

**Birding Extremadura and Casa Rural El Recuerdo
REPORT ON AUTUMN HOLIDAY FOR SUE HADWIN
Itinerary (3rd November 2015 – 10th November 2015)**

3rd November 2014: Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

4th November 2014: Madrigalejo, Moheda Alta and Orellana Reservoir

5th November 2014: Plains of Campo Lugar and Alcollarín Reservoir.

6th November 2014: Plains of Santa Marta de Magasca

7th November 2014: Mérida, Santa Amalia and Casar de Miajadas

8th November 2014: Monfragüe National Park.

9th November 2014: Guadalupe and Pico de Villuercas

10th November 2014: Arrocampo and return to Madrid



Sue watching Black Stork at Alcollarín

Trip Report

3rd November 2014: Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

Sue arrived a few minutes ahead of schedule at 15.20 and quickly had passed through the airport to be met by Martin at the arrivals gate. We set off straightaway around the Madrid ring-road to take the motorway to Extremadura. It was a largely overcast afternoon with a couple of heavy showers of rain so we decided to head straight for base, reaching Casa Rural El Recuerdo shortly after 18.30.

4th November 2014: Madrigalejo, Moheda Alta and Orellana Reservoir

A misty morning which cleared during the day, although there was heavy rain at the end of the afternoon as we returned home.

We stopped first of all at the old railway station at Madrigalejo where we saw 60 **Stone Curlew**, mostly in flight but several excellently on the ground. Then south of Madrigalejo we ventured onto an area of rice and maize stubble fields to watch flocks of hundreds of **Common Cranes**. Good numbers of **Lapwing** and **Black-headed Gull** were also present, as well as large flocks of **Spanish Sparrow**.



Black-winged Kite

As we left we saw a **Black-winged Kite** hovering and then very obligingly bringing its prey to the top of a tree directly in front of us. We enjoyed watching this beautiful bird for several minutes. After coffee in the village of Obando, we paid a visit to Orellana reservoir, where there was a selection of duck present, but most strikingly a lovely display of **Serotine Narcissus**. Then we paid a visit to Crane Information Centre at Moheda Alta followed by picnic lunch where we watched a procession of **Azure-winged Magpies** coming to olives.



Common Crane

Then we walked to a hide overlooking stubble where we watched more **Common Cranes** and **Greylag Geese**. Nearby we stopped at a small pool, which was full of duck, especially **Shoveler**, but also some rather fine **Pintail** and a male **Red-crested Pochard**. **Tree Sparrows** were present in the adjacent bushes. We then returned to base.

5th November 2014: Plains of Campo Lugar and Alcollarín Reservoir.

It was an overcast morning, but the clouds broke in the afternoon. We visited the plains near the village of Campo Lugar, which were alive with throngs of **Meadow Pipits**, **Skylarks**, **Calandra Larks** and **Lapwing**. Here we found a party of **Great Bustard** and also watched two **Little Bustard** in flight, spotted by Sue. On occasion, **Marsh Harriers** quartered the habitat. Near the village of Campo Lugar itself,

Hoopoes sat on dry stone walls whilst a group of **Stone Curlew** flew over the road to land in a field nearby.

We stopped for coffee and then moved onto the reservoir of Alcollarín. The conditions were excellent, the water without a ripple and we could scan the surface to find numerous **Great Crested Grebes**, **Little Grebe** as well as a few **Black-necked Grebe**. Ducks were varied with **Shoveler**, **Mallard**, **Pochard** and **Tufted Duck**, amongst others. We stopped for our picnic at the edge of woodland, where on a dead submerged tree, stood two **Black Stork**, as well as **Cormorants**, **Little** and **Cattle Egrets**. Beside the reservoir were **Spoonbill** and **Great Egret**.

We enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon there, the scenery magnificent and as well as watching the numerous water birds, took time to study the **Thekla Larks** which were common by the track.



Thekla Lark

6th November 2014: Plains of Santa Marta de Magasca

It was a clear sky and it was warm all day. We explored today the plains between Trujillo and Santa Marta de Magasca. At our first stop, we watched **Iberian Grey Shrike**, **Calandra**, **Thekla** and **Crested Larks** and **Ravens**. It was just a little way further on where we had our first good views of **Great Bustards** for the day, as well as a party of six **Little Bustard**, feeding quietly in the field. **Lapwings** were everywhere and **Red Kites** glided overhead. We enjoyed a walk along a track where we obtained superb views of more **Great Bustards** and also a pair of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** were seen in flight.



Great Bustards

After coffee in the village, we paused at the edge of the Tamuja valley. Although distant we could see a **Bonelli's Eagle** perched on a pylon. By now the air was warm enough to offer lift to **Griffon Vultures** which started to drift overhead. We then stopped for our picnic beside the Magasca River. **Grey Wagtails** entertained us on the rocks beside the water. **Blackcaps** were present in the wild olives, **Crag Martins** flew above the bridge, a **Sparrowhawk** zoomed past, whilst above us passed larger raptors: **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** and two **Golden Eagles**.

The afternoon was spent up on the plains again, from which we could look north towards the Gredos Mountains, showing the first snow of winter at their highest peaks.



First snows on the Gredos

Fields teemed with larks as we took a walk along an ancient drovers' trail along which we had very good views of a flock of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, along with a single **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**.

On the minor road back to Trujillo, small birds perched on the fences, including **Spanish Sparrow** and **Rock Sparrow**. At Trujillo, we visited the little-known and rather curious 19th public laundry, situated at the edge of the granite-outcrop terrain of the *berrocal*.

7th November 2014 Mérida, Santa Amalia and Casar de Miajadas

It was another warm, sunny and calm. We spent the morning visiting Mérida, taking a beautiful walk from close to the Circus, past the aqueducts, down to the park beside the River Guadiana, before returning to the car via a stop for lunch, past the Roman Theatre.



Mérida

From Mérida we drove to the rice fields and maize cultivations of Santa Amalia and then to Casar de Miajadas. The latter proved the most productive for birds with an excellent array of waders, including **Little Stint**, **Kentish Plover** and **Ruff**, as well as dozens of **Cattle Egrets** following a tractor as it churned up the mud.

8th November 2014 Monfragüe National Park.

On another warm, sunny day we visited Monfragüe National Park, stopping first of all at the cliff of the Portilla del Tiétar in the northern part of the park. Here the still water of the river reflected to perfection the extraordinary folding of the rocky outcrops close to the water's edge.



Reflections at Portilla del Tiétar

The cliff itself held a **Griffon Vulture** colony and many birds were still perched on the rocks in the gradually warming air. Occasionally the more massive **Black Vulture** would drift across. Appearing diminutive, **Red Kites** also soared with the vultures whilst **Cormorants** fished on the river. At one point we had a wonderful view of a **Kingfisher** hovering in front of us. We did also managed a rather brief and distant view of an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle**.

After coffee beside a grove of cork oak trees, we retraced our route back through the park, making leisurely stops at viewpoints. We enjoyed a walk through an area of pines and then had lunch in a picnic area where the southern elm trees were turning into autumnal colours. Here and at other times during the day we saw small parties of wintering **Siskins** flying over. We then took a walk beside the Tajo River, looking at the medieval Cardinal's Bridge and watching two **Goldcrests** in a Portuguese oak. We then made a stop at the magnificent Peña Falcon viewpoint, where there were even more **Griffon Vultures** present, as well as **Crag Martins**, **Blue Rock Thrush** and **Black Redstart**.

On our way back to Trujillo, we stopped at the picturesque River Almonte, now flowing with water after the autumn rains.



River Almonte

9th November 2014: Guadalupe and Pico de Villuercas

Today, yet another warm and sunny day, we drove south-east, past Cañamero, to head for the little monastery town of Guadalupe. Before stopping in the town itself, we stopped for a walk beside the Guadalupero River. It was a very attractive deep valley and we obtained superb sightings of **Crested Tit** and **Siskin**. At Guadalupe we had coffee in the Plaza Mayor and visited the basilica.



Mill beside river near Guadalupe



Autumn colours

We then headed north, ascending the Villuercas Mountains north of Guadalupe. Taking an old narrow road, we rose initially through forested area of pines, and then plantations of Sweet Chestnut before getting into native belts of Pyrenean Oak. The autumn colours were truly magnificent and we continued the drive up to the peak of the Villuercas Mountains, at 1600 metres above sea-level. The views from the top were breath-taking and we also found a party of nine wintering **Alpine Accentor**, as well as seeing **Black Redstart**, **Sparrowhawk**, **Crag Martin** and **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**. At one point a juvenile **Golden Eagle** drifted overhead, just to top the bill!



Alpine Accentor

From there we made our way back down the eastern side of the mountains, making short stops, before crossing the vast *dehesas* east of the pretty village of Garciaz, near to which we watched over 60 **Red Kites** gathering for roost.

10th November 2014: Arrocampo and return to Madrid

We bade farewell to Casa Rural El Recuerdo, on another sunny morning and took the A5 motorway back in the direction of Madrid. As we approached the Tajo valley, there was a large bank of fog, but we pressed on to make our stop at the Arrocampo Reservoir, close to the village of Saucedilla. Here, as the mist lifted, we had a really memorable hour and a half, simply standing beside one of the hides watching the birds as they appeared in front of us.



Mist rising at Arrocampo

These included several excellent views of **Purple Swamphen**, a very obliging male **Bluethroat**, **Marsh Harriers**, **Sparrowhawk**, **Common Snipe** and **Green Sandpiper**. A party of **Common Coot** foraged in the pool along with a female **Wigeon** and **Shoveler**, whilst **Cetti's Warblers**, **Zitting Cisticolas** and **Common Chiffchaffs** were present in the *Typha* beds.



Bluethroat

It was quite difficult to draw ourselves away, but as the departure time approached, we headed off to Madrid. We made a coffee stop halfway, and admired the swallow nests in the porch of the bar, and then proceeded to Madrid, seeing **White Stork**, **Red Kite**, **Golden Eagle**, **Spanish Imperial Eagle** and **Marsh Harrier** on the way. We arrived in excellent time for the check-in for the flight back to Luton.

Annotated List of Species Seen

Birds

1. **Grey Lag Goose**: About 50 present on rice fields at Moheda Alta on 4th November.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: At least 45 at Moheda Alta pool on 4th November and 25 at Alcollarín on 5th November.
3. **Wigeon**: One at at Moheda Alta pool on 4th November, about 20 at Alcollarín on 5th and one at Arrocampo on 10th.
4. **Gadwall**: Seen at Moheda Alta, Orellana and Alcollarín.
5. **Teal**: Seen at Moheda Alta, Orellana and Alcollarín.

6. **Pintail:** Several at Moheda Alta pool on 4th November
7. **Mallard:** Seen on several days.
8. **Shoveler:** Seen at Moheda Alta, Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
9. **Red-crested Pochard:** A male at Moheda Alta pool on 4th November
10. **Common Pochard:** Seen at Moheda Alta, Orellana and Alcollarín.
11. **Tufted Duck:** Seen at Moheda Alta, Orellana and Alcollarín.
12. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen and or heard on several days.
13. **Little Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
14. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín and Orellana.
15. **Black-necked Grebe:** At least four at Alcollarín on 5th November.
16. **Great Cormorant:** Seen most days.
17. **Cattle Egret:** Seen most days. Hundreds on rice fields on 7th November.
18. **Little Egret:** Seen most days
19. **Great Egret:** Seen at Alcollarín on 5th November.
20. **Grey Heron:** Seen almost every day.
21. **Black Stork:** Two seen at Alcollarín on 5th November.
22. **White Stork:** Seen on most days, especially on the rice fields. At nests in Mérida, Madrigalejo and on way to Madrid.
23. **Spoonbill:** Three at Alcollarín on 5th November.
24. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
25. **Black Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
26. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** One at Monfragüe on 8th November and a juvenile on return to Madrid.
27. **Golden Eagle:** Two at Magasca River on 6th November, one at Pico de Villuercas on 9th and two seen en route to Madrid on 10th.
28. **Bonelli's Eagle:** One south of Santa Marta de Magasca on 6th November.
29. **Red Kite:** Seen daily. 60 near Garciaz on 9th November.
30. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost daily.
31. **Hen Harrier:** Two females seen on rice fields on 7th November.
32. **Common Buzzard:** Seen daily.
33. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen on several days.

34. **Black-winged Kite:** One near Madrigalejo on 4th November.
35. **Common Kestrel:** Seen almost daily.
36. **Peregrine Falcon:** One at Trujillo on 6th November.
37. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen and or heard on several days.
38. **Moorhen:** Seen at Mérida and Arrocampo.
39. **Purple Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo on 10th November.
40. **Common Coot:** Present on all large water bodies.
41. **Common Crane:** Seen almost daily with hundreds present on rice fields.
42. **Little Bustard:** 2 near Campo Lugar on 5th November and 6 near Santa Marta de Magasca on 6th.
43. **Great Bustard:** 12 near Campo Lugar on 5th November and 35 near Santa Marta de Magasca on 6th.
44. **Stone Curlew:** About 60 near Madrigalejo on 4th and 12 at Campo Lugar on 5th November.
45. **Little Ringed Plover:** About ten near Casar de Miajadas on 7th November.
46. **Kentish Plover:** About 12 near Casar de Miajadas on 7th November.
47. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen daily and in good numbers on the plains and rice fields.
48. **Dunlin:** About 60 near Casar de Miajadas on 7th November.
49. **Little Stint:** About 20 near Casar de Miajadas on 7th November.
50. **Ruff:** About ten near Casar de Miajadas on 7th November.
51. **Common Snipe:** Good numbers on the rice fields and also at Arrocampo.
52. **Greenshank:** About six near Casar de Miajadas on 7th November.
53. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen at Orellana and Arrocampo.
54. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen Orellana and Mérida.
55. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen almost daily.
56. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on rice fields.
57. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** A total of 40 seen on plains north of Trujillo on 6th November.
58. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** 1 seen on plains north of Trujillo on 6th November.
59. **Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon:** Seen almost daily.
60. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen almost daily.

61. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
62. **Kingfisher:** Seen at Monfragüe on 8th November.
63. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost daily.
64. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Heard in Monfragüe and Villuercas.
65. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains west of Trujillo and near Campo Lugar.
66. **Crested Lark:** Seen daily.
67. **Thekla Lark:** Seen on plains and at Alcollarín.
68. **Woodlark:** Seen and heard at Pago de San Clemente.
69. **Skylark:** Seen almost daily.
70. **Crag Martin:** Seen on several days.
71. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen daily.
72. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen on Magasca River and in Mérida.
73. **White Wagtail:** Seen almost daily.
74. **Wren:** Heard on a couple of days.
75. **Dunnock:** Seen on Villuercas Mountains on 9th November.
76. **Alpine Accentor:** Nine at Pico de Villuercas on 9th November.
77. **Robin:** Seen almost daily.
78. **Bluethroat:** Two seen at Arrocampo on 10th November.
79. **Black Redstart:** Seen daily.
80. **Stonechat:** Seen almost daily.
81. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Monfragüe and Pico de Villuercas.
82. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
83. **Song Thrush:** Seen almost days.
84. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded almost daily.
85. **Zitting Cisticola.** Seen on most days.
86. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen near Garciaz.
87. **Sardinian Warbler:** Heard and/or seen on a couple of days.
88. **Blackcap:** Seen on several days.
89. **Chiffchaff:** Seen every day in good numbers.
90. **Goldcrest:** Two in Monfragüe on 8th November.

91. **Firecrest:** Seen near Guadalupe on 9th November.
92. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on several days.
93. **Crested Tit:** Seen near Guadalupe on 9th November.
94. **Blue Tit:** Seen almost daily.
95. **Great Tit:** Seen almost daily.
96. **Nuthatch:** Recorded in Villuercas Mountains.
97. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Recorded in Monfragüe.
98. **Southern Grey Shrike:** Seen daily.
99. **Azure-winged Magpie:** Seen daily.
100. **Magpie:** Seen almost daily.
101. **Jackdaw:** Seen on several days.
102. **Raven:** Seen almost every day.
103. **Common Starling:** Hundreds present on Campo Lugar plains on 5th November.
104. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
105. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
106. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen almost daily, with vast flocks on rice fields.
107. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen at Moheda Alta on 4th November.
108. **Rock Sparrow:** Three seen north of Trujillo on 6th November.
109. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on rice fields.
110. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on rice fields.
111. **Chaffinch:** Seen daily.
112. **Serin:** Seen on several days.
113. **Greenfinch:** Seen on one day.
114. **Goldfinch:** Seen on several days.
115. **Siskin:** Seen or heard almost every day. Flock of about 30 near Guadalupe on 9th November.
116. **Linnet:** Seen on several days.
117. **Hawfinch:** Seen on a couple of days.
118. **Reed Bunting:** Two at Arrocampo on 10th November.
119. **Corn Bunting:** Seen on several days.

Other wildlife

Mammals

Red Deer

Herptiles

Pond Terrapin

Iberian Water frog

Butterflies

Red Admiral

Cleopatra

Speckled Wood

Small White

Clouded Yellow

Small Copper

Dragonflies

Lesser Emperor

Red-veined Darter