

# BIRDING EXTREMADURA



LATE AUTUMN IN EXTREMADURA FOR CATHERINE AND ANDREW

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

1<sup>st</sup> November – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025



## Itinerary

1<sup>st</sup> November 2025: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2025: Plains west of Trujillo and east of Cáceres

3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025: Lobón, Mérida and Cornalvo

4<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Caparra and Monfragüe National Park

5<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Free day: Trujillo

6<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Rice fields near Madrigalejo and Medellín

7<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Rice fields near Madrigalejo, Vegas Altas, Palazuelo and the Orellana and Alcollarín Reservoirs

8<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Arrocampo and return to Madrid

## TRIP REPORT

### 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura

Martin met Catherine and Andrew at terminal 4 of Madrid Airport shortly after 17.00. Under overcast skies we passed the southern flanks of Madrid on the ring-road, before taking the motorway south-westwards out of the city. The traffic was light, and we made excellent progress, taking a stop at about the halfway mark for refreshments. Apart from a very heavy shower when we were about half an hour from base, we had a smooth ride. We reached Casa Rural El Recuerdo to be welcomed by Claudia and the evening meal, washed down by a bottle of local red wine.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2025: Plains west of Trujillo and east of Cáceres

After a night with considerable rain, the day dawned clear and we enjoyed a largely sunny day with just light south-westerly winds. We explored the plains to the west of Trujillo, walking along a drovers' trail. A **Woodlark** was singing as we arrived and along the track, we saw both **Crested** and **Thekla Lark**, as well as numerous **Calandra Larks**. Delicate autumn bulbs were in flower still: **Autumn Snowdrop**, **Autumn Squill** and the exquisite **Serotine Narcissus**. Also delicate but much harder to see well were the male **Rambur's Pellicle** moths that were relentlessly on the move to search for their flightless females.

We made a couple of stops to scan along the trail: seeing a group of **Little Bustard**, a **Great Bustard** and a flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**. A juvenile **Spanish Imperial Eagle** soared overhead and we also had excellent views of both vulture species and **Red Kites**. There were large flocks of **Lapwing** and **Spotless Starlings**.

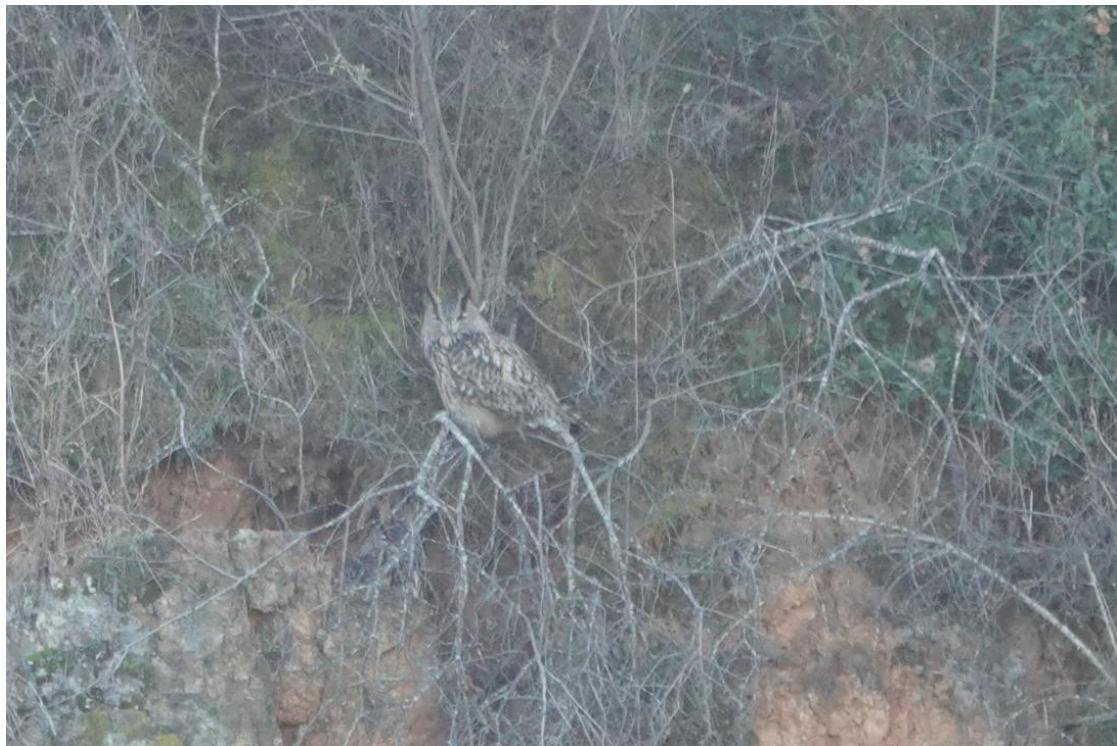
After coffee in the little village of Santa Marta de Maggasa, which was very busy after the fiestas the previous evening, we stopped for our picnic overlooking the Tamuja River. More vultures and **Red Kites** were seen.



*Great Bustards*

The afternoon was spent on the plains to the east of Cáceres: Here we saw another four **Great Bustard**, some rather distant **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, two **Hen Harriers** and large flocks of small birds like **Spanish Sparrows**, **Corn Buntings** and **Calandra Lark**.

**3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025: Lobón, Mérida and Cornalvo**



*Eagle Owl*

It had been a clear sky during the night, and the day dawned rather fresh, but with only light winds and plenty of sunshine, it warmed up to a very pleasant 22° C by the afternoon. We drove across country to Santa Cruz de la Sierra and then onto the motorway, past Mérida and then west towards Badajoz. We left the highway beside the River Guadiana and taking a track stopped by the river overlooking a steep hillside. Almost immediately we had found our hoped-for species: a stunning **Eagle Owl** perched right out in the open, staring at us and occasionally blinking. We treasured the moments watching this beautiful bird. As we stood, we also saw **Common Waxbills**, there were several **Chiffchaffs** and, just before we left an **Osprey** flew up the valley.

We retraced our steps to Mérida and parked close to the river, taking a short walk across the park and onto the Roman Bridge. As we crossed it, we found a **Purple Swamphen** feeding at the edge of an island. We had heard two or three **Little Bitterns**, but luckily, we found a male, incredibly well hidden, but very close to the bridge itself.

After coffee in the Plaza Mayor, we visited the Arch of Trajan and the edge of a nearby Temple. We then walked to see the Temple of Diana before returning to the car and picnic in the park, where we had great views of a couple of **Hoopoes**.

After lunch we visited the Casa de Miteo, a large Roman villa with frescoes and mosaics, close to the Bull Ring. Butterflies such as **Lang's Short-tailed Blue** and a **Peacock** were seen there. We then completed the afternoon with a visit to the Cornalvo Natural Park, stopping a small pool where there was a good selection of birds including **Rock Sparrows**, **Water Pipit**, **Wood**

**Sandpipers** and **Green Sandpipers**, amongst others. There was beautiful display of **Autumn Buttercup** and **Serotine Narcissus** in flower.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Cáparra and Monfragüe National Park

It was a dry and mainly sunny day, with a south-westerly breeze, which at times was a bit blustery. Heading north, we took the road through a vast *dehesa* landscape to Torrejón El Rubio and then onward to the Monfragüe National Park. We made a stop opposite the vast cliff of Peña Falcón. There were indeed two **Peregrine Falcons** flying over the top of the rock, making occasional swerves for **Crag Martins**. Both **Black** and Griffon Vultures wheeled with them. We also saw a **Blue Rock Thrush**. We then continued, north of the park and past Plasencia, entering the Ambroz valley, with the Gredos Mountains to our right. After a coffee at a small service station, we made our way through a lovely *dehesa* landscape to the Roman city of Cáparra. Small groups of **Common Cranes** were feeding amongst the trees.

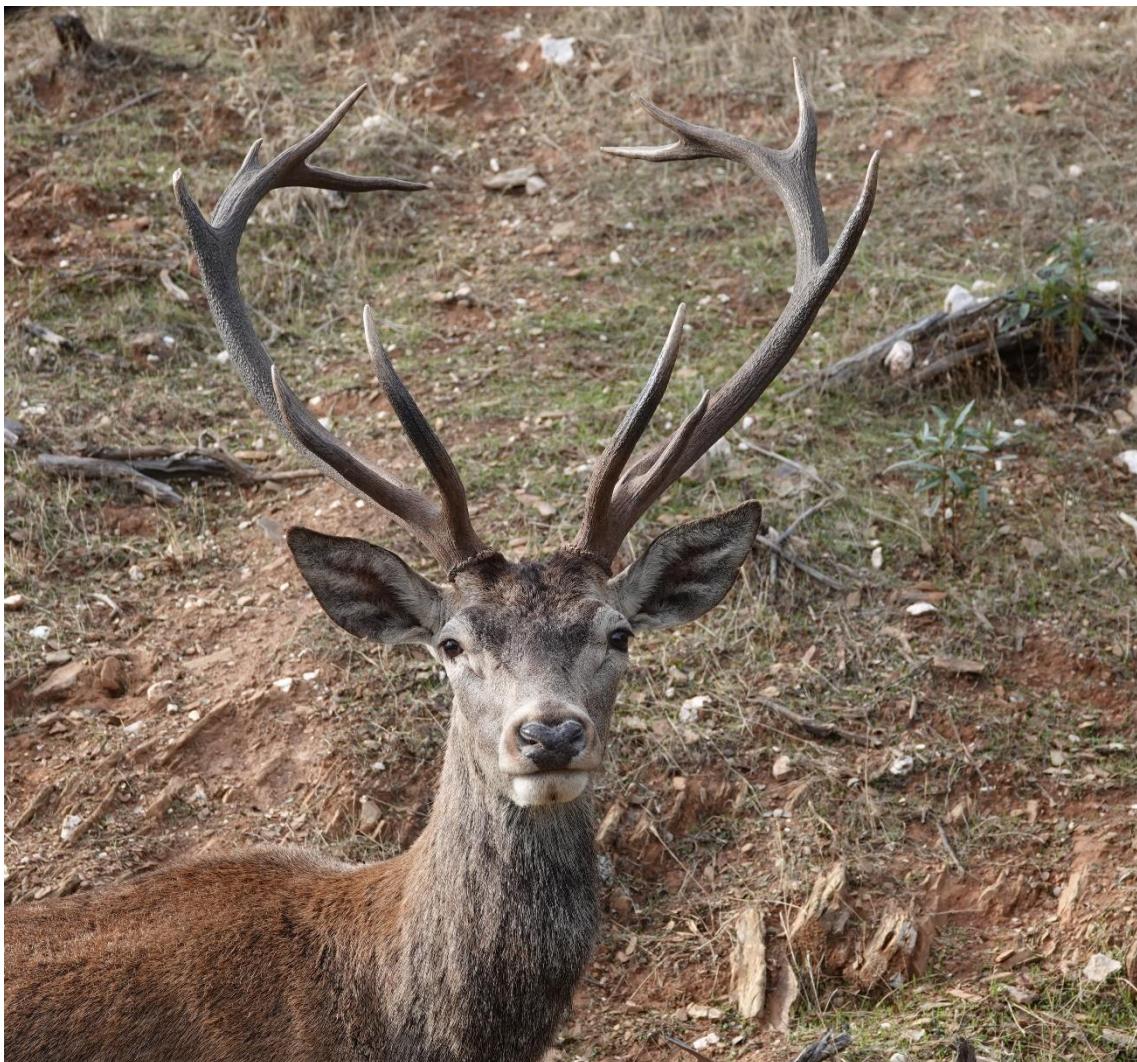
At Cáparra we walked around the ruins, admiring especially the impressive four-columned arch that straddled the Via de la Plata. The overall setting with olive groves, *dehesa* and a backdrop of the mountains was delightful.



*The Cáparra Arch*

We returned to the park, and had our picnic at the Puerto de Serrania, with lines of vultures drifting overhead. We then moved to the pines near the Salto de Torrejón dams where almost immediately after stopping we found our target species: a **Crested Tit**. At the same site we also had nice views of **Hawfinch** and a **Great Spotted Woodpecker**. We returned to the Tajo River, stopping for a walk at the Fuente del Francés where there were groups of small birds, with perhaps **Common Chiffchaffs** being the most common. Driving through the park we had some

lovely sightings of **Red Deer**, including two stags. We completed our visit back at the Peña de Falcon viewpoint, with vultures wheeling close above our heads.



*Red Deer*

#### **6<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Rice fields near Madrigalejo and Medellín**

It remained mainly dry throughout the day, in contrast to the heavy rain of the previous day. There were some mist patches as we set off in the morning, but we enjoyed good weather for most of the day. Heading south, we passed through the town of Zorita and then across the plains to the Sierra Brava Reservoir where we made a short stop at the dam. There was little on the reservoir itself, but it gave us an excellent opportunity to understand the nature of the landscape that we would explore: the rice fields of the Guadiana basin. These fields are fed by water that derives from such reservoirs, passing through a series of channels and ditches to the field themselves. As we descended to the rice fields, we saw several **Green Sandpipers** along the canal that helped to keep the reservoir full. Down on the rice fields there were several groups of **Common Cranes** and several **Marsh Harriers**. We had a prolonged view of a **Black-winged Kite** hovering.



*Ploughing the stubble*

After coffee in Madrigalejo we continued through the fields towards the rice-town of Palazuelo. A farmer was ploughing a rice stubble field, attracting a large number of **Black-headed Gulls**, and egrets. It was a tremendous sight, especially with the flock of **Black-winged Stilt** also present.



*Black-headed Gulls*

Nearby we stopped for lunch where there were also a similar range of species present, this time including **Greenshank** and **Common Redshank**. We then headed west, towards the town of Santa Amalia and then to Medellín. Here we visited the Roman Theatre and information centre/museum, but nor before a pleasant walk beside the Guadiana River.

**7<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Rice fields near Madrigalejo, Vegas Altas, Palazuelo and the Orellana and Alcollarín Reservoirs**

It was a heavily overcast day but we remained mainly free of rain and drizzle by opting to head south-east of base, whereas Pago de San Clemente received rain almost the whole day. Our first stop was at the railway bridge at Madrigalejo, this time finding four roosting **Stone Curlew** which we watched at length. A short walk beside the Ruercas River at the edge of Madrigalejo yielded **Grey Wagtail** and **Common Waxbill**, as well as the almost iniquitous **Common Chiffchaffs**. Beyond there, past some smallholdings, we walked beside a mosaic of arable land, with hordes of **Spanish Sparrows** and groups of **Common Cranes**.



*Common Cranes*

After an excellent coffee in the village of Vegas Altas, we explored the rice fields behind the village getting good views of nest-building **Red Avadavats** and rather more fleeting views of **Bluethroat**. At the edge of the village we stopped to watch a **Black-winged Kite**, and then a juvenile **Purple Heron** flew low over the stubble fields.

Our planned lunch stop was considered likely to be unproductive because of low cloud, our Plan B was inaccessible because of a road closure, so we drove to beside the Orellana River, where there was a small selection of ducks to watch and **Serotine Narcissus** to admire. We then crossed the rice fields near Palazuelo, finding fields with large numbers of **Glossy Ibis** and egrets as well as waders such as **Wood Sandpiper**, **Ruff** and **Ringed Plover**.

After coffee at Campo Lugar we completed the afternoon with an excellent visit to the subsidiary dam of Alcollarín Reservoir. Here under good viewing conditions, we studied a nice

selection of waders, including **Spotted Redshank** and **Black-tailed Godwit**, accompanied by duck such as **Teal** and **Shoveler**.

#### 8<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Arrocampo and return to Madrid

It was a fine sunny morning and we enjoyed wonderful weather throughout the day, with excellent visibility and hardly any wind. We bade farewell to Claudia and casa Rural El Recuerdo and headed onto the motorway in the direction of Madrid. After we had passed through the tunnel, we could see the Gredos Mountains very clearly, with just a fine dusting of snow on the higher ground.



*Squacco Heron*

Onward to Arrocampo where we stopped at the edge of the village of Saucedilla and had an excellent and fulfilling ninety minutes of very productive birding along the edge of the marsh. Highlights included a **Wryneck** which was singing on top of a dead tree, a **Squacco Heron** that flew in (promptly disappearing into the reeds), several **Barn Swallows**, a very late **Reed Warbler** giving sub-song from under cover, some superb views of **Iberian Grey Shrike** and two low-flying **Common Cranes**. Special mention must go to **Black-winged Kite**: we saw one on a roadside telegraph pole with a rodent as we arrived and another on a cable as we left.

It was now time to move on, and after a very welcome snack at the halfway point, we got to the airport at 14.10, with ample time for check-in.

#### BIRDS SEEN

1. **Grey Lag Goose**: Seen at the Orellana Reservoir.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen on three days.
3. **Gadwall**: Seen at Sierra Brava and Orellana Reservoirs.
4. **Eurasian Teal**: Seen at Cornalvo and Alcollarín.

5. **Pintail:** One seen on the rice fields.
6. **Mallard:** Seen on four days.
7. **Northern Shoveler:** Seen at Alcollarín.
8. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen on two days.
9. **Little Grebe:** Seen on two days.
10. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen at Orellana Reservoir.
11. **Great Cormorant:** Seen on four days.
12. **Little Bittern:** Seen at Mérida and heard at Arrocampo.
13. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** One seen at Mérida.
14. **Squacco Heron:** One at Arrocampo.
15. **Cattle Egret:** Seen on four days.
16. **Little Egret:** Seen on five days.
17. **Great Egret:** Seen on two days.
18. **Grey Heron:** Seen almost every day.
19. **Purple Heron:** One seen on the rice fields.
20. **White Stork:** Seen on four days, especially on the rice fields.
21. **Glossy Ibis:** Hundreds strong in the rice fields.
22. **Spoonbill:** Singles at Cornalvo and the rice fields.
23. **Griñón Vulture:** Seen almost every day.
24. **Black Vulture:** Seen almost every day.
25. **Osprey:** One seen at Lobón.
26. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** A juvenile bird seen on the plains.
27. **Red Kite:** Seen daily.
28. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen at Arrocampo and on the rice fields.
29. **Hen Harrier:** Seen on the plains.
30. **Common Buzzard:** Seen on three days.
31. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen on three days.
32. **Black-winged Kite:** Seen on three days.
33. **Common Kestrel:** Seen on three days.
34. **Peregrine Falcon:** Seen at Monfragüe.
35. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo and river Ruercas.
36. **Moorhen:** Seen and heard at several places.
37. **Purple Swamphen:** Seen at Mérida and heard at Arrocampo.
38. **Common Coot:** Seen at Orellana Reservoir.
39. **Common Crane:** Seen almost every day.
40. **Little Bustard:** Seen on the plains near Trujillo.
41. **Great Bustard:** Seen on the plains near Trujillo.
42. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on the rice fields and Alcollarín.
43. **Stone Curlew:** Seen near Madrigalejo.
44. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen at Cornalvo and on the rice fields.
45. **Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
46. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen most days.
47. **Dunlin:** Seen on the rice fields.
48. **Ruff:** Seen on the rice fields.
49. **Common Snipe:** Seen at Cornalvo, on the rice fields, and Alcollarín.
50. **Black-tailed Godwit:** Seen at Alcollarín.
51. **Spotted Redshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
52. **Common Redshank:** Seen on the rice fields and at Alcollarín.

53. **Wood Sandpiper**: Seen at Cornalvo, on the rice fields.
54. **Greenshank**: Seen on the rice fields and Alcollarín.
55. **Green Sandpiper**: Seen on four days.
56. **Common Sandpiper**: Seen at Alcollarín.
57. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: Seen on the rice fields.
58. **Black-headed Gull**: Seen almost daily.
59. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**: Seen on plains near Trujillo.
60. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**: Seen on plains near Trujillo.
61. **Feral Pigeon**: Seen almost daily.
62. **Wood Pigeon**: Seen on two days.
63. **Collared Dove**: Seen almost daily.
64. **Eagle Owl**: Seen at Lobón.
65. **Kingfisher**: Seen on three days.
66. **Hoopoe**: Seen almost every day.
67. **Wryneck**: Seen at Arrocampo.
68. **Great Spotted Woodpecker**: Seen in Monfragüe.
69. **Calandra Lark**: Seen on the plains.
70. **Crested Lark**: Seen on most days.
71. **Thekla Lark**: Seen on two days.
72. **Woodlark**: Recorded on two days.
73. **Skylark**: Seen on the plains and the rice fields.
74. **Sand Martin**: One at Medellín.
75. **Crag Martin**: Seen almost daily.
76. **Barn Swallow**: Seen at Arrocampo.
77. **House Martin**: Seen at Medellín.
78. **Meadow Pipit**: Seen on several days.
79. **Water Pipit**: Seen at Cornalvo.
80. **Grey Wagtail**: Seen at Madrigalejo.
81. **White Wagtail**: Seen on most days.
82. **Wren**: Seen on two days.
83. **Robin**: Seen almost daily.
84. **Bluethroat**: Seen on the rice fields and heard at Arrocampo.
85. **Black Redstart**: Seen almost daily.
86. **Stonechat**: Seen almost daily.
87. **Blue Rock Thrush**: Seen in Monfragüe.
88. **Blackbird**: Seen daily.
89. **Song Thrush**: Recorded on three days.
90. **Cetti's Warbler**: Recorded most days.
91. **Zitting Cisticola**: Seen most days.
92. **Dartford Warbler**: Recorded on three days.
93. **Sardinian Warbler**: Seen every day.
94. **Blackcap**: Seen almost daily.
95. **Chiffchaff**: Seen almost every day.
96. **Reed Warbler**: One heard at Arrocampo.
97. **Long-tailed Tit**: Seen on three days.
98. **Crested Tit**: Seen in Monfragüe.
99. **Blue Tit**: Seen almost daily.
100. **Great Tit**: Seen on three days.

101. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Recorded in Monfragüe.
102. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen almost daily.
103. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
104. **Magpie:** Seen almost daily.
105. **Jackdaw:** Seen on several days.
106. **Raven:** Seen almost daily.
107. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
108. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
109. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on several days, with big flocks on the rice fields.
110. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on the rice fields.
111. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen at Cornalvo.
112. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on rice fields and Arrocampo.
113. **Common Waxbill:** Seen almost daily.
114. **Yellow-crowned Bishop:** Seen on the rice fields.
115. **Chaffinch:** Seen on two days.
116. **Serin:** Seen on four days.
117. **Greenfinch:** Seen on two days.
118. **Goldfinch:** Seen almost daily.
119. **Siskin:** Seen on two days.
120. **Linnet:** Seen at Cornalvo.
121. **Hawfinch:** Seen in Monfragüe.
122. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

## **MAMMALS SEEN**

Red Deer

Rabbit

Iberian Hare

## **REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS**

Spanish Terrapin

Moorish Gecko

## **BUTTERFLIES**

Brown Argus

Lang's Short-tailed Blue

Small White

Clouded Yellow

Peacock

Red Admiral

## **OTHER INVERTEBRATES**

Rambur's Pellicle

## **PLANTS IN FLOWER**

Serotine Narcissus

Autumn Squill

Autumn Snowflake

Autumn Buttercup

Heliotrope

Wavy-leaved Mullein

Common Purslane

Strawberry tree

Slender Sow-thistle

Field Marigold

Chicory

Bidens aurea