Spain – A Solar Safari



7th – 16th August 2026

Introduction

August would not be my ideal choice for visiting the Pyrenees, Picos de Europa and Somiedo Natural Park, a better time would be late spring for Butterflies and wildflowers and a lot fewer tourists! But this trip was timed for the Total Solar Eclipse and I tried to fit in some late Summer wildlife around some touristy things.

We flew with Wizz Air from Luton to Barcelona and back from Bilbao, the flight times for the return flight were moved from 4pm to 9.30pm about 2 months before the flight which was a little annoying, but the flights themselves were fine.

We hired a car from Dollar (Hertz) which was time consuming as always why the process is not easier is beyond me. It was fine I assume! as it seemed the process was to basically abandon the car at the airport on return.

All accommodation and excursions were booked in advance.



Spiked Pyrenean Speedwell

Friday 7th August



Common Genet

Our flight from Luton left at 5.40am so we arrived in Barcelona mid morning and did some touristy stuff for a few hours before heading to our Hotel to check in and get some food. At 8pm we met our guide, he escorted us to the Genet hide where they have been feeding Genets in an illuminated area ideal for photographs for a few years. He left us there to return at 11.30 to collect us.

https://www.photo-logistics.com/listings/hide-genet-stone-marten-lamps/

It was very hot in the hide but we had a small fan to help. As dusk fell a Stone Marten appeared along with a fox, the Stone Marten did not like the presence of the fox so did not stay long. A feral cat appeared but no sign of the Genet. With no sign of the Genet our guide extended the pick up time and finally after yet another visit of the feral cat the Genet finally appeared and gave a great show and about 12.45 we finally left the hide for our hotel and some sleep, spotting a wild boar and two humbugs on the way back.



Common Genet



Common Genet

Saturday 8th August



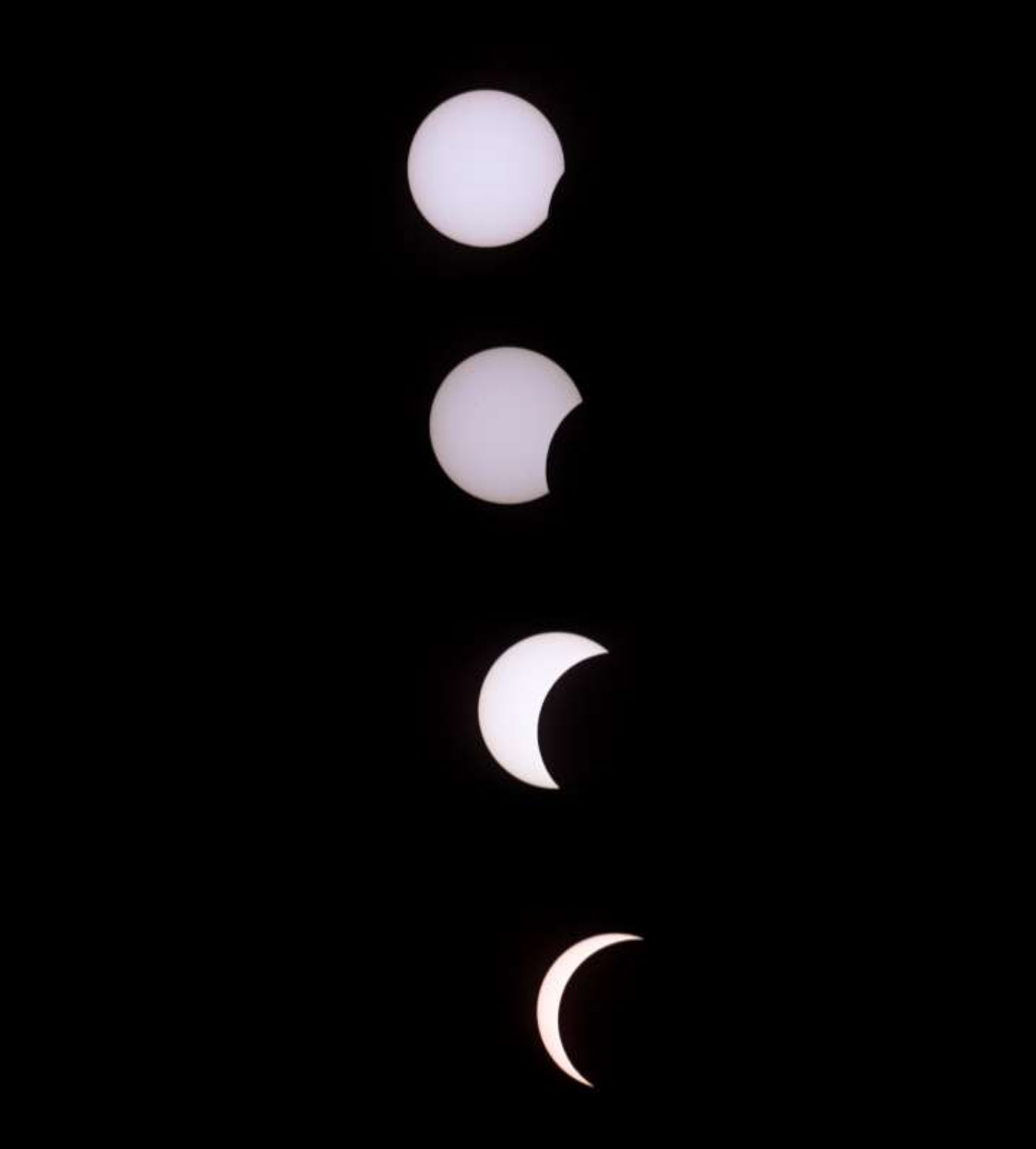
Alpine Marmot

Our destination was Andorra but we took a detour up to the Coll de Pal, we made several stops for butterflies and some spectacular views. We eventually found some Alpine marmots, including one which showed very well as we had our picnic lunch. There were some very close Griffon vultures by the side of the road and a few sightings of butterflies including a very nice scarce swallowtail. Birdwise we had a firecrest and some crossbills and plenty of Alpine choughs.

We made it to Andorra and checked in into our Hotel but did not do any wildlife stuff due to torrential rain from mid afternoon to the early hours.



Dusky Heath





Sunday 9th August



Pyrenean rock lizard

It was a long drive into France but we made many stops for wildlife along the way. We made it to the Col du Tourmalet for lunch. The place was very busy with people but we spent a few hours wandering around, sometimes managing to get away from the crowds. We had an Alpine Marmot, hoopoe, plenty of linnets and wheatears but despite extensive searching we could not find any white winged snowfinches. There were plenty of butterflies around the pick was a Pyrenean Brassy Ringlet and we found a few common wall lizards and Pyrenean rock lizards near the car park.

We headed into Lourdes to our Hotel for the night, where a walk round town produced two dippers along the river before heavy thunder storms forced us back to the hotel.



Pyrenees Brassy Ringlet



Scarce Swallowtail

Monday 10th August

This was pretty much a touristy day taking the Petit train d'Artouste to the Lac d'Artouste, here I explored a bit and found some nice late season alpine flowers, Star swertia plenty of yellow mountain saxifrage, Alpine asphodel, Alpine bistort, tufted saxifrage.

And a few more widespread species such as grass of parnassus, Pyrenean dead-nettle were present and plenty of plants not in flower, some I managed to identify others proved to be impossible.

The train journey was quite productive with sightings as it travelled at quite slowly. We had a couple of Lammergeiers and some Apollo butterflies and Alpine marmots from the train but we could not stop the train for photos! We drove into Spain for the night.



Star Swertia

Tuesday 11th August

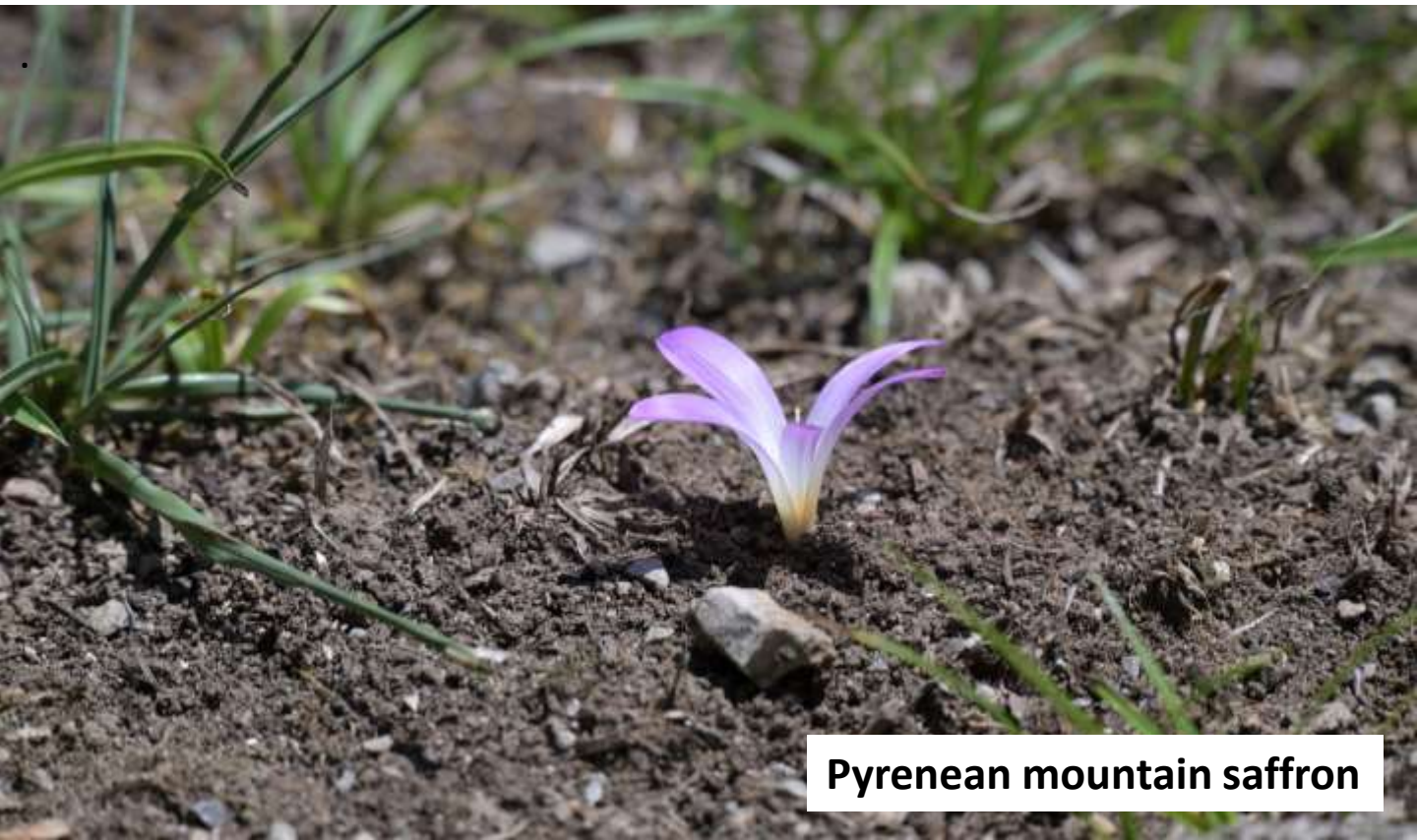


Rock Grayling

We had planned to go up the Bulnes Funicular to explore but the traffic was hell and you could not park within 4 of 5 miles of the train so we decided to explore some quite areas nearby for some wildlife for a few hours.

We found a nice walk along from a hydroelectric plant high up the Dobra valley, there were quite a few butterflies, large numbers on any cow droppings along the path, Great banded grayling the pick with chalkhill blue the most abundant species. There were a few late flowering plants with lots of False saffron in abundance along the path. A small stream with a pool held some midwife toad tadpoles but we did not find much else so by late afternoon we headed to out hotel in Covadonga.

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Pyrenean mountain saffron


Sempervivum vicentei

Wednesday 12th August

Our plan was to visit the lakes at Mirador de Entrelagos, in the summer you have to take a bus up there but all the tickets were already sold out, but our hotel mentioned a taxi shuttle that runs and we did that, it was slightly more expensive than the bus but well worth it for the flexibility.

We explored the area round the lakes for the whole morning looking for wildlife and enjoying the scenery, we found several Iberian Rock Lizards, the best area for these was to the north of Lago de Ericina, which was less frequented by the tourists. The area was excellent for plants with some nice flowering iceplants the highlight. Butterflies and dragonflies were present but quite tricky to photograph due to the heat but I got a few photos.

We drove to Nava and checked into our hotel. We then explored several locations I had scouted as potential eclipse viewing spots and some looked good but the cloud was thickening and the forecast did not look like improving. So after reviewing the weather we decided to drive an hour south out of the mountains to the plains nr Leon. As we neared this area the skies cleared and every parking area along the road was full of people. We pulled off the motorway and headed to a village called Montrjos del Camino stopping in a small area of scrub alongside another car, a perfect spot. We had a fantastic view of the total solar eclipse and a flyover flock of black bellied sandgrouse was a bonus.



Alpine Chough



Weavers Fritillary

Thursday 13th August

After some touristy stuff we headed to Somiedo and scouted out the bear watching area at Gua for an hour before checking into our hotel, after some food we headed back to the bear watching site which was already very busy (about 100 people) but no sign of any bears just a fox and a few wild boar.

When it was dark I headed off for a night drive to look for Broom Hare, I quickly had a fox and badger along the road and several spiny toads at various points along the way. The hare habitat was quite difficult to view from the car so I did many stops to scan with thermal and torch locating a deer sp, hedgehog and finally after about 2 hours a broom hare. But I could not get close to it for photos, I headed back with a brief sighting of a wildcat the only other thing of note.



Spiny Toad



Friday 14th August

I was back at the bear viewpoint before dawn and was shortly joined by one other person also using a thermal, as dawn broke a few more people started to arrive and the other person with a thermal scop picked up a bear. We watched it for a while before I headed back to the hotel to pick up my wife to see the bear which was still around when we returned.

We headed to Bersande where we were staying, but stopped a few miles from there at the Embalse de Besardino to look for butterflies. There was a good selection of butterflies including the rather scarce Black Satyr which was the clear highlight. At the edge of the lake was a quick moving Iberian grass snake but I did not see what it was hunting.

After some food I finally ran the Moth trap as it was pretty much the first time it was not raining at night, it was cool and breezy so the catch was not massive and nothing of real note, but a few common Spanish moths I don't see at home such as Selidosema taeniolaria and Idaea rubraria were caught.

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Cantabrian brown bear



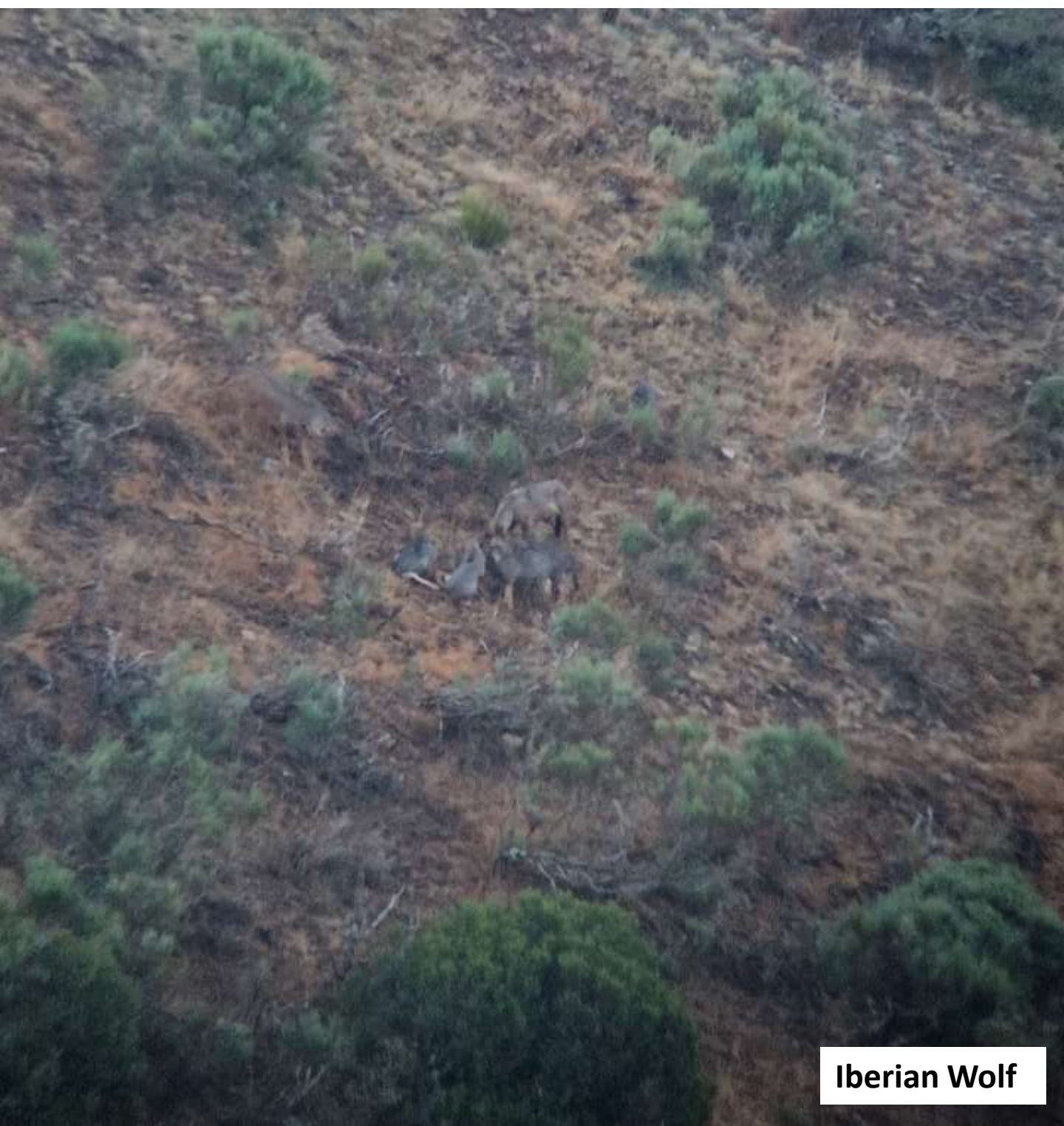
Gua Bear Watching



Cantabrian brown bear

Saturday 22nd February

We met our guide and two other people in Riano for some wolf watching, we picked up another person along the way and headed into the mountains before dawn. As we left the road and moved onto a track we stopped, a Broom hare was sat in the middle of the track showing very nicely before moving off into the scrub. Our location was high up on a rather exposed ridge, we searched the hill side opposite, the guide knew where the Iberian wolves would likely be and he picked them up in the thermal. As it got lighter we could see them, 2 adults and 5 pups, they were pretty distant but we did have good views of them in the open. As they moved off for the day we also headed off first checking out an area where a bear had been recently but no sign but we had some large herds of red deer and half a dozen Pyrenean chamois. We searched the cultivated fields nearby for wildcat no without luck and we finished for the morning.



Iberian Wolf

I headed out to Arroyo de Mostajar for more butterflies, I wandered up the small stream finding several species of butterfly and a few dragonflies a family of stonechats, a dead wildcat on the road was not present on the journey there so was recent kill. I searched the fields on my trip back to the hotel for wildcats without any success.

After some slight confusion where to meet we joined out guide for another look at the wolves from the same vantagepoint for the evening. They were present but were mostly obscured behind trees and only showed occasionally and did not show nearly as well as the morning session. We had some wild boar and a red deer on the same hillside and finished off the session with torrential rain and an amazing sunset and rainbow all at the same time. No mothing due to the heavy rain.



Scarce Copper

Sunday 16th August

We drove to Bilbao, a hoopoe and a few griffon vultures of note along the way. The day was spent doing tourist stuff in town before our night flight home.



Black Satyr

Lists



Large Wall Brown

Birds - 70



Griffon Vulture

Wren	Nuthatch	Mistle Thrush
Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Green Woodpecker
Tawny Owl	Red Legged Partridge	Robin
Lammergeier	Griffon Vulture	Stonechat
Coal tit	Firecrest	Crossbill
Great Tit	House Sparrow	Spanish Sparrow
House Martin	Sand Martin	Crag Martin
Swallow	Dipper	Buzzard
Golden Eagle	Booted eagle	Song Thrush
Great Tit	Wheatear	Stonechat
Yellowhammer	White Wagtail	Mallard
Coot	Grey Heron	Little Egret
Cattle Egret	Herring Gull	Red Legged Partridge
Common Swift	Alpine Swift	Black Bellied Sandgrouse
Woodpigeon	Feral Pigeon	Collared Dove
Little Grebe	Common Sandpiper	White Stork
Egyptian Vulture	Buzzard	Sardinian Warbler
Hoopoe	Kestrel	Jay
Magpie	Red Billed Chough	Alpine Chough
Jackdaw	Carrion Crow	Raven
Chiffchaff	Dunnock	Blackcap
Dartford Warbler	Starling	Blackbird
Wheatear	Rock Sparrow	Chaffinch
Linnet		

Mammals - 15



Stone Marten

Genet	Stone Marten	Red Fox
Wild Boar	Alpine Marmot	Roe Deer
Red Deer	Hedgehog	Badger
Soprano Pipistrelle	Broom Hare	Pyrenean Chamois
Cantabrian Brown bear	Iberian Wolf	Wildcat



Wild Boar

Selected Insects

Butterflies		
Scarce Swallowtail	Cleopatra	Apollo
Spanish Marbled white	Great Banded Grayling	Pyrenean Brassy Ringlet
Small Heath	Dark Green Fritillary	Weaver’s Fritillary
Clouded Yellow	Red Underwing Skipper	Silver Spotted Skipper
Black Satyr	Spanish Argus	Long Tailed Blue
Geranium Bronze	Red Admiral	Peacock
Painted Lady	Cardinal	Chalkhill Blue
Common Blue	Violet Copper	Scarce Copper
Southern Gatekeeper	Dusky Heath	Speckled wood
Clouded Yellow	Comma	Common Blue
Dusky meadow Brown	Geranium bronze	Green Veined White
Heath Fritillary	High Brown Fritillary	Lang's Short Tailed Blue
Large Skipper	Large Wall Brown	Marbled White
Meadow Brown	Pyrenees Brassy Ringlet	Queen of Spain Fritillary
Rock Grayling	Scarce Copper	Silver Studded Blue
Silver washed Fritillary	Small Heath	Small White
Sooty Copper	Southern Brown Argus	Spanish Argus
Wall Brown	Weaver's fritillary	
Grasshoppers		
Blue Winged Grasshopper	Red Winged Grasshopper	Blue-winged locust
Large banded grasshopper	Large mountain grasshopper	
Dragonflies		
Black Tailed Skimmer	Common Darter	Comon Bluet
Moths		
Agriphila tristella	Drab looper	Hummingbird Hawkmoth
Pyrausta purpuralis	Red Underwing	Vestal
Agapeta zoegana	Annulet	Brown line bright eye
Catoptria falsella	Catoptria pinella	Celypha striana
Clay	Clepsis consimilana	Clepsis siciliana
Common Carpet	Common Rustic agg	Coronet
Cynaeda dentalis	Dark Arches	Devonshire Wainscot
Eudonia mercurella	Euphyia frustata	Grass Eggar
Great dart	Gypsy Moth	Horse Chestnut
Idaea rubraria	Marbled Beauty	Mullein Wve
Orange Swift	Pediasia contaminella	Pyrausta despicata
Scarce Footman	Selagia spadicella	Selidosema taeniolaria
Small Rivulet	Southern Pine Hawkmoth	Tawny wave
Yellow Shell		
Beetles		
Carpocoris purpureipennis	Pyrrhocoris apterus	Spilostethus saxatilis
Green tiger beetle	Tropidothorax leucopterus	



Red Underwing Skipper



Selected Plants



Star Swertia	Adenostyles alliariae	Alder buckthorn
Sempervivum montanum	Alchemilla fissa	Alpenrose
Alpine asphodel	Alpine bistort	Alpine clover
Alpine toadflax	Basil Thyme	Betonica alopecuros
Biting Stonecrop	Blue Alpine daisy	Blue eryngo
Bog Bilberry	Brown knapweed	Campanula arvatica
Chives	Common rockrose	Common Spleenwort
Common whitebeam	Devil's Bit Scabious	False Meadow Saffron
Fir Clubmoss	French Sorrel	Fringed Pink
Gentiana lutea	Grass of Panassus	Greater Yellow rattle
Hairy Primrose	Harebell	Jewelled Rocket
Lesser Calamint	Lesser Centaury	Linaria alpina
Livelong Saxifrage	Monk's Hood	Mountain Sorrel
Musk Mallow	Pale Stonecrop	Parsley Fern
Pyrenean dead-nettle	Pyrenean eryngo	Pyrenean mountain saffron
Reflexed Stonecrop	Rock campion	Saxifraga caesia
Saxifraga moschata	Sempervivum vicentei	Sideritis hyssopifolia
Spiked Pyrenean Speedwell	Thick Leaved Stonecrop	Throatwort
Tufted Saxifrage	Wayfaring Tree`	Yellow Saxifrage

Herps - 7

Common Wall Lizard	Spiny Toad	Midwife Toad sp
Iberian Rock Lizard	Iberian Grass Snake	Pyrenean Rock Lizard
Large Psammodromus		



Iberian Rock Lizard

flickr

