

# Spain

## Extremadura & Gredos

Wed 7<sup>th</sup> – Wed 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014



*Trip photos (clockwise, from top left): A pale phase Booted Eagle at the Castillo de Monfragüe • One of the sights and sounds of the Spanish Steppe, a Calandra Lark • An adult Spanish Imperial Eagle at Pena Falcon, Monfragüe • Two-tailed Pasha comes top of the butterfly list when it comes to looks • A surprise came in the form of two White-rumped Swifts at the Castillo • The baby Hawfinch rescued from the middle of the road © photos by leader Gary Elton/Limosa Holidays;*

**report compiled by tour leader:  
Gary Elton**

## Trip Diary

### **Tour Leader: Gary Elton**

**with Bob Bailey & Chris Rose, Dave Barrett & Gill Stroud, Sasha Foreman, Tony Gow and Robert Underhill**

This tour started in the fabulous Spanish steppes with seemingly endless horizons of evergreen oaks, wide blue skies and the broad sweep of glorious steppe grasslands. Our days here were memorable and filled with birds. We moved on to the Sierra de Gredos, with views out over the pinewoods - these lovely mountains are another of Spain's best-kept secrets!

### **Day One – 7<sup>th</sup> May**

After a slightly late departure and hence arrival at Madrid, we took lunch in the small restaurant in the airport before collecting the minibus. We then made our way around the city and through the heavy traffic, finally heading southwest towards our destination in Extremadura. A stop midway through our journey had been planned, which not only provided us with our first views of a selection of species we were to see regularly over the next week, such as Black Kite, White Stork, Iberian Grey and Woodchat Shrikes, but also a species high on some of the group's wish lists - a Black-winged Kite! The bird was initially seen perched in the top of a small tree, and watched through telescopes until it took off giving excellent flight views.

We then continued on to Trujillo and our accommodation for the next five days at 'Vina las Torres', a country house nestled in the Spanish countryside with beautiful views and grounds planted with orange and lemon trees. After an enjoyable evening meal we retired to bed looking forward to the days ahead.

### **Day Two – 8<sup>th</sup> May**

We woke to a bright sunny start, which was to be the case throughout our time in Extremadura and a short pre-breakfast walk started the day. We enjoyed the spectacular views and a nice selection of resident birds that included Hoopoe, Nightingale, Serin, Red-rumped Swallow and the hard to miss Azure-winged Magpies. Amazingly, the only Turtle Dove of the trip was also seen, unfortunately a sign of the times. In contrast, several singing Golden Orioles were noted, with this being a species we were all to get good views of over the coming days.

After breakfast we made our way into the nearby town of Trujillo, stopping at the old bull ring to view the Lesser Kestrels that breed there, which also gave us an opportunity to study the local swifts and separate out the Commons from Pallids. Our plan today was to drive along the road to Monroy via Santa Marta de Magasca, with a stop at Rio Magasca for lunch. This, as expected, produced a vast array of birds, including a total of ten Montagu's Harriers and good looks at Short-toed, Golden and Booted Eagles. Plains specialities such as Crested and Calandra Larks were seen, though the Little Bustards that could be heard calling remained hidden in the long grass, and some distant hawking Collared Pratincoles unfortunately didn't come any closer. The highlight of the day for most though was the roadside pair of Great Spotted Cuckoos found on our return to Trujillo. They tried, to some degree successfully, to hide themselves in the limited amount of tree cover available, but good views were eventually had by everyone.

### Day Three – 9<sup>th</sup> May

An early start this morning saw us driving in the half-light to the town of Belen, to visit the nearby steppe there. We drove along the rather rough track stopping on occasions to scan the area, one of these stops produced our first Little Bustard, found by Sasha as it stood calling on the edge of a nearby field track. Our first Great Bustards soon appeared as well, with three seen in total during our visit. Other birds seen included two, some would say rather distant, Little Owls, and three closer perched vultures, two Griffons and a Black, which gave us nice comparison views of the two species.

We returned for a slightly later, and by this time welcome, breakfast, after which we headed off to spend the day in the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe. Several riverside stops were made as we made our way to the park, which added Cirl Bunting and Sardinian Warbler to our list. Our first destination was the Castillo de Monfragüe, with us fortunately finding the last remaining parking spot near the top. We then walked up to the Castillo to enjoy the breathtaking views out over the park, seeing Short-toed Treecreeper en route and fantastic views of Griffon Vultures drifting over from the nearby breeding colony. A rather smart Two-tailed Pasha butterfly was also seen here, and a check on several high flying Swifts revealed they were in fact White-rumped a species we are normally too early for, so a real bonus.

Returning to the minibus we drove back down the mountain side, and as we did so Gary was aware of a bird sat in the road ahead of us. “Hawfinch!” was the cry, as Gary stopped the van and climbed out followed by the rest of the group. The bird was a recently fledged youngster clearly unaware of its surroundings, and as we were taking pictures of it, it appeared to start to come to life. Gary walked closer and as he did so the bird took one look at him and came running up to his feet! The bird was picked up (fortunately his bill, that he clamped onto Gary's finger, had nowhere near the power of an adult bird's) and as Gary returned it to an area off the road he flushed the parent bird that was obviously well aware where its youngster was.

Lunch was our next stop overlooking the Pena Falcon, arguably the most iconic spot of the park. Griffon Vultures could be seen circling around and over the peak and as we lunched, both Black Stork and Egyptian Vulture were found amongst them. The nearby rocks also produced several other hoped-for species such as Black Redstart, Blue Rock Thrush (clearly blue...) and Rock Bunting.

After lunch we continued on, stopping a short distant further on to view another section of the imposing cliff face scenery, where large numbers of House Martins could be seen feeding, and a quick look revealed four larger birds amongst them which were identified as Alpine Swifts, the only ones of the trip. As we climbed back in the minibus Bob and Sasha picked out a distinct soaring raptor, its distinct profile immediately identified it as a Bonelli's Eagle and as we all climbed back out of the bus the bird settled on a distant crag allowing us to view the adult bird through telescopes.

Our next stop was an apparently long overdue (according to several of the group anyway) ice cream and coffee, which was to be the first of several. This was followed by a short walk that again gave us views of Golden Oriole plus our first proper views of Subalpine Warbler. Our final destination today was Portilla del Tietar watchpoint, where the hoped-for Spanish Imperial Eagle was in residence, though the local Eagle Owls made us work for views, with a rather fortuitous sighting of a mobile young bird making the effort worthwhile.

### **Day Four – 10<sup>th</sup> May**

Another pre-dawn start this morning with us heading out again along the Santa Marta de Magasca route, which was to prove successful. A roadside stop revealed a flock of a dozen or so calling Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, which proved somewhat challenging to see as they moved through the long grass on a nearby hillside. The first of several calling Black-bellied were also seen flying across in front of us, followed by a slightly more distant small flock of eight some 10 minutes later. Little Bustard, Montagu's Harrier and Raven completed our pre-breakfast trip and, after returning for breakfast, we headed south from our base towards Zorita.

Our time around this area produced views again of the expected open plains' species such as Calandra Lark, plus several small groups of Great Bustards, which gave us our best views yet. A flock of Lesser Kestrels along some roadside wires gave us some nice looks at this species, and another addition included several Gull-billed Terns watched hunting over the nearby fields. We also visited a large reservoir, the Embalse de Sierra Brava, which was disappointingly quiet with only a small group of Pochard and several Great Crested Grebes present. With lunchtime approaching we continued South stopping to view the roadside rice fields at Vegas Altas, where a flock of eight Collared Pratincoles showed much better for us, along with a pair of much-appreciated Rollers.

Lunch was taken sat on the old bridge that crosses the Rio Gargaligas, where the riverbank reeds held several Great Reed Warblers, a Little Bittern and small numbers of both Common Waxbill and Red Avadavats. After lunch we drove around the maze of agricultural fields in the area, which was to prove relatively quiet with only a handful of newly flooded fields found, holding only small numbers of Lapwing and several more Collared Pratincoles. Stops at the scrub edged water channels revealed three species of sparrow, and one flock of at least 60 Red Avadavats, which was an impressive sight and sound as they flew around us.

A slightly earlier return to our accommodation allowed us all to get ready for the non avian highlight of the trip, a wine-tasting session hosted by Juan Pedro, which was again to prove great fun and an entertaining evening for us all.

### **Day Five – 11<sup>th</sup> May**

A local walk started the day for the group again this morning, with a perched male Golden Oriole being very much the highlight. Our main destination today was to be the Embalse de Arrocampo a large, reed fringed reservoir complete with hides and a small visitor centre. Several stops were made en route, the first of these at an extensive area of scrub in search of Spectacled Warbler. Initial sightings involved several singing Dartford Warblers, plus a very brief Western Orphea, and an obliging male Sardinian Warbler. Perseverance finally paid off though, with at least two singing Spectacled Warblers eventually seen well. A coffee break followed giving us a chance to study the Thekla Larks in the area, noting the subtle differences separating them from the very similar Crested Lark, with two Black Storks also noted flying high above us.

A short drive took us to our next stop, El Mirador de Miravete, where a walk through the Pines quickly produced our target species, Crested Tit, with a pair giving us great views. We drove on to stop for lunch at the first roadside hide at the Embalse de Arrocampo, with a brief drive to collect a key from the visitor centre quickly allowing us access to it. Birds almost immediately seen included Purple Heron and Purple Gallinule, with others added to our list that included a pair of Spoonbills frequenting a presumed nest site, at least one Great Egret and a reeling Savi's Warbler.

A drive after lunch again took us to the visitor centre, which allowed us a comfort stop before we took the short trail round the northeastern edge of the reserve. Here the three elevated hides gave us views out into the corner of the reservoir. Species seen included several more Purple Herons and Gallinules, Little Bittern, Gull-billed Tern, Ferruginous Duck and Great Reed Warbler. We then re-traced our steps again stopping by the initial roadside hide, hoping for better views of the Savi's Warbler. This proved tricky to get, as the bird would only appear for short periods at a time, though a bonus was an adult Night Heron that flew over us as we stood watching.

With the following day being a travel day, to the Gredos region, a slightly earlier return to base was planned with a short scenic (and of course ice cream) stop in Trujillo itself, which proved a very pleasant way to end the day. For our last evening, a short drive was taken after dinner to look for Red-necked Nightjar and Scops Owl, both having been seen in the area in past years. As we arrived shortly before dusk the first bird seen was a confiding Little Owl and shortly after the first nightjar hawked over the area in front of us for several minutes giving us good views. Two nightjars were thought to be in the area with the birds seen several times as night fell. Another bird could also be heard calling further away and two Scops Owls were also heard.

### **Day Six – 12<sup>th</sup> May**

A slightly later start this morning following yesterday's 'nightjarring', saw us enjoying our last breakfast in Extremadura before we said goodbye to our hosts Juan Pedro and Belen. The journey northeast to the Sierra de Gredos was planned to take the majority of the day, with several stops en route planned. The first of these was at the Castillo de Monfragüe, although this time it only involved us spending time at the base of the mountain around the lower car park area. On parking the minibus, a distant Western Orphean Warbler could be heard singing. We walked across the road to view the area it could be heard from, but unfortunately it couldn't be located, though several Golden Orioles and at least one Hawfinch made the stop worthwhile. Moving on we again stopped at Pena Falcon, enjoying once again nice views of Griffon Vulture and Black Stork plus an addition to our list, Peregrine Falcon.

We moved on through the park stopping to try and see another roadside Orphean Warbler that had been heard singing a few days before. Our luck was in with us all gaining good views of at least one of the two birds it transpired were present. By means of a celebration a coffee stop followed at Villareal de San Carlos, then we continued our journey. Lunch was taken at a rather picturesque spot alongside the river that runs through with further Golden Orioles and several Grey Wagtails seen as well. We travelled on through the Jerte valley, an important cherry-growing region, where we made a roadside stop to collect a sample of the local produce, which was gratefully received by all.

A comfort stop further on somehow morphed into an ice cream stop, after which we continued on and as we climbed to the top, we disembarked, enjoying fantastic views out along the valley. Birds in the immediate area included our first Common Whitethroats plus at least one Subalpine Warbler and a singing Bonelli's Warbler, again another first for the trip. The journey from here to our destination, Hoyos del Espino was relatively straightforward, with us arriving at our accommodation around 5.30, promptly checking in and enjoying a relaxing evening.

### **Day Seven – 13<sup>th</sup> May**

Our first day in the Gredos started with a pre breakfast trip to the area around the nearby Parador de Gredos, hoping for a sighting of Citril Finch. Birding is rarely that easy, so it was no surprise we unfortunately drew a blank, though on the plus side we did see Sparrowhawk (well those in the front did), Black Redstart, Firecrest and Crossbill, and the first of what was to be many Rock Buntings.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast after which we made our way to the Plataforma de Gredos. The drive was several kilometres long, going through pine woodland that opened up to reveal rocky grass slopes and a valley, with the river running below us. Regular stops were made to search for birds and our first stop produced a singing male Rock Sparrow, followed by Iberian Yellow Wagtail and Northern Wheatear. Distant Ortolan Buntings were heard singing, with the first picked out sat on top of a bush though as the morning progressed our views got better and better as more confiding birds were found.

We arrived at the Plataforma, to disembark and make our way along the nearby footpath. A Rock Thrush could be heard singing and was located sat out on a distant crag, a far from ideal view, but clearly a Rock Thrush! Several Ibex were found, and Rock and Ortolan Buntings easily seen, both Water Pipit and Skylark could be heard singing nearby. Our walk to the top only gave us poor views unfortunately of our target species, Bluethroat, with only a male appearing briefly to see who we were before disappearing back out of view. A small herd of Ibex, probably 15 animals in total were seen, and after a short rest we started the descent back down to the car park where we had lunch sat by the river.

After lunch we made our way back down towards the Parador hotel to spend the remainder of the afternoon exploring the local woodland areas there. Highlights of the next couple of hours included a rather smart singing Melodious Warbler, several Bonelli's Warblers and Crested Tits, a rather uncooperative and mobile Firecrest and a frustratingly brief view for some of the group of a rather smart, presumed male, Citril Finch. Well, at least we now knew they were in the area!

### **Day Eight – 14<sup>th</sup> May**

The following morning saw an early start again with us heading straight back down towards the area, where some of the group had seen the Citril Finch the day before. Breakfast had been moved back to a slightly later time as well. We disembarked from the minibus, again hearing Bonelli's and a Melodious Warblers, with this later bird perched out in full view. Several Rock Buntings were also in the area seemingly returning to a possible breeding site. As we watched, two other birds appeared on a further end of the overhead wires, and a quick view through the telescope confirmed them to be our target birds, Citril Finch. Importantly they then did the decent thing, and stayed in full view and everyone got to see them.

With time now on our side we decided to head back towards the hotel and take the road to the Plataforma de Gredos, and walk along and through the pinewood stretching along the lower part of the river. The walk here was very pleasant with the sun now starting to break through, bringing some welcome heat with it and last minute additions here included two singing Song Thrushes and two Siskins. We returned for breakfast, after which we loaded the bags on the minibus and set off on our journey back to Madrid. Roadside birds included good numbers of Northern Wheatear and Sky Lark, replaced by Corn Bunting and Black Kites as the habitat changed. We arrived at Madrid airport in good time, and after experiencing the frustrations of modern technology we boarded our flight for the journey home.

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

### **Systematic list of species**

(Total number of species recorded: 153)

#### **Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa***

Seen and heard most days during our stay in Extremadura.

#### **Quail *Coturnix coturnix***

Heard on three days in suitable habitat in roadside fields.

#### **Gadwall *Anas strepera***

Seen on three dates, with two at Talavan Reservoir, three at Embalse de Arrocampo and two more seen during our travels on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos***

Birds were noted on five dates at various sites.

#### **Pochard *Aythya ferina***

Five were seen distantly at the Embalse de Sierra Brava.

#### **Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca***

A male bird played hide and seek with us in front of one of the hides at Embalse de Arrocampo.

#### **Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

Single birds were seen on roadside pools on two dates, the first just outside Madrigalejo, the second near Trujillo.

#### **Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus***

Three noted at Talavan Reservoir and eight at Embalse de Sierra Brava.

#### **Black Stork *Ciconia nigra***

Noted on three dates, with two birds seen at their nest site at Pena Falcon on both visits, and two more seen over Jaraicejo on 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### **White Stork *Ciconia ciconia***

Very common, recorded in good numbers throughout the week.

#### **Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia***

A pair were seen around their presumed nest site at Embalse de Arrocampo.

#### **Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus***

Birds were seen in flight at our lunch stop at the Rio Gargaligas, followed by two individuals at Embalse de Arrocampo.

#### **Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax***

Initially seen briefly during lunch by some of the group, presumably the same adult bird flew over the road in front of us all during our return visit to the roadside hide area at Embalse de Arrocampo.

#### **Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis***

Surprisingly scarce this year and possibly overlooked, with birds only recorded on three dates during our time in Extremadura.

#### **Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea***

Recorded on four dates at various sites.

**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea***

least ten individuals were noted at Embalse de Arrocampo with several seen extremely well.

**Great Egret**

One possibly two birds were seen in flight at the Embalse de Arrocampo.

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***

Only seen at Embalse de Arrocampo, with at least six birds noted.

**Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo***

Birds were noted at Pena Falcon and at Embalse de Arrocampo.

**Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni***

Seen well at breeding sites at Trujillo (the bull ring and old citadel) and the Embalse de Sierra Brava, with a roadside flock of at least 15 birds seen particularly well at the latter site.

**Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus***

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

**Hobby *Falco subbuteo***

One was seen in flight near the Parador de Gredos on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Peregrine *Falco peregrines***

Single birds were seen at Pena Falcon and over the car park at Plataforma de Gredos.

**Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus***

Almost the first bird of the trip, with a speculative look at a new site mid way from the airport producing great views of an initially perched bird, which was also seen well in flight.

**Red Kite *Milvus milvus***

Up to two were seen daily in Extremadura with up to six seen on our first day in the Gredos.

**Black Kite *Milvus migrans***

Common, recorded in good numbers every day.

**Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus***

Five seen in total, all but one in Monfragüe, this was seen as we travelled to Embalse de Arrocampo.

**Eurasian Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus***

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

**Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus***

Seen on six dates, with a maximum of six noted on any one day, invariably found when searching through the large numbers of Griffons.

**Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus***

Again good views were had of this species with our best views at Talavan Reservoir and Parque de Monfragüe .

**Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosu***

Two on our first day, were followed by four on 10<sup>th</sup> and two on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygarrus***

With so much ideal habitat for this species it was surprising birds were only seen on two dates, though the numbers on our second day went some way to make up for this with ten birds seen. A single male was also seen on our pre-breakfast trip on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus***

Only one seen flying over the road as we headed to our pre-breakfast destination, the Parador de Gredos on 13<sup>th</sup>

**Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo***

Seen daily, invariably roadside birds, with maximums of six seen on 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti***

One seen very well as it soared over its nest site in the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe

**Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos***

A 3<sup>rd</sup> year bird was seen well at Talavan Reservoir.

**Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata***

An adult bird initially seen soaring high above us during our time in the Parque de Monfragüe, settling eventually on a cliff face giving us prolonged albeit distant views.

**Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus***

Up to five birds seen daily, the majority pale phase birds.

**Great Bustard *Otis tarda***

Three were seen at the Belen plains and eleven in total at Campo Lugar, near Zorita.

**Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax***

Heard on three dates, with the first recorded on the Santa Marta de Magasca route. Our first was at Belen Plains with others seen on our pre breakfast trip on 10<sup>th</sup>, and at Campo Lugar.

**Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus***

One was heard squealing at Talavan Reservoir and it or another seen by Sasha at the same site.

**Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio***

Easily seen at Embalse de Arrocampo with at least six individuals noted.

**Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

Noted at various sites

**Coot *Fulica atra***

Recorded on four dates, with the maximum, 20 birds seen at Embalse de Arrocampo

**Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus***

Pairs were seen at some roadside pools at Madrigalejo and at Embalse de Arrocampo.

**Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus***

Groups of nine and six were seen on the flooded fields at Vegas Altas.

**Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola***

Following far from adequate views (according to some members of the group!) of four hawking at Talavan Reservoir, much better views were had of flocks of six and eight at Vegas Altas.

**Lesser Black backed Gull *Larus fuscus***

Disappointingly for the group the only gull of the trip! An adult bird on a flooded field edge at Vegas Altas.

**Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica***

Up to ten birds were seen over roadside fields just south of Zorito near Embalse de Sierra Bravo, with a single bird seen the next day at Embalse de Arrocampo.

**Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata***

Our pre-breakfast trip on the morning of 10<sup>th</sup>, gave us reasonable views of up to 15 birds, although more could easily have been present.

**Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis***

A single in flight was followed by a further eight birds at the same site as the above.

**Feral Rock Pigeon *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***

Only one was seen on our pre breakfast walk on 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius***

Our first, two roadside birds on 8<sup>th</sup> showed rather nicely for us all, with the next, again a roadside bird seen on our return to Vina las Torres on the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> showing equally well. The last was no more than a glimpse as it flew over the road in front of us on the way to the Embalse de Arrocampo.

**Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus***

Heard daily, with several birds seen.

**Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops***

Heard calling locally to Vina las Torres on the evening of 11<sup>th</sup> (2) and outside El Milano Real on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo***

A mobile youngest fortunately paused long enough in view for all the group to see it at the Portilla de tietar.

**Little Owl *Athene noctua***

Two distant birds were seen on our early morning visit to the Belen Plain, with another seen very well on our local Nightjar forray on the evening of the 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis***

An evening visit locally by the group to some nearby suitable habitat in Extremadura produced two that showed incredibly well just as darkness was falling, with another heard calling nearby.

**Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba***

Four were noted in amongst a large House Martin flock during our visit to the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe on 9th.

**Common Swift *Apus apus***

Seen daily at various sites during the tour.

**Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus***

Nowhere near as common as the above species with birds specifically identified around the bull ring and town square in Trujillo.

**White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer***

Two circling the Castillo at Monfragüe were a real bonus. Whilst the species breeds locally they do not normally return to the area from the wintering quarters until later in the month.

**European Roller *Coracias garrulus***

Three were seen very well during our visit to the Zorita Plain.

**Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis***

Up to two birds were seen on four dates.

**European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster***

Seen daily during our time in Extremadura, 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***

One was heard and one seen during our time in the Sierra de Gredos.

**Iberian Green Woodpecker *Picus sharpei***

Heard during our time in the Sierra de Gredos, with one bird seen.

**Iberian 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 and seen daily at various sites, with some nice views enjoyed at times.

**Jay *Garrulus glandarius***

Noted on six dates in total.

**Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus***

Common and recorded daily in Extremadura.

**Magpie *Pica pica***

Common, recorded every day.

**Eurasian 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***

Up to six birds were recorded virtually daily.

**Coal Tit *Periparus ater***

Common in the Sierra de Gredos.

**Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus***

Two birds were seen well in roadside woods near Casa de Miravete on 11th and a further six birds seen in the Gredos area.

**Great Tit *Parus major***

Recorded most days.

**Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus***

Recorded virtually daily.

**Sand Martin *Riparia riparia***

Eight on wires near the visitor centre at Embalse de Arrocampo were the only ones recorded.

**Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris***

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

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica***

Common, recorded everyday of the tour.

**House Martin *Delichon urbicum***

Common, recorded everyday of the tour. The amazing site of rows of hundreds of active nests under Punte del Cardenal in the Parque de Monfragüe being noteworthy.

**Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica***

Recorded daily in varying numbers.

**Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus***

Family parties were noted on two dates.

**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.

**Crested Lark *Galerida cristata***

Very common in Extremadura.

**Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae***

Only confidently identified during our visit to the heathland area near Jaraicejo, where the change of habitat seemed again to be the key to finding this species.

**Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis***

Easily seen and heard during our visit to the Plataforma de Gredos, where at least three birds were present. Several more were seen in roadside fields as we left the Gredos region.

**Wood Lark *Lullula arborea***

This fantastic songster was seen or heard on at least four days 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***

At least one bird reeling at Embalse de Arrocampo, at times showed well but frustratingly would periodically disappear from view.

**Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus***

Seen and heard at Talavan Reservoir, Rio Gargaligas and Embalse de Arrocampo.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus***

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

**Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta***

Seen and heard on both days in the Gredos

**Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita***

A single was seen by David and Gill in the garden of Vina las Torres with another seen by the group at our lunch stop at Rio Gargaligas.

**Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli***

Heard regularly throughout our visit to the Gredos, with birds seen well on all days.

**Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla***

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

**Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis***

One heard only on 9<sup>th</sup>, followed by a brief glimpse at Jaraicejo on 11<sup>th</sup>, success came though with three more singles heard on 12<sup>th</sup>, with one of these seen very well.

**Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata***

At least six birds, the majority seen well, were noted at Jaraicejo.

**Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis***

Seen regularly during our time in Sierra de Gredos.

**Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata***

At least two male birds showed well for us in suitable scrub habitat near Jaraciego.

**Western Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia inornata iberiae***

Several were seen well as well walked along the yellow route at Monfragüe, which included several smart males. One was also seen well in Sierra de Gredos.

**Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala***

Recorded daily during our time in Extremadura, though the majority were heard with only a few seen.

**Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus***

Several were seen during our time in Sierra de Gredos, though at times views at times were far from ideal.

**Goldcrest *Regulus regulus***

Several were seen and heard during our time in the Sierra de Gredos.

**Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes***

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

**Nuthatch *Sitta europaea***

Only one seen, whilst we enjoyed one of our numerous coffee breaks in the Sierra de 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.

**Song Thrush *Turdus Philomelos***

At least two singing birds were recorded on our last mornings pre breakfast walk.

**Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus***

Only recorded on one date in the Gredos, with one briefly seen in flight and another heard.

**Robin *Erithacus rubecula***

One seen in the Gredos, where birds were recorded daily.

**Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos***

Recorded daily, with all but a handful heard rather than seen.

**Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica***

Views this year were unfortunately very brief, with a territorial male the only bird seen, which appeared twice briefly during our visit to the Plataforma de Gredos

**Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochuros***

A pair seen at the Pena Falcon, faded into insignificance with birds seen everywhere in the Gredos.

**European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola***

Recorded daily in good numbers throughout the week.

**Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra***

A male bird found by Bob on 8<sup>th</sup>, was the only one seen.

**Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe***

Daily sightings of good numbers of birds were had in Sierra de Gredos.

**Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis***

A high perched singing male was seen well but distantly at the Plataforma de Gredos.

**Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius***

Several birds were seen at Peñafalcon, with another singing at the Castillo.

**Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata***

A mobile bird at our stop at the 'three bridges' was the only one seen.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***

Common, recorded daily.

**Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis***

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

**Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus***

At least ten birds were recorded during our visit to Vegas Altas, primarily around the viaduct.

**Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia***

A singing bird was seen well on its rooftop song post on two dates en route to the Plataforma de Gredos, with another seen nearby on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild***

A pair at Rio Gargaligas, showed well on several occasions enabling the separating features from the next species to be seen well.

**Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava***

Seen initially at the Rio Galgantias with further birds, including a flock of c. 60 birds seen around the nearby area of Vegas Altas.

**Dunnock *Prunella modularis***

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

**Iberian Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava iberiae***

Seen daily during our time in the Gredos.

**Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***

As above, with birds seen regularly along the rivers in the Gredos, plus several birds along river courses in Extremadura.

**White Wagtail *Motacilla alba***

Recorded in ones and twos daily throughout the week, more numerous in the Gredos.

**Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta***

At least two singing birds were present at the Plataforma de Gredos.

**Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs***

Fairly common, recorded daily.

**Serin *Serinus serinus***

Common, easily seen and recorded daily throughout the week.

**Greenfinch *Chloris chloris***

Surprisingly scarce with birds seen in Extremadura and Sierra de Gredos, recorded on four dates.

**Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis***

Common, recorded daily.

**Citrel Finch *Carduelis citronella***

A fine male initially seen by some of the group, gave us hope as we spent the afternoon searching unsuccessfully for more birds. As is often the case our return to the area saw us finding almost immediately two birds perched on nearby wires.

**Siskin *Spinus spinus***

Two juvenile birds showed well for us on our last mornings pre breakfast walk.

**Linnet *Linaria cannabina***

Recorded in small numbers most days.

**Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra***

A single fly-over bird during our first morning at the Parador de Gredos, was followed by nice views of two then five the following day.

**Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes***

Arguably one of the birds of the trip, with a recently fledged bird found and removed safely off the road at the Castillo de Monfragüe, where its parent was waiting. Further birds were seen near the same site on our return visit to Monfragüe, and another seen in flight near Casa de Miravete.

**Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra***

Almost certainly the commonest bird in Extremadura, with birds seemingly everywhere.

**Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia***

Our first at Pena Falcon, was followed by three at the same site on our return visit. Much more common in Sierra de Gredos and easily seen at the Plataforma de Gredos.

**Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana***

After initial views of distant birds en route to the Plataforma de Gredos, better views of several singing birds were had around the Plataforma.

### **Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus***

Two males as we entered Parque de Monfraque were the first seen. Several others were heard and a female bird was seen during our time in Sierra de Gredos.

### **MAMMALS**

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*  
Spanish Ibex *Capra pyrenaica*  
Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*  
Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*  
European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

### **BUTTERFLIES**

Swallowtail *Papilio machaon*  
Western Dappled White *Euchloe crameri*  
Orange Tip *Anthocharis cardamines*  
Moroccan Orange tip *Anthocharis belia*  
Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*  
Cleopatra *Gonepteryx cleopatra*  
Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*  
Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*  
Spanish Marbled White *Melanargia ines*  
Green-veined White *Artogeia napi*  
Small White *Artogeia rapae*  
Green-striped White *Euchloe belemia*  
Queen of Spain Fritillary *Issoria lathonia*  
Marsh Fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*  
Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*  
Speckled Wood *Parage aegeria*  
Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*  
Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*  
Southern Gatekeeper *Pyronia cecilia*  
Spanish Gatekeeper *Pyronia bathseba*  
Blue-spot Hairstreak *Satyrium spini*  
False Ilex hairstreak *Satyrium esculi*  
Small Skipper *Thymelicus sylvestris*  
Two-tailed Pasha *Charaxes jasius*

### **Reptiles and Amphibians**

European Pond Terrapin *Emys orbicularis*  
Schreiber's Green Lizard *Lacerta schreiberi*  
Large Psammodromus *Psammodromus algirus*