



Birdwatching route to the steppes around Santa Marta de Magasca – aprox. 100 kms. (Best time of the year: spring)

From September 2016 (till ?) there are road works on the first exit to Santa Marta de Magasca as described below. Therefore it is better to avoid this itinerary until the works has been finished. Ask us!

As you leave the entrance of Finca Las Abubillas, turn right to the village. Drive on to the end, turn left and follow the signs to the highway A5. Follow the A5 in the direction of Trujillo/Merida.

Just before you reach Trujillo take the exit right to Cáceres, it's named A58. After approximately 5 kms. take exit number 9 (Trujillo oeste) and

thereafter the N521 towards Cáceres. So, at this point you leave the A58 and continue your trip over the N521, which runs parallel with the A58. Next take the first road on your right hand side to the village of Santa Marta de Magasca. This is a smaller road where you can drive more slowly looking for birdlife. The first few kilometres leads through beautiful dehesas, but soon you will see endless steppes.

After a while the road makes a sharp bend to the left. At this point you can park your car on the right and look for steppe birds in the fields ahead. It is a good point to see Little and Great Bustards, as well as Great spotted Cuckoo, Calandra Lark, Southern Grey Shrike, Raven, Red Kite, Corn bunting and Crested Larks. If you like a short walk; there is a small land road to the right that you can follow for about 2 kms. with lots of birds to be seen.

When you are finished continue the tour. A little further there is another parking place overlooking a big field at your right hand side. This is particularly a good place to look for Sandgrouse, both Pintailed and Black-bellied. When you are lucky you might even find a Stone curlew. You will see a broad sand road with an information panel about steppe birds, as this is a protected area (ZEPA). You can drive this road up and down to look for birds. In Spring you will find beautiful plants flowering on the borders of this road. With a little patience you can see all kind of steppe birds here, as well as raptors like vultures, Montagu's Harrier and even the Spanish Imperial Eagle. Sometimes there are Short-toed Larks along the road sides; you might easily overlook them. When you are finished turn back to the tarmac road and continue to Santa Marta.

The road leads through dehesas and steppe area, with their own kind of birdlife. In the dehesas you can easily find Woodchat Shrike, Hoopoe, Azure-winged Magpie, Red legged Partridge, Common Buzzard and Booted Eagle for example.

As soon as you enter Santa Marta de Magasca take the first road to the left that leads you along the village. At the end of this road turn right and next turn left just before you would enter the village. (Should you appetize a coffe-break; walk at this point into the village where you find a pretty little plaza with three bars.)

Continue the route; there are only houses on your right. After a few kilometres the road descends to the river Magasca. There is beautiful scenery around you with particularly nice and dense woodland along the sides of the river. Take your time here. You can make a little walk along the Magasca where you definitely will see Kingfisher, Bee-eaters, Crag Martin and Red rumped Swallow. Many times you can hear singing Cirl bunting here, although they are hard to find, same with the Hawfinch. Raptors will soar in the sky; often I have seen Golden Eagle here. A nice place for coffee or lunch.

Leaving the valley you soon enter steppe area again. There is a T-junction at the end. Left goes to Monroy, right to Trujillo. Turn right and park your car directly right on a sand path. This is again a

good spot for birdwatching. The place is famous for hosting a small colony of Montagu's Harrier. Be aware not to disturb these endangered birds. A good place also for Fan-tailed Warbler, Spanish Sparrow, Little Bustard and Black Vulture.

Continue the road to Trujillo. You drive over an ancient track, the so called Vía Pecuaria, a kind of road on which shepherds went with their cattle to the mountains in the North of Spain. In springtime the borders of this road are full with flowers with even orchids in between.

Next along the road where there are stone walls, you might find a Little Owl, Hoopoe, Calandra Lark, Corn Bunting as well as great numbers of Crested Larks. There are small bushes of Eucalyptus trees where Spanish Sparrow breed. At some moment you will see a sign to the left to La Aldea (del Obispo) Take this one, but if you like, you can make a walk at the sand road on the opposite which leads you through steppe area.

So, take the tarmac road to Aldea. (The sign Birdcenter is not leading you to an information centre, but to a Bed and Breakfast). Finally you come to Aldea del Obispo, which is on some official maps also called Aldea de Trujillo. Try to avoid driving into the village, but take the little road on your right hand side that leads you around the village.

Leaving the village you might find some hoopoes on the stone walls; they are often seen here. A little further you will cross the Ex. 208, the road from Trujillo to Plasencia. Just go straight on, so don't take the Ex.208. You will pass a little stream, with chances on snipes, herons and maybe a Kingfisher. The road comes out at the A5, where you head in the direction of Madrid. Next take exit number 232 that brings you back to Jaraicejo. Once you are in the village you will easily find your way back to the finca.

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