

WINGSPAN BIRD TOURS

BIRD-WATCHING HOLIDAY

ANDALUCIA

MAY 23RD – 30TH 2017



TRIP REPORT

PLACES VISITED

Day 1 TRANSFER FROM MALAGA AIRPORT – GAUCIN – STOPPING AT GUADALMAR - SIERRA CRESTELLINA
Day 2 MARCHENILLA TRACK – RIO HOZGARGANTE – SAN ENRIQUE WOODS – LAGUNA DE TORREGUADIARO – SOTO GRANDE - SAN ROQUE STORKS
Day 3 GAUCIN SWEET CHESTNUT WOODS – ENCINAS BORRACHAS TRACK – SIERRA DE LAS NIEVES NATURAL PARQUE
Day 4 PLAYA LOS LANCES – LA JANDA – VEJER DE LA FRONTERA – BARBATE MARSHES -
Day 5 RIO GENAL – LLANOS DE LIBAR – CUEVA DE GATO – RIO GUADALEVIN – KM19 – ENCINAS BORRACHAS
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Day 8 DEPARTURE DAY – TRANSFER TO MALAGA AIRPORT VIA RONDA .

DAY 1 – TUESDAY 23RD MAY 2017

TRANSFER FROM MALAGA AIRPORT TO GAUCIN - STOPPING AT GUADALMAR – ESTEPONA REFUGE TIP - CASARES - SIERRA CRESTELLINA

WEATHER: BROKEN SUNSHINE AT THE COAST - CLEAR SUNSHINE LATER; TOP TEMP 27C

Today I collected Lynn, Mat, Steve and Mary from Malaga Airport, after various flight arrivals we were all together by 12:30pm and on our way to Guadalmar. We had a slow but enjoyable start to this, week-long birding tour, our first 'in-the-scope' bird was a European Bee-eater, wow! Several were flying around us as we emerged from the bus at a piece of waste-land not far from the airport. Dozens of Monk Parakeets dashed to and fro all around us too.

We never saw the expected Turtle Dove nor, in fact, much else. Jackdaw, Jay, House Martin, Barn Swallow, Greenfinch, Linnet, Yellow-legged Gull and Collared Dove was our sum-total, although we did notch up Red-rumped Swallow as we left.



Sierra Crestellina behind a typical bank of roadside wild-flowers

We made two small stops before reaching Sierra Crestellina, the first was at Estepona refuge centre where dozens of Griffon Vultures were circling in the valley, we also logged a single White Stork, Booted Eagle and 50+ Yellow-legged Gulls. Our second short stop was at the information centre at Casares. It was really windy there, however, we did see more Vultures and another Booted Eagle.



Gaucin

At Sierra Crestellina we spent an hour searching the high peaks and ridges for Bonelli's Eagle which failed to show. We added Common Stonechat, Corn Bunting, Crested Lark and Common Kestrel to the list and plenty more Griffon Vultures.



My group of 'spanners' for the week looking out over the Genal Valley
with Gaucin at the back of them

We stopped on the bridge over the Rio Genal to watch Red-rumped Swallows and we notched up a Grey Wagtail at the same time. At the Mirador just before Gaucin we watched a Short-toed Eagle and logged a couple of nice butterflies, Cleopatra and Scarce Swallowtail.

That was in fact our last birding of the day. We arrived at our home at 5pm. it had been a long day for some of the group, Dawn dished up a superb chicken Tajine for dinner which went down very well with a glass of Rioja. Everyone went off to bed by 9pm.

DAY 2 – WEDNESDAY 24TH MAY 2017

MARCHENILLA TRACK - RIO HOZGARGANTE - SAN ENRIQUE WOODS - LAGUNA DE TORREGUADIARO - BEACH NEAR SOTO GRANDE - SAN ROQUE STORKS NESTS

WEATHER: Overcast for most of the day, then bright sunshine, windy at first. Top temp 37C

Mary arrived yesterday with a bit of a cold which developed overnight into an infection so she and hubby Steve took the day off and went to the doctors. Mat, Lynn and I went out birding all day and what a great day we had too. Our sightings list wasn't massive, but the quality of the species coupled with the quality of the views we had, more than compensated for the lack of quantity.

We left the village at 8:30am and drove straight down to San Pablo where we turned off towards San Martin, after about 5km we stopped to watch Woodchat Shrike, Melodious Warbler, Corn Bunting and Common Stonechat all were sitting along on one stretch of telephone wire! We made our first stop a little further on which was at a pig farm. As in previous visits the area was alive with European Bee-eaters, on fences, in the trees, flying around, it was magical in the morning light. Several Turtle Doves flitted about and there were countless House Sparrows in the area.



an excellent sighting - an obliging Short-toed Eagle

Our first scheduled stop was nearby at the river Guadiaro, we parked on a bridge and walked down to the river it took all of two minutes to locate our target species the Western Olivaceous Warbler. There were two or three dashing about and over the next half an hour we got very good views of them. Also on show was Blackcap, Greenfinch, Serin and we watched Red-rumped Swallows collecting mud for nesting material. Cetti's Warbler and Common Nightingale sang out loud all the time we were there.



Tawny Pipit

From there we drove onto the Marchenilla track and spent the next two hours enjoying some terrific birding and despite the dull conditions a lot of birds were out singing, the Melodious Warbler seemed to be everywhere. Sardinian Warbler, Common Nightingale, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Linnet, Crested Lark and a Short-toed Eagle all showed extremely well.



Melodious Warbler

On the telephone wires and dashing over the fields we saw a couple of dozen European Bee-eaters, also on the wires was a collection of Corn Buntings, Common Stonechats and a Tawny Pipit. We then found a Common Nightingale sitting out in the open as it sang to us.



Common Nightingale

The star bird turned up a little later, it was just after we had seen the Tawny Pipit, sitting on the fence behind us was a Rufous Bush Robin, what a cracking bird and a top species for the list.



Rufous Bush Robin - a superb find

For the next hour we enjoyed several more sightings of Tawny Pipit and quite a lot of Griffon Vultures drifted over, a couple of Spanish Sparrows were a nice bonus find and a very fat-looking Serin looked as though it had just flown off the page of a Lars Jonsson field guide!

We drove the complete length of the track and crossed a main road to a track leading down to the Rio Hozgargante. A dense ribbon of eucalyptus woodland skirted the river, we walked a bout a kilometer along the track besides the eucalyptus woodland.



Perhaps a Lars Jonsson model? - European Serin

We heard Golden Oriole call several times without seeing one, likewise with the drumming Great Spotted Woodpecker, no sighting. What we did see well was a Bonelli's Warbler and a Firecrest. We also had great views of both Turtle Dove and Common Nightingale feeding on the track ahead of us.

We ate our picnic lunch near a ford where a Cetti's Warbler kept calling but remained 'invisible'. From there we drove to San Enrique where a quick coffee stop was followed by a Booted Eagle sighting. The Woods at San Enrique were quite productive, first we had good views of a Tree Sparrow near the Sewer Works and then we found our main target species- the WRYNECK.



Tree Sparrow

We made a quick stop at the Laguna de Torreguadiaro, it was the first time I have ever been without seeing a single bird on the water!! Incredible, all we saw were Pond Terrapins. We did find Spotted Flycatcher but not much else.



White Storks at San Roque

From the end of the breakwater at Soto Grande marina we scoped a number of sea-birds. Along with dozens of Yellow-legged Gulls we also saw Cory's and Balearic Shearwaters, Northern Gannet and a couple of Sandwich Terns.

A little further along the coast we stopped at a site where WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTS breed, after a long search we saw a single bird (the only swift we saw there), we had great but short views of it, a fantastic bird for the list.



Gibraltar as seen from the coast near Soto Grande

Apart from stopping in San Roque to look at the nesting White Storks we called it a day, with several goodies in the bag we were quite pleased with ourselves.

DAY 3 – THURSDAY 25TH MAY 2017

GAUCIN SWEET CHESTNUT WOODS - ENCINAS BORRACHAS TRACK - SIERRAS DE LAS NIEVES NATURAL PARQUE

WEATHER: Sunshine all day, light breeze. Top temp 29C

We had a mixed bag of results today, plenty of new birds with some sought-after species but not many were seen well and most of them were distant 'in-the-scope' views.

We started off in the Sweet Chestnut woods a couple of kilometers along the road to Ronda from Gaucin. It was very still and very quiet! After ten minutes or so we saw our first bird the lovely and lively Firecrest. We walked down the hillside and still not many species showed up, a Eurasian Nuthatch showed briefly, we saw Blue Tit and a couple of Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Back at the entrance gate we finally caught up with Crested Tit, so our day's birding didn't get off to a great start.

We stopped by the roadside just after the village of Atajate where we added Black Wheatear, Linnet and not much else to our day list. Then at the Encinas Borrachas track we spent 3 hours walking across the open valley, onto the heathland and into the cork woods, boy was it hard work. Nothing sat out on the top of bushes for us unless it was half-a-mile away! A couple of Red-billed Chough drifted along the mountain ridge just as we got out of the car and Griffon Vultures sailed over us for most of the time that we were there.



Corn Bunting, my favourite bird, was most obliging and seemed to be everywhere.

We saw Goldfinches, Linnets and Crested Larks before we found one of our target species, the Iberian Shrike. Then we found very distant Black-eared Wheatears, more Black Wheatears, Rock Sparrows, Rock Bunting and a Common Kestrel. On the heathland we spent ages trying to track down a Spectacled Warbler which gave only fleeting views. We saw Common Stonechat, Woodchat Shrike, Red-legged Partridge and a small herd of some 14 Spanish Ibex before we entered the cork woodland.



The beginning of the Encinas Borrachas track

We saw our three target warblers in the woods, first the Orphean Warbler showed reasonably well, then the Subalpine Warbler gave much better viewing opportunities whilst the sighting of the Bonelli's Warbler was short but sweet. On the way back we caught up with a distant Blue Rock Thrush and we had much better views of Spectacled Warbler. We dipped on Dartford Warbler, Common Rock Thrush and Woodlark.

Our picnic lunch was taken back at the entrance gate where we saw more butterflies than birds, Long-tailed Blue, Black-veined White, Small Skipper, Sage Skipper, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Clouded Yellow and Cleopatra were some of the species seen.



Black-veined White Butterfly, mating below



After a quick coffee stop we drove onto the Sierras de las Nieves natural park where we spent the last two hours of our birding day. Again it was hard work, we concentrated on two areas, the first was the small section of heathland. Dartford Warbler showed really well there, at last! Then we found Black Wheatear, Rock Bunting and two new species, Cirl Bunting and Woodlark. A Short-toed Eagle was the best of the raptors.

The second area we visited was the pine woods a little higher up into the reserve. There we found Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper and after some tracking down we saw Iberian Chiffchaff and Coal Tit, phew that was hard work too.



Cardinal Fritillary

On the way home we stopped to look at a flock of 10 Red-billed Chough and a Booted Eagle, we were home before six. Dinner was at 7:30pm, I think we were all tired by the time we finished eating.

DAY 4 – FRIDAY 26TH MAY 2017

TARIFA, PLAYA LOS LANCES - LA JANDA - VEJER DE LA FRONTERA - BARBATE MARSHES

WEATHER: Despite a forecast of unbroken sunshine it was overcast all day! This kept the temperature down to a reasonable max of 25C

After an early breakfast we were on the road by 7:15am and arrived at Tarifa by 8:30am we drove from clear conditions to an overcast sky. The birds at Playa los Lances were few and far between, as we walked to the beach hide we notched up Corn Bunting, Common Stonechat, Common Swift and Crested Lark.

On the beach we managed to see the grand total of 5 waders! Two Kentish Plovers, two Ringed Plovers and a single Bar-tailed Godwit. A gull roost of a few dozen Yellow-legged Gulls held a single Lesser Black-backed Gull. Out at sea it was a different story, hundreds of birds were out there, we saw many juvenile Northern Gannets and a huge raft of Cory's Shearwaters some of which got up to fly around.



On the grass meadows behind the beach we found a few Greater Short-toed Larks and more Crested Larks, as we walked back towards the bus we added a Tawny Pipit to the list.

La Janda was also hard work, the rice paddy fields were just being flooded but otherwise it was a barren looking landscape. We found a couple of distant Collared Pratincoles, lots of White Storks, Little and Cattle Egrets, Corn Buntings and Common Stonechats. As we drove along the central track we heard both Cetti's and Reed Warblers but failed to see them.



Glossy Ibis and Little Egret on the newly flooded rice fields

Toward the bridge at the turning to Benalup we found several Glossy Ibis feeding with Black-winged Stilts, Little Egrets and a few Grey Herons before we turned off the main track towards Benalup. Along this track the Cattle Egret nesting colony was alive with activity, it is now huge with easily over 1000 pairs of Cattle Egrets and a dozen or so of Glossy Ibis.



Cattle Egret looking its very best at this time of the year

We drove up to the 'smelly farm' stopping to watch Turtle Doves on the track and Common Kestrel, Black Kite and Booted Eagle in the sky. We ate our picnic lunch near the farm whilst watching up to 6 Black Kites, several Jackdaws and two introduced species, Red-legged Partridge and Common Pheasant.

As we left La Janda we added Zitting Cisticola and Reed Warbler to the list before heading for Vejer de la Frontera. We made one quick stop at a sight I know for EURASIAN EAGLE OWL. One bird was present but obscured by leaves so we only saw two-thirds of it, but good enough for a 'tick'. We heard our first Hoopoe but did not see it, we also added Common Buzzard, Wood Pigeon and we saw loads more Jackdaws.



Juvenile Yellow Wagtail

At Vejer we were very surprised to find the BALD IBIS colony practically deserted, all the nest were empty, the youngsters had fledged! A single adult bird circled high above us and then it dropped down to the cliff face where two juvenile birds were waiting to be fed away from the nests.

Barbate Marshes were also quiet apart from dozens and dozens of Collared Pratincoles, good numbers of Little Terns and Kentish Plovers and a few Black-winged Stilts. We worked hard searching for our few target species, Stone Curlews simply were not there, whilst Yellow Wagtail (Iberiae), Greater Short-toed Lark and Calandra Lark were only seen in very small numbers.



Collared Pratincole

More waders appeared in the middle-distance, Grey Plover and Dunlin were noted and also Eurasian Spoonbill (1), a very distance Audouin's Gull sat with dozens of Yellow-legged Gulls.



Calandra Lark

We called it a day after watching a juvenile Yellow Wagtail, a Calandra Lark singing from a fence-post and a remarkable number of Collared Pratincoles. Considering 5 years ago there were no Pratincoles breeding at this site the numbers today are quite staggering!

After a brief stop at the Mirador de Estrecho, where the visibility was quite bad, we arrived home at 6pm in good time for dinner.

DAY 5 – SATURDAY 27TH MAY 2017

RIO GENAL – LLANOS DE LIBAR – CUEVA DE GATO – RIO GUADALEVIN – KM19 – ENCINAS BORRACHAS

WEATHER: Sunshine all day, light winds. Max Temp 29C

For the first time on this tour we took a pre-breakfast trip at first light, our target bird was the GOLDEN ORIOLE and the nearest place to see them was the Rio Genal. We arrived there just after sunrise about 6:45, as we left the car we heard Blackcap, then Cetti's Warbler and Common Nightingale, we never actually saw a bird for about 10 minutes.

After a short walk we arrived at a clump of White Poplar trees, the favourite tree-species for the Oriole. We found Greenfinch, European Robin, Long-tailed Tit, Goldfinch and Little Ringed Plover before we started hearing the Orioles. Over the next 30 minutes we had a few brief flight views, a couple of scope views and plenty of calling, but nothing spectacular.

On the way back we found Spotted Flycatcher, Woodchat Shrike, Jay and a Grey Wagtail fly-over. Breakfast was over by 8:30 and we were on way towards Ronda soon after. We passed through Cortes and then Montejaque before stopping in the Llanos de Libar which is one of my favourite places, both scenically and bird-wise.

In glorious sunshine we walked up through the valley listing many of the local species. Black Redstart, Griffon Vulture, Red-billed Chough, Goldfinch, Linnet and Blue Rock Thrush were soon on the list. Over the next two hours we searched in vain for Bonelli's Eagle and Common Rock Thrush, but we did see Black Wheatear, Rock Sparrow and Rock Bunting on the cliffs and Alpine Swift, Crag Martin, Common Kestrel, Booted and Short-toed Eagle in the sky.



the main track up to the Llanos de Libar

We ate our picnic lunch near the top of the valley where we saw Melodious Warbler and we heard Orphean Warbler but there was still no sign of two target birds. Finally, we had to leave and after a short drive we arrived at Cueva de Gato just outside of Benaolan. Alpine Swifts dashed about whilst Crag Martin sailed by in a more sedate flight-style.



Red-billed Chough

A walk along the river produced some excellent sightings of Cetti's Warbler, Grey Wagtails and European Greenfinch. But we dipped on Dipper sightings. Further along the valley towards Ronda we parked next to the Rio Guadalevin and took a walk along the river. It was a beautiful spot in lovely sunshine, a smashing place to be. We had excellent views of Western Olivaceous Warbler, a Common Kingfisher flashed by and after a search for Golden Oriole, which were calling constantly,

we saw one in flight. A Spotted Flycatcher was nice to see and plenty of dragonflies and butterflies were on show.



Red-veined Darter

A quick dash out to the Ronda - Ardales road found us at kilometer 19 at 4pm. The significance of this place is that a Bonelli's Eagle nest is visible from the roadside exactly at Kilometer 19. We scoped the nest which had two well-developed chicks on it, one of which was much bigger than the other. The smaller chick seemed to cower away from its older sibling, which was probably dominating the food supply.

We made a final stop at Encinas Borrachas as we passed it on the way home, we scanned the mountain tops from the road producing Black Wheatear, Black-eared Wheatear, Rock Sparrow and a couple of groups of Spanish Ibex but not the hoped for Common Rock Thrush.



Spanish Ibex

We arrived home at 6pm in time to watch the FA Cup Final and enjoy a lovely dinner cooked by my delightful wife, Dawn.

DAY 6 – SUNDAY 28TH MAY 2017

LAGUNA MEDINA - LAGUNA JUNCOSA - LAGUNAS DE SANLUCAR DE BARRAMEDA - SALINAS DE BONANZA - LAGUNA TARELO - ALGAIDA PINE WOODS - CHIPIONA MARINA

WEATHER: Overcast at first, broken sunshine later. Top temp. 25C

This was our pre-planned 'long-day' we aimed to visit Bonanza Salt Pans which are over 180kms from Gaucin, so we had an early breakfast and set off at 7:15am. Our day list started as we drove down the Guadiaro Valley towards the coast, with sightings of Eurasian Jay, Common Stonechat, Corn Bunting and Common Buzzard. From Jimena onwards we started to see White Storks with almost fully grown chicks standing on the nests, at Castellar we passed a Lesser Kestrel colony and we also saw several Griffon Vultures above the hills.

As we approached laguna Medina a jogger flushed a Stone Curlew, nice one, we then spent a lovely hour at the laguna watching about 20 species. Despite the water being fairly devoid of birds we added both Black-necked and Great Crested Grebes, Gadwall, Red-crested Pochard and Common Shelduck to the trip list. Other species seen included: Zitting Cisticola, Common Nightingale, Cetti's Warbler, Red-legged Partridge, Reed Warbler and plenty of common finches.



The track leading to the hide at Laguna Medina

The much smaller Laguna Juncosa was packed with birds, most of which were Eurasian Coots but also present were; White-headed Duck, Common & Red-crested Pochard, Mallard, Gadwall, Moorhen, Cattle & Little Egret, Glossy Ibis, Greater Flamingo and both Little & Great Crested Grebe.

In the fields and over the laguna we saw both Marsh & Montagu's Harriers, Collared Pratincole, Common Swifts, Barn Swallows and a few Yellow-legged Gulls.



Greater Flamingos with Common Pochard at Laguna Juncosa

From Juncosa we drove through Sanlucar towards Bonanza, turning off the main road just north of Sanlucar. We visited a couple of small pools found by the roadside where a lot of species were found. Our prize sighting was of Little Bittern, at least three birds were present and one male flew across the road in front of us from one pool to another. Plenty of White-headed Ducks were on show, in one pool 4 males were vying for the attention of one poor female who had to keep diving to escape the unwanted harassment! At a third pool we saw another 3 Little Bitterns and added Great Reed Warbler to the list, plenty of other species were in and around these pools.



a male White-headed Duck in an aggressive posture!



I don't know what's going on here?
A male Common Pochard with a female Red-crested Pochard!

The big disappointment of the day has to be the Salt Pans at Bonanza! They were full of water and not much else, of the dozen pans that are visible from the main central track two had a small number of Greater Flamingos in them with a few Pied Avocets thrown in! At the small pumping station where we ate our lunch we fared a little better. More Greater Flamingos could be seen with more Pied Avocets we also saw, Black-winged Stilt, Little and Common Terns but absolutely no other waders! A single Slender-billed Gull sat on a bank not far from several Yellow-legged Gulls and we found a Red Kite circling overhead. Yellow Wagtails (*Iberiae*) and Sardinian Warblers were seen in an adjacent salt marsh.

Laguna Tarelo also had a high level of water and a low level of birds, no sandy islands were visible and a total of six ducks were sighted, 2 Red-crested & 3 Common Pochard and a single Mallard.



It was the large island that was teeming with life, it held a mixed nesting colony of mainly Eurasian Spoonbills, Little & Cattle Egrets with a few pairs of Squacco Herons, Night Herons and Glossy Ibis, it was alive with activity and real-estate space was at a premium hence many squabbles were taking place. We watched the antics of the colony from both sides of the island, first along the track that runs around the laguna and later from inside Algaida Pine Woods.

the colony at Laguna Tarelo - most of the fledglings are on the ground



From our vantage point at the back of Laguna Tarelo we could see a few more salt pans, a couple were brimming with Greater Flamingos and we saw two more Slender-billed Gulls that flew a lot closer than our previous sighting, but still the wader species were missing!

We left the area at 3pm and drove to Chipiona beach front to look for the rare breeding species, LITTLE SWIFT. On arrival we walked to the mariner first where on mooring platforms we saw 70+ Ruddy Turnstones, a single Whiskered Tern and about 50 roosting Yellow-legged Gulls.

The swift colony was deserted it looked as though most nests were abandoned after the young had fledged, we saw House Martins, Barn Swallows and House Sparrows visiting some of the nests. Then two LITTLE SWIFTS flew in to one of the nest, they didn't stay long and off they went. This same pair came back every 10 minutes or so, smashing, we had four of the five species of swift on our list with just Pallid Swift left to see. The beach was packed with Sunday sun-worshippers and a brief scan of the sea produced nothing at all.



one of the LITTLE SWIFT'S nest

It was now 4:30pm and we had 180 kilometers to drive home so we set off smartish. We stopped for a coffee break after 60 kilometers and completed the journey by 6:45pm. Dinner was taken an hour later, our bird log revealed that we had seen 75 species today, normally it would be in the nineties and sometimes over 100! This low count reflects on the lack of waders at the pans and the high levels of water in all of the lagunas. We are now at a count 141 for the trip and with one day to go we may struggle to see 150 species in total!

DAY 7 – MONDAY 29TH MAY 2017

SIERRA CRESTELLINA – CASARES - MANILVA BEACH – VAQUEROS GOLF COURSE – SOTO GRANDE NATURAL PARAJE – SAN ENRIQUE WOODS - EASTEPONA RUBBISH TIP - SIERRA CRESTELLINA

WEATHER: broken sunshine all day, light westerly wind. Top temp 26C

Our last full day had arrived, we called it our 'mopping-up' day but in actual fact it was a dipping day. We had 6 or 7 glaring spaces in our checklist and we hoped to rectify that somewhat. Egyptian Vulture was our first target. In recent years one pair has bred locally at Sierra Crestellina and I have had first hand reports of recent sightings, so that is where we set off for, straight after breakfast.



Back-lit by the rising sun at Crestellina - Griffon Vulture

With the sun rising behind the mountain the light wasn't perfect but with scopes we managed to scan the peaks and pinnacles. Dozens of Griffon Vultures sat on the high peaks, sometimes drifting up on the rising warm air. We saw Booted Eagle and Blue Rock Thrush before moving round to the centre of Casares where a mirador gave great views of the village and the surrounding mountains. We watched a dozen or so Pallid Swifts, the first ones for the trip and one of our target species, it was great looking down on them below the horizon. This was our fifth species of swift for the trip with COMMON, ALPINE, LITTLE & WHITE-RUMPED already in the bag! We also saw Lesser Kestrel and lots of very close Griffon Vultures.



Casares from the mirador

From Casares we drove straight down to the coast and parked near the beach. We walked to a place where we had extensive views of Casares Beach area and along the coast to Sabinillas. We

had a very surprising sighting in the shape of an OSPREY. I never expected that! It was quite distant at first but it flew much closer and even caught a fish in the bay. We had hoped for more gull or tern species but all we saw was a lot of Yellow-legged Gulls, a few Northern Gannets and a pod of very distant unidentified Dolphins.

Next, we spent an hour or so in a fruitless search for Eurasian Hoopoe on Vaqueros Golf Course, it is amazing that we haven't seen a single Hoopoe all week. We had nice views of Spotted Flycatcher, lots of finches, Stonechats, Serins and some dodgy Swans but no Hoopoe.



A recently fledged Barn Swallow

Following our dip on the Hoopoe we dipped on Western Swamphen at Soto Grande natural paraje! The Marsh was bird less other than a single Mallard. We had excellent views of a Common Nightingale and a few Cory's Shearwaters flew by but the marsh was barren.

We ate our picnic lunch in San Enrique Woods hoping for a sighting of Wryneck as Steve and Mary hadn't seen it on day 2. We dipped on that one too, we did see Spotted Flycatcher, Tree Sparrow and on the river we saw Little Ringed Plover.



Tree Sparrows

For the last hour we visited the valley near Estepona where a huge rubbish tip attracted hundreds of birds, we watched the valley for a good hour in the hope of seeing an Egyptian Vulture. Huge numbers of birds rose up from the tip in waves. At one stage we saw at least 50 Black Kites, 200+ Yellow-legged Gulls, innumerable Griffon Vultures, at least 5 White Storks and 3 Booted Eagles. But no Egyptian Vultures.



Unusual cloud formation at Estepona tip.

We spent our last birding of the day at the foot of Sierra Crestellina watching a steady procession of Griffon Vultures returning to roost. Before calling it a day we noted a couple of Short-toed Eagles and not much else. The arduous and dusty drive back up to Gaucin on the half-completed road just about finished us off, we arrived in good time to get ready for dinner.

DAY 8 – TUESDAY 30TH MAY 2017

TRANSFER FROM GAUCIN TO MALAGA AIRPORT VIA RONDA

After our final breakfast we said goodbye to Dawn and to Gaucin and set off for Malaga. We dropped Lynn off at Ronda as she was staying an extra few days whilst Steve, Mary, Matt and Mark got off at the airport. The trip was over, we had seen just over 140 species including some stunning and rare birds, it could have been higher but sometimes it just goes that way!

SPECIES RECORDED BETWEEN 23RD – 30TH MAY 2017

SPECIES			DATES									
			23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
1	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>						X				
2	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		X		X		X	X			
3	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>						X				
4	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>						X				
5	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>						X				
6	White-headed Duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>						X				
7	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			X	X		X				
8	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>				X						
9	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>						X				
10	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		X				X				
11	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>						X				
12	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		X		X			X			
13	Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris d. borealis</i>		X		X			X			
14	Balearic Shearwater	<i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>		X								
15	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				X						
16	Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>						X				
17	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>						X				
18	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>				X		X				
19	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>				X		X				
20	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>				X						
21	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	X	X		X		X	X			
22	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>				X		X				
23	Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>				X						
24	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>				X		X				
25	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>						X				
26	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
27	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>							X			
28	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circus gallicus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
29	Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennata</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
30	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>					X					
31	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>				X		X	X			
32	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>						X				
33	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		X	X	X	X	X		X		
34	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>						X				
35	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>						X				
36	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				X						

37	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
38	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>		X		X		X	X				
39	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				X		X					
40	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>						X					
41	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>						X					
42	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>				X		X					
43	Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>						X					
44	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>				X		X					
45	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>						X					
46	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		X			X	X	X				
47	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>				X							
48	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>				X							
49	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>				X							
50	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				X							
51	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponicus</i>				X							
52	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	X	X		X		X	X				
53	L Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>				X							
54	Audouin's Gull	<i>Ichthyophaga audouinii</i>				X							
55	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>						X					
56	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>				X		X					
57	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundi</i>						X					
58	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>		X									
59	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>						X					
60	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	X	X		X	X	X	X				
61	Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		X	X	X	X	X	X				
62	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
63	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		X		X	H	X	X				
64	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>				X							
65	Eurasian Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>				X							
66	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
67	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>							X				
68	Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>					X						
69	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>						X					
70	White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>		X									
71	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				H							
72	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	X	X									
73	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>					X						
74	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		H	X				H				
75	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>		X									
76	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
77	Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>			X								
78	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rachydactyla</i>				X							
79	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>				X							
80	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>					X						
81	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
82	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	X	X		X	X	X					
83	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
84	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>		X		X							
85	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		X	X	X	X		X	X			
86	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>				X		X					
87	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	X		X		X						

SPECIES			DATES										
			23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30			
88	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rbecula</i>		X			X						
89	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>		X		H	X	X	X				
90	Rufous Bush Robin	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>		X									
91	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>			X		X						
92	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>			X		X						
93	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>			X		X						
94	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
95	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			X								
96	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			
97	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola salitarius</i>			X		X		X				
98	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		X		H	X	H	X				
99	West Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>			X		H						
100	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>		X		X	X	X	X				
101	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>			X								
102	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>			X								
103	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>			X								
104	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>				X		X					
105	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H	H		H	X	X	H				
106	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				X		X					
107	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acro. arundinaceus</i>						X					
108	Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>		X		X	X	X					
109	Western Olivaceous War.	<i>Hippolais opaca</i>		X			X	X					
110	Western Bonelli’s Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>		X	X								
111	Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>			X								
112	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>		X	X								
113	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		X			H						
114	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula striata</i>		X			X		X				
115	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		X			X		X				
116	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		X	X		X		X				
117	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>			X								
118	Crested Tit	<i>Laphophanes cristatus</i>			X								
119	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		X			X						
120	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>			X								
121	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>		X	X		X		X				
122	Iberian Shrike	<i>Lanius meridonalis</i>			X			X					
123	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus grandarius</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
124	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>						X					
125	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	X			X		X					
126	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>			X		X						
127	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	X			X	X	X					
128	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	X	X		X	X	X	X	X			
129	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolis oriolis</i>		H			X						
130	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
131	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		X					X				
132	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>		X									
133	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>			X		X						
134	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringella coelebs</i>		X	X		X	X	X				
135	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X					
136	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			

[illegible]