

SHORT SPRING TOUR FOR LARRY HAUGH

30th April 2009 – 3rd May 2009 (return to Madrid 4th May)

Itinerary

30th April: Early morning pick-up from Madrid. Birding at Arrocampo and Valdecañas, with late afternoon arrival at Casa Rural El Recuerdo

1st May: Morning at heath land near Jaraicejo and rest of day in Monfragüe National Park.

2nd May: Plains and wooded valleys around Santa Marta de Magasca. Evening walk at Pago de San Clemente.

3rd May: Sierra Brava reservoir, the rice fields near Madrigalejo and the Villuercas mountains. Late afternoon visit to Trujillo.

4th May: Early morning departure for Madrid.

30th April 2009

Larry arrived on time off the flight from New York and soon we had left the airport and headed on the ring road south of Madrid to join the A5 motorway to Extremadura. We stopped for refreshments en route, and then continued to the reservoir of Arrocampo, lying between the towns of Almaraz and Saucedilla. We first of all explored the open country to the west of Saucedilla, having an excellent view of **Black-winged Kite**, as well as **Tree Sparrow** and male **Spanish Sparrow** adjacent on a nearby tree. We visited two of the observation hides overlooking the fringing vegetation of the reservoir. We were rewarded with several sightings of **Little Bittern**, an obliging **Squacco Heron** and several **Savi's Warblers**. **Purple Heron** were in good number and overhead passed **Black** and **Griffon Vulture**, **Booted** and **Short-toed Eagles**. Mid-afternoon saw us along a wooded valley at Valdecañas obtaining views of **Golden Oriole**, a fine male **Cirl Bunting** and **Hawfinch**. One of the highlights was an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle** being mobbed by a **Raven** on several occasions. We set off late afternoon for the final forty minutes drive to reach Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

1st May 2009

After an early breakfast, we set off for a nearby area of lavender heath land and cork oak woodland. The still conditions were ideal and the clear skies promised a warm sunny day ahead. Reaching the heath, we soon had the opportunity of studying at close range a **Thekla Lark** and also had views of several **Dartford Warblers**. After some searching we found a singing **Spectacled Warbler**, which although distant, obligingly was perched for several minutes. We then walked across the heath and located singing **Subalpine** and **Western Orphean Warblers**. In the woodland, **Short-toed Treecreepers** were singing and we also saw **Booted** and **Short-toed Eagles**. Mid-morning we headed to the

Monfragüe National Park. Although it was a busy holiday weekend and the place was thronging with visitors, we found places to park and enjoyed some excellent birding from the various viewpoints. At the first (Peña Falcón), a pair of **Black Stork** were present at their nest. Three species of vultures wheeled over the gorge whilst smaller birds were not outdone, with fine views of **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Wren** and **Red-rumped Swallow**. However the real gems were at the final viewpoint where we were rewarded with incredible views of a pair of **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, flying together and perched side-by-side on a bare tree. We were also lucky enough to get a view of an adult **Eagle Owl**, positioned between rocks in a way that one had to be in exactly the right point to see the bird. In the cork oak woodland nearby, we found a **Rock Sparrow**, feeding amongst **House Sparrows** and **Chaffinches** on the ground.

2nd May 2009

We arrived early on the plains between Trujillo and Santa Marta de Magasca, aiming to beat the sun shimmer that would be bound to start by mid-morning. Male **Little Bustards** called from fields around us and performed their short upward hops as well as chases. A fine male **Great Bustard** fed in an adjacent field, a close-by **Little Bustard** giving us a good opportunity to compare size. A **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** flew over calling. We drove along a dirt road, seeing a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** and a **Common Cuckoo** fly past within a minute of so of each other. **Short-toed Larks** foraged in the verges, whilst **Calandra Larks** performed their mimetic songs, often appearing to fly in slow-motion. A **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** flew in to land on bare ground. **Egyptian Vulture**, **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** stood on the ground, and an individual of the latter species flew in to chase off three **Black Kites** from what appeared to be a dead hare. Two **Red Kite** were also perched nearby. Radiating out from the village of Santa Marta de Magasca, we found **Roller** to the south, as well as a fine party of about 40 male **Great Bustards**. At the Tamuja river, **Crag Martins** haunted the bridge. North of the village, **Montagu's Harriers** quartered a cereal field and along the River Almonte, where we had lunch, a **White Wagtail** and **Common Sandpiper** foraging at the water's edge. After lunch we returned to Monfragüe and over the Visitors' Centre, saw a fine **Bonelli's Eagle** gliding over. Then, in an area of pines, we located a **Turtle Dove**. Back at Casa Rural El Recuerdo, we went out at dusk to listen to **Red-necked Nightjars** and we were lucky enough to see one fly over the lane. A **Little Owl** was also seen and we heard **Long-eared Owl** and **Scops Owl**.

3rd May 2009

Today we spent the morning to the south near Madrigalejo and then headed east to spend the afternoon in the wooded mountain range of the Villuercas. Our first stop was the Sierra Brava reservoir. The water was a bit choppy and apart from a few **Great-crested Grebes**, **Mallard** and **Shoveller**, there was not much to see. A highlight however, was a fine pair of **Black-eared Wheatear**. We had close views of a female **Marsh Harrier**. Descending to the rice-growing area, we stopped at a small dam and explored the bushes on its banks. A good selection of migrants were present: several **Pied Flycatchers**, a **Common Redstart**, **Willow Warblers** and a **Garden Warbler**. **Collared Pratincoles** flew

over the dry fields and a party of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** landed. A small flooded area had **Little Ringed Plover** and **Ringed Plover** and along the road **Bee-eaters** and **Southern Grey Shrikes** perched on the fence. We stopped to check the riverine gallery woodland beside the River Ruercas but did not tarry long as a fire had broken out. However, we did get excellent views there of **Great Reed Warbler**. Flocks of **Red Avadavat** and **Common Waxbill** were present in the roadside ditches. We crossed an area where most of the rice fields had standing water and found one with a party of **Gull-billed Terns**. Amongst there were three summer-plumaged **White-winged Black Terns**, a local rarity and their diagnostic features (white rumps and tails, white forewings – forming bold white shoulders at rest – were easily visible). A **Whimbrel**, **Common Redshank** and **Greenshank** were also present.

We then drove east to the Villuercas, visiting first a belt of deciduous Pyrenean Oak where we had good views of a **Western Bonelli's Warbler** singing and then cork oak, where we found **Nuthatch**. Beside the village of Cabañas del Castillo we found a pair of **Black Wheatear**, a **Melodious Warbler** and **Black Redstart**. A stop at the River Almonte yielded a male **Grey Wagtail**.

We completed the afternoon with a brief visit to the medieval centre of Trujillo where we saw **Pallid** and **Common Swift** and had excellent views of **Lesser Kestrel**.

4th May 2009

We set off before dawn to make the return journey to Madrid.

Species list

Despite a short duration, we managed to record a very impressive 145 species of birds, including all of the Extremadura specialities and all within an hour from base.

1. **Little Grebe** Seen at Arrocampo.
2. **Great Crested Grebe** Seen at Arrocampo and Sierra Brava reservoir.
3. **Great Cormorant** One at Monfragüe.
4. **Little Bittern** About four at Arrocampo.
5. **Squacco Heron** One at Arrocampo.
6. **Cattle Egret** Seen almost daily.
7. **Little Egret** Seen almost daily.
8. **Grey Heron** Seen at Arrocampo and on the rice fields.
9. **Purple Heron** About six seen at Arrocampo.
10. **Black Stork** Up to six birds seen on both visits to Monfragüe.
11. **White Stork** Common
12. **Spoonbill** One in flight at Arrocampo.
13. **Gadwall** Several pairs at Arrocampo.
14. **Shoveller** Two males at Sierra Brava.
15. **Mallard** Seen daily.
16. **Black-winged Kite** One at Arrocampo.

17. **Black Kite** Common.
18. **Red Kite** About six seen near Santa Marta de Magasca.
19. **Egyptian Vulture** Seen at Valdecañas, Monfragüe and Santa Marta de Magasca.
20. **Griffon Vulture** Seen daily.
21. **Black Vulture** Seen almost daily.
22. **Short-toed Eagle** Seen daily.
23. **Marsh Harrier** One at Arrocampo and one near Sierra Brava.
24. **Montagu's Harrier** Several near Santa Marta de Magasca.
25. **Sparrowhawk** One at Valdecañas.
26. **Common Buzzard** Seen daily.
27. **Spanish Imperial Eagle** One at Valdecañas and two at Monfragüe.
28. **Booted Eagle** Seen almost daily.
29. **Bonelli's Eagle** One at Monfragüe.
30. **Lesser Kestrel** Seen almost daily.
31. **Common Kestrel** Seen daily.
32. **Peregrine Falcon** One heard in Villuercas mountains.
33. **Red-legged Partridge** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and near Sierra Brava.
34. **Quail** Heard at Arrocampo and on rice fields.
35. **Moorhen** Seen at Arrocampo.
36. **Purple Swamphen** Seen at Arrocampo.
37. **Common Coot** Seen at Arrocampo and Sierra Brava.
38. **Little Bustard** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and near Sierra Brava.
39. **Great Bustard** About 40 seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and two near Sierra Brava.
40. **Black-winged Stilt** Seen at Arrocampo and on the rice fields.
41. **Collared Pratincole** Seen on the rice fields.
42. **Little Ringed Plover** Three seen on the rice fields.
43. **Ringed Plover** Eight seen on the rice fields.
44. **Whimbrel** One on the rice fields.
45. **Common Redshank** Six on the rice fields.
46. **Greenshank** One on the rice fields.
47. **Common Sandpiper** One on River Almonte and one on the rice fields.
48. **Black-headed Gull** About 30 on the rice fields.
49. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** One immature on rice fields.
50. **Gull-billed Tern** About six at Arrocampo and about ten on rice fields.
51. **White-winged Black Tern** Three near Palazuelo on rice fields.
52. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** One near Santa Marta de Magasca and about six on rice fields.
53. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** One near Santa Marta de Magasca
54. **Rock Dove** Seen daily.
55. **Wood Pigeon** Singles seen almost daily.
56. **Collared Dove** Seen daily.
57. **Turtle Dove** Good views at Monfragüe.
58. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** One seen in flight near Santa Marta de Magasca.
59. **Common Cuckoo** Seen or heard almost daily.

60. **Scops Owl** Heard on evening of 2nd May at Pago de San Clemente.
61. **Eagle Owl** Adult seen at Monfragüe on 1st May.
62. **Little Owl** One seen on evening of 2nd May at Pago de San Clemente.
63. **Long-eared Owl** Adult and juvenile heard on evening of 2nd May at Pago de San Clemente.
64. **Red-necked Nightjar** One seen on evening of 2nd May at Pago de San Clemente.
65. **Alpine Swift** Seen at Monfragüe and the Villuercas mountains.
66. **Common Swift** Seen daily.
67. **Pallid Swift** Small numbers seen over Trujillo.
68. **Kingfisher** Seen at Arrocampo and the Rio Tamuja near Santa Marta de Magasca.
69. **Bee-eater** Common.
70. **Roller** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and Madrigalejo.
71. **Hoopoe** Common.
72. **Great Spotted Woodpecker** Heard at Monfragüe and in the Villuercas mountains.
73. **Wryneck** One calling near the castle Monfragüe.
74. **Calandra Lark** Common on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca.
75. **Short-toed Lark** Seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca.
76. **Crested Lark** Common
77. **Thekla Lark** Common on heath land near Jaraicejo and seen on plains.
78. **Woodlark** Seen at Monfragüe and near Santa Marta de Magasca.
79. **Sand Martin** Seen at Arrocampo and near Madrigalejo.
80. **Crag Martin** Seen daily.
81. **Barn Swallow** Seen daily.
82. **Red-rumped Swallow** Seen daily.
83. **House Martin** Seen daily.
84. **Yellow Wagtail** A female near Santa Marta de Magasca.
85. **Grey Wagtail** A male on Rio Almonte in the Villuercas.
86. **White Wagtail** Seen almost daily.
87. **Wren** Seen or heard daily.
88. **Robin** Heard in Monfragüe and in the Villuercas.
89. **Nightingale** Seen or heard almost daily.
90. **Black Redstart** Seen in Monfragüe and in the Villuercas.
91. **Common Redstart** One on passage near Madrigalejo.
92. **Stonechat** Seen almost daily.
93. **Northern Wheatear** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca.
94. **Black-eared Wheatear** Seen near Sierra Brava reservoir.
95. **Black Wheatear** Seen in the Villuercas.
96. **Blue Rock Thrush** Seen in Monfragüe and the Villuercas.
97. **Blackbird** Seen daily.
98. **Mistle Thrush** Seen in Monfragüe.
99. **Cetti's Warbler** Seen at Arrocampo and near Madrigalejo.
100. **Zitting Cisticola** Seen at Arrocampo and near Madrigalejo.
101. **Savi's Warbler** Seen at Arrocampo.
102. **Reed Warbler** Heard at Arrocampo.
103. **Great Reed Warbler** Seen at Arrocampo and near Madrigalejo.
104. **Melodious Warbler** Seen in the Villuercas.
105. **Dartford Warbler** Seen near Jaraicejo.

106. **Spectacled Warbler** Seen near Jaraicejo.
107. **Subalpine Warbler** Seen near Jaraicejo and Monfragüe.
108. **Sardinian Warbler** Seen or heard almost daily.
109. **Western Orphean Warbler** One seen near Jaraicejo.
110. **Garden Warbler** Seen on passage near Madrigalejo.
111. **Blackcap** Heard in Monfragüe and seen in the Villuercas.
112. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** One seen in the Villuercas.
113. **Willow Warbler** Seen on passage near Madrigalejo.
114. **Pied Flycatcher** Seen on passage near Madrigalejo.
115. **Long-tailed Tit** Seen almost daily.
116. **Crested Tit** Seen in the Villuercas.
117. **Blue Tit** Seen almost daily.
118. **Great Tit** Seen daily.
119. **Nuthatch** Seen in the Villuercas.
120. **Short-toed Treecreeper** Seen almost daily.
121. **Golden Oriole** Seen almost daily.
122. **Southern Grey Shrike** Seen almost daily.
123. **Woodchat Shrike** Seen daily.
124. **Jay** Seen at Monfragüe and in the Villuercas.
125. **Azure-winged Magpie** Seen daily.
126. **Magpie** Seen daily.
127. **Red-billed Chough** Seen at Valdecañas and in the Villuercas.
128. **Jackdaw** Seen almost daily.
129. **Raven** Seen daily.
130. **Spotless Starling** Seen daily.
131. **House Sparrow** Seen daily.
132. **Spanish Sparrow** Seen almost daily.
133. **Tree Sparrow** Seen at Arrocampo and near Madrigalejo.
134. **Rock Sparrow** Seen at Monfragüe.
135. **Common Waxbill** Seen briefly near Madrigalejo.
136. **Red Avadavat** Seen near Madrigalejo.
137. **Chaffinch** Seen daily.
138. **Serin** Seen daily.
139. **Greenfinch** Seen almost daily.
140. **Goldfinch** Seen daily.
141. **Linnet** Seen near Jaraicejo.
142. **Hawfinch** Seen at Valdecañas and Monfragüe.
143. **Cirl Bunting** Seen at Valdecañas and Monfragüe.
144. **Rock Bunting** Seen at Monfragüe.
145. **Corn Bunting** Abundant, seen daily.