

# BIRDING EXTREMADURA



LATE WINTER IN EXTREMADURA FOR RACHAEL AND DUNCAN

Casa Rural El Recuerdo and Birding Extremadura

8<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026



## Itinerary

8<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura, with stop at Arrocampo

9<sup>th</sup> February 2026: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres

10<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Sierra Brava, Madrigalejo, Palazuelo rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir

11<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Rice fields south of Madrigalejo, Orellana, Cubilar and Alcollarín Reservoirs

12<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Relax day

13<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Alange, Hornachos and Azud de las Canchalejas

14<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Monfragüe National Park

15<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Plains west of Trujillo, Los Barruecos, Casar de Cáceres and return to Madrid.

## TRIP REPORT

8<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Collection from Madrid and drive to Extremadura, with stop at Arrocampo



Martin met Rachael and Duncan at about midday at Madrid airport and we were quickly heading out around the southern ring-road. The Sunday traffic was quite light and it became even lighter once we were on the motorway for Extremadura. The weather was excellent with scattered cloud and sunshine, with a magnificent view north to the snow-clad Gredos Mountains. We crossed a changing landscape, 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. About half an hour later, we stopped beside the reservoir of Arrocampo. We stood on the ramp of a hide to look across the marsh. We watched an adult **Bluethroat**, saw **Purple Swampheens**, as well as several **Marsh Harriers** amongst other things. We continued onto Casa Rural El Recuerdo, arriving there at just after 5

pm. In the evening Rachael and Duncan took a short walk to enjoy the **Natterjack Toad** chorus, as also found **Marbled Newt**, **Iberian Water Frog** and **Sharp-ribbed Newt**.

#### **9<sup>th</sup> February 2026: The plains between Trujillo and Cáceres**

The day dawned damp and misty, but by the time we had arrived on the plains just west of Trujillo, we had descended below the cloud ceiling, and the visibility was much improved. During most of the morning we had fine weather and light winds, with some breaks in the cloud with sunshine. By midday. However, there were bands of sometimes heavy rain. We enjoyed an excellent walk to start the day. This took us out onto the open plains, to acquaint ourselves with **Corn Buntings** and **Calandra Larks**. There were large numbers of **Golden Plover** and **Lapwing**, in flocks which suggested that many of these birds were on migration. A **Merlin** flew over, putting up small birds from the fields. 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. Two very distant **Great Bustard** were also found. Before we left the area, we witnessed an amazing encounter between a female **Merlin** and a female **Sparrowhawk**, with the small falcon mobbing the larger hawk right over our heads.

We continued towards Cáceres, then taking a small road towards the village of Santa Marta de Magasca. A stop on a small side road gave us our first sighting of **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, with a pair sitting on a pylon. Later, we saw an adult and a juvenile bird together. Just a few minutes later two male **Great Bustards** flew close past us and joined a group of over thirty birds in a field fairly close to us. We took a walk along a small road, seeing **Corn Bunting**, **Thekla Lark** and **Zitting Cisticola** and very extremely distant **Little Bustard**.



After coffee in the village, we stopped beside the River Tamuja, looking down into the side-sided valley. **Crag Martins** and a **House Martin** searched for insects above us. There were several **Red Kites** in view, but as drizzle turned to rain, we were losing hope of seeing other raptors, until a subadult **Golden Eagle** flew directly overhead, its crop full.

We then drove north of the village taking a road which took us back to Trujillo, but not before a pleasant walk along a drovers' trail. Flocks of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, **Golden Plover** and **Lapwing** were above us, whilst at our feet we found a **Natterjack Toad**. Onward to Trujillo where we had a short walk from the Main Square to the castle, watching a nest-robbing **White Stork**, a cluster of **Spotless Starling** and some enchanting **Crag Martins** perched around a balcony window of an old stone building overlooking the square.

#### **10<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Sierra Brava, Madrigalejo, Palazuelo rice fields and Alcollarín Reservoir**

We set off under thick low cloud and light rain and crossed into the Guadiana watershed and headed south past the town of Zorita. We had frequent bouts of rain, often prolonged, and a freshening wind during the afternoon, but overall it was very mild. 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 **Shelduck** and a **Great Crested Grebe**. Moving onto the rice fields, we stopped to have our first good views of **Common Cranes**.

Entering an area of rough pasture on one side, and peach orchards on the other, we had a view of a **Black-winged Kite**, in flight and also mating with the female in a tree. **Iberian Grey Shrikes** were quite frequently encountered. South of the village of Madrigalejo we spent some time in an area of smallholdings and small fields, where we had further good and close views of family groups of **Common Crane**. **Red Avadavats** and **Common Waxbills** were present in the ditches beside the fields. Following our coffee we spent the rest of the morning and early afternoon on the rice fields near the rice village of Palazuelo. We stopped to watch a tractor working on rice stubble, mashing it into the mud and creating wonderful feeding opportunities for egrets and herons. In one area we found a sizable flock of **Glossy Ibis** and also watched nearby some wonderful foraging behaviour by **Black-headed Gulls** as they daintily picked items of food off the water surface whilst in flight. Small birds were well represented with **Spanish** and **Tree Sparrows**, **Water** and **Meadow Pipits**.

We left the rice fields and headed towards the village of Campo Lugar. Here we found a roosting flock of **Stone Curlew**. 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**. There were hundreds of **Barn Swallows** and **House Martins**, battling against the head wind as they foraged close to the water surface.

#### **11<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Rice fields south of Madrigalejo, Orellana, Cubilar and Alcollarín Reservoirs**

It was generally another wet and windy day. There were dry intervals in the morning, but more persistent, albeit light, rain in the afternoon. We went south again, continuing beyond Madrigalejo to explore the arable land to the south of the town, a mosaic of rice, winter wheat, maize stubble and fruit-growing. Groups of **Common Cranes** were everywhere. We had a fabulous hour or so parked near a pile of branches, a ditch and the muddy corner of a rice field, getting superb views of a series of birds including **Red Avadavat**, **Dartford Warbler**, **Sardinian Warbler**, **Spanish Sparrow** and a male **Bluethroat**. In a field of maize stubble we came across a small group of **Little Bustard**, which we watched as a male **Hen Harrier** came through our field of view.



We checked the old church at Acedera to see if any Lesser Kestrels were back. There were none, but the colony of **White Storks** were a delight. Following coffee, we continued onto the Orellana Reservoir to check a couple of bays. The water levels were very high, and apart from a **Kingfisher** and **Great Crested Grebe**, there was not much to see, apart from the large numbers of **House Martins**, with some **Crag Martins** and **Barn Swallows**.

We had our picnic beside the Cubilar Reservoir. The rain was fairly persistent now, giving a grey shroud to the landscape, but after our picnic, viewing ducks that were a bit closer to us from the dam, we were very pleased to find a group of nine **Marbled Duck**, the largest number ever recorded in Extremadura. Returning through the rice fields and *dehesa*, we stopped to watch **Common Cranes** in the traditional *dehesa* landscape, along with Iberian Pigs and an obliging **Hoopoe**.



We looked at the rice fields near Vegas Altas. Here there were groups of **Golden Plover** and more **Common Crane**. We then crossed the Campo Lugar plains, in the rain, but did see another male **Hen Harrier** and we stopped beside the village for another view of the **Stone Curlew** roost. Finally, we checked the Alcollarín Reservoir again, which seemed even fuller of water than yesterday!

#### **12<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Relax day cycling south-west of Trujillo**

It is a dry day, at last, with a fresh westerly wind. Rachael and Duncan hired bikes for the day to explore the villages to the south-west of Trujillo. When we arrived in Trujillo, we stopped beside the old grain silos and saw a newly arrived pair of **Lesser Kestrel**. On the cycle ride, several **Hoopoes** were seen and a **Black Vulture** too.

#### **13<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Alange, Hornachos and Azud de las Canchalejas**

There had been heavy rain during the night and strong winds. The latter persisted right through the day, and we also had several heavy showers, but also some sunshine. The result of this

were some stunning rainbows in the morning. We drove south-west, passing Miajadas and then dropping to the irrigated arable lands of the Guadiana valley. As we crossed the river, we could see the extend of the flooding where the river had burst its banks.

We stopped at Alange, beside the large reservoir bearing the same name, and walked from the town along a very good path westward, with the water to our left and a rocky outcrop to our right. Above it were several **Griffon Vultures**, whilst on the storm-tossed waters of the reservoir were **Great Crested Grebe** and **Cormorant**. The very blustery conditions and several heavy showers meant that it was hard-going, but we managed to get a lovely view of a male **Black Wheatear**, our sought-after species, perched on the stump of a palm tree beside the path. As we returned to Alange, we also saw **Thekla Lark** and **Iberian Grey Shrike**. After an excellent coffee stop, we drove south to Hornachos.



At Hornachos, beside the impressive isolated mountain range, we turned west and stopped at a viewpoint overlooking the Matachel River. It was here where we spent the next three hours, mostly scanning the sides of the valley and sometimes seeking shelter in the car from the rain. Eventually Duncan spotted an **Iberian Lynx** and we had quite prolonged views of it as it sat beside a tree and moved in apparent interest of pursuit for a rabbit. That sighting alone would have made the sojourn worthwhile, along with the spectacular landscape, but we also had excellent views of a **Golden Eagle**, looking down on it as it crossed the valley. There were also two more distant **Spanish Imperial Eagles** and an even more distant **Black Stork**.

On our return we dropped in on the small reservoir, the Azud de Canchalejas. Several hundred **Common Cranes** were circling low over the trees, with their highly evocative bugling call. Dozens of **House Martins** and **Barn Swallows** flew just above the water and a group of **Spoonbills** flew overhead. It was a lovely spot.

14<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Monfragüe National Park



There had been a clear night (the first without the chorus of toads) and it felt chilly at first light. It was calm to begin with, but by mid-morning a fresh north-westerly wind had developed with got quite strong during the rest of the day, making it feel much colder. 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.

Entering the national park, we made our first stop on the castle ridge and had an excellent walk, completing a circuit which included the northern, mossy side of the ridge and the castle. The views south across the landscape filled with *dehesa* and to the north to the snow-clad Gredos Mountains was amazing. **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** glided overhead. We then descended and made our second 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 pretty much to ourselves. Indeed, throughout the entire day we met very few visitors at the viewpoints and even in the bar, we were the only customers.

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. However, Duncan did find a **Bosca's Newt**.

After coffee, 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 but the windy conditions made it quite difficult. We then drove to the Portilla del Tiétar viewpoint, where we could avail ourselves the shelter of a hide for our picnic. The views of both **Griffon** and **Black Vultures** were superb. We watched a **Peregrine** making attempt on **Crag Martins**. But most exciting were prolonged views of two rather noisy **Otters**.

We returned through the park, watching **Red Deer** grazing in open meadows. We stopped a couple of times in a rather vain attempt to find small birds, with only one area yielding **Chaffinch, Robin** and **Black Redstart**. Back briefly at the Puerto de Serrania, a **Cleopatra** butterfly zoomed past us.

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. As a finale we stopped beside the silos in Trujillo and had lovely views of at least three **Lesser Kestrels**, including a pair which appeared to be prospecting a nest box.

### **15<sup>th</sup> February 2026: Plains west of Trujillo, Los Barruecos, Casar de Cáceres and return to Madrid.**

It was a clear sky with a touch of frost at dawn. Although there were some scattered clouds during the day, the weather remained fine, dry and with little wind. Even as we drove towards Trujillo we could see the snow on the Gredos Mountains, a distance of about 120 km. We stopped at the edge of the plains just west of Trujillo and heard a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** calling as soon as we arrived. Luckily it was sitting in a tree, rather distant but showing nicely in the excellent light. A **Woodlark** was also singing. As we set off, we discovered that one of the tyres had suffered a puncture. So, there was a short stop to change the wheel. Then we continued to Cáceres. We stopped beside the Parque del Principe which was closed because of the bad weather over the last few weeks, whilst trees were being checked for safety. We walked beside the park, through the adjacent carpark. We had a good view of a female **Cirl Bunting** and a **Siskin**, but the views of **Hawfinch** and **Iberian Magpie** were much further away.

We proceeded to the west of the city to stop in the wonderful granite landscape of Los Barruecos, close to Malpartida de Cáceres. We stopped at a small pool to enjoy superb views in wonderful light of **Common Snipe, Black-winged Stilt**, duck (**Mallard, Teal** and **Shoveler**), a distant **Reed Bunting**, and numerous **Spanish Terrapins**. All of the time we could hear and see **White Storks** clacking their bills at a nearby colony on stilts. 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 going into the café for coffee.

We then continued to the town of Casar de Cáceres, where the famous Torta de Casar cheese comes from. We stopped at a small lake beside the town, having our picnic there. Three **Little Gulls** were among many **Black-headed Gull**, along with **House Martins**, with **Crag Martins** and **Barn Swallows**, foraging over the water. There were **Little Grebes** bobbing in the water just in front of us as well as **Common Sandpiper** and a **Green Sandpiper**.

We then started our return to Madrid, taking the journey north from Cáceres, towards Plasencia and then east south of the flank of the Gredos Mountains, looking absolutely splendid. We beat the peak time of the return of the weekend traffic into Madrid, reaching the airport at about 17.30.

### **BIRDS SEEN**

1. **Egyptian Goose**: Seen on three days.
2. **Common Shelduck**: Seen at Sierra Brava.
3. **Eurasian Wigeon**: Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.



4. **Gadwall:** Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
5. **Eurasian Teal:** Seen on four days.
6. **Pintail:** Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
7. **Mallard:** Seen on most days.
8. **Northern Shoveler:** Seen on three days.
9. **Red-crested Pochard:** Seen at Alcollarín Reservoir.
10. **Marbled Duck:** Seen at Cubilar Reservoir.
11. **Red-legged Partridge:** Seen on the plains.
12. **Little Grebe:** Seen on two days.
13. **Great Crested Grebe:** Seen on three days.
14. **Great Cormorant:** Seen most days.
15. **Cattle Egret:** Seen on four days.
16. **Little Egret:** Seen on two days.
17. **Great Egret:** Seen most days.
18. **Grey Heron:** Seen on three days.
19. **Black Stork:** One seen at Hornachos.
20. **White Stork:** Seen every day.
21. **Glossy Ibis:** Seen on the rice fields.
22. **Spoonbill:** Seen on three days.
23. **Griffon Vulture:** Seen on three days.
24. **Black Vulture:** Seen on two days.
25. **Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen on the plains, Hornachos and Monfragüe.
26. **Golden Eagle:** Seen beside Tamuja River and Hornachos.
27. **Red Kite:** Seen every day.
28. **Marsh Harrier:** Seen almost every day.
29. **Hen Harrier:** Seen on the rice fields.
30. **Common Buzzard:** Seen every day.
31. **Sparrowhawk:** Seen on the plains.
32. **Black-winged Kite:** Seen near Madrigalejo.
33. **Lesser Kestrel:** Seen at Trujillo.
34. **Common Kestrel:** Seen almost every day.
35. **Merlin:** Seen on the plains.
36. **Peregrine:** Seen in Monfragüe.
37. **Water Rail:** Heard at Arrocampo.
38. **Moorhen:** Seen on three days.
39. **Purple Swampphen:** Seen at Arrocampo.
40. **Common Coot:** Seen on one day.
41. **Common Crane:** Seen on four days.
42. **Little Bustard:** Seen on the plains of Cáceres and on the rice fields.
43. **Great Bustard:** Seen on the plains west of Trujillo.
44. **Black-winged Stilt:** Seen at Los Barruecos.
45. **Stone Curlew:** A flock seen twice near Campo Lugar.
46. **Golden Plover:** Seen on the plains and on the rice fields.
47. **Northern Lapwing:** Seen almost every day.
48. **Common Snipe:** Seen on the rice fields and Los Barruecos.
49. **Common Redshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
50. **Greenshank:** Seen on the rice fields.
51. **Green Sandpiper:** Seen on four days.

52. **Common Sandpiper:** Seen at Casa de Cáceres.
53. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Seen on four days.
54. **Black-headed Gull:** Seen almost every day.
55. **Little Gull:** Three at Casar del Cáceres.
56. **Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** Seen on the plains.
57. **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** Seen on plains.
58. **Feral Pigeon:** Seen most days.
59. **Wood Pigeon:** Seen almost daily.
60. **Collared Dove:** Seen almost daily.
61. **Great Spotted Cuckoo:** Seen once west of Trujillo.
62. **Little Owl:** Seen on plains east of Cáceres.
63. **Kingfisher:** Seen on two days.
64. **Hoopoe:** Seen almost daily.
65. **Iberian Green Woodpecker:** Heard at Hornachos.
66. **Calandra Lark:** Seen on the plains.
67. **Crested Lark:** Seen on four days.
68. **Thekla Lark:** Seen on four days.
69. **Woodlark:** Heard west of Trujillo.
70. **Skylark:** Seen on the rice fields.
71. **Crag Martin:** Seen almost every day.
72. **Barn Swallow:** Seen almost every day.
73. **House Martin:** Seen almost every day.
74. **Meadow Pipit:** Seen almost daily.
75. **Water Pipit:** Seen on the rice fields.
76. **Grey Wagtail:** Seen on one day.
77. **White Wagtail:** Seen almost daily.
78. **Wren:** Seen in Monfragüe.
79. **Robin:** Seen in Monfragüe.
80. **Bluethroat:** Seen on rice fields and Arrocampo.
81. **Black Redstart:** Seen almost daily.
82. **Stonechat:** Seen almost daily.
83. **Black Wheatear:** Seen at Alange.
84. **Blackbird:** Seen almost daily.
85. **Song Thrush:** Seen almost daily.
86. **Mistle Thrush:** Seen on way to Monfragüe.
87. **Cetti's Warbler:** Recorded on four days.
88. **Zitting Cisticola:** Seen on the plains.
89. **Dartford Warbler:** Seen on the rice fields.
90. **Sardinian Warbler:** Seen on two days.
91. **Blackcap:** Seen on three days.
92. **Common Chiffchaff:** Seen almost every day.
93. **Blue Tit:** Seen on two days.
94. **Great Tit:** Seen on three days.
95. **Short-toed Treecreeper:** Heard in Monfragüe.
96. **Iberian Grey Shrike:** Seen almost daily.
97. **Iberian Magpie:** Seen daily.
98. **Magpie:** Seen daily.
99. **Jackdaw:** Seen almost daily.

100. **Raven:** Seen almost daily.
101. **Spotless Starling:** Seen daily.
102. **House Sparrow:** Seen daily.
103. **Spanish Sparrow:** Seen on four days.
104. **Tree Sparrow:** Seen on the rice fields.
105. **Rock Sparrow:** Seen at Alcollarín.
106. **Red Avadavat:** Seen on the rice fields.
107. **Common Waxbill:** Seen on the rice fields.
108. **Chaffinch:** Seen on three days.
109. **Serin:** Seen on four days.
110. **Greenfinch:** Seen on two days.
111. **Goldfinch:** Seen on three days.
112. **Siskin:** Seen in Cáceres.
113. **Linnet:** Seen on one day.
114. **Hawfinch:** Seen at Pago de San Clemente and Cáceres.
115. **Cirl Bunting:** Seen at Cáceres.
116. **Reed Bunting:** Seen at Los Barruecos.
117. **Corn Bunting:** Seen almost daily.

#### **MAMMALS SEEN**

Iberian Lynx

Otter

Rabbit

Iberian Hare

Red Deer

#### **AMPHIBIANS**

Marbled Newt

Bosca's Newt

Sharp-ribbed Newt

Natterjack Toad

Iberian Water Frog

Spanish Terrapin