

Madrid Trip Report : 14-24 August 2018



Birding on the cheep, 8 € a day, using the Madrid Metro / Bus system.



Crossbill



Scops Owl



Crested Tit



Melodious Warbler

Once again I spent a family holiday in Madrid, with my wife and daughter. We flew from Dublin with Aer Lingus and stayed in the Sercotel 611, in the Canellijas district, a few hundred metres from Line 5 of the Madrid Metro system. On arrival I received an e-mail from my replacement guide that he was also unavailable, which left me with no guide for the two days I had allocated. However after Mallorca and Bulgaria this year already yielding fantastic birding I decided to 'go it alone' using the bus / metro system. Having spent several summer holidays in Madrid I was cognizant of most of the local sites, it was just a matter of studying the transport hub around the city. It goes without saying that the Madrid public transport system is one of the best in the world with excellent inter connections. Well it would be with the huge number of tourists and Madrillenos that use it every day.

For one or two Euros you can virtually travel any where within the city limits, sometimes you need to 'double up' but still get to these sites for no more than four euros. I visited four sites in and around the city surroundings all by public transport. There are ofcourse many other parks in the city, especially Caso de Campo which I didn't visit.

Sites visited were as follows:-

- 1 **Quinta de los Molinas:** a city park with lots of various woodland habitat.
- 2 **Quinta de Torre Arias:** a newly opened city park still under restoration.
- 3 **Paracuellos de Jarama:** a pathway along the Rio Jarama with riverine habitat, lots of trees, reeds and bushes.
- 4 **El Pardo:** a vantage point on the edge of a huge private government controlled reserve.

Getting there:-

- 1 **Quinta de los Molinas:** Suanzes Metro Station on Line 5 is only a two minute walk from the park gates and is well worth a visit for the various habitats and birds to be seen. The time of year is also important but during my visit in August, Green Woodpeckers, Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Pied Flycatchers, Spotted Flycatchers, Stock Doves, Serins, Hawfinches, Tree Sparrows, Monk Parakeets, Crossbills, Kestrels and the ubiquitous House Sparrows and Wood Pigeons to name but a few.



Stock Dove



Pied Flycatcher



Hawfinch



Short-toed Treecreeper

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- 2 **Quinta de Torre Arias:** is a two minute walk from **Torre Arias Metro Station on Line 5**. This is a newly opened park and is under restoration by the city council. It is much smaller than the nearby Quinta de Los Molinos and has neither the same bird numbers or habitat as Los Molinos. However it is here where I found the ' bird of the trip ' a Scops Owl. Birds present in addition to the Scops were Black Redstart, Stock Doves, migrating Beeeaters, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaff, Bonelli's Warblers, Blackcaps et alia.



Scops Owl



European Bee-eater

- 3 **Paracuellos de Jarama:** to get there you take **Line 5 to Cannilljas Metro Station** and from there is a five minute walk to Canillejas Square. Here you take the **ALSA 211 bus** which takes you under the airport runway and after leaving the tunnel you take the second stop at an industrial estate [poligono]. Either side of the road will take you down to the pathway along the river. This path goes for miles and is used by the local dog walkers. The habitat along the river is lush and the birds not easy to see, but with a bit of effort and time, at least three hours in my case, it was well worth it. Like all the sites , the best time to visit in August is between 08:00 to 11:00, after that the temperature is up around 30C and terrestrial birding virtually stops, ofcourse the vultures and raptors start to appear then in the thermals. Birds seen were Western Orphean Warblers, Garden Warblers, Willow Warblers, Bonelli's Warblers, Chiffchaff, Red-rumped Swallows, Woodchat Shrikes, Golden Orioles, Water Pipits, Green Sandpipers, Melodious Warblers, Blackcaps, Serins, Spanish Sparrows to name a few. Overhead were 100's of Black Kites on migration. Kestrels, Booted Eagles, Black and Griffon Vultures were also showing well.



Western Orphean Warbler



Golden Oriole

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4 **El Pardo:** To get to this viewing point you have to take **Line 3 to Moncloa** Terminus and then proceed to **Aisle 3 Stage 30** and here you get the **bus 601** to the terminus at Minogorubio cemetery. It is then just a matter of walking along the track to the barrier and waiting. Best to get there before 10:00, when in August at least the thermals are already bringing out the vultures and raptors over El Pardo. The area was once the hunting reserve of the Spanish royal family and is now the property of the government with very limited access to the general public.

On arrival at 08:00 the sun was already up and temperature sitting at 23C, a pleasant walk along the track produced the ever wary Azure-winged Magpies and Spotless Starlings. The bushes and reeds below the reservoir had Reed Warblers, Nightingales, Serins, Blackcaps, Golden Orioles, Lesser Whitethroats, Common Whitethroats, Willow warblers and a Yellow Wagtail at the outflow below the dam. Magpies and Pied Flycatchers were common around the picnic areas. Several Marsh Harriers were passing along with hundreds of Black Kites. Also seen was a Goshawk and three Booted Eagles, three Kestrels and a single Peregrine.

After eating my ' field breakfast ' I sat and waited and by 10:30 the sky began to fill with vultures, 100's of Griffon Vultures, 20 plus Black Vultures, several Spanish Imperial Eagles. What a wonderful sight, some many birds spiralling in the morning sunlight. Wave after wave of birds then began to appear, all looking for a meal. Eventually they all drifted northwards possibly a carcass had been spotted. Circa 12:00 the 'show' was over, the sky virtually empty.



Griffon Vulture



4th Cal. Year Spanish Imperial Eagle



Black Redstart



Juvenile Spanish Imperial Eagle



Garden Warbler



Common Buzzard



Nightingale

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	English Name	Latin	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	
			Q de Los Molinos	Q de Torre Arias	P de Jarama	El Pardo	
1	Duck, Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	0	0	50 +	5	
2	Shelduck , Ruddy	Tadorna ferrugina	0	0	0	3	
3	Partridge, Red-Legged	Alectoris rufa	0	0	12	8	
4	Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo	0	0	5	2	
5	Egret, Cattle	Bubulcus ibis	0	0	3	2	
6	Heron, Grey	Ardea cinerea	0	0	5	3	
7	Stork, White	Ciconia ciconia	0	0	100+	200+	
8	Flamingo, Greater	Phoenicopterus roseus	0	0	0	5	
9	Buzzard, Common	Buteo buteo	1	1	3	4	
10	Eagle, Booted	Aquila pennata	1	2	3	6	
11	Spanish Imp. Eagle	Aquila adalberti	0	0	0	8	
12	Goshawk	Accipiter gentilis	0	0	0	1	
13	Harrier, Marsh	Circus aeruginosus	0	0	3	5	
14	Kite, Black	Milvus migrans	0	0	100+	100+	
15	Kite, Red	Milvus milvus	0	0	3	6	
16	Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus	0	0	1	0	
17	Vulture, Eur. Black	Aegypius monachus	0	0	1	7	
18	Vulture, Eur.Griffon	Gyps fulvus	0	0	3	200+	
19	Falcon, Peregrine	Falco peregrinus	0	0	0	1	
20	Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	1	2	2	1	
21	Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	0	0	1	0	
22	Sandpiper, Common	Actitis hypoleucos	0	0	1	0	
23	Sandpiper, Green	Tringa ochropus	0	0	2	0	
24	Dove, Collared	Streptopelia decaocto	12	10	0	3	
25	Dove, Stock	Columba oenas	40	5	100+	5	
26	Dove, Turtle	Streptopelia turtur	0	0	1	0	
27	Pigeon, Wood	Columba palumbus	100+	20	100+	7	
28	Parakeet, Monk	Myiopsitta monachus	40+	11	5	3	
29	Owl, Little	Athene noctua	0	0	1	0	
30	Scops Owl	Otus scops	0	1	0	0	
31	Swift, Common	Apus apus	100+	100+	100+	10	
32	Swift, Pallid	Apus pallidus	0	0	5	1	
33	Hoopoe, Eurasian	Upupa epops	0	0	2	0	
34	Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis	0	0	1	0	
35	Bee-eater, European	Merops apiaster	20+	20+	50+	3	
36	Woodpecker, GS	Dendrocopos major	3	0	0	0	
37	Woodpecker, Green	Picus viridis sharpei	5	1	2	1	
38	Lark, Crested	Alauda	0	0	2	0	
39	Martin, House	Delichon urbicum	100+	100+	100+	0	
40	Martin, Sand	Riparia riparia	0	0	50+	0	
41	Swallow, Barn	Hirundo rustica	100+	100+	100+	100+	
42	Swallow, Red-rumped	Cecropis daurica	0	0	2	0	
43	Wagtail, Grey	Motacilla cinerea	0	0	2	2	
44	Wagtail, White	Motacilla alba	2	0	5	0	
45	Firecrest	Regulus ignicapilla	3	0	0	0	
46	Redstart, Black	Phoenicurus ochrurus	0	5	0	1	
47	Redstart, Common	Phoenicurus phoen.	0	0	1	0	
48	Robin	Erithacus rubecula	1	0	0	0	
49	Blackbird	Turdus merula	7	0	0	0	
50	Cisticola, Zitting	Cisticola juncidis	0	0	2	0	
51	Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla	5	0	0	0	



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	English Name	Latin	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	
			Q de Los Molinos	Q de Torre Arias	P de Jarama	El Pardo	
52	Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita	5	0	0	0	
53	Nightingale	Luscinia megarhynchos	0	0	2	4	
54	Warbler, Bonelli's. W	Phylloscopus bonelli	5	0	7	0	
55	Warbler, Cetti's	Cettia cetti	0	0	1	5	
56	Warbler, Garden	Sylvia borin	0	0	2	0	
57	Warbler, Melodious	Hippolais polyglotta	0	0	6	0	
58	Warbler, Olivaceous	Hippolais pallida	5	0	3	0	
59	Warbler, Orphean. W	Sylvia hortensis	0	0	4	0	
60	Warbler, Reed	Acrocephalus scirpaceus	0	0	1	0	
61	Warbler, Sardinian	Sylvia melanocephala	0	0	2	0	
62	Warbler, Willow	Phylloscopus trochilus	7	7	0	0	
63	Warbler, Wood	Phylloscopus sibilatrix	0	0	1	0	
64	Whitethroat	Sylvia communis	0	0	2	2	
65	Whitethroat, Lesser	Sylvia curruca	0	0	2	2	
66	Flycatcher, Pied	Ficedula hypoleuca	9	4	2	5	
67	Flycatcher, Spotted	Muscicapa striata	0	0	2	0	
68	Tit, Blue	Cyanistes caeruleus	4	3	5	0	
69	Tit, Coal	Parus ater	12	7	5	3	
70	Crested Tit	Parus cristatus	6	0	0	4	
71	Tit, Great	Parus major	12	7	4	5	
72	Tit, Long-tailed (WE)	Aegithalos caud. rosaceus	30+	30+	30+	8	
73	Treecreeper, Sh.-toed	Certhia brachydactyla	6	6	1	4	
74	Nuthatch	Sitta europae	0	0	0	1	
75	Shrike, Woodchat	Lanius senator	1	1	5	2	
76	Jackdaw	Corvus monedula	0	0	0	10	
77	Maggpie	Pica pica	20+	20+	7	15	
78	Azure-winged Magpie	Cyanopica	0	0	0	12	
79	Raven	Corvus corax	0	0	1	0	
80	Spotless Starling	Sturnus unicolor	50+	50+	50+	50+	
81	Oriole, Golden	Oriolus oriolus	0	0	2	0	
82	Sparrow, House	Passer domesticus	100+	100+	100+	100+	
83	Spanish Sparrow	Passer hispaniolensis	0	0	2	0	
84	Sparrow, Tree	Passer montanus	100+	50+	100+	100+	
85	Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	3	0	5	0	
86	Crossbill, Common	Loxia curvirostra	8	0	0	0	
87	Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	50+	12	100+	5	
88	Greenfinch	Carduelis chloris	7	4	12	3	
89	Serín	Serinus serinus	2	5	5	3	
90	Hawfinch	Coccothraustes coc.	5	0	0	0	
91	Linnet, Common	Carduelis cannabina	0	0	12	5	
92	Bunting, Corn	Emberiza calandra	0	0	6	0	

Naturally this is only 'the tip of the iceberg' regards birding, in the Madrid region. Considering that there are some fantastic birding areas inside the Madrid regional area, such as the Sierra Guadarrama part of the Sistema Central that runs along the centre of the Iberian Peninsula. The regional Parque del Sureste with its superb wetland habitats just a few kilometres southeast of the city and the plains just to the northeast of the city. Yet I managed a credible 92 species in 40 degrees heat, all on the cheap using the Metro system. Madrid is a brilliant birding spot, that is why I keep going back.

Ed.O'Hara, Lurgan, N.Ireland August 2018

