

Castile wildlife tour 01/10/23

We were joined by Paul Burley who is to be our guide for the ocean element of our trip and after a brief talk about the days ahead we proceeded to our cabins.

Our tour started with a sailing on the Brittany ferries ship the Pont-Aven and would take us across the English channel and in to the Bay of Biscay the following day, the forecast was for a smooth sailing with the chance of sporadic sea mist and this proved correct as we set sail with reduced visibility. The English channel at this time was showing good numbers of cetaceans and Pelagic birds and even with reduced visibility we still had good views of Great shearwater, Cory's shearwater and Manx shearwater. Common dolphins and Bluefin tuna were frequently seen among the Diving Gannets and shearwaters. A good start to the trip and next into the Bay the following morning.

02/10/23

We were on deck before sunrise and as the light increased we started to spot dolphins and soon after we had our first blow, this was almost certainly from a Fin whale with the other two possibilities being either a Blue whale or Sei but both are rare to these waters. More blows were seen until we saw the back of a whale as it surfaced and this was definitely a Fin whale and with sightings of Striped dolphins, Common dolphins and the incredible Cuvier's beaked whale we were anticipating a good crossing and it was then that the excitement increased when a whale blow appeared only 800m off the starboard side. Through our binoculars we noticed that there was no prominent dorsal fin and the body was light in colour, this was a Blue whale. After the excitement of seeing the largest species on the planet we settled down to more sightings of Fin whales and dolphins before arriving in Santander.

After arriving in Santander we boarded our coach and set off to Palencia where we would be staying in the Hotel La Posada La Casa del Abad in the village of Ampudia.

03/10/23

Today we were joined by our bird guide, Fernando Jubete and we set off to visit the area around Villamediana that hosts a beautiful Mediterranean forest and was going to be one of the favoured watch points for the Spanish Imperial eagle. After birding through the woodland we came to a clearing that opened up to give a clear view of the valley below and sure enough within a few minutes we had our view of two Spanish Imperial eagles with the light leading edge of the wings showing well. After leaving the forest we drove towards our next destination but stopped at the roadside to observe two Golden eagles circling over the fields. We then spent the rest of the day birding around the area to find Thekla's lark, Crested lark and more. That evening after our meal at the Hotel we visited the the 13th century castle that stands only 200m from the Hotel and in the darkness we watched as Little owls hunted around the illuminated parapets of the castle, a great evening and a great day.

04/10/23

Today we drove to Tierra de Campos and the La Nave wetland. We were to visit the cereal pseudo-steppe areas in search of the Great Bustard and our target for the day the Little Bustard. Our first sightings are of many Lesser Kestrel before reaching one of our destinations where we could see many Great Bustard. The area is known for its good numbers of Great Bustards and we had some excellent views. We decided to explore the area further to increase our chances of finding our main target, the Little Bustard and after watching a distant male Hen harrier we spotted a group of around thirty Little Bustard that offered fantastic views through our binoculars and scopes. After our lunch we visited the La Nava wetland and the surrounding area for our last afternoon of birding.

05/10/23

After breakfast we set off to Santander for our 13.30 return sailing, conditions looked good and we were once more looking forward to more sightings. Within an hour of leaving Santander we started to see dolphins and not long after our first blows and this was to continue throughout the afternoon. With more than thirty blows and close views of Fin whales and dolphins the afternoon certainly lived up to our expectations and we looked forward to the next morning in the English channel where we hoped to have more sightings of Shearwaters and Petrels.

06/10/23

Although we were only to have a few hours of viewing before arriving in England we were pleased to see many Great shearwater and a single Storm petrel was spotted. Common dolphins and Bluefin Tuna showed well and a small group of Bottlenose dolphins were seen just off the coast.

Species list..

Birds	Birds	Birds	Cetaceans
Great shearwater	Hobby	Chiffchaf	Fin Whale
Cory's shearwater	Peregrine	Spotted flycatcher	Blue Whale
Manx shearwater	Little owl	Pied flycatcher	Cuvier's beaked whale
Storm petrel	Spanish Imperial eagle	Blue tit	Minke whale
Mediterranean gull	Golden eagle	Great tit	Short beaked common dolphin
Gannet	Stock dove	Azure winged magpie	Striped dolphin
Kittiwake	Collard dove	Magpie	Bottlenose dolphin
Yellow legged gull	Wood pigeon	Grey partridge	Mammals
Oystercatcher	Barn swallow	Red billed chough	Wildboar
Red kite	Meadow pipit	Jackdaw	Roe deer
Black kite	Black redstart	Carrion crow	
Short eared owl	Stonechat	Raven	
Marsh harrier	Wheatear	House sparrow	
Hen harrier	Blackbird	Tree sparrow	
Lesser Kestrel	Cetti's warbler	Chaffinch	
Common Buzzard	Sedge warbler	Goldfinch	
Linnet	Spotless starling	Rock bunting	
Thekla's lark	Crested lark	Great bustard	
Little bustard	Corn bunting	Robin	