

Asturias and Leon (Spain)

From 02/10/2019 to 08/10/2019, we booked a special trip for small carnivores with the French naturalist agency Yuhina (<http://yuhina.fr/accueil.htm>).



Looking for wolves

Pierre Boutonnet, the head of the agency, welcomed the 8 participants to his cottage at Casa Folgueras 33115 Villanueva de Santo Adriano - Asturias - Spain (casafolgueras.com). In the property, 2 low walls are equipped with a camera trap coupled with a presence detector. When an animal is detected, an alarm sounds in the house. All you have to do is rush to the binoculars and scopes and observe the visitor. At night, the illuminated animal does not seem to be disturbed.

Our second guide Frédéric Chiche (vyanatura@gmail.com), a small carnivore's specialist, used his observation techniques for us: practically every evening, at the beginning of the night, we waited in front of a fig tree with ripe fruits. The guides were looking for visitors with their thermal camera and their lamp illuminated the show: what a success and what observations! Here again, the light didn't seem to disturb the animals, which for several minutes stuffed themselves with fruit before our eyes.

The Stone Marten remained in the heart of the fig tree, caught a fig and ate it on the ground. The European Pine Marten ventured to the end of the branches and ate the figs on the tree. The Common Genet seemed to be the most agile of the 3. The Red Fox remained at the foot of the tree, satisfied with the fruit fallen on the ground.



If the search for small carnivores was our priority at night, during the day other species were not neglected.

Only 1 observation of a European Polecat. Unfortunately, we were not ready when the alarm sounded because we were about to leave and the observation equipment was already stored in the vehicle. Nevertheless, the animal gave us time to find a flashlight and binoculars and did a few round trips on and at the foot of the low wall...



Frédéric's camera trap was more reactive than our cameras

Only 1 observation of a Stone Marten in a fig tree for a few minutes. She passed over the low walls several times during our sleep or when we were at another observation site.



2 European Wildcat observed: a female came out of the bushes around 7:40 p. m. A vehicle slowed down and stopped near the meadow where she was hunting. She quickly found shelter near a fence. The car restarted, she resumed hunting and captured a Montane Water Vole after 3 attempts (around 30 minutes of observation). The second observation was a male walking close to our vehicle.



3 very nice observations of a Common Genet. One caught a Brown Rat in front of us after basking in the fork of an open tree (at least 10 minutes of observation). Another arrived through a roof where her latrine was and climbed a fig tree to eat. She went down to climb another fig tree to continue her meal and ran away (at least 10 minutes of observation).



4 observations of a European Pine Marten: 3 in a fig tree and one on the low wall.



Picture of Chloé Le Gall--Ladevèze

4 mornings, on the same site, a Eurasian Otter (2 mornings with its 2 cubs) was fishing in the lake. Just by looking up with the binoculars, in the mountain above the lake, there was also 1 female Brown Bear with its 2 cubs.



A 2-day trip south of the Picos de Europa allowed us to see the Cantabrian Chamois, Iberian Ibex, Pyrenean Desman, European Wildcat, Grey Wolf (3 cubs for 1/2 hour and 1 adult briefly). To see the wolves, Pierre contacted Bernardo (see with Pierre to have a contact). We spent a whole morning searching for the Short-tailed Weasel but we failed. In Somiedo NP, we tried again: no Short-tailed Weasel but a Least Weasel showed up...



1 peculiar observation of a Pyrenean Desman: the week before our stay, Frédéric conducted successfully some Desman searches. So we went to the place where he saw a Desman at exactly the same hour, around noon. The thermal scopes quickly found the animal under a stone from the shore. Imagine a “torpedo” springing out of the stone, diving for a few seconds, and coming back at an incredible speed to a hiding place. After several round trips and 30 to 40 minutes of intermittent observation, the Desman went up the stream. Unfortunately, the “torpedo” was too fast for photographers!



The hiding place

The « torpedo »

Western Red Deer, Eurasian Wild Pig, Cantabrian Chamois are well represented in Cantabria, Western Roe Deer seems much less so.



Cantabrian Chamois



Iberian Ibex

List of mammals seen :

Belette d’Europe – Least Weasel (*Mustela nivalis*): 1 in Somiedo NP

Blaireau européen – European Badger (*Meles meles*): during the night, 1 seen in the field of Pierre and 4 from the vehicle south of Picos de Europa

Bouquetin d'Espagne – Iberian Ibex (*Capra pyrenaica*): 18 females and young in the south of Picos de Europa

Campagnol monticole – Montane Water Vole (*Arvicola monticola* or *Arvicola scherman*): lots of burrows and 1 individual caught by a European Wildcat

Cerf élaphe – Western Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*): all over the place

Chat forestier – European Wildcat (*Felix silvestris*): 1 male and 1 female, south of Picos de Europa

Chevreuil européen – Western Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*): Trubia Valley and Somiedo

Desman des Pyrénées – Pyrenean Desman (*Galemys pyrenaicus*): south of Picos de Europa

Ecureuil roux – Eurasian Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*): 1 in Trubia Valley

Fouine – Stone Marten (*Martes foina*): 1 in Trubia Valley

Genette d'Europe – Common Genet (*Genetta genetta*): 3 in Trubia Valley

Isard cantabrique – Cantabrian Chamois (*Rupicapra parva*): adults and young south of Picos de Europa and Somiedo

Lièvre de Castroviejo – Broom Hare (*Lepus castroviejo*): 2 (perhaps the same) in Trubia Valley

Loup d'Europe – Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*): 3 cubs and 1 adult south of Picos de Europa

Loutre d'Europe – Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*): 1 south of Picos de Europa. 1 or 2 adults and 2 cubs in Trubia Valley

Martre des pins – European Pine Marten (*Martes martes*): 1 at Pierre's house and 3 in Trubia Valley

Mulot à collier – Yellow-necked Field Mouse (*Apodemus flavicollis*): 1 at Pierre's house

Mulot sylvestre – Long-tailed Field Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*): 1 in Trubia Valley

Ours brun – Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*): 1 female with her 2 cubs and 1 subadult in Trubia Valley. 1 of 3 or 4 years old in Fondos de Vega seen after the trip with Pierre and Frédéric.

Putois d'Europe – European Polecat (*Mustela putorius*): 1 at Pierre's house

Rat surmulot – Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*): 1 caught by a Common Genet and 1 in a bridge in Trubia Valley

Renard roux – Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*): 2 in Trubia Valley and 1 or 2 in the south of Picos de Europa

Sanglier d'Europe – Eurasian Wild Pig (*Sus scrofa*): 8 (adults + young) at Pierre's house



Brown Bear at close range in Fondos de Vega, after the trip with Pierre and Frederic.