

Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



SPAIN: Iberian Lynx & Eagles

Saturday 16th - Wednesday 20th February 2019

6 Wise Birding Clients

Leader: Chris Townend

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Iberian Lynx: Another successful trip with sightings of at least 4 different individual animals over a three day period.

Spanish Imperial Eagle: Excellent views of adults, sub-adults and a striking juvenile born last year.

Eurasian Eagle Owl: An adult seen well in the scope above the Jandula River.

Alpine Accentor: At least 8 birds near Jandula dam. These birds had been present for at least two weeks and were a very good record for the site.

Common Crane: Great to see a total of 29 birds on our last morning at Laguna Fuente De Piedra, the last remaining birds of the huge flock that winters here.

Great Spotted Cuckoo: Four birds was a good tally for these newly arrived migrants, presumably due to the associated high pressure weather system.



One of at least four Iberian Lynx seen during the tour

SUMMARY

This tour was primarily focused on trying to see Iberian Lynx well and to enjoy the other great birds and mammals of the Sierra de Andujar region of Spain. This beautiful area, just 3 hours drive from Malaga has now become the best place to see Iberian Lynx in Spain. The Iberian Lynx performed well on this trip with a number of sightings including a mother and younger animal. Other highlights included some great views of Spanish Imperial and Golden Eagles, Spanish Ibex, Mouflon, numerous Cinereous and Griffon Vultures, Eurasian Eagle Owl, Great Spotted Cuckoo and the usual gangs of beautiful Iberian Azure-winged Magpies! Plus the usual fantastic hospitality of Villa Matilde.

Saturday 16th February

The group met at Malaga airport where we transferred to our vehicle and headed out of the city. Passing the outskirts of Malaga we saw our first Yellow-legged Gull before we headed north towards our destination in the Sierra de Andujar Natural Park. A pleasant stop en route allowed us time for coffee and a light lunch and then we continued towards Córdoba where an impressive count of 100+ White Storks were seen whilst travelling as well as Common Buzzard, two Red Kites and four overwintering or early migrant Black Kites. We arrived at the relaxing Villa Matilde where the always smiling Roland greeted us and showed us to our rooms before we headed off to search for Iberian Lynx.

We headed straight to the Lynx hotspot at La Lancha where we spent the last few hours of daylight in the company of rattling Sardinian Warblers, Dartford Warblers, Iberian Azure-winged Magpies, Eurasian Hoopoes and of course the many raptors of this area. These included both Eurasian Griffon Vulture and Cinereous Vulture as well as an immature Golden Eagle and our first Spanish Imperial Eagle too! No Lynx were seen this evening but a lone Mouflon was a good mammal to see, as numbers seem to have decreased on recent trips. We returned to our accommodation where some lovely home cooked food awaited us and everyone turned in early ready for our first full day in the beautiful Sierra de Andujar.

Sunday 17th February

After much needed coffee and breakfast, we headed out shortly after dawn at the civilised time of 08.00hrs and we were soon in the picturesque dehesa habitat so typical of the Sierra Morena region of Spain. A mix of Holm Oaks and Cork Oaks with scattered lichen covered rocks and grassland was soon to become a familiar site as we slowly drove along the dirt track searching for our main target species, the beautiful Iberian Lynx.

It was a bright still chilly morning, but the sunshine soon began to warm us all up as Iberian Azure-winged Magpies were a continual distraction as we carefully scanned the vast habitat for Lynx and listened for any alarm calling Eurasian Magpies that can sometimes be helpful in locating the bearded cat. Then, a shout from Cheryl had us looking just below us in the scrub where she had just seen two Iberian Lynx! Luckily thanks to the radios most of the group managed

a view before, in typical cat fashion, they simply vanished! We spent the next couple of hours trying to re-find them but failed. Sardinian Warblers, Blackcaps and Common Chiffchaffs were a common sight throughout the morning and as the temperature increased we enjoyed coffee whilst treated to some great views of Spanish Imperial Eagles, Griffon Vultures and Cinereous Vultures.

Lunch at a viewpoint overlooking the reservoir produced some good views of raptors including Golden Eagle and an immature male Northern Goshawk. We then ventured down towards the Jandula dam. Here, highlights included at least 125+ Eurasian Crag Martins around the dam with numerous birds perching on the dam wall and good views of Red-billed Tropicbird too. Diana did very well to provide us all with a new mammal for the trip as she found a Spanish Ibex high on the ridge. We soon found more and counted six animals, four adult females with two younger ones that gave great scope views.

Back at our main Lynx viewing area, once again we took our favoured viewpoints and remained in radio contact! It was a perfect evening with calm and sunny weather and we all enjoyed the wonderful scenery and hoped the elusive Iberian Lynx would show. Finally, after lots of scanning another Iberian Lynx appeared and after some anxious directions, everyone was seeing the animal as we tracked it up the valley towards the road. We had some excellent scope views as it slowly walked through the valley, disappearing amongst the Rosemary bushes and scrub. Calling Little Owls soon signified dusk was upon us and we slowly headed back towards Villa Matilde where we enjoyed some more great home cooked food and raised a glass to the Lynx!

Monday 18th February

It was another early start to maximise our chances of an Iberian Lynx sighting, so after breakfast we returned to our now familiar watch area. Once at our chosen viewpoint, we were now fully versed in our plans and we all covered our favourite lookouts, once again remaining in radio contact. It was another calm morning and before long, the sun soon warmed us up. The usual rattling Sardinian Warblers and chattering Iberian Azure-winged Magpies kept us interested, but the bird of the morning was a Great Spotted Cuckoo that called and gave a nice fly-by. A little later in the morning a fellow Lynx watcher spotted a Lynx before it gave everyone the slip! However, as is often the case, perseverance paid off and we were finally rewarded with some great views. It re-appeared further down the valley and slowly walked along a wooded slope and up through the Rosemary and scrub before disappearing! A celebratory coffee break was then enjoyed by all!

As lunch approached we decided to head to a new area to do some birding in some of the more open fields which can often hold small groups of birds. The highlights here were three Woodlarks including a vocal male singing from wires, a very showy Iberian Green Woodpecker and an Iberian Grey Shrike.

We returned to La Lancha for "Cat O'Clock" though there were no further Lynx sightings, but Dartford Warblers posed in the early evening sunshine and we enjoyed more great views of Eurasian Griffon and Cinereous Vultures. We enjoyed the sunset over the Santuario Virgen de la Cabeza and headed back to a welcome log fire and another very tasty meal at Villa Matilde.

Tuesday 19th February

After breakfast, we headed out keen to make the most of our last full day and we returned to La Lancha. A brief stop en route produced another calling Great Spotted Cuckoo and we watched a couple of birds chasing each other over the dehesa habitat. Once at the cat hotspot, a low circling Short-toed Snake Eagle added to the impressive raptor list and was probably one of the first returning migrants. Then by mid morning the Eurasian Magpies alerted Chris to another Iberian Lynx! A call on the radio soon had everyone quickly heading back along the road to try and re-locate it, but there was no further sign. Frustratingly it was above the road and headed into very thick cover! Around thirty minutes later there was another sighting as an animal crossed the road from the opposite direction, presumed to be a second animal! Luckily, Mick, re-found both animals as they appeared in an open area on the slope above us. Most of the group managed a view before, once again they vanished! We loitered with intent and had coffee but there was no further sign, so we headed for the Jandula dam for some more birding and our lunch.

At the dam we enjoyed more views of Black Redstart, Eurasian Crag Martins and a lone female Spanish Ibex. However, the real highlight of our time here was seeing a small group of at least eight Alpine Accentors! This is a very unusual species for the area and everyone enjoyed great scope views as the birds busily fed amongst the boulder slopes above us. The excitement continued when after some careful scanning of nearby crags a Eurasian Eagle Owl was located. It was an adult sitting in the shade of an overhang and showed very well in the scope. We enjoyed the warm sunshine for a while and it seemed like it was getting close to "Lynx O'Clock" so we returned to the hotspot to try our luck one final time.

Sadly, there were no more Lynx sightings but we did enjoy a couple of new birds with a superb male Rock Bunting and a good spot by Ken soon had us all watching a Red-rumped Swallow as it hawked for insects above us. More Spanish Imperial Eagles put on a good aerial display and a beautiful cream-coloured immature bird also appeared, a bird born last year. With the light now fading we slowly headed back to Villa Matilde for one final home-cooked meal and a well deserved beer!

Wednesday 20th February

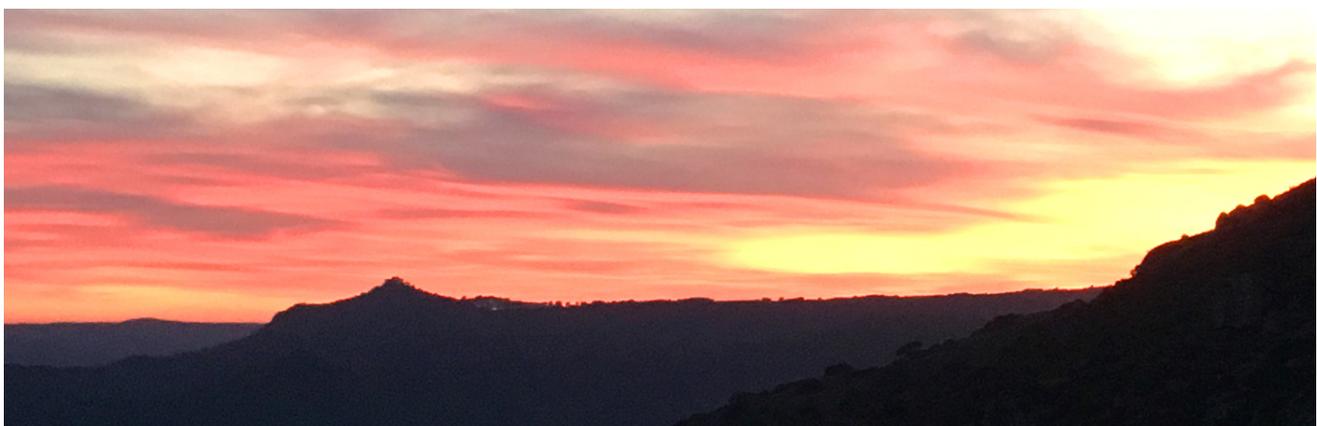
This morning we left very early to travel to the Laguna de Fuente de Piedra for some birding. We arrived at this important site for wintering Common Cranes just before 9am which gave us around two hours to explore the area before we needed to return to Malaga airport.

The key highlights of a short visit to this site included an impressive flock of at least 60 Black-necked Grebes with some birds already in summer plumage, 200+ Greater Flamingoes, four Western Marsh Harriers, a single Red-rumped Swallow and a single Iberian Yellow Wagtail. However, the real stars of the morning were 29 Common Cranes and an incredible flock of 75+ Eurasian Thick-Knees in one field! The Cranes were the last birds remaining of a huge flock that normally reaches a few thousand birds in mid winter. The Stone Curlews had most likely over-wintered somewhere nearby and gathered in a flock ready to head to their breeding grounds. It was certainly one of the birding spectacles of the tour!

Other new birds for the trip included Common Shelduck, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler and Common Teal, Common Greenshank and a couple of Ruff. We then took the short 50 minute drive to Malaga airport where the tour concluded.



The beautiful Sierra de Andujar





Cinereous Vulture (above) and Spanish Imperial Eagles (below)





This Iberian Lynx was seen very well on the evening of the 17th





This male Iberian Lynx was watched on the morning of the 18th





This Short-toed Snake Eagle (above) was a newly arrived migrant and the Eurasian Eagle Owl (below) dozed in the heat of the day





Fallow Deer (above) and Mouflon (below) were seen most days





Female Iberian Green Woodpecker (above) and Male Rock Bunting (below)



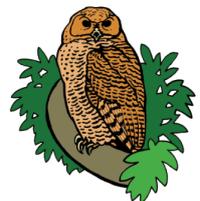


Conservation Donation – Following the successful conclusion of this tour, a **£180 donation** was transferred to the Wise Birding Holiday's central conservation fund.

Once a target amount has been reached this money will be used to support one single project in the hope of achieving more for species conservation. Currently this amounts to around £6,000. Some tours will continue to donate money to help some of the smaller projects that we feel will still benefit from smaller donations. Please visit our website to find out more about the projects that we support: www.wisebirding.co.uk

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SPAIN: Birds, Mammals & Reptiles Checklist: 16th - 20th Feb 2019

This bird checklist follows the nomenclature and classification from HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World and the associated online resource, HBW Alive

#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	#	NOTES
1	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	1	A minimum of 50 birds were seen at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
2	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	2	Three birds on the River Jandula on the 19th.
3	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	3	Small numbers recorded at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
4	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	4	Small numbers recorded at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
5	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	5	Small numbers recorded at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
6	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	6	Recorded daily whilst in the Sierra de Andujar.
7	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	7	A count of 60+ birds including some in breeding plumage were seen at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
8	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	8	Counts of 1-2 birds on three days.
9	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	9	A count of 12 whilst travelling near Cordoba on the first day and 3 birds at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
10	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	10	An impressive group of 100+ birds whilst travelling near Cordoba on the first day and a single bird seen whilst travelling on the last day.
11	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	11	A minimum count of 200 birds whilst at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
12	Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	12	A single early migrant circling over the main Lynx watching area on the 19th was the only sighting.
13	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	13	Daily sightings of 20 - 50 birds whilst in the Sierra de Andujar.
14	Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	14	Daily sightings of 5 - 10 birds whilst in the Sierra de Andujar.
15	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	15	Some nice views of an immature on our first day and an adult and immature the following day, both in the Sierra de Andujar.
16	Spanish Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>	16	Excellent views on three days in the Sierra de Andujar with counts of 1-5 birds including a lovely creamy juvenile bird (born last year) on the 19th. A Spanish endemic.
17	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	17	Two birds whilst travelling on our first day.
18	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	18	Four birds whilst travelling on our first day.
19	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	19	A single bird whilst travelling on our first day and a minimum of 4 birds at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
20	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	20	Counts of 1-3 birds on three days.
21	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	21	Great views of an immature male over our lunch spot on the 17th.
22	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	22	Recorded on two days.
23	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	23	Heard only at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
24	Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	24	A single bird on the morning of the 18th at the Lynx hotspot area and then 3 birds on the 19th. All very vocal birds and presumably newly arrived migrants.
25	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	25	Recorded at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
26	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	26	Recorded at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
27	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	27	Great to still find some birds at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day with a total count of 29 birds.
28	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	28	Small numbers recorded at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
29	Eurasian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>	29	An incredible sight of 75+ birds in one field at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
30	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	30	A single bird at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
31	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	31	The presumed same single bird on the small Yeguas River on two days.
32	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	32	A single bird at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
33	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	33	A single bird at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
34	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	34	A count of 7 birds at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
35	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	35	Two birds at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
36	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	36	Recorded at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
37	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	37	Recorded on the first whilst travelling and the greatest numbers at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.

#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	#	NOTES
38	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	38	Recorded daily.
39	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	39	Recorded daily.
40	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	40	Recorded on four days.
41	Eurasian Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	41	An adult above the Jandula River on the 19th gave great scope views as it dozed in the sunshine.
42	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	42	Heard at Villa Matilde on three nights.
43	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	43	Recorded on four days with some nice daylight sightings and regularly calling at dusk.
44	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	44	Counts of 1-2 birds with some good views on four days.
45	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>	45	Recorded on four days. Heard more often than seen, but a female bird feeding on the ground on the 18th showed very well. A nice Iberian speciality.
46	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	46	Small numbers recorded on three days.
47	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	47	Three birds on the 18th showed well and great to hear singing also.
48	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	48	Six birds on our first day were migrants.
49	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	49	Recorded on four days with the best views around Jandula dam where a minimum of 125 birds were resting on the dam wall.
50	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	50	Small numbers recorded on four days.
51	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	51	Single birds over the Lynx watching area on the 19th and another at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
52	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	52	Recorded on the first two days with 40+ birds at our lunch stop in Cordoba.
53	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	53	Single birds recorded on the 18th and 19th only.
54	Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava iberiae</i>	54	A single bird of the Iberian subspecies was seen well at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
55	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	55	Heard along the Jandula River on one day.
56	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	56	Recorded on three days.
57	Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>	57	A minimum of 8 birds near Jandula dam showed very well as they fed on the rocky slopes. This is a very uncommon species at this site and a first for our Iberian Lynx and Eagles Tours.
58	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	58	Heard on two days.
59	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	59	Recorded on four days.
60	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	60	Recorded daily with counts of 1-3 birds including some beautiful males.
61	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	61	Recorded on three days.
62	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	62	Counts of 1 and 2 birds on two days.
63	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	63	Recorded on four days in the Sierra de Andujar and seemingly common in the area.
64	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	64	Recorded daily.
65	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	65	Recorded on four days.
66	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	66	Recorded daily around the Lynx watching area.
67	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	67	Recorded on four days around the Lynx watching area.
68	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	68	Heard at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
69	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	69	Recorded on four days.
70	Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	70	Recorded on two days.
71	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	71	Recorded on three days.
72	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	72	A single bird on the 17th only.
73	European Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	73	Recorded on three days.
74	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>	74	Heard on two days.
75	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	75	Recorded on three days.

#	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	#	NOTES
76	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	76	Recorded on two days.
77	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	77	A single bird showed well near Jandula dam on the 17th and heard there also on the 19th.
78	Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	78	Single birds on two days with some nice scope views of this Iberian speciality.
79	Iberian Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	79	Great views of numerous flocks whilst scanning for Iberian Lynx. Another Iberian speciality.
80	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	80	Small groups recorded on four days and often helped with locating Lynx!
81	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	81	Recorded on two days.
82	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	82	Recorded at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
83	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	83	Good views near Jandula dam on the 17th and heard again on the 19th.
84	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	84	Recorded on the first day.
85	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	85	Recorded on the first day.
86	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	86	Small groups recorded daily.
87	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	87	Recorded daily.
88	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	88	Recorded on four days.
89	Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	89	A count of 50+ on the 18th was our only sighting whilst birding the open fields.
90	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	90	Recorded on three days.
91	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	91	Recorded on four days.
92	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	92	Recorded daily.
93	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	93	Recorded on four days and often seen well whilst scanning for Iberian Lynx.
94	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	94	A single male showed very well on the 19th.
95	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	95	Good to see and hear whilst travelling to the Lynx watching site each day.
MAMMALS				
#	Common Name	Scientific Name	#	
1	Iberian Lynx	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>	1	Recorded on three days with at least four different animals involved. A presumed mother with youngster on two occasions (17th and 19th), a male on the 18th and an unsexed animal on the afternoon of the 17th.
2	Spanish Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>	2	Great views near Jandula dam with 6 animals on the 17th; 4 females and two young. Then a single adult female on the 19th.
3	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	3	Large numbers recorded daily whilst in the Sierra de Andujar.
4	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	4	Good numbers recorded daily whilst in the Sierra de Andujar.
5	Mouflon	<i>Ovis musimon</i>	5	Smaller numbers this year with singles only on the first three days and then 5 on the 19th.
6	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	6	This is the main prey item for the Iberian Lynx and therefore crucial for their survival, so it was good to see an increase in numbers compared to previous trips.
7	Iberian Hare	<i>Lepus granatensis</i>	7	Two seen well at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra on the last day.
8	Wood Mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	8	A mouse species most likely to be this species was seen on the evening of the 19th.
REPTILES				
1	Vaucher's Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis vaucheri</i>	1	A single seen on the 17th near La Lancha village ruin.