WINGSPAN BIRD TOURS IN SPAIN

MAY $24^{th} - 31^{st}$ 2019



EXTREMADURA & SIERRA DE GREDOS

TRIP REPORT

PLACES VISITED

Day 1
TRANSFER FROM MADRID TO TRUJILLO (FINCA SANTA MARTA) WITH STOPS AT: ARROCAMPO NATURAL PARK – JARAICEJO HEATHLAND – '3 BRIDGES' OVER THE ALMONTE RIVER
ALMONTE RIVER
Day 2
BELEN PLAIN – TRUJILLO POND (MONTANCHEZ ROAD) – SANTA MARTA DE MAGASCA – RIO MAGASCA – LLANOS DE CASERES – RIO ALMONTE
Day 3
EMBLASES DE ACOLLORIN AND SIERRA BRAVE – MADRIGALEJO RICE FIELDS – RIO RUESCA – LA MOHEDA NATURE RESERVE
Day 4
MONFRAGÜE NATIONAL PARK
Day 5
SANTA MARTA PLAINS – RIO MAGASCA – MONROY – EMBALSE DE TALAVAN – MONROY TO TRUJILLO ROAD – TRUJILLO CASTLE
Day 6
TRANSFER FROM TRUJILLO TO NAVARREDONDA, SIERRA DE GREDOS WITH STOPS AT: MONFRAGÜE NATIONAL PARK – HERVAS WOODLAND – TORMES RIVER – HOYES DEL ESPINO - NAVARREDONDA CAMPSITE AREA
Day 7
PLATAFORMA DE GREDOS – GREDOS REGIONAL PARK BELOW HOYOS DEL ESPINO AND NAVARREDONDA
<u>Day 8</u>
PARADOR DE GREDOS - RIO TORMES - EMBALSE NAVALCÁN – TRANSFER TO MADRID

DAY 1 – FRIDAY 24TH MAY 2019

MADRID TO TRUJILLO WITH STOPS AT ARROCAMPO NATURAL PARK – JARAICEJO HEATHLAND AND THE '3 BRIDGES' OVER THE RIVER ALMONTE

WEATHER: bright and sunny all day, a little breezy. Top temp 25C

We had a marvellous start to our tour of Extremadura and the Gredos Mountains, the weather was just perfect, albeit a little windy. Everyone had arrived a day or two before the trip and we all met up for breakfast at 8am in the plaza at Barajas near Madrid Airport. It was warm, bright and sunny we sat outside on the terrace to eat breakfast. We saw lots of Common Swifts, Collared Doves, a nesting pair of White Storks and the very noisy Monk Parakeets.

Our route took us around the busy motorways of Madrid and out on the A5 heading south-west toward Badajoz. It wasn't long before were noting birds of prey. The Black Kite was a very common sighting, as were White Stork and Eurasian Magpie. We stopped after 90 minutes for a coffee break and during our break we watched both Red and Black Kites, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, Griffon Vulture and a few Goldfinches around the car park.

Spanish Sparrow

We spent a couple of hours at Arrocampo, this reserve comprises of lakes, reed-beds, oak dehesa, broom scrub and open grassland. We visited a series of hides near the visitor's centre where we viewed the reedbeds and open water. Great Reed Warblers sang out loudly as we scanned the reeds for Little Bitterns. Soon we saw a male Little Bittern in flight and a Purple Swamphen in the reeds, but it was the Purple Herons that grabbed our attention. There must have been 3 pairs, all breeding in close proximity to one another, they were all



feeding young as they frequently visited obvious nest sites, they were amazing to watch.

From one of the hides we found, not one, but three, FERRUGINOUS DUCKS, amazing! I never expected these wintering birds to be present near the end of May, a smashing bonus bird. Driving through the broom scrub we saw Crested Lark, Iberian Shrike, Common Stonechat and a probable Tawny Pipit.

From other vantage points we saw Little and Cattle Egret, Great Cormorants, Marsh Harrier and all the time there were Black Kites and Booted Eagles above us. Another part of the reserve had a breeding colony of herons and egrets, a large pool is bisected by a main road and from this causeway we scanned both sides of the lake. We found a Savi's Warbler, it was reeling from time to time and we saw it briefly a couple times quite close to us. Common Kingfisher and a fly-over Great Egret were also additions to the day list. Above us we added Black Vulture to the raptor list.

We then drove to another area where a couple of pools were found on either side of the road and lots of oak dehesa surrounded us. We found Black-winged Stilt, Redshank, Black-necked Grebe, Eurasian Hoopoe, Corn Bunting and a female Chaffinch.

From Arrocampo we drove further southwest to Jaraicejo where we stopped for a while on the 'broom' heathland, this area is well known for holding a population of both Spectacled and Dartford Warblers. It was quite windy when we arrived, so I didn't expect great sightings of these specialist scrub warblers. However, we get reasonable views of both species and after just 30 minutes we left the heathland.

Our final stop was below the village of Jaraicejo at the Rio Almonte where three bridges can be seen. Parking just above the ancient bridge we watched Spanish Sparrows at a nesting colony, also European Bee-eaters and Red-rumped Swallow. From the bridge we had good views of the river, a babbling brook in reality because the water level was so low. We found both Grey and White Wagtails, lots of Spanish Sparrows, Woodchat Shrike and we could hear Common Nightingale and Cetti's Warbler.

Butterflies were observed throughout the day we saw ten species including Common Swallowtail, Cleopatra, Holly Blue, Small Skipper, Small Copper and lots of Meadow Browns. European Pond Terrapins, Marsh Frogs and a couple of dead Egyptian Mongoose were our other sightings.

The final leg of the took another 45 minutes, we passed Trujillo and drove southward to Finca Santa Marta where we were staying for the next five nights.

DAY 2 - SATURDAY 25TH MAY 2019

BELEN PLAIN – TRUJILLO POND (MONTANCHEZ ROAD) – SANTA MARTA DE MAGASCA – RIO MAGASCA – LLANOS DE CASERES – RIO ALMONTE

WEATHER: a fabulous day, wall to wall sunshine, a cooling breeze, temp. mid 20's.



An early start saw us all at breakfast at 6am in the dark!! By the time we had driven to Belen Plain the sun was up and the birds were singing. It was magical out there, still and calm, a lovely temperature and

perfect morning light. The Eurasian Hoopoe was calling from all directions, Black Kites seemed to be on every fence post and larks were dashing about everywhere you looked. We made a couple of stops and scanned the huge expanse of grassland looking for Bustards and that is exactly what we found.

A dozen or so Great Bustard were seen first on a very distant sloping hillside, a scope job, but we could see them perfectly well. A couple of male Little Bustards were located next, they attracted our attention by delivering their short, rasping call, which sounded like someone 'blowing a raspberry'. Again, they were distant, but we were happy with our scope views in such good light. In the meantime, we had great views of Eurasian Hoopoe, Calandra Lark, Black Kite, dozens of Crested Larks and even more Corn Buntings.

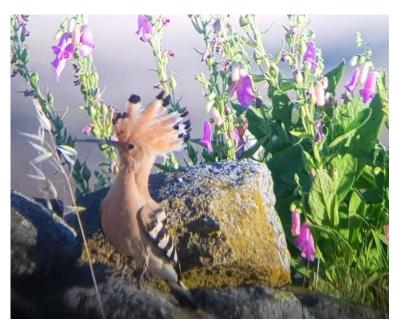
We drove along a side-track, stopping several times to look at other birds, we found Iberian Shrike, Griffon Vulture, Thekla Lark, Common Stonechat and had great views of a Great Bustard in flight. From another vantage point we added Common Cuckoo, Iberian Magpie, Red Kite and Spanish Sparrow to the day list. Another track led us to an area where we had a terrific panoramic view of the broom scrub, oak dehesa and a distant lake. It was there that we found a juvenile **Great Spotted Cuckoo!** It was very flighty but showed reasonably well, we also found Black-winged Stilt, Great Crested Grebe, Mallard, Little Egret and a few European Bee-eaters. On the approach road to this area we stopped to watch our first Montagu's Harrier of the trip, a female performed well for us as it quartered the fields.

From Belen we drove into Trujillo where we stopped to buy lunch and then we made a brief visit to the large pond on the Montanchez Road just on the outskirts of Trujillo. We added Little Grebe and Gadwall to our trip list but apart from many Mallards and a couple of Common Coots we saw nothing else.

Eurasian Hoopoe

We stopped to view the Rio Magasca from an ancient bridge just west of Trujillo where we saw a pair of Common Kingfishers, a Common Nightingale and we heard a Cetti's Warbler. A female Golden Oriole, found by Paul, landed in a nearby tree and gave great views when it flew out towards us, it flashed its yellow/green colours as it made a sharp turn away. A brief stop at a well-known spot for Sandgrouse was made next, however, the grass was far too long for sandgrouse spotting so we moved on.

Our lunch break was taken on the side of the road under the shelter of an oak tree.



During lunch we saw few birds, but butterflies were prolific, on one particular flowering broom there were a dozen Gatekeepers, several Brown Argus and a couple of Ilex Hairstreaks, the bush was covered in all manner of other flying insects too.

After a quick stop for coffee in Santa Marta we drove towards Caseres and after a few kilometers we stopped at a bridge over the River Magasca where we saw White Wagtails, Little ringed Plovers, Corn Buntings and a couple of Viperine Snakes. As we drove onto the llanos de Caseres (the open plain) we

found our first European Roller. A nest box scheme has proved very successful there and we saw several pairs of Rollers using the boxes.

We spent the next couple of hours driving towards Caseres, stopping here and there along an unmade road, we saw many species, but the most exciting was a group of three Black-bellied Sandgrouse, they flew up from close to the road and dropped down not too far away, unfortunately not everyone saw them and we could not relocate them on the ground as they walked over a ridge and out of sight.

Our last birding session was beneath another bridge over the river Almonte and we had several target species to look for. It was now very warm and we were sheltered from the cooling breeze in a gully leading down to the river. We quickly found a pair of Blue Rock Thrushes along with Serin, Linnets, Goldfinches, Chaffinches and lots of Crag Martins. Searching the sky for swifts we saw Griffon Vulture, Black Stork (2), Red-rumped Swallows and finally one of our targets birds the huge Alpine Swift.

Down by the river we eventually found the Black Wheatear which was our final target species and as a bonus we added Rock Bunting to the list and a Melodious Warbler was singing but only gave brief flight views as it flew away. The butterflies were again prolific, we also saw several Thread-winged Lacewings, what a beautiful creature that is.

We left the area at 5pm and returned the hotel via a supermarket in Trujillo. A wonderful dinner was consumed from 7:30pm, I must say the food at Finca Santa Marta is excellent again this year.

DAY 3 – SUNDAY 26TH MAY 2019

EMBLASES DE ACOLLORIN AND SIERRA BRAVE – MADRIGALEJO RICE FIELDS – RIO RUESCA – LA MOHEDA NATURE RESERVE

WEATHER: another perfect day, sometimes a little too hot, but a nice breeze throughout. Average temp 25C

We took a change of scenery today by visiting several bodies of water and the 'flooded' rice fields around Madrigalejo, but even before breakfast we enjoyed a lovely early morning walk along the tracks of Finca Santa Marta. We met at 7am and took the track from the car park down passed the paddocks and olive plantations. It was a lovely hour and although we did not see too many species, we really enjoyed the ambiance. The monotonous tri-syllabic call of the Hoopoe, hoo....poo....poo droned in the background, in contrast the fluty, melodic, call of the Golden Orioles and the perfect pitch of the Common Nightingale enhanced our morning's experience. We also listened to the scratchy song of the Sardinian Warbler, the non-descript jingle of the Corn Bunting and a Wren sang loudly right by the car park. We had great views of the Nightingale, Hoopoe and fleeting views of the Sardinian Warbler and the Wren.

Our first port of call after breakfast was the huge reservoir at Alcollorin, it is such a picturesque site, we stood a on a hillside and 'scoped the water which was at quite a low level. It was covered in birds, we picked out Eurasian Spoonbills, Great, Little and Cattle Egrets, Purple and Grey Herons around the shoreline and many Great Crested Grebes and hundreds of Mallard with a lot fewer Gadwall on the water. A pair of Egyptian Geese was a surprise for the group, they now breed in several places in Extremadura. One of the group saw an Otter and we added Northern Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover, Black-headed Gull and Little Grebe to the list.

The scrub and dehesa surrounding the lake held warblers and shrikes, finches and sparrows. We spent some time waiting for an Orphean Warbler to show, it delivered its melodic chant from a nearby oak tree, we picked out Iberian and Woodchat Shrikes whilst waiting. Further around the reservoir a second, much smaller, dam holds back a much smaller body of water, this is the nature reserve part. It too was covered in birds, it had an Egret colony with hundreds of Cattle Egrets, also a nesting pair of Marsh Harriers, more Egyptian Geese and Herons. Birds in the scrub below the dam provided some entertainment for us, we watched Great Reed Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, Common Stonechats, Sardinian Warbler, Linnets, Goldfinches, Greenfinches and White Wagtails.

We circumnavigated this lake on a track in the bus, stopping several times to watch birds and interesting butterflies, a huge colony of Spanish Sparrows was making such a racket, many of the hundreds of pairs were feeding their young fledglings.

From there we visited the even large reservoir called Sierra Brava, we walked along the dam before sitting at a picnic table to eat our picnic lunch, a Little Owl sat out nicely on a fence near the dam. It was beautiful there too. We saw very distant Gull-billed Terns and not much else. The sky was always full of Black Kites, Griffon Vultures, Common Buzzards, Common Kestrels and Jackdaws.

Collared Pratincole taken at Madridgalejo Rice Fields



We spent two hours at the rice fields near Madrigalejo and our first species seen on the now-flooded rice fields were Collared Pratincoles, we were lucky enough to get very close to one or two of them, taking pictures from the bus. There must have been a dozen or so in the area, what a beautiful species. For the next hour it was tough going because of the heat, the cooling wind seemed to have dropped and it became a little uncomfortable.

We soldiered on, taking plenty of water on board. Our target species of Melodious Warbler and Tree Sparrow were soon on

the list, but Turtle Dove remained elusive. We saw Golden Oriole, lots of Iberian Magpies, Bee-eaters, Hoopoes and a nice surprise was a Hawfinch. Walking back along the rice fields we added Zitting Cisticola (lots of them), Reed Warbler and the exotic ex-caged bird, the African Common Waxbill. We then drove along more tracks around even more flooded rice fields where we added Common Ringed Plover and not much else.

Our last birding place for the afternoon the was large reservoir at La Moheda, the Common Crane reserve near Obando, but not before a coffee stop in the village. We climbed a man-made bank to view the reservoir in perfect afternoon light and although it was still hot at 4pm a nice breeze kept us cool. As usual there were many species out on the islands and along the shoreline of reservoir. It was nice to see Black-winged Stilts, Pied Avocet and Little Ringed Plovers all with chicks, we also saw a couple of Dunlin and a single female Kentish Plover. A flock of 9 Eurasian Spoonbills, a couple of Grey Herons, a single Purple Heron, a few Mallard and yet another pair of Egyptian Geese were also seen.

It was 6pm when arrived back at the Finca, tonight we were eating out in a restaurant in the Plaza Major in the centre of Trujillo. After completing our bird-log we jumped onto the bus and drove into the centre of town. It was magical there, we sat outside on a high terrace overlooking the main square and the huge statue of Francisco Pizarro, the infamous conquistador. The sky was full of Common Swifts, Lesser Kestrels, White Storks, Jackdaws and Spotless Starlings. Later much larger groups of Spotless Starlings flew over to roost in the palm trees that line the streets in the town.



After our lovely meal we left the plaza just as it was getting dark, we made a short diversion to the west of the town to look for Red-necked Nightjars. A quiet lane provided the opportunity, we had perfect weather, a lovely setting sun with a bright red sky. It wasn't long before a Red-necked Nightjar flew up from the side of the road, we watched it hawking insects with a beautiful sunset as a back-drop. A second bird came into view for a short while and that was all we got. It was 10:30pm when we got back to the Finca, it had been another long day but a very enjoyable one.

DAY 4 – MONDAY 27TH MAY 2019

MONFRAGÜE NATIONAL PARK

WEATHER: glorious sunshine all day, very hot at times. Max temp 37C

Yes it was a hot one today but we still had a nice breeze to keep us relatively cool for most of the time. We ate breakfast at 7am and by 8am we were travelling through Trujillo on the way to Monfragüe National Park. It took just 50 minutes to arrive at our first birding destination which was the Castillo de Monfragüe. We had noted the usual species along the way such as Black Kite, Common Buzzard, Iberian Magpie, Corn Bunting, White Stork and several others.

We parked just below the Castillo car park and scanned a vertical cliff face for vultures and other montane species. Several Griffon Vultures were sitting on or near huge nests of sticks we also saw Blue Rock Thrush and dozens of Crag & House Martins, Barn & Red-rumped Swallows. In the sky behind us and not too far above us a few Griffon Vultures drifted by, then we saw our first Egyptian Vulture, it drifted past us almost at eye-level.

As we left the bus in the car park our first Cirl Bunting showed briefly and up ahead of us Gary found a

family party of Hawfinches, a parent bird was feeding two fledglings on the side of the path in front of us, the chicks were just as colourful as the adult bird. A Rock Bunting dropped down into the grass nearby with a couple of Chaffinches.

Black Stork shading its young from the sun

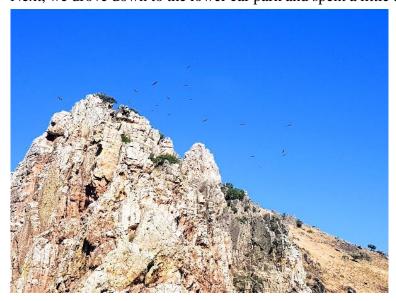
We climbed the steep stone steps to reach the Castillo, on the way up we saw a beautiful male Rock Bunting singing from a dead twig and as we neared the top of the steps we found our prized, most wanted



species, the White-rumped Swift!! This bird circled the top of the Castle for several minutes keeping close to a pair of Common Swifts, all the group got to see it well.

From the viewing platforms in the castle ramparts we had terrific views of the national park especially the rocky pinnacle called Peñon Falcon which is a paradise for Vultures, many sat out on the ledges. The sky was always full of hirundines and swifts and slowly, as the air temperature rose, more and more vultures took to the air, soon a kaleidoscopic swirl of birds were circling above the rock, it was a magical sight. A few butterflies also took to the wing, we noted Wall, Marbled White, Speckled Wood, Ilex Hairstreak and Rosemary found a new species for the list, Spanish Purple Hairstreak.

Next, we drove down to the lower car park and spent a little time looking for warblers in the surrounding



oak trees, we saw Sardinian and heard Subapline Warbler but not everyone had good views of it when it eventually showed. From the car park below the Peñon Falcon we were suddenly surrounded by about 100 elderly Spanish tourists as two buses disgorged their noisy cargo. We saw Black Storks standing on their nest sheltering the chicks from the heat, we had good views of Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart, Wren and you could almost reach out and touch the Crag Martins. A Peregrine joined the throng of Vultures circling above the rocky pinnacle, we also noted both Red and Black Kites, but no eagles.

Our next stop in the park was much more peaceful but it was getting much warmer, we parked near the main bridge over the river Tajo and watched the hundreds of house Martins flying two and fro from their nests under the bridge, Alpine Swifts and Red-rumped Swallows joined then, at times there was just a

swirling mass of birds around the bridge. On the hillside beyond the bridge a small number of Black Vultures had built their nests in the tops of trees, we watched these giants of the air coming and going but we could not see any chicks in the nests.

Our short walk took us along the bank of the river Tajo where woodland gave us some shelter from the sun, we noted Blackcap, Long-tailed Tit and some of the group saw a Garden Warbler. A Two-tailed Pasha butterfly grabbed our attention just before we left. We then drove to Villareal de San Carlos, the village in the park to buy lunch and apart from the two bus-loads of tourist very few people were seen. At the village only one café was open, luckily, they sold very nice sandwiches and excellent coffee.

For next couple of hours we made our way to the northern entrance to the park at the Portilla del Tierta, which is another rocky outcrop where lots of vultures were flying around. This site has been the best place to see Spanish Imperial Eagle for years. We noted Subalpine Warbler along the walk from the car park and a few Black Kites in the air. We had only been there about 5 minutes when an Imperial Eagle appeared over the ridge to the right of the rocky pinnacle, it circled above us for a while, gaining terrific height before drifting off. We learnt from some Spanish local birders that the old nest was back in use, but it could not be seen very well from the view-point.

A slow and very hot walk was taken along the road to some oak dehesa, we saw Eurasian Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blackcap, Common Nightingale, another Cirl Bunting and finally a couple of Woodlarks. The heat got to us and we gave up walking. We then sat in the shade sipping cold drinks at a restaurant on the very edge of the park, my group and I were exhausted because of the heat, it was around 37C at 5pm!! We eventually moved from the shade and boarded the bus for home, we did make two stops in the park on the way back, we looked for Black-eared Wheatear and Bonelli's Eagle but drew a blank on both species.

It was 6:30pm when we got back and at 8pm we all met again and sat out on one of the garden terraces to call the log, it was lovely out there in the gardens, Iberian Magpies dashing about, Hoopoes called from the olive groves and Swallows twittered around us, idyllic.

The best news of the day, of course, was that my football team had won promotion to the Premiere League, come on Aston Villa!!!

DAY 5 – TUESDAY 28TH MAY 2019

SANTA MARTA PLAINS – RIO MAGASCA – MONROY – EMBALSE DE TALAVAN – MONROY TO TRUJILLO ROAD – TRUJILLO CASTLE

WEATHER: Another great day, all day sunshine with a breeze, lower temperatures, max around 25C

After a 7am breakfast we met in the car park from where we heard Golden Orioles calling, they were in a small row of trees not too far away, we got one male in the scope and all had brief but excellent views of it. After that excitement we set off toward Trujillo and stopped after 8km on part of the old road. We were on a hill and from the roadside we had excellent views over a large area of scrub and scattered granite boulders. We were hoping for better views of Black-eared Wheatear but what we got was quite unexpected. A juvenile Great Spotted Cuckoo was sitting in a dead tree and after a short while a Eurasian Magpie came up and fed it!! Normally they chase these cuckoos off and give them hell, so we were obviously watching a Magpie feeding what it thought to be its own chick!! Never seen that before, I wonder at what stage the Magpie realises its mistake?

Oher birds around the cuckoo area were Iberian Shrike, Common Stonechat, Crested Lark, Woodchat Shrike, Hoopoe and Bee-eaters flew over, Black Kites were everywhere as usual.

From Trujillo we drove towards Santa Marta De Magasca, turning off on a wide track where large pasture fields could be seen on sloping hillsides, it looked an ideal place to search for Sandgrouse our main target species. Along the way, and quite bizarrely, we saw two Common Shelduck flying over the grass plains!!We quickly located four Great Bustards, dozens of Calandra Larks, also Crested Larks and Black Kites. Then we caught view of a single Black-bellied Sandgrouse, it flew quite a distance away from us and circled round and dropped below the skyline. I knew that there was a small lake over the hill and hoped the bird had landed there for a drink, so that is where we went to next.

Well, over the next hour we had a terrific time watching many small groups of Sandgrouse coming down to drink and often flying right over us giving us wonderful views. We saw a couple of dozen Pin-tailed Sandgrouse but never relocated the Black-bellied, although we did hear one calling a little later. Also, around the pond we saw Black-winged Stilts, Little Ringed Plover, White Wagtails and in the water, half a dozen Little Grebes swan about. Both Cattle and Little Egret dropped in with the occasional White Stork and two Grey Herons flew over.

Not too long after, we sat in the plaza major in Santa Marta drinking lovely coffee before setting off toward Monroy. We made several stops along the way and it was not until lunchtime that we finally arrived. Two of our stops were on bridges spanning the Rio Magasca, we saw quite a few species at the first bridge and very few at the second. Both Crag & House Martins, Red-rumped & Barn Swallows tended their nests under the bridges and White Wagtails, Kingfishers and Little Ringed Plovers were



seen around the water. We also noted Serin, Goldfinch, Spanish Sparrow, Chaffinch and lots of other common species. At the second bridge we watched Egyptian and Griffon Vultures coming down and landing on a rock-face along the river, large groups of Black Kites with occasional Red Kite were also noted.

back of the camera view of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, courtesy Gary Aitken

We ate our lunch sitting in the plaza major of Monroy, a nice cold drink helped our freshly made bocadillos (filled bread rolls) go down a treat. For the next hour we visited the large reservoir at Talavan, we

parked at the presa (dam) and scanned the water. To be frank there was more activity around a White Storks nest than in and around the water. We saw a couple of Great Crested Grebes, a few Mallards and three Grey Herons.

The Monroy to Trujillo road passes through some enormous grass meadows and is a regular spot where to find Montagu's Harriers, but not today, it was very disappointing not to see a single harrier. In fact, we have only seen one female Montagu's Harrier during the whole trip. I know the conservation groups

are very worried about the absence of a quintessential and iconic 'plains bird'. We did see many Black Kites and the odd Booted Eagle with distant Griffon and Black Vultures, most of our time was spent watching butterflies and other interesting insects.

At Trujillo the group went for a walk up to the Castle and enjoyed the superb panoramic views of the surrounding countryside from the castle ramparts. We sat in the Plaza Major to soak up the ambiance of such an interesting and ancient place. We also spent some time watching the local swift population zooming around the ancient buildings, we picked out one or two Pallid Swifts but it was hard to find them.

Our last dinner at Finca Santa Marta was delicious, the current chef is brilliant, inventive and imaginative, what a treat. We checked the bird list just before dinner, we have 132 species on the list with another 25 possible in the mountains of Gredos and that is where we are heading tomorrow.

DAY 6 – WEDNESDAY 29TH MAY 2019

TRANSFER FROM TRUJILLO TO NAVARREDONDA, SIERRA DE GREDOS WITH STOPS AT: MONFRAGÜE NATIONAL PARK – HERVAS WOODLAND – TORMES RIVER – HOYES DEL ESPINO - NAVARREDONDA CAMPSITE AREA

WEATHER: all day sunshine, quite breezy later. Temp lower 20's.

We said goodbye to Finca Santa Marta just after 8am, it was sad to leave, it may be my last visit there, we had had a wonderful stay as usual. But, onwards and upwards, we drove through Trujillo and on up to Monfragüe Park where we had an amazing 30 minutes of raptor watching. Along the way we finally notched a Turtle Dove (seen by 3 of us only), also many Black Kites, Booted Eagle and lots of Griffon Vultures. The usual Iberian and Eurasian Magpies dashed across the road and the obligatory Corn Buntings sat on the wires whilst kamikaze Crested Larks sat on the road.

As we approached the Park we spotted a large Eagle drifting towards us, we stopped and checked it out, it was Golden Eagle, quite a good find for Monfragüe I can't remember ever seeing one in or near the park before. After watching this magnificent bird for a while, a second, smaller eagle came up and joined it for a while. This second eagle was a Spanish Imperial Eagle, how about that, the birds did not interact but simple drifted off in different directions, amazing. We heard Woodlark singing as we got back into the bus.

Our only planned stop in the park was near the main bridge in a pull-in where I have seen Bonelli's Eagle in the past. Would you believe it, after 5 minutes of searching the sky above a ridge two **Bonelli's Eagles**, drifted over the ridge and just held in the wind above us, the light was perfect for viewing. These birds hung around for 10 minutes or so, fantastic!!

After a short toilet stop in Villareal we set off for Plasencia, which lies west of the park, we notched up a Black-eared Wheatear along the way and just when we were discussing the possibility of seeing all 5 eagles in one day I noticed a Short-toed Eagle sitting on a pylon, unfortunately it was impossible to stop anywhere near as we were on a winding road leading out of the park, (so I saw all 5 eagles, but not my clients, it was a shame).

After passing through Plasencia we stopped to buy lunch before driving up the mountainside on the road to Hervas, we parked on a side-track near an oak woodland, it was very breezy up there. We ate our lunch

and then chased a few butterflies before walking into the woodland. 'Some nice butterflies were on the wing, Brimstone, Silver Washed Fritillary, Pearl Heath, Iolas Blue, Large Tortoiseshell and Wood White were some of the species that we saw.

A stop just before Barca near the river Tormes produced a few sightings, lots of Bonelli's Warblers were singing, ditto Blackcaps, we also saw Grey Wagtail, Long-tailed Tit, our first Honey Buzzard (distant), Red Kite and we found a pair of Melodious Warblers nest building.

A quick stop at a Mirador at Hoyes del Espino produced a nice variety of species including our first Carrion Crows, Northern Wheatear and Rock Sparrow, we also saw Melodious Warbler, Common Whitethroat (at least 3 were singing from the wires), Black Redstart, Common Stonechat, some brightly

coloured Linnets, Woodchat Shrike and Corn Buntings.



Bonelli's Eagle seen this morning

Just below Hoyes del Espino we parked by a cattle pasture, a small stream ran through it and that is where we saw our first Western Yellow Wagtail (subspecies; *iberiae*), we also found Tree Sparrow, another Rock Sparrow, Eurasian Hoopoe, Black Redstart and more Carrion Crows than you shake a stick at.

It was 5pm when we arrived at our hotel on the outskirts of Navarredonda, it is a new venue for WINGSPAN, a change for the better. The hotel has 3 bird hides in the wooded grounds, the owners are birders and

very birder friendly, the whole place is covered in birdy information, photographs and birdy paraphernalia. After settling in we drove down the valley to look for Citril Finch without success, we did see Cirl Bunting, Mistle Thrush and several other common species. We then returned to the hotel for a short spell sitting in one of the hides, the birds get so close it is a lovely experience. We saw a few species but it was late in the day.

After a superb dinner with a nice glass of wine we sat on the upper terrace and listened out for Nightjars, around 10pm we heard a couple of European Nightjars and 3 of us decided to walk along the main road to find them. Despite getting very close to the calling birds we never actually saw one, tomorrow night we shall be more prepared.

DAY 7 – THURSDAY 30TH MAY 2019

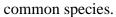
PLATAFORMA DE GREDOS – GREDOS REGIONAL PARK BELOW HOYOS DEL ESPINO AND NAVARREDONDA

WEATHER: you would think that clouds might appear in the mountains, but no, we never saw a cloud all day, just perfect. Temp ranged from 10 - 25C

It was quite cold when we got up and wearing fleeces was required but it soon warmed up after breakfast. We met at 7am and spent half-an-hour in the front car park of the hotel just watching and listening to a host of species. We took a short walk into the pine woods adjacent to the hotel and found Coal Tit and an Iberian Pied Flycatcher, the latter was visiting a nest box put up by the hotel owners.

Common Rock Thrush

A Green Woodpecker drummed a couple of times without showing we also saw Bonelli's Warbler, Black Redstart and we had great views of a couple of Crested Tits. Breakfast was nice the coffee was excellent and by 8:30am we were on our way to the Plataforma de Gredos, which is about 15km from the hotel along a winding road. We stopped at the Camping de Gredos site to look for Citril Finch without luck, but we did find Goldcrest, our first Song Thrush, lots of Serins, Eurasian Nuthatch, Jay and a few





As we worked our way up into the mountains, we made several stops to scan the hillsides and to enjoy some nice sightings of Red-backed Shrike, Ortolan Bunting, Common Whitethroat, Linnets, Yellow and Grey Wagtails and Common Stonechat. Near the car park at the top we saw several Rock Buntings and even more Ortolan Buntings. We then heard a Common Rock Thrush singing and soon we had it in the scope, what a smashing bird, furthermore we found a Blue Rock Thrush and a Red-legged Partridge up on the rocks too! A group of Spanish Ibex

were seen on the skyline way above us, we saw only females and youngsters and no adult males with their impressive horns.

As we walked higher, we found Skylarks, more Ortolan Buntings, Dunnocks and Northern Wheatears, but we could not locate a single Water Pipit! The weather was just perfect for our walk in the mountains and the light was exquisite, we came across a second Common Rock Thrush which posed nicely for our cameras. After about an hour we came to a more open area where large a tract of land was covered in flowering gorse, we searched this area for our star bird the BLUETHROAT. It took a while, as none were singing or displaying, but eventually we found a male. We saw it twice perched on a rock and realised that on both occasions the bird was carrying food, so it was obviously feeding young.

Other birds gave great views as we made our way back down to the car park, a Skylark posed nicely as did the very grey looking Dunnock but we never found a Water Pipit. From the car park we drove down

towards Hoyos de Espino, a coffee stop near the river Tormes was much appreciated and after driving into Hoyos to buy lunch supplies we returned to the river to eat it.

For an hour we searched the river area for Citril Finch without luck, we did enjoy Pied Flycatcher, Eurasian Nuthatch, Eurasian Jay, Short-toed Treecreeper, Serin, Grey Wagtail and lots of Chaffinches. We continued our search by taking a side road that followed the river, after a couple of stops in the heat of the afternoon we still had not seen a Citril Finch, We added Garden Warbler, Mistle



Thrush and Red Kite to the day list and our last port of call was just below the village of Navarredonda near the 'bull ring'. There we watched Rock Sparrow (Paul missed it for third time), also W. Yellow Wagtails, Serins and Linnets.

Just before we left a huge swirling mass of Griffon Vultures came up from beyond the village, there must have been nearly 200 of them it was an amazing sight. They were joined by 15 Black Kites, a single Red Kite and two or three Egyptian Vultures, it looked like a 'mass migration' more likely to be seen down in Tarifa on the south coast.

Skylark



We called it a day at that point and arrived back at the hotel at 5:30pm. We had a couple of hours in which to relax, some went birding others had a rest, it been another brilliant day with some treasured memories. The birding was not quite over yet, because after dinner three of went looking for European Nightjars, it was a perfect evening for looking, no wind a lovely sunset and no biting insects. We managed to hear two of them and had excellent views of one, it showed really well, flying around our heads at times, job done off to bed.

DAY 8 FRIDAY 31ST MAY 2019

PARADOR DE GREDOS - RIO TORMES EMBALSE NAVALCÁN – TRANSFER TO MADRID

WEATHER: ditto for the last 5 days, perfect sunshine all day.

We had three target species for this morning's outings, Common Crossbill, Dipper and Citril Finch, guess what? We dipped on all three! But we had a great time looking for them. At 7am we drove 1km to the Parador de Gredos to look for the Crossbill, it was a perfect morning, a little chilly but with good light and no wind. We found Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Serin, Black Redstart, Goldcrest and a few other species before we returned to our hotel 30 minutes later.



A short session in the hotel's bird hides produced a small number of birds including: Woodpecker, Robin, Great Spotted Greenfinch and more Nuthatches. In the grounds we found Crested Tit, Pied Flycatcher, Bonelli's Warbler, Blackcap and many Chaffinches. For the next two hours we searched many areas along the river Tormes for the Dipper, after two hours we were convinced that the Dipper did not exist!! Likewise, with the Citril Finch, we stopped in the places where they are seen most days but they refused to show for us. We had good views of Melodious Warbler, Cirl Bunting, Coal Tit and more Crested Tits.

The most common species of the trip: Black Kite

It was 11am by the time we set off for Madrid, we intended to stop a few times and make a leisurely trip of it. However, as we dropped down from the mountains the temperature rose significantly and it became uncomfortable to stay out of our air-conditioned bus for long. After a coffee stop we bought some picnic supplies and drove to the large Reservoir at Navalcán. We sat in the shade of some oak trees and birded the water as we ate. We saw very few species: Mallard, Great Cormorant, Jackdaw, House and Crag Martins, White Stork, Crested Lark and a Corn Bunting.

The drive to the airport went smoothly, the trip concluded as I dropped off the group at the terminal building. They all said they really enjoyed the tour and the birds we had seen. Different 'birds of the trip' were suggested: Bluethroat, Ferruginous Duck and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, personally I voted for the Sandgrouse they performed so well.

SPECIES RECORDED BETWEEN MAY 24TH AND MAY 31ST 2019

	SPECIES					DATES									
	SFE	CIES		24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				
1	Common Shelduck	Tadorna tadorna						X							
2	Egyptian Goose	Anser				X									
3	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	<u>y</u>		X	X	X	X							
4	Gadwall	Anas strepera			X										
5	Ferruginous Duck	Aythya ferruginea	X												
6	Red-legged Partridge	Alectoris rufa								X					
7	Black-necked Grebe	Podiceps nigricollis	X												
8	Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus			X	X		X							
9	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis			X	X		X							
10	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo	X			X									
11	Little Bittern	Ixobrychus minutes	<u> </u>												
12	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	<u> </u>			X		X							
13	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	X		X	X		X							
14	Great Egret	Casmerodius alba	X			X									
15	Glossy Ibis		Ŋ.												
16	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	X		X	X	X	X							
17	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea	X			X									
18	White Stork	Ciconia ciconia	<u>y</u>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
19	Black Stork	Ciconia nigra			X		X								
20	Eurasian Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia				X									
21	Eurasian Griffon Vulture	Gyps fulvus	<u> </u>		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
22	Black Vulture	Aegypius monachus	X		X		X	X	X	X	X				
23	Egyptian Vulture	Neophron percnopterus					X	X							
24	Golden Eagle	Aquila chrysaetos							X						
25	Spanish Imperial Eagle	Aquila adalberti					X		X						
26	Short-toed Snake-Eagle	Circaetus gallicus	<u> </u>	(X		X						
27	Booted Eagle	Aquila pennatus	<u>y</u>	(X	X	X					
28	Bonelli's Eagle	Hieraaetus pennatus							X						
29	Red Kite	Milvus milvus	X		X		X	X	X	X					
30	Black Kite	Milvus migrans	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
31	Western Marsh Harrier	Circus aeruginosus	, y			X									
32	Montagu's Harrier	Circus pygargus			X										
33	Common Buzzard	Buteo buteo	<u> </u>		X	X	X	X	X						
34	Honey Buzzard	Pernis apivorus							X						
35	Common Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus			X	X		X							
36	Lesser Kestrel	Falco naumanni	Y					X							
37	Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus				X	X								
38	Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	<u>y</u>			X									
39	Eurasian Coot	Fulica atra	<u>y</u>		X	X									

	SPECIES			DATE										
	Si Eci	ES	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				
40	Purple Swamphen	Porphyrula porphyrula	X											
41	Great Bustard	Otis tarda		X	X		X							
42	Little Bustard	Tetrax tetrax		X										
43	Pied Avocet	Recurvirostra avocetta			X									
44	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus	X	X	X		X	X						
45	Collared Pratincole	Glareola pratincole	X		X									
46	Little Ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius	X	X	X		X							
47	Common Ringed Plover	Charadrius hiaticula			X									
48	Kentish Plover	Charadrius			X									
49	Northern Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus			X									
50	Dunlin	Calidris alpina			X									
51	Common Redshank	Tringa tetanus	X											
52	Yellow-legged Gull	Larus cachinnans			X									
53	Black-headed Gull	Larus ridibundus			X	X								
54	Gull-billed Tern	Sterna nilotica			X									
55	Black-bellied Sandgrouse	Pterocles orientalis		X			X							
56	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	Ptercoles alchata					X							
57	Rock Dove	Columba livia	X	X	X	X	X	X						
58	Common Woodpigeon	Columba palumbus	X	X	X	X		X	X	X				
59	Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
60	Turtle Dove	Streptopelia turtur		Н		Н		X						
61	Common Cuckoo	Cuculus canorus		X		Н	X	Н	Н					
62	Great Spotted Cuckoo	Clamator glandarius		X			X							
63	Little Owl	Athene noctua		X	X									
64	Red-necked Nightjar	Caprimulgus ruficollis			X									
65	European Nightjar	Caprimulgus europaea						Н	X					
66	Common Swift	Apus apus	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
67	Pallid Swift	Apus pallidus					X							
68	Alpine Swift	Apus melba		X		X								
69	White-rumped Swift	Apus caffer				X								
70	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Uрира ерорѕ</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
71	Common Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis	X	X	X		X							
72	European Bee-eater	Merops apiaster	X	X	X	X	X	X						
73	European Roller	Coracias garrulous		X	X									
74	Green Woodpecker	Picus viridus							Н					
75	Great Sp. Woodpecker	Dendrocopus major				X		X	Н	X				
76	Skylark	Alauda arvensis		X					X					
77	Crested Lark	Galerida cristata	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				
78	Thekla Lark	Galerida theklae		X										
79	Woodlark	Lullula arborea				X	Н							
80	Greater Short-toed Lark	Calandrella brachydactyla		X										
81	Calandra Lark	Melanocorypha calandra		X		X								
82	Eurasian Crag Martin	Hirundo rupestris		X		X	X	X	X	X				

	a		DATE										
	SPECI	ES		•	25	26	^-	20	20	20	21		
02	Down Cresollows	Himmed a mustica		24 X	25 X	26 X	27 X	28 X	29 X	30 X	31 X		
83 84	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica Hirundo daurica		X	X	X	X	X	X	Λ	X		
	Red-rumped Swallow House Martin	Delichon urbica		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
85		Motacilla alba		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Λ		
86	White Wagtail (Spanish)Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava iberiae	-	A	<u>A</u>	Λ	Λ	Λ	X	X	X	$\overline{}$	-
87	` 1 '	Motacilla cinerea		X					X	X	21	$\overline{}$	
88	Grey Wagtail Dunnock	Prunella modularis	-	Λ					2X	X		$\overline{}$	
89		Erithacus rubecula					Н		X	X		$\overline{}$	
90	European Robin			ГТ	X	X	X	Н	X	H			
91	Common Nightingale	Luscinia megarhynchos		H	Λ	Λ	Λ	11	Λ	X			
92	Bluethroat	Luscinia svecica				X	X		X	X	X		
93	Black Redstart	Phoenicurus ochruros				Λ	Λ		X	X	Λ		
94	Northern Wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe								Α			
95	Black-eared Wheatear	Oenanthe hispanica					X		X				
96	Black Wheatear	Oenanthe leucura			X								
97	European Stonechat	Saxicola rubicola		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
98	Song Thrush	Turtus philomelos								X			
99	Mistle Thrush	Turdus viscivorus						X	X	X			
100	Eurasian Blackbird	Turdus merula]	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
101	Blue Rock-Thrush	Monticola solitarius			X		X			X			
102	Rock Thrush	Monticola saxatilis								X			
103	Garden Warbler	Sylvia borin								X			
104	Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla				X	X	X	X	X	X		
105	Common Whitethroat	Sylvia communis					X		X	X			
106	Western Orphean Warbler	Sylvia hortensis				X	Н						
107	Sardinian Warbler	Sylvia melanocephala		X		X	X	X					
108	Spectacled Warbler	Sylvia conspicillata		X									
109	Subalpine Warbler	Sylvia cantillans					X						
110	Dartford Warbler	Sylvia undata		X									
111	Zitting Cisticola	Cisticola juncidis		X		X			X				
112	Savi's Warbler	Locustella luscinioides		X									
113	Cetti's Warbler	Cettia cetti]	H	Н	X	Н						
114	Eurasian Reed-Warbler	Acrocephalus scirpaceus				X							
115	Great Reed-Warbler	Acrocephalus arundinaceus		X		X			X				
116	Melodious Warbler	Hippolais polyglotta				X			X	Н	X		
117	W. Bonelli's Warbler	Phylloscopus bonelli		X			Н			X			
118	Goldcrest	Regulus regulus								X			
119	Wren	Troglodytes trogladytes				X	X						
120	Spotted Flycatcher	Muscicapa striata				X							
121	Iberian Pied Flycatcher	Ficedula hypoleuca iberiae								X	X		
122	Great Tit	Parus major			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
123	Coal Tit	Parus ater								X			
123	Eurasian Blue Tit	Parus caeruleus			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
125	Crested Tit	Parus cristatus								X	X		
123	Ciestea III	1 W. W. C. I. DICHEMO					<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>				

	SPECIES			DATES									
	SPEC	IES .	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			
126	Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus	X	X		X		X	X	31			
127	Eurasian Nuthatch	Sitta europaea caesia				X		X	X	X			
128	Short-toed Treecreeper	Certhia brachydactyla							X				
129	Iberian Grey Shrike	Lanius meridionalis	X	X	X		X						
130	Red-backed Shrike	Lanius collurio							X				
131	Woodchat Shrike	Lanius senator	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			
132	Iberian Magpie	Cyanopica cyana	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			
133	Eurasian Magpie	Pica pica	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
134	Eurasian Jay	Garrulus glandarius		X		X		X	X	X			
135	Eurasian Jackdaw	Corvus monedula	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			
136	Carrion Crow	Corvus corone						X	X	X			
137	Northern Raven	Corvus corax		X	X		X		X	X			
138	Spotless Starling	Sturnus unicolor	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
139	Eurasian Golden-Oriole	Oriolus oriolus	Н	X	X		X	X					
140	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
141	Spanish Sparrow	Passer hispaniolensis	X	X	X	X	X						
142	Eurasian Tree-Sparrow	Passer montanus			X			X					
143	Rock Sparrow	Petronia petronia						X	X				
144	Common Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	X	X	Н	X	X	X	X	X			
145	Eurasian Linnet	Carduelis cannabina		X	X	X		X	X				
146	European Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelids	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
147	European Greenfinch	Carduelis chloris			X		X	X	X	X			
148	European Serin	Serinus serinus	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			
149		Coccothraustes			X	X		X					
	Hawfinch	coccothraustes											
150	Ortolan Bunting	Emberiza hortulana							X				
151	Cirl Bunting	Emberiza cirlus			-	X		X		X			
152	Corn Bunting	Miliaria calandra	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
153	Rock Bunting	Emberiza cia		X		X			X	X			
154	Monk Parakeet	Myiopsitta monachus	X							X			
155	Common Waxbill	Estrilda astrild			X							1	
	BUTTERFLY	SPECIES				D	ATI	ES					
	20111M D1		24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			
1	Swallowtail		X	X	X				X				
2	Large White			†		X		X					
3	Small White			X									
4	Bath White			X	X	X	X	X					
5	Wood White			†				X					
6	Moroccan Orange Tip (Prover	ce)						X	X				
7	Clouded Yellow	-	X		X	X		X	X				
8	Berger's Clouded Yellow			1					X				
9	Brimstone			1				X					
<u> </u>	1	<u> </u>											

	SPECIES	DATES											
				24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		
10	Cleopatra			X		X	X						
11	Small Copper			X	X				X	X			
12	Holly Blue			X	X	X	X		X				
13	Brown Argus				X	X	X	X	X	X			
14	Two-tailed Pasha						X						
15	Large Tortoiseshell						X	X					
16	Small Tortoiseshell									X			
17	Red Admiral						X						
18	Comma				X								
19	Cardinal Fritillary						X						
20	Silver-washed Fritillary								X	X			
21	Great-banded Grayling					X					X		
22	Meadow Brown		X			X	X	X	X		X		
23	Gatekeeper				X	X	X	X					
24	Small Heath				X	X	X	X		X			
25	Pearly Heath								X				
26	Speckled Wood						X		X	X			
27	Wall Brown						X		X	X			
28	llex Hairstreak				X								
29	Spanish Purple Hairstreak						X						
30	Small Skipper						X						
31	Large Skipper								X				
32	Queen of Spain Fritillary						X		X	X			
	DRAGONFLY SPECI & INTERESTING INSEC			24	25		DA'. 27		29	30	31		
33	Hummingbird Hawkmoth					X							
34	Thread-wing Lacewing					X		X					
35	Macro Owlfly (Libelloides)								X				
36	Common Bluetail				X								
	MAMMALS, REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS												
1	Spanish Ibex									X			
2	Red Deer dwordobar						X						
3	Hare							X		X			
4	Rabbit			X	X	X							
5	Moorish Gecko			X	X	X	X						
6	Ocellated Lizard				X	X	X						
7	Schrieber's Green Lizard									X	X		
8	European Pond Terrapin			X	X		X	X					
9	Marsh Frog			X	X					X			

10	Common Iberian Wall-Lizard		X	X				
11	European Tree Frog			H				
12	VIperine Snake		X		X			