

# ***WINGSPAN BIRD TOURS***



## ***TRIP REPORT***

***COTO DOÑANA & EXTREMADURA***

***APRIL 10<sup>TH</sup> – 18<sup>TH</sup> 2014***

**Leader: Bob Buckler**

**Participants:** Paul Edlin, Mike Sheridan, Duncan & Elizabeth Rothwell, Nigel Bleaken and Peter Last

## DAY 1

MALAGA AIRPORT - LAGUNA DULCE - LAGUNA FUENTE DE PIEDRA - EL ROCIO

The tour started at Malaga Airport at 10am when I met Nigel in the arrivals hall and then an hour later I met Peter before we drove off to meet the other 4 participants at a nearby hotel. Paul, Mike, Liz and Duncan had arrived the night before and had spent the morning birding at a local nature reserve, they had seen 26 species, the best of which were White-headed Duck, Turtle Dove and 8 Purple Herons.

After a quick shop for picnic supplies we set off for Coto Donana, it was 2pm by the time we arrived at our first birding stop - the Laguna Dulce. As usual it was brimming with birds with over 1000 Common Coot, they were joined by Black-necked Grebes, Common and Red-crested Pochard, a single Tufted Duck, Whiskered and Gull-billed Terns, Montagu's and Marsh Harriers, Little-ringed and Kentish Plover and lots of common ducks and Grebes.



Laguna Fuente de Piedra was covered with Greater Flamingos over 10,000 breed there, it was spectacular sight. We drove around to the visitor's centre where we birded the small, shallow lagoons around the boardwalk. This area was full of waders, ducks and coots. We listed a good selection of waders including: Ruff, Common Snipe, Wood, Common and Green Sandpipers, Dunlin, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Avocet and Black-winged Stilt. Most of the ducks were Northern Shoveler and Gadwall and we also found Yellow Wagtail, Crested Lark, Serin, Linnets, Common Kestrel and Cetti's Warbler.

We continued our journey passing through Sevilla and on to Coto Doñana, we added White Stork, Black Kite, Common Buzzard, European Bee-eater, Woodchat

Shrike and Common Raven to our list along the way.

It was 6pm by the time we reached El Rocio, we stopped along the west side of the Laguna Madre de Marismas with a setting-sun behind us. There were hundreds of birds on the water, we added Glossy Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill and Northern Pintail to the trip list before driving round to our hotel.

At 8pm we ate a lovely meal out on the terrace washed down with a glass of wine, how nice it was to sit outside in the evening.

## DAY 2

EL ROCIO (LAGUNA MADRE DE LA MARISMAS) - LA ROCINA - ACEBUCHE - EL ROCIO

After all the travelling yesterday we had a quiet day today with very short drives to all our venues. We all met at 7:30am for the short walk to the Laguna at El Rocio, it was just getting light when saw our first birds. A Purple Swamphen was first on the list then as the light improved we could make out the Greater Flamingos, Eurasian Spoonbills, Shoveler and hundreds of Common Coot on the Laguna.

We walked to the new visitor's centre, which was closed of course, so we watched the huge egret and heron roost from the side of the building. Night Herons were coming in to roost whilst Cattle and Little Egrets and Squacco Herons were leaving for the day. Purple Herons flew over and then hundreds of Glossy Ibis left the roost, it was quite spectacular in the morning light seeing all those birds in the air.

We saw a couple of Reed Warblers and heard a Great Reed Warbler on the way back, we also saw a Cetti's Warbler and several Black Kites, it was quite a lovely morning with lots of birds to see.

Breakfast was finished by 9am and we were on the road to La Rocina which is literally a stone's throw from the town. Our visit to the wooded area and the hides which overlook the Lagunas was quite rewarding. We had great views of Purple Heron, Eurasian Spoonbills, Whiskered Tern, Purple Swamphen and lots of coots and Grebes. In the pine woods we saw Long-tailed Tit, Tree Sparrow, Serin, Sardinian Warbler and every bush seemed to have a singing Common Nightingale inside it.

Along the boardwalk we heard Blackcap, Iberian Chiffchaff and Savi's Warbler which we eventually found and had great 'scope views of the latter. Lots of Woodchat Shrikes, Hoopoes, Bee-eaters, Booted Eagles and Black Kites made up most of the rest of our sightings. A good number of Night Herons sat in a roost in the bushes along with Little and Cattle Egrets.

We then drove across the heath to the Palacio de Acebron, on the heath we found Southern (Iberian) Grey Shrike, Common Stonechats and a few Chaffinches. In the deciduous woodland around the Palacio we found our first Short-toed Treecreeper, a Great Spotted Woodpecker and not much else.

Acebuche visitor's centre was our next venue, we ate our picnic lunch near the car park where we watched Azure-winged Magpies at close quarters. It was now very hot so we walked into the pine woods to find shelter, we spent a couple of hours without much reward but eventually we found Subalpine Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Blackcap and Tree Sparrow all in the same bush!! A Dartford Warbler sighting was an excellent find and lots of Bee-eater dashed about.



From Acebuche we made our second visit to the Madre de la Marismas where we enjoyed the afternoon sunlight watching a great selection of birds, our only new species for the list was a Common Kingfisher.

We ate our dinner out on the terrace again and enjoyed a nice glass of rioja with a lovely meal.

### **DAY 3**

#### **COREDOR DE VERDE - DEHESA ABAJO - NORTHERN MARSHES - JOSE VALVERDE CENTRE**

This was a classic day out in the 'wilds' of Donana, we started with a misty morning followed by a clear period then it clouded over for the rest of the day. Our temperature gauge read 17C but it felt more like 10C!

We drove off in the dark and after stopping to look for Owls (without success) we arrived in the Coredor de Verde at 8:30am. Our target bird was the Black-winged Kite, so we searched an open woodland where it seemed that every bird in the area was singing at the same time. We saw many finches, as well as Corn Bunting, Common Nightingale, Woodchat Shrike, Bee-eater, Zitting Cisticola and Common Buzzard. We

also heard Eurasian Hoopoe, Common Cuckoo and Cetti's Warbler. It took a while but we finally found the Kite, it was distant but then we relocated it much closer, in fact, two birds showed really well in the 'scope.

We took a quick look at the Laguna Quema where not a lot was happening, only Common Coot and Mallard appeared on the water. We ate our picnic breakfast whilst we were there and a couple of the group had fantastic views of a Common Nightingale on a fence post singing, how cool was that.

Next we continued our journey along the Coredor de Verde and onto the rice fields near the large reservoir called Dehesa de Abajo. Many species were on the lake and a good number of Night Herons were roosting along its edge. A Purple Heron was nice to see too. Ducks seen included: Common and Red-crested Pochard, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler as well as Spoonbills, Flamingos, egrets and herons. Our walk along the shore adjacent to the road culminated in sightings of Great Reed Warbler and no less than 5 Red-knobbed Coots. Three of these sported 'white-collars' indicating that they were of a captive breeding stock but two were not.

Driving further along we passed a number of smaller pools then we stopped for coffee and afterwards we drove into the 'proper' Coto Doñana. Miles of open scrub and some cultivated fields were criss-crossed by deep channels holding varying amounts of water and birds. We stopped to watch a party of Glossy Ibis and got great views of a Short-toed Lark having a dust bath.

A little later we watched Common Kestrel and two Short-toed Eagles as they flew around a line of pylons.

Yellow Wagtails perched along the fences with many Crested Larks and Corn Bunting. A lovely Montagu's Harrier showed well for us. More Short-toed Larks appeared before we stopped to watch a colony of Lesser Kestrels, twenty birds kept us enthralled as they fed over a field and often perched on nearby wires.



As we neared the Jose Valverde centre we decided to pull over by a large Laguna to eat lunch, whilst doing so we watched a very obliging Great Reed Warbler and lots of birds in the water. Our next journey took us through some open pasture dotted with pools and reeds it was there that we found Tawny Pipit, lots of Yellow Wagtails a flock of Collared Pratincoles and our one and only Lesser Short-toed Lark. This bird posed wonderfully for our cameras (except for mine).

Our visit to the Valverde centre was brief but enjoyable, the huge nesting site of herons, ibis and egrets was in full swing, a great spectacle.

Lastly we stopped on the way out of the marshes to scan the skies for Spanish Imperial Eagle but without success, however, we did see many birds and added Common Redstart to our list.

We then drove back to El Rocio arriving at 6pm giving us enough time to get ready for another lovely dinner, the sun was now shining and we warmed up as we drank a nice cool beer.

#### **DAY 4**

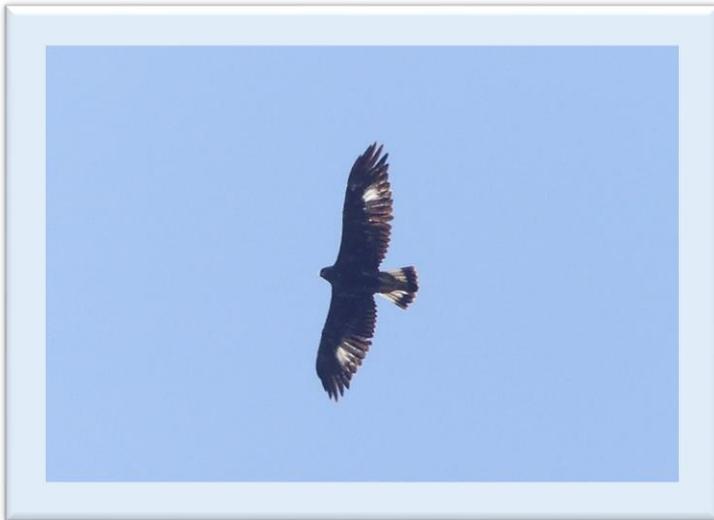
LAGUNAS DE LOS PALOS (HUELVA) - MARISMAS DE O'DIEL - LAGUNA DE PORTIL - EL ROMPIDO MARISMAS AND RIO PIEDRAS.

We went out of the Donana area today and ventured along the Atlantic coast towards Portugal, the day started with an overcast sky but by 10am this had burnt off to give us a cloud free blue sky all day. Top temperature was 27C.

Before breakfast we strolled round to the Laguna and watched the herons and egrets leave the roost, the numbers of Cattle Egrets was simply amazing to see.

After breakfast we first drove to the coast at Matalascanas where we spent a short while looking out to sea hoping to see some migrant bird passage. The sea was like a mill pond not ideal conditions for passing migrants, however, we did find an Audouin's Gull on the beach with other gulls and our one and only Northern Gannet flew by. A couple of Sandwich Terns just about wrapped up our sightings list.

It took about 30 minutes to drive to the edge of Huelva where we stopped to view the large Laguna at Los Palos which is situated adjacent to a huge oil refinery and gas-works, nice background! Yet again we have a lovely little Laguna that used to be covered with ducks, coots and Moorhen, but very few birds are now present because large carp can be seen splashing about on the water. The carp eat everything and leave nothing for the birds. We did see a few Pochard of both species, Gadwall, Shoveler, also a few Common Coot, Moorhen and a single Purple Swamphen. Nigel found a Purple Heron and we saw a single Squacco Heron flying around.



The salt pans at the entrance to the Marismas de O'Diel nature reserve are always interesting and usually hold a good number of birds. Hundreds of Greater Flamingos looked great in the morning light, they were joined by small pockets of waders feeding in the first few 'pans'. We quickly found Common Redshank, Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint, a little more searching produced Dunlin and Sanderling, most of these small waders were showing their colourful summer plumage.

We spent some time at the small Laguna near the entrance to the Calatilla restaurant looking for Little Bittern in the reed-beds, after a short while one bird began giving out its 'barking' call and

before long we were watching a superb male at close quarters.

A second stop near the pans produced more waders, we found Grey Plover, Ringed Plover and Greenshank as well as Common Shelduck, Eurasian Spoonbill, Little Egret, Grey Heron and Black-winged Stilt.

Our journey led us through open marsh-land where we watched several Montagu's Harriers, a couple of males looked stunning in the superb light. After about 20km the land mass began to narrow as we followed a badly repaired road towards the lighthouse, we had the Atlantic to our right and the Rio O'Diel to our left and not much in between. Several areas had been widened and reclaimed and this where conservation areas had been set aside for breeding birds, both the Little Tern and the Collared Pratincole benefited from these measures. They were both present in good numbers especially the Pratincole where a count of 50 was conservative.

We ate lunch whilst scanning a huge flock of roosting Dunlin, Redshank, Sanderling, Ringed and Kentish Plovers, a group of gulls held over 20 Audouin's Gulls as well as Lesser Black-backed and Yellow-legged. A flock of some 30+ Whimbrel landed amid the roosting flock whilst we were watching them, very nice.

On our way off the O'Diel marshes we had excellent views of Montagu's Harrier and we found our only Great Egret of the day.

A short drive found us at the superb Laguna De Portil, it was covered in birds, a few hundred Common Coots were joined by large numbers of Common and Red-crested Pochard, Mallard, Gadwall, Shoveler and a single Common Teal. Good numbers of Black-necked, Great-crested and Little Grebes were also present. Along the shoreline we saw Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Kentish and Little-ringed Plovers.

Other wildlife interest around the Laguna included Mediterranean Chameleon and Red-faced Terrapins, the latter an unwanted introduced species from the Americas whilst the former is always a delight to find.

It was now getting quite warm, 27C registered on the bus's gauge so we stopped for an ice-cream near our last venue of the day the Marismas del Rompido next to the Rio Piedras. As we drove down the bumpy track passed the well-kept golf course we noted Hoopoe, Azure-winged Magpie, Crested Lark, Spotless Starling and Sardinian Warbler.

Our walk on the heath didn't produce much, a few more Montagu's Harriers, Dartford Warbler, Common Whitethroat and some of the group found a skulking Common Nightingale.

It was 4pm so we decided to head back to El Rocio to have a look at the Laguna there, it took an hour and 30 minutes to get back. From the old disused road on the west side of the Laguna we scanned the shallow water, the light was simply superb. A flock of some 50+ Collared Pratincoles were new additions, as were a few Wood Sandpipers, a single Black-tailed Godwit, but the number of Pintail had fallen to just two.

We ate our final dinner on the terrace of the hotel, it was lovely and warm until dark, we were all in high spirits as we discussed our forthcoming journey to Extremadura for the exciting second phase of our holiday.

#### **DAY 5 – TRANSFER - DOÑANA TO EXTREMADURA**

**VEGAS ALTAS – RIO PIZZAROSA – MADRIGALEJO RICE FIELDS – LLANOS DE ZORITA – FINCA SANTA MARTA**

Not a great deal of birding news for today as we spent 4 hours in the bus travelling from Coto Doñana to Extremadura via Sevilla and Merida.

We left after breakfast at 9am the roads were very quiet and passing through Sevilla was accomplished with no delay, we drove for another hour on the road to Merida before stopping for a coffee break.

Our first birding stop was well into Extremadura about 50km south of our final destination, Finca Santa Marta. We sat on a disused bridge near Vegas Altas and ate our picnic lunch in bright sunshine, in fact it was very warm, 27C.



A number of Common Nightingales were singing along with Cetti's Warbler and a couple of Great Reed Warblers, all of which showed very well. A Stork's nest was attended by two adults and Grey Heron, Common Moorhen, Mallard and to our great delight two Little Bitterns were seen along the river in the reed-beds.

Black Kites, Booted Eagles, Griffon Vultures and lots of White Storks were seen in the sky above and more birds were seen in the bushes and reeds as we finished our picnic. A few Common Waxbill dashed about and we found two Pied Flycatchers, our first for the trip.

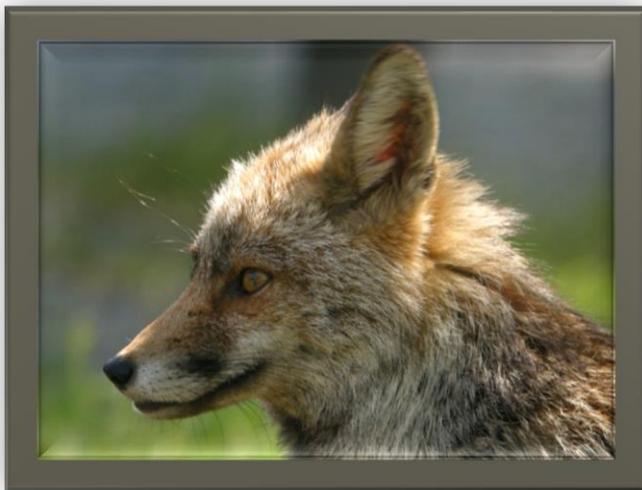
We set off again passing through a flat landscape with many rice fields which were just about being flooded having a new crop recently planted. We found a Short-toed Eagle on a post as well as Common Buzzard and our first European Roller, this bird was one of our main target species and it sat nicely for us but not in good light.

Next we stopped along another section of rice fields near the town of Madrigalejo, this time reptiles and amphibians were our major finds. First a Ladder Snake was discovered and then a small number of the tiny green Common Tree Frogs were found in the grass along a ditch. Back to birding we found a couple of Red Avadavats – these birds as with the Waxbill are cage-escapee's and now have thriving populations in Spain.

We drove to our next stop at another 'feeder' river just a couple of kilometers further north, our search for the Penduline Tit continued and it continued to frustrate us as we 'dipped' again. Nevertheless we had a nice time watching more Waxbills, Cetti's Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, another Pied Flycatcher (this bird is a passing migrant on its way up to the mountains) and we found our first European Pond Terrapin (you can probably work out that we have a group member with a passion for amphibians and reptiles).

Our final stop was just south of Zorita, we pulled over at the side of the road to scan the open grassland for Bustards. We quickly located a number of species, a Common Cuckoo sat on a fence and two Calandra Larks showed well. We also found Common Raven, Spotless Starling, Crested Lark and some Griffon

Vultures sitting on the ground. Then just before we got back into the bus we saw a Little Bustard on the skyline sitting on the crest of a hill. It was a male and it could clearly be seen to be displaying, by extending its neck feathers and then throwing its head back as it issued its 'raspberry-blowing' call. We couldn't hear the call as the bird was too far away but the bird showed its lovely colourful neck pattern in good light.



We finally arrived at Finca Santa Marta at 5pm. This was to be our home for the next three days. The Finca and all its out buildings has been a regular host for WINGSPAN Tours over the last

10-12 years. The grounds are vast and consist of olive groves, fruit orchards, woodland and there are many tracks give access to most of it.

After settling into our rooms some of the group took a short walk. Along the approach track, we found Azure-winged Magpies, Eurasian Hoopoe, Woodchat Shrikes, Common Nightingales, Serin and several White Storks sat on their nest either on the buildings or in the dead trees. House Sparrows were everywhere as were Corn Bunting, Spotless Starlings, Greenfinches and Goldfinches.

We ate our dinner in the lovely converted 'press room' where the original olive presses are still in situ next to the dining tables, the whole Finca has a lovely tranquil ambiance with delightful scents of jasmine and orange blossom, how nice to relax in such splendid surroundings with a glass of wine produced at the Bodega next door!

## **DAY 6**

RIO MAGASCA - SANTA MARTA MAGASCA PLAINS – RIO ALMONTE – TORRE EL RUBIO TRACK

We had a superb day out exploring the area west of Trujillo and visiting the river valleys and open plains around Santa Marta and those near to Casares. The weather was wonderful, clear blue sky with fluffy white clouds drifting by and a temperature in the lower 20's.

We set out at 9am after our buffet breakfast, we made a quick stop at the old bull ring on the edge of Trujillo to watch the Lesser Kestrels that nest in the roof, along the way we saw a Black-eared Wheatear which was new for our trip list.

After passing through Trujillo we took the old road towards Casares which is now virtually devoid of traffic since the opening of the new motorway. An old bridge over the Rio Magasca is a favourite site of mine so we stopped for a short while. Both Cetti's Warbler and Common Nightingale were singing from the scrub and soon we had a nice list of species. Eurasian Chiffchaff, Garden Warbler and Bonelli's Warbler were feeding in the trees whilst Common Kingfisher and Common Sandpiper were seen along the river. Other species listed were Woodchat and Southern Grey Shrikes, Spanish Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Thekla Lark and lots of Black Kites.

Our next stop was for me the best of the day, we had superb light as we looked across an expanse of grassland with the sun behind us. We saw a male Little Bustard on the horizon and hundreds of Larks were singing or chasing one another across the fields. Calendar Larks showed very well then we heard the distinctive call of the Pintail Sandgrouse and to our great surprise a small flock of both Black-bellied and Pintail Sandgrouse flew directly over us. During the next 30 minutes we saw many more of both species and a couple of Pintail Sandgrouse landed fairly close to us.

To add to the excitement we found our first Great Bustard in the field right behind us. The bird list grew with the addition of another sought-after species which was found as we drove off, a Great Spotted Cuckoo was sitting on the fence but flew off when we stopped to admire it.



Our next stop wasn't as productive but we saw a few more species with great views of Black Vulture, Montagu's Harrier and a few more Thekla Larks, we also saw Eurasian Hoopoe and European Bee-eater flying over.

We drove through the village of Santa Marta de Magasca making a brief stop at the river where we saw Little Ringed Plover, White Wagtail, Serin and a few more Spanish Sparrows. As we approached the plains near Casares we stopped to watch European Rollers and Lesser Kestrel both of which had chosen next boxes to make their nests in, a couple of male Montagu's Harriers gave superb views as they performed very close to the bus.

Over the next hour we drove towards Casares across the plains and open cultivated fields viewing from the bus and making occasional stops. We never saw a great deal of species but added Whinchat, Red Kite and Northern Wheatear to our list.

At a large bridge over the river Almonte we stopped to eat our picnic lunch, the bridge attracted many birds mostly swifts and hirundines. The swifts were Alpine Swift and it was fantastic to see them at eye-level, they were joined by Crag Martins, House Martins, Barn and Red-rumped Swallows it was truly a magnificent sight.

We searched the rocky slopes of the river for Black Wheatear and Blue Rock Thrush but found neither but we did find a superbly marked Golden Eagle as it drifted high over the river valley.

After lunch we departed and headed for the embalse Talavan, which is a man-made reservoir, it usually holds quite a few birds. Today it was fairly quiet but we found Gadwall, Great Crested Grebe, Mallard and we also had superb views of perched Black Kites and a small flock Red-rumped Swallows.

Many White Storks had built their nests on platforms dotted around the water and hundreds of Spanish Sparrows had built their nests in the Stork's nests. As we left the area we stopped to look at a known nest site of the Golden Eagle, incredibly the nest sits only a few meters off the ground built in the fork of a large tree trunk. The adult bird could clearly be seen sitting on the nest, how extraordinary is that?

For our last hour of birding we visiting another Eagle's nest near the town of Torrejon el Rubio, we turned off the main road and drove a few kilometres along a dirt track. The habitat was superb with open oak woodland and large cleared areas. We saw a few Northern Wheatears, Mistle Thrush, Azure-winged Magpies and we found our first Woodlark. The Eagle's nest was unattended so we left it in peace, on the way back to the bus we found Long-tailed Tit and Subalpine Warbler.

We called it a day at that and drove back to our Finca passing through Trujillo along the way. It had been a superb day out, we had seen all the plain's birds we had hoped for. Tomorrow we are heading for Monfrague National Park where raptors dominate the skyline.

## DAY 7



### ALL DAY AT MONFRAGÜE NACIONAL PARQUE

Monfrague Nacional Parque is such a terrific venue and deserves much more than a day's visit, there is so much to see and discover there. We took an early breakfast and set off at 7:45am just as it was getting light. The weather was absolutely perfect, a clear sky and not a whiff of air. Our first stop was at the Castillo de Monfrague which sits on a limestone pinnacle just inside the park's boundary. We parked just below the castle and scanned the steep mountainside where Griffon Vultures sat on their nests and Crag Martins dashed in and out of the caves.

A Black Redstart sang from the electricity cables and a Rock Bunting was seen in the lower bushes, then a pair of Red-billed Chough called as they rounded the mountain peaks. We drove to the top car park and walked along the new trail to the castle, along the way we found more Black Redstarts, a Blue Rock Thrush and we saw the Choughs perched on a radio mast. From the top, the light was perfect for scoping the Peña Falcon pinnacles, over 100 Griffon Vultures were perched there, we even found our only Egyptian Vulture of the trip.

Next we drove round to the base of the Peña Falcon and spent a good hour watching the Griffon Vultures take to the air, as they circled we found a pair of Peregrine Falcons that had joined them along with a Short-toed Eagle and a few Black Vultures. From another view point nearby we watched Crag Martins from close quarters and a pair of Black Storks were building their nest on a rocky island in the river below us. We also saw a pair of Grey Herons sitting on top of a tree, one of the pair had most unusual colouring I have ever seen on a Grey Heron, it had a red bill and red legs and large black shoulder patches, it looked like a hybrid species crossed with a White Stork, in 40 years of birding I have never seen one as unusual as this!

So we continued around the park until we reached Villareal a small village in the centre of the park, there we stopped for a coffee and a sandwich before continuing deeper into the forested valleys near the dam of the river Tietar.

At Portilla de Tietar we spent an hour watching the huge limestone cliff face where many Griffon Vultures sat and a family of Eagle Owls were also on show. However the best of all was a sighting of a Spanish Imperial Eagle sitting on a huge nest in the canopy of the trees on the opposite bank of the river, what a treat. We had just missed the sighting of an Otter but we did find Blue Rock Thrush and another Rock Bunting.

The next two hours were spent walking through the open oak forest a little further along the river, it was delightful although the temperature was now in the upper twenties. We added a few species to the trip list and several to the day list. Eurasian Nuthatch, Common Cuckoo, European Bee-eater, Eurasian Hoopoe, Woodlark, Rock Sparrow, Spanish Sparrow, Mistle Thrush, Short-toed Tree-creeper and many common species.

We also saw a soaring Spanish Imperial Eagle as well as Booted Eagle, Black Vulture and many Griffon Vultures. Next we drove to a small courtyard hotel and ate a cold ice-cream before setting off for home.

Our journey home was relatively quiet but we did stop a couple of times without finding any new species.

Back at the Finca we ate our dinner outside in the courtyard, it was a lovely meal and a superb atmosphere at the table with plenty of laughter.

#### **DAY 8**

TRANSFER FROM EXTREMADURA TO MALAGA WITH BIRDING STOPS AT; BELEN PLAIN – LLANOS DE LIBAR –RONDA – SIERRA DE VIJAN NEAR TEBA.



Our last full day of the tour was spent travelling from Trujillo to Malaga with birding before and during the trip. It was another glorious day filled with sunshine and a nice temperature, you couldn't wish for better.

We met at 7:15am in the car park for our last birding in the area, a Scop's Owl had been calling from the large tree just above the bus some 3 hours earlier. We drove the short distance to Belen Plain arriving just as the sun was coming up over the distant mountains to the east. Larks were singing their little heart's out and were joined by Corn Buntings, Hoopoes and Stonechats.

It took us a while to locate our target species the Great Bustard and to our delight we found a male displaying to four females. With his head held back and his feathers inverted to display a mass of colour he strutted around the girls flapping his extended wings, it was an extraordinary sight, but none of the females seemed the slightest bit interested. We left him to it and wished him luck as we moved on in search of other species.

We were hoping for a sighting of the Great Spotted Cuckoo as our first sighting had been brief, but we couldn't find one in the hour that we had. However, in superb light we saw many species, Calandra Larks, Skylarks, many Eurasian Hoopoe, Black Kites, Ravens, White Storks and lots of Thekla and Crested Larks and hundreds of Corn Buntings.

One of our stops produced a host of Vultures sitting in the canopy of a row of trees, there was a few Egyptian Vultures sitting with Griffon Vultures, they looked tiny besides the Griffons and the Black Kites looked even smaller. On the way back to the Finca we stopped to look at a male Whinchat, a Little Owl and anything that resembled a cuckoo.

After a nice breakfast we said our farewell to the staff at Finca Santa Marta and set off for the journey to Malaga. It took us 3 hours to reach the south side of Sevilla where we stopped for coffee and picnic supplies. We ate our picnic a little nearer to Ronda and then we drove to the beautiful mountains around Montejaque, an area close to my Spanish home and one that I know very well.

A small patch of Yellow Orchids was nice to find as was a sturdy-looking male Spanish Ibex which sat on the top of a mountain peak, it was well endowed with an impressive set of horns. We then drove into the 'hidden valley' of Llanos de Libar where we spent a hot hour looking for Bonelli's Eagles and other montane species. We did find Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart, Red-billed Chough, Black Wheatear, Rock Sparrow, Crag Martin, Booted and Short-toed Eagles and lots of Griffon Vultures but no Bonelli's.

The group decided that they wanted to see the famous bridge in Ronda so I dropped them in town for a while before we set off for the final leg of the journey. But before we drove onto Malaga I had one final trick up my sleeve, it was another Bonelli's Eagle nest site. This time the birds were found as they circled near their mountain home, a wonderful sight and a great species to end the trip with.

We arrived at our hotel near Malaga Airport at 6pm in good time to get ready for our last supper which we all thoroughly enjoyed. A few beers help wash the dinner down before we completed our checklist.

The total bird count was now an impressive 172 with another 7 that were heard but not seen. The week had flown by with everyone having a great time - I have to repeat this trip in 9 days' time I hope that it will be as good as this one was! Thank you to all the participants who made this trip so wonderful and a joy to lead.

### **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.	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
6.	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
7.	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
8.	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>
9.	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
10.	White-headed Duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>
11.	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>
12.	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i> <b>(H)</b>
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.	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
35.	Spanish Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila aldaberti</i>
36.	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
37.	Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennata</i>
38.	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>
39.	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>
40.	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
41.	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
42.	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
43.	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
44.	Northern Goshawk	<i>Acciptor gentilis</i>
45.	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
46.	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
47.	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>
48.	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
49.	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
50.	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
51.	Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
52.	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
53.	Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>
54.	Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>
55.	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
56.	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
57.	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
58.	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
59.	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
60.	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
61.	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
62.	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
63.	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
64.	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
65.	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
66.	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
67.	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
68.	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>

69.	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
70.	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
71.	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
72.	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
73.	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
74.	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
75.	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
76.	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
77.	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
78.	Audouin's Gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>
79.	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
80.	Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
81.	Sandwich Tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
82.	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>
83.	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
84.	Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>
85.	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>
86.	Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
87.	Common Wood-Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
88.	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
89.	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
90.	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
91.	Great-spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandularis</i>
92.	Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>
93.	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>
94.	Eurasian Scops Owl	<i>Otus Scops.</i> <b>(H)</b>
95.	Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>
96.	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
97.	Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>
98.	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
99.	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>
100.	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>
101.	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridusis</i> <b>(H)</b>
102.	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>
103.	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
104.	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
105.	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>
106.	Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
107.	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
108.	Lesser Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>
109.	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocoryphra calandra</i>
110.	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
111.	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>
112.	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
113.	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>
114.	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>

115.	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
116.	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
117.	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>
118.	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula.....(H)</i>
119.	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
120.	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
121.	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
122.	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
123.	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>
124.	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>
125.	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
126.	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
127.	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
128.	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>
129.	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
130.	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola salitarius</i>
131.	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
132.	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
133.	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
134.	West Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>
135.	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
136.	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>
137.	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
138.	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>
139.	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
140.	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
141.	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
142.	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
143.	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
144.	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> <b>(H)</b>
145.	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>
146.	Eurasian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopis collybita</i>
147.	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
148.	Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
149.	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
150.	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
151.	Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus.....(H)</i>
152.	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
153.	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>
154.	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
155.	Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>
156.	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>
157.	Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>
158.	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
159.	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus grandarius</i>

160.	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
161.	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
162.	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
163.	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>
164.	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolis orioles</i> <b>(H)</b>
165.	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
166.	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
167.	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
168.	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>
169.	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringella coelebs</i>
170.	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
171.	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
172.	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>
173.	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>
174.	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>
175.	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>
176.	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>
177.	<b>Monk Parakeet</b>	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>
178.	<b>Common Waxbill</b>	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
179.	<b>Red Avadavat</b>	<i>Amandava amandava</i>

**MAMMALS/REPTILES/AMPHIBEANS**

	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>
	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
	Iberian Hare	<i>Lepus granatensis</i>
	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
	Spanish Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica hispanica</i>
	Moorish Gecko	<i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>
	Large Paammadromus	<i>Psammmodromus algirus</i>
	Ocellated Lizard	<i>Lacerta lepida</i>
	Iberian Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis hispanica</i>
	Common Tree Frog	<i>Hyla arborea</i>
	Mediterranean Chameleon	<i>Chamaeleo chamaeleon</i>
	Marsh Frog	<i>Rana ridibunda</i>
	Red-eared Terrapin	<i>Trachemys scripta</i>
	Ladder Snake	<i>Elaphe scalaris</i>