

# Spain

## Extremadura & Gredos

Sat 4<sup>th</sup> – Sat 11<sup>th</sup> May 2013



*Trip photos (clockwise, from top left): Two close encounters with Eurasian Griffon Vultures at the Castillo de Monfragüe • One of the sights and sounds of the Spanish Steppe, a fine portrait of a Corn Bunting • An adult Spanish Imperial Eagle at Penafalcon, Monfragüe • Azure-winged Magpies appear to be ever more common in Iberia • Time for a paracetamol as two Spanish Ibex go head-banging at Plataforma de Gredos © first five photos from the tour by leader Gary Elton/Limosa Holidays; Spanish Ibex © tour participant Len Waterworth*

**report compiled by tour leaders:  
Gary Elton and Peter Kennerley**

## Trip Diary

### **Tour Leader: Gary Elton and Peter Kennerley**

**with Harry Baillie, John Conway, Paul & Sandy Freedman, Iain & Lynn Gardner, Barry & Gillian Marsh, Margaret Miller, Len & Gill Waterworth and Susie Whitehouse**

After a trouble-free flight from Heathrow we arrived at Madrid Airport, collected our luggage, and whilst the group had lunch in the airport restaurant, Gary and Peter organised the minibuses. We began our journey with a rather impromptu sightseeing tour of Madrid city centre, courtesy of Gary's 'Sat. Nav', complete with highlights and local history relayed by Susie en route. Once clear of Madrid we drove west towards Trujillo and a couple of hours later we arrived at our accommodation for the week. 'Vinas las Torres' is situated on the outskirts of Trujillo and set in beautiful rolling countryside with spectacular views towards Trujillo. On arrival we were greeted by our hosts Juan Pedro and his wife Belen who were to look after us admirably during our five night stay.

The landscape around Trujillo is dominated by the rolling plains of the Spanish steppe, the dehesa, orchards, vineyards, forests of Holm Oak and Cork Oak, and large colourful wildflower meadows. During the spring and summer the area is home to some of the most colourful of European species including Hoopoe, Bee-eater and Golden Oriole, all of which could be seen and heard daily around the grounds of our hotel, as could the ever-present Azure-winged Magpie, a speciality of the Iberian Peninsula.

Our itinerary over the next five days included visits to Santa Marta de Magasca, and the Belén and Cáceres Plains which provided us with great views of displaying Great and Little Bustards, the former making every effort to turn themselves inside out, and the latter uttering their 'raspberry blowing' call as they leapt up out of the long grass opening their wings at the same time in an effort to impress. Both species of sandgrouse were eventually seen well - the wet spring had resulted in a flush of grass, making locating them something of a challenge. Our visits to the steppe also allowed us to see Rollers, with an impressive nestbox scheme producing dozens of the birds sat on telegraph wires along the roadside.

A full day was spent in the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe and offered a contrasting habitat to that of the rolling plains of the Spanish Steppe, with its rocky ridges and artificially flooded valleys. The rocky outcrop of Peña Falcon, with its considerable colony of Eurasian Griffon Vultures is a focal point for the park and is overlooked by the Castillo de Monfragüe, which we climbed to enjoying the fantastic scenery and literally eye-to-eye views of Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, along with Red-billed Chough and Blue Rock Thrush. Lunch was enjoyed on the lower level overlooking the Peña Falcon where our first Rock Bunting was seen, followed by ice creams later in the day for some of the group, following discussions with their elected shop steward! We rounded off a fantastic day with an adult Spanish Imperial Eagle over the Portilla del Tiétar, which gave spectacular views.

Lunches and speculative stops at several river bridges over the following days gave us opportunities to enjoy both the scenery again and the birds. These bridges were invariably home to Red-rumped Swallows and Crag Martins; the associated habitat at some gave us nice views of nesting Kingfishers, Red Avadavats and Great Reed Warblers. A quieter day spent driving down through Zorita towards Vegas Altas, provided a day of quality rather than quantity. Sightings including a pair of Penduline Tits, a Little Bittern and an impressive

roadside tree roost of a hundred or so Cattle Egrets. The day was rounded off nicely with a slightly earlier finish that found the group enjoying a wine-tasting evening hosted by Juan Pedro and his sister at the hotel, which was seemingly enjoyed by all!

A visit to Embalse de Arrocampo proved particularly productive, with our group arriving to enjoy lunch while viewing nesting Purple Herons, several Purple Swamphen and a singing Savi's Warbler. With a driveable route around the area to various viewing points (complete with locked hides) we enjoyed sightings of an impressive flock of 80 or so Gull-billed Terns, yet more Purple Swamphens complete with young, and three Great Egrets. It was here that Barry's amazing Questar telescope really came into its own, and was quickly nicknamed 'Hubble', such was its performance where other 'scopes had reached their limit.

Our time in Extremadura produced numerous other avian highlights, from the Bonelli's Eagle watched on its nest with young and the Crested Tit's nest with young in a hollow tree stump, to the Lesser Kestrels at their breeding site in Trujillo, around the roof of the old bull ring. We also enjoyed useful instructive views of similar species such as Booted and Short-toed Eagles, Red and Black Kites, and Crested and Thekla Larks - the latter species at times proving quite challenging.

Our day spent travelling to our next location, the splendid Sierra de Gredos, included a stop at a small reservoir near Hinojal. Here an immature Golden Eagle entertained us, although a perched Great Spotted Cuckoo soon grabbed pole position and everyone's attention. The journey took us via the Jerte Valley, an important cherry growing region, with several stops made en route, which added Grey Wagtail, Short-toed Treecreeper and Mistle Thrush to the list, with Gill fortunate to glimpse a Dipper as we drove over one of the river bridges.

Our last full day was spent in the splendid Sierra de Gredos. Both of our pre-breakfast excursions were spent largely in the hope of seeing the elusive Citril Finch. These proved tricky, though birds were finally seen well on a return visit to the Parador area during the afternoon. Additional bonus species on these visits included Crossbills, Firecrest, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Rock Sparrow and Melodious Warbler. After returning to the hotel, where our breakfast spread was almost as impressive as the surrounding scenery, we headed up to the Plataforma de Gredos.

Several speculative stops along the way produced views of Iberian Yellow Wagtail and Northern Wheatear, Rock Bunting and Spanish Ibex, both these were to prove remarkably easy to see higher up, and a pair of Golden Eagles being mobbed by Ravens. We carried on up to the upper car park, from where we walked a bit higher to a moorland type habitat with areas of low bushes where we hoped to find Bluethroat. From the car park we saw several Rock Thrushes and a singing Water Pipit and on the way up we saw Dunnocks, Rock Buntings and a couple of Ortolan Buntings. Finding Bluethroats was to prove somewhat frustrating until a singing bird popped up twice briefly to sing nearby us then promptly refused to show again. Reluctantly we returned to the car park, but as luck would have it a singing bird was picked out on top of a distant broom bush. Although at some distance, the sun highlighted the Bluethroat's breast perfectly and great views were had by everyone through the telescopes.

The following day we returned for more views of Citril Finch, and again we were successful although this time only one bird was seen. However, views of more Crested Tits, Western Bonelli's Warblers and our first Pied Flycatcher made for a great pre-breakfast excursion.

After breakfast on our last day, we made the short drive along the road to the Plataforma de Gredos stopping at the river crossing some 4 km along the road. We spent just over an hour walking only several hundred yards with the sun encouraging singing birds into the open for us with Pied Flycatcher, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Firecrest and Crested Tit all seen well, plus a couple of Short-toed and a Booted Eagle overhead. A Red Squirrel, our first and only of the trip, rounded things off nicely. We returned to the hotel to finish packing and collect our bags before making the drive back to Madrid to catch our flight home.

It had been a great week spent in two regions of central Spain of great beauty and some superb birding to go with it. We left with some wonderful memories, some of us saw lots of new birds and we had a lot of laughs and fun along the way. We would like to thank everyone in the group for being such good company; your patience, generosity and understanding at times were all very welcome and made our job an enjoyable one. We hope to meet you all again soon in the not too distant future.

*Gary Elton & Peter Kennerley*

### **Daily itinerary**

- 4 May** - Arrived Madrid, drive to Trujillo
- 5 May** - Pre-breakfast near hotel. Trujillo bullring, then onto to Monroy via Santa Marta de Magasca, with stops at Rio Magasca, Rio Almonte and the White Stork colony beyond Monroy.
- 6 May** - Pre-breakfast Belén Plain. Trujillo to Monfragüe NP via Torrejón el Rubio, stopping en route at Rio Tozo, Rio Almonte, then Castilla de Monfragüe, Peña Falcon, Villareal de san Carlos and Portilla del Tiétar. Return to Trujillo via expressway.
- 7 May** - Trujillo to Zorita and surrounding area, Embalse de Sierra Brava, Rio Gargaligas (lunch stop), ricefields near Vegas Altas.
- 8 May** - Pre-breakfast Cáceres Plain. Trujillo to Rio Almonte (3 bridges), Jaraicejo, Casa de Miravete, Saucedilla, Embalse de Arrocampo, Trujillo. Evening near Convento de San Clemente.
- 9 May** - Pre-breakfast along road to Santa Marta de Magasca. Trujillo to Stork colony near Monroy, Embalse de Talavan, then to Sierra de Gredos via Valle de Jerte to Hoyos del Espino.
- 10 May** - Pre-breakfast to Parador at Navarredonda de Gredos, remainder of day into hills to Plataforma de Gredos to car park and walk into hills. Evening into forest below at Navarredonda de Gredos.
- 11 May** - Pre-breakfast into forest below Parador at Navarredonda de Gredos. Morning to woodland by Puente del Duque, c. 2 km along road to Plataforma de Gredos. Drive to Madrid airport.

**ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED**

*(A total of 147 species was recorded by the group)*

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

One or two seen daily from 5/5 to 10/5, many more heard.

**Quail *Coturnix coturnix***

Calling birds heard on 6/5, 8/5 and 9/5. Not seen.

**Gadwall *Anas strepera***

A male at Embalse de Sierra Brava on 7/5, two at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 and one at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5.

**Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos***

Up to 20 noted at many wetland sites from 5/5 to 9/5.

**Pochard *Anas ferina***

A female at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 was the only record.

**Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

Heard near Vegas Altas on 7/5, two at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 and at least one at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5.

**Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus***

Five at Embalse de Sierra Brava on 7/5, six at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 and three at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5.

**Black Stork *Ciconia nigra***

Only seen in Monfragüe NP with two from the Castilla de Monfragüe, at least 12 at Peña Falcon, and one near Portilla del Tiétar, all on 6/5. Birds breeding in Spain often show white in the tail, on some this is just the outer one or two pairs of feather, on others the entire tail is white. Birds breeding elsewhere within the species range in Europe and Asia are not known to show this.

**White Stork *Ciconia ciconia***

Very common throughout and recorded daily.

**Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus***

A male flushed from a wet channel near Vegas Altas on 7/5, and two males in flight at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5.

**Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax***

One at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5.

**Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis***

Regularly seen in fields with sheep or cattle and noted daily from 5/5 to 9/5. Most numerous on 7/5 in the dry ricefields near Vegas Altas, with 100+ roosting in eucalyptus near the village.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea***

One or two daily from 4/5 to 7/5. At least 30 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 and two at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5.

**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea***

At least 30 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5. Many were sitting on nests in the reeds just in front of the (locked) hide.

**Great Egret *Ardea alba***

Three distant birds at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5

**Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***

At least 30 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 and three at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5.

**Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo***

At least 20 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 and one at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5.

**Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni***

Recorded from 5/5 to 9/5 with up to 30 birds daily. Commonly seen hunting over steppe grasslands and farmland throughout Extremadura. Great views of up to 16 birds nesting in the roof of the Trujillo bullring on 5/5.

**Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus***

Widespread in small numbers and recorded on six days. Noted throughout Extremadura and also in the Sierra de Gredos. Probably overlooked among the more numerous Lesser Kestrels.

**Peregrine *Falco peregrinus***

One at Peña Falcon in Monfragüe NP on 6/5, one near Zorita on 7/5, one at the upper car park at Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5, and two seen by Len and Gill near Madrid on 11/5.

**Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus***

One overhead at Jaraicejo on 8/5.

**Red Kite *Milvus milvus***

Surprisingly scarce in Extremadura, with two on 5/5 and singles on 7/5 and 8/5. More numerous in the Sierra de Gredos, with one near the hotel in Jerte to Hoyos on 9/5, at least six on 10/5 and five or more on 11/5, including four en-route to Madrid.

**Black Kite *Milvus migrans***

Common and up to 200 recorded daily, but scarce in the Sierra de Gredos where it was outnumbered by Red Kites.

**Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus***

Four at Castilla de Monfragüe and Peña Falcon, Monfragüe NP on 6/5.

**Eurasian Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus***

Surprisingly numerous, often the most numerous raptor after Black Kite, and seen seven dates, with 50+ on 5/5, 100+ on 6/5, 20+ on 7/5, 80+ on 8/5 and 9/5, 10+ on 10/5 and 2+ on 11/5.

**Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus***

These leviathans of the skies were noted on six dates, with at least six on the Monroy circuit on 5/5, six or more in Monfragüe NP on 6/5, one near Vegas Altas on 7/5, at least two with Eurasian Griffons over Jaraicejo on 8/5, four near Monroy and Embalse de Talavan on 9/5, and one over near Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5.

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

Ones and twos noted on five dates, with one on the Monroy circuit on 5/5, at least four at various sites in Monfragüe NP on 6/5, one on 7/5, a particularly pale headed individual in the hills near Hoyos del Espino on 9/5, and two (one pale headed, the other dark headed) over the Rio Tormes c. 4 km along road to Plataforma de Gredos on 11/5.

**Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus***

One en-route to Trujillo from Madrid on 4/5, three near Vegas Altas on 7/5 and at least six at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5.

**Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus***

At least eight on the Monroy circuit on 5/5 including six males and two females, a female near Vegas Altas on 7/5, two on the Cáceres Plain on 8/5 and a male near Jaraicejo on 8/5. This species appears to breed in small groups, with several birds being encountered in a small area, then no further sightings.

**Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus***

One on the Monroy circuit on 5/5.

**Buzzard *Buteo buteo***

A fairly common roadside bird, with up to eight noted on seven dates, typically all singles.

**Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti***

An adult over Portilla del Tiétar in Monfragüe NP on 6/5 was the only sighting.

**Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos***

A sub-adult at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5, and a pair being mobbed by Ravens en route to the Plataforma de Gredos upper car park on 10/5.

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

An adult and a chick at a nest on a pylon on the Monroy circuit on 5/5 was the only sighting.

**Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus***

Noted on seven dates and birds of both the pale and dark colour morphs were regularly encountered. Up to four birds per day apart from 5/5 on the Monroy circuit which produced at least 12 birds, while 6+ were seen in Monfragüe NP on 6/5.

**Great Bustard *Otis tarda***

Small numbers noted at widely scattered sites on five dates, four on 5/5, two on 6/5, six on 7/5, one on 8/5 and two on 9/5. A displaying male on the Belén Plain on 6/5 probably gave the best views.

**Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax***

Noted at a number of sites near Trujillo, including three on 5/5, a minimum of four on 6/5 and one on 7/5. The best views came in the early morning on the Belén Plain where two were displaying and at least two other birds were calling.

**Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio***

At least six at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5.

**Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus***

Four at sites near Vegas Altas on 7/5, at least four at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 and two at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5.

**Coot *Fulica atra***

One at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 and four at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5.

**Stone-curlew *Burhinus oediconemus***

Heard at dusk and dawn on five days at our hotel near Trujillo, with one seen by several of the group on the morning of the 6th.

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

One at Belén Plain on 6/5 and two flew over the expressway near Trujillo on 8/5.

**Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius***

Singles at Rio Magasca and Rio Almonte on 6/5, and one at Embalse de Sierra Brava on 7/5.

**Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***

One at Embalse de Sierra Brava on 7/5.

**Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus***

At least 40 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5.

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

Three flew over the road near Embalse de Sierra Brava on 7/5. At least 80 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 gave great views.

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

After much searching we finally tracked this species down on 9/5 to a dry field with sheep just beyond the trees on the road to Santa Marta de Magasca with at least 30 birds present. Well worth the wait.

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

At least four seen in flight with Pin-tailed Sandgrouse in the field beyond the trees on the road to Santa Marta de Magasca on 9/5.

**Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon *Columba livia***

Common, mostly feral birds but some looked like the real thing.

**Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus***

Common and recorded daily in all areas although scarce in the Sierra de Gredos.

**Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur***

Just one heard, at Portilla del Tiétar, Monfragüe NP on 6/6.

**Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***

Common and recorded daily in all areas visited except the highest elevations in the Sierra de Gredos.

**Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius***

Two flew over the road near Madroñera on 9/5, and one gave prolonged but distant views later the same day at Embalse de Talavan. Finally, one seen by Gill en-route to Madrid on 11/5.

**Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus***

One or two seen or heard daily at most locations visited.

**Scops Owl *Otus scops***

Up to six birds calling distantly in vineyards near the Convento de San Clemente, quite close to our hotel on 7/5. On a return visit on 8/5 a similar number was heard, but a further two birds were much closer, but remained frustratingly out of view.

**Little Owl *Athene noctua***

One or two seen daily on 5/5 to 7/5, but eight seen during the pre-breakfast drive to the Cáceres Plain on 8/5.

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

Two distant birds calling in vineyards near the Convento de San Clemente, quite close to our hotel on 7/5. On a return visit on 8/5 two birds were seen distantly, one of which later came much closer and gave good views in the semi-darkness.

**Alpine Swift *Apus melba***

One over the Castilla de Monfragüe in Monfragüe NP on 6/5.

**Common Swift *Apus apus***

Common and recorded daily in all areas visited.

**Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus***

At least 40 in Madroñera on the evening of 4/5, and 10+ there on 8/5. In nearby Trujillo, 30+ on 5/5 and 10+ there on 8/5.

**Roller *Coracias garrulus***

One on the edge of woodland en-route to Sancta Marta de Magasca on 5/5, four on roadside wires near Vegas Altas on 7/5, and a minimum of 14 on roadside wires and power poles at the nestbox project on the Cáceres Plain east of Cáceres.

**Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis***

One on the Rio Magasca on 5/5, and two at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5.

**Bee-eater *Merops apiaster***

Regularly heard and up to 30 seen daily throughout our time in Extremadura. Only two noted on roadside wires during our time in the Sierra de Gredos.

**Hoopoe *Upupa epops***

Common and widespread with up to 20 recorded daily.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major***

Heard in woodland above Valle de Jerte on 9/5. Three seen at the Parador near Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5. Others heard above Hoyos del Espino on the road to Plataforma de Gredos, also on 10/5.

**[Iberian] Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis***

One seen and several heard above Hoyos del Espino on the road to Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5. Others heard near Navarredonda de Gredos and by Rio Tormes c. 4 km along road to Plataforma de Gredos on 11/5. Birds in Spain belong to the distinctive race *P. v. sharpei* which resembles Levilliant's Woodpecker of North Africa.

**Iberian Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis***

Widespread in Extremadura with a distribution similar to that of Woodchat Shrike but in lower numbers, with up to 20 birds daily but usually < 10 most days. Not recorded from the Sierra de Gredos.

**Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator***

Common and widely recorded daily throughout Extremadura with up to 30 birds daily although usually < 10 seen most days. Two above Hoyos del Espino on the road to Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5 was the only sighting in the hills.

**Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus***

This species was widespread in small numbers throughout Extremadura with up to six daily. One of the delights of this tour was watching and listening to Golden Orioles from our hotel near Trujillo. At least six in the wooded hills above Valle de Jerte on 9/5 but absent from higher elevations in the Sierra de Gredos.

**Jay *Garrulus glandarius***

One or two seen daily in the Sierra de Gredos from 9/5 to 11/5.

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

Common throughout Extremadura. Also seen in the side valley above Valle de Jerte on 9/5.

**Magpie *Pica pica***

Common and widely recorded.

**Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax***

Singles at Peña Falcon, Monfragüe NP on 6/5, and above the upper car park at Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5.

**Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula***

One or two daily in Extremadura a part from six on 6/5 and 20+ on 8/5. Absent from Sierra de Gredos.

**Carrión Crow *Corvus corone***

Only seen in the Sierra de Gredos with 6+ between Hoyos del Espino and the Plataforma de Gredos car park. Others seen near the hotel and at Navarredonda de Gredos.

**Raven *Corvus corax***

Up to 12 daily from 5/5 to 10/5.

**Coal Tit *Periparus ater***

At least ten in the pine forests in the Sierra de Gredos on 9/5 to 11/5.

**Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus***

A pair feeding young at a nest in a hollow stump at Casa de Miravete on 8/5, followed by singles in pine woodland below Navarredonda de Gredos on 11/5, and by the Rio Tormes c. 4 km along road to Plataforma de Gredos, also on 11/5.

**Great Tit *Parus major***

Common and recorded daily from 5/5 to 11/5 at most woodland and garden sites visited.

**Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus***

Widespread in small numbers and recorded daily from 5/5 to 10/5.

**Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus***

A pair in a reed-filled channel near Vegas Altas on 7/5 and a male at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5.

**Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris***

Recorded on four dates. Most numerous on the Monroy circuit on 5/5 with 20+ recorded and in Monfragüe NP on 6/5 with 50+. Elsewhere, four by the Rio Almonte on 8/5 and two en-route later the same day, and four on 9/5.

**Swallow *Hirundo rustica***

Common, widespread and recorded daily.

**House Martin *Delichon urbicum***

Common, widespread and recorded daily.

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

Recorded daily from 4/5 to 10/5 at many sites with many breeding. Most numerous on the Monroy circuit on 5/5 with 35+ recorded and in Monfragüe NP on 6/5 with 40+. On other dates numbers generally below 20.

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

At least 20 at various sites in Monfragüe NP on 6/5. At least four in the hills above Valle de Jerte on 9/5 and two near Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5.

**Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra***

Common on steppe grassland and poorly cultivated land throughout Extremadura. Estimates included 30+ on 5/5 on 7/5, 35+ on 6/5, 60+ on 8/5 and 50+ on 9/5. Absent from the Sierra de Gredos.

**Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla***

Two near Embalse de Sierra Brava on 7/5 and at least two birds on the track on the Cáceres Plain on 8/5.

**Crested Lark *Galerida cristata***

Common, widespread and recorded daily except in the Sierra de Gredos.

**Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae***

One by the roadside at Embalse de Sierra Brava on 7/5, and at least ten near Jaraicejo on 8/5, in habitat favoured by Dartford Warblers. Many of these birds showed well and enabled us to appreciate the subtle differences that separate this species from the very similar Crested Lark. The most useful features were the call and song, followed by bill structure.

**Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis***

At least six in song above the upper car park at Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5.

**Wood Lark *Lullula arborea***

One seen and others heard on the Monroy circuit on 5/5. One in song at Casa de Miravete on 8/5. At least four in song en route to Plataforma de Gredos and above the upper car park on 10/5. One sang non stop for over 40 minutes below Navarredonda de Gredos shortly after sunrise on 11/5.

**Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis***

Seen and heard daily from 4/5 to 9/5. Absent from the Sierra de Gredos.

**Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti***

Frequently heard and occasionally seen by wetlands and rivers with thick undergrowth on 6/5, 7/5 and 8/5.

**Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides***

At least three singing males at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5, one of which eventually showed quite well.

**Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus***

A distant bird in song at Rio Tozo on 6/5, at least ten in song at various sites near Vegas Altas including the Rio Gargaligas on 7/5, two seen and many heard at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5 and at least two at Embalse de Talavan on 9/5.

**Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus***

Several heard in song at the Rio Gargaligas on 7/5, and at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5.

**Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta***

Singles at the Rio Almonte on 6/5 and Embalse de Sierra Brava on 7/5. Two showed well by the Parador at Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5 and 11/5, and also in woodland below Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5.

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

One heard by the roadside in the Sierra de Gredos near Hoyos del Espino on 9/5. Several seen and many more heard at numerous sites near Navarredonda de Gredos, Hoyos del Espino and along the road to Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5 and 11/5.

**Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla***

At least four males in song at Portilla del Tiétar, Monfragüe NP on 6/5. Thereafter only recorded from the Sierra De Gredos, with small numbers daily from 9/5 to 11/5.

**Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis***

A pair at Villareal de san Carlos in Monfragüe NP on 6/5.

**Whitethroat *Sylvia communis***

At least four singing above the treeline along the road to Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5.

**Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata***

At least eight near Jaraicejo on 8/5. The males were darker grey above and showed deeper, wine-red underparts than British birds, and were presumably of the race *S. u. toni*.

**Western Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans***

A pair plus a singing male at Villareal de san Carlos in Monfragüe NP on 6/5, a male at Casa de Miravete on 8/5, and a male near the Stork colony near Monroy on 9/5.

**Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala***

Recorded at Villareal de san Carlos in Monfragüe NP on 6/5, near Jaraicejo and also at Casa de Miravete, both on 8/5, and close to our hotel later that day, also noted near the Stork colony near Monroy and also at Embalse de Talavan, both on 9/5.

**Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus***

A male showed well at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8/5.

**Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla***

Singles seen in pine forest at the Parador at Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5, and in woodland near Navarredonda de Gredos on 11/5. Others heard in song on these dates.

**Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes***

Noted on six dates, mostly singing birds heard, including 5/5, 6/5 and 8/5 in Extremadura, and daily from 9/5 to 11/5 in the Sierra de Gredos.

**Nuthatch *Sitta europaea***

Heard daily in the Sierra de Gredos from 9/5 to 11/5, and occasionally seen.

**Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla***

Two in the wooded valley above Valle de Jerte on 9/5, two in woodland near Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5 and one there on 11/5, and one in riverside woodland by the Rio Tormes c. 4 km along road to Plataforma de Gredos, on 11/5.

**Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor***

Common and recorded daily.

**Blackbird *Turdus merula***

Widespread and recorded daily in small numbers.

**Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus***

Recorded daily from the Sierra de Gredos from 9/5 to 11/5. Mostly heard but one or two seen daily.

**Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos***

One heard by GE in riverside woodland by the Rio Tormes c. 4 km along road to Plataforma de Gredos, on 11/5.

**Robin *Erithacus rubecula***

Recorded daily from the Sierra de Gredos from 9/5 to 11/5. Mostly heard but one or two seen daily.

**Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos***

Common, widespread and heard daily from 4/5 to 10/5. However, only one or two were seen, e.g. by the hotel near Trujillo and the bird at the three bridges over the Rio Almonte on 8/5.

**Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica***

Two males singing from scrub above the upper car park at Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5.

**Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros***

A singing male heard at Peña Falcon, Monfragüe NP, on 6/5. All other sightings came from the Sierra de Gredos where it was seen and heard daily from 9/5 to 11/5, including birds in song by the hotel.

**Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola***

Recorded daily in small numbers, maximum being 10+ on 7/5 and 8/5.

**Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe***

At least ten between Hoyos del Espino and the upper car park at Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5. A wheatear, presumed to be this species, was seen in flight from the minivans en-route to Madrid on 11/5. The birds we saw were of the race *O. o. libanotica*. Compared to birds which breed in northern Europe, the males are cleaner grey above and mostly lack warmer tones to the underparts. It also shows a proportionately longer, finer bill.

**Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis***

At least three males near the upper car park at Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5. Some were singing and performing an aerial display flight.

**Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius***

At least six in Monfragüe NP on 6/5.

**Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata***

Singles at the hotel near Trujillo on 5/5 and 9/5, and near Vegas Altas on 7/5.

**Iberian Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca***

A singing male in pines near at Navarredonda de Gredos on 11/5, and at least three males in riverside woodland by the Rio Tormes c. 4 km along road to Plataforma de Gredos, also on 11/5. Compared to the birds occurring in northern Europe, birds of the race *F. h. iberiae* show a larger white patch on the forehead, a greater extent of white in the closed wing and a larger white patch at the base of the primaries, and closely resemble Altas Flycatcher *F. speculigera* of North Africa.

**Dipper *Cinclus cinclus***

One seen by Gill from the minivan as we crossed the river in the Valle de Jerte on 9/5.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***

Common, widespread and recorded daily. Usually associated with human habitation but many associating with Spanish Sparrows in rural areas.

**Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis***

Recorded daily at several sites in Extremadura from 5/5 to 9/5. Many 100s nesting in roadside trees on the Monroy circuit on 5/5. On other days numbers were smaller. Typically avoids human habitations.

**Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus***

At least three on a viaduct near Vegas Altas on 7/5, and two in roadside scrub near the hotel at Hoyos del Espino on 11/5.

**Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia***

Two by the Parador at Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5, and three by a children's sandpit near Hoyos del Espino on 11/5.

**Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava***

At least 30 recorded on 7/5 at a number of sites near the dry ricefields near Vegas Altas. All were in the drab, non-breeding plumage. The first were found at the Rio Gargaligas as we ate lunch. Others were found late in the day during casual roadside stops. The call of this species closely resembles that of Penduline Tit, which also occurs in the same habitats.

**Dunnock *Prunella modularis***

Heard at the hotel at Hoyos del Espino on 9/5. Common en route to Plataforma de Gredos as far as the upper car park on 10/5.

**Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava***

Two in flight over the dry ricefields near Vegas Altas on 7/5. Widely recorded in grassy meadows en route to Plataforma de Gredos as far as the upper car park on 10/5. All birds were of the race *M. f. iberiae* (Iberian Wagtail), which shows a dark blue head, pale supercilium and white throat. They also have a call note that is more nasal and buzzing than that of the Yellow Wagtails that bred in central and northern Europe. Some authorities treat this race, together with Ashy-headed Wagtail *M. f. cinereocapilla*, as a distinct species, the White-throated Wagtail.

**Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***

Two by a stream on a side road in the Valle de Jerte on 9/5 and one near Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5.

**White Wagtail *Motacilla alba***

Noted on three dates in Extremadura and two dates in the Sierra de Gredos. Usually singles or pairs along rivers and small streams

**Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta***

A singing and displaying bird at the car park at Plataforma de Gredos on 10/5. Others heard higher into the hills.

**Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs***

Widely recorded and noted on six dates, with highs of 20+ on 5/5 on the Monroy circuit, 15+ in Monfragüe NP on 6/5 and 20+ in the Sierra de Gredos on 10/5.

**Serin *Serinus serinus***

Widespread and recorded daily, with many giving good views including displaying males, especially at the hotel near Trujillo.

**Greenfinch *Chloris chloris***

One near Monroy on 5/5 and a pair on 8/5.

**Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis***

Status very much as that of Serin.

**Citril Finch *Carduelis citrinella***

Three in pines near at Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5 and a male there on 11/5.

**Linnet *Carduelis cannabina***

Ones and twos noted on 5/5, 6/5 and 8/5. More numerous near Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5 with 20+ seen.

**Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra***

Only seen in Sierra de Gredos, with at least 18 in pine woodland at various sites near Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5 and 5+ there on 11/5.

**Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra***

Seen or heard daily in Extremadura and low lying areas, its song is a characteristic sound of the scrub and cultivation.

**Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia***

A male singing by the roadside at Peña Falcon, Monfragüe NP on 6/5, and 10+ en-route to Plataforma de Gredos and above the car park on 10/5.

**Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana***

At least eight en-route to Plataforma de Gredos and above the car park on 10/5.

**Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus***

Noted on three dates, with males near Monroy on 5/5 and Monfragüe NP on 6/5, a female en-route to Plataforma de Gredos and a singing male at Navarredonda de Gredos on 10/5.

**MAMMALS**

**Spanish Ibex *Capra pyrenaica***

At least 50, including some males with impressive horns, on slopes by the roadside leading to Plataforma de Gredos, and also on the meadows near the trail above the car park.

**Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris***

One in woodland by the river c. 4 km along the road to Plataforma de Gredos,

**Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes***

A tame individual foraging in a picnic area by the roadside leading to Portilla del Tiétar.

**BUTTERFLIES**

Our May tour is rather too early in the season for many butterflies. List follows Tolman and Lewington, 'Butterflies of Britain and Europe':

**Spanish Festoon *Zerynthia rumina***

**Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines***

**Moroccan Orange Tip *Anthocharis belia***

**Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea***

**Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas***

**Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae***

**Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta***

**Queen of Spain Fritillary *Issoria lathonia***

**Spanish Marbled White *Melanargia ines***

**Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus***

**Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria***

**Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina***

**Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera***

**DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES**

Again, we visit rather too early in the season for dragons. List follows Dijkstra and Lewington, 'Dragonflies of Britain and Europe':

**Emperor *Anax imperator***

**Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum***

**Red-veined Darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii***

**Broad Scarlet *Crocothemis erythraea***

**Banded Groundling *Brachythemis leucosticta***

**REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS**

**Bosca's Newt *Triturus boscai***

**Iberian Frog *Rana iberica***

**European Pond Terrapin *Emys orbicularis***

**Large Psammodromus *Psammodromus algirus***

**Schreiber's Green Lizard *Lacerta schreiberi***

**Viparine Snake *Natrix maura***

**ORCHIDS**

During the tour we identified the following species:

***Orchis champagneuxii* Champagne Orchid**

***Serapias lingua* Tongue Orchid**

***Serapias parviflora* Small-flowered Serapias**