

# *Extremadura in spring*

## *27<sup>th</sup> March – 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2010*



Pairs of Egyptian Vulture and Common Raven flanking a Griffon Vulture in Monfragüe National Park

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## **Leader**

John Muddeman (The Travelling Naturalist)

## **Introduction**

With BA playing shenanigans, it was actually a relief when all participants finally arrived **and** with all their luggage, to Madrid airport! Once again we experienced a superb week experiencing the wildlife of Extremadura, despite some unseasonably chilly winds for the first part of the week (though in keeping with the winter!) and a very, very delayed spring (by 3-4 weeks!) in floral terms. Indeed, from the word go on our first day out, we could see that once again early spring in Extremadura is a hard destination to beat in Europe and with a nice friendly group atmosphere, once again it was a delight. Even the very, very wet weather experienced throughout the winter largely held off, and the first true spring weather (especially two glorious days at the end) coincided with a heavy influx of returning migrants arriving back as expected. However, with some winter visitors also lingering in larger numbers than normal, it was a rich mix again, with almost 150 bird species recorded. With the flora almost 3 weeks late, we were delighted by stunning displays of sheets and sheets of white chamomile and yellow crucifers flowering in the steppes, plus the first of the spring specialities, including a number of orchids coming out almost on time!

## **Daily diary**

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March**  
Trujillo.

arrival Madrid, then transfer to near

*Light cloud, largely still and mild.*

We all finally met at the arrivals gate in Madrid and after picking up the vehicle keys, loaded up and were away as quickly as possible. Despite coinciding with one of the busiest weekends for traffic in the year, the late arrivals, (no) thanks to BA, meant we avoided most of this and after a small final detour to see if there was anything around on the roads at night – producing two Iberian Hares and a Red-legged Partridge (!) – we finally arrived at 2 a.m. Only to have to put the clocks forward by an hour too with the spring clock change! However, we all had a fitful night's sleep and were well awake for our 9 a.m. breakfast.

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March** Trujillo – Monroy road, Río Magasca, Santa Marta de Magasca, Cáceres steppes, Trujillo reservoir.

*Still with thin high cloud until 4 p.m., then very fine and sunny. Warm with occasional light breeze.*

The wealth of birdlife in the region was epitomised by the wonderful discovery of single male Great and Little Bustards –in the same scope view– directly in front of our accommodation, and greatly enjoyed from within the comfort of the breakfast lounge! The large numbers of White Storks (including the magnificent colony of 33 nests on a nearby ruined building) would have been sufficient in themselves!

We finally pulled ourselves outside and started towards the entrance, but even here a group of Spanish Sparrows, with many males in superb plumage halted us before we'd even reached the gate! A series of short drives and stops to view from the bus revealed a hunting female Montagu's Harrier, a couple of Southern Grey Shrikes, Crested and plentiful Calandra Larks singing over the scrubby steppes, an early-returning Whinchat and a gorgeous pair of Red-rumped Swallows on roadside wires, plus a couple of perched Common Buzzards. Another stop revealed perched Lesser Kestrels, Hoopoe, Iberian (Azure-winged) Magpies, a massive Spanish Sparrow colony, flighty Great Spotted Cuckoo, a couple of wandering Black Kites, a fine male Northern Wheatear and two singing male Woodlarks fluttering overhead in a territorial dispute. This really was superb!

Another stop ahead in the warming still conditions provided us with more singing Crested and numerous Calandra Larks, but distantly, small groups of raptors were appearing, with numerous Griffon and plenty of Black Vultures finally circling up and eventually drifting over, one mixed group coming straight over us to take a look and giving simply stunning views of both species as they peered down at us! But an impromptu ID session making use of the occasion was also well rewarded when a large longer-tailed bird was noted, and over 20 minutes or so we intermittently saw a 'checkerboard' immature Spanish Imperial Eagle circling around and gliding past, albeit quite distantly. And we never did locate the calling Pin-tailed Sandgrouse which had called occasionally too!

Back at the car we suddenly discovered it was well past 1 p.m., but with the clock shift, felt earlier, so despite trying to rush off for a lunch spot, a couple of stops were made – including one to enjoy the stunning sights and sounds of up to 15 Montagu's Harriers simultaneously displaying over a nesting field – and it was a little while before we tucked into our packed lunches down by the Río Magasca. This was quite noisy, given singing Great Tits and Common Chaffinches (though we saw neither), though a couple of European Serins, a passing Common Kingfisher (complete with fish) and a few wheeling Crag Martins and Red-rumped Swallows plus numerous noisy passing European Bee-eaters kept us busy when not looking at 'the big guys'. And with passing Black and Griffon Vultures, hovering Short-toed Eagle, a pair of circling Egyptian Vultures, a pair of Golden Eagles and even a distant Black Stork, this was good! Other wildlife included a couple of Small Heath butterflies and several nervous Spanish Terrapins on or close to the far bank.

We headed out towards the Cáceres road after a refreshing drink's break in Santa Marta de Magasca, and after checking numerous spots en route, finally reached a spot where three other birdwatchers were intently watching a ploughed field... But no, this wasn't like watching paint dry (!), since they'd located a small group of Great Bustards plus a pair of shuffling Black-bellied Sandgrouse, which despite being distant, gave reasonable views in excellent light. A female Western Marsh Harrier quartering an adjacent field and another 23 flighty male Great Bustards showed what a great site it was, while a pair of Northern Lapwings looked like they were wilting in the sun, but not so a small very elusive group of Greater Short-toed Larks which were feeding furtively in the rough plough.

We finally headed back via Trujillo and paused beside one of its pools, where a couple of Green Sandpipers, 5 Black-winged Stilts, a noisy passing Great Spotted Cuckoo, our first Common Stonechat and a small group of Cattle Egrets were of most note. Back at our rural guesthouse, meeting for the call-over before dinner produced stunning views of Spanish Sparrows and a pair of Red-legged Partridge in the garden, plus later, the remarkable sight of many, many thousands of (only?) Spotless Starlings going to roost somewhere near Trujillo. A Moorish Gecko was teased out by the warmth too, though the local Little Owls didn't start yelling until all had gone to their rooms for a well-earned night's rest.

### **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March**

Zorita steppes, Vegas Altas area, Madrigalejo rice fields.

*A cool, cloudy start, increasingly windy to moderate chilly W, heavy rain showers after dark.*

After a 7 a.m. breakfast we were quickly away after 8, and started off S. Two Great Spotted Cuckoos perched a little off the road in a bush top required a stop, though we kept quite tightly to schedule and soon continued on. The low cloud today clung to the tops of the mountains SE of Trujillo, but skies were clearer down over the plains and we dodged all of the few passing showers throughout the day as a result.

The roadside near the Sierra Brava reservoir was much quieter than hoped, but a superb Little Owl sat out on a rock pile while its mate merely peered quizzically at us with only its head visible. They naturally disappeared the instant we got out, but the singing Calandra and Crested Larks on the steppes kept us looking and we eventually found a single Great Bustard and high-flying Black-bellied Sandgrouse, while a couple of adult Lesser Black-backed Gulls looked a little out of place on the rolling grasslands!

We moved on again, scanning the roadside wires as we went in the hope of a Roller, though to no avail, and finally pulled off onto tracks between a mixture of rice and arable fields. Given a local walking his greyhounds alongside his moving car, things were not quite as quiet as hoped, and a

number of Black-bellied Sandgrouse, already on edge, jumped up out of a rough field at our approach and disappeared over the ridge. A tractor then appeared on that next ridge and the remaining birds left too before we had a chance to see them on the ground! Persistence eventually paid off though, and we finally saw 4 fly past us and land in a field close enough to see the male's chestnut-coloured face patch.

Driving out saw us watching the antics of 2-3 Zitting Cisticolas in territorial displays over the grain fields plus a nervous-looking distant female Great Bustard, though a circling Short-toed Eagle and numerous Corn Buntings were the only other birds seen. The other side of the road looked more inviting and a flooded rice paddy held three Little Egrets and over a dozen Black-winged Stilts, with another behind full of Black-headed Gulls. But with a comfort stop calling, it took a huge male Great Bustard to stop us from reaching village of Vegas Altas! Refreshments in a local bar were then enjoyed before we were off again, this time stopping in the car to try and see Eurasian Tree Sparrows and a male Eurasian Linnet (with variable success), before going for a walk along a track between rice fields. This was very rewarding with numerous Red Avadavats skittering along, a few Cetti's Warblers shouting at us, a grunting Water Rail, but best of all, a number of noisy and elegant Collared Pratincoles which posed on the ground and then flew past and over us to show off their aerial capabilities. The walk back was then punctuated by a stop to watch a group of huge male Great Bustards fly past which had been flushed by a marauding young Golden Eagle! Superb views of the bustards were then obtained as we headed back towards the main road, though the eagle dropped to the ground after prey and was not seen again.

With time pushing along, we turned off near Madrigalejo and found ourselves on an appallingly potholed road. Indeed, despite a few Common Moorhens and Blue Tits on a pond, doubts were raised as to whether it would be worthwhile continuing. A good number of Common Stonechats, then a stunning group of five European Bee-eaters on the road and roadside wires, plus a gaggle of Iberian Magpies adjacent to two Common Woodpigeons on the ground, showed however that it was improving!

We finally pulled off onto a track for lunch in a chill wind, but soon, three Common Cranes took off from adjacent rice fields and we saw there were 14 more still remaining! A calling Great Spotted cuckoo at first refused to show but later perched in full view, but best of all, perhaps, was a delightful Black-shouldered Kite which flew around a couple of times before pitching openly into a tree-top to be admired at length in the scope. And as if this weren't enough, the discovery of a pile of Otter spraint beside the roadside ditch was enhanced by finding a large brilliant green Common Tree-frog perched quietly in the bottom of a tiny holm oak sapling!

The Common Cranes gave stunning close views as we passed, while the remainder of the afternoon was spent exploring the large Casas del Hito lake by circumnavigating it on foot. Waders, including Common Greenshank, Common Redshank, Dunlin and a Ruff, were resting on an island around which 9 Garganey and two Common Pochard were swimming. But given only rather distant flight views we wanted to see the island from the far side. Walking down revealed a couple of pairs of Great Crested Grebes, numerous singing but unseen Cetti's Warblers and Common Nightingales, brief Common Kingfisher and Common Sandpiper, plus Willow Warblers, Common Chiffchaffs and Blue and Long-tailed Tits all in the adjacent scrub. But it wasn't until we were returning that our luck really improved when a huge pale female Peregrine came in and made a few unsuccessful attempts to take a few birds, including ducks on the water! Birds on surrounding rice fields included two Little Ringed Plovers, c. 50 rising Common Snipe and a Water Pipit, and to cap it all, an adult Eurasian Spoonbill flew over!

The return was more direct than originally planned as rain showers set in, but not before we'd (almost) all had fine views of five very mobile Common Waxbills along the roadside.

Although late back, we still arrived before two heavy bouts of rain hit (during and after dinner), and the wind peaked, so blowing the weather through before the morning. Or so we hoped...

**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March**  
Park.

Monfragüe National

*Cloud clearing first thing, then chilly & windy, with heavy cloud returning, including a rain shower p.m. Fine and sunny from 5:30 p.m.*

A short stop near our rural guesthouse revealed a lone young male Great Bustard and a flock of 11 Little Bustards, while a female Merlin flashed over as we stepped out. Various small birds were noted sitting along wire and stone walls, but an orange tail disappearing into oaks caught our attention and belonged to a superb male Common Redstart. A Common Cuckoo flew across but refused to land, with various others only heard during the rest of the day.

We headed north, passing the lovely-looking Río Almonte, with a brief pause en route producing a singing European Greenfinch and distant views of our destination, though we stopped just after reaching the S edge of the park. Taking a small side road we parked under the 'castle', with a cliff rising above us. Here, we were immediately 'besieged' by a flotilla of passing and circling Griffon Vultures, plus several with nests on the ledges above us returning with beakfuls of nesting material from time to time. A shrieking Rock Sparrow was finally excellently located by Miriam, plus our first Black Redstart and Rock Bunting appeared, while a superb pair of Red-billed Choughs took a few twigs to various clefts and cracks, presumably looking for a good nesting spot. A couple of Egyptian vultures were also watched down below us as they cruised the Tagus valley and nearby tributaries.

Our next stop was at the busy *Salto del Gitano* ("Gypsy's Leap") viewpoint, which despite lots of Griffon and a few Black Vultures was relatively quiet. However, 'round the corner' another viewpoint gave us a fine vantage point to spot a single Black Stork on its partly made nest down near to the water's edge and a couple of distant Blue Rock Thrushes.

After a well-earned comfort stop in Villareal de San Carlos, we were off again, and this time to the Tajadilla viewpoint. This too *seemed* quiet, but highlights included several superb Hawfinches in the fruiting elms, a gang of Iberian (Azure-winged) Magpies raiding the scraps from the picnic tables, a couple of fly-past Blue Rock Thrushes and perhaps best of all, excellent views of a pair of Subalpine Warblers in the scrub, with the male finally coming out to preen in full view during a spell of warming sunshine.

The final stop was at the Portilla del Tiétar, which was also relatively quiet, and when the various circling vultures around all started to come in and land, I suggested we head for shelter. Indeed, a couple of minutes later the rain came down and we were glad for the shelter of the stone hide! It was hardly bad here though, since the sun shone intermittently afterwards, bringing out numerous vultures and even a few small birds, including two Eurasian jays which went for a bath, and we took one last look at that Eagle Owl's face visible in a small cave opposite before departing.

Paul and Miriam had gone for a short walk towards the N, so I picked them up before returning, the superb light of sun after rain drawing out the colours of a number of perched Eurasian Bee-eaters to the full, and a pair of Woodlarks crept around under a Cork Oak for Miriam to enjoy too.

We returned via the pinewood, and after a short, virtually birdless walk, met again at the viewpoint overlooking the Tajadilla, where a couple of Crested Tits showed for a lucky few.

And as sun had returned, we returned again for a short stop to look over Peñafalcón, where the beautiful sunlight was highlighting the massed movement of Griffon Vultures as they flew around to get warm and dry.

**Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March**

Trujillo, Alange, Mérida.

*Variably broken cloud with a stiff, chilly breeze all day.*

After our 8 a.m. breakfast we headed to the outskirts of Trujillo and the bull ring. Given the chilly conditions it was no surprise that half a dozen Lesser Kestrels, evenly split between males and females were sitting on the tiles bathing in the dull sunlight. They gave excellent views in the scope, and a couple of males even started tumbling in mid-air, almost down to the ground, during a short fight! Having had our fill we soon moved on to the nearby fish ponds, but with so much water, apart from Mallard and Common Coots, just one Little Grebe was present! A couple of brief noisily displaying Little Ringed Plovers were nice additions however as they flew over from an adjacent field.

Parking up towards the town centre provided a relatively short and flat walk into the main square, and the next couple of hours were variably spent sightseeing, shopping and even noting a few birds from the cafe terraces! Indeed, the only swifts over the town this morning were a few Common Swifts to my surprise! A fax was sent, an internet café was found and we all managed to get everything done almost by the allotted time!

Just over an hour later saw us down near Mérida at a shallow roadside lake, which was inexplicably quiet for birds, despite plenty of Common Coots and a pair of Black-winged Stilts, though singing Calandra and Crested larks and a passing Short-toed Eagle added variety. Perhaps the huge excess of water everywhere this year means that birds are simply extremely dispersed, but it seems that they still prefer just one or two sites even with so many more available. A few fine flowers also distracted us here.

A nearby outcrop at Alange was a great place for lunch, including views over the reservoir where a few Lesser Black-backed Gulls were loafing, though a fine display by 2-3 superb male Blue Rock Thrushes, a small number of Alpine Swifts zooming around, an all-too-brief Black Wheatear and superb repeated sightings of a pair of Bonelli's Eagles were a really terrific haul! Plenty of small birds were buzzing around too, including Eurasian Serins and European Goldfinches, both these species being abundant all day, and notably common throughout the trip this year, plus a male Subalpine Warbler was photographed by John and a single Osprey went over, and to the N, very high, with single Booted and Short-toed Eagles keeping us busy too!

Mérida itself was quieter than expected, with the majority of the Cattle Egrets tucked down on their nests which were buried deep in the now leafy bushes, but persistence rewarded us with a few adult Black-crowned Night Herons and a Little Egret or two in the same colony, plus a fly-over Purple Heron. Smaller birds were few along the river itself, but included some superb showy Barn Swallows, which gave excellent photographic opportunities in the sunlight, while perched on reedmace heads against a backdrop of the muddied waters, plus a few buzzing Sand Martins, while a few noisy and very flighty Cetti's Warblers actually gave us our first views. The Roman bridge was not only excellent to see, and walk in part in itself, but also provided an excellent viewpoint along this stretch of the Guadiana, with another Cetti's, plus male Subalpine and Woodchat Shrikes to boot!

The return was easy, especially after being punctuated near the start for an ice-cream stop (well, it was warm in the van!), while simply watching over the surrounding steppe and dehesa for an hour when back at the accommodation revealed Short-toed and Booted Eagles, Red and Black Kites, Griffon and Black Vultures, Lesser and Common Kestrels, a Merlin (probably the same as the day before) dashing over, and a delightful pair of Little Owls sunning themselves on top of a small outbuilding (amongst others!). A big surprise was a singing Common Whitethroat which flew up into a large leafless tree for a couple of minutes before vanishing again

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> April**  
Jaraicejo

Arrocampo Reservoir, Valdecañas Dam, Almaraz,

*Largely sunny with high thin cloud dawn, and broken cloud later; cool breeze p.m.*

We started with a gentle drive through the local steppe to start, stopping for separate groups of 4 Little and a dozen or so Great Bustards, with a fly-over Great Spotted Cuckoo, dozens of Iberian Magpies, a roadside Zitting Cisticola and a fine selection of other typical species making it a terrific start.

Once on the motorway we headed rapidly N and even bypassed my 'obligatory' orchid stop, despite seeing a fine display of Naked Man Orchids on the roadside, since we were saving them for later! Although mist had lingered over some of the plains to the S, the Arrocampo reservoir was completely clear in nearly still conditions. A preliminary scan along the edge of the bulrushes produced a somewhat hidden pair of Purple Swamphens with a chick, while on the other side, several Savi's Warblers buzzed from the tops of dead reedmace heads and gave excellent views, while flighty Cetti's Warblers also finally sat still long enough for all to admire. Numerous Common Chiffchaffs and a few Willow Warblers flitted through the vegetation, though the noisily singing Sedge Warblers remained notable for totally failing to appear for even a moment! A couple of passing Purple Herons, quartering Western Marsh Harriers and a few passing Great Cormorants rounded off views over the main part of the reservoir.

Picking up a key from near the edge of the village we headed to the first of two hides, where despite spending considerable time standing quietly and watching, only a few Purple Herons, a Little Egret briefly in flight and a rather distant Squacco Heron in flight were seen, and the singing Eurasian Reed Warblers refused to show! So we moved to the next hide, pausing en route for a flock of six (not very!) Red Avadavats, again finding it rather quiet again, despite good numbers of Griffon and Black Vultures passing high overhead, and eventually retraced our steps and headed for a pre-lunch comfort stop.

Lunch was taken in a sun-drenched little valley, where a number of butterflies put in an appearance, despite the deciduous trees not even really showing signs of buds! The most showy were a crisp Swallowtail from the bus, plus a brilliant yellow male Brimstone and a few flashy male Orange-tips, but single Painted Lady, Red Admiral and Clouded Yellow were also much appreciated. Though much dowdier, a small number of Nettle-tree Butterflies came out to sun themselves on the tips of twigs of their host tree, and a small orangey-green butterfly which flew through the trees and then past was retrospectively identified when another nearby, later, landed to sun itself and when viewed in the scope was seen to be a Chapman's Green Hairstreak! A specialist of the locally common strawberry tree, these were only the second and third I'd ever seen, and though despite actually not being uncommon in much of the region, doesn't occur here according to the European field guides! Orchids were good here too, with a moderate number of Sawfly Ophrys and Naked Man Orchids, plus a few Yellow Bee Ophrys and a single Mirror Ophrys. A single spike of Early Spider Ophrys nearby was a great find too given the early date!

The birds were not abundant, but included a pair of Egyptian Vultures among the various Griffon Vultures, and we also saw them again from a raised viewpoint nearby, along with a very high-flying Spanish Imperial Eagle and also an immature Golden Eagle.

An orchid reserve has been established on the edge of Almaraz, and we dropped in here too to see what numbers and species were present, with the satisfaction of finding plenty of Conical and a single Champagne Orchid, plus several Woodcock Ophrys in flower too, among the hundreds of Naked Man Orchids (the anatomical explanation of the latter being explained as we were about to leave).

There was now just enough time to visit another area of White Broom and French Lavender-dominated scrub to look for a couple of special birds. With only a light breeze, lots of Dartford Warblers were busy about their territories and we noted a good number, while a slightly sweeter song gave away the presence of a couple of lovely little Spectacled Warblers, looking rather like small, brightly-coloured Common Whitethroats. Although they hadn't been present even just 2 days before, one of the males was already building a nest! Another short drive took us to the edge of a cork oak-dominated woodland, where despite just half an hour, we latched onto a Mistle Thrush, 1-2 Crested Tits and a Short-toed Treecreeper among Blue and Great Tits in a mixed-species flock. A Subalpine Warbler was a bonus too.

We returned to the accommodation to find far more people than normal, coinciding with the Easter weekend holidays, though it was good to see it so busy.

**Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> April**      Trujillo – Monroy road, Río Almonte, Monroy, Talavan reservoir, Cáceres plains.

*Largely clear a.m. with moderate broken cloud p.m. Cool breeze but warm in strong sun.*

The day was organised in part around a bit of a 'hit-list', since although it was also ostensibly basically to revisit the principal steppe habitat of the region, a few of its key species had still eluded us. Leaving at 8:30 it was still chilly and the dew lay thickly on the ground, but plenty of birds were active in the still conditions. The first of over 20 Red-legged Partridges throughout the course of the day were soon noted, along with the first of hundreds of Crested and Calandra Larks (including one large flock of the latter), Corn Buntings and Spanish Sparrows. Plenty of Southern Grey and Woodchat Shrikes, Common Stonechats, European Goldfinches and European Serins were also present, but long-range views of a particular field revealed a fine flock of about 50 Pin-tailed Sandgrouse on the ground, which despite the distance gave good views in the early morning sun. Two male Great Bustards in the same field were also a great start. A female Montagu's Harrier was the first of many, though the great majority of these were over one nesting field which we steered clear of

given a large caravanette and another car parked hard up against the fence just yards from the displaying birds... Would these people do this in their home countries?

Anyway, another stop nearby was required when the umpteenth 'quick scan' of the steppe revealed a fine pair of Stone-curlews, which walked and ran off to slightly more cover, plus the first pair of a good number of Little Bustards during the day (including 10 back at Francisco's place in the evening!). So two out of four within the first two hours was good! A fine adult Great Spotted Cuckoo also flew in to land beside one of the Stone-curlews at one point, and also gave terrific views in the still perfect light.

Time was already starting to tick away, so we headed on through mile after mile of vast landscapes, with grassy and flower-filled pastures sweeping away to the horizons, and small scrubby rock outcrops dotting the landscape. Broom-filled fields appeared and were then finally replaced by holm oak *dehesa* as we dropped down to the Río Almonte. The sight as we rounded the last bend was simply amazing though, with dozens of cars lining the roads and even riverside access tracks, with many more fishermen and some families enjoying the dead still and crystal clear conditions along the river. The remarkably high water levels meant virtually no edges, so a few birds normally present were totally absent, but still, the first of 4 or 5 Short-toed Eagles for the day circled over the valley side downstream, and a loudly-calling Common Cuckoo sped high over chasing another. Singing Common Chaffinches, Great Tits and European Serins, plus an unseen calling Rock Bunting completed the picture.

Being Good Friday, it was no surprise that only one bar in Monroy was open, but this made a perfect comfort stop, and after drinks and house-made *porras* (rather like deep-fried extruded doughnut material), we were out again shortly after midday, and soon taking a short walk down a very shallow, but varied and flower-filled valley among olive orchards, which was a real delight. The many White Stork nests on the pines and noisy Spanish Sparrows nesting underneath were admired, with plenty of Griffon and Black Vultures, Black and a Red Kite, plus no less than five Booted Eagles a very good reason for keeping an eye to the sky! Single male Blackcap and Subalpine Warbler were much enjoyed too!

Another short drive took us to the Talavan reservoir, where a good bed of dead reedmace didn't look very promising at all, but on entering the hide we found two photographers taking pictures of a superb Eurasian Penduline-tit, and when they left very shortly afterwards, we sat in near silence and scoured the bed for more, whilst enjoying prolonged views of this masked midget! A fine Willow Warbler was also present, plus a furtive, but well-watched Sedge Warbler, and in the deeper water a number of Great Crested, plus very elusive Little Grebes were also present. A pair of Gadwall made a good change from the Mallard, with three more pairs at the bottom end of the reservoir where we took lunch outside in the sun. And the warmth was also good for a few butterflies, including a few Small Coppers and a single superb Provence Hairstreak which posed beautifully on a white stone for most to enjoy. A few plants included two rather oddly coloured Green-winged Orchids, plus a number of spikes of the red-flowered milk-vetch *Onobrychis humilis*.

We finally moved on again, passing through mile after mile more of varied pseudosteppe habitats, with vast swathes of tiny yellow and white flowers, principally of crucifers and chamomile, and after crossing the Almonte river again, complete with two circling Black Storks, turned off down a terrible road cutting right across the heart of the Cáceres steppes. It seemed to be an innumerable series of potholes linked by a few bits of gravel and tarmac, but despite the "shaken but not stirred" experience, it was also very rewarding. A stunning male Black-eared Wheatear perched and preened, at length, on a nearby rock, a Southern Grey Shrike posed in a bush giving us our closest views yet, and when we took one stop for a few roadside flowers, including Barbary Nut and Amethyst Toadflax, some rock turning revealed two beautifully marked Southern Marbled Newts, a number of Churchyard Beetles and a huge 'big nasty' centipede, apart from thousands of ants! Some of the meadows were simply ablaze with small flowers, the low yellow crucifer *Brassica barrelieri* forming potently scented sheets of tiny flowers carpeting some enormous areas.

We eventually emerged from the far end, despite the time moving rapidly on, and then found another dapper Black-eared Wheatear as it flew parallel to the minibus before perching briefly on a fence. But despite then checking every single power pylon and associated nestbox alongside the new motorway, we failed to find a Roller, though one large bird perched up was a terrific Short-toed Eagle

and on the opposite side 2 male Great Bustards were displaying to three females which were walking nonchalantly (and seemingly uninterestedly) across a flowery meadow below them!

The Easter processions were underway in Trujillo after dinner, so 5 of us went to see it for 45 minutes or so, catching the last half come past. The sights and sounds of a traditional Easter procession are quite something, and the numerous spectators were testament to the continued interest in this religious activity. And even the drive home revealed distant Red Fox and an Iberian Hare crossing the road.

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April**

Las Canteras, Trujillo, transfer to Madrid.

*Crystal clear first thing, gradually clouding up. Cool dewy start, dry a.m. then rain at airport!*

After an 8 a.m. start, we met outside shortly over an hour later for a walk around part of Francisco's 400ha estate. Walking down past the storks we soon started down a little dip towards the stream running through, but despite a fine range of local birds, including White Storks, Lesser and Common Kestrels, Black and Red Kites, fly-over Little Bustards, and numerous Spanish Sparrows and Calandra and Crested Larks, nothing new was seen and it was all too soon to start back.

Leaving at shortly after 11 we headed across to the main road with just enough time for a quick visit to a local products store, where various hams, black pudding, and other delicacies were bought! Moving on quickly we tried unsuccessfully to get a few stamps en route, flashed past a Black-shouldered Kite hovering right beside the motorway, but made good progress, and stopped again about half way for a comfort break. A young Spanish Imperial Eagle circling off to one side later again had to be watched at high speed, while the biggest surprise of all was a female Northern Goshawk which passed low overhead while we were on the outskirts of Madrid in the early afternoon! Although they are present in the region, it was suburban and in no great hurry to get back to wilder habitat.

We reached T4 of the airport with 90 minutes before the flight and bade our farewells, with most returning to London before onward flights but Miriam was heading into Madrid for a couple of nights before her longer return to the U.S.A.

This was another highly successful trip, with the added bonus of hardly any rain while we were in the field, despite some marked changes in the weather, and particularly in temperature! The highlights were numerous, but included numerous sightings of the raptors seen, including large numbers of vultures almost daily, the cute Little Owls, the visible migration of the bee-eaters returning to and through the area (including heading back S on one day!), the exquisite plumage of the male Penduline-tit in reedmace beds right in front of the hide, and perhaps for some, the amazing sight of the vast swathes of countryside cloaked in the early spring flowers, in a 'watercolour' landscape of green, yellow and white. The orchids certainly weren't to be sniffed at either, nor indeed the two Southern Marbled Newts, but I'm sure you'll all have your own favourites!

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

Very best wishes, John Muddeman ([www.iberianwildlife.com](http://www.iberianwildlife.com))

**John Muddeman, April 2010**

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## SPECIES LISTS

Before reading, please note that the bird names and list follow the taxonomy and names used by F. Gill and M. Wright. 2008. *Birds of the World: Recommended English Names*. Princeton University Press. This differs significantly in order, but only slightly in the common and scientific names used when compared to most field guides currently in use. Most significant name changes are also included to avoid confusion.

### **BIRDS - AVES**

#### *GROUSE, PHEASANTS & allies - Phasianidae*

**Red-legged Partridge** *Alectoris rufa* : Noted daily with A few various sites on 28th, 2 Vegas Altas + 2 various sites on 29th, 4-5 various sites on 30th, 2 various sites on 31st, 6-7 various sites on 1st, 20+ various sites on 2nd, a few various sites on 3rd.

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* : Heard Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

#### *GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS - Anatidae*

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* : 3 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera* : Noted on 2 days: 2 pairs Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 4 pairs Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* : Common, widespread and noted daily.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* : 14+ Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula* : 7 males + 1 female Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* : 2 males Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

#### *GREBES - Podicipedidae*

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* : Noted on 5 days : 2 Las Canteras road on 28th, 2-3 various sites on 29th, 1 Trujillo fish pond + heard Alange on 31st, heard Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, 5+ Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* : Recorded on 4 days: 2 pairs Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 1 Monfragüe on 30th, 3+ Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, 7+ Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

#### *STORKS - Ciconiidae*

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* : noted on 3 days with 1 Río Magasca on 28th, 2-3 Monfragüe on 30th, 2 Río Almonte on 2nd.

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* : Noted daily with 100+ various sites on 28th, lots various sites on 29th, plenty various sites on 30th, lots various sites on 31st, lots various sites on 1st, lots various sites on 2nd, plenty various sites on 3rd.

#### *IBISES & SPOONBILLS - Threskiornithidae*

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* : 1 adult in flight Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

#### *HERONS & BITTERNs - Ardeidae*

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* : 5+ Mérida on 31st.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* : 1 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* : Noted on 6 days, with 20-25 Las Canteras + 15+ Talavan Reservoir on 28th, plenty various sites on 29th, 150+ Mérida on 31st, a few various sites on 1st, 15 Las Canteras on 2nd, 14 Las Canteras on 3rd.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* : Noted on 5 days with 3 various sites on 29th, 2 Monfragüe on 30th, 2 various sites on 31st, several various sites on 1st, a few various sites on 2nd.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* : Noted on 2 days: 1 ad Mérida on 31st, 8+ Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* : Recorded on 4 days: 8+ various sites on 29th, 1-2 Mérida on 31st, 1 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, 1 en route on 3rd.

*CORMORANTS - Phalacrocoracidae*

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* : 10 + 1 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 25+ Monfragüe on 30th, 5 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

*FALCONS & allies - Falconidae*

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* : Noted daily with c. 12 various sites on 28th, plenty various sites on 29th, a few Las Canteras on 30th, 7-8 Trujillo + pr Las Canteras on 31st, several Las Canteras on 1st, lots various sites on 2nd, 2 Las Canteras on 3rd.

**Common/Eurasian Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* : Noted on 6 days with a few various sites on 29th, a few Monfragüe on 30th, a few various sites on 31st, a few various sites on 1st, a few various sites on 2nd, 1 male Las Canteras on 3rd.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius* : A female Las Canteras road on 30th.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* : Noted on 2 days: 1 huge adult female Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, and a pair + 1 Monfragüe on 30th.

*HAWKS, EAGLES & allies - Accipitridae*

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* : 1 moving N high over Alange on 31st.

**Black-winged/-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* : Noted on 2 days: 1 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 1 various sites near Almaraz on 3rd.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* : Noted daily with 6+ various sites on 28th, 3-4 various sites on 29th, 3 Las Canteras on 30th, a few Las Canteras+ on 31st, 2 various sites on 1st, 3 various sites on 2nd, 3-4 various sites on 3rd.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* : Noted commonly, daily and widely throughout.

**Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* : Noted on 3 days: 1 Las Canteras road + 2 Río Magasca on 28th, 8+ Monfragüe on 30th, 2 Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

**Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* : Noted daily with 100+ various sites on 28th, 1 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 150+ Monfragüe on 30th, a few on 31st, and plenty various sites on 1st, 2nd & 3rd.

**Cinereous/Monk/Black Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* : Noted on 6 days with 20-25 various sites on 28th, 20-30 Monfragüe on 30th, 2-3 Las Canteras on 31st, plenty various sites on 1st, 6+ various sites on 2nd, 1 en route on 3rd.

**Short-toed Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* : noted on 6 days with 3 various sites on 28th, 1 Vegas Altas on 29th, 2 Monfragüe on 30th, 2 Alange + 1 Las Canteras on 31st, 2-3 various sites on 1st, 2+ various sites on 2nd.

**[Western] Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* : Recorded on 4 days: 1 female Cáceres plains on 28th, 6-7 various sites on 29th, a pair Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, 1 en route on 3rd.

**Hen/Northern Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* : 1 female Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* : Recorded on 4 days: c.20 Las Canteras road + 1 male Cáceres plains on 28th, 1 male Vegas Altas on 29th, 1 female Las Canteras + 1 male Almaraz on 1st, several various sites on 2nd.

**Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* : Remarkably, one, apparently an immature female, over the outskirts of Madrid early afternoon on 3rd.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* : Noted on 6 days at numerous sites, with 3-4 on 28th, 2-3 on 29th, a few on 30th, 2-3 on 1st, 2 on 2nd, and a few on 3rd.

**Spanish Imperial Eagle** *Aquila adalberti* : 1 'checkerboard' Las Canteras road on 28th, 1 adult very high over the Valdecañas Dam on 1st, and a young bird seen off the side of the motorway en route on 3rd.

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* : A pair Río Magasca on 28th, 1 immature Vegas Altas on 29th, 1 immature Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

**Bonelli's Eagle** *Hieraetus fasciatus* : A pair near Alange on 31st.

**Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* : Noted on 6 days: a dark morph various sites on 28th, 1-2 pale morphs Monfragüe on 30th, 5-6 pale morphs various sites on 31st, 2-3 pale morphs various sites on 1st, 6+ pale (and 1 dark) morphs various sites on 2nd, a few various sites on 3rd.

*BUSTARDS - Otidae*

**Great Bustard** *Otis tarda* : One Las Canteras & 30+ Cáceres plains on 28th, 1 Campo Lugar road + 1 + 14 males Vegas Altas on 29th, 1 Las Canteras road on 30th, 12-13 Las Canteras road on 1st, 2 Las Canteras road + 5 Cáceres plains on 2nd.

**Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* : Noted on 5 days: 1 male Las Canteras on 28th, 12 Las Canteras road on 30th, 1 male + 3 females Las Canteras road on 1st, 8 Las Canteras road + 10 Las Canteras on 2nd, a few in flight Las Canteras on 3rd.

*RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS - Rallidae*

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* : Heard Vegas Altas + heard Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* : 10+ Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* : Recorded on 4 days: 4+ Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, plenty Alange on 31st, several Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, several Talavan reservoir on 2nd.

**Eurasian/Common Coot** *Fulica atra* : Recorded on 4 days: 2 Vegas Altas on 29th, 7-8 Alange on 31st, 20+ Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, several Talavan reservoir on 2nd.

*CRANES - Gruidae*

**Common Crane** *Grus grus* : 17 immature Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

*STONE-CURLEWS / THICK-KNEES - Burhinidae*

**Eurasian Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oediconemus* : Noted on 2 days: Heard Vegas Altas on 29th, pr Las Canteras road on 2nd.

*STILTS & AVOCETS - Recurvirostridae*

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* : Noted on 3 days: 5+ Trujillo Reservoir on 28th, 40+ Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 2 Alange on 31st.

*PLOVERS & LAPWINGS - Charadriidae*

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* : 2 Cáceres plains on 28th, 1 Vegas Altas on 29th, 5 Las Canteras road on 2nd.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* : 2 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 2 Trujillo on 31st.

*SANDPIPERS, SNIPES & allies - Scolopacidae*

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* : 50+ Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* : 5 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* : c. 20 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* : Noted on 2 days: 2 Trujillo Reservoir on 28th, 2-3 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* : Noted on 2 days: 1-2 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 1 Talavan reservoir on 2nd.

**Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* : 15-20 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* : 17 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* : 1 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

*COURSERS & PRATINCOLES - Glareolidae*

**Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* : c. 20 Vegas Altas on 29th.

*GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS - Laridae*

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* : 2 adults Campo Lugar road on 29th, plenty Alange on 31st.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* : Lots Vegas Altas + Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

*SANDGROUSE - Pteroclididae*

**Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** *Pterocles alchata* : C. 15 Las Canteras road (poor views) on 28th, but 45-50 there on 2nd.

**Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis* : A pair Cáceres plains on 28th, 16-20 Vegas Altas on 29th.

*PIGEONS & DOVES - Columbidae*

**Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia* : Noted commonly, daily and widely.

**[Common] Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus* : Noted on 5 days: 2 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 2-3 Monfragüe on 30th, a few various sites on 31st, a few various sites on 1st, lots, especially near Madrid various sites on 3rd.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* : Noted almost daily in small to moderate number.

*CUCKOOS - Cuculidae*

**Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* : 1 Las Canteras road, 1 Trujillo Reservoir + 1 various sites on 28th, 2 various sites + 1-2 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 1 Las Canteras + heard various sites on 30th, and at Las Canteras, 2 on 31st, 1 on 1st, and 1 adult on 2nd.

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* : Heard Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 2 in flight + 2-3 heard Monfragüe on 30th, 2 Monroy on 2nd.

*OWLS - Strigidae*

**Eurasian Eagle-Owl** *Bubo bubo* : 1 Monfragüe on 30th.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua* : Recorded on 4 days: 2 Campo Lugar road on 29th, 2 Las Canteras on 31st, 2 Las Canteras on 1st, 7+ various sites on 2nd.

*SWIFTS - Apodidae*

**Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* : 8+ Alange on 31st.

**Common Swift** *Apus apus* : Noted on 2 days: 3-4 Trujillo on 31st, 5-6 Almaraz on 1st.

*KINGFISHERS - Alcedinidae*

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* : 2 Río Magasca on 28th, 1-2 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

*BEE-EATERS - Meropidae*

**European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* : Noted daily with 25+ various sites on 28th, plenty inc 5 on wires Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 40+ various sites on 30th, heard Las Canteras on 31st, 15 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, 20-25 Las Canteras road+ on 2nd, 1 Las Canteras on 3rd.

*HOPOES - Upupidae*

**Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* : Noted daily a few to several at various sites, max. 7+ on 2nd.

*WOODPECKERS - Picidae*

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major* : 2 heard Monfragüe on 30th.

*SHRIKES - Laniidae*

**Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* : Noted daily with 4-5 various sites on 28th, a few various sites on 29th, 2-3 various sites on 30th, 3-4 various sites on 31st, several various sites on 1st, several various sites on 2nd, a few various sites on 3rd.

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* : Noted daily with plenty various sites on 28th, a few various sites on 29th, plenty various sites + Monfragüe on 30th, plenty various sites on 31st, a few various sites on 1st, several various sites on 2nd, several various sites on 3rd.

*CROWS, JAYS & MAGPIES - Corvidae*

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* : Noted on 2 days: 2 Monfragüe on 30th, 2 Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

**Iberian Magpie** *Cyanopica cooki* : 25 Las Canteras road on 28th, plenty Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, lots various sites on 30th and 1st, 15+ various sites on 2nd, and several various sites on 3rd.

**Eurasian Magpie** *Pica pica* : Noted commonly, daily and widely.

**Red-billed Chough** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* : A superb pair Monfragüe on 30th.

**Western Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula* : Noted daily in small to moderate number at a few sites.

**Northern/Common Raven** *Corvus corax* : Noted daily with 6+ various sites on 28th, 12+ Madrigalejo rice fields+ on 29th, c.6 Monfragüe on 30th, 2-3 Alange on 31st, 2-3 Valdecañas Dam on 1st, 4+ various sites on 2nd, 12 various sites on 3rd.

*TITS & CHICKADEES - Paridae*

**[European] Crested Tit** *Lophophanes cristatus* : 1 Monfragüe on 30th, 1-2 Jaraicejo on 1st.

**Great Tit** *Parus major* : Several heard Río Magasca on 28th, heard Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, a few various sites on 30th, a few various sites on 1st, 2 Monroy on 2nd.

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus* : 2 Río Magasca on 28th, several Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, several various sites on 30th, 2 Alange on 31st, a few various sites on 1st.

*PENDULINE TITS - Remizidae*

**Eurasian Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* : 1 cracker Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

*SWALLOWS & MARTINS - Hirundinidae*

**Sand Martin / Bank Swallow** *Riparia riparia* : Plenty Vegas Altas + Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, several Mérida on 31st, 2+ Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* : Noted very commonly, daily and widely.

**Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* : Recorded on 4 days: 4-5 Río Magasca on 28th, several Monfragüe on 30th, several Alange on 31st, a few Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

**[Common] House Martin** *Delichon urbicum* : Noted daily with 10+ Santa Marta de Magasca on 28th, plenty various sites on 29th, plenty Monfragüe+ on 30th, and lots at various sites on 31st, 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica* : Noted daily with 6+ various sites on 28th, a few Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, a few various sites on 30th, 2 Las Canteras on 31st, 1 Las Canteras on 1st, several various sites on 2nd, 2 Las Canteras on 3rd.

*BUSHTITS, LONG-TAILED TITS - Aegithalidae*

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* : Noted on 2 days: heard + 2 seen Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 2 Monfragüe on 30th.

*LARKS - Alaudidae*

**Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* : Noted on 5 days : lots various sites on 28th, several Campo Lugar road on 29th, a few Alange on 31st, 100s various sites on 2nd, several Las Canteras on 3rd.

**Greater Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* : Recorded on 3 days: 3 Cáceres plains on 28th, 1 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, 1 Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

**Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata* : Noted commonly, widely and daily in agricultural areas.

**Thekla Lark** *Galerida theklae* : Noted on 5 days: 1 Santa Marta de Magasca on 28th, several heard Monfragüe on 30th, 2+ Alange on 31st, several various sites on 1st, plenty various sites on 2nd.

**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea* : Noted on 2 days: 2 Las Canteras road + 1 heard Río Magasca on 28th, 2 (Miriam) Monfragüe on 30th.

**Eurasian/Common Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* : 3 Las Canteras road on 28th.

*CISTICOLAS & allies - Cisticolidae*

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* : Noted on 2 days: 6+ various sites on 29th, 2-3 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

*OLD WORLD WARBLERS - Sylviidae*

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti* : Recorded on 3 days with a few seen + several heard various sites on 29th, 2 seen + others heard Mérida on 31st, and several Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* : 6+ Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* : Noted on 2 days: several heard Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, 1 Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

**[Eurasian] Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* : 1 seen briefly + several heard Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* : A few Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, several various sites on 1st, 4 various sites on 2nd.

**Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* : A couple Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, lots Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* : 1 female en route on 30th, 1 male Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, single males Monroy + Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* : 1 male Las Canteras on 31st, 1 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata* : c. 10 Jaraicejo on 1st.

**Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata* : 2 males + 1 female Jaraicejo on 1st.

**Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* : A pair Monfragüe on 30th, 1 male Alange + 3 males Mérida on 31st, 1 male Jaraicejo on 1st, 1 male Monroy on 2nd.

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* : Just 1 male Trujillo Reservoir on 28th!

#### *WRENS - Troglodytidae*

**[Winter] Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* : Heard Río Magasca on 28th, 1 seen + several heard Monfragüe on 30th, and heard Jaraicejo on 1st.

#### *TREECREEPERS - Certhiidae*

**Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla* : 1 seen + another heard Jaraicejo on 1st.

#### *STARLINGS - Sturnidae*

**Spotless Starling** *Sturnus unicolor* : Noted commonly, daily and widely, including 1000s some days.

#### *THRUSHES - Turdidae*

**Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula* : Plenty various sites on 28th and 29th, several various sites on 30th, a few various sites on 31st, several various sites on 1st and 2nd.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos* : Just 1 Cáceres plains on 2nd.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus* : Heard Monfragüe on 30th, and 1 seen Jaraicejo on 1st.

#### *OLD WORLD CHATS & FLYCATCHERS - Muscicapidae*

**Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* : 2 heard Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 1 on the roadside close to Las Canteras on 3rd.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* : Just 2 Monfragüe on 30th.

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* : 1 male near Aldea del Obispo on 30th.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* : 1 Las Canteras road + 1 en route on 28th.

**European/Common Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola* : Noted daily with 1 Trujillo Reservoir on 28th, lots various sites on 29th, 1 en route + 1 Las Canteras on 30th, a few various sites on 31st, and several various sites on 1st, 2nd and 3rd.

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* : 1 male + 1 female Las Canteras road on 28th, 1 Campo Lugar road + 1 Vegas Altas on 29th, 1 male + 2 females various sites on 2nd.

**Western Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica hispanica* : 2 males Cáceres plains on 2nd.

**Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucura* : 1 Alange on 31st.

**Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* : 5+ Monfragüe on 30th, several Alange on 31st.

#### *OLD WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Passeridae*

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* : Noted commonly, daily and widely.

**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* : Noted abundantly, daily and widely, including 100s on occasion.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* : 1 Vegas Altas + 3 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Rock Sparrow** *Petronia petronia* : 1 Monfragüe on 30th.

*WAXBILLS, MUNIAS & allies - Estrildidae*

**Common Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild* : 5 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Red Avadavat** *Amandava amandava* : 100+ various sites on 29th, 6 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

*WAGTAILS & PIPITS - Motacillidae*

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* : Several Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 2 Monfragüe on 30th, 1 Alange on 31st, 2 Río Almonte on 2nd.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis* : Plenty various sites on 28th, plenty various sites on 29th, lots various sites on 2nd.

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta* : Just 1 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

*FINCHES & allies - Fringillidae*

**Common Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* : Recorded on 4 days: Heard Río Magasca on 28th, 1 female Monfragüe on 30th, a few various sites on 1st, several heard Monroy on 2nd.

**European Serin** *Serinus serinus* : Noted commonly, widely and daily.

**European Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris* : 2-3 various sites on 30th and 31st, 1 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**European Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis* : Noted very commonly, daily and widely.

**Common Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina* : 1 male Vegas Altas on 29th, 4 + 1 Alange on 31st, several various sites on 1st, 2-3 various sites on 2nd.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* : 7-8 Monfragüe on 30th.

*BUNTINGS, NEW WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Emberizidae*

**Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra* : Abundant and noted widely, daily at numerous sites.

**Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia* : 2-3 Monfragüe on 30th, heard Monroy on 2nd.

**Cirl Bunting** *Emberiza cirlus* : Heard Río Magasca on 28th, 1 male Trujillo (Paul) on 31st.

**Common Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* : 1 male Embalse de Arrocampo (Leslie) on 1st.

**MAMMALS - MAMMALIA**

*RABBITS & HARES - Leporidae*

**European Rabbit** *Oryctolagus cuniculus* : 2 various sites on 28th, 1 on 29th, 2 various sites on 2nd.

**Iberian Hare** *Lepus granatensis* : 2 at night Las Canteras on 28th, 2 Las Canteras + 1 en route on 1st, 1 Las Canteras on 2nd, and 1 there on 3rd.

*DOGS & allies - Canidae*

**Red Fox** *Vulpes vulpes* : 2X corpses en route in morning + 1 distantly in vehicle lights near Las Canteras late on 2nd.

*WEASELS & allies - Mustelidae*

**Eurasian Otter** *Lutra lutra* : Spraint in the Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th and Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

*VESPER BATS - Vespertilionidae*

**Common Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* : At Las Canteras several on 28th, 29th, 31st and on 1st.

*DEER - Cervidae*

**Red Deer** *Cervus elaphus* : 1 stag + 1 hind Monfragüe on 30th.

## REPTILES - REPTILIA

**Spanish Terrapin** *Mauremys [caspica] leprosa* : 100s various sites on 28th, several Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st, several various sites + Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

**Moorish Gecko** *Tarentola mauritanica* : At Las Canteras, 1 on 28th, 29th, 31st and 2nd.

**Spanish Psammodromus** *Psammodromus hispanicus* : 1 Las Canteras road on 28th, 2 Jaraicejo on 1st.

## AMPHIBIANS - AMPHIBIA

**Southern Marbled Newt** *Triturus pygmaeus* : 2 Cáceres plains on 2nd.

**Common Toad** *Bufo bufo* : 2 heard Río Almonte, Monroy on 2nd.

**Common/European Tree Frog** *Hyla arborea* : 1 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Iberian Water Frog** *Rana perezi* : Heard Las Canteras + 1 Río Magasca on 28th, 2 Vegas Altas on 29th, several heard Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

## BUTTERFLIES - LEPIDOPTERA

### *SWALLOWTAILS & allies - Papilionidae*

[Common] **Swallowtail** *Papilio machaon* : 1 Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

### *WHITES, YELLOWS & SULPHURS - Pieridae*

**Wood White** *Leptidea sinapis* : 1 Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

**Large White** *Pieris brassicae* : 1 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**Small White** *Pieris rapae* : 1 en route on 28th, several various sites on 1st, a few various sites on 2nd.

**Bath White** *Pontia daplidice* : 1 Jaraicejo on 1st, several various sites on 2nd.

**Orange-tip** *Anthocharis cardamines* : 2-3 males Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

**Western Dappled White** *Euchloe crameri* : several various sites on 28th.

**Clouded Yellow** *Colias crocea* : A few various sites on 28th, a few Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

**Brimstone** *Gonepteryx rhamni* : 1 probable female of this species Monfragüe on 30th, 2 males Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

### *METALMARKS, HAIRSTREAKS, COPPERS & BLUES - Lycaenidae*

**Provence Hairstreak** *Tomares ballus* : 1 Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

**Chapman's Green Hairstreak** *Callophrys avis* : 2 Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

**Small Copper** *Lycaena phlaeas* : 3-4 Talavan Reservoir on 2nd.

### *Snouts - subf: Libytheinae*

**Nettle-tree Butterfly** *Libythea celtis* : 2-3 Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

### *Vanessids & smaller Fritillaries - subf: Nymphalinae*

**Red Admiral** *Vanessa atalanta* : 1 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 1 Mérida on 31st, 1 Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

**Painted Lady** *Vanessa cardui* : 1 Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

### *Browns, Ringlets & Satyrs - subf: Satyrinae*

**Speckled Wood** *Pararge aegeria* : 1 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, 1 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**Small Heath** *Coenonympha pamphilus* : 2 Río Magasca on 28th, 1 Valdecañas Dam on 1st.

## MOTHS - LEPIDOPTERA

*NOCTUIDS - NOCTUIDAE*

Silver Y *Autographa gamma* : 1 Las Canteras road on 28th.

**DAMSELFLIES & DRAGONFLIES - ODONATA**

*BLUE-TAILED & RED DAMSELFLIES - Coenagrionidae*

Iberian Bluetail *Ischnura graellsii* : 2 Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

*CHASERS, SKIMMERS & DARTERS - Libellulidae*

Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii* : 2 Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th.

**OTHER SELECTED INSECTS - INSECTA**

Mole Cricket *Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa* : 1 hole (!) + heard Jaraicejo on 1st.

Violet Carpenter Bee *Xylocopa violacea* : A few Almaraz on 1st.

Cockchafer / May Bug sp. *Scarabaeidae* : A few Jaraicejo on 1st.

**OTHER SELECTED TAXA**

Centipede *Scolopendra cingulatus* : 1 Cáceres plains on 2nd.

Long-legged Centipede *Scutigera coleoptrata* : 2 Cáceres plains on 2nd.

**LARGER FISH - PISCES**

Common Carp *Cyprinus carpio* : Several Madrigalejo rice fields on 29th, a few probably this sp. Monfragüe on 30th, several Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

Eastern Mosquito Fish *Gambusia holbrooki* : Plenty Embalse de Arrocampo on 1st.

**SELECTED PLANTS:**

[Nos. on the right refer to Grey-Wilson & Blamey, *Mediterranean Wild Flowers*]

<b><u>Pinaceae:</u></b>	<i>Pinus pinea</i>	Stone / Umbrella Pine	(3)
<b><u>Fagaceae:</u></b>	<i>Quercus rotundifolia</i>	Evergreen Oak	(26)
	<i>Quercus suber</i>	Cork Oak	(27)
<b><u>Ulmaceae:</u></b>	<i>Ulmus minor</i>	Elm sp.	(c. 38)
<b><u>Moraceae:</u></b>	<i>Ficus carica</i>	Fig	(42)
<b><u>Caryophyllaceae:</u></b>	<i>Silene colorata</i>	pink catchfly sp.	(180)
<b><u>Ranunculaceae:</u></b>	<i>Ranunculus</i> sp.	Water Crowfoot sp.	
<b><u>Crassulaceae:</u></b>	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Navelwort	(396)
<b><u>Leguminosae:</u></b>	<i>Cytisus multiflorus</i>	White Broom	
	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Broom	(456)
	<i>Lygos sphaerocarpa</i>	Lygos (common broom-like plant)	(478)
	<i>Lupinus angustifolia</i>	Narrow-leaved Lupin (prob. this sp.)	(486)
	<i>Astragalus lusitanicus</i>	'Iberian' Milk-vetch	(504)
	<i>Onobrychis humilis</i>	Sainfoin sp.	(c.717)
<b><u>Geraniaceae:</u></b>	<i>Geranium molle</i>	Dove's-foot Crane's-bill	(741)
	<i>Erodium</i> sp.	Storksbill sp.	(cf. 758)
<b><u>Thymelaeaceae:</u></b>	<i>Daphne gnidium</i>	Mediterranean Daphne	(936)
<b><u>Cistaceae:</u></b>	<i>Cistus albidus</i>	Grey-leaved Cistus (will have big pink fls)	(961)
	<i>Cistus salviifolius</i>	Sage-leaved Cistus (to have small white fls)	(965)
	<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	Gum Cistus (big white fls)	(971)

<b><u>Cactaceae:</u></b>	<i>Opuntia maxima</i> (= <i>ficus-indica</i> )	Prickly Pear	(1040)
<b><u>Umbelliferae:</u></b>	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel	(1108)
	<i>Ferula communis</i>	Giant Fennel	(1141)
<b><u>Ericaceae:</u></b>	<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry Tree	(1176)
	<i>Erica arborea</i>	Tree Heath (pink fls in EX)	(1178)
	<i>Erica lusitanica</i>	Portuguese Heath (white fls)	(1179)
<b><u>Oleaceae:</u></b>	<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>	narrow-leaved shrub	(1246)
	<i>Olea europaea</i>	Olive	(1248)
<b><u>Boraginaceae:</u></b>	<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	Purple Viper's Bugloss	(1383)
	<i>Anchusa undulata</i>	Undulate Anchusa	(1406)
<b><u>Labiatae:</u></b>	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Rosemary	(1526)
	<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French Lavender	(1528)
<b><u>Scrophulariaceae:</u></b>	<i>Linaria amethystea</i>	Amethyst Toadflax	(no ref.)
	<i>Linaria spartea</i>	a yellow-fl. Toadflax	(c. 1614)
<b><u>Valerianaceae:</u></b>	<i>Centranthus calcitrapae</i>	'Spanish' Valerian	(1725)
<b><u>Compositae:</u></b>	<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>	Chamomile	(1884)
	<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	Field Marigold	(1908)
	<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Milk Thistle	(1982)
<b><u>Liliaceae:</u></b>	<i>Asphodelus fistulosus</i>	Hollow-leaved Asphodel	(2087)
	<i>Asphodelus aestivus</i>	Common Asphodel	(2089)
	<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	Spanish Bluebell	
	<i>Muscari comosum</i>	Tassel Hyacinth	(2201)
	<i>Leucojum trichophyllum</i>	Three-leaved Snowflake	(2265)
	<i>Narcissus triandrus</i>	Angel's Tears	(no ref.)
	<i>Narcissus bulbocodium</i>	Hoop-petticoat Narcissus	(2281)
<b><u>Iridaceae:</u></b>	<i>Gymnandris sisyrynchium</i>	Barbary Nut Iris	(2305)
	<i>Romulea cf ramiflora</i>	Sand Crocus sp.	(2316)
<b><u>Orchidaceae:</u></b>	<i>Orchis morio</i> ssp. <i>picta</i>	Green-winged Orchid	(2403a)
	<i>Orchis (morio) champagneuxii</i>	Champagne Orchid	(2403b)
	<i>Orchis conica</i>	Spanish Milky Orchid	(cf. 2408)
	<i>Orchis italica</i>	Italian / Naked Man Orchid	(2409)
	<i>Ophrys speculum</i>	Mirror Ophrys	(2422)
	<i>Ophrys lutea</i>	Yellow Ophrys	(2423)
	<i>Ophrys (sphegodes) incubacea</i>	Early Spider Orchid form	(c.2428)
	<i>Ophrys scolopax</i>	Woodcock Ophrys	(2436)
	<i>Ophrys tenthredinifera</i>	Sawfly Ophrys	(2443)

This list has been drawn up using Blamey & Grey-Wilson's *Med. Wild Flowers*, the 'Flora y vegetación de Extremadura', Polunin & Smythies' 'Guía de campo de las flores de España, Portugal y sudoeste de Francia' and Durán & Rodríguez's 'Guía de arboles y arbustos de Extremadura'. My apologies if I've omitted anything obvious!



Eurasian Penduline-tit



Great Crested Grebe



Naked Man Orchid



Mirror Ophrys



Sawfly Ophrys



White Storks



Lesser Kestrel male



Barn Swallow



Black-crowned Night Heron



Common Cranes



Conical Orchid



Early Spider Ophrys



Green-winged Orchid



View from Las Canteras: White Stork colony in the foreground & Trujillo in the background