

# BIRDING EXTREMADURA



**SHORT EARLY SPRING HOLIDAY FOR SARAH, SUE AND ULRIKE**

**Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura**

**7<sup>th</sup> March – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024**



*Wrapped-up warm*

## **Itinerary**

**7<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Pick-up at Madrid airport**

**8<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Plains between Trujillo and Cáceres**

**9<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Sierra Brava Reservoir, Campo Lugar, the rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir**

**10<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Monfragüe National Park**

**11<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Return to Madrid**

## TRIP REPORT

### 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Pick-up at Madrid airport

Martin met Sarah, Sue and Ulrike at Madrid airport and we set off at 17.30 around the southern ring-road and then onto the motorway to Extremadura. We stopped at Las Esparteras bar having just crossed into the region of Castille la Mancha, for a tasty snack, before continuing our journey. We arrived in darkness at casa Rural El Recuerdo at about 21.15.

### 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Plains between Trujillo and Cáceres

Sunshine and showers with a fresh wind summed up the weather today, so it felt often quite chilly during our stops on the open plains. We headed west from Trujillo, entering the vast plains, looking stunning with the yellow mantle of **Tall Rocket** in flower. At our first stop we saw a group of **Great Bustards** which included a male in full display. We had much more distant views of a small group of **Little Bustards**. A large flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** also erupted from the same field, and we obtained subsequently some excellent views of two at quite close range. **Calandra Larks** sang from all sides. Taking a small dirt track, we stood, surrounded by the plains, watching a distant **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, as well as smaller birds such as **Northern Lapwing**, **Crested Larks** and **Lesser Kestrel**.



*Looking for Ulrike's bird*

We continued onto the village of Santa Marta de Magsaca, where we stopped for a very welcome coffee. From there we took a road southward onto another area of plains, where we stopped to look at a group of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**. In the same area we had superb views of **Black** and Griffon **Vultures** on the ground, dwarfing **Ravens** and **Red Kites**. It was here where Ulrike's new binoculars came into their own!

We stopped overlooking the River Tamuja for our picnic. It was a very attractive stop, despite the fresh wind. We enjoyed a good view of a **Short-toed Eagle** quite quickly and then during our stay, had a superb sighting of a **Spanish Imperial Eagle**. A female **Sparrowhawk** caused alarm amongst the **Barn Swallows**.



*Spanish Imperial Eagle*

Following that lovely sojourn, we made a shorter stop beside the River Magasca north of the village before returning to the plains. A **Golden Eagle** flew past quickly and we also looked at a **Spanish Terrapin**. We stopped at a drovers' trail which was excellent for plants including **Sawfly Orchid** and the delightful **Least Adder's Tongue** fern.

We made another botanical stop at the edge of the granite *berrocal*, in a landscape where the flowers were staggering, especially luxuriant **Hoop Petticoat Narcissus** and **Star of Bethlehem**.

#### **9<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Sierra Brava Reservoir, Campo Lugar, the rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir**

There was a biting westerly wind for most of the day and a heavy shower in the afternoon, but we also enjoyed moments of sunshine, despite the blustery conditions. We spent the day



south of base, in the basin of the Guadiana River. Near Madrigalejo, we looked unsuccessfully for Black-winged Kite, but had some nice sightings of **Iberian Grey Shrike**. At the dam of the Sierra Brava Reservoir we had wonderful views of **Marsh Harriers**, especially a fine male. A group of **Great Flamingos** stood huddled, looking very cold, on a small island in the middle of the expanse of water. Further away still were a group of **Shelduck**. On to the plains of Campo Lugar we had lovely views of a pair of **Little Owls** and then an opportunity of studying four species of larks: **Calandra**, **Crested**, **Thekla** and **Skylark**. **Lesser Kestrels** hunted over the open terrain. Near the village of Campo Lugar we stopped to watch a group of roosting **Stone Curlew**, also huddled against the wind in the leeward side of a bank.

After a welcome coffee in the village, we made a short visit to the rice fields. Here there was a nice selection of wagtails: **White**, **Pied** and **Yellow Wagtails**, as well as **Meadow Pipits** and a **Water Pipit**. We also came across a small group of **Little Ringed Plovers**. However the strong winds kept many birds sheltered in the fields of rice stubble and a **Bluethroat** was only seen very poorly as it kept deep under cover.



*Pied Wagtail*

We were feeling ready for our picnic so we made the quick drive northwards to the Alcollarín Reservoir where we had lunch. The picnic area offered some shelter and we found some interesting plants, such a cluster of **Dwarf Pansy**. **Spoonbills** fed at the edge of the reservoir and a group of **Pallid Swift** flew over under the threatening clouds. A very heavy shower passed over as we left to start a drive along the eastern shore of the lake. By the time we had reached our turning point, the wind had pushed the rain on.



*Alcollarín Reservoir*

A group of **Alpine Swifts** appeared, as well as some more **Pallid Swifts**. We had good views of at least two **Woodchat Shrikes**, and some **Thekla Larks**. **Hoop Petticoat Narcissus** were in fine bloom. A juvenile **Spanish Imperial Eagle** flew over, struggling hard against the wind.



*Woodchat Shrike*

We completed the visit on the western shore, watching a lovely range of duck species in excellent light, including a drake **Garganey**, **Pintail** and **Wigeon**. Waders there included **Black-tailed Godwit** and a **Ruff**.

#### **10<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Monfragüe National Park**

The strong and fresh westerly wind continued for most of the day, but apart from a brief shower and some threatening clouds in the middle of the day, we had largely a mix of sunshine and cloud.

We headed north-west from Trujillo, taking the motorway as far as Almaráz, before heading west to Serrejón and then to the northern side of the Monfragüe National Park, entering at the Portilla del Tiétar. We had an excellent hour or so at this lovely viewpoint, seeing all three vulture species, as well as **Spanish Imperial Eagle** and a **Short-toed Eagle**. **Angel's Tears Narcissus** was in bloom on the roadside bank, along with **Hoop Petticoat Narcissus** and there were clumps of **Iberian Milk-vetch**.



*Siskin*

We had coffee nearby, beside a grove of cork oak, where along the road there were three species of **Cistus**. We stopped at the Tajadilla viewpoint for our picnic, where elm trees were in seed and **Griffon Vultures** sat on their nests on the cliff face across the Tiétar river. We watched a delightful cluster of **Siskins** feeding on the elm seeds and in the sky above a pair of **Bonelli's Eagles** and **Egyptian Vultures**. Continuing through the park, seeing a **Red Deer**, we stopped at the Puerto de la Serrana, where we saw another pair of **Bonelli's Eagles** and a very



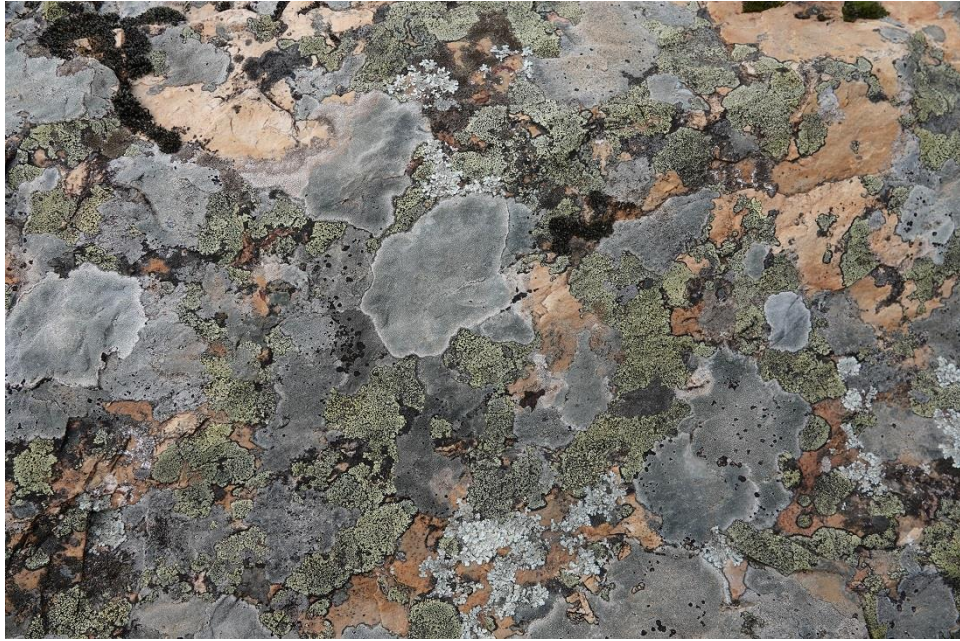
obliging male **Sardinian Warbler**. Then, south of Villareal de San Carlos, now overlooking the Tagus River, we tracked down a male **Hawfinch** which stayed still enough for us to watch through the telescope.

We completed our day at the magnificent Salto de Gitano viewpoint. Dozens of vultures were in the sky above us. **Black Redstarts** and **Blue Rock Thrushes** perched and sang from rocks beside us. A **Rock Bunting** sat on a twig below us and we watched a **Wren** bringing moss to line its nest. We also saw a **Peregrine**. A **Short-toed Eagle** was found sitting near the top of a pine, whilst just a few minutes later two more glided overhead.



*Rock Bunting*

On our way back home, as we crossed the River Almonte we saw yet another **Short-toed Eagle**.



*Lichens at Monfragüe*

### **11<sup>th</sup> March 2024: Return to Madrid**

After all too short a stay it was time to bid farewell to Casa Rural el Recuerdo and return to Madrid. But not before some final birding at the Arrocampo Reservoir. The sunshine was tempered by a very fresh westerly wind, but we had a spectacular view of the Gredos Mountains, dressed by a heavy fall of snow. The wind made the viewing conditions across the marsh quite difficult, but nevertheless we managed sightings of **Western Swamphen**, **Ferruginous Duck** and **Squacco Heron** (the latter rather distantly). **Barn Swallows** and **Sand Martins** hawked low over the water. **Cetti's Warblers** gave their explosive songs from all sides and we also heard a few snatches of the reeling song of **Savi's Warbler**.



*Arrocampo and Gredos Mountains*



We then visited the orchid area of Almaráz hill, finding some stands of **Naked Man Orchid** just coming into flower and a few **Conical Orchid** too. A **Short-toed Eagle** swung into view just as we were preparing to leave. After that it was a smooth run through to the airport, with a stop for coffee at about the halfway mark.

#### LIST OF SPECIES SEEN



*On the plains*

1. **Egyptian Goose:** Seen on two days.
2. **Wigeon:** Seen at Alcollarín reservoir.
3. **Gadwall:** Seen at Alcollarín reservoir and on the plains.
4. **Teal:** Seen at Alcollarín.
5. **Mallard:** Seen on two days.
6. **Pintail:** Seen at Alcollarín.
7. **Garganey:** One seen at Alcollarín reservoir.
8. **Northern Shoveler:** Seen at Alcollarín and on the plains.
9. **Ferruginous Duck:** A group at Arrocampo Reservoir.
10. **Common Shelduck:** Seen at Sierra Brava.
11. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen on three days.
12. **Little Grebe:** Seen on two days.
13. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín.
14. **Great Cormorant:** Seen on three days.
15. **Squacco Heron:** One at Arrocampo.
16. **Cattle Egret:** Seen on the rice fields and Arrocampo.
17. **Little Egret:** Seen at Arrocampo.
18. **Great Egret:** Seen at Alcollarín reservoir.
19. **Grey Heron:** Seen on three days.

20. **White Stork:** Seen every day.
21. **Spoonbill:** Seen at Alcollarín and on way to Madrid.
22. **Greater Flamingo:** A group at Sierra Brava reservoir.
23. **Egyptian Vulture:** Seen in Monfragüe.
24. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
25. **Black Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
26. **Short-toed Eagle:** Seen on three days.
27. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen on the plains, in Monfragüe and Alcollarín Reservoir.
28. **Golden Eagle:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca.
29. **Bonelli's Eagle:** Four seen in Monfragüe.
30. **Black Kite:** Seen daily.
31. **Red Kite:** Seen daily.
32. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen daily.
33. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen on three days.
34. **Common Buzzard:** Seen daily.
35. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen on two days.
36. **Common Kestrel:** Seen on three days.
37. **Peregrine:** One seen in Monfragüe.
38. **Moorhen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
39. **Western Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
40. **Common Coot:** Seen at Alcollarín reservoir.
41. **Little Bustard:** Seen on the plains near Trujillo.
42. **Great Bustard:** Seen on the plains near Trujillo.
43. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen near Trujillo and on way back to Madrid.
44. **Stone Curlew:** Small group seen near Campo Lugar.
45. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields and Alcollarín.
46. **Golden Plover:** Seen on the plains.
47. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen on two days.
48. **Ruff:** Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
49. **Common Snipe:** Seen at Arrocampo.
50. **Black-tailed Godwit:** Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
51. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen on two days.
52. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen every day.
53. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on two days.
54. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on the plains on two days.
55. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on the plains.
56. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
57. **Woodpigeon:** Seen almost daily.
58. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
59. **Little Owl:** Two seen near Campo Lugar.
60. **Alpine Swift:** Seen at Alcollarín.
61. **Pallid Swift:** Seen at Alcollarín.
62. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost daily.
63. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
64. **Crested Lark:** Seen almost every day.
65. **Thekla Lark:** Seen near Campo Lugar and Alcollarín.
66. **Skylark:** Seen on the plains.
67. **Sand Martin:** Seen at Arrocampo.

68. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost daily.
69. **Barn Swallow:** Seen daily.
70. **Red-rumped Swallow:** Seen at Alcollarín.
71. **House Martin:** Seen almost daily.
72. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen almost daily.
73. **Water Pipit:** Seen on the rice fields.
74. **Western Yellow Wagtail:** Seen on the rice fields.
75. **White Wagtail:** Seen almost daily. A "Pied" Wagtail seen on the rice fields.
76. **Robin:** Recorded most days.
77. **Bluethroat:** Seen briefly on the rice fields and Arrocampo.
78. **Black Redstart:** Seen on two days.
79. **Stonechat:** Seen almost daily.
80. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Monfragüe.
81. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
82. **Song Thrush:** Seen almost every day.
83. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen on one day.
84. **Cetti's Warbler:** Seen at Arrocampo.
85. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen on two days.
86. **Savi's Warbler:** Heard at Arrocampo.
87. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen on two days.
88. **Blackcap:** Seen daily.
89. **Chiffchaff:** Seen daily.
90. **Wren:** Recorded most days.
91. **Long-tailed Tit:** Recorded on one day.
92. **Blue Tit:** Seen on one day.
93. **Great Tit:** Seen almost daily.
94. **Nuthatch:** Heard in Monfragüe.
95. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen almost daily.
96. **Woodchat Shrike:** Seen at Alcollarín.
97. **Jay:** Heard in Monfragüe.
98. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
99. **Common Magpie:** Seen daily.
100. **Jackdaw:** Seen on the plains.
101. **Raven:** Seen almost daily.
102. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
103. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
104. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on two days.
105. **Chaffinch:** Seen on two days.
106. **Serin:** Seen almost daily.
107. **Goldfinch:** Seen almost daily.
108. **Siskin:** Seen in Monfragüe
109. **Linnet:** Seen almost daily.
110. **Hawfinch:** Seen in Monfragüe.
111. **Rock Bunting:** Seen in Monfragüe.
112. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

## **Mammals**

Red Deer



Rabbit

### Reptiles and Amphibians

Stripeless Tree Frog

Spanish Terrapin

### Some plants

**Fagaceae**     *Quercus rotundifolia*     Holm oak

*Quercus suber*     Cork oak

**Ulmaceae**     *Ulmus minor*                     Elm sp.

**Polygonaceae**   *Rumex bucephalophorus*     Horned dock, often brick-red sheets on dry ground

**Caryophyllaceae**   *Paronychia capita*     Paronychia

*Silene latifolia*                     White campion

*Silene colorata*     Mediterranean catchfly

**Fumariaceae**   *Fumaria capreolata*     Ramping fumitory

**Cruciferae**     *Raphanus raphanistrum*     Wild radish

*Sisymbrium altissimum*     Tall rocket

**Crassulaceae**   *Umbilicus rupestris*     Navelwort

### Leguminosae

*Adenocarpus argyrophyllus*     Spanish adenocarpus

*Astragalus lusitanicus*     Iberian milk-vetch

*Bisserula pelecinus*     Bisserula

*Cytisus multiflorus*             White broom

*Cytisus scoparius*             Broom (456)

*Lygos monosperma*             Retama

*Onobrychis humilis*

*Lupinus angustifolius*     Narrow-leaved lupin

**Geraniaceae**   *Erodium botrys*     Mediterranean or long-beaked storksbill

*Erodium cicutarum*             Common storksbill

**Violaceae**     *Viola (arvensis) kitaibeliana*     Dwarf pansy

**Cistaceae**     *Cistus albidus*                     Grey-leaved cistus

*Cistus monspelliensis*     Narrow-leaved cistus

*Cistus salviifolius*             Sage-leaved cistus

*Cistus ladanifer*     Gum cistus

*Helianthemum egyptiacum*

<b>Ericaceae</b>	<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry tree
	<i>Erica arborea</i>	Tree heath (white fls)
	<i>Erica australis</i>	Spanish heath (pink fls)
<b>Oleaceae</b>	<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>	Phillyrea or false olive
	<i>Olea europaea</i>	Olive
	<i>Olea europaea</i> spp <i>oleaster</i>	Wild olive
	<i>Fraxinus angustifolia</i>	Narrow-leaved ash
<b>Boraginaceae</b>	<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	Purple viper's bugloss
	<i>Anchusa undulata</i>	Undulate anchusa
	<i>Myosotis ramosissima</i>	Early forget-me-not
<b>Labiatae</b>	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Rosemary
	<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French lavender
<b>Scrophularicaea</b>		
	<i>Linaria amethystea</i>	amethyst toadflax
	<i>Linaria spartea</i>	a yellow-flowered toadflax
<b>Campanulaceae</b>		
	<i>Jasione crispa</i>	Dwarf sheep's bit
<b>Compositae</b>	<i>Bellis sylvestris</i>	Southern daisy
	<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	Field marigold
	<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	Galactites
<b>Liliaceae</b>	<i>Gagea sp lutea?</i>	Yellow star-of-Bethlehem sp.
	<i>Ornithogalum concinnum</i>	A spiked star-of-Bethlehem
	<i>Ornithogalum ?narbonense</i>	Star-of-Bethlehem sp.
	<i>Urginea maritima</i>	Sea squill (leaves & dead flower spikes)
	<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	Spanish bluebell
	<i>Dipcadi serotinum</i>	Brown Harebell
<b>Amaryllidaceaea</b>	<i>Narcissus triandrus</i>	Angel's tears
	<i>Narcissus bulbocodium</i>	Hoop-petticoat narcissus
<b>Iridaceae</b>	<i>Gynandris sisyrynchium</i>	Barbary nut iris
	<i>Romulea columnae</i>	Sand crocus
<b>Orchidaceae:</b>	<i>Orchis (morio) champagneuxii</i>	Champagne orchid
	<i>Orchis conica</i>	Conical orchid

*Orchis italica* Naked man orchid

*Ophrys tenthredinifera* Sawfly orchid

**FERNS (PTERIDOPHYTA)**

*Ophioglossum lusitanica* Least Adder's Tongue