

Birds Seen On A Six day Trip To Spain Flying Into France  
From 20/3/03 to 25/3/03 – By Derek Marsh

Day1, 20/3

The group on our trip consisted of 3 people: myself, Adrian and Mike. Another group from Suffolk were also on the same flight and birding the same area, this enabled us to text info to each other.

Arrived Biarritz 17.50, picked up hire car then drove to Zaragoza that took about 3.5 to 4.0 hours. We eventually found a hotel at a small town called Pino de Ebro at a cost of 15 euros each for the night.

Day 2 21/3

Left the hotel at 06.30 and headed for El Planeron for Dupont's Lark. I saw a Little Owl on route but the other two missed it. We birded what we thought was the El Planeron reserve but later on into the trip we discovered we were in the wrong place about 9kms south of it. The road had been resurfaced and the sign marking the reserve had vanished. However the area was good and we saw a good number of species. In the afternoon we went to the ruins of the old town of Belchite to see Black Wheatear, then back to the wrong place for Dupont's Lark, we saw a Flock of 30 Calandra Larks and at dusk heard 3 Dupont's. We stayed the night near the new town of Belchite. The staff and the locals were very friendly. Price paid for two rooms worked out at 15 euro's each.

Day 3 22/3

First thing we birded the wrong area again for Dupont's Lark and only heard 1, singing. At 10.00 we decided to head to Loporzano near Huesca for Wallcreeper having seen one there last year. It took us about 1.5 hours to get there. We searched the gorge for about 2 hours but saw no sign of Wallcreeper, but had very good views of a Golden Eagle, good numbers of Griffin Vultures and up to 4 Egyptian Vultures. We then drove down to the bottom of the Valley to Embalse de Vadiello. Here we saw a Bonelli's Eagle, 200+ Griffins and up to 4 more Egyptian Vultures. Late afternoon we drove to Huesca in search of an hotel and saw a nice flock of 30 Chough on route, booked into hotel near Huesca where our accommodation cost 32 euro's each. There was a couple of hour's daylight left so Mike and I went out again. Adrian went to bed for a nap. Saw a Rock Sparrow whilst driving. At dusk tried a couple of places for Eagle Owl. 2 enormous dogs guarded the first place we went to, so we went to Loporzano and had no joy there. Went back to the hotel for a very nice meal.

Day 4 23/3

Had breakfast today. Left the hotel about 08.10 and went to Monasterio San Jaun de la Penda near Jaca for Citril Finch. No sign of any so we went to Gabartito, a mountain cross-country ski resort along the Hencho Valley. Matthew a birder in the other party had sent us a text a day earlier to inform us he had seen them there. This was a very lovely area of alpine meadows and pine woods, we had excellent views of a pair of Citril Finch's collecting nesting material and in total saw 18. We stayed here and the Hencho Valley for the rest of the day. That night we stayed in the Hotel Aragon 11kms west of Jaca along N240, total cost for the 3 of us, 88.41, Euros including a 3-course meal, beers and wine.

Day5 24/3

Had an early breakfast and went to Oreol near Jaca to look for Black Woodpecker. We heard 2 but had no luck seeing them, although this was a very good area with lots of birds around. Later that day we received a text from Matthew to say he had seen 3 Dupont's Larks at El Planeron. I persuaded Mike and Adrian we should drive South back to El Planeron and look for them in the right place, on route we had very good views of Rock Sparrow on the old Citadel Jaca. When we got to El Planeron we still struggled to find the reserve. Matthew said it was 4kms n/e of Codo, in the end I asked a local farmer and followed him and Adrian there in his van. It was 9kms n/e of Codo. That evening we heard none singing and felt a little demoralised, however we cheered up a little when 2 Black-bellied Sandgrouse flew over. That night we stayed in the same hotel near the new town of Belchite. The waiter gave us a coin wallet and a free bottle of wine.

Day 6, 25/3

Made a very early start to El Planeron 05.45, it was still dark when we arrived. The first birds we heard singing were Dupont's Larks. We heard a total of about 10 of them and when it got light we saw at least 4 in flight plus another 2 Black-bellied Sandgrouse, also several Calandra and Short-toed Larks. We left the reserve at 09.00 and headed for Biarritz, arriving at approximately 12.30, flying back to the UK at 17.00. Arrived back in Stansted at 18.00.

Distance Covered 1734kms=1077miles

Costs of flights £46.17p

Cost of car hire £172. 00p

Cormorant	3 Embalse de Vadiello.	22/3
Grey Heron	Odd bird seen in the Codo area.	21/3
White Stork	Common along N11, around Osera and along E7 between Zaragoza and Huesca.	
Mallard	Up to 4 birds present about 2kms n/w of Codo 21-22/3	
Black Kite	Very common especially along the Hencho Valley, but seen nearly all area's visited	
Red Kite	Good numbers seen on the road to San Juan de la Penda.	23/3
Egyptian Vulture	4+Embalse de Vadiello 22/3, 4+ Gabardito 23/3, odd bird seen most days.	
Griffin Vulture	200+Embalse de Vadiello 22/3, very common seen daily.	
Short-toed Eagle	2 in the Hencho Valley.	23/3
Marsh Harrier	1, near Codo.	21/3
Hen Harrier	2 birds present about 2kms n/w of Codo 21-22/3	

Sparrowhawk	1, Gabardito 23/3.	
Buzzard	1, between Jaca and Puente la Reina de Jaca .	23/3
Golden Eagle	1, Embalse de Vadiello.	22/3
Bonelli's Eagle	1, Embalse de Vadiello.	22/3
Lesser Kestrel	5+ near El Planeron.	24/3
Kestrel	1, on route to airport	25/3
Red-legged Partridge	Common around Codo and El Planeron seen on most visits many heard.	
Quail	2 birds calling about 2kms n/w of Codo	22/3
Moorhen	1, bird present about 2kms n/w of Codo 21-22/3	
Stone Curlew	1, bird present about 2kms n/w of Codo.	21/3
Yellow-legged Gull	1, on route to airport	25/3
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	2 El Planeron 24/3 and 2 there 25/3	
Rock Dove	Very common along gorge Embalse de Vadiello.	22/3
Woodpigeon	Odd bird seen most days, quite common at Oroel, 24/3.	
Collared Dove	Common seen daily.	
Cuckoo	1, calling about 2kms n/w of Codo	22/3
Little Owl	1, between Quinto and Codo.	21/3
Hoopoe	Up to 4 birds present about 2kms n/w of Codo 21-22/3	
Black Woodpecker	2 heard calling Oroel.	24/3
Great Spotted Woodpecker	A few calling Monasterio San Jaun de la Penda, 23/4, also 2 seen and several heard calling and drumming Oroel, 24/3.	
Dupont's Lark	3, birds singing late evening about 2kms n/w of Codo. 10+ singing early morning El Planeron, 25/3 and 4 seen there in flight 25/3.	
Lesser Short-toed Lark	Common in all suitable habitats in the Codo and El Planeron area seen on all visits.	
Calandra Lark	Common in all suitable habitats in the Codo and El Planeron area seen on all visits, a flock of 30 + seen in plain about 7kms west of Codo 21/3.	
Crested Lark	Common in all suitable habitats in the Codo and El Planeron area seen on all visits, often difficult to separate From Thekla when not singing, seen and heard daily elsewhere.	
Thekla Lark	Common in all suitable habitats in the Codo and El Planeron area seen on all visits.	
Skylark	A few birds present in suitable habitats in the Codo and El Planeron area seen on all visits, not seen or heard anywhere else.	
Crag Martin	Small numbers seen around Old Belchite 21/3, very common along gorge Embalse de Vadiello 22/3, and seen most days in suitable habitats.	

Swallow	Up to 5 seen in the Hencho Valley .	23/3
Meadow Pipit	Common in all suitable habitats in the Codo and El Planeron area seen on all visits.	
White Wagtail	Common seen daily.	
Grey Wagtail	1, seen in the Hencho Valley	23/3
Dipper	1, Briefly seen in the Hencho Valley	23/3
Wren	Surprisingly difficultly to see but heard in suitable habitats.	
Dunnock	Quite common at Oroel, several seen and heard there.	24/3
Robin	Odd bird seen in suitable habitats, also seen at Biarritz Airport. 20/3	
Black Redstart	Common seen daily.	
Stonechat	Odd bird present about 2kms n/w of Codo 21-22/3	
Black Wheatear	1, seen well around Old Belchite.	21/3
Wheatear	1, between Quinto and Codo.	24/3
Blue Rock Thrush	1, between Loporzano and Embalse de Vadiello.	22/3
Ring Ouzel	2, Monasterio San Jaun de la Penda.	23/4
Song Thrush	1, Monasterio San Jaun de la Penda.	23/4
Cetti's Warbler	Up to 4 birds calling about 2kms n/w of Codo 21-22/3	
Fan-tailed Warbler	5+ present about 2kms n/w of Codo 21-22/3	
Sardinian Warbler	A few birds present in suitable habitats seen most days.	
Blackcap	1, heard singing in Huesca –Jaca area.	
Chiffchaff	Common heard and seen Daily.	
Willow Warbler	1, bird present about 2kms n/w of Codo 21/3. 1, seen at Biarritz Airport. 25/3	
Goldcrest	Heard calling most days when visiting wooded area's	
Crested Tit	2, Monasterio San Jaun de la Penda, 23/3.	
Coal Tit	A few seen Monasterio San Jaun de la Penda, 23/3. Fairly common at Oroel, 24/3.	
Blue Tit	Common heard and seen most days.	
Great Tit	Common heard and seen most days.	
Nuthatch	2 seen Monasterio San Jaun de la Penda, 23/3. Odd bird seen Oroel, 24/3	
Short-Toed Treecreeper	Many calling Oroel and 1 seen very well there.	24/3
Southern Grey Shrike	2+ present about 9kms n/w of Codo 21/3	
Jay	1, calling Oroel.	24/3
Magpie	Common in area about 2kms n/w of Codo 21/-22/3	
Red-billed Chough	30 between Loporzano and Embalse de Vadiello, 22/3. Large numbers seen at Gabardito 23/3, Surprisingly 1, bird present near El planeron, 25/3	
Alpine Chough	A number of birds in with chough flock Gabardito	23/3

Carrion Crow	Odd bird seen in the El Planeron area, 21-22/3	
Raven	Fairly common seen and heard most days.	
Spottless Starling	Common seen daily.	
Starling	Small nubers seen around Biarritz Airport, 21-25/3	
House Sparrow	Common seen daily.	
Rock Sparrow	1, near Huesca, 23/3, 2 Jaca, 24/3.	
Chaffinch	Seen in most woodland areas.	
Serin	Small numbers seen around the village pond in Codo 21/3, odd bird seen and heard most days.	
Citril Finch	18+ Gabardito, pair seen there very well collecting nesting material off a barbed wire fence, 23/3, also at least 2 birds present at Oroel, 24/3.	
Goldfinch	Fairly common seen and heard most days.	
Linnet	Odd bird seen around the village pond in Codo 21/3, odd bird seen and heard most days.	
Cirl Bunting	1, Sta Cruz de la Seros, 23/3 1, Hencho Valley 23/3	
Corn Bunting	Common in all suitable habitats in the Codo and El Planeron area seen on all visits.	

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