



Spring migration in Cadiz (Andalucia)

Mike Cram & Neville Davies

10th to 14th May 2011

For this trip we chose again to return to Spain, birding the Cadiz region of Andalucia, located on the western edge of The Strait of Gibraltar, close to Cape Trafalgar and the towns of Vejer de la Frontera and Barbate. This is close to Europe's most southerly point and one of the busiest avian migration spots in the world. We chose to base ourselves just outside Barbate for 4 nights at **Hoopoe Cottage** which belongs to **Stephen & Pattie Daly** & family of **Andalucian Guides**. We also arranged for Stephen to guide us for 2 of the days (11th and 12th).

Day 1 - Tues 10th May 2011

The trip began at Cardiff for the 1210 BMI Baby flight to **Malaga**, landing 1535 Spanish time. We picked up the hire car. During the 2 and a half hours drive to **La Oliva** we encountered numerous **White Stork**, **Turtle Dove**, **Bee-eater** and **Spotless Starling**. We were given a nice welcome by Stephen & Patty and dropped a few things off at the cottage where we noted the resident **Nightingale**, Serin and **Corn Buntings**. We then went out for a meal at a nearby restaurant where there was a roost of **50 Cattle Egret**.

Day 2 – Weds 11th May 2011 (*Mainly Guadalquivir Basin - hot and sunny, some cloud*)

The theme of the trip began with a very sociable 0900 start at the cottage following a good dawn chorus including **Cetti's Warbler**. Visible migration was evident with the first of many **Honey Buzzards**. We headed North-west to the **Guadalquivir Basin**, our first stop outside **Barbate** produced **Lesser Kestrel**, **Greater Flamingo**, **Hoopoe** and **Pallid Swift**. Stephen then took us to a nest site for one of our target birds **Northern Bald Ibis**, 2 pairs plus 3 chicks. These re-introduced species seem to be doing well in the region.

We moved off to drive the off-road tracks around **Mesas De Asta**. There was much activity here including **Spoonbill** (*left leg ring C611, right leg metal ring*), **Gadwall**, **Common Pochard**, **Greater Flamingo**, hunting **Collared Pratincole**, **Avocet**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Kentish Plover**, **Ringed Plover**, **Lapwing**, **Dunlin**, **Slender-billed Gull** and **Red-rumped Swallow** which were nesting in drainage pipes. We stopped for morning coffee and delicious toast covered in olive oil and tomato sauce. Stephen took us to a local shop rammed with all sorts of goods including wines, sherries and olive oil. I opted to buy some olive oil to take home.

We moved on to the **Bonanza** salt pans and **Algaida wetlands** via some nice well-flowered areas. Butterflies included **Painted Lady**, **Clouded Yellow**, **Swallow-tail**, **Small** and **Large White** plus a **Lesser Emperor** dragonfly. We encountered **Great Cormorant**, **Night Heron** and **Glossy Ibis** together with overhead **Booted Eagle**, **Little Tern**, **Short-toed Lark** and the first of many **Zitting Cisticola**, **Yellow Wagtail** and **Linnet**. The salt pans at Bonanza were full of waders including **1 Golden Plover**, **50+ Grey plover**, **100+ Ringed Plover**, **many Curlew Sandpipers**, **Redshank**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **2 Common Sandpiper**, **500+ Dunlin**, **a Whimbrel** and **2 Little Stint**. A little later we encountered **25 Greater Flamingo**, **2 Red-crested Pochard**, **50+ Slender-billed Gull** and then excellent views of the first of our target birds **5 Marbled Teal**.



The coast at Bolonia



Poppy fields



Stephen and Mike

We took lunch (3 course menu del journo at *Venta el Raspa* for about 10 Euros) near **Bonanza**. This was most pleasant, fish with large mixed salad and a nice glass of wine followed by coffee.

Soon after at 1515h we stopped by a small pool to see 3 drake **White-headed Ducks** who performed admirably for us! A detour to the [Algaida forest](#) produced nesting **Booted Eagles**, seven birds in all seen, plus **2 Red Kite**, **Spectacled Warbler**, **Sardinian Warbler**, **Short-toed Treecreeper** (heard) **2 Raven** and nesting **Tree Sparrow**. We travelled back towards Barbate via [Las Noveros](#) where we encountered the fascinating large [Oscillated Lizard](#); unfortunately one had been run over so we re-named it 'Squasholated Lizard'! The grassland areas we stopped at produced **10+ Stonechat**, **6+ Linnet** and numerous **Griffon Vulture**, **Woodpigeon**, **Common Kestrel** and **Spectacled Warbler**. To round the day off nicely a superb **Black-winged Kite** flew through.

*(92 species were encountered today, including several **Tawny Owls** that night back at [Hoopoe Cottage](#))*

Day 3 Thu 12th May 2011 *(Mainly SE to Facinas, Sierra de la Plata & Tarifa - Warm, very breezy in some places)*

We enjoyed a repeat of the previous day's dawn chorus plus **2 Bee-eaters** over the garden and set off at 0900 towards a campsite amongst some woodland outside [Barbate](#). As we entered the woods Stephen briefly spotted an **Eagle Owl** disappearing into thicker woods. We spent a few hours here as there was a much visible raptor migration - hundreds of **Honey Buzzard** again plus **Northern Bald Ibis**, **3 Griffon Vulture**, dozens of **Black Kite**, **Booted Eagle** and some **Short-toed Eagle**. Also noted in the woodland were [Green-ringed Dragonfly](#), **Iberian Green Woodpecker** (heard), **Pallid Swift**, 2 male **Cuckoo**, **Western Orphean Warbler**, **Sardinian Warbler**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Blue Tit** and **Woodchat Shrike**. We also spent some time carefully looking to see if we could see any ground-roosting *Red-necked Nightjar*.

We moved off towards [Facinas](#) and [Tarifa](#), but stopped at [Mazanete](#) on our way down to the coastal grasslands. A superb **Little Owl** sat still for us! As we descended to the coast we saw **2 Spoonbill**, a **Short-toed Eagle**, several **Calandra Larks**, **Tawny Pipit**, again numerous **Zitting Cisticola**, **2 Woodchat Shrike**, **Greenfinch** and **Serin**. A **Red Admiral** was also noted as strong winds were encountered. The military were busy, so we backtracked and headed off to the [Sierra de la Plata](#). As we climbed up the Sierra, the African continent could be seen in the distance across the [Strait of Gibraltar](#), Morocco was tantalisingly close, but it was hazy and we were a bit disappointed that the views weren't as good as we'd hoped for. Still we were able to pick out several raptors miles out into the strait on their way north, **Griffon Vultures**, **Honey Buzzard** and **3 Egyptian Vulture** (dark 3rd year birds). On dry land were **Blue Rock Thrush**, a **Chaffinch** and **Common Swift**, but no sign of any rarer Swifts at the former traditional cave site above [Bolonia](#). Apparently *White-rumped & Little Swift* do not nest there any more.

At [Betis](#) we found a **Thekla Lark**, **Wren**, **Nightingale**, **Stonechat** and **Blackbird** all in among a flock of goats and herds of school children out on a trip. We beat a retreat and stopped for lunch near the coast. It was a similar menu to yesterday, delicious and good value. After lunch we moved on to [Tarifa](#) where it had become very windy. We saw **Spanish Sparrow** as we climbed up to [Alcornales](#). A cracking pair of **Black-eared Wheatear** performed very well for us, especially the male of the *pale-throated variety*. Butterflies encountered were [Wall](#) and [Red Admiral](#). A little later we stopped at a slightly more sheltered lightly wooded slope and enjoyed at least **5 Western Bonelli's Warbler**, another pair of **Black-eared Wheatear** (*dark-throated this time*), a **Short-toed Eagle**, **2 Woodchat Shrike** and a **Spotted Flycatcher**. On the way back to our base around 1800h we finished a great day in style with a superb male **Montagu's Harrier** at [Tahivilla](#).

After freshening up and making sure we were well covered up, Nev and I returned to the [woodland](#) at 2030h following Stephen's tip-off, to try and catch up with nocturnal species. Initially we had good views of **Iberian Green Woodpecker** (*'sharpei' race*), [Small Copper](#), and **Lesser Kestrel**. Suddenly an **Eagle Owl** flew up from the woods and landed on a cliff face and just sat there for over half an hour calling – amazing luck! A lifer for Mike (at last!). This was the beginning of a purple patch as not long after what was probably the female **Eagle Owl** flew up and landed on top of a tree for a few minutes. We moved back into the woods and soon heard the "clip-clop" sound of **Red-necked Nightjar**. Pretty much by 2130h we had amazingly close views of at least 3 flying around us and landing on the path. Later on in the night when we left, they landed on the path down to 20 feet in front of the car, giving truly awesome views in the headlights.

These two species were lifers for both of us.



Red-necked Nightjar (Stephen Daly)



White-headed duck (Mike Cram)



Neville and Stephen

Day 4 – Fri 13th May 2011 (still very windy, cold in the wind, but warm out of it)

We had a day to ourselves today and chose to retrace some of the sites we had visited previously towards [Sierra de la Plata](#) and [Tarifa](#). We hoped for a chance of encountering some of the *Ruppell's Griffon Vultures* that had been passing through recently as we had not encountered any yet, probably as conditions had not been ideal with the wind. We stopped in among the wind turbines near [La Zarzuela](#) and encountered mainly commoner species including some **Calandra Larks** and **White Storks**. We then moved to [Bolonia](#) by the coast for morning coffee and noted Sanderling, **Kentish Plover**, **Red-rumped Swallow**, **Crested Lark**, **Dunlin** and **Ringed Plover** on the beach and around the lagoon there. A *Tern sp* flew east. Again the wind caused us to add a layer of clothing and we encountered **50+ Griffon Vultures**, so we moved back up on to the [Sierra de la Plata](#) to try our luck there for some more raptors and scored with a **Hobby**, **2 Short-toed Eagle**, **2 more Griffons**, **4+ Crag Martins** at the 'swift' caves, **Sardinian Warbler** and a **Woodchat Shrike** by the N340.

We decided to move back east and try out another suggested site for some *Swifts* near [La Zarzuela](#), so we found a nice spot near a small farm with good views of some distant rocky hills and set up our scopes. This was a productive area. Although we only definitely saw 'Common' Swifts, we also enjoyed good views of **2 Booted Eagle**, **2 Short-toed Eagle**, **3 Turtle Doves** and a **Melodious Warbler**. We took lunch at 1330h at Rest El Valenciao outside [Barbate](#) and paid a little bit more than the previous days because we fancied a nice Veal steak. We noted **Brimstone** and **Swallow-tail** butterflies in the woodland nearby. After lunch we decided to spend the afternoon north of [Vejer de la Frontera](#) in some different habitat to try our luck for some different species. We took some tracks north off the A2225 between [Benalup](#) and [Los Badalejos](#) - **3 Black Kite**, a **Common Buzzard**, a **Bee-eater** and **3 Melodious Warblers** were the highlight. We re-joined the A2228 and continued north to drive the causeways of the [Embalse de Barbate](#), pretty quiet, lots of **Corn Bunting** and **Serin**, plus **20+ Mallard**, **2 White Stork** and **2 Common Kestrel** noted. We finished the afternoon off in [Barbate](#) back at the cottage and joined Stephen on his roof for a late evening raptor movement. The wind had dropped and we enjoyed a magnificent show as several hundred **Honey Buzzards** flew low north together with a **Griffon** and several **Pallid Swift**. A nice finish to the trip.



Eagle Owl (Stephen Daly)

Day 5 – Sat 14th May 2011

It was an early start to drive the 2 hours east to [Malaga](#) to catch our late morning flight back. Pretty uneventful with mainly the commoner species encountered earlier in our trip noted. We arrived safely in Cardiff by mid-afternoon. We finished with a trip total of **117 bird species** (*Mike had 5 lifers, Neville 2. These are highlighted in the Species List below.*

The whole trip cost us about £600 each including flights, hire car, petrol, airport parking, cottage hire, 2 days guiding, meals and miscellaneous spending.

We express our sincere thanks to Stephen and Patty for the welcome and hospitality and would gladly recommend Hoopoe cottage as a great base for a birding break. I'd say it is an ideal base to accommodate birding widows and children too due to the nice swimming pool and generally relaxed and quiet surroundings. Whilst we have planned many bird trips abroad together, it was a good plan to sit back and get someone else to do all the work for a change and lead us to the birds! We may not have cleaned up in tick-crazed style, that was not what we wanted to do, rather bag a few lifers and enjoy the region and we certainly did that!

More information on [Andalucian Guides](#) can be found on <http://www.andalucianguides.com/main.htm>

Neville's website can be found at <http://ecologycymru.com>

Mike Cram **15th July 2011**

Species List (117):

Gadwall	Mallard	Marbled Teal	White-headed Duck
Red-crested Pochard	Common Pochard	Red-legged Partridge	Little Grebe
Greater Flamingo	Great Cormorant	Night Heron	Cattle Egret
Little Egret	Grey Heron	White Stork	Glossy Ibis
Northern Bald Ibis	Spoonbill	Honey Buzzard	Black Kite
Red Kite	Egyptian Vulture	Black-winged Kite	Griffon Vulture
Booted Eagle	Short-toed Eagle	Marsh Harrier	Montagu's Harrier
Common Buzzard	Lesser Kestrel	Common Kestrel	Hobby
Water Rail (hd)	Moorhen	Common Coot	Oystercatcher
Black-winged Stilt	Avocet	Collared Pratincole	Ringed Plover
Kentish Plover	Golden Plover	Grey Plover	Lapwing
Sanderling	Little Stint	Curlew Sandpiper	Dunlin
Black-tailed Godwit	Bar-tailed Godwit	Whimbrel	Redshank
Green Sandpiper (hd)	Common Sandpiper	Black-headed Gull	Slender-billed Gull
Yellow-legged Gull	Little Tern	Whiskered Tern	Rock Dove
Woodpigeon	Collared Dove	Turtle Dove	Common Cuckoo
Little Owl	Tawny Owl (hd)	Eagle Owl	Red-necked Nightjar
Common Swift	Pallid Swift	Bee-eater	Hoopoe
Ib. Green Woodpecker	Calandra Lark	G. Short-toed Lark	Crested Lark
Thekla Lark	Crag Martin	Sand Martin	Barn Swallow
House Martin	Red-rumped Swallow	Tawny Pipit	Yellow Wagtail
Wren	Nightingale	Stonechat	Black-eared Wheatear
Blue Rock Thrush	Blackbird	Cetti's Warbler (hd)	Zitting Cisticola
Reed Warbler (hd)	Great Reed Warbler (hd)	Melodious Warbler	Blackcap (hd)
Western Orphean Warbler	Spectacled Warbler	Sardinian Warbler	Western Bonelli's Warbler
Spotted Flycatcher	Blue Tit	Great Tit	Short-toed Treecreeper (hd)
Woodchat Shrike	Spotless Starling	Jackdaw	Common Raven
House Sparrow	Spanish Sparrow	Tree Sparrow	Chaffinch
Serin	Greenfinch	Goldfinch	Common Linnet
Corn Bunting			

Butterflies:

Painted Lady, Clouded Yellow, Large White, Small White, Swallow-tail, Red Admiral, Brimstone, Small Copper, Wall

Dragonflies: Lesser Emperor, Green-ringed Dragonfly