

# Wingspan Bird Tours

## Trip Report

### Coto Donaña and Tarifa March 26<sup>th</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008

#### Summary.

#### Day 1. Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup>.March

A late arrival from Gatwick for the group prevented birding on day-one, the drive from Seville to Hinojos was uneventful, we arrived at our hotel about eleven pm. and went straight to bed.

#### Day 2. Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March.

The sky was a clear azure blue and the light was very good as we emerged from the hotel at 8 am. We took breakfast at a café/bar just around the corner, coffee and large rounds of toast were consumed with great enthusiasm.

After breakfast we set off for the ‘cowboy style’ town of El Rocio with its sandy roads and hitch rails for horses outside every dwelling. We started our list with Spotless Starling, Black Kite, Common Buzzard, Corn Bunting, Woodchat Shrike, Red-rumped Swallow, Serin, Common Raven, Azure-winged and Common Magpies and Goldfinch all seen en-route.

Arriving at El Roicio we took in the truly bizarre setting, but what a wonderful place, cars look strangely out of context there. Adjacent to the town is the Laguna Madre de las Marismas a large shallow lagoon that is fed by the arroyo del la Rocina. What a fabulous place, birds were everywhere the whole area teemed with life. Spoonbills, Greater Flamingos, Glossy Ibis, and Egrets fed or loafed alongside many species of ducks and waders. The most notable of these species were Little and Cattle Egrets, Garganey, Shoveler, Pintail, Gadwall and Teal. The water level was just right for waders and many hundreds of Black-tailed Godwits were feeding voraciously in the muddy shallows. We also saw some Ruff, Common Snipe and Black-winged Stilts.

Large flocks of Collared Pratincoles alighted onto the grassy islands in the middle of the pool. Along the reed fringed lakeside we found Chiffchaff, a single Reed Warbler and at our second stop near the church we found Squacco Heron, a couple of Gull-billed Terns and a Donana speciality, Red-knobbed Coot. Overhead many birds of prey drifted across the water, mostly Black Kites but the occasional Marsh Harrier was noted, hundreds of Martins and Swallows fed on the abundant insects that were evident in the sky above us.

We dragged ourselves away from this magical place and made the short trip to La Rocina and the Palacio de Acebron, stopping first on the heathland between the visitor’s centre and the Palacio. Stonechats, Woodchat Shrikes and Crested Larks were abundant on the heathland and a Cuckoo could be heard in the distance. From the car park at the palacio we set off into the ‘ancient’ riparian woodland of cork oak, pine, salix and wild olive. The walk was truly lovely but the birds were few and far between. We heard Cuckoo and Nightingale, Cetti’s Warbler and Blackcap, we managed glimpses of few other species but not much else. A Spanish Festoon butterfly delighted the group and several interesting flowers kept the keen botanists happy. From one view point we picked out Night Heron and Little Egret as they roosted in the salix adjacent to the pool.

The Palacio de Acebron is a large white building built in the 1960’s and set in large elaborate gardens, a rather posh hunting lodge that is now a museum and coffee shop. We avoided the building and the crowds of visitors and headed for the boardwalk and lookout platform at the lakeside. As we returned from the viewing platform a bird high up in the trees was noted and on quick inspection was identified as a Wryneck, a great find. We then drove back into El Rocio and had a nice lunch at a roadside restaurant.

Our next stop was Las Guyanas, an area of open scrub leading to sandy tracks through a young pine plantation, but first we had to drive passed the fruit farms with their plastic tunnels and throngs of fruit pickers. Along the way we had great views of a Black-eared Wheatear, Little and Cattle Egrets and many White Storks as they attended their nests high up on every pylon. The heath held very little, we had brief views of Dartford Warbler, but on the other hand the sky teemed with life, raptors

were everywhere, we noted our first Red Kites and Booted Eagles and saw more Black Kites, Common Buzzards and Ravens.

Next we visited the centre at Acebche, the car park was full of cars and coaches, a bad omen as it meant that there were many noisy Spanish visitors. Before entering the reserve we threw bread for the hordes of Magpies in the picnic area, our cameras were clicking away as great views were had of those Azure-winged (and tailed) gems.

We visited one or two of the hides and walked into the stone pine woodland noting firstly, Purple Heron and Purple Swamphen in the reeds and Sardinian Warbler in the pines. We concluded our day with a second visit to the laguna at El Rocio. Viewing from the west, with the reddening sun behind us, the setting was truly magical. We added Yellow Wagtail, and Meadow Pipit, we had superb close-up sightings of the Godwits and Stilts and another (or the same) Red-knobbed Coot appeared quite close. We concluded our day with the pleasant drive back to Hinojos tired and weary but fulfilled.

### **Day 3 Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March**

Our second full day began with a pre breakfast walk – in fact we arrived a little too early and had to wait for the sun to rise! The beautiful morning began as the a red sun rose behind the pine woods of Hinojos – we could hear a distant Common Cuckoo then a Green Woodpecker and a Tawny Owl. It was not long before other species began to make noises including one of the loudest, the Cettis Warbler. Our second stop near a stream produced a good find, Siskin feeding on alder cat in a small flock – just like at home, many Azure-winged Magpies were seen and heard as we returned to town for breakfast.

We ventured along the Corredor de Verde in search of the Black-winged Kite which appeared briefly as we stood on a bridge watching Red-rumped Swallows. We searched the area where the Kite disappeared and discovered its nest, one adult sat and another perched close by in attendance, what a fantastic bird really is. Several Zitting Cisticola zipped by, Woodchat Shrikes seemed abundant and we heard a Willow Warbler singing.

Further along the Corredor we stopped at an open laguna where several White Storks were attending a small colony of nest, the laguna had many dead trees protruding from the water and they provided nesting sites for the delightful Tree Sparrow.

Our next stop was the Dehesa de Pilas where a large square wood of mature eucalyptus trees hosted a huge colony of Spanish sparrows, many of which were feeding close by along a fence line. In an adjacent field there were at least 25 Lesser Kestrels hawking insect both airborne and grounded. Several Bee-eaters dotted a telegraph wire and above many swifts flew around in great swarms.

A short distance away lies the nature reserve of Dehesa de Abajo which consists of Dehesa, open meadows and a very large reservoir on which we noted many species including our first Black necked Grebes. Many Black Kites gave us superb views in nearby fields and above the water.

Just across the road a track lead of into the rice paddies alongside which lay a wide ditch filled with reeds and sedge, we drove along the track and parked near an area of open water and mud. We ate our picnic lunch listening to the reeling of a Savi's Warbler which gave us all a good show, a number of Wood Sandpipers fed along the poolside and a little later we flushed a small crane from the sedge, but we did not have long enough views to identify it. A Black Stork flew over in the distance and both Reed Warbler and Zitting Cisticola were seen and heard frequently.

After lunch we set off on the long, 'off-road', journey to the Jose Valverde visitor's centre in the middle of the Northern Marshes, we had good views of Short-toed Eagle, Short-toed Lark and a Great Egret along the way.

In and around the centre we added Pied Avocets, more Black necked Grebes to our list and we saw another four, Great Egrets, at the Lucio el Lobo seasonal pool we saw Redshank, Greenshank and many Spotted Redshank. Large flocks of Common-ringed and Kentish Plovers covered the muddy pool edges and the shallow waters held at least 1,000 Common Coot.

Our drive back to Hinojos was entertaining only because of the state of the track, we had to negotiate several large pot-holes which were very deep, we also noted another Great Egret – a species becoming more and more frequent in the marshes and must surely become another breeding bird in the very near future.

### **Day 4 Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March**

Niebla Castle – Lesser Kestrel, Pallid Swift

Marismas de O'Diel 21 waders, whiskered, sandwich, Caspian tern, harriers, kites, booted, wheatear, audouin's and Slender-billed Gulls, great

Laguna El Portil – ducks, waders,

Lunch – Rompido – marismas de Rio Piedras

Hinojos woods – Woodlark, Crsted Tit, Taw ny Owl

### **Day 5 - Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March**

Palmones marshes and estuary, Osprey, Terns: Caspian, Whiakereda nd Sandwich

Waders Sanderling, Common Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwit, Egrets Black Kites 53

Punta Canero – Migrations weatch 500+ Black Kites, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, Buzzard, Raven, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine, Storks 200+, Bee-eaters, Sardinian, Curlew

Alcornacales \_ Embalse Osprey, Bea-eaters, Buzzard, Booted

Los Lances Beach Audouin's Gull, Caspian, Common, Sandwich Terns, merlin, Sanderling 100+

Tarifa sea watch Cory's and Balearic Shearwaters, Gannet

Balcony Sskin, Cetti's

### **Day 6 - Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April**

Tawny Owl during the early morning

Bolonia – Sierra de Plata

Blue Rock Thrush, Crag Martin, **Little Swift**, Griffon Vulture, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Sardinian Warbler, Booted Eagle. Waders in the river mouth, Green Sandpiper, Sanderling, Redshank, Dunlin, Trunstone,

La Janda

Calandra Lark, Reed Warbler, White Stork our first Egyptian Vulture, Swamphen, Meadow Pipiy, mnay Bee-eaters, Montagu's Harrier, over 100 Collared Pratincoles, \zitter's, Pheasant (nest with 13 eggs , 4 pheasants and 9 Red-legged partridge- very odd), lots Mallard, Garnney, Purple Heron, very hot little shelter and little breeze.

Barbate

Distant gull flock – with trens, Sandwich and Caspian. Audoiuns Gull, more waders

New parque natural – again many waders, especially Kentish, lots of singing and displaying Short-toed Larks

Woodchats, gulls, Avocets, Redshanks, Black-winged Stilts, Sanderling, Dunlin, Little-ringed and Greater Ringed Plover

La Janda

Second brief visit – Short-toed Eagle, Calandra Lark

El Estrecho

10 minute watch – Osprey, Booted Eagles

Balcony – siskin, Sparrowhawk



The Black-shouldered Kite proved to be very popular as bird of the week, but so did the obliging Little Bittern and Subalpine Warbler. The leader's favourite choice was not a particular species but of a particular moment as we overlooked the laguna at Rocío late on Monday afternoon. There was a wonderful array of colourful species in fantastic light as the sun shone for a brief moment, then all of a sudden, in the blink of an eye, it was gone and we were pelted with hail stones – that's bird-watching.

SPECIES		<i>Scientific Name</i>	No of birding days out of 6 recorded	Highest daily count C = Common H = Heard only
1	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	2	20+
2	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	3	20
3	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	6	9
4	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	1	2
5	Gannet	<i>Sula bassana</i>	2	8
6	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	6	7
7	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	6	C
8	Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	2	2
9	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	6	C
10	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	2	2
11	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	2	2
12	Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	4	100+
13	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	1	1
14	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	1	1
15	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	6	C
16	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	3	50+
17	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	6	30+
18	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	6	100+
19	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	1	1
20	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	6	C
21	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	5	20+
22	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	4	10
23	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	4	C

24	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	2	4
25	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	6	C
26	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	5	20+
27	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	5	20+
28	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	2	3
29	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	3	4
30	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans migrans; M.f.lineatus</i>	6	C
31	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	2	2
32	Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennatus</i>	3	5
33	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1	1
34	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	6	7
35	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	5	6
36	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	2	2
37	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	4	2
38	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	6	3
39	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	1	1
40	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	1	H
41	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	2	2
42	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	3	5
43	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	6	10
44	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	6	C
45	Red-knobbed or Crested Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>	2	2
46	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyryla porphyryla</i>	3	10+
47	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	1	H
48	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	3	100+
49	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	6	C
50	Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	3	2
51	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	2	30+
52	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	1	2
53	European Golden-Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	1	LEADER ONLY
54	Grey or Black-bellied Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	1	10+
55	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	2	5
56	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	4	10+
57	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	1	4
58	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	1	5
59	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	2	10+
60	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	2	100+
61	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	1	2
62	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	2	3
63	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	1	10+
64	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	6	200+
65	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	6	6
66	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	6	C
67	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	1	7
68	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	5	10+
69	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	2	3
70	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	1	1
71	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	1	3
72	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	1	10+
73	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	1	2
74	Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	2	2
75	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	4	C

76	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	3	50+
77	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	1	2
78	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	5	50+
79	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>	1	34
80	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	1	1
81	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	4	20+
82	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	2	20+
83	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	1	1
84	Rock Dove /Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia feral</i>	6	C
85	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	6	C
86	Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	2	5
87	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	4	1,3H
88	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	1	H
89	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	1	3
90	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	2	1
91	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	5	C
92	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	1	10+
93	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	3	12
94	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	6	10
95	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	1	1
96	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla [cinerea]</i>	1	20+
97	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	6	C
98	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	1	3
99	Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	1	1
100	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	3	1
101	Eurasian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis sharpei</i>	2	H
102	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	5	10 +
103	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	6	C
104	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	4	4
105	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	6	C
106	(Spanish)Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>	4	10+
107	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	4	10+
108	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	5	6
109	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	1	3
110	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	5	1
111	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	2	1, H
112	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	1	H
113	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	6	C
114	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	3	5
115	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	3	2
116	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	4	3
117	Common or Eurasian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	6	C
118	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	4	4
119	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	6	C
120	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1	1
121	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	2	10+
122	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	4	4
123	Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	4	C
124	Crested Tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>	1	4
125	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	1	1
126	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1	H
127	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	5	4

128	Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyana</i>	6	50+
129	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	6	C
130	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	1	1
131	Common or Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	6	8
132	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	2	4
133	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	1	20 +
134	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	6	C
135	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis [domesticus]</i>	1	5
136	Eurasian Tree-Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	1	10+
137	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	6	C
138	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	5	C
139	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	6	C
140	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	6	C
141	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	6	C
142	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	1	1
143	Siskin	<i>Carduelis pinus</i>	1	3
144	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	4	20+
145	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	6	C
146	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	1	1