

Wolf-watching in Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report

11 - 15 September 2016



Views of Picos de Europa from Casavegas (Montaña Palentina)



Valley of Pineda



European Wildcat



Iberian Wolf from Resoba

Report and images by Laura Benito



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Tour participants: Laura Benito, Tino Garcia & Toño Ruiz de Gopegui (leaders)
With ten Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Sunday 11th September

Stansted - Santander - Cordovilla

The tour started with a flight from Stansted to Santander. Laura and Tino were waiting for the group at the airport, and once we had all met up, we drove to the small village of Cordovilla, north of Palencia in Castilla y Leon, our base for the next four nights.

It was very late when we arrived at the hotel, so it was time to sleep and dream of wolves!

Day 2

Monday 12th September

Resoba (Laguna Cimera) - Milares - Valle Pineda

Today we had an early start for the 45-minute drive to Resoba, a Wolf territory. Nearing our destination, we had to leave the main road and follow a track for a further 15 minutes. Several European Nightjars were spotted crossing in front of the cars.

Once at our spot, we sat down and started to scan the valley. It was a nice morning but a little chilly, with Red Deer rutting in the background. Finally we spotted a group of young Wolves moving around. We tried to watch them through the telescopes, however the Wolves were moving quickly; appearing and disappearing like phantoms. In the end, we all had good views before they finally disappeared.

We then went for a walk, following the track to the Alto de Milares, with superb views of the magnificent valley and of the Griffon Vultures flying above our heads. After stretching our legs, we continued driving to the glacial valley of Pineda, one of the most spectacular places in Montaña Palentina.

We had our picnic in one of the mountain shelters in Pineda. After lunch we went for a walk into the valley to explore the area. We saw some different birds including Dipper and Grey Wagtail, and also some signs that a Brown Bear had been eating one of the Buckthorn (*Rhamnus alpine*) trees.

After this nice walk, we drove slowly back to the hotel where we rested before enjoying a drink and a great dinner prepared by chef Rosa.

Day 3

Tuesday 13th September

Resoba - Celada de Roblecedo - Perapertú

We had another early start and returned to the same spot at Resoba to try for better views of the wolf pack. The sunrise was absolutely fantastic. We spent three hours there and had very good views of a pack which included juveniles playing, running and never stopping! We enjoyed this very much with better views than the previous day. We also saw a Golden Eagle circling above us with some Griffon Vultures. By this time the wind was cold and strong, so it was time to go to Cervera de Pisuerga for a coffee.

After a hot coffee, we moved to the valley of La Castillera. On the way we had fantastic views of two Wildcats that were hunting in the fields. The temperature this morning was low and it was fresh, so these animals were more active hunting Mountain Water Voles.

We continued to Celada de Robledo and had a nice walk in this beautiful ancient oak forest. During our walk we saw Firecrest and Short-toed Treecreeper. By now it was raining, so rather than using an open picnic site, we went back to the town and had our picnic in a sheltered place. While the picnic was being prepared, some of the group took the opportunity to visit a local pub for a beer and enjoyed the experience!

After lunch the rain had stopped so we drove to the next valley, the valley of Perapertú, stopping in some interesting places for a walk. Sightings included Meadow Pipit, Crested Tit and Marsh Tit.

After this we headed back to the hotel where we had our evening meeting and a delicious dinner to celebrate a successful day!

Day 4

Wednesday 14th September

Cortes – Casavegas - Cordovilla

Today we went to a different area called Cortes, which can be good for Wolves and there is also a possibility of seeing Brown Bear. After an hour's drive and seeing a young Wildcat cross in front of the vehicle, we arrived at Cortes. It was still dark as we started to watch and wait. It was a little chilly, but with the first light of the morning we enjoyed superb views of the mountains.

Suddenly Toño spotted a young Brown Bear eating fruits from one of the Buckthorns. We watched him until he finally disappeared behind some bushes. Then Tino spotted another Brown Bear, this time a female with two cubs, and we enjoyed views of this nice family for more than 20 minutes!

After this productive session, we went for a walk to explore the area and see some birds. There was no coffee this time as we were far away from any village, so exercise was the best way to warm us up! We spotted Yellowhammer, Meadow Pipit, Linnet, Northern Wheatear, and a group of Chamois in the distance. The scenery was amazing with the Picos de Europa in the background.

Next we moved to Casavegas where we had lunch in the refuge of the Alto Velasco. The sun was strong enough to warm us up while we were having lunch, and we enjoyed our meal in a beautiful place.

After lunch, some relaxed and some went for short walks around the refuge before we moved to the town of San Salvador, where some of us had a coffee while others went for a walk along the river, getting great views of a Booted Eagle.

Back at the hotel, we had some time to relax and talk before an enjoyable dinner with wine to celebrate a superb day in the field.

Day 5

Thursday 15th September

Corvio - Rebolledo de la Torre - Aguilar - Santander

Today was our last day so we had a more relaxed start. It was cloudy and windy, and at 9am we drove to a Pine forest not far from Cordovilla for a walk. Sightings included Firecrest, Crested Lark, Woodlark and Great Spotted Woodpecker.

We then drove to Rebolledo de la Torre, more to the south of Aguilar, stopping on the way in Villascusa de la torre for a short walk to explore the river area. We saw thousands of House Martins, Crag Martins and Barn Swallows in a large group flying above us, catching mosquitos. It was amazing. Finally we arrive to Rebolledo de la Torre where we had lunch in the church, sheltered from the elements. The church of Rebolledo de la Torre is a Romanesque church from the XII century - a good place to enjoy our lunch! After lunch we had a very welcome coffee in the Teleclub.

In the afternoon we had a walk in the surroundings of Rebolledo, but when the rain started again we drove to Aguilar de Campoo to visit the area and have coffee. We had an early dinner in the town of Canduela, where we enjoyed the Rosa's nice Spanish tortilla; delicious!

Finally we drove to Santander airport, arriving in time for our late flight back to England. We were very happy and satisfied with our five day's experience in the impressive Montaña Palentina, and had had a very enjoyable and unforgettable time during this trip!

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Sunrise from Resoba

Species Lists

Mammals (✓=recorded but not counted; H = heard only)

	Common name	Scientific name	12	13	14	15
1	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>		✓		
2	Chamois	<i>Rupicapra rupicapra</i>			✓	
3	Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>	✓	✓		
4	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		✓	✓	
5	European Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris silvestris</i>		✓	✓	
6	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
7	Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>			✓	
8	Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus castroviejo</i>			✓	
9	Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>		✓		

Birds

1	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			✓	✓
2	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>				✓
3	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓		
4	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>			✓	
5	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓	✓
6	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				✓
7	Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	✓	✓		
8	European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>		✓		
9	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	✓	✓	✓	
11	Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>			✓	
12	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>			✓	
13	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>			✓	
14	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>			✓	✓
15	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
17	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓		✓
18	European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	✓		✓	
19	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓	✓
20	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>		✓		
21	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
22	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>				✓
23	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓	✓
24	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	✓	✓
25	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>			✓	
26	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
27	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
28	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓		✓
29	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓		
30	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		✓		
31	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
33	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>				✓
34	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	✓	✓		
35	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				✓
36	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>				✓

	Common name	Scientific name	12	13	14	15
37	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓		✓
39	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>				H
40	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		✓		
41	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>				✓
42	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓	✓	✓
43	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	✓			
44	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>		✓		✓
45	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	H		H	
46	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓		
47	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>		✓		✓
48	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>		✓	✓	
49	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
50	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			✓	
51	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			✓	✓
52	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓
53	European Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	✓	✓		
54	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>		✓	✓	
56	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	✓		✓	
58	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	✓			
59	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
60	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
61	Spanish Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>	✓			
62	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓	✓		
63	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓		✓	✓
64	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓		
65	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>			✓	
66	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	
67	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>				✓
68	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓		✓	✓
69	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	
70	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>		✓	✓	
71	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		✓	✓	
72	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	✓	✓	✓	

Reptiles and Amphibians

1	Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>	✓			
2	Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>		✓		
3	Common Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis muralis</i>	✓	✓		