

Autumn Wildlife in Valencia

Mariposa Nature Tours trip report

2nd-7th September 2025



Tour leader Pau Lucio

Trip report kindly written by Barrie S

Images kindly shared by our guests

(Images above, clockwise from top left: Black Percher (Allan), Plain Tiger (Barrie), Red-knobbed Coot (Paul), Grey Heron art (Anita))



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Introduction

Valencia Province in early autumn offers the exciting prospect of watching a wide variety of interesting wildlife. The focus of this tour was birds, late summer butterflies and dragonflies, the latter included a number of African species that have recently colonised this part of Spain. The holiday was based in the municipality of Villalonga, some 80 km south of the city of Valencia, an ideal location for exploring the delights of Valencia Province.

The tour was led by local naturalist Pau Lucio, who has an outstanding knowledge of the area and its wildlife, which was enthusiastically shared with the guests. The guests taking part on the tour were Paul, Allan, Barrie and Anita.

What follows is a daily diary, followed by species lists and guest galleries.

Day 1 – Tuesday 2nd September

All of the guests had arrived in Spain beforehand ensuring an easy and stress-free start to the tour. Pau met Paul at his hotel close to Valencia Airport and then collected Allan, Barrie and Anita, who had arrived on Saturday, from their hotel close to Albufera National Park. The trip



Greater Flamingo © Barrie

got off to a good start as a **Plain Tiger** was seen in the hotel garden, and had Pau and Paul arrived a few minutes earlier, they would have seen two **Turtle Dove** that were also in the garden.

Our first stop at a series of paddyfields on the edge of Albufera NP where, as soon as we arrived, two **Osprey** were seen flying high overhead. Instantly noticeable on the paddyfields were the stately **Greater Flamingo**, some beautiful pinkish adults,

and others their duller brownish offspring, and many **Glossy Ibis** and egrets. The pools were teeming with a variety of waders. *Calidris* waders were particularly well represented with many **Ruff**, **Dunlin** in a variety of plumages, both adult and juvenile **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Little Stint** and a much scarcer **Temminck's Stint**.

Wood Sandpiper were numerous, and other waders included **Black-winged Stilt**, **Avocet**, **Ringed Plover** and **Little Ringed Plover** and the non-wader-like wader, the **Collared Pratincole**, which hawked insects in a manner so reminiscent of Swallows. Two species of tern were seen: two huge **Caspian Tern** displaying their massive carrot-like bills as they flew over the paddyfields and the much daintier **Whiskered Tern**, which sat unobtrusively amongst the feeding waders. Many dragonflies were hunting over the pools, and we had close views of some of these in the channels alongside the path. The most attractive and sought after was the aptly named **Broad Scarlet** with its dazzling red abdomen,



Collared Pratincole © Barrie



also seen too were **Lesser Emperor**, **Long Skimmer** and **Black-tailed Skimmer**. One of the area's speciality butterflies, the very localised **Mediterranean Skipper** was present in small numbers in the vegetation alongside the path. Although not the most aesthetically pleasing of butterflies, they were a highly desired target on this trip.

After this introduction to Valencia's wildlife, we had a relaxing lunch at a roadside café, where bocadillos and meatballs in ratatouille were enjoyed by the team, followed by coffees. Our afternoon began at another series of paddyfields close to El Palmar and while on the approach road, to everyone's delight, we came across several **Plain Tiger**. The bird life on the pools was very similar to the morning, with **Greater Flamingo** and **Glossy Ibis** being instantly noticeable. Again, many waders were present and **Snipe**, **Whimbrel** and **Greenshank** were added to our growing wader tally, and a **Gull-billed Tern** flew in too. A **Marsh Harrier** was seen flying in the distance, but without doubt our most exciting sighting here was a **Booted Eagle**. Few butterflies were seen, but several **Lang's Short-tailed Blue** were present, including a mating pair found by Allan.



We left the Albufera area and Pau drove us through a series of reedbeds and more paddyfields towards a small nature reserve. We saw a **Squacco Heron** in one of the roadside ditches, and large numbers of **Lesser Black-backed Gull** and **Glossy Ibis** that had congregated in the fields. A feature on the journey were the bird murals painted on the walls of some of the farm buildings; we saw paintings of Buzzard and Grey Heron. The reserve had a viewing screen that overlooked a small pool

where **Swallow** were congregating on dead branches before undertaking their journey south for winter. Suddenly, a **Squacco Heron** flew into one of the poolside trees, and as we scoped it, we found a family of **Night Heron**, a pair of adults and two juveniles, in the same tree. At another pool, we saw a **Red-eared Terrapin** *Trachemys scripta elegans*, which is an invasive species, as were the **Red Crayfish** *Procambarus clarkii* we saw elsewhere on the reserve.

On the paths were many **Northern Banded Groundling**, which seemed to follow our every step, often settling right by our feet. We saw two of the area's speciality butterflies, **Mediterranean Skipper** and the tiny **African Grass Blue**, and a **Swallowtail**, before Paul cried out "Violet Dropwing!" We rushed over to him, and there perched over a channel was the

most stunning insect, and many images that were taken before we left the reserve. We made our way south to Villalonga and the excellent boutique hotel which became our home for the next five nights. Once settled in, some of us explored the small town before enjoying the first of our delicious dinners served from the hotel's excellent restaurant.



Day 2 – Wednesday 3rd September

We left our hotel under clear blue skies and using the superb Spanish road system we headed south, soon reaching and passing the sprawling holiday resort of Benidorm. We left the main road and headed inland to a series of arid rolling hills with little vegetation, close to Alicante, accompanied briefly on our way by a **Red-rumped Swallow**. Leaving the minibus, amidst the sound of distant **Thekla Lark**, we disturbed a covey of **Red-legged Partridge** before Pau led us purposefully along a dusty track to a point where we overlooked a small valley. A few **Red-veined Darter** were seen and, almost immediately, we saw a **Black Wheatear** on one of the

close hilltops, and a second was seen nearby. Below us was a small plateau that Pau told us was a feeding area where niger seed and water were placed for birds, and before long we noticed several **Serin** visiting the food.



A female **Western Subalpine Warbler** showed in the bushes nearby, just before we had one of those magical birding moments, as Pau excitedly called out “two **Trumpeter Finches!**”. We were so fortunate to share this special moment and

eventually eight juvenile **Trumpeter Finch** came in to feed on the seed. Pau explained there is a ringing programme for this species in the area and our eight birds were all unringed, therefore potentially adding to the estimates of the local population. Walking back to the minibus we heard a **Blue Rock Thrush** calling and Anita found a **Striped Grayling**, which disappeared almost immediately after it was found.

We drove a little further inland and stopped to look at a party of four **Blue Rock Thrush**, and nearby another **Western Subalpine Warbler** was seen. We also saw a **Swallowtail** here, before a large dark butterfly floated gracefully towards us; without doubt it was the week's main butterfly target, a **Two-tailed Pasha**, but unfortunately it



carried on floating past us. We all hoped we would have better opportunities to see this species during the coming days.



Red-knobbed Coot © Paul

We left these arid hills behind us and drove further south to the El Fondo reserve for lunch. The reserve had an air-conditioned Visitor Centre with photographs and displays highlighting the wildlife that may be seen on the reserve. With the sun blazing down, we ate our superb pasta lunches under the very welcome shade offered by the reserve's picnic area. From the nearby viewing screen, we enjoyed our first views of the highly localised **Red-knobbed Coot**. After lunch we took

to the boardwalks to view the riches of this wetland reserve. **Moorhen** and **Common Coot** were present, and **Red-knobbed Coot**, which were more obvious than expected, sometimes offered point blank views, clearly showing two bright red 'knobs' on their foreheads. There was no need to scan through hundreds of Common Coots to find this scarce species here.

A few **White-headed Duck** were present and in the distance was a pair of **Marbled Duck**, which is Europe's rarest duck. Good numbers of **Greater Flamingo** were present, and we had a brief sighting of a **Purple Heron** flying over the reedbeds. Another Iberian speciality, **Purple Swamphen**, was feeding in the open, while some saw a **Hoopoe** flying over the reedbeds.



Purple Swamphen © Berrie

The Reserve wasn't just a haven for birds as it also hosted a wide variety of dragonflies. These included **Broad Scarlet**, **Red-veined Darter**, **Long Skimmer**, **Black-tailed Skimmer**, and **Lesser Emperor** – a mating pair of the latter were photographed on the edge of the boardwalk. However, the dragonfly we all wanted to see here was **Black Percher**, a species of African origin that is slowly colonising this part of Spain. The reserve staff had suggested to Pau that there were perhaps two females on the site; we enjoyed views of three inky black males right next to the boardwalk. While enjoying our views of these stunning dragonflies, nearby the



Black Percher © Allan

harsh side of nature was on view too, as we saw a **Long Skimmer** devouring a **Red-veined Darter** it had recently caught. On our return to the reserve centre, we saw a fourth **Black Percher** on a fence and nearby was a **Fan-tailed Warbler** and the only **Crested Lark** of the trip. The afternoon had progressed quickly, and as the heat became even more intense, we decided to leave for the hotel, stopping for a very welcome ice cream on the long journey north.

Day 3 – Thursday 4th September

Having had frustratingly brief views of our main target butterfly, the **Two-tailed Pasha**, yesterday, the morning was set aside for a concerted effort to see this exotic species. In previous years Pau had a Fig tree staked out, which had always attracted the butterfly. However, last year the Fig trees for some reason were in poor condition and were not attractive to our target. We hoped for better luck this year, and to help Pau had brought along a 'magic potion' to paste onto the tree. How could we possibly fail with this level of Mariposa preparation? A relatively short drive from our hotel took us onto a road near Barx, which led through a pine wood to a parking area, where we saw **Small Copper** and **Common Darter**. We walked up a track through a wooded hillside, which held some Strawberry Tree, the Pasha's larval food plant, but none were seen.



Sage Skipper © Allan

We stopped to compare **Wall Brown** and **Large Wall Brown**, and to admire a small colony of freshly emerged **Sage Skipper**, showing a beautiful subtle sage green colouration to their thorax and upper wings. A **Wingless Ground Mantis** *Geomantis larvoides* was seen, as were a few **Striped Shieldbug** *Graphosoma lineatum*, affectionately known as AC Milan Bugs on account of their red and black striped bodies matching the shirts of the famous Italian football club. Very few birds were seen, the highlights being **Long-tailed Tit** and an absolute jewel of a **Firecrest** that Anita found.



Two-tailed Pasha © Barrie

Pau was first to reach the famous Fig tree, which had recovered from last year, and to which he applied his 'magic potion', the make-up of which still remains secret. Immediately, to our great excitement and relief, a **Two-tailed Pasha**, albeit with a slightly damaged wing, was seen on the tree. We watched it fly from the tree and return several times before a second **Pasha** arrived on the scene. Many images were taken from somewhat

challenging positions as the **Pasha** moved around the tree. Paul, who had been eager to see **Striped Grayling**, did well to find one on the ground amongst the vegetation at the base of the Fig, but it soon disappeared, never to return.

Understandably, we were all thrilled as we made our way back down the hill. The sun was now hitting the path and more butterflies were seen – a **Holly Blue**, lots of **Speckled Wood**, a couple of **Wood White**, both **Wall** species again and a few more **Two-tailed Pasha** in flight, which frustratingly didn't settle for us. Back at the car park an agile **Iberian Wall Lizard** entertained us for a while before we left for lunch.

As we drove on towards our lunch stop in the village of Pla de Corrals, we had tantalisingly brief views of an adult **Wild Boar** *Sus scrofa* and two piglets as they disappeared into the roadside bushes. In the village, a patch of wasteland saw the week's only **Iberian Scarce Swallowtail**, which showed some battle scars to its right-hand tail. Nearby, a concrete apron which was fed by water from a freshwater stream proved to be a magnet for dragonflies. Not a great quantity were seen, but lots of quality, as in addition to **Blue Emperor**, **Lesser Emperor**, **Broad Scarlet** and **Red-veined Darter**, two highly desirable colonists from Africa were amongst them, **Orange-winged Dropwing** and **Epaulet Skimmer**, with the attractive dropwing soon becoming the centre of everyone's attention.



Orange-winged Dropwing © Barnie

We ate our delicious Spanish omelette lunches under the shade of an old stone laundry pool, where Anita decided to cool her feet in the freezing water. As the heat was becoming too much for us, we retreated to the cool of the village bar for iced coffees where a **Hummingbird Hawkmoth** *Macroglossum stellatarum* joined had us. From the bar we watched a family of **Red-rumped Swallow** flying around one of the hillsides outside.



Squacco Heron © Paul

After lunch we made a brief visit to see an old icehouse, a vast, circular, stone lined pit dug deep into the ground. In the winter in years gone by it would be filled with packed snow sufficient to keep the villagers supplied with ice throughout the summer months. A poignant reminder of how much our climate has warmed since those days.

Before returning to our hotel, we made our final stop by the Rio Serpis on the outskirts of

Villalonga. The river there is shallow and slow running, while on one side of the road bridge reed-fringed pools add to the site's diversity. Dragonflies were expected to be the main focus here, but almost immediately our eyes were glued onto a **Squacco Heron** hunting stealthily on the far bank of the river. In the riverside vegetation, we found several **Lang's Short-tail Blue**, a **Mediterranean Skipper** and the tiny **African Grass Blue**. Once dragonflies became our main focus, we soon added several new species to our list: **Copper Demoiselle**, **White Featherleg**, and **Blue-eye**. The small pool next to the road bridge was home to some very photogenic **Orange-winged Dropwing** and **Violet Dropwing**, and a female of the latter species was observed ovipositing. Regularly in view over the river and pools were both **Blue** and **Lesser Emperor**, and **Scarlet Darter**.



Lang's Short-tailed Blue © Allan

Day 4 – Friday 5th September



Desert Orange Tip © Paul

On another fine and sunny morning, we again drove south, this time to a coastal site south of the holiday resort of Benidorm. Our target species here was the **Desert Orange Tip**, an African species that has colonised a few sites, mainly on Spain's southern coast, and our site is likely to be the species' most northerly site anywhere in the world. The butterflies are faithful to their larval foodplant, the Caper Bush, and after walking uphill from the car park to a small headland, we soon

found a few of these bushes. It was incredibly windy, and our first **Desert Orange Tip** was found sheltering in the undergrowth out of the wind.

After looking further around the immediate vicinity, we found another five **Desert Orange Tip**, each one sheltering from the wind, which did little for our photographic opportunities. While searching around the rocky headland, some other goodies were found, a **Whimbrel** posing beautifully on the coastal rocks for some excellent portraits, **Sardinian Warbler**, a singing **Thekla Lark**, two **Pallid Swift**, and two **Black Wheatear**.

We moved south of Alicante to the wetland nature reserve at Clot de Galvany where we spent the latter part of the morning viewing a variety of pools from the well-positioned hides. The first we visited presented some surprises. While admiring a **Red-crested Pochard** and the other wildfowl, Paul found a **Little Bittern** feeding along the edge of the reeds, and right beside it was a **Red-eared Terrapin** *Trachemys scripta elegans* and two **Squacco Heron**.



White-headed Duck © Allan



Black-necked Grebe © Paul

One of the biggest surprises of the day came while walking between pools when Pau pointed out a small group of waders flying out of the reserve. Unbelievably, they were **Stone Curlew**, which seemed so far from their normal habitat range. The Reserve is home to two rare ducks – the **White-headed Duck** and the endangered **Marbled Duck**. At the largest lake we saw a male **White-headed Duck** that was conveniently on view right in front of the hide and scanning around the lake revealed a healthy population of these ducks. Finding a **Marbled Duck** was a much harder task, but eventually Pau located one resting on the lake's edge alongside a few **Common Pochard**.

Three species of grebe were seen around the lake: **Black-necked Grebe**, including adults in breeding plumage and juveniles, **Little Grebe**, and **Great Crested Grebe**. Finally, everyone's favourite, the beautifully pink **Greater Flamingo** were here too.

Our lunch site was a shaded picnic area at the edge of the reserve, but before leaving the car park we were thrilled to find a **Two-tailed Pasha** resting on a wooden handrail. We all took lots of images before tucking into our tasty smoked salmon sandwiches. Surprisingly, the **Pasha** was still on the rail after lunch, and unbelievably, it was joined by a second, a cue for more pictures. Pau was as surprised as we were, as he had never seen a Pasha at this site before. The car park was full of 'singing' **Cicadas**, which normally remain frustratingly out of sight; however, thanks to Pau's observational skills, he found one for us 'singing' on a tree trunk. The heat had become more intense over lunch, and before our afternoon session, we called into a roadside café to cool down with iced coffees and cold drinks.



Cicada © Barrie

Suitably refreshed, we moved further south to the coastal salt pans at Santa Pola where it was extremely windy. At our first stop we saw a small passage of **Little Terns**, a few common waders and large numbers of **Greater Flamingo**, which appeared like a long horizontal pink stripe in the distance. Our second stop proved to be much more productive. At first glance, it appeared the salt pans were almost devoid of birds. However, closer inspection of the water's

edges and the sandy spits revealed several waders, including our first **Kentish Plover** and **Black-tailed Godwit** of the tour, and also **Greenshank**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Avocet**, and **Collared Pratincole**. Most surprising, though, were the two **Stone Curlews** seen resting on the edge of one of the spits.



Kentish Plover © Paul

We walked along a boardwalk to a viewing screen, finding a **Cicada** on a post and posing perfectly for photographs. At the same time Barrie picked out

an **Audouin's Gull** that flew over us and onto the salt pans. Sandy spits were perfect for resting gulls and terns, and we saw **Common Tern** and **Black Tern** on them, and Pau found an adult **Mediterranean Gull** amongst the terns. Finally, a small group of the attractive **Slender-billed Gull**, a most desirable species, dropped onto the pans just before we left.

We began our long drive home very satisfied with our day, but birding never stops, even in the minibus as between the salt pans and the main road north, we saw **Roller** on roadside wires and Paul saw a **Southern Grey Shrike** adding another species to our increasing bird list.

Day 5 – Saturday 6th September



After our long day yesterday, our final full day was a relaxing affair spent exploring local sites, with the expectation of adding some new dragonflies to our list, including the scarce Desert Darter. There had been a change in the weather today; it was still hot, but now extremely humid.

We began our day by visiting the Pego Marshes, a Natural Park very familiar to Pau, as it is home to a bird ringing station that has been recording both breeding and passage migrant birds of the marshes for around 20 years – data gathering that has informed Pau’s university studies. It was a privilege to see the four ringers in action and to see some of the birds they had captured in the hand. Pau took time to teach some interesting

information about the birds. For example, ageing birds from their feather wear and to highlight the tiny ‘pectal bristles’ birds have between their beaks and eyes, which fulfil many functions, including helping prey capture. Several new species to our bird list came courtesy of the ringers, including **Savi’s Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Moustached Warbler** and **Bluethroat**. The latter bird was instantly recognised by its rusty-red tail-base as it was extracted from the ringer’s bag. The highlight for everyone though was seeing three stunningly beautiful **Kingfisher** in the hand, each delicately handled by Pau as he showed us some of their key features, before he released them.

The Table below lists the species trapped and ringed at Pego Marshes during the morning of our visit.

Pego Marshes - Species ringed on 6 Sept	
Species	Number
Kingfisher	3
Great Reed Warbler	2
Moustached Warbler	15
Sedge Warbler	1
Reed Warbler	10
Savi’s Warbler	1
Fan-tailed Warbler	3
Yellow Wagtail	1
House Sparrow (not seen)	2
Cetti’s Warbler (not seen)	7



We spent time exploring the tracks close to the ringing station, where **Plain Tiger**, which had been so numerous as we drove into the reserve, showed really well, allowing good photographic opportunities. At last, we finally saw **Common Waxbill** perched and in view, rather than the calling birds seen flying past us in our previous encounters. We were distracted by the sound of **Bee-eaters** overhead and we looked up to see c.50 of the exotically coloured birds passing overhead. A few raptors were soaring over the reserve, which we



Red Crayfish © Barrie

identified as two **Marsh Harriers**, a **Short-toed Eagle**, and a **Kestrel**. In the channels and on the paths were the invasive **Red Crayfish** *Procambarus clarkii*, which we had seen previously on our first afternoon.

As Pau drove us to another part of the reserve, we flushed a **Little Bittern** from one of the roadside ditches, and once at the car park an **Osprey** flew

by, and as we lost sight of it, a **Booted Eagle** flew in to take its place. We alongside the Rio Salinar, where **Iberian Water Frogs** *Pelophylax perezi*, **Long Skimmer**, **Violet Dropwing**, **Broad Scarlet**, and **Common Bluetail** posed by the riverside, and **Blue Emperor** and **Lesser Emperor** were hunting along the river course.

Pau explained there is currently an Osprey introduction scheme in progress within the reserve, where Osprey juveniles from Scotland have been introduced under licence, housed, monitored and fed under strict conditions before release. This is an ongoing process in the hope that they will eventually breed on the reserve. We saw the holding pens used in the programme from the riverside, and nearby one of the **Osprey** juveniles released this year was sitting in the trees.



Iberian Water Frog © Barrie



Long-tailed Blue © Allan

After lunch we drove further inland on a very narrow road into the hills at Vall de Gallinera. At one point we had an interesting encounter with another vehicle whose driver expected us to pull off the road and into the roadside bushes to allow them to squeeze by. It was never a possibility, and they were eventually persuaded to reverse into the wide-open space just behind them. This encounter coincided with the sighting of two **Long-tailed Blue** nectaring on Everlasting-pea. A

little further on, where we had parked the bus, a white butterfly flew by us, and Pau and Paul chased it to confirm it as our only **Bath White** of the tour.

We walked along the road to what had become an almost dry section of river, where **Red-veined Darter** and **Broad Scarlet** were present, but unfortunately, the Desert Darter we had hoped to see here eluded us. Further up the wooded hillside, we eventually added two new species to our dragonfly list, **Small Red Damsel** and **Keeled Skimmer**, and nearby was a **White Featherleg** and



White Featherleg © Barrie

two female **Common Blue**. On our return to the minibus Pau and Paul walked off road to a small pool where they saw **Orange-winged Dropwing** and **Violet Dropwing**, and along the road several **Wall** and a single **Wood White** were seen. The weather was quite gloomy as Pau drove us back to Villalonga, the highlight of the journey being a sighting of a probable **Short-toed Eagle**.

Our final dinner in the restaurant at Casa Babal reached the same high standards as the preceding evenings. The fish dishes are a particular speciality of the restaurant and are always unique, as they use the fresh ingredients available on the day from the market.

Day 6 – Sunday 7th September



Copper Demoiselle © Barrie

With everyone's departure flight out of Valencia being in the afternoon or on Monday, we had time to visit some local sites as we made our way north towards Valencia Airport. After leaving Casa Babel for the final time, we drove to the outskirts of Villalonga and the banks of the Rio Serpis for a second visit, where the **Squacco Heron** we saw on our previous visit was still present on the far bank of the river. The birders amongst us were

attracted to a calling **Cirl Bunting** and we walked up a track towards it but only had a brief sighting this new species for the trip. Other birds seen included **Common Waxbill**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Spotless Starling**, and **Little Egret**. By the river, a good selection of dragonflies included **Red-veined Darter**, **Broad Scarlet**, **Copper Demoiselle**, **Blue-eye**, **Epaulet Skimmer** and what would prove to be our final sighting of the tour of the stunning **Violet Dropwing**.

Our final stop was at Albufera NP and the same paddyfields where we started this wonderful tour five days ago. As well as good numbers of **Greater Flamingo** and **Glossy Ibis**, the marshes were still teeming with waders, 17 species in all. Amongst the large numbers of **Collared Pratincole**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Ringed Plover**, **Dunlin**, and **Curlew Sandpiper**, were two new wader species for our lists: **Knot** and **Spotted Redshank**. A highlight was a lovely juvenile **Kentish Plover**, supporting a huge red ring carrying the initials 'CV', which no doubt would be used to track his life path in the future. The arrival over the marshes of three **Caspian Tern** over the marshes caused havoc amongst the waders for a while, and though two of the terns departed almost immediately, one stayed to rest on the marsh. With Pau and Barrie continually looking for new species, it was Pau who found the final new bird for the tour, a **Teal**. Meanwhile, Paul had spent most of the session looking at the dragonflies, and his sightings included **Lesser Emperor**, **Broad Scarlet**, **Black-tailed Skimmer**, and **Long Skimmer**.



Epaulet Skimmer © Paul



Hoopoe on the way in the middle of the industrial area.

We drove Allan to the airport for his mid-afternoon flight home and after we said our goodbyes, Pau took the three of us to a picnic site in Catarroja, on the outskirts of Valencia, to eat our lunches. We were greeted by a flock of c.20 **Bee-eaters** perched on wires by the roadside, where we added some final colourful images to our memory cards. After lunch Pau took Barrie and Anita to their overnight hotel, then Paul to the airport to catch his evening flight, finding a

Conclusion

This general wildlife tour was hugely successful in every respect. The pre-tour arrangements made by Mariposa and Pau ensured we visited a wide variety of well-chosen sites such that birds, butterflies or dragonflies all took turns to be a main focus. This ensured we enjoyed some outstanding encounters with the area's special wildlife. We were expertly led by Pau who was so keen to pass on his knowledge and enthusiasm to the guests. The four of us on tour enjoyed each other's company and all contributed to finding wildlife for the benefit of everyone. Finally, our hotel was delightful in every respect, with spacious and tastefully furnished rooms, friendly and helpful staff and of course, delicious food.

Postscript

Pau, David & Jon would particularly like to take this opportunity to thank Barrie for so generously writing this trip report, and compiling the checklists to accompany it. We certainly don't expect our guests to do this as a rule! On this occasion we know how fortunate we are to have such a brilliant report provided for us – thank you so much, Barrie!

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AUTUMN WILDLIFE IN VALENCIA – BIRD CHECKLIST

			Tue 2nd Sep	Wed 3rd Sep	Thu 4th Sep	Fri 5th Sep	Sat 6th Sep	Sun 7th Sep
			Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
	Common Name	Scientific Name						
1	Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓
2	Shoveller	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓		✓		
3	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>				✓		
4	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>						✓
6	Marbled Duck	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>		✓		✓		
7	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>				✓		
8	Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>				✓		
9	White-headed Duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>		✓		✓		
10	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓				
11	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓		✓	✓		
12	Pallid Swift	<i>Apus pallidus</i>				✓		
13	Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>						
14	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>						
15	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>						
16	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	✓					
18	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
19	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>		✓				
20	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓				
21	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓		✓		
22	Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>		✓				
23	Western Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>		✓			✓	
24	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓		✓		
25	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				✓		
26	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>				✓		
27	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	✓	✓		✓		✓
28	Stone Curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>				✓		
29	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>				✓		
30	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓			✓		✓
31	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓			✓		✓
32	Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>						
33	Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓			✓		✓
34	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓					✓
35	Kentish Plover	<i>Anarhynchus alexandrinus</i>				✓		✓
36	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	✓			✓		
37	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>				✓		
38	Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>						✓
39	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	✓					✓
40	Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	✓			✓		✓
41	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	✓					✓
42	Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	✓					✓
43	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>						
44	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓			✓		✓
45	Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓					✓
46	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓			✓		✓
47	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	✓				✓	✓

			Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
48	Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	✓					✓
49	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	✓			✓		✓
50	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>						✓
51	Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	✓			✓		✓
52	Collared Pratincole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>	✓			✓		✓
53	Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>				✓		
54	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓			✓		
55	Audouin's Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus audouinii</i>				✓		
56	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>				✓		
57	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓			✓		
58	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓					
59	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	✓					
60	Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	✓					✓
61	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>						
62	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>				✓		
63	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>				✓		✓
64	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	✓					
65	White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>						
66	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>				✓		
67	Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>						
68	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓
69	Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>						
70	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>				✓	✓	
71	Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	✓					
72	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓
73	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓				✓
74	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
75	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		✓			✓	
76	Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>						
77	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
78	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	✓				✓	
79	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>					✓	
80	Booted Eagle	<i>Aquila pennata</i>	✓				✓	
81	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>						
82	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>						
83	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>						
84	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓				✓	
85	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>						
86	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>						
87	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>						
88	Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓				✓
89	Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>					✓	
90	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ^R	✓
91	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>					✓	✓
92	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
93	Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>				✓		
94	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			✓			
95	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>				✓		
97	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>						
98	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>						
99	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>						
100	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>				✓		
101	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>					✓	
102	Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>		✓		✓		

			Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
103	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓				
104	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>						
105	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>						
106	Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>						
107	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
108	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓
109	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>		✓	✓	✓		
110	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
111	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			✓		✓	
112	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓					
113	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>					✓ ^R	
114	Moustached Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>					✓ ^R	
115	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>					✓ ^R	
116	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓	✓			✓ ^R	
117	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella lusciniooides</i>					✓ ^R	
118	Fan-tailed Warbler	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ^R	
119	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>						
120	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca iberiae</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓
121	Western Subalpine Warbler	<i>Curruca iberiae</i>		✓				
122	Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>			✓			
123	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			✓			
124	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>						
125	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
126	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
127	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓
128	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			✓		✓	
129	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>					✓ ^R	
130	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>						
131	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>						
132	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>		✓				
133	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓				
134	Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>						
135	Western Black-Eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>						
136	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>		✓		✓		
137	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>						
138	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	✓				✓	✓
139	Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	✓					
140	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
141	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>	✓				✓ ^R	✓
142	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓		✓			✓
143	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>					✓	
144	Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>		✓				
145	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>					✓	✓
146	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>						
147	Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>						
148	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>					✓	✓
149	Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓
150	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>						
151	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>						
152	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>						✓
		Daily Total	56	40	24	61	41	52
		Running Total	56	78	84	104	115	119

NOTE – Birds ringed and seen in the hand at the Pego Marshes ringing session are shown as '✓^R'

AUTUMN WILDLIFE IN VALENCIA – DRAGONFLY CHECKLIST

			Tue 2nd Sep	Wed 3rd Sep	Thu 4th Sep	Fri 5th Sep	Sat 6th Sep	Sun 7th Sep
			Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
	Common Name	Scientific Name						
1	Copper Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx haemorrhoidalis</i>			✓			✓
2	Migrant Spreadwing	<i>Lestes barbarous</i>						
3	Common Bluetail	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>	✓				✓	
4	Common Bluet	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>		✓	✓			
5	Blue-eye	<i>Erythromma lindenii</i>			✓			✓
6	Small Red Damsel	<i>Ceriagrion tenellum</i>					✓	
7	White Featherleg	<i>Platycnemis latipes</i>			✓		✓	✓
8	Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>						
9	Blue Emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Lesser Emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Black-tailed Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	✓	✓				✓
12	Keeled Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>					✓	
13	Epaulet Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum chrysostigma</i>			✓			✓
14	Long Skimmer	<i>Orthetrum trinacria</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	
15	Red-veined Darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>			✓			
17	Desert Darter	<i>Sympetrum sinaiticum</i>						
18	Broad Scarlet	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
19	Violet Dropwing	<i>Trithemis annulata</i>	✓		✓		✓	✓
20	Orange-winged Dropwing	<i>Trithemis kirbyi</i>			✓		✓	✓
21	Northern Banded Groundling	<i>Brachythemis impartia</i>	✓					
22	Black Percher	<i>Diplacodes lefebvrei</i>		✓				
		Daily Total	8	7	12	5	11	11
		Running Total	8	10	17	17	19	19

NOTE

There are many synonyms for common names.

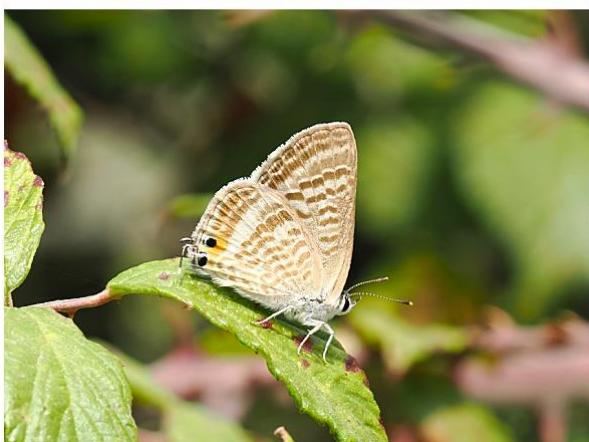
We have used nomenclature of *Europe's Dragonflies* (Smallshire and Swash, Princeton 2020)

AUTUMN WILDLIFE IN VALENCIA – BUTTERFLY CHECKLIST

			Tue 2nd Sep	Wed 3rd Sep	Thu 4th Sep	Fri 5th Sep	Sat 6th Sep	Sun 7th Sep
			Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
	Common Name	Scientific Name						
1	Marbled Skipper	<i>Carcharodus lavatherae</i>						
2	Sage Skipper	<i>Muschampia proto</i>			✓			
3	Mediterranean Skipper	<i>Gegenes nostrodamus</i>	✓		✓			
4	Iberian Swallowtail	<i>Iphiclides feisthamelii</i>			✓			
5	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio Machaon</i>	✓	✓	✓			
6	Wood White	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>			✓		✓	
7	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>						
8	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>						
9	Bath White	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>					✓	
10	Desert Orange Tip	<i>Colotis evagore</i>					✓	
11	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>						
12	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>			✓			
13	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>			✓			
14	Long-tailed Blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>					✓	
15	Geranium Bronze	<i>Cacyreus marshalli</i>						
16	Lang's Short-tailed Blue	<i>Leptotes pirithous</i>	✓		✓		✓	
17	African Grass Blue	<i>Zizeeria knysna</i>	✓		✓			
18	Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>			✓			
19	Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>					✓	
20	Adonis Blue	<i>Lysandra bellargus</i>						
21	Cardinal	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>						
22	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	✓					
23	Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>						
24	Two-tailed Pasha	<i>Charaxes jasius</i>		✓	✓	✓		
25	Plain Tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	✓				✓	
26	Monarch	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>						
27	Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>			✓		✓	
28	Wall Brown	<i>Lasionymata megera</i>			✓		✓	
29	Large Wall Brown	<i>Lasionymata maera</i>			✓			
30	Southern Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia cecilia</i>						
31	Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>						
32	Dusky Meadow Brown	<i>Hyponephele lycaon</i>						
33	Rock Grayling	<i>Hipparchia hermione</i>						
34	Striped Grayling	<i>Hipparchia fidia</i>		✓	✓			
	Daily Total		6	3	15	2	8	-
	Running Totals		6	8	17	18	21	21

Guests' Galleries

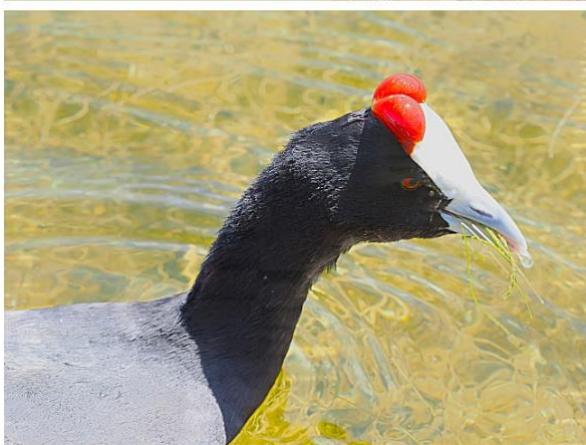
All images that follow were kindly shared by tour participants.



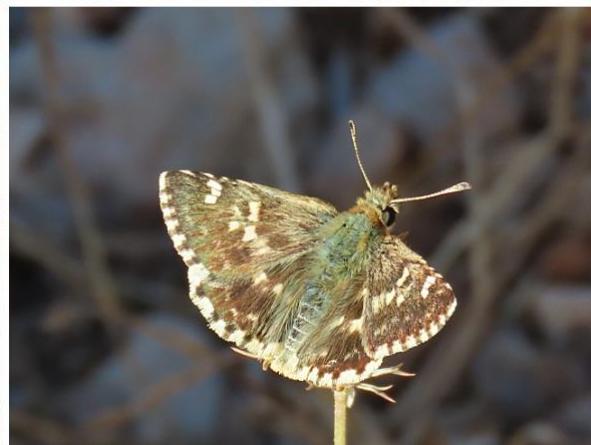
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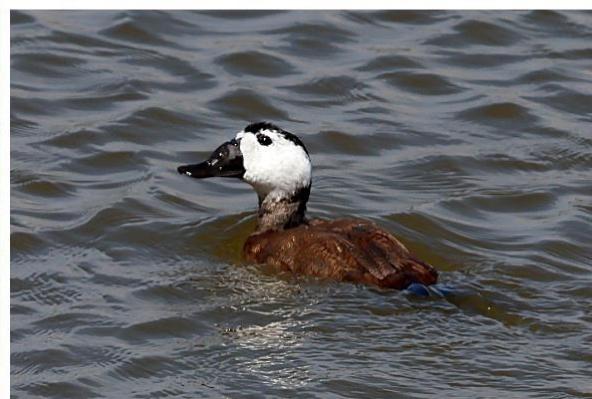
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[Autumn Wildlife in Valencia](#)

Alternatively, we have other butterfly tours with remaining availability in 2026 that explore other wonderful parts of Spain!

[Butterflies of Tenerife](#)

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

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[Autumn Exotica in Andalusia](#)