

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



SHORT SPRING HOLIDAY TO EXTREMADURA FOR JULIE, PAUL AND PETER

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

22nd – 28th April 2023



Itinerary

22nd April 2023: Transfer from Madrid

23rd April 2023: Madrigalejo area, Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir

24th April 2023: River Guadiana at Valverde de Mérida, Alange Reservoir, River Guadiana at Don Benito

25th April 2023: Monfragüe National Park

26th April 2023: Free Day

27th April 2023: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca and River Almonte

28th April 2023: Arroyo de la Vid and Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid

TRIP REPORT

22nd April 2023: Transfer from Madrid

Martin met Julie, Peter and Paul at Terminal One of Madrid airport off their Manchester flight which had arrived punctually. Quite quickly we were on the southern ring-road and then out on the motorway to Extremadura. At dusk we could see the silhouettes of **White Storks** on their nests as we approached the halfway point of our journey. We reached Casa Rural El Recuerdo at about 23.30.

23rd April 2023: Madrigalejo area, Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir

It was a warm sunny day, with a pleasant light breeze most of the day. We took the road south, past Zorita and onto the edge of the rice fields near Madrigalejo. On the way we saw two **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** in flight and several **Black Kites**. We had a very productive morning along a road, with fruit orchards on one side and rough pasture with scattered trees on the other. Here we saw three **Black-winged Kites**, gorgeous small raptors, including an adult and two juvenile birds. There were **Iberian Grey Shrikes** and **Bee-eaters**. At an old gravel pit we had good views of **Purple Heron**. A **Black Vulture** was being mobbed by a **Buzzard**, which was completely dwarfed, gave us a stunning sensation of the size of the vulture.

On the nearby plains we had excellent views of **Calandra**, **Greater Short-toed**, **Thekla** and **Crested Lark**, along with several **Northern Wheatears**. A chase between a **Calandra** and **Greater Short-toed** again offered us a great size comparison. Further along, we watched two **Rollers** and a **Lesser Kestrel**.



After coffee, we moved to the Alcollarín Reservoir, pausing first to watch **Bee-eaters** beside their colony, for our picnic and to spend the rest of the day. In the picnic area we had great views of **Purple Heron**, **Spoonbill** and **Kingfisher**. Nearby we watched a singing **Great Reed Warbler** and **Melodious Warbler**. We found a summer plumaged **Spotted Redshank** and a range of interesting butterflies included **Black-eyed Blue**. Along the western shore, was a

wonderful flock of **Collared Pratincoles**, courtship-feeding **Gull-billed Terns** and an interesting range of waders, including **Ruff** (including males in summer plumage undertaking a courtship dance with females) and **Little Stint**, a **Black-necked Grebe** and a few duck. **Quail** called from the rough grassland around us.



24th April 2023: River Guadiana at Valverde de Mérida, Alange Reservoir, River Guadiana at Don Benito

A warm sunny day and we headed south to the River Guadiana. Our first stop was near Valverde de Mérida where as soon as we got out of the car we were rewarded with an excellent view of a male **Golden Oriole**. We heard and saw briefly a **Western Olivaceous Warbler**. Very impressive was the large **House Martin** colony under the bridge, along with **Alpine** and **Pallid Swifts**. From there it was just a short drive to the dam of the Alange Reservoir. We enjoyed a lovely walk here, accompanied again by **Alpine Swifts**. The treat was a pair of **Black Wheatear**, which we watched at length. There was a good supporting cast of birds including **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Thekla Lark** and **Iberian Grey Shrike**.

We had a coffee at a nearby bar and then returned to the dam to sit in the shade and have our picnic. From there we drove through Alange and visited the north-eastern shore of the Alange Reservoir. Here there were several **Gull-billed Terns**, **Collared Pratincoles** and a selection of waders including some beautiful **Kentish Plovers**, two summer plumaged **Sanderling** and some **Little Stints**.

It was getting hot, so we drove to the Guadiana River near Don Benito where we walked in partial shade beside an old gravel pit. A **Western Olivaceous Warbler** was heard, not seen, but we did see **Red Avadavat**, lots of **Iberian Magpies** and a charming **Tree Sparrow**.

25th April 2023: Monfragüe National Park

We drove north, across the vast undulating *dehesas*, crossing the Tagus River and then entering the Monfragüe National Park beside the Tiétar River, at the Portilla del Téitar. Here rocky crags emerged from wooded hillsides, a place for nesting **Griffon Vultures** and also a nest of **Eagle Owls**, on which we saw, eventually, two chicks. Often they lay low, hidden, but sometimes, they would rise and peer across the valley. Beautiful. We also had superb views of two **Black Storks** soaring above us, often interacting with **Black Kites** or **Egyptian Vultures**. **Black Vultures** settled on the crags amongst the **Griffons**. A **Spanish Imperial Eagle** gave us an excellent show, soaring over our heads.



We stopped to have coffee in a small hotel set amongst cork oak trees. Following coffee we made our way southward through the park, making several stops at the well-appointed viewpoints. At all we saw **Black** and **Griffon Vultures**.

We completed our visit to Monfragüe with a stop at the famous viewpoint of Salto del Gitano, looking across at the Peña Falcón cliff. Here we watched a **Black Stork** sitting on its nest, **Griffon Vultures** and a **Booted Eagle** soaring overhead, **Peregrine Falcon** and **Raven**, and closer at hand **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Rock Bunting**, **Black Redstart**, **Red-rumped Swallows** and **Crag Martins**. A **Large Psammodromus** lizard emerged from the shadows.



26th April 2023: Free Day: Pago de San Clemente and Trujillo

Julie, Peter and Paul spent the morning on a gentle walk from Casa Rural El Recuerdo, with sightings including **Booted Eagle**, **Nightingales** and **Hoopoe**. This was followed by a visit to Trujillo and Martin met them in the afternoon as they were watching **Lesser Kestrels** at the Bull Ring. Before returning to base, we stopped to watch a roosting **Scops Owl** at close range in a small town park.



27th April 2023: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca and River Almonte

We had an earlier start to make the best of the morning on what promised to be a very hot day. The morning on the plains east of Santa Marta de Magasca was superb, good light with some cloud cover. We found very quickly a **Great Bustard** and saw by the time we left a further eight birds. A displaying **Little Bustard** was more than sufficient reward for the early start. We had several sightings of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** in flight, a **Montagu's Harrier**, an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle** and larks galore. A **Whinchat** was also a nice find. To the south of the village we explored the plains further, seeing perhaps ten **Rollers**, as well as **Little Owl** and a fine male **Montagu's Harrier**. A further four more **Great Bustards** were seen.

After coffee in Santa Marta de Magasca we stopped beside the River Magasca. Here there was a pair of **Cirl Bunting**, **Crag** and House Martins. We then headed to the River Almonme where we had our picnic. A **Grey Wagtail** was watched several times, but it was the sky which drew our attention with a pair of **Short-toed Eagles**, a juvenile **Spanish Imperial Eagle** and all three **vulture** species.

The afternoon was getting exceptionally hot for the time of year. Reaching the mid-thirties, so given the early start, and early return to base was quite in order. The evening outing for night birds yielded again the sound of **Red-necked Nightjars**, but also **Little Owl** and a high-flying **Tawny Owl**.

28th April 2023: Arroyo de la Vid and Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid

We bade farewell to Casa Rural El Recuerdo shortly before 09.00 and made a stop in Trujillo to watch **Pallid Swifts**. Onward then to the beautiful cork oak groves near the Arroyo de la Vid. Here we were surrounded by birdsong: **Nightingales**, **Spanish Sparrows**, **Cetti's Warblers**, **Melodious Warbler** (later seen singing atop a tree) and **Western Orphean Warbler**. We had superb views of a Western Subalpine Warbler, and shorter glimpses of the **Western Orphean**. A **Turtle Dove** purred in the background whilst the wonderful song of **Woodlark** was also heard. Just before we left there was a magnificent fly past of **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**.

We then moved onto the Arrocampo Reservoir near the town of Saucedilla. There overlooking a reedbed, we watched a **Squacco Heron** fly over as we arrived and then during our stay, lovely sightings of **Western Swamphen** with chicks, **Savi's Warblers**, **Reed Warblers**, **Gull-billed Terns** and two **Whiskered Terns**. **Purple Herons** arrived and perched in the reedbeds in front of us. Sadly the time arrived for us to move on. We repaired to the town for a coffee-break and then started our return to Madrid, in the opposite direction to a massive movement from the city at the start of the May bank holiday. We stopped halfway for lunch and then arrived at 15.00 on the dot at Terminal One.

LIST OF SPECIES SEEN

Birds

1. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen at Alange and Alcollarín.
2. **Gadwall**: Seen on three days, on pools on the plains, also Alange and Alcollarín.

3. **Mallard**: Seen most days.
4. **Shoveler**: Seen at Alcollarín.
5. **Red-legged Partridge**: Seen on two days.
6. **Quail**: Heard almost every day.
7. **Little Grebe**: Seen on several days.
8. **Great Crested Grebe**: Seen at Alange and Alcollarín.
9. **Black-necked Grebe**: One at Alcollarín.
10. **Great Cormorant**: Seen on two days.
11. **Black-crowned Night Heron**: One seen at Alcollarín.
12. **Squacco Heron**: One seen at Arrocampo.
13. **Cattle Egret**: Seen at Arrocampo.
14. **Little Egret**: Seen on three days.
15. **Great Egret**: Seen at Alcollarín and Guadiana River.
16. **Grey Heron**: Seen almost daily.
17. **Purple Heron**: Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
18. **Black Stork**: Seen at Monfragüe.
19. **White Stork**: Seen daily.
20. **Glossy Ibis**: Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
21. **Spoonbill**: Seen at Alcollarín and Guadiana.
22. **Egyptian Vulture**: Seen on two days.
23. **Griffon Vulture**: Seen every day.
24. **Black Vulture**: Seen almost daily.
25. **Spanish Imperial Eagle**: Seen at Monfragüe and on the plains.
26. **Short-toed Eagle**: Seen at Monfragüe and on the plains.
27. **Booted Eagle**: Seen on three days.
28. **Black Kite**: Several daily.
29. **Red Kite**: Seen daily.
30. **Marsh Harrier**: Seen on four days.
31. **Montagu's Harrier**: Seen on the plains west of Trujillo.
32. **Common Buzzard**: Seen almost daily.
33. **Black-winged Kite**: Seen at Madrigalejo.
34. **Lesser Kestrel**: Seen on three days.
35. **Common Kestrel**: Seen on one day.
36. **Peregrine**: Seen at Monfragüe.
37. **Water Rail**: Heard twice.
38. **Moorhen**: Seen on three days.
39. **Purple Swamphen**: Seen at Arrocampo.
40. **Common Coot**: Seen at Alcollarín and Alange.
41. **Little Bustard**: Seen on the plains west of Trujillo.
42. **Great Bustard**: Seen on the plains west of Trujillo.
43. **Black-winged Stilt**: Seen on two days.
44. **Stone Curlew**: Heard on the plains.
45. **Collared Pratincole**: Seen at Alcollarín and Alange.
46. **Common Ringed Plover**: Seen at Alcollarín.
47. **Little Ringed Plover**: Seen on three days.
48. **Kentish Plover**: Seen at Alange.
49. **Northern Lapwing**: Small group present at Alcollarín.
50. **Dunlin**: Seen at Alcollarín.

51. **Little Stint:** Present at Alcollarín and Alange.
52. **Sanderling:** Two present at Alange.
53. **Ruff:** Present at Alcollarín, including males with “ruffs”
54. **Common Redshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
55. **Spotted Redshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
56. **Greenshank:** Seen at Alcollarín and Alange.
57. **Wood Sandpiper:** Seen at Alcollarín.
58. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen at Alcollarín and Alange.
59. **Whiskered Tern:** Two at Arrocampo.
60. **Gull-billed Tern:** Seen at Alcollarín, Alange and Arrocampo.
61. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen on two days.
62. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls:** Seen at Alange.
63. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen near Campo Lugar.
64. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen west of Trujillo.
65. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
66. **Woodpigeon:** Seen daily.
67. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
68. **Turtle Dove:** Heard at Monfragüe and Jaraicejo.
69. **Common Cuckoo:** Seen or heard most days.
70. **Great Spotted Cuckoo:** Seen west of Trujillo.
71. **Monk Parakeet:** Seen on our arrival to Madrid.
72. **Scops Owl:** Seen in Trujillo.
73. **Eagle Owl:** Two chicks seen in Monfragüe.
74. **Tawny Owl:** One in flight over Pago de San Clemente one evening.
75. **Little Owl:** Seen on plains.
76. **Red-necked Nightjar:** Calling on two evenings.
77. **Alpine Swift:** Seen at Alange.
78. **Common Swift:** Seen most days.
79. **Pallid Swift:** Seen on three days.
80. **Kingfisher:** Seen on two days.
81. **Bee-eater:** Seen daily.
82. **Roller:** Seen on plains west of Trujillo and Campo Lugar.
83. **Hoopoe:** Seen daily.
84. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen at Monfragüe.
85. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
86. **Greater Short-toed Lark:** Seen on the plains.
87. **Crested Lark:** Seen most days.
88. **Thekla Lark:** Seen on almost daily.
89. **Woodlark:** Singing on two days.
90. **Crag Martin:** Seen most days.
91. **Barn Swallow:** Seen daily.
92. **Red-rumped Swallow:** Seen almost daily.
93. **House Martin:** Seen most days.
94. **Western Yellow Wagtail:** Seen at Alcollarín and Alange.
95. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen beside River Almonte.
96. **White Wagtail:** Seen daily.
97. **Wren:** Recorded daily.
98. **Robin:** Seen on two days.

99. **Nightingale:** Seen daily.
100. **Black Redstart:** Seen daily.
101. **Stonechat:** Seen daily.
102. **Whinchat:** Seen on plains west of Trujillo.
103. **Northern Wheatear:** Seen on plains near Campo Lugar.
104. **Black Wheatear:** Two seen at Alange.
105. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen on three days.
106. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
107. **Cetti's Warbler:** Seen most days.
108. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen daily.
109. **Savi's Warbler:** Seen at Arrocampo.
110. **Reed Warbler:** Seen at Guadiana, Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
111. **Great Reed Warbler:** Seen at Alcollarín and Guadiana.
112. **Western Olivaceous Warbler:** Singing at Valverde de Mérida.
113. **Melodious Warbler:** Seen at Alcollarín and Jaraicejo.
114. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen at Monfragüe.
115. **Subalpine Warbler:** Seen near Jaraicejo.
116. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen on several days.
117. **Western Orphean Warbler:** Seen near Jaraicejo.
118. **Blackcap:** Seen on two days.
119. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on two days.
120. **Blue Tit:** Seen almost daily.
121. **Great Tit:** Seen almost daily.
122. **Bearded Tit:** Heard at Arrocampo.
123. **Nuthatch:** Heard at Monfragüe.
124. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Seen near Jaraicejo.
125. **Golden Oriole:** Seen or heard almost daily.
126. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen on two days.
127. **Woodchat Shrike:** Seen almost daily.
128. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
129. **Common Magpie:** Seen daily.
130. **Jackdaw:** Seen on three days.
131. **Raven:** Seen most days.
132. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
133. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
134. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on two days.
135. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen at Don Benito.
136. **Rock Sparrow:** Heard at Monfragüe.
137. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on one day.
138. **Chaffinch:** Seen almost daily.
139. **Serin:** Seen daily.
140. **Greenfinch:** Seen almost daily.
141. **Goldfinch:** Seen most days.
142. **Linnet:** Seen almost daily.
143. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen at River Magasca.
144. **Rock Bunting:** Seen in Monfragüe.
145. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.

Other wildlife

Butterflies

1. Mallow Skipper
2. Lulworth Skipper
3. Spanish Festoon
4. Swallowtail
5. Orange Tip
6. Western Dappled White
7. Bath White
8. Small White
9. Clouded Yellow
10. Cleopatra
11. Small Copper
12. Brown Argus
13. Black-eyed Blue
14. Holly Blue
15. Painted Lady
16. Meadow Brown

Dragonflies

1. Scarlet Darter
2. Vagrant/Lesser Emperor
3. Blue Emperor
4. Northern Banded Groundling

Mammals

1. Fox
2. Egyptian Mongoose

Reptiles

1. Large Psammodromus
2. Spanish Terrapin

Misc invertebrates

1. Egyptian Grasshopper
2. Red-striped Oil Beetle
3. Violet Carpenter Bee
4. Cinnabar Moth