

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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

Telephone: 01603 300552 evenings & weekends

www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: honeyguide@tesco.net



Extremadura

8 – 15 March 2008

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Holiday participants

Brenda Motley

Richard and Brenda Hawes

Angus and Rosie Ross

Geoff and Anne Wadsworth

Leader

Martin Kelsey

Extremadura

Report by Martin Kelsey..

Illustrations by Rob Hume, photos by Chris Durdin.

Below: almond orchard at Finca Santa Marta www.fincasantamarta.com

Front cover: Trujillo with white storks.



As with all Honeyguide holidays, £30 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 £30 per person was supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, leading to a total of £265. During the holiday Marcelino Cardalliaguet of SEO came to Finca Santa Marta to collect a cheque from this year's holiday in Extremadura.

This year's donation brings the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £10,426. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays was at £49,098 at the end of March 2008.

Extremadura 8 – 15 March 2008

Itinerary

Saturday 8th 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. Tea followed by a walk through the property to the clump of stone pines above the Finca.

Sunday 9th March: Morning visit to Belén Plains with lunch, afternoon stop at Aldeacentenera. Return to Finca Santa Marta across country to Madroñera with stop on heath on hill above the village. Dinner in La Troya, Trujillo.

Monday 10th March: Exploring plains around Santa Marta de Magasca, coffee at the village of Santa Marta de Magasca, with lunch on Tamuja River south of the village.

Tuesday 11th March: From Trujillo to Torrejón El Rubio, 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.

Wednesday 12th 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.

Thursday 13th March: South to Zorita with a visit to part of the Zorita Plains and then towards Madrigalejo. Stop at Sierra Brava reservoir and coffee stop just outside Madrigalejo and then exploring area of Casas del Hito, including visit to Charca del Hito (a large pool), where lunch taken. Then visit to Vegas Altas. Drive to rice fields near Palazuelo with a walk beside Rio Ruercas

Friday 14th March: Visit to Arrocampo reservoir, between Almaraz and Saucedilla (with coffee stop at latter village). Visit to Valdecañas. Afternoon walk at Finca Santa Marta.

Saturday 15th March: Early morning departure to Madrid to check-in at airport shortly after 10.15 am for flight back to UK.

Daily Diary

8 March: Madrid to Finca Santa Marta

The party met up at Madrid, with Geoff and Anne having arrived by train earlier in the morning, most of the group coming in on the Easyjet flight from Gatwick, landing just a few minutes late. We set off just after 13.00 hrs. It was a lovely sunny day as we made our way around the M40 ring road, exiting on the A5 motorway for Extremadura. The Gredos mountains formed a spectacular backdrop to the north, with snow on their peaks, but very little on their southern slopes compared to other springs. We stopped for lunch snacks about 50 kms out of Madrid. The lively bar was packed and the atmosphere happy. Following lunch, several of the party took the opportunity to purchase maps from the adjacent filling station.

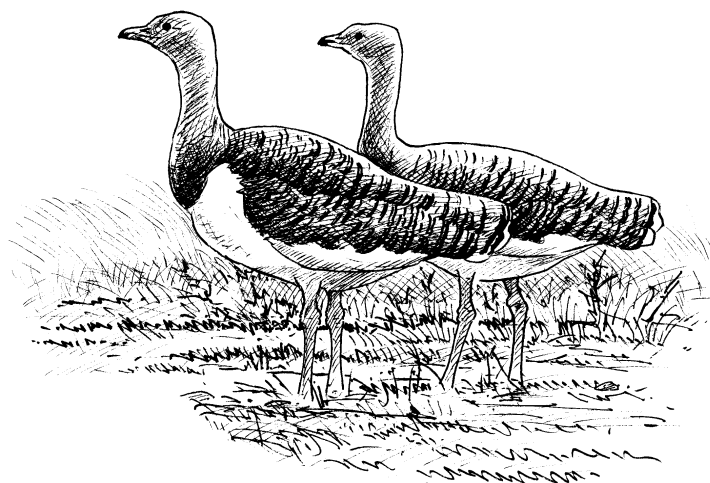
As we continued along the motorway, we started to see White Storks, as well as Black Kite, Red Kite and Black-winged Stilt, while those at the front of the minibus also saw a pair of Great Spotted Cuckoos cross the motorway. As we crossed the border into Extremadura, we also saw distant wheeling groups of Griffon Vultures. We headed off the motorway onto the road that heads south-east from Trujillo and passed through landscape dominated by huge blocks of granite.

We arrived at Finca Santa Marta at 17.30 hrs. Henri, our host welcomed us and introduced us to some of the staff, who helped to get the group settled into their rooms. After tea, we took a late afternoon walk up through the Finca, through the almond orchards and olive groves to the stand of stone pines. Good numbers of Blackcaps were heard and seen, as well as Song

Thrushes, while a few Redwings passed over as dusk approached. We found Sage-leaved Cistus just starting to flower as well as a single Conical Orchid. On our return to the finca, Henri welcomed us with cocktails followed by dinner.

9 March: Belén Plains and Madroñera

A fine clear and calm start to the day, but it quickly clouded over and although there were sunny spells, the day overall was quite chilly with a fresh northerly wind. As we gathered for departure, a Hawfinch was seen flying over by some, while Serin and Barn Swallow were singing around us. We spent most of the day slowly exploring the open plains north-east of the small village of Belén. At our first stop just outside the village, we enjoyed a superb panorama of the habitat and saw Thekla Lark quite close-by. Shortly afterwards we stopped again in a gateway and saw our first Calandra Larks of the day, as well as wintering Meadow Pipit while Corn Buntings sang from roadside fences. Two Little Owls were found perched on pile of stones in the middle of a field. We then located a party of eight Great Bustards feeding a couple of fields away, the sun catching their rich brown upperparts. A huge flock of Spanish Sparrows fed in the fields behind us, where a pair of Crested Larks was also present. Griffon, Black and Egyptian Vultures drifted past in the distance. At subsequent stops we watched more and more Calandra Larks starting to sing, circling at great height with their highly mimetic song, and then descending with their characteristic slow-motion heavy flapping.



We enjoyed a short walk along a sunny track. Although few plants were yet in bloom, we found good numbers of Sand Crocus and several Small Heath butterflies braved the breeze. However, the birds were superb. A group of over half a dozen Lesser Kestrels hovered over the field beside us throughout the whole of our visit, affording us excellent views. A Short-toed Eagle passed overhead. At what appeared to be an avian carcass in the field (possibly Great Bustard) a medley of scavengers was present: Black Vulture dominating, Griffon Vulture, Red Kite, Black Kite and Raven. A tight flock of about 50 Little Bustards gave us a prolonged view, as they appeared sometimes glimmering white, sometimes dark, as the combination of factors (the birds turning, intermittent sunshine, and different backgrounds of blue sky and cloud) all came into play. Shortly afterwards a large flock of over 20 Great Bustards flew past, with another small flock flying in the opposite direction. It gave us a perfect opportunity to compare the difference in flight between the two species.

We stopped for lunch to view a multi-layered White Storks colony on some dead trees. We continued along the road after lunch, stopping at a roadside pool to watch a pair of Little Ringed Plovers, Green Sandpiper, a seemingly injured Redshank and a Greenshank. Another Short-toed Eagle flew over while shortly afterwards we saw a pair of Great Spotted Cuckoo in flight.

After a stop at Bar Martín in Aldeacentenera, where we admired the White Storks' nests on the church tower, we drove through the undulating dehesa to Madroñera. We reached a patch of broom and lavender heath. Hoop Petticoat Narcissus was in flower. However, the windy conditions hampered seeing small birds, although brief flight views of a pair of Dartford Warblers were had and some of us saw Sardinian warbler and Thekla Lark.

Back at Finca Santa Marta, we went through the checklists before heading for Trujillo for dinner at the La Troya. Situated on the fine medieval town square, the restaurant provided an excellent series of local dishes.

10 March: Santa Marta de Magasca

Although the day started quite fine, cloud quickly built up, backed by a fresh breeze, which became quite blustery during the afternoon, with prolonged light rain. Pre-breakfast walks had yielded Redwing and Cetti's Warbler, and some members of the group had a good view of a Hawfinch close to the finca while we waited for the team to assemble after breakfast.

Today we drove west of Trujillo, and took the minor road towards Santa Marta de Magasca. Stopping at the edge of the plains, we quickly found a wintering flock of about 60 Little Bustards, partially concealed by banks of dead thistles. Some males were already close to breeding plumage. In an adjacent field we found a party of Great Bustards, then another and then a third group, this time on the skyline. Males in this latter group started some lekking display, and despite the relative distance, the cool windy conditions meant that there was no heat haze to worry about, so the viewing was excellent. Closer at hand, we saw a pair of Great Spotted Cuckoos being mobbed by Magpies and had good views of Rock Sparrows alongside Spanish Sparrows on trackside fences. Several Southern Grey Shrikes also provided us with excellent views. Whilst standing there, we saw a flock of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse land in a field further to the west. Luckily, the flock was in view from a point along the road and we watched them for a couple of minutes, before they took – the flock revealing itself to be about 70 strong. In a marvellous fashion they wheeled high and low, passing close by before settling again, this time a little farther off, but still close enough to see their plumage well. Another group of Great Bustards were present in that field. We made another stop nearby, but the strong wind made conditions difficult, so after a few minutes of botanising, we repaired to the café in Santa Marta de Magasca for some welcome coffee and warmth.

We then headed south to the Rio Tamuja, set in a deep wooded valley. Here we had lunch in this wonderful spot. Despite the strong winds, we were relatively sheltered and watched a procession of raptors passing overhead: a dark phase Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Black and Griffon Vulture, Black and Red Kite and Sparrowhawk. A Black Stork also came overhead as well as group of nine Ravens and we had good views of Hawfinch perched on cables crossing the valley, as well as Crag Martins. Iberian Water Frogs croaked occasionally and several clumps of Common Jonquil were also seen. We then drove towards the Cáceres road. Taking a small country lane for a few hundred metres, we stopped near a pool, watching a Black-tailed Godwit descend and then swerve off to settle in a ploughed field. It looked decidedly out of place. However the worsening weather made us abort plans to continue further along the road and we turned round, seeing minutes later a single Alpine Swift, battling against the strong southerly wind, barely a metre or two above the ground.

Before returning to Finca Santa Marta we stopped to watch the Lesser Kestrels (*right*) at the bull ring of Trujillo and had excellent views of the birds, including some very smart males. While enjoying this spectacle, we also noted a party of seven Black Kites passing overhead.



11 March: Monfragüe National Park

After yesterday's high winds and overcast weather, today dawned much more promising and true enough we enjoyed a sunny, albeit breezy, day, with scattered cloud. 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 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 could look down on passing Griffon and Black Vultures, while above us spiralled more still, as well as a pair of Egyptian Vulture. We were lucky enough to see a fine adult Bonelli's Eagle pass by and then watched it soaring with the vultures. A Swallowtail butterfly settled to sun itself on a stone, while there were also a Large Tortoiseshell and several Wall Browns. A Firecrest feeding in the cork oaks beside the minibus provided good views for most of us.



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 spectacular views of all three species of vulture, as well as at least four Black Storks. An immature Spanish Imperial Eagle made a showing as did a Short-toed Eagle, hovering over the highest crags, diving and then re-emerging bearing a snake. We also had excellent views of a male Blue Rock Thrush, as well as Black Redstart.

After a stop at Villareal de San Carlos, where House Martins were collecting mud for their nests, we continued through to Tajadilla, a lovely picnic spot just downstream from one of the dams along the course of the river. It overlooked another rock face with nesting Griffon Vultures, with Black Kites and a pair of Egyptian Vultures present as well. A Subalpine Warbler sang from the *Cistus* scrub, while a Hawfinch provided us with superb views as it fed close by on elm mast. A Nettle Tree Butterfly was seen quite well, and a Spanish Festoon more briefly.

At the Portilla, the viewpoint directed our gaze onto the wonderful strata of the cliffs opposite, supporting another colony of Griffon Vulture. A very obliging Subalpine Warbler performed song flights, as well as singing from a bare branch very close to the road. We found one of the pair of resident Eagle Owls, sitting on her nest on the cliff opposite under an *Adenocarpus* bush. Although at first she was fairly motionless, she later turned round and presented us with a fine view of her face. A Spanish Imperial Eagle made the briefest of appearances, but we had good, prolonged views of a juvenile Golden Eagle high overhead. Shortly afterwards a pair of Short-toed Eagles circled slowly over the cliffs.

Angel Tears (*right*) and Hoop Petticoat Narcissus grew side-by-side on the bank beside the road, along with Spanish Bluebells. We returned to Finca Santa Marta for tea and checklist and before dinner, Marcelino Cardalliaguet (Extremadura representative of the Spanish Ornithological Society) gave an illustrated talk on bird conservation in Extremadura and received a cheque from Martin, as a contribution from the group to continue SEO's work.



12 March: Trujillo and Cabañas del Castillo

Although the day started rather foggy, it quickly cleared and by the time we left for our free morning in Trujillo, the clouds were breaking and the sun was shining. The beautiful medieval town square and the narrow cobbled streets leading up to the castle are dominated by the old granite-built palaces and large churches built, 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 Kestrels as well as pairs of Pallid Swifts.



At 12.30, after coffee in the Plaza Mayor, 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 and Black Vultures, we saw a Short-toed Eagle and had a fine view of a Cirl Bunting singing. Brimstone butterflies enjoyed the sunshine.

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 as a pair of Short-toed Eagles soared overhead, then along a path leading to the small village cemetery and a gap between the crags, to afford one a magnificent view of the valley to the east. Quickly we found first a male and then a female Black Wheatear. 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 and Egyptian Vultures. We found a Peregrine perched on a cliff and a few minutes later watched the spectacle of a Peregrine mobbing a Griffon Vulture. Botanically the area was productive with Dwarf Sheep's Bit (below), as well as Narrow-leaved Cistus, and we had excellent views of a Bath White.



13 March: Madrigalejo

With another fine day ahead, we drove south after breakfast. We drove through the quiet town of Zorita, crossing a plateau south of the town before calling in to view a section of the Sierra Brava reservoir. Quickly we found a Black-necked Grebe quite close to the shore, as well as a couple of pairs of Great Crested Grebes and a small flock of Coots. South of the reservoir was a derelict barn, around which flew about five Lesser Kestrels, which at one point joined forces to mob a Red Kite. We also saw a group of six Great Bustards, a couple of fields away. A Little Bustard flew over as we watched them.

A brief stop was made to an area behind the old railway station at Madrigalejo, where two Stone-curlews were seen well on a stony rise in the ground. Following coffee at a nearby bar, we then entered the area known as Casas del Hito. Several Southern Grey Shrikes were seen, as well as flocks of Spanish Sparrows. Approaching a patch of woodland, we spotted a Black-shouldered Kite perched at the top of a tree and then quickly found another on an even closer tree. We had good views of the pair as they moved from one tree to another, gliding past with wings held in a steep V. We then drove up to a pool (Charca el Hito) sited behind embankments. A flock of Red Avadavats thronged in the vegetation beside the track. As we peered over the bank to look at the pool, a small group of Little Ringed Plovers moved on, taking our gaze to the series of shingle spits in the centre of the area. Here groups of Dunlins fed, along with a couple of Little Stints and three or four Kentish Plovers. A drake Red-crested Pochard and some Shovelers were on open water, later joined by Teal and a few Greylag Geese. As we walked along the bank, we found more birds of interest: a Water Pipit along with a small group of Green Sandpipers, as well as some Greenshanks. We had our lunch on the northern side of the pool, watching a group of 35 Common Cranes that took off on our approach and gradually gained height on thermals almost overhead.

We then travelled onto another rice field area, south of Madrigalejo, around the village of Vegas Altas. Although tractors were working on many of the fields, we stopped to scan a quieter zone of arable fields. A juvenile Golden Eagle was found, gliding over the low hill in front of us, and then soaring, to be mobbed by a kite. At the same time a female Hen Harrier and then a Marsh Harrier glided past. Large flocks of Spanish Sparrows lined the roadside wires as we returned to the main road and nearby we found clumps of Barbary Nut Iris in flower.

We then headed to a third irrigated zone, near the village of Palazuelo. We stopped beside the River Ruercas to check out a good area of riverine habitat. We saw a large flock of Common Waxbill and the habitat was full of Cetti's Warblers, but the highlights were a group of at least four Penduline Tits which fed on the seed heads of Great Reed Mace, beautifully back-lit by the afternoon sun and a Jack Snipe which silently rose from close by and just as quietly dropped beyond the tall vegetation where the Penduline Tits were feeding.

14 March: Arrocampo

A Brambling was seen by Brenda on the pre-breakfast walk. After breakfast we headed up to motorway to Almaraz and the reservoir of Arrocampo. The reservoir lies between the town of Almaraz and the village of Saucedilla and provides cooling water for a power station. The water circulating around is slightly warmer than the average, probably accounting for the luxuriant growth of littoral vegetation. We stopped at the Visitors' Centre and from there walked to the first hide. On the way we quickly found a Purple Swamphen, which put on a showy performance for us, clambering on reed mace in the sunshine close by. A male Little Bittern flew past and descended into the reeds. From the first hide, we looked down a channel fringed by beds of reed mace. At least one Savi's Warbler sang and two Purple Heron stood preening, one providing superb views for all of us. A Grey Heron nearby provided a good comparison. Sand Martins and Swallows abounded and we saw a Kingfisher zoom past and settle briefly nearby.

Visiting another hide we managed to find a Savi's Warbler singing atop of a reed stem, giving prolonged, albeit distant views. Finally from another hide, we benefited in having the sun behind us and were able to have excellent views of more Purple Swamphens, two more Purple Herons and a Black-winged Stilt. While we were there a Spoonbill flew in to settle in front of us and proceed to preen, while Richard found an obliging Water Rail which all of us managed to see.

A coffee stop in the village of Saucedilla beckoned and we found a bar close to the old church. The latter has a colony of Lesser Kestrels and we had magnificent views of birds wheeling overhead. We then had a lunch stop beside the pool at Cerro Alto, although the water level was rather high, leaving no exposed mud. However, we had wonderful views of a pair of Great Spotted Cuckoos.

After lunch we took a short walk below the dam at Valdecañas. There we had good views of a Firecrest, as well as Short-toed Treecreeper and several sightings of a Cleopatra butterfly. But most interesting were the orchids: Naked Man, Sawfly and Yellow Ophrys all growing within a short distance of each other.

Back at the Finca we had our final afternoon tea and checklist call-over we took the opportunity to walk up the track to the top of the property and beyond. Good views of Woodlark and Short-toed Treecreeper were obtained and for those of us who continued higher up the path, we found large colonies of Champagne and Conical Orchid (*below, right*), as well as some splendid Iberian Fritillaries (*below, left*).



15 March: Finca Santa Marta to Madrid

As we set off at 06.50 for the airport, with the wind freshening, in contrast to the calm weather of the last few days. Swallows started the dawn chorus. We had an easy run to the airport, arriving in good time for the check-in and farewells.

Systematic list – Birds

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

Little Grebe One on a pool near Madrigalejo on 13th March.

Great Crested Grebe Pairs on Sierra Brava reservoir on 13th March and at Arrocampo on 14th March.

Black-necked Grebe One at Sierra Brava reservoir on 13th March.

Cormorant Seen almost daily along rivers and on water bodies.

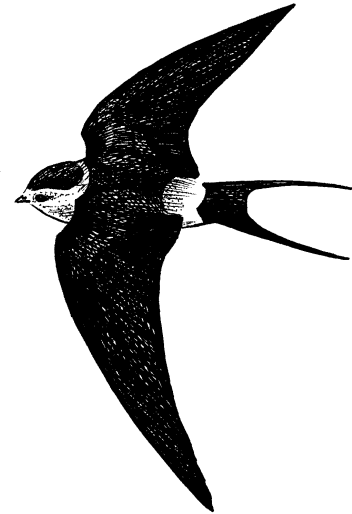
Little Bittern One male seen at Arrocampo on 14th March.

Cattle Egret	Seen daily.
Little Egret	Small numbers seen on the rice fields on 13 th March and at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Great White Egret	Two or three at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Grey Heron	Seen in small numbers almost every day.
Purple Heron	Four seen at Arrocampo on 13 th March.
Black Stork	One seen over Rio Tamuja on 10 th March and at least six in Monfragüe on 11 th March.
White Stork	Common throughout the week, around towns and villages, as well as in the fields.
Spoonbill	Excellent views of one at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Greylag Goose	Six on a pool at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Gadwall	Two at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Teal	Six on a pool at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Mallard	Pairs seen almost daily.
Shoveler	Four on a pool at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Red-crested Pochard	Male on a pool at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Black-shouldered Kite	A pair at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Black Kite	Double figures seen everyday.
Red Kite	Single figures seen everyday, especially over dehesa and the plains.
Egyptian Vulture	Seen, generally in pairs, at Monfragüe and the Villuercas mountains as well as Valdecañas, with one bird also seen near Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March.
Griffon Vulture	Good numbers seen everyday, especially at Monfragüe on 11 th March.
Black Vulture	Seen daily, often totalling double figures, especially on Belén Plains. Monfragüe and near Santa Marta de Magasca.
Short-toed Eagle	Seen almost daily, often in pairs.
Marsh Harrier	Three or four on the rice fields on 13 th March and a similar number at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Hen Harrier	A female at Vegas Altas on 13 th March.
Sparrowhawk	Seen almost daily.
Common Buzzard	Seen almost daily.
Spanish Imperial Eagle	One bird soaring at Peña Falcón in Monfragüe on 11 th March.

Golden Eagle	Juveniles seen at Portilla del Tiétar in Monfragüe on 11 th March and near Vegas Altas on 13 th March.
Bonelli's Eagle	One bird at the castle and then at Peña Falcón in Monfragüe on 11 th March.
Booted Eagle	One bird (dark phase) passing high overhead at Rio Tamuja on 10 th March.
Lesser Kestrel	Seen daily in double figures. Excellent views obtained in Trujillo and Saucedilla of this exquisite little falcon.
Common Kestrel	Seen almost daily in single figures.
Peregrine	A pair at Cabañas del Castillo on 12 th March, including a spectacular mobbing incident with a Griffon Vulture
Red-legged Partridge	Seen most days, especially common around Santa Marta de Magasca.
Quail	One heard on rice fields on 13 th March.
Water Rail	Excellent views of one at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Moorhen	Small numbers on rice fields and Arrocampo.
Purple Swamphen	Excellent views of at least ten birds at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Coot	Present at the reservoirs of Sierra Brava and Arrocampo.
Common Crane	35 at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Little Bustard	Winter flocks of 50 on Belén Plains on 9 th March, and 60 near Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March.
Great Bustard	35 on Belén Plains on 9 th March, a total of over 35-40 birds seen near Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March and 6 near Sierra Brava on 13 th March.
Stone-curlew	Two birds near Madrigalejo on 13 th March.
Black-winged Stilt	Two seen from motorway on 8 th March and one at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Ringed Plover	One with the following species at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Little Ringed Plover	Two beside pool on Belén Plains on 9 th March and four at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Kentish Plover	Three or four at Casas del Hito on 13 th March
Lapwing	Very few of this winter visitor still present: 5 west of Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March were the only records.
Little Stint	Two seen Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Dunlin	About 30 at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Jack Snipe	One at Rio Ruercas on 13 th March.

Snipe	Singles on Belén Plains on 9 th March and west of Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March. Four or five on the rice fields on 13 th March and one at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Black-tailed Godwit	One west of Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March..
Redshank	One on Belén Plains on 9 th March and one at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Greenshank	One on Belén Plains on 9 th March and three at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Green Sandpiper	Two on Belén Plains on 9 th March, one west of Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March, seven at Casas del Hito on 13 th March and two at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Common Sandpiper	One at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Black-headed Gull	Small flocks seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and on the rice fields.
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Small flocks seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and on the rice fields.
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	Over 70 seen in flight and several of the flock seen well on the ground on plains east of Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March.
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	Seen daily
Woodpigeon	Small numbers seen almost daily.
Collared Dove	Seen daily.
Great Spotted Cuckoo	Seen almost everyday, generally in pairs.
Scops Owl	Heard in the evening at the Finca from 11 th March.
Eagle Owl	Female at the nest at Monfragüe on 11 th March.
Little Owl	Two seen at Belén Plains on 9 th March.
Pallid Swift	Excellent views at Trujillo on 12 th March.
Alpine Swift	One west of Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March and seen distantly at Monfragüe and at Cabañas del Castillo.
Kingfisher	One seen on Rio Tamuja on 10 th March, heard at Rio Ruercas on 13 th March and seen at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Hoopoe	Commonly seen everyday.
Great Spotted Woodpecker	One at Finca Santa Marta on 12 th March.
Calandra Lark	Seen on visits to open plains at Belén and near Santa Marta de Magasca.
Crested Lark	Common and seen daily.
Thekla Lark	Present in suitable habitat, especially on hills above Madroñera and near Sierra Brava.

Woodlark	Heard east of Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March and seen well at Finca Santa Marta on 14 th March.
Skylark	Small flocks of this winter visitor seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and Vegas Altas.
Sand Martin	One over Finca Santa Marta on 13 th March and common at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Crag Martin	Common near bridges and in rocky areas in Monfragüe and in the Villuercas mountains, also present in Trujillo.
Swallow	Common every day.
Red-rumped Swallow	Seen daily.
House Martin	Seen almost every day.
Meadow Pipit	Small numbers seen almost daily.
Water Pipit	Individuals coming into breeding plumage at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Grey Wagtail	Seen almost every day.
White Wagtail	Seen every day.
Wren	Recorded daily.
Robin	Small numbers seen daily.
Black Redstart	Present around the Finca and also seen at Monfragüe on 11 th March and Cabañas del Castillo on 12 th March.
Stonechat	Common and seen almost every day.
Northern Wheatear	Two east of Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March.
Black Wheatear	Two birds at Cabañas del Castillo on 12 th March.
Blue Rock Thrush	Seen at Finca Santa Marta, in Monfragüe on 11 th March and Cabañas del Castillo on 12 th March.
Blackbird	Seen daily.
Song Thrush	Seen daily.
Redwing	Heard and sometimes seen almost daily at Finca Santa Marta.
Cetti's Warbler	Heard and seen on the rice fields on 13 th March and at Arrocampo on 14 th March, as well as near Finca Santa Marta.
Zitting Cisticola	Heard and seen almost daily.
Savi's Warbler	Three or four singing at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Sedge Warbler	One burst of song heard at Casas del Hito on 13 th March.
Dartford Warbler	Two singing above Madroñera on 9 th March.



Subalpine Warbler	Two singing in Monfragüe on 11 th March.
Sardinian Warbler	Seen almost daily.
Blackcap	Seen daily and in good numbers around Finca.
Chiffchaff	Seen almost daily and especially numerous in waterside vegetation.
Firecrest	One near Monfragüe castle on 11 th March and one at Valdecañas on 14 th March.
Long-tailed Tit	Small numbers seen most days.
Blue Tit	Seen daily.
Great Tit	Seen daily.
Penduline Tit	Four birds watched feeding on reed mace in Rio Ruercas on 13 th March.
Short-toed Treecreeper	Seen and heard almost daily, especially around the Finca.
Southern Grey Shrike	Seen almost daily.
Jay	Three near Cabañas del Castillo on 12 th March and one at Valdecañas on 14 th March.
Azure-winged Magpie	Common and seen everyday.
Magpie	Common and seen every day.
Red-billed Chough	Heard at Valdecañas on 14 th March.
Jackdaw	Common and seen almost everyday.
Raven	Seen daily.
Spotless Starling	Common every day.
House Sparrow	Common every day.
Spanish Sparrow	Seen commonly most days, often in large flocks.
Tree Sparrow	One at Vegas Altas on 13 th March.
Rock Sparrow	Two or three with Spanish Sparrows east of Santa Marta de Magasca on 10 th March.
Common Waxbill	About 40 near Rio Ruercas on 13 th March.
Red Avadavat	Small flocks on the rice fields on 13 th March.
Chaffinch	Small numbers seen every day.
Brambling	Seen at Finca Santa Marta on 14 th March.
Serin	Seen every day, often in song-flight.
Greenfinch	Seen daily near the Finca.

Goldfinch	Small flocks seen daily: over 40 on Belén Plains.
Siskin	One seen at Finca Santa Marta on 9 th March.
Linnet	Seen almost daily.
Hawfinch	Recorded almost every morning at the Finca, as well as at Monfragüe on 11 th March.
Cirl Bunting	Male singing near Cabañas del Castillo on 12 th March.
Rock Bunting	Seen briefly at Monfragüe on 11 th March.
Reed Bunting	One at Arrocampo on 14 th March.
Corn Bunting	Seen almost daily. One of the commonest birds of the plains.

Wildlife sightings of the week, as nominated by group members

Viv: Looking down on birds of prey from Monfragüe castle.

Richard: Great Bustards in flight.

Rosie: The 'secret valley' behind Cabañas del Castillo.

Brenda: Cirl Bunting, the Eagle Owl and, best of all, the two Little Owls on Belén Plains.

Angus: Penduline Tits feeding on reed mace and the Jack Snipe.

Geoff: The Dehesa landscape.

Anne: walking around the Finca and the Peregrine chasing the Griffon Vulture.

Martin: Four Penduline Tits feed on flowering heads of Great Reed Mace, perfectly back lit by the afternoon sun.

MAMMALS

Greater White-toothed Shrew *Crocidura russula*

Iberian Hare *Lepus granatensis*

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Iberian Mole *Talpa occidentalis*

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

European Pond Terrapin *Emys orbicularis*

Iberian wall lizard *Podarcis hispanica*

Moorish Gecko *Tarentola mauretanica*

Natterjack toad *Bufo calamita*

Iberian water frog *Rana perezi*

BUTTERFLIES

Swallowtail

Spanish Festoon

Large White

Bath White

Brimstone

Clouded Yellow

Cleopatra

Comma

Nettle-tree Butterfly

Large Tortoiseshell

Red Admiral

Small Heath

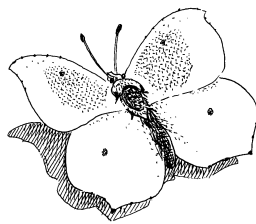
Wall Brown

Small Copper

Holly Blue

Brown Argus

Meadow Brown



OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Egyptian grasshopper/locust *Anacridium aegyptium*

Rhinoceros Beetle *Copris lunaris*

Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum*

Pine Processionary moth *Thaumetopoea pityocampa*

A tiger moth *Ocnognyna boetica*

Violet carpenter bee *Xylocopa violacea*

A large ant possibly *Camponotus vagus*

A bee-fly sp (*Bombyliidae*)

A Hornet

PLANTS (Selected species)

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

Pinaceae	<i>Pinus pinea</i>	Stone/umbrella Pine (3)
Cupressaceae	<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Common Juniper (13)
Fagaceae	<i>Quercus rotundifolia</i> <i>Q. suber</i>	Evergreen Oak (26) Cork Oak (27)
Ulmaceae	<i>Ulmus minor</i> <i>Celtis australis</i> P.	Elm sp (c.38) Southern nettle-tree (39)
Urticaceae	<i>Urtica membranacea</i>	Membranous nettle (49)
Caryophyllaceae	<i>Paronychia argentea</i> <i>Spergularia purpurea</i> <i>Silene colorata</i>	Paronychia (136) Purple Sand-spurrey (148) Campion sp (180)
Ranunculaceae	<i>Ranunculus</i> sp. <i>R. macrophyllus</i>	Water Crowfoot sp. Large-leaved buttercup (237)
Fumariaceae	<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	Ramping Fumitory (303)
Cruciferae	<i>Matthiola</i> sp. <i>Brassica nigra</i> <i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	A stock Black Mustard Wild Radish (369)
Crassulaceae	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	Navelwort
Saxifragaceae	<i>Saxifraga tridactyla</i> <i>Saxifraga granulata</i>	Rue-leaved saxifrage Meadow saxifrage
Leguminosae	<i>Acacia dealbata</i> <i>Adenocarpus argyrophyllus</i> <i>Astragalus lusitanicus</i> <i>Cytisus multiflorus</i> <i>Cytisus scoparius</i> <i>Lupinus angustifolius</i> <i>Lathyrus cicera</i> <i>Medicago arabica</i>	Silver Wattle (432) Spanish adenocarpus Iberian Milk-vetch (504) White Broom Broom (456) Narrow-leaved Lupin (486) A vetchling of cultivated fields (545) Spotted Medick
Oxalidaceae	<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda Buttercup
Geraniaceae	<i>G. molle</i> <i>G. rotundifolium</i> <i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Dovesfoot Cranesbill (741) Round-leaved Cranesbill (743) Common Storks-bill (751)
Meliaceae	<i>Melia azedarach</i> P	Indian bead tree or Persian lilac (843)
Violaceae	<i>Viola (arvensis) kitaibeliana</i>	Dwarf Pansy (931)
Thymelaeaceae	<i>Daphne gnidium</i>	Daphne (936)
Cistaceae	<i>Cistus salviifolius</i> <i>C. monspeliensis</i> <i>C. ladanifer</i>	Sage-leaved Cistus (965) Narrow-leaved Cistus (966) Gum Cistus (971)
Cactaceae	<i>Opuntia maxima (=ficus-indica)</i>	Prickly Pear (1040)

Umbelliferae	<i>Ferula communis</i> <i>Smyrniolum olustratum</i>	Giant Fennel (1141) Alexanders (1087)
Ericaceae	<i>Arbutus unedo</i> <i>Erica arborea</i> <i>Erica lusitanica</i>	Strawberry Tree (1176) Tree Heath (1178) Portuguese Heath (1179)
Oleaceae	<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i> <i>Olea europaea</i> <i>Olea europaea</i> spp <i>oleaster</i>	(1246) Olive (1248) Wild Olive (1248a)
Boraginaceae	<i>Nonea</i> sp. <i>Prob. vesicaria</i> <i>Echium plantagineum</i> <i>Anchusa undulata</i>	A nonea (1375) Purple viper's bugloss (1383) Undulate anchusa (1406)
Labiatae	<i>Lamium amplexicaule</i> <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> <i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	Henbit Deadnettle (1478) Rosemary (1526) French Lavender (1528)
Campanulaceae	<i>Jasione crispa</i>	Dwarf Sheep's Bit (Polunin 1355c)
Compositae	<i>Anthemis</i> sp. <i>arvensis</i> <i>Bellis annua</i> <i>Calendula arvensis</i> <i>Galactites tormentosa</i> <i>Silybum marianum</i>	An abundant mayweed Annual Daisy (1791) Field Marigold (1908) Galactites (1971) Milk Thistle (1982)
Liliceae	<i>Asphodelus aestivus</i> <i>Gagea elliptica</i> <i>Fritillaria lusitanica</i> <i>Urginea maritima</i> <i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i> <i>Asparagus acutiflorus?</i> <i>Ruscus aculeatus</i> <i>Narcissus triandrus papyraceus</i> <i>Narcissus jonquilla</i> <i>N. bulbocodium</i>	Common Asphodel (2089) Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem (2106) Iberian fritillary (2152) Sea Squill (2163) Spanish Bluebell (2191) A shrubby asparagus (c 2212) Butcher's broom (2219) Angel's Tears (Polunin) Common Jonquill (2279) Hoop-petticoat Narcissus (2281)
Iridaceae	<i>Gynandriris sisyrinchium</i> <i>Romulea columnae</i>	Barbary Nut Iris (23059) Sand Crocus (2320)
Orchidaceae	<i>Orchis (morio) champagneuxii</i> <i>Orchis conica</i> <i>Orchis italica</i> <i>Ophrys tenthredinifera</i> <i>Ophrys lutea</i>	Champagne Orchid (2403) Conical Orchid Naked man orchid (2409) Sawfly orchid (2442) Yellow Ophrys (2423)
Gramineae	<i>Arundo donax</i>	Giant Reed (2494)



annual daises with a sand crocus