

## Holiday Highlights

### Andujar-Lynx

5-9 February 2017

Guide: Julian Sykes

Guests: Mary and David Penton, Lydia and Ian Taylor, Pam Litton and Brian Megson

Day 1: Julian arrives at Malaga airport with Pam and Brian to meet up with Ian, Lydia, David and Mary who are waiting in the arrivals hall. Soon enough we are heading away from the airport to the vehicle rental company. It is all very streamlined and well ahead of schedule we are driving away from the city and up into the Montes de Malaga with clear skies, warm sunshine and a few Monk Parakeets as we leave Malaga. Lunch is required and at the first available place we stop and enjoy our first 'bocadillos' of the trip before continuing north, up through the mountains covered in almond, olive and Spanish Oak. There are Crag Martins hawking insects over the motorway and we also see White Wagtail, Spotless Starling and House Sparrow. Our next stop is Laguna de Dulce but its completely dry so 'plan B' is instigated and we head for the Laguna de Fuente de Piedra seeing a few distant roadside Common Cranes enroute.

We arrive at the large brackish lagoon and soon encounter lots of gulls, with mostly Lesser Black-backed but also lots of Black-headed Gulls. Julian finds a few Greater Flamingos asleep in the lake but this is paltry in comparison to previous visits when hundreds have been on view. Pam spots some Linnets around the scrubby area and in the Tamarisk there are a couple of Great Tits. Not much else so we head for another part of the lagoon. On the way we stop off at a small pool of water which produces some new birds such as Black-winged Stilt, Lapwing, Shoveler and Eurasian Teal to a few of us. Julian has been here many times and knows the area well but things are changing with new olive groves springing up everywhere. We don't find any Common Cranes at the traditional site but Ian points out a small flock of Skylark and around the olives we see our first mammal – Rabbit. It is getting late and we still have a long drive so we turn round and start back towards Fuente de Piedra village until Julian stops again. He confirms he's found our target species and when Brian and Lydia kindly set up their telescopes we all get good views of 30+ Common Cranes feeding in a wheat field. It is really time to leave now as we are keen to get to our accommodation before nightfall.

The drive is thankfully an easy one with some incredibly quiet motorways and on the route to Córdoba we see a few Raven, Red Kite, Kestrel, a single Common Buzzard and several White Storks to add to the days checklist. As we pass Córdoba Julian points out the Mezquita, a huge mosque that has a cathedral built within its walls after the Christians overran the Moors centuries before. The road east to Andujar is also quiet and good progress is made as we cross the Rio

Guadalquivir several times before exiting the motorway at Andujar. The drive now slows as we wind our way up into the Sierra de Andujar and our rural accommodation, getting there at 7:00pm with the last vestiges of light. We are allocated our rooms quickly and about fifty minutes later we all sit down in the hotel's restaurant for our first fabulous meal.

Julian organises a quiet table in the bar area and conducts our first checklist after going through his road maps of this area and talking about the logistics of the next few days. We are all very tired after such a long day and we're keen to get to bed so shortly after the list and another brief chat we return to the accommodation for some very welcome sleep.

**Day 2:** We meet at the minibus at 8:00am on this lovely clear and bright morning with high expectations of a good day in this fabulous natural park. The drive up to the 'fighting bulls' area of Los Escoriales is punctuated with stops for both Red and Fallow Deer plus our first Red-legged Partridges, Chaffinch, Robin, Blackbird and Eurasian Magpie. As we climb up towards the old disused zinc mine Julian stops the minibus for a group of mammals he assumes are more Fallow Deer but once he has them in his binoculars he realises they are actually Mouflon! There are at least twenty of these lovely wild sheep including some very impressive Rams, sporting very large horns, which is fabulous and a new mammal to some of us in the group. We turn off the tarmacked road on to a metalled track and we see our first 'Ganado Bravo' in all their raw physical beauty, feeding peacefully on the short grass. Lydia spots a Mistle Thrush from the van and we decide to stop and check out the other birds in the area, which include Meadow Pipit, Linnets and a few Serins but they are difficult amongst the deep, lush grass. A little further we stop by a small seasonal stream and immediately find White Wagtail but Mary asks about a second bird that turns out to be a Green Sandpiper – nice one. On we slowly travel along the incredibly bumpy road and poor David who already has a bad back feels like he's been in a session with his local chiropractor! More of the same birds and mammals are seen along with Collared Dove and Woodpigeon but the highlight is an Iberian Green Woodpecker picking away at the top of a telegraph pole. It is a fabulous drive through this pristine Mediterranean forest despite being a fraction of what it was centuries ago we can feel the wilderness of this special place. Eventually we drive into the La Lancha valley where we are spending the morning at least and according to our guide the best chance we have of an Iberian Lynx.

Julian opts for the traditional watch-point within the valley as it's pretty quiet with people and wants to maximize our chances. It is the birds though that dominates initially as David finds a lovely female Dartford Warbler followed by its commoner cousin Sardinian Warbler. We can hear Red-billed Chough and Little Owl in the distance but they prove impossible to find – hopefully later? Julian is keen to cover as much ground as possible and walks down the track being in constant contact with Ian, which is brilliant as he finds a Spanish Imperial Eagle sat in a Holm Oak and is able to relay this back to the rest of us. Lydia finds a couple of male Mouflon on the hillside and all around there are Red and Fallow Deer,

it is a wonderful scene in the bright morning sunlight. Mary, Pam and Brian spend time looking at the local plant life with great interest seeing some gorgeous Common Jonquil, plus *Astragalus lusitanicus*, Storksbill, French Lavender and lots of fragrant Rosemary.

Julian soon returns back to the main watch-point and starts to scan the higher part of the valley with Ian and becomes aware that there is activity and interest from the small group of watchers back up the valley. He takes the decision to drive back that way as the body language of the crowd suggests they are watching a Lynx? So we climb back into the minibus, turn the van round and head back towards the small crowd. Getting there Julian quickly goes to speak to a colleague he knows from previous visits and returns with the frustrating news that there had been a Lynx five minutes previously lying out in the open but it had now walked out of sight. Bad luck or what! It is now a waiting game and we need to make sure we give it our best effort. Thankfully we have plenty to keep the interest with Red-billed Chough overhead, more Mouflon and Ian and Lydia spotting our first vultures. This involves a bit of a raptor 'purple-patch' as the first few birds are in fact Black Vultures followed by Griffons, which give a fabulous comparison. Julian then spots an immature Spanish Imperial Eagle, which is being vocally shepherded out of the valley by the resident adult male with the female staying at a respectable distance – fascinating stuff. Pam then spots a Kestrel and soon we are seeing vultures everywhere. A welcome hot drink and biscuit keeps our focus going as we wait to see if a Lynx appears but there are also butterflies with Western Dappled White, Small Heath, Small Copper and Red Admiral on the wing. Lunchtime is round the corner but Julian wants us to stay a while longer so we break out the picnic lunches as we continue to remain vigilant and search the immediate area. It is actually very nice having our 'bocadillos' in this situation but the desired result of an Iberian Lynx does not transpire so Julian calls time on this vigil and decides on a change of venue.

We get back to the minibus and return back down the valley where Julian stops the bus as he's found a smart male Blue Rock Thrush – on a rock! It's not a brilliant view looking into the sun but good enough for most of us; hopefully we will have chances for more. Further down the valley we make a much-needed comfort stop at the derelict village of La Lancha and while here, Julian spots an adult Golden Eagle over a distant ridge. This is superb as we watch this majestic raptor be joined by its mate and start displaying over the hillside. As we wait Julian hears a Crested Tit calling and then Mary also hears a Nuthatch in the nearby trees but sadly neither show themselves. Soon enough we are back in the minibus and completing our journey down to the Jandula Dam wall. It is quite warm now but with a cool wind but no-one's complaining as we are getting our fill of Vitamin D, which probably would not be the case in the UK. There are Crag Martins flying around the dam wall but Ian spots several House Martins amongst them, obviously some early migration going on. Julian then announces he has found a Spanish Ibex and through his telescope we get a good view of this female mountain goat. There is a pair of Red-billed Chough here showing very well and Lydia then points out a couple of Rock Doves – also

on the rocks! We cross the dam wall and enter the tunnel armed with our torches – into the 'Bat Cave' we go. Winter is not brilliant but we do eventually find both Schreiber's Bats and Daubenton's in the man-made holes, along with a few Cormorants and male Black Redstart on the other side of the tunnel. We soon make our way back on to the dam wall and Lydia does really well picking out a pair of Mallard on the still waters below. Back at the minibus we are getting back in when Julian announces a Sparrowhawk overhead, but this causes some confusion for Mary as she latches on to another adult Spanish Imperial Eagle, this time the views are sublime and we see all its fabulous salient features.

Julian decides we stick to the plan and head back to the accommodation for a quick break before heading down to the Jandula River. The drive back up to Los Escoriales is obviously slow with the state of the track and we stop briefly at La Lancha to make sure no cats had been seen in our absence. At Los Escoriales we stop for a bit of birding and photos of the 'comedores de granito' (or granite feeding bowls) in the sunshine. We find mixed flocks of Serin, Chaffinch and Meadow Pipit along with Hoopoe, Black Redstart and the ubiquitous Robin. As we drive up the final section of the track to the disused zinc mine Julian spots a round shape on one of the granite boulders and suspecting Little Owl stops the vehicle. It is what he had hoped for and looking brilliant in the afternoon sunlight so the cameras are out again and we endeavour to get something despite it being at least 100m away and they are tiny!

Time is moving on and Julian is keen for us to have a comfort break at the hotel so on we travel but only get half way back until we have stopped again. This time our keen-eyed driver has seen a large raptor over the ridge on his side and confirms it as a immature Spanish Imperial Eagle that soon drifts away out of sight. This seems to be because a local adult pair are also being very vocal and concerned about something, which turns out to be a 1<sup>st</sup> winter Golden Eagle that has dared to enter their territory! Soon enough under the attention of the Spanish Imps it moves on and the adult pair go into a celebratory sky dance with the male wheeling up and down in display – fabulous stuff. It is now getting on in the afternoon and we eventually reach our accommodation around 4:00pm and Julian gives us 20 minutes to do our stuff which is actually enough time for a hot drink in the bar for some of us!

Once ready we now drive down to the Rio Jandula turning off on to the track just after the road bridge and continue slowly towards the Encinarejos Dam wall. There seems to be Azure-winged (Iberian) Magpies everywhere here and along the track we displace a couple of Hoopoes. We reach our parking place opposite a group of large granite boulders that stick out into the river, collect what we need to keep us warm as it starts to cool down and walk out there. It is incredibly tranquil sat quietly on the edge of this very still river, which is protected by a huge stone wall a little way upstream. We are also finding birds with good views of Great Spotted Woodpecker in a nearby tree alongside a couple of Cormorants silhouetted against the sky. A Grey Wagtail is found with

several White Wagtails and in the adjacent pine trees Julian can hear a Short-toed Treecreeper – hopefully we will get to see one.

Ian then says “Otter” and is pointing to the opposite bank under some overhanging branches and sure enough we see the movement as it starts out towards the centre of the wide river. We watch for it surfacing, which proves difficult as it now hugs the opposite river bank but does come out briefly allowing for a good look. It's now back in the still water and must catch a fish as it hurries back to where Ian first found it, exits the water and disappears out of sight. Great stuff and still in good light, which is unusual for seeing Otter according to Julian. A time is set for our departure and we continue to hope for further European Otter sightings until Julian says there's another but in fact Lydia is right, there are two at the far end of the pool as the river narrows. This is fantastic as we all get good looks at these lovely aquatic mammals playing in and out of the water before they also depart – as we do, very satisfied with our day despite no Iberian Lynx sightings.

The light is fading as we drive back to our accommodation and Julian sets a meeting time in the restaurant for dinner, giving us enough time to freshen up. Soon we are all together and ready for something to eat, now quite prepared for the amount of good food on offer tonight and the subsequent nights according to our guide. The conversation is excellent with everyone contributing to a lovely evening followed by our daily checklist, which definitely makes healthy reading. It has been another long day and we are retiring to our rooms soon after – fingers crossed for Iberian Lynx tomorrow!

**Day 3:** Despite the predicted weather forecast we wake to another fine starry morning and after breakfast the first vestiges of light are beginning to show. We leave around 8:00am and do the same as the previous day, driving up to Los Escoriales and seeing much the same species enroute with lots of Red Deer, Chaffinches, Robin, Blackbird and Eurasian Magpies. At the ‘fighting bulls’ area our progress is slowed by both the deterioration in road state and the birds on show, with again mixed flocks of Serin, Chaffinch, Meadow Pipit and a few Mistle Thrushes. We again see the Green Sandpiper in the stream followed by even better views of a small flock of Mouflon, including some spectacular rams. A little further Julian stops the minibus as he hears a Woodlark singing followed by Brian finding a couple right next to the van, which is superb. This section of Los Escoriales is very productive with some fabulous ‘stag’ Red Deer, flocks of finches, Azure-winged Magpies and our first Corn Bunting of the trip, again right next to the vehicle. Julian is keen for us to get to La Lancha and maximise our chances of Lynx so on we drive down towards this familiar valley.

We soon reach our destination and decide to park at the head of the valley where the Lynx had been seen on the previous day. It certainly isn't as cold as yesterday but still cool and we don our kit for a morning looking out over this pristine site. It's great as we scan round finding more Mouflon, lots of Red Deer and Pam pointing out this wonderful herd of ‘buck’ Fallow Deer, lazily grazing

on the open pasture. We start to expand our views and split up slightly with Julian and Ian holding the walkie-talkies in case something should happen – and it soon does. Ian is scanning an adjacent hillside and an Iberian Lynx comes into his view but only for a fraction of a second before disappearing – even Lydia who's standing with him doesn't have a chance to see it!. He shouts to the rest of us and we gather taking information of the occurrence and directions to where it was last seen but nothing more materialises. Julian then finds a single Wild Boar not too far from this sighting and is enjoyed by most of us but it's difficult as the sun is now streaming into our faces. Time moves on and the speculation of where this animal has gone continues but the intensity of searching begins to wane. The sun is making any kind of searching incredibly hard but we are offered a lifeline of some cloud coming over. This helps and a few of us continue to scrutinize the hillside but over a bigger area. Then Julian calmly says "I have got a Lynx" and it's all back to training our scopes and bins where he is pointing. It takes (as always) an agonising few moments to get the first of us on to this animal but it behaves and stays around in view until we are all looking at this gorgeous animal. Now we enjoy several minutes of action from this lively cat as it wanders around and chases a few Red-legged Partridge nearby making them quickly leave the scene, which is brilliant. As so often happens it walks out of sight behind a tree and does not come out again but we continue to search the area until it's time for a break and a mid-morning cuppa.

It is prudent to continue searching the area for another Lynx sighting until lunchtime at least, which is exactly what we do. Sadly there are no further looks at this rare cat and it's starting to get quite warm and the pangs of hunger are beginning to form so Julian 'calls time' and we pack our things into the minibus, then ourselves and set off down the valley. We reach the mirador soon after and one of the granite picnic tables has been occupied by some Spanish observers but we quickly utilise the second, which is thankfully in the shade a little – we cannot believe this weather! Lunch is sandwiches and fruit and that's enough to get us through to the outrageous amounts given for dinner. Julian is scanning the surrounding hillsides during lunch and finds a pair of adult Golden Eagles over one of them, with the male doing some displaying, which is great. Around the picnic area there are plenty of butterflies with Small Heath, Western Dappled White and Red Admiral seen. Lunch is now finished and we join our guide searching the valley with the reservoir below and Ian picks up a smaller raptor amongst the Griffon and Black Vultures. Julian latches on to it and immediately thinks Goshawk by the distinctive flight action and lack of flapping when soaring round. It is gaining height but we all eventually get on to the bird and the confirmation is complete as from underneath we can clearly see the huge bulging secondary's of the wings and the long rounded tail – superb. This is good but when he decides to flare his bright white upper tail coverts and start to display in huge undulations we are in raptor-heaven. Even Julian hasn't seen Goshawk like this in such good light in many years – absolutely astonishing. The accipiter then dives into the Aleppo pines below us and then reappears heading out over the reservoir. However, Lydia is describing another bird in another place and sure enough there is the huge female joining her partner. These two fly around for a while occasionally

coming together but mostly separate and the scene is completed as the male goes and sees off a Spanish Imperial Eagle now flying around the valley – wow. This is the icing on the cake of a wonderful morning and one we will not forget for a long time.

It is now mid-afternoon and Julian wants us to head back again to the accommodation in a repeat of the previous day to try and keep the interest in our surroundings. Back we drive up through La Lancha seeing our first Southern Grey Shrike (behaving like a Blue Rock Thrush) to Los Escoriales where Lydia and Pam find a male Bullfinch amongst the commoner Chaffinches and Serin. This is a good bird here but unfortunately it disappears before we all get a chance to see it, always a problem when viewing from a minibus. The journey continues slowly as we watch several migrating Swallows overhead and the usual Hoopoe, Azure-winged Magpies and Collared Doves. We check for the Little Owl but no-one's home today before travelling through to our hotel for a brief stop for the services and a hot drink.

It is then on to Encinarejos arriving there late afternoon and do the same as previous days by walking out to the rocks and sitting there until dusk. We get the news an Otter had been seen briefly a little earlier but had headed off downstream, so maybe it would return – unfortunately not. However, the birds keep our interest as we see a few Hawfinch, more migrating Swallows, Grey and White Wagtails, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Moorhen and Grey Heron before leaving a little after 6:00pm – this has been an amazing day! Back at the hotel we meet at the restaurant later that night and have yet another fabulous meal, one of the highlights of these few days in the Sierra de Andujar.

**Day 4:** It's another lovely starlit morning as we go for our breakfast in the nearby bar/restaurant, followed by our usual meeting time of 8:00am at the minibus. Our spirits of a good day are high, which is reflected at the breakfast table with hilarious discussions about coffins made out of cork with tracking devices – how surreal. The drive up to Los Escoriales is quiet with just a few Red Deer sightings and a couple of Fallow Deer at the side of the road. As we drive through the 'fighting bulls' area it's the absence of finch flocks seen on previous days that is notable and even our regular Green Sandpiper has disappeared – it is quiet! However, Julian spies a flock of birds in the top of a nearby Ash and declares "these are all Hawfinch!" It's a wonderful sight to see these normally elusive birds sat out in the open being illuminated beautifully in the early morning sunlight. They almost have a Waxwing-like quality. This small event of seeing these 15 Hawfinches has lifted our spirits and we continue to see a few good species as we head to La Lancha such as Azure-winged Magpies, Mistle Thrush, Iberian Green Woodpecker and some handsome stag Red Deer.

At the valley we park in the same place as yesterday and conduct our ritual of donning suitable warm clothing and setting up our telescopes in readiness for any event. The sun is starting to appear over the hillside to the east, lighting the valley more and more each minute as it rises slowly in the sky. There are

significantly fewer people out this morning and word 'quiet' is used again when Julian asked if any Lynx have been seen so far. We find the usual deer dotted about the sierra and Lydia finds a lone male Mouflon feeding on the short grass but not much else and there are definitely less Rabbits around. Even the birds are keeping their heads down but Pam and Brian see a lovely male Dartford Warbler, along with a couple of Sardinian Warblers and David finds our first Blackcap, that proves elusive. Around 11:00am Julian suggests breaking out the flasks and the choccy biscuits, which prove to be very popular! As we sip on our respective hot drinks the first of many Griffon Vultures start to appear but surprisingly no Black Vultures – very unusual. Once we have finished our guide states we are sticking to plan A and leaving for Encinarejos and a walk along the river, this meets with no argument. Our expectations of another Iberian Lynx sighting had been high this morning but alas it's not to be.

Once ready we set off back up the valley to Los Escoriales seeing many of the same species with Mistle Thrush, Chaffinch and Meadow Pipit being notable. We do stop to look for the Little Owl again and are rewarded with Ian finding the first and then Pam a second – brilliant! It is lovely and sunny here and we are in no rush to leave so a few photos are taken with Julian pointing out a nearby Crested Lark, whilst enjoying the wee owls. On we go but quickly stop again as Julian points out a Sparrowhawk flying ahead of us and we all incredibly get a sighting despite being in the minibus with restricted viewing. The journey continues back down the next valley stopping for a welcome comfort break at our enroute accommodation. While we are waiting a couple of us continue to 'bird' around the grounds and find a couple more Blackcaps feeding on the natural olives. After 15 minutes we are off again and don't stop until we reach the River Jandula.

Julian parks the minibus just after we turn off the main road at a couple of picnic tables nestled in the warm sunshine and it is time for lunch. We unpack our sandwiches and sit at the tables listening to Long-tailed Tits calling in the adjacent trees and a Nuthatch more distantly. Our sharp-eared guide then alerts us to a singing Short-toed Treecreeper and with a bit of gentle persuasion we get good views of at least two individuals – brilliant. After lunch we ready ourselves for the 2Km walk to the Encinarejos Dam wall, which actually we are really looking forward to. It's a cracking afternoon and we are seeing lots of butterflies with Small Heath, Small Copper, Clouded Yellow, Red Admiral, Small and Western Dappled Whites on the wing. Not bad for early February. We are also seeing plenty of the usual woodland and water species with Mallard and Grey Heron on the river plus a couple of Hoopoes, Serin, Great and Blue Tits. However, it's the incredible views of a Spanish Imperial Eagle pair displaying, interacting with Common Buzzard and being quite vocal, which again is a major highlight. Julian sees a friend from Spain and goes to catch up on any 'Lynx news' and while he's doing this Mary spots a shape on the opposite bank, which transforms into a Red Fox. Sadly the animal is aware of her scrutiny and slinks off into the hedge before we all get to see it. This causes some surprise with Julian as he sees very few fox



here and this, his first by the river – superb and our 12<sup>th</sup> mammal species of the short break.

On we slowly walk up the slight incline and sit for a while scanning the sierra and watching more Spanish Imp activity before Lydia spots an adult Golden Eagle over the far ridge, making for another great comparison of these two 'Aquila' eagles. It's another excellent interlude before moving on but we don't go far before Pam says "bunting?" Julian gets on to it straight away and says "brilliant – male Rock Bunting, nice find" and we watch this gorgeous bird for several minutes picking about in the short grass. Around here also Julian knows of more narcissuses and a quick search proves fruitful as he points out a small patch of Hoop Petticoat Daffodil, which are just simply delightful. It is worth all the effort of getting down on our hands and knees to take some photographs. On we walk with Pam again spotting a Firecrest and we also get our best views of Serin feeding around some more picnic tables. Eventually we reach the small bridge that crosses the river right next to the dam wall and here our guide says au revoir as he's going to walk back for the minibus and 'save our legs' from a return journey, despite the walk being fantastic.

While he's away we stand watching the river below seeing the Brown Trout float past and watch innumerable Chiffchaffs hawking insects from the bushes and rocks that line the water. Ian finds a pair of Blackcaps in the willows and both House Martin and Swallow are seen moving north overhead. It is half an hour before Julian returns with the bus and nearly 5:00pm with us now completing our regular evening routine of sitting on the granite rocks hoping for an Otter sighting. It is again a very pleasant experience on this tranquil afternoon with just the sound of cow bells in the distance, but the day's buzzword of 'quiet' comes to mind. We do see Grey Wagtail with several White Wagtails, Great Spotted Woodpecker and a few more Hawfinch, we can hear a Wren but it remains hidden but a Song Thrush is seen well – so still some interest. David replicating Ian's swallow-dive as we get up to leave is a concern but thankfully nothing is broken – physical or mechanical, just the pride is hurt!

At dusk we drive back to the accommodation and after some time to freshen up we meet for the final time in the restaurant, enjoying our last excellent meal and some very genial conversation. Following this we retire to the bar where Julian conducts the daily species list followed by SW's traditional highlights category's which always bring back forgotten memories of a great holiday. It is pretty late when this finishes and with a long day ahead and some packing to do we are soon heading back to our respective rooms and a good night's sleep.

**Day 5:** Breakfast is at the usual time and following this we are scheduled to leave for Malaga at 8:30am on this cold but glorious morning. This happens without any issues and we leave the accommodation with a little sadness after such an eventful and intense few days that were also very successful. The drive down to Andujar is punctuated with views of Azure-winged Magpie, Spotless Starling and

Woodpigeon but generally quiet, which is also the case initially on the motorway to Córdoba. As we reach the city Ian spots a Raven at the side of the road followed by a few White Storks in their nests on top of roadside pylons. Beyond Córdoba we turn south towards our destination of Malaga and Julian points towards a 'kite species' flying across the motorway, which Ian confidently identifies as a Black Kite – excellent. The next portion of the journey is again pretty quiet but we do see hundreds of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, a Kestrel and a Buzzard sat on top of a pylon. Julian has a comfort and coffee break in mind just before Antequera and a little before 10:15am we arrive at the services.

It is a very welcome break and also an opportunity for us to break out our binoculars and scan the surrounding agricultural fields for birds. This proves to be very successful as we find a few 'winter plumage' Golden Plover plus Lapwing and lots of White Wagtails following a tractor. Julian arrives back with his telescope after filling-up the minibus and amongst the furrows we get distant views of Calandra Lark, although they look much better in flight showing their distinctive white breast against the black underwing and white trailing edge. This is a great place but Julian reminds us we need to be at the airport soon for the first of our check-ins so its back into the vehicle and continue south. The traffic is incredibly light to say we are driving between two major Andalucian cities and without any delays we arrive at the airport for the scheduled time of 11:30am which is fantastic. We say our very fond farewells and thank you's to our guide along with David and Mary who leave later that afternoon and are going to the coast for a spot of birding – lucky people!

This has been a fabulous trip with Julian (David and Mary) sad to leave behind Brian, Pam, Ian and Lydia at the airport as he drives the short distance to the Mediterranean Sea. Julian stays with the bus while David and Mary walk into the coastal nature reserve of the Rio Guadalhorce. Here the couple have a brilliant final session in Spain adding White-headed Duck, Little Grebe, Common Pochard, Little Egret, Common Coot and Kingfisher to their species list for the trip. Julian also enjoys an hour at the beach catching up with paperwork and also finding a Razorbill just off-shore –not a common bird here. There are lots of Western Yellow-legged Gulls milling around and also patrolling the bay are several Gannets, which were much more likely. At the arranged time Julian collects David and Mary and returns them to the airport in plenty of time for their flight, bringing to a close his work until the next guests arrive the following day!

## Species of the Trip

Brian – Iberian Lynx plus the vultures (sheer numbers)

Pam – Iberian Lynx and Hawfinch

Ian – Iberian Lynx and Spanish Imperial Eagle

Lydia – Iberian Lynx and Spanish Imperial Eagle

David – Iberian Lynx and Goshawk

Mary – Schreiber's Bats and Spanish Imperial Eagle

Julian – Iberian Lynx and Mouflon

## Place of the Trip

Brian – La Lancha

Pam – La Lancha

Ian – La Lancha

Lydia – La Lancha

David – Encinarejos walk

Mary – La Lancha

Julian – Encinarejos rocks

## Magic Moment

Brian – Everything – an incredible experience!

Pam – Goshawk displaying

Ian – Goshawk displaying

Lydia – Goshawk displaying

David – Goshawk displaying

Mary – Seeing the bright cream epaulets on the SIE

Julian – Goshawk displaying

### Bird List

Little Grebe (D&M only)  
Cormorant  
Little Egret (D&M only)  
Grey Heron  
White Stork  
Greater Flamingo  
Mallard  
Eurasian Teal  
Northern Shoveler  
Common Pochard (D&M only)  
White-headed Duck (D&M only)  
Griffon Vulture  
Black Vulture  
Red Kite  
Black Kite  
Sparrowhawk  
Goshawk  
Common Buzzard  
Spanish Imperial Eagle  
Golden Eagle  
Common Kestrel  
Moorhen  
Common Coot (D&M only)  
Red-legged Partridge  
Common Crane  
Black-winged Stilt  
Lapwing  
Golden Plover  
Green Sandpiper  
Western Yellow-legged Gull  
Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Black-headed Gull  
Rock Dove  
Feral Pigeon  
Woodpigeon  
Collared Dove  
Monk Parakeet  
Little Owl  
Tawny Owl (heard only)  
Kingfisher (D&M only)  
Hoopoe  
Iberian Green Woodpecker  
Great Spotted Woodpecker  
Crested Lark  
Calandra Lark  
Woodlark  
Crag Martin  
Barn Swallow  
House Martin  
Meadow Pipit  
White Wagtail  
Grey Wagtail  
Wren  
Robin

Black Redstart  
Blue Rock Thrush  
Blackbird  
Song Thrush  
Mistle Thrush  
Cetti's Warbler  
Dartford Warbler  
Sardinian Warbler  
Blackcap  
Common Chiffchaff  
Firecrest  
Long-tailed Tit  
Crested Tit  
Blue Tit  
Great Tit  
Nuthatch  
Short-toed Treecreeper  
Southern Grey Shrike  
Red-billed Chough  
Azure-winged Magpie  
Magpie  
Raven  
Spotless Starling  
House Sparrow  
Chaffinch  
Serin  
Goldfinch  
Linnet  
Bullfinch  
Hawfinch  
Rock Bunting  
Corn Bunting

### Mammal List

Iberian Lynx  
Rabbit  
European Otter  
Red Deer  
Fallow Deer  
Spanish Ibex  
Mouflon  
Wild Boar  
Red Fox  
Schreiber's Bat  
Daubenton's Bat  
Common Pipistrelle

### Amphibian List

Stripeless Tree Frog (heard only)

### Butterfly and Insect List

Small White  
Western Dappled White  
Brimstone  
Clouded Yellow  
Red Admiral  
Small Heath  
Small Copper  
Dragonfly (sp)  
Firebug