



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Spain

Strait of Gibraltar Pre-tour Extension

6th to 10th May 2018 (5 Days)

Main Tour

11th to 26th May (16 Days)

Trip Report



Bearded Vulture by Rob Williams

**Led by Rob Williams
with Alberto Bueno (Main Tour)
and Yeray Seminario (Extension)**

Birding Spain

Spain is a fantastically diverse country, and we travelled from the dehesas of Extremadura through the plains of La Mancha to the Mediterranean coast, then north to the Ebro delta and inland through the steppes of the Ebro valley and finally to the Pyrenees. This journey gave us access to most of the habitats in central and northern Spain and we enjoyed warm, sunny Mediterranean woodlands and snow-covered alpine environs whilst recording some 253 species of bird. Added to this, we marvelled at the spectacular and varied landscapes, ancient villages, castles and churches, and enjoyed fine and varied local food and the odd glass or two of local wines.

Top 5 Birds on the pre-tour extension (as voted by participants):

1. Northern Bald Ibis
2. Spanish Imperial Eagle
3. Honey Buzzard
4. Marbled Duck
5. Atlantic Puffin

Top 10 Birds on the main tour (as voted by participants):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Bearded Vulture (Lammergeier) | 6. Wallcreeper |
| 2. Bearded Reedling | 7. Dupont's Lark |
| 3. Great Bustard | 8. Spanish Imperial Eagle |
| 4. Eurasian Eagle-Owl | 9. Iberian Magpie |
| 5. Dartford Warbler | 10. Spectacled Warbler |

Strait of Gibraltar Pre-tour Extension

6th May 2018: Seville to Tarifa. We met in the beautiful historic city of Seville, where several of us had enjoyed a couple of days. As we drove out of the city, we noted the abundant Pallid Swifts overhead and the introduced Rose-ringed and Monk Parakeets. It was a day with a strong easterly wind,



Great Reed Warbler by Rob Williams

so we decided to stay north of the Strait of Gibraltar area and headed straight to Brazo del Este – an area of wetlands situated to the east of the Guadalquivir River. A series of stops here produced a suite of waders: Black-winged Stilt, Common Redshank, Dunlin, Curlew Sandpiper, and Common Ringed Plover were all present in good numbers, and Kentish Plover, Little Stint, Common Sandpiper and Whimbrel were also seen as singles. The reedbeds held good numbers of Western Swampheens and African/Eurasian Reed Warblers [see note in species accounts], Great Reed Warblers, Zitting Cisticolas, and we heard a couple of Savi's Warblers. The introduced Black-headed Weaver was quite common and we also saw a couple of female Yellow-crowned Bishops. The bird of the day was an adult male Trumpeter Finch, which we

found feeding along the side of the raised road – it was quite flighty, but with patience we managed to document it with photos. *This is a very rare bird in Spain away from the small resident population in Almeria.*

We stopped at Laguna Medina, adding 3 species of grebe and White-headed Duck. Sadly, the introduction of carp has had a severe impact on this endoheric lagoon, which is now just a shadow of its former self. The bushes along the way held Cetti's Warbler, Melodious Warbler and Common Nightingale, but all gave glimpse views in the continuing windy conditions. A final stop at Barca de Bejer gave us good looks at a colony of Northern Bald Ibis that has resulted from the reintroduction programme. The ledges held adults and quite large chicks. Here we also enjoyed looking at wild Rock Doves, noting the features on a bird that is all too familiar in its "corrupted" feral form.



Northern Bald Ibis by Rob Williams

7th May 2018: Barbate area and La Janda. A quick pre-breakfast look at the hotel garden gave us good looks at a pair of European Crested Tits. We heard and glimpsed a few other new passerines but the strong winds meant they remained well-hidden. Adapting to the conditions, which looked poor for migration, we headed to the Barbate marshes. Here we found a good variety of waders, including Eurasian Stone-curlew, Pied Avocet, Kentish Plover, and Bar-tailed Godwit; also interesting was seeing Grey Plover, Sanderling, Dunlin and Curlew Sandpipers in full or very near-full breeding plumage. We heard a distant Little Bustard but could not locate it. We later found it in the long vegetation. The fields did hold Tawny Pipit, and Crested, Greater Short-toed and Calandra Larks. The Barbate river estuary gave us a single Eurasian Curlew. A quick look at the Northern Bald Ibis colony gave us better light for photos, and a few birds were coming and going from the colony.

A brief stop in pine woodland en route to lunch gave us first looks at hoopoe and serin. After lunch, we birded the La Janda area – previously a large lagoon that was drained to create an agricultural landscape. A single juvenile Black Stork was found. Several Common Quail were heard calling, but could not be seen in the tall wheat fields from which they were calling. A pair of Montagu's Harrier gave great looks and the highlight was a nice adult Spanish Imperial Eagle that we watched through the scopes, perched on pylons and making a hunting attempt. Unfortunately, the lie of the land prevented us seeing if it was successful, but the time it was down and a bulging crop when it reappeared suggested it probably had been.



Pied Avocet by Rob Williams

8th May 2018: Tarifa and Strait of Gibraltar area. We started the day with a sea-watch from the Tarifa harbour wall. The sea was flat and calm due to very little wind, and at first glance it seemed devoid of birds. With some patience and

scanning, we soon all enjoyed scope views of a few Balearic Shearwaters and a couple of decent but distant flocks of Scopoli's Shearwaters. Further scanning gave us a few Northern Gannets and an adult Pomarine Jaeger. We then headed to Los Lances beach which held a few gulls, including 2 Slender-billed Gulls. We also enjoyed watching displaying Kentish Plovers.

The wind was picking up, so we headed back to the Strait of Gibraltar to the central point of Guadalmeisi. We waited and watched, seeing a few Short-toed and Booted Eagles, a single Honey Buzzard and a steady stream of Eurasian Griffon Vultures that appeared to be arriving from Africa, but it was not the movement the weather would seem to bring. However, although conditions were good in Spain, the visibility across the Strait was not good, and Jebel Musa – the main departure point in Morocco – was covered in a blanket of cloud. As we waited, a male Cirl Bunting was enjoyed as he sang from a wire, and a few other passerines entertained us. An old lean-to held at least 13 Moorish Geckos.



Slender-billed Gull by Rob Williams

The winds strengthened from the west and the mountain ridges in Morocco started to clear. We decided it was time to move farther east and relocated to Punta Carnero. On arrival there seemed to be little activity, but it was not long till we spotted birds flying towards us, fighting the wind. The first wave of Black Kites came across with a few Honey Buzzards for company, then the first of a couple of large



Honey Buzzard by Rob Williams

flocks of White Storks arrived, and Short-toed and Booted Eagles and more Honey Buzzards kept coming – *this was the migration we wanted to see!* Some birds passed just metres over our heads when they arrived. Just as we had to head off, a group of very relieved looking Eurasian Griffon Vultures made it. Heading back to Tarifa, we made a stop for a quick shag – actually 6 European Shags of the *desmarestii* subspecies from the Mediterranean – sitting on mussel farm rafts.

From Tarifa, we took a 2-hour whale-watching trip into the Strait of Gibraltar. We had good views of both Bottle-nosed Dolphin and Long-finned Pilot Whales. We also saw a suite of good birds, with great looks at many Scopoli's Shearwaters, a few Black Terns, a single Atlantic Puffin and a single Leach's Storm Petrel being the highlights. After the boat trip, we enjoyed a beer or Sangria before we went to see the Common Bulbul by the castle – one of only two surviving birds in Europe from a small colonisation event. A pair arrived from Morocco in 2013 and bred for at least 3 years but now there are only 2 males known of, presumably brothers, which are surviving. We enjoyed a wonderful dinner in Tarifa.

9th May 2018. The wind was blowing strongly from the west and the mountains were shrouded in cloud. Heading back to La Janda, we birded the main canal area. Highlights here were the huge colony of Cattle Egrets in full breeding plumage. We had views of the birds down to just a couple of metres; amongst them were a few nests of Little Egrets and Glossy Ibis. We also found our first Spanish Sparrow and Greater Whitethroat, and also had good looks at both Cetti's Warbler and Melodious Warbler.

After a well-earned coffee break, we headed to an area near Benalup that still holds a small population of Little Bustards, a species that has undergone a dramatic and continuing decline. We started off finding a roosting Little Owl and seeing a hunting adult Black-winged Kite. There were quite a few raptors in the air, including Short-toed and Booted Eagles. Then we found a sub-adult Golden Eagle and enjoyed scope views of it patrolling nearby hills. Whilst watching it, we



Black-winged Kite by Rob Williams

heard a calling male Little Bustard and were fortunate that Yeray spotted him in a small clearing some 400m away. Although distant the scope views were reasonable, and we could watch him calling and then hear it just over a second later, we decided to try and get closer. As we did, the Golden Eagle headed that way and the Little Bustard disappeared from view. Later examination of Chris's photos showed another male photobombing one of the pictures of the Golden Eagle.

After a hearty lunch at Tahivilla, we headed up into the Alcornocales Natural Park for the afternoon, driving up the Ojen valley. The beautiful Cork and Iberian Oak forests here gave us good looks at the Iberian Chiffchaff, European Robin and Firecrest. An open area held Thekla Lark and Tawny Pipit. We also saw an Egyptian Mongoose jumping across a mountain stream and a Red Fox that stared at us and then hurried off uphill away from us.



Iberian Chiffchaff by Rob Williams

We spent the last hours of birding looking for White-rumped Swifts. These are the last migrants to arrive in Spain, and as far as we knew none had been reported yet this year; however, feeling optimistic, we decided to try a site near the Embalse de Barbate. After about 45 minutes it was not looking good, and we were thinking of heading back to the hotel when 2 White-rumped Swifts appeared. Distant at first, we eventually got closer and enjoyed reasonable looks at them!

10th May 2018: Tarifa to Seville and on to Madrid. An early start saw us having a field

breakfast in the Chipiona port at the only colony of Little Swifts in Europe. Several birds were seen, as well as numerous Pallid Swifts and a few shorebirds on the coast, while we enjoyed a field breakfast and coffee from the port cafe. We then headed into a highly intensive agricultural area, where a few small lagoons persist amongst wall to wall glasshouses and small fields. Here we enjoyed great looks at

White-headed Ducks at close range and also succeeded in finding a single Red-knobbed Coot – *now a very rare bird in Spain*. Moving on to the famous Bonanza salt pans, we enjoyed superb views of hundreds of Great Flamingoes, Slender-billed Gulls, Pied Avocets, Little Terns, and Kentish Plovers – all resident here. They were joined by a good number of migrant waders, many now in full breeding plumage, and we got good looks and photos of Sanderlings, Dunlin, Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint.

Just to the north, another lagoon held a variety of ducks and a large colony of Eurasian Spoonbill. The salt marshes and lagoons along the Guadalquivir held a variety of waders and waterfowl, including our target species of Marbled Duck. *We saw a pair very close to the vans and got great views and photos of this now rare species*. The final stop of the morning was in the vineyards near Trebujena for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin. Unfortunately, this very late migrant has not seemed to have arrived in force, and Chris was the only person to get a view of one perched distantly.



Marbled Duck by Rob Williams

After saying goodbye to Yeray and getting some sandwiches for lunch, we took the 14:45 high-speed train (AVE) from Seville to Madrid. Travelling at up to 245km/h, we arrived at 17:15 to meet Alberto for the main tour and head to the hotel, where we met the rest of the group for dinner.

The Gibraltar extension had given a great start to our adventures in Spain, with a total of 161 species of birds, including 19 that we would not see on the main tour, 9 mammals, 5 reptiles and 1 amphibian recorded, as well as a good selection of butterflies and flowers.

MAIN SPAIN TOUR

11th May 2018: Madrid to Navahonda, Gredos and Monfragüe. We started in the main square of Barajas suburb, where we found a few Monk Parakeets, enjoyed a White Stork on its nest, Spotless Starlings were singing from the rooftops, a few Common Swifts screamed overhead and a European



Egyptian Vulture by Rob Williams

Serin was also singing. Heading west out of Madrid, we visited the Ermita de Navahonda, where the scrub and meadows gave us a good introduction to Spanish birds. We soon saw our first Spanish Imperial Eagle soaring over the ridge, and enjoyed getting to grips with a good range of Mediterranean birds, including Woodchat Shrike, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Iberian Magpie, Eurasian Hoopoe and Western Subalpine Warbler. Our target of Hawfinch proved elusive: we had a couple of flight views and the fortunate few had brief looks on the ground.

We enjoyed a fantastic lunch at a culinary school en route to the Sierra de Gredos mountains, our route also taking us past the ancient walls of Avila. Arriving in Gredos, we stopped for an impressive White Stork colony and then in some oak forests for Western Bonelli's Warbler. Reaching the alpine zone at Peña Negra, we soon found several Common Whitethroats, Northern Wheatears and many Dunnocks and Western Yellow Wagtails. After a considerable search, we finally found a singing male Bluethroat which perched up for scope views, although somewhat backlit. We then drove south over the Gredos and dropped down into the *dehesas* of Extremadura arriving just in time for dinner.

12th May 2018: Monfrague and the Trujillo steppes.

Before breakfast we birded near the hotel, where the highlight was great looks at a male Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, but a supporting cast of Woodchat Shrike, scoped bee-eaters and calling Common Quail were also appreciated. Heading into the park, a first stop gave us great views of Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Cinereous Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Black Kite and Common Buzzard. *Just a start of the staggering number of raptors we would see in a day in this amazing national park – surely one of the world's best raptor-watching sites.* Here we also saw 2 Alpine Swifts and a cooperative male Sardinian Warbler.



Crag Martin by Rob Williams

The bridge over the river in the centre of the park was surrounded by clouds of Common House Martins intermixed with a few Crag Martins, a couple more Alpine Swifts and large flocks of Rock Doves. It was the two displaying Bonelli's Eagles that stole the show here, though. Moving on to the famous Salto de Gitano viewpoint, we enjoyed great views of the impressive cliffs and the multitude of Griffon Vultures that call them home. Here we also saw 2 Black Storks, 2 Peregrine Falcons, Blue Rock Thrush and Black Redstart.



Bonelli's Eagle by Rob Williams

the only individual we found. Further on, we saw a number of European Roller in an area where nestboxes are provided for this declining species. Eventually, Alberto spotted a distant head on the horizon and we all had scope views of a displaying Little Bustard. Moving east, we checked another

Moving south, we headed into the *dehesas* and steppes. Here we began our search for bustards. As we surveyed the fields we saw hundreds of larks, including Calandra Lark and Greater Short-toed Lark. Raptors were also quite common, and we had good looks at several Montagu's Harriers. We lunched by a river where a fly-past Common Kingfisher was seen by some, and 4 Stripeless Tree Frogs were found roosting. Just after lunch, a fly-past Great Spotted Cuckoo caused a swift van evacuation and we all enjoyed good looks at this species whose numbers fluctuate from year to year, and which was reportedly hard this year – *this was*

road and found some Spanish Sparrows drinking at a small pool, shortly afterwards we found 3 Great Bustards and had good scope views of these, including seeing the display. Whilst we were watching it we heard another Little Bustard and also found that. We even had both species in the same scope view for a while.

We ended the day at Portilla del Tietar, where we had fly-over views of eagle-owl and then very good views of a perched Red-necked Nightjar.

13th May 2018: Arrocampo, Steppes of Belén, Trujillo, Montehermoso, Portilla del Tietar.

We started the day by the hotel, where we had good flight views of Common Quail 3 times. Then 2 adult Spanish Imperial Eagles were watched in the scopes. Other birds included several Common Cuckoos, Woodchat Shrike and Iberian Magpie. After breakfast, we headed to the reservoir at Arrocampo. Here we found



Western Swamphehen by Rob Williams

Western Swamphehen, Little Bittern, Purple Heron, Little Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Common Kingfisher and Cetti's Warbler. We then travelled through the steppes east of Trujillo, seeing another Great Bustard distantly and a nice selection of other steppe birds. After a nice lunch in the fantastic town square of Trujillo, we made sure we all got good looks at the Pallid Swift and Lesser Kestrels that nest here. We then headed to an area of vineyards and orchards at Montehermoso to look for the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, one was heard and seen briefly by a few, but it was windy and we could not get decent views. After dinner, we returned to Portilla del Tietar at dusk and enjoyed better views of the Eurasian Eagle-Owl as it flew across the valley again.

14th May 2018: Portilla del Tietar, Alcazar de San Juan, Pedro Muñoz, El Renegado. As some had regretted not participating in the optional pre-breakfast the day before, we went out again. Despite it



Pallid Swift by Rob Williams

being much windier, we managed to get great views of 3 different Common Quail. We then headed down the road a bit and enjoyed watching a pair of Spanish Imperial Eagles at the nest where a downy white chick could be seen through the scope. Nearby, a Eurasian Golden Oriole was incubating on a nest made entirely of plastic. Sadly it was time to leave Extremadura, and we journeyed east to Castilla La Mancha – the legendary land of Don Quixote.

After a few hours of driving, and having passed by the city of Toledo – where we took a slight detour to get better views of the historic old city – we stopped to bird the lakes at Alcazar de San Juan and have lunch. The two lakes were contrastingly different, one being a permanent reed-fringed wetland and the other a seasonal saline lake – *this year much fuller than usual after the heavy spring rains*. We found a nice selection of birds, including White-headed Duck, Black-necked Grebe,

Whiskered Tern, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Grey Plover, Temminck's Stint, Kentish Plover and Little Ringed Plover.

Further on, we stopped to check the lake at the village of Pedro Muñoz and had more views of now-familiar birds, but turned up nothing new. Chris had had a mishap with his eye the night before, so we decided to get it checked at a clinic in San Clemente. Whilst there, Alberto's vehicle decided it needed a top-up of a new pollution-reducing fluid and refused to start until we had sourced some and added 13 litres to a hidden tank – *something none of us had ever heard of before*.



White-headed Duck by Rob Williams

Problems resolved, we moved on to our delightful accommodation at the El Renegado bodega. Part of an active winery where the old buildings are home to Rock Sparrows (Petronia), we saw several as we checked in and explored. After a great dinner and sampling a few of the bodega's wines, we ended the day getting good views of two Eurasian Scops Owls in a large oak tree in the vineyards; while at least 6 more could be heard in the surrounding area.

15th May 2018: Valencia coast to Ebro Delta. Pre-breakfast, we took a walk down through the vineyards to a small area of pine woodland. Initially birds were very hard to find, with an unseasonal cool wind. We heard Iberian Green Woodpecker but failed to get more than a half-hearted response. Our luck turned with a Short-toed Treecreeper, which performed well, giving everyone good looks. This was quickly followed by a European Crested Tit which gave very good looks. As we headed back to the hotel for breakfast, 4 Red Crossbills flew over, calling.



Collared Pratincole by Rob Williams

After breakfast, we headed down to the Mediterranean coast at Valencia, visiting the Albufera de Valencia National Park, where we met local birder, Toni, who would help us out. The hides here gave great views of colonies of Black-headed and Mediterranean Gulls, Common and Sandwich Terns, the latter holding one of the few Elegant Terns residing in Europe. A few waders were seen, some resident breeders and a few late migrants. The scrub around the lagoons held European Turtle Doves.

North of Valencia we stopped at the Marjal del Moros Reserve just south of the port of Sagunt.

Here we enjoyed more breeding colonies of gulls and terns, which included Collared Pratincoles, and Kentish and Little Ringed Plovers. After a picnic lunch looking at the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean, we headed north to Prat de Cabanes to search for the increasingly scarce Moustached Warbler. It was very windy, and despite finding two singing birds which we could get within a couple of metres of, we could not see them. We tried and tried and finally managed to locate a bird near a

small pool; and with the wind abating slightly, we managed to provoke it into the open atop a reed for all to enjoy. It was then time to head north to Sant Carles de la Rapita and our hotel for a fantastic fish dinner.

16th May 2018: Ebro Delta. We started the day exploring the southern portion of the Ebro delta, visiting a number of different habitats: rice fields, freshwater lagoons, reedbeds, salt pans, salt marsh, beach and coastal scrub. The first stop rewarded us with great views of a Water Rail; and nearby reedbeds held a good variety of warblers, including Eurasian Reed Warbler, Great Reed Warbler and Savi's Warbler, which all gave good views. A nice surprise was a male Common Reed Bunting of the scarce resident subspecies *witherbyi*, which we watched singing in the scope. A couple of Black Terns were seen in the distance amongst the Whiskered and Common Terns.



Common Nightingale by Rob Williams

An area of abandoned saltpans held a large number of Audouin's Gulls and a good selection of waders, including our first Common Greenshank. We found a distant Caspian Tern and a Red-throated Pipit flew over, calling. We then headed out onto the barrier beach, where an isolated clump of bushes can act as a migrant trap. Our luck was in, and as we pulled up we could see multiple birds flitting in the low shrub. In the next 45 minutes, we saw at least 25 Willow Warbler, 3 Common Redstart, 2 Melodious Warbler, 2 Common Chiffchaff (one of which had a most unusual orange throat), 2 Pied Flycatcher, and singles of Mediterranean Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher, Woodchat Shrike, Northern Wheatear and Western Subalpine Warbler. Further north, a small plantation of Eucalyptus and pines with some native bushes was checked. Apart from better views of Pied Flycatcher, it held few migrants; although we did find the uncommon, in Spain, Common Starling and Eurasian Tree Sparrow. We lunched at a cafe nearby and saw Greylag Geese in a nearby rice paddy. In the afternoon, we headed to the northern delta looking for waders and found a few, including Red Knot, Wood Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and Eurasian Curlew.



Dupont's Lark by Rob Williams

17th May 2018: Ebro delta to Lecera Steppes via Flix and Alcañiz. Before breakfast, we headed back to the coastal bushes but found only the Mediterranean Flycatcher and a single singing Common Chiffchaff – *what an amazing difference 24 hours makes*. We then birded the beach south to the salt pans, picking up Eurasian Oystercatcher and a few other waders. After breakfast back at the hotel, we headed inland to the town of Flix, where we visited the Sebes reserve and had nice looks at singing Common Nightingale, Little Grebes feeding their chicks, a cooperative Hoopoe and White Storks on nests.

We lunched on a hill, near an historic monastery with stunning views across the Aragon countryside.

18th May 2018: Belchite steppes. We listened to 6 species of larks singing as dawn broke on the Planerón steppes. Our main target was Dupont's Lark, and we enjoyed scope views of a cooperative bird singing from a small thyme bush. A male Hen Harrier was a late migrant and a large eagle caused some confusion. After breakfast, we found a large female Golden Eagle perched on an electricity pylon and then birded the Belchite road, getting scope views of both Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse. The Almochuel reservoir held a selection of waders, including a winter plumaged Spotted Redshank and a Goshawk and another Golden Eagle were seen.



Long-eared Owl chick by Rob Williams

The pines around Ermita Matamala gave us good looks at a recently fledged Long-eared Owl and an adult; the remains of another juvenile seemed to have been predated by a goshawk. After lunch, we made a quick visit to the ruins of the town of Belchite, left as a monument to the Spanish Civil War. With Chris needing to get his eye checked by a doctor in Zaragoza, he, Jean and Alberto headed off while most of us headed back to Alcañiz Reservoir to see a White-winged Tern that had been found in the morning – we enjoyed great looks as it fed with a group of 10 Black Terns. Kindly, Stephanie and Frank, who had previously seen the species, volunteered to stay at the hotel so the vehicle logistics worked. Thanks to them both!

19th May 2018: Lecera, Laguna Salada de la Playa, Ballobar Steppes, Laguna de Sarineña, Siresa. The saline waters and pan of Laguna Salada de la Playa form the largest inland saline lake in the area. Almost dry, we did still see millions of the endemic brine shrimp *Artemia salina* in the remaining water. The lakeside vegetation and ruined buildings held Tawny Pipit and Black-eared Wheatear and a single Eurasian Stone-curlew walked on the dry pan. The Ballobar steppes entertained us with views of many birds we had already seen, including 7 Little Owls, and also gave us great looks at 2 pairs of Spectacled Warblers, the second pair feeding young just metres from the vehicles, allowing all to get great looks at this of furtive little warbler. We lunched at a pleasant picnic ground where Alberto's wife, Rosa, joined us.



Bearded Reedling by Rob Williams

After lunch we birded a river canyon, getting good looks at 4 Black Wheatears, several Blue Rock Thrushes, Alpine Swift, Stock Dove and wonderful scoped views of a roosting Eurasian Eagle-Owl located by Chris and Ruben (Alison's scope). A stop at a site for Penduline Tit gave brief flight views for some, but we enjoyed seeing the nest made of poplar seed cotton, apparently requiring a staggering 3,600 visits to make it. We did get our first views of Great Spotted Woodpecker and blackcap here. At Sarineña Lake, we had good views of Bearded Reedling. We then drove on to Siresa

in the Hecho valley, which would be our base for exploring the Pyrenees for the next few days.

20th May 2018: Hecho Valley. A fine morning bode well for our quest for the Wallcreeper. We walked up through mixed pine and beech forest from the Gabardito refuge, finding a cooperative singing Garden Warbler, Common Treecreeper, Goldcrest and Coal Tits en route. At the usual cliff, we did not have to wait too long before we had a first flight view of our quarry. Initially favouring the upper cliff, we had several flight views and enjoyed a couple of spectacular display flights from the pair. Our patience paid off and they eventually descended to the lower cliff, allowing much better views of this most sought-after bird.



White-throated Dipper by Rob Williams

Heavy rain and hail coincided with an extended lunch break, and we headed out to the Selva de Oza area just as it stopped. We picked up a steady trickle of new birds, including White-throated Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Common Firecrest, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer and Water Pipit, as we enjoyed the stunning scenery and also the flora, with several species of orchid flowering. The heavy rain in the upper valley drove us to a nearby bar for coffees and ice-creams and when we re-emerged it had dried up and we enjoyed good looks at more of the same birds.

21st May 2018: Roncal and Anso valleys. Before breakfast, a walk near the hotel added Iberian Green Woodpecker to the list. We then headed west into the Roncal valley, pausing en route for a singing Tree Pipit and seeing 9 Egyptian Vultures together. Driving up the valley we found several pairs of Red-backed Shrikes and had fantastic views of a male Black Woodpecker, both perched and in flight. The alpine meadows held Water Pipits, Northern Wheatears, and Red-billed and Yellow-billed Choughs. The highest forests gave us nice scope views of the *alpestris* subspecies of Ring Ouzel and looks at several Citril Finches. Just over the border in France, we found Alpine Accentor. We lunched



Alpine Accentor by Rob Williams

in France, racking up a list of 13 species including a 2nd-year Bearded Vulture that flew past. Returning to Spain, we found 2 Alpine Marmots, part of an introduced population, and saw a variety of raptors including Short-toed Snake Eagle, Honey Buzzard and Red Kite.

In the afternoon we visited the upper Anso valley, where we dodged the showers and birded in the magnificent Beech forests. Bird activity was low but we had good looks at 2 more Black Woodpeckers, Marsh Tit, Eurasian Nuthatch, and Black Redstart. The rain started to look more permanent, so we headed back to the hotel.

22nd May 2018: Siresa, El Portalet (Formigal), Aínsa to Lecina. From Lecina, we drove east and up into the Pyrenees at Formigal. A brief stop on the way for fuel resulted in us hearing a calling Common

Quail. With one person who had opted out of the early walks in Monfrague still needing to see the bird, we played the tape and had flight views of a timid shy male quail fleeing the taped female. Arriving in the Alpine zone, a first stop gave us reasonable looks at a Bearded Vulture and great scope views of both Common Rock Thrush and a singing male Whinchat. Further on, a Common Redstart male was perched beside the road but vanished by the time we had parked safely and walked back.

In France, we parked looking out over a spectacular valley and most of us set out for a walk in search of White-winged Snowfinch. This was a particularly hard bird this year as the late snowfalls meant we could not access the breeding site, but the recent rain had melted snow at lower elevations where we had hoped to find them still feeding. We walked for a couple of hours in stunning scenery on a delightfully pleasant Pyrenean morning, perfect weather and light. The alpine flowers were out in force with Narcissus, Gentians, cowslips and others, and every other rock seemed to have a Pyrenean Rock Lizard sunning on it. There were numerous Southern Chamois, many with kids, and the Alpine Marmots were out in force. The birding was good, with a huge mixed flock of Red-billed and Alpine Choughs entertaining us as they separated and rejoined, or mobbed a passing bird of prey. We had great looks at a Golden Eagle and Booted Eagle. On the ground, Northern Wheatears were numerous and we saw a few Eurasian Skylarks and many Water Pipits. Rob saw a perched White-winged Snowfinch which flew over a ridge and disappeared, and on the way back Chris picked up a bird in flight in the same area and managed to get a quick recording of its calls.



Black Redstart by Rob Williams

We stopped at the 16th-century fortress at Aínsa to try and resolve an outstanding Rock Sparrow problem, but it was not to be. We enjoyed a good look around but all sparrows were House Sparrows. A Short-toed Treecreeper was seen on the castle walls.



Northern Wheatear by Markus Lilje

After a fantastic dinner, we headed out and soon heard the Tawny Owl calling. A few minutes later, we were enjoying good looks at the male calling from a TV antenna on a nearby house, he was to be a nightly part of the soundscape of this ancient village throughout our stay.

23rd May 2018: Lecina area. The morning was spent exploring the road from Lecina to Betorz. During our time we picked up Western Orphean Warbler, Woodlark and Long-tailed Tit, as well as better views of a range of birds that we had seen previously, including Western Subalpine Warbler, Common Firecrest, Eurasian Golden

Oriole, Melodious Warbler, Common Cuckoo and Eurasian Wren. The road here is little travelled, we saw 2 vehicles in the morning, and winds through Iberian Oak forest interspersed with small fields,

scrubby clearings and grassy meadows. We also saw a decent variety of butterflies, including Scarce Swallowtail and 3 species of Fritillary. From the village of Betorz, we saw a few species of raptor as we looked out across the pleasing landscape of the Sierra de Guara.

After lunch and a well-deserved siesta, we headed to an area of juniper scrub in search of Ortolan Bunting. One was calling when we arrived and we soon got it in the scope, but unfortunately it flew right over us and disappeared before everyone had got on it. The cool wind made things difficult and despite hearing it a couple more times, we could not get views. We then headed to the spectacular Choca canyon, where we enjoyed the views, even seeing some of the ancient cave art through the scope. There were many Eurasian Griffon Vultures roosting here, and we found a nesting Egyptian Vulture. One of the highlights was a group of approximately 20 Alpine Swifts that were flying around, often close and below us, and at times “singing” in flight above us.



Common Firecrest by Markus Lilje

24th May 2018. We started the day heading west to the hills above Santa Eulalia. Here we soon resolved the Ortolan Bunting problem, with great scope views of a singing bird at close range. *One of several we were to find that morning.* Moving on, we birded a high scrubby ridge with spectacular views, but the strong wind meant we struggled to find the sought-after Dartford Warbler for a while, with just a distant bird singing from the slopes below us. Then, suddenly, there were 2, no 4, on the slope behind us. They mainly stayed low in the strong wind but in time a pair showed well, perching in plain view for all. We then tried some lowland areas along the Flumen River for Penduline Tit and Wryneck and failed on both, the wind was strong even down there. We headed back into the hills to the impressive formations at Salto del Roldán. We enjoyed lunch with a fantastic view, watching many Griffon Vultures and getting great views of 4 Bearded Vultures (3 adults and a juvenile) with some flying right overhead and others cruising past at eye-level. Alberto knew them individually and told us where they nested and how they were doing.



Eurasian Wryneck by Markus Lilje

We returned to a lowland river and heard a calling Eurasian Wryneck. Unfortunately, we could not reach the area it was calling from, but another started calling downstream and soon we were enjoying good looks at a foraging and singing wryneck. On the way back to Lecina, we stopped to admire the picturesque old town of Alquézar, where 2 Peregrines were high overhead and a male Blue Rock Thrush posed on a wire.

25th May 2018. We awoke to a wet morning in the Sierra de Guara, and some took a pre-breakfast walk to see the ancient

oak that gives the name to the village of Lecina. We then travelled south-west and out of the wet weather to Monzón, where we searched for better views of Penduline Tit. Sadly, it was not to be; but we did see and hear some decent birds, including Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. The large reservoir of San Salvador gave us our last new bird of the trip in the form of Northern Lapwing, and we also enjoyed good looks at Little Ringed Plovers and nesting European Bee-eaters. A quick stop at a ruined house for Barn Owl was thwarted by the doors having been recently bricked up – *the mortar was still not completely hardened!* Great news for the Barn Owl, which flies in through a broken upstairs window, but cutting off access for birders! We journeyed east to have lunch by the Cinca River reservoir near Fraga and finally managed to put our European Kingfisher demons to rest, with scoped views of a somewhat distant but fairly cooperative individual. From there it was an easy run into Barcelona to our hotel near the airport, where we bade farewell to Alberto and later enjoyed a group dinner to reminisce over the highs and lows of the tour and discuss the pros and cons of different systems for creating the top 10 bird list.



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker by David Erterius

Final Comments

We had a wonderful and highly successful tour, recording a respectable 242 species of bird (of which all but one were seen), 15 terrestrial mammals and 11 bats detected, 9 reptiles and 6 amphibians. We had also enjoyed the culture, cuisine and wines of Spain and saw some spectacular natural landscapes and man-made constructions. The Strait of Gibraltar pre-tour extension added an additional 19 species of bird, 3 mammals, and 1 reptile to the totals.

Annotated List of Species Recorded

Birds

DUCKS, GEESE & SWANS - Anatidae

Greylag Goose

6 seen in a rice field in the Ebro Delta

Anser anser

Mute Swan

2 in the Ebro Delta and 42 in the Cinca River.

Cygnus olor

Egyptian Goose - I

2 in a small lagoon near Trujillo.

Alopochen aegyptiaca

Common Shelduck

Fairly common in the north-east.

Tadorna tadorna

Garganey

3 including 2 males in a lagoon near Alquezar.

Spatula querquedula

Northern Shoveler

Alison saw 2

Spatula clypeata

Gadwall*Mareca strepera*

Fairly common.

Mallard*Anas platyrhynchos*

Common.

Eurasian Teal*Anas crecca*

A few distantly in the Ebro delta.

Marbled Duck - VU*Marmaronetta angustirostris*

EXT: Superb views of a pair on the extension.

Red-crested Pochard*Netta rufina*

Common.

Common Pochard*Aythya ferina*

Common.

White-headed Duck - EN*Oxyura leucocephala*

15 at the lagoon at Alcázar de San Juan. More on the extension at 3 sites.

PHEASANTS, GROUSE, AND ALLIES - Phasianidae**Red-legged Partridge***Alectoris rufa*

Common.

Common Quail*Coturnix coturnix*

Several heard and at least 7 seen with multiple views of some.

Common Pheasant - I*Phasianus colchicus*

Ridiculous looks at a male at Navahonda on the main tour and several at La Janda on the extension.

PETRELS, SHEARWATERS & DIVING PETRELS - Procellariidae**Scopoli's Shearwater***Calonectris diomedea*

EXT: Several flocks totalling 200+ in the Strait of Gibraltar.

Cory's Shearwater*Calonectris diomedea*

EXT: 1 with Scopoli's Shearwaters off Tarifa.

Balearic Shearwater - CR*Puffinus mauretanicus*

EXT: About 5 seen off Tarifa.

GREBES - Podicipedidae**Little Grebe***Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common.

Great Crested Grebe*Podiceps cristatus*

Common.

Black-necked Grebe*Podiceps nigricollis*

15 at Alcázar de San Juan and 1 at Prat de Cabanes on the main tour and 10 at Laguna Medina on the extension.

FLAMINGOS - Phoenicopteridae**Greater Flamingo***Phoenicopterus roseus*

Common in suitable habitat with several thousand being seen.

STORKS - Ciconiidae**Black Stork***Ciconia nigra*

Up to 2 daily in Monfragüe and several seen on the extension.

White Stork*Ciconia ciconia*

Common.

IBISES, SPOONBILLS - Threskiornithidae**Northern Bald Ibis - CR : G***Geronticus eremita*

EXT: Up to 15 seen on three occasions at the Colony near Bejer de la Frontera.

Glossy Ibis*Plegadis falcinellus*

Fairly common in the Ebro Delta and on the extension.

Eurasian Spoonbill*Platalea leucorodia*

5 seen at Arrocampo on the main tour. Fairly common on the extension with two big colonies seen near San Lucar de la Barrameda.

HERONS, EGRETS, AND BITTERNS - Ardeidae**Eurasian Bittern***Botaurus stellaris*

Alison saw 1 briefly in flight at Arrocampo.

Little Bittern*Ixobrychus minutus*

Good views at Arrocampo. A couple more on the extension.

Black-crowned Night Heron*Nycticorax nycticorax*

2 seen on the main tour and fairly common on the extension.

Squacco Heron*Ardeola ralloides*

Several seen in the Ebro Delta and the Cinca river.

Western Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Uncommon but seen on several dates and locations on the main tour. Common on the extension with a huge colony at La Janda being particularly noteworthy.

Grey Heron*Ardea cinerea*

Common and widespread.

Purple Heron*Ardea purpurea*

Fairly common in suitable habitat.

Great Egret*Ardea alba*

5 seen on the main tour.

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

Common.

GANNETS, BOOBIES - Sulidae**Northern Gannet : G***Morus bassanus*

1 distantly off the Ebro Delta and a few on the extension.

CORMORANTS AND SHAGS - Phalacrocoracidae**European Shag***Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

EXT: 6 of the subspecies *desmaresti* near Punta Carnero.

Great Cormorant*Phalacrocorax carbo*

Fairly common.

OSPREY - Pandionidae**Western Osprey***Pandion haliaetus*

EXT: 1 at Bonanza Salt Pans.

KITES, HAWKS & EAGLES - Accipitridae**Black-winged Kite***Elanus caeruleus*

EXT: 1 seen well hunting near Benalup.

Bearded Vulture - NT*Gypaetus barbatus*

8 birds seen in total, initially distant sightings but finally some very good eye level flypasts.

Egyptian Vulture - EN*Neophron percnopterus*

A total of 28 birds seen, including one found incubating. 3 more on the extension.

European Honey Buzzard*Pernis apivorus*

9 birds seen on the main tour. 66 seen on the extension with most (49) seen on one day of migration.

Griffon Vulture*Gyps fulvus*

Common.

Cinereous Vulture - NT*Aegypius monachus*

42 birds seen in Extremadura.

Short-toed Snake Eagle*Circaetus gallicus*

14 birds, mostly adults, seen on the main tour on 7 days and 14 more, all juveniles, on 3 days of the extension.

Booted Eagle*Hieraaetus pennatus*

Common.

Spanish Imperial Eagle - NE - VU*Aquila adalberti*

6 seen on the main tour, including great looks at a pair with a chick in the nest. 1 adult seen hunting on the extension.

Golden Eagle*Aquila chrysaetos*

4 seen on the main tour and 1 additional on the extension.

Bonelli's Eagle*Aquila fasciata*

2 adults displaying over Monfragüe was one of the highlights of the tour.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk*Accipiter nisus*

1 flashed across the road in front of Rob's vehicle near Lecina. Rob saw another while everyone was asleep.

Northern Goshawk*Accipiter gentilis*

1 seen by some near a reservoir in the steppes. Another seen by Rob on the extension.

Western Marsh Harrier*Circus aeruginosus*

Common.

Hen Harrier : G*Circus cyaneus*

1 male seen at the El Planeron reserve.

Montagu's Harrier*Circus pygargus*

Fairly common on the main tour.

Red Kite - NT*Milvus milvus*

Locally common.

Black Kite*Milvus migrans*

Common.

Common Buzzard*Buteo buteo*

Fairly common.

BUSTARDS - Otididae

Great Bustard - VU

Otis tarda

5 seen in the steps near Trujillo. 2 males were still displaying - quite late in the season.

Little Bustard - NT

Tetrax tetrax

3 seen in the steppes near Trujillo. On the extension we enjoyed good scope views of one, Christine photographed another as it photobombed a Golden Eagle, Rob saw 1 in flight and we heard another.

RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS - Rallidae

Water Rail

Rallus aquaticus

Good looks at 1 in the Ebro Delta. Others heard at various sites.

Western Swamphen

Porphyrio porphyrio

3 seen at Arrocampo. More common on the extension where seen several times.

Common Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

Fairly common.

Red-knobbed Coot

Fulica cristata

EXT: 1 adult seen well near San Lucar de la Barrameda.

Eurasian Coot

Fulica atra

Common.

THICK-KNEES - Burhinidae

Eurasian Stone-curlew

Burhinus oediconemus

3 seen on the main tour and 4 on the extension.

OYSTERCATCHERS - Haematopodidae

Eurasian Oystercatcher

Haematopus ostralegus

2 seen on the beach of the Ebro Delta.

STILTS AND AVOCETS - Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus

Common.

Pied Avocet

Recurvirostra avosetta

Fairly common in suitable habitat.

PLOVERS AND LAPWINGS - Charadriidae

Northern Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus

About 10 seen at an inland lake on the last day of the tour.

Grey Plover

Pluvialis squatarola

Fairly common in coastal locations with many in fine breeding plumage.

Common Ringed Plover

Charadrius hiaticula

Common.

Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius

Fairly common on inland lakes and pools.

Kentish Plover

Charadrius alexandrinus

Fairly common on the coast and at saline lakes.

SANDPIPERS AND ALLIES - Scolopacidae

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

Heard in the Ebro Delta.

Eurasian Curlew - NT

Numenius arquata

7 in the bay north of the Ebro Delta. An additional single at Barbate on the extension.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

EXT: About 10 on the extension.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

A few at coastal locations on both the main tour and extension.

Red Knot

Calidris canutus

1 in breeding plumage in the north of the Ebro Delta.

Ruff

Calidris pugnax

1 female (Reeve) at an inland lagoon near Alcañiz.

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea

A few in the Ebro Delta and more on the extension. Many in breeding plumage.

Temminck's Stint

Calidris temminckii

1 at the saline lake near Alcazar de San Juan.

Sanderling

Calidris alba

Fairly common on the coast, some in full breeding plumage.

Dunlin

Calidris alpina

Fairly common on the coast, some in full breeding plumage.

Little Stint

Calidris minuta

EXT: 6 seen on the extension with especially good views at the Bonanza salt pans.

Common Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

1 at an inland lagoon near Alquezar.

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos

Fairly common.

Common Redshank

Tringa totanus

Common on the coast and at inland lakes.

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

2 seen in a rice field in the north of the Ebro Delta.

Spotted Redshank

Tringa erythropus

1 non-breeding plumage bird found in an inland lake near Belchite.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

14 seen at scattered localities, most in the Ebro Delta.

PRATINCOLES AND COURSERS - Glareolidae

Collared Pratincole

Glareola pratincola

Good numbers on the coast, breeding birds seen at Marjal del Moros, and also on the extension.

GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS - Laridae

Slender-billed Gull

Chroicocephalus genei

Fairly common on the coast and 2 seen inland near Alcañiz were the first record for Aragon - a surprise for us, we later discovered they had been found the previous day by a local birder.

Black-headed Gull*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Common.

Audouin's Gull*Ichthyaelus audouinii*

Common in the Ebro Delta.

Mediterranean Gull*Ichthyaelus melanocephalus*

Several at a breeding colony near Valencia and a few in the Ebro Delta.

Mew Gull*Larus canus*

1 2nd summer in the Ebro Delta.

Yellow-legged Gull*Larus michahellis*

Common.

Lesser Black-backed Gull*Larus fuscus*

EXT: A few on the coast.

Gull-billed Tern*Gelochelidon nilotica*

Fairly common.

Caspian Tern*Hydroprogne caspia*

4 in the Ebro delta and 2 at Brazo del este on the extension.

Sandwich Tern*Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Fairly common on the coast, big colonies seen several times.

Elegant Tern - NT*Thalasseus elegans*

1 adult in the Sandwich Tern colony at Albufera de Valencia.

Little Tern*Sternula albifrons*

Common on the coast and odd birds inland.

Common Tern*Sterna hirundo*

Common on the coast.

Whiskered Tern*Chlidonias hybrida*

Common on freshwater habitats.

White-winged Tern*Chlidonias leucopterus*

1 with about 30 Black Terns near Alcañiz.

Black Tern*Chlidonias niger*

Good passage 60+ seen on 5 days and 11 off Tarifa on the extension.

SKUAS AND JAEGERs - Stercorariidae**Pomarine Skua***Stercorarius pomarinus*

EXT: 1 adult seen off Tarifa during the boat trip.

AUKS, MURRES, AND PUFFINS - Alcidae**Atlantic Puffin***Fratercula arctica*

EXT: 1 adult seen off Tarifa during the boat trip.

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

A fly-over of 2 in the Trujillo steppes. Several sightings with scope views on the deck in the Belchite Steppes.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse*Pterocles orientalis*

A fly-over of 4 at dusk in Monfragüe and multiple sightings including scope views on the deck in the Belchite steppes.

PIGEONS AND DOVES - Columbidae**Rock Dove***Columba livia*

Common, both in feral and more impressively in the untainted wild form.

Stock Dove*Columba oenas*

1 seen at the Black Wheatear site.

Common Wood Pigeon*Columba palumbus*

Common.

European Turtle Dove*Streptopelia turtur*

Regular in small numbers with some good looks.

Eurasian Collared Dove*Streptopelia decaocto*

Common.

CUCKOOS - Cuculidae**Great Spotted Cuckoo***Clamator glandarius*

Decent looks of one in the Trujillo steppes.

Common Cuckoo*Cuculus canorus*

Common, several good views.

OWLS - Strigidae**Eurasian Scops Owl***Otus scops*

Several heard and eventually decent views of 2 at El Renegado.

Eurasian Eagle-Owl*Bubo bubo*

2 flight views in Monfragüe and then a roosting bird around by Chris at the Black Wheatear site.

Tawny Owl*Strix aluco*

Great looks in Lecina, where heard nightly.

Little Owl*Athene noctua*

Common in steppe habitats, around ruined buildings.

Long-eared Owl*Asio otus*

1 adult and 1 juvenile seen in a pine plantation in the Belchite steppes.

NIGHTJARS AND ALLIES - Caprimulgidae**Red-necked Nightjar***Caprimulgus ruficollis*

Heard and seen well in Monfragüe at night. A female flushed in the Belchite steppes.

SWIFTS - Apodidae**Alpine Swift***Tachymarptis melba*

A few seen in several localities but the Choca canyon gave the best views of about 20.

Common Swift*Apus apus*

Common.

Pallid Swift*Apus pallidus*

2+ in Trujillo. Many on the extension where the default swift.

Little Swift*Apus affinis*

EXT: About 8 seen at Europe's only colony in Chipiona.

White-rumped Swift*Apus caffer*

EXT: 2 seen near the Barbate reservoir, apparently the first birds seen in Spain this year.

KINGFISHERS - Alcedinidae**Common Kingfisher***Alcedo atthis*

A couple of fly-bys in Extremadura and then finally decent but slightly distant scope vies in the Cinca river.

BEE-EATERS - Meropidae**European Bee-eater***Merops apiaster*

Common.

HOOPOES - Upupidae**Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

Fairly common.

WOODPECKERS - Picidae**Eurasian Wryneck***Jynx torquilla*

Good looks at one and another calling near Huesca.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker*Dryobates minor*

1 male seen very well in Monfragüe and another heard on the last day.

Great Spotted Woodpecker*Dendrocopos major*

Several seen and heard, a few decent looks.

Black Woodpecker*Dryocopus martius*

Great looks at 3 in the Anso and Rocal valleys.

Iberian Green Woodpecker*Picus sharpei*

Many heard and seen in the Hecho and Formal valleys.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS - Falconidae**Common Kestrel***Falco tinnunculus*

Fairly common, seen daily.

Eurasian Hobby*Falco subbuteo*

4 seen in the north.

Peregrine Falcon*Falco peregrinus*

A pair in Monfragüe were mobbing a Black Stork. A pair also seen high over the village of Alquézar.

AFRICAN & NEW WORLD PARROTS - Psittacidae**Monk Parakeet - I***Myiopsitta monachus*

4 seen in Madrid and few in Seville on the extension.

OLD WORLD PARROTS - Psittaculidae**Rose-ringed Parakeet - I : G***Psittacula krameri*

EXT: A couple seen in the suburbs of Seville.

SHRIKES - Laniidae**Red-backed Shrike***Lanius collurio*

Fairly common in the Pyrenees and Sierra de Guara.

Southern Grey Shrike*Lanius meridionalis*

7 seen in Extremadura.

Woodchat Shrike*Lanius senator*

Fairly common.

OLD WORLD ORIOLES - Oriolidae**Eurasian Golden Oriole***Oriolus oriolus*

Common by voice and a few seen well.

CROWS, JAYS, AND MAGPIES - Corvidae**Eurasian Jay***Garrulus glandarius*

Several seen at scattered locations.

Iberian Magpie*Cyanopica cooki*

Fairly common in Extremadura.

Eurasian Magpie*Pica pica*

Common.

Red-billed Chough*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Fairly common in the northern steppes and Pyrenees.

Alpine Chough*Pyrrhocorax graculus*

Common in the high Pyrenees.

Western Jackdaw*Coloeus monedula*

Fairly common.

Carrion Crow*Corvus corone*

Common in the north.

Northern Raven*Corvus corax*

Fairly common.

TITS, CHICKADEES - Paridae**Coal Tit***Parus ater*

Fairly common in coniferous forest in the Pyrenees.

European Crested Tit*Lophophanes cristatus*

2 seen well at El Renegado.

Marsh Tit*Poecile palustris*

1 seen in the upper Anso valley.

Eurasian Blue Tit*Cyanistes caeruleus*

Common.

Great Tit*Parus major*

Common.

PENDULINE-TITS - Remizidae**Eurasian Penduline Tit***Remiz pendulinus*

Despite watching a recently built nest we only got flight glimpses for a few on the main tour. Those on the extension had great views of a male singing from an exposed reed.

BEARDED REEDLING - *Panuridae*

Bearded Reedling

Panurus biarmicus

Great looks at a male at Sariñena lake with a few others seen distantly at other sites.

LARKS - *Alaudidae*

Woodlark

Lullula arborea

A few seen near Lecina.

Eurasian Skylark

Alauda arvensis

Common in montane highlands of Gredos and Pyrennes.

Thekla's Lark

Galerida theklae

Fairly common on rocky hillsides and adjacent areas.

Crested Lark

Galerida cristata

Common.

Greater Short-toed Lark

Calandrella brachydactyla

Common.

Calandra Lark

Melanocorypha calandra

Common.

Dupont's Lark

Chersophilus duponti

Great looks at 2 in the Belchite steppes and then scope views of a singing birds the next morning at El Planerón reserve.

Lesser Short-toed Lark

Alauda refescens

A few at the Bonanza Salt Pans on the extension and then good views at several in the Ebro valley steppes.

BULBULS - *Pycnonotidae*

Common Bulbul

Pycnonotus barbatus

EXT: 1 of the 2 birds known in Europe was seen well in Tarifa.

SWALLOWS - *Hirundinidae*

Sand Martin

Riparia riparia

Fairly common in the Ebro and Cinca river valleys.

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

Common.

Eurasian Crag Martin

Ptyonoprogne rupestris

Common around crags, castles and cathedrals.

Common House Martin

Delichon urbicum

Common.

Red-rumped Swallow

Cecropis daurica

Fairly common in Extremadura and on the extension.

CETTIA BUSH WARBLERS AND ALLIES - *Cettiidae*

Cetti's Warbler

Cettia cetti

Common in wetland and riverine scrub and even occasionally away from water. Mostly heard but several good sightings.

LONG-TAILED TITS - Aegithalidae

Long-tailed Tit

Aegithalos caudatus

2 family groups seen well in the Sierra de Guara.

LEAF WARBLERS AND ALLIES - Phylloscopidae

Willow Warbler

Phylloscopus trochilus

About 30 migrants in the Ebro Delta.

Common Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita

A few migrants and singing birds seen and heard.

Iberian Chiffchaff : G

Phylloscopus ibericus

EXT: Good looks at a singing bird in Los Alcornocales Park.

Western Bonelli's Warbler

Phylloscopus bonelli

Fairly common in oak woodlands with several seen well.

REED WARBLERS AND ALLIES - Acrocephalidae

Great Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus arundinaceus

Fairly common.

Moustached Warbler

Acrocephalus melanopogon

Several heard and finally great looks at a singing bird at Prat de Cabanes.

Eurasian Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Common in reedbeds in the north.

African Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus baeticatus

It is assumed that the Reed Warblers seen in Extremadura are this species. See Taxonomic note.

Melodious Warbler

Hippolais polyglotta

Fairly common, with many good sightings.

GRASSBIRDS AND ALLIES - Locustellidae

Savi's Warbler

Locustella luscinioides

2 heard and seen, with scope views, in the Ebro delta.

CISTICOLAS AND ALLIES - Cisticolidae

Zitting Cisticola

Cisticola juncidis

Common.

SYLVIID BABBLERS - Sylviidae

Eurasian Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Fairly common in broad-leaved woodland.

Garden Warbler

Sylvia borin

3 seen in the Pyrenees.

Western Orphean Warbler

Sylvia hortensis

A few seen well near Lecina and elsewhere in the Sierra de Guara.

Common Whitethroat

Sylvia communis

A few seen well in the Sierra de Gredos, others seen on the extension.

Dartford Warbler - NT *Sylvia undata*

4 seen very well in windy conditions above St. Eulalia.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*

Great looks at a pair feeding 2 juveniles.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Several seen on 5 days with good looks at a few.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

Common.

KINGLETS - Regulidae

Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

A few sightings with good looks in the Pyrenees and at Lecina and in the Alconocales park on the extension.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

1 above Garbadito in the Pyrenees.

WRENS - Troglodytidae

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Fairly common by voice, a few heard.

NUTHATCHES - Sittidae

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Several heard and seen.

WALLCREEPER - Tichodromidae

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

Multiple views of 2 birds above Garbadito, including scope views on the lower cliffs, singing birds and display flights.

TREECREEPERS - Certhiidae

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

1 above Garbadito in the Pyrenees.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*

A few seen, good looks at El renegado.

STARLINGS - Sturnidae

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

A few in the Ebro Delta.

Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor*

Common.

THRUSHES AND ALLIES - Turdidae

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

Several in Spain and France in the upper Roncal valley. Subspecies *alpestris*.

Common Blackbird*Turdus merula*

Common.

Song Thrush*Turdus philomelos*

Several heard and a couple seen in the Pyrenees.

Mistle Thrush*Turdus viscivorus*

Fairly common.

CHATS, OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS - Muscicapidae**Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin***Cercotrichas galactotes*

Heard and glimpsed at Montehermoso.

Spotted Flycatcher*Muscicapa striata*

Fairly common.

Mediterranean Flycatcher*Muscicapa tyrrhenica*

1 in coastal scrub at the Ebro delta.

European Robin*Erithacus rubecula*

Common in the north and a few on the extension.

Bluethroat*Luscinia svecica*

1 male seen singing in the Gredos at Peña Negra.

Common Nightingale*Luscinia megarhynchos*

Common by voice and a few seen well.

European Pied Flycatcher*Ficedula hypoleuca*

3 seen on the coast of the Ebro delta.

Black Redstart*Phoenicurus ochruros*

Common.

Common Redstart*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

4 females on the coast of the Ebro delta and 1 male by the road in the high Pyrenees.

Common Rock Thrush*Monticola saxatilis*

2 seen in the high Pyrenees, including nice scope views of a singing male.

Blue Rock Thrush*Monticola solitarius*

Several seen at various sites.

Whinchat*Saxicola rubetra*

A singing male seen very well above Formigal.

European Stonechat*Saxicola rubicola*

Common.

Northern Wheatear*Oenanthe oenanthe*

Common in Alpine areas of the Pyrenees and Gredos.

Black-eared Wheatear*Oenanthe hispanica*

9 seen including nice scope looks on a couple of occasions.

Black Wheatear*Oenanthe leucura*

4 seen well but distantly.

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

3 seen in the Hecho and Roncal valleys with great looks at one bathing.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS - Passeridae**House Sparrow***Passer domesticus*

Common.

Spanish Sparrow*Passer hispaniolensis*

7 seen in the Extremadura steppes.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow*Passer montanus*

Seen at several places.

Rock Sparrow*Petronia petronia*

Seen at several places.

White-winged Snowfinch*Montifringilla nivalis*

1 leader-only by Rob and 1 possible in flight by Chris.

Black-headed Weaver*Ploceus melanocephalus*

EXT: Several seen Brazo del Este.

Yellow-crowned Bishop*Euplectes afer*

EXT: 2 seen Brazo del Este.

WAXBILLS, MUNIAS AND ALLIES - Estrildidae**Common Waxbill - I***Estrilda astrild*

Chris saw 1 at Montehermoso.

ACCENTORS - Prunellidae**Alpine Accentor***Prunella collaris*

4 birds seen in France at Piedra de San Martin.

Dunnock*Prunella modularis*

Fairly common in alpine habitats in Gredos and the Pyrenees.

WAGTAILS, PIPITS - Motacillidae**Western Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla flava*

Common.

Grey Wagtail*Motacilla cinerea*

Several seen in the Hecho and Also valleys.

White Wagtail*Motacilla alba*

Common.

Tawny Pipit*Anthus campestris*

Fairly common in suitable habitat.

Tree Pipit*Anthus trivialis*

Good looks at 1 singing in the pine forest of the Hecho valley.

Red-throated Pipit*Anthus cervinus*

1 flyover in the Ebro delta.

Water Pipit*Anthus spinoletta*

Common in alpine habitats of the Pyrenees.

FINCHES - Fringillidae**Common Chaffinch***Fringilla coelebs*

Common.

Hawfinch

Coccothraustes coccothraustes

2 seen briefly at Navahonda and a flyover in Monfragüe.

Eurasian Bullfinch

Pyrrhula pyrrhula

A few in the upper Hecho valley with good views of males.

Trumpeter Finch

Bucanetes githagineus

EXT: 1 adult male seen Brazo del Este.

European Greenfinch

Chloris chloris

Common.

Common Linnet

Linaria cannabina

Common.

Red Crossbill

Loxia curvirostra

4 flew over at El Renegado and 2 at Garbadito refuge.

European Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis

Common.

Citril Finch

Carduelis citrinella

Good views of several in the high Pyrenees.

European Serin

Serinus serinus

Common.

BUNTINGS, NEW WORLD SPARROWS AND ALLIES - Emberizidae

Corn Bunting

Emberiza calandra

Common.

Yellowhammer

Emberiza citrinella

Fairly common at higher altitudes in the Pyrenees.

Rock Bunting

Emberiza cia

3 seen.

Ortolan Bunting

Emberiza hortulana

A bit of a struggle at first but eventually great looks for all at a few birds in the Sierra de Guara.

Cirl Bunting

Emberiza cirlus

Fairly common with several good sightings.

Common Reed Bunting

Emberiza schoeniclus

1 male of the local subspecies *witherbyi* seen well in the Ebro Delta.

*** Taxonomic note of African and Eurasian Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus***

Recently (2017) IOC accepted recommendations of a genetic study that reed warblers in Morocco and central and southern Spain are actually attributable to African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus* as part of a subspecies *ambiguus* - though some have suggested that it may actually deserve species rank as Ambiguous Reed Warbler. In northern Spain, this taxon is apparently sympatric with Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* which is then the default species further north. The authors of the genetic study actually propose that all 8 clades be treated as part of the polytypic species *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and this is followed by HBW/Birdlife, but IOC has retained both Eurasian and African Reed Warblers at species level. Clements/Cornell/eBird have yet to rise to the challenge these findings present.

Field characters are not well-defined yet, but Eurasian Reed Warbler is supposed to have longer primaries. Last year, I (Rob) watched a bird well at Laguna Sariñena and noted the primary lengths to be similar to what I am familiar with in the UK, so I am assuming that this and other birds there are attributable to Eurasian; whilst those in Extremadura and La Mancha (and Andalusia for those on the extension) should, according to the study, all be African Reed Warblers.

Mammals

RABBITS, HARES - Leporidae

European Hare

Lepus europaeus

1 seen near Lecina.

Granada Hare - NE

Lepus granatensis

3 seen.

European Rabbit

Oryctolagus cuniculus

Common.

SHREWS - Soricidae

Greater White-toothed Shrew

Crocidura russula

1 heard.

HAMSTERS, NEW WORLD RATS AND MICE, VOLES - Cricetidae

European Snow Vole

Chionomys nivalis

1 seen in the high Pyrenees.

Water Vole

1 seen at Prat de Cabanes.

SQUIRRELS - Sciuridae

Alpine Marmot

Marmota marmota

Fairly common in the high Pyrenees.

Eurasian Red Squirrel

Sciurus vulgaris

2 seen.

MONGOOSES - Herpestidae

Egyptian Mongoose

Herpestes ichneumon

EXT: Good looks at 1 in Alcornocales park.

WOLVES, COYOTE, FOXES, JACKALS - Canidae

Red Fox

Vulpes vulpes

9 seen.

PIGS - Suidae

Wild Boar

Sus scrofa

OCEANIC DOLPHINS - Delphinidae

Long-finned Pilot Whale : G

Globicephala melas

EXT: About 40 seen on the Tarifa boat trip.

Common Bottlenose Dolphin : G

Tursiops truncatus

EXT: 12+ on the Tarifa boat trip.

DEER - Cervidae

European Roe Deer

Capreolus capreolus

2 seen and several heard.

Red Deer

Cervus elaphus

4 seen.

Fallow Deer

Dama dama

1 seen.

CATTLE, ANTELOPES, SHEEP, GOATS - Bovidae

Iberian Wild Goat

Capra pyrenaica

1 old female seen.

Pyrenean Chamois

Rupicapra pyrenaica

Common in the high Pyrenees.

BATS

Greater Mouse-eared Myotis

Myotis myotis

1 recorded. Identified with the bat detector.

Savi's Pipistrelle

Hypsugo savi

1 recorded. Identified with the bat detector.

Common Pipistrelle

Pipistrellus pipistrellus

Common. Identified with the bat detector.

Soprano Pipistrelle

Pipistrellus pygmaeus

Common. Identified with the bat detector.

Nathusius's Pipistrelle

Pipistrellus nathusii

Fairly common. Identified with the bat detector.

Kuhl's Pipistrelle

Pipistrellus kuhlii

Fairly common. Identified with the bat detector.

Giant Noctule

Nyctalus lasiopterus

Fairly common. Identified with the bat detector.

Noctule

Nyctalus noctula

Fairly common. Identified with the bat detector.

Serotine

Eptesicus serotinus

1 recorded. Identified with the bat detector.

Mediterranean Horseshoe Bat

Eptesicus isabellinus

2 recorded. Identified with the bat detector.

Grey-long Eared Bat

Plecotus austriacus

2 recorded. Identified with the bat detector.

Reptiles

EMYDIDAE - Emydidae

European Pond Terrapin

Emys orbicularis

A few seen at scattered locations.

Pond Slider

Trachemys scripta elegans

1 recorded. Introduced.

ASIAN RIVER TURTLES, LEAF AND ROOFED TURTLES, ASIAN BOX TURTLES - Geoemydidae

Spanish Terrapin

Mauremys leprosa

Fairly common

LEAF-TOED GECKOS - Phyllodactylidae

Moorish Gecko

Tarentola mauritanica

Fairly common. Seen at 4 sites.

TRUE LIZARDS - Lacertidae

Spiny-footed Lizard

Acanthodactylus erythrurus

1 seen at Marjal de Moros.

Large Psammmodromus

Psammmodromus algirus

Fairly common.

Edwards Psammmodromus - NE

Psammmodromus edwardsianus

1 seen.

Ocellated Lizard

Timon lepidus

Fairly common.

Vaucher's Wall Lizard

Podarcis vaucheri

EXT: 1 on a tree in the Alcornocales Park.

Pyrenean Rock Lizard - NE

Iberolacerta bonnali

Common in the high Pyrenees.

COLUBRID SNAKES - Colubridae

Smooth Snake

Coronella austriaca

1 very small one found on the road in Sierra de Gredos.

Amphibians

TRUE TOADS - Bufonidae

Mediterranean toad

Bufo spinosus

One seen.

Natterjack Toad

Epidalea calamita

One on the road near Monfragüe hotel.

SPADE-FOOT TOADS - Pelobatidae

Western Spadefoot Toad

Pelobates cultripes

1 daily by the hotel pool in Monfragüe.

TRUE FROGS - Ranidae

Stripeless Tree frog

Hyla meridionalis

4 seen sleeping in pipes on a bridge buttress.

Common Frog

Rana temporaria

1 by a water trough in the Hecho valley.

Iberian Water Frog

Pelophylax perezi

Common by voice a few seen.

TRUE SALAMANDERS - Salamandridae

Spanish Ribbed Newt

Pleurodeles waltl

Up to 11 daily in the hotel pool in Monfragüe.

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