

Wingspan Bird Tours

Trip Report

Andalucia 5 day Tour April 2012

Leader: **Bob Buckler**

Participants:

Susan Anderson
Steve Anderson

DAY 1 APRIL 1ST 2012

MALAGA AIRPORT -DESEMBOCADURA GUADALHORCE - SIERRA CRESTELLINA

I collected Susan and Steve from Malaga Airport around 11am and we went straight to the Nature Reserve at the river Guadalhorce, we spent 3 excellent hours having a great birding session in the bright Spanish Sunshine.



Sue and Steve on the west embankment at the Guadalhorce.

We started listing our birds with **Spotless Starling, Monk Parakeet, Kentish Plover, Common Sandpiper, Sardinian Warbler, Red-rumped Swallow** and several **Serins** all appearing quite quickly one after the other.

We then walked along the beach and turned into the reserve to view the Laguna Grande from the raised hide. It was at this point that Steve took a tumble, all was OK his camera wasn't broken.

At the Laguna we saw **Black-winged Stilt, Little and Black-necked Grebes, White-headed Duck, Gadwall, Ringed and Little Ringed Plover, Redshank, Greenshank, Dunlin** and a couple of

Little Egrets. A **Night Heron** flew over us a couple of times and a lovely **Collared Pratincole** landed right in front of the hide, click, click went the cameras.

From the next hide we found more **White-headed Ducks**, some of the males were looking super in their summer plumage with bright blue bills. We also found **Purple Swamphen, Common Pochard** and a male **Shoveler**. Many **Zitting Cisticola** were Zitting about, we also heard a few **Cetti's Warblers** and one **Reed Warbler**. Over head we found a couple of **Bee-eaters**, a male **Marsh Harrier** and a **Common Kestrel**.

We took lunch at a venta in San Julian before driving to Gaucin, along the way we drove through several showers of rain, some of them heavy. As we arrived at sierra Crestellina the sun came out and the light improved dramatically. From the roadside we saw **Griffon Vultures**, a **Peregrine Falcon**, **Woodchat Shrike**, **Cirl Bunting**, **Corn Bunting**, **Blackcap**, **Stonechat** and a couple of **Common Kestrels**. We then drove up the hill to Gaucin and along the way we stopped to watch a large flock of **Black Kites** flying up the Genal valley towards Gaucin, a **Common Buzzard** flew up to join them.



THE OBLIGING COLLARED PRATINCOLE

We gathered for dinner at 7pm and ran through the bird log; we had listed just fewer than 60 species, not too bad for 3/4 of a day.

DAY 2 - APRIL 2ND 2012

GAUCIN - CORTES DE LA FRONTERA - MONTEJAQUE – RONDA

Oh, to be in England now that April's here!!! I mean it, it was cloudy, dull, misty, wet and cold here in Spain today, I may as well have been back in Somerset, (or Wales).



Sue and Steve on a footbridge over the Rio Guadiaro

Wet, wet, wet.....I can't believe it. We set off at 8:30am from Gaucin and headed north towards Ronda, we broke through the cloud a couple of clicks up the road so we decided to have a quick look in the cork oaks near the 'bull ring'. We found **Eurasian Nuthatch, Mistle Thrush, Chaffinch, Great spotted Woodpecker** and lots of **Blue & Great Tits**. We heard **Blackcap, Bonelli's Warbler, Green Woodpecker** and **Iberian Chiffchaff** but didn't see any of them, rain drove us off.

In the Guadiaro valley near Estacion de Cortes we took a walk along a wide track where we found **Cirl Bunting, Serin**, lots of **Gold, Green and Chaffinches** and millions of **Blackcaps** - I mean lots - we saw 12 in one tree!

At the river the weather perked up for 30 minutes in which time we logged: **White & Grey Wagtails, Little Ringed Plover, Cattle Egret, Wood Pigeon, Cetti's Warbler, Common Nightingale** (heard only), **Red-rumped and Barn Swallows, House Martin, Cirl Bunting, Stonechat, Rock Sparrow, Hawfinch** (a lovely male perched up for us) and more **Blackcaps**. A juvenile **Black-crowned Night Heron** was a nice find.

A new wet front was pushing up the valley and keeping just ahead of it were a good number of raptors: over 40 **Black Kites**, **Short-toed Eagles** and **Booted Eagles** were joined by a single **Egyptian Vulture** and several **Griffon Vultures**, a **Common Kestrel** perched on a nearby pylon.

We quickly ate our picnic lunch just before the rain came back with a vengeance. Driving through Cortes and Benaolan we arrived at Montejaque where we stopped just north of the town on a nice quiet track. It was still raining lightly as we searched for a **Black Wheatear**, which never appeared for us. We only found **Red-billed Chough**, **Southern Grey Shrike**, **Spotless Starling**, **Linnet**, **Stonechat** and more **Black Kites**.

At the 'dam-that-doesn't work' we added **Rock Dove**, **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Sardinian Warbler** and more **Griffon Vultures** to our sightings. Just up the road we visited the cork woods near the Ronda-Sevilla road where we found a nice **Firecrest**, also **Eurasian Nuthatch**, **Wren** (heard), **Short-toed Eagle**, **Booted Eagle**, **Common Coot** (on the lake), **European Robin**, **Bonelli's Warbler** (heard) and lots of the more common birds.

After a short coffee break in a roadside venta we drove into the centre of Ronda where Susan and Steve visited the famous gorge before we set off for Gaucin taking the Algeciras road, we saw a **Hoopoe** fly up from the road just outside Ronda. We did stop a couple of times when we found breaks in the thick fog and mist but our efforts to find **Black Wheatear** were thwarted by the weather, we did find **Red-legged Partridge**, a new species for the list.

An early shower was the order of the day, actually it was showers all day, we arrived back in Gaucin at 4:45pm, a wash-out I would call it, I hope tomorrow isn't the same!!!

DAY 3 - APRIL 3RD 2012

GAUCIN-CASARES BEACH- LAGUNA TORREGUADIARO - SAN ENRIQUE WOODS - PINAR DEL REY -PALMONES SALT MARSH

Today I set off with Steve and Sue at 7:30am and headed for the coast, it was still dark, very misty and pouring with rain! We collected Roy and Rachel from Estapona and set off for our first birding destination which was the beach area at Casares.

We got soaked, it rained all the time and we didn't see many birds. A quick stop at a **Monk Parakeet** nesting colony proved better, it had stopped raining and the birds were showing well.

At Torreguadiaro we had light showers during our walk. We did see some good species: **Purple Heron (2)**, **Purple Swamphen (4)**, **Little Owl**, **Kentish Plover**, **Crested Lark**, **Cirl Bunting (8)**, **Common Nightingale** and **Cetti's Warbler** were both heard but not seen.

At San Enrique Woods we found **Tree Sparrow** as soon as we got out of the car, there was also **Blackcap**, **Booted Eagle**, **Serim**, **Cattle Egret** and **Goldfinch** to look at. In the wood we had great views of both **Short-toed Treecreeper** and **Great Spotted Woodpecker** along with **Blue Tit**, **Great Tit**, **Blackcap** and again we heard **Common Nightingale** and **Cetti's Warbler**. We ate our picnic lunch just outside the wood; the weather had improved and warmed up.



A short visit to Pinar del Rey produced several **Jays, Chaffinch, Bee-eaters** (overhead), **Griffon Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Black Kite** and a singing **Bonelli's Warbler**.



The rest of the afternoon was spent at Palmones, first we visited the west side of the marsh at the Municipal Park. At least 8 **Woodchat Shrikes** were found in the park along with a **Hoopoe**. On the marsh we saw **Marsh Harrier, Eurasian Spoonbill, Black-winged Stilt, Greenshank, Redshank** and **Great Cormorant**. Our last birding was done from the promenade on the east side of the river. A good selection of waders was present: **Ringed, Little Ringed, Grey and Kentish Plover, Dunlin, Whimbrel, Sanderling, Turnstone** and **Common Sandpiper**. A few **Sandwich Terns** were joined

by a **Gull-billed Tern** on the sand bar.

We dropped Roy and Rachel off near Estapona and made our way back to Gaucin. We stopped at Sierra Crestellina to look for eagles and we were rewarded with great views of a pair of **Bonelli's Eagles**, the male was displaying, a great show. Well pleased with our sightings we set off back to Gaucin for a lovely home cooked dinner.

DAY 4 - APRIL 4TH 2012

GAUCIN - SAN MARTIN - CASTELLAR - LOS LANCES BEACH - LA JANDA - BARBATE MARSHES

Our final full day began at 8:30am as we left Gaucin for the coast, we were joined by Paul who lives in the village. The weather looked promising, whilst it was dull and overcast in the mountains it looked bright and sunny at the coast.

Our first stop was at the railway bridge near San Martin where a small colony of **Lesser Kestrels** usually breeds. They showed very well, we saw about a dozen birds there, other species in the area were: **White Stork, Jackdaw, Blackcap, Griffon Vulture** and **Cattle Egret**.

Next we stopped at the Hotel Castellar to look into the sand quarry that sits behind the hotel, we were looking for Bee-eaters, at least 50 pairs breed there but we only saw about six individuals, they obviously haven't got back from Africa yet. Several raptors were soaring high up in the sky they included: **Black Kite, Booted Eagle, Marsh Harrier** and **Common Kestrel**. We passed through San Roque where we saw about 50 **White Stork's** nests, many had sitting birds.

The good weather approached as we arrived at the coast, but it was very windy as we got out of the car at the Los Lances Beach in Tarifa. Despite the windy conditions we saw several new species for our list. There were many **Short-toed Larks** on the short turf behind the beach; they were with **Meadow Pipits, Crested Larks** and **Yellow Wagtails**. We also saw **Northern Wheatears**, my first in Spain this year, as well as **Corn Buntings, Stonechat, Zitting Cisticola** and **Spotless Starlings** all feeding in the same area.

BEAUTY AND ELEGANCE ON STILTS!



On the beach we found **Kentish Plover**, **Grey Plover** and **Sanderling**. There were also lots of **Sandwich Terns**, **Mediterranean Gulls**, **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, **Audouin's Gulls** and a solitary **Little Tern**.

Off shore there many more **Little Terns** feeding in the surf and a few **Balearic Shearwaters** were seen a little further out

We arrived at La Janda in the late morning and our first sightings included: **Corn Bunting**, **Goldfinches**, **Linnets**, **Greenfinches** and many **White Storks**, **Griffon Vultures** and **Black Kites** were in the air.

As we drove along the central track we saw **Purple Swamphen**, **Cetti's Warbler (heard)**, **Calandra Lark (distant)**, **Montagu's Harrier**, **Marsh Harrier** and plenty more **White Storks**. We saw a single **Eurasian Spoonbill** in a ditch and as we ate our picnic lunch we located a **Black-crowned Night Heron** that was roosting in a tree nearby. One highlight was the sighting of a **Black-winged Kite** perched in a bush, we approached quietly and Paul managed to get a few photographs.

We followed the Benalup track over the hill passed the farm and into the olive groves where we looked for **Great-spotted Cuckoo**, we found their 'hosts', the **Eurasian Magpie**, but not the cuckoo. At one point we accidentally flushed five **Short-eared Owls** from a thicket, it was quite a surprise as hadn't anticipated their presence! The sky



was full of raptors we added **Common Buzzard** to our list as they joined **Griffon Vultures** and many **Black Kites** on the thermals. It was now very hot so we decided to go back to the coast to the marshes at Barbate; we drove back along the dirt track to the main road trying to avoid the many **Common Pheasants** and **Red-legged Partridges** that ventured onto the track.

The marshes were full of birds but not many species; there must have been over 200 **Common Moorhens!!** Also many **Black-winged Stilts**, twenty or so **Glossy Ibis**, lots of **Mallards** and **Common Coots**. The few waders present were: **Wood Sandpiper** (2), **Ruff** (1) and a distant **Green Sandpiper**.

BARBATE MARSHES

Driving round to Barbate we took the coast road to Zahara and it was along there that we drove passed a small group of 'Ibis', a quick shout from the back of the car had us turning around to view the birds. They were indeed Ibis, **Bald Ibis**, a party from the re-introduction programme, all the birds were 'ringed' and appeared quite tame. A little further along the road we saw a large flock of them flying over the road, there must have been 30 birds, the programme is proving successful as the produced young birds last year for the first time and are doing so again this year!



IT'S NO WONDER THAT THE BALD IBIS IS ONE OF THE RAREST BIRDS IN THE WORLD - THEY ARE SO UGLY THAT THEY CAN'T ATTRACT A MATE!!

After a short stop for coffee at the Mirador over the Strait of Gibraltar we set off for Gaucin arriving at 7pm just in time for a delicious Mousaka dinner with chocolate brownies for sweet. yum, yum!

That was the last of the birding for Steve and Sue, they elected to have the final morning 'off' so they could explore the village before setting off to Malaga to catch their cruise ship for a med cruise, it's alright for some, eh!

We listed 125 species and heard 4 more, this low figure would have been higher had it not been for the inclement weather on days 2 and 3! Steve voted **Woodchat Shrike** as his bird of the week whilst Susan (a non-birder) liked the **White Storks** on their nests and the **Collared Pratincole** that she found on day 1 at Guadlahorce. I wonder why the Bald Ibis wasn't voted for?

SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE 5 DAYS APRIL 1ST – APRIL 5TH 2012

1	Black-necked Grebe
2	Little Grebe
3	Great Cormorant
4	Northern Gannet
5	Grey Heron
6	Purple Heron
7	Little Egret
8	Cattle Egret
9	Night-Heron
10	Glossy Ibis
11	Bald Ibis
12	Eurasian Spoonbill
13	White Stork
14	Common Shelduck
15	Mallard
16	Gadwall
17	Northern Shoveler
18	Common Pochard
19	White-headed Duck
20	Black Kite
21	Black-winged Kite
22	Eurasian Griffon Vulture
23	Egyptian Vulture
24	Bonelli's Eagle
25	Booted Eagle
26	Short-toed Snake-Eagle
27	Common Buzzard
28	Western Marsh-Harrier
29	Montagu's Harrier
30	Lesser Kestrel
31	Common Kestrel

32	Peregrine Falcon
33	Red-legged Partridge
34	Common Pheasant
35	Common Moorhen
36	Common Coot
37	Purple Swamphen
38	Black-winged Stilt
39	Collared Pratincole
40	Little Ringed Plover
41	Common Ringed Plover
42	Kentish Plover
43	Grey Plover
44	Ruddy Turnstone
45	Ruff
46	Little Stint
47	Dunlin
48	Sanderling
49	Common Redshank
50	Common Greenshank
51	Common Sandpiper
52	Wood Sandpiper
53	Black-headed Gull
54	Mediterranean Gull
55	Yellow-legged Gull
56	Audouin's Gull
57	Lesser Black-backed Gull
58	Sandwich Tern
59	Little Tern
60	Gull-billed Tern
61	Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon
62	Common Wood-Pigeon
63	Eurasian Collared-Dove
64	Little Owl
65	Short-eared Owl
66	Eurasian Hoopoe
67	Common Swift
68	Pallid Swift
69	Alpine Swift
70	Great Sp. Woodpecker
71	Green Woodpecker (H)
72	European Bee-eater
73	Calandra Lark
74	Crested Lark
75	Short-toed Lark
76	Barn Swallow
77	Red-rumped Swallow
78	Northern House-Martin
79	Meadow Pipit
80	White Wagtail
81	Yellow Wagtail
82	Grey Wagtail
83	European Stonechat
84	European Robin
85	Common Redstart
86	Northern Wheatear
87	Mistle Thrush
88	Song Thrush
89	Common Blackbird
90	Blue Rock-Thrush
91	Reed Warbler (H)
92	Zitting Cisticola
93	Cetti's Warbler

94 Blackcap
95 Sardinian Warbler
96 Spectacled Warbler
97 Bonelli's Warbler
98 Willow Warbler
99 Iberian Chiffchaff..... (H)
100 Common Chiffchaff
101 Firecrest
102 Great Tit
103 Eurasian Blue Tit
104 Eurasian Nuthatch
105 Short-toed Treecreeper
106 Wren..... (H)
107 Southern Grey Shrike
108 Woodchat Shrike
109 Eurasian Jay
110 Eurasian Magpie
111 Eurasian Jackdaw
112 Red-billed Chough
113 Common Raven
114 Spotless Starling
115 Eurasian Tree Sparrow
116 House Sparrow
117 Rock Sparrow
118 Spotless Starling
119 Common Chaffinch
120 Common Linnet
121 European Goldfinch
122 European Greenfinch
123 European Serin
124 Hawfinch
125 Cirl Bunting
126 Corn Bunting
127 Monk Parakeet
TOTAL SEEN 123
HEARD ONLY (H) 4