

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



LATE AUTUMN IN EXTREMADURA FOR JUDITH AND NIGEL

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

22nd – 31st October 2025



Itinerary

22nd October 2025: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura, with stop at Arrocampo

23rd October 2025: Plains west of Trujillo and Trujillo town

24th October 2025: Monfragüe National Park

25th October 2025: Villuercas Mountains, Guadalupe and Belén Plains

26th October 2025: Free day

27th October 2025: Plains west of Trujillo, pools near Malpartida de Cáceres, Cáceres

28th October 2025: Alange and Mérida

29th October 2025: Free day

30th October 2025: Rice fields near Madrigalejo and Alcollarín Reservoir

31st October 2025: River Almonte at Jaraicejo, Arrocampo and return to Madrid

TRIP REPORT

22nd October 2025: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura, with stop at Arrocampo

Martin collected Judith and Nigel at Madrid Airport at 11.00. There was quite busy traffic on the ring-road, but it eased significantly once we were on the motorway heading south-west. Groups of Monk Parakeets flew over the road when we were still close to Madrid. En route we saw Red Kites, White Storks and Black Vultures. After a stop for lunch near Saucedilla, we made a couple of stops at the Arrocampo Reservoir. It was fairly windy and rather overcast, so the conditions were far from ideal. However, birds seen here included a fine Iberian Grey Shrike, Barn Swallows, Cattle Egrets and Marsh harrier. Heard but not seen were Cetti's Warblers, Purple Swamphen, Water Rails and Moorhen. We made a final stop at a small pool near Casatejadas where we found several male and female Violet Dropwings. We continued onto Casa Rural El Recuerdo, arriving just after 18.00.



Violet Dropwing

23rd October 2025: Plains west of Trujillo and Trujillo town

The day dawned overcast and windy, but mild. With no rain forecast, we moved to the plains north-west of Trujillo where at our very first stop we found a group for Great Bustards and a solitary Little Bustard. The views of the former were excellent, with birds striding across the pasture and also in flight. We walked along a Cañada Real, part of the network of drovers' trails that cross-cross Spain. Common Darters were moving close to the dried grasses. Autumn flowers such as Merendera, Serotine Narcissuses and Autumn Snowflake emerged from the mat of dry grasses. There were flocks of Calandra Larks and Corn Buntings, and a few Lapwing in the fields. After a stop for refreshments in the small, friendly village of Santa Marta de Magasca, we stopped at a pint overlooking the River Tamuja for our picnic. Whilst there, groups of Griffon and Black Vultures glided overhead and we were very pleased to see a pair of adult Spanish Imperial Eagles circling overhead. Onward back to the plains, we enjoyed the vast landscape, seeing old shepherds' refuges, and a host of small birds including Northern Wheatear, Spanish Sparrow, Calandra Larks and Skylarks.

We then drove back towards Trujillo, stopping in the Main Square, where Crag Martins were clinging on to the wall of one of the 16th century houses in the square. We took a walk through history climbing to the Arab fort and then walking back through the medieval centre of Trujillo, before returning to the Main Square, where the Crag Martins were still present.

24th October 2025: Monfragüe National Park



Peña Falcón in the morning mist

The day dawned dry with broken cloud, but quickly the cloud thickened, and dropped, and as we set off there was drizzle. Notwithstanding the somewhat gloomy conditions, we headed north of Trujillo, through a vast dehesa landscape to the Monfragüe National Park. On arrival, we stopped at the iconic viewpoint overlooking the Falcon's Rock. The misty conditions made the cliff look very atmospheric, whilst Griffon Vultures perched in a hunched position, not

wanting to fly. We had a lovely view of a male Rock Bunting. We walked through the fine drizzle beside the mixed woodland to the north of the viewpoint, having some good views of a couple of Firecrest. Chiffchaffs were also present.

After a stop at Villareal de San Carlos for coffee, and a walk round in pursuit of a flock of Hawfinches which gave us tantalizing flight views and where we saw our first of many Red Deer of the day, we drove through to the northern side of the park, to the viewpoint at the Portilla del Tietar. This was where we had lunch, availing ourselves of a shelter for the periods when the rain was more persistent. Griffon Vultures were present, including a juvenile bird that was still begging for food. A flotilla of Cormorants swam past and herons and Great White Egrets and Little Egrets were also attracted to small fish that the Cormorants were pursuing. At one point a Spanish Imperial Eagle sailed into view too. A Two-tailed Pasha flew past quickly without stopping.

We retraced our steps, with a couple of stops, having more views of Firecrests in a belt of pines, as well as Great Spotted Woodpeckers, and more vultures on cliffs. We made a final stop at the Falcon's Rock again, this time with a Peregrine wheeling overhead in the sunshine amongst the Griffon and Black Vultures, at one stage making a stoop onto a Crag Martin. Black Redstarts, Blue Rock Thrush and a fine Cirl Bunting were also seen.

25th October 2025: Villuercas Mountains, Guadalupe and Belén Plains



The Virgin of Guadalupe

The day was misty or with low cloud almost throughout, with a persistent drizzle for periods in the morning. We drove south through Zorita, Cañamero and past Guadalupe, to ascend to the highest point in the Villuercas GeoPark, at 1600 metres above sea-level. We were not quite high enough to escape the mist, so sadly visibility was very poor. There were a few birds present, like Blue Rock Thrush, several Black Redstart, as well as Dartford Warbler and Wren.

We then descended, making a stop at a viewpoint to admire the town of Guadalupe and its monastery. A Woodlark was singing. Guadalupe itself was very busy and we coincided our arrival with the end of a mass, so the church too was quite full. We opted to have a stroll around some of the town first before returning to the basilica, by which time the crowds had thinned out significantly.

Leaving Guadalupe, we stopped for a picnic beside the Ruercas River. Griffon Vultures were airborne above us in the dramatic gorge where we had stopped. From Cañamero we followed the road along the eastern flank of the Villuercas mountains and the clouds were started to rise and break-up. The views across the vast undulating dehesa landscape were amazing. At Cabañas del Castillo we walked up through little hillside village to a narrow pass affording us a wonderful view across a hidden valley to the sequence of quartzite ridges to our east. At last we could appreciate the Appalachian relief landform which makes this mountain range so famous. Clusters of Autumn Snowflake and Autumn Squill were in flower at our feet.



The valley behind Cabañas del Castillo

We then made our way back across the dehesas to Aldeacentenara and onward, across the Belén plains to Trujillo. On the plains there were huge flocks of Spotless Starlings, with at least one Common Starling with them, flocks of Ravens, Stock Dove and Spanish Sparrow, a remarkable abundance of birds on this seemingly barren landscape.

27th October 2025: Plains west of Trujillo, pools near Malpartida de Cáceres, Cáceres

It was a beautiful day with clear blue skies, superb visibility and warm temperatures. We started on the plains west of Trujillo where we went for a very productive walk on an old drovers' trail. Larks were around us the whole time: Thekla, Crested and Calandra. There were Lapwing in the fields, a Northern Wheatear and a group of six Pintail that came to settle in a small pool. But most exciting as a group of about ten Little Bustard that were wonderfully

camouflaged in the tall dry vegetation, a party of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse and a single, Black-bellied Sandgrouse that came into land in the same field. Butterflies included a Small Copper and a Bath White.

After coffee, we moved west of Cáceres to investigate a couple of small pools in a granite landscape. There were numerous Common Darter and some Broad Scarlets, and we also saw Migrant Hawker and Small Spreadwing. A Spanish Terrapin and Iberian Water Frogs were also present.



Small Spreadwing

Moving to Cáceres we had a pleasant walk in the Parque del Principe where we had close views of Iberian magpies, and very satisfying views of Hawfinches feeding on the ground or on berries just above our heads. Afterwards we spent the rest of the afternoon exploring the medieval part of the city, surrounded by fortified palaces and churches, also taking in an old Jewish quarter and admiring some Arabic architecture too. A full afternoon for a very well-rounded day!

28th October 2025: Alange and Mérida

It was a warm and calm day, starting out sunny with scattered clouds, but with storm clouds gathering by late afternoon, with heavy rain in the evening. We headed south-west, through the small village of Santa Cruz de la Sierra and then on the motorway in the direction of Badajoz. Very quickly we dropped from the undulating dehesa landscape to the flat floodplains of the Guadiana dominated by irrigated intensive crops of rice, tomatoes and fruit (peaches, olives). Shortly before Mérida we took a southerly route which took us to the spa town of Alange, beside a vast reservoir bearing its name, overlooked by a large rock outcrop with a Moorish watchtower on the top. We had a very pleasant walk beside the reservoir, seeing a pair of Black Wheatear, as well as Thekla Larks, a Common Sandpiper, Crag Martins, House Martins and a large number of Great Crested Grebes.

After refreshments, we drove north along the Guadiana River to Mérida. We made our first stop beside the impressive Aqueduct of the Milagros (Miracles). Another Common Sandpiper and two Little Egrets were in the small waterway nearby. After our picnic, we walked across the Roman Bridge, seeing a Purple Swamphen and Glossy Ibis. The walk took us into the heart of Mérida, where we looked at The Temple of Diana, the remains of the Forum and then onto the Roman Theatre and Amphitheatre. Returning to the Roman Bridge, there was time to take a look at the Moorish fort before returning to the car and driving back to base, under very threatening clouds.



Monk Parakeet

30th October 2025: Rice fields near Madrigalejo and Alcollarín Reservoir

After the heavy rain of the previous day and clear night skies, the morning started in thick fog. We nevertheless headed south from Zorita, across the fog-blanketed plains of Campo Lugar towards Madrigalejo and, in so doing, slipped below the fog level and enjoyed good visibility the whole day. We stopped first of all just north of the town, where we watched a flock of Stone Curlew at a regular winter-roost site. We heard our first cranes of the day, a sound that would stay with us the whole time. An Iberian Grey Shrike also perched obligingly on a cable nearby. We then explored the rice stubble fields to the east of the town, where we found groups of wintering Common Crane. There were large flocks of Spanish Sparrow and Marsh Harriers quartering the terrain. Further south, we came across more groups of cranes and also shorebirds such as Green Sandpiper and Common Snipe.

We stopped for refreshments in Madrigalejo and then walked close to the Ruercas River where we had good views of Common Waxbills. There were flocks of sparrows and Chaffinches going into a field of sunflowers beside us. Further on we stopped for our picnic close to a recently ploughed field where hundreds of Glossy Ibis, as well as egrets, Spoonbills and Grey Herons were feeding, along with Black-winged Stilt and some Ruff. It was a wonderful spectacle. Across the field we came across more flocks of Cattle Egrets, groups of Common Cranes and a few waders like Little Ringed Plovers.



Common Crane

We then completed the afternoon at the small dam of the Azud de Alcollarín. This was a very pleasant spot, where we had good views of Kingfishers (one perched alongside an Iberian Grey Shrike), as well as a good selection of waders including Black-winged Stilt, Black-tailed Godwits, Greenshank, Common Redshank and Green Sandpipers. A Migrant Hawker or two buzzed the reeds beside us. A short stop beside the Alcollarín reservoir yielded a couple of squabbling Grey Wagtails.



Migrant Hawker

31st October 2025: River Almonte at Jaraicejo, Arrocampo and return to Madrid

After a short walk along the lane beyond the house, we set off mid-morning under rather heavily overcast skies. Our first stop was south of Jaraicejo where three bridges span the River Almonte, which was now in full flow after months of being dry. The oldest bridge, dating from 1450, took the Madrid traffic until the late 1950s when the middle bridge was built and the new National Highway 5 was built. The new bridge with the A5 motorway was built in the early 1990s. The birds there included several **Red Kite** and both **Black** and **Griffon Vultures**, and we also enjoyed watching three **Rock Sparrows** perched on the wires nearby.

Onward to Arrocampo where we retraced our steps from the first afternoon, but this time taking in a walk too. The experience was similar to our first visit with tantalizing calls coming from the reeds, but not much showing itself, least of all Little Bittern or Purple Swamphen, but we did have good views again of **Iberian Grey Shrike**, and best of all, a prolonged view of a **Black-winged Kite** just as we were leaving, gliding and hovering against the dark clouds.

It was now time to move on, and after a very satisfying Menu del Dia at the halfway point, we got to the airport at 17.10, with ample time for check-in.

BIRDS SEEN

1. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen at Alange and Alcollarín.
2. **Eurasian Teal**: Seen at Alcollarín.
3. **Pintail**: Small group seen on the plains.
4. **Mallard**: Seen at Alcollarín and Mérida.
5. **Northern Shoveler**: Seen at Alcollarín.
6. **Red-legged Partridge**: Heard at Monfragüe.
7. **Little Grebe**: Seen at Alcollarín.
8. **Great Crested Grebe**: Seen at Alange.
9. **Great Cormorant**: Seen on four days.
10. **Little Bittern**: Heard at Arrocampo and Mérida.
11. **Cattle Egret**: Seen on three days.
12. **Little Egret**: Seen on five days.
13. **Great Egret**: Seen on three days.
14. **Grey Heron**: Seen almost every day.
15. **White Stork**: Several seen, especially on the rice fields.
16. **Glossy Ibis**: Seen on three days, and memorably hundreds strong in the rice fields.
17. **Spoonbill**: A small group seen on the rice fields.
18. **Griffon Vulture**: Seen every day.
19. **Black Vulture**: Seen almost every day.
20. **Spanish Imperial Eagle**: A pair seen on the plains, one over Trujillo and one at Monfragüe.
21. **Red Kite**: Seen daily.
22. **Marsh Harrier**: Seen at Arrocampo and on the rice fields.
23. **Common Buzzard**: Seen daily.
24. **Sparrowhawk**: Seen on three days.
25. **Black-winged Kite**: One seen at Arrocampo.
26. **Common Kestrel**: Seen daily.
27. **Peregrine Falcon**: Seen at Monfragüe.

28. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo and river Ruercas.
29. **Moorhen:** Seen at Mérida and heard at several places.
30. **Common Coot:** Seen at Mérida.
31. **Common Crane:** Seen almost every day.
32. **Little Bustard:** Seen on two days on the plains near Trujillo.
33. **Great Bustard:** A group watched on the plains north-west of Trujillo.
34. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on the rice fields and Alcollarín.
35. **Stone Curlew:** Seen near Madrigalejo.
36. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
37. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen most days.
38. **Ruff:** Seen on the rice fields.
39. **Common Snipe:** Seen on the rice fields and Alcollarín.
40. **Black-tailed Godwit:** Seen at Alcollarín.
41. **Common Redshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
42. **Spotted Redshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
43. **Greenshank:** Seen on the rice fields and Alcollarín.
44. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen on three days.
45. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen at Alange and Alcollarín.
46. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on five days.
47. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen almost daily.
48. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains near Trujillo.
49. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains near Trujillo.
50. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
51. **Stock Dove:** A group on Belén Plains.
52. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen almost daily.
53. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
54. **Little Owl:** Heard at Mérida.
55. **Monk Parakeet:** One seen at Mérida.
56. **Kingfisher:** Seen on six days.
57. **Hoopoe:** Seen on two days.
58. **Iberian Green Woodpecker:** Heard near Cañamero.
59. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen in Monfragüe.
60. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
61. **Crested Lark:** Seen on most days.
62. **Thekla Lark:** Seen at Alange and on the plains.
63. **Woodlark:** Recorded on three days.
64. **Skylark:** Seen on the plains and the rice fields.
65. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost daily.
66. **Barn Swallow:** Seen at Arrocampo and Monfragüe.
67. **House Martin:** Seen at Alange.
68. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen on several days.
69. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen at Alcollarín.
70. **White Wagtail:** Seen on most days.
71. **Wren:** Seen on two days.
72. **Dunnock:** Heard in Villuercas Mountains.
73. **Robin:** Seen almost daily.
74. **Black Redstart:** Seen almost daily.
75. **Stonechat:** Seen almost daily.

76. **Northern Wheatear:** Seen on the plains.
77. **Black Wheatear:** Seen at Alange.
78. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen in Monfragüe, Villuercas and Alange.
79. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
80. **Song Thrush:** Recorded on three days.
81. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen in Villuercas Mountains.
82. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded most days.
83. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen most days.
84. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen in Villuercas Mountains and Arrocampo.
85. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen every day.
86. **Blackcap:** Seen almost daily.
87. **Chiffchaff:** Seen almost every day.
88. **Willow Warbler:** One seen at Pago de San Clemente.
89. **Firecrest:** Seen in Monfragüe.
90. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen in Monfragüe.
91. **Blue Tit:** Seen almost daily.
92. **Great Tit:** Seen most days.
93. **Nuthatch:** Recorded in the Villuercas and Monfragüe.
94. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Recorded on two days.
95. **Penduline Tit:** Heard distantly at Arrocampo.
96. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen almost daily.
97. **Jay:** Seen in Monfragüe and Villuercas.
98. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
99. **Magpie:** Seen almost daily.
100. **Jackdaw:** Seen on several days.
101. **Raven:** Seen almost daily.
102. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
103. **Common Starling:** One seen on Belén Plains.
104. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
105. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on several days, with big flocks on the rice fields.
106. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen at Jaraicejo.
107. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on the rice fields.
108. **Chaffinch:** Seen almost daily.
109. **Serin:** Seen on three days.
110. **Greenfinch:** Seen on two days.
111. **Goldfinch:** Seen on four days.
112. **Siskin:** Seen on two days.
113. **Hawfinch:** Seen on three days with lovely views in Cáceres.
114. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen in Monfragüe.
115. **Rock Bunting:** Seen in Monfragüe.
116. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

MAMMALS SEEN

Red Deer

REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS

Spanish Terrapin

Western Psammodromus

Large Psammodromus

Marbled Newt

Fire Salamander

Iberian Water Frog

Spiny Toad

ODONATA

Small Spreadwing

Migrant Hawker

Common Darter

Red-veined Darter

Broad Scarlet

Violet Dropwing

Northern Banded Groundling

BUTTERFLIES

Small Copper

African Grass Blue

Small White

Bath White

Clouded Yellow

Large Tortoiseshell

Common Swallowtail

Two-tailed Pasha

Speckled Wood

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Giant Centipede

Praying Mantis

PLANTS IN FLOWER

Lesser Water Plantain

Carlina Thistle

Serotine Narcissus

Autumn Squill

Autumn Snowflake

Merendera

A Pink