

# Catalonia – Spain

Ebro Delta, Lleida Drylands & Pre-Pyrenees



Colin



Richard



Trevor



Trevor



Steve



Colin



Richard

North Herts Birders - 20th-24th April 2015



# **Catalonia – Spain**

## *Ebro Delta, Lleida Drylands & Pre-Pyrenees*

**20th – 24th April 2015**

The fuzzy memories of Steve Lane  
Logistics Manager, Happy Tours

*With the 2013 trip still fresh in our memories, it did not take long for us to re-visit this scenic and diverse region of Spain. This trip was for returning migrants, local specialities, butterflies and just because we had so much fun last time.*

*Unfortunately, not all the originals could make this trip, so we drafted in 2 legends, which enhanced the drinking team!*

*After exchanging several emails with Steve West, Birding in Spain and Catalonia. Guided by Steve's suggested dates to maximise bird numbers and the returning migrants, the dates were set.*

*Travel arrangements were duly completed and further emails between Steve West and the group, firmed up the itinerary. With a fairly long target list of birds and butterflies. Steve would be under pressure!*







Steve



Richard

Trevor



Colin



Colin



Steve



Steve



# ITINERARY

**Flights:-** Easyjet Luton to Barcelona

## Monday 20th April

Steve will meet you at the arrivals lounge in Terminal 2 of Barcelona airport and then escort you to your vehicle, a 9-seater minibus. From here we will drive towards the Ebro Delta, birding at one or two key sites en-route, depending on the time available to us. At a coastal location we could look for Pallid Swift, a very localized species in this part of Spain, before heading inland to an attractive Mediterranean massif. Birding here could reveal an interesting array of species including Black-eared Wheatear, Rock Bunting, Dartford Warbler Red-billed Cough, Rock Thrush, Alpine Swift, Sardinian Warbler, Crag Martin, Subalpine Warbler, Firecrest and Short-toed Treecreeper among others. Brown Shrike if still present. We plan for an early evening arrival at our hotel in the Ebro Delta.

## Tuesday 21st April

Today will be spent getting as much as we can from birding around the bird-rich Ebro Delta. The northern bay known as the Fangar is usually an excellent place to start, with the possibility of Slender-billed Gull, Audouin's Gull, Caspian Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Little Tern, Greater Flamingo, Kentish Plover, Squacco Heron, Purple Heron, Night Heron, Collared Pratincole, Black-winged Stilt, Purple Swamphen, Great Reed Warbler and plenty of migratory waders.

At other wetland sites around the delta on both sides of the River Ebro, and on rough pastures and rice fields, we should set eyes on other species of interest such as Red-crested Pochard, Little Bittern, Glossy Ibis, Whiskered Tern, Short-toed Lark, Lesser Short-toed Lark, Savi's Warbler, Great White Egret, Temminck's Stint, etc. Furthermore, we'll be checking out bushes along the coast for migrant songbirds, and if we're lucky a short seawatch may produce observations of skuas or shearwaters.

Night in the Ebro Delta

## Wednesday 22nd April

We'll leave the Ebro Delta in the morning and head up-river along the banks of the River Ebro towards Lleida. It's not a long journey, but we won't be rushing, as there are numerous sites where we can stop off and look for some great birds.

One of the first sites could well be a reed-fringed reservoir known as one of the few sites in the region for the rare Moustached Warbler. Here we may also encounter other reedbed dwellers such as the Spanish race of the Reed Bunting, Penduline Tit and Bearded Tit. Then we move on to a dry, rocky area which offers the possibility of seeing Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Red-rumped Swallow, Cirl Bunting, Rock Sparrow, Western Orphean Warbler, Thekla Lark, Turtle Dove, Nightingale, Bee-eater, Iberian Grey Shrike, Wood Lark and Short-toed Eagle!

On the nearby plains there will be some more of the same birds, but we can also hope for others like Calandra Lark, Little Owl and with luck the scarce and localized Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Not far from here is a privately owned area whose owner is sympathetic to wild birds and their habitats. It seems that the birds have responded, as this is a good place to see species such as White Stork, Iberian (Green) Woodpecker, Woodchat Shrike, Melodious Warbler, Hobby, Cirl Bunting, Golden Oriole and possibly even Black-winged Kite. From here we drive the last stretch of the journey to our accommodation at an active monastery in a rural setting! Don't worry though, you won't be subjected to a monastic regime of prayer and bread and water, probably not. After dinner and depending on the weather we can take an optional search for nightjars and owls.

## Thursday 23rd April

A pre-breakfast outing may be the order of the day, especially when a good dryland habitat is just down the road from our hotel. Displaying Little Bustards, with their jumping, wing-flapping and raspberry-blowing antics should be one of the main attractions but there are sure to be more: Stone Curlew, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Tawny Pipit and Lesser Kestrel, to name a few. Catalonia's last Black-bellied Sandgrouse also inhabit this area, but if we don't strike lucky in the morning we could try again later in the day.

After a hearty breakfast we will visit another dryland area, hopefully still in time to see more displaying Little Bustards, as well as Montagu's Harrier, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Hobby, Subalpine Warbler and perhaps the first Roller of the year. A short drive to the north takes us to the foothills of the Pyrenees, and a different array of birds, especially raptors: Bonelli's Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, Griffon Vulture and Booted Eagle are all possible in this area. Western Bonelli's Warblers are usually quite conspicuous at this time of year, while Firecrest is one of the interesting species that can be seen in the nearby gallery woodland.

Then we can visit the banks of a local reservoir to look for Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper and Red Squirrel. Another short visit to the first dryland area could reveal some different species, and is on our way to another good birding area which often offers the chance of seeing Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Goshawk. Night at the Monastery hotel.

## Friday 24th April

A circuit in mountain areas to look for Lammergeiers, vultures and other mountain birds before leaving the area and beginning the journey back towards Barcelona.



Colin



Richard



Steve



Steve



## 20th April

The day finally arrived and the arranged 6.30am meet at Tony's was on time. Richard, Ray, Trevor, Mick, Colin, Tony and myself set off for Luton Airport. Cars parked, transfer buses met, bags drop NO! Too early! A quick cup of coffee. Bag drop opened, off and running. Security next, no queue. We all filled our boxes, the security guard said we could leave our boots on, I went through and the buzzer sounded, back you go, boots off, boxed and into the x-ray machine.

Returning back through, no buzzer this time, but, a very long search, it was so long I thought it might be the rubber gloves next! Returning to collect my camera and boots from the back of the x-ray machine, the only boots I could see were a pair of kid's boots, so I took them and asked the security guard what his machine had done to my boots! All was taken in fun and now it was time to have a relaxing breakfast and wait for the gate number.

Ray got ants, so went for a wander, returning with a smirk on this face. A little while later he produced a magazine out of his bag, Canal Boat magazine and then told us all about bilge cocks – LAUGH!

He said it had been a toss-up between Canal Boat or Tractor Weekly.

Gate number called, charge! Don't know why as Easyjet has seat booking now, old habits! Took off and landed on time, lady pilot, so jokes about parking, stopping at shoe shops, etc.

Passport and baggage collection barely broke our stride as we came through the airport in record time. Met by Steve West just starting a cuppa, your early he said. Off to the sparkly clean executive Mercedes minivan, an automatic! A problem, Steve said it's the first automatic he'd driven and wasn't 100% on it, help and hindrance was offered in equal amounts and we were soon on the road, with Goldfinch being the first bird.

Our first stop was Llobregat Reserve next to the airport, this would give us a short time to stretch our legs after the flight, but for some reason it was shut. So plan B – Straight to the Ebro Delta, which meant a bit of a drive. A few common birds were picked-up on route, Pigeons, Doves, Starlings and Sparrows.

We left the AP7 motorway at L'Ampolla and the vast flat-lands of the Ebro Delta lay in front of us, all 320km<sup>2</sup> at around 0.5m above sea level. At this time of year most of the fields have been prepared for sowing the rice and are waiting to be flooded, so it all looks very dry and brown, with a few brightly coloured tractors dotted around. Ray now knew he'd brought the wrong magazine. Which he was reminded of as we passed each one! We got bored after around 300, but it did re-occur most days.

Driving along the roads parallel to the irrigation ditches we soon started to find some birds, Black-winged Stilt, Black-winged Stilt, Black-winged Stilt, I didn't know they were that common! Then, a tractor being followed by Gull-billed Terns caused us to pause, as it was a tick for some. The dry brown fields soon started giving up some interesting birds, Squacco Heron, Cattle and Little Egrets, Wood Sandpipers and Black-winged Stilt, sorry but they are such elegant birds. Ray had at least 12 tractor manufacturers pointed out to him and even more colours.



Richard





Colin



Colin



Colin





Steve



Steve



Steve





Steve



Steve



Bath White - Trevor



Colin

Colin





Arriving at El Fangar on the North side of the Delta, a very close Purple Heron gave outstanding views, showing all its colourful plumage and very long neck.

The road at El Fangar runs along the shore line, with salt-water on one side and newly created freshwater habitat on the other. The estuarine bay is full of fish traps, called Busso's, mainly for catching Glass Eels.

Various stops along the road produced the first Greater Flamingos and Yellow-legged Gulls, the large flocks of waders contained Kentish Plover, Curlew Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt, Little Stint, Greenshank, Whimbrel and Knot, a fly over Caspian Tern, Little Tern, Collared Pratincole, White Wagtail, Yellow Wagtail (iberiae), Bee-Eater all to a chorus of Great Reed Warblers. Our first interesting butterfly a Bath White showed well, but proved difficult, but not impossible to photograph due to the breeze.

Final stop before arriving at our hotel, was a house garden in the centre of Deltebre on the banks of the Rio Ebro. A large lush garden full of Lemon and Almond trees and a Brown Shrike giving good views for about 10 minutes. A first for Spain having been discovered by an English birder on 6th January, also in the garden Woodchat Shrike, Zitting Cisticola, Serin amongst the more notable birds. Our guide Steve was very happy as his previous visit the Shrike had only shown for around 3 seconds.

Arriving at the Delta Hotel we saw Pied Flycatcher and Redstart as we pulled into the car park and later Wood Warbler in the wooded area. The hotel has excellent grounds with a large reedy pond with an island and a small wooded area, so we would not have to go far for some pre-breakfast birding.

As it was fast approaching beer o'clock, bags were dumped into rooms and off to the bar. A NHB tradition. First beer, Voll-Damm Doble Malta, it's a mistake not taking your reading glasses to the bar, as this beer turned out to be a very drinkable 7.2abv. After an excellent 3 courses dinner with white and red wine, it was back in the bar. A more sensible beer was tried, Cervesa Amb Malt D'Arròs, a local artisan created malt beer at 4.2abv, this was followed by G&Ts.

Steve



Richard

## 21st April

Some ventured out early with Steve West to re-visit El Fangar, they had good views of many of the birds noted the previous day, particularly Great Reed Warbler, but nothing new added to the list. Others a wander around the hotel grounds, with very close views of Barn Swallow, Black-crowned Night Heron and more Pied Flycatchers.

After the usual Mediterranean breakfast and a few snacks made for the day, we set off to the Southern Delta. First stop, Gola de Migjorn. An observation tower that looks across the Riu de Migjorn and surrounding marshes, christened Mosquito Tower by NHBs for obvious reasons.

Singing Savi's Warbler, Little Bitterns, Purple Swamhen, flyby Flamingo, more Black-winged Stilts, Water Rail,







Colin



Richard



Steve



Trevor



Glossy Ibis, Avocet amongst the birds added to our growing list. The mosquitoes got the better of us, so back in the van and off to the next area.

We had a close encounter with a Fox, which walked down the road and passed within feet of our stationary van, carrying its lunch, a large dead rat.

En-route to our next stop, we visited a beach with a scrubby area where we had good views of Lesser Short-toed Lark and heard Bee-eaters. We then found a mystery chat. From one side it looked like a Whinchat and Stonechat from the other.

After moving the van a few metres at a time and stopping several times to view from different angles, Stonechat was agreed. A coffee stop was taken roadside, we added Hoopoe and more Zitting Cisticola, along with Swallowtail, Common Blue and various Whites.

At Reit Vell, an organic rice farm which has a hide sponsored by Swarovski overlooking a lake. This gave good views of an Audouin's Gull, Common Tern, Purple Swamphen, Black-winged Stilts, Glossy Ibis to name but a few. In the car park the orange continental version of Speckled Wood was added to a growing butterfly list.

A new chapter of the Entente Cordiale was written in the hide, when a French birder complained that our guide Steve was too loud, Steve was pointing out a distant bird and there were a few Swallows perched on the rushes a few feet from Steve, in front of the hide. Steve asked if he was too loud for the birds or the French. A grunt and the French birder left. 1-0 to the English.

Sandwich Tern, Med Gull and Grey Plover were spotted at various road side pools.

Our next birding spot, the very long sand spit leading to Punta de la Bunya and the Salt Pans. We added Northern Wheatear, Slender-billed Gull one with a nice pink tinge, more Audouin's Gulls and Kentish Plover and Little Stints. Also, later, Temminck's Stint was confirmed and added after reviewing photos.

Next to a large freshwater lake, where lunch was taken. Good numbers of Whiskered Terns, hid a couple of Black Terns and a White-winged Tern, but we found them! Impressive numbers of Red-crested Pochard and a few other duck species, Shelduke, Gadwall amongst them. Marsh Harriers seem to be everywhere, as do Grey and Purple Herons. The sky was full of Swallows and Martins. A Blue Headed Wagtail put in an appearance.

Our next target, Moustached Warbler failed to appear at the next stop, but we had the Iberian race Reed Bunting, Great Egret, our closest views of Flamingo and around a dozen Black-crowned Night Herons in one tree. Oh! I forgot to mention Black-winged Stilt.

Next, inland to the Cabrafeixet area to look for the farmland birds and warblers of this region. Walking the flower



Colin



Steve





Steve



Steve



Steve



Steve



Colin



Colin



rich tracks in the orchards and groves we had singing Nightingale, good views of Bee-eaters, Sardinian Warbler, calling Cuckoo and Corn Buntings, Alpine Swift, Black Kite, Serin, calling Turtle Dove, Kestrel and a flyby Red-Rumped Swallow.



Colin

The Rural Police stopped to find out what we were up to, one of them was a previous student of Steve's, so gave us some useful info and directions to a small pond up another track.

Driving an off-road track higher into the hills added both male and female Black-eared Wheatear, Red-legged Partridge and Blackbird. We then went back to check out the info given to us about the pond.

Finding the pond was easy as it was just by the road. Red Squirrel was spotted and later Marsh Frog. There were hundreds of dragonfly exuvia on the reeds, some stems having four clustered together. A number of stems had larva gripping the base waiting for night fall before emerging. We saw Emperor and Lesser Emperor, and the only damselfly was later ID as Dainty Damselfly. Birds included Wood Lark, Chaffinch, calling Crested Tit.

Returning to the hotel grounds we saw more Pied Flycatchers, both male and female. Butterflies included Painted Lady and Red Admiral.

Special meal night, Steve West had requested Paella for our meal tonight. Richard ordered a Steak, which looked better than it tasted. The rest of us started with Salad, followed by Calamari, then Mussels and finally to the Paella all very tasty and then a pudding. Washed down with red wine and followed by beers and G&Ts in the bar.



Steve

## 22nd April

After an early breakfast and van packing we set off inland following the Ebro River, our second look for Moustached Warbler at Utxesa. A landscape of reed-fringed reservoirs, set amongst the pear and peach orchards. En-route we saw Black Wheatear, Buzzard and Red-billed Chough. At the reservoir several Mute Swan were a surprise, further sightings of Iberian Reed Bunting, Bearded Tit, Reed Warbler, Little Grebe, Black Kite and Purple Heron and calling Hoopoe. Lots of wild flowers including a blood red poppy that caught the eye, but no butterflies, as it was a cool grey showery morning. Still no sight or sound of a Moustached Warbler. Heading back towards the van we had good views of Ferruginous Duck, which Steve West said was unexpected and the first time he had recorded it at this site. Ray asked if it would OK to play the call of Moustached Warbler, Steve West agreed, Ray went back to the van to get his phone and on his return, he described a large aggressive dog that nearly attacked him, poor Ray!...LOL!

Playing the call caused an instant response, Moustached Warbler at first a little on the shy side and then more showy and vocal, being seen with both Bearded Tit and Reed Warbler. A second appeared in the reeds on the far side of the lake, giving more distant but good views. Two males, both showing well, not bad for a site with only 4 or 5 pairs. And a tick for most if not all the group.





Colin



Trevor



Richard



Colin



Steve





Trevor



Richard



Steve



Steve



Colin





Red Underwing Skipper - Trevor



Steve



Panoptes Blue - Richard



Steve



Colin



Colin



Return to the van anticipating a large and vicious dog, we found nothing! What's Ray on, we wondered. Back in the van, driving back to the road the van did come under attack from what looked more like a bear than a dog, Ray will be awarded a medal for bravery at some point.

Some very obliging Bee-eaters caused us to pause for photos and then later Short-toed Eagle circle and hovered for another short stop, we also heard calling Quail and viewed Hobby.

Arriving at the very fragrant Alfes Aerodrome, the scent of wild Thyme hits your nose and the myriad of colourful wild flowers catches your eye. The birds, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Calandra Lark, a song flight from Short-toed Lark, Crested and Thekla Larks, Kestrel, from a nearby wood calling Iberian Green Woodpecker, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, more singing Nightingales, Cirl Bunting, Rock Sparrow, Woodchat Shrike, lots of Corn Buntings and a flyby Golden Oriole.



Steve

On another dry rocky track on the Lleida drylands we had Black-eared and Northern Wheatears, Red-billed Chough. We all had good views of Red-Underwing Skipper and Panoptes Blue butterflies.

While travelling on a proper road, Steve noticed Stone Curlew in a scrubby set-a-side field, pulling off suddenly into the field, gave us good views of Stone Curlew, flyby of a flock of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse and our closest view of a handsome male Little Bustard.

More off-road tracks gave great views of Roller, Blue Rock Thrush, Iberian Grey Shrike, a photogenic Hoopoe perched on a dry stone wall. Followed by Bee-eaters perch on a wire.

Our second attempt to find nesting Eagle Owl was successful, with one adult and 2 very large chicks still in the nest high up on a cliff. Great views were had by all.

Steve



Steve







Steve



Richard

Colin





Then, to a must on any birding trip, the rubbish dump. It was good to see recycling in action, with bails aluminium cans and plastics of all colours. The birds, in very good numbers included White(ish) Storks, Cattle Egrets, Grey Herons, more Black-winged Stilts, numerous Black Kites and a few Red Kites.

Next stop, a large organic farm where the farmer is wildlife friendly, so lots of lush wide field margins full of wild flowers and grasses, a very bird rich habitat. Black-winged Kite our third Kite species of the day, you don't get many of them. At least 6 male Golden Orioles and 1 female in an area the size of 2 tennis courts, more than I've seen in my life-time, in one place! Bee-eaters, Stone Curlew, Cetti's Warblers and singing Nightingales everywhere.

Further along the track, our final stop. A Penduline Tit's nest under construction and the birds returned with nesting material several times, an excellent photo opportunity. Melodious Warbler and Iberian Green Woodpecker also seen. Finally time to head to our next hotel, the very grandiose Monestir de les Avellanes. Which still has a community of Monks in half of the building. After checking-in Steve told us we were on the 1st floor, a bit strange as the key numbers all started 00. Four of us squashed into the tiny lift the door just closed behind us, up one floor and the door at the side, opened to our surprise, we nearly fell out! A grinning Steve was waiting to tell us, it was actually the ground floor we were on. So back down the stairs and to our rooms. Stunning building and grounds, but NO BAR!!! What do we do about a beer? Seven thirsty birders asked in panicked tones. Pre-order before dinner and they are left in the lounge. The dinner is the only thing that lets this hotel down, not good, enough said. After dinner we retire to the lounge to find a large plastic bucket filled with beer and ice, the usual banter and beers followed by bed. A long day with loads of excellent birds, Ray commented, that this was his best days birding ever! We all agreed, including Steve West, that this was definitely one of the best, if not the best day!

## 23rd April

An early pre-breakfast start for Little Bustard and Lesser Kestrel on the Balaguer Drylands, in the company of a film crew from Channel 3 TV, Catalans largest TV Channel. Making a programme about eco-tourism, the environment and Little Bustards, so they had arranged with Steve West to film and interview us watching Little Bustards. Well this turned into a game, something like Musical Chairs. You had to keep moving, if you stopped and looked through your bins to long, when you put them down the lady interviewer started to ask questions in a reasonable version of English, a sound recordist tried to put his large, fluffy grey microphone up your nose and all this while the cameraman was bobbing about trying to find your best angle. At this point we decided to do a little payback on Steve West and got him to demonstrate the male Little Bustards courtship dance for the camera. It starts with head tossing and raspberry blowing, followed by running on the spot and finally jumping up and down flapping your wings. This caused Steve a little embarrassment and us, including the film crew, much amusement. Later, Richard, made the fatal mistake of recording a few birds on his Dictaphone.

Richard







Colin



Colin





Colin



Steve



Steve





Steve



Steve



Colin



Steve



Richard



Steve



What followed was something from the shopping channel. Demonstration, record, playback and again and again. When they asked him about his job and he replied Retired Detective Sergeant, well that was the next episode! We did have some fun with them and we all seemed to enjoy it. Even the re-takes. We did get some good birds, Little Bustard, Calandra Lark and Lesser Kestrel. Back to the hotel for breakfast.

After breakfast, again in the company of the film crew, we searched Bellmont Drylands finding more Little Bustards, Lesser Kestrel, Red-footed Falcon, Roller, Marsh Harrier, Golden Oriole and Hobby.

The film crew were rushing around every time we stopped, filming us watching the birds. Soon it was time for the film crew to leave, but first a few contrived shots, including us driving away up a winding road between the poppy studded barley fields and back again, Steve West had to do a parting line, 'Now were off to find Montagu's Harrier' to which we all cheered and laughed, which made the film crew laugh so we had to do it again, with a bit less enthusiasm! Finally we parted company and the programme is due out in September. Not sure when Sarge's Dictaphone Ad is out. Another quick drive around and we still failed to find a Monty's.

Off on the road to our next target bird, Bonelli's Eagle and a site we visited on our previous trip in the Montsonis area. We had excellent views of a male Bonelli's Eagle dive bombing Griffon Vultures, we then walked the gorge road and added a feisty Firecrest, Wryneck, singing Nightingales everywhere, calling Golden Orioles, Raven and Subalpine Warbler.

On a hillside warbler walk, we saw Early Spider Orchid and had our first Spanish Festoons, one of which was a colour variation with only black and cream. We also saw Green Hairstreak and Richard found a Pale Shoulder moth.

A few more miles down the road we stopped by a large cliff and watched Peregrine Falcon harassing Griffon Vultures who came to close the its nest.

Driving around the beautiful dry farmland with its flower rich margins and rocky wooded area with the windows down listening for singing birds, was how Steve West picked up next target. Western Orphean Warbler, which after some encouragement showed very well, a new bird for a lot of us, which sang in the top of a nearby tree, showing its dark head, pale eye and pinkish-buff underparts, all the salient features.

Steve, then took us to a lake, which is only filled by rain water so varies in size dependent on the rainfall. The previous September was very wet, so the lake was quite large. An excellent spot for ducks and waders, including Wood Sandpiper, Greenshank, Ruff, Spotted Redshank, Black-winged Stilt, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper, Whiskered Tern, Kentish Plover, Snipe, Shelduck, Shoveler, Garganey and Marsh Harrier, as well as Red-veined Darter. Not bad for a big puddle!

Back to the hotel for a quick look around the grounds added Black Redstart and as it started to get dark, all except Richard went for a night drive looking for Owls and Nightjars. No Owls, only Common Nightjar and Quail calling. We paused for a calling Midwife Toad, which sounds similar to Scops Owl. On our return, we were met by a beaming Richard, who had a Tawny Owl flying around the Monastery, just above his head.

After dinner, drinks with our bucket of beer in the lounge and the usual banter, before an earlyish night, before our final long day.



Steve



Richard





Steve



Steve



Steve



Colin





Steve



Trevor



Steve



Red-veined Darter - Richard



Mediterranean Fan Palm - Colin





Steve



Steve



Steve



Cleopatara - Trevor



Chequered Blue - Trevor



## 24th April

Pre-breakfast excitement was the finding of Richard's Tawny Owl roosting in a large tree, just outside the hotel entrance, good views and photos taken, then back in for breakfast. Van then packed up, Red-Rumped Swallow flyby admired, we then set off for the Pre-Pyrenees and Vulture spotting. This area is my favourite part of Spain and as we got closer we could see the snow-capped mountains of the Pyrenees. A couple of brief stops to admire the scenery, Crag Martins and some interesting rock formations, we arrived at our first site. Up a steep track with more than a few hairpin bends, we stopped not far from a vulture feeding site. Black Kite, Griffon Vulture, Raven, Peregrine and a stunning Booted Eagle glided past. A large group of Spanish birders/walkers then arrived, so having seen no build-up of vulture numbers, we concluded it was not feeding time yet, so time to leave and off to the next site. Stopping at a bridge, Steve showed us a Dippers nest and a pair of Common Sandpipers, displaying and circling an island searching for a suitable nest site. Up another steep winding road, we paused for Bullfinch, Mistle Thrush and Rock Bunting. Before reaching a lookout point over a scenic wooded valley, we had close views of Crested Tit. Overhead adult and juvenile Lammergeiers, amongst the circling Griffon Vultures. Next, an adult Egyptian Vulture glided past and down the valley. Coming up the other way more Griffons, but one didn't look right, bigger and darker and not a Griffon, but a Black Vulture which circled and gave good views. Four species of vulture in around 10 minutes and a couple of ticks for some members of the group. Target species all found, except Montys, it was time to relax and switch our attention to butterflies.

Returning down the mountain, stopping frequently for butterflies we soon added Moroccan Orange Tip, Orange Tip, Brimstone, Cleopatra, Camberwell Beauty, Chequered Blue which was a new butterfly for our guide Steve West, Iberian Scarce Swallowtail, Spanish Festoon and Holly Blue.

Stopping by the river and back onto birds for a moment Grey Wagtail and a Wryneck, which was singing, most of us had not witnessed this before, quite melodic for a woodpecker.

Along the river we stopped at a ford. Lots of Skippers, Blues and Bees taking minerals from the damp gravel. At the start of the ford, Wall, Red-Underwing Skipper, Panoptes Blue, Baton Blue and Chequered Blue, also hundreds of small black bees.

Time came for us to head off towards Barcelona and the airport, but before the final long distance motorway journey, a short stop at an old castle added Lesser Spotted Fritillary and Hummingbird Hawkmoth to the list. Black Redstart and singing Western Bonelli's Warbler sent us on our way back to the airport.

Some discussions with Steve West about future trips and timings on the journey back. Included vulture photographic hides, Wallcreepers on buildings, Duponts Lark and other birds has given food for thought.

Arriving back at Barcelona airport, we all thanked Steve West for his hard work in making our bird filled trip fun and enjoyable, a second successful Happy Tours trip. Steve said, we made his job easy and fun, and looked forward to our return.

Check-in, security, passport, no problems. A quick tally up of the list gave a trip total of 192, with all of us getting at least one tick.

The plane was a little delayed, but the flight back was the usual quiet and uneventful end of trip return journey.

Luton was even quicker than going, no hold ups and our bags out first. Cars packed, said our goodbyes, exit found, car 1 no problems. Car 2, barrier said NO! £96 please. Tony spoke to the attendant and a computer error was blamed, next problem for Tony was a bottle in the road, about a mile from his home which shredded his tyre and made him, Trevor and Mick late home.





Red Underwing Skipper - Trevor



Red Underwing Skipper - Trevor



Lesser Spotted Fritillary - Colin



Spanish Festoon - Colin



Camberwell Beauty - Richard



Common Blue - Richard





Steve



Steve



Steve



Steve

Red-veined Darter - Steve







Steve



Richard



Colin

## Beer List

### **Voll-Damm Doble Malta** - 7.2abv.

A dark lager with a slight honey flavour, very drinkable, does not give its strength away.

### **Amb Malt D'Arròs** - 4.2abv

A local artisan created malt beer. Pale slightly cloudy beer with a citrus finish. Our favourite beer of the trip.

### **Estrella Damm** - 4.6abv.

The beer of Barcelona. A very drinkable lager, with a creamy hop flavoured froth and refreshing after taste.

### **Estrella Galicia** - 4.7abv.

A pale lager of hoppy character, with a soft aroma of lemongrass and a clean refreshing finish.



1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	49	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
2	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	50	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
3	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	51	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
4	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	52	Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedinemus</i>
5	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	53	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
6	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	54	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
7	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	55	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
8	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	56	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
9	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	57	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
10	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	58	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
11	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	59	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
12	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	60	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
13	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	61	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
14	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	62	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
15	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	63	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
16	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	64	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
17	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	65	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
18	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	66	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
19	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	67	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
20	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	68	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
21	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	69	Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
22	Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	70	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
23	Lammergeier	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	71	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
24	Eurasian Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	72	Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
25	Eurasian Black Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	73	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
26	Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	74	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
27	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circus gallicus</i>	75	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
28	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	76	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
29	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>	77	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>
30	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	78	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
31	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	79	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
32	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	80	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
33	Eurasian Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	81	Audouin's Gull	<i>Ichthyophaga audouinii</i>
34	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	82	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
35	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	83	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
36	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	84	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
37	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	85	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
38	Red-footed Falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	86	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
39	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	87	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>
40	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	88	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
41	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	89	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
42	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	90	White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>
43	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	91	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>
44	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	92	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>
45	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	93	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>
46	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	94	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
47	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	95	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
48	Little Bustard	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	96	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>



97	Monk Parakeet	<i>Myopsitta monachus</i>	143	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
98	Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	144	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
99	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	145	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
100	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	146	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>
101	Eurasian Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	147	Moustached Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>
102	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	148	Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
103	European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	149	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>
104	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	150	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>
105	Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	151	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
106	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	152	Western Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>
107	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	153	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
108	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	154	European Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
109	Iberian (Green) Woodpecker	<i>Picus (viridis) sharpei</i>	151	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>
110	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	152	Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>
111	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	153	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>
112	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	154	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
113	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	155	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
114	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	156	Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
115	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	157	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>
116	Lesser Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>	158	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
117	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	159	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
118	Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	160	Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>
119	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	161	Coal Tit	<i>Pariparus ater</i>
120	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	162	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
121	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	163	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
122	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	164	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
123	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	165	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
124	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	166	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>
125	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	167	Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>
126	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>	168	Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>
	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	169	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
127	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	170	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
128	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	171	Black-billed Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
129	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	172	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
130	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	173	Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
131	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	174	Carion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
132	Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	175	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
133	Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	176	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
134	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	177	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>
135	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	178	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
136	Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	179	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
137	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>	180	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
138	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	181	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>
139	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	182	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
140	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>			
141	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			
142	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			



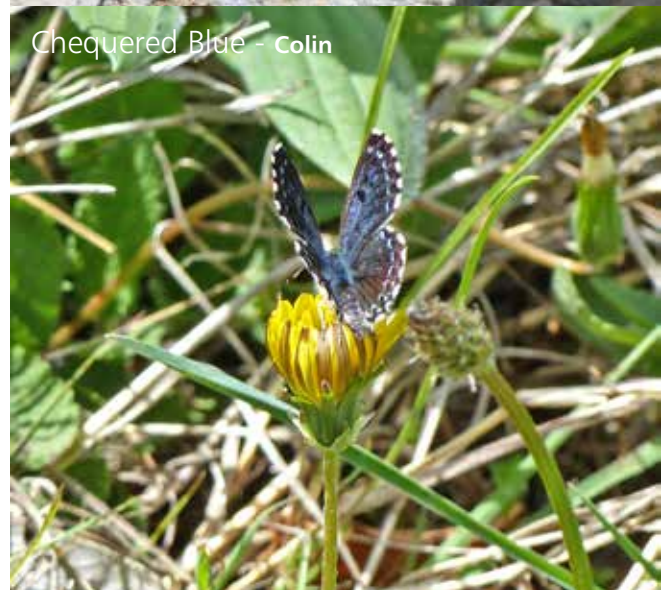
- 183 European Serin *Serinus serinus*
- 184 Citril Finch *Serinus citrinella*
- 185 European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*
- 186 European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
- 187 Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*
- 188 Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*
- 189 Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*
- 190 Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*
- 191 Iberian Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*
- 192 Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*

#### Butterfly List

- 1 Red Underwing Skipper
- 2 Spanish Festoon
- 3 Swallowtail
- 4 Iberian Scarce Swallowtail
- 5 Orange-Tip
- 6 Moroccan Orange-Tip
- 7 Large White
- 8 Green-Veined White
- 9 Small White
- 10 Western Dappled White
- 11 Bath White
- 12 Clouded Yellow
- 13 Berger's Clouded Yellow
- 14 Brimstone
- 15 Cleopatra
- 16 Green Hairstreak
- 17 Baton Blue
- 18 Common Blue
- 19 Panoptes Blue
- 20 Chequered Blue
- 21 Lesser Spotted Fritillary
- 22 Red Admiral
- 23 Peacock
- 24 Small Tortoiseshell
- 25 Comma
- 26 Camberwell Beauty
- 27 Speckled Wood
- 28 Wall
- 29 Small Heath
- 30 Painted Lady
- 31 Holly Blue



Wall - Richard



Chequered Blue - Colin



Lesser Spotted Fritillary - Colin



Baton Blue - Colin



