

HOLIDAY REPORT FOR JANET, CYRIL, CAROL AND DAVE

Casa Rural El Recuerdo & Birding Extremadura

14th – 21st May 2018

Itinerary

14th May 2018: Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

15th May 2018: Sierra Brava Reservoir, rice fields near Madrigalejo, Puerto Peña and Moheda Alta.

16th May 2018: Plains of Campo Lugar, Don Benito and Alcollarín Reservoir

17th May 2018: Monfragüe National Park

18th May 2018: Alange Reservoir, Almendralejo, and Roman Bridge Mérida

19th May 2018: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, heath and cork oak groves of Jaraicejo, Miravete Pass and Trujillo

20th May 2018: Arrocampo Reservoir, Gredos Mountains. Navarredondo de los Gredos.

21st May 2018: Gredos Mountains and return to Madrid.



TOUR REPORT

14th May 2018: Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

Martin met the group at Terminal Four at Madrid Airport late afternoon. We had a good run from the airport, around the southern side of Madrid and on to the A5 motorway for Extremadura. We made a stop at a service station on the motorway for a bite to eat. Close to the town of Almaráz, we glimpsed a **Black-winged Kite** hovering close to the side of the motorway. As we arrived at Casa Rural El Recuerdo, a **Common Nightingale** was in full song.

15th May 2018: Sierra Brava Reservoir, rice fields near Madrigalejo, Puerto Peña and Palazuelo

Our first stop was beside the Sierra Brava Reservoir, south of Zorita, where we watched a colony of **Lesser Kestrel** using a derelict barn. A fine male **Marsh Harrier** was seen and we had good views of **Gull-billed Terns**.

We ventured then south to the rice and corn fields near Vegas Altas and then checked the Gargaligas River where a **White Stork** was nesting with its nest full of nesting **House Sparrows**. A **Golden Oriole** and **Great Reed Warbler** were singing.

After coffee in the village of Obando, we proceeded to the massive rock face of Puerto Peña where we had lunch. Here with the **Griffon Vultures**, we had sightings of two **Black Stork** and also **Egyptian Vulture**. On our return we checked a small pool near Moheda Alta, finding a great collection of shorebirds, including **Ruff**, **Grey Plover**, a **Greater Flamingo** and a drake **Garganey**, and no fewer than 27 **Collared Pratincole**.

16th May 2018: Plains of Campo Lugar, Don Benito and Alcollarín Reservoir

We spent the morning on the open plains south of the town of Zorita, close to the village of Campo Lugar. Here we quickly found a group of about 20 **Great Bustards**, including some displaying males. **Gull-billed Terns** hawked over the meadows as did a **Marsh Harrier**. A **Stone Curlew** was found in a recently ploughed field. In one area we saw a **Short-toed Eagle** perched on an electricity tower, whilst a bit further on we had superb views of a male **Little Bustard** as well as **European Rollers** with their electric blue wings.



We then drove south to explore an area beside the River Guadiana, near Don Benito. Here we had good views of **Isabelline Warbler**, and saw both **Pied and Spotted Flycatcher**, **Great Reed** and **Reed Warblers**, **Golden Orioles** and had some great views of **Purple Heron** in flight.

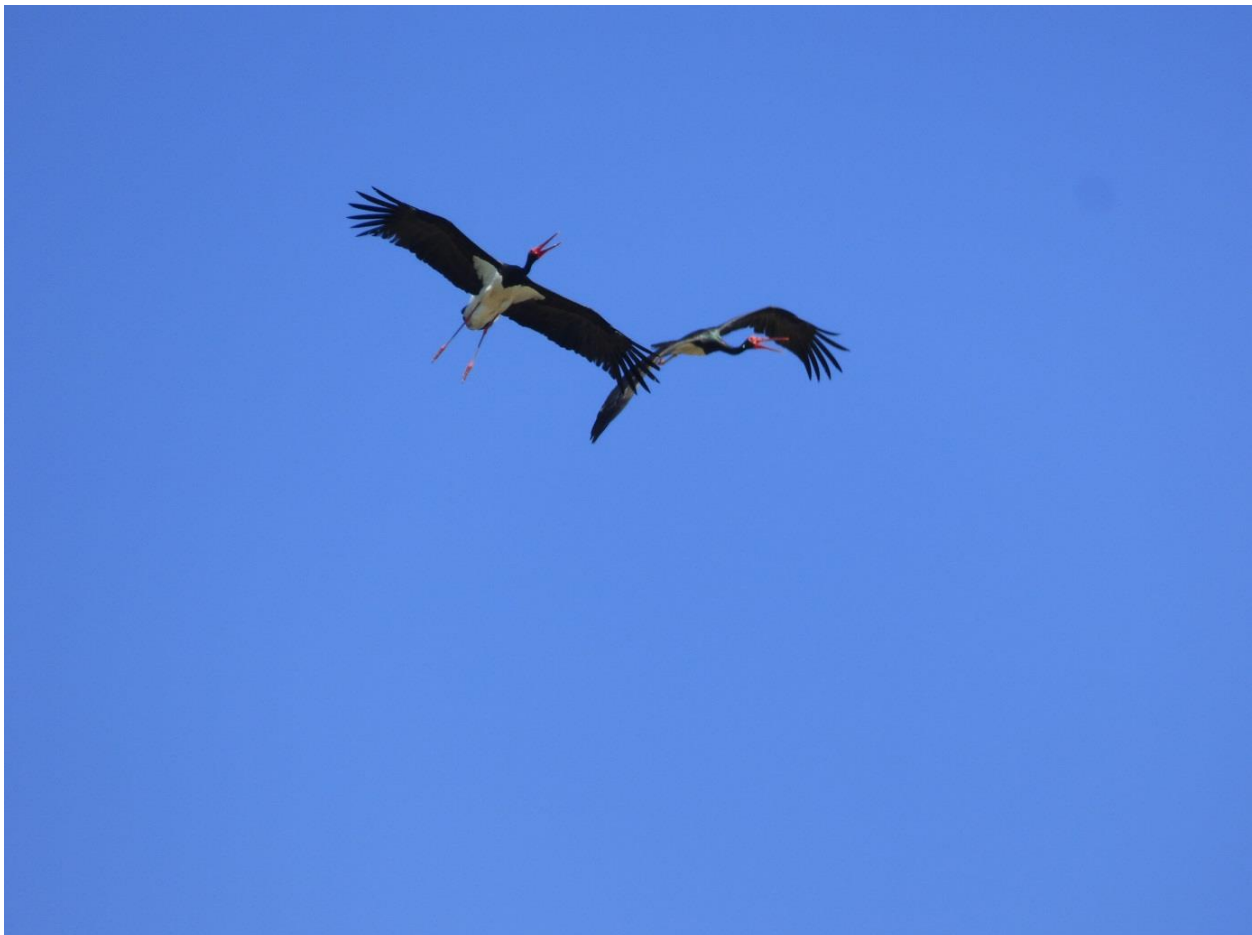


The rest of the day was spent at the Alcollarín Reservoir. Here we followed dirt tracks on either side of the water body, along the edge of beautiful holm oak *dehesa* woodland, where again the flowers were magnificent. Where we had our picnic, **Great Reed Warblers** were in song. **Bee-eaters** were nesting on the roadside bank and on the water itself **Great Crested Grebes** were in full display. We also found a **Common Redshank**, **Collared Pratincoles** and some **Black-necked Grebes**.

In the evening, beside the village of Pago de San Clemente we listened to the sound of singing **Red-necked Nightjars**.

17th May 2018: Monfragüe National Park

We drove north through the seemingly endless expanse of *dehesa* to enter the Monfragüe National Park on its northern side, making our first stop at the Portilla del Tiétar rock face. Soon after we had arrived a **Spanish Imperial Eagle** flew in and we were treated with a superb performance, watching it perched and in flight. We also saw its mate. Other birds that cruised past included **Black Stork**, both **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**, **Booted** and **Short-toed Eagles** and both **Black** and **Red Kites**. A **Rock Bunting** sang on several occasions from the rock behind our viewpoint.



Turtle Doves called from the wooded slope opposite us. Nearby we enjoyed a coffee at the edge of Cork Oak woodland where **Western Orphean Warblers** were singing. Close to that we could admire a nesting **Egyptian Vulture** beside the Tiétar River.

We had excellent views of **Thekla Lark** and **Black-eared Wheatear** close to the hamlet of Villarreal de San Carlos and then descending to the mixed woodland beside the Tagus River, we saw **Robins** and **Alpine Swifts** were nesting under a road bridge, along with large numbers of **House Martins**.

We completed our visit at the massive rock of Peña Falcon. There we had superb views of **Blue Rock Thrush** and **Black Redstart**. **Griffon Vultures** descended to land on the rock face, whilst several **Black Storks** were watched at nest sites.

18th May 2018: Alange Reservoir, Almendralejo and Roman Bridge Mérida

We headed south-west with a first stop beside the massive Alange Reservoir. We walked beside the reservoir, checking the rock face to our north. Here we had good views of **Black Wheatear**, as well as **Blue Rock Thrush** and **Thekla Lark**. On the water body itself there was a drake **Red-crested Pochard**, a couple of **Egyptian Geese** and **Gull-billed Tern**.

We then entered the vast landscape of the Tierra de los Barros, centre of wine-production and olive-growing in Extremadura. We followed tracks across this area near the town of Almendralejo. We had eventually excellent views of our target species, a pair of the **Rufous Bush Robin**.



We completed the day by birding from the two-thousand-year-old Roman Bridge, in the centre of Mérida, the capital city of Extremadura. This was an excellent place, offering us brilliant views of **Penduline Tit**, **Purple Swamphen**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Great Reed Warbler** and **Pallid Swift**. The riverine bushes held birds like **Melodious** and **Garden Warbler**, whilst **Golden Oriole** sang from the park.

19th May 2018: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, heath and cork oak groves of Jaraicejo, Miravete Pass and Trujillo

We drove along the road to the village of Santa Marta de Magasca where thanks to the provision of nest boxes we had wonderful views of **Rollers**, as well as **Lesser Kestrel**, and no fewer than six **Little Owls**. We followed a dirt track, where we saw four Great Bustard (including a displaying attracting the attention of a female, which appeared more interested in removing his feathers than mating with him) and had views of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**.

We then drove north-east to visit first the beautiful heath above Jaraicejo. This is a lavender and broom dominated landscape, skirted by cork oak groves. We very quickly found **Dartford Warbler** and it was not long before we also had obtained good views of **Spectacled Warbler**. **Thekla Larks** were abundant, as were the ubiquitous **Corn Buntings**.

We stopped at the Miravete Pass for our picnic.

Close by, near the Arroyo de la Vid, we saw **Woodchat Shrike**, **Nightingales**, **Melodious** and **Subalpine Warblers**, as well as a **Spotted Flycatcher** and **Spanish Sparrow**.

We paid a visit to the beautiful historic town of Trujillo at the end of the afternoon.

20th May 2018: Arrocampo Reservoir, Gredos Mountains, Navarredondo de los Gredos.

We bade farewell to Casa Rural El Recuerdo and took the motorway in the direction of Madrid. We stopped at the Arrocampo Reservoir where we eventually found a **Savi's Warbler**. We also had good views of **Zitting Cisticola**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Purple Heron** and **Little Bittern**.

We then continued our journey, leaving the motorway near Talavera to ascend the Gredos Mountains, crossing a pass where a Roman Road did the same. This was where we had our picnic. We then proceeded into the heart of the mountains, spending the afternoon birding in the pine woods near Navarredonda. Here we saw several **Pied Flycatchers**, **Iberian Green Woodpecker**, **Goldcrest**, **Crested** and **Coal Tits**, **Girl Bunting**, **Crossbills**, **Citril Finch** and **Ortolan Buntings**, as well as lovely views of **Moroccan Orange-tip** butterfly, as well as **Red Squirrel**. We reached our hotel at 17.00, where we made good use of the hide facility there to watch **Jay** and **Coal Tits**.

After dinner, a **European Nightjar** was heard churring.

21st May 2018: Gredos Mountains and return to Madrid.

Pre-breakfast in the hide yielded **Crested Tit** and **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, as well as the return of the **Jay**. After breakfast, we set off for the high-altitude birding at the Plataforma, at about 6000 feet above sea-level. On the way we saw **Red-backed Shrike**.



At the Plataforma, we easily found an **Ortolan Bunting** and saw a party of **Iberian Ibex**. The walk from the car park, provided superb views of **Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush**, **Northern Wheatear** and **Dunnock**. We had a longer wait for the appearance of **Bluethroat**, which was seen briefly on several occasions.

Returning to the pines for our picnic, we had a flurry of birding with great views of more **Crossbills**, **Citril Finch** and **Iberian Green Woodpecker**.

From there we had a good run through to Madrid, passing the walled-city of Ávila, reaching the hotel at Barajas at 16.00.

Annotated List

1. **Egyptian Goose:** Seen at Alcollarín and Alange.
2. **Greylag Goose:** One at Alcollarín on 16th May.
3. **Gadwall:** Seen at Alcollarín.
4. **Mallard:** Seen almost daily.
5. **Garganey:** One at Moheda Alta on 15th May.
6. **Red-crested Pochard:** A drake at Alange on 18th May.
7. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen on two days.
8. **Little Grebe:** Seen on pools near Madrigalejo and Alcollarín.
9. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen at Sierra Brava, Alcollarín and Alange.
10. **Black-necked Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín.
11. **Great Cormorant:** Seen on several days.
12. **Little Bittern:** Seen at Arrocampo on 20th.
13. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** Seen at Merida and Arrocampo.
14. **Cattle Egret:** Seen on several days.
15. **Little Egret:** Seen at Mérida and Arrocampo.
16. **Great Egret:** Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
17. **Grey Heron:** Seen almost daily.
18. **Purple Heron:** Seen at Alcollarín, Merida and Arrocampo.
19. **Black Stork:** Seen at Puerto Peña and nesting birds at Monfragüe.
20. **White Stork:** Seen daily.
21. **Glossy Ibis:** Seen at Roman Bridge, Mérida.
22. **Eurasian Spoonbill:** Seen near Arrocampo.
23. **Greater Flamingo:** One near Moheda Alta on 15th May.
24. **Egyptian Vulture:** Seen in Puerto Peña and Monfragüe.
25. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
26. **Black Vulture:** Seen almost every day.
27. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen in Monfragüe National Park on 17th and near Santa Marta de Magasca on 19th May.
28. **Short-toed Eagle:** Seen on three days.
29. **Booted Eagle:** Seen almost daily.
30. **Black Kite:** Seen daily.
31. **Red Kite:** See on several days.
32. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost daily.
33. **Montagu's Harrier:** Seen near Almendralejo and on plains west of Trujillo.
34. **Common Buzzard:** Seen almost daily.
35. **Sparrowhawk:** One seen on 16th May.
36. **Black-winged Kite:** One seen near Almaráz on 14th May.
37. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen almost daily.
38. **Common Kestrel:** Seen almost daily.
39. **Hobby:** One seen in Gredos on 20th May.
40. **Water Rail:** Heard only at Arrocampo.
41. **Moorhen:** Seen on several days.

42. **Purple Swamphen:** Seen at Mérida and Arrocampo.
43. **Common Coot:** Seen at Alcollarín.
44. **Little Bustard:** One at Campo Lugar plains on 16th May.
45. **Great Bustard:** Twenty males near Campo Lugar on 16th May and also seen west of Trujillo on 19th.
46. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on several days.
47. **Stone Curlew:** One on Campo Lugar plains on 16th May.
48. **Collared Pratincole:** Seen at Moheda Alta (27 present) on 15th May and at Alcollarín.
49. **Common Ringed Plover:** Seen near Moheda Alta on 15th May with about 45 present.
50. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on two days.
51. **Grey Plover:** One near Moheda Alta on 15th May.
52. **Dunlin:** Three near Moheda Alta on 15th May.
53. **Little Stint:** Three near Moheda Alta on 15th May.
54. **Common Redshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
55. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen on several days, including three at Arrocampo on 20th May.
56. **Ruff:** One near Moheda Alta on 15th May.
57. **Gull-billed Tern:** Seen on rice fields, Alcollarín, Sierra Brava and Arrocampo.
58. **Little Tern:** Two near Moheda Alta on 15th May, also at Arrocampo.
59. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen on two days.
60. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Two seen near Santa Marta de Magasca on 19th May.
61. **Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
62. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen daily.
63. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
64. **Turtle Dove:** Seen near Madrigalejo and Monfragüe.
65. **Common Cuckoo:** Heard/seen almost daily.
66. **Scops Owl:** Heard in Gredos.
67. **Little Owl:** Seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca.
68. **Red-necked Nightjar:** Heard at Pago de San Clemente on 16th May.
69. **European Nightjar:** Heard at Navarredona on 20th May.
70. **Alpine Swift:** Seen at Puerto Peña, Monfragüe, Alange and Mérida.
71. **Common Swift:** Seen daily.
72. **Pallid Swift:** Seen in Mérida.
73. **Common Kingfisher:** Seen on three days.
74. **European Bee-eater:** Seen every day, including in the Gredos.
75. **European Roller:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and Campo Lugar.
76. **Eurasian Hoopoe:** Seen daily.
77. **Iberian Green Woodpecker:** Seen at Navarredona in the Gredos.
78. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen at Navarredona in the Gredos.
79. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on plains.

80. **Greater Short-toed Lark:** Seen on plains.
81. **Crested Lark:** Seen almost daily.
82. **Thekla Lark:** Seen almost daily.
83. **Wood Lark:** Seen at Monfragüe and the Gredos.
84. **Skylark:** Seen at the Plataforma in the Gredos.
85. **Sand Martin:** Seen at Alcollarín and on rice fields.
86. **Crag Martin:** Seen most days.
87. **Barn Swallow:** Seen daily.
88. **Red-rumped Swallow:** Seen daily.
89. **Common House Martin:** Seen daily.
90. **Yellow Wagtail:** Seen on rice fields and in the Gredos.
91. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen in the Gredos.
92. **White Wagtail:** Seen on several days
93. **Wren:** Seen in Monfragüe and the Gredos.
94. **Dunnock:** Seen at the Plataforma in the Gredos.
95. **Rufous Bush Robin:** Two seen near Almendralejo on 18th May.
96. **Robin:** Seen in Monfragüe and the Gredos.
97. **Nightingale:** Seen daily.
98. **Bluethroat:** Seen at the Plataforma on 21st May.
99. **Black Redstart:** Seen on several days.
100. **Stonechat:** Seen daily.
101. **Northern Wheatear:** Seen at the Plataforma in the Gredos and Navarredonda.
102. **Black-eared Wheatear:** One seen in Monfragüe on 17th May.
103. **Black Wheatear:** One at Alange on 18th May.
104. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Monfragüe and Alange.
105. **Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush:** Seen at the Plataforma in the Gredos.
106. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
107. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen in Monfragüe, Jaraicejo and near Navarredonda.
108. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded almost every day.
109. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen on several days.
110. **Savi's Warbler:** Singing at Arrocampo on 20th May.
111. **Reed Warbler:** Seen/heard on several days.
112. **Great Reed Warbler:** Seen/heard on several days.
113. **Sedge Warbler:** One singing at Arrocampo on 20th May.
114. **Melodious Warbler:** Seen on four days.
115. **Isabelline Warbler:** Seen near Don Benito on 16th May.
116. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen at Jaraicejo on 19th May.
117. **Spectacled Warbler:** Seen at Jaraicejo on 19th May
118. **Subalpine Warbler:** Seen at Monfragüe and Jaraicejo.
119. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen almost daily.
120. **Western Orphean Warbler:** Singing at Monfragüe.
121. **Greater Whitethroat:** Seen at Navarredonda.

122. **Eurasian Blackcap:** Seen almost daily.
123. **Garden Warbler:** One at Mérida on 18th May.
124. **Western Bonelli's Warbler:** Singing at Navarredonda.
125. **Goldcrest:** Seen at Navarredonda.
126. **Firecrest:** Seen at Navarredonda.
127. **Spotted Flycatcher:** Seen near Don Benito on 16th May and Jaraicejo on 19th.
128. **Pied Flycatcher:** Seen near Don Benito on 16th May and at Navarredonda.
129. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on several days.
130. **Crested Tit:** Seen at Navarredonda on 20th and 21st May.
131. **Coal Tit:** Seen at Navarredonda on 20th and 21st May.
132. **Blue Tit:** Seen almost daily.
133. **Great Tit:** Seen almost daily.
134. **Nuthatch:** Seen at Navarredonda.
135. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Seen at Navarredonda.
136. **Penduline Tit:** Seen in Mérida on 18th May.
137. **Golden Oriole:** Seen on several days.
138. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen on three days.
139. **Woodchat Shrike:** Seen daily, apart from the Gredos.
140. **Red-backed Shrike:** Seen at Navarredonda on 21st May.
141. **Jay:** Seen at Navarredonda.
142. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily, apart from in the Gredos.
143. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
144. **Jackdaw:** Seen on several days.
145. **Carrion Crow:** Seen at Navarredonda.
146. **Raven:** Seen every day.
147. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
148. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
149. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on the plains and at Jaraicejo.
150. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on rice fields.
151. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen at River Almonte and Navarredonda.
152. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on rice fields.
153. **Common Chaffinch:** Seen almost daily.
154. **Serin:** Seen daily.
155. **Greenfinch:** Seen on several days.
156. **Citril Finch:** Seen at Navarredonda on 20th and 21st May.
157. **Goldfinch:** Seen daily.
158. **Linnet:** Seen on several days.
159. **Crossbill:** Seen at Navarredonda on 20th and 21st May.
160. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen at Navarredonda on 20th May.
161. **Rock Bunting:** Seen at Monfragüe, Alange and Gredos.

162. **Ortolan Bunting:** Seen at Navarredonda and at the Plataforma on 20th and 21st May.
163. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.

Mammals

Red Deer

Iberian Ibex

Iberian Hare

Rabbit

Red Squirrel

Butterflies

1. **Small White**
2. **Green-veined White**
3. **Bath White**
4. **Western Dappled White**
5. **Orange Tip**
6. **Moroccan Orange Tip**
7. **Clouded Yellow**
8. **Small Copper**
9. **Brown Argus**
10. **Nettle-tree Butterfly**
11. **Queen of Spain Fritillary**
12. **Spanish Marbled White**
13. **Meadow Brown**
14. **Small Heath**
15. **Speckled Wood**

Dragonflies

1. **Blue Emperor**
2. **Lesser Emperor**
3. **Northern Banded Groundling**
4. **Broad Scarlet**
5. **Broad-bodied Chaser**
6. **Red-veined Darter**