

Spanish Pyrenees

2 – 9 June 2007

Leaders:

John Muddeman
David Cottridge

Introduction

This was our umpteenth time to the area, and a return to the lovely rural Hotel Usón in the upper Echo Valley. Though it has been an unusually cool, late spring, it was typically hot in the lowlands and so the array of wild flowers and mixture of birds and butterflies was great as usual.

Before reading, please note that the bird names and list follows the taxonomy and names used by F. Gill and M. Wright. 2006. *Birds of the World: Recommended English Names*. Princeton University Press. This differs significantly in order, but only slightly in common and scientific names used compared to the checklist we used (Most significant changes are also included to avoid confusion).

Saturday 2 June – clear, hot & sunny, max. 29.5°C; chilly & windy hotel, 13°C!

The two leaders and most of the participants met at Barcelona airport, and after a couple of delays for renting hire vehicles and grabbing a snack lunch were finally off at 4 p.m. Despite time not being on our side we headed westwards in glorious sunny conditions and the temperature rose as we headed inland. To 29.5°C in fact, but since we weren't stopping, this wasn't a problem!

A few birds, including Black Kites and Griffon Vultures were noted en route as we passed Montserrat, then Lerida, and later Huesca, then during a brief stop at a roadside petrol station we enjoyed the sound of a singing Common Nightingale and noted a few raptors passing over.

On again and after passing the mighty stone pillars of Riglos, we finally reached our hotel in the Echo (or is it Hecho?!) Valley at a little after 8:30. Though a chill wind and 13°C were not the most welcoming, the warm reception from our hosts, Imanol and Lucia certainly was!

We settled-in in the company of another birdwatching group.

Sunday 3 June – largely clear & hot, max. 28°C; cooler & cloudy hotel in evening.

It dawned quite clear, but since the rest in the hotel (all birdwatchers!) were going to one site, we opted for something different! It turned out that everywhere was just alive with people, especially French visitors (given a holiday there on the Monday), but at least we also soaked up some lovely hot sunshine in the lowlands.

Our first stop was not far from Puente la Reina. Box-covered scrub and rough grassland bordering fields was the perfect habitat for a range of birds including Common Stonechat, Tawny Pipit and Corn Buntings, while the soft ditty of Ortolan Bunting was just audible above a background of Garden Warbler and Common Nightingale song. A little bit of careful watching revealed almost all these birds, but it was the raptors that stole the show, with Black and Red Kites, Griffon Vultures and even a few European Honey Buzzards drifting and circling over, the latter in particular giving stunning close views. The sun also came out, warming the butterflies and we had our first good look at Green-underside and Idas Blue amongst others.

Continuing down through extensive pine forest we turned back on ourselves and up towards the ever-impressive rock buttresses of Riglos. The roadside scrub en route was good, and a Woodchat Shrike graced a wire, though at a proper stop on a dry slope a few birds made their presence felt, including calling Sardinian Warbler, a couple of striking Black-eared Wheatears, and several passing raptors, though a fine array of butterflies included Western Bath White and Provençal Fritillary.

The village itself was packed with visitors and climbers... However, the first bird was a busy Firecrest, frantically gleaning tiny insects from a spruce to feed a hungry youngster. Closer to the church a male Black Redstart sang from an aerial and the first Eurasian Crag Martins were noted flitting across the crag

faces. It was quite warm, so we started the track round below the main cliff, pausing periodically to scan the towering cliffs, though it was neck-breaking stuff! A few European Greenfinches sang from the scrub and below us in an orchard a fine Woodchat Shrike posed well and an Orphean Warbler sang, but refused to show.

We finally passed the learner climbers on 'practice corner', and went round to slightly quieter and shaded conditions behind. A large group of Red-billed Choughs tumbled over the peak opposite calling loudly, while several Alpine Swifts powered round overhead, periodically making passes to the rock face where they breed. A 'shreeping' call alerted us to some Rock Sparrows, and after a while we finally got views of a male peering out and displaying his yellow throat. Common Linnets and a male Eurasian Blackcap in the scrub added a couple more species.

It was hot and the walk back noisy with climbers and others, though a couple of sky-divers who lobbed themselves off the top before dropping down beside the village made an interesting sight!

Lunch was taken in a the car park, but while this seemed a poor option, singing Melodious Warbler and two male Subalpine Warblers in the small trees more than made amends! A few butterflies were around too, including (Spanish) Scarce Swallowtail and a Large Tortoiseshell.

Our return was via the Embalse de la Peña. A roadside pull-in lead directly onto a track beside the reservoir. Eurasian Crag and Common House Martins were nesting on the cliffs immediately opposite, while a few Alpine Swifts powered around overhead. The reservoir was very sterile, though we finally found three adult Yellow-legged Gulls and a lone fishing Great Crested Grebe. A Blue Tit graced a poplar, some Eurasian Crag Martins gave views on the nest in a cool, small tunnel, though it was perhaps the sight of some full-grown Griffon Vulture chicks on, or adjacent to their nests on the cliffs nearby which most impressed.

We finally moved away after noting the numerous sprays of Pyrenean Saxifrage peppering the bare rock slopes and back beside the vehicles a spot of luck saw us watching single adult and fledgling White-throated Dipper on the river below us, both moving around on tree-trunks snagged in the vegetation in the river. A noisy Winter Wren also put in a brief appearance.

Monday 4 June – chilly & cloudy a.m., max. 14°C; clearing to fine and sunny p.m., max. 23.5°C.

After the usual 8 a.m. breakfast we were away just after 9. The weather was 'iffy', with much cooler conditions, a breeze in the valley bottom and cloud threatening to spill-over onto the S side of the peaks above us, but at least there weren't going to be the hoards of walkers others had noted at the site the day before! Indeed, after winding our way up through the forested slopes we emerged to an all-but-empty car park.

The grassy meadows in the forest housed several species, including Mistle Thrush, but it was a group of superb Citril Finches, including a singing male, which really caught the eye and our attention.

The walk through the mixed forest gave lovely scenic views to the mountains. Our first Coal Tits and Eurasian Treecreepers, plus a Common Chiffchaff singing on the outward route but seen on our return journey, plus singing European Robins, Song Thrush and Garden Warblers were amongst plenty of birds singing, with just one of the latter seen briefly though. Red-billed Choughs, Carrion Crows and Griffon Vultures were all noted passing over, while an immature Bearded Vulture [Lammergeier] mobbed by a diminutive-looking Carrion Crow gave terrific views. The short but rougher climb towards the end saw other groups of birdwatchers leaving, but we sat for c. 1.5 hours to scan a rock face where both chough species, Eurasian Crag Martins and Black Redstarts put in regular appearances. Calling European Green Woodpeckers and a single drumming Black Woodpecker in the forest below added to the variety. However, our wait was foiled and we finally left for lunch when the weather started to turn colder and a few rain spots fell. The walk down was punctuated by pauses for singing Goldcrest, Crested Tits, Eurasian Nuthatch and Short-toed Treecreeper though to keep us busy. Lunch was taken in the car park to again enjoy the magnificent views.

A short (planned) stop at the hotel turned into a longer one when a Short-toed Snake Eagle appeared as we arrived, hovering beautifully several times and giving tremendous scope views, before finally gliding across the valley and then perching in a pine tree opposite. A Golden Eagle perched on a crag top at extreme range was also an interesting sight, with minimum detail visible for a positive ID, but in precisely the same spot as 2 years ago!

The cloud had rolled in, so we headed down the valley to look for something better. A little back road near Puente la Reina was a treat in the hot and sunny conditions. Melodious, Subalpine and Western Bonelli's Warblers, European Honey Buzzard, lots of flowers and butterflies including a few stunning Spanish Fritillaries and male Provence Chalkhill Blues.

A short drive ahead and a new area with a few dead trees hosted European Bee-eaters, a male Common Stonechat, a circling adult Golden Eagle, a pair of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Tawny Pipit and male and

female Rock Sparrow. A superb end to the day.

Tuesday 5 June – varied & cool, with occasional light showers p.m.

We started with a short visit to the shady, windy and chilly Boca del Infierno. Eurasian Crag Martins were constantly noted, but nothing else appeared, so after leaving, a short roadside stop ahead in the arm sun for some Griffon Vultures in tree-tops was welcome, and also revealed passing Egyptian Vulture, and by a high crag a few Alpine Swifts and a cruising Peregrine Falcon, and a calling Rock Bunting in the scrub!

Down the valley, where the 'usual' Black Kites and Common Buzzards adorned the posts and wires and then onwards to climb up to San Juan de la Peña. It was notably cool and partially cloudy at the top, keeping butterfly activity down, but making it very pleasant walking. The woodlands were rather quiet bird-wise, with calling Coal and Crested Tits and Firecrest, while for the Pyrenees viewpoint, passing Griffons and an Egyptian Vulture gave good views. Our attention was geared to catching sight of a Black Woodpecker calling and drumming below us for c. 45 minutes, though ironically it was only seen by one person flying over the treetops just as we started to leave! With the sun peeking out, the temperature rose a few degrees and a notable sight was that of dozens of white butterflies 'pouring' off the ridge and plunging down the sheer slopes to the woodland below. While this at the time looked like a local movement, we later realised it was part of a massive movement of butterflies N through the Pyrenees.

Great Spotted Woodpecker and Firecrest were both seen on return, and despite hoards of noisy school children, we took lunch by the car park. A great move as it turned out, since just as we were leaving, a friend's client found a Black Woodpecker's nest beside the vehicles and after waiting quietly nearby we had fine views of the female peering out from hole before finally flying off.

Time was running away and the heavy cloud which had formed over the high Pyrenees saw us stopping down by old monastery instead of going up into the mountains again. A stunning display of wild flowers on the banks was fine reward, with abundant Ramonda and Pyrenean Saxifrage above all, but also *Petrocoptis* on the monastery walls (the species was first described for science from specimens collected here) and other gems such as St Bernard's Lily. A Tawny Owl hooted from deep in the forest and we rounded off with a quick look at the ancient monastery itself.

Down below in the village we took a relaxing break in a bar with views of the old church. A female Grey Wagtail fed its young in a hole, with an intruding male soundly chased off by its mate, dubbed a 'wagstump' on account of the absence of a tail! A fledgling Black Redstart fed beside a tiny stream with a smart adult male in an adjacent meadow, and a lemon-yellow male European Serin adorned a wall top. A quick wander into the village also found us scouring a huge Horse Chestnut in the vain hope of locating a Eurasian Scops Owl which had called a couple of times in broad daylight!

Wednesday 6 June – very fine & sunny, but a little cloud p.m., max. 28°C.

We didn't even make out of the valley bottom before we pulled off to watch a superb pale phase Booted Eagle circling low overhead, closely shadowed by a flock of Common Swifts. As it drifted a little up-river, so a stork drifting low past was noted, but remarkably it was a fine adult Black Stork! This also circled around a few times before finally flapping off low W, apparently looking for a quieter fishing spot. What a start!

We headed S, winding our way down towards the Embalse de Sotonera and associated habitats. After a comfort stop, a short roadside break also turned into a little bonanza, with a few European Bee-eaters in a small scruffy area the main attraction, but as we watched, so male Black-eared and Northern Wheatears gave good views, Crested Larks flitted around and sang, a Tawny Pipit also called and sang and behind us, a pair of Golden Eagles circled slowly up beside a couple of Griffon Vultures. Plentiful Black Kites over poplars in another direction were also joined by two White Storks for variety!

On the edge of Montmesa Rock Sparrows and Spotless Starlings were present, though both were better seen on our return. The fields were nearly all intensively cropped with wheat or barley and were rather quiet, but down by the reservoir, a smart male Northern Wheatear was a treat and a couple of Eurasian Skylarks as we got out provided a good comparison to the Crested Larks.

The water levels were high and most of the reservoir was screened by a dense bank of emergent flowering tamarisk bushes. Odd gaps though revealed Common Coots, Great Crested Grebe and Mallard, while many other species were seen flying over, with great comparisons possible of Little and Cattle Egret together, then Little and Great [White] Egret together, then Grey Heron followed shortly after by Purple Heron!! Calling Little Ringed Plover refused to show, but a Green Sandpiper flushed from the shoreline vegetation and towered off up over the trees, and a small group of Gadwall flew round over the scrub.

Other birds remained unseen, but singing Great Reed and Melodious Warblers were both in the tamarisks,

while a few calling Eurasian Penduline Tits remained frustratingly deep in the vegetation. We rounded off with a perched European Turtle Dove and three Common Cuckoos, presumably two males chasing a female judging by the excited calls.

It was hot and fairly late, so we returned towards the vans to drive to our lunch site. A Calandra Lark flew low round over the wheat field in front, 'twizzling' as it went, and in chasing another showed off its black underwings to perfection.

The reservoir dam was hot given the black tarmac surface, but as we pulled in Geoff and I saw a fine male Green Lizard run off. Common House Martins were collecting mud in the overflow channel, but a fine White Wagtail and especially three Little Ringed Plovers were a terrific sight. A Blue-spot Hairstreak and (Spanish) Scarce Swallowtail were also fine sights, while a Common Kingfisher which flashed past carrying a tiny fish was all too brief.

We finally found our picnic site, under pines and in the shade but with views out, which also produced a fly-by male Eurasian Golden Oriole on two occasions and a Spotted Flycatcher for a few.

The remainder of the afternoon we taken up with the long drive back to our hotel, punctuated by a drinks break and rest stop, then a short walk around a small pool near Cuarte. The very high water levels seemed to have put off many birds and it was strangely quiet, despite numerous Common Coots and Great Crested Grebes with chicks, though we did get good views of perched Eurasian Tree Sparrows among House Sparrows for good comparison. A few butterflies included our only Small Copper and a Spanish Marbled White.

Thursday 7 June – mostly very fine & sunny; warm.

The weather was finally forecast to clear and so we headed up. The narrow roads wound up through narrow chilly gorges and towering limestone cliffs coated in a fresh green swathe of beech, pine and spruce forest. A brief stop revealed typical small birds singing in the forest and plenty of Eurasian Crag Martins, Alpine Swifts and choughs of both species way overhead. A Common Kestrel and a few Griffon Vultures were the only raptors. Continuing we flushed the first of many Citril Finches from the roadside, so common this year, and had glimpses of Yellowhammers as they dashed off.

Turning into the Belagua valley we started the tortuous ascent to the pass, finally clearing the middle woodland and reaching the rather open black pine forest and 'alpine' meadows. Considerable building works on the Belagua Refuge meant access into the meadows was complicated and it was noisy, so we walked a stretch of road, noting our first Dunnock, Water Pipit and Mistle Thrushes, plus more Citril Finches and Common Linnets. The flowers were lovely too, including both Trumpet and Spring Gentians.

Further ahead we found we were already into France before knowing it! A wander round the rockier slopes here revealed little other than some fine Alpine Choughs and a wandering Red Kite, plus Mistle Thrushes in the high forest singing a very peculiar and confusing dialect of their song. A little further on and down we just enjoyed the views and ate lunch out in the open meadows of some ski runs, with a continuous chorus of Alpine and a few Red-billed Choughs, plus a couple of pairs of Northern Wheatears for variety. The flower-studded turf was lovely here too, and butterflies moving included Small Whites and especially Small Tortoiseshells at this altitude. A spotty Queen of Spain Fritillary was our only one of the trip, but very welcome!

A quick stop just over the ridge on our return turned out to be more interesting than at first sight. Two male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrushes graced the skyline, Common Kestrel, Red Kite, Griffon Vulture and then a fine Short-toed Snake Eagle were all noted, and a little down the road a superb singing Tree Pipit gave great scope views as it perched on the tip of a pine before climbing up and then parachuting back down.

A quick drinks break was very welcome and we rounded off with a rather warm walk in one of the valleys as we returned, displaying European Honey Buzzard causing us to stop. Birds were very thin on the ground though given the mid-afternoon heat, but Early Purple and Greater Butterfly Orchids provided splashes of colour along the verges. The butterflies were numerous, but again dominated by Small Whites (a huge N-bound movement going on), but on a roadside further down as we stopped to admire masses of flowering *Genista*, a superb Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoth buzzed a group of pink Kidney-vetch, reminding us of the similar Hummingbird Hawkmoths we'd seen earlier in the trip.

A fascinating end to a lovely day in stunning scenery!

Friday 8 June – mostly fine & sunny, clouding up p.m.; warm.

A return to the beautiful woods and scenic views above Gabardito was called for. This time we wasted no time on the walk up through the woods, though Ursula was fortunate to see a large Pyrenean Chamois topping a distant ridge in John's scope. It was just yards from where later we were to see a perched Golden

Eagle! The effort was well rewarded this time with a double viewing of the Wallcreeper pair, though Dunnocks, Black Redstarts, Red-billed and Alpine Choughs, Eurasian Crag Martins, and drumming Black Woodpecker were also noted!

The walk down found Peter scouring the trackside plants, only to discover plenty of active Duke of Burgundy butterflies in the hot sun, though we also noted an amazing movement of butterflies to the N, mostly being Small Whites, but also including a few Large Whites, Small Tortoiseshells and Clouded Yellows amongst others. Two counts of 6 minutes each revealed 160 butterflies passing over a 150 pace stretch, then later, 129 passing over just 75 paces! Millions must have been passing in total, since we'd also seen them on the move in quantity at San Juan de la Peña on Tuesday, without then realising the significance!

Back at the hotel we enjoyed a quiet lunch, though frustratingly, a pair of adult Bearded Vultures which soared close to a large crag managed to do a sudden disappearing act before we could get our optics out!

The afternoon was taken up exploring the beautiful valley above the hotel. Stopping at one point for a fine Camberwell Beauty butterfly, we saw not only this, but various Small and Large Whites, Small Tortoiseshells, Wall and Large Wall Browns, Dinky and Mallow Skippers in the rocky area beside the river! A strange moth gave us the run-around, though a few Palmate Newts in a pool with plenty of Common Frog tadpoles were a fine sight too. The rocks here were also covered in Iberian Wall Lizards, including a few fine males.

The head of the valley is reached along a long track, with the meadows and river down below rising up towards the high peaks bordering France. The limestone substrate makes it rich in flowers, and the stands of orchids on the slopes were a fine sight. Indeed, a brief photo stop for a couple of slender Fragrant Orchids led to the discovery of another 4 species: yellow Elder-flowered, abundant Early Purple, tiny, greenish Frog and a few Greater Butterfly Orchids. While this was impressive in itself, a single spotted orchid spike was tentatively opening its flowers, while in another spot some beautiful and tiny spikes of Burnt-tip Orchid studded the turf. A marvellous sight! There was even a little time to look at the local birds, and we added Yellowhammer to the tally, and again enjoyed views of European Serins and Common Linnets, this time on or just beside the track.

The end of the track saw us taking a short walk in rather cloudy conditions, with a Short-toed Snake Eagle and two Egyptian Vultures for starters, a passing 'funny' (but Common) Buzzard and then best of all, two Golden Eagles spiralling then flying quite quickly past as a territorial adult saw off an intruder which had strayed onto its patch! A few drops of rain threatened to multiply though, so we soon turned tracks and headed down and back to the hotel for plenty of time to relax and organise ourselves before the final dinner.

Saturday 9 June – Fine & sunny with high very thin cloud; max. 32.5°C en route.

With time to kill before the flight, we took the luxury of a short detour off our route and a quick visit to the Castillo de Loarre, one of the castles used in the film 'The Kingdom of Heaven'. Being Saturday, it was busier than hoped, but with numerous Red Kites on the way up, things looked good. Even as we stepped out in the warm sun, a few birds were calling and singing from the colourful hillsides and rock outcrops. A Woodlark sang distantly from a telephone wire, though when we tried to get onto it with the scopes it dropped into a field, leaving a male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush in the view perched on a pine behind!! An Orphean Warbler and more distant Bonelli's Warbler sang from the pines, a Hoopoe flitted around some rock spires where it appeared to be breeding, and Rock Sparrows and Eurasian Crag Martins graced the castle walls and towers. A bunting, sat stock still on a rock in a small island of rock and hummocks of the yellow-flowered *Echinosperrum horridum*, well-named given its vicious spines, was a female Cirl Bunting, with a beak full of food and waiting patiently for a quiet moment to drop down to its nest. A fledged Common Stonechat also popped up just in front! We turned to leave and finally, the dark shapes of a pair of Blue Rock Thrushes were clearly visible on the tops of some nearby rock outcrops, and gave us good views in the scopes. A fine way to complete our bird list and a good way to say our farewells to Jeff and Janet who were returning N and passing through to France for a couple of weeks extra holiday (what luck!).

Most of the drive back was fortunately unexciting, and after a break for lunch along a track where Eurasian Tree Sparrows called among the House Sparrows overhead, European Bee-eaters 'prooped' as they fed over the adjacent fields and a White Stork tended two well-grown young on a nearby silo.

We reached Barcelona airport almost spot on time and after quickly checking the vehicles said our goodbyes, John returning from a different terminal to the rest of the group.

This was a great and very relaxed trip, with a fine number of the local speciality species seen, and quality sightings of most. The relaxed nature of all participating made this a pleasure to lead, and we hope it met your hopes and expectations. An attempt to draw out highlights is just too tricky given the terrific diversity of sights, sounds and weather experienced during the week, though I suspect that the breeding Black Woodpecker and stunning scenery, especially on Thursday when we went

up high during the first really clear weather of the week will figure highly for most!

We look forward to seeing you again on a Travelling Naturalist or Limosa tour, and wish to thank you again for helping make this such a relaxing, but extremely rewarding holiday.

Very best wishes,

John Muddeman (www.iberianwildlife.com) & David Cottridge

Systematic list of species

(total no. species 161)

Birds

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Nine at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

A total of about ten birds observed on the reservoirs and lakes on 6th.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

One heard calling at Embalse Sotonera on 6th.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Three single birds recorded on 6th, with one each at Embalse de la Pena, Embalse de Sotonera and Cuarte Lake.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Another good bird for the region when a single bird in flight was observed at Javierregay on 6th.

European White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

About 14 as we travelled from Barcelona on 2nd and six birds on 6th on the lowland plains. Birds were mostly observed on nests.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

A very obliging bird in all its splendour was a real surprise at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th - much to the delight of John and indeed everyone else.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Common on 6th when we visited the plains at lower altitude.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Recorded in ones and twos on most days on meadows, rivers and ditches but as expected the daily total on 6th was ten birds when we visited the reservoirs and lakes at lower altitude.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Two at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*

Three birds at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

About eight birds recorded as we travelled from Barcelona on 2nd and six at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Recorded in ones and twos on most days of the tour.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

An immature bird was seen near Boca del Infierno on 5th.

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

A total of six on 3rd, two at Alastuey on 4th and one was seen wing-clapping as we drove along the Belagua Valley on 7th.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Fairly common throughout the tour.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Common throughout the tour.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*

One seen quite well on our walk up to Gabardito on 4th and one from our hotel on 4th.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

Regularly recorded in smallish numbers on each day of the tour with daily records varying from two to twelve.

Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus*

Very common throughout the tour.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

One seen well from our hotel on 4th as it first hung on the wind and then perched in a tree, one just below Col de la Pierre san Martin on 7th and two as we travelled to Barcelona on 9th.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

- One being mobbed by a crow as we left Cuarte Lake on 6th was the only record.
- Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*
Recorded in small numbers each day of the tour.
- Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*
One seen from our hotel perched on a ridge on 4th and one later the same day, two at Montmesa on 6th and two at Gabardito and two at the upper Echo Valley on 8th.
- Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennata*
On 6th one at Javierregay and one at Jaca, and on 8th one seen from our hotel.
- Common Coot** *Fulica atra*
About 20 birds on Cuarte Lake on 6th.
- Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*
A total of six recorded during our day at lower altitude on 6th with four birds around Embalse de Sotonera and two at Cuarte Lake.
- Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*
A single bird at Montmesa on 6th.
- Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis*
Common as we travelled from Barcelona until we were near the Pyrenees on 2nd, Three at Embalse de la Pena on 3rd and three at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.
- Feral Rock Dove** *Columba livia*
Common on 2nd and 6th but only recorded on occasions in the Pyrenees.
- Common Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*
Generally common at lower altitudes but not recorded above Hecho.
- European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*
Three recorded on 6th with two at Embalse de Sotonera and one at Cuarte Lake.
- Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*
Common at lower altitudes but rarely seen above Hecho.
- Monk Parakeet** *Myiopsitta monachus*
Three birds seen near Barcelona as we travelled on 2nd.
- Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*
Quite common, but only 1-2 heard on four days, plus 3 seen Montmesa on 6th.
- Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops*
One heard calling from a tree in the town of Santa Cruz de la Serós on 5th.
- Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*
One heard calling during the day at San Juan de la Pena on 5th.
- Alpine Swift** *Tachymartus melba*
Twelve at Riglos on 3rd, six at Boca del Infierno on 5th, six in the gorge near Zuriza on 7th and nine at Gabardito on 8th.
- Common Swift** *Apus apus*
Seemed to be a little erratic in its presence with 15 on 3rd, good numbers on 5th and 6th but not recorded on the other days.
- Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*
One flew over the dam at Embalse de la Sotonera on 6th.
- European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*
15 along the road to Alastuey on 4th and good numbers on 6th when we travelled to lower altitudes.
- Common Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*
Two on the day we travelled from Barcelona and one heard calling as we had lunch on 6th.
- Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*
One on 4th, one at San Juan de la Pena on 5th and one heard calling at our lunch stop on 6th.
- Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius*
One seen and one heard at Gabardito on 4th, possibly three birds at San Juan de la Pena on 5th that included a pair visiting a nest hole and one heard drumming on 8th.
- Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*
One heard calling at Gabardito on 4th.
- Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*
Fairly common throughout the week.
- Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator*
One in the Hecho Valley and two at Riglos on 3rd, Two along the road to Alastuey on 4th and one at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.
- Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*
Heard calling on a couple of occasions and a male seen at our picnic spot at the Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.
- Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*
Recorded in ones and twos on most days of the tour.
- Common Magpie** *Pica pica*
Very common at lower altitudes but much less so above Hecho.
- Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*
Fairly common along the tops of ridges when flocks up to about 30 were seen. There was also one unexpected record of one sitting on farm building in the middle of a field near to Cuarte Lake on 6th.
- Alpine Chough** *Pyrrhocorax graculus*
Good numbers were at Gabardito during both our visits and also good numbers on the tops around the Spanish/French Border on 7th.
- Eurasian Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*
About ten birds seen when we made our visit to the area of Embalse de Sotonera.
- Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*
Common throughout the tour.

- Common Raven** *Corvus corax*
Recorded in ones and twos on most days of the tour.
- Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris*
At least four in a family party at Gamueta Forest on 7th.
- Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*
Fairly common in pine forests particularly above Hecho.
- Crested Tit** *Lophophanes cristatus*
One seen at Gabardito on 4th, one outside our hotel on 6th and several heard singing on separate days.
- Great Tit** *Parus major*
Recorded in small numbers on four separate dates.
- Eurasian Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*
A total of eleven seen on three separate dates and others heard.
- Eurasian Penduline-tit** *Remiz pendulinus*
Several birds heard calling at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.
- Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*
Very common recorded everyday except on 2nd travelling from Barcelona.
- Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*
Good numbers seen on 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 8th and a few on 4th.
- Northern House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*
Recorded in good numbers everyday except 4th when we must have had our eyes shut.
- Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*
Several roving family flocks that numbered about 25 birds on 4th and one heard calling at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.
- Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra*
Three in song-flight over fields around Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.
- Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata*
Five as we travelled from Barcelona on 2nd, six on 4th and common on 6th when we descended to lower altitudes.
- Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*
One singing from telegraph wires at Castillo de Loarre on 9th.
- Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*
Two birds seen at Embalse de la Sotonera on 6th.
- Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis*
Two at Cuarte Lake on 6th.
- Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*
Several heard singing at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.
- Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta*
One at Riglos on 3rd, one along the Alastuey Road on 4th and one heard singing at Cuarte Lake on 6th.
- Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*
Two at Gabardito on 4th and subsequently heard at Boca del Infierno on 5th, in the Gamueta Forest on 7th and at Gabardito on 8th.
- Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli*
Two seen well and others heard singing along the road to Alastuey on 4th.
- Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*
Heard singing at several different locations on four separate days but the only one seen was a male at Riglos on 3rd.
- Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin*
One seen at Gabardito on 4th and also heard singing on 3rd and Gabardito on 4th and 8th.
- Western Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis*
Heard singing on 3rd, a male seen well on 4th and one heard singing at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.
- Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans*
Two males at Riglos on 3rd and two along the Alastuey Road on 4th.
- Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala*
One heard singing at Riglos on 3rd.
- Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*
One seen at Riglos on 3rd, heard during two visits to Gabardito and one seen on 8th, one at San Juan de la Pena on 5th and three in Gamueta Forest on 7th.
- Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*
One heard singing at Gabardito on 4th but we were unable to see it.
- Northern Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*
Two at Gabardito on 4th and heard calling at various locations on three separate dates.
- Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*
Two at Gabardito on 4th, three at San Juan de la Pena that included one visiting a nest and one outside our hotel on 7th.
- Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*
After failing to see this enigmatic species during our first visit on the 4th we were blessed with excellent views of a pair during our second visit on 8th.
- Eurasian Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*
At Gabardito, two on 4th and one on 8th.
- Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla*
One seen at Gabardito on 4th, one heard at San Juan de la Pena on 5th and one heard on 8th.
- Spotless Starling** *Sturnus unicolor*
Common at lower altitudes but not recorded above Hecho.
- Eurasian Blackbird** *Turdus merula*
Common throughout the tour.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Heard singing on three separate dates generally in the mountain valleys.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Generally fairly common in the higher forests of the Pyrenees.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Four or five seen during our walk to Gabardito on 4th, then heard singing or calling on several occasions.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

A single bird seen as we travelled from Barcelona on 2nd, another on 3rd and heard singing on several other occasions.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

A total of 20 birds recorded on five separate dates.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Six birds on 3rd and one on 4th.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Three at Montmesa on 6th and at least eight birds on the tops at the Spanish/French border on 7th.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*

Two male and a female Riglos on 3rd, a male Montmesa on 6th and a male en route on 9th.

Common Rock-thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

A male and a female on 4th and two males as we descended from the Spanish/French border on 7th.

Blue Rock-thrush *Monticola solitarius*

A pair at Castillo de Loarre on 9th.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

One at our lunch stop at Embalse de Sotonera on 6th.

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

One adult feeding a fledged chick at Embalse de la Pena on 3rd.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common, widespread and noted daily.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Two+ Cuarte Lake on 6th and heard Zaidán town on 9th.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

Two Riglos on 3rd, several on 4th, 4 seen + others heard on 6th and several Castillo de Loarre on 9th.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Three near the Spanish/French border on 7th and one at Gabardito on 8th.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

A pair feeding young, and a male without a tail at Santa Cruz de la Serós on 5th, two as we travelled along the Belagua Valley on 7th and several birds in the Hecho Valley on 8th.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Good numbers seen on 6th when we visited various wetland areas and six on 7th when we travelled to the border with France.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Two at Arrés on 3rd, two along the road to Alastuey on 4th and one at Montmesa on 6th.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*

One singing from the top of a pine tree near to Vento de Juan Pito on 7th.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Two near to the Spanish/French border on 7th.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common, widespread and noted each full day.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Common and widespread, being noted daily except on 4th.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Several Riglos on 3rd, 2 Gabardito on 8th and heard en route on 9th.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Widespread in small number and noted on 5 days.

Citril Finch *Carduelis citrinella*

12+ Gabardito on 4th, then plenty on both 7th and 8th.

Common Linnnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Quite widespread; noted on 3rd and then daily 6th – 9th.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

One briefly from front vehicle on 7th and 2 Hotel Usón on 8th.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

A few at various sites on 4 days.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

A few on 7th, but 10+ Upper Hecho Valley on 8th.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

A pair Arrés on 4th and heard Boca del Infierno on 5th.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

Just 1 male Arrés on 3rd.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

Heard Riglos on 3rd, 1 plus another heard Hotel Usón on 8th and a female Cuarte Lake on 9th.

Mammals

Beech Marten *Martes foina*

One seen by Peter, Hotel Usón on 6th.

Pyrenean Chamois *Rupicapra pyrenaica*

Just one way above Gabardito seen by Ursula on 8th.

European Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

Singles Hotel Usón on 3rd and near Gabardito on 4th.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Palmate Newt *Lissotriton helveticus*

Five+ Upper Hecho Valley on 8th.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

Lots of tadpoles Upper Hecho Valley on 8th.

Iberian Marsh Frog *Pelophylax perezi*

Heard Arrés on 4th and one seen and others heard Cuarte Lake on 6th.

Large Psammotromus *Psammotromus algirus*

One at the picnic site on 6th.

Iberian Wall Lizard *Podarcis hispanicus*

A single Arrés on 4th and plenty on 7th and 8th.

Western Green Lizard *Lacerta bilineata*

One Sotonera on 6th.

Western Montpellier Snake *Malpolon monspessulanus*

One dead en route on 6th and several dead en route on 9th.

Butterflies

Common Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*

Scarce Swallowtail *Iphiclides podalirius*

Black-veined White *Aporia crataegi*

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Small White *Artogeia rapae*

Green-veined White *Artogeia napae*

Western Bath White *Pontia daplidice*

Western Dappled White *Euchloe simplonia*

Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

Moroccan Orange-tip *Anthocharis belia*

Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*

Berger's Clouded Yellow *Colias australis*

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Cleopatra *Gonepteryx cleopatra*

Wood White *Leptidea sinapis*

Blue-spot Hairstreak *Satyrrium spini*

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Little (Small) Blue *Cupido minimus*

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Panoptes Blue *Pseudophilotes panoptes*

Idas Blue *Lycaeides argus*

Adonis Blue *Lysandra bellargus*

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Duke of Burgundy *Hemaris lucina*

Southern White Admiral *Limenitis reducta*

Camberwell Beauty *Nymphalis antiopa*

Large Tortoiseshell *Nymphalis polychloros*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

Queen of Spain Fritillary *Issoria lathonia*

Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Clossiana euphrosyne*

Glanville Fritillary *Melitaea cinxa*

Knapweed Fritillary *Melitaea phoebe*

Provençal Fritillary *Mellicta deione*

Spanish Fritillary *Eurodryas desfontainii*

Spanish Marbled White *Melanargia ines*

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Spanish Gatekeeper *Pyronia bathsheba*

Pearly Heath *Coenonympha arcania*

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*

Large Wall Brown *Lasiommata maera*

Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*

Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*

Moths

Eyed Hawkmoth *Smerinthus ocellata*

Hummingbird Hawkmoth *Macroglossum stellatarum*

Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoth *Hemaris fuciformis*

Pine Processionary *Thaumetopoea pityocampa*

Dragonflies & Damselflies

Azure Bluet *Coenagrion puella*

Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*

Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii*

Blue Emperor *Anax imperator*

Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope*

Other Taxa

Field Cricket *Gryllus campestris*

Egyptian Grasshopper *Anacridium aegyptium*

Red Signal Crayfish *Procambarus clarkii*

Long-horned Beetle *Morimus funereus*

Violet Carpenter Bee *Xylocopa violacea*

Orchids

Sword-leaved Helleborine *Cephalanthera longifolia*

Greater Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*

Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*

Frog Orchid *Coeloglossum viride*

Elder-flowered Orchid *Dactylorhiza sambucina*

Heath Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*

Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*

Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*

Burnt(-tip) Orchid *Orchis ustulata*

Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*

David Cottridge & John Muddeman, June 2007

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