

## BIRDING REPORT FOR MICHAEL AND ANNE EVANS

22<sup>nd</sup> November – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016

### Birdingextremadura & Casa Rural El Recuerdo



#### **Itinerary**

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016: Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural el Recuerdo

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016: The plains between Trujillo and Santa Marta de Magasca followed by the Belén Plains

24<sup>th</sup> November 2016: The Campo Lugar plains, Madrigalejo rice fields, Moheda Alta, Orellana Reservoir

25<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Arrocampo Reservoir

26<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Rice fields of Palazuelo, Alcollarín and Búrdalo Reservoirs

27<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Monfragüe National Park and plains near Aldea del Obispo

28<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, Alcollarín Reservoir, rice fields near Palazuelo and plains near Campo Lugar

29<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Return to Madrid.

## **22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016: Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural el Recuerdo**

Michael and Anne's flight from Luton arrived perfectly on schedule at 15.30 to a rather wet Madrid. As we headed south-west from the city on the motorway to Extremadura, crossing the expanse of the arable plains of Castilla La Mancha, the clouds started to break. With improved visibility we could see the impressive Gredos Mountains to our north, bearing fresh snow from the poor weather of the previous few days.

Along the journey we saw several **White Storks** as well as numerous **Red Kites**. We arrived at Casa Rural El Recuerdo just as it was getting dark. There was a welcoming log fire in the hearth and dinner ready.

## **23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016: The plains between Trujillo and Santa Marta de Magasca followed by the Belén Plains**

The day dawned crisp and calm, with ice on the car windscreen and a beautiful mist filling the valley bottom. After breakfast we headed west from Trujillo, across the bands of open country and *dehesa* woodland in the direction of Cáceres, turning north before we arrived at the provincial capital. This took us in the direction of the village of Santa Marta de Magasca, but we had barely started on this road before we saw a group of nine **Great Bustard** in the field beside the road. We had superb views in excellent light of the group, comprising large males. Beside the road were also nest boxes on the telegraph pole, with **Little Owls** perched beside two of them.



We followed a minor road from a short distance across the plains, finding an immature **Spanish Imperial Eagle** on a pylon, as well as several **Red Kites**. As the air warmed

so there was more to see as far as large soaring birds were concerned, with the arrival of both **Black** and **Griffon Vultures**. We came across another group of **Great Bustards** and enjoyed excellent views of **Calandra** and **Crested Larks**.

We then continued towards the village, stopping to see another immature **Spanish Imperial Eagle** on a roadside post, which then flew and was mobbed by **Ravens** and **Red Kites**. **Thekla Larks** showed themselves very well at the roadside. We stopped to admire the view across the Tamuja River and were fortunate enough to get a close view of a **Golden Eagle** which slowly made its way beside the head of the valley.



After coffee in the village of Santa Marta de Magasca, we stopped for lunch beside the River Magasca. Here we had good views of **Iberian Grey Shrike**, **Cirl** and **Rock Bunting**, as well as a pair of **Golden Eagles** soaring together against a blue sky.

Returning to the plains we made a stop where we feasted on panoramic views of the landscape and watched large parties of **Golden Plover** and **Lapwing** close at hand. **Spanish Sparrows** were in flocks beside the road as we continued our journey, this

time heading east across the *dehesa* landscape near Aldea del Obispo. A **Merlin** flew past in level direct flight.

We completed the day on the Belén Plains to the north-east of Trujillo. Here there were flocks of larks, especially **Calandra** and **Skylark**, numerous **Corn Buntings** and a group of **Stone Curlew**. But pride of place were certainly the harriers, with good views of a female and male **Hen Harrier** as well as a fine female **Marsh Harrier**.

### **24<sup>th</sup> November 2016: The Campo Lugar plains, Madrigalejo rice fields, Moheda Alta, Orellana Reservoir**

There was a wintry look to the sky, with a cover of pale grey clouds which remained pretty much all day, with few breaks of sunshine and a couple of light showers of rain.

We headed south, past the town of Zorita and onto the edge of the Campo Lugar plains. We made just one stop there, but how productive it was! Anne spotted two **Common Cranes** on the skyline and shortly afterwards a group of about 40 **Great Bustard** flew quite close to them. In the other direction, we found a female **Merlin** perched on a rock which stayed and afforded superb views. Close by was a group of at least ten **Little Bustard**. It was an excellent way to start the day. Close by, just north of Madrigalejo, we stopped to look at **Stone Curlew** at their roost, but a man with dogs walking through the area disturbed them. Not downhearted though we spent the next hour so exploring the rice and maize fields south of Madrigalejo. Here there were thousands of **Common Cranes** and at times we simply stopped and sat silently taking in the magnificent sight. **Marsh Harriers** quartered the stubble fields, whilst on the wetter fields, with the **Lapwing** we also found species like **Wood Sandpiper** and **Water Pipit**. Little groups of **Red Avadavats** and **Common Waxbills** teased us by constantly diving into cover, but with patience we got good views of both species, including males avadavats in their strawberry-red breeding plumage.

After coffee at Vegas Altas, we took a track across the fields to Obando and thence to the Crane Information Centre at Moheda Alta. By then it was raining slightly so we repaired to the large hide overlooking stubble fields, where we had our lunch. Two **Spotted Redshank** and a female **Hen Harrier** provided interest there.

We then drove to the edge of the Orellana Reservoir, where the highlights were a few **Black-necked Grebes** and a selection of duck including **Gadwall** and **Tufted Duck**. We then returned to spend the rest of the afternoon amongst the cranes at Vegas Altas, seeing more **avadavats** and waders such as **Common Snipe**, **Wood Sandpiper** and **Greenshank**. We checked the **Stone Curlew** roost again on our way back to Casa Rural El Recuerdo, where more than fifty birds were present.

## **25<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Arrocampo Reservoir**

The day broke with high winds and heavy rain, as was forecast, and remained like that almost all the time. Under the circumstances, the best bet was to find shelter and so we travelled to the Arrocampo Reservoir where we could make use of a hide to watch from.

From the hide, we had a very productive morning, starting with the sight of a **Marsh Harrier** putting up three juvenile **Spoonbill** and a host of **Little Egrets**. **Purple Swamphens** made an appearance, as did **Great Egrets**. The lesser reed mace in front of us was been tossed by the high winds, making it difficult to see small birds, but we got glimpses of **Common Chiffchaffs** and **Reed Buntings**.

On our way from the hide for coffee, we had good views of a **Black-winged Kite**. Successfully de-chilled after coffee, we spent an hour driving slowly on the hinterland of the reservoir, stopping to look at small pools. These produced birds like **Common** and **Green Sandpiper**, as well as **Water Pipit**.

We returned to park beside the hide for our picnic, taken inside the car and then completed the afternoon in the hide. We had a brief view of **Penduline Tit**, but on the whole, things were rather quieter, so by mid-afternoon, we felt it was time to retreat back to the car and return to the log fire at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

## **26<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Rice fields of Palazuelo, Alcollarín and Búrdalo Reservoirs**

It was another overcast day with steady rain or drizzle being the feature until late afternoon. Luckily the strong winds of yesterday had eased. We headed south to spend the morning on the rice fields near the village of Palazuelo. Here the farming landscape was dominated by rice, with some of the fields already ploughed after harvesting and full of the recent rain water. There were also orchards of peaches and areas of maize stubble. The stubble fields were strongly favoured by **Common Crane** and they were the dominant feature of our morning. However, there was clearly of movement from the north of **Grey Lag Geese**, and we saw several large skeins arriving.

Small birds were both entertaining and frustrating, as many dived into cover in the ditches, but eventually we got views of **Bluethroat**, **Water Pipit**, **Red Avadavat** and **Common Waxbill**, with a nice supporting cast of **Tree Sparrow** and **Rock Sparrow**. **Hoopoes** and **Azure-winged Magpies** were very common. Waders were harder to find however because of the deep water that had filled most of the fields. There were numerous **Common Snipe** and **Lapwing**, and we also found **Black-winged Stilt**, **Greenshank** and **Common Redshank**. **Marsh Harriers** were a common feature of the day.

After coffee, we headed to the nearby Alcollarín Reservoir, shrouds of rain hindered our enjoyment of the site, but we saw a good range of duck, including **Pintail**, **Tufted Duck** and **Pochard**, as well as **Great Egret**. **Thekla Larks** were in small groups in the surrounding woodland edge. We had our picnic there, again having to shelter in the car from the rain.

After leaving Alcollarín we paid a visit to the small body of water near Villamesias, where again there were a good selection of duck as well as many Little Grebe.

### **27<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Monfragüe National Park and plains near Aldea del Obispo**

The overcast conditions persisted despite a more favourable forecast and there were some periods of light rain. We spent most of the day in the Monfragüe National Park, where thanks to the weather we were treated to the wonderful sight at all the cliff faces we visited of groups of **Griffon Vultures** drying their wings after the damp night.



Other highlights included a fine juvenile **Peregrine**, an overwintering **Black Stork** beside a **Great Egret** in the Tiétar River and a very smart and obliging **Firecrest**. The light on the cliffs and across the ridges was superb, with the combination of brooding skies and sunlit rock faces.

In the afternoon, we returned to the plains north of Trujillo where in a field which hosted large flocks of **Lapwing**, **Golden Plover** and **Calandra Lark**, we found two **Great Bustard** quietly feeding and whilst we watched them about 40 **Little Bustard** flew in. Just as we were leaving about 70 **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** flew over calling.

On our return to Trujillo, groups of **Red Kite** were moving onto their roosts.

**28<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, Alcollarín Reservoir, rice fields near Palazuelo and plains near Campo Lugar**

The day started with beautiful low mists over the fields, breaking to give blue skies in the morning, with more overcast conditions in the afternoon. Overall an excellent day weather-wise as well as for birds.

We started on the plains south-west of Santa Marta de Magasca, where we found a group of 18 **Great Bustard**, enjoying excellent views of them quietly feeding in a field of winter wheat. There were throngs of **Calandra Larks** and as many as five **Little Owls** perched beside the boxes erected for Rollers beside the road. We then made a stop beside the River Tamuja and with patience were rewarded first of all by groups of **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**, then by a soaring immature **Golden Eagle**, followed by a pair of **Bonelli's Eagles**. To cap it all the **Bonelli's** then started mobbing the **Golden**, forcing it to fly off.



After coffee in the village of Santa Marta de Magasca, we drove across country to the reservoir of Alcollarín where we had our lunch. A few **cranes** passed overhead, whilst we were entertained by **Common Chiffchaffs** flitting constantly from the bank side

vegetation. Beside the reservoir, we found two **Black Stork**, along with **White Stork** and **Great Egret**.

After that we headed to the rice fields near Palazuelo, seeing thousands of cranes feeding on maize stubble. We searched for the fields for waders, and right at the end of the afternoon, found one field with a wonderful array of species including **Little Stint** and **Kentish Plover**.



Leaving the rice fields we travelled across the plains near Campo Lugar, finding a single **Stone Curlew** and then a flock of 19 **Little Bustard**, which flew from the field beside us, did a wonderful circle in front of us before returning to the same field, where we were able to see them, on the ground.

**29<sup>th</sup> November 2016: Return to Madrid.**



## Annotated list of birds seen

1. **Greylag Goose:** Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir and skeins arriving seen at various times.
2. **Egyptian Goose:** Seen at Búrdalo Reservoir.
3. **Wigeon:** Large numbers at Alcollarín.
4. **Gadwall:** Seen on all large water bodies.
5. **Teal:** Seen at all large water bodies.
6. **Pintail:** Seen at Alcollarín and Búrdalo Reservoirs.
7. **Mallard:** Seen on most days.
8. **Shoveler:** Seen on all large water bodies.
9. **Pochard:** Seen at Alcollarín.
10. **Tufted Duck:** Seen at Alcollarín and Orellana Reservoirs.
11. **Red-legged Partridge:** seen at Monfragüe and on the plains.
12. **Little Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín and Orellana Reservoirs.
13. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín and Orellana Reservoirs.
14. **Black-necked Grebe:** About four seen at Orellana Reservoir on 24<sup>th</sup> November.
15. **Great Cormorant:** Seen almost daily.
16. **Cattle Egret:** Seen almost daily.
17. **Little Egret:** Seen almost daily.
18. **Great Egret:** Seen almost daily.
19. **Grey Heron:** Seen most days.
20. **Black Stork:** One at Monfragüe on 27<sup>th</sup> and two at Alcollarín on 28<sup>th</sup> November.
21. **White Stork:** Seen most days.
22. **Spoonbill:** Three juveniles at Arrocampo on 25<sup>th</sup> November.
23. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen most days.
24. **Black Vulture:** Seen most days.
25. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Two immature birds seen south of Santa Marta de Magasca on 23<sup>rd</sup> November.
26. **Golden Eagle:** Three birds seen near Santa Marta de Magasca on 23<sup>rd</sup> November and one there on 28<sup>th</sup>.
27. **Bonelli's Eagle:** A pair near Santa Marta de Magasca on 28<sup>th</sup> November.
28. **Red Kite:** Seen daily in good numbers.
29. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen most days.
30. **Hen Harrier:** Seen on plains and on rice fields.
31. **Common Buzzard:** Seen daily.
32. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen on two days.
33. **Black-winged Kite:** One at Arrocampo on 25<sup>th</sup> November.
34. **Common Kestrel:** Seen daily.
35. **Merlin:** One seen in flight on 23<sup>rd</sup> November and a female seen excellently perched near Campo Lugar on 24<sup>th</sup> November.
36. **Peregrine:** A juvenile at Monfragüe on 27<sup>th</sup> November.

37. **Water Rail:** Heard on rice fields on 26<sup>th</sup> November.
38. **Moorhen:** Seen on two days.
39. **Purple Swamphen:** Two or three seen at Arrocampo on 25<sup>th</sup> November.
40. **Common Coot:** Seen at Arrocampo, Alcollarín and Orellana reservoirs.
41. **Common Crane:** Thousands seen on rice and maize stubble fields and smaller numbers elsewhere.
42. **Little Bustard:** 12 seen on plains near Campo Lugar on 24<sup>th</sup> November, about 40 on plains near Aldea del Obispo on 27<sup>th</sup> November and 19 on Campo Lugar plains.
43. **Great Bustard:** About 30 on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 40 on plains near Campo Lugar on 24<sup>th</sup> November, two seen near Aldea del Obispo on 27<sup>th</sup> November and 18 near Santa Marta de Magasca on 28<sup>th</sup> November.
44. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on rice fields near Palazuelo on both visits.
45. **Stone Curlew:** About 6 seen on Belén plains on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, about 40 near Madrigalejo on 24<sup>th</sup> and one near Campo Lugar on 28<sup>th</sup>.
46. **Little Ringed Plover:** Small numbers seen on rice fields.
47. **Ringed Plover:** About ten near Palazuelo on 28<sup>th</sup> November.
48. **Kentish Plover:** About eight near Palazuelo on 28<sup>th</sup> November.
49. **Golden Plover:** Seen on plains and rice fields.
50. **Lapwing:** In good numbers very day.
51. **Dunlin:** Small numbers seen on rice fields near Palazuelo on both visits.
52. **Little Stint:** One near Palazuelo on 28<sup>th</sup> November.
53. **Common Snipe:** Good numbers on the rice fields.
54. **Spotted Redshank:** Two at Moheda Alta on 24<sup>th</sup> November.
55. **Common Redshank:** Seen near Palazuelo on 26<sup>th</sup> November.
56. **Greenshank:** Four seen on rice fields on 24<sup>th</sup> November and also seen on 26<sup>th</sup>.
57. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen on several days.
58. **Wood Sandpiper:** Five seen near Vegas Altas on 24<sup>th</sup> November and one near Palazuelo on 26<sup>th</sup>.
59. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen at Arrocampo and Alcollarín reservoirs.
60. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on several days.
61. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen on several days.
62. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains on 23<sup>rd</sup> November.
63. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains on 27<sup>th</sup> November.
64. **Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
65. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen on just two days.
66. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
67. **Little Owl:** Seen on plains on 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> (with five seen on latter date).
68. **Kingfisher:** Seen on rice fields and Alcollarín.
69. **Hoopoe:** Seen daily.
70. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Two in Monfragüe on 27<sup>th</sup> November.
71. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on plains.

72. **Crested Lark**: seen daily.
73. **Thekla Lark**: Seen on plains and Alcollarín.
74. **Woodlark**: Heard near Santa Marta de Magasca.
75. **Skylark**: Seen on plains.
76. **Crag Martin**: Seen most days.
77. **Barn Swallow**: Seen at Alcollarín and Orellana.
78. **House Martin**: Two seen at Orellana on 24<sup>th</sup> November and one at Alcollarín on 26<sup>th</sup>.
79. **Meadow Pipit**: Seen daily.
80. **Water Pipit**: Seen on rice fields.
81. **White Wagtail**: Seen daily.
82. **Wren**: Recorded on two days.
83. **Dunnock**: Heard on 23<sup>rd</sup> November.
84. **Robin**: Seen daily.
85. **Bluethroat**: Seen on rice fields on 24<sup>th</sup> November and 26<sup>th</sup>.
86. **Black Redstart**: Seen daily.
87. **Stonechat**: Seen daily.
88. **Blue Rock Thrush**: Seen in Monfragüe.
89. **Blackbird**: Seen daily.
90. **Song Thrush**: Seen daily.
91. **Cetti's Warbler**: Recorded on rice fields and Arrocampo.
92. **Zitting Cisticola**: Recorded on rice fields and plains.
93. **Dartford Warbler**: Seen/heard on several days.
94. **Sardinian Warbler**: Seen on several days.
95. **Blackcap**: Seen on several days.
96. **Common Chiffchaff**: Seen daily.
97. **Firecrest**: Seen in Monfragüe.
98. **Long-tailed Tit**: Seen on two days.
99. **Blue Tit**: Seen on several days.
100. **Great Tit**: Seen on several days.
101. **Nuthatch**: Recorded in Monfragüe.
102. **Penduline Tit**: Heard at Arrocampo.
103. **Iberian Grey Shrike**: Seen most days.
104. **Jay**: Seen in Monfragüe.
105. **Azure-winged Magpie**: Seen daily.
106. **Magpie**: Seen daily.
107. **Jackdaw**: Seen on several days.
108. **Raven**: Seen on several days.
109. **Common Starling**: Seen on the plains.
110. **Spotless Starling**: Seen daily.
111. **House Sparrow**: Seen daily.
112. **Spanish Sparrow**: Seen most days.
113. **Tree Sparrow**: Seen on rice fields on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

114. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen near Palazuelo on 26<sup>th</sup> November.
115. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on rice fields.
116. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on rice fields.
117. **Chaffinch:** Seen most days.
118. **Serin:** Seen on 23<sup>rd</sup> November.
119. **Greenfinch:** Seen on two days.
120. **Goldfinch:** Seen on several days.
121. **Linnet:** Seen on several days.
122. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and Monfragüe.
123. **Rock Bunting:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca.
124. **Reed Bunting:** Seen on rice fields and Arrocampo.
125. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.

### **Other Wildlife**

Common Darter (River Magasca 23<sup>rd</sup> November)

Red Admiral (River Magasca 23<sup>rd</sup> November)

Egyptian Mongoose (Near Monfragüe 27<sup>th</sup> November)

Red Deer (Monfragüe 27<sup>th</sup> November)