

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



EARLY SUMMER IN EXTREMADURA FOR ALISON, PAT AND SARAH

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

15th May – 22nd May 2026



Itinerary

15th May 2026: Pick up from Madrid

16th May: Campo Lugar plains, rice fields near Madrigalejo and Alcollarín Reservoir

17th May 2026: The plains and rivers near Santa Marta de Magasca, and Trujillo

18th May 2026: Monfragüe National Park

19th May 2026: Culibar Reservoir, Villuercas Mountains and Garciaz

20th May 2026: Garganta de la Olla and Piornal

21st May 2026: Trujillo, Arrocampo Reservoir, Valdecañas Dam, Jaraicejo

22nd May 2026: Return to Madrid

TRIP REPORT

15th May 2026: Pick up from Madrid

Martin met the trio outside Terminal One, beside the Botero statue of Europa. It was a cool and rather overcast morning, with a fresh north-westerly breeze. This abated somewhat during the day, and by the afternoon we enjoyed some sunshine too. We headed out of Madrid and soon hit the heavy outbound traffic of Madrileños escaping the city for their holiday weekend. The traffic became slower due to an accident. Luckily as soon as we had passed that obstacle, the traffic flowed well and we started to make good progress. We stopped for a snack just east of the city of Talavera. Onward, we moved away from the open arable land of La Mancha to landscapes which would presage the typical landscape of much of Extremadura: the wood pasture dominated by holm oaks. To the north, the impressive Gredos Mountains showed their snowy peaks as the clouds lifted.



We stopped at the Arrocampo Reservoir, beside the village of Saucedilla. Here we admired the nesting **Barn Swallows** and enjoyed a walk beside the marsh. **Reed Warblers** and **Savi's Warblers** were singing, and we had good views of **Cetti's Warblers** and **Zitting Cisticolas**. Overhead there were many **Black Kite**, as well as a couple of **Black Vulture**. We watched **Purple Herons** come into their nesting colony and saw egrets crossing our view. **White Storks** bill-clacked. Delightful **Northern Banded Groundling** dragonflies hovered by our feet. At 16.30, we moved on, reaching Casa Rural El Recuerdo at about 17.15 to be welcomed by Claudia and shortly afterwards an evening meal, washed down with local red wine.

16th May: Campo Lugar plains, rice fields near Madrigalejo and Alcollarín Reservoir

The day dawned calm and sunny, with not a cloud in the sky, as the day progressed fine weather clouds did gather and there were some gusts of wind (as well as impressive dust-

devils!). We drove south to enter the Guadiana watershed, stopping first on the expanse of the Campo Lugar plains, south of the town of Zorita. **Lesser Kestrels** were perched on fence posts and on the ground. **Calandra Larks** sang above us and chased each other over the dry grassland. We found quickly a singing male **Little Bustard** and we had a superb and prolonged view of it. Four **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** were less obliging as they took off quickly and flew away from us. There were a couple of **Short-toed Eagles** too. Other larks included **Greater Short-toed** and **Crested**. The trio of exotic-looking species were seen in close proximity: **Roller**, **Hoopoe** and **Bee-eater**.

We moved on to the Sierra Brava Reservoir to see how such infrastructure has transformed what were the flood plains of the Guadiana River to intensive agriculture dominated by rice, maize, tomatoes and fruit trees. Most of the rice fields were dry, but on one, we saw a small group of **Ringed Plovers**. Beyond we passed an area of rough pasture with scattered trees, seeing our first **Iberian Grey Shrikes**. We were pleased to find a juvenile **Black-winged Kite** sitting quietly in a dead tree. In the holm oaks were colonies of **White Storks**. We stopped at a small old gravel working where **Purple Herons** were present. A male **Little Bittern** flew across the marsh towards us. A **Savi's Warbler** was singing but not seen.

We stopped for coffee in the rice village of Vegas Altas and then explored some of the rice fields close to the village before moving on to have lunch beside the River Gargaligas. Here a **White Stork** nest was occupied by **House** and **Tree Sparrows**. A couple of **Kingfishers** were seen. **Great Reed Warblers** were singing but remained elusive. Onward afterwards to more rice fields, seeing a pair of **Bonelli's Eagles** soaring overhead. Eventually we found a wet muddy field with many **Ringed Plovers** and a group of **Collared Pratincoles** which were beautiful in flight.



We completed the day at Alcollarín Reservoir. As we arrived, we saw at very close quarters on the ground and then above us a large group of **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**. A **Booted Eagle** flew

through the melee. The reservoir itself was quiet, but along the reiver below the dam we had good views of **Common Waxbill** and another **Kingfisher**.

17th May 2026: The plains and rivers near Santa Marta de Magasca, and Trujillo



There was high cloud for most of the day and at times a fresh breeze, which kept the temperatures very comfortable and the light, especially in the morning, excellent. We started on the plains between Santa Marta de Magasca and Trujillo. Here we had a very productive walk, seeing lots of **Calandra Larks**, some superb views of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, a very emblematic **Great Bustard** and a glimpse of a **Spanish Imperial Eagle**. But most evocative perhaps was the site of two cowboys on horseback with two dogs, riding across a vast field to move a herd of cattle.

We then moved to the plains south-west of the village. Very quickly we obtained good views of **Roller** and **Little Owl**. Along a track we found a female **Montagu's Harrier** and watched a group of **Lesser Kestrels** following a combine harvester. After coffee, in the village, which was very busy, we stopped to overlook the Tamuja River and then had our picnic beside the Magasca River. At both sites we had good views of **Crag Martins** and **Red-rumped Swallows**, and some flyover raptors, such as kites and vultures. We completed our visit of the plains with a walk along an ancient drovers' trail. Here too there were **Calandra Larks**, **Greater Short-toed Larks**, with other wildlife interest in the form of a **Western Psammmodromus** lizard and butterflies such as **Southern Gatekeeper**. We then moved onto the town of Trujillo to see the main square and then wander up to the Arab fortress, where the view across the landscape was extraordinary, whilst dozens of swifts were constantly in sight and sound.



18th May 2026: Monfragüe National Park



High cloud persisted most of the day with a light westerly breeze and plenty of sunshine. We entered the Monfragüe National Park from the northern side, beside the River Tiétar and made our first stop where the river cuts through the hard quartzite northern ridge. On the cliff face opposite **Griffon Vultures** nurtured their chicks. **House Martins** flew over the cliff top and **Blue Rock Thrush** sang. We had a very close view of a **Rock Bunting**, whilst **Turtle Doves** were singing from across the river but remained hard to pin down. An **Egyptian Vulture** flew in front of the rock face at one point, whilst a distant pair of **Spanish Imperial Eagles** soared.

Close by was a nest of **Egyptian Vulture** and we enjoyed a superb view. Onward through the park, we stopped at a picnic area and were delighted by the views of a pair of **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** feeding their young in a nest hole. A **Thekla Lark** showed itself beautiful and later we saw another pair.

After coffee in the hamlet of Villareal de San Carlos, we saw three **Golden Orioles** fly from a mulberry tree. We then moved to the picnic near beside the Tagus River where we had magnificent views of a **Two-tailed Pasha** and a **Large Tortoiseshell**. **Alpine Swifts** were amongst the **House Martins** beside the bridge. We also saw a **Nettle-tree Butterfly** well, close to where we had parked. Our next stop was at the iconic viewpoint of Salto de Gitano. We had a very productive stay here, seeing again **Griffon Vultures** at their nests, but also **Black Storks** at their too. **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Black Redstarts** and **Rock Bunting** were singing, sometimes using the same rock, but not all at the same time. We completed the afternoon, walking up to the viewpoint on the castle ridge, giving us an unbroken view southwards across the *dehesa* and northwards to the Gredos Mountains.



19th May 2026: Culibar Reservoir, Villuercas Mountains and Garciaz

We enjoyed another lovely sunny and warm day with deep blue skies. We ventured first to the Cubilar Reservoir, where **Great crested Grebes** glided on the water, which offered us a good panoramic view of the Villuercas Mountains, our destination for the day. Climbing past Guadalupe, we paused to admire the view and then started our ascent. We stopped to see the medieval snow well, set in a scrubby habitat of ericaceous species and rock rose. From there it was just a few minutes' drive to reach the summit at 1600 metres. There we could admire the extraordinary landscape of Appalachian relief which makes this mountain range so famous. But beyond that we could see across vast swathes of Extremadura and beyond, into the provinces of Toledo and Avila. **House Martins** hawked insects over our heads, **Wrens** and **Rock Bunting** sang from perches, whilst a few **Griffon Vultures** glided over.

We descended on the northern slope to the town of Navezuelas where we had an excellent coffee, whilst **Common Swifts** screamed overhead. From there we drove south to take a walk in mixed forest above the town of Cañamero. It was a lovely walk, with superb views of **Crested Tits**. **Iberian Green Woodpeckers** were very vocal.

Our picnic followed beside a spring surrounded by Pyrenean oak. We then drove through Berzocana and onward towards Garcias, entering a *dehesa*-dominated landscape. We drove to an area of forest where we had another excellent walk. Here butterflies were excellent with several **Spanish Marbled Whites** and **Spanish Gatekeepers**, as well as **Marsh** and **Queen of Spain Fritillaries**. We also found two species of orchid in flower: **Broad-leaved Helleborine** and **Langei's Orchid**.

We completed the day with a couple of stops near Garciaz, in very attractive patches of woodland, with song from **Melodious Warbler** and **Nightingales**.



20th May 2026: Garganta de la Olla and Piornal

It was another wonderful day, with clear blue skies and only a slight breeze. We headed to the Gredos Mountains, making our first stop at the beautiful mountain stream at Garganta de la Olla. Here the water tumbled over smooth granite, through a gallery woodland of alders. A **Golden Oriole** was seen dashing past and the woodland seemed full of **Robins**. As we returned, we saw a **Grey Wagtail** and a **Dipper** which was enjoying a good preen.

We drove up through the steep slopes clad with Pyrenean oak and emerged on the rolling crest of the mountain to golden broom-scrub, heathers and smooth granite boulders. We drove up a track and parked beside a small reservoir. From there we spent an hour and a half on a beautiful walk. The views were stunning, the colours and variety of flowers wonderful. Birds were in song: **Dartford Warbler**, **Common Whitethroat**, the curious Iberian **Dunnocks**, and **Ortolan Buntings**. Overhead were **Booted Eagles**, **Buzzards** and **Griffon Vultures**.

We then proceeded to the town of Piornal for coffee, under a sky full of **Pallid Swifts**. Afterwards we managed to buy a box of freshly picked cherries as they were being unloaded to the local cooperative. And delicious they were too.

We enjoyed our picnic in the shade of a clump of pines, full of small birds: **Subalpine Warbler**, a charming **Bonelli's Warbler**, noisy **Jays**, **Nightingales** and **Firecrest**.

It was then back off the mountains, down to the hot plains of the Tiétar and Tagus rivers and onward to base.

21st May 2026: Trujillo, Arrocampo Reservoir, Valdecañas Dam, Jaraicejo

The hot and sunny weather continued today. After a stop at the edge of Trujillo to watch the comings-and-goings of **Lesser Kestrels** at their large colony in an old silo building. We then returned to the area where we had made our first stop in Extremadura, the reed-fringed lake of Arrocampo. Our first stop was to look for a roosting **Long-eared Owl**, and we were all rewarded with a wonderful view as it started out of a tree at us. A **Squacco Heron** was also seen. We then moved to one of the hides, and whilst standing on the ramp, for an hour, had a very productive session. **Purple Herons** continuously flew in and out of their nesting colony. A **Black-crowned Night Heron** crossed our view. A **Savi's Warbler** showed beautifully, as did a **Purple Swampphen**, with its extraordinary feet. **Zitting Cisticolas** were active and a couple of **Whiskered Terns** gracefully flew over the water on several occasions. At another section of the marsh, we had a quick sighting of a **Little Bittern**. To the west, at another smaller body of water we watched a family group of **Ferruginous Duck** swimming into the reeds and a family group of **Sardinian Warblers** in a bush. **Nesting Spoonbills** were more distant.



At coffee, we admired the big number of **Barn Swallows** enjoying the shade provided by a sports pavilion roof. Before leaving the marsh, we stopped one more time, this time to see a beautiful **Violet Dropwing** dragonfly.

We then moved to a valley beyond the Valdecañas dam where we had our picnic. It was sheer where we were treated with great views of **Golden Oriole**: including two males perched together and another mobbing a Common Kestrel. A family group of **Long-tailed Tits** were enchanting, as was a **Cleopatra** butterfly. We made our final stops closer to base, near Jaraicejo. At the Arroyo de la Vid, we saw two more dragonflies: a **Western Clubtail** and a lovely **Orange Featherleg**. The heat was causing alarm to the car, with a faulty thermostat, so we found the shade of a local bar to wait for Claudia to rescue the trio.



22nd May 2026: Return to Madrid

There was an opportunity for a pre-breakfast walk and to say farewell to **Nightingales** and **Red-rumped Swallows**. We set off at 10.30 for the drive to Madrid. We stopped for refreshments at about the halfway point and then entered Madrid, heralded by **Monk Parakeets**, reaching the airport at 13.45.

SPECIES SEEN

Birds

1. **Greylag Goose**: Seen at Alcollarín.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen at Alcollarín.
3. **Mallard**: Seen almost daily.
4. **Ferruginous Duck**: Seen at Arrocampo.
5. **Quail**: Heard on two days.
6. **Great Crested Grebe**: Seen at Cubilar.
7. **Great Cormorant**: Seen on three days.
8. **Little Bittern**: Seen at Madrigalejo and Arrocampo.
9. **Black-crowned Night Heron**: Seen at Arrocampo.
10. **Squacco Heron**: Seen at Arrocampo.
11. **Cattle Egret**: Seen on two days.
12. **Little Egret**: Seen on four days.
13. **Great Egret**: Seen at Arrocampo.
14. **Grey Heron**: Seen on most day.
15. **Purple Heron**: Seen on three days.
16. **Black Stork**: Seen at Monfragüe and near Zorita.
17. **White Stork**: Seen every day.
18. **Glossy Ibis**: Seen at Arrocampo.

19. **Spoonbill:** Seen at Arrocampo.
20. **Egyptian Vulture:** Seen on two days.
21. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
22. **Black Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
23. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen on two days.
24. **Short-toed Eagle:** Seen on four days.
25. **Booted Eagle:** Seen on five days.
26. **Bonelli's Eagle:** Seen in near Madrigalejo.
27. **Black Kite:** Seen almost daily.
28. **Red Kite:** Seen on two days.
29. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen on three days.
30. **Montagu's Harrier:** Seen on the plains.
31. **Common Buzzard:** Seen most days.
32. **Black-winged Kite:** Seen near Madrigalejo.
33. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen on four days
34. **Common Kestrel:** Seen on three days.
35. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo.
36. **Moorhen:** Seen on three days.
37. **Purple Swampphen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
38. **Little Bustard:** Seen on Campo Lugar plains.
39. **Great Bustard:** Seen near Trujillo.
40. **Collared Pratincole:** Seen on the rice fields.
41. **Common Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
42. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
43. **Whiskered Tern:** Seen at Arrocampo.
44. **Gull-billed Tern:** Seen at Arrocampo.
45. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on Campo Lugar plains.
46. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on the plains.
47. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen almost daily.
48. **Woodpigeon:** Seen daily.
49. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
50. **Turtle Dove:** Heard on two days.
51. **Common Cuckoo:** Recorded almost daily.
52. **Little Owl:** Seen on the plains.
53. **Long-eared Owl:** Seen at Arrocampo.
54. **Alpine Swift:** Seen in Monfragüe.
55. **Common Swift:** Seen almost daily.
56. **Pallid Swift:** Seen on three days.
57. **Monk Parakeet:** Seen in Madrid.
58. **Kingfisher:** Seen on three days.
59. **Bee-eater:** Seen on three days.
60. **Roller:** Seen on two days.
61. **Hoopoe:** Seen on four days.
62. **Iberian Green Woodpecker:** Heard in the Villuercas Mountains.
63. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Heard on two days.
64. **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen in Monfragüe.
65. **Calandra Lark:** Common on the plains.
66. **Greater Short-toed Lark:** Seen on the plains.

67. **Crested Lark**: Seen on three days.
68. **Thekla Lark**: Seen on three days.
69. **Woodlark**: Seen on four days.
70. **Crag Martin**: Seen almost daily.
71. **Barn Swallow**: Seen daily.
72. **Red-rumped Swallow**: Seen daily.
73. **House Martin**: Seen daily.
74. **Yellow Wagtail**: Seen on the rice fields.
75. **Grey Wagtail**: Seen on one day.
76. **White Wagtail**: Seen almost daily.
77. **Wren**: Seen on four days.
78. **Dipper**: Seen at Garganta de la Olla.
79. **Robin**: Seen on four days.
80. **Nightingale**: Recorded every day.
81. **Black Redstart**: Seen almost daily.
82. **Common Redstart**: One at Piornal.
83. **Stonechat**: Seen almost daily.
84. **Blue Rock Thrush**: Seen on two days.
85. **Blackbird**: Seen daily.
86. **Mistle Thrush**: Seen on two days.
87. **Cetti's Warbler**: Recorded almost daily.
88. **Zitting Cisticola**: Seen almost daily.
89. **Savi's Warbler**: Seen at Madrigalejo and at Arrocampo.
90. **Reed Warbler**: Recorded on three days.
91. **Great Reed Warbler**: Recorded on two days.
92. **Melodious Warbler**: Recorded on two days.
93. **Dartford Warbler**: Seen in Villuercas and Piornal.
94. **Subalpine Warbler**: Seen on two days.
95. **Sardinian Warbler**: Seen almost daily.
96. **Common Whitethroat**: Seen at Piornal.
97. **Blackcap**: Seen on two days.
98. **Western Bonelli's Warbler**: Seen at Piornal.
99. **Spotted Flycatcher**: Seen at Jaraicejo.
100. **Long-tailed Tit**: Recorded on two days.
101. **Crested Tit**: Seen in the Villuercas and Piornal.
102. **Coal Tit**: Seen in Piornal.
103. **Blue Tit**: Seen almost daily.
104. **Great Tit**: Seen on two days.
105. **Nuthatch**: Seen in the Villuercas.
106. **Short-toed Treecreeper**: Seen on three days.
107. **Golden Oriole**: Seen on three days.
108. **Iberian Grey Shrike**: Seen on three days.
109. **Woodchat Shrike**: Seen on four days.
110. **Jay**: Seen on three days.
111. **Iberian Magpie**: Seen daily.
112. **Magpie**: Seen almost daily.
113. **Jackdaw**: Seen on three days.
114. **Raven**: Seen almost daily.

- 115. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
- 116. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
- 117. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on three days.
- 118. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on the rice fields.
- 119. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on the rice fields.
- 120. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on two days.
- 121. **Chaffinch:** Seen almost daily.
- 122. **Serin:** Seen almost daily.
- 123. **Greenfinch:** Seen on three days.
- 124. **Goldfinch:** Seen almost daily.
- 125. **Linnet:** Seen on two days.
- 126. **Hawfinch:** Seen on two days
- 127. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen on one day.
- 128. **Rock Bunting:** Seen on three days.
- 129. **Ortolan Bunting:** Seen at Piornal.
- 130. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.

Butterflies

- 1. Swallowtail
- 2. Scarce Swallowtail
- 3. Small White
- 4. Bath White
- 5. Spanish Marbled White
- 6. Clouded Yellow
- 7. Cleopatra
- 8. False Ilex Hairstreak
- 9. Small Copper
- 10. Holly Blue
- 11. Southern Brown Argus
- 12. Spanish Argus
- 13. Nettle-tree Butterfly
- 14. Two-tailed Pasha
- 15. Large Tortoiseshell
- 16. Red Admiral
- 17. Painted Lady
- 18. Queen of Spain Fritillary
- 19. Marsh Fritillary
- 20. Meadow Brown
- 21. Spanish Gatekeeper
- 22. Southern Gatekeeper
- 23. Speckled Wood
- 24. Wall Brown
- 25. Small Skipper

Odonata

1. Orange Featherleg
2. Blue Emperor
3. Western Clubtail
4. Common Goldenring
5. Black-tailed Skimmer
6. Violet Dropwing
7. Red-veined Darter
8. Northern Banded Groundling

Herpetofauna

1. Iberian Water Frog
2. Spanish Terrapin
3. Red-eared Terrapin
4. Geniez's Wall Lizard
5. Large Psammodromus
6. Western Psammodromus
7. Viperine Snake

Noted Plants

1. Broad-leaved Helleborine
2. Langei's Orchid
3. Wild Tulip
4. Mountain Sandwort
5. Basil-leaved Rockrose
6. Gum Cistus
7. Common Andryala (Pat's favourite)
8. Persian Clover