

# BIRDING EXTREMADURA



**EARLY AUTUMN HOLIDAY TO EXTREMADURA FOR TINA AND TRACEY**

**Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura**

**3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023**



## **Itinerary**

**3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023: Transfer from Madrid and stop at Arrocampo Reservoir**

**4<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Madrigalejo, plains near Campo Lugar, Alcollarín Reservoir and Azud de Canchalejas.**

**5<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, River Almonte near Jaraicejo and Arroyo de la Vid.**

**6<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Monfragüe National Park and Trujillo**

**7<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Plains near Cáceres**

## TRIP REPORT

### 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023: Transfer from Madrid and stop at Arrocampo Reservoir

Martin collected Tina and Tracy at Terminal 1 at Madrid airport at 11.00, just as a shower of rain was starting. The rainswept cloudy sky was a feature as we made very good progress on the ring road around the south of Madrid and we were soon crossing the vast arable plains of Castilla La Mancha, before the landscape started to change halfway on our journey, near Talavera. Now the Gredos Mountains were close to our north and the typical *dehesa* woodland started to appear.

There was very little traffic (it was mostly heading towards Madrid, as the school holidays were finishing). We stopped for a lunch just east of Saucedilla. From there it was just a few minutes before our first scheduled stop, but we made an unscheduled one to watch a **Short-toed Eagle** perched on a pylon and our first **Griffon Vultures** soaring across. At Saucedilla we walked beside part of the Arrocampo Reservoir. It was quite windy and rain was always threatening, but we managed well, with birds of prey such as **Black Kite** and **Marsh Harrier**, **Purple** and **Grey Herons** and a good suite of small birds such as **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Stonechat**, **Western Yellow Wagtail** and **Woodchat Shrike**. We also had good views of two dragonflies: **Long Skimmer** and **Northern Banded Groundling** and brief views of a group of **Egyptian Mongoose**.

Eventually the prospect of heavier rain, took us back to the car and thence onward to base. It was about 16.30 when we reached Pago de San Clemente where Claudia welcomed us into Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

### 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Madrigalejo, plains near Campo Lugar, Alcollarín Reservoir and Azud de Canchalejas.

It was still rather overcast at dawn and with some light rain, but quickly the clouds cleared and we enjoyed warm sunshine almost the whole day.

We headed first southwards towards Zorita and then across open country before dropping to the rice and fruit-growing area near Madrigalejo. Here we drove along a small road, beside fruit orchards, finding two **Black-winged Kites** and also enjoying views of **Iberian Magpies** and **Iberian Grey Shrikes**. Beside a small gravel pit, we had very good sightings of **Common Waxbill** and **Red Avadavat**, in breeding plumage.



From there we proceeded to cross the plains near Campo Lugar, seeing a party of **Great Bustard** in flight as soon as we entered the area. Other birds included huge flocks of **Calandra Larks**, several hundred **Egyptian Geese** as well as groups of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**. **Greater Short-toed Larks** were heard singing, but not seen, but we did see a couple of migrant **Pied Flycatchers**.

After coffee in the village, we continued to the Alcollarín Reservoir. Here we spent almost the whole of the rest of the day, enjoying some walks through the *dehesa* wood pasture and along the shore of the lake. A total of 56 species were seen, with highlights including a pair of **Bonelli's Eagles** soaring overhead, **Short-toed Eagles**, **Montagu's Harrier**, two **Black Stork**, five **Black Terns**, as well as several species of shorebird and smaller birds like **Western Bonelli's Warbler**, **Sardinian Warbler**, **Corn Buntings**, **Red-legged Partridge**, **Woodchat** and **Iberian Grey Shrike** and both **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**. A **Large Psammmodromus** lizard was seen.

We completed the day at the small reservoir at Canchalejas. Here we were delighted by the large number of **Northern Banded Groundlings** at our feet.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, River Almonte near Jaraicejo and Arroyo de la Vid**

It was a fine sunny day, with just a little bit of cloud appearing in the afternoon, and the temperatures staying quite comfortable.

Tracey wished to spend the morning resting, so Tina and Martin spent the time exploring the plains north-west of Trujillo. We enjoyed an excellent walk along an ancient drovers' trail. **Calandra Larks** were once again the bird which epitomized the habitat, but we also saw two

**Greater Short-toed Larks** as well. **Whinchats** were perched on thistles. Soon after setting off we found three **Great Bustards** standing at the far end of the field, but they mysteriously disappeared as we approached.



However, close to the car, we found first two and then another two **Little Bustards** and we had prolonged views of them. Whilst watching them, a large flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** flew over, offering us excellent views.



A little further on we stopped at an area of higher ground to watch small groups of vultures passing over. At one moment they were joined by a **Spanish Imperial Eagle**. We dropped down to the Magasca River and walked beside it for a short distance. **Pied Flycatchers** and **Sardinian Warblers** were present. After coffee in the little village of Santa Marta de Magasca, we



returned to base to collect Tracey and then stopped for our picnic beside the River Almonte, just south of Jaraicejo. **Thekla Larks** were singing and in the vegetation along the river we saw migrants such as **Willow Warblers**. Crag Martins were present around the bridge. Two **Booted Eagles** glided over, calling and shortly afterwards a **Short-toed Eagle** was seen.

We then stopped beside some cork oak woodland near the Arroyo de La Vid. **Geniez's Wall Lizards** were present on the bridge there, and we watched **Blackcap** and **Willow Warblers** feeding.

### **6<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Monfragüe National Park and Trujillo**

A fine and hot sunny day, although we appreciated some light cloud and a breeze by late afternoon.

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 left the main road and drove up a small road to a parking area close to the castle. From there we walked through wild olives and cork oak to the top of the ridge, to survey the vast panorama to the north and to the south of us. Ascending the castle (more a watchtower than castle), we came across birds attracted to the mastic berries such as **Hawfinches** and **Chaffinches**. Vultures glided past us, below us and at eye level.

We descended to the rocky overhang below the castle, where we had a guided tour of the rock paintings, some dating back 10,000 years. **Crag Martins** and **Red-rumped Swallows** accompanied us.



From there we stopped for coffee in the hamlet of Villareal de San Carlos. We continued through the park, across a landscape of Mediterranean scrub, where once there had been

eucalyptus plantations. At the Portilla del Tiétar we stopped to watch a **Two-tailed Pasha** butterfly and great views of **Egyptian, Griffon** and **Black Vultures**. A **Western Subalpine Warbler** was present at the viewpoint too. As we retraced our steps, two **Black Stork** were seen soaring overhead. We had lunch at a belt of pines, where we watched **Crested Tits** and a **Bonelli's Eagle** soaring overhead with the vultures.



Along the road, we saw several **Red Deer**, some very close. We stopped beside the Tagus River, beside a tract of intact Mediterranean forest, watching **Hawfinches, Blue Tits, Great Tits** and a **Garden Warbler** coming to drink.





We completed our visit at the famous Salto de Gitano viewpoint, looking across to the massive Peña Falcon cliff. Here there were dozens of **Griffon Vultures**, including some juveniles still receiving food from their parents.

We had lovely views of a **Blue Rock Thrush**, as well as **Rock Buntings**. **Crag Martins**, **House Martins** and **Red-rumped Swallows** hawked insects in front of us and a **Short-toed Eagle** was also watched.

We completed the afternoon with a brief stop at the Main Square of Trujillo to admire the history and architecture, as well as a **Booted Eagle** which soared overhead.

### **7<sup>th</sup> September 2023: Plains near Cáceres**

It was a rather cloudier and cooler morning than yesterday but did clear up by late morning. Tina and Tracey bade farewell to Casa Rural El Recuerdo after breakfast and we drove west to stop on the plains close to the city of Cáceres. We had good views of **Greater Short-toed Larks**, **Calandra Larks**, **Little Owls**, **Northern Wheatear** and **Whinchats**, but the cloudy conditions impeded the flight of large birds of prey. We did enjoy however a fine male **Montagu's Harrier** flying past and a **Short-toed Eagle** perched on a nearby pylon.



Stopping at the River Tamuja, we watched a **Green Sandpiper** feeding and several **Spanish Terrapins**.

Following coffee ta Santa Marta de Magasca we retraced our steps and at the place where we had our very first stop of the day, we paused for our final stop. By now the vultures were airborne and then the barking call of a **Spanish Imperial Eagle** was heard. What followed was the spectacle of at least three, perhaps four, adults, sky dancing above us. It was an exciting and satisfying way to complete the short birding break in Extremadura.

## LIST OF BIRD SPECIES SEEN

1. **Egyptian Goose:** A large flock on Campo Lugar plains and also seen at Alcollarín.
2. **Northern Shoveler:** Seen at Alcollarín.
3. **Gadwall:** Seen at Alcollarín.
4. **Teal:** Seen at Alcollarín.
5. **Mallard:** Seen most days.
6. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen at Alcollarín and on the plains.
7. **Little Grebe:** Large numbers at Alcollarín.
8. **Great Crested Grebe:** Large numbers at Alcollarín.
9. **Stock Dove:** One seen on plains near Cáceres.
10. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
11. **Woodpigeon:** Seen daily.
12. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
13. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains at Campo Lugar and near Cáceres.
14. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen north-west of Trujillo.
15. **Little Bustard:** Seen on the plains north-west of Trujillo.
16. **Great Bustard:** Seen on the plains north-west of Trujillo and Campo Lugar.
17. **Common Swift:** Seen near Madrigalejo.
18. **Moorhen:** Seen at Alcollarín.
19. **Purple Swamphen:** Heard at Arrocampo.
20. **Common Coot:** Seen at Alcollarín.
21. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen at Alcollarín.
22. **Northern Lapwing:** Small group present at Alcollarín, also on plains.
23. **Common Ringed Plover:** One at Alcollarín.
24. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen at Alcollarín.
25. **Little Stint:** Present at Alcollarín.
26. **Dunlin:** Seen at Alcollarín.
27. **Ruff:** Present at Alcollarín.
28. **Greenshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
29. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen at Alcollarín and River Tamuja.
30. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen at Alcollarín.
31. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen at Alcollarín.
32. **Black Tern:** Five seen at Alcollarín.
33. **Black Stork:** Seen at Alcollarín and Monfragüe.
34. **Great Cormorant:** Seen most days.
35. **Little Bittern:** Heard (and seen briefly) at Arrocampo.
36. **Grey Heron:** Seen daily.
37. **Purple Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo.
38. **Great Egret:** Seen at Alcollarín and at Arrocampo.
39. **Little Egret:** Seen most days.
40. **Cattle Egret:** Seen at Alcollarín and at Arrocampo.
41. **Spoonbill:** Seen at Alcollarín.
42. **Black-winged Kite:** Two seen at Madrigalejo.
43. **Egyptian Vulture:** Seen at Monfragüe
44. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen every day.
45. **Black Vulture:** Seen every day.
46. **Short-toed Eagle:** Seen daily.



47. **Booted Eagle:** Seen near Jaraicejo, Trujillo and Monfragüe.
48. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen on the plains.
49. **Bonelli's Eagle:** Seen at Alcollarín and Monfragüe.
50. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen at Arrocampo and Alcollarín.
51. **Montagu's Harrier:** Seen at Alcollarín and on the plains.
52. **Black Kite:** Seen at Alcollarín.
53. **Common Buzzard:** Seen almost daily.
54. **Little Owl:** Seen on plains near Cáceres.
55. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost daily.
56. **Kingfisher:** Seen on three days.
57. **Bee-eater:** Seen or heard almost daily.
58. **Common Kestrel:** Seen most days.
59. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen every day.
60. **Woodchat Shrike:** Seen most days.
61. **Jay:** Heard at Monfragüe and Tamuja River.
62. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
63. **Common Magpie:** Seen daily.
64. **Jackdaw:** Seen at Arrocampo and on the plains.
65. **Raven:** Seen on the plains.
66. **Crested Tit:** Seen at Monfragüe.
67. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on two days.
68. **Blue Tit:** Seen almost daily.
69. **Great Tit:** Seen almost daily.
70. **Greater Short-toed Lark:** Seen on the plains.
71. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
72. **Crested Lark:** Seen most days.
73. **Thekla Lark:** Seen at Alcollarín and on the plains.
74. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen on three days.
75. **Common Reed Warbler:** Seen at Madrigalejo, Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
76. **Crag Martin:** Seen most days.
77. **Barn Swallow:** Seen daily.
78. **Red-rumped Swallow:** Seen almost daily.
79. **House Martin:** Seen daily.
80. **Western Bonelli's Warbler:** Seen at Alcollarín.
81. **Willow Warbler:** Seen most days.
82. **Cetti's Warbler:** Heard on several days.
83. **Blackcap:** Seen at Monfragüe and at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.
84. **Garden Warbler:** Seen at Monfragüe.
85. **Western Orphean Warbler:** Seen at Monfragüe.
86. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen on several days.
87. **Western Subalpine Warbler:** Seen at Monfragüe.
88. **Wren:** Seen on several days.
89. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
90. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
91. **Spotted Flycatcher:** Seen most days.
92. **Pied Flycatcher:** Seen most days.
93. **Black Redstart:** Seen at Monfragüe.
94. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Monfragüe.

95. **Whinchat:** Seen on the plains.
96. **Stonechat:** Seen daily.
97. **Northern Wheatear:** Seen on the plains.
98. **Common Waxbill:** Seen at Madrigalejo, Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
99. **Red Avadavat:** Seen at Madrigalejo.
100. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
101. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen at Jaraicejo.
102. **Western Yellow Wagtail:** Seen on two days.
103. **White Wagtail:** Seen on two days.
104. **Tawny Pipit:** Seen on plains.
105. **Tree Pipit:** Seen at Monfragüe.
106. **Chaffinch:** Seen at Monfragüe.
107. **Hawfinch:** Seen at Monfragüe.
108. **Serin:** Seen at casa Rural El Recuerdo.
109. **Goldfinch:** Seen most days.
110. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.
111. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen at River Magasca
112. **Rock Bunting:** Seen at Monfragüe.