



# Strait Birding and Doñana Delights

9 – 19 March 2018



## Day 1

### Friday 9 March

We were greeted with fresh Straits air and bright sunshine this morning, and we made the most of it, doing a spot of pre-breakfast birding with Pete and Adrienne who we had collected from Málaga airport the previous evening. Pretty much the first bird of the trip was a Hawfinch, perched up in a Poplar with several Spotless Starlings! As well as many Blackcaps and a handful of Iberian Chiffchaffs, we had lovely views of Serins in songflight. Several Short-toed Eagles soared low overhead, boding well for the migration events to come.

Then it was time to assemble some more of the team! Leaving Pete and Adrienne to their breakfast *tostadas* and coffee, we collected Margaret from her nearby accommodation and Caz from Gibraltar airport, noting many White Storks and Black Kites on the way back.

Making the most of the wind conditions, we headed down to a valley just below Huerta Grande, to an area that has become known as 'Niki's Watchpoint'! Affording spectacular views across the Straits of Gibraltar, this area is also amazing for seeing newly arrived raptors when the wind is in the right direction.

As we travelled through the landscape, making frequent stops to admire migrating birds, we enjoyed views of dozens of Black Kites, Short-toed Eagles and Griffon Vultures drifting through the valley, as well as eight Black Storks, two Eurasian Sparrowhawks and an Egyptian Vulture, also newly arrived in Europe.

Other migrants were in evidence too - a Great Spotted Cuckoo flashed before us and we could see the first of the Pallid Swifts arriving amongst Barn Swallows and House Martins.

Ken and Margaret arrived into Gibraltar that evening, and after settling them into their lovely accommodation the team were finally united for our first delicious dinner together!

## Day 2

### Saturday 10 March

A blustery day with strong westerly winds and scattered, but heavy showers did nothing to dampen our enthusiasm, and we toggled up and headed to La Janda, a large area of low intensity agricultural land where rice paddies and well-vegetated ditches provide habitat for waterbirds.

Echoes of its former glory as a vast wetland were immediately apparent, as we could see Little and Cattle Egrets, White Storks and Eurasian Spoonbills dotted across the landscape.

Corn Buntings and Calandra and Crested Larks sang from every field, and we enjoyed views of an Iberian Grey Shrike, perched up on a telegraph wire, as well as hunting Western Marsh Harrier. A single Audouin's Gull – once the world's rarest gull – was hunkered down in a field, seemingly enjoying the weather even less than we were!

Waterbirds didn't disappoint, with two very showy Purple Swampheens on view! We also saw Little Ringed Plover, Ruff, Green Sandpiper and a lone Sanderling taking refuge. Numerous newly arrived *ibericae* Yellow Wagtails were showing beautifully, as were White and a single Grey Wagtail.

We were impressed by the veritable swarms of hirundines, pushed low by the weather, with Sand and House Martins and Barn Swallows hunting in their thousands! When a shower came that forced even these intrepid airborne foragers to land, we decided to head for lunch!

Simon and Niki hosted the group at their 'mansion' in the *pueblo blanco* of Facinas, where we enjoyed fresh salads and olives, fresh local breads wines and cheeses, all washed down with a warming glass of *vino tinto* or two!

The shower soon passed, and we explored the local Cork Oak forest and scrub of Monte Facinas, in Los Alcornacales Parque Natural. We could hear Firecrests and Short-toed Treecreepers calling, and we enjoyed watching the last of the area's wintering Black Redstarts, soon to head

north to breed. A Eurasian Hoopoe put on a show for us, and after a little searching, we got great views of a Cirl Bunting which had been tormenting us with its song from a hidden perch!

Using local knowledge to make a decision based on wind direction, Simon took us back through our 'Secret Valley' west of Tarifa. It was definitely a good choice! Trapped by the weather, many raptors were holed up in this area, hunting and searching for a place to roost.

We parked up and watched as over eighty Short-toed Eagles, 100+ Griffon Vultures, a Eurasian Hobby, Peregrine Falcon, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawks and the first Booted Eagle of the trip drifted in and out of the cloud over our heads – magical! We also had views of a Gibraltar Buzzard – a Common Buzzard who somewhere in its lineage clearly has some Long-legged Buzzard genes, being longer winged and more rufous than average, with white flashes on the upperwing and completely lacking a sub-terminal band on the tail.

We started to head back, thinking we had maxed out on some amazing raptor watching, but we were wrong! A single male Montagu's drifted silently past the vehicles, leaving us spellbound.

### Day 3

### Sunday 11 March

Heading out west into another blustery, but much sunnier day, we made our first stop at the coast of Punta Paloma, to see what interesting seabirds the westerly wind - or *poniente* - had brought in off the Atlantic. We spent an enjoyable time letting the breezy day blow away the morning cobwebs while we watched Cory's Shearwaters, Northern Gannets, Sandwich Terns and a Great Skua hunting just off the coast.

A stroll to examine an intertidal pool yielded Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone and Common Ringed Plover, and on our return to the vehicle a rather tired-looking Western Osprey was waiting for us, perched up on a post!

Our next stop was at Barca de Vejer, where the group was to meet with the rarest bird of the trip! The grotesque but fabulous Northern Bald Ibis has chosen to make the cliffs outside this town its home, after a dozen or so pairs spilled out from a nearby reintroduction project and started recolonising the countryside! The colony were in full breeding activity, and we enjoyed their fascinating antics, wooing each other with the gift of nest material and indulging in mutual preening.

Simon and Niki were particularly overjoyed to see the colony so active. Over coffee we explained to the group that, last year, all but one of the chicks were lost to a marauding Eagle Owl and we had concerns they wouldn't return. With only around 1000 individuals left in the wild, to lose this busy colony would have been tragic indeed.

Next, we headed on to the disused salt pans at Barbate, a real haven for gulls, terns, waders and waterbirds. Here we were able to view roosting Glossy Ibises and Eurasian Spoonbills, Oystercatchers, Black-winged Stilts and Pied Avocets, without even needing to leave the vehicle!

Common Ringed, Kentish and Grey Plovers were numerous, as were Sanderling, Little Stints, Dunlin, Common Snipe, Redshank, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper and Ruddy Turnstone – a very attractive assemblage! A large group of Audouin's Gulls afforded great views and we also saw Gull-billed and Caspian Terns.

The sun broke through once more just in time for our picnic lunch! As we enjoyed it we also enjoyed views of three goofy-looking Eurasian Stone Curlews, alternating between standing proud and looking like rocks on one of the salt pan's gravel islands. There were also many Iberian Yellow Wagtails gleaming in the sunshine.

On the way back to base we stopped off in Tarifa, next to the seafront fort of Guzman el Bueno. Here, we enjoyed watching the antics of the colony of Lesser Kestrels, which have occupied the many nooks and crannies on the fort's walls and formed a nesting colony. As with the ibises earlier today, bonding and mating activity was at a high, as the handsome males with their rufous

backs and powder-blue heads called mid-flight to the beautifully patterned females in their nesting holes.

Then time to head back and relax before dinner, tonight a hearty local speciality known as *pisto*, a flavoursome peasant's dish of tomatoes and courgettes mixed in with a poached egg and plenty of robust local bread and wine!

## **Day 4**

### **Monday 12 March**

Today the wind had died down and switched to north-westerly, so it was 'game on' for migration-chasing! Thousands of raptors had been trapped in North Africa for days now. We knew they would be desperate to get moving, and so were we!

We headed up to a nearby viewpoint to get a feel for where the most movement was happening and immediately we could see many Black Kites were already arriving around that area of the coast.

We went to a coastal watchpoint at Guadalamesi, where an old Napoleonic military outpost gives stunning views out over the ocean. Spending an uplifting morning watching from here and other areas around the coast, we enjoyed our first real experience of migration happening all around us as throngs of Black Kites and Short-toed Snake Eagles arrived in Europe, accompanied by Egyptian Vultures, Montagu's Harriers, Western Marsh Harriers and Eurasian Sparrowhawks!

As we headed to Tarifa for a comfort break and to pick up some picnic supplies, we were astonished to spot two Northern Bald Ibis on the edge of an industrial estate! These birds were a good 50 km from their main breeding colony – what were they doing here..?

We picnicked at El Trafico, looking out over the deep blue waters of the Straits of Gibraltar to the North coast of Morocco, with stunning views of the Rif Mountains and the Jebel Mousa – Morocco's impressive rocky monolith that is the African twin of the Rock of Gibraltar. There had been recent sightings of Orca from this spot and we scanned hopefully, but to no avail. The swell on the sea was still very large from the recent backlash from Storm Emma, something which the local Northern Gannets seemed to be enjoying a great deal!

We spent the afternoon at a viewpoint high in the hills above Tarifa, known as La Peña. This area is a good example of the unusual habitat in the Straits where coastal lowland species meet those with a typically more mountainous range. Sure enough, we found both Crested and the superficially similar Thekla Lark together here – an unusual situation. It afforded good opportunities for an ID masterclass on how to separate these two tricky larks!

But as the group diligently examined little brown jobs, they were rather distracted by the appearance of rather more glamorous Black-eared Wheatear! This peachy little stunner perched up on a rock for all to see, and was not to be outdone even when a gorgeous Blue Rock Thrush appeared! And, just to pop a cherry on the cake, a newly arrived Subalpine Warbler – a lifer for some in the group - put on a show. We also had numerous raptors to take our attention, including Peregrine Falcon and dozens of our resident Griffon Vultures.

We headed back happy for a rest and dinner, but not before a well-earned ice-cream stop at the Mirador del Estrecho, where we took in a few last drifting Black Kites while we chomped on our choc ices!

## Day 5

## Tuesday 13 March

Today another day of humid north-westerly winds took us east – to Punta Carnero, a migration watchpoint near Algeciras. We enjoyed nice views of a rather bedraggled Eurasian Hoopoe in a field, and watched out across Algeciras bay, finding a great selection of sea and waterbirds, including Great Skua, Great Crested Grebe, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, Ruddy Turnstone, a flock of Common Scoter and a single Arctic Skua.

The clouds were low and moody, and the winds pretty strong, but despite the inclement conditions, the intrepid Black Kites had decided, “Bugger it! This will do!”. One by one, and then by the dozen, they started to appear out of the clouds, wings beating like crazy and some barely making land! We watched, hearts in mouths as two individuals struggled right in front of us, so close we could almost have dragged them in with a well-flung lasso! There are no thermals over the sea, which is what makes crossing it so treacherous for soaring birds. Though barely metres from land, they were having to use the diagonal wind to gain lift, increasing the length of their journey many times.

Then, after what seemed like an age they hit land and instantly found a thermal, taking them from a couple of metres above the sea to a couple of hundred metres above the land within seconds! We cheered them on with a massive amount of relief! Looking along the cliffs we could see an exhausted looking Western Osprey clinging there, presumably having undergone the same ordeal earlier!

Exhilarated, we headed down to the coastal village of Getares for a comfort break and a coffee stop. But our break was not to be an uneventful one! Suddenly a break appeared between two large clouds over Punta Carnero and Gibraltar, effectively creating a sunlit channel of warm air which stretched right from the coast of Morocco to just above our heads! This was the moment they – and we – had been waiting for!

Necking our coffee we took up position by the sea wall as they began to arrive. Over the next hour or so we witnessed an immense river of raptors and storks arriving from Africa. Three hundred Black Kites, twenty Griffon Vultures, three hundred Short-toed Eagles, over a hundred Booted Eagles, 38 Black Storks, thirty or more Western Marsh Harriers and a sprinkling of Egyptian Vultures, Montagu’s Harriers, Eurasian Sparrowhawks and Lesser Kestrels poured over us in one of Nature’s most uplifting and vibrant spectacles. We abandoned all plans and ate our picnic right there, barely finding a quiet moment between waves to grab a plate of food!

Eventually the action died down and we left our ringside seats to the greatest show on Earth! We headed inland, following kettles of the many hundreds of raptors that we had just seen cross the sea.

We called in at Embalse de Barbate, enjoying views of three Western Ospreys as well a large number of Glossy Ibis, and low-foraging hirundines including several Red-rumped Swallows.

The afternoon was spent exploring the higher parts of the farmland at La Janda. Here we had amazing views of a Short-eared Owl and a male Hen Harrier. A distant Spanish Imperial added another jewel to our day, and we were impressed by the large numbers of hunting Western Marsh Harriers. Many Serins, Corn Buntings and Zitting Cisticolas provided the soundtrack. We ended a spectacular day much as it had began, with lovely close-up views of a Eurasian Hoopoe on the track, this time considerably less bedraggled!

**Day 6****Wednesday 14 March**

This morning, invigorated by our breakfast of toasted local breads and spreads, fresh fruit and cereal – not to mention the good strong coffee – we headed out to see the intertidal habitat at pretty Los Lances beach, just outside Tarifa.

A short walk down to the hide took us through pastureland, where we enjoyed many Yellow Wagtails, Meadow Pipits, Zitting Cisticolas, Corn Buntings and a single Italian Sparrow amongst the large House Sparrow flocks.

From the hide overlooking the beach we watched many dozens of waders going about their business, including Common Ringed, Kentish and Grey Plovers, Sanderling, Dunlin, Common Redshank and Green Sandpiper amongst others.

Amongst the flocks of Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed Gulls roosting on the beach, we picked out nine Mediterranean Gulls, several Audouin's Gulls and a first-winter Common Gull – unusual for the area. There were also many Sandwich Terns, and a single Caspian Tern drifted overhead. Out to sea, we spotted Northern Gannets, Cory's Shearwaters and a Great Skua.

Next we headed out to the seaside town of Bolonia, where we had a quick coffee break before heading up into the rocky hills of Sierra de la Plata. Here, we could right down onto the magnificent sweep of Tarifa bay, over the Roman ruins of Baelo Claudia and out to the craggy coast of Morocco. A singing Blue Rock Thrush and a lovely male Black Redstart put in an appearance before we headed off.

We took our lunch across from a craggy cliff face that hosts the area's colony of Griffon Vultures. While Simon and Niki prepared another fabulous picnic, the group delighted in watching the birds soar overhead and land noisily at their nesting sites. We counted over seventy of these magnificent, prehistoric-looking scavengers as well as three Endangered Egyptian Vultures – a welcome site as one of the single resident pair had unfortunately been killed the previous year.

As the group ate, Simon and Niki scanned the colony and a particularly dark-looking individual took our eye. Hunkered down in a nest and only just visible, something about the chocolate colour and lack of contrasting colours on this bird caused us to keep watching it. Sure enough, after many minutes it eventually stood up and revealed itself to be a Rüppell's Vulture! This African species has become a regular, if elusive visitor to Spain and especially the Straits, as young birds from Senegal get caught up in the northward migratory movement of Griffon Vultures returning here.

On the way back home we took one last stop in the rice paddies of La Janda, and this time were rewarded by the sight of several hundred Common Cranes - the last of the wintering flocks – grazing in the fields.

Then it was home for our last delicious dinner at Huerta Grande, where we toasted a successful first leg of the trip and recounted our highlights over a glass or two of local sherry!

**Day 7****Thursday 15 March**

Today we said goodbye to our friends Pete and Adrienne and headed off to the next leg of our adventure - Doñana National Park and around.

We had a leisurely morning to pack, and also to spend a little time enjoying our surroundings at Huerta Grande. This wooded eco-lodge provides the perfect place to observe Short-toed Treecreepers, Firecrests and Iberian Chiffchaffs, as well as having Crested Tits and Serins as frequent visitors to the bird feeders!

We eventually said goodbye to Katrin and the Huerta Grande team and made a start. Not long into our journey we were treated to views of a stunning little Black-winged Kite by the side of the road. We broke up the picturesque three-hour drive with a very pleasant lunch break in the Bay of Cadiz

area. The vast salt pans here form part of the Natural Park, and the traditionally harvested areas are rich with macrofauna and birdlife.

Exploring the pans within easy reach of the main national road, we were really pleased with the selection of waterbirds and waders which included Greater Flamingo, Eurasian Spoonbill, Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Little Ringed, Common Ringed, Kentish and Grey Plovers, Sanderling, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwits, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Green and Common Sandpiper. Amongst the Yellow-legged and Black-headed Gulls, we saw Slender-billed Gulls, Audouin's Gulls, Caspian and Sandwich Terns and a solitary Little Gull.

We took our picnic under a blue sky overlooking the pans, accompanied by the song of Crested, Thekla and Lesser Short-toed Lark, and enjoyed views of Western Osprey overhead.

We continued on our way and, as we approached our destination, flocks of gregarious Iberian Magpies could be seen flitting amongst the Stone Pine plantations alongside the road.

Soon we arrived in the tiny town of El Rocío, and Simon and Niki had the pleasure of watching our guests' faces as we made our way through the sand-covered, 'Wild West' style streets of this quirky Spanish horseman's town, where hitching posts are more common than parking spaces! We checked into our accommodation, a spacious ranch-style hotel around a pretty central courtyard.

The town is located on the shores of a tranquil, scrub-edged lagoon, and no birder can resist its draw for long! A late afternoon stroll brought us views of dozens of Greater Flamingoes and Eurasian Spoonbills wading through the peaceful waters, as well as Little and Great Crested Grebes, Common Teal, Red-crested and Common Pochard, Purple Heron, Great Egret and genuine, wild Greylag Geese – the symbol of Doñana National Park. On the near shore of the lake we found iridescent Glossy Ibis and Purple Swamphens, and secretive Common Snipe picking through the mud.

We could tell that Spring was coming as hundreds of House Martins and Barn Swallows filled the air, along with the odd Red-rumped Swallow! As we made our way to dinner, the aerial insect-hunting night shift took over and hirundines gave way to hundreds of bats!

Dinner at the famous Hotel Toruño, overlooking the *laguna*. We were treated to a variety of traditional local dishes, including *salmorejo* - a type of gazpacho - and Iberian pork steak with a tomato and vegetable sauce. As we were finishing dinner, we were joined by the new members of our team for this leg, Rob and Mary, who Simon had fetched from Seville, and who were treated to a delicious platter of local cheeses for their supper.

## **Day 8                      Friday 16 March**

Today we headed out into Doñana National Park with our friend Jose Manuel from Doñana Nature. We travelled in their 4x4 minibus, giving us exclusive access to permit-only areas of the park.

In the morning we travelled through the extensive Stone Pine and Cork Oak forests. We enjoyed the sights and sounds of the forest, including Short-toed Treecreepers, Firecrests and huge numbers of brightly-singing Serins. Flocks of peach-and-turquoise Iberian Magpies crashed noisily through the trees and we came across many Red Deer, some of the stags still holding on to their impressive antlers. We also started to notice a seasonal crossover, with both wintering Common Chiffchaffs and breeding Iberian Chiffchaffs vocally present.

We were passing through the territories of Iberian Lynxes, and there was always a chance that we might come across one of these hard-to-see cats. But although we saw some great Lynx snacks in the form of European Rabbits and Red-legged Partridges, unfortunately this morning luck wasn't on our side.

We emerged out onto the acid heathland, which had been rendered into an incredible wetland by all the recent rain! The splashes of water on the grass yielded a wonderful selection and huge

numbers of wetland birds, including Great Egrets, Purple Herons, Black-necked, Little and Great Crested Grebes. Waders included Black-winged Stilts, Little Ringed Plovers, Northern Lapwings, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwits, Common Redshanks, Common Greenshanks and Green Sandpipers. All these were set against a backdrop of literally thousands of Glossy Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbills and Greater Flamingoes – a wonderful spectacle, almost primeval in nature!

Walking the short stretch of footpath leading to the Valverde Visitor Centre, we enjoyed two Black-winged Kites which could be seen hunting and perching nearby. We also spotted a lone Short-eared Owl, sat down in the grass, seemingly scowling at us! We found a Subalpine Warbler in the scrubby vegetation and Sedge Warblers singing from the reedy edges of the lake.

Around the Visitor Centre, we relaxed with a coffee and then looked out over the shallow, reed- and scrub-fringed lake. A great selection of ducks awaited, with four White-headed Ducks, a Ferruginous Duck, a drake Garganey and several Red-crested Pochards amongst the Eurasian Teal, Mallard and Northern Shoveler.

For lunch we headed back to El Rocío, and took our picnic by the lagoon's edge. As well as all yesterday's birds and more, we picked up two fascinating Penduline Tits foraging in the reed mace. We were treated to a brief flyby by a Little Bittern, launching from the reeds just metres from where we sat and flying right over the picnic!

In the afternoon, we headed back into the park, into an area known as Coto del Rey. This higher, dryer area gave us great views of a Woodchat Shrike and hunting Lesser Kestrels, as well as confused-looking Common Cuckoo, clinging to a thistle just metres from the van!

But the spectacle of the flooded heathland drew us back for a second helping, and as we arrived the air positively fizzed with the song of Eurasian Skylarks, Lesser Short-toed, Calandra and Crested Larks. Subalpine Warblers were now numerous and amongst the swirling flocks of low hirundines we could pick out several Red-rumped Swallows.

As the sun started to lower, a Marsh harrier flushed hundreds of Greater Flamingoes, filling the evening sky with a baby-pink and fuschia cloud of wings, legs and necks!

We headed back just in time for a relaxing G&T before dinner!

## **Day 9                      Saturday 17 March**

Today we drove out from El Rocío along a road through farmland and pine forest. We took our time, enjoying views of perched Iberian Grey and Woodchat Shrikes, and Black Kites leaving their roosts.

Looking out through an orchard, Mary caught a movement in the long grass. A dark, medium-sized mammal was sauntering slowly through the vegetation about 100 yards back from the road. We stopped and spent some time searching, as Woodlarks, Tree Sparrows, Serins, and Iberian Magpies went about their business in the trees. Iberian Lynx aren't just active in the National Park itself, and a male had in fact been seen in this area just two days ago! Could it have been a lynx that Mary saw? Sadly we'll never know!

We spent the morning exploring the area of Isla Mayor, where the recent rains had turned the entire farmed area into a prime wetland site! We were impressed by fields full of dozens of Cattle, Little and Great Egrets all feeding together, alongside almost too many Glossy Ibis to count!

Black Kites were super-numerous as they drifted around the scrubby areas along ditches. A highlight for many was the single male Hen Harrier that drifted low over the vehicles, affording us amazing views.

We took our picnic in a hide overlooking another section of the Madre de Marismas lagoon. Here, we could look out at a close flock of waders which included Black-tailed Godwit, Black-winged Stilt and Ruff amongst others. Again, the swirling hirundines put on a show, and more Red-rumped

Swallows made themselves apparent amongst the throngs of House and Sand Martins and Barn Swallows.

In the afternoon we took a spin round the grounds of the impressive Palacio de Acebron, and explored the heaths and marshes of Acebuche. We took a break for coffee at the Visitor Centre there, where we were able to watch live footage of a mother Iberian Lynx and her three tiny kits, safely holed up in a shelter nearby. These cats are part of the local breeding programme, and those three tiny furballs would soon be part of Spain's wild population!

Later that evening, bright sunshine came our way, and we partook in a pre-dinner visit to the lagoon shores, this time getting even better views of extraordinarily glossy Purple Swamphens.

## **Day 10**

## **Sunday 18 March**

Today, after a hearty breakfast and some good Hotel Toruño coffee, we drove round to the far side of the Natural park, to visit the expansive salt pans at Bonanza. Beyond Seville we made a coffee stop, before journeying on through the sweeping farmlands, where we saw the odd Gull-billed Tern over the splashes of water in the fields.

We soon arrived at the pans, and no sooner had we got set up outside the vehicle than a beautiful adult male Montagu's Harrier swept right by us and began hunting over the ditch edges in front of us – worth the journey alone!

We spent a lovely morning viewing out over the pans from various sites. The variations in the depth of the water and the scrubbiness brought us a lovely selection of birds. Some pans were favoured by the larger birds such as Eurasian Spoonbills and Greater Flamingoes, while various others brought an incredible selection of waders, including Little-ringed, Common, Kentish and Grey Plover. Pale Wood Sandpiper, Sanderling and Common Greenshank shone out from amongst the throngs of Dunlin and Ruff, many of them entering summer plumage. Ruddy Turnstone, Common Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit and Whimbrel were all present, as were Common Redshank and Common Sandpiper.

Western Marsh Harriers quartered the scrubby banks, and we had outstanding views of four Western Ospreys! Neither did the gulls disappoint, with four Mediterranean gulls roosting and plenty of sleek-looking Slender-billed Gulls feeding in the shallows, their summer flush almost as pink as the Flamingoes!

We took our lunch right out in the middle of the vast open landscape, listening to Lesser Short-toed larks in songflight and enjoying an abundance of zesty Iberian Yellow Wagtails and some particularly belligerent Sardinian Warblers! Pied Avocets and Black-winged Stilts paddled in the pool next to us.

After picnic we headed over to a more vegetated lagoon set amongst Stone Pine Groves, at the edge of the pans. The deeper water brought yet more avian treats! Amongst the Northern Shoveler and Common Pochard were over 150 Red-crested Pochard, over twenty splendid White-headed Ducks and six Marbled Teal!

The scrub around the edge of the water was also dripping with many Black-crowned Night Herons, giving us some superb close-up views of this handsome heron. The air was full of explosive Cetti's Warbler song and we picked out several of the year's last Common Chiffchaffs flitting through the reeds. The turquoise flash of a Common Kingfisher rounded off the day, and it was time to head home, after finishing the trip with an absolutely superb day's birding.

We celebrated our journey together with another fine meal at Hotel Toruño and enjoyed some local *manzanilla* sherry while we reminisced over some of the superb wildlife moments and good laughs we had shared along the way!

**Day 11**

**Monday 19 March**

Today we went our separate ways, and while Niki took Ken, Margaret and Caz to their flight from Seville airport, Simon made sure Rob, Mary and (other) Margaret were able to make the most of their last morning before taking them to their various hotels and flights for their onward journeys.

Simon and Niki were sad to see everyone go! We enjoyed this trip immensely, sharing the areas we love with old friends and new. We'd like to thank the group for their good spirits and banter throughout, and we look forward to seeing you again!



## Strait Birding & Cetaceans and Doñana Delights Species Checklist

### Birds

		DATE:	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	Species common name	Scientific Name											
1	Cory's Shearwater	<i>Calonectris diomedea</i>		1	2			10					
2	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>							10	5+	10+	P	
3	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>					5		20+	50+	10+	10+	
4	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>								15+		40+	
5	Northern Gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>		20+	50+	✓	✓	✓					
6	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	5+	10+	20+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
7	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>								1			
8	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>										20+	
9	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>											1
10	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		P	P	3+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>					1		2	10+	3+	✓	
13	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>							3	8	4		
14	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		4	2	1	10+	10+	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	8				38						
16	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	10+	6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
17	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>			c.10		200+	150+	300+	800+	200+	600+	
18	Northern Bald Ibis	<i>Geronticus eremita</i>			34	2							
19	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>			14		50+	20+	80+	150+	50+	100+	
20	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>							400+	800+	200+	700+	
21	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>							10+	20+	5+	50+	
22	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>					1		4	10+		150+	
23	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen Aegyptiaca</i>					2						
24	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>							10+	20+	5+	20+	
25	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>					4		30+	50+	20+	4	
26	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
27	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>								1		1	
28	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>							✓	✓	✓	✓	
29	Marbled Teal	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>										6	
30	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>							50+	100+		150+	

31	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	
32	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>									1			
33	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>					20+							
34	White-headed Duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>									4		20+	
35	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>				2	✓				✓	✓		
36	Western Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>			1		4		3+		1			4
37	Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>								1	2			
38	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	20+	5+	20+	200+	400+	50+	✓	✓	✓	✓		
39	Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	1			2+	3+	3						
40	Rüppell's Vulture	<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>						1						
41	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	30+	100+	c.5	50+	20+	70+						20+
42	Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	30+	80+	1	80+	300+	10+	2					
43	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>						1			2	1	1	
44	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>			1	1	2	3	1					1
45	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			1	1	5+	30+	20+	20+	10+		2	10+
46	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	2	6	2	6	c.10	5+	10+	5+		1	1	
47	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	1	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	5	
48	Gibraltar Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i> x <i>Buteo rufinus</i>		1										
49	Spanish Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>					1							
50	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>		1		20+	100+		3			1	2	
51	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	3	3	7	30+	20+	5+	5+	3+	10+		3	
52	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	5+	10+	2	5+	10+	2		5+			2	
53	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbetueo</i>		1								1		
54	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		1			1							
55	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>		2			5		5+	10+	2+	10+		
56	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		2			6+		P	P	P		15+	
57	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>							P	P	P	P		
58	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>			c.20									
59	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>			8+		5		P	P	P	P		
60	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>			10+	2			20+				20+	
61	Eurasian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oediacnemus</i>			3		2						1	
62	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		6					10+	3+			4	
63	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>			30+			15+	20+				10+	
64	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>			15+			10+	10+				20+	
65	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			10+			20+	50+				10+	



101	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	4*	3+			30+	10+	P	P	P	P	
102	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		6		2							3
103	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>											1
104	Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		1		1	5	2	5	3	1	4	
105	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	1			1							
106	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>								1			
107	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>		10*	4					5			
108	Lesser Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>							10+	4		5	
109	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
110	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>				4+	3	1	2				
111	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>									2		
112	Common Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>		10+			P	5+	P	P	P	P	
113	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>					3+	1+	3	5	2	10+	
114	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>		2	10+	5+	P	2+	2			20+	
115	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
116	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
117	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		2	2		20+	30+	P	P	2	20+	
118	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		1									
119	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		4	3	3	20+		✓	✓	✓	✓	
120	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
121	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>		2									
122	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
123	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	2	1		3	
124	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	2	6	2	20+	10+	20+	P	P	5+	3	
125	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
126	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>				1							
127	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>				2		1					
128	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	5+	2		3	1	20+					
129	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>				1							
130	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
131	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	2	2	3	4+	P	2	P	P	P	5+	
132	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>			2								
133	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>								c.10			
134	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>								1		5+	
135	Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>	2	20*	10+	10+	10+	3+	5+	5+			



## Strait Birding & Cetaceans and Doñana Delights Species Checklist Butterflies

Common Name	Scientific name	Straits	Doñana
Monarch	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	✓	
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	✓	✓
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	✓	✓
Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>	✓	
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	✓	✓
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>	✓	✓
Small Copper		✓	

## Reptiles and Amphibians

Common Name	Scientific name	Straits	Doñana
Iberian Pool Frog	<i>Rana perezi</i>	✓	
Fire Salamander	<i>Salamandra salamandra</i>	✓	
Mediterranean Tree Frog	<i>Hyla meridionalis</i>		✓

## Land Mammals

Common Name	Scientific name	Straits	Doñana
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓
Brown Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>		✓
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓
Iberian Hare	<i>Lepus granatensis</i>		✓