

A Few Days in Andalusia (and Gibraltar)



Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*)

It was almost the end of the year, and I still had a flight voucher that needed to be used. I initially decided to escape the cold and head to **Málaga** for some sun - but then I realized that Spain actually offers a pretty decent chance to see the **Iberian lynx** (*Lynx pardinus*). That was all it took, I scrapped my original plans and bought a train ticket to Andújar instead.

To maximize my chances, I booked one full day at the **Gato Clavo hide**. Partly due to some booking confusion, and partly (I suspect, thank you for that!) because they took pity on my very limited schedule, I was unexpectedly given an extra half day as well! I was genuinely curious this - was my **first-ever experience in a wildlife hide**.



Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*)

I started the trip in Málaga. The weather turned out to be excellent, but apart from a few Andalusian wall lizards (*Podarcis vaucheri*) around the Alcazaba, I didn't see many reptiles. In the evening I went to **Parque del Guadalhorce** (during the day great birding spot btw.) in search of chameleons. I also encountered a rather fearless **Red Fox** (*Vulpes vulpes*) and a **feral pig** (*Sus scrofa*), which at least gave me the chance to test my pocket thermal camera a bit. Unfortunately, I had no luck with either genets or mongooses.

The following day I traveled onward to **Andújar**. I decided to spend the whole afternoon in the area and visited a well-known local site for **Eurasian Otters** (*Lutra lutra*). I was very lucky and saw otters almost immediately at **Área recreativa del Encinarejo**. Sadly, there was no sign of lynx that day, nor of the frequently reported Iberian Ibex (*Capra pyrenaica*). Only later, toward evening on the way to Hotel Los Pinos, did I spot another **Red Fox** (*Vulpes vulpes*) and a **Red Deer** (*Cervus elaphus*). Early the next morning, I moved to **Gato Clavo**. The morning session started at 7:30, and both hides were fully occupied. However, until the end of the session (at 11:30) there wasn't even a whisker to be seen.



Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)



feral pig (*Sus scrofa*)



The afternoon session began at 15:00. Apart from the ever-present **European Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)**, not much was happening. I was genuinely starting to worry that I might leave without seeing a lynx at all, when - **about half an hour before the end of the session** - one suddenly appeared right in front of my viewpoint. A second individual briefly followed (which I only confirmed with certainty later when reviewing my photos). In a rapid sequence of events, the lynx caught a rabbit and disappeared from view almost exactly as the session ended.

And now for a small negative note - apologies in advance. This was my first experience in a hide, so perhaps I'm the one being overly sensitive. Still, I was quite surprised by the behavior of some fellow participants. At the exact moment the lynx appeared, one person's phone started ringing. Already during the afternoon session, some people were having fairly loud conversations and message alerts kept beeping. The next morning, a couple sitting next to me were talking so loudly that someone from a small hide nearby had to ask them to be quiet. Honestly - is that normal? Or am I strange for finding this inappropriate? Of course, I understand that in this setting the lynx are probably quite habituated, and an occasional notification sound won't necessarily disturb them. Still, the ringing phone genuinely startled the animal, and for a moment it looked as if it might not return.

Later that evening I went for a short walk around the area and encountered several **Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*)**.

The following morning, we didn't manage to see the lynx from the hide. However, as far as my very limited Spanish allowed me to understand, someone had meanwhile spotted it casually walking around the yard behind the hide :) I decided to walk all the way back toward Andújar to increase my chances of further sightings, but luck wasn't on my side - apart from a Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*). Even so, it was a very nice trip overall, and I'm genuinely happy to see that the Iberian lynx population is doing well.

On the final day of the trip, I decided to visit **Gibraltar** and its famous **Barbary macaques (*Macaca sylvanus*)**. That part was certainly not difficult - there was an impressively large group right on site.

I hope I'll be able to return next winter to search for lynx again - and this time try my luck along the road to La Lancha Dam, as many of you have successfully done. And I also hope that I will make another of the great discoveries that you mention here in your reports.



Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*)



Andalusian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis vaucheri*)



Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)

European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)Barbary Macaque (*Macaca sylvanus*)

Mammals

- Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*)
- Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*)
- Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
- Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*)
- European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)
- Wild Boar and Feral Domestic Pig (*Sus scrofa*)
- Barbary Macaque (*Macaca sylvanus*)

Birds

- European Stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*)
- Booted Eagle (*Hieraetus pennatus*)
- Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)
- White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*)
- Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*)
- Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*)
- Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)
- Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)
- Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)
- Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)
- Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)
- Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)
- Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
- Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*)
- White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*)
- Marbled Teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*)
- European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)
- Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis*)
- Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)
- Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*)
- Iberian Magpie (*Cyanopica cooki*)
- Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*)
- Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*)
- Sardinian Warbler (*Curruca melanocephala*)

Reptiles

- Andalusian Wall Lizard (*Podarcis vaucheri*)
- Iberian Green Lizard (*Podarcis virescens*)
- Common Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*)
- Moorish Gecko (*Tarentola mauritanica*)
- Ladder Snake (*Zamenis scalaris*)

Common Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*)