

# Honeyguide

**WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS**

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## Extremadura

8 - 15 March 2003

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**Holiday participants**

Malcolm Crowder Helen Crowder	Norwich
Di Licence Steve Licence	Cambridge
Peter Crook Elonwy Crook	Norfolk
David Hall Susan Hall	Hemel Hempstead
Elaine Tubby Julian Phillips	Hove
Stephen Graham	Newbury
Bill Hudson Jackie Banks	Norfolk
Eiluned Morgan	Northants

Leaders

John Muddeman and David Collins

Report 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, Santiago Villa of SEO came to Finca Santa Marta to collect £350 from this year's holiday in Extremadura.

This year's donations, including from another Honeyguide group in Extremadura and a group in the Spanish Pyrenees, bring the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £8,620 and the total conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays to £29,800. A thank-you letter from SEO appears at the end of this report.

## Extremadura 8 - 15 March 2003

### Saturday 8 March – Madrid to Finca Santa Marta

Despite a delayed departure, the group arrived slightly early at Madrid and we got away quite quickly in mild and sunny conditions. A few were able to spot Magpies, Spotless Starlings and even fly-by Buzzards, Swallows, Corn Buntings and Crested Larks, while a pair of Black-winged Stilts in a pond and a Booted Eagle on a fence post, and from the front bus, a Red-rumped Swallow, were all good birds too.

We stopped for drinks and a snack at the 'Hotel David' where a pair of White Storks on a nest showed they were recently back by copulating in front of all, a Red Kite drifted over and a Serin jingled away merrily.

Our main stop however was at the Embalse de Arrocampo where despite large numbers of fishermen wading around on one side, various birds were on the other. At least three Marsh Harriers, 20+ Grey Herons and a good number of remarkable Purple Swamp-hens brightened up the reedbeds, Chiffchaffs flitted nervously around, a flock of smart Spanish Sparrows adorned a bramble bush and a few Cetti's Warblers shouted from the depths of the vegetation.

A few Snipe tried to hide in the muddier edges and a flock of squeaking brown Red Avadavats flitted up and around several times as the harriers passed over.

All was not birds however, as we noted our first Iberian Blue-tailed Damselflies, a few Stripe-necked Terrapins hauled out on the edge of the open water, the Holm Oaks and Gum Mastic bushes and the now curling pink flowers of *Silene conica*. All this was livened-up by the antics of dozens of Common Carp sucking and slurping in the shallow waters, their backs half out of the water!

At the Finca we settled in and were then given an introductory chat by our host, Henri. A terrific start.

### Sunday 9 March – Zorita, Embalse de Sierra Brava, Vegas Altas

The day dawned without a cloud in the sky, but was drier and not as chilly as expected. Conditions were perfect and as we spread out around the Finca, making use of a later breakfast time on Sunday, so several excellent birds were seen. Above the whistling Spotless Starlings and jingling Serins, a few other calls and sounds included singing Wren, Robin, Hoopoe and Black Redstart, while Sardinian Warbler, Great and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (this is a rare and new species for the Finca!) and a couple of Hawfinches delighted almost all. The roving groups of Azure-winged Magpies also provided an exotic element to the proceedings despite their rasping calls. Even as we convened to leave at 10, so a Short-toed Treecreeper sang from the enormous almond in the car park.

We headed south, stopping in Zorita for close views of Lesser Kestrels and Crested Larks (*pictured right* - the first of many), while out on the plains, though the various small white butterflies gave us the slip, the Fan-tailed Warblers, Corn Buntings and White Storks didn't, nor did the small early spring flowers including a Stork's-bill and Papery Paronychia, or the narrow milk-thistle leaves of Galactites.

Another stop yielded a number of surprises, starting with a delightful Little Owl on a pile of rocks, complete with false eyes on the back of its head, numerous butterflies including Western Dappled and Green-striped Whites (both expertly potted and shown to all by David) and our first Swallowtail, plus various 'twisling' Calandra Larks. Three Stone-curlews which flew across the road in front were later relocated, showing how incredibly effective their cryptic plumage colouration is, but not before John lifted up both hands with a different snake in each! A decent-sized Ladder Snake and a small Viperine Snake were very lucky finds, even more so as they were under the same rock and both so cold they could be handed with relative ease! Only after they'd both been released did he realise he hadn't taken a photo...



Amazingly, it was already noon, so we pushed on again, pausing briefly as six Cranes flew overhead, and continued to an area of seemingly boring arable fields. Not so! A Great Bustard took off with flashing white wings, but then soon dropped revealing the presence of 13 more, which we watched at range, and despite the increasing heat-haze, were left totally in peace. Grovelling around on the ditch-sides we found the large blue flowers of the local form of Scarlet Pimpernel, several small Iberian Pool Frogs and a single beautifully dark fumitory, while single Large and Small White butterflies were noted. 'Our' bustards remained calm and relaxed, but not so 16 more which were flushed by a different vehicle and flew in to land parallel to us as we were leaving.

Lunch was taken nearby at Vegas Altas, where Southern Grey Shrike, the continental white-rumped race of Stonechat and Zitting Cisticola (AKA Fan-tailed Warbler!) were finally seen well by all, and all to the tune of large numbers of Black-headed Gulls feeding in the bare rice fields. A few distant Cranes and a small group of male Great Bustards half-heartedly displaying in a nearby wheat field kept things busy, though small flocks of highly mobile Common Waxbills and Red Avadavats kept us on our toes as we took a route between the paddies, and also led first to the discovery of a couple of Water Pipits and better still, a superb Spanish Festoon butterfly.

Time for a break and a comfort stop for drinks in a strange little local town, which was appreciated by all.

We headed back towards the finca, but turned off through an area of dehesa and rice fields which proved to be an inspired choice. Marsh Harriers, Buzzards and Kestrels kept us looking; when we stopped for a smart Black-shouldered Kite, we found a pair, and at one point a flock of six Black and one Red Kite also passed over to give us a true 'kite-fest'. A Rock Sparrow that was passing also swung round to join a group of Corn Buntings in the top of an oak tree – another real bonus!

It was now feeling hot and we still had a long way to go. Bumping along the road though we made more stops, first for a fine male Hen Harrier, though at least a dozen Water Pipits on the other side of the road were an excellent find, a flock of Cranes on the ground, and flocks of Red Avadavats and Spanish Sparrows in scrub, plus other odd birds including Little Egret in the paddy fields.

We came back via an access road and the Embalse de Sierra Brava, where distant Black-necked Grebe, Gadwall and Tufted Duck added to the list, though just as much attention was focussed on a fine pair of horses being ridden behind us.



Time was now really pushing, so we headed back 'definitively'... However, this is not always possible, and when we were still short of Zorita a pair of birds on roadside wires caused us to pull over at the first opportunity. A superb pair of spotty Great Spotted Cuckoos then performed for almost 20 minutes, the male dropping down periodically to pick up large hairy caterpillars which he then took back up to his mate nearby. The mention by Di of a flock of birds with white wing stripes which had dropped out of sight into a grassy field nearby raised suspicions, which were fortunately confirmed when 17 Little Bustards flickered up in perfect light from the field before dropping in sight into a field carpeted with the white flowers of Wild Chamomile, affording superb, if slightly distant views of the feeding flock including a few males with their black-and-white polo-neck jerseys! If this were not enough, a little clump of gorgeous Hoop-petticoat Narcissi (*left*) brightened up the lush grass in the little ditch right behind us!

We arrived back, slightly drained by the sun, but elated, to a cuppa and log-call before another fine dinner.

### **Monday 10 March – Monfragüe**

The day dawned bright and clear again. After breakfast at 8, we departed at 9 and headed north. On the outskirts of Trujillo we stopped to admire a colony of Lesser Kestrels, though a 20-strong group of Pallid Swifts was also pointed out, and a couple of Black-winged Stilts and single Green and Common Sandpipers graced a local pool while several Meadow Pipits crept through the grass nearby. A long-eared mule also attracted certain attention though was more nervous than thought and ran away from Helen as she approached (maybe a wise move?).

We partially retraced our route towards Madrid, turning off onto the old main road, and went down to the oldest of the three bridges over the Río Almonte. Before we even got out, a fine female Cirl Bunting fed on the edge of the car park gravel, while down by the river, a couple of Little Ringed Plover, Kingfisher, Lapwing, Green Sandpiper and hoards of Iberian Pools Frogs attracted attention as several Crag Martins wheeled overhead flashing their white tail spots as they banked.

A Crested Lark we'd also watched was completely ignored by a speckle-breasted Thekla Lark that display-flighted for some time overhead before coming down to feed unconcernedly in the grass. As if this were not enough, a flock of Red Kites crossed the valley, followed by several Griffon and a single Black Vulture, though just as we were about to leave, so a mystery eagle appeared, fortunately giving us excellent views for a couple of minutes to reveal its identity as a 2nd calendar-year Spanish Imperial Eagle.

We continued towards Monfragüe, our 'target', though stopped en route at a little pull-off for a spot of raptor-watching. A couple of Black Vultures were nice, though three smart Woodlarks creeping around in the flower-studded turf nearby attracted most attention. As attention began to wane and a few party members started to wander off, so an adult Spanish Imperial Eagle circled up at distance, but performed long enough for us to see its white scapular marks and scattered white feathers along the inner forewing.

Attention then turned to other things, with a Small Heath and plenty of small (mostly Western Dappled) white butterflies flitting around, and plants including some fine examples of *Romulea ramiflora*, a large-flowered sand crocus.

After fighting roadworks, we took a break at Torrejón el Rubio before driving up the track towards the Castillo de Monfragüe. We walked up in very warm and still conditions after noting several Nettle-tree Butterflies and Large Tortoiseshells, adding calling Hawfinch and close Griffon Vultures as we went. Patches of blue on the rock face turned out to be early flowering clumps of the fine *Iris planifolia*.

Though conditions were murky, the view from the top was terrific for those who had legs left to climb the castle steps, while most of us sat in the shade on the sunny side of the ridge eating lunch to the sound of chirruping Crag Martins and Red-rumped Swallows and with a Robin in close attendance. More Nettle-tree Butterflies, Red Admirals and a fine male Cleopatra were also admired, though a brief Sparrowhawk was only noted by Susan. The very warm conditions had finally dragged out our first lizard and a small Large Psammodromus crept over a lichen-covered rock, only to be bettered by two larger ones as we started to descend.

We moved round to the Salto del Gitano and the imposing Peñafalcón opposite, here a flock of Griffon Vultures wheeled around, only to be greeted by superb pair of chestnut-flanked Rock Buntings on the wall of the little car park! These we soon left behind though as a male Blue Rock Thrush sang from a nearby pinnacle close to a male Black Redstart. Just round the corner we watched another Blue Rock Thrush and no less than four Black Storks swirling round at height alongside a young Spanish Imperial Eagle and dozens of vultures, including one or two black-and-white Egyptian! The plants were good here too, with an impressive large-flowered stork's-bill, Spanish Bluebell, the yellow-flowered bushes of the endemic *Adenophyllum argyrophyllum* and a Pignut-like umbellifer just coming into flower.

Time was now really pushing so we headed to the far end of the park in the hope of closer views of the raptors. However, a stop for a short walk in the shade of a pine wood proved to be ideal, since we noted hundreds of the delightful pale-flowered Angel's-tears narcissi, heard Crested Tit and saw Great Spotted Woodpecker, a couple of Black Vultures and a fly-over Short-toed Eagle.

We finally reached the Portilla del Tiétar at the N boundary of the park, though the lack of wind meant that there was nothing in the air as we arrived. We busied ourselves with checking the numerous brooding Griffons on their nests in the rock faces and the Cormorants and a Grey Heron on the edge of the reservoir and our patience was rewarded when a superb Black Stork glided down to come in and rest in the sun, the green, bronze and purple sheens of its 'black' plumage looking resplendent and contrasting hugely with the red bill and legs. We rounded off with another superb Large Tortoiseshell butterfly, coming back cross-country via the north of the park through vast areas of marvellous Cork Oak groves and Holm Oak dehesa, complete with fighting bulls.

## Tuesday 11 March – Santa Marta de Magasca

After another 9am exit we passed Trujillo and headed out through steppe and dehesa towards Santa Marta de Magasca. A light breeze kept temperatures down, though birds appeared in a seemingly barren landscape. A few Corn Buntings sang from fences, a female Southern Grey Shrike collected nest material and in the short grass just within visible range a pair of Black-bellied Sandgrouse shuffled around as they fed, with three Great Bustards brightening up the field behind them. A whistling sound off to one side revealed a flock of a little over a hundred Little Bustards that popped up then dropped down out of sight again in an *Osyris*-filled field.

Continuing, we turned off onto a side track to scan further apparently barren fields, though distant Buzzard, Raven and several Southern Grey Shrikes on the wires provided some interest. Farther on in the fields we split into two groups, with the walkers continuing on and the rest scanning and searching the fields in several places. The latter option revealed most birds, with two pairs of feeding Black-bellied Sandgrouse distantly in the same field as a pair of nesting Stone-curlews, which we approached closer and watched at leisure, though not before seeing a closer fly-by Black-bellied Sandgrouse and six distant, but loudly calling, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse.

We finally reached the end of the track and reunited with the walkers who'd also seen two Great Spotted Cuckoos, shortly afterwards seeing 10 Pin-tailed Sandgrouse in flight a little closer than before, while dozens of the sand crocus were popping up from the turf in the strengthening sun. A sadly dead Sharp-ribbed Salamander was an interesting find in a small pool and a male Northern Wheatear made an all-too-brief appearance.

Time was moving on, and after admiring another Great Spotted Cuckoo on the road and noting a couple of Rabbits, so a break and drinks outside at tables in Santa Marta de Magasca were very welcome, especially given the hordes of Civil Guard on motorbikes on the back-road. Juani the bar owner did us proud, also treating us to some fine, though simple *tapas*.

Despite the warm and very sunny conditions, the Río Magasca seemed very quiet at first, though after admiring the Stripe-necked Terrapins hauled out on rocks and numerous Crag Martins at the bridge, a stroll along the river revealed a few new flowers and a few raptors including Griffon and Black Vultures, Red Kites, Buzzards, a Short-toed Eagle and a Sparrowhawk passing over. A large and fairly fat Viperine Snake was also caught and admired by all, remaining generally very calm despite all the attention and gentle provocation to reveal why this close relative of the Grass Snake has this name.

We went back for our packed lunches before returning to eat by the river, noting fly-over Grey Wagtail, further new plants including *Moenchia erecta* and the tiny Early Forget-me-not amongst others. The gentle murmuring of the river and the cool air but hot sun made for a delightful lunch.

We took another detour, this time towards Cáceres, rising up onto open steppe where after a couple of very quick stops to admire the first Barbary Nut Irises in flower, a random stop revealed a wealth of tremendous birds. A Little Owl peeped from behind a stone on a stone shepherd's hut (but not stone shepherd...), but more impressive was a juvenile Golden Eagle which planed in the updraft of a slope before dropping into the grass. As we moved forward to find it again this disappeared, but another sub-adult Golden Eagle appeared being mobbed by two Buzzards, with Red Kites, several Lesser Kestrels and further Black and Griffon Vultures (*right*) also noted. A raucous call revealed a scrap between two Great Spotted Cuckoos which did a superb fly-by, while as these disappeared over a hill-top, so a couple of very distant raptors just above where they disappeared turned into a pair of Spanish Imperial Eagles!



Our last stop was in another area of fallow fields and steppe when the second bus picked up a couple of close Great Bustards. Stopping farther ahead for these we found 12 more in the field, while on the other side a late flock of Golden Plovers made an interesting sight as they sat in the grass alongside Crested and Calandra Larks and a Mistle Thrush! The verge here also yielded a couple more Barbary

Nut Irises and our first, though very brief Spanish *Psammmodromus* lizards. A group of Lapwings as we left rounded off a fine day in the vast expanses of the Extremaduran plains and river valleys.

As so often, it wasn't completely over however, as just after dusk most of us reconvened to try and see Mole Cricket, a rather strange burrowing cricket which had been singing nightly in a wet field below the finca. While we nearly all experienced its extraordinarily loud and slightly disorienting song when listening from vertically above the paired entrance hole, we were unable to see it (even when flooding the hole!), and we assumed that the insect had a dry escape tunnel in the surprisingly wet ground. Fascinating!

### **Wednesday 12 March – Finca Santa Marta, Río Almonte and Cabañas del Castillo**

Another bright and sunny start, though with a distinctly cool breeze, keeping birds down and notably quiet. We walked up through the Finca's orchards, finding a Greenfinch and pair of probable Thekla Larks in the vineyard, but before we could work out the latter, a call went up as one of the dogs carried over a large hedgehog - the first Algerian Hedgehog any of us had seen alive! This was successfully taken from the dog and left off to one side, while amazingly, as we continued up the hill, so the dog unearthed another!! We carried on, hearing a few Serins and Sardinian Warblers, but remarkably little bird-wise. The botanical streak in us began to take hold, searches revealing the exquisite little Amethyst Toadflax, plus Mediterranean Daphne, Suffocated Clover and other early spring flowers, with a superb Bath White and a brilliantly fresh Green Hairstreak for diversity. However, only once we had climbed over into an old track between the dry stone walls did more plants come to light: Strawberry Tree, Fly Honeysuckle, *Phyllirea angustifolia*, a purple Stock, Alexanders and the emerging clumps *Paeonia*, while in a near-abandoned olive orchard, a few clumps of Iberian Milk-vetch and masses of Champagne and various Iberian Milky Orchids were in perfect flower. A freshly sloughed Ladder Snake showed perfectly how staying still allows them to escape detection, as two of the dogs went straight past it just inches away despite it being in full view! A Humming-bird Hawkmoth, Wall Brown and a large Bee-fly were also respectively seen by a few, though given the sunny and rapidly warming conditions were not surprisingly highly mobile.

We came down, noting more and more butterflies, including a stunning Spanish Festoon, a very brief Scarce Swallowtail and a Clouded Yellow, while a male Sardinian Warbler now behaved better in the warm sun and a few Violet Carpenter Bees buzzed the almond blossom.

Most of us then met to head off for lunch on the edge of the Villuercas mountains, though we had to pass through the Belén steppes first. The warm conditions but still air had at first enticed only a few raptors up, but we stopped for an amazingly close Black Vulture which was perched just yards from the roadside ahead, which then moved some 30 yards farther on to sit a few feet from another, both affording us extraordinary prolonged views in near-perfect conditions. This allowed us time to see the subtle differences in the bill and facial pattern between young and older birds. It was as we were watching these that David also noticed a small group of Great Bustards beyond them which soon walked out of sight into dead ground. Five more Black and two Griffon Vultures were perched on the ground in the valley below us, apparently waiting for something to happen. A few Griffons, and Black and Red Kites were noted moving around over the extensive steppe, while a couple of Golden Plovers ran around on the grass trying not to be mown down by a large roving flock of sheep!

We paused again by a large pool to note a couple of Little Grebes, though had to stop shortly ahead yet again when a simply superb Short-toed Eagle circled over repeatedly at low height in perfect light.

We moved on decisively this time, and headed to a quiet spot by the Río Almonte for lunch. Crag and House Martins flitted around high overhead and a pair of Short-toed Eagles (including one with a snake dangling from its bill) passed over giving fine views, while Grey and White Wagtails livened up the rocks in the rapids. A few Brimstones were also very evident here, as were some Speckled Woods (of the southern orange-and-black form) and Large Tortoiseshells, but we were in for a few surprises. Firstly, some lovely Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem and Meadow Saxifrage were noted among the ever-increasing number of plants emerging in the mild conditions, though a number of Yellow Anemones stole the show, but as we returned, so an 'exploding' log produced a young spotty Ocellated Lizard and genuine Termites, a rock in the shade shielded a resting Sharp-ribbed Salamander and to cap it all, a broken piece of pipe covered a Three-toed Skink which fortunately didn't escape being caught and was a real delight and a remarkable little beast.

We headed to our last stop and a walk up to the rock outcrops at the hamlet of Cabañas del Castillo. Though the short walk up was hot, the abundance of butterflies was notable, while a superb male Black Wheatear failed to hide among the several Blue Rock Thrushes, despite giving us the run around, and pairs of Cirl and Rock Bunting were also present. The male wheatear was then joined by a female, though these soon disappeared.

We were now up on a broad ledge in the shade and with a delightful light breeze, overlooking a deep valley in front with simply magnificent views to the E comprised of the ridge in front, topped by a crest of rocky peaks. To the sound of singing Black Redstart, Blue Rock Thrush and Short-toed Treecreeper we scanned the far ridge-top for raptors, finding an Egyptian Vulture and Short-toed Eagle, then finally a Bonelli's Eagle, though while most were searching for this, we then found another, which came in to settle on a distant cliff-face. As we congratulated ourselves on this good luck the scream of a Peregrine met us and we turned to find one perched on a nearby ledge. What a finish to a remarkable day!

### Thursday 13 March – Trujillo and Belén plain

An early morning start for a trip to the Belén steppe again, this time in the quest for displaying Great Bustards. Despite a remarkably warm breeze at the finca, it was blowing much cooler on the plain, though this didn't put off about 10 male bustards trying sporadically to turn themselves inside out into white pom-poms in front of four females on the other side of a fence! We watched at leisure, the proceedings briefly interrupted as a pair of Stone-curlews flew across only to land in dead ground, which we finally managed to see as they flushed out later. We tried at another site, though this drew a blank, but as we headed back towards the Finca we located another group of the bustards with three males displaying beautifully on a slope below us. A great way to kick off the day!

The rest of the morning was taken up with a wander round historic Trujillo on lively market day. The Plaza Mayor with the imposing statue of Francisco Pizarro was our first stop, though we wound our way up through the ancient streets past the 13th century church to look down on the square, and then on to the castle from where the vistas in all directions were remarkable, with the surrounding steppes painted in swathes of green, white, yellow and purple due to the first flush of spring flowers.

We left via a mass buy at a shop with an excellent selection of Extremaduran products, finally pulling off a country road to have lunch by a little river in delightfully warm and tranquil conditions.

Birds were few, though a striking male Stonechat alarm-called on the other side of the river and a few Black Kites drifted around over the dehesa. We then walked along the river, though two logs at the beginning produced a fine False Smooth Snake and large 'nasty' centipede under one and a very active small Southern Smooth Snake under the other!

A few Spanish Fescos and Small Heaths were noted along the river, with lots of Sand Crocus emerging in clumps and a few Hoop-petticoat Narcissi in flower. A couple of Green Sandpipers and Snipe and a pair of Gadwall came up out of the river as we walked along to the sound of singing Woodlarks. Despite doubts over three red 'bulls' in the last field, we continued as they were not complete (!) and came over a little rise to see a reservoir with plenty of birds in front. Several Little Egrets, Green Sandpipers and a Greenshank, a pair of Wigeon, plenty of Great Crested Grebes, Teal, Mallard and Gadwall were all present apart from the numerous horrid 'dodgy' geese, though a shepherd and his dogs on the other bank flushed most before we could get good views... The shepherd provided great interest however, since with just a few whistles and tongue-clicking noises, a large group of loafing sheep suddenly sprang to life and rushed over to him through the trees bleating loudly! "One Man and his dog" eat your heart out! As they disappeared into the dehesa, so the ducks reappeared at the far end of the water, with a pair of Shoveler and a Little Grebe also coming out.

Things seemed slow though, despite a fine Iberian Hare and a fly-by and briefly perched Stone-curlew, so we started back only to find birthday boy asleep under a tree... David picked out a dark-phase Booted Eagle (*right*) among the numerous Black Kites circling



overhead and those able to see it in the scopes saw the little white "landing lights" at the base of the upperwings.

We also found a lovely little clump of Common Jonquil daffodils on a rock in the river as we returned, their fabulous fragrance being noted by all those who approached closely enough, and as we later read, is used as a base in some perfumes. We also stopped for a Humming-bird Hawkmoth that was laying eggs on bedstraw near the river.

We came back via the Belén Plain again, firstly stopping for a Rock Sparrow perched on a wire, which flew down to mix with a flock of c.30 more, though sadly these shot off before most could see them in the scopes, and secondly for two distantly perched Black Vultures which led to the discovery of two Great Bustards flying-in!

Tea and coffee was again taken with a birthday cake, our third of the week (!) while we finished off the day with a meal out in Trujillo to give the Finca staff a well-deserved break.

### **Friday 14 March - Embalse de Arrocampo and Monfragüe**

A normal start, with a bit of a drive up to the Embalse de Arrocampo, but where we met mild and very still conditions, ideal for birdwatching. Numerous Cetti's Warblers shouted from the scrub, Spanish Sparrows 'shreeped' from bushes and a White Stork's nest on a pylon, Purple Swamp-hens grunted and stalked their way around in the Reedmace beds, Marsh Harriers circled up and the same small group of Red Avadavats as on the first afternoon squeaked from the rushes. A few things were new however, and we saw a couple of stripey-necked Purple Herons, Stephen found an Osprey circling at distance which came in to land on a pylon, a calling Redshank flew over alongside a Green Sandpiper and a couple of Sand Martins 'buzzed' past a few of us. Stephen also managed to see a Water Rail that crept out onto mud where a few Snipe and a Water Pipit had been noted. We finally left for coffee, stopping to admire the Osprey that was now dismembering a surprisingly large fish on a small electricity pole close to the road.

After our break, we headed to Monfragüe, with a wrong turning resulting in our favour as we arrived in still conditions, but just before a breeze picked up. Little apart from a Jay crossing the reservoir and the brooding Griffons and a few Red-rumped Swallows (*right*) round the peak were notable until the breeze appeared. This drew out a few raptors, including a pair of Bonelli's Eagles at remarkably close range, and later Black Vulture, Griffons, no less than three distant Spanish Imperial Eagles and also a pair of superb Black Storks which had been stood on a nearby nest beforehand - what a view!!! We took a late lunch, watching the antics of these birds, plus a Sparrowhawk, brief Buzzard and high-flying Red Kites, to the sound of Blue Rock Thrushes, Long-tailed Tits, Rock Bunting and a superb male Subalpine Warbler, also seeing all of these in due course.

This was just magic, this wildlife 'bonanza' further emphasised by various butterflies and topped-off by the excellent find of at least three large Viperine Snakes in a tail-twitching breeding 'frenzy' a little below the lunch site!

We stopped briefly to look unsuccessfully for close Egyptian Vultures en route to the bar at Villareal de San Carlos, but saw then saw them circling here by the village as a Short-toed Eagle quartered the adjacent meadows.

Our last stop was at the Salto del Gitano car park where we barely even bothered to get the scopes out, sitting with our backs to the barrier to help us look up into the blue. Odd Black Vultures and Black Kites plus up to 70 Griffons at a time circled overhead in a stunning aerial ballet, the wind audibly rushing through their wings as small groups of the latter sped across from one side of the river to the other and a few pairs in remarkable synchronised flying displays. We watched spellbound, only changing to watch as a couple of Griffons perched on a nearby pinnacle, first to squabble but then to



delicately preen, and then back again as a screaming Peregrine came into view and circled round the nearest peak!

This was a perfect end to a genuinely remarkable trip, and the trip back to the Finca seeming rapid, with just enough time for drinks and call-over before a talk by Santiago Villa representing the Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO/BirdLife). After presenting him with a cheque from the group towards conservation issues (currently dominated by the Galician oil-spill disaster and Spanish Hydrological (“Hydraulic”!) Plan), we had time to organise ourselves before our final meal, which came to a rapid natural end after pointing out a Moorish Gecko on the dingy room wall!

### **Saturday 15 March – Finca Santa Marta to Madrid**

The journey home is always a bit of a come down, but the ominous silence in the buses said it all. Things were not so bad however, with a Great Bustard flying over near the Finca, swathes of flowers along the roadside fields and a couple of groups of Black-winged Stilts on pools plus a fly-over Black-winged Kite to say goodbye.



We sincerely hope that you enjoyed the trip as much as we did and will come back again in the future to sample even more of the area and its extraordinary richness and biodiversity. We look forward to seeing you again.

John Muddeman & David Collins

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## **HIGHLIGHTS**

With so many wonderful animals and plants seen, the members of the group found it hard to decide what they had enjoyed most. However, the following were all mentioned during a thorough cross-examination at the end of the week.

### **Birds**

Azure-winged Magpies  
Black Stork (2 votes)  
Large numbers of White Storks  
Griffon Vultures  
Bonelli's Eagles  
Purple Gallinule  
Black-shouldered Kite  
Southern Grey Shrike  
Hoopoe (3 votes)  
The variety and views of birds of prey during lunch on the last day.

### **Other things**

Algerian Hedgehogs  
Mole Crickets  
Three-toed Skink  
The narcissi  
Amethyst Toadflax  
Spanish Festoon  
Iberian Milk-vetch  
The wine at FSM!!

## BIRDS

This is the combined list for the whole group.

FSM = Finca Santa Marta; MRF = Madrigalejo rice fields area.

**Little Grebe:** Seen on 5 dates, with a maximum of 6 (various locations) on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Great Crested Grebe:** Seen on 5 dates, with at least 6 at Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-necked Grebe:** 4 in the distance at Embalse de Sierra Brava on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Cormorant:** Recorded every day, often in good numbers. Significant northward migration noted, with maximum of 60 seen on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Cattle Egret:** Noted daily, mostly in small numbers by the roadside N of Finca Santa Marta, but a hundred or so regularly seen in a particular tree beside the road north of Trujillo, presumably be a nesting colony.

**Little Egret:** Small numbers on four dates, with maximum of about 10 at Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey Heron:** A few seen every day, with maximum of 6 on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Purple Heron:** 2 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Black Stork:** Mostly in Monfragüe (5 on 10<sup>th</sup> and 8 on 14<sup>th</sup>), but one over plains near Santa Marta de Magasca on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**White Stork:** Very common and seen daily with many nests on trees and buildings, including right in the centre of Trujillo.

**Wigeon:** 2 at Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Gadwall:** Good numbers in the distance at Embalse de Sierra Brava on 9<sup>th</sup>, about 25 at Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>, and 3 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Teal:** About 25 at Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Mallard:** Seen almost daily and widely in small numbers,

**Shoveler:** Small numbers at Embalse de Arrocampo and Embalse de Sierra Brava.

**Tufted Duck:** 15 at Embalse de Sierra Brava on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Osprey:** Great views of one with a fish at Embalse de Arrocampo on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-shouldered Kite:** a pair in dehesa near Campo Lugar on 9<sup>th</sup>, and 1 flying over the road on the way back to Madrid!

**Black Kite:** 5-10 seen each day.

**Red Kite:** Similar numbers to Black Kite, and often with them.

**Egyptian Vulture:** Seen mostly in Monfragüe, where 4 on 4 on 10<sup>th</sup> and 6 on 14<sup>th</sup>. Also 1 in the Cabañas del Castillo area.

**Griffon Vulture:** Not seen on the first two days, but good numbers on other dates. Highest number in one place was 70 at Peñafalcón in Monfragüe on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Black Vulture:** Every day except the first two. Maximum of 15 seen on 12<sup>th</sup>, including extraordinary close views of 2 on the Belén Plain.

**Short-toed Eagle:** Singles over the pine wood in Monfragüe on 10<sup>th</sup>, and over the Río Magasca near Santa Marta on 11<sup>th</sup>. A total of no less than 6 seen on 12<sup>th</sup>, then 2 singles on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Marsh Harrier:** A few seen at Embalse de Arrocampo on both visits, and several around the MRF area on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Hen Harrier:** Good views of a fine adult male over plains east of Campo Lugar on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Sparrowhawk:** Singles on three dates.

**Common Buzzard:** Seen daily at widely dispersed sites, though in small numbers.

**Spanish Imperial Eagle:** An impressive total of 8 individuals seen as follows: on 10<sup>th</sup> a second year bird over the Río Almonte near Jaraicejo, an adult over dehesa between there and Torrejón el Rubio, and another young bird near Peñafalcón in the Monfragüe National Park; on 11<sup>th</sup> a pair over open country south of Santa Marta de Magasca; and 3 distant birds near the Portilla del Tiétar in Monfragüe again on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Golden Eagle:** 1 sub-adult and 1 juvenile south of Santa Marta de Magasca on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Bonelli's Eagle:** A pair in the Sierra de Viejas on on 12<sup>th</sup> and superb views of another pair at the Portilla del Tiétar in Monfragüe on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Booted Eagle:** One on a fence post by the road on the way to Finca Santa Marta on 8<sup>th</sup>, and a dark phase bird at Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Lesser Kestrel:** Seen in good numbers every day, especially in Trujillo.

**Kestrel:** 1 or 2 identified most days, but often overlooked!

**Peregrine Falcon:** Singles at Cabañas del Castillo on 12<sup>th</sup> and, fittingly, at Peñafalcón in Monfragüe on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Red-legged Partridge:** Small numbers seen on three dates.

**Water Rail:** Heard during both visits to Embalse de Arrocampo.

**Moorhen:** Small numbers on four dates.

**Purple Swamp-hen [Gallinule]:** Up to 10 seen at Embalse de Arrocampo.

**Coot:** Small numbers at Embalse de Arrocampo and Embalse de Sierra Brava.

**Common Crane:** 40 or more seen in the Vegas Altas/Campo Lugar area on 9<sup>th</sup>, and 25 migrating over Castillo de Monfragüe on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Little Bustard:** On 9<sup>th</sup>, a flock of 17 on plains near Zorita. On 11<sup>th</sup>, a magnificent flock of more than 100 in flight south of Santa Marta de Magasca.

**Great Bustard:** On plains between Zorita and Vegas Altas, no less than 37 birds logged on 9<sup>th</sup>. Also seen in good numbers on 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, when more than 20 seen south of Santa Marta de Magasca and on the Belén Plains respectively. Also on the Belén Plains, 5 seen on 12<sup>th</sup>. Finally, one flying over the road quite close to Finca Santa Marta as we drove towards Madrid on 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Stone-curlew:** 1 over Finca Santa Marta at dusk on the first day; 3 on plains near Zorita on 9<sup>th</sup>; a pair with a nest on plains south of Santa Marta de Magasca on 11<sup>th</sup>; and four on the Belén Plains on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Black-winged Stilt:** 2 at a roadside pool from the minibuses on the way to Finca Santa Marta from the airport on 8<sup>th</sup>; 2 on pools in Trujillo on 10<sup>th</sup>; and at least 9 seen from the minibuses on the way back to the airport.

**Little Ringed Plover:** A pair by the Río Almonte near Jaraicejo on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Golden Plover:** Flock of about 60 on plains SW of Santa Marta de Magasca on 11<sup>th</sup>; and two on the Belén Plain the following day.

**Lapwing:** 10 near Vegas Altas on 9<sup>th</sup>; 1 on the Río Almonte near Jaraicejo on 10<sup>th</sup>; no less than 25 recorded in the Santa Marta de Magasca area on 11<sup>th</sup>; and 10 at Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Snipe:** 15 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8<sup>th</sup>; 5 at Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>, and 3 at Embalse de Arrocampo again on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Redshank:** 1 flying over at Embalse de Arrocampo on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Greenshank:** 2 at Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Green Sandpiper:** 1 at a pool by the bullring in Trujillo on 10<sup>th</sup>; 5 Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>; and 1 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Sandpiper:** 5 birds seen in various locations on 9<sup>th</sup>, and 1 at the pool by the bullring in Trujillo on 10<sup>th</sup>;

**Black-headed Gull:** Good numbers seen on the first couple of days only.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** A scattering of records on three dates.

**Black-bellied Sandgrouse:** A total of 7 birds seen in open steppe south of Santa Marta de Magasca on 11<sup>th</sup>, and perhaps 1 at Belén plains on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Pin-tailed Sandgrouse:** A total of 16 birds recorded in the same area as the Black-bellied Sandgrouse on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon:** Common in Trujillo etc..

**Wood Pigeon:** Seen on four dates, with a flock of 15 near Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Collared Dove:** A pair at FSM daily.

**Great Spotted Cuckoo:** A pair courtship feeding near Zorita on 9<sup>th</sup>, and 6 different birds seen in various places in steppe habitat south of Santa Marta de Magasca on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Scops Owl:** calling around FSM from 11<sup>th</sup> onwards.

**Little Owl:** several calling around FSM every evening, and several seen during the day as follows: 1 near Zorita on 9<sup>th</sup>; 2 in the Santa Marta de Magasca area on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Pallid Swift:** About 10 birds in Trujillo on 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Kingfisher:** 1 seen on the way to FSM on 8<sup>th</sup>, and another seen well at the Río Almonte near Jaraicejo on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Hoopoe:** Noted regularly each day at various sites.

**Green Woodpecker:** Heard around FSM

**Great Spotted Woodpecker:** Drumming around FSM.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker:** One drumming and calling around FSM in the early part of the week.

**Calandra Lark:** About 10 seen on 9<sup>th</sup> in steppe habitats around Zorita

**Crested Lark:** Widespread and seen daily in variable numbers.

**Thekla Lark:** 1 singing and seen well by the Río Almonte near Jaraicejo on 10<sup>th</sup>, and possibly a pair around FSM on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Woodlark:** Seen or heard on 5 days, including 3 in dehesa west of Jaraicejo on 10<sup>th</sup>; at least 2 singing on the hillside above FSM on 12<sup>th</sup>; and 1 seen well near Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Skylark:** 1 over Belén steppe on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Sand Martin:** 2 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Crag Martin:** Seen on five dates, with about twenty seen on both 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Swallow:** Seen every day.

**Red-rumped Swallow:** A few seen each day. There appeared to have been an influx on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**House Martin:** Seen daily, but generally in small numbers.

**Meadow Pipit:** Small flocks noted on four dates.

**Water Pipit:** Winter plumage birds, mainly in with flocks of Meadow Pipits on four dates, including 12 on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Grey Wagtail:** One by the Río Magasca on 11<sup>th</sup>, and 2 by the Río Almonte near Cabañas del Castillo on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**White Wagtail:** Seen daily and widely in small number.

**Wren:** Small numbers daily, including around FSM.

**Robin:** 1 or 2 birds on 5 dates.

**Black Redstart:** Rather scarce, but a few seen on 4 dates.

**Stonechat:** Seen in small numbers almost daily.

**Northern Wheatear:** A male in steppe habitat south of Santa Marta de Magasca on 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Black Wheatear:** A pair on the rocks by Cabañas del Castillo on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Blue Rock Thrush:** Seen in small numbers in Monfragüe Natural Park on both visits, and also around Cabañas del Castillo on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Blackbird:** Recorded every day.

**Song Thrush:** Small numbers seen most days, including around FSM.

**Mistle Thrush:** Single birds seen on three dates.

**Cetti's Warbler:** Several singing at Embalse de Arrocampo, and one or two seen well by most of the group on 14<sup>th</sup>. Also heard on two other dates.

**Zitting Cisticola [=Fan-tailed Warbler]:** Small numbers on 5 dates.

**Subalpine Warbler:** A fine male at the Portilla del Tiétar in Monfragüe Natural Park on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Sardinian Warbler:** Heard and occasionally seen most days, including around FSM.

**Blackcap:** 4 around the water tank at FSM all week, and one or two birds singing in other areas.

**Chiffchaff:** The most numerous warbler. Seen every day in varying numbers.

**Long-tailed Tit:** Noted on small numbers on four dates.

**Crested Tit:** One heard calling in pines in Monfragüe on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Blue Tit:** Small numbers in wooded areas daily.

**Great Tit:** Small numbers in wooded areas daily.

**Short-toed Treecreeper:** A few heard and occasionally seen most days.

**Southern Grey Shrike:** A few seen in steppe habitats on four dates.

**Jay:** Single birds seen on both visits to Monfragüe.

**Azure-winged Magpie:** Seen each full day, with good numbers around FSM.

**Magpie:** Noted daily in moderate number.

**Jackdaw:** Small numbers noted each full day, especially near Trujillo.

**Raven:** Small numbers seen daily, with pairs at FSM and Monfragüe.

**Spotless Starling:** Common.

**House Sparrow:** Common.

**Spanish Sparrow:** About 50 at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8<sup>th</sup>, and hundreds seen the following day around MRF and Campo Lugar. 10 noted at Embalse de Arrocampo again on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Rock Sparrow:** 1 near Campo Lugar on 9<sup>th</sup>, and a flock of 30 or so at Belén plain on 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Red Avadavat:** Several flocks, totalling around 30 birds in the MRF area on 9<sup>th</sup>, and 5 or so at Embalse de Arrocampo on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Waxbill:** Flocks totalling at least 15 birds, mixed with Red Avadavats, in the MRF area on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Chaffinch:** Noted daily in small number in numerous locations.

**Serin:** Seen and heard daily, including around FSM.

**Greenfinch:** Noted in small numbers on three dates only.

**Goldfinch:** Noted each full day in moderate number.

**Linnet:** Small numbers on each full day.

**Siskin:** 2 near FSM on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Hawfinch:** Several at FSM all week. Also seen in trees below Castillo de Monfragüe on 101th.

**Cirl Bunting:** Pairs at the Río Almonte near Jaraicejo on 10<sup>th</sup> and at Cabañas del Castillo on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Rock Bunting:** Pairs seen in three areas as follows: Peñafalcón car park on 10<sup>th</sup>; Cabañas del Castillos on 12<sup>th</sup>; and at the Portilla del Tiétar in Monfragüe again on 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Corn Bunting:** Noted daily and commonly.

## BUTTERFLIES

**Swallowtail:** one or two on several dates.

**Scarce Swallowtail:** 1 near Finca Sta Marta on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Spanish Festoon:** Seen on several dates, and becoming quite numerous during the week.

**Large White:** one or two seen most days.

**Small White:** one on 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Green-striped White:** Quite common in the open steppe areas.

**Western Dappled White:** The commonest white.

**Bath White:** 1 identified near Finca Sta Marta on 12<sup>th</sup>, but probably many more flying past.

**Brimstone:** 1 by Almonte in Villuercos mountains

**Clouded Yellow:** Small numbers seen on a few days.

**Cleopatra (right):** A few seen most days

**Nettle-tree Butterfly:** A few in Monfragüe on 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Large Tortoiseshell:** A few seen on a few days.

**Red Admiral:** small numbers on several dates

**Painted Lady:** one or two on several dates

**Small Heath:** Seen most days, often quite numerous.

**Southern Speckled Wood:** 1 seen on 12<sup>th</sup>.

**Wall Brown:** 1 near Finca Sta Marta on 12<sup>th</sup>

**Provence Hairstreak:**

**Green Hairstreak:** 1 near Finca Sta Marta on 12<sup>th</sup>

**Small Copper:** Seen most days.

**Holly Blue:** quite numerous



**MAMMALS: 'Iberian' Hare** *Lepus* sp. \* - one on the Zorita steppes on 9<sup>th</sup>, one by the Emb. del Tozo on 13<sup>th</sup>, **Otter** *Lutra lutra* scats in the Vegas Altas rice fields on 9<sup>th</sup>, a few **Rabbit** *Oryctolagus cuniculus* in the Sta Marta de Magasca area on 11<sup>th</sup>, two (probably) **Algerian Hedgehogs** *Erinaceus algirus* unearthed by the dogs at FSM on 12<sup>th</sup>, and a small mouse, probably **Algerian Mouse** *Mus spretus* also there on 12<sup>th</sup>.

\*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* - a rather nice one though!

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS:** The terrapins seen at the Emb. de Arrocampo on 8<sup>th</sup>, the Río Magasca on 11<sup>th</sup> and Emb. del Tozo on 13<sup>th</sup> were **Stripe-necked Terrapins** *Mauremys caspica*; the cold and hence very confiding brown **Ladder Snake** *Elaphe scalaris* picked up on the Zorita steppes on 9<sup>th</sup> and oddly confiding large one at FSM

on 12th; the small **Viperine Snake** *Natrix maura* picked up on the Zorita steppes on 9th, a large one by the Río Magasca on 11th and at least three large ones in a mating knot at Monfragüe on 14th; the very confiding **False Smooth Snake** *Macroprotodon cucullatus* and small **Southern Smooth Snake** *Coronilla girondicus* near the Emb. del Tozo on 13th; 3 **Large Psammmodromus** *Psammmodromus algirus* at Monfragüe on 10th, 4+ in total on 11th, several on 12th; two brief **Spanish Psammmodromus** *Psammmodromus hispanicus* near Cáceres on 11th; the small spotty **Ocellated Lizard** *Lacerta lepida* by the Río Almonte near Cabañas del Castillo on 12th; the remarkable **Three-toed Skink** *Chalcides chalcides* also there; a few small **Iberian Wall Lizards** *Podarcis hispanica* in Trujillo on 13th; the rather shy **Moorish Gecko** *Tarentola mauretana* at FSM late after dinner on 12th and one on 14th; **Common Toad** *Bufo bufo* one or two heard croaking in a couple of rivers; one or two **Stripeless Tree Frogs** *Hyla meridionalis* calling loudly at FSM nightly; **Iberian Pool Frog** (*Rana perezii*) was frequent in the rivers and even drainage channels, e.g. near Vegas Altas on 9th, with its 'laughing' heard in vau places and very loud calls at FSM nightly; a single dead **Iberian Marbled Newt** *Triturus pygmaeus* at FSM; a dead **Sharp-ribbed Salamander** *Pleurodeles waltl* near Sta Marta de Magasca on 11th, but live one by the Río Almonte near Cabañas del Castillo on 12th.

**OTHER TAXA:** included **Iberian Blue-tailed Damselfly** *Ischnura graelsii* at Embalse de Arrocampo on 8<sup>th</sup>, an **Egyptian Grasshopper/Locust** *Anacridium aegyptium* at Torrejón el Rubio on 10th, trilling **Mole Crickets** *Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa* at FSM nightly, **Rhinoceros Beetle** *Copris lunaris* at FSM on 11th and 12th, the proposed **Black Widow Spider** at FSM on 12<sup>th</sup> was probably actually *Steatodea paykulliana* which is also supposed to have a poisonous bite for humans, the **Termites** *Reticulitermes lucifugus* in fallen wood by the Río Almonte near Cabañas del Castillo on 12th and by the Río Tozo on 13th, and also a **Glow-worm** *Lampyrus noctileuca* under a rock by the Río Almonte near Cabañas del Castillo on 12<sup>th</sup>. Near Tozo Reservoir on 13<sup>th</sup>, the rock under which the False Smooth Snake was found also had an astonishingly large and dangerously poisonous centipede *Scolopendra cingulatus*. Also in that area, a **Hummingbird Hawk Moth** *Macroglossum stellatarum* laying eggs on bedstraw. **Violet Carpenter Bees** *Xylocopa violacea* and species of bee-fly (Bombyliidae) were seen most days. Finally the little **Velvet Ant** sp. Mutillidae at Monfragüe on 14th.

## SELECTED PLANTS

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

**Pinaceae:** *Pinus pinea* Stone / Umbrella Pine (3)

**Fagaceae:** *Quercus rotundifolia* Evergreen Oak (26)  
*Quercus suber* Cork Oak (27)

**Ulmaceae:** *Ulmus minor* Elm sp. (c. 38)  
*Celtis australis* Southern Nettle Tree (39)

### **Caryophyllaceae:**

*Cerastium glomeratum* Clustered Mouseear (c.128)  
*Paronychia argentea* Paronychia (prob. this sp.) (136)  
*Spergularia rubra?* Sand spurrey (146)  
*Silene colorata* Campion sp. (180)  
*Moenchia erecta* Upright Chickweed

### **Ranunculaceae:**

*Ranunculus* sp. Water Crowfoot sp.  
*Ranunculus* sp. Buttercup sp.  
*Anemone palmata* Yellow Anemone (218)

<b><u>Fumariaceae:</u></b>	<i>Fumaria capreolata</i>	Ramping Fumitory (303)
<b><u>Cruciferae:</u></b>	<i>Malcolmia sp?</i> <i>Eruca sativa</i>	Stock sp. Eruca (361)
<b><u>Crassulaceae:</u></b>	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i> <i>Crassula tillaea</i>	Navelwort (396) Mossy Stonecrop
<b><u>Saxifragaceae:</u></b>	<i>Saxifraga tridactyla</i> <i>Saxifraga granulata</i>	Rue-leaved Saxifrage Meadow Saxifrage
<b><u>Leguminosae:</u></b>	<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i> <i>Acacia dealbata</i> <i>Cytisus multiflorus</i> <i>Cytisus scoparius</i> <i>Adenocarpus argyrophyllus</i> <i>Lupinus ?hispanicus</i> <i>Astragalus lusitanicus</i> <i>Vicia lutea</i> <i>Medicago arabica</i> <i>Trifolium suffocatum</i>	Judas Tree (430) 'Mimosa' or Silver Wattle (432) White Broom Broom (456) Spanish Adenocarpus (482) Iberian Lupin (prob. this sp.) (c. 484) 'Iberian' Milk-vetch (504) Yellow Vetch (525) Spotted Medick (623) Suffocated Clover
<b><u>Oxalidaceae:</u></b>	<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i>	Bermuda Buttercup (735)
<b><u>Geraniaceae:</u></b>	<i>Geranium molle</i> <i>Erodium botrys</i>	Dove's-foot Crane's-bill (741) Storksbill sp. (758)
<b><u>Euphorbiaceae:</u></b>	<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	Annual Mercury (820)
<b><u>Violaceae:</u></b>	<i>Viola kitaibeliana</i> <i>Viola sp.</i>	Dwarf Pansy (931) Violet
<b><u>Thymelaeaceae:</u></b>	<i>Daphne gnidium</i>	Daphne (936)
<b><u>Cistaceae:</u></b>	<i>Cistus albidus</i> <i>Cistus salviifolius</i> <i>Cistus ladanifer</i>	Grey-leaved Cistus (big pink fls) (961) Sage-leaved Cistus (small white)(965) Gum Cistus (big white fls) (971)
<b><u>Cactaceae:</u></b>	<i>Opuntia maxima (=ficus-indica)</i>	Prickly Pear (1040)
<b><u>Umbelliferae:</u></b>	<i>Smyrniolum perfoliatum</i> <i>Scandix pecten-veneris</i> <i>Oenanthe sp.</i>	Perfoliate Alexanders (1088) Shepherd's Needles (1097) Water-dropwort (poisonous!)
<b><u>Ericaceae:</u></b>	<i>Arbutus unedo</i> <i>Erica arborea</i> <i>Erica lusitanica</i>	Strawberry Tree (1176) Tree Heath (pink fls in EX) (1178) Portuguese Heath (white fls) (1179)
<b><u>Primulaceae:</u></b>	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Scarlet Pimpernel (1198)
<b><u>Oleaceae:</u></b>	<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i> <i>Olea europaea</i>	(1245) Olive (1248)
<b><u>Boraginaceae:</u></b>	<i>Anchusa undulata</i> <i>Myosotis ramosissima</i>	Undualte Anchusa (1406) Early Forget-me-not

**Labiatae:** *Rosmarinus officinalis* Rosemary (1526)  
*Lavandula stoechas* French Lavender (1528)  
*Salvia verbenaca* Wild Clary (1545)

**Solanaceae:** *Hyosciamus albus* White Henbane (1555)

**Scrophularicaea:**  
*Linaria amethystea* 'Amethyst' Toadflax (c. 1614)  
*Veronica verna?* A very small speedwell

**Caprifoliaceae:**  
*Lonicera xylosteum* Fly Honeysuckle

**Compositae:** *Bellis annua* Annual Daisy (1791)  
*Bellis sylvestris* Southern Daisy (1793)  
*Calendula arvensis* Field Marigold (1908)  
*Galactites tomentosa* Galactites (1971)  
*Silybum marianum* Milk Thistle (1982)

**Liliaceae:** *Asphodelus aestivus* Common Asphodel (2089)  
*Gagea elliptica* Yellow Star-of-Bethlehem sp. (c 2106)  
*Ornithogalum ?narbonense* Star-of-Bethlehem sp. (2171)  
*Scilla peruviana?* Squill (leaves only) (2183)  
*Hyacinthoides hispanica* Spanish Bluebell (2191)  
*Muscari comosum* Tassel Hyacinth (2201) (*illustrated right*)  
*Asparagus acutiflorus?* A shrubby asparagus (c 2212)  
*Narcissus triandrus papyraceus* Angel's Tears (small  
pale fls)  
*Narcissus jonquilla* Common Jonquil (not *rupicola*) (2279)  
*Narcissus bulbocodium* Hoop-petticoat Narcissus (2281)

**Iridaceae:** *Gynandriris sisyrinchium* Barbary Nut Iris (2305)  
*Iris germanica?* A large iris (2291)  
*Romulea ramiflora gaditana* Sand Crocus sp. (2316a)  
*Romulea columnae* Sand Crocus (2320)

**Orchidaceae:** *Orchis champagneuxii* Champagne Orchid (2405)  
*Orchis lactea* Milky Orchid (2408)  
*Ophrys tenthredinifera* Sawfly Orchid (2442)

**Gramineae:** *Lamarckia aurea* Golden Dog's-tail (2459)

**FERNS (PTERIDOPHYTA)**

*Cheilanthes sp.* (c 2517)  
*Ceterach officinarum* Rusty-back Fern (2532)



Cáceres, 21 april 2002

Dear Honeyguide groups:

It was a pleasure to meet you all at Finca Santa Marta in Trujillo to talk about the importance of Extremadura to protected birds.

Extremadura is a priority in terms of conservation of birds in Spain and in Europe. But, unfortunately for those we love nature, the progress is arriving at Extremadura in form of more new roads, highways, irrigation schemes and plans to build dams. We want to stress the need for making compatible the economic development with the adequate protection and management of such a diverse region. To achieve this aim, SEO/BirdLife has increased both monitoring and intervention activities in this region.

Your collaboration supports and encourages us to continue our actions in Extremadura, particularly to carry out our Conservation Programme.

On behalf of SEO/BirdLife, I want to acknowledge your collaboration and wish to meet you next year.

Marcelino Cardalliaguet  
Extremadura Conservation Officer