

# Wise Birding Holidays

Bird and mammal watching tours



## SPAIN: Iberian Lynx & Eagles

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> - Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015

**Tour Participants:** Reg and Sue Ammon & Sue Healey

**Leader:** Chris Townend

### HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

**Iberian Lynx:** We had to work hard on this trip to find our main target species, but the wait was certainly worth it as we were treated to a close view on our last full day.

**Spanish Imperial Eagle:** Seen very well on two days including a very close adult.

**Golden Eagle:** Some nice views of a pair of birds on two different days.

**Otter:** We were treated to a cub swimming on the river Jandula early on the 12th.

**Spanish Ibex:** A single animal gave good scope views on the 11th.

**Natterjack Toad:** A night drive produced a good view of this smart amphibian.



**This Iberian Lynx was the definite highlight of 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 certainly made us work hard on this trip, though the wait was worth it! On our last full day we were treated to a very close view, much to everyone's relief. Other highlights included some great views of Spanish Imperial and Golden Eagles, Spanish Ibex as well as Otter, Mouflon, numerous Black and Griffon Vultures and the usual gangs of beautiful Azure-winged Magpies!*

## **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February**

The group met at Malaga airport where blue skies and sunshine welcomed everyone and we transferred to our vehicle and headed out of the city. Passing the outskirts of Malaga we saw Yellow-legged Gulls and our first Crag Martins before we left the coast and headed north towards the Ramsar Site at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra. We spent an hour here seeing various species of wader and wildfowl that we would not see when in the Sierra de Andujar. Highlights included, small numbers of Little Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Little Stint and Greater Flamingos as well as our first Swallow of the year!

The journey to our accommodation was fairly uneventful until nearing Córdoba where the only White Stork of the trip was seen by Reg. We soon arrived at the very relaxing Villa Matilde where the ever smiling Roland greeted us and showed us to our rooms before we headed off for our first evening of searching for Iberian Lynx.

We spent the last couple of hours alongside the Jandula River where we enjoyed the late afternoon sunshine in the company of rattling Sardinian Warblers, Spotless Starlings and the first Red Deer of the trip was our only mammal. At dusk, 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 Natural Park.

## **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February**

After much needed coffee and breakfast, we headed out shortly after dawn and were soon in the picturesque dehesa habitat so typical of this 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 looking for the elusive Iberian Lynx.

It was a fairly cold morning with a slight breeze but the sunshine began to slowly warm us all up. Azure-winged Magpies were a continual distraction along with Dartford Warbler, Sardinian Warbler and Blackcap. We spent the morning scanning the vast expanse of Iberian Lynx habitat and despite our best efforts,

the bearded feline failed to reveal itself to us during the morning. However, it was a lovely day and as the temperature increased we were treated to some great views of Griffon Vultures and Black Vultures. A small group of at least three Mouflon were a welcome new mammal species before we ventured down towards the dam for our lunch.

The raptor theme continued whilst enjoying lunch as we watched a pair of Golden Eagles soaring above the ridge as well as superb views of a fine adult Spanish Imperial Eagle! Other highlights during the afternoon included two Red-billed Chough, a cracking male Blue Rock Thrush and a number of Eurasian Crag Martins.

Back at our main Lynx viewing area, once again we took our favoured viewpoints but remaining 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. Time passed with Iberian Grey Shrikes and Azure-winged Magpies for company along with Iberian Wall Lizards and a Greater White-toothed Shrew for Sue A, but alas still no Iberian Lynx! A small group of Wild Boar, including striped piglets, were a very welcome addition to the mammal list as we watched them slowly work their way down the hillside. 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 hoped tomorrow would yield the main prize!

## **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February**

Once again, it was another early start to maximise our chances of an Iberian Lynx sighting, so after a hearty breakfast we returned to our now familiar watch area. En route to the watchpoint we had some brief views of Rock Sparrow on some derelict buildings and a Green Sandpiper on a small stream. Further along the road a group of at least eight Hawfinch were a welcome distraction too.

Once at our main viewpoint, we were now fully versed in our plans and we all manned our favourite lookouts, once again remaining in radio contact. It was another pleasant day and the sun soon warmed us up. A coffee break also helped keep our focus but there was still no sign of the elusive Iberian Lynx.

We spent most of the day enjoying the wonderful birds of prey with more sightings of Spanish Imperial Eagles and Golden Eagles as well as the now expected Griffon and Black Vultures. Another visit to the dam gave us a break from scanning and time for lunch as well as a new mammal as Reg and Sue spotted a single Spanish Ibex. We all enjoyed some good scope views before it disappeared over the rocky hillside and Reg managed some good views of a fine male Rock Bunting. We then returned for an afternoon session of scanning. It seemed as if we knew every rock and every Rosemary bush personally by now(!), but despite our best efforts the Iberian Lynx still did not show.

However, it wasn't all bad, as we had seen some more great birds, had some great weather and we still had one more day to rectify things. Never say never! So we enjoyed the sunset over the Santuario Virgen de la Cabeza and headed back to a welcome log fire at Villa Matilde.

After dinner, we ventured out to the river Jandula where we had some nice views of a Natterjack Toad.

### **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February**

Today was our last full day and the pressure was on to locate our elusive feline friend! Once again, we left the guest house at pre-dawn and a slight change of plan saw us arriving at the river Jandula at Encinarejo for the first hour of the day. Our main feline target continued to remain elusive but an Otter was a very welcome addition to the mammal list as we spent a few minutes watching a young cub fishing on the river in front of us. Once the animal disappeared we headed off to investigate La Lancha for the last time as something seemed to suggest it was nearing "Lynx O'clock!" We arrived at the viewpoint and took our positions once more, armed with radios for peace of mind.

Only five minutes had passed when the message that everyone had been waiting for came. Chris had located a Lynx! Luckily Sue H was not far away and managed a scope view of this simply stunning cat before it disappeared from view. Chris knew from the direction it was travelling that it would not be visible for too long and re-iterated the need to get to him as soon as possible! Sue and Chris continued swiftly in the cat's direction so as not to lose it from view and after a few minutes everyone had made it and the Eurasian Magpies soon gave away the cat's whereabouts. There, just 30 metres from us was a beautiful Iberian Lynx sat on a small rock! It might have been a very long wait, but it was certainly worth it as we all enjoyed great views of the animal's intricate coat markings, black tufted ears and short bob tail as if dipped in black ink. Although facing away from us, it did do the decent thing on at least a couple of occasions and gave us all a long hard stare allowing us to see the majestic white beard and gorgeous green eyes. It remained alert for its performance looking around and then yawned before continuing on its path into the thick scrub and out of sight. It was quite simply smiles all round and we decided to return to the vehicle for a celebratory coffee which most definitely tasted all the better than the previous few mornings! We spent the rest of the morning simply enjoying our surroundings and savouring the great cat encounter that we felt we had all earned as it had certainly been a team effort.

As lunchtime neared, we set off for a change of scenery, but it seemed the Iberian Lynx had different ideas! After a short drive, a Eurasian Magpie caught Chris's eye and after a quick check it was obvious the bird was very unhappy as it persisted with a rattling alarm call. Everyone was soon out of the vehicle and we were then treated to another few glimpses of presumably the same Iberian Lynx as it slowly padded through the scrub and out of view. This changed our lunch plans and we decided to remain put, just in case the animal returned.

We enjoyed another great picnic lunch surrounded by the now familiar sights and sounds of this wonderful place. Griffon Vultures soared above us, Red-billed Choughs called overhead whilst performing display flights, an Iberian Wall Lizard ventured out from a nearby rock whilst the Blue Rock Thrushes, Iberian Grey Shrikes and Azure-winged Magpies continued to give photographic opportunities.

We remained in the area until dusk and the Fallow and Red Deer slowly ventured out into the open and the Little Owls began to call and although we had no further Iberian Lynx sightings, an animal was heard calling. Maybe it was a farewell call to us all and one that was much appreciated as we headed for our final hearty home cooked food at Villa Matilde.

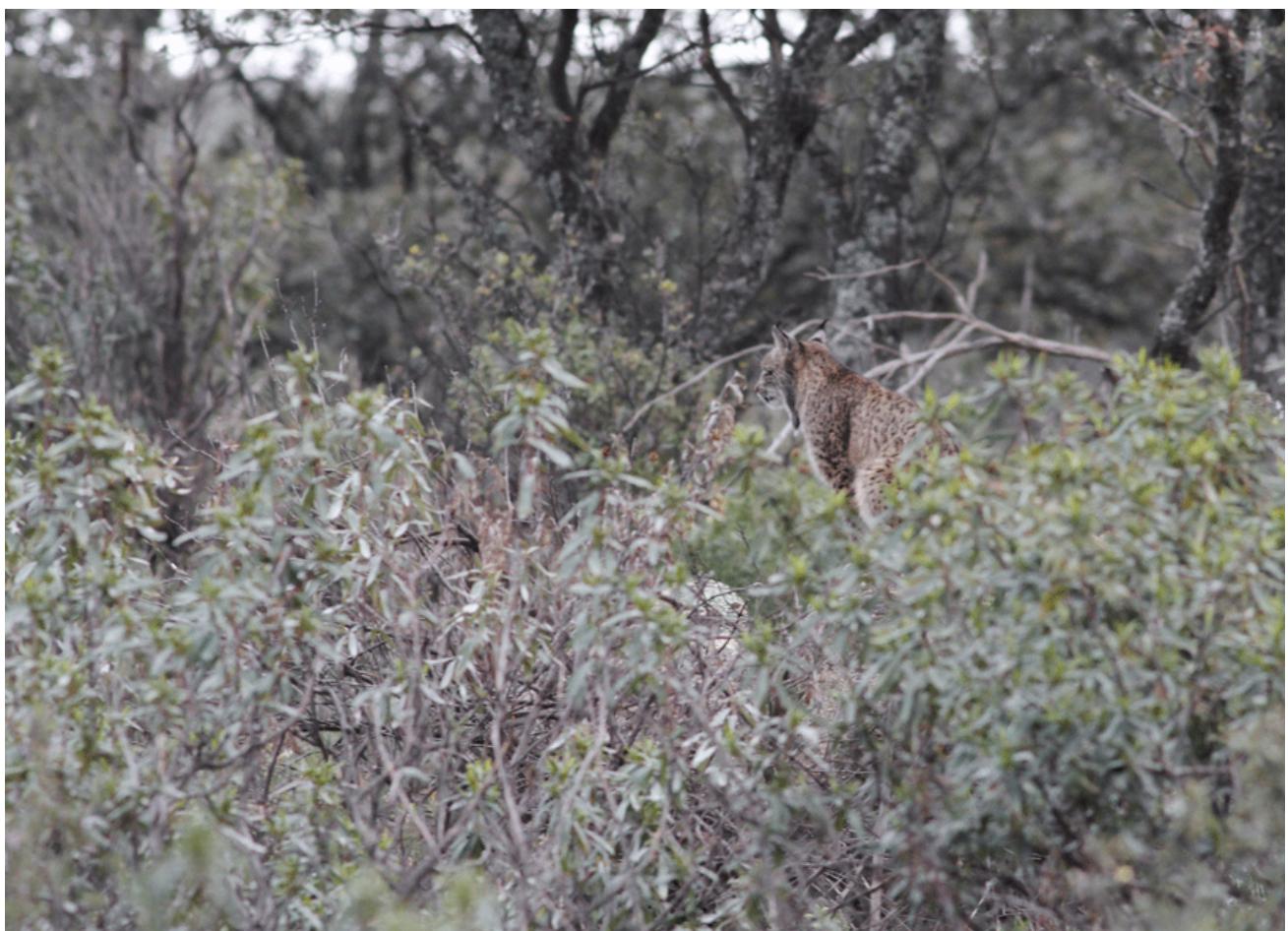
## **Friday 13th February**

After an early breakfast, we were soon packed and back on the road. As the sun began to rise we were not far from Malaga and back safely at the airport in good time for our mid morning flight back to the UK with our Iberian Lynx mission accomplished!

**Conservation Donation** – Following the successful conclusion of this tour, a £100 donation from Wise Birding Holidays was made to the LIFE-Nature Project “Enhancing habitat for the Iberian Lynx and Black Vulture in SE Portugal” This is a partnership between LPN – Liga para a Protecção da Natureza and Fauna and Flora International. The Lynx Programme for LPN ensures the conservation of almost 20,000 hectares of suitable Mediterranean habitat for the Iberian lynx in the Southeast of Portugal through numerous management agreements with local landowners and other stakeholders. Rabbits are the main prey item for the Iberian Lynx and ensuring there is a healthy population of wild rabbits is crucial. Therefore, the project works hard to provide accessible food, water and artificial shelter specifically for rabbits to maintain the population. Thousands of children from the programme’s intervention area along with hundreds of local and regional stakeholders have been educated on the problems facing the Iberian Lynx and the importance of its future conservation and protection. You can find out more about this project by visiting the following link:  
[www.lpn.pt/homepage/What-we-do/Programs/Lynx-Programme/Content.aspx?tabid=2454&code=en](http://www.lpn.pt/homepage/What-we-do/Programs/Lynx-Programme/Content.aspx?tabid=2454&code=en)



**Sierra de Andujar and Iberian Lynx**



**WISE BIRDING HOLIDAYS LTD – SPAIN: Iberian Lynx & Eagles, Feb 2015**



**Spanish Imperial Eagle**



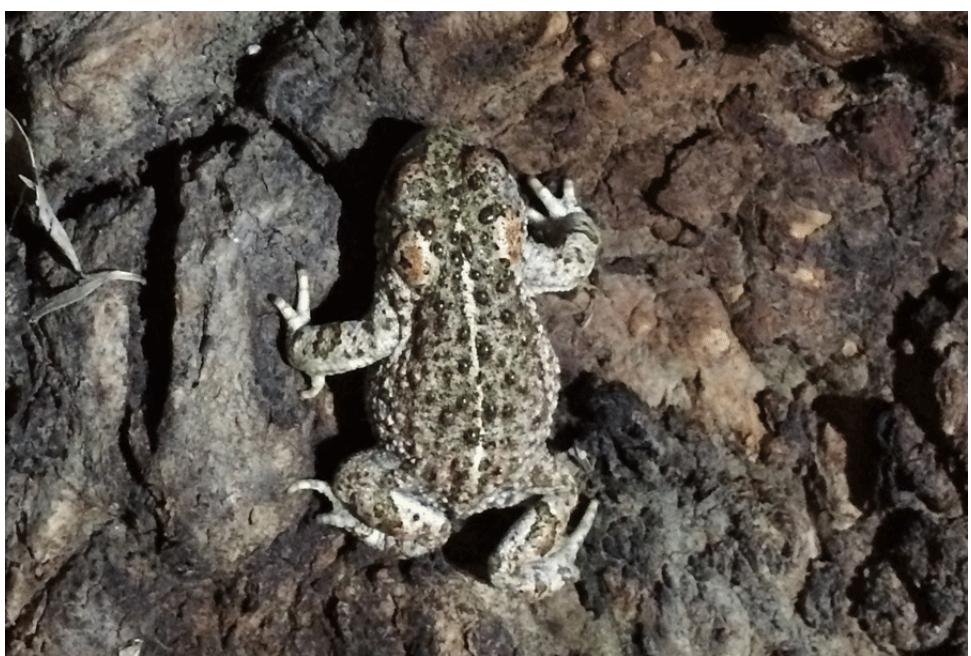


Dartford Warbler and Black Redstart





**“Iberian” Wall Lizard and Natterjack Toad**





Iberian Lynx



# Wise Birding Holidays

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WISE BIRDING HOLIDAYS LTD – SPAIN: Iberian Lynx & Eagles, Feb 2015

Wise Birding Holidays Checklist: Iberian Lynx & Eagles Checklist  
 Monday 9th - Friday 13th February 2015

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
2	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Recorded on 4 days
3	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
4	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
5	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
6	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Recorded on 3 days
7	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
8	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Recorded on 3 days
9	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	A single bird at LFP
10	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Two birds at LFP
11	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Recorded on 2 days
12	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	A single bird seen on the outskirts of Cordoba
13	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	Just 4 birds recorded at LFP
14	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Recorded on 3 days with max counts of 30+
15	Black Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Recorded on 2 days with max counts of 3+
16	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Recorded on two days with 2 adults on each occasion
17	Spanish Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>	Recorded on 2 days with excellent views of an adult on the 10th
18	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	A single bird en route to Sierra de Andujar
19	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Recorded on 4 days
20	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
21	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
22	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
23	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	At least 6 birds seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
24	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	A minimum of 60 birds at LFP
25	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
26	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	A small group of 20+ birds at LFP
27	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Singles recorded on three days
28	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
29	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
30	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
31	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
32	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	Recorded on the first day only near Malaga
33	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Seen at Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP) only
34	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Recorded on 4 days
35	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Recorded on 3 days
36	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Recorded on 3 days
37	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	Recorded on 3 days - seen and heard
38	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>	Recorded on 4 days
39	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Recorded on 2 days
40	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Heard only on the 12th
41	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Heard only on the 10th
42	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Recorded on 4 days
43	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Recorded on 2 days
44	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Recorded on 2 days
45	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Recorded on 4 days
46	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Recorded on the 9th only

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
47	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Recorded on the 9th only
48	European Robin	<i>Erythacus rubecula</i>	Recorded on 4 days
49	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Recorded on 4 days
50	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	Recorded on 2 days
51	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Recorded on 3 days
52	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Recorded on 2 days
53	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Recorded on 4 days
54	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Recorded on 3 days with a max count of 3+ birds on the 11th
55	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Recorded on 3 days
56	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Recorded on 4 days
57	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	Recorded on 3 days
58	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Recorded on 4 days
59	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Heard on the 9th only
60	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Recorded on 4 days
61	European Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Recorded on 2 days
62	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>	Recorded on 3 days
63	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Recorded on 4 days
64	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	Seen well on the 11th only
65	Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	Recorded on 3 days
66	Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>	Recorded on 4 days
67	Common Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Recorded on 4 days
68	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Recorded on 2 days
69	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	Recorded on the 9th only
70	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Recorded on 2 days with two birds on the 9th and 12th

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
71	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	Recorded on 4 days
72	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Recorded on 3 days
73	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	At least one bird seen on the 11th whilst travelling to the Lynx hotspot
74	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Recorded on 3 days
75	Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Recorded on the 9th only
76	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Recorded on 3 days
77	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	Recorded on 2 days
78	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	Recorded on 3 days
79	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	A group of 8+ birds seen well on the 11th
80	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Reg had good views of a single bird on the 11th
81	Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	Recorded on 2 days

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Iberian Lynx	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>	Finally on our last full day (12th) we were treated to a great view at 30M range
2	Spanish Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>	A single animal was a good spot by Reg and Sue on the 11th
3	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Seen daily
4	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	Recorded on 3 days
5	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Recorded on 2 days including striped piglets!
6	Mouflon	<i>Ovis musimon</i>	A group of at least three animals were seen well on the 10th
7	Otter	<i>Lutra lutre</i>	A young cub was seen fishing on the River Jandula early on the 12th
8	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Seen daily
9	Greater White-toothed Shrew	<i>Crocidura russula</i>	Sue A had a good view of what was presumed to be this species
10	Garden Dormouse	<i>Eliomys quercinus</i>	Four different animals recorded on a trail camera

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
11	"Iberian" Wall Lizard	Podarcis virescens	These extremely variable lizards were seen on three days
12	Natterjack Toad	Bufo calamita	Seen well during a night drive on the 11th

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Red Admiral	Vanessa atalanta	-
2	Clouded Yellow	Colias croceus	-
3	Painted Lady	Vanessa cardui	-
4	Large Tortoiseshell	-	-
5	White Sp.	-	-

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