

Spain: Birds, Bears, Wolves & Total Solar Eclipse Species List | August 3 - 14, 2026 with Naturalist Journeys



Compiled by guide Stephen Grace with local guide Manuel Morales and Victor Porras and Naturalist Journeys Staff Member Alex Cahill. Our clients included Nancy, Robert, Janice, George, Barbara, Steve B, Judy, Loretta and Lynn.

Our route crossed a broad range of habitats in central and northern Spain—from Madrid’s mature urban parks to the dry uplands of Castilla y León, the Atlantic forests and mountain pastures of Asturias, the limestone alpine zone of the Picos de Europa, and the agricultural landscapes around Riaño and Segovia. We recorded 114 species across 42 families.

Early August coincided with post-breeding dispersal and the beginning of southbound migration. This was especially evident among raptors, with kites, eagles, falcons, and vultures a conspicuous feature throughout the trip. The changing elevation and climate also produced marked turnover in passerine communities as we moved from Mediterranean-influenced lowlands into the Atlantic and alpine zones of northern Spain.

Madrid — Urban Parks and Mature Woodland

Pre-tour birding began in Parque del Retiro, where mature trees, lawns, ponds, and ornamental plantings support a diverse urban avifauna.

Our principal target was Iberian Green Woodpecker, an Iberian near-endemic that required some persistence before eventually giving us excellent views. We observed both sexes, allowing us to compare the moustachial stripes—red in the male and black in the female.

Other characteristic park species included Eurasian Blackbird, European Greenfinch, Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, and Common Wood-Pigeon. Long-tailed Tit provided an early taxonomic connection for North American birders: despite its name, it is not a true tit but a member of Aegithalidae, the same family as Bushtit.

Introduced Monk Parakeets were conspicuous around their large communal stick nests. Ponds near the Palacio de Cristal held Common Moorhen, along with the nonnative Egyptian Goose and Black Swan.

A Black Kite soaring over the park and later perched in a treetop was our first raptor of the trip and an early indication that late-summer raptor movement was beginning.

Sierra de la Culebra — Open Country, Scrub, and Raptors

The drive northwest from Madrid produced an exceptional series of roadside raptor observations.

A Short-toed Snake-Eagle perched prominently on a utility pole initiated an impromptu raptor watch that quickly expanded to Eurasian Griffon, Cinereous Vulture, Booted Eagle, Red Kite, Black Kite, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Kestrel, and Peregrine Falcon.

The concentration provided excellent opportunities to compare structure and flight style. Red Kite showed a long, deeply forked tail and conspicuous pale wing panels; Black Kite was shorter-tailed and less deeply forked. Common Buzzard became increasingly familiar during the trip. Despite the North American colloquial use of “buzzard” for vultures, European buzzards are Buteo hawks and are broadly analogous to Red-tailed Hawk in structure and hunting behavior.

This region also introduced one of the major ornithological themes of the trip: Spain’s importance to migrating raptors. Many European soaring birds move south through the Iberian Peninsula toward the Strait of Gibraltar, where the short crossing to Africa allows them to minimize time over open water.

The outstanding roadside sighting was Spanish Eagle. We first watched the bird perched, with its extensive white shoulder patches conspicuous, and then followed it in soaring flight. This Iberian endemic was among the most significant raptors of the tour.

Another stop produced European Bee-eaters lined along utility wires, with a single European Turtle-Dove among them. The bee-eaters made repeated aerial sallies for insects. The Turtle-Dove was especially noteworthy given its severe population decline across much of Europe.

Open scrub, brambles, pastures, and woodland margins supported White Wagtail, European Stonechat, Dartford Warbler, and Greater Whitethroat.

European Stonechat belongs to Muscicapidae, the Old World flycatcher family, and is unrelated to New World tyrant flycatchers despite similar sit-and-sally behavior. Dartford Warbler and Greater Whitethroat are sylviid warblers, evolutionarily distinct from New World warblers in Parulidae.

Eurasian Skylarks flew over the open fields, while Woodchat Shrikes perched conspicuously on shrubs and fences.

During an evening wolf watch, Common Nightingales were heard, and a Common Hoopoe passed, its broad black-and-white wings immediately recognizable in flight.

Puebla de Sanabria — Castle Birding

The historic town of Puebla de Sanabria was particularly productive for hirundines.

Western House-Martins, Eurasian Crag-Martins, European Red-rumped Swallows, and Barn Swallows coursed over the historic town and castle, giving us repeated opportunities to compare flight style, structure, and plumage.

A single Bank Swallow perched conveniently on a wire. Its smaller size and distinct brown breast band allowed direct comparison with the surrounding hirundines.

Common Swifts flying overhead added another useful comparison, their long, scythe-shaped wings and rapid, powerful flight contrasting with the more buoyant flight of the swallows and martins.

Other notable sightings included Great Cormorant and Eurasian Jackdaw—both common species that proved surprisingly scarce on the tour.

Somiedo Natural Park — Atlantic Mountains and High Pastures

Somiedo shifted us into a cooler, greener Atlantic landscape of beech forest, mountain pasture, scrub, and cliffs.

Egyptian Vultures were seen well, their white bodies, black flight feathers, wedge-shaped tails, and yellow facial skin readily separating them from the much larger Eurasian Griffons.

Red-billed Choughs were characteristic of the mountain environment, at times gathering into large, swirling flocks over the slopes. Their highly social behavior and acrobatic flight made them particularly memorable.

The major raptor highlight was Bearded Vulture. Its long, narrow wings and diamond-shaped tail produced a distinctive silhouette unlike the broader-winged griffons. This highly specialized scavenger feeds heavily on bone and may carry large bones aloft and drop them onto rocks to break them into swallowable fragments.

The sighting was especially notable because the species has been the focus of major conservation and reintroduction efforts in northern Spain.

European Robin became another group favorite. Unlike American Robin, which is a thrush, European Robin belongs to Muscicapidae. It frequently remained low in dense vegetation, making prolonged unobstructed views particularly satisfying.

Picos de Europa — Glacial Lakes and Alpine Limestone

Covadonga provided alpine pasture, wetlands, and rocky limestone habitat.

Eurasian Coots and Little Grebes occupied the lakes, including birds retaining breeding plumage with rich rufous cheeks and necks. Gray Heron was also present, while Meadow Pipits and Water Pipits foraged in the surrounding grasslands.

The dramatic elevational transition became even more evident at Fuente Dé, where the cable car carried us rapidly from montane forest into an open alpine landscape of limestone cliffs, scree, and high pasture.

Alpine Accentor appeared almost immediately near the upper station. Having previously encountered its lower-elevation relative, Dunnock, we could compare two members of Prunellidae. Alpine Accentor was larger and more robust, with a gray head and warm rufous spotting along the flanks.

Northern Wheatears occupied open rocky slopes, including handsome males with gray backs and black facial masks. Black Redstarts were abundant and became one of the most frequently encountered passerines of the day.

Eurasian Griffons were nearly constant overhead. Several passed low enough for detailed views of the pale head and neck, tawny coverts, and contrasting dark remiges. Eurasian Kestrels and Booted Eagles also worked the ridges and slopes.

Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush was an important alpine target and appeared in appropriate rocky habitat during our return hike.

Egyptian Vultures provided a memorable conclusion to the alpine birding, their white-and-black wings standing out brilliantly against the clear sky.

Montane Forest and Fast-flowing Streams

Descending from the alpine zone produced another distinct bird community.

Common Firecrest and Goldcrest occurred in forested habitat. Both belong to Regulidae, the same family as the kinglets of North America. Eurasian Jay added a larger and more colorful woodland species.

Along the Deva drainage near Cosgaya, White-throated Dipper was closely associated with fast-flowing mountain water. Its compact form, white breast, characteristic bobbing, and underwater foraging behavior made it one of the most distinctive ecological specialists of the trip.

A later forest stop near a monastery produced Eurasian Nuthatch and both Eurasian Treecreeper and Short-toed Treecreeper. Seeing the two treecreepers together provided one of the more technical identification exercises of the tour, requiring attention to vocalizations.

Montaña de Riaño y Mampodre — Agricultural Mosaic and Forest Edge

The hayfields, hedgerows, woodland margins, and mountain slopes around Cistierna and Riaño supported one of the richest passerine assemblages of the trip.

One evening began with the observation that our trip list contained no buntings. That changed rapidly.

Rock Bunting was followed by Corn Bunting, Cirl Bunting, and finally Yellowhammer. The four species illustrated the diversity of Emberizidae, from the strongly patterned Rock and Cirl Buntings to the heavily streaked Corn Bunting and brilliant yellow male Yellowhammer.

Yellowhammer was particularly appropriate in this agricultural mosaic. The species is strongly associated with farmland retaining hedgerows, field margins, winter stubble, and other structurally diverse features, and has declined substantially in more intensively managed agricultural landscapes.

Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush provided another useful comparison. Mistle Thrush was larger, paler, and more upright, with relatively bold rounded spotting; Song Thrush was smaller and warmer-toned with more arrowhead-shaped breast markings.

An early-morning outing on August 12 was among the most productive passerine sessions of the tour. European Goldfinches fed on thistle seedheads alongside European Serins, Eurasian Linnets, and Common Chaffinches. Great Spotted Woodpecker was also recorded.

Pied Flycatchers hunted actively from perches, repeatedly sallying after insects. Western Bonelli's Warbler and Garden Warbler were both added during this outing, although obtaining sustained views of these foliage-gleaning warblers required patience.

Riaño to Segovia — Open Agricultural Country

One of the best roadside discoveries of the trip came during our southbound drive.

Our superb local guides Manuel Morales and Víctor Porras spotted several large birds in open farmland, and after finding a safe route back we confirmed Great Bustards. We obtained excellent scope views before the birds disappeared into folds in the terrain.

Great Bustard was one of the most impressive species encountered simply in terms of size. Adult males rank among the heaviest living birds capable of powered flight. Their dependence on broad open farmland and steppe-like habitats makes them one of the characteristic birds of the Iberian interior.

Segovia and the Central Plateau

Our final evening produced one of the trip's most memorable behavioral observations.

Large numbers of Spotless Starlings gathered over Segovia near sunset, eventually forming a coordinated murmuration above the historic center and Roman aqueduct. Hundreds of birds repeatedly contracted, expanded, and changed direction as the flock moved as a cohesive unit.

Our final morning yielded prolonged views of Crested Larks in open country, a perched Iberian Gray Shrike, and a satisfying look at Iberian Green Woodpecker. By this point, "soul-satisfying views" had become something of a trip philosophy: not simply recording a species, but taking enough time to study its structure, plumage, behavior, and habitat.

Even Eurasian Magpie, a species so common throughout the tour that we often barely paused for it, rewarded closer attention. In the strong morning light, its seemingly black plumage shimmered with iridescent greens, blues, and purples—a beautiful reminder not to overlook the familiar.

A Booted Eagle perched in a tree provided an appropriate final raptor sighting.

Raptors had dominated our first travel day and remained a conspicuous theme throughout the journey. From Short-toed Snake-Eagle and Spanish Eagle to Bearded Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, kites, kestrels, buzzards, and Booted Eagles, their diversity reflected both the richness of the Iberian avifauna and the beginning of late-summer migration.

Across the trip, the transition from Mediterranean-influenced lowlands to Atlantic forest, alpine limestone, traditional agricultural landscapes, and the central plateau produced continual turnover in bird communities. From Iberian Green Woodpecker probing lawns for ants in a Madrid park to Great Bustard striding through open farmland, from Bearded Vulture soaring over mountain ridges to European Robin skulking in shaded woodland, and from Alpine Accentor among high limestone slopes to White-throated Dipper in rushing mountain streams, the birds reflected the extraordinary diversity of the landscapes we traveled through and made for a remarkably rich journey across northern and central Spain.

BIRDS: 114 species were recorded, including 6 Pre-tour Only, 4 Heard Only, 2 Introduced, and 3 Iberian Endemics or Near-endemics. Two additional species considered exotic and uncountable by eBird were also recorded. Details are included below.

The eBird link below details the 114 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you're new to eBird, be sure to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

[Naturalist Journeys Spain: Birds, Bears, Wolves & Total Solar Eclipse 2026](#)

[3–14 Aug 2026\(12 days\)](#)

Following is a list of the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians we were fortunate to observe during the trip.

BIRDS

PT = Pre-tour Only; **H** = Heard Only; **IE** = Iberian Endemic or Near-endemic; **I** = Introduced; **EX** = Exotic (not recognized by eBird as a countable species)

DUCKS, GEESE, AND WATERFOWL: Anatidae — (3)

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* — (**EX**) (**PT**) Large black swan with a red bill and conspicuous white flight feathers. Native to Australia; European birds derive from introduced or ornamental populations. Seen pre-tour at Parque del Retiro.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* — (**I**) (**PT**) Pale brown waterfowl with dark eye patches and a chestnut breast patch. Native to Africa and now established in parts of western Europe. Seen pre-tour at Parque del Retiro.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* — Familiar dabbling duck and the wild ancestor of most domestic duck breeds.

PHEASANTS, GROUSE, AND ALLIES: Phasianidae — (1)

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* — (**EX**) Native to the Indian subcontinent and widely kept ornamentally. The male's spectacular "train" consists of elongated upper-tail coverts rather than true tail feathers. Seen at Alcázar castle in Segovia.

PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae — (5)

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* — (**I**) Wild ancestor of the domestic pigeon. Natural nesting sites are cliffs, readily substituted by buildings. Common in urban areas throughout the tour.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas* — (**PT**) Compact gray pigeon with a greenish neck patch and no white neck patch or wing stripe. Frequently nests in tree cavities. Seen pre-tour at Parque del Retiro.

Common Wood-Pigeon *Columba palumbus* — Large woodland pigeon identified by white neck patches and bold white wing bands; widespread in parks and cities as well as forests. Seen often on tour.

European Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia turtur* — Elegant, warm-toned dove with patterned wings and a striped neck patch. This trans-Saharan migrant has undergone severe declines across much of Europe. One bird seen among European Bee-eaters on wire on first full day of tour.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* — Pale dove with a narrow black hind-neck collar. Its rapid westward expansion across Europe during the twentieth century was one of the continent's great natural range expansions. Encountered on our tour in southern Spain but not at northern sites.

BUSTARDS: Otidae — (1)

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* — Enormous bird of open steppe and low-intensity farmland. Adult males are among the heaviest living birds capable of powered flight, sometimes exceeding 30 pounds. During courtship, males transform themselves with an extraordinary display of white plumage at traditional lek sites. Several observed at roadside stop while driving toward Segovia.

NIGHTJARS AND ALLIES: Caprimulgidae — (1)

Eurasian Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* — Cryptically patterned nocturnal insectivore that rests nearly invisibly by day and hunts moths and other flying insects at dusk. Seen at Somiedo.

SWIFTS: Apodidae — (2)

Common Swift *Apus apus* — Sickie-winged aerial specialist that feeds, drinks, and even sleeps on the wing; individuals can remain airborne almost continuously for months outside the breeding season. Common on the tour.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* — Mediterranean relative of Common Swift, generally browner and paler with a more obvious pale throat. Recorded only on the first full day of the tour.

RAILS, GALLINULES, AND COOTS: Rallidae — (2)

Eurasian Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* — (PT) Dark waterbird with a red-and-yellow bill, white flank stripe, and exceptionally long toes adapted for walking over aquatic vegetation. Seen pre-tour at Parque del Retiro.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* — Blackish waterbird with a white bill and frontal shield. Broad lobes on the toes provide propulsion while swimming and diving. Abundant in lake at Covadonga.

GULLS, TERNS, AND SKIMMERS: Laridae — (1)

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* — Large Mediterranean gull with yellow legs, stout yellow bill, and gray mantle; highly adaptable in coastal, inland, and urban habitats.

GREBES: Podicipedidae — (2)

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* — Tiny diving bird; breeding adults show rich rufous cheeks and neck and a pale gape patch. Often dives rather than flies when disturbed. Observed in lake at Covadonga, including birds in breeding plumage.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* — Large, elegant grebe famous for elaborate synchronized courtship displays; small chicks may ride on a parent's back. Seen on reservoir at Riaño while we were driving.

STORKS: Ciconiidae — (1)

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* — Huge black-and-white stork with red bill and legs, often nesting on buildings and utility structures. Migrants concentrate at Gibraltar to minimize travel over open water. Several nests were evident on the tour and a few birds were observed while driving.

CORMORANTS AND SHAGS: *Phalacrocoracidae* — (1)

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* — Large fish-eating waterbird that pursues prey underwater and commonly perches afterward with wings spread. A flock seen flying overhead at Puebla de Sanabria.

HERONS, EGRETS, AND BITTERNS: *Ardeidae* — (1)

Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea* — Large gray-and-white heron closely related to North America's Great Blue Heron and similarly adapted to stalking fish and other aquatic prey. One bird seen well at lake at Covadonga.

OSPREY: *Pandionidae* — (1)

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* — Specialized fish-eating raptor with a reversible outer toe and rough foot pads that help secure slippery prey. One bird seen near a lake en route to Segovia.

HAWKS, EAGLES, AND KITES: *Accipitridae* — (16)

Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus* — Also known as Lammergeier. Spectacular long-winged mountain vulture with a diamond-shaped tail. Bones constitute most of its diet, and large bones may be carried aloft and dropped onto rocks to break them into swallowable pieces. The species disappeared from much of Europe and has become an important conservation and reintroduction success story in northern Spain. One bird seen soaring at La Peral in Somiedo.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* — Small white-and-black vulture with a yellow face and wedge-shaped tail. Some individuals famously use stones as tools to break open large eggs. Observed several times on the tour; seen well soaring over alpine terrain at Fuente Dé.

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* — Long-winged raptor with a relatively small, pigeon-like head, a useful identification feature in flight. It specializes in excavating wasp nests to feed primarily on larvae and pupae rather than honey. A long-distance migrant to sub-Saharan Africa, it was seen multiple times during the tour, often among other southbound migrating raptors.

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* — Massive dark vulture and one of the world's largest raptors. Unlike cliff-nesting griffons, it generally builds enormous stick nests in trees. Observed the first two days of the tour.

Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus* — Huge, broad-winged vulture adapted for efficient thermal soaring and frequently nesting colonially on cliffs. Seen often on the tour.

Short-toed Snake-Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* — Pale, broad-winged eagle with a large head and yellow eyes. Snakes and other reptiles comprise much of its diet. One bird seen perched on a power pole near gas station on the first day, and several times on the tour this species was observed in flight.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* — Small eagle occurring in pale and dark morphs. Shows conspicuous white shoulder patches nicknamed "landing lights." "Booted" refers to its feathered legs. Observed in flight many times on the tour, and on the final day we saw one perched.

Spanish Eagle *Aquila adalberti* — **(IE)** Also known as Spanish Imperial Eagle. Powerful Iberian specialty, adults distinguished by brilliant white shoulders against dark plumage. Rabbits are a major prey species. Once perilously rare, the species has undergone an impressive recovery through nest protection, anti-poisoning work, safer power infrastructure, and habitat conservation. Observed during a roadside stop the first day of the tour perched on a utility pole and then in flight.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* — Large mountain eagle with golden nape feathers. Pairs maintain extensive territories and may reuse large stick nests for many years. One bird observed at Sierra de la Culebra.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* — Small woodland hawk specialized in rapid pursuit of birds through vegetation; females are substantially larger than males. One bird spotted at Segovia winging over the aqueduct.

Eurasian Goshawk *Astur gentilis* — Powerful forest raptor with broad wings, long tail, and bold pale eyebrow; an accomplished predator of birds and mammals. Seen while driving through mountains of Somiedo.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* — Large wetland harrier that hunts by quartering over reedbeds and marshes. Seen them multiple times during the tour, often flying low in open areas as we drove.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* — Graceful, long-winged harrier of open farmland and grassland; a ground nester and long-distance migrant to Africa. Observed on the first and the final full days of the tour.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* — Elegant raptor with a deeply forked reddish tail and conspicuous pale wing panels; feeds by both scavenging and hunting. Seen well at the gas station stop the first full day of the tour, and spotted several times after that. One individual was heard but not seen near Cisterna, likely an immature bird calling from the nest.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* — Widespread, adaptable kite with a shallower tail fork than Red Kite and a strong tendency to exploit carrion and human-altered landscapes. Observed often on the tour.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* — Broad-winged and remarkably variable in plumage. Ecologically similar to North America's Red-tailed Hawk, hunting small mammals and other prey from perches or soaring flight. Common throughout the tour. Often seen perched on fenceposts and soaring, and sometimes spotted on the ground.

OWLS: Strigidae — (1)

Little Owl *Athene noctua* — **(H)** Small, compact owl with bright yellow eyes, often active in daylight. Its genus name references Athena, the Greek goddess associated with the owl. Heard making a catlike call in a park near our hotel in Segovia.

HOOPOES: Upupidae — (1)

Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops* — Unmistakable with a long curved bill, erectile crest, and bold black-and-white wings. It probes the ground for insects and other invertebrates. One bird seen flying while we did a wolf wait in the Sierra de la Culebra.

BEE-EATERS: Meropidae — (1)

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* — Brilliant aerial insectivore catching bees, wasps, dragonflies, and other insects on the wing. Stinging prey may be rubbed against a perch before being swallowed. Seen perched on wires the first full day of the tour and again on the final day on the way to the airport.

WOODPECKERS: Picidae — (3)

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* — Cryptically patterned member of the woodpecker family with a primarily ant-based diet. When threatened it can twist its head and neck in striking snake-like movements. Heard and then briefly seen flying at the monastery birding stop in Picos de Europa.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* — Bold black-and-white woodpecker with red undertail coverts. It wedges cones into favored cracks to extract their seeds. Heard and then seen at the monastery birding stop in Picos de Europa. Also seen at the morning birding session near Cistierna.

Iberian Green Woodpecker *Picus sharpei* — **(IE)** Iberian specialty with green upperparts, pale underparts, and a brilliant red crown. It spends much of its feeding time on the ground searching for ants. Once treated as part of European Green Woodpecker, it is now recognized as a distinct species. Spotted in the distance after we saw the European Wildcat. Seen well on the final day of the tour before we went to the airport.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae — (3)

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* — Small colonial kestrel of open country, frequently nesting in old buildings and feeding heavily on large insects. Seen on the first and the final full days of the tour.

Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* — Small falcon often seen hovering nearly stationary while searching for prey below. Spotted several times on the tour in varied habitats, sometimes mobbing much larger raptors.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* — Powerful cosmopolitan falcon specialized in catching birds in flight; hunting stoops can exceed 200 m/h. Seen at gas station stop first full day of the tour, Sierra de la Culebra, and La Peral in Somiedo.

NEW WORLD AND AFRICAN PARROTS: Psittacidae — (1)

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* — **(PT) (I)** South American parrot established in Madrid and many other cities. Unusually for parrots, it builds large communal stick nests rather than using cavities. Seen pre-tour at Parque del Retiro.

SHRIKES: Laniidae — (3)

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* — Migratory shrike; males have a gray head, black mask, and chestnut back. Shrikes may impale prey on thorns or wire, earning the nickname “butcherbirds.” Several seen while birding near Cistierna.

Iberian Gray Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* — **(IE)** Large gray shrike of dry Iberian landscapes (range is overwhelmingly Iberian but extends into southern France). Hunts insects, reptiles, rodents, and even small birds from exposed perches. Seen well on birding stop before heading to the airport on the final day.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* — Striking migrant with chestnut crown and black-and-white plumage, favoring open woodland, orchards, and traditional farmland. Several seen well on evening Sierra de la Culebra birding walk.

CROWS, JAYS, AND MAGPIES: Corvidae — (7)

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* — Colorful woodland corvid with brilliant blue-barred wing patches. By caching acorns, it plays an important role in oak dispersal. Seen well during forest birding session at the base of the Fuente Dé tram.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* — Long-tailed black-and-white corvid whose dark feathers show green, blue, and purple iridescence in strong light. Eurasian Magpies became famous after a study reported behavior consistent with mirror self-recognition—an exceptionally rare finding outside mammals—although later studies have questioned how conclusively the mirror test demonstrates self-awareness in this species. Common on the tour.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* — Glossy black mountain corvid with curved red bill and red legs; highly social and exceptionally agile in flight. Large flock observed flying above a ridgeline at La Peral in Somiedo.

Yellow-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus* — High-alpine corvid with yellow bill and red legs, remarkably well adapted to life above treeline. Seen exceptionally well around the lake at Covadonga.

Eurasian Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula* — Small social crow with gray nape and pale eye, frequently nesting colonially in cavities. Seen briefly in flight at Puebla de Sanabria.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* — Intelligent, adaptable all-black crow found in farmland, woodland edges, and cities. Common on the tour.

Common Raven *Corvus corax* — Massive, heavy-billed corvid with a wedge-shaped tail; an accomplished aerial performer and sophisticated problem-solver. Seen soaring several times on the tour.

TITS, CHICKADEES, AND TITMICE: Paridae — (3)

Coal Tit *Pariparus ater* — **(H)** Small conifer-associated tit with a distinctive white nape patch; frequently caches seeds. Heard but not seen at Sierra de la Culebra.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* — Tiny acrobatic tit with blue cap and wings and yellow underparts, common in woodland, parks, and gardens. Seen well several times.

Great Tit *Parus major* — Large, widespread tit recognized by its black head, white cheeks, yellow underparts, and central black breast stripe. Seen well several times.

LARKS: Alaudidae — (3)

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea* — Short-tailed lark of open woodland and heath, noted for a beautiful fluting song often delivered in flight. Seen briefly on evening walk at Sierra de la Culebra.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* — Streaked open-country lark famous during the breeding season for prolonged song flights high above fields. Seen flying on evening walk at Sierra de la Culebra.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* — Dry-country lark with a conspicuous pointed crest and relatively long bill, often walking or running across open ground. Seen well on final day at birding stop on the way to the airport.

REED WARBLERS AND ALLIES: Acrocephalidae — (1)

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* — Yellowish-green warbler of Mediterranean scrub, woodland edges, and hedgerows; a trans-Saharan migrant. Spotted by Manuel during a driving stop in Somiedo, and seen from the vehicle by a few clients.

SWALLOWS: Hirundinidae — (5)

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* — Small brown-and-white swallow with a diagnostic dark breast band. Nests colonially in burrows excavated in sandy banks. One individual seen on a wire between martins at Puebla de Sanabria.

Eurasian Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* — Broad-winged brown martin of cliffs and mountains, with small white windows visible in the spread tail. Less common on the tour than the ubiquitous Western House-Martin.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* — Elegant long-distance migrant with deeply forked tail, long streamers, blue upperparts, and reddish face. Seen often.

Western House-Martin *Delichon urbicum* — Compact martin with blue-black upperparts, white underparts, and a white rump patch; builds enclosed mud nests beneath cliffs and building eaves. Common on the tour.

European Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis rufula* — Graceful swallow with an orange-rufous rump and collar, constructing enclosed mud nests with tubular entrances. Seen the first few days of the tour.

LEAF WARBLERS: Phylloscopidae — (3)

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* — Pale leaf warbler with whitish underparts and contrasting greenish wings and tail; breeds in southwestern European woodland. Seen flitting in a tree in the Crémenes area near Cisterna.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* — Slim leaf warbler and remarkable long-distance migrant, with European populations wintering in sub-Saharan Africa. Seen at Covadonga.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* — **(H)** Small olive-brown leaf warbler named for its repetitive “chiff-chaff” song. Heard but not seen near the Cosgaya hotel.

LONG-TAILED TITS: Aegithalidae — (1)

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* — Tiny round-bodied bird with a long tail. Its intricate nest is constructed from moss, spider silk, lichen, and hundreds of feathers. A busy little flock was observed at the monastery at Picos de Europa.

SYLVIID WARBLERS AND ALLIES: Sylviidae — (4)

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* — Gray warbler with black cap in males and brown cap in females, renowned for its rich, fluting song. The warbler most often encountered on the tour. Seen well near the Cosgaya hotel.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* — Remarkably plain gray-brown warbler with few obvious field marks but a rich, flowing song. Observed in the Crémenes area near Cisterna.

Greater Whitethroat *Curruca communis* — Active scrub warbler with a white throat and warm-edged wings, common in brambles and hedgerows. Seen on evening walk at Sierra de la Culebra and in the Crémenes area near Cisterna.

Dartford Warbler *Curruca undata* — Long-tailed Mediterranean scrub specialist with reddish underparts and red eye ring, often remaining deep in low vegetation. Finally seen on evening walk at Sierra de la Culebra after considerable patience.

KINGLETS: Regulidae — (2)

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* — Europe's smallest bird, recognized by its bright crown stripe; males show orange in the center of the crown. Seen during forest birding at base of Fuente Dé cable car.

Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* — Tiny kinglet with a bold white eyebrow, black eye stripe, and brilliant crown, fiery orange in males. Seen during forest birding at base of Fuente Dé cable car; also seen the next day at the monastery.

NUTHATCHES: Sittidae — (1)

Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* — Compact blue-gray woodland bird that can move headfirst down tree trunks as readily as upward. Multiple birds seen well at base of Fuente Dé cable car; also seen the next day at the monastery.

TREECREEPERS: Certhiidae — (2)

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* — Tiny bark-colored bird that spirals upward around trunks, probing crevices with its curved bill; generally associated with cooler forest. Seen in forest at base of Fuente Dé cable car.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* — Extremely similar to Eurasian Treecreeper and often best distinguished by voice, especially where the species overlap. Seen in forest at base of Fuente Dé cable car; also seen the next day at the monastery.

WRENS: Troglodytidae — (1)

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* — Tiny brown bird with a cocked tail and an exceptionally loud, complex song for its size. This skulker was heard and glimpsed a few times but never seen well.

DIPPERS: Cinclidae — (1)

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* — Stocky stream specialist with a brilliant white breast that swims and effectively “flies” underwater while hunting aquatic invertebrates. Seen exceptionally well in the stream near Cosgaya hotel perched on rocks and hunting underwater.

STARLINGS: Sturnidae — (1)

Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor* — Glossy dark starling centered on the Iberian Peninsula and northwestern Africa; can gather in spectacular evening flocks. An exceptional murmuration was witnessed near the Segovia aqueduct.

THRUSHES AND ALLIES: Turdidae — (3)

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* — Large, pale thrush with rounded spotting and upright posture. Its fondness for mistletoe berries helps disperse the plant’s seeds. Seen well while searching for European Wildcat.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* — Medium-sized thrush with arrowhead-shaped breast spots, famous for breaking snail shells against favored “anvil” stones. Seen several times on the tour.

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula* — True thrush rather than a New World blackbird; adult males are black with a bright yellow-orange bill and eye ring. Seen many times on the tour.

OLD WORLD FLYCATCHERS: Muscicapidae — (7)

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* — Small brown bird with orange face and breast. Despite its familiar name, it is an Old World flycatcher rather than a thrush like the American Robin. Seen well on morning bird walk at Posad Real lodge.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* — (H) Plain, secretive brown songbird renowned for an exceptionally rich and powerful voice, often heard at night. Heard but not seen during an evening wolf wait.

European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* — Active insectivore that hunts from perches; European populations migrate to sub-Saharan Africa. Seen well near Cistierna.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* — Dark, restless flycatcher with a constantly quivering rusty tail; common on both natural cliffs and buildings. Ubiquitous in the alpine zone at Fuente Dé.

Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* — Striking mountain specialist; males combine a blue-gray head with orange-rufous underparts and tail. Seen in the alpine zone at Fuente Dé after considerable searching.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola* — Upright flycatcher hunting from exposed shrubs and fences. Its sharp call inspired the name “stonechat,” likened to stones tapped together. Perched birds seen well many times on the tour.

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* — Ground-dwelling flycatcher with a conspicuous white rump and black tail pattern; many populations undertake remarkable long-distance migrations. Seen well in the alpine zone at Fuente Dé.

ACCENTORS: Prunellidae — (2)

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* — Robust high-mountain songbird with gray head and warm chestnut flank spotting, characteristic of rocky alpine habitats. Its breeding system is unusually complex: birds often form polygynandrous groups in which several females mate with several males, and multiple males may help feed the young. Seen well in the alpine zone at Fuente Dé.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis* — Unobtrusive brown-and-gray accentor whose complex breeding systems can include monogamy, polyandry, and polygyny. Seen well at Somiedo.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS: *Passeridae* — (2)

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* — Familiar human-associated sparrow native to Eurasia and North Africa but introduced widely around the world.

White-winged Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis* — Large high-alpine sparrow with striking black-and-white wings, specialized for rocky mountain habitats above treeline. Glimpsed in the alpine zone at Fuente Dé.

WAGTAILS AND PIPITS: *Motacillidae* — (6)

Gray Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* — Despite its name, this elegant streamside wagtail has bright yellow underparts and an exceptionally long tail. Seen well in the stream near Cosgaya hotel.

Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* — Slender yellow wagtail of wet grasslands and farmland showing substantial geographic variation in male head pattern. Seen at lunch stop at Calle los Alores early in the tour.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* — Crisp black-gray-and-white bird of open ground and water edges, characteristically pumping its long tail while walking. Common on the tour.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* — Small streaked pipit of open grasslands and moors, typically showing a conspicuously long hind claw. Seen several times in Somiedo and near the lake at Covadonga.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* — Open-woodland pipit whose breeding display includes a characteristic parachuting song flight. Seen near Posada Real lodge.

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* — Mountain-breeding pipit using alpine grasslands in summer; breeding adults can show a gray head and pinkish breast. Seen in the alpine zone at Fuente Dé and near lake at Covadonga.

FINCHES, EUPHONIAS, AND ALLIES: *Fringillidae* — (6)

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* — Abundant European finch with bold white wing bars; males combine a blue-gray crown with warm pinkish underparts. Common on the tour. Handsome males seen well several times, especially in forest at base of Fuente Dé.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* — Stocky, thick-billed finch with black cap; males have striking pink-red underparts. One male seen on evening search for wildcat.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* — (PT) Chunky olive-green finch with a heavy bill and brilliant yellow flashes in wings and tail. Seen pre-tour at Parque del Retiro.

Eurasian Linnet *Linaria cannabina* — Slim finch of farmland and scrub; breeding males develop red forehead and breast. Encountered multiple times on the tour.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* — Brilliant red-faced finch with broad yellow wing bars and a pointed bill adapted to extracting seeds from thistles. Encountered multiple times on the tour; seen well several times.

European Serin *Serinus serinus* — Close relative of canaries. Tiny streaked finch with yellow rump; males show bright yellow on the face and breast and deliver a rapid, buzzy song. Bright yellow males seen well in the Crémenes area near Cisterna.

OLD WORLD BUNTINGS: *Emberizidae* — (4)

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* — Large, heavily streaked bunting of agricultural country; its jangling song is often likened to a set of keys being shaken. Part of the bunting bonanza that occurred on evening wildcat search. Also seen in the town of Cistierna.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* — Attractive mountain bunting with a boldly striped head and warm chestnut underparts, favoring rocky slopes and scrub. Part of the bunting bonanza that occurred on evening wildcat search.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* — Colorful southwestern European bunting; males show striking black-and-yellow facial markings and a chestnut breast band. Part of the bunting bonanza that occurred on evening wildcat search.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* — Classic European farmland bird, males glowing yellow on the head and underparts with warm brown streaking and a rusty rump. Yellowhammers thrive where agricultural landscapes retain hedgerows, rough field margins, winter stubble, seeds, and abundant insects for their young. Their substantial declines in intensively

farmed regions have made them an important symbol of the conservation value of diverse, wildlife-friendly farmland. Highlight of the bunting bonanza that occurred on evening wildcat search.

MAMMALS — (9)

Iberian Wolf *Canis lupus signatus* — Distinctive Iberian population of Gray Wolf, traditionally recognized as the subspecies *C. l. signatus*, a name meaning “marked” and referring to the dark markings on the legs and body. We were extraordinarily fortunate to watch a wolf actively pursuing Red Deer in the Sierra de la Culebra.

European Wildcat *Felis silvestris* — Robust wild felid with a broad head, thick coat, strong dorsal stripe, and thick, blunt-ended tail marked with dark rings and a black tip. Our prolonged view of one hunting through a meadow near Cisterna was one of the mammalian highlights of the tour.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* — Familiar, adaptable carnivore with reddish fur, black legs, pointed ears, and a bushy white-tipped tail. We saw this species while driving in Somiedo and after returning from our evening wildcat search near Riaño.

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* — Large deer closely related to elk; widespread in Spain’s forests and open country and an important prey species for Iberian Wolf.

Cantabrian Chamois *Rupicapra pyrenaica parva* — Compact, sure-footed mountain ungulate endemic to the Cantabrian Mountains of northern Spain. Both sexes bear slender, backward-hooked horns. We saw them well in the high mountain country of Somiedo and the Picos de Europa.

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* — Powerful omnivorous wild pig occurring widely in woodland, scrub, and agricultural landscapes. Important prey species for Iberian wolf. Seen vaguely in distant dim light at dusk during wolf wait.

Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* — Eurasian tree squirrel varying considerably in color from reddish to dark brown, usually with conspicuous ear tufts.

Stoat (Short-tailed Weasel) *Mustela erminea* — Slender mustelid resembling a larger Least Weasel but distinguished by its longer tail with a conspicuous black tip. Also called ermine, particularly in its white winter coat.

Least Weasel *Mustela nivalis* — Tiny, elongated carnivore and the smallest living member of the order Carnivora. Unlike the Stoat, it lacks a conspicuous black tip to the tail. One forced our vans to slow down when it scurried across the road near Puebla de la Sanabria.

REPTILES — (2)

Lataste’s Viper *Vipera latastei* — Iberian viper with a short, upturned horn-like projection on the snout and a dark zigzag pattern along the back. Seen slithering across the track at dusk when we walked back from our wolf wait in Sierra de la Culebra.

Iberian Wall Lizard *Podarcis hispanicus* — Small, agile lizard associated with rocky habitats, stone walls, and other sunny surfaces. Iberian *Podarcis* taxonomy is complex, with several closely related species formerly included under the name “Iberian Wall Lizard” or “Spanish Wall Lizard.” Common throughout the tour.

BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS

Butterflies from several families—including whites and sulphurs (Pieridae), swallowtails (Papilionidae), brush-footed butterflies (Nymphalidae), blues and coppers (Lycaenidae), and skippers (Hesperiidae)—were observed and photographed throughout the tour. A Hummingbird Hawk-moth, a member of the moth family Sphingidae, was another memorable insect. Among those we identified to species were:

Iberian Scarce Swallowtail *Iphiclides feisthamelii* — A large, elegant butterfly with pale cream to gray-white wings crossed by bold black “tiger” stripes, long hindwing tails, and blue-and-orange markings near the tails. Centered on the Iberian Peninsula, its range also extends into southwestern France and North Africa. It is closely related to the Scarce Swallowtail, and some taxonomies have treated the two as subspecies rather than separate species.

Common Swallowtail *Papilio machaon* — A large yellow-and-black butterfly with distinctive hindwing tails, a band of blue markings, and a red eyespot near the inner corner of each hindwing. Its caterpillars have a remarkable defense: when threatened, they can evert a bright orange, forked scent organ called an osmeterium that releases a strong odor.

Clouded Yellow *Colias croceus* — A fast-flying orange-yellow butterfly with broad dark wing margins. Females are variable, and a pale form known as *helice* can be creamy white. A strong migrant, the species breeds widely in southern Europe and North Africa and can move far north across Europe in favorable years.

Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus* — Males are bright violet-blue above with narrow dark margins, while females vary from predominantly brown to extensively blue but usually show orange marginal spots. Beneath, both sexes have a characteristic pattern of black spots ringed with white and a row of orange markings. It is one of Europe's most widespread butterflies.

Iberian Marbled White *Melanargia lachesis* — A striking black-and-white butterfly with an intricate marbled pattern. Despite its appearance and name, it belongs to the brush-footed butterfly family Nymphalidae rather than to the "whites" of Pieridae. It is essentially an Iberian specialty, occurring across Spain and Portugal and extending into southern France.

Hummingbird Hawk-moth *Macroglossum stellatarum* — A distinctive day-flying hawk-moth with gray-brown forewings, bright orange hindwings, and a long proboscis. It hovers in front of flowers while drinking nectar, its rapidly beating wings producing an audible hum—the remarkably hummingbird-like behavior that gives the species its name.