

Tour Report Wild Spain 13 - 20 October 2025

Lammergeier



Ring ouzel



Iberian lynx



Mouflon



Compiled by José Luis Sánchez

Following years of intensive conservation work, the Iberian lynx has staged one of Europe's most remarkable recoveries. The most recent census recorded 2,401 individuals across Spain and Portugal (2024), moving the species from *Endangered* to *Vulnerable* — a huge achievement, yet one that still leaves the species fragile in many parts of its range. Road mortality and habitat fragmentation remain important threats, and finding a lynx in the wild still requires patience, skill and often a measure of luck.

At the other end of the conservation spectrum, the lammergeier (*Gypaetus barbatus*), also known as the bearded vulture, has been successfully reintroduced to Andalucía. To date, roughly 90 birds have been released in the region as part of the reintroduction programme, and the 2025 censuses report 11 breeding pairs in Andalucía (nine of them in the Sierras of Cazorla, Segura and Las Villas). The wild population in the region is now estimated at around 65 individuals, and recent wild hatches underline the growing strength of the project. These two flagship species — Iberian lynx and lammergeier — are the central focus of this Wild Spain itinerary.

This October, we linked the oak-studded granite hills of Sierra de Andújar (Iberian lynx country) with the limestone highlands of Cazorla (lammergeier territory), combining close-up encounters with iconic mammals and spectacular views of the region's raptors.

Monday 13 October 2025

Day 1:

Arrival in Málaga and transfer to Sierra de Andújar

Warm and dry throughout; clear skies with a gentle evening breeze.

We met at Málaga Airport and travelled north to the Sierra de Andújar Natural Park, arriving late in the afternoon at our countryside lodge, La Caracola. Margaret, a member of our group, who had driven from home, was already waiting for us.

After settling in, we headed out for our first short evening safari along the river Jándula at Encinarejo. As the light softened, the group quickly began recording species: great cormorant, common kingfisher, several white wagtails, a few common chiffchaffs, a large flock of Iberian magpies, and little egrets feeding by the river. We also heard cetti's warbler and European robin, while a few common moorhens patrolled the shallows. It was a gentle but promising start to the week.

Tuesday 14 October 2025

Day 2:

Iberian lynx hide sessions

Still and cool during the morning; light cloud cover in the afternoon, no rain.

Our first full day was dedicated to the Iberian lynx hide. The morning was quiet, with only small birds appearing near the hide – European stonechat, Iberian magpie, black redstart – but no sign of the cat itself. After lunch and a short rest back at La Caracola, we returned for the afternoon session. Patience was rewarded: around 20:50 a lynx emerged briefly, disappearing into the scrub before returning a few minutes later, giving everyone excellent views. Between sessions, some of the group visited the hotel's bird hide, enjoying close views of crested tit and hawfinch. Spirits were high that evening after such an early success.

Wednesday 15 October 2025

Day 3:

La Lancha and Jándula Dam

Bright and comfortable; partly cloudy, light breeze, no precipitation.

This morning, we explored the track to La Lancha Dam, one of the classic Iberian lynx areas. En route, we observed common fallow deer, a strong stag, and a large Eurasian wild boar beside the track. At Los



Image by JL Ojeda

Escoriales old house, we found two Eurasian hoopoes, and a little further on, we spotted a little owl on the rocks, while several Western red deer and mouflon appeared farther along. Near the dam we watched cinerous vultures (three individuals) together with around a dozen griffon vultures perched on the cliffs. The reservoir area was lively with hawfinch, black redstart, rock bunting, and many crag martins and some migrating house martins sweeping over the wall. At the end of the bridge, on the wall, a beautiful male blue rock thrush was right before we reached the tunnel. Once inside the tunnel, we noted four greater mouse-eared bats

and four Daubenton's bats roosting. On our way back, more vultures circled above and a magnificent Spanish imperial eagle appeared briefly, followed by an Eurasian goshawk. Among butterflies we recorded pea blue (*Lampides boeticus*) and common yellow swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*). A common firecrest and Eurasian sparrowhawk were also seen, together with a migrating flock of alpine swifts. Later that afternoon the group witnessed two Spanish ibex males sparring on a rocky slope – a memorable highlight of the day.

Thursday 16 October 2025

Day 4:

Encinarejo Dam and La Lancha track

Fresh mountain air, skies mostly clear; slight breeze later in the day.

At dawn we returned down to the river Jándula, to Encinarejo area, finding a grey heron, several large fish in the river, mallards, Eurasian coot and common moorhen. An Iberian green woodpecker called nearby and a group of long-tailed tits flitted through the bushes. Other sightings included numerous white wagtails, singing Cetti's warblers and a woodlark. Overhead flew three little egrets and a great egret, while a large Western red deer stag fed quietly near the viewpoint. We enjoyed close views of a common kingfisher perched on a rock and a grey wagtail feeding along the water's edge. Flocks of blackcaps, common chiffchaffs and several Iberian magpies were active on both sides of the river. A great spotted woodpecker and Hawfinches showed beautifully in the trees opposite, giving everyone prolonged views. Later, on the track past Los Escoriales - the fighting-bull estate, we observed a herd of mouflon, more common fallow deer, and soaring griffon vultures. We stopped at one of the viewpoints for lunch. During our picnic, we watched an Iberian grey shrike, followed by a fine Spanish ibex male crossing the track just ahead of us. Not long after, a little owl appeared on a rock formation shaped like a mushroom, only to be startled by a passing common red deer stag. Further scanning produced a juvenile Eurasian goshawk circling high above the ridges, and we finished the day with superb light and contented smiles all round.



Image by Iberian Lynx Land

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Friday 17 October 2025

Day 5:

Transfer from Sierra de Andújar to Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas Natural Park, via Sierra Mágina Natural Park
Cool start in the mountains; sunny intervals; mild temperatures overall.

Our last morning in Andújar began again beside the river Jándula, at Encinarejo area. A grey heron, several mallards, and a calling Iberian green woodpecker greeted us as the sun rose. An Eurasian otter showed very briefly in front of us, at the other riverside, but we only had a glimpse of it. Then we moved up to the river, to the bridge near the dam, hoping to get a better view. While waiting for the otter, a flash of blue announced the arrival of another kingfisher; we all enjoyed watching a family of four, very active, flying up and down the river, while long-tailed tits, white wagtails, and Cetti's warblers moved busily through the riverside vegetation.

Later, Dave saw a bird perched in a nearby tree that he couldn't identify. After looking through the telescope, we discovered it was a Northern wheatear. Obviously, it was a migrating bird, as this isn't its natural habitat. Then we saw the otter again, but also very briefly.

Later we left the Sierra de Andújar and began our scenic journey east towards the mountains of Sierra Mágina, a dramatic massif separating the olive-dotted plains of Jaén from the vast ranges of Cazorla. En route, we paused near an area known for Bonelli's eagle. We enjoyed panoramic views of the cliffs while having our picnic, and although the eagles didn't show, a cinerous vulture glided past at close range.

Continuing through the mountains, we spotted Spanish ibex crossing the track and later paused in an alpine meadow with splendid views of the most iconic peak, La Peña Jaén. A magnificent golden eagle soared in front of us, and tawny pipits fed in the grasslands.

Higher up, at an altitude of about 1,760m, among dense juniper scrub, numerous ring ouzels were on migration. Though shy and restless, several gave fine views through the telescope as they moved among the berry-laden bushes. We also saw red-billed choughs crossing above the ridges.

By late afternoon, we descended from Sierra Mágina down to the river Guadalquivir valley, and again ascending along the road until reaching our hotel in Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas Natural Park, surrounded by pine forest and rocky slopes – the perfect base for the next three nights.

Saturday 18 October 2025

Day 6:

Exploring Cazorla Natural Park: Puerto de Las Palomas - Cerrada del Utrero - Nacimiento del Guadalquivir - Puerto llano - El Chorro

Mild and breezy; Thick fog in the morning in the higher areas, some cloud build-up late afternoon.

Before breakfast, a few Spanish ibex males were already grazing in the hotel gardens – an unforgettable sight just outside our rooms. After breakfast, we drove to the Puerto de las Palomas (meaning Pigeon Pass), stopping at the viewpoint there (1,241m), watching griffon vultures catching the first thermals and Spanish ibex clinging to the cliffs below. A common kestrel hovered nearby.

We then walked the impressive trail of the Cerrada del Utrero, a narrow gorge carved by the upper Guadalquivir. Along the path we enjoyed close views of black redstarts, red-billed choughs, and several griffon vultures perched on the cliffs. Despite careful searching, the common firecrest eluded us today.

After lunch, we continued towards the source of the legendary river Guadalquivir, where a few red foxes appeared near the picnic area, remarkably tame and photogenic. We also saw an Eurasian red squirrel, a subspecies found in the southern half of the Iberian Peninsula (*Sciurus vulgaris segurae*), with its coat a distinct reddish-brown hue.

Higher up, at Puerto Llano (1,800m), we encountered an adult golden eagle flying directly overhead and a Western red deer hind with her fawn crossing the track. After that we headed to El Chorro, a spectacular cliff with one of the largest vulture colonies in the park, where we watched dozens of griffons and red-billed choughs at eye level. Two common ravens patrolled the crags and an Eurasian goshawk passed by.

As the sun set, over a hundred choughs descended noisily into the cliffs to roost – an extraordinary finale to the day.



Image by Javier Milla

Sunday 19 October 2025

Day 7:

The High Plateau of Campos de Hernán Perea

Chilly early morning at altitude; calm and clear for most of the day; no rainfall.

We travelled to the remote high plateau of Campos de Hernán Perea, at an altitude of about 1,800m, to look for the most emblematic bird of the park, the lammergeier. On arrival, we found more than a hundred griffon vultures feeding on a carcass, joined by a young lammergeier and a golden eagle. Later an adult lammergeier soared low overhead, giving breathtaking views. We also spotted a mouflon, and in the fields around, a flock of European Goldfinches, European serins, rock sparrows, and some Eurasian skylarks. On the return journey, we added coal tit and Eurasian nuthatch, while a common fallow deer stag posed by the car park.

Monday 20 October 2025

Day 8:

Transfer from Sierra de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas Natural Park to Málaga

Dry and still; low clouds in the valley, clear above; mild later in the day.



Image by JL Sánchez-Balsera

After breakfast, we began our journey back to Málaga, and after some 30 minutes' drive, sadly, a young European wildcat killed by a car reminded us of the fragility of this ecosystem.

We had time to stop again in Sierra Mágina and try the Bonelli's eagle in a different spot. Despite clear skies, only a distant golden eagle appeared, along with a black wheatear and Thekla lark.

By afternoon, we reached Málaga Airport, bringing this memorable journey through Wild Spain to a close.

Tour Highlights

- Excellent sighting of Iberian lynx at Sierra de Andújar
- Superb views of Spanish imperial eagle, cinereous vulture, and golden eagle
- Close encounters with Spanish ibex in Cazorla and mouflon in Andújar
- Spectacular views and magnificent eye-level photo opportunities of griffons and red-billed choughs at El Chorro
- Spectacular observations of lammergeier on the Hernán Perea plateau
- Vivid autumn landscapes of Mediterranean woodland and limestone cliffs

This Wild Spain tour offered a superb combination of Mediterranean landscapes and wildlife, from the granite hills of Sierra de Andújar to the towering peaks of Sierra de Cazorla, segura y las villas Natural Park. The group enjoyed unforgettable encounters with some of the region's most iconic species – Iberian lynx, Spanish imperial eagle, lammergeier, and Spanish ibex – together with an impressive variety of smaller birds and mammals. Andalucía once again proved itself to be one of Europe's most rewarding regions for natural history travel.

Cover images by: Lammergeier, Ring ouzel, Mouflon (JL Sánchez-Balsera) & Iberian lynx (Iberian Lynx Land)

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Checklist for Wild Spain

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
	BIRDS									
1	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓			✓	✓			
2	Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>			✓	✓				
3	Tachymarptis melba	<i>Alpine swift</i>			✓					
4	Rock dove / Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
5	Common wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			✓	✓	✓			✓
7	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓			✓	✓			
8	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓			✓	✓			
9	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓			✓	✓			
10	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>				✓				
11	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				✓				
12	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓			✓				
13	Lammergeier	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>							✓	
14	Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Cineros vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>			✓	✓	✓		✓	
16	Spanish imperial eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>		H	✓	H				
17	Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓					
19	Eurasian goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>			✓	✓		✓		
20	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>			✓	✓				
21	Eurasian hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>			✓					
22	Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓			✓	✓			
23	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>				✓				
24	Iberian green woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>			H	✓	✓			
25	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>						✓		

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26	Iberian grey shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>					✓			
27	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>							✓	✓
28	Iberian magpie	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
29	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
30	Red-billed chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>						✓	✓	✓
31	Western jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓				✓	✓	✓	
32	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>							✓	✓
33	Northern raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>							✓	✓
34	Coal tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>							✓	✓
35	Crested tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓						
36	Eurasian blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
37	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>					H			
39	Eurasian skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>								✓
40	Thekla's lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>			✓	✓				✓
41	Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>						✓		✓
42	Eurasian crag martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Western house martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>			✓					
44	Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H				H	H		
45	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>					✓			
46	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓				✓	✓		
47	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
48	Sardinian warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
49	Common firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>			✓					
50	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	H				H	H		
51	Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europea</i>					H		H	
52	Spotless starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Common blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Ring ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>						✓		
56	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
58	Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>			✓					

59	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓						
60	Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>					✓		✓	
61	Black wheatear	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>								✓
62	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
63	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓			✓	✓			
64	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓			✓	✓			
65	Tawny pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>					✓			
66	Eurasian chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
67	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>		✓	✓	✓				
68	European greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓						
69	Red crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>						✓		
70	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>							✓	
71	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>							✓	
72	European serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>							✓	
73	Rock bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>			✓		✓			
	MAMMALS									
1	Greater mouse-eared bat	<i>Myotis myotis</i>			✓					
2	Daubenton's bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>			✓					
3	Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>						✓		
4	Eurasian otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>					✓			
5	Iberian lynx	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>		✓						
6	Eurasian wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>			✓					
7	Western red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	
8	Common fallow deer	<i>Dama dama</i>			✓	✓			✓	
9	Capra pyrenaica	<i>Spanish ibex</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Ovis aries musimon	<i>European mouflon</i>			✓	✓		✓	✓	
11	Red squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris ssp. Segurae</i>						✓		
12	European rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus ssp. algirus</i>			✓	✓	✓			
	BUTTERFLIES									
1	Pea blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>			✓					
2	Common yellow swallowtail	<i>Papilio machaon</i>			✓					