

Report Of A Birding Trip To

Madrid Province - Spain

March 6th - March 9th 2008

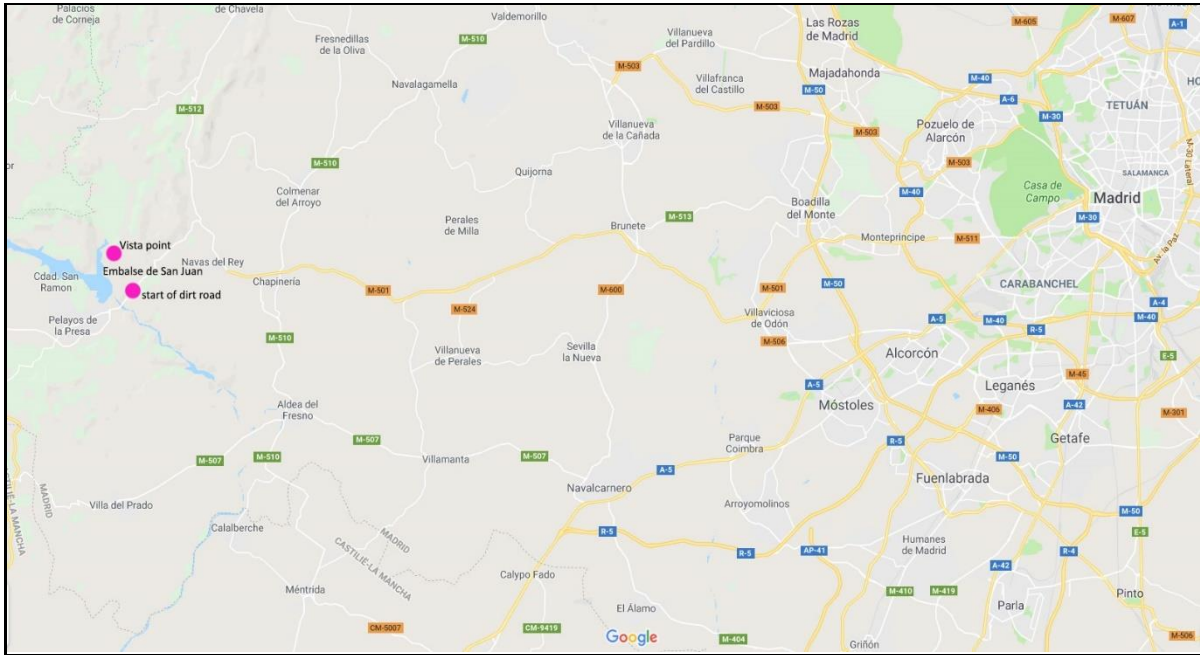
Participants:

Cor Hopman
Jan van der Laan

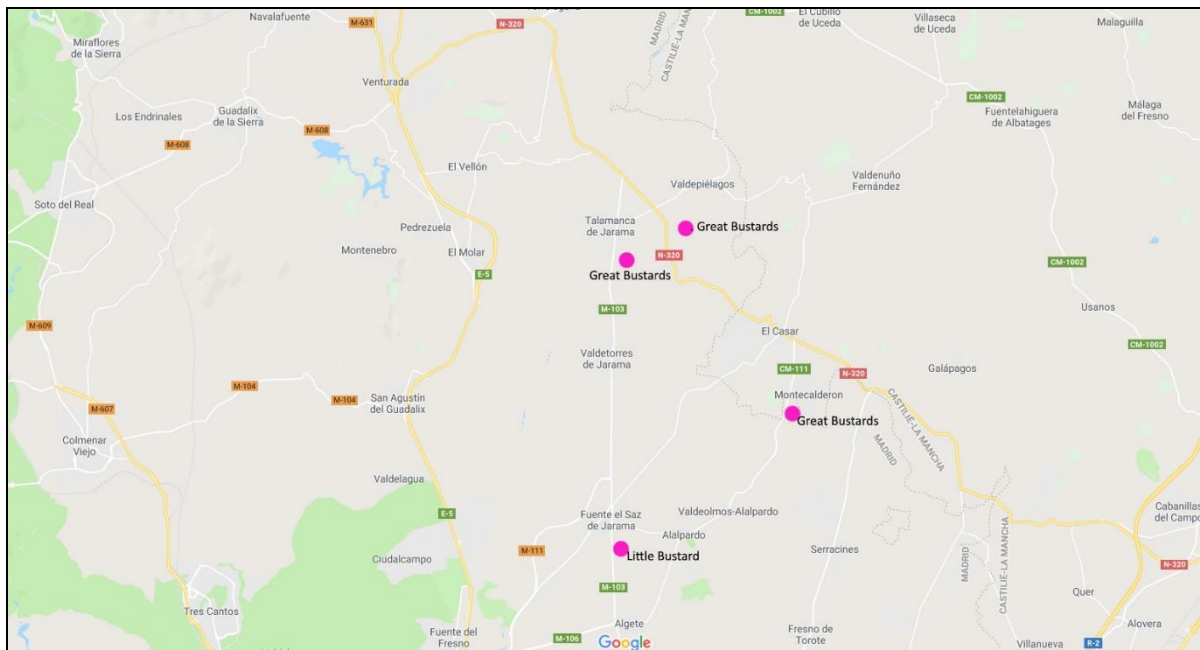


Spanish Imperial Eagle – *Aquila adalberti*, 8 March 2008, Embalse de San Juan, Madrid Province, Spain; © Jan van der Laan.

Maps



Madrid Province (west of Madrid City).



Area north-east of Madrid (Great Bustard area).

Introduction

From 6-9 March 2008, Cor Hopman and I, Jan van der Laan, visited the Madrid province in Spain. Our main goal was to find the Spanish Imperial Eagle – *Aquila adalberti* plus some Iberian specialities like Cinereous Vulture, Great Bustard, Bonelli's Eagle, Southern Grey Shrike or Thekla Lark.

Birds

In March a lot of summer visitors have not yet been returned from their winter quarters in Africa. Nice birds as Lesser Kestrel, Roller, Red-rumped Swallow amongst others will return a month later. However, our main target was the Spanish Imperial Eagle, these days a good species. I missed this species during my visit in 1983. At that time we knew only of one place, the Coto Doñana. During that 1983 visit – after returning from the Kabylie Nuthatch quest from Algeria - all tours were sold out and we could not find any eagle at the borders of the reserve. These days there are several well known places around Madrid and I found one on the internet, a place some 50 km west of Madrid along the M501. Other good places are more further into the Extremadura, like Monfragues.

Recommended Literature, Sites and Trip Reports

I used the Where to Watch Birds in Europe and Russia, which I left behind in the rental car unfortunately!

The site [Birdwatching Madrid](#) was useful for Imperial Eagle, Great Bustard and others, but navigation on this site is a little bit difficult. However, this site gave us just enough information for the best area (10 reproductive pairs) for Spanish Imperial Eagle: the reserve (ZEPA called in Spanish) Encinares del Rio Cofio-Alberche, which is roughly west of the triangle Chapineria - Navas del Rey - Robledo de Chavela (M501 and M512).

Useful trip reports can be found at www.cloudbirders.com.

Sound Recordings

There was a CD-player in the car and we had the whole series *Die Vogelstimmen Europas, Nordafrikas und Vorderasiens* by *Andreas Schulze* (2003) with us. These proved to be very useful to identify and lure Thekla Larks (no harm to any bird was done, however!).

The Species Accounts

The order and nomenclature follows [IOC World Bird List](#) - Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). 2019. IOC World Bird List (v9.2).

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following persons: Justin Janssen, Max Berlijn for providing us with information and Marieke Wiringa for picking us up from the Schiphol Airport.

Alkmaar, March 2008, updated in 2019.

If you have any remarks, questions or suggestions, please contact:

Jan van der Laan

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Itinerary

- 6 March** Departure from **Amsterdam** at 9:55 hours with flight VY 6521 (Vueling), arrival at **Barajas Airport, Madrid** at 12:20. Picked-up the rental car – Ford Focus - at Hertz. Passed through the centre of Madrid, saw the Bernabeu Stadium and the Prado Museum, before we finally arrived at the area near Navas del Rey – **Robledo de Chavela**. First birds were Rock Bunting, Griffon Vulture, Spotless Starling, Common Buzzard, Corn Bunting, Meadow Pipit, European Serin, Iberian Magpie, Barn Swallow, Northern Raven, Black Kite (the only one), Black Redstart, Red-legged Partridge and Common Kestrel. We found the area a little bit disappointing, because there were only a few sites to park the car and even fewer sites where you had a good overview of the area. Nevertheless we decided to give it another try the next day. After sunset we went looking for our hotel in **Las Rozas** and after an hour long search we found out it was between **Las Rozas** and **Las Matas** along the A6. The hotel (Gran Hotel Almenar, Jaraiz s/n, Las Rozas de Madrid, 28290) was nice and clean. We had a good dinner and went to sleep, very tired.
- 7 March** After an early rise we went to **Embalse de San Juan**, west of **Navas del Rey**. Just before San Juan is a dirt road heading north. From there we found a good vista point. We had to wait for about ten minutes when a big bird of prey appeared. A closer look revealed it was a Spanish Imperial Eagle! Half an hour later another (or the same) appeared. So less than 24 hours and our mission was accomplished. Other birds here were Iberian Green Woodpecker, Sardinian Warbler, Crag Martin, Cinereous Vulture (at least one), Griffon Vulture, Bonelli's Eagle (two adult birds), Goshawk (one), Grey and White Wagtail, European Serin, Hoopoe, Crested Tit, Coal Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Spotless Starling, Iberian Magpie, Rock Bunting, Fieldfare, Mistle Thrush, Great Spotted Woodpecker. In the afternoon we went to **Robledo de Chavela** to buy some food. After a short picnic near **Fresnedillas de Olivas** – which produced a Short-toed Eagle – we decided to drive to **El Pardo**, just north of **Madrid**. Just before **Peralejo** we discovered at least 4 Red Kites and while looking at these, we discovered a Cinereous Vulture, soaring above the road! We took several photographs and after the bird had disappeared we continued to El Pardo. Birds seen en route were Stonechat, Iberian Grey Shrike, White Stork, Corn Bunting, Great Cormorant, Eurasian Coot and Common Kestrel. At **El Pardo** we saw a two flocks of c 30 resting Griffon Vultures. Other birds were House Martin, Crested Tit, Hawfinch and Little Owl. We had dinner in a weird restaurant **El Faro**, where they put us as the only non-smoking guests in the Salón Náutico room. Later we went back to **El Rozas** to our hotel (we could find it this time without any effort!).
- 8 March** Again we went to the **Embalse de San Juan** west of Navas del Rey. After a 10 minutes wait we saw two adult Spanish Imperial Eagles calling to each other! Also two Cinereous Vultures soared overhead. Other birds were Sardinian and Dartford Warbler, Rock Bunting, European Serin, Crested Tit, Firecrest, Iberian Green Woodpecker (not seen, only calling) and lots of Griffon Vultures. After buying some food again in **Robledo de Chavela**, we had lunch at a spot between **Robledo de Chavela** and **Fresnedillas de Olivas**. The first day we had seen crested larks there, now it was time to give them a closer look. Identification on plumages features alone was difficult, so we did some play-back test: we played Thekla's Lark and Crested Lark and the birds reacted only to Thekla's Larks! Other birds there were Stonechat, Iberian Grey Shrike (one), Corn Bunting and Sparrow Hawk. Next on the program were the bustards and to get there we had to drive to an area northeast of Madrid, in the triangle **Valdetorres de Jarama**, **Fuente el Saz de Jarama** and **El Casar**. Birding here proved to be very good, we managed to find three groups of Great Bustards, with three, fourteen and c 30 birds. Also here was one only male Little Bustard - seen only from the car - Hen Harrier, Red-legged Partridge, Stone-Curlew, Green Sandpiper, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Common Kestrel and Black Redstart. After sunset we went



back to **Madrid**, were we looked for three hours around the airport for the hotel High Tech Aeropuerto (C/ Galeón 25, 28042 Madrid). Finally we delivered back the car, phoned the hotel and asked if they could pick us up. This hotel was alongside a parallel road, which was only to be reached by a strange secret route, still unknown to us. At 23:45 we went to sleep, too tired to eat or to take a drink.

9 March

We woke up at 4:45 hours. The shower produced only cold water. At 5.30 we left the hotel, took a taxi (and were charged 23 €), checked in and had some breakfast at **Barajas Airport, Madrid**. The plane was leaving on time (6:45 VY 6506). We arrived at 9:10 hours at **Schiphol, Amsterdam** and were picked up by Marieke (my girlfriend) and Bob (my son).



The Embalse de San Juan Valley, Spain, 7 March 2008; © Jan van der Laan.



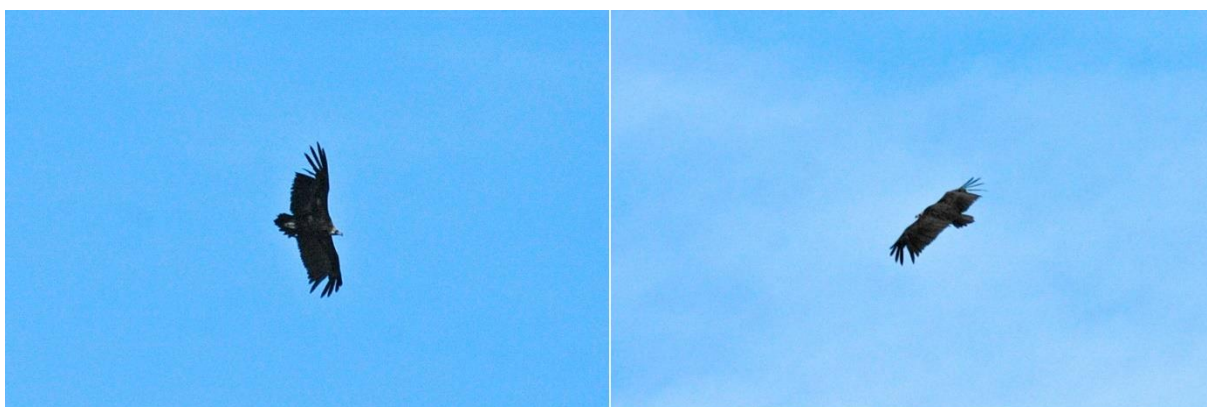
Cor en Jan in the Embalse de San Juan Valley, Spain, 7 March 2008; © Jan van der Laan/Cor Hopman.



First sighting of the Spanish Imperial Eagle, 7 March 2008, Embalse de San Juan Valley, Spain; © Jan van der Laan.



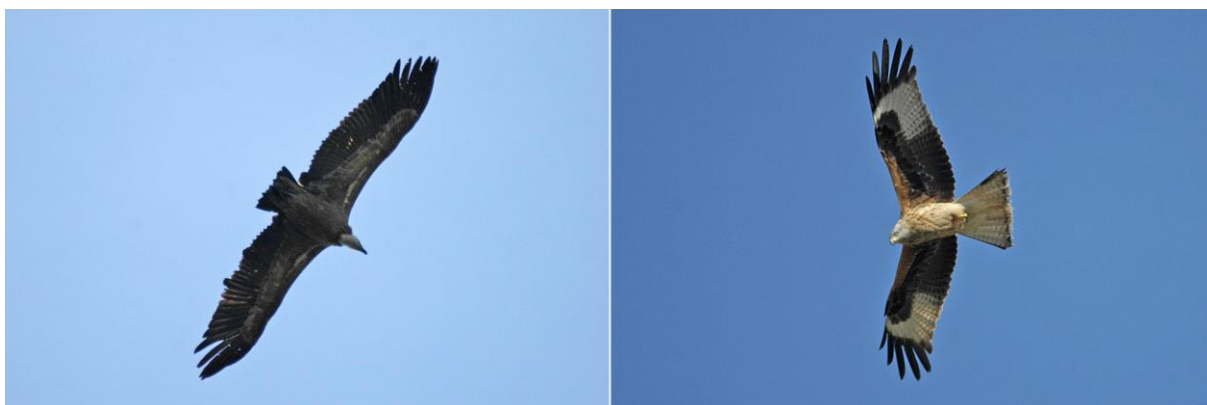
Left: Eurasian Hoopoe; right: Iberian Magpie and Spotless Starling; 7 March 2008, Embalse de San Juan Valley, Spain; © Jan van der Laan.



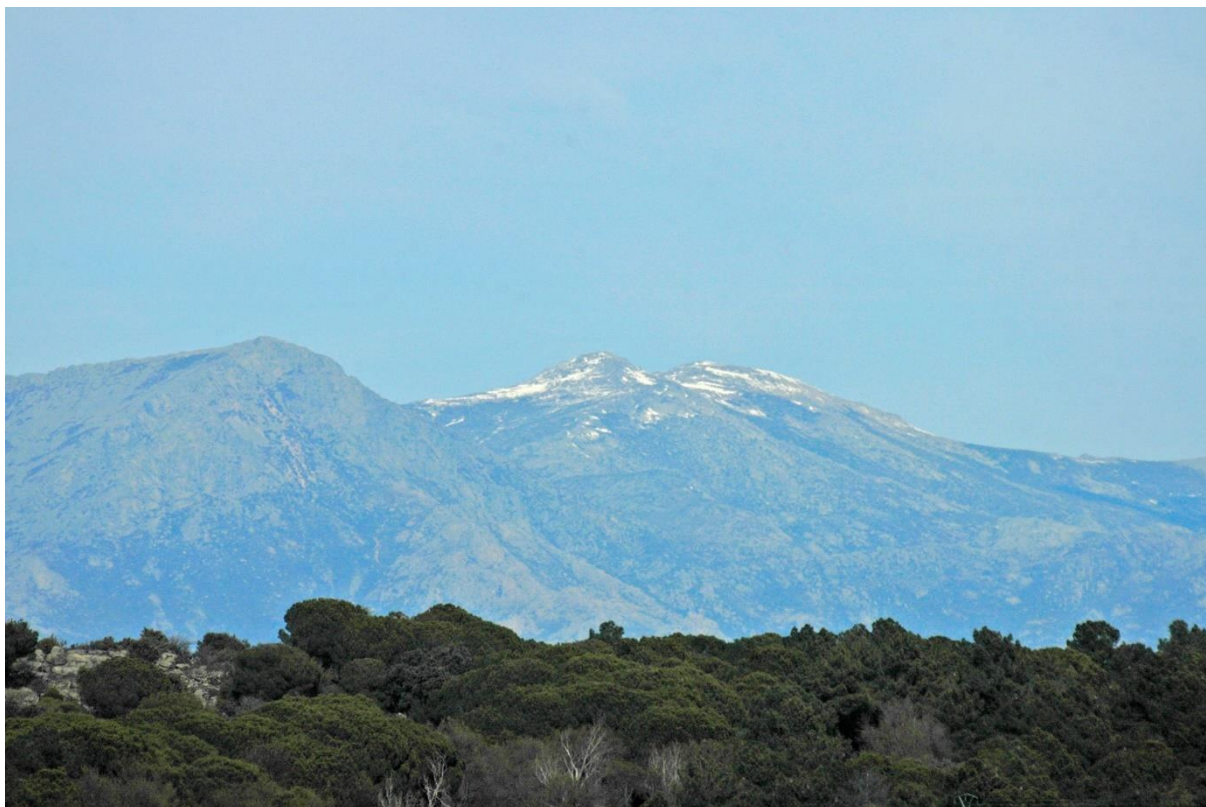
Cinereous Vulture, 7 March 2008, Peralejo, Spain; © Jan van der Laan.



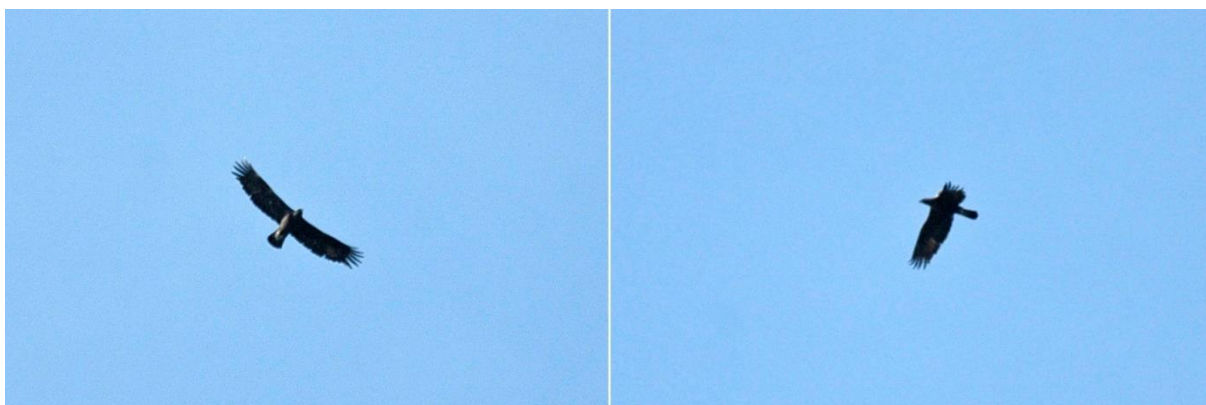
Cinereous Vulture, 7 March 2008, Peralejo, Spain; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Griffon Vulture; right: Red Kite; 7 March 2008, Peralejo, Spain; © Jan van der Laan.



Sierra de Guadarrama, north of Madrid, Spain, 7 March 2008; © Jan van der Laan.



Spanish Imperial Eagle on the second day, 8 March 2008, Embalse de San Juan Valley, Spain; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Rock Bunting, 7 March 2008, Embalse de San Juan Valley, Spain; © Jan van der Laan. Right: Iberian Grey Shrike, 8 March 2008, between Robledo de Chavela and Fresnedillas de Olivas, Spain; © Cor Hopman.



Left: Corn Bunting; right: Thekla's Lark; both between Robledo de Chavela and Fresnedillas de Olivas, Spain, 8 March 2008; © Jan van der Laan (l), Cor Hopman (r).



Eurasian Stone-Curlew, 8 March 2008, south of Fuente el Saz de Jarama, along road 103, Madrid Province, Spain; © Cor Hopman.



Great Bustards, 8 March 2008, Talamanca de Jarama, north of road 320, Madrid Province, Spain; © Cor Hopman.



Great Bustards, 8 March 2008, Talamanca de Jarama, north of road 320, Madrid Province, Spain; © Cor Hopman (l), Jan van der Laan (r).

01. **Red-legged Partridge / Rode Patrijs** - *Alectoris rufa*
 6 March 1 Navahonda.
 8 March 1 south of El Casar.
 4 east of Talamanca de Jarama.
02. **Mallard / Wilde Eend** - *Anas platyrhynchos*
 Quite common, seen daily with c 10 birds.
03. **Great Bustard / Grote Trap** - *Otis tarda*
 8 March 3 south of El Casar, east of road 111.
 14 southeast of Talamanca de Jarama, east of road 103.
 c 30 (previous 14 probably included) east of Talamanca de Jarama, north of road 320.
04. **Little Bustard / Kleine Trap** – *Tetrax tetrax*
 8 March 1 (male) south of Fuente el Saz de Jarama, along road 103.
05. **Common Wood Pigeon / Houtduif** - *Columba palumbus*
 Common and widespread, seen daily.
06. **Eurasian Collared Dove / Turkse Tortel** - *Streptopelia decaocto*
 9 March c 100 (only place where we saw it!) Fuente el Saz de Jarama.
07. **Eurasian Coot / Meerkoet** - *Fulica atra*
 7-8 March c 20 Embalse de Valmayor, along the M505 between El Escorial and Galapagar.
08. **Eurasian Stone-Curlew / Griel** - *Burhinus oediconemus*
 8 March 1 south of Fuente el Saz de Jarama, along road 103.
 1 east of Talamanca de Jarama.
09. **Northern Lapwing / Kievit** - *Vanellus vanellus*
 8 March c 100 in the triangle Valdetorres de Jarama, Fuente el Saz de Jarama and El Casar.
10. **Green Sandpiper / Witgatje** - *Tringa ochropus*
 8 March 1 in a roadside pool east of Talamanca de Jarama, just south of road 320.
11. **Black-headed Gull / Kokmeeuw** - *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
 7-8 March c 10 Embalse de Valmayor, along the M505 between El Escorial and Galapagar.
12. **Lesser Black-backed Gull / Kleine Mantelmeeuw** - *Larus fuscus*
 8 March c 250 (several flocks in v-formation passing) El Pardo.
13. **White Stork / Ooievaar** - *Ciconia ciconia*
 Rather common, seen daily with 10-20 birds; several were already nesting or breeding.

14. **Great Cormorant / Aalscholver** – *Phalacrocorax carbo*
 7 March c 10 Embalse de Valmayor, along the M505 between El Escorial and Galapagar.
 8 March c 5 Embalse de Valmayor, along the M505 between El Escorial and Galapagar.
15. **Western Cattle Egret / Koereiger** – *Bubulcus ibis*
 8 March 5 south of El Casar.
 c 20 east of Talamanca de Jarama.
16. **Grey Heron / Blauwe Reiger** - *Ardea cinerea*
 7 March 2 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
 8 March 1 Valdetorres de Jarama (along road 103).
17. **Griffon Vulture / Vale Gier** - *Gyps fulvus*
 Seen daily with c 100 birds each day. At El Pardo we saw two flocks of c 30 birds resting in the trees.
18. **Cinereous Vulture / Monniksgier** - *Aegypius monachus*
 7 March 1 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
 1 between Fresnedillas and Pajares, along road 510.
 8 March 2 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
 Best markers from a distance when seen in head-on sunlight are the light-coloured legs.
19. **Short-toed Snake Eagle / Slangenarend** - *Circaetus gallicus*
 7 March 1 (seen twice) between Robledo de Chavela and Fresnedillas.
20. **SPANISH IMPERIAL EAGLE / SPAANSE KEIZERAREND** - *Aquila adalberti*
 7 March 2 (1 bird seen twice) adult seen soaring in a valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
 8 March 2 adults seen and calling to each other (a low wuk-wuk), valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey. Highlight of the holiday!
21. **Bonelli's Eagle / Havikarend** - *Aquila fasciata*
 7 March 2 adults soaring in a valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
22. **Eurasian Sparrowhawk / Sperwer** - *Accipiter nisus*
 We saw one on 7 or 8 March, but we did not take notes where exactly and when, sorry!
23. **Northern Goshawk / Havik** - *Accipiter gentilis*
 7 March 1 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
24. **Hen Harrier / Blauwe Kiekendief** - *Circus cyaneus*
 8 March c 10 In the triangle Talamanca de Jarama, Fuente el Saz de Jarama and El Casar.

25. **Red Kite / Rode Wouw** - *Milvus milvus*
 7 March 3-4 between Fresnedillas and Pajares, along road 510.
 8 March 3 (same as 7 March) between Fresnedillas and Pajares, along road 510.
26. **Black Kite / Zwarte Wouw** - *Milvus migrans*
 6 March 1 along the M40 west of Madrid.
27. **Common Buzzard / Buizerd** - *Buteo buteo*
 Quite common, seen daily with c 10 birds.
28. **Little Owl / Steenuil** - *Athene noctua*
 8 March 1 El Pardo.
29. **Eurasian Hoopoe / Hop** - *Upupa epops*
 7 March 2 (1 seen, 1 heard calling) valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
30. **Great Spotted Woodpecker / Grote Bonte Specht** - *Dendrocopos major*
 7 March c 3 (heard calling) valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
 1 (drumming in a telegraph pole) road 562.
31. **IBERIAN GREEN WOODPECKER / IBERISCHE GROENE SPECHT** - *Picus sharpei*
 7-8 March c 5 (heard calling) valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
 Split from European Green Woodpecker *P. viridis* (Pons et al. 2011, Perktas et al. 2011).
32. **Common Kestrel / Torenvalk** - *Falco tinnunculus*
 Scarce, seen daily with only 1-3 birds.
33. **IBERIAN GREY SHRIKE / ZUIDELIJKE KLAPEKSTER** - *Lanius meridionalis*
 7 March 1 along the M505 between Galapagar and Las Rozas.
 8 March 1 between Robledo de Chavela and Fresnedillos.
34. **Eurasian Jay / Gaai** - *Garrulus glandarius*
 7 March c 5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
35. **IBERIAN MAGPIE / BLAUWE EKSTER** - *Cyanopica cooki*
 Common with flocks up to 30-50 along roadsides and in villages.
36. **Eurasian Magpie / Ekster** - *Pica pica*
 Common to abundant along roadsides and in villages.
37. **Western Jackdaw / Kauw** - *Corvus monedula*
 7 March c 50 El Pardo.

38. **Carrion Crow / Zwarte Kraai** - *Corvus corone*
7 March c 5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
39. **Northern Raven / Raaf** - *Corvus corax*
Common, seen daily in the mountainous areas, with up to 20 birds each day.
40. **Coal Tit / Zwarte Mees** - *Parus ater*
7-8 March c 5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
41. **European Crested Tit / Kuifmees** - *Lophophanes cristatus*
7 March c 10 (most common tit here) valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
 c 5 El Pardo.
8 March c 10 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
42. **Eurasian Blue Tit / Pimpelmees** - *Cyanistes caeruleus*
Commonly seen in all forested areas and villages.
43. **Great Tit / Koolmees** - *Parus major*
Commonly seen – but less common than Crested or Blue Tit - in all forested areas and villages.
44. **Woodlark / Boomleeuwerik** – *Lullula arborea*
6 March 2 Navahonda.
7-8 March c 8 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
45. **Thekla's Lark / Thekla Leeuwerik** - *Galerida theklae*
6 March 3-4 between Robledo de Chavela and Fresnedillos.
8 March c 10 between Robledo de Chavela and Fresnedillos.
We have seen several 'crested' larks along the road, but stopping along the road is very dangerous or simply impossible. The only Thekla's Larks we were sure of were these birds which did the right calls and songs.
46. **Barn Swallow / Boerenwaluw** - *Hirundo rustica*
Seen regularly, with 5-10 birds each day.
47. **Eurasian Crag Martin / Rotszwaluw** - *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*
7 March 5 at a bridge on northern site of the Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
8 March 3 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
48. **Common House Martin / Huiszwaluw** - *Delichon urbica*
8 March 7 El Pardo.
49. **Long-tailed Tit / Staartmees** - *Aegithalos caudatus*
7-8 March c 5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.

50. **Dartford Warbler / Provençaalse Grasmus** - *Sylvia undata*
8 March 4 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
51. **Sardinian Warbler / Kleine Zwartkop** - *Sylvia melanocephala*
7-8 March 3-5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
52. **Common Firecrest / Vuurgoudhaan** - *Regulus ignicapilla*
8 March 3-4 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
53. **Eurasian Wren / Winterkoninkje** - *Troglodytes troglodytes*
6 March 1 Navahonda.
7-8 March c 5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey
54. **Eurasian Nuthatch / Boomklever** - *Sitta europaea*
7 March c 10 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
 1 El Pardo.
8 March c 5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
55. **Short-toed Treecreeper / Boomkruiper** - *Certhia brachydactyla*
7-8 March c 5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
56. **Spotless Starling / Zwarte Spreeuw** - *Sturnus unicolor*
Common to abundant along roadsides and in villages.
57. **Common Blackbird / Merel** - *Turdus merula*
Common with c 25-50 seen daily.
58. **Fieldfare / Kramsvogel** - *Turdus pilaris*
6 March c 10 west of Navahonda
7 March c 5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
59. **Mistle Thrush / Grote Lijster** - *Turdus viscivorus*
7 March 2 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
60. **European Robin / Roodborst** - *Erithacus rubecula*
Seen (mostly heard) regularly in all forested areas and villages.
61. **Black Redstart / Zwarte Roodstaart** - *Phoenicurus ochruros*
6 March 3 west of Navahonda
7 March c 5 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
8 March 1 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.

62. **European Stonechat / Roodborsttapuit** - *Saxicola rubicola*
Seen regularly along roadsides of 512, 510 and 600 and c 5 birds seen along the dirt road east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
63. **House Sparrow / Huismus** - *Passer domesticus*
Common and widespread along all roadsides, towns and villages.
64. **Grey Wagtail / Grote Gele Kwikstaart** - *Motacilla cinerea*
7 March 2 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
65. **White Wagtail / Witte Kwikstaart** - *Motacilla alba*
Common with c 10-20 seen daily.
66. **Meadow Pipit / Graspieper** - *Anthus pratensis*
6 March 1 Navahonda.
7 March 1 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
67. **Common Chaffinch / Vink** - *Fringilla coelebs*
7-8 March c 20 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
68. **Hawfinch / Appelvink** - *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
7 March 1 El Pardo.
69. **European Goldfinch / Putter** - *Carduelis carduelis*
Rather common in forested areas and villages, with up to 20 birds seen each day.
70. **European Serin / Europese Kanarie** - *Serinus serinus*
Common and widespread in all forested areas and villages.
71. **Eurasian Siskin / Sijs** - *Spinus spinus*
7 March 2 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.
72. **Corn Bunting / Grauwe Gors** - *Emberiza calandra*
Common and widespread along all roadsides.
73. **Rock Bunting / Grije Gors** - *Emberiza cia*
6 March 1 c 10 km south of Robledo de Chavela.
7-8 March 2 valley east of Embalse de San Juan, west of Navas del Rey.