



Ultimate Spain - Easter 2013

Report written by Jan Kelchtermans, founder of Europesbig5

Pristine nature and its top carnivores, is what we were after. Showing **Iberian lynx**, **wolf** and **Cantabrian brown bears** as well as general Spanish wildlife to a group of Belgian nature enthusiasts. No expensive hides or feeders, but the real deal of tracking shy carnivores up in the Spanish mountains. **The trip yielded sightings of lynx** (twice) , **bears** (three times), **wolves** (four times), otter and all birds on the wish list (including displaying great and little bustards and 21 raptor species). Sadly, no less than 12 out of 14 days were rainy. Hence a lack of more decent pictures. Kar Van Ginderdeuren, co-guide and photographer of the trip, missed two decent pictures (very close lynx and bear) by being at the wrong place at the right time.



We started the two week trip in Andalucia, looking for el lince Iberico. Iberian lynx still considered the rarest cat in the world with only two relict populations remaining in Southern Spain. Total estimation: 320 individuals. This number includes those animals bred in captivity before being released in the wild. Cordillera de Andujar the real last stronghold on earth. Resident Andujar animals are especially interesting for nature lovers as they are not that difficult to encounter and, very atypical for critical endangered animals, lacking unnatural radio collars.



Subsequently we did a stop in Extremadura for steppe birds before heading north to wolf country. 'Extreme hard' is not the case during early April in this part of Spain. Plentifulness and richness of nature amazing. An endless array of displaying and singing bird species in a smashing flowering 360° surrounding!





Then we went to Sierra the Culebra where we saw wolves 4 out of 8 times. One sighting was pretty close but still early in the morning. Hence only two record shots. One of an alfa female circling a pack of deer. The other one of two patrolling individuals near their core area.







The trip ended tracking Cantabrian Brown bears. For sure the most pristine bears in Europe given the amazing landscape they can be seen in. Nowhere else can one photograph bears in such an amazing landscape. In the end we saw all large carnivores in one trip rendering all group members very happy.



©pictures by Karl Van Ginderdeuren

(apart a minority of pics from tour participants **Willy De Ruyter** and **Geert Blomme**)