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Tour Report

Spain – Secret Wilderness of Extremadura

27 September – 4 October 2022

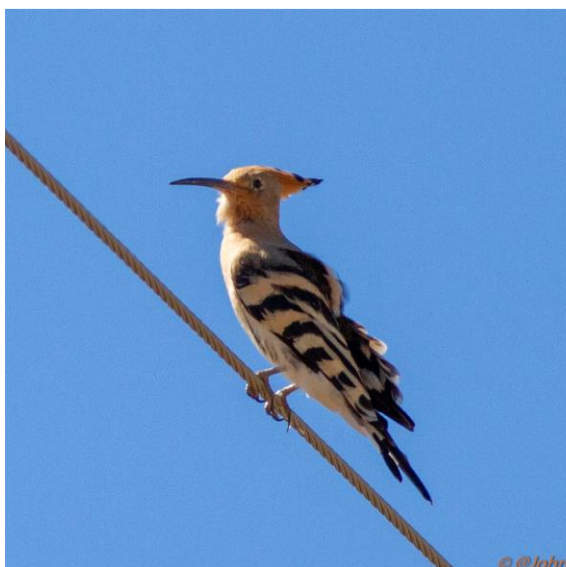
Eurasian spoonbills



Griffon vulture



Eurasian hoopoe



European pied flycatcher



Compiled by John Muddeman

Extremadura is justifiably famous for the extraordinary abundance of wildlife, especially steppic birds and raptors, with autumn seeing interesting concentrations of the former and good chances of the latter following the breeding season. Added to this are the various, largely artificial wetlands in the region, from vast open reservoirs attracting waterbirds to the open water and waders to their muddy edges to the large expanses of rice fields and their irrigation and drainage channels attracting large numbers of small birds to the generally well-vegetation habitats associated with them.

The huge vistas over gently undulating plains incised by small rivers and streams, plus impressive mountains to the north of the region, all largely given over to the vast swathes of pseudosteppe and western holm oak dehesa (or wood pasture) give it a very characteristic feel, while there is considerable subtle variation with the mountain ridges.

2022 had been characterised by the drought conditions, exacerbated by the extremely hot summer and lack of autumn rains (so far at least), meaning that the reservoir levels were generally at historic minima and the rice fields dry after a ban on their cultivation given the lack of overwintering rain last year. So how did that affect the birds and other wildlife? Read on!

Day 1: Madrid airport, El Pardo, Bar David, Arrocampo Res.

Tuesday 27 September 2022

Four of us met at the airport and we then headed quickly to pick up the last of the group, who had come in from Norway the day before, and I also nipped over to a nearby supermarket for a picnic lunch.

This picnic was taken on the edge of Madrid at a favoured and surprisingly quiet picnic site, where a stunning adult Spanish imperial eagle sat in a tree nearby before we could even get all our optical gear out! Rutting red and fallow deer under the trees opposite made an interesting soundscape, though it was extremely quiet otherwise for birds, despite a couple of Cetti's warblers occasionally yelling from the depths of the riverside scrub below us.

The next stop was for a comfort break plus a refreshing and welcome group drink plus the bonus of quite a large half-filled farm lake nearby with abundant birds! Waders along the shores included plentiful elegant black-winged stilts, numerous green and several common sandpipers, lots of active little ringed plovers, plus a group of common snipe, unusually completely out in the open given the total lack of cover for them to hide in! A small flock of mobile western yellow and a single white wagtail were evidence of active migration, while a grey heron in shade under trees was sat just a metre or so from a resting western marsh harrier!

Time had really moved on, but we headed to our final stop of the day, much to the further surprise and delight of the participants, who'd assumed that it would have been a straight drive to our rural guesthouse! Here we drove out to look over a large expanse of bulrushes on the edge of a big reservoir and while not seeming to be a great place, with very little close open water visible, we were quickly treated to four great egrets and a couple of grey herons lifting off and flying slowly way to one side, then the impressive sight of almost 20 Eurasian spoonbills lifting off and heading off to a quiet spot on the other bank. Eurasian coots, a gadwall or two, a pair of little grebes and even a common teal were briefly visible in the open water in front in the gap between the vegetation, while shouting Cetti's warblers, plus squealing water rail and grunting purple swamphens provided the sound backdrop. A couple of common kingfishers sped back and forth vying for fishing space, a western marsh harrier or two drifted over, while a small whitish 'egret' winging its way in from a small arm of the reservoir was a squacco heron, even though it dropped out of sight while still some way from us. Spanish sparrows were mixed with house sparrows on the fence behind us, while a few western yellow wagtails feeding under the hooves of a couple of horses in a pasture behind us added a welcome final splash of colour!

I called our host to tell him that we were on our way and detoured to take a shortcut out of the site, only to see a common snipe drop into a little channel beside the track ahead of us. Edging forward slowly to try and get a close look flushed another small bird off to one side, resulting in us finding a superb Eurasian wryneck, which popped up into a tree full of dead leaves and maturing almond fruits! OK, its extraordinary cryptic plumage meant it was tough to see, plus it kept still for a long time, but we persisted and eventually all got decent views of this bizarre and fascinating migrant woodpecker!

We reached our destination a little after sunset and were soon into our rooms and then quickly back down for our first tasty meal: ratatouille followed by baked gilt-head bream. Yum!

Day 2: Las Canteras, Los Cerralbos, Santa Marta de Magasca, Río Tamuja, Llanos de Cáceres observatory, San Jorge Reservoir, San Lázaro park

Wednesday 28 September 2022

The day dawned dead calm and in silence, which combined with its immense vistas, give it an incredibly serene feel, especially in the cool half-light before sunrise.

Following our 08:00 (still pre-sunrise!) breakfast we were out an hour later, but instead of hurrying off to the steppes as early as possible as planned, a couple of birds 'intervened' to suggest a good look around the guesthouse would be an excellent first move. And so, it was!

A delightful little owl peered out from a gap in the stonework of an old wall in a building, giving fantastic scope views in the early morning light. A cracking start! Two sparring common redstarts in bushes right beside the bus then prompted us to take a walk around the broom-scrub field, with a fine haul of small migrants seen in consequence and in keeping with the excellent numbers of passerines generally noted on passage in Spain this autumn! A couple of whinchats, half a dozen or more feisty northern wheatears, a couple of European pied and a superb spotted flycatcher (or was it two?), a fly-over calling tawny pipit, our first flighty Eurasian hoopoe of the day (and there were plenty!), brief willow warbler and, finally, a brief view of one or other of the common redstarts, in addition to local fly-over rock sparrows, calling Iberian grey shrike, a couple of corn buntings and hordes of crested larks, was a terrific start!

Plenty more northern wheatears and a couple of whinchats were noted on the way to Trujillo, where we had to refuel, and then more of the same out in the open pseudosteppe to the west of the town, showing just how many were moving through the area. A circling eagle off to one side resulted in good views of both an adult and then a calling juvenile short-toed snake eagle, plus a small group of battling Thekla's larks in the pastures, showing just how similar they are to crested!

Another broad track ahead had us stopping repeatedly for more wheatears and whinchats, but try as we might here though, not a single other true steppic bird was present, except for a couple of groups of flighty Calandra larks, while a surprise appeared in the form of over thirty northern lapwings winging their way low across the exceptionally dry and slightly overgrazed pastures. A few griffon and a single fine cinereous vulture circling overhead were great local birds, however, in addition to a couple of more Iberian grey shrikes.

We pulled ourselves away and headed for a quite late refreshing drink in Santa Marta de Magasca, where passing griffon and cinereous vultures, plus a few Eurasian crag martins amongst the more numerous common house martins wheeling over the rooftops added birding moments to the pleasure of the relaxing drink in the shade.

Despite still quite cool temperatures only in the low 20s, the sun was beating down as we spent a little vigil over a largely dry local valley, though a European robin passing underneath was the only new bird seen well, despite being rather out of place on the very dry slopes. Perhaps it was an early migrant to the wild olive groves here?

The pseudosteppe ahead was ever more desolate looking under the almost crystal-clear skies, with birds seemingly either having taken cover or having moved elsewhere, except for the northern wheatears and occasional whinchats, of course ...! Thankfully, after seeing a tawny pipit briefly on the ground until flushed by a passing lorry (!), we were able to take lunch in the shelter of a hide with terrific views over a huge swathe of the Cáceres plains. A stiff breeze with strong gusts was blowing through, keeping the temperature down to 26°C, and given the cover we were treated to excellent views of a juvenile western marsh harrier hunting over the grassland right in front, totally unaware of our presence. A much more distant adult Spanish imperial eagle circling up was a great find too, but very little else moved, so once we finished, I decided to try something different: another wetland site, plus nearby 'stake-out'.

After a little fun to find the right road, we headed out to the Guadiloba reservoir, where despite it appearing to be devoid of birds, we slowly started seeing a few species of interest, including a few great crested grebe, a common greenshank, three little egrets and then a fine common kingfisher, first perched but then hovering a few times as it fished a small channel. Both black-headed and lesser black-backed gulls added further variety, though a 'checkerboard' Spanish imperial eagle circling high over to one side was a great find.

The pseudostepes ahead required patience to scan, with vast areas to cover in our search for an uncommon migrant to the region, but after several kilometres in the van we finally spotted movement on a low ridge off to one side as a small trip of Eurasian dotterel started exercising their wings before taking short runs over the ground. Our Norwegian party member was intrigued since they are far more flighty than when on the breeding grounds and we did not try to even get close as they headed off over a small ridge nearby.

We commenced our return via two wetlands in Trujillo. Here, a range of commoner waterbird and wader species were present, plus on one lake, an escaped mute swan (!), lots of common moorhens (our first), two calling Eurasian reed warblers and migrant common whitethroat to round off a very rewarding day.

Day 3: Monroy Road, Sierra Brava Reservoir, Madrigalejo rice fields, Campo Lugar road, Alcollarín Reservoir

Thursday 29 September 2022

Having completely failed to see any true steppic birds the day before, I decided to try again, but closer to base first today, rather than heading directly off towards the south as originally planned. Stepping out into a humid chilly 13°C breeze under overcast skies wasn't very promising, especially when we could barely even see any birds around! A couple of northern wheatears graced a huge pasture off to one side and a flighty Iberian grey shrike a fence ahead, but it took some time to really see any reasonable movement, most noted after a good walk when a small flotilla of Eurasian griffon and cinereous vultures flew low past, then after pausing briefly in a sheep field, simply moved silently on again and quickly out of sight. Long-range scanning produced a horribly distant mixed flock of black-bellied and pin-tailed sandgrouse in the air, but they quickly dropped out of sight, for good, before anyone could pick them up. Another group in flight on the other side of the track were all pin-tailed, though again dropped down into quite long grass beyond a small fence and totally out of sight. I walked back and moved the vehicle around to pick up the group, who after waiting unsuccessfully for them to reappear, joined me where, with the scope, we could just make out their hunch-backed forms in the grass some way off. Plenty of common ravens, lots of flighty Calandra larks and calling crested larks, plus hordes of spotless starlings feeding distantly on the steppes kept us busy, but again we left without good views of any steppic species.

After a quick comfort break back to our accommodation, we headed off again, this to the south of Trujillo and took a risk by heading to the west side of the Sierra Brava reservoir. A risk, since I knew it was currently at only around 13% of its capacity, so I was unsure of what we might find! The choice was a great one though since a group of Eurasian griffon plus one cinereous vulture were huddled under a western holm

oak beside the already mostly eaten carcass of a sheep! We hopped out to get pictures as they were already starting to leave, giving us terrific flight views in the process, with the cinereous staying until last until it too finally gave a couple of bounces and took off into the fresh wind before soaring quickly off over the trees.

The remainder of the drive was longer than expected given the terrific drawdown of the reservoir, leaving the water probably at its lowest levels since it was first flooded in 1996! Stopping at a birdwatching hide, now too far from the water to even contemplate looking at what was on it, we did take a good look with the scope to see if it was worth spending time and realised it was better than it first looked! First one, and then a second western osprey were spotted resting among the abundant emergent trees, plus a small variety of waders were spotted on the muddy edges below. Surprisingly, a Dartford warbler called from bushes behind us, and was then spotted as it flew towards us before diving into one bush, only to then reappear shortly afterwards and head high over and past us and down into the leafless oaks below! It was clearly on migration, though it's only anyone's guess as to where!

Giving it a chance, we walked down towards the water's edge, enjoying a pair of Thekla's larks first and then a small flock of very active blue-headed yellow wagtails which moved past. Working our way closer we finally saw a good variety of waders, including a lovely Kentish plover, seven dunlin, a ruff wading in deep water with black-winged stilts and even a juvenile little stint once we'd returned back to the vehicle. With rain forecast later in the day and darker clouds looming, we decided to take an earlier lunch at a conveniently placed picnic table, with views over the reservoir and from where we even managed to spot a surprise greater flamingo crossing low over to the near shore. Despite a few spits of rain as we ate, the light got better to see the reservoir, helping us when a glossy ibis dropped in, either having been flushed by a passing marsh harrier or one of the ospreys on a fishing jaunt!

Light rain started about five minutes after we'd packed everything back into the van and started back, so we headed first for a post-lunch drink at a small bar in a local village to give it time to blow through. This worked and we started back with an unexpectedly long detour through the dry rice fields, given that the tracks were not as I'd remembered! However, not to worry, this turned out to be extremely rewarding, a wealth of birds present, either on the rough edges, along the still wet drainage and irrigation channels or even in the few fields with crops. A fine male common redstart was hunting in a patch of recently burned bushes, while our first wet channel produced our first very flighty common waxbills and red avadavats. The first of seven or eight bluethroats also flew low past before diving down into the thick cover, but one perched on a metal pole for perhaps a minute and another took a run across the track we were parked on, before then returned a minute or so later, even though we were largely distracted trying to spot a surprising elusive Eurasian hoopoe feeding close beside it! A couple of Eurasian tree sparrows were heard before being spotted, with a couple of other small groups also noted later. After the first dead-end drive, we took a larger track past a field of alfalfa where, amazingly, as it is a seemingly scarce migrant through the region, at least eight tree pipits were perched up on the wire above it, before they dropped down to the ground and disappeared deep into the lush green vegetation. Changing route again after the second dead-end track took us first past a large field of ripe sunflowers where an immense flock of thousands of Spanish sparrows were feeding and then beside a small building with a terrific concentration of Eurasian collared doves. Knowing how European turtle doves frequently associate with these flocks, it was a treat to then discover one on a wire even closer! Another group of trackside waxbills and avadavats finally gave us decent views, though we had to move on as a huge harvester came in at that moment to crop the sunflower field immediately adjacent to it, this moved us on to our final surprise when a typical 'all dark' marsh harrier rose up off the ground only to surprise us with its lovely blue-grey wing panels and tail, this being a rare melanistic form of a male western marsh harrier!

The weather was still good, so we continued our return with a slow drive along a road crossing mixed agristeppe habitats. A stunning great bustard out in the middle of one field allowed us to get out and get the scope on it before finally jumping up and flying low off ahead and across the road, where it clearly dropped down again. Moving on, we quickly discovered that it was with six more in two small groups, and we stopped and watched, this time from within the vehicle, to marvel at these majestic birds.

Having joked that the weather forecast was not that great, since storms had been forecast from 18:00 for a couple of hours, a salutary lesson came as dark clouds began to gather on the horizon to the north almost spot on time. Indeed, by the time we reached the Alcollarín reservoir and drove down towards the water's edge, it was looking very black over the mountains forming the horizon, though we were still well clear of it. Lots of little and great crested grebes, a few hundred mallard and seemingly as many Egyptian geese, a large flighty group of Eurasian spoonbills -though three came back and gave excellent views later - a and few waders along the shoreline, as well as fantastic views over a lovely bit of landscape, were all enjoyed before the clearly approaching storm hurried us back into the vehicles and quickly working our way out along a broad track. The powerful squall preceding the storm hit the back of the reservoir, lifting clouds of dust and then blasted its way across the open water, before finally hitting us too, but not before we'd enjoyed it from safely within the van!

About half the drive back was in light to occasionally moderate rain, much to my delight, since there's still a massive rainfall shortfall this year, though a large eucalyptus bough down across part of the road needed carefully avoiding, and the rain stopped much too quickly. Once out of Trujillo we also made a U-turn to head back for a fine, albeit bedraggled, short-toed snake eagle perched high on a pylon before finally returning to our guesthouse in cooler, but very fine conditions once again!

Day 4: Monroy road, Monfragüe: Castillo, Peñafalcón, Villareal de San Carlos, Mirador de la Malavuelta, Portilla del Tiétar, Hotel Puerta de Monfragüe

Friday 30 September 2022

Despite no 'house' little owl, it was a beautiful, cool, crystal clear and dead still start to the day! Given the lovely conditions, I decided to try again for the pin-tailed sandgrouse not far from the guesthouse, with a little more success this time, given a large flock of perhaps 100 birds splitting into two in flight at least giving us flight views as they twinkled over the agristeppe in the early morning sun. Several close perched griffon and cinereous vultures were much closer and generally enjoyed more, of course, while the abundance of corn buntings, moving nervously over the pastures in loose flocks, plus numerous 'twisling' Calandra larks as well were a particular feature. A single meadow pipit passed over calling, my first for the autumn, while a calling Eurasian skylark firmly set the scene that winter was on its way!

Once we'd had a good look, we continued on north to Monfragüe, stopping first under the castle for an enjoyable walk up in the bright, but cool conditions. Several griffons 'adorned' the crag above us where numerous common house and a few Eurasian crag martins wheeled in front and with ticking and wheezing European robins and hawfinches in the wild olive trees on the steep slopes, it was a very different feel to the previous few days. A smart male black redstart sang for a few moments but promptly disappeared once the scope came out for a better look!

Both griffon and cinereous vultures were on the wing, with numerous birds to-ing and fro-ing over the ridge as we climbed up, but it was really the wonderful clear views across the surrounding landscapes, over 360° for those who scaled the castle stairway, which really stole the show. Incredibly, a couple of us watched a gigantic wels catfish down in the reservoir below us, it almost being as long as a small boat moored nearby, while a great egret passing was also a treat, especially when it wheeled, then dropped onto the water's surface as it tried to snatch prey out in the middle! This fishing technique by herons is very not well known in general but is regular amongst several heron types here in the big reservoirs in Extremadura.

There was little variety amongst the birds, however, so we started the climb down, only for a common firecrest to flit across, then two short-toed treecreepers kept us well occupied for quite some time as they (unusually!) very slowly worked their way painstakingly through the extensive coating of spongy lichen enveloping the branches of some small western holm oaks very close beside us.

Despite plenty of visitors and even a few noisy workers undertaking repairs at the main viewpoint, we stopped to enjoy the impressive numbers of vultures visible at Peñafalcón, with bonuses in the form of an

ageing male blue rock thrush (and his increasingly white 'hair'!), plus a small group of the rather dark local race of Eurasian long-tailed tit. A peregrine circled high over at one point for a little more diversity, along with a male red deer feeding near the water's edge downriver, just a few metres away from his small harem of hinds.

A pre-lunch comfort stop and drink was called for in the little village in the centre of the park, also allowing most to enter into the visitor centre to grab a map or two in passing, though we were soon moving on again to lunch, at a lovely shaded set of picnic tables with views over a dam and with numerous pines and a few other planted trees around for cover. A very leisurely picnic lunch was enjoyed to the almost constant sound of great and Eurasian blue tits and hawfinches, while a European pied flycatcher or two and almost constantly over-flying griffon and cinerous vultures made it a great experience! A short walk afterwards flushed a juvenile western osprey which was feeding on a small fish, while persistence really paid off as we finally tracked down a singing male ciril bunting and then followed two juvenile rock buntings as they flitted along a small roadside channel, getting good scope views. A brief fly-over great spotted woodpecker was our final addition here, but all too brief!

With the afternoon marching on we headed on again, passing just out of the park where fine old cork oaks formed a superb open dehesa and some took the opportunity to have a refreshing ice cream! The birds were again rather thin on the ground in the mid-afternoon sun, so we returned (via several great egrets and plenty of red deer!) to the pines again, but this time completed our original quest by hearing and seeing both several hawfinches and a pair of flighty European crested tits, while a dapper Eurasian nuthatch was a good bonus!

A couple more stops were made en route back, mainly to search for birds down at the bottom of the Tiétar valley, which was more like its original riverine form than a reservoir given desperately low water levels, but more than happy with the day's offerings and the wonderful conditions, we called it a day and headed back to base for just after 19:00.

Another excellent homemade dinner was enjoyed before the call-over and a relatively early night for most!

Day 5: Monroy road, Almonte bridge, Monroy, Emb. Sotillo, Emb. Talaván, Almonte bridge II, Llanos de Cáceres track, La Pulgosa, Sta Marta de Magasca, Monroy road

Saturday 1 October 2022

We started, once again, with a wait on the birdy plains near the hotel, though once again, it was very quiet for some time until finally, a few sandgrouse started moving. OK, so the first two were a pair of black-bellied which were too distant for the party members to see, but then the large flock of local pin-tailed sandgrouse finally got up, split into various groups, and noisily allowed us to watch them fly around, even though they always kept their distance. A little distraction was also in the offing when a male little bustard was spotted working its way through the long grass of a field below us and two of the party headed down to try and get pictures. It took off after a while, taking four other birds up with it and they headed off to another, similarly grassy pasture about a kilometre away where we couldn't even try to approach. This was a great start, and with a few other small birds around, including a couple of Eurasian blue tits apparently dispersing through the area (in completely unsuitable habitat) and then a Dartford warbler up in the scrub near the bus, it was an excellent start to the day!

We continued to the Almonte River not too far ahead, noting hordes of corn buntings and numerous Calandra larks in groups on the way, as well as an endless string of northern wheatears, common stonechats and a smaller number of whinchats in the adjacent fields and on the fences and roadside bushes as we progressed. Indeed, as ALL DAY on pseudosteppe areas!

It was very quiet as well down by the river, though it was pleasantly cool in the shade, and a brief grey wagtail was noted by a couple of us, plus small numbers of common stonechat, white wagtail, Eurasian crag and common house martins amongst other common species, so we moved on again quite soon.

A bit of a search for an open bar was needed in the nearby village of Monroy, but we successfully found one opposite a small supermarket, killing two birds with one stone! After drinks and a quick shop, we were on our way again, this time heading to a lovely reservoir in a seeming private estate, but which allows access. OK, so half of it was almost dry, but with a decent lamina of water, it had pulled in an interesting selection of birds, and apart from the griffon and cinereous vultures passing overhead, plus European pied flycatchers in the adjacent scrub, it was waders and waterbirds to concentrate on. Single common ringed plover and spotted redshank were prize finds amongst the usual black-winged stilts, common greenshanks, little ringed plovers, green and common sandpipers, and common snipe, with plenty of little grebes and single grey heron and little egret also of note. A Eurasian otter which came out to feed in the open water for a few minutes was undoubtedly the star, even if two common kingfishers chasing across the open waters were the most colourful!

A drive along the Talavan reservoir produced a few more Eurasian hoopoes for the day, always a lovely sight, but with very low water levels it was thanks to one of the group that we saw a superb flock of almost 100 pin-tailed sandgrouse in flight, flickering ochre and white over the pastures well beyond the reservoir. This was a very good record for this area! A picnic lunch was taken in one of the birdwatching hides, which despite no water anywhere near it, still gave us excellent sightings of zitting cisticolas, a calling Iberian grey shrike and a rather grey red fox!

A few key birds were still eluding us, however, so I took a risk and continued on further to another bridge of the here even deeper Almonte valley, but it was to avail, and we had no hint of the 'three Bs', though lovely views of some close perched Eurasian crag martins and a brown blue rock thrush showed briefly.

Since it was still quite early and I didn't fancy the 'boring' drive back along the main roads and motorway, we took a (long!) shortcut. Unfortunately, this meant almost 20 kilometres of dirt road in variable conditions, but the birds we enjoyed as a result were good! Northern wheatears, common stonechats and the odd whinchat were boosted by around 20 willow warblers and a couple of very flighty common redstarts in the broom scrub and fennel adjacent to the track, with a very confiding red-legged partridge and half a dozen Eurasian hoopoes adding further colour! The rattling along was finally rewarded with a hunting golden eagle, though it was a LONG way to one side, then shortly after rejoining the proper road and deciding to take the scenic and not boring route, we drew quickly to a halt when the group spotted a fine flock of great bustards striding off into the fields not far from the road. Backing up and then carefully getting out, using the vehicle as a cover, meant we all had great views and plenty of pictures, despite the inevitable heat haze. Since a little owl was poking its head out of a nestbox a short way ahead, we cruised gently along to pictures of this as well, and then of another out on top of another box, and then with two more seen along the long line of boxes as well!

This route meant passing over two small (dry) rivers, but we continued without delay and were finally rewarded with another adult golden eagle, this time circling over the pastures off to one side and drifting towards us. The cameras and binoculars were out again and put to great use as we enjoyed this king of the countryside!

We still got back to our accommodation in time for a good rest before a slightly earlier dinner at 20:00, with most spending a bit of time out in the garden, either reading, making notes, or watching for birds, though it turned out that a disappearing Iberian grey shrike had good motives when a large female Eurasian sparrowhawk was accidentally flushed out of a tree beside the entrance gate.

After another fine meal, including local ingredients, we took a couple of drives up and down the local roads in the hope of seeing possible nightjars or terrestrial mammals, without success, but with time for another try during the next couple of days.

Day 6: Arrocampo Reservoir, Saucedilla area, Valdecañas Dam, old N-V beside Tagus, Monfragüe (La Vueltona & Fuente del Francés)

Sunday 2 October 2022

Another very fine start and a maximum of around 30°C forecast, which was reached, even though the evening was cooler than predicted given some unexpected light cloud. Also unexpected was a fine Alpine swift amongst a small cloud of hirundines right beside the motorway as we started crossing a high bridge, though it was impossible to even slow to try and show everyone.

It was a little windy by the time we reached the reservoir and a few fishermen's cars warned of plenty of fishing activity at the site. However, our first stop overlooking the extensive bulrush beds produced an interesting suite of species including a few willow warblers, common waxbills, European stonechats, loudly singing Cetti's warblers and a fine Iberian grey shrike in the bushes, plus a passing western marsh harrier, while just after we'd crossed the road, two more Dartford warblers suddenly appeared, giving lovely views, but were very soon off again before all the cameras could be turned on them!

The next site was also busy with a couple of fishermen, and despite hundreds of common house martins and barn swallows, plus smaller numbers of red-rumped swallows as first got out, they soon moved off, leaving us to contemplate the now breezy bulrush beds under strong sun and very little bird movement. A couple of water rails called loudly from the depths of the vegetation, while a tiny white dot on a pylon north of the reservoir was a black-winged kite, which we noted to go and look for again later.

The next hide was even busier, with perhaps 15 cars parked either beside or just beyond it, but while it looked like something of a lost cause, we persisted and saw a few excellent birds. A couple of small groups of Eurasian spoonbills came over and dropped down into the unseen pools, with a couple of grey herons and a single great egret rising from within before dropping down again to disappear almost as quickly. A couple of chasing common kingfishers sped, calling noisily in the process, across the tops of the bulrushes, giving us lovely views, while patience, only lightly punctuated by passing griffon and cinereous vultures and a couple of western marsh harriers, paid off when a super juvenile purple heron flew leisurely in from one side and finally dropped into where the other herons and egrets were hiding.

Seeing that it was going to be rather quiet and quite disturbed, with over half of the vehicles and most of the people attending a ringing demonstration nearby, we next headed off to look for the kite. The location turned out to be a lot further away than first thought, though the pylon was characteristic, there was no sign of the bird when we arrived, nor in a wide area of surrounding habitat when we searched. A northern wheatear landing at point blank just in front tried to cheer us up, as did three passing Eurasian skylarks, the first for the group which called repeatedly as they went overhead.

I saw it was a bit of a lost cause, so took a couple of drives around the tracks and small roads in the area in the hopes of finding other birds of interest on the pools or in the mixed habitats around, but again, the very sunny conditions, rising temperature and strong breeze meant it was difficult to locate small birds, so after another 'last ditch' attempt along a track adjacent to a chaotically orientated solar panel farm (!) and once we'd had our best views to date of several red kites literally glowing under the sun, plus a young male lesser kestrel hunting off to one side, we headed into the nearest village for our usual refreshment and comfort break.

Restored, we detoured next to the impressive views over the Tagus valley and the Valdecañas Dam, where the wind was allowing an excellent number of griffon and cinereous vultures to wheel and drift along the valley sides and over the ridges and while no other raptors at all showed with them, a few red-winged grasshoppers caught our eye as we walked over some rather bare ground and a huge fresh two-tailed pasha butterfly sailed past into the wind at speed, giving a couple of us terrific, albeit brief views. Lunch shortly afterwards down by the Tagus was rather quiet for birds, but excellent for the numerous violet dropwing dragonflies present!

With the temperature approaching 30°C we headed into the north end of Monfragüe National Park, pausing only for our first mistle thrush of the tour and unable to stop, for security reasons, for a fine winter plumaged squacco heron which had flown a short distance up from the Arrocampo reservoir dam, its dark back contrasting strongly with its white wings until it landed and suddenly 'disappeared'.

It was very pleasant, though again rather quiet for birds at the Vueltona viewpoint, though a Cardinal fritillary glided around and around looking for something to drink and, just before we were due to leave, we spotted a lesser spotted woodpecker up in the pines, though it was typically flighty and eluded the rest of the group, even if we did hear it call just before it disappeared off for good. A tiny layby on the roadside enabled us to just pull off the road to look steeply down into the impressive valley cut by the Tiétar River, where a tiny river was being maintained to keep the river healthy. A good scan only revealed distant grey herons and great cormorants, but just as I called out a blank on my main goal, black stork, I suddenly saw one, standing dead still beside the only (tiny) rapids in the river! We quickly got out and with the telescope were able to make out the pied plumage and dark red bill of a lovely adult, despite the long distance and significant heat haze! Excellent!

We finished with a stop at the Fuente del Francés. A small spring that permanently fills a few small drinking troughs in the shade of the woodland here and is a magnet for small birds during dry weather. Indeed, despite lots of visitors to the park, being a Sunday, as soon as they'd moved away from the water, birds began arriving. First a great tit and then a second, then a Eurasian blue tit, followed by several more, with female common chaffinch and male common blackbird all appearing. A flock of the lovely dark local irbii race long-tailed tits made an appearance too, also coming down to drink, a European robin bounced into view and a female, and then a male blackcap appeared as well. As if this wasn't enough, the icing on the cake was a female and two male hawfinches which came down to drink, giving lovely views, even if the dark conditions made photography quite tricky for the bridge cameras.

With lots of people visiting the remainder of the park we continued back direct and had a good break before a slightly earlier dinner at 20:00 again.

Day 7: Mérida (Roman Bridge), Alange Dam, Alcollarín Reservoir, Trujillo

Monday 3 October 2022

Our last full day and while the route was going to be a little unusual, especially given the greater distances to and from the furthest point, it promised well. Indeed, with a strange pall of cloud having appeared overnight keeping temperatures down when we left, conditions looked better than the blazing sun and 30+°C forecast!

Though the group were unfortunately unable to see a flighty female hen harrier hunting over the fields some distance from the car park of our rural guest house, we did notice plenty of northern wheatears and common stonechats, plus a couple of European pied flycatchers in the immediate steppe area, as on our arrival day.

The journey went very smoothly and quite quickly, and given that the sun was starting to gain strength, we went to the nearest site first on our route, which happened to be the middle of the city of Mérida! OK, given the river Guadiana running right through it, plus the flanking parks, including trees, it was no ordinary urban birding, to be honest! Single spotted and European pied flycatchers called from the pines as we crossed towards the river, where calling common kingfishers, and feeding common coots and common moorhens were amongst the first birds seen, other than hordes of Eurasian collared doves. A couple of common waxbills flitted past calling, a warbler clumping about in a Eucalyptus was a foraging garden warbler and a harsh call from the bank alerted us to a little bittern, which then flew out across the water before pitching a patch of bulrushes and then quite quickly walking inside them and out of sight. One, then two common kingfishers were noted on dead trees, though they were first picked up due to a calling, unseen, lesser spotted woodpecker!

Being up on the lovely ancient bridge gave us a whole new perspective and sites to check, with a fine series of birds noted between us. Eurasian blackcaps and reed warblers, another calling little bittern, a juvenile black-crowned night heron in flight, a tiny serin hiding in the same bushes where an escaped canary appeared later, up to five fantastic Alpine swifts wheeling around at low height calling loudly, a showy spotted flycatcher, two great egrets passing overhead ... Not surprisingly, it was often tricky to know what to prioritise looking at! A juvenile little bittern finally gave more prolonged views before flying off, while one, then a second and finally a showy third western swamphen put in classy appearances to add to this glut. Amazingly, we also saw our first two, AND ONLY, white storks of the trip, a testament to the general drought conditions the region (and indeed much of Spain) was suffering.

We finally dragged ourselves away, with a fly-by Eurasian penduline tit our last new bird of the site and headed for a well-earned drink in a local bar! The drive to our next site, an abrupt rock outcrop beside a huge reservoir, was uneventful, though it was already very warm and hazy when we got there. Indeed, this was the typical haze formed given an incursion of Saharan air, though it did weaken the power of the sun!

A couple of rock sparrows checking out holes on the dam wall, plus the first of five blue rock thrushes, including three on a rocky island in the reservoir, were quickly seen, though it was very quiet otherwise except for good numbers of Eurasian crag martins wheeling over the peaks and the regular appearance of griffon vultures gliding over. A singing Thekla's lark and a showy Iberian grey shrike were good additions, but there were no new species to see, so we quite quickly returned to the vehicle and got the picnic out for a relaxing lunch. A singing serin after lunch refused to be seen, but we contented ourselves with a few birds down in a watery channel below the dam, including common kingfisher (again!), green sandpiper (again!), western marsh harrier (err, again!) and a couple of cruising Alpine swifts, which were as impressive as ever!

Despite still being relatively early and despite the temperature now hovering around 30°C, the return journey was punctuated twice, firstly with a return to the lovely Alcollarín reservoir. We headed to one of the upper arms of the reservoir first this time, which was a good move given the open muddy edges attracting a moderate number of waders. Numerous little and at least five common ringed plovers, a few black-winged stilts, three ruffs (including one juvenile), nine dunlin, two common greenshanks, a few common and green sandpipers and, best of all, a single little stint and a lovely elegant juvenile curlew sandpiper were all admired in the scopes, until, that is, a big adult female peregrine falcon raced in at speed causing pandemonium amongst all the waders present and leaving them clearly nervous for some time afterwards! A pair of gadwall were also new for the trip, while at another spot, with many fewer birds, at least produced a fine male common pochard for the still-lengthening list. A few more butterflies were present than anywhere else we'd been, with several clouded yellows and a couple of bath whites feeding on the few tiny yellow composite flowers growing in a belt along what had been the upper shoreline, while several diminutive African grass blues were also spotted flickering very low over the sparse vegetation in one sandy area.

We started back towards base but paused again for a fine immature golden eagle which was circling up not far from the road, and a couple of the group were dropped off in Trujillo to spend an hour and a half exploring the architectural cultural delights of this lovely ancient town.

The Saharan haze was now surprisingly intense, but after our final very tasty (again!) dinner and call-over, we took the van out for another drive along nearby roads in the hopes of seeing something of the nocturnal wildlife. A very brief Iberian hare crossed almost at the start, but then we drew a complete blank for around half an hour until turning back into the entrance to the guesthouse, where remarkably, another one was trying to get through the gateway, over the cattle grid and into the field just in front of the van! It struggled for a few seconds, confused by the cattle grid, but then quickly loped off into the dark once past.

Day 8: Arrocampo area, El Gordo, El Pardo (lunch), Madrid airport

Tuesday 4 October 2022

Another mild, dead calm and slightly clearer, but still hazy morning greeted us. After breakfast and farewells to Francisco and Pilar, we packed the van and started the journey to Madrid, but with a clear objective in mind.

With only extremely long-range views of black-winged kite during our earlier visit to the Arrocampo reservoir area, we were on a quest to not only see one better but perhaps even get photos with luck! Out on the same tracks as last time, little seemed to be moving at first, but there were actually plenty of small birds on the move, especially a few extremely nervous flocks of Spanish sparrows and smaller groups of local corn buntings in addition to a Eurasian hoopoe and Iberian grey shrike, plus a calling Eurasian kestrel. It didn't actually take long to find an adult kite perched on the top of a stag's-head oak, but it was completely inaccessible and a broad field away from any track. We continued on, finding another on the top of a tall irrigation pipe, seemingly totally ignoring us, but no sooner did we get out to try and get better views, than it casually lifted off and in typically leisurely fashion, simply headed off over the top of the slope! Hmmm. We continued on, this time in an attempt to approach a fine adult female peregrine perched on a tall pylon off to one side, when a small raptor on an electricity pole off against the light caught our eye. Surprisingly, it was another black-winged kite, and though it too also took off no sooner had we tried to move to improve the light angle on it, at least it moved back down the track and up onto the top of a tall pylon, where after seeing it all from the bus, we also watched it in good light as it finally took off and headed off to a quieter spot for the day.

Time to move on, we headed up to the motorway and started the rest of the journey back. With a few hours to spare, however, we took another detour off towards the still shrinking remains of the vast Valdecañas reservoir in case there was anything to see. Remarkably, as we arrived to overlook the closest bit of water visible (though still some way off), an immature Spanish imperial eagle was flying low over the bare slopes looking for a thermal to try and gain height, which it subsequently did, though much more slowly than normal in the still relatively cool conditions. Once it had reached a sufficient height, a second bird, this time an adult, started calling behind us and then flapped across from a group of eucalyptus trees before disappearing behind another bank of trees in front. Terrific!

After a refuelling and comfort stop, we headed to our picnic spot, once again by the river Manzanares on the edge of Madrid, and while we were not treated to another eagle, as on our last visit, it still made a very pleasant final stop, including listening to the 'snoring' buck fallow deer in full rut chasing around under the western holm oaks opposite. We reached the airport spot on time two hours before the group flights out, with the other two of the party also saying their farewells before disappearing into the terminal to catch a taxi into Madrid to continue their respective trips here.

I would like to thank you all for making this such an enjoyable and rewarding tour! Your good humour and easy-going nature, combined with interesting early autumn conditions meant that we had to travel further than usual and work harder than normal for some of the birds, but with excellent results. The quiet isolation of the guesthouse and Pilar's homely cooking naturally formed an integral part of the whole experience.

Checklist

THE TRAVELLING
NATURALIST

	Common Name	Latin Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
	BIRDS	AVES								
1	Egyptian goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		✓	✓				✓	
2	Northern shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓	✓				✓	
3	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓						✓	
4	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	Eurasian teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓					✓	
6	Common pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>							✓	
7	Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓			✓			
8	Greater flamingo	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			✓					
9	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
10	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓	✓				✓	
11	Rock dove / feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Common wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
13	European turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>			✓					
14	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Pin-tailed sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>			✓	✓	✓			

16	Black-bellied sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>					✓			
17	Great bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>			✓		✓			
18	Little bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>					✓			
19	Alpine swift	<i>Apus melba</i>						✓	✓	
20	Water rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	H					H	H	
21	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓				✓	✓	
22	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓					✓	
23	Western swampen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	H					H	✓	
24	Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
25	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓		✓	✓		✓	
26	Kentish plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>			✓					
27	Common ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>					✓		✓	
28	Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
29	Eurasian dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>		✓						
30	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>			✓				✓	
31	Curlew sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>							✓	
32	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>			✓				✓	
33	Little stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>			✓				✓	
34	Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
35	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleuca</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	

36	Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
37	Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>					✓			
38	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
39	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
40	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		✓	✓				✓	
41	Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>						✓		
42	White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>							✓	
43	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
44	Little bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>							✓	
45	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
46	Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>						✓		
47	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓			✓		✓	✓	
48	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
49	Western cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
50	Squacco heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	✓					✓		
51	Black-crowned night heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>							✓	
52	Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>			✓			✓	✓	
53	Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓		✓			✓	✓	
54	Western osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>			✓	✓				
55	Black-winged kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>						✓		✓

56	Cinereous vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
58	Short-toed snake eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>		✓	✓				✓	
59	Spanish imperial eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>	✓	✓		✓				✓
60	Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>					✓		✓	
61	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
62	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				✓	✓	✓		
63	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
66	Eurasian hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Eurasian wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	✓							
69	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	H			✓		✓		
70	Lesser spotted woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>						✓	H	
71	Lesser kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>			✓			✓	✓	
72	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
73	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	✓							
74	Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				✓			✓	✓
75	Iberian grey shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

76	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>				✓				
77	Iberian magpie	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
78	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
79	Western jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
80	Northern raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
81	Crested tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>				✓				
82	Eurasian blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
84	Eurasian penduline tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>						✓	✓	
85	Calandra lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
86	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	H	H		H	H			
87	Eurasian skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			✓			✓		
88	Thekla's lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓	
89	Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Zitting cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
91	Eurasian reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>		H					✓	
92	Sand martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		✓				✓		
93	Eurasian crag martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>				✓	✓		✓	
94	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓		
95	Red-rumped swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	

96	Common house martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
97	Willow warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓	✓				✓	✓	
98	Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H					✓	✓	
99	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>				✓			✓	
100	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>				✓				
101	Garden warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	✓						✓	
102	Sardinian warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
103	Common whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>		✓						
104	Dartford warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		
105	Common firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>				✓				
106	Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>				✓				
107	Short-toed treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>				✓				
108	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				✓	✓			
109	Spotless starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
110	Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>				✓		✓		
111	Eurasian blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
112	Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
113	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>				✓	✓		✓	
114	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>			✓					
115	European pied flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

116	Common redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
117	Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>				✓				
118	Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>				✓	✓		✓	
119	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓			
120	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
121	Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
122	Common waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>			✓			✓	✓	
123	Red avadavat	<i>Amandava amandava</i>			✓			✓		
124	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
125	Spanish sparrow	<i>Passer hispanicus</i>	✓		✓					✓
126	Eurasian tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>			✓					
127	Rock sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>		✓			✓		✓	
128	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	H				✓	✓	✓	
129	Western yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
130	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
131	Tawny pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>		✓			✓			
132	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>				✓	✓			
133	Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>			✓					
134	Common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
135	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>				✓	✓	✓		

136	European greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓			✓		✓	✓	
137	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓		✓	✓			
138	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
139	European serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>							✓	
140	Corn bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
141	Rock bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>				✓				
142	Cirl bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>		✓		✓	H			
143	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>		✓						
144	Greylag goose (domestic type)	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓					✓	
145	Atlantic canary (domestic)	<i>Serinus canaria</i>							✓	
	MAMMALS	MAMMALIA								
1	Iberian hare	<i>Lepus granatensis</i>							✓	
2	Brown rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>							✓	
3	Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>					✓			
4	Eurasian otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>					✓			
5	Pipistrelle sp.	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>								
6	Eurasian wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>				✓				
7	Red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓			✓		✓		
8	Fallow deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	✓							✓
	REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS	REPTILIA & AMPHIBIA								

1	Red-eared terrapin / Red-eared slider	<i>Trachemys scripta</i>		✓						
2	Spanish terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>					✓			
3	Moorish gecko	<i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Stripeless tree frog	<i>Hyla meridionalis</i>				✓				
	BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS	RHODALOCERA & LEPIDOPTERA								
1	Small white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>						✓		
2	Bath white	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>							✓	
3	Clouded yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>		✓					✓	
4	African grass blue	<i>Zizeeria knysna</i>							✓	
5	Two-tailed pasha	<i>Charaxes jasius</i>						✓		
6	Cardinal fritillary	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>	✓	✓				✓		
7	Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtinus</i>					✓			
8	Tiger moth sp.	<i>Cymbalophora pudica</i>			✓				✓	
9	Grass processionary moth	<i>Thaumetopoeia herculeana</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	DRAGONFLIES	ANISOPTERA								
1	Red-veined darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>		✓						
2	Common scarlet darter	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>		✓						
3	Violet dropwing	<i>Trithemis annulata</i>						✓		
	OTHER									
1	Red-winged grasshopper	<i>Aedipoda cf germanica</i>						✓		

2	Wels catfish	<i>Silurus glanis</i>				✓				
3	Common carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>				✓				
	PLANTS	PLANTAE								
1	Umbrella pine	<i>Pinus pinea</i>								
2	Autumn squill	<i>Scilla autumnalis</i>								
3	Sea squill	<i>Drimia maritima</i>								
4	Gum tree species	<i>Eucalyptus spp</i>								
5	Dwarf narcissus	<i>Narcissus serotinus</i>								
6	Western holm oak	<i>Quercus (ilex) rotundifolia</i>								
7	Cork oak	<i>Quercus suber</i>								
8	Western strawberry tree	<i>Arbutus unedo</i>								
9	Narrow-leaved ash	<i>Fraxinus angustifolia</i>								
10	Wild olive	<i>Olea europaea</i>								