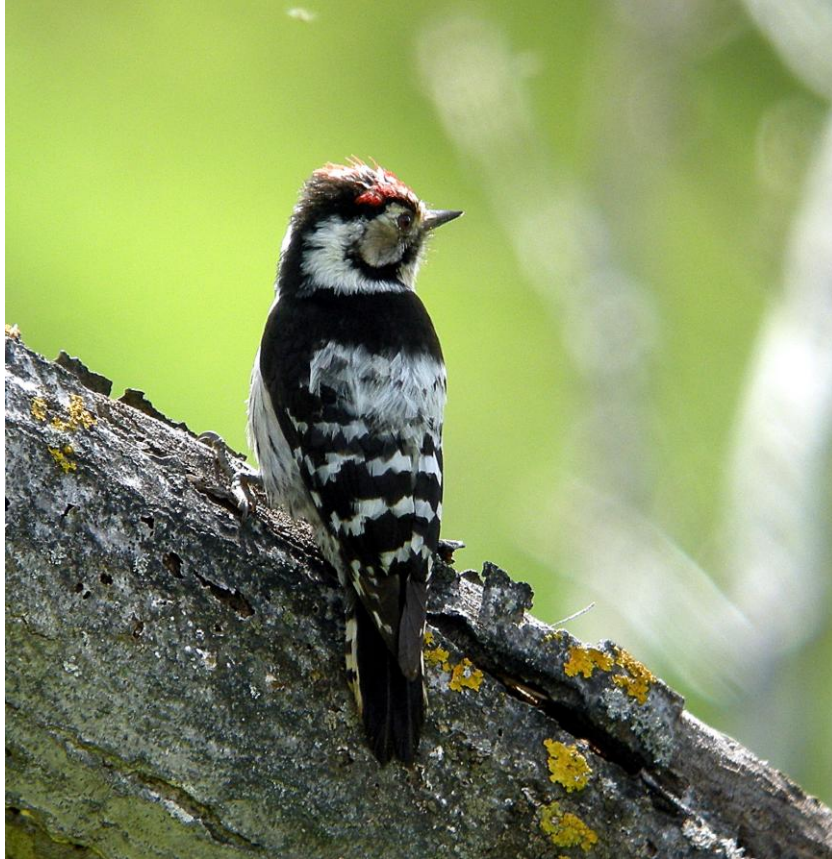


WINGSPAN BIRD TOURS



TRIP REPORT

COTO DOÑANA & EXTREMADURA

12TH - 19TH APRIL 2013

Leader: Bob Buckler

Participants:

**Paul Parker
Claire Strachan
Vern Laux
Trish Pastuzak**

Summary

We spent 8 superb days in some of the best habitat that Spain has to offer, the weather was glorious throughout except for one day of windy conditions near the end of the trip. Birding highlights included: **Spanish Imperial Eagle, Great Bustards** (displaying), **Red-knobbed Coot, Marbled Duck, Wryneck, Lesser-spotted Woodpecker** and thousands of birds at Donana. Our star bird of the trip was a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** found by us at the Marismas de O'Diel Salt Pans where we also saw a whole host of waders, gulls, terns and Pratincoles. Overall we logged 198 species a very good effort from the group and a testament of how good Spain is as a birding location during the spring.

APRIL 12TH - DAY 1 - EXTREMADURA AND DONANA 8 - DAY TOUR

MADRID AIRPORT TO TRUJILLO WITH STOPS AT ARROCAMPO, JARAICEJO AND THE RIO ALMONTE

The group assembled in an hotel near Madrid airport on the evening of the 11th in preparation for this 7 day tour of Extremadura and the Coto Donana. We left the hotel at 7:30am and negotiated the complex motorway system around Madrid before heading off Southwest towards Extremadura. There was a clear blue sky at first but it soon clouded over as we left the city.

After an hour or so we were out of town and the bird sighting began to increase, we saw **White Storks, Black Kites, Wood Pigeons** and even **Monk Parakeets** in the suburbs of Madrid. After a short breakfast stop we pulled off the motorway to view a couple of road side pools where we found: **Gadwall, Mallard, Great Crested** and **Little Grebes, Common Sandpiper, Corn Bunting, Crested Larks** and **European Goldfinches**. Raptors where everywhere, **Red Kites, Griffon Vultures, Common Buzzards** and a single **Montagu's Harrier** were added to our sightings list.

We spent a couple of hours at the new reserve of Arrocampo where we visited a few hides and watched many new species. Herons and egrets where the birds of the moment especially **Purple Herons** and **Little Egrets**. We also saw a single **Great White Egret**, a couple of **Squacco Herons, Grey Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, Gull-billed Terns, Little Bittern, Purple Swamphen, Common Moorhen, Common Coot** and many **Great Cormorants**. Passerine sightings included: **Zitting Cisticola, White Wagtail, Cetti's Warbler, Corn Bunting** and **Spanish Sparrow**.

After driving a few kilometers further along the motorway we pulled off to visit a little known site on the heathland above Jaraicejo. This is suitable habitat for **Dartford** and **Spectacled Warblers**, both which were seen but it was the **Dartford** that proved to be the most obliging. Other birds seen were: **Southern Grey Shrike, Booted Eagle, Black Vulture** and many **Crested Larks**.

Next we stopped at the Rio Almonte where three generations of bridges can be seen in a steep sided valley. We spent an incredible hour watching some terrific birds, the best of which had to be a **Lesser-spotted**

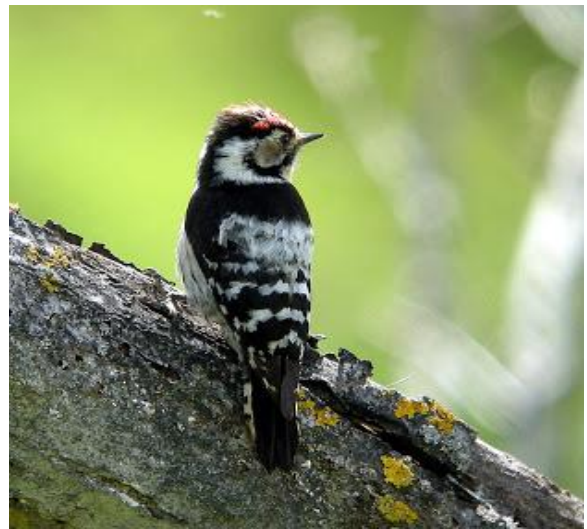
Woodpecker, this male bird appeared on a dead tree out in the open and was so obliging I couldn't believe our luck. The bird had excavated a couple of holes and kept flying back and forth from the nearby woods to the nest sites, incredible. It was calling constantly trying to attract a mate to show her what great nest holes he had made.

At the river we watched from the old bridge where we saw; **Crag Martin, European Bee-eater, Eurasian Hoopoe, Rock Bunting, Spanish Sparrow, Woodchat Shrike, Red-rumped Swallow, Common Stonechat** and a **Common Nightingale** sang from the nearby trees.

We drove a little way upriver and whilst watching a **Common Sandpiper** we found 3 Otters playing in the river! How cool was that? A **Cirl Bunting** was singing from the nearest bushes and gave us great views.

For the last part of the afternoon we drove to Finca Santa Marta which is just south of Trujillo. This superb converted olive mill is now a beautiful guest house, it has many hectares of land with superb tracks from which we saw a good variety of species. After settling into our rooms we took a short walk and found **Azure-winged Magpies, European Serin, Blackcaps, Eurasian Hoopoes** and many common species.

Our evening concluding with drinks on one of the many terraces of this unique accommodation before we got ready for dinner. What a great day! Despite traveling some 300 kilometers we listed 82 species with some excellent sightings.



APRIL 13TH - DAY 2 - EXTREMADURA AND DONANA 8 -.DAY TOUR

BELEN PLAIN - RIO MAGASCAR - SANTA MARTA - MONROY - RIO ALMONTE - EMBALSE
TALAVAN - LLNOS DE CASARES

It was another smashing day with fantastic weather and some superb bird sightings. We went out at 7am in the dark and headed to Belen Plain. Unfortunately there were severe roadwork disruption with a diversion in the village and massive road repairs out on the plains. This only delayed us and did not prevent us having a tremendous time, we arrived just as the sun began to rise.

Once the light had improved we began to find our target species, many **Calandra Larks** were singing alongside **Thekla, Crested** and **Short-toed Larks**. But it was the **Great Bustard** that caused a major reaction in the group, we saw at least four birds displaying, what a strange and unusual sight.

We then located a **Little Bustard** from its call, it was quite distant but showed well. The bird song all around was amazing all the larks were competing with **Eurasian Hoopoes, Corn Buntings, Common Stonechats** and **Spotless Starlings**. A **Tawny Pipit** was a nice find and many **Griffon Vultures, Black Vultures, Black Kites, Red Kites, Common Ravens, Cattle Egrets, White Storks** and **Montagu's Harriers** began to fill the sky.

We eventually got back to Finca Santa Marta for breakfast just before 10am and it wasn't until 11am that we were back out on the road. The rest of the day was spent driving along the country lanes across the dehesa and open grasslands between Trujillo and Casares where we found an abundance of wildlife and some beautiful scenery. Everywhere we looked we could see a blaze of colour with thousands of spring flowers in full bloom. We found a flock of some 22 **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, a couple of **Great Spotted Cuckoos**, and hundreds of raptors.

We ate lunch at the Embalse Talavan where nearby we found the nest of a **Golden Eagle**, two birds were present and we were lucky enough to witness a nest change-over as one adult left whilst seconds later the other one appeared and settled on the nest. In and around the water we found a couple of good species worth mentioning: two **Black Terns** were feeding over the water a very unusual sighting for central Spain and a pair of **Garganey** fed close to the far shoreline.

Our search for **European Roller** ended when we eventually found two of them sitting alongside one of the hundreds of nest boxes strapped to each of the electricity poles. We finally arrived back at the Finca at 6pm, it had been a long day but a very successful one, with 84 species on our day list we were all tired but well satisfied.



An evening walk after dinner produced only **Eurasian Scop's Owl** and **Common Nightingale** both heard not seen, no nightjars called at all despite perfect weather conditions.

APRIL 14TH - DAY 3 - EXTREMADURA AND DONANA 8 - DAY TOUR

MONFRAGUE NATIONAL PARK

It was another excellent day of bright sunshine, but it was quite windy to start with. Temperatures ranged from 10C – 32C but even at 32C it felt much cooler because of the northerly wind. We set off from the finca at 7:30am and drove through Trujillo to the National Park of Monfrague, a couple of stops along the way produced **Eurasian Hoopoe, Common Redstart** (a lovely male) and **Azure-winged Magpies**.

Our first destination was the Castillo de Monfrague which was getting the full force of the wind. Recent renovation and improvement work has increased the enjoyment of the visit, superb viewing platforms are now in place and a lovely sheltered approach walk gives you much better birding opportunities. As always, the views from the castle were stunning, we could see for miles in all directions in this fabulous clear daylight. The sky was littered with vultures, 50 -80 **Griffon Vultures** were up there and just as many were seen perched on the Salto de Gitano (a pinnacle of limestone with hundreds of ledges and caves). The odd **Black Vulture** would venture into view and a single **Egyptian Vulture** circled above us as we were watching a pair of **Peregrine**

Falcons. A few passerines flitted about the castle walls, we saw **Blue Rock Thrushes, Black Redstart, Blue Tit, Great Tit** and lots of **Common Chaffinches.**

Back down on the main road through the park we drove to the base of Salto de Gitano which was much more sheltered and it felt quite warm. Now we were looking up to the pinnacle as we watched the vultures in their hundreds. We found several **Black Storks**, two of which were nest building. We had superb views of a **Winter Wren** singing as it perched on a rock and as we drove deeper into the park we saw lots of hirundines and good numbers of **Alpine Swifts.** Other stops, taken just before lunch, produced **Black-eared Wheatear, Woodlark, Subalpine, Sardinian Warblers** and several parties of **European Bee-eaters.** We ate lunch at picnic tables overlooking another rocky pinnacle with several pairs of **Griffon Vultures** in residence and an equal number of **Black Kites** were milling around often delivering their horse-like whining call. A couple of **Hawfinches** dropped into the tress quite near to our picnic tables and whilst we searched for them we discovered **European Greenfinch, European Serin** and **Eurasian Siskin.**

The afternoon was spent doing much of the same, stopping at interesting miradors that are located throughout the park, in particular we spent some extra time at the Puerto de Tierta. It was there that we found a superb **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, what a great sighting and it was also excellent to see such a large number of Spanish birders watching it too, perhaps there is hope for Spanish conservation after all? The last couple of hours of the afternoon were spent walking through the Cork Oak woods on the northwest side of the park. Despite the high temperature there were still many birds singing and dashing about. We found **Common Cuckoo** (both the male and the female called), **Woodchat Shrike, Short-toed Treecreeper, Eurasian Nuthatch, Great-spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit, Rock Sparrow** and many common species.

At 4pm we decided to call it day and set off back to Finca Santa Marta which took us an hour. We hadn't seen that many species but we got quality birds today rather than quantity.



APRIL 15TH - DAY 4 - EXTREMADURA AND DONANA 8 - DAY TOUR

EXTREMADURA to COTO DONANA WITH STOPS AT EMBALSE SIERRA BRAVA - VEGAS ALTAS RICE FIELDS AND LAGUNA MARISMAS DE LA MADRA EL ROCIO

It was transfer day today so most of the time was spent travelling. We all met at 7:30am for a walk in the superb grounds at Finca Santa Marta, the highlights were a couple of **Hawfinches, Eurasian Hoopoes** at close quarters, **Common Cuckoo, Garden Warbler** and **Blackcaps.**

The whole ambiance of this unique setting is an unforgettable experience and I am already looking forward to my next visit and I am very happy to report that Henri, the owner, is still alive and very well after his health scare 4 years ago.

We left about 10am and drove immediately south passing through Zorita before stopping at Sierra Brava reservoir, we stopped along the way to look at **European Rollers, Common Buzzard, Calandra Lark** and **European Bee-eaters.**

The morning was warm but not so bright because very high cloud shielded the sun somewhat, however there wasn't a whiff of air and the reservoir was as still as a mill pond. We logged a few species but the water level was extremely high and most of the birds were very distant.

In the rice fields near to Madrigalejo we found several new species for trip list, I had a very excited group on my hands when we found a flock of 20+ **Collared Pratincoles**, the birds were hawking insects above the rice fields and were especially pleasing for our American contingent. We made several stops in the area and got good views of **European Bee-eaters**, **Little-ringed Plovers**, **little Stints** (a small flock were flying around), **Cetti's Warbler** and **Common Nightingale**. We spent some time on a bridge overlooking a flooded stream and surprisingly we found a **Purple Swamphen** there, our first for the trip!

Next stop was referred to as "THE PET SHOP RUN" by our English group members as we saw **Common Waxbill**, **Red Avadavat** and **Indian Silverbill**, all escaped cage birds, they are all breeding in good numbers in this area. Nice views of European Tree Frog were also had.

The next leg of the journey was the long drive to El Rocio via Merida and Sevilla, we arrived at 4:30pm. A short stop was made once we reached the Donana area to watch a **Black-winged Kite**, what a little beauty that bird is, so dainty and delicate in flight.

At the Laguna Marismas de la Madra just outside El Rocio we were again disappointed by the lack of birds due to the high water level, however we logged a few goodies. Both the **Red-crested** and the **Common Pochard** were seen along with **Eurasian Spoonbill** (2), **Little Egret** (1) and singles of **Common Redshank**, **Wood Sandpiper**, and **Glossy Ibis**. A large number of **Whiskered Terns** hawked over the water and above them the sky was peppered with raptors which were mainly **Black Kites**.



We called it day at 6pm and we went to check into our hotel in the centre of El Rocio, we did take a short walk at 7pm but apart from some excellent close views of **European Bee-eaters** and **Eurasian Hoopoes** it was generally quiet. A lovely dinner was enjoyed by all as we sat out on the hotel terrace in a lovely warm, summer temperature.

APRIL 16TH - DAY 5 - EXTREMADURA AND DONANA 8 - DAY TOUR

EL ROCIO - MATALASCANAS CLIFFS - ACEBUCHE VISITOR'S CENTRE - LA ROCINA VISITOR'S CENTRE AND LAGUNA MARISMAS DE LA MADRA

Our day started at 7am as we met in the car park of the hotel, it was still dark and the town was shrouded in a thick mist. We set off to the coast in the hope that the mist would have cleared there but when we arrived it had not. We spent an hour idling around until the mist cleared enough for a bit of sea-watching, it was very disappointing as we only saw a few species: **Northern Gannet**, **Yellow-legged** and **Lesser Black Backed Gulls**, **Common** and **Sandwich Terns**.

After breakfast taken back at the hotel we drove to the Acebuche centre and spent 4 hours visiting the hides and strolling along the boardwalks. The mist completely cleared and we had a very warm clear day, from the hides we looked over the lagunas which were full of water but not too many birds were on them. It was the trees and bushes that held the most. We found many **Pied Flycatchers** and **Garden Warblers** and up to 3 **Golden Orioles**. From one of the hides we saw **Reed Warbler**, heard a **Great Reed Warbler** singing and saw a **Melodious Warbler** also in full song.



On the lagunas we watched **Red-crested** and **Common Pochard**, **Eurasian Spoonbills**, **Purple Herons** and lots of **Whiskered Terns**. A nice find was an **Ortolan Bunting**, which posed nicely for our cameras and a couple of **Tree Pipits**. The sky was full of **Black Kites**, **Booted Eagles** and **White Storks**, the bushes and open ground held **Woodchat Shrikes** and **Azure-winged Magpies**, all in all it was a magical morning, dripping with migrants and full of bird song.

La Rocina was much of the same except that it was hotter in the afternoon, much hotter. We spent most of the time in the hides adding a few species to the day list: **Eurasian Tree Sparrows** were common, **European Bee-eaters** and **Eurasian Hoopoes** popped up everywhere, **Reed Warblers** sang all the time and we saw **Purple Swamphens**, **Black-crowned Night Heron** and many more **Whiskered Terns**.

Finally we stopped at the Laguna adjacent to El Rocio, the light was fantastic even at 6pm. No new species had arrived but we counted 5 **Common Redshanks**, 2 **Common Sandpipers** and a host of **Black-winged Stilts**, **Whiskered Terns**, **Greater Flamingos**, 3 **Yellow Wagtails** and lots of ducks.

We ate our evening meal on the hotel terrace in a sombre mood as we had just heard of the bombings in Boston it was especially upsetting for our American group members.

APRIL 17TH - DAY 6 - EXTREMADURA AND DONANA 8 - DAY TOUR

EL ROCIO - LAGUNA PRIMERA DE LOS PALOS (HUELVA) - MARISMAS DE O'DIEL - LAGUNA EL PORTIL - RIO PIEDRAS (EL ROMPIDO) - LAGUNA DE MARISMAS DE LA MADRA



WHAT A FANTASTIC DAY - THIS HAD TO BE MY BEST BIRDING DAY OUT IN SPAIN THIS YEAR (SO FAR) - WE CLOCKED 97 SPECIES AND FOUND SOME TRULY GREAT BIRDS INCLUDING A RARITY FOR SPAIN IN THE SHAPE OF A BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER. WE LISTED 21 SPECIES OF WADER, 6 GULLS AND 6 TERNS PLUS A WRYNECK.

At 7Am we set off from El Rocio towards Huelva, the sky was clear, it was already warm and there wasn't a whiff of air. We drove through some thick patches of mist before arriving at the Laguna de Los Palos near the outskirts of Huelva. The water was like a mirror, perfectly still, everything was visible and although we didn't see many species it was still very enjoyable.

We found **Gadwall**, **Red-crested** and **Common Pochard**, **Whiskered Tern**, **Purple Swamphen** and a couple of **Squacco Herons** flew over.

Next we stopped at the laguna Calatilla at the entrance to the Marismas de O'Diel near the salt pans. It was fairly quiet but we did find a male **Little Bittern** sitting high up in the reed-bed and very close to road.

We then spent an hour scanning the salt pans with great success despite some of the birds being a long way off. Thousands of birds were present with hundreds of **Dunlin**, **Curlew Sandpipers**, **Grey Plover**, **Red Knot** and

Common Greenshanks. We also noted good numbers of **Common Redshank, Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Sanderling** and an **Osprey.**

Next we drove a little deeper into the salt marsh and spent some time watching more waders in a muddy channel and it was there that we found our star bird and a rarity for Spain, the **Broad-billed Sandpiper,** it showed extremely well down to about 50 meters, these are the best shots I could get of this busy little blighter.

After the great excitement of finding this bird the next few hours seemed somewhat underwhelming, however, our enthusiasm for birding didn't wane one iota.

We added some larger waders to the list as we got further into the salt marsh: **Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwit, Pied Avocet** and **Eurasian Oystercatcher** and then we hit a second purple patch further down the road.

We had just been watching **Caspian Tern** and **Collared Pratincoles** in flight when we found a lagoon with lots of species feeding or loafing in it. A good flock of gulls held both **Audouin's** and **Slender-billed Gulls** as well as **Mediterranean, Black-headed, Yellow-legged** and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls.** It was a rare opportunity to see so many species in one place, the light was excellent and they were not too far away.



Tern numbers were quite high too, lots of **Sandwich Terns** were joined by a single **Common Tern,** 25+ **Black Terns** and hundreds of **Little Terns.** Wader counts were pretty good too, with 8 species present!

So in this little lagoon we saw 6 species of gulls, 4 tern species and 8 species of waders, how fantastic is that? it was a rare sight that we were privileged to witness.

We then drove a little further along the causeway to find a place to turn around and as we did so a shout went up from the back of the bus "Pratincole". Sure enough just a few meters from the bus and sitting on the bare earth was about four **Collared Pratincoles.** We watched them for 30 minutes or so and even saw them displaying to one another,

great views.

On the way back out of the marshes we stopped at lagoon Calatilla for a second look and found a **Northern Gannet** sitting there???? How bizarre is that?? The bird was obviously not well and it could not fly off, it also looked as though it was oiled on its underside.



Our journey continued along the coast and our next stop was the lagoon at El Portil, this large 'urban' body of water is usually covered in ducks and it is a great place to find **Ferruginous Duck.** Today, however, the water level was very high and very few birds were present. We did see **Common** and **Red-crested Pochard, Gadwall** and both **Great-crested** and **Little Grebes.** A **Crested Tit** flew over us and a beautiful little **Mediterranean Chameleon** was found in the tamarisk.

We ate lunch on the terrace of a restaurant in El Portil, lovely warm sunshine and good food made it a very enjoyable experience and it was hard to drag the group away from there! We then spent some time searching the

heath at the Rio Piedras in El Rompido in the hope that a late **Bluethroat** was still present but we never saw one. It was now late afternoon and it was very warm so bird movement was at a minimum. We did find many **Sardinian Warblers**, a couple of **Dartford Warblers**, **Northern Wheatear**, **Common Stonechat** and we saw 4 **Montagu's Harriers** in the distance. Along the river there were several **Caspian Terns** and lots of wader species that we had seen earlier.

As we drove off the heath we stopped to look at a warbler and as we did so a **Wryneck** flew up from the ground and landed in a tree not too far away. Splendid! We all got prolonged 'in-the-scope' views of this remarkable creature, we watched it licking ants off the bark of a pine tree, a little gem of a find and well appreciated by all of us.

We drove back to El Rocio and arrived at 6pm, a long day but a very enjoyable one. We spent the last hour looking into the laguna from the old, elevated road. This road is now closed and makes for a perfect bird watching platform. We added a couple of species to our day list but the laguna itself was pretty much devoid of bird life, not what it is usually like. A few **Glossy Ibis** flew in the distance over a flock of feeding **Greater Flamingos**. A single **Eurasian Spoonbill** sat on a small island as did **Common Sandpiper**, **Common Redshank**, a couple of dozen **Black-winged Stilts** and about 50 **Whiskered Terns** fed over the water. The light was superb and the warm sunshine on our backs made it difficult to move away, but we did, it was a lovely ending to a perfect birding day in Southern Spain.

APRIL 18TH - DAY 7 - EXTREMADURA AND DONANA 8 - DAY TOUR

THE NORTHERN MARSHES OF DONANA WITH VISITS TO: CORREDOR DE VERDE - DEHESA ABAJO - THE RICE FIELDS - JOSE VALVERDE CENTRE AND VILLAMONRIQUE PINE WOODS

Another fabulous day with glorious sunshine and warm temperatures, it was very misty at first but it soon burnt off to reveal a clear blue sky.

We set off at 7am from El Rocio and drove in the dark to Villamonrique, one very nice sighting was of a **Tawny Owl** as it flew up from the roadside carrying its prey, this was quickly followed by views of a **Little Owl** sitting on a fence post. Not long after that we turned onto dirt tracks to visit the Corredor de Verde. Sightings were limited to roadside birds because of the mist, even the laguna at Quema was virtually devoid of birds - not a great start to the day. We did see lots of **Corn Buntings**, **Woodchat Shrikes**, **Eurasian Hoopoes**, **Azure-winged Magpies** and we heard many **Common Nightingales** and **Cetti's Warblers**. Hundreds of finches flitted across the track with **European Goldfinches** and **European Serins** numbering in their hundreds.

We stopped on our way to Dehesa de Abajo to look along a feeder water channel and saw a huge colony of **Black Crowned Night Herons** we also found **Marsh Harrier** and many **Black Kites**, **White Storks**, **Grey Herons**. **Cattle & Little Egrets** were also sighted.

Once again there was very little wind, hardly a breeze, so the reservoir at Dehesa de Abajo was like a mill pond, we could see right across to the far side in excellent light. We quickly located **Red-knobbed Coot**, in fact we found 5 of them, we saw a couple of males displaying too. Other species seen on the water were **Common & Red Crested Pochard**, our first **Northern Shovelers** of the trip, likewise **Black-necked Grebe**. **Gadwall**, **Common Coot**, **Moorhen**, **Purple Swamphen**, **Little & Great-crested Grebes** were also seen. The water was a little too deep for waders except for **Black Winged Stilts**, **Eurasian Spoonbills** and a large flock of some 200 **Greater Flamingos**.

Another colony of **Black Crowned Night Herons** was located in the tamarisk and we also found **Great Reed Warbler**. **Zitting Cisticolas** were seen everywhere and a nice find was a male **Orphee Warbler**.

Next we drove to a venta for coffee and toast but just before we got there we stopped to look at a much smaller

laguna at the side of the road. A good choice because we found 5 more **Red-knobbed Coots** and a pair of **Marbled Ducks**, the ducks were very wary of our presence and unfortunately they soon flew off.

Our journey to the Valverde Centre was punctuated with stops both short and long, the heat had increased and now we had to contend with heat-haze. We found half a dozen **Great White Egrets, Purple Heron, Squacco Herons, Sand Martin** and many **Greater Short-toed Larks**.

Near the Valverde visitor's centre the whole area was awash with huge shallow lagoons, the roadside ditches were a blaze of colour with hundreds of flowering plants, the sky was dotted with raptors egrets, ibis, storks, herons, swifts, swallows, martins and our ears were bombarded with the sweet songs of the larks - **I thought I'd died and gone to heaven!**

Our visit to the centre was enhanced with great views of the nesting birds, thousands of **Glossy Ibis** were joined by equal numbers of **Cattle Egrets** and fewer **Little Egrets** and **Night Herons**, the noise was deafening at times. In the pools around the centre's buildings were found **Purple Swamphen, Pied Avocet**, lots of **Black-winged Stilts** and the usual duck species.

The next 2 hours was spent driving along the dirt tracks stopping every few meters to watch the throngs of birds out in the water meadows, it was an extraordinary sight. There were literally thousands of birds out there, **Greater Flamingos** must have numbered over 3000, whilst **Black-winged Stilts** just at the side of the road were estimated at 2000. We also found several new species for our list: **Lesser Short Toed Lark** sat on a post and sang to us, a flock of five **Ruff** were joined by a single summer plumage **Spotted Redshank** and a pair of **Northern Lapwings** flew over the marshes. Once again the sky was full of birds, a flock of **Collared Pratincoles** hawked insects overhead, whilst hoards of **Whiskered Terns, Black-headed Gulls** and a few **Gull Billed Terns** did the same over the marsh. It was truly an amazing experience and a memory to treasure for ever.

On the way back out of the marshes we stopped to watch **Short-toed Eagles** as they sat on pylons and we looked for the **Spanish Imperial Eagle** near a known nest site without success, a flock of feeding **Eurasian Spoonbills** were nice to watch as they dashed through the water sweeping their bills from side to side.



Just before we left the area we made a couple of short stops, the first was at a eucalyptus wood where there must have been over a thousand pairs of **Spanish Sparrows** nesting, what a noise. Whilst watching the sparrows we found 3 **Whinchats**, one was a very nicely marked male, a single **Northern Wheatear** also appeared, many European Bee-eaters were excavating nest holes in a bank of a ditch and a couple of **Woodchat Shrikes** were hunting insects from a fence.

Our last excursion was a walk in a pine wood near Villamonrique, it was hot and quite quiet but we found **Tree Sparrow, Sardinian Warbler, Common Chaffinches**, we heard a **Green Woodpecker** and we flushed 3 **Red-legged Partridges**.

Well that concluded our fabulous visit to the 'true' Donana, we had seen nearly 100 species (95) and we all agreed that we had had one of our most enjoyable days of the trip.

APRIL 19TH - DAY 8 - EXTREMADURA AND DONANA 8- DAY TOUR

EL ROCIO TO MALAGA THEN TO GAUCIN WITH VISITS TO LAGUNA DULCE AT CAMPILLOS AND THE RAPTOR WATCH POINT AT TEBA

Our final day started with a lie-in!! We took breakfast at 9am at the hotel and set off for Malaga at 10am, we made a couple stops along the way for coffee and toilets and we listed over 30 birds during the journey, the most interesting being a couple **Montagu's Harriers** and several **Turtle Doves** perched on roadside wires.

Our lunch stop at the Laguna Dulce just outside of Campillos was excellent. The sun was shining the water level on this seasonal lake was high but so was the temperature and humidity. The lake was covered in birds as usual with many grebes of three species in good numbers. We soon located our target bird the **White-headed Duck**, at least two pairs were present. Then we got a surprise when we found a **Red-knobbed Coot**, (now referred to as **Tomato Head** by the group), but a great find. Many **Gull-billed Terns** and a few **Whiskered Terns** hawked over the lake and the surrounding fields.

We ate our picnic lunch in the picnic area provided at the laguna and then drove off to the bird observatory near Teba. This is usually a good place to see **Bonelli's Eagle** and sure enough we had good views of a pair. We also watched **Red-billed Chough**, **Turtle Dove**, **Short-toed Eagle**, **Griffon Vulture**, **Common Kestrel** and a very high **Eurasian Hobby**.

Our drive into Malaga was uneventful, we dropped Paul and Claire off at their hotel where they were spending a few more days before flying back to the UK. Vern and Trish, my American clients came back to Gaucin with me and are staying a few more days of local birding.

On the way back to Gaucin we stopped to look at our 'local' pair of Bonelli's Eagles, one was seen standing on the nest and then both of them went off for some soaring and displaying. Many Griffon Vultures also appeared and we did see a small flock of Lesser Kestrels near Casares.

Well that concluded the tour of **EXTREMADURA** and **COTO DONANA** , we had a great time with wall to wall sunshine and some fantastic sightings. The flowers were extraordinary this year, a blaze of colour where ever we went and the birding was superb. We saw just below 200 species, a great effort and a record list for this tour with WINGSPAN TOURS! This small group certainly put the work in to make it an unforgettable experience.

LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED DURING THIS TRIP

1.	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
2.	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
3.	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
4.	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
5.	Marbled Duck	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>
6.	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
7.	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
8.	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
9.	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>
10.	White-headed Duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>
11.	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>
12.	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i> (H)

13.	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
14.	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
15.	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
16.	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
17.	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
18.	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
19.	Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
20.	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
21.	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
22.	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
23.	Great Egret	<i>Casmerofius alba</i>
24.	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
25.	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
26.	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
27.	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
28.	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
29.	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
30.	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
31.	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>
32.	Black Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>
33.	Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
34.	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
35.	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
36.	Spanish Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila aldaberti</i>
37.	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
38.	Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennata</i>
39.	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>
40.	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>
41.	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
42.	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
43.	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
44.	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
45.	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
46.	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
47.	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>
48.	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subuteo</i>
49.	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
50.	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
51.	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
52.	Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
53.	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
54.	Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>
55.	Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>

56.	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
57.	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
58.	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
59.	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
60.	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
61.	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
62.	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
63.	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
64.	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
65.	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
66.	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
67.	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
68.	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
69.	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
70.	Broad-billed Sandpiper	<i>Limicola falcinellus</i>
71.	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
72.	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
73.	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
74.	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
75.	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
76.	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
77.	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
78.	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponicus</i>
79.	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
80.	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
81.	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
82.	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
83.	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
84.	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>
85.	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
86.	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
87.	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>
88.	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
89.	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
90.	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
91.	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>
92.	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
93.	Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>
94.	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
95.	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
96.	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>
97.	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
98.	Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>

99.	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
100.	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
101.	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
102.	Great-spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandularis</i>
103.	Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>
104.	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>
105.	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
106.	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>
107.	Eurasian Scops Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>
108.	Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>
109.	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
110.	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>
111.	Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>
112.	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
113.	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
114.	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
115.	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i> (H)
116.	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>
117.	Lesser Sp. Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus minor</i>
118.	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
119.	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
120.	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
121.	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>
122.	Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
123.	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
124.	Lesser Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>
125.	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>
126.	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
127.	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
128.	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
129.	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>
130.	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
131.	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
132.	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
133.	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
134.	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
135.	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>
136.	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
137.	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
138.	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
139.	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
140.	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>
141.	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>

142.	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
143.	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
144.	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
145.	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola salitarius</i>
146.	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
147.	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
148.	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
149.	West Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>
150.	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
151.	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>
152.	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
153.	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>
154.	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
155.	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides (H)</i>
156.	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
157.	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
158.	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
159.	Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>
160.	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
161.	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
162.	Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
163.	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
164.	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>
165.	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
166.	Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>
167.	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
168.	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
169.	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
170.	Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>
171.	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>
172.	Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>
173.	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
174.	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus grandarius</i>
175.	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
176.	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
177.	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
178.	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>
179.	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolis oriolis</i>
180.	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
181.	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
182.	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
183.	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>
184.	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringella coelebs</i>

185.	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
186.	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
187.	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
188.	Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>
189.	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
190.	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>
191.	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>
192.	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>
193.	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>
194.	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>
195.	Monk Parakeet	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>
196.	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
197.	Red Avadavat	<i>Amandava amandava</i>
198.	African Silverbill	<i>Lonchura cantans</i>