

BIRD TREKS

SPAIN Madrid to Barcelona

Lots of Birds, with a nice mix of Culture & History, many Migrants, Mediterranean Species & Beautiful Historic & Cultural Sites

Dates Tuesday, 26 April through Sunday, 8 May 2011: 13 days & 12 nights

Spain is the most visited European country for the observation of birds due to its geographical location along the migratory routes between Europe and Africa, and because it embraces a great variety of habitats of the Western Palearctic. It was selected as **THE chosen destination** of British birders in the forum UKBIRDNET. This mosaic of habitats in a relatively good state of conservation provides shelter to a great number and variety of species: raptors, alpine birds, steppe birds, aquatic birds, and an unsurpassed representation of typical Mediterranean species.

In this 13-day tour we will visit the most beautiful and important areas and could easily observe more than 200 bird species. Special attention is given to the Spanish specialties such as **Spanish Imperial Eagle, Lammergeier, Dupont's Lark, and Wallcreeper**, with the added opportunity for a good number of mammals, reptiles, and butterflies. As an embellishment to the tour, we will also be able to see historic monuments and cultural sites such as **The House of Goya, El Castillo de Loarre (XI C), El Monasterio de San Juan de la Peña (XI / XIII C), medieval villages** such as Trujillo, and **Moorish villages** including Alquezar.

This tour is designed especially for the American birder who wishes to see a maximum number of bird species in Europe, combined with some of Spain's rich culture, all in the most spectacular and interesting areas of this enchanting part of the world.



Want to visit the medieval
Village of Alquezar?

- - Steve West,
Spain tour leader

[Day-by-day itinerary begins on page 2]

SPAIN Birds, Culture & History

26 April - 8 May 2011

Day Agenda

- 1 The Tour Begins** The tour begins at the **Madrid Airport**, where we will meet you. Plan to arrive between 9:00 AM and 12:00 noon. Once together we will skirt around Madrid on the ring road and head towards Extremadura on a comfortable modern road. We will stop en route to get our first introduction to Spanish birds. Our main aim will be to observe the attractive **Black-winged Kite**, although it's likely that our efforts will also bring us into contact with other species, including our first **Bee-eaters**, **Corn Buntings**, **Zitting Cisticolas**, **White Storks**, **Eurasian Griffon Vultures**, **Red and Black Kites**, and more. From here we will drive the remaining distance to our rural hotel in a peaceful village on the edge of the famous Monfragüe National Park. Overnight near Monfragüe.
- 2 Monfragüe National Park** The National Park is an area of dramatic scenery, and is regarded by raptor watchers as one of the most outstanding sites to see birds of prey in Europe. Specialties like the **Cinereous Vulture** (different from our New World Black Vulture) breed near **Eurasian Griffon** and **Egyptian Vultures**. No fewer than FIVE species of **Eagle** can be seen: **Golden**, **Booted**, **Bonelli's**, **Short-toed**, and **Spanish Imperial**. Around the rocky pinnacle of Peñafalcon that holds **Red-billed Chough**, **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Red-rumped Swallow**, **Eurasian Crag-Martin**, and **Alpine Swift**, we will look for breeding **Black Stork** in one of the easiest sites in Europe to watch these shy birds at the nest. With a little luck the **Eurasian Eagle-Owl** will be found at its daytime roost, while **Azure-winged Magpies** are easily detected in the marvelous cork oak *dehesa*. Surprisingly, **Spanish Sparrow** is a localized species in Spain, but there are several sites for this attractive little bird, including the grounds of our hotel!! If that's not enough to temporarily quell your appetite for birding, then a late evening outing may be arranged after dinner, to look and listen for **Scops Owl** and **Red-necked Nightjar**. Our second night near Monfragüe.



Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, WOW!
Steve West, Spain tour leader

[Day 3 begins on page 3]

- 3 **Steppes near Cáceres** It's on to the open rolling steppes today and a whole new set of birds. These include **Great Bustard, Little Bustard, Eurasian Thick-Knee, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Montagu's Harrier, Calandra Lark, Tawny Pipit, European Roller, Hoopoe, and Great Spotted Cuckoo**. Early in the afternoon we will visit picturesque Trujillo with its large breeding colony of **Lesser Kestrels** and perhaps a **Pallid Swift** or two. From here we complete the day's birding with further observations of steppe birds in the area east of Trujillo. A few strategic stops along very quiet country roads south of the National Park should enable us to locate birds like **Rock Sparrow, Hawfinch, Golden Oriole, Melodious Warbler, Rufous Nightingale, and Western Orphean Warbler**. Our third and final night near Monfragüe.
- 4 **Drive to Belchite** Before leaving this wonderful area we will make a short stop at one of the most interesting wetland sites in Extremadura, where experience has taught us we can hope to see birds such as **Little Bittern, Common Kingfisher, Penduline Tit, Savi's Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Purple Gallinule**, and perhaps even a **Spoonbill** or two. Then it will be time to make our way to our next base. Passing Madrid, our route takes us through **Fuendetodos**, the artist **Goya's birthplace**. A short cultural visit here will give us a welcome opportunity to stretch our legs and perhaps enrich our spirit! Depending on the time available to us we can also visit the ruins of the old town of Belchite (destroyed in the Spanish Civil War), or make a short detour to look for **Bonelli's Eagle**. Overnight near Belchite Steppes.
- 5 **Belchite Steppes and River Ebro**



Belchite Steppes - - *Steve West*

Today we will bird the arid Ebro Valley steppes, cereal plains, and little mesetas of the plains. Our day will begin pre-dawn with a visit to Belchite. This impressive steppe area is a spectacle at sunrise, complete with the mysterious song of **Dupont's Lark** creating a unique magical ambience. This area boasts the highest population density of the rare **Dupont's Lark** in Spain. After breakfast we will venture further into the steppes where we can see **Pin-tailed** and **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** in good numbers. Among the other birds that we are likely to see are **Tawny Pipit, Black-eared Wheatear, Eurasian Thick-Knee, Little Owl, Greater and Lesser Short-toed Lark, Thekla Lark, and Calandra Lark**. Later in the day we will picnic and walk around a nearby meander in the grand River Ebro to observe a highly contrasting array of birds including **Common Kingfisher, Purple Heron, Cetti's Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Penduline Tit, Eurasian Wryneck, and Iberian Green Woodpecker**. Migrants are usually present in good numbers at this time of year as well. The afternoon will be spent on an easy-going drive through attractive and solitary landscapes, punctuated with stops to look for birds like **Black Wheatear, Rock Sparrow, Spectacled Warbler, and Hobby**. A stunning little gorge is also worth visiting, not only for its Neolithic cave paintings, but also for the chance of seeing a **Spanish Ibex** or two. Our second night near Belchite Steppes.

- 6 **The Pyrenees: Hecho Valley and Roncal Valley** Driving past Huesca, our first stop could well be a local golf course where we will look for migrants such as **Pied Flycatcher**, **Common Redstart**, **Whinchat**, and **Wryneck**. From here we drive through magnificent high mountain scenery into the Pyrenees. Next on the agenda is the valley of Hecho, formed by the River Sobordan basin, where it turns into a deep gorge at the 'Boca del Infierno', one of the most beautiful ravines in the Pyrenees. Most outstanding here are rock-loving birds such as the emblematic **Wallcreeper**, and the many raptors that occupy the rock cliffs. There are good opportunities to find alpine and woodland birds including **Eurasian Treecreeper**, **Goldcrest**, **Firecrest**, **Red Crossbill**, **Citril Finch**, **Song Thrush**, and **Spotted Flycatcher**. This region holds a healthy population of **Lammergeier** (also known as Bearded Vulture) and **Egyptian Vulture**, and mammals including **Marmots** and **Chamois**. The last stretch of the day's journey takes us westward past beautiful river valleys, with high mountain scenery looming above us. Overnight in Roncal Valley.
- 7 **Birding in the High Pyrenees** From our base in an unspoiled Pyrenean Valley we'll visit narrow, winding valleys with large wooded masses of pine and beech. In the open areas we find cultivated fields or grazing lands and subalpine meadows above 1500 meters. This is the domain of many alpine and woodland birds such as **Black Woodpecker**, **Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush**, **Skylark**, **Crested Tit**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Rock Bunting**, **Yellowhammer**, and **Marsh Tit**. We will search the mature patches of forest for the **White-backed Woodpecker**, a rare and localized breeding bird in Spain, and we could also see **Eurasian Bullfinch**, **White-throated Dipper**, and **Grey Wagtail** on the local river. If the weather permits, an after dinner stroll to search for the local **Tawny Owls** could be rewarding. Our second night in the Roncal Valley.
- 8 **Birding in the High Pyrenees II** We will be coming out of the woods today to bird the bucolic valleys and high mountain slopes. In addition to the raptors we could see, including the magnificent **Lammergeier**, we are also likely to cross the French border in search of **Ring Ouzel**, **Alpine Chough**, **Citril Finch**, **Water Pipit**, and **Alpine Accentor**. Later in the afternoon we will drive further down the valley, past gliding **Red Kites**, to visit a spot where we actually saw the **Lammergeier** breaking bones on our 2010 tour! Our third night in the Roncal Valley.
- 9 **Drive to Sierra de Guara, visiting Loarre Castle** Today we descend from the lofty Pyrenees to make our way to Sierra de Guara Natural Park. First we pass the spectacular Mallos de Riglos with their thriving vulture colonies. Then make a small detour to visit the imposing Loarre Castle and its surroundings, taking in the birdlife of this magnificent setting, with species such as **Rock Petronia**, **Alpine Swift**, **Red-billed Chough**, **Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush**, **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Wood Lark**, and raptors. From here we drive past Huesca, visiting hilltop ruins on the edge of town to look for a different array of birds including **Spectacled Warbler**, **Black-eared Wheatear**, **Black Wheatear**, and **Thekla Lark**, among others. The next stage of our route will take us along winding roads and past spectacular limestone ravines that will lead us into the heart of the remote Sierra de Guara. Additional stops en route could reveal **Subalpine Warbler** and **Bonelli's Warbler** in the Holm Oaks that dominate this area and, with a little luck, we can also witness several **Lammergeiers** near a feeding area en route to our hotel. Overnight in Bierge.

10 **From the Pre-Pyrenees to the Plains** In the olive groves and fields of the Sierra de Guara we can discover a good array of birds including **Golden Oriole**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, and **Subalpine**, **Western Orphean**, **Western Bonelli's**, and **Garden Warblers**. The ravines of the rivers Flumen and Mascún are regarded as the most rugged and inaccessible of all in the pre-Pyrenean ranges and offer spectacular rock formations with abundant birdlife. We also have the option of a visit to the stunning medieval walled town of Alquézar, perfectly restored and overlooking a steep ravine with numerous birding opportunities. Throughout the area raptors are much in evidence, mainly **Short-toed** and **Golden Eagles**, **Lammergeier**, **Griffon Vulture**, and **Egyptian Vulture**. Additionally, **Cirl Bunting**, **Rock Bunting**, and **Ortolan Bunting** will be among our target birds. Then we bid farewell to these remote Pre-Pyrenees and head towards the city of Lleida. Before we get there, however, we will visit dryland areas in the hope of seeing species such as **Dartford Warbler**, **Lesser Kestrel**, and **Great Spotted Cuckoo**, and then a pool thriving with birdlife: **Eared Grebe**, **Little Grebe**, **Great Crested Grebe**, **Red Crested Pochard**, **Western Marsh Harrier**, and much more. Then, as we pass through the plains around the city of Lleida, we will rely on our guide's excellent local knowledge to locate any interesting species that we may not yet have seen, either in the surrounding drylands, riverside woodland, or at little known inland wetlands. Overnight south of Lleida.

11 **Ebro Delta via plains of Lleida** A pre-breakfast excursion to a nearby wetland could enable us to set eyes on some new species, including **Water Rail**, **Moustached Warbler**, **Reed Bunting**, **Bearded Reedling**, and **Sardinian Warbler**. Our next stop will be the Catalan coast and a novelty for the Bird Treks Spain Tour, a 4-hour sea watching excursion on board a large, comfortable vessel. We will sail out to sea in search of **Balearic**, **Mediterranean**, and **Cory's Shearwaters**, **Storm Petrel**, **Great**, **Arctic**, and **Pomarine Skuas (Jaegers)**, **Northern Gannet**, **Mediterranean Gull**, and whatever else crosses our wake! Once back on land we will make our way to the shores of the Ebro Delta, perhaps with time to spare to visit the northern bay, where we'll be suddenly immersed in the abundant birdlife of the delta. Among the birds we should see during this fast-paced introduction are **Audouin's Gull**, **Slender-billed Gull**, **Mediterranean Gull**, **Caspian Tern**, **Little Tern**, **Gull-billed Tern**, **Whiskered Tern**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, and a large variety of waders, herons, and other water birds. Overnight in Ebro Delta.



Seventy percent of the world's **Audouin's Gull** population breeds in the Ebro Delta.

Steve West, Spain tour leader

[Days 12 and 13 are on page 6]

- 12 **Birding in the Ebro Delta** Today we will have a full day of birding the Ebro Delta to the south of the River Ebro. This area of littoral wetlands is the third most important in the western Mediterranean after La Camargue in France and ‘las marismas del Guadalquivir’ (Coto de Doñana) in southern Spain. It is an alluvial plain of about 32,000 hectares that reaches 20 km into the sea. A large part of this area is cultivated, with a predominance of rice fields (20,000 hectares). The rice fields are of great importance as a feeding area for many **waterbirds**, and there are vast beaches and wide expanses of sand, bays, flood marshes, salt plains, small littoral lakes, and riverside woods, with a rich, diverse birdlife. Eleven species of **gulls** and **terns** regularly nest here. This is the only breeding location for **Sandwich Tern** on the entire Iberian Peninsula, and it contains the most important breeding colony of **Audouin's Gull** in the world. In recent years a large population of **Greater Flamingos** has been nesting in this area, and the Delta has become its third most important breeding site in the western Mediterranean. Other interesting birds that we can see here are **Squacco Heron**, **Little Bittern**, **Great Egret**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Common Shelduck**, **Red-crested Pochard**, **Purple Swamphen**, **Water Rail**, **Eurasian Oystercatcher**, **Collared Pratincole**, **Kentish (Snowy) Plover**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Ruff**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Great Reed-Warbler**, **Savi's Warbler**, and **Reed Bunting**. Second night in Ebro Delta.
- 13 **Barcelona Airport** Taking leave of the Ebro Delta this morning, we drive for approximately two hours to Barcelona Airport and the end of an incredible adventure through some of the most beautiful and productive areas of Spain.

Click the following link for a **map of the tour route**:

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=117812928873209532533.000460793be31a6298172&ll=42.561173,-0.65918&spn=6.0601,14.282227&z=7>



Your tour includes the snow-capped **Pyrenees**. - - *Steve West*

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Leaders This incredible tour will be led by **Steve West**. Steve has an intimate knowledge of Spain's birds and where to find them. He will give you a spectacular experience. **Bob Schutsky**, the owner of Bird Treks, will be the second tour leader, should the number of participants warrant.

Price Approximately \$3695 per person based upon double occupancy, with a minimum of five participants. Single accommodations are available for an extra charge of approximately \$695. If a single room is not available at a particular location, that portion of your extra payment will be refunded to you.

Includes Expert guide service, lodging for twelve nights, **ALL meals** beginning with lunch on Day 1, all entrance fees, and all ground transportation within Spain. **ALL tips** are also included in the tour fee, except for anything extra that you may wish to give to your tour leaders and boat captain.

Does not include cost of airfare to Madrid and home from Barcelona. BIRD TREKS will, upon request, help you obtain the best airfare. Also not included are the costs of alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature, although local wine is available free at all dinners.

Deposit A \$900 deposit will assure your reservation on the tour. The balance is payable 25 January 2010. Spain is a popular and spectacular birding destination. Send your deposit soon to insure your reservation and to obtain the best possible airfare.

Extra Services We offer the services of our exclusive BIRD TREKS travel agent, **Lori Heathcote**, in arranging your air travel. Lori has 25 years of experience in the travel industry and is a veteran birder. Contact her directly at Bailey Travel, **1-800-224-5399** or e-mail her at **lori@baileytravel.com**. By dealing with Lori you have the security of a 24-hour toll-free telephone number in case of any travel emergency. She can also assist you with all pre- and post-tour travel plans. There may be a fee for these services.

Refund & Cancellation Policy With written notice more than 90 days prior to the first day of the tour, 100% of your deposit will be refunded, minus a \$100 service fee. With 30-90 days notice, you will receive a 50% refund of the full cost of the tour. No refund can be made with less than 30 days notice. You will receive a full refund if you provide a replacement for your spot on the tour. No partial refund can be given once a tour begins. We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment. Contact Access America at **1-800-284-8300** and mention **BIRD TREKS (ACCAM # F021096)**. You can apply from home by phone or via the ease of the Internet at **www.accessamerica.com**.

