

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



EARLY SPRING HOLIDAY FOR PETER, VANA, JENNY, JOAN AND HILARY

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

9th March – 13th March 2025



Itinerary

9th March 2025: Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir

10th March 2025: Plains between Trujillo and Cáceres, Trujillo

11th March 2025: Monfragüe National Park

12th March 2025: Alange, Mérida and rice fields near Palazuelo

13th March 2025: Arrocampo Reservoir, Miravete Pass and River Almonte

TRIP REPORT

9th March 2025: Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir

There was light rain and heavily overcast skies at first light, but through most of the morning we enjoyed dry, albeit mainly overcast weather. However heavy showers of rains, alternating with calmer features, were a feature of the afternoon.

We headed south, through the town of Zorita and onward across the plains of Campo Lugar. At our first stop, we found a total of over thirty **Great Bustard**, spread across two groups. One of the groups, comprising mainly males, included some birds were putting on short bouts of display. Their colours in the moments of morning sunshine were wonderful. **Calandra Larks** sang above us and small groups performed chases just above the ground. We continued across the plains, making several stops, seeing amongst other birds **Lesser Kestrel** and **Marsh Harrier**, whilst **Corn Buntings** were singing everywhere.

After a coffee stop near the village, we proceeded to Alcollarín. Beside the river there were a multitude of **Common Chiffchaffs** foraging and in song, and among them a **Willow Warbler** was also singing. There were some fine **Spanish Sparrows** too.

We stopped beside the reservoir, at a vantage point under the shade of a holm oak. From here we could see several **Spoonbill** and a group of six **Greater Flamingo**. There was a stunning **Iberian Grey Shrike** on a nearby bush. At the picnic site, **Marsh Harriers** were in display and a **Western Swamphen** put in a brief appearance.



We spent most of the afternoon on the western shore of the reservoir, dodging heavy showers of rain. There were thousands of ducks present, mainly **Shoveler** and **Pintail**, but also good numbers of **Wigeon**, **Mallard** and **Gadwall**. We came across a group of six **Red-crested Pochard**. A few **Greenshank** fed on the shoreline. At the dam, a pair of **Great Crested Grebe** were in display, framed by a magnificent rainbow.

We made a final stop again by the river at the edge of the village. Here **Serins** were singing, a **Kingfisher** was very briefly seen and a **Hoopoe** called.

10th March 2025: Plains between Trujillo and Cáceres, Trujillo

It was heavily overcast first thing, but with just a fine drizzle, which quickly cleared up as we approached Trujillo. We took the road to Cáceres and stopped at the edge of the plains north-west of the town. There were two birding groups along the track, whom we greeted as we continued to a further vantage point. From here we had an extremely rewarding first stop: a group of 12 **Great Bustards** on one side of us, three **Little Bustards** on the other side, a flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** flying overhead, whilst we also watched an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle** being mobbed by **Common Kestrels**. All the time, of course we were immersed in the song of **Calandra Larks**. Further on the track we stopped again, relocating the **Little Bustards** and now realising that there were four birds (two males and two females). They were bunkered down in the vegetation to protect themselves against the fresh southerly wind. One of the birding groups arrived and we put them onto the birds, and we withdrew to give them some space and returned along the track. We stopped to have good views of the **Great Bustards** again.

We proceeded onto the village of Santa Marta de Magasca where we had our coffee in the friendly bar on the main square. It was starting to rain as we left and we took the road southwards, seeing several **Woodchat Shrikes**. An immature **Spanish Imperial Eagle** had a tussle with a **Red Kite** at one of our stops. However, conditions on the open ground were not conducive for birding so we sought shelter in the Tamuja valley for our picnic. Here the conditions were much improved, and we enjoyed watching a dozen **Crag Martins** close to us, as well as another adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, **Red Kite** and also flowers such as **Dwarf Pansy**.

To the north of the village, we stopped briefly beside the River Magasca, where there was a pair of **Grey Wagtail**. We ascended north to the plains, finding a large flock of passage **Golden Plover** and in an adjacent field a large group of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**. They were on the ground close to the road, and they took flight as we stopped. However, three returned and we had magnificent views of a male and then a pair together at quite close range and under superb light conditions.

We paused at an ancient drovers' trail, where a **Grass Eggar** caterpillar was found, as well as a colony of **Sawfly Orchids** in flower. By then the rain had set in. With the prospect of heavy rain for what remained of the afternoon, we decided to call it a day whilst we were still dry and return to base.

11th March 2025: Monfragüe National Park

A day of brooding dark skies, heavy showers, squalls but also spells of sunshine, and with the latter in mind, we headed to the Monfragüe National Park. But not before stopping at the edge of the village, here we found a flock of about 35 **Hawfinches** feeding on the ground – although merely four or five were actually visible on the ground itself. It was only when something disturbed them that the true size of the flock was discernible.



Our journey took us across the vast, undulating *dehesa* landscape north of Trujillo. After the village of Torrejón del Rubio, we entered the national park. We made a brief, initial stop at the massive gorge of Salto del Gitano. Here **Griffon Vultures** were gliding overhead, whilst numerous others were perched on the crags waiting for a break in the weather. However, it was rather cold and windy, so we proceeded further. On the northern side of the park there is a small viewpoint of overlooking a deep valley with some crags. On the way, we saw a **Bonelli's Eagle** gliding just above the skyline. The sun was breaking through and as we stopped, we heard a **Subalpine Warbler** singing from the bank of tree heath. Two **Egyptian Vultures** glided in front of the crags, whilst other **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** were overhead. Remarkably we found an **Eagle Owl** sitting right out in the open, clearly making the most of a respite in the weather. What a sight!



We felt that a well-deserved coffee was next in the itinerary so we stopped in the little hamlet of Villareal de San Carlos, where **Barn Swallows** were flying around. We then drove slowly through the park, seeing some **Red Deer**. We made a stop at a high vantage point, looking down on a wide bend of the Tiétar River. There **Egyptian Vultures** were present and we found a perched **Bonelli's Eagle**, which gave us remarkably good views.

We had our picnic in the shelter of the viewpoint at the Portilla del Tiétar, overlooking another cliff where there were vultures, and an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle**. Two species of delicate narcissus were in flower along the banks beside the road. We retraced our steps and stopped in a belt of pine trees. Here we found a **Crested Tit**, and several **Long-tailed Tits**, whilst overhead a **Short-toed Eagle** and a **Black Kite** were seen. Back beside the Tagus River, we stopped to take the opportunity of a short walk and again in a short spell of sunshine, a **Nettle-tree Butterfly** came out to perched on the bare tree beside the van.

We made our final stop back at the Salto del Gitano. There were periods of windy rain but also some sunshine. Perhaps two hundred **Griffon Vultures** were in the sky at times. A pair of **Black Storks** rushed past us in a swoosh! When the sky darkened, the vultures returned to their perches, trying to dry their wings before the next shower. What a day!

12th March 2025: Alange, Mérida and rice fields near Palazuelo

The day stayed dry but was generally overcast with light winds. The favourable weather conditions made it a good day to enjoy more time outside the van, doing some short walks. So, this is what we did, after parking at Alange beside a wonderful colony of **House Martins**. We walked for a short way from the town, beside the reservoir, through an area of rocky outcrops. Here we quickly found three **Black Wheatear**, as well as getting excellent views of **Thekla Larks** and hearing a **Quail** calling quite close by. Returning to the van, we watched a **Blue Rock Thrush** on an outcrop beside the park.

After coffee, we paid a short visit to the dam of the reservoir, hoping to see **Alpine Swift**. The heavy cloud meant that there was little activity, but we did see two birds rather distantly.

We then took a road north to Mérida, which took us past some wonderful colonies of **White Storks**. At Mérida we parked beside the River Guadiana for our picnic. There was a great variety of birds seen there, including a group of **Spoonbill**, a **Caspian Tern** and an **Osprey**. We entered the city and took a walk on the Roman Bridge. Here we had a superb view of a male **Little Bittern** and a **Western Swamphen**, as well as groups of **Glossy Ibis**. **Common** and **Iberian Chiffchaffs** were feeding in the vegetation beside the bridge. The colony of egrets nearby yielded several **Black-crowned Night Herons**, as well as **Glossy Ibis**.

Following a stop at a service station, we then drove east to enter the rice fields near Palazuelo for a brief afternoon visit. This proved very productive with a field full of wagtails and pipits, including some very smart **Yellow Wagtails**. Three **Temminck's Stint** and 25 **Little Stint** were also present, as well as a group of **Kentish Plover**.



As we slowly made our way out of the area, we came across flocks of **Red Adirons**, **Spanish** and **Tree Sparrows**. Finally, just before heading for home, we found a group of eight **Common Crane**.

13th March 2025: Arrocampo Reservoir, Miravete Pass and River Almonte

The day remained dry, with a light northerly wind which made it feel quite fresh. We travelled north-east to the village of Saucedilla, beside the Arrocampo Reservoir. This lake, with emergent vegetation dominated by Lesser Reed Mace, was created to provide cooling water for the Almaraz nuclear power station and is now the best site in northern Extremadura for herons and egrets. The chilly overcast weather did not make it very conducive to much bird song or activity at the start, but we had lovely views of a male **Bluethroat**, as well as some **Western Swamphen** and a **Ferruginous Duck**. Further along the marsh we also saw a group of roosting **Black-crowned Night Heron** and two **Penduline Tits**. After coffee in the village, we explored the area to the west, stopping first beside a shallow lake with inundated trees, some of which provided perches for **Cormorants**. A **Water Rail** made a furtive appearance and there were a few waders: **Black-winged Stilts** and **Common Redshank**. What was delightful was a sight of a family of **Black-winged Kites** (an adult with two juveniles). We watched the adult set out to look for prey, hovering over a field.

We had lunch at a corner of the reservoir, where there were more **Western Swamphens** and egrets. We then checked the eastern shore, with a fine view of a newly arrived **Purple Heron**. By now it was time to move on, so after a brief visit to see the church in Saucedilla, its small square and a very attractive mural, we returned to the town of Almaraz, to visit an area with a colony of **Naked Man Orchid** which were just starting to flower.

Onward and southward, retracing our steps, we stopped south of the Miravete Pass where a **Woodlark** was singing. Our final stop was beside the River Almonte, where three **Short-toed Eagles** glided overhead.



BIRDS SEEN OR HEARD

1. **Grey Lag Goose:** Seen at Alcollarín and Alange.
2. **Egyptian Goose:** Seen on three days
3. **Wigeon:** Seen at Alcollarín.
4. **Gadwall:** Seen at Alcollarín.
5. **Eurasian Teal:** Seen at Alcollarín.
6. **Pintail:** Seen at Alcollarín.
7. **Mallard:** Seen daily.
8. **Northern Shoveler:** Seen at Alcollarín and on the plains.
9. **Red-crested Pochard:** Seen at Alcollarín.
10. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen on the plains.
11. **Quail:** Heard on three days.
12. **Little Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín and Arrocampo.
13. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen at Alcollarín and Alange.
14. **Great Cormorant:** Seen daily.
15. **Little Bittern:** Seen in Mérida and heard at Arrocampo.
16. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo and Mérida.
17. **Western Cattle Egret:** Seen on most days.
18. **Little Egret:** Seen on most days.
19. **Great White Egret:** Seen almost every day
20. **Grey Heron:** Seen daily.
21. **Purple Heron:** One seen at Arrocampo.
22. **Black Stork:** Seen at Monfragüe and near Santa Marta de Magasca.
23. **White Stork:** Seen daily.
24. **Glossy Ibis:** Seen at Alcollarín, Arrocampo and Mérida.
25. **Spoonbill:** Seen at Alcollarín and Mérida.
26. **Greater Flamingo:** A group seen at Alcollarín.
27. **Black-winged Kite:** Three seen at Arrocampo.
28. **Black Kite:** Seen daily.
29. **Red Kite:** Seen almost every day.
30. **Egyptian Vulture:** Seen on two days.
31. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
32. **Black Vulture:** Seen on three days.
33. **Osprey:** One seen in Mérida.
34. **Short-toed Eagle:** Seen on two days.
35. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost every day.
36. **Common Buzzard:** Seen almost every day.
37. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen in Monfragüe and on the plains
38. **Bonelli's Eagle:** Seen in Monfragüe.
39. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen on the plains.
40. **Common Kestrel:** Seen on two days.
41. **Peregrine:** Heard at Monfragüe and seen briefly at River Almonte.
42. **Water Rail:** Seen at Arrocampo.
43. **Common Moorhen:** Seen on three days.
44. **Western Swamphen:** Seen at Alcollarín, Mérida and Arrocampo.
45. **Common Coot:** Seen at Alcollarín.

46. **Common Crane:** A group of eight on the rice fields.
47. **Little Bustard:** A group of four seen on the plains.
48. **Great Bustard:** Flocks seen at Campo Lugar and on plains west of Trujillo.
49. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen at Arrocampo.
50. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on one day.
51. **Kentish Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
52. **Golden Plover:** Seen on the plains.
53. **Little Stint:** Small flock on the rice fields.
54. **Temminck's Stint:** Three seen on the rice fields.
55. **Common Snipe:** Seen at Arrocampo.
56. **Common Redshank:** Seen at Arrocampo.
57. **Greenshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
58. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen at Alcollarín.
59. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on two days.
60. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen almost every day.
61. **Caspian Tern:** One seen at Mérida.
62. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen wonderfully on the plains.
63. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
64. **Common Woodpigeon:** Seen on two days.
65. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
66. **Common Cuckoo:** Calling at Alcollarín.
67. **Eagle Owl:** One seen wonderfully in Monfragüe.
68. **Alpine Swift:** Two seen at Alange.
69. **Pallid Swift:** Seen on the plains.
70. **Kingfisher:** Seen most days.
71. **Hoopoe:** Seen most day.
72. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
73. **Crested Lark:** Seen almost every day.
74. **Thekla Lark:** Seen almost every day.
75. **Skylark:** Seen on the plains.
76. **Woodlark:** Seen near Puerto de Miravete.
77. **Sand Martin:** Seen at Mérida.
78. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost daily.
79. **Barn Swallow:** Seen daily.
80. **Red-rumped Swallow:** Seen at Arrocampo.
81. **House Martin:** Seen daily.
82. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen almost daily.
83. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen at River Magasca.
84. **Yellow Wagtail:** Seen on the rice fields
85. **White Wagtail:** Seen every day.
86. **Robin:** Seen almost daily.
87. **Bluethroat:** Seen at Arrocampo.
88. **Black Redstart:** Seen every day.
89. **Stonechat:** Seen daily.
90. **Northern Wheatear:** Seen on one day.
91. **Black Wheatear:** Seen at Alange.
92. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Alange.
93. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.

- 94. **Song Thrush:** Seen daily.
- 95. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen on the plains.
- 96. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded almost every day.
- 97. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen almost every day.
- 98. **Subalpine Warbler:** Seen in Monfragüe.
- 99. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen daily.
- 100. **Blackcap:** Seen on two days
- 101. **Iberian Chiffchaff:** One seen in Mérida.
- 102. **Common Chiffchaff:** Seen daily.
- 103. **Willow Warbler:** Seen at Alcollárin and Mérida.
- 104. **Wren:** Seen almost daily.
- 105. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on one day.
- 106. **Crested Tit:** Seen in Monfragüe.
- 107. **Blue Tit:** Seen on one day.
- 108. **Great Tit:** Seen most days.
- 109. **Nuthatch:** Heard on one day.
- 110. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Seen in Monfragüe.
- 111. **Penduline Tit:** Seen at Arrocampo.
- 112. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen on two days.
- 113. **Woodchat Shrike:** Seen on two days.
- 114. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
- 115. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
- 116. **Jackdaw:** Seen almost daily.
- 117. **Raven:** Seen most days.
- 118. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
- 119. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
- 120. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen most days.
- 121. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on the rice fields.
- 122. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on the rice fields.
- 123. **Chaffinch:** Seen most days.
- 124. **Serin:** Seen daily.
- 125. **Greenfinch:** Seen on two days.
- 126. **Goldfinch:** Seen every day.
- 127. **Linnet:** Seen most days.
- 128. **Hawfinch:** Seen on three days.
- 129. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.

MAMMALS

Red Deer

Roe Deer

Rabbit

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Natterjack Toad

BUTTERFLIES

Brimstone

Nettle-tree Butterfly

Small Heath

OTHER INSECTS (SELECTION)

Winter Webworm *Ocnogryna boetica*

Grass Egger

PLANTS (SELECTION)

Sawfly Orchid

Naked man Orchid

Dwarf Pansy

Angel's Tears Narcissus

Hoop Petticoat Narcissus

Spanish Milk Vetch

Common Asphodel

Spanish Tree Heath

Portuguese Tree Heath

Grey-leaved Cistus

Gum Cistus