



**EARLY SUMMER IN EXTREMADURA AND THE GREDOS FOR GEORGE AND LESLEY**

**Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura**

**25<sup>th</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025**



**Itinerary**

**25<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Collection from Madrid, Arrocampo Reservoir and drive to Casa Rural El Recuerdo**

**26<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Almendralejo, Don Benito and Alcollarín Reservoir**

**27<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Miravete Pass, pool near Casatejadas, Castañar del Ibor**

**28<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Monfragüe National Park, Tornavacas Pass and Hostel Almanzor**

**29<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Plataforma of the Gredos and Tormes River**

**30<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Peña Negra pass, Navacepeda de Tormes and Tormes River**

**31<sup>st</sup> May 2025: Sierra de Bejar: La Covatilla and Candelario**

**1<sup>st</sup> June 2025: Pines at Navarredonda de Gredos, Pico Pass, Cerro del Águila and return to Madrid**

## TRIP REPORT

### 25<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Collection from Madrid, Arrocampo Reservoir and drive to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

Martin met George and Lesley at 11.00 at Madrid airport, and we were quickly heading out around the southern ring-road and then onto the motorway leading to Extremadura. The traffic was light throughout. After a quick snack, we spent the afternoon at Arrocampo. Here a lake which provides cooling water for the Almaraz nuclear power plant, had a fabulous fringing vegetation of lesser reed mace, home to a superb section of birds. Within minutes of arriving, we were listening to **Savi's Warbler**, **Common Reed Warbler** and **Cetti's Warbler**. Overhead passed **Black Vulture** and **Griffon Vulture** whilst **Gull-billed Terns** flew over the water.



*Gull-billed Tern (Martin)*

We watched a beautiful colony of **Purple Heron**. A **Great White Egret** flew over. A **Western Swamphen** was watched at length. At a third stop, we saw a **Squacco Heron** and **Gull-billed Terns** came past close.

We made a final stop and found a recently emerged **Long Skimmer**, whilst a couple of **Northern-banded Groundlings** buzzed the ground nearby, but didn't opt to land. It was then onward to Casa Rural El Recuerdo, arriving shortly after 18.00, with time for a cool-off in the pool to the sound of a singing **Nightingale**.

### 26<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Almendralejo, Don Benito and Alcollarín Reservoir

We set off early with a forecast for a hot and sunny day. Taking the motorway south-westwards, we passed the capital of Extremadura, Mérida and continued to the town of



Almendralejo, surrounded by a vast landscape of vineyards and olive orchards. This was the preferred habitat of our sought-after species, the **Rufous Bush Robin**.



*Habitat of Rufous Bush Robin (Martin)*

As soon as we entered the area, George spotted one flying across the track and we watched it briefly at the side of the road. Driving slowly onward, we came across a singing bird and had prolonged and excellent views of it singing from several preferred perches, as well as on the ground.



*Rufous Bush Robin (George)*

A bit later we came across another bird, but this was harder to get a view of. Pleased with the successful start of the day we stopped for coffee at the edge of the town and then drove to the River Guadiana near Don Benito. Here in the shade of trees we had our picnic whilst **Golden Orioles** and **Great Reed Warblers** sang, and **Iberian Magpies** came to feed. We walked around a small lake, having the chance to listen to a **Western Olivaceous Warbler** singing, which was briefly seen as well.

We moved on to spend the rest of the afternoon at the Alcollarín Reservoir. Here we had a very enjoyable session watching dragonflies and damselflies, including **Violet Dropwing**, **Lesser Emperor**, **Western Clubtail** and **Epaulet Skimmer**. Damselflies included **Dainty Bluet**, **Blue-eyes** and **Small Red-eyes**.

In the western shore of the reservoir, we watched a **Marsh Harrier** being mobbed by **Collared Pratincoles** and **Little Terns**, whilst a group of **Spoonbills** roosted.

**27<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Miravete Pass, pool near Casatejadas, Castañar del Ibor**

It was another hot and sunny day, and we elected to spend as much as possible of the day beside water. We started off, however, with a short stop at the Miravete Pass to get a clear view across to the Gredos Mountains. A **Red-legged Partridge** was feeding on the track as we arrived, and **Short-toed Treecreepers** sang. We then descended to the plains to the north and spent a very productive time beside a small pool near Casatejadas where the most common dragonfly was the **Violet Dropwing**. Also present were **Epaulet Skimmers**, **Black-tailed Skimmers**, **Red-veined Darter**, a **Southern Darter**, **Iberian Bluetails** and **Blue-eyes**.



*Violet Dropwing (Lesley)*

After coffee near Saucedilla, we headed to the Ibor Mountains, stopping at Castañar del Ibor for a lovely walk through groves of sweet chestnut. **Meadow Browns** and **Graylings**, **Nettle-**



**tree Butterflies** and a **Cleopatra** were seen, as well as several **Marsh Fritillaries**. Surprisingly a **Langei's Orchid** was still in flower. We had lunch with a view, across the Ibor valley onto the sheer ridges of quartzite. Parties of swifts foraged overhead. We completed the afternoon beside the Ibor River where **Small Pincertails** perched on rocks beside the river. A **Broad-bodied Chaser** was very territorial. **Western Demoiselles** fluttered.



*Orange Featherleg (Martin)*

We saw two species of **Featherlegs**: **Orange** and **White**. Butterflies included **Brown Argus** and **Long-tailed Blue**.



*White Featherleg (Martin)*

## 28<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Monfragüe National Park, Tornavacas Pass and Hostel Almanzor

It was a hot day with very little wind. We bade farewell to Claudia at Casa Rural El Recuerdo and headed north across the vast *dehesa* between Trujillo and Torrejón El Rubio, at arrive at the castle of Monfragüe. Here we had a lovely walk through the stunted holm oak and Montpellier maple trees to the castle itself, with superb 360° views south over the *dehesas* and north towards the Gredos Mountains, our eventual destination. On the walk we had good views of two **White-rumped Swifts** which accompanied **House Martins** and **Common** and **Pallid Swifts** along the top of the ridge.



*White-rumped Swift (Martin)*

There was a nice selection of butterflies including **Large Tortoiseshells**, Cleopatra and most pleasingly three species of hairstreak: **Spanish Purple**, **False Ilex** and **Blue-spot**. Two species of lizard were also seen.

Descending on the north side, we stopped at the Fuente de Francés, in shady Mediterranean woodland. Here there was a very obliging **Two-tailed Pasha**, and several **Bosca's Newts** were found in the drinking troughs. We had good views of **Hawfinch** and **Short-toed Treecreeper**.



*Blue-spot Hairstreak (Martin)*

Following coffee in the centre of the park, we moved northwards, driving past Plasencia and into the Jerte valley, the largest cherry-growing area of Spain. We drove all the way up the valley to stop at the Tornavacas Pass, on the border between Extremadura and Castille y León.



*Tornavacas Pass (Martin)*

Here we had our picnic and followed that by a walk which yielded **Red-backed Shrike** and **Dartford Warbler**, as well as several **Common Whitethroats**. The flowers were superb, especially the banks of *Lupinus gredense*.



*Green Underside Blue (Martin)*

From there it was another hour or so to reach our destination, the lovely Hostal Almanzor, surrounded by pine woods and singing **Western Bonelli's Warblers**.

### **29<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Plataforma of the Gredos and Tormes River**

The garden of the hotel seemed full of **Western Bonelli's Warblers** as we set off. We took the road from Hoyos del Espino up to the high-altitude car park in the Gredos Mountains, called the Plataforma. On our way we stopped to look a **Schreiber's Green Lizard**. **Spanish Ibex** were along the stream beside the car park. High on the bare granite mountainsides there were banks of snow. Walking up a stone track, built for General Franco to give him access to the high hunting grounds, we saw **Northern Wheatear**, **Ortolan Buntings** and **Rock Buntings**.

We reached a grassy moorland zone where in the areas of broom we waited until eventually we had views, albeit distantly, of a singing **Bluethroat**. There were plenty of other birds to distract us: **Iberian Yellow Wagtails**, **Skylarks** and the **Iberian Dunnocks**.

We returned to the village for coffee and snacks, on a terrace which gave us a superb view across the mountain range. **Common** and **Pallid Swifts** whizzed around us.

We had a very pleasant afternoon walk beside the River Tormes, with **Western Bonelli's Warblers**, **Firecrests**, **Crested Tits** all singing around us, and a good selection of butterflies on the warm sunny banks included **Spanish Argus**, **Provence Orange-tip**, various **Fritillaries** and **Sooty Copper**.





*Sooty Copper (Martin)*

**30<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Peña Negra pass, Navacepeda de Tormes and Tormes River**

With another hot and sunny day in store, we ascended to the Peña Negra Pass, even higher than the Plataforma carpark of yesterday but with a very different feel. Instead of a bare rocky mountain valley, we were on an open broom-covered mountain with a spectacular view across south to the range. The broom was in flower, making the landscape amazing.



We found a rather distant **Bluethroat** singing, but as we retraced our steps, we came across another perched on a bare twig, singing upwind, so that the sound carried perfectly. It flew to a fence line and started an interaction with a rival male. This gave us a tremendous opportunity to be close bystanders, watching the male in song from the perch and in-flight as it defended its territory.



*Bluethroat (George)*



*Panoptes Blue (Martin)*

The area was full of **Skylarks**, there were **Iberian Dunnocks** singing and **Common Whitethroats** a-plenty. On our ascent we had also seen a **Red-backed Shrike**. We stopped in Navecepeda for coffee and snacks and then took a walk beside the Tormes river. There was an excellent variety of butterflies on the sunny hillsides: including **Small Blue**, **Panoptes Blue** and **Adonis Blue**. A **Honey Buzzard** flew low overhead and a **Garden Warbler** was heard.

#### **31<sup>st</sup> May 2025: Sierra de Bejar: La Covatilla and Candelario**

We ventured further afield today, leaving the Gredos to explore the Sierra de Bejar to the west. Our first stop was at the Covatilla ski station. Although it was rather windy, **Skylarks** were singing above us and surrounding us was an even more spectacular expanse of flowering yellow broom than we had seen yesterday. The scent was extraordinary. A **Common Rock Thrush** was seen well and there were several **Northern Wheatears**. On lower slopes we enjoyed the late morning watching butterflies on a flower-rich bank. **Lesser Spotted Fritillaries** were present and we were very pleased to see a **Broad-bordered Bee Hawk Moth**.

After lunch in Bejar we drove to Candelario and then into the deciduous oak and pine woods between the town and La Garganta. A **Honey Buzzard** was seen, and two **Iberian Chiffchaffs** were singing. As well as numerous **Marsh Fritillaries**, we also found a **Large Wall Butterfly** and **Black-eyed Blues**.



*Broad-bordered Bee Hawk Moth (Lesley)*



## 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025: Pines at Navarredonda de Gredos, Pico Pass, Cerro del Águila and return to Madrid

After breakfast we bade farewell to our hosts, Luis Alfonso and Loli at the Hostal Almanzor. We stopped beside the Parador and took a walk into the pines. Here we found **several Pied Flycatchers, Firecrests, Western Bonelli's Warblers** as well as **Iberian Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch** and **Short-toed Treecreeper**. A female **Keeled Skimmer** was found.

We had coffee at the Pico Pass, close to a magnificent Roman Road which climbed to the pass and beyond. On the southern slope we stopped at the hotter and drier *dehesa* area near the Cueva del Águila. We enjoyed a very productive walk along a dusty track, finding at least three **Spanish Fritillaries**, watching a gorgeous **Black-veined White** and then being delighted by a **Great Banded Grayling**. It was an exciting and rewarding conclusion to the holiday.



*Spanish Fritillary (Martin)*

We proceeded onto the motorway and stopped for a satisfying Menu del Día at a cafeteria. We then proceeded to Madrid, reaching the terminal at about 17.00.

### Species Lists

#### Butterflies

1. Swallowtail
2. Scarce Swallowtail
3. Black-veined White

4. Green-veined White
5. Large White
6. Small White
7. Bath White
8. Western Dappled White
9. Orange Tip
10. Provençal Orange Tip
11. Clouded Yellow
12. Brimstone
13. Cleopatra
14. Spanish Purple Hairstreak
15. False Ilex Hairstreak
16. Blue-spot Hairstreak
17. Small Copper
18. Sooty Copper
19. Long-tailed Blue
20. Lang's Short-tailed Blue
21. Holly Blue
22. Green-underside Blue
23. Black-eyed Blue
24. Panoptes Blue
25. Adonis Blue
26. Southern Brown Argus
27. Spanish Argus
28. Common Blue
29. Nettle-tree Butterfly
30. Two-tailed Pasha
31. Large Tortoiseshell
32. Red Admiral
33. Painted Lady
34. Small Tortoiseshell
35. Comma
36. Cardinal
37. Queen of Spain Fritillary
38. Glanville Fritillary
39. Knapweed Fritillary
40. Lesser Spotted Fritillary
41. Marsh Fritillary
42. Spanish Fritillary
43. Grayling
44. Great Banded Grayling
45. Meadow Brown
46. Spanish Gatekeeper
47. Small Heath
48. Speckled Wood

49. Wall Brown
50. Large Wall Brown
51. Red-underwing Skipper
52. Mallow Skipper
53. Large Skipper
54. Small Skipper

### **Odonata**

1. Western Demoiselle
2. Beautiful Demoiselle
3. Blue-eye
4. Small Red-eye
5. Large Red Damselfly
6. Orange Featherleg
7. White Featherleg
8. Dainty Bluet
9. Iberian Blue-tail
10. Blue Emperor
11. Lesser Emperor
12. Western Clubtail
13. Small Pincertail
14. Common Goldenring
15. Broad Scarlet
16. Broad-bodied Chaser
17. Long Skimmer
18. Epaulet Skimmer
19. Keeled Skimmer
20. Black-tailed Skimmer
21. Common Darter
22. Red-veined Darter
23. Southern Darter
24. Violet Dropwing
25. Northern Banded Groundling

### **Herpetofauna**

1. Iberian Water Frog
2. Bosca's Newt
3. Spanish Terrapin
4. Schreiber's Green Lizard
5. Geniez's Wall Lizard
6. Large Psammodromus
7. Ocellated Lizard



8. Viperine Snake

## **Birds**

1. Egyptian Goose
2. Common Shelduck
3. Mallard
4. Gadwall
5. Red-legged Partridge
6. Great Cormorant
7. Cattle Egret
8. Little Egret
9. Great White Egret
10. Little Bittern
11. Squacco Heron
12. Black-crowned Night Heron
13. Grey Heron
14. Purple Heron
15. Spoonbill
16. Glossy Ibis
17. White Stork
18. Griffon Vulture
19. Black Vulture
20. Egyptian Vulture
21. Short-toed Eagle
22. Booted Eagle
23. Black Kite
24. Red Kite
25. Common Buzzard
26. Honey Buzzard
27. Sparrowhawk
28. Lesser Kestrel
29. Common Kestrel
30. Little Ringed Plover
31. Kentish Plover
32. Collared Pratincole
33. Little Tern
34. Gull-billed Tern
35. Feral Pigeon
36. Wood Pigeon
37. Collared Dove
38. Common Cuckoo
39. Scops Owl
40. European Nightjar

41. Alpine Swift
42. Common Swift
43. Pallid Swift
44. White-rumped Swift
45. Kingfisher
46. Bee-eater
47. Hoopoe
48. Iberian Green Woodpecker
49. Great Spotted Woodpecker
50. Crested Lark
51. Thekla Lark
52. Woodlark
53. Skylark
54. Greater Short-toed Lark
55. Crag Martin
56. Sand Martin
57. Barn Swallow
58. Red-rumped Swallow
59. House Martin
60. Iberian Yellow Wagtail
61. Grey Wagtail
62. White Wagtail
63. Wren
64. Iberian Dunnock
65. Robin
66. Nightingale
67. Bluethroat
68. Rufous Bush Robin
69. Black Redstart
70. Stonechat
71. Northern Wheatear
72. Blue Rock Thrush
73. Common Rock Thrush
74. Blackbird
75. Mistle Thrush
76. Song Thrush
77. Zitting Cisticola
78. Melodious Warbler
79. Western Olivaceous Warbler
80. Common Reed Warbler
81. Great Reed Warbler
82. Savi's Warbler
83. Cetti's Warbler
84. Dartford Warbler
85. Sardinian Warbler

86. Common Whitethroat
87. Blackcap
88. Garden Warbler
89. Western Bonelli's Warbler
90. Iberian Chiffchaff
91. Firecrest
92. Pied Flycatcher
93. Long-tailed Tit
94. Crested Tit
95. Coal Tit
96. Blue Tit
97. Great Tit
98. Penduline Tit
99. Nuthatch
100. Short-toed Treecreeper
101. Golden Oriole
102. Iberian Grey Shrike
103. Woodchat Shrike
104. Red-backed Shrike
105. Jay
106. Iberian Magpie
107. Magpie
108. Jackdaw
109. Carrion Crow
110. Raven
111. Spotless Starling
112. House Sparrow
113. Rock Sparrow
114. Common Waxbill
115. Chaffinch
116. Serin
117. Greenfinch
118. Goldfinch
119. Linnet
120. Hawfinch
121. Cirl Bunting
122. Rock Bunting
123. Ortolan Bunting
124. Corn Bunting

### **Other Wildlife**

Hummingbird Hawkmoth

Broad-bodied Bee Hawkmoth



Roe Deer

Red Deer

Spanish Ibex