

Wolf Watching in Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report

13th – 17th October 2021

Report by 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) & Tino Garcia (local guide) with nine Naturetrek clients.

Day 1

Wednesday 13th October

The group arrived at Santander airport where we met our guides Pablo and Tino before driving to the rural cottage which would be our base for the next five days. This historical house is located in the quiet little village of Cordovilla de Aguilar.

Day 2

Thursday 14th October

We all enjoyed an excellent viewing of the pack wolf in the morning sun. We saw four different cubs at some distance but with good sighting thanks to the telescope. The four cubs were literally playing just like dogs and it was great to spend some time watching them learn more about their natural behavior.

In the evening we went for a short walk in the bush nearby San Salvador de Cantamuda, where we learnt more about the different kind of native oaks trees in the area, and heard a Middle-spotted Woodpecker.

Back at the lodge we had time for a tea in the garden, enjoying the evening sun before a delightful dinner from Tino's wife Rosa.

Day 3

Friday 15th October

After an early morning start with about fifty minutes driving, we went back to the same location as yesterday spending some more time with the same pack. It was interesting to see how they stayed in the sun for a while and then decided to jump into the shade as soon as they became overheated. Here we also had a much nearer sighting of a big Red Deer stag with good opportunities for photography.

After the required coffee break in Cervera de Pisuerga town, we drove towards Lores an historical rustic town with really appealing nearby natural surroundings. We took a nice sunny walk where we saw Red-billed Chough and European Common Buzzards. Those wintering birds are much bigger than the local population of Buzzards. We enjoyed a beautiful picnic lunch in the mountains and then walked to explore the nearby beech forest where we saw traces of Wild Cat and Wolf. Tino explained the differences between the dog and the Wolf footprints and scats, as well as the prints of cat and fox. So here we have in a single day, a sight of a pack of wolves, their footprints, their scats. All in all, a very thorough experience with the wolves.

Day 4

Saturday 16th October

The predicted weather was rain so having considered our previous wolf sighting, we decided to turn our efforts to the Wildcats today. We did some slow driving through different off-road trails with the two 4*4 vehicles, but did not succeed in our quest during the morning. However, we enjoyed income groups of wintering birds such as Redwing and Meadow Pipit just arriving here from northern Europe into Palencia.

We could also appreciate the historical part of this remote part of Spain where the amount of superb Romanesque churches is breathtaking. We could see how the landscapes we were enjoying is so linked to the ancestral use of land.

After a nice lunch in the woods near by San Martin de Perapertu, we decided to give another try for the cats. This time we were really lucky because we were able to spot not only one but two Wildcats together hunting in

the same grass field nearby the road. They were waiting to detect the presence of a small rodents to then jump over and catch. At one point, the big male held his tail up to show the other cat, a female, he was the dominant animal and she left.

While we all watching the reminding cat, Tino spotted a big Red Fox male right behind us, so this was an excellent sighting to have both animals in view the same time.

Day 5

Sunday 17th October

Having seen Wildcats and Wolves, we decided to put our efforts into the nearby interesting river systems at the Pisuerga river. We did a morning stroll near Salinas de Pisuerga where we searched for Otter. We didn't succeed but we have a great sight of the Dipper while it was diving and caching invertebrates under the water. There were a good number of Barb fish migrating upstream and we also saw a Grey Wagtail and an immature Grey Heron. While looking at the river we could also see another interesting bird, perched in the nearby Aspen trees. This was the Iberian Green Woodpecker and it was interesting to look at the different mustache patterns of this bird compared with the European Green Woodpecker.

The location for the picnic this time was near by the Pisuerga river damp, where we could also hear the Crossbills and had a good sighting of a group of Yellow-legged Gulls, another appealing bird for the UK visitors in Spain.

Soon after we then went back for another excellent early dinner by Rosa at the houses and made our way back to Santander for a late evening flying back to England.

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Checklist

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	Oct-21			
		13	14	15	16
Wolf	<i>Canis lupus lupus</i>		✓	✓	
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>			✓	✓
European Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris silvestris</i>				✓
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓	✓	✓

Birds

			Date: 13-17 Oct 2021				
	Common Name	Scientific Name	13	14	15	16	17
1	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓			
2	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>					✓
3	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba "feral"</i>		✓	✓		
4	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>			✓	✓	
5	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>					✓
6	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>					✓
7	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>					✓
8	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>					✓
9	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>			✓		
10	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>			✓		
11	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓		✓
12	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		✓			
13	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>					✓
14	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
15	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓				
16	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes medius</i>		✓			
18	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>					✓
19	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓	✓	
20	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	✓	✓	✓		
21	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
22	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>			✓		
23	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
24	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓			
25	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>		✓			
26	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓			
27	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			✓		
28	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>			✓	✓	
29	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		✓			
30	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>		✓	✓		
31	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>					✓
32	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓			
33	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			✓		
34	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			✓		
35	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>		✓			
36	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>			✓		

			Date: 13-17 Oct 2021				
	Common Name	Scientific Name	13	14	15	16	17
37	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				✓	
38	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓			
39	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>		✓			
40	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓		✓	✓	
41	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
42	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓		✓	
43	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
44	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓			✓	
45	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
46	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>					✓
47	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>					✓
48	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓		✓		
49	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		✓			
50	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>		✓			