

# Wolf Watching in Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report

20th – 24th October 2021

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Report by Pablo Perez



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Tour participants: Pablo Perez (leader) & Tino Garcia (local guide) with seven Naturetrek clients.

## Day 1

**Wednesday 20th October**

The group arrived at Santander airport and then drove to the town of Cordovilla de Aguilar and Casas Rural el Mayorazgo, our base. Once there, Rosa, Tino's wife was the perfect host providing us with an excellent homemade dinner at 7 pm.

We had a briefing chat about the plan for the next few days and looked forward to spending time together, watching nature in this beautiful area.

## Day 2

**Thursday 21st October**

At seven in the morning, we split into two vehicles with the hope "espera", for Wolves in the early morning. This first morning there was lots of moisture in the atmosphere and after a short try in the morning, the mist came down which made it impossible so we returned to Cervera de Pisuerga for a coffee break at El Sevillano bar. After the coffee break we visited the local stores to look for a topographic map of the "Montaña Palentina" and also look into the local art gallery called "Muy Pajara".

Then we drove up to Celada de Robledo to explore some ancient oak woods. We did an interesting walk through the woods where we could hear Middle-spotted Woodpecker calling and found some interesting mammals' traces on the ground. Alex was really keen on plants. Tino really enjoyed having another botanist in the group and was able to give him a lot of information even though we were in autumn.

We then had a really nice lunch in an open area facing some scenic rock faces where we spotted four Red Deer running uphill. While having lunch we also got excellent views of the massive Griffon Vultures gliding nearby us. After lunch we did some exploring, looking for the elusive Wildcat, but on this particular day, we were unlucky.

## Day 3

**Friday 22nd October**

This morning it was colder than the previous one and in fact there was no mist at all, so we hoped it would be a good one for sightings. On the way up, one of the vehicles saw the endemic Broom Hare. After only few minutes, we were lucky enough to witness something really special because we saw a Wolf - the big alfa male! We could distinctly see the uniform pale colour pattern, the big size and the way the Wolf was constantly marking his territory. This was an excellent observation that everyone was able to enjoy for some time.

After such an amazing experience, we went for a coffee break before travelling to another really nice place for lunch. We went up to Lores at the mountain hut, where there were few cows that must have thought we were bringing them some salt as they got really close to the guides. During lunch we saw some Red-billed Chough, the local Common Buzzard and the larger northern race of Buzzard.

Soon after lunch on our way down from the hut, we had an excellent sighting of the very elusive and amazing European Wildcat and also a beautiful Red Fox. It was a good sighting allowing us to take some reasonable pictures of this endangered creature.

## Day 4

**Saturday 23rd October**

Another clear morning and right at the sunrise as we all were concentrating and scanning the far distance, we saw three different Brown Bears - one big adult and two third years, potentially brothers. At this time of year, they

are feeding on acorns meaning they are only visible when moving from one piece of forest to the other. However, that gave the group enough time to see them well, although at quite a distance.

After a coffee break, we decided to set up our lunch nearby the Pantano de Aguilar to the Iglesia de San Andres, near a flooded abandoned town. We went down to the water line looking for footprints on the mud. It was really interesting to see the different mammal traces such as Otter and even some other animals such as Toad. After lunch we did a nice walk, along the path to look for passerines. Here we saw a Red Kite and a Golden Eagle flying nearby.

## Day 5

## Sunday 24th October

Another early morning trip which although not successful for mammals, we still enjoyed good views of Griffon Vultures and were able to listen some Dartford Warblers and Crossbills in the distance.

In our way to the lunch spot, we did spot another beautiful Wildcat. This one was also marking so all the group were really happy as we reached the lunch spot, La Espina hut. An amazing location where we enjoyed one of Tino and Rosa's wonderful lunches. We also spotted some Wolf traces and a group of Red Deer in the distance.

Soon after lunch, we went back to the lodge where we packed our bags before having dinner and heading to the Santander airport for our night flight.

This was certainly an excellent week for the group who enjoyed such a great time together in the mountains.

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## Checklist

### Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	20	21	22	23	24
Wolf	<i>Canis lupus lupus</i>		✓	✓		
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>			✓	✓	
European Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris silvestris</i>			✓	✓	
Broom Hare	<i>Lepus castroviejoi</i>			✓		
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>			✓	✓	✓
Brown Bear	<i>Ursus arctos arctos</i>				✓	

### Birds

			Date: 20- 24 oct 2021 Palencia				
	Common Name	Scientific Name	20	21	22	23	24
1	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			✓	✓	
2	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>					✓
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>					✓
4	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓		
5	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>				✓	
6	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>				✓	
7	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				✓	
8	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>				✓	
9	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				✓	
10	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>				✓	
11	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓			✓
12	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>				✓	
13	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓		
14	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
15	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16	Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes medius</i>		✓			
17	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓		
18	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓		
19	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>		✓	✓		
20	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓		✓	
22	Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>		✓			
23	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓			
24	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		✓			
25	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			✓		
26	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓		✓	
27	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				✓	
28	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
29	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			✓		
30	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			✓		
31	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>			✓	✓	
32	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>		✓			
33	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			✓		
34	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓

			Date: 20- 24 oct 2021 Palencia				
	Common Name	Scientific Name	20	21	22	23	24
35	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>			✓		
36	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
37	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓		✓	✓	
38	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓			✓
39	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
40	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓		✓		
41	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓			
42	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>			✓		
43	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓			
44	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	✓				
45	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>			✓		
46	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓		
47	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓			
48	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			✓		
49	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓			
50	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>					✓