

Leader: Santiago Villa

Digiscoping Expert: Paul Hackett

Participants: Richard Jones, Alberto Galofré, Nick Dalton, Michael Lloyd and David Marshall

HIGHLIGHTS

Doñana is one of those fabulous places which offers great chances for birders and photographers of all over the world. After the terrible draught of 2005 marshes and fields were happily flooded in our visit on May and we all enjoyed its treasures during an unforgettable tour. The total number of species recorded was 135 and considering that we spent most of the time taking pics of the birds the number is not bad at all. Although we surprisingly missed some of the very common birds such as Stonechat, we could see all the specialities present in the region including great views of Red-necked Nightjar for two nights. The aim was learning about the digiscoping technique following the advice of Paul Hackett while having different subjects that participants don't use to in their countries. One week is not much time for becoming an expert but every single participant improved considerably at the end of the tour.

Amongst the most interesting birds we saw 4 Marbled Teals, two of them beautifully displaying in the Dehesa de Abajo. In the same place we recorded at least 6 different White-headed Ducks having wonderful views of a couple of drakes. A pair of Black-shouldered Kites nesting found thanks to the help of Jose Antonio from Discovering Doñana while seeing Olivaceous Warbler singing was also a nice experience.



Rufous Bush Chat / Spainbirds

The open fields of the Parque Natural gave us the opportunity to see some of the most typical birds of these ecosystems where Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Short-toed and Lesser Short-toed Larks, Bee-eaters, Calandra Larks, Stone Curlew and an unexpected Roller the last evening were all seen. In the nearby Marismas del Odiel we specially enjoyed the views of a male Montagu's Harrier, a single Red-knobbed Coot, several Audouin's Gull in different plumages and dozens of waders including Curlew Sandpipers and Knots in breeding plumage.

One of the magical moments of the trip was when we had several Rufous-bush Chats displaying not far from 5 metres from our position. One of them had in a fence its favourite perche which gave us all the chance to



Red-necked Nightjar / Photo: Paul Hackett

take great pics although the light conditions were not the best that day.

However the "Nightjar experience" was for many the most exciting moment of the trip providing views of several birds at a really close range from our vehicle. Paul managed to be at less than two metres to one of the birds which was lying down confident in its camouflage (see photo above).

An hybrid Western Reef x Little Egret in the heronry of the Jose Antonio Valverde visitors centre and three Long-legged Buzzards chasing each others near Villamanrique wrote the exotic note of the trip.

Of course during the week we saw plenty of Night and Squacco Herons, Little Bitterns, Glossy Ibis, Greater Flamingos, Azure-winged Magpies, Woodchat Shrikes, Whiskered Terns, Collared Pratincoles, Black-winged Stilts, two Garganeys, a single Great White Egret, Marsh Harriers, almost daily views of Hoopoes and many, many more... for an example just see the bird checklist below.



Bee-eater / Photo: Spainbirds

We just want to say thanks to all who participated in our second digiscoping trip to Spain. For more information and details about our trips for 2007 don't hesitate to reach us at www.spainbirds.com.

