



## **Spring Birding Southern Spain** **With Fernando Navarotte**

April 11-18, 2020

TO MADRID & MONFRAGUE

### **Saturday April 11** Day 1

Our spring birdwatching tour focusing on central and southern Spain begins as we meet up in Madrid. From there we will drive west for 3-4 hours, soon entering the wilds of Extremadura with rolling hills and oak forest. Extremadura lies in the southeast of Spain, bordering Portugal to the west and Andalusia to the south. It is one of the least populated and economically poorest areas of Spain, and therefore has much open space and natural diversity.

We'll grab a wonderful lunch of Spanish tapas as we scour the verdent grasslands for Montagu's Harrier and Bee-eater, and keep eyes also up with the chance to see a Black-winged Kite.

We'll arrive at our hotel, close to exciting Monfragüe National Park. This will be our base for four nights. We'll scan the pastures nearby for Cattle Egrets and White Storks dining on lizards and grasshoppers and the skies for Black Kites. Farmlands are nesting sites for Spanish Sparrows and Spotless Starlings.

### **Sunday, Monday & Tuesday April 12, 13 & 14** Days 2 - 4

#### **MONFRAGÜE & THE STEPPE GRASSLANDS OF EXTREMADURA**

The steppe grasslands of Extremadura and Monfragüe consist of dehesas, a traditional landscape mix of pastures punctuated by evergreen and oak woodlands. Pigs wander these pastures and are the source of the famous Spanish jamón or ham. Also living in this age-old landscape are Hoopoes, Woodlarks, Rock Sparrows, Woodchat Shrikes and exotic Iberian Magpies. Wildflowers abound in spring along the roads, and as we stop to admire them, we'll also listen for Sardinian Warblers and watch for Southern Grey Shrikes.

This is wonderful location for birds of prey and we'll hope to see at least a dozen different species in this area. We'll watch for Griffon Vultures, Egyptian Vulture, Black Vulture, Red and Black Kites, Peregrine Falcon and up to five eagle species: Short-toed Snake, Booted, Bonelli's, Golden and Spanish Imperial. Though rare and endangered, this area affords us a decent chance to see the rare Spanish Imperial eagle. Black Stork is also a possibility at Monfragüe, and we'll hope to find a Eurasian Eagle Owl, too. The Peñafalcon cliffs in the center of the park provide nesting sites and good viewing for several of these species.

Monfragüe's valleys, ravines, and hillsides, provide excellent habitat for small birds too. We'll look for Crag Martin, Thekla Lark, Blue Rock Thrush, secretive Dartford, Subalpine and Western Orphean Warblers, Short-toed Treecreeper, Hawfinch and Red-billed Chough. Alpine Swifts soar above and we'll keep fingers crossed that we can find the uncommon and elusive Black Wheatear, too.

In the plains that stretch to the south we will search for the Great Bustard which is easiest to see early in the mornings before the grasslands the haze of sun lights up the land. Other birds in this steppe area are Hoopoes, Stone-curlews and Calandra Larks. We'll scan for the dominant males performing remarkable displays that end with the birds shaking to expose their white feathers like a giant flower, which can be seen at great distance. Little Bustards also put on a good show during displays, exposing red necks to each other.

Rocky outcrops and meandering rivers punctuate the grasslands, making this area phenomenal for bird diversity. We'll search for Little Bittern, Night Heron, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Greater Short-toed Lark, Spectacled Warbler, Penduline Tit and Golden Oriole, among others. Spanish Sparrows are not common in Spain, but can be found locally here, sometimes in sizeable flocks.

We'll listen for the grating call of the Great Spotted Cuckoo, follow Red-rumped Swallows feeding and hope to find a Little Owl among the large rock formations that characterize Extremadura's.

As a final treat in Extremadura, we'll visit the old historic town of Trujillo with its narrow cobblestone streets. It was famous in the time of the Conquistadors. We can relax and enjoy a drink in the main piazza while we look for White Storks, Lesser Kestrels and Pallid Swifts as well as photo-worthy panoramas. Lodging for three further nights at a hotel overlooking Monfragüe National Park

### **Wednesday April 15** Day 5

#### **SOUTH TO ANDALUCIA & COTO DOÑANA NATIONAL PARK**

We leave Monfragüe in the morning and head south towards Seville, stopping to bird along the way. Then from Seville we drive west and to our second hotel in the sleepy Andalusian village of Villamanrique de la Condesa, near famous Coto Doñana National Park. We should arrive in time for some late afternoon birding in the nearby Dehesa de Abajo, a small reserve home to some of the most emblematic species in southern Spain, including the threatened Red-knobbed Coot or the elusive Marbled Duck.

### **Thursday & Friday April 16 & 17** Days 6 - 7

#### **DOÑANA NATIONAL PARK**

Doñana NP in far southern Spain at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River, is one of Europe's largest and most important bird areas, encompassing over 120,000 hectares of wetlands, pine forests and beaches. Fernando was born and raised in this area, and spent many years banding birds during migration in this region, a great advantage in finding unusual species.

Due to its large landmass, varied habitat and location, Doñana has an amazing biodiversity of both migrating and nesting species including Spoonbill, Purple Heron, Little Egret, Whiskered Tern, Collared Pratincole. There are some regional specialities such as Greater Flamingo, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis and Western Swamphen, and we'll also hope to find the rare Red-knobbed Coot, Black-necked Grebe, White-headed Duck and Marbled Duck. Vagrants are always possible here depending on weather conditions.

While in Doñana, we'll visit the Corredor Verde which affords good raptor watching; we'll look for the hunting Black-winged Kite and Booted Eagle, Europe's smallest eagle. We'll also stop to enjoy the palette of colors in the spring meadows of the Dehesa de Abajo, looking for Bee-eaters which fly low to feed on the feast of fragrant flowers. Close by are acebuche trees, wild olives that host an enormous White Stork rookery, one of the largest in Europe. Bordering the dehesa are lagoons supporting many ducks, including Red-crested Pochard, and we'll expect to see Gull-billed and Black Terns snatching insects from the air. A bit later in the day we'll welcome some shade and diversity in a pine forest and get to see the source of real wine corks when we hike through stands of Cork Oak. We'll be looking for Iberian Magpies and higher up in the canopy, Crested Tits and Firecrests. Nearby scrub is home to both Dartford and Sardinian Warblers.

En route to the José Antonio Valverde Visitors' Centre at the northern edge of the marshes we'll hope to find migrant Spectacled and Subalpine Warblers as well as Common and Great Spotted Cuckoos. In the surrounding farmlands it is possible to see all the different southern European larks: Crested Larks will be singing their aerial displays, and we'll also scan for Thekla, Calandra and both Greater and Lesser Short-toed Larks.

Spring migrants in this area include Night Herons, Hoopoe, Black-eared Wheatear and Red-rumped Swallows, and Southern Grey and Woodchat Shrikes. We'll also watch for Red Kite and the ubiquitous Black Kite, Marsh Harrier and Short-toed Snake Eagle, and hope to find the endangered Spanish Imperial Eagle, which nests in the national park.

### **Saturday April 18** Day 8

#### **COTO DOÑANA TO SEVILLE, ONWARD TRAVEL**

There should be an opportunity to enjoy some further birdwatching in and around Doñana today before we head to Seville and either to the extension or on home

*Because I, Like You, know that dialogue is better than fear*

I, Like You, Tours  
1141 Hawk Mountain Road  
Kempton, PA 19529  
EIN: 47-1632028  
Tel: +34 656 313 627  
allen@ilikeyoutours.com  
www.ilikeyoutours.com

**Price Quote: Spring Birding Southern Spain April 2020**

6-9 pax	- \$2495 per person in double/twin rooms
10-12 pax	- \$2235 per person in double/twin rooms
Single supplement	- \$275 per person

Prices subject to a maximum exchange rate of 1.20 USD = 1 EURO. Any increase beyond 1.20 at the time of payment is subject to an additional exchange fee, or reduction in services to offset exchange rate.

**Price Includes:**

- Full-time services of 1 bilingual birding guide
- Transportation by private vehicle
- 7 nights lodging in 4-star hotels and/or charming inns
- 7 breakfasts (depending on flight arrangements)
- 7 lunches & 7 dinners with water and wine (including tips for wait staff)
- All per-diems for driver(s) and guide

**Price does not include:**

- Transportation to departure airport in US
- Flights
- Drinks other than water and wine with lunches and dinners
- Entrance fees to any monuments/museums not on guided portions

A \$750 deposit will be required by November 1 to confirm your reservation. The balance payment will be due by January 15. Payment options and a registration link will be sent.

An extension to Portugal or Morocco will be offered if there is interest.

**Fernando Navarrete** is our resident Spanish bird tour guide, an all-round naturalist and biologist whose home is in Sevilla - beside the Doñana National Park. He has been working as an international bird guide for several Spanish and international tour companies for over five years, and has guided tours in Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Mexico, Honduras, Belize and Guatemala.

Growing up close to the Strait of Gibraltar, Europe's most important bird migration route, Fernando developed an early love of birds and nature. By age 18, Fernando became one of the youngest bird-banders in Spain. In 2012, Fernando spent 4 months as a trainee at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania. This experience and the contacts he gained in the bird world have allowed him to find work on conservation and research projects with a number of species (especially raptors) in several countries, including Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Egypt, Guatemala and the US. This is work he is passionate about so he continues to participate seasonally in between leading birding tours.

**Lee Simpson**, a longtime volunteer at Hawk Mountain, has a passion for passerines and love of all birds. She has traveled extensively in Europe and Central America, and has been to Spain four times. She will be our stateside facilitator and will join the tour to help with coordination.

**Allen Hoppes** is from Kempton, Pennsylvania. He was a Hawk Mountain volunteer for years before becoming the sanctuary Caretaker from 1989-92. He then joined the Peace Corps and served in Mali, and later traveled extensively, visiting over 40 countries. He now lives in Madrid and owns and manages a cross-cultural and Nature tour company. He is a member of SEO, the Spanish Ornithological Organization. [www.ilikeyoutours.com](http://www.ilikeyoutours.com)

