

Trip Report: Spain (Extremadura)

26th April – 2nd May 2011

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TropicalBirdPhotos



Whilst visiting Spain to participate in the ITU Cross-Triathlon World Championships at the Embalse de Gabriel y Galán in the Province of Cáceres, Extremadura, I was able to sneak in some casual birding in the countryside and villages of the area, plus an afternoon of dedicated birding in the renowned Monfragüe National Park. Despite only having a few hours to focus on birding I was able to identify 41 species and given my limited prior experience in Europe, some 37 of these were lifers!



Eurasian Blue Tit attending nest hole in cliff wall [Monfragüe National Park]



Forested hillsides; White Stork nest [both adjacent to the Embalse de Gabriel y Galán]



Azure-winged Magpie; Southern Gray Shrike [both on farmland near to the Embalse de Gabriel y Galán]



Stonechat; Corn Bunting [both along roadside outside Monfragüe National Park]



Río Tiétar winding through Monfragüe National Park



Imposing cliffs and soaring raptors [both Monfragüe National Park]



Eurasian Griffon [Monfragüe National Park]



Eurasian Crag-Martin [Monfragüe National Park]



Rock Bunting; Red-rumped Swallow [both in Monfragüe National Park]



Red Kite; Short-toed Eagle [both in Monfragüe National Park]

Bird Trip List¹

Confirmed personal sightings only for DJS – excludes birds heard only unless otherwise indicated. For field guides I used ‘Birds of Britain and Europe’ by Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom, 1993 - which contained all of the species that I saw. Many names have been updated since this guide were published, so birds in the trip list are identified and listed as per ‘The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World’, Cornell, 2007 with updates through December 2010 (online version 6.5).

Locations where species seen in sequence of travel:

M = Madrid and environs (April 28th).

EGG = Embalse de Gabriel y Galán, including forest and wetlands around the lake, plus roadside birding through the forest and farmland in between Hervás to the north and Plasencia to the south - at between 400m and 800m altitude (principally morning of May 1st).

MNP = Monfragüe National Park (afternoon of May 2nd).

White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) * [EGG; MNP]: Seen all around the countryside and villages of Extremadura, with large elevated nests built on church towers, house roofs, electricity pylons and even on elevated platforms especially installed in fields.

Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) * [MNP]: Several seen flying inside the park and perched on riverside cliffs. One individual with chicks seen on a nest built on a large boulder in the middle of the river.

Eurasian Griffon (*Cyps fulvus*) * [MNP]: Clement’s name of ‘Eurasian Griffon’ replaces ‘Griffon Vulture’ used in Peterson et al. Many tens seen flying inside the park and perched on riverside cliffs along the Río Tíetar. The commonest raptor at each of the cliffs visited.

Cinereous Vulture (*Aegyptius monachus*) [MNP]: Clement’s name of ‘Cinereous Vulture’ replaces ‘(Eurasian) Black Vulture’ used in Peterson et al. One individual seen on a nest perched in the top of a distant pine tree across the Río Tíetar near to one of the major cliff complexes.

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) [MNP]: One seen soaring in the company of Eurasian Griffons.

Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) * [EGG; MNP]: Regularly seen flying over the countryside and villages of Extremadura.

Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) * [MNP]: Several seen as I approached the park and also seen in the company of other raptors within the park.

Booted Eagle (*Hieraetus pennatus*) * [MNP]: One seen soaring alone.

Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) * [MNP]: One seen soaring in the company of Eurasian Griffons.

Spanish Eagle (*Aquila adalberti*) [MNP]: Clement’s name of ‘Spanish Eagle’ split from ‘Imperial Eagle’ (*Aquila heliaca*) used in Peterson et al. Elsewhere sometimes referred to as ‘Spanish Imperial Eagle’. One individual seen soaring in the company of Eurasian Griffons.

Eurasian Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) [EGG]: Clement’s name of ‘Eurasian Kestrel’ replaces ‘Kestrel’ used in Peterson et al. One seen perched on a roadside cable.

Common Wood-Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) [EGG]: Clement’s name of ‘Common Wood-Pigeon’ replaces ‘Wood Pigeon’ used in Peterson et al. Several seen perched on roadside cables.

Eurasian Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) * [MNP]: Clement’s name of ‘Eurasian Collared-Dove’ replaces ‘Collared Dove’ used in Peterson et al. Several seen perched on roadside cables near to the park entrance.

Eurasian Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) [EGG]: Clement’s name of ‘Eurasian Hoopoe’ replaces ‘Hoopoe’ used in Peterson et al. Several seen flying in their twisting and floating style near to the lake, including one pair ‘dancing’ in the air.

European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) * [MNP]: Clement’s name of ‘European Bee-eater’ replaces ‘Bee-eater’ used in Peterson et al. Several seen perched on roadside cables, trees and on the ground in sandy fields near to the park entrance.

Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*) * [EGG]: Sub-species *pallida* seen regularly in the Extremadura countryside.

Common House-Martin (*Delichon urbicum*) [EGG]: Clement’s name of ‘Common House-Martin’ replaces ‘House Martin’ (*Delichon urbica*) used in Peterson et al. Large numbers seen around the dam wall at the end of the lake.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) [EGG]: Seen regularly in agricultural areas with nests on buildings.

Red-rumped Swallow (*Cecropis daurica*) * [MNP]: Clement’s name of ‘*Cecropis daurica*’ replaces ‘*Delichon urbica*’ used in

¹ First sighting ever for DJS; Previously seen by DJS but not documented; * = photo available

Peterson et al. Small flocks seen flying and perched around the cliffs along the Río Tíetar.

Eurasian Crag-Martin (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*) * [MNP]: Clement's name of 'Eurasian Crag-Martin' replaces 'Crag Martin' (*Delichon urbica*) used in Peterson et al. Small flocks seen around the cliffs along the Río Tíetar.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) * [EGG]: One seen on the roof of my rental house in the small village of Casas del Monte.

Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) * [MNP]: Several seen perched on fences and in trees near to the park entrance.

Common Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*) * [MNP]: Clement's name of 'Common Nightingale' replaces 'Nightingale' used in Peterson et al. One seen singing from thick cover within a tree near to the park entrance.

Blue Rock-Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*) [MNP]: One seen moving around the rocks on a cliff along the Río Tíetar.

Eurasian Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) [EGG]: Clement's name of 'Eurasian Blackbird' replaces 'Blackbird' used in Peterson et al. Regularly seen in the countryside and villages of Extremadura.

Sardinian Warbler (*Sylvia melanocephala*) * [EGG]: Several seen in the countryside of Extremadura.

Eurasian Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) [MNP]: Clement's name of 'Eurasian Wren' replaces 'Wren' used in Peterson et al. One seen in a village.

Southern Gray Shrike (*Lanius meridionalis*) * [EGG]: Clement's name of 'Southern Gray Shrike' split from 'Great Grey Shrike' (termed 'Northern Shrike' in Clements - *Lanius excubitor*) used in Peterson et al. Small family group seen in the countryside of Extremadura near to farm buildings.

Woodchat Shrike (*Lanius senator*) * [EGG; MNP]: Several of these attractive shrikes were seen in the countryside of Extremadura where they sang from exposed perches.

Great Tit (*Parus major*) * [EGG]: Sub-species *corsus* seen several times in the countryside of Extremadura.

Eurasian Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) * [EGG; MNP]: Clement's name of 'Eurasian Blue Tit' (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) replaces 'Blue Tit' (*Parus caeruleus*) used in Peterson et al. Several seen in the countryside of Extremadura. Photographed a pair attending a nest built in a hole in a vertical roadside wall at one of the cliffs along the Río Tíetar.

Eurasian Magpie (*Pica pica*) [M; EGG]: Clement's name of 'Eurasian Magpie' replaces 'Magpie' used in Peterson et al. Regularly seen in Madrid's parks and around the roads and villages of Extremadura.

Azure-winged Magpie (*Cyanopica cyanus*) * [EGG]: Clement's name of '*Cyanopica cyanus*' replaces '*Cyanopica cyana*' used in Peterson et al. Several pairs seen in the countryside of Extremadura.

Spotless Starling (*Sturnus unicolor*) * [EGG; MNP]: Several seen perched near to roads in the Extremadura countryside.

Common Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) * [EGG; MNP]: Clement's name of 'Common Chaffinch' replaces 'Chaffinch' used in Peterson et al. Several seen in the countryside of Extremadura.

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) [MNP]: Clement's name of 'European Goldfinch' replaces 'Goldfinch' used in Peterson et al. Small flocks seen in the countryside of Extremadura.

European Serin (*Serinus serinus*) [MNP]: Clement's name of 'European Serin' replaces 'Serin' used in Peterson et al. Small flock seen in shrubs at roadside near to the park entrance.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) [M; EGG]: Regularly seen in Madrid's parks and the villages of Extremadura.

Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis*) * [MNP]: Several seen perched on fences near to the park entrance.

Corn Bunting (*Emberiza calandra*) * [EGG; MNP]: Clement's name of '*Emberiza calandra*' replaces '*Miliaria calandra*' used in Peterson et al. Regularly seen perched on fences alongside country roads.

Rock Bunting (*Emberiza cia*) * [MNP]: One seen singing from an exposed perch amongst the rocks on a cliff along the Río Tíetar.

Combined total: 41 (41 seen, 0 heard only), with 38 of these confirmed as "first time ever" species for DJS (including ten species - White Stork, Eurasian Kestrel, Common Wood-Pigeon, Common House-Martin, White Wagtail, Eurasian Blackbird, Eurasian Wren, Great Tit, Eurasian Blue Tit and Eurasian Magpie - that I had seen before in Europe but never added to my life list) ...