

**Birding Extremadura and Casa Rural El Recuerdo**  
**SHORT EARLY SPRING HOLIDAY REPORT FOR DAVID AND JANE**  
**(9<sup>th</sup> March - 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018)**

**Itinerary**

**9<sup>th</sup> March 2018:** Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural El Recuerdo, with stop at Saucedilla.

**10<sup>th</sup> March 2018:** Plains near the village of Santa Marta de Magasca

**11<sup>th</sup> March 2018:** Monfragüe National Park

**12<sup>th</sup> March 2018:** Sierra Brava Reservoir, the Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir.

**13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018:** Visits to Trujillo

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2018:** Arrocampo Reservoir, return to Madrid



*At a rather blustery Salto de Gitano viewpoint in Monfragüe National Park*

## TRIP REPORT

### 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018: Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

David and Jean's arrival was slightly delayed, but by 11.40 we were leaving the airport carpark and on to the Madrid ring road and then the A5 motorway for Extremadura. It was heavily overcast, and we hit belts of rain on the journey, although we did see **Red** and **Black Kites** and **White Storks** as we made our way along the almost traffic-free road. By early afternoon we had reached the reservoir of Arrocampo, near Saucedilla. We ate our sandwiches in the shelter of the car, watching dozens of **Barn Swallows** low over a pool in the rain. On flooded patches of fields **Black-winged Stilts** were feeding. At one stage, the rain paused long enough for us to do some birding from outside the vehicle. We had good views of **Purple Swamphen** and **Great Egret**, but perhaps most memorable was a superb view of a **Black Vulture** on the skyline, rather bedraggled and holding its wings outstretched to let the fresh breeze dry the feathers.



*Black Vulture after the rain*

From Arrocampo it was then an easy drive onwards to Casa Rural El Recuerdo, reaching there in pouring rain at 17.30.

### 10<sup>th</sup> March 2018: Plains near the village of Santa Marta de Magasca

It was a wet start of the day, but David managed to get views of **Hawfinch** in front of the bedroom. After breakfast we drove west of Trujillo towards the provincial capital of

Cáceres, the sky looked considerably brighter in that direction and by the time we had stopped, on the plains south of Santa Marta de Magasca, there were patches of blue sky. Thus, during the day we enjoyed mainly dry weather, with a couple of heavy showers, and plenty of dramatic-looking skies. At our first stop we had excellent views of a young pair of **Spanish Imperial Eagles**. It was also a good opportunity to get our first good looks at larks, studying both **Crested** and **Calandra Larks** at this site. Large flocks of **Golden Plover** were on the move, and we also saw several **Ravens**. We had a good view of **Little Owl** perched beside a nest box and a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** on a fence. **Corn Buntings** were everywhere.

Beside the valley of the Tamuja River we admired the river in full spate, while close to our feet, a **Western Dappled White** butterfly was taking in a short respite from the heavy rain. After an excellent coffee in a very friendly bar in Santa Marta de Magasca, we drove to the Magasca River where we had our picnic. There were fly-bys of **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**, but it was once we were leaving that we had brief views of a **Golden Eagle**.



*Seasonal pools amidst the wild flowers*

Returning across the plains in the direction of Trujillo, we looked at **Thekla Larks** and found a party of **Common Crane**, including a bird ringed in Poland. Hordes of **Spanish Sparrows** fed on the meadow, whilst there was a wonderful show of **Hoop Petticoat Narcissus**.



*Common Crane ringed at Dziekanowice in Poland*

We completed the afternoon on the plains east of Santa Marta de Magasca, where we had lovely views of about 50 **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, three **Stone Curlew** and a total of 34 **Great Bustards**, including several males making use of the afternoon sunshine to start displaying. More flocks of **Golden Plover** were seen and we ended the day, as we had begun it, listening to the song of **Calandra Larks**.

#### **11<sup>th</sup> March 2018: Monfragüe National Park**

It was a very windy day today, with a series of heavy showers, dramatic skies but also welcome sunshine. We left Trujillo northwards, across vast expanses of *dehesa*, through Torrejón El Rubio, and on to the Monfragüe National Park. Our first stop was the viewpoint opposite the huge and impressive Peña Falcón rock face. Here, appropriately enough, there was a pair of **Peregrines**, but also large numbers of **Griffon Vultures** wheeling over the rock and even more standing perched on the rock face. The **Peregrines** delighted us with their spectacular stoops and exuberant rapid glides and at one time mobbed an **Egyptian Vulture**. No fewer than four **Black Stork** were also in view at one time.

We then continued through the park to the Portilla del Tiétar viewpoint. Here again we enjoyed excellent views of **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**. But most memorable was the appearance of an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, which in feisty fashion mobbed a **Black Vulture**. It reappeared some time later, pushed a **Griffon Vulture** off its perch and we watched it perched and preening at the top of the cliff opposite us.

After coffee at the edge of a cork oak grove, we retraced our route through the park. It was starting to get overcast, so there were fewer birds of prey on the air. We had our picnic overlooking the site of the medieval Cardinal's Bridge, which was barely visible above the rising water in the Tagus River in the morning and was completely submerged by early afternoon. As well as further great views of **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**, we had distant views of a **Bonelli's Eagle**. We then made a second visit at the Peña Falcon viewpoint. This time, vultures were coming into roost and we had superb views of the birds flying in to land. A **Blue Rock Thrush** was also seen, but the wind had truly become gale force and few small birds were braving exposure. We made a visit to the Monfragüe Castle to admire the views and then on our return journey stopped beside the River Almonte. Parties of vultures drifted overhead, whilst four species of hirundine searched for insects over the river in spate.

### **12<sup>th</sup> March 2018: Sierra Brava Reservoir, the Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir.**

It was a dry day, with a fresh southerly wind, with periods of sunshine, interspersed by cloud. We headed south, past the town on Zorita and then to the dam of the Sierra Brava reservoir. On the way we had lovely views of a group of **Lesser Kestrels**. At the dam, the adult **Kittiwake** which Martin had found a few days earlier was still present, flying past at very close range. We had good views of an **Eagle Owl**, roosting beside a small cliff. A fine male **Common Kestrel** also gave us very close views.



### *Kittiwake at Sierra Brava*

We then crossed the plains towards the village of Campo Lugar. There were large numbers of **Golden Plover** resting in the fields and we reacquainted ourselves with **Calandra Larks**. At a small pool we found a pair of **Garganey**, amongst other duck such as **Gadwall**, **Shoveler** and **Teal**.

We then made a quick visit to see the rice fields, near the village of Puebla de Alcollarín. The recent heavy rain had left almost all the fields flooded, but we found one holding some waders: **Little Stint** and **Little Ringed Plover**.

After coffee, we went to the Alcollarín Reservoir. We had lunch in the attractive picnic area, where an **Iberian Chiffchaff** was singing and it showed itself nicely on a few occasions, **Common Chiffchaffs** were also present. The afternoon was spent in the surroundings of the reservoir. It was a very productive way to complete the day. Beside the water were birds such as **Spoonbill**, **Ringed** and **Kentish Plover**, on the water a good selection of duck and grebes, including **Black-necked Grebe**. Overhead we had a great view of a **Short-toed Eagle** and numerous hirundines, whilst in the woodland we heard **Common Cuckoo** and saw birds such as **Woodchat Shrike** and **Great Spotted Cuckoo**, as well as excellent views of **Thekla Lark**.

### **13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018: Visits to Trujillo**

David and Jane spent two days doing their own thing, exploring the historic town of Trujillo.

### **15<sup>th</sup> March 2018: Arrocampo Reservoir, return to Madrid**



*(Reasonably) sheltered from the rain at Arrocampo*

The final day brought us a mixture of heavy showers of rain, but also some sunshine and generally somewhat lighter winds. We set off at about 09.45 from Casa Rural El Recuerdo and stopped at the Arrocampo Reservoir. We spent a highly productive hour sitting in Hide No. 2. Here we had superb views of several **Marsh Harrier** and **Purple Swamphen**, but pride of place went to a male **Bluethroat** which came out to feed in the short damp grass close-by, and to a **Spotted Crake** which gave us wonderful views as it foraged at the edge of the reed bed. Just as we were leaving we saw a **Purple Heron**. We then stopped near Hide No. 1. We saw a male and female **Little Bittern** in flight, and more **Purple Swamphens**.



*Male Bluethroat*



*Spotted Crake*

After a coffee, we then started our return to Madrid, reaching at Terminal 4 at our estimated arrival time.

### **List of Birds Seen**

1. **Grey Lag Goose:** One seen at Alcollarín on 12<sup>th</sup> March. One in a field near Pago de San Clemente on 15<sup>th</sup> March was of unknown origin.
2. **Common Shelduck:** Four at Alcollarín Reservoir.
3. **Wigeon:** Seen at Alcollarín.
4. **Gadwall:** Seen at Alcollarín and Campo Lugar.
5. **Teal:** Seen at Arrocampo on 9<sup>th</sup> March and at Alcollarín and Campo Lugar.
6. **Mallard:** Seen daily.
7. **Garganey:** A pair at Campo Lugar on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
8. **Shoveler:** Seen at Arrocampo on 9<sup>th</sup> March and at Alcollarín and Campo Lugar.
9. **Common Pochard:** Seen at Alcollarín.
10. **Tufted Duck:** Seen at Alcollarín.
11. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen on two days.
12. **Little Grebe:** Seen at most water bodies.
13. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen at several reservoirs,



14. **Black-necked Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín.
15. **Great Cormorant:** Seen daily.
16. **Little Bittern:** Two at Arrocampo on 15<sup>th</sup> March.
17. **Cattle Egret:** Seen at Arrocampo and near Alcollarín.
18. **Little Egret:** Seen at Arrocampo, Alcollarín and rice fields.
19. **Great Egret:** Seen at Arrocampo and near Alcollarín.
20. **Grey Heron:** Seen most days.
21. **Purple Heron:** One seen at Arrocampo on 15<sup>th</sup> March.
22. **Black Stork:** Four seen at Monfragüe on 11<sup>th</sup> March.
23. **White Stork:** Seen every day.
24. **Spoonbill:** Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
25. **Black Kite:** Seen every day.
26. **Red Kite:** Seen every day.
27. **Egyptian Vulture:** Two seen at Monfragüe on 11<sup>th</sup> March.
28. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen almost every day.
29. **Black Vulture:** Seen almost every day.
30. **Short-toed Eagle:** Three seen on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
31. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen most days.
32. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March.
33. **Common Buzzard:** Seen every day.
34. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Two seen on plains on 10<sup>th</sup> March and one adult in Monfragüe on 11<sup>th</sup> March.
35. **Golden Eagle:** One seen on plains on 10<sup>th</sup> March.
36. **Booted Eagle:** One seen on 15<sup>th</sup> March.
37. **Bonelli's Eagle:** One adult in Monfragüe on 11<sup>th</sup> March.
38. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen at Sierra Brava reservoir and Campo Lugar plains on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
39. **Common Kestrel:** Seen most days.
40. **Peregrine Falcon:** Seen at Monfragüe on 11<sup>th</sup> March.
41. **Water Rail:** One seen at Arrocampo on 15<sup>th</sup> March.
42. **Spotted Crake:** One seen at Arrocampo on 15<sup>th</sup> March.
43. **Moorhen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
44. **Purple Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
45. **Common Coot:** Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
46. **Common Crane:** A group of nine birds, including one Polish-ringed adult north of Trujillo.
47. **Great Bustard:** 34 seen on plains on 10<sup>th</sup> March.
48. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen at Arrocampo and Alcollarín.
49. **Stone Curlew:** Three seen on plains on 10<sup>th</sup> March.
50. **Ringed Plover:** Two at Alcollarín on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
51. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on rice fields and Alcollarín.
52. **Kentish Plover:** Three at Alcollarín on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
53. **Golden Plover:** Seen on the plains in large numbers.

54. **Lapwing**: A few seen at Arrocampo and the plains on 10<sup>th</sup> March.
55. **Little Stint**: About three seen on rice fields on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
56. **Greenshank**: One seen in pool on Campo Lugar plains on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
57. **Green Sandpiper**: Seen on pool in plains on 10<sup>th</sup> March.
58. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: Seen at Alcollarín.
59. **Black-headed Gull**: Seen most days.
60. **Kittiwake**: One adult at Sierra Brava Reservoir on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
61. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**: About 50 seen on the plains on 10<sup>th</sup> March.
62. **Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon**: Seen every day.
63. **Wood Pigeon**: Seen every day.
64. **Collared Dove**: Seen every day.
65. **Great Spotted Cuckoo**: Seen on plains on 10<sup>th</sup> March and Alcollarín on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
66. **Common Cuckoo**: One calling at Alcollarín on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
67. **Eagle Owl**: Seen at Sierra Brava on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
68. **Little Owl**: Seen on plains on 10<sup>th</sup> March.
69. **Pallid/Common Swift**: Seen on two days, but distantly and in poor light.
70. **Kingfisher**: One at Arrocampo on 15<sup>th</sup> March.
71. **Hoopoe**: Seen most days.
72. **Calandra Lark**: Seen on plains
73. **Crested Lark**: Seen on at Arrocampo and on plains.
74. **Thekla Lark**: Seen on plains and Alcollarín.
75. **Woodlark**: Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca on 10<sup>th</sup> March.
76. **Skylark**: Seen on plains
77. **Sand Martin**: Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
78. **Crag Martin**: Seen most days.
79. **Barn Swallow**: Seen every day.
80. **Red-rumped Swallow**: Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
81. **House Martin**: Seen most days.
82. **Meadow Pipit**: Seen most days.
83. **Water Pipit**: Seen at Arrocampo on 15<sup>th</sup> March.
84. **White Wagtail**: Seen every day.
85. **Robin**: Seen most days.
86. **Bluethroat**: Seen at Arrocampo on 15<sup>th</sup> March.
87. **Black Redstart**: Seen on several days.
88. **Stonechat**: Seen every day.
89. **Blue Rock Thrush**: Seen in Monfragüe and Trujillo.
90. **Blackbird**: Seen every day.
91. **Song Thrush**: Seen at Alcollarín.
92. **Mistle Thrush**: Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and at Alcollarín
93. **Cetti's Warbler**: Seen at Arrocampo.
94. **Zitting Cisticola**: Seen at Arrocampo.
95. **Subalpine Warbler**: Seen at Alcollarín on 12<sup>th</sup> March

96. **Sardinian Warbler**: Seen most days.
97. **Blackcap**: Seen most days.
98. **Iberian Chiffchaff**: One singing at Alcollarín on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
99. **Common Chiffchaff**: Seen every day.
100. **Firecrest**: One seen in Trujillo on 13<sup>th</sup> March.
101. **Wren**: Singing at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.
102. **Long-tailed Tit**: Seen at Alcollarín.
103. **Blue Tit**: Seen daily.
104. **Great Tit**: Seen at Alcollarín.
105. **Iberian Grey Shrike**: Seen at Arrocampo and on plains.
106. **Woodchat Shrike**: One at Alcollarín on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
107. **Iberian (Azure-winged) Magpie**: Seen every day.
108. **Magpie**: Seen every day.
109. **Jackdaw**: Seen most days.
110. **Raven**: Seen most days.
111. **Common Starling**: Seen on plains and Arrocampo.
112. **Spotless Starling**: Seen every day.
113. **House Sparrow**: Seen every day.
114. **Spanish Sparrow**: Seen most days.
115. **Chaffinch**: Seen every day.
116. **Serin**: Seen every day.
117. **Greenfinch**: Seen at Arrocampo.
118. **Goldfinch**: Seen every day.
119. **Linnet**: Seen most days.
120. **Hawfinch**: Seen at Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Monfragüe.
121. **Cirl Bunting**: Singing at River Almonte on 11<sup>th</sup> March.
122. **Corn Bunting**: Seen most days.

## **Other Wildlife**

Iberian Hare

Rabbit

Western Dappled White butterfly