

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



MID SPRING IN EXTREMADURA FOR DEBORAH AND JOHN

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

4th April – 10th April 2026



Itinerary

4th April 2026: Collection at Madrid

5th April 2026: La Serena, Puerto Peña and Cubilar Reservoir

6th April 2026: Mérida, Cornalvo, rice fields

7th April 2026: Rivers near Madrigalejo, Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir

8th April 2026: Malpartida de Cáceres, Sierra de Fuentes, plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, Palazuelo rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir

9th April 2026: Monfragüe National Park and Arroyo de la Vid

10th April 2026: Arrocampo and return to Madrid

TRIP REPORT

4th April 2026: Collection at Madrid

Martin collected John and Deborah at Terminal One of Madrid Airport at 14.30. The traffic was light, being the middle of the long holiday weekend, so we made swift progress out of the city and on the way to Extremadura. We stopped for a coffee near Talavera and then proceeded non-stop, reaching Casa Rural El Recuerdo at about 17.30.

5th April 2026: La Serena, Puerto Peña and Cubilar Reservoir

It was an early start today with a longish drive ahead to the southern part of the vast plain of La Serena. The weather throughout the day was excellent, becoming quite hot in the afternoon. We passed a **Bonelli's Eagle** standing sentinel on a jagged rock. We made our first stop to watch a large, scattered group of **Great Bustards**, with perhaps as many as 13 males displaying. The light was superb, bringing out the rich colours of the males, against the snooker-table green of the field.

We then proceeded to stop just north of Cabeza del Buey where we spent about 90 minutes watching perhaps as many as eight **Montagu's Harriers** displaying over a cereal field. Their gracing flight, sweeping dives and chases were wonderful to watch. Sometimes birds perched on posts, or the ground to rest or preen.

Following coffee, we returned northwards along the eastern edge of La Serena, passing bays of the La Serena reservoir, the largest in Spain. A **Black-eared Wheatear** was seen on a derelict building.

We stopped for lunch at Puerto Peña, looking across to the magnificent cliff face beyond the Guadiana River. There were four **Black Storks** and several **Griffon Vultures**, as well as small flocks of **Alpine Swifts** and **Crag Martins**. A **Booted Eagle** flapped slowly past us.

A final stop was at the Cubilar Reservoir where **Great Crested Grebes** were scattered across the water and we could admire the backdrop of the Villuercas Mountains. A **Short-toed Eagle** soared over the seemingly endless *dehesa* landscape.

6th April 2026: Mérida, Cornalvo, rice fields

It was another warm and sunny day, although the breeze was a little bit fresher. We set off shortly after 9.00 across the beautiful country to Santa Cruz de la Sierra and then on to the motorway for Mérida. There we walked through the park there onto the Roman Bridge and then along the eastern shore of the River Guadiana, up to the Lusitanian Bridge and the magnificent egret colony there.

The swifts were superb, with wonderful views of **Alpine**, **Pallid** and **Common Swift** from the bridge. **Willow Warblers**, **Western Bonelli's Warblers** and **Common Chiffchaffs** were in song. We had a quick glimpse of a **Little Bittern** as we returned along the bridge.



Pallid Swift

At the egret colony, there were **Spoonbill** feeding nestlings, numerous **Glossy Ibis**, and masses of **Cattle Egret**. We also found a few **Little Egret**, **Grey Heron** and **Black-crowned Night Heron**. We had short views of **Penduline Tits** and saw a completed nest hanging high in a eucalyptus tree. Very special was watching **House Martins** collecting nest lining from the reed mace seed heads.



House Martin

After coffee, we moved on to look at pools near Mérida for Black-winged Stilts. At Esparragalejo, there were many **Black-winged Stilts**, but all were a bit distant. Equally at Cornalvo Natural Park, where we had our picnic. **Glossy Ibis** and **Spoonbill** were feeding at the water's edge, and **Little Grebe** and **Great Crested Grebe** were on the open water.

We spent the rest of the day doing a reccy of the rice fields, finding that all (apart from a small area near Madrigalejo) appeared dry. Admittedly we kept to the tarmac roads, as the wind was picking up fine dust into dramatic dust devils and we wanted to keep clear of the dust clouds if possible. We did see a few **Yellow Wagtails** and **Marsh Harriers**, as well as several **Bee-eaters** perched on the wires. A **Purple Heron** perched on the bare, stony bank of the Sierra Brava reservoir looked slightly out of place.

7th April 2026: Rivers near Madrigalejo, Campo Lugar plains and Alcollarín Reservoir

There was a turn in the weather, with overcast conditions, occasional showers and a warm southerly wind. We visited first three rivers (the Pizarro, Gargaligas and Ruceras) patiently watching to see what may appear. We had nice views of **Bee-eaters** and heard **Reed Warblers**, but the windy conditions made the chances of Penduline Tit rather low. Near the Ruercas, we stopped to watch **Collared Pratincoles**, including a pair mating.

Onward then to the Campo Lugar plains which were very productive. We had good views of a female **Little Bustard**, passage birds such as **Whinchat**, **Tawny Pipit** and **Northern Wheatear** and briefly a couple of **Rollers**.

After coffee we moved on to the Alcollarín Reservoir where we spent the rest of the day. Over sixty species were seen. There were a few duck such as **Shoveler**, **Gadwall** and **Teal** and a nice selection of waders including **Common Redshank**, **Greenshank**, **Little Ringed Plover** and **Common Sandpiper**. **Woodchat Shrikes** were well in evidence and overhead passed **Booted Eagle**, **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** and several **Black Kites**. **Willow Warblers** sang from the trees at the picnic area, where we also watched **Spoonbills** feeding.

8th April 2026: Malpartida de Cáceres, Sierra de Fuentes, plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, Palazuelo rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir

There was rain overnight and we experienced light rain through most of the day. There was very little wind, but despite that it felt much colder. We drove to the west of Cáceres city, to the beautiful granite landscape of Los Barruecos near Malpartida de Cáceres. Here we stopped at a small pool where there was an excellent selection of waders, with two **Jack Snipe** feeding out in the open as the top stars. Supporting cast were **Common Snipe**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Greenshank**, **Ruff**, **Little Ringed Plover** and **Common Sandpiper**. Elsewhere in the area we saw **White Storks** nesting on the bizarre sculpture of Wolfgang Vostell: a MIG fighter jet supporting some Soviet cars, in which **Spanish Sparrows** were nesting.

After coffee we moved to the other side of Cáceres, to some old fishponds near Sierra de Fuentes. Here there were a pair of **Garganey** and a drake **Red-crested Pochard**. We then moved on the plains near Santa Marta de Magasca, seeing a fox close to a male **Montagu's Harrier**. We stopped for our picnic on the plains between the village and Trujillo, watching nine

Great Bustards, a **Little Bustard**, male **Montagu's Harrier**, a distant **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, and several **Tawny Pipits**.



Female Stonechat



Tawny Pipit

After looking for, but failing to find, nesting Black-winged Stilts in the pools near Trujillo (the water level was too high), we decided to do a quick round on the rice fields, to check if any were wet enough to attract waders or terns. The answer was no, but we did find a group of **Spoonbill**, including two ringed birds. We completed the day where we had finished yesterday too, at Alcollarín Reservoir. Here we did find a summer plumage **Black Tern**, catching insects alongside hordes of hirundines.

9th April 2026: Monfragüe National Park and Arroyo de la Vid



There had been some rain overnight, but the day was dry but with a fresh north-easterly wind, which at times was very strong. We braved it to the Monfragüe National Park, but opted to leave the exposed Salto de Gitano viewpoint until it had warmed-up a bit. So, we headed to the north-western part of the park, to the Puerto de Serrana, watching **Griffon Vultures** and listening to **Nightingales** singing. A **Short-toed Eagle** flapped languidly across the cliff face. After a check of the overflow parking area for Black-eared Wheatear (we had seen a couple briefly as we were driving), we stopped for a walk on the short-circular route, where we had seen Black-eared Wheatear last year. None were showing, perhaps because of the rather windy weather conditions. We then moved on to the Portilla del Tiétar where we saw a good selection of classic birds: **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, **Booted Eagle**, **Egyptian Vulture** and **Black Stork**. A **Rock Bunting** sang close to us. After a welcome warm cup of coffee, we returned through the park, stopping to admire an **Egyptian Vulture** sitting on its nest. We went back to the overflow car park, but apart from **Thekla Larks**, we didn't see anything new. We then made a final stop at the iconic Salto de Gitano viewpoint. Amongst the masses of **Griffon Vultures**, we saw **Egyptian Vulture**, several **Black Vultures** and a **Peregrine**.

We completed the afternoon near Jaraicejo at the Arroyo de la Vid. We had brief and fleeting views of **Subalpine Warblers** and **Nightingales** surrounded us with song, but otherwise it was fairly quiet, so we moved back to Casa Rural El Recuerdo, just as the wind was abating somewhat and it started to feel warmer.

10th April 2026: Arrocampo and return to Madrid

There had been strong easterly winds during the night, but these had eased by dawn. The breeze picked up again during the day. There was a heavy pall of Sahara dust in the air, creating a haze which obscured distant views. After bidding farewell to Casa Rural El Recuerdo, we drove to the Arrocampo Reservoir where we spent the day. We positioned ourselves for an hour at the hide overlooking the colony of **Purple Herons**, which we enjoyed, whilst listening to the reeling of **Savi's Warblers**. **Ferruginous Duck** and **Gull-billed Tern** flew past and **Purple Swamphen** were watched swimming in the pool in front of us. Later at the marsh behind the information office, we had superb views of a pair of **Little Bittern**, whilst a third called from nearby. **Sand Martins** sat on the cables. After coffee, we checked another area of the marsh, seeing more **Gull-billed Terns**. Ww then drove to the western edge of the marsh, stopping to watch **Whiskered Tern**. We heard **Great Spotted Cuckoo** and saw several **Bee-eaters**. Returning to the eastern shore, we checked other areas, before having lunch, enjoying more close views of **Gull-billed Terns** and seeing a **Collared Pratincole**.

It was then time to move on. We made a brief visit to the Valdecañas Reservoir, where there were a few ducks, including **Common Shelduck**. As we left a male **Montagu's Harrier** flew close beside us. Our last bird in Extremadura and a fitting bird for the week.

SPECIES SEEN

1. **Greylag Goose**: A pair with goslings at Alcollarín.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen most days.
3. **Gadwall**: Seen almost every day.
4. **Teal**: Seen at Alcollarín.
5. **Mallard**: Seen daily.
6. **Garganey**: A pair at Sierra de Fuentes.
7. **Shoveler**: Seen on four days.
8. **Red-crested Pochard**: One at Sierra de Fuentes.
9. **Ferruginous Duck**: Seen at Arrocampo.
10. **Common Shelduck**: Seen at Valdecañas.
11. **Red-legged Partridge**: Seen on three days.
12. **Quail**: Heard on two days.
13. **Little Grebe**: Seen on three days.
14. **Great Crested Grebe**: Seen on four days.
15. **Great Cormorant**: Seen daily.
16. **Little Bittern**: Seen at Mérida and Arrocampo.
17. **Black-crowned Night Heron**: Seen at Mérida.
18. **Cattle Egret**: Seen almost every day.
19. **Little Egret**: Seen on three days.
20. **Great Egret**: Seen on two days.
21. **Grey Heron**: Seen almost every day.
22. **Purple Heron**: Seen at Sierra Barva and Arrocampo.
23. **Black Stork**: Seen at Puerto Peña and Monfragüe.
24. **White Stork**: Seen every day.
25. **Glossy Ibis**: Seen in and near Mérida.

26. **Spoonbill:** Seen on three days.
27. **Egyptian Vulture:** Seen in Monfragüe.
28. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen almost daily.
29. **Black Vulture:** Seen on four days.
30. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen on the plains and in Monfragüe.
31. **Short-toed Eagle:** Seen on two days.
32. **Booted Eagle:** Seen on three days.
33. **Bonelli's Eagle:** Seen on La Serena.
34. **Black Kite:** Seen daily.
35. **Red Kite:** Seen on two days.
36. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost daily.
37. **Montagu's Harrier:** Seen on La Serena, near Trujillo and Valdecañas.
38. **Common Buzzard:** Seen most days.
39. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen almost daily.
40. **Common Kestrel:** Seen daily.
41. **Peregrine:** Seen in Monfragüe.
42. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo.
43. **Moorhen:** Seen on four days.
44. **Purple Swamphen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
45. **Common Coot:** Seen on three days.
46. **Little Bustard:** Seen on Campo Lugar plains and near Trujillo.
47. **Great Bustard:** Seen on La Serena and near Trujillo.
48. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on four days.
49. **Collared Pratincole:** Seen near Madrigalejo and Arrocampo.
50. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on two days.
51. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen at Alcollarín.
52. **Ruff:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres.
53. **Common Snipe:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres.
54. **Jack Snipe:** Two at Malpartida de Cáceres.
55. **Common Redshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
56. **Spotted Redshank:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres.
57. **Greenshank:** Seen on two days.
58. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen at Malpartida de Cáceres.
59. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen on four days.
60. **Whiskered Tern:** Seen at Arrocampo.
61. **Black Tern:** One at Alcollarín.
62. **Gull-billed Tern:** Seen at Arrocampo.
63. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen at Alcollarín.
64. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen at Sierra Brava and Alcollarín.
65. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Heard on the plains near Trujillo.
66. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen daily.
67. **Woodpigeon:** Seen daily.
68. **Collared Dove:** Seen daily.
69. **Common Cuckoo:** Recorded almost daily.
70. **Great Spotted Cuckoo:** Heard at Arrocampo.
71. **Alpine Swift:** Seen at Puerto Peña and Mérida.
72. **Common Swift:** Seen on three days.
73. **Pallid Swift:** Seen on three days.

74. **Kingfisher**: Seen on two days.
75. **Bee-eater**: Seen daily.
76. **Roller**: Seen at Campo Lugar.
77. **Hoopoe**: Seen almost daily.
78. **Great Spotted Woodpecker**: Recorded in Monfragüe.
79. **Calandra Lark**: Common on the plains.
80. **Short-toed Lark**: Seen on two days.
81. **Crested Lark**: Seen almost every day.
82. **Thekla Lark**: Seen almost every day.
83. **Woodlark**: Seen on two days.
84. **Sand Martin**: Seen on three days, common at Arrocampo.
85. **Crag Martin**: Seen almost daily.
86. **Barn Swallow**: Seen daily.
87. **Red-rumped Swallow**: Seen daily.
88. **House Martin**: Seen daily.
89. **Tawny Pipit**: Seen on the plains.
90. **Meadow Pipit**: Seen on two days.
91. **Yellow Wagtail**: Seen on three days.
92. **White Wagtail**: Seen almost daily.
93. **Wren**: Seen on two days.
94. **Robin**: Seen on one day.
95. **Nightingale**: Recorded every day.
96. **Black Redstart**: Seen daily.
97. **Stonechat**: Seen daily.
98. **Whinchat**: Seen on Campo Lugar plains.
99. **Northern Wheatear**: Seen on the plains.
100. **Black-eared Wheatear**: Seen on La Serena and at Monfragüe.
101. **Blue Rock Thrush**: Seen at Puerto Peña and Monfragüe.
102. **Blackbird**: Seen daily.
103. **Cetti's Warbler**: Recorded daily.
104. **Zitting Cisticola**: Seen daily.
105. **Savi's Warbler**: Recorded at Arrocampo.
106. **Sedge Warbler**: Recorded at Malpartida de Cáceres and Arrocampo.
107. **Reed Warbler**: seen on two days.
108. **Dartford warbler**: Seen in Monfragüe.
109. **Subalpine Warbler**: Seen on two days.
110. **Blackcap**: Seen daily.
111. **Western Bonelli's Warbler**: Recorded on two days.
112. **Common Chiffchaff**: Heard singing on two days.
113. **Willow Warbler**: Heard on three days.
114. **Long-tailed Tit**: Recorded on three days.
115. **Blue Tit**: Seen daily.
116. **Great Tit**: Seen daily.
117. **Short-toed Treecreeper**: Seen in Monfragüe.
118. **Penduline Tit**: Seen in Mérida.
119. **Iberian Grey Shrike**: Seen almost daily.
120. **Woodchat Shrike**: Seen daily.
121. **Jay**: Seen near Jaraicejo.

- 122. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
- 123. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
- 124. **Red-billed Chough:** Heard in La Serena.
- 125. **Jackdaw:** Seen on three days.
- 126. **Raven:** Seen almost daily.
- 127. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
- 128. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
- 129. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on four days.
- 130. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on the rice fields.
- 131. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on the rice fields and at Arrocampo.
- 132. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on the rice fields.
- 133. **Chaffinch:** seen on two days.
- 134. **Serin:** Seen daily.
- 135. **Greenfinch:** Seen almost daily.
- 136. **Goldfinch:** Seen daily.
- 137. **Linnet:** Seen on two days.
- 138. **Hawfinch:** seen at Pago de San Clemente.
- 139. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen in Monfragüe.
- 140. **Rock Bunting:** Seen in Monfragüe.
- 141. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.