

Autumn Wildlife in Valencia

Mariposa Nature Tours trip report

1st-7th September 2024



Tour leaders Pau Lucio & Jon Dunn

Trip report by Jon Dunn

Images kindly shared by our guests

(Images above, clockwise from top left: Iberian Scarce Swallowtail (Gillian), Violet Dropwing (Ann), Plain Tiger (Andrew), Western Swamphen (Don))



Mariposa Nature Tours Ltd

2 Ashtree Cottages

Langrove

Parkmill

Swansea

SA3 2EB, United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 7748 598768

Email: info@mariposanature.com

Website: www.mariposanature.com

Introduction

Valencia in early autumn offers the prospect of wildlife watching with much to catch the eye, with birds, dragonflies, and butterflies of particular interest.

Joining us for this tour were Andrew, Mark, Vernon, Gillian & Stephen, Linda & Alan, Simon, Ann & Will, and Don.

What follows is a daily diary for the week, followed by gallery and species lists.

Day 1 – 1st September



Our morning meet-up at the rendezvous point at Valencia airport passed by mercifully smoothly, with no flight delays, and some guests having elected to make their way to Spain beforehand. Before long, we were making our way south of the city. But not far! For within half an hour we had driven into a network of paddyfields known to Pau like the back of his hand. He'd been here

the previous day checking out the best site to start our week-long dive into Valencia's autumn wildlife and here, with the buildings of Valencia visible on the skyline in the distance, we were to get off to a spectacular start.

As we stopped our vehicles at the junction of two raised tracks that threaded their way through the fields, our attention was immediately grabbed by Collared Pratincole – and not just one or two of these curious waders that hawk insects mid-air in a manner reminiscent of swallows, but dozens of them, swirling in a loose flock before us. After a while they settled down in the flooded field, perching on muddy margins and drainage paraphernalia, and giving outrageous views.

Nor were they alone, for this wader-friendly habitat was teeming with other waders besides. Many active and vocal Wood Sandpiper were evident, and as they moved around the area Jon picked out a Green Sandpiper in their midst. Other waders present included Ringed and Little Ringed Plover, Dunlin, and Common Snipe. All of these shared the area with dozens of showy Glossy Ibis, and egrets in all shapes and sizes – Little, Great White, and Cattle all being duly recorded.

Our attention wasn't wholly on the birds, for on the tracks themselves were some distractions. Impossible to ignore were the dragonflies – Broad Scarlet were particularly numerous and eye-catching, their name perfectly describing them; while Northern Banded Groundling dogged our steps as we meandered along the tracks. Hunting actively over the flooded fields were Lesser Emperor and Long Skimmer, both occasionally



coming to rest a while on the reeds in the ditches that bordered the fields. Simon's keen eye found our first Common Bluetail in these liminal areas.



Swallowtail © Will

A shout went up early on for Plain Tiger, and these magnificent flaming butterflies were to prove to be regularly seen during the afternoon, some very freshly emerged and in pristine condition. The same could be said of the Swallowtail that settled obligingly in front of Will and Simon – an immaculate insect, and far from the only one of its kind here – a profusion of fennel, their larval foodplant, growing at the

tracksides no doubt explaining their relative profusion.

Our first Mediterranean Skippers were found – while not, with the best will in the world, as ostentatiously beautiful as Plain Tiger or Swallowtail, they have a subtle charm all their own. Speaking of subtle, one of Europe's smallest butterflies was also on the wing, though something of a challenge to follow in flight as they are so very tiny, and fly fast at low level – African Grass Blue was a species that rewarded some patience and applied effort if it was to be seen at rest. A relative giant by comparison, we also found Lang's Short-tailed Blue here.



African Grass Blue © Ann

We had to reluctantly tear ourselves away from this abundance of life, and make our way south to our accommodation for the week, a truly delightful boutique hotel in a small rural town. We elected to take the scenic route out of the paddyfields rather than the most direct route to the main road – ten minutes added to our journey was, we decided, likely to be



Lang's Short-tailed Blue © Andrew

time well spent if it increased our chances of some good bird encounters, and so it proved. We found ourselves having to drive around Cattle Egrets in the road, enjoyed close encounters with a couple of Squacco Heron in the adjacent paddyfields, and had close views of Marsh Harrier as it quartered low over the fields.

Settled in to our comfortable hotel, and over the first of a week's worth of delicious meals courtesy

of their fine restaurant, we looked back on the afternoon's wildlife. Vernon summed it up well – "you should have saved this to the last day, it's been that good!" – but we were confident we could continue to deliver wildlife encounters of this quality throughout the week. As long as the weather played ball...

Day 2 – Monday 2nd September

Our plan going into today had been that we should spend the morning at the Pego Marshes, starting the day with some of Pau's university colleagues at their bird ringing station here. The weather forecast had worsened overnight, and we awoke to find yesterday's blue skies and sunshine had been replaced by low, dark grey cloud and the threat of imminent heavy rain.

When we heard the ringers had abandoned their ringing session before it began, putting their mist-nets away as it had started to rain at the Pego Marshes, we made the sensible decision to vary the daily itinerary, and head down the coast towards Alicante, in search of better conditions and different birds.

The road network here, as in much of Spain, is of excellent quality and it was an easy drive past the incongruity of Benidorm to more salubrious habitat for our purposes – the network of lakes at Clot del Galvany. We spent the morning making our way slowly around the reserve here, enjoying excellent birding opportunities from the well-positioned hides, and finding some notable dragonflies and other insects on the margins of the wide paths that connected them.

Chief among our birding targets here were two rare ducks – the highly endangered Marbled Duck, and the somewhat less beleaguered White-headed Duck. We found both readily enough here, and enjoyed some close views. Greater



Flamingo was on our list the previous day courtesy of a single bird, but here there were many dozens of these outrageously pink and large birds, feeding actively before us. Careful scanning from the hides revealed other treasures, amongst them Whiskered Tern, a winter-plumaged Black-necked Grebe, and two Little Bittern.



Upon leaving the first hide, Pau had no sooner told us to pay close attention for Black Percher, a scarce dragonfly that's common in Africa but at the very edge of its range on the Iberian Peninsula, than Simon calmly pointed one out at our very feet! This obliging female was to prove extremely popular, and no wonder – she was the first of her kind for many of us, and she posed incredibly well for photographs. Nearby, Ann

found a stunning red colour morph Egyptian Locust, a most dramatic insect indeed.



Ann and Will's keen eyes were also rewarded with the discovery of a pair of mating cicada – the buzzing calls of these insects was a constant soundtrack to the morning, and we'd seen their abandoned exuviae on the wooden railings that bordered some of the pathways, but actually seeing an adult cicada can be rather tricky, let alone find two in cop. Love was also in the air for a pair of Long Skimmer, a dragonfly species that showed particularly well here this morning. Additional dragonflies for our list today came in the form of our first examples of Black-tailed Skimmer.

Lunch was a civilised affair, sat at tables in welcome deep shade beneath large trees at the edge of the reserve. The weather here was hot and sunny, with not a sniff of rain, and

we'd made the most of it throughout the morning. After lunch, we moved a little way along the coast to check out some salt pans that had been boiling with birds, according to some of Pau's friends, the previous day. Bird migration waits for no man, and we found them rather quiet, though some extraordinarily confiding Collared Pratincole were much admired, and a Red-veined Darter was also a well-photographed poser.



We had hoped for Slender-billed Gull here but, in their absence, Pau simply took us to another salt pan where he was confident we should find them and, of course, his local knowledge was once again to prove invaluable – we found a small roosting flock of these attractively pink-flushed gulls and, with them, an adult Audouin's Gull as a pleasant bonus. All of these rather distracted from the confiding Avocet that greeted our arrival, and the calmly siphoning Greater Flamingo that stalked the water beyond!

Our final stop of the afternoon was an important one – at a site on the coast further north where we hoped to find Desert Orange Tip. This African species has a few pioneering colonies on the Spanish coast, chiefly along the southern

seaboard – our site is surely one of the furthest north points in which Desert Orange Tip can be seen anywhere in the world. The butterflies are, understandably, obsessed with their larval foodplant, Caper Bush *Capparis spinosa*. Having parked at a small beach car park, we made our way a little uphill, looking in the vicinity of Caper Bush for the butterflies.

At first glance, we were dismayed to find several areas of Caper Bush desiccated and looking rather sorry for themselves – perhaps victims of the intense heat of July in this region of

Spain. However, we searched undaunted and found several lush plants in sheltered spots



Black Wheatear © Gillian

and, near these, several Desert Orange Tip on the wing. They proved to be extremely mobile in the absence of many flowering plants at which to pause and take nectar but, eventually, everyone enjoyed close views of a male insect. Our time searching wasn't without its other rewards, for we found ourselves sharing the stony clifftop area with some fine Black Wheatear for company.

Day 3 – Tuesday 3rd September

As with all of our tours, we keep a weather eye on the weather forecasts and, where applicable and practical, vary the order of the weekly itinerary in order to minimise weather disruption and maximise valuable and productive time in the field. With this in mind, and with a very ominous and unsettled forecast for the next couple of days, we decided to bring forward our local day with Two-tailed Pasha the principle target in order to ensure we had a decent chance to try to see this king of the Vanessids.

A short drive brought us high into the hills a little way inland and, after we'd taken our vehicles a little way up a forest track to a suitable parking area, we walked along the face of the hills towards an old, isolated homestead surrounded by orchards of olive, sweet chestnut, vines and a few fig trees. It was the latter that interested us – as they are of particular interest to Two-tailed Pasha at this time of year, as the insects cannot resist the lure of overripe figs bursting with sweet juice.

To our dismay, we found all the fig trees in a parlous state, their leaves lying dead on the ground around them, their branches starkly bare. Only a couple of trees bore one or two tiny, desiccated figs. Some terrible event had plainly overcome them earlier in the summer – perhaps the unusually extreme heat of July. They would not be acting as Two-tailed Pasha magnets for us, so we would have to find the insects the old-fashioned way – hoping for an encounter with a wandering insect, or one attracted to animal faeces. (Their tastes extend dubiously in that direction too).

For the next three hours, with a break back at the vehicles for lunch, we scoured the track. Strawberry Trees – the larval foodplant – were very much in healthy evidence in the forest above and beneath us. While it was pleasantly warm, the weather wasn't helpful – broken cloud came and went, and sunny intervals were obstinately not extending for significant periods of time. Fortunately the alternative – heavy rain – did not materialise, though rumbles of thunder in the distance told us other areas were getting a soaking. A few fat, warm drops fell our way at midday, but soon dwindled to nothing.



Bath White © Mark



Epaulette Skimmer © Mark

Just before lunchtime, our first sighting materialised – an insect passing over the clearing in which we were parked, at canopy height, found by Pau and seen also by Jon and Simon. This, together with Holly Blue and Bath White, were the sum total of the butterflies all morning – though we'd been enjoying some forest birding too, with Firecrest, Coal Tit and Short-toed Treecreeper all much in evidence around us.

After lunch, back on the hunt, it was Will's turn to get lucky – he bumped into two Two-tailed Pasha though, once again, they were frustratingly mobile and didn't settle for him.

We opted to move downhill for the afternoon, to a site that we knew would deliver the goods of another kind – an area of damp, seeping water below a spring and beside an old village wash-house, beloved of dragonflies in this otherwise generally arid, inland area. We arrived to find it boiling with activity – mainly Epaulette Skimmer, another chiefly African species; and many Broad Scarlet also. The skimmers were much admired and duly photographed. When we arrived, Pau and Jon saw an Orange-winged Dropwing in the air, and after a while Pau relocated this in a small field beside the seep.

While the group were stalking this desirable insect, we began to find more butterflies in the same weedy area at the field margins – more African Grass Blue, less animated and more approachable than those we'd seen on arrivals day, and a delightfully confiding Mediterranean Skipper too. Back at the seep, an emperor swept in, and proved to be a useful case study into the finer features of female emperor identification. Initially thought to be a Blue Emperor, careful scrutiny revealed it to



Mediterranean Skipper © Gillian



Iberian Water Frog © Gillian

be the blue form of female Lesser Emperor, Simon securing a useful in flight shot of the never-settling individual that helped clinch his suspicion of its true identity. Just as we were leaving, a Swallowtail flew into the area, and for a few furious seconds was pursued with great vigour by the Lesser Emperor before it flew strongly and quickly away from the incipient danger.

A final stop at some old monastic ice-ponds was made before we headed for home – this was a speculative stop hoping for more Orange-winged Dropwing and perhaps our first Desert Darter, but the gathering dark blue-grey clouds overhead, stiffening wind, and falling temperatures meant we were fighting an uphill battle to see any dragonflies

whatsoever – a Red-veined Darter being the best we could do. However, sharp eyes were finding other wildlife besides – Iberian Water Frog and Iberian Rock Lizard were both duly admired.

The drive home was well-timed, as the heavens now opened with a vengeance, truly dramatic and torrential rain that we were glad to have dodged. While the day had been frustrating from a Two-tailed Pasha perspective, we'd made the best of it, and come away with some targets under our belts, most notably well-seen Epaulette Skimmer.

Day 4 – Wednesday 4th September

The weather forecast was unequivocal about today – in the vicinity of our hotel base, there was to be apocalyptic rain. We had absolutely no intention of hanging around to have our day disrupted by that! As we loaded our vehicles to set off, the first ominous rumbles of thunder in the distance began to draw closer, and to intensify in both volume and duration.



Striped Grayling © Andrew

The first large, hazelnut-sized hailstone to fall bounced off Pau's head, and was the final warning before the storm broke properly overhead.

But by the time it did, we were on the road and heading south, away from the weather. We soon broke out of the rain and, by the time we reached our first stop of the day, in the arid and corrugated hills near to Alicante, the sun was firmly out in a blue sky. We began to walk a level

track that ran along the top of one of the valleys, distracted initially by a showy Red-veined Darter and, in due course, by one of our targets for the day – the first of several confiding Striped Grayling, this one found by Andrew, surely the most beautiful of all the grayling butterfly family with its jagged 'dazzle' camouflage black stripes breaking up its outline to tremendous effect. This first individual of its kind posed incredibly obligingly for all to enjoy and take their time with their cameras.

Black Wheatear were evident in the landscape, and Thekla Lark were vocal and on the wing around us. Blue Rock Thrush was also noted here, while a Painted Lady was new for the trip – a decidedly scarce species anywhere in Western Europe this year after persistent northerlies afflicted weeks of the spring to ill effect for all migrants. Bath White were also noted as we returned to our vehicles for a short drive further inland to a site well-known to Pau...



Red-veined Darter © Ann

Here the birding highlights continued apace – Serin were singing, as were more Black Wheatear and Blue Rock Thrush. A small flock of Red-rumped Swallow passed overhead, and a confiding Western Black-eared Wheatear hunted moths for a while in front of us.

More Striped Grayling were found here, and our first Wall Brown of the week too. However, the site saved its best until last – a pair of Bonelli’s Eagle powering along the bluff that loomed above us.



Red-knobbed Coot © Andrew

Pressing further south, we arrived at Fondo at lunchtime – our picnic plans slightly disrupted upon arrival by a small feeding flock of Bee-eater hawking insects overhead! Lunch was taken in the shade here, but there were ample distractions all around us to sharpen our appetites and threaten indigestion for bolting our food... the pools around us gave us our first views

of both Red-knobbed Coot and Western Swamphen. The Coot and Moorhen we’re so familiar with at home had seriously levelled up in these colourful Iberian counterparts!

While watching these, we were further distracted by the first of several Plain Tiger, including one female that intently laid her eggs on the low hedge around the picnic area, mere inches away from our hungry cameras. Another Mediterranean Skipper was also found – these unassuming skippers might go easily overlooked, were we not intent on recording all we could find this week.



Western Swamphen © Don

After lunch, we set out to walk the boardwalks that carry visitors right through the heart of the wetlands at Fondo. This wonderful reserve provides unbeatable views of its avian treasures – we enjoyed Red-knobbed Coots feeding beside us, at times too close to focus upon; and White-headed Duck nearby too. Flyover Squacco Heron added to the colour, while more Western Swamphen and Greater Flamingo added to the kaleidoscope.



Long Skimmer © Ann

Our attention was frequently drawn to dragonflies – starting with a confiding female Indigo Dropwing near the visitor centre, and ending with an inky male Black Percher at the end of the boardwalk. In between, we saw countless Broad Scarlet, Lesser Emperor and Long Skimmer – the latter displaying its predatory credentials on several occasions, including killing and consuming other dragonflies.

Our return to the vehicles for the journey home coincided with curdling clouds overhead and a stiffening breeze that rocked the Red-knobbed Coots on the increasingly choppy waters of their shallow feeding pools. The storm we’d left far behind us in the north that morning had made its way south during the day... We avoided getting wet, leaving just

before it broke. We headed north, feeling pleased with all we'd seen today – and celebrated with an ice cream before we returned to our hotel and the prospect of another delicious evening meal.

Day 5 – Thursday 5th September

Our destination today were the steppe landscapes way inland from our almost coastal base for the week – though good roads made light work of the distance. Arriving mid-morning at our first stop for the day, we were greeted by a hunting Marsh Harrier, the first of several Common Buzzard, and numerous hovering Kestrel – we had high hopes that we might bump into a new raptor or two in this productive area.

Spotless Starling and an Iberian Grey Shrike were also seen, all to a soundtrack of Crested Lark demanding we 'look at me' as their call seems to phonetically suggest. Linda and Alan meanwhile had invertebrates on their minds, finding first an Ornate Shieldbug and then a large European Mantis, the latter much admired and photographed by all. Jon found our first Clouded Yellow and Common Blue in the area in the meanwhile, while the first of many Bath White for the day were also noted.



Birding © Ann

We headed off-road next, using the stony tracks that criss-cross the steppe to explore the extensive, enormous landscape, our quarry the world's heaviest flying bird, Great Bustard. We made several stops to scan to the horizons, but alas to no avail – they simply couldn't be found today. Instead, further new birds were seen – Short-toed Lark, numerous Hoopoe, Northern Wheatear, Little Owl... our bird list was growing for the week.

With lunchtime approaching, we made our way across the steppe to a small natural lake that, with a ruderal field skirting one flank, makes for a picnic site with some natural history diversions. Indeed, this is a Natura site, so important is it for wildfowl, in particular the



Iberian Scarce Swallowtail © Ann

endangered White-headed Duck. To Pau's evident dismay – and our collective disappointment – the lake was reduced to a fraction of its former extent, whether by water abstraction for surround agriculture or as a consequence of the heat of July and August it was unclear. Pau took images to send to colleagues working in conservation.

We meanwhile concentrated our attention on first our picnic lunch and, secondly, the ruderal fields beside the lake. While not, at first glance, particularly flowery, with some closer attention they began to yield treasures in the form of several new butterfly species. The first, rather prosaically, was none other than Large White – a species the vegetable growers

amongst us are, of course, all too familiar with back at home. The next, however, was of a different calibre altogether – a fine Iberian Scarce Swallowtail. This magnificent insect at first was feeding hungrily from flowers in front of us, but latterly settled to bask on the bare earth, providing superlative views. Remarkably, given how late in the butterfly season it was, its tails were intact and in good order – this was a butterfly that had avoided the attention of predators throughout its life.



Cardinal © Gillian

The same could not be said of a Dusky Meadow Brown found nearby by Pau – this had rather tatty wings, showing the consequences of a life spent largely at ground level, where grass, lizards and birds could all contribute to wear and tear on a butterfly. Andrew, however, found and photographed another in better condition, and also bumped into Southern Gatekeeper for good measure.

We tore ourselves away from here for one last transect across the steppe looking for the elusive bustards. While they were obstinately nowhere to be seen, our final stop and scan of the broad horizons was decidedly successful for two other famously large and striking species... The first was unmissable – a Golden Eagle hunting before us, at one point stooping down and presumably successfully catching something small, for it stayed out of sight for some time before taking to the air once more. Our second prize was thanks to Simon's sharp eyes – while examining the underwings of Common Blue, a fritillary sped past him. Jon, in hot pursuit of the insect, managed to overtake it and steer it back towards the group where, fortunately, it found some flowers to alight upon at the side of the road – a female Cardinal! Not the largest example of this generally substantial fritillary, it was nonetheless a very welcome find and, while it fed, we could see the lovely, characteristic cherry red of the underside of the forewing.

We made one further stop on the way back to our hotel, and this was to prove a spectacularly successful one. A riverside site quite near to the hotel promised dragonflies, and delivered them in some style. The river Serpis is broad and shallow here, and there are a couple of deeper, still pools fringed with reeds that add to the attraction. Invasive alien plant species have been cleared from the banks of the river, and native plants are reclaiming the riverside margins, adding significantly to their biodiversity.



Orange-winged Dropwing © Andrew

The first dragonflies that were evident were many sapphire Blue Emperor on the wing, patrolling singularly but at times flying in small interactive squadrons past us. We soon found a fine male Orange-winged Dropwing, and nearby the first of two fine male Violet Dropwing also, the latter particularly posing well for photographs. Nearby, Andrew



African Grass Blue © Gillian

discovered a roosting *helice* Clouded Yellow, while African Grass Blue were particularly abundant over weedy roadside areas.

A little way upstream, one particular area of riverbank was the home of a small colony of Copper Demoiselle, another new insect for us. Time spent here was particularly fruitful, for we also discovered Small Red Damsel and, the icing on the cake, a male White Featherleg for good measure. Today had been a long day, but our efforts had been substantially rewarded at the last.

Day 6 – Friday 6th September

Our final full day in the field was to be a much more local affair, and was one that promised ample photographic opportunities of butterflies and, in particular, dragonflies from start to finish.

We began by making our way onto the Pego Marshes, a site particularly familiar to Pau as it's home to a bird ringing station that's been recording the breeding and visiting migrant birds of the marshes for decades – data gathering that's informed Pau's university work. We were privileged to spend an hour watching one of the scientists at work here processing birds their 100 metres of mist-net had captured – amongst them new species for us, including Willow Warbler, Savi's Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, and Moustached Warbler. The latter in particular was greatly admired – a wonderful confection of dark chocolate and milk chocolate brown shades, and purest snow white. Of similar aesthetic appeal, the opportunity to see a Kingfisher at such close quarters was similarly well received.



Plain Tiger © Will

We had time to also wander the tracks that intersected the marshes here. The drive in had revealed many dozens of Plain Tiger here, so these were welcome photographic subjects for us. Distractions came in the form of many Long Skimmer, including our first female individuals, Northern Banded Groundling, and more Broad Scarlet, Lesser Emperor, and Bluetail.



Northern Banded Groundling © Andrew

A very short drive took us to a different section of the marshes, where a small river flowed slowly through the landscape. We followed a path at the riverside, and discovered it held many male Violet Dropwing, each posing better for the cameras than the last! An Osprey soared high overhead, while still more Blue Emperor hurtled up and down the river course.



Osprey © Ann

Back at our vehicles, a shady area of trees and picnic tables made for a good lunch site – as did the numerous hirundines that fed over the reeds before us, with some Red-rumped Swallow in their number, and a handful of low-flying Pallid Swift too. Lunch concluded with a Lang’s Short-tailed Blue paying us a visit, and then we set off inland, heading upstream into the mountains where the River Serpis is a mere stream.

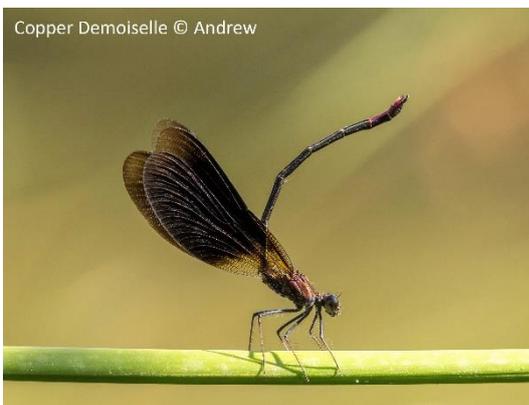
Vehicular access to the well-wooded source of the river is restricted, so we knew we’d need to park and walk in to the site. As there’s a fairly long, albeit smooth and tarmacked, walk down to the river, some of the group elected to not walk the entire way down – but between us, scattered along the lane, we did rather well here... The first of our unseen dragonfly targets quickly obliged, with a male Keeled Skimmer seen shortly after arrival. Desert Darter, on the other hand, wasn’t to be seen at the lowest elevation, but several confiding male Orange-winged Dropwing amply made up for its absence, providing excellent photographic opportunities.

New butterflies came in quick succession – our first of what proved to be several Sage Skipper; a Wood White found by Linda’s sharp eyes; Simon spotted a fine male Adonis Blue; while Gillian found a Small White, a butterfly that sped off uphill and needed Jon to race after it to clinch the identification. (Jon had already had some practice in this regard, having heard raised voices earlier and rushed to check everyone was okay – to find that they were more than merely okay, and were revelling in the sight of a magnificent female European Mantis feasting upon a juicy fly, found by Annie and Will!)



Mantid with prey © Ann

On our homebound journey we stopped once more at the riverside site that had proved so productive and enjoyable the previous afternoon. And this time, it delivered still more delights – another Keeled Skimmer, and more photogenic Copper Demoiselle and White Featherleg than we had previously seen here, amongst others. Those who had yet to get to grips with images of the diminutive African Grass Blue were able to take their time here and do so in the warm evening sunshine.



Copper Demoiselle © Andrew

We eventually returned to the hotel, camera memory cards bulging. This had been a fine finale to the week. The kitchen staff excelled themselves this evening with a truly spectacular seafood fideuà, a local dish that had captured the



imagination of a number of our group during the week. No two iterations of it were ever the same, depending on what the local fish markets had provided that morning – and tonight, we found ourselves with a varied feast that included lobster!

Fideuà is a good metaphor for the week we'd just enjoyed – a mixture of all manner of good things blended together into one satisfying dish. We'd seen terrific birds, butterflies and dragonflies of all shapes, sizes, and colours – and other wildlife besides, from endemic peas to colourful Orthoptera. Our hotel had been a delight, with friendly and helpful staff and delicious food. There'd really been something for everyone.

Pau and Jon would particularly like to thank the group for joining them in Valencia, for their tireless good humour and fine company, and for their sharp eyes – we never take the group effort for granted, but this week our group really excelled themselves in finding fabulous wildlife for the benefit of one another. Thank you, one and all – we look forward to seeing you again someday soon.



POSTSCRIPT

Departure day went smoothly for all concerned, with the group dividing in two depending on their respective departure times from Valencia. Those leaving later in the day had the luxury of some more time with Pau in Albufera, which proved to be productive, with some past highlights revisited, including a mating pair of Plain Tiger found by Will; and some new species added – for the butterflies, two Monarch; and Night Heron, Tree Sparrow, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Temminck's Stint for the birds.

Newsletter – if you'd like to join our mailing list and be the first to hear of new tours and special offers, you can join the Mariposa Nature Tours family on www.mariposanature.com

Social media - For the most up to the minute news of what we're seeing, give us a follow on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or YouTube, and see live sightings from the field, photos and videos, and all the very latest Mariposa Nature Tours news.

 [FACEBOOK](#)

 [TWITTER](#)

 [INSTAGRAM](#)

 [YOUTUBE](#)

AUTUMN WILDLIFE IN VALENCIA 1-7 SEPTEMBER 2024								
	Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
	Butterflies							
1	Swallowtail <i>Papilio Machaon</i>	✓		✓		✓		
2	Sage Skipper <i>Muschampia proto</i>						✓	
3	Marbled Skipper <i>Carcharodus alceae</i>							
4	Mediterranean Skipper <i>Gegenes nostrodamus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		
5	Wood White <i>Leptidea sinapis</i>						✓	
6	Bath White <i>Pontia daplidice</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	
7	Brimstone <i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>							
8	Clouded Yellow <i>Colias crocea</i>					✓		
9	Large White <i>Pieris brassicae</i>					✓		
10	Small White <i>Pieris rapae</i>						✓	
11	Desert Orange Tip <i>Colotis evagore</i>		✓					
12	Plain Tiger <i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	✓			✓		✓	✓
13	Two-tailed Pasha <i>Charaxes jasius</i>			✓	✓			
14	Wall Brown <i>Lasiommata megera</i>				✓	✓		
15	Speckled Wood <i>Pararge aegeria</i>			✓				
16	Meadow Brown <i>Maniola jurtina</i>							
17	Southern Gatekeeper <i>Pyronia cecilia</i>					✓		
18	Striped Grayling <i>Hipparchia fidia</i>				✓			
19	Rock Grayling <i>Hipparchia hermione</i>							
20	Painted Lady <i>Vanessa cardui</i>				✓	✓		
21	Red Admiral <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>							
22	Common Blue <i>Polyommatus icarus</i>					✓		
23	Adonis Blue <i>Polyommatus bellargus</i>						✓	
24	Lang's Short-tailed Blue <i>Leptotes pirithous</i>	✓				✓	✓	
25	Holly Blue <i>Celastrina argiolus</i>			✓			✓	
26	African Grass Blue <i>Zizeeria knysna</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓	
#	Dusky Meadow Brown <i>Hyponephele lycaon</i>					✓		
#	Iberian Scarce Swallowtail <i>Iphiclides feisthamelii</i>					✓	✓	
#	Cardinal <i>Argynnis pandora</i>					✓		
#	Long-tailed Blue <i>Lampides boeticus</i>						✓	
#	Monarch <i>Danaus plexippus</i>							✓
	Dragonflies & Damselflies NB – there are many synonyms for common names. We have used nomenclature of Europe's Dragonflies (Smallshire & Swash, Princeton 2020)							
1	Copper Demoiselle <i>Calopteryx haemorrhoidalis</i>					✓	✓	
2	Common Bluetail <i>Ischnura elegans</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Common Bluet Damselfly <i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>							

	Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
4	Blue-eye <i>Erythromma lindenii</i>					✓	✓	
5	Small Red Damsel <i>Ceragrion tenellum</i>					✓	✓	
6	White Featherleg <i>Platycnemis latipes</i>					✓	✓	
7	Migrant Spreadwing <i>Lestes barbarus</i>							
8	Migrant Hawker <i>Aeshna mixta</i>							
9	Blue Emperor <i>Anax imperator</i>					✓	✓	
10	Lesser Emperor <i>Anax Parthenope</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11	Keeled Skimmer <i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>						✓	
12	Epaulet Skimmer <i>Orthetrum chrysostigma</i>			✓	✓			
13	Long Skimmer <i>Orthetrum trinacria</i>	✓	✓		✓		✓	
14	Black-tailed Skimmer <i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>		✓		✓			
15	Red-veined Darter <i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16	Desert Darter <i>Sympetrum sinaiticum</i>							
17	Broad Scarlet <i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
18	Violet Dropwing <i>Trithemis annulata</i>				✓	✓	✓	
19	Orange-winged Dropwing <i>Trithemis kirbyi</i>			✓		✓	✓	
20	Northern Banded Groundling <i>Brachythemis impartita</i>	✓					✓	
#	Black Percher <i>Diplacodes lefebvrii</i>		✓		✓			
	Birds							
1	Shelduck							
2	Mallard	✓	✓				✓	
3	Gadwall		✓					
4	Shoveler		✓				✓	
5	Marbled Duck		✓					
6	Pochard							
7	Red-crested Pochard		✓					
8	White-headed Duck		✓		✓			
9	Red-legged Partridge							
10	Little Grebe		✓		✓			
11	Great Crested Grebe							
12	Black-necked Grebe		✓					
13	Great Cormorant							
14	Little Bittern		✓				✓	
15	Night Heron							✓
16	Squacco Heron	✓			✓		✓	✓
17	Cattle Egret	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
18	Little Egret	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
19	Great White Egret	✓	✓				✓	
20	Grey Heron	✓	✓		✓		✓	
21	Purple Heron				✓		✓	✓
22	Spoonbill							
23	Glossy Ibis	✓	✓				✓	
24	Greater Flamingo	✓	✓		✓			

	Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
25	Short-toed Eagle						✓	
26	Osprey						✓	
27	Marsh Harrier	✓				✓		✓
28	Montagu's Harrier							
29	Common Buzzard					✓		
30	Common Kestrel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
31	Sparrowhawk							
32	Water Rail							
33	Moorhen	✓	✓		✓			
34	Common Coot		✓		✓			
35	Red-knobbed Coot				✓			
36	Western Swamphen				✓		✓	
37	Great Bustard							
38	Oystercatcher							
39	Black-winged Stilt	✓	✓					
40	Avocet		✓					
41	Stone Curlew							
42	Collared Pratincole	✓	✓					✓
43	Little Ringed Plover	✓						✓
44	Ringed Plover	✓	✓					
45	Kentish Plover							
46	Lapwing					✓		
47	Sanderling							
48	Little Stint							
49	Dunlin	✓						
50	Curlew Sandpiper							
51	Green Sandpiper	✓					✓	✓
52	Wood Sandpiper	✓						✓
53	Common Sandpiper							
54	Redshank							
55	Greenshank							
56	Black-tailed Godwit							
57	Common Snipe	✓				✓		
58	Ruff							
59	Black-headed Gull		✓		✓			
60	Mediterranean Gull		✓					
61	Yellow-legged Gull	✓	✓					
62	Lesser Black-backed Gull							✓
63	Audouin's Gull		✓					
64	Slender-billed Gull		✓					
65	Whiskered Tern	✓	✓					
66	White-winged Black Tern							
67	Black Tern		✓					
68	Common Tern		✓					
69	Caspian Tern							

	Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
70	Sandwich Tern							
71	Little Tern		✓					
72	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
73	Woodpigeon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
74	Turtle Dove		✓	✓				
75	Collared Dove	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
76	Swift							
77	Pallid Swift		✓				✓	
78	Little Owl					✓	✓	
79	Kingfisher		✓		✓		✓	
80	Bee-eater				✓	✓	✓	
81	Hoopoe		✓			✓	✓	
82	Crested Lark					✓		
83	Thekla Lark				✓			
84	Short-toed Lark					✓		
85	Sand Martin	✓						
86	Crag Martin							
87	House Martin	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
88	Swallow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
89	Red-rumped Swallow				✓			
90	Yellow Wagtail	✓						✓
91	White Wagtail			✓		✓	✓	
92	Wren							
93	Robin			✓				
94	Bluethroat							
95	Whinchat							
96	Northern Wheatear					✓		
97	Black Wheatear		✓		✓			
98	Blue Rock Thrush				✓			
99	Blackbird	✓	✓					
100	Blackcap							
101	Sardinian Warbler		✓	✓	✓		✓	
102	Western Subalpine Warbler							
103	Moustached Warbler						✓	
104	Zitting Cisticola	✓						
105	Savi's Warbler						✓	
106	Cetti's Warbler				✓		✓	
107	Reed Warbler						✓	
108	Great Reed Warbler						✓	
109	Willow Warbler						✓	
110	Firecrest			✓			✓	
111	Spotted Flycatcher							
112	Blue Tit							
113	Great Tit						✓	
114	Long-tailed Tit						✓	

	Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
115	Short-toed Treecreeper			✓				
116	Iberian Grey Shrike					✓		
117	Magpie	✓			✓	✓	✓	
118	Jay			✓				
119	Raven							
120	Spotless Starling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
121	House Sparrow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
122	Tree Sparrow							✓
123	Rock Sparrow							
124	Chaffinch						✓	
125	Greenfinch						✓	
126	Goldfinch			✓	✓	✓		
127	Linnet					✓		
128	Serin				✓		✓	
129	Common Crossbill						✓	
130	Corn Bunting							
131	Rock Bunting							
132	Common Waxbill						✓	
#	Coal Tit			✓				
#	Stonechat			✓				
#	Black Redstart			✓				
#	Bonelli's Eagle				✓			
#	Western Black-eared Wheatear				✓			
#	Golden Eagle					✓		
#	Stock Dove					✓		
#	Carrion Crow					✓		
#	Temminck's Stint							✓
	Miscellaneous Flora & Fauna							
	Iberian Rock Lizard			✓				
	Iberian Water Frog			✓	✓		✓	
	Red-waisted Wasp		✓	✓				
	Blue-winged Grasshopper	✓	✓	✓			✓	
	Egyptian Locust		✓					
	<i>Tabanus sp</i> horsefly				✓			
	European Paper Wasp				✓			
	European Mantis					✓	✓	
	European Firebug			✓		✓		
	<i>Scoliid sp</i> wasp					✓		
	Black-banded Spider Wasp					✓		
	Rabbit				✓	✓		
	Ornate Shieldbug					✓		
	Wasp Spider						✓	
	Wool Carder Bee						✓	

	Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
	Viperine Snake						✓	

Guests' Galleries

All images that follow were kindly shared by tour participants.



Images © Ann



Images © Ann



Images © Ann



Images © Will



Images © Don



Images © Mark



Images © Mark



Images © Gillian



Images © Gillian



Images © Gillian



Images © Andrew

And finally... If you like the sound of Autumn Wildlife in Valencia, the 2025 tour is available to book on our website:

[Autumn Wildlife in Valencia](#)

Alternatively, we have other tours with availability in spring / summer 2025 that explore other wonderful parts of Spain! Here are just a few...

[Spring Butterflies of Central and Northern Spain](#)

[Summer Butterflies of the Spanish Pyrenees](#)

[Butterflies of the Picos de Europa](#)

[Autumn in Andalusia](#)