

HOLIDAY REPORT FOR PAUL AND ANNE
Casa Rural El Recuerdo & Birding Extremadura
“Nature in late spring”
12th – 18th May 2019



Itinerary

12th May 2019: Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

13th May 2019: Campo Lugar Plains, Ricefields near Madrigalejo and Alcollarín Reservoir

14th May 2019: Villuercas Mountains

15th May 2019: Almaráz, Garganta de la Olla, Piornal

16th May 2019: Plains east of Cáceres and Alcollarín Reservoir

17th May 2019: Jaraicejo heath and cork woodland, Arrocampo Reservoir, Valdecañas.

18th May 2019: Return to Madrid

12th May 2019: Transfer from Madrid airport to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

Paul and Ann arrived on time at a very crowded Terminal 4 of Madrid Airport and we set off shortly after 15.00 on our way to Extremadura. The traffic was light and in less than an hour we were on the motorway heading southwest from the city. We stopped about halfway in the journey for a coffee. On the rest of the journey we had sightings of **White Stork** and **Black Kites**. We arrived at 18.00 on the dot at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

13th May 2019: Campo Lugar Plains, Ricefields near Madrigalejo and Alcollarín Reservoir

With the forecast of hot weather, we had an early start. We travelled on to the plains south of Zorita. There we were well rewarded with the magnificent view of a displaying male **Great Bustard**, amongst the blonded grasses of early summer. Dozens of **White Storks** were feeding on grasshoppers, as were **Black Kites**. From all sides we were embraced by the sound of **Calandra Lark** song. We had distant views of **Rollers** but many close views of **Bee-eaters**.

We then ventured across rice fields, which were being flooded for this year's crop. Here we found a group of **Grey Plover** and flocks of **Dunlin**. A stop beside the Ruercas River was enchanting for the bird song: **Nightingales**, **Golden Orioles**, **Cetti's Warblers**, **Great Reed Warblers** in chorus. We stopped for coffee at Madrigalejo and then made a stop at the Gargaligás river, where mainly **Great Reed Warblers** were singing. At a pool near Moheda Alta we found **Collared Pratincoles**, **Spoonbills** and **Avocets**, plus a collection of waders. Close by in an open *dehesa* we found a picnic table in the shade where we enjoyed lunch. We then went back across rice fields near Vegas Altas. It was becoming very hot, but nice flock of **Collared Pratincoles** were a very good reason to pause. We returned across Campo Lugar plains where we had started off. It was much quieter, but **Black Kites** were finding grasshoppers on the road. We dropped into the Alcollarín reservoir where we found **Avocet**, **Dunlin** and a large flock of **Ravens**. Our final stop was beside a little pond near Zorita where there was a group of **Glossy Ibis** and **Spoonbill**, as well as a delightful brood of **Little Ringed Plover** chicks.

14th May 2019: Villuercas Mountains

It was another hot sunny day and we took to the slight respite of the attitude by heading to the Villuercas Mountains to the east. We made an initial stop beside the village of Cabañas del Castillo to admire the view and then to the highest peak of the Villuercas Mountains. Here we saw a singing male **Common Rock Thrush**, **Common Redstart**, **Egyptian Vulture** and a pair of **Red-billed Chough**. The tree heaths were in flower as

were a delightful colony of **Southern Wild Tulips**, surrounded by rock rose and **Mountain Sandwort**.



After coffee at Navezuelas, we had a picnic close to village of Berzocana. We were surrounded by bird song and butterflies, but the antics of **Broad-bodied Chasers** and **Large Red Damselflies** were of note.

From there we stopped in the sweet chestnut woods of Garciaz, where we found a wonderful specimen of **Lang's Orchid** with some **Sulphur Orchids** that were finishing.

15th May 2019: Almaráz, Garganta de la Olla, Piornal

Another hot day so again we headed to higher latitude, but not without stopping first to find and admire the endemic **Red Bee Orchid** at Almaráz.



From there we headed north, past tobacco fields, to the lower slopes of the Gredos Mountains in La Vera. After a welcome pause for coffee just outside Jaraiz de la Vera, we then went for a walk at Garganta de la Olla, beside a rocky river with Pyrenean oak clad valley slopes. Here we saw **Dipper**, **Grey Wagtail** and lots of butterflies including **Niobe Fritillary**.

Lunch in a shady spot half-way up the mountain side, beside a small waterfall. **Western Bonelli's Warblers** were singing, there were **Jays** and many butterflies, including **Black-eyed Blue** and **Purple-shot Copper**.

We spent the afternoon on the moorland above the town of Piornal. It was glorious in colour thanks to the broom and heaths in flower. There were **Cardinal**, **Niobe** and **Queen of Spain Fritillaries**, **Nettle-tree** butterflies. A **Blue Emperor** dragonfly hawked

the small reservoir whilst we were surrounded by the songs of **Western Bonelli's Warblers**, **Whitethroats**, **Dartford Warblers** and **Oortolan Buntings**.



16th May 2019: Plains east of Cáceres, Guadiloba and Alcollarín Reservoir

The focus this morning was to see and photograph **Rollers** and in this we succeeded magnificently along the road to Santa Marta de Magasca. In addition, we had great views of **Hoopoes** and **Bee-eaters**, as well as **Black Kites** and **Black Vultures**, and a fine **Short-toed Eagle**.

We paid a brief visit to the Guadiloba Reservoir where there were **Little Tern** and **Black-winged Stilt**, and several darters and **Southern Gatekeeper** butterfly.

After coffee we drove south to the Alcollarín Reservoir. Here we had more views of **Bee-eater**, three **Avocet** and numerous **Thekla Larks**. At the picnic area where we stopped for lunch, a **Great Reed Warbler** was singing, and the **White Storks** had young in their nests. **Cattle Egrets** were nest-building and we had good views of **Little Ringed Plovers**.

17th May 2019: Jaraicejo heath and cork woodland, Arrocampo Reservoir, Valdecañas.

The weather had changed, and it was markedly cold and windy! We visited the Jaraicejo heath where there were **Thekla Larks** and **Corn Buntings**. **Black Vultures** sailed overhead. We continued down into wonderful cork oak woodland where we saw **Short-toed Treecreepers** and **Melodious Warblers**. **Vervain** and **Lesser Thapsis** were some of the plants in flower. Then, after coffee, we continued to the Arrocampo Reservoir. Although it was still very windy, we managed to see three species of terns: **Little**, **Gull-billed** and the rare **Caspian**. **Purple Herons** were busy attending their nests and we also saw **Glossy Ibis**, **Black-winged Stilts**, **Purple Swamphen** and a **Ferruginous Duck**. **Savi's Warblers** were in song and **Marsh Harriers** cruised over the vegetation.

We spent the afternoon on the hillside and riverbanks near Valdecañas. Here we found a **Thread-winged Antlion**, **Broad Scarlet** dragonflies, **Spanish Gatekeeper** butterflies and birds including **Golden Eagle** and **Hawfinch**.



18th May 2019: Return to Madrid

We left Casa Rural El Recuerdo just before 09.00 and made a stop at Almaráz to visit the Orchydarium information centre. At the halfway point in the journey we stopped for a welcome coffee and then reached Madrid airport as planned at 12.30.

Annotated List

Birds

1. Egyptian Goose
2. Gadwall
3. Mallard
4. Red-legged Partridge
5. Little Grebe
6. Great Crested Grebe
7. Great Cormorant
8. Cattle Egret
9. Little Egret
10. Great Egret
11. Grey Heron
12. Purple Heron
13. White Stork
14. Spoonbill
15. Black Kite
16. Red Kite
17. Egyptian Vulture
18. Griffon Vulture
19. Black Vulture
20. Short-toed Eagle
21. Marsh Harrier
22. Common Buzzard
23. Golden Eagle
24. Booted Eagle
25. Lesser Kestrel
26. Common Kestrel
27. Water Rail
28. Moorhen
29. Purple Swamphen
30. Common Coot
31. Little Bustard
32. Great Bustard
33. Black-winged Stilt
34. Avocet
35. Little Ringed Plover

36. Common Ringed Plover
37. Grey Plover
38. Common Redshank
39. Ruff
40. Dunlin
41. Little Stint
42. Common Sandpiper
43. Collared Pratincole
44. Black-headed Gull
45. Little Tern
46. Gull-billed Tern
47. Caspian Tern
48. Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon
49. Wood Pigeon
50. Collared Dove
51. Common Cuckoo
52. Common Swift
53. Kingfisher
54. Bee-eater
55. Roller
56. Hoopoe
57. Calandra Lark
58. Short-toed Lark
59. Crested Lark
60. Thekla Lark
61. Woodlark
62. Crag Martin
63. Barn Swallow
64. Red-rumped Swallow
65. House Martin
66. Grey Wagtail
67. White Wagtail
68. Yellow Wagtail
69. Robin
70. Nightingale
71. Black Redstart
72. Common Redstart
73. Stonechat
74. Blue Rock Thrush.
75. Common Rock Thrush
76. Blackbird
77. Mistle Thrush
78. Cetti's Warbler

79. Zitting Cisticola
80. Savi's Warbler
81. Great Reed Warbler
82. Reed Warbler
83. Melodious Warbler
84. Dartford Warbler
85. Subalpine Warbler
86. Sardinian Warbler
87. Blackcap
88. Greater Whitehroat
89. Western Bonelli's Warbler
90. Wren
91. Long-tailed Tit
92. Blue Tit
93. Great Tit
94. Dipper
95. Short-toed Treecreeper
96. Iberian Grey Shrike
97. Woodchat Shrike
98. Golden Oriole
99. Jay
100. Azure-winged Magpie
101. Magpie
102. Jackdaw
103. Red-billed Chough
104. Raven
105. Spotless Starling
106. House Sparrow
107. Spanish Sparrow
108. Tree Sparrow
109. Chaffinch
110. Common Waxbill
111. Red Avadavat
112. Serin
113. Hawfinch
114. Greenfinch
115. Goldfinch
116. Linnet
117. Cirl Bunting
118. Rock Bunting
119. Corn Bunting

Orchids

1. Red Bee Orchid (Almaráz endemic)
2. Lang's Orchid
3. Sulphur Orchid
4. Tongue Orchid



Butterflies

Spanish Festoon

Swallowtail

Small Skipper

Bath White

Small White

Large White

Clouded Yellow

Speckled Wood
Small Heath
Spanish Gatekeeper
Southern Gatekeeper
Spanish Marbled White
Meadow Brown
Queen of Spain Fritillary
Niobe Fritillary
Marsh Fritillary
Cardinal
Red Admiral
Large Tortoiseshell
Purple-shot Copper
Small Copper
False Ilex Hairstreak
Green Hairstreak
Lang's Short-tailed Blue
Holly Blue
Black-eyed Blue
Brown Argus

Other insects of interest

Large Red Damselfly
Blue Emperor
Broad-bodied Chaser
Black-tailed Skimmer
Common Darter

Broad Scarlet

Egyptian Grasshopper

Spoonwing (Thread-winged Antlion)

Red-striped Oil Beetle

Lizards

Large Psammodromus

Geniez's Wall Lizard