

Tour Report

Iberian Lynx Quest

19 – 26 October 2025

Iberian lynx



Barn owl



Drimys maritima



Mediterranean chameleon



Compiled by John L. Muddeman

Following huge conservation efforts over the past 20 years or so, the number of Iberian lynx have thankfully grown sufficiently to move the species from the 'Critically Endangered' list and then from the 'Endangered' category to officially 'Vulnerable'. A huge conservation success, though this downgrading is somewhat surprising, given that there are still only an estimated 2400 of these exquisite animals in the world and certainly not yet out of danger, in part due to genetic bottlenecks. Also, not surprisingly, as their range has increased in line with the surging population, so there has been a marked increase in the number of lynx deaths, with dispersing immature individuals in particular suffering as road kill or deaths due to other man-made causes, but its population still continues to rise between an excellent 10% and 20% per year!

The Iberian Lynx has also consolidated its hold in the greater Doñana area, with approximately 120 animals. Although still struggling to maintain its former density in much of the Andújar mountains area, given patchy European rabbit populations there, its preferred diet and the prey which determines its breeding success, it continues to hang on in this scenically beautiful area, rich in other mammal species too.

Consequently, observing one in the field still requires patience, knowledge and often more than just a slice of luck in order to both find one and then be able to observe it well within the depths of their preferred habitats.

Sunday 19 October 2025

Day 1:

Seville airport, El Rocío

Despite a quite badly delayed train from Madrid, I was still able to get to Seville Airport in time to get the rental vehicle out and have a little time sat in arrivals before the group came through.

The run down to the edge of Doñana National Park went smoothly, even though it took a little tweaking to get the minibus' air-con balance right as it was very warm and humid outside (the "calor del membrillo" as the taxi driver who took me to the airport had called it) and though sunset was lining-up to be impressive, given some thin and random cloud around, it rather fizzled out without much of a show as the sun dipped over the horizon just as we turned off the motorway to head south to El Rocío.

We checked in, headed into our rooms, dropped off our bags and went almost straight away to the restaurant on the side of the town square full of ancient wild olive trees for our first dinner.

Monday 20 October 2025

Day 2:

Vado del Quema, Villamanrique de la Condesa, "La FAO", Isla Mayor rice fields, Vado del Quema

The day dawned calm, mild and a very misty and though the latter helped with cleaning the van's windows before we left the square (yes, there are still insects here!) -shortly after 8 a.m.-, it also meant a change in plan and so we headed off north instead and then cruised east in the hope that the mist would lift by the time we arrived for our first lynx watch.

Despite the odd passing vehicle, hopes that we would be on our own were soon dashed when a quite large group of French tourists also turned up to try their luck with searching for cats, shortly followed by two other small groups as well! However, it actually really had little impact on what we did and although we hung around a large semi-open area in the woodland for around 90 minutes, enjoying the numerous birds present and especially a large flock of garrulous Iberian magpies which set off raucously in hot pursuit after a flying tawny owl! A calling lesser spotted woodpecker couldn't be seen, though a couple of common kingfishers were glimpsed over a large pool remaining in an otherwise dry river channel and a fine Eurasian hoopoe, in typically gawky fashion, shuffled across the grass in pursuit of prey.

Following a breakfast request for at least one owl on the trip and the flying tawny earlier, it was a further

treat when, during a minor detour along some nearby tracks as we departed, we spotted a fantastic little owl adorning the dead stag's-head of a huge old oak!

An extended drinks break was taken while I went shopping for our picnic lunch with the help of one or two of the party and after driving back to our earlier watching area and then on via more tracks, we finally hit the flat lower "Doñana northern marshes", even though it is now very largely and heavily transformed into irrigated crop fields and orchards.

With thick cloud and even the threat of rain looming, we decided not to start heading towards an open picnic site, but to head out instead to the border of the National Park and a visitor's centre, a little over 20 km along dusty tracks! The number of western marsh harriers was very impressive from the start, a smart Iberian grey shrike showed really well on crooked fence posts, an osprey was also spotted resting on a field, failing to hide as a marsh harrier and hundreds of glossy ibis and egrets could be seen wheeling over one set of rice fields in the distance. A late purple heron was a good find in addition to the western cattle, great white and little egrets, grey herons and white storks also gathered nearby and though we pushed on quite hard past numerous Eurasian kestrels, European stonechats, zitting cisticolas, charms of European goldfinches and, at another spot, hundreds of Spanish sparrows among the thistles and tamarisks adjacent to the 'road', we certainly did stop for our first common crane which circled up off to our left and then a pair of gorgeous black-winged kites adorning wires to our right!

Lunch was taken in the visitors centre, where surprisingly, no water was present outside, though it did mean that we could concentrate completely on the selection of goodies purchased earlier!

Our return ended up deviating from the course we'd taken out given the sight of a massive 'murmuration' of glossy ibis in the air off to the east, though this was doubly productive, since not only did we eventually manage to make our way round to them, but greatly enjoyed a stunning barn owl perched out in full view in the sun as we progressed and then, once we'd crossed the wide Entremuros channel, bumped into a couple of colourful squacco herons at close range!

A flock of bugling common cranes greeted us as we stepped out for a quick look, plus a circling pale morph booted eagle and a couple of passing black storks, though it was a true birding bonanza ahead at some paddies which were in the process of being churned back in. Flocks and flocks included 100+ Eurasian spoonbills, 30 great egrets, another pale morph booted eagle, a surprise juvenile Bonelli's eagle, an interesting range of waders including ruff, spotted redshank and black-winged stilts of most note, plus hundreds of black-headed and lesser black-backed gulls and probably >1000 glossy ibis... It was a very impressive sight and we enjoyed it at length as we strolled along the adjacent tracks as hundreds of red-veined darter and other dragonflies darted out of our way or grabbed mates in an autumn breeding frenzy.

The rice gathering was at full pelt with bird-rich harvested paddies scattered all along the route back, then after winding our way up through the stone pine-dominated forest, where a few European rabbits were finally seen, we stopped again at the morning's lynx site for a good wait (including a male lesser spotted woodpecker, this time in view and calling common kingfisher and grey wagtail, amongst others), until 15 minutes before sunset when we upped and gently cruised the tracks back, reaching the hotel in time for dinner, which actually commenced a little later than 8:30 p.m.!

Tuesday 21 October 2025

Day 3:

Raya Real, la FAO, Coto del Rey, Puente del Ajolí

Deliberately slightly delaying our planned 8 a.m. exit (still well in the dark!) worked a treat. Heading out along a broad sandy track, where we could only pass down one set of firmer tracks, we were overtaken by one of the tall National Park visitor vehicles. As it neared the park's boundary, the driver suddenly stopped, then reversed a little, then moved forward a little, then reversed again... We had already stopped and both Ana (our driver) and my suspicions upheld as a magnificent male Iberian lynx had been spotted lying on the

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ground just beyond the fence behind the bus! We got out quietly and walked over to enjoy the sight of it standing up, walking along, then sitting again, before finally moving off in a little canter towards the bushes where it crouched, apparently in hunting mode, before moving off into the bushes and out of sight. Wow, and before sun-up!

We continued our drive out along the northern edge of the park, detouring a little here and there to look down side tracks and through gaps in the vegetation as we searched for more lynx, revealing lots of red deer and plentiful red-legged partridges, though actually it was very quiet otherwise on the long drive out to visitor's centre we'd visited the day before, until we bumped into a delightful little owl on its favoured stumps!

Despite extensive spring flooding, the salt marsh was extremely dry, though with patience and some searching, where straw had been put out for the hungry cows, two western yellow wagtails and a few tricky-to-see Mediterranean short-toed larks were present, in addition to a couple of late northern wheatears and also corn buntings adorning the fences. Most impressive though was where a wide channel still holding plenty of water was alive with Eurasian spoonbills, great and little egrets, plenty of grey and two flying black-crowned night herons, a few plump purple swamphens ripping up the bulrushes, ridiculously long-legged black-winged stilts, a noisy flock of spotted redshank powering past and then, even more surprisingly, another smaller group of distant pin-tailed sandgrouse calling as they sped off into the vast open area. Frustratingly, a few calling and even singing bluethroats simply refused to come out of the tamarisk scrub and allow themselves to be seen!

A comfort and coffee break in the nearby visitor centre seemed like the best remedy for the bluethroats, and indeed it was!

We returned directly for a walk through a very quiet Coto del Rey, mostly under the sun, then drove a little to get closer views of a perched Spanish imperial eagle, but which had decided to move in the process! However, a lovely picnic lunch in the shade at tables in the middle of the estate was just marvellous and very relaxing.

Returning around 3 p.m., we had time for a siesta before heading out again for a 90-minute watch on the edge of the National Park, where plenty of horse riders, including some in more traditional attire, were seen, but no lynx decided to come out and greet us!

Wednesday 22 October 2025

Day 4:

Puente del Ajolí, Almonte, Odiel Estuary, Laguna del Portil, Palacio del Acebrón

We were greeted with a beautifully fresh, clear and still start to the day as we walked out towards the edge of the Doñana National Park near El Rocío. A couple of Eurasian tree sparrows chipped from the bushes and then two lesser spotted woodpeckers called from the poplars, upping the interest even further.

Plenty of birds were around as we stood quietly, hoping for a lynx to appear, with a few grazing European rabbits, a good sign that they might be on the hunt! Patience is a virtue, though one animal dashing across between and behind the numerous tamarisks finally turned out to be 'just' a calf red deer and in the end, we were about to leave when a call came up that behind us, a couple of Iberian lynx had apparently rushed across a broad sandy track! We started walking as quickly back towards them, only to have two large dogs reappear from where they had disappeared...! So we back-tracked and walked a little way along the Raya Real, turning round once we'd thoroughly covered the first main open area, and also turning our attention to a delightful male lesser spotted woodpecker drumming and vigorously preening up in a poplar and which afforded us lovely views.

After a comfort stop back at the hotel, we headed off towards Almonte to pick up a parcel for Andrea (!) and then continued towards Huelva, where we detoured off for a drinks break and shop for picnic lunch goodies

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before heading down into the vast expanse of salinas and salt marsh in the huge estuary complex.

Slender-billed gulls, greater flamingos and a few Sandwich terns on the first water-filled pan meant a good stop was required, with some distant common shelduck a nice addition, too. Waders on a muddy channel nearby included a curlew sandpiper amongst the dunlin and, briefly, both Kentish and common ringed plovers, with Eurasian whimbrel and grey plover also calling as they flew past and both northern shoveler and gadwall flying over as well.

With a rising tide we headed south until a short walk over a muddy creek provided not only excellent views of the West Atlantic fiddler crabs, but also great views over extensive mudflats and oyster beds with a wide range of waders and other tidal wetland species present, including Eurasian oystercatchers, bar-tailed godwits, Eurasian whimbrel, Eurasian curlew, common redshank, common greenshank and a single fly-by ruddy turnstone. In addition, a huge Caspian tern and a distant wandering female hen harrier were quality bonuses.

Pushing on down to the very end of the driveable road, two walks out onto the shell-rich beach by the group enabled me first to set up our varied picnic in the back of the minibus and then secondly pack away all the left-overs afterwards, though the resumption of repair works on the breakwater meant that numerous lorries were unfortunately stopping just opposite us over lunch itself and making it a little less idyllic than it might have been!

Time had really run on, but we stopped again at the top salinas on our way out, in addition to at a small pool nearby, adding many more waders to the day's sightings, including a ruff, plus three more Caspian terns, an adult Mediterranean gull, Eurasian teal and black-tailed godwits, and the constant melee of feeding and bathing birds at close range simply meant that it was a lovely spot to take a relaxed look.

Another site en route to a coffee stop was by special request and though I openly admit that I had very low expectations following three years of not finding our goal (due to drought), it was a huge delight when those famous words of "Got one!" rang out from Kate... And there it was, a tiny, little brilliant green and white spot-striped Mediterranean chameleon hiding in the bushes! Not only that, but with further careful searching, we found at least four more!

Drinks nearby, with a Eurasian crag martin or two occasionally whizzing overhead was consequently a jovial affair, though I really hadn't noticed how late it was until plugging our final destination into the Satnav as we started our return!

The monument to Columbus, Río Tinto (of the mines) and smelly petrochemical plants left behind, we cruised back through the extensive pine forest and 'white scrub' of Doñana's Natural Park shelter belt before turning off to the main visitors centre... OK, so we were due to arrive with little time to see it, but found it already closed, 15 minutes before official closing time!!

However, all was not lost, and I compensated with a slow drive through lovely lynx habitat near El Rocío as the sun sank over the horizon, and while no cats were to be seen, it was a great way to finish off the day.

Thursday 23 October 2025

Day 5:

Vado del Quema, Isla Mayor rice fields, Dehesa de Abajo, Seville airport, Andújar + Los Pinos

After breakfast, we met at the front desk as usual, though departed shortly after 8 a.m., given that we had to load the van for our transfer.

The drive across to the Vado del Quema was quiet, though two pairs of common ravens on different roadside pylons where they'd presumably roosted were good to see. No-one else was around when we arrived, though plenty of traffic was moving through and given a near-absence of animals, even of the calling small

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birds around, after taking a good look at the clumps of mandrake, complete with lovely pale lilac flowers, which had forced their way out of the hard-baked ground and having a little leg stretch, as a few other observers appeared and wandered around, so we moved on.

A long, broad track winding its way through the extensive pine forest and bushy heath was also very quiet apart from the usual randomly scattered flocks of Iberian magpies and a small group of woodlarks we put up at one spot, but enabled us to cut across and reach a small road which wound its way down to the edge of the rice fields.

Driving out through the paddies towards a marker I'd been given by a friend, we passed flocks of western cattle egrets, liberally scattered grey herons, a fine group of white storks, a couple of black storks close to the road and plentiful little and a few great egrets, all cashing on the food bonanza afforded by the autumn harvest.

A bit of doubt about exactly which track to take was solved when we could clearly see a fine pink line in the distance and we turned off down a broad dusty track to get closer. This was a perfect choice, taking us to the end of a large, already empty and tilled rice field covered in a shallow lamina of water, with around two thousand noisy grunting and honking greater flamingos lining almost the entire length! Not only that, but there were roughly as many more in a few other paddies just beyond, all with the sun behind us, making it a marvellous sight!

We got out to enjoy the spectacle, seeing a few adults also in flight to add an extra dimension to the moment, while a large flock of hirundines descending over the water in front turned out to be mostly sand martins, plus a smaller number of barn swallows, which wheeled around throughout our stay. A calling Eurasian skylark flew over, our first common sandpiper wing-flicked low across the water just in front and even a small group of chunky calandra larks powered over, presumably looking for drier fields somewhere to land.

After just simply enjoying the spectacle for quite some time, the rising sun beat us back into the vehicle, though as we continued ahead, so passed more and more groups of flamingos, the last staying put much closer as we remained in the vehicle, and with numerous Eurasian spoonbills, little and great egrets, grey herons and waving lines of passing glossy ibis flocks to boot, it was terrific finale to the Doñana experience. Barring another tasty picnic lunch on a breezy nearby hilltop that is!

Indeed, given the 27+°C temperature by 2 p.m., it wasn't a bad thing to have had a slightly earlier lunch and we headed off to Seville airport, despite the lunchtime rush hour traffic both before the city and on its ring road. Why, well, a persistent warning sign kept appearing on the minibus dashboard, though only once the group had been ushered off to take a 30-minute comfort break and coffee stop, was I told that that wasn't actually a serious issue, but just a prior warning of an oil revision necessary in 1500 km or so's time!

So I had a little nap until all returned and we headed on up the motorway for a couple of hours to Andújar, where another break was required to replenish the picnic lunch goodies!

Given that time had really run on and we were quite tired, we checked in and enjoyed a bit of a break before sampling the first of Los Pinos' impressive dinners.

Friday 24 October 2025

Day 6:

La Lancha, lunch Los Pinos, Gorgoljíl, OR, Gato Clavo

Another very fine, calm and relatively cool start to the day, though the forecast was for it to get rather warmer in the afternoon, which it felt like it did under the blazing sun, even though it only reached 25.5°C on the minibus thermometer and dropped to a very pleasant 23°C or so for our evening watch. Some high milky haze and light patchy cloud combined with a light moderate breeze p.m. made for some lovely conditions.

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An alternative choice had already been organised for Andrea and Kate and so I took them off early to a nearby private estate to spend a morning session in a photographic hide, while the rest of us enjoyed an 8 a.m. breakfast and headed out a little before 9.

We wound our way slowly out to the La Lancha track. The vegetation and surroundings were extremely dry, but some growth of green grass and a little area of stones washed out onto the track at one spot showed that intense rain had fallen, albeit briefly and very locally, recently. A few woodlarks were spotted on the way out, plus three gorgeous little owls adorning rocks, a few corn buntings along the track and numerous red and several fallow deer under the adjacent *dehesa* as well.

Our main watch was concentrated along a couple of bands in the track providing us with a huge vista over quite steep and rocky open *dehesa* and pasture, with plentiful calling European robins, common chaffinches, Sardinian warblers and a few other small birds in the bushes, Iberian green woodpeckers 'yaffling' in their local parlance in the western holm oaks and a smart Iberian grey shrike of most note. But there was actually surprisingly little showing obviously, apart from numerous common wood pigeons and Eurasian magpies, perhaps given the intense sunshine.

A male mouflon gave brief views but then disappeared under a couple of densely crowned western holm oaks, never to reappear. Elaine even managed to get an all too brief sighting of an Iberian lynx not far away below us, but it vanished without a trace, unlike the numerous European rabbits in the area (which were a very positive sign).

We made a couple of short walks and even finally a short drive to a new viewpoint, coinciding with the first thermals just before 12 a.m. and, in consequence, with a good movement of the large local raptors, this including two all-too-brief Spanish imperial eagles, lots of wheeling griffon vultures and two mighty cinereous vultures for good measure. But it was getting hot, and at 1 p.m., shortly after enjoying a couple of very distant blue rock thrushes on the distant crags, we headed back for a very comfortable picnic lunch behind the apartments and a siesta.

Andrea and Helen stayed behind before being taken to their photographic hide for the afternoon session, while we headed gently off into the depths of the mountains again, this time easing down the steep slope to the east and towards the immense areas of olive orchards we could see stretching off as far as the eye could see...

More red and fallow deer, plus a fine patch of Iberian lynx scat were noted in addition to a couple of little owls and even a grey wagtail on a water trough, but with the sun finally dipping, we headed to a favourite viewpoint in the shade and watched and listened as the evening wore on.

A lovely pair of Spanish imperial eagles circled, albeit separately, before coming down to crown their respective oak tree vantage points on the horizon. Distant "chow" calls led us to find six calling red-billed choughs passing high over, while an inquisitive young male red deer which came to look for food, started feeding while rearing up on its back legs to reach the lower leaves and shoots on the young trees, something only a part of the red deer population can apparently do... As the sun dipped over the mountain behind us, a smart female mouflon nervously appeared from cover before climbing nimbly up some huge boulders to give us good scope views.

Finally, and just as I began to think that time was running out, some persistent Eurasian magpie calls required investigating and suddenly I spotted a fine female Iberian lynx spearheading a movement with two well-grown young in tow, walking across a distant hillside! The views in the scope were good, though they were very hard to see in the binoculars -their coat blends remarkably well with the background of course- and after what appeared to be a successful catch, the cubs remained out of sight as the female came up to a fence, finally scaled it and then sat beside a couple of entrances of an artificial rabbit warren waiting for food to deliver itself!

The light was going fast, so we headed as rapidly back to Los Pinos as safely possible before I went straight

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back out to pick up our photographers, returning just in time for dinner.

With the hide watchers all having seen at least three different lynx on their combined visits, it was a lynx day all round!

Saturday 25 October 2025

Day 7:

El Encinarejo, La Lancha + Jándula Dam, El Encinarejo

Our last full day started at just 11°C or so, with an autumn freshness in the air and lovely light. That said, it rose to at least 27°C by the afternoon and stayed very warm until after sunset, despite a notable breeze picking up last thing!

Ripples on the river as we cruised slowly along led to us finding some hunting Eurasian otters, with two young and their mother seen for a few moments out on the open and surprisingly fast-moving water once we'd got out of the vehicle, though they rapidly swam through a small hole in overhanging vegetation, presumably to their holt, and did not reappear.

This appeared to be no problem, however, since as we were getting out of the vehicle at our next stop, I could hear another otter calling and I thought that we'd all quickly get good views... Until a local ranger pulled up beside us just as we were about to walk out onto a bridge to see it and immediately asked if we wanted to try and see a lynx that was hunting along a small stream back near the start of the track!! So, naturally, we all jumped back in as quickly as we could and headed back to the road, where, despite cruising very slowly along (thankfully with almost no other traffic around!) and carefully checking where the roadside bushes allowed clear views, we drew a blank and decided to return to the bridge, where no otters were now showing...

But, not to be outdone, we hung around and enjoyed a superb half hour or more as the light strengthened and many small birds, including a couple of smart black redstarts, fly-over rock sparrows and a good flock of hawfinches in a tall dead *Eucalyptus*, kept us entertained as we scanned the slopes hoping for furred animals to appear!

Breakfast was taken back at the accommodation at 10 a.m., where a few smiles quickly appeared amongst the group following coffee intake, despite slight delays given how incredibly busy the restaurant was!

The temperature had climbed fast and it was already 20°C by the time we headed out towards La Lancha and notably fewer animals were on show than the previous morning, though my favourite pair of little owls were present on their rock outcrops, an Iberian green woodpecker showed off its yellow rump as it powered upwards into a tree canopy as we passed and a few meadow pipits were picking through the haze of green grass beginning to spread further across the pastures following the heavy downpour that had fallen a day or two before our arrival to Andújar.

Though I had not intended to stop along the La Lancha track, comments from a couple of lynx watchers that a mother and two cubs had been seen earlier that morning meant that we put in a little while, just in case, though it was to no avail. However, a cinereous vulture cruising over was a touch earlier than yesterday's birds, though being around 12 a.m. as we arrived, it was no surprise to see a couple of fine kettles of griffon vultures were already wheeling up on thermals and one or two cinereous of different ages mixed amongst them.

We scoured the sharply pleated oak-spattered hillsides for lynx, noting a few red deer, but little else and finally decided to move on and down to the impressive Jándula Dam, with a good pause for a stunning horseshoe whipsnake which after slithering off the edge of the track, reared up amongst the grass just off the side to watch our movements until it finally decided that we were a threat and slithered off to hide for good.

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Large numbers of Eurasian crag martins were wheeling around the dam, some coming to rest on a pylon and others perching on the face of the dam itself, while a few western house martins and even a single European red-rumped swallow were noted mixing as well. Best of all, though nearby, was a young male Spanish ibex trying to seduce a female on some large boulders amongst the forested valley side, though despite his posturing and tongue wagging, she was having nothing of it and he finally moved off to try his luck with two other and younger females nearby. A fine crested tit showed at close range for Lorna and myself, while a surprise immature Bonelli's eagle wheeling over the cliffs opposite was a major surprise, this only being the second I've seen here. Even more of a surprise, however, was a male Eurasian bullfinch which passed high over the valley in flight, though sadly only I could get onto it, this being a now rare winter visitor to the region and rather a surprise given the hot conditions!

After a quick check of some nearby southern Daubenton's and greater mouse-eared bats and a lovely passing common swallowtail, we finally made it back to a couple of picnic tables for a slightly late, but excellent picnic lunch, where not only had a few tiny autumn squills also sprung up in flower (again thanks to the recent rain), but had attracted a few butterflies in to feed on them, including Lang's short-tailed blues, a Spanish brown argus and a few clouded yellows (which were migrating through in small numbers). A large two-tailed pasha flitted around an adjacent oak before landing there, though it rapidly cruised off when we tried to get a little closer for good views.

We headed back for a little over an hour's break, then most of us re-adjourned and headed back down to the river. Lots of cars and motorbikes were heading in the opposite direction (Good!), though the large numbers of weekenders still present in the riverside picnic areas were not a great omen! However, arriving back at the bridge it was clear that there was potential for the otters to reappear and as the sun dropped behind slightly thickening cloud, we joined a gathering group of observers to enjoy the antics of three or four Eurasian otters as they came out and fed in the river below us, in addition to the numerous small birds around, including a couple of common kingfishers keeping in close attendance to the otters and a couple of smart grey wagtails on the rocks.

The sun dipped over the horizon and as the light began to fade notably, we headed back off towards our hotel, pausing en route ostensibly to listen for owls, but a light breeze had picked up and made hearing anything just about impossible, so we returned with time for a short break before our final, and delicious, paella dinner!

Sunday 26 October 2025

Day 8:

La Lancha, Los Pinos (lunch), Seville Airport

A distinct change in weather saw heavy rain from 0745h until c. five minutes after 8... And for those who don't know that they are often shot with heavy showers, it was a bit wet! Breakfast was good though and although the rain came and went again, as we headed off towards our favourite area, it was as if a small miracle had happened, with the boulders now topped by vivid green moss and beautiful lichens soaking up the 'liquid gold'! A few thread-leaved snowflakes and even a patch of autumn crocus showed how the earlier rainfall was still having an effect, now boosted by this new rainfall.

We tried our luck from a couple of viewpoints a little further along than last time, enjoying the magnificent views as the early morning mist and low cloud first hung over the hills, but gradually pulled away, revealing a much fresher and much less dusty landscape! The rain had also spurred a few stag red deer to start roaring again and the numerous wintering European robins were hard at work staking their territorial claims with their songs and calls. An angry song thrush, persistently alarm-calling caught my attention and as luck would have it, it was mobbing a surprisingly active little owl, perhaps hunting emerging queen ants, though as we watched with the scope it was the sudden appearance of three Eurasian hoopoes, gracefully fluttering, butterfly-like around it, as they too mobbed, which made a stunning sight!

The morning wore on and the two hours we had flew quickly past with no sign of any lynx. However, at the

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very end, just when we'd finished putting Helen onto a male mouflon sunbathing in the open and were about to turn around and head back, I noticed a lady further down the track running at full speed back towards a car... Advancing, she quickly announced that a female and two cubs had just crossed the track beside them at the next bend! Well, as we swiftly headed to and then got out at the next bend, she indicated that no, it was further on, so in we jumped again and got to the next set of bends... Watching from here and along to the next open area over the next 15 minutes was simultaneously both exciting and frustrating, since the abundant vegetation and steep pleated hillsides meant that although we could scan over large areas, much lay permanently out of sight and, as somewhat expected, not an animal could be seen!

It was certainly fun to try, and also comforting to know that we'd been oh so close to another sighting, but these mountains continue to hold their secrets and provide a quiet, safe haven for these exquisite animals.

We returned to our accommodation for a quick wash and change of clothes (for some) before enjoying a leisurely tapas-style lunch in the already busy restaurant and then, after putting finishing touches to packing, made our way back to the motorway and on to Seville. The drive was uneventful apart from a few heavy squally rain showers, plenty of red kites and even a surprise osprey passing over shortly before reaching the airport, where the UK contingent were dropped off with plenty of time for check-in and Andrea and I dropped off the vehicle and made our way to the train station for our respective trains to Madrid.

I would like to thank you all for making this such an enjoyable and rewarding tour! Your broad interests, combined with varied early autumn conditions meant that we enjoyed a fantastic variety of wildlife in the Doñana area, plus an excellent selection of mammals and a few different birds and reptiles in Andújar. The latter area is very quiet at this time of year, with few other visitors, giving us the added bonus that just about everything we see we find for ourselves, making it a very rewarding experience. We have also been lucky with the weather, with heavy flash flooding from Huelva to Seville and down to Almonte less than a week after we were there. Good for Doñana in general, but not for the inhabitants!

Images by John L. Muddeman

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Checklist for Iberian Lynx Quest



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
	BIRDS									
1	Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>		✓						
2	Common shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>				✓				
3	Northern shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>				✓				
4	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>				✓				
5	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓	
6	Eurasian teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>				✓				
7	Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			✓			✓	H	✓
8	Rock dove / Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
9	Common wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
11	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓	
12	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
13	Western swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>				✓				
14	Common crane	<i>Grus grus</i>		✓						
15	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓	✓	✓			
16	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>				✓				
17	Greater flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>				✓	✓			
18	Eurasian oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>				✓				
19	Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		✓	✓	✓				
20	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	✓		✓			
21	Grey plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>				✓				
22	Common ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>				✓				
23	Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>					✓			
24	Kentish plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>				✓				
25	Eurasian whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>				✓				
26	Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquatus</i>				✓				

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27	Bar-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>				✓			
28	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>				✓			
29	Ruddy turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>				✓			
30	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>				✓			
31	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>		✓					
32	Curlew sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>				✓			
33	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>				✓			
34	Eurasian snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓	✓	✓			
35	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleuca</i>					✓		
36	Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		✓	✓		✓		
37	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓		✓			
38	Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>		✓	✓				
39	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓		✓			
40	Slender-billed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>				✓			
41	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		
42	Mediterranean gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>				✓			
43	Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>				✓			
44	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		✓		✓	✓		✓
45	Caspian tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>				✓			
46	Sandwich tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>				✓			
47	Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>		✓			✓		
48	White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
49	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
50	Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		✓		✓	✓		
51	Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		
52	Western cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
53	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
54	Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		✓					
55	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		
56	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		
57	Black-winged kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>		✓					
58	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>		✓			✓		✓
59	Egyptian vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>		✓					
60	Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓

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61	Cinereous vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>						✓	✓	
62	Booted eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>		✓						
63	Bonelli's eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>		✓					✓	
64	Spanish imperial eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>			✓			✓		
65	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓					✓
66	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
67	Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				✓				
68	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
69	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
70	Western barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		✓						
71	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
72	Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>		✓				H	H	
73	Eurasian hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>		✓	✓					✓
74	Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		✓	✓	H			✓	
75	Lesser spotted woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>		✓		✓				
76	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		H						
77	Iberian green woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>		H				✓	✓	H
78	Eurasian kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
79	Eurasian hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		✓	✓					
80	Iberian grey shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>		✓				✓		
81	Iberian magpie	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
82	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>						✓	✓	✓
84	Red-billed chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>						✓		
85	Western jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓		✓					
86	Northern raven	<i>Corax corax</i>		✓	✓		✓			
87	Crested tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>							✓	H
88	Eurasian blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		H	
89	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>			H	✓	✓	✓	✓	
90	Calandra lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>					✓			
91	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
92	Eurasian skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>					✓			
93	Mediterranean short-toed lark	<i>Alaudala rufescens</i>			✓					
94	Thekla's lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>					✓			H

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95	Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
96	Sand martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>					✓			
97	Eurasian crag martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>				✓			✓	
98	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓			✓			
99	European red-rumped swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>							✓	
100	Common house martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>							✓	
101	Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		H	✓	H	H		H	
102	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		H	✓	✓	H	H	✓	
103	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	H	✓	✓
104	Zitting cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		✓	✓		✓			
105	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓	✓	✓		H	✓	
106	Sardinian warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		H
107	Common firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>			✓					
108	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>						H	H	
109	Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>						H	H	
110	Short-toed treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>			H					
111	Eurasian starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>						✓		
112	Spotless starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
113	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			✓	✓				✓
114	Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓
115	Eurasian blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
116	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		H	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
117	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>		✓	H	✓				
118	Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓	✓			✓		
119	Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>						✓		
120	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
121	Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>		✓	✓					
122	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
123	Spanish sparrow	<i>Passer hispanicus</i>		✓						
124	Eurasian tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>				✓				
125	Rock sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>							✓	
126	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
127	Western yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		H	✓		H			
128	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

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129	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
130	Eurasian chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
131	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>							✓	
132	European greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓		
133	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
134	European serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>			✓		✓			
135	Corn bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
136	Rock bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>							✓	✓
137	Cirl bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>							H	
	MAMMALS									
1	European rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Eurasian badger	<i>Meles meles</i>		✓						
3	Iberian lynx	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>			✓			✓		
4	Pipistrelle sp.	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>		✓	✓	✓			✓	
5	Southern Daubenton's bat	<i>Myotis (daubentoni) nathalinae</i>							✓	
6	Greater mouse-eared bat	<i>Myotis myotis</i>							✓	
7	Mouflon	<i>Ovis gmelini</i>						✓		✓
8	Spanish ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>							✓	
9	Red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10	Fallow deer	<i>Dama dama</i>			✓			✓	✓	
	REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS									
1	Spanish terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>				✓				
2	Moorish gecko	<i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>		✓				✓	✓	
3	Vaucher's wall lizard	<i>Podarcis vaucheri</i>			✓					
4	Geniez's wall lizard	<i>Podarcis virescens</i>							✓	
5	Mediterranean chameleon	<i>Chamaeleo chamaeleon</i>				✓				
6	Horseshoe whip snake	<i>Hemorrhois hippocrepis</i>							✓	
7	Iberian water frog	<i>Pelophylax perezi</i>			✓					
	BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS									
1	Common swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>							✓	
2	Bath white	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>						✓		

3	Clouded yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>						✓	✓	
4	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>						✓	✓	
5	Spanish brown argus	<i>Aricia crameri</i>							✓	
6	Lang's short-tailed blue	<i>Leptotes pirithous</i>						✓	✓	
7	Two-tailed pasha	<i>Charaxes jasius</i>							✓	
8	Cardinal fritillary	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>				✓				
9	Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtinus</i>						✓		
10	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>						✓		
11	Painted lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>						✓		
12	Crimson speckled	<i>Utetheisa pulchella</i>			✓		✓			
	DRAGONFLIES									
1	Iberian bluetail	<i>Ischnura graellsii</i>		✓						
2	Lesser emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>		✓			✓			
3	Migrant hawk	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>			✓	✓		✓		
4	Red-veined darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>		✓	✓		✓			
5	Common scarlet darter	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>		✓				✓		

	ADDITIONAL TAXA	
1	Blue-winged grasshopper	<i>Aedipoda cf caeruleascens</i>
2	Predatory ground beetle	<i>Scarites sp.</i>
3	Common carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>
	NOTEABLE PLANTS	
1	Umbrella pine	<i>Pinus pinea</i>
2	Autumn squill	<i>Scilla autumnalis</i>
3	Sea Squill	<i>Drimia maritima</i>
4	Autumn crocus	<i>Colchicum autumnale</i>
5	Gum tree species	<i>Eucalyptus spp</i>
6	Western holm oak	<i>Quercus (ilex) rotundifolia</i>
7	Cork oak	<i>Quercus suber</i>
8	Western strawberry tree	<i>Arbutus unedo</i>

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9	Narrow-leaved ash	<i>Fraxinus angustifolia</i>
10	Wild olive	<i>Olea europaea</i>
11	Yellow-flowered rock rose	<i>Halimium atriplicifolium</i>
12	Rosemary	<i>Salvia rosmarinus</i>
13	Triangular / Three-leaved snowflake	<i>Acis trichophylla</i>
14	Squirting cucumber	<i>Ecballium elaterium</i>
15	European heliotrope	<i>Heliotropium europaeum</i>
16	Sticky fleabane	<i>Dittrichia viscosa</i>
17	Mandrake	<i>Mandragora officinarum</i>
18	Rush skeletonweed	<i>Chondrilla juncea</i>