

Spain

Spanish Steppes in Autumn

Tue 19th – Tue 26th November 2013



Trip photos (clockwise, from top): Becoming increasingly common in the past decade, **Azure-winged Magpies** were noted daily • An adult **Black-winged Kite** • A majestic **Black Vulture** – always a great sight to see © all photos Stephen Daly/andalucianguides.com

report compiled by tour leader:
Stephen Daly

Trip Diary

Tour Leader: Stephen Daly

with Steve & Lindsey Cottam, Mary Graves, Liz Howes, Geoff Nelson and Jack & Ruth Upsall

Escaping the onset of the British winter, this week-long tour enjoyed terrific late autumn birdwatching and weather in wonderful Extremadura - the wild heart of Spain. With birds of prey in abundance, Great and Little Bustards on the steppe, thousands of wintering Cranes and so much more, we could hardly fail to have had a great time. Coupled with seven nights at a beautifully restored country house hotel near Trujillo, with good food and wine to look forward to each evening, hopefully it was a trip to remember.

Tour Highlights

- Watching huge flocks of Great Bustards
- Spectacular views of thousands of Cranes
- Watching Spanish Imperial and Golden Eagles
- The vulture-filled skies of Peña Falcon, Monfragüe
- Wonderful view of Marsh and Hen Harriers
- Stunning views of over 70 Stone Curlews

Day 1 - Tuesday 19th

Stephen took an early flight from Seville to Barajas airport in Madrid, joining the group who arrived a few hours later from London. Flights ran to time and as the mini-bus paperwork was all ready completed we headed off through Madrid's intricate motorway system and headed southwest towards our destination outside Trujillo. Stopping en route to have some tapas and a drink we arrived just as the sun was setting after managing to see a host of birds from the airport to our hotel.

A lovely dinner was taken and we retired early as most had been up very early that morning.

Day 2 - Wednesday 20th

It doesn't get light until around 8am in Extremadura in November and although a few Blackcaps and Robins were calling from the hotel gardens we weren't able to have a pre-breakfast walk. Blue Tits, Great Tits, Blackcaps and a dashing Sparrowhawk were seen on the lane in front of the hotel before we departed. After we had finished our breakfast we headed off towards Caceres and the small winding country lanes that seemed to be full of Azure-winged Magpies, Wood Larks, White Wagtails and Meadow Pipits. A good number of Red Kites were already out scanning the countryside above the *dehesa*, that wonderful mix of meadow grazing land and light wooded area that sweeps across the rolling contours of this rich land. Here flocks of Merino sheep and many different breeds of cattle and black Iberian pigs feed on the acorn harvest that comes from the predominant Holm Oaks that offer not only the fruits in autumn but each tree provides a shaded canopy in summer for the many animals that live there.

Taking a track away from the woodlands we soon found a large flock of over 25 Great Bustards that had lifted off a large field where one of the local farmers had been tending his sheep. These rather nervous birds took to the air crossing the track in front of us and flew over a ridge and eventually out of sight. Another group of males were also watched nearby and as we walked, and then drove back the way we'd come, we watched a small party of Griffon Vultures with some Black Vultures passing effortlessly across the blue sky. Serins and Goldfinches were feeding on the thistles and other dried out plants on the steppe; Sky Larks sang as the Iberian Grey Shrikes kept watch with their amazing eyesight for any predators. Corn Buntings, Crested Larks were seen on the fences and a small flock of seven Pin-tailed Sandgrouse flew past, calling as they went.

Travelling through some Holm Oak-lined country lanes we came to the Rio Magasca where we stopped for lunch, watching low-flying Red Kites and high-flying Black and Griffon Vultures. Taking the road down to the rice fields at Madrigalejo we stopped to look for Stone Curlew and after a short search we found a flock of over 70 birds. Moving on through the flat landscape, with rice-fields on either side of the road, we saw pockets of Cranes in the air and on the ground. Finding a quiet lane we stopped the mini-bus and watched wave upon wave of cranes come in to feed in a harvested maize field. The noise was incredible and the acrobatics as the birds flew in to land was a sight to witness. Along the canals and ditches we saw quite a few medium-sized flocks of Common Waxbills and a single Kingfisher. A single juvenile male Marsh Harrier was seen close to the main road as we left the rice fields.

Moving through to higher ground we searched for Little Bustards, but found more Great Bustards. In fact we almost doubled our score from the morning's tally and managed to see another 40+ birds on both sides of the road. A lovely male Hen Harrier was a treat and then our patience paid off when we spotted two Little Bustards fairly close to the road. After this we watched one group then a second group of Great Bustards take to the air when a farmer and his dog went to round up some sheep that were lambing. We ended our day at the hotel and felt quite satisfied after a great day's birding!

Day 3 - Thursday 21st

There was some ground frost as we left after breakfast and headed towards the National Park at Monfragüe. Stopping en route at a section of the Rio Magasca we found Grey Wagtail and Green Sandpiper. A few Hoopoes were seen as we headed north. Common Buzzards were seen on posts by the roadside and already a few Red Kites were patrolling the skies over the *dehesa*.

At Monfragüe we parked below the Castillo that sits on a high ridge overlooking the impressive peak of Peña Falcon. Mist shrouded the valley where the Rio Tajo has been held back with a series of hydro-electric dams, and the peak sat clear of the mist with Griffon and Black Vultures peppering the guano covered rock face. Looking down on the forest canopy Robins, Song Thrushes, Hawfinch, Chaffinch, Blackcaps and Azure-winged Magpies chattered and called. The trees, a mixture of wild olives and hawthorns, were laden with fruits offering the resident and migrant birds winter food and there were certainly lots of passerines around.

As the mist slowly cleared we had wonderful close views of both the numerous Griffon Vultures and the scarcer Black Vultures passing below us on the new observation platforms. Mistle Thrush, Black Redstarts, Wren, Rock Bunting, Short-toed Treecreepers were watched and Jay and Firecrest were seen as we descended the staircase to the mini-bus. We spent time below at another viewing point at Peña Falcon watching the vultures and and Peregrine flying around the peak. Long-tailed Tits came through the trees and Cirl Bunting were seen.

After stopping off for a coffee at Villa Carlos we had some close views of Red Deer and Azure-winged Magpies near the Tietar dam and continued on to the head of the valley where we took our picnic lunch at one of the hides. Cormorants and Rock Dove seemed in good supply and a single Blue Rock Thrush flitted across the rock face, where more Griffon Vultures sat as others took off or landed. Raven called and we scanned the skies for Spanish Imperial Eagles to no avail. We continued down through the network of park roads to Trujillo and back to the hotel. Later in the evening we went back to take a walk around the old town centre and had a meal in the Plaza Mayor beside the formidable statue of Fransisco Pizaro, conqueror of Peru. It was late when we returned to the hotel after a good meal.

Day 4 - Friday 22nd

Another chilly start to the day we left the hotel to travel to the Sierra Brava reservoir. En route we saw some of the early morning birds with quite a number of Common Buzzards and Red Kites either sitting on telephone poles or in flight. Quite a few Redwings and Fieldfares were also seen in the dehesas under the oaks and wild olive trees. Meadow Pipits, Great Tits and Blackbirds came and went, as did both Song and Mistle Thrushes.

On arrival at the reservoir we took a track along the western edge, finding two Yellow-legged Gulls. There were lots of Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls there too, but the biggest group of birds was the ducks at the far side of the water. Scanning with the telescope we picked out Gadwall, Wigeon, Mallard, Shoveler, Teal, Common and Red-crested Pochards. A few Great Crested Grebes were seen diving and then preening and a flight of 12 Greylag Geese passed overhead. On the other side of the reservoir at the dam wall we watched two Thekla Larks and a single Kingfisher, which came in quite close, perching on a rock.

Following the small road around the main canal above Vegas Altas we watched thousands of Cranes above and below this huge rice- and maize-producing area. Some 20 or so Great Bustards were seen with the Cranes on the reservoir side of the canal and we saw good numbers of Cattle Egrets and about a dozen White Storks. A little later on we saw Green Sandpipers, a lovely male Blue Rock Thrush and 100s of Tree Sparrows. Linnets, Goldfinches, Serins, a few Greenfinches and Spanish Sparrows were seen as we descended for lunch over a small stream where there was a large growth of bullrushes and other aquatic plants, bushes and trees. Water Rail was heard several times and there were more than three different birds calling but didn't show themselves. Similarly Purple Swamphen also called a few times downstream but we only saw Moorhen. A few Cetti's Warblers showed and there were lots of Chiffchaffs to see. Some Red Avadavats and Common Waxbills eventually showed and Corn Buntings and Zitting Cisticolas were fairly abundant, as were Stonechats, Meadow Pipits. We stopped a while later to see two close adult Hen Harriers, one male and one female.

Taking a drive down to Campo Lugar we found another group of forty Great Bustards, several Marsh Harriers including a lovely male before returning to Turjillo. A wine tasting at the hotel literally went down well and after another lovely meal we retired for the night.

Day 5 - Saturday 23rd

A cold and frosty start soon cleared as the sun rose and we drove to Cabanas del Castillo. The landscape on the drive through the Sweet Chestnut valleys was ablaze with autumnal colours and Black Vultures patrolled the ridges and valleys. Jays were noted, as were Mistle and Song Thrushes, Fieldfares and Redwings through the woodland stretches. Up at Cabanas we watched a Blue Rock Thrush sitting behind a large boulder close to the village entrance. Hawfinches came past and there were a few Black Redstarts on the rooftops, as Crag Martins fed on insects around the cliff face backdrop to the village. Griffon and Black Vultures were present along the valley to the rear of the village and the walk to this viewpoint was quite beautiful. We had been fortunate with the weather and the clear skies and warming sun made everyone feel good.

We found another male Blue Rock Thrush sitting below the ancient ruins of the castle on the high ridge. There were many Robins in the olive and fig gardens and a single Dunnock was seen. We drove down from Cabanas to have lunch at the old bridges below Jaraicejo on the River Almonte. Here were many White Wagtails and six Grey Wagtails feeding on the pasture or in the shallows of river. More Crag Martins came and went as did some close vultures and the woodland strip above the river was alive with the sound of Blackcaps.

After lunch we drove along the country road towards Monroy stopping a few times to look for the still scarce Spanish Imperial Eagle. Our efforts were rewarded near the junction to Torrejon del Rubio when we checked out a group of vultures above the dehesa and found a single adult Spanish Imperial and an adult Golden Eagle high in the sky. They circled a few times allowing us all to watch and compare the size and structure of these two special creatures as they turned on their long wings effortlessly against a backdrop of blue winter sky.

After this we continued across country finding lots of Common Buzzards and around 40 Common Cranes. Reaching Monroy we treated ourselves to a coffee, sitting out in the town square enjoying the sun. Taking the road towards Trujillo, not an easy task as signposts are not big on the villager's agenda, we came across a dead cow at the side of the road with a small party of Griffon Vultures feeding on it. This was quite a special sight to see on any tour and those with cameras managed to get

some good photos of adult and juvenile vultures threatening and posturing to each other, hissing and taking turns in the pecking order at the carcass.

Later, out on the rolling steppe we watched Red Kites, Marsh Harriers, a few Hen Harriers and a single Black Kite hunting across the open landscape. A Little Owl very close to the road was another bonus and a dashing male Merlin was another addition to an excellent day out in the field.

Day 6 - Sunday 24th

As another wonderful day dawned, with a deep blue sky, birds were singing as we left the hotel. Azure-winged Magpies flitted across the roadway in troops as we drove towards the motorway and on to Almaraz to see some of the wetland species. Unfortunately, the fog was so thick that you could hardly see your hand in front of your face and we decided to take a coffee and wait until it lifted. The air was quite still yet nevertheless the sun was managing to burn off some of the fog by the time we took the road to Saucedilla. Along the edge of the reeds we managed to peer through the mist at some Purple Swamphens, Chiffchaffs and a couple of Cetti's Warblers, but it was pretty difficult to find anything in the poor visibility.

Sunday is a day for fishermen and hunters with guns and dogs out in the country during winter and they were very much in evidence everywhere we went. Taking the road back towards Almaraz we saw a Black-winged Kite fly past the edge of the lake then disappear over a ridge. We drove around the edge of the power station perimeter and tried in vain to see the bird but to no avail. We then returned towards Trujillo and took a long look at the vast expanse of steppe landscape at Belen. Again we seemed to be destined to meet groups of hunters sweeping the rolling plain for hares, rabbits or partridge. Naturally all the bustards had left although we did take time to go through the larks again and sort out Short-toed from Thekla! There were also huge numbers of Calandra Larks and many finches and a Little Owl was watched, which is always a lovely bird to catch up with.

On the outskirts of Trujillo we had lunch then drove up to the road to Santa Marta de Magasca, again watching lots of Azure-winged Magpies, Wood Larks and Tree Sparrows. We took a walk through one of the country lanes that had no traffic and no hunters - we were sure that they were all having lunch by this time! Watching Red Kites wheel and turn over the pastures, we heard the call of Black-bellied Sandgrouse from a distant ridge and walking up to the rise we scanned across the open undulating fields and found a pair feeding in the rough pasture. A few minutes later a flock of 16 Little Bustards lifted into the air in a tight group and flew off towards the setting sun. More Black-bellied Sandgrouse were seen also in flight and after listening to their calls getting quieter and quieter, we called it a day and walked back the few kilometres to the mini-bus.

In the evening we talked about visiting Monfragüe National Park one last time and all agreed that another visit would be wonderful, especially as the sunny clear skies were here to stay for a few more days.

Day 7 - Monday 25th

As expected, a cloudless sky greeted us after breakfast and although it was cold with some frost on the ground, the birds could be heard singing as we left the hotel. At Monfragüe we stopped briefly to watch the vultures at Peña Falcon then drove up the Tietar to the other colony to see if we could find a Spanish Imperial Eagle. Blue Rock Thrushes were watched, as were both Black and the commoner Griffon Vultures. Great Crested Grebes and Cormorants swam and dived for food as some very pure forms of the local Rock Doves flew past.

There was disturbance on the roadway with gangs of forestry workers strimming the edges of the road and the noise was fairly loud. We then left the area without seeing the big eagle and continued down the road towards Placencia for some kilometres stopping to check out some open areas where Snipe were seen. Red Kites were fairly common and we had a superb view of a low flying Black Vulture that was keen to see what we were up to!

We travelled back through the Tietar valley following the reservoir to the dam and finding Crested Tit before having our picnic lunch. After lunch we stopped to take in some of the sights down at Peña Falcon before travelling up the road that leads to the castle, where the cliffs offered some protection from the cold wind and in fact it was very warm there in the sunshine. We stayed a while watching the Griffons fly past and land on the cliff face above us. Crag Martins also sun bathed and flew close by, catching flying insects that seemed to be plentiful. A few Hawfinches, lots of Chaffinches, Song Thrushes, a few Mistle Thrushes and a dashing Great Spotted and ground-feeding Iberian Green Woodpeckers were seen in and under the oak canopy. There were lots of Blackcaps around and Serins, Tree Sparrows and Great and Blue Tits with the occasional party of Long-tailed Tits coming past. Looking down on the evergreen lower canopy of mixed wild olive and oak we could see and hear the troops of Azure-winged Magpies flying after one another. Ravens flew overhead calling and here and there a Grey Heron or Cormorant went past.

Reluctantly we moved across country towards Monroy and the Santa Marta de Magasca area. Here we were fortunate to catch up with a sub-adult Golden Eagle that was circling with a mixed group of Griffon and Black Vultures. A short time later we watched a flock of Great Bustards flying across the steppe to feed in another area. Black-bellied Sandgrouse were also seen and heard. We had travelled quite a distance during the day and decided to head back to the hotel as the light faded. It had been another great day out in the field.

Day 8 - Tuesday 26th

Steve and Lindsey were taking the bus back from Trujillo to Madrid for their early flight back to the UK from Madrid and Stephen took them to Trujillo's bus station very early before breakfast. The rest of the group said their goodbyes to the staff at the hotel and could spend the last few hours birding before they too had to leave Extremadura for flights later in the day from Madrid.

We headed down to the Vegas Altas area one more time to watch the mass of Cranes for the last time. We stopped off near Madrigalejo to look at the Stone Curlew roost counting over 70 birds and admiring such a large winter flock some preening others feeding and walking around the site. After this great start we took a tour of the rice fields watching literally 1000s of Cranes interspersed with views of Iberian Grey Shrikes, a dashing male Merlin, Kestrels, Hen and Marsh Harriers and a host of different larks. We took time to watch both Common Waxbills and Red Avadavats in the reeds and grasses along the canals and ditches that feed this huge agricultural area. Great Bustards were next on the list and a huge flock of over 80 birds had taken to the air with 100s of Cranes as tractors moved around the area. We followed a group that had landed a short distance away and stopped to admire such a great sight, before they took off again to look for somewhere quieter.

Time passed quickly as we were enjoying the birds, but sadly we had to make our way and join the main motorway to Madrid, after a coffee and a comfort stop of course! Heading along the motorway we saw a Goshawk pass across the carriageway and a short time later we saw a Black-winged Kite hovering in the central reservation with another bird perched on wires on the other side of the road. There were also many Griffon and a few Black Vultures along the route and when we pulled off to take our picnic in the countryside we saw many more, as well as long lines of distant Cranes flowing the snow capped mountains. Again larks and Lapwings seemed everywhere with huge numbers of Sky Larks mingling with huge mixed flocks of Spotless and European Starlings, Calandra, Crested and Short-toed Larks.

We arrived back at Barajas airport at an easy pace and in plenty of time for our flights. Stephen said his goodbyes to the remainder of the group as they checked in for their flight to London. This year's Spanish Steppes tour was really rewarding for all. The weather was wall-to-wall sunshine with a fabulous number of birds seen at beautiful locations in the wide-open expanses of Extremadura. Thanks to all for your bird-spotting abilities good cheer and good company. Hopefully we can meet up some other time on another birding and wildlife adventure!

Stephen Daly

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED

(total number of species recorded by the group was 109)

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Seen in low numbers or heard most days

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Seen in the Vegas Altas area feeding with Cranes and a few birds seen in flight over the Embalse de Sierra Brava on the 22nd.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Moderate numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Moderate numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Large numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava and small numbers recorded elsewhere on wetland areas.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Large numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava.

Teal *Anas crecca*

60 or so birds seen on the Embalse de Sierra Brava.

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Seen only on the Sierra Brava.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Moderate numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava and more birds at the Portal del Tietar.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Not so common as in some years but seen on three days with greater concentrations through the Vegas Altas area

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Large numbers at Vegas Altas and on a few other days in various locations during the week.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Small numbers recorded daily most around the agricultural areas and wetland habitats.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Seen most days in small numbers

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common and seen daily with concentrations on the Monfragüe and Sierra Brava reservoirs and at Almaraz.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common throughout the week

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Singles seen on four days.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

A pair at Peña Falcon gave us a great flying display and later in the week three birds were seen at the Portal del Tietar.

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Fleeting views of a single juvenile bird at Almaraz then two birds seen on the motorway on the last day near Talevera.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Seen every day of the tour, fairly common.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Singles seen on two days.

Eurasian Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

Common, seen in good numbers everyday of the week with exceptional sightings at Peña Falcon and Portal del Tietar in the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe.

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

Low numbers, seen every day of the tour with some excellent close views at Monfragüe.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Seen on five days in small numbers, mostly in the rice-fields.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Seen on three days of the tour with some good views of males hunting.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Seen on four days, singles.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

One bird seen flying close over the motorway on the last day

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Fairly common, recorded in small numbers each day of the tour.

Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti*

One adult seen near Monfragüe on the 5th day and a single sub-adult seen a few days later near Santa Marta de Magasca.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

An adult seen at Monfragüe and a single sub-adult was watched near Santa Marta de Magasca later in the week.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Great views of some large flock of up to 90 birds on four days of the tour.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*

Small flocks and pairs seen in flight on four days of the tour.

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Birds heard calling and seen briefly in the mist at Almaraz lagoons on the 26th.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

One bird seen at Madrigalejo and more at Vegas Altas

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Three birds heard calling at Río Gargalligas.

Coot *Fulica atra*

Good numbers seen on the Embalse de Sierra Brava and again at Almaraz.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Seen every day of the tour. 1000s of birds seen within the Vegas Altas agricultural area. Good numbers of medium-sized flocks in various Dehesas throughout the area. Extremadura has concentrations of Common Crane exceeding 140,000 birds most winters.

Stone Curlew *Burhinus oediconemus*

A flock of 70+ wintering birds were seen near Madrigalejo on two occasions. Great views were had by all.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Seen every day of the tour.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Five seen feeding around a large compost mound near Puerto de Tietar.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

One bird seen at Sierra Brava on the 25th

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Seen in small numbers most days of the tour

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

One bird seen on the 25th at Sierra Brava

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Several birds seen at Vegas Altas on the 23rd and a single bird on the 25th at Sierra Brava

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Seen in low numbers on five days of the tour

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Good numbers feeding in the agricultural areas, seen on 5 days of the tour.

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*

A small flight of seven birds were seen and heard calling at Santa Marta de Magasca on the 24th.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*

Small groups seen feeding, heard calling and seen in flight on two days of the tour.

Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Recorded every day of the tour. There were some pure Rock Doves seen at Portal de Tietar.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Seen every day of the tour; common.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Recorded in smallish numbers throughout the week.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Recorded on five days.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Single birds seen on two days.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Fairly common throughout the week and seen most days in low numbers.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

Seen only on one day at woodland around Monfrague Castillo. Hear calling on another day.

Iberian Green Woodpecker *Picus sharpei*

Noted on the floor of the *dehesa* on 25th

Iberian Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

Fairly common on the steppes and on telegraph wires alongside roads.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Singles and pairs seen in the appropriate woodland areas throughout the tour.

Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus*

Very common and vocal with flocks seen daily. Good numbers around our hotel.

Magpie *Pica pica*

A very common species throughout the week.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Fairly common throughout the week with a resident flock of at least 20 birds at Las Canteras and bigger flocks in the square in the old square in Trujillo.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Recorded in small numbers throughout the week.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Singles seen on a couple of days.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Fairly common during the week but only seen in ones and twos.

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Small numbers seen most days and one seen most days in the hotel garden.

Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus*

Good views of three birds in the pines at Monfrague.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Six at the Peña Falcon on the 13th and ten at the Portal del Tietar in Monfragüe.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Seen in low numbers on five days. Larger concentrations at Peña Falcon and Portal del Tietar in Monfragüe.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

Quite numerous in selected meadows on the Magasca, Zorita and a large flock of over 300 on the Belen Plain on the 25th.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Small flocks watched feeding on open ground at Vegas Altas and a few seen and heard calling as they flew over Belen plain.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Very common throughout the week.

Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*

Seen on three occasions with two birds to compare with Crested Lark on the Belen Plain on the 23th.

Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*

a few seen on the 22nd en route to Monfragüe from Placencia. On the 24th six were seen at Belen and on the 25th a few were seen and heard at Vegas Altas.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

Seen most days around woodland in small numbers. Very vocal.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Seen well on four days at Campo Lugar, Vegas Altas and other sites.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Seen or heard blasting out their explosive call most days.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Very common throughout the week.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common seen and heard most days. Present in the hotel gardens.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

Skulking birds seen most days and heard as well. A fairly common warbler in Extremadura.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

Seen a few times at various places in Vegas Altas

Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*

Seen at Río Gargalligas and nearby Vegas Altas.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

A few seen and heard calling on the 21st at woodland in at Monfragüe Castillo.

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

A few birds seen and others heard in various locations. Present and calling from the hotel gardens

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

Four birds seen at woodland in the *dehesa* at Monfragüe .

Nuthatch *Sitta europea*

Brief views of this woodland species on three days.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Large flocks from the north seen every day in the company of Spotless Starlings

Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor*

Very common throughout the week.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Fairly common throughout the week.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Small to medium flocks arriving throughout the week.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Small to medium flocks arriving throughout the week.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Fairly common and seen in low numbers most days

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Seen in wooded *dehesas* and meadows on five days

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Recorded fairly regularly throughout the week.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Common around buildings and rocky areas and roosting at local buildings around our hotel.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Fairly common, recorded daily throughout our week.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Seen on the three days at Monfragüe at Peñafalcon and Portel del Tietar and Cabañas del Castillo; always good to see the males.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common, recorded daily.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

A flock of at least 200 around Vegas Altas with smaller numbers recorded at other locations.

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Small flocks seen on three days of the tour.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Recorded in ones and twos each day along streams, at reservoirs and on flooded rice fields.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Encountered regularly in quite good numbers.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Very common on the steppes and on agricultural fields.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Common, recorded in good numbers each day.

Serim *Serinus serinus*

Recorded on four separate days in smallish numbers.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Recorded on four separate days in smallish numbers.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common, recorded in good numbers throughout the week.

Linnet *Linaria cannabina*

Reasonably common, recorded in smallish numbers on four separate days.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Singles seen at Monfrague and other birds heard calling in or over the woodland canopy.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Very common on the steppe and surrounding open areas.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

Seen at Peña Falcon on 21st

MAMMALS

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Iberian Hare *Lepus granatensis*

Common Pipistrelle Bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS

Marsh Frog *Pelophylax ridibundus*

BUTTERFLIES

Small White *Artogeia rapae*

Large White *Pieris brassicae*

Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*

Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

OTHER

Red-winged Grasshopper *Oedipoda germanica*