

# Portugal

11 – 19 June 2011

Helen Rijkers (hrijkes@gmail.com)

## Introduction

In the late spring of 2011 my parents visited Portugal for a week and I was invited to join them. Most of the time was spent on cultural visits but I had a few days and hours of spare time to do some birding. It was my first birding experience in Portugal and I was amazed with the beautiful countryside and nice birds that were quite easy to find.

*Temperature and climate* - Sunrise was around 6:15 AM and sunset around 9PM. Early morning was often cool (on days with wind even a bit cold). Midday (from 1PM to 4:30PM) the temperatures were high and bird activity decreased to a minimum at this time.

## Birding places

Below is a description of visited birding sites. Birds that were encountered throughout the entire trip (and therefore very common): Western Cattle Egret, Crested Lark, Barn Swallow and Red-rumped Swallow.

### *Lisboa* (11-14 June)

Not that many birds. Nice to encounter were the Pallid swifts that were breeding everywhere in the city. In the trees around the Castelo I found some singing Serins.

Near Evora, on our way from Lisboa to Castro Verde a Booted Eagle flew over.

### *Castro Verde* (evening of 14 June, 18 June all day and the morning of June 19<sup>th</sup>)

Castro Verde is a large area that for birders is mostly known for its Great and Little Bustard. The following species were common in the area and seen on several days:

Crested Lark, White Stork, Western Cattle Egret, Hoopoe, Woodchat Shrike, European Bee-eater, Corn Bunting, Southern Grey Shrike, Montagu's Harrier, Common Kestrel, European Stonechat, Azure-winged Magpie, Zitting Cisticola, Red-rumped Swallow, Red-legged Partridge, Common Quail, Spotless Starling

- *Road east of Entradas* - (signposted with yellow/red markers. The road starts at the church. Start at 37°46'25.34"N, 8° 0'42.77"W)

On the evening of June 14<sup>th</sup> I birded here between 6-7PM the following birds: 9 Great Bustards from the top of the hill near a small house (view in all directions from here), Black Kite, Little Ringed Plover, Hoopoe, European Stonechat and Woodchat Shrike. A return visit on June 18<sup>th</sup> (between 1-3PM) only added some Crested Larks and Common Raven to the list.

- *First bridge on the N123 towards Mertola* (about 7 km east of Castro Verde, gps 37°41'32.16"N, 8° 1'45.01"W)

On the evening of June 14<sup>th</sup> (between 7-8PM) some European Beeeaters and Red-rumped Swallows were drinking near the bridge. A Black-winged Kite flew by and a Short-toed Eagle landed on a nearby electricity post and giving good views. Second visit on June 19<sup>th</sup> between 9:30 and 10:30AM: Highlights were Sardinian Warbler, Short-toed Eagle and singing Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin that gave stunning views. A little further along the small road going to the south (from the east side of the bridge) there were two more Scrub Robins.

- *Grasslands south of the N123 towards Mertola* (several dirtroads near the villages Rolao, Viseus and Mote de Guerreiro).

Most of the birding time was spent here searching for Bustards: June 18<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-12AM and 5:30-8PM, June 19<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-10:30AM. On the first morning two Great Bustards were quickly

found on the right side of the road in high grass (just after leaving the N123 and going to Rolao). The dirt road from Monte de Guerreiro back to the N123 at San Marcos de Ataboeira was very productive with birds. At the first stop on this road (37°40'37.16"N, 7°53'55.31"W) we saw Great Spotted Cuckoo (sitting on the road), a singing Dartford Warbler (in low bushes next to the road), a group of seven Great Bustards, male Western Black-eared Wheatear and two Stone-curlews. Further along this track the highlights were a female Little Bustard, Collared Pratincole and some Calandra Larks. The best bird for me was a male Little Bustard, found on the road between Alcaria de Coelho and Monte do Guerreiro (37°39'49.50"N, 7°54'6.08"W). Other birds seen in this area were Roller, several small groups of flying by Black-bellied Sandgrouse, a colony of Spanish Sparrows, 2 Short-toed Eagles, Black Kites, 1 Red Kite, Booted Eagle, Marsh Harrier.

- *N123 towards Mertola near the intersection with the N122*

Drove here at 16:00 on June 18<sup>th</sup> and birded until 17:30. From the car we saw 6 Griffon Vultures. Near the intersection with N122 a group of 20 Griffon Vultures on a rock and flying 37°42'29.21"N, 7°44'29.31"W. Driving back at 17:30 in the direction of Castro Verde we saw 2 Great Bustards.

- *Visitor center* (7 km northeast from Castro Verde in the direction of Beja, reachable from the parallel road, starting in in Castro Verde) (37°44'12.35"N, 8° 1'53.06"W). A short visit the 18th at 20:00. The visitor center lies 1 km west of the IP2 and the access road goes through prime bustard grassland. In a short visit we saw 1 Roller, a few Calandra Larks and the colony of Lesser Kestrels.
- *General area*: 2 booted eagles from the car around Castro Verde, 1 Roller from the car between Castro Verde and the highway south.

### **Castro Marim (morning of 16 June)**

Birded here from 6am to 1pm, unfortunately with strong winds making birding difficult. Species seen: *Red-legged Partridge, Flamingos, Slender-billed Gull, Common & Little Tern, Bee-eater, Iberian Magpie, Crested Lark, Stone-curlews, Sardinian Warbler, Booted Eagle, Montagu's & Marsh Harrier, and Eurasian Spoonbill.*

- *Visitors center*: We started at the visitor center and the hill with small house just south of it (from 6:15 to 8:00). One partridge Red-legged Partridge flew up from a fence when we crossed the hill. The entire morning many groups of flamingo's flew past, showing really well. In the salt pans there were several Black-winged stilts and Pied Avocets. A bit further on the plains 2 Kentish plovers were seen with several Montagu's Harrier and one Marsh Harrier. At 12:30 we did a final stop at the dirt road leading up to the visitors center which resulted in a nice pair of Sardinian Warbler.
- *Dirtroad*: From 08:00-09:30 we walked the dirt road along the water (the road makes a right turn after about one km from Castro Marim in the direction of Vila Real de Santo Antonio). Birding was nice here with Iberian Magpie, Little Tern, 2 Slender-billed Gulls, European Bee-eaters, and several Eurasian Spoonbills.
- *Saltworks*: Last place I checked were the saltworks west of Castro Marim, along the N125-6 (turn left just after a bridge). A Booted Eagle was soaring overhead and driving along the small dikes resulted in 3 Eurasian stone-curlews that first flew off and then landed a bit further. Again many black-winged stilts and Flamingo's here but also Crested Larks and Corn Bunting.

### **Cape St. Vincent (afternoon June 17th)**

We drove to the cape at the end of the afternoon to do some sea watching. En route we made a short stop at Da Rocha giving nice views again of Sardinian Warbler. Watching over sea (about 30 min) was difficult since you are very high up the rock but it resulted in 10 Gannets and 2 Kuhl's/ Scopoli's

Shearwaters. Walking back a Black Redstart was present. After our stop at the cape we drove a bit further along the west coast to a viewing point. Here we walked around in the fields and found 1 singing Short-toad Lark and 2 Stone-curlews.

### **Around the Hotel**

Our Hotel was situated at the village Gale – about 5km west of Albufeira. There happened to be a small “birdwatching trail” along some water and reed when walking from the hotel tot he beach which was a nice addition in the birding. I walked here 3 times; 2 times in the middle of the day and one time in the evening. Each walk gave similar birds: Purple Swamphen, Flamingo, Little Bittern, Common Kingfisher, Zitting Cisticola, Pallid Swift, Common Swift, Coot, Moorhen, Spoonbill Cattle Egret.

From the balcony of the hotel Hoopoe, Bee-eater, House Martin and Crested Lark were seen .

### **Triplist**

|                      |         |                            |                  |
|----------------------|---------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Little Grebe         | several | Hotel                      | 16, 17 June      |
| Kuhls/Scopoli ‘s     | 2-3     | Cape St. Vincent           | 17 June          |
| Gannet               | +/-10   | Cape St. Vincent           | 17 June          |
| Little Bittern       | 2-4     | Hotel (trail)              | 16, 17 June      |
| Western Cattle Egret | Common  |                            |                  |
| Little Egret         | +/- 10  | Castro Marim, Hotel        | 15,16,17 June    |
| Grey Heron           | Several |                            |                  |
| White Stork          | Common  |                            |                  |
| Spoonbill            | +/- 10  | Castro Marim, Hotel        | 15,16,17 June    |
| Flamingo             | 100+    | Castro Marim, Hotel        | 15,16,17 June    |
| Griffon Vulture      | +/- 20  | Castro Verde               | 18 June          |
| Short-toed Eagle     | 4       | Castro Verde               | 14,19 June       |
| Booted Eagle         | 5-10    | Evora, C. Verde, C. Marim  | 14,16,18 June    |
| Red Kite             | 1       | Castro Verde               | 18 June          |
| Black Kite           | 10+     | Castro Verde               | 14,18 June       |
| Marsh Harrier        | 2-3     | Castro Verde, Castro Marim | 16,18 June       |
| Black-winged kite    | 1       | Castro Verde               | 14 June          |
| Montagu’s Harrier    | Common  | Castro Verde, Castro Marim | 14,16,18,19 June |
| Common Buzzard       | +/- 10  | Castro Verde               | 18 June          |

|                          |                     |                                 |               |
|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Common Kestrel           | Common              |                                 |               |
| Lesser Kestrel           | +/- 10              | kolonie in Castro Verde         | 18 June       |
| Red-legged Partridge     | common              | C. Verde (1 in C. Marim)        | 16,18,19 June |
| Common Quail             | common (calling)    | Castro Verde                    | 14,18,19 June |
| Common Moorhen           | 10+                 | Hotel (trail)                   |               |
| Coot                     | 100+                | Hotel (trail)                   |               |
| Purple Swamphen          | 2                   | Hotel (trail)                   | 15,16,17 June |
| Great Bustard            | 30-50               | Castro Verde                    | 14,18,19 June |
| Little Bustard           | 2 (male and female) | Castro Verde                    | 18,19 June    |
| Pied Avocet              | 20+                 | Castro Marim, Hotel (trail)     | 16,17 June    |
| Black-winged Stilt       | 30+                 | Castro Marim, Hotel (trail)     | 15,16,17 June |
| Eurasian Stone-curlew    | 7                   | C. Verde, C, Marim, St. Vincent | 16,17,19 June |
| Collared Pratincole      | 1                   | Castro Verde                    | 18 June       |
| Little Ringed Plover     | 2                   | Castro Verde                    | 14, 18 June   |
| Kentish Plover           | 2                   | Castro Marim                    | 16 June       |
| Black-tailed Godwit      | 5+                  | Castro Marim                    | 16 June       |
| Black-headed Gull        | several             | Castro Marim                    | 16 June       |
| Slender-billed Gull      | 2                   | Castro Marim                    | 16 June       |
| Yellow-legged Gull       | common              | overall aan de kust             |               |
| Little Tern              | several             | Castro Marim                    | 16 June       |
| Common Tern              | 20+                 | Casto Marim, Hotel (trail)      | 16, 17 June   |
| Black-bellied Sandgrouse | 6-9                 | Castro Verde                    | 18 June       |
| Common Wood Pigeon       | common              |                                 |               |
| Eurasian Collared Dove   | common              |                                 |               |
| Turtle Dove              | 1                   | Castro Verde                    |               |
| Great Spotted Cuckoo     | 1                   | Castro Verde                    | 18 June       |
| Common Swift             | common              |                                 |               |

|                              |          |                             |               |
|------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Pallid Swift                 | common   |                             |               |
| Eurasian Hoopoe              | 10+      | Castro Verde, Hotel         | 14-19 June    |
| Common Kingfisher            | 3-5      | Castro Verde, Hotel (trail) | 16,18 June    |
| European Bee-eater           | common   |                             |               |
| European Roller              | 3        | Castro Verde                |               |
| Ring-necked Parakeet         | several  | Lissabon                    | 13 June       |
| Crested Lark                 | common   |                             |               |
| Short-toed Lark              | 1        | St. Vincent                 | 17 June       |
| Calandra Lark                | 20+      | Castro Verde                | 18 June       |
| Sand Martin                  | 20+      | Castro Marim                | 16 June       |
| Barn Swallow                 | common   |                             |               |
| Red-rumped swallow           | common   |                             |               |
| House Martin                 | common   |                             |               |
| White Wagtail                | several  |                             |               |
| Yellow wagtail               | 1 (juv)  | Castro Marim                | 16 June       |
| Rufous-tailed Bush Robin     | 3        | Castro Verde                | 19 June       |
| Black Redstart               | several  | Lissabon, St. Vincent       | 12, 17 June   |
| Western Black-eared wheatear | 2 (male) | Castro Verde                | 18,19 June    |
| European Stonechat           | common   | Castro Verde                | 14,18,19 June |
| Common Blackbird             | common   | Lissabon, coast             |               |
| Blackcap                     | several  | Lissabon                    |               |
| Sardinian Warbler            | several  | kust, C. Verde, C. Marim    |               |
| Dartford Warbler             | 1        | Castro Verde                | 18 June       |
| Zitting Cisticola            | common   | overall                     |               |
| Great Tit                    | several  |                             |               |
| Blue Tit                     | several  |                             |               |
| Woodchat Shrike              | common   | Castro Verde                | 14,18,19 June |

|                      |           |                                |               |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Southern Grey Shrike | common    | Castro Verde, Castro Marim     | 16,18,19 June |
| Iberian Magpie       | common    | Castro Verde, Castro Marim     |               |
| Eurasian Magpie      | several   | overall                        |               |
| Eurasian Jay         | several   | o.a rond hotel                 |               |
| Western Jackdaw      | several   | o.a bij Cape St. Vincent       |               |
| Northern Raven       | several   | Castro Verde                   | 18 June       |
| Spotless Starling    | common    | overall                        |               |
| House Sparrow        | common    | overall rond dorpen/ in steden |               |
| Spanish Sparrow      | 1 kolonie | Castro Verde                   | 18 June       |
| Chaffinch            | several   | Lissabon                       |               |
| Common Linnet        | several   |                                |               |
| European Goldfinch   | common    | overall                        |               |
| European Greenfinch  | 2+        | Lissabon                       | 13 June       |
| European Serin       | 5-10      | Lissabon, Castro Verde         | 13, 18 June   |
| Corn Bunting         | common    | Castro Verde, Castro Marim     | 16,18,19 June |