

Spain – Sierra de Andújar (May 2016) and Cordillera Cantabrica (August 2016)

Report by Sjöf Öllers

Two relatively short trips to Sierra de Andújar to see Iberian Lynx and the Cordillera Cantabrica for European Wildcat, Wolf and Bear. Both trips were successful with all target species seen. I saw both Iberian Hare (Andujar) and Broom Hare (Riaño area), but managed to dip on Otter on both trips. Birding was fine on both trips but nothing out of the ordinary was seen.



European Wildcat at dusk near Besande



Record shot of one of the bears at La Peral

Part 1: Sierra de Andújar

During our first trip to Sierra de Andújar in March 2013 it was cold and rainy, so we were pretty confident that a visit in May would be a guarantee for hot and dry sunny weather. Not so in 2016 in the week that we visited; a cold front swept over Spain during that week and we had highly variable weather with quite a lot of rain and moderate temperatures (12-22 °C). We lost quite a bit of viewing time waiting for the heavy showers to pass. Just like in 2013 we stayed in Villa Matilde (www.villamatilde.org).



Shower 347 approaching La Lancha

The two main lynx watching areas (Encinarejo and La Lancha) have been well described in the report by Lee Dingain on mammalwatching.com. The map in his report was still up to date during our visit. The road from Los Escoriales to La Lancha was much worse than in 2013 with lots of deep potholes.

Since we had seen the lynx in 2013 and the weather was pretty bad, we spent less time at La Lancha as planned and instead explored several other areas in the Sierra de Andújar.

We didn't see much on the road north of Virgen de la Cabeza (A6178) up to about Junquillo partly because it was constantly drizzling or raining most of the time, but if you are lucky you might encounter an Egyptian Mongoose (or Wolf if you are outrageously lucky).

At Los Escoriales, a farm complex, where you usually turn left to drive to La Lancha, you can also continue straight on to the viewpoint at Los Alarcones or turn right to Baños de la Encina and Las Viñas. If you turn right, you are on the JV5041 (an unpaved road) which later forks: to the left one continues to Baños de la Encina and to the right you first continue through good woodland, then an olive plantation, until you reach another T-Junction (turn right twice shortly after each other) and finally you end up back in Las Viñas via the JA5012. The middle part of the road from Las Escoriales to Las Viñas was not driveable with a sedan car in 2013 but has been resurfaced and upgraded and the middle section was now in excellent condition.

The first part of the road to the Los Alarcones viewpoint (i.e., continue straight on from Los Escoriales) appears to be good for Iberian Hare (more particular the first 3-4 km after Los Escoriales, I have seen them there now 3 out of 4 visits), but can also be good for raptors, Woodchat Shrike, Eurasian Bee-eater, Hoopoe, etc. At the Los

Alarcones viewpoint vultures are common but we also saw a sub-adult Spanish Imperial Eagle perched on an electricity pylon.

We also visited an area called San Gines, about 10 km west of Las Viñas. From the chapel at San Gines there is a “walking trail” (mostly unsurfaced roads/tracks, and occasionally an actual hiking trail) towards the Rio Jandula and Lugar Nuevo, after which the trail continues all the way up to Virgen de la Cabeza. The trail down to Lugar Nuevo was disappointing and we didn’t see much here in terms of birds and mammals although most of the time we had heavy rain here. The scenery was underwhelming too, mostly boring pine forest and agricultural land. Bee-eaters were breeding near the chapel.

Because of the relatively cold and rainy weather, we could only go spotlighting one night but saw nothing of note. The only minor disappointment of the Andujar visit was that I could not get really good pictures of the lynx, but given the fact that the weather was pretty awful I was glad that we got to see one lynx well. The majority of the visitors/lynx watchers that I talked to that week unfortunately left La Lancha empty-handed.

Itinerary Sierra de Andújar

- May 4: Flight Amsterdam – Madrid; Drive to Sierra de Andújar (3.5 hrs), evening Encinarejo
- May 5 Morning and early afternoon La Lancha; late afternoon/evening Encinarejo and Jabali Trail
- May 6: Morning: La Lancha; afternoon: Ermita de San Gines area/Hike to Lugar Nuevo; evening: Encinarejo
- May 7: Morning and afternoon: La Lancha – evening: road to Los Alarcones
- May 8: Morning Encinarejo and the A6178 – midday road to Los Alarcones – afternoon La Lancha – Evening/night Encinarejo
- May 9: Drive back to Madrid with stop at Desfiladero de Despenaperros; flight home



La Lancha

Part 2: Cordillera Cantabrica

The reports by Norbert Willaert (Cloudbirders) and Mike Richardson and Janco van Gelderen (Mammalwatching.com) inspired me to finally visit the Cordillera Cantabrica; the main aim was to see and photograph European Wildcat. I had wanted to visit the Cordillera Cantabrica already since the mid-90s but somehow a visit never materialized but I am glad I went this time. Certainly one of Spain's more rewarding areas in terms of wildlife and scenery.

Booking some of the accommodation in advance might be a good idea in August because choices are a little limited in the area. Several hotels were full most days of the week. I stayed one night at the albergue (signposted) in the hamlet of Portilla de la Reina because every other hotel in the wider area was fully booked (a large fiesta in the area). Food and lodging at the albergue were cheap, rooms a tad noisy but the young owners were very friendly and helpful. Early starts are possible if you ask them (they will put a thermos with coffee and cookies at the entrance). Another night I stayed at Hotel San Glorio in Llanaves de la Reina. Nice hotel, pretty good food, but in the morning it turned out that they had locked up their customers in the hotel; all the doors including the emergency exit were locked when I (and other customers) tried to get out at 7.45am. I wasn't in a hurry that morning but still pretty annoying. Ask them the evening before if you want to go out early.



View down the valley on the Coriscau hike

The weather was very pleasant all week with temperatures ranging from 23-32 °C. According to the locals it had been unusually warm and dry with no rain for at least three weeks in the Riaño area. In Somiedo we regularly had drizzle and cloud/mist in the early morning and late evening, which sometimes hampered scanning for mammals on distant slopes a little but otherwise it was warm and sunny throughout the day.

The "Riaño area" refers in this report to the area around Llanaves de la Reina/Puerto de San Glorio in the (north)east, the Posada de Valdeon area in the north, Riaño/Acebedo in the west and the "quadrant" Boca de Hurgano/Riaño/Cistierna/Guardo in the south.



Scenery near Wolf Site 1

Itinerary Cordillera Cantabrica

August 20: Flight Amsterdam – Bilbao; Drive to the Riaño area via Desfiladero de la Hermida and Potes (4 hrs)

August 21: Boca de Hurgano/Riaño all morning/evening - Afternoon hikes around Llanaves de la Reina

August 22: Hike to Coriscau – Afternoon Valdeon and Soto de Sajambre – Evening Boca de Hurgano

August 23: Wolf Site 1 – Hike around Boca – Evening: Wild Cat excursion

August 24: Wolf Site 2 – Hike around Barniedo and Boca – Evening: Wild Cat excursion

August 25: Wolf Site 3 – drive to Somiedo/Pola de Somiedo – Bear watching at La Peral

August 26: Bear watching at La Peral – Hikes around Pola and Llamardal – Bear watching near Pola

August 27: Bear watching at Gua/La Peral – Hikes around La Malva/Castro and Pola – Bear watching at Gua

August 28: Drive back to Bilbao (4 hrs) – Flight home



Wildcat near Boca

How to find the wolf?

I booked a tour with [Wildwatchingspain](#) (August 23-27) because I assumed that finding wolves by myself in Riaño and Somiedo would be pretty much a hopeless undertaking. That said, every now and then tourists/mammalwatchers have chance encounters with wolves in the Riaño area and Somiedo.

Wildwatchingspain provided two lead guides, Maria (Riaño) and Lali (Somiedo), but on a few excursions a second guide joined. Maria and Lali both did an excellent job and made sure that all clients got to see the target species. We had a nice group of people with eight participants in total from Spain, Germany, UK and The Netherlands. One thing to keep in mind is that the excursions are only in the morning from pre-dawn to about 11 am and in the afternoon from about 6/6.30 pm until dusk (this is indicated on Wildwatchingspain's website). Between 11 am and about 6 pm there are no excursions and no guides available. For birders and all-round nature enthusiasts this should be less of a problem, since the birding was good around both villages that we stayed in (Boca de Hurgano and Pola de Somiedo). Plenty of beautiful butterflies and flowers too! Nevertheless, I was glad that I had a car, which gave me the opportunity to do some mountain hikes and look for a number of bird species above the treeline, during the down time between 11 am and 6 pm. All in all, Wildwatchingspain delivered as advertised and is a good choice if you want to tick wolves in the Riaño area, but their services also appeared a little measured on some outings. They didn't exactly go the extra mile, e.g. in the evenings when some spotlighting might have been rewarding they always returned around dusk.



Sunrise near wolf watching site 3

One cannot reach the wolf-watching sites that we visited with Wildwatchingspain without a high clearance 4WD unless you are prepared to hike a full day and camp high up in the mountains. In addition, entering the nature reserves where the wolves have their territories typically requires access permits to the reserves (both for yourself and the car). The relationship between the guides/researchers/tour operators that try to promote large fauna tourism in the area and hunting-related entities is less than optimal as we experienced ourselves. We got harassed by a gamekeeper who claimed we were trespassing about 17.43 millimetres into a reserve area for which we allegedly had no permit. So we had to relocate all the scopes, backpacks and cameras a few

metres just for the sake of it, just as we had found the wolves at a distance that would have been okay for decent photos. Well, you can imagine how long the wolves stayed after that episode. While it would be easy to give directions to the wolf-watching sites, disclosing the wolf-watching sites increases the risk of unauthorized visits and might further hamper the wolf/bear-watching tourism efforts in the area, so if you want to see a wolf in the Riaño area with a decent chance of success, book a tour with one of the licensed tour operators. The odds of seeing the wolves are pretty good, but sightings are not 100% guaranteed and distances between you and the wolves are generally in the 300-2000 metres range, although closer sightings (100-300 metres) are definitely possible.

Wolves are still not fully protected by law in Spain and hunting them is allowed in the entire Cordillera Cantabrica (this starts as early as the first of September!). Although wolves occasionally do kill livestock, farmers are compensated and often the damage is greatly exaggerated or even wrongly attributed to wolves when stray dogs are the actual problem. Illegal hunting and indiscriminate poaching practices that randomly kill or maim wolves, other carnivores and their prey are still a problem in the area. I found well-concealed snares myself twice when birding a little off-trail.



Yes those five grey pixels are a wolf about 1.3 km away



"Digiscoped" record shot with handheld mobile phone of two of the four wolves at the same site



Scenery in the Llamardal area

Where to see the wildcat?

August to mid-September is generally considered the best time to see the cats. If the weather conditions are not too extreme they prefer hunting in fields that have just been cut. If it is too hot, the cats may retreat to the cooler forest and can be more difficult to see. In the Riaño area you should keep an eye open for wildcats in suitable habitat along all roads in the quadrant Boca de Hurgano-Riaño-Cistierna-Guardo. The area around Boca is a well-known hotspot, but the cats are also often seen near Besande (but I saw two hybrids here as well). I saw my third wild cat at 10 am in the morning near Valmartino (east of Cistierna), but stopping along this road can be tricky though, so I would focus on the Boca area first because success is almost guaranteed. Another area to check is north of Riaño between Vegacerueja and Retuerto but I agree with Janco van Gelderen that the cats in this area appear to be very shy.

In Somiedo our tour group didn't really look very actively for the wild cat, but the fields below the bear viewpoint at La Peral are a well-known spot to look for them, but pretty much all grassy areas in the valley are worth checking if you don't visit the Riaño area and can only look for them in the Pola de Somiedo/La Peral area.



Big male near Besande

Where to see the bear?

There are at least two main bear-watching areas in Somiedo, i.e. the areas around Pola de Somiedo and Fondos de Vega. I only visited the Pola de Somiedo area. Below is a selection of viewpoints and areas to look for bears that seem fairly reliable and are easily accessible.

Pola de Somiedo Area

During our stay La Peral appeared to be the most reliable place for the bear, see Mike Richardson's report for a map of the La Peral area. It is impossible to miss and only a 15–20 minute drive from Pola de Somiedo.

Another good place is the hamlet Gua: park along the main road at the turn-off and walk 100–150 meters up the access road into the hamlet. From the "centre" in Gua you can scan both valley walls for bears. If they are around, they are much closer than at La Peral.

Also worth a shot are the villages Caunedo and Castro: find an open spot in or on the outskirts of the village (or park along the main road and walk up to the village) and scan the slopes above the treeline with rocky areas and scree, open areas with small bushes, etc.

The parking at Llamardal directly next to the main road can also be a good spot to look for bears. A bear crossed the main road in the Llamardal area one day before we arrived.

Less ideal in my opinion is La Malva; park at the power station and walk up the obvious track through the forest. After a few hundred meters you encounter a gate and walk onto a wider track; take a right turn (left goes down to another car park). Every now and then you get open vistas on the mountain slopes to scan for bears. If you are lucky, they can be very close if the bears are on your side of the mountains, but in general the viewing options are more limited. Eventually the track ends at the village Castro. Probably easier to try your luck from Castro. The walk from La Malva is nice though and pretty entertaining for birds, butterflies and flowers (and probably herps in wetter conditions).

Locals said that the bears are often quite easy to see in April, May and June, even on the slopes directly around Pola de Somiedo. Although early morning and late evening are obviously the best times to go bear watching, bears can be seen at any hour of the day, especially on cooler days.



Fondos de la Vega area

I have not yet been to this area, so I have not been able to check whether the GPS coordinates below are correct, but I have no reason to doubt that they are and they appear to be good vantage points judging from Google Earth.

A well-known viewpoint is near Fondos de la Vega (at 42°58'14"N; 6°37'32.7"W) about halfway between Villablino and Cangas del Narcea. Some reports state you should look for the bears between kilometre markers 95 and 96, others refer to 87 and 88, so better try both.

At the Puerto de Leitariegos pass bears are sometimes seen. Another spot to watch for bears is near Branas d'Abaxau, about 3 km north of Puerto de Leitariegos. The viewpoint is at 43°0'47.3"N; 6°26'55.6"W. These GPS coordinates were published by Norbert Willaert, who has published several excellent reports on Spain on the Cloudbirders website, but they are all in Dutch. Spanish bear watchers told me that two other areas to check for bears are the surroundings of the village of Gedrez and the area around Monasterio de Hermo.

Bears are sometimes seen by tourists/mammalwatchers in the Riaño area, but encountering one is rather difficult simply because there aren't that many.



Near Caunedo

Summarising, you don't really need a guided tour for the bear in Somiedo and the wildcat in Riaño; you may have to work a little harder to find them on your own, although you would have to be unlucky not to see them. If you want to find a wolf in the Cordillera Cantabrica on your own, then Sierra de Culebra is still the best place to go but chances of success are on average lower than for the bear and cat. Luckily, there are usually mammalwatchers out in the field in all three areas to exchange information with. Otherwise, a booked tour with a licensed tour operator is your safest bet (high success rates, i.e. close to 100%, for all three species if you allow 5-6 days).

Trip Lists Andújar

Mammal List – Andújar

Schreiber's Bat *Miniopterus schreibersii* – at least eight in the tunnels at La Lancha dam

Greater Mouse-eared Bat *Myotis myotis* – at least two in the tunnels at La Lancha

Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii* – two seen well (more present) in the tunnels at La Lancha

Mediterranean Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolopus Euryale* – two seen in the tunnels at La Lancha dam

Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrelle pygmaeus* – the Pipistrelle bats seen were probably this species

[Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* – not seen, but a few people had seen one]

Iberian Lynx *Lynx pardinus* – an extremely brief view of one when it crossed the road, much better and longer views of a different animal at about 40-50 metres; both animals did not have a collar



Iberian Lynx



Iberian Hare

[European Otter *Lutra lutra* – not seen; not the lynx, but this is my bogey animal in Andújar, we tried three times at Encinarejo, but no luck, although once I heard them and a little later I saw a large dark-bodied shape dive under, which I am pretty sure was the otter.]

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* – a large male on a distant slope and three animals in the valley below the road at La Lancha

Fallow Deer *Dama dama* – males and females seen on all days, about 5-25 daily

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* – abundant, males and females seen on all days



Red Deer

Mouflon *Ovis orientalis musimon* – two males on a distant ridge in La Lancha. The owners of Villa Matilde told us that it has become more difficult to see them, because they are an introduced species that is no longer stocked up and have therefore disappeared from many hunting estates.



Record shot of the Moufflons (and a Red Deer)

Iberian Ibex *Capra pyreneica* – three at the dam at La Lancha

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* – 2-20 seen daily

Iberian Hare *Lepus granatensis* – superb views of three close to the road near Los Escoriales

Wood Mouse *Apodemus Sylvaticus* – twice one seen while spotlighting



Iberian Hare



European Turtle Dove



Red-legged Partridge

Bird List Andujar

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* – a few at Encinarejo

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* – common, 5-30 daily

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* – one soaring high at La Lancha on May 7, a pair was breeding near the dam in La Lancha but we didn't see it there

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* – two on the banks of the reservoir at La Lancha

Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea* – only one seen

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* – between 3 and 6 daily

Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus* – common



Eurasian Griffon Vulture

[Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* – not seen to my surprise, probably because of the rainy weather]
 Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* – two at Encinarejo on May 5
 Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti* – 1-2 seen daily at La Lancha, a sub-adult at the Los Alarcones viewpoint
 Red Kite *Milvus milvus* – only one on route between Madrid and Andujar
 Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* – fairly common
 European Honey-Buzzard *Pernis Apivorus* – rather spectacular migration movements with dozens migrating north along the mountain ridges. A few birds were seen resting/exhausted in trees and being mobbed constantly by both magpie species.
 Eurasian Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* – seen en route
 Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* – seen en route
 Rock/Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* – common
 Stock Dove *Columba oenas* – fairly common
 Common Wood-Pigeon *Columba palumbus* – common
 Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* – common
 European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* – two between Madrid and Andujar; 5+ on the JV5041
 Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* – a total of 5 sightings, seen at La Lancha, on the road to Los Alarcones and near San Gines
 Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* – not that common (or just silent), but heard once or twice daily, seen twice
 Little Owl *Athene Noctua* – one along the paved road between Villa Matilde and Los Escoriales
 Alpine Swift *Apus melba* – groups seen three times at La Lancha
 Kingfisher *Alcedo Atthis* – one at Encinarejo on May 4
 European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* – rather localized, but easy to see/hear when around, a total of five sightings of small groups of 3-7 birds including at San Gines, en route to Los Alarcones and the R5012 near Las Viñas



Eurasian Bee-eater



Barn Swallows discussing the events of the day

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* – common
 [Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* – a probable one, flushed when driving through the foothills north of Andujar town]
 Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* – about 4-5 seen in total
 Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* – common, very active and easy to see this time at La Lancha
 Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* – 1-3 seen on all days
 Southern Gray Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* – three sightings of singles along the La Lancha Road

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* – twice a single bird seen at Encinarejo, and 3+ and 5+ (on different days) on the road to Los Alarcones
 Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* – few sightings, twice seen in the La Lancha area, more common along the road north of the monastery
 Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus* – very common
 Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* – common
 Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* – 1-2 pairs almost always present at La Lancha dam and less often along La Lancha Road
 Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* – relatively scarce this visit, but usually present along the Encinarejo River
 Common Raven *Corvus corax* – surprisingly only a few seen including a pair breeding on an electricity pylon near the monastery
 Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus Oriolus* – surprisingly common with at least 30 males seen and 3-4 females. We had an excellent encounter with two birds having a dispute while a female watched the spectacle; they seemed pretty oblivious of our presence, so we could watch them for about 10 minutes



Surprisingly cooperative Golden Orioles – the two nearly killed each other minutes earlier

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* – very common
 Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae* – a few seen on the road to Los Alarcones and along the A6178
 Tree Lark *Lullula arborea* – a few seen on the way to Los Alarcones
 Eurasian Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis* – a few sightings only
 Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* – about 10 at La Lancha dam
 Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – common
 Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* – common
 Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* – common, especially at the dams at Encinarejo and La Lancha
 Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus* – seen well at the walking trail near La Lancha dam
 Great Tit *Parus major* – common
 Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* – fairly common
 Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus irbii* – one or two groups of 2-5 birds on most days
 Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* – about 1-2 daily

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* – a few sightings only
 Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* – a few sightings only
 [Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* – heard only, did not make an effort to see them]
 Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* – twice seen well, at Encinarejo and La La Lancha dam, respectively; heard regularly
 Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* – a few seen, some may have been Iberian Chiffchaff but did not check.
 Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* – common to abundant
 Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* – good views of a pair on the walking trail from La Lancha dam
 Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* – several daily in the La Lancha area
 Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* – common, easy to see at La Lancha
 European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* – only a few seen, around Villa Matilde and La Lancha dam
 Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* – common
 Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius* – a male and several female-type birds at the dam at La Lancha
 European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola* – only one male in the La Lancha area
 Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula* – common to abundant
 Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* – fairly common
 Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor* – common
 Dunnock *Prunella modularis* – one seen briefly
 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* – always present along the river at Encinarejo
 Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* – common
 European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* – seemed less common than other finches, but seen several times
 European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* – fairly common
 Eurasian Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* – only seen once
 European Serin *Serinus serinus* – common
 Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* – surprisingly common, daily between 4 and 10 seen and in all areas visited
 House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* – common
 Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* – a total of 5 seen in the Encinarejo area
 Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* – fairly common, seen daily
 Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* – common



Sardinian Warbler



Corn Bunting

Trip List Cordillera Cantabrica

Mammal List – Cordillera Cantabrica

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* – one seen briefly

Broom Hare *Lepus castroviejo* – two at dawn on the edge of a deciduous forest right at the treeline at one of wolf-watching sites.

Wood Mouse *Apodemus Sylvaticus* – only seen briefly before they disappeared in a wild cat's mouth and at night crossing the road.

European Wildcat *Felis sylvestris sylvestris* – six different animals and 11 sightings in total



Success for cat number 2

Cantabrian Brown Bear *Ursus arctos arctos* – three at La Peral on August 25 and two on August 26 (almost certainly two of the three animals we saw the evening before)

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* – common around Boca de Hurgano (at least five different animals seen), one at Wolf Site 2

Iberian Wolf *Canis lupus signatus* – a group of subadult animals at Wolf Site 1 and one adult seen by me (two seen by one member of the group) at Wolf Site 3

Badger *Meles Meles* – one briefly seen before dawn on our way to Wolf Site 1

[European Otter *Lutra lutra* – narrowly missed in the Boca de Hurgano area and only a glimpse at Encinarjo]

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* – one before dawn on the way to Wolf Site 2, a group of about 8-10 at Wolf Site 2

Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* – a female before dawn on August 21, two males before dawn on August 23, three females/subadults at dawn at Wolf Site 3, a beautiful male around dusk at Perlunes on August 26

Pyrenean Chamois *Rupicapra pyrenaica parva* – usually between 5 and 15 at La Peral, a few at Gua, one near Besande south of Boca de Hurgano

Bird List Cordillera Cantabrica

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* – a few on the river near Boca de Hurgano

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* – a few on route, a few around Riaño Reservoir and along the river near Boca de Hurgano

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* – one in a meadow near Valderrueda

Gray Heron *Ardea cinerea* – 1-2 on most days in the Riaño area

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* – one en route from Bilbao to the Cordillera Cantabrica

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* – single birds twice en route from Bilbao to the Cordillera Cantabrica

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* – not seen in the Riaño area by me (but by others), a total of 3-4 seen from the various bear watching sites including La Peral and Gua

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* – one near Llamardal
Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus* – common in Somiedo and fairly common in the Riaño area



Griffon Vulture

Montagu's Harrier *Circus Pygargus* – a female-type bird at Wolf Site 2, a female-type bird near Barniedo fighting with a Common Buzzard
 Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* – one near Barniedo, a few en route from Riaño to Somiedo, about 3-4 in total in the Somiedo area
 Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* – a few en route from Riaño to Somiedo, also in the Boca de Huergano area
 Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* – one near Boca de Huergano, one near Llamardal
 Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* – one near Prioro
 Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* – one near Aguino
 Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* – fairly common to common, about 1-4 daily
 European Honey-Buzzard *Pernis Apivorus* – one on the walk near Llanaves de la Reina, about 3-4 in Somiedo
 Eurasian Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* – between 2 and 15 seen on most days
 Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis* – common along the Cantabrian coast and on Riaño Reservoir
 Eurasian Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* – only en route along the coast
 Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* – only en route along the coast
 Rock/Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* – common
 Stock Dove *Columba oenas* – fairly common
 Common Wood-Pigeon *Columba palumbus* – fairly common
 Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* – fairly common
 Eurasian Swift *Apus apus* – groups of 20-30 birds going south seen near Liesba and in the Somiedo area; also small numbers near Barniedo, near La Malva and Llamardal
 Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* – heard several times in the Riaño area, one seen well west of Boca de Huergano, another one seen near Barniedo
 [Iberian Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis sharpei* – once heard in the Riaño area, regularly heard in Somiedo]
 [Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* – heard at Wolf Site 2]
 [Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* - heard only]
 Eurasian Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* - one flushed near the roadside before dawn at Portilla de la Reina
 Southern Gray Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* – one near Boca
 Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* – one seen well near Boca, one at Puerto de Pandetrave (Valdeon)
 Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* – fairly common, singles or small groups seen about 8-9 times
 Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* – fairly common, seen daily
 Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* – the commoner of the two, a pair seen on the walk to Coriscau, a group of at least 30 birds was seen at Wolf Site 2, daily seen in Somiedo at various locations
 Alpine Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus* – seen only once
 Common Raven *Corvus corax* – small numbers (1-4) daily in the Riaño area and Somiedo
 Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* – common in the Riaño area
 Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* – fairly common but more localized
 Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – common
 Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* – pleasingly common
 [Crested Tit *Lophophanes cristatus* – heard only]
 Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* – two seen well in forest on the edge of Pola de Somiedo
 Great Tit *Parus major* – fairly common
 Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus* – fairly common
 Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* – twice near Boca de Huergano, once near Barniedo, a small group in forest near Pola de Somiedo
 Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* – seen twice on the outskirts of Boca de Huergano
 Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* – one seen on the outskirts of Boca de Huergano
 Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* – a few sightings only near Boca and a nice family group near La Malva
 [Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla* – heard only, did not make an effort to see them]
 Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* – one seen on the outskirts of Boca de Huergano, one near Barniedo de la Sierra
 Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* – a few seen
 Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* – common
 Garden Warbler *Sylvia Borin* – one seen on August 22
 Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata* – a family group seen well on the walk to Coriscau, often seen flushed only
 Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* – several seen in the Valdeon area, a family seen well at Llamardal
 European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* – seen near Boca, Barniedo, Llamardal and Pola de Somiedo
 Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* – fairly common to common, seen on most days
 Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* – one in the garden of the hotel in Boca de Huergano

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola* – fairly common, seen on most days
 Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* – one at Wolf Site 1, a family seen well on the walk from Liesba to Corsicau
 Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* – common on the higher slopes above the treeline in the Riaño area
 Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula* – common to abundant
 Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* – fairly common in the Riaño area, a group of 40 in fields near Prioro was nice
 Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor* – only a few sightings, but didn't pay attention to them
 Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* – once briefly seen in the Somiedo area
 Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* – a couple near Valverde de la Sierra
 Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* – one male at the hotel in Boca, about 7-8 female-type birds seen including at Boca de Hurgano, Barniedo de la Sierra, Besande
 White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* – fairly reliable at the bridge in Boca de Hurgano
 Dunnock *Prunella modularis* – fairly common, seen on most days
 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* – common to very common, seen on all days in double digits
 Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* – seen at Barniedo de la Sierra, La Malva, Castro
 Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* – fairly common, 1-2 seen on most days
 Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* – easy to see on hikes in the mountains, usually in areas above the treeline
 Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* – fairly common
 European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* – fairly common
 Eurasian Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* – fairly common
 European Serin *Serinus serinus* – fairly common
 House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* – common in towns and villages
 Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* – fairly common, seen on most days
 Yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella* – locally common, seen near Barniedo, Boca de Hurgano, and Llamardal

Other Wildlife in the Cordillera Cantabrica

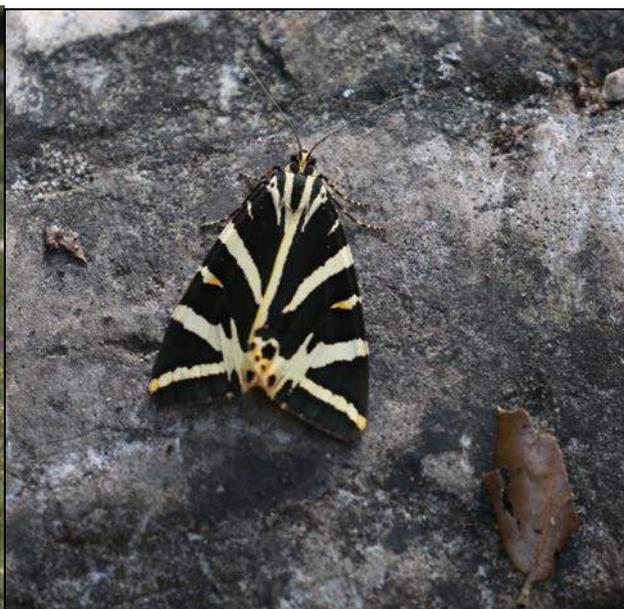
The lack of rain made the salamanders invisible, but plenty of lizards. Surprisingly I didn't see any snakes. The variety of (and amazing colours on many) butterflies was stunning! And I also saw some rather spectacular moths on their day roosts.

Herps

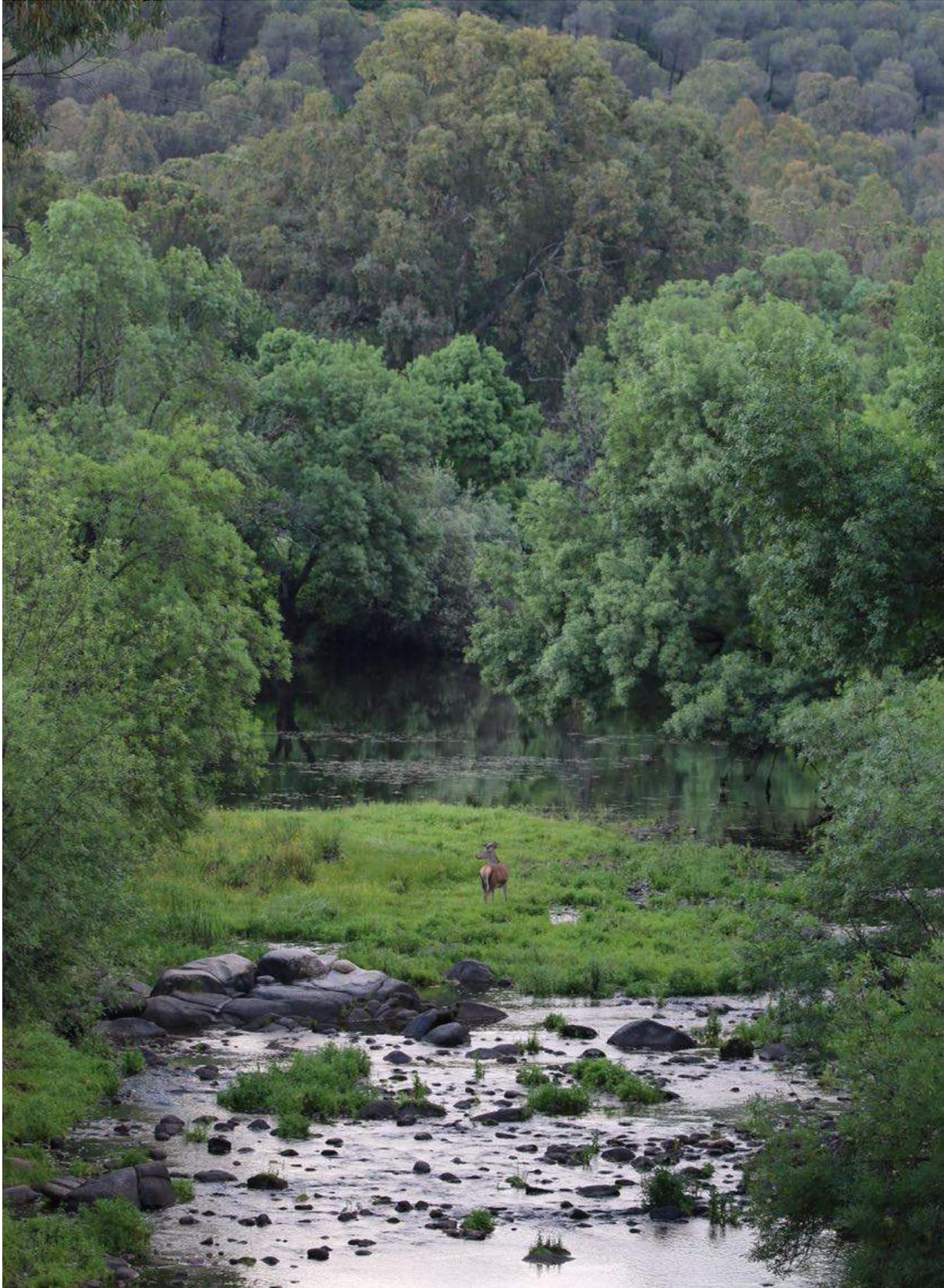
Common Wall Lizard *Podarcis muralis* – seen daily
 Iberian Wall Lizard *Podarcis hispanica* – seen on most days
 Viviparous Lizard *Zooteca vivipara* – several seen
 Ocellated Lizard *Lacerta lepida* – one seen
 Common Frog *Rana temporaria* – one seen



Iberian Hares



No ID but seen near La Malva



Red Deer seen from the bridge at Encinarejo