

# Spain + France Trip Report

*Jake Barker*

8/6 - 7/7 2025

## About the author

My name is Jake, and I am a 25yr old ecologist, naturalist and amateur wildlife photographer from Australia. I have spent the last three years living and working in the Kimberley region of Western Australia and have recently moved to Perth where I will likely be based for the next few years. When I travel, it's usually to look for wildlife and I'm lucky to share this interest with my partner Jasmin, who also works as an ecologist in Australia.



To see more of my wildlife adventures or to get in contact, hit me up on Instagram at:

<https://www.instagram.com/jake.b.wild/>

## Intro

This report is split into two sections: the first details wildlife watching in Spain, and the second details my attempt to see a **Desman** in the French Pyrenees. My partner Jasmin joined me for the first week of the trip in Andalusia where we targeted **Iberian Lynx** among a few other things. Following which I was solo and explored northern Spain, targeting **Bears**, **Wolves** and some **Salamanders**. I then popped over to the French Pyrenees, to try my luck for **Pyrenean Desman**.

I'd like to give a huge thank you to Jon for setting up the website and everyone who has posted info, which was invaluable and contributed greatly to the success of the trip. In total I observed 18 mammal (excluding tentative bat IDs), 32 herp and 173 bird species! Given the timing of this trip was sub-optimal for a lot of mammal targets (summer heat) I was very pleased with the success.

For more details about the birds, see the ebird report here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/396010>

Mammals are highlighted in **blue** with other wildlife in **bold**.

See appendix for attempted (tentative) acoustic **bat** IDs – comments welcomed.

This is the second of three trip reports, with the others detailing wildlife observed in the UK and Singapore.

## Part 1: Spain

### Day by Day

#### *Southern Spain*

8/6

#### Desembocadura del Guadalhorce

The first wildlife location of the trip was Desembocadura del Guadalhorce, a great spot basically in Malaga that has nice birds but also a population of **Mediterranean Chameleons** (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*) which were high on my wish list. Walking around in the mid-morning we rattled off a heap of new birds highlighted by **Greater Flamingo**, **White-headed Duck** (female), **European Bee-eater** and **Kentish Plover**! I also spotted a small **Mediterranean Chameleon** moving through some dried-up reeds! Having just arrived from the UK, the heat was new and satisfied with our success we headed back to our accommodation for a midday siesta.



**Mediterranean Chameleon** (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*)



**European Bee-eater**

9/6

We began our journey to Andujar today with a couple of stop offs on the way.

#### El Torcal de Antequera

A few hours north of Malaga, El Torcal de Antequera is a stunning reserve boasting impressive Jurassic age limestone formations. **Iberian Ibex** (*Capra pyrenaica*) were abundant here allowing for excellent views, we saw a couple driving in and at least 20 on a short walk from the visitor centre. We saw our first vultures ever in **Eurasian Griffon** and **Egyptian Vultures** soaring over the range along with a bunch of other bird lifers. We saw a few **Large Psammmodromus** (*Psammmodromus algirus*) but I'm sure more effort would have produced a greater herp list.



**Iberian Ibex** (*Capra pyrenaica*)





*Iberian Ibex* (*Capra pyrenaica*)

#### Laguna de Fuente de Piedra

We took a second stopover at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra, the largest lagoon in Andalusia. The reserve has one of the biggest **Flamingo** populations in all of Europe and it was stunning to see so many of them there. Other bird highlights were **White-headed Duck** (male), **Marbled Ducks**, and **Lesser Kestrel**. We also spotted a few **Spanish Terrapin** (*Mauremys leprosa*).



**Greater Flamingo**



***Marbled Ducks***



***White-headed Duck male***

### San Jose

Due to poor planning on my behalf, we spent the first couple of nights staying at a lovely farm up on the edge of the National Park but importantly a long way away from the two main **Iberian Lynx** (*Lynx pardinus*) areas. On the way up to the farm we spotted some **Red** (*Cervus elaphus*) and **Fallow Deer** (*Dama dama*) as well as **Iberian Magpie**, and **Eurasian Hoopoe**.

### **10/6**

We spent the morning attempting to drive an alternative route (potentially quicker) to the main **Lynx** viewing areas but the road deteriorated and our small hire car was unable to proceed. So, we went the long way and committed to spending the whole day exploring the JF-5004 to La Lancha.

### JF-5004 to La Lancha

It takes an hour or more to drive from Andujar to the start of the viewing areas for **Lynx** around here 38.205835, -3.951747. With most of the JH-5002 and JF-5004 on the way being slow going due to potholes. We got by in our Peugeot 208, but it may be worth getting a car with a smidge more clearance for peace of mind.

Arriving mid-morning we knew our chances for **Lynx** were not high but filled with enthusiasm we spent the next few hours scanning, moving along to different viewpoints every hour or so. We saw plenty of **Deer**, mostly **Red** but a few **Fallow** as well. A couple of **Iberian Ibex**, and **European Rabbits** (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) rounded out the mammals for that morning. We got excellent views of **Spanish Eagles**, and swarms of **Griffons** swirled around with the odd **Cinereous Vulture** among them. As it approached the hottest period of the day, we headed down to La Lancha and the Dam and had a brief sweaty siesta in our car, before exploring around the Dam. We got onto some **Eurasian Crag Martins**, **Moorish Geckoes** (*Tarentola mauritanica*) and an **Ocellated Lizard** (*Timon lepidus*) in the tunnel. I glimpsed what I suspect was a **Horseshoe Whipsnake** (*Hemorrhois hippocrepis*) and there was also a dead **Viperine Snake** (*Natrix maura*).



***Spanish Eagle***



**Cinereous Vulture**



**Ocellated Lizard** (*Timon lepidus*)

It was getting into the later arvo, so we headed back up to start scanning for [Lynx](#) again (though it was probably still too hot for a couple of hours). We saw more of the same stuff during this scan and exhausted from a big day we headed off just before sunset (due to intense hunger pangs). We had been alone the entire day but someone else arrived an hour or so before sunset. A brief chat with the other [Lynx](#) viewer revealed that someone had seen a female [Lynx](#) on the road the night before, around the start of the viewing area. On the drive out we saw plenty of [deer](#) as well as a [Wild Boar](#) (*Sus scrofa*). There was also a **Ladder Snake** (*Zamenis scalaris*) and an **Iberian False Smooth Snake** (*Macroprotodon brevis*). After a late dinner in Andujar, we still had a long drive back to our accom though were rewarded with a brief sighting of an [Iberian Hare](#) (*Lepus granatensis*) very roughly here 38.1054136, -4.1687838.





**Ladder Snake** (*Zamenis scalaris*)



**Iberian False Smooth Snake** (*Macropododon brevis*)

**11/6**

### Encinarejo Trail

Due to a flat tyre, we couldn't head out until the afternoon. We decided to try the Encinarejo trail, partly targeting **European Otter** (*Lutra lutra*). As discussed in other reports this road can yield close encounters with **Lynx** but probably requires more luck. The road is decent, and we stopped a few times to bird along the Jandula river. We scanned at the vantage points described in Dingain's report but didn't spend long as views weren't as expansive as the La Lancha area. Reaching the end of the road we explored a bit around the dam and bridge before setting up on a rock at 38.1630, -3.9962 (credit to Lonnie Bregman) with a nice vantage over the river. We sat patiently for a little over an hour when Jas noticed an **Otter** on the far side of the river. It dove back under and two minutes later popped up right in front of us! We were stoked and it was probably one of our favourite encounters of the trip.





*European Otter* (*Lutra lutra*)

#### JF-5004 to La Lancha (nighttime drive)

The sun was close to setting, and with the recent sighting of a **Lynx** on the road we decided to do a night drive to the La Lancha Dam and back. We saw **Ladder** and **False Iberian Smooth Snakes** on the road again, also a dead **Horseshoe Whipsnake**. There were plenty of **deer** and a few **boars** alongside the road. Down at the dam, I started recording bats with my echometer (see appendix for some tentative IDs). Jas was a little unsettled by the vibe of the place, so we didn't stay too long before driving out. Sadly, no chance **Lynx** encounter this time but as we were getting back into Andujar a **Red-throated Nightjar** took off from the road and we had a couple of unidentified **rodents** scurry across the road. It takes a long time to drive to La Lancha and back so it was quite late by this point and thankfully we were now staying in Andujar, so we were straight to bed.

#### **12/6**

#### JF-5004 to La Lancha

Today was our last day to look for **Lynx**. We got out to the viewing area just after sunrise and began scanning. Again, lots of **Red Deer**, **Fallow Deer**, **Wild Boar**, **Rabbits**, and **Raptors** were seen. Jas is a gun on the scope and managed to spot our only **Mouflon** (*Ovis gmelina*) a mile away, as well as multiple **Little Owls** on the other side of the valley!! But again, sadly no **Lynx**. We started heading back into town around 10:50am so we could get some Churros before the shops closed, but on the way out we came up to several cars with people stationed along the road. This could mean only one thing, chatting with one of the people they confirmed that a **Lynx** had recently been seen in the area and had made a **deer** kill that morning! Better yet the kill was right next to the road. As it was approaching the hottest part of the day and we had a churro deadline we made the hard decision to head back into town, knowing that it was very likely the **Lynx** would still be around in the arvo.



**Red Deer** (*Cervus elaphus*)

Heading back out that arvo, fuelled by churro's and recharged after a Spanish siesta, we were itching with excitement and anticipation. I think it was around 5:30pm, when we arrived at the **deer** carcass. Shortly after, we were joined by a guide and guest. We spread out a little along the road and were all scanning for maybe 40mins when I heard clicking. It was Jas, desperately trying to covertly get my attention 20m away! As quietly as I could I moved towards her and there it was, the most beautiful female **Iberian Lynx**!!! The four of us got incredible views maybe 20m away and were able to watch the **Lynx** (mostly sleeping) right up until the light disappeared! What a wildlife experience, we were both unbelievably chuffed!



**Iberian Lynx** (*Lynx pardinus*)





*Iberian Lynx* (*Lynx pardinus*)

Just when we thought the night couldn't get any better, we spotted a **European Badger** (*Meles meles*) on the drive out (here 38.108926, -3.967992)! A species we had been really wanting to see but had dipped on in the UK. What a day!

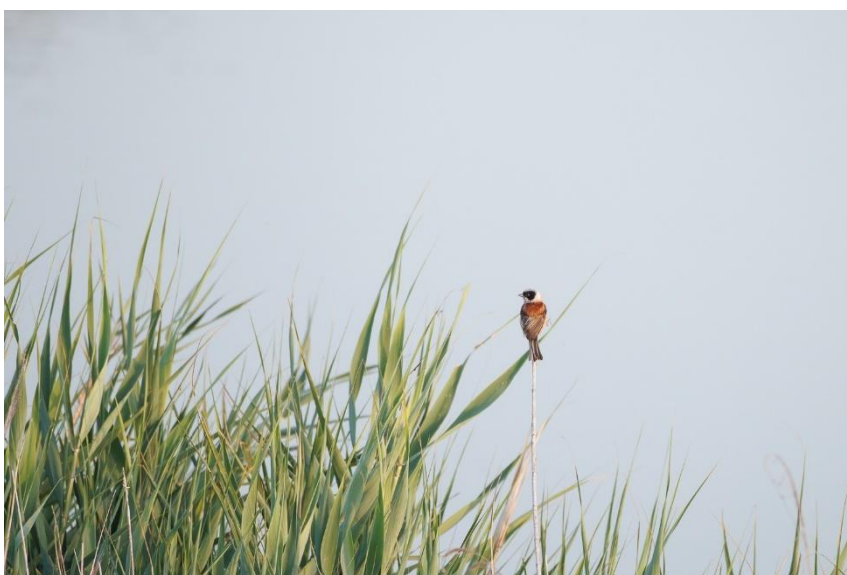
**13/6**

#### Laguna de Fuente de Piedra

On the way back to Malaga we stopped into Laguna de Fuente de Piedra again, to tick off some vagrant **Lesser Flamingos** that had been reported.

#### Desembocadura del Guadalhorce

Back in Malaga, we also revisited Desembocadura del Guadalhorce adding **Collared Pratincole**, and **Eurasian Penduline-tit** as some nice lifers to end Jasmins time in Spain.



*Eurasian Penduline-tit*

**14/6**

Now on my own, I headed to El Rocio where I would base myself to explore Donana National Park.

#### Dehesa de Abajo

I stopped into Dehesa de Abajo to look for **Red-knobbed Coots**. Sadly, none were located.

#### El Rocio

I stayed in El Rocio for the next 3 nights. A unique little village with sandy streets and lots of character. My main target for this leg of the trip was **Spur-thighed Tortoise** (*Testudo graeca*) and whatever other herps I could find, but I also took the opportunity to slow down a little and rest up for the next phase of the trip.

**15/6**

#### El Rocio

I did some light birding around El Rocio in the morning followed by exploring the town.

#### Matalascañas

That afternoon, I walked the sand dunes near Matalascañas. No luck for **Tortoises** or **Chameleons**, I did see a couple of **Spiny-footed Lizards** (*Acanthodactylus erythrurus*) and a **Maria's Worm Skink** (*Blanus mariae*).



**Maria's Worm Skink** (*Blanus mariae*)

#### El Rocio

Returning to El Rocio, I went for a short spotlight and saw a **Wood Mouse** (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), and some **Iberian Green Frogs** (*Pelophylax perezi*).





**Wood Mouse** (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) I'm pretty sure?

16/6

#### Matalascañas

I spent the morning and arvo/evening exploring the dunes around Matalascañas again. Saw lots of footprints of **Chameleons** and **Tortoises** but none in the flesh. I turned up a couple of **Bedriaga's Skinks** (*Chalcides bedriagai*), a **Natterjack Toad** (*Epidalea calamita*) and a **Red Fox** (*Vulpes vulpes*).



**Bedriaga's Skinks** (*Chalcides bedriagai*)

17/6

#### Centro de Visitantes José Antonio Valverde

Heading back towards Malaga, I tried again for **Red-knobbed Coot** at Doñana PN--Centro de Visitantes José Antonio Valverde. Be warned, it was not the smoothest drive requiring multiple lengthy detours to avoid obstacles like a bridge with a hole in it, but the **coot** was obtained!



**Red-knobbed Coot**

#### Villaluenga del Rosario

I stayed that night in a mountainside village - Villaluenga del Rosario. Some late arvo herping in the area wasn't super productive but added **Western Three-toed Skink** (*Chalcides striatus*) to my list.

#### *Northern Spain*

For this next phase of the trip my main targets were **Iberian Wolf** (*Canis lupus signatus*), **Brown Bear** (*Ursus arctos*), and a few **Salamander** species.

**19/6**

#### Cervera de Pisuerga

Following advice from other reports, I booked onto a tour with IntoAsturias to try and see **Wolves**. The tour included an arvo and a morning session which also tries to see **Wildcat** (*Felis silvestris*) during season. Though I was a little too early as the fields had only just started to be cut.

In the arvo, I met up with the guide Diego and a British couple, and we headed out to look for the **Wolves** in an area near Cervera de Pisuerga. Apparently, the previous two days hadn't yielded much success, and Diego admitted they can be challenging that time of year (due to the heat). We spent most of 4hrs scanning the surrounding hills from a vantage point, Diego noted **Bears** were also possible though we didn't see any. It was relatively quiet with just a few **Deer** and **Wild Boars** being seen. We got distant views of a **Golden Eagle** which I was pleased with. As it started to cool off Diego tried looking through his thermal scope but the latent heat in the landscape limited his success. Just as we were about to leave, we heard **Wolves** howling in the distance! This was a nice consolation! On the drive out we spotlit a couple of **Broom Hare** (*Lepus castroviejoi*) on the side of the track, to make it a decent affair.



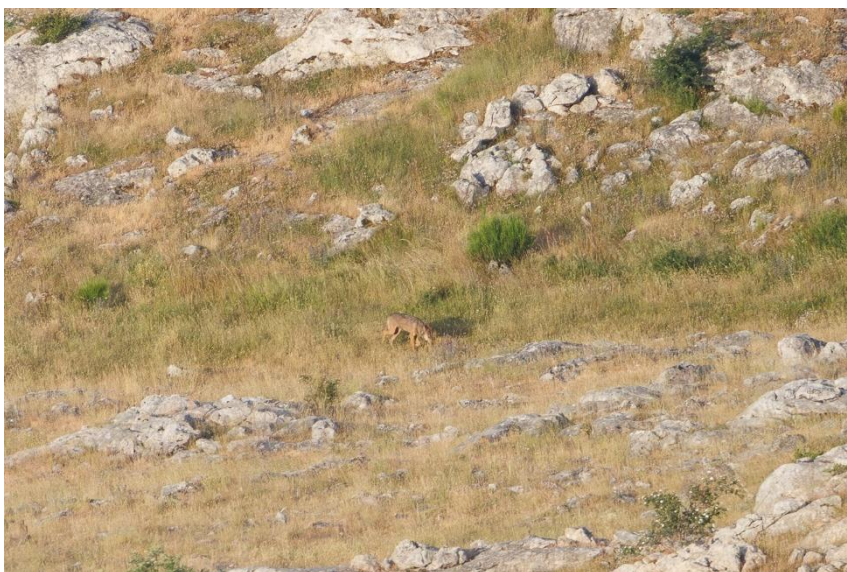


**Broom Hare** (*Lepus castroviejoi*)

**20/6**

#### Cervera de Pisuerga

Just before sunrise, I met up with Diego and the others and we headed back up the ranges. Diego had selected a slightly different vantage this time with better views of the area the **Wolves** had been calling. Since it was still quite cool Diego primarily used his thermal scope, and I was impressed by its effectiveness compared to just scanning with the spotting scope. After about an hour Diego managed to locate a **Wolf** on the adjacent slope with his thermal! I was surprised at how difficult it was to locate and stay on the **Wolf** in the spotting scope despite knowing the general area it was in, as it constantly disappeared amongst the vegetation. It certainly diminished some of my scoping confidence. We were fairly sure we had at least two **Wolves** which we watched on and off for the next 40mins, mission accomplished! I would recommend IntoAsturias for those looking for a wolf tour, though perhaps it's worth discussing in advance the best time of year to visit if you want to maximise your chances.



**Wolf** (*Canis lupus signatus*)

That evening, I headed out to cruise the fields looking for **Wildcat**. As expected, I was too early and very few had been cut. I decided to do some spotlighting around the trails at Senda del Roblón. To my delight I had bright green **cat** eyeshine (approx. here 42.919114, -4.474337), though sadly didn't manage to get great views or photos to confirm its purity. Other sightings on the walk included **Fox**, **Common Frog** (*Rana temporaria*), **Iberian Green Frog**, **Common Midwife Toad** (*Alytes obstetricans*), and **Tawny Owl**. I also saw a small **rodent** in some scree but it escaped ID.



**Tawny Owl**



**Common Midwife Toad** (*Alytes obstetricans*)

**21/6**

#### Tendi Valley Area

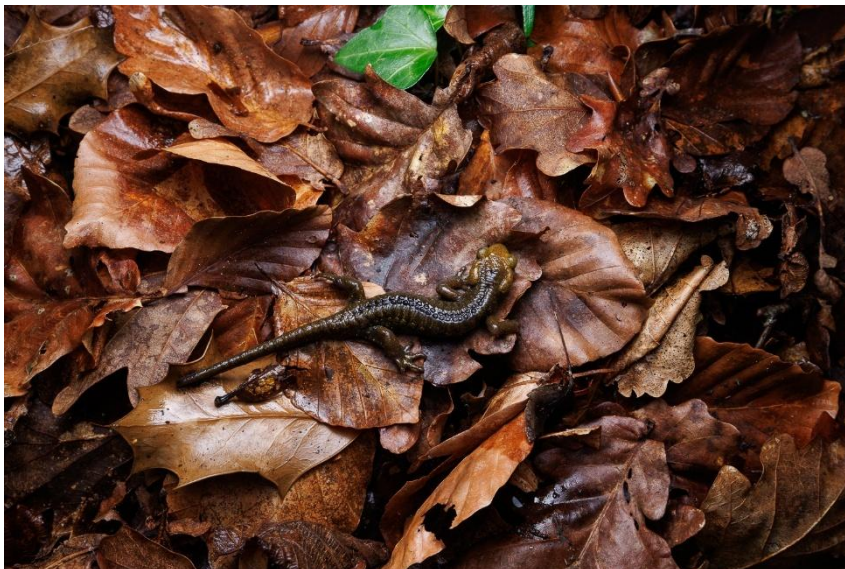
I was spending the next few nights in the Tendi Valley area with my main targets being **salamanders**. Arriving in the arvo (after some enroute birding) I headed out for a search. I managed to find two **Oviedo Fire Salamanders** (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)! We have



no native newts or salamanders in Aus so I was stoked! On the way out I also found a couple of **Palmate Newts** (*Lissotriton helveticus*) in a water fountain.



**Oviedo Fire Salamander** (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)



**Oviedo Fire Salamander** (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)

**22/6**

### Picos de Europa

With some nice weather forecast, I decided to visit Picos de Europa via the Fuente De cable car. The cable car takes you up over 750m in elevation in just 4 minutes, allowing for stunning views and accessible alpine habitat with which to explore. Spending most of the day up there I saw basically all my targets. There was a pair of **Cantabrian Chamois** (*Rupicapra pyrenaica parva*) moving along the scree slope in the morning (here 43.163061, -4.808703). I saw some in the arvo, but they were all laying low amongst the rocks. I easily found some **Alpine Newts** (*Ichthyosaura alpestris*) in the remaining water. Birdwise I ticked off several alpine species including **Alpine Accentor**, **White-winged Snowfinch**, **Northern Wheatear** and **Yellow-billed Chough**. Though my highlight of the day was seeing a **Wallcreeper**, one of my most wanted

birds for the whole trip! These stunning birds are the sole members of their family, and so I was ecstatic when I located one hopping about the side of the sheer rock wall!



**Cantabrian Chamois** (*Rupicapra pyrenaica parva*)



**Alpine Newt** (*Ichthyosaura alpestris*)



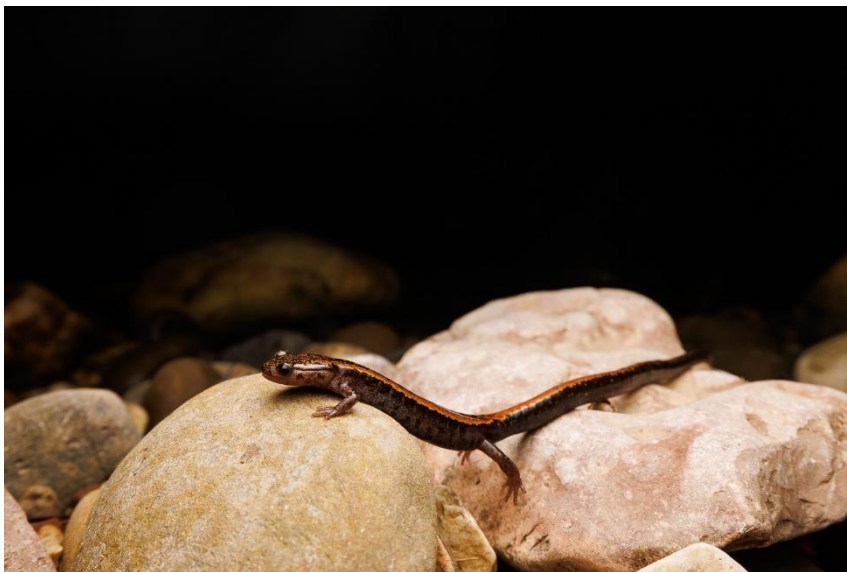


*Wallcreeper*

23/6

Tendi Valley Area

I spent most of the day and a little of the evening looking for **Salamanders**. I eventually managed to find my main target, the **Golden Striped Salamander** (*Chioglossa lusitanica*), as well as loads more **Oviedo Fire Salamanders**.



*Golden Striped Salamander (Chioglossa lusitanica)*



Juv **Golden Striped Salamander** (*Chioglossa lusitanica*)

24/6

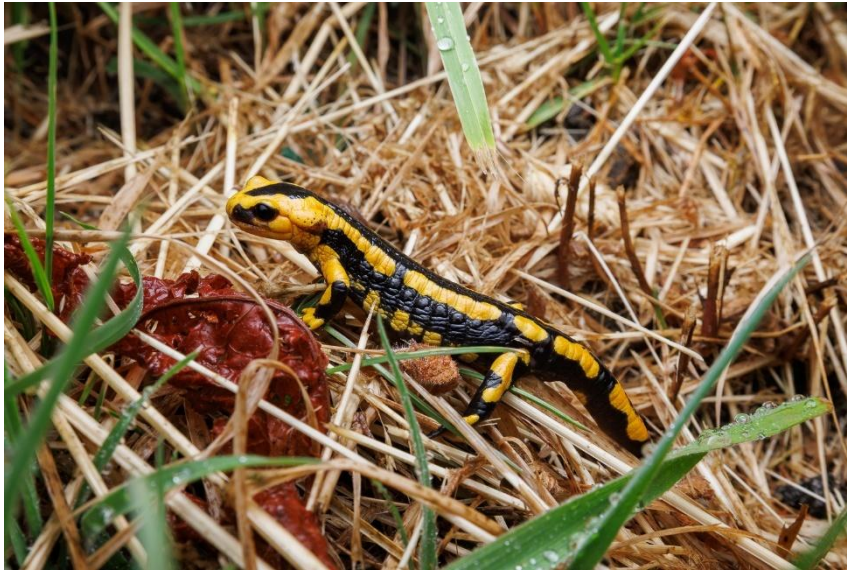
#### Somiedo area

Next on the list was a **Brown Bear** and from others reports I decided to spend a couple of nights in Somiedo. I spent that arvo at the La Peral vantage where I scanned for about an hour before wind and light rain led me to retreat. I headed to the vantage point in Gua which is more sheltered and scanned until it was dark though it was probably hopeless with the dismal conditions. Craving some wildlife, I did a bit of night exploring and managed to find several gorgeous **Oviedo Fire Salamanders**. Though they were the same subspecies I had been seeing, their colour morph was super different which I enjoyed. There were also a bunch of **Spiny Toads** (*Bufo spinosus*) on the roads.



**Oviedo Fire Salamander** (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)





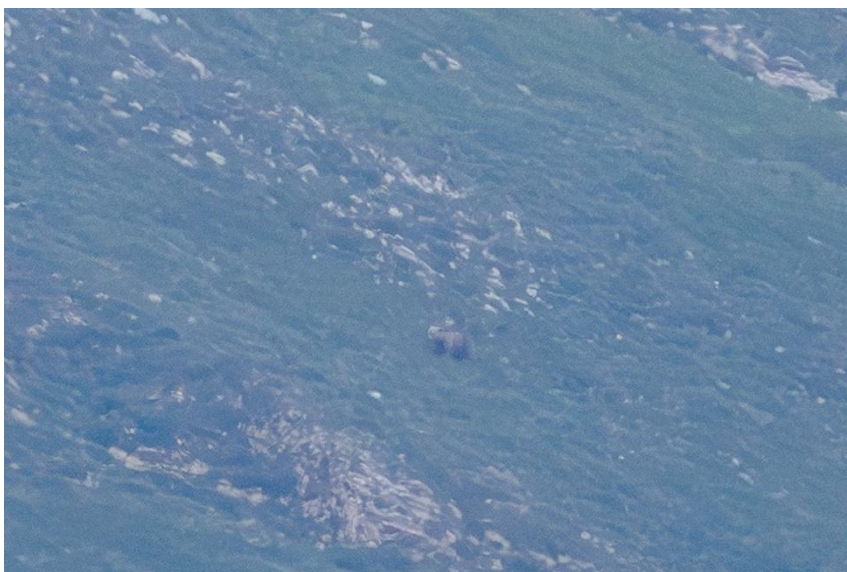
**Oviedo Fire Salamander** (*Salamandra salamandra bernardezi*)

**25/6**

Somiedo area

I woke early in the morning to the disappointing sound of heavy rain. Waiting for it to pass I headed up to La Peral, though it was now mid-morning. I scanned for a couple of hours and managed to see some **Chamois** and **Deer** on the slopes. During the day I located a few **Viperine Snakes**.

That arvo I decided to try the lookout in Caunedo and was pleased to have nice weather and other **Bear** watchers. After scanning for a couple of hours one of the other watchers located a **Bear** on a distant slope at least 1km away. The views were far from the best, but it was a **Bear**, Mission accomplished!



**Brown Bear** (*Ursus arctos*)

I did some night driving and spotted a **Wildcat Hybrid** on the road. I'd love to hear if you think it's a pure **Wildcat** but the head proportions lead me to think it's a hybrid. I also cruised an **Iberian Grass Snake** (*Natrix astreptophora*).



**Wildcat hybrid**

26/6

#### Hoces Del Ebro

I began my journey towards the Pyrenees and decided to stay a night in the Hoces Del Ebro area where I wanted to try for **Vipers**. Three species were possible, though I'm not experienced in how best to target them. I spent the arvo looking along some stone walls and eventually got brief views of one as it disappeared into dense vegetation. I didn't manage to clinch the ID but was still excited by the encounter. I later found another target in **Marbled Newt** (*Triturus marmoratus*), and some new frog species; **Iberian Tree Frog** (*Hyla molleri*), and **Western Spadefoot** (*Pelobates cultripes*).



**Marbled Newt** (*Triturus marmoratus*)





**Iberian Tree Frog** (*Hyla molleri*)



**Western Spadefoot** (*Pelobates cultripes*)

**27/6**

Hoces Del Ebro

I spent the morning searching the area for more **vipers** but sadly had no luck. I continued to Jaca.

**28/6**

Spanish Pyrenees

I took the opportunity to catch up on some rest whilst in Jaca, though headed out in the arvo to chase down my last couple of big bird targets, **Bearded Vulture** and **Black Woodpecker**.

I visited the trails at Refugio de Garbadito and was treated to excellent views from at least three **Bearded Vultures**! I stayed in the area until it was dark hoping to run into a **Pine Marten** (*Martes martes*) on the drive out. No **Pine Martens** were seen but there were heaps of snakes out. Sadly,

many had been struck by cars, alive I saw **Aesculpian** (*Zamenis longissimus*), **Southern Smooth** (*Coronella girondica*), and **Ladder Snake**.



*Bearded Vulture*

**29/6**

### Spanish Pyrenees

I headed out that arvo for **Black Woodpecker**, I decided to try the Selva de Oza ebird hotspot and was rewarded with a sighting after a brief walk! Again, I delayed a little, so I was driving back in the dark but no luck for **Pine Marten**.

## Part 2: Searching for Desman in the French Pyrenees



*View from Refuge Lacs de Ayous*



## Intro

Whilst planning my trip to Europe I flicked through a bunch of trip reports from a bunch of countries to decide where to go and what I wanted to target. Pretty quickly the **Pyrenean Desman** (*Galemys pyrenaicus*) jumped out at me as something I really wanted to try and see. Several trip reports from 2017-2021 detailed successful searches for the **Desman** at Lac de Ayous and so I was hopeful I might be able to replicate their success. Though I was concerned by the lack of recent reports and had heard the **Desman** hadn't been seen there for a few years now. Ultimately, I decided to try anyway, keen to explore the Pyrenees and interested in some of the other potential wildlife in the area.

Here I detail my efforts to see the **Desman**, in what ended up being the sequel to Jan Ebr's report "how not to see a **Desman**".

## Logistics

The logistics of visiting the area are well documented in others reports so I won't delve deeply into them. I stayed two nights at Refuge Ayous, a short walk (~1.5km) from the described **Desman** sites. To reach the refuge you can park at "parking at de Bious Oumettes" (the top park is only for day visitors) and walk ~8km up to the refuge. This took me about 3hrs. There is an option to camp in front of the refuge with your own gear, but you can also book full board which includes your meals and a dormitory style bed. I stayed in the dormitory and had meals provided which made for a lighter climb up to the refuge.

## Day by Day

### 30/6

After dropping some of my gear at the refuge, I arrived at the **Desman** site around 11:30am. It was easy to find using the info and photos provided in previous reports. I spent the next ~6hrs alternating between viewing from the described rock and slowly walking the edge of the pools. It was very quiet, and I didn't see much other wildlife except for a bunch of **Common Frogs**, **Common Wall Lizards** (*Podarcis muralis*) and a **Viviparous Lizard** (*Zootoca vivipara*). There was a small dead **rodent** near to the water though (see photo below). On the way down to the Refuge for dinner I spotted a **Bearded Vulture**, and a few **Eurasian Griffons**.



**Common Wall Lizard** (*Podarcis muralis*)



*Who is this poor guy found near to the described Desman site?*

A little after dinner, I headed back up to the pools with my spotlight to try my luck at night. I walked a couple of laps around the pools slowly shining into the water, but no **Desman** were seen. I did finally see a **Pyrenean Brook Newt** (*Calotriton asper*), as well as **Palmate Newts**, **Common Frogs**, **Spiny Toads**, and **Common Midwife Frogs**. The highlight was an **Asp Viper** (*Vipera aspis*) in ambush next to the water. On the way back down to the refuge I got some orange eyeshine looking down at me from a ridgeline a hundred or so metres away. It quickly stepped back and I couldn't confirm the ID, leaving me to wonder if it could have been a **Wolf**..





**Asp Viper** (*Vipera aspis*)



**Palmate Newt** (*Lissotriton helveticus*)

1/7

I had the whole day to search for **Desman** today and I was still feeling hopeful. I headed up to the pools around 8am (just after breakfast). I spent most of the morning viewing from the described rock but lacking patience and knowing there hadn't been many recent sightings I decided to try some different areas/approaches. I walked partly around Lake Bersaer (having read that the **Desman** were also known from the Lakes in the area) but quickly decided a sighting was very unlikely with that much water and area to cover. I then decided to spend a few hours watching the pool near to the refuge (42.847420, -0.491906). As it approached dinner, I hadn't had any luck with the **Desman**, though had watched a couple of **Alpine Marmots** (*Marmota marmota*) cruise around the rocks near the refuge. There were a few nice birds around earlier in the day with a **Dipper** hanging around the top pools. But otherwise, it had been a quiet day, made up for by the spectacular scenery of the area.





**Alpine Marmot** (*Marmota marmota*)



**White-throated Dipper**

My last strategy was to try some early morning spotlighting, so decided to go to bed shortly after dinner.

**2/7**

Today was my last chance to find the **Desman** and it wasn't off to a good start as I woke up to my 3am alarm feeling like death. The plan was to spotlight for 4 hours until breakfast and then potentially head back up again for a final viewing session before descending back to the car in the arvo. Walking up the hill to the pools, I quickly realised I wasn't just tired; I was quite sick. I pushed on and managed to walk around the pools once with no luck, before heading back down to collapse into bed. I wasn't feeling much better at breakfast and made the tough decision to start making my way back to the car. I was sad to have also dipped on the Pyrenean subspecies of **Chamois**. I spent the remainder of the day resting and seemed to recover overnight.

## Epilogue

I find it difficult to believe that **Desman** would have disappeared entirely from the Lac de Ayous area but am curious if any recent research in the area has seen a strong decline in the population? If this is the case, it's certainly quite sad, the Refuge staff talked about increased visitation to the area post covid and the strain that was having on water levels, so I wonder if this could have contributed to a decline.

In terms of strategy, I'm not convinced the sitting and waiting approach during the day is particularly effective if you're not confident there's a **Desman** in the area. I think if I were to look in the future, I would be inclined to follow the approach of Jan Ebr and spend most of the time spotlighting along streams or searching during the day for latrines.

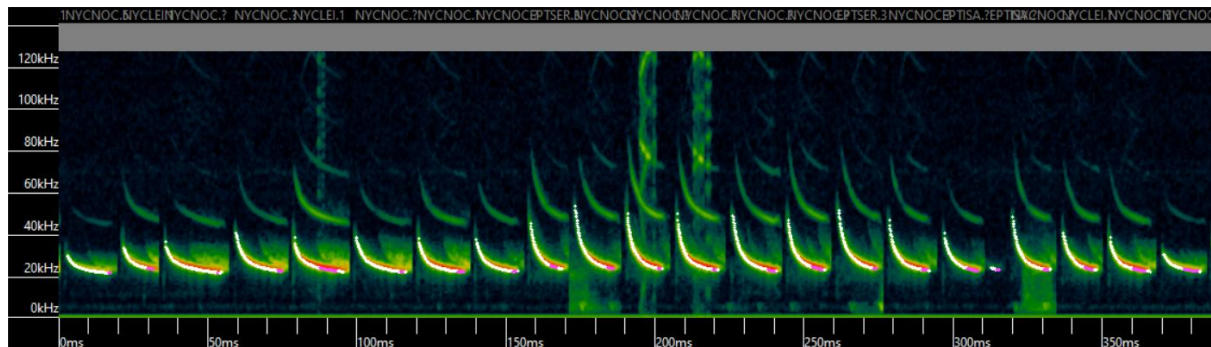
Despite being a little slow wildlife wise at times, I enjoyed my time in Lacs de Ayous. The view out from the refuge is one of the most stunning I've ever seen and the whole area is breathtaking. The staff at the refuge were super friendly as were the other hikers and visitors to the area and I still managed to see a few new species like the **Pyrenean Brook Newt**, **Alpine Marmots** and **Asp Viper**!

## Appendix

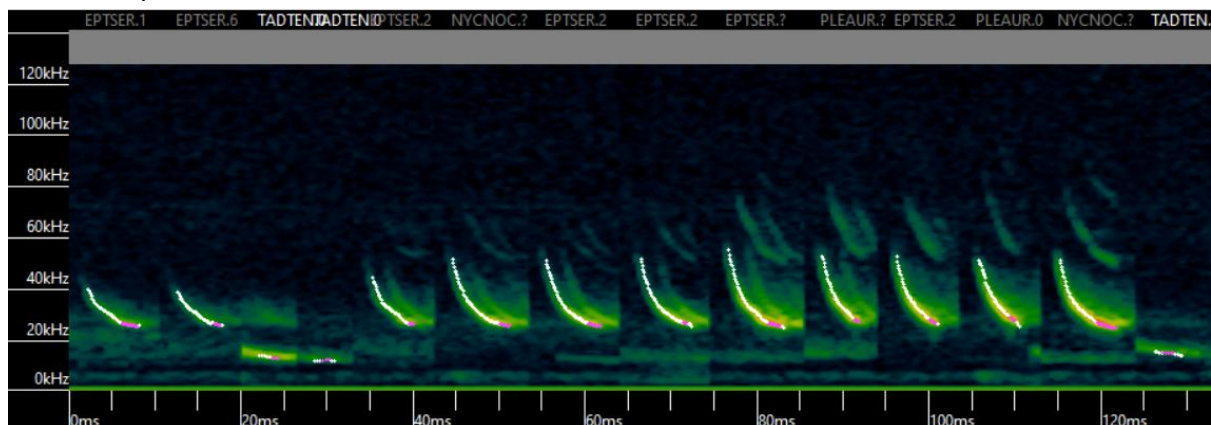
### Bats

I've provided below a couple of screenshots of sonograms where I have attempted ID on bats I observed in the field. I'm very new to use of my echometer, bat ID, autoID etc so very much appreciate any feedback on my attempted IDs. I regret not trying to observe and record physical and flight characteristics of bats and will endeavour to do this more in the future to increase confidence in IDs.

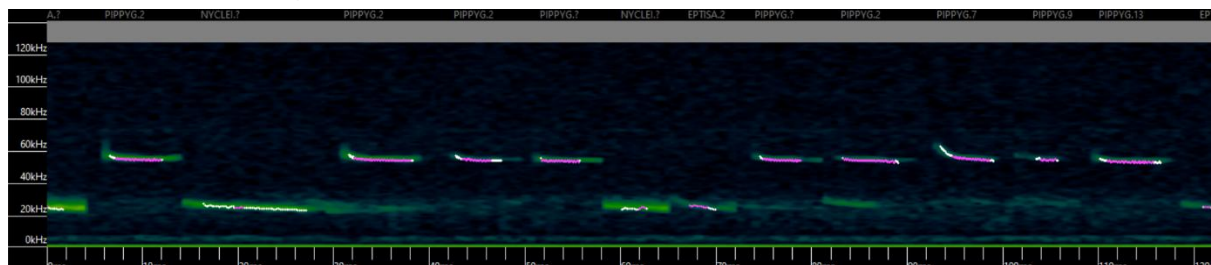
#### 11/6/2025 La Lancha Dam



**Noctule** – ID tentative based on fm-qcf shape at an Fc of ~20kHz where **Leisler's Bat** should have very flat calls only? Not certain if the calls are plip ploppy but suspect they are which should help to rule out **Serotine**?

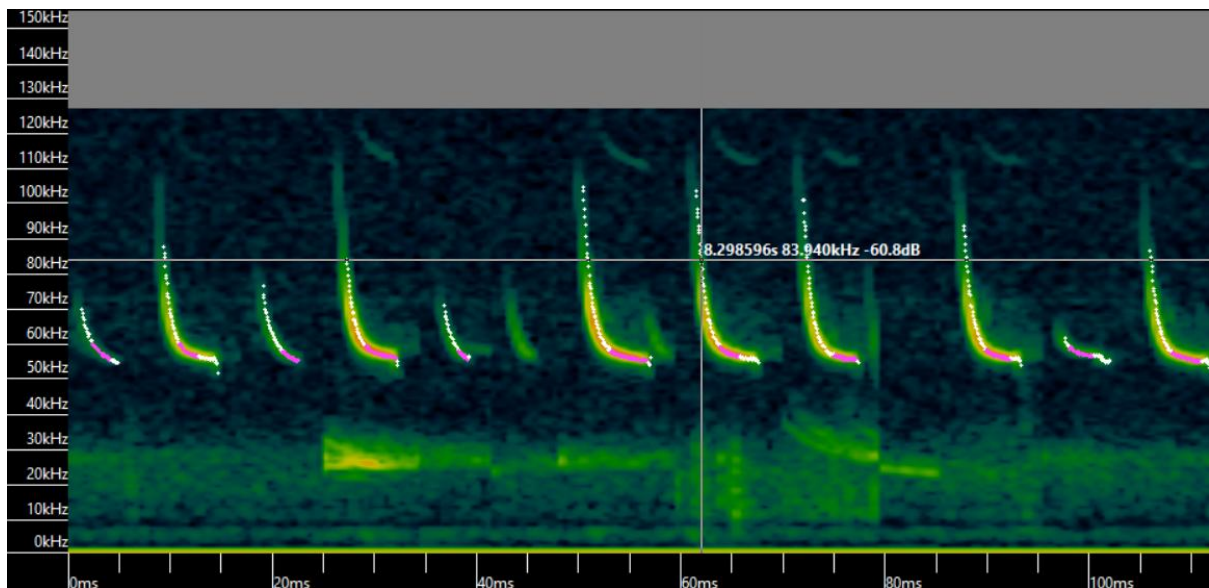


**Noctule** – ID tentative, separated from **Serotine** due to changes in call throughout the sequence (the weird plip plops at very low frequency?) Separated from **Leisler's Bat** by Fc being around 21-22 at which point Leisler's should be flat?

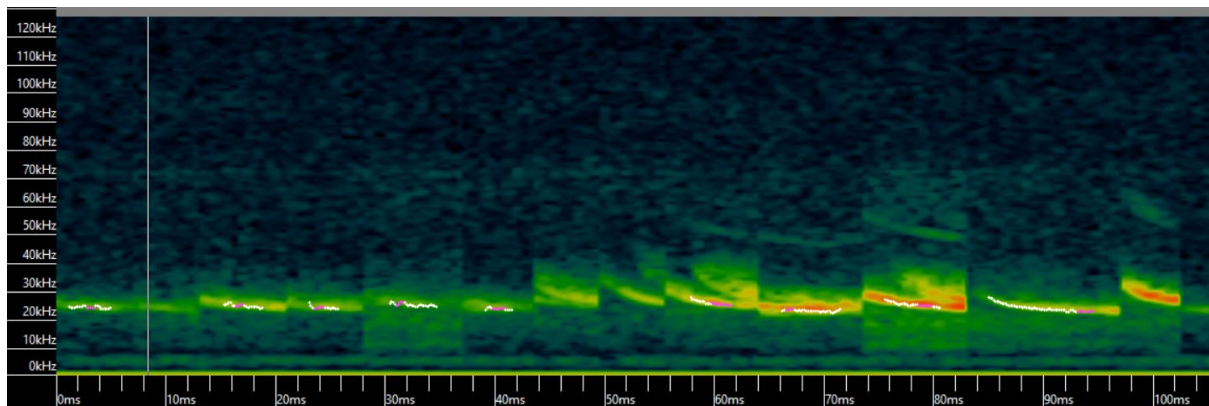


**Soprano Pipistrelle** – ID tentative as not certain I've effectively ruled out **M. schrieber** but is based on qcf call Fc being too high for **PIPPIP** and shorter call duration than typical of **M. Schreiberi**?

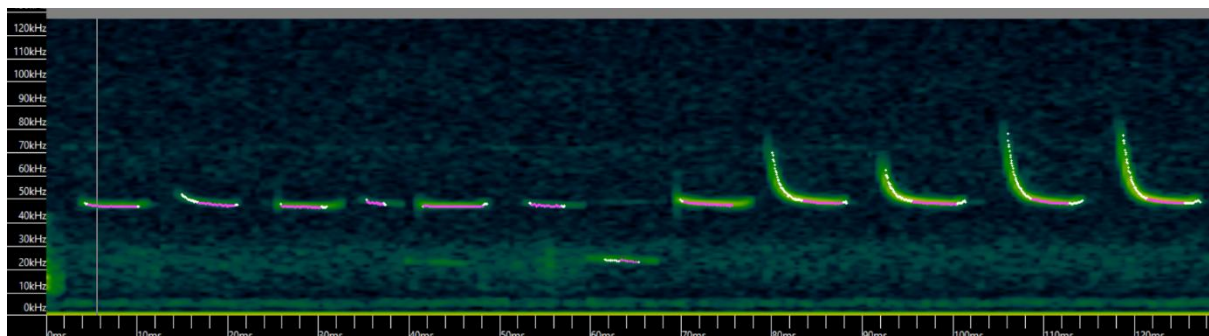




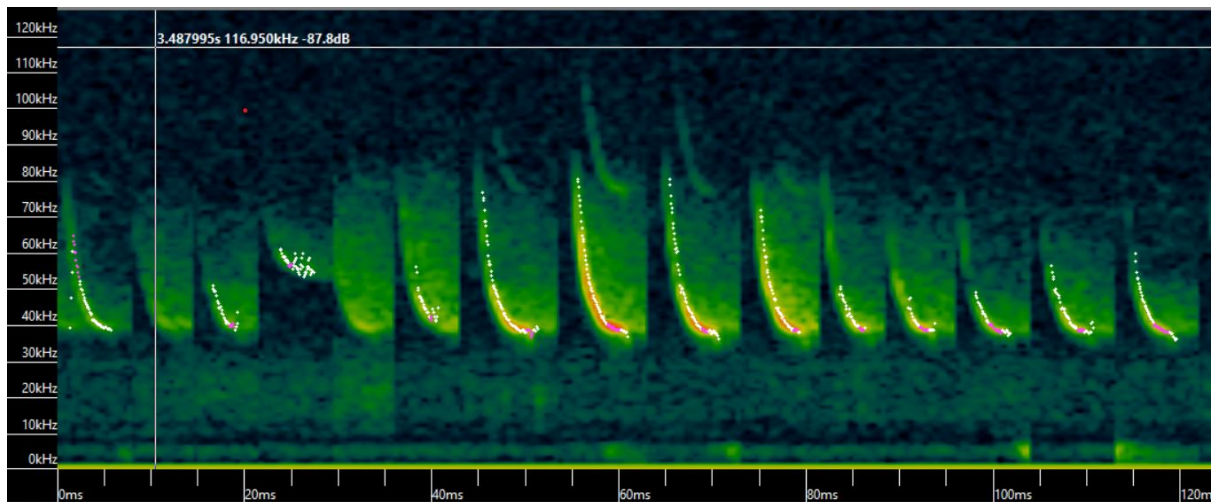
**Soprano Pipistrelle** – ID slightly more conf due to higher Fc sitting at 55.6khz



**Leisler's Bat** – ID tentative based on plip plop pattern (helping to rule out **Serotine**) and presence of qcf pulses above 23khz (they are around 24khz) to rule out **Noctule**?

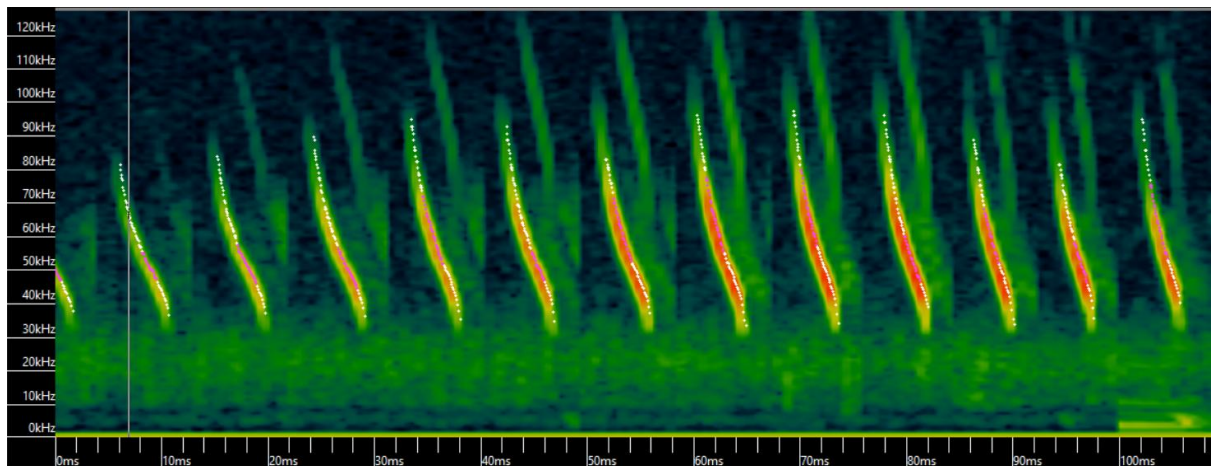


**Common Pipistrelle** – ID tentative but the qcf calls being at Fc 47khz seems too low for both **MINSCH** and **PIPPYG**?

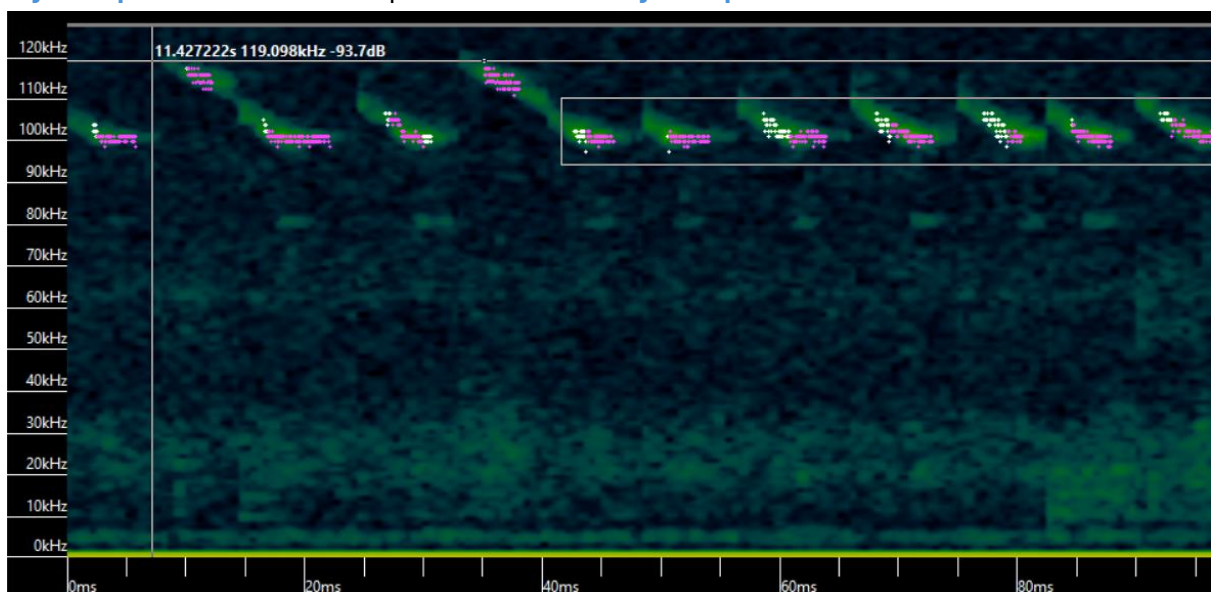


**Kuhl's Pipistrelle** – Not in range of **PIP NAT** and Fc and duration characteristic from other pips being Fc = 38kHz and duration over 7ms.

### 20/06/25 Tendi Valley Area



**Myotis sp** – not sure how to separate from other **Myotis sp**?



**Lesser Horseshoe Bat** (very low confidence) – quite confused by this call? Frequency has me considering **RHIIIP** but shape is all wrong?

### References used for bat ID

Marckmann U, Pfeiffer B (2020). Analysis of Bat Call Recordings and Criteria for the Evaluation of Acoustic Identification of Species.

Russ J (2021). *Bat calls of Britain and Europe: A guide to species identification*.

### Overall Mammal + Herp List

Common Name	Scientific Name	Location
Iberian Hare	Lepus granatensis	Andujar
Broom Hare	Lepus castroviejoi	Cervera de Pisuega
European Otter	Lutra lutra	Encinerajo Trail, Andujar
Iberian Lynx	Lynx pardinus	just before Lynx viewing area, Andujar
Iberian Ibex	Capra pyrenaica	El Torcal de Antequera and Lynx viewing area in Andujar
Mouflon	Ovis gmelini	Lynx viewing area Andujar
Wild Boar	Sus scrofa	Numerous locations
Red Deer	Cervus elaphus	Numerous locations
Fallow Deer	Dama dama	Andujar
Roe Deer	Capreolus capreolus	North Spain
Brown Bear	Ursus arctos	Caunedo viewing area, Somiedo region
Wolf	Canis lupus signatus	Cervera de Pisuega
European Badger	Meles meles	Andujar
Wildcat x Hybrid	Felis sp.	Somiedo region
Alpine Marmot	Marmota marmota	Pyrenees on both Spanish and French side
Cantabrian Chamois	Rupicapra pyrenaica parva	Somiedo region and Picos de Europa
Wood Mouse	Apodemus sylvaticus	El Rocio
Red Fox	Vulpes vulpes	Numerous locations
European Rabbit	Oryctolagus cuniculus	Numerous locations
Spanish Terrapin	Mauremys leprosa	Laguna de Fuente de Piedra
Mediterranean Chameleon	Chamaeleo chamaeleon	Desembocadura del Guadalhorce in Malaga
Moorish Gecko	Tarentola mauritanica	Numerous locations
Large Psammmodromas	Psammmodromus algirus	Numerous locations
Ocellated Lizard	Timon lepidus	Tunnel at the La Lancha Dam, Andujar
Common Wall Lizard	Podarcis muralis	Numerous locations
Bedriaga's Skink	Chalcides bedriagai	Dunes around Matalascanas
Iberian Three-toed Skink	Chalcides striatus	near Villaluenga del Rosario
Maria's Worm Lizard	Blanus mariae	Dunes around Matalascanas
Aesculupian Snake	Zamenis longissimus	Pyrenees near Jaca
Ladder Snake	Zamenis scalaris	Andujar and Pyrenees
Southern Smooth Snake	Coronella girondica	Pyrenees
Iberian False Smooth Snake	Macroprotodon brevis	Andujar
Iberian Grass Snake	Natrix astreptophora	Somiedo region
Viperine Snake	Natrix maura	Somiedo region



<b>Asp Viper</b>	Vipera aspis	Refuge Lacs de Ayous
<b>Spiny-footed Lizard</b>	Acanthodactylus erythrurus	Dunes around Matalascanas
<b>Andalusian Wall Lizard</b>	Podarcis vaucheri	El Rocio
<b>Viviparous Lizard</b>	Zootoca vivipara	Refuge Lacs de Ayous
<b>Oviedo Fire Salamander</b>	Salamandra salamandra bernardezi	Tendi Valley area and Somiedo region
<b>Golden-striped Salamander</b>	Chioglossa lusitanica	Tendi Valley area
<b>Palmate Newt</b>	Lissotriton helveticus	Tendi Valley area and Pyrenees
<b>Alpine Newt</b>	Ichthyosaura alpestris	Picos de Europa
<b>Marbled Newt</b>	Triturus marmoratus	Hoces Del Ebro
<b>Common Midwife Toad</b>	Alytes obstetricans	Numerous locations
<b>Western Spadefoot</b>	Pelobates cultripes	Hoces Del Ebro
<b>Spiny Toad</b>	Bufo spinosus	Numerous locations
<b>Natterjack Toad</b>	Epidalea calamita	Hoces Del Ebro and Matalascanas
<b>Iberian Tree Frog</b>	Hyla molleri	Hoces Del Ebro
<b>Common Frog</b>	Rana temporaria	Numerous locations
<b>Iberian Green Frog</b>	Pelophylax perezi	Numerous locations
<b>Pyrenean Brook Salamander</b>	Calotriton asper	Refuge Lacs de Ayous

### *Bird List*

Alpine Accentor	Common Pochard	Eurasian Jackdaw
Audouin's Gull	Common Raven	Eurasian Jay
Barn Swallow	Common Redshank	Eurasian Kestrel
Bearded Vulture (Eurasian)	Common Reed Warbler	Eurasian Linnet
Black Kite	Common Ringed Plover	Eurasian Magpie
Black Redstart	Common Shelduck	Eurasian Moorhen
Black Stork	Common Swift	Eurasian Nightjar
Black Woodpecker	Common Wood-Pigeon	Eurasian Nuthatch
Black-crowned Night Heron	Corn Bunting	Eurasian Oystercatcher
Black-headed Gull	Crested Lark	Eurasian Penduline-Tit
Black-winged Stilt	Crested Tit	Eurasian Scops-Owl
Blue Rock-Thrush	Dartford Warbler	Eurasian Skylark
Booted Eagle	Dunnock	Eurasian Spoonbill
Carrion Crow	Eared Grebe	Eurasian Wren
Cetti's Warbler	Egyptian Vulture	European Bee-eater
Cinereous Vulture	Eurasian Blackbird	European Goldfinch
Cirl Bunting	Eurasian Blackcap	European Greenfinch
Coal Tit	Eurasian Blue Tit	European Red-rumped Swallow
Collared Pratincole	Eurasian Bullfinch	European Robin
Common Buzzard	Eurasian Collared-Dove	European Serin
Common Chaffinch	Eurasian Coot	European Shag
Common Chiffchaff	Eurasian Crag-Martin	European Starling
Common Cuckoo	Eurasian Curlew	European Stonechat
Common Firecrest	Eurasian Golden Oriole	European Turtle-Dove
Common Kingfisher	Eurasian Griffon	Gadwall
Common Nightingale	Eurasian Hoopoe	Garden Warbler

Glossy Ibis	Marbled Duck	Slender-billed Gull
Golden Eagle	Marsh Tit	Song Thrush
Gray Heron	Mediterranean Gull	Spanish Eagle
Gray Wagtail	Melodious Warbler	Spanish Sparrow
Graylag Goose	Mistle Thrush	Spotless Starling
Great Cormorant	Monk Parakeet	Spotted Flycatcher
Great Crested Grebe	Montagu's Harrier	Squacco Heron
Great Egret	Mute Swan	Tawny Owl
Great Reed Warbler	Northern Gannet	Thekla's Lark
Great Spotted Cuckoo	Northern Lapwing	Tufted Duck
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Northern Shoveler	Wallcreeper
Great Tit	Northern Wheatear	Water Pipit
Greater Flamingo	Ortolan Bunting	Western Black-eared Wheatear
Green-winged Teal	Osprey (Eurasian)	Western Bonelli's Warbler
Gull-billed Tern	Peregrine Falcon (Mediterranean)	Western Cattle-Egret
Hawfinch	Pied Avocet	Western House-Martin
House Sparrow	Purple Heron	Western Subalpine Warbler
Iberian Chiffchaff	Red-backed Shrike	Western Swampphen
Iberian Gray Shrike	Red-billed Chough	Western Yellow Wagtail
Iberian Green Woodpecker	Red-crested Pochard	Whimbrel
Iberian Magpie	Red-knobbed Coot	Whiskered Tern
Kentish Plover	Red-legged Partridge	White Stork
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Red-necked Nightjar	White Wagtail
Lesser Flamingo	Ringed Teal	White-headed Duck
Lesser Kestrel	Rock Bunting	White-throated Dipper
Little Egret	Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	White-winged Snowfinch
Little Grebe	Rock Sparrow	Wood Lark
Little Owl	Sandwich Tern	Woodchat Shrike
Little Ringed Plover	Sardinian Warbler	Yellow-billed Chough
Little Tern	Short-toed Snake-Eagle	Yellow-crowned Bishop
Long-tailed Tit	Short-toed Treecreeper	Yellow-legged Gull
Mallard		Zitting Cisticola