

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Extremadura
9 – 16 March 2002

**Extremadura
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Holiday participants

The Heathrow contingent

John Morris	Norwich
Alan James	
Sallie Bottomley	Lancing, W Sussex
Colin Hodgson	Melton Mowbray
Marilyn Hodgson	
Peter Higgleton	Colchester
David Wilkins	
Graham Harris	
Chris Ebdon	Rushden
Frank Andrews	Dunstable
Billie Andrews	

The Manchester flights contingent

Dorothy Iveson	Carlisle
Jean Connor	West Lothian
June Ackroyd	Pudsey, W Yorks
Ken Anderton	Bury
Margaret Anderton	

<u>Leaders:</u>	John Muddeman	Madrid
	Russell Leavett	Harwich

Report by John Muddeman.

Illustrations by Rob Hume. Front cover: white storks at Trujillo

As with all Honeyguide holidays, £25 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. During the holiday, Carlota Viada Saulea of SEO's Madrid office came to Finca Santa Marta to collect £400 from this year's holiday in Extremadura.

This year's donations bring the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £7,470 and the total from all Honeyguide holidays to £25,700. A thank-you letter from Carlota appears at the end of this report.

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Saturday 9 March – Madrid to Finca Santa Marta

With a three- hour difference in arrival of flights from Manchester and Heathrow, John took the Manchester contingent for a spot of birdwatching on the edge of Madrid. With thin cloud and no breeze, a T-shirt was all that was necessary in the very mild conditions and clouded yellow and small white butterflies were testament to this. Despite being on the edge of the city and a weekend 'honeypot', from the side of the car park we had views of several common buzzards, two black kites, a distant short-toed eagle, Eurasian sparrowhawk, circling northern goshawk and to cap it all, a pair of Spanish Imperial eagles! However, this was not all, with a single common crane on passage remarkably late, and several swallows a sign that spring was on its way. The undisturbed dehesa within the fence also provides refuge for mammals, and two fine buck fallow deer and a group of assorted wild boar piglets plus one adult were a notable sighting.

The Heathrow group joined the rest after a slight delay, and after fighting with the luggage for some time we eventually got away. While the landscape outside Madrid to the west and south west leaves something to be desired, a roadside stop near Gamonal produced a small flock of European golden plover and a pair of stone-curlews, which even displayed at one point. A large dark bird on the top of a pylon proved to be a short-toed eagle when viewed through the 'scope. At a short stop by the Bar/Hotel David, several stone-curlews were seen along with a dozen golden plovers and a short-toed eagle on a pylon. We sped down the remaining section to arrive at Finca Santa Marta just after 8:30, well after dark, ready for drinks and snacks before dinner.

Sunday 10 March – Belén Plain

A late start was fortuitous given thick mist blowing up over the finca from the Guadiana river basin to the south. However a few brave souls ventured into the finca's grounds and saw a few of the local species, including azure-winged magpies and spotless starlings. Two red-rumped swallows huddled on one of the finca's aerials for a few to see.

We had hardly left the buildings when a southern grey shrike flew across in front, perching for all to admire in a bare fig tree, but even better were two rock sparrows which flew up onto the adjacent wires, before flying down into a fallow field to allow 'scope views. Watching this revealed numerous meadow pipits, a few white wagtails and a black redstart for further interest, all to the tune of a crested lark serenading us from up in the murk above and with a backdrop of white storks on their nests.

Reaching Trujillo, we turned off the old main road and passed through the narrow streets of Belén, stopping on a side track as the mist began to lift to look at a mixture of steppe, scrub and rocky habitat. Immediate interest was found in a calling common quail, while corn buntings jingled all around. A fine display of spring flowers was on show, with sheets of storksbill and on the roadsides, fumitory and the catchfly *Silene colorata*. A couple of black and red kites provided further interest, while a vast number of hairy moth caterpillars were peppered among the scrub and grass. Down the track a flock of bright linnets also held a couple of serins and a smart male Spanish sparrow, and on rocks on a nearby hillside, a couple of red-legged partridges put on a display.

Flowering bushes of white broom, the slender yellow toadflax *Linaria spartea*, hoop petticoat narcissus and a white snapdragon *Antirrhinum meoanthum* provided further botanical interest.

A strange shrieking slowed our return to the vans (which had been prompted by clearing weather ahead) and led to the discovery of a pair of stone-curlews, though a calling great spotted cuckoo refused to show itself clearly.

Crossing the steppe we noted flocks of small birds, especially skylarks and meadow pipits, while stonechats and corn buntings adorned the wires at regular intervals. Our main quarry though lay not too far ahead and as the sun began to break through, and the finding of one great bustard eventually led to the discovery of 22 more!! A group of 15 large males strutting across the steppe and occasionally displaying was a truly terrific sight. Other large birds tried to steal attention, with a few griffon vultures circling around, but our attention was not diverted.

Eventually tearing ourselves away, we were next looking for a 'comfort stop' but three little bustards flying over the road put paid to that! Following these, they dropped down out of sight, but shortly ahead, two more dropped down in view and John discovered a flock of about 15, including several males with their fine black and white necks, near by.

Not surprisingly, lunch was now called for, and we scattered over an area of grass dotted with sand crocus flowers. However, various distractions, including more griffon vultures, a black vulture, black and red kites, a smart adult male lesser kestrel on a fence and another white stork colony made this less than perfectly straightforward! A small reptile under a flattened tin was a tiny viperine snake, while two very smart Spanish psammodromus lizards were nearby. A stone-turning session revealed a sharp-ribbed salamander and also a local 'nasty' in the form of the large and poisonous centipede *Scolopendra cingulatus*. Finally, a short-toed eagle drifted over at height.



black vulture

We carried on, checking pools and streams on the steppe as we went, with more views of raptors, including an adult Egyptian vulture, while more rock-turning produced two fine marbled newts and we watched a couple of Iberian pool frogs in a stream. A few stripe-necked terrapins jumped off rocks into some water as we passed, though others were in a pool where a green sandpiper waded through a mass of white flowers of water-crowfoot. Another stone-curlew on the other side diverted attention, but some gorgeous barbary nut iris, a purple-flowered toadflax *Linaria amethystea* and other flowers including French lavender, the curious *Evax* and the tiny-flowered strapwort *Corrigiola littoralis* deservedly vied for attention.

We turned around and headed back along the same road, stopping briefly for single cattle and little egrets in a pond, diverting off though along a track towards Madroñera. Although surprisingly interest-free for most of its length, single black and red kites, a black vulture, a number of hoopoes, a little egret and a thekla lark (among the 'creklas'!) added variety. A terrific spot by Alan near the end of the track though produced a delightful close great spotted cuckoo, with another close by and while moving on to find the source of little owl sounds, the first bus found another. Two different little owls were then located on roofs, allowing prolonged telescope views of one very spotty individual.

Back through Madroñera we saw a number of lesser kestrels and back at the finca, tea and biscuits were a fine welcome, added spice being three roe deer excellently picked up at long distance on the opposite hillside. There was even a bit of time to wander and explore the grounds of the finca before dinner.

Monday 11 March - Monfragüe Natural Park

The day dawned cool and misty, though with reasonable visibility. After a quick fuel stop in Trujillo, where one or two noted a few pallid swifts, we pushed on north towards Monfragüe Natural Park. At the río Tozo, though a couple of fishermen had disturbed the river, a brief pause saw a few singing woodlarks, serins and 'crekla' larks (either crested or Thekla).

The río Almonte to the north was much more peaceful, with more abundant bird life. A short-toed eagle made a beeline past as we stepped out, several little ringed plovers flew around constantly, calling again and again, several crag martins, a black kite, single Spanish and rock sparrows, a few chiffchaffs fly-catching from riverine scrub and green sandpiper, grey heron and a brief kingfisher provided a fine start. A raptor rising up from a hillside proved to be a young golden eagle, the small white patches in the wings being typical relatively difficult to see in the Ibero-African subspecies, while a tiny-looking bird rising up beside it was in fact a sparrowhawk. Finally, an elusive pair of ciril buntings gave us the 'run-around', though the last delight was a stunning western dappled white butterfly, with silvery-spotted underwings, resting on an annual nettle.

A final stop south of the park in dehesa (the local name for the wood pasture so much a feature of this area) was surprisingly productive. Raptor flocks were mostly comprised of griffon vultures, while a few Eurasian black vultures were mixed among them. A short-toed eagle cruised over at one point, while a warbler display-fighting from bushes in front was a Dartford, a very local breeding species in the area. Suddenly, a large flock of woodpigeons rising out of the trees beyond a flock of azure-winged magpies heralded a different raptor, and a few moments later a female hen harrier cruised through the dehesa, appearing sporadically beneath and between the trees. Small flowers ruled the roost underfoot,

with apart from plenty of French lavender, a couple of flowering yellow star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea elliptica* a real treat.

The bumpy road was soon forgotten as we reached the park, the climb in the minibuses up to the middle car park underneath the castle being memorable... Stepping out under bare southern nettle trees, we immediately noted large numbers of vultures cruising past, with lots of blackcaps and robins in the scrub and crag martins by the rock face. A fine sight was a beautiful flowering group of *Iris planifolia* near the top of the rocks. The stiff climb up was well worth it, the panoramic view from the top being memorable despite hazy conditions, while we had paused at the half-way point for a flappy adult Bonelli's eagle sailing along the ridge top. Several adult Egyptian vultures provided interest, though watching the griffon vultures passing swiftly below us was difficult to match. Walking down we noted a non-blue blue rock thrush, a couple of the local race (*irbii*) of long-tailed tits with their grey backs and dark faces in the 'wild' olives. Lunch down in the car park was punctuated by fly-over black stork and Egyptian vultures and a large wolf spider (Spanish tarantula) and then effectively terminated by two hawfinches in the treetop over the second bus! The botanists had also been at work though, checking the rustyback ferns, asphodels and finding some emerging spikes of greater broomrape.

We picked up people at various stages as they walked back down to the main road, then took the short run to the small car park almost opposite Peñafalcon. Almost immediately we watched a melée of griffons swirling in front of the rock pinnacle, a BLUE male blue rock thrush touted his stuff and no less than three superb rock buntings picked around on the ground adjacent to the tarmac! The black stork came back and perched in the rocks calling, though behind us the rocky crags held a large number of the endemic shrubby pea Spanish adenocarpus *Adenocarpus argyrophyllus*, and a number of spikes of Spanish bluebell.

Coffee was now a must, the mild, still conditions allowing us to take this outside, while various sundries were bought and maps collected from the information office.

A final wander round near Villareal de San Carlos was dampened by light rain, but spirits were high and the large bells of purple viper's-bugloss and a pair of ciril buntings boded well. Plants were predominant, with more *Evax*, strapwort and stork's-bill in flower, plus the peculiar grass *Lamarckia aurea*, though the highlights were the delightful nodding bells of the tiny daffodil angel's-tears *Narcissus triandrus pallidulus*, and fine bushes of the pink-flowered Lusitanian heather and white-flowered tree heather.

Vertebrate life tried to dominate the last few yards, with fine goldfinches, serins, song thrush and meadow pipit, with a young spotty ocellated lizard a superb find, and another of the nasty centipedes admired by all.

Tuesday 12 March – Sierra Brava reservoir and around Madrigalejo

A rather 'bitty' day, but considering overnight squalls and the threat of heavy rain after a 5 a.m. downpour and thick cloud at the finca after dawn, surprisingly successful! Heading south and down from Finca Santa Marta we headed across the Zorita steppes, where great spotted cuckoos sat on roadside fences. Our first stop coincided with rain, though a pair of stone-curlews flew across in front and a calandra lark walked around on the plough. Shortly ahead we detoured towards the Sierra Brava reservoir, where two breeding plumaged black-necked and dozens of great crested grebes graced the water, a couple of flocks of coots grazed the banks and black-headed and lesser black-backed gulls, little egrets and mallard were also present. A group of white storks and cattle egrets in a distant field appeared to be accompanied by a black stork, but this turned out to be a heavily soiled white when viewed in the 'scopes! A pair of little owls also vied for attention on a barn roof.

Moving round to overlook another bay, the wind was zero, making conditions warmer. Interesting additions, apart from more of both grebes and coots, were a common sandpiper, a flock of five common swifts passing overhead and a female common pochard in front of an island where 10 common shelducks roosted. A small group of Spanish sparrows gave good views with a backdrop of a view down over the river valley with its dehesa and mostly dry rice fields.

We continued over the dam and paralleled a water channel, where a green sandpiper and a pair of common toads in amplexus were noted, while two black kites perched in scrub on a hillside.

No sooner did we join a back road than two ponds off to one side with ducks on caused us to stop, with three superb male and four female red-crested pochard on the first, and a good number of shovelers on the second. Three black-tailed godwits were also feeding in the flooded meadow adjacent to the second, where a marsh harrier also caused panic just as we left.

The rather poor road then continued through dry rice fields near Madrigalejo, though a small patch of trees was frequented by numerous Spanish and house sparrows and their hybrids, a rock sparrow 'shreeped' from a dead tree and a common quail 'wetted its lips' nearby. Just before a drinks and comfort stop, different stops by the buses produced another little owl and numerous moorhens and the first collared doves for many.

Heading down to a lunch stop as the skies brightened considerably, the sight of two black-bellied sandgrouses flying near the road caused us to take a side track, only to unwittingly flush a small group of little bustards and a total of at least 49 great bustards in the process!! Once these had settled, we had good looks at both species and also a pair of calandra larks, a stone-curlew, zitting cisticolas (fan-tailed warblers) and a female hen harrier, and all while enjoying lunch! A few arable 'weeds' along the edges included a non-flowering spike of *Gladiolus*.

We pulled away just as a few drops began to fall, but after just a couple of hundred yards a pair of black-bellied sandgrouse flew past then landed in a fallow field allowing prolonged views of these lovely animals. A group of circling birds in the distance were four short-toed eagles and a pair of ravens.

Tearing ourselves away we headed down to an old bridge over the río Gargáligas, which though looking fairly uninviting provided views of five penduline tits, a kingfisher and several red avadavats, though not after considerable work in orientating the 'scopes! A singing Cetti's warbler also showed itself briefly on a couple of occasions. The sun here had drawn out a number of flowers included more barbary nut iris and sand crocus.

Heading back towards Vegas Altas, a few tree sparrows (a notably scarce bird in Extremadura) were noted from the front bus though as we crossed the rice fields, Spanish sparrows were abundant and among the meadow pipits, a fine water pipit was found. However, most of the rice fields were dry this year and only near the end did we find more red avadavats and on a flooded paddy, two green sandpipers and a little ringed plover. A close southern grey shrike rounded off the detour through the paddies.

With the sun out and spirits high, we made a final turn off through some rice fields to a rather unassuming-looking area. However, a large group of 50+ red avadavats including, finally, one or two near-adult, white-spotted red birds heralded our arrival, while a fine display of spectacular sawfly orchids graced a long mound of dumped soil. While savouring these, another group of small reddish birds made themselves evident, being a superb group of common waxbills, commuting a few yards between a bramble bush and a weedy wheat field. A group of sand martins passed overhead and a large flock of cattle egrets fed on slopes nearby, finally among cattle and not sheep! A truly excellent finale.

Driving back, we passed the weather front, entering the finca under thick cloud, but now dry, despite the heavy rain they'd had for much of the day.

Wednesday 13 March – Trujillo and Tozo reservoir

A rainy night and start with thick cloud, but the promise of better things... Trujillo seemed the appropriate answer and we spent the whole morning there, soaking up some of the atmosphere of this medieval town with its numerous churches, restored centre and simple, but impressive castle with wide vistas over the plains around the town. In fact an unpleasant drop in temperature was far more notable than the rain which was sporadic and light.



Back to the finca for a relaxed lunch and then as the skies cleared partially, we headed back out for a wander along the río Tozo to the Tozo reservoir. While the flowers were not so impressive as in previous years, a few hoop petticoat daffodils (pictured left), a number of large sand crocus *Romulea ramiflora* and a superb clump of sweet-smelling common jonquils on a rock in the river brightened the view. While bird life was ever present in the form of fly-by white storks, black kites and an adult Egyptian vulture, some serious rock, branch and tin-sheet lifting turned up trumps with a large adult natterjack toad, a male marbled newt, a family of wood mice and a delightful small viperine snake. Otter spraints full of crayfish remains on the rocks were even checked by sniffing them! A pair of gadwalls rose up noisily off the river, though as we neared the reservoir we were delighted by seven spoonbills, lots of white storks and cormorants feeding where the river fed in. These, plus a crane which had been picking around under the oaks all

suddenly flapped off, allowing us a closer approach to reservoir without disturbing the remaining birds, though not before we'd had superb views of up to three woodlarks just 20 or so yards away.

Despite the distance, judicious use of the telescopes revealed half a dozen greenshank, two spotted redshank, a pair of black-winged stilts, a flock of lapwings, several green sandpipers and even a dunlin (notably scarce here). Plenty of wildfowl were present too, including three pairs of wigeon, common teal, a large flock of common pochard and various little and great crested grebes. The crane had also settled in view allowing fine 'scope views. This was a terrific selection of species, though eventually after different birds were "up the creek" and "round the bend" and a conversation about the price of meat started, we judged that heading back to the finca for drinks and cakes was an appropriate move! This was not before time too, given that half an hour after starting tea it started to rain, this increasing in quantity on an intensifying wind as the evening went on.

Thursday 14 March – Arrocampo and Monfragüe

Rain over breakfast did not bode well yet again! However, we weren't to be thrown and as a heavy storm cloud rolled through, so we headed north with clearing skies to the west. Following the road up to Almaraz, so we turned off as the rain cleared from the south west, leaving us in a stiff cold breeze, but admiring the complex nature of the Arrocampo with its (steaming!) warm and cold water areas. Four red deer ran across the road just in front on the way out making a fine sight.

We next visited the north end of the reservoir where extensive reedmace beds have formed, providing ideal habitat for purple swamp-hens (purple gallinules). Several were seen, along with moorhens and coots, with white storks, cormorants and grey herons common, a few great crested and little grebes on the water, a couple of black kites overhead and a few small birds including common chiffchaffs along the edges.

We started edging back towards the minibuses as black skies loomed ever closer, where Frank suddenly picked out a male bluethroat, though this disappeared as promptly as he found it, the rain beating our efforts to see it in the end. A mixed group of black and griffon vultures and black kites and five common swifts passed over on the edge of the storm front before we ran for the vehicles.

However, scintillating conversation kept us occupied in the buses as a heavy squall passed through and we came out again to broken sunshine for some time. Checking the other side, small birds had come out of the scrub, June seeing a fine male subalpine warbler which promptly dived back into cover again not to be seen again. A number of common chiffchaffs kept us on the go for some time, with at least one willow warbler also found, in a back channel a squacco heron performed for a couple of people and a sedge warbler sang from cover. On the other side a few of us were lucky with a singing Savi's warbler (we suspect they winter here) and a couple of reed buntings, though only a marsh harrier was really on show when we all finally regathered as the wind picked up again.

Off to Monfragüe via a pit stop, we passed through a large area of cork oak dehesa before taking lunch at or from the vans, which were just before the Portilla del Tiétar viewpoint, out of the wind. While some scurried for cover as a rain shower came through, the hardier members enjoyed stunning views of black storks and griffon and black vultures riding the wind funnelling along the river. A Spanish imperial eagle circled up and then passed over, giving closer views than those before and a few kites and a rock bunting provided further interest. Roadside hoop-petticoat narcissi, angel's tears, tree and Lusitanian heather and flower-laden bushes of wild rosemary were dotted among the scrub, while various spikes of Spanish bluebell were visible on the rocks on the far side of the reservoir, where numerous large bushes of Spanish *Adenocarpus* were also in flower. A species-rich area of classic Mediterranean scrub in a wonderful setting.

Another very heavy squall had us sheltering for some time, though the mass arrival of vultures just before it hit was noted as a clear warning of its arrival! The drenching the birds received was followed by the extraordinary sight of up to half a dozen along the edge of the ridge later spreading their wings and necks out in the wind and broken sunshine looking like extraordinary living gargoyles. The black storks went up again, also to dry themselves off, though just as we were preparing to leave, first one, then a second Spanish imperial eagle came up and circled around, accompanied by a pair of Egyptian vultures and a couple of fly-by short-toed eagles!!



As the weather was clearing we headed for a pine plantation, where the sun broke through and glorious blue skies were overhead. Walking down the road, though we started with dozens of angel's tears, we ended peering skywards as up to four magnificent short-toed eagles, three black vultures, several black kites and griffon vultures and a red kite sailed past low overhead, providing phenomenal views.

Another grey-backed long-tailed tit was also noted, a couple of siskins were seen by Colin and I finally managed to get John onto a couple of fly-by red-rumped swallows as they cavorted high overhead among house and crag martins and numerous swallows.

Time was sadly against us, though the journey back was broken by quick stops for Lusitanian milk-vetch and later a roadside pond with a superb hovering kingfisher, a water pipit and a grey wagtail.

Arrival back at the finca at 17:30 meant we had an hour for a break, drinks and a run through the bird list before Carlota Viada from SEO/BirdLife came down from Madrid to give us a talk on bird life and conservation in Extremadura. Of particular importance were two pieces of good news. The first was that just the day before the plans for the irrigation of part of the Villafáfila region in Castilla y Leon (home to 10% of the world population of great bustards in NW central Spain) had been rejected after 2_ years of battling. The second is that SEO/BirdLife had appointed a regional officer for Extremadura just one week earlier! Very good news on both counts, with the Honeyguide donation going towards the local officer's future expenses.

The day was rounded off with a very Spanish meal in Trujillo, with plenty to fill us up after a cold day in the field.

Friday 15 March – Cáceres steppes

Thick cloud at breakfast again was accompanied by a really unpleasantly cold start, but we headed out through Trujillo and past the old fishponds, noting a pair of black-winged stilts as we went and a few fly-over pallid swifts in the town.

Setting out across the Cáceres steppes, we headed towards Sta. Marta de Magasca, and a seemingly uninteresting set of fields yielded 125 little and 14 great bustards, 2 great spotted cuckoos, lots of calandra larks and corn buntings and a number of red kites.

A few fields ahead an adult male Montagu's harrier displayed over an arable field, while off to one side a flock of common pochards dived in a pond near to a grey heron. The trackside here was peppered with the reddish flowers of a local sainfoin *Onobrychis humilis*.

However, the cold and damp was getting the better of us so we spent quite a while cruising the backroads through the dehesa, where plenty of red-legged partridges and azure-winged magpies and a few rabbits and Iberian hares were notable.

By-passing the village we dropped down into the valley of the río Magasca where it was surprisingly quiet despite calling hawfinches and a couple of crag martins, though at least warmer out of the wind.

Climbing out onto grazed steppe, regular stops and scans produced a stone-curlew, more partridges and various small birds, though driving rain certainly did not help! A little ahead though, a flock of birds rising off a field were pin-tailed sandgrouse, and with persistence we managed to see some well in flight and poorly on the ground, with a second flock rising up before we could find them settled.

The wind and cold had finally eaten through us, so off to Monroy where, at my regular stop, the barman kindly allowed us to eat food inside. Our exit coincided with clearing and slightly warmer conditions, so made our way back to the río Almonte in lovely conditions – still, warm and with no heat haze.

The first bird however was extraordinary – a canary-yellow bird with a long tail and dark primaries! Fortunately it landed on rocks in the river where its yellow back, white mantle and head did not sufficiently hide its identity as an aberrant grey wagtail.

Apart from masses of meadow saxifrages along the rocky banks, birds dominated here. Large numbers of crag martins, a fly-over black stork, a few red-rumped swallows, a male blue rock thrush, a couple of hawfinches and a greenfinch kept us occupied. Just as we were about to start leaving, a fine male subalpine warbler appeared and gave good, if somewhat distant views, with a short-toed eagle passing just over the heads of most of the group remaining largely unobserved! However, two short-toed eagles, a griffon, a black and two Egyptian vultures and two black kites up at once as we prepared to leave were a fine display.

The return was punctuated by various stops on the steppes, including some extraordinary vistas over grazed steppe. Apart from a few little bustards and southern grey shrikes, the main bird of note was calandra lark with excellent views, especially of one singing while perched on a fence post.

The day was cut shorter by a tremendous storm with thunder and lightning, unfortunately foiling Dorothy's attempts at photographing the flower-carpeted rocky steppe north of Trujillo.

Drinks and cakes back at the finca were warmly welcomed, the 'final' bird log indicating a remarkable 141 species over the trip. However, not to be undone by the weather, we raced up to hill in the gathering gloom, a superb display of both champagne and Spanish milky orchids and a couple of still-to-open buds of *Fritillaria lusitanica* being fine reward, not to mention a wealth of other species including alexanders, sage-leaved, pink-flowered and narrow-leaved cistuses and fly honeysuckle.

Saturday 16 March – Finca Santa Marta to Madrid

The drive back was fortunately relatively uneventful, the only thing of note being a great spotted cuckoo glimpsed by one or two near Talavera de la Reina. I (John) want to apologise for my dashing off at high speed after saying goodbyes, with the excuse of a short turn-around at home before back to the airport to get to the UK to then go to Cyprus the following day. I was successful and write these last few words from a hotel just outside Heathrow! I hope you all had a wonderful time in Extremadura and a pleasant flight home.

We hope to see you all again soon.

John Muddeman



bunting

cirl

Extremadura bird list 2002

This is the combined list for the group.

Great crested grebe	Stone-curlew	Black redstart
Little grebe	Black-winged stilt	Whinchat
Black-necked grebe	Little ringed plover	Stonechat
Cormorant	Golden plover	Northern wheatear
Cattle egret	Lapwing	Blue rock thrush
Little egret	Snipe	Blackbird
Grey heron	Dunlin	Song thrush
Black stork	Black-tailed godwit	Mistle thrush
White stork	Spotted redshank	Cetti's warbler
Spoonbill	Greenshank	Fan-tailed warbler
Wigeon	Green sandpiper	Sedge warbler
Gadwall	Common sandpiper	Subalpine warbler
Teal	Black-headed gull	Sardinian warbler
Mallard	Lesser black-backed gull	Blackcap
Showeler	Black-bellied sandgrouse	Willow warbler
Red-crested pochard	Pin-tailed sandgrouse	Chiffchaff
Pochard	Rock dove/feral pigeon	Long-tailed tit
Tufted duck	Woodpigeon	Blue tit
Shelduck	Collared dove	Great tit
Black kite	Great spotted cuckoo	Penduline tit
Red kite	Scops owl	Short-toed treecreeper
Egyptian vulture	Little owl	Southern grey shrike
Griffon vulture	Swift	Jay
Black vulture	Kingfisher	Azure-winged magpie
Short-toed eagle	Hoopoe	Magpie
Marsh harrier	Green woodpecker	Jackdaw
Hen harrier	Great spotted woodpecker	Raven
Montagu's harrier	Calandra lark	Spotless starling
Sparrowhawk	Crested lark	House sparrow
Common buzzard	Thekla lark	Spanish sparrow
Spanish imperial eagle	Woodlark	Rock sparrow
Golden eagle	Skylark	Common waxbill
Bonelli's eagle	Sand martin	Avadavat
Lesser kestrel	Crag martin	Chaffinch
Common kestrel	Swallow	Serin
Peregrine	Red-rumped swallow	Goldfinch
Red-legged partridge	House martin	Linnet
Quail	Meadow pipit	Hawfinch
Water rail	Water pipit	Cirl bunting
Moorhen	Meadow pipit	Rock bunting
Purple gallinule	Grey wagtail	Corn bunting
Coot	White wagtail	Reed bunting
Common crane	Wren	Total: 128 species
Little bustard	Robin	
Great bustard	Bluethroat	

Mammals

Fallow deer
 Red deer
 Roe deer
 Wild boar
 Iberian hare
 Rabbit
 Wood mouse

Butterflies

Clouded yellow
 Small white
 Western dappled white
 Orange-tip
 Small copper
 Small heath
 Red admiral

Other invertebrates

Nasty centipede *Scolopendra cingulatus*
 Spanish tarantula
 Oil beetle *Meloe* sp.
 Praying mantis
 Firebug

Reptiles & amphibians

Stripe-necked terrapin
 Viperine snake
 Spanish psammodromus
 Moorish gecko
 Ocellated lizard
 Natterjack toad
 Iberian pool frog
 Common toad
 Sharp-ribbed salamander
 Marbled newt

Fungi earthstars**Selected flowers & other plants**

Holm oak
 Cork oak
 Friar's cowl
Silene colorata
 Papery paronychia
 Water crowfoot sp. x 2,

Fumitory
 Mossy stonecrop
 Meadow saxifrage
Onobrychis humilis a sainfoin
Adenocarpus argyrophyllus
 Spanish white broom
 Spanish broom
 Lusitanian milk-vetch
Vicia lutea
 Sage-leaved cistus
 Narrow-leaved cistus
 A pink-flowered cistus
 Alexanders
 Strawberry tree
 Tree heather
 Lusitanian heather
 Purple viper's-bugloss
 French lavender
 Borage
Antirrhinum meoanthum A white snapdragon
Linaria spartea
Linaria amethystea
 Broomrape *Orobancha rapum-genistae*
 Fly honeysuckle
 Marigold
 Evax sp.
Bellis sylvestris Southern daisy
Asphodelus sp.,
 Yellow star-of-Bethlehem *Gagea elliptica*
Fritillaria lusitanica
 Butcher's-broom
 Rosy garlic
 Hoop petticoat narcissus
 Angel's-tears *Narcissus triandrus*
Iris planifolia
 Barbary nut iris
 Spanish bluebell
 Sand crocus
 Sawfly orchid
 Champagne orchid
 Spanish milky orchid
 Giant reed *Arundo donax*
 A grass *Lamarckia aurea*



Madrid, 24 June 2002

Dear Honeyguide group:

It was a pleasure to meet you at Finca Santa Marta in Trujillo last March to have a talk about the extraordinary biodiversity of Extremadura.

Extremadura is a priority in terms of conservation of birds in Spain and in Europe and your collaboration supports and encourages us to continue our actions in this region.

As a consequence of the Conservation Programme of Extremadura in 2001, SEO/BirdLife has increased the number and intensity of the interventions there. We want to estress the need for making compatible the economic development with the adequate protection and management of such a diverse region.

Thank you very much for your interest and collaboration. SEO/BirdLife will continue working for nature conservation in Spain.

Carlota Viada
Conservation Dpt.
SEO/BirdLife