



Iberian Lynx at Zoobotánico Jerez, Jerez de la Frontera

Intention

Find and photograph Iberian Lynx for the last remaining chapter of my book „Sie sind wieder da – Bär, Luchs und Wolf erleben“ (They are back again – experiencing bear, lynx and wolf); find the best places to photograph Southeastern Iberian Ibex (*Capra pyrenaica hispanica*); observe wildlife on the way.

Locations visited

Parque Natural Sierra de Andújar;
Zoo, Jerez de la Frontera;
Grazalema / Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema;
El Burgo / Parque Natural Sierra de las Nieves;
El Torcal (Paraje Natural Torcal de Antequera);
Paraje Natural Acantilados de Maro Cerro Gordo*

*visited after the trip during my staying in the area with my family

weather: generally warm and pleasant; sometimes hot (32°C) in the lowlands during the day; in the mountains chilly at night; no rain at all

Free ranging wild mammal species seen: 8

Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), german: Rothirsch;

Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*), Pardelluchs;

European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), Wildkaninchen;

Southeastern Spanish ibex or **Beceite ibex** (*Capra pyrenaica hispanica*), Beceite-Steinbock;

European otter (*Lutra lutra*), Euroasischer Fischotter

Wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), Wildschwein

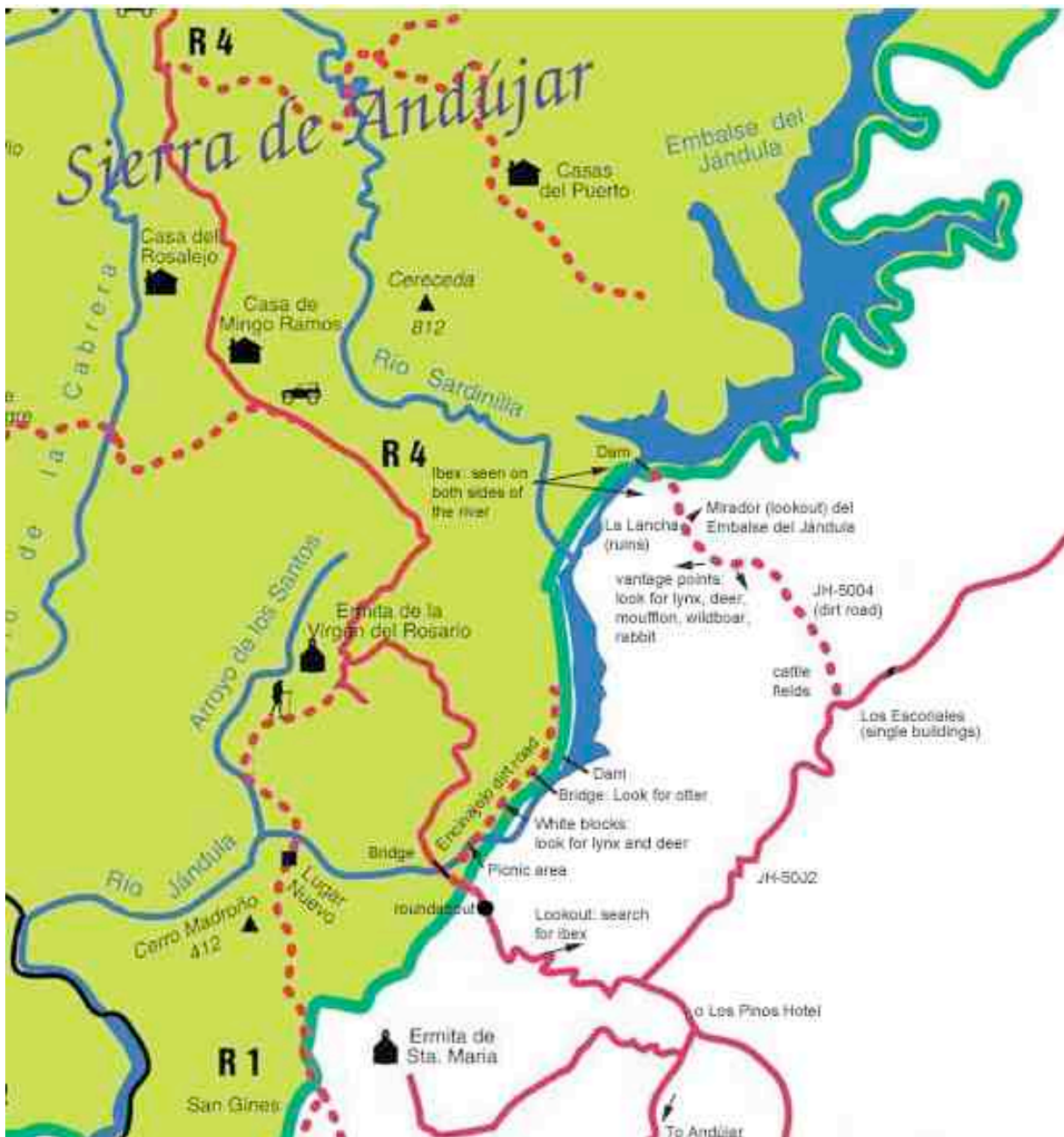
Fallow deer (*Dama dama*), Damhirsch

Mouflon (*Ovis orientalis*), Europäischer Mufflon

Itinerary

october 17th –Andújar: almost lost

Arrive at Malaga 02:50 pm; get my car and drive to Sierra de Andújar; take a right turn in the town of Andújar towards the park on A-6177, drive for 20 minutes / 15 kilometers. Give up too early and miss the Los Pinos Hotel, where I have reserved an apartment; drive back all the way to town and back again on A-6177 to find out that I had turned around just a few hundred meters in front of the hotel. Finally I get my room and all is fine.



Map of the area. Note: Most of the wildlife viewing takes place outside or at the edge of the park

october 18th – Sierra de Andújar: lynx in 2:20 h

Get up at 5 am and drive towards the parc; observe my first red deers at around 6 am on Encinarejo dirt road. It's rutting season and the animals are not very shy which gives me opportunity to experiment photographing them in the beam of my headlamp – which works quite well.

I turn and drive on JH-5002 towards Jándula dam. After the farm buildings at Los Escoriales the paved road turns into a gravel road which is strewn with potholes. So driving here that early in the morning rocks you to sleep again. Just a few hundred meters before the dam – it is still dark –, I notice a shadow crossing the road and I am instantly wide awake: it's a lynx, just 20 meters in front of me! After 2 hours and 20 minutes of relaxed searching for my lynx, I have got it! What are the odds!! I know, I have only a few seconds. The lynx pauses to scratch itself and is gone. I manage to get a few shots with ISO 6400. Great fortune!



„My“ lynx! Wearing a radio collar

I drive to the „Mirador (lookout) del Embalse del Jándula“ to experience the sunrise – hoping to get a glimpse of the lynx again. No lynx, but lots of red deer instead and a wonderful scenery.

The Sierra de Andújar is part of the Sierra Morena which stretches for 450 km in an E-W direction extending into Portugal. The system is the result of the northward-moving African Plate. It is made up of Paleozoic rocks such as granite, gneiss, quartzite and slate. Species such as lynx, wolf, Imperial Eagle, Black Vulture, Black Stork or mongoose find a stronghold here. The hunting of red deer, fallow deer and wild boar has been and is the main use of these mountains.



Red Deer: most conspicuous species in october

Later I drive down to the dam, where I photograph Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and a Rock Bunting (*Emberiza cia*). On the way back, I see more red deer, rabbits and Red-legged partridges (*Alectoris rufa*) from the vantage points along the dirt road. The latter two are prey species of the Iberian lynx.

Drive back to Los Pinos Hotel for lunch. Start again early afternoon. On the first lookout on A-6177 after Los Pinos Hotel you can see the monastery „El Santuario de la Virgen de la Cabeza“ in the far distance on the horizon. To your right is a rocky slope, where I discover my first iberian ibex, a single male.

Drive to Encinarejo Dam. On the bridge below the dam I am delighted to see a European Otter (*Lutra lutra*) in bright daylight at around 4 p.m.



European Otter: seems to be accustomed to people at Encinarejo dam bridge

October 19th – Sierra de Andújar: ibex and mouflon

Start on JH-5004. From one of the vantage points I see my first mammal of the day: a Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*).



Wild Boar: best seen from the lookouts at JH-5004

Scan the area from below the ruins of La Lancha. People have reported to see Southern Iberian Ibex (*Capra pyrenaica hispanica*) on the wall of Jándula Dam. I don't discover them there. But on the slope opposite the river and on the rocks on the left hand side of the river, west of La Lancha I find several animals. It is early rutting season: males are curting, females are fleeing.



Ibex: a young male chases a group of females with young

On the way back I see more Red Deer and the first Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*).



Fallow deer: seen behind the cattle fields of road JH-5004

In the late afternoon I detect two mature Mouflons (*Ovis orientalis*) - at the same lookout where I saw the Wild Boar in the morning



mouflon: only two were seen on the lookouts of JH-5004

October 20th – Sierra de Andújar: more otter, more deer

Drive again to the Encinarejo Dam Bridge. Sure enough, at 7:07 a.m. two young European Otter (*Lutra lutra*) play between the rocks. During the day it shows again that Red Deer is the most common animal in the area – at least at this time of the year. Also Wild Boar, Fallow Deer and rabbits I see again. But for the rabbits my impression is, 2014 is not a very good year for them. I notice only 2 to 3 locations alongside JH 5004 where 2 or 3 animals hang out.

Conclusions: „Andújar“ is worth going. It should be noted though that most of the wildlife viewing is actually done outside the nature park on private lands with overgrazing taking place and quite a few visitors (especially on weekends). As one can envision looking at the accompanying map, in Sierra de Andújar there must be more places to explore.

Birds at Sierra de Andújar



Rock Bunting (*Emberiza cia*), Zippammer
seen at Jándula dam; Encinarejo picnic area



Great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Kormoran
seen at Jándula dam; Encinarejo picnic area



Great tit (*Parus major*), Kohlmeise
seen along JH-5004



Red legged partridge (*Alectoris rufa*), Rothuhn
seen along JH-5004



Corn bunting (*Emberiza calandra*), Grauammer
Seen at cattle fields at Los Escoriales



House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Haussperling
seen at Jándula dam bridge; Encinarejo picnic area



White wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), Bachstelze
seen at Jándula dam bridge; Encinarejo picnic area



Azure-winged magpie (*Cyanopica cyanus*), Blauelster
seen at Encinarejo picnic area; along JH-5002



Grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) Gebirgsstelze
seen at Jándula dam bridge; Encinarejo picnic area



Willow warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), Fitis
seen at Jándula dam bridge; Encinarejo picnic area



Grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*), Graureiher
seen at Rio Jándula, Encinarejo picnic area



Long-tailed bushtit (*Aegithalos caudatus*), Schwanzmeise
Encinarejo picnic area



Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), Gänsegeier
seen along JH-5004; lookout at A-6177



Common Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*), Ringeltaube
Seen at Encinarejo picnic area



Common kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), Eisvogel
seen below and above Encinarejo dam



Spottless starling (*Sturnus unicolor*), Einfarbstar
seen at Encinarejo Dam



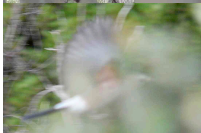
European stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*), Schwarzkehlchen
seen at Encinarejo picnic area; cattle fields at Los Escoriales



European pied flycatcher (*Ficedula hypoleuca*), Trauerschnäpper
seen at Encinarejo picnic area



European robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), Rotkehlchen
seen at Encinarejo picnic area



Eurasian jay (*Garrulus glandarius*), Eichelhäher
seen at one of the vantage points at JH-5004



Eurasian sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*), Sperber
seen at one of the vantage points at JH-5004



Eurasian blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus* or *Parus caeruleus*),
Blaumeise
seen at Jándula dam



Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), Stieglitz
seen above Jándula dam



Northern shrike (*Lanius excubitor*), Raubwürger
seen at one of the vantage points at JH-5004



Red-billed chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), Alpenkrähe
seen at Jándula dam



Collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), Türkentaube
seen on JH-5004



Eurasian wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Zaunkönig
seen at Jándula dam



Eurasian black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*), Mönchsgeier
seen at Jándula dam



Black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), Hausrotschwanz
seen at cattle fields at Los Escoriales



Hawfinch (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*), Kernbeißer
seen above Jándula dam



Eurasian magpie (*Pica pica*), Elster
seen at one of the vantage points at JH-5004



Feral pigeon ??? (*Columba livia domestica*), Haustaube
seen at Jándula dam



Mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*), Misteldrossel
seen at cattle fields at Los Escoriales



Crested lark ??? (*Galerida cristata*), Haubenlerche
seen at cattle fields at Los Escoriales



Thekla lark (*Galerida theklae*), Theklalerche
seen at cattle fields at Los Escoriales



Wood lark (*Lullula arborea*), Heidelerche
seen at cattle fields at Los Escoriales



Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), Habicht
seen at one of the vantage points at JH-5004



Eurasian blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Amsel
seen at Encinarejo picnic area



Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*), Wiedehopf
seen at Rio Jándula Bridge



Eurasian jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*), Dohle
seen at Rio Jándula Bridge

October 21st – Jerez de la Frontera: lynx in the zoo

Spend the mornig along Encinarejo dirt road. See lots of birds, but no more mammals. Drive 3,5 hours to Jerez de la Frontera (mostly through agricultural desert) to see Iberian Lynx close up in the zoo. The enclosure provides good opportunities for photography.

October 22nd – Grazalema: ibexes close to town

Arrive in Grazalema, „Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema“. When you enter Grazalema on A-372 from the west, there is a campground on the righthand side just at the edge of the village. From there starts a trail that leads to „Llanos del Endrinal“. At the trail head there is a sign actually saying „Sendero – Los Charcones“.

The landscape is characterised by Karst with pure white limestone or dolomite which are shaped by the force of solving water. Caves, sinkholes and polje are the typical feature of the Karst. What stands out most here is the „Llanos del Endrinal“, a polje or a low-lying zone, where rain water converges to be then eliminated by a underground drainage system. The polje was used to grow chick peas and different cereals until the middle of the twentieth century. In spring there is orchids blooming. The moisture attracts wildlife.

I start to hike in the afternoon and after a few hundred metres I get my first ibex. It's a kid and it is for sure not by itself – but in the relatively dense vegetation, close to the valley bottom, I don't get to see other animals. They probably hide in the bush. Flight distance for this ibex (and others that will follow) in „Parque Natural Sierra de Grazalema“ is below 50 m. In less then an our I reach the rim of „Llanos del Endrinal“, where I find another single ibex, a 8-year old female. It shares it's habitat with Black-wheatears (*Oenanthe leucura*) – a liver for me.

In the evenig at 6.45 p.m. I encounter a small group of female, young and immature males just before the trailhead close to the village.

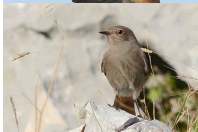
Birds at „Llanos del Endrinal“, Grazalema



Black wheatear (*Oenanthe leucura*), Trauersteinschmätzer



Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), Gänsegeier



Black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), Hausrotschwanz



Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Wanderfalke



Young male ibex chasing after females

October 23rd – El Burgo: Courting ibexes

At 7:46 a.m I run into a group of around 10 ibexes. Five- to six-year old males are courting, trying to mate. They don't show the typical color pattern of older males. The big buddies are missing - or I don't get to see them.



**Male ibex courting:
In young males the
typical black color
pattern is not yet
developed**

Next stop: El Burgo / Parque Natural Sierra de Las Nieves.



The traffic circle in El Burgo looks very promising!

I get a room in one of the few hotels (name?). It seems, I am the only tourist here, in fact, I don't meet any foreigner in town. But there is a tourist information, where I get to know Nieves who is very helpful. She points out the lookout „Mirador del Guarda Forestal“ as being the best place in the area for ibex.

For looking from below the lookout you leave the village towards the south and turn right after the bridge. Follow the gravel road along the river. After about 5 km you see onto a dam in the river. The highest point of the cliff in front is the lookout. You can park your car in a lefthand curve. From there the landscape looks like this:



At the highest point is the official lookout, which can easily be approached from the main road A 366. Scan the slope from below and find ibex all over the place. What is cool about this site is the hole / cave in the wall (arrow).

October 24th – El Burgo: ibex in the hole

At 8:10 a.m I manage to picture the moment when a female leaves the cave. Soon after a young follows. It is known that ibex enter caves for shelter in severe weather, looking for shade or protection to give birth. Maybe these animals spent the night in the cave. The reason why I don't know.



Female ibex leaving the cave

The look from the top of the lookout and a climb into the extremely sharp-edged karst rocks produces looks of ibex of all age classes (but only one mature male) and a group of three crossing the river via the dam.

The drive from El Burgo to El Torcal is the most scenic of all of Andalusia. And El Torcal is the best place to see Southern Iberian Ibex – for the scenery, for the many animals and, which are completely accustomed to people. Within a few hours I get hundreds of good shots.

Birds at „Mirador del Guarda Forestal“, El Burgo



Black wheatear (*Oenanthe leucura*), Trauersteinschmätzer



Blue rock thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), Blaumerle



Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*), Zilpzalp



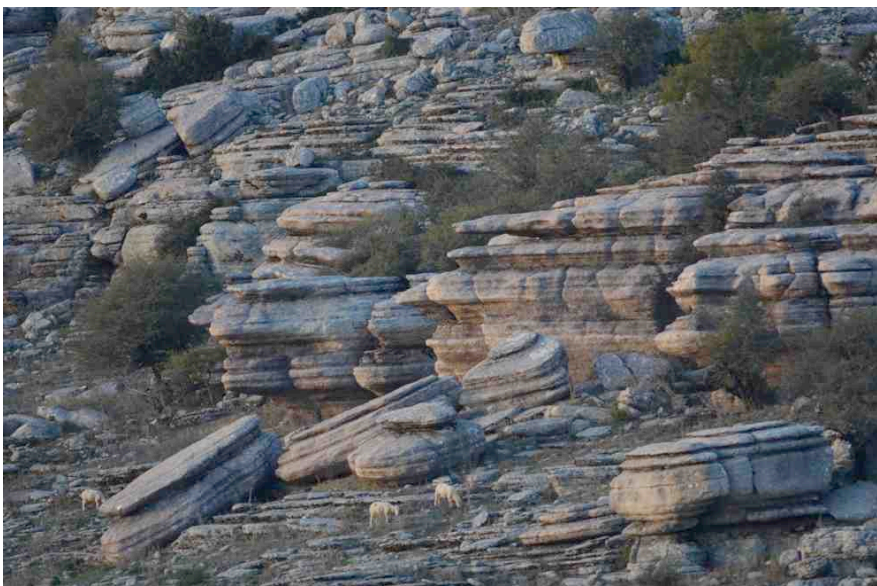
Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Wanderfalke

October 25th to 26th – El Torcal: ibex between „pancakes“



Great scenery at El Torcal

El Torcal is again a karst area made of 200 Million year old Jurassic limestone. Around 20 Million years ago, during the Alpine uplift, the carbonate sediments – already transformed into limestone – were compressed, deformed and fractured, until the limestone emerged in a slow and continuous process that is still taking place today. The limestones have remained exposed to atmospheric weathering and erosion agents since that time, dissolution being the main force creating rock collums and rocks that look like giant pancake piles. Watching the lively ibexes climbing and jumping within this fabulous landscape is great fun.



Typical „pancake piles“ at El Torcal.

There is some competition with domestic sheep at El Torcal



Southeastern Iberian Ibex (*Capra pyrenaica hispanica*): In comparison to the Gredos Ibex of Central Spain (below) the black markings are more strongly confined, but expand less. Note: Only in mature males the typical color pattern of each subspecies becomes visible.



Gredos Ibex (*Capra pyrenaica victoriae*) from Central Spain. Black markings expand more and are not sharply confined.

Photo: Petra Wiedemann

7-year old male from El Torcal



8-9-year old male from Credos.



Photo: Petra Wiedemann

Both animals are not mature enough to show the typical fur pattern of the subspecies they belong to. The animals resemble more than they would differ.



ibex at El Torcal courting – me? Nowhere else in southern Spain could I approach ibexes so closely without bothering the animals.

Birds at El Torcal



Crested lark ??? (*Galerida cristata*), Haubenlerche



Blue rock thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), Blaumerle



Black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), Hausrotschwanz



Rock Bunting (*Emberiza cia*), Zippammer



Tree pipit (*Anthus trivialis*), Baumpieper



Ibex habitat at „Paraje Natural Acantilados de Maro Cerro Gordo“

October 28th – Mediterranean coast: ibex at the beach

After my solo trip I stay with my family in a resort near Málaga. On a day trip to a beach we pass by the „Paraje Natural Acantilados de Maro Cerro Gordo“ between Málaga and Granada. I am very surprised to encounter ibex here at the coast. You get the probably rare opportunity to photograph ibex with the Mediterranean Sea in the background! This indicates that ibexes not necessarily need high altitude environments, but rather sheer rock walls as a retreat no matter at what elevation.

By the way there is also the chance to see three different dolphin species along this stretch off the coast:

- Short-beaked common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) - german: Gemeiner Delfin;
- Striped dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*) - Streifendelfin
- Common bottlenose dolphin, (*Tursiops truncatus*) - Großer Tümmler

Coming from Málaga on A-7 / E-15 you leave the Highway at Nerja. Then follow N-340 eastward for about 8 km; then turn right and follow the road down to the beach. There are two restaurants there: Restaurante la Barraca and Bola Marina. Look for the ibexes on the way down.