

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



SHORT WINTER BREAK FOR KEVIN AND MORGAN

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

31st December 2024 – 3rd January 2025



Itinerary

31st December 2024: Collection from Lisbon

1st January 2025: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres

2nd January 2025: Arrocampo Reservoir and Monfragüe National Park

3rd January 2025: Woodland near Conquista, Sierra Brava reservoir, the rice fields near Palazuelo and Alcollarín

TRIP REPORT

31st December 2024: Collection from Lisbon

Martin met Kevin and Morgan at Lisbon airport at 3 pm and we quickly navigated the traffic out of the city, crossing the amazing Vaso de Gama bridge over the Tagus River (17 km long). We saw groups of **Greater Flamingos** on the salt pans on the southern side of the river and then numerous **White Storks** on their nests on the pylons beside the highway. We did a short stop at about halfway to stretch our legs and then completed the journey in darkness, arriving at Casas Rural El Recuerdo at just after 8 pm.

After dinner and a chance to freshen up we reconvened just before midnight to welcome in the New Year in traditional Spanish fashion of twelve grapes and a glass of Cava.

1st January 2025: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres

It was a bright sunny day with very little wind. Although there was a touch of ground frost first thing, it became quite warm by the afternoon.



Pin-tailed Sandgrouse

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 **Northern Lapwing** and we found also parties of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, feeding in the sunshine and flying with their raucous calls, showing their amazing behaviour as the main flock disintegrated into small, noisy parties in all directions. Three **Little Bustards** were found, remarkably camouflaged in tall dry vegetation. We had excellent views of **Corn Buntings** on the fences. There were flocks of **Goldfinch** and **Linnet** too, as well as noisy **Calandra Larks** and our first views of **Crested** and **Thekla Larks**.

We stopped beside the River Magasca. A **Common Kingfisher** sped past us twice, and a **Grey Wagtail** was also present. We watched **Sardinian Warblers** and **Blackcaps**, the former bathing on droplets of thawed frost on the leaves of brambles. We got our first views of **Cinereous** and **Griffon Vultures**, whilst **Red Kites** continued to be in the sky almost the whole time.

After an excellent rest stop in the pretty little main square of Santa Marta de Magasca where **Serins** were singing, we stopped beside the River Tamuja for our picnic. It was a tremendous stay there. As well as numerous **Red Kites**, and **Griffon** and **Cinereous Vultures**, we were also rewarded by close views of an immature **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, which we subsequently watched being chased off by an adult. Several further views were had of both: in excellent light. A **Dartford Warbler** showed itself briefly.



Spanish Eagle

Back on the plains again, to the south of the river, we spent a long time watching vultures and kites feeding on a sheep carcass, interrupted from time to time by a large dog. Above us, in the clear blue sky, vultures circled, joined once by an immature **Spanish Imperial Eagle**. At one stage there was also a distant pair of adults calling. Small birds included flocks of **Eurasian Skylarks**, **Meadow Pipits** and a **Black Redstart**. A **Hen Harrier** was watched quartering a field and shortly afterwards a **Western Marsh Harrier**.

There were some distant sandgrouse on the ground: groups of both **Pin-tailed** and **Black-bellied**, the latter we also saw in flight later one. We had a lovely view of a **Little Owl**.

We completed the afternoon on the plains just west of Trujillo. The highlight was group of four male **Great Bustard** which we watched at length in perfect light.



Great Bustard

2nd January 2025: Arrocampo Reservoir and Monfragüe National Park

We set off with a frosty morning and clear skies, but by the time we approached our first destination we were in thick fog. Visibility was still poor when we reached Arrocampo, but with the chance that the fog might slowly lift, we opted to stay there rather than lose birding time to drive somewhere else. For the first hour or so, it was a struggle, we heard birds but not much was showing. It was a delightful **Bluethroat** that marked the change. Out it hopped onto the open ground in front of us and spent several minutes foraging, completely oblivious of our presence.

As visibility slowly improved we started to see a few **Little Egrets**, a **Black-crowned Night Heron** was watched fast asleep and two **Western Swamphens** emerged from the reeds. We were also lucky enough to watch a **Penduline Tit** fly across the reedbed.

Close by on a small body of water, we enjoyed watching, now with much better visibility, an interesting selection of shore birds, including **Black-winged Stilt**, **Black-tailed Godwit** and

Spotted Redshank. Two **Water Pipits** were seen perched, unusually, in a tree, and **Barn Swallows** hawked insects.



Bluethroat

We then drove into the Monfragüe National Park where we spent the rest of the day. We had our picnic overlooking the rockface at Portilla del Tiétar, a peaceful place where **Griffon Vultures** lounged in the sunshine, brought in nesting material and mated, rather noisily! Our first male **Blue Rock Thrush** of the day was also found.

In the mixed woodland at the Malavuelta, we had excellent views of a **Hawfinch** and **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, a **Crested Tit** and rather briefer views of at least two **Redwing**. We made a couple of other stops, watching **Griffon** and **Cinereous Vultures** wheeling in the sky, joined at one point by a **White Stork**. At the grand finale, the Salto del Gitano, we enjoyed the combination of superbly close views of vultures set in a truly spectacular quartzite gorge.

3rd January 2025: Woodland near Conquista, Sierra Brava reservoir, the rice fields near Palazuelo and Alcollarín

It was another crisp and frosty morning and we ascended the hill behind the village of Conquista to spend the first hour of the day in some beautiful mixed oak *dehesa*. Here we found a good selection of small birds such as a **Firecrest**, some **Long-tailed Tits**, **Eurasian Nuthatch**, a small flock of **Rock Sparrows** and a group of enchanting **Woodlarks**.

From there we headed south, crossing the plains near Zorita and then stopping beside the Sierra Brava reservoir. Here there was a large raft of **Common Shelduck** and a party of six **Pied Avocet**, alongside a range of duck species such as **Pintail** and **Eurasian Wigeon**. This reservoir

provides water for the rice fields, and we started our visit to this landscape nearby where we saw our first **Common Cranes** foraging on the stubble fields, as well as some wintering **Grey Lag Geese**.



Common Crane

Nearby in an area of rough grassland and scattered trees we watched a **Black-winged Kite** which sat perched and preening on a tree.

After a rest stop at a café at the edge of Madrigalejo we entered an area of rice fields to the west. **Common Cranes** were again present in many of the stubble fields. Beside the River Ruercas, we had our picnic and watched a selection of small birds in the reed-filled river: **Penduline Tit**, **Common Waxbills** and the ubiquitous **Common Chiffchaffs**. **Western Marsh Harriers** flew overhead, whilst **Water Rails** squealed in the cover of the reeds.

To the west lay further rice fields, which held large numbers of **Common Cranes** and an interesting array of shorebirds including flocks of **Dunlin**, some **Kentish Plovers**, **Little Stint** and **Spotted Redshank**.

We stopped beside the village of Campo Lugar to see a few roosting **Stone Curlew**: such bizarre birds. Then it was onward to the Alcollarín reservoir where we spent the rest of the afternoon. The conditions were perfect: calm and sunny and the ducks were in their thousands across the water surface. They were almost all **Shoveler**, but there was also **Mallard**, **Eurasian Teal**, **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Northern Pintail** and **Gadwall**. Three species of grebe were present: **Great Crested**, **Eared** and **Little**. We were pleased to find our hoped-for **Black Storks** and **Eurasian Spoonbill** too.

It was the conclusion of a very happy and very productive three days of birding in Extremadura.



BIRDS SEEN OR HEARD

1. Grey Lag Goose
2. Egyptian Goose
3. Common Shelduck
4. Northern Shoveler
5. Gadwall
6. Eurasian Wigeon
7. Mallard
8. Northern Pintail
9. Eurasian Teal
10. Red-legged Partridge
11. Feral Pigeon
12. Common Woodpigeon
13. Eurasian Collared Dove
14. Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
15. Black-bellied Sandgrouse
16. Great Bustard
17. Little Bustard
18. Water Rail
19. Common Moorhen
20. Eurasian Coot
21. Western Swamphen

22. Common Crane
23. Stone Curlew
24. Black-winged Stilt
25. Pied Avocet
26. European Golden Plover
27. Common Ringed Plover
28. Little Ringed Plover
29. Northern Lapwing
30. Kentish Plover
31. Black-tailed Godwit
32. Common Snipe
33. Green Sandpiper
34. Wood Sandpiper
35. Common Redshank
36. Spotted Redshank
37. Common Greenshank
38. Common Sandpiper
39. Dunlin
40. Little Stint
41. Black-headed Gull
42. Lesser Black-backed Gull
43. Little Grebe
44. Great Crested Grebe
45. Eared Grebe
46. Black Stork
47. White Stork
48. Great Cormorant
49. Eurasian Spoonbill
50. Little Bittern
51. Black-crowned Night Heron
52. Little Egret
53. Western Cattle Egret
54. Great White Egret
55. Grey Heron
56. Greater Flamingo
57. Black-winged Kite
58. Cinereous Vulture
59. Griffon Vulture
60. Spanish Imperial Eagle
61. Eurasian Sparrowhawk
62. Western Marsh Harrier
63. Hen Harrier
64. Red Kite
65. Common Buzzard
66. Little Owl
67. Eurasian Hoopoe
68. Common Kingfisher
69. Great Spotted Woodpecker

70. Common Kestrel
71. Peregrine Falcon
72. Iberian Grey Shrike
73. Eurasian Jay
74. Iberian Magpie
75. Common Magpie
76. Eurasian Jackdaw
77. Common Raven
78. Crested Tit
79. Eurasian Blue Tit
80. Great Tit
81. Eurasian Penduline Tit
82. Woodlark
83. Eurasian Skylark
84. Thekla's Lark
85. Crested Lark
86. Calandra Lark
87. Zitting Cisticola
88. Eurasian Crag Martin
89. Barn Swallow
90. Western House Martin
91. Common Chiffchaff
92. Cetti's Warbler
93. Long-tailed Tit
94. Eurasian Blackcap
95. Sardinian Warbler
96. Dartford Warbler
97. Common Firecrest
98. Eurasian Nuthatch
99. Common Starling
100. Spotless Starling
101. Mistle Thrush
102. Song Thrush
103. Redwing
104. Eurasian Blackbird
105. Eurasian Robin
106. Bluethroat
107. Black Redstart
108. Blue Rock Thrush
109. European Stonechat
110. Common Waxbill
111. Red Avadavat
112. House Sparrow
113. Spanish Sparrow
114. Eurasian Tree Sparrow
115. Rock Sparrow
116. Gray Wagtail
117. White Wagtail

- 118. Meadow Pipit
- 119. Water Pipit
- 120. Common Chaffinch
- 121. Hawfinch
- 122. Common Linnet
- 123. European Goldfinch
- 124. European Serin
- 125. Corn Bunting