

Spain
August 8th-12th, 2021
Justin Brown

Chris Townend at Wise Birding put me in touch with Luke Massey to see a European wildcat. Originally from the UK, and after working as a wildlife filmmaker all over the world in such places like Zambia, Chernobyl, and Singapore, Luke has settled in northern Spain with his girlfriend and their young son. Their goal is to "rewild" as much land as they can, and to live sustainably in harmony with nature. You can learn more about their mission, and also contact Luke for wildcat guiding, at wildfinca.com. Luke is a terrific guide. Riaño has been the wildcat capital for the last few years, but Luke has discovered some areas around Cervera de Pisuerga

that he thinks are even better for sightings. And the results speak for themselves: we had at least a dozen sightings over four days, most of which were good sightings, and we spent some of that time looking for other species, like bears and wolves. As has been noted in other reports, the window of opportunity for seeing wildcats is relatively small each year, as the cats can be seen hunting rodents in the fields cut by the farmers typically around the end of July, with their activity in these fields tending to wane by September when they've greatly reduced the bounty of rodents. Aside from the wildcats, a big highlight for me was going to a badger den, where four youngsters put on quite a show with lots of chasing and wrestling. We didn't spend much time looking for wolves, and I'm sure we would have found some with more effort. Luke is always in

the loop about their whereabouts because his friend is a wolf researcher.