

Trip report, Spain (and a few hours in Portugal), 13-26/5 2001

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Itinerary:

13/5 Madrid airport -> Puerto de Navacerrada -> Sepúlveda (Hoces del Duratón)
14/5 Sepúlveda -> Fuente Dé (Picos de Europa)
15/5 Fuente Dé (Picos de Europa) -> Valladolid
16/5 Valladolid -> Monfragüe
17/5 Monfragüe
18/5 Monfragüe -> Degolados (Portugal) -> Badajoz
19/5 Badajoz -> El Rocío (Coto Doñana)
20/5 Coto Doñana
21/5 El Rocío -> Laguna de Medina -> Tarifa
22/5 Tarifa area
23/5 Tarifa -> Ronda -> Tarifa
24/5 Tarifa area
25/5 Tarifa area
26/5 Tarifa -> Malaga airport

Introduction

Me, my wife and our four-year-old son made a two-week trip in Spain in May 2001. We have birded abroad several times, both in Europe and Asia, but never before in mainland of Spain.

Preparing for the trip I listed of some very-much-wanted-species – our special “target species”, most of them “lifers” to us both. Our goal was to try to see all these species, if possible. We based our itinerary on this list. Originally the northern part of the country (Picos de Europa) was not included in our plan, but after calculating the distances and thinking of the mouth-watering species hopefully present (Wallcreeper, Alpine Accentor, Snowfinch, Alpine Chough etc.), we decided to visit this area too. The main disadvantage with this “last-minute-change” was that the northern area wasn’t planned as carefully as the other visited sites (e.g. too few backup-sites for Wallcreeper – being wise after the event!).

No need to explain how to get to Spain... We bought our tickets from the Spanish airline Iberia, to Madrid and back home from Malaga. We rented a car from Hertz (booked in advance from Sweden – it’s said to be cheaper that way) which we picked up at the Madrid airport and returned in that of Malaga’s. We drove 3140 km.

Almost everything was very nice in Spain. Nice food, lovely weather, excellent roads, fine hotels and very good birding! One minor problem was the road numbers. Many of them has been changed in recent years (don’t ask me why). This implies that directions in earlier trip reports and some literature (in e.g. Gosney site guides [7] and [8]) are difficult to follow. We made use of a Michelin map [26] printed 2001, but even this very recent publication sometimes (especially in the south) was outdated, referring to wrong road numbers. (I frequently mention road numbers in the text below myself, but keep in mind they can change over the night!)

References [in brackets] – see page 20.

Target species:

1. Citril Finch
2. Dupont's Lark
3. Wallcreeper
4. Alpine Chough
5. Alpine Accentor
6. Snowfinch
7. White-rumped Swift
8. Spanish Imperial Eagle
9. Black-shouldered Kite
10. Great Bustard
11. Great Spotted Cuckoo
12. Bonelli's Eagle
14. Red-necked Nightjar
15. Crested Coot
16. White-headed Duck
17. Black Wheatear

(I didn't dare to use no. 13...)

These plus some more new to us, but quite easy-to-find species in Spain:

Calandra Lark
Subalpine Warbler
Dartford Warbler
Melodious Warbler
Short-toed Treecreeper
Azure-winged Magpie
Spotless Starling
Red-billed Chough

We succeeded in seeing all but one of these species. I have already hinted which one – the one (according to Svensson [10]) “..very difficult to see..” Wallcreeper – we do agree!

Maybe a trip to the Spanish Pyrenees next time?!

/JD

Sunday 13/5

Madrid -> Puerto de Navacerrada (12:30-14:35):

From Madrid airport, we followed the signs for the NI (E5) road towards Burgos (the use of Roman Numerals on the map and on traffic signs puzzled us initially, e.g. NI means N1). This road took us due N and straight away from Madrid. About 40 km after Madrid we turned left at San Agustín del Guadalix (M104) and after we 17 km turned right (M607) and followed this road to Navacerrada. Just after Navacerrada we turned right (M601) and drove the last 7 km to Puerto de Navacerrada. Trip reports [11] and [12] were useful in the area and so were the personal comments from Mr. John Muddeman (thank you John!).

Birds on the way:

Spotless Starling, Calandra Lark (1), Red Kite, Black Kite, White Stork, Hoopoe, House Martin, Barn Swallow, Magpie, Carrion Crow (*corone*), Raven, House Sparrow, Great Grey Shrike (*meridionalis*; 4-5), Woodchat Shrike (1), Domestic Pigeon, Wood Pigeon, White Wagtail and Tree Sparrow (1 – the only one on the whole trip!).

Target species no. 1 Citril Finch (*Serinus citrinella*) in Puerto de Navacerrada area (14:35-16:45):

When we reached the top (the highest point in the pass, only about 50 m before the big road crossing CL601/M604) we turned left on a small, steep road, which ended near a Military building. Our directions were to: "Look along the banks and in the trees all along this road". The only problem was that we arrived on a Sunday afternoon and there were a lot of people out walking etc. Anyway, we first searched the area around the military building and I had a brief view of a pair of Citril Finches just to the right of the building. Later we searched the ski lift area just where the small, steep road begins (on the left-hand side). Here we had great views of at least four birds (probably two pairs) of the species and also heard and saw more birds passing.

Other birds:

Short-toed Treecreeper (1), Black Redstart (*aterrimus*; 2), Coal Tit (*britannicus*), Crested Tit, Great Tit, Nuthatch (*caesia*), Great Spotted Woodpecker, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Green Woodpecker (*sharpei*; 1), Song Thrush, Blackbird, Hobby (1), Common Swift, Griffon Vulture (10), Blackcap, Crest sp. (probably Goldcrest) and Chiffchaff (*brehmii*; 1).

Other "stake outs" in the area for Citril Finch – but not tried by us:

"The road crossing the Puerto de Morcuera (probably means along road M611 NE Puerto de Navacerrada) in the areas near the highest tree-level in the north slope."

"A few can sometimes be found in the Puerto de los Cotos area to the east (beginning of the walk to Peñalara). Maybe Gredos area too? - Yes, though can be very difficult around the Parador."

Puerto de Navacerrada -> Sepúlveda (16:45-18:30):

We left Puerto de Navacerrada and drove NE (M604). Passed Puerto de los Cotos, Rascafría and Lozoya, up again on NI (E5) and continued N until we found an exit at c. K110 (means 110 km from Madrid) signposted Riaza & Sepúlveda. We took this exit and at the "bottom" we turned left under the NI and then followed the signs for Sepúlveda.

Birds on the way (most records from short stops M604/Río Lozoya):

Bonelli's Warbler (*bonelli*; 3), Blackcap, House Martin, Barn Swallow, Jay, Booted Eagle (4), Wren and Great Crested Grebe (3-4 pairs in Embalse de Pinilla).

Sepúlveda:

In Sepúlveda we checked in at "Hostal Restaurante Villa de Sepúlveda" (7 500 ptas for double room). My family stayed at the hotel, but I headed for the tempting Dupont's Larks!

Target species no. 2 Dupont's Lark (*Chersophilus duponti*) in Hoces del Duratón area (19:30-20:45):

When I was planning this trip I read several trip reports from the Internet and also several site-guides. I first thought that we should search the Dupont's Lark in the SE of Spain (e.g. Almeria or Murcia) – with NE Spain (e.g. Zaragoza plains) totally out of the scope of our itinerary). But after reading "Where to Watch Birds in Spain – de Juana" [1], the trip report [2] and [5] and other, I realised that there was a very interesting area, quite close to Madrid, which seemed very reliable for this species!

053 Cañón del Duratón (Castilla y León)

41° 20'N, 03° 50'W 15,000 ha

Unprotected (**N.B. 1989!! See below. /comment by JD**)

A limestone canyon, carved by the River Duratón and its tributaries, downstream from Sepúlveda, with *Populus* plantations and *Salix* and *Ulmus* along the river; low open scrub (*Thymus*, *Lavandula*), xerophytic grasslands, and some small patches of *Juniperus thurifera* and *Quercus rotundifolia* on the sides of the canyon. The area is grazed by sheep.

The canyon holds important populations of cliff-nesting birds of prey with *Neophron percnopterus* (15 pairs), *Gyps fulvus* (170-180 pairs), and *Falco peregrinus* (12 pairs); also *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (min. 200 pairs), and ***Chersophilus duponti* (min. 50 pairs)** in areas of wasteland.

Description

Size of Skylark (L 18 cm), sandy-coloured and with long and slightly curved bill. The Dupont's Lark occupies flat areas, sparsely covered with scrubs and avoids large cultivated regions. The species feeds principally on insects. Resident.

Reasons for the need for protection/inclusion in annex I

The EU breeding population is about 14,000 pairs. The species is threatened through degradation of its natural habitat (the expansion of dry cultivation and afforestation) and fragmentation of its range. Additionally, illegal hunting and predation can occasionally have a negative effect on populations.

Cuts from ref. [3] and [4].

Parts of the area ("El Parque Natural del Duratón") is today protected "zonas de reserva" and you need some kind of permit to visit some parts of the area. To get this permit (hopefully!) you can write to:

Servicio Territorial de Medio Ambiente y Ordenación del Territorio

Junta de Castilla y León

Calle Santa Catalina 15

E-40003 Segovia

But the road/track between the small village of Villaseca and Ermita de San Frutos is NOT protected (as long as you stay on the road!).

From our Hostal I continued a few hundred meters towards the old town of Sepúlveda, turned right on a small road signposted "Urueñas", drove 4-5 km and turned left towards "Castrillo de Sepúlveda". In this (very small and narrow!) village I

held left (towards Villaseca). In Villaseca I took the track to the right (just past the church) - which leads to (and is signposted) the "Ermita de San Frutos". I continued this track for about 1-2 km (past the "dry stream valley") and stopped about 500 m after this obvious landmark.

The time was about 19:30 so I didn't expect to hear any Dupont's Larks until much later. But when I got out of the car I immediately heard the distinct song of that species! Not just one, but at least 3-4 birds! Scanning the area I soon spotted one bird singing from a small rock (stone). Great views!!

Other birds (N.B. Larks galore!):

Short-toed Lark, Calandra Lark (1), Thekla Lark, Crested Lark, Skylark, Wood Lark, Tawny Pipit, Black-eared Wheatear, Spectacled Warbler, Linnet, Common Cuckoo, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Golden Eagle (1 subad. – 3/5K), Griffon Vulture (>75), Common Buzzard, Red-billed Chough (2), Corn Bunting (everywhere!) and Stonechat.

Monday 14/5

Sepúlveda -> Ermita de San Frutos -> Sepúlveda (06:15-10:15):

Today the whole family went to the Dupont's site. The Larks were singing when we arrived and we birdwatched the area for about two hours (great views of the larks again). Later we continued the road/track to the monastery ("Ermita de San Frutos"). You can find a car park where the road ends and from there you can walk the last km to the monastery. This walk is very nice and you have great views (from above) of the vultures (and other raptors) in the "canyon" below.

Birds seen:

Eagle Owl (1 perched on a pole before dawn, close to Castrillo de Sepúlveda), Dupont's Lark (at least 4-5), the same lark species as yesterday, Red-billed Chough (>75), Jackdaw, Kestrel, Black Kite (15-20), Griffon Vulture (>50), Red-legged Partridge (5-6 males displaying), Hoopoe (calling everywhere early morning), Woodchat Shrike (>10), Black-eared Wheatear (>10), Bee-eater (10 on wires on the way back to Sepúlveda), Rock Bunting, Cirl Bunting, Rock Sparrow (3), Rock Martin, Dartford Warbler, Orphean Warbler (3), Serin, Egyptian Vulture (2), Goldfinch, Linnet, Nightingale, Common Swift and Northern Wheatear.

Sepúlveda -> Fuente Dé (12:30-19:00):

After a late breakfast we headed northwards. We followed the NI to Burgos, continued N623 for 19 km, and took the left-fork (N627) to Aguilar de Campoo (where we had lunch in "Hotel Valentin"). Minor road (P212) to Cervera de Pisuerga and then the (very!) winding road (627) to Ojedo (close to Potes), finally the last 25 km from Ojedo to Fuente Dé. A rather long trip, but we took our time and drove quite slowly (you have no choice the last 80 km!).

Birds on the way:

Montagu's Harrier, Black Kite, Common Buzzard, Booted Eagle, Griffon Vulture, White Stork, Robin, Mallard, Great Crested Grebe and Grey Wagtail.

In Potes:

Firecrest.

In Fuente Dé:

Black Redstart and Linnet.

We found a nice two-star-hotel ("Rebecca"; 7 500 ptas for double room) just 50 m from the cable-car-station in Fuente Dé. It was raining that evening...

Tuesday 15/5

"Picos de Europa" – cable-car from Fuente Dé and a little walking in snow (10:00-15:30):

Fortunately the rain had ceased when we looked out of the hotel window at about 07:30. The first cable-car-ride was scheduled 10:00 (1300 ptas return for adult), so we had time for some breakfast and a little birdwatching in Fuente Dé.

Useful literature was [1], [7] and [19] and trip reports [6], [22], [23] and [24].

Birds round the cable-car-station (down) in Fuente Dé:

March Tit, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Black Redstart and Firecrest

Target species no. 3-6 Wallcreeper (*Tichodroma muraria*), Alpine Chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*), Alpine Accentor (*Prunella collaris*) and Snowfinch (*Montifringilla nivalis*) in Picos de Europa area:

I totally agree with Phil Cruttenden (in [6]) referring to the cable-car-ride – "the ride is spectacular". An 800 m sheer cliff in less than five minutes! At "the top" ("Mirador del Cable") we walked the obvious path until it splits (about 500 m). Then we followed the left-fork another 5-800 m until the path made an obvious "U-turn" and we found ourselves between very high cliffs on the right ("La Vueltona") and lower cliffs on the left. This ought to be the famous Wallcreeper-site! Well, we didn't see any Wallcreepers, though we stayed on the spot until about 14:30, scanning the crags and cliffs again and again and again... Maybe the weather condition wasn't the best, rather cloudy and windy and still a lot of snow in the valley? But you have to save some species for a later occasion, eh?!?

We had splendid views of all the other target species. The Snowfinches were seen closer to the cable-car-station, near the small "lakes" present alongside the path. Alpine Choughs and Alpine Accentors at a very close range - less than one meter – while we had "pique-nique" in the snow at the Wallcreeper-site! My son made a special "banana-pizza" for the Alpine Choughs!

Birds seen along the walk:

Northern Wheatear (2), Snowfinch (>4), Red-billed Chough (>20), Alpine Chough (>50), Alpine Accentor (>4), Kestrel (1), Griffon Vulture (1), Carrion Crow (10), Black Redstart (2) and Rock Dove (25). But no Wallcreeper and no Water Pipit!

Fuente Dé -> Potes -> La Hermida -> beginning of the path to Trevisio in Urdion (15:45-18:00):

We tried another (Gosney) site for the Wallcreeper, see [7] page 34-35, site 1, but in vain.

Other birds at this site:

Griffon Vulture (10), Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher and Common Swift.

Gosney site -> South, towards Monfragüe (18:00-22:30)

We drove the same very winding road back from Picos de Europa area, but this time we drove southwards (N611) from Aguilar de Campoo towards Palencia and Valladolid (N620/E80). We found a roadside hostel ("Hostal Vista Alegre"; 6 000

ptas for double room) about 10 km S Valladolid, (Autovia Burgos-Portugal, km 140, Salida 139). A nasty smell from outside (manure...), but very nice rooms inside!

Birds on the way:

Common Redstart, Blue Tit, White Stork (a lot of them!), Stonechat, Wren, Robin, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Blackcap, Coal Tit, Black Kite, Common Buzzard, Booted Eagle, Kestrel and a female Sparrowhawk.

Wednesday 16/5

Hostal Vista Alegre -> Monfragüe (10:30-13:00):

We slept some extra hours and left the hostel at about 10:30. We drove straight to Placencia via Salamanca (N620/E80 and N630) and then south (EX208) towards "Parque natural de Monfragüe". Our first destination in the Parque was "Castillo de Monfragüe" (see [9], page 27-32).

Many trip reports are available for the Extremadura area – see the references.

Birds on the way (to Placencia):

White Stork (nests with pullus everywhere!), Black Kite (very common), Booted Eagle (every now and then), Griffon Vulture, Kestrel, Montagu's Harrier, Black Vulture (2, just before Placencia), Turtle Dove and Calandra Lark.

Birds on the way (from Placencia -> Monfragüe):

Azure-winged Magpie, Corn Bunting (heard from every direction all of the time!), Golden Oriole, White Stork, Griffon Vulture, Black Kite, Common Buzzard, Crested Lark, Woodchat Shrike, Spanish Sparrow (often in stork nests), Common Cuckoo and Hoopoe.

Target species no. 7 White-rumped Swift (*Apus caffer*) from Castillo de Monfragüe (13:30-15:00):

The reason why we went to Spain as late as in May, was primarily because of this species. It arrives rather late in May - not guaranteed before 10-12 May, but from then you can see the species until late October/even November.

Climbing the path and stairs to the "Castillo" wasn't as hard as I had expected. We met a British tour-guide with participants of mostly elderly people and they didn't look too exhausted – at least in my view. Well, we asked them if they had seen the much-wanted swift, but the answer was negative. The tour-guide did tell us that the species had been claimed at Peña Falcon the day before (or something like that). A little discouraged we continued to the top.

First we climbed the parapet inside the small building. Stunning views, but we hurried down when we noticed that there were absolutely no safety arrangements (my son is 4 y of age...). I don't like these kinds of heights very much either! Instead we positioned ourselves on the north-western-most-corner around the bottom of the Castillo walls. It didn't take more than a few minutes until I spotted the first White-rumped Swift!

I carefully studied the few Common Swifts in the air to the west of the Castillo. Suddenly an obviously smaller swift came within sight, but it had to come much closer for me to see the white rump. The best characters to look for (I think) is the smaller size (than Common) and the deeply forked tail. Also the flight was a little different from Common Swift. It made some kind of tail-spreading, which I haven't noticed in Common. Maybe it was some kind of display flight?! When the bird came closer, I noticed the white rump (which was very obvious at close range – but only from "above") and also the big white throat-patch. I couldn't see the white/light

trailing edge to the secondaries depicted in e.g. “Fågelguiden” (Collins Birdguide) [10].

It didn't take very long until I realised that the White-rumped Swift wasn't alone – there were two birds (at least). The birds flew just over our heads and circled the Castillo. Then they flew off in the direction of Peña Falcon. About 15 minutes later the birds reappeared and once again we could enjoy these magnificent flyers!

Other birds:

Blue Rock Thrush (1), Rock Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, House Martin, Common Swift, Serin, Goldfinch, Linnet, Chaffinch, Griffon Vulture and Black Kite.

Castillo de Monfragüe -> Torrejón el Rubio (15:15-15:45):

We got ourselves a room in Torrejón el Rubio (“Pensión Monfragüe”; 4 000 ptas for double room). Shared bathroom and beds with springs from the nineteenth century – my back still hurts... (But overall ok, and cheap!). We stayed here for two nights. A Spanish lunch at the “Restaurante Monfragüe”, then back on track.

The bridge about 5 km N Torrejón el Rubio “Arroyo de la Vid” (18:00-18:30):

A nice area for a short stop – there were also turtles in the stream!

Birds:

Bee-eater, Kingfisher, Spanish Sparrow (on Muddemans pole! See [9]), Black Vulture (1), Azure-winged Magpie, Black Stork (1 soaring above) and Egyptian Vulture (1; the most scarce vulture in the area).

Peña Falcon (18:35-18:45):

Lots of people, lots of Griffon Vultures and lots of Black Kites – we didn't stay very long.

Other Birds:

Blue Rock Thrush (1)

Target species no. 8 Spanish Imperial Eagle (Aquila adalberti) at Mirador de la Bascula (19:00-21:00):

This is the famous (official!) breeding-site for the Spanish Imperial Eagle in Monfragüe. The birds were gone in 2000 (as I understand it) but were back again this year! It's impossible to find the nest just by scanning with your scope! The only ways are to see a bird landing or asking a fellow birder (who hopefully knows where to look – we met a Dutch couple who helped us). The closest I can/will tell you is to scan the third ridge (the most distant ridge). Well, the nest was very distant and only poor views were given. We did see at least one adult bird in the nest and probably also pullus moving around below the adult (adults?). We saw only the head of an adult and one time the white on the fore-wing/shoulders (when one bird flapped his wings). Also Black Vulture breeds here, and if you do a good job with your scope, you can find more than one occupied nest of this species!

Other birds:

Wood Lark, Jay, Azure-winged Magpie, Kestrel, Nightingale (on the way “home” to Torrejón el Rubio) and Griffon Vulture (but they are everywhere!).

Thursday 17/5

Target species no. 9 Black-shouldered Kite (Elanus caeruleus) at the famous Monroy-site (07:00-12:00):

After reading many trip reports (e.g. [11] and [12]) and some literature (e.g. [9]), I thought that this species was almost guaranteed at this site; at the recommended stop 10 on site/route 11 (“Trujillo to Monroy ” in [9]). Well, I was wrong, very wrong! The morning started with fog – very thick fog, you couldn’t see anything. Later on when the fog left I thoroughly worked the area for several hours, but no Bs.Kites. The only small raptor was a Kestrel.

There were many other nice birds in the area, e.g. the White Storks nesting in the pines just 50 meters away. My wife spotted a Great Spotted Cuckoo flying by (another target species – no. 11, see below). Surprisingly we also heard the call from a Red-necked Nightjar, quite far away in E direction, just when we arrived (another target species – no. 14, see below in the Doñana part).

Other birds:

Red-legged Partridge, Bee-eater, Sardinian Warbler, Fan-tailed Warbler (or Zitting Cisticola, if you like), Golden Oriole, Quail, Azure-winged Magpie and Spanish Sparrow.

Combination of recommended “Bustard-routes” (see [9], page 52) between Cáceres and Trujillo (12:20-17:30):

Bad time of the day for “bustard hunting” (the Bs.Kite-search simply cost too much time) – early morning is of course much better. We continued EX390, passed the Monroy-crossing and also crossed Río Almonte before turning left towards Santa Marta de Magasca (about 7 km before Cáceres). This minor “road” was in rather bad shape and careful driving is prompted for! Driving this road slowly and scanning both sides gave us very good views of many steppe species. E.g. a very obliging Little Owl.

Target species no. 10 Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*):

Somewhere between recommended stop 9 and 10 on site/route 10 (“Santa Marta de Magasca West to Cáceres” in [9]), my wife spotted a group (actually it was two groups, close to each other) of 15-20 Great Bustards quite close to the road on the right-hand side! When we stopped the car and opened the doors, a group of six Black-bellied Sandgrouse took off from the same field. We had splendid views of the Great Bustards as they, very slowly, walked away from us and finally moved out of sight.

Target species no. 11 Great Spotted Cuckoo (*Clamator glandarius*):

This species we considered as rather tricky this time of the year. So it was. No really good views of this species on the whole trip. We hoped that some of the “bustard-hunting-tours” should provide us with this species. As I wrote earlier, my wife spotted a flying bird at the Bs.Kite-site. We also heard the call from this species at the site where we had “siesta” later the same day (see below). The last (and my only “visual”) was a bird flying along the road on the way back from Belén plains to Torrejón el Rubio 18/5 (see below).

We moved on:

When we reached the T-junction (close to N521) we turned left towards SMdM (every decent trip report must use this abbreviation!). Crossing Río Tamuja and in SMdM turning right (after some minor trouble finding the right road) towards N521 again. Between the recommended stop 2 and 1 (just SE 2) on site/route 10 (“Santa Marta de Magasca West to Cáceres” in [9]) we parked the car close to some nice-looking Dehesa for a siesta (at least part of the family wanted this!). Instead of sleeping I scanned the surroundings carefully and spotted some nice species, e.g. Stone-curlew (1 pair), Roller (6) and Black Vulture (4). We also heard Great Spotted Cuckoo from this “site”.

Other birds so far:

Cattle Egret (10; on cows of course!), Red Kite (10), Griffon Vulture, Black Kite (50), Short-toed Eagle (2), Booted Eagle (1), Montagu's Harrier (20), Common Buzzard, Kestrel, White Stork, Mallard, Calandra Lark (lots of them), Wood Lark, Black-eared Wheatear and Stonechat.

Return to Torrejón el Rubio:

From our siesta-site we drove NW towards SMdM, but in this village now turning NE, towards site/route 11 ("Trujillo to Monroy" in [9]). A few km after crossing Río Magasca we turned left towards Monroy. Making short stops along this road and a little longer one at the recommended stop 9 (Río Almonte) on site/route 11 ("Trujillo to Monroy" in [9]) – but no Black Wheatear! We also tried the Bs.Kites again, but the same negative result.

Birds at recommended stop 9 (Río Almonte):

Kingfisher (1), Grey Heron, Green Finch, Spanish Sparrow, Bee-eater, Red-rumped Swallow, Rock Martin, House Martin, Booted Eagle (1 dark morph) and Black Stork (1 soaring above). Just before Torrejón el Rubio we also saw a Red-legged Partridge on the roadside.

Friday 18/5**Early morning at the Belén plains (07:15-09:15):**

See site 12 ("Trujillo town and Belén plains" in [9]). We left Torrejón el Rubio at about 06:45 and drove the EX208 south to Trujillo. Having some trouble in understanding that the "old NV road" was the main road when entering Trujillo from EX208. So, keep driving EX208 towards Trujillo (and inside) until you reach a major road crossing (roundabout-type), then turn left and continue this "old NV road" (maybe 1-2 km?) until you pass the obvious Hotel Perú. Then turn right, onto a small road signposted "Belén" – about 250 m past Hotel Perú. Birdwatching starts just after the small (and narrow!) village of Belén. We saw most of the birds on the left-hand-side. After this successful morning trip, we drove straight "home" to Torrejón el Rubio for some breakfast and hotel-checkout.

Birds in Belén area:

Calandra Lark (very many, 150? maybe even more), Little Bustard (30-40; seen and heard – their "farty-calls" [2] are very obvious!), Great Bustard (>20), Stone-curlew (3-4), Montagu's Harrier (10), Quail, Cattle Egret and Stonechat.

Birds on the way back to Torrejón el Rubio:

Great Spotted Cuckoo (1; flying along the road), Short-toed Eagle (1), Booted Eagle (1), Collared Dove (by some reason we hadn't noticed this species before) and Common Cuckoo.

Beginning the journey south via some Monfragüe sites (10:30-15:00):

Driving northwards from Torrejón el Rubio, we made a short stop at the "Turtle-site" ("Arroyo de la Vid") seeing one turtle on the road (alive!) and a Rock Sparrow at very close range (even saw the yellow spot on the throat without bins).

Picking up a map over the park in the "Natural Park Information Centre" in Villareal de San Carlos is a good thing to do (but preferably a little earlier than we did - on the way from Monfragüe...).

We then walked the beginning of "the green path" (Villareal – Cerro Gimio) anti-clockwise until we reached the "Lunch Area" (see the park map) in a lush valley with a nice stream (only about 1 km walk). Some 100 meters before this "Lunch Area"

we saw several Subalpine Warblers; e.g. a family with youngsters. The call from this species sounds quite the same as Lesser Whitethroat, a hard “teck” or “tett”, so they were very easy to locate.

Other birds seen from “the green path”:

Cirl Bunting, Rock Bunting, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Chaffinch, Blackbird, Serin, Corn Bunting, Woodchat Shrike, Great Spotted Woodpecker and (of course) Griffon Vultures and Black Kites.

We moved on:

A short stop at Mirador de la Bascula where we once again watched the occupied nest of the Spanish Imperial Eagles. Also the Wood Lark was still singing.

Target species no. 12 Bonelli’s Eagle (*Hieraaetus fasciatus*) at Mirador de la Bascula (13:15-13:30):

Even if we have travelled in several countries where this species commonly occur, we have never succeeded in locating it. So this time we were well prepared with plenty of “stake-outs” (most of them in the south) for this species. Scanning above the far ridge, at Mirador de la Bascula, I located a raptor that I immediately identified as an adult Bonelli’s Eagle. Identification was straightforward with the obvious patterning of the underwing, the broad black terminal band on the tail and the very obvious white patch on the mantle. Also the silhouette and size were good characters – it reminded (somewhat) of a large hawk (Swedish name is translated “Hawk Eagle”). The bird came closer and closer and passed us just above our heads on its way due north. Very good views of this much wanted target species!

2:nd try for Black-shouldered Kite – “CM-gate-site” (14:00-15:00):

Having read the trip report by Phil Cruttenden [6], we now took a chance trying “his” Bs.Kite-site. The directions were something like this:

“Drove N to the EX 108 and headed W towards Plasencia. Took the minor road N, just after the bridge over Rio Tietar, and then turned E at Pantano de Navabuen. The eastward turning is directly opposite a gate marked “CM” and just before an electrical sub station; the birds frequented the edge of the first field northwards of the road, just after a large agricultural building on the south side of the road.”

We found the site without any problem and scanned the area carefully for about one hour – but no Bs.Kites! We also asked some “locals” and showed them the picture of the little raptor, but they shook their heads and instead pointed at the picture of Marsh Harrier (!) and nodded (probably they meant the Black Kite). Who knows, maybe the birds were present also this year or maybe not?

Then we considered trying a third site for Bs.Kite (Brozas area; “Plasencia – Brozas (C522), a few km before Brozas a small lake, on the left-hand side”, see [13]), but abandoned that idea (the Dutch couple had tried and failed earlier this week) and instead we went to Portugal!

“CM-gate-site” -> Degolados (Portugal) (15:00-19:00):

We drove EX108 W to N630 (Placencia-Cáceres-road), then EX100 to Badajoz, took the minor road (N371) from Badajoz to Campo Maior then the N371 to Degolados and finally continued for about 3 km on the same road (NW direction). Ok, so where were the Bs.Kites? The trip report by Magnus Hellström [14], states that this site “seems to be one of the easiest sites on the Iberian Peninsula” (my translation from Swedish).

Target species no. 9 Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) in Degolados, Portugal (19:00-20:30):

We parked at the entrance of a farming track on the right-hand-side of the road, next to a hill with good elevation. The only landmark I remember was some obvious fence enclosing something (maybe a pumping station or some electrical equipment?). After five minutes my wife spotted a small, light (whitish with some black) raptor hovering a few 100 meters in front of her. When I looked I only managed to see a shadow disappearing behind a hill! Crisis! Almost an hour until I was able to relocate the bird (or maybe it was another individual, because “my” bird was much more far away than “hers” when I located it?). This time we both had splendid views of this adult bird hunting and flying over the Dehesa in the NW. At last!!!

Other birds 3 km NW Degolados:

Little Bustard (>10), Montagu’s Harrier, Kestrel, Quail, Bee-eater, Crested Lark, White Stork, Cattle Egret, Stonechat, Great Grey Shrike, Woodchat Shrike, Golden Oriole and Jay.

3 km NW Degolados -> S Badajoz (20:30-21:30):

Rather tired we drove back into Spain again and past Badajoz (saw some Yellow-legged Gulls here). Just after Badajoz we found a nice road-side-hotel at km 5 or 8 (their brochure states both!?), along N432 (“Hotel Acuarel”; 7 490 ptas for double room). This hotel had a lot of swimming facilities, but all of this was closed. But if you travel in summer time and have children who want to see some water on their vacation – my son certainly does!

Saturday 19/5

Badajoz -> El Rocío (10:00-12:30):

We continued N432 to Zafra and then N630/E803 to Sevilla. In Sevilla we followed the signs for Huelva and drove A49 to Bollullos where we turned left and drove the last 24 km to El Rocío (the starting-point for birdwatching in Coto Doñana). We searched for a cheaper hotel for a while but after some consideration (wise!) we checked in at the only (?) big hotel in the town (“Hotel Puente del Rey”; 8 700 ptas for double room) – we stayed here for two nights. The hotel is situated just at the entrance of this “Wild West city” – no paved roads, only sand! Fun to drive around here, but be careful so you don’t get stuck!! For detailed information about birdwatching and good sites in Coto Doñana I refer to literature [1], [8] and [15] and trip reports [11], [12], [16], [17] and [18].

Playa de Matalascañas (13:00-15:00):

Just 16 km SW El Rocío is the resort of Matalascañas situated. A “..depressing and Godforsaken dump..” according to Malcolm Palmer [15]. But we liked it, especially my son who went absolutely crazy when he saw the water and sand, which he had longed for during the whole trip! Not much birdwatching was done here (bins and a running 4 y of age in the sand doesn’t match!), but we spotted an Arctic Skua far off shore.

The bridge at El Rocío:

Just 150 m from our Hotel, along the A483. After this short stop we had an excellent lunch at the “Restaurante Aires de Doñana”. We sat outside watching the Whiskered Terns hunting while eating, we recommend it!

Birds seen:

Pochard, Wigeon, Gadwall, Shovler, Coot, Moorhen, Red-crested Pochard, Mallard, Greylag Goose, Cattle Egret (>75), Little Egret (3), Grey Heron (5), Night Heron (1),

Black-winged Stilt (>200), Spoonbill (>100), Flamingo (>50), Black Kite, Whiskered Tern (>75), Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Woodchat Shrike, Great Grey Shrike and Stonechat.

La Rocina – Nature trail and Information Centre (18:00-19:30):

A lovely evening walk! A few hides are available from where you can see some of the Doñana specialities.

Birds seen (or heard!):

Chiffchaff (1), Reed Warbler, Nightingale, Fan-tailed Warbler, Savi's Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Long-tailed Tit (*ibrii*), Short-toed Treecreeper, Little Egret, Purple Gallinule (or Purple Swamp-hen if you like; 5 + pullus), Moorhen, Coot, Red-crested Pochard, Mallard, Little Grebe, White Stork, Spotted Flycatcher, Chaffinch, Serin and Goldfinch.

Sunday 20/5

Doñana tour with the guide Claudio Manetti (06:10-14:45):

We had made a reservation with Claudio (Discovering Doñana S.L.) some six weeks before the trip. We contacted him when we arrived to El Rocío and told him which hotel we stayed at. Claudio turned up in a 4-wd Land Rover, as agreed, at 06:10 just outside our hotel. A half day excursion with Claudio costs 14 000 ptas + 16% taxes = 16 240 ptas. Of great value! He has knowledge of all the species and all the sites. Because of this arrangement we didn't need to plan the Doñana area in detail. Due to many trip reports it's quite difficult to find the right way to many of the famous sites – we didn't need to worry at all about these things. Excellent! The only disadvantage was that we didn't really know exactly where we went, so I can't tell you. I know we started in Cañada Mayor for the magnificent concerto by the Red-necked Nightjars (see below). Then we went inside the "Parque natural", and were not allowed to go outside the car for a while. Then we visited both wet and cultivated areas and later on we went to the "J.A. Valverde Centre" or "Lucio Cerrado Garrido" – another name of the same place. In this large building (holding Cafeteria, Information Centre, Museum etc.) we had coffee and watched the large colonies of Purple Heron, Glossy Ibis, and Squacco Heron. We also had stunning views of several Little Bitterns. I could write much longer about this "tour", but the species list below tell the full story, I think.

Target species no. 14 Red-necked Nightjar (*Caprimulgus ruficollis*) in Cañada Mayor:

We had already heard this species in the Monfragüe area, but the short (and only by ear) observation we had, cannot compete with the magnificent views we had in Cañada Mayor! At least three males were singing from the ground. We could actually see their throats "pulsing" when they uttered their "cut-ock...cut-ock...cut-ock..." all the time. As the early morning light was increasing, we could see the buff (or tawny-buff) nuchal collar appear more and more! Very nice.

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Birds seen:

Black-necked Grebe (>10), Little Grebe (>20), Great Crested Grebe, Little Bittern (4), Night Heron (>30), Cattle Egret (>100), Squacco Heron (>30), Little Egret (>25), Grey Heron (>50), Purple Heron (>30), White Stork, Glossy Ibis (>50), Spoonbill (>30), Flamingo (>200), Greylag Goose, Mallard, Gadwall, Shovler, Marbled Duck (3 pairs), Garganey, Pochard, Red-crested Pochard, Griffon Vulture, Spanish Imperial Eagle (1 ad. soaring + 1 ad. on a nest), Short-toed Eagle (1 pair), Booted Eagle (>10), Black Kite (>150), Marsh Harrier, Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge (3), Moorhen, Coot, Crested Coot (or Red-knobbed Coot if you like; 1 pair + 2 pullus + 1 ad. + heard), Purple Gallinule (5 + heard), Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Stone-curlew (1 pair), Collared Pratincole (> 100), Ringed Plover, Knot (1), Common Sandpiper, Little Tern (1), Gull-billed Tern (>10), Whiskered Tern (>75), Pin-tailed Sandgrouse (4 females), Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Common Cuckoo, Tawny Owl, Red-necked Nightjar (>3), Common Swift, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Crested Lark, Thekla Lark, Lesser Short-toed Lark (>30), Calandra Lark (>10), Sand Martin, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Red-rumped Swallow (2), Yellow Wagtail (*iberiae*; >30), Nightingale, Blackbird, Sardinian Warbler, Fan-tailed Warbler (>10), Great Reed Warbler (>20), Woodchat Shrike, Great Grey Shrike, Azure-winged Magpie, Magpie, Jackdaw, Spotless Starling, Golden Oriole (heard), House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Serin.

Target species no. 15 Crested Coot (*Fulica cristata*):

Because of the recent reports from Laguna de Medina (Cádiz), we had some expectation for this, normally tricky, species. Up to eight birds was reported from that site in the last week of April. But we didn't need Laguna de Medina for this species, Claudio showed us them in Doñana! We had great views and also learnt their distinct (muffled/dull) call; "a groaning *euu*" according to [25]. All adult birds we saw (here and later in Laguna de Medina) still had their obvious red knobs more or less intact. Also the bluish tinge on the bill was very obvious. Other characters, e.g. the lack of feathering on the side of the bill, may be useful if you see a bird at very close range. But it was certainly not the first character we noticed! In non-breeding plumage (no red knobs) it is more difficult, and then characters like this may be more useful.

Playa de Matalascañas (17:00-18:30):

More swimming practice and a few Yellow-legged Gulls.

La Rocina (19:00-19:30):

About same species as yesterday.

Monday 21/5

A short morning trip to El Rocío lagoon (07:30-08:30):

The same species as the day before, but also Redshank (15-20), Common Sandpiper (3) and lots of Avocet.

El Rocío -> Laguna de Medina, Cádiz (10:00-14:00):

We drove to Laguna de Medina via Sevilla. In Sevilla we took the wrong way and ended up about some 30 km in the wrong direction before we understood our mistake. We also had some troubles about where to exit the A4/E5-road and we passed the accurate junction at Jerez de la Frontera (no. 5 in our map, but it was

named something else in the real world...). We had to drive all the way to Puerto Real to be able to “turn around”. Hence we were a bit tired and it was very hot (as told in [15]!) when we finally reached our destination.

Target species no. 16 White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) in Laguna de Medina (14:00-16:00):

Laguna de Medina is a rather big lake. A path leads round it (see [8], but forget about the Gosney road numbers – the booklet is not up to date). Almost the first water-bird I spotted was an adult Crested Coot at very close range, it showed very well and we had even better views than in Doñana.

Scanning the far margins to the east I immediately spotted a male White-headed Duck. At a certain distance, but the white head and bluish bill shone! “Ok, there they are”, I told my family, “we just have to follow the path to see all the White-headed Ducks much better”. Fortunately we all viewed the first bird before moving on – because this was the only observation of White-headed duck we made in Laguna de Medina! Obviously he swam into the reedy margins and probably more birds were hidden in the same area. You should NOT visit Laguna de Medina at this time of the day!

Other birds in and around Laguna de Medina:

Black-necked Grebe (>30), Great Crested Grebe (>20), Little grebe (>10), Red-crested Pochard, Moorhen, Coot, Cetti’s Warbler (>10), Melodious Warbler (3), Great Reed Warbler (>10), Sardinian Warbler, Nightingale (>10), Stonechat, Fan-tailed Warbler (4), Turtle Dove, Corn Bunting and Serin.

Laguna de Medina -> Bolonia -> Tarifa (16:00-20:00):

From Laguna de Medina we drove (A381) via Medina Sidonia to Vejer. In Vejer we turned left onto N340 towards Tarifa. About 12 km before Tarifa we turned right towards the “Roman ruins at Baelo Claudio” (and “Bolonia”; CA9004), and when we reached the junction near the beach, we kept right (not left on the road to the entrance to the ruins). Then we continued this road for about 2,5 km to a small village, where the road bends 90° right and then (after about 100 m) 90° left. Here we stopped at a (military) sign which told us: “Prohibido el paso” (or something like this in Spanish) – the meaning is “no go”. We were scanning the mountain (Sierra de la Plata) to the right for a cave, but failed. Something was very wrong with our directions. This was supposed to be a site for White-rumped Swift and maybe also Little Swift.

Well, no swifts at all, no cave and a tired family. We drove to the beach below the ruins instead. Because of late afternoon and a little chill in the air, we soon left and drove south (back to the main road N340) and towards Tarifa.

We entered the city of Tarifa and drove to the harbour/lighthouse area. Here we saw about 20 Mediterranean Shearwaters flying eastwards.

Five or six km to the N of Tarifa on N340 (or five or six km to the south of the Bolonia junction) we found a very nice Hotel (Hotel Milion; 11 500 ptas for double room/night, but we wanted to stay for five nights so we ended up with 10 000 ptas/night). A little expensive, but very close to the beach (son and wife had deserved it!) and also (we noticed later) very good sea-watching!

Birds on the way and from the Bolonia beach:

Booted Eagle, Gannet (>10), Griffon Vulture (>10), Yellow-legged Gull (>30)

Birds (and mammals) from our hotel late evening:

Cory’s Shearwater (>20), Mediterranean Shearwater (1), Gannet (>5), Yellow-legged Gull, Storm-petrel (1) and some bats.

Tuesday 22/5

The Bolonia Swift-site again (07:15-09:15):

We drove to the same place as the day before and scanned the sky in all directions. But no rare swifts and still no cave!

Birds seen:

Pallid Swift (>20), Common Swift, Barn Swallow, Sand Martin, Rock Martin, House Martin, Golden Oriole, Green Woodpecker (1 heard, call differs from northern race I think) and Chiffchaff (1).

The rest of the day sea-watching from our hotel:

Very nice sea-watching (at least for a Swedish birdwatcher living on the east coast). We saw a lot of shearwaters (see below) and also most probably a Great Shearwater. The size and flight was as Cory's and the viewing distance was not that far away (maybe 5-800 m). I saw the dark "beret" (cap) contrasting to the white underparts and neck. The bird also showed some dark markings on the underwings (in the axillaries area, where Cory's normally are pure white) and it had obviously white uppertailcoverts (more than most Cory's). This bird was a shearwater for sure (no imm. Gannet etc.), but I have never seen this species before and I don't know if I can exclude the possibility of an aberrant Cory's? Moreover I don't know the exact status of Great Shearwater in Spain this time of the year. I saw the bird for about only 20 seconds before I lost it (maybe it landed?) – so the observation time was rather short and I had no time for a double check. I have seen the other shearwater species (which are regular in WP waters) several times before (Cory's, Sooty, Manx, Mediterranean and Little). Comments?

Other birds:

Cory's Shearwater (>50), Mediterranean Shearwater (>20), Gannet (>30), Sooty Shearwater (1-2 – a big surprise!) and some kind of Dolphins (we saw these jumpy animals quite often the next days).

Wednesday 23/5

Our hotel -> Ronda -> our hotel (07:00-18:00):

We drove via Tarifa and Algeciras and at the "no. 115" junction, after Algeciras, we turned left upon A369 towards Ronda. The road was in a rather good condition and there was no problem driving at all. In Ronda we walked around and watched the spectacular bridge and saw a lot of tourists! After Ronda we tried another White-rumped Swift site. According to [11] and [12] (free translation):

"..together with Common Swifts and Red-rumped Swallows in a cleft 3,0 km W the bridge over Rio Guadiaro (just NW Ronda) along road C339 (A376 according to our map by 2001/JD)..".

I think we found the right place, but it was a little difficult to judge exactly which cleft, so I scanned the sky in the area randomly. I saw about 10 Common Swifts, 10 Alpine Swifts, 10 House Martins, 2 Hone Buzzards, 1 Booted Eagle, 10 Griffon Vultures and 1 Cirl Bunting – but no White-rumped Swifts and no Red-rumped Swallows.

After this little detour we had an excellent lunch and then went back "home" to Hotel Milion.

Target species no. 17 Black Wheatear (*Oenanthe leucura*) Ronda area:

According to Gosney [8], earlier observations of Black Wheatear were made at about K72 (on C341, but today this road is named A369), some 20 km from Ronda.

Well, the kilometre posts had, of course, been changed. We calculated that K13 should be the equivalent to Gosney-72. We stopped and scanned the surroundings carefully. No Black Wheatear here! We continued slowly towards Ronda ("Don't need to worry, we have backup-sites!"). Between K12 and K11 my wife shouted: "I saw one!" Reverse! No, not needed, good parking-opportunity just 20 m ahead! We jumped out of the car and tried to relocate the bird. There it was! One very nice male perching on a pile of stone on the left-hand side of the road. This was the last target species. A great relief (and a mean thought dedicated the "very-difficult-to-see-wall-creeping-species")!

Other birds:

Little Owl (1), Bee-eater, White Stork, Griffon Vulture (>20), Booted Eagle, Red-rumped Swallow, Spotted Flycatcher, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Honey Buzzard (>20 migrating), Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Lesser Kestrel (1 in Ronda), Spectacled Warbler (1 at K15), Blue Rock Thrush (1 at K15 + 1 at K11,5), Black-eared Wheatear (1 at K15), Rock Sparrow (1 pair at K11,5), Red-billed Chough (>20 in Ronda), Jay, Pallid Swift, Common Swift, Alpine Swift (>10 in Ronda + 10 on the way), Peregrine Falcon (1 with prey in Ronda) and Rock Martin.

Afternoon sea-watching from our hotel:

Birds seen:

Audouin's Gull (>10-15; 2K or 3K), Gull-billed Tern (2), Little Tern (13), Mediterranean Shearwater (2), Cory's Shearwater (3), Gannet (1 almost adult) and Yellow-legged Gull (>75).

Thursday 24/5

Tarifa Beach (07:30-09:45):

The outlet from Rio Jara in combination with high and low tide, makes the area just NW Tarifa very attractive to waterbirds – especially waders and gulls. Directions where to park etc, see [8]. Gosney approaches the area from the south, but it's also very possible to enter it from the north. Just after the Rio Jara bridge on N340 (driving S) there is a Camping site on the right-hand-side. Park somewhere here, preferably as close to the beach as possible. Walk the last (short) distance towards the beach until you see an obvious white "walking-bridge" crossing Rio Jara. Cross this bridge and continue some 2-300 m in Tarifa (S) direction. Even from this bridge you can have good views of the waders and gulls, but much closer ones if you walk a little further.

Until now we had seen very few wader species, but this site added a lot of new trip species and a surprise. The surprise was two adult Lesser Crested Terns. The birds were together with two Sandwich Terns, flying around and also sometimes rested on buoys. One of the birds were actually "courting" the other, e.g. picking on the others bill etc. - romance? I didn't really know the status of this species in Spain - but "Svensson" [10] states it as a "very rare vagrant in Europe" (my translation from Swedish edition!!).

I have received comments on this subject from Mr. Ernest Garcia who states: "LCTern is quite normal at Tarifa beach in May and also in October/November. It passes through the Strait to and from nesting colonies in Libya. It is rare elsewhere in Spain although a pair has nested at the Ebro Delta."

Other birds from Tarifa Beach:

Little Tern (1), Yellow-legged Gull (>150), Lesser Black-backed Gull (*graellsii*; >4), Audouin's Gull (>4), Little Egret (1), Kentish Plover (>50), Ringed Plover (>75),

Dunlin (>20), Sanderling (>40), Knot (7), Grey Plover (10) and Curlew Sandpiper (1).

Soft sea-watching from our Hotel (10:30-16:00):

We saw one more Lesser Crested Tern (or perhaps more probably one of the Tarifa-couple?) from our Hotel and also about 15 migrating Honey Buzzards arriving from Morocco. As I watched one of the incoming Honey Buzzards, which flew unusually low, it suddenly landed in the water! I shook my head, was it really a raptor? It looked like a skua or something, the brown bird with greyish head (it was a male!) swimming (or probably only "floating") out there. "He must be absolutely exhausted", was my first thought. "Sad, having only about 800 m left to Spain". But after about five minutes in the water the bird (it was indeed a Honey Buzzard!) flew up from the surface and continued towards the shore. But soon he landed again. Now a few Yellow-legged Gulls arrived and lined up beside the poor raptor. Next time the Honey Buzzard flew up, the mean Gulls attacked! They stamped the buzzard in his back and tried to push him back into the water again. After about 100 m flight they succeeded. More gulls now joined in. This story was repeated three or four times before the buzzard was so tired (and probably also very wet) that he couldn't get up anymore. He was very close to the shore now, and the gulls seemed a little bit worried. At about 150 m from the shore the participants of this drama unfortunately came out of sight, and I don't know how the story ended. I was quite amazed that a raptor, like this species, could land and get up again from the water so many times. I really hope he made it!

Tarifa Beach again (18:30-20:30):

About the same species as in the morning, though some minor changes in numbers. We also saw the only Mediterranean Gull (1 2K) during the trip and about ten migrating Black Kites (incoming).

Late evening sea-watching from our hotel (21:00-21:45):

Birds seen:

Cory's Shearwater (1), Mediterranean Shearwater (1) and Gull-billed Tern (4).

Friday 25/5

The swift-site at Bolonia the third time (07:45-09:45 + 11:00-13:00):

The last night I carefully studied the literature and trip reports we had brought. Comparing Gosney-notes [8] and other directions we had about the swift-site at Bolonia. I realised that the cave must be situated a little further from the place we had visited twice before. But how to deal with the military sign, saying "no go"? Well, early in the morning I went to the site again, drove past the military sign and followed the road (rather bad condition, but not really a track) for about two more km. Now I immediately found the cave and I began to scan the area for rare swifts. The first half-hour I only saw House Martins flying in and out the cave, but then the first White-rumped Swift turned up and inspected the cave for a few seconds. A little later I saw two birds together flying around the cave, they disappeared for some 10-15 minutes and then reappeared. I never saw the birds landing and they always spent very short time inside the cave. I drove back to the hotel for breakfast and then we all went back to the cave-site again. We saw the White-rumps at least 8-10 times during our visit.

All the time I kept a look-out for potential Little Swifts, but there was no luck. At about 12:45, just before leaving the area, I did spot a small swift with a large and obvious white rump. But this bird only turned up for a second or two, and I could

have been mistaken (e.g. fooled by a House Martin). But probably this was a Little swift. It would be very interesting to hear about other records from this site this year! But “no cow on the ice” (Swedish saying i.e. there’s no fear of that!), we have seen that species before and I didn’t really believe we should see it on this trip. Finally I really can’t tell you how to deal with the “no go”-sign. It is not a very big sign (you could miss it!) and there are ordinary houses also after the sign. No fences, no barking dogs and no militaries! But don’t blame me if you get into trouble if you trespass! (See also Gosney [8] about this matter.)

Other birds near the cave:

Pallid Swift, Common Swift, Rock Martin (2), Blue Rock Thrush (2), Black-eared Wheatear (4; Bolonia area), Cirl Bunting (1), Rock Bunting (1), Green Woodpecker (heard), Great Spotted Woodpecker, Goldfinch (galore!), Spotted Flycatcher, Kestrel, Booted Eagle, Griffon Vulture (one nest close by), Turtle Dove, Cuckoo and Blackcap.

Last evening:

Nothing really special, though we saw some 10 incoming Black Kites late afternoon.

Saturday 26/5

The journey home:

We left our hotel rather early and drove the coast road to Malaga and the airport. A Mistle Thrush sang outside our hotel when we left and no more exciting birds were seen. In the aeroplane I made a quick summery of noted species, ending up 186. 21 new to me and 23 to my wife.

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25. Lewington I, Alström P, Colston P (1991) "A Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe" Domino Books
26. Michelin (2001) "Spain and Portugal Tourist and Motoring Atlas 1:400 000"

Other sources of information mentioned in trip reports, but not used by us:

1. Garcia Paterson (????) "Where to Watch birds in Southern Spain" ???
2. Finlayson C. (1993) "A Birdwatchers' Guide to Southern Spain and Gibraltar" Natural History Book Service Ltd, Devon
3. Rose L. (1995) "Where to Watch Birds in Spain and Portugal" Hamlyn Ltd, London

How to find the Internet references?

(If you already have found this trip report on the Internet, you probably don't need to read this portion! ☺)

If you can't find them at any known trip report Web-site (e.g.):

<http://www.birdtours.co.uk/tripreports/Spain/>

<http://www.crosswinds.net/~birdtrips/TripReports.html>

<http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/birding.htm>

<http://bsc-eoc.org/links/>
<http://www.sofnet.org/index.asp?lev=227&typ=1>
<http://www.regulus.o.se/tours/Tour-reports.html>
<http://www.birdtours.co.uk/>
<http://ebn.unige.ch/ebn/trip.html>
<http://home4.inet.tele.dk/moel/reports.htm>
<http://www.astro.utu.fi/~hlehto/reports/reports.shtml>
http://www.fatbirder.com/links/trip_reports/index.html
<http://listserv.arizona.edu/cgi-bin/wa?S1=birdtrip&D=0>
<http://www.osme.org/osmetrip/tripreps.html>
<http://www.skof.se/lank/andra/reserapporter.htm>
<http://www.netaccessperu.net/kolibri/>
http://www.btinternet.com/~pdj_photos/trips.htm
<http://home-1.worldonline.nl/~jvanderw/>

Try to use a "search-engine" on the Internet (e.g. Altavista, Excite, Webcrawler etc.) and enter the name of the author and parts of the trip report title (e.g.):
+Cruttenden +"Spain and France"

In (e.g.) an "Altavista-search" the + means that this word (or sentence) is obligatory and the "xxx yyy zzz" means keep this sentence intact and complete. This should (hopefully) do it (if the trip report is still out there). Good luck.

Full species list:

This list does not deal with every observation made (plenty of details in the main text!). Instead I have tried to estimate (roughly), how common the species were in the visited areas during our stay. For rarer or more difficult species I have also included figures and exact location (and sometimes also the observation time).

Remember that we didn't try to see as many "travel-species" as possible, our prime goal was the "target species", and to see these birds well.

We didn't search for owls in the night, didn't kick every bush to increase the figures of species which we already seen plenty of and didn't check every lark with a crest etc. I made my notes in the evenings (most figures are estimated) and sometimes I probably forgot a few common species we saw that day. I hope the list can be useful anyway. Species, which I grade "Quite common", "Common" or "Very common", should be rather straightforward this time of the year (May) in that particular site/habitat.

"*Monfragüe area*" means any (or some of) the sites we visited in Extremadura 16-18/5.

"(H)" means only Heard.

"(inside) *Coto Doñana*" means inside the "real" park – not El Rocío/La Rocina area.

Black-necked Grebe	Common in Doñana and Laguna de Medina
Little Grebe	Common in Doñana and Laguna de Medina
Great Crested Grebe	Common in Doñana and Laguna de Medina
Cory's Shearwater	Several from Tarifa beach some days
Mediterranean Shearwater	Several from Tarifa beach some days
Sooty Shearwater	1-2 Tarifa beach 22/5
Storm-petrel	1 Tarifa beach late evening 21/5
Gannet	Several from Tarifa beach some days
Little Bittern	Few (inside) Coto Doñana
Night Heron	Common (inside) Coto Doñana
Cattle Egret	Common Coto Doñana and elsewhere
Squacco Heron	Common (inside) Coto Doñana
Little Egret	Quite common Coto Doñana
Grey Heron	Common Coto Doñana and elsewhere
Purple Heron	Common (inside) Coto Doñana
White Stork	Very common almost everywhere
Black Stork	Few only in Monfragüe area
Glossy Ibis	Common (inside) Coto Doñana
Spoonbill	Common Coto Doñana
Flamingo	Common Coto Doñana
Greylag Goose	Few Coto Doñana
Mallard	Common Coto Doñana and elsewhere
Gadwall	Quite common Coto Doñana
Shovler	Few Coto Doñana
Wigeon	Few Coto Doñana
Marbled Duck	3 pairs (inside) Coto Doñana
Garganey	1 Coto Doñana
Pochard	Common Coto Doñana
Red-crested Pochard	Common Coto Doñana

White-headed Duck	1 Laguna de Medina
Griffon Vulture	Very common almost everywhere
Black Vulture	Few only Monfragüe area
Egyptian Vulture	Few Hoces del Duratón + Monfragüe
Golden Eagle	1 Hoces del Duratón
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Nesting Monfragüe + nesting and 1 ad. soaring Coto Doñana
Short-toed Eagle	Few in Monfragüe + Coto Doñana
Booted Eagle	Quite common raptor in many areas
Bonelli's Eagle	1 Mirador de la Bascula, Monfragüe
Red Kite	Common Madrid area + Monfragüe area
Black Kite	Very common almost everywhere
Marsh Harrier	Only Coto Doñana
Black-shouldered Kite	1 Degolados, Portugal
Montagu's Harrier	Common in many steppe areas
Common Buzzard	Quite common everywhere
Honey Buzzard	Few migrating Tarifa area
Sparrowhawk	1 Picos de Europa area
Kestrel	Common everywhere
Lesser Kestrel	1 Ronda
Hobby	1 Navacerrada area
Peregrine Falcon	1 Ronda
Red-legged Partridge	Common Hoces del Duratón + Monfragüe area + Coto Doñana
Quail	Quite common Monfragüe + Degolados (Portugal)
Moorhen	Very common Coto Doñana + Laguna de Medina
Coot	Very common Coto Doñana + Laguna de Medina
Crested Coot	5 + (H) Coto Doñana + 1 Laguna de Medina
Purple Gallinule	Quite common Coto Doñana
Great Bustard	Quite easy Monfragüe area (just luck?)
Little Bustard	Very easy Monfragüe area + Degolados (Portugal)
Avocet	Very common Coto Doñana
Black-winged Stilt	Very common Coto Doñana
Stone-curlew	Few Monfragüe area + Coto Doñana
Collared Pratincole	Locally quite common Coto Doñana
Ringed Plover	Few Coto Doñana + Tarifa beach
Kentish Plover	Very common Tarifa beach
Grey plover	Few Tarifa beach
Knot	1 Coto Doñana + few Tarifa beach
Sanderling	Quite many Tarifa beach
Dunlin	Quite many Tarifa beach
Curlew Sandpiper	1 Tarifa beach
Common Sandpiper	Common Coto Doñana

Redshank	Common Coto Doñana
Arctic Skua	1 Playa de Matalascañas
Mediterranean Gull	1 Tarifa beach
Yellow-legged Gull	Very common S coast + few Badajoz
Audouin's Gull	Quite common some days Tarifa beach
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Few Tarifa beach
Little Tern	Few Tarifa beach
Sandwich Tern	Few Tarifa beach
Gull-billed Tern	Few Coto Doñana + Tarifa beach
Lesser Crested Tern	2 (+1?) Tarifa beach 24/5
Whiskered Tern	Very common Coto Doñana
Razorbill(/Guillemot)	1 Tarifa beach
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	6 Monfragüe area
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	4 Coto Doñana
Rock Dove(/Domestic Pigeon)	"Pure" birds only in Picos de Europa area
Wood Pigeon	Common almost everywhere
Collared Dove	Quite common Monfragüe area + in the south
Turtle Dove	Few Madrid area + Monfragüe area + Tarifa area
Cuckoo	Very Common
Great Spotted Cuckoo	2 seen + (H) Monfragüe area
Tawny Owl	(H) Coto Doñana
Eagle Owl	1 Hoces del Duratón
Little Owl	Few Monfragüe area + Ronda area
Red-necked Nightjar	(H) Monfragüe area and >3 Coto Doñana
Common Swift	Very common
Pallid Swift	Quite common in the south
Alpine Swift	Quite common (mountain areas) in the south, e.g. Ronda
White-rumped Swift	2 Castillo de Monfragüe 16/5+ 2 Bolonia, Tarifa 25/5
Hoopoe	Common in most areas
Kingfisher	Few Monfragüe area + 1 in the north
Bee-eater	Quite common in many areas
Roller	Only seen around SMdM, Monfragüe area
Green Woodpecker	1 Navacerrada + 1 Bolonia, Tarifa
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Few in different places
Skylark	Common Hoces del Duratón
Crested Lark	Common almost everywhere
Thekla Lark	Common Hoces del Duratón + few Coto Doñana (most certainly also in Monfragüe area)
Wood Lark	Common Hoces del Duratón + Monfragüe area
Short-toed Lark	Few only Hoces del Duratón
Lesser Short-toed Lark	Common only Coto Doñana
Calandra Lark	Few Hoces del Duratón + common Monfragüe area + common Coto Doñana + few elsewhere

Dupont's Lark	Common (!) Hoces del Duratón
Sand Martin	Common Coto Doñana + Tarifa area
Rock Martin	Common Hoces del Duratón + Monfragüe area + Tarifa area + Ronda area
Barn Swallow	Quite Common in many areas
Red-rumped Swallow	Scarce Monfragüe area + Coto Doñana + Ronda area
House Martin	Very common almost everywhere
Tawny Pipit	Few Hoces del Duratón
White Wagtail	Very common everywhere
Yellow Wagtail	Common only Coto Doñana
Grey Wagtail	2 seen in small streams in the north
Wren	Common almost everywhere
Dunnock	Common in the north
Alpine Accentor	>4 Picos de Europa
Robin	Common almost everywhere
Nightingale	Quite common almost everywhere
Common Redstart	1 along the road in the north
Black Redstart	Quite common in many areas
Northern Wheatear	Few Hoces del Duratón + Picos de Europa
Black-eared Wheatear	Quite common Hoces del Duratón + Monfragüe area + Tarifa area + Ronda area
Black Wheatear	1 Ronda area
Stonechat	Very common almost everywhere
Blue Rock Thrush	Few Monfragüe area + Ronda area + Tarifa area
Song Thrush	(H) Navacerrada + (H) Picos de Europa area
Mistle Thrush	(H) Tarifa area
Blackbird	Very common everywhere
Blackcap	Very common everywhere
Orphean Warbler	3 Hoces del Duratón
Sardinian warbler	Common in most visited regions (not in the north)
Spectacled Warbler	Few Hoces del Duratón + Ronda area
Subalpine Warbler	Few Monfragüe area
Dartford Warbler	Few Hoces del Duratón + Coto Doñana
Fan-tailed Warbler	Common Monfragüe area + Coto Doñana + Laguna de Medina
Savi's Warbler	(H) La Rocina, Coto Doñana
Cetti's Warbler	Few Coto Doñana + common Laguna de Medina
Reed Warbler	(H) La Rocina, Coto Doñana
Great Reed Warbler	Very common Coto Doñana + Laguna de Medina
Melodious Warbler	Few Coto Doñana + Laguna de Medina
Bonelli's Warbler	Few Navacerrada area
Chiffchaff	Singles Navacerrada area + Coto Doñana + Bolonia, Tarifa
Firecrest	Few Potes + Fuente Dé, Picos de Europa

Spotted Flycatcher	Few Coto Doñana + Ronda area + Bolonia, Tarifa
Great Tit	Very common in many areas
Coal Tit	Common in central and north areas
Blue Tit	Common in central and north areas
Crested Tit	Common in central and north areas
Marsh Tit	1 Fuente Dé, Picos de Europa
Long-tailed Tit	6 La Rocina, Coto Doñana
Nuthatch	Common in the north
Short-toed Treecreeper	Few Navacerrada area + Coto Doñana
Woodchat Shrike	Very common almost everywhere
Great Grey Shrike	Quite common in many areas
Azure-winged Magpie	Common Monfragüe area + Coto Doñana
Magpie	Very common almost everywhere
Jay	Singles in all part of the country
Jackdaw	Quite common in some areas
Red-billed Chough	Common Hoces del Duratón + Picos de Europa area + Ronda area
Alpine Chough	Common in Picos de Europa area (high!)
Carrion Crow	Common in most areas
Raven	Quite common in most areas
Spotless Starling	Very common everywhere
Golden Oriole	Few Monfragüe area + Degolados (Portugal) + Coto Doñana area + Bolonia, Tarifa
House Sparrow	Very common everywhere
Spanish Sparrow	Quite common in Monfragüe area
Tree Sparrow	1 along the road close to Madrid
Rock Sparrow	Few Hoces del Duratón + Monfragüe area + Ronda area
Snowfinch	>4 Picos de Europa area
Chaffinch	Very common everywhere
Linnet	Common in many areas (not in Doñana)
Goldfinch	Very common in many areas
Greenfinch	Quite common in some areas
Citril Finch	>6 Navacerrada area
Serin	Very common almost everywhere
Cirl Bunting	Quite common in many areas
Corn Bunting	Extremely common everywhere!
Rock bunting	Few Hoces del Duratón + Monfragüe area + Bolonia, Tarifa

∑ 186 species