

# Ayrshire Birders Abroad

with Angus Hogg and Tony + Gerda Scott  
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Private holidays for birding friends of the SOC and RSPB in Ayrshire and beyond. Friends travelling together sharing birding and cultural experiences in mainland Europe, the UK, Asia and the Americas.



## Raptor Migration in Cádiz Province and the Straits of Gibraltar

Revised  
itinerary

**Leader:** Angus Hogg  
**Organisers:** Tony & Gerda Scott

**Wednesday 04 to Thursday  
12 September 2013**



The cost of the trip will be c. £1400.00 depending on the number of participants and the exchange rate nearer the time. It will include flights from and to Glasgow, all coach travel in Spain, entrance to parks, the services of our bird leader Angus Hogg, and accommodation in a four-star hotel with breakfast and dinner for eight nights.

If you would like to join this tour, please complete the form on the back page of this itinerary and post it to Tony & Gerda Scott, 4 Hilltop Place, Ayr KA7 3PB or for more details please telephone us on 01292 281 085 or e-mail Tony Scott on:

[da.scott@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:da.scott@tiscali.co.uk)

Join us for nine days (eight nights) in one of the prime birding regions of southern Spain, to observe the migration of raptors, storks and many other species as they move south across the Straits of Gibraltar into Africa.

There will also be many chances to explore the villages and towns of the Costa de la Luz, such as the hauntingly beautiful Moorish hill town of Vejer de la Frontera; the hill town of Arcos de la Frontera; the coastal town of Tarifa and the harbour town of Cádiz - one of the oldest settlements in Spain.

Apart from the spectacle of the autumn migration, the Tarifa hinterland is rich in the breeding species of the rocky, wooded countryside so typical of the area. There are large vulture colonies with Griffon, Egyptian and a few black vultures, marsh harriers, ospreys, honey buzzards and more!

We will be staying in two well appointed four-star-plus hotels with en-suite rooms and a buffet breakfast and dinner each day. Our first four nights will be at the **ESTEPONA PALACE HOTEL** directly on the beach at Estepona and overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar. The final four nights are at the **PARADOR ATLANTICO HOTEL IN CÁDIZ**, once again on the waterfront. Our flights will be with easyJet from Glasgow to Malaga and we will have a comfortable touring coach at our disposal for the nine days we will be in Spain. We will be covering many of the varied birding spots throughout Cádiz Province, from coastal reserves, reedbeds, cork oak woodlands, lagunas and marshes to the higher regions of the Sierra de Grazalema and the Sierra Crestallina.

Images: Map of the region; Straits of Gibraltar (day and sunset); Tarifa port; American golden plover at Tarifa Beach; Glossy ibis flock on passage.

## Raptor Migration in Cádiz Province & the Straits of Gibraltar Wednesday 04 to Thursday 12 September 2013 **Detailed Itinerary**

### Day 1: Wednesday 04 September

#### FLIGHT FROM GLASGOW TO MALAGA AND COACH TO ESTEPONA

Depart from Glasgow International Airport on the EasyJet flight to MALAGA at 16.55 hrs. Check-in time at Glasgow will be from 14.55 hrs, and so we should all meet at the check-in area of Terminal 1 at 14.45 hrs. We arrive in MALAGA at 21.15 hrs, where we will be met by a comfortable and spacious touring coach. Our route tonight will take us along the coastal motorway (E15 / N340) passing close to MARBELLA, to arrive at our hotel (the 4\*Estepona Palace directly on the shore overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar) around 22.30 hrs, the distance being 80 km from the airport. Time to check-in and have a nightcap before retiring.

### Day 2: Thursday 05 September BIRDING THE CENTRAL STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR FROM the TARIFA MIRADORES

Tarifa is the southernmost point of mainland Europe. The hinterland consists of rolling open hillsides, with numerous rocky gullies and outcrops, climbing to the Sierra del Bujeo and the Sierra del Calibro. There are areas of pines and corkwoods, much favoured by resting raptors and other migrants. After breakfast at our hotel in Estepona, we will head out around 08.30 to the **Migration watchpoint at CAZELLA** (65km). This watchpoint is just above Tarifa and is particularly useful in autumn since the storks and raptors approaching the Strait of Gibraltar from the northwest generally set off southwards from this area. Access is via a short rough-tarmac track leading off the southbound carriageway of the N340 at km 87. There is an observatory at the end of the track. Here for around one hour before driving on to the next **viewpoint at PUERTO DEL BUJEO**. This provides an excellent and secluded watchpoint for raptor and other migration. It is situated about halfway between Tarifa and the Bay of Gibraltar. Access is from the picnic area on the north side of the N340 at km 95. Beyond the tree-line of cork oaks and eucalyptus there are stunning views of Gibraltar, the Bay and the Straits. The Moroccan migration can be viewed easily from anywhere along this stretch. In the area from around 09.15 until 12.00. From here we move on to the public watchpoint over the Strait from the **MIRADOR DEL ESTRECHO** - access at km 91. Here until around 13.30 hrs. **The potential list of species** we may see during this passage period is extensive and often includes 'frequent rarities' (according to Garcia & Paterson's 'Where to Watch Birds in Southern & Western Spain'). **Regulars include:** night heron; little egret; grey and purple herons; black stork; spoonbill; greater flamingo; honey buzzard; marsh harrier; golden eagle; osprey; Eleanora's falcon; stone curlew; collared pratincole; stock dove; great spotted cuckoo; short-eared owl; European nightjar; kingfisher; roller; wryneck; sand martin; tree, red-throated and water pipits; yellow wagtail; bluethroat; whinchat; wheatear; rufous-tailed rock thrush; ring ouzel; grasshopper, Savi's, reed, great reed, spectacled, garden, wood and willow warblers; pied flycatcher; Spanish and tree sparrows; crossbill, bullfinch and many seabirds. **Species seen all year** in this general area include: cattle egret; white stork; Griffon and Rüppell's vultures; goshawk; sparrowhawk; common and long-legged buzzards; Bonelli's eagle; lesser and common kestrels; Lanner falcon; peregrine falcon; little bustard; barn, eagle, little and tawny owls; Calandra, crested, Thekla and wood larks; crag martin; blue rock thrush; Cetti's warbler; zitting cisticola; Dartford and Sardinian warblers; firecrest; crested tit; southern grey shrike; raven; spotless starling; serin; hawfinch; Cirl and rock buntings and a wide list of seabirds.

As the day heats up, we will **return to TARIFA for a spot of LUNCH** from 14.00 hrs and a rest in some shady spot - possibly the atmospheric **MANDRATORA** at Calle Independencia 3 (Just behind the Iglesia de San Mateo). This cafe-restaurant offers dishes from both sides of the Strait. As well as authentic Moroccan cuisine, there are plenty of Tapas to choose from. After lunch, maybe around 15.30 - there are alternatives. The sea wall in Tarifa town offers a good vantage point for seawatching, and of course, at this time of passage, what flies over will be as (or even more) dramatic as the birds on the water. There is also a coastal path which runs east along the coast of the Strait and should also provide good views of both seabirds and migratory species.

**The alternative choice** will be a walk around the network of lanes that surround the 15th century, **Baroque-fronted church of SAN MATEO** with its beautiful late Gothic interior. The nearby **CASTILLO de GUZMAN** is also worth a visit, named after Guzmán el Bueno (The Good), Tarifa's infamous commander during the Moorish Siege of 1292. We will have time to wander along the Moorish walls and crumbling ramparts with views way out to sea and over the old town itself.

We will be collected by the coach at the drop-off point at 18.00 hrs and head back up the coast to Estepona arriving at 19hrs - dinner at 20hrs. Distance driven today - c. 155km.





**Photos:** Griffon vulture: the Plain of La Janda: Wryneck: Black & white storks at La Janda: White storks: Palmones Estuary with Gibraltar in view: Cabo Trafalgar.



### Day 3: Friday 06 September

#### MIRADOR VALLE DEL SANTUARIO; THE PLAIN OF LA JANDA; AND THE PARQUE NATURAL AT PALMONES ESTUARY

Breakfast at 07.15 and depart 08.30 - driving south to connect with the N340 and turning right at EL MIRADOR and on to another viewpoint at the **MIRADOR VALLE DEL SANTUARIO**. (60km and here for 09.15). The area offers outstanding scenery and ample opportunities to stop and search the scrub and woodlands for migrants. Spectacular falls of raptors occur at times, especially during this time of the autumn migration. Kites and other species often dot the hills like flocks of small, elongated brown sheep. Bonelli's warbler are abundant in the oakwoods and Cirl buntings breed here. The lush vegetation along the streams appears attractive to Iberian chiffchaff and others. The lesser kestrels of nearby Tarifa frequently feed in the area. Griffon vultures, along with the occasional black vulture or Rüppell's vulture, can be seen feeding on dead cattle. The Santuario valley itself is a natural conduit from the Strait and to the plains of La Janda, and sees a large movement of raptors and storks. Hirundine congregations are sometimes spectacular during passage periods. We anticipate being here until 10.30.

We then move on to **the plain of LA JANDA** - a truly remarkable place. Travel is along the CA9210 / 7200 around FACINAS. Then along the canal track road opposite the Zahara turn-off. The area was once one of Spain's finest wetlands. Sadly, its fate was decided in the early 1960's when the area was drained and numerous and extensive farms sprang up, followed much later by a wind turbine development between 2004 - 2007. Despite all of this, La Janda continues to be an excellent and rewarding area for birds. In wet winters the area floods and the former Laguna reasserts itself. The relatively recent expansion of rice cultivation has proved popular with migrant waders and also attracts little egrets, Squacco herons, marsh harriers and yellow wagtails. Night herons inhabit the waterside poplars. **The main raptor and passerine routes leading to the Strait cross this area and virtually anything can turn up here.**

Regulars include: Garganey; Squacco and purple herons; black stork; honey buzzard; sparrowhawk; osprey; wood and green sandpipers; roller; wryneck; lesser short-toed lark; tree pipit; yellow wagtail; bluethroat; common redstart; northern and black-eared wheatears; warblers and finches. **Birds here all year include:** mallard; cattle and little egrets; white stork; Griffon vulture; marsh harrier; little bustard; purple swamphen; black-winged stilt; stone-curlew; barn and eagle owls; Calandra and Thekla larks; zitting cisticola; raven and spotless starling. Access is from the north side of the N340 at the junction with the Zahara road. In the general area from about 11.00 until 13.00 hrs.

**Moving on once again** along the N340, we travel in the reverse direction **to visit the PALMONES ESTUARY** (c.90km). It's status as a Paraje Natural gives it some protection. The flood plain and estuary lie just north of Algeciras, on the western shore of the **BAY OF GIBRALTAR**. The area of surviving open country can attract many migrants. The upper reaches consist of grazing marsh with reedy ditches. The principal interest is as a staging point for migrant storks, herons, waders and passerines. Flocks of white storks, usually many hundreds of birds, often linger here. Several ospreys overwinter regularly, as do bluethroats and penduline tits. The site is most rewarding during the main passage periods and in winter. The estuary and river may be viewed at leisure from **PALMONES VILLAGE** where there is an attractive waterfront promenade. In fact, this will be **a good place to enjoy LUNCH** today - from around 14.00 until 15.00. We will then have the rest of the afternoon to bird the estuary. Local ornithologists have constructed an observatory on the south bank, complete with sun terraces for open-air viewing of the raptor migration which passes overhead. Storks, raptors, hirundines and finches - as well as spoonbills, greater flamingoes, wildfowl, terns, chats and warblers are all possible from this watchpoint. After a full afternoon in the area, we will return to our hotel (40km) around 18.15 hrs for dinner at 20.00 h. Distance travelled today - about 225 kilometres.

### Day 4: Saturday 07 September

#### PARQUE NATURAL LOS ALCORNOCALES - THE CORKWOODS; EL AJIBE VISITOR CENTRE & ALCALÁ DE LOS GAZULES

Leaving Estepona at 08.45, driving via Los Barrios along the A381 motorway. Junction 45 brings us first to the **VISITOR CENTRE OF EL AJIBE**, some 87 km from our hotel. We should be here by 09.40. This is an excellent starting point and the centre occupies a splendid airy building with many natural history displays. The centre, complete with toilets, shop selling maps, books and site guides, was opened in 2003. From here we can move on to a number of viewpoints, villages and reservoirs throughout the Parque Natural, starting with the two reservoirs - **EMBALSE DE BARBATE & DEL CELEMÍN** (15km).



Photos from top: Barbate pinewoods; Flamingoes; Cádiz Bay; The Bellas Artes Museum.

This whole area is rewarding throughout the year. Raptors are always obvious and the visible migration is most evident from August through November, involving large numbers of storks, raptors, swifts, bee-eaters and passerines. The woodlands provide roost sites for raptors and in early September it 'rains' honey buzzards here! (according to Garcia & Paterson in 'Where to Watch Birds in Southern & Western Spain'). The reservoirs are good for ospreys and other waterbirds, so a short stop here is planned. As we drive around the network of country roads, we will stop wherever possible to scan both sky and vegetation. It is also recommended to visit the areas of corkwoods in search of the full range of passerines which may still be around if we are lucky.

As **LUNCH TIME** approaches, we will visit **ALCALÁ DE LOS GAZULES & EL PICACHO** (20km). Lesser kestrels inhabit the church above the town of Los Gazules and it should be a worthwhile stop not only to look up this species, but to choose a place to eat (from around 13.45 to 15.00 hrs). Then on to **LA SAUCEDA** (27km), (Bonelli's eagles, goshawks, booted and short-toed eagles). Migrant raptors are attracted to the **HOZGARGANTA VALLEY** where red and roe deer, as well as wild boar can be found. We should stay in the area around **LA SAUCEDA** for a couple of hours, possibly until 17.00 hrs. If time allows, there are other places to visit, such as **CASTELAR DE LA FRONTERA** (Old Castellar) which provides another excellent watchpoint for the migration. **EL PINAR DEL REY** is just outside the Park and is a large area of stone pine woodland just north of **SAN ROQUE**. Crested tits are particularly common here. This circular route should have taken us on a round trail of over 230 km. **We expect to be back at our hotel around 18.45 and dinner at 20.00 hrs.**

### Day 5: Sunday 09 September OUR MOVE FROM ESTEPONA TO CÁDIZ: VISITING CAPE TRAFALGAR, PARQUE NATURAL DE LA BREÑA Y MARISMAS DEL BARBATE EN-ROUTE AND THE BAY & TOWN OF CÁDIZ



El Ajibe centre



Honey buzzard



Los Alcornocales

Migration - Los Alcornocales

El Pinar del Rey

Breakfast at 07.30 and depart Estepona at 08.45 for the N340 as we head north-west. Our first stop will be at **CABO TRAFALGAR** (136km) and is accessed from the Los Caños de Mea / Veja road - the A2233 - to the Cape itself. The road is well surfaced but narrow. Seawatching from the Cape is most worthwhile at this time and mornings are best. Great and sooty shearwaters, Pomarine skuas, Audouin's gull; gull-billed, common, little and black terns; razorbills and puffins pass through during the autumn migration. **Species seen all year here include:** Cory's and Balearic shearwaters; northern gannet; Kentish plover; sanderling; Arctic and great skuas; yellow-legged gull. Here from around 10.15 until 11.15. Moving on to the nearby **PARQUE NATURAL DE LA BREÑA Y MARISMAS DEL BARBATE (The Barbate pinewoods and estuary)** (8km), we return along the A2231 to the A314. The stone pines create an extensive woodland at our first stop on the A2231 - and we also find an understorey of juniper, fan palm and rosemary. The woodlands should have much birding interest just now, as they shelter a wide range of passerines and other migrants. The nearby cliffs have a nesting colony of yellow-legged gulls, common kestrels, peregrines, rock doves, jackdaws and ravens. Here from 11.30 until 12.30. **We then drive on the short distance to the BARBATE ESTUARY** (2km) which is best viewed from the bridge which crosses it. **Birds here all year include:** cattle and little egrets; white stork; bald ibis; greater flamingo; Griffon vulture; peregrine falcon; Kentish plover; rock dove; blue rock thrush; raven. We anticipate being in this area until 13.30 hrs.

**We now drive on to the town of CÁDIZ** (68km), where we will have lunch. A good place to stop would be the Plaza Tío de la Tiza in the old fishing quarter near **PLAYA DE LA CALETA**, where dozens of good seafood places offer many interesting dishes; or maybe the slightly more upmarket **El Faro** restaurant on Calle San Felix 15. This establishment is well known for its good table d'hôte menu and is one of the best fish restaurants in Andalucía (according to The Rough Guide). **Around 15.30 hrs we can once again choose to bird the extensive saltmarshes or visit the heart of the old town.** The birding group will head off to the hinterland comprising salt pans which border the **BAY OF CÁDIZ**. This area attracts waterfowl and seabirds, including grebes and divers, especially during passage and in winter. The cultural group will visit the older parts of town, and possibly the **MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES Y ARQUEOLOGICO** at Plaza de Mina. The galleries are open until 20.30 hrs on Saturdays. Entry is free to all over 60's who hold an EU passport. The art gallery is on the upper floors and the archeological museum below. **We will be staying at the PARADORES HOTEL ATLANTICO in Cádiz for the next four nights.** Arrive 17.30 to check in. Dinner at 19.30 hrs. Distance travelled today: approx. 215 km.

## Day 6: Monday 09 September

### ZAHARA; LAGUNAS DE PUERTO REAL & THE HILL TOWN OF VEJER DE LA FRONTERA

Breakfast at 07.00 and depart 08.15 for a trip along the coast southwards to **ZAHARA** (80km - arr. 09.05). The area's chief claim to fame is as the first known breeding site in Europe of the white-rumped swift, a species not previously known to occur closer than tropical Africa. The first discoveries, in 1964 were assumed to be little swifts, also a white-rumped species and one which has nested for decades at Tangier, in full view of Zahara and not 30 km away. The birds were later netted and this established their true identity. The small white-rumped swift population may mean a patient wait, but watching in the mornings from the southern flanks of the **SIERRA DE LA PLATA** is generally successful. This is accessed via the village of **Bolona** (25km from Zahara) on the CA8202 road. There is also a great range of species here during the passage periods and will certainly be worthwhile to spend time here until 13.00 hrs or so. We may travel to the south side of the Sierra before visiting Zahara, depending on local conditions.

We now return to the N340 for the 65 kilometre drive to **VEJER DE LA FRONTERA** - arriving for 13.45. There is plenty of choice when it comes to **LUNCH**. Tapas bars include the **Mésón Pepe Julián** at Calle Juan Relinque, just off La Plazuela. At the other end of town, **Bar Peneque** in Plaza de España (almost opposite the Casa del Califa Hotel) is also recommended. **El Jardín del Califa** is a restaurant with a tree-shaded courtyard where Spanish and North African cuisine is served (this is with the 'Califa' Hotel). Sounds good!

After lunch, we may wish to wander around this amazingly situated hill town for its many photo opportunities. **VEJER** is set in a cleft between great protective hills that rear high above the road from Tarifa to Cádiz. The drama of the place is in its isolation and elevated position, both easily appreciated from an approach road which winds its way upwards for a dizzying four kilometres. Until the end of the 20th century the women of Vejer wore long, dark cloaks that veiled their faces like a nun's habit. Despite being adopted as the town's tourist icon, this custom seems to be virtually extinct, but one can well imagine how it was, as it has a remoteness and a Moorish feel to the architecture, as explicit as anywhere in Spain. **There's a CASTLE and CHURCH of curiously mixed styles** (Mainly Gothic and Mudéjar), but the main fascination lies in exploring the brilliant white, labyrinthine alleyways, wandering past decorative iron-grilled windows, with flower-filled balconies and the chance of slipping into at least one of a succession of inviting bars!

**Around 16.15 hrs we set off for the LAGUNAS DE PUERTO REAL - a Reserva Natural.** The lagunas consist of three lagoons and are most secluded. The site is surrounded by agricultural land, but fringed by reedbeds and fern palm scrub. It is of interest all year round, with marbled and white-headed ducks, little egret, marsh harrier, purple swamphen, common coot and Calandra lark all year. During passage there are visits from waterfowl, waders, gull-billed tern, whiskered tern and many passerines. Access is from the A408 via the A381 and is about 30 kilometres from Vejer. **Here from 16.45 until 18.15.** We drive back to **our hotel in Cadiz for c.18.45 with dinner at 20 hrs. Distance travelled today - approx. 210 km.**

## Day 7: Tuesday 10 September

### A GRAND TOUR TO THE NORTH OF CÁDIZ PROVINCE, THROUGH THE SIERRA DE GRAZALEMA & A VISIT TO ARCOS DE LA FRONTERA

Breakfast at 07.00 and depart from our Parador at 08.15. Driving inland towards Chiclana de la Frontera (22km), we join the A390 to MEDINA SEDONIA (23km) and join the A381 to **ALCALÁ DE LOS GAZULES** (18 km), turning left along the A2304/A373 to **UBRIQUE** (53 km) - where we will make a coffee stop for 30 minutes. Leaving again at 10.30. Ubrique and beyond is within the Parque Natural of the **SIERRA DE GRAZALEMA** - an extensive natural park including the limestone mountains of the **BETIC CORDILLERA**. These are rugged slopes with bare, rocky summits reaching to more than 1600 metres. The valleys are heavily forested with cork, Holm and Lusitanian oaks and stands of maritime pines. Locally there are residual woods of the endemic Spanish fir (Pinaspo). Sheer cliff faces are typical, flanking rocky gorges in which seasonal streams flow briskly and sometimes torrentially. This rocky terrain is attractive to raptors and most sierras of the region have nesting eagles. These are short-toed, booted and either Bonelli's or golden eagles. Griffon vultures nest commonly, accompanied by other cliff-nesting birds, notably Egyptian vultures, eagle owls and red-billed choughs. The crags are shared by herds of Spanish ibexes.

**From Ubrique** we press on along the A2302 via **BENAOCAZ**, stopping at the southern end of a gorge close by, which is a good site for Bonelli's eagle, and passerines include black wheatears. After a 30 minute stop we continue to **GRAZALEMA** (30 km) - arriving about 11.45.



**Photos.** Above: White-rumped swift; Zahara - home to white-rumped swift; Next two - views of Vejer de la Frontera. Hoopoe at Lagunas de Puerto Real. Short-toed eagle. Below: Booted eagle; Alcalá de los Gazules; Spanish ibex: the town of Grazaalema.





**Above:** Arcos de la Frontera.  
**Below:** Marshes at Sotogrande; Cory's shearwater & killer whale off the Costa del Sol; the 'white town' of Casares; two views of the Sierra Crestallina escarpment.



On from here along the A372 to **BENAMAHOMA** and **EL BOSQUE** (24 km). This is a particularly rewarding road for raptors. Allowing for stops, we should reach El Bosque by 13.00 hrs before moving on to the A372 which brings us to **ARCOS DE LA FRONTERA** (33 km) for 14.30 - **where we will stop for LUNCH and more birding of the valley below.** This town was taken from the Moors in 1264. An impressive feat, for it stands high above the **RÍO GUADALETE** on a double crag and must have been a virtually impregnable fortress. This dramatic location, enhanced by low white houses and sandstone churches, gives the town a similar feel and appearance to Ronda - but far less visited. The streets are, if anything, more interesting with their mix of Moorish and Renaissance buildings. At its heart is the **PLAZA DEL CABILO**. Flanking two sides are the castle walls and the large Gothic-Mudéjar church of **SANTA MARIA DE LA ASUNCIÓN**. One side of the square is open, offering plunging views of the river valley below, and a superb place to pick up raptors and other birds as they soar above and below. A tourist office is on the west side of the Plaza, and town maps can be obtained here. **A good place to have LUNCH is La Terraza** in the gardens of the Paseo de Andalucía to the south-west of the Plaza. Alternatively, **Alcaravan** in Calle Nueva 1, close to the castle walls, is an interesting cave restaurant which does *tapas* and *platas asados* (roasted meats). Nearby, **Meson de Ana** (Calle Dean Espihosa 10) is a pleasant little cafe-bar serving *platos combinados* and lots of snacks.

**We will have time to explore ARCOS DE LA FRONTERA**, leaving again at 18.00 hrs. From here we make our way 'home' via the A382 and the A4, skirting **JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA** towards **CÁDIZ** and our hotel for 18.45 hrs and dinner at 20.00 hrs. Distance driven today - c.270 km.

## Day 8: Wednesday 11 September PLAYA DE LOS LANCES & THE RAPTOR WATCHPOINTS OF TARIFA

Breakfast at 07.00 and depart 08.10 from Cádiz. We drive along the A48 motorway passing VEJER DE LA FRONTERA (58km) and the N340 down to TARIFA (65km). Our first and main stop here today is at **PLAYA DE LOS LANCES** (09.30), the southernmost and one of the finest of many long sandy beaches of the Costa de la Luz. This is a favourite loafing ground for gulls, including Audouin's gulls, which are present all year round - but especially numerous at this time of the year. Tern flocks also form on the lagoon fringes and often include a few lesser crested terns in the spring and autumn.

The lagoons attract waders, notably flocks of sanderling and dunlin. Ringed plover are usually present and Kentish plover breed here. The strategic siting means that legions of raptors and other migrants cross the area, and many land on or close to the hinterland. Passerines throng the fields and pines at this time of migration. The beach is exceptionally well placed to attract scarce or vagrant species, which has recently included Baillon's crane, dotterel, American golden plover, Terek sandpiper, cream-coloured courser and Royal tern (but we would be very lucky indeed to make sightings of any of these species of course!).

Apart from the beach, there is a fine BOARDWALK which runs behind the dunes and alongside the RÍO DE LA VEGA. This was inaugurated in 2006 and is excellent for viewing migrant passerines on the beaches and pastures. The boardwalk skirts the main lagoon where waders and gulls congregate.

**Species seen her all year include:** Cory's and Balearic shearwaters, northern gannet, cattle and little egrets, grey heron, ringed and Kentish plovers, sanderling, dunlin, common redshank, Arctic and great skuas, Audouin's and yellow-legged gulls, Thekla lark, zitting cisticola, spotless starling, serin, greenfinch, goldfinch, linnnet, corn bunting.

**Species seen additionally during passage:** Purple heron, black and white storks, spoonbill, greater flamingo, raptors (honey buzzard, golden eagle, osprey, Eleanora's falcon, Griffon and Rüppell's vultures, common and long-legged buzzards, Bonelli's eagle, lesser and common kestrels, Lanner falcon, peregrine falcon, Montagu's harrier, booted eagle and more), black-winged stilt, avocet, stone-curlew, collared pratincole, little ringed plover, little stint, curlew sandpiper, ruff, spotted redshank, greenshank, green and wood sandpipers, Pomarine skua, gull-billed, lesser-crested, common, little, whiskered and black terns. All the many species of landbirds crossing the Strait of Gibraltar on migration also occur in this area: swifts, larks, swallows, pipits, wagtails, chats, warblers and finches are all well represented.

We suggest remaining in this area for about four hours, which enables us to cover it adequately. At about 13.30 we can pop into TARIFA town for a quick snack, before heading out and around the various **MIRADORS above Tarifa** (20km). We would spend another three hours or so doing this and heading back to our hotel in CÁDIZ for 19.15 and dinner at 20.00 hrs. Distance travelled today - c. 260 km.

The Costa de la Luz; View of Morocco from the Spanish coast; Common snipe at a coastal reserve; Whiskered tern.

## Day 9: Thursday 12 September

### SOTOGRADE & THE SIERRA CRESTELLINA NEAR GAUCÍN AND OUR FLIGHT FROM MALAGA TO GLASGOW

We check out and depart after breakfast at 09.00 and drive the 155 kilometres via Algeciras to **SOTOGRADE** - arriving about 10.35. Sotograde is the name of an upmarket residential area and marina built around the estuary of the **RÍO GUARDIORO**. Despite the lush gardens, palm groves, golf courses and polo fields, the estuary proper is a small reserve protecting an expanse of reeds and tamarisks sheltered from the sea by a sand bar. The area is important as one of the few remaining wetlands on the **COSTA DEL SOL** and is a popular place for waterbirds. Gulls and waders are always obvious and flocks of the former are always worth scanning. They usually include Audouin's gull, especially in late summer and autumn. Lesser-crested terns occur with some frequency too, in autumn. A range of seabirds are often visible offshore. The freshwater marsh has resident purple swamphen, and migrant ospreys often linger during passage periods.

**The 'all-year' list includes:** Cory's and Balearic shearwaters; northern gannet; cattle and little egrets; white stork; yellow-legged gull; water rail; Kentish plover; Monk parakeet; Cetti's warbler; zitting cisticola; common waxbill (sporadic); reed bunting. **During passage periods:** garganey; little bittern; night and purple herons; greater flamingo; raptors including osprey; spotted crane; waders; Pomarine skua; Audouin's gull; gull-billed and Caspian terns; Royal tern (occasional); lesser crested, common, little, whiskered and black terns; passerines. This is most certainly an excellent area, so we will allow enough time to check out the whole area, leaving again around 13.30.

We continue north along the coast for about 47 km, passing S. LUIS DE SABINILLAS, then on as far as **ESTEPONA**, arriving at the **ESTEPONA PALACE HOTEL** once again, for around 14.00 hrs. We have arranged a buffet lunch here at 14.30 hrs (included in the overall cost). This will give us time to freshen up beforehand, and to spend a relaxing afternoon in and around this beautiful location. We can spend time birding along the shore or just relaxing on the beach, in the grounds of the hotel or in the comfort of one of the hotel lounges until our departure time of 18.00 hrs.

We then drive the final 80 kilometres up to **MALAGA AIRPORT** for 19.00 hrs, where check-in begins for our easyJet flight to **GLASGOW** at 19.50, with a departure time of 21.50 hrs. We arrive in **GLASGOW** for 00.10 hrs (13.09.13). Distance driven today in Spain - 240 km. We plan to organise a coach from Dodds in Ayr to and from Glasgow airport for those who wish. Cars may be left safely at Dodds depot on East Road.

Below: Sotograde wetlands



Below: Our hotels: 1, 2 & 3 - Estepona Palace. 4, 5 & 6 - Parador Atlantico Hotel, Cádiz.



Audouin's gull



Bee-eater



Caspian tern



Chough

Griffon and black vultures: Angus Hogg

# Ayrshire Birders Abroad

with Angus Hogg and  
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Private holidays for birding  
friends of the SOC and  
RSPB in Ayrshire and  
beyond. Friends travelling  
together sharing birding and  
cultural experiences in  
mainland Europe, the UK,  
Asia and the Americas.



## Booking Form: Raptor Migration in Cádiz Province

Duration: Wednesday 04 to Thursday 12 September 2013

PLEASE LET US HAVE THE FOLLOWING DETAILS TO HELP WITH YOUR BOOKING. THANK YOU

I / We wish to join the Ayrshire Birders Abroad EXTREMADURA & ANDALUCIA TOUR

Name / s \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Post code \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. No. \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note:** The holiday is inclusive of flights from Glasgow to Malaga; and dinner, bed and breakfast for eight nights. It also includes all coach travel in Spain, entry to Parks, and the services of our bird leader, Angus Hogg. It does not include tips, taxes, drinks or any items of a personal nature. Total cost is estimated at around £1400.00. The final cost does depend on the exchange rate at the time of payment for flights and all other services. There will be a single supplement room charge.

Please use the space below to indicate room requirements and also any dietary requirements you may have

**Insurance.** Please ensure you have adequate insurance to cover the cost of cancellation.

**I enclose £350.00 per person as deposit for the above named person or persons.** A second instalment of £450.00 is payable on or before the last day of February 2013. The final payment is payable on or before the last day of May 2013. Please make your cheque payable to David A. Scott. Thank you.

Signature/s \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Any enquiries? Please 'phone Tony or Gerda Scott on 01292 281 085 or e-mail us at: da.scott@tiscali.co.uk or write to us at 4 Hilltop Place, AYR KA7 3PB.