

HOLIDAY REPORT FOR MARK AND PAM
Birding Extremadura and Casa Rural El Recuerdo
17th – 24th April 2019



ITINERARY

17th April 2019: Transfer from Madrid with stop at Arrocampo Reservoir

18th April 2019: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca and San Lazaro Park in Trujillo

19th April 2019: Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir

20th April 2019: Sierra Brava Reservoir, River Gargaligas, Moheda Alta, Orellana Reservoir, Puerto Peña, Madrigalejo gravel pit, Palazuelo rice fields.

21st April 2019: Valverde de Mérida, Alange, Jabata valley, Roman Bridge Mérida

22nd April 2019: Jaraicejo and Miravete Pass

23rd April 2019: Monfragüe National Park and Trujillo.

24th April 2019: Return to Madrid with stop at Arrocampo Reservoir.

TRIP REPORT

17th April 2019: Transfer from Madrid with stop at Arrocampo Reservoir

Mark and Pam arrived at Madrid's airport Terminal 4 just shortly after 11.00 to be met by Martin. As we set out on the southern ring road of Madrid, there was light cloud cover, but during the rest of the day it thickened. Traffic was heavy, it being the departure from the city for the long Easter break. We stopped at about 13.00 for a delicious fresh salad at the Las Esperteras bar just out of the District of Madrid, on the motorway for Extremadura. From there, seeing many **White Storks** en route we continued through to the Arrocampo Reservoir, near the village of Saucedilla. Here we spent just over an hour at one spot beside the marsh and were rewarded with a wonderful selection of birds as an introduction to the holiday. **Purple Herons** delighted us as they arrive with materials for the nests, **Cattle Egrets** were also carrying nest material. **Purple Swamphens** were present as was a singing **Savi's Warbler**. The antics of a **Zitting Cisticola** were almost hypnotic. **Bee-eaters** swooped nearby, whilst **Gull-billed Terns** circled the edge of the water. We saw a pair of **Ferruginous Duck** pass by in flight. **Marsh Harriers** quartered the reedbed. There was not a single moment when there was nothing to see.

The skies were darkening, so we retreated to the car and made the final leg of the journey, arriving at Casa Rural El Recuerdo at about 17.00, just before the first drops of rain.

18th April 2019: Plains near Santa Marta de Magasca and San Lazaro Park in Trujillo

After a good night's sleep, we set off towards Trujillo and then westwards on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca. It was a calm day but always with the threat of heavy rain, as dark clouds stalked the skies. At our first stop we had magnificent views of displaying **Great Bustards**, some **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** on the ground and in flight, a distant **Spanish Imperial Eagle** and an obliging **Common Cuckoo** and were surrounded the whole time by the sound of the song of **Calandra Larks** and **Corn Buntings**. Nearby we watched a beautiful **Great Spotted Cuckoo**. **Woodchat Shrikes** and **Iberian Grey Shrikes** were soon logged as well. We then continued further to the west and approached the village of Santa Marta de Magasca from the south-west. On roadside telegraph pole we had brilliant views of **Rollers**, **Little Owls** and **Lesser Kestrels**. We found another displaying **Great Bustard** and watched a delightful pair of **Short-toed Larks**. **Booted Eagles** soared overhead. Further along the road we had magnificent views of two **Black Vultures** and four **Griffon Vultures** on the road close-by. Beside the Tamuja River, a **Cirl Bunting** was singing, **Bee-eaters** hawked and we saw a pair of **Short-toed Eagles**. Two **Woodlarks** sang above us. After coffee in the friendly

village of Santa Marta de Magasca, we descended to the River Magasca, where we had our picnic. We were accompanied by **Crag Martins** and **Red-rumped Swallows** and saw **Black** and **Griffon Vultures**.

We spent the rest of the afternoon on the plains again, getting good views of **Spanish Sparrows**, **Bee-eaters** and more shrikes. Pride of place must go to a gorgeous **Turtle Dove**. As we ascended the granite terrain near Trujillo we stopped to watch **Sardinian Warblers** and yet another **Iberian Grey Shrike**. We completed the afternoon at the San Lazaro park near Trujillo, where we were treated with close views of **Black-winged Stilts** and **Little Ringed Plovers**.

19th April 2019: Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir



Another day when we escaped serious rain and were rewarded by dramatic skylines and light. We headed south to the plains of Campo Lugar. Here we had an extraordinary morning with lekking **Great Bustards** side-by-side with displaying **Little Bustards**, a feast of larks, especially **Calandra Lark** and barrowloads of **Bee-eaters**. We also came across a migrant **Ortolan Bunting** which was extremely obliging, as well as good views of birds like **Short-toed Eagle** and **Roller**. A small pool yielded an array

of waders including **Ruff**, **Wood Sandpiper** and **Redshank**, as well as attracting the interest of a **Booted Eagle**.

After coffee, we had a picnic beside the Alcollarín Reservoir. **Willow Warblers** and **Western Bonelli's Warblers** were in song around us, whilst there were birds like **Woodchat Shrike** and **Spoonbill** to enjoy. The afternoon was spent exploring the surroundings of the reservoir. We came across a group of four **Whinchats**, including a stunning male. **Gull-billed Terns** were active all afternoon whilst along the shore there were several waders including **Black-winged Stilt**, **Avocet**, **Greenshank** and numerous **Common Sandpipers**. At the end of the stay we found two **Black-necked Grebes** out on the water, just as the clouds darkened and rain threatened. In the end we reached home having skirted successfully around the storm.



20th April 2019: Sierra Brava Reservoir, River Gargaligas, Moheda Alta, Orellana Reservoir, Puerto Peña, Madrigalejo gravel pit, Palazuelo rice fields.

It was generally an overcast day, sometime with rather light cloud and often with a fresh easterly wind. We headed southwards again, this time making our first stop at the Sierra Brava Reservoir. Here we were enchanted by views of two well-grown **Eagle Owl** chicks, which sat together under a bush blinking at us. Near by a **Little Owl** popped up

onto a rocky outcrop. **Iberian Hares** lolloped through the broom-dominated slopes below the reservoir. We passed through the town of Madrigalejo and stopped next to the River Gargaligas. We were surrounded by birdsong: **Great Reed Warblers**, **Nightingales**, **Cetti's Warblers**, as well as the squeals of **Water Rails**. We had fine views of two **Great Reed Warblers** perched in the open.

We stopped at a pool near Moheda Alta where there was a large party of **Spoonbill** and an even bigger group of **Cattle Egret**. They were accompanied by a nice array of waders, including **Black-tailed Godwit** and **Little Stint**. We watched two **Collared Pratincoles** come down to land.

From there we continued eastwards stopping beside the Orellana Reservoir where we found a drake **Red-crested Pochard** amongst a large flotilla of **Great Crested Grebes**. The weather at this point was a bit threatening and dozens of swifts and hirundines were forced low over the water. There was a nice selection of flowers in bloom including **Spotted Rock Rose** and the curious **Dipcadi**.

We enjoyed our picnic opposite the impressive Puerto Peña rockface. We had magnificent views of **Black Stork**, **Griffon Vultures**, **Booted Eagle** and **Short-toed Eagle** here.



We started our return, stopping near Madrigalejo at a small gravel pit where along with **Spoonbill** there was a fine **Greenshank**. We then crossed the rice fields, at the time bone dry. But we came across a stony field which was alive with **Collared Pratincoles** and we had superb opportunity to study these birds closely. Further on, we watched **Red Avadavats**, **Common Waxbills** and **Tree Sparrows** in the damp ditches and a beautiful male Iberian race **Yellow Wagtail**.

21st April 2019: Valverde de Mérida, Alange, Jabata valley, Roman Bridge Mérida

There was more sunshine today and when the breeze abated, it felt much warmer than on recent days!

This Easter morning, we headed south-west and made a first stop beside small gravel workings near Valverde de Mérida. Here we had great views of **Bee-eater**, **Great Reed Warbler** and a party of **Yellow-crowned Bishops**. On a bridge over the Guadiana River there was a magnificent **House Martin** colony and good views were also had of **Common Waxbill**. From there we drove to the reservoir of Alange and enjoyed a walk with the water to the south of us and a rocky outcrop to the north. The place was full of **Thekla Larks** and **Gull-billed Terns** patrolled the edge of the lake. We had several views of a pair of **Black Wheatear** and saw **Blue Rock Thrush** and passing **Griffon Vultures**. We complete the morning with a wonderful walk on the northern side of the same rock outcrop, where, amongst olive groves and meadows we found eight species of orchid and some interesting butterflies including **Spanish Marbled White**, **Bath White** and **Spanish Festoon**.

Our lunch stop was just to the east of Alange, in the Jabata Valley. It was a gorgeous setting with the French lavender in full bloom, two species of Tongue Orchid were present including the endemic Yellow Tongue. We also saw **Black-eyed Blue** and **Lulworth Skipper** butterflies.

From there it was just a short drive to our final stop, the Roman Bridge in the centre of Mérida, Extremadura's capital city. It was a superb afternoon with great views of birds like **Little Bittern**, **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **Spoonbill**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Penduline Tit**, **Purple Swamphen** and **Pallid Swift**.



22nd April 2019: Jaraicejo and Miravete Pass

We enjoyed wonderful weather today: very little wind, plenty of sunshine, ideal for looking for small birds in heath and woodland. We travelled north-east the short distance to Jaraicejo and thence to a wonderful broom-dominated heath and cork oak woodland. We had a very productive couple of hours with good views of **Western Orphean Warbler**, **Spectacled** and **Dartford Warblers**, as well as **Subalpine**. The views of **Short-toed Treecreeper** were brief but an encounter with one at our picnic area later more than compensated for that.

After coffee we ascended to close to the Miravete peak where there was a magnificent view across the Tagus valley to the north. At the Pass we found **Crested Tit**, a couple of serenading **Serins** and a **Golden Eagle** soaring high overhead with two **Griffon Vulture**. At the picnic site we were joined by a **Short-toed Treecreeper**.

Afterwards we stopped at the Arroyo de la Vid. Here we saw **Melodious Warbler** and enjoyed excellent views again of **Subalpine** and **Sardinian Warblers**. We then stopped beside the River Almonte, straddled by three bridges, just south of Jaraicejo. People were enjoying Easter picnics and we enjoyed watching **Clouded Yellow** butterflies and a very fine male **Grey Wagtail**.

23rd April 2019: Monfragüe National Park and Trujillo.

We battened-down the hatches for a tougher weather challenge today, with high winds at times, dramatic skies and some heavy showers. Notwithstanding these challenges, we enjoyed a wonderful day in the Monfragüe National Park. We made our first stop at the legendary Peña Falcón viewpoint. Here we watched the comings and goings of the vulture colony, a nesting **Black Stork** and singing **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Black Redstart** and **Rock Bunting**. From there we drove through the park to reach the Portilla del Tiétar viewpoint, just in time to see a **Spanish Imperial Eagle** arrive and land on the top of the cliff in front of us. We had ample time to watch it and see its mate appear on a low fly-past as she headed westwards. The viewpoint also gave us the chance to see the parental care of the **Griffon Vultures** on their sole chicks. The planned coffee stop was not possible because of a power cut, so we retraced our steps through the park to have coffee in the centre at Villareal de San Carlos. At a nearby carpark we had good views of a pair of **Black-eared Wheatears**.

Picnic was in the shelter of a hut beside the River Tagus, where the flowers were quite breath-taking in the vividness. **Cirl Bunting** sang nearby.

By mid-afternoon we had left the park, aiming a stop beside the River Almonte to admire the Water's Crowfoot before finishing the day with a short visit to the historic centre of Trujillo. Here, during our wander through the narrow streets and visits to churches, we saw a **Great Spotted Cuckoo**, as well as the more usual **White Storks**, **Jackdaws** and **Crag Martins**.

24th April 2019: Return to Madrid with stop at Arrocampo Reservoir.

We had heavy rain, sometimes torrential, pretty much for the whole day, so the planned morning's birding at Arrocampo, whilst still taking place, was done almost entirely from inside the vehicle. We watched **Gull-billed Terns** and **Purple Herons** in the pouring rain and had almost given up hope on our target species, when we found a **Black-winged Kite** perched on a pole close to the motorway. Fortunately, it was close to a slip road, so we managed reasonable views of this beautiful little bird of prey.

We then headed to Madrid, arriving in excellent time for Pam and Mark's check-in.

LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED

1. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir and Alange.
2. **Gadwall**: Seen on 19th and 20th April.
3. **Teal**: Seen at Campo Lugar.
4. **Mallard**: Seen almost every day.

5. **Pintail:** A female at Moheda Alta on 20th April.
6. **Shoveler:** Seen at Alcollarín on 19th April.
7. **Red-crested Pochard:** A male at Orellana Reservoir on 20th April.
8. **Ferruginous Duck:** A pair at Arrocampo on 17th April.
9. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen on plains near Trujillo and at Jaraicejo.
10. **Quail:** Heard calling on several days.
11. **Little Grebe:** Seen on three days.
12. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen on large water bodies.
13. **Black-necked Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín.
14. **Great Cormorant:** Seen on large water bodies.
15. **Little Bittern:** Seen at Mérida.
16. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** Seen at Mérida.
17. **Cattle Egret:** Seen most days.
18. **Little Egret:** Seen most days.
19. **Great Egret:** Seen on several days.
20. **Grey Heron:** Seen on most days.
21. **Purple Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo and Mérida.
22. **Black Stork:** Seen at Puerto Peña and Monfragüe.
23. **White Stork:** Seen daily.
24. **Glossy Ibis:** Seen in Mérida.
25. **Spoonbill:** Seen on several days.
26. **Egyptian Vulture:** Seen on plains near Trujillo, Monfragüe and Jaraicejo.
27. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen daily.
28. **Black Vulture:** Seen most days.
29. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen on plains near Trujillo and in Monfragüe.
30. **Golden Eagle:** Seen at Miravete Pass on 22nd April.
31. **Short-toed Eagle:** Seen on several days.
32. **Booted eagle:** Seen on three days.
33. **Black Kite:** Seen daily.
34. **Red Kite:** Seen on several days.
35. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen on several days.
36. **Montagu's Harrier:** Seen on plains near Trujillo and Campo Lugar.
37. **Common Buzzard:** Seen on most days.
38. **Black-winged Kite:** One seen near Saucedilla on 24th April.
39. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen on plains and in Trujillo.
40. **Common Kestrel:** Seen on several days.
41. **Hobby:** One seen at Puerto Peña on 20th April.
42. **Water Rail:** Seen in River Gargaliás on 20th April.
43. **Moorhen:** Seen on several days.
44. **Purple Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo and Mérida.
45. **Common Coot:** Seen on most days.
46. **Little Bustard:** Seen on plains of Campo Lugar on 19th April.
47. **Great Bustard:** Seen on plains of Trujillo and Campo Lugar.

48. **Black-winged Stilt**: Seen on several days.
49. **Avocet**: Seen at Alcollarín on 19th April.
50. **Collared Pratincole**: Seen at Alcollarín and on rice fields.
51. **Ringed Plover**: Seen at Alcollarín and Moheda Alta.
52. **Little Ringed Plover**: Seen on several days.
53. **Kentish Plover**: Seen at Alcollarín and Moheda Alta.
54. **Dunlin**: Seen at Alcollarín and Moheda Alta.
55. **Little Stint**: Seen at Moheda Alta.
56. **Ruff**: Seen on pool near Campo Lugar on 19th April.
57. **Black-tailed Godwit**: One at Moheda Alta on 20th April.
58. **Common Rdshank**: Seen at Arrocampo and at Alcollarín.
59. **Greenshank**: Seen at Alcollarín and Moheda Alta.
60. **Wood Sandpiper**: Seen on pool near Campo Lugar and near Zorita.
61. **Common Sandpiper**: Seen on three days.
62. **Gull-billed Tern**: Seen on several days.
63. **Black-headed Gull**: Seen on several days.
64. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**: Seen briefly on plains near Trujillo and heard at Campo Lugar.
65. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**: Seen on plans near Trujillo on 18th April.
66. **Feral Pigeon**: Seen daily.
67. **Wood Pigeon**: Seen daily.
68. **Collared Dove**: Seen daily.
69. **Turtle Dove**: Seen on plains near Trujillo and heard at Jaraicejo.
70. **Common Cuckoo**: Seen or heard almost daily.
71. **Great Spotted Cuckoo**: Seen on plains near Trujillo and in Trujillo on 23rd April.
72. **Eagle Owl**: Seen near Sierra Brava on 20th April.
73. **Little Owl**: Seen on plains.
74. **Alpine Swift**: Seen near Mérida and Monfragüe.
75. **Common Swift**: Seen on several days.
76. **Pallid Swift**: Seen at Mérida.
77. **Kingfisher**: Seen on several days.
78. **Bee-eater**: Seen daily.
79. **Roller**: Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and Campo Lugar.
80. **Hoopoe**: Seen daily.
81. **Calandra Lark**: Seen on the plains.
82. **Short-toed Lark**: Seen on the plains.
83. **Crested Lark**: Seen almost daily.
84. **Thekla Lark**: Seen almost every day.
85. **Woodlark**: Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca.
86. **Sand Martin**: Seen on several days.
87. **Crag Martin**: Seen almost daily.
88. **Barn Swallow**: Seen daily.
89. **Red-rumped Swallow**: Seen almost daily.

90. **House Martin:** Seen daily.
91. **Tawny Pipit:** Seen near Campo Lugar:
92. **Yellow Wagtail:** Seen on rice fields.
93. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen near Jaraicejo.
94. **White Wagtail:** Seen on several days.
95. **Wren:** Seen at Monfragüe and Jaraicejo.
96. **Robin:** Recorded in Monfragüe.
97. **Nightingale:** Seen daily.
98. **Black Redstart:** Seen in Monfragüe.
99. **Stonechat:** Seen daily.
100. **Whinchat:** Seen at Alcollarín on 19th April.
101. **Northern Wheatear:** Seen on the plains.
102. **Black-eared Wheatear:** Seen in Monfragüe.
103. **Black Wheatear:** Seen at Alange.
104. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Alange, Monfragüe and Miravete.
105. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
106. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen at Alange.
107. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded daily.
108. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen daily.
109. **Savi's Warbler:** Singing at Arrocampo.
110. **Sedge Warbler:** Seen at Arrocampo and near Mérida.
111. **Reed Warbler:** Seen on several days.
112. **Great Reed Warbler:** Seen on rivers in rice fields, near Mérida and heard at Arrocampo.
113. **Melodious Warbler:** Seen near Jaraicejo on 22nd April.
114. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen near Jaraicejo and Monfragüe.
115. **Spectacled Warbler:** Seen near Jaraicejo on 22nd April.
116. **Subalpine Warbler:** Seen near Jaraicejo and Monfragüe.
117. **Sardinian Warbler:** seen on most days.
118. **Wester Orphean Warbler:** Seen near Jaraicejo on 22nd April.
119. **Common Whitethroat:** Seen on two days.
120. **Blackcap:** Seen on three days.
121. **Western Bonelli's Warbler:** Heard on several days.
122. **Willow Warbler:** Seen on two days.
123. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on two days.
124. **Crested Tit:** Seen at Miravete on 22nd April.
125. **Blue Tit:** Seen on several days.
126. **Great Tit:** Seen on several days.
127. **Nuthatch:** Seen at Jaraicejo.
128. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Seen at Jaraicejo and Miravete.
129. **Penduline Tit:** Seen at Mérida.
130. **Golden Oriole:** Heard on two days.
131. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen most days.

- 132. **Woodchat Shrike:** Seen most days.
- 133. **Jay:** Seen at Jaraicejo and Monfragüe.
- 134. **Azure-winged Magpie:** Seen daily.
- 135. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
- 136. **Jackdaw:** Seen almost daily.
- 137. **Raven:** Seen most days.
- 138. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
- 139. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
- 140. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen most days.
- 141. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on rice fields.
- 142. **Yellow-crowned Bishop:** A party seen near Mérida on 21st April.
- 143. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen on plains near Trujillo.
- 144. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on rice fields and near Mérida.
- 145. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on rice fields.
- 146. **Chaffinch:** Seen most days.
- 147. **Serin:** Seen most days.
- 148. **Greenfinch:** Seen most days.
- 149. **Goldfinch:** Seen daily.
- 150. **Linnet:** Seen on several days.
- 151. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca and heard at Monfragüe and Jaraicejo.
- 152. **Rock Bunting:** Seen in Monfragüe.
- 153. **Ortolan Bunting:** Seen near Campo Lugar on 19th April.
- 154. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.

Other wildlife

Butterflies

Clouded Yellow

Swallowtail

Green-striped White

Bath White

Small Heath

Brown Argus

Small Copper

Black-eyed Blue

Wall Brown

Speckled Wood

Spanish Marbled White

Lulworth Skipper

Dragonflies

Long Skimmer

Others

Spanish Terrapin

Red-striped Oil Beetle

Iberian hare

Red Deer

Orchids

Champagne

Pink Butterfly

Lax-flowered

Sawfly

Bumblebee

Yellow Bee

Woodcock

Early Spider

Dense-flowered

Green Tongue

Common Tongue

Another species of Tongue