

**HOLIDAY REPORT FOR SANDIE AND TONY**  
**Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

**Itinerary**

- 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018: Transfer from Madrid airport with stop at Arrocampo Reservoir
- 24<sup>th</sup> October 2018: Plains of Trujillo, Santa Marta de Magasca and Talaván Reservoir
- 25<sup>th</sup> October 2018: Monfragüe National Park and Trujillo
- 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Rice fields south of Madrigalejo
- 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Monfragüe National Park and Jaraicejo
- 28<sup>th</sup> October 2018: Campo Lugar plains, Alcollarín Reservoir and Palazuelo rice fields
- 29<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Rice fields near Madrigalejo
- 30<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Belén Plains, Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid.

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*Photographing Squacco Heron*

## TRIP REPORT

### 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018: Transfer from Madrid airport with stop at Arrocampo Reservoir

Despite a delay departure from London, Sandie and Tony arrived almost on schedule at Madrid and to a sunny and warm day. We followed the ring-road to the western side of Madrid before then taking the A5 motorway south-westwards. Throughout the traffic was light and we made excellent progress. Birds seen on the first leg of the journey included several **Red Kite** and **White Storks**. We had lunch at a service station about halfway through our journey. **Crested Larks** were present, and we watched **House Sparrows** leaving a storks' nest. We made a stop at the reed-mace fringed wetland of Arrocampo.



*Squacco Heron*

Here we had excellent views of **Squacco Heron** and **Long Skimmer** dragonflies, but **Purple Swamphens** and **Little Bitterns** although heard, were not seen. A **Reed Bunting** was an early winter visitor here. Other species seen included **Common Chiffchaff**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Common Snipe** and **Green Sandpiper**.

We reached Casa Rural El Recuerdo at 17.15, with time to get settled in and relax before an early dinner.

## **24<sup>th</sup> October 2018: Plains of Trujillo, Santa Marta de Magasca and Talaván Reservoir**

It was a warm sunny day throughout. We started on the plains between Trujillo and Santa Marta de Magasca, enjoying a long spell stationary as birds passed. A party of stately **Great Bustards** walked on the horizon and we saw a distant male **Hen Harrier** quartering the plains. More dramatic was a **Merlin** which spun into view chasing a **Corn Bunting**. The field boundaries provided perches for a throng of birds: **Iberian Grey Shrike**, **Thekla Lark**, **Stonechat**, **Corn Bunting** and others. At our feet grew swards of **Serotine Narcissus**, **Autumn Snowflakes** and **Colchicums**.

We stopped for coffee at the village of Santa Marta de Magasca and then paused overlooking the Tamuja River. **Sardinian Warblers** teased us from the bushes, and the thermals encouraged the appearance of **vultures** and **Red Kites**. At the nearby Magasca River where we had our picnic, **vultures** were again in evidence, as well as **Crag Martins**, **Rock Sparrow** and **Black Redstart** along the bridge. **Spanish Terrapins** were basking on rocks in the sunshine.

We then drove over the plains to take a short walk beside the Talaván Reservoir, **Praying Mantis** and **Western Psammodramus** lizards were seen along the path as well as **Common Darter** and **Iberian Water Frogs**. Migrating **Common Cranes** passed high overhead whilst a flock of **Lapwings** with some **Common Snipe** were on the banks of the reservoir.

On our return to Trujillo we had views both in flight as well as on the ground of a large flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**.

## **25<sup>th</sup> October 2018: Monfragüe National Park and Trujillo**

Another warm and sunny day and we headed north of Trujillo, through huge expanse of *dehesa*, entering the Monfragüe National Park at its northern side. We spent almost two hours at the magnificent rock face of the Portilla del Tiétar. Throughout most of that time a group of **Griffon Vultures** stood in the sunshine. Whilst we waited, large flocks of **Great Cormorants** flew past, sometimes accompanied by **Little** and **Great Egrets**. **Crag Martins** hunted insects close to the warm cliff face. Eventually the **vultures** rose on a forming thermal and on cue, they were joined by a **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, which afforded us good views as it soared in the sunshine.

After coffee beside a grove of cork oaks, we headed back into the park and stopped in an area of opines for our picnic. This proved very productive, with good views of **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** overhead and a soaring **Bonelli's Eagle**. Glimpses were also had of a range of small birds including **Firecrest**, **Crested Tit** and, unusual for the location, a party of **Common Crossbill**.

We then made a final stop at the vast Peña Falcon rockface where we again enjoyed the arrival of **Griffon Vultures**, as well as sighting of birds like **Blue Rock Thrush**.



*Monfragüe National Park*

We stopped briefly in the main square of Trujillo where a flock of **Crag Martins** and **Red-rumped Swallows** were perched on the wall of a building soaking up the sunshine.

### **26<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Rice fields south of Madrigalejo**

A damp start to the day and it remained overcast with some light rain throughout, but mild. Today we headed south, past the town of Zorita and across the plains (seeing some **Great Bustards** from the main road) and then onto the rice -growing area near Madrigalejo and Vegas Altas. We had a very productive morning driving slowly along dirt tracks, seeing many hundreds of **Common Crane**, as well as **Hen Harrier**. Huge flocks of **Spanish Sparrows** and parties of **Red Avadavats** (with males in breeding plumage and carrying nest material) as well as **Common Waxbills**.

We had a picnic lunch in a belt of *dehesa* at Moheda Alta and paid a visit to a small pool where several species of duck, including **Pintail** and **Shoveler** were present. As well as **Great Egret**. Nearby we watched small birds like **Sardinian Warbler** and **Cetti's Warbler** from a public hide, as well as **Iberian Grey Shrike**, and more good views of

**Common Crane.** On the way back, we stopped to photograph an amazing show of **Serontine Narcissus** with **Autumn Squill**.



*Common Crane*

### **27<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Monfragüe National Park and Jaraicejo**

Following heavy rain during the early hours of the morning, the day started misty but calm, but as we reached Monfragüe National Park, the sky had cleared and a strong, gusty north-westerly wind had started.

Accompanied by a film crew from German TV, we reached the southern entrance to the Monfragüe National with **vultures** already in the skies above us, the strong winds having cleared away any early morning mist but making viewing conditions difficult. However, we were rewarded by the truly spectacular sight of a **Peregrine** making a massive stoop (perhaps easily a thousand feet), narrowly missing a **Crag Martin**.

We sought shelter on the northern slope of the ridge, below the castle, where we had closer views of **Griffon Vultures** coming into land.

After coffee in Torrejon el Rubio we stopped by the Arroyo de la Vid where we found two **Firecrests** and quite good views were obtained of them. After stopping to admire **Serontine Narcissus**, and then the spectacle of about 200 **vultures** drifting across the sky (along with a **Golden Eagle**) we drove for about twenty minutes through a vast *dehesa* landscape.

We had lunch higher upstream the same Arroyo de la Vid river, this time north of the small town of Jaraicejo, where we had some reasonable shelter from a belt of trees. More **vultures** passed overhead as we started a walk across a rock-rose and broom dominated heathland and down into a beautiful cork oak grove., The high winds made finding small birds very difficult (a few **Thekla Larks** and a **Short-toed Treecreeper** were the only birds of note), but we had the chance to watch industrious dung beetles at their labours and large numbers of **Common Darter** dragonflies and a **Western Willow Spreadwing**.

We made a final stop beside the River Almonte (flowing for the first time this autumn) where we saw **Black Restart**, **Grey Wagtail**, **Linnets** and **Crag Martins** and then headed back to base.

### **28<sup>th</sup> October 2018: Campo Lugar plains, Alcollarín Reservoir and Palazuelo rice fields**



*The Plains*

A much colder day (even a touch of ground frost first thing) and with a very fresh north-westerly breeze. We headed south to the plains near the village of Campo Lugar, where after a fair bit of searching we got good views of **Great Bustard** and **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, as well as four **Little Bustard** in flight. There were large numbers of **Meadow Pipits**, **Lapwings**, as well as **Crested**, **Thekla** and **Calandra Larks**.

After coffee nearby, we moved onto the Alcollarín Reservoir where we had our picnic in an area of woodland, close to the water. Here there were wintering **Common Chiffchaff**, plenty of waterfowl on the lake, **Great Egrets**. An **African Grass Blue** butterfly was also present.

The afternoon was spent on the rice fields near Palazuelo where as well as large numbers of **Common Crane**, we also had excellent view of both **Black** and **White Storks**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Water Pipits** and waders such as **Greenshank**, **Green Sandpiper** and **Common Snipe**.



*Black Stork and Common Crane*

### **29<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Rice fields near Madrigalejo**

A sunny and dry day, but with a fresh north-westerly wind. After Sandie had photographed **Azure-winged Magpies** in the garden, we ventured southwards again to the rice fields, stopping first beside the River Ruercas where we watched a **Red Avadavat** nest-building. A **Wryneck** was seen briefly and throughout our stay and indeed throughout the day, we were never out of earshot of the sound of **Common Cranes** and almost always birds were in view.

We had a welcome coffee late morning and then returned to the rice fields, where we spent the rest of the day. Thousands of Common Cranes were present and we had wonderful views of **Hoopoes** on several occasions on the track in front of us. Also of note were several **Glossy Ibis** and **Water Pipits**.

We completed the day beside the Sierra Brava reservoir to the soft hooting sound of **Eagle Owl**.

### **30<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Belén Plains, Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid**

It was a heavily overcast day with frequent rain showers. We spent the morning on the Belén Plains to the east of Trujillo. Despite the highly unfavourable conditions, we had a very productive and enjoyable morning, seeing a wide range of raptors including **Hen** and **Marsh Harriers**, as well as good views of **Iberian Grey Shrikes**, **Thekla Larks** and **Rock Sparrows**. We paused for coffee at Torrecillas de la Tiesa, before returning across the plains.

After a warming soup at the house, we set off on our return to Madrid, with time to make a stop at the Arrocampo reservoir. As we approached Tony spotted a **Black-winged Kite** perched on the wires and we got good views of it. At the marsh itself we had excellent views of **Purple Swamphen** and saw briefly **Bluethroat** and **Reed Bunting**. In gaps in the clouds we could see fresh snow on the higher slopes of the Gredos Mountains, the first of the winter. As we left Arrocampo, the **Black-winged Kite** was perched on a small pylon, very obligingly allowing Sandie to get a few photos.

We then did the final packing of hand luggage and headed to Madrid, reaching the airport at 18:30 in ample time for check-in.

### Annotated Species List

#### **Birds**

1. **Greylag Goose**: Small parties seen most days.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen near Sierra Brava Reservoir and also at Moheda Alta.
3. **Common Shelduck**: Group of six on rice fields on 29<sup>th</sup> October.
4. **Wigeon**: One at Arrocampo on 30<sup>th</sup> October.
5. **Gadwall**: Seen on several water bodies.
6. **Teal**: Seen at Arrocampo and Moheda Alta.
7. **Mallard**: Seen most days.
8. **Pintail**: Seen at Moheda Alta and Sierra Brava Reservoir..
9. **Shoveler**: Seen on several water bodies.
10. **Common Pochard**: three at pool at Moheda Alta.
11. **Red-legged Partridge**: Recorded in Monfragüe.
12. **Little Grebe**: Seen at Moheda Alta.
13. **Great Crested Grebe**: Present at several water bodies.
14. **Great Cormorant**: Seen almost daily with large numbers at Monfragüe.
15. **Little Bittern**: Heard at Arrocampo.
16. **Squacco Heron**: Seen at Arrocampo on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.
17. **Cattle Egret**: Seen almost daily.



18. **Little Egret:** Small numbers on the rice fields and Arrocampo.
19. **Great Egret:** Seen at Alcollarín and rice fields.
20. **Grey Heron:** Seen almost every day.
21. **White Stork:** Seen en route from Madrid and about 20 seen on rice fields on each visit.
22. **Black Stork:** Seen on rice fields on 28<sup>th</sup> October and near Sierra Brava Reservoir on 29<sup>th</sup>.
23. **Glossy Ibis:** Seen on rice fields.
24. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
25. **Black Vulture:** Seen on several days.
26. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** An adult in Monfragüe on 25<sup>th</sup> October.
27. **Golden Eagle:** Birds seen distantly in Monfragüe on 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October.
28. **Bonelli's Eagle:** An adult in Monfragüe on 25<sup>th</sup> October.
29. **Red Kite:** Seen daily.
30. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost every day.
31. **Hen Harrier:** Seen on plains and rice fields.
32. **Common Buzzard:** Single figures seen almost daily.
33. **Sparrowhawk:** One seen on Belén Plains.
34. **Black-winged Kite:** One at Arrocampo on 30<sup>th</sup> October.
35. **Common Kestrel:** Seen almost daily.
36. **Peregrine:** Pair at Monfragüe on 27<sup>th</sup> October.
37. **Merlin:** One on plains on 24<sup>th</sup> October.
38. **Moorhen:** Recorded in rice fields and at Arrocampo.
39. **Purple Swamphen:** Four or five seen at Arrocampo on 30<sup>th</sup> October.
40. **Common Coot:** Present at Sierra Brava and Arrocampo reservoirs.
41. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo and rice fields.
42. **Common Crane:** Seen almost daily and several thousand present on rice fields.
43. **Little Bustard:** Four on plains near Campo Lugar on 28<sup>th</sup> October.
44. **Great Bustard:** Six on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca on 24<sup>th</sup> October and 18 near Campo Lugar on 28<sup>th</sup> October.
45. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen in small numbers on rice fields.
46. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen in small numbers on rice fields.
47. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen almost daily.
48. **Common Snipe:** Seen on rice fields and Arrocampo.
49. **Spotted Redshank:** About two on rice fields on 29<sup>th</sup> October.
50. **Greenshank:** Over 20 seen on rice fields.
51. **Green Sandpiper:** Singles seen most days.
52. **Common Sandpiper:** One at Arrocampo on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.
53. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen daily.
54. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on rice fields.
55. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** About 11 seen on plains near Campo Lugar on 28<sup>th</sup> October.
56. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Over 140 seen on plains north-west of Trujillo on 24<sup>th</sup> October.
57. **Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon:** Recorded daily.
58. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen almost daily.
59. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
60. **Little Owl:** Seen on plains on 24<sup>th</sup> October.
61. **Eagle Owl:** Heard and briefly seen at Sierra Brava reservoir.
62. **Kingfisher:** Seen on rice fields and Arrocampo.
63. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost daily.
64. **Iberian Green Woodpecker:** Seen on journeys from/to Madrid.
65. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen in Monfragüe.

66. **Wryneck**: One seen at River Ruercas.
67. **Calandra Lark**: Seen on plains near Campo Lugar and Santa Marta de Magasca.
68. **Skylark**: Seen on plains.
69. **Crested Lark**: Seen almost daily.
70. **Thekla Lark**: Seen on plains.
71. **Woodlark**: Seen or heard on heath near Jaraicejo and Monfragüe.
72. **Crag Martin**: Seen on several days.
73. **Red-rumped Swallow**: Seen in Trujillo.
74. **House Martin**: Seen at Monfragüe on 25<sup>th</sup> October.
75. **Water Pipit**: Seen on rice fields on 29<sup>th</sup> October.
76. **Meadow Pipit**: Seen daily.
77. **Grey Wagtail**: Seen on rice fields.
78. **White Wagtail**: Seen on rice fields and plains.
79. **Wren**: Recorded at Monfragüe.
80. **Robin**: Seen daily.
81. **Bluethroat**: Brief views at Arrocampo and rice fields.
82. **Black Redstart**: Seen on several days.
83. **Stonechat**: Seen daily.
84. **Northern Wheatear**: Only one seen on plains on 24<sup>th</sup> October.
85. **Blue Rock Thrush**: Three or four at Monfragüe on 25<sup>th</sup> October.
86. **Blackbird**: Seen daily.
87. **Song Thrush**: Seen on several days.
88. **Mistle Thrush**: Seen near Monfragüe on 25<sup>th</sup> October.
89. **Cetti's Warbler**: Recorded almost daily.
90. **Zitting Cisticola**: Seen on rice fields and at Arrocampo.
91. **Sardinian Warbler**: Recorded almost daily.
92. **Blackcap**: Seen or heard daily.
93. **Chiffchaff**: Seen or heard daily.
94. **Firecrest**: two seen near Monfragüe on 27<sup>th</sup> October.
95. **Long-tailed Tit**: Recorded on several days.
96. **Crested Tit**: Seen at Monfragüe.
97. **Blue Tit**: seen almost daily.
98. **Great Tit**: Seen almost daily.
99. **Nuthatch**: Recorded in Jaraicejo.
100. **Short-toed Treecreeper**: Recorded in Jaraicejo.
101. **Iberian Grey Shrike**: seen almost daily.
102. **Jay**: Seen in Monfragüe.
103. **Azure-winged Magpie**: Seen daily.
104. **Magpie**: Seen daily.
105. **Jackdaw**: Seen almost daily.
106. **Raven**: Seen almost daily.
107. **Spotless Starling**: Seen daily.
108. **House Sparrow**: Seen daily.
109. **Spanish Sparrow**: seen on rice fields and on plains.
110. **Tree Sparrow**: Seen on rice fields.
111. **Rock Sparrow**: Seen on plains.
112. **Common Waxbill**: Seen on rice fields.
113. **Red Avadavat**: Seen on rice fields.
114. **Chaffinch**: seen almost daily.
115. **Serin**: Seen on several days.
116. **Goldfinch**: Seen on several days.

- 117. **Linnet:** Seen on several days
- 118. **Common Crossbill:** About six in Monfragüe on 25<sup>th</sup> October.
- 119. **Hawfinch:** Seen at Monfragüe.
- 120. **Cirl Bunting:** One singing near Santa Marta de Magasca and in Monfragüe.
- 121. **Reed Bunting:** Seen at Arrocampo.
- 122. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

### Butterflies

- 1. **Small White**
- 2. **Clouded Yellow**
- 3. **Small Copper**
- 4. **African Grass Blue**
- 5. **Red Admiral**
- 6. **Speckled Wood**

### Odonata

- 1. **Western Willow Spreadwing**
- 2. **Migrant Hawker**
- 3. **Lesser Emperor**
- 4. **Long Skimmer**
- 5. **Red-veined Darter**
- 6. **Common Darter**



*Long Skimmer*

## **Other wildlife**

Iberian Water Frog

Western Psammodromus

Spanish Terrapin

## **Plants**

*Colchicum filifolium*

*Acis autumnalis*

*Narcissus serotinus*

*Prospero autumnalis*