

THE TRAVELLING NATURALIST

TRAVEL | EXPERIENCE | CONSERVE



SPAIN

Iberian Lynx Quest

22 – 29 October 2016

TOUR REPORT

Leader: John Muddeman

Thanks to intensive conservation measures, an overall increase in the population of Iberian lynx has very recently been reflected in a change in official status. The IUCN improved its conservation category to *Endangered*, instead of *Critically Endangered*, with the Doñana population slowly increasing, and two of the reintroduction areas in Spain (which lie between Doñana and Andújar) being highly successful. There are still well under 500 individuals in the wild though, so it's really quite remarkable that a week-long tour stands a realistic chance of seeing one. However, with more problems arising from the spread of a new strain of the rVHD (rabbit Viral Haemorrhagic Disease) which has severely depleted the rabbit populations in Spain since 2014, particularly in the Andújar area, it's no surprise that it remains a difficult animal to see, and there are certainly no guarantees. But, just as there's a good chance of not seeing one, we usually do, and the luck factor sometimes just falls your way at the right time.

Saturday 22nd October

Seville airport, Andújar, Jándula River

After meeting at Seville airport, we set off up the Andalusian highway, a little slow at first due to the heavy rain, but then increasingly drier weather. After lunch at a roadside service station, we reached our rural accommodation complex at 4 pm, quickly checked in and then were out again to make best use of the remainder of the afternoon light.

The road down towards the Jándula river, which carves an impressively deep sinuous valley through the granite bedrock, snakes a complex route through open western holm oak and umbrella pine forests, plus open grassy pastures grazed by fighting bulls and, to our delight, the first of numerous red deer. It also serves as a taste of the wonderful rock formations, with extensive crags near the top, and numerous smooth moss-cloaked boulders, sometimes precariously perched on the hillsides, scattered throughout. With the first autumn rain having fallen a week before, the grass was resprouting and many seeds germinating, a fine green haze of fresh growth was appearing and the moss and lichen covered rocks and trees a lovely sight.

The river itself was still very low of course, with the rain (which had been much lighter here than in Seville) still only penetrating a tiny way in the parched ground following the long summer drought period. But, it had really freshened up the vegetation and stripped the dust from the atmosphere.

A couple of stops failed to connect well with the numerous small birds present, though abundant Iberian magpies and European robins were quickly noted, and a few Eurasian hoopoes, black redstarts, and a passing common chiffchaff were also noted. Getting out at one spot turned out to be fortuitous, with a calling Spanish imperial eagle leading me to scour the hillsides, only to find a distant perched golden eagle! Indeed, so distant that we weren't totally sure it was a golden until a pair of stunning adult Spanish imperials were noticed off to one side adorning an electricity pylon. What a start! Passing grey herons and a large flock of great cormorants heading downstream in a ramshackle V formation were about the only birds flying though.

Watching from the footbridge upstream is often rewarding, and while it seemed quiet, we noted white and grey wagtails on the river, flighty European robins and black redstarts, plus a fine blue rock thrush on some boulders nearby and repeated viewings of a lovely male common kingfisher along the river itself.

We finally pulled ourselves away as heavy drizzle started again and wound our way back to our accommodation for the first of several very large, delicious meals in Andújar.

Sunday 23rd October

Morning La Lancha; afternoon La Lancha & Jándula Dam

Following heavy rain and strong wind shortly before our 08.30 breakfast, conditions rapidly improved and it became warm and largely dry throughout the morning. Leaving an hour later we took a slow drive out to the principal Iberian lynx watching area, stopping frequently en route.

A few red deer were scattered through the mountainous terrain, and one or two of the still bellowing stags could be heard intermittently. A couple of fine fallow deer bucks were also quickly found, with small numbers noted throughout the area during the day.

Despite calm conditions down in the small valleys, there was clearly some wind over the tops, with a fine group of vultures circling over one ridge, there being a couple of the more rectangular winged cinereous amongst the more numerous griffons.

A more open area shortly ahead housed a number of fine fighting bulls, which were quietly grazing here amongst a series of unique feeding bowls – hewn from solid granite boulders – strewn across the field. A couple of mistle thrushes and a few white wagtails, plus numerous spotless starlings were present too,

rather in contrast to the groups of common chaffinches, abundant European robins and flocks of the striking Iberian magpies present in the wooded areas.

More stops were made to admire red deer stags with ever larger and more ornate antlers, though we continued on to an area with tremendous open vistas across a beautiful estate. By sheer chance, having managed to pass a particular spot to check for Iberian lynx scat en route, I reversed a short way to look at some unusual looking black scat on the track. A quick look suggested it was very fresh lynx droppings, but while trying to observe it a little better a double shout went up that a lynx was walking past below us!

Incredibly, having very quickly lost the lynx from view behind some bushes, after a surprisingly long wait we relocated it - sauntering through the rock rose scrub on the slopes below us, then again as it sat between two rocks patiently scanning the surroundings, and then briefly twice more as it crowned a low ridge before dropping down the other side... Walking along the track failed to produce it again for some time, but Paul continued a little further as he tried to follow a little bird in flight that crossed his path, amazingly finding a large male just 10 metres from the track with a rabbit in its mouth!

The rest of us tried to reach him as quickly as possible - along with a few French observers also present - though the lynx moved off, moving down across an open grassy area for a few moments, giving terrific views, before disappearing into dense scrub. Unbelievable! And nearly two hours had actually passed between first finding it and our final sighting!! But it wasn't until I moved swiftly back to the vehicle to drive it up to the group, and saw a lynx briefly again there, without a rabbit, that I realised we had actually seen two different individuals! This was clearly compensation for the grief of the day before, and a fabulous birthday present for me!

We headed back for a delicious lunch at our accommodation and took the liberty of a very welcome short siesta afterwards before heading out again.

It was actually rather wet in the afternoon, mizzle turning to heavy drizzle, and with it becoming very dull from 5pm onwards we called it a day relatively early, despite the slow drive back. That said, we headed down as far as the Jándula Dam, noting a couple of hundred Eurasian crag martins resting out of the rain on the dam walls, plus a remarkable dense flock of black redstarts feeding on an area of short grass adjacent to some impressive crags. A Eurasian eagle-owl even called a couple of times from across the river, but was impossible to locate amongst the vast rock formations, especially as the weather deteriorated.

Monday 24th October

Morning El Encinarejo & Sanctuary & Pilgrim's Viewpoint; afternoon Jándula Dam & La Lancha

Heavy bursts of rain before breakfast again were promising, but then continued over breakfast and well into the morning. Indeed, this was almost torrential at times, making the drive down to the El Encinarejo Dam a real wash-out. However, it did stop long enough at one point for a short session out to look for deer, hear a singing Cetti's warbler and even locate a superb Spanish imperial eagle perched in the crown of a nearby umbrella pine before this flew off to a more distant pylon where it clearly felt safer at distance. The rain finally eased and the cloud started to lift a little as we headed up towards the Sanctuary. It remained rather cool, but as we approached, conditions continued to improve and once we finally reached the top of the mount, after a quick visit inside the chapel, the views continued to improve as the cloud finally lifted for good.

A warming drink was taken in a nearby bar, which in true local style, was once again decorated with the peculiar combination of images of live Iberian lynx plus very dead hunting trophies, in this particular case being various mouflon heads!

With conditions having improved fast and it warming up, we stopped en route for filled rolls before continuing back out to the La Lancha area for a lovely quiet lunch overlooking the main lynx watching site. A couple of fine male mouflon were noted en route, another brief Iberian green woodpecker sat on the

side of a wooden telephone pole and dozens of red deer were enjoyed. A few butterflies were also beginning to emerge, including a small white and clouded yellow.

Despite a patient wait in gorgeous conditions, there was no sign of lynx, so we headed to the dam again. Despite three fine small wild boar and a few birds, including a pair of red-billed chough, it was very quiet and no ibex could be seen, so we took a quick look at the bats in the local tunnel. Some three or four species were roosting, including greater mouse-eared, Daubenton's and a single horseshoe bat. The return allowed another tranquil wait at the main viewpoint, including finding a distant wild boar, and abundant deer, plus many more on the return, but again, no lynx.

Tuesday 25th October

Transfer to El Rocío, Raya Real & La Escupidera

It was another dry start, with plenty of hazy sun showing through, cheering the group further and finally putting jokes about 'sunny Spain' to bed!!

Following a normal breakfast time and quick attempt to photograph the local Iberian magpies as we loaded up, we started the long, but simple road journey down to El Rocío, passing Seville on the way. Remarkably, huge flying queen ants were on the wing at exactly the same spot as on the outward journey, and a considerable number hit the windscreen, leaving horrid fatty smears again. But this time I was prepared for it, and the light rain shortly afterwards combined with washing-up liquid in the car windscreen washing water did the job!

We reached El Rocío in rather more overcast conditions with rain threatening, despite it being very mild. Consequently, we took lunch in the hotel restaurant, with a short break before going out in a 4x4 minibus onto the sandy tracks adjacent to and just inside the N edge of Doñana National Park. Our exit was delayed though as we admired the large shallow lake which was present just in front of the hotel, which despite having been dry on Friday was now awash, and even more remarkably, already heaving with birds. The bulrushes in front held zitting cisticolas and a mobile Eurasian penduline tit, while flocks of black-winged stilts, black-headed gulls and ducks were spread widely across the marsh, particularly around the numerous emergent grassy islands. Indeed the variety of ducks was notable, with mallard, northern shoveler, gadwall, Eurasian wigeon, northern pintail and common teal all noted in quick succession, a few black-tailed godwits added variety, and, amazingly, straight out, a 'fluffy bummed' red-knobbed coot swam past with its Eurasian cousin just behind!

Heading out towards the ancient hunting estate of the Coto del Rey, several remarkably similar features of Doñana compared to Andújar were immediately obvious. These included the abundant stone pines (here not native, though long established), numerous mastic bushes, and abundant red and fallow deer and even a few wild boar. Plenty of rabbits and a distant Spanish imperial eagle at one point added to this similarity. Otherwise, the extraordinarily flat land, ranging from just one to four metres above sea level, ended the obvious comparisons and meant that the habitat differences were very much more subtly marked. These included the much richer tree and shrub vegetation along the damp stream lines (including fine cork oaks), and the higher and drier 'monte negro' scrub giving way to the shorter and often denser 'monte blanco' bushes in the marginally lower areas. We looked at the near infinite number of changes between these habitats as we drove round and round on a maze of tracks through the pine forest, our eyes scouring the shorter grassy areas, tracks and edges of the larger rides for any signs of a large cat...

Driving out through the pinewoods to the only stopping point allowed in the National Park for a limited stroll was interesting, not just for the odd bird around, but also to see a few butterflies. These included a large Lang's short-tailed blue, a small copper and a gorgeous freshly emerged Bath white on a fine display of autumn squill flowering in the turf. A Zeller's skipper whizzed-off though before we could see it properly. This is a common species in Africa, but still extremely range-restricted in Europe, despite us discovering it in Doñana for the first time ever a couple of autumn's ago on this tour!

The track and adjacent grass and saltmarsh vegetation was attractive to numerous of small birds, including corn buntings, plentiful white wagtails, a few meadow pipits and a couple of European goldfinches on dry thistles, while numerous crested larks fed in the adjacent dry field, which had been grazed literally absolutely bare during the long summer drought this year. A fine red kite or two wheeled over across the field, with one perched on a fence given good scope views too and a couple of western marsh harriers were noted quartering the dry marshes. A few late northern wheatears, at least two western yellow wagtails and a single brief whinchat showed that southbound migrants still appear here well into October (and occasionally November), with the incoming meadow pipits and black redstarts were just starting to arrive in number.

We returned via another route through the pine forest until just gone sundown.

Wednesday 26th October

Raya Real, La Escupidera, CI José Antonio Valverde, La Garvija, Palacio del Coto del Rey, Raya Real

A day exploring the northern edge of 'Doñana'. Leaving El Rocío shortly after 9am. we started with a meandering look at the pinewoods adjacent to the northern edge of the national park again, once again noting numerous red and fallow deer and a brief wild boar or two. However, we were now getting very complacent about these!

We headed out once more across towards the seasonal saltmarsh, stopping again to look at the same long fence as the evening before, this time to admire several huge perched griffon vultures on it, which had clearly roosted there. But, not only that, a superb adult Spanish imperial eagle was perched just 10 metres beyond them and a fine adult Egyptian vulture was sat out in the field off to one side! More griffons were scattered across the vast field to the left, with further scanning revealing quite a number of common ravens also in little groups on the ground, and, with particularly patient scanning, a large flock of little blobs scurrying across the ground (probably over a kilometre away) were a good find. Not because of the distance, but because they were some 200+ pin-tailed sandgrouse! Thankfully, they rose into the air and wheeled around at one point when spooked by a passing raven, giving slightly better views.

We continued to the big interpretation centre in the middle of the marsh, pausing for a variety of small birds on the way, plus another group of around a dozen wild boar, plus the first pink greater flamingos for most in a deeper channel. A few zitting cisticolas, northern wheatears and a flock of Eurasian skylarks was noted as we went, with a couple of perched western marsh harriers probably the star birds at the centre itself, as we enjoyed a coffee.

It suddenly started to clear and get very warm, so after continuing along one track, doubled back on ourselves and after noting a wheeling dark morph booted eagle from the vehicle as we went, headed off for a short walk in an open area of the Coto del Rey estate in order to stretch our legs. A few southern grey shrikes, plus a distant perched black-winged kite were good finds.

A tasty picnic lunch was enjoyed at the La Garvija 'outhouse' of the palace before we returned for a quick look from the courtyard of the (largely much more recently restored) 15th century Palacio del Rey, and even a slight detour to enjoy some flowering Mandrakes in a nearby meadow, complete with feeding Zeller's skippers.

A slightly less tortuous return route through the forest again failed to produce any hoped-for cats, but was still rewarding, especially when we bumped (not literally!) into a small group of five small wild boar feeding in full view right beside the main track, affording a wonderful photographic opportunity.

We took a mid afternoon break, then met again at 6pm before heading back to the Raya Real, this time on foot. Lynx had been seen repeatedly at one spot along the track just before the weekend, and we hoped to see one with a quiet wait. Luck though was definitely not on our side, as no sooner had we reached our main viewpoint, than we discovered the head and intestines of a freshly eaten rabbit just 15 metres away!

A lynx had had a typically late Spanish lunch, possibly just an hour or two beforehand. And, despite a patient wait, the presence of various horse riders and others steering horse drawn traps meant it was a little busier than hoped. Another couple walked past, having gone for a stroll beyond us, only for them to stop as they returned to show me a video on their camera that they'd taken that morning of a large male walking close to a female just ten minutes before we'd come past!!! SO close and yet so far...!

We returned in very warm and muggy conditions to a slightly later dinner after enjoying a quick drink outside on the restaurant patio, we 'ticking another El Rocío box' by watching a small group of horse riders taking a sherry en route, without dismounting!

Would we get the Andújar-Doñana double tomorrow? We drew up the plan of taking an early coffee the following morning and then heading out for an hour's watch before returning for breakfast proper...

Thursday 27th October

Raya Real, Laguna del Portil, Odiel Marshes, El Acebuche Visitor Centre

With it still being so dark, we decided on a full breakfast before departing a little later than thought, but still just after dawn. But, we felt we were thwarted from the beginning, with a group of National Park workers chainsawing tamarisks and giant reeds down almost right where we wanted to be! We stuck it out for an hour, in the vague hope of seeing a lynx taking a slight detour round them, but it was clearly not to be, and with very few rabbits visible either, perhaps the lynx knew this too and either stayed in bed or were off on their business elsewhere.

Driving down towards the Atlantic coast was also a way of visualising just how extensive the pinewoods of Doñana are, especially along the long stretch west of Matalascañas towards Huelva, where only one or two resorts break the stone pine 'monotony'!

After crossing the Río Tinto and seeing the monument to Columbus, we took a slight detour for a coffee break and refuel, before heading off still further west, as the sun broke out, to the Laguna del Portil. This was rather disappointing, given low water levels and ever higher vegetation between the viewing platform and the lake, and only a few birds caught our eye, but included a water pipit of most note. But, as the sun was burning our backs, a good search of nearby vegetation came up trumps with a gorgeous white-flecked, lurid lime green Mediterranean chameleon creeping through a broom bush. Just reward for the travelling I thought!

We returned to a supermarket in Huelva to boost the dwindling picnic supplies before heading to the Odiel Marshes Visitor centre. Lots of common chiffchaffs were fly-catching in the scrub, reminding me that there had been another influx of yellow-browed warblers this autumn, though perhaps not surprisingly none appeared in the small patch of trees beside us as we enjoyed lunch!

Roosting local waders on the adjacent river during high tide included plentiful ruddy turnstones, whimbrels and a couple of bar-tailed godwits, plus a few sandwich terns and both yellow-legged and lesser black-backed gulls. The nearby old salt pans as we left held numerous common redshanks, a few black-tailed and bar-tailed godwits, common greenshanks, dunlin, grey plover and flighty common ringed plovers. Yellow-legged, lesser black-backed and a single adult Audouin's gull were lined up along one bund and even one of the local peregrines powered over as we watched.

The long drive down towards the spit, which was still closed due to dumping of dredged material from the river, revealed numerous common chiffchaffs, European robins and black redstarts in the dunes, plus roosting Eurasian spoonbills and over 20 Eurasian curlews in the saltmarsh. A sanderling flew in with a group of common ringed plovers to bathe in some freshwater puddles on a car parking area. A western osprey perched on a beach was undoubtedly different from two others seen in flight earlier much further upriver.

The return drive was good too, especially when we stopped to look at some pink greater flamingos a little way off in the salinas. More gulls and terns had congregated than before, with around a dozen gorgeous pink-bodied slender-billed gulls amongst the black-headed gulls, and a huge Caspian tern motored over, calling harshly as it went. But I got an even greater surprise, thinking that my mobile had sprung to life in my pocket, when checking it showed it was still off, despite clearly hearing a yellow-browed warbler calling! And there it was in bushes along a ditch beside us, before it flew along a small hedge and into a bush in front, before finally returning to some tall Aspen trees in the visitor centre garden! We all finally achieved good views of this gorgeous and increasingly regular Siberian vagrant.

Time was running on, so we followed suit, heading all the way back round the coast to the main visitor centre of Doñana National park. This was not only to enjoy watching the hordes of delightful Iberian magpies outside the cafeteria windows while having a drink, but also live footage of the Iberian lynx which form part of the captive breeding group here, where three mobile individuals were in one pen, giving our unseen remote controlled teleoperator a busy time.

We finally returned to El Rocío after another rewarding day, taking dinner outside given the very warm conditions again.

Friday 28th October

El Rocío, Dehesa de Abajo, Raya Real

Having failed twice to connect with lynx while on foot along the Raya Real, we avoided returning again, instead taking another look at the abundant birds present on the shallow lagoon in front of the hotel. Innumerable common chiffchaffs were everywhere in the bulrush beds, along with at least three Eurasian penduline tits. A small flock of Eurasian wigeon flew around, greater flamingos were present at the eastern end, a couple of black-tailed godwit were roosting on the mud, two mobile ruff and a feisty red-knobbed coot were less usual, but otherwise it was simply a treat to see hordes of black-winged stilts amongst the abundant commoner other bird present.

A small flock of common house martins flew around beside the church as we left, and a few young sand martins and barn swallows were seen later in the morning to add yet more diversity, though some weren't looking too happy in the cooler autumn air.

More of the vast Doñana pine forest was traversed as we made our way out to the northern marshes, though the almost instant transformation to and from intensive agricultural land which borders it, highlighted one of the current difficulties of the National Park. This includes around 1,000 illegal boreholes drilled to supply the necessary water, lowering the groundwater in the national park and so meaning that far less of it floods nowadays than should. The first rice fields had already been harvested and ploughed, with three black storks sitting hunched on a bank an excellent find. A gorgeous, but extremely flighty black-winged kite in bushes almost opposite was a treat too.

Crossing Entremuros was a shock though, with very little of the vast area of rice fields present on the other side, stretching away as far as the eye could see, virtually uncut! Some distant cut paddies held large numbers of 'black blob' glossy ibis, gulls, white storks and cattle egrets, but none were close, and in the heat haze were a bit of a lost cause.

The large water body at the Dehesa de Abajo nearby was a different kettle of fish though. Abundant duck floated on the water, being mostly red-crested pochards and northern shoveler (plus mallard of course), a few little grebes and a winter-plumaged black-necked grebe showed well, and western marsh harriers and a fine western osprey kept them all on the move from time to time. Indeed, at the very shallow far end was a haven for a tremendous flock of greater flamingos, and over 1,000 noisy black-winged stilts. A thin line of roosting pied avocets in front of them looked negligible in comparison!

A couple of purple swamphens called from deep in the bulrushes as we walked along, while the group also noted a fly-by squacco heron as I returned for the vehicle.

We took our 'statutory' drinks at the adjacent visitor centre as it turned quite hot. A short walk towards the lake, partly just for the exercise, revealed nothing new, despite the thousands of birds on the lake in front, so we ordered more drinks as we ate our picnic lunch at the visitors centre, before a relatively speedy return to El Rocío.

We reassembled outside once again for a 16.30 meet for our final 'lynx' drive. No wild boar this time was a surprise, despite abundant deer in the shade of the pines and cork oaks and indeed, after over an hour of traversing and scouring the pine forest and scrub, we'd mentally decided that there was basically no real chance of seeing a lynx again. We made our last turn to head out through the final scrubby area just before the park boundary, when suddenly there really was one! Shortly before sundown, it was sitting in the open on a patch of bright green turf just beyond the fence... Manoeuvring, we stopped, lifted the cameras and binoculars, only to see it suddenly dash off in hunt mode before we could press shutters! Arghh!! The tension mounted, but it then reappeared briefly two or three more times from behind bushes, before again disappearing, seemingly for good, before we could even try to get a picture.

The light was really going, but suddenly we spotted it again, this time resting in the shadow of a tamarisk, licking its paws, then even looking up and over towards us twice, before suddenly trotting off at speed again! I just managed a half decent picture and Andrew a great video before it finally sauntered off, moving deeper into the national park behind seemingly impenetrable scrub, and we were left with silly grins on our faces!

Should we stay? No, I decided, and a little reluctantly, but still elated, we drove gently off and out of the restricted area. Our driver was now on the walkie-talkie though, trying to give instructions to another guide, José Manuel, who'd so ably guided us on the previous other trips to where we'd last seen it. He failed, but then garbled back that there was one in the tamarisks instead!

Our driver asked if we wanted to return – of course! Inside the park, we carefully manoeuvred behind another vehicle. And, as it pulled away, we inched forward to suddenly discover a perfectly calm Iberian lynx just a couple of metres away, sat under the cover of a tamarisk and completely ignoring us. AND IT WAS A DIFFERENT LYNX!!! Too dark now for photos, and too hidden for clear views, we simply enjoyed what we could of it before it gently stood up and wandered off into the adjacent cover. Now that was a truly impressive last-minute set of observations!

Our final dinner was taken outside again, with a lovely Swiss lady of Catalan descent, who'd been in the other vehicle watching the second lynx, joining us in the celebratory banter!

Saturday 29th October

Transfer to Seville and fly home

Apart from Francoise, who was staying on and had opted to lie-in and take a later bus to Seville, an early start saw us taking coffee and a light breakfast snack before heading to the airport for 08.30. Andrew and Paul were dropped-off with plenty of time to spare, while Jackie and I spent a little time looking at other transport options, and coincidentally, as we walked back to the parked car, hearing calling pallid swifts in the process!

I dropped Jackie off in central Seville for her visit to the city and subsequent trip to southern Andalucía before opting myself for the coach journey home to Madrid, so finally rounding off a superb tour!

SPECIES LIST

BIRDS - AVES

GROUSE, PHEASANTS & allies - Phasianidae

Red-legged partridge *Alectoris rufa* : Noted daily in small to moderate number, sometimes numerous in Andújar.

GEESE, SWANS & DUCKS - Anatidae

Greylag goose *Anser anser* : A few noted daily at El Rocío from 25th.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* : Noted 3 days Doñana, at El Rocío, the Dehesa de Abajo and José Antonio Valverde centre.

Eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope* : 6+ at El Rocío on 28th.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* : Common, widespread and noted each full day, especially in Doñana on 23rd.

Northern shoveler *Anas clypeata* : Noted daily Doñana from 25th, and particularly abundant Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Northern pintail *Anas acuta* : 2 El Rocío on 26th, 2 again El Rocío on 28th, and 4+ Dehesa de Abajo on 29th.

Eurasian teal *Anas crecca* : Noted various sites Doñana daily from on 25th.

Red-crested pochard *Netta rufina* : Abundant Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Common pochard *Aythya ferina* : A few Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

GREBES - Podicipedidae

Little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* : Only a few Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Black-necked/eared grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* : 2 Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

FLAMINGOS - Phoenicopteridae

Greater flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* : Noted daily El Rocío from on 26th, and abundant Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

STORKS - Ciconiidae

Black stork *Ciconia nigra* : Four Doñana Northern Marshes on 28th.

White stork *Ciconia ciconia* : Abundant en route on 22nd, and then daily in moderate number from 25th.

IBISES & SPOONBILLS - Threskiornithidae

Glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* : Noted Doñana Northern Marshes on 27th, and abundant, but distant there on 28th.

Eurasian spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* : Several groups noted Doñana Northern Marshes on 27th and 28th.

HERONS & BITTERNs - Ardeidae

Squacco heron *Ardeola ralloides* : One seen by the group Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Western cattle egret *Bubulcus ibis* : Moderate numbers noted en route on 22nd, and again, plus around Doñana on 25th, 26th and 28th.

Grey heron *Ardea cinerea* : Frequent along the river in Andújar on 22nd, and again on 24th, then noted daily in Doñana from 26th.

Great [white] egret *Ardea alba* : A few noted Odiel Estuary on 27th, and Doñana Northern Marshes on 28th.

Little egret *Egretta garzetta* : Moderate numbers noted widely in Doñana and the Odiel Estuary on 25th.

CORMORANTS - Phalacrocoracidae

Great cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* : Abundant Andújar on 22nd, and again on 24th, then smaller numbers Odiel Estuary on 27th, and Doñana Northern Marshes on 28th.

HAWKS, EAGLES & allies - Accipitridae

Black-winged/-shouldered kite *Elanus caeruleus* : One en route on 22nd, and different singles Doñana Northern Marshes on 26th and 28th.

Red kite *Milvus milvus* : One en route on 22nd, several en route on 25th, several Doñana Northern Marshes on 26th, and 1+ there on 28th.

Griffon vulture *Gyps fulvus* : Noted in variable number daily in Andújar from 23rd, also en route and Doñana on 25th, and also on 26th.

Cinereous/monk/black vulture *Aegypius monachus* : Small numbers noted in Andújar on 23rd and 24th.

Egyptian vulture *Neophron percnopterus* : A late adult Doñana Northern Marshes was a welcome surprise on 26th.

Western marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus* : Common in and around Doñana and noted daily from on 25th.

Eurasian sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* : 1 en route on 22nd, 2 Coto del Rey on 26th.

Common buzzard *Buteo buteo* : 1 en route on 22nd, plenty en route on 25th, and again on 26th, 2+ Coto del Rey on 28th.

Spanish imperial eagle *Aquila adalberti* : A superb pair Andújar on 22nd and one of these adults again on 24th, 1 Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th, and a fine adult Doñana Northern Marshes on 26th.

Golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* : A very distant perched bird Andújar on 22nd.

Booted eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* : A dark morph bird Coto del Rey on 26th.

FALCONS & allies - Falconidae

Lesser kestrel *Falco naumanni* : A few noted en route and Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th.

Common/Eurasian kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* : Noted daily from 25th, though some were probably Lesser Kestrels in the Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th.

Peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus* : Single birds Doñana on 26th and 27th.

RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS - Rallidae

Purple swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* : Only heard Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Common moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* : Heard Andújar on 22nd, widespread in small numbers Doñana daily from 26th.

Eurasian coot *Fulica atra* : Abundant El Rocío and noted there almost daily from 25th.

Red-knobbed coot *Fulica cristata* : One El Rocío was a great find on 25th.

STILTS & AVOCETS - Recurvirostridae

Black-winged stilt *Himantopus himantopus* : Abundant El Rocío from 25th, and 1000+ Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Pied avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* : A few noted El Rocío on 25th, and 50+ Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

PLOVERS & LAPWINGS - Charadriidae

Northern lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* : A few noted Doñana area from 26th, with 50+ on 28th.

Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola* : Plenty of roosting birds Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Common ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula* : Plenty on the salinas Odiel Estuary on 27th.

SANDPIPERS, SNIPES & allies - Scolopacidae

Common snipe *Gallinago gallinago* : A few El Rocío on 26th and again on 28th.

Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa* : Several El Rocío on 25th, 27th, and 2 noted on 28th.

Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica* : Plenty of roosting birds Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* : Plenty of roosting birds Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata* : 20+ roosting birds Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Spotted redshank *Tringa erythropus* : One flew over the Dehesa de Abajo calling on 28th.

Common redshank *Tringa totanus* : 100+ on the salinas Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Common greenshank *Tringa nebularia* : 10+ roosting birds Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* : 3 Doñana Northern Marshes on 26th.

Common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* : 2+ Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Ruddy turnstone *Arenaria interpres* : 20+ Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* : 1 Odiel Estuary salinas on 27th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* : Abundant Odiel Estuary salinas on 27th.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* : 40+ Dehesa de Abajo+ on 28th.

GULLS, TERNS & SKIMMERS - Laridae

Slender-billed gull *Chroicocephalus genei* : 15+ Odiel Estuary salinas were a great find on 27th.

Black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* : Abundant El Rocío + other sites daily from 25th.

Audouin's gull *Ichthyaetus audouinii* : 2 Odiel Estuary salinas on 27th.

Yellow-legged gull *Larus michahellis* : Common Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus* : Abundant Odiel Estuary + Doñana Northern Marshes from 27th.

Caspian tern *Hydroprogne caspia* : 1 in flight overhead Odiel Estuary on 27th.

Sandwich tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* : 6+ Odiel Estuary on 27th.

SANDGROUSE - Pteroclididae

Pin-tailed sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata* : 200+ very distant birds Doñana Northern Marshes on 26th.

PIGEONS & DOVES - Columbidae

Rock dove / feral pigeon *Columba livia* : Some wild-type rock doves in Andújar on 22nd, but then only feral birds around farms etc. from on 24th.

Common wood pigeon *Columba palumbus* : Widespread and seen daily, though commoner in the Doñana area on 22nd.

Eurasian collared dove *Streptopelia decaocto* : A few Andújar from 22nd - 24th, plus a few Doñana area on 27th, and again on 28th.

OWLS - Strigidae

Eurasian eagle-owl *Bubo bubo* : Heard Andújar on 23rd.

Tawny owl *Strix aluco* : A pair duetting near El Rocío on 26th.

Little owl *Athene noctua* : Singles Andújar on 23rd, and on 24th, 1 Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th, and heard Coto del Rey on 26th.

SWIFTS - Apodidae

Pallid swift *Apus pallidus* : Heard Seville airport with Jackie on 29th.

KINGFISHERS - Alcedinidae

Common kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* : A lovely bird Andújar on 22nd, and h Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

HOOPOES - Upupidae

Eurasian hoopoe *Upupa epops* : Small numbers noted Andújar on 23rd & 24th and Doñana on 26th & 27th.

WOODPECKERS - Picidae

Lesser spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* : Heard Doñana on 26th.

Great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* : Heard Andújar on 23rd, and seen there on 24th.

Iberian green woodpecker *Picus sharpei* : Singles seen Andújar on 22nd - 24th and a few heard there as well.

SHRIKES - Laniidae

Iberian grey shrike *Lanius meridionalis* : One Andújar on 23rd, two there on 24th, plus one Doñana on 27th.

CROWS, JAYS & MAGPIES - Corvidae

Eurasian jay *Garrulus glandarius* : Two Andújar on 24th.

Iberian magpie *Cyanopica cooki* : Abundant both areas and seen daily from 22nd.

Eurasian magpie *Pica pica* : Common both areas and also seen daily from 22nd.

Red-billed chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* : 2 Andújar on 23rd, and again on 24th.

Western jackdaw *Corvus monedula* : 6+ Andújar on 24th, and lots Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Northern/common raven *Corvus corax* : Small numbers noted en route on 25th, and Doñana daily from on 26th.

TITS & CHICKADEES - Paridae

Great tit *Parus major* : 1+ Andújar on 24th, then small numbers Doñana on 25th, again on 26th, and 2+ Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* : A few Andújar on 23rd, and again on 24th.

PENDULINE TITS - Remizidae

Eurasian penduline tit *Remiz pendulinus* : 1 El Rocío on 25th, and 3+ there on 28th.

SWALLOWS & MARTINS - Hirundinidae

Sand martin / bank swallow *Riparia riparia* : 5 Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Barn swallow *Hirundo rustica* : 6+ Doñana Northern Marshes on 28th.

Eurasian crag martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* : 200+ Andújar on 23rd, and 50+ there on 24th.

Common house martin *Delichon urbicum* : 8+ Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

BUSHTITS, LONG-TAILED TITS - Aegithalidae

Long-tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus* : Just a few Andújar on 22nd, and again on 24th.

LARKS - Alaudidae

Crested lark *Galerida cristata* : A few Andújar on 24th, lots Doñana Northern Marshes on 26th, and abundant various sites on 28th.

Thekla lark *Galerida theklae* : 2 Andújar on 24th.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea* : Heard Andújar on 22nd, 2 there on 23rd, heard again there on 24th, and 2+ Doñana on 26th.

Eurasian/common skylark *Alauda arvensis* : Common on the open seasonally flooded fields Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th and 26th.

CISTICOLAS & allies - Cisticolidae

Zitting cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* : Noted El Rocío on 25th and 26th, with lots Doñana on 28th.

OLD WORLD WARBLERS - Sylviidae

Cetti's warbler *Cettia cetti* : Only heard in the end; birds singing Andújar on 22nd and 24th, and plenty Doñana daily from on 26th.

Willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* : A late migrant El Rocío on 25th.

Common chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* : 2 Andújar on 22nd, then plenty El Rocío on 25th and 26th, with a large influx from 27th.

Yellow-browed warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* : For the second time on this tour we found our own bird; 1 Odier Estuary on 27th.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* : Two males Andújar on 23rd, and 3+ Doñana Northern Marshes on 26th.

Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata* : 1 Andújar on 23rd, heard there on 24th, and 2 El Rocío on 28th.

Sardinian warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* : Noted daily, with birds seen Andújar and Doñana, though only heard Doñana from 27th.

WRENS - Troglodytidae

Eurasian wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* : Only heard singing Andújar on 22nd.

STARLINGS - Sturnidae

Spotless starling *Sturnus unicolor* : Common, widespread and seen daily, being particularly abundant Doñana Northern Marshes on 28th.

THRUSHES - Turdidae

Ring ouzel *Turdus torquatus* : A new species for the tour: a fine male was seen briefly in flight near El Rocío during a huge early morning movement of Song Thrushes on 27th.

Common blackbird *Turdus merula* : Common Andújar where seen daily from on 22nd, and also noted El Rocío on 27th.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus* : One noted in flight El Rocío during the same thrush movement on 27th.

Song thrush *Turdus philomelos* : Large numbers on active passage early morning near El Rocío on 27th, and a few noted Odiel Estuary on 28th.

Mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus* : A few daily Andújar from 22nd - 24th.

OLD WORLD CHATS & FLYCATCHERS - Muscicapidae

European robin *Erithacus rubecula* : Abundant Andújar and widespread Doñana, being seen on 6 days.

Black redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* : Common to abundant, widespread and seen daily.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* : 1 Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th.

European/common stonechat *Saxicola rubicola* : A few en route and Andújar on 22nd, quite common and widespread Doñana daily from 25th.

Northern wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* : Several Doñana Northern Marshes daily from 25th.

Blue rock thrush *Monticola solitarius* : Single males Andújar on 22nd and 24th.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Passeridae

House sparrow *Passer domesticus* : Common, widespread and noted daily.

Spanish sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* : Huge numbers heard in the bushes near Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

Eurasian tree sparrow *Passer montanus* : 1 Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th.

WAGTAILS & PIPITS - Motacillidae

Western yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava* : 2+ late migrants Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th.

Grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* : At least 2 Andújar on 22nd.

White wagtail *Motacilla alba* : Common, widespread and seen daily in variable number.

Meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis* : After just 1 noted Andújar on 23rd, it suddenly became much commoner and was noted daily in small numbers thereafter.

Water pipit *Anthus spinoletta* : 1 Laguna del Portil on 27th.

FINCHES & allies - Fringillidae

Common chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* : Common Andújar and noted daily from 23rd, with smaller numbers Doñana each full day there.

European serin *Serinus serinus* : A couple of flocks noted Doñana Northern Marshes on 27th, and 2 noted Dehesa de Abajo on 28th.

European greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* : Only noted in Andújar on 24th.

European goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* : Small flocks Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th, and again on 27th.

Common linnet *Carduelis cannabina* : 20+ Odiel Estuary on 28th.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* : 2+ Andújar gave great views on 23rd.

BUNTINGS, NEW WORLD SPARROWS & allies - Emberizidae

Corn bunting *Emberiza calandra* : Lots Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th, and 1 Odiel Estuary on 28th.

Cirl bunting *Emberiza cirlus* : Heard singing Andújar on 22nd, and 2 seen there on 24th.

MAMMALS - MAMMALIA

RABBITS & HARES - Leporidae

European rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* : Noted in small numbers Andújar and in larger numbers very locally in Doñana daily.

CATS - Felidae

Iberian lynx *Felis pardina* : 2 Andújar on 23rd, and 2 Doñana on 28th was my first 'double double' for Iberian Lynx on this tour :-)

DOGS & allies - Canidae

Red fox *Vulpes vulpes* : One at dusk Andújar on 24th.

HORSESHOE BATS - Rhinolophidae

Horseshoe bat sp. *Rhinolophus sp.* : One Andújar on 24th.

VESPER BATS - Vespertilionidae

Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* : Plenty El Rocío each evening from on 25th,.

Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii* : Numerous Andújar on 24th.

Greater mouse-eared bat *Myotis myotis* : 2-3 Andújar on 24th.

PIGS - Suidae

Eurasian wild boar *Sus scrofa* : 1 Andújar on 23rd, 5 there on 24th, plenty Doñana on 25th, and 15+ there on 26th.

DEER - Cervidae

Red deer *Cervus elaphus* : Abundant at both Andújar and Doñana, including some fine stags. Seen daily.

Fallow deer *Dama dama* : Also abundant at both Andújar and Doñana, including some fine stags. Daily except on 28th.

CATTLE, ANTELOPE, SHEEP & GOATS - Bovidae

Mouflon *Ovis orientalis* : 3+ Andújar on 23rd, and at least 2 there on 24th.

REPTILES - REPTILIA

Geckos - Gekkonidae

Moorish gecko *Tarentola mauritanica* : A few to several seen every evening El Rocío on 25th.

Wall/Typical Lizards - Lacertidae

Iberian wall lizard *Podarcis hispanica* : 2 Andújar on 24th, and 1+ El Rocío on 25th and 26th.

Colubrid or "harmless(!)" snakes - Colubridae

Horseshoe whip snake *Coluber hippocrepis* : A brief snake crossing ahead of us Doñana Northern Marshes was probably this species on 27th.

[Western] Montpellier snake *Malpolon monspessulanus* : A small to middling individual crossed the Doñana Northern Marshes track ahead of us on 28th.

AMPHIBIANS - AMPHIBIA

Salamanders & newts - Salamandridae

Fire Salamander *Salamandra salamandra* : After heavy rain, a squashed individual Andújar on 23rd.

Tree frogs - Hylidae

Stripeless/Mediterranean tree frog *Hyla meridionalis* : Heard croaking Andújar on 24th, and Doñana on 26th.

BUTTERFLIES - LEPIDOPTERA

SKIPPERS - HesperIIDae

Zeller's skipper *Borbo borbonica* : In the Doñana Northern Marshes noted on 25th, plenty there on 26th, and 1 on 28th.

TYPICAL WHITES - subf: Pierinae

Large white *Pieris brassicae* : A few Doñana Northern Marshes on 26th.

Small white *Pieris rapae* : 1 Andújar on 24th.

Bath white *Pontia daplidice* : 1 Doñana on 25th.

YELLOW & SULPHURS - subf: Coliadinae

Clouded yellow *Colias crocea* : 1 Andújar on 24th, and 2 Doñana on 26th.

COPPERS - subf: Lycaeninae

Small copper *Lycaena phlaeas* : 1 El Rocío on 25th.

BLUES & OPALS - subf: Polyommatainae

African grass blue *Zizeeria knysna* : Several El Rocío on 25th, and 1 Doñana Northern Marshes on 27th.

VANESSIDS & SMALLER FRITILLARIES - subf: Nymphalinae

Red admiral *Vanessa atalanta* : Several Andújar on 24th, and also Doñana on 26th and 28th.

Painted lady *Vanessa cardui* : A few Andújar on 23rd, and 1 El Rocío on 25th.

MOTHS - LEPIDOPTERA

HAWK-MOTHS - SPHINGIDAE

Hummingbird hawkmoth *Macroglossum stellatarum* : 2 around the accommodation in Andújar on 23rd.

Striped hawkmoth *Hyles livornica* : A beautiful individual photographed by Andrew beside the door to the El Rocío roof viewpoint on 27th.

TIGER, ERMINE, FOOTMAN MOTHS & allies - ARCTIIDAE

Crimson speckled *Utetheisa pulchella* : Several Doñana Northern Marshes on 25th, and lots Doñana area on 28th.

DAMSELFLIES & DRAGONFLIES - ODONATA

BLUE-TAILED & RED DAMSELFLIES - Coenagrionidae

Iberian bluetail *Ischnura graellsii* : 2 El Rocío on 25th.

HAWKERS & EMPERORS - Aeshnidae

Lesser emperor *Anax parthenope* : Common and widespread in the Doñana area on 25th,.

CHASERS, SKIMMERS & DARTERS - Libellulidae

Red-veined darter *Sympetrum fonscolombii* : Abundant in the Doñana area, with 1000s sometimes present.

OTHER SELECTED INSECTS - INSECTA

Blue-winged grasshopper *Oedipoda caerulea* : 2, possibly this species, noted Andújar on 24th.

Honey bee *Apis mellifera* : Plenty Andújar on 24th.

OTHER SELECTED TAXA - .

Red signal crayfish *Procambarus clarkii* : Several Doñana area on 28th.

LARGER FISH - PISCES

Common carp *Cyprinus carpio* : Several good sized fish in Andújar on 24th.