

HOLIDAY REPORT FOR JULE AND GEOFF
Casa Rural El Recuerdo & Birding Extremadura
19th – 26th January 2020



Watching a Wallcreeper

Itinerary

19th January 2020: Transfer from Madrid

20th January 2020: Santa Marta de Magasca plains.

21st January 2020: Sierra Grande de Hornachos, Alange dam and Roman Bridge in Mérida

22nd January 2020: Cabañas del Castillo, Belén Plains

23rd January 2020: Sierra Brava reservoir, Campo Lugar plains, rice fields near Madrigalejo, Orellana Reservoir

24th January 2020: Plains west of Trujillo, rice fields near Palazuelo.

25th January 2020: Alcollarín Reservoir and the Canchalejas dam.

26th January 2020: Arrocampo and Valdecañas Reservoirs, return to Madrid.

TRIP REPORT

19th January 2020: Transfer from Madrid

Left Madrid at about 16:30, driving westwards towards Extremadura in beautiful late afternoon. About halfway on the journey we took a break for coffee. **White Storks** and **Red Kites** were amongst several species seen as we made the journey, arriving after dusk at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

20th January 2020: Santa Marta de Magasca plains.

Storm Gloria struck, giving us a very cold and very windy day. There was some sunshine in morning, we had to contend with snow flurries at midday and then gales in the afternoon.

We went first to the plains north of Trujillo to see a first-winter **Sociable Lapwing** that had been found just a few days earlier. We enjoyed wonderful views, with at times **Common Cranes** in the same field of view and flocks of small birds, such as **Skylarks**, **Calandra Larks**, **Meadow Pipits** and **Corn Buntings**. We returned to Trujillo for coffee and then headed west towards Cáceres with visit to expanse of open country where there were **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, **Thekla Larks** and flocks of other passerines. We took shelter in a hide for lunch, enjoying as we ate our sandwiches the sight of **Great Bustards** flying in front of us, **Skylarks** and **Common Starlings**. Onto plains again in the afternoon, where highlights included watching a **Merlin** being mobbed by an **Iberian Grey Shrike**, a group of **Little Bustard** and more **Great Bustards**. We returned to where we had started to have more views of the **Sociable Lapwing** and finished the day with a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** on our return home.



Sociable Lapwing (Martin Kelsey)

21st January 2020: Sierra Grande de Hornachos, Alange dam and Roman Bridge in Mérida

It was still very windy, with some sunshine in the morning and cloudy in the afternoon.



Narcissus cantabricus (Martin Kelsey)

We drove south to enjoy a long walk in the Sierra Grande de Hornachos. It was stunning scenery, with views to the castle and well beyond, and great for small birds especially. Noteworthy were **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, **Black Wheatear**, **Blue Rock Thrush** and **Rock Bunting**. We found the delightful *Narcissus cantabricus* in flower and in a sheltered spot a **Wall Brown Butterfly**.



After coffee in Hornachos, we drove to the Alange dam for our picnic at Alange. At the spot we had excellent views of two **Bonelli's Eagle** and a **Golden Eagle**. A short walk afterwards yielded **Black Wheatear**, **Thekla Lark**, **Blue Rock Thrush** and **House Martin**.

We spent the rest of the afternoon on the Roman Bridge in Mérida. Here we had wonderful view of an **Otter**, a pair of **Little Bittern**, roosting **Black-crowned Night Herons**, **Kingfishers** and **Purple Swamphens** - all in the city centre!

22nd January 2020: Cabañas del Castillo, Belén Plains

Today it was dry with some periods of sunshine and much lighter winds.

We spent most of the day close to the village of Cabañas del Castillo in the Villuercas Mountains. In the morning we had wonderful views of five **Alpine Accentors** and a nice host of other species, such as **Griffon Vulture**, **Blue Rock Thrush** and **Black Redstart**. We found a **Hoop Petticoat Narcissus** in flower. After coffee in Retamosa, we went back to Cabañas del Castillo, standing from a viewpoint to survey the eastern side of the rock face south of the village. In last five minutes of our sojourn, Geoff spotted the **Wallcreeper**. We watched it heading in our direction and then crossing over to the west face of the cliff. We crossed to the other side and relocated the bird, enjoying quite prolonged views of it. It then disappeared and we returned to the village for our picnic. Whilst there, Julie spotted the bird again and we had the opportunity of getting good long views of it from the carpark!



Little Owls (Julie Rogers)

We returned across the Belén plains where we had lovely views of two **Little Owls** and two **Foxes**. Continually we were accompanied by larks and **Lapwings**.

23rd January 2020: Sierra Brava reservoir, Campo Lugar plains, rice fields near Madrigalejo, Orellana Reservoir



White Storks (Julie Rogers)

There was rain and it was heavily overcast throughout most of the day but there was only light wind.

After a brief stop at Sierra Brava Reservoir, we checked the plains near Campo Lugar seeing a small group of **Stone Curlew** by the village, then visiting some pools where there was a variety of dabbling duck. As always there were lots of **Lapwings** and larks on the plains and we had excellent views of **Iberian Grey Shrikes**. We had a welcome coffee stop at Madrigalejo and then continued onto the irrigated farmland to the south where we found a large flock of **Great Bustard** alongside **Common Cranes**. We also saw two **Hen Harrier**. We took shelter in the hide at Moheda Alta for our picnic, seeing a **Black Stork**, **Hen Harrier** and **Common Cranes** at close quarters. In the *dehesa* woodland nearby there were more **Common Cranes** and a party of **Woodlark**. Onto the Orellana Reservoir then, where amongst the numerous **Shoveler**, we found a pair of **Red-crested Pochard**. **Crag Martins** and **House Martins** were hawking insects. On our return at Sierra Brava, we heard the **Eagle Owl** calling and it was seen briefly in flight.

24th January 2020: Plains west of Trujillo, rice fields near Palazuelo.

It was mostly overcast, with some sunny spells, hardly any rain and rather milder.

We enjoyed yet another excellent day with varied landscapes and a great variety of amazing birds.

We started on the plains west of Trujillo with superb views of both **Pin-tailed** and **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Great** and **Little Bustards**. From our vantage point, we could also see a pair of **Spanish Imperial Eagles**. There was, as always, a wonderful supporting cast of small birds. After coffee in Trujillo, we discovered a nesting **Eagle Owl**.

We then headed southwards, having lunch on the rice fields near Palazuelo, where we had great views of an obliging male **Bluethroat** and surrounded continuously by the sound of **Common Cranes**. Then after another coffee stop, we spent the rest of the afternoon on the rice fields with a focus on waders, achieving good views of both **Little** and **Temminck's Stints**, and **Kentish Plovers**. After such a very satisfactory afternoon we returned to Pago de San Clemente, where **Tawny Owls** calling in the evening.



Bluethroat (Julie Rogers)

25th January 2020: Alcollarín Reservoir and the Canchalejas dam.

It was a dry but largely overcast day with light wind.

We spent most of the day at The Alcollarín Reservoir where there were huge numbers of dabbling duck, dominated by **Shoveler**. We watched them performing their vortex foraging. There was a good selection of grebes: **Great Crested**, **Little** and about 20 **Black-necked**. As we explored the reservoir we also came across **Black Stork**, **Spoonbill** and a party of **Kentish Plovers**.

We paid a brief visit at the end of the afternoon to the small Canchalejas dam where there were large numbers of **Teal** and some **Black-winged Stilts**, as well as an obliging **Fox**.



Black-crowned Night Herons (Martin Kelsey)

26th January 2020: Arrocampo and Valdecañas Reservoirs, return to Madrid.

It was a foggy start, but it had cleared up by time we arrived at Arrocampo Reservoir. This revealed the spectacular sight of the fresh snow on the Gredos Mountains.

At Arrocampo we had an excellent walk beside marsh. There was a winter roost of **Black-crowned Night Heron**, a **Wryneck** and a male **Bearded Tit**. We had prolonged views of a **Black-winged Kite**, saw **Great White Egrets**, heard several **Little Bittern**. **Black Vultures** flew low overhead.

After coffee, we went onto the Valdecañas Reservoir where we had our picnic. Here there were flocks of **Grey Lag Geese**, **Common Shelduck**, two **Greater Flamingos** as well as large flocks of small finches and **Corn Buntings**. Perhaps the highlight was a pair of **Roe Deer** which crossed the road in front of us.

It was then onto Madrid for the drop-off at the airport, with ample time for check-in.

List of species seen

1. **Grey Lag Goose:** Present at Valdecañas Reservoir
2. **Egyptian Goose:** Seen at Orellana and Alcollarín Reservoirs.
3. **Common Shelduck:** Seen on rice fields near Palazuelo and at Valdecañas.
4. **Wigeon:** Seen on pools at Campo Lugar and at Alcollarín.
5. **Gadwall:** Seen at all reservoirs.
6. **Teal:** Seen most days.
7. **Pintail:** Small numbers at Alcollarín.
8. **Mallard:** Seen almost every day.
9. **Shoveler:** Several thousand at Alcollarín Reservoir. Present at all reservoirs.
10. **Red-crested Pochard:** A pair at Orellana Reservoir.
11. **Pochard:** Small numbers at Alcollarín.
12. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen on several days.
13. **Little Grebe:** Seen on several days.
14. **Great Crested Grebe:** present on all large water bodies.
15. **Black-necked Grebe:** At least 20 at Alcollarín Reservoir.
16. **Great Cormorant:** Seen almost daily.
17. **Little Bittern:** Seen from the Roman Bridge in Mérida and heard at Arrocampo.
18. **Cattle Egret:** Seen mainly on rice fields.
19. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** Roosts at Mérida and Arrocampo.
20. **Little Egret:** Seen almost every day.
21. **Great White Egret:** Seen on several days.
22. **Grey Heron:** Seen almost daily.
23. **Black Stork:** Seen at Moheda Alta and at Alcollarín.
24. **White Stork:** Seen daily.
25. **Spoonbill:** A party at Alcollarín.
26. **Greater Flamingo:** Two at Valdecañas.
27. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen most days.
28. **Black Vulture:** Seen on the plains and at Arrocampo.
29. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** A pair on the plains west of Trujillo.
30. **Golden Eagle:** One seen at Alange.
31. **Bonelli's Eagle:** A pair seen at Alange.
32. **Red Kite:** Seen daily.
33. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost every day.
34. **Hen Harrier:** Seen most days.
35. **Common Buzzard:** Seen daily.
36. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen almost every day.
37. **Black-winged Kite:** One at Arrocampo.
38. **Common Kestrel:** Seen daily.
39. **Merlin:** Seen on several days.
40. **Peregrine Falcon:** Seen on two days.
41. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo.
42. **Moorhen:** Seen on three days.
43. **Common Coot:** Seen on large water bodies.
44. **Common Crane:** Seen on most days.
45. **Little Bustard:** Seen on the plains north and west of Trujillo.
46. **Great Bustard:** Seen on plains north and west of Trujillo, and a group of 59 south of Madrigalejo.
47. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on two days, as well as on journey from Madrid.

48. **Stone Curlew:** Seven seen near Campo Lugar and one bird seen on rice fields near Palazuelo.
49. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on rice fields and Canchalejas.
50. **Ringed Plover:** Seen on rice fields and Alcollarín.
51. **Kentish Plover:** Seen on rice fields and Alcollarín.
52. **Golden Plover:** Seen on plains and on rice fields.
53. **Lapwing:** Seen daily.
54. **Sociable Lapwing:** One seen on plains north of Trujillo.
55. **Dunlin:** Seen on rice fields and at Alcollarín.
56. **Little Stint:** Seen on rice fields near Palazuelo.
57. **Temminck's Stint:** One seen on rice fields near Palazuelo.
58. **Common Snipe:** Seen on three days.
59. **Common Curlew:** Seen on rice fields and at Valdecañas.
60. **Spotted Redshank:** Seen on rice fields near Palazuelo.
61. **Common Redshank:** One at Alcollarín.
62. **Greenshank:** Seen on rice fields and beside reservoirs.
63. **Green Sandpiper:** seen most days.
64. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen on three days.
65. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen most days.
66. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen on most days.
67. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains west of Trujillo.
68. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains between Trujillo and Cáceres.
69. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
70. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen daily.
71. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
72. **Great Spotted Cuckoo:** One seen north of Trujillo.
73. **Eagle Owl:** Seen on two days.
74. **Little Owl:** Seen on three days.
75. **Tawny Owl:** Calling on two evenings at Pago de San Clemente.
76. **Kingfisher:** Seen on three days.
77. **Hoopoe:** Seen daily.
78. **Wryneck:** One seen at Arrocampo.
79. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Heard at Cabañas del Castillo.
80. **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker:** One seen at Hornachos.
81. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
82. **Crested Lark:** Seen almost every day.
83. **Thekla Lark:** Seen almost daily.
84. **Woodlark:** Seen on two days.
85. **Skylark:** Winter flocks on the plains and rice fields.
86. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost daily.
87. **Barn Swallow:** Seen on two days.
88. **House Martin:** Seen on three days.
89. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen daily.
90. **Water Pipit:** Seen on rice fields.
91. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen most days.
92. **White Wagtail:** Seen daily.
93. **Wren:** Heard at Hornachos.
94. **Dunnock:** Recorded at Hornachos and Cabañas del Castillo.
95. **Alpine Accentor:** Five at Cabañas del Castillo.
96. **Robin:** Seen daily.
97. **Bluethroat:** Seen on rice fields and at Arrocampo.

98. **Black Redstart:** Seen daily.
99. **Stonechat:** Seen daily.
100. **Black Wheatear:** Seen at Hornachos and Alange.
101. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen a Cabañas del Castillo, Hornachos and Alange.
102. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
103. **Song Thrush:** Seen daily.
104. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen on three ays.
105. **Cetti's warbler:** Seen on three days.
106. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen at Arrocampo.
107. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen on one day.
108. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen daily.
109. **Blackcap:** Seen most days.
110. **Common Chiffchaff:** Seen almost every day.
111. **Firecrest:** Seen in garden at Pago de San Clemente.
112. **Long-tailed Tit:** Recorded on two days.
113. **Blue Tit:** Seen most days.
114. **Great Tit:** Seen most days.
115. **Bearded Tit:** A male seen at Arrocampo.
116. **Wallcreeper:** Seen at Cabañas del Castillo.
117. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen daily.
118. **Jay:** Seen at Cabañas del Castillo.
119. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
120. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
121. **Jackdaw:** Seen on four days.
122. **Raven:** Seen most days.
123. **Common Starling:** Seen on the plains.
124. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
125. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
126. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen most days.
127. **Tree Sparrow:** seen on the rice fields.
128. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen on plains west of Trujillo and at Valdecañas.
129. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on rice fields and Arrocampo.
130. **Common Waxbill:** Seen at Mérida, the rice fields and Arrocampo.
131. **Chaffinch:** Seen daily.
132. **Serin:** Seen on several days.
133. **Green finch:** Seen most days.
134. **Goldfinch:** Seen almost daily.
135. **Linnet:** Seen most days.
136. **Hawfinch:** Seen on four days.
137. **Rock Bunting:** Seen at Hornachos, Alange and Cabañas del Castillo.
138. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.

Mammals

Otter

Weasel

Fox

Rabbit

Roe Deer

Butterflies

Wall Brown

Green-striped White

Other insects of interest

Rhinoceros Beetle

Nymph of Cone-headed Grasshopper