

# BOC trip to Portugal – Lisbon, Alentejo and the Algarve 20-27 March 2024

João Jara, 'Birds and Nature Tours in Portugal, Spain and beyond' [www.birds.pt](http://www.birds.pt)

Field guide: Where to watch Birds in Southern Portugal João Jara, Helder Costa, Ray Tipper

Tour guides João Jara (first day), António Cotão, Miguel Rodrigues



This trip was four years in the making having been postponed twice due to Covid and the aftermath. It proved well worth persevering with; the week tour was thoroughly enjoyed by the whole party of fifteen club members.

We had fantastic views of some very special birds; Spanish Imperial, Short-toed, Booted & Golden Eagles; Long-eared, Eagle and Little Owls, Little Bittern; Black-bellied Sand Grouse; Stone Curlew; Roller and Bee-eaters.

It was a bit early in the season for many of the warblers and we struggled to find them; lots of Sardinian Warblers and a couple of Nightingales still tuning up but others very scarce. However, the displays of wildflowers were joyous. Most of the waders are winter or passage migrants, birds that will be gone later in the year. Many of our sightings were of birds classed as 'rare' in Portugal. White Storks were nesting on many electricity pylons and trees arranged like blocks of flats. We had several encounters with calling Quail (wet-my-lips). Did we see one? Of course not, even when they were within a few feet of us.

João's guide 'Where to watch birds in Southern Portugal' is well researched and would allow you to find many of the sites and birds yourself. However, there is nothing like local and current knowledge. You could, for example, check all the trees in all the towns in Southern Portugal looking for roosting Long-eared Owls but it's much easier when the guide knows which town and which tree. Eagle Owls are easily disturbed, and their nest locations are not made public and how would you know about the only Roller in Portugal.

The food was lovely with vegetarians/pescatarians well catered for. Most drinks were included but generally you had to buy bottles of wine yourself. But, very agreeable, local wines cost under 15€. The guides and our driver, Pedro, were brilliant and couldn't do enough for us. The hotels and restaurants were all well chosen. The locations and habitats were varied. I would recommend João's company to anyone interested in birding in Portugal (or elsewhere).

A full bird list plus butterflies and flora are appended.

Alastair Fraser  
[bristolornithologicalclub.co.uk](http://bristolornithologicalclub.co.uk)

## Daily reports

Day 1: Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March

Dru Brooke-Taylor

[Alcochete South](#); [Hortas](#), [Barranca d'Alva](#), [Samouca](#) (salt pans), [Quinta da Atalaia](#), [Tagus River Estuary](#)

After our flight and a good meal in Lisbon the previous evening which provided an opportunity for us to meet, those we knew well, in my case from Tuesday group, and those we'd not met before, a good night's sleep and a good breakfast, we assembled in our coach outside our hotel in Lisbon.

As we set off though the city we were introduced to our guides, João, the driving force behind Birds and Nature Portugal, who provided the trip and was to be with us just for the first day, Antonio and Miguel, who would be our guides throughout and Pedro our driver - not technically a birder but who we were to discover has developed a remarkable ability to spot birds even while concentrating on the road.

Inland and upstream from Lisbon, the estuary of the Tagus widens into a broad tidal expanse. On our first day we travelled to Alcochete, a small town on the opposite side of the estuary, where we were to spend two nights in a hotel that was once a farmstead on what would originally have been the foreshore and is now a promenade.

As we were setting off, Jaõa asked whether any of us had any target species we particularly wanted to see. In the silence, somewhat foolishly, I blurted out that I had two, Spotless Starling and Azure Winged Magpie. Both are birds that I've known from childhood are only found in Iberia. His reply was that one was more or less universal, and the other wasn't that scarce where we were going either. The Azure Winged Magpie is now called the Iberian Magpie to split it from what was thought to be the same species found in China, but now found to be genetically separate.

We crossed the Vasco da Gama Bridge, at 17 km the second longest in Europe, eyes fixed both on the impressive size of the structure and the birds we could see from it to our first site, salt-marshes just north of Alcochete. Before we'd even got there, we'd seen the first of my target species, the Spotless Starling, with its shiny, glossy blackness. It is common throughout most of the country. We were soon introduced to another species which we were to hear and see throughout our travels, the Zitting Cisticola (cis-TIC-ola). In older bird books, this was the Fan-Tailed Warbler, but was renamed as the only European example of a genus of over 50 species of Cisticolas, mainly found in Africa. Almost all the swifts we were seeing were not the familiar ones from home, but Pallid Swifts. We also saw Flamingos, Avocets, Crested Lark and migrating Peregrine and Osprey. A mixed roost of waders on the beach included Dunlin, Ringed Plover and Little Stint.



**Osprey**

After lunch we were taken to salt pans the other side of Alcochete where we had excellent views of one of my favourite species, the elegant Black-Winged Stilt, Kentish Plover, more Avocets, Curlew Sandpiper, Glossy Ibis and a smart male Black Redstart.



**Glossy Ibis**



**Curlew Sandpiper centre with Dunlin and Ringed Plover**

We then went to a Quinta (farm) a km or two inland from Alcochete, adjoining another marsh, where we saw a Caspian Tern (for a tern, huge), a pair of Black Kites, Hoopoe, an engaging little introduced species, the Waxbill and an American rarity in Europe; João spotted a Dowitcher. We got good views of this but even João (past chairman of the Portuguese rarities committee) could not be certain whether it was Long-billed (rare) or Short-billed (very rare indeed). The two species have different migration routes which means that the Short-Billed species is less likely to be blown across the Atlantic and so is incredibly rare in Europe. For our list at the end of the day, we were asked to record this as undecided. It was not until later in our trip we had confirmation from the Portuguese rarities' specialists. They had looked at the photographs from our party and concluded it was 'only' a Long-billed one. Even so, that was pretty exciting.



**Long-billed Dowitcher**

Shortly after that we got excellent views of a Squacco Heron, which is a regular but scarce bird in Portugal. Some people also saw a Short-toed Treecreeper, but on this occasion, I only heard it. Then finally, as we were heading back to our coach, we saw a small flock of my second target species, Iberian Magpie, heading to roost in some trees. So that was both my species, and it was only the first day.



**Squacco Heron with Crayfish**





**Black Kite**

When António and Miguel gathered us for our records in the evening, between us, we'd seen or heard 80 species, which when the Dowitcher's identification was later confirmed, increased the total to 81.

We then adjourned for a delicious meal in Dom Peixe, a family-owned fish restaurant in Alcochete.

**Day 2: Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March**

**Alan Wall**

[Alcochete North; Pancas \(Cork Oak\), Evoa, Ponta da Erva](#)

Our first overnight stay was at a traditional Portuguese finca, Quinta da Praia Das Fontes in Alcochete overlooking the Tagus Estuary. We woke to overcast skies but some of the early risers in the group walked along the promenade and watched locals 'cockling' before returning to a hearty breakfast.

Our first stop of the day was in the car park of a large 'Designer Outlet Centre' which may have been a comment on the sartorial elegance of the group. However, it turned out to be a known spot for Little Owls to nest. The owls were nowhere to be seen so we drove on to the Pancas cork and oak tree woodlands.

A good number of woodland species were present with the highlight a Booted Eagle providing a fantastic aerial display.



**Booted Eagle**

Other notable sightings were a Short-toed Treecreeper, Black Kite and Woodchat Shrike. Raptors were much in evidence including a very distant Black-winged Kite identified by its characteristic V-shaped profile and slow wing beats.



**Short-toed Treecreeper**



**Woodchat Shrike**

Late morning we drove on to the Ponta da Grava rice fields and reed beds with numerous Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Glossy Ibis and Egrets. The star of the show was a Yellow-crowned Bishop an African bird with a small population in Portugal, the only European presence. [Added note: Robin, checking his photos after the holiday, identified a Tree Sparrow among the Bishops. A new species for the trip.].

We lunched at the EVOA – Tagus Estuary Birdwatching and Conservation Area visitor centre - where Ruff, Black-Winged Stilts, Spoonbill, Marsh Harrier and Purple Swamphen were seen from the centre. One person had a brief view of Little Bittern. After lunch, we explored two of the lagoons close by with good views of Purple Heron and Red-Crested Pochard. Some of the group heard a faint Savi's Warbler and one or two singing Reed Warblers.



**Black-winged Stilt**



**Spoonbill and Black-winged Stilt**



**Zitting Cisticola**

Late afternoon, on route to our hotel, we returned to the rice fields and were rewarded with sightings of the Iberian subspecies of Yellow Wagtail and a Gull-Billed Tern.





**Iberian Subspecies of Yellow Wagtail**



**Gull-billed Tern**

A day birding in two very different habitats resulted in a count of 76 species.

**Day 3: Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March**

**Charmaine Furlong & Graham Green**

[Aljustrel \(Service Station\)](#), [Carregueiro Dam](#), [Castro Verde](#), [Caséul](#), [Mértola](#)

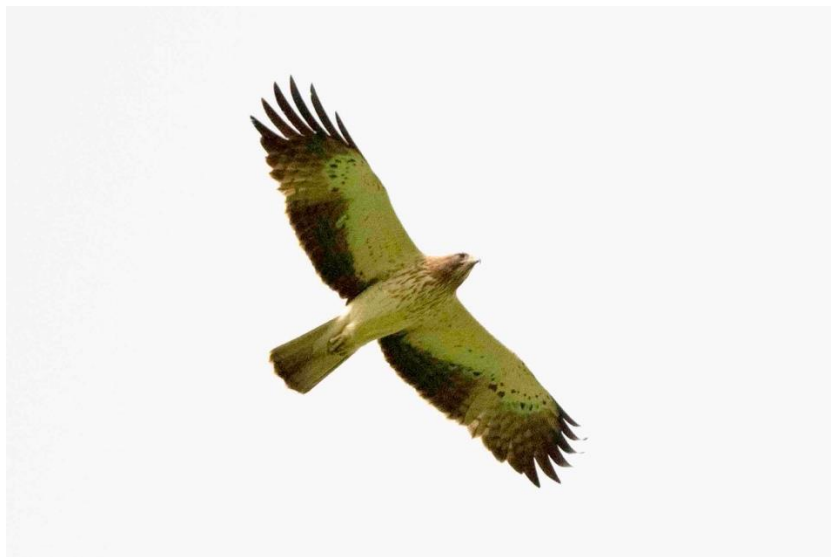
After two nights at the Hotel da Praia das Fontes in Alcochete, an unusual and quirky accommodation in former farm buildings with a breakfast room full of character and stone arches, we travelled the 219 km journey to Mértola in the Alentejo region. We passed numerous Stork nests on pylons which was a wonderful sight to see, and the Storks could be often clearly seen stood up on the nest. Miguel told us that one pylon housed as many as forty nests! Storks were regularly seen in flight or on the ground the whole time we were in Portugal.

The landscape changed to grapevines, Cork Oak woodland, Stone Pine trees (umbrella shaped), rice fields and olive trees. We had barely set off when we saw six species including Great Spotted Cuckoo and Black Kite.



**Great Spotted Cuckoo**

En route to the Carregueiro Dam, we had the first sighting of Red Kite and the second sighting of Booted Eagles soaring high. At our second stop, Ferruginous ducks were a 'first' for the group: also, Pochard, Little Grebe and Spanish Sparrows.



**Pale Morph Booted Eagle**

On the road to Castro Verde, a quaint and typically Portuguese small town, we spotted Buzzard, Lesser Kestrel and were delighted to get our first sighting of Montagu's Harrier flying low across the great rolling plains. We had many more sightings of this beautiful bird before the week was out. As the day wore on, we got our first sighting of the Spanish Imperial Eagle. An Ostrich was a surprise sighting in a field.



**Male Lesser Kestrel**



**Second Year Spanish Imperial Eagle**

We stopped for lunch in an excellent café in Castro Verde and sat outside in warm temperatures. Crag and House Martin nests were numerous on an old building in the town and were constantly flying overhead. Before leaving the town, we were taken to a tree in a residential area (in two separate groups so we could remain as quiet as possible), where we were treated to a Long-eared Owl looking down on us. Great photos were taken. We understood that the owl is a regular visitor.



**Long-eared Owl**

After lunch, we drove to Caséval, a former civil Parish in the municipality of Castro Verde. The abandoned railway station at this parish now houses a large colony of Lesser Kestrels.

Later, we stopped at a secret location in a quarry off the beaten track where we were treated to the sight of a female Eagle owl partly visible on a rockface nest with several chicks. We also saw Woodlark and Calendra Lark for the first time.



**Eagle Owls in nest**





**Corn Bunting**



**Spanish Sparrow**

We returned to San Marcos village hall for a comfort stop and ice cream in the late afternoon and saw Spanish Sparrow.

It was time to head for our hotel at Mértola for three nights' stay, and you could say the best was kept for last, when we had our first sighting of a Great Bustard briefly disappearing over a hill. Fortunately, the days ahead would reveal much better sightings of Great and Little Bustards!

Mértola is the sixth largest municipality in Alentejo and is close to the Spanish border. A castle dominates the town and our hotel, the Museu, overlooked the Guadiana river where we saw Red-rumped Swallows and Crag Martins. The basement of the hotel contained an archaeological site, the foundations of a 12th century fortress. We had two evening meals in a restaurant just above the hotel and our final meal was at a restaurant in the old town in what seemed like a grand residential house offering a set meal of many courses. It was a very enjoyable evening in such surroundings. The restaurant was run by a charity to support ecology projects.

We felt we were visiting Portugal at a perfect time of year for wildflowers with the Rock Gum Rose in abundance. Our lasting memories are of Peter taking close up photos of wildflowers and disappearing off the main tracks hoping he would return in time for the minibus to depart!

At the end of Day 3, a total of 63 species including 19 new ones.

#### **Day 4: Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March**

**Robin Martin**

##### [Canaís, Reláo & Viseus, Álvares Dam](#)

In the morning, before breakfast at Hotel Museu in Mértola, António and Miguel were birding from the hotel terrace. A nightingale was singing from dense cover. There were many different hirundines including Crag Martin, House Martin, Swallows, Common Swift and 2 Red-rumped Swallow with their black trouser pattern undersurface. Cetti's Warbler and Kingfisher were heard and there were brief views of a Sardinian Warbler.

The group headed off after breakfast to the East side of the Guadiana River with a mixture of bluffs, small hills, and Mediterranean scrub. On the way, Thekla Lark and Woodchat Shrike were on the wires and a flock of Spanish Sparrows and Red-legged Partridges by the roadside.



**Woodlark**

A further 2 Red-rumped Swallows flew by; a Hoopoe was calling from the overhead wires and then flew to a hole in a tree.



**Hoopoe**

The group stopped at a pizza restaurant to pick from the menu for later. Robin was locked in the minibus for a short while, but Pedro soon released him. The public toilets outside the restaurant had swallows nesting on the lights in the gents and the ladies. Having chosen and booked our lunch, Pedro took the group to the river valley, and we walked down a steep path to the river. The flora was a riot of colour with yellow Gorse and large white Asphodel spikes. A Great Tit called; a Sardinian Warbler and Serin seen.

António set up the scope to check out a historic Golden Eagle nest but there was no sign of any occupants. There were several Cormorants on the river, a flock of Iberian Magpies in the trees behind, and Red-legged Partridge calling. One highlight was Rock Bunting close to the path. One appeared to be displaying to the other suggesting they might be a pair.



**Rock Bunting**

Three Long-tailed Tits were flitting through and 2 White Wagtails fed from the riverside rocks.

A female Blue Rock Thrush was on some large rocks on the opposite side of the river. There were also 2 Common Sandpipers at the riverside that soon flew upstream.

The group split up as not all had seen the Rock Bunting and the group that stayed down by the river managed to see the Bunting and also the male Blue Rock Thrush. Alan photographed a Gull-billed Tern flying upriver. The other part of the group went uphill to the coach enjoying the impressive flora. Numerous Western Dappled White butterflies traversed the flora. Robin heard and saw a Dartford Warbler on the way back to the coach.

We stopped on the way to the lunch spot to get good views of singing Corn Bunting and Woodlark. After our pizzas we set off up the Guadiana River Valley stopping on the way in a wood pasture to have fleeting views of Iberian Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Dru had a distant view of a Short-toed Eagle and whilst investigating that we had good and close views of a second year Spanish Imperial Eagle. Another couple of birders stopped by to investigate what we were watching, and they pointed out two distant raptors that António identified as Griffon and Cinereous or Black Vulture.



**Very Distant Cinereous or Black Vulture**

We then took the road to the raptor area, Reláo & Viseus, where Eagle territories intersect. On the way Alastair spotted a male Great Bustard. We stopped to admire him and then picked out several others. Eventually, 10 Great Bustards took to the air and flew off.



**Great Bustard**



Driving on we stopped when another raptor was spotted. We had the wonderful experience of seeing five different raptor species during a period of about 5 minutes. First, we saw a Spanish Imperial Eagle and a pale morph Booted Eagle interacting with a soaring Common Buzzard. Then a Red Kite passed closely over us, and a beautiful pair of Montagu's Harriers floated by. Wow, that was a real highlight.



**Red Kite**

We drove on towards Marcos da Ataboeira where we planned a comfort break. On the way a Raven on a telegraph pole and several nesting White Storks provided a further photographic opportunity.

After a brief stop, we continued to explore the Castro Verde countryside passing through rolling pastures home to a good population of Montagu's Harriers. We were delighted to see 4 Harriers including a couple of ghost-like males with their black wing tips contrasting with the darker ringtail females. We stopped at the small village of Viseus and. António picked out a perched Spanish Imperial Eagle, this time an adult with the prominent white markings on the head and wing leading edge. Miguel then spotted a Little Bustard on the brow of a small hill. The group approached cautiously to get good views and some decent photographs.



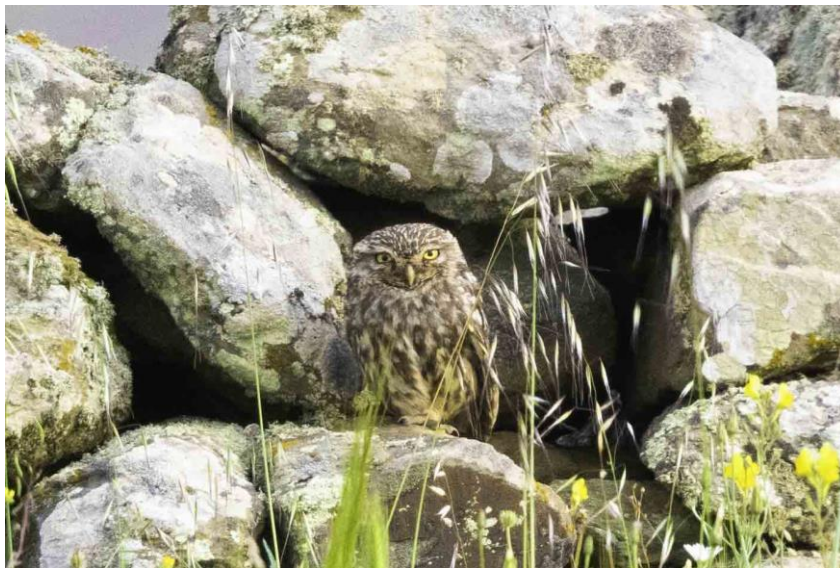
**Little Bustard**

We drove on further and saw a close-by Short-toed Eagle on a pole and an Iberian Grey Shrike on the wires.



**Iberian Grey Shrike**

At Alvarez we saw another Montague's Harrier and 2 Fallow Deer. We stopped to admire a Little Owl using a pile of stones in a field as a roost and hunting perch. It didn't look happy to see us, but we were delighted to see him/her.



**Little Owl**

We headed back to the hotel, birding on the way seeing another Hoopoe, Red-legged Partridges perched on rocks and Corn Buntings on the wires. In the evening, we had an enjoyable meal at a restaurant up the hill from the hotel.

**Day 5: Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March**

**Alison Hooper**

Mértola, Benviuda, Aparica, Álvares Dam, São João Dos Caldeireiros

We started the day at a viewing point on the river (Além Rio) opposite our hotel, Hotel Museo, Mértola, Alentejo region. House Martins were dipping into the river for water and collected mud from the bank opposite. Barn and Red-rumped Swallows passed by. There was no sign of Kingfisher, so we moved on to the next stop at Benviuda. A Quail was calling nearby, and two Stone Curlew were visible on the slope in front of us (they are very aptly named as they blend unto the rocky landscape). Eight more flew in while most of the group were looking elsewhere.



#### **Stone Curlew**

A flock of at least 16 Black-bellied Sand Grouse made short flights and foraged on the ground in the distance. The narrow black and white stripe across the breast was clearly visible in the scopes.



#### **Spot the 6 Black-bellied Sand Grouse**

En route, we saw a Great Bustard flying, a Montagu's Harrier hunting, a Black Kite with prey, which it dropped, and a mongoose which ran across the road in front of us.

From Benviuda, we travelled to Apariça and spotted a Spanish Imperial Eagle, 2 Hoopoe, a Red Kite. Two distant birds in flight we thought (hoped) were Little Bustard turned out to be Egyptian Geese.



### **Egyptian geese**

We had a brilliant sighting of a Montagu's Harrier flying low with its black wing bars clearly visible and two statue-like Little Owls sitting atop a pile of stones.



### **Male Montagu's Harrier**

Two Bee-eaters flew across the track. Our guides were very pleased to spot two Ravens. Raven, Crow and Jackdaw are rarely seen in Portugal. The highlight of the day was a European Roller, perched on a fence near some buildings. Its brilliant turquoise-blue head and breast, tawny back and black eye stripe were clearly visible. It was hunting, taking off from its fence post perch to loop around and return minutes later. This recently reported bird is believed to be the first Roller to return to Portugal this season.





Further on, going towards Álvares Dam an Iberian Grey Shrike and several Bee-eaters were seen on the wires by the roadside. Many Crag Martins and 3 Little Ringed Plover were in the shallows of a river. On the Dam were more Plover, Great Crested Grebe, Red-crested Pochard as well as Mallard, Coot and Black-winged Stilt. Five Collared Pratincole flew overhead, and two Golden Eagle rose high on the thermals into the haze joined by a smaller Short-toed Eagle.



**Collared Pratincole**



**Short-toed Eagle**



**Golden Eagle**

We finished the day with a visit to the Lynx Observatory at São João Dos Caldeireiros. The endangered Iberian Lynx was released into the heart of the Vale of Guadiana Nature Park in 2014 and numbers are slowly increasing. We didn't see any, they are very elusive.

We saw 75 different bird species during the day, including 10 new ones.

#### **Day 6: Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March**

**Joyce Donkor**

[Alentejo; Ribiera do Vascão, Poreiros Dam.](#)      [Algarve; Ableia Nova, Santa Lúzia, Tavira East](#)

We travelled from Mértola in the Alentejo region to Tavira in the Algarve region for our last two nights to a lovely hotel, "Vila Gale Albacora". Before we departed from hotel Museu the early risers heard Nightingale, saw Crag Martins, Swifts and Red-rumped Swallows.

En-route we stopped by the River Vascão which runs between the regions of Alentejo and Algarve. The habitat was that of mature trees, thickets and wildflowers. We could hear the songs of Blackcap and a Song Thrush and had a spectacular showing of a flock of Bee-eaters. A native Iberian turtle was in the clear running water of the river.



Throughout the journey we saw Crested Larks, Corn Buntings and Stonechats sitting on wires or fence posts.



**Crested Lark**

We travelled to the Poreiros Dam where we had good viewings of Greenshank, Little Ringed Plover, Common Ringed Plover, and Iberian Magpies.

We moved on to Ableia Nova and visited a pinewood and lagoon. We walked through a path flanked by pine trees where we saw Crested Tits flying to and from their nest box. We could hear the calls of the Iberian Green Woodpecker but it was very elusive even when we saw which tree it landed in. Some people saw a Short-toed Treecreeper.



**Crested Tit**

On the Lagoon; Ferruginous Duck, Caspian and Sandwich Tern, a Red-knobbed Coot (a rare bird in Portugal), a male Little Bitten perched for a good while on the reeds before flying across the lagoon and out of sight. There were Shelducks, Gadwall, Mallards and Purple Swamphen. Amongst the trees; Hoopoe, Serins and a beautiful, male Woodchat Shrike.



**Ferruginous Duck**



**Red-knobbed Coot**



**Male Little Bittern**

From here we drove to Tavira East Salt Pans. There were Greater Flamingos, Kentish Plovers, Sandwich Terns, Yellow-legged and Audouin's Gulls, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Black-tailed and Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshanks, Avocets, Blacked-winged Stilt, Greenshanks, Spoonbills, Little Stint, Dunlins and Cormorant. Flying over head were Black Kite, Red Kite and Gannets over the sea in the distance. Total species for the day was 87. 10 new species.





**Greater Flamingo**



**Audouin's Gull**



**Kentish Plover**

We then drove to our hotel for a well-earned rest. What a wonderful and memorable day.

**Day 7: Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March**

**Di Bunniss**

[Quinto Do Lago and Ludo Golf Course, Salgados Lagoon, Tavira Salt Pans.](#)

We set off at 8.15 am, driving through a Limestone Natural Park renowned for orchids, caves and unique geology. But no stopping for us as we headed for the Ludo golf course; a very smart area with many large mansions and villas. We entered the Golf Course area by a path and quickly spotted 2 Hoopoes on the fairway and, on crossing over the course, a Wryneck perched in a tree.



**Wryneck**

A Purple Heron was briefly seen during a scan over the adjacent wetland. We followed a wide sandy path, well used by walkers, runners and bird watchers. Plenty of information boards gave details of the local flora and fauna. Blackcap, Goldfinch, Woodchat Shrike and Iberian Magpie were quickly added to the list.

We passed Roman remains where they made a condiment from grinding together fish, salt and herbs. A Sardinian Warbler called from the trees and bushes as it darted about, making it difficult to get a really good view or photo. Pausing at a Bird Hide we looked down on a small island in a lake to see my 'bird of the day'; a Black-headed Weaver bird. This bright yellow, showy bird was busy among the reeds, posing and fluttering its wings in a display to attract a female to inspect and approve one of its nests.



**Male Black-headed Weaver**



**Little Bittern**

Close by, but as still as stone, was another star; the Little Bittern. With its elegant cream and brown striped plumage and green beak it merged well into the background. Look away and it was hard to spot again. A second was found perched in the reeds opposite.

After our lunch break, we headed for the Salgados Lagoon where we had good views of the Red-rumped Swallow in a mixed flock with House Martins, Swifts and Barn Swallows. Two Iberian Yellow Wagtails foraged on the ground in front of us. An Osprey observation was interrupted by a sudden downpour which sent us hurrying back to the shelter of the coach. When we ventured out again, we were treated to an Otter fishing in the lake.



Moving on to the Tavira Salt Pans we were delighted to watch 2 Flamingo fly in, showing their brilliant pink and black wings as they landed. Here were also Spotted Redshank, Sanderling and Kentish Plover among the waders.



**Spotted Redshank**

The final stop at the salt pans António picked out a Slender-billed Gull preening beside four Caspian Terns.



**Slender-billed Gull**





**Caspian Tern**

A total of 80 species recorded for the day.

**Day 8: Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March**

Before our flight home some of the party members had a short walk pre breakfast. We had good views of Sardinian Warbler and Serin. A visit to the local beach showed Greenshank, Grey Plover, Sanderling and Whimbrel. A large flock of Gannet flew by and lastly we had good views of our last bird for the day, a Hoopoe in the hotel grounds. We returned to breakfast happy with a good week of birding and company.



**Sardinian Warbler**



**Serin**

## **BOC Party**

**Alastair Fraser, Di Bunnis, Robin Martin, Alison Hooper, Alan Wall, Alan Gilbert, Charmaine Furlong, Graham Green, Dru Brooke-Taylor, Joyce Donkor, Kate Cashmore, John Skinner, Lou Skinner, Nick Hawkridge, Peter Hilton**

## Appendix 1: Bird list

Shelduck	Little Bittern	Moorhen	Black-headed Gull
Mallard	Cattle Egret	Coot	Slender-billed Gull
Gadwall	Squacco Heron	Red-knobbed Coot	Yellow-legged Gull
Pintail	Little Egret	Purple Swamphen	Audouin's Gull
Shoveller	Great Egret	Great Bustard	L Black-backed Gull
Teal	Grey Heron	Little Bustard	Sandwich Tern
Pochard	Purple Heron	Oystercatcher	Gull-billed Tern
Red-crested Pochard	White Stork	Avocet	Caspian Tern
Ferruginous Duck	Glossy Ibis	Black-winged Stilt	Black-bellied Sandgrouse
Red-legged Partridge	Spoonbill	Stone Curlew	Feral Pigeon
Quail	Greater Flamingo	Collared Pratincole	Wood Pigeon
Little Grebe		Little Ringed Plover	Collared Dove
Great Crested Grebe	Griffon Vulture	Common Ringed Plover	Great-spotted Cuckoo
Gannet	Black Vulture	Kentish Plover	Eagle Owl
Cormorant	Osprey	Grey Plover	Long-eared Owl
	Golden Eagle	Knot	Little Owl
	Spanish Imperial Eagle	Sanderling	Swift
	Short-toed Eagle	Turnstone	Pallid Swift
	Booted Eagle	Dunlin	Hoopoe
	Red Kite	Little Stint	Kingfisher
	Black Kite	Green Sandpiper	Bee-eater
	Marsh Harrier	Common Sandpiper	Roller
	Montagu's Harrier	Redshank	Iberian Green Woodpecker
	Buzzard	Spotted Redshank	GS Woodpecker
	Black-winged Kite	Greenshank	Wryneck
	Kestrel	Black-tailed Godwit	
	Lesser Kestrel	Bar-tailed Godwit	
	Peregrine Falcon	Whimbrel	
		Snipe	
		Ruff	

Skylark	Songthrush	Nuthatch	Goldfinch
Crested Lark	Blackbird	Short-toed Treecreeper	Greenfinch
Thekla Lark	Blue Rock Thrush	Iberian Grey Shrike	Siskin
Woodlark	Blackcap	Woodchat Shrike	Serin
Calandra Lark	Sardinian Warbler	Iberian Magpie	Corn Bunting
Sand Martin	Dartford Warbler	Magpie	Rock Bunting
Crag Martin	Zitting Cisticola	Jay	Rose-ringed Parakeet
Barn Swallow	Savi's Warbler	Jackdaw	Crested Myna
Red-rumped Swallow	Cetti's Warbler	Carrion Crow	Black-headed Weaver
House Martin	Reed Warbler	Raven	Yellow-crowned Bishop
Meadow Pipit	Chiffchaff	Spotless Starling	Waxbill
White Wagtail	Wren	House Sparrow	LB Dowitcher
Iberian Yellow Wagtail	Great Tit	Spanish Sparrow	Egyptian Goose
Nightingale	Blue Tit	Tree Sparrow	
Black Redstart	Crested Tit	Chaffinch	
Stonechat	Long-tailed Tit	Linnet	



## Appendix 2: Butterflies

Robin Martin

Red Admiral

Speckled Wood

Large White

Small White

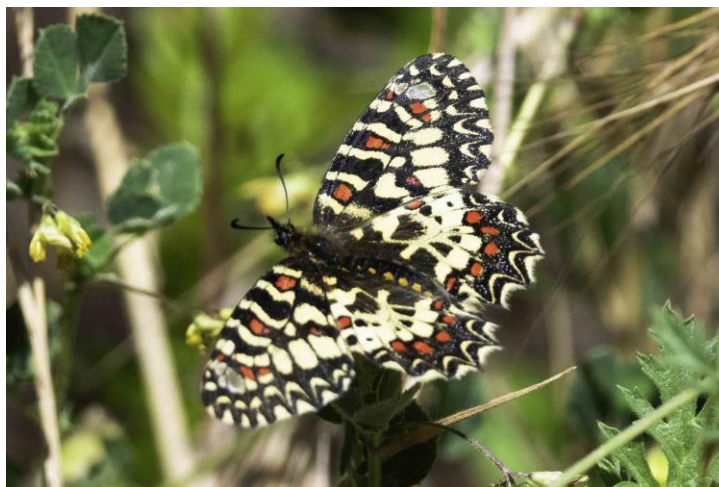
Clouded Yellow

Western Dappled White

Spanish Festoon



**Western Dappled White**



**Spanish Festoon**

## Appendix 3: Flowers

### A BOTANICAL REPORT

Peter Hilton

We left Lisbon driving south along Cistus-lined highways to spend two day exploring saltmarsh habitat and alluvial fields around the Tagus estuary close to our hotel in Alcochete.

Along the banks of the saltmarsh there were huge spikes of the yellow parasitic Cistanche and matted along the tracks was *Paronychia argentea*. Also present were *Tamarix Africana*, Three-leaved Snowflake (*Leucojum triphyllum*), Sea Heath (*Frankenia laevis*).

In woodland, along the trackside vegetation were Vipers Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), Wild Lupins- yellow (*Lupinus lutea*) and purple (*Lupinus angustifolia*), Lesser Snapdragon (*Misopates orontium*) and the delicate *Linaria* (*Linaria sparteae*). Here was a first opportunity to examine one of the four *Cistus* species to be seen- *Cistus salvifolius*. The arable fields were a haze of red from the extensive spread of a Sorrel (*Rumex bucephalophorus*).

On the third day, travelling south, we passed through plantations of Cork Oak to reach a stopover for Eagle Owl. It was here that we could examine closely the spectacular flower of Gum Cistus (*Cistus ladanifer*) which, in the Alentejo, was present in huge spreads across the landscape.

Here also there was an opportunity to explore the adjacent rich meadows which included Yellow Bartsia (*Parentucellia viscosa*) and *Bellardia trixago*. Also here was Barbary Nut (*Gymandiris sisyrinchium*) and a multitude of leguminous plants.

When in Castro Verde we spent a long morning walking down a sunken track into the Guadiana Valley. The lane was bordered by bushes of the yellow-flowered, prickly, *Genista villosa*. On the banks was a wonderful display of flowers in peak condition. The many leguminous plants reflected the acidic nature of the impoverished shale soil of the Alentejo.

Roadside verges of the Alentejo were also found to be rich botanically.

When visiting the dam after the excitement of Rollers, Hoopoes and Bee-eaters we encountered meadows extending towards the horizon which were ablaze with colour. Whilst Crown Daisies and Field Marigolds were dominant many other plants were interspersed including Purple Spurrey (*Spergularia purpurea*), *Ononis reclinata*, Small-flowered Catchfly (*Silene gallica*) and *Silene colorata*.

Just as we were leaving the Alentejo, we encountered a flock of Bee-eaters in excellent habitat with Green Lavender (*Lavandula viridis*) as well as the common Spanish Lavender (*Lavandula stoechas*). There was a first orchid sighting- a small collection of rather wet Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*).

South into the Algarve we explored the coastal region where two more *Cistus* were found *C. monspeliensis* and the only red cistus *C. albidus*. Adjacent to the golf course were a few Tongue Orchids (probably *Serapias lingua*). António took great pleasure in showing the rare endemic *Linaria algaviana* and nearby the spike of *Orobanche foetida* on the dunes.