

Birding Extremadura and Casa Rural El Recuerdo

SPRING TOUR 8th June 2011 – 15th June 2011

Guests: Peter and Janice Farrbridge

Guide: Martin Kelsey

BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES

Itinerary

8th June 2011: Arrival in Madrid and transfer from airport to casa Rural El Recuerdo

9th June 2011: Arrocampo reservoir, Lago de Jaraiz and Valdecañas

10th June 2011: Pico de Villuercas

11th June 2011: Monfragüe National Park

12th June 2011: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca and Villuercas mountains

13th June 2011: Tierra de Barros, Alange, Mérida and Palazuelo

14th June 2011: Monfragüe National Park and the Jerte Valley, including Puerto de Honduras

15th June 2011: Valdecañas and transfer to Madrid airport.

8th June

Peter and Jan arrived on schedule late afternoon at Madrid airport and we headed west, arriving at Casa Rural El Recuerdo by mid-evening.

9th June

There was a fresh easterly breeze as we set off north-eastwards towards the reservoir of Arrocampo. We explored an area of open *dehesa* woodland near the edge of the reservoir, coming across a family party of **Black-crowned Night Heron**, as well as butterflies such as **Lulworth** and **Essex Skipper**. A **Banded Groundling** dragonfly was also present. Beside the reservoir, and despite the wind, we located a singing **Savi's Warbler**. **Purple Herons** flew in and out of the fringing vegetation and we had excellent views of a pair of **Little Bittern** and **Purple Swamphen**. We then visited open country close to the village of Saucedilla where we located a juvenile **Black-winged Kite** perched on a roadside pylon. We then headed to the foothills of the Gredos mountains in La Vera, visiting the lake near Jaraiz. As well as birds such as **Honey Buzzard**, **Grey Wagtail** and **Golden Oriole**, the area also proved productive for butterflies with species like **Wood White**, **Brimstone** and **Spanish Purple Hairstreak**. Returning past Arrocampo, we checked a line of bank side bushes and we lucky enough to find a **Penduline Tit** building an almost completed nest. A marvellous sight! We completed the day exploring a valley close to the Valdecañas dam. The woodland seemed full of **Golden Orioles** with **Hawfinch** and **Cirl Bunting** also present. **Spanish Gatekeepers** and **Iberian Marbled Whites** were amongst the butterfly species present.

10th June

We spent the entire day at the highest point of the Villuercas Mountains (Pico de Villuercas) close to the town of Guadalupe. The summit is 1600 metres above sea-level, where scrubby vegetation grows above the tree-line. **Black Redstart** and **Rock Bunting** were present as were a pair of breeding **Red-billed Chough**, but it was the butterflies which were the highlight of the day. Close to the summit we found **Glanville**, **Marsh** and **Queen of Spain Fritillary**, whilst **Sooty** and **Purple-shot Coppers** were also present. We then slowly descended to the edge of the woodland dominated by stunted Pyrenean oak trees. There beside the road were clumps of brambles in flower which attracted a breathtaking multitude of butterflies: **Cardinals**, **Southern White Admirals**, **Glanville Fritillaries**, **Purple-shot Coppers** and **Clouded Yellows**. We had lunch beside a small clearing where the bizarre **Owflies** buzzed around like little robots and **Chimney Sweeper** moths fluttered. In the space of barely two kilometres we had found 24 species of butterfly - remarkable.

11th June

The Monfragüe National Park is well known for the spectacular views that can be enjoyed of breeding vultures and **Black Storks**, and indeed we were not disappointed. Joined by Rob Orenstein for the day, we were also keen to get views of **White-rumped Swift**, and during the course of the day we had several good sightings as well. A **Black Wheatear** was also found at the big cliff at Peña Falcón, as was **Peregrine** and **Short-toed Eagle**. But the butterflies were also especially rewarding. We had hoped for **Nettle-tree Butterfly** and we had excellent views of about three around Southern Nettle Trees growing beside the River Tajo. A **Two-tailed Pasha** was also present along this shady lane, frequently Strawberry Trees. Other species included **Great Banded Grayling** and **Spanish Purple Hairstreak**. We ended the day with a stop at the Arroyo de la Vid, a deep valley in which a family of **Subalpine Warblers** was present. Whilst we were watching these, a pair of **Golden Eagles** drifted onto the scene offering us spectacularly close views.

12th June

We had an early start this morning with the target species being birds of the steppes. Joined again by Rob, we visited first the plains between Trujillo and Santa Marta de Magasca. We had good views of both **Great** and **Little Bustard** and flight views of **Pin-tailed** and **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**. Already post-breeding flocks of **Corn Buntings** and **Calandra Larks** were starting to form. We visited areas to the south of the village of Santa Marta de Magasca, stopping at the Tamuja River where a pair of **Little Ringed Plovers** were present as well as a **Black Stork**, then visiting the plains beyond where we enjoyed close views of **Rollers**, more **sandgrouse** and a **Little Owl** adult and juvenile peering out of a nest box. We then moved on to spend the afternoon in the Villuercas Mountains. We spent most of the time in the cork oak woodland near Solana, where we had views of a pair of **Bonelli's Eagle**, as well as finding **Sooty Copper** and **Great Banded Grayling** butterflies. Beside the River

Almonte, we found **Sage Skipper**, with sightings of **Short-toed** and **Booted Eagles**.

13th June

It was a dramatic change in landscape today as we spent the morning in the Tierra de Barros, a vast area given over to intensive vineyards and olive production, close to Villafranca de los Barros. The key species here is the **Rufous Bush Robin** and within just minutes of entering suitable habitat we were rewarded by one on the ground, between two lines of vines, tail-cocked and wings spread. Over the next hour or so we had sightings of another three or four, mainly birds singing, perched on exposed vine shoots or on olive trees. Despite the intensive land use practices here, we also saw several **Montagu's Harriers**. From there we visited the crag of Alange where a **Bonelli's Eagle** appeared fleetingly, but more prolonged views were possible of the vast number of **Alpine Swifts** nesting on the dam. We then made a visit to the Roman Bridge in Mérida to get further views of **swifts: Alpine, Pallid** and **Common**, as well as a **Little Bittern** and excellent views of a pale and a dark phase **Booted Eagle**. We then headed east to make a quick visit to the rice-growing area near Palazuelo. The rice fields themselves were rather unproductive bird wise, although we did see **Roller, Bee-eater, Common Waxbill** and **Collared Pratincole**. In dry, rocky country near the Sierra Brava reservoir we found a male Black-eared Wheatear.

14th June

From the depths of the central lowlands in Extremadura yesterday, today we climbed into the Gredos mountains, rising from the Jerte valley (after an initial stop in Monfragüe) to the Honduras pass (Puerto de Honduras). The first sensation on arrival was the sound of **Ortolan Buntings**, with several birds singing from different directions. The butterflies were also excellent with masses of **High Brown Fritillaries**, as well as **Rosy Grizzled Skippers** amongst others. We descended from the pass, making three stops at lower altitudes. We enjoyed excellent views of an **Ortolan Bunting** collected food, as well as **Honey Buzzard, Golden Oriole** and a calling **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**. Good numbers of butterflies included **Sooty** and **Purple-shot Coppers, Iberian Marbled White, Cardinals** and **Small Skipper**. After buying freshly picked Jerte valley cherries, we returned to Monfragüe to find again the **Nettle-tree Butterfly** and adding **Lang's Short-tailed Blue** to the ever-increasing butterfly list.

15th June

Our final day and having booked a later afternoon flight back to Luton, Peter and Jan had a full morning to make the most of. We elected to visit the Tajo valley downstream of the Valdecañas dam, arriving at a rather overgrown picnic area that we had first been to five years earlier. As on our first visit, the butterflies were in abundance: **Long-tailed Blue, Lang's Short-tailed Blue, Mallow Skipper, Lulworth Skipper, Bath White** and **Queen of Spain Fritillary** amongst others. We also had excellent views of **Ant Lions**. The birds

were of interest too with **Hawfinch**, **Golden Oriole**, **Melodious Warbler** and **Western Orphean Warbler** all present. Following a quick lunch in the shade of trees near the dam, with **Golden Oriole** song filling the valley, we then set off at 12.30 on the dot to make the return leg of the journey to the airport in Madrid. We arrived exactly as planned, well in time for Peter and Jan to check in for their flight.

Species List of Birds and Butterflies

The tour was designed to combine opportunities for both birds and butterfly watching in early summer. Weather was very obliging with temperatures generally comfortable throughout the day, no rain and just light winds. A total of 124 bird species and 46 butterfly species were recorded.

Birds

1. **Little Grebe**: Present on small pool on plains on 12th June.
2. **Little Bittern**: Pair seen at Arrocampo on 9th June and one from Roman Bridge, Mérida on 13th June.
3. **Black-crowned Night Heron**: Three seen at Arrocampo on 9th June.
4. **Cattle Egret**: Seen daily.
5. **Little Egret**: Seen at Arrocampo, Mérida and the rice fields near Palazuelo.
6. **Grey Heron**: Seen daily.
7. **Purple Heron**: Several at Arrocampo and at Roman Bridge, Mérida.
8. **Black Stork**: Several in Monfragüe and one near Santa Marta de Magasca.
9. **White Stork**: Seen daily.
10. **Gadwall**: Pair at Arrocampo on 9th June.
11. **Mallard**: Seen at Arrocampo and on pools on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca.
12. **Honey Buzzard**: Singles at Jaraiz and in the Jerte valley.
13. **Black-winged Kite**: Juvenile near Arrocampo.
14. **Black Kite**: Common and seen daily.
15. **Red Kite**: Singles seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and in Jerte valley.
16. **Egyptian Vulture**: Seen almost daily.
17. **Griffon Vulture**: Seen daily.
18. **Black Vulture**: Seen in Monfragüe and near Santa Marta de Magasca.
19. **Short-toed Eagle**: Seen daily.
20. **Marsh Harrier**: Seen at Arrocampo and near Mérida.
21. **Montagu's Harrier**: Seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca and south of Mérida.
22. **Common Buzzard**: Seen almost daily.
23. **Golden Eagle**: A pair at Arroyo de la Vid, south of Monfragüe on 11th June.
24. **Booted Eagle**: Seen almost daily.
25. **Bonelli's Eagle**: A pair in the Villuercas Mountains on 12th June and one at Alange on 13th June.

26. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen almost daily.
27. **Common Kestrel:** Seen in the Villuercas mountains.
28. **Peregrine Falcon:** Seen in Monfragüe.
29. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen almost daily.
30. **Water Rail:** One seen at Arrocampo on 9th June.
31. **Moorhen:** Seen at Arrocampo and Mérida.
32. **Purple Swamphen:** Several seen at Arrocampo on 9th June.
33. **Common Coot:** Seen at Arrocampo.
34. **Little Bustard:** Seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca.
35. **Great Bustard:** Seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca.
36. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and near Alange.
37. **Collared Pratincole:** A pair seen near Palazuelo.
38. **Little Ringed Plover:** A pair present near Santa Marta de Magasca.
39. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca.
40. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca.
41. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
42. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen almost daily.
43. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
44. **Turtle Dove:** Seen at Monfragüe and heard in the Jerte.
45. **Common Cuckoo:** Recorded at Monfragüe and near Santa Marta de Magasca.
46. **Scops Owl:** Recorded most evenings at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.
47. **Little Owl:** Heard most evenings at Casa Rural El Recuerdo and seen near Santa Marta de Magasca.
48. **Red-necked Nightjar:** Heard on three evenings at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.
49. **Alpine Swift:** Seen at Monfragüe, Alange and Mérida.
50. **Common Swift:** Seen daily.
51. **Pallid Swift:** Seen at Mérida.
52. **White-rumped Swift:** Three or four seen at Monfragüe on 11th June.
53. **Kingfisher:** Seen almost daily.
54. **Bee-eater:** Seen daily.
55. **Roller:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and near Palazuelo.
56. **Hoopoe:** Seen daily.
57. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Recorded in Monfragüe.
58. **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker:** Recorded in Jerte valley.
59. **Calandra Lark:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and near Alange.
60. **Short-toed Lark:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca.
61. **Crested Lark:** Seen daily.
62. **Thekla Lark:** Seen almost daily.
63. **Woodlark:** Seen on Pico de Villuercas and Jerte valley.
64. **Sand Martin:** Seen at Arrocampo.
65. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost daily.
66. **Barn Swallow:** Seen daily.
67. **Red-rumped Swallow:** Seen daily.
68. **House Martin:** Seen daily.
69. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen at Jaraiz and in Villuercas mountains.
70. **White Wagtail:** Seen almost daily.
71. **Wren:** Recorded almost daily.

72. **Rufous Bush Robin**: Four or five seen near Villafranca de los Barros.
73. **Robin**: Recorded almost daily.
74. **Nightingale**: Recorded almost daily.
75. **Black Redstart**: seen at Pico de Villuercas and Monfragüe.
76. **Stonechat**: Seen almost daily.
77. **Black-eared Wheatear**: a male near Sierra Brava reservoir.
78. **Black Wheatear**: Seen in Monfragüe and at Alange.
79. **Blue Rock Thrush**: Seen almost daily in suitable habitat.
80. **Blackbird**. Seen daily.
81. **Mistle Thrush**: Seen at Jaraiz and in the Villuercas.
82. **Cetti's warbler**: Recorded almost daily.
83. **Zitting Cisticola**: Recorded almost daily.
84. **Savi's Warbler**: Several singing at Arrocampo.
85. **Reed Warbler**: Seen at Arrocampo and Mérida.
86. **Great Reed Warbler**: Seen at Arrocampo and Mérida.
87. **Melodious Warbler**: Recorded in the Villuercas and Valdecañas.
88. **Dartford Warbler**: Recorded on Pico de Villuercas and south of Mérida.
89. **Subalpine Warbler**: Recorded almost daily.
90. **Sardinian Warbler**: Recorded almost daily.
91. **Western Orphean Warbler**: Recorded in the Villuercas and Valdecañas.
92. **Common Whitethroat**: Present at Puerto de Honduras, Jerte valley.
93. **Blackcap**: Recorded in Jaraiz and the Jerte valley.
94. **Western Bonelli's Warbler**: Recorded on Pico de Villuercas and Jerte valley.
95. **Long-tailed Tit**: Recorded at Jaraiz and the Villuercas.
96. **Blue Tit**: Seen almost daily.
97. **Great Tit**: Seen almost daily.
98. **Nuthatch**: Recorded at Jaraiz and the Villuercas.
99. **Short-toed Treecreeper**: Recorded in Monfragüe and the Villuercas.
100. **Penduline Tit**: Seen nest-building at Arrocampo on 9th June and recorded from the Roman Bridge, Mérida.
101. **Golden Oriole**: Recorded at Valdecañas, Jaraiz, Monfragüe and the Jerte.
102. **Southern Grey Shrike**: Seen almost daily.
103. **Woodchat Shrike**: Seen daily.
104. **Jay**: Seen almost daily.
105. **Azure-winged Magpie**: Seen daily.
106. **Magpie**: Seen daily.
107. **Red-billed Chough**: Seen on Pico de Villuercas on 10th June.
108. **Jackdaw**: Seen almost daily.
109. **Raven**: Seen almost daily.
110. **Spotless Starling**: Seen daily.
111. **House Sparrow**: Seen daily.
112. **Spanish Sparrow**: Seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca and Palazuelo.
113. **Tree Sparrow**: Seen on rice fields near Palazuelo.
114. **Common Waxbill**: Seen on rice fields near Palazuelo.
115. **Chaffinch**: Seen daily.
116. **Serin**: Seen almost daily.
117. **Greenfinch**: Seen almost daily.

- 118. **Goldfinch**: Seen daily.
- 119. **Linnet**: Seen almost daily.
- 120. **Hawfinch**: Seen daily, including in the Casa Rural El Recuerdo garden.
- 121. **Cirl Bunting**: Recorded almost daily.
- 122. **Rock Bunting**: Seen in Monfragüe, the Villuercas and the Jerte.
- 123. **Ortolan Bunting**: Several in song around Puerto de Honduras.
- 124. **Corn Bunting**: Seen daily.

Butterflies

- 1. **Swallowtail**: Seen almost daily.
- 2. **Scarce Swallowtail**: Seen on Puerto de Honduras 14th June.
- 3. **Small White**: Seen daily.
- 4. **Bath White**: Seen south of Mérida 13th June and Valdecañas 15th June.
- 5. **Clouded Yellow**: Seen daily.
- 6. **Brimstone**: Seen at Jaraiz 9th June.
- 7. **Cleopatra**: Seen almost daily.
- 8. **Wood White**: Seen at Jaraiz 9th June and Pico de Villuercas on 10th June.
- 9. **Spanish Purple Hairstreak**: Seen at Jaraiz 9th June and in Monfragüe on 11th June.
- 10. **Ilex Hairstreak**: Seen at Jaraiz 9th June.
- 11. **False Ilex Hairstreak**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June and Villuercas 12th June.
- 12. **Small Copper**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June and Villuercas 12th June.
- 13. **Sooty Copper**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June, Villuercas 12th June and Jerte 14th June.
- 14. **Purple-shot Copper**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June and Jerte 14th June.
- 15. **Long-tailed Blue**: Valdecañas 15th June.
- 16. **Lang's Short-tailed Blue**: Monfragüe 14th June and Valdecañas 15th June.
- 17. **Holly Blue**: Seen at Jaraiz 9th June, Pico de Villuercas on 10th June and Valdecañas 15th June.
- 18. **Brown Argus**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June, Villuercas 12th June and Valdecañas 15th June.
- 19. **Common Blue**: Jerte 14th June and Valdecañas 15th June.
- 20. **Nettle-tree Butterfly**: Seen in Monfragüe on 11th June and 14th June.
- 21. **Two-tailed Pasha**: Seen in Monfragüe on 11th June.
- 22. **Southern White Admiral**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June
- 23. **Large Tortoiseshell**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June
- 24. **Peacock**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June and Jerte.
- 25. **Red Admiral**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June
- 26. **Painted Lady**: Seen almost daily.
- 27. **Comma**: Seen at Casa Rural el Recuerdo 12th June.
- 28. **Cardinal**: Seen daily.
- 29. **High Brown Fritillary**: Seen on Puerto de Honduras 14th June.
- 30. **Queen of Spain Fritillary**: Seen almost daily.
- 31. **Glanville Fritillary**: Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June

- 32. Marsh Fritillary:** Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 10th June
- 33. Iberian Marbled White:** Seen at Jaraiz 9th June and Jerte 14th June
- 34. Great Banded Grayling:** Seen in Monfragüe on 11th June and Villuercas 12th June.
- 35. Meadow Brown:** Seen daily.
- 36. Southern Gatekeeper:** Seen at Jaraiz and Valdecañas 9th June.
- 37. Spanish Gatekeeper:** Seen at Jaraiz and Valdecañas 9th June, Pico de Villuercas on 10th June and in Monfragüe on 11th June.
- 38. Small Heath:** Seen in Monfragüe on 11th June, Villuercas 12th June and Valdecañas 15th June.
- 39. Speckled Wood:** Seen daily.
- 40. Wall Brown:** Seen at Jaraiz 9th June, Jerte 14th June and Valdecañas 15th June.
- 41. Rosy Grizzled Skipper:** Puerto de Honduras 14th June.
- 42. Sage Skipper:** Villuercas 12th June.
- 43. Mallow Skipper:** Valdecañas 15th June.
- 44. Lulworth Skipper:** Seen at Arrocampo 9th June and Valdecañas 15th June.
- 45. Essex Skipper:** Seen at Arrocampo 9th June and Pico de Villuercas on 10th June
- 46. Small Skipper:** Jerte 14th June and Valdecañas 15th June.