

Spain: Spanish Steppes in Autumn

Wed 21-Wed 28 November 2012



(Photos this page, clockwise from top left): A pair of exotic **Azure-winged Magpies** flies by • **Adult Spanish Imperial Eagle** displays its characteristic white epaulettes • A flock of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** wheels low over the steppe • Storm clouds gather over the medieval town of **Trujillo** • **Cranes** feeding beneath the oaks in the dehesas • **Hoopoes** are always a treat to see • (Photos next page, clockwise from top left): A predatory **Southern Grey Shrike** dashes past • But the immense **Griffon Vulture** is rather more impressive on the wing! • In flight, **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** utter a tell-tale chuckling call • **Male Black Redstart** and fallen olives • Extremadura's **Great Bustards** gather in 'droves' on the steppe in autumn • **Cranes** in the rice fields • **Male Spanish Sparrow** in buff-tipped autumn plumage © all photos Stephen Daly/www.andalucianguides.com

report compiled by tour leader:
Stephen Daly



Trip Diary

Tour leader: Stephen Daly

with James Camden, Nicola Duckworth, David Fosh, Sylvia King, Brook Phillips, and Tim & Daphne Watson

There were many highlights during the week. Who will forget the superb views of Spanish Imperial Eagles, the Great and Little Bustards feeding across the plains, the Calandra Larks in great numbers, or indeed the Bonelli's Eagles and Black-winged Kites? The Spanish Steppes are always full of surprises and we had quite a few, with the Woodchat Shrike so late in the year high on the list.

Wednesday 21st November

Stephen was at Madrid's Barajas airport, ready and waiting with the minibus parked closely for a quick getaway when the group arrived from London. Travelling through the city and out on to the main road to Badajoz was really quiet... once we cleared Madrid! Birds were seen from the start, with Magpie, Woodpigeon, Spotless and European Starlings, Southern Grey Shrike, Black Vulture, Red Kite, Buzzard, Kestrel, Corn Bunting, Stonechat, Green Sandpiper and Little Grebe all noted en route. We stopped off for *tapas* at a roadside restaurant and travelled the last leg to our hotel near Trujillo with ease. Arriving at the journey's end we saw a lovely Southern Grey Shrike. Soon we were relaxing with a welcome drink from our hosts and later enjoying a lovely meal.

Thursday 22nd November

In November, daylight is late arriving in Extremadura and it was just getting light at 8am when we took breakfast. Leaving around 9am, we set off for Monfragüe National Park and were soon watching the fantastic spectacle of Griffon and Black Vultures wheeling around the top of Peñafalcon. Here Peregrine was also seen and a Blue Rock Thrush basked in the early morning sunshine. Black Redstart, Crag Martin, Greenfinches, Great and Blue Tits all came past the observation point as Cormorants fed on the River Tajo below.

It was a mainly sunny day and there wasn't too much low cloud to the north. Temperatures were going to be around 15°C so we decided to drive further into the park, following the river and winding road that leads to the Tietar valley. There were many Red Deer in the park, feeding fairly close to the road, and Red-legged Partridges were seen as well as heard opposite the Portal de Tietar observation point.

As we were watching the vultures and admiring a perched male Peregrine, a beautiful adult Spanish Imperial Eagle came into view then disappeared behind the cliff line and forest. After a little while the bird was seen again, soaring on a thermal, and coming close enough for us all to enjoy great views. A distant second bird was also seen off to the west. A Great Spotted Woodpecker flew past and a long line of distant Cranes could also be seen. Long-tailed Tit, Sardinian Warbler, Wren and Rock Dove were also watched.

Attracted by the sound of calling Cranes, we took a loop around the lower agricultural flatlands towards Placencia, finding a good number of Buzzards and Red Kites. Woodlarks, White Wagtails and Meadow Pipits seemed to be very common and Jackdaw, Lapwing, Crested Lark, Sky Lark, Stonechat, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush and Hoopoe were also found. Stopping for our picnic lunch we had a fleeting view of a hunting Sparrowhawk and Brook found a great example of the fawn-colored Praying Mantis.

The remainder of our afternoon was spent stopping off at various sites to watch Griffon and Black Vultures cross the *dehesa* and we eventually halted below Jaraicejo, at the three bridges on the Rio Almonte. Here we found Cirl Bunting, Grey Wagtail, Dartford Warbler, Little Egret and Green Sandpiper. Having driven quite a distance during the course of the day, we returned to the hotel and took a walk along the country lane. There were some of the usual garden birds that we see around the hotel gardens plus some farmland birds, including lots of Azure-winged Magpies. Brook also found a large adult Praying Mantis at the side of a dry-stone wall.

Friday 23rd November

After breakfast we headed south, stopping on the Campo Lugar road. Our first good bird of the day was a Redwing perched on top of a tree, followed by lots of Southern Grey Shrikes and plenty of Hoopoes, too. As we came close to the entrance to the Sierra Brava reservoir, Nicola and Sylvia spotted a male Merlin by the roadside. Good birds kept on coming, with two Little Owls seen on top of a rock pile and our first group of Great Bustards was watched; Calandra Larks sang and rose in the air across the steppe, Zitting Cisticola buzzed around and Skylarks were seen and heard as were a couple of small flocks of Short-toed Larks. Wood and Crested Larks added to the lark tally and hundreds of Lapwings and Meadow Pipits fed through the close-grazed landscape. A Griffon Vulture sat in a tall eucalyptus and a small flock of Little Bustards was watched feeding at the top of a ridge in coarse grass and dried thistles - a perfect screen for a perfectly camouflaged bird!

After the Guardia Civil told us we were not allowed to stop at the side of the road (even although there was no continuous white line painted along the side), we pulled into a gateway and allowed them to go and harass other tourists. We had a quick look further along the road, picking up a few raptors that included Kestrel, Buzzard, Marsh Harrier and Red Kite. On the way back we spotted huge flock of over 70 Little Bustards. Ignoring the prospect of another encounter with the 'boys in green' we stopped for a little while to watch them.

Continuing down to Madrigalejo we passed more Marsh Harriers and turned off the road to watch Cranes feeding in the rice-fields. A beautiful Black-winged Kite was seen on the edge of an old cork oak and conveniently flew onto a post at the side of the road. We inched forward and everyone had a great view of this quite rare bird in Extremadura. Numbers of Black-winged Kites have gone down slowly in Extremadura, whereas in other southern and more northern areas their numbers have actually increased. France now has over 60 breeding pairs, which shows just what a nomad this lovely raptor really is. We saw literally thousands of Cranes in the harvested rice-fields and a small flock of Greylag Geese that were feeding with one distant group. Snipe, Spanish Sparrow, Red Avadavat and Penduline Tit made for an impressive tally in this area.

Our next exploration was amongst the tracks of the agricultural lands to the south. Here we saw many more Cranes, and medium to large flocks of Black-bellied Sandgrouse, which took off and landed again to feed. We took our lunch stop by a reedbed on the local river and found White Stork, Corn Bunting, Southern Grey Shrike, Little Grebe, Moorhen, Common Waxbill and Cetti's Warbler.

Saturday 24th November

It was a grey day, but dry at least, as we set off to search for Great Bustards after breakfast. There was no rain, but you could feel there was a change in the weather coming and as we took a look at Belen plain there was a lot of activity in the countryside with hunters around

and the sound of distant gunshots being heard. Belen was quiet, not surprisingly as Saturday is a big hunting day here in Spain and disturbance is inevitable at this time of year. We did have our spirits raised when a flock of over 300 Calandra Larks was watched feeding on a freshly ploughed field. The usual raptors were already patrolling the skies and Hoopoes, Short-toed Larks plus some large mixed flocks of sparrows and finches swirled past. Green Sandpipers fed on some pools and lots of Southern Grey Shrikes sat on the wires.

Taking a trip out to the Caceres plains was similar, with little birdlife in the countryside. Everything seemed very quiet as we passed lots of parked vehicles with dog trailers on private land. A look along the Santa Marta de Magasca tracks was also quiet apart from Ravens, Red Kites, finches, larks and one distant Golden Eagle. There were flocks of Griffon and Black Vultures wheeling around some distant points, but all in all it was a bit disappointing to see men out hare-coursing with Lurchers though fields where normally Great Bustards fed. One passing hunter stopped his vehicle as we were having lunch and kindly handed us a couple of Great Bustard wing feathers: in general the hunters know which birds are protected and I believe that this was a kind gesture.

We took a walk up one of the tracks after lunch to see if we could get closer to a large flock of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse that had been seen lifting off the ground and wheeling around a hilltop, calling as they flew. On the way we saw an Iberian Hare that had obviously been successful avoiding the men with dogs! We also came across quite a large Ladder Snake against a dry stone wall - it was over a metre in length and quickly found a hole to disappear into. As luck would have it, a few feeding sandgrouse were seen through the 'scope by Brook and the flock had another fly around in front of us. It was a lovely spectacle with around 80 birds in the sky.

We took a drive along country lanes and reached the hotel earlier than normal as a wine-tasting had been organized for our group before dinner. We sampled a selection of three different wines from different Spanish regions and all were quite different and very good quality. After dinner, we chatted in front of the log fire in the sitting room over a drink.

Sunday 25th November

A Wren was calling at the hotel gardens and flitted past the laden orange trees as we walked to the minibus from the hotel. A few Blackcaps, plus Blue and Great Tits performed, and a male Sardinian Warbler scolded us off the premises! We took a drive south and visited the tracks leading around the north side of the Sierra Bravo reservoir. A huge number of duck were visible from the roadside on this huge water collector that feeds the Vegas Altas rice-fields and the flat agricultural plain below. Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Pintail, Wigeon, Gadwall and Tufted Duck were all present and a single Greylag and a group of 12 Egyptian Geese were also watched. A pair of Red-crested Pochard was also picked out of the 1000s of duck as were two Black-necked Grebes; Great Crested Grebes were visible in good numbers and a few Coot were seen. The noise of feeding Cranes on the rice fields below was incredible and everywhere we looked in the sky we could see lines coming and going, with a quick count that went well over 2,000 birds. Great White and Little Egrets were seen in flight or around the edges of the water.

Checking the dam wall and nearby pools below the reservoir we could see Green and Common Sandpipers; a single Greenshank was seen in flight. A few Kingfishers and a group of five Hoopoes all lined up in a row were lovely to see; quite a few Marsh Harriers and Buzzards were seen hunting or perched around the area, too. Driving down through the rice-fields we got a bit closer to the Cranes. A few hundred Cattle Egrets were following a lone

tractor that was turning over the wet mud after the harvest and there were pockets of White Storks feeding there, too.

Travelling along the edge of the holm oak *dehesa* we watched many Cranes feeding on the acorns under the canopy of the trees, which made a very pretty sight. The adjacent farmland held quite a few feeding passerines including Reed Bunting, which was a new species for the tour. We drove on along the Campo Lugar roadway across the steppe and found Little Owls, Calandra Larks, Buzzards and Kestrel. The hunters were out again, this being Sunday, and so the usual Great Bustard site was empty. Little Bustards, too, were nowhere to be seen as men roamed the countryside with dogs hunting hares. Stopping off for lunch at the side of the road overlooking a sweep of the lower steppe, we picked up a single female Hen Harrier and some very distant Great Bustards. After checking the map for some road or track references to get closer, we drove towards them and came through an olive grove literally dripping with ripe olives, where Black Redstarts danced and flicked on the ground between the fallen fruits.

Looking out across the open landscape we found the Great Bustard flock, almost 90 in total. Another flock, this time a group of c. 40 Little Bustards, took off from an area close by and wheeled across the sky before landing again just out of sight. The flock of Great Bustards then took off and flew around before coming back to the same spot, but a good number had obviously landed over the other side of the olive grove. We took a drive around to open ground to look for the remaining birds and, stopping off on a quiet country road, found them on a sloping stubble field actually walking towards us. This was the closest view we could have hoped for and the birds seemed quite settled. After spotting the female Hen Harrier hunting once more, we drove along the road looking at the crumbling dry stone walls and checking the fields. Our attention was drawn to two large raptors on the edge of a field with winter wheat - the birds turned out to be a fine pair of Bonelli's Eagles. The birds flew off, but landed in a dead tree on a hillside and we were able to set up our telescopes and get some great views of these magnificent rare raptors.

We ended the day happily avoiding any forecasted rain showers, although by 5pm the sky was quite dark and a quick look at the fingers of a mountain woodland proved to be very quiet. Dinner back of the hotel was most enjoyable and most of us retired fairly early to bed.

Monday 26th November

Cooler winds were wheeling in from the northwest and the sky looked threatening as we left after breakfast for Almaraz. By the time we got there it was quite windy and there wasn't much visible along the reed beds. A few Purple Swamphen flew over the reeds and one obligingly stayed out for a while before skulking back out of sight. A Kingfisher darted across the water and a few Penduline Tits called. One distant Black-winged Kite was seen and there were good numbers of wintering Marsh Harriers and Grey Herons.

Following a quick coffee to warm up, we drove out past Casatejada and Serrejon, and around Estacin de La Bagazona to get into the Monfragüe National Park at the Tietar Reservoir. Before arriving at Monfragüe we had a walk through a wooded *dehesa* and found Nuthatch and Short-toed Treecreeper. Good numbers of Meadow Pipits and Woodlarks were seen. There were Mistle and Song Thrushes too, with a sprinkling of Crested Larks and Blackbirds.

The massive granite cliff face at the Puerto del Tietar was particularly impressive on our second visit, with hundreds of Griffon and Black Vultures in the air, wheeling around and lifting higher and higher on the air currents. It wasn't long before we saw an adult Spanish

Imperial Eagle and this time it came in really close and flew past the rock face. A second bird was also spotted in the vulture flock. A dashing Peregrine came past then soared above our heads for a while before flying out of view. Firecrests were seen by James through the nearby treeline and Long-tailed Tits trooped through the lower scrub and smaller trees below the lookout point.

Some time after lunch and leaving the magnificent raptor views overlooking the Puerto de Tietar, we made our way back towards Trujillo stopping off to buy some *Jamon Iberico*, locally cured hams and cheeses. Back at the hotel we wrote up our birding list and had another fine dinner from Belen and Juan Pedro.

Tuesday 27th November

We awoke to frost-covered ground and clear bright blue skies. After breakfast we drove out along the road to Monroy and Santa Marta de Magasca. Red Kites seemed to be up early and a Little Owl was seen perched on a large rock. Southern Grey Shrikes and Azure-winged Magpies fed on the steppe and nearby oaks of the neighbouring *dehesa*. There were Ravens calling and we could also hear the sound of Cranes, their haunting voices carrying across the chill landscape. A little further on, we turned off onto a drovers road and Brook quickly spotted a group of Great Bustards feeding amongst a verdant meadow of fresh grasses and wild mustard. The birds didn't seem too bothered about our presence and fed for a while before moving off to the treeline. A few Black Redstarts, Mistle Thrushes and various larks were seen as we checked out a few other sites for more wildlife. Butterflies included Clouded Yellow, Small White and a Painted Lady.

On the other side of the village of Santa Marta de Magasca, a single Spanish Imperial Eagle passed overhead and a little further on we watched two adult Bonelli's Eagles fly down the river valley over the wooded *dehesa*. We took lunch in the shelter from the cooler north wind, then drove out towards Caceres, where we found one Great Bustard in flight that landed beside a small group of seven close to a farmhouse. Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed Gulls fed in the same fields and one of the Black-headed was still in summer plumage.

After the bustard show, we took a drive south to see if we could catch up with the Stone-curlews that had eluded us at the start of the tour down near Madrigalejo. On our arrival at the old silos and railway we came across a flock of over 50 birds that were put up by a young Marsh Harrier that was quartering the nearby *dehesa*. What was really surprising was finding an adult Woodchat Shrike so late in the season! These birds usually have all left Europe by early October and here, very close to the month of December, was an apparently healthy adult bird feeding on a freshly caught young Iberian Wall Lizard.

We took a quick look at the Cranes, which were nearby and beautifully framed through the wooded meadows, then quickly checked the Campo Lugar road to see if we could find Little Bustard to add to the day's tally. As luck would have it, we all scanned the rising grasslands before James saw four birds feeding in the grass in the near distance.

We travelled back to the hotel and dropped off our bags and scopes, then drove the short distance to Trujillo's medieval centre to enjoy a walk through the narrow winding streets to the ancient castle overlooking this famous historic town. From the top, we had lovely sunset views across the rolling landscape and were able to see many of the landmarks of the birding sites we had already visited. We walked down to the main square, found a bar and went indoors for a drink and some local olives. What a lovely way to finish off our last full day!

As usual the hotel dinner was delicious and we were even treated to a piano recital from Marina, Juan Pedro and Belen's daughter.

Wednesday 28th November

After breakfast we packed and prepared for departure in the minibus. Saying farewell to *Viña Las Torres* we set off back to Madrid. We made good time, stopping only for a coffee and *churos* and filling up with fuel just inside Madrid city limits. There were lots of Red Kites en route and a few Black Vultures. A solitary Black-winged Kite was seen hunting close to the motorway as well. After returning the minibus to the car hire firm we checked-in, cleared security and then had lunch. We then went our own separate ways, with Stephen heading off to get his fight to Jerez and the group heading for terminal 4S and their flight back to London.

It had been a terrific tour and we saw all the key birds plus some lovely surprises. Thanks to all who participated for your warmth and appreciation, and I hope to see you in the not-too-distant future on another Limosa birding and wildlife tour.

Stephen Daly

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED

(total of 120 species recorded by the group)

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Seen in low numbers or heard most days

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

Eleven seen in the Vegas Altas area feeding with Cranes and a few birds seen in flight over the Embalse de Sierra Brava on the 25th

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

A flock of 12 on the Sierra Brava on 25th

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Moderate numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava on the 25th

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Moderate numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava on the 25th

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Large numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava on the 25th and small numbers recorded elsewhere on wetland areas.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Large numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava on the 25th

Pintail *Anas acuta*

Around 60 on the Sierra Brava on the 25th

Teal *Anas crecca*

Forty or so seen on the Embalse de Sierra Brava on the 25th

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

A single pair on the Sierra Brava on the 25th

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Seen on four days at various sites

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Low numbers recorded on the Sierra Brava on the 25th

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Four on the Embalse de Arrocampo on the 16th

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

A pair seen amongst the raft of ducks at the Sierra Bava on the 25th

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Large numbers on the Embalse de Sierra Brava on the 25th and a single bird at the Portal del Tietar on the 27th

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Fairly common. Seen most days, with the greatest concentrations in the Vegas Altas area

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Large numbers at Vegas Altas feeding behind a ploughing tractor on the 25th and on a few other days in various locations

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Small numbers recorded daily with most around the agricultural areas

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

Seen most days in ones and twos

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Seen most days in small numbers

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Seen daily with concentrations on the Monfrague & Sierra Brava reservoirs and at Almaraz

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common throughout the week

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

One male seen perched on a post at Campo Lugar on the 23rd and another adult female seen on the Santa Marta de Magasca road on the 24th

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

One pair seen at Peñafalcon and a single male soaring over the Portal del Tietar on the 26th

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Great views of a single bird at Vegas Altas on the 23rd, distant bird seen at Almaraz on the 26th and one seen on our journey back to Barajas on the 28th

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Seen every day of the tour, common

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

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

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

Low numbers, seen every day of the tour

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

At least 15 seen at Vegas Altas on the 23rd, a few seen on the 24th at various locations, 12+ on the 25th at Vegas Altas and on the 26th another 12+ at Almaraz

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

A lovely male seen on the 21st en route to Trujillo and one adult female seen on the 25th near Campo Lugar

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

A single on the 22nd at Monfrague, another single seen on the 23rd near Rio Gargaligas

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

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

Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti*

Two adults seen at the Portal del Tietar on the 22nd, with another two adults seen at the same site on the 26th. A single on the 27th near Santa Marta de Magasca.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

A single seen on the 24th towards the Caceres plains

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*

A juvenile seen on the 22nd at Monfrague. Two adults seen near Campo Lugar on the 25th and two adults seen on the 27th near the village of Santa Marta de Magasca

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

Twelve seen on the 23rd near Santa Marta de Magasca; 86 seen on the 24th at two sites in the same area; and on the 27th two groups of 17 and nine seen on the Caceres plains

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*

A flock of 80 seen on the 23rd at Campo Lugar; 42 seen on the 25th near Alcollarin and four seen on the 27th again at Campo Lugar

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

One heard at Almaraz lagoons on the 26th

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Three seen at Almaraz lagoons on the 26th

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

One seen at Madrigalejo on the 23rd, and three seen on the 25th at Vegas Altas

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

One heard calling at Arroyo Campo/Almaraz

Coot *Fulica atra*

Good numbers seen on the 25th at the Embalse de Sierra Brava and again on the 26th at Almaraz

Crane *Grus grus*

Seen daily, with thousands within the Vegas Altas agricultural area. Good numbers of medium sized flocks in various *dehesas* throughout the area. Extremadura has concentrations of Crane exceeding 140,000 birds in winter.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicanus*

A flock of 50+ wintering birds were seen near Madrigalejo on the 27th

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Seen every day of the tour

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

One seen on the 23rd at Vegas Altas

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

One 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 seen on the 25th at Sierra Brava

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Several at Vegas Altas on the 23rd and a single on the 25th at the Embalse de 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 five days of the tour

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*

A flock of 80+ seen at Santa Marta de Magasca on the 24th

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*

A flock of 85 on the 23rd at Vegas Altas. A few heard calling at the Belen Plain on the 24th

Rock Dove/Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Recorded daily. Some pure Rock Dove types seen at Portal de Tietar on 22nd and 26th

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

Seen every day of the tour - common.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Recorded in smallish numbers throughout the week.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Two on the Campo Lugar road on 23rd and again on 25th. One at Madrigalejo on 27th

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Ones and twos recorded on most days in river valleys and reservoirs.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Fairly common throughout the week with 20 or so recorded on two separate days.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

Seen on four days, in typical woodland habitat.

Southern [Iberian] Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

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

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

A single adult was watched for some time near Madrigalejo. Normally these birds have migrated through Spain and Portugal and are in West Africa by now, but this bird was happily feeding on a young Iberian Wall Lizard and certainly looked in good shape - which is more than can be said about the wee lizard!

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.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Seen on both the 23rd and again on the 24th at Vegas Altas and Belen Plain respectively.

Raven *Corvus corax*

Recorded in small numbers throughout the week.

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.

Great Tit *Parus major*

Seen most days of the tour.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*

Four heard then seen flying at Vegas Altas on the 23rd and again heard at Almaraz on 26th.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Five at the Rio Almonte 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 Peñafalcon and Portal del Tietar in Monfragüe Parque Nacional.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Two seen near Santa Marta de Magasca on the 24th

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*

Eight seen on the 23rd at Vegas Altas and a few seen on the 24th calling and flying over Belen plain

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Very common throughout the week

Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*

Two seen to compare with Crested Lark on the Belen Plain on the 25th

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

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

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

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

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

One seen and others heard at the Rio Gargalligas on the 23rd and subsequently heard calling at Almaraz/Arrocampo on the 26th and some other wetland areas

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common throughout the week

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

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

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Two birds seen very briefly and also heard near Jaraicejo on the 22nd

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

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

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

A few seen and heard calling on the 26th at woodland near the Portal del Tietar

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

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

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

A couple seen at woodland in the *dehesa* when we took a walk on the 26th near Serrejón

Nuthatch *Sitta europea*

One seen as above on the 26th

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 ilacus*

One seen near Zortia on the 23rd

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

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

One wintering bird seen on the 23rd at the rice fields of Vegas Altas

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Common around buildings and rocky areas. Great views of a male in an Olive grove on the 25th

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*

Fairly common, recorded throughout the week.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

Seen on the 23rd and again on the 26th at Monfragüe at Peñafalcon and Portel del Tietar.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common, recorded daily

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

A flock of at least 200 around Vegas Altas on the 14th with smaller numbers recorded at various other locations

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

A couple seen on the 23rd at the Río Gargalligas, and again on the 24th at La Cumbres

Common Waxbill *Estrilida astrild*

Twenty seen on the 24th at Vegas Altas.

Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*

Seen on two occasions at Río Gargalligas on the 23rd and again on the 25th at the lower dam wall at Sierra Brava

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

Serin *Serinus serinus*

Recorded on four separate days in smallish numbers

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

Recorded on four separate days in smallish numbers

Siskin *Spinus spinus*

A flock of 40 seen on the 23rd near Cabañas del Castillo and a couple of other times in smaller numbers during the week

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common, recorded in good numbers throughout the week

Linnet *Linarius cannabina*

Reasonably common, recorded in smallish numbers on four separate days

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

Four seen briefly in flight near to Modronera on the 16th

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*

Very common on the steppe and surrounding open areas

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

Heard on the 22nd at Peñafalcon and six birds seen on the 26th at the Castillo de Monfrague

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

One seen on the 23rd near Madrigalejo

MAMMALS

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus*

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Iberian Hare *Lepus granatensis*

REPTILES/AMPHIBIANS

Marsh Frog *Pelophylax ridibundus*
Moorish Gecko *Tarentola mauritanica*
Ladder Snake *Rhinechis scalaris*
European Terrapin *Emys orbicularis*

BUTTERFLIES

Small White *Artogeia rapae*
Large White *Pieris brassicae*
Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

OTHER WILDLIFE

Praying Mantis (Brown form) *Mantis religiosa*
Hummingbird Hawk Moth *Macroglossum stellatarum*
Solitary Bee sp. Family *Hymenoptera*