

# Spain - Extremadura in Winter

Naturetrek Tour Report

11th – 17th February 2026

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Great Bustard



Calandra Larks



Common Cranes



Little Owl

Tour report by Keith Hamilton  
Photos by Mike Smith and Wendy Owen



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Tour participants: Keith Hamilton and Sergio Martin (leaders) with 14 Naturetrek clients

## Summary

Following an unusually wet and windy start to the year, with some of the most severe storms of recent times, we were hoping for some better weather for our winter tour. The countryside was littered with small rain-induced lakes, and it was lovely to see the landscape so lush and green.

Our first full day was filled with beautiful sunshine, and thankfully the rest of the week was brighter and breezy, giving us great visibility. We were able to see 112 bird species. We had fabulous views of the bustards and sandgrouse, and all three of the resident eagle species.

## Day 1

**Wednesday 11th February**

### Transfer day

The day started with drizzle in Madrid, and with a generally poor forecast for the rest of the day, but thankfully the forecast for the rest of the week was much better. The incoming flight arrived mid-afternoon, leaving the rest of the day to make the transfer to our accommodation. After a smooth and uneventful journey out of the city, we stopped for a break at around halfway, and arrived at Las Canteras just after 6.30pm: good timing for our evening meal and a quick discussion about the week ahead.

## Day 2

**Thursday 12th February**

### Santa Marta de Magasca – Llanos de Cáceres

After the rain on the journey to Las Canteras the previous day, we awakened to a beautiful clear, still morning, and after an early breakfast we set off on to the Monroy road. Calandra Larks were in full song, and there were Corn Buntings everywhere. Ten Little Bustards were seen feeding in a field by the roadside. When we arrived at the bridge over the Rio Magasca, two Cinereous Vultures showed well, and then we found a Blue Rock Thrush picking around by edge of the river. Two cracking adult Golden Eagles joined the vultures and then, unbelievably a Spanish Imperial Eagle also joined this small group. They made a wonderful sight all up together, with the eagles looking very small beside the vultures.

Now it was time for our break in a village, and after coffee we took the road towards Trujillo, where we found both Great and Little Bustards, and had amazing views of around fifty Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, with distant views of another Spanish Imperial Eagle. After a brief stop off in Trujillo, our fresh picnic was at Santa Marta, before we headed towards the Llanos do Cáceres, where we saw more sandgrouse, and three groups of Great Bustards, totalling around forty-five birds. We were also able to see a female Hen Harrier quartering the fields, and a close Black-winged Kite. It had been a great day's birding on a wonderful February day.

## Day 3

## Friday 13th February

### Arrocampo

The weather for today was forecast as strong winds with some rain, so our best option was to take the trip up to Arrocampo, where we could make good use of the hides. After a slightly later breakfast than normal, we arrived at Arrocampo around 10.45am, and we were pleased to see a Squacco Heron fly over as we approached. The first job was to take a northerly loop in search of Black-winged Kites, which took us a little while, but we finally found an adult bird hunkered low down in a Holm Oak.

The rain was beating down, so we headed to the local café for a nice warm coffee and a break, before heading down to the hides, where we saw Little Bittern, Western Swamphen, and Great and Little Egrets. A Water Rail was calling, and a very confiding Hoopoe perched up really close for us to get a good view. Considering the weather, we had done quite well, so we had our lunch before heading back down to the historic town of Trujillo, where the group got to spend some time enjoying the town, before we returned to Las Canteras

## Day 4

## Saturday 14th February

### Campo Lugar – Madrigalejo – Alcollarín

The day started with a beautiful clear sky and a waning crescent moon. After breakfast, we took the E90 south in bright sunshine, before heading east to Campo Lugar; but by the time we arrived the wind had increased significantly, which made birdwatching almost impossible in that very exposed landscape. We moved on to Madrigalejo, where we watched four Marsh Harriers really close up, and a pair of Iberian Grey Shrikes. Some cracking Spanish Sparrows were going about their business in a large bramble patch.

The group then went for their morning coffee, while I went for some fresh bread. After coffee, we headed down towards Palazuelo and the rice fields. There had been extensive rains for the previous few weeks, so all of the paddies were under water, but we still got to see a good selection of birds, including Bluethroat, Spoonbill, Common Waxbills and a big flock of some eighty Tree Sparrows. As is normally the case, time was running away from us, and it was time for lunch, which we took at the Embalse de Alcollarín.

On the way there, a Hen Harrier followed us down the road for quite a way before we turned up to the reservoir. The wind had strengthened a bit, but we still were able to produce a picnic to everyone's satisfaction, after which we went to see what ducks we could find. They included Pintails, Wigeons, Teals and lots of Gadwalls. A cracking male Hen Harrier was quartering the edge of the water. We were very happy with our day's birding, especially considering the high winds: we had seen sixty-three species today.

## Day 5

## Sunday 15th February

### Monfragüe

A crisp morning with no wind made a fabulous start to the day. After our breakfast, we drove up to the National Park of Monfragüe, which is a really pleasant drive of only forty minutes, through some beautiful countryside. We

stopped off at a parking area where we saw Rock Sparrow, Woodlark and some Tree Sparrows; two Hawfinches flew over but, unfortunately, we were not able to get the group onto them. On arrival at Salto de Gitano, there were hundreds of vultures up in the air: it was quite a spectacle. A Peregrine was above the crag, a Blue Rock Thrush showed well, and after a few minutes we eventually got to see two elusive Rock Buntings: they are easier to hear than to see.

It was time to head up to Villareal de San Carlos for coffee, after which we parked, looking for Bonelli's Eagle. At first, we thought we had missed out, but then we saw one perched on a rock, and then a second just twenty metres away from the first: what a relief! An Iberian Grey Shrike also showed well.

We moved a little further along the road and saw Short-toed Treecreeper and Crested Tit, and a Great Spotted Woodpecker flew through the woodland. At Portilla del Tietar there were vultures overhead, and then an adult Spanish Imperial Eagle came into view for a few minutes. It had been a very busy morning, so we moved back to Villareal de San Carlos for our picnic, which was very pleasant in the sunshine.

After lunch we had a short walk, before having one last stop at Salto de Gitano, the highlight there being, apart from the enormous number of Griffon Vultures, a pair of Bonelli's Eagles, which floated over the crag for a little before disappearing beyond the ridge. The day was almost done, so it was time to go back to Las Canteras to prepare for our supper.

## Day 6

Monday 16th February

### Los Cerralbos – Monroy Road

We were greeted by another lovely crisp morning, and just before the sun rose we could hear Stone-curlews calling close by: unfortunately, we could not see them. For our day's birding today, we visited more steppe, and the *dehesa* of Monroy. At our first stop, the Calandra Larks were already in full song, and Corn Buntings seemed to be on every other fence post, while hundreds of Golden Plovers littered the fields. During the week we had so far missed out on Black-bellied Sandgrouse, so we worked our way around to Los Cerralbos, and fairly quickly we picked up around ten of them on an adjacent field. Then we found five Great Bustards, and within a few minutes a flock of some fifty Pin-tailed Sandgrouse flew over.

We had been keeping an eye out for a Spanish Imperial Eagle that we knew had been around, and sure enough an adult gave us a good show around its favourite tree. The obligatory comfort break beckoned, so we went to Santa Marta for a very welcome coffee, before heading back out on to the Monroy Road. Lunch was a hot chickpea stew taken by the River Almonte, and here we spotted a mixed group of sparrows, including around a dozen Rock Sparrows. After a small detour into the village of Monroy, taking the road out towards Jaraciejo, we stopped along the way to view Common Cranes feeding in the *dehesa* woodland. With our last full day running out, it was time to head back to Las Canteras for our last supper, before a good night's sleep in anticipation of the journey back to Madrid the following day.

## Day 7

## Tuesday 17th February

### Transfer day

To take advantage of another lovely day, we had arranged a walk before breakfast, so we got into the vans to go just five minutes up the road, to walk along a nice quiet track as the sun rose: it is fabulous to be in the countryside at daybreak. A lasting memory of the trip would be the Corn Buntings and Woodlarks singing in the half light of the breaking day. After our breakfast, alas, it was time to take the motorway back to Madrid. The snow on the Sierra de Gredos glistened as a majestic backdrop along the E90. We stopped off for a break halfway before arriving with perfect timing at the airport, for the group to take their onwards journeys.

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## Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	February 2026				
		12	13	14	15	16
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			✓		
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		✓	✓		✓
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓	✓			
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓		✓		
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>			✓		
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>			✓		
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>			✓		
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓	✓			✓
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>			✓		
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>		✓			
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>			✓		
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>		✓			
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓			
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓		
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓		
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓	✓		
Western Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	✓	✓			
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedichnemus</i>	✓			✓	✓
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓				
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>				✓	
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓			
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓				✓
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓				
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		H			
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>		✓			
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	✓	✓			
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Little Bittern	<i>Botaurus minutus</i>				H	H
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓				
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓				✓
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>		✓	✓		
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>			✓		
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>			✓		
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>			✓		

Common name	Scientific name	February 2026				
		12	13	14	15	16
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spanish Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>					
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>	✓		✓		✓
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>					✓
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				✓	
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓				
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				✓	
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	✓	✓			
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	✓			✓	
Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>				H	
Iberian Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>				✓	
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓		✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>				✓	✓
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				✓	
Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>			✓	✓	
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	✓		✓		✓
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
Western House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H	H	H	H	
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	✓		✓	
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	✓	✓	✓	H	
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>				✓	✓
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>			✓		✓
Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>			✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				✓	
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>				✓	
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>				✓	
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>				✓	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>				H	
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>			✓		
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	✓			✓	✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	February 2026				
		12	13	14	15	16
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>			✓	✓	✓
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>			✓	✓	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>				✓	✓
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>			✓		
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓			✓	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>					✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			✓		✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	H
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>				✓	

## Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	February 2026				
		12	13	14	15	16
European Rabbit	<i>Orytolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Iberian Hare	<i>Lepus granatensis</i>	✓	✓			✓
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>				✓	✓
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		✓			✓

## Amphibians & reptiles

Common name	Scientific name	February 2026				
		12	13	14	15	16
Stripeless Tree Frog	<i>Hyla meridionalis</i>	✓				
Spanish Pond Terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>	✓				✓

## Insects

Common name	Scientific name	February 2026				
		12	13	14	15	16
<b>Butterflies</b>						
Green-striped White	<i>Euchloe belemia</i>			✓		✓
<b>Grasshoppers</b>						
Egyptian Locust	<i>Anacridium aegyptium</i>					✓