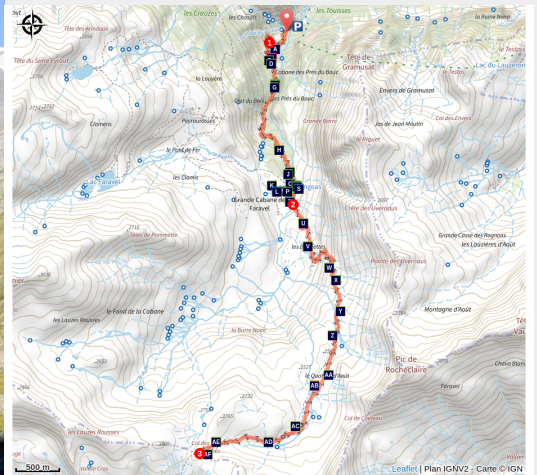


# Le Col des Terres Blanches from Dormillouse

Parc national des Ecrins - Freissinières



Montée au col des Terres Blanches depuis Dormillouse (Thierry Maillet - Parc national des Ecrins)



*A long trail up to the high plateaux of Col des Terres Blanches, a gypsum bubble placed on a mountain crest - an untamed Nordic atmosphere guaranteed!*

"Once we finally got to the plateau overlooking Lac du Fangeas and the Faravel pastures, at the foot of the Rochelaire, a huge bird soared up out of the blue. No doubt about it - with its diamond-shaped tail, it is a bearded vulture passing through the region!"

*Blandine Delenatte and Jean-Philippe Telmon, regional park keepers*

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 7 h 30

Length : 16.5 km

Trek ascent : 1271 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Return trip

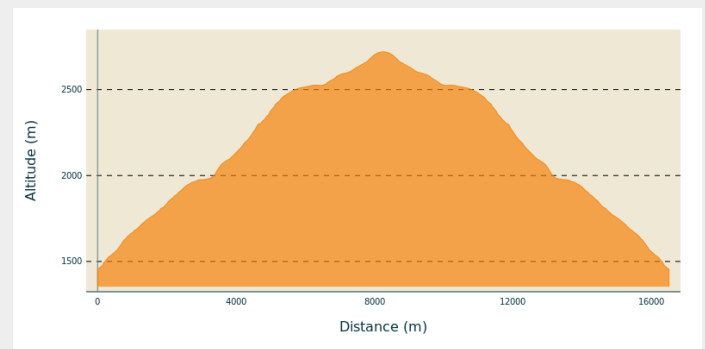
Themes : Fauna, Flora, Geology

# Trek

**Departure** : Les Cascades car park,  
Freissinières

**Cities** : 1. Freissinières

## Altimetric profile

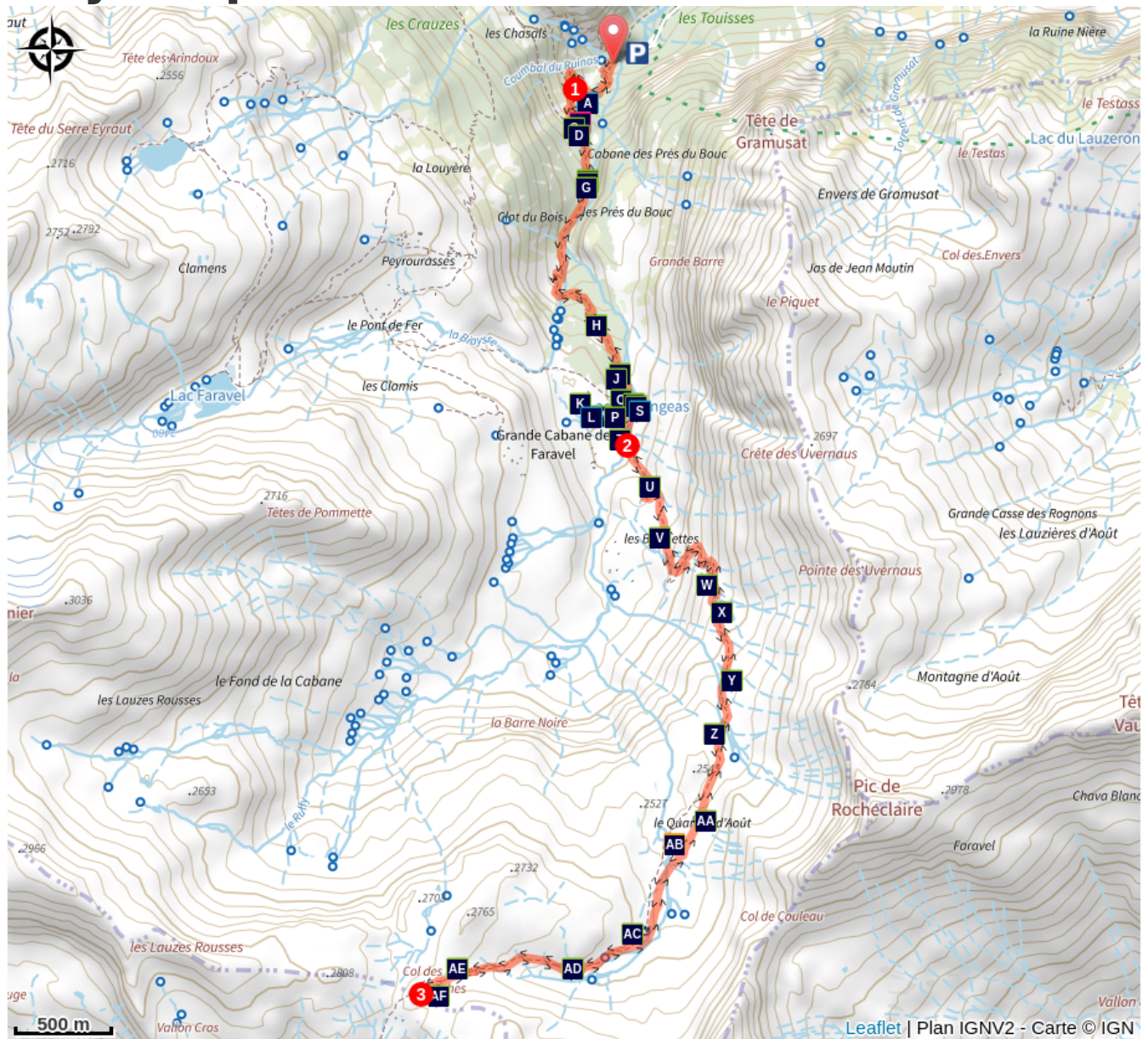


Min elevation 1454 m Max elevation 2721 m


Park at Les Cascades car park, at the end of the road and at the end of the Freissinières valley. Take the path on the left, where the entrance to the National Park is, and three information panels (you will pass a footbridge on the right that leads to the winter trail). Cross the bridge over the Oules torrent and continue along the looping path alongside a large waterfall, then cross an area of scree. This “summer” trail is in an avalanche zone and is not visited in winter. The trail is wide and the climb is gentle, and the inhabitants of Dormillouse use it to fetch food using tracked barrows.


1. At the next crossroads, turn left into the path towards "Lac du Fangeas, Col des Terres Blanches" and continue the only trail along the Oules torrent as far as Lake Fangeas.
2. Walk around the lake and turn left to take the footbridge upstream from the lake. From there, the Col des Terres Blanches path is marked by cairns and white markings. In places, before the ewes have passed through it, the route may be hard to see in the tall grasses: follow the cairns and zigzag your way through a series of rocky bars to reach the first plateau. Continue following the cairns across the plateau and the torrent, then follow the well-marked path up to the col.
3. The way back is along the same route or via Prapic, then Col de Freissinières over 2 days.

# On your path...




-  The Oules stream (AA)
-  Eurasian wren (AC)
-  Eutrophic Tall herb fringe (AE)
-  Hogweed (AG)
-  Roe deer (AI)
-  Alpine bartsia (AK)
-  Felwort (AM)
-  Butterwort (AO)
-  Siberian grasshopper (AQ)
-  Lac du Fangeas (AS)
-  The globe-flower (AU)
-  The water pipit (AW)
-  The common linnet (AY)
-  View of the village of Dormillouse (AB)
-  Common Chiffchaff (AD)
-  Large flowered foxglove (AF)
-  Boar (AH)
-  White hellebore (AJ)
-  Wetlands (AL)
-  Large mountain grasshopper (AN)
-  Broad-bodied chaser (AP)
-  Common frog (AR)
-  The silver birch (AT)
-  The adenostyle leaf beetle (AV)
-  The alpine bistort (AX)
-  The Pyrenean buttercup (AZ)

 The alpine snowbell (BA)

 The common mountain grasshopper (BC)

 The griffon vulture (BE)

 The plateau below the Col des Terres Blanches (BB)

 The moss campion (BD)

 The bearded vulture (BF)

# All useful information

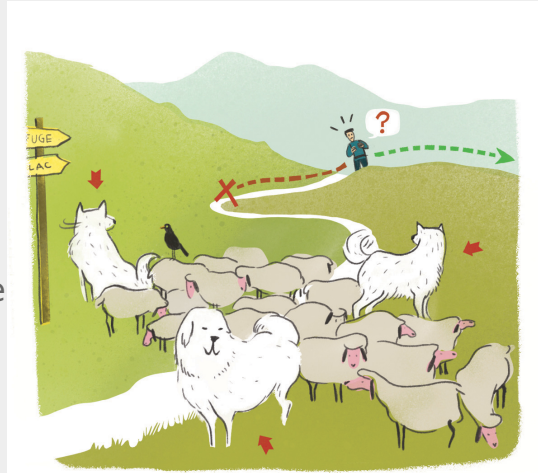
## Herd protection dogs

In mountain pastures, protection dogs are there to protect the herds from predators (wolves, etc.).

When I hike I adapt my behavior by going around the herd and pausing for the dog to identify me.

Find out more about the actions to adopt with the article ["Protection dogs: a context and actions to adopt"](#).

Tell us about your meeting by answering this [survey](#).



## Is in the midst of the park

The national park is an unrestricted natural area but subjected to regulations which must be known by all visitors.



## Advices

Camping is forbidden in the Cascades car park, bivouacking authorised over an hour's walk from the park limits. Fire is also forbidden inside the park limits.

## How to come ?

### Transports

Nearest SNCF train station: l'Argentière les Ecrins - [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com) then taxi (Taxi Pellegrin 06 98 88 17 78 / Taxi Billau 06 08 03 45 90)

### Access

From the RN 94, north of La Roche-de-Rame, head for Freissinières along the D38, then the D38B as far as Freissinières. Go through Freissinières, then follow the D238 towards the right as far as the Cascades car park, at the end of the valley. This is the end of the road and the end of the Freissinières valley, except for periods of snow, when the road is closed.

### Advised parking

Summer: Les Cascades, Freissinières car park. End of the road and the end of the Freissinières valley.

## Source



Parc national des Ecrins

<https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr>

# On your path...

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## The Oules stream (AA)

It has a series of waterfalls and natural basins that make it one of the most difficult streams to descend for those who like canyoning. The footpath that leads to the Fangeas lake follows it for most of the route and the sound of rushing water in the spring and the beginning of the summer, accompany the hiker.

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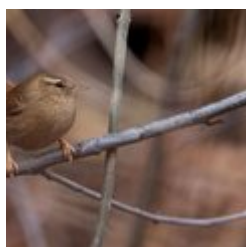


## View of the village of Dormillouse (AB)

The village of Dormillouse is unique in that it is levelled into several hamlets, each of which has a public amenity. Enflous, at the bottom of the village, has the mill, Escleyers has the temple, the school and the fountain, and Romans, at the top of the village, has the oven. The stone and wood houses are typical of mountain architecture in an isolated area.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE

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## Eurasian wren (AC)

This small 10 cm ball of feathers, with a white band across its eyes, is the “pétabouillou” ou la “pétouse” that lets out its powerful song from the branch it is on, tail oriented vertically. It fidgets continually in the clutter of vegetation, elusive.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE

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## Common Chiffchaff (AD)

Although common, this small passerine is rarely seen but its «Tchiff-tchaff, tchiff-tchaff, chiff-tchaff...» song is often heard. Its song is reminiscent of the noise made by gold coins as they drop into a box one by one. The English call it the chiffchaff, the Germans Zilpzalp. In other words, this song certainly attracts attention! A migratory bird, it arrives in Les Écrins in late March or early April and nests in shrubby forests. It feeds on insects all summer before returning to overwinter around the Mediterranean rim.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE



### ✿ Eutrophic Tall herb fringe (AE)

This is a plant formation of tall grass that grows on damp ground. Along the Fangeas footpath on the edge of the Oules, this tall grass brushes calves and thighs.

Attribution : Pierre-Emmanuel Dequest - PNE



### ✿ Large flowered foxglove (AF)

It would be difficult to miss this large flower with its bunched yellow corolla. It gets its name from the resemblance of its flower with thimbles in which you put your finger ("digitale" referring to finger in French). In colloquial language, it is called "witch's glove" as it is a very toxic plant.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE



### ✿ Hogweed (AG)

This large member of the umbelliferae family can grow up to 160 cm and likes rich damp soil. It gives off a smell of mandarin when it is handled. In the spring, the flower buds are hidden in a sheath of leaves and when they blossom, the umbels attract many insects.

Attribution : Cédric Dentant - PNE



### 🦏 Boar (AH)

There is little chance that you will come across this animal but it is likely you will see evidence of unearthing (overturned top layer of earth) or rooting (when it digs deeper into the soil). Boar root the soil with their snout in search of worms, beetle larvae, roots and tubers.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - PNE



### 🦌 Roe deer (AI)

Hidden in the larch forest, the roe deer will occasionally show its fine head at dusk or dawn. It is not always easy to spot this reserved animal but traces betray its presence by the print of its frail heart-shaped hooves, shrubs stripped of their bark by yearlings rubbing the last shreds of velvet from their antlers, or scratching at the ground to mark their territory during the mating season. Sometimes a throaty barking sound may be heard.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE



### ✿ White hellebore (AJ)

Without its flowers, it would be easy to mistake it for a yellow gentian. However, the white hellebore has alternating leaves on its stem whereas those of the gentian are opposite (forming a cup). The gentian makes a well-known aperitif, whereas the hellebore is poisonous.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



### ✿ Alpine bartsia (AK)

It can be seen from afar in the green grass due to its purplish bracts that almost hide its small flowers. It is an artic-alpine species living high in the Alps and in northern Europe.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



### 💧 Wetlands (AL)

The Fangeas lake is surrounded by wetlands. Its name comes from "fange", which is a marshy area.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



### ✿ Felwort (AM)

At the beginning of August, the Felwort's violet stars open up in the sun. At the base of each of the five petals, two shiny dimples filled with nectar attract insects. It is part of the gentian family and is a beautiful, hardy flower that resists the winter season thanks to its winter bud.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



### 🦗 Large mountain grasshopper (AN)

From the middle of the summer, this grasshopper rubs its dark, staggered, ribbed elytra with its back legs and fills the air with the resulting repetitive sh-trrrrrrr sh-trrrrrrrr sh-trrrrrrrr...sound. When we disturb it as we walk, it flies off noisily as if it was not happy.

Attribution : Blandine Delenatte - PNE



### ✿ Butterwort (AO)

Its light green, almost yellow leaves enable us to identify it on the soggy earth. The sticky surface of its leaves are a real trap for the gnats that venture onto them. The plant is carnivorous in order to compensate for the lack of nitrogen in the wetlands.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicollet - PNE



### 🦋 Broad-bodied chaser (AP)

It gets its French name, 'Libellule déprimée' not because it is "depressed" in a psychological way, but due to its flat abdomen. The male with its blue abdomen can often be seen flying above wet areas.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



### 🦋 Siberian grasshopper (AQ)

In the grass around the Fangeas lake, in August, several grasshoppers blend into the grass. Among them, the Siberian grasshopper has a peculiarity; it has butch arms, like Popeye. In fact, it is just that its front legs that are shaped like bulbs. Without this detail and its long steady song "creh-creh-creh-creh", it might easily go unnoticed with its green-brown colour.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



### 🦎 Common frog (AR)

Sometimes a frog will jump in the wetlands that surround the Fangeas lake and more specifically in the rivulets that meander through the grass. Young or adult, it is the common frog, the most common in the mountains. It can live up to an altitude of 2800 m, a record! It hibernates in the ground or in the silt at the bottom of the water. In the spring, its eggs float on the surface of the water in compact clusters.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



### 🏞️ Lac du Fangeas (AS)

The Lac du Fangeas is not a high-mountain lake in the strict sense of the term, although that in no way detracts from its charm. Formed in the 1960s by a landslide which blocked the mountain stream, it is shallow and the flow still passes through it.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE

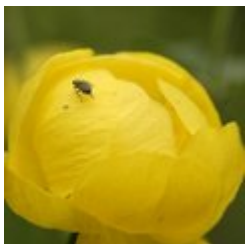


### ✿ The silver birch (AT)

On either side of the walkway crossing the mountain stream above the Lac du Fangeas, the predominant tree is recognisable by its white bark, its warty branches and its weeping growth habit. In all the region's mountain valleys, bundles of young birch twigs cut before the snows were used to make brooms. Believed by some to have magic powers, they prevented evil spirits from entering the home...

Attribution : Blandine Delenatte - PNE

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### ✿ The globe-flower (AU)

With their gold spheres on long stems swaying in the wind, globe-flowers brighten up the rich meadows surrounding the path. Proud yet modest, these flowers fold their petals over, hiding the inside from our gaze. They are reserved for a little seed-eating fly which takes advantage of the mysterious yellow chamber to reproduce and drink the nectar undisturbed. The fly spreads the pollen from flower to flower and the flower provides a safe haven for the insect's larvae. Everyone wins: a two-way relationship.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

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### 🐞 The adenostyle leaf beetle (AV)

This beetle with brilliant reflections is a mountain-dweller and a lace-making specialist! Its favourite material for this work: the large leaves of the adenostyles which brush against your calves as you pass the cairns marking the route. The more the leaf is nibbled, the more it gives off a scent which attracts the beetles, which can gather on it in large numbers. But be aware, a leaf beetle on an adenostyle is not necessarily the adenostyle leaf beetle... because several species of leaf beetles share occupancy of the leaf!

Attribution : Blandine Delenatte - PNE

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### The water pipit (AW)

There's no point in searching for it: if it wants to, the water pipit can remain invisible, hovering against the blue of the sky. But it can make itself heard! It calls out its name « pi-pit-pipit-pipit-pipit » and suddenly, at the peak of its flight, it glides down towards the ground, its unfurled wings acting like a parachute, uttering a loud « piii » call. This call echoes from the rock bars which the Col Des Terres Blanche path winds around.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



### The alpine bistort (AX)

This persicaria is a hardy plant which withstands low temperatures and is capable of adapting [to conditions in the montane zone right up to the alpine zone. Its reproduction is also adapted to the harsh environments in which it lives: while the white to pinkish flowers are grouped into a spike at the top of the inflorescence, small bulbils form underneath, along the spike. This persicaria is therefore viviparous, that is to say, it is capable of producing embryos ready to germinate, with no fertilisation.](#)

Attribution : Blandine Delenatte - PNE



### The common linnet (AY)

Trills, piping calls, loud and staccato sounds: the linnet's song seems random. Alpine pastures and ground dotted with scrub and wild grasses are its favourite high-altitude terrain. Here, it finds seeds to feed on and bushes in which it builds its nest, near to the ground and with no effort to conceal it. Might the linnet be careless? The mountains are a vital refuge for this species which is in decline due to reduced food resources: the small seeds of grasses which are regarded as weeds are eliminated from cultivated areas.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE



## ✿ The Pyrenean buttercup (AZ)

When the snows have just melted on the high plateaux through which the Col des Terres Blanches path runs, the grass is turned a silky vibrant white by the petals of a multitude of small white buttercups. At the centre of a circle formed by five white petals, a string of yellow stamens surrounds the many green achenes which form a bristly cone of hooked "beaks".

Attribution : Cédric Dentant - PNE



## ✿ The alpine snowbell (BA)

A cousin of the primrose, the fragile but tough snowbell heralds the return of fine weather. The snow has barely melted yet here it is, its resilient violet bells poking up from the high-mountain grass, fringed like ballerinas' tutus. The round shape of its leaves, all grouped at the base of the stem, make them look rather like a penny coin, *soldus* in Latin, hence its French name soldanelle des Alpes.

Attribution : Thierry Maillet- PNE



## 🐑 The plateau below the Col des Terres Blanches (BB)

The plateau below the Col des Terres Blanches is the August grazing ground for the Faravel flock which grazes the shores of the Lac du Fangeas in early summer. On the right, uphill of the path, a dry stone-built Jas, or sheepfold, is used by the shepherd as a store for the nets.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



## 🦗 The common mountain grasshopper (BC)

A witness of the ancient expansion of the glaciers, this grasshopper lives only above altitudes of 2,000 metres; it is an orophile (or mountain-loving) species. The male can easily be recognised by its black-striped yellow abdomen, its minuscule wings, its red upper hind legs and blue lower hind legs. Although bigger than the male, the female is less conspicuous with her greyish colouring. Moving about on foot holds no fear for the common mountain grasshopper, its Latin name *Podisma pedestris* making a double reference to walking. Not surprising, because its tiny wings make it incapable of flying! At this altitude, the summer is short-lived and the sexual organs develop before the wings.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



### ✿ The moss campion (BD)

Commonly called the *silène des glaciers* (campion of the glaciers), it grows on rocky ground at altitudes of between 1,800 and 3,700 metres. In summer, it resembles clumps of moss dotted with tiny pink flowers. Its cushion-forming habit is a morphological as well as physiological adaptation, allowing it to withstand the extreme weather conditions at high altitudes. Inside the cushion, the climate is less harsh for the plant's biological activity and the dead leaves enrich with nutrients the solutions absorbed by the roots.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



### 🦅 The griffon vulture (BE)

Its silhouette against the sky is unmistakable: rectangular wingspan, imposing and contrasting with long broad wings and a very short tail. With a wingspan of approximately 2.7 metres, it is a very big bird of prey which follows the herds in summer. Solely a carrion eater, it occupies a key place in the food chain by removing corpses quickly, limiting the risks of spreading bacteria. Griffon vultures are gregarious birds and it is rare to see one flying on its own in the skies over the Col des Terres Blanches!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



### 🦅 The bearded vulture (BF)

This is one of the biggest birds in Europe. It is very noticeable with its 2.8-metre wingspan and its lozenge-shaped tail. The juveniles are rather dark-coloured and have broad wings while the adults have a light body and narrow wings. The orangey colour of their breasts comes from the baths they take in iron-rich waters. In captivity, the bearded vulture has a white body. Its diet, which is essentially made up of bones, has earned it the nickname « bone breaker ». In fact, when a bone is too big, it carries it high into the air and drops it onto rocky ground. Then, all it has to do is to ingest the scattered bone fragments, which are digested by its powerful gastric juices.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE