

Extremadura with Shetland Wildlife

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23 - 30 April 2016

Leaders: Judd Hunt & Martin Kelsey

Saturday 23 April 2016

The group met in London Gatwick where we soon boarded our flight and arrived on time in Madrid. After meeting Martin, who would be both our host and co-guide for the week, we picked up our minibus and began the journey to the heart of Extremadura.

We stopped along the way and started seeing some of the birds typical of this region with Short-toed and Booted Eagle being the highlights.

Later we arrived in Martin's home village of Pago de San Clemente where he and his wife Claudia run Casa Rural el Recuerdo. Their Guesthouse is located just 10 kilometres from the ancient town of Trujillo and is set in the beautiful foothills of the Sierra de los Lagares, making this a super location from which to explore Extremadura.

Before dinner, we strolled around the beautiful gardens and saw the resident Nightingale, Hoopoe and stunning Azure-winged Magpies, all of which whetted the appetite for what we hoped to see during our week in this most beautiful and unspoilt part of Spain.

Sunday 24 April 2016

The day dawned clear, bright and warm. After breakfast, we set off on the short journey to the expansive plains positioned between Trujillo, Cáceres and Santa Marta de Magasca. Here we made frequent stops to search for the fantastic wildlife that exists here.

Highlights included both White and Black Storks, Red and Black Kites, 3 Egyptian, 200 Griffon and 10 mighty Black Vultures, Short-toed Eagles, 10 splendid Montagu's Harriers, Common Buzzards, 2 Spanish Imperial Eagles, 2 Golden Eagles, 7 Booted Eagles, Bonelli's Eagle, both Lesser and Common Kestrels, 5 Great and 2 Little Bustards, 2 Stone Curlews, 3 Black-bellied Sandgrouse, both Common and Great Spotted Cuckoos, Pallid and Common Swifts, lots of Bee-eaters, 14 Rollers, Hoopoes, many Calandra, Short-toed, Crested and Thekla Larks, Crag Martins, Red-rumped Swallows, Tawny Pipits, Fan-tailed and Sardinian Warblers, Iberian Grey and Woodchat Shrikes, lots of Spotless Starlings and Spanish Sparrows and both Gull and abundant Corn Buntings. Phew! What a start to the trip!



Monday 25 April 2016

After breakfast, we drove into Monfragüe National Park where we would spend most of the day. There are few places in Europe where one can see such variety and numbers of birds of prey, so we were all eager to get going!

We made our first stop at the impressive gateway to the park - Peña Falcon - where the group had fantastic views of the Griffon Vultures, often right overhead as they flew to and from their colony across the flooded gorge.

From here we headed further into the park and spent time at the Rio Tiétar where we had great views of the pair of Spanish Imperial Eagles that reside there.

We ended the day in Trujillo where we spent time having great views of Lesser Kestrels colony.

Main highlights of the day were: Black Storks seen at their nesting sites in the cliffs, 4 Egyptian, several hundred Griffon and 30 Black Vultures, Short-toed Eagles, 2 stunning Spanish Imperial Eagles, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagles, 10 Lesser Kestrels, Peregrine Falcon, Little Ringed Plover, 2 Turtle Doves, several Alpine Swifts, Bee-eaters, Hoopoes, 2 Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, 4 Woodlarks, many Red-rumped Swallows, Black Redstarts, several stunning Blue Rock Thrushes, singing Subalpine Warblers, Western Orphean Warbler, Short-toed Treecreepers, Golden Oriole, 3 Rock Sparrows, Serins, Rock Buntings plus a migrant Ortolan Bunting.

An unforgettable day that we enjoyed reflecting upon whilst sharing another fantastic dinner prepared by Claudia and Martin!

Tuesday 26 April 2016

We began the day by visiting the plains to the west of Trujillo before moving on to the pristine heathland to the east of Jaraicejo. We ended the day by exploring the wetlands and areas that surround Almaraz and Arrocampo.

Visiting this variety of habitats produced a wide range of species with the following being recorded; Little and Great Crested Grebes, 4 Little Bitterns, many Cattle, Great and Little Egrets, lots of Purple and Grey Herons, both Black and White Storks, 3 Spoonbills, 2 Red-crested Pochards, Black-shouldered Kite, both Black and Red Kites, Egyptian, Griffon and Black Vultures, Marsh Harriers, 4 Purple Swamphens, 20 Great Bustards, Black-winged Stilts, 2 Stone Curlews, migrant Common Sandpipers, 10 Gull-billed Terns, 8 Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, 4 Great Spotted Cuckoos, Little Owl, Alpine Swifts, a great selection of larks including Calandras, Short-toed, Crested and Theklas, 4 Tawny Pipits, Zitting Cisticolas, Savi's Warblers, Great Reed Warblers, Dartford Warblers, 2 singing Spectacled Warblers, Subalpine Warblers, Iberian Grey and Woodchat Shrikes plus Azure-winged Magpies – another amazing selection of birds seen!



Wednesday 27 April 2016

As with all previous days, the weather dawned clear and warm; perfect conditions for being outdoors. We headed south today and our first stop was to search the Campo Lugar plains. We then moved the short distance to Sierra Brava reservoir before travelling to the area surrounding Madrigalejo. We stopped at the impressive Puerta Pena for lunch before searching around Vegas Atlas later in the afternoon.

Highlights of the many species recorded today were Black Storks, Bonelli's Eagle, Lesser Kestrels, Red-legged Partridges, calling Quails, Great Bustards, 2 Stone Curlews, 6 stunning Collared Pratincoles, migrant waders including Spotted Redshanks and Greenshanks, Yellow-legged Gulls, Gull-billed Terns, 8 Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Turtle Dove, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Alpine Swifts, the colourful quintet of Kingfisher, Bee-eaters, Rollers, Hoopoes and Golden Orioles, a stunning male Black-eared Wheatear, Great Reed Warblers, Melodious Warblers, Iberian Grey Shrikes, 2 Red-billed Choughs, Tree Sparrows, plus the previously introduced Common Waxbills and Red Avadavats.

During dinner, we discussed the diverse range of habitats visited today and the resulting eclectic mix of species recorded.



Thursday 28 April 2016

Today saw us head south-west and we visited the huge Embalse at Alange and surrounding areas before we travelled to Mérida where we took lunch and headed across the ancient Roman Bridge. To end the day, we travelled back towards base and scoured the fantastic new wetlands formed by the creation of Alcollarin reservoir.

In a repeat of all previous days, we were treated to a fantastic array of birds with the following representing just the tip of the iceberg; 4 Black-necked Grebes, Little Bittern, 4 Night Herons, Purple Herons, Glossy Ibis, Spoonbills, Short-toed Eagles, Marsh and Montagu's Harriers, Booted Eagles, Purple Swamphen, Gull-billed Terns, Whiskered Tern, Great Spotted Cuckoos, a magnificent Eagle Owl, stunning views of Long-eared Owl, Black Redstarts, beautiful displaying Black Wheatears, Blue Rock Thrushes, Zitting Cisticolas, Cetti's, Melodious Warblers and Sardinian Warblers, Short-toed Treecreepers and 2 beautiful Penduline Tits.

Friday 29 April 2016

Our last full day saw us heading up into the magnificent Sierra de Gredos via the wetlands at Arrocampo. The drive through the mountains took us through some of the most picturesque parts of Extremadura and we visited areas surrounding Piornal and Tornavacas before driving back home via Monfragüe National Park.

During the day we experienced a change of birdlife due to the montane habitats visited and recorded the following notable species; Black-shouldered Kite, Red Kites, Black Kites, Griffon and Black Vultures, Short-toed and Booted Eagles, Common and Lesser Kestrels, Gull-billed Terns, Common Cuckoos, a colony of Pallid Swifts, Iberian Green, Great Spotted and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Grey Wagtails, Dunnocks, Robins, Mistle Thrushes, Subalpine and Bonelli's Warblers, Whitethroats, gorgeous little Firecrests, Coal Tits, Nuthatches, Jays and singing Ortolan Buntings in their breeding habitat.

Saturday 30 April 2016

After breakfast, we said our farewells to Martin, Claudia and their son Patrick before starting the journey back to Madrid. Once again, the Kelsey family had been the perfect hosts providing us with fantastic food, accommodation and outstanding guiding services.