

## 19 days southern France and Spain (incl. Gibraltar) with 17 mammal species

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Together with 3 friends I spent 19 days (1<sup>st</sup> of February to the 19<sup>th</sup>) by car and tent on a camping/wildlife trip. Books on the occurrence and distribution of the species groups mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and butterflies served as preparation. For the big target of the trip, the Iberian lynx, the trip reports by Valentin Moser (2018), John Weir (2020) and Lonnie Bergman (2022) were read. The following are stops made along the route:



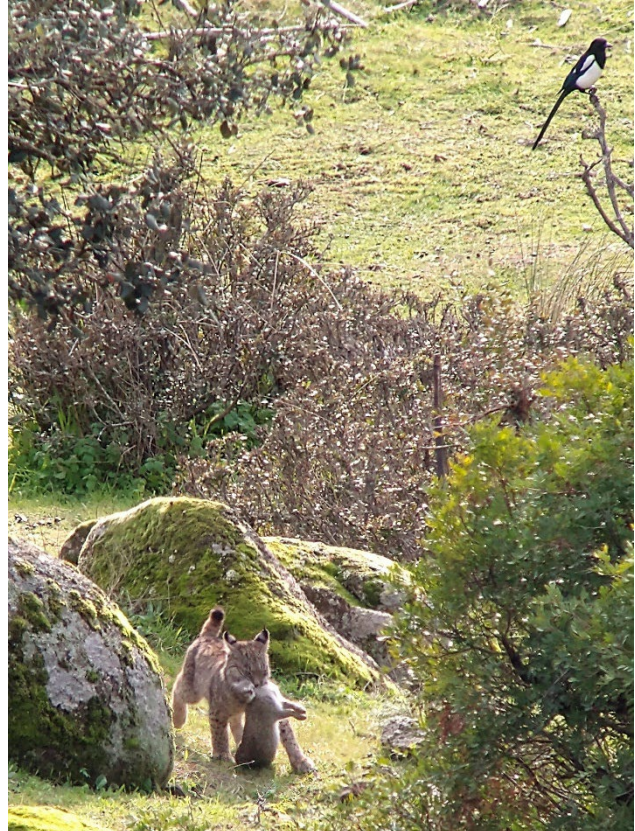
Species are listed where they were first observed on this trip. The first few days were pretty quiet as far as mammals were concerned. An evening walk in the Camargue brought only a **Brown Hare**. Continuing into the Pyrenees, **Roe Deer** were seen at the side of the road. In the Pyrenees we spent half a day looking for the Pyrenean Desman, but the mountain stream was mostly frozen. We found no tracks in the snow or droppings. In Belchite, where we searched mainly for Dupond's lark (*Chersophilus duponti*), **Rabbits**, **Red Fox** and **Wild Boar** were added to the list. During the drive to Andujar we saw the first **Iberian Ibex** from the car.



This was followed by two nights in the Sierra de Andujar, where we slept at Los Pinos. We spent the afternoon and evening after arrival in the Presa de El Encinarejo region. Towards evening we had very nice observations of several groups of **Red Deer**. Shortly before dark, an Iberian Lynx called for a short time. But the search of the opposite slopes with the scope was unsuccessful. After dark we waited a few minutes on the bank of the stream, but the European Otter did not appear. Instead, there was a lot of bat activity in the air above the water.



The second day started with rain and so we decided to stay in bed a little longer, after all it was the first night in a bed for a week. In the morning we slowly drove the road towards Salto del Jandula. Halfway there, the first group of **Fallow Deer** stood in the meadow. We also managed to add a **Eurasian Red Squirrel** to the list. At the known vantage points for lynx, we met a small group who had apparently already spotted a sleeping **Iberian Lynx**. We spent the rest of the morning and the afternoon at that spot and could observe the lynx for several hours. In the meantime we spotted a second lynx, probably a cub, which was being harassed by red deer. The deer came closer and closer to the lynx and a doe tried to scare the lynx away with a kick. The lynx fled with a big jump into dense bushes. A short time later it came back to the rocks where it had been staying with a rabbit as prey. Joachim Pintens, who was also watching, was able to capture the moment, thanks for the photo!



Just before dawn, we continued to the end of the road and the dam. There, we walked through the tunnels mentioned in Valentin Moser's (2018) and Thomas Gibson's (2017). The community identified the species in the pictures as **Schreibers' Long-fingered Bat**, **Daubenton's Bat** and **Greater Mouse-eared Bat**, but there is of course some uncertainty. After dark we observed a number of **Wood Mouse** on the way back to the hotel.





We spent a few days in the Malaga region without seeing any new mammal species. We did see some reptiles and amphibians, which were active despite the rather cool conditions in February. These included Southern Marbled Newt (*Triturus pygmaeus*), Iberian ribbed newt (*Pleurodeles waltl*), Perez's frog (*Pelophylax perezi*), Andalusian wall lizard (*Podarcis vaucheri*), Spanish psammodromus (*Psammodromus hispanicus*), Moorish gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*), Mediterranean house gecko (*Hemidactylus turcicus*) and Southern smooth snake (*Coronella girondica*).

We continued with the **Barbary Macaques** on Gibraltar. Here the question arises whether these can be counted as wild animals at all. The zoo-like habitat is not very attractive and at times almost a little irritating. After a longer search of the slopes, the Barbary Partridge (*Alectoris barbara*) could also be observed. As with the Barbary macaques, this is the only place in mainland Europe where this species can be found.



Halfway back to France, we visited the (not very) warm springs in the Parc Natural dels Ports, where we were able to observe an **European Otter** on an evening walk after dark. The next night we spent in the R serve Naturelle des Coussouls de Crau where we could observe about 8 **Iberian Hare** in the night after our arrival but also the next morning. On the way back to Switzerland, we were also able to note the **European Badger** for the list.

With a total of 17 mammal species (and several "easy" missed species), Spain once again proved to be a very good mammalwatching destination in Europe. The trip also brought 141 bird, 6 reptile and 3 amphibian species. For the insects and the flora we were probably still about 3 weeks too early (but there were already sightings of flowering orchids and butterflies). Early March is probably one of the best seasons for southern Spain to see all the plant and animal diversity. Here are some more pictures:





## Species List

Common Name	Latin Name	Place
Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	Camargue, Grenoble
Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	Pyrenees, Grenoble
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Belchite, Andujar, Tabernas
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	Belchite, Crau, Grenoble
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Belchite
Iberian Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>	Alfambra, Andujar, El Torcal, Grazalema, Tabernas
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Andujar
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	Andujar
Eurasian Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	Andujar
Iberian Lynx	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>	Andujar
Schreibers' Long-fingered Bat	<i>Miniopterus schreibersii</i>	Andujar
Daubenton's Bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	Andujar
Greater Mouse-eared Bat	<i>Myotis myotis</i>	Andujar
Wood Mouse	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	Andujar, Grenoble
Barbary Macaques	<i>Macaca sylvanus</i>	Gibraltar
European Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	La Fontcalda
Iberian Hare	<i>Lepus granatensis</i>	Crau
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	Grenoble