

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Extremadura

17th – 25th March 2010

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Holiday participants

Suzanne Hunter and Lesley Scott
Geoff Firth and Angela Shoulder
Sandy and Marie Watt
David Nind and Shevaun Mendelsohn
Desmond and Deborah Cassidi
Peter and Elonwy Crook
Melvyn and Brenda Smith

Leaders

Chris Durdin
Martin Kelsey



Our base for the holiday was the lovely Finca Santa Marta: www.fincasantamarta.com
Martin Kelsey's blog about wildlife in Extremadura: <http://birdingextremadura.blogspot.com>

Report by Martin Kelsey (most of it) and Chris Durdin (pre-breakfast and additions here and there).
Bird list by Martin, other lists by Chris.

Photos edged green by Chris Durdin, edged red by Steve Fletcher and edged blue by Brenda Smith
Cover photo: pin-tailed sandgrouse and great bustards. Above: enjoying a coffee in Trujillo.

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As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for La Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO), the Spanish Ornithological Society, and its work in Extremadura. The conservation contribution this year of £35 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, a contribution after a talk in Cambridge and £200 from our friends in the Wildlife Outreach Network in Essex. This led to a total of £833 – €915 – which Patrick Kelsey accepted on behalf of SEO.

This year's donation brings the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £12,308. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays was £63,851 by the end of April 2010.

Extremadura
17th – 25th March 2010

Itinerary

Wednesday 17th March: Arrival in Madrid and travel to Trujillo via A5 motorway, with a stop before Ventas de Retamosa for snacks. Arrived at Finca Santa Marta late afternoon.

Thursday 18th March: Morning visit to Belén Plains and afternoon walk along River Tozo.

Friday 19th March: South to Zorita with a visit across the Zorita Plains and then coffee stop just outside Madrigalejo. Exploring area of Casas del Hito, including visit to Charca del Hito (a large pool), where lunch taken, followed by visit to Sierra Brava reservoir

Saturday 20th March: Visit to heath at Jaraicejo and lunch at Miravete Pass. Afternoon walk on hill above grounds of Finca Santa Marta.

Sunday 21st March: Exploring plains around Santa Marta de Magasca.

Monday 22nd March: From Trujillo to Torrejón El Rubío, then to Monfragüe National Park. Stop at Castle and then at car park opposite the crags of Peña Falcón. Lunch at Mirador de Tajadilla, then to the Portilla del Tietár.

Tuesday 23rd March: Free morning in Trujillo, then east towards Villuercas mountains, with lunch on Almonte river near village of Cabañas del Castillo. Visit to village after lunch, with walk along base of cliffs.

Wednesday 24th March: Arrocampo reservoir, between Almaráz and Saucedilla, afternoon walk on Cerro de Almaráz.

Thursday 25st March: Early morning departure (06.45) to Madrid to check-in at airport for flight back to UK.

Daily diary

17th March: Madrid to Finca Santa Marta

The flight from Gatwick arrived at Madrid on time to welcoming fine and warm weather. Sandy and Marie were waiting in the terminal having spent a few days in Madrid. After rather too much time working out the paperwork for our brand new, red minibuses, we loaded up and set off shortly after 14.00, taking the ring road around the southern side of Madrid, before leaving it for the motorway south-west to Extremadura. We stopped just outside Madrid for lunch at the lively bar Las Esparteras, full of lunchtime business, where we enjoyed freshly prepared food and soaked in the atmosphere of being in Spain. Onward on the journey with the impressive Gredos mountains to the north, their slopes covered by snow, testament to the cool and very wet winter experienced here this year.

As we approached Extremadura, the landscape was getting greener and more wooded and we were seeing more birds like white storks and black kites.

We reached the Finca at about 18.30, in time for tea to be organised and everyone to settle into their rooms before dinner, by which time a scops owl had just started calling.

18th March: Belén Plains and Tozo River

There was some light rain at 7:45 as several of us assembled at what became our regular pre-breakfast gathering point, overlooking the sunken pond behind the Finca. This morning, as every morning this week, the ivy over the water was alive with blackcaps: typically some 20 or so, though impractical to count accurately. Heading down the entrance road, we saw serin and stonechat and heard short-toed treecreeper and, in what became another regular pattern, a hawfinch flew over but didn't offer a good view. Winter visitors, namely song thrushes and a robin, were still with us, but disappeared during the course of the week to follow.

That light rain was still there as we set off but the weather quite quickly improved with warm sunshine most of the afternoon. After breakfast we explored the open plains north-east of the small village of Belén close to Trujillo. At our first stop just outside the village, we enjoyed a superb panorama of the habitat: the mosaic of colours reflecting the rotating land use with darker green fields of cereals, lighter green pastures and fields that had been fallow. From this vantage point we located our first pair of great spotted cuckoos, initially rather distant, but as if they wanted us to see them better, they flew around and passed us closely. Hoopoes were also seen. Shortly afterwards we stopped again in a gateway, and found a pair of little owls perched on a pile of stones. Brenda then checked the area behind the owls, and came across a group of great bustards, resting and preening on a far slope. Hoop petticoat narcissus was flowering in abundance across the field in front of us while showy Spanish sparrows lined-up on the fence beside the road.

We walked for a short distance along a dirt track, finding good numbers of sand crocus in flower as well as many green-striped white butterflies, one of which Chris caught (*below*). At our lunch stop a little bit farther along, we found two species of sand crocus growing close together as well as sawfly orchid (*photo on page 17*). White storks were nesting on a clump of dead trees beside a pool. Griffon and black vultures drifted overhead while a stripeless tree frog (*below*) was found at the picnic site itself.



We stopped for coffee in the village of Torrecillas de la Tiesa and then stopped to walk along the River Tozo, through open *dehesa* woodland before reaching the small Tozo reservoir. A great white egret flew up as we arrived and we were to see at least two more on the reservoir. Among the circling vultures above us were black kite, a booted eagle and a distant sparrowhawk, probably the same one which a few minutes later passed close by, giving us excellent views.

On the reservoir, we found three spoonbills, as well as great crested grebe, ducks including mallard, shoveler, teal and gadwall, some greenshanks and a black-winged stilt. A fine woodchat shrike sat on the fence in the shade of the holm oaks.

We were back at the Finca a little later than planned to go through the checklists with our tea and biscuits.

19th March: Zorita Plains, Casas del Hito and Sierra Brava

Like yesterday, a day that started damp but got sunnier and warmer during the afternoon. The pre-breakfast birders, after admiring the blackcap flock, went down the damp track where we had good views of serin and a rather distant hawfinch on a treetop.

We headed south, through the town of Zorita and then to Campo Lugar, passing great solar panel farms, to cross the Zorita Plains. Driving slowly and stopping regularly to scan was the approach used to search the wide, open landscape. Crested, Thekla and calandra larks, as well as zitting cisticolas (fan-tailed warblers), were easily found close to the road. A little owl played hide-and-seek with us from a bare tree. Farther away, on the skyline, we found an impressive male great bustard, looking grand and stately indeed with its tail fanned. A pair of lesser kestrels were using a nestbox set up for rollers on an electricity post. We met some birdwatchers who had just found a stone-curlew and a little bustard and luckily both species were still present when we scanned the area they described. Farther on we came across a wonderful group of ten great bustards, feeding nonchalantly at close range, affording us superb views.

We left the plains and entered an area of irrigated land, used mainly for rice growing. Just outside Madrigalejo we stopped for coffee and then drove along a rather rough track into an area of rice stubble

called Casas del Hito. Here we found a flock of common cranes, about 150 birds, remarkably late for a species which winters here in their thousands, with most birds leaving in late February for Scandinavia. We then stopped for lunch on the embankment of a small pool. From the bank we had a good view of the surrounding plains, seeing the same group of cranes at a distance. We saw a fine male marsh harrier, while along the bank were parties of non-breeding red avadavats. A bluethroat was seen briefly as returned to the minibuses.

We stopped briefly beside the Sierra Brava reservoir. The ducks there were far too far away to be able to identify, but nearer at hand we watched lesser kestrels and a hoopoe on a ruined farm building.

Back at the Finca, following the checklist and tea, our usual pattern, we enjoyed a slide show by local photographer Steve Fletcher, with his wife Karen. Linked with Honeyguide's conservation donation is a presentation on local issues from Marcelino Cardalliaguet, who runs the local office of SEO/BirdLife. However Marcelino was tied up all week with an international bird science meeting in Cáceres, so stepping ably into his shoes was an SEO volunteer ... our leader Martin Kelsey. His son Patrick received on behalf of SEO a cheque from Chris, as a contribution from the group to continue SEO's work in the region.

20th March: Jaraicejo, Miravete Pass and Finca Santa Marta

As seemed to be the pattern these days, a damp start with the weather brightening steadily during the day, although there was a fresh breeze during the middle part of the day. Before breakfast there were good views of hoopoes, red-rumped swallows and a Sardinian warbler.

After breakfast we drove up the motorway north to Jaraicejo, then taking the old road onto an area of open heath, dominated by broom, lavender and cistus. Thekla larks were in song when we arrived, as were corn buntings, and after just a few minutes we located two or three singing Dartford warblers. With some patience and a little prompt from a recording on Chris's phone we ended up getting superb views of one of these birds (*below*), very close to the track.



While we were watching this bird, an immature golden eagle flew past, at quite low altitude. All three species of vultures (griffon, black and Egyptian) were seen passing, albeit distantly.

Entering a cork oak grove, we found good numbers of angel's tears narcissus, set in the atmospheric setting of the cork oaks. A great spotted woodpecker was drumming high in a distant tree, while short-toed treecreepers and nuthatches were calling closer to us. We also heard a common cuckoo.

From the heath we drove through scattered open woodland and had an excellent view of a short-toed eagle, initially perched on a pylon and then soaring close by. Nearby we stopped for coffee and then drove to the Miravete pass for lunch. The wind had picked up, making finding a sheltered spot essential – luckily a

forester's cabin had a porch that we could use. From there we could watch a procession of griffon vultures drifting past.

We returned early to the Finca to spend the afternoon walking on the property and then beyond along the ridge to the west. We found the first champagne and conical orchids of the spring, as well as a very fine Iberian fritillary in full flower.

In the evening, a pre-dinner drinks reception was organised by our host Henri in his beautiful vaulted sitting room.

21st March: Santa Marta de Magasca

Yet again damp first thing, with the usual hawfinches flying over, our first chiffchaff and hoopoes duetting with the musical interval of a fourth. Although it did clear during the morning, we could never escape threatening skies, which brought upon just after lunch a heavy thunderstorm.

After breakfast we drove west of Trujillo towards the village of Santa Marta de Magasca. We stopped at the edge of open plains, watching Thekla, crested and calandra larks in song, a single great spotted cuckoo and enjoying some excellent views of Iberian grey shrike. A stone-curlew gave its evocative and rather haunting call. A little bit further along the road, we stopped at a high point, overlooking a flower-rich meadow. We did not have to wait long before we saw flying pin-tailed sandgrouse, their rapid flight and pointed wings giving them a rather wader-like appearance. For a few minutes one was visible on the ground and although distant, the lack of heat shimmer meant that we had good enough views to note its distinctive plumage well. A buzzard flew over and this apparently put up a couple of flocks of sandgrouse and for a time we were offered the wonderful sight of a tight group of these birds, flying fast just above the skyline, turning every so often. A pair of black-bellied sandgrouse flew past, looking much bulkier than the pin-tailed.

We walked along a dirt track, having more excellent views of calandra lark, as well as a woodchat shrike.

After coffee in Santa Marta de Magasca, we stopped on some high ground for lunch and were rewarded by superb views of male Montagu's harriers. Some flew close by, settling on fence posts, while others performed aerial displays over a cereal field. They were beautifully elegant and buoyant birds. Just as we were completing lunch, heavy drops of rain started to fall and sure enough the storm that had been darkening the skies to the south had come our way. We climbed into the vehicles and then drove slowly through the rain back to Trujillo, stopping to see a fine male little bustard close the road.

Remarkably it had not rained at all at the Finca, so after an early tea and checklist session, the late afternoon was spent resting or pottering around. Some members of the group saw a green woodpecker.

In the evening we repaired to Trujillo to see the magnificent town square at night and to enjoy the ambience and good hearty fare provided at La Troya restaurant: local specialities, simple and very tasty. After the meal some of the group watched the last twenty minutes of an exciting Real Zaragoza - Barcelona football match on the TV in the bar (result – 2:4), while others were drawn into friendly conversation with the locals! It was a memorable and thoroughly enjoyable evening. A large and audible bat flew over the square: a European free-tailed bat, we concluded.

22nd March: Monfragüe National Park

There was a change in the weather with a clear blue sky in the morning and just scattered cloud in the afternoon. It was even bright first thing as we looked at the red-rumped swallow nest under an arch on the Finca. There were no new birds, but down by the Finca's entrance we enjoyed a Sardinian warbler plus Spanish sparrows and spotless starlings around the white stork nests on the dead eucalyptus trees.

We headed north from Trujillo to Monfragüe National Park. The route took us first through the rocky granite terrain around Trujillo, and then through dehesa as far as the eye could see, with the only changes being when we dropped down to cross three river valleys: the Tozo, the Almonte and finally the narrow Arroyo de la Vid. After the last crossing we followed the road winding up to the edge of the Monfragüe Park, heralded by a rocky ridge, capped by a small castle and a spectacular gorge through which passed the Tajo river.

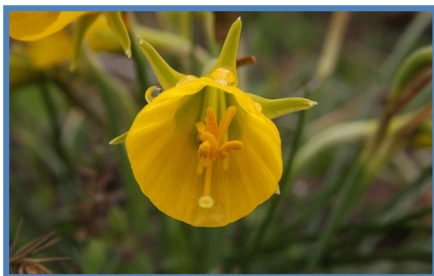
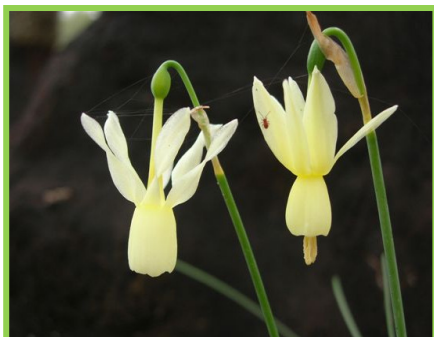
Our first stop was the castle itself, which we reached by climbing up 135 stone steps through groves of wild olive and cork oak. The view from the top was stunning: a vast *dehesa* panorama to the south, while to the north the hills of the park, the man-made lakes along the river valley and behind the snow-capped Gredos, perfectly clear. From the top of the escarpment we watched passing griffon vultures, as well as a pair of red-billed choughs. A pair of red-rumped swallows delighted us as they preened, perched on bare branches nearby. Several southern speckled wood butterflies were found, and rue-leaved saxifrage was sprinkled around the old walls.

Our next port of call was the famous Peña Falcón and Salto de Gitano (the Gypsy's leap). Here, close to the base of the gorge, we enjoyed more views of griffon vulture (including birds at the nest, some with chicks), as well as some black vultures. A pair of black storks stood on a ledge giving their greeting ceremony in the sunshine, the green iridescence on their necks and backs quite spectacular. We also had excellent views of blue rock thrush. At one point an Egyptian vulture was mobbed by a peregrine. Nettle tree butterfly was seen very well.

The road then took us over a bridge, crossing the River Tajo. We stopped at Villareal de San Carlos for coffee. Just a few of us saw a juvenile Spanish imperial eagle high overhead. House martins were coming down to collect mud, while a very fine male white wagtail darted after flies.

We continued through to Tajadilla, a lovely picnic spot just downstream from one of the dams along the course of the river Tiétar. It overlooked another rock face with nesting griffon vultures. Black kites were present as well. A Bonelli's eagle was also seen, soaring overhead before heading south over the cliff. We had magnificent views of azure-winged magpies (*below*) coming down to take crumbs from the picnic tables, while a very smart subalpine warbler foraged in the bushes and a confiding rock bunting was found near the parked cars.

At the Portilla del Tiétar, the viewpoint directed our gaze onto the wonderful strata of the cliffs opposite, supporting another colony of griffon vultures. A pair of Egyptian vultures stood on the highest part of the rock face, while a great cormorant swam in the river. We enjoyed the wonderful serenity of the place. A pair of Bonelli's eagles was watched soaring high in the sky and a short-toed eagle flew over.



Pottering along the road, we found angel's tears (*above top*) and hoop petticoat narcissus (*above bottom*) growing side-by-side on the bank beside the road, along with Spanish bluebells and Spanish milk-vetch.

We were joined by Steve and Karen Fletcher and, as well as the other visitors also present there, many pairs of eyes continually scanned the skies but there was no appearance of the Spanish imperial eagle by the time we needed to move on.

On the way back we stopped on a small road to see the attractive lily that Chris had found yesterday afternoon – eventually identified as a star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum concinnum* – and then we returned to Finca Santa Marta for tea and checklist.

23rd March: Trujillo and Cabañas del Castillo

Starting overcast, the weather gradually improved during the day. 'Hunt the hawfinch' before breakfast led to four sightings, three of which were in or over the almond orchard, but none settled.

The group spent the morning at leisure in Trujillo, with the beautiful medieval town square as the starting point, from which the narrow cobbled streets led up to the castle and old part of the town. This is dominated by the old granite-built palaces and large churches, testimony to the wealth brought back from South America by the conquistadores born in Trujillo. The same buildings with their old tiled roofs support one of Spain's most important colonies of lesser kestrel as well as pairs of pallid swift.

At 12.30, we left Trujillo and headed to the Villuercas mountains, a lovely series of ridges to the east of the *dehesa* and plains that we had been exploring over the last few days. We stopped for lunch at a crossing of the Rio Almonte, where the river passes through a narrow gorge. As well as griffon vultures, we saw grey wagtails and common kestrel. Yellow toadflax and meadow saxifrage were in flower and a small copper butterfly was seen. Nearby is the tiny village of Cabañas del Castillo, perched at the base of one of a pair of crags, on the top of which sits an ancient castle. We walked through the village, then along a path leading to the old church and a gap between the crags, to afford one a magnificent view of the valley to the east. A black wheatear was briefly seen by just a few of us, before disappearing from view behind a rock near the church, while a peregrine on a lofty perch was also seen. The rocks above the village also held black redstarts and blue rock thrushes. From the vantage point overlooking the valley behind the village we could watch passing griffon vultures as well as alpine swift, short-toed eagle and Egyptian vulture. Juniper and dwarf sheep's bit were found growing.

We returned to the Finca on a cross-country road through the *dehesa*, the highlight of the journey being a large flock of rock sparrows and a very fine woodchat shrike.

24th March: Arrocampo and Cerro de Almaráz

Generally an overcast day, and feeling fresher, but with some sunny spells as well. Birds of prey were up early, with red and black kites and a pale phase booted eagle at Finca Santa Martra before breakfast. We had good views of short-toed treecreeper in the olives and Brenda was quick to pick up on a cuckoo over the car park.

We visited the reservoir of Arrocampo, an expanse of water fringed by reedmace, lying between the towns of Almaráz and Saucedilla. At our first stop we saw several purple herons in flight, as well as a great white egret and a distant osprey, which was spotted by David. Zitting cisticolas provided excellent views in the vegetation just in front of us. At our second stop we had even better views of purple heron as well as our first sightings of purple swamphen. A Savi's warbler sang nearby but proved elusive, as did a reed warbler. However, we did find up to three penduline tits that generally gave good views as they foraged on the reed mace seed heads or perched in a willow tree or adjacent giant reeds. A squacco heron also flew past and landed among the vegetation, merging cryptically in it. We went to have coffee in a bar in the centre of Saucedilla, beside the old church, where we watched a few lesser kestrels but most were out feeding out in the countryside. Later we could see no fewer than 14 hovering over the fields.

We drove through an agricultural zone to the north where we found a pair of black-winged kites perched on a tree. Lunch was beside a smaller pool of water, close to which was a pair of black-winged stilts. We then made a final stop at Arrocampo to obtain better views of purple swamphen and finally get a view of a Savi's warbler singing.

We completed the afternoon with a very pleasant foray onto part of the limestone hill nearby (Cerro de Almaráz) where we found several species of orchid (naked man, conical, mirror, yellow bee and champagne). Some of us saw hawfinch in the olives there and a fine short-toed eagle flew over. Storm clouds were forming as we returned to the Finca where we had our final afternoon tea and checklist call-over.

25th March: Finca Santa Marta to Madrid

We set off at 06.50, just as dawn was breaking. We had quite a good run to the airport, then some congestion on the Madrid ring-road, arriving in time for the check-in only to find that the flight had been delayed by some two hours.

Wildlife sightings of the week, as nominated by group members

Desmond: blackcaps every morning.

Shevaun: Finca Santa Marta, cork oak woodland with narcissi, subalpine warbler, red avadavats.

David: cork oak woodland, fan-tailed warbler.

Marie: cranes, lots of warblers of various species (eg Dartford, Sardinian, subalpine), angel's tears narcissi.

Peter: Finca Santa Marta, hawfinch, the view from the ramparts of the castle in Trujillo.

Sandy: vultures low over the trees at Monfragüe castle.

Elonwy: cork oak and two black storks together.

Lesley: flocks of dark cranes and white egrets against the sky, rue-leaved saxifrage.

Suzanne: great bustards, wildflowers at Finca Santa Marta.

Debs: ambience of Finca Santa Marta, good company, griffons at Monfragüe castle, smell of almonds. Penduline tit.

Brenda: vultures, peregrine mobbing griffon vultures.

Melvyn: lunch break with subalpine warbler, rock bunting, Bonelli's eagle and azure-winged magpies.

Geoff: Dartford warbler, angel's tears narcissi in the cork oak wood, then doubles and trebles of the angel's tears at Finca Santa Marta.

Angela: great bustard in flight, diamond-shaped tight flock of dunlins, both narcissus species.

Martin: pair of black storks at Peña Falcón, male great bustard on the skyline, packs of pallid swifts in Trujillo.

Chris: cranes, Thekla lark, and as many Montagu's harriers in one field as in the whole of the UK.

View over Trujillo



Orchid walk



Systematic list – Birds

A summary of sightings contributed by the whole group at the daily “call-over”.

Little Grebe	A pair at Arrocampo on 24 th March and one seen on a pool on 23 rd March.
Great Crested Grebe	Present at reservoirs such as Tozo, Sierra Brava and Arrocampo as well as the Tiétar river, Monfragüe.
Cormorant	Present at reservoirs such as Tozo and Arrocampo as well as the Tiétar river, Monfragüe.
Squacco Heron	One seen at close quarters at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Cattle Egret	Seen almost daily, with a flock of over a 100 on rice fields at Casas del Hito on 19 th March.
Little Egret	Singles seen on rice fields and at Arrocampo.
Great White Egret	3 at Tozo on 18 th March and one seen at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Grey Heron	Seen almost every day.
Purple Heron	At least 6 seen at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Black Stork	About 10 seen at Monfragüe on 22 nd March and 2 near Cabañas del Castillo on 23 rd March.
White Stork	Common throughout the week, around towns and villages, as well as in the fields.
Spoonbill	3 at Tozo on 18 th March.
Greylag Goose	5 at Casas del Hito on 19 th March.
Gadwall	Seen on Tozo on 18 th March.
Teal	Seen on Tozo reservoir and near Arrocampo.
Mallard	Seen daily.
Pintail	2 or 3 seen at Casas del Hito on 19 th March.
Shoveler	Small numbers seen at Tozo, Casas del Hito and Arrocampo.
Black-shouldered Kite	2 at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Black Kite	Double figures seen every day.
Red Kite	Single figures seen every day, especially over dehesa and the plains.
Egyptian Vulture	Generally seen in pairs at Jaraicejo, the plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, Monfragüe (6-8 seen) and Cabañas del Castillo.
Griffon Vulture	Good numbers seen almost every day, especially at Monfragüe on 22 nd March (over 100 seen).
Black Vulture	Seen almost daily, and double figures at Monfragüe.
Short-toed Eagle	Seen almost daily, often in pairs.
Marsh Harrier	About 5 on the rice fields on 19 th March and 3 at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Montagu's Harrier	At least 6 on the plains near Santa Marta de Magasca on 21 st March.
Sparrowhawk	Singles at Tozo and Jaraicejo.
Common Buzzard	Seen daily.
Spanish Imperial Eagle	A juvenile seen briefly at Monfragüe on 22 nd March.
Golden Eagle	An adult over the heath at Jaraicejo on 20 th March.
Bonelli's Eagle	A total of 3 seen in Monfragüe on 22 nd March.
Osprey	One at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Lesser Kestrel	Seen almost daily.
Common Kestrel	Seen almost daily in single figures.
Merlin	One on Belén Plains on 18 th March and one near Santa Marta de Magasca on 21 st March.
Peregrine	Singles in Monfragüe and at Cabañas del Castillo.

Red-legged Partridge	Seen most days.
Moorhen	Small numbers on rice fields and Arrocampo.
Purple Swamphen	At least 5 birds at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Coot	Present at the reservoir of Arrocampo.
Common Crane	A very late wintering flock of 150 at Casas del Hito on 19 th March.
Little Bustard	A male on Zorita plains on 19 th March and one near Santa Marta de Magasca on 21 st March.
Great Bustard	8 on Belén Plains on 18 th March, 11 on Zorita Plains on 19 th March and 2 near Santa Marta de Magasca on 21 st March.
Stone-curlew	One on Zorita Plains on 19 th March and 3 near Santa Marta de Magasca on 21 st March.
Black-winged Stilt	Seen almost daily on small pool near Trujillo, also at Arrocampo.
Little Ringed Plover	2 on wet fields at Casas del Hito on 19 th March.
Golden Plover	A total of 30 seen on Zorita Plains and near Madrigalejo on 19 th March.
Lapwing	Very few of this winter visitor still present: single figures on Tozo on 18 th March and about 6 on rice fields on 19 th March.
Dunlin	A flock of about 50 at Casas del Hito on 19 th March.
Snipe	Single figures on Tozo and rice fields.
Greenshank	4 at Tozo on 18 th March.
Green Sandpiper	Single birds seen at Tozo, rice fields and Arrocampo.
Common Sandpiper	Single birds at Tozo and sierra Brava.
Black-headed Gull	Small groups on Belén and rice fields.
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Small groups seen almost daily.
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	2 seen near Santa Marta de Magasca on 21 st March
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	About 50 seen near Santa Marta de Magasca on 21 st March.
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	Seen daily.
Woodpigeon	Small numbers seen daily.
Collared Dove	Seen daily.
Great Spotted Cuckoo	Seen almost daily, generally in pairs.
Common Cuckoo	Recorded almost daily, especially near the Finca.
Scops Owl	Heard most evenings (and some mornings) at the Finca.
Little Owl	2 seen on Belén Plains on 18 th March and one on Zorita Plains on 19 th March.
Pallid Swift	Seen at Trujillo on 23 rd March and 24 th March.
Alpine Swift	Several at Cabañas del Castillo on 23 rd March.
Kingfisher	One on Tozo on 18 th March, also on Rio Almonte on 23 rd March and Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Hoopoe	Commonly seen every day.
Green Woodpecker	Heard and seen at the Finca on 21 st and 22 nd March.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Heard and seen several times during the week.
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Heard drumming at the Finca on 19 th March.
Calandra Lark	Seen on visits to open plains at Belén, Zorita and near Santa Marta de Magasca.
Crested Lark	Common and seen daily.
Thekla Lark	Seen on Belén, Zorita, Jaraicejo and near Santa Marta de Magasca.
Woodlark	Heard and sometimes seen several times at the Finca.
Sand Martin	Seen at Arrocampo on 24 th March.

Crag Martin	Common near bridges and in rocky areas in Monfragüe, in the Villuercas mountains and also present in Trujillo.
Swallow	Common every day.
Red-rumped Swallow	Seen almost daily.
House Martin	Seen almost every day.
Meadow Pipit	Small numbers seen almost daily.
Grey Wagtail	2 present on Rio Almonte on 23 rd March.
White Wagtail	Seen every day.
Wren	Recorded daily.
Robin	Recorded at the Finca only until 20 th March.
Bluethroat	One at Casas del Hito on 19 th March.
Black Redstart	Seen at Monfragüe and Cabañas del Castillo.
Stonechat	Common and seen every day.
Northern Wheatear	One on Zorita Plains on 19 th March.
Black Wheatear	2 birds at Cabañas del Castillo on 23 rd March.
Blue Rock Thrush	Seen in Monfragüe and Cabañas del Castillo.
Blackbird	Seen daily.
Song Thrush	Seen at the Finca until 22 nd March.
Mistle Thrush	Singles seen near the Finca. at Monfragüe and in the Villuercas.
Cetti's Warbler	Present in rice fields and at Arrocampo.
Zitting Cisticola	Present on Zorita Plains, the rice fields and at Arrocampo.
Savi's Warbler	2 singing at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Reed Warbler	One singing at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Dartford Warbler	Excellent views at Jaraicejo on 20 th March and at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Subalpine Warbler	Good views of two at Monfragüe on 22 nd March and one at Rio Almonte on 23 rd March.
Sardinian Warbler	Seen almost daily.
Blackcap	Seen daily and in good numbers around Finca.
Willow Warbler	One singing at Casas del Hito on 19 th March.
Chiffchaff	Small numbers seen, generally close to water.
Long-tailed Tit	Small numbers seen on several days.
Blue Tit	Seen almost daily.
Great Tit	Seen daily.
Penduline Tit	3 seen at Arrocampo on 24 th March.
Short-toed Treecreeper	Seen and heard almost daily, especially around the Finca.
Southern Grey Shrike	Seen daily.
Woodchat Shrike	Seen almost daily.
Jay	Seen near Cabañas del Castillo on 23 rd March.
Azure-winged Magpie	Common and seen every day.
Magpie	Common and seen every day.
Red-billed Chough	2 at Monfragüe castle on 22 nd March.
Jackdaw	Common and seen every day.
Raven	Seen almost daily.
Spotless Starling	Common every day.
House Sparrow	Common every day.

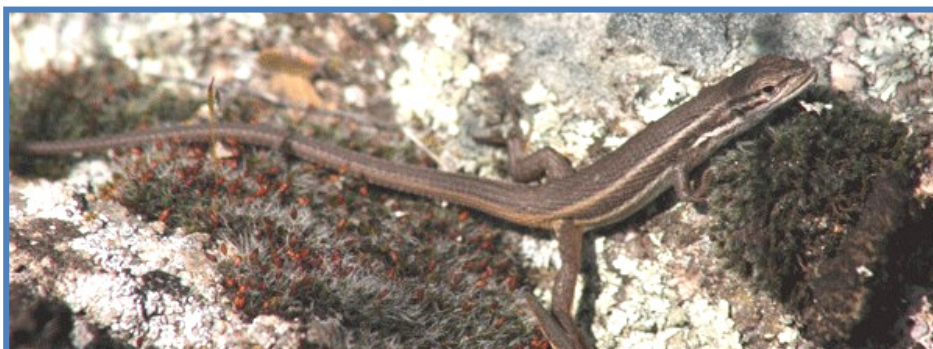
Spanish Sparrow	Flocks on the rice fields, plains and at Arrocampo.
Tree Sparrow	2 or 3 at Casas del Hito on 19 th March.
Rock Sparrow	A flock of over 50 seen near Rio Almonte between Retamosa and Aldeacentenera on 23 rd March.
Red Avadavat	Small flocks on the rice fields on 19 th March.
Chaffinch	Small numbers seen every day.
Serin	Seen every day, often in song-flight.
Greenfinch	Seen daily near the Finca.
Goldfinch	Small flocks seen daily.
Linnet	Seen daily.
Hawfinch	Recorded every morning at the Finca.
Cirl Bunting	One at Cabañas del Castillo on 23 rd March.
Rock Bunting	Seen well at Monfragüe on 22 nd March and at Cabañas del Castillo on 23 rd March.
Corn Bunting	Seen daily. One of the commonest birds of the plains.

MAMMALS

Red fox <i>Vulpes vulpes</i> (dead)	Iberian hare <i>Lepus granatensis</i>
Wild boar <i>Sus scrofa</i> – rootings	Rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
Red deer <i>Cervus elaphus hispanicus</i> (dead)	European free-tailed bat <i>Tadarida teniotis</i>

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Terrapin sp – not seen well enough to ID	Common toad <i>Bufo bufo</i>
Large psammodromus <i>Psammodromus algirus</i> (below)	Stripeless tree frog <i>Hyla meridionalis</i>
Iberian wall lizard <i>Podarcis hispanica</i>	Iberian water frog <i>Rana perezi</i>
Moorish gecko <i>Tarentola mauretanica</i>	



BUTTERFLIES

Swallowtail (dead)	Nettle-tree Butterfly
Large White	Red Admiral
Small White	Southern Speckled Wood
Green-striped White (photo on page 4)	Small Copper
Clouded Yellow	Holly Blue
Comma	

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

A large pond skater, probably <i>Aquarius najas</i>	Pine processionary moth <i>Thaumetopoea pityocampa</i>
Rhinoceros beetle <i>Copris lunaris</i>	Caterpillars of the tiger moth <i>Ocnognyna boetica</i>
7-spot ladybird <i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>	Violet carpenter bee <i>Xylocopa violacea</i> (above)
A ground bug <i>Lygaeus equestris</i>	Large ant possibly <i>Camponotus vagus</i>
Hummingbird hawk-moth <i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>	House centipede <i>Scutigera coleoptrata</i>

Plants

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

Polunin refers to Polunin & Smythies, *Flowers of south-west Europe*.

Some are planted, marked **P**. **NiF** = not in flower.

Common northern European plants e.g. shepherd's purse, groundsel, are not usually noted; planted trees are only noted when of special interest.

Pinaceae		
<i>Pinus pinea</i>	Stone/umbrella pine	(3)
Cupressaceae		
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Common juniper	(13)
Fagaceae		
<i>Quercus rotundifolia</i>	Holm oak	(26)
<i>Quercus suber</i>	Cork oak	(27)
Ulmaceae		
<i>Ulmus minor</i>	Elm sp.	(c. 38)
Urticaceae		
<i>Urtica membranacea</i>	Membranous nettle	(49)
<i>U. urens</i>	Annual nettle	(-)
Caryophyllaceae		
<i>Paronychia capita</i>	Paronychia	(134)
<i>Spergularia arvensis</i>	Corn spurrey	(-)
<i>Spergularia purpurea</i>	Purple sand-spurrey	(148)
<i>Silene colorata</i>	Mediterranean campion sp.	(180)
Ranunculaceae		
<i>Ranunculus</i> sp.	Water crowfoot sp.	
Fumariaceae		
<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	Ramping fumitory	(303)
Cruciferae		
<i>Matthiola lunata</i>	A stock (photo in Polunin)	
<i>Sisymbrium altissimum</i>	Tall rocket (the abundant yellow crucifer in fields and on disturbed ground everywhere)	
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	Wild radish	(369)
<i>Teesdalia nudicaulis</i>	Shepherd's cress	
Crassulaceae		
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Navelwort	(396)
Saxifragaceae		
<i>Saxifraga tridactyla</i>	Rue-leaved saxifrage	
<i>Saxifraga granulata</i>	Meadow saxifrage	

Leguminosae		
<i>Acacia dealbata</i> P	'Mimosa' or Silver wattle	(432)
<i>Adenocarpus argyrophyllus</i>	Spanish adenocarpus (endemic to Extremadura - in neither book)	
<i>Astragalus lusitanicus</i>	Iberian milk-vetch	(504)
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i> P	Judas tree	(430) NiF
<i>Lupinus angustifolius</i>	Narrow-leaved lupin	(486)
<i>Medicago arabica</i>	Spotted medick	(623) NiF
<i>Psoralea bituminosa</i>	Pitch trefoil	(508)
<i>Vicia lutea</i>	Yellow vetch	(525)
<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Common vetch	(531)
Oxalidaceae		
<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda buttercup	(735)
Geraniaceae		
<i>Geranium lucidum</i>	Shining cranesbill	
<i>Geranium molle</i>	Dovesfoot cranesbill	(741)
<i>Erodium cicutarim</i>	Common storksbill	(761)
Euphorbiaceae		
<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i>	Sun spurge	(700)
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	Annual mercury	(820)
Meliaceae		
<i>Melia azedarach</i> P	Indian bead tree or Persian lilac	(843) NiF
Violaceae		
<i>Viola (arvensis) kitaibeliana</i>	Dwarf pansy	(931)
Cistaceae		
<i>Cistus albidus</i>	Grey-leaved cistus (big pink flowers)	(961) NiF
<i>Cistus salviifolius</i>	Sage-leaved cistus (small white flowers)	(965) NiF
<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	Gum cistus (big white flowers)	(971)
<i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Common rockrose	(996)
Cactaceae		
<i>Opuntia maxima</i> (= <i>ficus-indica</i>)	Prickly pear	(1040)
Umbelliferae		
<i>Ferula communis</i>	Giant fennel	(1141)
<i>Smyrniolum olustatum</i>	Alexanders	(1087)
Ericaceae		
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry tree	(1176)
<i>Erica arborea</i>	Tree heath (white flowers)	(1178)
<i>Erica australis</i>	Spanish heath (pink flowers)	(1181)
Rubiaceae		
<i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	Field madder	

Oleaceae		
<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>		(1246)
<i>Olea europaea</i>	Olive	(1248)
Boraginaceae		
<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	Purple viper's bugloss	(1383)
<i>Anchusa undulata</i>	Undulate anchusa	(1406)
<i>Cynoglossum cherifolium</i>	A houndstongue	(1409)
<i>Myosotis</i> sp	A forget-me-not	
Labiatae		
<i>Lamium bifidum</i>	A white-flowered deadnettle with white stripes on the leaves. Not in Blamey or Polunin!	
<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	White horehound	(1445) NiF
<i>Lamium amplexicaule</i>	Henbit deadnettle	(1478)
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Rosemary	(1526)
<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French lavender	(1528)
<i>Salvia verbenaca</i>	Wild clary	(1545)
<i>Stachys arvensis</i>	Field woundwort	
Solanaceae		
<i>Hyosciamus albus</i>	White henbane	(1555)
Scrophularicaea		
<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>	Ivy-leaved speedwell	(1632)
<i>Linaria amethystea</i>	'Amethyst' toadflax (Polunin)	
<i>Linaria spartea</i>	A yellow-flowered toadflax (Polunin)	
Caprifoliaceae		
<i>Lonicera caprifolium</i>	Perfoliate honeysuckle (Polunin etc)	NiF
Campanulaceae		
<i>Jasione crispa</i>	Dwarf sheep's bit (Polunin 1355c) Illustrated in Blamey / Grey-Wilson's <u>Alpine</u> flowers)	
Compositae		
<i>Anthemis</i> sp. <i>arvensis</i> ?	An abundant white (corn?) mayweed	
<i>Bellis annua</i>	Annual daisy	(1791)
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Perennial daisy	(1792)
<i>Bellis sylvestris</i>	Southern daisy	(1793)
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	Field marigold	(1908)
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i>	Crown daisy	(1895) NiF
<i>Evax pygmaea</i>	Evax	(1805)
<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	Galactites	(1971) NiF
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Milk Thistle	(1982) NiF
Liliaceae		
<i>Asphodelus aestivus</i>	Common asphodel	(2089) NiF
<i>Gagea</i> sp <i>pratensis</i> ?	Yellow star-of-Bethlehem sp.	(c 2106)
<i>Fritillaria lusitanica</i>	Iberian fritillary	(2152)
<i>Ornithogalum concinnum</i>	A spiked star-of-Bethlehem	(Polunin)
<i>Ornithogalum ? narbonense</i>	Star-of-Bethlehem sp.	(2171)
<i>Urginea maritima</i>	Sea squill (leaves, bulbs and dead flower spikes)	(2163)
<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	Spanish bluebell	(2191)
<i>Muscari comosum</i>	Tassel hyacinth	(2201)
<i>Narcissus triandrus papyraceus</i>	Angel's tears	(Polunin)
<i>Narcissus bulbocodium</i>	Hoop-petticoat narcissus	(2281)

Iridaceae

<i>Gynandriris sisyrinchium</i>	Barbary nut iris	(2305)
<i>Romulea bulbocodium</i>	A sand crocus	(2314)
<i>Romulea columnae</i>	Sand crocus	(2320)

Orchidaceae

<i>Orchis (morio) champagneuxii</i>	Champagne orchid	(2403)
<i>Orchis conica</i>	Conical orchid	
<i>Orchis italica</i>	Naked man orchid	(2409)
<i>Ophrys tenthredinifera</i>	Sawfly orchid	(2442)
<i>Ophrys lutea</i>	Yellow bee orchid	(2423)
<i>Ophrys speculum</i>	Mirror orchid	(2436)

Gramineae

<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	Lesser reedmace	
<i>Arundo donax</i>	Giant reed	(2494)

FERNS (PTERIDOPHYTA)

<i>Cheilanthes</i> sp.		(c 2521)
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	Rusty-back fern	(2532)
<i>Polypodium</i> sp.	A polypody	

* * * * *

Sawfly orchid



Amethyst toadflax



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