

Spanish Pyrenees

Saturday 7 – Saturday 14 June 2008



Clockwise: Lady's Slipper Orchid, Blue-spot Hairstreak, Citril Finch pair & Spanish Moon Moth

(all © J.L. Muddeman)

Leaders: John Muddeman
David Cottridge

Daily Diary

Saturday 7 June

Flights to Barcelona, then transfer to Valley de

Hecho

Largely fine and sunny throughout the journey.

We all arrived at Heathrow terminal 2 on a clear, bright and sunny morning and we wondered if this was a precursor of what was to come during our week in Spain. We all eventually met in the departure lounge and after getting acquainted with everyone, a slightly delayed flight took off just before noon and headed for the Iberian Peninsula. On landing we were pleased to see that the sunshine had followed us from the UK, and after the formalities of hiring our vehicles John joined our group as well. Lunch was taken at the airport and soon after, we were heading westwards towards Lleida, where we turned north towards the Pyrenees via Jaca and Hecho, arriving at our Hotel Usón (with both Lammergeier and Wallcreeper on their sign!) during the evening. After a pleasant dinner we went to bed with a strong wind howling down the valley and we wondered what the following morning would bring.

Sunday 8 June

Hecho Valley, Arrés, Alastuey road

Largely fine and sunny. Warm and still low down, but cloud building over peaks.

Although the wind was still blowing in the morning the sky was clear and bright and promised a hot and sunny day.

After breakfast we gathered in the car park where our departure was delayed by a singing Western Orphean Warbler and a singing Western Bonelli's, and try as we did to see them, the Orphean only showed itself briefly and the Bonelli's remained elusive. We eventually set off and only travelled a few kilometres before we pulled into the side of the road. The first thing that drew our attention was a hovering Short-toed Eagle hanging in the wind along a ridge, but soon our attention was drawn to the ground by Early Purple, Green-winged and Greater Butterfly Orchids, and a Duke of Burgundy Fritillary butterfly. This was followed by superb views of a Firecrest in a nearby pine, singing and raising its crest and looking as if its head was on fire.

We moved onto the village of Hecho and then Puente la Reina and eventually driving along the road to Arrés, stopping at a point that afforded us a good view of some gentle hills and a flat cultivated valley floor. After scanning the area a good selection of passerines were seen that included Ortolan Bunting, Red-backed Shrike, Stonechat, Crested Lark, Subalpine Warbler and Corn Bunting. There was also a good selection of raptors with Red and Black Kites, a Peregrine, a couple of Honey Buzzards, two Marsh Harriers and three Hobbies hawking insects.

Our picnic lunch was taken at our next location, the road to Alastuey, after which we drove further along the road stopping on occasions to scan the sky and hillsides for birds and look at the plants and insect life on the valley floor. Amongst the birds we saw were several pairs of breeding Bee-eaters, a couple of Melodious Warblers, a juvenile Western Orphean Warbler, several Subalpine Warblers, four Dartford warblers, three Rock Buntings and several Cirl Buntings. Some interesting butterflies were recorded that included Scarce Swallowtail, Spanish Festoon, Black-veined White, Clouded Yellow, Brimstone, and Osiris Blue, Holly Blue, Provence Chalkhill Blue and Common Blue. A few more species of orchid were added – Pyramidal, Fragrant, Bee and Burnt. Just as we were leaving we stopped to watch a spectacular flight of Griffon Vultures that numbered in excess of 100 circling around above us. It had been a great introduction to Pyrenean natural history and we returned in the early evening looking forward to our dinner and whilst we were doing our log for the day there was one more surprise. A Spanish Moon Moth was seen perched on an outside window frame of the hotel and so the log was put on hold for a short while as we admired and photographed this magnificent creature.

Monday 9 June

Gabardito & Upper Hecho Valley

Mixed. Fine at first, becoming cloudy p.m. and with occasional light showers.

An overcast and cloudy start to the day with the strong wind of previous two days still evident as it swayed the pines from side to side around the hotel car park as we gathered for the days activities after a good breakfast. We set out for Gabardito, stopping briefly on the climb up for an Orange-tip Butterfly and a Sword-leaved Helleborine. Just before we reached the refuge, a pair of Citril Finches were seen at the side of the road, and these were quickly followed by another half a dozen that were flying around and feeding in the meadow at the car park. Then came one of the most exciting moments of the trip when a pair of Lammergeiers were seen above a pine wood and then drifted towards us, passing right over our heads. We continued to watch them until they landed on a cliff ledge when we were able to scope them and enjoy pretty good views, which later became even better when we were able to watch from a closer view point on the way up to Gabardito. Before we left the refuge, however, we had also seen a Golden Eagle, a Booted Eagle, a Black Woodpecker in flight and several Black Redstarts.

After our exciting start we began our walk through the woodlands to the sounds of Black Woodpecker calling from the valley below, the high-pitched sounds of Goldcrests and Firecrests at times hardly audible and high above us along the mountain ridges the staccato call of choughs drifted down. We eventually reached Gabardito and set up our vigil to wait for the jewel of alpine cliff faces, the Wallcreeper. While we waited Alpine Choughs danced in the air above the cliff top uttering their excited trill and darting between the gullies to occasionally perch on a ledge to pose for a short while. Every now and then our attention was diverted to some Alpine Swifts as they flew around at break-neck speed, and showing why they are one of the most dynamic of Alpine species. We kept scanning the cliff faces in the hope of finding the elusive Wallcreeper and, as the group were looking at a Crested Tit, white-spotted wingtips and a splash of crimson was seen flying out of a deep crevice in the cliff face. The yell of 'Wallcreeper' was heard as one flew across the rock face and around the corner out of sight. It was brief, it was wonderful, and it was frustrating! The members of the group hardly had time to divert their attention when the butterfly-like flight of the bird took it out of sight, never to be seen again that day. We vowed to return!

We had lunch back down at the Refuge as a couple of Citril Finches were seen feeding close to our vehicles. For the rest of the afternoon we decided to head up to the Upper Hecho Valley to see what delights awaited us. On the way up we stopped briefly to view Grey and White Wagtails in the fast flowing streams where we also searched for Dippers. We arrived at the meadows where we briefly saw a pair of Yellowhammers, but it was the supporting cast that drew our attention and enthralled us. The slopes were full of orchids and we enjoyed a great variety of early Purple Orchid, Elder-flowered Orchid (both the pale yellow and the red forms) and the diminutive Frog Orchid. In the pools along the edges of the track were many Common Frog tadpoles, abundant small Palmate Newts and the occasional Fire Salamander eft. In the late afternoon, as it started to rain, we headed back down the valley stopping at a few places to look for Dippers, and were rewarded with excellent views of one bobbing on rocks in the river only to fly straight towards us and disappear into its nest no more than twenty feet away.

Our final stop was at Boca del Infierno, not far from our hotel, where we found several interesting plants, such as Pyrenean Saxifrage and Fringed Pink. In addition, a Glanville Fritillary butterfly had settled for the night on a plant by the roadside and was very content to be subjected to many camera shutters clicking away.

Tuesday 10 June
Reina

Jaca, Astún, Candanchú, Santa Cecilia, Puente la

Changeable weather: generally overcast and cool, with some heavy showers and the occasional bright spells. Min. 9°C at Candanchú!

After breakfast we headed for the town of Jaca and its magnificent fort. The great stone walls had become the nesting place of many Rock Sparrows whose strange wheezing call was evident as soon we approached the deep moat that surrounded the fort. There were plenty of birds to look at including a singing male that obliged by showing the bright yellow spot on his throat as it opened its bill to sing. The walls of the fort were also favoured many Common Swifts as their nesting location, and often birds would momentarily perch at a crevice in the stone walls where their nest was. As we strolled around the

perimeter of the fort several Tree Sparrows were seen feeding in the grass of the surrounding park and in the dry moat of the fort a small herd of captive Red Deer were an opportunity to see this species at close quarters.

From Jaca we drove up to the ski resort of Astún stopping at a couple of places as we approached the ski village to scan the slopes above and below us. A couple of Water Pipits were the first birds to draw our attention, quickly followed by a couple of Red-backed Shrikes and up on the horizon a pair of male Rock Thrushes were flying from rock to rock. Our sightings were not confined to birds, as a couple of Alpine Marmots were sighted on the lower meadows, quickly followed a couple of Pyrenean Chamois that included one also on the lower slopes that could be seen extremely well when viewed through our telescopes. We then moved onto the other side of the valley to Candanchú for lunch and as we got out of the mini buses a pair of Linnets was there to greet us, and then it started to rain.

After lunch we began our return journey stopping near Santa Cecilia to walk along a river bank where we heard Golden Orioles calling, and enjoyed excellent views of a pair of Woodchat Shrikes. Further down the road we stopped to look at some orchids at the roadside and when we explored a little on the scrubby slopes we found more. The most spectacular was a Lizard Orchid that was growing tall by the roadside, as was the much more delicate Lady Orchid, but perhaps the most exciting and beautiful was an *Ophrys* in the form of a Woodcock Orchid on the slopes amongst a dozen or more Fragrant Orchids.

Wednesday 11 June

Riglos, Montmesa, Embalse de Sotonera, Cuarte

Lake

The changeable weather continued today, a mixture of sunshine and showers, although the rain seemed more confined to the mountains so our decision to move down to the lowland areas proved to be a good one. After breakfast we headed southwards making our first stop at the spectacular cliff faces that rise up like massive columns towering over the village of Riglos. On the approach road we stopped to scan the slopes either side of the road where a fire in recent years paved the way for scrubby vegetation. A fine male Black-eared Wheatear was soon located sitting on the remnants of old burnt trees, a couple of Tawny Pipits were in some green bushes, a male Stonechat was resplendent in its starkly contrasting plumage and from the bushes the rattle of Sardinian warblers could be heard. We continued on up, and once we had parked in the village of Riglos, we walked around the bottom of the cliffs, that were under assault from a small group of climbers. In the skies above the cliffs were the expected Griffon Vultures, several Egyptian Vultures and flurries of both Alpine and Red-billed Choughs. Around the cliff face on the vegetated scree slopes we saw a young male Blue Rock Thrush, Red-backed Shrike, many Cirl Buntings and Melodious Warbler, while Crag Martins, at times, whizzed past our ears and a Peregrine was seen briefly in flight.

It wasn't too far to the plains from Riglos and once we were on them we headed for the Embalse (reservoir) de Sotonera at Montmesa passing good numbers of Bee-eaters perching on telegraph wires on the way. On arrival at the reservoir we parked the vehicles and surveyed the agricultural fields around the water to the sound of larks filling the air. Most prominent were Crested Larks but good numbers of Calandra Larks were rising skywards in song, as were small numbers of Greater Short-toed Larks. In addition two Stone Curlews were seen in flight by one member of our group, and a couple of Woodchat Shrikes were seen briefly. Around the waters edge was a small flock of Cattle Egrets, looking their best in their white and saffron-coloured plumage, and three Great Egrets and three Little Egrets (does that equal three Intermediate Egrets?). Great Crested Grebes could be seen further out on the water but the presence of Penduline Tits were only noted by their high-pitched call.

We moved around to the other side of the reservoir where we were able to walk along a short road that led into the reservoir. A pair of Little Ringed Plovers showed well nearby and a little more distant were a Southern Grey Shrike, a Melodious Warbler, and on the water were at least 20 Yellow-legged Gulls. We made one more stop at Lake Cuarte before we headed home where we saw a first summer Black Tern and our one and only Hoopoe of the week.

Thursday 12 June
Portalet

San Juan de la Peña, Sallent de Gállego, Puerto de

A mostly fine day, with some intermittent showers, that would turn out to be a special day for orchids. During the morning we spent our time in and around the woods at San Juan de la Peña where our attention was broadly divided between birds, plants, insects and one mammal. In the pine woodlands we enjoyed good views of Crested Tits, Coal Tits and a single Long-tailed Tit, the amusing antics of a pair of Nuthatches, and always a delight to see, a lone Red Squirrel sitting obligingly on a branch for us all to enjoy. There was also a good selection of butterflies that included Black-eyed Blue, Duke of Burgundy, Glanville Fritillary and Green Hairstreak, and two orchids, Military Orchid and the strange but interesting Bird's Nest Orchid. Although dragonflies were few and far between on the tour the Blue Emperor flying over a pond was at least a spectacular one. After we had eaten our picnic lunch we moved lower down to the ancient monastery set back into the cliff face and surrounded by some very interesting flora, particularly lots of flowering Ramonda and Pyrenean Saxifrage.

For the afternoon we travelled through Jaca and climbed up to the Gállego Valley to Sallent de Gállego where a warden was stationed in a parking area. After parking our vehicles and speaking to the warden, he led us to an area where there were clumps of up to 20 or so Lady's Slipper Orchids, and they looked fantastic! We spent some time looking, photographing and admiring these magnificent flowers as well as the Elder-flowered Orchids that were also showing in good numbers. On the other side of the road in more soggy conditions were some intensely coloured Broad-leaved Marsh Orchids and a mass of flowering bog-bean.

We continued on up the valley to the French border, seeing our one and only Whinchat for the week, and on arriving at the border at the Puerto de Portalet we walked across the border into France. Around the border were meadows full of Elder-flowered Orchids, accompanied this time by some Pyrenean Fritillaries, and from a vantage point we saw three Lammergeiers, a Golden Eagle and a Honey Buzzard soaring above mountain tops and dropping down into valleys.

In the late afternoon, after a nice cup of coffee, we made our way back down the valley we headed back towards Jaca and then once again up the Hecho Valley and back to our hotel.

Friday 13 June
Marta

Matalascañas beach, El Rocío, en route, Alange, Finca Santa

We awoke to a fine morning with some scattered cloud and through the day the weather would turn out to be much more settled than the previous two days.

After breakfast we headed back up to Gabardito for a second look for those elusive Wallcreepers. We headed straight up to the car park and as soon as we got there we started our walk to the Wallcreeper immediately. On the way up our only Marsh Tit of the week was seen and on reaching our destination we set up vigil on the track and scanned the rock face for Wallcreepers. As we waited we enjoyed the aerial prowess of a small flock of Alpine Swifts as they sped around the rock faces, occasionally disappearing into crevices in the rock face where their nests were. It wasn't too long before success with the Wallcreepers came our way, as first one, and then a second was seen flying out of a narrow gorge. One flew in our direction to land on a rock face above us, whilst the other one flew in the opposite direction. We enjoyed good views of the first one as we looked up almost vertically to a cliff face above us. We then diverted our attention to the other one that was feeding on another rock face that was much more comfortable for viewing. With everyone well satisfied we made our way back to the car park enjoying excellent views of a couple of Firecrests on the way down.

During the afternoon we drove up the Val d'Espetal having our picnic lunch at a very pleasant spot overlooking a stream. It was to be an afternoon of essentially butterflies and orchids as we explored various hedgerows and meadows. Among the butterflies we saw were Orange Tip, Small Blue, Adonis Blue, Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and several Dingy Skippers. One very interesting insect that we came across was an *Ascalaphus*, which is dragonfly-like and belongs to a group of insects known as owlflies. As we climbed higher onto the alpine meadows we turned our attention to the orchids growing in them species such as Burnt, Lady, Greater and Lesser Butterfly, and Common Spotted, with a brief Lammergeier over the head of the valley also of note! It was a beautiful valley and it was a nice way to spend our last afternoon.

On the way back to the hotel we were able to reflect on all the wonderful things we had seen in this magnificent part of Spain.

Saturday 14 June
Delta

Transfer Hecho Valley to Barcelona + Llobregat

The day started with a bright sunny morning and an early breakfast saw us soon on the road for our long drive to Barcelona. It was generally an uneventful journey with a stop for coffee *en route* and at the end a brief visit to a wetland nature reserve close to Barcelona Airport where we saw Little Egrets, a couple of Collared Pratincoles and frustratingly often heard Penduline Tits calling but could not see any. After an hour on the reserve we headed for the airport, said goodbye to John, and after check-in we set off for London in the late afternoon.

We would sincerely like to thank you all for making this such a pleasant trip to be on. The rather varied conditions following a cool and damp spring meant that the flowers were later than usual and butterflies relatively scarce, but also meant that it wasn't cooking in the lowlands as a result! The orchids were also better than normal too, with no less than 22 species found, including the spectacular Lady's Slipper, Lizard and a number of smaller-flowered species!

I (John) would also like to apologise for the extremely late production of this report, brought about by other work commitments, despite Dave getting the daily diary to me quickly.

We look forward to seeing you again soon, we hope, on another Travelling Naturalist and /or Limosa Holidays trip. Our very best wishes,

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

Species lists

BIRDS: We use the worldwide English names and systematic order as recommended by the I.O.C., and published in *Birds of the World – Recommended English Names* (Gill, F. & Wright, Manzanilla., 2006). Alternative names are separated by '/' and optional names are enclosed by '[.]'.

BIRDS - AVES

GROUSE, PHEASANTS & allies - Phasianidae

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* Just 2 en route on 11th is our only record.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* 3 - 4 heard at various sites on 11th.

GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS - Anatidae

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* Plenty including ducklings Llobregat Delta on 14th.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* Just 1 briefly Embalse de Sotonera on 11th is our only record.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Noted on 2 days : 6+ Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, and plenty Llobregat Delta on 14th.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* Plenty Llobregat Delta on 14th.

GREBES - Podicipedidae

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Four seen and others Heard Cuarte Lake on 11th, and plenty Llobregat Delta on 14th.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* 6+ at both Embalse de Sotonera and Cuarte Lake on 11th.

STORKS - Ciconiidae

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* Noted on 3 days : 1 en route on 7th, 6 at various sites on 11th, and plenty various sites on 14th.

HERONS & BITTERNs - Ardeidae

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Plenty near presumed colony Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* noted on 6 days : one en route on 7th, 1 Hecho Valley on 8th, 6+ various sites on 10th, 4+ various sites on 11th, 3 various sites on 12th, and plenty on 14th.

Great [White] Egret *Ardea alba* Three fine individuals Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Three Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, and plenty Llobregat Delta on 14th.

FALCONS & allies - Falconidae

Common/Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* noted on 6 days : small numbers noted daily except on 7th and 13th.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* Three a little distantly from Arrés on 8th is our only record.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* One high over Arrés on 8th, and 1 Riglos on 11th.

HAWKS, EAGLES & allies - Accipitridae

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* Noted on 2 days : Singles Arrés and Alastuey Road on 8th, and 1 high over Puerto de Portalet on 12th.

Black-winged/-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* One from moving vehicles en route on 7th was a surprise.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* Noted on 6 days : Good numbers noted daily except on 9th and 13th.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Also noted on 6 days : good numbers noted daily except on 9th and 13th.

Lammergeier / Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus* Very good numbers and noted on 4 days: a pair + a single Gabardito on 9th, 1 adult Astún on 10th, 2 adult + 1 juvenile Puerto de Portalet on 12th, and a pair Gabardito and 1 Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* Relatively common! Three en route on 7th, and then 3 - 10+ daily at various sites.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* After just 1 en route near Huesca on 7th, common, widespread and seen daily in large number (e.g. 200+ on a few days).

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* Noted on 5 days : Two singles Hecho Valley on 8th, 1 Upper Hecho Valley 4 various sites on 11th, 3 various sites on 12th, and 1 on 14th.

[Western] Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* noted on 3 days : Two Arrés on 8th, 1 en route on 10th, and a pair Embalse de Sotonera and a female Cuarte Lake on 11th.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* noted on 3 days with One Hotel Usón on 9th, a male on 12th, and singles Gabardito and Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* Quite common, widespread and seen daily, though usually in small number, but "going on 20" on 11th.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* An immature Gabardito on 9th, a juvenile interacting with Lammergeiers Puerto de Portalet on 12th, and an adult Gabardito on 13th.

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennatus* Noted on 6 days : One pale phase Gabardito on 9th, 1 Jaca and 3 Santa Cecilia on 10th, 1 Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, 1 San Juan de la Peña on 12th, 1 Val d'Espetal on 13th, and 1 Llobregat Delta on 14th.

RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS - Rallidae

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Noted Llobregat Delta on 14th.

Eurasian/Common Coot *Fulica atra* Several Embalse de Sotonera and 20+ Cuarte Lake on 11th, and plenty Llobregat Delta on 14th.

STONE-CURLEWS / THICK-KNEES - Burhinidae

Eurasian Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* A pair very briefly in flight Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

STILTS & AVOCETS - Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* 4+ en route on 7th, and lots Llobregat Delta on 14th.

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS - Charadriidae

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* 4 Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, and plenty Llobregat Delta on 14th.

COURSERS & PRATINCOLES - Glareolidae

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* Two+ Llobregat Delta were a good find on 14th.

GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS - Laridae

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* 20+ Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, and lots Llobregat Delta on 14th.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* Singles Embalse de Sotonera and Cuarte Lake on 11th.

PIGEONS & DOVES - Columbidae

Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* Noted on 4 days : Plenty en route on 7th, noted on 11th, on 12th, and also on 14th.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas* One noted on 12th is our only record.

[Common] Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* Noted on 7 days. Quite common, widespread and noted daily except on 10th, though never abundant.

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* Noted on 3 days : Two+ en route on 7th, heard Arrés on 8th, 1 Riglos and 2 en route on 11th.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Noted on 6 days. Quite common, widespread and noted on 6 days.

PARROTS & allies - Psittacidae

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* C. 6 noted on the outskirts of Barcelona as we approached on 14th.

CUCKOOS - Cuculidae

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* Noted on 4 days. Surprisingly uncommon: heard Arrés and 1 seen and another heard Alastuey Road on 8th, heard Gabardito on 9th, 1 Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, and heard Val d'Espetal on 13th.

OWLS - Strigidae

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* Heard Cuarte Lake in broad daylight on 11th.

Eurasian Eagle-Owl *Bubo bubo* Super views of one at dusk Alastuey Road on 13th.

NIGHTJARS - Caprimulgidae

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* Heard singing near Hotel Usón on 10th.

SWIFTS - Apodidae

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* Noted on 3 days : C. 12 Gabardito on 9th, 2 on 12th, and 8 Gabardito on 13th.

Common Swift *Apus apus* Common, widespread and noted daily except on 9th.

BEE-EATERS - Meropidae

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Noted on 4 days. C. 12 Alastuey Road on 8th, heard Jaca on 10th, lots M and other sites on 11th, and 1 en route on 14th.

HOOPOES - Upupidae

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Just 1 Cuarte Lake on 11th is our only record.

WOODPECKERS - Picidae

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* One seen and 1 heard Gabardito on 9th, 1 + heard San Juan de la Peña on 12th, 1 + heard Gabardito on 13th, and 1 en route on 14th.

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* One seen in flight and this or others heard Gabardito on 9th.

European Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* Heard Arrés on 8th, 1 + heard en route on 9th, 1 en route on 10th, heard Gabardito on 13th.

SHRIKES - Laniidae

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* Noted on 6 days : 5+ various sites on 8th, 2 Upper Hecho Valley several Astún+ on 10th, 6+ various sites on 11th, several various sites on 13th, and 2+ en route on 14th.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* One en route on 7th, 1 Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, and 2 en route on 14th.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* Two males Santa Cecilia on 10th, 4-5 various sites on 11th, and 2+ en route on 14th.

OLD WORLD ORIOLES - Oriolidae

[Eurasian] Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* Noted on just 3 days. Heard both Arrés and Alastuey Road on 8th, heard Santa Cecilia on 10th, but 1 en route and 3 in flight Llobregat Delta on 14th.

CROWS, JAYS & MAGPIES - Corvidae

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* Noted on 5 days : Two en route on 8th, 2-3 Gabardito on 9th, 1 en route on 10th, 1 en route on 12th, and 3 various sites on 13th.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* Common, widespread and noted daily.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* Noted on 6 days. Common in the middle and upper mountains and seen each full day.

Alpine Chough *Pyrrhonorax graculus* noted on 3 days with Common in the high mountains and noted Gabardito+ on 9th, Astún+ on 10th, and Gabardito again on 13th.

Western Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* Just 2 Embalse de Sotonera on 11th is our only record.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* Common, widespread and noted daily in middle and higher areas.

Common Raven *Corvus corax* Widespread but thin on the ground in the mountains; up to 4 noted each full day.

TITS & CHICKADEES - Paridae

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* One Gabardito on 13th is our only record.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater* Common in the mountain pine forest; noted on 9th, on 10th, on 12th, on 13th, and heard Hotel Usón on 14th.

[European] Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus* Noted on 4 days. 3+ Gabardito on 9th, 2 Hotel Usón on 10th, 5 various sites on 12th, and a few Gabardito on 13th.

Great Tit *Parus major* Quite common, widespread and noted each full day.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* Noted on 3 days : Heard Alastuey Road on 8th, noted Hotel Usón on 11th, and heard Val d'Espetal on 13th.

PENDULINE TITS - Remizidae

Eurasian Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Several heard Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, and also heard Llobregat Delta on 14th.

SWALLOWS & MARTINS - Hirundinidae

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Common, widespread and noted daily except on 9th.

Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Also common and widespread and noted daily from 8th.

[Common] House Martin *Delichon urbicum* Common, widespread and noted daily.

BUSHTITS, LONG-TAILED TITS - Aegithalidae

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* One San Juan de la Peña on 12th, and 2 Val d'Espetal on 13th.

LARKS - Alaudidae

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* Several Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* Two Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* One en route on 7th, 2 Arrés on 8th, and plenty Embalse de Sotonera+ on 11th.

Eurasian/Common Skylark *Alauda arvensis* One Embalse de Sotonera on 11th is our only record.

CISTICOLAS & allies - Cisticolidae

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* One en route on 7th, and heard Llobregat Delta on 14th.

OLD WORLD WARBLERS - Sylviidae

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* Heard Jaca on 10th, and heard Llobregat Delta on 14th.

- Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta* Noted on 6 days. Quite common, widespread and noted each full day in small number.
- Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* Noted on 5 days : Ones and twos heard on 5 days in montane forest, but none seen!
- Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Noted on 4 days : Heard Hotel Usón on 8th, 10th and 13th, but just 1 seen Gabardito on 9th.
- Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* Noted on 7 days. Heard widely and daily from 8th, but only 1 or 2 seen on 8th, 10th and 13th.
- Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* Two + heard Hecho Valley on 8th, several heard Gabardito+ on 9th, heard Jaca and 1 Santa Cecilia on 10th, 1 Hotel Usón on 11th, 3 + several heard Val d'Espetal on 13th, and heard Hotel Usón on 14th.
- Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis* Noted on 5 days. Heard Hotel Usón and a juvenile Alastuey Road on 8th, heard Hotel Usón on 9th, heard Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, 1 Hotel Usón on 12th, and heard there again on 13th.
- Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata* 3-4 Alastuey Road on 8th, and 4 Riglos on 11th.
- Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* 6-7 various sites on 8th, heard San Juan de la Peña on 12th, and 1 en route on 13th.
- Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* A pair + 3 fledglings and another 2 Riglos on 11th.

CRESTS & KINGLETS - Regulidae

- Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla* Noted on 6 days. Singles seen and others heard at various sites on each full day, though 2 Gabardito on 13th.
- Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* One + heard Gabardito on 9th, and heard San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

WRENS - Troglodytidae

- [Winter] Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* Noted on 7 days. Heard daily at various sites from 8th, but only 2 seen Hotel Usón on 11th.

NUTHATCHES & WALLCREEPER - Sittidae

- Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* 4 San Juan de la Peña on 12th.
- Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria* A pair Gabardito on 13th.

TREECREEPERS - Certhiidae

- Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla* Only once heard, at Gabardito on 9th.

STARLINGS - Sturnidae

- Spotless Starling** *Sturnus unicolor* Only in lowlands; noted on 7th, , on 11th, and on 14th.

THRUSHES - Turdidae

- Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula* Common, widespread and seen and heard daily.
- Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos* Quite common in montane woodland, and noted daily from 9th, though few seen.
- Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus* Noted on 4 days : 2-3 + heard Gabardito on 9th, heard Hotel Usón on 10th, 1 en route on 11th, and 2 + heard Gabardito on 13th.

OLD WORLD CHATS & FLYCATCHERS - Muscicapidae

- European Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* Recorded daily in small - moderate number from 8th.
- Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* Noted on 6 days. Heard on five days from 8th onwards, but 2 Arrés on 8th and 1 en route on 14th were the only sightings.
- Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* C. 12 various sites on 9th, c. 10 Astún+ on 10th, several Riglos on 11th, and a few Gabardito on 13th.
- Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* Just one noted from a bus near Puerto de Portalet on 12th.
- European/Common Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola* A male Arrés on 8th, 4-5 Riglos on 11th, and 2 San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* Two males Astún on 10th, 6+ various sites on 11th, and 3 en route on 12th.

Western Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica hispanica* A fine male Riglos on 11th.

Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* Two males Astún on 10th.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* A young male Riglos on 11th is our only record.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* Two Riglos village on 11th.

DIPPERS - Cinclidae

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* Three including a female going to nest Upper Hecho Valley and singles Hotel Usón on 10th, and on 11th.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Passeridae

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Abundant, widespread and seen daily.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* Noted Jaca on 10th, and Cuarte Lake on 11th.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* Plenty Jaca on 10th, and several Riglos+ on 11th.

ACCENTORS - Prunellidae

Dunnock / Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis* Noted on 5 days. One - two recorded daily from 9th - 13th.

WAGTAILS & PIPITS - Motacillidae

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* 5+ Upper Hecho Valley and singles Astún and Candanchú on 10th.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* Noted on 5 days : 12+ Upper Hecho Valley 3+ Jaca and Astún on 10th, a few Embalse de Sotenera+ on 11th, 1 Gabardito on 13th, and a few en route on 14th.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* 3 Riglos and 2 Embalse de Sotenera on 11th.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* noted on 2 days with 3-4 Astún on 10th, and 1 near Puerto de Portalet on 12th.

FINCHES & allies - Fringillidae

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* Common in the mountains and noted daily from 8th.

European Serin *Serinus serinus* Common in the middle and lower mountains and noted daily from 8th.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* Heard Jaca on 10th, a few Riglos on 11th, and heard Hotel Usón on 13th.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* Noted on 6 days. Two en route on 7th, a few Arrés on 8th, 4 Hotel Usón on 10th, plenty on 14th. 1 San Juan de la Peña on 12th, and plenty on 14th.

Citril Finch *Carduelis citrinella* Noted on 3 days. Minimum of 8 seen and others heard Gabardito on 9th, 1 Astún on 10th, and 6+ Gabardito on 13th.

Common Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* Quite common and widespread and noted each full day.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* Only heard in Hecho Valley on 8th.

BUNTINGS, NEW WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Emberizidae

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* Noted on 4 days. Several Arrés + Alastuey Road on 8th, heard Santa Cecilia on 10th, plenty various sites on 11th, plenty en route on 14th.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* Two males Upper Hecho Valley a pair Astún on 10th, and 1 on 12th.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* 3+ Alastuey Road on 8th, and 1 Gabardito on 13th.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* A male Arrés and heard Alastuey Road on 8th.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* Noted on 4 days : 4-5 various sites on 8th, several Hotel Usón on 10th, plenty various sites on 11th, and 2 Hotel Usón on 13th.

MAMMALS - MAMMALIA

SQUIRRELS - Sciuridae

Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* Noted on 3 days. One en route on 9th, 1 San Juan de la Peña on 12th, and 2 en route on 13th.

Alpine Marmot *Marmota marmota* Heard Upper Hecho Valley 4 + heard Astún on 10th, and 2 Sallent de Gállego on 12th.

DOGS & allies - Canidae

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* Noted on 4 days. One en route on 7th, heard Gabardito on 9th, heard Hotel Usón on 13th, and 1 Hecho Valley

DEER - Cervidae

[Western] Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus* One en route on 9th, 1 Hotel Usón on 10th, and 2 there on 11th.

CATTLE, ANTELOPE, SHEEP & GOATS - Bovidae

Isard / Pyrenean Chamois *Rupicapra pyrenaica* 4 Astún on 10th, and 2 Gabardito and 4+ Val d'Espetal on 13th.

REPTILES - REPTILIA

Red-eared/Ornate Terrapin / Common Slider *Trachemys scripta* 3+, probably this species, Llobregat Delta on 14th.

Large Psammodromus *Psammodromus algirus* Just 1 Alastuey Road on 8th.

Common Wall Lizard *Podarcis muralis* noted on 4 days with One Alastuey Road on 8th, 10+ Gabardito on 9th, 3 Puerto de Portalet on 12th, and plenty Gabardito and 1 Hotel Usón on 13th.

Green Lizard *Lacerta viridis* A male Hecho Valley on 8th, and 1 San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

Viperine Snake *Natrix maura* One en route on 11th.

AMPHIBIANS - AMPHIBIA

Fire Salamander *Salamandra salamandra* 3+ efts Upper Hecho Valley on 9th.

Palmate Newt *Triturus helveticus* Abundant Upper Hecho Valley on 9th.

Common Midwife Toad *Alytes obstetricans* One seen + 3 more heard Alastuey Road on 13th.

Natterjack Toad *Bufo calamita* Three tiny toadlets Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

Common Frog *Rana ridibunda* Abundant tadpoles Upper Hecho Valley on 9th.

Iberian Water Frog *Rana perezi* noted on 4 days with Several Alastuey Road on 8th, 1 seen + several heard Cuarte Lake on 11th, heard San Juan de la Peña on 12th, and heard Alastuey Road on 13th.

BUTTERFLIES - LEPIDOPTERA

SKIPPERS - HesperIIDae

Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages* noted on 2 days with Several Arrés + Alastuey Road on 8th, a few Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Tufted / Marbled or Mallow Skipper *Carcharodus sp.* One Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Red-underwing Skipper *Spialia sertorius* noted on 2 days with Two Arrés on 8th, and several San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae* noted on 2 days with One Arrés on 8th, 1 Puerto de Portalet on 12th.

Large Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus alveus* One possibly this species Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineolus* Abundant Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

APOLLOS & SWALLOWTAILS - Papilionidae

Spanish Festoon *Zerynthia rumina* One Alastuey Road on 8th.

Spanish Swallowtail *Iphiclides feisthamelii* noted on 2 days with One Alastuey Road on 8th, and 2 Val d'Espetal on 13th.

WHITES, YELLOWS & SULPHURS - Pieridae

Wood White *Leptidea sinapis* noted on 3 days with Two Alastuey Road on 8th, 2 San Juan de la Peña on 12th, and plenty Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Black-veined White *Aporia crataegi* Plenty Alastuey Road on 8th, 1 on 12th, and 2+ Gabardito on 13th.

Large White *Pieris brassicae* Two Hecho Valley on 8th, and a few Embalse de Sotonera+ on 11th.

Small White *Pieris rapae* Only noted on 11th, 12th and on 13th.

Bath White *Pontia daplidice* Just one positively identified on 11th.

Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines* 4+ Gabardito and Upper Hecho Valley a male on 12th, and several Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Western Dappled White *Euchloe crameri* Plenty Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea* A few Alastuey Road on 8th.

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni* One Alastuey Road on 8th, and 1 Val d'Espetal on 13th.

METALMARKS - Riodinidae

Duke of Burgundy Fritillary *Hamearis lucina* Two Hecho Valley on 8th, 2-3 on 12th, and several Val d'Espetal on 13th.

HAIRSTREAKS, COPPERS & BLUES - Lycaenidae

False Ilex Hairstreak *Satyrrium esculi* One Riglos on 11th.

Blue-spot Hairstreak *Satyrrium spini* Two Riglos on 11th.

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi* 2 San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

Small Blue / Little Blue *Cupido minimus* Singles San Juan de la Peña on 12th, and Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Osiris Blue *Cupido osiris* 5+ Alastuey Road on 8th.

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus* One Arrés on 8th.

Black-eyed Blue *Glaucopsyche melanops* One San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* Plenty Arrés on 8th, plenty on 14th. and 1 Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Adonis Blue *Lysandra bellargus* A male + a female Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Provence Chalkhill Blue *Lysandra hispana* Plenty Alastuey Road on 8th, 2 San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

BRUSH-FOOTED BUTTERFLIES - Nymphalidae

Southern White Admiral *Limenitis reducta* Several Arrés & Alastuey Road on 8th.

Vanessids & smaller Fritillaries - subf: Nymphalinae

Camberwell Beauty / Morning Cloak *Nymphalis antiopa* Two Upper Hecho Valley on 9th.

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* noted on 4 days with One Arrés on 8th, two Upper Hecho Valley 1 Sallent de Gállego on 12th, and plenty Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* One Alastuey Road on 8th, and 1 on 13th.

Painted Lady *Vanessa [=Cynthia] cardui* Just 1 Arrés on 8th.

Glanville Fritillary *Melitaea cinxia* One Boca del Infierno on 9th, and 1 San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

Knapweed Fritillary *Melitaea phoebe* A few Arrés + Alastuey Road on 8th.

Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia* Plenty Arrés + Alastuey Road on 8th.

Larger Fritillaries & Heliconians - subf: Heliconiinae

Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene* One-two Alastuey Road on 8th, and 1 Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne* One probably this species Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Browns, Ringlets & Satyrs - subf: Satyrinae

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* A few various sites on 8th, plenty San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera* Singles Riglos on 11th, San Juan de la Peña on 12th, and Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Chestnut Heath *Coenonympha glycerion* Several Arrés & Alastuey Road on 8th.

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus* Just 1 Sallent de Gállego on 12th.

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina* Plenty Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, and noted on 12th.

Mountain Ringlet *Erebia ephron* One possibly this species Sallent de Gállego on 12th.

Western Marbled White *Melanargia occitancia* One Alastuey Road on 8th.

MOTHS - LEPIDOPTERA

Spanish Moon Moth *Graellsia isabellae* A stunning male Hotel Usón on 8th.

Puss Moth *Cerula vinula* A fine specimen on the bridge Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Mother Shipton *Callistege mi* 4+ San Juan de la Peña on 12th, and 1 Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Burnet Companion *Euclidia glyphica* 2+ San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

DAMSELFLIES & DRAGONFLIES - ODONATA

EMERALD DAMSELFLIES - Lestidae

Common Winter Damsel *Sympecma fusca* Plenty Cuarte Lake on 11th.

BLUE-TAILED & RED DAMSELFLIES - Coenagrionidae

Common Bluet / Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum* Plenty Cuarte Lake on 11th.

Iberian Bluetail *Ischnura graellsii* Plenty Cuarte Lake on 11th.

HAWKERS & EMPERORS - Aeshnidae

Blue Emperor [Dragonfly] *Anax imperator* A male San Juan de la Peña on 12th.

Lesser Emperor *Anax parthenope* Plenty Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

CHASERS, SKIMMERS & DARTERS - Libellulidae

Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii* Two Alastuey Road on 8th and plenty Embalse de Sotonera on 11th.

OTHER SELECTED INSECTS - INSECTA

Field Cricket *Gryllus campestris* One heard Hecho Valley on 8th, and plenty heard various sites on 12th.

Carpenter Bee *Xylocopa violacea* A few Arrés & Alastuey Road on 8th, 1 Embalse de Sotonera on 11th, and 1 on 12th.

Ascalaphid *Ascalaphus sp.* Several Val d'Espetal on 13th.

Ruby-tailed / Cuckoo Wasp Chrysididae One on John's shirt, Hotel Usón on 13th.

OTHER SELECTED TAXA

Leech: Two rather large individuals in a roadside runnel Upper Hecho Valley on 9th.

ORCHIDS

Lady's Slipper Orchid *Cypripedium calceolus*

Sword-leaved Helleborine *Cephalanthera longifolia*

Bird's-nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis*

Lesser Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera bifolia*

Greater Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*

Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*

Frog Orchid *Coeloglossum viride*

Elder-flowered Orchid *Dactylorhiza sambucina*

Broad-leaved Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza majalis*

Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*

Heath Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*

Green-winged Orchid *Orchis morio*

'Champagne' Orchid *Orchis (morio) champagneuxii*

Burnt(-tip) Orchid *Orchis ustulata*

Military Orchid *Orchis militaris*

Lady Orchid *Orchis purpurea*

Lang's Orchid *Orchis langei* While we didn't know it at the time, other than thinking it looked distinctly 'odd', this is the commonest 'form' of early purple orchid we saw, e.g. most of those on roadsides in the Hecho Valley area. Distinction from *O. mascula* is not that easy, but it **is** split as a separate species in the Flora Ibérica volume which deals, in a very conservative way, with orchids.

Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula* Also seen, but in lesser number, e.g. at the head of the Hecho Valley in the meadows with elder-flowered and frog orchids.

Lizard Orchid *Himantoglossum hircinum*

Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*

Bee Ophrys *Ophrys apifera*

Woodcock Ophrys *Ophrys scolopax*

John Muddeman, August 2008

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