

## Trip report Frances and Alexander Salamanca May 23-25<sup>th</sup> 2023

### Day 1 Sangusin and Alagon valleys

As the forecast was for showers in most of the province, we began with the most likely to be dry place and were able to avoid all but a very weak 'spray', borne on the breeze from a nearby cloud just before lunch. We headed for the Sangusin valley, in the Sierra de Bejar, the south-eastern part of the Sierras de Francia and Bejar Biosphere reserve.



Sangusin river



Iberian water frog

From the old bridge we spotted Iberian water frog, European and Spanish pond terrapin.



Spanish pond terrapin



Aqueduct

Around were White wagtail, Red-rumped and Barn swallow and House martin, Serin and Spotless starling. There was a Spanish wall lizard on a rock. Black and Red kite and both light and dark Booted eagle made appearances, as did Griffon vulture. We stopped to look at an old aqueduct leading from a raised well which in past times had worked with a donkey-run mechanism.

We walked in the Ash dehesa where we watched a Bee-eater colony (mixed in with Rock sparrow and Ocelated lizard), and a pair of Golden oriole in courtship.





Golden oriole

We saw a pair of Turtle doves and a silent and transfixed Cuckoo probably waiting for the right moment in which to surreptitiously lay her egg.



Cuckoo





Ocelated lizards



A lesser spotted woodpecker appeared on a tree, we also heard Iberian Green woodpecker, Western Bonelli's warbler and Blackcap calling. We saw Iberian magpie, Hoopoe, Woodchat shrike, and Thekla lark.



Lesser-spotted woodpecker



There was a very attractive Yellow shell moth *Camptogramma bilineata*, Clouded yellow butterfly *Colias crocea* and Mammoth wasp *Megascolia maculate*.



Yellow shell moth



We picnicked by an old mill and watched a pair of Black stork rise up and wheel from the valley below.





After lunch we went to the Alagon valley where we stopped to look at Nettle tree butterfly, Large tortoiseshell, Holly blue and an Essex skipper, and the Beefly *Villa hottentotta*.



Nettle tree butterfly



There was a startling looking insect on a bramble, *Rhagium sycophant*, and a Broad bodied darter.



Beefly



*Rhagium sycophant*

Raptors included Honey buzzard, Black kite and Booted eagle.



## Day 2 Upper Tormes and Sierra de Ventosa

We stopped on the way to have a look at *Antirrhinum graniticum* and *Helichrysum stoechas*, the curry plant.



*Antirrhinum graniticum* (top) and *Helichrysum stoechas* (bottom left)

We drove to Puente del Congosto where we had a wander by the castle. There were Swifts and Crag martin flying over the tower and around the bridge, as well as House martin, Barn and Red-rumped Swallow.



Blue rockthrush also appeared on a nearby post, and two vultures, one Griffon and one Black, flew over us. We drove downstream and walked amongst the Holm oaks and Mediterranean scrub where we saw Booted eagle, Red and Black kite, Buzzard and Hoopoe.





Back in the village by the river we saw Grey and white wagtail, Nightingale, Nuthatch, Short-toed tree creeper, Long-tailed tit and Serin amongst others. We also saw a Spanish Purple hairstreak *Laeosopis roboris*.



After a picnic lunch by the river we drove to the base of the Sierra Ventosa and watched Vultures on a rocky promontory. There were Corn bunting, Bee-eater, Iberian magpie, Woodchat shrike and Iberian shrike as well as red-legged partridge. Suddenly a Golden eagle flew over, and landed on a rocky ledge.



### Day 3 Sierra de Bejar and Candelario

As the day started off cool, we began by visiting the area just north of Salvatierra.

On the ground we found a Ground lackey moth caterpillar, *Malacosoma castrensis*, some tiny yellow cistus *Halimium lasianthum* subsp. *alyssoides*, Stork's bill *Erodium ciconium* and a pair of mating Red-legged grasshoppers, *Chorthippus binotatus*.



Ground lackey moth caterpillar



*Halimium alyssoides*



*Chorthippus binotatus*



Stork's bill



Here were Thekla lark and a singing Woodlark which took us ages to find, as it was high up in the sky, Woodchat shrike, Hoopoe and Rock sparrow, Black and Red kite.



Rock sparrow

The day now warming up we headed up the mountain on the north face of the Sierra de Bejar. Halfway up the mountain we stopped in a layby to look at a male Rock thrush on a rock. Close by was a Rock bunting.



Rock thrush



Rock bunting



On the mountain top we saw Ortolan bunting, Tawny pipit, Water pipit, Northern wheatear, Linnet, Dunnock and Skylark. There was some Elegant toadflax *Linaria elegans* and *Veronica persica* close by.



Ortolan bunting



Tawny pipit

Next was coffee in Candelario and a look at the Swifts, both Pallid and Common, winging by in the square.





From here we headed for a picnic lunch in a nearby pine forest, where we were surrounded by butterflies including Scarce swallowtail and Queen of Spain fritillary, and singing Serin and Coal tit. We then drove up the mountain, stopping to look at some Early Marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnate*, more Elegant toadflax, and some flowering *Adenocarpus*, on our way to the Candelario platform.



Early marsh orchid



*Adenocarpus complicatus*



Elegant toadflax

More Tawny pipit, this time great close views as they foraged in the undergrowth.





Tawny pipit

On the way back we stopped to look at the singular seedpods of *Adenocarpus argyrophyllus*.



And so ended our three days' tour with Frances and Alex: thank you for choosing us as your guides!

Vega Bermejo 23 June 2023