

Go Slow in Extremadura

Naturetrek Tour Report

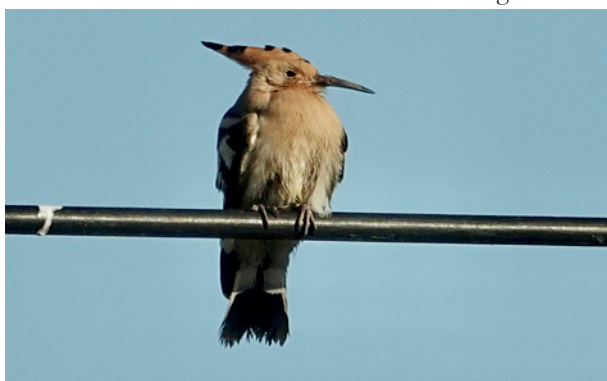
13th – 20th May 2026



Night Heron



Spotless Starling



Hoopoe



Roller

Tour report by Keith Hamilton
Photos by Alison Turner and Armana Handley



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

Summary

This, the penultimate 'Go Slow in Extremadura' tour of the season, started with wonderful warm sunny weather, which thankfully continued throughout the week. We had a great week of birding and got to see pretty much all of the species that we had hoped for, although close views of a Long-eared Owl took us a little by surprise! The group were fantastic, and all were satisfied with the week's events. We could not have hoped for more.

Day 1

Wednesday 13th May

Transfer to Extremadura

A beautiful warm day in Sevilla made for the perfect start to this tour, which would be based mainly in the Cáceres province of Extremadura. The flight was on time, and with no real delays at the airport we were soon heading north. We arrived in good time for our evening meal and to cover the plans for the coming week.

Day 2

Thursday 14th May

Arrocampo – Trujillo

We woke to wonderful clear skies and no wind: what a perfect start to our first morning at our accommodation, Finca Flores Amarillas. We had breakfast at 8.00am and left for the day's events before 9.00am. Our first stop of the day was at the Meseta de Jaraicejo, a great stop where we found Spectacled and Dartford Warblers, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodlark and Thekla's Lark.

The next stop was at the Embalse de Arrocampo reservoir. Very soon, we could hear Reed and Savi's Warblers, and a distant Penduline Tit. The Purple Herons put on a fabulous show, a Ferruginous Duck and a Little Bittern put in very brief appearances, and there were many other birds to keep us occupied. Lunchtime was fast approaching, but first we would take a look at hide number two: two Gull-billed Terns flew up and down, close to the small breeding colony here. A pale-morph Booted Eagle hung around for a little while. We had one last stop before lunch: a fabulous Long-eared Owl was a major bonus! We were even able to get the telescope on it. Lunch was taken at a local bar. We then carried on to Trujillo, where the clients were able to enjoy the atmosphere of the Plaza Mayor and a walk up to the castle for an hour, while we stocked up on provisions at the supermarket

Day 3

Friday 15th May

Medellín – Alange

After a leisurely breakfast, we headed to Medellín, arriving just before 10.00am. It was a beautiful sunny morning, albeit with a quite strong westerly wind. We could hear Common, Great Reed and Cetti's Warblers as we walked on to the bridge, House Martins were busy attending their colonial nests, and from the top of the bridge we had great views of Purple Swamphen, and could see a Great Reed Warbler singing. There were quite a few Purple Herons meandering their way up and down the river, and Golden Orioles were singing but were frustratingly

difficult to spot. Just a little way along the riverbank, we finally we caught sight of a fabulous Golden Oriole flying in front of the Eucalyptus trees, then two together: they are always wonderful birds to see.

After a quick coffee, we headed to Alange, where the Alpine Swift colony was very busy, with dozens of birds flying in the vicinity. A Blue Rock Thrush showed quite well from time to time, and there was a constant stream of Griffon Vultures overhead.

We arrived back at Finca Las Amarillas just before 2.00pm to sit down for a special traditional Spanish *comida*, the main meal of the day, which was grilled sea bass. We followed Spanish tradition with a *siesta* after the meal, but as it cooled down, we headed out again, this time towards Montanechez. We had a walk through woodland, where we got great views of Nightingales among other passerines; we were lucky to get a comparison between Common and Iberian Chiffchaffs, which were both singing. We followed the walk with a typical Spanish *cena* (evening meal) at a local bar, before heading back to our accommodation and to bed.

Day 4

Saturday 16th May

Santa Marta de Magasca – Santiago del Campo

We had a slightly earlier breakfast today, as we were heading to Santa Marta de Magasca to search for steppe birds. After we had called in for bread and cakes, two Rollers on wires close to the road were a great start, and three Hoopoes showed very well alongside them. At our first steppe stop just after 9.00am, one of our first birds was a displaying Great Bustard, and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse were very active, with flocks constantly flying overhead. Calandra Larks are very common here, and the cacophony of their distinctive song makes a wonderful welcome to the grasslands of Extremadura.

Further along we found a perched Spanish Imperial Eagle which soon flew off, allowing us to see the white leading edge to the wings. Deciding to try a different area, we passed through the village of Santa Marta de Magasca, and soon a close Spanish Imperial Eagle gave us some even better views of this iconic bird. We returned to Santa Marta for a short break, before making our way to Santiago del Campo via the Monroy road, from which we admired the steppe in all its splendour. On arrival at the village, our final destination was the vulture hide where, while we made the picnic, the spectacle of the feeding vultures entertained the clients. Around sixty vultures (both Cinereous and Griffon) were at the feast, with a supporting cast of kites (Red and Black). With both clients and vultures suitably fed, we headed back to our accommodation for a well-deserved rest, before another home-cooked meal.

Day 5

Sunday 17th May

Campo Lugar – Alcollarín

We were on our way to Campo Lugar just before 8.00am. On arrival, there were Rollers on the power lines, interacting with Lesser Kestrels, their iridescent aquamarine wings shining in the morning sunlight. On a different hillside not too far away, a male Great Bustard was strutting through the grass, while a female was close by. It was really heartening to see two juvenile Great Bustards on another part of the hillside. We spotted two sandgrouse flying distantly, but unfortunately could not get an ID. Calandra Larks provided a backdrop of constant birdsong.

Further up the track we finally found one of our big target species, a displaying male Little Bustard: these birds are becoming increasingly difficult to see.

Further south, and after scouring the landscape for fifteen minutes, we found a Black-winged Kite: it was a fabulous juvenile bird, and evidence of a thriving breeding season. After coffee, we went down to the rice fields, where there were a number of Golden Orioles, Common Waxbills, lots of Iberian Magpies and a surprise Spotted Flycatcher. We had our picnic just outside the town of Madrigalejo, in lovely warm sunshine but under the shade of some trees.

Our final stop was at the Embalse de Alcollarín, where we found Great Reed Warbler, Spanish Sparrow, Marsh Harrier and Great Crested Grebe, among others. An especially nice surprise was a juvenile Night Heron. It was time to head back to base: we arrived just before 5.00pm.

Day 6

Monday 18th May

Parque Nacional de Monfragüe

After a 7.30am breakfast, we headed off on one of the big days of the tour, to the Parque Nacional de Monfragüe. We arrived at the castle of Monfragüe just before 10.00am, on a beautiful sunny morning with crystal clear air: it was perfect for raptors. From the top of the castle, we quickly found the nest of a Peregrine Falcon with three healthy chicks waiting for food to arrive. One of our target species up here was White-rumped Swift: it took around ten minutes, but sure enough, there were two flying above the crag. Griffon Vultures were just starting to leave their roosts as the air was warming up, and it was fabulous to enjoy the expansive views from this 'window on the world': it felt like we could view the whole of the park.

We went to a site which is often good for Bonelli's Eagles; this turned out to be a good choice, as we soon found two circling over the woodland. As an added bonus, we also picked up Western Black-eared Wheatear, and Western Subalpine and Dartford Warblers. We had our picnic at Villarreal de San Carlos, a lovely hamlet in the centre of the park, and further on we had great views of Egyptian Vultures, and Crested Tits feeding young.

We had done very well with the birds today, but we still were missing Rock Bunting. One good place for them is the iconic site of Salto de Gitano: by the time we arrived it was quiet, and sure enough a lovely male perched up where we could all see it well. The day had passed us by, so we took to the road back to our accommodation, arriving just after 6.00pm.

Day 7

Tuesday 19th May

Ruecas – Embalse de Burdalo

On the last full day of the tour, we were yet again blessed with beautiful weather and, after a slightly later start and a typical Spanish breakfast of *churros*, we hit the road towards Ruecas. We stopped by the river for a short walk down by the river bank: many Golden Orioles were calling, and we got great views of them as they flew up and down the river. Great and Common Reed Warblers were singing, along with a few Cetti's Warblers, a lovely adult Night Heron fished from a branch by the water, and the riverside was alive with birdsong.

We had a quick look in the rice fields, but it was quiet, and the almost obligatory coffee stop beckoned! We picked up some supplies for the last picnic, which we had at the hotel. Our day was not finished yet, however, and after lunch we took a short journey to the Embalse de Burdalo, where we got to see Spoonbills and another Night Heron, a juvenile this time.

We headed off back to the hotel, stopping off for a walk by the main dam, where we had probably the best views yet of a cracking male Spanish Sparrow sitting beside its nest. It was a lovely end to a fabulous week's birding.

As always, our last supper was a time to reflect on the previous week's experiences: we had had a fantastic time, and had seen some great birds in good company.

Day 8

Wednesday 20th May

Transfer to Sevilla

Some of the group took the opportunity to have an early, pre-breakfast walk from the hotel today, returning in time for another of Iva's great breakfasts. Alas, just after 10.00am we headed down the track away from our wonderful base for the last time. We were at our first break by 11.30am, and arrived in Sevilla in good time to have something to eat before the drop off at the airport.

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Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Egyptian Goose - I	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>			✓				✓
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>							✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>					✓		
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>				✓		✓	
Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>			H			H	
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>			✓				✓
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>		✓	✓				
White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>						✓	
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>				✓	✓		
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>					✓		
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		H		✓		H	
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>				✓			
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>					✓	H	
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>		H					
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>					✓		
Western Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>		✓	✓		✓		
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				✓	✓		
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>					✓		✓
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		✓					
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>					✓		
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>							✓
Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>		✓	✓				
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>						✓	
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>					✓		✓
Little Bittern	<i>Botaurus minutus</i>		✓	✓		✓		
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>					✓		✓
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>		✓			✓		✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓			✓	✓	✓
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		✓	✓		✓		
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓					
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	✓				✓
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>					✓		
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>			✓			✓	
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spanish Imperial Eagle - N	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>				✓			

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>						✓	
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓			✓		✓
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>				✓			
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓		✓		✓	
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>		✓					
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	H	✓
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>				✓	✓		
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>					✓		
Iberian Green Woodpecker - N	<i>Picus sharpei</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>				✓	✓	✓	✓
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>		H	✓		✓	✓	✓
Iberian Magpie - N	<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>		✓	H			✓	✓
Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</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>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis rufula</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		H	H		✓		✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>						H	
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			✓				
Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>			✓				
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>			✓		✓		H
Common Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>		H	✓		✓		H
Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>					✓	✓	✓
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>		H			H		
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			✓		✓	H	
Western Orphean Warbler	<i>Curruca hortensis</i>						✓	
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Western Subalpine Warbler	<i>Curruca iberiae</i>						✓	
Spectacled Warbler	<i>Curruca conspicillata</i>		✓					
Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>		✓				✓	
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			✓			✓	
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>		✓	✓			✓	
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	✓		✓		
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>					✓		
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			✓			✓	
Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>		H	✓	✓	H	H	✓
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>						✓	
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>			✓	✓		✓	
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>						✓	
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>			✓		✓		✓
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Waxbill - I	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>					✓		✓
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>					✓		H
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</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>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>						✓	
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>				H			

Mammals

N=Near-endemic		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓			✓		✓
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>					✓		
Iberian Ibex - N	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>						✓	
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>							✓

Amphibians & reptiles

I=Introduced		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Iberian Water Frog	<i>Pelophylax perezi</i>			✓			✓	
Large Psammmodromus	<i>Psammmodromus algirus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Montpelier Snake	<i>Malpolon monspessulanus</i>			✓				
Viperine Snake	<i>Natrix maura</i>						✓	

I=Introduced		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Red-eared Slider - I	<i>Trachemys scripta</i>		✓					✓
Spanish Terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>	✓			✓		✓	

Grasshoppers

		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Egyptian Grasshopper	<i>Anacridium aegyptium</i>							✓