

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



SHORT WINTER BREAK FOR ATHYNA, EE LING AND SYED

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

30th November – 2nd December 2024



At Monfragüe National Park

Itinerary

30th November 2024: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres

1st December 2024: Garcíáz and rice fields near Palazuelo

26th November 2024: Arrocampo Reservoir and Monfragüe National Park

TRIP REPORT

30th November 2024: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres

It was generally a bright sunny day with very little wind, making it feel quite warm by the afternoon.

We spent the whole day on the plains between Trujillo and Cáceres, stopping first north of Trujillo on the Monroy Road. Here there were groups of **Eurasian Golden Plover** and we found also parties of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, feeding in the sunshine and flying with their raucous calls.



Pin-tailed Sandgrouse

A male **Hen Harrier** was watched quartering the fields. We had excellent views of **Corn Buntings** on the fences. A little further along, a group of **Red Kites** had clearly been attracted to a roadkill. There was a very obliging **Dartford Warbler** and **Common Chiffchaffs** were numerous. Stopping briefly beside the River Magasca, we watched Eurasian Crag Martins hawking insects.

After an excellent coffee stop in the pretty little main square of Santa Marta de Magasca, we stopped beside the River Tamuja for our picnic. Both **Griffon** and **Cinereous Vultures** joined the **Red Kites** passing along the valley sides.

Back on the plains again, to the south of the river, we had a lovely view of a **Little Owl**, and briefer views of a subadult **Spanish Imperial Eagle**. We then stopped at the entrance of a dirt road. Here we saw a group of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** in flight. Having seen a distant pair of **Spanish Imperial Eagles** displaying far to the south, we were surprised to find another pair

perched on a pylon in the opposite direction, and much closer. One of these birds then glided across our field of view, putting up **Northern Lapwing**, **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** and, most spectacularly, a group of 45 **Great Bustard**. These flew towards us and then passed us in perfect light.



Great Bustard

Smaller birds were not ignored. We had good views of **Thekla's Lark**, **Calandra Lark**, **Stonechat** and **Meadow Pipits**. We completed the afternoon on the plains just west of Trujillo. Here we saw two more **Great Bustard** and a small flock of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**.



Black-bellied Sandgrouse

1st December 2024: Garciáz and rice fields near Palazuelo

Unlike the day before, the morning dawned heavily overcast with some light drizzle. Although it remained generally dry throughout (just some short periods of light rain), it remained overcast, until some breaks in the cloud in the afternoon.

We ascended first the hills behind the village of Garciáz. This beautiful mixed forest was rather quite bird wise, until we had finished our walk and quite close to where we had parked, came across a mixed species flock. Here we had lovely views of **Crested Tit**, briefer views of **Firecrest**, as well as **Long-tailed Tit** and **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**.

We then descended and walked for a while in a mixed oak grove. Here we had better views of **Firecrest**, as well as species such as **Great and Blue Tit**, **Short-toed Treecreeper**, **Eurasian Hoopoe** and **Song Thrush**.

After coffee near the village of Campo Lugar, we explore the southern edge of the village and found a wintering flock of about 50 **Eurasian Stone Curlew**, which we had good views of in flight.



Stone Curlew

Just to the south lay the rice fields of Palazuelo, where we spent the rest of the afternoon. The most memorable of the visit were the huge numbers of **Common Crane** (perhaps over ten thousand birds). There was also a good scattering of waders such as **Kentish Plover**, **Ruff**, **Dunlin**, **Spotted Redshank** and **Wood Sandpiper**. **Western Marsh Harriers** were numerous. We also saw a distant **Squacco Heron**. There were large numbers of wagtails (mainly **White Wagtail** but a couple of **Western Yellow Wagtails** were found), **Water** and **Meadow Pipits**, and the amazing sight of vast flocks of **Spanish Sparrows**.



Common Crane

26th November 2024: Arrocampo Reservoir and Monfragüe National Park

The day started as rather overcast, with moments of very light rain, but it soon progressed to generally sunny conditions. We started first at the marsh beside the Arrocampo Reservoir. Here we spent time on the eastern shore, beside the fringing vegetation. We managed to get sightings of **Penduline Tit**, **Western Marsh Harrier**, **Western Swamphen**, a brief view of a **Bluethroat** and we heard **Water Rail** and **Bearded Tit**. **Common Chiffchaffs** were amazingly abundant and we had superb views of **Sardinian Warbler**.

After coffee at the cafeteria close by (where **Barn Swallows** hawked insects), we had a second stop beside the western end of the marsh, where there was huge flock of **Goldfinch** and **Serins**. At an isolated water body, there were large numbers of **Common Snipe** present.

We then moved on to the Monfragüe National Park, making our first stop (where we also had our picnic) at the beautiful viewpoint at Portilla del Tietar. Here we watched both **Griffon** and **Cinereous Vultures** and had a good view of a **Golden Eagle**. We progressed through the park making three other stops, and seeing **Eurasian Sparrowhawk**, **Hawfinch**, amongst other birds, as well as several **Red Deer**, before reaching the majestic Salto de Gitano viewpoint.



Red Deer

The impressive cliff opposite was the focal point for dozens of **Griffon Vultures** and we enjoyed a long stay there, seeing also smaller birds such as **Black Redstart**, **Long-tailed Tit**, **Sardinian Warbler** and **Blackcap**.



Sardinian Warbler

We made our final stop below the Monfragüe Castle to enjoy seeing the Griffon Vultures at even closer proximity, as they perched and preened on the cliff, as well as flying away and returning. Distant groups of vultures circled over the vast landscape to our south.

BIRDS SEEN OR HEARD (Lifers in bold)

1. **Egyptian Goose**
2. Northern Shoveler
3. Gadwall
4. Mallard
5. Eurasian Teal
6. **Red-legged Partridge**
7. Feral Pigeon
8. **Common Woodpigeon**
9. **Eurasian Collared Dove**
10. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**
11. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**
12. **Great Bustard**
13. **Water Rail**
14. **Western Swamphen**
15. **Common Crane**
16. **Stone Curlew**
17. Grey Plover
18. **European Golden Plover**
19. Common Ringed Plover
20. Little Ringed Plover
21. **Northern Lapwing**
22. Kentish Plover
23. Common Snipe
24. Green Sandpiper
25. Wood Sandpiper
26. Common Redshank
27. Spotted Redshank
28. Common Greenshank
29. Common Sandpiper
30. Ruff
31. Dunlin
32. Black-headed Gull
33. Lesser Black-backed Gull
34. Little Grebe
35. **White Stork**
36. Great Cormorant
37. **Eurasian Spoonbill**
38. **Little Bittern**
39. **Squacco Heron**
40. Grey Heron

41. Cattle Egret
42. Little Egret
43. Great White Egret
- 44. Greater Flamingo**
45. Cinereous Vulture
- 46. Griffon Vulture**
- 47. Spanish Imperial Eagle**
- 48. Golden Eagle**
- 49. Eurasian Sparrowhawk**
- 50. Western Marsh Harrier**
- 51. Hen Harrier**
- 52. Red Kite**
- 53. Common Buzzard**
- 54. Little Owl**
- 55. Eurasian Hoopoe**
56. Common Kingfisher
57. Great Spotted Woodpecker
- 58. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**
- 59. Eurasian Wryneck**
60. Common Kestrel
- 61. Iberian Grey Shrike**
62. Eurasian Jay
- 63. Iberian Magpie**
- 64. Common Magpie**
- 65. Eurasian Jackdaw**
- 66. Common Raven**
- 67. Eurasian Blue Tit**
- 68. Great Tit**
- 69. Crested Tit**
- 70. Eurasian Penduline Tit**
- 71. Eurasian Skylark**
- 72. Thekla's Lark**
- 73. Crested Lark**
- 74. Calandra Lark**
- 75. Bearded Tit**
76. Zitting Cisticola
77. Eurasian Crag Martin
78. Barn Swallow
- 79. Common Chiffchaff**
- 80. Cetti's Warbler**
81. Long-tailed Tit
- 82. Eurasian Blackcap**
- 83. Sardinian Warbler**
- 84. Dartford Warbler**
- 85. Common Firecrest**
86. Eurasian Nuthatch
- 87. Short-toed Treecreeper**
- 88. Eurasian Wren**

89. Common Starling
- 90. Spotless Starling**
- 91. Mistle Thrush**
- 92. Song Thrush**
- 93. Eurasian Blackbird**
- 94. Eurasian Robin**
- 95. Bluethroat**
96. Black Redstart
97. Blue Rock Thrush
- 98. European Stonechat**
- 99. Yellow-crowned Bishop**
100. Common Waxbill
101. Red Avadavat
102. House Sparrow
- 103. Spanish Sparrow**
104. White Wagtail
- 105. Western Yellow Wagtail**
- 106. Meadow Pipit**
- 107. Water Pipit**
- 108. Common Chaffinch**
- 109. Hawfinch**
- 110. Common Linnet**
- 111. European Goldfinch**
- 112. European Serin**
- 113. Corn Bunting**