

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



MID-WINTER HOLIDAY FOR PETROS AND LOUKIA

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

7th January – 12th January 2024



Itinerary

7th January 2024: Pick-up at Madrid airport and afternoon at Arrocampo Reservoir.

8th January 2024: Plains near Cáceres and Trujillo

9th January 2024: Madrigalejo, Campo Lugar, rice fields of Hernán Cortes and Palazuelo, Alcollarín and Abertura, Belén Plains

10th January 2024: Plains near Trujillo, La Garganta, Monfragüe National Park

11th January 2024: La Serena, Los Hornachos, Sierra Brava

12th January 2024: Return to Madrid

TRIP REPORT

7th January 2024: Pick-up at Madrid airport and afternoon at Arrocampo Reservoir.

Martin met Petros and Loukia at Terminal 2 of Madrid airport at about 13.00 and we headed off around the southern ring-road of Madrid under clear blue skies. Fresh snow lay on the Guadarrama Mountains to the north of the city. Small parties of **Monk Parakeets** flew over the road as we skirted the city. The traffic was quite light and soon we were out on the motorway heading to Extremadura. **Red Kites** and **White Storks** were the main birds seen on the journey. We stopped for refreshments about an hour into the journey. We stopped mid-afternoon for some birding at the Arrocampo Reservoir, making two stops beside the marsh. At the first there was a small roosting flock of **Black-crowned Night Herons**. **Little Bittern** was heard but not seen. **Common Chiffchaffs** were numerous in the emergent vegetation. The second stop was more productive as we could view part of the marsh from a slightly elevated vantage. We had good views of **Western Swamphen**, again lots of **Common Chiffchaffs**, and just before we left we had a lovely view of a **Bluethroat** preening in the late afternoon sunshine, close to a very bright male **Serin**. A small party of **Common Waxbills** were present and male **Bearded Tit** was seen briefly.



We then continued our journey. Reaching Casa Rural El Recuerdo at 18.15, we were welcomed by Claudia who had prepared a delicious evening meal.

8th January 2024: Plains near Cáceres and Trujillo

It was a beautiful day with clear skies in the morning, sunshine with little wind, although with more general cloud in the afternoon. We stopped first just west of Trujillo, at an area of higher ground to check a field where we saw, rather distantly, a large flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**.

We then headed west towards the provincial capital of Cáceres and entered the plains lying between Cáceres and Trujillo. The vast almost treeless landscape often gives an empty feel, but as soon as one stops and starts looking, birds will be found. So it was today. At our first stop we saw a subadult **Spanish Eagle** perched on a nearby pylon. In the other direction, there was a spectacular group of over 60 **Great Bustards** feeding in a field full of yellow flowers.



There were **Calandra Larks** and **Common Chiffchaffs** and a fine male **Hen Harrier** quartered a field. On our return we watched the subadult **Spanish Eagle** being shoved off its perch by an adult. At a third stop, we found a flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** on the ground. Good views were obtained of **Iberian Grey Shrike** and **Thekla Lark**.

After an excellent coffee break in the village we returned to the plains, and spent most of the afternoon there seeing **Red-legged Partridge**, **Hen Harrier** and **Merlin**. On our way back to Trujillo, stops along the road yielded **Spanish Sparrow**, more **Iberian Grey Shrikes** and **Iberian Magpies**.

We completed the afternoon on the Belen Plains where we found a small group of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** and had quite close views of eight **Great Bustards**.

9th January 2024: Madrigalejo, Campo Lugar, rice fields of Hernán Cortes and Palazuelo, Alcollarín and Abertura, Belén Plains

It was a day with fine weather throughout, less frosty in the morning than the day before and some cloud cover in the afternoon. We packed quite a lot into the day, with a start near Madrigalejo where we had excellent views of four Black-winged Kites and a very obliging **Wryneck**. From there we crossed the plains of Campo Lugar, finding a close group of 24 **Great Bustard** and large flocks of **Calandra Larks**. Near the village of Campo Lugar there were over twenty roosting **Stone Curlew**. After coffee, we headed to the area near Hernán Cortes where we enjoyed fabulous views of four **Short-eared Owls**, huge numbers of **Common Cranes**, flocks of **Red Avadavats** and a group of six **Brent Geese**.



We returned via the rice fields near Palazuelo, where there were parties of waders such as **Dunlin** and **Common Ringed Plover**. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were resting at the Sierra Brava reservoir. We stopped for our picnic at the dam of Alcollarín Reservoir, where there were huge numbers of wintering duck, mainly **Shoveler**. A group of **Crag Martins** hawked insects above us. Nearby on the way to Abertura, we had brief views of an **Eagle Owl** and better views of **Dartford Warbler** and **Rock Bunting**. We returned to the Belén Plains to look, unsuccessfully for Little Bustard, but did have excellent views of **Cinereous** and **Griffon Vultures** on the ground.

10th January 2024: Plains near Trujillo, La Garganta, Monfragüe National Park

It was a heavily cloudy, foggy day throughout, although the weather cleared a little by the end of the afternoon. We started the first part of the morning back on the plains near Trujillo to look (unsuccessfully) for Little Bustard, although we did have good views of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** and **Hen Harrier**. After coffee we headed to the northern extreme of Extremadura, in the mountains near the village of La Garganta. Here we watched a pair of **Carrión Crows** (one of the target species for the trip) and heard **Iberian Green Woodpeckers**. As clouds started to clear we could see the fresh snow lying on the higher mountain sides.

Returned to lower altitude we made a couple of stops in the Monfragüe National Park. Hundreds of **Griffon Vultures** were using the break in the weather to fly a few circuits, but otherwise it was rather quiet. We ended the afternoon with a short visit to see the beautiful main square of Trujillo.



11th January 2024: La Serena, Los Hornachos, Sierra Brava

The day was mostly heavily overcast with rather misty conditions in the morning, and some sunshine by the end of the afternoon. We took the long drive down to La Serena, the vast plains in the south of Extremadura to give ourselves another chance for **Little Bustard**. This time we were lucky, seeing a small group as soon as we stopped and then a few minutes later a larger group flying up from a cereal field. Despite some searching afterwards, we did not find any more, but we did see Black-bellied Sandgrouse and had good views of birds like **Golden Plover**, **Iberian Grey Shrike** and **Eurasian Teal**. We then drove westwards (seeing a **Spanish Eagle** on the way) to the town of Hornachos where we had coffee. We then explored a nearby area, the Chozos of Llera, where we saw a group of about twenty **Red-billed Chough** and two **Iberian Green Woodpeckers**, as well **Red-legged Partridge**.

Then we drove to the edge of the town, had our picnic and then took a very pleasant walk into the Valley de los Cristianos. We had excellent views of **Black Wheatears**, **Rock Bunting**, **Blue Rock Thrush** and were delighted to find a wintering **Ring Ouzel**.

As we drove north from Hornachos, a **Golden Eagle** flew over.

We completed the afternoon at the rice fields of Casas del Hitos and the Sierra Brava reservoir. Some distant **Grey Lag Geese** were seen, and large numbers of **Northern Pintail**, and other duck such as **Wigeon** and **Common Shelduck**. It was then time, as the afternoon was drawing to a close, to return to Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

12th January 2024: Return to Madrid

We set off from Casa Rural El Recuerdo just before 06.30 for the return to Madrid, which we approached as the sun was rising. We got to Terminal 4 at the airport in good time for the check-in for Petros's and Loukia's onward flight.

LIST OF BIRD SPECIES SEEN

The focus of the short visit to Extremadura was a list of target species and we found all of the species that were possible, with a few additional surprises as well!

1. **Grey Lag Goose:** Seen at Sierra Brava reservoir.
2. **Brent Goose:** Six seen near Hernán Cortes.
3. **Egyptian Goose:** Seen on two days.
4. **Common Shelduck:** Seen at Sierra Brava reservoir.
5. **Wigeon:** Seen at Sierra Brava reservoir.
6. **Gadwall:** Seen on the plains east of Cáceres.
7. **Teal:** Seen on pools in the plains.
8. **Mallard:** Seen on most days.
9. **Pintail:** Seen at Sierra Brava reservoir.
10. **Northern Shoveler:** Seen on three days, huge numbers at Alcollarín.
11. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca and at Chozos de Llera.
12. **Little Grebe:** Seen on three days.
13. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín.
14. **Great Cormorant:** Seen on three days.
15. **Little Bittern:** Heard at Arrocampo.
16. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo.
17. **Cattle Egret:** Seen on three days.
18. **Little Egret:** Seen on one day.
19. **Great Egret:** Seen on one day.
20. **Grey Heron:** Seen almost daily.
21. **White Stork:** Seen every day.
22. **Spoonbill:** Seen on pool near Campo Lugar.
23. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen on two days.
24. **Cinereous Vulture:** Seen on three days.
25. **Spanish Eagle:** Three birds seen on plains near Santa Marta de Magasca and one bird near Hornachos.
26. **Golden Eagle:** One seen near Hornachos.
27. **Red Kite:** Seen daily.
28. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost daily.
29. **Hen Harrier:** Males seen on the rice fields and plains on three days.
30. **Common Buzzard:** Seen almost daily.
31. **Black-winged Kite:** Seen near Madrigalejo.
32. **Common Kestrel:** Seen most days.
33. **Merlin:** Seen on the plains.
34. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo.
35. **Moorhen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
36. **Western Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
37. **Common Coot:** Seen at Alcollarín.
38. **Common Crane:** Seen almost daily.
39. **Little Bustard:** Seen on La Serena plains.

40. **Great Bustard:** Seen on the plains east of Cáceres, Belén Plains and Zorita Plains.
41. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on the plains east of Cáceres.
42. **Stone Curlew:** Seen near Campo Lugar.
43. **Common Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
44. **Kentish Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
45. **Golden Plover:** Seen almost daily.
46. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen daily.
47. **Dunlin:** Seen on the rice fields.
48. **Common Snipe:** Seen on two days.
49. **Greenshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
50. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen on the rice fields.
51. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen most days.
52. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen at Sierra Brava.
53. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on the Belén plains and La Serena.
54. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen north of Trujillo and east of Cáceres.
55. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
56. **Woodpigeon:** Seen at Monfragüe.
57. **Collared Dove:** Seen almost daily.
58. **Eagle Owl:** Seen near Abertura.
59. **Short-eared Owl:** Four seen near Hernán Cortes.
60. **Little Owl:** Seen on the plains east of Cáceres.
61. **Kingfisher:** Seen on two days.
62. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost daily.
63. **Wryneck:** Seen near Madrigalejo.
64. **Iberian Green Woodpecker:** Seen at Hornachos and heard at La Garganta.
65. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
66. **Crested Lark:** Seen at Arrocampo.
67. **Thekla Lark:** Seen most days.
68. **Skylark:** Seen on the plains north of Trujillo.
69. **Crag Martin:** Seen on two days.
70. **Barn Swallow:** Seen at Arrocampo.
71. **Western House Martin:** Seen at Chozos de Llera.
72. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen daily.
73. **Water Pipit:** Seen on the rice fields.
74. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen on the rice fields.
75. **White Wagtail:** Seen almost daily.
76. **Wren:** Heard on several days.
77. **Dunnock:** Heard at Hornachos.
78. **Robin:** Heard at Hornachos
79. **Bluethroat:** Seen at Arrocampo.
80. **Black Redstart:** Seen at Hornachos.
81. **Stonechat:** Seen daily.
82. **Black Wheatear:** Seen at Hornachos.
83. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Hornachos.
84. **Blackbird:** Seen almost daily.
85. **Ring Ouzel.** One seen at Hornachos.
86. **Song Thrush:** Seen at Arrocampo.
87. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen north of Trujillo.

88. **Cetti's Warbler**: Seen at Arrocampo.
89. **Zitting Cisticola**: Seen at Arrocampo.
90. **Dartford Warbler**: Seen at Abertura.
91. **Sardinian Warbler**: Seen at Monfragüe and Hornachos.
92. **Blackcap**: Seen on three days.
93. **Chiffchaff**: Seen daily.
94. **Blue Tit**: Seen on one day.
95. **Great Tit**: Seen on three days.
96. **Bearded Tit**: Seen at Arrocampo.
97. **Iberian Grey Shrike**: Seen almost daily.
98. **Eurasian Jay**: Seen near Hornachos.
99. **Iberian Magpie**: Seen almost daily.
100. **Common Magpie**: Seen daily.
101. **Red-billed Chough**: Seen at Chozos de Llera.
102. **Jackdaw**: Seen on two days.
103. **Carrion Crow**: Seen at La Garganta.
104. **Raven**: Seen almost daily.
105. **Spotless Starling**: Seen daily.
106. **House Sparrow**: Seen daily.
107. **Spanish Sparrow**: Seen almost daily.
108. **Rock Sparrow**: Seen at Arrocampo.
109. **Common Waxbill**: Seen at Arrocampo.
110. **Red Avadavat**: Seen on the rice fields.
111. **Chaffinch**: Seen almost daily.
112. **Serin**: Seen on two days.
113. **Greenfinch**: Seen on one day.
114. **Goldfinch**: Seen almost daily.
115. **Linnet**: Seen on two days.
116. **Siskin**: Seen on one day.
117. **Rock Bunting**: Seen near Abertura, at La Garganta and Hornachos.
118. **Corn Bunting**: Seen daily.

Mammals

Red Deer

Rabbit

Red Fox

Egyptian Mongoose