

# Spain - Realm of the Iberian Lynx

Naturetrek Tour Report

17th – 22nd January 2022



Iberian Lynx, by Julia Stone



Eurasian Otter, by Julia Stone



White-spotted Bluethroat, by Chris Marcol



Spanish Ibex, by Julia Stone

Report compiled by Byron Palacios. Images courtesy of Julia Stone and Chris Marcol



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Tour Participants: Byron Palacios & Niki Williamson (Leaders) with 13 Naturetrek clients.

## Summary

A brand new adventure to start 2022 with exciting views of the fantastic yet elusive Iberian Lynx! The great landscape of the colourful Andalusian land, traditions, great food produce and great hosts, alongside the amazing species seen: Iberian Magpie, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Spanish Ibex...and of course a few individuals of Iberian Lynx...all of them seen in the most amazing way, quite close and clearly! Those are the colours painted in our memories and the vivid colours of nature that we all experienced throughout this wonderful week, with the best company in the Realm of the Iberian Lynx!

## Day 1

**Monday 17th January**

### Stansted – Seville – El Rocío – Doñana National Park

We left the UK on our Stansted flight which arrived on time in Seville, and after clearing airport formalities, we went out to meet Niki, reassembled the group and set off for a quick lunch in a café nearby. We then started our journey, heading west towards Huelva, and diverting towards El Rocío where we checked in our comfortable hotel. After a very short break, we gathered together again to go out into Doñana National Park for our first excursion, in 4x4 vans and with park ranger Irene with us. The marshes were full of Greater Flamingos, Northern Lapwing, Little and Cattle Egrets, Grey Heron, Eurasian Spoonbills, Spotless Starlings and Common Snipes when we passed by.

Once in the park, we started exploring along the Royal Track from where we saw lots of active flocks of Iberian Magpies and Spotless Starlings. Lots of Red Deer were also seen around, but then, in a blink of an eye, a young male Iberian Lynx emerged from the bushes on the side of the track crossing right in front of our first van, then he stopped for a second to look around and continued his relaxed walk before vanishing into the vegetation. It was a first sighting, quick, clean and let us all wondering...gosh, this cat does exist!

Still a bit shocked by the quick sighting, we continued exploring towards the flooded heathland area where we spotted Griffon Vultures, Hen Harrier, Eurasian Kestrel, and large flocks of Greylag Geese and Common Cranes in the distance. We also saw plenty of Red Kites, Common Buzzards, a few European Stonechats and Common Chiffchaffs flycatching around. The sunset was turning beautiful and picturesque, and it was time to drive back to El Rocío in order to take a break and meet up again at the hotel's bar in order to enjoy local drinks and nibbles followed by a delicious dinner!

## Day 2

**Tuesday 18th January**

### Doñana National Park (Raya Real – FAO Visitors Centre)

We gathered together for an early breakfast at the hotel's cafeteria on a very fresh and beautiful morning. And just as dawn was breaking through, we jumped in the 4x4 vans in order to start another exploration in search of Iberian Lynx in the core area of Doñana National Park. It was a nice, dry and chilly morning, the light was breaking through along the Royal Track or Raya Real. The sunrise was beautiful, perfect for photo opportunities as the many Iberian Magpies, Red-legged Partridge and Red Deer were constantly turning up by the side of the

Royal Track. We then took a stroll around the area known as Hierba Buena, a beautiful dehesa habitat (meadows & cork oaks) which produced lots of interesting birds such as Iberian Grey Shrike, Sardinian Warbler, European Stonechat, Corn Bunting, Wood Lark, European Hoopoe, Red Kite, quick views of Spanish Imperial Eagle and stunning views of 100+ Stone Curlews. Towards noon, we drove back to El Rocio in order to take a break and to enjoy a delicious local lunch!

In the mid-afternoon, we drove back into Doñana National Park again. We drove towards the same area where the lynx was spotted yesterday and boom...to our great surprise, a female adult was spotted while taking a nap right next to a massive Mastic Tree (*P. lentiscus*). Our surprise was double when a young male emerged from the opposite side of the bush walking around the back. The female though came out eventually and sat amongst bushes with her head in view. We enjoyed this partial views of this beautiful feline...gosh, what a good luck we had!

After this great moment, we continued our drive towards the marisma area (flooded heathland) which produced fantastic birds such as Little Owl, Iberian Grey Shrike and Crested Lark, amongst others. In the wet marshes, we found Purple Swamp-hen, Marsh Harrier, Black-winged Stilt, Common Snipe, Northern Shoveler and Greater Flamingoes, amongst others.

After having a great time in this area, we started to drive back to El Rocio but searching more Iberian Lynx territories along the core area but it looked quiet. Very happy with the fantastic day we just had, we returned to our hotel for a well deserved break, delicious supper, celebrations and drinks!!

## Day 3

Wednesday 19th January

### Doñana National Park (Isla Mayor) – Sierra de Andujar Natural Park

Today we enjoyed a relaxing breakfast enjoying the surroundings of our hotel in El Rocío. After packing up our belongings, we left this beautiful village and started our journey towards Andújar, making a few stops along the way. The first one was at the north-eastern entrance of Doñana National Park, Isla Mayor, where we enjoyed watching fantastic birds such as Black-shouldered Kites, Spanish Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Crested Lark, Great Egret, Black Stork, Common Cranes, Grey Herons, a colony of roosting Black-crowned Night-Herons, White Storks, Marsh Harrier, Hen Harrier and a pair of Lesser Kestrel. Soon we hit lunch time so we made a stop in a lovely recreational area where we enjoyed a delicious picnic lunch!

After lunch, we hit the motorway and start our journey to Andújar (via Seville) making a coffee break and facilities half way through the journey; arriving at the town of Andújar and diverting northeast towards the mountains and into the village of Viñas de Peñallana where Los Pinos hotel is located. After checking in, we took a well deserved break and had a delicious dinner, followed by a good night sleep!

## Day 4

Thursday 20th January

### Andujar Natural Park (La Lancha – Rio Jándula)

After an early breakfast, we drove for about thirty minutes towards the upper valley of La Lancha in order to explore and scan the multiple gullies which have been potential Iberian Lynx hotspots over the last few years. It

was a sunny morning but a bit quiet generally. After choosing the right spot, we started to scan the different gullies finding other important wildlife such as Red and Fallow Deer, Iberian Magpies, Iberian Green Woodpecker and fantastic views of Spanish Imperial Eagle flying over the valley and very close. We also saw Griffon and Eurasian Black Vultures, Iberian Magpies, Red-legged Partridge and European Rabbit, amongst others. It was clear blue sky and bright sunshine, perfect for going to a different spot which overlooks the dam from where we saw a herd of Spanish Ibex really close, making the most out of this endemic ungulate. We also saw Golden Eagle, Crag Martins and more Eurasian Black and Griffon Vultures soaring over the hill tops and forming kettles.

We then found a nice place with great views of the dam to have our lunch; from here, we found more Black and Griffon Vultures. The sun was hitting the valley nicely warming up the midday, so it was time to drive back to the valley area in order to spend the rest of the afternoon there checking the lower valley of the River Jándula making a coffee break stop at our hotel. After the break, we drove 15 minutes down the valley road which took us to a track parallel to the river. We took a stroll here spotting lovely birds such as European Kingfisher, Grey and White Wagtails, plenty of Common Chiffchaffs, Rock Sparrows and Blue Rock Thrush.

We spent a good deal of time in this area trying until the natural light was fading away in front of our eyes so we decided to drive back to our hotel very happy and pleased with the wildlife seen, it was also a wonderful late afternoon with a breathtaking sunset! Back at our hotel, the evening was enjoyed with more drinks and nibbles followed by the delicious local gastronomy.

## Day 5

Friday 21st January

### Andujar Natural Park (Rio Jándula - La Lancha)

Another fabulous morning with an early start in the wonderful scenery of Andújar Natural Park! We had our early breakfast and soon drove down the main road and towards the lower basin of the River Jandula. We took a walk along the track that follows the river and soon we saw lots of bird activity, including noisy flocks of Iberian Magpies, Hawfinch, Common Chiffchaff, Long-tailed, Blue and Great Tits, Short-toed Treecreeper, Crested Tit, Rock Bunting, Iberian Green Woodpecker and Great Cormorants. The river was full of activity with Great Cormorants, Grey Heron, European Kingfisher, White and Great Wagtails, Sardinian Warblers and Blackcaps feeding by the shore. Then, a beautiful European Otter turned up from nowhere right in front of us and it was great seeing her swimming and fishing, also scratching its body on a rock after eating a feast! Most of the time it was very visible and out on the shore for quite a good time, long enough to see her very well!

After enjoying the sightings on this site, we drove back to La Lancha in order to spend our last hour scanning for more Iberian Lynx, and the wait was not long, because as soon as we got there, one Iberian Lynx was spotted hunting and we got great views of him. He then went off on a long stroll along the various tracks and firebreaks, yet making himself very visible to us and posing for our cameras, coming really close to us on a couple of occasions. This was a great experience for everyone and we were really pleased with this sighting! We then found a nice spot for our lunch and went down to the dam to explore more.

As we finished the day, we drove back to the lodge with plenty of wine, beer and local sparkling wine flowing in order to celebrate the Iberian Lynx seen today! We enjoyed our last dinner together with large amounts of tasty local food and certainly we were all in great spirits, sharing unforgettable memories which will be kept in

our minds forever. We enjoyed our last supper together very much, a truly good farewell from this lovely and wild area!

## Day 6

Saturday 22nd January

### Andujar Natural Park (river Jándula) – Seville airport

A more relaxed start was required on this morning in order to explore the lower valley of El Encinarejo walking next to the river bank as we had done on a previous day. We then managed to find a lovely pair of European Otters which were the icing on the cake of this great tour as we enjoyed watching them for a long time! We also had great views of Hawfinch, Woodlark, Sardinian Warblers, Common Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps, amongst others.

We drove back to our lodge for a nice delicious lunch, before driving towards Seville airport afterwards in order to catch our mid-morning flight to the UK. Lots of birds were sporadically seen during our drive: White Stork, Red Kite, Common Buzzard, Common Kestrel, Little and Cattle Egrets, Crested Lark, Blackbird, Eurasian Magpies, House Sparrows and Spotless Starlings.

We arrived at the airport in time to check in our luggage and boarded our flight back to Stansted which was all on time. Once we arrived at Stansted, we collected our luggage and said goodbye to each other with all the best wishes, especially after our wonderful experiences lived in the last week in lovely Andalusia! We were lucky enough to see great wildlife, the landscapes, fine gastronomy and great locations of this fantastic part of Spain; most importantly, fantastic views of different Iberian Lynx. We were incredibly lucky and fortunate to enjoy in such a way the mysterious and very rare Iberian Lynx!

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## Species Lists

Birds (H = heard only)

	N=Near-endemic		January 2022					
	Common name	Scientific name	17	18	19	20	21	22
1	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓				
3	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>			✓			
4	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓	✓	✓			
5	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		✓	✓			
6	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		✓	✓			
7	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓	✓	✓			
9	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓			
10	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>			✓			
11	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			✓			
12	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Western Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>		✓	✓			
15	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
16	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓			
17	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>		✓	✓			
18	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓	✓	✓			
19	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			✓			
20	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	✓	✓	✓			
21	Eurasian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedecnemus</i>		✓				
22	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓	✓				
23	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓	✓				
24	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓			
25	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		✓				
26	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓	✓				
27	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓	✓			
28	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		✓				
29	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		✓				
30	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>		✓	✓			
31	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>			✓			
32	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓			
33	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
34	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	✓	✓				
35	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓	✓			
36	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>			✓			
37	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓				
38	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>			✓			
40	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

	N=Near-endemic		January 2022					
	Common name	Scientific name	17	18	19	20	21	22
41	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>			✓			
42	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Eurasian Black Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>		✓		✓	✓	
44	Spanish Imperial Eagle - N	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>		✓		✓	✓	
45	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>				✓		✓
46	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓				
47	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>				✓		✓
48	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
49	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	✓		✓			
50	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
51	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
52	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>				H	H	
53	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		✓			✓	
54	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓	✓		✓	
55	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>				✓	✓	✓
56	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>					✓	✓
57	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>				✓	✓	
58	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>			✓			
59	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
60	Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	✓	✓				
61	Iberian Magpie - N	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
62	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
63	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>						✓
64	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓			✓
65	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>				H	H	
66	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
67	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓
68	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>		✓				
69	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		✓				✓
70	Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>		✓				
71	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓	H			
72	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓				
73	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>					✓	
74	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H	H	H			
75	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
76	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		✓	✓			
78	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>				✓	✓	✓
79	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
80	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				✓		✓
81	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>				✓	✓	
82	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>		H				
83	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



	N=Near-endemic		January 2022					
	Common name	Scientific name	17	18	19	20	21	22
84	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
85	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓			✓	
86	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>				✓	✓	✓
87	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
88	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	✓	✓				
89	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>				✓	✓	
91	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
92	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
93	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>			✓			
94	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>						✓
95	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>				✓	✓	
96	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓
97	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
98	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	
99	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
100	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>				✓	✓	✓
101	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓					
102	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
103	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>		✓	✓			
104	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
105	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>				✓		

## Mammals

E=Endemic, I=Introduced		January 2022					
Common name	Scientific name	17	18	19	20	21	22
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Iberian Lynx - E	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>	1	3			1	
Egyptian Mongoose - I	<i>Herpestes ichneumon</i>			1			
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	✓					
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>			✓	✓	✓	
Spanish Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>				✓	✓	
Mouflon	<i>Ovis orientalis</i>				2	4	
European Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>					1	2