

Wolves & Bustards in Rural Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report Compilation

October 2007

Summary

The wolf watching trip departed on two occasions this month and we were joined by 17 Naturetrek clients. Both trips saw Wolf, although the first group struggled with only limited views for some members of the party. All the luck was reserved for the second group, who enjoyed prolonged views on all days! Overall wolves were recorded on six days with a maximum daily sighting of five. We were able to watch their interactions and behaviour and the unique colour of their coats enabled us to 'get to know' certain individuals during the trips. We saw 11 species of mammals including Red Deer and Wild Boar, 94 species of birds which included 10 raptors and up to 100 Great Bustards.

The following are extracts from the two tour reports from October 2007:

Wolves

After a little while Dave drew our attention to movements amongst long grass at the edge of a large clearing. Tension grew, before the mystery creature revealed itself as a hunting Red Fox. Of course not what we were anticipating, however it entertained us with its leaps into the air above the grass to pounce back downwards after some unsighted prey.

Soon another canine was seen, but much bigger, & to our great excitement, a Wolf! It was in an area of heather with some scattered young pines, & as we looked down on it we realized there was another one. We were able to watch these large carnivores on & off for around half an hour before the light faded, during which time Ann was able to confirm at least a third. Wild Wolves in Western Europe!



Wolf watching by John Willsher

What a fantastic end to a fantastic day.



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Great Bustards

Turning westwards, we headed for an open, arable area but we discovered the road was closed & a diversion was necessary. We took a minor, occasional pot holed road between gently rolling fields, which were in the process of being ploughed. We had our lunch at the roadside here, where White Storks & Red Kites were feeding; however our attention was mainly focused on the spectacular Great Bustards. We saw several groups of these huge birds, as they walked across the fields, even observing some in their heavy, ponderous flight. A magnificent sight!



Scanning for bustards by John Willsher

Due to the poor visibility Dave was a little concerned that we may miss one of the prime species of the tour, so it was with some relief that despite the weather conditions he spotted a dozen or more Great Bustards. Though we had to halt partly on the main road, the traffic was light & tolerant of the band of 'ingles' who were admiring the local wildlife, as we observed these huge spectacular birds in the roadside field we soon realized there were more than 70 in the adjacent area. Some of the distant birds had the first rays of sun on them as the cloud began to break & eventually the brightness rolled onto the nearest ones revealing them in perfect light & even inducing one male to go into a display.

Raptors and more.....



Griffon Vulture by Peter Dunn

Departing for our exploration to the south of the region, we drove through a constantly changing & interesting landscape. Buzzards were numerous & several Red Kites were seen, though the most exciting raptors during the drive were 2 Black-shouldered Kites which flew briefly around the vehicle before disappearing from view.

We took our planned lunch stop soon after this at the Ermita where the gorged Rio Duero forms the border with Portugal (Rio Douro, to the Portuguese). Overhead the most obvious large raptors were the soaring & gliding

Griffon Vultures; however their flying skills were surpassed by four Golden Eagles, two adults & two juveniles which were mainly active across the void around the Portuguese cliffs.

And finally more Wolves.....

Amongst the heather & young pines a Wolf had revealed itself & as we focused our attention to that area a second & then a third was seen. The three were several metres apart when first observed, but quickly came together with tails wagging & began rubbing up against one another, in what appeared to be a greeting. It was wonderful to witness this behaviour & we even had one proudly walking around with a large, heavy bone in its mouth. We were able to watch them on & off, depending on the density of vegetation around them, for nearly three quarters of an hour, until the light was too poor. Before the darkness forced us to conclude we had also seen 4 Red Deer stags, plus a Wild Boar.



Wolf country by John Willsher

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	20-24 October	24-28 October
Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>	✓	✓
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		✓
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓
Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>		✓
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	✓	✓
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓
Iberian Hare	<i>Lepus ibericus</i>		✓
Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	✓	
Field Vole	<i>Microtus agrestis</i>	✓	
Stoat	<i>Mustela erminea</i>		✓
Soprano Pippistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus "sopranensis"</i>		✓

Birds

Common name	Scientific name	13-17 March	17-21 March
Great crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	✓	✓
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓
Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓
Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>		✓
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓
Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>		✓
Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		✓
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>		✓
Black Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	✓	✓
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		✓
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓
Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓	✓
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓
Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>		✓
Great Bustard	<i>Otis tarda</i>	✓	✓
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>		✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>		✓
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	20-24 October	24-28 October
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓
Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>		✓
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>		✓
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	✓	
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		✓
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓	✓
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	✓	✓
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓	
Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓	✓
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	✓
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	✓	✓
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	✓	✓
Calandra Lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>		✓
Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	✓	✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	
White Wagtail	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	✓	✓
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓
Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	✓	✓
Common Wheatear	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	✓	
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓	✓
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓
Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	✓	✓
Fan-tailed Warbler	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	✓	✓
Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓	
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapillus</i>	✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓	✓
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	✓	✓
Crested Tit	<i>Parus cristatus</i>	✓	✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	✓
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓	
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	✓	✓
Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius excubitor</i>	✓	✓
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	✓
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	✓	✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	✓	✓
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓
Linnet	<i>Acanthis cannabina</i>	✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	20-24 October	24-28 October
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓
Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	✓	
Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	✓	
Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	✓	✓
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	✓	
Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	✓	✓
Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	✓	✓
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓	✓
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	✓	✓