

Birding Big Day around the Route of 100 Birds (2017.04.25)

The Andalusia Bird Society Malaga Team meets again for a very profitable Big Day.

Click here for the complete list of 111 species observed:

<http://www.birdaytrip.es/blog/item/673-birding-big-day-around-the-route-of-100-birds-costa-del-sol-andalucia-southern-spain-2017-04-25>

Despite we still need a lot more rain in the region before summer, the countryside is looking great and birds are openly showing up.

Our first tick on the list was a Blackbird singing at the Plaza mayor car park where Mick, Barbara, Derek and I met at 5:30 for an early start at Montes de Malaga. This time we did not have to wait for the hooting of the Tawny Owl there in the hills as we could see one of them jumping from the road to a pine tree on our way up. Other night singers were Scops Owl, Nightingale and Woodlark.

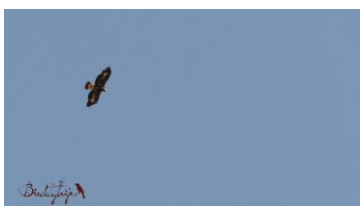
The break of dawn was spectacular, full of calls and songs, and we could identify most of the typical forest birds with only few exceptions. But the day was very promising and we were sure we will not miss them at the end.

Next stage was El Torcal. There are no words to describe this site at this time of year. After spotting our first W. Orphean Warbler of the day, Derek found a young Golden Eagle flying in and out of a close ridge until it finally flew over us for the most exciting moment of the day. After that, the visit left most of the targets like Melodious, Subalpine, Bonelli's and Spectacled Warblers, Rock Sparrow, Rock Bunting, Blue Rock Thrush, Black and Black-eared Wheatears, Thekla Lark and Griffon Vultures.

The Fuente de Piedra Lake is the best indicator of the rainfall shortage. Nevertheless, life goes on there and both Greater, and Lesser!, Flamingos, and migrating waders get the necessary resources for breeding and travelling. Curlew Sandpipers, Dunlins and Little Stints were looking gorgeous in their almost summer plumages. Black and Whiskered Terns were also stopping over the Laguneto, where we could watch Avocets, Black-winged Stilts, Red-crested Pochards, White-headed Ducks, Marsh Harrier, Great Reed Warbler and the last Shovelers and Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

Everything was going very well and we were very close to the 100 birds target when we went across the farmlands. A few more species, including my first Turtle Dove of the season came out until we were only two species to go. Then, a very close male Little Bustard showed up in a field full of Calandra Larks that rounded up our list to 100.

The list was completed in the farmlands and the Valley of the Guadalhorce (we did not visit the mouth of the river this time!) with eleven more species, including great views of Short-toed Lark, Montagu's Harrier, Spanish Sparrow and Alpine Swift.



Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)



Geropogon hybridus



Melodious Warbler (*Hippolais polyglotta*)



Rock Bunting (*Emberiza cia*)



Yellow Ophrys (*Ophrys lutea*)



Hedgehog Broom (*Erinacea anthyllis*)



Thekla Lark (*Galerida theklae*)



Curlew Sandpipers (*Calidris ferruginea*)



Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)



Whiskered Tern (top, *Chlidonias hybrida*) & Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)



Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*)



Gull-billed Terns (*Gelochelidos nilotica*)



Little Stint (bottom, *Calidris minuta*) & Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)



Dunlin (bottom, *Calidris alpina*) & Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)



Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)



Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)



Little Bustard (*Tetrax tetrax*)



Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*)