

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



AUTUMN HOLIDAY TO EXTREMADURA FOR GOSIA AND LOUIS

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

3rd – 14th October 2023



Itinerary

3rd October 2023: Pick-up at Madrid airport.

4th October 2023: Campo Lugar plains and Palazuelo rice fields.

5th October 2023: Alcollarín Reservoir and Garciaz.

6th October 2023: Plains north of Trujillo, Miravete Pass, Arroyo de la Vid and River Almonte

7th October 2023: Plains east of Cáceres, Rivers Tamuja and Magasca, Valdesalor Reservoir

8th October 2023: Madrigalejo, Moheda Alta, Cubilar Reservoir, Vegas Altas and Sierra Brava

9th October 2023: Plains near Guadiloba Reservoir, Malpartida de Cáceres and Guadiloba

10th October 2023: River Ruercas at Cañamero, Pico de Villuercas and Palazuelo rice fields

11th October 2023: Cáceres

12th October 2023: Monfragüe National Park and Pago de San Clemente

13th October 2023: Arrocampo Reservoir and Valdecañas Dam

14th October 2023: Belén Plains, pool near Peraleda, onward journey to Madrid

TRIP REPORT

3rd October 2023: Pick-up at Madrid airport.

Martin met Gosia and Louis at about 14.00 at Terminal 4 and we headed straightaway onto the southern ring road of Madrid and then onwards on the motorway for Extremadura. It was a hot afternoon and with little rain so far this autumn, the landscape looked quite barren still, not much of the sign of autumnal flush of new vegetation. During the journey we saw **White Stork** and **Red Kite**, as well as a **Black Vulture** soon after leaving Madrid.

We had a light, but delicious lunch about a third of the way on the journey and then continued non-stop to reach Casa Rural El Recuerdo late afternoon, with Claudia to welcome us.

4th October 2023: Campo Lugar plains and Palazuelo rice fields.



We set off at 08.30 southwards towards the plains of Campo Lugar. There was a clear sky with all the promise of a hot day to come. At our first stop, there was a light breeze and it was actually very comfortable, with good visibility to scan the plains for birds. We found a few **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** on the ground (more flying) and started counting the **Northern**

Wheatears: we ended up midday with an amazing 34 individuals. We had excellent views of **Thekla** and **Calandra** Larks too. **Serotine Narcissus** and **Merendera**, two delightful little autumn flowers, formed carpets of colour in places, in contrast to the barren landscape. There were groups of **Western Yellow Wagtails** too.

After a coffee stop in the village of Campo Lugar, we continued south to the edge of the rice-growing area. Here the harvest was well underway, and we were amazed to find a large flock of over 630 **Glossy Ibis**, as well as dozens of **Cattle Egrets** and **Little Egrets** on the fresh stubble. On muddier fields we came across small numbers of waders including **Wood Sandpiper**, **Greenshank**, **Ruff** and **Lapwing**. We sought some shade in a small car park at Puebla de Alcollarín for our picnic before continuing our drive through the rice fields north of Palazuelo. Male **Yellow-crowned Bishops** were in full finery and at the River Ruercas, we also saw **Red Avadavats** in breeding plumage.

5th October 2023: Alcollarín Reservoir and Garciaz.



It was another hot and sunny day and we set off at 08.30 southwards again, stopping this time at the Alcollarín Reservoir, just twenty minutes away. Here we spent the whole morning, first on the western shore. Here we walked a small section of the edge of the reservoir, finding a good selection of waders including **Little Stint**, **Ruff**, **Spotted Redshank** and **Kentish Plover**. There were several species of dabbling duck present, including newly arrived **Wigeon** and **Pintail**. Moving along the eastern shore subsequently we added some more waders, such as **Common Redshank**, and found a **Black Stork**. There were large numbers of **Great Crested** and **Little Grebe** forming large rafts on the water. A migrant **Sedge Warbler** was found, as well as a couple of **Pied Flycatchers** and a **Whinchat**.

After lunch, with the temperature rising we sought solace in the hilltop forests above Garciaz. Here we had superb views of several **Two-tailed Pashas**, as well an array of woodland birds such as **Crested Tit**, **Short-toed Treecreeper** and **Firecrest**. The views eastwards the Villuceras mountains were wonderful.

6th October 2023: Plains north of Trujillo, Miravete Pass, Arroyo de la Vid and River Almonte

We set off on another fine morning, promising yet again a hot day ahead. Two **Red-rumped Swallows** were gliding high over the house before we left. Passing Trujillo, we took a road north, across the plains to stop beside fields in open country, close to a drovers' trail. Despite the high temperatures of late and the lack of rain, the large numbers of **Serotine Narcissus** gave the appearance in places of a dusting of snow. **Calandra Larks** were in full voice and **Northern Wheatears** sat on the fences.



Eventually we found one of our target species, a group of 8 **Little Bustards**. Not long afterwards in another field we found a further 21 **Little Bustards** and a large flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** quite close to them. It was excellent to watch these birds feeding and preening, undisturbed. Several **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** were also seen. A **Dartford Warbler** was found in the sparse shrubs.

As the heat rose and heat haze worsened, we quit the plains and after a quick coffee, stopped at the Miravete Pass where a pleasant breeze plus the altitude, took the edge of the heat. A **Grayling** butterfly was present and we heard **Crested Tit**, watched a sizeable flock of **Common Chaffinches** and heard an **Iberian Green Woodpecker**. A shade-blessed picnic site was very welcome.

After lunch we stopped beside the Arroyo de la Vid, watching a **Red Kite** and **Blackcaps**, before completing the afternoon at the River Almonte south of Jaraicejo. Here we saw two **Short-toed Eagles**, a steady passage of **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**, another **Red Kite** and smaller birds including **Grey Wagtail**, **Thekla Lark**, **Chiffchaff** and **Long-tailed Tits**.

7th October 2023: Plasín east of Cáceres, Rivers Tamuja and Magasca, Valdesalor Reservoir



Heading again to the plains, we focused today on the area east of Cáceres. As we entered the area we saw a fine juvenile **Spanish Imperial Eagle** perched on a post, then flying off being mobbed by **Jackdaws**. We took a small road and stopped at an area of high ground. From here we found a couple of groups of **Great Bustards**, which offered us prolonged views in excellent light. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** were seen in flight. **Northern Wheatears** were common and there were parties of **Calandra Larks** and **Thekla Larks** seen as well. **Black** and **Griffon Vultures** rested on the ground, waiting for the air to warm, which it did quite quickly. The day certainly promised to be another hot one!

We stopped at the village of Santa Marta de Magasca for refreshments and also at the river to the south (the Tamuja) and to the north (the Magasca). At the latter we had excellent views of calling **Rock Sparrow**. **Crag Martins** hawked insects across the valley. Grey Wagtails were also present. After lunch under some welcome shade, we offered a lift to a chap from Senegal who was stranded at the village, back to Cáceres where he lived. From Cáceres we spent the afternoon at the Valdesalor Reservoir. Here there was a large flock of **Spoonbill** which entertained us with their frantic feeding, the whole flock rotating slowly clockwise as they churned through the water. There was a nice selection of waders, including **Common Ringed Plover** and **Little Stint**.

We then returned through Cáceres to Casa Rural El Recuerdo with the temperature yet again reaching an unseasonal 35°C.

8th October 2023: Madrigalejo, Moheda Alta, Cubilar Reservoir, Vegas Altas and Sierra Brava

Another hot sunny day and we headed this time south, to the area of Madrigalejo. We looked for Black-winged Kite but without success, but we were luckier with **Stone Curlew**, finding at least twelve individuals at a winter roost site. We had superb views of these strange birds. We

made our second stop at a water storage lake near Moheda Alta where there was a large flock of **Greater Flamingos**, 70 plus birds making it the largest flock in Extremadura for a long time.



There were also double figures for **Spoonbill**, **Red-crested Pochard** and a good selection of other birds including **Kentish**, **Common Ringed** and **Little Ringed Plover**, **Wood Sandpiper** and a selection of dragonflies including **Black Percher**, **Violet Dropwing** and **Broad Scarlet**.

After coffee and out picnic nearby, we drove across the rice fields near Vegas Altas, watching the rice harvest underway. We completed the day beside the Sierra Brava reservoir, finding a **Ruddy Shelduck** amongst a large flock of **Egyptian Geese**. Just as we were about to leave a huge flock of **Glossy Ibis** flew in to drink and bathe at the water's edge. It was a spectacular conclusion of the day.



9th October 2023: Plains near Guadiloba Reservoir, Malpartida de Cáceres and Guadiloba

More hot sunny weather on the menu and so we set off in good time to spend a couple of hours on the plains to the north of the Guadiloba Reservoir near Cáceres. The typical birds were quickly found: **Calandra Larks**, **Thekla Larks**, **Northern Wheatears** and **Whinchat**. We had good views of a flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, a **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** flew over calling and then we came across a fine group of male **Great Bustards**. Then, last but certainly not least, four **Eurasian Dotterel** (two adults and two juveniles) when fed quite unconcernedly about twenty metres from the car.



Delighted with the morning so far, we then skirted around Cáceres and visited a lake near the town of Malpartida de Cáceres. Here in the bay close to where we parked, we watched two **Pectoral Sandpipers** (one quite close to us), **Common Ringed** and **Little Ringed Plovers** (the size difference was impressive), **Black-winged Stilts** and a nice selection of commoner waders. **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** drifted overhead.



We returned to the Guadiloba Reservoir, having a picnic in the shade below the dam and from where we spent the afternoon beside the riverine woodland and scattered holm oaks. Highlights were two **Firecrest**, a **Eurasian Reed Warbler**, a brief **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** and other woodland species. It was a very pleasant conclusion of the day, to which we also added **Autmn Snowflakes** in flower in the dappled shade.

10th October 2023: River Ruercas at Cañamero, Pico de Villuercas and Palazuelo rice fields

To yet another hot sunny day, the response was to go to the mountains, which we did (via a short diversion to Madrigalejo to look for, in vain, the Black-winged Kite). We made our first stop in the deep canyon of the River Ruercas near Cañamero. The gallery woodland of alder and eucalyptus was full of **Common Chiffchaffs** and **Blackcaps**. We were pleased to find our first **Spotted Flycatcher** of the holiday. A **Blue Rock Thrush** was perched on a high outcrop and **Griffon Vultures** soared overhead.



We stopped to visit the church at Guadalupe and then ascended to the 1600 metre peak of Pico de Villuercas, which affords such spectacular views across the north of Extremadura and beyond into Toledo. Several **Blue Rock Thrush** were also seen here, as well as **Red-billed Chough**, a Sparrowhawk and even **Common Chiffchaff** at this high elevation. **Black Redstarts** were also common. We had lunch near the summit and then headed south for a quick visit to the rice fields near Palazuelo. It was rather quiet, although we did see several **Wood Sandpiper**, **Western Yellow Wagtails** and **Yellow-crowned Bishops**. The rice harvest was still underway, to take advantage of the hit sunny weather before the rain which is forecast for the weekend.



11th October 2023: Cáceres

A day of culture and fine dining, with a visit to the World Heritage Site of medieval Cáceres, where we spent the morning exploring the historic centre. This included a visit to the exceptionally good municipal museum with a superb collection of artefacts from pre-historic to Visigoth periods. This was followed by the amazing treat of a gourmet lunch with fine wines at the three-Michelin star Atrio restaurant. Starting at 13.30, we finished at 17.30 and had a comfortable return journey by taxi to Pago de San Clemente.



12th October 2023: Monfragüe National Park and Pago de San Clemente

The morning started rather overcast, by the light cloud dispersed during the first half of the day, with a return to the hot sunny weather.

We north from Trujillo firstly over a landscape dominated by granite and then over the vast undulating *dehesa* landscape, the wood pasture dominated by holm oak trees, broken only by the crossing of the Almonte River. As we approached the Monfragüe National Park we could see the east-west escarpment of quartzite rock, the castle on top and a deep gorge to its west.

We then made a stop at the dramatic gorge of Salto de Gitano, where the Tagus River cut through the quartzite. Here there were dozens of **Griffon Vultures**, as well as some **Black Vultures**, a **Peregrine**, **Rock Bunting** and **Blue Rock Thrush**.

We then headed to the northern edge of the park, stopping at the attractive Portilla del Tiétar gorge. Here we had excellent views of perched **Black** and **Griffon Vulture**. A **Sparrowhawk** harassed the **Crag Martins**. A fine **Great White Egret** flew upstream, whilst parties of **Cormorants** went in the opposite direction. Again we had good views of **Blue Rock Thrush**.

We then took a look at a beautiful cork oak *dehesa*, with **Rock Sparrows** and **Nuthatches** calling. Unfortunately a problem with the clutch meant that we had to call assistance. Luckily a tow-truck and taxi arrived within 45 minutes and we used the wait to further enjoy walking in the cork oak woodland, listening to **Woodlarks** and having our picnic.

The taxi took us back to Casa Rural El Recuerdo and the time in the afternoon was well served by having a swim and then taking an afternoon walk.

13th October 2023: Arrocampo Reservoir and Valdecañas Dam

The weather showed a slight change today, a little bit cooler and with periods of high cloud cover, but there was little wind and the conditions were perfect for a visit to the marsh at Arrocampo.



We picked up the replacement vehicle in Trujillo and continued directly to the village of Saucedilla, parking at the information centre and then walking to the edge of the marsh. We had a very productive morning indeed. Superb views were enjoyed of **Squacco Heron** and **Western Swamphen**, as well as **Bluethroat**. Other species included **Great White Egret**, **Iberian Grey Shrike**, **Zitting Cisticolas**, **Common Waxbills** and **Marsh Harriers**. There were more **Red Kites** in the sky today than we had seen all week. A group of **Bearded Tits** were seen distantly in flight as were two **Penduline Tits**.

As we left to head for a coffee, an unexpected dark morph **Booted Eagle** glided over.

After coffee we went for a short drive to an area west of the marsh seeing **Black-winged Kite** and a selection of waders, including **Black-winged Stilt** and **Little Ringed Plover**. We had our picnic back at the information centre, where amongst the swirling **Barn Swallows** and **House Martins** was a small group of **Alpine Swifts**.

We spent the first part of the afternoon downstream from the Valdecañas dam, seeing a **Peregrine** and **Common Kestrel**, as well as more **Griffon Vulture**. Small birds included **Siskins** and numerous **Crag Martins**. We returned to Trujillo to do some shopping for gifts and passing the San Lazaro Park, saw the long-resident **Mute Swan**.

14th October 2023: Belén Plains, pool near Peraleda, onward journey to Madrid



The weather broke during the night, with some heavy rain before dawn. However, we enjoyed fine, albeit a little bit cooler, weather for our final few hours in Extremadura. After bidding farewell to Casa Rural El Recuerdo, we drove east from Trujillo over the Belén Plains. Here we saw a total of nine **Great Bustard**, a **Whinchat** as well as the usual great supporting cast of **Northern Wheatear**, **Calandra Larks**, some fine **Spanish Sparrows**, **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** on the ground, many **Lapwings** and **Corn Buntings**.



We then joined the motorway and headed in the direction of Madrid, making a stop to check a small pool near the motorway just shy of the border between Extremadura and Castilla La Mancha. From there it was a very easy run to Madrid. We saw a **Black-winged Kite** perched on a wire as well as a good number of **Red Kites**. Their numbers certainly seemed to have increased during the week. We reached Terminal 4 as planned at 13.00 and quite quickly the check-in was organised for the return flight to London.

LIST OF BIRD SPECIES SEEN

1. **Mute Swan**: One in the town park of Trujillo.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen on three days.
3. **Wigeon**: Seen at Alcollarín and Moheda Alta.
4. **Gadwall**: Seen at Alcollarín, Moheda Alta and near Peraleda.
5. **Teal**: Seen at Alcollarín, Moheda Alta, Arrocampo and Peraleda
6. **Mallard**: Seen on most days.
7. **Pintail**: Seen at Alcollarín and Moheda Alta.
8. **Northern Shoveler**: Seen on four days.
9. **Red-crested Pochard**: Seen at Moheda Alta.
10. **Ruddy Shelduck**: One seen with Egyptian Geese at Sierra Brava.
11. **Red-legged Partridge**: Seen on three days.
12. **Little Grebe**: Large numbers at Alcollarín, also seen on most days.
13. **Great Crested Grebe**: Large numbers at Alcollarín, also at Moheda Alta.
14. **Great Cormorant**: Seen most days.
15. **Little Bittern**: Heard at Arrocampo.
16. **Squacco Heron**: Seen at Arrocampo.
17. **Cattle Egret**: Seen most days.
18. **Little Egret**: Seen most days.
19. **Great Egret**: Seen most days.
20. **Grey Heron**: Seen almost daily.
21. **Black Stork**: Seen at Alcollarín.
22. **White Stork**: Seen on the rice fields mainly.
23. **Glossy Ibis**: Seen on four days with big flocks on the rice fields and at Sierra Brava reservoir.
24. **Spoonbill**: Seen on four days.
25. **Greater Flamingo**: 70 present at Moheda Alta.
26. **Griffon Vulture**: Seen every day.
27. **Black Vulture**: Seen almost every day.
28. **Osprey**: Seen at Cubilar Reservoir.
29. **Spanish Imperial Eagle**: Seen on plains east of Cáceres.
30. **Short-toed Eagle**: Seen on two days.
31. **Booted Eagle**: Seen at Arrocampo.
32. **Red Kite**: Seen daily.
33. **Marsh Harrier**: Seen almost daily.
34. **Common Buzzard**: Seen daily.
35. **Sparrowhawk**: Seen on four days.
36. **Black-winged Kite**: One seen at Arrocampo and on return to Madrid.
37. **Common Kestrel**: Seen most days.

38. **Peregrine:** Seen at Monfragüe and Valdecañas.
39. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo.
40. **Moorhen:** Heard at Arrocampo and on the rice fields.
41. **Western Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
42. **Common Coot:** Seen at Alcollarín, Moheda Alta and Arrocampo.
43. **Little Bustard:** 29 seen on plains north of Trujillo.
44. **Great Bustard:** Seen on the plains east of Cáceres and on Belén Plains.
45. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen almost daily.
46. **Stone Curlew:** Roosting birds seen near Madrigalejo.
47. **Common Ringed Plover:** Seen at three sites.
48. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on six days.
49. **Kentish Plover:** Seen on three days.
50. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen almost daily.
51. **Eurasian Dotterel:** Four on plains east of Cáceres.
52. **Little Stint:** Seen at Alcollarín and Valdesalor reservoirs.
53. **Ruff:** Seen on rice fields and Alcollarín.
54. **Common Snipe:** Seen almost daily.
55. **Common Redshank:** One at Alcollarín.
56. **Spotted Redshank:** seen at Alcollarín.
57. **Greenshank:** Seen most days.
58. **Pectoral Sandpiper:** Two west of Cáceres.
59. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen most days.
60. **Wood Sandpiper:** Seen on three days.
61. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen on four days.
62. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen most days.
63. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen at Alcollarín and rice fields.
64. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on four days on the plains.
65. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen north of Trujillo and east of Cáceres.
66. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
67. **Woodpigeon:** Seen almost daily.
68. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
69. **Little Owl:** Seen on four days.
70. **Alpine Swift:** Seen at Arrocampo.
71. **Kingfisher:** Seen on most days.
72. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost daily.
73. **Iberian Green Woodpecker:** Heard at Miravete.
74. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Recorded on three days.
75. **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen at Guadiloba and also heard in garden.
76. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
77. **Crested Lark:** Seen most days.
78. **Thekla Lark:** Seen most days.
79. **Woodlark:** Seen on two days.
80. **Sand Martin:** Seen at Arrocampo.
81. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost days.
82. **Barn Swallow:** Seen on two days
83. **Red-rumped Swallow:** Seen on one day.
84. **House Martin:** Seen almost daily.
85. **Western Yellow Wagtail:** Seen most days.

86. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen on four days.
87. **White Wagtail:** Seen almost daily.
88. **Wren:** Seen on several days.
89. **Robin:** Seen daily.
90. **Bluethroat:** Seen at Arrocampo.
91. **Black Redstart:** Seen daily.
92. **Stonechat:** Seen daily.
93. **Whinchat:** Seen on four days.
94. **Northern Wheatear:** Seen mainly on the plains in good numbers.
95. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen on three days.
96. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
97. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen on one day.
98. **Cetti's Warbler:** Heard on several days and seen at Arrocampo.
99. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen on most days.
100. **Sedge Warbler:** Seen at Alcollarín.
101. **Common Reed Warbler:** Seen at Guadiloba and Arrocampo.
102. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen on five days.
103. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen daily.
104. **Blackcap:** Seen on most days.
105. **Chiffchaff:** Seen almost daily.
106. **Willow Warbler:** Seen on five days.
107. **Firecrest:** Seen at Garcias and Guadiloba.
108. **Spotted Flycatcher:** Seen near Cañamero.
109. **Pied Flycatcher:** Seen on four days.
110. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen most days.
111. **Crested Tit:** Seen on two days.
112. **Blue Tit:** Seen almost daily.
113. **Great Tit:** Seen almost daily.
114. **Bearded Tit:** Seen at Arrocampo.
115. **Nuthatch:** Recorded on two days.
116. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Recorded on four days.
117. **Penduline Tit:** Seen at Arrocampo.
118. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen daily.
119. **Eurasian jay:** Seen on four days.
120. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
121. **Common Magpie:** Seen daily.
122. **Red-billed Chough:** Seen on Pico de Villuercas.
123. **Jackdaw:** Seen mainly on the plains.
124. **Raven:** Seen daily.
125. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
126. **Common Starling:** Seen on plains east of Cáceres.
127. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
128. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen almost daily.
129. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on two days.
130. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen on three days.
131. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on four days.
132. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on four days.
133. **Yellow-crowned Bishop:** Seen on the rice fields.

134. **Chaffinch:** Seen almost daily.
135. **Serin:** Seen on four days.
136. **Goldfinch:** Seen almost daily.
137. **Linnet:** Seen almost daily.
138. **Siskin:** Seen at Valdecañas.
139. **Hawfinch:** Seen almost daily.
140. **Cirl Bunting:** heard at River Almonte.
141. **Rock Bunting:** Seen at Monfragüe.
142. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

Other Wildlife of Note

Butterflies

Swallowtail

Two-tailed Pasha

Cardinal

Grayling

Wall Brown

Bath White

Mallow Skipper

Dragonflies

Migrant Hawker

Long Skimmer

Red-veined Darter

Common Darter

Broad Scarlet

Violet dropwing

Black Percher



Reptiles

Spanish Terrapin

Large Psammodromus

Western Psammodromus

Iberian Grass Snake

Misc

Fox

Red Deer

Autumn flowers

Sea Squill

Autumn Squill

Merendera

Autumn Snowflake

Serotine Narcissus