

# Spain - Realm of the Iberian Lynx

Naturetrek Tour Report

7th – 12th March 2022



Spanish Ibex by Byron Palacios

Tour report by Byron Palacios



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Tour Participants: Byron Palacios and Simon Woolley (Leaders) with 11 Naturetrek clients.

## Day 1

Monday 7th March

### London Gatwick – Seville – El Rocio

We left the UK from London Gatwick to Seville in the very early morning, arriving in the sunny Andalusian city right on time and with no delays. Other tour participants were waiting for us there already so after going through all the airport formalities, we reassembled the whole group successfully in the arrivals area and from airport hotels. We made a stop to enjoy some lunch, driving up out of Seville and heading west towards El Rocío. We made a short diversion towards the northern entrance of Doñana National Park, more precisely at La Dehesa de Abajo, where we had the chance to see lots of interesting birds such as White Stork, Marsh Harrier, Black Kites, Peregrine Falcon, thousands of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Greater Flamingos, Eurasian Coot, Little Grebe, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler and a pair of the rare Red-knobbed Coot.

It was a stunning end of the afternoon with the setting sunshine painting breathtaking orange/pink tones in the sky: a great way to see Doñana and its surroundings in such gorgeous light! We continued our drive to El Rocío arriving to our hotel where we checked in its comfortable rooms. Some of us went out to the marshes behind our hotel and enjoyed watching plenty of Common Chiffchaffs, Greater Flamingos, Sedge Warbler and a pair of the always-lovely Eurasian Penduline Tits. All this alongside a beautiful and picturesque sunset. It was then time for us to meet up at the bar in order to enjoy some drinks followed by a delicious dinner.

## Day 2

Tuesday 8th March

### Doñana National Park (Raya Real – FAO visitor's centre – Coto del Rey)

We gathered together for an early breakfast at the hotel's cafeteria. It was rather wet with early morning showers, and quite fresh too. Despite of this, we managed to go out exploring the core area of Doñana National Park and the FAO Visitor Centre. Right here, we managed to get great species such as Gadwall, Greater Flamingos, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Coot, Western Swamphen, Marsh Harrier and Black Kites. A pair of Sedge Warblers and also Penduline Tits were also seen. Back in the core area of the park, many Iberian Magpies, Red-legged Partridge and Red Deer were constantly turning up by the side of the Royal Track. We worked very hard checking every concealment and bushes along the sandy tracks, but our felines seemed elusive this morning. Towards noon, we drove back to El Rocio in order to take a break and to enjoy of a delicious local lunch, walking along village marshes which produced Back Redstarts, Sardinian Warblers, Little Egrets, Common Snipe, European Stonechat, White Wagtail, White-spotted Bluethroat, Eurasian Penduline Tits and many others.

After a break, we resumed our activities in the afternoon by doing an intensive search in the first portion of the core area; we drove a short distance in order to take a stroll around the area known as Hierba Buena within Coto del Rey. This beautiful dehesa habitat (meadows and Cork Oaks) produced lots of interesting birds such as Iberian Grey Shrike, Sardinian Warbler, European Stonechat, Corn Bunting, Thekla's Lark, Black Kites, a pair of Short-toed Snake Eagle and Great Spotted Cuckoo, amongst others, plus a Red Fox.

In the late afternoon, we drove back to the Royal Track again, this time to explore the core area in order to keep searching for Iberian Lynx but no luck today, so we returned to our hotel in El Rocío for a well-deserved break, delicious supper, celebrations and drinks!

## Day 3

**Wednesday 9th March**

### Doñana National Park (Raya Real) – Dehesa de Abajo – Sierra de Andujar Natural Park

We had another early morning start and breakfast, heading into the core area of Doñana National Park in the very early morning on a chilly but dry morning. Once again, we drove along the Raya Real track enjoying the sounds of the wilderness of this lovely place as we drifted along the sandy tracks in search for lynx. We search really hard again, getting more nice and enjoyable views of Red Deer, Red-legged Partridge, Iberian Magpies and a few European Rabbits, the latter two main food for Iberian Lynx! We made a stop in order to stretch our legs and scan the border area of the Mediterranean forest and the Marisma area, watching large flocks of Corn Buntings, Goldfinches, Linnets, Greylag Geese and Greater Flamingos, amongst others.

After this morning excursion, it was time for us to head back to our hotel in order to check out with our belongings and to drive for about 35 minutes in order to make a stop at Dehesa de Abajo. Here, we had wonderful views of Marsh Harrier, Black Kite, plenty of Greater Flamingos, White Storks, Northern Shovelers, Gadwalls, Eurasian Teal, Western Swamphen, the rare Red-knobbed Coot, Black-winged Stilt and a pair of Booted Eagles, amongst others. We found a lovely place in this area where we enjoyed our delicious picnic lunch, hitting the motorway afterwards in order to start our journey to Andújar (via Seville) making a break for coffee and facilities half way through the journey.

We arrived in the town of Andújar and soon diverted north-east 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 10th March**

### Andújar Natural Park (La Lancha – river Jándula)

After an early breakfast, we drove for about 30 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 speaking. After choosing the right spot, we started to scan the different gullies, finding other important wildlife such as Blue Rock Thrush, Iberian Grey Shrike, Great and Blue Tits, Sardinian Warbler and having fantastic views of Spanish Imperial Eagle flying over the valley. We also saw plenty of Red and Fallow Deer, Griffon and Eurasian Black Vultures, Iberian Magpies, Red-legged Partridge and European Rabbit, amongst others. The sky was clear blue, and the sun was shining, perfect for going to a different spot which overlooks the dam. Here we saw a herd of Spanish Ibex really close, making the most of this endemic ungulate. We continued down towards the dam where we had a stroll which produced Northern Goshawk, Black Redstarts, Blue Rock Thrush, Crag and House Martins, Black Wheatear and more Black and Griffon Vultures soaring over the hill tops and forming kettles.



We then found a nice place to have our lunch which provided great views of the dam and a soaring Spanish Imperial Eagle and more Spanish Ibex grazing nearby. The sun was hitting the valley nicely, warming up the early afternoon. After lunch, we drove back to our lodge in order to take a break, followed a visit to the lower valley of the river Jándula. Here, we had great views of Hawfinch, Greenfinch, Spotless Starling, Spanish Imperial Eagle, White Wagtails, European Kingfisher, Cetti's Warbler and Blackcaps, amongst others. We found a nice spot by the river and had a good scan of the boulders and clearings in case Iberian Lynx are around but we had no luck this evening.

The light was fading away, so we drove back to our hotel in order to enjoy of local drinks followed by the delicious local gastronomy at Los Pinos Restaurant.

## Day 5

Friday 11th March

### Andújar Natural Park (La Lancha – river Jándula)

After another early breakfast, we went out to the upper valley of La Lancha once again, despite the overcast weather. We started to scan the valley from a different spot than the previous day as we were told there was some activity in the area at dawn. We kept scanning the area when a pair of Spanish Imperial Eagles flew in front of us giving us fantastic views. We then moved to the next corner of the track and closer to the hills we were scanning, and it was from here I spotted a living object in the distance having a siesta amongst a bush and a small boulder...it was a lovely male Iberian Lynx! We were all very surprised and delighted with the finding. He eventually stood up, stretched his body, and drifted down the hill and through boulders and gaps, till he finally got right in the open and sat on a large boulder, from where we had amazing views of this Iberian Lynx...on the rocks! He then moved back to the same spot where he was found and went for a short break again. Shortly after that, he started meandering around the spot and walking up the hill providing us more amazing views! He eventually disappeared amongst the next slope and bushes. He left us all very happy and satisfied, after our working very hard to see one Iberian Lynx!

Soon, the rain arrived, and it looked very persistent, so we managed to find a good spot to have our lunch and then return to our lodge for a break. After this, the rain was still falling, but we went out anyway, down to the lower valley of the river Jándula. We sheltered ourselves under the two hides provided by the river but the rain wasn't stopping at all, so we decided to go back to the hotel in order to start packing and, of course, enjoy plentiful wine, beer and local brut that was flowing in order to celebrate the fantastic sightings we had of Iberian Lynx!

It was our last dinner together and of this wonderful tour; alongside large amounts of tasty local food we certainly all deserved our 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 12th March

### Andujar Natural Park – Seville airport

A very early start was made by all of us this morning in order to be in Seville airport in time for our mid-morning flight to Gatwick. Some of us were catching a different flight and others were staying in Seville for an extra time.

We said goodbye to each other with all the best wishes, especially after an amazing experience lived in the last week in the lovely Andalucia!

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 the mysterious and very rare Iberian Lynx!



Spanish Imperial Eagle by Simon Woolley

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## Species lists

### Birds

	N=Near-endemic, H = Heard only		March				
	Common name	Scientific name	7	8	9	10	11
1	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓		
2	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>			✓		
3	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓	✓	✓		
4	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓	✓	✓		
5	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓				
7	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓		
8	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	✓	✓			
9	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	✓	✓			
10	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>		✓	✓		
12	Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>		✓			✓
13	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	H	✓			
16	Western Swamphe	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	✓	✓	✓		
17	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
18	Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>	2		✓		
19	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓		
20	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓	✓	✓		
21	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
22	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
23	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓	✓			
24	Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		✓			
25	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓	✓			
26	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓	✓	✓		
27	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>		✓			
28	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓	✓			
29	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓	✓	✓		
30	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			✓		
31	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	✓				
32	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓		✓		
33	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓				
34	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
35	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓		
36	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
37	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
38	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓	✓		
39	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓		

	N=Near-endemic, H = Heard only		March				
	Common name	Scientific name	7	8	9	10	11
40	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
41	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓	✓		
42	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓		
43	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
44	Eurasian Black Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>				✓	✓
45	Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>		✓		✓	
46	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
47	Spanish Imperial Eagle - N	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>				✓	✓
48	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>				✓	
49	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
50	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓	✓		
51	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	✓	✓	✓		
52	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>			H	H	H
54	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		H		✓	H
55	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>			✓		
56	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓		✓	
57	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>				✓	✓
58	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				✓	
59	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>				✓	✓
60	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
61	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	✓				
62	Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	✓	✓			
63	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>				✓	
64	Iberian Magpie - N	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>		✓		✓	✓
65	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
66	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓		✓		
67	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
69	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	✓	✓			
71	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		✓			
72	Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>		✓			
73	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓	✓		
74	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	✓	✓			
75	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
76	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>			✓		
77	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
78	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>				✓	
79	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	h		h	✓	✓
80	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			✓	✓	✓
81	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	✓	✓			

	N=Near-endemic, H = Heard only		March				
	Common name	Scientific name	7	8	9	10	11
83	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>			✓		
84	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	H		✓		
85	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			✓	✓	✓
86	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>		✓	✓	✓	
87	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				✓	H
88	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>			✓	✓	
89	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>			✓	✓	✓
90	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
91	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
92	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	✓	✓	
93	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			✓	✓	✓
94	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
95	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>		✓			
96	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
97	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>				✓	✓
98	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓		
99	Black Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>				✓	
100	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓			✓
101	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>		✓			
102	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>				✓	
103	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>		✓			
104	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
105	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓		
106	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓			✓
107	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>				✓	✓
108	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓		
110	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
111	European Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>					✓
112	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	H	✓	✓	✓	✓
113	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
114	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>				✓	✓
115	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>			✓	✓	✓

## Others

	E=Endemic		March				
	Common name	Scientific name	7	8	9	10	11
	<b>Mammals</b>						
1	European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Iberian Lynx - E	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>					1
3	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		✓			
4	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>		✓		✓	✓
6	Spanish Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>				✓	



	E=Endemic		March				
	Common name	Scientific name	7	8	9	10	11
7	Mouflon	<i>Ovis orientalis</i>				3	✓
	<b>Butterflies</b>						
1	Large White						
2	Clouded Yellow						
3	Red Admiral						
4	Painted Lady						
5	Provence Hairstreak						
6	Small Copper						
7	Small Heath						
8	Spanish Festoon						
	<b>Reptiles</b>						
1	Spanish Terrapin						
2	Spanish Wall Lizard						