

Nature week

HOSTAL

CASA

CLARA

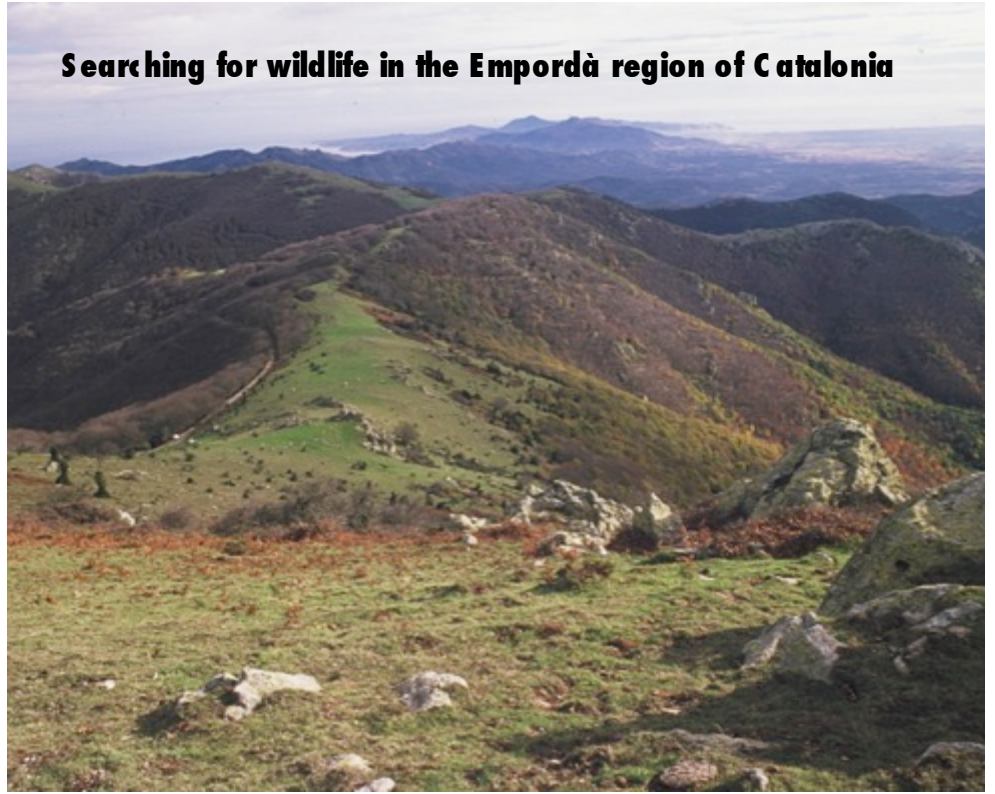
(CASTELLÓ
D'EMPÚRIES)

May 8–12
2017

MIKE

LOCKWOOD

Searching for wildlife in the Empordà region of Catalonia



L'EMPORDÀ

L'Empordà is a wonderful natural showroom of all the best of Catalan Mediterranean natural history. From the coastal marshes of Els Aiguamolls to the scrubby hillsides and forests of Cap de Creus and L'Albera, there is a vast range of natural and semi-natural habitats that host one of the greatest variety of vertebrate fauna in the whole of Europe. At the end of April, the coastal marshes throb with life as breeding birds come into song and passage migrants head north, just as the inland scrub and its flowers and butterflies is springing to colourful life as summer approaches.

Nature weeks: you choose which days you want to come out with us - just 1 day or all 5, it's up to you!

Add to this, all the creature comforts that **Casa Clara** and the region provides, as well as all of its historical and cultural treasures, from lonely Romanesque monasteries to Salvador Dalí, via good wines and freshly caught fish, and you have a perfect destination for the birdwatching natural historian looking for a relaxed but stimulating spring break.

CALENDAR 2017

Monday 8 May **Aiguamolls de l'Empordà** Migrant and breeding birds and marsh flora.

Tuesday 9 May **Cap de Creus** Breeding birds, geology and Mediterranean flora.

Wednesday 10 May **L'Albera** Breeding and migrant birds, flora and butterflies.

Thursday 11 May **Sant Pere de Rodes** Breeding birds, flora, butterflies, amphibians and reptiles.

Friday 12 May **Aiguamolls de l'Empordà** More migrant and breeding birds and marsh flora.



TERMS & CONDITIONS

**Guiding-only price: 50€
per day per person**

For half-board+guiding offers, contact Casa Clara or Mike Lockwood

Minimum group size 2; maximum 12. So, a booking for two guarantees that the day-out will go ahead.

You are free to join the groups on however many or few days you want.

Excursions begin at 09.00 at Casa Clara (Castelló d'Empúries) and finish more or less at 18.00.

Please book in advance, via either Casa Clara or Mike Lockwood. You will receive personal confirmation.

All transport and food and drink are the responsibility of the clients.

BOOKINGS

Hostal Casa Clara:
info@hostalcasaclara.com
972 25 02 15

Mike Lockwood:
mike@walkingcatalonia.net
972 590327 / 661 956 939



Els Aiguamolls de l'Empordà

These vast coastal marshes are a haven for migrating birds in spring as they head north to their breeding grounds. Add to this, the highly varied community of local breeding birds and you have one of the best birdwatching spots in the western Mediterranean. Typical migrants include Spoonbill, many raptors, waders galore, Whiskered Tern, and many passerines. If there is a fall of migrants as in 2013, when dozens of Collared Flycatchers and Pallid Harriers, with a supporting cast of Red-footed Falcon, White-winged Black Terns and Red-throated Pipit, all appeared, then, as the old maxim goes, 'anything can turn up!' Breeding birds include Grey and Squacco Herons, Little and Great Bitterns, Thekla Lark, Roller, Great Reed and Melodious Warblers. Birdwatching is easy here as many well-built hides makes observation of the main habitats relatively straightforward.

The flora is diverse too, with sawfly and early spider orchids and blue iris in the dry and wet areas, respectively. Early spring butterflies, with both Swallowtails, are common in and around the marshes, as are green hairstreak, dappled white and Cleopatra in the scrub.

Serra de l'Albera

These mountains straggle the border between the French and Spanish states and from the main ridge (1,257 m), just 11 km from the sea, thick beech woods tumble down to mix with the cork-oaks and merge into the colourful, aromatic Mediterranean scrub. Its birdlife is a cornucopia of Mediterranean species: Bonelli's and Short-toed Eagles, Lesser Kestrel, Stone Curlew,

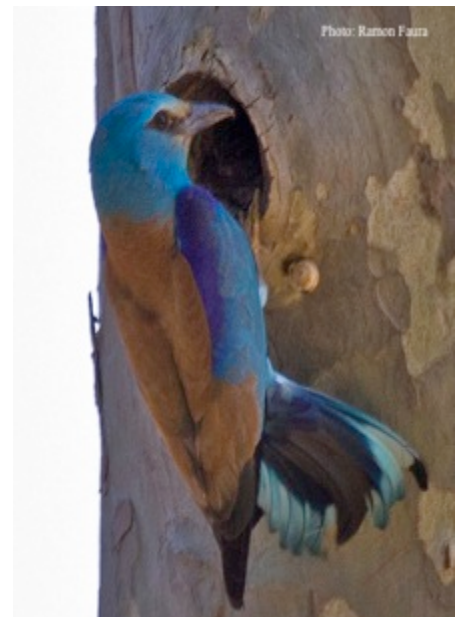
Roller, Woodchat Shrike, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Orphean and Subalpine Warblers, Thekla Lark and Rock Bunting, to name just some. In its piedmont, mixed in with the olive groves and vineyards, there are a series of lagoons and temporary wetlands that add extra variety to the area's habitats.

This is also the richest area in Catalonia for reptiles and amphibians, and amongst the spring scrub it is always a challenge to find the very local Provence and conical orchids. Other floral highlights include narrow-leaved lupin and birthwort.

Cap de Creus

The third and final main area of L'Empordà that we will visit is Cap de Creus, another protected area, and the final flourish of the Pyrenees as they reach the Mediterranean. Geologists from all over the world come to study the strata and outcrops that inspired some of Salvador Dalí's most famous works. Spiny cushions of *Astragalus massiliensis* decorate the rocks, while the rocky outcrops here are excellent for reptiles such as Mediterranean pond terrapin, Montpellier snake, Spanish psammodomous. If winter has been generous with its rain, amphibians such as fire salamander, natterjack toad and painted frog and the common winter damselfly *Sympetma fusca* are common.

Birdwatchers will revel in the abundance of birds, both breeders and migrants: Bonelli's and Short-toed Eagles, Pallid and Alpine Swifts, Red-rumped Swallow, Crag Martin, Blue Rock Thrush, Black-eared Wheatear, Tawny Pipit, Sardinian, Dartford and Spectacled Warblers, Rock and Cirl Buntings, as well as plenty of passage migrants onshore and offshore, above all if the weather is a bit changeable.



Iberian Wildlife Tours