

Birding Extremadura and Casa Rural El Recuerdo

REPORT ON SPRING HOLIDAY FOR MIKE GRIMSHAW

14th April – 21st April 2015

14th April 2015: Transfer from Madrid Airport to Casa Rural El Recuerdo with stop at Valdecañas Reservoir

En route from Madrid, we stopped at the Valdecañas Reservoir for a picnic lunch. The highlight here was a fine drake **Garganey**. We reached Casa Rural El Recuerdo late afternoon.

15th April 2015: Exploring the plains between Trujillo and Santa Marta de Magasca.

We stopped on the plains between Trujillo and Santa Marta de Magasca, where we had good views of **Great** and **Little Bustard**, as well as **Rock Sparrow**, **Calandra Larks** and **Iberian Grey Shrikes**. Flight views were obtained of both **Pin-tailed** and **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, whilst one **Stone Curlew** was found as well. After coffee, beside colony of **Spanish Sparrows**, we paused to admire the view across the Tamuja valley, where a **Cirl Bunting** was present. We stopped for lunch beside the River Magasca. Continuing across the plains north of Santa Marta de Magasca, we watched several **Montagu's Harriers** displaying and stopped along a drovers' trail where we found several species of orchid, including many **Bug Orchids**. We made a stop to look at an old water mill hosting nests of **White Storks**, before returning to Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

16th April 2015: Plains of Campo Lugar, Madrigalejo, Palazuelo rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir and Sierra Brava Reservoir.

We started the day on the plains of Campo Lugar enjoying the superb spectacle of displaying **Great** and **Little Bustards**. A party of **Gull-billed Terns** followed a tractor harrowing a field, whilst **Calandra Larks** sang around us. Beside the Sierra Brava Reservoir, we saw a male **Black-eared Wheatear** briefly, as well as a **Great Spotted Cuckoo**. We stopped by a small pool where a pair of **Red-crested Pochard** were seen, as well as groups of egrets. After coffee, we spent the rest of the morning crossing an area of rice fields, which were dry and rather unproductive, although beside the River Ruercas there were **Great Reed Warblers**, a **Melodious Warbler**, as well as **Cetti's Warblers** and **Nightingales**.

We had our picnic beside the Alcollarín Reservoir, where we spent the rest of the afternoon. It was a very productive visit, with a variety of ducks present including **Ferruginous Duck** and **Red-crested Pochard**, and splendid **Black-necked Grebes**, but what was most memorable was an enormous passage of **Black Terns**, at least 90 birds, by far and away the largest number ever seen in Extremadura.

17th April 2015: Monfragüe National Park

The day was spent in the Monfragüe National Park, with our first stop at the Portilla del Tiétar, where we had good views of **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, both flying and also at its nest. **Griffon Vultures** had young in their nests on the rock face, whilst smaller birds, like **Rock Bunting** and **Subalpine Warbler** also were of interest. Nearby in a grove of cork oak we enjoyed coffee, to the sounds and sights of two male **Golden Orioles** and a **Western Orphean Warbler**. We then drove through the park, stopping in a belt of pines for lunch and then proceeding slowly to conclude the afternoon at the huge rock face of Peña Falcon. Here we watched dozens of **Griffon Vultures**, had wonderful views of **Black Stork** and also saw **Blue Rock Thrush**.

18th April 2015: South of Madrigalejo with Gargaligas River, Moheda Alta, Puerto Peña, Orellana Reservoir and Casas del Hito.

We headed south again, this time making an initial stop to watch a man with a mule ploughing his field, and then beside the River Gargaligas where we had excellent views of **Great Reed Warbler**. A stop at Moheda Alta yielded a distant **Black-winged Kite**, a fine show of **Tongue Orchids** as well as good coffee. We then moved onto the spectacular gorge at Puerto Peña for lunch, Here we enjoyed excellent views of **Black Stork**, **Griffon Vulture** and a **Bonelli's Eagle**. We stopped briefly beside the Orellana Reservoir, where there were several anglers and then again at the pool near Madrigalejo where the **Red-crested Pochard** were again present, and finally at Sierra Brava to see a fine **Black-eared Wheatear**.

19th April 2015: Jaraicejo, Castañar del Ibor, Pico de Villuercas and Cañamero

Our first stop was a beautiful expanse of lavender and broom heathland north-east of Trujillo, where we enjoyed views of **Dartford** and **Spectacled Warblers**, as well as displaying **Booted Eagles**. We then drove eastwards to Castañar del Ibor, where following coffee, we walked through sweet chestnut groves and found a fine show of **Sulphur** and **Early Purple Orchids**, as well as **Sword-leaved Helleborines**. We then drove south along the valley of the Ibor River, before climbing onto the slopes of the Villuercas peak. Here we had a picnic in moorland, where a pair of **Red-billed Chough** were seen mobbing a **Raven**. In the stunted Pyrenean oak woodland, **Rock Narcissus** and **Angel's Tears Narcissus** were in flower. We descended to an area of mixed woodland where we had superb views of **Crested Tit**, as well as **Green Woodpecker**.

20th April 2015: Arrocampo Reservoir, Valdecañas dam and Cerro de Almaráz.

We started the day at the Arrocampo Reservoir, standing at Hide 2 looking across belts of *Typha*, with the sound of **Savi's Warblers** around us. **Purple Herons** flew past and we had several views of **Purple Swamphen** and nearby there as a singing **Yellow Wagtail**. We were then rewarded by the sight of two male **Little Bitterns** in chase over the marsh. We drove to the west of the

reservoir and found a party of **Bee-eaters** foraging close to the road. Following coffee, we drove past the Valdecañas Dam, up a small valley where whilst we enjoyed our picnic we saw **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, **Egyptian Vulture** and a **Sparrowhawk**. Lower down the valley **Golden Orioles** were calling. We spent the first part of the afternoon exploring the Cerro Almaráz finding a variety of orchids, before returning to Trujillo to watch the **Lesser Kestrels** at the Bull Ring.

21st April 2015: Transfer to Madrid

We left Casa Rural El Recuerdo at 08.15 and arrived at Madrid in good time for the check-in.

Trip Report

Annotated Lists

Generally fine weather throughout meant that, despite a poor wader passage, we saw an excellent total of 154 bird species, as well as 16 orchids and 20 butterfly species.

Birds

1. **Grey Lag Goose**: One at Alcollarín on 16th April.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: Two at Alcollarín on 16th April.
3. **Wigeon**: About six present at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
4. **Gadwall**: Seen at Valdecañas, Alcollarín, Arrocampo and Orellana Reservoirs.
5. **Mallard**: Seen every day.
6. **Garganey**: A male at Valdecañas Reservoir on 14th April and four males at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
7. **Shoveler**: Seen at Alcollarín and Valdecañas Reservoirs.
8. **Red-crested Pochard**: A pair at Alcollarín on 16th April and on pool near Madrigalejo on 16th and 18th April
9. **Common Pochard**: Three at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
10. **Ferruginous Duck**: A pair at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
11. **Shelduck**: Four at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
12. **Red-legged Partridge**: Seen on several days.
13. **Quail**: Heard on several days.
14. **Little Grebe**: Seen on several days.
15. **Great Crested Grebe**: Seen at Alcollarín, Valdecañas, Sierra Brava and Orellana Reservoirs
16. **Black-necked Grebe**: Seven at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
17. **Great Cormorant**: Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
18. **Little Bittern**: Two seen at Arrocampo Reservoir on 20th April.
19. **Black-crowned Night Heron**: Three seen distantly at Arrocampo on 20th April.
20. **Cattle Egret**: Seen almost daily.
21. **Little Egret**: Seen almost every day.

22. **Great Egret:** Seen at Alcollarín.
23. **Grey Heron:** Seen daily.
24. **Purple Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo.
25. **Black Stork:** Seen at Monfragüe and Puerto Peña.
26. **White Stork:** Seen daily.
27. **Glossy Ibis:** One at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
28. **Spoonbill:** 15 at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
29. **Black-winged Kite:** One at Moheda Alta on 18th April.
30. **Black Kite:** Seen daily.
31. **Red Kite:** Singles seen on several days.
32. **Egyptian Vulture:** Seen at Puerto Peña, Monfragüe, las Villuercas and Valdecañas dam.
33. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen daily.
34. **Black Vulture:** Seen almost every day.
35. **Short-toed Eagle:** Seen on most days.
36. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen on several days.
37. **Montagu's Harrier:** Seen north of Santa Marta de Magasca on 15th April, also near Madrigalejo and Arrocampo.
38. **Sparrowhawk:** One at Valdecañas on 20th April.
39. **Common Buzzard:** Seen daily.
40. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen at Monfragüe on 17th April and at Valdecañas on 20th.
41. **Booted Eagle:** Seen daily, several times in display.
42. **Bonelli's Eagle:** One at Puerto Peña on 18th April.
43. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen daily.
44. **Common Kestrel:** Seen almost daily.
45. **Peregrine:** Seen at Monfragüe on 17th April.
46. **Water Rail:** Heard at Gargaligas River and Arrocampo.
47. **Moorhen:** Seen on several days.
48. **Common Coot:** Seen on several days.
49. **Purple Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo on 20th April.
50. **Little Bustard:** 4-5 seen on plains west of Trujillo on 15th April and two near Campo Lugar on 16th.
51. **Great Bustard:** Seen on plains west of Trujillo on 15th April and about 30 on plains near Campo Lugar on 16th April.
52. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on several days.
53. **Stone Curlew:** One on plains west of Trujillo on 15th April.
54. **Collared Pratincole:** About four present at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
55. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on several days.
56. **Northern Lapwing:** One at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
57. **Common Redshank:** Two at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
58. **Spotted Redshank:** One at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
59. **Greenshank:** Seen at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April and at Orellana on 18th.
60. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen on several days.
61. **Whiskered Tern:** Five at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April.
62. **Black Tern:** At least 90 present at Alcollarín reservoir on 16th April. A massive concentration.

63. **Gull-billed Tern:** Seen on several days, including following a tractor on Campo Lugar plains on 16th April.
64. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen at Alcollarín.
65. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen at Valdecañas Reservoir.
66. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains west of Trujillo on 15th April.
67. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains west of Trujillo on 15th April.
68. **Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
69. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen daily.
70. **Collared Dove:** seen daily.
71. **Great Spotted Cuckoo:** Heard on plains west of Trujillo and seen at Sierra Brava Reservoir on 16th April.
72. **Common Cuckoo:** Heard almost every day and a couple of sightings as well.
73. **Scops Owl:** Heard in the evenings at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.
74. **Eagle Owl:** Chick seen at a secret location.
75. **Long-eared Owl:** Heard on evening of 20th April at Pago de San Clemente.
76. **Alpine Swift:** Seen at Monfragüe.
77. **Common Swift:** Seen almost daily.
78. **Pallid Swift:** Seen at Monfragüe.
79. **Kingfisher:** Seen almost daily.
80. **Bee-eater:** Seen daily.
81. **Roller:** one seen near Madrigalejo on 16th April.
82. **Hoopoe:** Seen daily.
83. **Green Woodpecker:** Seen at Valdecañas and near Cañamero.
84. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen at Monfragüe and Valdecañas Dam.
85. **Calandra Lark.** Common on plains west of Trujillo and near Campo Lugar.
86. **Short-toed Lark:** Seen on plains west of Trujillo and near Campo Lugar.
87. **Crested Lark.** Seen daily.
88. **Thekla Lark:** Seen on most days.
89. **Woodlark:** Singing at Orellana Reservoir and in Villuercas Mountains.
90. **Sand Martin:** Seen at Arrocampo.
91. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost every day.
92. **Barn Swallow:** Seen daily.
93. **Red-rumped Swallow:** Seen daily.
94. **House Martin:** Seen daily.
95. **Tawny Pipit:** One at Jaraicejo on 19th April.
96. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen at Alcollarín on 16th April.
97. **Yellow Wagtail:** Seen at Alcollarín and at Arrocampo.
98. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen at River Magasca on 15th April.
99. **White Wagtail:** Seen daily.
100. **Wren:** Seen or heard daily.
101. **Robin:** Singing in Monfragüe, the Villuercas Mountains and Valdecañas Dam.
102. **Nightingale:** Recorded daily.
103. **Black Redstart:** Seen at Santa Marta de Magasca and in Monfragüe.
104. **Stonechat:** Seen daily.

105. **Whinchat:** One on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca on 15th April.
106. **Northern Wheatear:** Seen at Arrocampo and Sierra Brava Reservoir.
107. **Black-eared Wheatear:** A pair at Sierra Brava Reservoir on 16th April.
108. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Monfragüe and Valdecañas Dam.
109. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
110. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen on a couple of days.
111. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded daily.
112. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen almost daily.
113. **Savi's Warbler:** Several present at Arrocampo on 20th April.
114. **Sedge Warbler:** Present at Arrocampo on 20th April.
115. **Reed Warbler:** Singing at River Gargaligas and at Arrocampo.
116. **Great Reed Warbler:** Seen at Rivers Ruercas and Gargaligas, as well as Arrocampo.
117. **Melodious Warbler:** One singing at River Ruercas on 16th April.
118. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen at Jaraicejo on 19th April.
119. **Spectacled Warbler:** Three males seen at Jaraicejo on 19th April.
120. **Subalpine Warbler:** Seen in Monfragüe.
121. **Sardinian Warbler:** Heard and seen briefly on several days.
122. **Western Orphean Warbler:** Seen in Monfragüe and heard at Jaraicejo.
123. **Blackcap:** Seen on several days.
124. **Willow Warbler:** Singing at Alcollarín on 16th April.
125. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on several days.
126. **Crested Tit:** Seen near Cañamero on 19th April.
127. **Blue Tit:** Seen daily.
128. **Great Tit:** Seen daily.
129. **Nuthatch:** Recorded at Monfragüe and near Cañamero
130. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Seen at Monfragüe, Cañamero and Valdecañas Dam.
131. **Golden Oriole:** Two males in Monfragüe on 17th April and heard at Valdecañas on 20th.
132. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen daily.
133. **Woodchat Shrike:** Seen daily.
134. **Azure-winged Magpie:** Seen daily.
135. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
136. **Jay:** Seen almost daily.
137. **Red-billed Chough:** Seen at Pico de Villuercas on 19th April.
138. **Jackdaw:** Seen daily.
139. **Raven:** Seen daily.
140. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
141. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
142. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen almost daily.
143. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen near Madrigalejo on 16th April.
144. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen west of Trujillo on 15th April.
145. **Common Waxbill:** Seen near Madrigalejo on 16th April.
146. **Red Avadavat:** Seen near Madrigalejo on 16th April.
147. **Chaffinch:** Seen daily.

- 148. **Serin:** Seen daily.
- 149. **Greenfinch:** Seen on two days.
- 150. **Goldfinch:** Seen daily.
- 151. **Linnet:** Seen on several days.
- 152. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen beside River Tamuja and Monfragüe.
- 153. **Rock Bunting:** Seen in Monfragüe.
- 154. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.

Mammals

Iberian hare
 Red Deer
 Fallow Deer
 Egyptian Mongoose

Orchids

1. *Cephalanthera longifolia* (**Sword-leaved Helleborine**): Castañar del Ibor
2. *Dactylorhiza sulphurea* (**Sulphur Orchid**): Castañar del Ibor.
3. *Ophrys incubacea* (**Early Spider Orchid**): Cerro de Almaráz.
4. *Ophrys lutea* (**Yellow Bee Orchid**): Cerro de Almaráz.
5. *Ophrys scolopax* (**Woodcock Orchid**): Cerro de Almaráz.
6. *Ophrys speculum* (**Mirror Orchid**): Plains of Trujillo.
7. *Ophrys tenthredinifera* (**Sawfly Orchid**): Plains of Trujillo.
8. *Orchis conica* (**Conical Orchid**): Cerro de Almaráz.
9. *Orchis coriophora* (**Bug Orchid**): Plains of Trujillo.
10. *Orchis champagneuxii* (**Champagne Orchid**): Sierra de los Lagares, Cerro de Almaráz, Plains of Trujillo.
11. *Orchis italica* (**Naked Man Orchid**): Cerro de Almaráz.
12. *Orchis laxiflora* (**Lax-flowered Orchid**): Almaráz.
13. *Orchis mascula* (**Early Purple Orchid**): Castañar del Ibor.
14. *Orchis morio* (**Green-winged Orchid**): Cerro de Almaráz.
15. *Orchis papilionacea* (**Pink Butterfly Orchid**): Sierra de los Lagares.
16. *Serapias lingua* (**Tongue Orchid**): Moheda Alta, Cerro de Almaráz.

Butterflies

1. **Swallowtail**
2. **Spanish Festoon**
3. **Small White**
4. **Western Dappled White**
5. **Green-striped White**
6. **Orange Tip**
7. **Cleopatra**
8. **Green Hairstreak**
9. **Small Copper**
10. **Holly Blue**
11. **Brown Argus**
12. **Common Blue**
13. **Nettle-tree Butterfly**

14. **Painted Lady**
15. **Small White**
16. **Western Dappled White**
17. **Green-striped White**
18. **Spanish Marbled White**
19. **Small Heath**
20. **Speckled Wood**