



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Spain Trip Report *22<sup>nd</sup> April to 7<sup>th</sup> May 2016*



Wallcreeper by Ray Wilson

**Trip report by tour leader: Mark Beevers and Alberto Bueno**

**Top ten birds as voted for by participants:**

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Spanish Imperial Eagle | 6. Great Bustard           |
| 2. Wallcreeper            | 7. Dupont's Lark           |
| 3. Dotterel               | 8. Eagle Owl               |
| 4. Bearded Reedling       | 9. Tawny Owl               |
| 5. Little Bustard         | 10. Eurasian Penduline Tit |

## Tour Summary

Day one and we set off on time from our rendezvous at the airport. It took a while to negotiate the Madrid traffic but by mid-morning we were heading south-west on remarkably quiet roads towards Monfragüe National Park with a couple of scheduled stops planned. Our first stop however was unscheduled, when Alberto saw a Hawfinch from the vehicle at Colmenar del Arroyo. The Hawfinch could not be relocated but this stop gave us an introduction to our first Mediterranean species with European Bee-eaters, Woodchat Shrike and Black-Redstarts all being seen along with a pair of Rock Sparrows. Our first Eurasian Griffon and Cinereous Vultures were overhead and a pair of Short-toed Treecreepers showed very well. Not a bad first stop.

Our first scheduled stop was at Navahonda Hermitage where after quite a bit of searching we eventually found a Hawfinch, which was our target here. We also secured great looks at a Nightingale, a species which we were to hear singing frequently during the tour. Eurasian Nuthatches were particularly common here, giving great views, whilst further Mediterranean species included Red-rumped Swallow and European Serin. We took another unscheduled stop, this time to admire our first Short-toed Eagle and Iberian Magpies, but we didn't have time to search for the singing Western Bonelli's Warbler as we were already late for our rather excellent lunch. Leaving later than intended our next stop was at Puerto de Peñanegra in the Sierra de Gredos. Here, at 1850 meters and in chilly weather, we found our target bird quite quickly and soon everyone was getting views of a stunning male Bluethroat, a scarce breeding bird in Spain and the first to be recorded by Alberto on this tour. Other species noted in this upland area included several Eurasian Skylarks, a very smart Northern Wheatear, two pairs of European Stonechats, a surprising number of Dunnocks and a couple of Water



Bluethroat by Ignacio Yúfera



Hawfinch by Adam Riley

Pipits. We then set off for our accommodation, situated on the edge of Monfragüe National Park in the Extremadura region, where the landscape is dominated by the cork oak woodlands or dehesas as they are known locally. The dehesa is an ecosystem which has been shaped over the centuries by man, which allows farming to be carried out alongside nature, creating a mosaic of rich pastures in the shade of evergreen and cork oaks. Monfragüe National Park, declared such as recently as 2007, covers 18,000 hectares with an additional buffer zone of 11,700 hectares. It's a very impressive region with mountains, gorges, woodland and grasslands and we were to spend



the next couple of days exploring the area, seeking out its special birds.

So day two of the tour saw us up and out before dawn, and although we heard both Tawny Owl and Red-necked Nightjar, both were distant and neither responded. After breakfast, we did a short walk near the hotel seeing several Iberian Magpies and a Woodlark, before we headed further along the road to our stakeout for Spanish Imperial Eagle. After a while we located the nest and we occasionally saw the female poke her head out but there was no sign of the male. There was plenty to keep us occupied with a fly-over Hobby, Red-rumped Swallows building a nest under a cliff overhang, a

male Blue Rock Thrush and singing male Rock Buntings. A juvenile Cinereous Vulture landed amongst the Griffon Vultures that were nesting on the cliff opposite and we saw our first Montagu's Harrier. A Wild Boar remained partially hidden and then suddenly a big eagle flew in. It wasn't the expected male but an immature Spanish Imperial Eagle which landed allowing good views. Finally, after a wait of two hours, the male finally arrived, not carrying any prey but a small branch; I suspect his mate was far from impressed!

We headed off further into the park, stopping at Mirador de la Báscula where, high on the cliff, we found our first Black Stork and a couple more Cinereous Vultures. From Mirador de la Tajadilla we added Booted Eagle including our only dark phased bird of the trip, three Short-toed Eagles and a couple of Common Cuckoos and we also heard our first Western Orphee Warbler singing its thrush-like song. We had our first picnic lunch at the visitor center accompanied by Crested Larks and then at Villareal de San Carlos most of us saw a Western Orphee Warbler along with a pair of Blue Rock Thrushes. Salto del Gitano is an impressive cliff face and is home to a large colony of Eurasian Griffon Vultures and fifty or more were seen soaring overhead along with an Egyptian Vulture, Booted Eagle, a male Peregrine and several Black Storks whilst low on the rocks we found a pair of Black Storks on a nest.

We then moved on to a different habitat, the steppe area of the park at Aldea del Obispo, where we soon found three Great Bustards including an impressive male. We also found White Stork, a pair of Red-legged Partridge, several European Bee-eaters, our first Southern Grey Shrikes and many Corn Buntings. We then decided to head off to Montehermoso a ninety minute drive away, to search for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin in an area where three pairs were present last year. Unfortunately it was a wasted effort as they hadn't yet arrived from their winter quarters in Africa and all we got for our trouble was a couple of Eurasian Hoopoes and a Zitting Cisticola. It was however a productive first day in the park with two major targets in the bag.



Griffon Vulture by Werner Suter



Great Bustard by Ignacio Yúfera





Day three started as the previous did, with a pre-dawn walk in an effort to see Red-necked Nightjar and Tawny Owl and although we heard the latter it was again distant. After breakfast we set off to explore a different area stopping on the way to bag a very cooperative pair of tiny Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers. Our first destination was Embalse de Arrocampo where we quickly found a few Little Bitterns and Purple Swampheens. Good numbers of Purple Herons were seen in flight along with a few Gull-billed Terns and a Water Rail was heard calling. A male Eurasian Penduline Tit appeared and was seen in the scope by most people, although it was hidden by a branch in front of it and you had to wait for the wind to blow so it came into view. Unfortunately it didn't stay long enough for all of the group to get on to it. We moved to a raised viewing area which gave us a decent view across the reed bed and we were soon looking at singing Savi's and Great Reed Warblers. A male Bearded Reedling appeared briefly and then flew off but a short while later a female popped up in front of us giving every one great looks.



**Bearded Reedling**  
by Niels Poul Dreyer

We left the area heading for our lunch in a nice restaurant in Trujillo and, during our drive, some of those in the second vehicle saw three Alpine Swifts dash across in front of us. Trujillo is a famous place from where Francisco Pizarro, conqueror of Peru, Orellana, who discovered the Amazon and Garcia de Paredes, a famous explorer all hailed from. It has 16th century churches outside, in one of which there is a statue of Pizarro whilst a huge Arab castle looks down on the town from the top of a hill. Trujillo wasn't just picked for our lunch venue nor for its history as there were a couple of species we needed to see there. First up was Pallid Swift and by carefully searching through the hordes of Common Swifts flying round the town square, we soon picked out three birds. After lunch we made our way up to the castle from where we were able to 'scope four Lesser Kestrels. A good result, two more species in the bag, it was time to head back out onto the grasslands to continue our search for Little Bustard, which up until now had eluded us. We soon found a couple of Great Bustards, several Calandra Larks and a Tawny Pipit as well as several Montagu's and Marsh Harriers and a couple of Booted Eagles. The lead car found a Great Spotted Cuckoo but it did a bunk as we arrived and was last seen flying off into the distance. Numerous nest boxes had been put up for Eurasian Roller and we saw ten or more with ease but we still had no luck with Little Bustards. We stopped to check another stretch



**Little Bustard** by Ignacio Yúfera

of grassland where we found singing Greater Short-toed Larks whilst above us we found not one, not two but three Spanish Imperial Eagles, the adults calling and all three provided excellent looks! We were heading back towards our base when, at a junction in the distance, I saw a black shape; I looked again but it had disappeared. This merited checking with the 'scope, and although it was distant, the black shape turned out to be a male Little Bustard. Then one of the group found a second bird, this time a female, a little closer. It's not a bad birding experience when at one stage the directions were that "it was just left of the Great Bustard". Target nailed it was time to return to our hotel and for the first time on the tour we were actually in at



a reasonable hour. This didn't make for an early night for us, as we had failed twice in the mornings to find a Red-necked Nightjar so we thought we'd try at night for that species as well as both Tawny and Eurasian Eagle Owl but we didn't connect with any of them.

The following morning it was time to leave Monfragüe to drive to the La Mancha region a vast open landscape of mixed agriculture and grassland and as it was to be the longest travel day. Most people didn't bother with a pre-breakfast walk, which was rather unfortunate for the one member of the group who did venture out was rewarded with views of a Red-necked Nightjar sitting on a branch above the road. Now what's that saying "you snooze, you lose". After breakfast we set off to an area where we had been told that Black-winged

Kites had been seen. This was quite close to Embalse del Arrocampo where we had a Short-toed Eagle and some distant Gull-billed Terns but no kites. We relocated to Oropesa where we found no less than six Great-spotted Cuckoos including a couple that showed down to twenty meters, one of which was carrying a radio transmitter. Just as we got onto them I picked up a Black-winged Kite, hovering. No sweat, it was hunting, so we concentrated on watching the cuckoos as we thought the kite would remain in the area. Well it clearly hadn't read the script, for when we looked again, it had gone, not to be relocated.

We lunched at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan, which was a very productive wetland. Our principal target was White-headed Duck and we quickly found fifteen of this formerly endangered species whilst other wildfowl included thirty or so of the very attractive Red-crested Pochard, a couple of Common Shelduck, Common Pochard and Gadwall along with a few Black-necked Grebes. Over the water, marsh terns were hawking and accompanying a few Whiskered Terns were two migrant Black Terns, a bonus bird for the tour. We also added our first Greater Flamingos, a Water Rail showed briefly to a couple of us and we also had views of two Bearded Reedlings, Great Reed Warbler, Cetti's Warbler and a migrant Pied Flycatcher. There was that much going on I almost forgot to eat my lunch! Moving on, we passed by numerous windmills and went through the village where Don Quixote was born. Mid-afternoon we left for another wetland site, Laguna de Pedro Muñoz, which held similar species plus additions like Northern Shoveler, our only Common Teal of the tour and two Northern Lapwings. We arrived at our hotel in good time and during dinner, the first of several Eurasian Scops Owls started calling. Dessert would have to wait as this was our best chance for this diminutive owl and after a bit of effort, one came in and sat above us briefly, which meant we could return to the dinner table fairly quickly.



Greater Flamingo by Adam Riley



Gull-billed Tern by Glen Valentine

Day five and we had arranged to meet a local birder and friend of Alberto's so that we could visit a couple of reserves located in the Albufera de Valencia Natural Park. Our first was Racó de l'olla which holds good numbers of breeding Mediterranean Gulls as well as large numbers of Sandwich and Common Terns, all of which showed incredibly well. Large numbers of Pied Avocet were present on the pool and there were at least seven Slender-billed Gulls. The other hide overlooked a wetland which held good numbers of shorebirds, including well over a hundred Curlew Sandpipers and thirty Common Ringed Plovers whilst hidden amongst the flock we also found a few



Kentish Plovers and Little Stints. Two Collared Pratincoles were on one island, as were single Caspian and Little Terns, and an Audouin's Gull. From here we moved on to another reserve called Tancat de la Pipa which yielded our first two Glossy Ibis, ten Ruff and loads of mosquitos; we didn't stay long! Then we drove to a protected wetland north of Valencia located on the Mediterranean coast and called La Marjal del Moro to lunch where we saw Water Rail and Eurasian Turtle Dove among others. We still had a long way to go but managed to fit one more birding stop in at Prat de Cabanes where we immediately connected with our target, Moustached Warbler. Two showed well and they were expected, unlike the drake Wood Duck that most certainly was not. Twenty seven Common Redshank and four Greenshank were also seen at this site. We arrived at our hotel in good time and that evening enjoyed some excellent seafood, for which the hotel is famous.

Our hotel was situated on the edge of the wonderful Ebro delta, one of the finest wetland areas in Spain, if not in Europe. The delta projects into the sea and consists of a complex of rice fields, vast reed beds, saltpans and riverine woodland. Twelve square kilometers are protected as a reserve and on day six we were out before breakfast on our first foray into the reserve to an area called La Encañizada, where we hoped to find the uncommon Reed Bunting but we failed in this quest. Still it was good birding and there was plenty to see including another singing Savi's Warbler through the 'scope. After breakfast we started birding at some saltpans known as Salinas de San Antonio which held a selection of shorebirds including Bar-tailed Godwit, Sanderling, Turnstone, Dunlin and Pied Avocet, before relocating to a tiny patch of bushes on the coast known as Barra del Trabucador. The bushes were alive with birds, particularly Willow Warblers with twenty of more actively feeding. Other passerine migrants were also present including a couple of Wheatears, a female Common Redstart, Western Orphee, Subalpine and Melodious Warblers, Common Whitethroats and a very brief male Ortolan Bunting that was only seen by a couple of the group. Our only Whimbrel of the tour was heard calling and two Collared Pratincoles flew over.



**Ortolan Bunting by Ignacio Yúfera**

I could have stayed here all day as birds kept arriving, but time was pressing and we had to move on. We headed to a small pond called Riet Vell where, along the access track, we found Spotted and Pied Flycatchers and Tree Sparrows. The wetland held good numbers of Purple Swamphen and many Common Moorhens plus our first Wood and Green Sandpipers. After lunch we worked a stand of trees on the coast which was also full of migrants most notably Golden Oriole and Common Grasshopper Warbler, a species that is rarely seen on a Rockjumper tour. We spent the rest of the afternoon checking various salinas and rice paddies, adding



**European Roller by Adam Riley**

another Eurasian Spoonbill and an unexpected European Roller.

The following day we returned to the migrant bushes at dawn which were still full of migrants but there was nothing different to add to the list. After breakfast we set off for the Spanish steppes in the Monegros area, though we did check out more salinas and also Lo Goleró Bay where we found a few shorebirds including a very fine summer plumaged Bar-tailed Godwit and quite a few Curlew Sandpipers. Moving inland we lunched at Estanca de Alcañiz, a large lake which held a drake Garganey amongst a few other ducks and quite a few shorebirds





including more than thirty Common Sandpipers. Amongst hundreds if not thousands of hirundines we picked out two Black Terns and then we moved on to a reservoir known as Presa de Calanda. Here we were hoping for Bonelli's Eagle but it was a no show, though we did find our first very smart Black-eared Wheatear and a pair of Sardinian Warblers. On the opposite side of the lake, in an area of pines, a pair of Eurasian Crested Tits was very cooperative, if a little flighty. Having missed Red-knobbed Coot in the Ebro delta, we then went twitching, to Cueva Foradada Reservoir to be precise. It was a bit of a hairy drive down but, once at the reservoir, the target bird was quickly picked out and everyone had 'scope views of it. A couple of adult Night Herons were sitting out in the open but as there was little else to see, we returned to



**Black-eared Wheatear by Yeray Seminario**

our vehicles finding a Dartford Warbler as we arrived, and then we set off for our hotel. We arrived in the small village of Lécera and pulled up at the petrol station, to be informed that this was our accommodation. Hmm... it didn't look good but hidden behind the filling station were our rooms and they were delightful.

Day eight was devoted to the steppe area around Belchite, a small village that was heavily bombed during the Spanish Civil War and then left after the war as a monument to the conflict. Dupont's Lark is often regarded as one of the hardest species to see in Europe, necessitating a pre-dawn start and a good helping of luck. So we were out on the plains at El Planerón just as dawn was breaking and yes, immediately we could hear two or three larks singing. That was the easy bit, seeing them proved to be impossible and after an hour they fell silent and we had to call it a day. Calandra and Lesser Short-toed Larks were much in evidence and we heard a distant calling Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Further exploring the area we found a smart male Whinchat and a couple of Black-eared Wheatears. We decided to move to a different area which, since Alberto's last visit, had been ploughed. We thought that might affect our chances of finding Sandgrouse but it didn't and we soon found a flock of



**Black-bellied Sandgrouse by Ignacio Yúfera**

18 Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. They were a bit distant but through the 'scopes we all had good views, as we did of a nearby Eurasian Stone Curlew. We also found four Black-bellied Sandgrouse but they were a brief sighting.

After breakfast we went back out onto the plains, stopping first at a small plantation that was hopping with birds including a large flock of Western Yellow Wagtails of the *iberiae* race but including one of the *flavissima* race. Also in the plantation, we found a Melodious Warbler, Pied Flycatcher and a couple of Common Redstarts. Just down the road we found a Tawny Pipit along with singing Greater Short-toed Larks. Seven more Black-bellied Sandgrouse were seen along with a Eurasian Roller and a migrant

Spotted Flycatcher in the grasslands, before we headed to a lake known as Hoya de Almochuel where we had a particular bird in mind. Almost as soon as we arrived, the target bird was found and everyone had a good look at a stunning summer plumaged Spotted Redshank amongst a small number of other 'shanks and a solitary Ruff. Back to the plains and our next hour or more was spent scouring bare fields



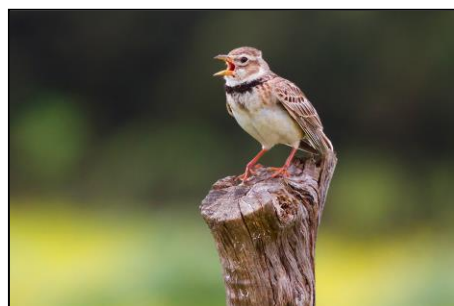
in search of Eurasian Dotterel. After what seemed an age, and with lunchtime rapidly approaching, we eventually found a distant flock in the heat haze. We repositioned ourselves and set off slowly on foot towards what we thought was a group of eight. As we crept ever closer more and more heads appeared and eventually, when we were just fifty meters from the flock, we could see that there were actually 49 birds, the largest flock I have ever seen. We were also treated to some awesome views of Alpine Swifts as they swooped low over the dotterel's chosen field.

After a good lunch and a short siesta it was time to head off in search of a species which had so far eluded us: Bonelli's Eagle. Our destination was Embalse de las Torcas where, as soon as we alighted from the vehicles, we found a bird perched high on a cliff. The views were a bit distant but a displaying bird overhead made up for that and, soon after, a Golden Eagle flew over. We endeavored to get closer and made a short stop somewhat nearer where a pair of Long-tailed Tits flew across a ravine and where a

Bonelli's Warbler was singing, but the eagles were still a bit distant. Further along the road and we soon found ourselves much closer to the eagles, both of which were now perched on the cliff face, giving excellent views. A couple of Short-toed Eagles were added to the list and a Wood Lark was also seen. Time for the next target so we set off back to El Planerón where we started out in the morning. Just beyond there, we found a large copse and walking through it, we soon put up two Long-eared Owls. After a couple more walk-throughs the birds flew to an isolated tree but sat out in almost full view. Up went the 'scope and good views were had by those that wanted them. All that was missing of the day's targets was the elusive Dupont's Lark, so we elected to return their breeding area. Knowing what this species is like from previous experience, I was skeptical that an evening visit would produce the goods but with a bit of perseverance eventually Ken found a distant bird sitting atop a tussock. It was distant but when it turned, its long bill was clearly visible and there was no doubting it was the target bird. What a pity that the one that popped up just thirty meters away didn't hang around and was only seen by myself. Unfortunately that's what Dupont's Larks are like; they often jump up, have a quick look and then promptly disappear never to be seen again but then I did say that they are one of the hardest birds to see in Europe.



Lesser Kestrel by Yeray Seminario



Calandra Lark by Yeray Seminario

The 30<sup>th</sup> April was day one of the second half of the tour and saw us heading off towards the magnificent Pyrenees. Before then though, we had a few sites we wanted to visit, starting with the Ballobar steppes where birds of prey featured with Montagu's and Marsh Harrier, Hobby and Lesser Kestrel being seen as soon as we arrived there. A flock of twenty two Pin-tailed Sandgrouse flew around us but didn't land and then we found the first of three male Little Bustards that we were to encounter during the morning, along with several Eurasian Stone Curlews. We found another large flock of Western Yellow Wagtails, saw many Calandra and Lesser Short-toed Larks but also had a good number of Thekla Larks. Two Black-bellied Sandgrouse were also seen, along with a pair of cute Little Owls, two Red-billed Choughs and we found a really responsive male Spectacled Warbler. We moved on to an impressive gorge in search of Eurasian Eagle Owl but had to be content with good views of Black





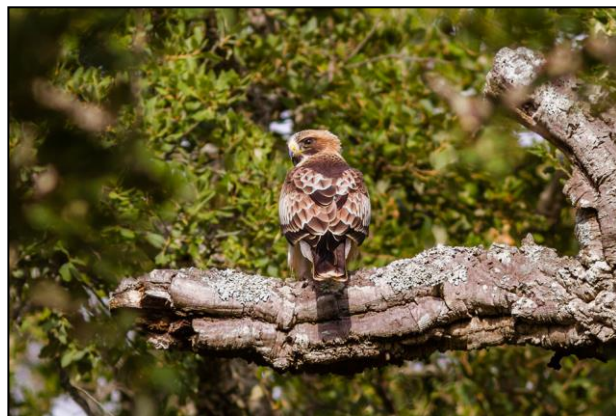
Wheatear whilst a singing Cirl Bunting was a leader only record. The next stop produced the hoped for Eurasian Eagle Owl and we had good views of the female and rather briefer views of the male.



**Eurasian Penduline Tit**  
by David Hoddinott

We lunched in a local bar in Ontiñena, where we briefly met Alberto's wife and daughter before moving on to a small river valley. Here we marveled at a Eurasian Penduline Tit's nest and we all heard one calling, but only a couple of people managed a glimpse of this elusive bird. A quick visit to Laguna de Sariñena was abandoned due to the strong wind and we elected for an early arrival at our hotel in Siresa, situated in the Hecho Valley. Siresa is small village but has the old monastery of San Pedro, a national monument that was built in 1082 and restored in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Boca del Infierno or Hell's Gate was our pre-breakfast appointment on May Day and boy was it windy and cold and no we didn't score the hoped for Wallcreeper. Disappointed we returned for breakfast after which we headed into the hills to Gabardito. This is the start of a pleasant woodland trail that leads to a huge cliff face where the Wallcreeper breeds. In the car park we found a small flock of Red Crossbills including two red males whilst overhead we saw several Egyptian Vultures, a smart Red Kite and a pale Booted Eagle. A pleasant walk through the woods produced two fly by views of a male Black Woodpecker, great views of a male Eurasian Treecreeper, along with Eurasian Crested Tit and singing Common Firecrests. We reached our destination and were confronted by a huge stone slab where, somewhere, there was supposed to be a Wallcreeper. For two hours we craned our necks and scoured the rock without success. Somebody picked up a distant Northern Chamois, the first of many that we were to see during the day with a final day total of one hundred and twenty as we progressively grew colder and colder. Time was pressing and we had to leave. As we commenced our descent, indeed just before we lost sight of the rock face, an unfamiliar call was heard, not the full call of a Wallcreeper but sufficient to raise my interest. A quick blast of the call and a dark shape moved half way up the wall but, on raising the binoculars, there was nothing to be seen. Trick of the light or my imagination, I wasn't sure so I kept my binoculars trained on the area and then after what seemed like an age the shape became a male Wallcreeper. We called the group back and set the 'scope on it allowing everyone great looks at the bird. Phew, not one to miss! On the way back to the vehicles we had great looks at a European Robin. Driving down towards the hotel a male Bullfinch flew up from the side of the road so we stopped for a look. It wasn't very cooperative but we got views of it plus a pair of Great-spotted Woodpeckers.



**Booted Eagle** by Yeray Seminario

After lunch we headed up the Hecho Valley, stopping to chat with some Swedish guys whom we'd met at the Wallcreeper site, passing on our good news. Conveniently they had their 'scopes trained on an adult Bearded Vulture which, because of the distance, proved somewhat difficult to get people on but eventually everyone realized which bit of the rock-face was actually the bird. Behind us, a pair of Marsh Tits put in an appearance, after which we saw White-throated Dipper and Grey Wagtail



on the fast flowing stream. A walk around a picnic area netted us a singing male Goldcrest and very close views of Eurasian Crested Tit. Moving further up the valley until we could go no further, we started to see many Water Pipits, several herds of Northern Chamois and a couple of Golden Eagles but we added nothing else to our tally for the day.

Day eleven of the tour was one to which we were all looking forward, a trip into the high Pyrenees, above the tree line in search of some alpine species. However, as an early breakfast just doesn't occur in Spain an early walk was the order of the day. A short path behind the hotel immediately put us into countryside and a calling Iberian Woodpecker soon caught our attention. It appeared briefly on a dead tree and then flew across the valley but carried on so that not everyone got onto it. Despite working hard to entice it back it, it wasn't to be, but a Eurasian Wryneck posed beautifully allowing everyone

great views.

After breakfast we set off for the high Pyrenees above the Belagua Valley, stopping en route for Alberto to buy cheese! We stopped in an area to try for Tree Pipit, to no avail and four Citril Finches flew by but the birds were only seen by a couple of us and the views were far from satisfactory. BVR - better views required. Three migrating Eurasian Honey Buzzards provided much better views as they made their way along a ridge. As we approached the tree line our vehicle spotted a male Ring Ouzel, which we then worked hard, for the rest of the group to see. Little did we know that they would be common as we gained altitude. Just above the tree line we found a large swirling mixed flock of Alpine and Red-billed Choughs, the former outnumbering the latter by four to one. Ring Ouzels (of the southern and central European race *alpestris*), Northern Wheatears and Black Redstarts were common as were Water Pipits. Just before we reached the highest point of the road, close to the French Border, we came across a lovely Alpine Accentor. We lunched just inside France at the Arette Ski Resort, adding another Alpine Accentor, more Ring Ouzels and Water Pipits to our French lists. Mammals included more Northern Chamois and



Alpine Accentor by Ignacio Yúfera



Red-billed Chough by Adam Riley

several endearing (but fat) Alpine Marmots before we set off down to the lower part of the valley. After a welcome cup of coffee at Zuriza we set about finding Yellowhammer, which didn't take long then we tried a side road where we scored better views of Iberian Woodpecker and had great looks at a pair of Long-tailed Tits.

The following day was 3rd May and we realized that we only had four full days birding left. More importantly, we also realized that we were already three ahead of last year's total with still a few target birds to try for; most important of which was Citril Finch, for all we'd had so far was the brief group of four flying away the previous day. We



needn't have worried for, as soon as we arrived for our pre-breakfast visit to the car park at Gabardito, three birds flew up, so we knew they were in the area. The group of seven Red Crossbills was still present only this time with just one red male with them but then our focus quickly changed as a male Citril Finch flew in and landed right at the top of a conifer in full view of everyone. Brilliant views were had by all and a female also put in a brief appearance. Two Bearded Vultures, an adult and a second year, added a bit more quality but then it was time for breakfast.



**Bearded Vulture by Matthew Matthiessen**

After breakfast we set off on a bit of a travel day but nevertheless still with target birds in mind. A stop in an area of farmland didn't produce the hoped for Ortolan Bunting but did yield several Cirl Buntings. Two Golden Orioles were once again a brief sighting by a few but two Tawny Pipits showed really well for everyone. Likewise a Common Chiffchaff was extremely cooperative, allowing the whole group great looks and we also found several Dartford Warblers and a male Subalpine Warbler. We then had a decision to make. Should we go out of our way back into the High Pyrenees to look for White-winged Snowfinch, a difficult species to see in late spring. We were

never going to see one if we didn't go, whereas if we did go but didn't see one well at least we had tried! So off we headed back up the mountain roads, pausing to look at a pair of Common Rock Thrushes, the male of which showed admirably. Once again we crossed into France parking up at El Portalé where we found several more Alpine Marmots. The snowfields were a bit distant but we considered our best chance for the Snowfinch was to head for the snow so we set off hiking, seeing plenty of Alpine Choughs, Northern Wheatears and Water Pipits along the way. Alberto and I left the group to rest, whilst we walked further up the slopes, searching for the elusive bird but we never found any. We returned to the group only to find that four of them had seen a Snowfinch briefly whilst we were away! This prompted another search to no avail and neither of the leaders saw this bird. Can't win 'em all. After a picnic lunch we took a different route down the mountain and stopped in an area that looked good for Tree Pipit and soon we were looking at one singing from the wires with another singing out of sight. We also had more looks at an Iberian Woodpecker and a Short-toed Eagle. We made a short stop at Aínsa Castle where we had our best looks at Red Kite and Eurasian Sparrowhawk, before we set off to Lecina, which was to be our base for the next three nights. As you would expect, by now there was one more stop (at Arcusa) and finally we managed to find a singing male Ortolan Bunting that conveniently sat on top of a bush singing. Wood Lark and Cirl Bunting were also singing in the same area. We finally ended the day at our accommodation in a beautifully converted farmhouse set in a tiny village, where excellent food and wine awaited us.



**Dartford Warbler by Yeray Seminario**





The group had worked hard over the previous few days so we had a lie in, but not for too long as we had negotiated our earliest breakfast of the tour, after which we set off to walk from Lecina to the next village of Betorz. Before we'd even left the village, we'd had great looks at a Eurasian Wren and two squabbling Western Orphean Warblers and it was soon apparent that Western Bonelli's Warblers were everywhere, so it wasn't too long before everyone had seen that species well. Further up the road first a male Great-spotted



**Peregrine by Yeray Seminario**

Woodpecker, and then a male Sardinian Warbler, both showed well but a Common Cuckoo steadfastly refused to perch for us, though we did get great flight views. We had a quick look around the village of Betorz and then returned for lunch. Our afternoon excursion was something different, a short visit to a couple of nearby caverns that had some prehistoric cave art. Most of the group went for a look but those that elected to bird had great views of Eurasian Griffon Vulture and Alpine Swift from above for a change. From there we moved on to Alquézar, a pretty medieval village that had been declared a Historical-Artistic Monument. It sits above an impressive gorge called La Choca Canyon. Here, in the canyon, we finally managed to find a Garden Warbler which wasn't very cooperative but did, on one occasion, show well though not all the group got onto it. Later in the evening I peeked out of the dining room to find a Tawny Owl perched on a pole but the excited group didn't encourage it to stay and it flew off before anyone else saw it.

With just two full days left it was time to start mopping up species that we'd missed or trying to get better views of birds that we had seen earlier. A pre-breakfast walk ensured the latter with repeat sightings of Eurasian Wryneck, Short-toed Treecreeper, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Common Firecrest and Cirl Bunting but still Golden Orioles would not give themselves up even though two were calling nearby. Quite a few people still needed to see Eurasian Penduline Tit so we went to the Flumen River where we heard one calling, but it didn't reveal itself. A Common Kingfisher flashed past us, another Eurasian Wryneck put in an appearance, some people saw a female type Golden Oriole and a couple of Cetti's Warblers were seen. We moved on to Vadiello from where we had information that Red-backed



**Firecrest by David Hoddinott**

Shrikes had just come in. On the way up the people in the second car had point blank views of a singing Ortolan Bunting. We spent a bit of time searching the hillside before eventually finding a distant male shrike also seeing a few Red-billed Choughs before 'scoping some feral goats on a distant ridge.

Lunch was taken in a pleasant valley where some of us saw a second male Red-backed Shrike, after which we went to the dam. From here we saw an adult Bearded Vulture come in to its nest site with prey, whilst being mobbed by a Peregrine. We moved on from there to a small park on the Isuela River, which was alive with Common Nightingales some of

which were very showy. Our reason for visiting though was because this was another stakeout for



Eurasian Penduline Tit and sure enough we could hear one calling. It wasn't long before someone found a partially constructed nest and we soon had the 'scopes set up on it. Then it was just a matter of time before everyone enjoyed good views of the pair nest-building and another species was finally put to bed. From here we went to Castillo de Montearagón which is the northern most site for Spectacled Warbler. Although we didn't find one, we did find a Dartford Warbler and also had good looks at Black and Black-eared Wheatears and four Thekla Larks. And the castle was quite impressive too! That evening a much quieter group ventured forth after dark and although I never saw it, the whole group did get a look at a Tawny Owl on a post above their heads and so ended another successful day.

Our final full day's birding arrived and with it, the realization that we had equaled the best ever Rockjumper total for the Spain tour. Ok so there's only been three previous tours but with one full day to go we were level with the previous best and we still had a couple of targets. Game on, as they say. However, before we set off in search of more new birds, we took one last pre-breakfast walk below the village of Lecina. We saw pretty much the same species as the previous days but finally managed to see a Song Thrush feeding a fledged youngster. For some reason we had found this species to be particularly difficult so it was pleasing to finally get everyone on it.

Our next destination was a massive Reservoir, the San Salvador Reservoir, which held a selection of shorebirds including three Black-tailed Godwits that were new for the trip. Other shorebirds there included a couple of Eurasian Stone Curlew, ten Little Ringed Plovers, Common Ringed Plovers, a couple of Grey Plovers, Common Greenshank, several Wood Sandpipers, two Little Stints and a fine male Ruff. We'd heard that recently there had been a few White-winged Terns over the lake so our attention changed from the shoreline to the lake itself and a nice summer-plumaged, though distant, adult was soon found. Other birds here included a few Common Shelduck and a Eurasian Hobby and nearby we found a pair of Western Barn Owls in a derelict building. We then called briefly at the nearby El Pas Reservoir where we added Grey Lag Goose to the list.



**Eurasian Stone Curlew Phil Perry**



**Common Sandpiper by Glen Valentine**

We had lunch adjacent to a nice little wetland that held twenty Common Shelduck, thirty-two Common Pochard and a few shorebirds including a very dapper chestnut male Ruff, another Little Stint and a Green Sandpiper. Then we set off in search of another target only to be stopped in our tracks by two soaring raptors that were being mobbed by a Common Buzzard. These turned out to be a Golden Eagle and rather more surprisingly an immature Spanish Imperial Eagle. We disturbed four doves from under a bridge and they were quickly identified as Stock Doves, which took our tour tally to 236, equal to Alberto's best ever total, and he'd done this



tour twenty three times! And we still had one target species left, would they be where they were supposed to be? Well it was always going to be, for Mute Swan is pretty much nailed on at the Ebro / Cinca confluence and our last addition to the tour total was seen with ease when we found five gliding sedately along the river.

And that was it, the birding was finished! All we had to do was make the trip to Barcelona for our final night. En route three Monk Parakeets flashed by but we couldn't stop for anything else as we were running late. This meant for a chaotic arrival at our hotel and very hasty goodbyes to Alberto. Over the previous sixteen days we had driven over 4,300 kilometers and seen some wonderful countryside. We'd also seen some superb birds, a measure of which was that 49 species featured in the top ten lists submitted! Our accommodations had been great, the food lovely, especially the seafood at Miami Mar hotel and the traditional rural Spanish food, and the copious quantities of wine that washed it down was appreciated by those that imbibed. Spain certainly is a great country in which to bird, I heartily recommend the trip and can't wait to get back there.

## Annotated List of Birds (Total species seen: 237; 3 heard only)

*Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC List. Please cite: Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2006. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.*

### Key to abbreviations:

**E:** an endemic species

**NE:** a near-endemic species

**BE:** a breeding endemic species

**I:** an introduced species

### Conservation Status

**CR:** Critically Endangered **EN:** Endangered **VU:** Vulnerable **NT:** Near Threatened

### Swans, Geese & Ducks      Anatidae

#### **Greylag Goose**

*Anser anser*

We found a group of fifteen at El Pas Reservoir on our final full day's birding.

#### **Mute Swan**

*Cygnus olor*

We found a pair and a group of three on the River Ebro as we drove towards Barcelona.

#### **Common Shelduck**

*Tadorna tadorna*

We saw this species on five dates with small numbers at a number of sites around Valencia and the Ebro delta with most (c20) at our lunch stop at Monreal.

#### **Gadwall**

*Anas strepera*

Recorded on five dates in small numbers with double-figure counts at Laguna de Alcázar and Laguna de Pedro Muñoz the same day early in the tour.

#### **Mallard**

*Anas platyrhynchos*

This was by far the commonest duck with log entries eight dates and three-figure estimates on four of those, the highest being 300 or more at the Ebro Delta and at San Salvador Reservoir.

#### **Northern Shoveler**

*Anas clypeata*





Thirty were seen at Laguna de Pedro Muñoz whilst a male was seen the following day at La Marjal del Moro.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*

We had 'scope views of a fine drake at Estanca de Alcañiz.

**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*

A late pair was found at Laguna de Pedro Muñoz.

*NOTE: This species has been split into 2 species, the nominate Eurasian Teal (which is the one we recorded in Spain) and Green-winged Teal A. Carolinensis. This split is not recognized by Clements.*

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*

This colorful species was seen on five dates mid-tour with up to fifty a day logged. Low double-figure counts were made at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan, Laguna de Pedro Muñoz, Reserva Tancat de la Pipa, La Encañizada to name just a few locations where we saw this species.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*

Our only sightings were at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan, Laguna de Pedro Muñoz, La Marjal del Moro and Monreal where 35 on our last full day was our highest count.

**White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala*

We had great looks at around fifteen of this near-threatened species as we ate lunch at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan with another ten or so at Laguna de Pedro Muñoz.

## **Pheasants & Quails** **Phasianidae**

**Red-legged Partridge** *Alectoris barbara*

We saw up to six at many locations on nine dates with birds most often seen whilst travelling.

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

Two were heard giving its distinctive call at as we watched the Lesser-spotted Woodpeckers in Monfragüe NP and others were heard calling at Planerón and on the Ballobar Steppes. Care had to be taken because Calandra Larks can mimic this species

**Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

One of the guests heard one calling early on at Lecina but we were unable to locate it again on subsequent early morning walks.

## **Grebes** **Podicipedidae**

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Up to ten were seen on five dates in the Monfragüe area, at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan, Laguna de Pedro Muñoz, La Marjal del Moro and the Ebro delta.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*

Up to ten were seen on four dates at various sites during the first week of the tour but an impressive 200 or more were at San Salvador Reservoir.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis*

25 were present at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan with another 15 or so at Laguna de Pedro Muñoz later the same day.

## **Flamingos** **Phoenicopteridae**

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*

Recorded on four dates during the first week of the tour with a high day count of 350 including 300 at Laguna de Pedro Muñoz. Up to 100 were seen around the Ebro delta.



## Storks                      Ciconidae

**Black Stork***Ciconia nigra*

About ten were seen in Monfragüe NP including birds on the nest and birds soaring with Eurasian Griffon Vultures.

**White Stork***Ciconia ciconia*

Recorded on nine dates during the tour with birds on nests in many towns with up to thirty a day logged.

## Ibises & Spoonbills                      Threskiornithidae

**Glossy Ibis***Geronticus falcinellus*

Recorded on three dates during our stay in the Valencia and Ebro delta areas with 100 or more on our last day in the delta.

**Eurasian Spoonbill***Platalea leucorodia*

This species can be difficult to find on our route so we were pleased to find one at Reserva Tancat de la Pipa and another at La Tancada in the Ebro delta. Both birds were adults.

## Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns                      Ardeidae

**Little Bittern***Ixobrychus minutus*

We had wonderful views of ten or more at Embalse de Arrocampo near Monfragüe NP whilst one at Reserva Marjal del Moro was a leader only sighting.

**Black-crowned Night Heron***Nycticorax nycticorax*

An adult was seen at Reserva D'Albufera, two adults and an immature were at La Encañizada in the Ebro delta with two adults at Cueva Foradada Reservoir.

**Squacco Heron***Ardeola ralloides*

Two were seen at Reserva D'Albufera and twenty or more were scattered around the Ebro delta with two there the following day.

**Western Cattle Egret***Bubulcus ibis*

Recorded on seven dates usually whilst travelling but only in small numbers with a peak day count of ten as we headed towards Barcelona.

*NOTE: This group may be split into 2 species, the nominate Common Cattle Egret (which is what we recorded in Spain) and the Asian / Australasian Eastern Cattle Egret E. coromanda. This split is as yet not recognized by Clements.*

**Grey Heron***Ardea cinerea*

Recorded on nine dates and at many localities during the tour with up to eleven a day logged.

**Purple Heron***Ardea purpurea*

About eight were seen at Embalse de Arrocampo near Monfragüe NP with one to three on for more dates from sites such as Reserva Tancat de la Pipa, the Ebro delta, Laguna de Sariñena, Monreal and the River Ebro.

**Great Egret***Ardea alba*

Recorded on five dates during the first week of the tour but only in low numbers with no more than four a day recorded. However at least six were around San Salvador Reservoir on our final full day.

**Little Egret***Egretta garzetta*

Up to ten a day recorded on six dates during the tour from many different localities, most frequently encountered in the Ebro delta.



**Cormorants & Shags****Phalacrocoracidae****Great Cormorant***Phalacrocorax carbo*

One to four noted on six dates during the first week of the tour when we were birding wetlands with ten seen at San Salvador Reservoir.

**Hawks, Kites, Eagles & Vultures****Accipitridae****Black-winged Kite***Elanus caeruleus*

One was found just as we were getting great views of a couple of Great-spotted Cuckoos, which we concentrated on, expecting the kite to remain on view given that it was hovering and therefore clearly hunting. It didn't and only one guest managed to catch a glimpse of it. One of the disappointments on the trip.

**Bearded Vulture***Gypaetus barbatus*

The first record of the tour was a leader only sighting of three over our hotel at Siresa. The following day further up the Hecho Valley everyone eventually managed to see a very distant adult perched high on a cliff face that some Swedish birders had found and then later that day we had decent flyover views of another adult. On our final morning in the Hecho Valley we had good flight views of an adult and a second year bird in the morning and another was seen at Lecina. Two adults were seen in the Vadiello area including one that was watched taking prey to its nest in a cave high up a cliff face whilst receiving unwanted attention from a Peregrine.

**Egyptian Vulture***Neophron percnopterus*

The first sighting of this endangered vulture was of an adult in Monfragüe NP followed by another adult at Planerón. More common in the Hecho Valley where ten were seen around Siresa with three there the following day. About eight were seen around the Lecina area followed by two adults at Vadiello and another at Castillo de Montearagón.

**European Honey Buzzard***Pernis apivorus*

The only sighting concerned three migrating birds that flew along a ridge above the Belagua valley.

**Eurasian Griffon Vulture***Gyps fulvus*

This magnificent beast was seen on twelve dates with three-figure counts on three dates and nobody will forget the 300 plus birds circling above Alquézar where there is a vulture feeding station.

**Cinereous Vulture***Aegypius monachus*

Our first were rather unexpected on our first day when we found a pair soaring at our first stop at Colmenar del Arroyo. The following day in Monfragüe NP we found about ten including both adults and immatures and even had young in the nest. Two more were seen at Embalse de Arrocampo and our last was seen at Oropesa.

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

We had great looks at a few birds during the tour recording one or two on six dates but we found five in Monfragüe NP and also had five during our day touring the Spanish Steppes in the Belchite / Planerón area.

**Booted Eagle***Hieraaetus pennatus*

We found six in Monfragüe NP on our first excursion, including our only dark phase bird, with three in the steppe area of that park the following day whilst single birds were seen on five more dates. One near Trujillo was carrying an unidentified snake.

**Spanish Imperial Eagle***Aquila chrysaetos*



We staked out a nest of this vulnerable near endemic species in Monfragüe NP occasionally getting glimpses of the female. After a couple of hours an immature flew in and then finally the male arrived, carrying not prey but a small branch. Rather unexpectedly whilst searching for Little Bustards in Monfragüe NP we were treated to great views of two adults and an immature overhead that were calling. Even more unexpected was an immature flying with a Common Buzzard and an immature Golden Eagle at Monreal on our last day. An above average number of birds for the tour and voted number one bird of the tour.

**Golden Eagle***Aquila chrysaetos*

Our first was seen at Embalse de las Torcas. This was followed by two at the head of the Hecho valley and then the aforementioned immature at Monreal.

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

After looking for this species at several sites with no success we were really pleased to see a pair at Embalse de las Torcas. One was displaying and eventually landed above its mate allowing great views.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk***Accipiter nisus*

A female was seen in Monfragüe NP and another female with a damaged leg was seen at Aínsa Castle.

**Western Marsh-Harrier***Circus aeruginosus*

This species was logged on eight dates at a number of locations with usually up to five a day seen on six of the dates. Larger day counts were ten as we travelled from Monfragüe to Valencia and twenty or more were around the San Salvador / Monreal area on our last day.

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

Twelve birds in total were seen but most were in Monfragüe NP where we saw three on our first visit with seven the following day. The only others were a female on the steppes near Planerón and an immature male was seen the following day on the Ballobar Steppes.

**Red Kite***Milvus milvus*

Our first sighting of this near threatened species was seen near Trujillo, but when we got to the Pyrenees birds became more regular with up to five a day being recorded on six dates during the last week of the tour. Always nice to see this magnificent raptor and at Aínsa Castle we were treated to exceptional views.

**Black Kite***Milvus migrans*

After Griffon Vulture this species was the most commonly seen species of raptor with up to thirty a day logged on twelve dates.

**Buzzard***Buteo buteo*

Another commonly seen bird of prey with up to six noted on thirteen dates.

## Bustards                      Otididae

**Great Bustard***Otis tarda*

On our first day in Monfragüe we found three birds including a fine male. The following day we found four more birds in a different area of the park. This species is considered to be vulnerable so we were pleased to connect with it.

**Little Bustard***Tetrax tetrax*

We spent most of our second day in Monfragüe NP looking for this species and it wasn't until late in the day that a distant male was located. Shortly afterwards a slightly closer female was found. It's not a bad birding experience when the directions for the female at one point were "it's just left of the Great Bustard!" We had better views of three males on the Ballobar steppes later in the tour.



**Rails, Gallinules & Coots****Rallidae****Water Rail***Rallus aquaticus*

One was heard at Embalse de Arrocampo and two more were heard in the Ebro delta at La Encañizada. Three more were heard at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan and one was seen briefly by a couple of us during our lunch break there. The following day a determined effort was made to see this species and after several attempts everyone had brief views of one at La Marjal del Moro.

**Purple Swamphen***Gallinula chloropus*

Our first encounter was with four birds at Embalse de Arrocampo with another noted at Reserva Tancat de la Pipa. The best site however was Riet Vell in the Ebro delta where sixty were present.

**Common Moorhen***Gallinula chloropus*

One or two were seen on two dates early in the tour but a hundred plus were seen in the Reserva D'Albufera and the Ebro delta on two more dates.

**Red-knobbed Coot***Fulica cristata*

Having failed to locate one in the wetlands early in the tour we were happy to hear that an out of range bird was still present at a site on our way to the steppes. A slight detour enabled us to connect with this bird at Cueva Foradada Reservoir and good 'scope views were obtained.

**Eurasian Coot***Fulica atra*

This species was seen on seven dates during the tour with the highest count of 400 during our tour of the Ebro delta. We also found 100 at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan, otherwise up to fifty seen.

**Stone-Curlews, Thick-knees****Burhinidae****Eurasian Stone-curlew***Burhinus oedicephalus*

Three were found on the steppes at Planerón, four more were seen on the Ballobar steppes and four were seen around San Salvador Reservoir.

**Stilts & Avocets****Recurvirostridae****Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

A very common bird in the wetlands with up to thirty on five dates with 100 plus found around the Ebro delta and on our last day around San Salvador Reservoir / Monreal area.

**Pied Avocet***Recurvirostra avosetta*

Sixty were seen at Reserva D'Albufera and up to thirty were seen on two dates in Ebro delta.

**Plovers & Lapwings****Charadriidae****Northern Lapwing***Vanellus vanellus*

Two were seen by some of us at Laguna de Pedro Muñoz and four were found at San Salvador Reservoir on our last day.

**Grey (Black-bellied) Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

Single birds were seen on consecutive dates in the Ebro delta and two were found at San Salvador Reservoir.

**Common Ringed Plover***Charadrius hiaticula*

Forty were seen in the Valencia area with twenty on our first visit to the Ebro delta and six there the following day. On our final day we had thirty split between San Salvador Reservoir and Monreal.

**Little Ringed Plover***Charadrius dubius*

The first sighting was a leader only bird in Monfragüe NP, three at Estanca de Alcañiz, two were at Hoya de Almochuel and ten were at San Salvador Reservoir.



**Kentish Plover***Charadrius alexandrinus*

Three at reserve D'Albufera were our first, followed by ten or so in the Ebro delta with a few more the following day plus two at Estanca de Alcañiz.

**Eurasian Dotterel***Charadrius marinellus*

One of the star birds of the trip and a top three bird. After what seemed like hours searching for the flock near Belchite we eventually found them just before lunch and slowly we inched closer to be rewarded with views of 49 birds.

**Sandpipers & Allies****Scolopacidae****Common Snipe***Gallinago gallinago*

One was a surprise find at Hoya de Almochuel.

**Black-tailed Godwit***Limosa limosa*

Three of this near-threatened species were found at San Salvador Reservoir.

**Bar-tailed Godwit***Limosa lapponica*

We found one at Salinas de San Antonio in the Ebro delta with four the following day, including a stunning summer plumaged bird, at Lo Goleró Bay in another part of the Ebro delta.

**Whimbrel***Numenius phaeopus*

We heard one on the coast at the Ebro delta but couldn't pick it up visually so a heard only bird.

**Eurasian Curlew***Numenius arquata*

One of this near-threatened species was eventually found at Lo Goleró Bay in the Ebro delta.

**Spotted Redshank***Tringa erythropus*

We had one in full breeding dress at Hoya de Almochuel.

**Common Redshank***Tringa totanus*

Reasonably common at some wetland sites with up to thirty a day logged on five dates.

**Common Greenshank***Tringa nebularia*

One to five on five dates with birds noted at quite a few sites. Best day count however was ten when we visited the Ebro delta.

**Green Sandpiper***Tringa ochropus*

We saw one at Riet Vell in the Ebro delta, two at Hoya de Almochuel and another at Monreal.

**Wood Sandpiper***Tringa glareola*

We found at least six scattered around the Ebro delta and another four at San Salvador Reservoir and Monreal.

**Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos*

Commonly seen on the tour with records on nine dates including notable counts of thirty five at Estanca de Alcañiz and twenty at San Salvador Reservoir.

**Ruddy Turnstone***Arenaria interpres*

We saw up to ten on two dates during our time in the Ebro delta.

**Little Stint***Calidris minuta*

Two were seen at Reserva D'Albufera, up to three were in the Ebro delta with two at San Salvador Reservoir and one at Moreal.

**Curlew Sandpiper***Calidris ferruginea*

An impressive count of a hundred and fifty at Reserva D'Albufera, six were seen during our first visit to the Ebro delta and the following day another sixty were at Lo Goleró Bay in the Ebro delta, many were coming into summer plumage.

**Dunlin***Calidris alpina*



Fifteen were seen on both days that we were in the Ebro delta.

### **Ruff**

*Philomachus pugnax*

After ten females and winter plumaged males at Reserva Tancat de la Pipa and a similarly plumaged bird at Hoya de Almochuel it was great to see a male coming into breeding plumage at San Salvador Reservoir and four birds including a male in full breeding plumage at Monreal.

## **Coursers & Pratincoles      Glareolidae**

### **Collared Pratincole**

*Glareola pratincola*

We found two at Reserva D'Albufera and saw three the following day in the Ebro delta.

## **Gulls, Terns and Skimmers      Laridae**

### **Slender-billed Gull**

*Chroicocephalus genei*

Ten were seen at Reserva D'Albufera with ten on both of our days in the Ebro delta.

### **Black-headed Gull**

*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

The most common gull seen on the tour with records on eight dates. Largest numbers were at Reserva D'Albufera where three hundred were breeding with two hundred daily in the Ebro delta.

### **Audouin's Gull**

*Ichthyaelus audouinii*

Our first were seven at Reserva D'Albufera but the Ebro delta is the place to see this species as thousands of pairs breed there. We went as far as we could go towards the main breeding area but saw only a fraction of the colony, still five hundred was a pretty good total. We saw a few more the following day.

### **Mediterranean Gull**

*Ichthyaelus melanocephalus*

We saw fifty of this very handsome species at the breeding colony at Reserva D'Albufera.

### **Yellow-legged Gull**

*Larus michahellis*

Small numbers were seen at La Marjal del Moro, Prat de Cabanes, in the Ebro delta and at San Salvador Reservoir with up to fifty a day logged.

### **Lesser Black-backed Gull**

*Larus fuscus*

Five were seen at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan and one adult was seen in the Ebro delta.

### **Gull-billed Tern**

*Gelochelidon nilotica*

Following our first five at Embalse de Arrocampo over the next few days we saw this species quite regularly with a maximum count of twenty around the Ebro delta.

### **Caspian Tern**

*Hydroprogne caspia*

One was seen Reserva D'Albufera and three were found in the Ebro delta.

### **Sandwich Tern**

*Thalasseus sandvicensis*

200 plus were found in the tern colony at Reserva D'Albufera with 500 at the Audouin's Gull Colony on our first visit to the Ebro delta with twenty scattered around the delta the following day.

### **Little Tern**

*Sternula albifrons*

One was at Reserva D'Albufera with six at La Marjal del Moro and up to fifty were seen on two dates in the Ebro delta.

### **Common Tern**

*Sterna hirundo*

Hundreds were in the breeding colonies at Reserva D'Albufera and in the Ebro delta.

### **Whiskered Tern**

*Chlidonias hybrida*

The commonest marsh tern on the tour with small numbers seen at many wetlands on five dates with the highest day count being sixty in the Ebro delta.

### **White-winged Tern**

*Chlidonias leucopterus*



We were very fortunate to find a summer plumaged adult of this scarce migrant at San Salvador Reservoir.

**Black Tern***Chlidonias niger*

Two adults were with a few Whiskered Terns at Reserva D'Albufera and two more were found at Estanca de Alcañiz.

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

We heard our first calling over the Dupont's Lark site at El Planerón but couldn't see them but when we changed location we found a flock of eighteen distant birds which we 'scoped. That evening we had another in flight back at the Dupont's Lark site. The following day in the Ballobar steppes we found another twenty three.

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

We saw two flocks totalling eleven in the Planerón area and three more on the Ballobar steppes the following day.

**Doves & Pigeons****Columbidae****Rock Dove***Columba livia*

Recorded every day in towns apart from when we were in the Pyrenees.

**Stock Dove***Columba oenas*

We found four on a bridge at Monreal but unfortunately as soon as they were disturbed by our vehicles approaching they departed rapidly.

**Common Wood-Pigeon***Columba palumbus*

Recorded on all dates bar one in small numbers with a high day count of forty on our first day.

**European Turtle Dove***Streptopelia turtur*

Our first two sightings were leader only birds but then we started to see more and by the end of the tour we had seen this attractive species on seven dates with up to four a day logged from various locations.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove***Streptopelia decaocto*

A common resident that was recorded daily in many towns apart from the two days we had in the Pyrenees.

**Cuckoos****Cuculidae****Great Spotted Cuckoo***Clamator glandarius*

The first car had great views of one in Monfragüe NP but all the second car got was the rear end of the bird as it flew away. However in Oropesa we had great views of six in quite a small area with two showing down to 20 meters, one of which seemed to have a radio transmitter attached. Unfortunately the great views we were getting cost most people the Black-winged Kite.

**Common Cuckoo***Cuculuc clamorus*

More often heard than seen we recorded this bird on eight dates seeing fifteen in total and although most were fly-bys we did get reasonable views of a couple.

**Owls****Strigidae****Western Barn Owl***Tyto alba*

We had great flight views of two birds during the day at San Salvador reservoir

**Eurasian Scops Owl***Otus scops*

We heard several around our accommodation at Hotel Rural Entreviñas and managed brief views of one above us in the spotlight.

**Eurasian Eagle Owl***Bubo bubo*

We had good looks at a female and rather briefer looks at a male at a site near Ontiñena.

**Tawny Owl***Strix aluco*

We heard two males on all three mornings from our accommodation in Monfragüe NP but they were too distant to respond and another male was heard distantly at Lecina. The following night one sat briefly on a pole outside our accommodation but it flew off when the group arrived but the following night it was better behaved sitting above the group allowing everyone (bar me who was further down the road) good looks.

**Little Owl***Athene noctua*

We had good looks at a pair on the Ballobar steppes.

**Long-eared Owl***Asio otus*

After flushing a pair a couple of times at a patch of woodland at Quinto near El Planerón we eventually were able to 'scope them for a good while as they sat low in a willow tree.

### Nightjars                      Caprimulgidae

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

We heard this bird two mornings on the trot near our accommodation in Monfragüe NP but only distantly and when we tried at night we had no response at all. Then on the third morning whilst most were having a lie in one intrepid guest went and found one perched on a branch above the road. A classic case of snooze you lose!

### Swifts                              Apodidae

**Alpine Swift***Tachymarptis melba*

The first three in Monfragüe NP were leader only birds but everyone caught up with this species when we had a flock of twenty low over the Dotterel near Belchite. Another was seen on the Ballobar steppes and at least two were below a few of us in a gorge near Lecina.

**Common Swift***Apus apus*

Commonly seen with log entries of up to 100 birds for thirteen dates.

**Pallid Swift***Apus pallidus*

We had good views of at least three at Trujillo with the birds being seen from both above and below.

### Rollers                              Coraciidae

**European Roller***Coracias garrulus*

We had brief looks at a couple near our first Great Bustards in Monfragüe NP and the following day saw ten or more in the same park in their stronghold in the steppe area where numerous nest boxes had been put up for their benefit. Singles were seen in the Ebro delta and at El Planerón and four were seen at Monreal.

### Kingfishers                      Alcedinidae

**Common Kingfisher***Alcedo atthis*

Three were seen in Monfragüe NP and another flashed passed us when we were at the Flumen River.

### Bee-eaters                      Meropidae

**Eurasian Bee-eater***Merops apiaster*



This colourful species was quite common and seen on twelve dates during the tour with up to twenty a day logged.

### Hoopoes Upupidae

#### **Eurasian Hoopoe**

*Upupa epops*

Another species typical of southern Europe we logged this species on ten dates with up to six a day seen.

### Woodpeckers & Allies Picidae

#### **Eurasian Wryneck**

*Jynx torquilla*

We saw one well during our pre-breakfast walk at Siresa and another was also seen well during another pre-breakfast foray at Lecina when a second bird was heard calling. One was also heard calling in the same area the following morning.

#### **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopus minor*

A pair showed really well as we made our way out of Monfragüe NP.

#### **Great Spotted Woodpecker**

*Dendrocopus major*

A pair was seen near Siresa though not by the whole group as they were rather uncooperative (the birds not the group!) Another pair was seen with the male showing particularly well as we walked from Lecina to Betorz. Another was calling below the village of Lecina the following day and on our final morning there one was seen briefly in the same area.

#### **Black Woodpecker**

*Dryocopus martius*

We had two great fly-by looks at a male at Gabardito near Siresa.

#### **Iberian Green Woodpecker**

*Picus sharpei*

Our first were two birds that were rather uncooperative during a pre-breakfast walk at Siresa and we had better looks at one later the same day high in the Pyrenees. Two were seen the following day when we were still in the Pyrenees and one was seen two days on the trot below Lecina.

### Falcons & Caracaras Falconidae

#### **Lesser Kestrel**

*Falco naumanni*

We saw many Kestrel sp. during the tour but having scoped four birds well at Trujillo (including two males) we didn't have to worry too much about this species although we did see two more on the Ballobar steppes.

#### **Eurasian Kestrel**

*Falco tinnunculus*

This species was commonly encountered during the tour with log entries for 14 dates and up to ten a day recorded. Most Kestrels we looked at closely were this species.

*NOTE: Some authorities split including IOC this species into Common Kestrel, F. tinnunculus which we observed (occurring in East Africa and the Palaearctic region) and Rock Kestrel, F. rupicolus that occurs in Southern Africa. Clements does not as yet recognize these splits.*

#### **Eurasian Hobby**

*Falco subbuteo*

Three birds were seen, one over the Spanish Imperial Eagle nest site in Monfragüe NP, another at the Ballobar steppes with the third being seen at San Salvador Reservoir.

#### **Peregrine Falcon**

*Falco peregrinus*

One was seen in Monfragüe NP at Salto de Gitano, with others seen at Boca del Infierno near Siresa, another as we headed towards the high Pyrenees and the last at Vadiello where we saw one mobbing at Bearded Vulture.



## Parrots                      Psittacidae

### **Monk Parakeet**

*Myiopsitta monachus*

We had two somewhere near Valencia and three more flew across the road in front of us as we approached Barcelona.

## Shrikes                      Laniidae

### **Red-backed Shrike**

*Lanius collurio*

We found two males at Vadiello on our penultimate day.

### **Southern Grey Shrike**

*Lanius meridionalis*

Our first two were in the Aldea del Obispo area of Monfragüe NP with two more the following day near Trujillo and two more near Embalse de Arrocampo.

*NOTE: IOC and Clements split this species from Northern (Great Grey) Shrike but the Collins guide splits *Lanius meridionalis* off as Iberian Grey Shrike lumping Northern Shrike *L. excubitor* with Southern Grey Shrike. There is clearly much work to be done with this group of birds.*

## Old World Orioles                      Oriolidae

### **Golden Oriole**

*Oriolus oriolus*

Recorded on seven dates but most sightings were very brief affairs, usually of birds in flight. Heard only on two dates but two males were seen in the Ebro delta with one at Estanca de Alcañiz. A pair was seen at Arrés whilst we were searching unsuccessfully for Ortolan Bunting, a female was seen by some at the River Flumen with two others heard there and one was seen at Lecina.

## Crows, Jays & Magpies                      Corvidae

### **Eurasian Jay**

*Garrulus glandarius*

Up to four birds were seen on six dates at various woodland localities.

### **Iberian Magpie**

*Cyanopica cooki*

Fairly common with our first being three that we saw at Robledo de Chavela with five more seen later that day as we approached Monfragüe NP whilst in Monfragüe NP itself we recorded up to eight a day over the following three days.

### **Eurasian Magpie**

*Pica pica*

A common bird with up to fifty a day seen on fourteen dates.

### **Red-billed Chough**

*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Two were seen around the Ballobar steppes after which up to twenty a day were recorded in the Pyrenees with ten also seen in the Vadiello area.

### **Alpine (Yellow-billed) Chough**

*Pyrrhocorax graculus*

Only seen in the high Pyrenees where we saw eighty on our first day and fifty the following day. We saw this species both in Spain and in France when we ventured across the border.

### **Western Jackdaw**

*Coloeus monedula*

Recorded on five dates with the best counts being twenty in Monfragüe NP and thirty around San Salvador Reservoir.

### **Carrion Crow**

*Corvus corone*

Commonly seen with up to ten noted on thirteen dates during the tour.

### **Northern (Common) Raven**

*Corvus corax*



Recorded slightly less frequently than the above species but still up to six a day seen on ten dates at all elevations.

### Tits                      Paridae

#### **Coal Tit**

*Periparus ater*

One was seen in Monfragüe NP and another was found at Embalse de las Torcas after which up to four a day in the Hecho Valley above Siresa.

#### **European Crested Tit**

*Lophophanes cristatus*

Two were very responsive at Presa de Calanda and three were seen in the Hecho Valley above Siresa.

#### **Marsh Tit**

*Poecile palustris*

A pair showed well in the Hecho Valley when we had had our fill of our first Bearded Vulture.

#### **Eurasian Blue Tit**

*Cyanistes caeruleus*

Commonly seen in small numbers with up to six noted on thirteen dates during the tour.

#### **Great Tit**

*Parus major*

Also a commonly seen bird with log entries of up to six birds for eleven dates.

### Penduline Tits                      Remizidae

#### **Eurasian Penduline Tit**

*Remiz pendulinus*

Some of us had good looks at a male at Embalse de Arrocampo but you had to wait for the wind to blow the leaves in front of it aside and unfortunately after a few minutes it flew off. We heard one calling and saw the nest in a river valley near Ontiñena but only a couple of people saw the bird briefly here. We heard one at the Flumen River but it steadfastly refused to show but then all was saved later in the day when at the Isuela River we had prolonged 'scope views of a pair, but particularly the male, as they constructed their nest.

### Bearded Reedling                      Panuridae

#### **Bearded Reedling**

*Panurus biarmicus*

We had brief views of a male followed by longer 'scope views of a female at Embalse de Arrocampo and then saw a pair at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan.

### Larks                      Alaudidae

#### **Wood Lark**

*Lullula arborea*

We heard two in Monfragüe NP and saw two as we left the Embalse de las Torcas area. Another was seen on the Ballobar steppes, with one at Arcusa where we saw our first Ortolan Bunting, two between Lecina and Betorz, two were seen on the way to the Flumen River and one was seen as we left Lecina.

#### **Eurasian Sky Lark**

*Alauda arvensis*

We saw about six singing and on the ground at Puerto de Peñanegra in the Sierra de Gredos area.

#### **Thekla Lark**

*Galerida theklae*

Twenty or so were seen on the Ballobar steppes with four more found at Castillo de Montearagón.

#### **Crested Lark**

*Galerida cristata*

This common & widespread lark was seen on 11 dates when up to fifty a day were logged, mostly when travelling between sites.

#### **Greater Short-toed Lark**

*Calandrella brachydactyla*

This species prefers agricultural land rather than the steppes and having seen our first two in Monfragüe NP we saw about 30 in the Belchite / El Planerón area.





**Calandra Lark***Melanocorypha calandra*

This species was refreshingly common especially in the steppe areas with up to thirty a day recorded on five dates with notable counts of twenty in Monfragüe NP and 30 at El Planerón and the Ballobar steppes.

**Dupont's Lark***Chersophilus duponti*

We heard at least three individuals singing at daybreak at El Planerón but failed to see one. This is the normal time to see this species and it is generally considered to be impossible during the day. However Alberto was confident that a return visit in the evening would pay off and with a bit of work eventually we managed to pick up a distant bird which stayed up long enough for everyone to get acceptable 'scope views. Pity the one that popped up briefly just thirty meters from us didn't stay long enough for any of the group to see it and it remained a leader only bird.

**Lesser Short-toed Lark***Alaudala rufescens*

Unlike its cousin this species is a bird of the steppes although we did record our first five at Estanca de Alcañiz. Twenty were found around El Planerón with a further five the following day at the Ballobar steppes.

**Swallows****Hirundinidae****Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)***Riparia riparia*

Up to ten a day were logged for six dates at various wetlands.

**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

Very common during the tour with sightings on all but one date. Usually up to a couple of hundred a day logged but at Estanca de Alcañiz there were thousands of hirundines, many of which were this species or Common House Martin.

**Eurasian Crag-Martin***Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Far more common than it was expected to be with up to twenty a day logged for twelve dates. Pretty much every village seemed to have a pair.

**Common House Martin***Delichon urbicum*

Another common species with log entries for 13 dates with usually up to 200 a day seen but many hundreds were at Estanca de Alcañiz. We saw this species building nests on houses and bridges but also saw them using natural sites such as cliffs.

**Cettia Bush Warblers and Allies****Cettidae****Cetti's Warbler***Cettia cetti*

More often heard singing than seen but we did manage views of several including birds at Embalse de Arrocampo, Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan and the Flumen River.

**Long-tailed Tits****Aegithalidae****Long-tailed Tit***Aegithalos caudatus*

Two flew back and forth across a little valley at Embalse de las Torcas but never perched up, two more showed really well at Zuriza and one was seen on the walk from Lecina to Betorz.

**Leaf Warblers and Allies****Phylloscopidae****Willow Warbler***Phylloscopus trochilus*

Birds were heard at Reserva Tancat de la Pipa and as we walked between Lecina and Betorz. However this species was seen well and in some numbers in a small clump of bushes on the coast at the Ebro



delta with twenty on our first visit and slightly less the following day. We also found half a dozen in a small copse at El Planerón.

### **Common Chiffchaff**

*Phylloscopus collybita*

We only saw one but we saw it very well at Arrés whilst we were looking for Ortolan Bunting and then over the next couple of days we heard several more singing.

*NOTE: Most authorities split; including Clements have split the Chiffchaff complex into 4 full species. The nominate form which we recorded is known as Common Chiffchaff P. collybita.*

### **Western Bonelli's Warbler**

*Phylloscopus bonellii*

The first bird we recorded was heard only by the leaders at Robledo de Chavela but as we were already late for lunch we didn't try for it. Another was also heard only at Embalse de Las Torcas but it wouldn't play ball. We weren't worried though because we knew that the Lecina area is brilliant for this species and so it was with twenty or more recorded on our walk to Betorz including half a dozen that were seen very well. Over the next couple of days we saw several more.

## **Reed Warblers and Allies**

## **Acrocephalidae**

### **Great Reed Warbler**

*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

We 'scoped singing males at Embalse de Arrocampo and Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan and other singing birds were heard on five more dates during the tour.

### **Moustached Warbler**

*Acrocephalus melanopogon*

We had great views of two singing birds Prat de Cabanes near Valencia.

### **Sedge Warbler**

*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

We were very lucky to find one at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan.

### **Eurasian Reed Warbler**

*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Having heard them at Embalse de Arrocampo we were pleased to see several at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan and two more at Reserva Tancat de la Pipa.

### **Melodious Warbler**

*Hippolais polyglotta*

Hardly a melodic songster we saw our first in the migrant bushes at the Ebro delta two days running and saw another in the small copse at El Planerón. Two different birds were also seen at Lecina with a third heard singing there.

## **Grassbirds and Allies**

## **Locustellidae**

### **Common Grasshopper Warbler**

*Locustella naevia*

In the Ebro delta one was a leader only bird in the morning but then just after lunch another was flushed at Playa de los Eucaliptos and after several attempts most people got flight views of it. A difficult bird to see even if singing so a good bird to get on the tour.

### **Savi's warbler**

*Locustella luscinioides*

We 'scoped one singing male at Embalse de Arrocampo where we had some height to enable us to see over the tops of the reeds and we heard other birds at Laguna de Alcázar de San Juan, Reserva Tancat de la Pipa. We also 'scoped another singing bird on our first morning in the Ebro delta. You need some elevation to see this species as they sing deep within large stands of reeds.

## **Cisticolas and Allies**

## **Acrocephalidae**

### **Zitting Cisticola**

*Cisticola juncidis*

Commonly recorded on the tour with log entries of up to six on nine dates.



### Sylviid Babblers      Sylviidae

#### **Eurasian Blackcap**

*Sylvia atricapilla*

Only seen during the latter half of the tour when up to six were recorded on eight dates.

#### **Garden Warbler**

*Sylvia borin*

Boy did we struggle for this species and when we did finally find a singing bird at La Choca Canyon below Alquézar not everybody got on to it when it perched up after which it failed to respond.

#### **Western Orphean Warbler**

*Sylvia conspicillata*

We heard our first at Colmenar del Arroyo and saw three migrants over two dates at the Ebro delta. Three more were seen with others heard over two dates at Lecina. This species sounds more like a thrush than a Sylvia Warbler.

#### **Common Whitethroat**

*Sylvia comunis*

We found our first, a singing male at Puerto de Peñanegra in Sierra de Gredos after which we had up to five in the Ebro delta with another singing male at Arrés.

#### **Dartford Warbler**

*Sylvia undata*

A very flighty bird was seen at Cueva Foradada, four were seen at Arrés and another flighty individual was found at Castillo de Montearagón.

#### **Spectacled Warbler**

*Sylvia conspicillata*

We had great looks at a singing male at the Ballobar steppes.

#### **Subalpine Warbler**

*Sylvia cantillans*

One was found in the migrant bushes at the Ebro delta, a male was seen at Arrés, about four were seen on our walk between Lecina and Betorz and singles were seen at the river Flumen and at Vadiello.

#### **Sardinian Warbler**

*Sylvia melanocephala*

The first was a leader only sighting at Montehermoso which was poor consolation for not finding the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin that we were searching for. A pair was seen well at Presa de Calanda and a male was seen at Cueva Foradada Reservoir. One was heard at El Planerón. One or two people still needed to get decent views of this species and they finally did when we found a cooperative male on our walk between Lecina and Betorz.

### Kinglets      Regulidae

#### **Common Firecrest**

*Regulus ignicapillus*

Three pairs were found in the Hecho valley and one was heard the following day. Three different males were found in the Lecina area, one for each day that we were there.

#### **Goldcrest**

*Regulus regulus*

A singing male was seen in the Hecho valley.

### Wrens      Troglodytidae

#### **Eurasian Wren**

*Troglodytes troglodytes*

One seen very well by everyone whilst we were watching for the Spanish Imperial Eagle in Monfragüe and another showed brilliantly as we walked out of Lecina. At least ten others were heard singing on seven dates.

### Nuthatches      Sittidae

#### **Eurasian Nuthatch**

*Sitta europaea*

At least ten were found at Navahonda Hermitage with two in Monfragüe NP the following day.



**Wallcreeper****Tichodromidae****Wallcreeper***Tichodroma muraria*

What a relief it was to get this bird. We got frozen before breakfast at one site with no luck and then spent the rest of the morning gazing at massive cliff-face again with no luck. We were about to leave, indeed a couple had already set off back, when one of the leaders heard half a call. With a little bit of work a shape was seen but disappeared. Then a few minutes later a bird came out onto the open cliff-face and suddenly we were having 'scope views. A great bird and rightly rated number two in the top ten.

**Creepers****Certhiidae****Eurasian Treecreeper***Certhia familiaris*

A singing male provided us with great views at Gabardito near Siresa.

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

We found a pair at our first stop at Colmenar with another at Navahonda Hermitage after which birds were heard daily in Monfragüe NP. A singing male was seen just below Lecina with it and another singing there the following day.

**Starlings****Sturnidae****Common Starling***Sturnus vulgaris*

This species is a scarce resident in the Ebro delta where we managed to find one.

**Spotless Starling***Sturnus unicolor*

Up to 100 were seen on all but two dates on the tour.

**Thrushes & Allies****Turdidae****Ring Ouzel***Turdus torquatus*

We worked hard to get everyone looks at our first bird high above the Belagua Valley. Little did we know that once we got to the top of the road this species would prove to be quite common and we saw about twenty during the day. The race concerned was *alpestris* which breeds in south and central Europe rather than the migrant *torquatus*.

**Common (Eurasian) Blackbird***Turdus merula*

A common species that was seen daily throughout the tour in small numbers.

**Song Thrush***Turdus philomelos*

Several were heard singing in the high Pyrenees on the three days that we were there and one was a leader only sighting as we refuelled but it dropped out of the tree just as the 'scope was put on it. Leaving it a bit late an adult was found feeding a fledged juvenile just below Lecina on our final mornings walk.

**Mistle Thrush***Turdus viscivorus*

Two were found at Colmenar del Arroyo and at Gabardito on two dates. The highest day counts were six on two dates, firstly as we travelled from the Ebro delta to Cueva Foradada and the second as we climbed into the high Pyrenees.

**Chats, Old World Flycatchers****Muscicapidae****Spotted Flycatcher***Muscicapa striata*



Single birds were seen at Riet Vell in the Ebro delta, at El Planerón, between Lecina and Betorz, below Lecina, at the Flumen River with two at the Isuela River.

**European Robin***Erithacus rubecula*

We saw four of this familiar Christmas card bird as we walked the woodland trail at Gabardito with two seen on our pre-breakfast walk at Siresa. Single birds were also seen on two dates at Lecina.

**Bluethroat***Luscinia svecica*

We saw a male several times in dense low vegetation at Puerto de Peñanegra in the Sierra de Gredos. This is a rare breeding species in Spain and this was the first tour that Alberto had recorded this species.

**Common Nightingale***Luscinia Megarhynchos*

This species was remarkably common at times and their singing often drowned out other species. We logged this species on thirteen dates and saw several very well.

**European Pied Flycatcher***Ficedula hypoleuca*

We recorded this species on seven dates at many sites but the Ebro delta was particularly productive with ten on our first day there and five the following day. Most were females or first summer males but we did see a couple of striking black and white males.

**Black Redstart***Phoenicurus ochruros*

Regularly seen on the tour with log entries on eleven dates. Usually up to six a day seen but in the high Pyrenees we saw in the region of twenty birds.

**Common Redstart***Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Migrants were found in the Ebro delta where we had four on our first visit with one the following day. A pair was seen in the small plantation at El Planerón and a female was a leader only sighting between Lecina and Betorz.

**Common Rock-Thrush***Monticola solitarius*

We found a pair as we drove up to the French border at El Portalé in the Pyrenees and the male showed exceptionally well allowing everyone great views.

**Blue Rock-Thrush***Monticola solitarius*

Five were seen as we drove around Monfragüe NP, one was seen at Embalse de las Torcas and two were seen near Alquézar.

**Whinchat***Saxicola rubetra*

Two were found in the Ebro delta with two more at El Planerón.

**European (Common) Stonechat***Saxicola rubicola*

We saw this attractive species on nine dates with up to eight a day seen.

**Northern Wheatear***Oenanthe Oenanthe*

Another attractive species that was relatively common but particularly so in the high Pyrenees where we logged twenty. Otherwise we saw up to eight birds on seven more dates.

**Black-eared Wheatear***Oenanthe hispanica*

Our first bird was a fine male above Presa de Calanda but the following day we saw four males and a female at El Planerón with two males and a female the following day on the Ballobar steppes. The last was a male at Castillo de Montearagón.

**Black Wheatear***Oenanthe leucura*

One was seen at Cueva Foradada but most people missed it. Then we found two males near Ontiñena whilst our final birds were a pair at Castillo de Montearagón.



**Dippers****Cinclidae****White-throated Dipper***Cinclus cinclus*

One was seen well in the Hecho Valley.

**Old World Sparrows****Passeridae****House Sparrow***Passer domesticus*

As to be expected a common species that was seen on all but one date during the tour.

**Spanish Sparrow***Passer hispaniolensis*

Up to twenty a day were seen on five dates during the first half of the tour although in Monfragüe NP there was clearly a lot more given the amount of noise that was coming from a stand of Eucalyptus.

**Rock Sparrow***Petronia petronia*

We unexpectedly found a pair at Colmenar and some people saw another from the dining room window at Hotel Rural Entreviñas.

**White-winged Snowfinch***Montifringilla nivalis*

Whilst both guides were searching the snowfields at El Portalé for this species one conveniently popped up where we'd left the group resting, needless to say neither guide saw it.

**Accentors****Prunellidae****Alpine Accentor***Prunella collaris*

One of the principal targets in the high Pyrenees and we found two high above the Belagua Valley with one bird seen at Arette Ski resort in France and the other in Spain as we drove towards there.

**Dunnock***Prunella modularis*

We saw at least ten in dense low vegetation at Puerto de Peñanegra in the Sierra de Gredos, which was a bit of a surprise to me given the habitat and had another high above the Belagua valley in the Pyrenees.

**Wagtails & Pipits****Motacillidae****Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla flava*

We saw a few in the Ebro delta but found large gatherings of fifty at El Planerón including one of the *flavissima* race and 120 in the Ballobar Steppes.

**Grey Wagtail***Motacilla cinerea*

Two were disturbed by our vehicles from the roadside as we drove around Monfragüe NP, with two in the Hecho valley, one in the Belagua valley and one near Siresa.

**White Wagtail***Motacilla alba*

This species was a common bird during the tour with up to ten seen on eleven dates.

**Tawny Pipit***Anthus pratensis*

One flew over calling in Monfragüe NP, one was seen at El Planerón, and one was heard singing in the Ballobar steppes but the best sighting was at Arrés where we had great views of a close pair.

**Tree Pipit***Anthus trivialis*

This species gave us a bit of a run around as we tried to find one but eventually we found a singing bird as we drove down from El Portalé in the Pyrenees with another singing close by but out of sight.

**Water Pipit***Anthus spinoletta*

Two at Puerto de Peñanegra were a bit of a surprise but once we got into the Pyrenees this species was quite common with up to thirty five a day recorded over three days.



**Siskins, Crossbills & Allies****Fringillidae****Common Chaffinch***Fringilla coelebs*

We recorded this common species on thirteen dates with up to twenty a day logged.

**Hawfinch***Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

One was seen from the front vehicle which caused our unscheduled stop at Colmenar del Arroyo, although it could not be relocated so it remained a leader only bird. Not to worry for our first scheduled stop was the Navahonda Hermitage where after quite a bit of searching we eventually found one

**Common Bullfinch***Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

We saw a male briefly near Siresa and another was seen in the same area two days later. Not everyone on the tour saw these birds.

**European Greenfinch***Chloris chloris*

Commonly seen with up to six logged on twelve dates.

**Common Linnet***Linaria cannabina*

Also commonly seen with up to six seen on nine dates. Most were flyovers identified by call but one or two were seen perched up, when it could be seen that the males are quite an attractive bird.

**Red Crossbill***Loxia curvirostra*

Seven were seen on two dates at Gabardito near Siresa including a couple of red males.

**European Goldfinch***Carduelis carduelis*

This gorgeous species was encountered on thirteen dates at various locations with up to six a day noted.

**Citril Finch***Carduelis citrinella*

Four that flew by as we drove up into the high Pyrenees provided unsatisfactory views for most people as did three that flew as soon as we arrived at the car park at Gabardito, however that was quickly rectified as we had great 'scope views of a male sat atop a pine tree, with a female just below him.

**European Serin***Serinus serinus*

Small numbers were recorded on all dates with up to twenty a day seen.

**Buntings****Emberizidae****Corn Bunting***Emberiza calandra*

A very common bird in Spain with up to 100 a day logged on twelve dates.

**Rock Bunting***Emberiza cia*

Two singing males were in the vicinity of the Spanish Imperial Eagles nest in Monfragüe NP.

**Ortolan Bunting***Emberiza hortulana*

The first was a very brief sighting of a male in the migrant bushes at the Ebro delta that only a couple of people saw. We then found a singing male at Arcusa which everyone got to see and then those in the second vehicle had almost point blank views of a singing male near Vadiello.

**Cirl Bunting***Emberiza cirlus*

A male was heard singing near Ontiñena but then we managed to find five as we were searching for Ortolan Bunting at Arrés. Single males were seen two days running at Lecina.

**Annotated List of Mammals Recorded****8 species**

*Nomenclature and taxonomy provided by iGo-terra.*



### Wolves, Coyote, Foxes, Jackals Canidae

#### **Red Fox**

*Vulpes vulpes*

One was seen as we departed from Monfragüe NP and another was at El Planerón.

### Cattle, Antelope, Sheep, Goats Bovidae

#### **Northern Chamois**

*Rupicapra rupicapra*

On our first day in the Hecho valley we found several small herds totalling 120 animals with twenty nine the following day above the Belagua Valley and a few more on our second visit to Gabardito

### Deer Cervidae

#### **Roe Deer**

*Capreolus capreolus*

One or two were seen on five dates though most sightings were fleeting. At Lecina we saw two close ones and the following day had 'scope views of a distant one allowing everyone to catch up with this species.

#### **Red Deer**

*Cervus elaphus*

One was seen whilst travelling in Monfragüe NP.

### Pigs Suidae

#### **Wild Boar**

*Sus scrofa*

One, well at least some of it, was seen in Monfragüe NP whilst the following day one of the group found another near our accommodation there.

### Rabbits, Hares Leporidae

#### **Broom Hare**

*Lepus castroviejoi*

Singles were seen in Monfragüe NP, at El Planerón and on the Ballobar steppes but our best views were below Lecina on a pre-breakfast walk.

#### **European Rabbit**

*Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Up to six were seen on four dates, usually whilst travelling.

### Squirrels Sciuridae

#### **Alpine Marmot**

*Marmota marmota*

We saw four of these rather endearing creatures as we drove up to Arette Ski resort and six the following day around El Portalé.

## **Annotated List of Amphibians and Reptiles Recorded**

### **13 species**

*Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Europe. Spreybroeck et al 2016. The following is a list of the Amphibians and Reptiles that we found on the tour. Most of these species were identified from photographs taken by Michael Otero and were subsequently identified by Michael who I thank for his contribution.*

<b>Southern Marbled Newt</b>	<i>Triturus marmoratus</i>
<b>Iberian Midwife Toad</b>	<i>Alytes cisternasii</i>
<b>Natterjack Toad</b>	<i>Epidalea calamita</i>
<b>Iberian Water Frog</b>	<i>Rana perezi</i>
<b>Graf's Hybrid Frog</b>	<i>Rana kl grafi</i>
<b>Moorish Gecko</b>	<i>Tarantola mauritanica</i>
<b>Ocellated Lizard</b>	<i>Timon lepidus</i>





Eastern Green Lizard	<i>Lacerta viridis</i>
Pyrenean Rock Lizard	<i>Iberolacerta bonnali</i>
Aran Rock Lizard	<i>Iberolacerta aranica</i>
Aurelio's Rock Lizard	<i>Iberolacerta aurelioli</i>
Common Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis muralis</i>
Mediterranean Turtle	<i>Mauremys lepros.</i>

## Annotated List of Butterflies Recorded

### 20 species

Nomenclature and taxonomy provided by Collins Butterfly Guide.

Below is a list of the Butterfly species recorded on the tour, most of which were photographed.

Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>
Scarce Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclides podalirius</i>
Spanish Festoon	<i>Zerynthia polyxena</i>
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>
Greenish Blacktip	<i>Elphinstonia charlonia</i>
Orangetip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>
Moroccan Orangetip	<i>Anthocharis belia</i>
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>
Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>
Wood White	<i>Leptidea Sinapis</i>
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>
Baton Blue	<i>Pseudophilotes baton</i>
Common Blue	<i>Polymmatius icarus</i>
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>
Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>
Large Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus alveus</i>
Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>

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