

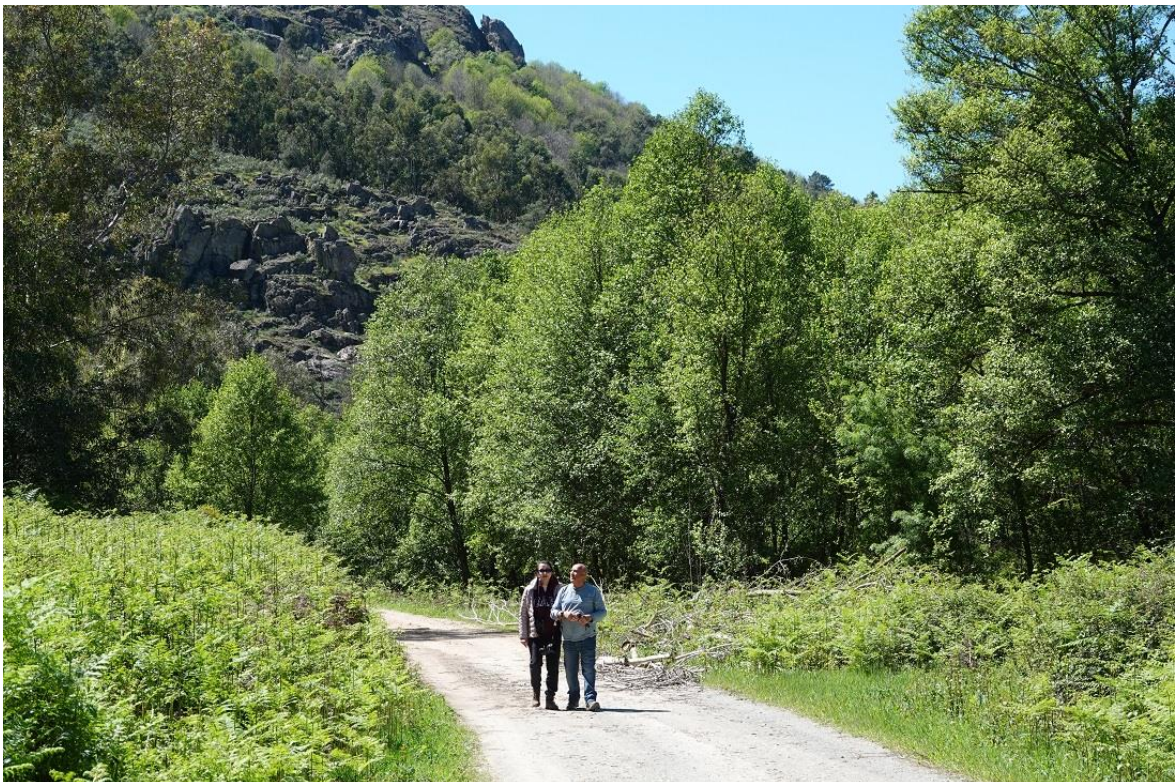
BIRDING EXTREMADURA



SPRING HOLIDAY FOR HAIFA AND BADER

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

5th April 2024 – 12th April 2024



Itinerary

5th April 2024: Pick-up at Madrid airport

6th April 2024: Plains of Campo Lugar and Alcollarín Reservoir

7th April 2024: The rice fields of Madrigalejo, Vegas Altas and Palazuelo

8th April 2024: Trujillo, Cáceres, Malpártida de Cáceres and plains east of Cáceres

9th April 2024: Jaraicejo and Villuercas Mountains

10th April 2024: Monfragüe

11th April 2024: Arrocampo Reservoir, Valdecañas woodlands

12th April 2024: Plains east of Cáceres and Cáceres

TRIP REPORT

5th April 2024: Pick-up at Madrid airport

Martin met Haifa and Bader at Terminal 1 of Madrid airport following the arrival on time of their flight from Istanbul. We had a good run from Madrid, with a stop for a meal at the half-way point. On the journey we saw a **Little Bustard** flying over the motorway, a **Marsh Harrier** and several **White Storks**. It was 21.30 when we reached Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

6th April 2024: Plains of Campo Lugar and Alcollarín Reservoir

It was a warm, but overcast day, with barely any wind. The **Nightingale** was serenading us as we left at 09.00, sitting in a tree in full view. We headed south to the plains near Campo Lugar where we were enthralled by the sight of displaying **Great Bustards**. Several males were in full display, attracting the interest of females. Whilst we stood there, a **Montagu's Harrier** passed by, two **Little Bustards** chased each other, and a **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** flew over.

Further along the plain we watched three **Rollers** and enjoyed great views of numerous **Corn Buntings**, **Calandra Larks**, **Thekla** and **Crested Larks**.



European Bee-eaters

After coffee near Campo Lugar, we spent the rest of the day at the Alcollarín Reservoir. We started our visit watching a flock of **Bee-eaters**, hunting bees and perching on the fence and on the road. The water of the reservoir was wonderfully calm, and **Spoonbills** foraging at its shore. We had our picnic surrounded by holm oak trees and flower-rich meadows. In the afternoon we had an excellent walk along the western bank of the reservoir. As well as more **Spoonbills**, we saw an interesting array of duck including **Garganey**, **Wigeon**, **Shoveler** and **Gadwall**, some waders such as **Greenshank** and a **Red-knobbed Coot**. Perhaps most memorable was watching the courtship displays of **Great Crested Grebes**, offering water weed to each other and dancing and head-tossing. It really was a wonderful day for birds to be in courtship.

7th April 2024: The rice fields of Madrigalejo, Vegas Altas and Palazuelo

There was some rain as we started, bearing with it dust from the Sahara, leaving the surface of the car very stained. Luckily it had eased by the time we had started birding. We drove first along a quiet road, with fruit orchards on one side and rough pasture and scattered trees on the other and it was here where we had excellent views of a **Black-winged Kite**. There were also several **Iberian Grey Shrikes**, **Woodchat Shrikes**, **Bee-eaters** and two **Griffon Vultures** perched on pylons waiting for the rain to pass.

We continued through some rice fields and stopped beside the dam of the Sierra Brava reservoir just as two **Great Spotted Cuckoos** flew over. We then went to the village of Vegas Altas where we had an excellent coffee break at a friendly small bar. We then drove around rice fields behind the village, finding some very smart Iberian **Yellow Wagtails** and numerous **Stonechats**, as well as **Greater Short-toed Larks**.



Greater Short-toed Lark

We had our picnic beside the River Ruercas, now with the sun shining and our first sight of blue sky since the start of the holiday. **Nightingales** sang from the thickets. Following a walk along tracks close to the river, we proceeded to drive through the rice growing area near Palazuelo. Here we found more Iberian **Yellow Wagtails**, as small groups of waders including **Kentish** and **Little Ringed Plovers**, **Dunlin** and **Little Stint**.



Eurasian Stonechat

8th April 2024: Trujillo, Cáceres, Malpártida de Cáceres and plains east of Cáceres

It was a mixed bag of weather today, with heavy showers, a fresh wind and some sunny periods. We started off beside the Bull Ring in Trujillo to watch the nesting **Lesser Kestrels** there, followed by the treat of watching a pair of roosting **Scops Owls** (one fast asleep, the other glaring at us). We then drove west to Cáceres to visit the Parque del Principe, a very attractive city-centre park which provided us with excellent opportunities to photograph birds which are normally shy, especially the **Iberian Magpies**.

Coffee was enjoyed at Malpartida de Cáceres, timed perfectly to miss a downpour of rain. We then had a picnic beside a pool where we watched **Black-winged Stilts**, **White Storks**, **Mallard**, **Shoveler** and **Gadwall**.



Scops Owl



Iberian Magpie

We then returned to Trujillo taking a slow track across the plains, enjoying this vast landscape with stunning spring flowers. **Crested, Thekla** and **Calandra Larks** perched on fence posts, as did countless **Corn Buntings**. We also saw at least six different **Montagu's Harriers**, including a melanistic individual. Great views were also had of squadrons of **Griffon Vultures** passing slowly past in the strong head wind and a pair of **Red-legged Partridge**.



Red-legged Partridge

9th April 2024: Jaraicejo and Villuercas Mountains

There was ice on the car first thing, but we enjoyed a day without rain, with wonderful clear blue skies and sunshine, and barely any wind. We made our way northwards a short distance, passing the small town of Jaraicejo and rising onto a plateau of heathland dominated by broom and lavender, which were both in flower. At our very first stop we had views of singing **Spectacled Warblers** and **Dartford Warblers**. **Thekla Larks** sang around us and a stream of vultures crossed the sky. We entered a wonderful cork oak woodland, where **Short-toed Treecreepers** were singing. As we emerged from the wood, a group of **Tawny Pipits** were on the heath. We made a second stop nearby, at the Arroyo de la Vid where **Crag Martins** hawked insects beside the old bridge.

After coffee nearby we headed eastwards to the glorious Villuercas Mountains. We had our picnic at the highest point, which blessed us with an extraordinary view under perfect conditions: to the snow-capped Gredos Mountains to the north and the undulating sierras of Badajoz to the south. Several **Griffon Vultures** passed us at eye-level.

We then passed through Guadalupe, admiring the historic monastery and then stopping for a lovely afternoon walk beside the River Ruercas. There were singing **Nightingales**, **Greenfinches**, **Serins**, and **Blackcaps**, whilst we also saw a mating pair of **Blue Rock Thrush**.

10th April 2024: Monfragüe

There was fine and warm weather today, with again wonderful blue skies. We headed north from Trujillo across an ocean-like expanse of *dehesa* landscape to reach the Monfragüe National Park. We stopped below the castle and enjoyed a wonderful circular walk to the castle and back, affording us amazing views across the park and the wider landscape. We could look down onto **Griffon Vultures** gliding in the distance. We then made a stop in the viewpoint of the Salto de Gitano, although it felt chilly we saw **Black Stork** on the nest and **Blue Rock Thrush**, as well as a plethora of **Griffon Vultures**.

We stopped for a welcome coffee in Villareal de San Carlos, where **Barn Swallows** perched on the walls of the buildings along the street. We made a lovely walk nearby, down to a stream which was flowing fast, and past gallery woodland in fresh greens of springs, hosting singing **Nightingales**. Onward through the park, we stopped for a picnic, enjoying a view of more **Griffon** and **Cinereous (=Black) Vultures**, and a **Short-toed Eagle**. A **Sardinian Warbler** sang in the scrub.



Subalpine Warbler

We then stopped at the Portilla del Tiétar viewpoint. Here we had good views of all three species of vultures. A **Subalpine Warbler** sang close by and gave us lovely views. Stopping at the bridge over the River Tagus we were mesmerised by **Alpine Swifts** and **House Martins**.

We completed the day at the Salto de Gitano again, this time in warm sunshine, where as well as close views of vultures, we had tremendous views of **Blue Rock Thrush** and **Black Redstart**.

11th April 2024: Arrocampo Reservoir, Valdecañas woodlands

An even warmer day today and there was hardly a breath of wind, which made a visit to the marsh at Arrocampo a perfect plan. We stood at one of the observation hides for nearly two hours, soaking in a wonderful array of species. Especially noteworthy were the large numbers of **Purple Herons**. There were also several **Ferruginous Duck**, good views of **Purple Swamphen** and smaller birds like **Savi's Warblers**, **Red Avadavat** and **Zitting Cisticola**.



Ferruginous Duck

After a break for coffee and Spanish tortilla, we returned to the marsh and watched displaying **Marsh Harriers** and **Pallid Swifts** drinking. A drive around the area afterwards produced some **Bee-eaters** and **Red-legged Partridge**. We had lunch in the shade of oaks in a *dehesa* nearby and then watched more **Purple Herons** and groups of **Gull-billed Terns**.

As it became warmer, we moved to the nearby hills and watched vultures soaring overhead and a **Rock Bunting** singing. The flowers were spectacular and the landscape amazing, with such beautiful light and the colours of spring.

12th April 2024: Plains east of Cáceres and Cáceres

It was our final morning and we were welcomed by clear blue skies. After our sad farewells, we drove west towards Cáceres, making a brief detour to see an enchanting **Little Owl**, plenty of **Jackdaws**, some **Black** and **Griffon Vultures** on the ground and a couple of **Rollers**. A fitting and satisfying way to complete the holiday. It was then just a short distance to reach the car-hire check-in near the bus terminal in Cáceres.

LIST OF SPECIES SEEN

BIRDS

1. **Egyptian Goose**
2. **Wigeon**
3. **Gadwall**
4. **Mallard**
5. **Northern Shoveler**
6. **Garganey**
7. **Ferruginous Duck**
8. **Red-legged Partridge**
9. **Great Crested Grebe**
10. **Great Cormorant**
11. **Cattle Egret**
12. **Little Egret**
13. **Great Egret**
14. **Grey Heron**
15. **Purple Heron**
16. **Black Stork**
17. **White Stork**
18. **Glossy Ibis**
19. **Spoonbill**
20. **Black-winged Kite**
21. **Black Kite**
22. **Red Kite**
23. **Egyptian Vulture**
24. **Griffon Vulture**
25. **Black Vulture**
26. **Short-toed Eagle**
27. **Marsh Harrier**
28. **Montagu's Harrier**
29. **Common Buzzard**
30. **Booted Eagle**
31. **Lesser Kestrel**
32. **Common Kestrel**
33. **Moorhen**
34. **Western Swamphen**
35. **Common Coot**
36. **Red-knobbed Coot**
37. **Little Bustard**
38. **Great Bustard**
39. **Black-winged Stilt**
40. **Stone Curlew**
41. **Little Ringed Plover**
42. **Kentish Plover**
43. **Greenshank**
44. **Dunlin**
45. **Little Stint**

46. **Gull-billed Tern**
47. **Black-headed Gull**: Seen on one day.
48. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**
49. **Feral Pigeon**
50. **Woodpigeon**
51. **Collared Dove**
52. **Great Spotted Cuckoo**
53. **Common Cuckoo**
54. **Scops Owl**
55. **Little Owl**
56. **Alpine Swift**
57. **Common Swift**
58. **Pallid Swift**
59. **Bee-eater**
60. **Roller**
61. **Hoopoe**
62. **Calandra Lark**
63. **Greater Short-toed Lark**
64. **Crested Lark**
65. **Thekla Lark**
66. **Crag Martin**
67. **Barn Swallow**
68. **Red-rumped Swallow**
69. **House Martin**
70. **Tawny Pipit**
71. **Western Yellow Wagtail**
72. **White Wagtail**
73. **Nightingale**
74. **Black Redstart**
75. **Stonechat**
76. **Northern Wheatear**
77. **Blue Rock Thrush**
78. **Blackbird**
79. **Cetti's Warbler**
80. **Zitting Cisticola**
81. **Savi's Warbler**
82. **Dartford Warbler**
83. **Spectacled Warbler**
84. **Subalpine Warbler**
85. **Sardinian Warbler**
86. **Wren**
87. **Blue Tit**
88. **Great Tit**
89. **Short-toed Treecreeper**
90. **Iberian Grey Shrike**
91. **Woodchat Shrike**
92. **Jay**
93. **Iberian Magpie**

- 94. **Common Magpie**
- 95. **Jackdaw**
- 96. **Raven**
- 97. **Spotless Starling**
- 98. **House Sparrow**
- 99. **Spanish Sparrow**
- 100. **Red Avadavat**
- 101. **Chaffinch**
- 102. **Serin**
- 103. **Goldfinch**
- 104. **Linnet**
- 105. **Rock Bunting**
- 106. **Corn Bunting**