

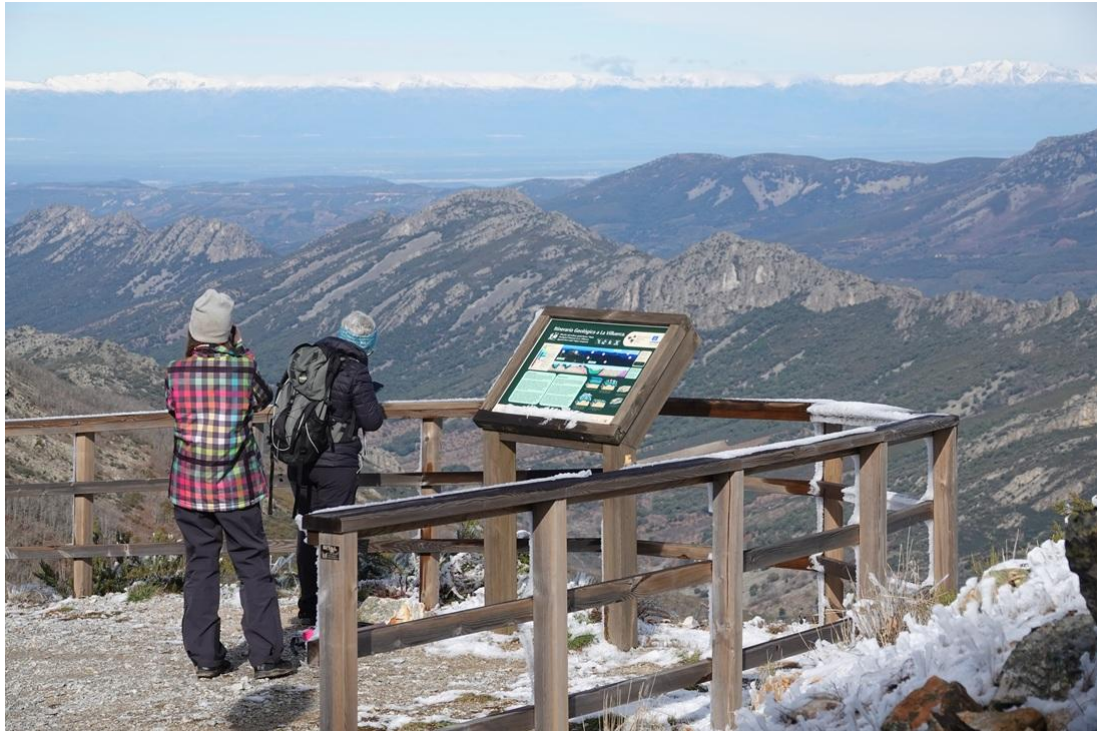
BIRDING EXTREMADURA



LATE WINTER IN EXTREMADURA FOR LISBET AND VEGARD

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

18th – 25th January 2026



Itinerary

18th January 2026: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura

19th January 2026: Villuercas Mountains

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25th January 2026: Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid

TRIP REPORT

18th January 2026: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura

Martin met Lisbet and Vegard just before 20.00 at Madrid airport and we were quickly heading out around the southern ring-road. The traffic was quite heavy, thanks to a couple of tailbacks because of accidents. It was very light once we were on the motorway for Extremadura and we made the journey without needing to stop en route. Claudia greeted our arrival at Casa Rural El Recuerdo.

19th January 2026: Villuercas Mountains

It was a cloudless dawn and there was a very heavy frost. The calm conditions made it an ideal day to explore the Villuercas Mountains Geopark. As we left the village, there were groups of **Iberian Magpies**. We stopped just outside Cañamero, where we had an enjoyable walk beside the Ruerkas River. At the start it was rather quiet birdwise, as we were walking in the shade and everything was still quite cold. However, as we emerged into more open habitat and the sun rose above the hill to the east, things picked up. **Common Chiffchaffs** were busy feeding in the small gardens of chalets. Parties of **Long-tailed Tits** brought with them **Short-toed Treecreepers** and a **Firecrest**. A **Rock Bunting** perched on a fence. As we retraced our steps we heard and saw **Bullfinch**. **Griffon Vultures** started to appear over the rock outcrops above us.

We then drove to Guadalupe, taking a route to the east of the town and then north, stopping to admire the pilgrimage town from above. It was then a quick ascent through Sweet Chestnut and Pyrenean Oak to the peak. On the way we stopped to look at a medieval snow well. At the peak, there was patches of snow and the trees and bushes were covered in heavy ice.



It was a beautiful scene, but most spectacular were the views in all directions: north to the Gredos Mountains, capped with snow, east across the ridges of the Ibores Mountains and Montes de Toledo, south over the sierras of Badajoz and east towards Trujillo and beyond. Close to where we parked, we found three **Alpine Accentors**. A **Wren** and **Black Redstart** were

otherwise the other birds there, with **Raven** and **Griffon Vulture** overhead. The conditions were perfect for a magnificent picnic with a view.

We then descended to the north-east, taking the western flanks of the Villuercas Mountains. We stopped beside cork oak woodland, watching **Griffon Vultures** and a rather distant displaying pair of **Bonelli's Eagles**. Beyond that was the village of Cabañas del Castillo, where we had an excellent walk to get a spectacular view into the valley leading up to the Villuercas peak. The village was full of **Blackcaps** and **Black Redstarts**. Nearby we stopped at the River Almonte, where we had much better views of **Bonelli's Eagles**, as well as a **Sardinian Warbler**.

We returned to base crossing the Belén Plains to the east of Trujillo. Here there were numerous **Lapwing** in the fields, as well as couple of small groups of **Golden Plover**.

20th January 2026: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres

It was another cold frosty morning. There was some high cloud in the morning, but a light but fresh westerly breeze cleared the sky by midday.



We spent the whole day on the plains between Trujillo and Cáceres, stopping first north of Trujillo on the Monroy Road. Here we had a nice long walk along a track, with **Calandra Larks** singing and a **Skylark** flying overhead. The snow-capped Gredos Mountains afforded us an excellent view to the north. There were **Lapwing** and **Golden Plovers** in the fields. We found a group of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** and saw others in flight. We eventually found a group of **Little Bustard**. Well-hidden in old dry vegetation, there were perhaps 20 in view and certainly more than that hidden.

As we progressed across the plains, birds of prey such as **Common Kestrel**, **Buzzard**, **Red Kite** and **Griffon Vulture** started to appear.

We stopped at the top of valley side of the River Tamuja for our picnic. It was not too long before we saw a juvenile **Spanish Imperial Eagle** soaring, and then an adult appeared high

above it. However, we kept hearing one calling from the opposite direction. At one point, it flew from a tree where it had been hidden and a few minutes later soared into view, giving us a superb view. Several **Crag Martins** were busy feeding on insects around us the whole time. We were also entertained by the appearance of two **Otters** which played in the water below us.

We then moved southwards on the plains again. **Griffon Vultures** passed low overhead, and we had a lovely view of a **Little Owl**. We saw a group of 43 **Great Bustards** in flight and then settling on the arable fields ahead of us. We had several opportunities to watch them walking and in flight. We had a walk along a track nearby, which gave us good opportunities to see small birds like **Thekla Lark**, **Zitting Cisticola**, **Corn Bunting** and **Stonechat**.



We completed our day on the plains just west of Trujillo. Here we found a flock of five **Great Bustard**, much closer than the birds we had seen earlier. Also present in the fields around us, along with the **Lapwings** and **Golden Plover**, were over 70 **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** and about 20 **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, an excellent way to complete the day.

21st January 2026: Sierra Brava, Madrigalejo, Palazuelo rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir

There was an abrupt change in the weather, with hill mist and steady rain as we set off. Heading southwards we crossed the misty open plains near Zorita and then stopped to look at the Sierra Brava Reservoir. This supplies water for much of the rice growing in the area. The weather conditions made viewing the water body a challenge, but we could make out distantly some **Shelduck**, **Avocet** and **Egyptian Geese**. Birds were easier to see once we had descended to the first section of the rice fields. **Common Cranes** were in family groups and there were also **White Storks** and **Marsh Harriers** on the rice stubble. Tractors were ploughing the stubble in, attracting large numbers of **Cattle**, **Little** and **Great White Egrets** as well as **Grey Heron**. This was a spectacle that we came across several times during the day. We stopped beside the River Ruercas, where **Water Rails** and **Moorhen** called from the dense vegetation. Proceeding to the rice fields close to the rice villages of Palazuelo and Puebla de Alcollarín, more of the fields were already ploughed and many were flooded because of the recent winter rains. However, we did find groups of waders including **Dunlin** and **Kentish Plover**. A huge flock of several

hundred **Glossy Ibis** was quite a spectacle, as were the dense flocks of **Spanish Sparrow**. With the **Black-headed** and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, we came across an adult **Mediterranean Gull** too.



Cranes were generally in small groups, although as we left the rice area, we did see a flock of about a hundred in a field of maize stubble.

After a warming cup of coffee, we completed the afternoon in steady light rain, checking the small subsidiary lake at Alcollarin Reservoir. There were groups of **Mallard**, **Teal**, **Wigeon** and **Gadwall**, many **Cormorants**, **White Wagtails**, and above us **Crag Martins** and **House Martins**.

It was as misty as we returned at the end of the afternoon as it was when we set off, but we were delighted with the wonderful sight of a pair of **Bonelli's Eagles** perched on a pylon right close to the road.

22nd January 2026: Monfragüe National Park

The day dawned clear and calm and it remained fine until early afternoon. From then onwards with heavily overcast skies, we had bouts of heavy rain, with just short respites.

We travelled north through a vast landscape of *dehesa* wood-pasture. A large flock of **Common Cranes** were standing in a field of winter wheat. As we approached the Monfragüe National Park, we could see the southern ridge of the quartzite, with the snow-clad Gredos Mountains in the distance, visible through gaps in the clouds.

At Monfragüe we drove up the southern ridge to park close to the castle to which we ascended. We climbed through a mixture of wild olives, cork oak and holm oak. All the time **Griffon Vultures** were sweeping past us, sometimes very closely. From the castle we could look across the vast *dehesa* landscape to the south and also admire the vultures from above. We watched a vulture land in a wild olive tree below us and start pulling off some branches to take

back to its nest. Just before we made our way back to the car a pair of magnificent **Black Vultures** cruised by.



We then stopped at the iconic Salto de Gitano viewpoint. Looking across to the massive Peña Falcón cliff. **Vultures** were soaring above the rock, some taking off, other arriving with nesting material. A very obliging **Blue Rock Thrush** posed for us nicely.



We drove then to the northern edge of the park, where vultures were also circling above us. In the scrub vegetation there were **Dunnock, Robin** and **Sardinian Warblers**. Returning to the interior of the park, we walked part of a trail down to a stream. It was a very attractive spot,

but bird activity was low, although we did have some nice views of **Red Deer**. We had our picnic beside the River Tagus, with a small group of birds to keep us company, such as **Chaffinches**, **Great Tit** and **Blue Tits**. By now the weather was turning and as we set off to leave the park, we drove through long periods of heavy rain. A stop by the River Almonte was aborted, so we went to Trujillo instead, to make a quick visit to see part of the historic centre of the town. Back at base, during a short break in the rain, Lisbeth and Vegard had a short walk near the village.



23rd January 2026: Guadiana at Lobón, Alange and Mérida

The day dawned clear and it was sunny for most of the morning. However, clouds quickly developed after midday with a fresh wind, bringing heavy rain for most of the afternoon. We drove south-west, past Miajadas, to enter the lowlands of the Guadiana valley, dominated by rice, maize, tomato and fruit fields. Passing Mérida, we continued to near Lobón where we spent an hour beside the Guadiana River.

We failed to find an Eagle Owl (this is a regular site for the species), but we did see **Osprey**, **Kingfisher**, and, briefly, a **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**. We retraced our steps and then went south to Alange. Parking near the dam we took the very good footpath from there to the edge of the town, with the rocky outcrops on one side of us and the vast Alange Reservoir on the other. It was not until we had almost returned to the car when we found a **Black Wheatear**, but during the walk we had fabulous views of **Thekla Lark**, **Iberian Grey Shrike**, **Black Redstart**, **Long-tailed Tit**, and several **Griffon Vultures** above us.

We had our picnic at the dam and then moved the short distance north to Mérida. Here the plan was to walk along the Roman Bridge, but unfortunately the weather had deteriorated dramatically, and we only managed a short section before deciding to return to the car. The wind and the rain made finding, let alone watching birds, very hard.

We made our way back to base, via the rice fields near Santa Amalia, but apart from some **Common Cranes** and **Black-headed Gulls**, it was hard to find anything though the heavy rain.

24th January 2026: Plains east of Cáceres, Parque del Príncipe, Los Barruecos, Sierra de Fuentes

Today we were spared rain and there were periods of sunshine and light cloud, alternating with more overcast weather. The fresh westerly wind made it feel chilly. We started on the plains east of Cáceres, making a couple of stops to revisit places we had been to earlier in the week. At the second we enjoyed a long walk, giving us the chance to get good views of **Thekla Larks**, as well as **Calandra** and **Sky Larks**. There were good numbers of **Golden Plover** and **Lapwing** also present.

We then moved to the city of Cáceres, spending an hour or so in the beautiful urban park, Parque del Príncipe. The main purpose of this visit was to get good views of **Iberian Magpies**, and we quickly achieved this objective. We also had close and prolonged views of **Firecrest** and **Siskin**.



West of Cáceres, beside the town of Malpartida de Cáceres, lies the Barruecos, an area of granite landscape with pools and a large dam which stored water used for washing wool. At one of the pools we stopped for our picnic, watching **Common Snipe**, a **Black-winged Stilt**, and several **Teal** and **Mallard**. Two **Black Vultures** passed overhead. At the larger dam we could see **White Storks** nesting on massive granite boulders. Nearby was the complex of the Vostell Museum and in the ground was the massive sculpture comprising an old Soviet warplane and two Soviet cars, piled on top of each other, with three pairs of **White Storks** using the structure to nest on.

We moved into the city of Cáceres for a walk around the historic centre and then completed our day at some old fishponds near Sierra de Fuentes. Here there was a nice mix of birds including **Red-crested Pochard**, **Spoonbill**, **Common Coot**, **Kingfisher**, **Crag Martins** and **Barn Swallows**.

25th January 2026: Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid

The day dawned with some mist and a shower of rain as we departed, with a farewell to Claudia and Casa Rural El Recuerdo. However, the clouds started to break, and we enjoyed periods of sunshine. As the day progressed the wind became stronger. We spent the morning at the marsh near Saucedilla, which is part of the Arrocampo Reservoir. The wide belts of Typha emergent vegetation are home to a good range of waterbirds. Despite the windy conditions, we found some roosting **Black-crowned Night Herons** and had good views of **Purple Swamphens**. A **Kingfisher** was present, but more often seen rather than heard. The same was with the **Cetti's Warblers**. However, we had prolonged and excellent views of a first-winter **Bluethroat** which was foraging beside the track in front of one of the hides.



Driving to the far side of the reservoir, we saw good numbers of **Barn Swallows** and a rather distant **Black-winged Kite**, perched in a tree to shelter from the strong wind.

By early afternoon it was time to make our way towards Madrid. The snow-clad Gredos appeared in gaps in the clouds. We stopped for a tapas lunch and then continued our journey, seeing a **Spanish Imperial Eagle** just before we entered Madrid. The traffic was light and we reached the airport before 17.00, with plenty of time to spare.

BIRDS SEEN

1. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen on four days.
2. **Common Shelduck**: A party at Sierra Brava.
3. **Eurasian Wigeon**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
4. **Gadwall**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
5. **Eurasian Teal**: Seen on three days.
6. **Mallard**: Seen on most days.
7. **Northern Shoveler**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
8. **Red-crested Pochard**: Seen at Sierra de Fuentes.
9. **Red-legged Partridge**: Seen on the plains.

10. **Little Grebe:** Seen almost every day.
11. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen on three days.
12. **Great Cormorant:** Seen most days.
13. **Little Bittern:** Heard at Lobón and at Arrocampo.
14. **Black-crowned Night Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo.
15. **Cattle Egret:** Seen most days.
16. **Little Egret:** Seen most days.
17. **Great Egret:** Seen most days.
18. **Grey Heron:** Seen almost every day.
19. **White Stork:** Seen every day.
20. **Glossy Ibis:** Seen on the rice fields.
21. **Spoonbill:** Seen on the rice fields and Sierra de Fuentes.
22. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen almost every day.
23. **Black Vulture:** Seen on three days.
24. **Osprey:** One at Lobón.
25. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen on the plains and also on return to Madrid.
26. **Bonelli's Eagle:** One or two pairs seen in the Villuercas and also a pair perched near Zorita.
27. **Red Kite:** Seen almost every day.
28. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen most days.
29. **Hen Harrier:** Seen on two days.
30. **Common Buzzard:** Seen every day.
31. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen on two days.
32. **Black-winged Kite:** Seen at Arrocampo.
33. **Common Kestrel:** Seen almost every day.
34. **Water Rail:** Heard on two days.
35. **Moorhen:** Seen or heard most days.
36. **Purple Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
37. **Common Coot:** Seen on two days.
38. **Common Crane:** Seen almost every day.
39. **Little Bustard:** A flock seen distantly on the plains.
40. **Great Bustard:** Seen twice on the plains.
41. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen at Los Barruecos.
42. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
43. **Kentish Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
44. **Golden Plover:** Seen on the plains and on the rice fields.
45. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen every day.
46. **Dunlin:** Seen on the rice fields.
47. **Common Snipe:** Seen on the rice fields and Los Barruecos.
48. **Spotted Redshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
49. **Common Redshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
50. **Greenshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
51. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen on the rice fields.
52. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen at Alcollarín.
53. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on two days.
54. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen almost every day.
55. **Mediterranean Gull:** One on the rice fields.
56. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on the plains.

57. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains.
58. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
59. **Stock Dove:** Seen on the plains.
60. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen on two days.
61. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
62. **Little Owl:** Seen on the plains.
63. **Kingfisher:** Seen on two days.
64. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost daily.
65. **Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen at Cañamero.
66. **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker:** Seen at Lobón.
67. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
68. **Crested Lark:** Seen almost every day.
69. **Thekla Lark:** Seen on three days.
70. **Woodlark:** Seen briefly at Alcollarín.
71. **Skylark:** Seen on two days.
72. **Sand Martin:** Two at Arrocampo.
73. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost every day.
74. **Barn Swallow:** Seen on two days.
75. **House Martin:** Seen on two days.
76. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen almost daily.
77. **Water Pipit:** Seen on the rice fields.
78. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen on two days.
79. **Western Yellow Wagtail:** Seen on the rice fields.
80. **White Wagtail:** Seen daily.
81. **Wren:** Seen almost daily.
82. **Dunnock:** Recorded on three days.
83. **Alpine Accentor:** Seen at Villueras Peak.
84. **Robin:** Seen daily.
85. **Bluethroat:** Seen on rice fields and Arrocampo.
86. **Black Redstart:** Seen almost daily.
87. **Stonechat:** Seen almost daily.
88. **Black Wheatear:** Seen at Alange.
89. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Monfragüe and Alange.
90. **Blackbird:** Seen daily.
91. **Song Thrush:** Seen almost daily.
92. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded most days.
93. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen on two days.
94. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen at Alange.
95. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen almost every day.
96. **Blackcap:** Seen every day.
97. **Common Chiffchaff:** Seen every day.
98. **Firecrest:** Seen on two days.
99. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on four days.
100. **Crested Tit:** Heard at Monfragüe.
101. **Blue Tit:** Seen most days.
102. **Great Tit:** Seen most days.
103. **Bearded Tit:** Heard at Arrocampo.
104. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Seen at Cañamero.

- 105. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen daily.
- 106. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
- 107. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
- 108. **Jackdaw:** Seen almost daily.
- 109. **Raven:** Seen almost daily.
- 110. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
- 111. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
- 112. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen almost daily.
- 113. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on the rice fields.
- 114. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen poorly on plains north of Trujillo.
- 115. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on the rice fields.
- 116. **Common Waxbill:** Seen briefly on rice fields near Santa Amalia.
- 117. **Chaffinch:** Seen daily.
- 118. **Brambling:** Heard at Garciáz.
- 119. **Serin:** Seen on several days.
- 120. **Greenfinch:** Seen daily.
- 121. **Goldfinch:** Seen almost daily.
- 122. **Siskin:** Seen on two days.
- 123. **Linnet:** Heard on one day.
- 124. **Bullfinch:** Seen at Cañamero.
- 125. **Hawfinch:** Seen on three days.
- 126. **Rock Bunting:** Seen at Cañamero.
- 127. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

MAMMALS SEEN

Otter

Iberian Hare

Wild Boar

Red Deer

INSECTS NOTED

Wall Brown butterfly