

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



MID-SUMMER IN EXTREMADURA FOR MARK AND SALLY

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

6th June – 15th June 2025



Itinerary

6th June 2025: Collection from Madrid and drive to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

7th June 2025: Alcollarín Reservoir and Garciaz pines

8th June 2025: Cañamero and Ibor Mountains

9th June 2025: Las Mestas and Villareal de San Carlos

10th June 2025: Castañar de Ibor

11th June 2025: Monfragüe National Park, River Almonte and Alcollarín.

12th June 2025: Cañada Vulture Hide, Torrejón El Rubio

13th June 2025: La Garganta and Hervás

14th June 2025: Plains east of Cáceres, pools near Malpartida de Cáceres and Parque del Principé, Cáceres

15th June 2025: Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid.

TRIP REPORT

6th June 2025: Collection from Madrid and drive to Casa Rural El Recuerdo

Martin met Mark and Sally at 13.30 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, despite it being a Friday afternoon. We stopped for a quick lunch just outside Madrid and then continued our journey. Both **Red Kites** and **Black Kites** were seen several times, as well as several clusters of **White Stork** nests, each with young close to fledging. It was then onward to Casa Rural El Recuerdo, arriving shortly after 17.00, with time to listen to the sound of a singing **Nightingale**.

7th June 2025: Alcollarín Reservoir and Garciaz pines

It was a hot and sunny day with just a light wind. We set off at 8.30, just as a **Blue Rock Thrush** flew over the garden. We paused beside a fishing lake near Zorita where there were **Common Coot**, **Moorhen** and **Little Grebe**. It was close to our next stop: the River Alcollarín, beside the village of the same name. Water was flowing fast in the river as water was being released from the dam nearby. **Nightingales** and **Cetti's Warblers** sang and we saw a **Hoopoe** carrying food in its bill. We moved to the Alcollarín Reservoir, stopping on the eastern shore to scan the water. There were groups of **Spoonbill** and also a few **Ringed Plovers**, along with a **Kentish Plover**. The former were late passage migrants – an interesting record. An **Iberian Grey Shrike** perched obligingly near to where we stood and **Thekla's Larks** were singing. As we left Sally found a perched **Green Hooktail** in a holm oak tree: a superb find of one of our target species of the week.



We then moved to the smaller dam and pool to the east where a **Great Reed Warbler** sang close to us and a **Kingfisher** was also active. There were a few butterflies already active: **Southern** and **Common Gatekeeper**, **Brown Argus** and **African Grass Blue**. **Small Red-eyed** damselflies were also starting to appear, whilst **Northern Banded Groundling** were busy investigating us! We continued along the eastern shore of the reservoir and had several sightings of **Bee-eaters** and **Woodchat Shrikes**. Taking a break we stopped for coffee near the village of Campo Lugar, close to a silo building with a colony of **Lesser Kestrel** and an even bigger colony of **House Martins**. Returning to Alcollarín, a party of **Common Swifts** caught our attention and as we were watching them we were distracted by a tussle between a **Booted Eagle** and two **Common Buzzards** over a prey item. At one moment the **Common Buzzard** and **Booted Eagle** even locked talons!

Returning to the small dam for our picnic, we were well entertained by a greater variety of dragonflies: **Lesser Emperor**, **Epaulet Skimmer**, **Black-tailed Skimmer**, **Broad Scarlet**, a **Violet Dropwing** and a **Green Hooktail**, the latter failing to perch anywhere. Damselflies included **Dainty Bluet** and **Blue-eye**.

We made a visit to the western shore where we had good view of a **Collared Pratincole** and more **Ringed Plovers**. There were **Red-veined Darters** and a **Blue Emperor**.

We then concluded the afternoon in the pinewoods above the village of Garciaz. Here there were numerous **Common Darters**, and butterflies including **Cardinal**, **Southern Scarce Swallowtail** and **Common Swallowtail**.

8th June 2025: Cañamero and Ibor Mountains

It was a very hot and sunny day, but we managed to escape the most intense heat by being close to water in the morning and then at higher elevations in woodland later on. We started at the Ruercas River near Cañamero, waiting for the sun to rise high enough to start warming the banksides of the river. Whilst we waited we were royally entertained by **Golden Orioles**, especially three males which were chasing each other for much of the time near to where we stood. As things warmed up, so dragonflies and damselflies started to appear. We had superb views of **Beautiful** and **Copper Demoiselles**, a **Large Pincertail** and several **Epaulet Skimmers**.

After coffee in Cañamero, we moved to a pass between the town and Guadalupe. Here we had fleeting views of a **Two-tailed Pasha**. Onward we entered the Ibor valley and stopped for our picnic in beautiful deciduous oak woodland beside the meadow at the old **Bishop's Hospital**. A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** appeared as we arrived. The meadow was a paradise for butterflies and we were engrossed for some time with views of **Black-veined Whites**, **Clouded Yellows**, **Painted Ladies**, **Queen of Spain Fritillaries**, **Common Blues** and **Brown Argus**. Walking through the woodland we also found **Large Tortoiseshell** and **Grayling**, whilst Odonata included **Black-tailed Skimmer** and **Migrant Emerald**. **Western Bonelli's Warblers** sang around us continuously.



We retraced our steps making a few stops for butterflies as we did so, and then onward to Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

9th June 2025: Las Mestas and Villareal de San Carlos

It was an even hotter day today, with cloud cover in the afternoon. We made the long journey north-west to the remote region of Las Hurdes to stop at the Ladrillar River beside the little village of Las Mestas. The journey took us through the *dehesa* landscapes near Plasencia and then through large olive groves and pine forestry. We had a welcome stop for coffee just before arriving at the village. We spent the whole time beside the river, in an area that will be used as a natural swimming pool in the summer, and, with the hot weather, some people arrived during our stay to bath in the crystal-clear pools. It was a superbly productive visit. Highlights were the **Splendid Cruisers**, of which we must have seen at least six. Almost all the time they were patrolling stretches of the river, but on one occasion, Mark spotted one that had landed in a tree and amazingly it was still there by the time we had negotiated our approach. What an amazing experience!



Orange-spotted Emeralds were also active, as were **Large Pincertails** and **Epaulet Skimmers**. Another attraction of the area where the **Two-tailed Pashas**, of which again half a dozen were present and affording us excellent views as they came down to the water's edge.



We had a lovely picnic in the shade not far from the river and then returned for another short sojourn to watch the **Orange-spotted Emeralds**.

We then drove back, making a coffee stop at Villareal de San Carlos in the heart of the Monfragüe National Park. Here on a mulberry tree, we had superb views of a male **Golden Oriole** and a family party of **Hawfinches**. It was then back to base, with the temperature of the car showing 39° as we drove.

10th June 2025: Castañar de Ibor

There was generally high cloud today, with periods of hazy sunshine and a sense of rather sultry weather. After checking the town park of Madroñera for Scops Owl – an off-chance given that there had been no records there this spring, we continued via Trujillo to the Ibores Mountains, stopping at Castañar de Ibor for a morning walk through sweet chestnut groves and orchards. The butterflies were amazing, a constant flow beside us, almost overwhelming at times. There were dozens and dozens of **Painted Ladies**. Other species included **Iberian Marbled White**, **Amanda's Blue**, **Great Banded Grayling**, **Southern White Admiral** and fritillaries such as **Queen of Spain**, **Cardinal**, **Marsh** and **Meadow**. **Golden-ringed Dragonflies** were also present.



After coffee in the town, we drove a short distance southwards for a picnic with a panoramic view of the mountains. We then returned to the Ibor River for a walk beside the natural swimming pool. **Large Pincertails** were numerous, as were **Western Demoiselles**. Just a little upstream on the Arroyo de las Viejas, we found a **White Featherleg**. But perhaps the most productive area was further upstream where we spent a very productive finale to the afternoon. As well as **Small Pincertails**, we found several **Orange Featherlegs**, **Broad-bodied Chasers** and Keeled Skimmers, **Orange-spotted Emerald**, **Western Clubtails** and best of all, **Western Spectres**, which gave us a superb show of their distinctive bank-hugging display.

11th June 2025: Monfragüe National Park and River Almonte

There had been some rain over night and there was high cloud as we left. The day certainly felt welcomingly fresher. We headed north across the vast *dehesa* between Trujillo and Torrejón El Rubio, at arrive at the castle of Monfragüe. The view from the castle was magnificent across the *dehesas* to the south and the ridges of the park to north. We spent most of the morning at the castle, getting regular sightings of at least three **White-rumped Swifts**, which only came close just as we were about to leave! However, there were plenty of eye-level views of **vultures**: all three species. We also saw three other species of **swift**, as well as a close flypast of a **Peregrine**. A **Red Fox** also put in an appearance.

We spotted at Villareal de San Carlos for coffee and to take a look at the fruiting mulberry trees. A **Golden Oriole** was there only briefly, but we had several views of **Hawfinch**. At a small pond at the edge of the hamlet there was a small pond with a wonderful selection of dragonflies and damselflies (six species), with **Dainty Bluets** the most numerous.

We stopped at the Fuente de Francés, in shady Mediterranean woodland for our picnic. **Hawfinches** were coming down to drink and a **Two-tailed Pasha** was present, but what was most memorable was a family party of at least five **Jays** which were remarkably tame.



We completed our visit with a stop at the Salto de Gitano viewpoint. We enjoyed watching **Black Stork** (including a nest with three chicks) and again close views of **Griffon Vultures**. There were **Red-rumped Swallows**, **Crag Martins**, **Blue Rock Thrush** and **Rock Bunting** all in view.

To round the afternoon off, we stopped at the River Almonte which gave us the chance to get photographs of **Violet Dropwings**.

At sunset we returned to Alcollarín Reservoir. There we listened to two or three different **Red-necked Nightjars** and saw at least four different individuals.

12th June 2025: Cañada Vulture Hide, Torrejón El Rubio

We had the day booked at the Cañada hide just south of Monfragüe National Park. We arrived at the rendezvous point just ahead of schedule and shortly after 09.00 we were ensconced in the hide. Within minutes **Black Kites**, **Black Vultures**, **Griffon Vultures** and **Egyptian Vultures** had arrived and were tussling over each other in a scrum-like frenzy. As things quietened down, with some of the vultures leaving, we could appreciate better the different behaviours of each species as they picked over the pieces. **Black Vultures** were powerful and used a lot of threat displays to move into a potential morsel, clearing the way of other scavengers. **Griffon Vultures** quarrelled amongst themselves, often with pecks at each other's bills. **Egyptian Vultures** were more solitary, picking at morsels but also we had the chance to watch one crack an Ostrich egg with a stone which it flung down onto the shell with force. The kites swooped in and out and also wandered around looking for morsels.



Smaller birds present included **Iberian Magpies**, **Rock Sparrows** (collecting nesting material), **Red-rumped Swallows** and **Woodchat Shrikes**.

We hoped that a **Golden Eagle** would come in – it is a regular visitor, but despite a long wait nothing had arrived. We decided to leave at 16.00 at the precise moment that the eagle appeared. It probably saw us and after a couple of passes veered away, despite the fact that we were safely out of view again in the hide. We waited for another 90 minutes in the hope that it would return, but to no avail. Examination of the photos of the eagle in flight suggested that its crop was full, so perhaps it might not have been interested in coming anyway.

13th June 2025: La Garganta and Hervás



On another warm and sunny day, we ventured north to the limits of Extremadura with Castille y Leon, near to the village of La Garganta, the second highest settlement in Extremadura, in the Sierra de Bejar. Before making the final ascent to the village, and beyond, we stopped for coffee at Baños de Monetmayor, where **Golden Orioles** were seen and Blackcaps were singing. We then followed the small road that climbed through Sweet Chestnut groves and Pyrenean Oak, full of the song of **Western Bonelli's Warblers**. Through La Garganta, we continued our way, now through more open country, with belts of pine, scrub and mountain meadows. This was where we spent most of the day. Our main target species was the highly localised **Yellow-banded Skipper**. We visited a meadow where there were masses of *Potentilla* in flower, its larval food plant. We found first of all an **Olive Skipper**, but almost simultaneously Sally had come across another skipper, which was indeed a **Yellow-banded**. It is a very large skipper and quite unlike others in its flight behaviour. We encountered another and for moments we had superb views until it flew strongly away.



Other butterflies were also a joy to watch such as **Niobe Fritillaries** and **Black-veined Whites**. **Cirl Buntings** sang nearby and there were snatches of song from an **Iberian Chiffchaff**. We moved to another area, seeing a **Hobby** fly past as we stopped. The second meadow was also very productive and here again we had superb views of a **Yellow-banded Skipper**, egg-laying on *Potentilla*. Near where we found it, there was a nest of **Woodlark**, so we moved on to avoid disturbance.

After our picnic, we made another stop where two **Hobbies** were circling, and a Booted Eagle and **Short-toed Eagle** also appeared. **Carrión Crows**, which have a very limited distribution in Extremadura were also present.

We then drove down towards the town of Hervás, making a stop in woodland to watch **Wood White** and **Silver-washed Fritillary**. Beyond Hervás, we searched for orchids in the woodland, finding two **Birds' Nest orchids**. It was then time to head back, which we did through the Monfragüe National Park, to make a short stop at the Puerto de Serrania, where a **Blue Rock Thrush** was watched as it made display flights from the top of a rocky pinnacle.

14th June 2025: Plains east of Cáceres, pools near Malpartida de Cáceres and Parque del Principé, Cáceres

Another hot and sunny day with gentle and light winds: it was perfect for the plans. We started first with a brief watch of the **Lesser Kestrel** colony at the edge of Trujillo. Travelling west, we stopped on the open plains just a few kilometres from Cáceres. Here we saw several **Roller**,

more **Lesser Kestrel**, **Little Owl** and no fewer than three **Short-toed Eagles**. Typical birds of the plains: **Calandra Larks** and **Corn Buntings** were in good numbers.



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 our count was in double figures., The vegetation was full of **Robust** and **Migrant Spreadwings**, as well as **Iberian Bluetails** and **Blue-eyes**. **Violet Dropwings**, **Red-veined** and **Common Darters**, and **Broad Scarlet** were common. Birds were not neglected with **Squacco Heron**, **Spoonbill** and **Glossy Ibis** also seen.



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 and provided shade for our picnic whilst **Iberian Magpies**, **Hawfinch** and **Golden Orioles** were in the trees around us.



Our target here was the **Orange-winged Dropwing** and we found at least seven individuals around the system of fountains and water courses in the park. **Epaulet Skimmer** and **Broad Scarlet** were also present.



15th June 2025: Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid.

We bade farewell to Claudia and Casa Rural El Recuerdo under clear skies and sunshine. As we approached the motorway, a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** was seen perched on a wire beside the road. Once on the motorway heading for Madrid, we took a pause from the journey to stop beside the marsh at Saucedilla, part of the Arrocampo Reservoir. It was an extremely productive interlude, with 40 species of birds recorded. These included some wonderful views of **Little Bittern** and **Squacco Heron**, along with **Purple Swamphen** and **Purple Heron**. A distant **Black-winged Kite** was seen hovering. **Savi's Warbler** was heard but not seen as was **Common Reed Warbler**. **Common** and **Pallid Swifts** amongst the numerous hirundines hawked for food over the marsh.



It was then time to continue our journey. We had a coffee stop at about the halfway mark and then reached the airport exactly as planned, at 12.45. It was the end of an enormously successful holiday.

Species Lists

Butterflies

1. Swallowtail
2. Scarce Swallowtail
3. Black-veined White
4. Large White
5. Small White
6. Green-veined White
7. Bath White
8. Clouded Yellow

9. Brimstone
10. Cleopatra
11. Wood White
12. Purple Hairstreak
13. Spanish Purple Hairstreak
14. Ilex Hairstreak
15. False Ilex Hairstreak
16. Small Copper
17. Scarce Copper
18. Sooty Copper
19. Long-tailed Blue
20. Lang's Short-tailed Blue
21. African Grass Blue
22. Holly Blue
23. Black-eyed Blue
24. Southern Brown Argus
25. Amanda's Blue
26. Common Blue
27. Nettle-tree Butterfly
28. Two-tailed Pasha
29. Southern White Admiral
30. Large Tortoiseshell
31. Red Admiral
32. Painted Lady
33. Small Tortoiseshell
34. Comma
35. Cardinal
36. Silver-washed Fritillary
37. Niobe Fritillary
38. Queen of Spain Fritillary
39. Glanville Fritillary
40. Knapweed Fritillary
41. Heath Fritillary
42. Provençal Fritillary
43. Meadow Fritillary
44. Marsh Fritillary
45. Iberian Marbled White
46. Grayling
47. Great Banded Grayling
48. Meadow Brown
49. Gatekeeper
50. Southern Gatekeeper
51. Spanish Gatekeeper
52. Small Heath
53. Speckled Wood

54. Wall Brown
55. Olive Skipper
56. Yellow-banded Skipper
57. Red-underwing Skipper
58. Lulworth Skipper
59. Small Skipper
60. Large Skipper
61. Mediterranean Skipper

Odonata

1. Copper Demoiselle
2. Beautiful Demoiselle
3. Western Demoiselle
4. Migrant Spreadwing
5. Robust Spreadwing
6. Small Spreadwing
7. Dainty Bluet
8. Blue-eye
9. Small Red-eye
10. Iberian Blue-tail
11. Large Red Damselfly
12. Orange Featherleg
13. White Featherleg
14. Migrant Hawker
15. Blue Emperor
16. Lesser Emperor
17. Western Spectre
18. Western Clubtail
19. Small Pincertail
20. Large Pincertail
21. Green Hooktail
22. Common Goldenring
23. Splendid Cruiser
24. Orange-spotted Emerald
25. Northern Banded Groundling
26. Broad Scarlet
27. Black Percher
28. Broad-bodied Chaser
29. Black-tailed Skimmer
30. Epaulet Skimmer
31. Keeled Skimmer
32. Long Skimmer
33. Red-veined Darter
34. Common Darter
35. Violet Dropwing

36. Orange-winged Dropwing

Birds

1. Egyptian Goose
2. Grey Lag Goose
3. Gadwall
4. Mallard
5. Pintail
6. Red-legged Partridge
7. Quail
8. Little Grebe
9. Great Crested Grebe
10. Great Cormorant
11. Little Bittern
12. Black-crowned Night Heron
13. Squacco Heron
14. Cattle Egret
15. Little Egret
16. Great White Egret
17. Grey Heron
18. Purple Heron
19. Black Stork
20. White Stork
21. Glossy Ibis
22. Spoonbill
23. Egyptian Vulture
24. Griffon Vulture
25. Black Vulture
26. Golden Eagle
27. Short-toed Eagle
28. Booted Eagle
29. Black Kite
30. Red Kite
31. Marsh Harrier
32. Common Buzzard
33. Black-winged Kite
34. Lesser Kestrel
35. Common Kestrel
36. Hobby
37. Peregrine Falcon
38. Water Rail
39. Moorhen
40. Purple Swamphen
41. Common Coot
42. Black-winged Stilt

43. Collared Pratincole
44. Ringed Plover
45. Little Ringed Plover
46. Kentish Plover
47. Yellow-legged Gull
48. Black-bellied Sandgrouse
49. Feral Pigeon
50. Wood Pigeon
51. Collared Dove
52. Turtle Dove
53. Common Cuckoo
54. Great Spotted Cuckoo
55. Scops Owl
56. Little Owl
57. Red-necked Nightjar
58. Alpine Swift
59. Common Swift
60. Pallid Swift
61. White-rumped Swift
62. Kingfisher
63. Bee-eater
64. Roller
65. Hoopoe
66. Great Spotted Woodpecker
67. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
68. Calandra Lark
69. Short-toed Lark
70. Crested Lark
71. Thekla Lark
72. Woodlark
73. Sand Martin
74. Crag Martin
75. Barn Swallow
76. Red-rumped Swallow
77. House Martin
78. Grey Wagtail
79. White Wagtail
80. Wren
81. Robin
82. Nightingale
83. Black Redstart
84. Stonechat
85. Blue Rock Thrush
86. Blackbird
87. Mistle Thrush

88. Cetti's Warbler
89. Zitting Cisticola
90. Savi's Warbler
91. Common Reed Warbler
92. Great Reed Warbler
93. Melodious Warbler
94. Sardinian Warbler
95. Western Orphean Warbler
96. Common Whitethroat
97. Blackcap
98. Western Bonelli's Warbler
99. Iberian Chiffchaff
100. Common Chiffchaff
101. Firecrest
102. Long-tailed Tit
103. Crested Tit
104. Coal Tit
105. Blue Tit
106. Great Tit
107. Nuthatch
108. Short-toed Treecreeper
109. Penduline Tit
110. Golden Oriole
111. Iberian Grey Shrike
112. Woodchat Shrike
113. Jay
114. Iberian Magpie
115. Magpie
116. Jackdaw
117. Carrion Crow
118. Raven
119. Spotless Starling
120. House Sparrow
121. Spanish Sparrow
122. Rock Sparrow
123. Chaffinch
124. Serin
125. Greenfinch
126. Goldfinch
127. Linnet
128. Hawfinch
129. Cirl Bunting
130. Rock Bunting
131. Corn Bunting