

BIRDING EXTREMADURA



EARLY SPRING IN EXTREMADURA FOR GOSIA AND LOUIS

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

7th – 15th March 2026



Itinerary

7th March 2026: Collection from Seville and drive to Extremadura, with stops at Alconera and Mérida

8th March 2026: La Serena and Cabeza del Buey

9th March 2026: Cubilar Reservoir, Rice fields near Vegas Altas and Palazuelo, Alcollarín Reservoir

10th March 2026: Alcollarín Reservoir, Campo Lugar, Sierra Brava and Madrigalejo

11th March 2026: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres

12th March 2026: Plains of Campo Lugar, Guadalupe and Cañamero

13th March 2026: Pago de San Clemente, Trujillo and Monfragüe National Park

14th March 2026: Garciaz and Habla winery

15th March 2026: Trujillo, Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid.

TRIP REPORT

7th March 2026: Collection from Seville and drive to Extremadura, with stops at Alconera and Mérida

Martin met Louis and Gosia just north of Seville at about 11.15 and straightaway we got onto the Via de la Plata motorway, heading north to Extremadura. We quickly rose from the coastal plain and entered the hilly dehesa landscape of the border. We enjoyed mainly sunny weather, with a few very light and brief showers, meaning we had the opportunity of a couple of interesting stops on the way. The first area we explored was the limestone landscape west of the town of Zafra, close to the village of Alconera. Here the colonies of **Giant Orchids** were absolutely breathtaking. The specimens were superb, numerous and distributed over a large area of roadside verges and olive groves. Among these, we also found some stands of the **Hill Orchid**, an early-flowering species, as well as the first **Sawfly Orchids** coming into flower. As we explored, **Thekla Larks** sang overhead and **Sardinian Warblers** called from the olives.



Giant Orchids

We moved on, stopping for refreshments at a service area. We then stopped beside the River Guadiana down stream of the city of Mérida. A large flock of **Great Cormorant** were feeding, which provided quite a spectacle. **Penduline Tits** were present in the trees beside us. There was a nice selection of birds at the edge of the emergent vegetation such as **Western Swamphen**, **Grey Herons** and **Cattle Egrets**. **Glossy Ibis** and a breeding-plumage **Spoonbill** flew overhead and we watched a flock of **Spanish Sparrows** as well.

It was then time to move onward to Casa Rural El Recuerdo. The is final leg of the journey was the only one where we encountered any rain.

8th March 2026: La Serena and Cabeza del Buey

It was a fine day, with little wind, some scattered cloud with just a few light showers in the afternoon. We drove to the south-east corner of Extremadura, entering the vast plains of La Serena. We pulled-over into a gateway once we were in the area and quickly found three absolutely pristine male **Great Bustards**. We watched these for some time, at different angles. Whilst we were doing so, **Corn Buntings** and **Calandra Larks** were singing around us. A very distant group of **Little Bustard** were seen in flight and we also watched a nesting pair of **Spanish Imperial Eagles**. It was a very rewarding stop.



We continued along the long straight road and then ascended the side of a small hill, clothed in olive orchards and some holm and cork oaks, Here is the cheese-cave of Reborta where we spent the rest of the day, hosed by Antonio and his son, Antonio Jr. We walked around the small farm, enjoying the immense view north over the plains and onto the Villuercas Mountains. We learnt about the history of the place and its links to the Civil War. We entered a cave excavated by Republican soldiers which is now used for maturing cheese. Here we enjoyed a selection of twelve cheese, accompanied by four wines. Emerging from the cave, we spent the rest of the afternoon on the terrace of the small farmhouse, whilst Antonio Jr

prepared an amazing rice with home-produced Iberian pork, followed by his signature cheese cake.

As we started our return, we found a newly arrived **Woodchat Shrike**, and in the late afternoon sun, a **Black-winged Kite** perched on a telegraph post.

9th March 2026: Cubilar Reservoir, Rice fields near Vegas Altas and Palazuelo, Alcollarín Reservoir

The day was generally overcast, apart from a couple of sunny spells, with a prolonged and heavy shower of rain at the end of the day. We travelled southwards, stopping first at the Cubilar Reservoir. This was rather quiet bird wise, although there was a nice mixture of hirundines: **Crag Martin**, **Sand Martin** and **Barn Swallow** feeding low over the water. We then travelled down onto the rice fields, also making stops at a couple of rivers, which bore the signs of the recent flooding and with considerable damage to the reedbeds and banks. A **Little Bittern** was glimpsed and **White Storks** were busy on their nests. On rice fields near Vegas Altas, where we stopped for coffee, we found a group of **Common Crane** feeding in a field, later a couple of small flocks were seen flying overhead.

After picnic beside the Ruercas River, the rice fields near Palazuelo were more productive with flocks of **Kentish Plover** and **Little Ringed Plover**, **Common Snipe** and a good selection of herons including **Spoonbill** and all of the egrets. **Tree Sparrows** lined up on the irrigation channels and flocks of **Spanish Sparrows** flew up from the stubble. A couple of fields had a good number of pipits and wagtails, including **Water Pipits** in breeding plumage and the Spanish race of **Western Yellow Wagtail**.



Drake American Wigeon

We completed the afternoon at the Alcollarín Reservoir. Here there was an excellent selection of duck, and we were thrilled to find Extremadura's first ever **American Wigeon**! It associated with **Eurasian Wigeon**, of which there were several hundred. **Pintail**, **Teal** and **Shoveler** were also in good numbers, whilst it was also good to find three **Garganey**. A **Common Cuckoo** added to the sense of migration.

10th March 2026: Alcollarín Reservoir, Campo Lugar, Sierra Brava and Madrigalejo



Alcollarín Reservoir

There were some stunning cloudscapes first thing as tongues of cold air rolled down the slopes of the sierras. At our first stop, Alcollarín Reservoir, we could appreciate this sight beautifully. We spent the whole morning at Alcollarín, discovering that there were in fact two drake **American Wigeons**. The viewing conditions were much better than the previous afternoon, although they remained rather distant. **Garganey** were present again. Additions to yesterday were a couple of **Ruff**, a **Redshank** and three **Greenshank**. We explored all the tracks around the reservoir. Three different **Woodchat Shrikes** were present, and the sunny conditions prompted the movement of some raptors with two **Short-toed Eagles** and a **Booted Eagle** seen. **Marsh Harriers** were in display.

Apart from two other birders first thing, who had arrived to see the **American Wigeon**, we had the whole place to ourselves. It was a very enjoyable and relaxing stay, with **Thekla Larks** singing overhead.

After our picnic, we drove across the Campo Lugar plains, seeing perhaps a dozen **Lesser Kestrels** and numerous **Corn Buntings** and **Calandra Larks**. Onward to the Sierra Brava reservoir and then down across some rice fields to Madrigalejo. We saw several **Iberian Grey Shrikes**, nesting **White Storks**, **Hoopoes** and groups of **Iberian Magpies**. It was then a drive in afternoon sunshine back to base.

11th March 2026: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres

It was a fine, sunny and warm day, with hardly any wind. We spent the whole day in the region between Trujillo and Cáceres, starting first on a track just west of Trujillo. Just before we arrived, we watched a group of **Little Bustard** flying over a vast field. On the plains we were surrounded by the songs of **Corn Buntings** and **Calandra Larks**. Checking the fields carefully we came across a small group of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** and then a larger, and closer, group of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**. They were gorgeous in their striking plumage. An adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle** was perched on a distant tree. We also found a **Merlin** perched on a small rock in same field as the flocks of sandgrouse.

We continued towards Cáceres, then taking a small road towards the village of Santa Marta de Magasca. This gave us more opportunities to see **Corn Buntings**, **Calandra Larks** and **Crested Larks**. A **Little Owl** peered out of its nesting box.

After coffee in the village, where **House Martins** were nest building, we stopped beside the River Tamuja, looking down into the side-sided valley. It was a perfect spot for a picnic. During our stay we had excellent views of three **Short-toed Eagles**, as well as more distant vultures and kites.

We then drove north of the village taking a road which took us back to Trujillo. A magnificent juvenile **Spanish Imperial Eagle** was perched close to the road. We had a pleasant walk along a drovers' trail. **Sawfly Orchids** and **Sand Crocuses** were in flower and we saw several **Western Psammodromus** lizards. We completed the afternoon at the track where we had started, enjoying the sandgrouse again, this time in better light.

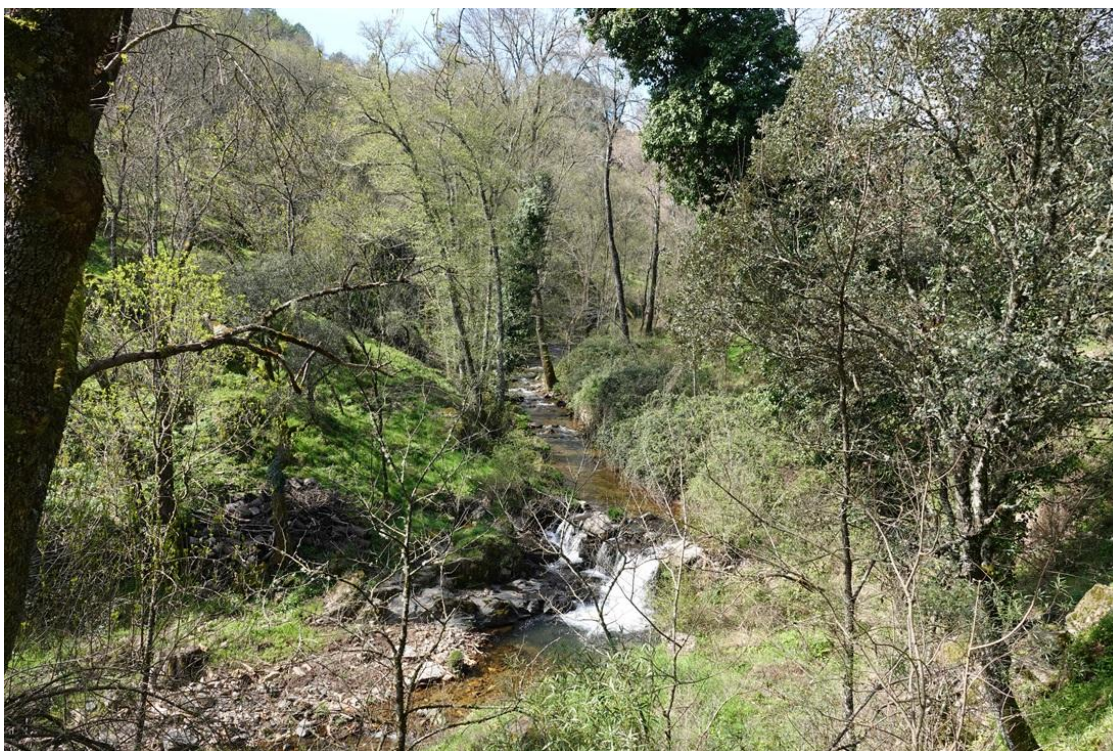


Calandra Lark

12th March 2026: Plains of Campo Lugar, Guadalupe and Cañamero

It was another day of quite perfect weather, with little or no wind and gentle sunshine. Heading south of Zorita, we made a first stop on the plains near the village of Campo Lugar where we found a group of **Great Bustard**. The **Calandra Larks** and **Corn Buntings** were in full song and there were still wintering **Meadow Pipit** and **Skylark** present. We then drove across country to Logrosán, through a very beautiful dehesa, with carpets of white flowers, like a dusting of snow. There was an attractive **White Stork** colony in a group of trees.

The landscape changed as we ascended to the southern end of the Villuercas Mountains, where Pyrenean oak started to dominate. At Guadalupe we had coffee and **watched Lesser Kestrel** and **Crag Martins**. Just south of the town, we enjoyed a lovely walk beside the river Guadalupejo, past an old water mill and through mixed gallery woodland and old olive groves and pines. Highlights included **Cirl Bunting** and **Hawfinch**.



Guadalupejo River

We had our picnic beside the Ruercas River, watching an **Egyptian Vulture** soaring with **Griffon Vultures**. Near Cañamero, we took another walk, this time in mixed forest of pine, Pyrenean oak and some eucalyptus. This was a very rewarding way to complete the day. **Angel's Tears Narcissus** were in flower, butterflies such as **Spanish Festoon** and **Orange-tip** with settling on the path. We had good views of **Firecrest** and **Nuthatch**, shorter views of **Iberian Green Woodpecker** and more fleeting views of **Crested Tit** and **Short-toed Treecreeper**.



Spanish Festoon

We had a wonderful evening in Trujillo, dining at the Mesaguera Restaurant and enjoying the sight of the main square, lit up and almost empty as we left close to midnight. Magical.

13th March 2026: Pago de San Clemente, Trujillo and Monfragüe National Park

It was a warm and sunny day, with just some fine weather clouds in the afternoon. Louis and Gosia spent a couple of hours first thing birding close to the village. This yielded at least two, possibly three **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers**, as well as **Iberian Green Woodpecker**. We then drove to the edge of Trujillo, in search of Great Spotted Cuckoo. The search was fruitless, but we did appreciate a magnificent view across the plains towards the snow-clad Gredos Mountains. At the edge of Trujillo we stopped to look at the **Lesser Kestrel** colony, with well over twenty birds gliding above us against an egg-shell blue sky,

We then drove north, through the stunning dehesa landscape, to the Monfragüe National Park. We had picnic at the Puerto de Serrana, with a **Western Subalpine Warbler** and two **Firecrest** in the tree right beside the car. We saw **Black Stork** fly past and two **Short-toed Eagles**. We then explored the northern part of the park, with birds like **Marsh Harrier**, **Bonelli's Eagle** and **Egyptian Vulture** being seen. We completed our stay at the iconic viewpoint of Salto de Gitano. Here dozens of vultures (all three species) were gliding past, at very close range. A **Peregrine** was dwarfed in comparison. Overhead passed **Red and Black Kite**, a **Booted Eagle** and a **Short-toed Eagle**, whilst a pair of **Ravens** drove off a **Golden Eagle**.



Black Stork

We enjoyed prolonged views of a couple of **Blue Rock Thrush**. We finished the day at the edge of Trujillo, getting wonderful views of a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** as it sat in a bush and preened.

14th March 2026: Garciaz and Habla winery

It was a rather cloudy and windy day, quite a contrast from yesterday. We spent the morning in the open, wooded country near the village of Garciaz, where we had a very pleasant walk. We heard several **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** and a very good view of two singing **Rock Sparrows**. **Buzzards** were soaring and **Mistle Thrushes** were widespread. A male **Grey Wagtail** flew up and perched high in a tree.

We returned late morning to base and then moved to the Habla winery just to the south-west of Trujillo. Set in a thousand hectares of vineyards and pasture, this new winery (less than twenty years old) has become an established producer of quality wines. The tour of the plant was followed by wine-tasting and delicious tapas.

After an afternoon's rest, we had our evening meal, watching Arsenal win against Everton and enjoying a magnum of Habla esencia followed by a Torres 20 brandy.



Enjoying football and Habla wine

15th March 2026: Trujillo, Arrocampo Reservoir and return to Madrid.



Gredos Mountains from Arrocampo

It was a day of beautiful sunny weather and calm conditions. Sadly, it was farewell to Casa Rural El Recuerdo. Claudia and Patrick waved us off. We made a first stop to admire **the Lesser Kestrels** at the Trujillo silos, flying against a clear blue sky. There were probably about forty birds in the sky.



Purple Heron

We then moved on to the Arrocampo Reservoir where we spent an hour and half around the first and second hides. We were rewarded with a lovely view of a newly arrived **Purple Heron**, several **Western Swamphens**, displaying **Marsh Harriers** and a brief **Little Bittern**. A couple of **Savi's Warblers** were singing and we also heard a **Sedge Warbler**. Six **Ferruginous Duck** were seen flying over the marsh. **Sawfly Orchids** were flowering beside the marsh. We then started the return journey to Madrid, making a stop about halfway for refreshments. The traffic was light and we reached Terminal 4 shortly after 14.00.

BIRDS SEEN

1. **Grey Lag Goose**: Seen at Alcollarín.
2. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen on two days.
3. **Eurasian Wigeon**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
4. **American Wigeon**: Two at Alcollarín Reservoir.
5. **Gadwall**: Seen on three days.
6. **Eurasian Teal**: Seen on two days.
7. **Pintail**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
8. **Garganey**: Three seen at Alcollarín.
9. **Mallard**: Seen on most days.
10. **Northern Shoveler**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
11. **Ferruginous Duck**: Seen at Arrocampo.
12. **Red-legged Partridge**: Seen most days.
13. **Quail**: Heard on three days.

14. **Little Grebe:** Seen on four days.
15. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen on three days.
16. **Great Cormorant:** Seen most days.
17. **Little Bittern:** Seen on River Gargaligas and Arrocampo.
18. **Cattle Egret:** Seen on three days.
19. **Little Egret:** Seen on four days.
20. **Great Egret:** Seen three days.
21. **Grey Heron:** Seen most days.
22. **Purple Heron:** Seen at Arrocampo.
23. **Black Stork:** Seen at Monfragüe and near Garciaz.
24. **White Stork:** Seen every day.
25. **Glossy Ibis:** Seen near Mérida.
26. **Spoonbill:** Seen on five days.
27. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen on three days.
28. **Black Vulture:** Seen on two days.
29. **Egyptian Vulture:** Seen in Monfragüe and near Cañamero.
30. **Short-toed Eagle:** Seen on three days.
31. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen on the plains.
32. **Golden Eagle:** Seen in Monfragüe.
33. **Bonelli's Eagle:** Seen in Monfragüe.
34. **Booted Eagle:** Seen on two days.
35. **Black Kite:** Seen most days.
36. **Red Kite:** Seen almost every day.
37. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost every day.
38. **Hen Harrier:** Seen on the plains.
39. **Common Buzzard:** Seen almost every day.
40. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen on two days.
41. **Black-winged Kite:** Seen near Vegas Altas.
42. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen almost daily, especially at Trujillo.
43. **Common Kestrel:** Seen almost every day.
44. **Merlin:** Seen on the plains.
45. **Peregrine:** Seen in Monfragüe.
46. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo and the rice fields.
47. **Moorhen:** Seen on four days.
48. **Western Swamphen:** Seen near Mérida and at Arrocampo.
49. **Common Coot:** Seen near Mérida and at Alcollarín.
50. **Common Crane:** Seen on the rice fields.
51. **Little Bustard:** Seen on the plains of La Serena and near Trujillo.
52. **Great Bustard:** Seen on the plains of La Serena and near Campo Lugar.
53. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen on three days.
54. **Little Ringed Plover:** Seen on the rice fields and near Arrocampo.
55. **Kentish Plover:** Seen on the rice fields.
56. **Ruff:** Seen at Alcollarín.
57. **Common Snipe:** Seen on the rice fields and Arrocampo.
58. **Common Redshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
59. **Greenshank:** Seen at Alcollarín.
60. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen on three days.
61. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen at Alcollarín.

62. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: Seen on three days.
63. **Black-headed Gull**: Seen on four days.
64. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**: Seen on the plains.
65. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**: Seen on plains.
66. **Feral Pigeon**: Seen daily.
67. **Wood Pigeon**: Seen daily.
68. **Collared Dove**: Seen daily.
69. **Great Spotted Cuckoo**: Seen north of Trujillo.
70. **Common Cuckoo**: Heard at Alcollarín.
71. **Little Owl**: Seen on plains east of Cáceres.
72. **Tawny Owl**: Heard near Cañamero.
73. **Pallid Swift**: Seen on three days.
74. **Kingfisher**: Seen at Arrocampo.
75. **Hoopoe**: Seen almost daily.
76. **Iberian Gren Woodpecker**: Seen near Cañamero and heard at Pago de San Clemente.
77. **Great Spotted Woodpecker**: Seen on three days.
78. **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**: Recorded on four days.
79. **Calandra Lark**: Seen on the plains.
80. **Crested Lark**: Seen daily.
81. **Thekla Lark**: Seen almost daily.
82. **Woodlark**: Seen on five days.
83. **Skylark**: Seen on the plains.
84. **Sand Martin**: Seen on three days.
85. **Crag Martin**: Seen almost every day.
86. **Barn Swallow**: Seen every day.
87. **Red-rumped Swallow**: Seen almost every day.
88. **House Martin**: Seen almost every day.
89. **Meadow Pipit**: Seen almost daily.
90. **Water Pipit**: Seen on the rice fields.
91. **Yellow Wagtail**: Seen on the rice fields.
92. **Grey Wagtail**: Seen on four days.
93. **White Wagtail**: Seen almost daily.
94. **Wren**: Recorded on four days.
95. **Robin**: Seen almost daily.
96. **Bluethroat**: Seen on rice fields.
97. **Black Redstart**: Seen almost daily.
98. **Stonechat**: Seen daily.
99. **Blue Rock Thrush**: Seen in Monfragüe.
100. **Blackbird**: Seen daily.
101. **Song Thrush**: Seen on two days.
102. **Mistle Thrush**: Seen on two days.
103. **Cetti's Warbler**: Recorded almost daily.
104. **Zitting Cisticola**: Seen almost daily.
105. **Savi's Warbler**: Singing at Arrocampo.
106. **Sedge Warbler**: Singing at Arrocampo.
107. **Western Subalpine Warbler**: Seen in Monfragüe.
108. **Sardinian Warbler**: Seen almost daily.
109. **Blackcap**: Seen almost daily.

110. **Common Chiffchaff:** Seen almost daily.
111. **Firecrest:** Seen in the Villuercas Mountains and Monfragüe.
112. **Long-tailed Tit:** Seen on four days.
113. **Crested Tit:** Seen in Villuercas Mountains.
114. **Blue Tit:** Seen daily.
115. **Great Tit:** Seen daily.
116. **Nuthatch:** Seen on two days.
117. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Seen on three days.
118. **Penduline Tit:** Seen near Mérida and Arrocampo.
119. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen almost daily.
120. **Woodchat Shrike:** Seen on two days.
121. **Jay:** Seen on one day.
122. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
123. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
124. **Jackdaw:** Seen on three days.
125. **Raven:** Seen daily.
126. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
127. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
128. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen daily.
129. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on the rice fields.
130. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen near Garciaz.
131. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on the rice fields and Arrocampo.
132. **Common Waxbill:** Seen at Arrocampo
133. **Chaffinch:** Seen most days.
134. **Serin:** Seen daily.
135. **Greenfinch:** Seen daily.
136. **Goldfinch:** Seen daily.
137. **Siskin:** Seen near Cañamero.
138. **Linnet:** Seen most days.
139. **Hawfinch:** Seen on three days.
140. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen near Guadalupe.
141. **Rock Bunting:** Seen near Cañamero.
142. **Corn Bunting:** Seen daily.