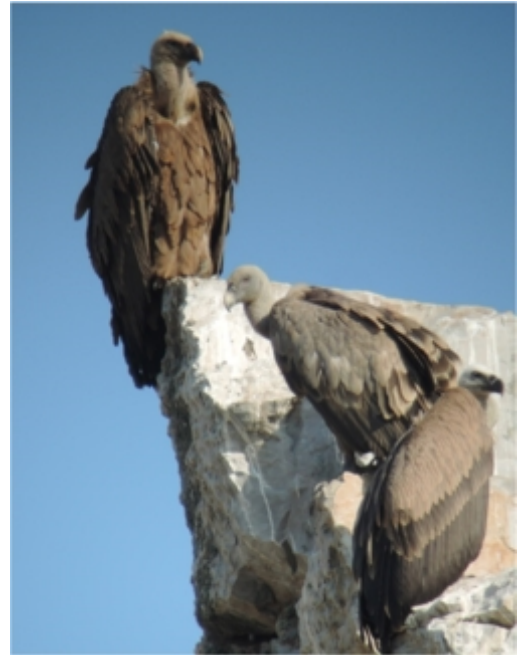


# Central Spain July/August 2014

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## Incorporating a family Summer Holiday with some early morning birding, 19/7/14 – 4/8/14.

My son Jack and I took the car over on Brittany Ferries Portsmouth – Santander crossing, picking up my wife and daughter on the way south at Madrid airport. We stayed at a lovely House/Villa in Navas de Estena on the edge of Cabaneros National Park, close to the Toledo mountains. To accommodate the late afternoon arrival in Santander we stopped over on both journeys, just south of Burgos. This allowed some time at Parque Natural de Hoces del rio Duracion. We organised through Natura Indomita three excursions guided by Vicente Malagon: two half days ( Calatrava Steppes south of Ciudad Real and Tablas de Daimiel National Park), one full day northeast and southeast of Cabaneros National Park.



We did some sea watching on board Cap Finistere on the Saturday (19<sup>th</sup>), backed up by some help from the Brittany Ferries Wildlife expert, as we had no experience in Cetacean spotting!

On the Friday night, whilst enjoying a pint in the 'open air' Bar, 4 Gannets and 2 Oystercatchers were observed in the Channel. Saturday in the Bay of Biscay we had a Great Black-backed Gull, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, 5 Corys Shearwater and a Collared Dove which landed briefly on the ship.

Cetaceans: 100+ Common Beak-nosed Dolphin, 12 Striped Dolphin, 3 Pilot Whale and 5 Risso's Dolphin.

In the evening we endured heavy rain on the way to Burgos ; Spain in July? In between the showers we did notice some soaring Griffon Vultures whilst passing through the mountains.



Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July. We were greeted by a gloomy overcast morning, hardly matching our shorts which were the only apparel available! A Black Redstart was noted as I manoeuvred the car out of the small underground garage. Once on the Motorway south, Black Kites were much in evidence ( very common throughout the holiday), as well as a couple of Red Kites. Two White Storks were spotted in a recently cut field, and immediately on leaving the motorway for the

Duration reserve a male and female Golden Oriole flew over the road, with a Great Spotted Woodpecker and a Cirl Bunting obligingly showing in the trees close to the road. Also 1 Hen Harrier from the car. Hoces del rio Duration is a wonderful spot with a spectacular river gorge. We arrived at 10-00am with one other car in the car park, when we left three hours later the car park was nearly full and there was one coach party. Most folk were visiting the little church perched on the side of the gorge. We however were looking for the wildlife. Of interest, we observed: 100+ Griffon Vulture (some excellent views), 2 Egyptian Vulture, 2 Raven, 2 Booted Eagle (1 light and 1 dark phase), 2 Hoopoe, 12 Rock Sparrow, 2 Mistle Thrush, a handful of Crested Lark, several Thekla Lark, a few Woodchat Shrike (another very common bird throughout the holiday), 1 Black-Eared Wheatear, 1 Common Buzzard, 4 Linnet, with Spotless Starling and House Sparrow also noted. A great area for birds; 4 Roe deer did scamper past us whilst watching the Griffon Vulture colony and the clouds got higher throughout the morning. Now we didn't feel underdressed!



Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July

With the family reunited, we shopped for provisions and relaxed, but always kept an eye out for birds. Locally around the house we saw 6 Bee-Eater, 3 Golden Oriole, 1 Red-Rumped Swallow, 1 Azure-Winged Magpie, 1 Corn Bunting. Barn Swallow, House Martin, House Sparrow and Spotless Starling were numerous. As we became accustomed to the local birds, Bee-Eaters, Azure-Winged Magpies and Woodchat Shrikes were also much in evidence. Blue skies and hot sunny conditions were now established.

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July

Morning trip to Calatrava Steppes guided by Vicente Malagon. An early morning departure (4-30am)



to ensure we met up with Vicente in plenty of time to start birding at 7-00am. Vicente drove us in his 4x4 and within minutes we were off the main road on a track. We soon stopped and immediately Vicente pointed out a group of birds – 7 Little Bustards. So an interesting morning ensued with the following highlights: 20+ Red-Billed Chough, 30+ Cattle Egret, 6 Stone Curlew, 50+ Great Bustard, 12 Pin-Tailed Sandgrouse, 3 Black-Bellied Sandgrouse, 1 Glossy Ibis, 6 Montagu's Harrier, several Marsh Harriers, 1 Black Vulture, 1 Black-

Winged Kite, 1 Spanish Imperial Eagle(3<sup>rd</sup> > 4<sup>th</sup> year), 4 Lesser Kestrel (1 male,3 female), 4 Little Owl, 2 Iberian Shrike, 2 Gull-Billed Tern, 1 Roller, 4 Hoopoe and 3 Red-Rumped Swallow. Also several Common Swift, Pallid Swift, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Goldfinch, Crested Lark, Red-Legged Partridge, Corn Bunting, Bee-Eater and Magpie. We also heard Calandra Lark, Penduline

Tit, Cetti's Warbler and Water Rail.. As a bonus we spotted a Black Stork from the car ; stood at the shoreline of the large reservoir on our way home.

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July

Morning trip to Tablas de Daimiel National Park guided by Vicente Malagon. Another equally early morning ensured we started birding soon after 7-00am. Today we were targeting mainly wetland



species. An excellent tour of this Reserve and neighbouring wet areas were highlighted by: 6 Black-Necked Grebe, 4 Spoonbill, 8 Glossy Ibis, 2 Grey Heron, 1 Squacco Heron, several Little Egret, Cattle Egret, Great Egret, Purple Heron, Little Bittern and Night Heron. Also; 2 Red-Crested Pochard, 3 Marsh Harrier, 1 Kestrel, 2 Avocet, Black-Winged Stilt, 2 Ringed Plover, 2 Lapwing, 8 Ruff, 2 Common Sandpiper, 5 Collared Pratincole, 1 Black Tern, several Whiskered Tern, 3 Roller, 4 Bee-Eater, 4 Iberian Woodpecker, 2 Savi's Warbler, several

Reed Warbler, 6 Bearded Tit, 2 Iberian Grey Shrike, 8 Penduline Tit, 50+ Jackdaw, 4 Spanish Sparrow, 1 Sardinian Warbler, 4 Nightingale, several Fan-Tailed Warbler, 4 Gadwall, 1 Turtle Dove, 4 Greenfinch, 1 Linnet and 50+ Greylag Goose. There were several ; Mallard, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, White-Headed Duck, Greater Flamingo, Reed Warbler, Woodchat Shrike and Corn Bunting. We finished at 1-30pm after an enthralling morning, only dipping on Moustached Warbler and Marbled Duck. On the way back we saw a light phase Booted Eagle from the car.

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July

Full day (starting 8-00am) exploring southeast of Cabaneros National Park, often fringing the perimeter, guided by Vicente Malagon. We visited a river bordered by a wood and cliffs/mountains, cork/holm oak dehesa, and grassy plains with scattered trees. The trip culminated

in a stop off in the mountains north east of Cabaneros, not far from Navas de Estena. Highlights included; 1 Little Bittern, several Little Egret, 2 Cattle Egret, 2 Grey Heron, 4 White Stork, 5 Black Stork, 20+ Mallard, 3 Red Kite, several Black Kite, 1 Marsh Harrier, 1 Montagu's Harrier, 2 Common Buzzard, 1 Golden Eagle( 4<sup>th</sup>> 5<sup>th</sup> year ), 5 Spanish Imperial Eagle( 2 juv 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 3 3<sup>rd</sup>> 4<sup>th</sup> year ), 6 Short-Toed Eagle, 5 Booted Eagle( 4 light phase, 1 dark phase ), 2



Kestrel, 12 Griffon Vulture, 5 Black Vulture, Moorhen, 3 Green Sandpiper, 2 Common Sandpiper, 2 Turtle Dove, 1 White-Rumped Swift, 2 Kingfisher, 2 Roller, 3 Hoopoe, 1 Woodlark, several Red-

Rumped Swallow, 1 Crag Martin, 2 White Wagtail, 1 Night Heron, 1 Nightingale, 1 Stonechat, 2 Black-Eared Wheatear, 1 Great Reed Warbler, 2 Sardinian Warbler, Long-Tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, 2 Iberian Shrike, Nuthatch, Jay, several ( 70+ ) Azure-Winged Magpie, Magpie, 2 Raven, Spotless Starling, House Sparrow, 50+ Spanish Sparrow, 8 Rock Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Corn Bunting. We finished birding at 8-00pm and said our farewells to Vicente. We cannot recommend him highly enough as an exemplary and enthusiastic guide. He speaks excellent English, not forgetting his wonderful picnic lunch! A great day out, in glorious scenery.

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July

A walk with the family into Cabaneros National Park at Navas de Estena on the Boqueron del Estena trail; wooded river/rocky gorge. An impressive walk with the following birds noted: 3 Rock Bunting, 1 Bonelli's Warbler, 2 Subalpine Warblers ( juveniles ), 6 Crag Martin, several Red-Rumped Swallow, 2 Pallid Swift, 1 Blue Rock Thrush, 1 Grey Wagtail, 1 Kingfisher, 1 Wren, 1 Nuthatch and 2 Jay.

We had many subsequent outings in the car around the north eastern and south eastern fringes of

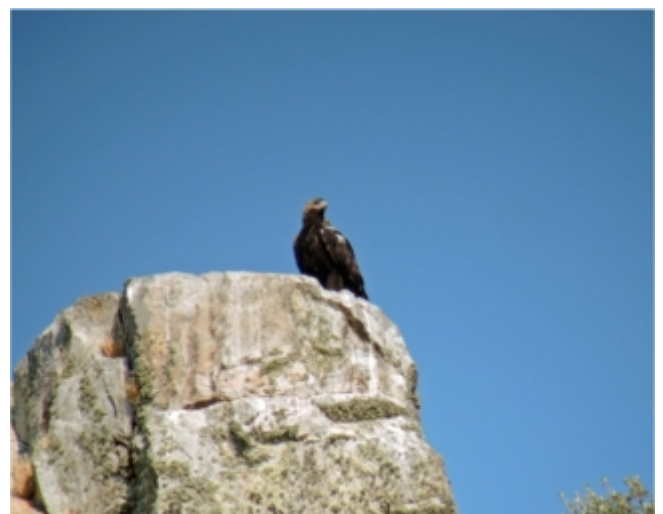


Cabaneros, some incorporating early starts. We mainly concentrated on the Santa Quiteria/El Robledo/El Bullaque area, but did happen upon a Vulture feeding fest at a carcass, to the side of the road a few kilometres from Navas de Estena. All the big raptors were always evident sometimes giving fantastic close views. Also we did pick up another Black-Winged Kite a couple of kilometres outside Santa Quiteria heading towards the observation hide. On a morning shopping trip a Great Spotted Cuckoo was

seen from the car. Since Monfrague National Park was only 2.5 hours drive away we decided to have a family day trip ( leaving at 7-00am ) taking lunch at Trujillo.

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> July

Monfrague National Park. Another spectacular area with wonderful views. Bird highlights were: 5 Red-legged Partridge, 70+ White Stork ( from car ), 4 Black Stork, 50+ Griffon Vulture, 4 Black Vulture, 4 Egyptian Vulture, 3 Spanish Imperial Eagle ( 1 adult, 2 3<sup>rd</sup>> 4<sup>th</sup> year ), 1 Golden Eagle ( 2<sup>nd</sup> year ), 1 Bonelli's Eagle, 1 Booted Eagle ( light phase ), 12 Black Kite, 1 Common Buzzard, 2 Lesser Kestrel, 2 Rock Dove, 12 Crag Martin, 1 Blue Rock Thrush, 1 Subalpine Warbler ( female ) and 1 Dartford Warbler ( female ).





Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August

At carcass : 35+ Griffon Vulture and 12+ Black Vulture. 1 adult Golden Eagle over carcass site at one stage.

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August

Last early morning trip to Santa Quiteria area. In stubble cereal fields : 100+ Spotless

Starling, 200+ Spanish Sparrow. Also 6 Golden Oriole ( 3 ad., 3 juv. ), plus plenty of large raptors as usual.

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> August/Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August

Travelling north via Madrid airport, including stops: 100+ White Storks (circling – preparing for migration?), 1 Black Vulture, 25+ Griffon Vulture, 1 Booted Eagle (light phase), several Black Kite, 5 Common Buzzard, 4 Kestrel, 3 Thekla Lark, 5 Crested Lark, 1 White Wagtail, 1 Nightingale, 1 Stonechat, 2 Wren, 6 Rock Sparrow were the highlights. Visited the Duration reserve again on the Sunday, and took the car into the mountains near Santander on the Monday ( Natural Parque Saja ) where we had a brief excellent view of a Middle Spotted Woodpecker in the misty woods.







Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August


On board Brittany Ferries Pont-Aven, off the Brest peninsula: 1 Cory's Shearwater, 6 Manx Shearwater, 1 Sooty Shearwater, 70+ Gannet, 1 Great Skua, 2 Common Swift, 3 Lesser Black-Backed Gull.

We really enjoyed our 'adventure' in Central Spain, the road infrastructure is fantastic, coupled with very little traffic, the 'joy of motoring' returned! Prices are relatively cheap compared to the UK and you only have to decide, ' which shorts am I going to wear today?' Two essentials for the family holiday at this time of year – a pool ( doesn't have to be big ) and air conditioning (inclusive).

**Bird List 18/7/2014 - 5/8/2014.**


SPECIES	MAX NO. SEEN AT ONCE	NO OF DAYS SEEN
Greylag Goose	50+	1
Mallard	20	3
Gadwall	2	1
Red-Crested Pochard	2	1
White-Headed Duck	20+	1
		
Red-Legged Partridge	5	3
Black-Necked Grebe	6	1
Little Grebe	3	1
Great Crested Grebe	3	1
Cory's Shearwater	2	2
Manx Shearwater	2	1
Sooty Shearwater	1	1
Gannet	70+	2
Cormorant	4	2
Little Bittern	1	2
Night Heron	5	2
Cattle Egret	30+	6
Squacco Heron	1	1
Little Egret	6	5
Great Egret	2	1
Grey Heron	2	2
Purple Heron	3	1
White Stork	100+	7
Black Stork	5	4
		
Glossy Ibis	2	2
Spoonbill	4	1


Greater Flamingo	25+	1
Griffon Vulture	100+	11
Black Vulture	12+	9
Egyptian Vulture	2	2
		
Golden Eagle	1	5
Spanish Imperial Eagle	2	6
Short-Toed Eagle	1	4
Booted Eagle	2	9
Bonelli's Eagle	1	1
Red Kite	2	3
Black Kite	4	14
Marsh Harrier	2	3
Hen Harrier	1	1
Montagu's Harrier	4	3
Common Buzzard	2	3
Black-Winged Kite	1	2
Kestrel	2	4
Lesser Kestrel	4	3
Moorhen	3	2
Coot	6	1
Great Bustard	50+	1
		
Little Bustard	7	1
Avocet	2	1
Black-Winged Stilt	4	2
Stone Curlew	2	1
Collared Pratincole	4	1
Ringed Plover	2	1
Lapwing	2	1
Green Sandpiper	3	1

Common Sandpiper	2	3
Ruff	4	1
Great Skua	1	1
Black-Headed Gull	8	1
Lesser Black-Backed Gull	2	2
Great Black-Backed Gull	2	1
Gull-Billed Tern	2	1
Black Tern	1	1
Whiskered Tern	12+	1
		
Black-Bellied Sandgrouse	3	1
Pin-Tailed Sandgrouse	6	1
Rock Dove	2	1
Wood Pigeon	4	10
Turtle Dove	2	3
Collared Dove	1	3
Great Spotted Cuckoo	1	1
Little Owl	2	1
Swift	6	5
Pallid Swift	10	8
White-Rumped Swift	1	1
Hoopoe	2	6
Kingfisher	2	3
Bee-Eater	14	15
Roller	2	3
Iberian Woodpecker	2	1
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	2
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	1	1
Skylark	1	1
Crested Lark	6	12
Thekla Lark	3	3
Woodlark	2	2
Crag Martin	12	3





Barn Swallow	6	10
Red-Rumped Swallow	6	10
House Martin	4	5
White Wagtail	2	3
Grey Wagtail	1	1
Robin	2	1
Nightingale	2	3
Black Redstart	2	2
Wheatear	1	1
Black-Eared Wheatear	1	2
Stonechat	2	3
Mistle Thrush	2	1
Blackbird	2	8
Blue Rock Thrush	1	2
Sardinian Warbler	2	3
Subalpine Warbler	2	2
Dartford Warbler	1	1
Fan-Tailed Warbler	3	2
Savi's Warbler	1	1
Reed Warbler	2	1
Great Reed Warbler	1	1
Western Bonelli's Warbler	1	1
Wren	2	3
Great Tit	2	3
Blue Tit	2	3
Long-Tailed Tit	6	1
Bearded Tit	2	1
		
Penduline Tit	4	1
Nuthatch	2	2

Iberian Grey Shrike	1	3
Woodchat Shrike	4	14
Azure-Winged Magpie 	12+	12
Magpie	2	7
Jay	2	3
Jackdaw	50+	2
Red-Billed Cough	8+	1
Raven	2	3
Spotless Starling	100+	14
Golden Oriole	4	6
House Sparrow	6	10
Spanish Sparrow	200+	4
Rock Sparrow	6	3
Chaffinch	2	3
Linnet	4	2
Goldfinch	12+	9
Greenfinch	2	2
Cirl Bunting	1	2
Corn Bunting	4	6
Rock Bunting	2	2

Heard only: Calandra Lark, Cetti's Warbler, Water Rail.

## 136 Species

**Clive and Jack Oldham**

