

Wise Birding Holidays

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Trip Report

SIERRA DE ANDUJAR, SPAIN:

Iberian Lynx & Eagles Tour

Monday 10th - Friday 14th March 2014

Tour Participants: David Land, Hazel Land, David Hopkins and Gladys Grant

Leader: Chris Townend

HIGHLIGHTS OF TRIP

Spanish Imperial Eagle: Some superb views of adult birds both flying and perched.

Golden Eagle: An adult bird over the Jandula dam plus a Juv whilst returning to Villa Matilde

Great Spotted Cuckoo: Adult and 1st Summer birds performed brilliantly on our first morning.

Mouflon: Great views of at least 8 animals in the early morning sunshine on the 13th March.

Butterflies: A minimum of 11 species recorded and quite unexpected for the time of year.

Paella: On our last night at Villa Matilde!



This 1st Summer Great Spotted Cuckoo was one of two birds that entertained us.

Monday 10th March

After a smooth flight from Bristol to Malaga we were soon on our way to Laguna Fuente de Piedra. This wetland area is less than an hour's drive from Malaga and is an internationally important site for wintering waders and wildfowl. **Greater Flamingos** were plentiful with hundreds of birds along with numerous **Eurasian Teal** and **Gadwall**. Other highlights here included a nice selection of waders that included some small groups of **Ruff**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Black-winged Stilts**, at least a dozen **Little Ringed Plover** and a single **Cattle Egret** that all suggested Spring was only just round the corner! It seemed the last of the wintering **Common Cranes** had already departed in the recent good weather but passerines included a spanking male **Black Redstart**, **Sardinian Warbler** and plenty of **Corn Bunting**. After a coffee and a snack in the local town square, we continued our journey north to the Andujar region.

Within less than three hours we were in the peaceful surroundings of our accommodation at Villa Matilde which was to be our base for the next four nights. Once checked into our rooms, we soon headed out for our first visit to prime **Iberian Lynx** habitat! We spent the last couple of hours of daylight scanning a favoured valley, but despite our best efforts a Lynx failed to show. However, the first **Wild Boar** of the trip along with stripey piglets were very much appreciated. We returned to Villa Matilde for some excellent home cooked food and a beer in front of the log fire!

Tuesday 11th March

Everyone was up early and eager for our first full day in the field. After some much required caffeine we headed back to the area from the previous evening, but we had plenty of **Iberian Lynx** habitat to drive through en route and everyone was alert for any sniff of a feline! Flocks of **Azure-winged Magpies** distracted us on our journey as well as small groups of **European Serin** feeding in the weedy fields.

We soon arrived at one of our main Lynx watching areas and took our scanning positions, remaining in radio contact to increase our chances. It was a beautiful morning with clear blue skies, sunshine and a light wind. A noisy **Great Spotted Cuckoo** alerted us to its presence and for much of the morning, an adult and a first summer bird treated us all to low fly-bys whilst being continually mobbed by **Eurasian Magpies**, the species which it parasitises. Our scanning resumed as each of us carefully checked every boulder and Rosemary bush for any sign of an **Iberian Lynx**. Both **Sardinian Warbler** and **Dartford Warbler** were a constant distraction and as the temperatures increased, the first of the raptors began to appear. First were **Griffon Vultures**, soon to be followed by a **Black Vulture** allowing side by side comparisons to be made. A break for coffee and snacks allowed us to regain our focus and continue our quest for the Lynx but despite our efforts there was still no sign of the elusive feline. It was beginning to get quite warm so we headed to the nearby dam for a change of scenery. Here, an adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle** gave us somewhat tantalising views as it circled over a distant ridge. A noisy **Red-billed Chough** was far more obliging whilst **Eurasian Crag Martins** hawked for insects above our heads. However, it was Dave H who had the sharpest eyes this morning as he found two **Spanish Ibex** on one of the large rocks above us!

We then re-traced our steps and slowly headed back to our accommodation where we enjoyed a very relaxing lunch outside. Whilst sitting outside in the garden we enjoyed the warm sunshine with vultures flying overhead and **European Serins** singing from the Cypress trees.

After lunch and a short siesta(!), we once again headed out for another evening searching for our quarry species! We slowly drove the tracks stopping every now and again to check any likely looking rocks for a snoozing Lynx. Before long we were back at our familiar scanning points and we all prepared ourselves for another early evening of searching for the bearded one! Despite another very pleasant evening, **the Iberian Lynx** failed to show up, but the sun was shining and there were plenty of other good birds to keep us entertained. These included **Rock Sparrow**, a small group of **Red-billed Chough** and the definite highlight was a superb adult **Spanish Imperial Eagle**. We then returned to Villa Matilde for yet another warm welcome and some great home cooked food.

Wednesday 12th and Thursday 13th March

The following two days involved the same routine. Early caffeine and breakfast before heading out to our watchpoints and then returning to our accommodation for lunch and a siesta before a second attempt in the late afternoon and early evening.

Wednesday was a particularly good day for birds with an adult **Golden Eagle** over the dam during the late morning and then a cracking juvenile **Golden Eagle** directly above us whilst driving back for lunch! We were also treated to our best views of **Spanish Imperial Eagle**, as two adults performed fantastically well in the late afternoon, allowing some great scope views in flight as well as perched. The other notable raptor was **Short-toed Eagle** with three of these very striking birds freshly returned from their African wintering grounds. Passerines performed well also with some great views of a male **Blue Rock Thrush** at the dam and a number of very obliging **Iberian Grey Shrikes** and the odd **Hawfinch**. A visit to a nearby tunnel revealed a small number of roosting bats that were not seen well enough to identify but were possibly **Schreiber's Bat**.

Highlights on **Thursday** included our first **Iberian Wall Lizard** basking in the sun as temperatures increased, the now expected **Griffon and Black Vultures**, a **Spanish Imperial Eagle** and probably the same three **Short-toed Eagles**. A vocal **Crested Tit** gave some good views to most of us and the mammal highlight was a group of at least eight **Mouflon** giving perfect scope views in the early morning sunshine.

In addition to all of the above the good weather produced many butterflies for the time of year (see list), along with the wonderful scenery and commoner bird species such as **Little Owl**, **Eurasian Hoopoe**, **Dartford Warbler** etc and it is clear why this region has so much to offer the naturalist. Of course, the other highlight was the home cooked **Paella** that we all very much enjoyed on our last night at Villa Matilde!

Friday 14th March

After an early breakfast we set off for Malaga and within three hours we were checking in for our return flight. Despite the lack of **Iberian Lynx** sightings everyone was still full of smiles and happy to have experienced the wonderful habitat, birds, mammals, butterflies and plants, oh and the Paella Dave!

Let's just hope that the lack of **Iberian Lynx** sightings is not the start of another decline due to the recent worrying crash in the local rabbit population. Everyone agreed they would return soon and wished the Iberian Lynx a successful breeding year.

I would personally like to thank everyone for their continued high spirits and enthusiasm despite not finding our key target. Also thanks in particular to both Dave L and Dave H for sharing their enthusiasm and knowledge on butterflies. Also thanks to Dave L and Hazel for some of the photos that appear in this report.

Conservation Donation – Following the successful conclusion of this tour, a £125 donation from Wise Birding Holidays was made to the **LIFE-Nature Project “Enhancing habitat for the Iberian Lynx and Black Vulture in SE Portugal”**

It 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: <http://www.lpn.pt/Homepage/What-we-do/Programs/Lynx-Programme/Content.aspx?tabid=2454&code=en>



The wonderful Villa Matilde
Great people, great location, great food!





Black Vulture



Griffon Vulture



Juvenile Golden Eagle



Prime Iberian Lynx habitat: Hazel Land





Black Vulture: Dave Land



Iberian Grey Shrike: Dave Land



Red-billed Chough: Dave Land



Eurasian Crag Martin



Adult Great Spotted Cuckoo



Fallow Deer



View towards the Rio Jandula Dam: Hazel Land

BIRD LIST for Wise Birding Holidays' Iberian Lynx & Eagles Tour
10th -14th March 2014

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Laguna Fuente de la Piedra (LFP)
2	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	LFP
3	Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	LFP
4	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	LFP
5	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	Daily around La Lancha area (LL)
6	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	LFP
7	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	LFP & Jandula Dam (JD)
8	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	A single bird at LFP
9	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	LFP
10	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	1 bird en route to Andujar
11	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	A few hundred birds at LFP
12	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	On 3 days at LL
13	Black Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	On 3 days at LL
14	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	One adult and one Juv on the 12th
15	Spanish Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>	Up to 4 adults LL on 3 days
16	Short-toed Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	Three birds seen on 2 days
17	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	A single bird near Cordoba
18	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	A single bird near Cordoba
19	Western Marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	A couple of birds at LFP
20	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Singles en route to LL & airport
21	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	A single bird at LFP
22	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Recorded on 3 days
23	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	LFP
24	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	LFP
25	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Just 2 birds at LFP
26	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	LFP
27	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	12+ birds at LFP
28	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Two birds at LFP
29	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	One bird at LFP
30	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	A single bird on the river Yeguas
31	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Recorded at LFP
32	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Around 12 birds at LFP
33	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	LFP
34	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	LFP
35	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	LFP and en route to airport
36	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	LFP
37	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Recorded on 4 days
38	Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Recorded on 4 days
39	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Recorded on 4 days
40	Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	Up to 3 birds seen on 2 days at LL
41	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	Good views around LL

BIRD LIST: Wise Birding Holidays' Iberian Lynx & Eagles Tour continued

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
42	Swift Sp	-	Briefly LFP – Date suggests Pallid?
43	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Max. count 3 - Recorded on 3 days
44	Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>	A distinct race seen on 3 days
45	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	Recorded on 3 days
46	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Travelling to and from airport
47	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Seen en route to LL. Max. 2 birds
48	Common Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	LFP
49	Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	Recorded on 3 days around JD
50	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Recorded on 4 days
51	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Recorded on 3 days
52	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Recorded on 3 days
53	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Recorded on 4 days
54	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Recorded on 4 days
55	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Recorded on 4 days
56	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	Recorded on 2 days at LL
57	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	Recorded on 4 days
58	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Recorded on 4 days
59	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Recorded on 4 days
60	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Recorded on 3 days
61	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Recorded on 1 day
62	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Recorded on 4 days mostly LL
63	Dartford Warbler	<i>Sylvia undata</i>	Recorded on 3 days at LL
64	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Recorded on 2 days
65	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Recorded on 4 days
66	European Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Recorded on 2 days
67	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>	Up to 3 birds seen on the 13th at LL
68	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	Recorded on 2 days
69	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	A single bird on one day
70	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	Heard on 3 days at Villa Matilde
71	Southern (Iberian) Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	Recorded on 2 days. Max. count 5 LL
72	Azure-winged Magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>	Recorded on 3 days
73	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Recorded on 4 days
74	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Recorded on 2 days
75	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	Up to 7 birds at LL on 3 days
76	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	A single bird on our first day
77	Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	Recorded on 4 days
78	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Recorded on 4 days
79	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	A single male at LFP
80	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	A single bird en route to LL
81	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Recorded on 4 days
82	Common Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Recorded on 3 days
83	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Recorded on 4 days

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
84	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	Recorded on 4 days
85	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Recorded on 2 days & up to 9 birds
86	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	Recorded on 3 days
87	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Three birds seen near JD

MAMMAL & REPTILE LIST: Wise Birding Holidays' Iberian Lynx & Eagles Tour

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Spanish Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>	A good spot by DH - 2 animals at JD
2	Mouflon	<i>Ovis musimon</i>	At least 8 animals seen from LL
3	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Recorded daily
4	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	Recorded daily
5	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Adults and piglets at LL on 2 days
6	Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Recorded daily
7	Iberian Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis hispanica</i>	One on 13 th in warm weather
8	Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	One on the evening of the 12th
9	Stripe-necked Terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>	At least one at LFP
10	Bat Sp	-	Concealed at roost and unable to id

BUTTERFLY LIST: Wise Birding Holidays' Iberian Lynx & Eagles Tour

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>	-
2	Large Tortoiseshell	<i>Nymphalis polychloros</i>	-
3	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	-
4	Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	-
5	Cleopatra	<i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i>	-
6	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	-
7	Bath White	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>	-
8	Holly Blue	<i>Celestrina argiolus</i>	-
9	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	-
10	Clouded Yellow Sp	-	-
11	Small Heath Sp	-	-

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