

HOLIDAY REPORT FOR PIERRE AND DANY
Casa Rural El Recuerdo & Birding Extremadura
Dragonflies in mid-summer
27th June – 1st July 2019



Itinerary

27th June 2019: Collection at Cáceres bus station and afternoon near Malpartida de Cáceres

28th June 2019: Las Mestas in Las Hurdes and Tiétar River

29th June 2019: The Ibores mountains and River Almonte

30th June 2019: River Guadiana at Don Alvaro and Mérida, rice fields at Santa Amalia and Alcollarín Reservoir

1st July 2019: Near Malpartida de Cáceres and drop-off at Cáceres bus station.

TRIP REPORT

The visit coincided with the first heatwave of the summer, with temperatures approaching 40°C most afternoons. However, there was generally a light breeze. The visit focused on Odonata and generally we were in the field shortly after 09.00, just as activity was starting.

27th June 2019: Collection at Cáceres bus station and afternoon near Malpartida de Cáceres

Pierre and Dany were met in Cáceres bus station from the Seville bus at 12.30 and we went straight to the Charcas de Millar, lying just east of Malpartida de Cáceres. Here there are a series of small *Typha*-fringed pools in a granite landscape. The afternoon was overcast with sunny periods, with a breeze but hot. **Small** and **Migrant Spreadwings** were abundant, as were **Blue-eyes** and **Iberian Bluetails**. Several showy **Long Skimmers** were found, as well as **Broad Scarlet** and a **Blue Emperor**. The highlight was at least two **Green Hooktails**, which posed very obligingly for us. We also found an injured juvenile **Marsh Harrier** which we arranged to be collected by the local Fauna Recovery Centre, where it transpired that it was suffering from a fractured wing. Then it was onward to base at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.



28th June 2019: Las Mestas in Las Hurdes and Tiétar River

Today we headed to the extreme north-west of Extremadura, to Las Hurdes and the village of Las Mestas, beside the Ladrillar River. We arrived there mid-morning, to ensure that we got to the natural swimming pool before the bathers did, and indeed we enjoyed a good 100 minutes there. It was a wonderful morning. We had superb opportunities to watch the very active **Splendid Cruisers** and **Orange-spotted Emeralds** and had amazing views of **Western Spectre** (perhaps three individuals involved), as well as **Western Demoiselle** and both **pincertails** (**Small Pincertail** were more common). At one moment, an Otter lolloped behind Pierre!



After a stop for refreshments, we visited a site just downstream of the village where there were more **pincertails** (this time mainly **Large**), both **White** and **Orange Featherlegs**, **Copper** and **Western Demoiselles**, **Keeled Skimmer**, several **Orange-spotted Emeralds** and a **Common Goldenring**.

After our picnic there, we drove to River Tiétar, where the temperature had reached about 40°. There we spent about an hour and were rewarded with good views of **Northern Banded Groundlings**, briefly a female **Green Hooktail**, numerous **White Featherlegs**, **Long** and **Keeled Skimmer**, as well as **Broad Scarlets**.

29th June 2019: The Ibores mountains and River Almonte

Today we headed eastwards to the Ibores Mountains, accompanied by Chuty (a local webmaster who wanted to make a short video about our activities). We arrived at the natural swimming pool at Castañar de Ibor just after nine, before the arrival of bathers and just as dragonflies were getting active. It was an excellent morning, with **Winter Damselfly, Orange Featherleg, Small Red Damselfly**, both **pincertails, Pronged Clubtail, Western Spectre, Orange-spotted Emerald** and **Western Demoiselles**. Then we proceeded to a woodland trail where we found **Keeled Skimmer, Common Goldenring** and lots and lots of butterflies.

We had a picnic in the shade beside the River Almonte, near the village of Retamosa. Here **Copper Demoiselles** were numerous, and we also saw **Keeled Skimmer, Broad-bodied Chaser, Blue Emperor** and yet more **Western Spectre**.

We stopped again at the River Almonte, near Aldeacentenera where we are fortunate to find both **Pronged** and **Western Clubtails**, as well as **Epaulet** and **Keeled Skimmers**. As we returned to base, we came across a party of **Egyptian Vultures** accompanied by a **Black (Cinereous) Vulture**.

30th June 2019: River Guadiana at Don Alvaro and Mérida, rice fields at Santa Amalia and Alcollarín Reservoir

Today our exploration took us south-west towards Mérida, through a mixture of open landscapes, seeing birds en route such as **Iberian Grey Shrike** and **Little Bustard**. We made our first stop near Don Alvaro, beside the Guadiana River. We had a fruitless search for the near-mythical Faded Pincertail, but did get good views of **Violet Dropwing** and numerous **White Featherleg**, as well as **Broad Scarlet**.

We proceeded downstream to Mérida, the capital of Extremadura, stopping in parkland beside the Roman Bridge, the longest such structure in existence. Here **Northern Banded Groundlings** were numerous, and we also found **Small Red Rye, Violet Dropwing** and **Broad Scarlet**.

We then returned eastwards onto the vast rice fields near Santa Amalia. Here **Red-veined Darter** were super abundant. There were also large flocks of **Glossy Ibis, Black-winged Stilts** and **Collared Pratincoles**. Our final stop was the reservoir at Alcollarín, where we found a **Lesser Emperor** as well as more **Red-veined Darters** and **Northern Banded Groundlings**.



1st July 2019: Near Malpartida de Cáceres and drop-off at Cáceres bus station.

The heatwave was passing, so the temperatures today were slightly more comfortable. It was our last morning and we elected to return to the pools near Malpártida de Cáceres. As we approached, we had magnificent views of **Bee-eater**, **Iberian Grey** and **Woodchat Shrikes**, **Hoopoe** and **Eurasian Spoonbill**. At the pools there were large numbers of two species of **spreadwings**. We were there just as the dragonfly activity started. We saw at least six or seven **Long Skimmers**, several **Broad Scarlets**, a couple of **Common Darters**, a **Blue Emperor**, and (new for the trip) a **Southern Darter**.

Then it was time to go to Cáceres, with a drop-off at the bus station at 13.00, giving plenty to catch the bus back to Seville.

Checklist of Odonata seen

1. **Copper Demoiselle**: Seen at River Ladrillar on 28th and River Almonte on 29th June.
2. **Western Demoiselle**: Seen at River Ladrillar on 28th and Rivers Ibor and Almonte on 29th June.

3. **Migrant Spreadwing:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres on 27th June and 1st July and River Ibor on 29th June.
4. **Western Willow Spreadwing:** Seen at River Ibor on 29th June.
5. **Small Spreadwing:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres on 27th June and 1st July.
6. **Winter Damselfly:** Seen at River Ibor on 29th June.
7. **Small Red Damselfly:** Seen at River Ibor on 29th June.
8. **Blue-eye:** Seen daily.
9. **Small Red-eye:** Seen at Mérida on 30th June.
10. **Iberian Bluetail:** Seen daily.
11. **Small Bluetail:** Seen at River Tiétar on 28th June.
12. **Large Red Damselfly:** Seen at River Ladrillar on 28th June.
13. **Orange Featherleg:** Seen at River Ladrillar on 28th June and River Ibor on 29th June.
14. **White Featherleg:** Seen at Rivers Ladrillar, Tiétar, Ibor and Guadiana.
15. **Blue Emperor:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres on both visits and River Almonte on 29th June.
16. **Lesser Emperor:** Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir on 30th June.
17. **Western Spectre:** Seen at River Ladrillar on 28th June and Rivers Ibor and Almonte on 29th.
18. **Pronged Clubtail:** Seen at Rivers Ibor and Almonte on 29th June.
19. **Western Clubtail:** Seen at River Almonte on 29th June.
20. **Small Pincertail:** Seen at River Ladrillar on 28th June and Rivers Ibor and Almonte on 29th.
21. **Large Pincertail:** Seen at River Ladrillar on 28th June and Rivers Ibor and Almonte on 29th.
22. **Green Hooktail:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres on 27th June and River Tiétar on 28th.
23. **Common Goldenring:** Seen at River Ladrillar on 28th June and Rivers Ibor and Almonte on 29th.
24. **Splendid Cruiser:** Seen at River Ladrillar at Las Mestas on 28th June.
25. **Orange-spotted Emerald:** Seen at Las Mestas and River Ibor.
26. **Northern Banded Groundling:** Seen at River Tiétar, Mérida and Alcollarín.
27. **Broad Scarlet:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres, Rivers Tiétar and Guadiana, the rice fields and at Alcollarín Reservoir.
28. **Broad-bodied Chaser:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor and River Almonte on 29th June.
29. **Black-tailed Skimmer:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres, Castañar de Ibor and the rice fields at Santa Amalia.
30. **Epaulet Skimmer:** Seen at Almonte River on 29th June.
31. **Keeled Skimmer:** Seen at Rivers Ladrillar, Ibor and Almonte and at Casrañar de Ibor.
32. **Long Skimmer:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres on both visits and at River Tiétar on 28th June.

33. **Red-veined Darter:** Seen at River Almonte on 29th June and on rice fields and at Alcollarín on 30th.
34. **Common Darter:** Seen at River Ibor and at Malpartida de Cáceres.
35. **Southern Darter:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres on 1st July.
36. **Violet Dropwing:** Seen at Guadiana River on 30th June.