

Andalucía Bird Society

**Your Society caring for our Birds
and its valued membership.**



Issue 02. May 2019

Field Meetings Update

- 18th May Osuna and birds of the Steppe. Details on the Forum
- 22nd June We visit an area in Granada, details will appear on the Forum
- 20th July The Society's AGM. Details to be finalized.
- 17th August A visit to Grazalema and hopefully one of our conservation projects. TBA



Editorial

Firstly thank you so much for the many messages expressing approval for the new format of your Newsletter. It was much appreciated.

By the time you receive this mailing many of our summer residents will have arrived and already getting down to breeding. Some are yet to arrive and Honey Buzzard will be filtering in for their onwards-northern migration. It is an exciting time to be here and getting out among our birds.

I have been delighted that a few members have contacted me with the offer to write an article for this newsletter. I will be including them in future mailings. If you would like to write an article or offer photographs for the newsletter please let me know.

Of course our Field Meetings will focus on spring/summer birds, so why not come along in May or June? Good birding to all and thanks for your support.

European Bee Eater *Merops apiaster*

Perhaps one of the most popular summer residents and migrants to be seen in Andalucía. By now they should be on their breeding sites, but with migration still happening as northern birds pass through our region.



Spring Birding in Andalucía

Choices for birding in Andalucía during the spring offers so many possibilities, so many sites hold great species and reward a journey into the big outdoors.

We certainly have a great variety of habitats and good birding sites to visit and view spring arrivals, plus of course raptor migration continues with the anticipated passage of Honey Buzzard, so keep an eye to the sky. Blessed we are on where to go birding here in Andalucía. Fuente de Piedra and other lagoons in the Campillos area has good

water levels this year, so a visit to the area is a must to see Greater Flamingo in huge numbers and also it is the time of year to see waders passing through in their breeding plumage. Our woodlands will be buzzing with the song of recently arrived warblers such as Bonelli's and Subalpine Warblers, both worth making

an effort to stroll along the tracks bisecting typical oak woodlands, also Scop's Owl love this habitat so keep an eye and ear engaged for this elusive owl. I wonder how many of you will go and search our mountains for the declining Common Rock Thrush, formerly Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush? Let us know if you are successful.

Ideas for our future Field Meetings

A list of field meetings appear on page 1 in the furthest left column of the page. We are now in the final planning stages for our proposed tour to the northern coastal areas of Morocco, we have received a great response from members so far. However, we

need to finalise numbers to make advanced bookings for our accommodation and also what transport to provide for our group, so we need to have your confirmation of attendance before the 1st June. Please, if you can confirm by email for the



attention Membership Secretary Bob Wright by June 1st, then we would be grateful. Dates August 31st to September 4th. Thank you one and all.

Spring has sprung

An individual take on spring birding and nature by

Neville Davies



"I can see the attraction of the Serrania de Ronda and the surrounding area to anyone who has seen it. It is inspiring, captivating, full of beauty, colour and sounds".

Neville Davies - ABS Member

Well, spring is officially upon us and settling in well as it rolls into the summer, and this is the time of year that the flora and fauna bursts into life across the region. Animals are waking from a long hibernation, the Frogs and Toads have already spawned, plants are poking through the soil and reaching for the sunlight, birds are singing and fighting for their territories, the trees are coming into leaf of many shades of green, and even the skies are changing. The days are getting longer and finally the air has warmed up. What more could nature or the nature lover ask for?

The landscape plays a big part here for the wildlife, and with its abundance of habitats it is no wonder we see some awesome species here. The trees in particular cover every hillside. Did you know that trees sleep at night, they make four times the oxygen they actually require, they can absorb up to 48lb of carbon dioxide each year and they drink around 2,000 litres of water each year? Wow. No matter how many times I pass the endemic Pinsapo Pines, I just have to stop and take another look; they are such a fascinating tree. And I always marvel at the many different species of Oak that can grow in the same area.

For the resident and visiting naturalist alike, this is the start of a special time of year. For me, armed with information from previous visits and new sites to hopefully explore, I feel as excited as a child. This is the beauty of this wonderful area – there is something here at any time of the year. Even the winter can hold excitement and some spectacular winter scenery as well. Most bird watchers and plant enthusiasts will visit from late March and April onwards. The favoured months to visit are during migration (April and May) which is when most bird watchers I know will be visiting. Nothing beats seeing and hearing the first arriving Bee Eaters, entertaining us with their bubbling calls, acrobatic flying and their nine different colours. This is also the time of year when there is an abundance of plant species on show which add to an already impressive landscape and habitats.



Neville is taking names for anyone interested in purchasing his upcoming book, which is an accurate and up to date field guide on 'birdwatching in Mallorca'.

naturewithnev.blogspot.com



As spring settles in and the month progresses, there will be Marsh Sandpipers, Eleanora's Falcons, Squacco Herons, Short-toed Larks, Tawny Pipits, Golden Orioles, Rollers, raptors, terns and waders galore. Nightingales will add a beautiful sound to the landscape. By late May, many of the birds should be settled and doing what birds do best – squabbling for prime territory and getting frisky with the local ladies. With the varied habitat here and so many places to explore, the bird life can be very rewarding with some unexpected surprises too. That is one of the beauties of bird watching – you never know what may show up or where. Scanning over the

ridges and along the coast can be ideal for migrating raptors. It is an exciting time of the year that ensures that every bush, tree, hedge line, ridge and rock face should be checked, it can be that busy. But it is not just the variety of birds that sets the heart racing here, the plants and butterflies on show can also have an impact. On recent visits, I have had new species for my list such as Grayling, Large Tortoiseshell, Scarce Swallowtail and Sage Moth – and maybe this time they will stay still long enough for a photo? Everything is different now at this time of year. The trees are bursting into leaf, beautiful to see but a hindrance when trying to spot that skulking warbler in the foliage. There is a lovely scent from the Pines, and the plants give a splash of multiple colours across the varied habitats. The air is warmer and is filled with the song of

many bird species, and a dawn chorus here is a sound to behold. I am looking forward to seeing a plant I grew up loving, and looked at for many years in the field guides, wondering if I would ever see one. Well that came true for me last year with my first ever sighting of Lizard Orchids, I was not disappointed.



News Desk – News and Views

As one of the founding members and part of the original Committee, it was very sad to hear of the resignation of our current Secretary Ellie Wallbank. Ellie has been an absolute stalwart for the Society and will be greatly missed. With 10 years service and invaluable contributions to

the everyday running of our Society, Ellie has been one of the main driving forces behind the management team. Ellie has new challenges and changes in personal circumstances, but will continue as a member of ABS. I will miss her cheery presence at Committee meetings and her often-

shrewd observations on matters arising. Our Chairman has matters in hand and we expect to be able to announce a new Secretary in the very near future. I am sure I speak for and on behalf of all our members when thanking Ellie for all her support and much valued contribution to ABS.



Keep up to date on our Field Meetings. Look at our website for details.

Future meetings will include:

18th May – Osuna

20th June – Granada

20th July – AGM

17th August - Grazalema



Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* Our bird of the May/June Months

I hope a few of you will rise to the challenge and visit our high mountains to find Common Rock Thrush. The name is a bit misleading as it is now far from common. The male is particularly handsome and adds to the thrill of being in our mountains.

NEW WEBSITE

Whilst work continues on preparing and formatting our new website, the current version has been experiencing a few problems. Some of you will have noticed the site has gone down on several occasions; the cause is unknown and is currently under investigation. It is so frustrating not being able to find the root cause at the moment, but we are working hard to resolve it. As a temporary measure, we receive notice of website failure and are able to restore it, so the site will only ever be down for minutes rather than hours. So if at first you don't succeed in opening the site, visit again after an hour.

Conservation Support

I make no apologies for including this section from our last newsletter. We cannot emphasise enough the importance membership subscriptions play in helping us support conservation projects here in Andalucía. As the Society is run on a purely volunteer basis, our running costs are down to a bare minimum, printing, website and accounting are

among various expenditure, after which surpluses can be considered for worthwhile and sustainable conservation projects. We could do so much more with increasing membership. Just imagine our potential if each member were able to introduce a new member. Please do spread the word and promote your Society, helping us help conservation in the region.

Looking Ahead

Important dates for your diary includes the upcoming AGM, being held in conjunction with a morning field meeting on July 20th, the official meeting will be held later in the conference room at the Molino del Santo hotel. Please do try and attend. Also as previously mentioned we need to know if you intend to go on the Morocco tour for August 31st to September 4th and will require confirmation by the 1st June. We are currently trying to arrange a visit to one of our conservation projects, the site is in the Grazalema area and we will visit on August 17th, so as many members as possible would show the volunteers our support, more on this nearer the time.



Support those members who support ABS. Accommodation and Guides

ACCOMMODATION. We have many associate members offering special rates for ABS members and located in nearly all the provinces of the region.

Please support them and help them help us.

PROFESSIONAL GUIDES. All the provinces in the region are covered by our Approved Wildlife Guides.

They are active in supporting the Society and we hope you will use and recommend their services.

LINK FOR ACCOMMODATION:

<http://www.andaluciabirdsociety.org/index.php/affi>

LINK FOR GUIDES:

<http://www.andaluciabirdsociety.org/index.php/affi>



COMING SOON TO THE SKY NEAR YOU

