

Wolf-watching in Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report

18 - 22 November 2019



Iberian Grey Wolf by Pablo Perez



Live wolf viewing by Pablo Perez



Wolf tracks by Pablo Perez



Wild Cat by Peter Ward

Report compiled by Pablo Perez
Images courtesy of Peter Ward & Pablo Perez



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Pablo Perez (leader) and Tino/Toño (local guides) with seven Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Monday 18th November

Seven visitors arrived from England and Germany at Santander airport mid-morning. Tino and Toño the local guides, and Pablo, the tour Leader, met them and travelled to Cordovilla de Aguilar in Palencia, where we were staying the entire time. The rural cottage managed by Tino and his wife Rosa, is a refurnished 17th Century historical house, located in the heart of the rural Palencia.

In the evening, we went for a stroll from the house, through a range of habitats such as farmland, Oak woodland and bushes with lots of berries and other food sources for wildlife. The recent weather had been pretty wet and cold, so the food here was attracting flocks of wintering birds such as Bramblings, Siskins and Redwing and also a Red Fox. In addition, right next to the house, we saw the local Rock Sparrows.

At 19:00 we enjoyed our first taste of the great cuisine prepared by Rosa, definitely a highlight of the tour!

Day 2

Tuesday 19th November

At 06:45 we left the house and headed to the Palentian Mountains - about forty minutes away.

The morning was clear and really cold with plenty of snow around us with an impressive view of the white mountains in the background. We were all excited to see wolves and didn't have to wait long - just ten minutes after we arrived, the first two wolves were seen, albeit briefly. However, ten minutes later, Tino spotted a group of three resting and sleeping under a bush - an adult and two juveniles.

After an hour, we saw two more wolves in the distance. We assumed there was a carcass nearby because we also saw Griffon Vultures and Ravens. It was an amazing experience to see a wolf walking in the snow in the open. Exactly what we came for! We also saw good numbers of Red deer, including some stags, and a glimpse of a mature Wild Boar running through the bushes.

We decided to warm up with a warm coffee at Hotel El Roble in Cervera de Pisuerga, and after that, went for a walk in a nearby oak forest where we noted signs of recent bear, wolf and Wildcat activity. On the bird front, we had excellent views of three lovely Crested Tits and a Nuthatch.

After this first field trip, we were ready for a wonderful warm lunch in Castillejo de Robledo. We then spent some time looking for Wildcats but could only find, rather too many domestic cats. We did however, see a fine Southern Grey Shrike.

We ended the day visiting one of the cultural jewels of Palencia, a Romanesque church, where we saw our first Black Redstart, Red billed Chough and Spotless Starling. We also saw the first of many northern Common Buzzards - particularly common in the mountains, thanks to the numbers of voles in the grasslands. It was interesting to watch the interaction between these visitors and the other local smaller Common Buzzard.

Day 3

Wednesday 20th November

The weather didn't look too good this morning but we did see managed to see one Wolf before having a coffee. We then saw four Dippers and a Yellow-legged Gull with some Great Crested Grebe nearby.

The weather improved after lunch and we enjoyed a visit to a pine forest where we noted Great Spotted Woodpecker, Red Kite, Kestrel, Grey Heron, Gadwall, Mistle Thrush and Fieldfare. We also saw some enormous local Brown Trout in the river.

Day 4

Thursday 21st November

We had an early start today and saw our first Wolf in the dark as we were driving up the gravel road. We also saw a Broom Hare, an endemic specie of the Cantabrian Mountain range. As dawn approached we start searching for more Wolves. We found two lying down in the grass staring at us, giving us a great view until they moved away, but then found two others having a siesta. These two remained in the same spot for at least two hours, sleeping and resting from their last meal, as their remarkable inflated bellies showed us. Later, we saw a distant but impressive Golden Eagle.

After a coffee break, the weather was so good, we decided to drive up to Piedrasluengas mountain road to take a look at the snowy Picos de Europa Range in Cantabria. The view was superb and luckily enough, we were managed to find two Chamois walking on the snow, as well as Red legged Partridge.

The lunch was again excellent and in a lovely spot in a church patio, where we could watch various birds enjoying berries in the snowy scrub, including Bullfinch and Rock Bunting. On the way back, we were finally rewarded with a sighting of Wildcat - excellent views of an immature female walking in a field next to the road.

Later, back at the cottage, some of the group added Hen Harrier and Barn Owl to the trip list before dinner. What a day!

Day 5

Friday 22nd November

The weather forecast was for really bad weather this last morning, and those expectations were absolutely correct! So, we did the right thing and had a late breakfast before departing to visit some of the most iconic pieces of prehistorical painting art on earth, at the Cuevas del Castillo.

After visiting such a magnificent and breathtaking cave, we were ready for our last picnic, this time in Cantabria. And again the location was excellent and gave us the opportunity to search for birds in the nearby Besaya river. Here we saw our first Kingfisher, plus a Dipper, Grey and White Wagtail, Grey Heron and another super sight, a Short toed Treecreeper.

A Meadow Pipit was the last species added to the trip before we arrived at Santander airport for the departure early evening departure.

Species Lists

Mammals (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Common Name	Scientific Name	November				
			18	19	20	21	22
1	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	✓				
2	Wolf	<i>Canis lupus signatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
3	Red Deer	<i>Cervus Elaphus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
4	Chamois	<i>Rupicapra rupicapra</i>				✓	
5	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		✓			
6	Broom Hare	<i>Lepus castroviejo</i>				✓	
7	European Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris silvestris</i>				✓	

Birds

1	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>			✓		
2	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓		
3	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>				✓	
4	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			✓		
5	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓				
6	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓		✓	
8	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				✓	
9	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				✓	
10	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>			✓	✓	✓
11	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>			✓	✓	
13	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia domestica</i>			✓	✓	
14	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓			
15	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓		
16	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
17	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>		✓		✓	
18	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>		✓			
19	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>		✓			
20	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓		✓		
21	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓		✓	✓
22	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓			
23	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>			✓		
24	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓			✓	✓
25	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓		✓		✓
26	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>				✓	
27	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>				✓	
28	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓			
29	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>					✓
30	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>		✓	✓	✓	
31	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>			✓		
32	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓			
33	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓		✓		
34	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>		✓		✓	✓
35	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	✓	✓			
36	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓		✓
37	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
38	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓			✓	

39	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			✓		
40	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓				
41	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓				
42	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓				
43	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	✓				
44	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>			✓		

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 to sign up.

Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers and exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays



www.twitter.com/naturetrektours



www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays



Group Photo by Pablo Perez



Wolf watching by Pablo Perez