

Spain: Extremadura and Gredos

Sat 5th-Sat 12th May 2012



(Photos, clockwise from top left): The majestic **Great Bustard** seen on the plains near Belen • Male **Rock Buntings** are always pleasing • Many **Bee-eaters** flew over, so it was nice to savour one perched • Another special Spanish bird, a male **Iberian Wagtail** in the Gredos • Early breeders, **Great Spotted Cuckoos** put on a good show • A subtly coloured, but very fine male **Ortolan Bunting** in the Gredos © all photos Gary Elton/Limosa Holidays, Spain tour, May 2012.

report compiled by tour leader:
Gary Elton

Trip Diary

Tour leader: Gary Elton

with Ray Bryant, Tony Jones, Terry & Ann Mitchell.

Saturday 5th May

After a trouble free flight we arrived on time at Madrid Airport. The new airport building in Madrid is a stunning architectural achievement, although its size can be somewhat overwhelming for those experiencing it for the first time! We had landed in the satellite part of the huge airport and luggage collection involved a reasonable walk followed by a short train journey, which at times was very confusing! We had lunch at the airport, during which time Gary collected the mini-bus, then we set off westward towards Extremadura. The journey again was straightforward once we had cleared Madrid, and we travelled for several hours before taking a break at a roadside pull in. This gave us an opportunity to do our first birding of the day, and we quickly located a good selection of species including Woodchat and Southern Grey Shrike, Griffon Vulture, Black Kite, Bee-eater, Corn Bunting, which were all species we were to see daily over the next week, though more of a surprise was a solitary Tree Sparrow sat on a nearby roadside wire. We arrived at our hotel to be welcomed by its owner, Juan Pedro, who showed us around the grounds and then to our respective rooms, after which we had dinner and retired to bed.

Sunday 6th May

The following morning we were awoken to the sound of a singing Nightingale in the garden, and the first of our pre-breakfast walks produced an array of birds just a few hundred yards from the hotel. This included Azure-winged Magpie, Golden Oriole, Sardinian Warbler, Hoopoe and Woodchat Shrike, with a very brief Wryneck being a bonus bird. After a substantial breakfast we loaded the minibus, and made the short drive into Trujillo to view the nesting Lesser Kestrels on the bullring roof; there, at least six birds were present and gave us great views, obviously used to their celebrity status! We drove out of Trujillo and headed west towards Cáceres, turning off the motorway to travel north along the road towards Santa Marta de Magasca and Monroy.

We drove along, stopping regularly through the 'dehesa' habitat, which was quickly replaced with vast areas of Spanish steppe. The former producing several singing Wood Larks, Goldfinches and Crested Larks, whilst the steppe habitat soon had us viewing our first Great Bustards, numerous Calandra Larks, several Short-toed Larks and a Montagu's Harrier, which was to be the first of eight birds encountered during the day. Along with the expected, or at least hoped for species, came a few surprises which included a roadside Melodious Warbler, two Turtle Doves, which amazingly were the only ones of the trip, and a rather smart Black-eared Wheatear. Our last stop of the day was at a small roadside White Stork colony; we parked nearby, noting small numbers of Spanish Sparrows nesting in the lower parts of the stork's nests. We walked along the field edge here, viewing an area of mixed farmland. Several singing Quail could be heard, which unsurprisingly remained hidden from view, and several distant vultures included our first Black of the trip.

Our target species here was Black-winged Kite, but with no sign of the bird we started to return to the bus, but as luck would have it a Spanish birder coming the other way had just noted the bird appear distantly behind us. We then enjoyed good views of the bird through out scopes, before returning to the bus and heading back to the hotel. We made several roadside stops again on the way back, enabling us to find our first Little Bustards, and a small pool outside Trujillo produced a Common Sandpiper and Little Ringed Plover.

Monday 7th May

A slightly earlier start to our pre-breakfast jaunt this morning, found us driving to the nearby Belen plains, another area of largely Spanish steppe, where we drove along stopping periodically to view the plain. Distant Cattle Egrets were noted leaving their night time roosts, two Little Owls were found perched on prominent watchpoints, a Great Spotted Cuckoo showed well perched out on a fence post, and several more confiding Little Bustards were seen. A distant group of vultures on the ground

included both Griffon and Black, plus an Egyptian which frustratingly remained largely hidden from view. With time ticking by we returned through the narrow streets of Belen village for breakfast.

After breakfast we headed off to our destination of the day, the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe, here the Rio Tajo has cut a gorge into the Sierra de la Corchuelas to create the spectacular cliff face Peña Falcon, which is the defining location of the Park. With so much bird rich habitat, we made several speculative stops along the way, enjoying views of more singing Wood Lark, Red Kite, and several Booted Eagles. Our first stop in the park was at the base of the Castillo, where we parked in the lower car park and took a short walk along one of the roadside tracks, noting Nuthatch and Golden Oriole. The steep drive to the Castillo was followed by an equally steep walk to the top of the Castillo. A large party of school children greeted us when we arrived, though this didn't detract from the magnificent view out over the park. Griffon Vultures and Black Kites soared below and alongside us and a Short-toed Eagle drifted over us as we enjoyed the view. Returning back down to the van we were met by the familiar sound of a singing Short-toed Treecreeper, which after a short wait showed well for us.

We drove onto the 'Salto del Gitano' watchpoint, which over looks the Peña Falcon cliff face; we had lunch whilst scouring the rock faces for birds. Almost immediately, two distant birds chasing each other on the high peak caught our attention, and a telescope trained on them revealed their identity as Black Wheatears. Further birds seen during lunch included Black Stork, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart and Rock Bunting.

After lunch we continued on through the park, stopping at the visitor centre, where we walked a short section of one of the designated walks, this proved a good move with views of both singing Orphean and Subalpine Warblers. The weather today had at times been damp and grey, which had Gary worrying that this was going to hamper our chances of seeing the Spanish Imperial Eagles as we drove to our final destination of the day, the Portilla de Tietar. He needn't have worried as the first and only bird perched on the highest craig there as we disembarked from the bus was a Spanish Imperial Eagle. We enjoyed fantastic views of the bird which was shortly joined by a second, and scanning of the rock face below them revealed an Eagle Owl nest site with two young birds in it, a truly memorable end to a very successful day.

Tuesday 8th May

A return to normal the following morning, with a rather grey and damp local walk before breakfast, with Sardinian Warbler and some rather confiding Red-rumped Swallow showing well for us, and the opportunity taken to admire the Champagne Orchids growing both just outside the hotel and in the garden. After breakfast we headed south towards Zorita, with our first stop being the extensive plains there, which were again viewed from the roadside. As we drove the minor roads, various stops produced a very showy pair of Great Spotted Cuckoos on some fence wires, both bustards, a singing Chiffchaff, which was to be our only one of the trip, and a rather smart Roller, our first of the trip.

We returned to the main road and took the next turning to Embalse de Sierra Brava where a good selection of wildfowl greeted us, which included a flock of 15 Red-crested Pochard, close to 100 Great-crested Grebe and some less expected species that included a drake Pintail and several Shoveler. We continued our journey south, stopping once again at some roadside pools, which revealed a singing Great Reed Warbler, a Little Ringed Plover, our first Purple Heron and a small noisy flock of Red Avadavats. We then transversed an area of cultivated fields west of the main road, which largely due to Terry's sharp eyes revealed single Stone Curlew, Collared Pratincole and Lapwing, which was followed by our lunch stop on the banks of the Rio Gargaligas.

The river was quite heavily vegetated with reed, where singing Great Reed and Reed Warblers and more Red Avadavats were seen. A squealing Water Rail was heard but unsurprisingly not seen, and a calling male Penduline Tit was seen briefly by Gary, but unfortunately only seen in flight by the remainder of the group; despite searching it remained hidden from view. After lunch, we spent some time exploring the area south of the Embalse de Serena which proved vast and relatively quiet from a bird perspective though several Montagu's Harriers and Short-toed Eagles were seen. We returned

north and spent the last couple of hours of the day searching the cultivated area around Vegas Altas, where a drivable network of tracks around the area proved useful as we searched the flooded fields for birds. The majority of the fields were totally bird less, then we noted some distant feeding terns and driving towards them revealed more birds in the same field. At least 25 Gull-billed and four Whiskered Terns were present, plus a selection of waders that included Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Greenshank, Redshank and Black-winged Stilt.

With a wine-tasting session arranged by Juan Pedro at the Hotel this evening we needed to return to the hotel punctually (well at least not too late) so we reluctantly made our journey back, adding three more Rollers on roadside wires on the way. It would not be right not to mention the wine tasting that Juan Pedro had arranged; with excellent Spanish wine, an entertaining host and good company it proved an enjoyable diversion, and impressively we managed to comfortably finish all three bottles of the wine between us!

Wednesday 9th May

Our pre-breakfast excursion today took us to the nearest area of the Cáceres plain, in search of sandgrouse, a species that had so far eluded us, though today was to be our lucky day! We pulled up to search the first area of open steppe we encountered, singing Calandra larks and both bustards were on view. Gary then picked up two Black-bellied Sandgrouse flying, which landed in front of us, whilst almost simultaneously Ann had discovered a small flock of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse sat in full view nearby! A truly 'wow' moment as both species of sandgrouse, it transpired 22 birds in total, sat in full view for us in perfect sunlight. We savored the moment before reluctantly returning to the hotel for a celebratory breakfast.

A more relaxed day was planned today, with our ultimate destination being the Embalse de Arroyocampo, with a stop *en route* to search for several species of *Sylvia* warbler. With an incorrectly marked map we took a rather convoluted route to the site but arrived eventually, where we were almost immediately greeted by a pair of Dartford Warblers, with a second male also seen during our short stay. The area is a known breeding area for Spectacled Warbler and it wasn't long before we located a territorial male which showed well singing from various perches close by us. A cup of coffee was called for, after which we continued our journey to Embalse de Arroyocampo, stopping briefly *en route* at a small area of coniferous woodland, where we added a pair of Crested Tit to our list.

On arrival we parked by the hide overlooking the north-east corner of the reservoir and had lunch, then scanned across the areas of open water in front of us. Several Purple Herons were seen and a large group of egrets on one of the banks appeared to be largely Cattle. Two Savi's Warblers could be heard reeling in the extensive reed bed, one of which was relatively close and a short walk and a scan of the reed tops soon revealed the bird to us. After lunch we made the short drive to the nearby visitor centre, where we collected a key for the remaining three hides and spent the next hour or so viewing the various areas of the reservoirs from them. Birds seen included several Purple Swamphen and Purple Heron, Spoonbill, Night Heron and Kingfisher, with another Penduline Tit heard on several occasions, but unfortunately again refusing to reveal itself.

We left the reservoir and headed back to Trujillo, where we spent a leisurely hour walking around the town and castle enjoying the architecture and its history, and also noting large numbers of Lesser Kestrels and Swifts around the buildings. We returned back to the hotel in good time for dinner, which also allowed the group time to pack for the hotel transfer the following day, and after dinner Gary, Ray and Tony went in search of Nightjars. Juan Pedro had given us a possible area to search, having heard of reports of Nightjars there and after a rather testing drive down an extremely narrow track we parked the bus and continued on foot.

With the light just starting to fade, two Scops Owls could be heard starting to call and it wasn't long before we heard our first Red-necked Nightjar calling a short distance ahead of us. We stood listening and to our surprise the bird then took off and flew right over us. It then flew back across us before disappearing, we did not see it again, but on the walk back to the bus heard presumably a second bird

calling more distantly. We arrived back at the hotel and decided to take a speculative look at the barns where we had been told Barn Owl were nesting. A bird/birds could be heard calling from the barn which were presumed to be the young, and again to our surprise an adult bird flew across us landing in full silhouetted view on the rooftop, again a rather splendid end to another successful day.

Thursday 10th May

The following morning after breakfast we said goodbye to Juan Pedro and his wife and excellent cook Belen, and started our journey North to the Sierra de Gredos. The most straightforward route was back through the Monfragüe Park where we once again made a series of stops which enabled us to gain better views on previously seen species such as Cirl Bunting and Egyptian Vulture, the latter bird giving Ray views he now felt he could tick !

Our journey continued North-east along the Valle de Jerte, where we made several stops: our first, for lunch, by a mountain stream where the first of numerous Grey Wagtails were encountered; then two more stops along the road to Hervás, where we enjoyed fantastic views of Golden Oriole, including at one stage three squabbling males. We also had nice views of a singing Western Bonelli's Warbler, which was the first of many we were to see and hear over the coming days, and as we arrived at our hotel, El Milano Real, two Melodious Warblers were a nice roadside find.

Friday 11th May

Our birding in the Sierra de Gredos began the following morning with a pre-breakfast visit to the Parador de Gredos. There were some new species to see such as Coal Tits, common in the fir trees, a singing Firecrest, several noisy Crossbills. Black Redstarts were seemingly everywhere and a walk around the back of the Parador produced three Rock Sparrows, sitting in full view on some telephone wires. We returned to our hotel for breakfast, after which we made the short drive to the Plataforma de Gredos stopping *en route* at small paddock. Here we found several Northern Wheatears and the first of several "Iberian" Wagtails with their distinct blue-grey heads, white throat and fine supercilium. Several small birds were seen feeding on the ground further along the road and closer inspection revealed Chaffinch and four Ortolan Buntings, which conveniently allowed some nice photographic opportunities.

We continued to the Plataforma, where we parked and walked up to the higher level along the well marked path. Here we enjoyed great looks at more Rock and Ortolan Buntings along the way and Dunnocks were easily seen and heard. It wasn't long before we saw our first Bluethroat, a cracking singing male, sitting out in full view for us, enabling everyone to get great views through the scopes. A solitary Chough flew over calling and several more Bluethroats were seen, though not as well as our first viewing. We made a return journey to the Parador for lunch in hope of finding Citril Finch. We drew a blank, though once again enjoyed views of Black Redstarts, Crossbills and Firecrest.

After lunch we continued our search around the nearby woodland for Citril Finch, eventually having to admit defeat, Gary was keen though to have 'one more go' at a small piece of woodland he knew a short drive away. It was to prove to be a good move, as we discovered a flock of some 15 birds, the majority appearing to be young birds, feeding on pine cones. The birds were very flighty constantly moving around but quite vocal, and patient searching through the trees would give reasonable, and at times good views of them. A Pied Flycatcher also briefly appeared, before we returned to the hotel. With us not meeting for dinner until 8.00pm, Gary, Ray and Tony decided to go out for an hour, making the short drive to an area of woodland near the hotel. Several singing Goldcrests were heard and seen on arrival and a Green Woodpecker was also seen, though a singing Pied Flycatcher eluded us for a while but we eventually caught up with it and found it to be a fine adult black and white bird.

Saturday 12th May

The following morning we again drove part of the way up to the Plataforma, making several roadside stops, noting again species such as Rock Bunting and Stonechat, and allowing Terry and Ann to add Green Woodpecker to their lists, as they had missed the one the day before. We then drove down to the area we had used for the last hour the night before, and took a leisurely walk along the river and

through the pine wood there. Several Crossbills were seen and heard, and again Goldcrest was noted for those that had previously missed it; arguably the highlight was a very confiding Red Squirrel, a species that had surprisingly eluded us up until now. We returned to the hotel for a late breakfast and to pack our bags, before saying “goodbye” and heading off to Madrid airport for the flight home. The journey to the airport and the flight home went smoothly with no problems and we arrived back at Heathrow on time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for making the trip so much fun. I appreciated and was grateful for your patience, good humour and enthusiasm and hope to see all again in the not to distant future.

Gary Elton

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED

(a total of 158 species recorded by the group)

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Seen and heard on six day in small numbers

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Heard on four days primarily in suitable habitat in roadside fields

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Six birds were seen at the Embalse de Sierra Brava, with at least four noted at Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Noted throughout the trip

Pintail *Anas acuta*

A fine male was found in amongst other wildfowl at Embalse de Sierra Brava.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Eight were countered in the mixed flock of wildfowl at Embalse de Sierra Brava.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Six were noted at the Embalse de Sierra Brava.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Five were seen at the Embalse de Sierra Brava.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

A flock of 15 birds were present on the Embalse de Sierra Brava

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Seen on four dates, noted on roadside pools on the outskirts of Trujillo and at Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Close to a hundred birds were present on the Embalse de Sierra Brava, with two also noted at Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Noted on three dates, up to two birds, with at least four seen, including one on a nest in the Monfrague Park.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Very common, recorded in good numbers throughout the week,

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

An adult bird was seen on several occasions at Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

A distant solitary adult bird was seen at Embalse de Arroyocampo

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Noted daily during our time in Extremadura, with 50+ birds noted at the Belen Plains and Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Recorded on four dates at various sites.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Single birds were noted at Marigalejo and Vegas Altas on the 8th, with at least eight individuals noted at Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Great White Egret

A breeding-plumaged bird, with a largely dark bill and reddish legs was seen in flight at Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

First seen on 8th (two), with once again larger numbers, 6+ seen at Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

A single bird at Pena Falcon on 7th, was followed by three at Embalse de Arroyocampo on 9th.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

Seen well at breeding sites at Trujillo (the Bull Ring and old citadel) and the Embalse de Sierra Brava.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Small numbers recorded most days, although distant birds not always distinguished from the previous species.

Peregrine *Falco peregrines*

Single birds were seen at Pena Falcon on both visits to Monfragüe Park.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Almost a near miss, with a distant bird was pointed out to us as we were leaving a potential site for this species near Monroy on 6th.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Up to four birds were recorded daily between 7th-12th.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Common, recorded in good numbers every day.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

A poorly seen bird at the Belen Plains was followed after much searching by two at the Portilla del Tietar watchpoint at Monfragüe Park.

Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus*

Very common, recorded in good numbers every day with excellent views of breeding birds in Monfragüe Park.

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

Noted in small numbers, 1-6 birds, at various sites, the majority in the Monfragüe Park.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

Five birds were seen on three dates.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosu*

Two on our first day, were followed by a single bird on 8th and two on 9th.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygarrus*

With so much ideal habitat for this species it was no surprise birds were noted on four dates 5th (one), 6th (eight), 8th (three) and 9th (two).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

A soaring bird on the 7th over the park viewed from the bridge over the River Tajo was the only one seen.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Noted on four dates, 8th, 9th & 10th which were all singles and 6th (four)

Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti*

A largely grey damp day meant hopes were not high for seeing this species, though it appeared the weather worked in our favour, with a pair perched in full view near their nest site showing amazingly well for us presumably reluctant to fly.

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*

1-4 birds were seen daily at a variety of sites, including two birds in the Gredos.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Up to ten birds were noted and seen well at the Zorita and Cáceres plains.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*

Seen well in similar numbers to the above species at the Zorita, Cáceres and Belen Plains.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

One was heard squealing in the reeds at our lunch stop at the Rio Gargaligas on the 8th.

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Four were seen in total during our visit to Embalse de Arroyocampo on 9th.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Noted at various sites on the 8th and 9th.

Coot *Fulica atra*

A single bird at Embalse Sierra Brava was followed by a flock of over a hundred at Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

A single bird found in a roadside field by Terry at Vegas Altas was the only one seen.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Up to four birds were noted on a roadside pool on the outskirts of Trujillo on three dates, with larger numbers noted on the flooded fields at Vegas Altas.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Single birds were noted on three dates at three different sites

Ringed Plover

Some what surprisingly six birds were present on a large flooded field at Vegas Altas.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Three alongside the above species at Vegas Altas, where equally as surprising.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

A single bird spotted by Terry, was found at Vegas Altas on 8th.

Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Four birds were seen at Vegas Altas on 8th.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Two were seen at Vegas Altas on 8th

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Single birds were seen locally on a roadside pool on the outskirts of Trujillo and at Embalse de Arroyocampo

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*

A brief sighting of a bird in flight whilst we watched the Stone Curlew at Vegas Altas, was the only one seen.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

25 were feeding over the flooded fields at Vegas Altas, with six more noted at Embalse de Arroyocampo

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

Four were noted amongst the Gull-billed Terns at Vegas Altas.

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*

An early morning return visit to the Cáceres plains gave us great views of 20 birds.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*

A pair accompanying the above species at Cáceres was a nice bonus.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Recorded every day.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Recorded daily in small numbers.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common, recorded in good numbers each day.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Two seen as we travelled to Monroy were the only ones.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*

One at the Belen Plain was followed by two at the Zorita Plain which posed for us on nearby fence wires.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Heard daily, with several birds seen.

Scops Owl *Otus scops*

Heard calling locally to Vinas las Torres on 6th and 9th (two) and outside El Milano Real on 10th.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

Two young birds were seen in the mouth of their nest site high on the cliff face opposite Portial del Tertiari on both visits to the Monfrague Park.

Barn Owl *Tyto Alba*

Initially glimpsed leaving its nest site near the Villa las Torres on the evening of 6th, with a much better view of one of the adult birds perched on the roof of the barn on 9th

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Two were seen on our early morning visit to the Belen Plain.

Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*

An evening visit to some nearby suitable habitat produced two calling birds, with the bonus of two sightings of birds just as dusk was falling.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

Six were noted in amongst a large hirundine flock during our visit to Monfragüe on 10th.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Seen daily at various sites during the tour.

Roller *Coracias garrulus*

Our first bird was seen during our visit to the Zorita Plain, with three more seen on wires along the roadside as we travelled back from Madrigalejo.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Singles were noted at Embalse de Arroyocampo on 9th and heard along the River Tayo on 10th

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Seen daily, sometimes on roadside fences and wires, though normally encountered as over flying flocks.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Common, recorded in good numbers every day.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Two were heard and one glimpsed briefly in flight during our time in the Gredos.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Heard regularly during our time in the Gredos, with birds seen on two occasions.

Wryneck *Jynx torquata*

A calling bird showed briefly to some of the members of the group during the pre-breakfast walk on the 6th.

Iberian [Southern] Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

Recorded daily in good numbers on the plains during our stay in Extremadura.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

Common and easily seen in Extremadura.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Heard daily around Villa Las Torres, with several birds seen. Excellent views were had of several more on the road to Hervás, with three males watched fighting and squabbling right in front of us seemingly unaware of our presence.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Only one bird was seen during our time in Extremadura, though birds were regularly seen and heard during our time in the Gredos.

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*

Common and recorded daily in Extremadura, with birds showing well at times.

Magpie *Pica pica*

Common, recorded every day.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

One flew over us calling during our visit to the Plataforma de Gredos

Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Recorded regularly in variable numbers in Extremadura, with several breeding colonies found.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Easily seen in the Sierra de Gredos.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Between two and four birds were recorded daily.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Very common in the Sierra de Gredos.

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*

Two birds were seen well in roadside woods near Casa Miravete on 9th and a further four birds were seen in woods around the Parador de Gredos.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Recorded daily.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Recorded virtually daily.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Noted daily in small numbers, largely around breeding sites near bridges or mountain crags.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common, recorded everyday of the tour.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Common, recorded every day of the tour. The amazing site of rows of 100s of active nests under Punte del Cardenal in the Monfragüe Park being noteworthy.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*

Recorded daily in varying numbers.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Recorded daily, with a family party noted on the 11th.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

A calling male was seen by Gary at Rio Gargaligas on 8th, but only seen in flight by the rest of the group. The bird was heard calling nearby but could not be re-located. Another bird was heard calling several times at Embalse de Arroyocampo, but unfortunately remained hidden from view.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

Easily seen and heard on the plains of Extremadura where we enjoyed good views both in flight and on the ground.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Noted on both visits to the Cáceres Plains, with a maximum of six on the 6th, probably over looked to some degree.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Very common in Extremadura.

Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*

Gaining good views of larks on the ground proved difficult this year, and owing to the difficulty separating this and the above species, only one bird was identified from photographs with any confidence.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Easily seen and heard during our visit to the Plataforma de Gredos, where at least six birds were present.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

This fantastic songster was seen or heard daily during our travels.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Heard daily during our time in Extremadura, with several also seen well.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Heard and occasionally glimpsed in flight at suitable wetland sites.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Five birds reeling at Embalse de Arroyocampo was a good total with nice views had of three.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Seen and heard at our lunch stop at Rio Gargaligas on 8th and Embalse de Arroyocampo on 9th.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Recorded in similar numbers as the above species at the same sites.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

One was heard singing hidden in reeds in front of the fourth hide at Embalse de Arroyocampo.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

A roadside bird at the Caceres was the first seen, with two more seen well again near the roadside as we arrived at El Milano Real on 10th. The following day produced more good views of three more.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

A surprise find on the Zorita plain with a bird heard singing then seen, in a solitary broom bush near the roadside.

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*

Heard regularly throughout our visit to the Gredos, with birds seen well on all three days, with a maximum of six on 11th.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Heard only on one day during our time in Extremadura, with the species becoming more numerous in the Gredos, where birds were heard and seen daily.

Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*

A short walk along the Yellow trail at Monfrague produced good views of two singing males, with at least one more bird present in the area.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

A pair at a nest site near Jaraciego showed very well for us on 9th, with at least one more male also present at the site.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Recorded on five dates, with a maximum of four on the morning of the 12th.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*

A male bird showed well for us in suitable scrub habitat near Jaraciego.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Several were seen well as well walked along the yellow route at Monfrague, which included several singing males.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

Recorded daily during our time in Extremadura.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

Recorded daily in suitable coniferous habitat in the Gredos, with particularly good views of a bird outside the Parador hotel.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Several were seen and heard at a river walk close to our hotel in the Gredos.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Recorded in small numbers in Extremadura and in the Sierra de Gredos, more often heard than seen.

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Two in the lower car park area of the Castillo de Monfragüe were the only ones seen in Extremadura, with several seen daily during our time in the Gredos.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydact*

Recorded in small numbers in suitable habitat in Extremadura, with the species becoming far more common and easily seen in the Gredos.

Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor*

Very common in Extremadura.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Common throughout the week.

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Recorded on two dates in Extremadura and daily during our time in the Gredos.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Two birds in the Monfrague Park were the first seen, with the species commoner in the Gredos where birds were recorded daily.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Heard regularly each day and one or two seen on several days.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Our walk to the higher levels at the Plataforma de Gredos paid off, with our first singing Bluethroat seen almost immediately. Several others were seen briefly during our stay, with our last sighting again of a showy male bird perched in the open singing.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochuros*

A male bird at the Pena Falcon, faded into insignificance with birds appearing everywhere in the Gredos.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Recorded daily throughout the week.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

A single bird seen in Extremadura on the 9th was followed by daily sightings of good numbers of birds in the Gredos.

Western Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica hispanica*

A male bird was seen well in suitable habitat on the outskirts of Monroy on 6th.

Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura*

A distant but well seen pair at Peña Falcon on 7th, was followed by a closer bird at the same site.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

A total of possibly ten birds recorded in the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe during two visits, with birds at Peña Falcon and the Portel del Tietar.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Only two birds were seen both on the 8th

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca iberiae*

Two birds including a cracking adult male were seen in the Gredos on the 11th

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common, recorded daily.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

Recorded on three dates, though probably overlooked to some degree.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

A single bird on a roadside fence was a surprise find at our stop enroute from the airport, with three more seen on the aquaduct bridge at Vegas Altas.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*

Three found by Terry showed well for us perched on wires near the Parador de Gredos.

Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*

Seen at various stops during our time around Vegas Altas and the Rio Galgantias, with the first birds seen thought to be Waxbills until closer inspection revealed the birds were in fact non-breeding plumaged Avadavats.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Only recorded in the Sierra de Gredos where it was common and easily seen around the Plataforma de Gredos.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava iberia*

Seen daily during our time in the Gredos

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

As above, with birds seen regularly along the rivers in the Gredos

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Recorded in ones and twos daily throughout the week.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Fairly common, recorded daily.

Serim *Serinus serinus*

Common, recorded daily throughout the week.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Surprisingly scarce with only one seen in Extremadura and one in the Gredos.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common, recorded daily.

Citrel Finch *Carduelis citronella*

After much searching, we eventually found a small vocal feeding flock of mainly juvenile birds near the Parador de Gredos. The flock, totalling about 15, showed well at times, but always frustratingly brief and constantly on the move.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Recorded in small numbers most days.

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Two small flocks of five and six birds were seen during our time in the Gredos.

Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*

Almost certainly the commonest bird in Extremadura!

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

Two on the 7th and one on the 9th in Extremadura were somewhat over shadowed by the larger numbers we encountered in the Gredos, with at least ten seen daily, some showing amazingly well.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

Four by a roadside fence on the way to the Plataforma de Gredos allowed close views and good photographic opportunities, with two more seen later in the morning, which again were very approachable. Two also seen on roadside fencing as we left Hoyos del Espinos *en route* to Madrid.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

A female bird was heard calling and then briefly seen in flight on 7th as we entered Monfragüe Park, with a male seen well at the same spot three days later.

MAMMALS:

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

Iberian Hare *Lepus granatensis*

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

BUTTERFLIES:

Bath White *Pontia daplidice*

Orange Tip *Anthocaris cardamines*

Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

Adonis Blue *Lysandra bellargus*

Peacock *Inachis io*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Large Tortoiseshell *Aglais polychloros*

Spanish Marbled White *Melanargia ines*

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Silver-washed Fritillary *Argynnis paphia*

Speckled Wood *Parage aegeria*

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*

DRAGONFLIES

Lesser Emperor *Anax imperator*