

Tour Report Iberian Lynx Quest 06 - 13 October 2024

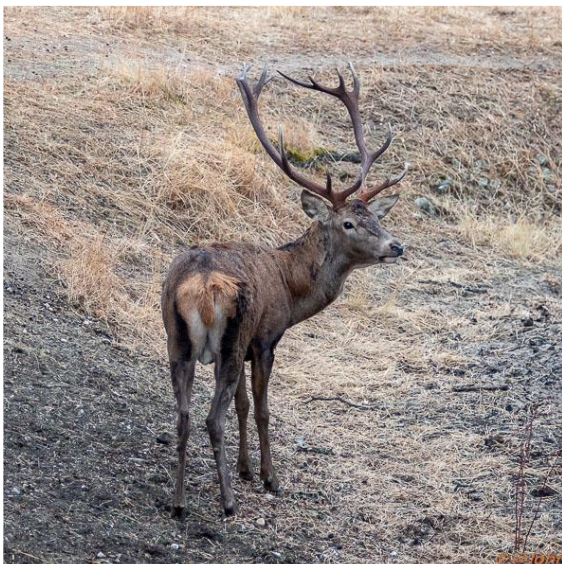
Broad scarlet



Iberian lynx



Red deer stag



Red-rumped swallow



Compiled by John Muddeman

Following huge conservation efforts over the past 20 years or so, the number of Iberian Lynx has thankfully grown sufficiently to move the species from the Critically Endangered list and via the Endangered category, to 'merely' Vulnerable. This is somewhat surprising, given that there are still only around 2500 of these exquisite animals in the world and, as their range has increased in line with this population surge, so the number of them, dispersing immature individuals dying from man-made causes (and particularly road kills), has also increased dramatically.

The species has consolidated its hold in the greater Doñana area, though is currently struggling to maintain itself in much of the area around Andújar, its traditional stronghold, so it still requires patience, knowledge and often more than just a slice of luck in order to find it and observe it well in the depths of its preferred habitats.

So did we manage it?

Day 1:

Sunday 6 October 2024

London to Seville to El Rocío (Doñana)

Overcast, very warm and humid; almost still all evening in Spain.

The afternoon flight from London arrived almost on time and the group were through in good time to meet John, who'd already arrived and booked the vehicle out in advance. After a short delay given a trapped seatbelt, which took a collaborative effort to resolve, we headed off around the N side of Seville as dusk approached and arrived to the hotel around 80 minutes later after dark. A rapid check-in saw us dropping-off our bags in the rooms before heading down for dinner, though Bob was a little delayed as his combination-lock suitcase refused to open... a screwdriver finally did the trick and our first dinner was started and enjoyed as we settled in to the tour.

Day 2:

Monday 7 October 2024

El Rocío, Dehesa de Abajo, Isla Mayor, Villamanrique area

Still, mild and overcast start, with strong S-SW wind from midday into evening, then a few heavy rain showers, before calming and fining-up near dusk.

With sunrise at around 08:30, we had a quick pre-breakfast drink at the restaurant and then pootled down the road before taking a pleasant walk out along a sandy track to make our first attempt to see a



lynx. Lots of birds were about, including several European pied flycatchers and a brief Eurasian hoopoe of particular note, though a pack of five dogs walked out from the area we wanted to watch over as we arrived and another quite large animal, possibly a lynx, was noted running across a gap between two bushes by two of us, but was so brief we couldn't tell what it was! A promising start!

Several vehicles had come past, but it was now very quiet and we were on our own, so as we waited we alternated between attentive scans of the area in front, despite plenty of vegetation blocking the view, and enjoying the local birdlife. Indeed, a calling and then drumming lesser spotted woodpecker was a great bird in addition to yet more European pied flycatchers, along with commoner birds of the area including great and long-tailed tits and lots of noisily calling Cetti's warblers. We actually only spent an hour in the area and with the sun breaking through the haze and warming us notably, we decided to head back for a late breakfast, noting a few Eurasian tree sparrows and two oh-so-brief fly-over common waxbills on the way.

After a few sundries were acquired at the local pharmacy on the way out, we drove through the extensive

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pine woods buffering the north edge of the national park, including spotting a couple of woodlarks on the sandy verge (plus a flightier group of three more further ahead), before finally turning south and heading into the Doñana northern marshes.

A healthy group of northern lapwings adorned part of one desperately dry field, with western cattle egrets correctly loafing around a large herd of cattle and a very dapper male western marsh harrier behind. We soon moved on though in the absence of anything else of particular note as a stiff breeze picked up.

With 70% of the region's rice fields having been put into crop this year (after much less over the previous few due to the ongoing drought), it was great to find a couple of these beside the road had already been harvested, though without the stubble mashed back in, and this was a magnet for many birds, including a large flock of smart white storks, a few grey herons, one great, plenty of little and numerous western cattle egrets, a lone glossy ibis, plus a single juvenile black stork half-buried in a ditch! Many birds were moving past or overhead too, including a juvenile Bonelli's eagle which raced over all too fast and too high, a secretive green sandpiper picked-up by James and a small group of migrant barn swallows, among others. Lunch was taken at picnic tables on top of a windy hill, but the views were good and the seven black storks we'd seen flying over the cork oak dehesa before arriving were worth every gust experienced!



Time was moving on, so we did the same, but on finding a couple of wet areas (to my surprise), we stopped to check them over, adding Eurasian coots and little grebes at one, then lots of black-winged stilts and, remarkably, at least three Eurasian hobbies catching dragonflies right in front, at another! Indeed, lots of dragonflies were present, including lesser emperors, red-veined darters and a few stunning broad scarlets. A squacco heron briefly in flight just as we were leaving left the group wanting views, but it went down and round behind some tamarisks and was clearly not going to return for some time!

Braving the increasingly strong wind and with darkening skies looming, we headed out across an area with a cluster of recent records for uncommon birds and hit pot luck with a large uncultivated rice field being the only one for a huge area around with partially flooded mud. This was wader heaven, with hundreds of black-tailed godwits, ruff, pied avocets and common ringed plovers making a formidable first sight, though once out, and despite the wind and clouds of dust enveloping us as we persevered, we started to tease out more and more of the species with a just a few birds present. Black-winged stilts, little ringed plover, several Kentish plover, dunlin, at least three smart Temminck's stints, a wood sandpiper, two curlew sandpiper, two common greenshank and finally, even four spotted redshank and a single Eurasian snipe were all added with gusto to the burgeoning list! A few black-headed gull flocks floated past, Eurasian spoonbills tried to hide among the mixed egrets at the back, and even a few blue-headed western yellow wagtails added a colourful splash to the proceedings, though were mainly after a heavy rainstorm sent abundant horizontal rain lashing down and many of the waders to take shelter either on an adjacent dry ploughed field or in the shelter of the paddy's own bund.

A celebratory drink was enjoyed at a small roadside bar before we returned, more in hope than expectation to the 'hobby pool' visited earlier, though it was quieter than the first visit until we turned to leave! A squacco heron then flew up, but pitched down into thick vegetation before most of us could turn around to see it! Not to be outdone though, we persisted and finally, up it flew again before standing out in the open for a while and then flew a short distance again before finally being lost to view. A great addition!

Time was now running away from me, but we pushed on and headed along a beautiful narrow winding

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road and then tracks towards a local stream. It was 20 minutes later than I'd wanted when we finally arrived and after consulting a local observer nearby, we discovered that it was one of those dreaded "you should have been here 10 minutes ago" moments, as they'd seen a young Iberian lynx come out of thick scrub and cross a track in front of them!

Despite a little more rain and not be outdone though, we joined a small group of watchers to try our luck, though with time running on, we finally headed back towards the vehicle to watch from there instead, apparently despite the noisy presence of a local Spaniard and his young son having evening tea outside. Ironically, they turned out to be two assiduous visitors to the site (i.e., daily!) in order to try and see the local lynx, with him telling me that they had been enjoyed there almost daily for several months!!! Indeed, it was during a few loud gripes from the child that an Iberian lynx cub popped

up onto a bridge in front and came padding quickly towards us, only to turn tail and head rapidly back when most of us realised that it was there! It dropped out of sight only for an adult to suddenly appear in the same spot which jumped up and onto some railings, where it sat quietly amongst the foliage, only most of its boldly spotted rump and twitching tail being visible to us! We waited patiently to see what it would do, only, as bad luck would have it, for a large horse-



drawn carriage carrying around 15 people to appear behind us and head up towards and onto the bridge... We walked quickly along just behind it, having seen how the lynx had leapt off at its approach, but it was a few minutes before the animal was relocated, this time walking away from us all, adjacent to thick cover and in deep shade, before it was lost in the forest. WOW!

With the light really ebbing, we decided to call it quits and headed back to the hotel for another quite late but tasty dinner, making plans to revisit the following day to see if we could do even better!

Day 3:

Tuesday 8 October 2024

Raya Real, Coto del Rey, Doñana northern marshes + Villamanrique area

A cool, dead still and misty start, the mist only clearing late morning. Then quite sunny and warm with stiff breeze appearing mid-afternoon onwards.

Breakfast was available from 07:15 onwards as we were away with Doñana Nature at 08:00. There was already enough light to start checking the scrubby understory of the extensive pine forest north of the national park as we progressed, Iberian lynx in mind as we scanned the terrain. Numerous red deer caught our eyes, plus a huge covey of red-legged partridge including numerous still-growing birds of the year. A great sign and almost certainly a clear sign that the extensive clearance of dead pines from the area in 2023 is having a positive impact. Few birds or other species were noted as we continued given the persistence mist, but it was a beautiful morning to be out enjoying the hazy light filtering through the treetops.

We headed up and down different tracks, searching as we went, though it was a stop to look at some tracks, including some excellently marked badger, (black?) rat and running red-legged partridge prints that livened us up a little (an addition to a welcome leg stretch).

We finally decided to head south and out into the vast flat, open (and now dry) northern marshes, finally coming out from the edge of the mist as sea breezes appeared to have started to blow it inland. The vistas were enormous, though very little was present again! However, persistence paid off and apart from the loudly calling crested larks, a couple of "twisling" calandra larks sped high over and a "buzz-rattling" flock of Mediterranean short-toed larks also flitted past. A few northern wheatears adorned a long fence, while a couple of Sardinian warblers in the thistles on the edge of the track showed well for

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a few moments too.

A comfort and cold drinks stop was made at the large visitors centre, where the first water had been pumped into the summer-dry pools, but some workmen clearing recently cut vegetation were keeping the birds at bay. Fly-over green sandpipers, Eurasian snipe and small flock of northern lapwings were all noted, along with a loudly calling Cetti's warbler and a juvenile lesser kestrel handily perched on nearby wires in good light.

Far more birds were moving as we returned along the long raised track, with at least 27 northern wheatears, plentiful common stonechats, a large mobile group of common linnets and, crowning some dead stumps, two gorgeous little owls sunning themselves in full view.

The huge estate of the Coto del Rey was relatively quiet in the pine forest, but out on the edge of the scattered Eucalyptus trees, a dead cow was providing a banquet for an ever-larger number of enormous squabbling griffon vultures, while two red kite and a young immature Egyptian vulture circled around in interest. A Eurasian sparrowhawk was dog-fighting with a booted eagle, but being against the bright sky were only silhouettes for most, though perhaps the same "sprawk" was seen again better later.

Time had run on, so after a short drive we were let out on foot to cover the last kilometre or so to our lunch spot, with a couple of Iberian grey shrikes, a high passing short-toed snake eagle and a persistently calling, but unseen, Iberian chiffchaff excellent further additions. A freshly emerged clouded yellow was out first butterfly for the day for the front-runners, though a few pesky mosquitoes were noted by almost everyone!

A delicious picnic lunch was taken in a small hunting outhouse of the "King's Palace" (a palatial name for a fine old hunting lodge in reality) before we returned via a quick look at the outside of the palace itself and headed straight back to the hotel. A siesta was taken by some of the group while others explored a little of El Rocío, with the majority of us reconvening at 17:30 to try for those lynx again... Bright sunny and windy weather was very different to yesterday, but as this time we were the only ones there, chances seemed better.

A few more vehicles and cyclists were noted compared to the day before, but sadly, despite one distant animal noted by Don as it snuck off deep into the scrub, despite our patient wait, no more were seen. Not even when the same father and young son team arrived while we had taken a short drive round and despite him then insisting that 15 minutes after we'd left the day before, one had walked across right in front of them... a flock of sand martins for the two Bobs, plus plenty of common house martins and calling red-rumped swallows for Maggie and John were most notable birds.

We persisted until 20:30, including hearing a close calling little owl and then two sets of calls of a stone curlew, the latter even as it passed overhead unseen, while the thermal imager enabled us to find a smart Iberian hare sat beside a track a little way off, even if it was too dark to make out all its features.

We returned to have dinner with James, who'd rested and also enjoyed a short walk in El Rocío where three red-rumped swallows had showed themselves well and after another tasty dinner, headed off to bed after another successful day.

Day 4:

Wednesday 9 October 2024

Villamanrique area, Odiel Estuary, El Acebuche Visitors Centre

Fine but breezy start, with fine but dense rain occasional on increasing wind as we headed towards Huelva. Occasional and quite persistent driving rain showers Odiel Estuary, then finer and decreasing wind p.m. near El Rocío.

After a normal 08:00 breakfast we headed out with all our gear for the day 45 minutes later, arriving to the site another 45 minutes on. Instead of a passive wait we opted to take a walk along the various tracks, though managed to 'loose' Dave quite quickly and then one or two others we progressed. Little

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was showing and certainly no lynx, so after a good look round, including at a cluster of scats found by Don on his wanderings and even at a huge common carp in the river for a few of us, we boarded the minibus and went to look for Dave! He had hardly moved, but had been well hidden in the vegetation, so after accepting him back on board, started our journey west.

Fine dense rain on increasingly strong winds (associated with Storm Kirk) were sweeping in head-on for much of the journey, but thankfully passed through shortly before arriving to a car park west of the river and salt-marsh, so that we could walk comfortably over for a “coffee and comfort break”! This completed, the rain then started once I was walking back to the bus with the day’s fresh picnic materials (of course!), but again ceased once we had stopped beside some rather pink salinas where a gorgeous flock of similarly coloured greater flamingos paddled in the shallow waters and a terrific flock of also rather pink slender-billed gulls accompanied them! The next salt pan was the same and any doubts existing over whether it had been worth the time spent on the drive over and about the weather itself were firmly dispelled!



A little bit of salt-marsh and old salinas were explored next, with a few Eurasian curlews, a Eurasian whimbrel, a small flock of black-headed gulls, common ringed plover and a small gathering of three great egrets, two little egrets a grey heron and a white stork also illustrated how rich the area is. Indeed, the mud was teeming with North African fiddler crabs, close here to the northern limit of their range, which make a fine food source, especially for the curlew and whimbrel!

A nearby visitors centre was going to close at 2 p.m. (how daft is that!), so we shot back to use the loos and also try to set up a quick picnic on some tables. The onset of rain just as I was starting put paid to that and then a failed attempt to organise the food in the car, now with even less time remaining led us to the obvious solution of exiting the car park altogether and heading down the estuary to find some shelter (somehow!) for lunch. Fortunately, I knew a spot in the lee of some trees and it stopped raining shortly after we arrived. Given the warm conditions we all finally got out and indeed enjoyed a tasty picnic lunch in relatively still conditions. Success!

It was now time to drive on and start birding the innumerable creeks, open mudflats and dense salt-marsh adjacent to the road. But a stiffening wind and then rain put paid to most of our chances to get out or then even see out of the right-hand side of the car, despite a short walk to overlook one set of mudflats where our first bar-tailed godwits, but the wind beat us back!

The other side at least permitted views along the edge of the river, where our first sanderling were noted, then a pair of common terns among Sandwich terns, a couple of great cormorants, a typically pale Kentish plover, a dapper Eurasian oystercatcher and a cryptically-coloured grey plover to start the ball rolling. A common kingfisher briefly sped low parallel to us over the water as we progressed, while after a rapidly (rain and wind-)thwarted attempt to head out to the beach by me, as we returned so the rain stopped and we got out at a couple of spots to enjoy the gatherings of terns and gulls. A black tern joined the larger commons, while the first of a few ruddy turnstones also made an appearance, plus scanning with the scopes revealed the presence of the single smart adult Audouin’s gull amongst the lesser black-backed gulls.

With the tide rising rapidly, we started our return, noting how a few birds were now being pushed up higher, though a big surprise was to find a grey-bodied, but white-headed hybrid western reed x little egret sat between a group of the latter and a fine group of Eurasian spoonbills.

This made a fine natural end to the visit here, so we returned via the formerly very industrial seafront

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of Huelva, passing over the Río Tinto and through the extensive (and smelly) refinery area and then continued on through the vast stands of stone pines in the Doñana Natural Park abutting the coast. A small port en route was a magnet for Audouin's gulls, with almost 250 present, making a stunning sight!

Our final stop was at the El Acebuche Visitors Centre of Doñana National Park, with a few indulging in a



little retail therapy, plus drinks afterwards enlivened by the Iberian water frogs in the pool outside and a superb red-rumped swallow nest under part of one building. Indeed, two adults and a noisy young swallow were present almost continuously passing overhead, virtually the only bird we saw given the still windy conditions.

The drive back was uneventful, even if a couple of Iberian grey shrikes were noted on the roadside wires and we arrived back with almost an hour to relax before reconvening shortly before dinner time.

Day 5:

Thursday 10 October 2024

Transfer from Doñana to Andújar. La Lancha p.m.

A lovely fine day with mostly quite high thin cloud. Almost no breeze. Mild.

After a 08:00 breakfast we were away just after 09:00 and headed towards the airport. After refuelling and toilet stop, we dropped into the airport on the off-chance that they would be able to swap the 8-seater for a 9-seater, and, much to my delight (and surprise), they could! So we moved the bags and ourselves over and after a few moments signing the relevant papers, we were away again in a little more comfort.

We broke the journey again just over an hour later with a relaxed drinks and comfort break, then went the extra hour on the motorway to reach Andújar where I headed into a supermarket to get picnic components. 20 minutes up the road we reached the accommodation, checked-in very quickly and then came out to have a very relaxing picnic lunch outside whilst sat on chairs and under a largely blue sky.

Indeed, as we sat in comfort and ate, we also lifted our binoculars frequently, seeing red-rumped swallows, a couple of Alpine swifts, two adult Spanish imperial eagles and a near-constant procession of passing griffon vultures. Not bad!

We took our first drive out towards the principal lynx-watching area, and despite it having rained well the previous day, the very dry conditions until now were very evident in the parched-looking landscape and plants, despite the odd tiny puddle around. Watching conditions were excellent, with virtually no wind and a fair amount of cloud, but some long spells with good light.

Plenty of red deer were present, having also noted some as well as few commoner birds, including mistle thrush, on the drive out. Iberian green woodpecker could be heard calling, but only one showed itself briefly, but a fine adult Spanish imperial eagle circling first below us before gliding across and perching on a huge oval granite 'egg' was far more obliging and afforded us lovely views. Our first Iberian grey shrike for the area appeared on a treetop, though Maggie came up trumps with a fine juvenile Eurasian goshawk which circled up before gliding across to one side of us as we watched in delight.

Two distant small groups of fast-moving wild boar were spotted at different moments, but most of the party couldn't get onto them, but groups of red-legged partridge were scattered liberally across the sweeping slopes and rock outcrops, holding a density rare to find almost anywhere else in Spain at present!

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Day 6:**Friday 11 October 2024**

La Lancha, Embalse del Jándula, La Lancha

Rather still and cool throughout the day; no rain until very light shower 1930h.

In addition to significantly higher numbers of red deer, the drive out saw us spotting our first mouflon, with a male vigorously chasing a female around a small woodland clearing above us, while a little further ahead, a colourful female Iberian green woodpecker first perched briefly in a tree before dropping down to feed out on the open ground, possibly on some of the vast numbers of winged ants which had emerged after the rains, but were sluggishly moving around in the cool conditions. The first of a couple of little owls on the drive also shot out from its hiding place in some rocks under a western holm oak to go and perch out in full view on a large boulder.

Out on the main watching area, five red-billed choughs passed high over calling, while our first Dartford warbler scolded from the scrub and was only really noted in flight as it dashed from wild rosemary bush to another. Our first cinereous vulture also gave terrific views as it circled up in great light before cruising off.

It was very quiet otherwise, so we made the short journey down to the Jándula dam, where to our delight, a small group of female, juvenile and young male Spanish ibex dropped off the wall in front and moved swiftly down onto the dam proper before simply traversing the face of the dam, something I'd



not seen here for a good number of years! A powerful and smartly patterned male followed suit, though more cautiously on the near-vertical slopes, finally rejoining the group on the far side. Further variety was added by the flock of chunky Eurasian crag martins swirling around us, a few showing off the white spots in their tails as they banked at close range. A male blue rock thrush sat quietly amongst a few dry stems as it waited for us to move on, while one or two more were calling loudly on the opposite side. A pair of red-billed choughs sat on the edge of a small quarry above us, while a few bats were roosting in a tunnel

ahead, including the newly described *nathalinae* Daubenton's and a couple of fantastic pale greater mouse-eared bats. Two grey wagtails were feeding on small rocks in the river below.

Lunch was enjoyed at a small picnic site with extensive views of the nearby estates and reservoir, the extraordinary silence of the area (with hardly a car or plane to be heard) was a joy to experience. With a bad headache coming on and the sun coming out, I decided to take us back to the hotel for a break, though this was slowed when we stopped and got out for repeated viewings of a pair of golden eagles, circling up over a small chapel perched atop a craggy outcrop.

There was just enough time for a siesta (and/or walk round the local woodland adjacent to the accommodation) and/or (in my case) refuel the van in Andújar. We then headed out to the La Lancha again with numerous red and also now fallow deer en route, while a small group of mouflon feeding from one of the characteristic local granite feeding bowls were a bonus. Two small groups of wild boar were successfully seen by all feeding under the oaks over on the slopes opposite at one point, plus another Eurasian goshawk was noted only noted by Bob as it flew over the rest of us as we sheltered under one of the covered viewing platforms!

Day 7:**Saturday 12 October 2024**

El Encinarejo, Santuario de Nuestra Señora de la Cabeza, El Encinarejo, Baños de la Encina road

A strange, very dark orange glow to start the day, giving way to very overcast conditions and then light

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turning to moderate rain, with occasional heavy spells. Drier spells first thing, midday and towards the evening.

We started out at 08:15 under a weirdly dark and very orange glow to the dense cloud overhead, so dark indeed that a few soprano pipistrelle bats were still feeding over the apartments as we gathered to leave. Saharan dust?

Down by the river a few drops had begun to fall, not surprisingly given the incredibly dense cloud just to the west of us sliding slowly north east, but the conditions were mild and very pleasant and there was lots of bird activity on the way, forcing us to stop for a couple of flighty Eurasian hoopoes as well as a couple of noisy Eurasian nuthatches in a narrow-leaved ash beside the bus. Best of all however, was a surprise near-melanistic young red squirrel though, which after grabbing an acorn from one of the oaks came down an ash trunk, bounded elegantly across the track in front and disappeared into the stone pine forest on the other side. Lovely!

We parked in the usual car park near a dam, where four other observers were peering down into the river over the railings of a bridge, only to find a vehicle crossing the bridge which stopped to talk to the group gathered ahead of us. I overheard mutterings about an Iberian lynx and “just back there” combined with hand gestures and, somewhat to my shock, since not everyone had even got all their gear from the vehicle, a large Iberian lynx was spotted moving between the bushes and onto a track not far beyond the far end of the bridge! A little panic ensued as I tried to alert everyone to its presence without resorting to shouting, but fortunately, once it had walked a little way off to one side between the bushes and rocks, we all got to see it, especially when it stepped out and stopped in the middle of a burned area of bare ground. The local Iberian magpies were making it noisily apparent that they were warning of its presence, but we then enjoyed terrific views as it walked quite slowly downstream parallel to the river, appearing and disappearing intermittently among the cover, especially when it went into two different piles of rocks, each with small caves present and into both of which it went for a short, but variable amount of time! It finally came out and walked casually but at a steady pace downriver again, this time finally being lost behind a wall of denser vegetation... Wow! We had probably had it for at least half an hour and probably quite a bit longer and it had given us fabulous views!



I went back for the van and moved it almost the kilometre along the track to meet the rest of the group again, actually carrying on further to pick up James who'd continued on for a good walk, returning in time to find another young red squirrel up a narrow-leaved ash tree, and also just in time for us to board before the rain started falling, and heavily... It clearly wasn't going to stop in a hurry, so we decided to head up the Sanctuary to take a look at the main cultural interest of the area –which houses the second largest religious festival in Spain, after El Rocío!– though with the rain continuing and the bar being closed, we went back down into the lower part of town for a relaxing drink to allow the weather to blow through a bit.

Indeed it finally did, so we opted for a quick visit back to the river before heading back to our accommodation for lunch, with the rain fortunately holding off long enough for us to walk out onto the bridge again. A few people were present, though none of them mentioned that just a few tens of metres upstream a few Eurasian otters were hiding in the bushes, but when a loud bickering call was heard from deep in the scrub and plenty of ripples were noted, it was clear that we needed to watch to see what it was! Indeed, Dave quickly spotted a fine otter, floating almost dead still on the surface looking at us, then another and finally, after various dives and moves, three young otters could be seen huddled together under the edge of the willow bush looking up at us to try and work out what we were! Since a string of bubbles had also crossed the pool just moments before, we were also sure that the mother was

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also present, making a total of four just a few metres away!

Time of course had run on, so we skedaddled back to our accommodation, in the rain again, and after quickly dropping off our gear, headed in to lunch in an increasingly crowded restaurant. A fine tapas-style lunch was enjoyed and quite quickly, though by the time we finished, a little after 14:00, the place was simply packed! OK, so it was a national holiday, Hispanic Day, but to know that over 300 diners went through, with the last finishing at almost 18:00, indicates just how appreciated the cuisine here is!

After a good break, we headed out under overcast conditions with occasional light rain and a few heavier bursts, taking a new track out to see what, if anything different we could find. A remarkable number of weekenders watching the rutting red deer stags at close distance was memorable, but we also noted a few mouflon, several groups of fallow deer, including a couple of fine bucks with their harems and also a terrific variety of plants. Indeed, in one particularly rich and almost ungrazed patch of woodland, this including three species of Cistus, western holm, cork and holly oaks, western strawberry tree, tree heather, wild rosemary and a few other characteristic species.

It was getting dark early, so we moved on back, only to cross paths with a fine and surprisingly reddish-coated wild boar in an adjacent field, which once it found an area of soft soil to root around in, slowed from its swift jogging pace for a while until it caught wind of us, stopped to peer intently and then sped off, seemingly in disgust!

We finally got back 'early' with time for a short break before our last sumptuous meal and call-over, though the latter had to be undertaken in an area of tables near the bar given that the dining room was not filled to the brim with people and their noise!

Day 8:

Sunday 13 October 2024

El Encinarejo, transfer to Seville

A slightly unexpectedly wet morning, given the forecast, with a few dry spells.

The day dawned a little wet with rain falling, but after a relaxed breakfast from 20:00 we headed down to the river again to see what we could find in the peaceful conditions. Plenty of birds could be heard as we progressed slowly along, but virtually all remained peculiarly out of sight, seemingly agreeing on giving us a hard time! A couple of calling circler buntings among them were certainly worth trying to see in the scopes, but once out, they quickly moved on, including the singing male which had first given away their presence and nothing else deigned to substitute them!

After a couple of relatively fruitless stops we headed towards the end and, after parking somewhat shy, opted to walk the last section, replaying the previous day's memories of the lynx walking down the far side of the river in our minds than with a realistic hope of it reappearing!

The bridge area was rather busy with a group of photographers and we noted how they 'needed' to be down by the water or amongst the rocks in order to try and get their shots of the otters (which



apparently had been up and down the river below them for a while already), so disturbing almost everything else! Patient waiting however, revealed at least three different common kingfishers speeding up and down or adorning the rocks along the edge of the water and, once the rain had definitely decided to set in, a lovely otter which worked its way upstream and could be seen foraging along the shores amongst the rocks or even out in the open water around a fallen branch.

The cool conditions were also good for using the thermal imager and I even noted how it could pick out rather cryptically hidden passerines in the shrubs nearby. Indeed, it put us onto a rather dowdy

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common redstart female in the bushes, the last new bird species added to the overall tally!

An earlier than expected return due to rain meant enjoying a hot drink in the bar on our return, while it fortunately gave me more time to pack everything which had been strewn across my room and in the vehicle.

The journey back was uneventful, reaching the airport exactly two hours before the flight home with plenty of time to get into and through the airport before the flight in this small airport, rounding off a fantastic trip! Three different Iberian lynx, with individuals seen at both sites was a treat, as was guiding the group!

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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	Northern shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		✓		✓				
3	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>				✓				
4	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				✓		✓		✓
5	Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	
6	Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>					✓	✓		
7	Rock dove / Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Common wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓						
11	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		✓						
12	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓						
13	Greater flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		✓		✓				
14	Eurasian thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>			✓					
15	Eurasian oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>				✓				
16	Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		✓		✓				
17	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>		✓						
18	Grey plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>				✓				
19	Common ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>		✓		✓				
20	Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		✓						
21	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>		✓	✓					
22	Kentish plover	<i>Anarhynchus alexandrinus</i>		✓		✓				
23	Eurasian whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>				✓				

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24	Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>				✓				
25	Bar-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>				✓				
26	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		✓						
27	Eurasian snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓	✓					
28	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleuca</i>				✓				
29	Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		✓	✓	✓				
30	Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>		✓						
31	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓						
32	Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>		✓						
33	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓		✓				
34	Ruddy turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>				✓				
35	Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>		✓						
36	Curlew sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>		✓						
37	Temminck's stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>		✓						
38	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>				✓				
39	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓		✓				
40	Black tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>				✓				
41	Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>				✓				
42	Sandwich tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>				✓				
43	Slender-billed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>				✓				
44	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>		✓		✓				
45	Audouin's gull	<i>Ichthyaetus audouinii</i>				✓				
46	Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>				✓				
47	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓			
48	Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>		✓						
49	White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>		✓		✓	✓			
50	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>				✓				✓
51	Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		✓		✓				
52	Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		✓		✓				
53	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	✓	✓				
54	Little X Western reef egret	<i>Egretta garzetta X gularis</i>				✓				
55	Squacco heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>		✓						
56	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓		✓				
57	Western cattle egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
58	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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59	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>				✓				
60	Egyptian vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>			✓					
61	Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	
62	Cinereous vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>					✓	✓	✓	
63	Short-toed snake eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>			✓					
64	Booted eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>			✓					
65	Spanish imperial eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>					✓			
66	Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>						✓		
67	Bonelli's eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>	✓							
68	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		
69	Eurasian goshawk	<i>Astur gentilis</i>					✓	✓		
70	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓					
71	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
72	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓			✓			
73	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	
74	Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>					✓	✓		
75	Eurasian hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
76	Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓		✓				✓	✓
77	Lesser spotted woodpecker	<i>Dryobates minor</i>	✓							
78	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>						✓		
79	Iberian green woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
80	Lesser kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	✓	✓						
81	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓			✓			
82	Eurasian hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	✓							
83	Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>				✓	✓			
84	Iberian grey shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
85	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>						✓		
86	Iberian magpie	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
87	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
88	Red-billed chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>						✓		
89	Western jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓						✓	
90	Northern raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			✓	✓	✓			
91	Crested tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>							✓	
92	Eurasian blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
93	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	

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94	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
95	Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓	✓	✓				
96	Calandra lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>			✓					
97	Mediterranean short-toed lark	<i>Alaudala rufescens</i>			✓					
98	Sand martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			✓					
99	Eurasian crag martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>						✓	✓	
100	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
101	Western house martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
102	European red-rumped swallow	<i>Cecropis rufula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
103	Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
104	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓						
105	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓					✓
106	Iberian chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>			✓					
107	Zitting cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		✓	✓					
108	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
109	Sardinian warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
110	Dartford warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>						✓		
111	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓				✓	✓	
112	Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europea</i>						✓	✓	✓
113	Spotless starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
114	Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>					✓	✓	✓	
115	Common blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
116	Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		
117	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
118	European pied flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
119	Common redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>								✓
120	Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>						✓	✓	
121	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
122	Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>			✓					
123	Eurasian tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		✓			✓			
124	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
125	Common waxbill	<i>Estrilda estrilda</i>		✓						
126	Western yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		✓	✓					
127	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>						✓		
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	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			✓					
134	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓		
135	European serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>						✓		
136	Corn bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>			✓			✓	✓	
137	Rock bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>						✓		✓
138	Cirl bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>								✓
	MAMMALS									
1	European rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Iberian hare	<i>Lepus granatensis</i>			✓					
3	Roof / Brown rat	<i>Rattus rattus / norvegicus</i>			✓*					
4	Long-tailed field mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>		✓						
5	Eurasian red squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>							✓	
6	Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>		✓	✓		✓		✓	
7	cryptic Daubenton's bat sp.	<i>Myotis cf nathalinae</i>						✓		
8	Greater myotis / mouse-eared bat	<i>Myotis myotis</i>						✓		
9	Common fallow deer	<i>Dama dama</i>						✓	✓	✓
10	Western red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Iberian ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>					✓	✓		
12	Mouflon	<i>Ovis gmelini</i>						✓	✓	
13	Eurasian wild pig / boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>						✓	✓	
14	Iberian lynx	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>		✓					✓	
15	Eurasian badger	<i>Meles meles</i>			✓*					
16	Eurasian otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>							✓	
	REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS									
1	Stripeless tree frog	<i>Hyla meridionalis</i>							✓	
2	Iberian water frog	<i>Pelophylax perezi</i>				✓				
3	Spanish terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>				✓				✓
4	Moorish gecko	<i>Tarentola mauretanicus</i>			✓				✓	

5	Green Iberian wall lizard	<i>Podarcis virescens</i>					✓			
	BUTTERFLIES & DRAGONFLIES									
1	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>		✓						
2	Small white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>		✓	✓					
3	Clouded yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>			✓					
4	Common swallowtail	<i>Papilio macaon</i>					✓	✓		
5	Small copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>			✓		✓			
6	Cardinal fritillary	<i>Argynnis pandora</i>					✓	✓	✓	
7	Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>					✓	✓		
8	Iberian bluetail	<i>Ischnura graellsii</i>		✓	✓					
9	Lesser emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>		✓						
10	Epaulet skimmer	<i>Orthetrum chrysostigma</i>			✓					
11	Red-veined darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>		✓	✓					
12	Broad scarlet	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>		✓	✓					
	OTHER									
1	Ant-lion sp.	<i>Neuroptera</i>		✓						
2	Darkling beetle sp.	<i>Akis cf lusitanica / granulifera</i>		✓	✓					
3	West African fiddler crab	<i>Uca tangeri</i>				✓				
4	Crimson speckled	<i>Utetheisa pulchella</i>		✓	✓					
5	Oak eggar	<i>Lasiocampa quercus</i>		✓						
6	Vestal	<i>Rhodometra sacraria</i>		✓						
7	Heart & club	<i>Agrotis clavis</i>					✓			
8	Willow beauty	<i>Peribatodes rhomboidaria</i>							✓	
9	Mediterranean tiger moth	<i>Cymbalophora pudica</i>					✓			