

# ***WINGSPAN BIRD TOURS***



## ***TRIP REPORT***

***SPANISH PYRENEES & PICOS DE EUROPA***

***JUNE 13<sup>TH</sup> – 21<sup>ST</sup> 2014***

**LEADER:** BOB BUCKLER co-driver Mervyn Jones

**Participants:** Conor and Ann Finch, Bob Wills, Harvey Berry, David Owwn, Vanda Bennett, Shirley & George Hodges, Davis Cosh, John Chesbrough, Sue Smith & Trevor Maynard.

## **DAY 1 – JUNE 13<sup>TH</sup> 2014**

### **MADRID AIRPORT - TO BELCHITE WITH STOPS ALONG THE WAY.**

I arrived at Madrid airport at 10am with Mervyn, the driver of the second bus. We met up with Conor and Ann who arrived from Dublin at 10am. The majority of the group (10 members of the Cheltenham Bird Club) arrived from Gatwick at 11am. we all loaded onto the two minibuses and set off for Belchite near Zaragoza.

During the journey we saw White Stork, Eurasian Magpie, Common Buzzard, Spotless Starling and Crested Lark.

We stopped for a lunch break along the autovia where we added Griffon Vulture, Booted Eagle and Greenfinch to the list. Our next species on the list were Turtle Doves, Wood Pigeons and Collared Doves, all were seen perched on wires in the countryside and near farms once we left the autovia.

The stop at Villanueva was quite productive, the first bird we saw was a WRYNECK, unfortunately it flew off before all of group saw it. We also added Egyptian Vulture, White Wagtail, Spotted Flycatcher, Serin, Goldfinch and we heard Common Nightingale, Golden Oriole and we saw Common Swifts.

Further along the route we added Cirl Bunting, Calandra Lark and Barn Swallow. At our hotel near Belchite we settled into our rooms and took a short walk before dinner. It was very dry and hot and a little windy but we saw a few more species. A Rock Sparrow was nice to see but distant, but better views were had of Short-toed Lark, Skylark and an amazing 'flock' of Eurasian Hoopoe, we saw eight together!!

We had a very a delicious dinner and a nice cold beer before retiring for our first night, over 40 species were in the bag.

## **DAY 2 – JUNE 14<sup>TH</sup> 2014**

### **EL PLANERON - QUINTO (RIO EBRO) - LOS MONEGROS - HECHO VALLEY**

This was a great day with a lot of travelling and a lot of species were listed, however it was marred by the weather, we had lovely clear skies but it was very windy all day and it got hot in the afternoon.!

We got up early and left the hotel carrying our picnic breakfast, it was just getting light as we pulled away at 6am. It took 20 minutes to drive to El Planeron, which is a huge protected area of 'Steppe' managed for the rare Dupont's Lark and other endangered species. The wind was blowing hard as we stepped out of the buses but we managed to hear a DuPont's Lark singing, but after a lot of searching we couldn't find one. Nevertheless we did see a host of other Larks, many Short-toed Larks, Crested Larks, Skylarks and Calandra Larks were seen during that first half an hour, we also saw Red-legged Partridge, a Little Owl and a Southern Grey Shrike.

The next hour was spent searching the surrounding 'steppe' for other species, a Stone Curlew sat very near the track and gave the photographers ample opportunity to get some great pictures. We also found several Lesser Short-toed Larks as they ran around on the track in front of us, Corn Buntings and Eurasian Magpies were

common. But our best sightings included; Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Montagu's and Marsh Harrier and a distant probable Golden Eagle (seen by the group on the second bus).

As we drove to Quinton we stopped to watch White Storks, Red Kites, European Bee-eaters and an Egyptian Vulture. At Quinton we stopped for coffee and toast before driving down to the river Ebro.

We spent a couple of hours enjoying great birding at the river and we found many species. In sheltered areas of reeds and hedges we found Common Kingfisher, Reed and Great Reed Warblers, Melodious Warbler, Cetti's Warbler and we had great views of Common Nightingale. Other species seen were Purple Heron, Golden Oriole, Little Egret, Sand Martins and we heard Penduline Tit. Black Kites were constantly in the air above us and often we saw Griffon Vultures and Booted Eagles. Before we left the area we stopped at another bend in the river where exposed shingle banks held Little Ringed Plover, White Wagtails and Yellow Wagtails.

We drove to Pinar de Ebro to buy lunch, the church was covered in Stork's nest and we saw a few Jackdaws flying around. Next we stopped in Los Monegros a unique area of hill-steppe where dry scrub and open valleys hold several interesting species. A Spectacled Warbler was found fairly quickly but it flew off before most of the group saw it, however, a pair of Black-eared Wheatears were enjoyed for a long time. The same went for a pair of Dartford Warblers, they too showed well. From then on our birding went downhill, the wind got stronger and time pressed so we decided to move on.

Our route to the Pyrenees took us passed Huesca and up through Jaca before we turned into the Hecho valley, birds seen along the way included several beautiful Red Kites, also Raven, Carrion Crow, Red-backed Shrike and more Black Kites.

We arrived at our hotel at 6pm, it been a long day, a windy day, but everyone agreed that it was an excellent birding day with 79 species listed, it was a total that even surprised me!

## **DAY 3 – JUNE 15<sup>TH</sup> 2014**

### **GABARDITO REFUGIO - UPPER HECHO VALLEY**

#### **WALLCREEPER AND LAMMERGEIER - STAR BIRDS OF THE DAY**

The cloud cover and the strong winds persisted overnight but eased off this morning, just a little, it didn't look good at 7am when we got up for our morning walk. The tops of the mountains were enshrouded in thick cloud but the valley was a little better.

Birds were singing in the car park and the hotel grounds, Blackcap, Chaffinch, Wren, Garden Warbler and Song Thrush were some of the species we heard and we also got glimpses of some of them. Making our way down to the river we found Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Crested Tit and a Red-backed Shrike, we heard Firecrest and got better views of Garden Warbler.

At the river we found Grey Wagtail but not the expected Dipper, on the way back we added both Black and Red Kites to the list as well as Common Buzzard, Carrion Crow and Griffon Vulture.

The cloud lifted somewhat and it got much brighter so by the time we finished breakfast we decided to go ahead with our plan and head up to Gabardito to look for the Wallcreeper. It was quite sheltered there and the weather was improving by the hour, splendid! From the car park we had fantastic views over the mountains and soon we were listing birds, Alpine Swift, Griffon Vulture and Serin were the first to go into the notebook.



We followed the main track that led us through mature woodland of mixed pine and beech and also through open alpine meadows as we headed towards the Wallcreeper nest site. As we walked along the views were stunning and the flowers, butterflies and birds were a delight. We soon found a few more species of birds - Song Thrush, Crested Tit, Marsh Tit were seen and a Eurasian Nuthatch was heard.

Three of the front walkers in the group managed to see a Lammergeier as it drifted along the rock face on the opposite side of the valley, sadly it disappeared before the rest of us caught up. Several parties of choughs flew over us calling loudly both the Red-billed and the Alpine were seen.

Finally we arrived at the vertical rock-face where the Wallcreeper breeds each year and as soon as we got there one appeared. Amazing!! It was a male and fed for a while then disappeared only to reappear and delight us all for a further 10 minutes or so. After that incredible experience we started our way back noting more butterflies and flowers as well as a few species of birds. We saw Mistle Thrush, Crested Tit, Dunnock and we heard Wren and Robin.



Back at the Refugio we ate our picnic lunch sitting at the picnic tables in lovely sunshine, the weather was still improving with bright sunny spells warming us up.

For the rest of the afternoon we travelled further north up the Hecho Valley towards the border with France. We spent several hours photographing, birds, butterflies, orchids and the scenery, we had a wonderful time. Few birds were seen but we did manage: Red-backed Shrike, Yellowhammer, Serin, Common Sandpiper, Grey Wagtail, White Wagtail and we had marvellous views of the stunning Egyptian Vulture. As time wore on we realised that a Lammergeier sighting was getting less and less of a possibility until we reached the far end of the track.

The first sighting was made by me but only briefly, then a little later the same bird flew across the valley and several others saw it, but not well enough. The weather was now closing in again, dark clouds loomed so we set off back to the hotel. Along the way the second bus saw 2 Dippers and the lead-bus was full of 'dippers'.

At the hotel we decided to search for Firecrest in the grounds, it was a good idea as we all got superb views of this dainty little beast.

Dinner was at eight, another enjoyable experience with lovely food and nice wine, ah, such fun!

Here is a list of some of the flowers and butterflies seen today.

#### ORCHIDS

GREATER BUTTERFLY ORCHID

LESSER BUTTERFLY ORCHID

COMMON SPOTTED ORCHID

MARSH ORCHID

FROG ORCHID

FRAGRANT ORCHID

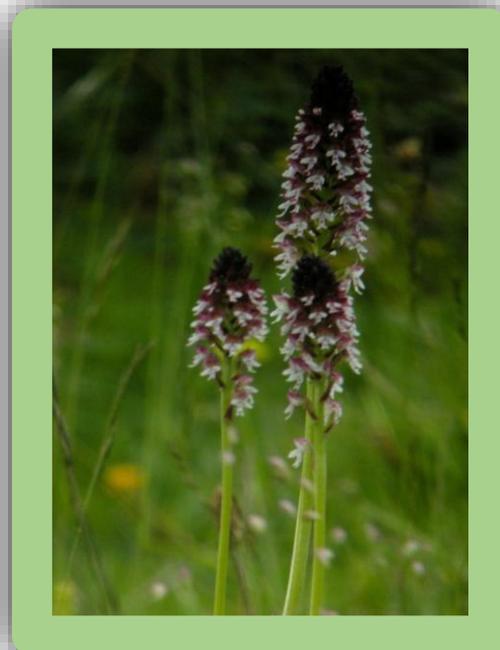
#### BUTTERFLIES

SCARCE SWALLOWTAIL

WOOD WHITE

BLACK VEINED WHITE

LARGE SKIPPER



GRIZZLED SKIPPER

DUKE OF BURGANDY FRITILLARY

PEARL BORDERED FRITILLARY

AMANDA'S BLUE

SILVER SPOTTED SKIPPER

**DAY 4 – JUNE 16<sup>TH</sup> 2014**

**THE ARAGON VALLEY WITH STOPS AT: ALASTUEY ROAD - PUENTE DE REINE - ARRES LANE - MARTES BRIDGE – BERDUN**

We spent a day down the valley out of the mountains because the weather looked better for us there, and it was, the wind had subsided quite a lot and we had sunshine for most of the day.

After reaching the Puente de Reine we turned towards Jaca and then onto a small lane leading to Alastuey where we pulled over to search an open scrub area for warblers. Our target bird was the Western Bonelli's Warbler which was seen within a couple of minutes one sat singing from the canopy of a small tree. A Woodlark was a nice find and we heard a Common Cuckoo calling but other than a few raptors nothing else



was seen. However there were many butterflies on the wing and the group showed a good interest in seeing them, lots of shutters were clicking away, we saw: Black-veined White, Wood White, Scarce Swallowtail, Ilex Hairstreak, Chestnut Heath, Dusky Heath and several others.

From there we drove a few hundred meters further along the road and stopped by a small stream, again we hoped for Orphean Warbler but never found one, a Subalpine Warbler was a nice find and more raptors circled above us, we saw Black Kite, Red Kite, Booted and Short-toed Eagles and lots of Griffon Vultures.

Driving back to the main road we turned back towards Puente de Reine and then followed a narrow track down to the river Aragón, we searched

this area for WRYNECK and eventually we found two birds, the second one showed very well for most of the group. During our time there we saw Grey Heron, White Wagtail, Spotted Flycatcher, Garden Warbler, Black-cap and Golden Oriole.

Next we stopped at a picnic site on the small lane that leads to Arres, it was the butterflies that stole the show, hundreds of them were milling about, we added many new species to our list including; Silver Washed Fritillary, Knapweed Fritillary, Large Skipper, Safflower Skipper, Spanish Chalkhill Blue and Southern White Admiral.

Bird sightings during our lunch stop included Cirl Bunting, Serin, Subalpine Warbler, Golden Oriole, Common Nightingale and Cetti's Warbler (heard).

Further along the lane we made two more stops to scan open scrub along an escarpment and large arable fields full of wheat ready for harvest. Common Stonechats, Corn and Cirl Buntings were the common species but we did see Woodchat Shrike, Crested Lark and more butterflies.

We turned onto a dirt track that led us to the river near a village called Martes, we spent our last birding time there, first at the bridge and then a little further west. At the bridge we found Rock Sparrow, House Martin, White Wagtail, Grey Wagtail and Common Nightingale. Then at the second stop we saw Great Spotted Woodpecker, Spotted Flycatcher, Golden Oriole and a Little Ringed Plover. A Southern White Admiral posed for the cameras, what a beauty.

From there we drove to the village of Berdun where we sat in the late afternoon sunshine and had a coffee, cold drink or ice cream, a Booted Eagle circled over us as we sat there.

The Journey back to the hotel was generally uneventful, the group on the second minibus stopped to look at a Marsh Harrier and we in the first bus stopped to look for Dipper at one of the bridges without success.

Dinner was a joyous affair with a lot of leg-pulling, yours truly took a tumble earlier, much to the delight of some of the group. Pressure is mounting as time is running out for a good sighting of Lammergeier.

## **DAY 5 – JUNE 17<sup>TH</sup> 2014**

### **HECHO VALLEY TO ANSO VALLEY TO RONCAL VALLEY - BELAGUA PASS - PIERRE DE LA ST. MARTIN (FRANCE)**

A cracking day with some fantastic sightings and made all the better when we realised that we had made the right decision yesterday about postponing this trip until today, the weather was just dandy!



amazing.

We continued onto the road that leads to the Roncal Valley and we stopped midway to look for Black Woodpecker, alas none appeared but we did see Great Spotted Woodpecker and more Red-backed Shrikes

At the head of the Roncal Valley the road took a winding path, climbing all the time, the temperature dropped to 8.5C but it wasn't windy and the cloud base was quite high. We climbed to 1800 meters and stopped to scan the open mountainside which was covered in flowers, including the beautiful English Gentian.

We started listing alpine birds as soon as we got out of the buses, many Water Pipits were singing and performing their parachuting display flight, lots of small flocks of chough, of both species, were dashing about or feeding on the grass slopes. We also saw Northern Wheatear, Black Redstart and Dunnock.

Our next stop, which was quite close to the French border, produced one of our main target species the ROCK THRUSH, this beautiful gem sang from several song-posts in a small gully just below us, fantastic. We saw more Dunnocks, Water Pipits and a superb male Bullfinch, another gem!

Just over the border we stopped in a small shallow gorge which had extensive views over into France, a LAMMERGEIER drifted towards at a low level giving us all fantastic views, the bird drifted gracefully passed us showing off its huge wingspan and diamond-shaped tail. A good number of Alpine Chough came very close too and we also logged Linnets, Serin and Black Redstart.

We set off after breakfast. at about 8:45am, the leading bus had to wait a while on the road near the hotel for the second bus to appear and whilst we waited a LAMMERGEIER drifted over the ridge, how lucky was that? We then drove through Hecho village and across to the Anso Valley, we stopped to look at a Red Kite on a pylon, a Black Kite in a field, an Egyptian Vulture circling and a few Red-backed Shrikes on bushes.

Our first official stop was at the head of the Anson valley near the Zoriza camp site, from there we saw a couple of Dippers and Grey Wagtails in the river, a Black Redstart on the buildings and a GOLDEN EAGLE circling high over the ridge. Common Buzzards, Ravens and Red-billed Chough were also noted, but best of all was the scenery, it was truly

From there we drove down to the Alpine Village of Pierre de St. Martin, at this time of the year this ski resort is totally deserted and full of birds. Usually the village is enshrouded in thick cloud but today the cloud base was much higher. We found a nice sheltered gully to sit and eat our picnic lunch whilst watching birds.

Many species were flitting about including the beautiful Citril Finch, what a star performer, a must-see species seen well by all the group. Over the next two hours we watched a good number of species without walking too far. Crested Tit, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Goldcrest, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Common Crossbill, Mistle Thrush and several of the distinctive sub-species '*alpestris*' RING OUZEL. Yet another LAMMERGEIER sighting was made, this time two birds drifted high over us, amazing.

We had to drag ourselves away from this magical spot, we had seen all of our target birds except the Black Woodpecker so we left with enough time to have another look for one back down in the valley.

Just when we thought it couldn't get any better, it did. As we drove down to exit the village we stopped to watch more Citril Finches and just after loading back into the bus yet another LAMMERGEIER was sighted, but this one was at eye level and it drifted towards us. We quickly abandoned the buses in the middle of the road and moved to get good views of the bird. It drifted away and then turned and came back right over us, absolutely fantastic, everyone had stunning views of this majestic and most enigmatic creature.



Well the bus was buzzing for while after that! We drove back into Spain and down through the Roncal Valley and onto the road to Anson where we stopped at a small village for coffee and/or ice-cream. It was now a nice 21C, we enjoyed our break whilst watching both Grey and White Wagtails along a stream, a family party of Black Redstart, with the cutest fledglings, flitted about, also a Garden Warbler sang and showed well.

We ran out of time so we drove straight back to the hotel arriving at 6pm, everyone was still in a buoyant mood so we decided to go for an after dinner Owl-Prowl.

At 9pm we loaded up the buses and drove to Puente de Reine and onto a side track to wait for Owls and Nightjars. As it got dark we heard at least three European Nightjars calling but none showed and neither did the hoped for Eagle Owl. We then drove round to a small village where the huge church is lit up every night and where Scops Owls sit out in the open.

We fared better there, a Scops Owl did, in fact show and it made its strange call, we also had the bonus of seeing a Little Owl as it flew back and forth to its nest hole.

Well that was that, the end of a fabulous day, we drove back to the hotel arriving at 11:30pm and a little tired by now!!

## **DAY 6 – JUNE 20<sup>TH</sup> 2014**

### **MONESTERIO AT SAN JUAN DE LA PENA - RIO GALEGO VALLEY - AGUERO - EMBALSE SOTONERO - RIGLOS**

What a difference a day makes, yesterday was full of new sightings and exciting finds and today was quite the opposite. That's birding for you.

It started off quite chilly with 8C and a cool breeze making it feel like 2-3C, but we set off heading down the valley away from the mountains and by the time we got to the Monastery it was about 12C

Along the way we saw the usual kites and Shrikes, a Common Buzzard and not much else. We then spent 2-3 hours walling through the woods looking for Black Woodpecker, we found every almost woodland species except the woodpecker! Eurasian Chiffchaff, Crested Tit, Firecrest, Eurasian Nuthatch, Coal, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Chaffinch and lots of butterflies came out as the sun got higher.

The views from the escarpment at the edge of the woods were simply stunning we had a wide panoramic vista of the snow covered peaks which no camera could capture sufficiently. We waited for quite a while to see what raptor species came up on the thermals but again we were disappointed with just Griffon Vultures, Red Kite and Common Kestrels.

Back at the monastery we saw a family of Black Redstarts, some Crag Martins and Common Swifts, even the cafeteria was closed so we couldn't get a coffee.

Driving down the valley we followed the course of the Rio Galego and stopped near the bottom where a wide expanse of reeds were growing around a roadside pool. Whilst eating our picnic lunch we saw a few more species, Common Nightingale, European Bee-eaters, Marsh Harrier, several Golden Orioles dashed about never giving prolonged views and our first Great Reed Warbler was seen by a couple of the group.

From there we drove to the scenic village of Aguero where magnificent pinnacles of 'pudding stone' rise vertically some 100-200 meters, again photographs could not capture how dramatic the scene really was.

Whilst looking from the mirador we found a few more bird species and lots of butterflies. Common Quail and Turtle Doves called from the fields and olive groves and overhead we saw Booted Eagle, Red Kite and Wood Pigeons. Above the village a host of Griffon Vultures were joined by Red-billed Chough, a Short-toed Eagle and a single Egyptian Vulture.

Our next stop was at the Embalse Sotonero, by now it was getting very warm, up to 28C! We spent an hour so at two places where we could see some of the water. We amassed a little list which included: Mallard,

Common and Red-crested Pochard, Gadwall, Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Little Egret, Great White Egret and Great Crested Grebe. In the pine woods around the lake we found Turtle Dove, Orphean Warbler (heard), Serin, Zitting Cisticola and a few finches.

Back on the road we headed for Hecho Valley via Riglos, the most famous of the villages with the 'fingers' Mallos de Riglos towering above the tiny village, we stopped to photograph the scene and found a pair of Orphean Warblers that showed very well.

We had to finish there, it was getting late and we had a long journey back to the hotel, we made good time and arrived back at 7pm. Dinner was at 8pm which was enjoyed by all.



## **DAY 7 - 19<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2014**

### **TRANSFER FROM PYRENEES TO PICOS WITH STOPS AT; FOZ DE BINIES – SENCILLO HILLS - EMBALSE DE EBRO – SAN VICENTE SALT MARSHES .**

Transfer days are often tedious with few birds seen, however today wasn't quite that bad, we saw over 50 species with 8 new editions to the trip list. We drove all day from 9am to 7pm making several stops with at least 3 prolonged birding stops.

From the Hecho Valley we drove to Anso and then down through the most scenic of gorges at Foz de Binges. We stopped to look for our target species the Blue Rock Thrush and after a short while, searching the sheer cliff faces we found at least three, and although our views of this montane beauty was limited to 'in-the-scope' long distance ones

we enjoyed the sighting. Other species seen there were Griffon Vultures, Crag Martin, House Martin and Black Redstart.

Once on the main road to Pamplona we made a short stop at a garage for refreshments before we put a few miles on clock, we passed through Pamplona and Logrono before turning towards Santander. We listed several raptors on this stretch of the journey; Marsh Harrier, Common Buzzard, both Black and Red Kites, Egyptian Vulture and Common Kestrel.

Our picnic lunch was eaten by the roadside in alpine woods at some altitude, we never listed a single bird during that time. From there we travelled for 30 minutes and stopped in the hills just above Sencillo where we saw a nice selection of species, including Stonechat, Whinchat, Northern Wheatear, Red-backed Shrike and lots of finches. Also Ravens and Egyptian Vultures showed particular well.

Next we stopped at the Embalse de Ebro and along the route we saw Montagu's Harrier, Southern Grey Shrike and a good number of Common Buzzards. The Ebro reservoir was a little disappointing, we found Mallard, Gadwall, Great-crested Grebe, Black-headed and Yellow-legged Gulls and a Common Coot. The best sighting was of a Melodious Warbler which sang to us and a Common Kestrel was seen mobbing a Common Buzzard.

We then drove for an hour to the coast west of Santander to a holiday resort called Saint Vicente, there a large salt marsh held a few species but not many. It was warm but humid and the group were getting tired of travelling by now. Our first sighting was an unusual one, a female Common Scooter sat on the water just under the bridge, it seemed perfectly healthy but it shouldn't have been there really. We also found a fair number of Eurasian Curlew and a smaller number of Whimbrel, it was nice to see these species side by side for comparison. Also on a large sand bar we found a gull roost which held, Black-headed, Yellow-legged, Lesser & Greater Black-backed Gulls.

That just about summed up our sightings so we then drove the last leg of the journey into the Picos de Europa national park. It took about an hour and fifteen minutes to negotiate the winding roads and narrow gorges but the scenery was spectacular. We arrived at our hotel at 7:15pm, tired and hungry, dinner at 8pm was most welcomed and so was the wine that went with it.



## **DAY 8 - JUNE 20<sup>TH</sup> 2014**

### **FUENTE DE AND PEMBES BEECH WOODS**

This was our last day of birding and we certainly went out with a bang, this group does not mess about, we had a number of target species and we saw them all. The weather could not have been better, high cloud and sunshine for most of the day with no wind, just perfect.

After a nice breakfast we walked across the road from the hotel to watch Dippers and Grey Wagtails in the river Deva, both of which turned up in good numbers, we also found Wren and White Wagtail there too.

From the hotel we drove the short distance to the cable car at Fuente De arriving at 9am in plenty of time to catch the first cable car to the impressive summit of the surrounding limestone peaks. It was like a cirque, a lush green valley encircled by magnificent snow-capped peaks. The cable car rises some 830 meters in 3 minutes and the first one of the day was at 10 am so we had an hour to kill.

We birded the pine woods around the car park and found lovely Red Squirrels as well as Eurasian Jays, Marsh Tit, Coal Tit, Firecrest and lots of Chaffinches. In due course all 14 of us sidled into the cable and made the journey to the top, it was a wonderful experience the views were just amazing.

At the top we climbed the stairs of the upper cable-car housing and out onto a mirador that gave extensive views of where we had just come from and of the surrounding area, a camera could not capture the true magnificent of our vista.

Following the track from the buildings we were confronted by a lunar landscape with patches of lush green grass and wild flowers including orchids! Patches of snow littered the hillside and mountain tops and a few bird calls could be heard.

We located a pair of Alpine Acceptors within minutes but they wouldn't come close, then small parties of Alpine Choughs dashed about and a couple of Water Pipit sang as they parachuted back to earth. Our progress along this alpine track was very slow as birds, butterflies and flowers came into view in regular intervals. Northern Wheatears were nesting by the side of the track and Black Redstarts flitted about on the rocks.



We then came to a junction where a huge rock face reaches high above and a sloping rocky area is behind you. It was there that we had a fantastic experience when a Wallcreeper flew down not 5 meters from us, it was amazing, the bird stayed for a full 5 minutes whilst it collected goat or sheep hair from within the rocks. It was not fazed one little bit by a group of admiring birders staring at it, the cameras were getting red hot as they clicked away.

Almost straight afterwards we saw our first Snow Finch, in fact over the next 15 minutes we saw a pair going in and out of a crevice so we directed our scopes onto the crevice and watched them for a while. Everyone got to see the finches but better views would have been nice. Alpine Choughs came down for crumbs and we found more Alpine Acceptors much closer than before.

We had such a wonderful time that it was hard to leave this incredible wilderness, we made our way back down the track towards the cable car restaurant and before we got there we stopped to look at more Alpine Acceptors and then we had incredible views of Snow Finch as a pair flew right to us and landed within a few meters, they stayed for a while collecting food before flying off. Again this was the best views I had ever had, the group were simply stunned with amazement, they couldn't stop talking about this whole fantastic experience.

We ate lunch in the restaurant at the top of the cable car run and travelled back down to 'earth' about 3:30pm. Our day was not finished yet, after dropping off a few of the group back at the hotel we drove a short way to

the village of Pambes. This unique little hamlet is incredible to look at, it is just like something from the 18/19th century, I can't describe the ambiance of the place it is simply incredible.

We walked up through the village and spent an hour walking up a very steep path that led us into a dense beech wood, this where we searched for Middle Spotted Woodpecker. Our efforts were in fact rewarded but only just because we had fleeting glimpses of this elusive 'pecker' and only a few us at that.

Other birds seen in and around the village included: Black Redstart, Common Redstart, White Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Robin, Song Thrush and lots of Serins. The butterflies were pretty good too, at one place we saw 8 Adonis Blues settled on some animal droppings. It then began to thunder and large dark clouds formed above us so we beat a hasty retreat, by the time we returned to the hotel it had begun to rain. During the course of the evening we had the most heavy downpour of rain I have seen in a long time, the road was flooded in minutes. We were not bothered though as we tucked into another superb meal accompanied by mirth and merriment brought on by some lovely rioja.

Well our final birding day was over all that was left was our morning trip to Madrid to catch the flight home. We had recorded 150 species of birds and 80 species of butterflies, which are both remarkable totals for this tour. We saw 95% of the target bird-list, a great effort by the group. Some of the most wanted species in Europe showed extremely well for us and we take home some great memories of a host of special moments. We talked at dinner of favourite species or best bird of the tour, Wallcreeper was high on the list, Snow Finch too, the Rock Thrush crept into the top 5 as did Ring Ouzel, but the best bird was of course the LAMMER-GEIER which showed so well and so often.

I can't wait for next year's tour, why not join me?

## **DAY 9 – JUNE 21<sup>ST</sup> 2014**

### **TRANSFER - PICOS DE EUROPA TO MADRID AIRPORT**

Our final day had arrived and all we had time for was an early breakfast, no birding just travelling. We took the scenic route which was a little longer time-wise but more enjoyable than spending a longer time on the autovia.

We saw a surprising number of birds along the way, some of the goodies included; Yellowhammer, Red-backed Shrike, lots of Common Buzzards, Jay, Raven, Red kite and Black Kite, Egyptian and Griffon Vultures.

A little nearer to Madrid we added two more species to the trip total: Green Woodpecker and Azure-winged Magpie, smashing!

Everyone got to the airport on time and I left Mervyn at the car rental centre before driving down to Malaga, another 5 hour drive. One really good sighting was of a 'flock' of Lesser Kestrels, about 15 of them were following a combine harvester, an incredible sighting.

At Malaga I met Dawn and we transferred from the minibus to a small car which I drove back to Gaucin, another 1 1/2 hour drive. I got home at 10pm after setting off at 8am, a lot of driving and now I'm totally bushed and ready for a rest!

### **LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED DURING THIS TRIP**

1.	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓
2.	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	✓
3.	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓
4.	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓
5.	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓
6.	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	✓

7.	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓
8.	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓
9.	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	✓
10.	Common Pochard	<i>Athya ferina</i>	✓
11.	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	✓
12.	Lammergeier	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	✓
13.	Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	✓
14.	Eurasian Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓
15.	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓
16.	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	✓
17.	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓
18.	Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennatus</i>	✓
19.	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	✓
20.	Short-toed Snake-Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	✓
21.	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓
22.	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓
23.	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	✓
24.	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓
25.	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	H
26.	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	H
27.	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓
28.	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓
29.	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓
30.	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓
31.	Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	✓
32.	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓
33.	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓
34.	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓
35.	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓
36.	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	✓
37.	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓
38.	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓
39.	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓
40.	Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	✓
41.	Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>	✓
42.	Rock Dove /Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓
43.	Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	✓
44.	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓
45.	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓
46.	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	H
47.	Scop's Owl	<i>Otus scops</i>	✓
48.	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓
49.	European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	H
50.	Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	✓
51.	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓
52.	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓

53.	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	✓
54.	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	✓
55.	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓
56.	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>	✓
57.	Middle-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus medius</i>	✓
58.	Black Woodpecker	<i>Drycopus martius</i>	H
59.	Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquatta</i>	✓
60.	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓
61.	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	✓
62.	Wood Lark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	✓
63.	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓
64.	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	✓
65.	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	✓
66.	Lesser Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>	✓
67.	Dupont's Lark	<i>Chersophilus duponti</i>	H
68.	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	✓
69.	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Hirundo rupestris</i>	✓
70.	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓
71.	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	✓
72.	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	✓
73.	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	✓
74.	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓
75.	(Spanish)Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>	✓
76.	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓
77.	White Throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	✓
78.	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓
79.	Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>	✓
80.	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓
81.	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	✓
82.	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓
83.	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	✓
84.	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓
85.	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	✓
86.	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	✓
87.	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>	✓
88.	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓
89.	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓
90.	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓
91.	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	✓
92.	Blue Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	✓
93.	Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	✓
94.	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	✓
95.	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓
96.	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	✓
97.	Western Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	✓
98.	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	✓

99.	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	✓
100.	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	✓
101.	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	✓
102.	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	✓
103.	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓
104.	Great Reed-Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	✓
105.	Eurasian Reed-Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓
106.	Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	✓
107.	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	✓
108.	Eurasian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus colybita</i>	✓
109.	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓
110.	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	✓
111.	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓
112.	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	✓
113.	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓
114.	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓
115.	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	✓
116.	Crested Tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>	✓
117.	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	✓
118.	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓
119.	Eurasian Penduline-Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	H
120.	Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>	✓
121.	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓
122.	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	✓
123.	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	✓
124.	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	✓
125.	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	✓
126.	Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyana</i>	✓
127.	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓
128.	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓
129.	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓
130.	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	✓
131.	Alpine Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	✓
132.	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓
133.	Common or Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓
134.	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓
135.	Eurasian Golden-Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	✓
136.	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓
137.	Spanish Sparrow	<i>P. domesticus hispaniolensis</i>	✓
138.	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	✓
139.	Snowfinch (White-winged)	<i>Montifringilla nivalis</i>	✓
140.	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓
141.	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	✓
142.	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓
143.	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	✓
144.	Citril Finch	<i>Carduelis citrinella</i>	✓

145.	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	✓
146.	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	✓
147.	Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	✓
148.	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓
149.	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>	✓
150.	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	✓

<b>MAMMALS/REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS/BUTTERFLIES</b>			
1	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	✓
2	Scarce Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>	✓
3	Black-veined white	<i>Aporia crataegi</i>	✓
4	Large white	<i>Pieris brassica</i>	✓
5	Small white	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>	✓
6	Green-veined white	<i>Artogeia napi</i>	✓
7	Bath white	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>	✓
8	Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	✓
9	Mountain clouded yellow	<i>Colias phicomone</i>	✓
10	Pale clouded yellow	<i>Colias palaeno</i>	✓
11	Berger's Clouded yellow	<i>Colinas alfacariensis</i>	
12	Clouded yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>	✓
13	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	✓
14	Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>	✓
15	Wood white	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>	✓
16	Ilex hairstreak	<i>Satyrrium ilicis</i>	✓
17	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	✓
18	Lang's Short-tailed Blue	<i>Leptotes pirithous</i>	✓
19	Little blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>	✓
20	Holly blue	<i>Cetastrina argiolus</i>	✓
21	Osiris blue	<i>Cupido osiris</i>	✓
22	Green-underside blue	<i>Glaucophysche alexis</i>	✓
23	Iolas blue	<i>Iolana iolas</i>	
24	Baton blue	<i>Pseudopholites baton</i>	
25	Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>	✓
26	Idas blue	<i>Plebejus idas</i>	✓
27	Brown argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>	✓
28	Mazarine blue	<i>Cyaniris semiargus</i>	
29	Amanda's blue	<i>Agrodiaetus amandus</i>	✓
30	Chapman's blue	<i>Agrodiaetus thersites</i>	✓
31	Province Chalk-hill blue	<i>Lysandra hispana</i>	
32	Spanish Chalk-hill blue	<i>Lysandra albicans</i>	✓
33	Adonis blue	<i>Lysandra bellargus</i>	✓
34	Common blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	✓
35	Duke of Burgundy	<i>Hamearis lucina</i>	✓
36	Southern white admiral	<i>Liminitis reducta</i>	✓
37	Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>	✓
38	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	✓
39	Painted lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>	✓
40	Small tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	✓
41	Queen of Spain Fritillary	<i>Issoria lathonia</i>	✓
42	Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>	✓

43	Cardinal fritillary	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>	✓
44	Silver-washed fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>	
45	Dark green fritillary	<i>Mesoacidalia aqlaja</i>	
46	Twin-spot fritillary	<i>Brenthis hecate</i>	
47	Marbled fritillary	<i>Brenthis daphe</i>	✓
48	Pearl-bordered fritillary	<i>Clossiana euphrosyne</i>	✓
49	Small Pearl-bordered fritillary	<i>Clossiana selene</i>	✓
50	Weaver's fritillary	<i>Clossiana dia</i>	✓
51	Glanville fritillary	<i>Metilaea cinxia</i>	✓
52	Knapweed fritillary	<i>Melitaea phoebe</i>	✓
53	Provençal fritillary	<i>Mellicta deione</i>	✓
54	Meadow Fritillary	<i>Mellicta parthenoides</i>	
55	Spanish fritillary	<i>Eurodryas desfontainii</i>	✓
56	Spotted fritillary	<i>Melitaea didyma</i>	✓
57	Heath fritillary	<i>Mellicta athalia</i>	✓
58	Marbled white	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>	✓
59	Esper's Marbled White	<i>Melanargia russiae</i>	✓
60	Spanish Marbled White	<i>Melanargia ines</i>	✓
61	Great Banded Grayling	<i>Kanetisa circe</i>	
62	De Prunner's Ringlet	<i>Erebia triaria</i>	
63	Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	✓
64	Southern gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia cecilia</i>	✓
65	Spanish gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia bathseba</i>	✓
66	Small heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	✓
67	Dusky heath	<i>Coenonympha dorus</i>	✓
68	Pearly Heath	<i>Coenonympha arcania</i>	✓
69	Chestnut Heath	<i>Coenonympha glycerion</i>	✓
70	Speckled wood	<i>Pararge aegeria aegeria</i>	✓
71	Wall brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	✓
72	Large wall brown	<i>Lasiommata maera</i>	✓
73	Grizzled skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	✓
74	Safflower skipper	<i>Pyrgus carthami</i>	✓
75	Dingy skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	✓
76	Sage skipper	<i>Muschampia proto</i>	✓
77	Small skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	✓
78	Silver-spotted Skipper	<i>Hesperia comma</i>	✓
79	Lulworth Skipper	<i>Thymelicus acteon</i>	
80	Large skipper	<i>Ochlodes venatus</i>	✓
	Hummingbird Hawk-Moth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>	✓
	Nosed Grasshopper	<i>Acrida hungarica</i>	
	Pyrenean Chamois	<i>Ruicapra rupicapra</i>	✓
	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓
	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	✓
	Stone Marten (dead)	<i>Martes foina</i>	✓
	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓
	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	✓
	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	✓
	Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	✓
	Yellow-necked Mouse	<i>Apodemus flavicollis</i>	✓