

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Extremadura
13 - 20 March 2004

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13 – 20 March 2004**

Holiday participants

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Kitty Blair | Edinburgh |
| Betty Fenton Rai Fenton | Chingford, London |
| Mike Freer | Norwich |
| Daphne Gilbert | Ilford, Essex |
| Gill Gregory | Hayle, Cornwall |
| Yvonne Griffiths | Chingford, London |
| Rachel Hammerton | London |
| Mary Parilla | Richmond, Surrey |
| Hazel Pawley Roger Pawley | London |
| Mary Price Mike Price | Bungay, Suffolk |

With commiserations to Margaret Joiner, who had to drop out due to ill health.

Leaders

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Chris Durdin | Norwich |
| Russell Leavett | Harwich, Essex |

*Report and plant list compiled by Chris Durdin: birds and other checklists by Russell Leavett.
Illustrations by Rob Hume. Front cover: Trujillo with white storks.*

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, Marcelino Cardalliaguet of SEO came to Finca Santa Marta to collect £350 from this year's holiday in Extremadura.

This year's donations, including from another Honeyguide group in the Spanish Pyrenees, bring the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £9,070 and the total conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays to £33,330. A thank-you letter from SEO appears at the end of this report.

Extremadura

13 – 20 March 2004

Itinerary

Saturday 13 March: Gatwick to Madrid by Easyjet. To Trujillo via A5 Autovia, arriving at Finca Santa Marta mid-evening after a short break near Talavera de la Reina.

Sunday 14 March: morning in the grounds of the Finca, lunch taken at the Finca. Afternoon the Belén Plains circuit via Aldeacentenera and Madroñera. Dinner in Trujillo.

Monday 15 March: North to Monfragüe via Torrejón el Rubio, stopping at the castle, where lunch taken, continuing to Pénafalcon, then to the park information centre at Villareal de San Carlos, finally a stop at Mirador de Tajadilla before returning to Trujillo via a brief stop at the Rio Almonte.

Tuesday 16 March: South to Zorita and the Embalse de Sierra Brava, where lunch was taken, continuing through rice fields to Vegas Altas and the Rio Gargáligas.

Wednesday 17 March: Marshes at Embalse de Arrocampo near Almaraz, continuing to Monfragüe via Saucedilla and Estación de la Bazagona. Stops at Portilla del Tietar, Mirador de la Higuera, La Báscula (where lunch taken) and Pénafalcon. Return via Torrejón el Rubio and a stop at the Rio Almonte.

Thursday 18 March: Morning spent in Trujillo. Lunch taken by the Rio Tozo, followed by a visit to the Embalse del Tozo, return to the Finca via the Belén Plains.

Friday 19 March: Circular plains visit via Santa Marta de Magasca, lunch by the Rio Magasca, continuing north to Monroy and returning through plains to the north-east of Cáceres.

Saturday 20 March: Brief walk close to the Finca, returning to Madrid for late afternoon easyJet flight to Gatwick.

Book on display at Finca Santa Marta:

Artists for Nature in Extremadura, edited by Nicholas Hammond, is published by The Wildlife Art Gallery, Lavenham, Suffolk ISBN 0-9526236-0-9

Daily diary

Saturday 13 March: Gatwick to Finca Santa Marta

After the horrific bombings in Madrid on 11 March, which killed more than 200 people, the front pages of the morning newspapers had pictures of the more than two million people marching for peace in Madrid on the Friday, carrying (it seemed) one million umbrellas. This didn't deter the group of Honeyguiders and all was smooth at both Gatwick and Madrid. We collected and loaded our two Europcar minibuses, then successfully navigated through the complex motorway network onto the M40 road to Extremadura.

A stop was made for a drink and loo some two-thirds of the way there near Talavera de la Reina, where crested larks were singing and walking around on the gravel outside the café. Birdwise the journey was unremarkable: two unidentified parakeets near Madrid; hundreds of starlings no doubt spotless but not so close that you could be sure; a few swallows; and white storks as soon we crossed into Extremadura. There were some showers but a red sunset, promising birdwatchers' delight of fine weather to come.

It was dark as we arrived at Finca Santa Marta. We were met by Henri and his staff: Inez the cook; the grey-haired, diminutive and always cheerful Isabela; three lads from South America led by Romanian but multi-lingual Marius. John Muddeman, Honeyguide's usual leader in Extremadura was also there, having been taking part in the international white stork survey and presenting us with a new leaflet he'd written about birds around the Finca, collected today from the printer. After unloading and finding rooms, Henri guided us to where there were drinks, nibbles and some words of welcome. It was dark but there was a swallow flitting around and settling on a nest under construction; John pointed out the sounds of Iberian pool frogs and the trills of natterjack toads. Supper was what became our usual routine of starter, homemade soup, main course and pudding, followed by coffee and liqueurs, the latter including the local speciality *bellota*, made from acorns.

Sunday 14 March: Finca Santa Marta and the Belén Plain

A cold night and early morning, but a bright and sunny morning set a pattern for the week, with the weather steadily warming during our stay. Breakfast was 8.30, allowing time for fresh bread to arrive: a few energetic members of the group took a wander in the grounds in the chilly pre-breakfast air.

After a day of travelling we had the morning on foot at the Finca. It's a gentle and attractive stroll through almond orchards, past a row of cork oaks and up to a collection of umbrella pines (= stone pines) at the top of the hill. Looking backwards, towards the Finca, there was the ever-present pair of white storks, regularly doing their bill-clapping display, with more pairs on the trees beyond. Sheets of crucifers made the orchards colourful: other striking plants included the purple-flowered undulate anchusa and the charming amethyst toadflax.

Over the wall beyond the umbrella pines there was a woodlark singing and a pretty, tame firecrest. A large tortoiseshell butterfly settled on a wall to offer good views and a green hairstreak demonstrated how, with wings closed, it can look a leaf. Several of the tiny angels tears narcissi were found and an orchid in bud suggested a return visit.

A picnic in the warm car park was followed by a drive, with only slight navigational glitches, onto the Belén Plain north-east of Trujillo, with several stops and pottering for wildlife as we found it along the way. Livestock were followed by cattle egrets and we soon found our first black vulture. Patches of white Spanish boom on the rocky bits were matched by sheets of white water crowfoot on the hundreds of seasonally damp areas following winter rains. One of the most striking birds in March here is the great spotted cuckoo: a magpie, its host species for its eggs & young, chased one of these. A Cleopatra with bright orange patches buzzed past, and all this was before we'd dropped onto the plain proper. On the plain were groups of feeding lesser kestrels and we stopped by a group of ten or more. Their feeding, as well as being communal, seems more like hover, drop a bit, up a bit and down a bit, compared with the more persistent style of common kestrels. A little owl on some rocks and great spotted cuckoo on the ground were more highlights. We found a patch of calandra larks overhead, with a fan-tailed warbler that showed well too. Round our feet were sand crocuses and bunch of small dung beetles in, well, dung. Then there was stop for a concentration of white stork nests on trees, with a few little and cattle egrets sitting by the small waterbody close by.

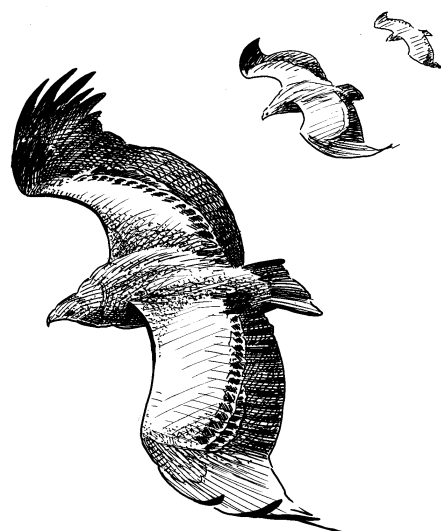
At the end of the plain we turned right and did a circuit via Aldeacentenera and Madroñera. Voting was evident in the latter in the Spanish general election; we were to learn later that there was a change of government to the centre-left party, with the pundits debating the impact of the bombs on voting patterns. The drive took us through holm oak *dehesa* (wood pasture), where we saw the black pigs, cattle, sheep and goats that use the trees for shelter and shade.

Sunday is the day off for the Finca's staff so the evening meal was at La Troya restaurant in the stunning main square in Trujillo. John had kindly booked it and his name was on the staff's lips. John had also organised the menu, an excellent selection of starters and main courses, all served in our own special dining room.

Monday 14 March: Monfragüe

A visit to Monfragüe Natural Park is always a highlight of a visit to Extremadura and this was our first of two. We drove straight there, avoiding the temptation to stop for a black stork and a white stork feeding alongside in a roadside pool. They flew off as we slowed down, anyway. First stop in Monfragüe was at the old castle. There was immediately a peregrine flying past and griffon vultures in the air and close on the cliffs above. A walk up the road and crag martins and red-rumped swallows could be seen well on the ground, collecting mud for nest building. A big dung beetle caused us to stop as it followed a large dung ball off the wall and onto the road.

Most of the group climbed the steps to the top of the castle where griffons cruised past at eye level. Looking over the safety barriers there was a patch of meadow saxifrage and close examination of a tiny white plant revealed a close relative, the sticky rue-leaved saxifrage. After a brief



geranium tutorial (dovesfoot, round-leaved and shining cranesbills), a turned tile revealed a tiny scorpion. A study of a large-leaved buttercup revealed it to be large-leaved buttercup *Ranunculus macrophyllus*; sometimes botany *can* be logical! At lunch back below, a blackcap was singing and a red admiral appeared.

We moved round to the Salto el Gitano and the imposing Peña falcon opposite where there were some 30 griffon vultures, cormorants on the reservoir below and a black stork on a nest. Holly blue and scarce swallowtail butterflies came past, then a local speciality, nettle-tree butterfly. The big birds are a certainty here, but we also scored well with excellent view of two small ones. A rock bunting fed on the ground in the car park as close as you can imagine, and a male subalpine warbler showed well in the scrub on the other side of the road. The yellow pea-shrub here is the endemic *Adenocarpus argyrophyllus*.

Being on holiday, it was easy to accept the temptation of stopping for a cup of tea and an ice cream – yes, it was warm enough – at Villareal de San Carlos, which doubles as a outlet for a modest range of souvenirs about the natural park. Eyes upwards revealed both short-toed and booted eagles. Final stop was at the viewpoint or *Mirador* de Tajadilla where the grass by the car park had sheets of annual daisies. We watched raptors come over, then the stars of the show here appeared: a group of azure-winged magpies in the elms and on the ground, with colours gleaming in the bright late afternoon sunshine.

The return drive was broken with a brief stop at the river Almonte where there was a black redstart, little ringed plovers, common and green sandpipers and a bright yellow serin.

We were back at six for what had become our routine of tea, biscuits and checklists in one of the Finca's many meeting rooms, with supper at eight. After dinner many looked through telescopes at Venus's crescent shape and Jupiter with three moons (or four with careful study) in a row. A scops owl called in the distance and the Iberian pool frogs croaked as usual.

Tuesday 16 March – Zorita, Embalse de Sierra Brava, rice fields to Vegas Altas

It was a good day for southern grey shrikes on wires as we headed south towards the rice fields area round Zorita, but they had nothing on the flying great bustard that led, naturally enough, to the first stop. The bustard prompted searching that yielded 17 distant little bustards and, following a walk across a pasture to the edge of a cereal field, three great bustards then flew through. Fan-tailed warblers were going zip...zip...zip on the edge of the cereals – they often seemed to be in quite dry habitats; a ring-tailed harrier came through, identified as hen harrier; and it was our best spot of the holiday for black kites with eight migrants.

The Embalse de Sierra Brava is a relatively new reservoir but already attracting many birds. Closest to us were black-necked grebes; eventually we found at least 10 in the choppy water this breezy day. Wintering birds included several hundred shovelers and four wigeons.

Farther south, we entered the paddyfield area that, at its best, can attract a great variety of wetland birds, though we were a little early in the year for the biggest range and numbers. A greenshank flock dropped in and, as we moved towards them, two green sandpipers flew away. A flock of tiny birds then appeared, dropping in and out of the thick vegetation by the path's side. It was clear they were one of two now well-established aliens in this area. It took some patience and perseverance to rule out waxbills and rule in red avadavats: these are energetic, flighty little birds and good views took some time, and only a few were the bright, brick-red males. Flowers of note here were yellow vetch and *Paronychia argentea*.

Aesthetically the paddyfield area left something to be desired so we returned to the Embalse for our picnic lunch. Scores of barbary nut irises brightened the area, and there was a black kite and singing crested lark for company. The diminutive flowers of evax were there in the short turf, along with spotted rock-rose and purple sand-spurrey. A colourful bug was identified as *Corizus hyoscyami*.

A tour round the rice fields in the Vegas Altas area found a sprinkling of little egrets; waders were few but corn buntings and stonechats were plentiful. A highlight was a southern grey shrike in full telescope view.

We took a longer return route via Logrosán to make a circuit through dehesa and fields, stopping at a large irrigation reservoir where there were pochards, shelducks and pintails. On the lap home, the first minibus stopped for 100 Spanish sparrows on a bramble patch, and the second minibus for a close-up woodchat shrike.

Back at Finca Santa Marta, Rai and I counted 38 azure-winged magpies on their regular circuit through the finca's grounds.

Wednesday 17 March – Arrocampo and Monfragüe

After a stop for fuel we took a short run up the motorway to junction 200 for the nuclear power station, through Almaraz and onto Arrocampo reservoir. This has become quite a must as a birdwatching spot, especially since purple gallinules (also known as purple swamp-hens) have become regular as a breeding bird here. There they were, happily easy to see, balancing on reed tops with surprising success for such a chunky bird. Marsh harrier and kingfishers were soon seen too, and a great white egret crossed the road from one side of the reservoir to the other. A long concrete embankment through the larger part of the reservoir provided a most unusual, and low, nest-site for several white storks. A very loud Cetti's warbler was seen as well as heard; there were more purple gallinules, a sprinkling of sand martins and a water rail was heard.

The roué took us through Saucedilla and then into cork oak wood pasture; until now, apart from a few trees at the finca, the *dehesa* had been all holm oak. This led into Monfragüe from the opposite direction to our previous visit, arriving at Tiétar cliffs. Short-toed eagles and vultures offered outstanding views, but there was no sign of the local imperial eagles, a bird that eluded us all week. Scrub here was an interesting and colourful mix of gum cistus, strawberry tree, rosemary, laurestinus, tree heaths and phillyrea.

Lunch was at another viewpoint with gum cistus scrub all around: it was noticeably coming into flower during our week. A very low short-toed eagle gave outstanding views and there were the now usual Egyptian and griffon vultures. We then again gave in to the temptation of tea and ice cream at Villareal de San Carlos, where many collected literature about the natural park.

Naturally, we stopped again at Peña falcon. It never disappoints: the griffon count reached 30 and variety was added by two black storks, a pair of Egyptian vultures, blue rock thrush and short-toed eagle. Then to the Rio Almonte, where three-red-rumped swallows were collecting mud for their nests.

We were back in good time tonight to allow for a checklist then to meet Marcelino and his colleague from SEO, the BirdLife partner in Spain. Marcelino is SEO officer for Extremadura and he has his work cut. I had expected to translate but to his credit he had prepared a presentation in English, which was projected into the white wall of the dining room – with much needed woodburner alight this cool evening. It was a great pleasure to hear the range of conservation work underway, though with big challenges, not least for the future SEO's bird of the year for 2004, the great bustard. Honeyguide's cheque for £350 was handed over too, of course.

Thursday 18 March – Trujillo, Tozo and Belén Plain

We parked by Trujillo's bullring and immediately there were lesser kestrels: Trujillo probably really is the easiest place in the world to see this relatively scarce and declining falcon (*right*). Another good bird picked up here was pallid swift: typically more associated with the Mediterranean coast, they are known to occur here but perhaps are easier to pick up in March before the common swifts arrive. There has been a nice little seasonal wetland tucked in behind the bullring on recent visits, but much of this was covered by a football pitch, that horribly familiar story of the fate of small wetlands in southern Europe. Nonetheless, there were little ringed plovers over the pitch.

After the birdwatching we were still left with two hours in Trujillo, and most of the group made their way to the *plaza mayor* – main square – for coffee, admiring the architecture or sightseeing. We did our own thing: several made it to the castle with its impressive views over the plains.



We then drove across the Belén plain to the small river Tozo, to be the starting point of the afternoon walk. But first this was an ideal picnic spot, as ever eventful: red kite, buzzard, corn bunting, stonechat, frogs, blue tits, storks, hoopoe ... It's a gentle walk along this peaceful river, with a green sandpiper moving ahead of us, hoop petticoat narcissi (*left*) and some terrapins hauled out of the shallow water. Two or three fields later on one is within sight of the Tozo reservoir, though fences (beside which was a milky orchid) mean the birds have to be watched through binoculars and telescopes. This leads to a pretty disturbance free spot, hence the scattering of black-winged stilts and wintering gadwalls. We'd heard the sound of geese and there were many domestic or feral geese there too. Rai was enjoying trying the butterfly net and caught one of the many whites that had so far eluded us, identified as a dappled white.



Driving back across the Belén plain the hunt was on for bustards with various stops for scanning. Our first sawfly orchids were found by the roadside and there were yet more outstanding views of great spotted cuckoos. Eventually one distant great bustard was found on the ground; then the more we looked, the more could be seen, with an eventual count of 24 when they flew. Impressive, if rather distant. It then started to rain, so we were home at the Finca by 5.30.

Friday 19 March – plains north of Cáceres and Monroy

Turning off the Trujillo-Cáceres, the majority of us – some had elected to spend the day at Finca Santa Marta – stopped in the low scrub before the open plains started. It was a single little bustard that had caused us to stop and search here, and as so often happens, one led to more, with flocks of 16 then 19 little bustards over us and the narrow country road. A dark phase booted eagle drifted past and then two very vocal great spotted cuckoos provided more entertainment. The final flock was 63 little bustards – quite a sight.

Some rough ploughed land a little farther on had three male black-eared wheatears. Here, and indeed many places on the steppes, there was a small pool with a pair of mallards, and here a pair of gadwalls too. Mallards were sprinkled all over the steppes: it's surprising for somewhere with such a dry reputation, but there are many seasonal pools and ponds, the latter with little embankments holding water for livestock.

A stop for coffee followed in the village square of Santa Marta de Magasca, with bowls of olives provided too. The route out of the village is less than obvious but we made it to a lunch spot overlooking the river Magasca, in which both a snake and toad were seen swimming.

Monroy was the next step, with the most extraordinary of landmarks, a colony of white storks in umbrella pines, to mark our parking spot. As we walked down the track we found woodchat shrike and great spotted cuckoo, but neither of these were the real target bird. A distant dot on a pylon seemed worth following up and it was indeed what we were looked for: a black-shouldered kite. After getting much closer to this one, eagle-eyed Roger noted another distant grey speck, this time on trees: a second black-shouldered kite. We returned via the Cáceres steppes, much of it on a quiet and bumpy road: there were no new birds, but many calandra larks, a little owl and a female hen harrier.

Back at Finca Santa Marta, those who'd stayed behind found a group of champagne orchids by the path in the Finca's orchard and Kitty had found a splendid Spanish fritillary newly out in flower near where we'd been on our first day.

Saturday 20 March – Finca Santa Marta to Madrid and home

After breakfast, we all went to see yesterday's discovery of the champagne orchids, four in total. These are sometimes listed as a subspecies of the similar green-winged orchid, but the lip is folded along the centre. Our flight allowed a civilised 10.30 departure after farewells to Henri, Marius and the team. Lunch was at a splendidly un-touristy café in Quismondo, off the motorway, either picnicking on an enormous tractor tyre out the back or eating tortillas inside. We were at the airport just after three for the return easyJet flight to Gatwick.

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Wildlife sightings of the week, as nominated by group members

Rock bunting – Mike Freer
Griffon vultures in stacks – Rai Fenton
Dappled white & nettle-tree butterflies – Betty Fenton
Black-eared wheatear – Mary Parilla
Subalpine warbler, great spotted cuckoo, rock bunting – Rachel Hammerton
Griffon vultures – Kitty Blair and Hazel Pawley
Hoopoe – Mary Price
Storks, griffons & azure-winged magpies – Roger Pawley
Subalpine warbler and black-eared wheatear – Gill Gregory
White storks, black-eared wheatear and barbary nut irises – Daphne Gilbert
Great spotted cuckoos, lupins & scenery – Yvonne Gilbert
Little bustards in sunlight, black storks and shrikes – Mike Price
Azure-winged magpies – Chris Durdin
Birds of prey – Russell Leavett

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Systematic List – Birds

A summary of sightings contributed by the whole group at the daily ‘call over’.

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| Little grebe | Regularly recorded on small roadside pools within the plains, maximum of three on any one day. |
| Great crested grebe | Frequent on larger water bodies – up to twenty on the Embalse de Sierra Brava and ten at the Embalse de Arrocampo. |
| Black-necked grebe | At least ten at the Embalse de Sierra Brava. |
| Cormorant | Recorded from most of the larger water bodies in small numbers with a maximum of around twenty at the Embalse de Arrocampo. |
| Cattle Egret | The commonest egret with ‘hundreds’ recorded on many days. Found in all habitats including the more arid plains. |
| Little egret | Much less common than cattle egret with a maximum of fifty recorded during our visit to the rice growing areas around Vegas Altas, more scarce elsewhere. |
| Great white egret | A single at the Embalse de Arrocampo was the only sighting. |
| Grey heron | Recorded on all days in small numbers with a maximum of ten At the Embalse de Arrocampo. |
| Black stork | A highlight of our visits to the Parque Natural de Monfragüe with up to five birds on both days, including an occupied nest at Pénafalcon. |
| White stork | For many <i>the</i> bird of Extremadura. Few will forget the sights and sounds of the many hundreds of birds that we saw during our stay. |
| Shelduck | A single bird on a farm reservoir near Vegas Altas was the only sighting. |
| Wigeon | Four at Embalse de Sierra Brava were the only sightings of a wintering species here. |
| Gadwall | Recorded from a number of water bodies including those within the plains, maximum number recorded estimated at fifty. |
| Teal | Two flushed from a roadside pool on the Belén Plain and four from the shore of the Embalse del Tozo were the only sightings. |

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| Mallard | The common duck of the plains' pools, reservoirs and within the ricefields. Recorded in 'tens' on most days. |
| Pintail | Seven on a farm reservoir in the Vegas Altas area. |
| Shoveler | Many hundreds on the Embalse de Sierra Brava – testimony to the importance of the site for wintering waterbirds. |
| Pochard | Forty on a farm reservoir near Vegas Altas. |
| Black-shouldered kite | Two seen well at a traditional site in the Monroy area. |
| Black kite | Almost daily sightings with as estimate of in excess of fifty birds on the best day. |
| Red kite | Daily with an estimate of twenty-five birds on the best day. |
| Egyptian vulture | Frequent at Monfragüe with up to ten birds on both visits. Occasional sightings on the plains. |
| Griffon vulture | Widespread and common with an estimated 250 birds on the best day! Fine sightings at Monfragüe, including many on nests and good examples of their distinctive 'stacking' display flights. |
| Black vulture | Occasional among griffons, with a maximum of eight on the best days. |
| Short-toed eagle | Seen on three days with a maximum of ten on our visit to Monfragüe via the Embalse de Arrocampo. |
| Marsh harrier | One or two birds on several days. |
| Hen harrier | So called 'ringtails' (adult females or juvenile males) on two days with a maximum of three birds being involved. |
| Sparrowhawk | A single bird high over the Portilla del Tiétar was surprisingly the only sighting. |
| Common buzzard | Daily with an estimated maximum of ten birds. |
| Booted eagle | Up to four on our first visit to Monfragüe and one on another day. |
| Lesser kestrel | The delightful small raptor of the towns and plains, including really close views of breeding birds at the bullring in Trujillo. We estimated up to sixty birds on the best day. |
| Common kestrel | Daily but in much smaller numbers than lesser kestrel, with our best estimate being just eight! |
| Peregrine | Occasional singletons at Monfragüe. |
| Red-legged partridge | A few on several days, with a maximum of fifteen in the plains to the north-east of Cáceres. |
| Water rail | Single birds on two days – one in flight at Arrocampo. |
| Moorhen | Up to half a dozen on several days – found on both small and larger water bodies as well as in the ricefields. |
| Purple gallinule | Excellent views of ten birds in the marshes of the Embalse de Arrocampo at Almaraz. |

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| Coot | Numbers running into ‘hundreds’ at the Embalse de Sierra Brava, elsewhere scarce, rarely more than five. |
| Little bustard | Seventeen in agricultural land south of Zorita and superb views of at least sixty-three in flight on the edge of the plains to the south of Santa Marta de Magasca. |
| Great bustard | Three in agricultural land with little bustards to the south of Zorita, and an estimated further thirty-five seen in the Belén plains. |
| Black-winged stilt | Four at the Embalse del Tozo and a single bird by a pool in the Magasca plains. |
| Little ringed plover | Single pairs seen on three days, including display near the old fish ponds at Trujillo. |
| Lapwing | Single birds on two days. |
| Snipe | Four birds flushed from the edge of the Embalse de Arrocampo. |
| Greenshank | An estimated fifteen birds flushed from rice fields in the Vegas Altas area. |
| Green sandpiper | Occasional singles flushed from riverbanks. |
| Common sandpiper | A single bird on the bank of the Rio Almonte south of Torrejón el Rubio. |
| Black-headed gull | ‘Hundreds’ at a few sites, such the Embalse de Sierra Brava and the Embalse de Arrocampo, scarce elsewhere. |
| Lesser black-backed gull | A few at the Embalse de Sierra Brava and an estimated seventy-five over a flooded area in the plains. |
| Rock dove/feral pigeon | Widespread and common. |
| Stock dove | Two birds flew over the road as we returned to Madrid from Trujillo. |
| Woodpigeon | Daily in small numbers, maximum of only ten. |
| Collared dove | Daily in very small numbers, largely around the Finca, maximum five. |
| Great spotted cuckoo | One of the real delights of Extremadura – up to eight birds of this attractive species were seen on a number of days. |
| Common cuckoo | Single birds were heard calling on two days. |
| Scops owl | Birds could be heard calling close to the Finca on all nights. |
| Little owl | Single birds were seen on two days – both perching on piles of rocks in the plains. |
| Pallid swift | Up to an estimated fifty birds were seen overhead at Trujillo on our ‘town day’. Interestingly no common swifts could be found, these still to arrive. |
| Alpine swift | Two were seen high above Peñafalcon at Monfragüe. |
| Kingfisher | One or two birds on three days, by rivers and at Arrocampo. |
| Hoopoe | A characteristic bird of the grounds of the Finca in particular but also seen and heard in lots of other places, maximum fifteen in any one day. |
| Green woodpecker | A single bird heard calling in the grounds of the Finca on our last day. |

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| Calandra lark | A characteristic species of the plains – birds heard singing and seen displaying on many occasions. On our best day we saw at least thirty. |
| Crested lark | A widespread and common species, probably running into hundreds on some days. |
| Woodlark | Single birds singing on three days. |
| Sand martin | Only seen at the Embalse de Arrocampo where ‘tens’ of birds mixed in with other hirundines. |
| Crag martin | A common bird of the hill country with ‘tens’ on several days. |
| Swallow | Widespread and common in all habitats. |
| Red-rumped swallow | Frequent in small numbers by rivers, a few around the Finca, within Monfragüe and elsewhere; maximum fifteen in any one day. |
| House martin | Common, especially around habitation and over large water bodies. |
| Meadow pipit | Frequent in the wetter areas especially, up to one hundred birds on the best day. |
| Water pipit | A single bird on one day, by the Rio Almonte. |
| White wagtail | Frequent in small (max. 10) numbers by rivers and around water bodies. |
| Wren | Very small numbers, largely around the Finca and in hill country. |
| Robin | Ditto. |
| Black redstart | Only recorded on one day, when up to four birds at Monfragüe. |
| Stonechat | Common by roadsides, where often perched on wires or stone walls etc, ‘tens’ on some days. |
| Northern wheatear | A single bird on one day – in the plains. |
| Black-eared wheatear | Three stunning birds in stony agricultural land close to Santa Marta de Magasca. Often a difficult bird to find in Extremadura. |
| Blue rock thrush | Excellent sightings of several birds at Monfragüe. |
| Blackbird | Widespread and common around the Finca, in hill country and in the dehesa. |
| Song thrush | Small numbers around the Finca in particular, rare elsewhere. |
| Mistle thrush | A single bird at the Finca. |
| Cetti’s warbler | Small numbers heard but rarely seen in a variety of wet situations. |
| Fan-tailed warbler | Not uncommon in the ricefields around Vegas Altas and in some agricultural land elsewhere. |
| Subalpine warbler | Splendid views of a male at Monfragüe. |
| Sardinian warbler | The common warbler of scrub, dehesa and the hillsides. |
| Common whitethroat | Two in scrub by the Rio Almonte. |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Blackcap | Common around the Finca, especially at the beginning of the week, occasional elsewhere. |
| Chiffchaff | Widespread and frequent in small numbers, maximum in any one day ten. |
| Firecrest | Two at the Finca on our first day. |
| Long-tailed tit | Up to two, on three days. |
| Blue tit | Daily in small numbers. |
| Great tit | Daily, more frequent than blue tit. |
| Short-toed treecreeper | Up to five daily, especially at the Finca where often found in cork oaks. |
| Southern grey shrike | One of the real treats of the plains in particular, up to twenty seen on the Santa Marta de Magasca circuit. |
| Woodchat shrike | One - three on several days, real 'winners' with the group! |
| Jay | A single on one day only. |
| Azure-winged magpie | Often abundant in the dehesa and very common around the Finca – another characteristic bird of Extremadura. |
| Magpie | Widespread and abundant in all habitats. |
| Jackdaw | Widespread and abundant. |
| Carion crow | Seemingly very scarce with just two birds and only on one day. |
| Raven | Frequent in the hills and plains, maximum eight in any one day. |
| Spotless starling | Widespread and often abundant. |
| House sparrow | Ditto |
| Spanish sparrow | Easily overlooked among the house sparrows but often common in agricultural land such as ricefields. Often nesting in white storks nests, such as at the Finca. |
| Red avadavat | Upwards of a hundred recorded in ricefields north of Vegas Altas. |
| Chaffinch | Widespread but seldom common, maximum in any one day only ten. |
| Serin | Common (maximum 25) in a variety of situations. |
| Greenfinch | 1 – 5 daily, surprisingly unobtrusive. |
| Goldfinch | A widespread and very common roadside bird, 'tens' on all days. |
| Linnet | Occasional – maximum of forty in any one day. |
| Cirl bunting | A single male on one day only. |
| Rock bunting | Excellent sightings of this handsome bird at Monfragüe. |
| Corn bunting | Widespread and abundant, especially on the plains, where 'hundreds' were recorded on some days. |

Mammals

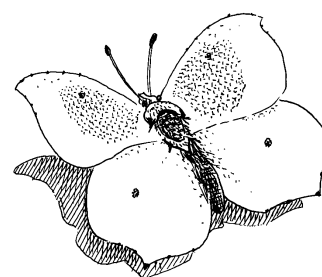
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|----------|------------------------------|
| Red fox | <i>Lutra lutra</i> |
| Hedgehog | <i>Erinaceus sp.</i> |
| Hare | <i>Lepus sp.</i> |
| Rabbit | <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i> |

Reptiles and amphibians

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Stripe-necked terrapin | <i>Mauremys caspica</i> |
| Pond terrapin? | |
| Viperine snake | <i>Natrix maura</i> |
| Large Psammodromus | <i>Psammodromus algirus</i> |
| Ocellated lizard | <i>Lacerta lepida</i> |
| Iberian wall lizard | <i>Podarcis hispanica</i> |
| Moorish gecko | <i>Tarentola mauretanica</i> |
| Common toad | <i>Bufo bufo</i> |
| Natterjack toad (heard) | <i>Bufo calamita</i> |
| Iberian pool frog | <i>Rana perezi</i> |

Butterflies

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Scarce swallowtail | Western dappled white |
| Brimstone | Clouded yellow |
| Cleopatra | Nettle-tree butterfly |
| Large tortoiseshell | Red admiral |
| Small tortoiseshell | Painted lady |
| Wall brown | Green hairstreak |
| Small copper | Holly blue |
| Small heath | |



Other invertebrates

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Hummingbird hawk moth | |
| European scorpion | <i>Buthus occitanus</i> |
| A red squash bug | <i>Corizus hyoscyami</i> |
| Rhinoceros beetle | <i>Copris lunaris</i> |
| Dung beetle | <i>Scarabaeus sp.?</i> |

Plant list

Numbers on the right refer to Blamey & Grey-Wilson, *Mediterranean Wild Flowers*. Polunin refers to Polunin & Smythies, *Flowers of south-west Europe*. Some are planted, marked P.

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Pinaceae | <i>Pinus pinea</i> | Stone / Umbrella Pine (3) |
| Fagaceae | <i>Quercus rotundifolia</i> <i>Quercus suber</i> | Evergreen Oak (26) Cork Oak (27) |
| Ulmaceae | <i>Ulmus minor</i> | Elm sp. (c. 38) |
| Urticaceae | <i>Urtica membranacea</i> <i>U. urens</i> | Membranous nettle (49) Annual nettle (-) |
| Aristolochiaceae | <i>Aristolochia paucinervis</i> | Birthwort sp. (c. 64) |
| Caryophyllaceae | <i>Paronychia argentea</i> <i>Spergularia arvensis</i> <i>Spergularia purpurea</i> <i>Silene colorata</i> | Paronychia (136) Corn spurrey (-) Purple sand-spurrey (148) Campion sp. (180) |

Ranunculaceae

Ranunculus sp. Water Crowfoot sp.
Ranunculus macrophyllus Large-leaved buttercup (237)

Fumariaceae *Fumaria capreolata* Ramping Fumitory (303)

Cruciferae: *Matthiola lunata* A stock (photo in Polunin)
Raphanus raphanistrum Wild radish (369)

Resedaceae *Reseda luteola* Weld (-)

Crassulaceae *Umbilicus rupestris* Navelwort (396)

Saxifragaceae *Saxifraga tridactyla* Rue-leaved Saxifrage
Saxifraga granulata Meadow Saxifrage

Leguminosae *Acacia dealbata* P Mimosa or Silver Wattle (432)
Adenocarpus argyrophyllus Spanish Adenocarpus (endemic to Extremadura
- in neither book)
Astragalus lusitanicus Iberian Milk-vetch (504)
Cercis siliquastrum P Judas Tree (430)
Cytisus multiflorus White Broom
Cytisus scoparius Broom (456)
Hedysarum glomeratum A sainfoin
Lathyrus cicera A vetchling of cultivated fields
Lupinus angustifolius Narrow-leaved lupin (486)
Medicago arabica Spotted Medick (623)
Ornithopus compressus Compressed birdsfoot (639)
Vicia lutea Yellow Vetch (525)
Vicia villosa Fodder vetch

Oxalidaceae *Oxalis pes-caprae* Bermuda Buttercup, leaves (735)

Geraniaceae *Geranium lucidum* Shining cranesbill
Geranium molle Dove's-foot Crane's-bill (741)
Geranium rotundifolium Round-leaved cranesbill
Erodium cicutarium Common storks-bill (761)

Euphorbiaceae

Mercurialis annua Annual Mercury (820)

Violaceae *Viola (arvensis) kitaibeliana* Dwarf Pansy (931)

Thymelaeaceae

Daphne gnidium Daphne (936)

Cistaceae *Cistus salviifolius* Sage-leaved Cistus (small white)(965)
Cistus ladanifer Gum Cistus (big white fls) (971)
Tuberaria guttata Spotted Rockrose (985)

Cactaceae *Opuntia maxima* (= *ficus-indica*) Prickly Pear (1040)

Umbelliferae *Ferula communis* Giant fennel (1141)
Smyrniolum olusatrum Alexanders (1087)
Scandix pecten-veneris Shepherd's Needle (1097)

Ericaceae *Arbutus unedo* Strawberry Tree (1176)
Erica arborea Tree Heath (pink fls in EX) (1178)
Erica lusitanica Portuguese Heath (white fls) (1179)

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Primulaceae | <i>Anagallis arvensis</i> | Scarlet Pimpernel (1198) |
| Oleaceae | <i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i> <i>Olea europaea</i> | (1245) Olive (1248) |
| Boraginaceae | <i>Echium plantagineum</i> <i>Anchusa undulata</i> | Purple viper's bugloss (1383) Undulate anchusa (1406) |
| Labiatae | <i>Marrubium vulgare</i> <i>Lamium amplexicaule</i> <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> <i>Lavandula stoechas</i> <i>Salvia verbenaca</i> | White horehound (1445) Henbit deadnettle (1478) Rosemary (1526) French Lavender (1528) Wild Clary (1545) |
| Solanaceae | <i>Hyosciamus albus</i> | White Henbane (1555) |
| Scrophularicaea | <i>Linaria amethystea</i> | 'Amethyst' Toadflax (Polunin) |
| Caprifoliaceae | <i>Lonicera caprifolium</i> <i>Lonicera xylosteum</i> <i>Viburnum tinus</i> | Perfoliate honeysuckle (Polunin etc) Fly honeysuckle (Polunin etc) Laurestinus (1711) |
| Valerianaceae | <i>Centranthus calcitrapa</i> | A narrow-leaved valerian (1725) |
| Compositae | <i>Anthemis cotula</i> <i>Bellis annua</i> <i>Bellis sylvestris</i> <i>Calendula arvensis</i> <i>Chrysanthemim segetum</i> <i>Evax pygmaea</i> <i>Galactites tomentosa</i> <i>Silybum marianum</i> | Stinking mayweed (1867) Annual Daisy (1791) Southern Daisy (1793) Field Marigold (1908) Corn marigold (1894) Evax (1805) Galactites (1971) Milk Thistle (1982) |
| Liliaceae | <i>Asphodelus aestivus</i> <i>Gagea sp</i> <i>Fritillaria lusitanica</i> <i>Ornithogalum ?narbonense</i> <i>Urginea maritima</i> <i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i> <i>Narcissus triandrus papyraceus</i> <i>Narcissus bulbocodium</i> | Common Asphodel (2089) Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem sp. (c 2106) Iberian Fritillary (2152) Star-of-Bethlehem sp. (2171) Sea squill (leaves & dead flower spikes) (2163) Spanish Bluebell (2191) Angel's Tears (Polunin) Hoop-petticoat Narcissus (2281) |
| Iridaceae | <i>Gynandriris sisyrinchium</i> <i>Romulea sp</i> | Barbary Nut Iris (2305) Sand Crocus |
| Orchidaceae | <i>Orchis (morio) champagneuxii</i> <i>Orchis lactea</i> <i>Ophrys tenthredinifera</i> | Champagne Orchid (2403) Milky Orchid (2408) Sawfly Orchid (2442) |
| Gramineae | <i>Lamarckia aurea</i> | Golden Dog's-tail (2459) |
| FERNS (PTERIDOPHYTA) | | |
| | <i>Ceterach officinarum</i> | Rusty-back Fern (2532) |



Cáceres, 1 July 2004

Dear Honeyguide groups:

It was a pleasure to meet you all at Finca Santa Marta in Trujillo to talk about the importance of Extremadura to protected birds.

In this meeting I want to traslate you that Extremadura is a priority in terms of conservation of birds in Spain and in Europe. But, unfortunately for those we love nature, the environmental impacts are multiplied in Extremadura in form of more new roads, highways, irrigation schemes, ilegal constructions and plans to build dams. We want to estress the need for making compatible the economic development with the adequate protection and management of such a diverse region. To achieve this aim, SEO/BirdLife has increased both monitoring and intervention activities in this region.

Your collaboration supports and encourages us to continue our actions in Extremadura, particularly to carry out our Conservation Programme.

On behalf of SEO/BirdLife, I want to acknowledge your collaboration and wish to meet you next year.

Marcelino Cardalliaguet
Extremadura Conservation Officer