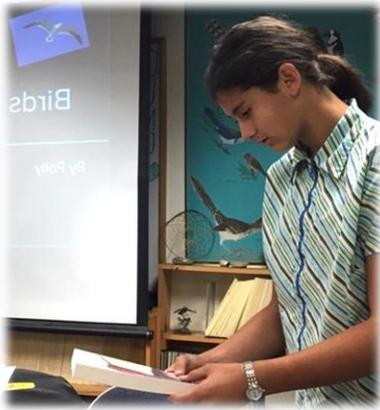


Young Birder Club

Birds of the Iberian Peninsula

By Polly, age 12



Polly, age 12, had an amazing summer holiday tour travelling around Portugal and Spain for a month. Of course, Polly did a lot of sightseeing, including castles, seaports and very interesting market places, but like every good birder, she also sought out the birds! To a full house, Polly presented the birds she found interesting and was even able to get photos of most of her sightings.



Eurasian Collared Dove - actually living where they are belong! Did you know that no other species of bird has colonized the US so quickly? It's true! They were first found nesting in Miami, Florida in 1982 and have now reached Alaska.

Common Wood Pigeons. Well, they are only "common" if you live in Europe. Polly said the Common Wood Pigeons are large handsome pigeons and are members of the dove and pigeon family. The Common Wood Pigeon belongs to the genus *Columba* and the family *Columbidae*. Though the Common Wood Pigeon superficially looks like the Feral (Rock) Pigeon, they have a distinctive white mark on the neck and wing.

In Tavira, Portugal, Polly saw her lifer Eurasian Hoopoe! It's an unmistakable bird. Who else has zebra-strips on their wings, an amazing fan shaped crest and a sickle shaped bill? Wow! Hoopoes are members

of the genus *Upupa*. Hoopoes are fed on the ground, using their long bill to probe for insects. They do resemble woodpeckers, but their bill is far longer and thinner.

In Sevilla, Spain, Polly found several Monk Parakeets. However, Monk Parakeets are native to Argentina! So how did they arrive in Spain? Well, It's likely that they were a part of the pet trade. It's quite likely, that the Monk Parakeet with the neck ring and tag number, 861, an escaped pet! Monk Parakeets are often kept in captivity and can be taught to mimic human speech. Something else that's very interesting about the Monk Parakeet, is that they are the *only* parakeet to nest together in family groups and build large stick nests in trees and power poles. Multiple families live together and likely share warmth to survive the colder temperatures in Spain.



In Bolonia, Spain, Polly saw a handsome male Common Chaffinch. Chaffinches are often found in parks, gardens and farmland area. In the winter they form large families.

But wait, is that a House Sparrow or a Eurasian Tree Sparrow? Well, these two "sparrows" are actually in different Families. The Eurasian Tree Sparrow is in the family Passeridae and the House Sparrow in North America is in the family Passerellidae. Though at first glance, they do look similar, but if you look carefully, the body proportions and beak shapes are quite different between the two groups, in fact, they are not closely related. So interesting! Polly saw Eurasian Tree Sparrows everywhere!



In Lisbon, Portugal, Polly saw the tiny and beautiful European Serin. Often just called, Serin, they are the smallest European species of the family of finches, Fringillidae. They are tiny with stubby short bills. Both males and females have many streaks and yellow rumps. They often found in parks, gardens, cities, like Lisbon.

Seen everywhere on Polly's trip, the very handsome, Yellow-legged Gull. This gull is common in the Mediterranean, and it makes sense that Polly was able to see this gull every day. Polly was not daunted by her Gull study and she was able to see two more species of Gulls including Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull. So proud of Polly for looking at the Gulls!



In both Spain and Portugal, Polly saw White Storks and their nests on towers and rooftops. White Storks nesting on one's roof is often seen as good omen! White Storks are long-distance migrants and winter in Africa, even as far south as South Africa. They don't like to cross the Mediterranean Sea and during migration they can often be seen using the Strait of Gibraltar as the distance over open water is much less.

Polly was so lucky to see an Old World Vulture, the Eurasian Griffon, in Casares, Spain, Griffons are huge vultures and we love vultures! Griffons can often be seen on the ground or soaring with friends over valleys and mountains in search of thermals and of course, carrion.



Thank you Polly for sharing your wonderful holiday with us. We all learned a lot from your experiences. We are so proud of you for finding a way to enjoy your family holiday and see the birds too!

Tip! Polly used the Merlin App to help her identify the species in the field. If you are interested in the Merlin App, you can download it to your SmartPhone for free. <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>