



## Southern Spain – a winter paradise for the bored naturalist

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*We spent 11 days in Spain (01.02.-11.02.2018). With the main goal being the Iberian lynx, we first spend some time in Sierra de Andújar, before visiting the Extremadura to look for Great Bustard and finish our trip in Doñana with some stopovers in Cordoba and Fuente de Piedra. Spain has good, usually empty roads and cheap food and accommodations. It was dry and cold, we even had to scrub ice of our car window in Doñana!*

*The amount of trip reports and places in Spain is sometimes overwhelming. We present here a good way to spend 10-14 days in Southern Spain in the European Winter.*



After picking up the car in Malaga, we drove straight in direction **Sierra de Andújar** and “La Lancha” (if coming from Andújar, turn right at Los Pinos 38.128439, -3.965836 and then turn left to road JF-5004, at the big white building 38.181292, -3.922718), currently the most reliable spot to find **Iberian Lynx**. The first day passed and no lynx was seen. However, mammal life, as well as birds are entertaining: Iberian Green Woodpecker, Azure-winged Magpies, Red-legged Partridge, Southern Grey Shrike, Dartford Warbler, Red-billed Chough as well as raptors such as Spanish Imperial Eagle, Golden Eagle and Black and Griffon vultures can be expected. There is plenty of mammals as well: **Mouflon, Red and Fallow deer, European rabbit and Wild boar** can be expected. At the dam we had **Iberian ibex** and bats (**Schreibers' Long-fingered Bat and Myotis sp**) in the tunnel(s). The best tunnel you find when you cross the dam, the second is beneath the first one and can be accessed by following the path a little bit, then it is possible to go down. However, the bats are much further away in the second one. Around the dam, there was also Blue Rock Thrush and Long-tailed Tit ssp *irbii*. During a short night drive, we saw a stunning eagle owl sitting on a pole above the bull pasture. On the second day we were lucky with the **Iberian Lynx** and had an excellent sighting. Tips to find the lynx: Scanning, scanning, scanning! And it is worth to observe the other people as well... Exchanging numbers proved valuable. It would really be helpful if everybody brought radios along!

The afternoon of the second day, much more relaxed with an excellent sighting of a Lynx, we spend some time just looking around, and were rewarded with some reptiles: *Blanus cinereus* and *Psammodromus algirus*. In the evening, we dipped the **Otter** at the bridge.



In search of Great Bustard and other steppe birds we decided to go west in direction Extremadura: **Cabeza del Buey and its plains “La serena”**.

Birding the side roads of the main road between Cabeza del Buey and Pantano del Zújar during the afternoon and next morning, we managed to slowly see all targets: Great Bustards (first one around here 38.775558, -5.310622 ) and lots of Black bellied Sandgrouse (Pin-tailed Sandgrouse very distant). As a bonus bird, we found a Great Spotted Cuckoo. There were a lot of overwintering Golden plovers, Lapwings and Cranes. From the mammalian side it was calm with **Fox** and a single **Iberian Hare**.



With windy and cold and though quite unpleasant weather we decided to leave soon again in direction Doñana national Park, in hope to find some warmer weather along the coast. We were only partly successful...

We did some stops on the way: In **Cordoba**, we had a look at the Mezquita-Catedral to tell our families we did some culture as well 😊 It was nice though! While visiting **El Torqual (Antequera)** we were stuck in fog, but managed to see Bonelli's eagle when descending again, just before the town.





We then spend some time in **Fuente de Piedra**. Avian highlights were Rock Sparrow, some flamingos and hearing the beautiful call of Crane all around us. Here we also saw, besides many **Rabbits**, **Iberian Hare**.

Finally we arrived in the famous **Doñana National Park**. El Rocío is a beautiful town, although it was quite hard to find a decent priced accommodation, compared to the rest of the trip. It is adjacent to a beautiful lagoon that makes a good start and end of the day. Besides the usual flamingos, it is the sleeping place for many wader and other species such as Glossy Ibis. In the morning we dipped on **Otter** in the visitor center La Rocina. Next up was the Palace Acebrón visitor center with a nice walk but not much birdlife. Finally, if you ever wanted to feed Azure-winged Magpies, the El Acebuche visitor centre it is your spot. Midday, there were not many other birds around anyway... We finished the day with a walk into the dunes at Matalascañas. Find information on the visitor centres and where to find them here: <http://www.discoveringdonana.com/donana-info/visitors-centres/>



For the last two days we had the choice of visiting the Odiel Marshes or move on to the Bonanza Saltpans. We went for the second option, starting by driving towards the José Antonio Valverde visitor centre (37.074048, -6.377382), due to the dry weather without problems. Best ask before at another visitor centre about the current access possibilities. Highlights were Black stork and Short-eared owl around the Corredor verte (37.183502, -6.195807) and two **Mongoose** crossing the road at midday close to the visitor centre (which itself was not very spectacular). Also we twitched Richard's pipit on the way (37.193259, -6.245310, maybe even regularly wintering in the area?) and saw Calandra Lark (37.199064, -6.241490), besides many birds like Purple Swamphen, Spoonbill and Black-winged Kite. We dipped Marbled Teal in a nice lagoon with Bluethroat (37.204865, -6.181345). Also about 100 night herons roosting together along the same road (37.215044, -6.167585), what a sight! We arrived in La Algaida to be ready to bird the Saltpans the next day. In the saltpans, we were able to add a few more species to the trip list, mainly waders, Slender-billed Gull and Lesser short-toed lark. In a pond in the middle of the agricultural area (36.810067, -6.328180), there was a surprise waiting for us: Red-knobbed Coot! The real highlight however was flipping *Blanus mariae* (and *Psammodromus algerus*), as well as a migrating Booted Eagle low overhead.



Summarizing, we saw lots in such a short time and with the rather unhelpful weather. We would maybe consider Cabo De Gata instead of Doñana and staying a bit longer at the lynx site to enjoy the landscape and its animals and maybe have a bigger chance for otter. The dry and cold conditions might partially explain why we failed to find any amphibians and not many reptiles, however *Blanus* is great!

If you go to Doñana, you can probably shorten or skip the time in Fuente de Piedra, as many of the species are the same. Following are the species lists. If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me at [swissbirder@gmail.com](mailto:swissbirder@gmail.com)



## Mammal species list

Name	Sierra de Andujar	Extremadura	Fuente de Piedra	Donana	Bonanza	en route	remarks
Schreibers' Long-fingered Bat	1						
Myotis sp	1						
Soprano Pipistrelle				1			
Common Pipistrelle				1			
Red fox		1					
Iberian Lynx	1						
Wild Boar	1						
Fallow Deer	1			1			
Red Deer	1						
Egyptian Mongoose				1			
Iberian Ibex	1						
Iberian Hare		1	1		1	1	
Rabbit	1		1	1		1	



### Bird species list (indicative)

Name	Sierra de Andujar	Extremadura	Fuente de Piedra	Donana	Bonanza	en route	remarks
Greylag Goose				1			
Common Shelduck			1				
Mallard	1		1	1	1		
Gadwall							
Northern Pintail				1			
Northern Shoveler				1			
Eurasian Wigeon				1			
Eurasian Teal			1	1			
Common Pochard			1				
Red-crested Pochard			1				
White-headed Duck					1		
Red-legged Partridge	1	1				1	
Little Grebe			1	1			
Great Crested Grebe				1			
Northern Gannet				1			
Great Cormorant	1			1		1	
Black-crowned Night Heron				1		1	
Cattle Egret			1	1		1	
Squacco Egret				1			
Little Egret				1			
Great Egret				1			
Grey Heron	1		1	1	1	1	
White Stork		1				1	
Black Stork				1	1		
Glossy Ibis				1			
Eurasian Spoonbill				1			
Greater Flamingo			1	1			
Griffon Vulture	1					1	
Black Vulture	1						
Osprey				1			
Golden Eagle	1						
Spanish Imperial Eagle	1						
Booted Eagle					1		
Bonelli's Eagle							El Torcal, Antequerra
Red Kite		1		1			
Black Kite						1	
Western Marsh Harrier		1	1	1			
Northern Harrier			1		1		
Common Buzzard						1	

Name	Sierra de Andujar	Extremadura	Fuente de Piedra	Donana	Bonanza	en route	remarks
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1						
Black-winged Kite			1	1			
Common Kestrel						1	
Peregrine Falcon				1			
Spotted Crane					1		
Common Moorhen	1		1	1		1	
Eurasian Coot			1	1	1	1	
Red-knobbed Coot					1		
Purple Swamphen				1			
Common Crane		1	1	1			
Great Bustard		1					
Pied Avocet			1		1		
Black-winged Stilt			1	1	1		
Eurasian Stone-curlew			1	1			
Common Ringed Plover					1		
Kentish Plover					1		
Grey Plover					1		
Eurasian Golden Plover		1	1	1			
Norther Lapwing	1	1	1	1			
Sanderling					1		
Dunlin				1	1		
Little Stint					1		
Green Sandpiper		1					
Common Sandpiper						1	
Common Redshank					1		
Common Greenshank				1			
Black-tailed Godwit			1	1			
Bar-tailed Godwit					1		
Common Snipe			1	1			
Ruff				1			
Black-headed Gull		1					
Slender-billed Gull					1		
Yellow-legged Gull				1	1	1	
Lesser Black-backed Gull			1	1	1		
Caspian Tern				1	1		
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse		(1)					very probable, distant
Black-bellied Sandgrouse		1					
Feral Pigeon	1	1	1			1	
Common Wood Pigeon	1					1	

Name	Sierra de Andujar	Extremadura	Fuente de Piedra	Donana	Bonanza	en route	remarks
Great Spotted Cuckoo		1				1	
Eurasian Eagle Owl	1		1				
Short-eared Owl				1			
Tawny Owl	1				1		
Little Owl	1	1					
Eurasian Hoopoe	1	1	1	1			
Common Kingfisher						1	Cordoba
Iberian Green Woodpecker	1						
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1						
Eurasian Skylark		1		1		1	
Crested Lark		1		1	1	1	
Thekla Lark	1			1		1	
Woodlark	1	1				1	
Calandra Lark				1			
Eurasian Crag Martin	1					1	
Barn Swallow			1	1	1	1	
Common House Martin			1	1		1	
Richard's Pipit				1			
Water Pipit			1				
Meadow Pipit	1	1	1	1		1	
White Wagtail				1		1	
Grey Wagtail	1						
European Robin	1	1	1	1		1	
Bluethroat				1	1		
Black Redstart	1	1	1	1	1	1	
European Stonechat			1	1			
Song Thrush	1			1		1	
Mistle Thrush	1					1	
Common Blackbird	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Blue Rock Thrush	1						
Blackcap	1			1		1	
Sardinian Warbler	1		1	1			
Darford Warbler	1						
Zitting Cisticola			1	1	1		
Cetti's Warbler			1	1		1	
Chiffchaff	1		1	1	1	1	possibly also Iberian
European Wren	1					1	
Great Tit	1					1	
Blue Tit	1					1	
European Crested Tit				1			
Long-tailed Tit	1						ssp irbii



Name	Sierra de Andujar	Extremadura	Fuente de Piedra	Donana	Bonanza	en route	remarks
Short-toed Treecreeper				1			
Southern Grey Shrike	1			1		1	
Azure-winged Magpie	1			1			
Eurasian Magpie	1					1	
Eurasian Jay	1						
Western Jackdaw						1	
Red-billed Chough	1						
Northern Raven	1	1					
Spotless Starling	1	1	1	1	1	1	
House Sparrow	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Spanish Sparrow			1		1	1	
Common Rock Sparrow			1				
Common Chaffinch	1			1		1	
Common Linnet						1	
European Goldfinch	1	1	1	1	1	1	
European Greenfinch	1					1	
Eurasian Siskin	1						
European Serin	1		1	1	1	1	
Eurasian Bullfinch				1			
Hawfinch	1						
Corn Bunting		1		1		1	