



European wildcat – Riaño area, Spain

Spain & Andorra

8 – 15 September 2022

Introduction

A week in the Pyrenean and Cantabrian mountains with the main goal to see European wildcat. But also trying to find some mammals in Andorra, do some trekking in the mountains and having a good time in general.

The last part failed already after 1½ day as I got sick. I tried to fulfill my plans anyway, which I did but couldn't joined it as much as I wanted. If you have tried to do some mountain trekking with fever, chills and headache you know what I mean...

I got big help from previous trip reports to plan this in more details, which road to go and when. I also got some good information from Carlos N. G. Bocos (big thank you) and others.

I started with a rental car in Barcelona and drove to Andorra for my first 3 nights. With a stop enroute for Alpine marmots. Then a long full day drive to Riaño for my next 3 nights and the last night in Bilbao where I left the car and flew home.

The weather was very good in Andorra with blue sky and warm.

Totally the opposite in Riaño and Cantabrian mountains. I believe that 80% of my time here was raining away with high winds, cold temperature and in short, awful conditions.



My car enroute to Andorra

In Andorra (by the way the biggest country in the world without it's own airport...) I stayed in the lovely Hotel L'Ermita (<https://hotelermita.com/>) a few kilometers north of the capital Andorra La Vella and with quite surroundings and free parking this was perfect.



Hotel L'Ermita

In Riaño area I stayed as many other mammalwatchers in Hotel de La Reina in the small village of Boca de Huergano (<https://hoteltierradelareina.com/>). Perfect place to stay to explore the surroundings.



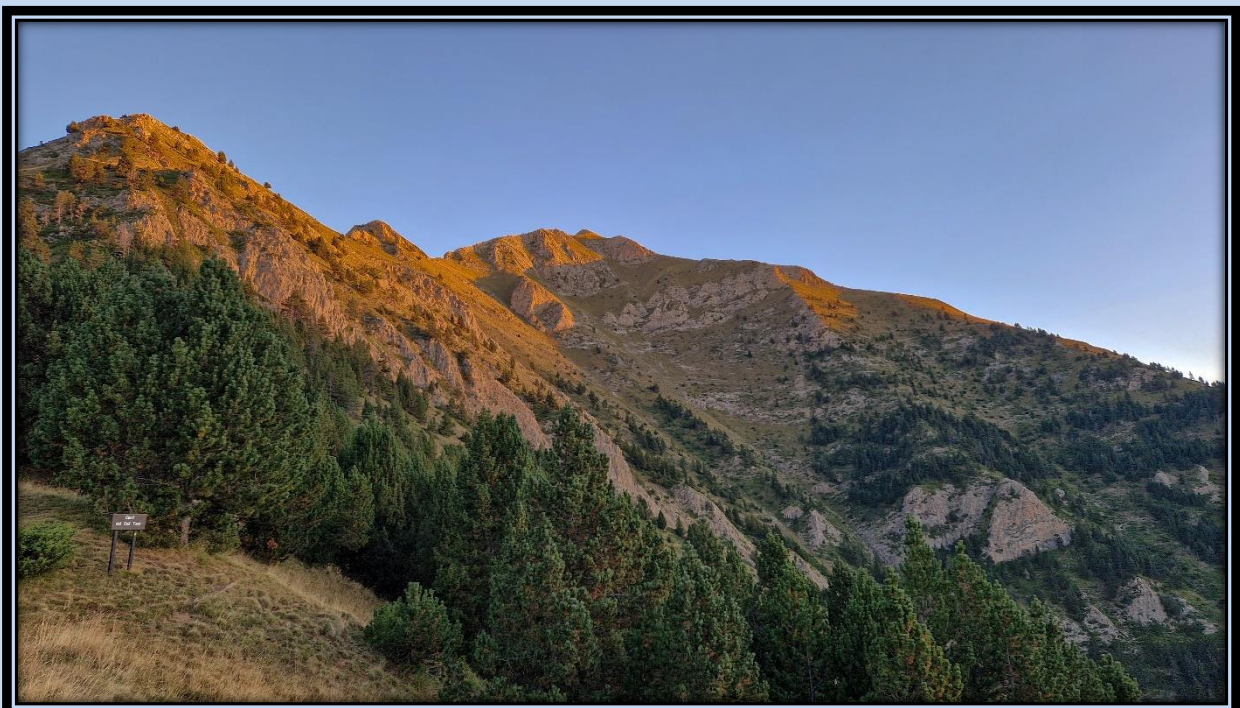
Hotel de La Reina

In Andorra my main goal was to find Pyrenean Chamois and European mouflon on one day and do a non mammalwatching hike the other and in Cantabrian mountains – Spain I did both nightdrives and early morning and afternoon drives as long it was possible because of the rain.

In the end I saw **11 species** of mammals of which **6 were lifers** and this is the story about them...

My species list from Andorra

1. Pyrenean chamois --- (Lifer) Easily found in the early morning at this place ([42.55263093728577](#), [1.45384349097637](#)) Scan the mountain side just in front of you at sunrise and you probably will see them. There is a signed path that you can walk from here so that you can get closer. Be quite, they are shy.



This mountainside was full of Pyrenean chamois



Pyrenean chamois

2. European mouflon --- (Lifer) If you consider this as a fullworthy species you have a good chance for them here: [42.53874439560229, 1.406828768074446](https://www.google.com/maps/place/42.53874439560229,1.406828768074446) There is a small parking place close by and some paths to walk to this valley. Sit down and scan the area in the morning and you probably will see them.



European mouflon

My species list from Spain

1. **Alpine marmot --- (Lifer)** I followed Richard webbs trip report from 2015 to this place enroute between Barcelona and Andorra. Sure enough, there was plenty of Alpine marmots at this beautiful place: [42.296459394196354, 1.9176883964816642](https://www.google.com/maps/place/42.296459394196354,1.9176883964816642)



2. **Red deer ---** Very common in Riaño area. Especially at night.



3. European wildcat --- (Lifer) My main target for this trip and my 29th feline. Already on my first afternoon drive I saw two of them and then I more or less stopped looking. Very easy to find. For me the best place was on the road N-625 between Vegacerneja and the junction to LE-2711.

Also on the fields close to Piedrasluengas [43.03480645410485](#), [-4.457411642601198](#) some 1½ hour drive from Riaño was teeming with Wildcats.

One was also seen between Boca de Hurgano – Besande.



4. Red fox --- Everywhere at night in Riaño area. I guess they also take advantage of all the rodents on the cut down fields.



5. **European badger** --- One seen close to Boca de Huergano on the fields at night. Terrible picture.

Sorry for that 😊



6. **Iberian ibex** --- (Lifer) Big group with females and young was seen here [43.053783474910134, -4.820189609201635](https://www.google.com/maps/place/43.053783474910134,-4.820189609201635) There is a small parking place. Scan the mountains from this.



7. **Pyrenean chamois** --- (**Lifer**) didn't look for them in Riaño as I saw them in Andorra earlier but on the last day when going back to Bilbao and the weather was good again (typical when you are about to leave...) I encountered two of them here [42.87662068043156](#), [-4.883700831376745](#)



8. **Lesser horseshoe bat** --- (**Lifer**) In a cave which I got recommended this little fellow was spending his day. A fairly common species around Europe but a lifer for me. Bats are truly great mammals!



9. **Wild boar** --- One group seen on the road at nightdrive

10. **Roe deer** --- Only one individual seen late at night on the road close to Besande

Stuff I missed

Of my targets the most notable miss was the Broom hare. Despite going on some recommended roads for two nights I didn't find this great endemic.

I also tried for the Snow Vole one late afternoon between the rains but nothing.

All in all some new lifers for me with top four sightings of **European wildcat, Iberian ibex, Pyrenean chamois and Lesser horseshoe bat.**

Random photos from my time on the Iberian peninsula



Me photographing Alpine marmots



Beautiful Spain. Notice the car on the right. Such a scenic road.



My hiking day in Andorra. This lake is called Estany del l'isla.

Looks very nice and it's good that your inner feelings doesn't make it on photos as the only thing I was thinking about was my bed due to sickness.



On the path to look for European mouflon. Such a scenic part of Europe – Andorra



We need a bird in here as well – Common Buzzard , Riaño area

Thanx alot to all the ones who posts trip reports on mammalwatching.com , you make it way more easier to plan a trip :)

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