

# THE TRAVELLING NATURALIST

TRAVEL | EXPERIENCE | CONSERVE

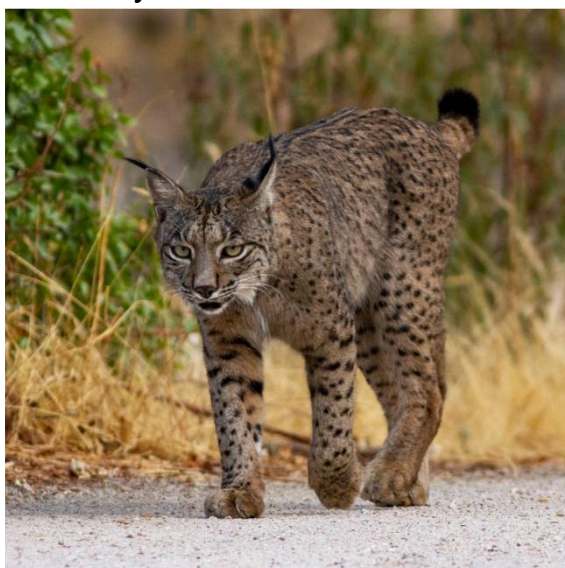


## Tour Report

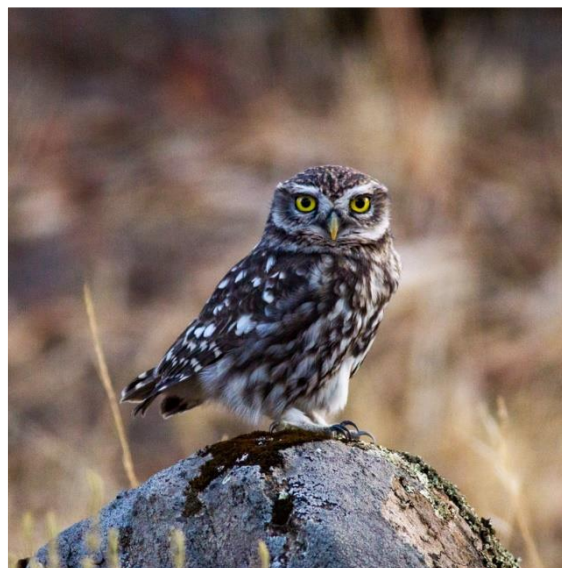
### Spain – Iberian Lynx Quest

16 – 23 October 2022

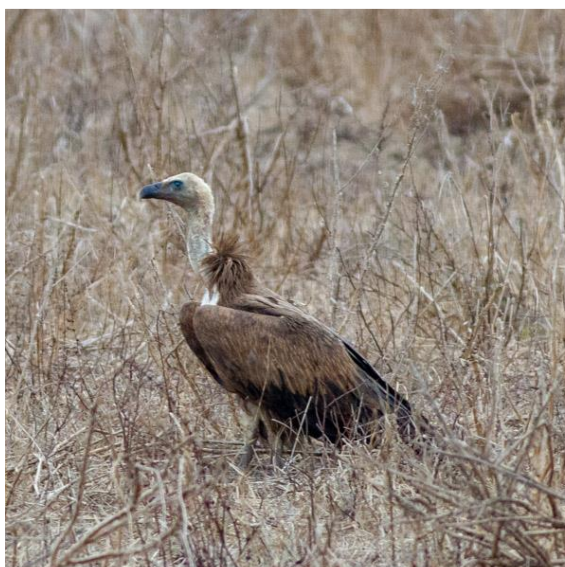
Iberian lynx



Little owl



Griffon vulture



Greater flamingo



Compiled by John Muddeman

The Iberian lynx is one of the rarest wild cats in world, though fortunately, the sad accolade of being the rarest now pertains to another species. It faced a critical situation in 2002, following a collapse in wild rabbit populations across the Iberian Peninsula in the 1980s. Just two separate populations (and a few dispersed individuals) survived – totalling approximately 100 animals. Thankfully - following intensive conservation measures - there are now nearly 2,000 free-living individuals. The number is rising markedly year-on-year, with the species being successfully reintroduced to former haunts, as well as, to a much lesser degree, dispersing by its own means.

Naturally though, at such low numbers, it remains a challenge to see an Iberian Lynx in the wild. There are just two areas in Andalucía which are currently accessible and offer a realistic chance of viewing them: Andújar and Doñana. Basing the tour around both sites had the potential to be rewarding in a number of ways. Firstly, guests would have the opportunity to experience areas that looked very different but were surprisingly similar in floristic and wildlife terms, secondly, our group visits would give financial support to the local communities of the respective areas, and finally, should we be unlucky in one location, the second site would provide another opportunity for lynx activity.

Lynx watching can be frustrating though. These days, plenty of observers are visiting the countryside searching for this gorgeous animal. On the one hand, this means that visitors have more access to information about patterns of sightings which can improve the chance of an occurrence. On the other, the notoriously fickle nature of the species and its activity patterns can result in random sightings being recorded - making it appear easier to spot an Iberian Lynx than it actually is.

To add to the challenges this year, a significant number of females still had cubs in tow (which made them shier), and the area was undergoing a drought. To sight an Iberian Lynx in these conditions would be a very special experience.

#### **Day 1: Arrive Seville & transfer to Andújar**

**Sunday 16 October 2022**

After meeting the group at the airport, we found a bar for welcome drinks and a tasty tapas-style lunch. We then spotted our first Iberian lynx on the journey to Andújar! OK, it was just a metal one used as a symbol for the town, but it sent a clear message about the strong local interest in this species.

We checked into our accommodation and, after a short break, headed out to get some fresh air and our first taste of the local area. The vicinity of the Jándula River was already getting dark due to the thick cloud cover, but we still enjoyed spotting our first red and fallow deer on the valley slopes, in addition to a small flock of Iberian magpies that were silently sneaking across the river as we watched from a narrow footbridge.

We rounded off the first day with a sumptuous dinner before getting a good night's sleep.

#### **Day 2: Andújar area**

**Monday 17 October 2022**

Leaving at 08:00, we had another short session down at the river, though this time under clear skies. There was much more light than the evening before and, despite the early hour, we were able to make out the ghostly shape of a Eurasian otter swimming under the water below the bridge. We also saw a few birds, including grey heron, grey and white wagtail, Cetti's warbler, common kingfisher and lots of Iberian magpies. At just 11.5°C, it was a pleasantly cool start to the day.

I left the group enjoying their breakfast and headed down to Andújar to buy picnic food for the two days. We then followed a series of narrow roads and bumpy tracks to the main Iberian lynx watching site in the area.

Being a little after noon, the sun was already surprisingly strong and the temperature had risen into the low 20s. We watched patiently, looking for any tell-tail signs of movement, though seemingly all the other observers had already packed up and moved out. Perhaps they thought it was too late or hot by now? A bad move as it turned out!

As the air warmed, cinereous and griffon vultures started appearing to get a free ride on the resulting air currents. We had excellent views as they crossed almost directly overhead, flying from one ridge to another. Rising temperatures are usually a bad sign for lynx sightings, as this can reduce their activity and make it harder to see them. However, a nearby watcher, who was in the process of moving position, suddenly appeared and informed the group ahead of me that a female with two cubs was in view. Indeed, there on the track, in exactly the same place I had seen her a week earlier, was a familiar female lying in the shade with her young. Wow! We took a few hurried pictures, and most of the group managed to get views in the telescope, before the family moved off, went round a bend in the track, and slipped out of sight.

After a good wait, and despite a soaring golden eagle vying (successfully) for our attention for a few minutes, we decided to move on. We thanked the observer who had informed us of the lynx's location and headed further along the track in search of a better viewpoint. We were partially successful, as one of the cubs walked across the track from left to right and then, some 10 minutes later, back to the left, but both times it quickly disappeared.

A long hot wait then ensued, with temperatures soaring to over 30°C. Even in the shade of a covered viewpoint, it was hard work! We decided to break for a relaxing picnic lunch. Sitting at a granite picnic table, in the shade of a western holm oak, we enjoyed a rest with a cooling breeze. Mindful of the uncomfortable heat, we made plans to return to the spot later for a mid-afternoon break. After lunch, we dropped down to the main dam in the area, in case there was anything obvious around. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the heat, there wasn't, so we started back. Gabi, the watcher from earlier, was still up at the main viewpoint when we passed, so I got out for a quick chat. Remarkably, just as he had finished telling me that he hadn't seen anything since we left, he glanced back and spotted a large male Iberian lynx lying in full view on the track in the shade of a big bush. Thankfully, we all had time to get out and get the scope onto this gorgeous creature for a good look before he finally got up paced off, disappearing behind a curtain of vegetation. With the cat gone, we headed off too, but not before we were treated to another aerial display from a circling golden eagle. That, and a 45 minute comfort stop, did wonders for reviving us all after the heat.

We certainly hadn't finished for the day though. Dawn and dusk are traditionally the best times for seeing Iberian lynx on the move, so we headed out again, taking a different (and flatter) track this time, which led us past some impressive accumulations of Iberian lynx scat (it can't all be about pretty fluffy things, you know). We reached a high point with fantastic vistas over the mostly agricultural lowlands to the east, then descended into the depths of one of the enormous estates in the area. By chance, Gabi was there again looking for lynx, but this time we went our separate ways. After admiring an abundance of fallow and red deer, including males of both species with very impressive antlers, we started the journey back around sunset.

Thanks to great calls from one of the group, we had two excellent mammal sightings on the return journey: first a fine and very dark male mouflon, and second a rather greyish red fox - an unusual species to see here given that the Iberian lynx reduce their numbers to reduce their predation impact on the smaller game species, especially rabbits. We also saw plenty of red-legged partridges, here in excellent density in contrast to the current situation in most agricultural parts of the country, along with a fine little owl on a rock under the trees.

We rounded off the excitement with another large dinner, before retiring to bed after a very successful day.

### Day 3: Andújar area

**Tuesday 18 October 2022**

The next day, we were out of the door just 45 minutes after our 8 am breakfast. Tuesday was much cooler than forecast, starting at 14.5°C, and pipping 32°C in the afternoon – a relief when compared with the initial forecasts of a scorching 37 °C!



We headed out to the main watching area, where we had seen the lynx the previous day, stopping several times on the way for various deer, red-legged partridges, and a little owl or two. Once again, Gabi, a veteran lynx watcher and photographer, was there before us.. We were glad to hear that we had not missed any sightings so far, since the conditions seemed ideal for seeing the species.

Not a lot happened at the start, though a fine adult Spanish imperial eagle gave us reasonable scope views as it perched on the skyline on a crag. However , it wasn't too long before a Eurasian magpie began alarm, - calling a hundred metres or so along the track, and when Gabi moved towards it, so did I. We saw nothing, so he returned, but I stayed put.

Suddenly, I heard another magpie calling and saw Gabi and the group running towards me. At the sight of his frantic arm waving, I realised that he must have seen a lynx on the slopes. We ground to a halt and then, as if by magic, there was Rafiki, a stunning male Iberian lynx on the track just 10 metres ahead of me. Rafiki was walking slowly at an angle towards us, utterly ignoring our presence. He turned and squeezed through a hole in the fence, before dropping down into the scrub below where he crouched in a small space between the bushes for a minute or so. We continued to watch, spellbound, as he stood up and slowly worked his way down through the scrub of the ridge below us, pausing a couple more times as he went, before disappearing out of sight.

After the lynx excitement, I went to retrieve one of the group, who had wandered off down the track earlier in order to photograph the Spanish imperial eagle. Sadly it seemed he had had no further views of it. However, a short watch from another spot along the track produced the group's first wild boar, which despite being a small piglet was not stripey. The skies were also busy, with regular processions of griffon and cinereous (Eurasian black) vultures passing over, but with no lynx likely, we changed tack.

The temperatures remained relatively cool, so we headed to the Jándula Dam, noting the huge and worrying draw-down of the water level on the way. Although the area seemed devoid of animals, we were soon beckoned over by another local guide to point out a young Spanish ibex feeding on the steep slopes below us. A female and kid were seen on the top of the rocks on the other side of the gorge, then after a considerable wait, a superb male was also spotted on the near-vertical rock face plunging down into the valley. It later walked across, ending up in exactly the same spot as the female and kid noted earlier, giving the group some very good telescope views.

When the sun finally came out from behind the hazy cloud, the temperature rose rapidly to almost 30°C, prompting us to head back to the vehicle and begin a leisurely drive back to base. We even found a small piece of equipment which we had lost in the morning's lynx rush.

Another varied and tasty picnic was taken on the grass behind the accommodation, which, apart from the unwanted attentions of a few pesky wasps, was excellent and very much enjoyed. This was followed by a siesta, or drink from the bar, or both!

The day ended with another drive to the site we had visited the evening before, taking time to photograph red and fallow deer with decent antlers, while also stopping in the heart of a series of artificial rabbit warrens in the hope of seeing a lynx. It was not to be, so, after a brief and very light rain shower, we started back with plenty of light, travelling very slowly to enjoy whatever animals we could, such as a large grey-whiskered wild boar. We also took a short walk along the track in another area where a female lynx with two cubs occasionally appears. On the rest of the return journey, the only sightings of note were two more boar - though one or two of our party also managed to hear the piping calls of the local Iberian midwife toads, which seemed to be responding to the imminent (but actually receding) threat of rain.

Our final dinner in Andújar consisted of four starters before another large main course to effectively round off a highly successful stay.

#### **Day 4: Andújar area, transfer to Doñana area**

**Wednesday 19 October 2022**

We reassembled for a pre-breakfast at 08:00, before leaving to check the river. After an initial false call (we saw some ripples in a large pool in the river) the bridge ahead turned up trumps, with a mother and two cub otters feeding right underneath us. Another, more stealthily, otter passed below us, without producing any bubbles or ripples. We watched the mother and cubs hugging the bank as they headed back downstream, fishing as they went, before finally rounded the last corner and disappearing out of sight.

After a quick check of a large crag area on the journey back, which turned up literally nothing at all, we went straight in for a 10:00 breakfast, leaving plenty of time to pack before loading up the minibus and exiting at 11.30.

The journey was uneventful, but we stopped after two hours to refuel and have lunch - which involved chicken and chips with a fried egg for some. We then took the high road through Seville and continued west, then finally south towards Doñana.

It was amusing to see how the guests responded to the 'wild west' town of El Rocío: its sand streets and hitching rails provoked a few comments, as some of the guests imagined Yul Brynner wandering down a street, or John Wayne coming out with a famous quote or two. But once again, and more in line with our quest for observing Iberia's big cat, we spotted the image of the Iberian lynx on a weather vane in one of the main squares.

We checked-in to our accommodation just after 16:30, only noting the impressively large and old local wild olive trees in passing, then unpacked and were ready again for our exit an hour later. This took us through a long section of the 'greater Doñana' area north of the park, past some of the immense areas of soft fruit crop farms, and a huge area of natural park dominated by stone (or umbrella) pines, before working our way across to another area of the local shrublands, some way back towards Seville. The outline of an Iberian lynx head in white on a roundabout showed once again how concerted action has shifted local perceptions of this beautiful animal from vermin that should be exterminated, to a proud symbol of the area.

After driving a short way down a couple of tracks, checking carefully as we went, we took a short walk out to the edge of a wide area of open grassland. As the evening drew on, a few rabbits came out to play amongst the low shrubs, wild olives, cork and western holms oak trees. It seemed like the perfect time for a lynx to appear, though it didn't, but at least we spotted an Iberian grey shrike and our first 'cronking' ravens. We planned the return drive with enough light to give us a chance of seeing lynx, but with lots of work going on to install a pipeline, it was perhaps no surprise that we came out empty handed. Or almost empty handed, since a huge Eurasian eagle owl had flown from its perch atop a large umbrella pine, then, on a long straight section of road half way back, a nightjar (which could have been either red-necked or Eurasian) gave us tantalising rear views for just a few seconds.

We reassembled in the restaurant opposite the hotel for a late and tasty dinner, though the portions were not as huge as those at our previous lodging.

#### **Day 5: El Rocío area dawn and dusk + El Acebrón lunch**

**Thursday 20 October 2022**

Thursday promised an exciting day out in the Doñana National Park, in a 4x4 vehicle driven by local guides. Since lynx activity is generally concentrated to the first and last hours of the day, we split our day to cover those key periods and give ourselves the best chance of spotting one.

An early breakfast at 07:15 was followed by a swift exit. With quite thick continuous cloud and some light rain, it was almost impossible to see clearly out of the side windows of the minibus until sometime after sunrise, though I still have no regrets about calling out "Stop!" on seeing an interesting tree stump under the pine canopy. The mirth this generated was great and continued almost unabated throughout the day.

The light and weather improved sufficiently for us to enjoy a slightly tortuous journey out along the famous Raya Real, which forms the north border of much of the national park. While we were searching for lynx, our first Doñana red-legged partridges and red deer turned up. It was cool and dry enough for a pleasant walk, so we made our way through part of the Coto del Rey estate, enjoying a few smaller birds as we went, and ending with views out over the completely treeless and dead-flat expanses of a currently dry saltmarsh.

A couple of raptors were visible on some small pylons in the distance, so we started driving towards them, only to spot a stunning adult Spanish imperial eagle perched on a wooden pole much closer. Then, as we tried to move around, it flew off, spooking a group of roosting red kites into flight, one of which started to mob a juvenile Spanish imperial eagle perched in the top of a tall eucalyptus tree. The other two pylon birds were also adult Spanish imperials too, so there were four in this roost area, plus the red kites, and a group of huge griffon vultures, all sitting out the dull weather. Having taken the obligatory photographs, we headed up to the King's Palace to contemplate the original 16th century entrance arch with its Moorish keyhole form, before returning back across the fields, heath, and sandy tracks of the Raya Real to El Rocío for around 11:30.

A break was called for, so the group headed off to enjoy the town, while I took two of the group to the supermarket for a couple of goods and picnic items before we all headed off again at 13:00.

The Iberian lynx was brought back from the verge of extinction, thanks to skillful management of the 100 remaining animals in the early 2000s. One of the key success factors was the establishment of a captive breeding facility in Doñana (there are now five in the Iberian Peninsula) almost adjacent to the El Acebuche visitors' centre. So this is where we went next. Our visit to the centre included a live screening of captive lynx, and a quick stop at both the shop and the café, before taking our picnic outside. It threatened to rain the entire time and was a bit gusty on occasions, but the weather held out, allowing us to enjoy the atmosphere, along with sightings of red deer at the edge of the picnic area. The local Iberian magpies, though present, refused to come close, so we headed off for a short walk at another Doñana palace, this time close to the El Acebrón stream.

This has a very pleasant circular walk but, perhaps given the time of day and the weather conditions, it was very quiet. That said, it enabled us to stretch our legs on the sandy tracks and the raised boardwalks over the wet and peaty gulley.

We returned to the hotel after a short tour along the sandy and busy Raya Real then out towards the heart of the Doñana marshes. One of the group spotted an Egyptian vulture soaring over the forest, but it quickly disappeared. We also had excellent views of a few fine red deer, then a small group of griffon vultures who had just polished off a small carcass, though the latter soon took to the air.

A few flighty common kestrels, and a more confiding common buzzard, were worth stopping for, though we quite quickly carried on to another visitors' centre, complete with a large display area. But not before enjoying a gorgeous barn owl hiding in a tamarisk. The owl gave us prolonged views and some fun with the cameras, as we tried to manually adjust the focus to blur out most of the vegetation in the foreground of the shot.

Our return was quite direct, despite a few twists and turns on the way. In the pine forest, we saw three mature male Iberian red deer - the smallest of the species, and probably less affected by cross-breeding than the larger varieties, which were selectively bred to be hunted for their large antlers.

We lost the light before hitting the town, but it was still quite early. We still had half an hour to go before dinner, and very light rain had started by the time we walked back out. We were the only diners in the restaurant, so we finished quickly, as increasingly heavy rain was falling outside. By the time some of the group came in later, there was a small river running down the road outside the hotel. It was the first decent rain in Doñana since March or April. The locals called it 'liquid gold'.

It was mild when we got up, with just the odd drop of rain still falling, though there were still plenty of puddles on El Rocío's roads and other signs of last night's downpour. Clearly, it was impossible to consider dirt tracks today, so we headed south, then west through the vast expanses of stone pine and heath that made up the natural park and natural landscapes buffering Doñana proper.

Our first diversion from the principal route was to veer off into the forest and heath, who knew, just perhaps we would get a glimpse of something furry. It was not to be, though the detour gave me a chance to talk to the group about the impact of a huge fire the area had suffered a few years ago, and how, thanks to a total non-intervention scheme, the ground flora was recovering very nicely. Almost immediately afterwards, we bumped into a machine stacking recently felled pines, so the group could see the impact for themselves.

Next, we got out to look at one of the large freshwater lagoons, just inland from the coast. It was rapidly filling with water, despite being virtually dry very recently. I hoped that management work at the back might transform into a few small sand heaps, which would be little island havens for spring birds and other wildlife. Eurasian coot, northern shoveler, gadwall, mallard and a few distant black-winged stilts were scant reward for our visit, so seeing that the thick black cloud to the west was starting to move off, we continued on.

Leaving a monument to Christopher Columbus, and an attractively relandscaped riverfront of Huelva behind us, we headed over the river. We turned down towards a small white mountain of salt near a huge expanse of active salinas, beside the Odiel estuary. Four small gulls on the salt pan turned out to be three black-headed and a gorgeous, rather pink breeding-plumaged, slender-billed gull. The greater flamingos nearby were not much pinker themselves.

After popping into the visitors' centre, we went back out nearby to a small freshwater pool, where the very close proximity to the birds offered a decent photography spot. From here we saw ducks, gulls, greater flamingos, and a glossy ibis. Dapper black-winged stilts were also present, though more numerous on the salt pans nearby, while the black-tailed godwits were almost completely overlooked. Not so a superb bluethroat, which was hopping out in the open along the far bank, and was enjoyed by all in the telescope. A late Eurasian reed warbler and shouting Cetti's warbler also showed very briefly in the bulrushes.

With a high and still rising tide, we slowly drove the long but very quiet road down towards the point, making a series of quick stops to look for some of the local bird specialties. Little and great egrets, grey and a very late adult purple heron, Eurasian spoonbills, an osprey perched on a reserve sign, a fine selection of waders (including Eurasian curlew), common redshank and greenshank, grey and common ringed plovers, plus a few bar-tailed godwit and, of most note, a fine Caspian tern fishing nearby, were all enjoyed in the creeks or saltmarsh areas. Then, on the waterline of the beach, we saw a typically hurried flock of sanderlings and a single Eurasian oystercatcher. The dunes held a few smaller birds, including corn bunting, crested lark and a couple of migrant northern wheatears, but it was slim pickings with most birds hiding in roosts in the saltmarsh. The near lack of wind meant that there were no birds within reasonable range visible out to sea. A dead juvenile Atlantic gannet on the tideline was a sad reminder that avian flu is still rife and impacting the species, even when well away from the breeding colonies (though it may have died from another cause).

At just after 14:00, we arrived at one of my favourite restaurants in a local village, only to find that this was now a trendy pre-booked place and we would have to wait at least an hour. So instead, we headed to a seaside resort town, finding a bar with outside seating in lovely conditions, where the staff were delighted to serve us.

Once we had finished, the lynx watch continued. Rabbits were out in force at a large clearing in the forest on the outskirts of Doñana - despite four dogs wandering around. Although the conditions were good, we saw nothing in over an hour. However, we had arrived a little late, after taking a detour to check suitable adjacent habitat, then pausing again for a superb flowering stand of diminutive slender-leaved snowflakes, mixed with autumn squills, which had all miraculously burst into flower following the previous night's rain.

The drive back took longer than usual, as we diverted off the standard route to explore more habitat while we still had some light. There were a few more wildlife highlights on the journey, including the silhouette of a nightjar cruising across the road against the last rays of light, and a large red fox crossing the road a little further on. We ended the day with a tasty dinner at 21:00.

### **Day 7: El Rocío + Doñana rice fields**

**Saturday 22 October 2022**

It was misty, cloudy, and much darker outside than we predicted, when we rose for breakfast at 07:45. We delayed our exit by 15 minutes, by which time we could see for a reasonable distance, then headed out to the edge of El Rocío. Most of the group went for a walk for an hour, enjoying the cool and evocative conditions. Despite not seeing any lynx, we were all in good spirits.

The majority of the day was then taken up with driving around the patchily cultivated rice fields of the Doñana northern marshes. Unfortunately, the rain from the preceding two days made it impossible to risk the mud tracks, so we stuck to roadside stops and access tracks with a sand or gravel surfaces. A couple of pied avocets were spotted in the first set of pools left behind post-harvest, though it took us a while to access areas with better numbers of birds. A fine black stork was found next, sat amongst a scattering of white storks, little egrets, and grey herons in cut stubble.

Seeing groups of birds fly up in the distance proved that there was more to see, and during another short walk to photograph white storks, over 100 greater flamingos landed in a water-filled paddy a few fields away. The group then observed that there were hundreds more already in the area.

We moved along to this pool and the walk out, getting excellent views of the flock, though they were a little wary, so I reigned the group back in to let the birds relax. Both lesser emperor and red-veined darter dragonflies were present in good number too. A few northern pintail were then seen dabbling on the same pool, along with gull, egret, heron and even a fly-by of great cormorant and glossy ibis, which kept us more than occupied. Not to mention the abundant (albeit introduced) red signal crayfish - the true kingpin of the paddies, since it is a food resource for most of these birds.

We finally moved on again, delighted with what we had seen, only to find six black storks roosting in a bare, dry field. They allowed us to approach quite close in the vehicle, then retreat without disturbing them. With sightings of cattle and little egrets, white stork and grey heron, there was a terrific mix of species

Large numbers of glossy ibis could be seen swirling in the distance, so despite the relatively late hour, we headed off in search of them. It took us some time, especially with a detour to see a small paddy populated with no less than 15 great egrets that were searching for prey, but we finally headed down a very long, but excellent track and were treated to the spectacle of hundreds, or even thousands, of glossy ibis feeding amongst throngs of lesser black-backed and black-headed gulls right beside us. When they lifted to relocate, it was incredible to see the sky filled with birds.

A late lunch beckoned, so we pulled ourselves away and started the journey back. However, late lunch turned into a late picnic as I noticed that all of the flamingos we had seen before, and more, were now in flight nearby. Veering off onto the first safe stopping site, we jumped out and, over the next 15 minutes or so, delighted in watching the incredible wheeling antics of around a thousand greater flamingos in flight. They swirled around and around, before eventually turning and passing directly overhead - the collective sound of their wings creating a clear rushing sound as they passed, despite being a good distance above us.

We took our picnic lunch at a large visitors' centre. Lots of African grass blues, a few crimson speckled moths, and dozens of dragonflies were present amongst the small flowering plants. After a very relaxing lunch, I suddenly noticed a large spider with its legs drawn in out on the silty surface. It appeared to be unwell, barely moving even, but after photos were taken, it suddenly burst into life, lifted a little sand plug and shot down



its hole. A trapdoor spider! It re-emerged shortly afterwards, eating a tiny ant, before opening the lid again and dropping down out of sight.

It was still relatively early, so we started back, finding a mass of autumn white-flowered narcissus serotinus along a verge en route, much to our delight. A circling dark morph booted eagle was the next good find, but it very quickly drifted off in the fresh southerly breeze. We returned via a long section of track running through excellent lynx habitat, but there was no sign of lynx – perhaps not surprising given it was well into the afternoon and there were quite a few people about. I did jump out for a small clump of a yellow-flowered bulb though, which turned out to be the rare autumn-flowering narcissus cavanillesii - the first I've ever knowingly seen.

Nothing else of note was seen - just hordes of people in El Rocío, who turned out to be choir singers, visiting for the weekend from Madrid and another nearby town. Back at our accommodation, we got changed and packed, and began gearing ourselves up to travel home the following day. Our final dinner at the restaurant was rounded off with a flaming - well sparkling really - pink flamingo dessert! A large Spanish group arrived just as we were finishing, so we enjoyed a last drink or two together in the bar before getting a good night's sleep.

#### **Day 8: El Rocío + transfer to Seville (airport or city)**

**Sunday 23 October 2022**

Sunday dawned, quite overcast, cool and still. We had a leisurely breakfast, before leaving at 09:00, given that two groups were due to come in then. We reached Seville airport two hours before one of the group's flight to Belgium, and with plenty of time to spare before the rest of the group's flight home to the UK. I also dropped off two other group members into Seville as they planned to spend two nights there. After collecting email addresses from those who wanted to be sent photographs, I headed off to wait for my train home.

# Checklist

THE TRAVELLING  
**NATURALIST**

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
	<b>BIRDS</b>	<b>AVES</b>								
1	Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>					✓		✓(I)	
2	Northern shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>						✓		
3	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>						✓		
4	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓			✓		✓		
5	Northern pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>							✓	
6	Eurasian teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>						✓		
7	Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Nightjar sp.	<i>Caprimulgus sp.</i>				✓			✓	
9	Rock dove / feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>				✓		✓	✓	
10	Common wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>					H	✓	H	
13	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>						✓	✓	
14	Greater flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>						✓	✓	
15	Eurasian oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>						✓		

16	Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>						✓	✓	
17	Pied avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>						✓	✓	
18	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>					✓		✓	
19	Grey plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>						✓		
20	Common ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>						✓		
21	Eurasian whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>						✓		
22	Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>						✓		
23	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>						✓		
24	Ruddy turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>						✓		
25	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>						✓		
26	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>						✓		
27	Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>							✓	
28	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleuca</i>						✓	✓	
29	Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>							✓	
30	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>						✓		
31	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>						✓		
32	Slender-billed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>						✓		
33	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>						✓		
34	Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>						✓		
35	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>						✓		

36	Caspian tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>						✓		
37	Sandwich tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>						✓		
38	Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>							✓	
39	White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>				✓		✓	✓	
40	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
41	Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>						✓	✓	
42	Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>						✓	✓	
43	Western cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
44	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
45	Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>						✓		
46	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>						✓	✓	
47	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>						✓	✓	
48	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>						✓		
49	Egyptian vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>					✓			
50	Griffon vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>		✓	✓		✓			
51	Cinereous vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>		✓	✓					
52	Booted eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>				✓				
53	Spanish Imperial eagle	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>			✓		✓			
54	Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		✓						
55	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓	✓				



56	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓			✓		✓	✓	
57	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
58	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
59	Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>					✓			
60	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>		✓	✓			✓	✓	
61	Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>						H		
62	Eurasian hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
63	Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
64	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓		H	H		
65	Iberian green woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>		✓	✓	H	✓			
66	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
67	Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>					✓		✓	
68	Iberian grey shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>				✓	✓		✓	✓
69	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			✓					
70	Iberian magpie	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
71	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
72	Western jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>			✓			✓	✓	
73	Northern raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>					✓		✓	
74	Crested tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>				✓			✓	
75	Eurasian blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓					

76	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓					
77	Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>				✓			✓	
78	Eurasian crag martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>			✓			✓		
79	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>						✓	✓	
80	Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓			✓	H	H	H	
81	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	H		✓	
82	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓		✓				✓	
83	Iberian chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus ibericus</i>		H						
84	Eurasian reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>							✓	
85	Zitting cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>						✓	✓	
86	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓			✓	✓	H	H	
87	Sardinian warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>			✓	✓	H	✓		
88	Dartford warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>			✓			✓		
89	Common firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>			H					
90	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	H			✓	H	H	H	✓
91	Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>			H					
92	Short-toed treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>					H		✓	
93	Spotless starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
94	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		✓						
95	Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>		✓	✓					

96	Common blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
97	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
98	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>						✓		
99	Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
100	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
101	Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>					✓	✓		
102	Eurasian tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>						✓		
103	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
104	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓			✓				
105	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓			✓				✓
106	Common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
107	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>				✓				
108	European greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			✓		✓	✓		
109	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>							✓	
110	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	
111	Corn bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>			✓					
112	Rock bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>		✓						
113	Cirl bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>			✓					
	<b>MAMMALS</b>									
1	European rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

2	Iberian lynx	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>		✓	✓					
3	Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		✓				✓		
4	Eurasian otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>		✓		✓				
5	Bat sp.	<i>Pipistrellus+</i>		✓	✓				✓	
6	Eurasian wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>		✓	✓					
7	Red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Fallow deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	✓	✓	✓					
9	Spanish ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>		✓	✓					
10	Mouflon	<i>Ovis orientalis</i>		✓						
	<b>REPTILES &amp; AMPHIBIANS</b>									
1	Spanish terrapin	<i>Mauremys leprosa</i>		✓				✓		
2	Moorish gecko	<i>Tarentola mauritanica</i>							✓	
3	Wall lizard sp	<i>Podarcis virescens</i>		✓						
4	Ladder snake	<i>Zamenis scalaris</i>		DOR						
1	Stripeless tree frog	<i>Hyla meridionalis</i>	H				H			
2	Iberian water frog	<i>Pelophylax perezi</i>							✓	
3	Iberian midwife toad	<i>Alytes cisternasii</i>			H					
	<b>BUTTERFLIES &amp; MOTHS</b>									
1	Bath white	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>		✓						
2	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>			✓				✓	



3	African grass blue	<i>Zizeeria kysna</i>							✓	
4	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓						
5	Painted lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>		✓					✓	
6	Crimson speckled	<i>Utetheisa pulchella</i>					✓		✓	
	<b>DRAGONFLIES</b>									
1	Lesser emperor	<i>Anax parthenope</i>							✓	
2	Red-veined darter	<i>Sympetrum fonscolombii</i>							✓	
	<b>OTHER</b>									
1	'May bug'					✓	✓			
2	Trapdoor spider	<i>Iberesius</i> sp.							✓	
	<b>SELECTED PLANTS</b>									
1	Umbrella pine	<i>Pinus pinea</i>								
2	Western holm oak	<i>Quercus (ilex) rotundifolia</i>								
3	Cork oak	<i>Quercus suber</i>								
4	Western strawberry tree	<i>Arbutus unedo</i>								
5	Narrow-leaved ash	<i>Fraxinus angustifolia</i>								
6	Wild olive	<i>Olea europaea</i>								
7	(Gum) Mastic tree	<i>Pistachia lentiscus</i>								
8	Terebinth	<i>Pistachia terebinthus</i>								
9	Gum tree species	<i>Eucalyptus</i> spp								

10	Hair-leaved snowflake	<i>Leucojum tricophyllum</i>								
11	Yellow narcissus sp.	<i>Narcissus cavanillesii</i>								
12	White narcissus sp.	<i>Narcissus serotinus</i>								
13	Autumn squill	<i>Scilla autumnalis</i>								