



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Telephone: 01603 300552

www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: chris@honeyguide.co.uk



Extremadura

14 – 22 March 2017

Holiday participants

Shevaun Mendelsohn and David Nind
Jill Jordan
Keith Wallace
Marion Walter

Leader

Chris Durdin

Our base for the holiday was Finca Santa Marta www.fincasantamarta.es
Martin Kelsey's blog about wildlife in Extremadura: <http://birdingextremadura.blogspot.com>
Flowers in Extremadura in March that are tricky to find in field guides:
www.honeyguide.co.uk/Extremaduraflowers.htm

Report and photos by Chris Durdin taken on the holiday, apart from Vagrant Emperor by Martin Kelsey.
Cover: jonquils by the River Tozo.
Below: group photo, taken just above Finca Santa Marta.



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 £40 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust.

This year's donation of £340 brings the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £17,965. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays at the end of March 2017 was £113,469.

ITINERARY

Day One 14 March 2017	Drive from Madrid to Extremadura.
Day Two 15 March 2017	Walk and lunch in vicinity of Finca Santa Marta (Sierra de los Lagares) and afternoon walk near Madroñera.
Day Three 16 March 2017	Plains near Campo Lugar, <i>dehesa</i> and rice fields at Moheda Alta and Sierra Brava reservoir.
Day Four 17 March 2017	Monfragüe National Park.
Day Five 18 March 2017	Morning visit to Trujillo and Alcollarín Reservoir.
Day Six 19 March 2017	Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, lunch at River Tamuja, walk to drovers' trail, granite outcrop near Trujillo.
Day Seven 20 March 2017	Alange Reservoir and Mérida.
Day Eight 21 March 2017	Tozo river and lake, Belén Plain, and Finca Santa Marta.
Day Nine 22 March 2017	Return to Madrid.

DAILY DIARY

Tuesday 14 March: Gatwick to Finca Santa Marta

Four of us successfully negotiated the ranks of self-service bag drop machines, newly established by easyJet on level 1 of Gatwick's North Terminal, and then the usual security and airport routines. The flight was on time and Shevaun and David were there at Madrid to meet us, having flown in from Liverpool. The Europcar paperwork process was efficient, finding the black Mercedes Vito minibus a little less so, but we were soon away and heading along the Madrid motorway network, Keith efficiently navigating with Martin Kelsey's directions crib sheet. An hour on and we took our customary break at Las Esparteras café, where most of us had a peach drink as the orange juicer was out of action. You couldn't help but admire the suspended hams and the wine collection, but only briefly as we were soon on our way.

It was then about two hours at a steady pace along the motorway, passing the snow-capped Gredos Mountains on our right. Just after we passed the sign announcing that we'd crossed into the region of Extremadura a white stork flew over the motorway, as if released by the tourist board, and we passed damp patches white with water crowfoot, extensive holm oak *dehesa* and hillsides covered with white Spanish broom. It was gusty weather and cloudy as we turned near Trujillo then through the granite outcrops along the last stretch to the Finca, arriving at a little after 7:30. Once the laundry van had moved we drew into the car park from where Laura greeted us and showed us into our rooms. Over at the main house we met new cook Ryan, a young Englishman, who had arrived just three days before us. Soon after 8:30 we were sitting down for dinner alongside the olive press in the Finca's splendid dining room for appetisers, root vegetable soup, chicken with risotto rice and cheesecake – with several variations on account of diets expertly taken on board by Ryan. Extra local flavour was provided by the accompanying red wine with the Finca Santa Marta labels, homemade by the Finca's man-of-all-trades, Gino. We all saw the room's resident Moorish gecko once a picture was lifted out of the way. The wind continued to blow as we went to bed.



Moorish gecko.

Wednesday 15 March: Finca Santa Marta and heath at Madroñera

It was a gusty night and distinctly chilly first thing, with the winds encouraging griffon vultures onto the wing over the Finca, though from then they were absent today. After our 8:30 breakfast we prepared picnics for later, then met in the orchard/car park where a serin sat still in an olive tree. We set out through the Finca's grounds, pausing by the big well where several blackcaps were feeding among the ivy and fig trees. Everywhere was rich and green with big patches of yellow from tall rocket and field marigolds, punctuated with the deep purple of undulate anchusa. Harder to spot, but equally beautiful were the tiny flowers of amethyst toadflaxes and dwarf pansies. A black kite came through, then a black stork, but otherwise it was mostly smaller birds: finches, great tits and groups of azure-winged magpies. Beyond the almond orchard were more olives, fringed by a row of cork oaks that mark the Finca's boundary where a short-toed treecreeper sang. Here some searching on a rock pile revealed a flower of friar's cowl. Narrow-leaved lupin was the showiest of the ruderal flowers here and most of the butterflies moving around were western dappled whites.

Over the wall just beyond the stone pines was the stock *Matthiola lunata* and several bushes of phillyrea, the false olive. From here a woodlark sang as we overlooked San Clemente and its church where two white storks stood on their nest.

Several yellow stars-of-Bethlehem (*Gagea*) were soon followed by Marion finding some orchids, namely conical orchid and champagne orchids. We found many scores of these orchids when we nipped into the overgrown orchard by the tumbledown house. Among these a Provence hairstreak settled on an Iberian milk-vetch, a butterfly with a curious mix of small copper patterning – we'd seen several of these, too – and green hairstreak-style underwing. Nearby Shevaun found a wall brown and by the stone wall on the other side was a fabulous Lusitanian fritillary in full flower. There were many more fritillaries in bud, especially looking over the wall a little farther up the path where they were mixed in with patches of the pretty, tiny angel's tears narcissi. Our return circuit was down a path that took us to the quiet road by the adjacent bodega. A rather-tatty looking large tortoiseshell basked on the road in the now warm sunshine; David noticed a hummingbird hawk-moth that fed on periwinkle and Bermuda buttercup flowers.



Champagne orchids, conical orchid and Thekla lark.

We ate our picnics outside the Finca, watching a couple of black redstarts on the olives and noting the red-rumped swallows and their nest under an arch.

At 2:30pm we took the short drive through the narrow streets of Madroñera, forking left at the graffiti-covered sign towards Aldeacentenera and towards our destination, an area of broom (white Spanish) and lavender heath. A patch of the yellow toadflax *Linaria spartea* prompted a brief stop on the way. At the heath we heard corn bunting and got glimpses of Sardinian warblers, but to start with birds were out of sight on account of the breeze. The unmade road was more protected and farther along there were good views of Thekla lark, stonechat and woodchat shrike. Red kites were in the distance at first, and later one came close by. A single hoop petticoat narcissus was followed by many more, especially on a grazed pasture, and there were many glorious patches of angel's tears narcissi at peak flowering perfection. Back by the minibus we managed OK views of a Dartford warbler.

We returned to the Finca for tea and wildlife checklists during which a hoopoe was singing in the distance.

Thursday 16 March: Campo Lugar and Moheda Alta

A bird seen only by the leader doesn't usually get mentioned, but a lesser spotted woodpecker drumming in the big almond tree earns a mention in despatches. At 7:45 four of the group joined me and it was Shevaun who was alert to the hawfinch in a tree beyond the blackcaps' well. We walked down towards the entrance road, seeing the local red-rumped swallows as we went, and picked out distant Spanish sparrows and spotless starlings around the storks' nest in the eucalyptus trees.

It was bright but still with a cold wind as we arrived on the plains of Campo Lugar. Martin Kelsey was there with three of his house guests already watching an impressive flock of 30 great bustards on the near slopes. Many were males, at first making some displays that seemed not to interest the separate group of females. Martin also drew our attention to four little bustards, an increasingly tricky bird to find in Extremadura and today far from obvious among dry thistles. Calandra larks were in good form, showing their dark underwings well: one seemed to be flying fast but staying still against a strong headwind. On the road, large numbers of winter webworm moth caterpillars plainly had little idea of the risks of straying onto tarmac. Moving on there was little to see by the big gateway, though we did study ground-hugging strapwort flowers. At the far end of the steppe where once upon a time stone-curlews gathered there were instead cattle egrets with a group of cattle. Heading back we stopped for a southern grey shrike, its breast a striking salmon pink, and yellow common jonquils in clumps by a watercourse, studied through the 'scope as they were beyond a fence. We were briefly with Martin's group again as we enjoyed a swallowtail feeding on sand crocuses.

After coffee and a loo stop in the homely café in the village of Obando we were soon at Moheda Alta. The crane information centre was shut now the cranes had gone, but the picnic tables are ideal for lunch and it was already warm enough to bring out clouded yellow butterflies and for us to choose a table in the shade. The *dehesa* was green after the winter's rains, with various flowers bringing patches of colour, a great contrast to the dry, open woodland Jill had seen last autumn.

We heard blue tit, chiffchaff and chaffinch plus many corn buntings, but the most notable wildlife wasn't until we'd reached the far end of the *dehesa* by the big hide. Here a short-toed eagle hung in the sky for a good while and there was a marsh harrier over the rice stubbles. Those stubbles were mostly dry and, apart from a few white storks, lacking in birds, but just before I was going to suggest we moved on Marion spotted two mammals. They were Egyptian mongooses, on the edge of the one wet area, and nipping in and out of view among patches of celery-leaved buttercup: we'll gloss over the claims that they were coypu. They weren't the only mammal: Keith had ascended to the top of the tower hide and called out a red fox making its way through the open *dehesa* and past the main hide. Some 50 or so red avadavats were buzzing around and, with patience, everyone had views of them among the reeds. Yellow anemone was a nice find at the start of the return walk. As we drove out of Moheda Alta we paused at the 'ford' where Spanish sparrows were bathing and again by the small lake where there was a great white egret and our first dabchick.

A black-shouldered kite was hovering by the road on the return journey, though couldn't be re-found when we turned and went up a side road where it had disappeared. We also made a brief stop at Sierra Brava reservoir. There were two gull species, great crested grebes and hundreds of distant ducks on the water, but better still were seven or eight lesser kestrels that appeared to be nesting on an old building.

At Finca Santa Marta, as well as tea and checklists and some down time, we joined proprietor Henri for canapés and drinks by way of a welcome reception. There was much discussion over a range of local and world issues, the conversation continuing during another excellent meal prepared by Ryan.



Peña Falcón in Monfragüe National Park and its viewpoint; angel's tears narcissi.

Friday 17 March: Monfragüe National Park

The early risers were rewarded with a singing hoopoe and a fine view of a low-flying black vulture.

At Monfragüe castle we took the winding red route to the castle's viewpoint, passing meadow saxifrage and walking under wild olive trees. Two Egyptian vultures were in the air with the many griffon vultures. We examined the strange globose mounds on the fruits of the tiny bedstraw *Galium verticillatum* before we descended the steps.

At Peña Falcón, two black storks were up in the air with the many griffons, as was a stooping peregrine. David heard then found the brightest of blue rock thrushes – or perhaps the clear light and close view was the explanation. Spanish adenocarpus, a rather special local shrub in the pea family, was in full flower.

We stopped for coffee in Villareal de San Carlos then drove on to our picnic site, which was missing the usual tame azure-winged magpies. From there we arrived in very good time at Tiétar cliffs. Within minutes a boldly marked Spanish imperial eagle flew out from behind the cliffs, disappeared, re-appeared briefly and then again for an extended stay in the sky across the water then towards us. Altogether magnificent views of one eagle species, which remarkably was matched by equally good views of a short-toed eagle hanging in the air then coming to land. Across the road were scores of hoop petticoat narcissi with Spanish bluebells in the adjacent rosemary and tree heather scrub.

On the way out Marion had seen a red deer by the roadside, so Keith was watching out for it on the return. We suspect it was the same mammal that he pointed out to us, sitting in the shade of a small tree close to the road. After a loo stop in Villareal de San Carlos we took a short walk on the 'Ruta de la Fuente del Francés' where we saw two new trees – Portuguese oak and narrow-leaved ash – plus two new butterflies, namely holly blue and a green hairstreak on the ground.

Saturday 18 March: Trujillo and Alcollarín Reservoir.

A cuckoo flew past us before breakfast and at last we saw a short-toed treecreeper as well as hearing them, this one climbing one of the adjacent bodega's poplars near where a man was working with a chainsaw.



Plaza Mayor in Trujillo, with statue of Pizarro and a huge tent for Trujillo's first artisan beer festival; Trujillo Castle.

In Trujillo we risked driving past the no entry sign to park in the usual side street, surmising that the sign was there to keep vehicles out for the two-day beer festival later today. Evidence of this new initiative was obvious in the *Plaza Mayor*: a large covered area ready to serve artisan beers and loud music underway. We split up, some to buy stamps and shop, Keith to explore a church and Jill and I to walk to the castle, near which we saw some of the others later. Pallid swifts were very much in evidence, the bright light showing their colour well, and white henbane on walls was a new plant. The temporary loos for the beer festival were useful as we rendezvoused in the main square for coffee, but we were happy to leave before the main event was underway.

After buying fuel we stopped briefly by the bullring and a brand new hide on stilts built, we assume, to encourage people to look at the lesser kestrels that nest there. The middle of the day wasn't a good time to see them so we moved swiftly on and drove south down the motorway before turning for the new reservoir (finished in 2014) at Alcollarín. Here we went straight to the picnic area at the far end, with shade welcome in the now regular pattern of warm afternoons.

The birdwatching was excellent: scores of little egrets, several great white egrets, nesting white storks and perched cormorants. A white wagtail joined the big flock of black-headed gulls on the dam wall. Half a dozen black-winged stilts were flying around or feeding on the far side of the neck of the waterbody, with three greenshanks moving to and fro as well. A green sandpiper dashed through but a distant wood sandpiper was trickier to make out. Great crested grebes were displaying and little grebes calling; the selection of ducks included shovelers, gadwalls and tufted ducks. Dragonflies with blue saddles on the males were on the wing and pairs in tandem were egg-laying in the shallow water's edge. Later we heard the news that these were part of an influx of vagrant emperors (photo on page 10).

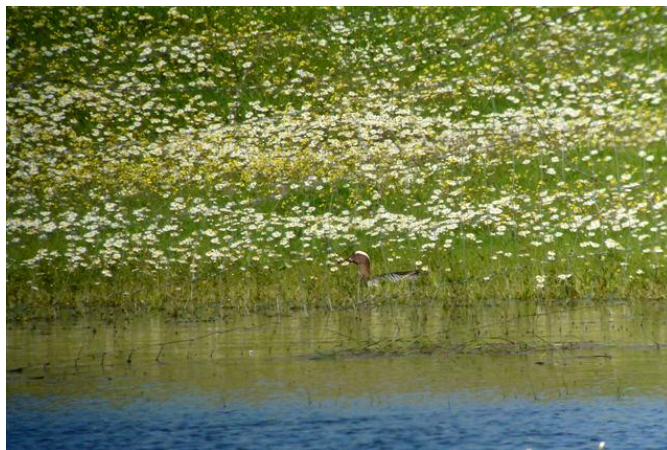


Alcollarín Reservoir, with black-headed gulls lined up on the dam.

Brief stops along the eastern edge of the reservoir yielded little else of interest, apart from a flock of sheep guarded by two dogs, and an early return was planned. We took a back route just west of Zorita through *dehesa* and open farmland that was so charming that the 'early' idea soon went. By a large pond we found our first flowering Barbary nut irises. A second water crowfoot-covered pond was even more productive, the stars a pair of garganeys half-hidden in the white flowers. Two flocks of goats, a dead tree with storks' nests and a big flock of Spanish sparrows on the other side all added to an idyllic scene. The route re-joined the main road at Herguijuela and we were still back by five o'clock. After dinner, Shevaun and I looked at Jupiter with four moons low to the east in the star-lit night sky.



An idyllic spot on 'Keith's drive'.



Play 'spot the garganey'.

Sunday 19 March: Santa Marta de Magasca

A cuckoo showed beautifully before breakfast. Later, as we gathered to leave, Shevaun observed that short-toed treecreepers were disappearing behind dead leaves of a fan palm, presumably nesting there.

The road towards Santa Marta de Magasca is under reconstruction, so horribly dusty but without working machinery on a Sunday. We overlooked the first area from an elevated drive-off, where there were many corn buntings and larks but nothing to make us linger too long. Next stop was by the sign for the Natura 2000 network where we walked out into the plain. There was lots of the unusual, prostrate sainfoin *Onobrychis humilis*, plus spotted rockrose and silvery *Paronychia*. The feeling that birdwatching was hard work today was interrupted by the sound of sandgrouse. The flock of pin-tailed sandgrouse came into view and then right over us, all 31 of them, then flying around in compact groups and away. It was an outstanding view for an often elusive bird, though for this fast-flying species over all too soon. Walking on we struck lucky again: a group of 22 male great bustards behind the large pond, first spotted by Keith, the flock walking towards us until they went out of view behind a rise.

Coffee was at the café in the pretty square of the small town of Santa Marta de Magasca, where we sat outside in the warm sunshine. Some popped into the small shop nearby, Keith treating us to cake and strawberries with our picnic at the next stop. That stop was in a *ribero*, a wooded valley of the Tamuja River. Looking down there were at 10 Iberian terrapins to see before we crossed the bridge to find some shade in which to sit and eat. There were wintering chiffchaffs, also in song, and brief views of grey wagtail, kingfisher and long-tailed tits. Back by the minibus, yellow vetch with its distinctive dark stipules was a new flower.



Tamuja River, near Santa Marta de Magasca; sawfly orchid; star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum concinnum*.

The next stop, by a road junction, overlooked steppe in all directions in different phases of the arable-fallow-grazed rotation. A skylark sang and there were two short-toed eagles, but otherwise birds were unremarkable. A swallowtail landed on a thistle and I caught a green-striped white. Sawfly orchids were a nice find, probably 15 plants all told, and we disturbed two Iberian hares. Our final stop on the plains allowed a short walk to a wide *cañada real* – rural droveway for transhumance. The Dutch people there had the right idea: sitting quietly in the shade on this surprisingly hot afternoon. As at the previous stop there were Barbary nut irises in flower and two of us failed to get a good view of small green lizard. We didn't linger.

During the final leg of the journey a distinctive call caught my ear. I self-edited my initial announcement of great spotted woodpecker: great spotted cuckoo is what I meant. It flew past, landed in a tree and stayed there, half-hidden, rather like the one pictured in the Artists for Nature Foundation book back at the Finca. I fetched the scope and we perched on top of a granite rise to look at it. Alongside were several white flowers of the unusual star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum concinnum*.

Finca chef Ryan and Martin and Patrick Kelsey joined us for dinner at La Higuera in San Clemente, the local restaurant where last September's group had enjoyed several meals. Our traditional evening out, when the Finca staff have a night off, had previously been in Trujillo, but the beer festival meant this was an ideal Plan B. Returning to the Finca, Ryan brought a night-cap to the east side of the buildings facing towards Jupiter, which was still shining brightly despite some light cloud. While we looked at Jupiter and four of its moons a scops owl called incessantly, a frog chorus struck up several times, white storks were bill-clapping and there was the squawk of a night heron. Then a deep, hollow note was added to the night-time medley: the call of a distant eagle owl.

Monday 20 March: Alange Reservoir and Mérida

A flight of cormorants flew over but otherwise the pre-breakfast walk was more about exercise and fresh air than views of early birds.

Today's itinerary was experimental, in the sense that it was new to Honeyguide, though following a careful briefing from Martin last night. We headed south along the main road from Trujillo, turning east to the edge of the deep reservoir at Alange. The weather was a surprise: it became cloudier as we journeyed south and distinctly nippy when we arrived. At our first stopping place we had a short walk through cistus scrub. Elsewhere cistuses had barely been in flower but here, farther south on a south-facing slope, gum and sage-leaved cistuses were looking good, with a lot of spotted rockrose on open patches between the asphodels. Not far along a view east showed us where we should have been, so we about-turned. We paused just off the main road to look at a fine crop of giant orchids, then drove over the dam to a public car park, busy this bank holiday Monday for Fathers' Day. Alpine swifts flew over the dam and on the rocky crags above, blue rock thrush and black wheatear came and went, giving distant but clear views.

By the road to Mérida was a field yellow with corn marigolds and any number of white storks' nests on a mix of low, abandoned buildings, former pylons and stork platforms created above active pylons. We found the park by the Guadiana River with the help of Martin's sketch map and had a picnic there in the sunshine. There I saw a little bittern fly into some *Typha*, but it didn't show again.



[The famous Roman bridge of Mérida.](#)

It was a short walk to the elegant Roman Bridge and a nice stroll along its traffic-free length. Downstream was a cattle egret colony and there were a few cormorants, lesser black-backed gulls and domestic geese, and non-native red-eared terrapins had hauled out onto stones or sloping tree trunks. In general the birdwatching was disappointing until one of the group wondered out loud why one of the moorhens had so much red on its head: because it was a purple swamp-hen, which fed in the open, firstly on a shingle bar then among more *Typha*.

Keith's confident navigation allowed another interesting diversion on the return route through Santa Cruz de la Sierra and north of San Clemente.

Tuesday 21 March: Tozo river and lake, Belén Plain and Finca Santa Marta

The male lesser spotted woodpecker, with red crown, was drumming on a branch of the dead tree, a branch no thicker than an upper arm. We were watching in the lane by an almond tree, and from above us there was an answering drum. Half-hidden in the almond was a female lesser spotted woodpecker, with red absent from the head; she was drumming, too. The duet lasted for several minutes before they flew away and we returned to the Finca for breakfast.



Male lesser spotted woodpecker: there is also a woodpecker hole on the right of the picture.

It was a chilly morning but yet again dry as we parked off the road and walked alongside the Tozo River. Snipe darted away and two kingfishers came past, but so fast that blink and you'd miss them. There were few flowers this late season apart from some lingering hoop petticoat narcissi until we reached some perfect common jonquils on the edge of the river. Just beyond there a rock sparrow flitted in and out of a holm oak but didn't show. We walked up the slope away from the river and soon the lake came into view, nestled in the *dehesa*. Seven spoonbills were feeding actively on the lake's edge and, as expected, they moved farther away as we reached the fence line. With the spoonbills was a great white egret and our first lapwing, and a few black-winged stilts and a greenshank flew around. The lake also had a selection of wintering ducks: teal, gadwall, shoveler and mallard. As we walked back a woodlark sang and settled on a holm oak.

After coffee in Torrecillas de la Tiesa we turned onto Belén Plain and found a gateway to tuck off the road to eat picnics. Belén Plain is not the birding hotspot it once was but it made a good circuit, especially as the new road made the journey across the plain so much better than my previous visit. From one viewpoint we picked out a small group of male great bustards.

Just off the Trujillo to San Clemente road was an unexpected nature spectacle: some 50 griffon vultures by or on a sheep carcass. By happy coincidence it was right by a pull-off where a bend in the road had been straightened, and we looked over a wall at the assembled carrion eaters. Many of the resting birds moved off, perhaps because they saw us, but the squabbling birds still feeding carried on, attended by two black kites, a red kite over the group and some magpies. Off to the left a solitary black vulture was standing; presumably it had eaten first. A large flock of live sheep then moved across the field to the area where the vultures were still feeding and their guard dog left the flock, nudged the remaining vultures into the sky and urinated nearby, perhaps to mark possession.



Vultures by a sheep's carcass: behind, Spanish white broom lights up the hillside.

We were back at the ranch by 3:30 for a relaxed final afternoon, though a little less so for four of us who walked up the hill where we'd been on our first morning. The orchids were even better than a week ago; the angel's tears narcissi had almost gone over; and one field must have had 100 Iberian fritillaries. We looked at green-flowered birthwort tucked behind a wall by the stone pines.

Then it was time for our final tea and checklists, and to note holiday highlights. And later, as ever, our final dinner was at the Finca and another of Ryan's delightful meals.

Wednesday 22 March

It was a chilly day for our eight o'clock breakfast, and we were away at nine o'clock. There were no vultures on what remained of the sheep carcass up the road and it was an uneventful journey, passing the Peninsular War memorial and Maqueda Castle, then a coffee stop two hours after departure in a rather scruffy café just before the big red signs for Madrid. Just after those signs we turned onto the R5 toll road, topped up with diesel and returned to Madrid Airport in good time for both Liverpool and Gatwick flights. For the Gatwick contingent, it poured with rain just after we were safely on board for a smooth journey back to the UK.

Highlights of the week, as nominated by group members

David	Finca Santa Marta; Egyptian mongoose; Spanish imperial eagle; jonquils.
Marion	Lesser spotted woodpeckers; mongoose; angel's tears and jonquils; view from Finca's high ground towards Madroñera; stone pines.
Keith	Strapwort.
Jill	Great bustards; Spanish imperial eagle; lesser spotted woodpeckers; orchids; general ambience of Finca Santa Marta and the group.
Shevaun	Walking great bustards; purple swamp-hen; jumping waxbills; white Spanish broom and French lavender; Finca Santa Marta.
Chris	Seeing a new area (the Mérida day); lesser spotted woodpeckers; Iberian fritillaries; vagrant emperor; mongoose; 'Keith's drive' on the return from Alcollarín.

Plus Ryan's food, by popular acclaim.



Red-eared terrapins in the Guadiana River at Mérida.

House centipede *Scutigera coleoptrata* on my bedroom wall at Finca Santa Marta,

Vagrant emperor dragonflies egg-laying at Alcollarín reservoir a few days before we saw them there (Martin Kelsey).

WILDLIFE LISTS

BIRDS

Little grebe	On various pools on three days.
Great crested grebe	On Sierra Brava, Alcollarín and Tozo reservoirs.
Cormorant	Seen on 4 days along large rivers and reservoirs, and one group flying near the Finca.
Night heron	Heard flying over the Finca while we were looking at Jupiter on 19 th .
Cattle egret	Seen on three days, including a colony at Mérida.
Little egret	Seen on two days, lots at Alcollarín on 18 th .
Great white egret	One at Moheda Alta pool, 16 th March, several at Alcollarín on 18 th & at Tozo on 21 st .
Grey heron	Singles seen on four days.
Black stork	1 on 15 th and 2 by Peña Falcón on 17 th .
White stork	Seen every day.
Spoonbill	7 at Tozo on 21 st .
Egyptian goose	1 at Alcollarín on 18 th .
Gadwall	Alcollarín, pond on Santa Marta de Magasca plains and at Tozo.
Teal	Several at Tozo on 21 st March.
Mallard	Seen almost every day.
Shoveler	Alcollarín & Tozo. Distant ducks at Sierra Brava Reservoir may have been shovelers.
Tufted duck	At Alcollarín Reservoir on 18 th .
Black-shouldered kite	One by the road on 16 th March.
Black kite	Seen every day in good numbers.
Red kite	Seen every day.
Egyptian vulture	2 at Monfragüe, 1 over Tozo Rover, 21 st .
Griffon vulture	Seen almost every day, with c.50 on a carcass near San Clemente on 21 st .
Black vulture	Seen on five days.
Short-toed eagle	Seen on three days, with some outstanding views.
Marsh harrier	Moheda Alta and Alcollarín.
Common buzzard	Seen almost every day.
Spanish imperial eagle	Superb views in Monfragüe NP on 17 th March.
Lesser kestrel	Seen on five days, best seen on a small building by Sierra Brava Reservoir.
Common kestrel	Seen two days, also unidentified kestrels on other days.
Peregrine	2 at Monfragüe on 17 th March.
Red-legged partridge	Seen or heard on four days.
Moorhen	Mérida on 20 th March.
Purple swamphen	Excellent view of one in Mérida, 20 th March.
Coot	At Tozo lake on 21 st .
Little bustard	A group of 4 on Campo Lugar, 16 th .
Great bustard	30 on Campo Lugar, 16 th ; 22 males near Santa Marta de Magasca, 19 th ; 8 males on Belén Plain, 21 st March.
Black-winged stilt	At Alcollarín on 18 th ; 1 on a pool near Trujillo on 19 th and at Tozo Lake on 21 st .
Lapwing	1 at Tozo Lake on 21 st .
Snipe	Flying off from Tozo River on 21 st .
Greenshank	3 at Alcollarín on 18 th and at Tozo Lake on 21 st .
Green sandpiper	Singles seen or heard on 2 days.
Wood sandpiper	1 at Alcollarín on 18 th .
Black-headed gull	Seen on four days on various water bodies.
Lesser black-backed gull	On Sierra Brava and Alange Reservoirs.
Pin-tailed sandgrouse	A wonderful flypast of 31 near Santa Marta de Magasca, 19 th .
Rock dove/feral pigeon	Feral pigeons seen daily; no good rock doves.
Woodpigeon	Seen on 3 days.
Collared dove	Seen every day.
Great spotted cuckoo	In the granite outcrops north of Trujillo on 19 th March.
Cuckoo	Heard and/or seen on the last five days, from 17 th March.
Scops owl	Heard at the Finca on the final three nights.
Eagle owl	Heard at the Finca on 19 th March, when we were looking at Jupiter.
Pallid swift	c.20 in Trujillo on 18 th March.
Alpine swift	Brief view of 2 in Monfragüe NP, 17 th ; better views of c. 10 at Alange Dam.
Kingfisher	Fleeting views on 3 days.
Hoopoe	Seen and heard around the Finca almost every day.
Green woodpecker	Heard only at the Finca, 17 th .
Lesser spotted woodpecker	Heard or seen on 4 days at the Finca, with both sexes seen drumming on 21 st .
Calandra lark	On plains of Campo Lugar on 16 th March and on Belén Plain on 21 st .
Crested lark	Seen almost every day.
Thekla lark	Seen well on the heath at Madroñera on 15 th .
Woodlark	Seen the Finca on 2 days and seen well at Tozo on 21 st .
Skylark	On three days, on the plains days: Campo Lugar, Santa Marta de Magasca and Belén.
Crag martin	Seen on four days.
Swallow	Seen every day.
Red-rumped swallow	Seen almost every day, especially at the Finca.
House martin	Seen on three days.

Meadow pipit	Seen on three days.
Grey wagtail	Seen on the River Tamuja near Santa Marta de Magasca.
White wagtail	Seen on most days.
Wren	Heard and/or seen every day.
Robin	Moheda Alta on 16 th and at the Finca on 17 th .
Black redstart	At the Finca on 15 th and 18 th March.
Stonechat	Seen on most days.
Northern wheatear	Elusive, finally seen by David at Tozo Lake on 21 st .
Black wheatear	On the cliffs by Alange Reservoir, 20 th .
Blue rock thrush	In Monfragüe on 17 th March and on the cliffs by Alange Reservoir, 20 th .
Blackbird	Seen every day.
Song thrush	Seen on three days, all glimpses.
Cetti's warbler	Heard on five days.
Zitting cisticola	Seen and heard on six days.
Dartford warbler	Seen on 15 th March on the heath near Madroñera.
Sardinian warbler	Seen and heard on several days.
Blackcap	Seen every day.
Chiffchaff	Seen or heard on five days.
Long-tailed tit	Seen or heard on three days.
Blue tit	Seen almost every day.
Great tit	Seen every day.
Short-toed treecreeper	Seen and/or heard almost every day and appeared to be nesting under the dead fronds on a palm tree at the Finca.
Iberian grey shrike	Seen on three days.
Woodchat shrike	Moheda Alta and the Mérida day.
Azure-winged magpie	Seen every day around the Finca.
Magpie	Seen every day.
Jackdaw	Seen on two days; most numerous in Mérida.
Raven	Seen every day.
Spotless starling	Seen every day.
House sparrow	Seen every day.
Spanish sparrow	Seen almost every day, including a few at Finca Santa Marta.
Rock sparrow	One at Tozo River, though not seen well, on 21 st March.
Common waxbill	A group of about 8 at Alcollarín on 18 th .
Red avadavat	c.50 near the hide at Moheda Alta, on 16 th March.
Chaffinch	Seen almost every day.
Serin	Seen every day.
Greenfinch	Seen every day.
Goldfinch	Seen every day.
Linnet	Seen on five days.
Hawfinch	Seen at the Finca on two days, but not for long.
Corn bunting	Seen every day.

**Names of mammals, reptiles and amphibians follow those in
Chris Gibson's *Dorling Kindersley's Pocket Nature: Wild Animals***

MAMMALS			
Red fox <i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		Stone marten <i>Martes foina</i> – roadkill	
Egyptian mongoose <i>Herpestes ichneumon</i>		Wild boar <i>Sus scrofa</i> – rootings	
Red deer <i>Cervus elaphus hispanicus</i>		Iberian hare <i>Lepus granatensis</i>	
Rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		Wood mouse <i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	
REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS			
Spanish (stripe-necked) terrapin <i>Mauremys leprosa</i>		Southern smooth snake <i>Coronella girondica</i>	
Red-eared terrapin <i>Trachemys scripta</i> ¹		Moorish gecko <i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>	
False smooth snake <i>Macroprotodon cucullatus</i> – roadkill			
BUTTERFLIES			
Swallowtail	Clouded yellow	Small heath	Green hairstreak
Small white	Cleopatra	Southern speckled wood	Small copper
Green-striped white	Large tortoiseshell	Wall brown	Holly blue
Western dappled white	Red admiral	Provence hairstreak	Brown argus
OTHER INVERTEBRATES			
Vagrant emperor <i>Anax ephippiger</i>		Caterpillars of the tiger moth or winter webworm	
A large pond skater, probably <i>Aquarius najas</i>		<i>Ocnogryna boetica</i>	
Egyptian grasshopper/locust <i>Anacridium aegyptium</i>		Violet carpenter bee <i>Xylocopa violacea</i>	
Hummingbird hawk-moth <i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>		A bee-fly sp. <i>Bombyliidae</i>	
Pine processionary moth <i>Thaumetopoea pityocampa</i> – tents		House centipede <i>Scutigera coleoptrata</i>	

¹ Red-eared terrapin (or red-eared slider) is a popular pet turtle native to north America, and listed by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as one of the 100 most invasive species in the world.

PLANTS

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

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

Where there is no number, usually these are plants in floras from northern Europe

e.g. *Wild Flowers of Britain & Europe* by Fitter, Fitter & Blamey.

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
<i>Pinus nigra</i>	Black pine	4
Fagaceae		
<i>Quercus rotundifolia</i>	Holm oak	26
<i>Quercus suber</i>	Cork oak	27
<i>Quercus faginea</i>	Portuguese oak	30
Ulmaceae		
<i>Ulmus minor</i>	Elm sp.	c. 38
<i>Celtis australis</i>	Southern nettle-tree P	39
Urticaceae		
<i>Urtica membranacea</i>	Membranous nettle	49
<i>Urtica urens</i>	Annual nettle	
Polygonaceae		
<i>Rumex bucephalophorus</i>	Horned dock, often in brick red sheets on dry ground	
<i>Rumex intermedius</i>		76
<i>Rumex scutatus</i>	Rubble dock or French sorrel (illustrated in Blamey/Grey-Wilson's <i>Alpine Flowers</i>)	
Aristolochiaceae		
<i>Aristolochia paucinervis</i>	Green-flowered birthwort (not in Blamey or Polunin)	
Caryophyllaceae		
<i>Corrigiola litoralis</i>	Strapwort	
<i>Paronychia capita</i>	Paronychia	134
<i>Spergularia arvensis</i>	Corn spurrey	
<i>Spergularia purpurea</i>	Purple sand-spurrey	148
<i>Silene latifolia</i>	White campion	158
<i>Silene colorata</i>	Mediterranean catchfly	180
Papaveraceae		
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common poppy	283
Ranunculaceae		
<i>Anemone palmata</i>	Yellow anemone	218
<i>Ranunculus</i> sp.	Water crowfoot sp.	
<i>Ranunculus macrophyllus</i>	Large-leaved buttercup	237
<i>Ranunculus paludosus</i>	Jersey buttercup	249
<i>Ranunculus sceleratus</i>	Celery-leaved buttercup	251
Fumariaceae		
<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	Ramping fumitory	303
<i>Platycapnos spicata</i>	Spiked fumitory	Polunin 282
Cruciferae		
<i>Alyssum alyssoides</i>	Small Alison	
<i>Matthiola lunata</i>	A stock	photo in Polunin
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	Wild radish	369
<i>Sinapsis arvensis</i>	Charlock	
<i>Sisymbrium altissimum</i>	Tall rocket The abundant yellow crucifer in fields and on disturbed ground everywhere.	
<i>Teesdalia nudicaulis</i>	Shepherd's cress	
Resedaceae		
<i>Reseda luteola</i>	Weld or dyer's rocket	377
Crassulaceae		
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Navelwort	396
Rosaceae		
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Common dogrose	c.404 NiF
Saxifragaceae		
<i>Saxifraga granulata</i>	Meadow saxifrage	

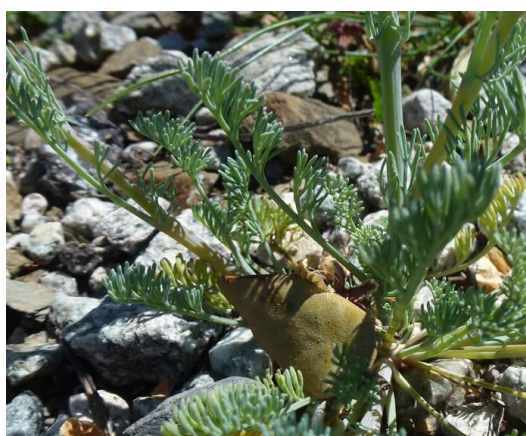
Leguminosae		
<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	'Mimosa' or Silver wattle	432 P
<i>Adenocarpus argyrophyllus</i>	Spanish adenocarpus (endemic to Extremadura, in neither book)	
<i>Anthyllis lotoides</i>		Polunin 623a
<i>Astragalus lusitanicus</i>	Iberian milk-vetch	504
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>	Judas tree	430 P
<i>Cytisus multiflorus</i>	White broom	
<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Broom	456
<i>Genista hirsuta</i>		466
<i>Lygos monosperma</i>	Retama	480 NiF
<i>Onobrychis humilis</i>	A sainfoin	
<i>Lathyrus linifolius</i>	Not in Blamey or Polunin	
<i>Lupinus angustifolius</i>	Narrow-leaved lupin	486 NiF
<i>Medicago intertexta</i>		602
<i>Medicago arabica</i>	Spotted medick	623 NiF
<i>Scorpiurus muricatus</i>	Scorpiurus, a scorpion vetch	684
<i>Vicia villosa</i>	Fodder vetch	510
<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 molle</i>	Dovesfoot cranesbill	741
<i>Geranium purpureum</i>	Little robin	748
<i>Geranium lucidum</i>	Shining cranesbill	749 NiF
<i>Erodium botrys</i>	Mediterranean or long-beaked storksbill	758
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Common storksbill	761
Linaceae		
<i>Linum bienne</i>	Pale flax	777 NiF
Euphorbiaceae		
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	Annual mercury	820
Meliaceae		
<i>Melia azedarach</i>	Indian bead tree or Persian lilac	843 P
Violaceae		
<i>Viola (arvensis) kitaibeliana</i>	Dwarf pansy	931
Thymelaeaceae		
<i>Daphne gnidium</i>	Daphne	936
Cistaceae		
<i>Cistus albidus</i>	Grey-leaved cistus (big pink fls)	961
<i>Cistus salviifolius</i>	Sage-leaved cistus (small white fls)	965
<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	Gum cistus (big white fls)	971 NiF
<i>Tuberaria guttata</i>	Spotted rockrose	985
Cucurbitaceae		
<i>Bryonia cretica</i>	White bryony	1033
Cactaceae		
<i>Opuntia maxima (= ficus-indica)</i>	Prickly pear	1040
Umbelliferae		
<i>Ferula communis</i>	Giant fennel	1141 NiF
<i>Smyrnum olustatum</i>	Alexanders	1087 NiF
Ericaceae		
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry tree	1176
<i>Erica arborea</i>	Tree heath (white fls)	1178
<i>Erica australis</i>	Spanish heath (pink fls)	1181
Primulaceae		
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Scarlet pimpernel	1198
Rubiaceae		
<i>Galium verticillatum</i>	a tiny bedstraw	1299
<i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	Field madder	

Oleaceae		
<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>	Phillyrea or false olive	1246
<i>Olea europaea</i>	Olive	1248
<i>Olea europaea</i> spp. <i>oleaster</i>	Wild olive	1248a
<i>Fraxinus angustifolia</i>	Narrow-leaved ash	
Boraginaceae		
<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	Purple viper's bugloss	1383
<i>Anchusa undulata</i>	Undulate anchusa	1406
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
<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
<i>Datura stramonium</i>	Thornapple	1575
<i>Nicotiana glauca</i>	Shrub or tree tobacco	1582
Scrophulariaceae		
<i>Verbascum sinuatum</i>		1601 NiF
<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>	Ivy-leaved toadflax	1632
<i>Linaria amethystea</i>	Amethyst toadflax	Polunin
<i>Linaria spartea</i>	A yellow-flowered toadflax	Polunin
Plantaginaceae		
<i>Plantago lagopus</i>		1702
Caprifoliaceae		
<i>Lonicera implexa</i>	A perfoliate honeysuckle	1713
<i>Viburnum tinus</i>	Laurestinus	1711
Compositae		
<i>Anthemis arvensis</i>	Corn mayweed	
<i>Bellis annua</i>	Annual daisy	1791
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Perennial daisy	1792
<i>Bellis sylvestris</i>	Southern daisy	1793
<i>Evax pygmaea</i>	Evax	1805
<i>Phagnalon saxatile</i>	Rock phagnalon	1833 NiF
<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>	Corn marigold	1894
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	Field marigold	1908
<i>Galactites tomentosa</i>	Galactites	1971 NiF
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Milk thistle	1982 NiF
Liliaceae		
<i>Asphodelus fistulosus</i>	Hollow-leaved asphodel	2087
<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 1639b
<i>Urginea maritima</i>	Sea squill (leaves & dead flower spikes)	2163
<i>Ornithogalum ?narbonense</i>	Star-of-Bethlehem sp.	2171
<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	Spanish bluebell	2191
<i>Muscari comosum</i>	Tassel hyacinth	2201
<i>Asparagus acutiflorus</i> ?	A shrubby asparagus	2212
Agavaceae		
<i>Agave americana</i>	Agave, century plant	2253
Amaryllidaceae		
<i>Narcissus triandrus</i>	Angel's tears	Polunin 1668d
<i>Narcissus jonquilla</i>	Common jonquil	2279
<i>Narcissus bulbocodium</i>	Hoop-petticoat narcissus	2281

Iridaceae		
<i>Gynandriris sisyrinchium</i>	Barbary nut iris	2305
<i>Romulea</i> sp.	Sand crocus	
<i>Arisarum simorrhinum</i>	Friar's cowl	2378
Orchidaceae		
<i>Orchis (morio) champagneuxii</i>	Champagne orchid	2403
<i>Orchis conica</i>	Conical orchid	
<i>Ophrys tenthredinifera</i>	Sawfly orchid	2442
<i>Barlia robertiana</i>	Giant orchid	2446
Gramineae		
<i>Lamarckia aurea</i>	Golden dog's-tail	2459
<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	Lesser reedmace	
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	Reed	
<i>Arundo donax</i>	Giant reed	2494
<i>Avena</i> sp.	Wild oats	
FERNS (PTERIDOPHYTA)		
<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>	Maidenhair spleenwort	2525
<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>	Polypody	



Iberian fritillary; giant orchid; Barbary nut irises.



Spiked fumitory *Platycapnos spicata* was at the heath above Madroñera on 15 March 2017, a new flower for me. It's mentioned but without a photo in Polunin. Identified with the help of online sources.