

# Wolf-watching in Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report

10 - 14 October 2016

---

Report compiled by Byron Palacios



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)

Participants: Byron Palacios with Tino Garcia & Toño Gopegui (leaders) and eight Naturetrek participants.

## Summary

The superb mountains of northern Castilla y Leon hosted another enjoyable Iberian Wolf trip once again. The weather was at times great and at others a bit adverse, yet great to see some good quality wildlife whilst exploring different areas and moving around breathtaking remote landscapes on board our powerful 4x4 vehicles. We very much enjoyed most of our wildlife moments, alongside the dramatic landscapes, local villages, native people and the local gastronomy, especially the fine cuisine of Rosa; and drinks, especially at our comfy main house where local wines and beer were tasted!

### Day 1

**Monday 10th October**

#### Stansted airport to Santander – Cordovilla de Aguilar

The group's flight to Asturias airport arrived on time and after going through security we reassembled the group at the exit gate from where we walked out to meet up with Tino and Toño who were already waiting for us in their 4x4 in order to take us to the tiny village of Cordovilla de Aguilar in the province of Palencia, north of Castilla y Leon. The driving was done on a clear and full-of-stars evening. Once in Cordovilla de Aguilar, we settled in our comfy and cosy rooms in order to have a restful night.

### Day 2

**Tuesday 11th October**

#### Resoba (El Cebollar) – Cervera de Pisuerga – Montaña Palentina (Tremaya)

A dawn start was made to visit our first hotspot known as El Cebollar, right above the village of Resoba, in the Montaña Palentina Natural Park. The morning looked promising and the dawn was beautiful, with a gorgeous blue sky; it was a bit chilly but not as cold as we were expecting. We sat quietly on top of the mountain overlooking the mountain of Monte del Obispo with its tops just catching the first sunbeams of the very early morning; numerous groups of Red Deer grazing along the steep hillsides were spotted, with some handsome stags still rutting. A few Griffon Vultures were seen perched on the rocks waiting for some good thermals to help them fly. At that precise moment we spotted our first Iberian Wolf, a beautiful male meandering through the low heather not far from the hill top. A female joined him at slow pace; this allowed us to get the first good views of this lovely creature. Then, all of a sudden, they vanished amongst the broom and small trees. After good 20 minutes, they turned up again in the open clearings of the hill and with good sunlight hitting them directly, a perfect moment for us to enjoy watching them in detail and for a good period of time. We were all happy and very chuffed after our great success!

The calls of Dunnocks, Woodlarks and Dartford Warblers were dominant in the area, and they reminded us that a comfort break was needed after the effort of the early cold morning, so we drove to the little town of Cervera de Pisuerga in order to enjoy of a very nice coffee break. After this, we hit the road again towards the upper basin of the river Pisuerga and the Requejada Dam where we found a few Eurasian Spooobills, Grey Heron and Iberian Chiffchaff, amongst others. We eventually found a lovely lunch spot right above of the village of Tremaya where we enjoyed our first picnic lunch, alongside beautiful views of the valley, including a group of Griffon Vultures feeding on a dead cow's carcass in one of the adjacent fields.

After lunch, we took a stroll along the tracks, starting our drive to Cordovilla de Aguilar afterwards, following the track through Herrerueta de Castillera, where we found a beautiful European Wildcat hunting in one of the meadows nearby. We had great views of the feline from our vehicles, enough time to look at the stunning details of this lovely species.

Happy with the results of our very first day in the field, we returned to our rural houses in order to take a break, followed by the joy of Rosa's delicious dinner with tasty wine and scrumptious food.

## Day 3

Wednesday 12th October

Resoba – Cervera de Pisuerga – Rabanal de los Caballeros – Valle de Santullan

It was a chilly and drizzly morning around Cordovilla de Aguilar and very misty at higher elevations. We started again very early, arriving at Resoba at dawn; we were hoping to see more Iberian Wolves but this was not possible as the weather wasn't helping at all. Very patiently, we drove down to Cervera de Pisuerga for the usual coffee break, and then we continued to nearby village of Rabanal de los Caballeros. Here, scanning one of the high viewpoints led us to spot two beautiful Wildcats which we enjoyed watching very much; in spite of the drizzly weather, we had fabulous views of both individuals hunting "mole-rats" (the continental race of Water Vole), with prolonged views of these stunning animals! We then headed a bit north to the village of Celada de Robledo where we found a good shelter to set up our picnic lunch which we enjoyed a lot, after a terrific morning that produced great quality wildlife despite the grim weather.

The weather improved a bit in the afternoon so we made a stop around Valle de Santullan where we took a stroll. We had some lovely views of Griffon Vultures perched on rocks, Iberian Green Woodpecker and Mistle Thrush, amongst others. After this stop, we headed back to the rural houses to take a break and to get ready for another delicious dinner, after a brilliant day!

## Day 4

Thursday 13th October

Resoba – Cervera de Pisuerga – Casavegas

We left our base very early again to go to the usual point of Resoba, but the heavy mist didn't help much as we scanned for our main target. We took a stroll along the track in search of any footprints while looking at the fantastic misty mountains; we found some Brown Bear tracks which was a bit of a surprise. After this pleasant stroll, we made a comfort stop at Cervera de Pisuerga in order to enjoy a nice hot drink and the very famous grilled croissants: delicious! Batteries recharged, we set off to the valley of Lores through the village of Casavegas where a patch of blue sky allowed us to take a nice walk enjoying the views of the valley and some birds and plants. The rain hit the area by lunch time, and we had the right spot to set up our picnic lunch, in one of the local shepherds' summer shelters, lighting a fire for a cosy delicious picnic lunch in the middle of nowhere!

After lunch, we drove around the valley and made our way back to the cottages, making a final stop along the river Pisuerga in the village of Ligüerzana, where the beautiful and crystal-clear waters of the river produced interesting birds such as Little Grebe, noisy Cetti's Warblers, White and Grey Wagtails, Long-tailed Tits, Moorhen, and two pairs of Common Snipe.

We arrived in time at Cordovilla de Aguilar for the usual break and to enjoy our dinner which was delicious as usual! Rosa set the table and presented to us her delicious menu cooked with local products from her family allotment, simply great!!

## Day 5

Friday 14th October

### Resoba – Salinas de Pisuerga – Cordovilla de Aguilar – Santander airport

We left Cordovilla de Aguilar and headed towards Resoba for our very last wolf-watching session. The morning was clear and very nice and promising, colder than the previous days though, ideal conditions for our target! We got to our spot in time to see the whole pack of Iberian Wolves, seven of them, playing nicely and moving around the spot; the interactions of the young submissive males with the alpha male were brilliant, and other individuals of the pack were socialising with each other. The first sunbeams hit the boulders where the pack were, and the alpha male and the dominant female were moving around from one bush to another, basking in the sun with other individuals; the alpha male was always looking around and very wary about the movements of other members of the pack as well as the movements of the many Red Deer that surrounded them. We were lucky enough to enjoy these fantastic wolf sightings for nearly two hours; it was such a treat for us to see this enigmatic species for such a long time and the way they were behaving, showing us how their very accurate social skills!

Happy and satisfied, we left this lovely habitat and drove back to Cervera de Pisuerga where we had the usual comfort stop, followed by a nice stroll in the village of Salinas de Pisuerga which produced interesting birds such as White-throated Dipper, Grey and White Wagtails, Long-tailed Tits and Iberian Chiffchaff, amongst others. We set our picnic lunch here, driving to Aguilar de Campoo where we enjoy of a relaxing break walking around this picturesque little town.

We returned to the cottages where we packed up our belongings and enjoyed our final meal from Rosas's skilled hands. We then said a massive "Hasta pronto" to Rosa, wishing her all the best and thanking her for looking after us for these few days at Montaña Palentina. We then set off to Santander airport where we all wished to Tino and Toño well, being very grateful for to them for delivering a fantastic experience.

This short week allowed us to learn more about the truly rural and wild Spain, visiting a well-hidden corner of this beautiful country; a corner where the magical wildlife is there for those wildlife-lovers who had the good fortune to see and appreciate the spectacular habitat and life of one of the most difficult species to see in Europe, the always beautiful Iberian Wolf!

## Naturetrek Facebook

We are delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page so that participants of Naturetrek tours can remain in touch after the holiday and share photos, comments and future travel plans.

Setting up a personal profile at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) is quick, free and easy. The [Naturetrek Facebook page](#) is now live; do please pay us a visit!

## Species Lists

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

	Common Name	Scientific Name	October			
			11	12	13	14
1	Iberian Wolf	<i>Canis lupus signatus</i>	2			7
3	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	h	✓	
5	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	✓		✓	
8	European Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris</i>	1	2		
9	Broom Hare	<i>Lepus castroviejo</i>			1	

## Birds

1	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				✓
2	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		h	h	
3	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓	
4	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓		✓	
5	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓		✓	
6	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓		✓	✓
7	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓		✓	✓
8	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>			✓	
12	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			✓	
13	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓		✓	
14	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			✓	✓
16	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>		h	✓	
17	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	h	h		
18	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓	
19	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>		✓	✓	
20	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓		✓
21	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>		✓		
22	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	✓	✓	
23	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	✓	✓	h	✓
25	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	h		✓
27	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓	✓	✓	
28	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>	h			
29	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	h	✓	✓	✓
30	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	h		✓	✓
31	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	✓	✓	✓	
32	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		h	✓	
33	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	h	h	✓	✓
34	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>			h	h
35	Iberian Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>	✓		✓	✓
36	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
37	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	h	h	h	h
38	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	h	h	✓	✓
39	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	h	✓	h	
40	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>				h

	Common Name	Scientific Name	October			
			11	12	13	14
41	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓		✓	✓
42	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓		✓
47	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>			h	
44	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
45	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
46	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
48	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>			h	✓
49	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓			✓
50	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
51	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓		✓	✓
52	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓			✓
53	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
56	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓			✓
57	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			h	
58	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓		✓	✓
59	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓	✓	✓	
60	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	✓			

## Butterflies

Clouded Yellow, *Colias crocea*

Red Admiral, *Vanessa atalanta*

Peacock, *Inachis io*

Speckled Wood, *Pararge aegeria*

## 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.