

# Wolf-watching in Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report

23 - 27 December 2018

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European Wildcat

Report compiled by Laura Benito  
Images courtesy of Eva



Naturetrek

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Tour participants: Laura Benito (Leader), Tino, Toño and Eva (local guides) with 12 Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

**Sunday 23rd December**

### London- Santander – San Martín de Perapertú

The flight from Stansted arrived at Santander in the afternoon and Tino, Toño, Eva and I were waiting for the group at the airport. Once we were all together, we started to drive to the small village of San Martín de Perapertú, north of Palencia in Castilla y León, our base for the next four days.

When we arrived at the hotel Karmah and Jose were waiting for us, ready to get us settled into our rooms. After some time to relax and unwind after the journey, we were ready to enjoy our first homemade dinner!

## Day 2

**Monday 24th December**

### Perapertú -Valle Estrecho - Oñañejo

We started very early this morning setting off to a Wolf territory called Valle Estrecho (Ventanilla), about 40 minutes drive from the hotel. It was still dark when we arrived at the village where we left the main road, driving along a dirt track just as dawn was breaking.

Once we arrived to our viewpoint, we sat down and started to scan the valley. It was a nice morning, a little bit chilly, but very clear and quiet. After a short time waiting and scanning the landscape, we saw two wolves walking down in the valley. All the group had nice views of the wolves, four in total, lying down, very relaxed and sometimes well camouflaged in the bushes. After more than an hour watching them, we decided it was time for coffee and we went to Cervera de Pisuerga.

After this very welcome break we went for a walk to a place called Oñañejo from where we had fantastic views of the Pineda Valley and the highest peaks of Montaña Palentina. We had our picnic in a beautiful small refuge, and although the temperature was pleasant, something hot was very welcome.

After lunch we went for another short walk. Some Griffon Vultures were flying above us and we had some good views of Red Deer, and we also learned about footprints and marks of Wolf, Fox and Pine Marten. After this enjoyable walk, we decided to drive back slowly to the hotel, to have some rest and enjoy a drink before settling down to another great dinner that our Chef Karmah prepared for us.

## Day 3

**Tuesday 25th December**

### Perapertú- Valle Estrecho - Cordovilla Lores

We left our base very early this Christmas morning and headed the same spot as yesterday, Ventanilla.

We spend some time scanning, and eventually saw one wolf, which was difficult to see at first, but finally all the group saw it. Another four then joined it and we had fantastic views of them walking, running and interacting with cows!! We all enjoyed watching them very much, but after almost an hour we decided that it was time for a coffee in Cervera.

After a welcome hot coffee, we moved to the valley of La Castilleria, a potential place for Wildcat, but we weren't lucky this time. We went to Lores where we had our picnic in a nice spot, with fantastic views. The sun was shining, and the temperature was perfect to enjoy our delicious meal in the field.

After lunch we went for a nice walk in a beautiful ancient oak forest. During our walk we saw Nuthatch, Coal Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Goldcrest and Marsh Tit. We found some fresh evidences of Wild Boar, Red Deer...and old Brown Bear marks on a tree.

We started to head back to the hotel, returning by the same route and scanning the fields looking for Wildcat and finally we saw one!!! We were able stop the cars at a high point on the road and we had fantastic views of this female Wildcat for more than 15 minutes.

Back at the hotel we enjoyed a very well-deserved and much appreciated Christmas dinner, with local food, wine and typical Spanish desserts.

## Day 4

## Wednesday 26th December

### Cuna del Oso- Casavegas- Perapertú

Today we decided to try a different area, called Cuna del Oso, which is a potential place for Brown Bear.

The views were spectacular, but we weren't lucky with the bears this time. We decided go for a coffee, this time in a different placed called San Salvador de Cantamuda. On the way we had nice views of a Wildcat hunting in the fields

After a very welcome coffee in a local cafe we drove to a place called Casavegas. On the way up we stopped to enjoy the fantastic views of the Picos de Europa, an impressive limestone massif.

Some of us, decided to continue walking up to the refuge, and during our walk we found some fresh Brown Bear footprints coming down the track!

After some delicious lunch that included the famous Rosa's Spanish Tortilla and Turrón, we spend the rest of the afternoon exploring the area, walking through an ancient oak forest with some evidence of black woodpecker and some other animals.

After this productive day we started to drive back to the hotel, to have some time to relax before the delicious dinner celebrating a superb day in the field.

## Day 5

## Thursday 27th December

### Perapertu- Santander

The group had an early flight this morning. We started our drive to Santander leaving the mountains and the wolves behind. We were very lucky this time with them, and we also enjoyed fantastic weather, the beautiful, peaceful landscape and a very friendly group – a perfect combination for a different sort of Christmas holiday!

## Species Lists

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

	Common name	Scientific name	December			
			24	25	26	27
1	Chamois	<i>Rupicapra rupicapra</i>	✓			
2	Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>	✓	✓		
3	European Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris silvestris</i>		✓	✓	
4	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	

## Birds

1	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	
2	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓			
3	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓			✓
4	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia "feral"</i>			✓	✓
8	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>			✓	
9	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos medius</i>	H			
10	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓		
11	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>	H	H		
12	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓		✓	
13	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	✓	✓	
14	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	✓			
16	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	
17	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	
18	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>	✓	✓		
19	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓		
20	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	✓			
21	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
22	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	
23	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	
24	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓		
25	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓			
26	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	✓			
27	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓		
28	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓		
29	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	✓	✓		
30	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	✓	✓		
31	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
33	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓		
34	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓		✓	
35	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			✓	
36	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓			
37	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓			
38	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
40	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	
41	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			✓	

	Common name	Scientific name	December			
			24	25	26	27
42	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	✓			

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