

# Spain – Realm of the Iberian Lynx

Naturetrek Tour Report

11th – 16th February 2024

---



Greater Flamingo



Spanish Ibex



Rock Bunting



Spanish Imperial Eagle

Tour report by Sergio Martín, Photos by Sergio Martín & Ben Spencer

---



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour participants: Sergio Martín (leader), Sonia Alís (co-leader) with 9 Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

**Sunday 11th February**

Sergio and Sonia met the group at Sevilla airport from various flights and early arrivals, and we were soon on the way to Doñana NP.

It was a rainy day so we explored the Mediterranean forest in a quiet silence in search of any evidence of the Iberian Lynx. We made our first stop at Dehesa Tornero which gave us an idea of the habitat that this great predator favours. Flocks of Linnets were flying around us and a Red Kite appeared above the trees. Northern Raven, Common Buzzard and Red-legged Partridge were also seen, amongst others.

We decided to take a break to have a warm lunch and after some local delicacies and being dry again we got back into the field to check some of the other species that Doñana had to offer. So we drove towards Dehesa de Abajo lagoon where we began to be surrounded by White Storks, Western Marsh Harriers and some of us had the chance to spot a beautiful Bluethroat.

The lagoon offered us also views of distant Black-winged Stilts, Greater Flamingoes and Eurasian Spoonbills amongst others.

Moving on we soon arrived at El Rocio, where we checked into Hotel Toruño, on the shores of the Mother of the Marshes lagoon. Some of the group had time to check the lagoon before dinner, picking up Glossy Ibis and several species of ducks including Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal and also Greylag Goose.

We had then a delicious dinner and a deserved rest.

## Day 2

**Monday 12th February**

This morning, we headed out to the core area of the park at first light with local guides. We used a local company with 4x4 minibuses and permits giving access to private areas of the National and Natural Park. With them we would spend the day searching for Iberian Lynx in the forest and heathlands, while enjoying all the other wonderful nature on show! The tracks were very wet due to the recent rains so we drove very slowly in search of the wildlife that the realm of the Lynx had to offer. Soon we had our first Iberian Magpies followed by Red-legged Partridge walking along the Camino Real (Royal track).

We drove outside of the pine woods to get to a very nice dehesa followed by the heathland where two fabulous Little Owls were perched nearby on eucalyptus stumps. The European Rabbits were also there giving us the clues that it was a good hunting area for the cat.

We made a stop at an area where we could stretch our legs. Some Iberian Grey Shrikes were moving along the thistle and many Red Deer were grazing at the edge of the heathland and the forest. Some of us had a glimpse of a Spanish Imperial Eagle. When we were going to move we had a report of a Great Spotted Cuckoo that we managed to find and we all had great views of that magnificent bird.

We moved on to Coto del Rey, once the king's private hunting estate. We took a walk there where we came across more Iberian Grey Shrikes, Dartford and Sardinian Warblers, plenty of White Storks and a Griffon Vulture staying on the ground amongst other birds. Plenty of mammal tracks were found but just Foxes and Badgers as well as some Egyptian Mongoose were recognized.

We headed back to El Rocío for lunch, where Antonio, Jose Manuel and Samuel took care of us. We tried local dishes and a great coffee. There was then some free time to wander the lake shores or the unusual town, with its famous sandy streets made for horse-riding.

After a little rest we jumped into our vehicles again to check the Lynx territories in the afternoon. We decided to head first to Jose Antonio Valverde Visitor Centre, at the side of a freshwater lagoon. Lots of Corn Buntings were found alongside the fences of the marshes on the way to the visitor centre and once there we had great views of Pied Avocets, Common Cranes, Black-tailed Godwits and two Common Snipes right in front of us. Some Wild Boars made their way also along the far bank while we were spotting the wildfowl.

We then decided to get back to the forest and check carefully the pine forest as it was already cooler and dryer. We scanned the whole forest and when we were just about to leave it for the day an adult Iberian Lynx crossed in front of the first vehicle. It was just few a seconds before it disappeared between the flowers but we all managed to see it in the first vehicle. We decided then to head back to another track behind us where we thought that the Lynx could cross and there it was again! This time we all managed to see it well in detail by everyone. After the Lynx walked away from us we decided to get back to El Rocío and celebrate the great day we'd had.

After a short break we gathered together to have some drinks, the checklist and a superb dinner!

## Day 3

**Tuesday 13th February**

Today we departed from the hotel again with our 4x4 vehicles to have another go at the core area of Doñana NP and see if we could see our Lynx from the previous day!

Following the same routes as yesterday morning, we came across some familiar faces, such as our Little Owl pair, and some new ones, like a Common Kingfisher by the toll bridge and some Woodlarks by a Cork Oak amongst others.

We scanned the area where we saw our Lynx from the previous afternoon but she didn't want to show off again. Just several Red Deer and Iberian Magpies were found from corner to corner.

We decided then that it was time to leave the mediterranean forest of Doñana and we headed back to El Rocío. Here we said our goodbyes to the team from Doñana Nature, and also our hosts at Hotel Toruño as it was time to head upstream to our second base in Sierra Morena.

After packing our luggage we had a very nice picnic at the shore of The Mother of the Marshes where we had fantastic views of Eurasian Spoonbills, Greater Flamingoes and Greylag Geese amongst other birds with the background of the picturesque town.

Once we finished, we departed towards our next destination in Sierra Morena.

As the light was good and we were still fresh we decided to explore a bit of the lower Jandula valley with the last hours of daylight. The area is a pristine dehesa forest with a quiet river and a dam. There we found more Common Kingfishers, Grey and White Wagtail, Common Chiffchaffs and other passerines... but the star of the evening was the Eurasian Otter that appeared right below us swimming and fishing giving good opportunities to the photographers.

We arrived at our accommodation at Los Pinos Complejo Rural with time to relax a bit and settle into our new habitat, before our first outstanding three course meal, courtesy of Ramón and the team.

## Day 4

## Wednesday 14th February

Today we got much deeper into the valleys and hills of Sierra Morena. After breakfast we made our way to the upper valley of the Jandula river. We drove through impressive dehesas forest finding on our way Red and Fallow Deer, some Eurasian Hoopoes flew across and the first Griffon Vultures appeared between the slopes. All surrounded by the call of the Iberian Green Woodpeckers, Common Chaffinches and Corn Buntings.

When we were approaching the open valley that we were aiming to scan we saw a beautiful Little Owl perched on a rock and we heard Crested Tits around so we got out of the vehicles and there they were, offering us great views of that special bird. After that stop we walked to La Lancha valley where we spent the rest of the day.

Griffon and European Black Vultures appeared on the scene gliding over us and an impressive Spanish Imperial Eagle pair flew around the valley giving us time and opportunities to check all their details. We scanned every rock or bush from the open valley and many Red Deer and European Rabbits were seen moving around but no traces of Iberian Lynx were found.

We were approaching noon so we decided to check another habitat before lunch. We drove down to the upper Jandula dam where we had incredible views of Spanish Ibex grazing just at the side of our vehicles. Then we moved on to the dam and there we found lots of new species as Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart, Eurasian Crag Martins, Hawfinches and Rock Buntings. The last two seemed to enjoy the same leafless bush.

Checking the reservoir we saw some Great Cormorants, Grey Herons and above the hills that surrounded it we saw plenty of Griffon and Cinereous Vultures together with a pair of Golden Eagles that delighted us right before lunch.

We had a nice picnic in a great location (Los Escoriales) with excellent views of the reservoir and the valley.

After lunch we spent the rest of the afternoon at the upper valley checking for the movement of any cat but there were no traces of it. Despite that we had great views of a group of Mouflon and Red Deer as well as our pair of Spanish Imperial Eagles moving around.

The day had been great but long so we made our way back to our hotel to gather and enjoy an impressive dinner offered by Los Pinos.

## Day 5

Thursday 15th February

Today we began our last full day in the lower valley at the Encinarrejo Dam. After breakfast we drove slowly to see if there was any movement. We parked in a high position to check the whole valley and we walked along the river with the expectation of another lynx ...

Many Iberian Magpies, European Serins, Greenfinches and Mistle Thrush were seen instead. By the river we could hear Crested Tits and Short-toed Treecreepers and some of the group managed to see them. The usual Great Cormorants were perched on a tree by the river but the Eurasian Otter didn't want to appear again this morning. On the way back to the vehicles we saw Common Chiffchafs, Eurasian Blackcaps and a group of Fallow Deer that were walking away from us close to a fence.

We decided then to spend the rest of the day in the upper valley where we had the best chances to spot the elusive cat. We set off and we began to check the rocks and bushes. The Cinereous and Griffon Vultures accompanied us during the day flying over us from time to time. Once scanning the valleys we spotted a Spanish Imperial Eagle female perched on top of a Holm Oak so we had great views through the telescope. Red-legged Partridge, Little Owl and European Rabbits were heard and seen around and we had views of a Dartford Warbler on a bush close to us.

We took our picnic once more at Los Escoriales. When we were just about to eat we had a report from a local guide of Iberian Lynx at La Lancha Dam, so we rushed up into the vehicles to see if we could catch up with him but after some challenging driving we realized that it was a misunderstanding with a European Otter that the local guide had seen so after some laughs we got back to the vehicles and had lunch right before the rain started.

We arrived then at some of the sheltered hides and kept on scanning, observing Spotless Starlings and Eurasian Magpies in the rain. The Iberian Green Woodpeckers were calling from different points and we managed to see some but they were quite elusive so far.

After a while, we decided to have a walk along a private finca with bulls that we know is the territory of a female Iberian Lynx and there we had at least great views of one Iberian Green Woodpecker that perched on a tree and not so far from us Corn Buntings, European Stonechat and Red-legged Partridge were seen also amongst others.

We decided then to get back to the hotel for a deserved rest and a great dinner.

## Day 6

Friday 16th February

Today, due to the early flight we had to depart from Los Pinos when it was still dark but on the way to the airport we had time to spot some White Storks, Red Kites and Northern Lapwings while driving.

Once we arrived at the airport we had time for big hugs with all the group, remembering the moment when our Iberian Lynx appeared in Doñana N.P. making this trip even more unforgettable.

## Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) to sign up.

## Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers and exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



[www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays](http://www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



[www.twitter.com/naturetrektours](http://www.twitter.com/naturetrektours)



[www.instagram.com/naturetrek\\_wildlife\\_holidays](http://www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays)



Iberian Green Woodpecker

## Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only, N = Near endemic)

Common name	Scientific name	February 2024					
		11	12	13	14	15	16
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓	✓			
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>			✓		✓	
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓	✓	✓			
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>			✓			
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓					
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓	✓	✓			
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓			
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	✓		✓			
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	✓					
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>			✓	H	✓	
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓					
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>		✓				
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓			✓	
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓			
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>		✓				
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	✓	✓	✓			
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓	✓	✓			
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			✓			✓
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		✓				
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓				
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓	✓				
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		✓	✓			
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓				
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓					
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		✓	✓		✓	
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓	✓			
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>					✓	

		February 2024					
Common name	Scientific name	11	12	13	14	15	16
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓	✓		✓	
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓			
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓		✓	✓	
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>				✓	✓	
Spanish Imperial Eagle - N	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>				✓		
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓				
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓			
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>			H	H		
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		✓		✓	✓	
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓	✓		✓	
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		h	✓	✓	✓	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				H	✓	
Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>			H	✓	✓	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>		✓	✓	✓		
Iberian Magpie - N	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>				✓	H	
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓				✓	
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>				✓	H	
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	H	✓	✓	✓	
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	H	✓	✓	
Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>			✓			
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		✓		✓		
Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>		✓				
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓	✓			✓
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>		✓				
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>		✓		✓	✓	
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓



		February 2024					
Common name	Scientific name	11	12	13	14	15	16
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H	✓	✓		✓	
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		H	✓	✓		
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	H	✓				
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	H	✓	✓	✓	
Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>		✓			✓	
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>					✓	
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>					✓	
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>		✓	H	H	✓	
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓	✓	✓		
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>				✓	✓	
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	✓					
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>				✓		
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	✓	✓				
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>		✓				
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓		✓	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓		✓	
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>				✓	✓	
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓			
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>				✓		
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>		✓	✓			

## Other vertebrates

E=Endemic, s = signs only, I = Introduced		February 2024					
Common name	Scientific name	12	13	14	15	16	17
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Iberian Lynx - E	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>			1			
Egyptian Mongoose - I	<i>Herpestes ichneumon</i>			s			
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>			✓			
Eurasian Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>		s	s			
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		s	✓			
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>			✓		✓	✓
Spanish Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>					✓	
Mouflon	<i>Ovis orientalis</i>					✓	
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>			✓			
European Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>			✓			
<b>Reptiles</b>							
Algerian Psammodrommus	<i>Psammodromus algirus</i>			✓		✓	
Andalusian Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis vaucheri</i>					✓	

## Invertebrates

Common name	Scientific name
Rambur's Pellicle	<i>Ocnogyna boeticum</i>
Cleopatra butterfly	<i>Gomnpteryx cleopatra</i>
Spanish Dung Beetle	<i>Copris hispanicus</i>
Red Admiral	<i>Amelia kleisser</i>
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>
Grass Eggar	<i>Lasiocampa trifolii</i>
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>
Pine Processionary Moth	<i>Thaumetopoea pityocampa</i>