

Spanish Tapas

After a short visit back in San Francisco, we set off on our second makeup birding tour of 2022, Spring in Spain. [A collection of photos from the trip is online.](#) You can also click on any of the photos in this document to see a larger version of the photo online.

We took the red eye from SFO to Newark, where we met our friends and frequent traveling companions, Jenny and Terry Cloudman. Then, we flew directly to Barcelona, where we spent several days doing a little birding, and lots of sightseeing.



La Sagrada Familia

We spent our first morning at the Barcelona Botanical Garden, learning some of the common birds of urban Spain. However, we were in Barcelona to see the famous Gaudi architecture, especially *La Sagrada Familia*.

Our third day was *Sant Jordi's Day*, celebrating the patron saint of Catalonia. In English, this alleged knight is known as Saint George, you know, the one who slew a dragon. Tradition calls for a gift of a book or a rose. Our hotel followed the tradition by presenting us with a lovely red rose.

Outside, we saw numerous book stalls lining the main street. Alas, the weather was uncooperative, releasing a deluge with wind that toppled most of the tents.



Linda with Rose

This also meant that every restaurant in the area was immediately inundated with sodden customers. We ventured out during a lull in the storm and found a place offering nice sandwiches. We made it back to the hotel just before the next wave hit. Later, the sun broke out and we decided to explore the *Rambla*, a fancy shopping area nearby. Of course, we made it just a bit too far, when yet another thunderstorm arrived. We sheltered in a cannabis dispensary, which we learned dispensed only CBD-rich products, though we were told that the establishment had better offerings in a back room. We declined the invitation.

The next morning, we left Barcelona to board one of the high-speed trains Europe has and the USA doesn't. A few hours later, we met up with more of our tour group in Seville. This was a much better alternative to flying there. Thanks again to Terry for figuring it all out.



400-Year-old Olive Tree and Us

Our first trip outside Seville took us to Doñana National Park, a large area near the Atlantic coast of Spain (yes, it has one) with numerous wetlands to explore. We took our signature Big Tree photo in front of a 400-year-old olive tree in the courtyard of our lunch spot.

One of our target birds for this trip was the Western Swamphen. Normally, we don't have any targets; we simply go to see what there is to see. However, this species, *Porphyrio porphyrio*, was split a few years ago into five separate species. We had seen 4 out of 5, with this, the *nominate* species the only one missing. We saw one on the first day.



© The Other Jim Hargrove

European Spoonbill and Squacco Heron



© Linda Hargrove

European Bee-eaters

Some other birds gave us great photo ops. Two favorites are these:

1. Eurasian Spoonbill in breeding plumage — note the yellow tip of the bill — with a Squacco Heron in the background.
2. These stunning European Bee-eaters that Linda photographed.

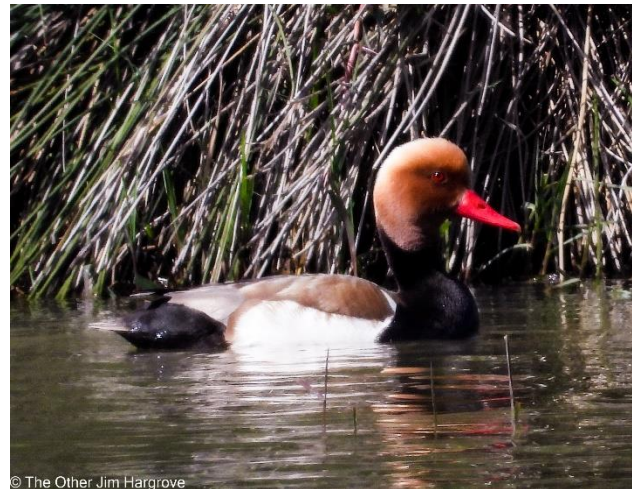
Another of my favorite photos from this part of the trip was another Linda took, a pair of Great Crested Grebes flirting with

each other. Red-crested Pochards were easy lifers. Here's a photo of one.



© Linda Hargrove

Great Crested Grebes



© The Other Jim Hargrove

Red-crested Pochard

Our tour involved *lots* of driving to cover all the important birding areas of Spain. Some people are flabbergasted to learn that we skipped almost all the cultural aspects of the country, such as the Alhambra. That's just the way we are.

One area we visited was the in the Sierra de Gredos, one of three mountain ranges we went to. This one produced my favorite photo of the entire tour and one of [the best of the year](#), this stunning view of a singing male Bluethroat. We hiked up a cobblestone path for "a little way" to get to the spot.



Singing Male Bluethroat



European Stonechat

It was worth it.

The European Stonechat was seen often, but seldom as well as in this photo, another of the year's best.

We thought this terrestrial orchid was particularly beautiful. We never found out the species, but who cares. As e.e. cummings put it:



© Linda Hargrove

Terrestrial Orchid

*since feeling is first
who pays any attention
to the syntax of things
will never wholly kiss you;*

Notice the delicate lines on each petal of the flower.

One day, we took a funicular ride to the top of a mountain where we hoped to find a Wallcreeper nesting. No luck, but we saw these interesting Snowfinches.

As we walked back from our unsuccessful search, we saw this cool lizard.



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White-winged Snowfinch



© The Other Jim Hargrove

Iberian Rock Lizard

We made another try for the Wallcreeper at a different location, with the same luck. However, as this lovely Gentian was a nice consolation prize:



© The Other Jim Hargrove

Blue Gentian



Saxifraga Longifolia

Another interesting plant was this Saxifrage, a genus we had previously seen only in Alaska. The name means “rock breaker” in German. The roots break up the rock it is growing on, turning it into better soil. Over a very long time. There are many common names for *S. Longifolia*. The Spanish called it **King's crown**.

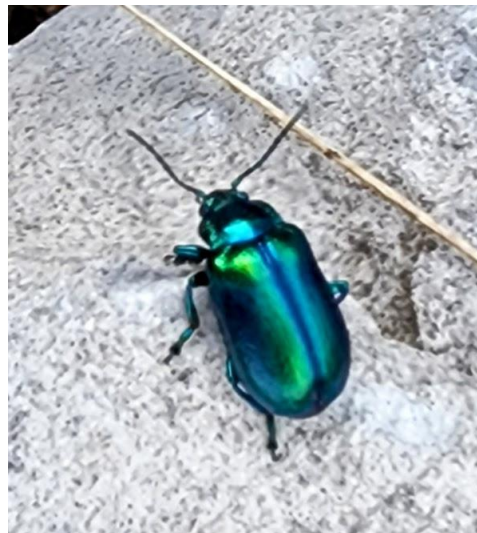
We visited three mountain ranges during the trip. The last was the Pyrenees, the largest and tallest. We had come to see the Ring Ouzel and whatever else there was. We also had a chance to wander into France (slightly) for some list padding in another country.

We had seen this species in Finland, or maybe Norway, but only thru a telescope, and it had its back turned. This was a great improvement.

This bright beetle was identified by iNaturalist as a “Mint” beetle, *Chrysolina coeruleans*. This was our final photo of this nice tour.



Ring Ouzel



Mint Beetle, Chrysolina coeruleans