

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

HOLIDAY REPORT FOR JULIE AND GEOFF

12th June – 19th June 2016

Itinerary

12th June 2016: Transfer from Madrid with stop near Valdecañas Dam

13th June 2016: Castañar del Ibor

14th June 2016: Monfragüe National Park

15th June 2016: Obando, Vegas Altas, Campo Lugar and Palazuelo

16th June 2016: Alcollarín Reservoir

17th June 2016: Arrocampo, Tiétar River and La Vera

18th June 2016: Gredos Mountains

19th June 2016: Tormes River and return to Madrid



Trip Report

12th June 2016: Transfer from Madrid with stop near Valdecañas Dam

Julie and Geoff were met by Martin at Madrid Airport at 11.00 and following a stop for a snack *en route* to Extremadura we then paused at a small valley near the Valdecañas Dam to start our search for butterflies, dragonflies and birds. **False Ilex Hairstreaks**

were active on the *retama* broom, whilst we found a resting **Western Spectre** to the background sound of **Golden Orioles**.

13th June 2016: Castañar del Ibor

We spent the whole day taking a short walk (we got no further than 1.6 km from the start of the track!) through an area of mixed habitats (a stream, smallholdings, sweet chestnut groves and Pyrenean Oak) close to the village of Castañar del Ibor. As the morning warmed up so did the butterflies and they detained us at several stages, especially in a wonderful clearing, as well as at crossings of the stream. We recorded no fewer than 35 species of butterfly during the day there, including **Amanda's Blue**, **Southern White Admiral** and **Spotted Fritillary**.



Southern White Admiral

14th June 2016: Monfragüe National Park

We started the day at the castle in Monfragüe enjoying superb views of **White-rumped Swifts**, passing a tremendously close range. We then visited the succession of viewpoints across the park, spending most time in areas of mixed woodland where Strawberry Trees were growing. This tactic paid off with three sightings of **Two-tailed Pasha**, the most prolonged being at an area close to the Tagus River, where we also got good views of **Spanish Purple Hairstreak** as well as **Hawfinches** and other birds attracted to drinking pools there.

15th June 2016: Obando, Vegas Altas, Campo Lugar and Palazuelo

It was an unseasonably cold day and with little likelihood of finding many butterflies we focused on the birds of the rice fields and plains. The *dehesa* of Moheda Alta near

Obando was a breath-taking picture with the late spring flowers resilient against the tired dry grass stems.



Moheda Alta

On the rice fields we counted a total of 55 returning **Green Sandpipers**, as well as **Lapwing**, whilst **Black-winged Stilts** were nesting. We had superb views of **Collared Pratincoles**.

On the Campo Lugar plains we had the chance to get good views of **Rollers** as well as seeing four **Great Bustards**.

16th June 2016: Alcollarín Reservoir



Watching Violet Dropwing at Alcollarín

We spent the whole day at the wonderful Alcollarín Reservoir. Although birds took a leading role: we relocated a **Red-knobbed Coot** that had been present here for several months and had sightings of a **Mediterranean Gull**, as well as four **Ferruginous Duck**, **Ruddy Shelduck** and well over a hundred pairs of **Great Crested Grebe**, there were some interesting butterflies as well. These included a few **African Grass Blue**. Also of African origin were dragonflies such as **Northern Banded Groundlings** and **Violet Dropwings**.



Violet Dropwing

One of the most memorable however was something we hardly got a glimpse of: a **Great Reed Warbler** which sang and had a nest in a tiny clump of reed mace, and yet remained out of view for almost the whole time.

17th June 2016: Arrocampo, Tiétar River and La Vera

We left Casa Rural El Recuerdo early in order to make a first visit to the Arrocampo area. Here we had a very productive stop beside a small section of the marsh, watching a family of **Black-winged Kites**, as well as **Great Reed Warbler**, **Penduline Tit**, **Purple Heron** and **Lesser Kestrels**. At the main body of the marsh, we also saw **Little Bittern** and **Purple Swamphen**, as well as several sightings of **Long Skimmers**. Whilst enjoying a coffee in the village of Saucedilla, we watched a **Hobby**, seemingly feeding on high-flying insects.

We then headed north and made a stop at the Tiétar River in search of dragonflies. We had several sightings of **Purple Dropwing**, as well as **Epaulet Skimmer** and an ovipositing **Blue Emperor**.

We had lunch near the town of Jaraiz de la Vera and then stopped for a walk near its lake, which was productive for butterflies, such as **Ilex Hairstreak** and **Marbled Fritillary**.

It was the time to leave Extremadura and we crossed the Gredos Mountains at the Peak Pass, and entered the northern flanks of the mountains. We drove to our hotel (Hostel Almanzor at Navarredonda) in time to settle down before dinner.

18th June 2016: Gredos Mountains

After an early breakfast we headed straight to the Plataforma, a high altitude site to leave the car and walk onto the open broom moorland. The sound of **Ortolan Buntings** was everywhere. We stopped at the edge of small valley where we started to get views of **Bluethroats**. We settled down and had excellent views of a pair. **Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes** were also present in the area. All around us there were other birds such as **Northern Wheatear**, **Skylark** and **Water Pipit**.

We returned to the car and slowly descended making several stops on the way to look for birds and butterflies, making a prolonged stop in an area where a **Western Orphee Warbler** was singing, as well as **Woodlark**, and a range of butterflies included **Chestnut Heath**. After a mid-afternoon coffee, we had an excellent walk beside a tributary of the Tormes river, having great views of **Ocellated Lizards**.

In the evening **European Nightjars** churred from the pines beside the hotel and **Tawny Owls** were calling.

19th June 2016: Tormes River and return to Madrid

We checked out of the hotel and took a very productive walk on a track above the Tormes River, finding more species of butterfly as well as listening to an almost constant song from **Western Bonelli's Warblers**. By late morning it was time to start our return to Madrid, but on the way we stopped at the Peak pass to watch **Spanish Argus** close to the car park. We had been advised about a place to park and a track on the descent from the Pass and this we did. It was a most memorable finale to the holiday with sightings of additional species of butterfly, notably the **Black-veined White** and **Panoptes Blue**, as well as sightings of birds like **Crested Tit**. We then completed our descent to the hot dry plains of Castille La Mancha and then onto Madrid.



The finale: a butterfly bonanza

Annotated Lists

Birds

1. **Egyptian Goose:** Several at Alcollarín.
2. **Wigeon:** A drake at Alcollarín on 16th June.
3. **Gadwall:** Seen at Alcollarín.
4. **Mallard:** Seen on several days.
5. **Common Pochard:** About 15-20 at Alcollarín on 16th June.
6. **Ferruginous Duck:** Four seen at Alcollarín on 16th June and one at Arrocampo on 17th.
7. **Ruddy Shelduck:** One at Alcollarín on 16th June.
8. **Red-legged Partridge:** Recorded on three days.
9. **Quail:** Heard on two days.
10. **Little Grebe:** Seen on two days.
11. **Great Crested Grebe:** Over a hundred breeding pairs at Alcollarín, also seen at Arrocampo.
12. **Black-necked Grebe:** About nine at Alcollarín on 16th June.
13. **Great Cormorant:** Seen at Arrocampo, Monfragüe and Alcollarín.
14. **Little Bittern:** Seen at Arrocampo.
15. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo.
16. **Cattle Egret:** Seen on four days.
17. **Little Egret:** Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
18. **Great Egret:** Seen en route from Madrid, Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
19. **Grey Heron:** seen on several days.
20. **Purple Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo, at Alcollarín and at Moheda Alta.
21. **Black Stork:** Seen at Monfragüe.
22. **White Stork:** Seen daily.

23. **Spoonbill**: Seen at Alcollarín (3) and at Arrocampo.
24. **Egyptian Vulture**: Seen at Valdecañas and Monfragüe.
25. **Griffon Vulture**: Seen daily.
26. **Black Vulture**: Seen almost daily.
27. **Spanish Imperial Eagle**: Seen in Monfragüe on 14th June.
28. **Short-toed Eagle**: Seen on several days.
29. **Booted Eagle**: Seen daily.
30. **Black Kite**: Seen daily.
31. **Red Kite**: Seen on two days only.
32. **Marsh Harrier**: Seen on two days.
33. **Common Buzzard**: Seen almost daily, with a pale bird of eastern origin seen at Alcollarín on 16th June.
34. **Honey Buzzard**: One on Tormes walk on 19th June.
35. **Black-winged Kite**: One adult and two juveniles at Saucedilla on 17th June.
36. **Lesser Kestrel**: Seen on several days.
37. **Common Kestrel**: Seen on several days.
38. **Hobby**: One seen at Saucedilla on 17th June and one in Gredos on 18th.
39. **Water Rail**: Heard at Arrocampo.
40. **Moorhen**: Seen on several days.
41. **Purple Swamphen**: Seen at Arrocampo.
42. **Common Coot**: Seen on three days.
43. **Red-knobbed Coot**: One at Alcollarín on 16th June.
44. **Great Bustard**: Four seen on Campo Lugar plains on 15th June.
45. **Black-winged Stilt**: Seen on several days.
46. **Collared Pratincole**: 30-40 seen on rice fields on 15th June.
47. **Little Ringed Plover**: Seen on three days.
48. **Northern Lapwing**: 27 seen on rice fields on 15th June and one at Arrocampo on 17th June.
49. **Green Sandpiper**: 55 seen on rice fields on 15th June.
50. **Gull-billed Tern**: Seen on rice fields, Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
51. **Black-headed Gull**: Two seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
52. **Mediterranean Gull**: Second summer bird at Alcollarín on 16th June.
53. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**: Six seen at Vegas Altas on 15th June.
54. **Feral Pigeon**: Seen almost daily.
55. **Wood Pigeon**: Seen most days.
56. **Collared Dove**: Seen daily.
57. **Turtle Dove**: Heard at Monfragüe.
58. **Common Cuckoo**: Heard on two days.
59. **Scops Owl**: Calling at Pago de San Clemente.
60. **Little Owl**: Calling at Pago de San Clemente.
61. **Tawny Owl**: Calling in the Gredos Mountains.
62. **European Nightjar**: Seen in Gredos Mountains.
63. **Alpine Swift**: Seen in Monfragüe.

64. **Common Swift:** Seen daily.
65. **Pallid Swift:** Seen on three days.
66. **White-rumped Swift:** A total of five or six seen at Monfragüe on 14th June.
67. **Kingfisher:** Seen on two days.
68. **Bee-eater:** seen almost daily.
69. **Roller:** Seen at Campo Lugar on 15th June.
70. **Hoopoe:** seen daily.
71. **Green Woodpecker:** Seen in Gredos Mountains on 18th June.
72. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen on several days.
73. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on Campo Lugar plains on 15th June.
74. **Short-toed Lark:** Seen on Campo Lugar plains on 15th June.
75. **Crested Lark:** Seen almost daily.
76. **Thekla Lark:** Seen at Alcollarín and Campo Lugar.
77. **Woodlark:** Seen in Gredos.
78. **Skylark:** Seen on Gredos Mountains.
79. **Sand Martin:** Seen on several days.
80. **Crag Martin:** Seen on several days.
81. **Barn Swallow:** Seen daily.
82. **Red-rumped Swallow:** Seen daily.
83. **House Martin:** Seen daily.
84. **Water Pipit:** Seen on Gredos Mountains.
85. **Yellow Wagtail:** Seen on rice fields on 15th June (including juvenile birds) and on Gredos Mountains.
86. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen on several days.
87. **White Wagtail:** Seen almost daily.
88. **Wren:** Seen most days.
89. **Dipper:** Seen on Gredos on 18th June.
90. **Duncock:** Seen in the Gredos.
91. **Robin:** Seen on several days.
92. **Bluethroat:** Seen in the Gredos on 18th June.
93. **Nightingale:** Recorded almost daily.
94. **Black Redstart:** Seen almost every day.
95. **Stonechat:** Seen almost daily.
96. **Northern Wheatear:** Seen on Gredos.
97. **Black-eared Wheatear:** Seen on Campo Lugar plains on 15th June.
98. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Valdecañas and Monfragüe.
99. **Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush:** Seen on Gredos on 18th June.
100. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
101. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen on several days.
102. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded most days in Extremadura.
103. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen on several days.
104. **Savi's Warbler:** Seen at Arrocampo on 17th June.
105. **Reed Warbler:** Seen on rice fields and Arrocampo.

106. **Great Reed Warbler:** Seen at Arrocampo and Alcollarín.
107. **Melodious Warbler:** Seen on several days.
108. **Subalpine Warbler:** Seen near Castañar del Ibor and in Monfragüe.
109. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen almost daily.
110. **Western Orphean Warbler:** Heard at Monfragüe and seen on Gredos on 18th June.
111. **Common Whitethroat:** Seen in the Gredos.
112. **Garden Warbler:** Singing near Tormes river on 19th June.
113. **Blackcap:** Seen on most days.
114. **Western Bonelli's Warbler:** Seen in Gredos Mountains.
115. **Iberian Chiffchaff:** One singing near Tormes River on 19th June.
116. **Common Chiffchaff:** One in Monfragüe on 14th June.
117. **Pied Flycatcher:** One in Gredos on 19th June.
118. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on several days.
119. **Crested Tit:** Seen in Gredos Mountains.
120. **Coal Tit:** Seen in Gredos Mountains.
121. **Blue Tit:** Seen almost daily.
122. **Great Tit:** Seen almost daily.
123. **Nuthatch:** Seen on several days.
124. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Seen on several days.
125. **Penduline Tit:** Seen at Arrocampo on 17th June.
126. **Golden Oriole:** Recorded on several days.
127. **Red-backed Shrike:** Seen in Gredos Mountains on 19th June.
128. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen on two days.
129. **Woodchat Shrike:** Seen daily in Extremadura.
130. **Jay:** Seen on several days.
131. **Azure-winged Magpie:** Seen daily in Extremadura.
132. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
133. **Jackdaw:** Seen on several days.
134. **Raven:** Seen on several days.
135. **Carrion Crow:** Seen in Gredos Mountains.
136. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
137. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
138. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on two days.
139. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on rice fields.
140. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen at Moheda Alta.
141. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on rice fields.
142. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on rice fields.
143. **Chaffinch:** Seen daily.
144. **Serin:** Seen almost daily.
145. **Greenfinch:** Seen on several days.
146. **Goldfinch:** Seen almost daily.
147. **Linnet:** Seen most days.

- 148. **Hawfinch:** Seen on several days.
- 149. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen on 19th June in Gredos.
- 150. **Rock Bunting:** Seen in Monfragüe and Gredos.
- 151. **Ortolan Bunting:** Seen in Gredos.
- 152. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

Butterflies

- 1. **Swallowtail:** Seen on Campo Lugar plains on 15th June and at Saucedilla on 17th.
- 2. **Black-veined White:** Seen near Peak Pass on 19th June.
- 3. **Large White:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
- 4. **Small White:** Seen daily.
- 5. **Bath White:** Seen on two days.
- 6. **Orange Tip:** Seen in Gredos.
- 7. **Clouded Yellow:** Seen daily.
- 8. **Brimstone:** Seen in Gredos.
- 9. **Cleopatra:** Seen on four days in Extremadura.
- 10. **Spanish Purple Hairstreak:** Seen at Monfragüe.
- 11. **Ilex Hairstreak:** Seen at Jaraiz de la Vera on 17th June.
- 12. **False Ilex Hairstreak:** Seen on several days in Extremadura.
- 13. **Small Copper:** Seen almost daily.
- 14. **Sooty Copper:** Seen in Gredos.
- 15. **Purple-shot Copper:** Seen in Gredos on 19th June.
- 16. **Long-tailed Blue:** Seen on four days.
- 17. **Lang's Short-tailed Blue:** Seen at Valdecañas, Castañar del Ibor and Gredos.
- 18. **African Grass Blue:** Seen at Alcollarín on 16th June.
- 19. **Holly Blue:** Seen on four days.
- 20. **Green-underside Blue:** Seen in Gredos on 19th June.
- 21. **Panoptes Blue:** Seen near Peak Pass on 19th June.
- 22. **Brown Argus:** Seen almost daily.
- 23. **Spanish Argus:** About five seen at Peak Pass on 19th June.
- 24. **Amanda's Blue:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
- 25. **Common Blue:** Seen on five days.
- 26. **Nettle-tree Butterfly:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
- 27. **Two-tailed Pasha:** Three seen in Monfragüe on 14th June.
- 28. **Southern White Admiral:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
- 29. **Large Tortoiseshell:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor, Monfragüe, Jaraiz de la Vera and the Gredos.
- 30. **Peacock:** Seen at Jaraiz and in Gredos.
- 31. **Red Admiral:** Seen on two days.
- 32. **Painted Lady:** Seen daily from 13th June.

33. **Small Tortoiseshell:** Seen in the Gredos.
34. **Comma:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June, Jaraiz and in the Gredos.
35. **Cardinal:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor and the Gredos.
36. **Niobe Fritillary:** Seen in Gredos and near Peak Pass on 19th June.
37. **Queen of Spain Fritillary:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June and the Gredos.
38. **Marbled Fritillary:** Seen at Jaraiz on 17th June.
39. **Glanville Fritillary:** Seen in the Gredos.
40. **Knapweed Fritillary:** Seen in the Gredos.
41. **Spotted Fritillary:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
42. **Lesser Spotted Fritillary:** Seen on Tormes walk on 19th June.
43. **Heath Fritillary:** Seen at Jaraiz de la Vera on 17th June.
44. **Provençal Fritillary:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June and the Gredos on 19th.
45. **Marsh Fritillary:** Seen on two days.
46. **Iberian Marbled White:** Seen near Peak Pass on 19th June.
47. **Spanish Marbled White:** Seen at Valdecañas on 12th and at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
48. **Grayling:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
49. **Great Banded Grayling:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
50. **Piedmont Ringlet:** Seen on Gredos on 18th June.
51. **Meadow Brown:** Seen daily.
52. **Gatekeeper:** Seen at Valdecañas on 12th June.
53. **Southern Gatekeeper:** Seen on several days in Extremadura.
54. **Spanish Gatekeeper:** Seen on several days in Extremadura and Gredos.
55. **Small Heath:** Seen on several days.
56. **Chestnut Heath:** Seen on Gredos on 18th June.
57. **Speckled Wood:** Seen on most days.
58. **Wall Brown:** Seen most days.
59. **Oberthür's Grizzled Skipper:** Seen in Gredos on 18th June.
60. **Red-underwing Skipper:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June and Gredos.
61. **Lulworth Skipper:** Seen on 15th June.
62. **Small Skipper:** Seen almost daily.

Damselflies

1. **Beautiful Demoiselle:** Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June and in Gredos.
2. **Western Demoiselle:** Seen on River Tiétar on 17th June.
3. **Migrant Spreadwing:** Seen at Jaraiz de la Vera on 17th June.
4. **Blue-eye:** Seen on River Tiétar on 17th June.
5. **Iberian Blue-tail:** Seen on River Tiétar on 17th June.
6. **Small Blue-tail:** Seen on River Tiétar on 17th June.
7. **Large Red Damselfly:** Seen on River Tiétar on 17th June and in Gredos.
8. **White Featherleg:** Seen on River Tiétar on 17th June.

Dragonflies

1. **Migrant Hawker**: Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
2. **Blue Emperor**: Seen on River Tiétar on 17th June.
3. **Western Spectre**: Seen at Valdecañas on 12th June.
4. **Common Goldenring**: Seen at Valdecañas on 12th June and at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
5. **Northern Banded Groundling**: Seen at Alcollarín.
6. **Broad Scarlet**: Seen on River Tiétar on 17th June.
7. **Broad-bodied Chaser**: Seen at Castañar del Ibor on 13th June.
8. **Black-tailed Skimmer**: Seen on two days.
9. **Epaulet Skimmer**: Seen at Moheda Alta on 15th June and River Tiétar on 17th June.
10. **Long Skimmer**: Seen at Arrocampo.
11. **Red-veined Darter**: Seen on three days.
12. **Common Darter**: Seen on two days.
13. **Violet Dropwing**: Seen at Alcollarín on 16th June and at River Tiétar on 17th June.

Other Wildlife

Mammoth Wasp

Ocellated Lizard

Schreiber's Green Lizard

Large Psammodromus

Iberian Wall Lizard

Iberian Ibex

Fox