

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



LATE WINTER IN EXTREMADURA FOR SUE AND IAN

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

1st – 8th February 2026



Itinerary

1st February 2026: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura, with stop at Talavera and Arrocampo

2nd February 2026: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres and Valdesalor Reservoir

3rd February 2026: Sierra Brava, Madrigalejo, Palazuelo rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir

4th February 2026: Arrocampo Reservoir and River Almonte

5th February 2026: Monfragüe National Park and River Almonte

6th February 2026: Relax day and walk around Pago de San Clemente

7th February 2026: Los Barruecos and Casar de Cáceres

8th February 2026: Return to Madrid

TRIP REPORT

1st February 2026: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura, with stop at Talavera and Arrocampo

Martin met Sue and Ian at about 13.15 at Madrid airport and we were quickly heading out around the southern ring-road. Being midday Sunday, the traffic was quite light and it became even lighter once we were on the motorway for Extremadura. The weather was heavily overcast, sometimes rather misty and with a persistent rain. This meant that we were not able to see the mountains to the north of us, but instead we could focus on the changing landscape that we crossed, from the mainly arable rolling country of the first half of the journey to the greener terrain as we approached and entered Extremadura, with extensive cover of holm oak dehesas. We stopped for a snack just east of Talavera, just as we were starting to see White Storks on their huge nests. As we passed the north of the town, we stopped at the monument of the Battle of Talavera. Here there was a gorgeous male **Black Redstart**. About half an hour later, we stopped beside the reservoir of Arrocampo. Conditions were far from ideal, but at least there rain was very light and we could stand on the ramp of a hide to look across the marsh. We watched a first-winter **Bluethroat**, saw a distant **Purple Swamphen**, saw a group of four **Ferruginous Duck**, as well as several **Marsh Harriers**, and **Iberian Grey Shrike**, **Iberian Magpies**, amongst other things. Overall, a very satisfactory start of the holiday. We continued onto Casa Rural El Recuerdo, arriving there at just after 6pm.

2nd February 2026: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres and Valdesalor Reservoir



There had been some fierce winds and heavy rain before dawn and the sky looked stormy as we set off. Throughout the day there were belts of heavy rain, followed by dry, sometimes sunny weather, but always with a keen westerly wind. We spent the day between Trujillo and Cáceres. We started on the plains south-west of the little village of Santa Marta de Magasca.

We searched for bustards and sandgrouse, but the windy conditions made it rather hard. However we got superb views of **Calandra Larks**, **Crested Larks** and **Zitting Cisticola**. There were hundreds of **Golden Plover** and **Lapwing** in the fields and small flocks of **Corn Buntings** too. We stopped to look across the Tamuja River during a brief respite in the weather and saw a juvenile **Spanish Imperial Eagle** crossing the rather leaden skies.

There were **Crag Martins** and a **House Martin** too. After coffee in the friendly small bar in the main square of Santa Marta de Magasca we then drove in heavy rain southwards to visit the Valdesalor Reservoir. After our picnic there we spent some time enjoying prolonged views of a **Grey Phalarope**, one of several that had been blown inland the previous week. There were also **Common Sandpiper**, a **Kingfisher** and **White Wagtails** present, amongst other birds at the edge of the reservoir, which was very full (they were letting water out at the dam). We returned to the River Tamuja and were entertained with lovely views of an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, as well as both **Black** and **Griffon Vultures**, along with several **Red Kite**. We then completed the afternoon on the plains just west of Trujillo. This was a very successful stop, finding two groups of **Great Bustard** and having views of several parties of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** on the ground and a couple of small groups of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** in flight. As on the plains in the morning, there were big flocks of **Golden Plover** and **Lapwing**.



We returned to base and Ian and Sue when out at nightfall to see **Natterjack Toads** which were very active.

3rd February 2026: Sierra Brava, Madrigalejo, Palazuelo rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir

We set off under thick low cloud and light rain, as we crossed into the Guadiana watershed and headed south past the town of Zorita, the sky started to brighten. Despite some heavy showers and periods of very dark clouds, we enjoyed overall perfectly accommodatable weather, with dry periods and even a few spells of sunshine. After crossing the plains of Zorita, we stopped beside the large dam of the Sierra Brava reservoir, which provides the water for much of the

irrigated agriculture in the central part of the Guadiana valley. On the reservoir, we saw a distant flock of **Avocet** and a **Shelduck**, whilst **Crag Martins** hawked insects around us. A group of **Spanish Sparrows** were feeding on seeds beside the road. Moving onto the rice fields, we stopped to have our first good views of **Common Cranes** and found a group of **Wood Sandpiper**. A male **Hen Harrier** was seen distantly (we were to see two others in the afternoon at much closer range). After passing through an area of intensive olive production, we stopped beside an area of rough pasture with scattered trees. We watched a mating pair of **Black-winged Kite** and were delighted to see a **Wryneck**, perched at top of a bramble bush which subsequently held **Dartford Warbler**, **Stonechat** and **Chiffchaff**.

After coffee at the edge of Madrigalejo, we did a circuit of nearby rice fields, where we had a good view of a **Bluethroat**, **Common Waxbills** and a nice flock of finches with **Serin**, **Linnet**, **Spanish Sparrow**, **Tree Sparrow** and **Corn Bunting**.



Onward onto the rice fields near Palazuelo (one of the rice villages), where we watched at close range a tractor churning up the rice stubble and attracting a wonderful selection of herons and egrets, as well as **Black-headed Gulls** and **White Wagtails**. Rain at that moment made it a good place to sit and have our sandwiches in the car, whilst enjoying the birds busily foraging in the field. The rest of the sojourn on the rice fields was especially rewarding, with hundreds of **Common Cranes**, a huge flock of **Golden Plover** with some **Dunlin**, groups of **Greenshank**, and finally a large flock of **Glossy Ibis**, **Red Avadavats** and **Yellow-crowned Bishops** and to cap it all off, a superb view of our second **Wryneck** of the day!

We left the rice fields and headed towards the village of Campo Lugar. Here we found a roosting flock of over 60 **Stone Curlew**. A celebratory coffee stop followed. The rest of the afternoon was spent very productively at the Alcollarín Reservoir. Here there was an excellent selection of duck: good numbers of **Pintail**, **Teal** and **Shoveler**, a few **Red-crested Pochard** and **Common Pochard**. Amongst the **Black-headed Gulls**, we found an adult **Little Gull**, foraging tern-like over the open water. The shore of the reservoir was lined with waders including

Spotted Redshank and **Greenshank**, **Lapwing** and **Common Sandpiper**. **Thekla Larks** were in view as we stood there.

4th February 2026: Arrocampo Reservoir and River Almonte

The day started heavily overcast with belts of rain, but was relatively calm. The wind picked up by midday, but there were some brighter spells afterwards. We returned to the Arrocampo Reservoir, where we had made a quick stop on our way down from Madrid. With the prospect of rain, we obtained a key for the hides and made use of these vantage points for most of the morning. We started at the edge of the village of Saucedilla, seeing a group of **Black-crowned Night Herons** roosting in bare trees. **Purple Swamphens** called from the cover of the *Typha* beds, only occasionally on show. **Kingfishers** were engaged in territorial chases in front of us, whilst a **Cetti's Warbler** showed a couple of times. We were delighted to watch an **Otter** swim across the channel.



Taking the cue of a rain shower, we stopped for coffee and then went to another hide where almost immediately we enjoyed lovely views of a **Bluethroat**. From this hide too, we watched two **Penduline Tits** feeding on the seed heads of the *Typha*. **Marsh Harriers** quartered the marsh, whilst a group of **Spoonbill** flew overhead. We had our picnic in a third hide, watching a flotilla of **Cormorants**, attracting **Black-headed Gulls** and **Little Egrets** to their fishing.

We check a couple of sites on the western side of the reservoir, seeing a pair of **Black-winged Kites** and watching a large feeding flock of **Barn Swallows**, which included **House Martins** and at least one **Sand Martin**.

On leaving Arrocampo, we moved on to the River Almonte, just south of Jaraicejo. Here three bridges dating between 1450 and 1992 span the river. A flock of **Rock Sparrows** perched on wires gave us good views, especially when a male **Spanish Sparrow** joined and sat beside one. At the river itself, **Chiffchaffs** were busy catching flies, and we saw a **Cetti's Warbler**. But most memorable was a superb view of an **Otter**, which was so close that we were almost looking

down on it. We watched it hunting close to the riverbank, the water flowing rapidly as the river was in full spate.

5th February 2026: Monfragüe National Park and River Almonte

High winds before dawn continued throughout the day, but fortunately the heavy rain that had fallen during the night had eased and apart from a few wind-blown showers, it stayed dry throughout the day with some welcome sunshine as well. A **Marbled Newt** was found in the garden before we set off. We headed north through the vast expanse of *dehesa* landscape between Trujillo and Monfragüe National Park. The effect of the heavy rain was evident in standing water on the fields and rivers full to the brim. As we crossed the River Almonte, a **Golden Eagle** flew beside us for a moment.



Entering the national park, we made our first stop at the viewpoint overlooking the magnificent rock face of Peña Falcón. The topography created a wind tunnel effect so we were buffeted by the gusts of wind. We had the viewpoint to ourselves. Indeed, throughout the entire day we did not meet another person at the viewpoints and even in the bar, we were the only customers.

At our first stop we watched the **Griffon Vultures** heading off from the rock face, taking advantage of some sunshine to search for food. We then walked beside the mixed Mediterranean forest on the northward side of the ridge. It was marginally more sheltered here, but the weather conditions made it difficult to find small birds, with **Chaffinches** and a **Great Tit** being the only species seen.

After coffee, we used the onset of a heavy shower to drive through to the northern edge of the park, seeing some **Red Deer** on the way. We stopped to look at a cork oak *dehesa* and then

parked to visit the Portilla del Tiétar viewpoint. Here a hide gave us excellent shelter from the winds and we watched **Griffon** and **Black Vultures**. A distant **Blue Rock Thrush** was seen and an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle** also appeared. **Cormorants** settled on the fast-flowing water below us.

From there we visited the extreme north-west of the park at the Puerto de Serrania viewpoint. Here there was a steady stream of vultures gliding over and we were delighted that a couple of times an adult **Bonelli's Eagle** also put in an appearance.

Returning to the Peña Falcon viewpoint we thoroughly enjoyed the sight of the vultures returning to the rock, some passing below us or at eye-level. The landscape was magnificent with afternoon sunshine contrasting with distant storm clouds. As a finale we stopped beside the River Almonte and again witnessed a flypast of vultures, this time with a high proportion of **Black Vultures**. A pair of **Golden Eagles** were also watched distantly.

6th February 2026: Relax day and walk around Pago de San Clemente

The day started with heavy rain but from late morning to late afternoon, it remained largely dry with some sunny spells. A **Spiny Toad** was found in the garden this morning. Sue and Ian took the opportunity for a rest day and to enjoy a late morning walk around the vicinity of Pago de San Clemente, seeing amongst other species, a **Firecrest**, **Long-tailed Tit** and **Short-toed Treecreeper**.

7th February 2026: Los Barruecos and Casar de Cáceres

Heavy cloud at dawn soon produced persistent rain that continued for most of the day. We ventured out, with a stop at the edge of Trujillo to inspect the Lesser Kestrel colonies, in case an early bird had arrived. Without success we drove towards Cáceres, with the rain getting heavier. Following a brief detour to check the nest boxes along the road toward Sata Marta de Magasca, we proceeded to the west of the city to stop in the wonderful granite landscape of Los Barruecos, close to Malpartida de Cáceres. Beside an old wool washing mill, there are sculptures by Wolf Vostell, a German avant-garde artist, who had a studio (now a museum) in the old buildings beside the dam. Atop an old Russian jet fighter and some Soviet cars there were storks' nests, which we admired briefly before diving into the café for coffee. Afterwards we stopped at small pool where there were several **Common Snipe** and a **Jack Snipe** partially hidden in the vegetation beside them.

We then continued to the town of Casar de Cáceres, where the famous Torta de Casar cheese comes from. We visited two small lakes beside the town, having our picnic in the car beside the second one. Three **Little Gulls** and a **Black-headed Gull** joined many **House Martins**, with **Crag Martins** and **Barn Swallows**, to forage. There were **Little Grebes** bobbing in the water just in front of us as well as a **Common Sandpiper**.

With the rain not showing any sign of easing, we returned to base. Ian and Sue ventured out later in the afternoon during a lull in the rain, seeing **Hawfinch**, **Iberian Magpies** and a **Sparrowhawk**.

8th February 2026: Return to Madrid

We set off at 08.00 and had a smooth, non-stop run to the airport, with very light traffic all the way. For the first time this week, the Gredos mountains appeared in all their snow-clad

splendour. **Red Kites** and a flock of **Common Cranes** crossed the skies as a farewell to Extremadura.

BIRDS SEEN

1. **Grey Lag Goose**: Seen at Alcollarín.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen on three days.
3. **Common Shelduck**: One at at Sierra Brava.
4. **Eurasian Wigeon**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
5. **Gadwall**: Seen on the plains and at Alcollarín Reservoir.
6. **Eurasian Teal**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
7. **Pintail**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
8. **Mallard**: Seen on most days.
9. **Northern Shoveler**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
10. **Red-crested Pochard**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
11. **Common Pochard**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
12. **Ferruginous Duck**: Seen at Arrocampo.
13. **Red-legged Partridge**: Seen on the plains.
14. **Little Grebe**: Seen on three days.
15. **Great Crested Grebe**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
16. **Great Cormorant**: Seen most days.
17. **Black-crowned Night Heron**: Seen at Arrocampo.
18. **Cattle Egret**: Seen on three days.
19. **Little Egret**: Seen most days.
20. **Great Egret**: Seen most days.
21. **Grey Heron**: Seen on three days.
22. **White Stork**: Seen almost every day.
23. **Glossy Ibis**: Seen on the rice fields and at Arrocampo.
24. **Spoonbill**: Seen on the rice fields, Alcollarín and at Arrocampo.
25. **Griffon Vulture**: Seen on four days.
26. **Black Vulture**: Seen on three days.
27. **Spanish Imperial Eagle**: Seen on the plains and Monfragüe.
28. **Golden Eagle**: Seen beside Almonte River.
29. **Bonelli's Eagle**: Seen in Monfragüe.
30. **Red Kite**: Seen every day.
31. **Marsh Harrier**: Seen most days.
32. **Hen Harrier**: Seen on the rice fields.
33. **Common Buzzard**: Seen almost every day.
34. **Sparrowhawk**: Seen on three days.
35. **Black-winged Kite**: Seen at Arrocampo and near Madrigalejo.
36. **Common Kestrel**: Seen almost every day.
37. **Moorhen**: Seen on three days.
38. **Purple Swamphen**: Seen at Arrocampo.
39. **Common Coot**: Seen on three days.
40. **Common Crane**: Seen on four days.
41. **Great Bustard**: Seen on the plains west of Trujillo.
42. **Avocet**: Seen at Sierra Brava.

43. **Stone Curlew:** A flock seen near Campo Lugar.
44. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
45. **Golden Plover:** Seen on the plains and on the rice fields.
46. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen on four days.
47. **Dunlin:** Seen on the rice fields.
48. **Common Snipe:** Seen at Arrocampo, on the rice fields and Los Barruecos.
49. **Jack Snipe:** One seen at Barruecos.
50. **Spotted Redshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
51. **Common Redshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
52. **Wood Sandpiper:** A group seen on the rice fields.
53. **Greenshank:** Seen on the rice fields and Alcollarín.
54. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen on the rice fields.
55. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen on three days.
56. **Grey Phalarope:** Seen at Valdesalor.
57. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on four days.
58. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen on four days.
59. **Little Gull:** One at Alcollarín and three at Casar del Cáceres.
60. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on the plains.
61. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains.
62. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen on three days.
63. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen almost daily.
64. **Collared Dove:** Seen almost daily.
65. **Kingfisher:** Seen on two days.
66. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost daily.
67. **Wryneck:** Two seen on the rice fields.
68. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
69. **Crested Lark:** Seen on four days.
70. **Thekla Lark:** Seen at Alcollarín.
71. **Woodlark:** Seen at River Tamuja.
72. **Skylark:** Seen on the rice fields.
73. **Sand Martin:** One at Arrocampo.
74. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost every day.
75. **Barn Swallow:** Seen on four days.
76. **House Martin:** Seen on five days.
77. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen almost daily.
78. **Water Pipit:** Seen on the rice fields.
79. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen at Monfragüe.
80. **White Wagtail:** Seen almost daily.
81. **Robin:** Seen almost daily.
82. **Bluethroat:** Seen on rice fields and Arrocampo.
83. **Black Redstart:** Seen almost daily.
84. **Stonechat:** Seen almost daily.
85. **Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen at Monfragüe.
86. **Blackbird:** Seen almost daily.
87. **Song Thrush:** Seen almost daily.
88. **Cetti's Warbler:** Seen at Arrocampo.
89. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen on the plains.
90. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen on the rice fields.

91. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen on four days.
92. **Blackcap:** Seen almost every day.
93. **Common Chiffchaff:** Seen almost every day.
94. **Firecrest:** Seen at Pago de San Clemente.
95. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen at Pago de San Clemente.
96. **Blue Tit:** Seen on two days.
97. **Great Tit:** Seen on two days.
98. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Seen at Pago de San Clemente.
99. **Penduline Tit:** Seen at Arrocampo.
100. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen on four days.
101. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
102. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
103. **Jackdaw:** Seen almost daily.
104. **Raven:** Seen almost daily.
105. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
106. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
107. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on four days.
108. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on the rice fields.
109. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen beside River Almonte.
110. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on the rice fields.
111. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on the rice fields.
112. **Yellow-crowned Bishop:** Seen on the rice fields.
113. **Chaffinch:** Seen almost daily.
114. **Serin:** Seen on two days.
115. **Greenfinch:** Seen on two days.
116. **Goldfinch:** Seen almost daily.
117. **Linnet:** Seen on one day.
118. **Hawfinch:** Seen at Pago de San Clemente.
119. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

MAMMALS SEEN

Otter

Fox

Red Deer

AMPHIBIANS

Marbled Newt

Natterjack Toad

Spiny Toad

Iberian Water Frog