#  European Conservation Action Network

**EuCAN Community Interest Company**

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**Visit to La Brenne, central France**

Thursday July 6th – Thursday July 13th 2017

**Joining instructions, travel Information and equipment list**

**Thursday July 6th**The minibus will be leaving Alweston (nr Sherborne) at 4.15pm, driving to Portsmouth for the 10.45pm ferry to Caen. We will be stopping at pre-arranged pick-up points on the way (places/times to be arranged as necessary) through Blandford and Wimborne, Ringwood main carpark, onto the M27,Rownhams Services on the M27, Southampton Parkway station (about 6.30pm) and then to the Cams Mill Inn on the edge of Fareham for supper around 7pm. See: <http://www.camsmill.co.uk/>

Could you please think about where you want to meet us – we will discuss this on the phone/by email. Bear in mind that on the return trip, we may not get back to Dorset until after 11pm, as the ferry does not dock until 9.15pm, so you will need to think of a way of getting home pretty late. It may well be possible to leave your vehicle at the Cams Mill Inn (our participants have done this before without any trouble or cost). Another possibility is to park in the Village Hall carpark in Alweston which I can arrange for you if necessary but you will get back to your car later of course.

After we have eaten at the Cams Mill Inn (I will contact you closer to the date for meal choices so that we can order in advance), we will reach the channel ferry quay for check-in at 9.15pm. Your cabins on the ferry have been booked; we will have breakfast before docking at Caen Ouistreham at 6.45am (French time – one hour ahead). We will stop several times on the journey for refreshments and to buy a picnic lunch, aiming to get to Mèzières around 4pm.

**Thursday July 13th** We will leave Mèzières-en-Brenne after an early breakfast and drive back to Caen to catch the ferry at 4.30pm (check-in 3pm) getting into Portsmouth around 9.15pm. We shall have supper on the ferry. We hope to get back to Alweston by 11.30pm, so please arrange your drop-off points accordingly.

**Equipment List**

We suggest that you bring one medium sized case/bag (if you only have a giant case, bring two smaller ones!). Also bring a small rucksack/haversack which you can use during the stay to carry packed lunches, binoculars, water bottle, id books, wallet, passport etc in.

Just in case anything goes astray, I would recommend that you label each case/bag with your name, mobile phone number (beginning 0044..) and home address on it. Please ensure that you passport and your wallet are in the small bag as the large one may be buried in the trailer.

Identification Books. It is useful to have a library of id books which covers as wide a range of animal and plant groups as possible. We shall transport these in the minibus. To avoid duplication and to minimise the weight, I have listed below the books we are taking in the minibus.

We have the Collins Bird Guide, Butterfly Guide, Wildflower Guide, Fungi Guide and Tree Guide, Reptiles and Amphibians, Alpine and Mediterranean Flowers and the Wildflowers of Northwest Europe; Butterflies of Europe by Tristan Lafranchis and the photographic guide to Butterflies of Britain and Europe by the Finnish authors; Chinery’s Butterflies and Dayflying Moths of Britain and Europe, and the Dragonflies book by Dijkstra and Lewington; the Field Guide to the Moths of Britain and Ireland, the recent Micromoth field guide, the French European moths book and guides to European Grasshoppers and Bushcrickets, to Spiders and to European Bats; the recent photographic guide to insects by Paul Brock and last but not least Michael Chinery’s ‘Insects of Britain and Western Europe’. Kathy will bring her bee id books. All these books will be transported with us with the moth traps, generator etc. I also have cd’s of the birdsongs of Europe (and bats and amphibians!).

Let me know what else you might have that you could bring. If you have a bat detector and/or butterfly net, please bring them.

**Checklist of equipment to bring:**

**Passport Make sure that your passport has at least 6 months on it** and keep it with you, not buried in your main suitcase! Please photocopy your passport (in black and white – it is illegal to make a colour copy of a passport apparently) and keep the copy in your main bag – that will make it much easier if anything happens to the original!

**International Health Card** (this has replaced the E111 certificate; passengers in minibuses are required to carry them). They can be obtained free via the internet. (don’t apply through the private company that makes you pay £10!).

**Money**: we suggest that you bring some Euros (say 50-100€) It is possible to use bank cards to obtain cash in Mézières-en-Brenne, but bring more cash if you are not planning to bring your bankcard. Banks like to be told if you are going abroad so that they know that someone hasn’t stolen your card and fled to Europe, so I would suggest that you let the bank know. You will need to have money to cover the cost of drinks, ice creams etc and souvenirs, and for the meals during the journeys.

Mobile phone/phone charger/euro plug adapter. Bring your own plug adaptor for phone and battery charging..

Notebook and pencil. Please bring a French phrase book or dictionary.

Binoculars, telescope if you have one.

Camera, handlens, if you have them. Bring a charger for your camera battery if it is a special one and a USB lead for downloading photos – we will be bringing a laptop.

Toilet things – including a towel - night clothes, sun block and sunhat.

Wet weather gear – waterproof coat and overtrousers – just in case...

You may need wellies for the wetter places, please write your initials inside each boot and store them in a bag! There should be plenty of room in the trailer for boots.

A set of smarter clothes and shoes for going out in the evenings perhaps, though we will never be very formal.

Bring a warm jumper in case the evenings are cold.

A small personal 1st Aid Kit – with plasters and a small roll of micropore tape, waspeeze, mosquito repellent, antiseptic wipes, a roll of bandage, a medium wound dressing and two prs of disposable gloves. We will be bringing a full 1st Aid Kit as well.

A torch.

We can pick up plastic bottles for drinks after we arrive.

**Insurance** You will need to take out your own insurance cover for your personal belongings and medical expenses. You should also bring your European Health card.

**The Programme for the visit**

There will be plenty of birds to see (and listen to with a background of frogs…) and the array of wildflowers, amphibians, reptiles, dragonflies and other insects will be stunning! There are so many wonderful places to see that the five days will certainly not be long enough!

We will set up moth traps on as many evenings as the weather allows – so the first part of each morning will be spent analysing the previous night’s catch.

A diary and lists of observations from the previous summer visits are on the EuCAN website: <http://www.eucan.org.uk/europe/2014-wildlife-holiday-to-la-brenne-in-central-france/>

and <http://www.eucan.org.uk/europe/2015-wildlife-holiday-to-la-brenne/>

and some of the species lists from our 2008 and 2009 (July) visits are on this link of our website:

<http://www.eucan.org.uk/europe/summer-visit-to-la-brenne-july-5th-12th-2017/>

The precise programme for our stay will depend on the weather, the particular interests of the individuals in the group and how we are feeling on the day! If anyone wants time on their own for birdwatching, a long walk or bike ride, or just sitting in the bar in the square drinking beer and reading a good book, you just need to say - we will try to accommodate everyone.

During the visit we would hope to do as many as possible of the following – as you see we are not going to be short of options!

1. Explore the area round the main Chérine Nature Reserve where there are several hides and many different habitats (reedbed, heathland, herb-rich grassland, woodland etc). Also visit the main centre at La Maison de la Nature where there is a beautiful display and a good hide.
2. Visit the Maison du Parc at Le Bouchet, which is the centre of the Parc Naturel Regional. There is a very good display there with slide shows, usually an interesting exhibition in the gallery, a very good shop and a restaurant which does exceptionally delicious ice-creams!
3. Visit Étang Vieux northeast of Mézières-en-Brenne hoping to hear a Bittern booming and see a good selection of butterflies and other insects.
4. Visit the Forêt de Lancosme, a highly afforested area to the east and enjoy the lovely area round the Chapelle de St. Sulpice.
5. Set up the moth traps on several evenings at La Chérine and elsewhere and go through the moths the following morning before releasing them.
6. Go out in the evening after supper hoping to hear Nightjars, and Grasshopper Warblers and Nightingales if we are not too late and the amazing chorus of frogs and toads, and at the same time we’d hope to see/hear bats.
7. Visit the limestone gorges of the River Creuse to the west of La Brenne where we should get a feast of wildflowers and butterflies. Also visit the lovely town of Angles-sur-l’Anglin perched on a crag .
8. Visit the lake reserves near Lingé, Étangs La Touche and Purais, where we should hope to see plenty of waterbirds, Marsh Harriers, possibly Little Bitterns, and good butterflies. We have worked on the habitats there over the years to encourage the rare Alcon Blue butterfly which may be on the wing; it will be interesting to see how the habitat is developing. This is one of the Large Blue species which has a very intimate association with ants. We would hope to see the Large Blue, Maculinea arion, on other sites in the area where it lays on marjoram.
9. We will visit lakes with colonies of Purple, Night and Grey Herons with Egrets alongside them, and hopefully get good views of nest activity.
10. The nearby town of Le Blanc has an interesting ‘Eco-Museum’ in the old chateau on the hill above the River Creuse, also some ‘proper’ shops, banks etc. (a wet weather option perhaps!).
11. Common land at Rosnay belonging to the local council has a wonderfully diverse collection of wildflowers and good butterflies too.
12. Visit the species rich calcareous grasslands around Obterre where we should see a good array of different wildflowers.
13. Visit the river Creuse near Ciron and the nearby Bee-eater colony.
14. There are also markets, goat farms, fishing enterprises and medieval churches.
15. And much else…..

**Some species we might hope to see if we are lucky**

Great White, Cattle and Little Egrets; Purple, Grey and Night Herons; Little and Greater Bitterns.

Marsh and Montagu’s Harriers; Short-toed Eagle, Honey Buzzard, Dark and Red Kites, Redbacked and possibly Woodchat Shrikes. Bee-Eaters!

Red-crested Pochard, Garganey and many other species of duck

Great Crested, Little and Blacknecked Grebes.

Whiskered and Black Terns

Migrant waders, Black-winged Stilt nesting

Black, Greyheaded (perhaps), Lesser, Middle and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers; Fan-tailed, Savi’s, Grasshopper, Bonelli’s Warblers. Cirl Bunting, Woodlarks, Black Redstarts and lots of other species common here but unusual in the UK.

Butterflies: Large Chequered, Mallow and other Skippers; Knapweed, Glanvilles, Heath, False Heath, Marbled, and Dark-green Fritillaries; White Admirals, Swallowtails and Scarce Swallowtails; Idas, Large, Alcon and many other blues; Woodland Grayling and Dryad; and many more species of butterflies.

Masses of moth species!

Parsley Frog (possibly), Agile Frog, Green Tree Frog, Natterjack Toad, Great Crested newt and large numbers of ‘Green Frogs’. European Pond Tortoise, Western Whip Snake, Green and Sand lizards

Many species of Dragon- and Damsel-flies.

**Cost of the holiday**:

En-suite accommodation in the ‘Meunière’ gîte): £610 per person in a twin-room

Accommodation in the adjacent ‘Moulin’ gîte with shared toilet and washing facilities: £585 per person in a twin-room.

The tariff does not include meals and refreshments on the journeys or drinks with the meals while we are there (we will buy bottled water to accompany the picnics). It does include breakfasts each day in France, picnics which we will buy locally, the 4 evening meals which we will cook communally in the gîte and the two evening meals we will eat in the village hotel.

Booking/Deposit:

A deposit of £100 per person is due to reserve a place on this holiday. Please transfer the money by BACS to the EuCAN CIC bank account with ‘Brenne + your name’ as the payment reference and email the registration form to nigelspring@yahoo.co.uk . At the same time please post the signed registration form to Nigel Spring at the address below.

Bank details:

Account name: EuCAN Community Interest Company, Sort Code: 08.92.99. A/c no. 65472987

If BACS transfers are not possible, please make cheques payable to EuCAN Community Interest Company and post with the signed booking form to:

Nigel Spring, 346, Mundens Lane, Alweston, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 5HU

The balance of the fee will be due by May 31st 2017 before which reminders and joining instructions will be sent out.

Cancellations: the deposit is non-refundable.

In the event of cancellation after the balance has been paid: before May 31st 50% of the balance will be forfeited, after May 31st the whole fee may be forfeited - unless the place can be filled.

**Other useful telephone numbers**:

Tony Williams Chérine reserve 0033.254.28.11.04 mob: 0033.675.136497.

Au Boeuf Couronné Hotel, Bernard and France Brossier: 0033. 254. 38.04.39

**For further information, please visit: www.eucan.org.uk**

**Contact: Nigel Spring** Tel: 01963.23559 Mobile: 07981.776767

Email: nigelspring@yahoo.co.uk.

*EuCAN CIC is registered in England and Wales as a Community Interest Company limited by guarantee.*

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