

Spain - Realm of the Iberian Lynx

Naturetrek Tour Report

1st – 6th December 2025



Iberian Lynx



Red-legged Partridge



Black Redstart



Otter

Tour report by Byron Palacios



Naturetrek

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Tour participants: Byron Palacios (leader) with five Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Monday 1st December

London Gatwick – Seville airport – El Rocío – Doñana National Park (Royal Track)

Our flight left Gatwick Airport on time and arrived in Seville at nearly noon. After going through airport formalities, we jumped in our van and drove to El Rocío, stopping in a local restaurant to enjoy a nice lunch. We then went to the other end of the village, where our hotel welcomed us to their comfortable rooms. We then got ready for our first excursion in the core area of Doñana National Park, driving along the Raya Real (Royal Track) in lovely sunny weather. The first Iberian Magpies and Red Deer started to show, as well as many rabbits. We checked along the sandy tracks for traces of Iberian Lynx, with no results within the first hour.

The, without warning, a Lynx emerged from under a *Lentiscus* bush as we drove by! He was very close to our 4x4, and gave us incredible views. We were absolutely wowed! After two or three minutes right out in the open, he disappeared into a bush and was never seen again. Very happy, and frankly a bit shocked by this sudden encounter with our top target animal, we continued exploring the park, finding a pair of Little Owls perched on top of tree stumps, together with lots of Stonechats, Goldfinches, Spanish Sparrows and others.

In the late afternoon, we started to drive back to El Rocío, and we saw the same young Lynx once again! This time he showed off much better, walking along calm and relaxed; he even attempted to catch something inside a bush. We were elated.

Super happy and ‘over the moon’, we drove back to our hotel, from where we enjoyed watching a beautiful sunset from the marsh edge. We then retired to our rooms to get ready for celebratory drinks, and dinner.

Day 2

Tuesday 2nd December

Doñana National Park (Royal Track – Valverde Visitor's Centre – Coto del Rey)

We made an exciting early start today, in order to explore the core area of Doñana National Park. We jumped in our 4x4 van after breakfast, and soon drove again onto the Raya Real, where we started searching a few Iberian Lynx territories. Flocks of Spotless Starlings and the beautiful Iberian Magpie were seen along the sandy tracks, alongside Red Deer. Right on the edge of the Mediterranean forest, we found a pair of very obliging Little Owls, flocks of Spanish Sparrows, Goldfinches and Meadow Pipits. We then drove through the *marismas* (seasonally-flooded grassland), where we found lots of birds such as Great and Little Egrets, Grey Herons, Crested Larks, European Stonechats, a beautiful Dartford Warbler and a flock of stunning Greater Flamingoes. The weather wasn't the best, and a heavy drizzle covered the area towards noon, so we decided to continue towards the José Antonio Valverde visitor centre for facilities, and to learn more about the area. After this, the rain was still persistent, but we still managed to see a few Lesser Kestrels. We drove back to El Rocío for lunch and a break.

In the afternoon, we drove back into the Park; this time the plan was to take a nice walk in the Coto del Rey area. The weather had improved massively, and we enjoyed our walk, which produced beautiful birds such as Hoopoes, White Storks, Woodlark, Stonechat, Black Redstart, and a juvenile individual of the rare Bonelli's Eagle. We also

found large flocks of Lapwings and Golden Plovers wintering together in this area. After this enjoyable walk, we drove to the core area of the park, searching for Iberian Lynx till dusk.

Day 3

Wednesday 3rd December

El Acebuche – Andújar Natural Park

After a very relaxed breakfast, we packed our bags and left our hotel to do some birding along the southern shore of the marshes in El Rocío. We had great views of Greylag Geese, Spoonbills, Black-tailed Godwits, Black-winged Stilts, Shoveler, Teal, Eurasian Coot, Hoopoe and others. We were lucky with the weather, and the sun was shining today, although there was a fairly chilly breeze.

We then drove a short distance to El Acebuche visitor centre, to pay a special visit to the Iberian Lynx Reproduction Centre, managed by the EU LIFE Project. We had a great experience here, learning more about the Iberian Lynx, and we were lucky enough to see a captive pair of Lynxes (they don't always show up) who have bred several healthy individuals that have been introduced to other areas of Spain and Portugal since 2014. Although they're kept in an eight-hectare natural enclosure, sometimes it is a bit difficult to find them both; we were very lucky to find them rapidly and fairly close. We enjoyed watching these two individuals, studying every single aspect of their fur, patterns and forms. They were truly stunning animals.

After enjoying this experience, we started our three-and-a-half-hour drive to Andújar, making a lunch spot along the way. We arrived at our lodge in Andújar Natural Park in time to get our rooms, followed by some drinks and a delicious local dinner.

Day 4

Thursday 4th December

Andújar Natural Park (El Encinarejo – River Jándula)

After a relaxed breakfast, we drove to the lower valley of the River Jándula, where we had great views of a pair of Red Squirrels, lots of Iberian Magpies, Nuthatch, Crag Martins and others. The weather deteriorated towards lunchtime, so we decided to go back to our lodge for lunch and a break.

After this, we drove back to El Encinarejo, where we took a nice stroll, finding great birds such as Hawfinch, Greenfinch, lots of great views of Kingfisher and Iberian Green Woodpecker. We then drove towards the old dam, where we spent our last hour of daylight, watching Kingfishers, Grey and White Wagtails, Chiffchaffs, Blackcap, Long-tailed Tits, Grey Herons and Great Cormorants. As the light was fading and dusk was soon upon us, we drove back to our lodge.

Day 5

Friday 5th December

Andújar Natural Park (El Encinarejo – River Jándula – La Lancha dam – Los Escoriales)

It was another day with grey skies and heavy mist covering the mountains and both valleys. After breakfast, we explored the lower valley of the River Jándula again in the area known as El Encinarejo. As soon as we arrived, we

found a group of four active Otters feeding in the river, giving an amazing display: it was superb. We watched them for a good while, as well as lots of Iberian Magpies, Chiffchaffs, Black Redstarts, and the odd Kingfisher. We then drove towards the old dam where plenty of Grey and White Wagtails, Kingfisher, Black Redstarts and other birds were spotted.

The weather improved a lot, and we decided to switch valleys, having had some lunch in our lodge along the way. After lunch, we drove towards La Lancha dam, where we had fantastic views of Spanish Ibex, Cinereous and Griffon Vultures, Red-billed Choughs, Black Redstart and the always beautiful Blue Rock Thrush. After this, we drove back to Los Escoriales, where we had fantastic views of two Spanish Imperial Eagles, both perched and in flight. They flew right in front of us at eye level, which was such a treat.

Later on, a light drizzle covered the valley, so we drove to the bull farm right at the start of Los Escoriales, where we found a bunch of Fallow and Red Deer, and a few Mouflon, one of which was very close to us. We also had great views of Iberian Green Woodpecker and Short-toed Treecreeper. Things suddenly became misty and drizzly, so we started our drive back to our hotel in the late afternoon for the usual break before drinks and dinner.

Day 6

Saturday 6th December

Andújar to Seville airport

We had a very early start today, so as to catch our flight to the UK from Seville. (Some clients were staying on in Seville for a few days to explore this fantastic city.) After a misty drive, we arrived in good time to catch our mid-morning flight, which was in fact delayed by three hours due to the bad weather conditions.

It had been a fantastic tour, full of great wildlife: we had been very lucky to see a wild Iberian Lynx so brilliantly. We had also had fantastic views of lots of other indigenous wildlife, despite the slightly poor weather we had during the second half of our tour in the Sierra de Andújar. Hasta pronto, Spain!

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

N=Near-endemic		December 2025				
Common name	Scientific name	1	2	3	4	5
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓			
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>			✓		
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>			✓		
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>				✓	✓
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>				✓	✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				✓	
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		✓			
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>			✓		
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>		✓			
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	✓		
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>			✓		
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</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>			✓		
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>				✓	✓
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>				✓	✓
Spanish Imperial Eagle - N	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>					2
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>		1			
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>			✓		
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓	✓			
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>				H	H
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓	✓	✓	
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>				✓	✓
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				✓	
Iberian Green Woodpecker - N	<i>Picus sharpei</i>				✓	✓
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>		✓			
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Iberian Magpie - N	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>			✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>					✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			✓	✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		✓			

N=Near-endemic		December 2025				
Common name	Scientific name	1	2	3	4	5
Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>		✓			
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓	✓		
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>				✓	✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>				H	
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>			✓	✓	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			✓	✓	✓
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Currucula melanocephala</i>				✓	H
Dartford Warbler	<i>Currucula undata</i>		✓			
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>				✓	H
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>					✓
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>				✓	
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>					✓
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>					✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	✓				
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>				✓	
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				✓	✓
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓		
Eurasian 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>	✓	✓	✓		✓

Mammals

N=Near-endemic, C=captive		December 2025				
Common name	Scientific name	1	2	3	4	5
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>				✓	
Leisler's Noctule	<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	✓				
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	✓				
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>		✓		✓	✓
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Iberian Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>					✓
Mouflon	<i>Ovis aries</i>					✓
Iberian Lynx - N	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>	1		2(C)		
Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>					✓