

Go Slow in Extremadura

Naturetrek Tour Report

21st – 28th May 2026



Iberian Grey Shrike



Cinereous Vulture



Little Bittern



Roller

Tour report by Adam Davison



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Tour participants: Sonia Alis and Adam Davison (leaders) with ten Naturetrek clients

Summary

The brutal temperatures in the regular birding locations in Extremadura necessitated a flexible approach if we were to have any chance of seeing the iconic birds of the region. Earlier starts than most Go Slow tours were needed to escape the unseasonal oppressive heat of this late spring tour, and reduced birding time was needed to cope with the conditions. Luckily, Finca Flores Amarillas has cool rooms, a wonderful swimming pool, and chillout areas which proved to be the perfect respite from the unseasonably hot conditions.

Even so, our tour provided memorable moments of some fabulous birds seen doing amazing things: the rare sight of a female Great Bustard and its chicks on the steppes, a recently fledged Long-eared Owl peering back at us at point-blank range from roadside willows, and stunning raptor performances on the ground and in the air throughout. Daily Hoopoe sightings and great opportunities to get to know common species were loved by all. When the leaders asked clients to name the 'bird of the trip', they all chose a different species and shared why it made it to the top of this prestigious list. Interestingly, both leaders chose Bonelli's Eagle: was it the close view of this rarely seen bird that tipped it to the top?

All week we were treated to beautifully presented, tasty, traditional dishes made from locally sourced ingredients by Paul and Iva, not to mention the regional red and white wines.

Day 1

Thursday 21st May

After a smooth immigration check and luggage collection at Seville, we met the three remaining clients and Sonia Alis, our local ornithologist and leader, in the arrivals hall. Safely packed into two minibuses, we headed to a restaurant near the airport for *tapas* and lots of *papas fritas*. The forecast heatwave was soon confirmed and, during a brief coffee and comfort break nearer our base for the week, the temperature was already 36°C!

On arrival at our amazing rural hotel, Finca Flores Amarillas, we were welcomed into the cool of the building with locally produced chocolate-dipped figs and a refreshing drink, before being allocated our rooms. A few clients rested in their rooms; others swam and cooled off in the swimming pool. At dinner we met Iva and Paul, and enjoyed a goat's cheese starter followed by a traditional mixed *paella* and strawberries. Wine, beer and aperitifs were also provided. The calls of Bee-eaters and Corn Buntings could be heard all around the hotel.

Day 2

Friday 22nd May

We agreed to have breakfast at 8.00am, and to leave at 8.45am. Almost as soon as we left the *finca*, a close group of Bee-eaters was disturbed from the ground: they had possibly been excavating a nest-hole next to a gate in the olive grove. It was over a hundred kilometres on fast roads to the renowned wetland of Arrocampo. This location always delivers great birding, and our three hours produced some amazing sights: Penduline Tits teased us with their calls, the blue skies were full of raptors, and both Savi's Warblers and Zitting Cisticolas sang their repetitive, metronomic songs.

We ate *bocadillos* and chips at a café next to the reserve and, refreshed, set out into the reserve again. The real prize was a month-old Long-eared Owl chick, sitting motionless just a few metres from the group. Wetland species also showed well, with multiple views of Little Bitterns, and some fabulous Squacco Herons.

The heat was intense, so we headed off and allowed the group to choose their own refreshments in the beautiful public square at Trujillo for an hour, before returning to the *finca* for an afternoon dip in the pool.

Day 3

Saturday 23rd May

To watch birds before the heat dampened activity in the beautiful, rugged steppe scenery, we had breakfast and were off in the minibuses by 7.30am. Just as we left the *finca*'s dusty lane, we watched a Little Owl, Bee-eaters and a Thekla's Lark show themselves. Once out on the steppe habitat at Campo Lugar, we scoured the area for bustards and sandgrouse, but to no avail. Species that did put in an appearance included Rollers, Lesser Kestrels, Calandra Larks and a female Montagu's Harrier.

As the temperature rose into the thirties, we dropped into a cool, dark café for drinks and a brief escape from the heat. Not to be discouraged, we continued birding, although few birds were around, and most were singing or calling from deep within the wetlands: Great Reed Warblers were loudly delivering their distinctive rasping calls. In the spirit of going slow, we headed back to the hotel early, and enjoyed a fabulous lunch at the *finca*: tomato and avocado salad, followed by a light and tasty quinoa stir-fry, and then tiramisu.

The afternoon was spent escaping the intense heat and undertaking a short circular walk around the surrounding hundred-year-old olive groves. Even at 7.00pm, the temperatures were high, and not much was moving apart from a few Hoopoes, Thekla's Larks and a singing Cirl Bunting. We ate a cold buffet in the warm evening, completed the daily checklist, and talked about the basics of 'jizz', bird colouration and vocalisations. The numerous quirky Thekla's Larks around the hotel provided a great opportunity to study their finer identification features: without careful attention, they appeared almost identical to the roadside Crested Larks we saw nearly everywhere.

Day 4

Sunday 24th May

Early birding and a return to the comfort of the hotel had become the only realistic way to see wildlife in this heat. Departure for the Alange dam at 7.30am was rewarded by the sight of hundreds of Alpine Swifts wheeling and chattering their ricocheting calls just below the reservoir wall, before they climbed high into the cloudless skies. The huge rock outcrop soon gave up a few breeding Black Wheatears and Rock Buntings. The large reservoir appeared almost birdless, apart from Egyptian Geese and a single fly-by Gull-billed Tern.

We returned to a couple of flooded rice fields after a quick coffee stop, and located Black-winged Stilts and a few Glossy Ibises. We drove on to the stunning historic bridge spanning the Guadiana River in Medellín, where we braved the heat and watched birds on, near and over the river. Screaming Pallid and Common Swifts showed off their very similar plumages, Western Swamphens tried to hide among the reeds, and Golden Orioles sang from the tall poplars. An early shout from one client helped many of the group to get an unforgettable, clear and open view of a male Golden Oriole flying across the river from the bridge. The shingle islands were busy with Little Ringed Plovers and Common Sandpipers.

We were back at the hotel for lunch at half past one: we ate a succulent chickpea salad timbale, pork loin with salad, and banoffee pie. The lazy afternoon was spent relaxing in and around the pool, while some swam and watch both Griffon and Cinereous Vultures descending to bare ground in the olive grove close to the hotel.

It was a close call whether to give up birding for the day, but we all agreed to try visiting a Bee-eater colony around the reservoir at Alcollarín, with the temperature gauge already indicating the low forties! Even at 7.00pm it was still 37°C. The Bee-eaters were calling, but from high overhead; Short-toed Snake Eagles and Booted Eagles were drifting around, and a Nightingale sang as the temperature gradually lowered. We returned for a cold buffet in the coolest outdoor area of the *finca*.

Day 5

Monday 25th May

Today was Vulture Café day at Santa Marta de Magasca, and it was always going to be a long one. To experience the steppe habitat before the brutal sun hit the sea of golden-brown grasslands, we needed to arrive early, so we left at 7.30am and headed out onto the plains. Blessed with an amazingly close flight view of a male Great Bustard, and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse overhead, we also settled for distant views of breeding Spanish Imperial Eagles.

A female Great Bustard crossed the track ahead of us and, to our amazement, was joined by two small chicks. It was incredible to see the next generation of these endangered birds undisturbed in their unique habitat. After a typical village-square coffee stop, we headed along 'Roller Road', marvelling at these brightly coloured birds breeding in nest boxes on telegraph poles.

On arrival at the rather exclusive 'Vulture Café' in Santiago del Campo, we settled down to the luxury of eating a freshly prepared picnic lunch, while watching Griffon and Cinereous Vultures, as well as Black Kites, feeding at very close quarters, right in front of the hide's two-way mirror. The birds and clients fed for over an hour, before we headed directly back to the hotel by the most direct route. We arrived at just after 3.00pm, and there was then a luxurious five-hour break before our evening meal.

Day 6

Tuesday 26th May

A visit to Extremadura would be incomplete without a day in Monfragüe National Park, and today was our day. Wonderful scenery, varied wooded habitats and well-planned stops meant we connected with a wide range of species, including Western Orphean Warbler, Hawfinch, singing Robins and Wrens, and nesting Black Storks at Tiétar. There was also an amazing array of birds of prey, with nesting Egyptian Vultures, young Peregrines and brilliant views of Bonelli's Eagle, among others.

We discovered Bosca's Newts in running water, and found Nettle-tree Butterflies too. It was baking hot again by midday, so we had lunch in a local bar and headed back to the hotel for some rest and relaxation, arriving at 4.00pm. A check of the list before another fabulous evening meal brought the tour bird count to over a hundred species.

Day 7

Wednesday 27th May

Three clients decided to leave at 7.30am to look for Black-winged Kite. It proved a successful morning, albeit with only distant views, but there was also a very accommodating female Little Bustard, and some great Bee-eater photo opportunities. The rest of the group had a late start, taking self-led walks and wandering from shade to shade, enjoying pool time and a cold buffet picnic. At 6.00pm we visited the fig factory outlet shop for some local food retail therapy, and had a short wander around Alcollarín.

The final evening meal of the tour was Marbella chicken, which Iva informed us was in fact a legendary New York recipe, celebrated for its unique combination of savoury chicken, briny olives, capers and sweet prunes, followed by an indulgent triple chocolate cheesecake.

Day 8

Thursday 28th May

With bags packed and loaded, we made an early start for the smooth journey to Seville Airport, accompanied by a glorious sunrise, and said our goodbyes to Sonia, our wonderful local bird guide.

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Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Egyptian Goose - I	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>			✓			✓	
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓				
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	✓						
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>				✓			
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>							
Red-necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus ruficollis</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>			✓		✓		
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>	✓						✓
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>				✓			
Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>						✓	
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>				✓			
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>					✓		
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	✓						
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓						
Western Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>					✓		
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</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>	✓		✓		✓		
Little Bittern	<i>Botaurus minutus</i>	✓						
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	✓						✓
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>	✓		✓	✓			
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	✓		✓				
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>						✓	
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>					✓		
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Spanish Imperial Eagle - N	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>				✓			
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>						✓	
Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>		✓					
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>				✓	✓	✓	
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		✓		✓			
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>		✓		✓		✓	
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓		✓				
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Monk Parakeet - I	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>	✓						
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>			✓		✓		
Iberian Grey Shrike - N	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓					
Iberian Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>			✓		✓		
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>				✓			
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>				✓	✓		
Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	✓				✓		
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				✓			
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>	✓						
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>						✓	
Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>		✓	✓			✓	
Common Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓	✓				✓	
Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	✓						
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓					
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				✓			
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>						✓	
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>						✓	
Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>			✓			✓	
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>						✓	
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced		May 2026						
Common name	Scientific name	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</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>		✓					
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>				✓			
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>					✓		
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓			✓		
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>				✓		✓	
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirius</i>	✓			✓		✓	

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>
Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>

Amphibians & reptiles

N=Near-endemic, I=Introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Bosca's Newt	<i>Lissotriton boscai</i>
Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>
Iberian Stream Frog - N	<i>Rana iberica</i>
Large Psammodromus	<i>Psammodromus algirus</i>
Spanish Terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name
Common Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>
Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>
a blue butterfly	<i>Polyommatus</i> sp.
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>