



# Honeyguide

## WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**Tarifa and Morocco**  
**27 February – 7 March 2017**

### **Holiday participants**

David and Steph Bennett  
Julia Maynard  
Robert Carr  
Anne Richards

### **Leaders**

Simon Tonkin, Ornithologist, and Niki Williamson, Naturalist

Report by Simon and Niki

Our base in Spain was Huerta Grande [www.huertagrande.com](http://www.huertagrande.com)

In Morocco, the group were one night at the Hotel España in Larache [www.hotelespanalarache.com](http://www.hotelespanalarache.com)  
and two nights at the Ras el Maa hotel in Chefchaouen [www.raselmaa.com](http://www.raselmaa.com).

Photos all taken on the holiday, except Portugese sundew.

Cover: monarch, boats at Merja Zerga lagoon and friar's cowl (David Bennett);  
northern bald ibis and Audouin's gulls (Rob Carr).

Below: group members birdwatching by boat and on dry land (leaders).



This holiday, as for every Honeyguide holiday, also puts something into conservation in our host country by way of a contribution to the wildlife that we enjoyed. The conservation contributions this year of £40 per person were supplemented by gift aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust giving a total of £330 to Migres, the organisation that monitors bird migration through the Strait of Gibraltar.

The total for all conservation contributions through Honeyguide since 1991 as at March 2017 is £113,469.

### **SUMMARY**

This holiday had three bases – the tranquil eco-lodge of Huerta Grande in the village of Pelayo near Tarifa; a characterful colonial-style hotel in the bustling Moroccan town of Larache; and a traditional family-run guest-house in the exquisite blue-washed Moroccan mountain town of Chefchaouen. It yielded a great quality bird list from European farmland and cork oak forest, Moroccan mountain habitats and wetlands and salt pans on both sides of the Strait, as well as views of hundreds of migrating black kites, short-toed eagles and other raptors.

Highlights included excellent views of Moroccan marsh owl, lesser kestrels, black-eared wheatear, hawfinches, northern bald ibis, slender-billed and Audouin's gulls, blue rock thrush, great spotted cuckoo, brown-throated and crag martins and purple swamphen.

Non-avian highlights came in the form of monarch and Spanish festoon butterflies, Portuguese sundew, and of course superb local food and culture throughout.



## DIARY

### Monday 27 February: Gibraltar to Huerta Grande, El Tráfico and Tarifa Old Town

The small but perfectly-formed group was met by Simon and Niki at Gibraltar airport, from where we made the short walk across the border to arrive in Spain. The minibus swiftly took us on the short journey to our first base at Huerta Grande Ecolodge, and the mood was good as the outskirts of Algeciras, peppered with huge white stork nests, gave way to the rugged hills and cork oak forests of Los Alcornacales Natural Park.



Casa del Espía (David Bennett)

Huerta Grande is a collection of tranquil log cabins and post-colonial buildings set within seven acres at the edge of the park itself. Here we sat down to a light lunch while Simon gave a brief introduction to the fascinating history and ornithology of the area. After lunch the group settled into accommodation at Casa del Espía, a building at Huerta Grande that used to house Italian and German Spies during WW2 while they monitored British shipping movements in the Strait of Gibraltar. It now nestles quietly amongst cork oak and laurel bushes, with a forest floor of intermediate periwinkle, wild garlic and Bermuda buttercup (non-native, but still very attractive!).

Heading out along the coast we stopped in at El Tráfico raptor watchpoint, right down at the edge of the cliffs overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar. Although the crosswinds were a little high to offer a major migration event today, we love to bring groups to this place, where you are almost level with the sea and North Africa looks so close you could reach out and touch it. Our stop gave us excellent views of northern gannets and Sandwich terns close in to the shore, and groups of Cory's and Scopoli's shearwaters out to sea. Although the soaring birds didn't fancy their chances against the crosswinds this afternoon, we were delighted to be in the middle of a steady stream of sand martins, barn swallows and house martins arriving back into Europe.

To complete our first relaxed day and help the group orientate, we headed into the picturesque Old Town of Tarifa for some 'urban birding'! The group were perhaps a bit bemused at first to find themselves birding in a car park, but understanding soon dawned as they were treated to common bulbul singing from the palm trees, lesser kestrels overhead and a very obliging little owl looking down on us from a eucalyptus! The car park fence brought more gems, with ramping fumitory growing all along its base and a black redstart perched on it, and we were even lucky enough to glimpse a black stork gliding overhead.



Little owl, a pair of lesser kestrels and black redstart (Rob Carr).

A short walk through the delightful plazas and winding streets of the Old Town took us to the Castillo de Guzman, Tarifa's 1000-year-old fortified castle by the sea. This imposing structure is not only impressive to visit but also hosts a colony of lesser kestrels, seven or eight pairs of which had already returned, and were super-active overhead as they rekindled their relationships and rebuilt nests in the holes and features of the fort's stonework. Lots of spotless starlings were also on show doing much the same thing, and there was also a beautifully crisp black redstart happy to pose for photos!

We paused at the hilltop Mirador del Estrecho restaurant for a well-earned coffee and another stunning view of the Strait, before making the short trip back to Huerta Grande so the group had plenty of time to relax from their journey before dinner.

**Tuesday 28 February: Cazalla watchpoint, El Tráfico, Guadalamesi, Mirador and Sierra de la Plata (Bolonia)**

With a much lower wind following a couple of days of bad weather we knew that today would be a good one for raptor migration, and the guides used their local knowledge to anticipate where the birds would be crossing. A group of ten or so alpine swifts passing high over Huerta Grande first thing certainly boded well, so after breakfast we headed straight to Cazalla watchpoint, which looks down over Tarifa beach. Sure enough, after a brief period of enjoying the differences between the singing Thekla and crested larks, Niki spotted a group of a dozen or so black kites drifting west over the town below us, and the game was on!

As the air warmed and the wind subtly changed direction, we spent a very exciting morning between Cazalla and El Tráfico watchpoints, eventually heading east along the coast to the Guadalamesi area. Among the ever-arriving hirundines, huge groups of black kites were crossing the sea in towering columns of fifty or more birds at a time and arriving low all around us. It was a thrilling sight and we counted over a thousand birds overall during the morning. Black kites are the earliest raptors to make the journey north, but the tide of other species was also beginning. We were lucky enough to catch four Egyptian vultures and four short-toed eagles arriving early, as well as sparrowhawks, lesser kestrels and a marsh harrier.



A flock of migrating black kites; griffon vulture (Rob Carr).

After a celebratory ice cream at the Mirador del Estrecho, we headed off for some mountain birding at Sierra de la Plata, near Bolonia. Simon and Niki took the group along winding tracks through remote countryside covered in wizened, wild olive trees and newly flowering cistus scrub to a beautiful viewpoint overlooking the village of Bolonia and Baelo Claudia roman ruins.

These well-preserved ruins used to be a thriving town which became prosperous due to the local tuna fishing trade and the manufacture and export of 'garum', a predecessor to modern day fish sauce. As the Roman Empire was falling, a string of earthquakes hit the Iberian peninsula, from which the town never recovered. Today its distant crumbling columns alongside the white sands and azure sea of Tarifa bay provided a picturesque backdrop to Niki and Simon's signature picnic lunch, which the group enjoyed while watching soaring griffon vultures and hovering common kestrels. We also stumbled upon a stunning male blue rock thrush, perched up right by the track, providing perfect opportunities for Rob and Dave to get some great photos.

Moving on up the track we reached a stark rocky outcrop, surrounded by swirling crag martins, which hosts a colony of resident griffon vultures. The group was blown away by the breath-taking close views and eerie 'prehistoric' screeching of these imposing birds as they came in to roost.

While at the site, we really had a chance to get to grips with the scratchy call and song of the many Sardinian warblers in the low scrub, and a couple of individuals put on a great show for the photographers in the group. We also got scope views of two Iberian *sharpei* green woodpeckers flitting round the rocks, although perhaps not quite well enough to see the reduced black around the eye which distinguishes them from the northern European sub-species.

Arriving home in plenty of time for dinner, we took the opportunity to make a short exploration of the grounds at Huerta Grande. Wending up through the cork oaks and laurel bushes, we took some time to look out over an area of low intensity farmland which was home to the famous free range Iberian black pigs. Here we were surrounded by glittering late afternoon serin song, and after a bit of trying had excellent views of a pair of hawfinches perched in a wild olive tree.

### **Wednesday 1 March:– La Janda, Benalupe**

We spent today at the huge plain of La Janda, formerly a vast wetland which was mostly drained for agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Fragments of wetland remain among the low-intensity farming, and we spent the morning finding a host of wetland and farmland treasures.

As the breeding season really gets into gear, the air here is thick with birdsong and we arrived to jangling corn buntings, zitting cisticolas calling and a symphony of song from the resident calandra and crested lark population. To the group's pleasure several of these perched conveniently on nearby fence posts for great views and photo ops! Julia soon picked up on a quail calling to add further to the soundtrack. The group got amazing views of a great spotted cuckoo perched up in a trackside bush, and it hung around calling and flitting between trees for a long time.

In the wetter rice stubble fields, groups of spoonbills and common cranes mingled with huge flocks of cattle and little egrets. We had several groups of little ringed plovers, common snipe and green sandpipers and good views of an elegant wood sandpiper – unusual for the site. Among the numerous meadow pipits, we also picked up on at least three water pipits, their broad superciliums and light wing bars visible even at a distance.



Corn bunting, Sardinian warbler and zitting cisticola (Rob Carr).

Some of the day's more glamorous birds were purple swampheens, which were very active today. We saw a total of five birds moving around the bulrushes fringing the main ditch, iridescent in the sun. They were not to be outdone by a particularly flirty hoopoe, which teased the group by giving great views from the minibus but continually darting a bit further away before it could be photographed!

Migrant passerines are reaching the area in early spring and we had brief but enjoyable encounters with northern wheatear and yellow wagtail. The spring-like feel was enhanced by clouded yellow and Cleopatra butterflies and a European pond terrapin basking in the sun.

Marsh harriers, common buzzards and both kestrel species quartered the land, and the group had stunning views of an adult short-toed eagle, first perched up on a telegraph pole and then low overhead. Two black-winged kites were also distantly visible hunting over the fields.

Another superb sighting for the day was a greater spotted eagle, which drifted overhead as the group picnicked by a river. A couple of these magnificent raptors, normally associated with the eastern Palearctic, have been recorded wintering at La Janda and we were able to get a good look at the diffuse light patch on its upper wing, compact wing shape and distinct spotting which made it stand out from more typical local raptors.

The group members were by now firm converts to urban birding, so our bins were very much at the ready as we headed into Benalupe village for an afternoon coffee stop! This didn't go amiss as we passed a large kettle of newly arrive black kites over the town, bringing the day's total to around 300 birds. Outside the café in the peaceful town square, we were treated to the aerial antics of barn swallows and crag martins, as well as cruising griffon vultures.

### **Thursday 2 March: Huerta Grande to Morocco – Oued Maarza, Merja Zerga, Larache**

After an early but hearty breakfast we boarded the bus to set sail for Africa! At 8.30am the docks were relatively quiet apart from a group of screaming pallid swifts, and we were soon on our way, seeing northern gannets and two common dolphins from the boat and admiring a new statue of Hercules as we arrived at Ceuta, one of the two Spanish enclaves on the north African coast (the other is Melilla), parting the twin pillars of the Rock of Gibraltar and the Jebel Musa mountain in Morocco. For the ancient European civilisations, these two landmark rocky monoliths represented the gateway out of the Mediterranean and into the Atlantic, and hence the end of the known world. For migrating birds, they form two major landmarks by which they navigate their short but perilous traverse of the sea.



We were soon making a short drive round the back of the second of these pillars, through the rocky lower Rif, before pausing at a café in the town of Oued Marza to regroup after the sea journey. Juan-Louis, who had accompanied us from Huerta Grande bringing his expertise in all things Moroccan, secured the group their first tastes of north Africa in the form of delicious sweet mint tea and flatbreads with fresh goat's cheese. While we waited, we started to get our first tastes of African variation, looking down onto a patch of scrub to see dapper African chaffinches.

Migration was already in full flow. Among the columns of raptors gaining height in the morning sun we counted more than fifty black kites, six Egyptian vultures and over thirty short-toed eagles getting ready to cross the Strait, as well as the first booted eagle of the trip.

We enjoyed the leisurely two-hour drive to our next site, the famous Merja Zerga lagoon, through low-intensity subsistence farmland, green and lush with spring crops. On arrival we went for a top-up of refreshing mint tea, in a café from which we could see laughing doves and common bulbul flitting over the town. Here we met with our local guide, Hassan, who is probably the most famous ornithologist in this part of the world. Hassan has been guiding boat trips out onto the lagoon since he was a boy. The lake is probably best known for being the last recorded site for the now probably extinct slender-billed curlew. Hassan told the group about the site and how he watched as the population declined during the last century for unknown reasons. He has the poignant honour of being the person who provided the last known record of this species at the site, in 1995.

Today sadly there would be no sightings of slender-billed curlews (although it is of course common practice to attempt to string a whimbrel or two!) but as the group headed out in two small boats we almost straight away came across a slender-billed gull, resting on a mudbank and boasting that gorgeous pinky hue that they get in the breeding season. Next to it were dozens of sleek red-billed Audouin's gulls, once the world's rarest gull but now recovering well.



Whimbrel, curlew and Audouin's gull (Rob Carr).

The wetlands and mudflats teemed with life and Hassan pointed out hundreds of grey and ringed plovers, bar-tailed godwits, whimbrels, Eurasian curlews, common redshanks, greenshanks, green sandpipers, ruddy turnstones and dunlins. We had a surreal few minutes birding from an isolated sandbank in the middle of the lagoon, from where we were able to watch a large group of greater flamingos promenading together.

But even after this huge adventure of a day, the highlight was yet to come. Hassan took us to a private area of local damp pastureland. This is a roosting site for the endemic Moroccan marsh owl, and sure enough after maybe half an hour of hunting, a gorgeous individual flew up from a large clump of rushes. We saw it several times in the next few minutes and had lots of chances to admire its intricately patterned plumage and haunting face as it fixed us with its incredible dark eyes.

After thanking local legend Hassan we made our final leg of the journey to our beautiful old colonial style hotel in the city of Larache, where we dined on local fish before retiring tired but buzzing for some much-needed sleep!

### **Friday 3 March: Larache, Loukkos, Bouachem forest, Chefchouen**

After a good night's sleep we set out for a relaxed breakfast, where the group was in for another urban birding treat! The café, under the arches of the promenades surrounding the town square, was right next to a colony of little swifts! We were able to watch them come and go through the arches as we enjoyed strong coffee and Moroccan churros, and also admire their creativity as they patched up their nests with everything from feathers to bits of plastic!

Next it was on to nearby Loukkos marshes, a wetland right at the edge of Larache. We spent a great morning there, and highlights included the group's first views of glossy ibis, red-crested pochard, red-knobbed coot, Caspian terns, several brown-throated martins and a nice selection of common waders including little-ringed plovers, green sandpipers and black-winged stilt.

We were surprised by the incredible numbers of marsh harriers present, with probably half a dozen being visible in the air at any given moment, and a total of 20+ for the day. We also enjoyed picking through a large flock of yellow wagtails which included *flava*, *flavissima* and *iberiae* races, a real treat to see these different markings together and be able to compare them.



Chefchouen (David Bennett)

Unluckily – and unusually for the time of year – the weather was taking a turn for the worse, so we negotiated a deal with a nearby café, who allowed us to eat our picnic lunch of local breads, cheeses and salads in the shelter of their establishment, while also getting a warming glass of tea!

The journey through Bouachem forest was sadly very cold and wet, but this didn't stop Simon and Niki valiantly getting out of the van to search for Levillant's green woodpecker and the resident population of Barbary macaques. After numerous attempts we were unlucky so we carried on our journey without further ado.

Things had cleared somewhat by the time we reached Chefchouen, a town beautifully located in the Rif mountains. The buildings and streets of its Old Town are painted many shades of blue, and from a distance appear to tumble down the hillside like a waterfall. Its tiny streets, some barely a couple of yards wide, are an intriguing maze of tea shops, grocery stores and art galleries, and the group couldn't help but be cheered by this fascinating new place.

Our hotel, the Ras el Maa, is reached through a small unimposing doorway in a row of traditional properties, but once inside opens up to reveal beautiful Moorish architecture full of open spaces and intricate archways.

Perhaps one of its best features from our point of view is the roof terrace, which affords breathtaking views of the village as it tumbles down the hillside, and the mountains of the Talessamtane National Park behind it.

Those who hadn't remained in their rooms to relax before dinner were treated to views of Atlas long-legged buzzard, large groups of ravens and red-billed chough and a distant glimpse of two black wheatears while we enjoyed the evening call to prayer drifting out over the town.

#### **Saturday 4 March: Chefchouen and Talassamtane**

For breakfast we wended our way through the narrow streets to the main square, Anne and Julia arm-in-arm with the chivalrous Simon and Juan-Lu. The group were impressed by a gnarled olive tree in one of the town's many interesting alleys. This ancient tree, reputedly 700 years old, has survived many an upheaval, including the town being built around it and then changing hands repeatedly between Muslims, Christians, Jews and tourists...

From the square we were treated to views of African chaffinch, and again we could see large groups of ravens swirling round the village's mountainous backdrop, and we were looking forward to our 4x4 exploration of the National Park. Sadly however, we were again largely thwarted by the weather. As our Landrover climbed up the sweeping tracks we had a stunning view out over the town before the clouds closed in. Again Simon and Niki worked hard searching for Moussier's redstart and black wheatear in the rain, while Juan-Lu kept the group company in the warmth of the vehicle. We had the briefest of views of a group of rock buntings feeding on the fields of a tiny smallholding, but in the end we cut our losses and descended.

As the weather gradually cleared, we headed out into another part of the National Park, where we were again able to enjoy our picnic at the tables of a local cafe, situated in an impressive mountain valley, narrowing to a dramatic gorge. Here we explored a short stretch of the fast-flowing river system and were rewarded by some great views of several smart grey wagtails. As the sun gradually returned, the air filled with dozens of crag martins catching up on lost feeding time. Our viewpoint from a thatched shelter by a bend in the river also afforded us our best views yet of African blue tit. After a bit of patient searching, an individual of this 'well-coloured-in' version of the species showed well in a tree opposite our vantage point and should have presented no difficulties for Rob to get some lovely snapshots.



Long-legged buzzard and African blue tit – two north African specialities (Rob Carr).

Our final treat of the day bird-wise was the first opportunity for the whole group together to get a good view of Atlas long-legged buzzard, circling low over us – although it was debated if it should have been "at-least" in the recent bad weather...

We returned to Chefchouen and dined again in our favourite restaurant just off the main square, where by now our waiter knew the group members by name and had special recommendations for us from the menu.

### **Sunday 5 March: Chefchouen, Oued Laou River Valley back to Spain**

Today it was time to follow the birds north and return to Europe. From our location high in the Rif mountains, we followed the route of the Oued Laou river all the way down from near its source to the bay where it meets the Atlantic Ocean, watching the ecology and vegetation change as we went. As we drove through the rugged countryside we could see numerous short-toed eagles and black kites following the same route as us and it was exciting to consider who would be the first to cross the Strait! Frequent birding stops en route gave us more superb views of blue rock thrush foraging on farmland. We got up close to a young male and were able to appreciate the delicate scalloped patterning on his plumage, which is usually ignored because of the distracting vibrant blue colouration of more adult birds.



Blue rock thrush and raven (Rob Carr).

Further on, as the river furrowed its way through another precipitous gorge, we watched a thrilling battle between a Bonelli's eagle and two ravens. It appeared at first that the ravens were mobbing the eagle, but it's also a possibility that this powerful and stocky predator had decided to try its luck making one of the ravens a prey item!

As the land levelled out and the river became wider, we stopped at a wide gravelly meander, which local folk were visiting to do their laundry and water their livestock. Against a background of crested larks and zitting cisticolas we enjoyed overhead peregrines and sparrowhawks, a perched short-toed eagle and the best views yet of Atlas long-legged buzzard, this time low over us in excellent light and in its most rufous morph. We could hear stone-curlews calling, and just as we were about to leave we finally spotted a bird on nest among the stones, barely visible except for its yellow eye. Carrying on downstream the river opened up into expanses of marshy land, on which we could see large flocks of egrets and glossy ibis and even a black-winged kite from the bus. We reached the coast at lunchtime, and enjoyed taking our picnic from an improvised table in the form of an upturned fishing boat on the shore.

Although a bit of a wait is always involved at the border crossing back into Ceuta, this is never boring and gives a fantastic opportunity to swap birdwatching for people-watching for an hour or so, for those that are open minded enough to observe! The crossing itself went smoothly and after taking refreshments at the port we were soon aboard the ferry and on our way back to Huerta Grande, where dinner awaited.



### Monday 6 March: El Bujeo, CIMA, Vejer de la Barca, Barbate, Mirador

This morning the group finally had the opportunity to meet Lola and Alejandro at Fundación Migres, the organisation benefiting from Honeyguide's conservation donation.

En route to our meeting we treated the group to a swift detour to visit a colony of *Drosophyllum lusitanicum*, a quasi-endemic carnivorous plant which we thought they would be interested to see. Apart from populations in Portugal and northern Morocco, this endangered plant species is only recorded in this part of Spain. It is becoming increasingly rare due to habitat destruction, and has been lost from many of its previously known strongholds in the region. It differs from other sundews because it grows in dry, stony, calcareous habitats rather than the acid conditions in the marshes and bogs which are the usual habitat for other carnivorous plants. In common with other sundew species, Portuguese Sundew catches its small insect prey by entrapping them with a sticky substance that emanates from the leaves and stem. Once trapped the insects become asphyxiated and, following death, are eventually digested by enzymes in the leaves of the plant. The group was able to witness this sinister little plant trapping flies first hand. We also managed our first views of crested tits, which despite being omnipresent in the area had only been heard up until this point.



Portuguese sundew (Chris Durdin) and Bartolo, the rescued eagle owl at Migres HQ (Rob Carr).

At Migres HQ, director Lola gave the group a tour of the facilities where they are able to house the international volunteers who help them with monitoring the twice-yearly passage of birds. Alejandro then gave a brief but fascinating presentation on the species and numbers involved and the work of Migres to ensure this spectacle is monitored, researched and protected for the future. We also got to meet Bartolo, a charming rescued eagle owl, which sadly will never fly again due to a gunshot wound to the wing, but now helps out at Migres in a public relations role.

After posing for a group photo, we moved on to the cliffs at Vejer de la Barca. Here we visited a breeding colony of northern bald Ibis, a fantastic quirky bird with iridescent black plumage and a superb punk hair-do reminiscent of something out of Mad Max. These birds are the product of a successful reintroduction scheme in the area and the rarest species we were likely to see on the trip – the 80 or so pairs now breeding in this area being a large chunk of the remainder of the world's population. They have expanded out of the original reintroduction site and now have nest sites right by the road into the village, so the group was able to observe and photograph these strange creatures at close hand.



Black-eared wheatear; radio-tagged bald ibis with grub (Rob Carr).

After a reviving coffee we headed for our next site at the nearby salt pans at Barbate. To our delight a confiding group of northern bald ibis were foraging on the farmland around the entrance to the site, so Niki and Simon left the group to wander among them while the final trademark picnic of the trip was prepared, overlooking a close-by group of Audouin's gulls.

While we ate the group enjoyed views of sanderling and dunlin as well as grey, golden, common ringed and Kentish plovers, greater flamingos in flight and fly-bys from painted lady and Spanish festoon butterflies. Elsewhere on the site we finally found Spanish sparrows amongst a flock of house sparrows, and had smashing views of a black-eared wheatear perched up on the fence.

There were numerous raptors aloft by now, and it was becoming apparent that something was causing griffon vultures to gather in large numbers. The flocks included three Egyptian vultures, and to our surprise we found another greater spotted eagle, its plumage indicating it to be a different individual to the one we had at La Janda.

We decided to investigate the source of temptation for the gathering vultures. Rounding the corner it soon became apparent what all the fuss was about. On a facing hillside was the carcass of a cow, with perhaps fifty individuals tucking into the remains or simply lounging about digesting their spoils, their white heads stained red.

Even more dramatically, though, in the field next to us a cow had just given birth to two calves. They were so newly born that they were still struggling to stand up, and their feeble attempts were attracting a great deal of unwanted attention from the vultures, who were shuffling ever closer to see whether another meal could be had. Mother cow was frantic, trying to tend to both calves, which were far enough apart that she couldn't defend both of them at once. To our amazement the whole herd eventually rallied round, and the vultures were relegated to a safe distance until both calves were up and about. This dramatic turn of events marked the end of our visit to Barbate, and we returned to Huerta Grande to enjoy chef Juan Carlos's evening meal for one last time.

### **Tuesday 7 March: Home**

Nine days had flown by and it was already time for the group to say goodbye for now to Katrin and the wonderful team at Huerta Grande. We made our way to Gibraltar airport and arrived for check-in in good time, with plenty of good memories and great photographs to remind us of our time in Morocco and the Strait.



Iberian chiffchaff, ringed at Huerta Grande; white stork (Rob Carr).

# WILDLIFE LISTS

BIRDS									
Common name	Scientific name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>					2			
Cory's shearwater	<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>	80+							
Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>	20+	8+		10+			20+	
Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	50+		5+	40+
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			10+	✓	✓		✓	✓
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			50+	✓	✓		✓	✓
Great white egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>				1+				
Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	2	3						
White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	40+		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>					150+		15+	
Northern bald ibis	<i>Geronticus eremite</i>								20+
Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			10+	6+	80+			4+
Greater flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>				100+				20+
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			30+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>							5+	
Red-crested pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>					4+			
Black-shouldered kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>			2				1	
Black kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	1	1,000+	300+	50+	20+	6+	20+	5+
Egyptian vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>		4+		6+				3+
Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			10+	100+
Short-toed eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	1	4	6+	30+			20+	
Marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		1	2+	40+	20+		10+	2
Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>					1			
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		1		2		2	3+	1
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	2+	4+	4+					
Long-legged buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>				3+	1+	1	5+	
Bonelli's eagle	<i>Aquila fasciatus</i>							1	
Booted eagle	<i>Aquila pennatus</i>	1			1				
Lesser kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	20+	3+	2+	3			3+	2+
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		2	12+					1
Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				1			1	
Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			6+				✓	✓
Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>			1					
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			4+					
Purple swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>			5+					
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>			5+		10+			
Red-knobbed coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>					40+			
Common crane	<i>Grus grus</i>			100+					
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>				20+				
Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>					20+			2+
Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>							2+	
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>				10+				
Golden plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>								2
Grey plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>				300+				6+
Ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>				200+				20+
Kentish plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>								6+
Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>			6+		10+			
Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			10+		2+			
Bar-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>				20+				
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		1		30+				
Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>				5+				
Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>				150+				✓



Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>				50+				
Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			20+	2+	15+			
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>					2			1
Ruddy turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>				10+				
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>								10+
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				10+				2+
Slender-billed gull	<i>Larus genei</i>				1				
Audouin's gull	<i>Larus audouinii</i>				100+				30+
Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>				✓	✓		✓	✓
Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Black-headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>				✓	✓		✓	✓
Caspian tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i>				2	4			
Sandwich tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>	10+	5+		✓	1+		3+	
Rock / feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>			6+	10+	20+	1	3+	1
Great spotted cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>			1					
Eagle owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>								injured
Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	1	1					1	1
Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	1				1		1	1
Marsh owl	<i>Asia capensis</i>				1				
Alpine swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>		10+						
Pallid swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>				10+				
Little swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>					5+			
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		1	1				1	
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			1	1	1			
Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	1	1	1					1
Iberian green woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>		2						
Calandra lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>			20+					40+
Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thekla lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>		2						
Eurasian skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			4+					
Sand martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	20+	15+					2+	1+
Crag martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>		40+	20+	10+		50+	30+	5+
Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	10+	40+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-rumped swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>								1
House martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	5+	20+	20+	✓	✓	1	4+	
White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	1+	3+	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>			1		20+		2	4+
Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>						3+		
Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		3+	30+	✓	✓		✓	✓
Water pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>			3+					
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	1+	1+	2+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		1+						
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	5+	3+	1+	3+	10+	2	10+	5+
Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			1					
Black-eared wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>								1
Black wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>					2			
Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>		2					2+	
Eurasian blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>								
Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>					4			
Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	1+	1+	4+	✓	✓	2	2+	5+
Zitting cisticola (fan-tailed warbler)	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>					1			
Sardinian warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			5+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Iberian chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>	1	2	1+					4+
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	4+	4+	3+		2+			1+
Crested tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>	H	H	H					2+
Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	2	3+	3+					✓
African blue tit	<i>Cyanistes teneriffae</i>					3H	1	1+	
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	1+	3+	2+	2+			3+	
Short-toed treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>		1	H		1			
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>					2+			2+
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>				3+	20+	40+	30+	
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			1+					
Spotless starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spanish sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>								5+
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓					✓
African chaffinch	<i>Fringilla (coelebs) spodyogenys</i>				2	10+	20+	✓	
Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	✓	✓	1+				1	2+
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>								
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	5+	20+	Y	20+	10+	8+	4+	10+
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>		2+						
Cirl bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>				2		1	1+	
Rock bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>						4		
Corn bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		5+	✓
Common bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	1			15+	10+	2+	5+	
Greater spotted eagle	<i>Clanga clanga</i>			1					1
Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>			1+					
Laughing dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>				3+				
Red-billed chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>					6		30+	
Monk parakeet	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>								1

TOTAL = 143 SPECIES

MAMMALS					
Common dolphin – 2 on first boat crossing into Morocco					
REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS					
European pond terrapin <i>Emys orbicularis</i> – several seen at La Janda					
Iberian water frog <i>Rana perezi</i> – several seen and heard at Huerta Grande					
BUTTERFLIES Sp = Spain, M = Morocco					
Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	Sp M	Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>	Sp M
Spanish festoon	<i>Zerynthia rumina</i>	Sp	Monarch	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	Sp
Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	Sp M	Comma	<i>Polygoniac-album</i>	Sp
Small white	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>	Sp M	Painted lady	<i>Cynthia cardui</i>	Sp
Green-striped white	<i>Euchloe belemia</i>	Sp M	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	Sp M
Clouded yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>	Sp M			

## PLANTS

<b>Pinaceae – pines</b>	
<i>Pinus pinea</i>	stone / umbrella pine
<b>Betulaceae – birch family</b>	
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	alder
<b>Fagaceae – oaks</b>	
<i>Quercus coccifera</i>	kermes oak
<i>Quercus suber</i>	cork oak
<i>Quercus canariensis</i>	Algerian oak
<b>Urticaceae – nettle family</b>	
<i>Urtica membranacea</i>	membranous nettle
<b>Polygonaceae – dock family</b>	
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	knotgrass
<i>Polygonum crispus</i>	curled dock
<b>Chenopodiaceae – fathen family</b>	
<i>Sarcocornia fruticosa</i>	shrubby glasswort
<i>Halimione portulacoides</i>	sea purslane
<b>Lauraceae – laurel family</b>	
<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	sweet bay
<b>Ranunculaceae – buttercup family</b>	
<i>Ranunculus</i> sp.	water crowfoot sp.
<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i> subsp. <i>ficariiformis</i>	lesser celandine
<b>Fumariaceae – fumitories</b>	
<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	ramping fumitory
<b>Cruciferae – cress/cabbage family</b>	
<i>Sinapsis arvensis</i>	charlock
<b>Droseraceae – sundews</b>	
<i>Drosophyllum lusitanicum</i>	Portuguese sundew
<b>Leguminosae – pea family</b>	
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>	Judas tree
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	carob
<i>Anagyris foetida</i>	bean trefoil
<i>Psoralea bituminosa</i>	pitch trefoil
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	black medick
<i>Medicago sativa</i>	lucerne
<i>Lotus creticus</i>	southern birdsfoot trefoil
<b>Oxalidaceae – sorrel family</b>	
<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda buttercup
<b>Geraniaceae – geranium family</b>	
<i>Geranium rotundifolium</i>	round-leaved cranesbill
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	cut-leaved cranesbill
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	common storksbill
<b>Euphorbiaceae – spurges</b>	
<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i>	sun spurge
<i>Ricinus communis</i>	castor oil plant
<b>Rhamnaceae – buckthorn family</b>	
<i>Rhamnus alaternus</i>	Mediterranean buckthorn

<b>Malvaceae – mallow family</b>	
<i>Dombeya x cayeuxii</i>	tropical hydrangea or pinkball, exotic tree at Huerta Grande
<b>Cistaceae – rock-rose family</b>	
<i>Cistus albidus</i>	grey-leaved cistus
<i>Cistus salviifolius</i>	sage-leaved cistus
<i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	gum cistus
<b>Cucurbitaceae – cucumber family</b>	
<i>Echballium elaterium</i>	squirting cucumber
<b>Cactaceae – cactuses</b>	
<i>Opuntia maxima</i> = <i>ficus-indica</i>	prickly pear
<b>Ericaceae – heather family</b>	
<i>Rhododendron ponticum baeticum</i>	Andalusian rhododendron
<b>Oleaceae – olive family</b>	
<i>Olea europaea</i>	olive
<i>Olea europaea</i> spp. <i>oleaster</i>	wild olive
<b>Apocynaceae – oleander family</b>	
<i>Vinca difformis</i>	intermediate periwinkle
<b>Lythraceae – loosestrifes</b>	
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	purple loosestrife
<b>Convolvulaceae – bindweeds</b>	
<i>Ipomoea purpurea</i>	morning glory
<b>Boraginaceae – borage family</b>	
<i>Lithodora diffusa</i>	scrambling gromwell
<i>Cerinthe major</i> var. <i>purpurascens</i>	honeywort
<i>Echium asperrimum</i>	viper's bugloss
<i>Borago officinalis</i>	borage
<b>Labiatae – mint family</b>	
<i>Lamium amplexicaule</i>	henbit deadnettle
<b>Solanaceae – potato family</b>	
<i>Solanum sodomaceum</i>	apple of Sodom
<b>Caprifoliaceae – honeysuckles</b>	
<i>Lonicera implexa</i>	honeysuckle
<b>Compositae – daisy family</b>	
<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>	corn marigold
<b>Liliaceae – lily family</b>	
<i>Asphodelus aestivus</i>	common asphodel
<i>Pancratium maritimum</i>	sea daffodil
<b>Araceae – arum family</b>	
<i>Arisarum simorhinum</i>	friar's cowl
<b>Palmae – palms</b>	
<i>Washingtonia filifera</i>	
<i>Chamerops humilis</i>	dwarf fan palm