

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



DRAGONFLIES IN EXTREMADURA FOR GUY

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

24th June – 29th June 2025



Itinerary

24th June 2025: Collection from Madrid and drive to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

25th June 2025: Alcollarín Reservoir and Zorita

26th June 2025: Castañar de Ibor, a pool near Casatejada and Alcollarín Reservoir.

27th June 2025: Las Mestas, La Garganta and Monfragüe

28th June 2025: Pools near Malpartida de Cáceres, Parque del Principé, Cáceres and pools at Sierra de Fuentes

29th June 2025: Pool near Casatejada and return to Madrid.

TRIP REPORT

24th June 2025: Collection from Madrid and drive to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

Martin met Guy at 16.30 at Madrid airport, and we were quickly heading out around the southern ring-road and then onto the motorway leading to Extremadura. We passed through a very heavy thunderstorm whilst on the toll section on the motorway, with traffic held up for a few minutes because the toll booths were not working. After that the traffic was light throughout, and we reached Casa Rural El Recuerdo at about 19.45. **Iberian Magpies**, **Red-rumped Swallows** and a **Booted Eagle** welcomed our arrival.

25th June 2025: Alcollarín Reservoir and Zorita



Violet Dropwing (male)

The day started rather cool with some mist. The morning was mainly overcast and with a light wind, with warmer and sunnier weather arriving in the afternoon. We headed south-eastwards, dropping to the town of Zorita then onto the nearby village of Alcollarín, behind which is a reservoir bearing the same name. Not expecting much dragonfly activity to start with, we spent an hour or so scanning the lake from the eastern shore, seeing distant **Black-necked Grebe**, **Kentish Plover**, and **Spoonbill**, whilst beside us was a family party of **Iberian Grey Shrikes**, some young **Woodchat Shrikes** and **Iberian Magpies**. **Purple Herons** flew overhead. We moved to the small subsidiary lake, bordered by *dehesa* woodland. There was very little activity insect-wise, although on the water were family parties of **Little Grebe**. We decided to go to check the western shore, which also was rather quiet.

Taking a break for coffee we watched **House Martins** and **Lesser Kestrels** nesting at a silo building whilst a **Roller** had been seen on the way. As soon as we were back by the small lake, it was clear that things had livened-up with clusters of **Northern Banded Groundlings** coming to inspect us. A **Violet Dropwing** was present and in the vegetation we found **Iberian Bluetails** and **Migrant Spreadwings**. We stayed for our picnic and after some more exploration of the area, we decided to move to a small fishing pond near Zorita. Here there was a lot of activity. Of special interest were **Long Skimmers**, **Epaulet Skimmer**, plenty of **Broad Scarlets**, several **Violet Dropwings**, as well as **Blue-eyes** and **Small Red-eyes**. A **Blue Emperor** was ovipositing on the submerged stem.



Violet Dropwing (female)

Opting for a final return visit to the small lake at Alcollarín, we saw three or four **Green Hooktails** in flight as soon as we arrived. Waiting just a few minutes was all that was required to see one settled. We had several views of this individual, despite it being chased off sometimes by a **Broad Scarlet**. It was a very satisfying end of the day.



Green Hooktail

26th June 2025: Castañar de Ibor, a pool near Casatejada and Alcollarín Reservoir.

It was a hot and sunny day and we headed to the Ibores Mountains, stopping at Castañar de Ibor for a short morning walk through sweet chestnut groves and orchards. We quickly found our target species, the **Golden-ringed Dragonfly** and we had a chance to photograph one specimen perched. **Copper** and **Beautiful Demoiselles** were also present, as well as a few butterflies such as **Spanish Purple Hairstreak**. A **Hawfinch** was seen in flight and a **Melodious Warbler** was singing.

Then we drove to the Ibor River for a walk beside the natural swimming pool. **Large Pincertails** and **Small Pincertails** were numerous, as were **Western Demoiselles**. A **Two-tailed Pasha** glided around. A **White Featherleg** gave its bouncy, hesitant weak flight in the vegetation.

After a break for coffee, we went further upstream, where we had our picnic in the shade, and enjoyed a very productive visit. As well as **Small Pincertails**, we found several **Orange Featherlegs**. We watched a **Western Spectre**, which gave us a superb show of its distinctive bank-hugging flight. But best of all, we found a perched individual, eventually, after seeing it being reticent to land. We saw **Keeled Skimmer**, **Small Spreadwings** and a pair of **Dainty Bluets**



Common Goldenring



Large Pincertail



Small Spreadwing



Western Spectre

Just as we were leaving a **Western Clubtail** drew us to a halt and eventually we had reasonable views of it perched.

We drove onward to Casatejada where we visited a small pool in the *dehesa*. There were impressive numbers of **Violet Dropwings** present and we had several, albeit distant views of **Black Pennant**, which Martin had only discovered at this site a week previously.

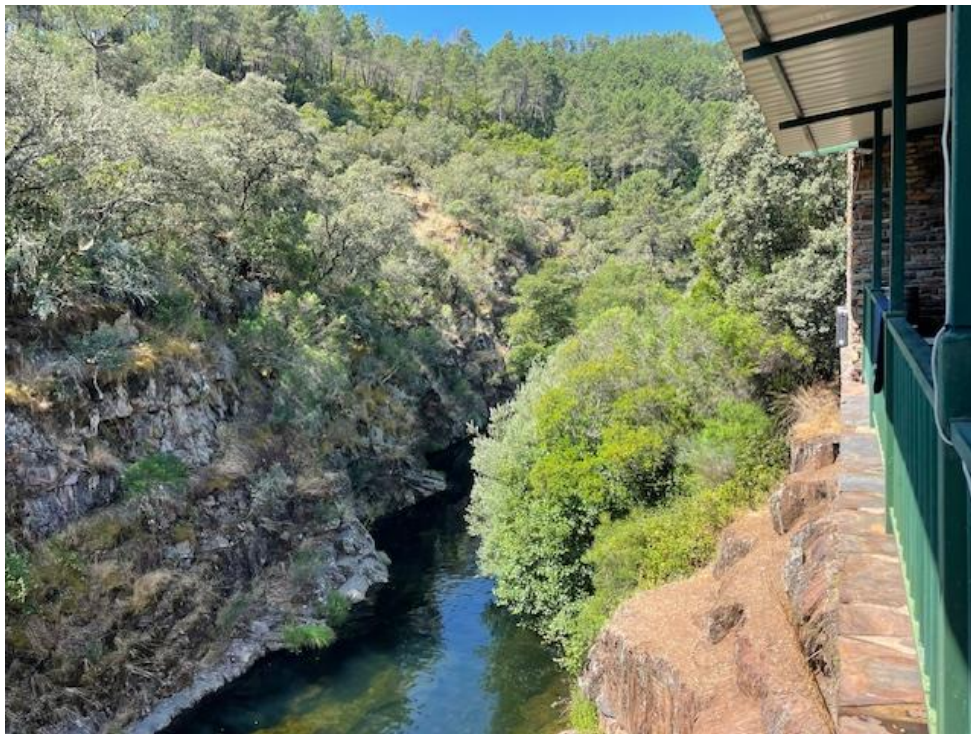


Black Pennant

In the evening we returned to Alcollarín Reservoir, just in time to hear the **Red-necked Nightjars** start calling, as the sky darkened and the fine crescent New Moon brightened. We initially saw two or three **Red-necked Nightjars** hawking over the outline of the trees, but best of all was a bird perched on a nearby bare tree, against the orange-hued sky, singing at length.

27th June 2025: Las Mestas, La Garganta and Monfragüe

We set off a bit earlier this morning, given a long drive ahead and the forecast of very hot weather. It took us over two hours to reach our destination: the small town of Las Mestas beside the Ladrillar River in the area known as Las Hurdes, close to the border with the province of Salamanca. The natural swimming pool here is an ideal place to watch the very scarce species, the **Splendid Cruiser**. This large dragonfly patrols its patch with a constant flight less than a metre above the water. They would routinely pass with a very short distance from where we were standing. Although we did not see one perched, it was fascinating to watch their behaviour. As it warmed-up so an **Orange-spotted Emerald** appeared. This too was not seen perched, but we watched it defend its patch too – on a much smaller scale – against other species intruding.



River Ladrillar



Orange-spotted Emerald

After coffee at the Chiringuito overlooking the natural swimming pool, we then made the hour-long drive to the Sierra de Bejar and the meadows above the town of La Garganta. The

butterflies here were superb, with numerous **Cardinals**, **Queen of Spain Fritillaries**, **Heath Fritillary**, **Niobe Fritillary** and species like **Iberian Marbled White**. Birds included a male **Red-backed Shrike**.

Returning to base in very hot weather, we made a stop at the viewpoint of Salto de Gitano in the Monfragüe National Park. There was relatively little activity, given the extreme heat, but several dozen **Griffon Vultures** were in the sky, a **Black Stork** stood on an empty nest, whilst **Crag Martins** and **Red-rumped Swallows** hawked insects above us.

28th June 2025: Pools near Malpartida de Cáceres, Parque del Principé, Cáceres and pools at Sierra de Fuentes



Black Percher

It was a very hot and sunny day with gentle and light winds. We stopped first just east of Cáceres to see **Little Owls** on the nest boxes on the plains. A **Montagu's Harrier** was a nice find and we also saw distant **Rollers**, several **Lesser Kestrels** and a **Short-toed Eagle**. Passing the outskirts of Cáceres, we stopped at a series of shallow pools in a dry, grassy terrain. It was a paradise for dragonflies. Within a minute we had found a **Black Percher**, our target species and by the end of the morning we had seen several. The vegetation was full of **Small** and **Migrant Spreadwings**, a couple of **Robust Spreadwings** as well as **Blue-eyes**. **Violet Dropwings**, **Red-veined** and **Common Darters**, and **Broad Scarlet** were common.



Robust Spreadwing



Lesser Emperor

A perched **Lesser Emperor** was good find. A **Spiny-footed Lizard** was also seen. Birds included a flock of **Spoonbill**, an aseasonal **Common Redshank** and several **Bee-eaters**.

We had a coffee at a luxurious spa hotel and then moved to the centre of the city. Parque del Principe is a beautiful urban park. Our target here was the **Orange-winged Dropwing** and we found two beside a fountain in the park. **Epaulet Skimmer** and **Broad Scarlet** were also present. The trees provided shade for our picnic whilst **Iberian Magpies** and **Hawfinch** were around us. We also saw a couple of **Viperine Snakes** basking in the cool, slow flowing water.



Orange-winged Dropwing

We concluded the day beside some fish ponds near Sierra de Fuentes, east of the city. These had a good selection of birds including breeding **Great Crested** and **Little Grebe**. But the dragonflies were especially good with large numbers of **Broad Scarlet** and **Red-veined Darters**, **Long Skimmers**, **Small Red-eyes** and **Blue-eyes**. Pride of place were a couple of **Black Perchers** found by Guy.

29th June 2025: Pool near Casatejada and return to Madrid.

We bade farewell to Casa Rural el Recuerdo at 08.00 and set off under clear blue skies and everything pointing again to a very hot day. As we passed Trujillo, two **Stone Curlew** flew beside the road. There was time for a very brief stop at the pool near Casatejada. Although it was perhaps too early in the day for the Black Pennants to be very active, we saw again good numbers of **Violet Dropwings** and **Northern Banded Groundlings**, whilst **Red-veined Darters**

were now more evident than they had been a few days earlier. It was then time to continue our journey. An adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle** sat on top of a pylon close to the halfway point in the journey. We enjoyed light traffic, and we reached the airport at 11.15, just as planned. It was the end of an enormously successful holiday.

Species List

1. **Copper Demoiselle:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor.
2. **Beautiful Demoiselle:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor.
3. **Western Demoiselle:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor and Las Mestas.
4. **Migrant Spreadwing:** Seen at Alcollarín and Malpartida de Cáceres.
5. **Small Spreadwing:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor and Malpartida de Cáceres.
6. **Robust Spreadwing:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres.
7. **Western Willow Spreadwing:** Seen at Parque de Principé.
8. **Dainty Bluet:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor.
9. **Blue-eye:** Seen almost daily.
10. **Small Red-eye:** Seen at Zorita and Sierra de Fuentes.
11. **Iberian Blue-tail:** Seen at Alcollarín and Malpartida de Cáceres.
12. **Large Red Damsel:** Seen at La Garganta.
13. **Orange Featherleg:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor.
14. **White Featherleg:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor and Casatejada.
15. **Blue Emperor:** Seen daily.
16. **Lesser Emperor:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres.
17. **Western Spectre:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor and Las Mestas.
18. **Western Clubtail:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor.
19. **Small Pincertail:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor and Las Mestas.
20. **Large Pincertail:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor.
21. **Green Hooktail:** Seen at Alcollarín.
22. **Common Goldenring:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor.
23. **Splendid Cruiser:** Seen at Las Mestas.
24. **Orange-spotted Emerald:** Seen at Las Mestas.
25. **Northern Banded Groundling:** Seen at Alcollarín and Casatejada.
26. **Broad Scarlet:** Seen daily.
27. **Black Percher:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres and Sierra de Fuentes.
28. **Broad-bodied Chaser:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor and Las Mestas.
29. **Black-tailed Skimmer:** Seen on three days.
30. **Epaulet Skimmer:** Seen daily.
31. **Keeled Skimmer:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor.
32. **Long Skimmer:** Seen at Zorita, Casatejada, Malpartida de Cáceres and Sierra de Fuentes.
33. **Black Pennant:** Seen at Casatejada.
34. **Red-veined Darter:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres, Sierra de Fuentes and Casatejada.
35. **Common Darter:** Seen at Castañar de Ibor and Malpartida de Cáceres.
36. **Violet Dropwing:** Seen at Casatejada, Alcollarín, Zorita and Malpartida de Cáceres.
37. **Orange-winged Dropwing:** Parque de Principé.