

# BIRDING EXTREMADURA



**EARLY WINTER IN EXTREMADURA FOR GOSIA, LOUIS, WILF AND TOM**

**Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura**

**29<sup>th</sup> November – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2025**



## **Itinerary**

**29<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Collection from Madrid**

**30<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Monfragüe National Park**

**1<sup>st</sup> December 2025: Plains east of Cáceres and Parque del Príncipe**

**2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025: Alcollarín, Campo Lugar, Palazuelo and Sierra Brava**

**3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025: Arrocampo, Jaraicejo and plains north of Trujillo**

**4<sup>th</sup> December 2025: Rice fields**

**5<sup>th</sup> December 2025: Guadiana at Lobón, Alange, Mérida and Montánchez**

**6<sup>th</sup> December 2025: Plains west of Trujillo and Monfragüe National Park**

**7<sup>th</sup> December 2025: Belén Palins, Valdecañas dam and return to Madrid**

## TRIP REPORT

### 29<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Collection from Madrid

Martin and Patrick met Gosia, Louis, Wilf and Tom at Terminal 4 of Madrid airport and by 16.30 we were heading out along the ring road to the south of the city. A couple of **Monk Parakeets** were seen as we took the exit for the A5 motorway to Extremadura. We did the whole journey non-stop, seeing **Red Kite** and **White Stork** on the way before it got too dark. Arriving at Casa Rural El Recuerdo we were welcomed by Claudia and soon settled down for a welcome evening meal.

### 30<sup>th</sup> November 2025: Monfragüe National Park

The day dawned misty and damp and it remained overcast as we headed north 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. By now the cloud had lifted and it was starting to break. We had a very rewarding hour at the viewpoint, enjoying close views of **Griffon Vultures** in flight and settled very close-by, as well as several **Black Vultures**. **Black Redstarts** and **Crag Martins** were also present, and we had quick glimpses of **Blue Rock Thrush**. After a coffee at Villareal de San Carlos, the sky was almost cloud-free and we stood for a while in the carpark, watching **Crested Larks**, **Linnets** and **Goldfinches**. We watched a **Black-winged Kite** fly across the sky to the north, a very unusual bird to find here. We continued to the Puerta de Serrana viewpoint, where more vultures were gathering and for a while they were joined by two **Bonelli's Eagles**. In the trees beside us we had superb views of two **Crested Tits**.

As we drove through the park, we had numerous sightings of **Red Deer**. We took our picnic in the belt of pines looking down to the Tiétar River. Vultures were almost constantly in view, but small birds were not showing well. We proceeded to the magnificent viewpoint of the Portilla del Tiétar. Vultures again were present and **Common Cranes** called from the *dehesas* to the north.

We took a short walk beside the River Tagus at the end of the afternoon, seeing a couple of **Firecrest** and then on our return to base **Iberian Grey Shrikes** were seen on roadside wires.

### 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025: Plains east of Cáceres and Parque del Príncipe

It was a day of perfect weather, with clear sky, no wind, sunshine and, despite the clear night, not too much of a frost to start with. **Iberian Magpies** were showing well in the garden first thing. We then set off towards the city of Cáceres, stopping on the plains about 15 km to the east. Here we made a series of stops to scan the open terrain. At every stop, there was a wonderful soundscape of larks, dominated by **Calandra Lark**, but also **Crested Lark** and **Skylark**. Flocks of **Corn Buntings** were as regular feature too. At our second stop we were rewarded by a flock of about 70 **Little Bustard** which flew in to settle on a field in view of where we stood. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** were also seen in flight. **Lapwings** were present in every field, and we came across some **Golden Plover** too. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** were heard, and one seen in flight, but otherwise they remained elusive.

We had coffee in Santa Marta de Magasca and then spent about an hour overlooking the River Tamsuja to enjoy our picnic. A **Cirl Bunting** was singing and we got views of two **Dartford**

**Warblers.** Several raptors were seen, including **Sparrowhawk** and several **Red Kite**. A **Spanish Imperial Eagle** flew in calling but veered southwards, depriving us of a closer view.

We then completed the day with an excellent visit to the Principe Park in Cáceres. There were groups of **Siskins** feeding along with **Goldfinches**. A couple of **Hawfinches** were seen on the ground. A **Grey Wagtail** was being harassed by a **White Wagtail**. A **Pied Flycatcher** was a complete surprise for 1<sup>st</sup> December! But pride of place must go to the **Iberian Magpies** which obliged us with numerous beautiful opportunities for photography.



*Pied Flycatcher*

## **2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025: Alcollarín, Campo Lugar, Palazuelo and Sierra Brava**

The day dawned damp and misty but as we set off southwards past the town of Zorita, the cloud started to rise and gradually broke-up during the day, bringing plenty of sunshine in the afternoon. Our first stop was at the Azud de Alcollarín, the subsidiary dam at Alcollarín. There were very few duck on the water, but enough to keep us busy for the first part of the morning. There were **Kingfishers**, plenty of **Common Chiffchaffs**, **Little Grebes**, and waders such as **Snipe** and **Common Sandpiper**. Amongst the **Crag Martins** was a **Barn Swallow**.

After coffee near Campo Lugar, we checked some small orchards just south of the village and enjoyed watching a roosting flock of perhaps 40 **Stone Curlew**. Onward to the rice fields near Puebla de Alcollarín, where we watched flocks of egrets and **Glossy Ibis** following a tractor and checked through muddy fields teeming with **Kentish Plovers**, **Ringed Plovers**, **Dunlin** and **Little Stint**. A **Peregrine** was active in the area, putting the waders up from time to time. All the time we could see and hear **Common Cranes**. We found a place for lunch, beside an old barn from where we could watch a large flock of **Spanish Sparrows** in the stubble and almost countless **Common Crane**. We made our way across the rice fields near Palazuelo afterwards, finding **Shelduck**, and other tractor-bird frenzy, this time full of egrets and gulls. **Yellow Wagtails** were



also present on the muddy fields. We took a short walk near the River Ruercas, hearing an **Eagle Owl** calling.



*An afternoon stroll*

We ended the day at the Sierra Brava reservoir, where there were rafts of **Shelduck** and distant groups of dabbling duck, just too far away to check through carefully.

**3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025: Arrocampo, Jaraicejo and plains north of Trujillo**



It was a beautifully clear morning and as we approached Trujillo, we could see the Gredos Mountains with a fresh layer of snow on them. We arrived at Arrocampo with superb conditions: great visibility over the reedbeds and little wind. However, soon afterwards the wind started to freshen. This made things quite difficult in finding birds in the reeds, but during the stay we did manage some views of **Penduline Tit**, **Squacco Heron** and **Black-crowned Night Heron**. The abundance of **Common Chiffchaffs** was staggering. After coffee, we visited another pool nearby where **Barn Swallows** were feeding low over the water. In an adjacent field, amongst the **Golden Plover** and **Lapwing**, we found a **Curlew**.

We then moved back in the direction of Trujillo to stop for our picnic south of Jaraicejo beside the Almonte River. It was a very picturesque spot with three bridges spanning the river dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A **Golden Eagle** was seen briefly at a distance, whereas we had a closer view of a **Sparrowhawk** which was harassing a **Common Kestrel**. **Chiffchaffs** were again busy here catching midges close to the water, along with **White Wagtails** and **Meadow Pipits**.

We continued to the plains north of the town. Here we had a very pleasant walk along an old drovers' trail and also scanned the terrain from a good viewpoint. A fine male **Hen Harrier** flew beside the vehicle as we arrived. In the area we saw well over two hundred **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** and a lovely flock of **Little Bustard**. We completed the afternoon on the plains just west of Trujillo, where four **Great Bustard** were admired as they strode across a field in the afternoon sunshine.



*Little Bustards*

#### **4<sup>th</sup> December 2025: Rice fields**

It was a murky morning with low cloud and drizzle, which continued through until midday. The afternoon was clearer, with some sunshine, but the fresh westerly wind continued. Given the dicey weather, the best bet was to spend the day exploring the rice fields, where the water-loving birds would be less put-off by the weather. South of Madrigalejo we looked at the fields

near the rice-village of Vegas Altas. There were good numbers of **Common Cranes** and a **Bluethroat** was glimpsed, but the conditions for viewing were not great, so we retreated to a bar for coffee in Vegas Altas. It was still drizzling when we left, so we headed west to the rice fields near Santa Amalia. Here there were again wonderful numbers of **Cranes** and dozens of wagtails and **Chiffchaffs**. A **Hen Harrier** put in a tremendous show for us. We made our way slowly back towards the east, with stops near Casar de Miajadas where gulls were feeding on recently ploughed fields.



*Glossy Ibis*

We had our picnic at the place where a couple of days previously we watched a Peregrine and numerous plovers. Today there were an excellent number of **Kentish Plovers**, as well as **Little Stints**. We spent the rest of the afternoon in the rice fields nearby. The **Common Cranes** created a very special atmosphere in terms of both sound and sight. Hundreds of gulls and **Glossy Ibises** were attracted to working tractors. We came across two **Greater Flamingos** with a flock of **Common Shelduck** and waders including a group of **Black-tailed Godwits**.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> December 2025: Guadiana at Lobón, Alange, Mérida and Montánchez**

It was a generally overcast day, with mist to start with, some drizzle during the day, but also short spells of sunshine in the late afternoon. We drove south-west to the Guadiana River between Mérida and Badajoz. Here we looked for Eagle Owl, which sadly did not oblige, but there were a few other birds to enjoy there such as **Cetti's Warbler**, **Serins**, **Little Grebe** and **Kingfisher**. We then drove south of Mérida to the spa town of Alange where we stopped for coffee and then a very productive short walk beside the town, overlooking the reservoir. The rocky habitat was very rich in birds, with a **Black Wheatear**, **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Rock Bunting** and **Thekla Lark** seen extremely well. There were two distant **Bonelli's Eagles** and a fine supporting cast of **Black Redstart**, **Serins**, **Linnets**, and **Spanish Sparrows**.



Stopping beside the Guadiana River in Mérida, we had our picnic in the van to escape a brief but heavy shower of rain, and then to look at the large gull flock present, mainly **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, but also some **Black-headed** and two **Yellow-legged Gulls** too.

We then drove back towards Trujillo with a stop at the castle of Montánchez. This had been in mist as we approached but fortunately the mist had lifted when we arrived, and we were afforded lovely views of the landscape all around. The highlight here was **seven Alpine Accentors** which were very obliging. There were also **Greenfinch**, **Chaffinches**, **Blue Rock Thrush** and **Black Redstart**. A lovely set of birds in a superb setting.



*Alpine Accentor*

#### **6<sup>th</sup> December 2025: Plains west of Trujillo and Monfragüe National Park**

It was an overcast day with some light drizzle in the afternoon, with some lighter clouds at midday, with little wind, it felt quite mild. We elected to spend the first part of the day on the plains west of Trujillo, stopping at various places and having some excellent views of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** in particular. There were large numbers of **Lapwings** on the move, we must have seen close to a thousand in total. **Little Bustards** and **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** were both seen in flight. We had several good sightings of vultures, including some **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** on the ground quite close to the road. At our lunch stop we saw two Spanish Imperial Eagles: first an adult being mobbed by a **Raven** and then just as we were about to leave, a juvenile bird which flew low overhead.

We then proceeded to Monfragüe National Park where we spent the rest of the afternoon at the Salto de Gitano viewpoint. Despite the cloudy conditions, there were at times good numbers of **Griffon Vultures** circling overhead and some also perched on rocks close to us. A Peregrine was soaring above us, calling and then remaining perched in view during the rest of our stay.

**Common Chiffchaffs** were flycatching from the rock face and a fine **Black Redstart** was perched at close quarters to us.



*Monfragüe*

#### **7<sup>th</sup> December 2025: Belén Plains, Valdecañas dam and return to Madrid**

We bade farewell to Claudia and Casa Rural El Recuerdo and embarked on our return to Madrid. However, there was time to do a couple of birding stops on the way. The first was on the Belén Plains just east of Trujillo. This afforded us superb views north towards the Gredos Mountains which were sandwiched between layers of cloud, with sun shining on their upper slopes and catching the snow on the highest peaks. On the plains there were sizeable flocks of **Lapwings** and we had another opportunity to watch a tractor working with perhaps not as many birds as were present in the rice fields, but an interesting selection, nonetheless, including **Cattle Egret**, **Black-headed Gull** and, amazingly, a small flock of **Mallard**! We admired an **Iberian Grey Shrike** with Trujillo in the background and there were flocks of **Skylark**, **Calandra Lark** and **Spanish Sparrows**.

Our next stop was the very pretty and deep valley below the Valdecañas dam. The autumn colours were wonderful and so were the steady stream of **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** against an overcast sky. **Long-tailed Tits** and **Common Chiffchaffs** were busy feeding in the mixed woodland around us.

Onward to Madrid, with a stop for coffee and snacks just before the halfway point. The traffic was light and we reached Terminal 4 of Madrid airport shortly after 14.30.

#### **BIRDS SEEN**

1. **Grey Lag Goose**: Seen on three days.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen on three days.
3. **Common Shelduck**: Seen on the rice fields and at Sierra Brava Reservoir.



4. **Wigeon:** Seen at Alcollarín.
5. **Gadwall:** Seen on two days.
6. **Eurasian Teal:** Seen at Alcollarín.
7. **Mallard:** Seen every day.
8. **Northern Shoveler:** Seen at Alcollarín.
9. **Common Pochard:** Seen on one day
10. **Little Grebe:** Seen on three days.
11. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen on two days.
12. **Great Cormorant:** Seen almost every day.
13. **Little Bittern:** Heard on the River Guadiana.
14. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo.
15. **Squacco Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo.
16. **Cattle Egret:** Seen on five days.
17. **Little Egret:** Seen on five days.
18. **Great Egret:** Seen on five days.
19. **Grey Heron:** Seen every day.
20. **White Stork:** Seen almost every day.
21. **Glossy Ibis:** Hundreds strong in the rice fields.
22. **Spoonbill:** Seen on two days.
23. **Greater Flamingo:** Seen on the rice fields.
24. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen every day.
25. **Black Vulture:** Seen every day.
26. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen on two days.
27. **Golden Eagle:** Seen near Jaraicejo.
28. **Bonelli's Eagle:** Seen at Monfragüe and Alange.
29. **Red Kite:** Seen daily.
30. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost daily.
31. **Hen Harrier:** Seen on the plains and rice fields.
32. **Common Buzzard:** Seen every day.
33. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen on four days.
34. **Black-winged Kite:** Seen in Monfragüe.
35. **Common Kestrel:** Seen on seven days.
36. **Merlin:** Seen at Alcollarín.
37. **Peregrine Falcon:** Seen on the rice fields, Monfragüe and Valdecañas.
38. **Water Rail:** Heard on three days.
39. **Moorhen:** Seen and heard at several places.
40. **Purple Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
41. **Common Coot:** Seen on Guadiana River and Alange.
42. **Common Crane:** Seen almost every day.
43. **Little Bustard:** Seen on the plains near Cáceres and Trujillo.
44. **Great Bustard:** Seen on the plains near Trujillo.
45. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on two days.
46. **Avocet:** Seen at Sierra Brava.
47. **Stone Curlew:** Seen at Campo Lugar.
48. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
49. **Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
50. **Kentish Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
51. **Golden Plover:** Seen on the rice fields and the plains.

52. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen every day.
53. **Dunlin:** Seen on the rice fields.
54. **Little Stint:** Seen on the rice fields.
55. **Ruff:** One seen on the rice fields.
56. **Common Snipe:** Seen on four days.
57. **Common Curlew:** One at Arrocampo.
58. **Black-tailed Godwit:** Seen on the rice fields.
59. **Common Redshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
60. **Greenshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
61. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen on three days.
62. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen at Alcollarín.
63. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on three days.
64. **Yellow-legged Gull:** Two seen at Mérida.
65. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen daily.
66. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on the plains.
67. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on the plains in large numbers.
68. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
69. **Stock Dove:** Seen on the plains near Trujillo.
70. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen daily.
71. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
72. **Eagle Owl:** Heard near Palazuelo.
73. **Little Owl:** Seen on plains near Cáceres.
74. **Kingfisher:** Seen almost daily.
75. **Monk Parakeet:** Seen in Madrid.
76. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost every day.
77. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen in Monfragüe and Cáceres.
78. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
79. **Crested Lark:** Seen daily.
80. **Thekla Lark:** Seen on five days.
81. **Woodlark:** Recorded on two days.
82. **Skylark:** Seen on the plains and the rice fields.
83. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost daily.
84. **Barn Swallow:** Seen on three days.
85. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen daily.
86. **Water Pipit:** Seen on the rice fields.
87. **Yellow Wagtail:** Seen on the rice fields.
88. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen almost every day.
89. **White Wagtail:** Seen daily.
90. **Wren:** Recorded most days.
91. **Dunnock:** Seen on two days.
92. **Alpine Accentor:** Seven at Montánchez Castle.
93. **Robin:** Seen daily.
94. **Bluethroat:** Seen on the rice fields.
95. **Black Redstart:** Seen daily.
96. **Stonechat:** Seen almost daily.
97. **Pied Flycatcher:** A female seen in Cáceres.
98. **Black Wheatear:** Seen at Alange.
99. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen on two days.

100. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
101. **Song Thrush:** Seen daily.
102. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen on one day.
103. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded most days.
104. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen daily.
105. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen near Santa Marta de Magasca.
106. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen almost every day.
107. **Blackcap:** Seen almost daily.
108. **Chiffchaff:** Seen every day.
109. **Firecrest:** Seen in Monfragüe.
110. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on three days.
111. **Crested Tit:** Seen in Monfragüe.
112. **Blue Tit:** Seen almost daily.
113. **Great Tit:** Seen almost daily.
114. **Nuthatch:** Heard on two days.
115. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Heard on two days.
116. **Penduline Tit:** Seen at Arrocampo.
117. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen daily.
118. **Jay:** Seen in Monfragüe.
119. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
120. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
121. **Jackdaw:** Seen almost daily.
122. **Raven:** Seen daily.
123. **Common Starling:** Seen on the plains.
124. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
125. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
126. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on several days, with big flocks on the rice fields.
127. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on the rice fields.
128. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen at Valdecañas.
129. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on rice fields.
130. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on four days.
131. **Yellow-crowned Bishop:** Seen on the rice fields.
132. **Chaffinch:** Seen almost daily.
133. **Serin:** Seen on three days.
134. **Greenfinch:** Seen on three day.
135. **Goldfinch:** Seen daily.
136. **Siskin:** Seen on two days.
137. **Linnet:** Seen daily.
138. **Hawfinch:** Seen in Cáceres.
139. **Cirl Bunting:** Singing at the River Tamuja.
140. **Rock Bunting:** Seen at Alange.
141. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

## **MAMMALS SEEN**

Otter

Egyptian Mongoose

Red Deer