

## **Trip report Spain: Picos de Europa**

### **'Going for wolf and wild cat'**

August 2015, Janco van Gelderen



This is a short report of a search for wolf and wild cat and a bit of bear in Somiedo in Spain.

*I have written a separate report about two trips for Iberian Lynx in 2015 and 2016.*

While focussed for Lynx in Andujar, people told me the north of Spain is good for wild cat. Especially the area around 'Riano' in the Picos de Europa. So I thought since lynx watching can be quite frustrating (to me) this might be a good alternative and a wild cat is one on my list. So I booked a flight to Madrid and a rental car and drove to 'Boca de Huergano' east of Riano. I stayed for 6 days in a local hostel.

August is the best period to see wild cat since the grasses are cut and cats hunt in the fields and are easy seen in open field because of their size.

Also I wanted to try for wolves since they are in this area as well. I booked some excursions for this with [www.wildwatchingspain.com](http://www.wildwatchingspain.com). This company arranges excursions to watch wolves. For the wild cat you can join as well. I tried to work the cats out by myself and it did.

#### **Wild cat:**

The wild cats are in the areas where there is cut grass. These areas/fields are on the roadsides south of Boca de Huergano and also along the roads north from Riano (google maps Picos de Europa). Early morning an evening the cats hunt in the fields as there are many rodents here. To mention is that it is difficult stopping by car on these roads also there is hardly any space to park... also most cats are rather shy. Sometimes they ran away before you stop. But the good thing is that there seem to be one or two cats that are a bit more adjust to cars and people. These cats are south of Boca de Huergano and they stay sometimes at some distance active in the field. But actually I found out this was not really predictable, sometimes they also ran off. Anyway I just tried hard by driving long hours in the area and tried for cats when I saw them. Eventually it worked out quit well with some great observations as you can see in this report.

#### **Wolf:**

The excursion I did with [www.wildwatchingspain.com](http://www.wildwatchingspain.com) were good organised. You are picked up in 4X4 and driven to some special locations. Here it is just sit and wait, usually the wolves are in quite distant to be seen. We were not so lucky in this period. I tried 4 excursions and saw only a 1 year old wolf for about 5 seconds and on another morning two wolf pups for let's say 10 seconds... Not what I really expected since they had sometimes prolonged views here in previous years. It will depend on the place and year how lucky you are I think. But I got my Iberian wolf sighting, a first for Europe for me.

To my surprise on my way back to the airport on the highway to Burgos I saw a big dog-kind of animal on the road side in a field. Since the area is rather empty here I thought this was a bit strange... So I looked again and saw this was a WOLF!!! I made a quick (bit risky) stop on the side lane. The wolf already walked away more far from the road (My camera jammed \$%\$%\$%\$). Luckily it stopped at around 150 meters away again and I could make some photos. So in the end this trip was a success with a surprise sighting ☺

Another good thing to mention was that there was a fresh wolf kill (red deer) not far from the road in a field where I could see some nice close vultures. I think a not that common sighting...

#### **Bear:**

I only tried for one evening in Somiedo to watch bear at the watch point which is near Fondos the Vega after Degana. You cannot miss it since there is a bear watch parking nowadays. (you better read other reports for bear since I did not see one, but only looked one afternoon) I wanted to try more for cats so returned to Riano area.

#### **Red deer:**

are seen quit well from viewpoints in the evening and mornings also a road crossing at night.

As photography is my passion my goal is to make a good picture of the mammals during the trip. I hope you will enjoy this report. Please feel free to commend or ask questions!

Specially I want to thank [www.mammelwatching.com](http://www.mammelwatching.com) for presenting such great trip reports.

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**Wild cat**





Wild cat







**Iberian wolf, roadside view highway to Burgos**







Iberian wolf pup, in the middle, just left down of the center bush before tree line. Wild cat with pray under











**Vultures on a fresh wolf kill (red deer)**







**vulture**



**Picos views**





**Wild cats**







**Wild cat terrain, cut grassfields. Beneath: red deer lake side**





## **TRIPLIST**

### **Mammal-list**

1. Red deer (+-20)
2. Red fox (1)
3. Wolf (3)
4. Wild cat (10)