

Andújar, November 13th – November 20th 2013

I had this trip in my mind for some time already, and when I had some days off in November, I decided to give it a go. Several reports deal with the best spots to see Iberian lynx, and I got some extra information from both Jan Kelchtermans and Karl Vanginderdeuren. I stayed at Villa Matilde the whole time, a nice place with friendly owners, who are well informed about recent sightings and know the area very well. During 2013, Rabbits – the main prey for Iberian lynx - were affected by a disease, and the population crashed, making it more difficult than before to see lynxes.

November 13th

Late afternoon flight from Brussels to Malaga, it was dark by the time I got my rental car. Nothing seen on the drive from Malaga to Andújar.

November 14th

Since most of the recent lynx-activity was at the La Lancha road, I decided to focus on this area first. On the drive up to the viewing spots lots of **Red deer** were seen (they are abundant in the whole area, 10s were seen each day, so I won't mention them all the time), and the sound of rutting males was all around, creating a nice atmosphere. Smaller groups of **Fallow deer** were seen too. I watched the vast area for a few hours, without any sign of the cats, and only a few Rabbits were seen. Around noon, I went to dam at the end of the road, which should be a good spot for Spanish ibex. Upon walking on the dam however, I couldn't find any, so I continued to the small tunnel, and found 19 **Daubenton's** and two **Greater mouse-eared bats**. When I walked back to my car, a female and calf **Spanish ibex** were walking on the dam below me, allowing good views.



Female **Spanish ibex**.

The afternoon was spent again at the La Lancha road, where I saw my first **Mouflons** (a group of five, including one male). Upon arriving at one of the viewpoints, I saw a Spanish guy looking into the

bushes, so I raced over, only to hear he saw a collared male Iberian lynx 15 minutes before, but lost sight of it. Unfortunately, we were not able to find it...



Young males **Red deer**.

November 15th

Another start at the La Lancha road, with some nice **Wild boars** early in the day. At 9.10 a.m., I saw something on a distant hilltop, and when I took the scope, it was what I was hoping for, a beautiful **Iberian lynx** enjoying the sunshine! She (it later turned out to be a female) was sitting in the sun for about five minutes, and then walked off. Mission accomplished, albeit with very distant views. A bit later, two displaying Spanish imperial eagles flew over, a nice bonus. With the pressure off, I decided to go back to the dam, and this time I found 22 **Daubenton's bats**, the same two **Greater mouse-eared bats**, and a nice group of five **Spanish ibex**, including two adult males. In the afternoon I went to the El Encinarejo road, in the hope of seeing Otters, but I only had views of **Red** and **Fallow deer**, and one **Rabbit** too.



Daubenton's bat.



Male Spanish ibex.

November 16th

Today I started where I ended yesterday, but again nothing much was seen. In the afternoon La Lancha only resulted in lots of **Red deer**, one **Fallow deer** and some **Rabbits**.



Rabbit, only small numbers were seen each day.

November 17th

The day started at La Lancha again, with the usual suspects. At about 10 o'clock however, I saw some Spanish people running to their cars and quickly driving back to some other lynx-watchers (they are in contact with each other through the use of walky-talky's). I realized this must be for some good reason, so I did the same, and upon arriving I heard they were all watching a female **Iberian lynx** (which turned out to be the same animal as the one I had seen two days before). At first she lay in the shadow of a tree, but after some minutes she walked to a rock in the sun, where we could observe her for over an hour, doing the things cats do: lying down, washing, rolling over, ... After this she walked away and was not seen anymore. Again a rather distant observation, but what a great animal!



Female **Iberian lynx** walking off. Distant picture, but a great souvenir of this sighting.

November 18th

Another start at La Lancha, and despite being a Sunday with many observers present, no lynxes were seen today. Highlights were a **Wild boar** eating from a dead Red deer, and two distant male **Mouflons**. The tunnel now already held 24 **Daubenton's bats**, but no ibex were seen (although I didn't spend a lot of time looking for them). In the afternoon at El Encinarejo, I found tracks of Otter and a latrine of Common genet, but no new mammals were seen.



Wild boar eating from a dead stag Red deer.



Greater mouse-eared bat.

November 19th

My last day in Spain, and Otter was the main target. I was at El Encinarejo at sunrise, but due to dense fog most of the river was invisible from the viewpoint... However, after waiting for two hours, I

heard some splashes, and suddenly saw an **Otter** swimming towards me! Unfortunately, at the same time the fog was getting denser, so my first Otter sighting was a frustratingly brief one. After seeing this lifer, and since the fog didn't seem to go away, I headed south, to spend the last afternoon near Laguna de Fuente de Piedra. Mammalwise it was pretty calm, with only some **Rabbits** and a **Greater white-toothed shrew** seen. At dusk, a pippistrelle was flying around at the car park, and with the help of my bat-detector, I was able to identify it as a **Soprano's pippistrelle**, another lifer. Since my plane was only leaving early the following morning, I decided to do some spotlighting near the lake, in the hope seeing Iberian hare. In 1.5 hour I managed to see 12 **Rabbits**, three **Iberian hares** (they seemed to prefer olive groves) and two **Red foxes**. After this, I drove to the airport to spend the rest of the night there waiting for my plane. The fun wasn't over yet however, since, in the middle of the night, when I was doing some reading at Starbucks (the only place that was open the whole night), I heard a sound coming from the floor, and saw an **Algerian mouse** eating some leftovers. I had very good views of it, but unfortunately it didn't stay long enough for me to get my camera out of my bag... A nice end of a great trip!

Mammal list

1. **Greater white-toothed shrew**: one at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra.
2. **Daubenton's bat**: up to 24 were present in the tunnel at the end of the La Lancha road.
3. **Greater mouse-eared bat**: two were present in the same tunnel.
4. **Iberian hare**: three were seen during a 1.5 hour spotlighting drive at the southern end of Laguna de Fuente de Piedra.
5. **Rabbit**: small numbers were seen every day.
6. **Algerian mouse**: one was seen in the middle of the night at Malaga Airport.
7. **Otter**: one seen on my last morning, it was swimming in the river at the El Encinarejo road.
8. **Red fox**: two were seen together during the spotlighting drive at Laguna de Fuente de Piedra.
9. **Iberian lynx**: the same female was seen twice, the first sighting was very brief and distant, the second however lasted more than an hour.



10. **Wild boar**: three sightings of five animals.



11. **Red deer:** The most common species, 10s were seen each day. The sound of the rutting males created a nice atmosphere.
12. **Fallow deer:** small numbers seen almost each day.
13. **Spanish ibex:** two sightings (female + calf; group of five including two adult males), both at the dam at the end of the La Lancha road.
14. **Mouflon:** two sightings (group of five including the male pictured below; two males)



Common genet: a latrine was seen at the river near El Encinarejo.