

Wolf Watching in Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report

4th – 8th November 2021

Report by Pablo Perez



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

Day 1

Thursday 4th November

After an interesting day of travelling thanks to flight cancellations, the majority of the party arrived at Cordovilla de Aguilar via Madrid with one coming direct from Holland. But by the evening we were all together at our lodge in Palcencia and discovered the wonderful food of Tino's wife Rosa.

Day 2

Friday 5th November

Although the weather didn't look good first thing, by the time we had driven to the viewing location by sunrise, it was really sunny and beautiful with amazing autumn colours contrasting with the green of the grass, the brown of the trees and the white of the snow and the pink of the early morning lights.

Soon after the eight visitors and the two guides had set the scopes, Tino spotted the very first Wolf of the day. We saw up to three different Wolf cubs but only one of them gave us time enough to watch it for about an hour by having a siesta down in the snow. We realised how thick their coat must be in such cold conditions.

By 10am, we all were dreaming of a hot chocolate, so we made our way down to Cervera de Pisuerga town to warm up ourselves. We also took the opportunity to visit the nearby art gallery called El Halluco in town to look at some of the wildlife artworks by Muy Pajara.

Then we drove down to the Aguilar water reservoir to have lunch near the San Andres historical church. We were looking for animal tracks and were excited to find the presence of Otters. Then we had a really nice warm picnic and went for a walk nearby. We had a good time with many local birds and an excellent sighting of a pair of Golden Eagles before we made back to the lodge late afternoon.

Day 3

Saturday 6th November

This morning was certainly the coldest of the year, especially due to the chilly wind. We spent about two hours looking for mammals but were not successful. Luckily, the group had brought warm enough clothing as recommended! We really welcomed our hot coffee at Cervera de Pisuerga town when we returned.

After lunch, we drove up to San Salvador de Cantamuda where we had a nice warm picnic after an easy walk. It was good to stretch our legs and watch some birds such as the Fieldfare, that just arrived with the cold weather. We did also see a couple of stags running up the fields.

After lunch, we got back on the road looking forward to see the spectacular Wildcat. It took us some slowly driving around to see it properly. When we first found it, the cat moved quickly from the field and we lost it. Later, with more searching we did find two more and got good but brief views. The first cat was large with a thick tail.

Day 4

Sunday 7th November

We had quieter morning thanks to the wind chill, and did not manage to find our target mammals. We did see a few nice birds, including Dipper, on our way to Cervera where we stopped by a nearby dam. After this, we decided we deserved a coffee.

After coffee we went towards our lunch spot but before that, we stopped on the side of the road and scanned, thinking this was a good location for a Wildcat. It was a good idea because we

Saw not one but two cats quite near by us for a long time. So we got an opportunity for pictures and observation - the male chasing the female from the field. Competition at this time of year is more important than cooperation for them. Some of the group managed some good shots of the cats, while others were able to watch them through binoculars and telescope – more essential equipment for the tour!

Soon after we drove up to La Espina, an excellent location where to enjoy 360 degrees of breath-taking views with the Curavacas mountain with snow cover and the brown autumn forest. We had a really nice picnic and also found some animal signs - Pine Martin footprints and Wolf scat.

As if that wasn't successful enough, we saw another Wildcat on our return trip to the lodge after our picnic - the sixth one! What a trip.

Day 5

Monday 8th November

Due our early flight, we departed Cordovilla at 7.30am, and arrived at the airport by 9am where we continued our journey home.

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Checklist

Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8
Wolf	<i>Canis lupus lupus</i>		✓			
European Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris silvestris</i>			✓	✓	
Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>		✓			
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓	✓	✓	

Birds

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Date: 4-8 Nov 2021				
			4	5	6	7	8
1	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓			
2	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			✓		
3	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>				✓	
4	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓		
5	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				✓	
6	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>		✓			
7	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>			✓		
8	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓			
9	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓	✓		
10	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	✓				
11	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓			
12	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>		✓			
13	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>			✓		
16	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>		✓			
17	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓	✓	
18	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				✓	
19	Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</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>Parus ater</i>		✓			
26	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓			
27	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>		✓			
28	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓			
29	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓			
30	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>			✓		
31	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓			
32	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓			
33	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓			
34	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓			
35	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>		✓			
36	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>			✓	✓	

			Date: 4-8 Nov 2021				
	Common Name	Scientific Name	4	5	6	7	8
37	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
38	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓			
39	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓		
40	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓			
41	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>		✓			
42	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>			✓		
43	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>		✓			
44	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓			
45	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓			
46	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	✓				
47	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			✓		
48	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			✓		
49	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	✓				