

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Extremadura

11-18 March 2000

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Holiday participants

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Brian Hall

Sue Burge
Peter Burge

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Bill Caldwell
Bobbie Caldwell

Paddy Trenow

Michael Jeeves

Mary Seal Coon
Pam Muirhead

Geoff Calway
Ann Calway

Fabian Williams
Lesley Williams

Leaders

John Muddeman
Rob Macklin

Madrid
Suffolk coast

Also staying at Finca Santa Marta (the 'honorary' Honeyguiders)

Rosemary and Michael Bonney
Ruth and Andrew Lapworth

Daily log by Rob Macklin, species notes by John Muddeman.
Illustrations by Rob Hume. Front cover: white storks at Trujillo

As with all Honeyguide holidays, £25 of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for La Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO), the Spanish Ornithological Society, and its work in Extremadura. During the holiday, Carlota Viada Sauleda of SEO's Madrid office came to Finca Santa Marta to collect £475 from this year's holiday in Extremadura, including a contribution from the honorary Honeyguiders (£25 per person).

This brings the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £5,875, and the total from all Honeyguide holidays to £20,180. A thank-you letter from Carlota appears at the end of this report.

Extremadura 11-18 March 2000

Saturday 11 March 11 - Travel from Heathrow/ Embalse Arrocampo Almaraz

A forty minute delay at the airport was irritating but we were soon on our way with British Airways to Madrid. Unfortunately BA managed to lose a case belonging to Geoff and Ann which caused more delays at the Madrid end. We then met up with John Muddeman and took the motorway to Trujillo. Our first stop was for coffee at the Hotel David where Swallows were nesting and Corn Buntings singing in the fields beyond. The drive down was fairly uneventful although John spotted six Pin-tailed Sandgrouse flying across the road and three Cattle Egrets were also seen.

As the light began to fade we arrived at the Embalse Arrocampo Almaraz for a swift bit of bird watching. This proved to be very productive with Savi's and Cetti's Warbler singing from the reeds, several Purple Gallinules climbing about on sedge tussocks, a couple of Water Rails calling and three Little Egrets perched up in trees in the distance. Up to 200 Jackdaws and 30 Magpies were roosting in the reeds which certainly doesn't happen in the UK.

We arrived at Finca Santa Marta after dark to be greeted by Henri the owner who served us pre-dinner drinks and gave us an introduction to the hotel. The Finca consists of two converted farmhouses set in 30 acres of cherry, almond and olive orchards with White Storks nesting on the roof. After a splendid dinner we retired to bed to the sound of Scops Owls calling and looking forward to the following day.

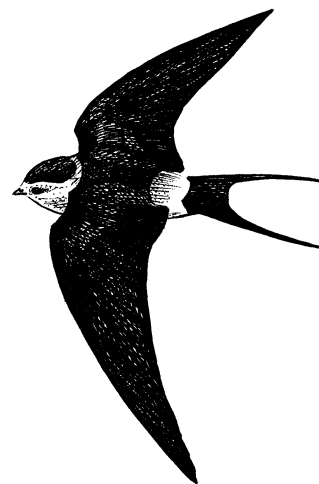
Sunday 12 March - Belén Plain

Several of the group joined the leaders on a pre-breakfast walk around the grounds of the hotel in sunny conditions with a light breeze. Several White Stork nests surrounded the Santa Marta and some of the birds were bill-clapping. A small group of Azure-winged Magpies flew across in front of us, some of the forty or so that inhabit this area, at least three Hoopoes were heard and two Woodlarks sang right above our heads. A Raven and a Sparrowhawk flew over, a Quail called from the undergrowth, Rock and Tree Sparrow called and two Red Kites flew over. Not a bad start to the day!

After negotiating the narrow streets of Belén village we were on the edge of the Belén plain which stretched out into the distance. Our first stop gave us good views of Southern Grey Shrikes, Red & Black Kites, a passing Short-toed Eagle and several Hoopoes. Closer examination of the local kestrels revealed them to be Lesser Kestrels, a speciality of the area which were to be found across the whole area. Corn Buntings sang from everywhere and this background song was to be with the group for the whole week. Moving on across the area we halted the buses to scan the open plain; three Little Bustards were soon located in the fields although at some considerable distance. Vultures then drifted over our heads and we were able to see in detail the differences between Griffons and the much rarer Black Vultures. At least 15 Red Kites were soaring amongst the vultures and Lesser Kestrels, a spectacular sight! Our first Spanish Sparrow was perched up in full view on a stone wall.

Stopping by a meandering stream we noticed a pair of Red-rumped Swallows beginning to nest under the bridge and Sue spotted a Kingfisher perched in the bushes alongside the water. As we continued our drive 15 Great Bustards flew across the road and settled on a nearby ridge to join at least ten others. We all disembarked from the bus and had great views of these majestic birds through the telescopes. Then it all started to happen.... John noticed an immature Golden Eagle perched up on farm buildings, 100 Little Bustards flew over the eagle and 25 more Great Bustards flew in; unbelievable!!!

Our lunch stop overlooked a small lake with several White Stork nests dotted around the edge. A pair of Pochards and two Little Grebes were seen on the lake, Calandra larks were singing in the nearby fields and a superbly marked male Montagu's Harrier drifted past giving us all a great view! A pair of Red-rumped Swallows were nesting under the culvert by the road and our butterfly tally got off to a good start with Spanish Festoon and Clouded Yellow.



The afternoon continued in the same vein with a large flock of larks turning out to be over a hundred Calandra larks. Stone-curlews were calling from the roadside fields and we managed to locate them and get good views through the telescopes; they were then joined in the area by four Great Spotted Cuckoos! Two Egyptian vultures and two Ravens then flew past before John spotted an immature Spanish Imperial Eagle being mobbed by two Red Kites. A female Hen Harrier was quartering the hillside before our attention was caught by a Merlin which screamed low across the plain scattering flocks of Starlings in its wake. What an incredible day on the Belén plain with an amazing array of spectacular species seen!

On the way home we decided to have a look at the disused fishponds by the bullring in Trujillo. The ponds were almost totally covered in water-crowfoot which did not appear to bother a fishing Little Egret although waders were conspicuous by their absence. A couple of Water Pipits were feeding on a small pond by the main area. We then drove back to the Finca Santa Marta where two Great Spotted Cuckoos were spotted in the trees by the entrance.

Monday 13 March - Monfragüe

The day dawned fine and clear for our visit to one of Spain's finest natural parks at Monfragüe. Initial excitement was caused by a Black-shouldered Kite perched up on a telegraph pole along the roadside although it flew off almost immediately. The road out of Trujillo was undergoing major reconstruction with the dust getting in everyone's eyes. However we soon got through that and stopped at a bridge overlooking the Río Tozo where at least three Woodchat Shrikes were showing off their bright orange caps in the sunshine. A Green Woodpecker called from the *dehesas*, two Herons were on the river and some of the group were fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of a Kingfisher.

We then drove on to Monfragüe and climbed up the steps to the Castillo which afforded a magnificent view across the natural park. There was absolutely no wind so birdwatching from here was an absolute pleasure. At least 80 Griffon Vultures were soaring over Peña Falcon with the occasional Black Vulture, two Egyptian Vultures and a high soaring Peregrine Falcon. Two Choughs were displaying over the castle and mobbing the occasional passing Raven. Several Red-rumped Swallows were in the air and careful scrutiny of the surrounding trees revealed at least eight Hawfinches which are always difficult to see well. One male Blue Rock Thrush sang from a rocky outcrop, two Rock Buntings were found on the rocks below the castle and two Short-toed Treecreepers were seen carrying nesting material.

A short drive from the castle is the parking area overlooking the embalse and the rocks of Peña Falcon. Four Black Storks were seen here including one bird which was calling loudly from its traditional nest site in the rocks and we had a superb view of a male Blue Rock Thrush on an outcrop of rock. The water below turned up 11 Cormorants and two Great Crested Grebes while a Grey Wagtail was much easier heard than seen. Both Swallowtail and Scarce Swallowtail were seen briefly here but much excitement was generated by two Nettle-tree butterflies at close quarters, a new species for both leaders! We then headed off for a coffee stop at Villarreal de San Carlos where an Egyptian Vulture was soaring overhead. It was also gratifying to see bulldozers finally clearing out areas of eucalyptus from the natural park.

Our lunch spot overlooked the Río Tajo at the Embalse de Torrejon where a pair of Egyptian Vultures gave us excellent views, particularly in the telescope. Another Black Stork was seen here and a Black Kite was seen carrying a small fish in the air. An unexpected find was six Siskins in the trees here and a Golden Eagle flew swiftly over. After lunch we moved on to the viewpoint at La Bascula where Imperial Eagles have bred. There was no sign of these special raptors but we were very fortunate to get good views of several Hawfinches - much to Bill's delight! A Subalpine Warbler was singing softly in the scrub but only Lesley was fortunate enough to actually see it. A distant Short-toed Eagle passed by and a Painted Lady was yet another butterfly for the list.

Our last stop of the day was at the Tiétar Cliffs where two Black Storks were on cue at their nest across the embalse, one of them calling very loudly. Another two Black Storks then appeared soaring over the cliffs, followed by two Short-toed Eagles and another immature Golden Eagle although the latter bird was very high. Another amazing day!!

Tuesday 14 March - Santa Marta de Magasca & Embalse de Guadiloba

Another very warm and sunny glorious day for our exploration towards Cáceres which we began with a male Bullfinch at the Finca followed by several Pallid Swifts in Trujillo. We then took the road to the village of Santa Marta de Magasca with steppe and arable fields on both sides of the road. Our first roadside stop allowed us to see over 100 Little Bustards and both Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse although both species were a long way off and difficult to see well. These fields also held five Golden Plovers, a Great Spotted Cuckoo and several Hoopoes. Our next stop was at a known Montagu's Harrier colony and we were astounded to count 12 birds here including 10 superb males. John pointed out that as the birds breed in the crops they are in danger of losing their young when the fields are cut; fortunately local conservationists come out to advise the farmers on where to cut thereby missing the nests.

Driving on along the road we saw Black Stork circling, had excellent close-up views of Black Vulture and were surprised to see an early Black-eared Wheatear on phone wires.

We reached our main destination at the Embalse de Guadiloba just before lunch and found a shady spot overlooking a stream to enjoy our picnics. The embalse itself was relatively unexciting with just 10 Great-crested Grebes, several Cormorants, two Gadwall and two immature Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The area of reeds, scrub and reedmace alongside and in the stream turned up a few surprises with singing Sedge and Cetti's Warbler plus calling Water Rail among the highlights. Two Great Spotted Cuckoos shrieked harshly as they flew over, a Snipe was flushed from cover and a pair of Little Ringed Plovers flew in. While we were enjoying our lunch a Pallid Swift flew over and a Kingfisher flashed across the open water at the head of the stream. Another butterfly species was added to the total with the positive identification of Green-underside Blue while Fabian found another stunning Scarce Swallowtail. John went off scouring the undergrowth and came back with a small specimen of a Praying Mantis which many of us had never seen before.

After lunch we decided to walk into the surrounding steppes and as we passed through scrubby woodland we found a very early Meadow Brown butterfly followed by a stunning Provence Hairstreak with bright green underwings. Out on the open steppe we were able to see across the embalse and two Greenshanks flew quickly across to the other side and out of view. John then turned over a few rocks and, lo and behold, found a sizeable Scorpion - another first for most of the group! A pale phase Booted Eagle then flew over giving us all good views and was then mobbed by a Swift. As we scanned across the steppes we picked up a group of 19 Great Bustards and it was now that Brian thought they were somewhat boring!! I would have to agree that they don't actually do a lot but still pretty amazing birds. Another seven Bustards then flew up in front of us and were able to get good views of these from the top of the hill. A Little Egret flew over and a Tawny Pipit called briefly before quickly disappearing from view.

Feeling hot and tired we began the long walk back to the buses, picking up a small flock of six Spanish Sparrows on the way, a Black Redstart on the dam, a territory holding pair of Little Ringed Plovers on the edge of the embalse and a very distant Black-winged Stilt on the other side of the reservoir. Tired but satisfied we made our way back home.

Wednesday 15 March - The road to Monroy and the Río Almonte

Yet another warm and sunny day and a pre-breakfast walk in the orchards and fields around Finca Santa Marta. As seems to be the tradition here we were accompanied by three dogs and two cats who led the way! A chilly wind was keeping birds quiet although a Woodlark was singing at the top of the hill and at least three Song Thrushes were located in the orchard. The local group of Azure-winged Magpies were very obvious showing off their bright colours and five Cattle Egrets flew lazily over towards their feeding areas.

After breakfast we again headed through the roadworks outside Trujillo but mercifully turned off in a short while for the road to Monroy. The usual farm stop failed to produce the huge flock of Spanish Sparrows and just a lone Green Sandpiper was on the edge of the livestock pond. We then pulled up at an abandoned farmhouse where at least 1000 Spanish Sparrows were found in the fields and in the scrub. White Storks were nesting around the farm buildings, a Cetti's Warbler sang from deep cover and a Lapwing flew by in the distance; Bobbie picked up a Fan-tailed Warbler here. A dead Iberian

Hare on the road had attracted the attentions of several Buzzards and Black Kites and they seemed only mildly put out as we drove past!

We then spent the rest of the morning driving slowly along this long and, sometimes, barren stretch of road checking the roadside fields. One field yielded four Pin-tailed Sandgrouse and two Little Bustards with another four Little Bustards found further on. Two Great-spotted Cuckoos were having a hard time from three Magpies, several Southern Grey Shrikes were found on roadside wires and a small pond turned up five Lapwings and a Little-ringed Plover. Calandra Larks were common in this area but a solitary Skylark was a good find. The first bus picked up a Wheatear and all of us saw two Red-legged Partridges scurrying for cover. A Short-toed Eagle over the buses gave us all superb views and two Woodchat Shrikes wound up the morning's entertainment.

Our lunch spot was overlooking the Río Almonte just south of Monroy which turned out to be an inspired choice. A Black Stork was soaring amongst many Griffons and a pair of Egyptian Vultures before an eagle came drifting over and was identified as a Bonelli's Eagle, one of the most difficult birds to track down in Extremadura! Ravens were rolling in the air, both Grey and White Wagtails were along the river, Crag Martins were breeding under the bridge and a pair of Stonechats showed well. A welcome coffee stop in Monroy also produced a Short-toed Eagle drifting over which was well identified by Michael.

We then moved on to a "Black-shouldered Kite spot" to the north of Monroy and, would you believe it, right on cue one of these amazing delicate raptors flew up and perched on electricity wires! We soon got the telescopes on it and the whole group saw it really well. It then flew around for a while perching up in the odd tree. What a sight! Just before this a male Fan-tailed Warbler performed his song flight right in front of us and was joined by a female. We then crossed the road and almost immediately had a male Montagu's Harrier flying over followed by a dark phase Booted Eagle - raptors wherever you looked! The parking area here was right next to a White Stork colony which got the cameras clicking and the birds bill-clapping. A brilliant day and very successful.

Thursday 16 March - Trujillo and the Embalse de Tozo

A more cultural feel to the morning with a visit to Trujillo to explore the town. On the way we stopped off at the fishponds where at least 20 Water Pipits had arrived along with two Common Sandpipers, one Snipe and three Hoopoes. Three Sand Martins were also hunting over the open water.

Trujillo itself proved to be very interesting with a superb all-round view from the castle walls. Large numbers of Jackdaws and Lesser Kestrels were flying around the castle and Pallid Swifts were nesting in some of the very old buildings. The group then re-assembled at the buses and we popped down the road for a look at a small reservoir on the edge of the town. This was very rewarding with excellent views of seven Black-winged Stilts, five Green Sandpipers, two Common Sandpipers and five Cattle Egrets. Four Little Grebes were also found. As we were looking at these birds a Large Tortoiseshell butterfly flew right over our heads and out across the reservoir.

Henri had told us of an interesting lake near the village of Torrecillas de la Tiesa so we decided to visit this area in the afternoon. We parked the buses just off the road and walked along the river bank looking for a suitable lunch spot. We soon came across several dead sheep in a field with about 30 Griffons circling and a couple actually on the ground. Several Black Kites and Buzzards were also looking very interested and at least 12 Ravens were also found here. The meadows alongside the river turned up some interesting flowers including hoop petticoat daffodil and Barbary Nut and we also found a small pile of sweet-smelling Otter spraint.

The Embalse itself was a revelation being full of wildfowl and waders. Wildfowl included 42 Shovelers, lots of Gadwall, three Wigeon, six Teal and four Pochard while the waders included four Black-winged Stilts, one Spotted Redshank and up to three Redshanks. Six Black-headed Gulls were another addition to the species list!

We then made our way back to the Finca across the Belén Plain picking up a Wheatear just outside Torrecillas and good views of a Little Owl near Belén village. Peter's sharp eyes then detected nine Great Bustards moving slowly along a ridge and allowing our bus to get unrivalled views. The day was completed by a Blue Rock Thrush singing from the roof of the Finca in early evening before we all

headed off into Trujillo for a meal in one of the many restaurants in the town square - very good it was too, although John was right, the Mijas does lay heavy on you!

Friday 17 March - Monfragüe, Torrejon

After waking up to probably the hottest day of the week we decided to have another crack at the eagle site near Torrejon. The nest site is in the top of an electricity pylon in the middle of the *dehesas* and we were able to get within a mile or so of the site; any nearer would have caused disturbance to the birds. As we arrived we saw a large raptor circling the site and immediately confirmed this as a full adult Spanish Imperial Eagle - what a start to our last day in the field! A Short-toed Eagle then flew by, a Black Stork circled over the area and singing birds included Woodlark and our first Willow Warbler.

Our next stop was at the Castillo Monfragüe where several eagle-eyed members of the group managed to get views of a Firecrest in the scrub. We also had good views of Rock Bunting, Black Redstart and several singing Blue-Rock Thrushes. Four Choughs were buzzing the castle with one carrying nesting material, two Egyptian Vultures soared over Peña Falcon and several Hawfinches flitted through the trees.

We then moved on towards our lunch stop which was overlooking the Río Tajo; as we arrived up to a hundred hirundines were feeding over the waters and closer inspection revealed at least 10 Alpine Swifts with them. Soon after this a second-year Golden Eagle drifted over and Bill and I saw the only Cleopatra butterfly of the trip. We moved on along the river and Bill spotted a rock which turned out to be a Black Wheatear, a very difficult bird to find. We managed to approach with caution and get the telescopes up so everyone had good views. While this was going on a male Subalpine Warbler landed in a bush right by the group and began to sing.

After our customary coffee-stop in Villareal de San Carlos we decided to have a final look at the Tiétar cliffs. On the way we stopped near the dam to investigate the pines here for possible Crested Tits. We were not to be disappointed and up to three birds were found although most of the group enjoyed better views of a male Great Spotted Woodpecker. Several very late Siskins were also found here. As we pulled up in the buses at the cliffs John saw a large bird wing-flap on the lower part of the cliffs. We quickly got the telescopes out and were absolutely astounded to find a superb Eagle Owl perched up. To get such a nocturnal bird in the middle of the afternoon was just amazing and provided a fitting climax to an excellent trip.

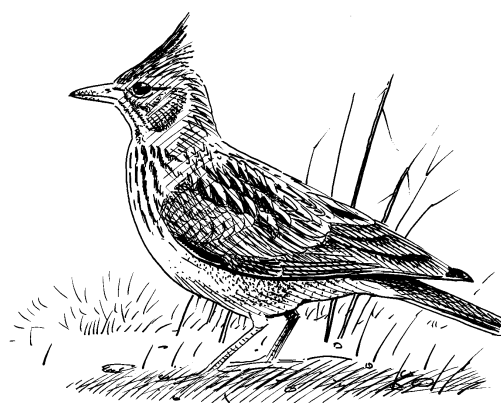
Time to move on and the long drive back to Trujillo for the customary stop at the supermarket and presents for home. As we were about to leave the supermarket Julia spotted a bright butterfly which turned out to be a Southern Speckled Wood bringing the trip total to 24 species.

Epilogue

Many thanks to my co-leader John Muddeman for his enthusiasm and knowledge and to all of the group for making the trip a resounding success. The bird species list of 134 was one of the best ever for March or April while the butterfly total of 24 species reflected the hot conditions.

Soon after we arrived back in the UK the weather conditions in Extremadura changed dramatically with temperatures dropping to 10 Celsius and fronts piling in off the Atlantic. I think we timed it just right!

Rob Macklin
April 2000



Extremadura bird list 2000:

This is the combined list for the whole group. H = heard only; Emb. = Embalse (reservoir); FSM = Finca Santa Marta. Common names per Collins Bird Guide.

- Little Grebe:** Noted on 4 days with small numbers on ponds in widely scattered locations, but 4 on Trujillo fishpond on 12th and 16th.
- Great Crested Grebe:** Seen on 3 days: 2 at Monfragüe on 13th, 6 on Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th and 4 on Emb. del Tozo on 16th.
- [Great] Cormorant:** Seen on 5 days, with maxima of 20+ at Monfragüe on 13th, and 10+ there on 17th. Nice, adult, white-headed sinensis forms seen on several occasions.
- Cattle Egret:** Noted daily, mostly in small numbers by roadside N of Finca Santa Marta, but 5 gave excellent views by the small reservoir in Trujillo on 16th.
- Little Egret:** Only seen on 3 days: 3+ at the Emb. de Arroyocampo (Almaraz) on 11th, and singles at the Trujillo fishpond on 12th and Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th.
- Grey Heron:** Ones and twos on all days except 4 on 16th, being 2 at the Emb. del Tozo and 2 on the Belén Plain.
- Black Stork:** Seen on 4 days: with 9+ at Monfragüe on 13th and 4 there on 17th, and singles over the Río Magasca on 14th, and R. Almonte on 15th.
- White Stork:** Very common and seen daily with many nests on trees and buildings, including right in the centre of Trujillo. Bill-clapping heard throughout the night at FSM.
- [Eurasian] Wigeon:** 3 males at the Emb. del Tozo on 16th.
- Gadwall:** 6 at the Emb. del Guadiloba and 2 more nearby there on 14th, 10+ at the Emb. del Tozo on 16th.
- [Common] Teal:** 10+ at the Emb. del Tozo on 16th.
- Mallard:** Seen almost daily in small numbers, with a max. 15+ Emb. del Tozo on 16th.
- [Northern] Shoveler:** A remarkable 43 at the Emb. del Tozo on 16th.
- [Common] Pochard:** A pair on a pond on Belén Plain on 12th, and 6 at the Emb. del Tozo on 16th.
- Black-winged Kite:** Singles noted on 2 days: 1 seen all too briefly by the roadside north of FSM on 13th, and another much more obliging bird north of Monroy on 15th.
- Black Kite:** Seen commonly each day from 12th, and usually much commoner than Red Kite. Especially well seen at Monfragüe on 13th and near the Emb. del Tozo on 16th.
- Red Kite:** Noted regularly with moderate numbers each day, but a group of c. 25 on the Belén Plain on 12th unusual.
- Egyptian Vulture:** Noted on 5 days: 2 over Belén Plain on 12th, 8 at Monfragüe on 13th, 4 on 15th including 2 for a long period over the Río Almonte, and 2 by the big bridge at Monfragüe on 17th.
- [Eurasian] Griffon Vulture:** Daily from 12th, with a max. at least 200 on 13th at Monfragüe.
- [Eurasian] Black Vulture:** Noted each day from 12th, with some amazing views at the Belén Plain, Río Magasca and Monfragüe amongst others, with max. of at least 15 on 13th.
- Short-toed Eagle:** Seen on 5 days at widely scattered sites, though none really close: 1+ on 12th, 6+ during day on 13th, 3 on 14th, 4+ on 15th and 2 on 17th.
- Marsh Harrier:** Seen only on 1 day, 1 adult female on 14th near Santa Marta de Magasca.
- Hen Harrier:** One female on the Belén Plain on 12th.
- Montagu's Harrier:** Noted on 3 days, with single males on the Belén Plain (extremely close) on 12th, and north of Monroy on 15th, and on 14th, at least 8 males and 2 females displaying over wheat near Santa Marta de Magasca, and 2 males by the main road back from Cáceres toward Trujillo.
- [Eurasian] Sparrowhawk:** 1, probably a female, at FSM early morning on 12th.

Common Buzzard: Seen daily from 12th in small numbers, with max. 10 on 16th.

Spanish Imperial Eagle: One juvenile seen on Belén Plain on 12th, and an adult near a nest near Monfragüe on 17th.

Golden Eagle: Seen on 3 days with a juvenile over the Belén Plain on 12th, a juvenile and a sub-adult at Monfragüe on 13th and a sub-adult over Monfragüe on 17th.

Bonelli's Eagle: 1 sub-adult over Río Almonte on 15th.

Booted Eagle: Noted on 3 days with the first a pale phase individual over the Emb. de Guadiloba on 14th, and a dark-phase en route back from there, and single dark phase birds N of Monroy on 15th, and over Trujillo on 16th.

Lesser Kestrel: Commonly seen each day from 12th, usually in and around Trujillo, and with excellent views at the bull-ring.

[Common] Kestrel: Noted in ones and twos on 5 days, but overlooked among the Lessers!.

Merlin: A male hunting over the Belén Plain on 12th rounded-off a superb day there.

Peregrine Falcon: Seen on just 13th: singles over Peñafalcón and Portillo del Tiétar, Monfragüe.

Red-legged Partridge: 2 pairs noted on just two days, near Santa Marta de Magasca on 14th and on the road to Monroy on 15th.

[Common] Quail: Just one calling early morning on 12th at FSM.

Water Rail: Surprisingly, actually noted on 2 days!: squealing at the Emb. de Arroyocampo (Almaraz) on 11th, and 1 heard at lunch below the Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th.

[Common] Moorhen: Noted on 2 days: 2+ at the Emb. de Arroyocampo (Almaraz) on 11th, and 2+ below the Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th.

Purple Swamp-hen [=Gallinule]: 4+ seen briefly and several heard at the Emb. de Arroyocampo (Almaraz) on 11th.

[Eurasian] Coot: Up to 3+ noted on 3 days.

Little Bustard: Seen on 3 days, with 3+ on the ground & c. 100 in flight on Belén Plain on 12th, over 100 closeby on ground and c. 10 others in flight near Santa Marta de Magasca on 14th, and a total of 7 on 15th on the road to Monroy.

Great Bustard: Seen on 3 days, with a total of 50 on 12th, and 9 on 16th on the Belén Plain, and 28 on 14th near the Emb. del Guadiloba.

Black-winged Stilt: Noted on 2 days, with 1 very distant on 14th at the Emb. del Guadiloba, then on 16th, 7 close at the Emb. de Trujillo and 5 at the Emb. del Tozo.

Stone-curlew: Two pairs seen extremely well on the Belén plain on 12th.

Little Ringed Plover: Noted on 4 days with max. 5 at the Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th and 4 Emb. del Tozo on 15th.

[European] Golden Plover: 3 on fallow fields near Santa Marta de Magasca on 14th.

[Northern] Lapwing: 6 seen from the road to Monroy on 5th.

[Common] Snipe: Seen on 2 days, 1 below the Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th and c. 15 at the Emb. del Tozo on 15th.

Spotted Redshank: 1 in winter plumage at the Emb. del Tozo on 15th.

[Common] Redshank: 1 briefly at the Emb. del Tozo on 15th.

[Common] Greenshank: 2 at the Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th.

Green Sandpiper: Seen on 3 days with max. 10 on 16th, with 5+ at the Emb. de Trujillo and 5+ at the Emb. del Tozo.

Common Sandpiper: Noted on 2 days at the Trujillo fishponds: 1 on 12th and 2 on 16th.

Black-headed Gull: Just 6 at the Emb. del Tozo on 15th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Seen distantly on 3 days, max. 4 past FSM early morning on 16th.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse: Heard once on the Belén Plain on 12th, with 5 seen distantly near Santa Marta de Magasca on 14th.

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse: Apart from 6 going over the road on the way down to EX on 11th, min. 33 near Santa Marta de Magasca on 14th and 2 on the road to Monroy on 15th, sadly, all very distant.

Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon: Noted daily, all were Feral Pigeons of some type, though plenty of wild-type bird were present in the flocks in Monfragüe.

[Common] Wood Pigeon: Noted in just ones and twos on most days.

[Eurasian] Collared Dove: One noted on roadside wires N of Trujillo on 13th and 17th.

Great Spotted Cuckoo: Seen excellently on 5 days: max. 6 on the Belén Plain on 12th and a 9 on 14th, including at least two very noisy birds all lunch below the Emb. del Guadiloba.

[Eurasian] Scops Owl: Noted all nights around FSM, with max. 4 calling on 11th.

[Eurasian] Eagle Owl: An adult on rocks at the Portillo del Tiétar, Monfragüe on 17th.

Little Owl: Noted calling on several days round FSM, with just one seen at dusk near Almaraz on 11th and 1 on wall on the Belén Plain on 16th.

[Common] Swift: One mobbing a Booted Eagle on 14th, 4 on 15th and one on 16th.

Pallid Swift: Seen on 3 days in Trujillo: 1 on 12th, 20 on 14th and 10+ on 16th; 1 also near the Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th.

Alpine Swift: Min. 14 seen and heard near the big bridge at Monfragüe, on 17th.

[Common] Kingfisher: At least 3 singles on 12th, 13th and 14th along small streams.

[Eurasian] Hoopoe: Noted regularly each day.

[European] Green Woodpecker: Calling birds at FSM on 12th, 13th and 15th.

Great Spotted Woodpecker: One drumming FSM on 12th, one calling Monfragüe on 13th and 2 males there on 17th.

Calandra Lark: Noted on 3 days, with 100+ on Belén Plain on 12th, 2 near Santa Marta de Magasca on 14th and 50+ from the road to Monroy on 15th.

Crested Lark: Seen daily in variable numbers from 12th.

Thekla Lark: Noted in small number on 5 days: max. 5+ in and around Monfragüe on 13th.

Woodlark: Noted daily from 12th, with singing birds widespread in dehesa.

[Common] Skylark: Singles on the Belén Plain on 12th and near Monroy on 15th.

Sand Martin: Singles at the Belén Plain and Trujillo fishpond on 12th, and 100+ around the Emb. del Tozo on 15th.

[Eurasian] Crag Martin: Seen daily from 13th to 16th, with max. 20+ on 15th, especially by the bridge over the Río Almonte.

Barn Swallow: Noted daily, with lots at the nests at FSM.

Red-rumped Swallow: Seen daily from 12th, with large numbers in Monfragüe but also widespread in various towns and villages.

[Common] House Martin: Noted daily from 12th, especially around Trujillo.

Tawny Pipit: Just one seen briefly at Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th.

Meadow Pipit: Seen on 5 days with max. 30+ on Belén Plain on 12th.

Water Pipit: Seen only at the Trujillo fishpond: 2+ on 12th and 30+ on 16th.

Grey Wagtail: Singles noted only on 2 days by very few people, on 13th and 15th.

White Wagtail: Noted in small number most days, though 10+ by road to Monroy on 15th.

[Winter] Wren: Heard most days at FSM, with 1+ singing Monfragüe on 17th.

[European] Robin: Seen in small numbers from 12th, especially at Monfragüe.

Black Redstart: Ones or twos seen on 5 days, 2+ at Monfragüe on 13th and 17th.

Stonechat: Seen in small numbers almost daily.

[Northern] Wheatear: Noted most days, with max 35+ on 12th.

Black-eared Wheatear: One superb male on steppe near Santa Marta de Magasca on 14th.

Black Wheatear: One, probably a first-year male at Monfragüe on 17th.

Blue Rock Thrush: Noted on 3 days with various at Monfragüe, with at least 5 on 13th and 3 on 17th, and a singing male at FSM on 16th.

[Common] Blackbird: Noted daily in small numbers at FSM, Monfragüe, etc.

Song Thrush: 5 singles seen on 4 days.

Mistle Thrush: One singing at FSM on 12th, then 2 near Santa Marta de Magasca on 14th and 1 near Monfragüe on 17th.

Cetti's Warbler: Noted on 4 days with singing heard on 11th, 13th and 15th, with 3+ below the Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th.

Zitting Cisticola [=Fan-tailed Warbler]: Heard at Emb. de Arroyocampo on 11th, 2 heard on Belén Plain on 12th, and 2 seen well N of Monroy on 15th.

Savi's Warbler: 2+ singing at Emb. de Arroyocampo on 11th.

Sedge Warbler: One seen and heard singing below the Emb. del Guadiloba on 14th.

Subalpine Warbler: Seen only at Monfragüe: 2 on 13th and 1 very well on 17th.

Sardinian Warbler: Noted on 5 days, with max. 3+ on 12th and 15th around FSM.

Blackcap: Noted on 6 days, with 5+ on 15th and 3+ most dys at FSM.

Willow Warbler: Just one heard singing near Monfragüe on 17th.

[Common] Chiffchaff: Noted on just 2 days with 3+ at FSM on 12th and 3+ on 14th.

Firecrest: One finally showed itself at Monfragüe on 17th.

Long-tailed Tit: Small numbers seen on 5 days, especially around FSM.

Crested Tit: 3 seen by most at Monfragüe on 17th.

Blue Tit: Noted on 6 days; common at FSM.

Great Tit: Also noted on 6 days.

Short-toed Treecreeper: Seen on 5 days, with 3+ on 13th.

Southern Grey Shrike: Noted regularly each full day.

Woodchat Shrike: Seen in small numbers on 4 days, with max. 6+ on 13th between Trujillo and Monfragüe.

[Eurasian] Jay: 2 singles seen briefly on 13th, at FSM and Monfragüe.

Azure-winged Magpie: Seen on 6 days, with good numbers around FSM.

[Common] Magpie: Noted daily.

[Red-billed] Chough: Seen at Monfragüe, 2 on 13th and 5 on 17th.

[Western] Jackdaw: Noted each day, with a large roost at the Emb. de Arroyocampo on 11th.

[Common] Raven: Seen each day, with a max. 10+ on 15th between Trujillo and around Monroy, and 15+ on 16th around the Emb. del Tozo.

Spotless Starling: Seen well each day, especially around Trujillo, and also c. 500 near Madrid on 18th.

House Sparrow: Noted every day and common.

Spanish Sparrow: Seen on 4 days with 1000+ along road to Monroy on 15th.

[Eurasian] Tree Sparrow: 3+ heard at FSM on 12th.

Rock Sparrow: Heard, and seen poorly on 2 days, at FSM, 2+ on 12th and 3+ on 16th.

[Common] Chaffinch: Noted on 4 days, with max. 5+ on road to Monroy on 15th.

[European] Serin: Seen 6 days, especially around FSM and Trujillo.

[European] Greenfinch: Seen on 5 days, with ones and twos at FSM most days.

[European] Goldfinch: Noted each full day.

[Eurasian] Siskin: A small flock at Monfragüe of 6+ on 13th and 17th.

[Common] Linnet: Seen only on 5 days, with just 3+ on 15th.

Hawfinch: Noted on 3 days, with at Monfragüe 12+ on 13th and 10 on 17th, plus 3+ briefly over the Río Almonte on 15th.

Cirl Bunting: A pair at FSM on 12th, 16th and 17th, and 1 singing at the Río Almonte on 15th.

Rock Bunting: Only seen at Monfragüe, with 3+ on 13th and 4 on 17th, when seen especially well.

Corn Bunting: Noted commonly each day.

BUTTERFLIES:

Swallowtail: Seen on 2 days.

Scarce Swallowtail: Seen on 2 days.

Spanish Festoon: Seen on 3 days.

Large White: Seen on several days.

Small White: Seen on 2 days.

Western Dappled White: Seen on 3+ days.

Clouded Yellow: Seen each day.

Cleopatra: Seen only on 1 day.

Comma: Rob ran one over...

Nettle-tree Butterfly: Seen on 2 days.

Small Tortoiseshell: Seen on just 1 day.

Large Tortoiseshell: Seen only on 1 day.

Red Admiral: Seen on 3 days.

Painted Lady: Seen on 3+ days.

Small Heath: Seen most days.

Southern Speckled Wood: Seen on 1 day.

Wall Brown: Seen on 4+ days.

Meadow Brown: One very small individual seen on 1 day.

Provence Hairstreak: Seen only on 1 day.

Small Copper: Seen on several days.

Holly Blue: Seen only on 2 days.

Common Blue: Seen on 2+ days.

Green-underside Blue: Seen on 1 day.

Long-tailed Blue: Seen on 1 day.



SELECTED PLANTS:

[Nos. on the right refer to Grey-Wilson & Blamey, *Mediterranean Wild Flowers*]

<u>Pinaceae:</u>	<i>Pinus pinea</i>	Stone / Umbrella Pine	(3)
<u>Ephedraceae:</u>	<i>Ephedra fragilis</i>	Joint Pine	(20)
<u>Fagaceae:</u>	<i>Quercus rotundifolia</i>	Evergreen Oak	(26)
	<i>Quercus suber</i>	Cork Oak	(27)
<u>Ulmaceae:</u>	<i>Ulmus minor</i>	Elm sp.	(c. 38)
	<i>Celtis australis</i>	Southern Nettle Tree	(39)
<u>Aristolochiaceae:</u>	<i>Aristolochia paucinervis</i>	Birthwort sp.	(c. 64)

<u>Caryophyllaceae:</u>	<i>Spergularia purpurea</i>	Purple Sand-spurrey	(148)
	<i>Silene colorata</i>		(180)
<u>Ranunculaceae:</u>	<i>Ranunculus</i> sp.	Water Crowfoot sp.	
<u>Fumariaceae:</u>	<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	Ramping Fumitory	(303)
<u>Leguminosae:</u>	<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>	Judas Tree	(430)
	<i>Cytisus multiflorus</i>	White Broom	
	<i>Lupinus hispanicus</i>	'Iberian' Lupin	(c. 484)
	<i>Astragalus lusitanicus</i>	'Iberian' Milk-vetch	(504)
<u>Geraniaceae:</u>	<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>	Bloody Cranesbill	
	<i>Erodium botrys</i>	Storksbill sp.	(758)
<u>Violaceae:</u>	<i>Viola kitaibeliana</i>	Dwarf Pansy	(931)
<u>Cistaceae:</u>	<i>Cistus albidus</i>	Grey-leaved Cistus	(961)
	<i>Cistus salvifolius</i>	Sage-leaved Cistus	(965)
	<i>Cistus monspeliensis</i>	Narrow-leaved Cistus	(966)
	<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	Gum Cistus	(971)
	<i>Tuberaria guttata</i>	Spotted Rockrose	(985)
<u>Ericaceae:</u>	<i>Erica arborea</i>	Tree Heath	(1178)
<u>Primulaceae:</u>	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Scarlet Pimpernel, blue form	(1198)
<u>Boraginaceae:</u>	<i>Echium plantagineum</i>	Purple Viper's Bugloss	(1383)
<u>Labiatae:</u>	<i>Mentha suaveolens</i>	Apple Mint (wild)	(1523)
	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Rosemary	(1526)
	<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French Lavender	(1528)
<u>Solanaceae:</u>	<i>Hyosciamus albus</i>	White Henbane	(1555)
<u>Scrophularicaea:</u>	<i>Parunticellia latifolia</i>	Bartsia sp.	(1652)
<u>Orobanchaceae:</u>	<i>Orobanche rapum-genistae</i>	Greater Broomrape	(c.1670)
<u>Compositae:</u>	<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i>	Chamomile	(1884)
	<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Milk Thistle	(1982)
<u>Liliaceae:</u>	<i>Asphodelus aestivus</i>	Common Asphodel	(2089)
	<i>Gagea elliptica</i>	Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem sp.	
	<i>Fritillaria lusitanica</i>	Iberian Fritillary	(2152)
	<i>Ornithogalum umbellatum</i>	Star-of-Bethlehem	(2171)
	<i>Hyacinthoides hispanica</i>	Spanish Bluebell	
	<i>Muscari comosum</i>	Tasselled Hyacinth	(2201)
	<i>Narcissus triandrus</i>	Narcissus sp.	
	<i>Narcissus jonquilla</i>	Common Jonquil	(2279)
and probably	<i>Narcissus fernandesii</i>	Jonquil sp.	(c. 2279)
	<i>Narcissus bulbocodium</i>	Hoop-petticoat Narcissus	(2281)
<u>Iridaceae:</u>	<i>Gynandris sisyrrinchium</i>	Barbary Nut Iris	(2305)
	<i>Romulea ramiflora</i>	Sand Crocus sp.	(2316)
	<i>Romulea columnae</i>	Sand Crocus	(2320)
<u>Orchidaceae:</u>	<i>Orchis champagneuxii</i>	Champagne Orchid	(2405)
	<i>Orchis conica</i> (= <i>lactea</i>)	Milky orchid according to earlier authors)	

This list has been drawn up after some post-trip homework using both Blamey's Mediterranean Wild Flowers and the 'Flora y vegetación de Extremadura' thus names to a number of things we didn't get to species level in the field, and a number of species seen by just one or two people. Apologies if I've omitted anything obvious.

MAMMALS:

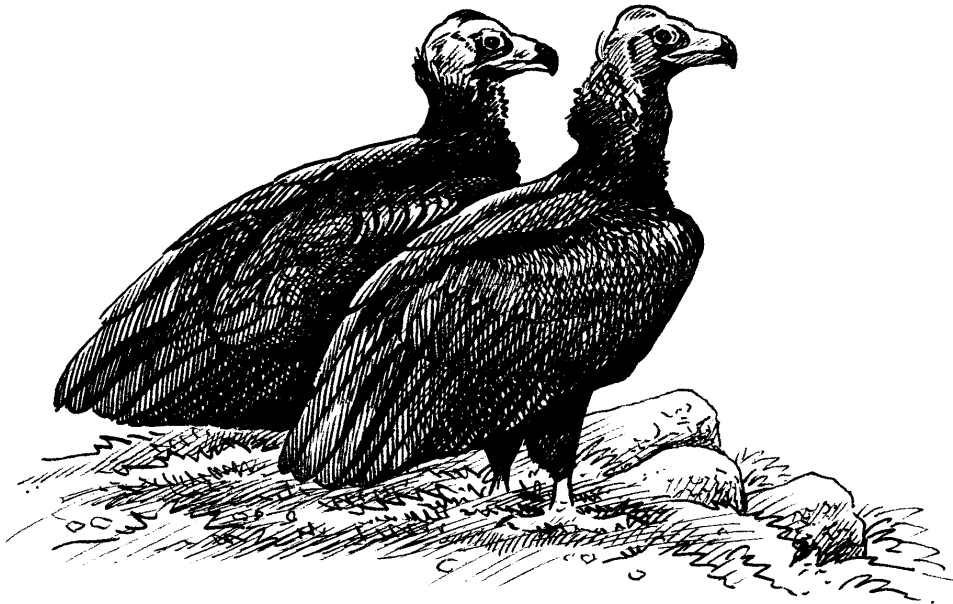
Western Hedgehog: Odd ones dead on road on 2 - 3 days.

'Iberian' Hare: Noted on several days, with 4 on 14th. The hares here are thought to belong to the African species *Lepus capensis*, though may just be a race of the European Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*.

Rabbit: Noted on a few days.

REPTILES: **Moorish Gecko** (*Tarentola mauretana*) at FSM almost nightly, **Iberian Wall Lizard** (*Podarcis hispanica*) on several days, two large **Ocellated Lizards** (*Lacerta lepida*) at Monfragüe. The numerous terrapins seen in all suitable water bodies were **Stripe-necked Terrapins** (*Mauremys caspica*).

OTHER TAXA: include **Iberian Pool Frog** (*Rana perezii*), a **Scorpion sp.** (?*Euscorpius italicus*), a small **Preying Mantis** (*Mantis religiosa*), **Egyptian Grasshopper/Locust** (*Anacridium aegyptium*), and a couple of moth species - the **Silver-Y** (*Autographa gamma*), and **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** (*Macroglossum stellatarum*).



Letter from SEO received at the Honeyguide office by e-mail

Our new address is:

Sociedad Española de Ornitología
Melquiades Biencinto, 34. 28053 Madrid
Tel.- 91-4340910
Fax-91-4340911

Madrid, 29 April 2000

Dear Honeyguiders:

It was a pleasure to meet you at Finca Santa Marta in Trujillo last March. I hope that you all enjoyed your visit to this region of high biodiversity that is Extremadura.

Your generous support to SEO's task has already been devoted towards carrying out the activities planned to avoid the extinction of the Spanish Imperial Eagle, the most threatened raptor in Spain.

As I write there is some important news regarding this species that will be of interest. In 2000 five pairs of Spanish Imperial Eagle are breeding in the Doñana area in spite of there having been only one that successfully bred last year. However, in other areas, many pairs have not bred successfully (such as in Madrid and Castilla-La Mancha), leaving the future of the species uncertain. Volunteers from the SEO/BirdLife membership are ensuring that nobody disturbs them, especially during the 'El Rocio pilgrimage' when hundreds of pilgrims cross the National Park to reach the El Rocio hermitage. Another important development has been the Workshop organized by SEO/BirdLife at the end of May, on the conservation of the Spanish Imperial Eagle, which gathered together 50 experts and active conservationists on the species. This meeting was a great success as recently the lack of co-ordination and misunderstandings between all the different bodies involved in the species conservation have been some of the handicaps for progress.

As promised, I have written a short letter to be addressed to the President of Extremadura, asking him to promote rural development in a sustainable way in Extremadura. SEO/BirdLife would be very grateful if you could send this letter to Mr. Rodríguez Ibarra and to send us a copy as well.

Thank you very much for your interest and collaboration. SEO/BirdLife will continue fighting for nature conservation in Spain.

Carlota Viada
Conservation Dpt.

Excmo. Sr. D. Juan Carlos Rodríguez Ibarra
Presidente de la Junta de Extremadura
Plaza del Rastro, s/n
06800 Mérida

(DATE)

Excmo. Sr. Presidente:

He tenido la posibilidad de conocer Extremadura a través de la empresa de viajes de naturaleza Honeyguide en marzo de 2000. La impresionante primavera que pude presenciar me mueve a transmitirle mi ruego de que no olvide la conservación de estos amplios paisajes y de esta gran variedad y abundancia de fauna y flora.

Pude conocer los graves problemas que están sufriendo las aves rapaces amenazadas, en particular el Águila Imperial Ibérica, por el azote del veneno. Por ello le rogamos la aprobación del Plan de Recuperación del Águila Imperial, que supondrá un primer paso fundamental para garantizar la conservación futura de esta especie tan emblemática y amenazada.

El buen estado de conservación actual de Extremadura sólo podrá mantenerse si se mantiene una política medioambiental clara y rotunda y si se promueven modelos de desarrollo socio-económicos compatibles con esos valores naturales, como el turismo de naturaleza.

Confiado en que comparte conmigo estas sugerencias, se despide atentamente,

(Name and signature)

Carlota's letter: translation by Chris Durdin

Dear Mr President

I had the opportunity to get to know Extremadura by travelling with wildlife holiday company Honeyguide in March 2000. The main impression left with me, that I am moved to pass to you, is my request not to forget the conservation of this extensive countryside and of the great variety and abundance of wildlife.

I was able to get to hear of the serious problems of threatened birds of prey, in particular the Iberian Imperial Eagle, by poisoning. For this we ask for the approval of the Recovery Plan for the Imperial Eagle, that would be the first and fundamental step to guarantee the future conservation of this emblematic and threatened species.

The best state of conservation in Extremadura can only be maintained by keeping clear and full environmental policies and by promoting models of socio-economic development compatible with these natural values, such as wildlife tourism.

Trusting that you share with me these suggestions, yours sincerely etc