



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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La Mancha recce
10 – 15 November 2013

Honeyguide La Mancha recce
La Mancha Húmeda and Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park
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These are some notes from a recce visit to La Mancha with Pau Lucio, who runs Birdwatching Spain www.birdwatchingspain.es



Photos in this report were all taken on the recce. Firecrest, Thekla lark and long-tailed blue by Pau Lucio, other photos by Chris Durdin. Cover photos: Belmonte castle with rock sparrows on a wire; clouded yellow, Don Quixote's windmills.

Conclusions: Pau (photographed, a little unfairly, with windmill sails round his head!) is an excellent guide who is ideal for Honeyguide as a personality and with his mix of natural history skills and local knowledge. Pau is available for hire as a guide in several parts of Spain, which is his main business: he can be contacted via his website www.birdwatchingspain.es

There is a lot that Honeyguiders would enjoy in La Mancha. The geography means that the holiday cannot have as compact an itinerary as would be ideal, but a two centre holiday would work fine. The two hotels and the restaurant in Belmonte were good with a lot of local character and enjoyable food with a strong regional flavour. The area would be excellent in spring, probably May, and could also make an interesting autumn holiday, though it would be better to be earlier than I visited, say October, as by November it was getting cold in the hills of the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park.

Chris Durdin, November 2013

Diary

Sunday 10 November – Valencia to Belmonte

A straightforward easyJet flight to coastal Valencia and Pau is there to meet me at the airport. Leaving the multi-storey car park at 11:30, there's a black redstart on a wall. That and spotless starlings apart, it's a pretty birdless drive west and inland. Progress on the motorway is slowed by a long queue of cars turning off to watch a motorbike race, but after that progress is good.



Autumn rains have failed to arrive and the main impression of the countryside is simply dryness, though there are some autumnal red in the colours of the soil and vine leaves. At a roadside stop for lunch it's apparent how the glorious warmth of the coast has faded as we gain height, and a cool breeze makes a fleece welcome. Wayside botanising is unrewarding in terms of flowering plants: lucerne, rosemary and one of those tricky yellow composites. Elsewhere, though, a white crucifer is abundant on the disturbed ground of vineyards: Pau knows it by the scientific name of *Diplotaxis erucooides* and I know it as white wall rocket, which I took a while to pin down by name in the Languedoc vineyards last winter. It's 14:50 when we reach our destination area, reminding me of the long haul from Madrid to Extremadura.

Our first destination is the lagoon of Manjavacas, which retains water year round from sewage from the nearby town of Mota del Cuervo, though the water is well back from the lagoon edges shown by the saltmarsh vegetation of sea-blite, samphire and saltwort. Waders on the water's edge are at first mostly dunlins, then they are outnumbered by little stints, plus two each of ruff and little ringed plover. On the water are mallards, shelducks and shovelers, and marsh harriers, meadow pipits and fan-tailed warblers are the marsh fringe birds here. Then the 'gru gru' sound of cranes floats towards us and two come into view. The sound of cranes gets louder as we near the end of a circuit of the lagoon: it's a flock on the ground, which then fly to reveal some 300 birds.

A few minutes away, we drive to a high point to see the windmills in the story of the travels and eccentricities of Don Quixote. One mill has been working making flour today, a Sunday special event; this, the car park and an unimpressive selection of souvenirs in the ground floor level of one mill is the modest extent of concessions for tourists.

In the footsteps of Don Quixote

There were many signs for the Ruta de Don Quijote in the area of La Mancha that we visited. The *molinos de viento* – windmills – are the most famous part of the story by Miguel de Cervantes, despite being just a short part of a long book. Don Quixote confronted 30 or 40 of them; the main hill-top group now has seven windmills plus metal sculptures of Quixote and his travelling companion Sancho Panza. It's worth bearing in mind that they were new technology from the Low Countries when the book was published, originally in two two volumes in 1605 and 1615, though Sancho Panza is well aware that Don Quixote is off his rocker when he sees them as giants to be slain. 'Tilting at windmills' has become an English metaphor meaning attacking imaginary enemies.



Chris and Sancho Panza.
Chris is on the left.

A few miles on and we reach Belmonte Castle. The film 'El Cid' with Charlton Heston and Sophia Loren was filmed here, about Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, Castilian nobleman and military leader in medieval Spain, but otherwise it is little known in the UK. It deserves to be better known: the history is long and complex with family rivalries causing warring factions within Spain; various politically inspired marriages, right up to being used a base for Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War. These are all described in a sparkling AV presentation, though that's in Spanish, and there is information in English through headphones in a portable talking guide. The owners, descendants of a long line of Spanish nobility, are making a big effort to open it up for visitors and the building is as impressive inside as outside, especially some of the ceilings. All in all, a better day for history than natural history.

We check in at the hotel, the Hospedería Real La Beltraneja in Belmonte. After settling in, our meal is in La Muralla restaurant, a five-minute walk away, as the hotel doesn't do evening meals. The best arrangement is to choose rations of *tapas*, two of which plus a mixed salad being more than generous for two people. We have *ajo arriero* – potato with cod and garlic – and *sepia a la plancha*, grilled cuttlefish. There's football on TV and we watch Barcelona put two goals past Real Betis by half-time, when we return to the hotel.



Belmonte Castle: courtyard, view from the battlements; one of several ornate ceilings; armour.

Monday 11 November – Las Tablas de Daimiel National Park

7:30 breakfast and away at 8:30, starting with a very short drive into the nearby countryside. The hope is to find bustards or sandgrouse, though that's unsuccessful. After the monotonous arable on yesterday's drive, the quiet, straight road is a delight: there are small fields of bare red soil, stubble or vines, plus some scrubby trees, in perfect morning light with the backdrop of Belmonte castle and windmills on the distant hilltop. There are lots of small birds: flocks of skylarks and spotless starlings, linnets and goldfinches, stonechats and group of corn buntings. A hoopoe flies through: some overwinter here, as in much of the Iberian peninsula. The best, though, is towards the end of this track: scores of birds on wires that at first aren't easy to identify against the light, but they are rock sparrows, eventually numbering at least 200, by far the most I've ever seen (*front cover picture*).

Las Tablas de Daimiel National Park is about an hour and half away, and it's a steady but dull drive. The National Park – plus biosphere reserve and ZEPA (Zona de Especial Protección para las Aves, Spanish for Special Protection Area) – is a chain of wetlands at the confluence of the rivers Guadiana and Gigüela, the core of the Biosphere Reserve of La Mancha Húmeda.



Restored water mill / museum at Las Tablas de Daimiel National Park; the *depuradora*.

We have an appointment to see the Park's water mill at 11:30: we meet Carmen from the National Park at the visitor centre and take the very short drive there. An information panel says that protection here started by royal request as the duck hunting was so good. Despite that, Pau remembers when over-abstraction reduced the water to little more than a pond, though happily new policies and some wet seasons mean the area is almost entirely back to how it should be. Traditional use of the wetlands included a water mill to channel the flow to grind flour. The building that Carmen takes us into – Los Molinos de Molemocho – is a brilliant combination of restoration and museum, with mill types of three generations in place. She speaks beautiful Spanish but it's tricky for me to pick up more than the odd word, so Pau explains.

Outside the mill, a Cetti's warbler was singing loudly as we went in, and the first of many chiffchaffs was catching flies. Coming out, some cranes fly over, a little egret is surprisingly noisy and there's a very tame Iberian wall lizard on, well, a wall. We are looking into the lagoon downstream of the mill when suddenly a family party of five marbled ducks swims into view. This stroke of luck is probably as Pau left his camera and long lens in the car. The ducks are from a re-introduction project and have been bred and released nearby.

Carmen suggests somewhere to watch birds that is new to Pau: a *depuradora* (water purification plant) 10 minutes drive away, passing on route a little owl on a tumbledown building. Later we saw a modern water treatment works, but the place to enjoy is two medium-sized lagoons fringed with reeds and *Typha*, with a raised area to help an overview. There are dozens of little grebes, scores of moorhens and coots, lots of ducks and noisy water rails in the reeds. A good place for lunch and by now it's shirtsleeve weather: the car's instrument panel says 21°C.

Passing the little owl in the same place, we return to the visitor centre and follow the visitor walks from there. These include excellent wooden walkways through reedbeds and lagoons, with various viewpoints. A very nice walk but strangely, especially after the riches at the *depuradora*, it's almost birdless. Dragonflies – common darters and blue emperors – are, however, much in evidence. At one point there's an exceptionally tame juvenile flamingo, so tame we wonder if it's unwell.

After our first circuit, another path takes us to an acclimatisation centre for captive-bred ducks where, from a hide, there are close views of white-headed and ferruginous ducks, red-crested pochards and more marbled ducks.



Walkway through Las Tablas de Daimiel National Park; white-headed duck, juvenile flamingo.

Walking on, our original plan was to go to a distant tower hide from where the cranes we've been seeing off and on all day, plus many more, can be seen coming to roost at dusk. We realise that as dusk is between 6 and 6:30 at this time of year that there would then be a longish walk back to the visitor centre in the gloom, so it's not practical option for a group. So we return, and drive a small circuit round another flooded river valley. It has more birds than the central part of the National Park, though the only new species is kingfisher. We head back at 5:15 for the same rather dull drive reaching the Belmonte town sign at 6:45, a little over 90 minutes by the time we reach the hotel.

At La Muralla restaurant we choose tapas of *pisto manchego con huevo* (like ratatouille with a fried egg) and *queso manchego con salsa* (deep fried cubes of local sheep's cheese with a sweet red fruit sauce). Tennis tonight, and Djokovic takes an early lead against Nadal in the ATP World Tour finals.

Tuesday 12 November – near Belmonte, and travel to Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park



We start by exploring a different area of arable near Belmonte. It's not as good as yesterday's, and the track is poorer to drive on, though we have a very good view of Thekla lark (*left*) and many more rock sparrows. Crossing the road to another area, there are two little owls on a tumbledown building and a great bustard flies through. It's more open and looks more promising for little bustards or sandgrouse, but again there are none. On a wire fence round a tractor compound I find a Spanish sparrow, which surprises Pau as it's unusual in this area: he texts a friend who confirms it has been recorded not far away. There are also at least four tree sparrows and three red kites, but all this may read better than it felt – it's not a good area for a group visit.

We head north towards the Serranía de Cuenca, but with two stops on route. The first is a hunting reserve managed for general wildlife, and the open scrub of mixed oak (holm and kermes) feels full of potential in better conditions, but less rewarding in a drought autumn. There are many Thekla larks, red-legged partridges, our first long-tailed tits and calling Sardinian warblers. A long-tailed blue finds some last-lingering thyme flowers to feed on and blue-winged grasshoppers fly off in a flash of colour (*photos in lists*). We picnic here and it's warm enough for shorts.

The second stop is at the Laguna El Hito Natural Park. This shows on the map and Pau's SatNav as a large lake, but this year is completely dry. The interpretation panel shows it as a stopping-off place for thousands of cranes, travelling between Lake Gallocanta in Aragón and Extremadura. In a typical year our timing is perfect, but this year it's depressingly arid and birdless. We move on.

Turning off the motorway round the edge of the city of Cuenca, we are soon up in the hills. First stop is a sometimes popular viewpoint called Ventana del Diablo: the Devil's Window. Choughs call and two fly over, and a griffon vulture comes into view. The scrub is an interesting mix including juniper, berberis and Montpellier maple and here's it's nicely sheltered.

But the *ventana* is fiercely windy and with a vertiginous view over the barrier, which is a pity as there was briefly an alpine accentor as we reached it and a strange toadflax-like flower, later identified as *Sarcocapnos enneaphylla*, an unusual member of the poppy family. A sign we see later calls it a snapdragon, *boca de dragón* or dragon's mouth.

Moving on, we drive past gathering griffons – I count 17 – and stop for a drink in the Bar Zaballos. This is opposite the Laguna de Uña, a reed-fringed lake with plenty of water, which we move onto. From a viewpoint on one side, about one-quarter of the way round, the mix of water, limestone crags and autumn colours in the late afternoon light is attractive. Ducks include teals and shovelers, there are several herons and a water rail calls. At the far end of the lake is a '*piscifactoría*' – fish farm – where trout are bred to re-stock the river. It's closed by now but apparently is usually open for visitors. We walk round the third quarter of the lake's perimeter, where there are lots of small birds in the trees including nuthatches, short-toed treecreeper, chiffchaffs and song thrushes. This takes us to a hide, from where Pau retraces his steps to get his car while I walk for a further fifteen minutes, completing the circuit of the lake and meeting up by the café. Check in and dinner at El Tablazo hotel.



The lake at Uña; firecrest with sloes; viewpoint at Ventana del Diablo, the Devil's Window.

Wednesday 13 November – Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park

At 7:45 it's getting light and Pau and I meet for a pre-breakfast walk. The mist hangs over the trout farm outside the hotel. Pau says otters are sometimes seen here, but not this morning, and a man walking round the lake's edge guarantees none now. We walk through the adjacent woodland, alongside a river as far as an old metal waterwheel. The vegetation is mostly familiar from the UK, apart from lots of hepatica leaves and some purple flowers for which the best fit seems to be scrambling gromwell *Lithodora diffusa*. It's cold: fleece and woolly hat this morning, though warming up steadily until midday when cloud comes over and it's back to fleece and hat.

First stop today is in the red-roofed hill village of Huélamo (*photos below*). A short walk takes us past the smallest bullring you can imagine and up onto a viewpoint on a prominent rock. In the village is the trip's second unusual snapdragon – *Antirrhinum pulverulentum* – and some yellowhammers. We move onto a short trail that leads to the waterfall called the Cascada de Chorrera. There are lots of berry-bearing shrubs, including hawthorn and blackthorn, and this has attracted blackcaps, one of which gives a burst of song. There's also a close firecrest, and as we return to the car, a rock bunting. It's nice, but very autumnal, and confirms a growing impression that November would be too late for a Honeyguide group.



We eat our picnic on some convenient outside tables in the village of Tragacete. By now it's cloudy, which causes a clouded yellow butterfly to land stock-still on a sow-thistle, allowing this usually fast-flying butterfly to be photographed in close-up (*cover picture*). Then time for a coffee in an adjacent café.

Farther on, our next walk is longer at the source of the river Cuervo – *Nacimiento del río Cuervo* as the signs say. The big car park shows what a popular spot this can be on a summer weekend, but today it's quiet. It's a pretty walk past mossy waterfalls with useful interpretation – as elsewhere – showing some of the species that would be on show, mostly in spring/summer. Then a fairly unremarkable drive through forest mostly here of Scots pine, enlivened at one point by a tower of griffon vultures that, including those coming in to join it, must have numbered around 300 birds. Our route doesn't reveal what is bringing them together.



Los Callejones.

The final stop is by far the most dramatic: Los Callejones of Las Majadas, an astonishing collection of mushroom-like limestone towers and pavements worn into shape by rainwater through the ages, the Natural Park's showpiece of geomorphology. Physically, it knocks your socks off. We follow a trail around the back of it to where there is an excellent sign in Spanish and English, which even describes where on the opposite limestone rockface certain plants can be found. These include amelanchier (snowy mespilus), a shrub of mountains such as the Pyrenees; a rock-clinging dwarf buckthorn *Rhamnus pumilus*; and a last-lingering flower of creeping globularia, a flower I know from the

French Pyrenees. Another Pyrenean flower is our third mystery snapdragon: Pyrenean toadflax, *Linaria supina*. Overhead crossbills fly to and fro, and we hear the 'tseep' call of redwings.



Los Callejones and two plants here: creeping globularia, left, and dwarf buckthorn; right.

There are dozens of finger posts that then take us weaving in and out of towers, little valleys and labelled trees. After a while we are completely disorientated and beginning to wonder if we'll ever make it out of the limestone labyrinth. It's not just us: four Spaniards are also wondering if we know the way back to the car park, which we don't. But eventually we find it, as the evening is beginning to close in, and we agree on a plan to see the best of this amazing place with a group – to walk to the first main interpretation point then retrace steps, then from the car park to come over to the arc of limestone in view. Home and dinner back at the hotel.

Thursday 14 November – Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park

The man who looks after the fish farm shows us a hole under a fence that an otter used last night. The vegetation is still wet and there is a spraint that smells of fish. We see rainbow trout and the remains of a signal crayfish in the water. Breakfast, choosing tomato spread on toast again.

We notice some ice on the windscreen, then head off for various stops in the more northern part of the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park today. It's bright but cold all morning. Apart from pausing for a mixed flock of rock sparrows and linnets on some arable, the first stop is at a gorge called the Hoz de Beteta. The walks are well signed and paths are good, with steps where needed. Turning left, firstly, the path goes to a damp wall where the insectivorous plant butterwort *Pinguicula mundi* grows, though not in November: with difficulty we find some shrivelled leaves. Later reading reveals it's in none of the books and the IUCN red list shows just two places in the mountains of eastern Spain, with the Serranía de Cuenca its main stronghold. However there are lots of flowering *Sarcocapnos enneaphylla*, the snapdragon-like poppy previously seen at the windy Devil's Window.

A little farther up is a viewpoint where in summer Egyptian vultures nest. A familiar sound, if out-of-place in a woodland, alerts us to some 50 cranes overhead, and we hear them – or other groups moving, it's difficult to know – two or three times this morning, and others later in the day.

Heading in the other direction, we go down some steps and along a wide woodland path where the trees include large-leaved lime. Plants here include gone-over broad-leaved helleborine and scorpion senna bushes. Towards the natural end of this stroll there is a very good view over the cliffs opposite where the ledges are ideal for griffons to nest, and there are two perched up there today.

Late morning and we stop for a *cafe con leche* in the pretty small town of Beteta, which is reminiscent of Pyrenean villages. Up here we are at the point where the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park adjoins the Natural Park of Alto Tajo. Pau notes the sign to the town of Molina de Aragón which he says normally records the lowest winter temperature in Spain. This rings true this morning.

Our picnic is by the lake Laguna de el Tabor, a reed-fringed mountain lake, which characteristically is not particularly good for birds, though does have little and great crested grebes, mallards and a cormorant. Two forest guards stop for a chat with Pau and more cranes pass through. It's warming up now as we have a look for flowers – the rockrose *Helianthemum organifolium* and pitch trefoil (leaves) are new – and insects, namely clouded yellows, blue-winged grasshoppers and emperor dragonflies.

A final stop is into an open area of black pine forest, for which I'd certainly never find the turn. Crossbills are everywhere, and we walk alongside a small watercourse with lush watercress and horse-mint. A blue butterfly is soaking up some late season sun and is so tame, or perhaps cold, that close photographs are easy – it's an Adonis blue. What at first looks like a pink flower on a spiny broom is, in fact, the parasitic plant dodder twining through the broom. The return drive is nearly 90 minutes and we make a note to find a break on this route in future.

A final meal at El Tablazo hotel and restaurant, where I opt for a non-meat meal. Here, as in many places in rural Spain, this can be a challenge – even the trout the other evening came with bits of bacon. I have cod *croquetas* (croquettes – mushroom croquettes were also on the menu); a house salad, which came with tuna, though no doubt that could be left off; and an excellent slice of vegetable pie made with borage and puff pastry. I discover that one of the bottled beers for sale, called Dawat, is made locally in Cuenca.

Friday 15 November – to Valencia and home

An early breakfast and departure at seven o'clock. Despite being a little slow through Cuenca and a detour on account of roadworks on a motorway bridge, we are at the airport by 9:20, with time in hand for the 11:30 flight back to Gatwick.

Hotel notes

Hospedería Real La Beltraneja in Belmonte www.casonalabeltraneja.com. Attractive building, urban setting in an attractive old town. Very elegant rooms, all with showers and TVs. No kettle or hair dryer in rooms, though a bar for evening tea/drinks. Simple breakfasts. Rooms cold at first on November evenings: Pau used the air conditioning, I turned on a radiator!

Hotel El Tablazo in Villalba de la Sierra www.hoteltablazo.com. Near road network but woodland at back and fishing lake at front. 26 rooms, 11 have bathrooms recently renovated, all with showers, mostly on floor level 1 (front entrance level). Other rooms much the same, but some older bathrooms have baths though also a slight damp smell. Rooms don't have hair driers or kettles. Open fire in large dining/breakfast room/bar. Both hotels have WiFi.

There was a third voice in the car on the recce: that of Pau's SatNav. I named her Dolores, and wrote this poem about her.

I think I'm love with Dolores
 The voice of Pau's GPS,
 The SatNav señora who tells us
 When our navigation's a mess.

I know she's just a computer
 But she sounds to me so real,
 With her clear, precise instructions
 To the man at the steering wheel.

"*Gire a la derecha*," she says,
 So we turn to the right, ever eager,
 The voice so sexy so certain
 Follow, straight on, "¡Siga siga!"

"*Recalculando*," she asserts, is it me?
 Or is she getting a little cross?
 Recalculating is what she's doing
 With Dolores you know who's the boss.

I think I'm in love with Lola
 That's Dolores for short, you see,
 The sultry SatNav señorita
 Please be a real person for me.

WILDLIFE LISTS

These lists summarise most of the species noted on the recce.

BIRDS

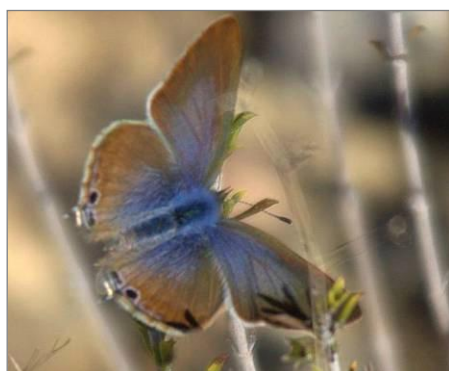
References here to NPs are Las Tablas de Daimiel National Park and Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park.

Little grebe	Wetlands in both NPs, including c50 at the depuradora
Great crested grebe	Wetlands in both NPs
Cormorant	Wetlands in both NPs
Cattle egret	Las Tablas de Daimiel NP
Little egret	Las Tablas de Daimiel NP
Grey heron	
Greater flamingo	a juvenile in Las Tablas de Daimiel NP
Crane	300 at Manjavacas lagoon, several groups in Las Tablas de Daimiel NP and on the final day in Serranía de Cuenca NP.
Greylag goose	depuradora
Shelduck	50, Manjavacas lagoon
Gadwall	4, depuradora
Teal	10, depuradora
Mallard	Manjavacas lagoon, Las Tablas de Daimiel NP, Uña lake
Pintail	2, depuradora
Shoveler	50, Manjavacas lagoon; 200, depuradora
Marbled duck	a family party of 5 reintroduced birds in Las Tablas de Daimiel NP
Red-crested pochard	captive birds awaiting release in Las Tablas de Daimiel NP]
Pochard	depuradora
Ferruginous duck	captive birds awaiting release in Las Tablas de Daimiel NP]
White-headed duck	captive birds awaiting release in Las Tablas de Daimiel NP]
Red kite	3 over arable near Belmonte
Griffon vulture	common in Serranía de Cuenca NP including some 300 together on 13/11
Buzzard	seen daily
Marsh harrier	Manjavacas lagoon and depuradora

Sparrowhawk	Laguna de el Tabor
Common kestrel	seen all bar one day
Moorhen	Las Tablas de Daimiel NP
Purple swamp-hen	heard at the depuradora
Water rail	heard on 3 days, especially at the depuradora and Uña lake
Great bustard	1 over arable near Belmonte
Black-winged stilt	depuradora
Ringed plover	Manjavacas lagoon
Little ringed plover	Manjavacas lagoon
Lapwing	Manjavacas lagoon and depuradora
Little stint	30, Manjavacas lagoon
Dunlin	25, Manjavacas lagoon
Ruff	2, Manjavacas lagoon
Snipe	1, depuradora
Black-headed gull	Manjavacas lagoon
Yellow-legged gull	depuradora
Feral pigeon	
Woodpigeon	
Collared dove	
Little owl	Las Tablas de Daimiel NP and arable near Belmonte
Kingfisher	recorded on 2 days
Hoopoe	Recorded on 2 days
Green woodpecker	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Great spotted woodpecker	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Crested lark	recorded on 4 days
Thekla lark	several in scrub near Belmonte and at shooting reserve
Woodlark	shooting reserve
Skylark	flocks on arable
Meadow pipit	recorded on 4 days
Grey wagtail	
White wagtail	recorded on 2 days
Wren	recorded on 3 days, all in Serranía de Cuenca NP
Dunnock	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Alpine accentor	1. Ventana del Diablo
Robin	recorded on 3 days
Black redstart	recorded on 4 days, including one singing at night in Belmonte and keeping Pau awake
Stonechat	recorded on 2 days
Blackbird	daily
Song thrush	wintering birds recorded on 4 days, especially in Serranía de Cuenca NP
Redwing	Serranía de Cuenca NP on 2 days
Mistle thrush	Serranía de Cuenca NP on 2 days
Cetti's warbler	seen or heard on 3 days
Fan-tailed warbler (Zitting cisticola)	on 2 days, including 3 at Manjavacas lagoon
Sardinian warbler	heard ins crub at at shooting reserve
Blackcap	winter birds in Serranía de Cuenca NP
Chiffchaff	recorded on 3 days, c10 in Las Tablas de Daimiel NP
Firecrest	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Blue tit	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Great tit	recorded on 4 days in a range of habitats and heights
Crested tit	heard trilling in Serranía de Cuenca NP
Long-tailed tit	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Nuthatch	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Short-toed treecreeper	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Iberian grey shrike	while travelling to Serranía de Cuenca NP
Jay	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Magpie	recorded daily

Chough	. 2, Ventana del Diablo
Jackdaw	recorded on first 3 days
Carrion crow	recorded daily
Raven	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Spotless starling	big flocks in various places, mostly on farmland
House sparrow	recorded on 4 days
Spanish sparrow	1 in farmland near Belmonte
Tree sparrow	4 in farmland near Belmonte
Rock sparrow	large flocks on arable near Belmonte, including a flock of c200, and mixed with linnets on arable in lower parts of Serranía de Cuenca
Chaffinch	Serranía de Cuenca NP
Crossbill	lots in the pines of the Serranía de Cuenca NP
Greenfinch	recorded on 2 days
Goldfinch	recorded on 4 days
Linnet	recorded on 4 days
Yellowhammer	3, Huélamo
Rock bunting	1, near Cascada de Chorrera in Serranía de Cuenca
Reed bunting	heard at depuradora
Corn bunting	in arable on 2 days

Mammals	Butterflies and moths	Other notable invertebrates
Red deer	Large white	Blue-winged grasshopper
Roe deer	Small white	Paper wasp <i>Polistes</i> sp.
Otter spraint	Clouded yellow	Common wasps – several times feeding on dead insects on Pau's car
Wild boar rootings	Red admiral	Common darter
	Adonis blue	Blue emperor
	Long-tailed blue	7-spotladybird
Reptiles	Speckled wood	Fire bug <i>Pyrrhocis apertus</i>
Iberian wall lizard	Pine processionary moth (tents)	



Above: Long-tailed blue; Adonis blue; blue-winged grasshopper.
Below: common darter; Iberian wall lizard.



Plants

Numbers on the right refer to Blamey & Grey-Wilson, *Mediterranean Wild Flowers*.
Others are in Polunin's *Flowers of South-West Europe*, though some of these from the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park are easier to see in Blamey & Grey-Wilson *Alpine Flowers*.

A few are from floras from northern Europe.

P = planted. NiF = not in flower.

Trees noted were not in flower, naturally, and the list is certainly incomplete.

Planted trees are noted when of special interest.

Common northern European plants e.g. shepherd's purse, are not usually noted.

SPERMATOPHYTA Conifers		
Pinaceae – pine family		
<i>Pinus pinea</i>	stone / umbrella pine	3
<i>Pinus nigra</i>	black pine	4
<i>Pinus pinaster</i>	maritime pine	5
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scots pine	
Cupressaceae – cypress family		
<i>Juniperus oxycedrus</i>	prickly juniper (shrub)	17
<i>Juniperus sabine</i>	Savin (low, spreading)	Polunin 15
<i>Juniperus thurifera</i>	Spanish juniper (tree)	Polunin 16
ANGIOSPERMS		
Moraceae – mulberry family		
<i>Ficus carica</i>	fig	42
Salicaceae – willow family		
<i>Populus tremulus</i>	aspen	
<i>Salix fragilis</i>	crack willow	
Corylaceae – hazel family		
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	hazel	
Fagaceae – oaks		
<i>Quercus coccifera</i>	holly / prickly / kermes oak	24
<i>Quercus rotundifolia</i>	Holm oak	26
<i>Quercus suber</i>	Cork oak	27
<i>Quercus faginea</i>		30
Urticaceae – nettle family		
<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	pellitory of the wall	50
Chenopodiaceae – goosefoot family		
<i>Salicornia ramosissima</i>		
<i>Sueda vera</i>	Shrubby seablite	94
<i>Salsola soda</i>	Saltwort	103
Ranunculaceae – buttercup family		
<i>Hepatica nobilis</i>	Hepatica (leaves)	Alpine flora
Berberidaceae – barberry family		
<i>Berberis</i> sp (<i>B. vulgaris</i> or <i>B. hispanica</i>)	Barberry. Needs looking at!	
Papaveraceae – poppy family		
<i>Sarcocapnos enneaphylla</i>		Polunin 279a
Brassicaceae (Cruciferae) – cabbage family		
<i>Diplotaxis erucoides</i>	white wall rocket	Polunin 358
<i>Nasturtium officinale</i>	watercress	
<i>Sisymbrium altissimum</i>	tall rocket	
Crassulaceae		
<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>	navelwort NiF	396
Rosaceae – rose family		
<i>Crataegus mongyna</i>	hawthorn	420
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	blackthorn	424
<i>Potentilla caulescens</i>	shrubby white cinquefoil / lax potentilla NiF	Alpine flora or Polunin 447
<i>Amelanchier ovalis</i>	amelanchier or snowy mespilus NiF	Alpine flora
<i>Sorbus aria</i> or <i>torminalis</i>	whitebeam	
Fabiaceae was Leguminosae – pea family		
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	carob	431
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>	Judas tree P	430

<i>Psoralea bituminosa</i>	pitch trefoil NiF	508
<i>Medicago sativa</i>	lucerne/alfalfa	596
<i>Coronilla emerus</i>	scorpion senna seed pods	693
<i>Erinacea anthyllis</i>	a blue-violet hedgehog broom NiF	Polunin 515
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	red clover	
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white clover	
Geraniaceae – cranesbills		
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	herb Robert	747
Anacardiaceae – pistacio family		
<i>Pistacia terebinthus</i>	terebinth NiF	861
Buxaceae – box family		
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	box	878
Rhamnaceae – buckthorn family		
<i>Rhamnus pumilus</i>	dwarf buckthorn	Alpine flora
Malvaceae – mallow family		
<i>Malva parviflora</i>	least mallow	897
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	common mallow	898
Cistaceae – rockrose family		
<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	gum cistus NiF	971
<i>Helianthemum organifolium</i>		1007
Tamaricaceae – tamarix		
<i>Tamarix canariensis</i>	tamarix	1018
Cucurbitaceae		
<i>Ecballium elaterium</i>	squirting cucumber, Devil's cucumber – <i>pepinillo</i> or <i>pepino del diablo</i> – in Spanish	1032
Umbelliferae/Apiaceae – carrot family		
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	fennel	1108
Ericaceae – heath family		
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	bearberry	
Araliaceae – ivy family		
<i>Hedera helix</i>	ivy	
Lentibulariaceae – butterworts		
<i>Pinguicula mundi</i>	a butterwort NiF	
Rubiaceae – bedstraw family		
<i>Rubia peregrina</i>	wild madder in fruit	1305
Aceraceae – maple family		
<i>Acer monspessulanum</i>	Montpellier maple	856
Aquifoliaceae – holly family		
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	holly	
Tiliaceae – lime tree family		
<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>	large-leaved lime	
Oleaceae		
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive	1248
Apocynaceae – Oleander family		
<i>Nerium oleander</i>	oleander P	1256
Convolvulaceae – bindweed family		
<i>Cuscuta epithymum</i>	common dodder	1311
Boraginaceae – borage family		
<i>Lithodoradiffusa</i>	scrambling gromwell	1351
Dipsacaceae – scabious family		
<i>Scabiosa columbaria</i>	small scabious	
Lamiaceae (Labiatae) – mint family		
<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	white horehound NiF	1445
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	rosemary	1526
<i>Lavandula stoechas</i>	French lavender NiF	1528
<i>Mentha longifolia</i>	horse mint NiF	Alpine flora.
Scrophulariaceae		
<i>Antirrhinum pulverulentum</i>		Polunin 1197f
<i>Linaria supina</i>	Pyrenean toadflax	Polunin 1206
Globulariaceae – globularia family		
<i>Globularia repens</i>	creeping globularia	Polunin 1263a

Caprifoliaceae – honeysuckle family

<i>Sambucus ebulus</i>	dwarf elder/danewort NiF	1710
<i>Sambucus niger</i>	elder NiF	
<i>Lonicera xylosteum</i>	fly honeysuckle NiF	

Asteraceae (was Compositae) – daisy family

<i>Helicryum stoechas</i>	curry plant	1824
<i>Pilosella officinarum</i>	mouse-ear hawkweed	

MONOCOTYLEDONS**Agavaceae**

<i>Agave americana</i>	agave, century plant P	2253
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Orchidaceae – orchids

<i>Epipactis helleborine</i>	broad-leaved helleborine NiF	2380
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Gramineae – grasses

<i>Typha angustifolia</i>	lesser reedmace	
<i>Arundo donax</i>	giant reed	2494
<i>Phragmites australis</i>	reed	

FERNS (PTERIDOPHYTA)

<i>Andiantum capillus-veneris</i>	maidenhair fern	2522
<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>	maidenhair spleenwort	2525
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	bracken	
<i>Cystopteris fragilis</i>	brittle bladder fern	

Fungi – all identified by Pau. Most were edible, but I forget which!

<i>Amarita cesarea</i>	<i>Lactarius deliciosus</i>	<i>Boletus luteus</i>	<i>Tricholoma terreum</i>
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Appendix: Other plants mentioned on signs, here for reference.

At Los Callejones of Las Majadas, in the Serranía de Cuenca NP

<i>Chiliadenus glutinosus</i>	pointed-leaved jasonia
<i>Sedum dasphyllum</i>	thick-leaved stonecrop
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i>	rustyback fern
<i>Draba dedeana</i>	a whitlow-grass
<i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i>	wall-rue (fern)
<i>Sanguisorba rupicola</i>	rock burnet
<i>Chaenorhinum organifolium</i>	chaenorhinum

Elsewhere in the Serranía de Cuenca NP

<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsia</i>	common spotted orchid
<i>Epipactis palustris</i>	marsh helleborine

Manjavacas lagoon

<i>Limonium</i> sp	a sea-lavender, which we saw in flower
<i>Cressa cretica</i>	
<i>Polypogon monspeliensis</i>	annual beard grass
<i>Frankenia pulverulenta</i>	European seaheath
<i>Salicornia ramosissima</i>	a glasswort
<i>Sueda splendens</i>	a sea-blite
<i>Bolboschoenus maritimus</i>	sea clubrush

In the saltwater:

Ruppia drepanensis; *Chara galioides*, a stonewort; *Lamprothamnium papulosum*

Three snapdragons. On the left is *Sarcocapnos enneaphylla*, actually an unusual member of the poppy family. It has a spur, like the others, and is called a snapdragon on a sign in the Natural Park, though for *boca de dragon*, dragon's mouth is a better translation. Centre: *Antirrhinum pulverulentum*. Right: Pyrenean toadflax *Linaria supina*.