

# Wolf-watching in Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report

10th – 14th November 2022



Wildcat



Wildcat



Watching in Palencia



Lunchtime location!

Tour report and images 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](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

## Day 1

Thursday 10th November

### London- Santander

The eight visitors arrived at Santander airport at four o'clock in the afternoon and we were fortunate to be able to drive during the day enjoying the beautiful views from the road, as we drove away from the capital of Cantabria, leaving the sea behind. After two hours on the road and where we could contemplate the first birds like the Red Kite, we arrived to the interior of the province of Palencia in the autonomous community of Castilla y León, to stay in the small, quiet village of Cordovilla de Aguilar, where Tino and Rosa would treat us with an excellent homemade dinner, something that was the general tone for the rest of the trip.

## Day 2

Friday 11th November

### Resoba- Camasobres- Verdeña- Perapertu

At dawn and with a completely clear day we sat at the top of the track that leaves in the vicinity of Cervera de Pisuerga, in the heart of the Natural Park of the Montaña Palentina, enjoying the breathtaking scenery, while looking for mammals. At the beginning of the morning, we could see a large male deer with its big antlers and several groups of females in the distance. The sun continued to rise, but despite our best efforts we could not see the hoped for Wolf, the great endemic predator of Iberia.

Fortunately, however, after more than an hour of intense searching, we were able to spot a distant lone Wolf walking on a meadow. We deciphered that it was the alpha male because of its large size and clear skin tone, but especially because we observed how it was digging in the ground marking its territory. Fortunately, all the party were very quick and were able to observe the elusive animal for seconds before it disappeared in the thick of the deciduous forest, which still has leaves at this time of autumn.

Later at ten o'clock in the morning and in the mood for a good coffee, we went to enjoy it at the bar El Sevillano in the village, which fortunately has undergone a very nice renovation of the furniture. We took the opportunity to buy some maps of the region in the bookstore of the village, thanks to the suggestion of the guide Pablo.

After recharging our batteries, we followed the local guide Tino to look for the attractive Wildcats, which we soon found in the vicinity of Camasobres, while they were looking for Water Vole at the fields near the road. With the intention of not disturbing him, we parked the vehicles and we stationed ourselves in a nearby field, giving a lot of distance to the animal so as not to disturb him. To our surprise this big male with winter fur, decided to thank us for our confidence and approached us, giving us a great show with his beauty. However, despite the efforts of the big dominant cat, he did not manage to catch anything in front of us, before he crossed the road and hid in the bush.

Afterwards we went to eat at the beautiful portico of the church of Verdeña, where Tino delighted us with some hot chickpeas with a delicious black pudding, prepared by Rosa, his wife. While we were enjoying the wonderful views a visitor observed the Iberian Shrike on top of a bush. We could also see a Kestrel hunting and a pair of Buzzards on the grass looking for prey. In this way we could clearly distinguish the smaller and darker looking Buzzards from the larger and lighter breasted wintering visitors from northern Europe.

We continued through the mountain in the 4x4 vehicle crossing the oak forests, which as Tino showed us in a stop, we can differentiate between the *Quercus petraea*, the *Pyrenaica* and the *Orocantabrica*, a species endemic to this part of the Cantabrian Mountain range.

Once past Perapertu town we could see again another male Wildcat, this time it was a little smaller, but we could still appreciate its long whiskers, black tip of the tail and extreme yellow eyes, while looking for food in the countryside in the vicinity of the road.

## Day 3

Saturday 12th November

### Resoba – Cervera - Lores

At dawn we were already looking for the Wolves in the heart of the Palencia mountains, when suddenly the guides could see a young Wolf on top of the hill, but unfortunately it quickly disappeared and we could not see it again. What we did see, although not for long, was the intense fight between a Fox and a Golden Eagle fighting for food on the ground. Later we could see another Fox in the distance for a few brief moments, together with some large male Iberian Deer. During the morning wait we could also hear several bird songs such as the Woodlark and a powerful bark that came from a Roe Deer snoring.

After ten o'clock in the morning we went for a coffee in Cervera de Pisuerga and then we went to visit the art gallery of Muy Pajara, owned by Sonia, who offers interesting works of art related to nature and that some of the visitors bought as a gift to their loved ones.

After coffee we took advantage of the excellent sunny day to drive through the mountains to Lores, where Tino prepared a nice lunch in the shepherds' hut. Although we were not alone as the resident cows of the local Tudanca breed approached intrigued by our presence. We had a nice walk too, where we could see some of the plants present in the area and find a Badger footprint in the mud.

We also had a good observation of the Red-billed Choughs making their characteristic swooping flights, similar to the chief of the birds, the Peregrine Falcon that we saw crossing the hill. Another king of the air that showed up very well was another adult Golden Eagle crossing the clouds. It was a good way to see in situ the differences in flight patterns and silhouette between the Griffon Vultures and the Golden Eagle.

As we were returning home, on the roadside we saw an interesting behavior between two Wildcats, as one captured a rat and the other ran off quickly to snatch it before fleeing across the road. The cats are already in winter fur and are extremely beautiful to look at.

## Day 4

Sunday 13th November

### Resoba- Cervera de Pisuerga-Salinas de Pisuerga- Aguilar Reservoir

Even at night on the way to the observation place in one of the cars, we could have a good observation of the endemic Broom Hare, present only in some places of the Cantabrian Mountain Range.

Already looking for the Wolves, only some lucky visitors could glimpse for a few seconds a Wolf crossing the meadow in the same place where we saw it the first day, but it was such a fast observation that not everyone had time to see it properly.

Despite our efforts, the Iberian Wolf did not show up again, so we decided to go to Cervera de Pisuerga for a well-deserved coffee. Later we went to Salinas de Pisuerga for a circular route around the river. During the pleasant walk we were finally able to see an abundant number of interesting birds such as the Bullfinch, the Short-toed Treecreeper, the Marsh Tit and the Cirl Bunting. While watching otter droppings on the bank of the Pisuerga River we had a very brief glimpse of a Water Rail-type bird.

Before getting into the car, we decided to make another effort to see the Dipper and this time we did it and we could enjoy its sight, as well as the always beautiful Grey Wagtails dancing along the river bank.

During the trip to the place of lunch we could still see one more Wildcat before we approached the vicinity of the Aguilar reservoir in the shelter of a nice hermitage, where we found owl pellets and we could see some of the most common micromammals that feed.

After lunch we took a pleasant walk through a pine forest where we first found a pigeon preyed by a bird of prey and then we could enjoy some of the birds that most interested some visitors as the famous Crested Tit and where we could also surprisingly see an interesting Iberian Wolf dropping.

Returning to Cordovilla de Aguilar we crossed the historic town of Aguilar de Campo and we could see its famous castle along with several other historical jewels of the Romanesque Palencia very well represented by its austere medieval churches.

Back at home we enjoyed a farewell feast with a hearty dinner prepared by Rosa before going to bed after another fantastic sunny day in the Palencia Mountains.

Of course this trip is very interesting for the naturalist as there are a great number of wild mammals to be seen and birds of prey in an enviable environment, with a backdrop of steep and rugged mountains. All in a quiet environment away from the masses of tourists where it is possible to feel the tranquility of nature and the peace of autumn.

## Day 5

**Monday 14th November**

### Cordobilla de Aguilar to Santander and UK

In the morning, still at night, we leave very early from the rural house to Santander, where the visitors will return to their homes after having enjoyed some fantastic days enjoying the still wild Spanish nature.

## 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](http://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](http://www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



[www.twitter.com/naturetrektours](http://www.twitter.com/naturetrektours)



[www.instagram.com/naturetrek\\_wildlife\\_holidays](http://www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays)

## Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	November 2022			
		10	11	12	13
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				✓
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓			
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>				✓
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>			✓	
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓		
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓	✓
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>				✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓	✓
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				✓
Eurasian Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓	✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓	
Southern (Iberian) Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>		✓		
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓		✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>		✓	✓	
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	✓
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>				✓
European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>				✓
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>				✓
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓		✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓		✓
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		✓		✓
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>				✓
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓		✓	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>				✓
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>				✓
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				✓
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>				✓
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>				✓
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>			✓	✓
Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓		✓
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓		✓
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>		✓		✓
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓	✓	✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓		
White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>				✓
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				✓
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓		✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓		
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>				✓
Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>				✓
Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>		✓		
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>				✓

Common name	Scientific name	November 2022			
		10	11	12	13
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>				✓
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>				✓

## Mammals

Common name	Scientific name	10	11	12	13
Iberian Wolf	<i>Canis lupus signatus</i>		✓		✓
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		✓	✓	
European Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris silvestris</i>		✓	✓	✓
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓		
Broom Hare	<i>Lepus castroviejo</i>			✓	✓

## Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name	10	11	12	13
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>		✓		
Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>			✓	
Painted Laidy	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>				✓