
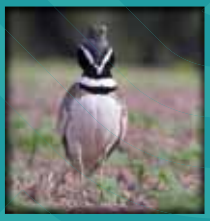

BIRDWATCHING *in* Malaga

ALONG THE GREAT PATH

Antonio-Román
Muñoz Gallego

diputación de málaga

Gran Senda de Málaga

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To María, Hana Jeschke and Sira,
for lighting up my every step.

To Antonia and Francisco *(in memoriam)*,
for having done this for so long,
and so well.

A. Román MUÑOZ

PHOTO: JLM

Birds can also be understood as a consumer-oriented commodity at the service of the birdwatcher. Birdwatching is a source of respect, pleasure and entertainment. As a result, the gratitude birdwatchers feel when looking at birds, benefits them personally. Birdwatching also generates economic benefits from ornithological tourism and this leads to the long-lasting preservation of species and habitats.

A. Román Muñoz

Bonelli's Eagle. PHOTO: JLM

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A great number of people have contributed to and participated in the creation of this book, which you, the Reader, are holding now in your hand. Mentioned below are the people who were highly involved in the work; however I do realise that there is a strong and unfortunate possibility that someone might have ended up being left out.

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To walkers and nature lovers who have made this type of book a necessity.

To María, Hana Jeschke and Sira, for so much and for everything.

THE AUTHOR

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Bee-eaters. PHOTO: JB

Blue Tit *(Cyanistes caeruleus).* PHOTO: JLM

Presentation

The strategic location of Malaga province in Mediterranean Andalucía, influenced by the Atlantic, has resulted in a highly significant environmental diversity, and the inclusion of its nature sites in the Natura 2000 project as well as the Red de Espacios Naturales Protegidos de Andalucía, the Network of Protected Natural Areas of Andalucía. Some of these areas have also been qualified as ZEPA (Zona de Especial Protección para las Aves), Special Protection Area for Birds.

Within this set of environmental values, at a European level, the pioneering Bird Directive should be considered. It has been transplanted into Spanish legislation and it highlights the priority of the protection and conservation measures. It covers most of the species of the large group of bird fauna spending part or all of their life cycle in Malaga province.

Aware of this fact, the Malaga Province Council, following the itinerary of the Great Malaga Path as a representative sample of the different human and natural landscapes of Malaga Province, has promoted the development of "Birdwatching in Malaga, along the Great Path" on the principle that sponsoring knowledge is the best way to appreciate and enjoy Malaga´s vast and valuable natural heritage.

Birdwatching used to be an activity associated with researchers and ornithologists, however nowadays, birding is becoming increasingly common and open to all members of the society.

Birds motivate a large number of specialized tourists and can also be an additional attraction for visitors interested in nature in general.

The bird guide you are holding in your hands offers texts, images and maps diligently and carefully prepared and supervised by the author, Antonio Román Muñoz and designed by Álvaro Sedeño.

Without a doubt, our main goal is that the publication "Birdwatching in Malaga, along the Great Path" reaches and brings enjoyment to a wide variety of readers.

Elías Bendodo Benasayag
The President of Malaga Province Council

Hoopoe *(Upupa epops).* PHOTO: JLM

Why do we find birds attractive?

In Spain, compared with other central and northern European countries, practising birdwatching is relatively new, but it should be mentioned that it is an activity which is on the rise. Generally speaking, although birdwatching is starting to gain popularity, it is nothing new. Many bird names are hundreds and even thousands years old. As early as in the 7th Century BC, as described in the treatise by Hesiod, Works and Days, the arrival or departure of some bird species was already used to mark the time to perform certain tasks in the countryside.

Consequently, bird identification dates back to a very distant past. A clear example can be found in the writing system invented by ancient Egyptians, the hieroglyphics, where over 80 different species of birds were used, such as ducks, herons, pelicans, the well-known ibis, eagles, falcons, owls and small bird species as well, such as wagtails, among many others.

Some of such bird depictions created thousands of years ago show precise details highly representative of certain species, which continue being valid for their identification. This is a reason to think that the interest in birdwatching comes from quite long ago. Throughout the history many bird species have been used as a source of food and, in spite of the fact that currently the developed world hardly uses wild birds for food, some psychologists claim that our interest in birds is an expression of a survival instinct awakened by our human origins as hunters.[1]

1 In Malaga the Hoopoe is known as "gallico de marzo" or "the March rooster" as it is in March when they reach Malaga having spent winter in sub-Saharan Africa. In the last decade the Hoopoe has been changing its migratory habits in the south of Iberian Peninsula, probably due to the recent climate change, and it is possible to see it year round, even in winter, however in smaller numbers.

A fragment of an Egyptian tablet where 2 pelicans and an owl can be distinguished. Neues Museum, Berlín. photo: ARM

Birdwatching is clearly a pastime which has been gaining more popularity but, **Why do we find birds attractive?** The vivid colours, fascinating behaviour, diversity of life strategies, the ubiquity (try to imagine a place you can go to and not hear or see some sort of feathered species), the ability to fly.

It is namely this ability to fly and to undertake long journeys which, in my humble opinion, gives birds their most fascinating and seductive

A mosaic at a Roman archaeological site of Volubilis (Meknes, Morocco) depicts a hunt for Great Bustards. Meknes, Marruecos. photo: ARM

characteristic, their unpredictability. Birds can turn up practically anywhere, but, will they? Which ones will you see? Will today be the day of your first Swift or Subalpine Warbler of the year or the first Lesser Spotted Eagle of your life? For someone intent on enjoying nature, especially birding, the game never stops.

However, there is much more to birdwatching than just a way of spending time. Learning the species of birds which surround you will get you closer to the natural environment and enable to develop a conscience and respect towards the species which we share the environment with. To start with, birds are a group of animals which has a lot to offer. Naming the different species which surround you, and there are more than you can imagine, will let you realise when they come and go, how they behave and, finally, the close relationship we have with birds.

Birds are also excellent indicators of changes in our environment. Their distribution areas are not constant; just as the Eurasian Jay and the Wood

Pigeon began occupying tree covered areas of Malaga city a few months ago; some species have shifted and extended their distributions due to the effect of climate change. There are typically African species such as Long-legged Buzzard, Little Swift or Common Bulbul which are beginning to colonise the South of Spain, as well as typically Mediterranean species which appear periodically in the areas of central Europe where there were no previous records of them. These kinds of changes correspond with the changes in the environment and they should be taken into account when planning the development of our society.

BIRDWATCHING TOURISM

Even though the concept of birdwatching tourism can still be considered new in the South of Spain, in the United Kingdom birdwatching has been seen as entertainment and pleasure since the second half of the 18th century. Around that time, Reverend Gilbert White established a whole new way of understanding bird identification, not associated with hunting but simply with observation (Moss, 2004). Subsequently, in 1841, Thomas Cook organized the first known birdwatching trip, when 570 English aristocrats made the journey between Leicester and Loughborough intent on observing and identifying the different bird species occurring in that area (Hamilton, 2013). Since then

The Common Bulbul is abundant in the north of Morocco and up to the year 2013 there had been no records of breeding pairs in the south of Spain. This was the year when the only breeding pair managed to rear three chicks in the centre of Tarifa. Will this species reach Malaga? When?. PHOTO: AMA

the global birding tourism market has been revolving around the English-speaking countries, mainly the British Isles, where 2.85 million people for over 15 years have been practicing birdwatching regularly (according to sources of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the RSPB).

Robin *(Erithacus rubecula).* PHOTO: JLM

Why birdwatch in Malaga?

Malaga Province gathers a high diversity of birds which stands out significantly in the context of all of Spain, and is noted for the abundance of species considered iconic by birdwatching enthusiasts. The province also contains a high diversity of habitats which make it possible to find sea birds and, for example, mountain birds, during one day´s outing.

The Malaga Great Path constitutes a representative sample of different natural environments and landscapes of Malaga province and offers, as a whole, a great number of species of interest for a birder. Balearic Shearwaters, Kentish Plovers and Audouin´s Gulls at the coast; Bonelli´s Eagles, Common Rock Thrushes, and Rock Sparrows in mountain areas; Crested Tits, Iberian Chiffchaffs, Bonelli´s Warblers, Western Olivaceous Warblers, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins and Azure-winged Magpies in wooded areas, Black Wheatears and Blue Rock Thrushes in rocky areas; White-headed Ducks, Greater Flamingos and Gull-billed Terns in the wetlands, this is only a small sample of the varied birdlife which can be enjoyed here. Moreover, given the geographical location of the province, a stone´s throw from another continent and two large seas, the bird list can become significantly longer during migration periods, with Black Storks, Honey Buzzards, Black Kites, Willow Warblers, and Pied Flycatchers, as an example of species which need to pass through Malaga province in autumn on the way to their African wintering quarters and pass though again in spring.

GEOGRAPHIC CHARACTERIZATION OF MALAGA PROVINCE

The province of Málaga is situated at the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula and is bounded by the latitude 37º 17' and 36º 18' north and the longitude 3º 45' and 5° 36' west.

The Great Malaga Path follows an approximate route along the perimeter of Malaga province administrative boundary. The province covers an

Spots like these meet the mountains during Stage 11, which leads from Alfarnate to Villanueva del Rosario. PHOTO: ARM

area of 7276 km^2 (Moreno et al., 1989) and is bordered in the south by the Mediterranean Sea and over 180 km of coast (Various authors, 1984).

Generally speaking, there are four main groups of factors to take into account when explaining the spacial and temporal distribution of live beings: land relief configuration, water distribution, vegetation as part of the landscape and spacial location. Below, each of these factors is discussed for Malaga province.

LAND RELIEF AND THE MAIN UNITS OF MALAGA PROVINCE

Malaga province forms an integral part of the Baetic System. Its relief is very mountainous and compartmentalised. The highest elevation is found in the Sierras Tejeda (over 2000 metres above sea level at the summit of Maroma) and Sierra de Las Nieves (Torrecilla, 1919 m.a.s.l.); both areas are excluded from the established stages of the Great Malaga Path. The average altitude of the province is around 500 m.a.s.l.; it is the third steepest Spanish province, with an average incline of 38%. Taking into account the morpho-structural features, according to Ferre (1999), the following land relief units can be identified:

Holm oak formations with Portuguese gall oaks and the contrasting farmland at Stage 10, which leads from Pulgarín Alto to Alfarnate. PHOTO: ARM

INLAND HIGH PLATEAUS

Composed of the depressions of Antequera (altitude between 400 and 500 m) and Ronda (altitude between 500 and 800 m), which form part of the Intrabaetic Basin stretching between the mountain ranges around the outer parts of the Baetic System. Main substrates in both areas are the Triassic marlstone-gypsum plus a cover of the Tertiary calcarenite and marl-sand.

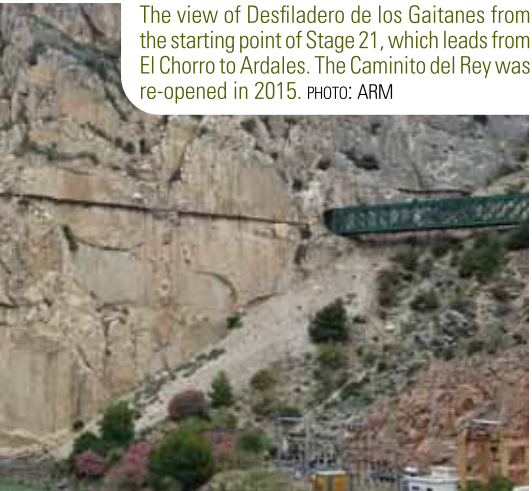
WESTERN MOUNTAIN CHAINS

Known broadly as the Serrania de Ronda, it constitutes the western tip of the Baetic System and forms a mountain range which reaches over 1200 m of altitude at many points. The mountain ranges and valleys are clearly laid out in the southwest-northeast direction. From the interior to the coast these are: the Sierra de Líbar, the Río Guadiaro,

At Stage 22, which starts in Ardales and ends in El Burgo, you will be entering the Serranía de Ronda. View of the section of the Great Malaga Path with Sierra Prieta in the background. PHOTO: ARM

the Sierra de Jimera of Líbar, the Sierra del Oreganal, the Genal Valley, the Sierra de las Nieves (which borders in the west with the Sierras Hidalga and Blanquilla and the Sierra Prieta in the east), the Sierra Bermeja (which connects with the Sierra de Tolox, passing through the Sierra Palmitera and Real) and, already part of the coastal alignment, Sierra Blanca plus the sierra Alpujata and Mijas. These sierras´ lithology classifies them into "white" and "brown" mountains. The first consist of limestone rocks and the latter are mainly peridotitic, although there are also formations which are metamorphic in origin.

The view of Desfiladero de los Gaitanes from the starting point of Stage 21, which leads from El Chorro to Ardales. The Caminito del Rey was re-opened in 2015. PHOTO: ARM



CENTRAL-EASTERN MOUNTAIN CHAINS

They are composed of three different structural units. The first unit begins in El Chorro-Sierra Huma, leads along the mountains of Valle de Abdalajís, Chimenea, El Torcal, Cabras, Camarolos, Alfarnate and Alhama, then arrives in the Boquete de Zafarraya, forming the central part of limestone arch of Malaga province. This area reaches

The plains with grain fields at Stage 18, which takes you from Fuente de Piedra to Campillos. In the background the limestone "arch" of Malaga province. PHOTO: ARM

altitudes of 1700 meters. The second unit runs from the Boquete de Zafarraya to the coastline, including the Sierras of Tejeda and Almijara. This group of limestone mountains, which reach the highest altitudes in the province, are part of the Axarquia region. The third unit, which extends from the right bank of the river Vélez to the Guadalhorce river, is the Montes de Malaga, metamorphic in nature. Here the mountains are between 500-800 metres above sea level, although the height of the Santopitar exceeds 1000 m.a.s.l.

VALLEYS AND INLAND DEPRESSIONS. The main inland valleys are: the Colmenar Corridor, which runs east-west between the Montes de Málaga and the Camarolos-Alfarnate range, with an altitude between 300-600 meters, and the Hoya de Malaga, which opens to the Mediterranean Sea and constitutes the basin of the lower section of Río Guadalhorce. The Colmenar Corridor is a morpho-structural depression which is made up of a complex lithology of detrital marl, marly limestone and sandstone belonging to the allochthonous circumbaetic Flysch. As far as the Hoya de Málaga is concerned, it had been a marine basin during the Miocene which emptied out in Late Miocene. Subsequently, the Pliocene transgression had been responsible for the current marl-sand fillings found in the basin, which, after the Late Miocene regression, were modelled by the hydrographical network of lower Guadalhorce river.

COASTAL FOOTHILLS AND THE SHORELINE. TThey constitute a narrow coastal strip which principally runs along the south-facing slopes of the western mountains. The proximity of the mountains to the sea, coupled with the predominant substrate of marl-sand and, to a lesser extent, of Jurassic limestone, favours the existence of numerous waterways which model the hilly landscape.

HYDROGRAPHICAL NETWORK OF MALAGA PROVINCE

The surface hydrographical network consists mainly of short rivers which are predominantly seasonal. Most of the territory drains into the Mediterranean Sea via numerous rivers. The main basins are, from west to east, the Río Guadiaro, which has the most water of the province rivers, Río Verde, Río Fuengirola, Río Guadalhorce, which is the largest in the province, Río Guadalmedina and Río Velez. In addition, north of the province there are waters which drain into the Atlantic, via the Río Genil rivers and several tributaries of the Río Guadalete and Corbones. Almost 1,500 hectares of lagoons present in the province of Malaga mainly cover the Antequera depression, a sedimentary plain connected to the campiña (extensive, often hilly farmland) of Cordoba and Seville in the north. Because of that area´s highly endorheic character the most important wetlands in the province form here. The 1364 hectare Fuente de Piedra Lagoon (inland lake with a closed drainage basin), is the largest one; the lagoons of Campillos, Laguna Ratosa, and the lagoons of Archidona complete this group. Besides these inland wetlands there are others located on the coast, such as the mouth of the Guadalhorce river, whose origin, as we know it today, is artificial, and dates back to the 1970s, when the extraction of aggregates was permitted, resulting in the creation of small pools. Furthermore, there is another interesting coastal wetland at the mouth of the Río Vélez. All in all, all wetlands are of great importance as far as Malaga birdlife is concerned since during the annual cycle they produce birds of great interest, both African and Northern European in origin.

Stage 19, which takes you from Campillos to the Guadalhorce reservoirs, is very appropiate for birding-cycling tourism. PHOTO: ARM

You will reach this view at the last section of Stage 28, where you will encounter a patchwork of vegetation and some impressive views of the Strait of Gibraltar (in the background the Gibraltar Rock and El Jbel Mussa in Morocco). PHOTO: ARM

VEGETATION OF MALAGA PROVINCE

Main plant formations which exist in Malaga province are the following:

CORK OAK WOODS (*Quercus suber*). These woods have been relatively well preserved thanks to the profit-bringing harvesting of cork. They are present in areas where the rainfall exceeds 500 mm and they grow on acidy soils. The main masses are found between 200 and 800 metres above sea level, the upper limit being the Sierra Tejeda (Canillas de Albaida), where a cork wood grows at 1300 m.a.s.l. These woods are mainly located in the south-western part of the province, principally in the Montes de Cortes, Valle del Genal, Montejaque, Bornoque-Moratán (Istán, Monda and Tolox), even though they are also represented in the eastern part of the province (Almogía, Montes de Málaga and Canillas de Albaida).

HOLM OAK WOODS (*Quercus rotundifolia*). Nowadays only some formations of holm oak remain, and they are highly transformed by the human hand through agriculture, animal husbandry and logging. It is the second species of hardwood tree according to the covered area. It reaches up to 1300 m.a.s.l. but some isolated trees can be found up to 1500 meters. The tree is highly adaptable. The main holm oak tree masses are found in some mountains of Valle del Guadiaro and, in form of thinned-out dehesas (woods on grazing meadows), at the Meseta de Ronda and surrounding sierras, as well as the high plateau of Lagunillas (Antequera) and Archidona.

View of Monte del Duque, with Genalguacíl in the background, seen from Stage 28, which takes you to Cacares. PHOTO: ARM

You will be crossing this Aleppo pine wood along Stage 20, from where you have beautiful panoramic views to the whole northern part of the province. PHOTO: ARM

PINE WOODS

There are 4 species of native pine in Malaga: black pine salzmanii subspecies *(Pinus nigra ssp. salzmannii)*, the maritime pine *(P. pinaster)*, stone pine *(P. pinea)* and Aleppo pine *(P. halepensis)*. Pines have been widely used in reforestation, which makes them well represented today. In some areas, pine has fulfilled its role of generating suitable conditions for other species to develop, which usually belong to the Quercus genus. Today´s forestry applied in these forest masses aims at changing the main species composing these woods. Good examples of this practice can be seen in the Natural Parks of Montes de Malaga and the Sierras de Tejeda, Almijara y Alhama. Maritime pine formations are found from the sea level to 1700 meters above sea level in the Sierra Almijara, appearing mainly in the peridotitic mountains (Real, Bermeja, Palmitera, Parda de Tolox, Aguas y Montes de Igualeja). Aleppo pine masses range from the sea level to 1200 meters above sea level, mainly in the mountains of Tolox and Yunquera, as well as in the mountains of Alcaparaín, Mijas, Almijara, near Gobantes (Antequera), the Montes de Málaga and the Hoz de Marin (Archidona). This species has been particularly favoured in reforestation. Pine formations are found primarily in Marbella, although there are some interesting patches of pine in Teba, Antequera, Ronda, Tolox and mountains of Malaga and Sierra de Mijas. The black pine can be found in an isolated manner mainly at high elevations of the Sierra Tejeda. In addition to these four species there are other, introduced pines of reduced distribution in the province, such as Scots pine *(P. sylvestris)*, the Monterey pine *(P. radiata)* and Canary Island pine *(Pinus canariensis)*.

Spanish Firs in the Sierra de las Nieves. PHOTO: JLM

SPANISH FIR WOODS

(*Abies pinsapo*).

These woods are found in shady areas between 1000 and 1800 metres above sea level, on various types of soils and in areas where the annual rainfall is higher than 1000 mm. Nowadays, two main concentrations of these woods are still standing, plus various copses and individual specimens at different points, all of them located in the southwest part of the province. The main formations are present in the Sierra de las Nieves, growing on limestone, and Sierra Bermeja, on peridotite. The Great Malaga Path does not cross any of the formations of *pinsapo*, but at Stage 23 from El Burgo to Ronda you can find single specimens of these trees on the side of the road near Puerto de Lifa.

FORMATIONS OF SCRUB AND BUSHES

Large areas of the province are currently covered by understory formations, where layers of bushes and scrub are predominant. The stretches of kermes oak *(Quercus coccifera)* growing mainly on calcareous soils, and Cistus (mostly on siliceous soils), are notable because of their extent. Another noteworthy feature, due to its botanical interest, is the juniper formation made up by the Phoenician juniper *(Juniperus phoenicea)*, which forms a thin mass together with the cade, or prickly juniper *(Juniperus oxycedrus)*, Mediterranean dwarf palm *(Chamaerops humilis)* and mastic *(Pistacia lentiscus)*; it is found on coastal sands, mainly in Marbella but also in the xeric areas of limestone mountains such as the Huma and the headwaters of Río Verde in Istán. High mountain juniper formations, present in the high peaks of the Tejeda and

Almijara and in the Sierra de Las Nieves, consist of common juniper *(Juniperus communis)* and the low-growing savin juniper *(Juniperus sabina)*.

RIPARIAN WOODS AND SCRUB

Other natural formations present, although not as extensive in size, are those associated with riparian environments, such as galleried woods (represented by the genera *Populus, Ulmus, Salix, Alnus* and *Fraxinus*), oleanders *(Nerium oleander)* and tamarisks *(Tamarix* sp.*)*. The eucalyptus *(Eucalyptus* sp.*)* formations are allochthonous (non-native) in origin and mainly associated with rivers; sometimes they constitute the only woodland along the riverside and around fluvial meadows, where they form islands of tree vegetation, so called "bosques isla".

CULTIVATED AREAS

Apart from natural vegetation, another noteworthy feature is the cultivated farmland, mainly due to the extensive area it occupies. Depending on the type of crops it can be divided into dry-farmed herbaceous crop and wood crop farmland. In the former, the dry-farmed cereals and legumes are very important and they cover a large area in Antequera. Extensive stretches of woody crops, especially olive groves and, to a lesser extent, vineyards, are also distributed around the same Antequera depression. In Valle del Guadalhorce and the Axarquía the irrigated woody crops are especially noticeable; these are mainly citrus trees in the first area and subtropical plantations in the latter.

Partial view of Stage 6, which leads from Frigiliana to Cómpeta and which shows you spectacular views of the sierras. PHOTO: ARM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W
E
S
Provincia de Sevilla
Fuente de Piedra
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Campillos
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Embalses del Guadalhorce
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Embalses
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The Great Malaga Path
City/Town/village centre
Motorway
Road
Train line
River
Reservoir
Province limits

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF BIRDS

Some species of birds live in relatively ordinary areas throughout the year, but others undertake migratory journeys that lead to places which are at times thousands of kilometres away and have very different ecological characteristics. Thus, the seasonal changes that some areas undergo regarding birds can be very significant considering the annual cycle of birds. The cycle basically includes the following periods: breeding season, post-breeding or autumn migration, wintering and pre-breeding or spring migration.

The **post-breeding migration** is one that the birds undertake just after the breeding season and it leads them from the nesting areas in Europe to the wintering areas, always located further south; it occurs in late summer and autumn. The **pre-breeding** or spring migration is undertaken by the birds leaving their wintering grounds and heading for their nesting sites, from the south to the north.

Two large groups can be distinguished among the migratory species: short distance migrants and those carrying out long distance voyages. The short-distance migratory species are those which come from northern Europe but spend their winter around the basin of the Mediterranean Sea. The so-called long-distance migrants winter in Africa and south of the Sahara desert.

In order to show the seasonal changes in birdlife which occur throughout

The Dunlin is a typical long-distance migrant which can be seen in Malaga during migration periods.
PHOTO: JLM

The Monk Parakeets build their nest and use it daily to roost also outside of the breeding season. This is one of the few species around the world which does it. It is a resident species living year round in the same areas, for the time being in urban areas. PHOTO: JLM

the year in the environments covered by the Great Malaga Path, I will use the example of what happens in the Malaga Park. There are a number of species which live there year round, known as **residents or sedentary species**, and they can be seen continuously. These include the Great Tits, House Sparrows, Blackbirds, Chaffinches, Monk Parakeets, and the domestic variety of the Rock Dove, among others.

As soon as August arrives and the phenomenon of the post-breeding migration starts, the **typical migratory species** begin to occur. They use the Park as a resting spot on their voyage southwards. Thus, it is quite common to see, at the beginning of September, Pied Flycatchers, Subalpine Warblers, Whitethroats, Willow Warblers and an occasional Nightingale. These birds stay in the Park for short periods of time, up to a week approximately, before they continue on their journey.

With the arrival of winter there is an influx of species coming form the north, birds which spend the cold months in the south of the Iberian Peninsula and the northern edge of the African continent. These are **winter visitors**. Especially notable, because of the sheer numbers and their impressive flights, are the Common Starlings. Tens of thousands of individuals gather every evening in the Malaga Park to roost for the night often having spent the day in quite remote areas in search of

A murmuration of Common Starlings arriving at their roost, painting curious shapes in the sky. Sometimes the flocks can exceed tens of thousands of individuals. PHOTO: JLM

food (their daily journeys can exceed 70 km). During winter White Wagtails also appear in high numbers, clearly visible and recognisable because of their elegant walk, Robins which brighten up the sunsets with typical calls, and there is the arrival of numerous Blackbirds from Central Europe and British Isles. These migratory Blackbirds share the same habitats as the Blackbirds living here year round, so there are frequent disputes and fights caused by the arising competition.

In March, birds already start returning to their nesting grounds, which, for the Malaga Park, means that the wintering birds return to their breeding grounds, and again it is possible to observe migratory species that use the Park as a resting place during their flight north. On their northwards journey birds are in a hurry as occupying the best breeding areas is at stake. In many cases the birds remain only one day in the area. Also in spiring the bird species which nest here arrive, after spending their winter in the south of the African continent. Perhaps the most significant examples of this group of birds, called **summer visitors**, are the swifts and swallows, which fill our skies in summer.

There are typically migratory species, which do not breed in Malaga province, and during migration passage can be seen almost anywhere. A good example is the Pied Flycatcher, which can be seen during the months of April and May, and then September and October. Its only ecological requirement is a tree to perch on; it does not matter if it is a Portuguese gall oak at 1100 m in the mountains of Camarolos, a white poplar in Benaoján Station or a jacaranda in a park in Velez-Malaga. Other similar cases are those of the Whinchat and Willow Warbler.

The Pied Flycatcher can be seen only during migration passages as it does not breed or winter in Malaga province. At certain times of the year it is relatively easily seen in wooded environments.
PHOTO: JLM

The Rose-ringed Parakeet is an exotic species whose population, similarily to the Monk Parakeet´s, has been growing in Malaga province. For now, both species have been associated with urban environments and it is uncertain whether the birds will end up occupying natural environments. PHOTO: JLM

URBAN BIRDS

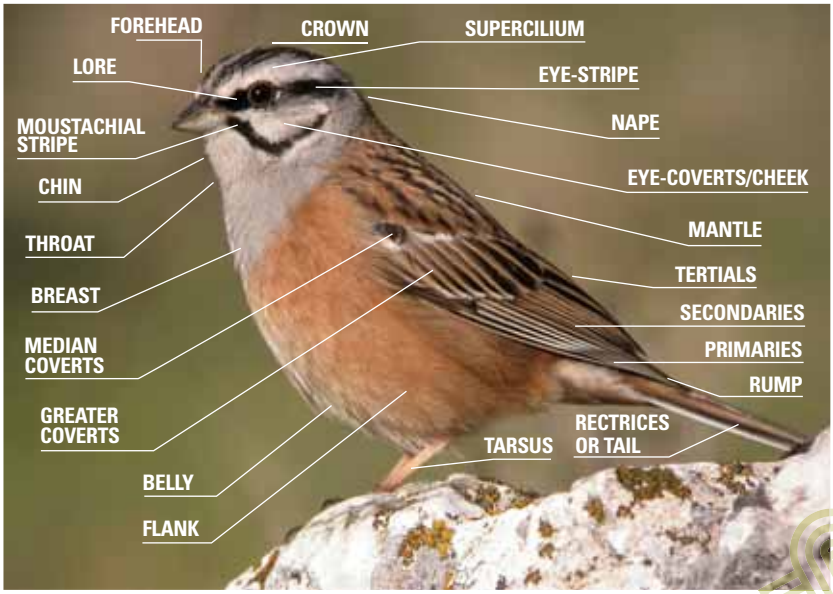
Cities and villages, hardly lacking in biodiversity, are an ideal setting where you can learn in detail about some species of interest and discover behavioural patterns which are difficult to find in other environments. Some species have adapted to living alongside humans to the point when they practically depend on us to be able to survive. You could say that the urban landscape offers a series of microhabitats which are taken advantage of by species with different ecological requirements. Parks and buildings hold typical woodland species which can also be found in the best-preserved woods in the province. The Malaga Cathedral or the New Bridge in Ronda, for example, resemble large steep rock faces and serve as breeding sites for typical mountain species such as the Peregrine Falcon and Red-billed Chough. La Caleta de Vélez port and the Estepona beaches offer a rest area to a great quantity of sea and coastal birds along their migration voyages.

A FEW TIPS FOR BIRD IDENTIFICATION

Ornithology as a hobby can be quite varied and have various aims; from looking for rarities to tick off your list to simply enjoying the birdsong and knowing what birds these are as you stroll through the woods. Just as there is no one single way to learn to identify birds, I would say there is no end to that journey, either. However, there are certain milestones on the way which have helped a majority of those interested in birdwatching gain knowledge, develop their skills and take their passion to the next level by using binoculars. First, you must start with at least a minimum interest in birds found in your immediate surroundings, next you need to get the minimum amount of materials to make birdwatching easier (basically a bird guide and binoculars are enough) and later, you will start looking for new environments to find new species. It is quite common that your interest in birds ends up extending to new areas such as, for example, photography, conservation and education. I cannot personally say why I have felt a great interest in birds since a very young age; neither can many of my colleagues, who took to this birdwatching business at many different stages of their lives. However I can confirm that once this passion is ignited, birds will keep you great company along the journey.

Some aspects of identification to take into account:

1. Be well familiar with the s**tructure**, **main areas** and **markings** of the birds´ plumage.



The cuckoo is a trans-Saharan migrant which is present here from late March to late July. Once it perches it relaxes its wings so that their tips are always underneath the tail. These features together with its size make it an easily recognizable species, even at great distances. PHOTO: JLM

2. Size matters, even though it can be relative. A raven can seem quite large when seen in urban area but it will become very small seen feeding alongside Griffon Vultures. Bird size in guide books tends to be indicated by the total body length, from the tip of the bill to the end of the tail, and this does not always reflect well the size you perceive through your binoculars. Use birds you know well as a reference, for example the Chiffchaffs, sparrows, blackbirds and doves, and then compare their size with the size of the bird you are watching.

3. Pay attention to shapes and proportions. It is important to look at the general shape of the bird as well as the proportions of different parts of its body. Does it have a large, round head like the Little Owl or a small head like the Collared Dove? Is the main axis of its body horizontal like the Blackbird´s or vertical like the Spotless Starling´s? Why is a perched Cuckoo so obviously easy to identify?

4. Silhouettes of birds in flight give you a lot of information. The silhouette of a bird in flight is completely different form a perched bird. Some of the silhouettes of birds in flight are indistinguishable from one another, such as swifts´, with their arched slender wings. In Malaga you can see up to 5 different species of swifts and although it is relatively easy to recognize this group of birds, identifying them at a specific level requires attention to certain features in detail.

Birds of prey are a typical group of birds which tend to be seen in flight and normally the species which seem similar in shape and size when perched can be distinguished when you look at their silhouettes in flight. An example which supports this can be the Common Kestrel and the Sparrowhawk. In flight the Kestrel shows pointed long wings whilst the Sparrowhawk´s wings are shorter and more rounded.

Another example how useful silhouettes in flight are could be the case of herons and

Swifts (pictured above is the Common Swift) are renowned for their superb flying ability. They perform most activities in the air, including preening, feeding, sleeping and mating, only landing to feed their chicks. PHOTO: PA.

On the left you can see a female Sparrowhawk and on the right a Common Kestrel. Although the size of both birds is very similar and may be difficult to differentiate through binoculars, the difference in wing shape and the way both birds fly is easy to notice. PHOTO: ARM

To the left you can see a juvenile Black Stork flying with its neck stretched out and on the right a Night Heron, also a juvenile, with a retracted neck. PHOTO: JW

storks; herons usually fly with their necks retracted, while storks holding their necks straight out.

5. Pay attention to the colours and markings. Under normal birdwatching conditions, especially at close range, you will be able to notice some colours and markings. It is not vital to remember all the details, because the general colouring and some specific details may be enough. To make the task of identification easier it is important that you devote some time to studying point 1. Common Redstart´s and Robin´s chest is orange, but the birds differ in other body part colour (the Robin´s throat is also orange and it is black in Common Redstart), in shape and behaviour.

The colour which you need to pay special attention to is colour white, which can be easily noticeable even in the shadows and it contrasts very well with other colours.

The upper image shows a Cirl Bunting´s eyestripe, the supercilium, the malar stripe, the moustachial stripe and the black throat. In the image below a male Common Redstart shows orange chest and tail; the whitish forehead contrasting with the black throat. FOTOS: JLM

6. What is the bill like? And legs? The parts of the bird not covered with feathers can also supply relevant ID information. Is the bill thin as a warbler´s or thick as the Greenfinch's? Are the legs long as the Spoonbill´s or hardly visible as the Swallow´s? The shape of bill and legs can sometimes reveal the family the bird belongs to such as in the case of birds of prey and the Ardeidae (Herons). In case of the Anatidae family, the Shoveler can be distinguished from the rest of the species, even at long distances, because of the shape of its bill.

7. What is the bird´s behaviour like? If you add general behaviour to the bird´s features (for example, the way it moves around, walks and flies, its posture and its calls), you will have a lot of information to be able to determine the species correctly, or, to be very close to determining it. If you are faced with a bird which is black, the size of a Blackbird but it walks around instead of hopping, you can be certain that you are looking at a Starling. If the bird in question seems to be the size of a Redstart but you are looking at it against the light and cannot see the colours, but you can see that it does not hop and it flicks its tail repeatedly as if it was on a spring, it is quite probable you are looking at a Black Redstart. If a raptor in the sky, also seen against the light, at a distance which makes it difficult to judge its size with the lack of a reference point, stops suddenly

Mediterranean Gull *(Ichthyaetus melanocephalus)*, third from the right, together with Blackheaded Gulls *(Chroicocephalus ridibundus)*. With a bit of practice you can easily note the differences between the bills and proportions of both species. PHOTO: JLM

A young individual of Great Tit *(Parus major)*, whose colouring and general look differ from an adult specimen. PHOTO: JLM

in the air and ruffles it feathers as if having a stretch, you can be sure it is a Booted Eagle. In this manner various types of behaviour could be described, important to identify many species, or genera, at a first glance. More than on one occasion you must have recognized a thrush flying before you, without being able to confirm the exact species. In English, there is a term for the total of the perceived features called "jizz" of a species (General Impression of Size and Shape).

8. Once you have taken up bird identification, it is vital to remember that, on most occasions, **the first impression counts.**

The more bird species you see and identify, the easier and faster the process of identification will become. It is as if you saved in your mind the process that leads to identification together with the bird´s image and I would say that this database can only be fed through your own personal experiences.

BASIC RULES OF BIRDWATCHING

Below you can find some recommendations which will assure that birdwatching goes hand-in-hand with bird protection and conservation.

1. Planning your outing and familiarising yourself with the species you are hoping to see will make your birding better. Usually, those well-planned outings are the ones which produce best results. A walk along the coast after a heavy westerly storm to look, for example, for rare gulls, an outing to enjoy the courtship of the Golden Eagle or the winter gatherings of Calandra Larks; all these require a prior commitment and the time spent on planning will make the time spent with your binoculars profitable. Also, it is a good idea to study the biology and behaviour of bird species in the area you are about to visit.

2. The use of binoculars and telescope will make birdwatching easier and more interesting. When you maintain your distance from the observed bird, it allows you to enjoy, for example, the particular aspects of its behaviour. You should never forget that your watching pleasure cannot take precedence over the welfare of the birds, especially during breeding season and migration periods.

3. Bird identification is made much easier if you know beforehand which parts of the bird you need to look at in detail. This requires a thorough

Common Chiffchaff *(Phylloscopus collybita)*, a common species during winter season in a variety of habitats and environments in the province. PHOTO: JLM

Black Wheatear *(Oenanthe leucura),* common species and typical to bare rock habitats. PHOTO: JLM

knowledge of bird topography and its terms, as well as the different types of feathers. The use of a good identification guide will help you to give a name and a "surname" to the watched bird. A guide should have detailed illustrations and a text that complements the image, instead of repeating what you can already see. Nowadays there is a wide range of guides available to bird lovers, some of which provide illustrations detailing plumage differences associated with age, sex and even the time of year.

4. It is best to move around quietly and discreetly, using the vegetation for cover, if there is any, to pass through as unnoticed as possible. Most birdwatchers follow this rule in general, but it is easy to forget it when faced with an interesting bird up close.

5. The best time of the day for birdwatching are the early hours of the morning and late in the day, but sometimes a passionate birder will tell you that the middle of the day is excellent, especially in areas with water and shade, and this is not an unreasonable statement.

6. Even though your eye-sight plays the main role when you are birdwatching, when it comes to birding your ear also holds the key to identification. If you decide to watch birds in a wooded area, for example, you should browse through a song guide beforehand to become familiar with these particular bird voices. In this type of environment

it is very common for a branch or a tree trunk to be in the way as you are trying to see the bird. Nowadays there are mp3 players available (most mobile phones have them) that allow to have access in the field to birdsongs of many species. As a result, you can return home having identified some species which, although difficult to observe, are conspicuous because of their song.

7. Respecting private land and property will in the end be positive for you and the birds you want to watch. It is recommended to access private property only when you have the proper permission. When you pass through gates they should be left the way you found them: open if they were open and closed if they were closed, remember that an open gate also serves a purpose.

8. If you see an individual of a bird unfamiliar to you, before thinking of a rarity first you should rule out the possibility of a common species with unusual plumage. Making detailed notes at the time of observation is essential for correct identification later. A photograph, if possible, will also be extremely helpful.

Birdwatching is an environmentally friendly alternative for spending your free time, and it can be exciting. A clear advantage of this activity is that it can be enjoyed throughout the year and practically anywhere.

Juvenile Blue Rock Thrush. *(Monticola solitarius).* PHOTO: JLM

Adult individual of Audouin´s Gull with a plastic ring (code number BA7W), ringed in 2009 in Chafarinas Islands, read on the 11th of June 2014 at the beach of Puerto de La Caleta (Stage 3). PHOTO: ARM

WHAT TO DO IF YOU NOTICE A RINGED OR MARKED BIRD?

When you have seen enough birds, sooner or later you finally notice some which are ringed or a marked. This will be relatively easy if you decide to spend some time around large flocks of gulls perched along the shore. Besides having a chance to discover some different species of gulls (for example, a specimen of Common Gull or Black-backed Gull after strong winter storms, or Little Gull during migration), you can also find out the details of a specimen´s life, as approximately between 1 and 6% of observed individuals will have a plastic ring coded with letters and numbers. If you communicate the sighting (place, date, species and code) to one of the bird ringing offices, you will be contributing to the bird ringing database of Europe and will be able to receive the observation history of the specimen, with the date and place of ringing and the list of places where the bird has been seen so far.

The links to bird ringing offices to report the data are as follows:

http://www.anillamientoseo.org/ and *http://anillamiento.ebd.csic.es*

Little Egret. PHOTO: JLM

Rare birds

The geographical location of Malaga province, together with the current context of climate change, make it easy every year to see birds considered to be rare (these are understood as birds which can be seen on very few occasions). There has been a total of 190 rare species registered out of a total of over 530 species in Spain. There are occasions when rarities are seen during migration periods or in winter season, generally as a result of bad weather conditions (such as, for example, Red-footed Falcon or Icterine Warbler). However, there are occasions when dispersing pioneer individuals can be seen prior to establishing a new population (in case of Long-legged Buzzard or Lesser Flamingo). Thus, when individuals of an uncommon species occur, this could be accidental or due to a biological process based on dispersion.

Additionally, you can find birds which have escaped or have been intentionally released and which may sometimes present a real challenge to a birdwatcher. Sightings of Blue-fronted Amazons, Harris' Hawks, African Sacred Ibises or Red-billed Leiothrix, among other species, correspond with individuals present due to human actions.

It is noteworthy that species such as Monk and Rose-ringed Parakeet used to be, years ago, the rare species resulting from escapes, but today they have established self-sustained populations which are growing rapidly.

Brent Geese have been observed twice in the last three years close to the Guadalhorce river mouth. PHOTO: ARM

These three Brent Geese spent several days near the promenade in Malaga city, last January 2015. PHOTO: AT

These types of birds have not been included in the rarities group but it is important to acknowledge such sightings, as the initial isolated specimens can turn into some healthy populations.

PERSISTENT EASTERLY WINDS IN NORTH AFRICA DURING PRE-BREEDING MIGRATION

The co-existence of the two large geographical barriers from east to west, namely the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert, has produced two major migratory axes in the context of the Palaearctic-African migration system. The western route is followed by birds crossing the Iberian Peninsula and wintering in West Africa, and the eastern route is followed by birds crossing the Mediterranean along its central and eastern sections to Africa, through the Near and Middle East, in order to winter in East and South Africa. The eastern route is followed by the migratory birds from the central and eastern Palaearctic and it exceeds the western route in number of species and number of birds on passage.

If the strong east-west winds affecting the south of the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa persist for more than a week at peak migration times, they can usually produce sightings of eastern species in southern Spain.

This is caused by the birds drifting with the winds during migration. Some of the affected species are the Lesser Spotted Eagle, the Hen Harrier, the Red-footed Falcon, Wood Warbler, Cream-coloured Courser and Icterine

Warbler, which can be seen in small numbers when conditions are right. The existence of historical records of these eastern species suggests that their presence in the area is relatively common even though it is something that may not happen every year. You only need to look, as an example, at the sightings of Red-footed Falcons registered by Irby in the vicinity of Tangier during the month of April at the end of the 19th century (Irby, 1898).

Consequently, if you are in Malaga area in spring season (mainly during the months of April and May) and there is a an anticyclone in the south of Europe combined with an area of low pressure in North Africa, it is a good idea to pay close attention as eastern species may occur.

Additionally, there are other reasons behind the presence of birds outside their usual areas, such as, for example, the expansion dynamics of some species (typical case of Long-legged Buzzard, Little Swift or Common Bulbul, which have recently colonised the south of the European continent). Also, there is the existence of secondary and minor migration routes within a population, the failure to manifest the internal migration schedule, plus the already mentioned

In February 2008 this Isabelline Shrike was observed in the Guadalhorce river mouth. PHOTO: MMA.

Slender-billed Gulls are scarce but, although in low numbers, are observed every year during migration (some years they breed in Fuente de Piedra lagoon). PHOTO: JAS.

Red-knobbed Coots are occasionally seen in Malaga, normally with neck-collars. PHOTO: JB

drifting effect during migration due to special weather conditions. If winter season brings strong storms which strike the Iberian Peninsula from the Atlantic, again, this is the time to go out looking for rarities, and in this particular case, I would recommend searching for American gulls along the coast.

WHICH BIRD IDENTIFICATION GUIDE SHOULD YOU USE IN THE SOUTH OF SPAIN?

The use of a guide is essential to make the task of bird identification easier. Nowadays there is a great choice of guides on the market but before you buy one you need to decide what the guide will be used for. Are you going to watch birds in Spain or will you also use it in other countries? Are you going to other neighbouring countries, such as Morocco or Israel? Is it enough for you just to know the species or will you want to know the sex and age of the bird whenever possible? Are you going to take the book with you to the field or will you use it at home with the notes you take on your outings?

It will be enough to visit a bookstore and see the wide range of guides at your disposal, to decide what to buy, according to your necessities. Below I am listing some aspects that I think should be considered.

1) If this is your first guide, a good option is to focus on one which limits the number of species to Spain (the number of species will be large enough and the price can be very affordable, about 20 €).

2) A guide with good illustrations is better than one with photographs (a good illustration highlights those points that help you identify the bird which is very difficult to do in a photograph).

3) The text, illustrations and maps should be on the same page, it saves you time leafing through the book and it will prolong the life of the book as well.

Great Egrets were rare two decades ago, and are relatively common at present. PHOTO: ARM

4) Finally, if you are going to take it to the field choose one which is not too heavy as it will accompany you on your many outings for a while.

It is not uncommon to end up with several guides which you will keep collecting as your birdwatching and your needs evolve.

BIRD IDENTIFICATION INVOLVES MORE THAN YOUR EYE-SIGHT

THE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTIFYING SONG AND CALLS.

In general, birdsong is considered relaxing, perhaps because for thousands of years it has been associated with situations of tranquillity; one used to worry when the birds stopped singing. In addition, the birdsong serves as nature´s alarm clock, indicating nightfall even in those latitudes where at certain times of the year there are 24 hours of sunlight.

It turns out that the song particular to each species is generally easier to recognize than it might seem at first. How many people have actually seen a Cuckoo, a Wryneck or a Scops Owl? It may not be your particular case, but many may have just heard those three species or at least two of them, even if at the time they did not associate the sound they heard with the bird.

On countless occasions, particularly in forest environment, you can hear birds but hardly ever see them. This is the typical case in which your hearing can supplement the use of binoculars. Although at first the songs may seem all the same and you may find it an impossible task, it only takes a bit of practice and giving yourself more than one chance. Do not forget that you are able to distinguish hundreds of human voices and recognize songs after just a few notes (though the latter is not true in my case).

Even if you start from scratch you will be surprised to know that you can already guess many birdsongs, like the cuckoo, a duck, the House Sparrow, the Rock Dove, the Monk Parakeet, an owl, a seagull, the Goldfinch.

There are birdsong recordings available for all bird species and I would recommend that you start with the species you know well and see often, and gradually continue expanding your repertoire in the environment you visit the most, and practice relatively often. It may seem like magic, although most definitely it is not, when you notice that slowly you begin to distinguish clearly, without actually seeing them,

Moussier's Redstart is a typical African species, with an increasing number of observations in Spain. It will probably be seen here. PHOTO: SD

the bird species which you never even knew existed.

Probably more than once your attention has been drawn to a striking song in a wooded area, not knowing that it was a Woodlark. I assure you that once you put a name to those cheerful notes, you will never forget what species it is.

The use of mnemonics (a set of prompts which help your memory) is very handy to remember birdsong. In case of the Great Tit it is easy to remember its call as it seems to repeat: "tea-cher, tea-cher, tea-cher". The Spanish mnemonics for it is "si, señor; si, señor; si señor". In many places of Malaga province the Great Tit is called the rain bird, as the "si señor" is considered an answer to the question: Is it going to rain tomorrow? To quote a typical call, I would mention what Common Stonechat tends to sound like, something like "beess-trec, beess-trec", which makes me think of a well-done piece of beef steak.

GREAT TIT´S SONG

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CALL AND A SONG?

BIRDSONG COLLECTION

A call generally consists of one or two short notes often used by the birds throughout the year to warn about danger or to keep in touch when they fly in flocks. The song is more complex, usually consists of several stanzas and is mainly used to defend the territory during the breeding season, as the birds sing from visible perches.

Bird guides generally provide information about the songs, with phrases such as "ping -ping, yutti - yutti, ti -ti -ta, ti -ti -ta, ti -ti -ta" (this is used by many guides to describe the Great Tit´s song), though there is nothing better than hearing the song on an mp3 player.

Iberian Yellow Wagtail *(Motacilla flava iberiae).* PHOTO: JLM

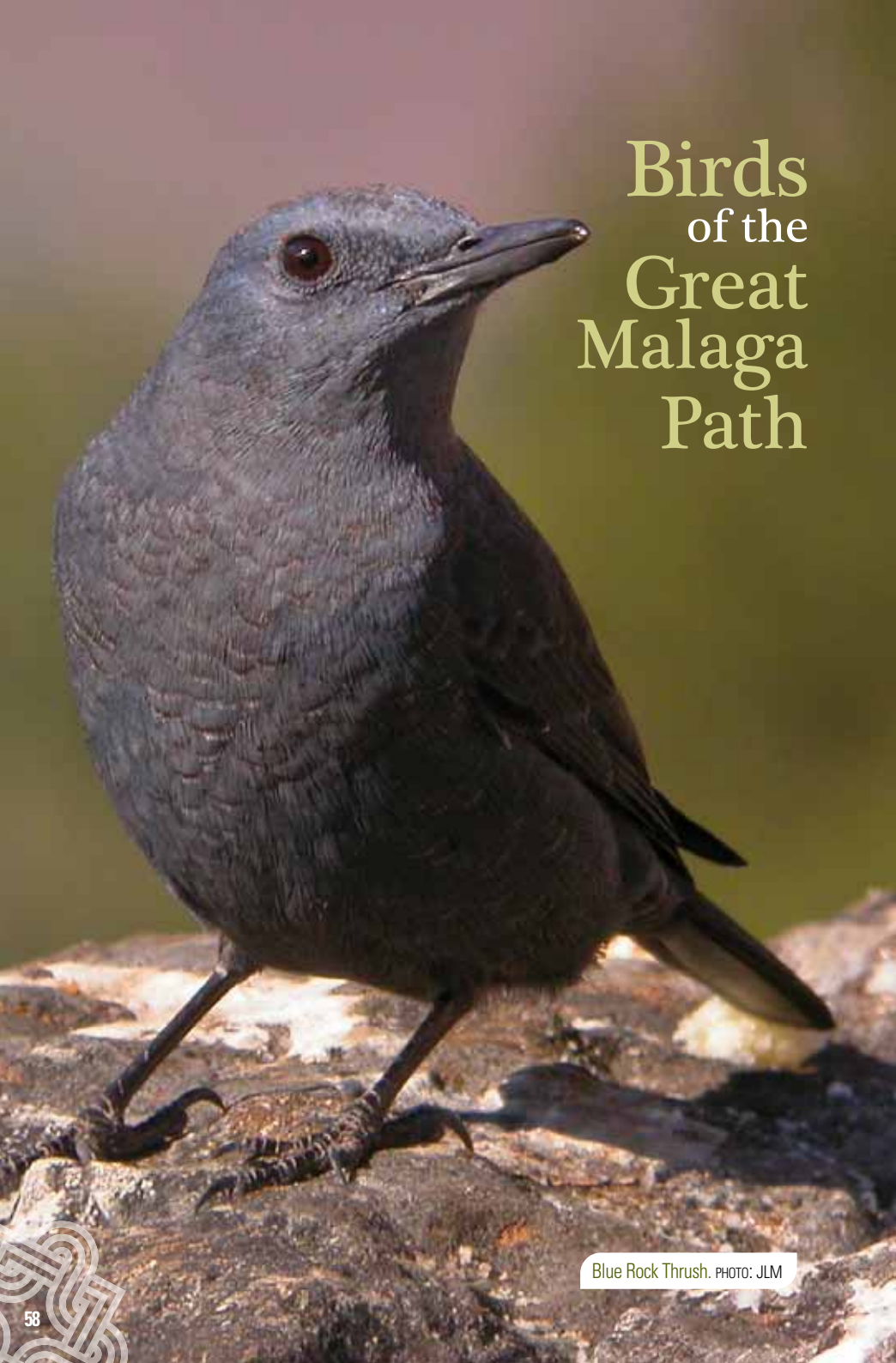
How many bird species can be seen in Malaga province?

A recent data gathering conducted for this book produced numbers reaching 338 species. This number excludes those species which have not been recorded since the mid 20th century (such as in the case of Barbary Partridge, Sociable Plover or the Marsh Owl, among others). This number constitutes approximately 70 % of the total number of species in Western Europe. The present work includes a complete and updated list of bird species in Malaga province, covering species which can be seen regularly or occasionally (these are considered to be rarities) as well as escapes whose presence is owed to human interference (exotic species). Along the Great Malaga Path you can see up to 306 different species approximately.

The bird species which can be seen year round are referred to as Resident, the ones which only spend the cold months here are called *Winter Visitors*, the species which are present only during the breeding season are *Summer Visitors*, and the ones which can only be seen during migration periods are *Migrants*. There are some birds whose presence is sporadic, these are Occasional species. The ones which occur rarely but there are records of their sightings are called Rarities and, finally, species which are releases or escapes are referred to as *Exotic* species.

A ringed male of Common Stonechat *(Saxicola torquata).* PHOTO: JLM

Birds of the Great Malaga Path



Blue Rock Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

Birds of Malaga

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SPANISH NAME	STATUS	HABITAT	DETECT.
Anatidae					
Graylag Goose	*Anser anser*	Ánsar común	Wint	WL	Sight
Common Shelduck	*Tadorna tadorna*	Tarro blanco	Res/Wint	WL	Sight
Ruddy Shelduck	*Tadorna ferruginea*	Tarro canelo	Exot/Rare	WL	Sight
Brent Goose	*Branta bernicla*	Barnacla carinegra	Rare	WL	Sight
Mandarin Duck	Aix galericulata	Pato mandarín	Exot	WL	Sight
Gadwall	*Anas strepera*	Ánade friso	Res	WL	Sight
Eurasian Wigeon	*Anas penelope*	Ánade silbón	Wint	WL	Sight
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	Ánade real	Res	WL	Sight
Blue-winged Teal	*Anas discors*	Cerceta aliazul	Rare/Exot	WL	Sight
Northern Shoveler	*Anas clypeata*	Pato cuchara	Res/Wint	WL	Sight
Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*	Ánade rabudo	Wint	WL	Sight
Garganey	*Anas querquedula*	Cerceta carretona	Mig	WL	Sight
Green-winged Teal	*Anas crecca*	Cerceta común	Wint	WL	Sight
Marbled Teal	*Marmaronetta angustirostris*	Cerceta pardilla	Occ	WL	Sight
Red-crested Pochard	*Netta rufina*	Pato colorado	Res	WL	Sight
Common Pochard	*Aythya ferina*	Porrón común	Res	WL	Sight
Ferruginous Duck	*Aythya nyroca*	Porrón pardo	Occ/Mig	WL	Sight
Tufted Duck	*Aythya fuligula*	Porrón moñudo	Occ/Wint	WL	Sight
Greater Scaup	*Aythya marila*	Porrón bastardo	Rare	WL	Sight
Black Scoter	*Melanitta nigra*	Negrón común	Wint	WL	Sight
Long-tailed Duck	*Clangula hyemalis*	Havelda	Rare/Wint	WL	Sight
Red-breasted Merganser	*Mergus serrator*	Serreta mediana	Occ/Wint	WL	Sight
White-headed Duck	*Oxyura leucocephala*	Malvasía	Res	WL	Sight
Phasianidae					
Red-legged Partridge	*Alectoris rufa*	Perdiz roja	Res	Cult	Sight
Common Quail	*Coturnix coturnix*	Codorniz	Sum/Mig	Cult	Sight
Pheasant	*Phasianus colchicus*	Faisán	Exot	Cult	Sight

STATUS:
Sum: spends spring and summer in Malaga province
Exot: exotic species
Wint: spends winter season in Malaga province
Mig: seen in Malaga province on migration
Occ: seen occasionally
Rare: a very rare species in Malaga province
Res: lives all year round in Malaga province

HABITAT:
Woods: woodland environment
Cult: cultivated areas
Mar: marine environment
Scrub: scrubland
Riv: river and riverside
Rock: rocky environments
Urban: urban environments
WL: Wetlands

DETECTION:
Sight: normally spotted by sight
Ear: detected by song or call
Sight/ear: the song is useful but it is easily found by sight

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SPANISH NAME	STATUS	HABITAT	DETECT.
Gaviidae					
Red-throated Loon	*Gavia stellata*	Colimbo chico	Rare/Wint	Mar	Sight
Black-throated Loon	*Gavia arctica*	Colimbo ártico	Rare/Wint	Mar	Sight
Great Northern Loon	*Gavia immer*	Colimbo grande	Rare/Wint	Mar	Sight
Podicipedidae					
Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	Zampullín chico	Res	WL	Sight
Great Crested Grebe	*Podiceps cristatus*	Somormujo lavanco	Res	WL	Sight
Black-necked Grebe	*Podiceps nigricollis*	Zampullín cuellinegro	Res	WL	Sight
Phoenicopteridae					
Greater Flamingo	*Phoenicopterus roseus*	Flamenco rosa	Res	WL	Sight
Lesser Flamingo	*Phoenicopterus minor*	Flamenco enano	Rare/Sum	WL	Sight
Procellariidae					
Fulmar	*Fulmarus glacialis*	Fulmar	Rare	Mar	Sight
Cory's Shearwater	*Calonectris diomedea*	Pardela cenicienta	Mig	Mar	Sight
Great Shearwater	*Puffinus gravis*	Pardela capirotada	Rare	Mar	Sight
Sooty Shearwater	*Puffinus griseus*	Pardela sombría	Rare/Wint	Mar	Sight
Manx Shearwater	*Puffinus puffinus*	Pardela pichoneta	Rare/Mig	Mar	Sight
Balearic Shearwater	*Puffinus mauretanicus*	Pardela balear	Mig	Mar	Sight
Hydrobatidae					
European Storm-Petrel	*Hydrobates pelagicus*	Paiño común	Mig	Mar	Sight
Leach's Storm-Petrel	*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*	Paiño de Leach	Rare/Mig	Mar	Sight
Sulidae					
Northern Gannet	*Morus bassanus*	Alcatraz Atlántico	Wint	Mar	Sight
Phalacrocoracidae					
Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	Cormorán grande	Wint	WL	Sight
Shag	*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*	Cormorán moñudo	Occ	Mar	Sight
Ardeidae					
Little Bittern	*Ixobrychus minutus*	Avetorillo	Sum	WL	Ear
Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	Garza real	Res	WL/Riv	Sight
Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	Garza imperial	Mig	WL	Sight
Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	Garceta grande	Occ	WL	Sight
Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	Garceta común	Wint	WL/Riv	Sight

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Reef Egret	*Egretta gularis*	Garceta dimorfa	Rare	WL/Riv	Sight
Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	Garcilla bueyera	Res	Cult/WL	Sight
Squacco Heron	*Ardeola ralloides*	Garcilla cangrejera	Mig	WL	Sight
Black-crowned Night-Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*	Martinete	Res	WL/Riv	Ear
Threskiornithidae					
Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*	Morito	Occ	WL	Sight
Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*	Espátula	Mig	WL	Sight
Ciconiidae					
Black Stork	*Ciconia nigra*	Cigüeña negra	Mig	Cult/Riv	Sight
White Stork	*Ciconia ciconia*	Cigüeña blanca	Mig	WL/Riv	Sight
Pandionidae					
Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*	Águila pescadora	Wint/Mig	WL/Mar	Sight
Accipitridae					
European Honey Buzzard	*Pernis apivorus*	Abejero Europeo	Mig		Sight
Black-shouldered Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	Elanio azul	Res	Cult	Sight
Red Kite	*Milvus milvus*	Milano real	Wint	Cult	Sight
Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	Milano negro	Mig		Sight
Lammergeier	*Gypaetus barbatus*	Quebrantahuesos	Occ	Rock	Sight
Egyptian Vulture	*Neophron percnopterus*	Alimoche	Sum/Mig	Rock	Sight
Rüppell's Vulture	*Gyps rueppellii*	Buitre de Rüppell	Rare	Rock	Sight
Griffon Vulture	*Gyps fulvus*	Buitre leonado	Res	Rock	Sight
Black Vulture	*Aegypius monachus*	Buitre negro	Occ		Sight
Short-toed Eagle	*Circaetus gallicus*	Águila culebrera	Sum	Woods	Sight
Marsh Harrier	*Circus aeruginosus*	Aguilucho lagunero	Wint/Sum	WL	Sight
Hen Harrier	*Circus cyaneus*	Aguilucho pálido	Wint	Cult	Sight
Montagu's Harrier	*Circus pygargus*	Aguilucho cenizo	Sum	Cult	Sight
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*	Gavilán	Res	Woods	Sight
Northern Goshawk	*Accipiter gentilis*	Azor	Res	Woods	Sight
Common Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*	Ratonero común	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Long-legged Buzzard	*Buteo rufinus cirtensis*	Ratonero moro	Rare	Woods	Sight
Spanish Imperial Eagle	*Aquila adalberti*	Águila imperial ibérica	Occ	Woods/ Scrub	Sight
Golden Eagle	*Aquila chrysaetos*	Águila real	Res	Rock	Sight
Bonelli's Eagle	*Aquila fasciata*	Águila perdicera	Res	Rock	Sight

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Booted Eagle	*Hieraaetus pennatus*	Águila calzada	Sum/Wint	Woods	Sight/Ear
Falconidae					
Lesser Kestrel	*Falco naumanni*	Cernícalo primilla	Sum	Cult	Sight/Ear
Common Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	Cernícalo vulgar	Res	Urban	Sight/Ear
Red-footed Falcon	*Falco vespertinus*	Cernícalo patirrojo	Rare/Wint	Cult	Sight
Eleonora's Falcon	*Falco eleonorae*	Halcón de Eleonor	Occ/Mig		Sight
Merlin	*Falco columbarius*	Esmerejón	Wint	Cult	Sight
Eurasian Hobby	*Falco subbuteo*	Alcotán	Mig	Woods	Sight
Saker Falcon	*Falco cherrug*	Halcón sacre	Rare		Sight
Peregrine Falcon	*Falco peregrinus*	Halcón peregrino	Res	Rock	Sight
Rallidae					
Corncrake	*Crex crex*	Guión de cordornices	Occ/Mig	WL/Riv	
Water Rail	*Rallus aquaticus*	Rascón	Res	WL	Ear
Little Crake	*Porzana parva*	Polluela bastarda	Mig	WL/Riv	Sight
Baillon's Crake	*Porzana pusilla*	Polluela chica	Mig/Sum	WL/Riv	Ear
Spotted Crake	*Porzana porzana*	Polluela pintoja	Mig	WL/Riv	Sight
Purple Swamphen	*Porphyrio porphyrio*	Calamón	Occ/Sum	WL	Sight
Common Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	Polla de agua	Res	WL/Riv	Sight/Ear
Red-knobbed Coot	*Fulica cristata*	Focha cornuda	Occ	WL	Sight
Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*	Focha común	Res	WL	Sight/Ear
Otididae					
Great Bustard	*Otis tarda*	Avutarda	Occ	Cult	Sight
Little Bustard	*Tetrax tetrax*	Sisón	Res	Cult	Sight/Ear
Gruidae					
Common Crane	*Grus grus*	Grulla común	Wint	Cult	Sight/Ear
Burhinidae					
Eurasian Thick-knee	*Burhinus oedicnemus*	Alcaraván	Res	Cult	Ear
Charadriidae					
Northern Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*	Avefría	Wint	Cult/WL	Sight
Black-bellied Plover	*Pluvialis squatarola*	Chorlito gris	Wint	WL/Mar	Sight
European Golden Plover	*Pluvialis apricaria*	Chorlito dorado	Wint	Cult	Sight
Kentish Plover	*Charadrius alexandrinus*	Chorlitejo patinegro	Sum/Wint	WL/Mar	Sight
Common Ringed Plover	*Charadrius hiaticula*	Chorlitejo grande	Mig	WL/Mar	Sight

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Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	Chorlitejo chico	Sum	WL/Riv	Sight
Dotterel	*Charadrius morinellus*	Chorlito carambolo	Rare/Mig		Sight
Haematopodidae					
Eurasian Oystercatcher	*Haematopus ostralegus*	Ostrero	Mig	Mar	Sight
Recurvirostridae					
Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	Cigüeñuela	Res	WL	Sight/Ear
Pied Avocet	*Recurvirostra avosetta*	Avoceta	Res/Mig	WL	Sight
Scolopacidae					
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	Andarríos chico	Mig	WL/Riv	Sight/Ear
Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*	Andarríos grande	Wint	WL/Riv	Sight/Ear
Spotted Redshank	*Tringa erythropus*	Archibebe oscuro	Mig	WL	Sight
Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*	Archibebe claro	Mig	WL	Sight/Ear
Lesser Yellowlegs	*Tringa flavipes*	Archibebe patigualdo chico	Rare	WL	Sight
Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*	Archibebe fino	Occ	WL	Sight
Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	Andarríos bastardo	Mig	WL	Sight
Common Redshank	*Tringa totanus*	Archibebe común	Mig	WL	Sight/Ear
Whimbrel	*Numenius phaeopus*	Zarapito trinador	Mig/Wint	Mar	Sight/Ear
Eurasian Curlew	*Numenius arquata*	Zarapito real	Mig	WL/Mar	Sight
Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*	Aguja colinegra	Mig	WL	Sight
Bar-tailed Godwit	*Limosa lapponica*	Aguja colipinta	Mig	WL	Sight
Ruddy Turnstone	*Arenaria interpres*	Vuelvepiedras	Wint	Mar	Sight
Red Knot	*Calidris canutus*	Correlimos gordo	Mig	WL	Sight
Sanderling	*Calidris alba*	Correlimos tridáctilo	Wint	Mar	Sight
Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	Correlimos menudo	Mig	WL	Sight
Temminck's Stint	*Calidris temminckii*	Correlimos de Temminck	Mig	WL	Sight
Purple Sandpiper	*Calidris maritima*	Correlimos oscuro	Occ/Wint	Mar	Sight
Dunlin	*Calidris alpina*	Correlimos común	Mig	WL	Sight
Curlew Sandpiper	*Calidris ferruginea*	Correlimos zarapitín	Mig	WL	Sight
Broad-billed Sandpiper	*Limicola falcinellus*	Correlimos falcinelo	Rare/Mig	WL	Sight
Ruff	*Philomachus pugnax*	Combatiente	Mig	WL	Sight
Jack Snipe	*Lymnocryptes minimus*	Agachadiza chica	Wint	WL/Riv	Sight/Ear
Common Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	Agachadiza común	Wint	WL/Riv	Sight/Ear

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Woodcock	*Scolopax rusticola*	Chocha perdiz	Wint	Woods	Sight/Ear
Glareolidae					
Collared Pratincole	*Glareola pratincola*	Canastera	Sum/Mig	Cult/WL	Sight
Laridae					
Black-legged Kittiwake	*Rissa tridactyla*	Gaviota tridáctila	Occ/Wint	Mar	Sight
Slender-billed Gull	*Chroicocephalus genei*	Gaviota picofina	Mig	WL	Sight
Black-headed Gull	*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*	Gaviota reidora	Wint	WL/Mar	Sight
Little Gull	*Hydrocoloeus minutus*	Gaviota enana	Mig	WL/Mar	Sight
Laughing Gull	*Leucophaeus atricilla*	Gaviota guanaguanare	Rare	Mar	Sight
Franklin's Gull	*Leucophaeus pipixcan*	Gaviota de Franklin	Rare	Mar	Sight
Mediterranean Gull	*Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*	Gaviota cabecinegra	Wint/Mig	Mar	Sight
Audouin's Gull	*Ichthyaetus audouinii*	Gaviota de Audouín	Mig	Mar	Sight
Mew Gull	*Larus canus*	Gaviota cana	Wint	Mar	Sight
Ring-billed Gull	*Larus delawarensis*	Gaviota de Delaware	Rare	Mar	Sight
Yellow-legged Gull	*Larus michahellis*	Gaviota patiamarilla	Res	Mar/ Urban	Sight
Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*	Gaviota sombría	Wint	WL/Mar	Sight
Great Black-backed Gull	*Larus marinus*	Gavión	Occ/Wint	Mar	Sight
Sternidae					
Little Tern	*Sternula albifrons*	Charrancito	Mig	Mar	Sight
Gull-billed Tern	*Gelochelidon nilotica*	Pagaza piconegra	Sum	WL/Cult	Sight
Caspian Tern	*Hydroprogne caspia*	Pagaza piquirroja	Wint/Mig	Mar	Sight
Black Tern	*Chlidonias niger*	Fumarel común	Mig	WL/Mar	Sight
White-winged Tern	*Chlidonias leucopterus*	Fumarel aliblanco	Occ/Mig	Mar	Sight
Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*	Fumarel cariblanco	Mig	WL/Mar	Sight
Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*	Charrán común	Mig	Mar	Sight
Arctic Tern	*Sterna paradisaea*	Charrán ártico	Mig	Mar	Sight
Sandwich Tern	*Thalasseus sandvicensis*	Charrán patinegro	Wint	Mar	Sight/Ear
Lesser Crested Tern	*Thalasseus bengalensis*	Charrán bengalí	Rare/Mig	Mar	Sight
Stercorariidae					
Great Skua	*Stercorarius skua*	Págalo grande	Wint	Mar	Sight

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Pomarine Skua	*Stercorarius pomarinus*	Págalo pomarino	Wint	Mar	Sight
Arctic Skua	*Stercorarius parasiticus*	Págalo parásito	Wint	Mar	Sight
Alcidae					
Common Guillemot	*Uria aalge*	Arao común	Occ/Wint	Mar	Sight
Razorbill	*Alca torda*	Alca	Wint	Mar	Sight
Puffin	*Fratercula arctica*	Frailecillo	Wint	Mar	Sight
Pteroclididae					
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	*Pterocles orientalis*	Ganga ortega	Occ/Res	Cultiv	Sight/Ear
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	*Pterocles alchata*	Ganga ibérica	Rare	Cultiv	Sight/Ear
Columbidae					
Rock Dove	*Columba livia*	Paloma bravía	Res	Urban/ Rock	Sight/Ear
Stock Dove	*Columba oenas*	Paloma zurita	Occ/Mig	Woods	Sight
Common Wood-Pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	Paloma torcaz	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
European Turtle-Dove	*Streptopelia turtur*	Tórtola común	Sum	Cult	Sight/Ear
Eurasian Collared-Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	Tórtola turca	Res	Urban	Sight/Ear
Eurasian Collared-Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	Tórtola senegalesa	Exot	Urban	Sight
Psittacidae					
Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	Cotorra de Kramer	Exot	Urban	Ear
Monk Parakeet	*Myiopsitta monachus*	Cotorra Argentina	Exot	Urban	Sight/Ear
Senegal Parrot	*Poicephalus senegalus*	Lorito senegalés	Exot	Urban	Sight/Ear
Burrowing Parakeet	*Cyanoliseus patagonus*	Loro barranquero	Exot	Urban	Sight/Ear
Scaly-headed Parrot	*Pionus maximiliani*	Loro choclero	Exot	Urban	Sight/Ear
Cuculidae					
Great Spotted Cuckoo	*Clamator glandarius*	Críalo	Mig	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Common Cuckoo	*Cuculus canorus*	Cuco	Sum	Woods/ Scrub	Ear
Tytonidae					
Barn Owl	*Tyto alba*	Lechuza común	Res	Cult/ Urban	Sight/Ear
Strigidae					
Scops Owl	*Otus scops*	Autillo	Sum	Woods	Ear
Eagle Owl	*Bubo bubo*	Búho real	Res	Rock	Ear

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Little Owl	*Athene noctua*	Mochuelo	Res	Cultiv	Sight/Ear
Tawny Owl	*Strix aluco*	Cárabo común	Res	Woods	Ear
Long-eared Owl	*Asio otus*	Búho chico	Wint	Woods	Sight/Ear
Short-eared Owl	*Asio flammeus*	Lechuza campestre	Mig	WL	Sight
Caprimulgidae					
Red-necked Nightjar	*Caprimulgus ruficollis*	Chotacabras pardo	Sum	Cultiv/ Scrub	Ear
European Nightjar	*Caprimulgus europaeus*	Chotacabras gris	Mig	Scrub	Ear
Apodidae					
Common Swift	*Apus apus*	Vencejo común	Sum	Urban/ Rock	Sight
Pallid Swift	*Apus pallidus*	Vencejo pálido	Sum	Urban/ Rock	Sight
Alpine Swift	*Apus melba*	Vencejo real	Sum	Rock	Sight/Ear
White-rumped Swift	*Apus caffer*	Vencejo cafre	Occ/Sum		Sight
Litlle Swift	*Apus afinis*	Vencejo moro	Rare		Sight
Alcedinidae					
Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	Martín pescador	Res	WL/Riv	Sight/Ear
Meropidae					
European Bee-eater	*Merops apiaster*	Abejaruco común	Sum/Mig	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	*Merops persicus*	Abejaruco papirrojo	Rare		Sight/Ear
Coraciidae					
European Roller	*Coracias garrulus*	Carraca	Mig	Cult	Sight
Upupidae					
Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	Abubilla	Sum	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Picidae					
Eurasian Wryneck	*Jynx torquilla*	Torcecuello	Sum/Wint	Woods	Ear
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos minor*	Pico menor	Occ	Woods	Ear
Great Spotted Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos major*	Pico picapinos	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Green Woodpecker	*Picus viridis*	Pito real	Res	Woods	Ear
Laniidae					
Iberian Grey Shrike	*Lanius meridionalis*	Alcaudón meridional	Sum	Scrub	Sight
Woodchat Shrike	*Lanius senator*	Alcaudón común	Sum	Scrub	Sight
Isabelline Shrike	*Lanius isabellinus*	Alcaudón Isabel	Rare	Scrub	Sight

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Oriolidae					
Eurasian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus oriolus*	Oropéndola	Sum	Riv	Ear
Corvidae					
Eurasian Jay	*Garrulus glandarius*	Arrendajo	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Azure-winged Magpie	*Cyanopica cyanus*	Rabilargo	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Magpie	*Pica pica*	Urraca	Occ	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Red-billed Chough	*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*	Chova Piquirroja	Res	Rock	Sight/Ear
Western Jackdaw	*Corvus monedula*	Grajilla	Res	Rock	Sight/Ear
Common Raven	*Corvus corax*	Cuervo	Res	Rock/ Cultiv	Sight/Ear
Carrion Crow	*Corvus corone*	Corneja negra	Occ	Cultiv	Sight/Ear
Alaudidae					
Calandra Lark	*Melanocorypha calandra*	Calandria	Res	Cultiv	Sight
Greater Short-toed Lark	*Calandrella brachydactyla*	Terrera común	Sum	Cultiv	Sight/Ear
Crested Lark	*Galerida cristata*	Cogujada común	Res	Cultiv	Sight/Ear
Thekla Lark	*Galerida theklae*	Cogujada montesina	Res	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*	Alondra común	Wint	Cultiv	Sight/Ear
Woodlark	*Lullula arborea*	Totovía	Res	Woods	Ear
Hirundinidae					
Sand Martin	*Riparia riparia*	Avión zapador	Sum	WL/Riv	Sight
Crag Martin	*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*	Avión roquero	Res	Rock/ Urban	Sight
Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	Golondrina común	Sum	Urban	Sight
Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*	Golondrina dáurica	Sum	Urban/ Scrub	Sight
Common House-Martin	*Delichon urbicum*	Avión común	Sum	Urban	Sight
Paridae					
Coal Tit	*Periparus ater*	Carbonero garrapinos	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Crested Tit	*Lophophanes cristatus*	Herrerillo Capuchino	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Great Tit	*Parus major*	Carbonero común	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	Herrerillo común	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Remizidae					
Eurasian Penduline-Tit	*Remiz pendulinus*	Pájaro moscón	Wint/Sum	WL/Riv	Sight/Ear

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Aegithalidae					
Long-tailed Tit	*Aegithalos caudatus*	Mito	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Sittidae					
Eurasian Nuthatch	*Sitta europaea*	Trepador Azul	Res	Woods	Ear
Certhiidae					
Short-toed Treecreeper	*Certhia brachydactyla*	Agateador común	Res	Woods	Ear
Tichodromadidae					
Wallcreeper	*Tichodroma muraria*	Treparriscos	Occ/Wint	Rock	Sight
Troglodytidae					
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	Chochín	Res	Woods	Ear
Cinclidae					
Dipper	*Cinclus cinclus*	Mirlo acuático	Occ	Riv	Sight
Sylviidae					
Cetti's Warbler	*Cettia cetti*	Ruiseñor bastardo	Res	Riv	Ear
Firecrest	*Regulus ignicapilla*	Reyezuelo listado	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Willow Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochilus*	Mosquitero musical	Mig	Woods/ Scrub	Sight
Common Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus collybita*	Mosquitero común	Wint	Scrub/ Urban	Sight/Ear
Iberian Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus ibericus*	Mosquitero ibérico	Sum	Woods	Sight/Ear
Western Bonelli's Warbler	*Phylloscopus bonelli*	Mosquitero papialbo	Sum	Woods	Sight/Ear
Yellow-browed Warbler	*Phylloscopus inornatus*	Mosquitero bilistado	Rare	Scrub/ Woods	Sight/Ear
Western Olivaceous Warbler	*Hippolais opaca*	Zarcero pálido	Sum	Scrub/ WL	Sight/Ear
Melodious Warbler	*Hippolais polyglotta*	Zarcero común	Sum	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Moustached Warbler	*Acrocephalus melanopogon*	Carricerín real	Occ/Wint	WL	Ear
Aquatic Warbler	*Acrocephalus paludicola*	Carricerín cejudo	Occ/Mig	WL	Sight
Sedge Warbler	*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*	Carricerín común	Mig	WL	Sight/Ear
Eurasian Reed-Warbler	*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*	Carricero común	Sum/Mig	WL	Sight/Ear
Great Reed-Warbler	*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*	Carricero tordal	Sum/Mig	WL	Sight/Ear

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Common Grasshopper-Warbler	*Locustella naevia*	Buscarla pintoja	Mig	WL/ Scrub	Sight/Ear
Savi's Warbler	*Locustella luscinioides*	Buscarla unicolor	Mig	WL	Sight/Ear
Zitting Cisticola	*Cisticola juncidis*	Buitrón	Res	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Blackcap	*Sylvia atricapilla*	Curruca capirotada	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Garden Warbler	*Sylvia borin*	Curruca mosquitera	Mig	Woods/ Scrub	Sight
Western Orphean Warbler	*Sylvia hortensis*	Curruca mirlona	Sum	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Greater Whitethroat	*Sylvia communis*	Curruca zarcera	Mig	Scrub	Sight
Spectacled Warbler	*Sylvia conspicillata*	Curruca tomillera	Sum	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Dartford Warbler	*Sylvia undata*	Curruca rabilarga	Res	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Subalpine Warbler	*Sylvia cantillans*	Curruca carrasqueña	Sum	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Sardinian Warbler	*Sylvia melanocephala*	Curruca cabecinegra	Res	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Muscicapidae					
Spotted Flycatcher	*Muscicapa striata*	Papamoscas gris	Sum	Woods	Sight/Ear
European Pied Flycatcher	*Ficedula hypoleuca*	Papamoscas cerrojillo	Mig	Woods/ Scrub	Sight
Red-breasted Flycatcher	*Ficedula parva*	Papamoscas papirrojo	Rare	Woods/ Scrub	Sight
Turdidae					
European Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	Petirrojo	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Common Nightingale	*Luscinia megarhynchos*	Ruiseñor común	Sum	Riv	Ear
Bluethroat	*Luscinia svecica*	Pechiazul	Wint	WL	Ear
Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin	*Cercotrichas galactotes*	Alzacola	Sum	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Black Redstart	*Phoenicurus ochruros*	Colirrojo tizón	Wint/Res	Urban/ Rock	Sight/Ear
Common Redstart	*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*	Colirrojo real	Mig	Woods/ Scrub	Sight/Ear
Black Wheatear	*Oenanthe leucura*	Collalba negra	Res	Rock	Sight
Northern Wheatear	*Oenanthe oenanthe*	Collalba gris	Mig	Scrub	Sight
Black-eared Wheatear	*Oenanthe hispanica*	Collalba rubia	Sum	Scrub	Sight
Whinchat	*Saxicola rubetra*	Tarabilla norteña	Mig	Scrub	Sight
Stonechat	*Saxicola torquatus*	Tarabilla común	Res	Scrub	Sight
Rock Thrush	*Monticola saxatilis*	Roquero rojo	Mig	Rock	Sight
Blue Rock Thrush	*Monticola solitarius*	Roquero solitario	Res	Rock	Sight

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SPANISH NAME	STATUS	HABITAT	DETECT.
Ring Ouzel	*Turdus torquatus*	Mirlo capiblanco	Wint	Scrub	Sight
Eurasian Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	Mirlo común	Res	Woods/ Scrub	Sight/Ear
Fieldfare	*Turdus pilaris*	Zorzal real	Wint	Scrub	Sight
Redwing	*Turdus iliacus*	Zorzal alirrojo	Wint	Woods	Sight
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	Zorzal común	Wint	Woods/ Scrub	Sight/Ear
Mistle Thrush	*Turdus viscivorus*	Zorzal charlo	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Sturnidae					
Common Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	Estornino pinto	Wint	Urban/ Cultiv	Sight
Spotless Starling	*Sturnus unicolor*	Estornino negro	Res	Urban	Sight
Prunellidae					
Alpine Accentor	*Prunella collaris*	Acentor alpino	Wint	Scrub	Sight
Dunnock	*Prunella modularis*	Acentor común	Wint	Rock	Ear
Motacillidae					
Western Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*	Lavandera boyera	Sum	WL	Sight
Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*	Lavandera cascadeña	Res	Riv	Sight
White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*	Lavandera blanca	Res	WL/ Urban	Sight
Tawny Pipit	*Anthus campestris*	Bisbita campestre	Mig	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Meadow Pipit	*Anthus pratensis*	Bisbita común	Wint	WL	Sight
Tree Pipit	*Anthus trivialis*	Bisbita arbóreo	Mig	Scrub	Sight
Water Pipit	*Anthus spinoletta*	Bisbita ribereño alpino	Wint	WL	Sight/Ear
Red-throated Pipit	*Anthus cervinus*	Bisbita gorgirrojo	Rare		Sight
Richard's Pipit	*Anthus richardi*	Bisbita de Richard	Rare	WL	Sight/Ear
Emberizidae					
Yellowhammer	*Emberiza citrinella*	Escribano Cerillo	Occ/Wint	Scrub	Sight
Cirl Bunting	*Emberiza cirlus*	Escribano Soteño	Res	Scrub/ Woods	Sight/Ear
Rock Bunting	*Emberiza cia*	Escribano Montesino	Res	Scrub/ Rock	Sight/Ear

ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SPANISH NAME	STATUS	HABITAT	DETECT.
Ortolan Bunting	*Emberiza hortulana*	Escribano hortelano	Mig	Scrub	Sight
Reed Bunting	*Emberiza schoeniclus*	Escribano palustre	Wint	WL	Sight/Ear
Snow Bunting	*Plectrophenax nivalis*	Escribano nival	Rare/Wint	WL	Sight
Little Bunting	*Emberiza pusilla*	Escribano pigmeo	Rare		Sight
Corn Bunting	*Emberiza calandra*	Triguero	Res	Cult	Sight/Ear
Fringillidae					
Chaffinch	*Fringilla coelebs*	Pinzón vulgar	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Brambling	*Fringilla montifringilla*	Pinzón real	Wint	Cult	Sight
European Greenfinch	*Chloris chloris*	Verderón común	Res	Scrub/ Woods	Sight/Ear
Common Crossbill	*Loxia curvirostra*	Piquituerto	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Eurasian Siskin	*Spinus spinus*	Lúgano	Wint	Woods	Sight/Ear
European Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	Jilguero	Res	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Citril Finch	*Carduelis citrinella*	Verderón Serrano	Rare	Woods	Sight/Ear
Common Linnet	*Carduelis cannabina*	Pardillo común	Res	Scrub	Sight/Ear
European Serin	*Serinus serinus*	Verdecillo	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	Camachuelo común	Wint	Woods	Sight
Hawfinch	*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*	Picogordo	Res	Woods	Sight/Ear
Trumpeter Finch	*Bucanetes githagineus*	Camachuelo trompetero	Rare	Scrub	Sight/Ear
Passeridae					
House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	Gorrión común	Res	Urban	Sight/Ear
Spanish Sparrow	*Passer hispaniolensis*	Gorrión moruno	Res	Cult	Sight/Ear
Tree Sparrow	*Passer montanus*	Gorrión molinero	Res	Cult	Sight/Ear
Rock Sparrow	*Petronia petronia*	Gorrión chillón	Res	Rock	Sight/Ear
Strildidae					
Orange-cheeked Waxbill	*Estrilda melpoda*	Pico de coral carananaranja	Exot	Cultiv/ WL	Sight
Black-rumped Waxbill	*Estrilda troglodytes*	Pico de coral colinegro	Exot	Cultiv/ WL	Sight
Common Waxbill	*Estrilda astrild*	Pico de coral	Exot	Cultiv/ WL	Sight
Red Avadavat	*Amandava amandava*	Bengalí rojo	Exot	Cultiv/ WL	Sight


















The Stages










MÁLAGA
Museo Alborania
de Educación
Ambiental
La Farola
Puerto
de Málaga
Diputación
Provincial
Baños de
Carmen
Puerto de
El Candado
Peñón del
Cuervo
Torre
de las
Palomas
La Araña
RINCÓN DE
LA VICTORIA
STAGE 1
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STAGE 1
Malaga - Rincón de la Victoria

LOCATION

The first stage of the walk starts at Kilometre Zero of The Great Malaga Path located at the Malaga Province Council building along the promenade Paseo Marítimo Antonio Banderas in Malaga city. It ends in La Cala del Moral at the bridge over the Totalán stream. This **15, 6 km** long stage of the walk lacks any uphill or downhill sections and it connects Malaga capital city with La Cala del Moral (a place within Rincón de la Victoria municipal district). It leads mainly through an urban area with the exception of the part between the sports complex El Candado and the Totalán stream.

Starting point of the Great Malaga Path PHOTO: ARM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The first stage of the walk takes you along the coastline of Malaga and, partially, Rincón de la Victoria municipal areas, and because of that the predominant species here are the ones adapted to living in an urban environment, as well as the species associated with the coast. The cities and villages, places which do not lack biodiversity, make for an ideal settings to familiarise yourself in detail with some of the bird species of your interest and to discover behaviour patterns difficult to find in other types of environment. Some species have adapted to living together with humans to the point where they practically depend on us to be able to survive.

DID YOU KNOW?

Limonium malacitanum. PHOTO: JSM

Stage 1 leads along one of the few stretches of the natural rocky environments of Malaga seaboard. These cliffs accommodate a series of caves which have been inhabited since the Palaeolithic era and which harbour an interesting plant population of species adapted to the splashes of the sea waves. Among them, the *Limonium malacitanum* stands out, an endemic species of Malaga coast catalogued as "endangered"". TEXT: JSM

One could say that the urban landscape offers a great number of microhabitats which are used by species with different ecological requirements. The Malaga Park harbours typically forest-dwelling birds which can also be found in the best-preserved woods in the province. The cathedral resembles a sheer cliff and serves as a breeding spot for typical mountain dwellers such as the Peregrine Falcon. Malaga port and the beaches where this stage of the walk takes you serve as a resting place for a great quantity of marine and shore birds along their migration voyages.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Without a doubt the typically urban and coastal species play the leading part at this stage. Among the coastal species the Great Cormorants and Grey Herons deserve a mention. They frequent Malaga coast, especially the area of Pedregalejo and El Palo, attracted by the food source provided by the breeding enclosures containing Gilt-head Bream and Sea Bass at the Chanquete beach.

As far as birds of prey are concerned, the Booted Eagle needs to be mentioned, an increasingly usual bird around the port and Gibralfaro during winter months, and the Common Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon in the vicinity of Malaga Park and Wharf One. At the beginning of the stage there are factory chimneys, witnesses to the industrial past of Malaga city. They serve as regular perches for the Peregrine Falcons which nest at the cathedral and use the mouth of Guadalhorce river to find food. At the Plaza del Obispo below the nest at the cathedral tower it is not unusual to find remains of waders and other birds which were used to feed the Peregrine chicks.

The Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed Gulls are very frequent, mainly in winter, together with Sandwich Tern and waders such as Sanderling and Turnstone. The Sandwich Terns are quite easy to identify as they tend to gather on the same shore, following the rhythm of the waves as they seek out small invertebrates and try to avoid getting their little legs wet, this way creating a continuous in and out movement. In winter, with the help of binoculars and/or a telescope you can watch skuas following the gulls to steal their food and albatrosses diving hard into the water to fish. The domesticated variety of Rock Dove and Collared Dove can be seen along the entire stretch of the itinerary, though the major concentrations of them happen in the area of Malaga port where they find food easily.

In spring and summer at this stage of the walk Pallid and Common Swifts

Lesser Black-backed Gull. PHOTO: JLM

Communal nest of Monk Parakeet. Each opening is occupied by a different pair. PHOTO: ARM

constantly fly across the sky, with each incessant movement greatly reducing the number of flying insects in the environment (thousands of swifts consume a daily amount of insects which is far from negligible). Notable passerines are the swallows, Common Swift, White Wagtail, Blackbird and Robin, Common Chiffchaff, Sardinian Warbler, Great Tit, Raven, Spotless (year round) and Common Starling (during winter season), House Sparrow, Goldfinch, Serin and Greenfinch.

A species which has recently joined the urban birdlife of Spain, and which you will doubtlessly hear and see during the first stage of the walk, is the Monk Parakeet, increasingly more abundant all along the province´s coast. This is a bird originating in South America, which has managed to form a population thanks to being released or escaping, and it is a species which is currently expanding.

TIMING

Stage 1 of the walk offers something of interest all year round and shows the seasonal character of the annual life-cycle of birds (breeding season, post-breeding or autumn migration and pre-breeding or spring migration). This lends distinctive elements to different times of the year in this section of the walk.

NATURAL VALUES

The first stage of the walk crosses the Guadalmedina river, the Malaga Park and the Jaboneros stream, from where you can glimpse the San Antón mountain, the El Cuervo outcrop and a stretch of the coast and cliffs of La Araña; all of these are places where you can discover other elements of flora and fauna which add great interest to this stage.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The eastern dock at the Puerto de Málaga is a good place to watch sea birds. You will be able to observe a few Razorbills and Black-necked Grebes during winter and see the passage of hundreds of Scopoll´s and Balearic Shearwaters on migration. The port itself is highly recommended to start your gull identification practice. Although there are three main species (Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed), it is possible to see other species such as Mediterranean, Audouin´s and Great Black-backed Gull. As a note for those more interested in gulls, there are two different subspecies of Lesser Black-backed Gulls you can see at the same time here, whose origins are geographically different.


STAGE 2
Totalán
Moclinejo
Benaque
Benamocarra
Iznate
Vélez Málaga
Macharaviaya
Valdés
Cajiz
Los Iberos
El Tomillar
El Capitán
Torre del Mar
Benagalbón
Almayate Alto
Los Puertas
Los Toscanos
Almayate Bajo
Ruinas
Chilches
Tajo del Pinto
Monte Azul
Torre del Jaral
El Hornillo
La Cala del Moral
Rincón de la Victoria
Cueva del Tesoro
Castillo Bezmiliana
Torre de Benagalbón
Benajarafe
Torre de Benajarafe
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STAGE 2
Rincón de la Victoria - Vélez Málaga

LOCATION

The second stage of the walk starts at Arroyo Totalán, where the promenade called Paseo Marítimo de la Cala del Moral begins, and it finishes in Vélez-Málaga.

This **24, 4 km** long section will give you the opportunity to cover part of the western shore of the Axarquía, from the urban coastal core of Rincón de la Victoria, to the fertile land dedicated to cultivating crops and passes through the Río Vélez, the widest river of the eastern coast in the province.

Arabic watchtower called Torre del Jaral. PHOTO: JSM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Amongst the representative birdlife of this stage of the walk coastal species play the main role, considering that you will be walking along the shore itself starting from Benajarafe. As well, there are birds typical to human-influenced environments and cultivated areas. The most interesting place for birdwatching along this stage is around the Río Vélez. The varied landscape and the role played by the sea and the mouth of the river increment quite significantly the diversity of species you will be able to observe.

DID YOU KNOW?

La Torre del Jaral was the chosen site in the Iberian Peninsula to track bird migration using radar technique between 1996 and 1997. A group of Swiss researchers led by Dr. Felix Liechti focused on night migration, although they also studied different aspects of daytime migration and, especially, the birds of prey. They found very significant differences in behaviour of different species during the post-breeding migration. Whilst Black Kites followed the coastline towards the Strait of Gibraltar, Ospreys, the three species of Harriers and falcon family in general flew over this part of the Axarquía direction south, directly to Africa from the coast of Malaga. The Honey Buzzards mostly had a tendency to follow the coast, like the kites, however some individuals used the strategy of the direct southwards crossing. TEXT: ARM

Adult Audouin´s and Yellow-legged Gulls.
PHOTO: ARM

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Most easily observed species at the beginning of Stage 2 are mainly the gulls and urban-dwelling birds. The Yellow-legged Gull is the most frequent one and can bee seen all year round, however, from the beginning of autumn, throughout most of winter until spring you will be able to see the Lesser Black-backed Gulls as well (same size but with a darker back) and Black-headed Gulls (visibly smaller than the previous two). At the beaches of Benajarafe you will be able to see Audouin´s Gulls from mid May to November and Mediterranean Gulls and Sandwich Terns in winter season and on passage. If you decide to devote some more time to the large flocks of seagulls which gather on the shore along this stage of the walk, with a bit of luck you will have a chance to discover a couple of species more (for example, some individuals of Common Gull or Great Black-backed Gull after the severe winter storms, or the Little Gull on migration).

As soon as you embark on Stage 2, around the El Cantal tunnels, you will be able to see winter roosts of Crag Martins. They come from the rocky areas of the province and probably from further north down to the coast to look for food and milder temperatures. You can also spot the Blue Rock Thrush around here.

Other typically coastal species you can see during this section would be the Sanderlings on the shore and Albatrosses flying over the sea, keeping a certain distance from the beach; both can be seen in winter.

Amongst the urban-dwellers there is the Rock Dove (domestic variety), Eurasian Collared Dove, Monk Parakeet,

Crag Martin. PHOTO: JLM

Pallid Swift, Barn Swallow, Blackbird, Sardinian Warbler, Spotless Starling, House Sparrow and Serin; they are joined in winter months by White Wagtail, Black Redstart and Common Chiffchaff.

Once you pass by Benajarafe and cross the Ibero stream and leave the first line of the beach behind, you will encounter the first cultivated areas which cause other species of birds to show up. The abandoned olive groves which you will cross as you walk up towards the Jaral tower and the orchards before arriving at Almayate are the sites to observe Cattle Egret, Common Kestrel, Blackcap, Crested Lark, European Turtle Dove, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Great Tit, House Martin, Jackdaw, Little Owl, Red-necked Nightjar, Robin, Stonechat, Spanish Sparrow and Woodchat Shrike.

TIMING

Majority of Stage 2 of the walk is influenced by the usual annual variations in bird species; the main bulk of the species is seen year roundand some are typical of winter months such as Meadow Pipits and Black Redstarts, then others are typical of the summer, such as the swifts. It is during the migration when the section of the stage which crosses the Río Vélez becomes more interesting, especially if you get close to the mouth of the river. This is a place of great value for the birds, allowing them to rest during their long journeys.

Baillon's Crake has breed in the mouth of the Velez river. PHOTO: JB

NATURAL VALUES

Stage 2 leads through the El Cantal cliffs, where you can see striking rock formations showing the erosion of the shoreline; you can also encounter a species of plant endemic to Malaga, *Limonium malacitanum*. Another compelling place is the Almayate Rock, an element of great natural value in the Bajo Vélez complex; it stands out from other geomorphologic elements because of its colour and steepness. Here you can see the quarries which used to supply building material for the Malaga Cathedral and in the surroundings there are valuable archaeological sites, especially the Phoenician city Los Toscanos. On the vertical walls of the Almayate Rock there are approximately 4-6 breeding pairs of Common Kestrel, which could be considered a colony, keeping in mind that the Common Kestrel normally tends to nest alone whilst the Lesser Kestrel nests in colonies.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Although The Great Malaga Path does not pass through the mouth of Río Vélez, the place is well worth a detour of about 500 metres to birdwatch. The mouth of the Vélez river is important at the level of the whole Malaga Province as it harbours a high diversity of species throughout the year in quite a limited space. A bird count conducted in the area in late 1990´s and at the beginning of the next decade in the year 2000, 193 species have been recorded at the mouth of the river itself and the surrounding crop fields.

Little Bittern, male. PHOTO: JLM

Great Cormorant drying its wings. PHOTO: JLM

On the river bank where Torre del Mar is located, there is a birdwatching viewpoint from which you have a good view of the final section of the river. Here you can mainly watch the aquatic birds whose numbers depend on the time of the year. Migration time can bring some real surprises. You can see various duck species, grebes, shearwaters, cormorants, herons (from the tiny Little Bittern to Purple Heron), flamingos, birds of prey, crakes, coots, rails, skuas, different species of gulls, nightjars, swifts, hoopoes, bee-eaters, rollers, and a large number of passerine birds. Waders deserve a special mention, they are usually associated with wetlands and known for their long migrations; the mouth of the river Vélez is possibly the best place in the province to watch them. During certain times in autumn or spring about 20 different species of waders have been recorded. As far as passerines, there are small numbers of Sand Martin during the breeding season, Moustached Warbler during some winter seasons and Penduline Tit, which has even started breeding in the area.

As an example of how valuable the area is for those birdwatchers looking for uncommon species, in late June 2014 a sighting of an individual of the Red-knobbed Coot was recorded.


Vélez-Málaga
Algarrobo
Los Llanos
P.I. La Peña
Barro Colorado
El Tomillar
Caleta de Vélez
Puerto de Caleta
Camarillas
Mezquitilla
Torre del Mar
Lagos
El Morche
Generación del 27
Los Llanos
Castillo Bajo-Conejito
Punta Torrox y Faro de Torrox
Torrox
Torrox Park
El Peñoncillo
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STAGE 3
Vélez Málaga - Torrox

LOCATION

Stage 3 starts at the Fernando Ruiz Hierro city sports complex in the south-east section of the centre of Vélez-Málaga, and it finishes at the entrance of Torrox. Along the walk you will be passing through abandoned crop fields from the very beginning, which look as if they are just waiting for the city build up to arrive. From La Caleta port continue along the coast up to the tip of Torrox. Once you reach that point, you will start walking up towards the end of Stage 3 through subtropical crops. The **19, 1 km** long stretch supports a diversity of birds which reflects the variety of landscapes of Stage 3 of the walk.

Little Owl. PHOTO: JLM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Along Stage 3 you have a chance to see communities of urban-dwelling birds, birds typical of transformed areas covered in ruderal vegetation and, mainly, sea and coastal species as this stage largely runs along the shoreline.

DID YOU KNOW?

The plumage of various species of seagulls can show differences during the first years of their lives. In some cases, such as with Black-headed Gull and Slender-billed Gull, there are two types of plumage, reaching the adult look at the age of 2. In other cases, the birds acquire the adult plumage at the age of 3, for example the Mediterranean Gull. Meanwhile in bigger species such as Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed Gull you can distinguish 4 different age groups which correspond with the first 3 years of their lives, the 4th one being the adult plumage maintained during the rest of their lives. This way, in a flock of similarly-sized gulls where there are white individuals with uniformly grey backs, some brown ones and others with a mix of grey and brown on the back and the coverts, you could be watching individuals of different ages but the same species. This example may be seen in July and August along the coastal stages of the walk, with the mixed-age flocks of Yellow-legged Gull. TEXT: ARM. SEE PHOTO AT THE TOP OF PAGE 86.


Common Blackbird. PHOTO: ARM

You will also be crossing streams and riverbeds, which, in spite of being dry a lot of the time during the year, still bring lots of interesting elements. The highlight here is shore birds, mostly waders and gulls, given the seasonal presence of water at the mouths of the rivers.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

In the urban environment where Stage 3 takes you, you will see the Collared Dove, Pallid and Common Swift, Barn Swallow, Blackbird, Spotless Starling and House Sparrow, among other species. During winter you can observe Crag Martins in urbanized areas near the beach as they arrive from higher areas to spend the cold months sheltered near the sea; also Wagtails, Common Chiffchaffs and Common Starlings. The area at the beginning of Stage 3 where ruderal vegetation is predominant, you can watch Common Kestrel, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Zitting Cisticola, Crested Lark, Sardinian Warbler and different species of finches (Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Serin). Upon reaching the coast, birds typical of the marine environment take the grandstand, for example the gulls: Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed, Mediterranean and Audouin´s.

Sandwich Terns and waders such as Sanderling and Turnstone are common at the first line of the beach. Cattle Egrets, Little Egrets, Cormorants and Monk Parakeets also show up during Stage 3, together with some specimens of Mallard, Moorhen and Coot in the seasonal pools which tend to appear around the river mouths. Thanks to the closeness of the Vélez river mouth the numbers of species along the coast can elevate greatly during the migration. It is the spring and autumn months when you should pay close attention to anything that flies and you might spot some exceptional species.

Kentish Plovers. PHOTO: JLM

TIMING

The main seasonal changes can be noted in the marine environment, given that the presence of different species of seagulls becomes evidently clear during the winter months, especially at times when the boats arrive at the port and fish remains are thrown in the water becoming food for the seagulls. The inland environment also undergoes a noticeable change when winter arrives, with the massive presence of Common Starlings, Chiffchaffs, Robins and Blackcaps. During spring and summer Swifts, Bee-eaters and Spotted Flycatchers are the highlights; they nest in our area and then go back to Africa to spend their winter.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The La Caleta port is a great place to watch sea birds, especially the gulls. It is an excellent place to practice the identification of gulls, birds which are abundant along our coasts.

Ringed-billed Gull next to an Audouin´s Gull. PHOTO: JR


STAGE 4
La Molineta
Cortijos de San Rafael
Torrox
Imaroga
Nerja
Macaca
Torrox Park
Generación del 27
Los Llanos
Castillo Bajo-Conejito
El Peñoncillo
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STAGE 4
Torrox - Nerja


A specimen of chameleon. PHOTO: ARM

LOCATION

Stage 4 is a short one, **10, 5 km**, and it begins at the town centre of Torrox. Follow direction south till you arrive at the *cañada real*, or the former drover´s path, from Motril to Málaga. Cross a few riverbeds, such as Torrox, Seco and Chillar, and many plantations of sub-tropical species (avocado, mango and loquat) with a few representatives of native vegetation (oleander, holm oak and Mediterranean hackberry). Having crossed the Río Chillar you will arrive at Nerja.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The beginning of Stage 4 is marked by a criss-cross of riverbeds, the type called "*rambla*" in Spanish, seasonally dry and often serving as a walking path. Typical vegetation of these *ramblas* are copses of oleander, enriching the bird community when compared to the rest of the stage, occupied mainly by crops. The presence of a few remaining specimens of holm oak indicates the existence of holm oak woods which once must have covered the area, now taken up by numerous subtropical crops. These, in a way, imitate a forest favouring the presence of some typically woodland species. The riverbeds you will cross, mainly the Río Chillar at the end of Stage 4, bring with them the typical species of river environment.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

At the beginning you will see typically urban species such as domestic pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, Pallid Swift, White Wagtail, Swallow, Common Blackbird and Sparrow.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Mediterranean Chameleon is a splendid-looking reptile adapted to life in tree branches where it hunts insects thanks to its prehensile tail, a projectile-like tongue and independently moving eyes. The chameleon is represented scarcely in Europe and the Axarquía is the area where its population reaches highest density. From April to September, its most active moths in the area, it is easiest to be able to find this reptile and this stage of the walk is an excellent place to do that. TEXT: JSM

The open areas you will come across at the beginning of Stage 4 with the vegetation mainly consisting of retama and broom contain few bird species mostly including Crested Lark, Common Stonechat, Sardinian Warbler and Goldfinch however you can also see Common Kestrel, Little Owl, Red-legged Partridge, Bee-eater and, providing there are sturdy trees close by, the Hoopoe.

Another predominant type of environment at Stage 4 is the tropical tree plantation, the avocado being the main crop. In this type of environment you will mainly find Common Blackbird, Great Tit, Spotted Flycatcher and finches and finches such as Goldfinch, Serin and Greenfinch, during breeding season. The list is rounded up by Robin, Song Thrush, Black Redstart, Blackcap, and Common Chiffchaff in winter. You will also be able to see a few Chaffinches where the vegetation reaches tree size and Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, Woodchat Shrike and Corn Bunting in more open areas. Other species present along Stage 4 are

House Sparrow. PHOTO: JLM

European Turtle Dove, Common Wood Pigeon, Cuckoo, Scops Owl, Red-necked Nightjar, Barn Swallow, House and Crag Martin, Wren, and Raven. At the very end of Stage 4 you will be crossing Río Chillar, where you could spot Little Ringed Plover, Grey Wagtail, Common Nightingale and Cetti´s Warbler, along with typical

Greenfinches. PHOTO: JLM

White Wagtail. PHOTO: JLM

urban dwellers such as Monk Parakeet, Eurasian Collared Dove, Spotless and Common Starling and House Sparrow.

TIMING

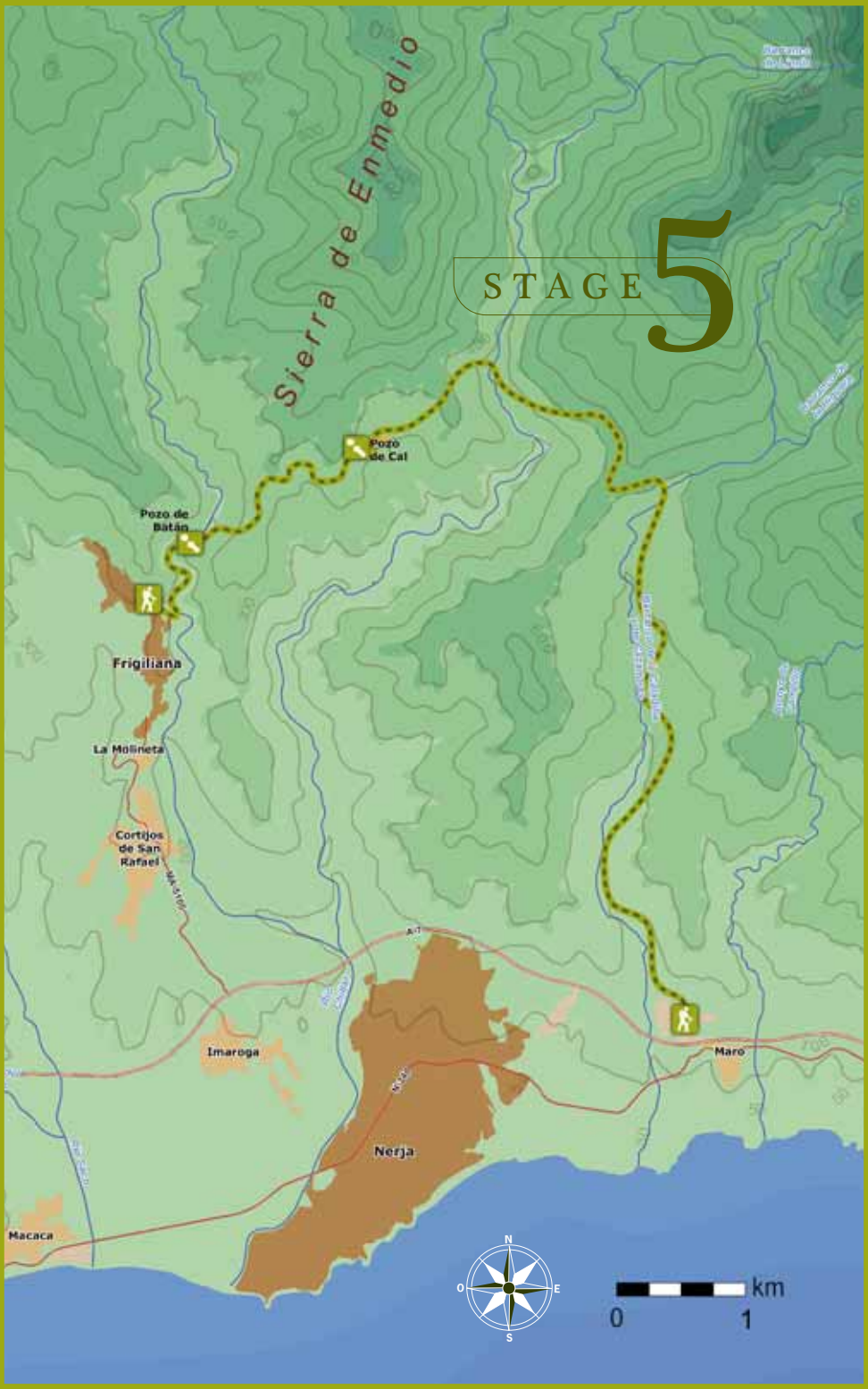
The short length of Stage 4 and the type of species which are found along it allow you to do this stage of the walk any time of the year, keeping in mind that during the cold moths the abundance of birds increases with the typical wintering species.

NATURAL VALUES

Thickets of retama shrubs are home to the populations of Mediterranean Chameleon, and this habitat is being broken up probably faster than the species can cope with to assure its survival on the long run. In the Nerja cave, at the end of this stage, as well as in other natural shelters in the surroundings a broad selection of bats have been recorded, among them the Greater Horseshoe Bat, Grey Long-eared Bat and Common Bentwing Bat. Other mammals present in the area are the Spanish Ibex, which is quite easy to see, and other species linked to rocky environment, namely Stone Martin, Fox, Genet and Badger.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Very close to the end of Stage 4 you will be crossing the Río Chillar, a highly recommended place in summer months as the low water level allows you to walk along the riverbed itself. This river´s source is in Sierra Almijara, at over 1200 meters above the sea level and its course is marked by a few gorges carved in dolomite marble. Interestingly enough, even during draughts, the water level in this river remains quite constant all year round.


STAGE 5
Sierra de Enmedio
Pozo de Cal
Pozo de Batán
Frigiliana
La Molineta
Cortijos de San Rafael
Imaroga
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STAGE 5
Nerja - Frigiliana

LOCATION

Stage 5 begins at the Nerja cave, very close to the town centre of Maro. Having crossed the Chillar and Higuerón rivers, after almost **15 km** from the start, Stage 5 ends in Frigiliana, at the square Plaza del Ingenio.

Short-toed Eagle. PHOTO: JLM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

From the very beginning of Stage 5, at the Nerja cave, you will have a chance to see typical forest-dwelling bird communities which become more abundant as you walk up into the pine woods. The impressive cliffs and summits of the Sierra Almijara will let you get familiar with mountain bird species and watch some of the large raptors. The areas of bare rock support species typical of that sort of environment and they are abundant enough to ensure sightings of some outstanding rock-dwelling species; the rock faces you will be passing by deserve a bit of binocular time. The scrub and vegetation around the Río Chillar and Higuerón also mark the presence of characteristic species.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

This stage of the walk gets you closer to a mountainous area and because of that you are able to watch mountain inhabitants such as Bonelli´s Eagle and Eagle Owl.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Nerja Cave is used as a permanent or temporary shelter by a great diversity of species. Amongst the vertebrates it is worth mentioning the cave-dwelling bats such as Grey Long-eared Bat, Common Bent-wing and two species of Horseshoe bats (Great and Mediterranean). Possibly the invertebrates may prove even more interesting here. Studies conducted at the beginning of the last decade have identified 26 species of arthropods, two of them endemic to the cave: Chthonius nerjaensis and Plusiocampa baetica. Detailed information on the subject can be found on the cave´s website: (*http://www.cuevadenerja.es*). TEXT: ARM

Common Chaffinch. PHOTO: JLM

At the starting point typical urban dwellers are present (basically Eurasian Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Spotless Starling and Black Redstart in winter), however the landscaped area around the Nerja cave attracts a high diversity of forest species typical of the woods which you will be passing through along Stage 5. This way, from the very beginning you can see Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Coal and Crested Tit and Common Chaffinch. Along the stage the woodland birds are the most profuse ones, additionally to the above mentioned you can find European Turtle Dove, Common Blackbird, Common Chiffchaff, Eurasian Jay, Common Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin and Rock Bunting. In winter such species as White Wagtail, European Robin, Song Thrush and Eurasian Siskin also frequent many places along Stage 5. In the surroundings of Chillar and Higuerón rivers you can watch Grey Wagtail, Common Nightingale, Cetti´s Warbler, Blackcap, Wren, Golden Oriole and Cirl Bunting. Other species which can be spotted along Stage 5 are Bonelli´s Eagle, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Red-necked Nightjar, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Black Redstart, Black Wheatear, Common Stonechat, Blue Rock Thrush, Song Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Woodchat Shrike, Spotless and Common Starling, Rock Bunting.

TIMING

Stage 5 can be done any time of the year although during the months of July and August birdwatching might bear little fruit; during the time when water level is low, the surroundings of Río Chillar and Higuerón are the areas showing the highest density of birds of Stage 5 itinerary.

NATURAL VALUES

The mammals present in the area include the relatively easily spotted Spanish Ibex and other typical inhabitants of rocky environment such as Stone Martin which is much more difficult to see. Along Stage 5 you will have a chance to see many signs left by the fox on top of rocks and plants on the edge of the path. As far as vegetation is concerned you can encounter some interesting species including the African *Maytenus senegalensis* as well as *Buxus baleárica* and *Cneorum tricocum*.

Eagle Owl PHOTO: JLM

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Maro and Cerro Gordo cliffs, even though not included in the itinerary of Stage 5, are worth a visit. In addition to being able to watch sea and shore birds mentioned in Stages 3 and 4, this is a good spot to see the Cory´s Shearwater as at dusk in summer they tend to form large gatherings on water surface (rafts) of up to a hundred birds, which are visible from the shore.

Scops Owl stays some winters in the Axarquia. PHOTO: JB


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Cortijo del Daire
Arroyo Zarzadilla
Cortijo María Dolores
Competa
Venta Cebollero
Frigiliana
La Molineta
Cortijos de San Rafael
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STAGE 6

STAGE 6
Frigiliana - Cómpeta

LOCATION

Stage 6 takes you up to some excellently located viewpoints in the Sierra Almijara. The stage starts at the square Plaza Ingenio in Frigiliana and continues on to the settlement called El Acebuchal. This stage is **26, 4 km** long, it climbs up to the altitudes of over 1000 metres above sea level and it ends in Plaza del Carmen square in Cómpeta.

Dartford Warblers. PHOTO: JLM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The stage starts in an urban environment which, little by little, gives way to a pine wood. The wood, varying in thickness, will keep you company along a large section of Stage 6. Streams and scrubland continue towards the higher areas of the walk and they also determine the type of birdlife, together with the sheer rock faces which support a wealth of rock-dwelling fauna.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

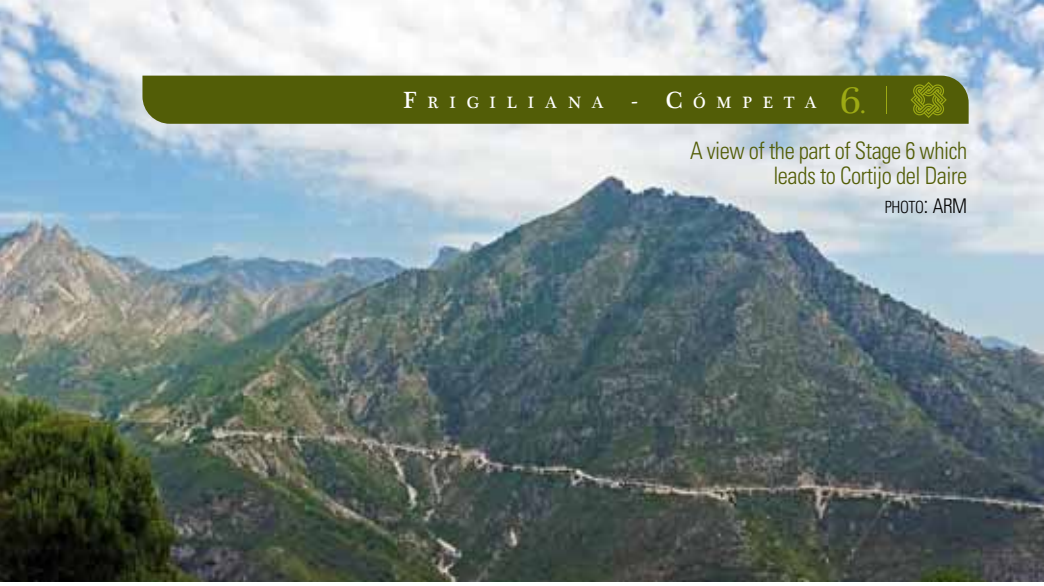
The first section of Stage 6, after leaving Frigiliana, leads along the road lined with houses and copses of pine. Because of that, species such as White Wagtail, Black Redstart, House Sparrow and Starlings, which typically can be found in inhabited areas, share territory with the species more linked to woodland, including Common Blackbird, Common Chiffchaff, Great Tit,

DID YOU KNOW?

If we were to say what group of birds are typically Mediterranean, the genus of Sylvia warblers would deserve to be in the spotlight. There are 26 species and 34 subspecies of these small birds. Up to 8 different species can be seen during the year along Stage 6; here the scrubland species are especially interesting, namely Sardinian Warbler, Dartford Warbler and Spectacled Warbler. It is an interesting group of birds to watch due to their abundance and the variety of plumage colours depending on their sex and age. Identifying their song by ear can prove challenging both to an expert and a beginner birder. TEXT: ARM

and Common Chaffinch. Along this first tarmac section of Stage 6 you can also find Eurasian Collared Dove, Common and Pallid Swift, Swallows and House Martins, European Robin, Black Redstart, Sardinian Warbler, Coal Tit, Goldfinch and Serin.

Once you set off on the forest track leading to El Acebuchal, the true woodland begins, where, amongst the Aleppo pines you can see such species as Mistle Thrush, Short-toed Treecreeper, Spotted Flycatcher and Greenfinch, together with Wren, European Robin, Common Nightingale, Blackcap, Cetti´s Warbler, Golden Oriole, Crossbill and Cirl Bunting as you get closer to the stream. Past El Acebuchal you will be walking along a *rambla*, a dry streambed lined with oleanders and large pine trees where the predominant species are Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Song Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Crested Tit and Eurasian Siskin, though you can still see the forest birds mentioned above. This is the basic make up of Stage 6 birdlife until you reach higher altitude and open areas, where additionally you will be able to see Red-legged Partridge, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Swifts, Common Stonechat, Black-eared Wheatear, Woodchat Shrike, Common Linnet and Rock Bunting. Past the Cortijo del Daire there is a combination of large extensions of broom and scrub where Short-toed Lark and Dartford Warbler breed; this is a good spot to pay attention to the sky looking for raptors. This *sierra* harbours Northern Goshawk, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard, Short-toed and Booted Eagle, and in the cliffs and gorges carved out by the streams, Bonelli´s and Golden Eagle. You can also see Common Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon, generally close to the rock faces, where you can also find Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush and Raven. Watching these species in such rocky environment proves to be especially rewarding for a birdwatcher. It´s worth mentioning the presence of other species though they might be difficult to see, such as



A view of the part of Stage 6 which leads to Cortijo del Daire
PHOTO: ARM

Cuckoo, Scops Owl, Tawny Owl, Eagle Owl, Red-necked Nightjar and Green Woodpecker; in any case these are birds which are easy to identify by their call or song. As you arrive in Cómpeta you are once more surrounded by the typically urban-dwelling birds.

TIMING

If you take into account the length and level of difficulty of Stage 6, combined with the best time to see most of the species, it is recommended to avoid the hottest months of the year.

NATURAL VALUES

The itinerary offers highly varied vegetation adapted to its characteristic environment (calcareous sands coming from disintegrating marble). The predominant plant formation is a reforested pine wood and various shrubs, including kermes oak, rosemary, juniper, and *cistus clusii*, also called *romero macho* in Spanish, "male" or false rosemary, as it closely resembles the herb. In lower areas the Aleppo pine is more abundant and as you gain altitude it is being replaced by the maritime pine,

Spiny-footed lizard (*Acanthodactylus erythrurus*). PHOTO: ARM

whose *fascicles* or needles are bigger and deeper green in colour.

In the areas where pine wood has not developed, it is substituted by scrubland consisting mainly of broom and rosemary. Along the streams and gullies there are oleanders, willows, brambles, rushes and, in shady spots, heather which is easily identifiable by its little branches of pink flowers. At the beginning of the walk boxwood appears, easily recognised when its leaves turn reddish in spring and summer. Another interesting species, which, together with boxwood are distributed at the border of Malaga and Granada provinces in the Iberian Peninsula, is the el *Cneorum triccocum.* Both are catalogued as endangered in the Red List of Threatened Flora of Andalucía.

Spotless Starling. PHOTO: JLM

Mistle Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

Yet another notable species of plant which can only be found along Stage 6 of the Great Malaga Path is the *Maytenus*

One of the lime kilns you encounter along this stage. PHOTO: ARM

Oleanders lining a stream on the way to El Acebuchal. PHOTO: ARM

senegalensis, its distribution is afro-Iberian and in Spain it appears only on the eastern coast of Andalucía and on the coast of Murcia.

Dianthus malacitanus. PHOTO: ARM

Male and juvenile Crossbills. PHOTO: JLM

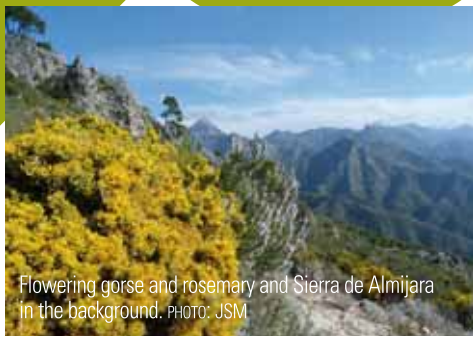
Oleanders lining a stream on the way to El Acebuchal. PHOTO: ARM

Male and juvenile crossbills. PHOTO: JLM

Dianthus malacitanus. PHOTO: ARM

STAGE 7

STAGE 7
Cómpeta - Canillas de Aceituno


Flowering gorse and rosemary and Sierra de Almijara in the background. PHOTO: JSM

LOCATION

Stage 7 begins in the northwest part of Cómpeta, specifically at the chapel called La Ermita de San Antonio. This stage leads from the Sierra Almijara to Sierra Tejeda, then passes by the settlements of Canillas de Albaida, Salares and Sedella, and finally ends in Canillas de Aceituno. It is **25, 1 km** long.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Stage 7 leads through the total of 5 settlements which makes it very anthropic (or transformed by humans) in character, with plenty of crop fields. The watercourses mingle with woodland and the plant formations consisting of pine trees and holm oaks demonstrate a part of the potential vegetation of the area.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

This is a stage of the walk which, in major part, takes you to areas marked by human influence. You will visit the total of five towns and their surroundings, so the urban-dwelling species of birds are abundant. Eurasian Collared Dove, Common and Pallid Swifts, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Crag Martin, White Wagtail, Black Redstart, Common Blackbird, Great Tit, Spotless and Common Starling, House Sparrow, Goldfinch and Serin are the leading species of Stage 7. Additionally to these species, in the areas with orchards and vegetable gardens found between Cómpeta and Canillas de Albaida, you can see Stonechat, Great Tit, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Serin, which will continue to appear throughout Stage 7.

DID YOU KNOW?

Supporting over 1400 species of plants, the Sierras of Tejeda and Almijara constitute one of the botanical jewels of the South of Europa. This surprising diversity can be explained by the altitude, closeness to the sea and geological diversity. This diversity of plants is reflected in the great variety of pollinating insects. As an example we can quote the fact that there are 105 species of day-flying butterflies which have been identified in these sierras. (José Manuel Moreno comm. pers.). TEXT: JSM

Wren. PHOTO: JLM

In the woods of Aleppo and Maritime pines you can also see Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Mistle and Song Thrush, Great and Coal Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Common Chaffinch and Crossbill. Additionally, in the copses of holm oak, we should add to the list the Blue Tit, Eurasian Jay, Spotted Flycatcher and Eurasian Siskin. You will also be walking through some open scrubland, predominantly composed of broom and it is in this type of environment where the Crested Lark becomes the star species, together with such birds as Red-legged Partridge, Zitting Cisticola and Sardinian Warbler. The water channels and any other places where water is present close to main riverbeds are the best spots to see Blackcap, Wren and Golden Oriole, and to enjoy the Nightingale´s and Cetti´s Warbler´s song. What is more, the closeness of the mountains makes finding the great raptors easier, such as Griffon Vulture, Bonelli´s and Golden Eagle, as well as the typical forest species of birds of prey which also manage to find some suitable nesting spots in this area (mainly Short-toed Eagle, Booted Eagle, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard).The list of birds can be rounded up by adding Common Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Little Owl, Scops Owl, Tawny Owl, Cuckoo, Green Woodpecker, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Cirl Bunting and Corn Bunting.

TIMING

Stage 7 is long and it is recommended to avoid walking it during the hottest months of the year. The make up of the bird species does not vary greatly throughout the year, except for the species which are exclusively winter or summer visitors.

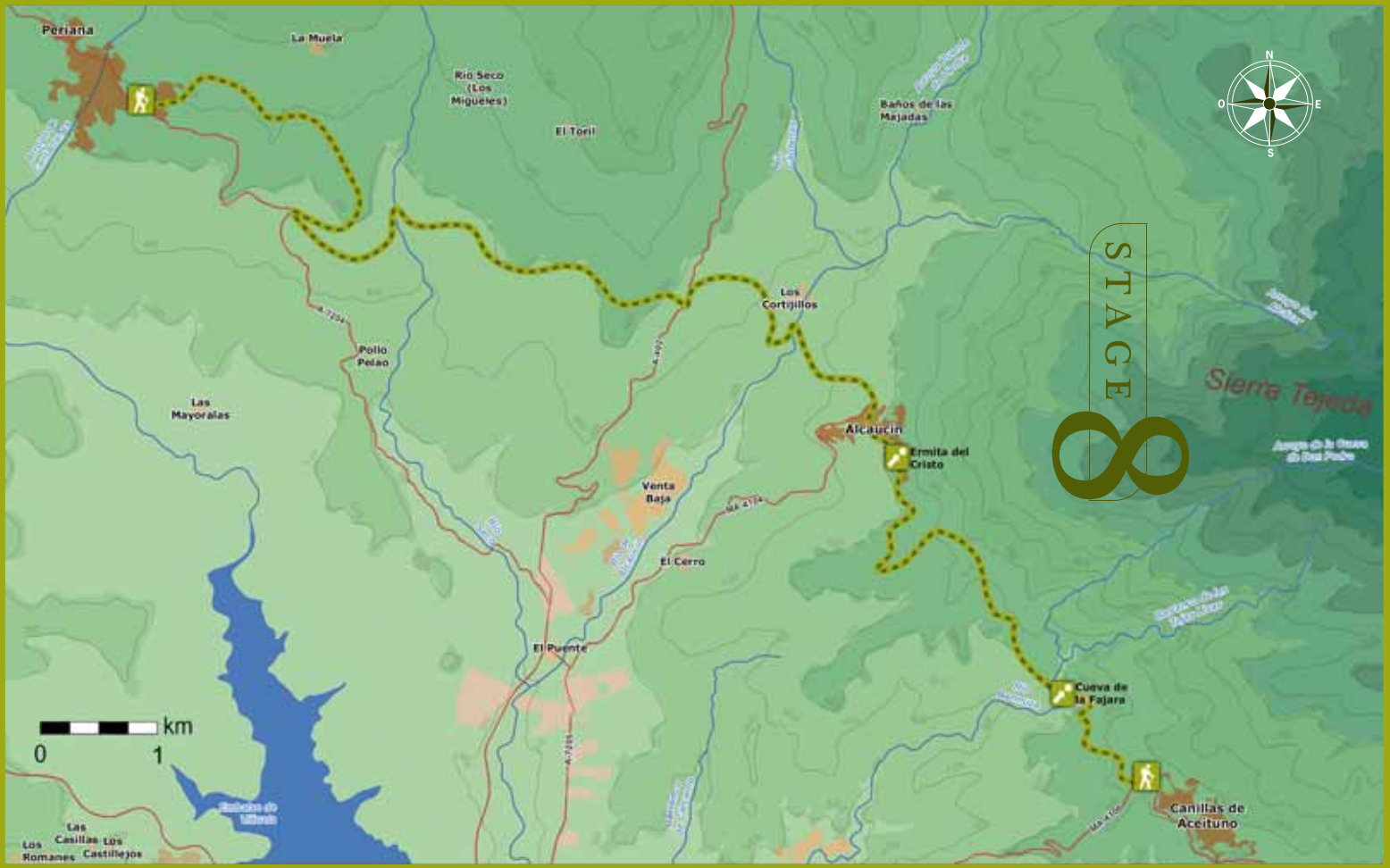
NATURAL VALUES

Along Stage 7 you will have a chance to see the larvae of the Iberian Midwife Toad (finding adults can prove to be difficult and generally must be done at night). This is a species of the Anura order (frogs and toads) which is endemic to the eastern part of Andalucía and Murcia; it is small (between 3, 5 and 6 cm long) and it has vertical pupils. These toads have a peculiar way of reproducing as they do not lay their eggs in water; instead, the male carries them around on its hind legs until the eggs hatch. The first individuals which were used to describe the species for science had been captured in Canillas de Aceituno, and this is why that village is considered to be the *terra típica* of the Iberian Midwife Toad.

Stonechat. PHOTO: JLM

Short-toed Treecreeper. PHOTO: JLM

Blue Rock Thrush. PHOTO: JLM


Periana
La Muela
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El Toril
Baños de las Majadas
Los Cortijillos
Pollo Pelao
Las Mayoralas
Alcaucín
Ermita del Cristo
Venta Baja
El Cerro
El Puente
Cueva de la Fajara
Canillas de Aceituno
Las Casillas
Los Romanes
Los Castillejos
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STAGE 8
Canillas de Aceituno - Periana

LOCATION

Stage 8 begins close to the football pitch in Canillas de Aceituno and very soon it takes us into the pine woods. It crosses Alcaucín and after 17 km arrives at a Periana, where you will have a very ample view of the Axarquía region.

A section of the stage leads through olive groves along the track seen in the image.
PHOTO: ARM

DID YOU KNOW?

Iberian Midwife Toad *(Alytes dickhilleni)*
PHOTO: LGC

The Iberian Midwife Toad (*Alytes dickhilleni*, Artzen& García-Paris, 1995) was described for the first time using individuals found in Canillas de Aceituno, which is why the village is known as its *terra tipica*. This small toad´s name comes from the fact that it carries its eggs on top of its body; it is typical of mountainous regions and it is the species of amphibian which occurs in the highest altitudes of all the amphibians in Malaga province. An Iberian endemic, essentially Andalucían, its populations are dispersed in various Baetic mountain chains of eastern Andalucía. In Malaga province it can only be found in the Sierras of Tejeda and Almijara. TEXT: JSM

Mesa de Zalia on the left and Boquete de Zafarraya. PHOTO: ARM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Stage 8 leads through the mountains; in its first section, there are formations of Aleppo pine and rocky cliffs, as well as arable land mostly devoted to cultivating olive trees. The olive groves are mostly young, with a few areas were hundred-year-old specimens are predominant. The walk also passes through some uncultivated areas mainly containing retama broom. This is why during Stage 8 you will principally find birds typical of open spaces and crop fields, with some forest species.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

In Canillas, as in villages in previous stages of the walk, you will be able to see bird species accustomed to living close to humans. Barn Swallow, Spotless Starling and House Sparrow are the most common species at the beginning of Stage 8 which soon enters a pine wood. Once surrounded by trees you can find Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Common Blackbird, Common Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper and Common Chaffinch. Around the Fájara cave the Blue Rock Thrush and Rock Bunting at the streambed the Blackcap and other typically riverside species such as Wren, European Robin and Golden Oriole.

Before arriving at Alcaucín you will be passing through uncultivated areas and vineyards where Crested Lark occurs, with the typical crest on its head and its cheerful song. Also, there is the Common Stonechat, Sardinian Warbler, Goldfinch, Common Linnet, Greenfinch and Serin. From Alcaucín onwards you will start walking downhill towards cultivated land, mainly olive

Red-rumped Swallow. PHOTO: JLM

groves and subtropical tree plantations, peppered with a few houses.

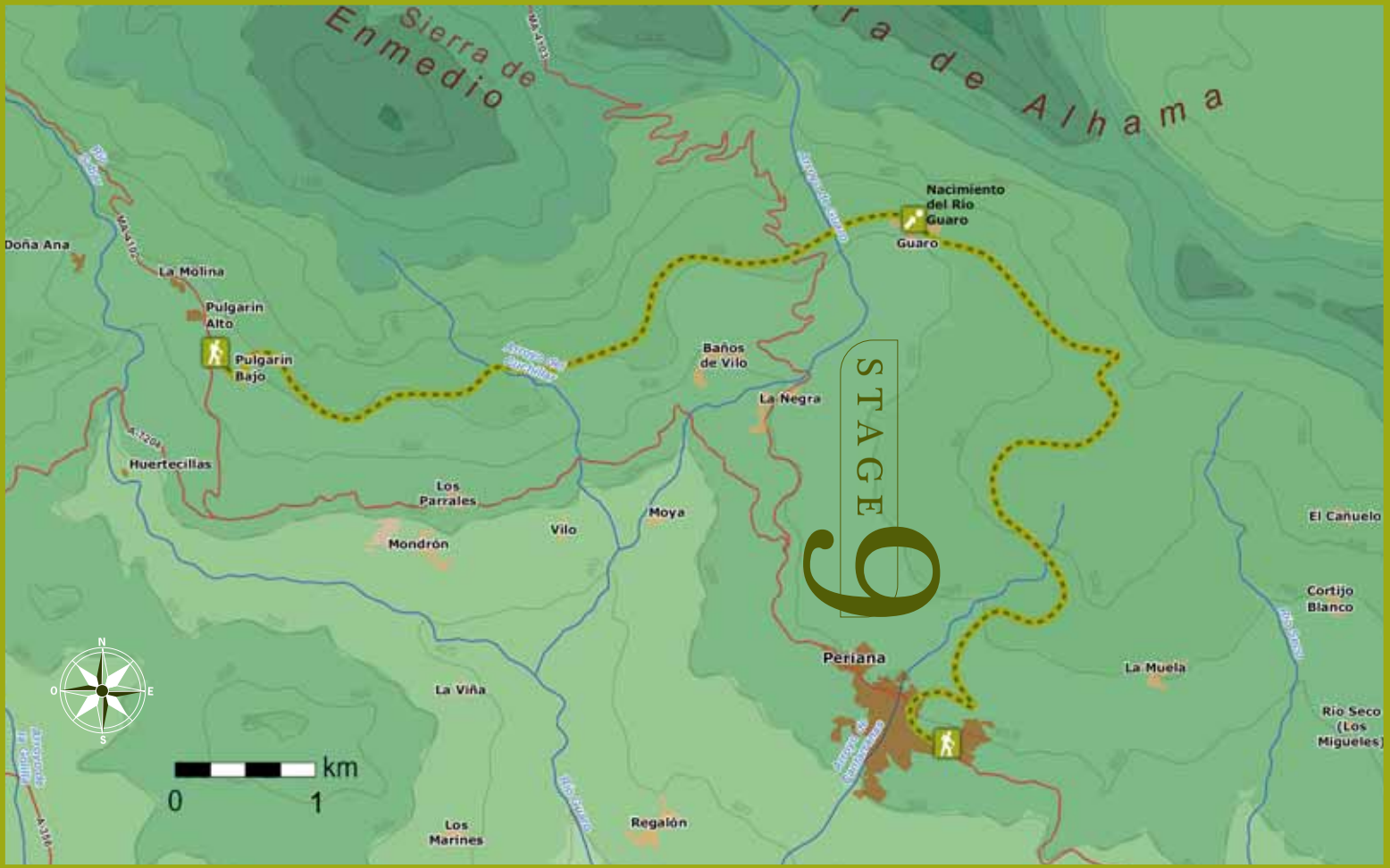
Here the predominant birds are Eurasian Collared Dove and Starling, also Barn Swallow European Robin, Black Redstart, Common Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Goldfinch. Next, cross the stream and start climbing towards the view of the reservoir called Pantano de la Viñuela, where you can enjoy the view of the Boquete de Zafarraya and La Mesa de Zalia, full of large rock faces inhabited by rock-dwelling raptors visible from the path of Stage 8. Once you come into the olive groves interspersed with the patchwork of grain fields, the Crested Lark again becomes the star species. In the next section you may see Short-toed and Booted eagles which tend to use this part of Stage 8 as hunting grounds, Bonelli´s Eagle, Common Kestrel, Little Owl, Red-legged Partridge, Common, Pallid and Alpine Swifts, Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, White Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Mistle and Song Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Woodchat and Southern Grey Shrike, and many species of finches. The area around Arroyo Seco is a good spot to devote some time to identifying Swallows, as in spring and summer it is possible to find up to 4 species at the same time (Barn Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow, Crag and House Martin) Additionally to the previously mentioned species of birds, the type of vegetation encourages the presence of Blackcap and Black-eared Wheatear. It is worth mentioning the presence of olive trees with very thick trunks before you arrive at Periana where amongst the Great Tits and Chaffinches you may be able to spot the rare Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, however it is a bird which is difficult to see.

Goldfinch. PHOTO: JLM

Male Chaffinch. PHOTO: JLM

TIMING

Similarly to previous stages, seasonal differences in the bird species you can see at Stage 8 are not very pronounced, and it can be recommended for year round birdwatching except for the hottest months.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Sierra de Alhama
Nacimiento del Rio Guaro
Guaro
Doña Ana
La Molina
Pulgarin Alto
Pulgarin Bajo
Baños de Vilo
La Negra
Huertecillas
Los Parrales
Mondrón
Vilo
Moya
El Cañuelo
Cortijo Blanco
Periana
La Muela
La Viña
Rio Seco (Los Migueles)
Regalón
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STAGE 9
Periana - Alfarnatejo

LOCATION

Stage 9 starts in the western part of Periana, specifically in Calle Algarrobo, where you start walking uphill. Olive groves and copses of holm oaks contrast with the pronounced ridges of limestone rocks and formidable cliffs. After **13, 5 km** you will pass through Pulgarín Bajo and then arrive at Pulgarín Alto (Alfarnatejo municipal district).

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

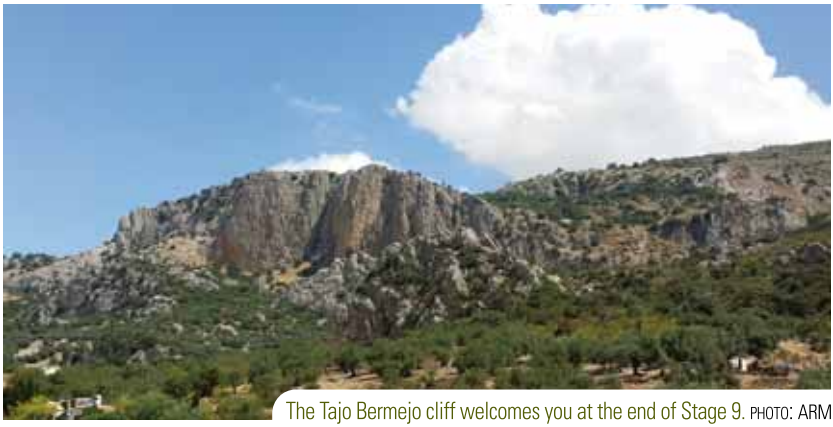
LAs you leave Periana there are abandoned olive and almond tree groves with a few saplings of young holm oaks which show the potential of the terrain to become woodland. From the beginning you will find species characteristic to open areas together with the typical forest-dwellers, though the latter are small in numbers.

An intersection of footpaths on the way. PHOTO: ARM

Along Stage 9 there is a mix of holm oak woods, olive groves, grain fields and an area of a low mountain range, containing interesting species. It is worth mentioning that some of

DID YOU KNOW?

A Bostonian named Robert Semple (1766-1816) captures his impressions from *A Second Journey in Spain, in the Spring of 1809.* He arrives in Málaga from Granada, on his way to Gibraltar, and from Alhama he observes: ..."After descending from the heights of Alhama, we passed over a fine plain nearly covered by holm-oaks, having close on our left a ridge called Sierra Texada, covered half way down with snow. Here all the dogs guarding the flocks wore collars, in which iron spikes were fastened, as a security against the wolves, which we were told abounded among these hills, and were now rendered desperate by the snow..." TEXT: SMB



The Tajo Bermejo cliff welcomes you at the end of Stage 9. PHOTO: ARM

these olive trees have been yielding fruit for over a hundred years (some of the olive tree trunks you will be passing by deserve a moment of your attention). In the vicinity of Cortijo de Marchamona and along the last section of Stage 9 you will be getting close to the impressive rock faces which give shelter to some fascinating rock-dwelling species.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

At the beginning of Stage 9 you will be able to see Eurasian Collared Dove, Starlings and Sparrows close to buildings, as well as other species, including Crested Lark, Sardinian Warbler, Zitting Cisticola, Great Tit and different species of finches (Serin, Goldfinch and Greenfinch). During spring and summer swifts are constantly present in the sky (paying attention you will be able to identify the Pallid, Common and Alpine Swift) and various species of Hirundines (mainly Barn Swallow, House Martin and Red-rumped Swallow.

Before entering an area populated by pine trees you will be passing by a low mountain range with gorse, dispersed full-sized holm oak trees and some bare rock formations. In this patch the typical rock-dwelling species start to occur and woodland birds are becoming more frequent, especially Blue Rock Thrush and Black Wheatear, joined in winter by Black Redstart in the rocky sections.

Male Sardinian Warbler. PHOTO: DPM

Once you are in the gorse area very close to the pine wood, Dartford Warbler and

Woodchat Shrike show up; Common Linnet can be added here to the previously mentioned list of finches. In addition, you can see partridges, Little Owl and birds of prey such as Short-toed Eagle and Common Kestrel. In the stretch covered by pine trees you will be able to see European Turtle Dove, the Great Tit again, together with Blue Tit and Common Chaffinch. From the very first flat area at the beginning of this stage of the walk large Aleppo pines are present, which, together with grain fields allow for a greater wealth of species you will be able to watch: Common Wood Pigeon, Thekla Lark, Melodious Warbler and in the distance, flying over the rock faces towering over Cortijo de Marchamona, Red-billed Choughs. From this stretch up to Guaro you will find grain fields and olive groves with frequently occurring partridges, Hoopoe, Barn and Red-rumped Swallows, larks, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, Black Redstart, Sardinian Warbler, Zitting Cisticola and Starling.

A centenary olive tree along the path. PHOTO: ARM

The path passes by Cortijo de Zapata where a natural spring helps create a small riverside wood with elms and poplars.

In spring you can mainly hear Blackcap´s song which then is replaced by a deep loud clicking sound in winter.

Blue Rock Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

The view of the Viñuela reservoir from the path. PHOTO: ARM

Additionally to Blackcaps you can see Eurasian Sparrowhawk, European Turtle Dove, Common Wood Pigeon, Common Blackbird, Song and Mistle Thrush, Golden Oriole and you have a chance to hear Scops Owl, Barn Owl and Red-necked Nightjar at night. Once you leave the cortijo behind, you will be passing through a quite closed-in thicket of wild olive, where, on top of the passerines you have seen so far, the Eurasian Jay is present and it announces your arrival with its alarm calls. Especially in winter this area is populated by birds coming from central and northern Europe which find food and shelter in the wild olives which let them survive the cold months (these mainly include Song Thrushes, European Robins and Blackcaps.

Past the Cortijo de La Cueva you embark upon the last climb amongst olive trees of the *verdial* variety which end at an area of low mountains and where you can find the Spectacled Warbler during breeding season. Along the last stretch of the walk downhill is lined with unusually thick trunks of olive trees and where the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin occurs repeatedly and can be seen in spring and summer, however in very low numbers. Local inhabitants are familiar with this scarce bird and recognise its progressive disappearance in recent years.

Female Blackcap. PHOTO: JLM

The main focus now is on the impressive cliffs surrounding Pulgarín; limestone rock faces which are predominant during the next stages of the walk. These wild landscapes are home to rock-dwelling raptors, with such outstanding species as the Bonelli´s Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and the Eagle Owl. The Griffon Vulture also frequents the area however quite irregularly and generally in small numbers.

TIMING

This stage is especially recommended in spring, a time when some interesting summer visitors start nesting; also in winter time when the abundance of birds is quite remarkable.

Melodious Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Goldfinch. PHOTO: JLM

Hoopoe. PHOTO: JB


Sierra del Jobo
Alfarnate
MA-4101
Área de Descanso
MA-4102
Alfarnatejo
Sierra de Enmedio
Sierra de Rey
Nacimiento del Río Borbollón
Doña Ana
La Molina
Pulgarín Alto
Pulgarín Bajo
Huertecillas
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STAGE 10

STAGE 10
Alfarnatejo - Alfarnate

LOCATION

Stage 10 begins in Pulgarín Alto (Alfarnatejo municipal district) and the first section of the stage leads uphill along the side of the road. Next, the walk leads downhill towards the cliffs called Tajo de Gómer and Tajo Doña Ana. Stage 10 connects the Colmenar-Periana corridor with the Alfarnate depression. You will be passing through Alfarnatejo and then arrive in Alfarnate having walked in total for **18, 1 km**.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

You will be walking by many rocky outcrops during Stage 10 which determine the type of bird-life during this stage of the walk. Olive groves, both new and centuries old, together with stretches of grain fields and formations of holm oak and pine, create an environment capable of supporting a high diversity of species.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

The beginning of Stage 10 is marked by the presence of olive groves up to the section leading along the road, which you will need to follow for a while until you come to a dirt track again. In this type of environment, where there are olive trees with trunks thick enough to provide nesting

Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin. PHOTO: TT

DID YOU KNOW?

The Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin is one of the least known species in the Iberian Peninsula; however people familiar with this stage of the walk know which bird we are talking about. Its habit of cocking its tail till it almost touches the bird´s back makes it easy to recognise. If you walk this stage between May and August you will have a chance to see this species and if you learn to recognise its song it will make detecting the bird much easier. Unlike other species, the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin is not an early riser and it can be heard more often during the mid-morning than at dawn. This species is highly appreciated by birdwatching tourists coming from Central and Northern Europe. TEXT: ARM

Rock Bunting. PHOTO: JLM

Birdwatching from the footpath. PHOTO: ARM

spots for many species of birds, you can see Hoopoe, Robin, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Common Blackbird, Song Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Woodchat Shrike, Common and Spotless Starling, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Serin, Greenfinch and Red-legged Partridge, among other species. Once you start walking through the retama bushes and farmland the most common species get to be the Barn Swallow, House Martin, Crested Lark, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, Common Stonechat, Black-eared Wheatear, Zitting Cisticola, House Sparrow and Corn Bunting. At the Cortijo de Auta you will cross a

The view of Gomer and Doña Ana cliffs. PHOTO: ARM

The cliffs in the background. PHOTO: ARM

stream where birds congregate in order to find water and where you will be able to see Cetti´s Warbler and Grey Wagtail. At this point you are walking among crop fields again which then are replaced by a holm oak wood leading to the Alfarnatejo valley. During this stretch you are close to the cliffs and you can mainly see such species as Griffon Vulture, Bonelli´s Eagle, Common Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Eagle Owl, Rock Dove, Crag Martin, Black Redstart, Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Common Rock Thrush at the top of the rocky outcrops, Rock Sparrow, Raven and Red-billed Chough.

Dunnock. PHOTO: JLM

Tajo Bermejo. PHOTO: ARM

Once you are in the holm oak wood, which will pretty much continue keeping you company till the end of Stage 10, you can spot Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Black-eared Wheatear, Bonelli´s Warbler, Common Firecrest, Blue Tit, Southern Grey Shrike, Common Linnet, Eurasian Siskin and Cirl Bunting. Other species occurring at Stage 10 are Short-toed Eagle, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Woodlark, Western Orphean Warbler, Short-toed Treecreeper and Rock Bunting which is especially abundant at the old quarry, nowadays serving as a tip, just before you get to the Alfarnate water-treatment plant. Other species which are present occasionally and irregularly in winter are Brambling, Eurasian Bullfinch and Yellowhammer.

Woodchat Shrike. PHOTO: JLM

TIMING

Spring and the first weeks of summer are recommended for walking Stage 10, a time when the diversity of birds species is at its highest.

A stretch of the path. PHOTO: ARM

In spring you can see the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin and other long-distance migrants whilst in winter the bird community is remarkably boosted by the arrival of species coming from Northern Europe.

NATURAL VALUES

Until recently the Otter was absent from this part of the Malaga Province, however, since the beginning of this decade, it has started occupying in a stable manner some of the watercourses in the eastern sector of the province. The Vélez and La Cueva rivers support Otters along their low and middle sections and if you look carefully around the stream which flows by the Cortijo de Auta you may be able to find paw prints and other signs of this species.

Ring Ouzel. PHOTO: JLM

Before the climb to holm oak wood. PHOTO: ARM


STAGE
11
Villanueva del Trabuco
Villanueva del Rosario
Ermita Nuestra Señora del Rosario
Zona de escalada del Hondonero Bajo
Observatorio de aves
Mirador del Hondonero Alto
Era
Era
Parque de Arborismo y Aula de la Naturaleza
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STAGE 11
Alfarnate - Villanueva del Rosario

LOCATION

Stage 11 starts at the Plaza del Puente en Alfarnate square, and during the **15, 4 km** long stretch it takes you to the level of over 1000 metres above the sea and then leads along the Arroyo de la Canaleja valley which gives access to the village of Villanueva del Rosario.

DESCRIPTION

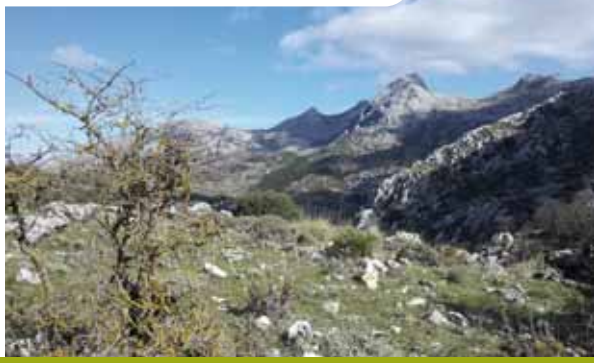
ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

This stage reaches the highest altitude of all the 35 stages of the Great Malaga Path. It starts in a flat farmland area, climbs through scrubland which then turns into a quite dense formation of pine trees and holm oaks with some Portuguese gall oaks. Higher up you will be passing very close to large rocky outcrops. The downhill section leads through the Hondonero *dehesa* with maple trees and terebinth underneath the towering mountains. As you arrive in Villanueva del Rosario the surroundings abound with natural water springs. Consequently you will be able to see bird species typical of open spaces, mountains, woodland and rivers.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

The beginning of Stage 11 constitutes cultivated areas where the predominant species are the White Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Crested Lark, Skylark, Goldfinch,

Views from the high parts of Stage 11. PHOTO: ARM



DID YOU KNOW?

The Hondoneros site is composed of the varied patch of grain fields, cultivated trees and natural vegetation where there is number of seasonal pools originating in the process of karst being dissolved. These pools are a prime habitat to find amphibians as they support a high number of species including Iberian Ribbed Newt, Penibetic Salamander, Iberian Painted Frog, Parsley Frog, Common and Natterjack Toad, Stripeless Tree Frog and Iberian Water Frog (Perez´s Frog). TEXT: JSM

Ring Ouzel. PHOTO: JLM

Common Linnet, Serin and Greenfinch, however once you are on the uphill section leading to the copses of holm oak, species typical of scrub start occurring such as Red-legged Partridge, Common Stonechat, Common Blackbird, European Robin, Black-eared Wheatear, Sardinian Warbler, Black-eared Wheatear, Dartford Warbler, Woodchat Shrike, and forest birds such as Song Thrush, Great Tit, Common Chaffinch and Rock Bunting. Birds in flight include the almost constantly present Common and Pallid Swifts together with Hirundines (mainly Barn and Red-rumped Swallow and House Martin) during the months when these species are present here. In the tree formations composed mainly of pines, then holm oaks and Portuguese gall oaks further on, the Eurasian Sparrowhawk might make an appearance, as well as European Turtle Dove, Common Wood Pigeon, Cuckoo, Scops Owl, Tawny Owl, Hoopoe, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Woodlark, Wren, Song and Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Firecrest, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Eurasian Jay, Crossbill, Hawfinch, Cirl Bunting and at times during some winter seasons, Yellowhammer. In the copses of holm oak you have a chance to see the Western Orphean Warbler and Azure-winged Magpie, and Iberian Chiffchaff in the more humid areas with

Eagle Owl. PHOTO: JLM

Western Orphean Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Portuguese gall oaks. Once you are in the rocky environment approaching the highest parts of the walk, you may be able to see Golden Eagle, Bonelli´s Eagle, Alpine Swift, as well as Crag Martin, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear, Western Jackdaw, Red-billed Chough, Raven and Rock Sparrow. Even though Griffon Vulture does not nest in these mountains, it can be seen relatively often in small groups.

Alpine Accentor. PHOTO: JLM

The star species of the highest parts of Stage 11, which can be seen during spring and summer months, is the Common Rock Thrush, a bird belonging to the Thrush family whose males present exceptionally striking plumage. Also in these higher parts of Stage 11 you will be able to find Northern Wheatear and Alpine Accentor. Once in the area of Hondoneros, along the downhill section approaching the end of Stage 11, the previously mentioned species are joined by the Eurasian Woodcock and Common Whitethroat in the shady spots, then Redwing, Ring Ouzel, Subalpine Warbler, Bonelli´s Warbler, and, occasionally, Brambling. This is also a good site to watch the majestic flight of the Golden Eagle and listen to the Eagle Owl. As you get closer to the village, and your destination, crop fields start appearing more often, where the most common birds are the Eurasian Collared Dove, Spotless and Common Starling and finches.

Rock Sparrow. PHOTO: JLM

Rock Thrush. PHOTO: DPM

You can also find White Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Nightingale and Cetti´s Warbler around the stream Arroyo de Los Cerezos.

TIMING

This is a very satisfying walk above all in spring and also in winter. However, even during the height of summer you can enjoy interesting species, especially higher up. Migration passage times allow you to enjoy the birds which settle in the woods and open areas at the high grounds.

Copses of holm oaks. PHOTO: ARM

Golden Eagle with a fox. PHOTO: JLM

NATURAL VALUES

The area around the Hondoneros site abounds with watercourses and natural streams, also it contains a few permanent ponds and mature riparian vegetation which includes ash trees, elms and well-developed patches of rushes. It is a key spot for the amphibians as it supports a high diversity of their species, including some of great interest. It is worth mentioning the presence of the Iberian Ribbed Newt, the Penibetic Salamander, Iberian Painted Frog, Parsley Frog, Common Toad and Natterjack Toad, Stripeless Tree Frog and Iberian Water Frog (Perez´s Frog). An intriguing fact is the presence of the Mediterranean Water Shrew in the area, which was first discovered here in 2004, and this still constitutes the only recent record of the animal in the province. This is a tiny, semi-aquatic insectivorous mammal which normally inhabits damp areas. Little is known about the species however given the type of habitat it lives in, the animal must be vulnerable to water contamination and the degradation of riparian vegetation.

Common Linnets. PHOTO: JLM

Bonelli´s Warbler. PHOTO: JLM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STAGE 12

STAGE 12
Villanueva del Rosario - Archidona


View of the path along Hoz de Marin. PHOTO: ARM

LOCATION

Stage 12 starts in Villanueva del Rosario, at the bridge over a stream named Arroyo de Canaleja, then crosses the river Guadalhorce, passes through a *dehesa* type holm oak woods and the splendid Hoz del Arroyo de Marín, arriving in Archidona after **18,5 km.**

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The most defining feature of Stage 12 is the presence of the *dehesas* and the section along Hoz de Marín river. The walk also leads through cultivated areas, pine woods, and scrubland which add interesting elements to this stage.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Stage 12 begins by taking you along the stream bed of Arroyo Cerezo, a stream which flows into the Río Guadalhorce later on, where the restricted riverside vegetation is pushed towards the riverbed by the farmland and where the following species occur frequently: White Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, European Robin, Common Nightingale, Common Stonechat, Common Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler,

DID YOU KNOW?

The Hoz de Marín is a gorge excavated by the stream Arroyo Marín which has created one of the most exceptionally beautiful landscapes. The presence of gypsum karst formations as well as volcanic rocks is a geological peculiarity. The site also harbours one of the scarce natural native woods of Aleppo pine where the Red Deer can be frequently found visiting from nearby areas.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPH: JSM

Griffon Vulture. PHOTO: DPM

Spotless and Common Starling, Great Tit, Golden Oriole, House Sparrow, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Serin, Greenfinch, Common Linnet and Cirl Bunting, among others. In the neighbouring farmland such birds as Red-legged Partridge, Little Owl, Crested Lark, Common Stonechat, Zitting Cisticola and Corn Bunting occur most frequently. In the area of the farm buildings you may see Common and Red-rumped Swallows, House Sparrow, together with

Green Woodpecker. PHOTO: JLM

Pied Flycatcher. PHOTO: JLM

Eurasian Collared Dove. The section following the spot where you must quickly cross the motorway, once you leave the road behind you, is a *dehesa* area of great ornithological value. Prevailing species are Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Scops Owl, Tawny Owl, Red-necked Nightjar, Pallid and Common Swifts seen as they mostly hunt insects here, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Green Woodpecker, Woodlark, Thekla Lark, Meadow Pipit, European Robin, Black-eared Wheatear, Common Blackbird, Song and Mistle Thrush, Redwing, Black-eared Wheatear, Blackcap, Firecrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Woodchat and Southern Grey Shrike, Western Jackdaw,

Wryneck. PHOTO: DPM

Common and Spotless Starling, Spanish Sparrow, Common Chaffinch, Serin, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Common Linnet, Eurasian Siskin and Hawfinch. Some winter seasons you may see Brambling joining flocks of other members of the finch family.

Long-tailed Tit. PHOTO: JLM

Mistle Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

In the patches of crop fields which break up the *dehesa* you may also see Common Kestrel and, still scarce in Malaga province, Black-winged Kite; in May 2014 there was a record of an adult with two chicks. You will arrive at the Hoz de Marín gorge walking through an almond grove and then a copse of pine where you can find Coal Tit and start hearing the first Crossbills of the day. Also, there are the woodland species mentioned earlier. This is a spot of great beauty with well-preserved riparian vegetation where Azure-winged Magpie can be relatively easily found and where you will most likely hear, given their

Azure-winged Magpie. PHOTO: JLM

secretive nature, the Wryneck, Green Woodpecker and Golden Oriole. You will also be able to find Long-tailed Tits and, if you pay attention to the birds high in the sky, with a bit of luck you may make out the silhouette of the Bonelli´s Eagle; the area contains one of the few known nests in the province which have been built on a tree top. You may also see during Stage 12 the Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Northern Goshawk, Short-toed Eagle and Booted Eagle. Arriving in Archidona you will be in a good spot to watch Swifts; amongst them you will be able to distinguish the Alpine Swifts with their strikingly white bellies.

Hawfinch. PHOTO: DPM


A pair of Bonelli´s Eagles. PHOTO: JLM

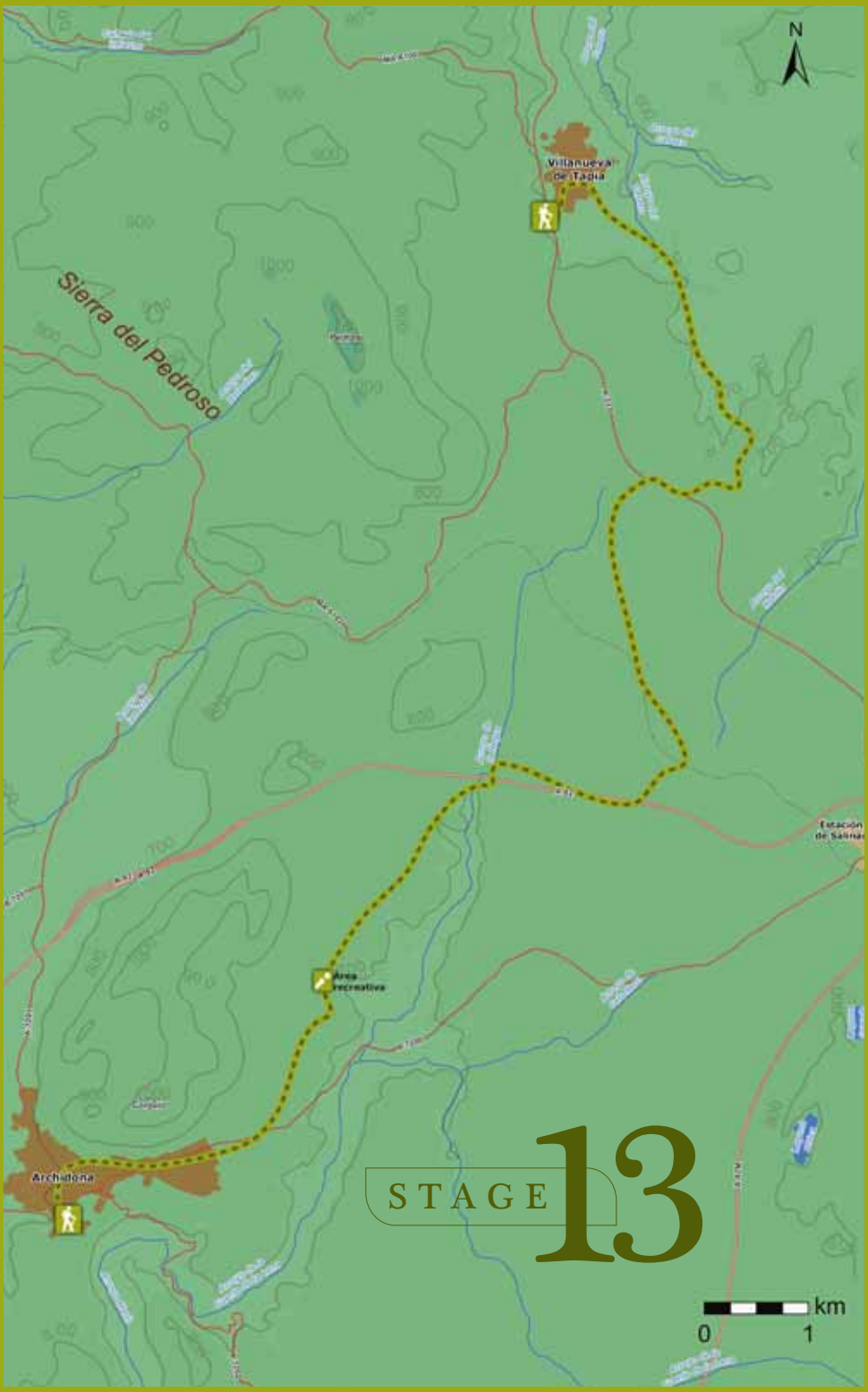

Red Deer. PHOTO: ARM

In the patches of retama bush which line the path as it leads towards the end of the stage, larks, Sardinian Warbler and Corn Bunting occur most frequently.

NATURAL VALUES

Stage 12 crosses areas where you can quite easily see Red Deer, mainly at the firebreak which you must follow to reach Río Marín. Moreover, there are other mammals which can be detected by their tracks and signs, such as Fox, Badger, Stone Martin, Genet, Egyptian Mongoose, European Polecat and Wildcat. If you look around you may find signs of Otter close to the riverbed in Hoz de Marín.


Whinchat. PHOTO: JLM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Villanueva de Tapia
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STAGE 13
Archidona - Villanueva de Tapia

LOCATION

Stage 13 begins in Archidona and it leads through mountains as you walk direction north-west. The **17,1 km** stretch between the starting point and the end in Villanueva de Tapia is characterised by the olive groves and *dehesas* of mature holm oaks.

Azure-winged Magpie. PHOTO: DPM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

This stage of the walk starts off with the views towards the Sierra de Archidona quarries and as it continues it takes you through cultivated areas harbouring large specimens of holm oak. You will be walking through a patch of well-preserved *dehesa* and then, for the first time, you will step into a large extension of olive tree monoculture.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

In the Archidona area you will see Rock Dove, Eurasian Collared Dove, Pallid, Common and Alpine Swifts, White Wagtail, Common and Red-rumped Swallows, House and Crag Martin, Black Redstart, Common and Spotless Starling and House Sparrow. Once you leave the urban area behind, your attention

DID YOU KNOW?

If you have a look at the world distribution map of the Azure-winged Magpie you may be surprised to see that it occurs from Russia and China up to Japan, with a population separated by over 9000 kilometres in the Iberian Peninsula. This species is gregarious and noisy with a very characteristic long tail, bluish wings and a black cap. For quite a long time it has been assumed that it was the tradesmen who brought the bird to Iberia from Asia in the 16th Century. However, the recent discovery of the bird´s fossils in Gibraltar started a theory that the bird populations had been separated by the last ice age. Currently, the Iberian Azure-winged Magpies *(Cyanopica cooki)* are considered different species from the Asian ones *(Cyanopica cyanus).* TEXT: ARM

Woodchat Shrike. PHOTO: JLM

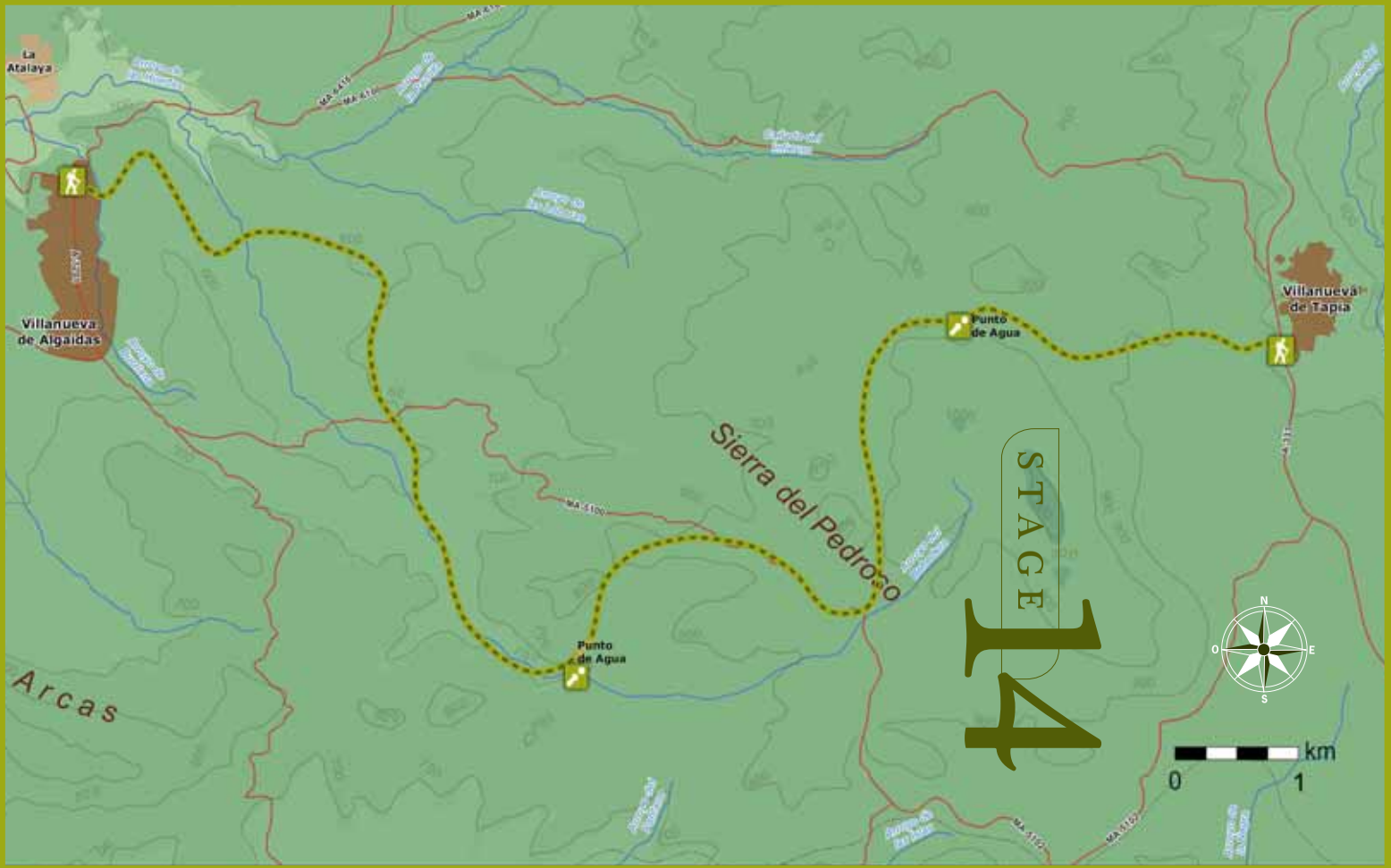
is drawn to the mountain views and species such as Common Kestrel, Blue Rock Thrush, Western Jackdaw and Red-billed Chough, which are seen in the distance, as well as some large raptors such as Golden, Short-toed and Bonelli´s Eagle or the Peregrine Falcon. Eagle Owl can also be found in the area. Species associated with crop fields are mainly the following: Crested Lark, European Robin, Common Blackbird, Sardinian Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Spotless and Common Starling, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Common Linnet and Serin. The scattered holm oak trees at this section add the presence of Common Buzzard, Long-eared Owl, Great Tit, Raven and Common Chaffinch.

Serin. PHOTO: JLM

Melodious Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Once you cross the motorway you will enter an area of *dehesa* where you may see Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Hoopoe, Mistle and Song Thrush, Western Orphean and Sardinian Warbler, Common Blackbird, Common Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodchat and Southern Grey Shrike, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, and the quite visible, joyful flocks of Azure-winged Magpies and Hawfinches. Now all you have left to do is walking down towards Villanueva de Tapia. Entering an olive grove you will be able to see some of the already mentioned species plus Eurasian Stone-curlew, Red-legged Partridge, Red-necked Nightjar, Crested Lark and, mainly, finches. As you arrive in the village the typical urban dwellers appear again.

Red-legged Partridge. PHOTO: JLM


La Atalaya
Villanueva de Algaidas
Punto de Agua
Villanueva de Tapia
Sierra del Pedroso
STAGE 14
Punto de Agua
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STAGE 14
Vva. de Tapia - Vva. de Algaidas

Iberian Grey Shrike. PHOTO: JLM

LOCATION

Stage 14 starts in the south-eastern part of Villanueva de Tapia and takes you through the areas dedicated to olive production, interspersed with holm oaks which indicate the woodland type of environment of the area. After crossing Burriana river and walking for **16, 7 km** in total, you will arrive in Villanueva de Algaidas.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

As you enter Villanueva de Tapia you are surrounded by olive trees and this will be the prevailing type of environment during Stage 14. It is still quite easy to picture the forest which must have once covered the area centuries ago, before the land was ploughed and devoted to farming. This is evident when you pass through the patches of young pine woods and by various large holm oaks; however there are only a few of these, they are very valuable to the birds and the fauna in general. The section along the stream Arroyo del Bebedero shows wealth of riparian vegetation where both holm oaks and Portuguese gall oaks are present.

DID YOU KNOW?

In these **farmland landscapes** dominated by the vast sweep of olive trees, it is the small strongholds of natural vegetation which play the key role in the conservation of wildlife and constitute true islands of biodiversity. Consequently, the patches of Mediterranean scrubland, the surviving holm oaks and riparian vegetation offer shelter and breeding spots to the fauna, at the same time diversifying the landscape and favouring ecological continuity through some highly human-influenced environments. TEXT: JSM

Common Buzzard. PHOTO: JLM

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

In spite of being a large extensive monoculture, the olive grove supports a high diversity of species throughout the year. Additionally, during Stage 14 you will be passing through patches of interesting natural vegetation. In the olive groves the most frequently seen species are Common Buzzard, Red-legged Partridge, Eurasian Stone-curlew, European Turtle Dove, Red-necked Nightjar, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Song Thrush, Redwing, Common Blackbird, European Robin, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodchat Shrike, Azure-winged Magpie, Spotless and Common Starling, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Common Linnet, Serin and Corn Bunting. The presence of such species as rabbit, hare and the Red-legged Partridge, and the presence of mountains nearby, favour the occurrence of large birds of prey; you may see along the way the Golden Eagle, Bonelli´s Eagle and Eagle Owl. In the patches of natural vegetation some woodland species occur, such as Common Wood Pigeon, Cuckoo, Blue Tit,

Ocelated Lizard. PHOTO: JLM

Red-legged Partridge. PHOTO: JLM

Hawfinch and Cirl Bunting, and the ruined farmhouses support Common Kestrel, Little Owl, Red-rumped Swallow and Blue Rock Thrush. In the open areas you can see Common Stonechat and Raven

Song Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

and in the villages at the beginning and the end of Stage 14 the urban-dwelling species prevail (mainly Eurasian Collard Dove, Common and Pallid Swifts, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Spotless Starling and House Sparrow).

TIMING

The most suitable time to walk Stage 14 to birdwatch is spring, the breeding time, and winter when the abundance of birds is at its highest.

Little Owls. PHOTO: JLM


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STAGE 15
Aldea del Pilar
Guevas Bajas
A-7300
Área de descanso "El Cedrón"
Mirador "El Cedrón"
La Atalaya
Vegetación de rivera
A-7201
Villanueva de Algaidas
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STAGE 15
Vva. de Algaidas - Cuevas Bajas


View of the Sotos de Genil. PHOTO: JSM

LOCATION

Stage 15 begins in the north of Villanueva de Algaidas, and you will be mainly following direction north for the whole duration of the stage. The **10, 1 km** lead through olive groves until you reach the village of Cuevas Bajas.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

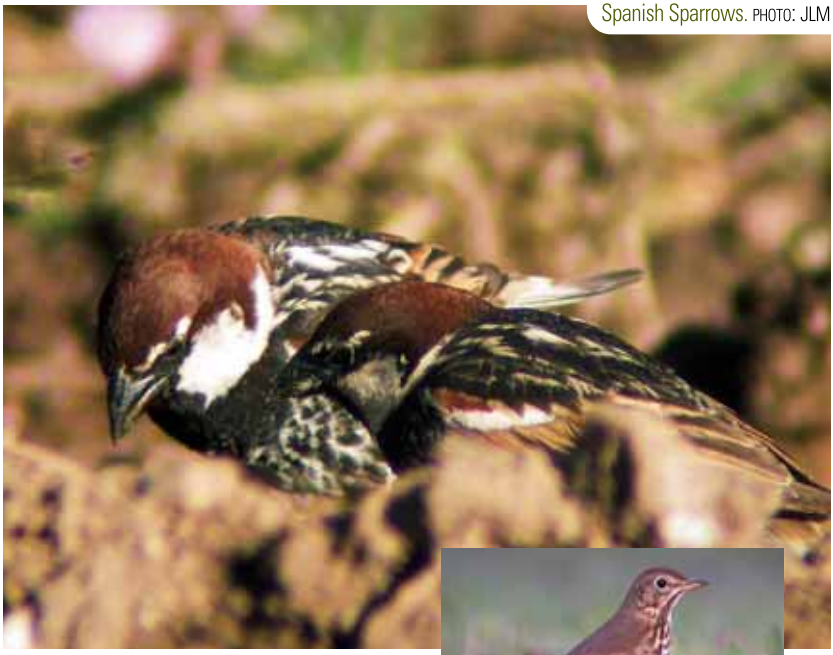
Again the olive grove is the main type of environment throughout Stage 15. At the very beginning you will cross the Arroyo del Bebedero (also called Río Burriana), before arriving in La Atalaya, and at the end of the stage you will encounter the same river again in Cuevas Bajas.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Stage 15 is less diverse than Stage 14 due to the ever-present olive grove. However, still, the diversity of species here can still be surprising when you lift your binoculars. The large holm oaks which are sprinkled around the great sweep of olive trees attract such species as Common Buzzard, a bird of prey which can be seen along the way. Other birds which can be found along Stage 15 are Red-legged Partridge, European Turtle Dove, Red-necked Nightjar, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Song Thrush, European Robin, Common Blackbird, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Common Chaffinch, Great Tit, Azure-winged Magpie, Spotless and Common Starling, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Common

DID YOU KNOW?

In Cuevas Bajas, the Genil river opens up in an extensive plain which forms an ample fluvial grove (soto) where there is a dense riparian wood, the Lago de los Fernández lake and where you can find El Molino de la Agusadera, one of best-preserved mills in the province. The high biodiversity of birdlife and other fauna was the reason behind building a hide next to the mill. TEXT: JSM



Spanish Sparrows. PHOTO: JLM

Song Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

Linnet and Serin. At the last section Bee-eaters appear, during the time of the the year when they are present here, at the high sandy river banks; also there is Common Nightingale, Common Stonechat, Woodchat Shrike, Western Jackdaw and, again, typical urban-dwelling species (Eurasian Collared Dove, Swifts, House Martin, and House Sparrow).

TIMING

Stage 15 is recommended during winter season as the best time to look for birds. Very close to Cuevas Bajas, at the river Genil, spring makes for a good birdwatching season as well where you can watch typical riverside environment species of birds.

Young Common Blackbird. PHOTO: JLM

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

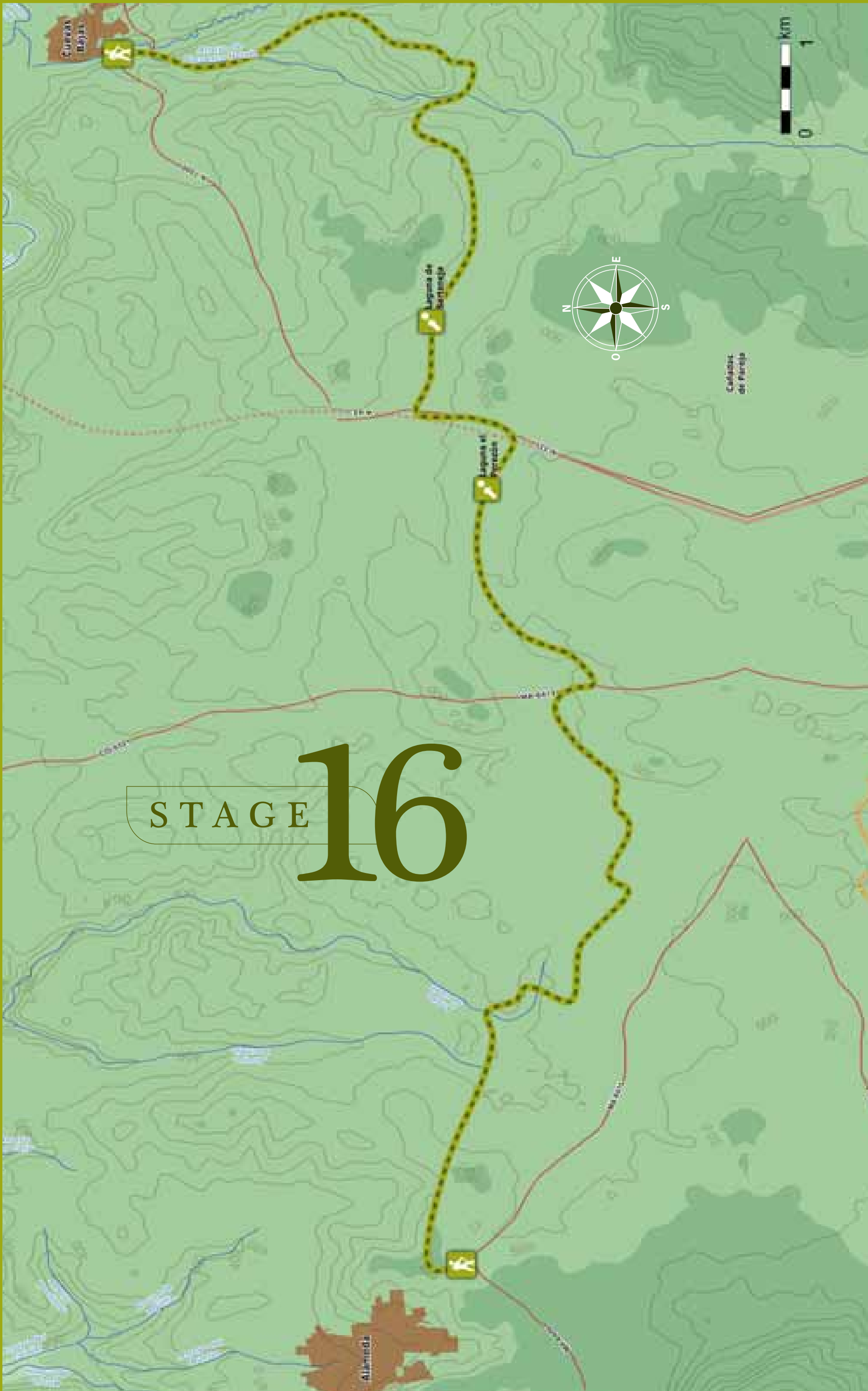
Upstream from Cuevas Bajas, on the river bank, there is a birdwatching viewpoint in surrounded by galleried woods and a clay slope. Here you can watch such species as Kingfisher, Hoopoe, Sand Martin, Eurasian Reed Warbler, Western Olivacious Warbler, Eurasian Penduline Tit, Azure-winged Magpie and waterfowl such as Great Cormorant, Mallard, Moorhen, Little Egret, Night Heron and Common Sandpiper.

Western Olivaceous Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

European Turtle Dove. PHOTO: JLM

Sand Martins. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 16



STAGE 16
Cuevas Bajas - Alameda

A patchwork of farmland, chickpeas and olive groves. PHOTO: ARM

LOCATION

Stage 16 starts off by following the stream Arroyo de Barranco Hondo, in the southern tip of Cuevas Bajas. This stage is **21, 2 km** long, it takes you to the northern part of Antequera region and its predominant type of landscape is agricultural. Stage 16 ends at the intersection of El Ventorrillo, in the vicinity of Alameda centre.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The first steps of Stage 16 take you along the stream Arroyo de Barranco Hondo and very soon the path enters an olive grove again, which will keep you company, alternating with a patchwork of dry crop farmland, till the end of this stage. Close to the Cortijo de la Sarteneja you will find seasonally flooded areas which, when they contain water, support waterfowl species providing contrast to the type of birdlife seen so far. Once you cross the motorway (A-45) you will enter the mix of olive groves and grain fields again and a small island of a holm oak wood which adds to the diversity of birdlife. The final section leads through an olive grove which is only interrupted by the appearance of the typical farmhouses of the area.

DID YOU KNOW?

Although in the strict sense of the word a steppe is an ecosystem characterised by permanent herbaceous vegetation, in Andalucía and Malaga this type of environment does not exist. It is simulated by hilly treeless landscapes which normally are cultivated. The "Malaga steppe" supports a particular type of fauna which is restricted to its northernmost part and constitutes a unique community at the European level. Currently, most of the fauna requires special conservation measures to ensure its populations are maintained; Little Bustard and Montagu´s Harrier are the examples of this type of fauna which can be seen at Stage 16. TEXT: ARM

Olive grove environment. PHOTO: ARM

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Swallows and House Martins, together with Starlings, Sparrows and increasingly common Eurasian Collared Dove are probably the first species you will see; however the fact that there is a stream at the very beginning of the walk will cause your bird list to grow considerably. Close to the river more birds appear, such as Nightingale, Stonechat, Cetti´s Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Great Tit, as well as finches typical to this part of Stage 16 (mainly Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Serin). Even though this is a river environment, the domestic variety of Rock Dove breed under the low bridge you will be crossing and they fly out as you walk past. At this point you are entering an olive grove and the most common species become the Red-legged Partridge, European Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Song Thrush, Common Blackbird, European Robin, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Azure-winged Magpie and Corn Bunting, together with the previously mentioned birds. In spring you can also find Bee-eaters and the three species of Swifts most frequently seen in the province (Pallid, Common and Alpine), these birds use the areas above watercourses to find food.

Bee-eaters. PHOTO: JLM

You can also see large raptors such as Short-toed, Bonelli´s, Booted and Golden Eagle, drawn by the presence of prey, as well as Common Buzzard and Common Kestrel; in spring and summer you can find Montagu´s Harrier, a species which breeds in the surroundings of the path. Once you reach Barranco Hondo, you will walk past, on your left, a patch of dry farming land (mostly cereal or chickpeas, depending on the time of the year) which represents a steppe environment in the province; here you can see the Montagu´s Harrier, Lesser, Kestrel, Stone-curlew, Little Bustard, Skylark and Calandra Lark. Other species occurring in the area are Common Kestrel, Barn Owl, Little Owl, Eagle Owl, Red-legged Partridge,

Nightingale. PHOTO: JLM

Montagu´s Harrier. PHOTO: JLM

Young olive trees planted where other dry crops used to be. PHOTO: ARM

Quail, Zitting Cisticola, Woodchat Shrike, Raven and however it is very uncommon, you might be able to see the scarce Black-bellied Sandgrouse. In spring and in June you will be able to see Gull-billed Terns which spread out from Laguna de Fuente de Piedra looking for food. In the wetland at Cortijo de La Sarteneja flocks of Mallard and Coot gather in winter. You can also see Little Grebe, Grey Heron, Moorhen, Mallard, and Golden Plover in winter, and even Greater Flamingos. Although the rest of Stage 16 leads through an olive grove, it is the area just after the Cortijo de La Capilla which, during breeding season, harbours a population of the scarce Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin. The existence of a holm oak formation favours the occurrence of typical woodland passerines in the area such as Great Tit, Woodchat Shrike and Common Chaffinch. In winter Common Buzzards gather around here, probably coming from the north, and it is not uncommon to see the Northern Harrier, Red Kite and Merlin.

TIMING

Stage 16 is highly recommended during the whole year except for the period between July and October when the temperatures are high around here and the diversity and abundance of birds is lower.

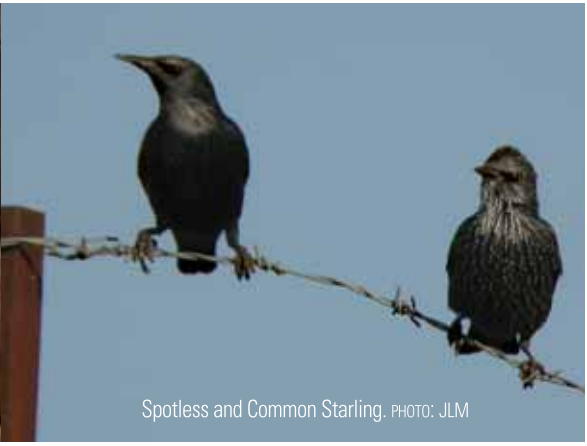
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The track which you pass by on your left in Barranco Hondo climbs along the valley and joins the MA-206 road, where

Little Owl. PHOTO: JLM

Red-legged Partridges. PHOTO: JLM

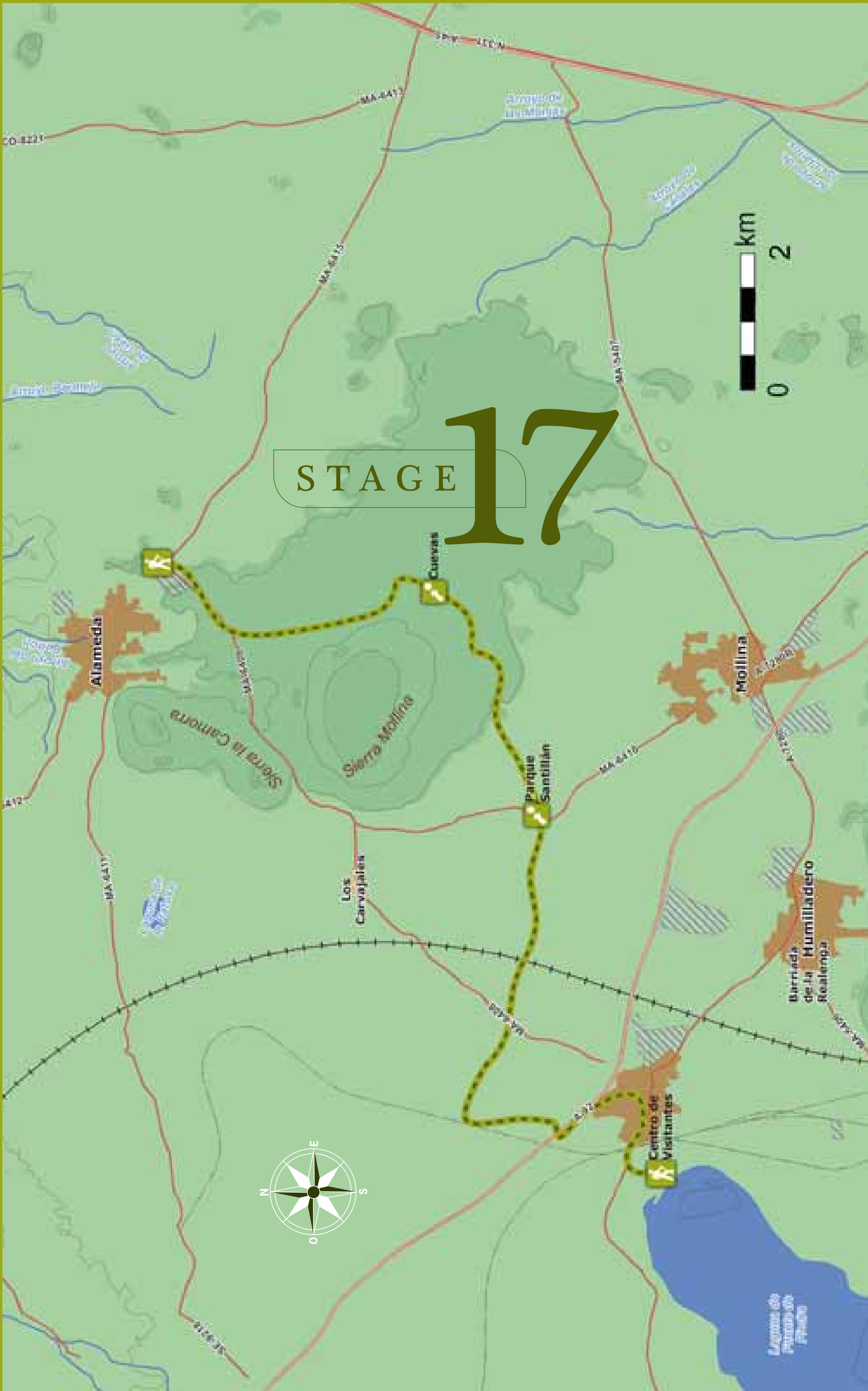
it leads to a breeding area of Montagu´s Harrier with an established colony of 8-12 pairs. This uphill track is also a good site to see other steppe species. The municipal district of Alameda and the village of Humilladero, where the stage ends, share the Reserva Natural Laguna de la Ratosa, a brackish seasonal fed by rainwater. It is surrounded by farmland with little vegetation on the shores and it supports a high diversity of waterfowl species when it contains water. You may be able to see the Little and Black-necked Grebe, Grey Heron, Greater Flamingo, various species of ducks, (Gadwall, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Red-crested Pochard, and Common Pochard), Eurasian Marsh Harrier, Moorhen, Coot, Black-winged Stilt, Lapwing and gulls: Lesser Black-backed, Yellow-legged and Black-headed, among others.



Spotless and Common Starling. PHOTO: JLM

These are specimens of Spotless Starling and Common Starling showing the differences in plumage. From further away the Common Starling seems to be grey, whilst the Spotless Starling continues looking black.

STAGE 17



Alameda
Cuevas
Sierra la Camorra
Sierra Mollina
Parque Santillán
Mollina
Los Carvajales
Humilladero
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STAGE 17
Alameda - Fuente de Piedra

Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin. PHOTO: JLM

LOCATION

Stage 17 starts at the intersection of Ventorrillo, along the road which leads to the village of Fuente de Piedra. The first section of Stage 17 is parallel to the road. Once you get around the hills of Sierra de la Camorra and the picnic area at Arroyo de Santillán, the landscape becomes mainly farmland. The end of the **18, 6 km** long Stage 17 is at the Visitor´s Centre of Laguna Fuente de Piedra, located at the Cerro del Palo hill. You will need to cross an overpass above the train line from where you can see the Visitor´s Centre.

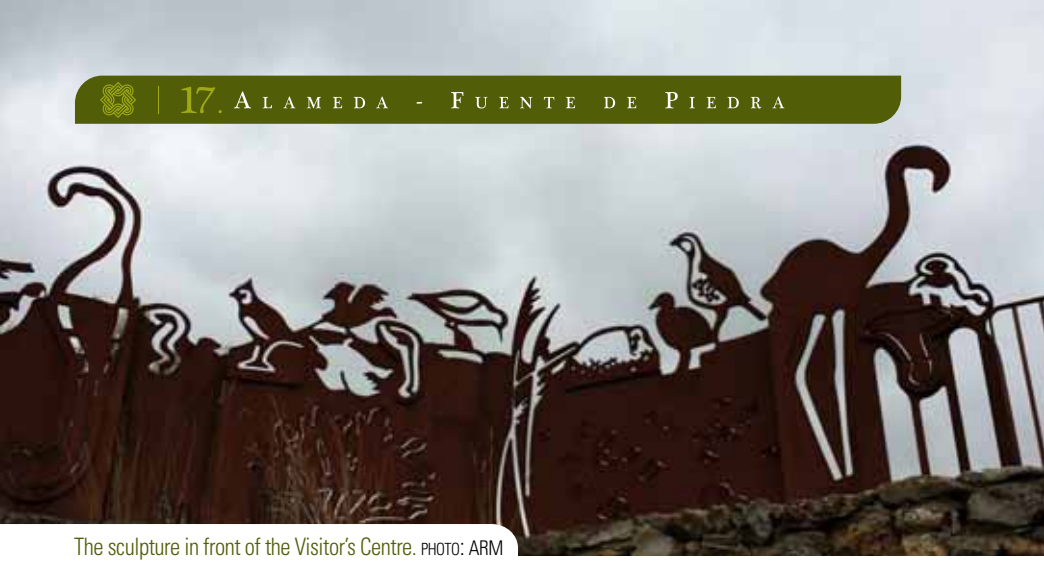
DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The initial stretch of this stage of the walk takes you along the road surrounded by crop fields, which continue until a small wood of holm oaks and then quite a dense pine wood in Sierra de La Camorra. You will be flanking this sierra around its southern tip, leaving its highest peaks on your right, where you can also see woodland vegetation characteristic to this area; young holm oaks and wild olive trees which stand out because of their round shape. The downhill section leads towards the Santillán, picnic area where the terrain becomes flat and stays that way until you reach your destination, as you walk

DID YOU KNOW?

A clergyman named Antonio Ponz Piquer (1725-1792), who travelled in 1791 from Seville to Malaga, comments in the ninth part of his *"Viage de España"*: "…its first major village is the Ciudad de Antequera... After walking for a league you come to a lake called *de la Sal* (Salt Lake) as the water taken out of the lake turns to salt. This lake´s circumference is three leagues; it is one league long and almost one league wide. … Two other smaller lakes or ponds are next to it where I saw ducks and other waterfowl.". TEXT: SMB



The sculpture in front of the Visitor's Centre. PHOTO: ARM

past grain fields and olive groves. Once you are at Cerro del Palo, at the end of Stage 17, you will find a few pools where waterfowl are the star species; the pools maintain their water level thanks to the water originating from Fuente de Piedra.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

The environment composed of farmland, mainly cereal crops and olive groves with almond trees in some sections, supports the species mentioned in two previous stages. The main species are Common

Inside the centre. PHOTO: ARM

Greater Flamingoes. PHOTO: JAS

Red Kite. PHOTO: JLM

Buzzard, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, European Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Barn Swallow, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, Crested Lark, Calandra Lark, Skylark, Song Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Azure-winged Magpie, Spotless and Common Starling, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Common Linnet, Serin and Corn Bunting. As you walk uphill and enter the forest mass in the sierra, the Azure-winged Magpie becomes more abundant, as

Herding flamingos to be ringed. PHOTO: MA

Azure-winged Magpies. PHOTO: JLM

well as Common Blackbird, Great Tit and Common Chaffinch joined by other typical forest species including European Turtle Dove, Common Wood Pigeon, European Robin, Song Thrush, Redwing, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Wren and Eurasian Jay. Other birds which occur in the holm oak copses and, mainly, in the pine woods, are Red-necked Nightjar, Stonechat, Black Redstart, Common Chiffchaff, Southern Grey Shrike, Raven and Cirl Bunting. Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin deserves a special mention at Stage 17, a migrating species which spends its winter south of the Sahara desert. In Spain it exclusively occupies the south of the peninsula in an intermittent manner; for the last two decades it has shown an apparent decline both in its distribution area and its population levels. At the moment the causes of the bird´s progressive decline are unknown. Its nesting grounds at Stage 17 are located close to the mountainous section in olive groves, vineyards and the stretches of natural vegetation where wild olive is the predominant plant.

Black-headed Gull. PHOTO: JLM

The Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin owes its name in Spanish, *Alzacola* , ("*alzar*" meaning "to raise" and "*cola*" being the word for "tail") to the habit of cocking its tail up as it perches, which makes the bird quite noticeable (the tail is reddish brown with a black and white band at the tip). In the vicinity of the lake you can see various species of waterfowl flying back and forth from the seasonally flooded areas. Greater Flamingo, Black-winged Stilt, gulls and ducks make up, in most cases, the major part of such flocks.

Avocets and Black-winged Stilt at Vicario path near Visitor´s Centre. PHOTO: ARM

TIMING

Stage 17 can be done all year round except for the hottest months. However, if the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin is your target species, the best time to do this stage would be from mid May to mid July.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A tour of the Visitor´s Centre is recommended. Named after José Antonio Valverde, the researcher who discovered breeding Greater Flamingos in the area, the centre provides detailed and high quality information about the biodiversity and functioning of the wetland. Around the centre and at other points of the lake there are birdwatching hides and using them is highly recommended as well.

Hoopoe. PHOTO: JLM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STAGE
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Sierra de Yeguas
Sierra de Yeguas
Centro de Visitantes
Laguna de Fuente de Piedra
Barriada de la Realenga
Humilladero
Mollina
Sierra de Humilladero
Cortijo de La Rábita
Lagunas del Lobón
Laguna Dulce
Campillos
Colonia Santa Ana
Barriada Ortiz Recio
Bobadilla
Bobadilla-Estación
A-7279
A-343
A-354
A-355
A-7280
A-92
MA-6406
MA-6410
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STAGE 18
Fuente de Piedra - Campillos


Predominant environment of Stage 18. PHOTO: ARM

LOCATION

The José Antonio Valverde Visitor´s Centre at the Reserva Natural de la Laguna de Fuente de Piedra is the starting point of Stage 18. Taking the direction south around the eastern side of the salt water lagoon you will be walking through farmland until the end of this stage in Campillos village. The **15, 7 km** of Stage 18 will allow you to discover this wetland well known at national level in Spain, and cultivated farmland which creates a steppe-like environment.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Stage 18 begins at the northern tip of the lagoon where you take direction south through agricultural environment, taken up mainly by olive trees and grain. This type of environment will continue to the end of this stage and it determines the species of birds which can be seen here. You will be crossing a stream and then walking along the two lakes which will make your Stage 18 bird list fill up with highly desirable species. The combination of wetland and steppe creates very valuable habitats with a rare composition of taxa unique at European level.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Neither the length, difficulty level or elevation gain of this stage is particularly

DID YOU KNOW?

Cecilio Garcia de la Leña, in Conversation 9th of "Historical Conversations of Malaga" published by Cristóbal Medina Conde (1726-1798) and entitled «About Animal Kingdom of Malaga and some Places in its Bishopric», comments: «…In some lagoons, along sea shores and river banks some large and beautiful birds breed, called Flamingos and Phoenicopteros according to the ancients...», after a description of the bird´s anatomy he adds: «The Romans appreciated the bird greatly, especially its tongue which was served as an exquisite dish…». TEXT: SMB

View of Laguna de Fuente de Piedra. PHOTO: ARM

demanding and you can spend some time around the Visitor´s Centre to enjoy watching water birds from purpose-built hides. Little and Eared (Black-necked) Grebe, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Cattle Egret, Greater Flamingo, Mallard, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Red-crested Pochard, Common Pochard, Eurasian Marsh Harrier, Common and Lesser Kestrel, Water Rail, Coot, Moorhen, Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Stone-curlew, Kentish Plover, Common and Little Ringed Plover, Golden and Black-bellied Plover,

Roller. PHOTO: JLM

Breeding structure for Lesser Kestrels and other steppe species placed beside the Great Malaga Path. PHOTO: ARM

Facilities around the Visitor´s Centre of the Laguna de Fuente de Piedra. PHOTO: ARM

Common Snipe, Green and Common Sandpiper, Lesser black-backed, Yellow-legged, Black-headed and Slender-billed Gull, Whiskered Tern, Gull-billed Tern and Yellow Wagtail are the most frequently seen species of birds found in water environment, however the list can grow considerably during migration passages if we include those waders and passerines which set off on migration journeys. Once you are on the footpath you will be entering agricultural environment in quite an abrupt manner and getting away from the lagoon progressively.

View from the hide at the Laguna Dulce. PHOTO: ARM

A pair of Lesser Kestrels. PHOTO: JLM

As a result, sightings of waterfowl and other aquatic birds will be limited to birds in flight commuting back and forth from the *laguna*.

In this environment, bird species occurring in open areas prevail, as well as birds which favour olive groves; noteworthy species are Red-legged Partridge, Stone-curlew, European Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Barn and Red-rumped Swallows, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, Crested Lark, Calandra Lark, Skylark, Common Blackbird, Song Thrush, European Robin, Common Stonechat, Zitting Cisticola, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Woodchat and Southern Grey Shrike, Great Tit, Spotless and Common Starling, House Sparrow, Goldfinch, Common Linnet, Serin, Greenfinch and Corn Bunting, the latter can be seen in large flocks in winter. What can seem at the start to be an unvarying and not very attractive environment for the birdwatcher ends up being a real diversity hot spot. The path leads through places where in winter concentrations of hundreds of Golden Plovers and Stone-curlews can gather; both species go unnoticed once they perch on the ground thanks to their plumage. Sometimes a low-flying Merlin on the hunt will help you find these flocks of birds. Other species which can be found here are Common Kestrel, Little Owl, Barn Owl around the ruined farmhouses, Common Buzzard whose individuals arrive from Central and Northern Europe during winter season (and which are visibly bigger and lighter coloured), Long-eared Owl and Red-necked Nightjar. At the southern tip of the lagoon, at the level of the Cortijo de la Rábita, you will need to cross Arroyo del Hoyero, and you will have to get your feet wet if the stream has water. In this environment, with its

Long-eared Owl chicks. PHOTO: MMA

strip of reeds and cane, you will be able to hear and see the Cetti´s Warbler, Reed Warbler and Great Reed Warbler as well as a greater abundance of birds drawn to the focal point of the stream´s water. Once you leave the stream behind and enter the olive grove, and then a great extension of dry crops, the following birds are the most abundant: White Wagtail, Crested Lark, Calandra Lark and Skylark. A ruined farmhouse, Cortijo de Las Monjas, harbours a population of Lesser Kestrel which is getting smaller year after year due to the general decline this species is suffering from. Within the period of a few years the number of pairs has dropped from 30 to only 5, which resulted in direct action being taken to ensure that breeding places are

A field just before harvest time, a habitat which holds many species. PHOTO: ARM

Little Bustard. PHOTO: JLM

Stone-curlews. PHOTO: JLM

available for this charismatic species of bird occurring in a steppe environment.

In the same general area, once you leave the olive grove behind, you can delight in the Common Cranes frequenting the open fields to feed, Little Bustards which require meticulous observation and Montagu´s Harriers, easily visible as they soar in large circles over the grain fields. During the cold months White Wagtails gather in large flocks which can contain over 4000 birds. Surprisingly, in winter and in summer, you can see Gull-billed Terns in this environment which is unusual for the species, hunting orthoptera in their elegant flight. Before walking uphill high enough to see the Laguna Dulce de Campillos, you will walk past an orangey-coloured building on your right. This is a purpose-built structure for the conservation of steppe bird species; specifically it is meant as a nesting place for Lesser Kestrels and Rollers. At the moment it is Common Kestrels and various pairs of Western Jackdaw that are using the structure and they let you get quite close to watch. Further on, at the Laguna de Lobón, you will be able to enjoy some water birds again, depending on the availability of water; this *laguna* is small and shallow which causes it to dry out long before other lakes in the area. When there is water available, you can enjoy watching Mallard, Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Common Ringed Plover, Little Ringed Plover and Kentish Plover, Collared Pranticole, Black-headed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, among other water species. The section which leads to Campillos takes you along the edge of Laguna Dulce, where it is not uncommon to see Black-winged Kite and Ferruginous Duck at the water surface, together with

The Lesser Flamingo successfully breeds in Fuente de Piedra Lagoon, with 4 pairs in 2015. PHOTO: JR

many of the species mentioned at the beginning of this section of Stage 18.

Among the many Coots present at this *laguna*, you may be able to see a few Red-knobbed Coots, which requires a careful search focused on the diagnostic features of the species. Basically, the Red-knobbed has two red nodules above the bill; the side of the bill does not form a white wedge which in the common Coot extends towards the nape. Migration periods are remarkable in this aquatic environment, but also in the fields around the lakes, especially as the Rollers appear. Finally, other species you can find at Stage 18 are Common Shellduck and Eagle Owl; the latter can be detected easier by its call.

TIMING

The characteristic features of Stage 18 make it recommendable during the whole year, except for the hottest months when temperatures can be very high around midday. During those years when the Greater Flamingo breed it is worth viisiting in spring to be able to enjoy the pink colour of the surroundings brought by the thousands of flamingos. In winter, the flight of Common Cranes also creates a spectacle of great beauty.

NATURAL VALUES

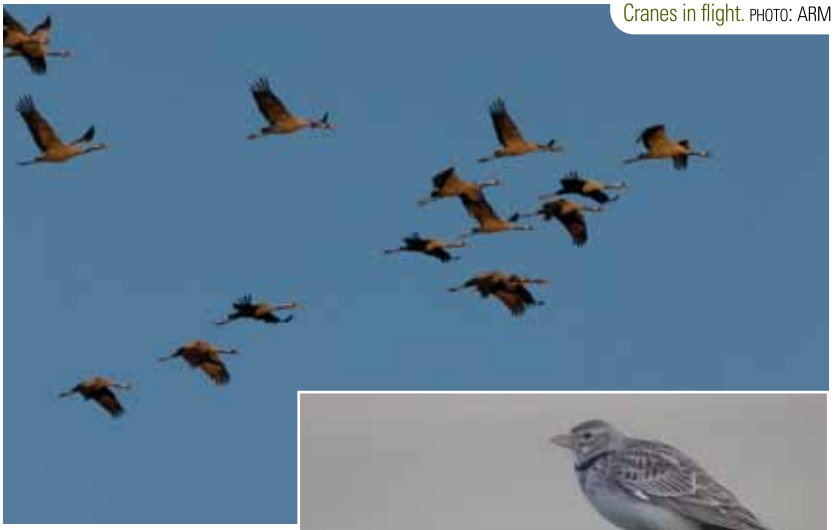
The Fuente de Piedra is the biggest Andalucían *laguna* (shallow natural lake)

Lesser Kestrel feeding its chick. PHOTO: JLM

Greater Flamingoes and Shovelers. PHOTO: JAS

and second largest in all of Spain, with the surface of over 1200 hectares. It is an endorheic basin (a closed drainage basin) which means that its water comes directly from rainfall and from run-offs. Perhaps what characterises and distinguishes this laguna from other Iberian wetlands is the saline nature of its waters, due to the gypsum salts which emerge in the basin. The lagoon´s saline character and the seasonal availability of water in the typically Mediterranean environment favour many species of zooplankton and highly important vegetation. Amphibians are restricted to the small stretches of wetland around the Fuente de Piedra and noteworthy species are Common and Natterjack Toad, Iberian Painted Frog, Parsley Frog, Iberian Water Frog (Perez´s Frog) and Iberian Ribbed Newt. Prominent reptiles include Spanish Pond Terrapin, Viperine Snake, Ocelated Lizard, Large Psammodromus, Spanish Psammodromus, Horseshoe Whip Snake, Montpelier Snake and Ladder Snake. The easiest to observe mammals are Rabbit, Hare and Fox, whilst you can also find signs and tracks of Badger, Genet, Stone Martin, Weasel and Egyptian Mongoose. Small mammals are a source of food for many of the above named vertebrates. Worthy of mention are Southern Water Vole, Black Rat, Wood Mouse, Common Vole and Garden Dormouse. Besides the many birds described in

Montagu´s Harrier in flight. PHOTO: JLM



Cranes in flight. PHOTO: ARM

Calandra Lark. PHOTO: JLM

the Highlighted Species section, the Spectacled Warbler also occurs in the salt marsh in the northern and eastern part of the lagoon, where Stage 18 does not take you but which is nevertheless worth a visit.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

At the beginning of Stage 18 you will find various birdwatching hides placed around quite a small area: at the Laguneto, Laguna de los Abejarucos (Bee-eaters' Lake) and at the Laguna de Las Palomas (Doves' Lake). Besides these facilities, the footpath called La Vicaria leads to another hide which also looks out to a sheet of water during sufficiently rainy seasons. In the eastern section there is also an interesting viewpoint, Cantarranas, especially given the fact that it is the access point to the Cantarranas Hide (which requires a permit from the natural reserve authorities, namely the environmental board called *Consejería de Medio Ambiente de la Junta de Andalucía)*. The recently built Las Latas viewpoint, at the southern tip of the lake, is also highly recommended as it is located in an area surrounded by large holm oaks and offers beautiful views to the brackish lake. At the end of Stage 18 you will be walking close to the Laguna Dulce de Campillos, also equipped with a hide however there is no direct access to this hide from the Great Malaga Path. The hide provides very good view to the whole lagoon and is accessed from the A-384 road to Antequera.

Bird´s-eye view of the northern sector of the Laguna de Fuente de Piedra, and the Visitor's Centre "José Antonio Valverde". PHOTO: JP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Laguna de la Marcela
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STAGE 19

STAGE 19
Campillos - Embalses del Guadalhorce

Ravens. PHOTO: JLM

LOCATION

Stage 19 begins in Campillos, the street Calle del Doctor Óscar Fernández being the starting point. Along this route you will discover lagoons which resemble true oases amongst the cultivated fields. After **23 km**, Stage 19 ends at the reservoirs Embalses de Guadalhorce y Guadalteba, at the point where the dams meet.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Stage 19 is the last of the series of stages where farmland is the main type of environment and the next stages become more mountainous. Stage 19 still passes through olive groves and grain fields however its special feature are a group of lagoons, Lagunas de Campillos, and pine tree formations, which together convert this part of the walk into a mosaic of landscapes accompanied by an interested variety of birds.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

In the centre of Campillos you will have a chance to see urban species, principally Eurasian Collared Dove, Common and Pallid Swift, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Spotless Starling, House

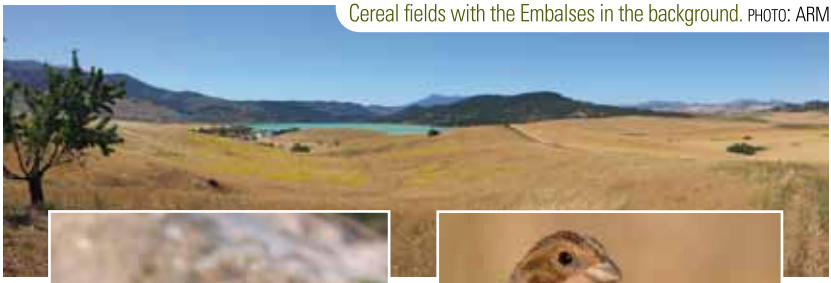
DID YOU KNOW?

The Catalogue of Lakes of Spain, written by the hydro-biologist Luis Pardo in 1948, mentions the endorheic lagoons in the steppes around Campillos as an interconnected complex of lakes, located south-east of Laguna de Fuente de Piedra, and he quotes Laguna Dulce, del Cerero, Salada, de Camuñas, de Capacete, de Lobón, Redonda and de la Marcela. According to the Natural Reserves Law (Ley de Espacios Naturales) from 1989 established by the Parlamento Andaluz first five lakes are protected as Natural Reserves. They hold such water birds as Greater Flamingo, Black-winged Stilt, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Widgeon, Coot, White-headed Duck, various species of gulls, as well as an important contingent of wintering Common Cranes. TEXT: SMB

Male Little Bustard. PHOTO: JLM

Sparrow, plus Common Kestrel, European Turtle Dove and Common Starling around the industrial estate located in the outskirts. Once you leave these buildings behind you will enter cultivated fields and olive groves where Red-legged Partridge, Song Thrush, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Common Blackbird, European Robin, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Goldfinch, Common Linnet and Corn Bunting are the most common species. Although Little Bustard is chosen as target species of all of Stage 19, and indeed it can be observed during the route, a good spot to enjoy this species is around Laguna Dulce very close to the starting point. The presence of large scattered pine trees are the reminder of what the area must have looked like before the land was ploughed and turned into farmland. These trees produce such species as Common Buzzard, Coal Tit and Raven. The group of lagoons you will be visiting are, in walking order, El Cerero, Laguna de Camuñas and la Marcela; these are areas which constitute true oases for water birds in an environment dominated by dry crop farming. The most common species in these wetlands are Little Grebe, Eared (Black-necked) Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Grey Heron, Greater Flamingo, Mallard, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Red-crested Pochard, Common Pochard, White-headed Duck, Moorhen, Coot, Black-winged Stilt, Lapwing, Golden Plover, Snipe, Green and Common Sandpiper, Black-headed Gull, White and Yellow Wagtail, and Meadow Pipit. Moreover, Cranes can be seen in the surroundings in winter months.

View of the reservoir and the cliffs. PHOTO: ARM



Cereal fields with the Embalses in the background. PHOTO: ARM

Quail. PHOTO: JLM

Corn Bunting. PHOTO: JLM

In the pine wood, before you cross the Arroyo del Boquerón, such birds could appear as the Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Greenfinch, Serin, Crossbill and Common Chaffinch, whilst in the scrubland, before the downhill section leading towards the reservoirs, you can fairly easily find Crested Lark, Stonechat, European Robin, Song Thrush and Sardinian Warbler. During migration periods in this part of Stage 19, Black Kite, Honey Buzzard, and good numbers of Bee-eaters tend to be seen flying overhead; neither is it uncommon to see Griffon Vulture, Bonelli´s Eagle and Peregrine Falcon in flight, frequenting the area in search for food. Once you reach the end of the stage at the foot of the reservoirs, water birds become the focus again, even though the depth of the Embalses limits the diversity of species, mainly to Little Black-backed, Yellow-legged and Black-headed Gulls, Mallard, Little and Eared (Black-necked) Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron and Coot.

Grey Heron. PHOTO: DPM

TIMING

Winter moths are particularly suitable to walk Stage 19 on account of the fact that you can then enjoy good numbers of wintering water birds which take over the wetland areas; spring is also a good time due to the diversity of breeding species. The hottest months are best avoided.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Although Stage 19 does not take you to Laguna de Capacete, it is worth a visit considering that the site holds, fairly reliably, the White-headed Duck. This lagoon is around a metre deep on average and its waters are slightly salty. The surrounding vegetation mainly includes Tamarisk and reeds, where you can hear and see Western Olivaceous Warbler,

Spanish Sparrow. PHOTO: JLM

and where Eurasian Reed Warbler and Great Reed Warbler nest.

Although for a long time it used to serve as a dumping ground for the organic residues coming from the nearby pig farm, since this was forbidden, the quality of its water has greatly improved. Similarly to other lagoons you visit during the stage, this one is also included in the Reserva Natural Lagunas de Campillos.

House Sparrow. PHOTO: JLM

Western Olivaceous Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Crested Lark. PHOTO: JLM

Common Starling. PHOTO: JLM


Puerto de Ramos y torcal
Mirador del Pico del Convento y Antequera
Cortijo Campano
Puerto del Rosalejo y desvío a ruinas de Nescania
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Mirador de los tres pantanos
Cortijo de las Pedreras
Sierra Llana
Sierra del Valle de Abdalajís
Pantano del Chorro
Sierra de Huma
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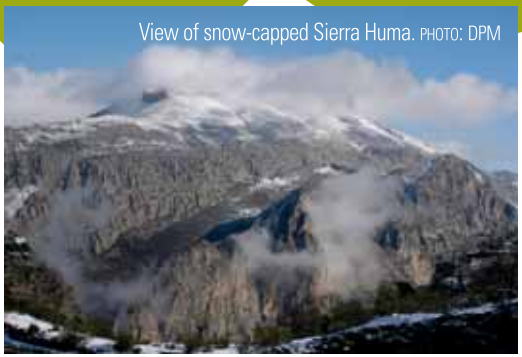
El Chorro

STAGE 20
Embalses del Guadalhorce - Estación de El Chorro


View of snow-capped Sierra Huma. PHOTO: DPM

LOCATION

Stage 20 begins at the meeting point of two dams of the Embalses, or reservoirs, of Guadalhorce and Guadalteba, from where onwards the Great Malaga Path meets mountain ranges again. The **22 km** long walk around the Sierra de Huma ends at the Estación de El Chorro, with views to the Desfiladero de Los Gaitanes canyon.

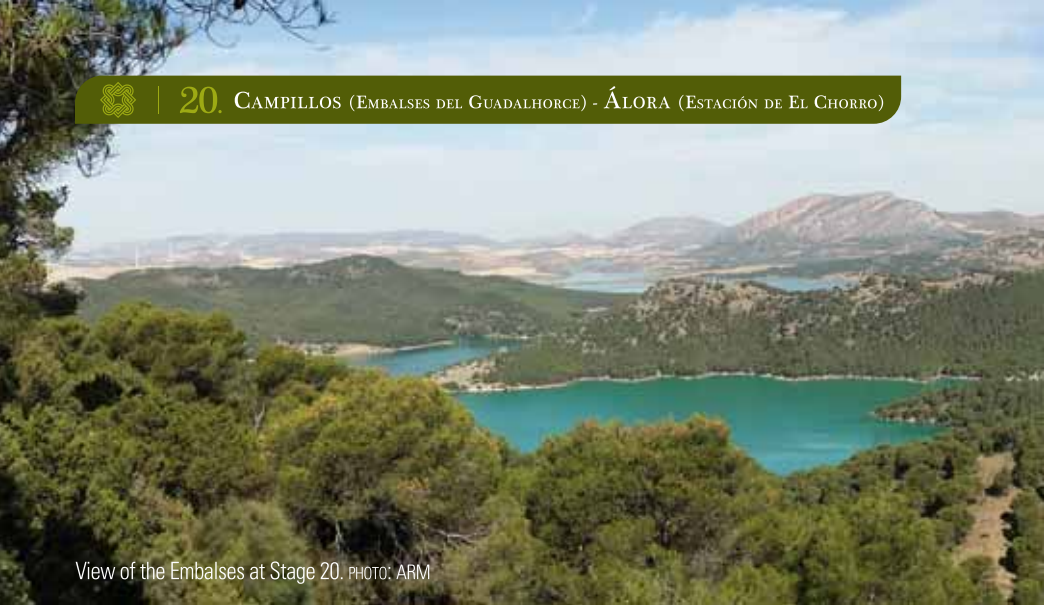
DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

As you start off Stage 20 at the Embalses del Guadalhorce, water birds are again well represented along the Great Malaga Path. As soon as you set off on a climb you will be entering woodland where the predominant trees are Aleppo pines, very soon joined by holm oaks, savin juniper and juniper. This type of vegetation continues up to the *miradores*, or viewpoints, where the low mountain terrain takes over. The rocky outcrops, which will be quite ever-present from now on at Stage 20, hold highly prized species and to find them you will need to pay close attention to the sky and keep in mind that you may only get a few seconds to enjoy the sighting. Although the rocky areas are visibly present along the way, the footpath now enters a stretch of lentiscs and savin juniper, which is only taken over by pine on the downhill stretch towards Cortijo de Campano.

DID YOU KNOW?

The naturalist from Malaga, José Arévalo y Baca (1844-1890) published in 1876 "La Sierra de la Juma (Provincia de Málaga)", (now named Sierra de Huma), where he quotes such raptors as Griffon Vulture, highlights the presence of the Egyptian Vulture in spring, and also includes the Lammergeyer (Bearded Vulture) among other species. In the Mesas de Villaverde he notes the occasional presence of the Black Vulture. Nowadays the site, declared Paraje Natural, maintains its importance for rock-dwelling birds. TEXT: SMB



View of the Embalses at Stage 20. PHOTO: ARM

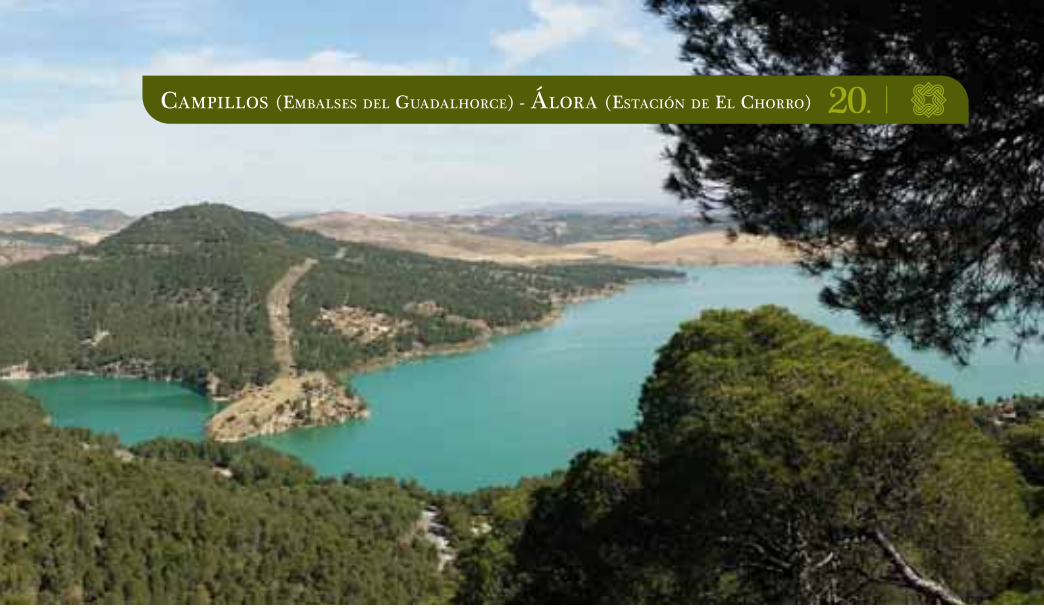
At the cortijo, scrub and rocky ridges rule again. Walking downhill you will find a natural spring called Fuente de la Viuda, which serves as a watering hole for birds. Consequently, finding certain species here is much easier. Before entering the pine wood, you will be passing through an olive grove, and, just before reaching your destination, the foot path will get very close to the impressive vertical rock faces which are dotted around El Chorro.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

It will probably be the gulls which will draw your attention first at the reservoirs. You will be able to observe different species which can reach numbers of over thousand individuals at certain times of the year. The most commonly occurring ones are Lesser Black-backed and

Passing by the Tajo de los Cabritos in the background. PHOTO: ARM

Egyptian Vulture. PHOTO: ARM



Yellow-legged Gull, although you can also find the small Black-headed Gull.

Although higher numbers can be found in winter season, the presence of gulls in the area is constant all year, with a handful of Yellow-legged Gulls remaining in summer months. Other aquatic birds you can see at Stage 20 are Mallard, Great Crested, Little and Eared (Black-necked) Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Coot, and on the shores you could spot a couple of individuals of Common Sandpiper if you look carefully. Within a few metres, the large water birds give way to smaller woodland species, usually hiding behind tree branches which make observation difficult. Great and Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Cirl Bunting are easier to detect if you can learn their song. This can be quite a trying

Rock Sparrow. PHOTO: JLM

Jackdaws. PHOTO: JLM

Black Wheatear. PHOTO: JLM

task at the beginning, as in theory it is quite a difficult skill to learn, but with time it will become more conceivable and fun.

Other species occurring in the pine tree area are European Turtle Dove, Common Wood Pigeon, Sardinian Warbler and Blackcap, Spotted Flycatcher, the mentioned earlier Great and Coal Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodchat Shrike in open areas, together with Crossbill and other frequently occurring finches (Goldfinch, Serin, Greenfinch and Common Linnet). Around the viewpoints during spring and summer months there is the constant presence of Swifts (Common, Pallid and Alpine) and Hirundines (principally House Martin and Barn Swallow) with such species as Bee-eater, Western Jackdaw and Raven adding a soundtrack to your birdwatching. This is a good area to watch birds of prey including Griffon Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Bonelli´s Eagle, Golden Eagle and Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Common Kestrel. Before you reach the surroundings of Tajo del Cabrito, the most common species are Red-legged

View of many interesting elements of the northern side of Malaga province, as seen from the path at Stage 20. PHOTO: ARM

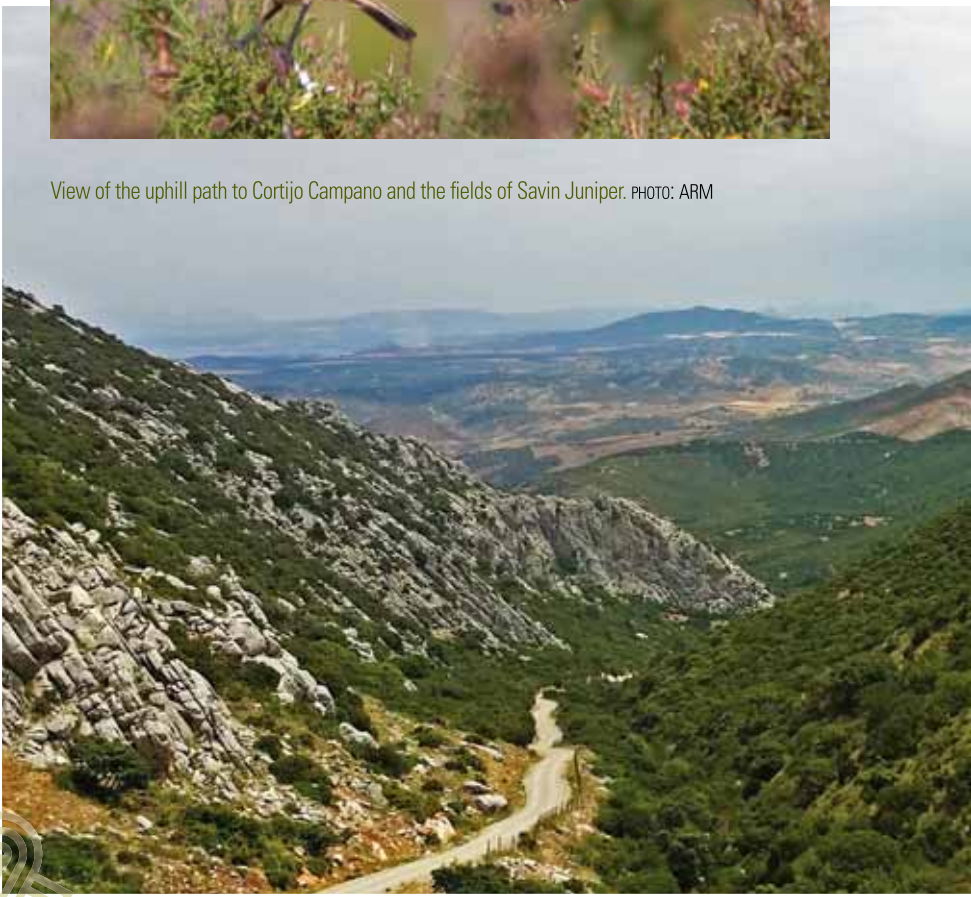
Rocky cliffs at Stage 20 harbour populations of interesting rock-dwelling species. PHOTO: ARM

Partridge, Crested Lark, Meadow Pipit, Common Linnet and Corn Buntings, and as you approach the first rocky cliffs, the Blue Rock.

Thrush, Black Wheatear and the boisterous Rock Sparrow could appear. If you scan the rocks carefully, you will start noticing the Griffon Vultures perched on rock shelves and you will be able to watch the acrobatic flight of Red-billed Choughs. Any spot in this area along the final part of Stage 20 could be a good setting to observe Egyptian Vulture, Bonelli´s Eagle and Peregrine Falcon, additionally to the already named species of birds of prey. The first stretch of savin juniper might bring only a few birds in spring, mainly Common Stonechat, Common Blackbird, Sardinian Warbler and rock-dwelling species in flight. This picture changes in winter season as numerous Thrushes, European Robins and Sardinian Warblers appear. The surroundings of Cortijo de Campano serves as a meeting point for the congregations of Red-billed Choughs, you will also find here species of birds which are accustomed to living close to humans such as Spotless Starling and House Sparrow. From here up to the Fuente de la Viuda natural spring you will be able to spot the Dartford Warbler, many Swifts feeding on flying insects and you may encounter the Black-eared Wheatear, a species which is progressively scarcer in its usual habitats. The site around the spring where the birds gather to drink, especially in summer months, is quite reliable for Zitting Cisticola as well as majority of species mentioned before. At this point you start walking downhill, passing through an olive grove and a very thick pine wood towards Estación El Chorro. The El Chorro landscape is exceptionally valuable and you can continue the rock-dwelling birds observation here, as well as water birds in the Embalse de la Encantada.

Common Stonechat. PHOTO: JLM

View of the uphill path to Cortijo Campano and the fields of Savin Juniper. PHOTO: ARM



TIMING

A high percentage of species observed during Stage 20 are resident, consequently they can be seen all year. Winter season however is better for water birds found around the abundant waters at the beginning and end of Stage 20. The cold months also bring bigger numbers of birds along this stage, mainly in scrubland.

NATURAL VALUES

El Chorro is an area of great geological wealth which can now be enjoyed from an exceptional perspective thanks to the Caminito del Rey walk open in 2015, a 3 km long walk built along of the Desfiladero de los Gaitanes canyon. Along Stage 20 you can see Spanish Ibex, an animal whose habits are diurnal in winter and more nocturnal in summer.

Golden Eagle being mobbed by Red-billed Choughs. PHOTO: JLM


STAGE
21
Sierra de Huma
El Chorro
Ruinas de Bobastro
Ardales
Cuevas de Ardales
Bermejo
Caracuel
Sierra de Baños
Sierra de Aguas
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STAGE 21
Estación de El Chorro - Ardales


View of Caminito del Rey. PHOTO: ARM

LOCATION

The platform of the El Chorro station is the setting where you begin Stage 21. Once you cross Río Guadalhorce the path leads uphill and you will be able to enjoy the best views of the El Chorro complex. A track takes you from the area of Bobastro ruins to Ardales village through grain fields which clearly used to be woodland; a total of **16, 5 km** before you arrive in the Río Turón valley.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The initial stretch of Stage 21 is characterised by the large rock faces which hold typical rock-dwellers. Then, the defining feature of Stage 21 becomes the reservoir Tajo de la Encantada which will add water birds to your list. The first uphill section takes through a pine wood with Mediterranean Dwarf Palm, retama bushes and a few savin junipers. Once you reach the viewpoint area the terrain changes to farmland; mainly almond groves and scattered farmhouses adjacent to grazing land. The former woodland character of this area becomes very evident with the mid-sized holm oaks which are still trying to claim their territory. Walking through fields and stretches of re-forested pine wood you will reach your destination which is the Ardales village.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the Tajo de la Encantada, situated to the west of Mesa de Villaverde, you can see rocky crags made of sandstone and limestone conglomerates of various grain size, mixed with chalk and schist. The erosion caused by wind and water has created various tafonis (lacework of round openings in the rocks) shaped like caves, alveoli (sockets) or a honey-comb, which characterise this rocky panorama. The vegetation is mostly composed of scrub with lentiscs, dwarf palm, savin juniper, retama, purple phlomis and Aleppo pines. TEXT: SMB

Spotless Starlings. PHOTO: JLM

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Birds of prey, such as Griffon Vulture, Bonelli´s Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Common Kestrel are common in the area at the beginning of Stage 21, as well as Cormorant, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Kingfisher at the section where you cross the river Guadalhorce. Around the train station Eurasian Collared Dove, Swifts, Barn Swallow House and Crag Martin, Spotless Starling, House Sparrow and finches such as Goldfinch and Greenfinch indicate the presence of human dwellings , however you can also se woodland birds here due to some forested and

Jay. PHOTO: JLM

Black Vulture surrounded by Griffon Vultures. PHOTO: JLM

A group of vultures feeding on a carcass. PHOTO: JLM

scrub areas (e.g.: Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Great Tit, Crossbill, Common Chaffinch and Rock Bunting).

On the way up you will be flanking a few rocky outcrops which gives you access to high rock dwellers such as Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear and Red-billed Chough. Higher up, the *mirador* (viewpoint) is an exceptional site to delight in birds of prey in flight, also Swifts and Choughs. Once you embark upon the part of the footpath which leads along hills dotted with houses, fields, patches of replanted pine trees and lone holm oaks, it will be the Eurasian Jay which will be drawing your attention the most, its visible white rump and its loud call. Moreover, good numbers of Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Serins and Common Linnets will be keeping you company

Mistle Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

Raven. PHOTO: JLM

during this stretch of the path, joined by such species as Little Owl, Red-legged Partridge, Sardinian Warbler, Great Tit, Spotless Starling and Common Chaffinch. Along this section there are various watercourses which allow you to see Song Thrushes, Redwings, European Robins, Blackcaps, Golden Orioles and Crossbills. Plus, the Short-toed Eagle is a frequent visitor to the area in spring and summer months. Golden and Bonelli´s Eagle use these slopes to search for food. If you walk along here at the break of the dawn or at dusk you may be able to hear Scops Owl and Eagle Owl.

TIMING

Stage12 has features which make it recommendable year round except for the hottest months. Winter months, however, produce bigger numbers of birds.

Crossbill. PHOTO: JLM

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

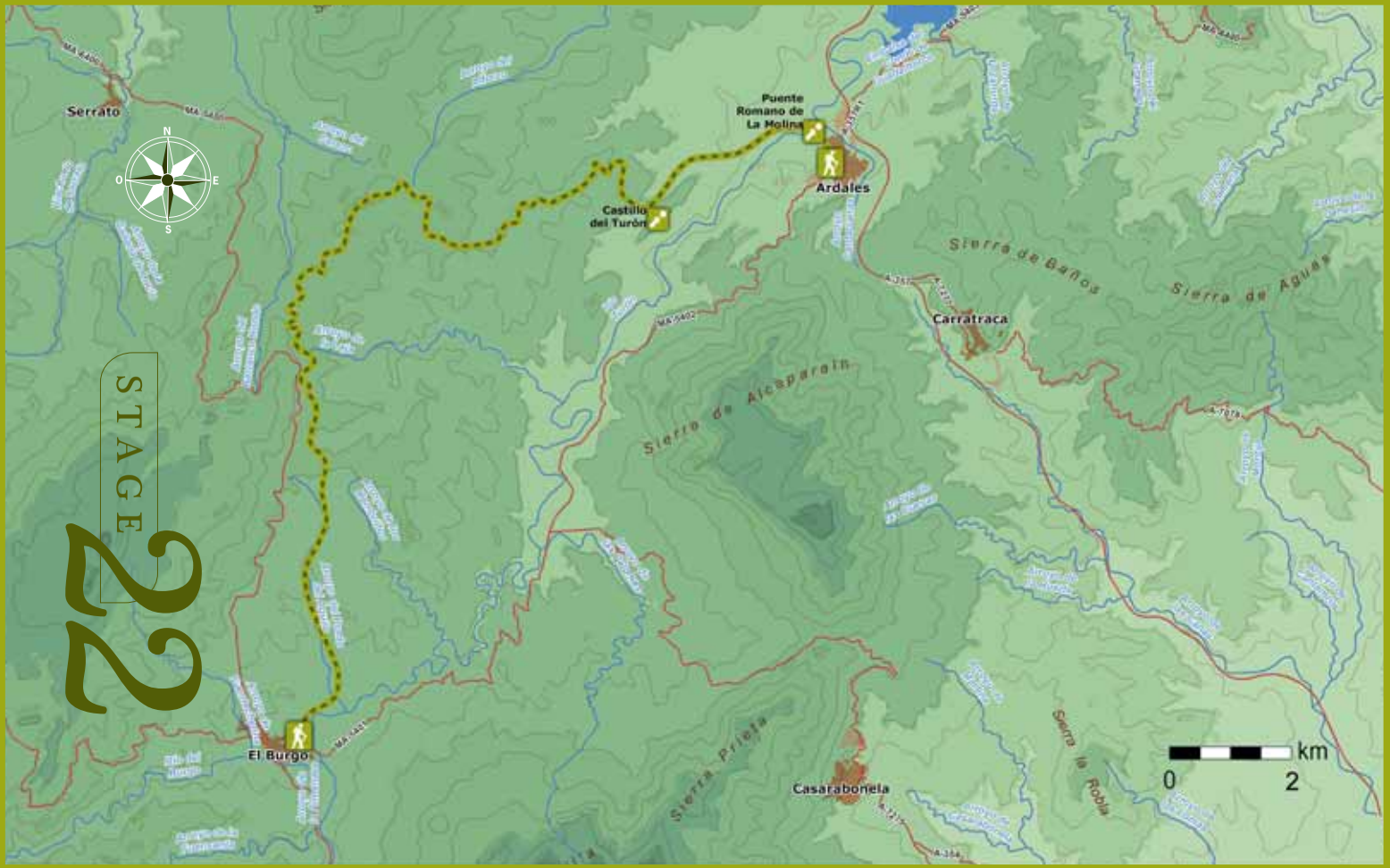
The Caminito del Rey runs through an area of exceptional beauty characterised by sheer rock faces and great heights. This is a walkway, about a metre wide and three kilometres long, which connects the area of the station with the reservoirs, crossing the Desfiladero de los Gaitanes gorge at height of over 100 metros at times. The walkway was built between 1901 and 1905, and it was not until the year 1921 when King Alfonso XIII, great-grand father of Felipe VI, opened the path. It used to be abandoned for a long time and as it had deteriorated it had to be closed about 25 years ago. In 2014 the walkway had been refurbished and it was re-opened in March 2015. This walk has all the ingredients to become a "must do" which will doubtlessly promote outdoors tourism in Malaga.

NATURAL VALUES

The sheer rock faces around the Tajo de La Encantada support highly interesting plants of very limited distribution, as is the case of the endemic *Rupicapnos africana*.

Woodchat Shrike. PHOTO: JLM

Desfiladero de los Gaitanes canyon. PHOTO: DPM


Serrato
Puente Romano de La Molina
Ardales
Castillo del Turón
Carratraca
Sierra de Baños
Sierra de Aguas
Sierra de Alcaparain
El Burgo
Casarabonela
Sierra Prieta
Sierra la Robla
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STAGE 22

STAGE 22
Ardales - El Burgo

Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*). PHOTO: JLM

LOCATION

The Río Turón marks the start and the end of the **22, 8 km** long Stage 22 which begins in the centre of Ardales. You need to find the bridge called Puente de la Molina, Roman in origin, from where you need to continue following a track parallel to the river. The end of the stage is in El Burgo; once you reach the tarmac section you must turn right to access the village.

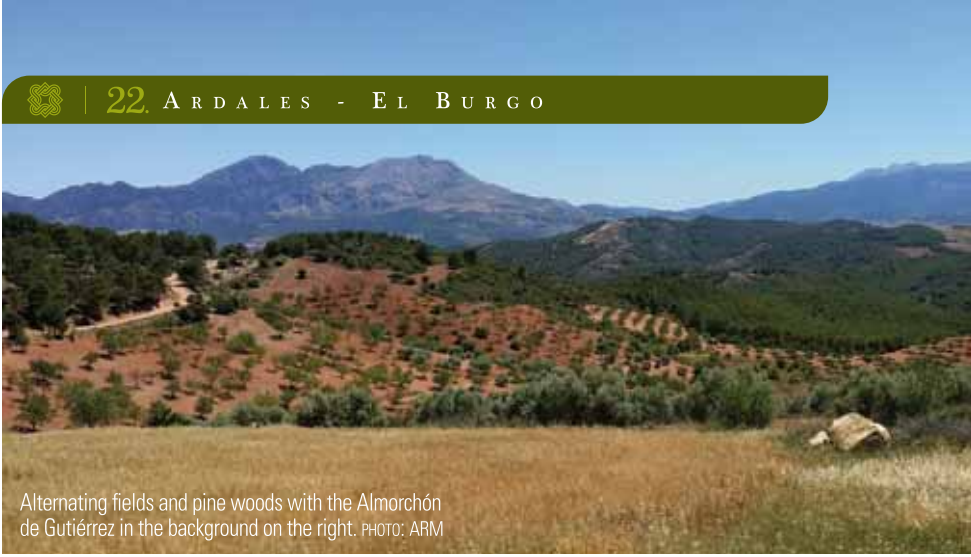
DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The beginning of stage 22 around the Río Turón constitutes a seasonally flooding area which can hold a great number of water birds. Almost as soon as you set off along the path you will move away from the river bed and pass through grain fields, which then give way to a mature pine wood within a few kilometres. Juniper and a fine scrub prosper underneath the tallest pines. During the whole stage you can make out the shapes of high mountain peaks in the distance, from the summits of Sierra Huma at the beginning to the Sierras de Alcaparaín, Ortegícar and Prieta along the footpath. This section of the Great Malaga Path marks the beginning of the mountainous stages

DID YOU KNOW?

The **Eurasian Jay** belongs to the corvid family and in spite of being a very retiring bird, it can be quite noisy. Its main source of food is acorns and consequently this bird is present around trees belonging to the *Quercus genus*. The bird has a very wholesome habit of hiding acorns by burying them in the ground, which makes this species one of the biggest allies of reforestation because it only consumes a small part of all the acorns it buries. If you have a chance to have a glimpse of the Eurasian Jay up close, you will be able to notice the striking blue wing panel. TEXT: ARM



Alternating fields and pine woods with the Almorchón de Gutiérrez in the background on the right. PHOTO: ARM

where *sierra* bird species again make an appearance.

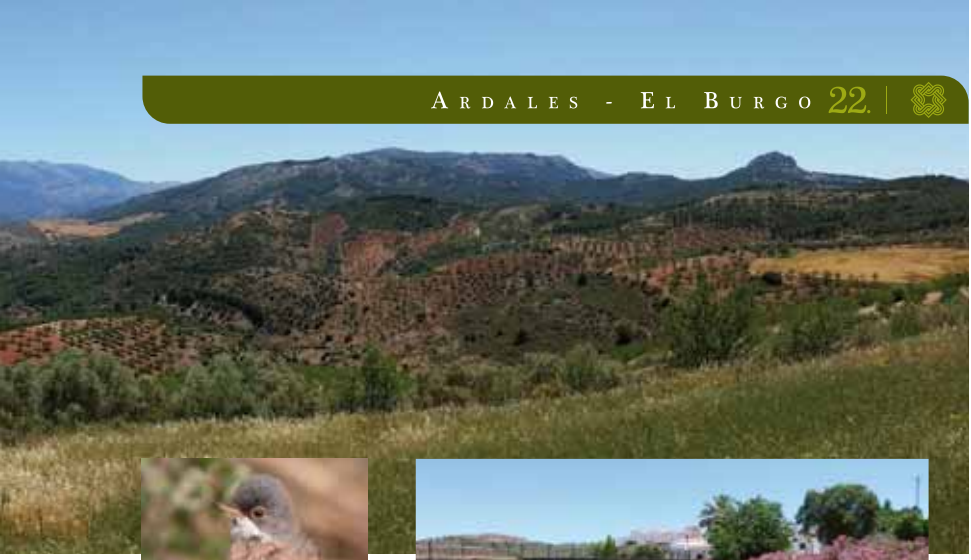
Once you reach the maximum height of this stage where pine trees are joined by holm oaks, grain fields will be the predominant landscape again, with species of birds favouring open spaces. Getting closer to El Burgo you will mainly see orchards and vegetable plots and with the addition of a few streams the task of birdwatching here is quite entertaining.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

In Ardales, specifically around the river, you will find the typical urban dwellers such as Pallid Swift, Spotless and Common Starling, Barn and Red-rumped Swallow, House and Crag Martin. These species visit the river to feed on insects and to drink water; flying low they stick just their lower mandible in the water with a precision down to a millimetre.

Little Owl. PHOTO: JLM

Red-rumped Swallow. PHOTO: JLM



Spectacled Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Puente la Molina where Stage 22 starts. PHOTO: ARM

Such a big concentration of these birds gives you a good chance to spend some time watching if you are not sure how to indentify them. From the bridge itself and underneath it, you will have a chance to see Mallard, a few Cormorants and waders such as Little Ringed Plover and the slender Black-winged Stilt. The presence of a patchwork of grain fields and olive groves, and a small wood of holm oak at the beginning of stage 22, favours diversity of species which, as you will be able to notice, is very high. Red-necked Nightjar is abundant in the area, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Common Nightingale, Black Redstart, Common Stonechat, Common Blackbird, Zitting Cisticola, Cetti´s Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Firecrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit,

Iberian Grey Shrike. PHOTO: JLM

Bee-eaters. PHOTO: JB

Woodchat Shrike, Golden Oriole, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin and Corn Bunting are the most commonly occurring species. Around the castle, Castillo del Turón, you may startle one or two Little Owls perched on a pile of rocks, as well as the Blue Rock Thrush or the Eagle Owl in the castle itself. At the transition point before entering the pine wood, Red-legged Partridges are common and once you are surrounded by trees, the presence of Coal Tit indicates the type of wood you are walking through. This pine wood also harbours Booted Eagle, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Common Blackbird, Song Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, and Southern Grey Shrike in open areas, Eurasian Jay, Common Chaffinch, Crossbill and Common Linnet, among other species. Having reached about 800 metres above the sea level, Blue Tit and Spectacled Warbler indicate the presence of holm oak and scrub. If your target species are large raptors, Stage 22 provides good sites especially that it runs through borders of different habitats. An occasional look at the sky and scanning the high ridges with your binoculars could produce sightings of Golden Eagle and Bonelli´s Eagle as well as individuals of Griffon Vulture.

Cerro de la Escribana, Sierra de Ortegícar, seen from the path. PHOTO: ARM

View of Sierra Prieta and Sierra de las Nieves from the path. PHOTO: ARM

Having left the woody area behind, the path takes you through grain fields lined with large retama bushes. In this area you will pass by on your left a clump of cane with clearly visible and abundant Corn Buntings, together with European Turtle Dove, Zitting Cisticola, Stonechat, and many other previously named species. The rocky peaks on your right are the abode of the Eagle Owl, which, together with Common Kestrel, Western Jackdaw and Red-billed Chough make it clear that you are now close to rocky areas. Once you reach the stream Arroyo de los Niños, Bee-eaters, Melodious Warbler, Shrikes, Starlings and Cirl Buntings will keep you company until you enter the more inhabited area with houses and fields; here the passerine community is visibly richer. If you choose spring-summer to do this route, House Martins will be the first birds to welcome you to El Burgo, at the banks of the same river you had left behind in Ardales.

Corn Bunting singing. PHOTO: ARM

TIMING

The diversity of species is distinctly higher in spring, given the diversity of habitats the stage takes you to and the presence of summer visitors.

NATURAL VALUES

At the beginning and the end of Stage 22, during migration periods you can see concentrations of soaring birds, especially birds of prey, as well as large numbers of Bee-eaters. The Spanish Ibex occupies the many high mountain areas along the stage and you will be able to find signs and tracks of carnivorous mammals such as Egyptian Mongoose, Stone Marten, Fox and also Otter around Río Turón.

Bird´s-eye view of a section of Stage 22 of the Great Malaga Path (Ardales-El Burgo).
On the right Castillo del Turón, on the left the footpath and in the background Ardales, Embalse del Conde de Guadalhorce and the Sierra Huma. PHOTO: JP


STAGE
23
Los Prados
La Cimada
Parchite
Arriate
Los Pinos
Santa María
Ronda
Rosalejo
Sierra de las Salinas
Sierra de los Merinos
Sierra Blanquilla
Sierra de la Hidalga
Serranía de Ronda
Sierra del Pinar
Valle de Lifa
Puerto de Lifa
Río Turón
El Burgo
Yunquera
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STAGE 23
El Burgo - Ronda

LOCATION

The route starts at a square in front of the petrol station, where you need to take the road direction Yunquera. After about 300 metres, having just crossed the bridge over Río Turón, turn right onto a track and follow it for quite a while. Reaching the point where you must abandon the track, take a path through a spectacular stretch of terebinth (turpentine tree), towards the tower called Torre de Lifa, which also lends its name to the valley. Stage 23 is **24, 2 km** long and it ends in Ronda. You will be entering the town from northeast at the local fair grounds.

Place where you leave the unpaved track and start walking downhill towards Cortijo de Lifa. PHOTO: ARM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Stage 23 starts in the centre of El Burgo, and inevitably the first species you see are associated with this type of environment. Within about 300 metros you will encounter Río Turón, which you will be then following for a large portion of Stage 23. The presence of crops on one side and riparian vegetation on the other, results in an interesting mix which translates into a high diversity of species. As you keep walking, the vegetation turns into woodland, and steep slopes start appearing, clearly influencing the type of predominant species. The pine wood will keep you company until the patch of terebinth in Lifa valley. Past the Lifa farmhouse you will be crossing a very interesting low mountain area. The climb comes to an end in a wooded area with holm oaks. This allows you to watch forest species before entering the flat farmland which leads to Ronda.

DID YOU KNOW?

Francis Carter (1741-1783), an English traveller and antiquarian, arrived in Ronda from Gibraltar in 1772, and he comments in his work *"A journey from Gibraltar to Málaga"* that: "The birds that people the sides of the rock of Ronda are vultures, eagles, hawks, lammergeyers, kites, ravens, doves, pigeons and thrushes". This remark is important as it constitutes one of the very first ornithological records at a specific site in Malaga province. TEXT: SMB

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

In El Burgo, the beginning of this demanding Stage is marked by such species as Eurasian Collared Dove, House Martin, Spotless Starling and House Sparrow. However, given the type of the village surroundings, it is not uncommon to see rock-dwelling or forest species flying overhead from the first step you take. At the very beginning you will encounter the river and sizeable riverside vegetation which promotes the presence of quite diverse species at this first section of the walk, such as, for example: Mallard, Hoopoe, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Wryneck, Barn Swallow, House Martin, White and Grey Wagtail, Common Blackbird, Stonechat, Nightingale, Blackcap, Spotless Starling and Short-toed Treecreeper.

Long-tailed Tit perched on an olive tree. PHOTO: JLM

The presence of olive groves results in the appearance of such species as Great Tit, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Serin. From the very beginning of Stage 23 you need to pay attention to the sky looking for bird silhouettes, which could turn out to be Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Northern Goshawk, Common Buzzard, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle and Common Kestrel. Once the path enters a pine wood and is still close to the river, the community of forest birds becomes more evident and such species occur as Mistle

A small pool at the Turón river. PHOTO: ARM

Before reaching the farmland of Ronda. PHOTO: ARM

Thrush, small flocks of Long-tailed Tit, Nuthatch and Eurasian Jay.

At the same time steep rock faces start taking over the terrain and thus Swifts, Crag Martins and Blue Rock Thrush turn up. An evening walk along this section will allow you to hear at least three nocturnal birds of prey (Eagle Owl, Tawny Owl and Scops Owl. During the day large raptors tend to fly along the Río Turón valley. Such species as Bonelli´s Eagle and Peregrine Falcon find welcoming spots around here and establish their territory, whilst the Griffon Vulture is a frequent visitor. Once you abandon the track and walk down to the river El Burgo, past a large holm oak the pine wood becomes richer in lentiscs, more holm oaks and first terebinth bushes. This is an area where,

Kingfisher. PHOTO: JLM

amongst some of the already named species, there is a great abundance of birds in the thrush family in winter. There might be up to six different species if you include Common Blackbird and Ring Ouzel. Although it is the Song Thrush which is the most abundant, you can also find Mistle Thrush and Redwing, and even the scarcest of them, the Fieldfare. Walking past rock faces on your right note the Griffon Vulture roosts which may become breeding spots in the future if the species continues being on the rise. Once you reach the top of the climb, facing the Lifa tower and farmhouse, you will next enter a glen dedicated to farming, where in winter Meadow Pipits and Skylarks are common, with the year round presence of Crested and Thekla Lark, Common Stonechat, Zitting Cisticola, Goldfinch, Common Linnet and Corn Bunting. In the surroundings of the cortijo you will walk through several gates which you should leave as you found them. These gates are used to control livestock and you would not be doing anyone a favour

Bonelli´s Eagle. PHOTO: JLM

if you forgot to close the gates, closed them incorrectly or decided to close a gate which you had found open (please keep in mind that an open gate is also performing a certain task).

At the farmhouse you will be entering an area of low thorny scrub where, if you take your time, you can end up watching to your heart´s content the Dartford Warbler, sharing the common range with the Sardinian Warbler.

Both species are joined in spring and summer by Spectacled Warbler plus Subalpine Warbler, Garden Warbler and Whitethroat in migration periods. Combined with the fact that Blackcap is frequent in winter and the patches of holm oak in Puerto de Lifa hold breeding Western Orphean Warbler, you could say that this part of Stage 23 harbours practically all of the Sylvia warblers which can be seen in the Spanish Peninsula. A similar situation occurs with wheatears, since the Black and Black-eared Wheatear nest along this section of the path, and Northern Wheatear turns up on migration.

Black-eared Wheatear. PHOTO: DPM

Worth adding to the bird list is the Cuckoo, occurring in the holm oak woods, a bird you will most definitely hear in spring but which can rarely be seen, and the Woodlark with its melodious song, the only representative of the Alaudidae family breeding in forest areas. The forest environment which you encounter before arriving in the Aguaya flatlands brings back the species you have already seen at the beginning of Stage 23.

Juvenile Black Vulture. PHOTO: ARM

Dipper visits Turon river at times. PHOTO: MMA

Common Redstart. PHOTO: JLM

Turón river basin. PHOTO: ARM

Entering the farmland immediately translates into the appearance of high numbers of larks, Stonechats, Zitting Cisticolas and Corn Buntings. If you happen to be doing this walk in spring and arrive in Ronda at dusk, you will have a chance to see the crepuscular flights of the Red-necked Nightjar, a bird which has a persistent tendency to settle on the road. As always, the Eurasian Collared Dove, Starlings and Sparrows indicate that you are approaching inhabited areas, in this case Ronda.

Dartford Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Northern Wheatear. PHOTO: JLM

TIMING

This stage is very rich in birdlife year round however spring is recommended to enjoy the high diversity of species. Winter is also very appealing, particularly the section of the terebinth formations. The number of species seen along Stage 23 increases significantly during the months of migration passages, especially as far as passerines are concerned.

A section of Stage 23. PHOTO: ARM

NATURAL VALUES

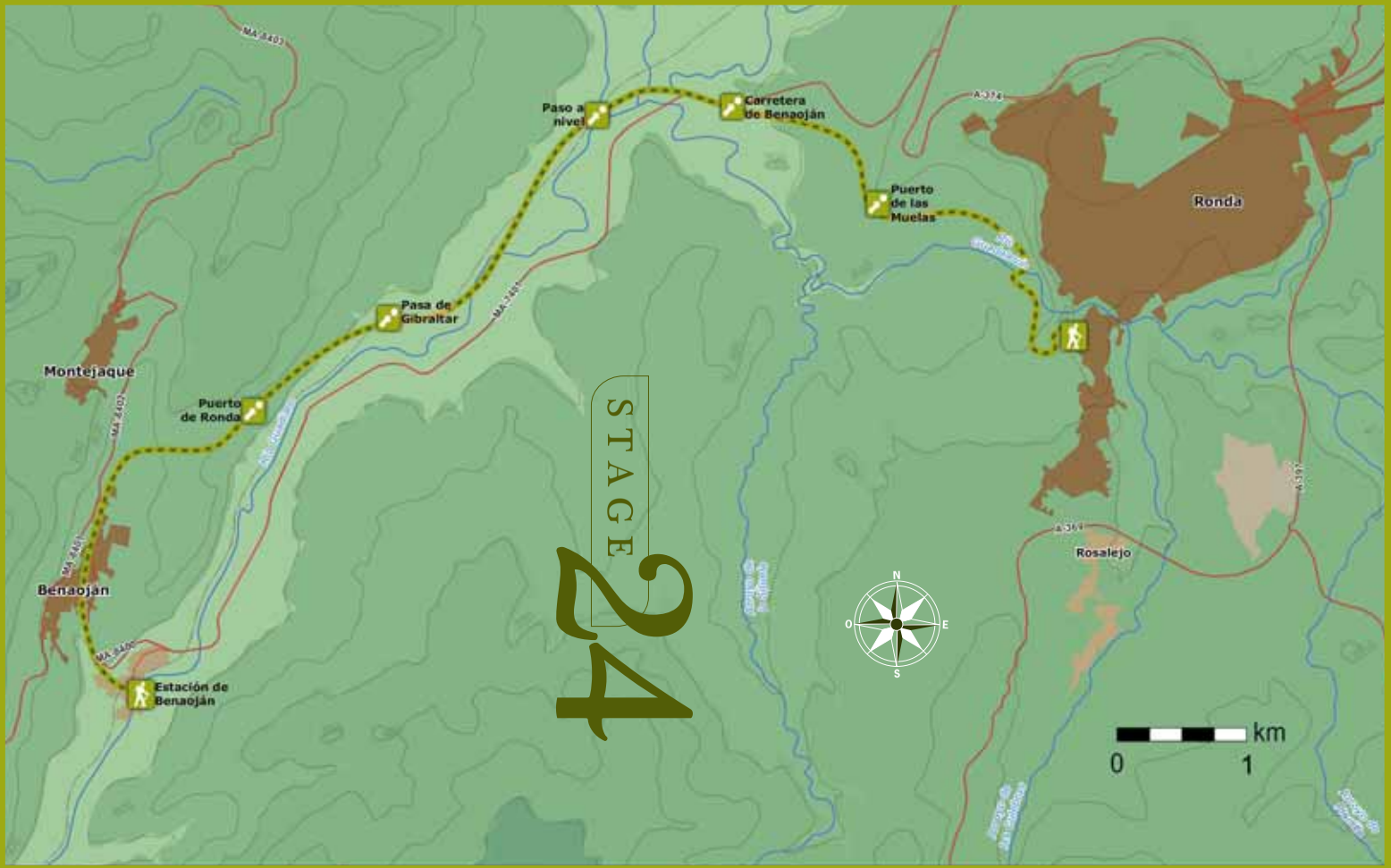
Río Turón holds a population of Otter and Southern Water Vole whose observation requires a little bit of patience, which may not quite be fit in with with the length of Stage 23 if you want to arrive in Ronda in daylight.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On occasion you can observe the Dipper in Río Turón, although this species is more typical of highland rivers.

Redwing. PHOTO: JLM

View from Lifa. PHOTO: ARM


Paso a nivel
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Puerto de las Muelas
Ronda
Pasa de Gibraltar
Montejaque
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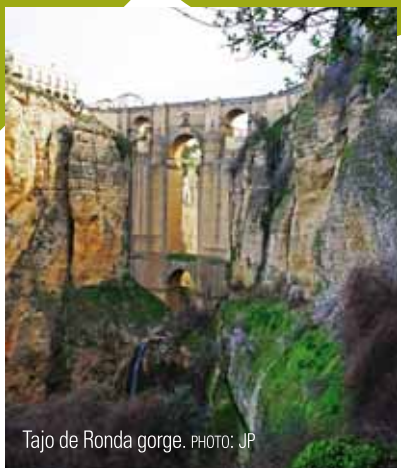
STAGE 24
Ronda - Estación de Benaoján

LOCATION

Stage 24 begins at the well-known Ronda gorge, Tajo (cliff) de Ronda, in the old part of town, where you need to find El Camino del Campillo. After the **12, 8 km** long walk, which in most part follows the rivers Guadalevín and Guadiaro, Stage 24 ends in the Estación de Benaoján, at a square close to the train station.



Tajo de Ronda gorge. PHOTO: JP

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

This stage of the walk starts in a built-up zone, yet it includes typical rocky environment ingredients, so frequent in this mountain area. Once you leave behind the Tajo de Ronda and Alameda cliffs, the path leads through farmland where watercourses play a major role. You will be passing through a Stone Pine wood, walking past sizeable riverside vegetation, crossing the river and continuing through a formation of retama bushes mixed with a few holm oaks, wild olives and, at the end, cultivated olive trees on the way to the Puerto de Ronda.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Gaduares river, a tributary of Río Guadiaro, flows underground for about 4, 5 km through a cave system called Hundidero-Gato. There have been records of Cueva del Gato (Cat´s Cave) since distant past, which emphasize the interest in the cave shown by the travellers who journeyed around the Serranía de Ronda, such as Francis Carter, who described it as one of the wonders of the Serranía. This author comments that he was assured there had been a big ruined structure a quarter of a league into the cave at a large lake, information which is also mentioned in 1811 by another traveller, William Jacob. Later on, in 1838, Captain Rochfort Scott in his book of travels around the Ronda mountains describes these ruins, attributing them to Roman times. The clergy William George Clark, in his "Gazpacho: or Summer months in Spain" from 1850, talks about the astonishing Garganta del Zumidero (Hundidero), a gorge with an exit in the Cueva del Gato. The cave harbours an important breeding population of bats and Alpine Swifts. TEXT: SMB

Red-billed Chough. PHOTO: JLM

From here to Benaoján, cultivated areas intertwine with natural vegetation along the last section which leads to the end of Stage 24, the Benaoján Station.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Stage 24 starts in an impressive environment due to its steep slopes and its sheer size. Here, the rock dwelling birds take over the sky, including such attractive species as Peregrine Falcon, Common Kestrel, Lesser Kestrel, Rock Dove, Pallid, Alpine and Common Swifts, Crag Martin, Black Redstart and the acrobatic flyer, Red-billed Chough, which can be seen mere metres from the bridge, Puente Nuevo. In spite of being so close to town, the first part of the route harbours the Eagle Owl, Tawny Owl, Scops Owl and Barn Owl, therefore a night outing can reward you with owl calls and get you closer to these nocturnal raptors. Close to the riverbed the passerine community becomes visibly richer. There are four species of Hirundines during the breeding season (House and Crag Martin, Barn and Red-rumped Swallow) plus Sand Martin on migration, also White and Grey Wagtail, European Robin, Common Nightingale, Black-eared Wheatear, Stonechat, Common Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Great Tit, Western Jackdaw, Spotless and Common Starling, Golden Oriole, House Sparrow, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Serin, Greenfinch, Common Linnet, Rock and Cirl Bunting. As soon as you enter farmland, Crested Lark, Zitting Cisticola and Corn Bunting turn up.

Learning Kingfisher´s call will help you find it along the river banks since it is much easier to hear this bird than to see its extremely fast flight. The mountain environment supports various species of birds of prey at Stage 24, including Griffon Vulture, Short-toed, Bonelli´s and Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard and Eurasian Sparrowhawk, together with previously named species. Noteworthy concentrations of finches and starlings occur in winter, they can happen around La Indiana, including such species as Eurasian Siskin and Brambling also present in the area. Back in the holm oaks, climbing up towards the Puerto de Ronda, the bird community is boosted by the presence of Hoopoe, Black-eared Wheatear and Western Orphean Warbler, as the most prominent species. Since more rocky outcrops appear, the Black Wheatear occurs and breeding pairs of Black Redstart are present. In the area of vegetable plots the Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail and Stonechat are the most common species. Along the downhill section leading to the station, House and Crag Martins are predominant; they mingle with swifts in their high-speed flights. Species such as Little Owl, Bee-eater, Cuckoo and European Turtle Dove also populate the route of Stage 24.

TIMING

Given the short length of Stage 24 and the fact that a major part of it follows watercourses, this stage can be recommended year round.

Juvenile Spanish Imperial Eagles can be occasionally seen in the Serrania de Ronda. PHOTO: JB

NATURAL VALUES

Although Stage 24 does not go past Cueva del Gato, the cave is worth a visit if you are interested in birds. This cave is one of the entrances to the Hundidero-Gato system, almost 8 km long in total, with lakes and permanent water sources inside. Besides typical river species (Grey Heron, Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail and Blackcap, among others), the biggest attraction is the colony of Alpine Swifts located inside the cave. The flocks, constantly on the wing around the area, can reach quite good numbers. This is the biggest of European swifts, easily identified by the white belly and throat.

Blackcap. PHOTO: JLM

Black-eared Wheatear. PHOTO: JLM

Western Orphean Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Its flying abilities make it possible for the bird to cover hundreds of kilometres a day in search for food. The prestigious science magazine "Nature" declared that these birds spend first two years of their lives in the air, without perching, and even sleep on the wing.

Common Linnet. PHOTO: JLM

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Migration passage periods, mainly autumn passage, produce large concentrations of birds of prey and Bee-eaters on their journey to the African continent. During that time you can see species which do not breed in the area such as Honey Buzzards and the alluring Black Stork.

Northern Wheatear. PHOTO: JLM


STAGE 25
Sierra de Juan Diego
Sierra del Palo
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Benaojan
Puente sobre el río Guadiaro
Mirador de Benaoján y la Estación
Arroyo del Agua y Venta
Desembocadura del Arroyo de la Fuente Enrique
Vereda hacia el Cortijo del Quejigal
Mirador del Chaco del Túnel
Arroyo Seco
Punto del accidente histórico del tren
Barriada de la Estación
Puente peatonal de la Vía Pecuaria sobre vía tren
Centro de Piragüismo Vagones de Jimera
Jimera de Líbar
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STAGE 25
Estación de Benaoján - Jimera de Líbar

Golden Oriole. PHOTO: JLM

LOCATION

The shortest of the Great Malaga Path stages starts at the train station of Benaoján. The **9,7 km** long walk leads across the narrow passes of Río Guadiaro and along a path parallel to the train line, ending in Jimera de Líbar village.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The presence of the river clearly marks the type of bird species you can see at the beginning of Stage 25, soecies which then give way to a community of forest birds in the uphill stretches leading through holm oaks.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

At the starting point you can see urban dwellers, such as Eurasian Collared Dove, Pallid and Common Swift, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Black Redstart, Common Starling, House Sparrow and, at the same time, species typical of riverside woods, including Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Sandpiper, Eurasian Collared Dove, Scops Owl, Kingfisher, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Great Spotted Woodpecker, White and Grey Wagtail, Nightingale, Cetti´s Warbler, Wren, and Golden Oriole. Besides, the vegetable plots and scrubland at the first part of Stage 25 hold the European Robin, Common Blackbird, Song Thrush, Black-eared Wheatear,

DID YOU KNOW?

The Golden Oriole is a migrating species which spends its winter south of the Sahara desert. This bird is much easier to hear than to see. Its song resembles its scientific name, *Oriolus oriolus*, which the bird repeats constantly during the breeding season. April is the time when Golden Oriole´s song fills the forests and river banks where the bird lives. If you want to try to see its vivid yellow plumage, you must focus on the foliage in the highest tree tops. TEXT: ARM

View of the rocky environment of Stage 25. PHOTO: ARM

Spotted Flycatcher, Woodchat Shrike, Great Tit, Goldfinch, Serin, Greenfinch and Cirl Bunting. These birds, together with rock-dwelling species such as Alpine Swift, Crag Martin and Blue Rock Thrush, create one of the most diverse birdlife starting points of all the stages along the Great Malaga Path.

In the holm oak woods you can find Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Green Woodpecker, Song and Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Firecrest, Blue Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Eurasian Jay, Goldfinch and Cirl Bunting, whilst in the shadiest spots with Portuguese gall oaks, Bonelli´s Warbler occurs, and you can see flocks of Long-tailed Tits.

The river, present virtually along the whole stage, allows for the presence of large birds such as Grey Heron and even Great Cormorant in winter, on top of the already named typical riparian species of birds.

Blue Tit. PHOTO: JLM

Firecrest. PHOTO: JLM

Stage 25 is highly suitable for watching birds of prey, with such notable species as Griffon Vulture, Northern Goshawk, Short-toed, Booted, Golden and Bonelli´s Eagle, Common Buzzard, Common Kestrel and Peregrine Falcon. Additionally, during migration passage periods you can frequently observe Black Kite, Honey Buzzard, and Hobby. As far as nocturnal raptors, the Eagle Owl is present, plus Tawny Owl and Scops Owl. Stage 25 also holds Common Linnet and Rock Bunting, which, together with Zitting Cisticola and Crested Lark occurring in cultivated areas, make up which quite an impressive set of species for such a short stage.

TIMING

Stage 25 can be walked year round. Whilst breeding species are substituted with wintering species, according to their status in this particular studied area, spring brings higher diversity of birds.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You can walk this stage and then return by train, either direction, which, together with the short length and the beauty of its landscape makes Stage 25 especially attractive. In *Natural Values* section of Stage 24 you can find information about Cueva del Gato, a cave located very close to the starting point of Stage 25. Moreover, it is recommended to read the *Did you know?* section of Stage 34, where you can find information about swifts.

Booted Eagle, dark morph. PHOTO: JLM


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STAGE 26

STAGE 26
Jimera de Líbar - Benalauría

LOCATION

Stage 26 starts in Jimera de Líbar, at the natural spring and the old wash house on the route through the village, where you need to follow the direction to Atajate. After **15,3 km**, and having passed through the Puerto de Benalauría, you will walk away from Río Guadiaro and approach Río Genal, finishing the walk in Benalauría.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

At this stage of the walk you will be crossing pine and holm oak woods, scrub and areas of cereal agriculture. Consequently, the composition of bird species is quite varied. Although along the whole route you can see rock faces which mark the valley of Río Guadiaro, you will be able to get close to that environment and enjoy rock-dwelling species once you have climbed to the pass called Puerto de Benalauría. Along the last section of Stage 26 you will be passing through chestnut groves which also will be very discernible during next two stages.

View of Laguna Florida. PHOTO: JSM

Stripeless Tree Frog (*Hyla meridionalis*). PHOTO: JLM

DID YOU KNOW?

The westernmost tip of Malaga province, characterised by the presence of mountain chains and woodland of great value, harbours a rich amphibian community, which includes Common and Natterjack Toad, Iberian Painted Frog, Parsley Frog, Stripeless Tree Frog, Iberian Water Frog (Perez´s Frog), Southern Marbled Newt, Iberian Ribbed Newt and Penibetic Fire Salamander. TEXT: JSM

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Stage 26 starts off in Jimera de Libar with urban birds. However the privileged location of the village provides the opportunity to enjoy a good number of mountain birds from the very first moment. Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Kestrel, Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Common, Pallid and Alpine Swift, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Barn Swallow, House and Crag Martin, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, European Robin, Common Stonechat, Common Blackbird, Song and Mistle Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Eurasian Jay, Common and Spotless Starling, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Serin and Greenfinch are the species present in the *dehesa* area at the first part of Stage 26.

The Seven Troughs (pilas). PHOTO: ARM

The Siete Pilas site. PHOTO: ARM

Having climbed the uphill section, you will be passing by farmhouses where House Sparrow occurs and in the cork oak areas you may also see Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper, Nuthatch, as well as Hawfinch. Other forest species which are present include Short-toed and Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpecker and the Golden Oriole in areas with tall riverside vegetation, joined by Nightingale and Cetti´s Warbler. Next, you will be coming to an open area with beautiful views of the village of Cortes de la Frontera on the slopes of the Sierra Blanquilla. Crossing olive groves and patches of cereal fields and scrub you will also be able to see Bee-eater, Black-eared Wheatear, Zitting Cisticola, Melodious Warbler, Woodchat Shrike and Corn Bunting.

Another climb takes you across a mature holm oak wood flanked with

A section of the walk. PHOTO: ARM

Rock Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

Short-toed Eagle, third calendar year bird. PHOTO: JAS

hawthorn and to a settlement called Siete Pilas, now directly *en route* to your destination, the Puerto de Benalauría. Before the steepest climb and outcrops of limestone (which makes up these sierras), you will be passing through open farmland, where

Bonelli´s Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

it is worth turning around to enjoy the landscape. It is mainly Crested and Thekla Lark, Sardinian Warbler and Zitting Cisticola which keep you company at this point, together with Woodchat Shrike and Melodious Warbler in summer season. Along the climb towards the pass Puerto de Benalauría, among the pine trees, the first rock faces bring the mountain species with them, including Bonelli´s Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart (breeding and wintering), Black Wheatear, Southern Grey Shrike, Raven, Jackdaw, Red-billed Chough and Common Linnet, as well as Golden Eagle, Griffon Vulture, and Common Kestrel. This is also a suitable environment for the Eagle Owl. The walk downhill to the village of Benalauría leads through holm oaks where, besides the already named species, you can see the Woodlark.

Remember now to pay attention to the sky to search for birds of prey, listening to the calls of forest birds (the type of species which will take the lead during the next stages), and enjoying the birds as you arrive in the village, greeted by Swallows, Starlings and House Sparrows.

TIMING

The diversity of birds is greatest during spring and early summer, due to the presence of summer season species, although the winter months are also a good time to birdwatch at Stage 26. Keep in mind that this route lies on a flight path used by numerous migratory birds as they approach the Strait of Gibraltar to cross to Africa in summer/autumn or head north in the spring. Because of this you can observe species which are present here only for a short time.

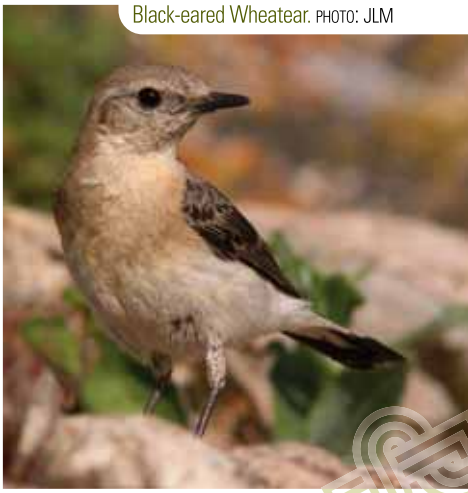
Corn Bunting. PHOTO: ARM

NATURAL VALUES

In the nearby rocks of Benadalid you can see rock-dwelling raptors. It is best to use a telescope to enjoy the birds fully, given the long distance to the rocks from the viewpoint or any, even closest, point in the village. You can frequently observe Bonelli´s Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. During the 2014 breeding season, 2-3 pairs of Griffon Vulture bred in the area, which was first such record for this site.

Black Redstart. PHOTO: JLM

Black-eared Wheatear. PHOTO: JLM



STAGE 27


Benadalid
Benalauria
El Bailaero
Algatocin
Puente y Venta de San Juan
Vado del Río Monardilla
Jubrique
Benarrabá
Llano de la Escribana
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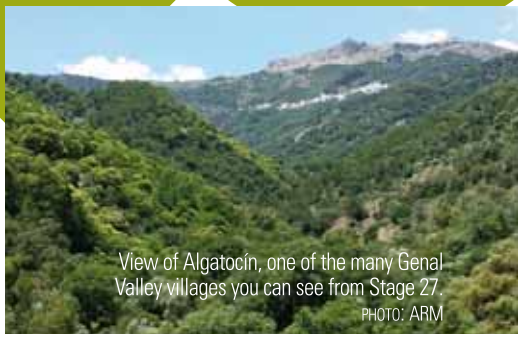
STAGE 27
Benalauría - Genalguacil



View of Algatocín, one of the many Genal Valley villages you can see from Stage 27. PHOTO: ARM

LOCATION

Stage 27 begins in the centre of Benalauría (Plaza del General Viñas) and finishes at the entrance to Genalguacil, at a roadside restaurant (venta) which will help you refuel after a steep climb. The **11, 6 km** long walk leads through a markedly wooded environment which continues as you reach Río Genal; the year round availability of water in this river allows for the existence of quite varied riparian plant formations (willows, ash, oleanders, tamarisks and even stands of planted poplars).

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

This stage gives you the opportunity to train your ear and in this way deepen your relationship with birds. Although you will be able to observe directly a varied sample of typical forest species, such as raptors, woodpeckers and many passerines, there is a significant number of species typical of woodland environment which are easy to hear and very hard to see. Also, what seems to happen quite often is that there is always a twig blocking the view of your target species. The section following closely the riverbed will provide an opportunity to become familiar with the bird community living in direct contact with the water.

Specimen of the threatened Splendid Cruiser, Macromia splendens. PHOTO: TH

DID YOU KNOW?

A study conducted by the *Fundación Nueva Cultura del Agua* in 2009 found 18 species of Odonata (Dragonflies and Damselflies) around Río Genal, highlighting the Orange-spotted Emerald *(Oxygastra curtisii)* and the Splendid Cruiser *(Macromia splendens)*, both endangered in Andalucía and considered relicts of the ice-age fauna. These species act as bio indicators and prove the extraordinary ecological value of Río Genal. TEXT: JSM

Chestnut in flower and Benadalid in the background. PHOTO: ARM

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Forest species are the stars of this stage. There are also birds characteristic to urban environments at the beginning and the end of Stage 27, and species typical of rivers and river banks. As you take the first and last steps of this route, Sparrows, Barn Swallows and House Martins will remind you that you are close to inhabited areas.

Nuthatch in its nest. PHOTO: JLM

Benadalid village is a true open-air museum. PHOTO: ARM

As you set off on the walk and the first trees appear, you are more and more likely to see the Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Wren, European Robin, Song Thrush, Stonechat and Redwing, Common Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Bonelli´s Warbler, Iberian Chiffchaff, Black-eared Wheatear, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Hawfinch and Cirl Bunting.

Once you are at the river you can see and / or hear Common Sandpiper, Wryneck, Kingfisher, White and Grey Wagtail, Nightingale, Cetti's Warbler, Reed Warbler occurring in the few open spaces with reed beds and Golden Oriole in the canopy of large trees. Birds associated with built-up areas along the way may include Common Kestrel, Little Owl, Red-rumped Swallow and Blue Rock Thrush.

Great Spotted Woodpecker. PHOTO: JLM

Wryneck. PHOTO: JLM

The community of birds of prey is highly interesting here since you can see both the typical forest raptors (Short-toed Eagle, Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Northern Goshawk and Eurasian Sparrowhawk), as well as birds associated with rocky cliffs that tower over the valley, from Sierra Crestellina and Hacho de Gaucín, to the Benadalid cliff (species such as Griffon Vulture, Bonelli's Eagle and Peregrine Falcon are relatively common if you pay attention to the sky).

If you walk any section of Stage 27 at dusk or at dawn, you can enjoy the call of such crepuscular species as the Eagle Owl, Scops Owl, Tawny Owl and Red-necked Nightjar.

TIMING

There is a great diversity of birds throughout the year and the percentage of resident species is high, although a significant taxa replacement occurs in winter and in breeding season. In winter, Thrushes, Robins, Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs appear in very large numbers, whilst in spring the species which have spent the winter south of the Sahara desert arrive and nest here, such as Wryneck, Bonelli´s Warbler, Iberian Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher and Golden Oriole.

During migration periods you can also observe species which are just passing through and are present only for short periods of time. The proximity to the Strait Gibraltar and the layout of the valley which opens directly to the Strait, channels large numbers of birds into the area.

NATURAL VALUES

Stage 27 covers a relatively uniform environment and most of its interesting components are within your reach. It is a good moment to become familiar with numerous species of trees such as cork oak, holm oak and Portuguese gall oak, among others.

Woodpecker holes in a cork oak stump, a common sight along this stage. PHOTO: ARM

View of Genal landscape, Benarrabá and Algatocín in the background. PHOTO: ARM

Little Ringed Plover. PHOTO: JLM

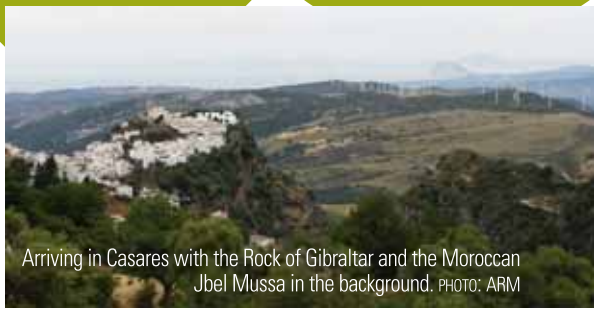
You will also be crossing chestnut groves, and the Genal river valley is a perfect environment for these trees. The river supports a healthy population of otters which you can detect by paying attention to their tracks and signs near the riverbed. Other species of mammals inhabiting the area are Badger, Genet, Stone Marten, Weasel, Polecat, Wildcat and Roe Deer. This river system is also highly important for aquatic invertebrates, mainly dragonflies and damselflies.

As far as fish is concerned, the Genal river has been declared by experts to be one of the best preserved rivers nationwide, supporting Eel, Andalucían Barbel, Iberian Nase, also species of chub Squalius pyranaicus and the recently described for science *Squalius malacitanus*.

Walkway prepared for Great Malaga Path, crossing narrow section of the Genal river. PHOTO: ARM

STAGE 28

STAGE 28
Genalguacil - Casares



Arriving in Casares with the Rock of Gibraltar and the Moroccan Jbel Mussa in the background. PHOTO: ARM

LOCATION

Stage 28 begins close to the Genalguacil church at a car park. The **20.5 km** walk leads through woodland and a lush valley to Casares in the western Costa del Sol. Casares is an excellent vantage point to see the Strait of Gibraltar and the African continent.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

In Genalguacil and Casares you will have a chance to see typical urban birds, while along the entire route forest birds are the predominant type of species. The rivers and streams also contribute their own birds and at the end of the stage cliffs and crags appear, which support breeding populations of Griffon Vultures, among other rock-dwelling birds. The broad views that characterise Stage 28 give you a good opportunity to scan the sky for birds of prey.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

The two villages visited at Stage 28 hold a great number of birds, however spring and summer birds are most noteworthy, when you can also see Swifts and Swallows constantly flying

DID YOU KNOW?

The Irishman William Bowles (1714-1780), the Age of Enlightenment traveller who published *"La Introducción a la Historia Natural y a la Geografía Física de España"*, (An Introduction to the Natural History and Physical Geography of Spain, originally in Spanish) in 1775, remarks about the Serranía de Ronda «There is a rare peculiarity in these mountains; its parallel ridges, so close together that their bases touch, are in part red and in part white. The first part, although slightly higher, does not retain snow permanently; and the other is almost always covered by it, so that in the summer all the neighbouring lands use the snow supply to cool their drinks. The white rock only holds cork oaks and holm oaks; the red rock does not have any of these trees, and is covered with firs». This is the first record of the Spanish fir *(Abies pinsapo)* in the Serranía. TEXT: SMB

Almarchal river. PHOTO: ARM

overhead. Genalguacil has a remarkable population of House Martins and Barn Swallows and, to a lesser extent, Red-rumped Swallows. Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Common and Spotless Starling are the predominant species in the village, although the diversity of birds which can be seen from the viewpoint (located at the starting point waymark) is very high, thanks to the privileged location of Genalguacil. Without having to leave the village you will be able to enjoy such birds in flight as Short-toed and Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Northern Goshawk and Common Kestrel, as well as a variety of forest species named below. The Great Spotted Woodpecker is common in the area, as proved by the many holes found in the trees along the way. Also, the Green Woodpecker, Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Wren, European Robin, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush and Redwing, Common Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warblers, Bonelli's Warbler, Firecrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Coal Tit, as well as Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper, Eurasian Jay, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Greenfinch, Serin, Hawfinch and Cirl Bunting. Along the watercourses, especially the Almarchal river, such birds may turn

View from Monte del Duque with Genalguacil in the background. PHOTO: ARM

Mixed woods along the path. PHOTO: ARM

Robin. PHOTO: JLM

up as Common Sandpiper, Kingfisher, White and Grey Wagtail, Nightingale, Cetti´s Warbler and Golden Oriole, among other species. In open spaces where the main type of vegetation is shrubs, you can also see Black-eared Wheatear, Bee-eater and Stonechat. Among the nocturnal species, the Tawny Owl is present and quite common; also Scops Owl and Red- necked Nightjar occur. Along the stage you will be passing by both ruined and inhabited buildings, and this environment supports Common Kestrel, Little Owl, Red-rumped Swallow, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear, Spotless Starling and House Sparrow. The path through the forest of the Monte del Duque can be considered a real treat,

PHOTO: ARM

First rocks appear as you arrive in Casares. PHOTO: ARM

since it is a superbly preserved cork oak wood, well maintained throughout the cork harvests.

Around here you can also detect by ear the presence of many of the species that have been mentioned previously. As you leave the Monte del Duque, more varied vegetation appears gradually: oaks, pines, olive trees and some Portuguese gall oak. Soon you will be passing by on your right the vertical walls of Sierra Crestellina and a breathtaking view of the Strait of Gibraltar and The Rock, the Mussa mountain in Morocco, and El Hacho in Ceuta whenever the morning haze clears. The rocky environment begins here and this is where the Griffon Vulture plays the leading role, but you can also see Bonelli's Eagle, Black Wheatear, Jackdaw and Red-billed Chough. In addition, these mountains are one of the few places in the province where you can find Egyptian Vulture during the breeding season. Once you are in Casares, the

House Sparrow in House Martin´s nest. PHOTO: JLM

Juvenile Robin. PHOTO: JLM

A section of the path suitable for cycling. PHOTO: ARM

castle and its viewpoint are worth a visit, where you can see Lesser Kestrel during breeding season, and, occasionally, in winter. This is unusual as the species normally winters in the region of Senegal and Gambia. Besides the Lesser Kestrels you can enjoy close flybys of Griffon Vultures right over the village of Casares, as well as Booted Eagle and Common Buzzard in flight.

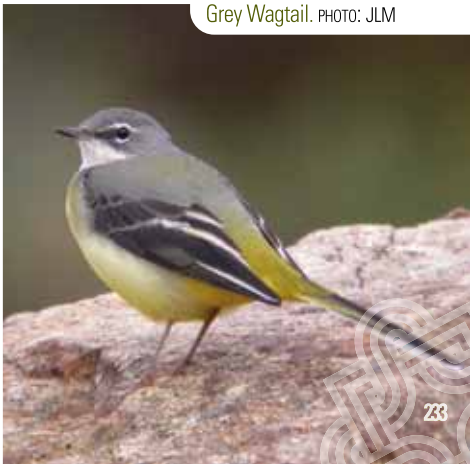
TIMING

Stage 28 is recommended throughout the year, although the greatest diversity of birds is found in the spring and summer months when the species that overwinter in Africa are here. During the migration, both pre-breeding and post-breeding passages, it is easy to see large concentrations of raptors and storks, since the Genal and Guadiaro valleys serve as migration channels for those birds which use the Strait of Gibraltar to cross to the African continent in summer and in autumn, and from Africa to Europe during the spring.

NATURAL VALUES

Along Stage 28 you will note the presence of the reddish rocks of Sierra Bermeja.

Common Chiffchaff. PHOTO: JLM



Grey Wagtail. PHOTO: JLM

View of the Rock of Gibraltar and the Jbel Mussa in Morocco, the two pillars of the Strait. PHOTO: ARM

These are the biggest outcrops of serpentinite in Spain and one of the largest in the world, which support numerous endemic species of flora and fauna associated with this globally rare ecosystem. The list of species recorded for Red Natura Sierra Bermeja includes a total of 20 endemic plant species, 17 species of unique invertebrates exclusive to this massif, and one endemic species of fish, described for science in 2006 (Doadrio & Carmona, 2006). The *Squalius malacitanus* chub is unique to the Genal, Guadalmina, Almárchal and Guadaiza rivers, but also appears in some streams linked to Sierra Bermeja. Due to its restricted range it is classified as Critically Endangered, based on IUCN criteria (see Perea *et al*. 2011). The community of aquatic invertebrates includes a high diversity of Diptera and Trichoptera. More than 80% and 65%, respectively, of all the known families in the Iberian peninsula occur here (source: Mediodes).

The dragonflies found in the river Almarchal include Orange-spotted Emerald *Oxygastra curtisii* and Splendid

Adult and juvenile Egyptian Vulture. PHOTO: JLM

Great Spotted Woodpecker. PHOTO: JLM

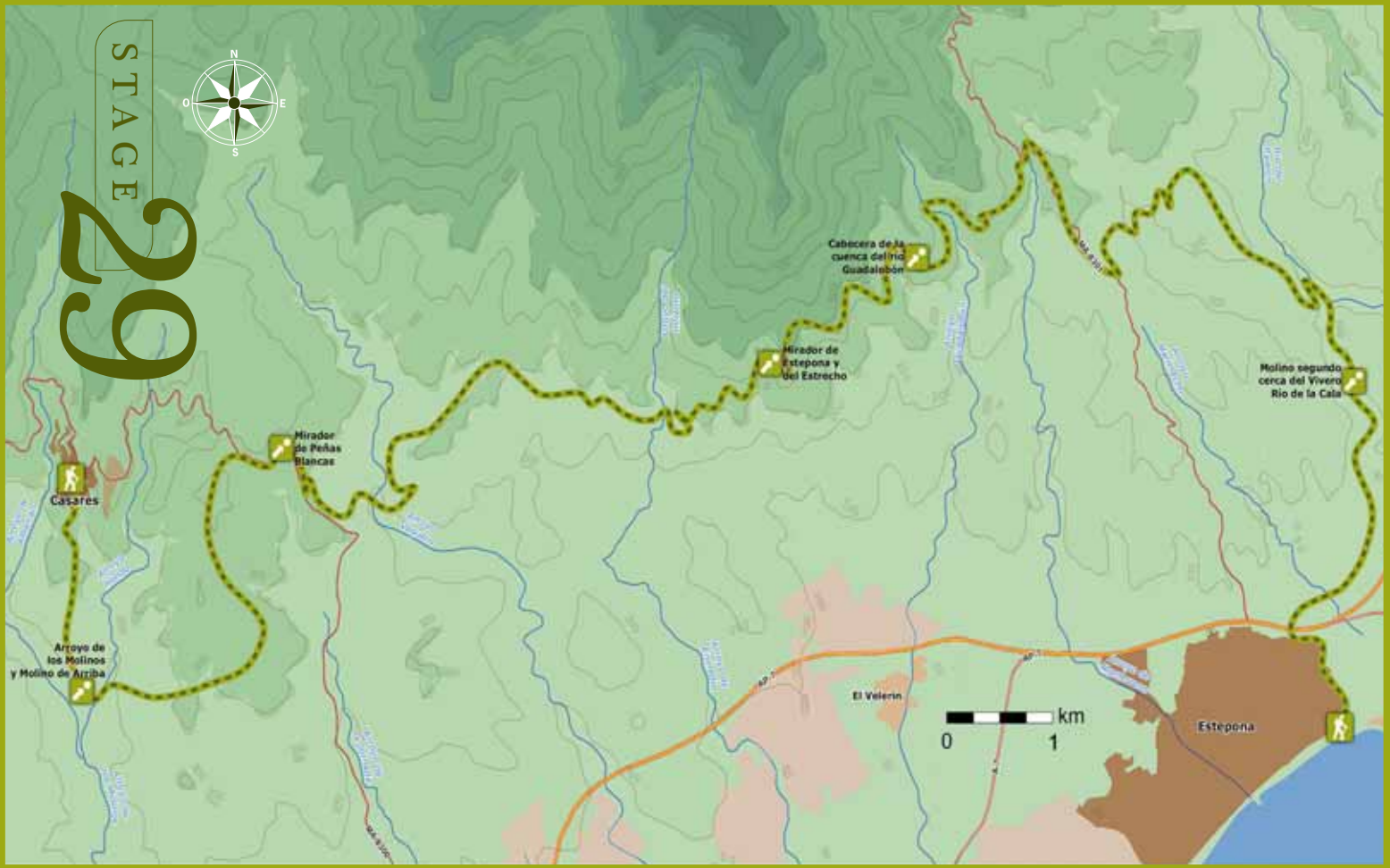
Cruiser *Macromia splendens*. These are special due to their rarity and precarious conservation status and both are considered endangered. Although the Otter is one of the most emblematic species of the stage as far as mammals are concerned, you may also find tracks of Fox, Genet, Badger, Weasel and Egyptian Mongoose. In addition, around Monte del Duque Red Deer could cross your path.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Monte del Duque was first mentioned in written documents dated 1491, the same year when the Catholic Monarchs sold the village of Casares and all its land to the Duke of Cadiz, Don Rodrigo Ponce de León. From that moment the mountain has been recorded in writing as Monte del Duque (Duke´s Mountain). It had been passed from hand to hand until the early twentieth century, when, already the property of the town hall and forming part of the confiscation of monastic properties (*desamortización de Madoz* decree of 1855), the Monte del Duque was sold to Miguel Martinez de Pinillos y Saenz, grandson of the founder of the Naviera Pinillos . In August 1928, Martinez de Pinillos sold the estate to Federico Garcia Rodriguez, (father of Federico García Lorca) and other partners, for a total of 1,250,000 pesetas. Federico owned 8% of the farm until his death in 1945. In the 1970s a court order determined the sole owner of the property to be the Capella family. In the 1980s current owner purchased the property. For more information visit the Spanish website *www.iluana.com*.

Griffon Vulture in flight. PHOTO: JW

STAGE 29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Cabecera de la cuenca del río Guadalobón
Mirador de Estepona y del Estrecho
Molino segundo cerca del Vivero Río de la Cala
Mirador de Peñas Blancas
Casares
Arroyo de los Molinos y Molino de Arriba
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Estepona

STAGE 29
Casares - Estepona

LOCATION

Stage 29 begins in Calle Carrera in Casares, at the birthplace of Blas Infante. You need to leave the village direction southwards, although the main direction of Stage 29 leads primarily eastwards. After **32.8 km** of walking along the southern foothills of the Sierra Bermeja you will arrive in Estepona at Río de la Cala, and reach the promenade Paseo Marítimo.

Waymark on the path, at Arroyo de la Cala, just before arriving in Estepona.
PHOTO: ARM

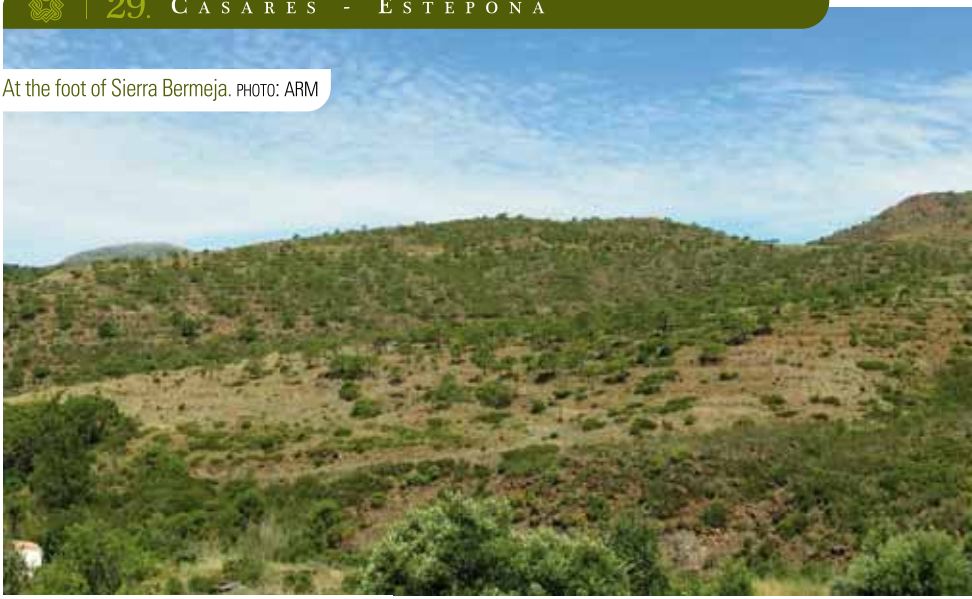
DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Casares is a star site for birdwatching, both the sierra and the village centre, since they hold a breeding population

DID YOU KNOW?

Charles Edmond Boissier (1810-1885), a botanist from Geneva, comments in his *"Botanical Journey around the South of Spain in the year 1837"*: «I have planned a climb to the Sierra Bermeja for the following day. I was curious to see and examine the pine tree, whose branch with no fruit I have seen in the herbarium of Mr Haenseler in Malaga, and which seemed to me to be a new species. In Estepona everybody knew it as a *pinsapo* ...» he mentions further: «Mr Haenseler, who had lived for almost nine years in Estepona, discovered in these hills a new four-legged creature in Europe, *Viverro Ichneumon* which had only been known in Egypt and a few places in Barbary: it lives in burrows and in the country it is known as *Meloncillo* (Mongoose) ». This is the first record of Egyptian Mongoose for Spain. British travellers, hunters and naturalists Abel Chapman (1851-1929) and Walter J. Buck (1843-1917) published *"Unexplored Spain"* in 1910. They tell us: «from the peaks of Bermeja we enjoyed a spectacle possibly unequalled in Europe. Soaring down below was a magnificent pair of Lammergeyers, with their backs and outstretched pinions gleaming almost white in the sunshine. Here we saw Golden, Booted and Bonelli´s Eagles, a solitary Griffon Vulture, Peregrine Falcon and Goshawk, a pair of Sparrowhawks, very busy carrying twigs, Ravens, Eurasian Jays, Woodpecker, Wrens, Crag Martins, the usual Wheatears and a few Wood Pigeons». TEXT: SMB



At the foot of Sierra Bermeja. PHOTO: ARM

View of the coast from one of the streams. PHOTO: ARM

of Lesser Kestrel and various pairs of Griffon Vulture in the rock faces visible from the viewpoints. Around the Arroyo de los Molinos you will be able to see river birds and species typical of cultivated areas. You will be walking along this characteristic environment of the Strait of Gibraltar region having flanked the southern corner of Sierra Bermeja. Here, the substrate changes to metamorphic rock. The great attraction of this stage

Section along Río Padrón and farmland. PHOTO: ARM

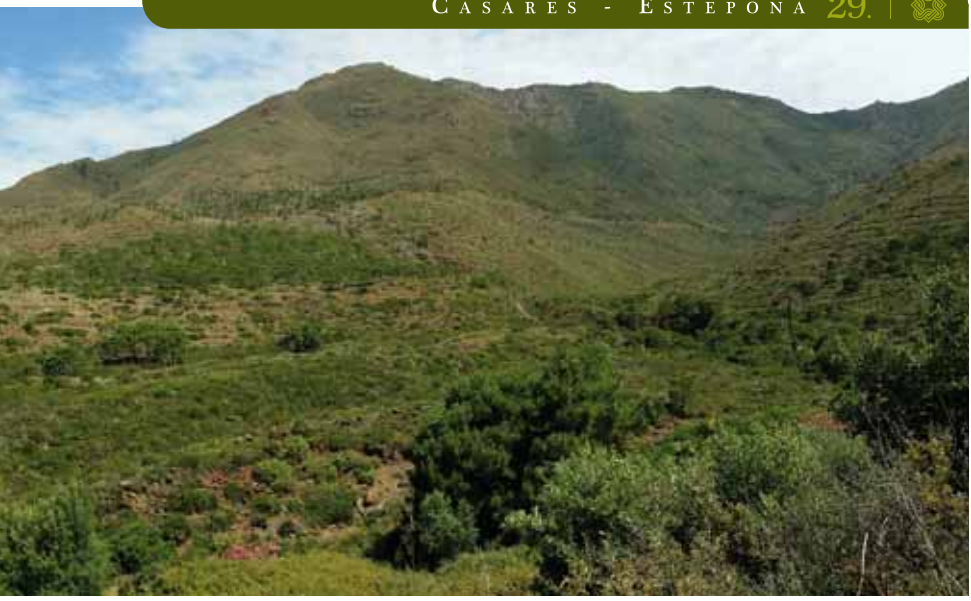


PHOTO: ARM

is the Sierra, composed of plutonic rock, which offers beautiful views that include the African continent. The final section leads to Arroyo of La Cala, which takes you to the Paseo Maritimo of Estepona. This beach promenade provides an opportunity to see coastal birds.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

The very start of Stage 29 produces a great number of birds which, depending

Adult Griffon Vulture. PHOTO: JLM

on the season, can be highly diverse and abundant.

In spring and summer the are the swifts, swallows and the most frequent House Martins, accompanied by Griffon Vultures (often in the village itself), Common Kestrels, Collared Dove, Spotless and Common Starlings, Jackdaw and House Sparrow.

Next, as you enter the flysch of Aljibe, the wild olive and mastic bushes support Turtle Dove, Robin, Stonechat, Mistle and Song Thrush, Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warblers, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Eurasian Siskin, Greenfinch, Serin and Rock Bunting. Around the Arroyo de los Molinos the following birds may turn up: Great Spotted Woodpecker, White and Grey Wagtail Wren and, on occasion, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (which also occurs in the vineyards in Cortijo del Robledal). It is a peculiar fact that during the breeding season Spectacled Warbler and Tawny Pipit can be seen here, species linked to higher altitudes in the rest of the province.

From this area until you pass through the settlement called Acedía, dotted with houses, and cork oaks mixed with scrubland constituting the main vegetation; again the already mentioned forest species occur, alongside those typical of open spaces: Spotted Woodpecker, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Eurasian Jay, Blackcap, Great Tit and Chaffinch along with Crested Lark, Sardinian Warbler and Stonechat. Upon reaching the viewpoint of Peñas Blancas you can enjoy a broad view of Sierra Bermeja, and this is a good moment to scan the sky for raptors. Here you can see Griffon Vulture, Booted and Short-toed Eagle, Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Common Kestrel, and with a little luck, Golden Eagle. During times of migration passage you can also observe Black Kite and Honey Buzzard. Next, you will come to Arroyo Vaquero and enter the sierra.

Mistle Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

Migrating White Storks. PHOTO: ARM

Following the stream along the slightly uphill section among pines and cork oaks, you can find European Turtle Dove, Wryneck, Robin, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Golden Oriole, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper, Greenfinch, Serin, Goldfinch and Common Linnet, plus Starlings and House Sparrows around the buildings. The climb leads to an esplanade where you will be able to see the section of mountains ahead and the town landfill, which sometimes attracts concentrations of thousands of birds. The majority are gulls (Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed), although there are also Cattle Egrets, Griffon Vultures and, during migration periods, large numbers of Black Kites and White Storks.

The sierra Bermeja slopes are covered with loose rocks which can be hard on your ankles and you must tread carefully. The history of forest fires of the Sierra is clearly visible here, looking at the scarcity and dispersion of maritime pines. However, there is a single stand of pine before Barranco del Infierno. This area is dominated by larks, Stonechat, Black Redstart and Sardinian Warbler, together with finches, such as Goldfinch, Common Linnet and Greenfinch. You do need to keep looking at the sky as you may see some of the previously named raptors and gulls coming and going to the landfill. You could also spot the Black

A pool at Arroyo La Cala. PHOTO: ARM

Wheatear and Blue Rock Thrush here. With luck, you may hear and see the Eagle Owl.

Near Guadalobón river the abundance of birds increases, as they flock to the water, something that frequently happens during the summer months. As you leave behind the area of loose rocks and reach the road which connects Estepona with Los Reales de Sierra Bermeja, you are still 10 kilometres away from your destination. You are now at the basin of the stream of La Cala, where young cork oaks and cistus scrub plus inhabited areas with vegetable plots appear. Here, again, there is a community of forest bird species accompanied by the birds accustomed to human presence, named above. Grey Wagtails and Reed Warblers, which nest in reed beds, remind you that you are walking close to a watercourse. It is not uncommon to observe the Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Kestrel before approaching the centre of Estepona. As before, you will notice Collared Doves, Starlings and House Sparrows approaching the town centre. Along the beach promenade of Estepona you will have a chance to see marine and coastal species, which are listed in Stage 30 (Estepona - Marbella).

TIMING

Similarly to other stages that run through the western Costa del Sol, Stage 29 is especially rewarding for birdwatchers during periods of pre-breeding and post-breeding migration, due to the diversity of species found and the large concentrations of birds which may occur.

Stage 29 passes by a waste treatment station where birds congregate: gulls, vultures, egrets, kites, among others. PHOTO: ARM

View of the Strait of Gibraltar from the path. PHOTO: ARM

Stage 29 is not recommended for birding during the hottest month of the year. The location of the southern slopes of Sierra Bermeja within Stage 29 puts you in the mountains around midday and this is why hot months are best avoided.

NATURAL VALUES

Peridotite is an ultramafic igneous rock of great hardness and high density which consists of ferromagnesian minerals and, when transformed, receives the generic name of serpentinite. The uniqueness of this particular substrate and its outstanding strategic location halfway between Europe and Africa are behind the great interest shown in Sierra Bermeja plants of serpentinite habitat, starting from the first work dedicated to the vegetation of this type of habitat published in the late sixties of the last century (Goday Rivas 1969). Botanically speaking, this area is considered a separate bio-geographical zone denominated *Bermejense* because of its special importance in Spain according to its level of speciation. Worth mentioning are the formations of *Pinus pinaster var. acutisquama* growing on peridotites, which are then replaced at a higher altitude by ultramafic Spanish Fir wood, the only one in the world (Asensi & Rivas Martinez 1976 Cabezudo *et al*. 1989).

Mating Lesser Kestrels. PHOTO: JLM

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Out of the 22 endemic plants, some are listed as vulnerable, while others are critically endangered species. The most threatened species are *Armeria villosa subsp. carratracensis, Centaurea lainzii, Peucedanum officinale subsp. brachyradium, Silene fernandezii, Allium Rouyi, Arenaria and Armeria capillipes colorata* (Moreno 2011, Pérez-Latorre *et al*. 2013).


El Madroñal
Benahavis
Colinas de Marbella
Artola
Marbella
Salto del Agua
San Pedro de Alcántara
Nueva Andalucía
Cortés
Colinas de Guadalmansa
Cortés
Nueva Atalaya
Paraiso-Barronal
Guadalmina
Bel-Air
Saladillo-Benamara
Cancelada
Duna de Matas verdes_Saladillo
Las Bóvedas
Resinera-Voladilla
Playa del Sol-Villacana
Torre de Guadalmansa
Torre del Velerin(s.XVI)
Río Castor (LIC)
Reinoso
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El Padrón
Los Llanos
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STAGE 30
Estepona - Marbella

LOCATION

Stage 30 begins at the beach promenade, Paseo Marítimo de Estepona, at the eastern tip of the Playa de la Cala beach. During this stage you will be walking past the sea on your right and crossing the many short rivers of the western Costa del Sol. After **27, 1 km** you will arrive at Paseo Marítimo de Marbella, where Stage 30 ends at the mouth of the stream called Arroyo Guadalpín, very close to the meeting hall building, Palacio de Congresos.

Stage 30 passes through this dune system, held in by a Stone Pine wood. PHOTO: ARM

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

This stage covers exclusively beach environment and inhabited areas. Some sections run along beach promenades, paseos marítimos, and on occasion cross some of the many housing developments in the area and their well-developed stands of pine. Both the rivers and the still persisting remnants of dune systems add in diversity to the list of species you can observe at Stage 30.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Stage 30 starts at the beach promenade Paseo Marítimo de Estepona, because of that you can see marine birds and shore birds from the very first moment, plus birds typical of inhabited areas.

DID YOU KNOW?

Stage 30 takes you to the last remaining stretches of a great dune belt which, in years gone by, used to cover Malaga´s coast. The dune system of Saladillo-Matas Verdes is especially well preserved and valuable, with three levels of dunes and a good representation of coastal vegetation communities with an Atlantic influence. Because of their botanical uniqueness in the Mediterranean coast the savin junipers are especially noteworthy, followed by a cork oak wood mixed with Portuguese gall oaks. TEXT: JSM

A flock of Sanderlings wintering along Malaga beaches *(Calidris alba).* PHOTO: MG

Urban birds can be seen practically along the whole itinerary of Stage 30, due to the presence of housing developments built very close to the first line of the beach. In winter the abundance of birds at the beach is higher and the gatherings of gulls can reach large numbers. The most frequently seen species are the Lesser Black-backed, Yellow-legged, Black-headed, Mediterranean and Audouin´s Gull; during migration periods you can also find Slender-billed and Little Gull. Winter storms can bring, with a bit of luck, the Black-legged Kittiwake. Occasionally, also in winter, there are some individuals of the Great Black-backed Gull, a giant among Spanish gulls. Using a telescope and spending some time, you may see a few individuals of the Great Skua and the Arctic Skua in flight, chasing gulls. The alcidae family is represented by the Razorbill in winter, either in small groups or single individuals, and using a telescope you may be able to see Puffins. It is a known fact that there are wintering Common Guillemots (Guillemots) along the coast as sometimes beached individuals turn up after great storms. The alcidae family is linked to gulls and waders (Order Charadriiformes), which are seem similar to penguins and which occupy a similar trophic niche as penguins but their taxonomy is not related.

Yellow-legged Gull. PHOTO: JLM

You will be able to see terns, also closely related to gulls; the Sandwich Tern is noteworthy in winter, and it announces its presence with constant screeching. This tern´s characteristic feature is a black beak with a yellow tip. It is worth paying attention to this "chap" during migration periods as there is a possibility it might turn out to be a Lesser Crested Tern, also with black legs but with an orange beak. This bird is still considered a rarity but tends to be more and more frequent. Black and Whiskered Terns are also common on migration passages, as well as the Little Tern, which indeed is the smallest of the family. Other species associated with the coastline are Black-necked Grebe, Cory´s and Balearic Shearwater, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant,

Willow Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Common Scoter, Osprey, Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, the three species of plovers (Common Ringed, Little Ringed and Kentish) Sanderling, Curlew, Whimbrel and Turnstone. Out of the mentioned birds, the Northern Gannet is especially noteworthy with its spectacular dives in search of fish; also Turnstone and Common Sandpipers which keep you

Las Bóvedas, remains of Roman baths located close to the path at Stage 30. PHOTO: ARM

company along some sections, always staying between the water´s edge and the beach. The stage crosses many rivers and streams, for example Padrón, del Castor, Velerín, Guadalmansa, del Saladillo, Guadalmina, Guadaiza, Verde and Guadalpín at the end. This makes it possible to see river birds as well as birds which use watercourses to rest during their migration journeys. For a birdwatcher it is worth making a detour to visit one of the river mouths at the times when water is available, and be able to get close to such species as Mallard, Great Cormorant, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Cattle Egret, Common Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover, Kingfisher, Bee-eater, Grey Wagtail, Nightingale, Cetti´s Warbler, Reed Warbler, Penduline Tit and Golden Oriole, as well as migratory birds during passage periods. The river mouth of Río Guadalmansa is a good spot, where a large patch of brambles attracts a great quantity of migrants.

Moorhen. PHOTO: JLM

Finally, urban birds present in the town centres along the stage are worth a mention; their list is quite extensive,

Northern Gannet, photographed in front of Torre de Casarola. PHOTO: ARM

Mouth of Guadalmansa river. PHOTO: ARM

Family of Mallards. PHOTO: ARM

especially that many urban areas contain pine tree formations which can sometimes compare with a wood, plus, there are also orchards and vegetable gardens. The most frequently seen species are Common Kestrel, Monk Parakeet, Wood Pigeon, Rock Dove, Turtle Dove, Turtle and Collared Dove, Barn Owl, Scops Owl, Little Owl, Red-necked Nightjar, Common and Pallid Swifts, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Crested Lark, Barn and Red-rumped Swallow, Crag and House Martin, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, European Robin, Black Redstart, Stonechat, Common Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Firecrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodchat Shrike, Spotless and Common Starling, House Sparrow, Common Chaffinch, Serin, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Crossbill, Rock Bunting and Corn Bunting.

TIMING

Stage 30 can be recommended year round, even though in winter and spring months a greater number of species can be seen. In autumn, the proximity of Stage 30 to the Strait of Gibraltar can bring a few surprises.

NATURAL VALUES

Many of the rivers which this stage crosses have been declared so called "important sites for the EU", Lugar de Interés Comunitario (LIC) and support healthy populations of Otter. This animal uses the beach to travel between river basins. In fact, it is not uncommon to find Otter tracks and scat along the beach, even quite far away from the river mouths.


Sierra Blanca
STAGE
31
Balcones del Lago
Ermita de los Monjes
Puerto Rico Alto
Arroyo del Tajo Negro
Ojen
Minas del Peñoncillo
Pinar de Nagüeles
Arroyo Guadalpin
Marbella
A-7
AP-7
A-355
A-315
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STAGE 31
Marbella - Ojén

LOCATION

Starting point of Stage 31 is at the Paseo Marítimo de Marbella, at the level of the Arroyo de Guadalpín stream. After walking across Marbella and following the steady but gentle climb you will arrive at the Nagüeles pine wood. Here, the footpath which leads along the southern foothills of the Sierra Blanca begins. The path goes up and down continuously, which provides beautiful views, the sharply contrasting steep peak of La Concha, the natural environment and the tourism-focused coast. After the **17 km** walk you will reach Ojén, via a mirador and walking to the village along the road.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

At the beginning of Stage 31, at the seaside, you can watch sea birds and coastal birds, together with river species at the stream mouth of the Arroyo Guadalpín.

View of Ojén. PHOTO: ARM

DID YOU KNOW?

Traveller, ornithologist, hunter-naturalist and bird and egg collector, the Londoner Thomas Littleton Powys (1833-1896), who signed his publications as Lord Lilford, comments in his 1865 text *"Notes on the Ornithology of Spain"* for the Ibis magazine: «I believe I found these vultures (he is referring to *Gyps fulvus*) in all of the areas I visited in Spain, and in great abundance, particularly in April of 1864 in the Sierra Palmitera near Marbella, where we set up camp for a few days to hunt the Spanish Ibex»", and further: «A handsome pair of Lammergeyers visited our camp near Marbella in April ». TEXT: SMB

A group of walkers at Stage 31. PHOTO: ARM

Next, you will be entering the urban sprawl of Marbella, where urban-dwelling birds are predominant. This continues until the tall buildings give way to lower structures surrounded by landscaped areas and an abundance of trees. This encourages the presence of typical forest birds, also because of the proximity of the Nagüeles pine wood. Once you have passed through the pine wood you will encounter stands of trees alternating with areas of scrub and bare rock continuing practically till the end of this stage.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

At the beginning you can see gulls, whose abundance and the type of predominant species depend on the time of the year. In winter, the Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed Gulls are most common even though you can also find the Yellow-legged. The last named gull is more common at the end of spring and in the first half of summer.

Siskin. PHOTO: JLM

Iberian Chiffchaff. PHOTO: JLM

Northern Gannet and Sandwich Tern are also common during migration periods and winter season, so are the Sanderling, Common Sandpiper and other waders, such as Turnstone. Mallard, Great Cormorant, Grey Heron, Little Egret and Cattle Egret can also be seen along the first section of Stage 31, as well as the progressively more common Monk Parakeet. As you enter the built-up area, Common Kestrel, Eurasian Collared Dove, Pallid and Common Swift, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Common Blackbird, Black Redstart, Common Chiffchaff, Spotless and Common Starling, House Sparrow and Serin are the most common. When passing through the area of low houses and extensive landscaped zones, you will notice that both the Blackcap and the Sardinian Warbler turn up, also Great Tit, Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, and other typical woodland birds. In the "proper" pine wood, where the savin juniper, wild olive and mastic form part of the undergrowth, you will be able see the Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Short-toed Tree Creeper, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Eurasian Siskin and Crossbill, besides the already named birds. The Nagüeles pine wood is an excellent place to see the Crested Tit, an easy to identify bird because of the tuft of feathers on

Pine wood in Sierra Blanca. PHOTO: ARM

its head. The bird has a black collar encircling its whole neck and if you are close enough you will notice the striking red eye colour. This species is much easier to hear than to see, however with a bit of patience you will end up spotting the bird, always accompanied by other individuals of the same species. Past the pine wood the many ups and downs lead through a sequence of cols. Dense tree copses alternate with dolomite limestone zones where herbs and esparto grass rule. The European Robin and Bonelli´s Warbler nest around the streams where Song Thrushes and Redwings congregate in winter. Open areas are the domain of the Common Stonechat, Sardinian Warbler and Crested Lark, and this is a good moment to start paying attention to the sky for a very likely sighting of a raptor. Besides Common Kestrel, you can see Short-toed Eagle,

Drinking trough for animals before Ojén. PHOTO: ARM

Northern Wheatear. PHOTO: JLM

Common Buzzard, Bonelli´s Eagle, Booted Eagle and Golden Eagle, as well as Goshawk and Sparrowhawk. Other well represented species in the area are the Red-necked Nightjar, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Pallid and Common Swifts, which can form great flocks at the foothills of the sierra in search of food, plus the Red-rumped Swallow. At certain points of Stage 31, such as around the open-air pyrite mines, you can find sites which harbour the Eagle Owl as well as wintering and breeding populations of Crag Martin. Before the village of Ojén comes into view, at the outskirt villas, you will be walking through a mature pine wood where the already named forest species turn up again, together with the Tawny Owl and Scops Owl. Along the last section of Stage 31 in the shady areas with trees, such as the surroundings of the Arroyo del Tajo Negro, the scarce Iberian Chiffchaff nests, plus you will be able to spot the Long-tailed Tit. Same environment holds European Robins year round, and one or two Hawfinches might make an appearance.

TIMING

Stage 31 can be walked year round; however July and August would be the least suitable months for birding. Thanks to the stage´s proximity to the Strait of Gibraltar, and the fact that the walk lies along a migration flight path of various species of birds, passage periods produce a good number of species, especially soaring birds (mainly raptors but also Black Stork) and sea birds.

NATURAL VALUES

Along Stage 31 you will have an opportunity to observe the Spanish Ibex, as well as tracks and signs of carnivorous mammals along the well-pronounced path which takes you to Ojén; these mammals mainly include Fox and Stone Marten.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Refugio del Juanar site is 10 kilometres away from Ojén. Around the refugio you can familiarise yourself with the Spanish Fir Trees (pinsapos). There is also a breeding station for the Spanish Ibex where the government environment board, called Consejería de Medio Ambiente de la Junta de Andalucía, keeps about fifty individuals of that species for research. The surroundings of El Juanar support a rich community of forest birds and it is a good site to watch mountain birds.

Intersection at Puerto de Las Pitas. PHOTO: ARM

Marbella in the background. PHOTO: ARM


Sierra Blanca
Sierra Mata
Sierra Negra
Sierra Alpuata
Sierra de Mijas
Puerto Colorado
Mirador Etapa 32
Mijas
Valtocado
La Alqueria
Doña Pilar
Puerto de la Alberca, cabecera arroyo del Laurel
Mirador de Sierra de Mijas desde Loma del Flamenco
Ojen
Alcornocal de Cordobachina
Puerto de los Carneros
Puente sobre el Arroyo Jobretin
Vado sobre el Arroyo Majar de la Parra
Barriada de Entrerríos
Mijas Golf
Campo Mijas
Las Lagunas
Cerros del Aguila
STAGE 32
km
0
2
El Chaparral
Rio Real
El Rosario
Los Monteros
Elviria
Ricmar
Sitio de Calahonda

STAGE 32
Ojén - Mijas


Ruined farmhouse at Mirador de Las Águilas. PHOTO: ARM

LOCATION

Stage 32 is the longest of the Great Malaga Path stages, covering almost **40 km**. It begins in the western part of Ojén, in the Almadán area, where you need to take a forest track. The stage ends in the northern part of Mijas village, in limestone mountain surroundings similar to the starting point. The end of Stage 32 is marked by the chapel called Ermita del Calvario where you walk down to the village centre. Between the mountain chains of the Sierra Blanca and the Sierra de Mijas, which respectively mark the beginning and the end of the stage, you will be crossing the Sierra de Alpujata, composed of noticeably orange-coloured peroditite rock.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

This text, describing Stage 32, would have been completely different if not for the many forest fires which have happened during the recent years, the 2012 being the most memorable due to its magnitude. The fires in the summer of 2014 have also contributed to the changed look of the area. Along

DID YOU KNOW?

The surroundings of the Strait of Gibraltar are a strategic point for the hundreds of thousands of **soaring birds** every summer. The site´s geographical location causes all of the Western Europe´s migrants to gather here in order to cross over to the African continent. Soaring birds use thermals to travel, in this way maximizing the energy intended for migration voyages. Thermals do not form over the sea surface since water absorbs the Sun´s heat, consequently these birds need to look for narrow channels where they can minimise, as much as possible, the distance they have to fly over water. Stage 32 provides an opportunity to enjoy the migration of many soaring bird species, which include the Black Kite, Osprey, Booted and Short-toed Eagle and Sparrowhawk. The most suitable spot to do that is the Mirador de las Águilas. TEXT: ARM

Canary Island Pines sprouting new shoots after the fire. PHOTO: ARM

the major part of the stage forest bird communities have been, quite simply, ruined, and where there used to be well established populations of Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Long-tailed Tits and Eurasian Jays, nowadays you can just see, with a bit of luck, Crested Larks, Stonechats, Sardinian and Dartford Warblers, Goldfinches, Linnets, Rock Buntings and Swifts pursuing insects in flight. In spite of this, good stands of cork oak can be found along the way and you will come across some scrub and isolated trees, mainly Canary Island pines and eucalyptus, which harbour long-established birdlife. Both in Ojén and in Mijas you can enjoy the typical urban birds and in the cultivated areas you may be able to discover species which, possibly, have found here an environment closest to the pre-fire woodland.

"No entry" waymark placed in the section affected by the 2012 fire. PHOTO: ARM

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

In Ojén you will have an opportunity to see such urban-dwelling birds as Collared Dove, Pallid and Common Swift, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Spotless and Common Starling, House Sparrow, Black Redstart in winter and White Wagtail and Meadow Pipit on the outskirts of the village close to water. Very soon the first orchards appear, some of them including tropical fruit trees, and you can see the

View of Sierra Alpujata from Mirador de Las Águilas. PHOTO: ARM

Common Blackbird, European Robin, Sardinian Warbler, Great Tit and finches such as Goldfinch, Serin, Greenfinch and Common Chaffinch. The areas of scrub which follow next, the domain of Mediterranean dwarf palm, juniper, gorse and esparto grass, hold such species as Turtle Dove, Red-necked Nightjar, Bee-eater, Crested Lark, Common Stonechat, Song Thrush, Zitting Cisticola, Dartford Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Woodchat Shrike and Rock Bunting. As Stage 32 continues, it crosses a stand of cork where you can also see Blue Tit, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper and Eurasian Jay. Starting from the area called Cordobachina, the first signs of

Booted Eagle. PHOTO: JW

the past forest fires mentioned earlier are becoming visible. From this point, along a good stretch of the stage, the prevailing vegetation consists of sprouting Canary Island pines and eucalyptus trees which have survived the flames. In spite of the efforts to reforest the area, it will take years for the Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Nuthatches and Long-tailed Tits to inhabit the place again and to create stable populations. Surprisingly, Booted and Short-toed Eagles as well as Goshawks and Sparrowhawks continue to be seen here, also Green Woodpeckers and Golden Orioles are still heard around the streams. In spring of 2014 it was confirmed that a pair of Short-toed Eagles nested and reproduced atop a burnt tree. Similarly, a pair of Bonelli´s

Short-toed Eagle. PHOTO: ARM

Black Kite. PHOTO: JLM

Eagle breeds along Stage 32, using a cork oak tree which has survived the 2012 fire.

The southern slopes of Sierra Alpujata and Sierra Blanca are good areas to see soaring birds on migration and one of the best viewpoints is located at the Cerrro del Púlpito, only a few metres away from The Great Malaga Path, not far from the "centro de tratamiento y rehabilitación contra la drogadicción" (drug addiction rehabilitation and treatment centre).

Egyptian Vulture and Short-toed Eagle. PHOTO: ARM

The *Additional Information* section contains description of the site. The site also provides a chance to see the Eagle Owl, Raven, Peregrine Falcon, Black Wheatear, and, before the fire, the scarce Bullfinch used to be present during winter season. The downhill section leading from the viewpoint has also been burnt; the track is lined with recovering Canary Island pines all the way up to the Entrerríos area. In this area the riverbed forms several pools which contain water year round and you will note how the diversity and abundance of birds is significantly higher compared to the previous part of the stage. Wood Pigeon, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Grey Wagtail, Common Nightingale, Cetti´s Warbler, Blackcap and Spotted Flycatcher appear, so does the Cirl Bunting and again Tits and Finches turn up, as they did at the start of Stage 32.

Common Redstart. PHOTO: JLM

From this point to Sierra de Mijas you will come across gorse and broom scrub harbouring Sardinian Warbler and Dartford Warbler and species typical of open spaces. Ermita del Calvario chapel, surrounded by large stone pine trees, marks the arrival in Mijas. Walking down to the village again you can see birds which are typically found in populated areas.

TIMING

This is a very long stage but most of it can be done by car. Considering the current status of the area due to the fires in the past, it is recommended to birdwatch around the sites where some trees remain. This can be done year round, and from mid August to the end of September you can visit the Mirador de las Aguilas in order to enjoy the spectacle of migration of raptors and Black Storks.

NATURAL VALUES

Sierra Alpujata forms another peroditite massif, similar to Sierra Bermeja and it shares some of the endemic species typical of soils rich in heavy metals. Along the section which crosses Sierra Alpujata you can encounter, among other species, many specimens of *Armeria colorata, Staehelina baetica* and *Silene inaperta* subsp. *serpentinicola*.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The viewpoint "Mirador de las Aguilas", as christened by Paco Ríos and Blas López, is an excellent place to enjoy raptor migration, mainly in autumn. This site provides a highly representative sample of birds which can be seen at the Strait of Gibraltar itself.

For many years, Paco and Blas, with the help of other birdwatchers, have been tracking migration passages in the area, revealing the magnitude of the bird migration phenomenon around the coastal mountain chains of Malaga. Black Storks, Ospreys, Egyptian Vultures, Griffon Vultures, Honey Buzzards, Black Kites, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, Sparrowhawks, Montagu´s, Marsh and Hen Harriers, Lesser Kestrels, Hobbies, Eleonora´s Falcons and Peregrine Falcons are the species which can be seen merely a few kilometres away from heavily populated areas, set in beautiful landscapes.

Honey Buzzard on migration.
PHOTO: JW


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Sierra de Mijas
Sierra Blanca
Sierra Castillejos
Mirador de la parte sur de Málaga
Mirador de la Hoya de Málaga y Valle Guadalhorce
Encina del Puerto de la Media Luna
Regajo del Quejigal
Ermita del Calvario o de la Virgen de la Peña
STAGE 33
Mijas
Benalmádena
La Alqueria
Lomas de Mijas
La Sierrezuela
Torreblanca del Sol
Santana
La Capellanía
Peñablanquilla
Torremuelle
A-7
A-368

STAGE 33
Mijas - Benalmádena

LOCATION

Stage 33 begins at the road linking Mijas, Coín and Alhaurín el Grande, via the Puerto de los Pescadores pass. The **18 km** walk leads along the waymarked local Mijas paths and towards Cerro del Moro summit with aerials at the top. Having passed through a tunnel under the motorway you will come across a park in Calle Luis Cernuda, in the northern part of Benalmádena, where Stage 33 ends.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The birdlife of Stage 33 is influenced by the high altitude of the major part of the stage and the type of plant formations it covers. These include pine woods and some holm oaks which are gaining more territory.

Little Owl. PHOTO: JLM

As a result, there is a mix of mountain species, woodland birds, and birds characteristic to partially degraded areas (due to past forest fires).

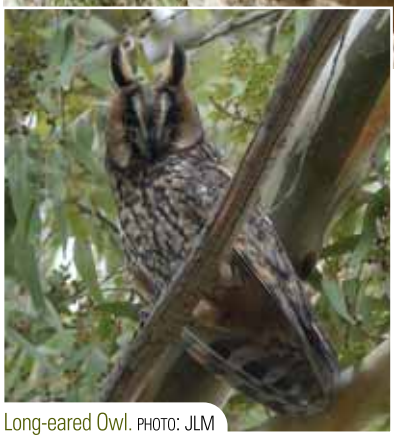
HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

This stage also shows effects of the fires which have devastated the Sierra de Mijas. First part of the walk leads through an area with dwarf palm and esparto grass where Crested Lark, Stonechat and Sardinian Warbler are the main feathered characters. However, the different pine formations you will come across during

DID YOU KNOW?

The vegetation of the Sierra de Mijas is characterized by extensive pine forests with very diverse undergrowth. The highly skeletal soils (exceedingly shallow soils, also called orthents or lithosols) are carpeted by bushes of herbs which fill the mountains with colour. The flora includes two very interesting endemic species found in sandy areas created through the decomposition of marble, *Linaria clementei* and *Linaria huteri*, the latter being a local Mijas endemic. TEXT: JSM

Black Wheatear´s nest. PHOTO: JLM



Long-eared Owl. PHOTO: JLM

Stage 33 (maritime, stone and Aleppo pines) also hold such birds as Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Pallid and Common Swifts, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Common Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Eurasian Jay, Common Chaffinch, Common Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Crossbill, and Rock Bunting. Very soon you will be passing by one of the quarries and here it is relatively easy to see Booted and Short-toed Eagle and Common Kestrel. Other birds of prey present along the stage are Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Northern Goshawk, associated with the woodland. The first stone pine wood is becoming more and more valuable as other woods are being consumed by fires at quite a fast pace. In winter, the vegetation supports Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, European Robin, Song Thrush, Redwing, Dunnock, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, and Eurasian Siskin, birds which come from Central and Northern Europe. Similarly to previous stages, the number of species to see at Stage 33 increases significantly during migration passages. Worthy of a mention here are the passerines which settle along the Sierra de Mijas and remain there for a few days at a time.

Common Chaffinch. PHOTO: JLM

These include Black-eared and Northern Wheatear, Common Blackstart, Subalpine, Melodious and Western Orphean Warbler and Pied Flycatcher. It is also possible to find the Common Rock Thrush. Moreover, when there is a prevailing westerly wind in August, September and October, you can see raptors on migration, mainly Booted Eagle and Black Kite, although the assortment of birds could include any of the migrants which use the Strait of Gibraltar to cross over to Africa. Nocturnal birds of prey present at Stage 33 are Barn Owl, Eagle Owl, Tawny Owl, Little Owl and Scops Owl, which, along with the Red-necked Nightjar, add ambient sounds to the walk as soon as the sun goes down. Once you reach the higher altitudes of this stage, Thekla Lark can be added to the previously named species. This is also an area where Blue Rock Thrush appears, around the most prominent rocks and it almost always perches on the small rocks on top of the steepest outcrops. Here you can also find Crag Martin, Black Wheatear, Raven and Rock Bunting. As soon as there are holm oaks around, you are likely to

Juvenile Blue Rock Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

Pied Flycatcher. PHOTO: JLM

see Melodious Warbler, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper and Blue Tit, which are also present along Stage 33. The highlight of the stage is the last section, the area of Tajo del Quejigal where the high ground allows for generous views and where you can admire the gorge with well-preserved vegetation and the cliffs which hold an outstanding sample of rock-dwelling bird species. Around this area you can see, among other species, the Bonelli´s Eagle, Golden Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. Along the final section of Stage 33, similarly to the first section, there are species accustomed to living in human environment, mainly Swifts, Rock Dove, *var. domestica,* Collared Dove, Barn Swallow, Spotless and Common Starling, House Sparrow.

TIMING

Stage 33 harbours interesting species throughout the whole year, however the hottest months are best avoided. Similarly to previous stages of the walk, there is a greater wealth of birds to be seen during migration periods.

NATURAL VALUES

The Sierra de Mijas possesses many natural values despite of having suffered many intrusions caused by humans (mainly the quarries and the stress caused by construction industry). The sierra holds the Spanish Ibex and a large quantity of mammals including Fox, Badger, Genet, Stone Marten, Weasel, Wildcat and Egyptian Mongoose.

Female Sparrowhawk. PHOTO: JLM

Additionally, it is worth highlighting the presence of interesting populations of bats, for example the Greater Horseshoe Bat, Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Geoffroy´s Bat and the Common Bentwing Bat. Amphibians, found close to water, include Fire Salamander and Spanish Painted Frog.

Black Wheatears. PHOTO: JLM


Alhaurin de la Torre
El Alamillo
Los Tomillares
Pinos de Alhaurin
STAGE 34
Corrales del Tío Caliche
Mirador de los tajos del Arroyo de Zambrano
N
O
E
S
Puerto Viejo y acceso al Calamorro
Puerto de la Cruz
Sierra Castillejos
A-7
A-368
Arroyo de la Miel
Benalmádena
La Sierrezuela
Santana
Torrequebrada
Capellanía
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STAGE 34
Benalmádena - Alhaurín de la Torre

LOCATION

Stage 34 starts in Calle Luís Cernuda in Benalmádena, near the motorway called Autovía del Mediterráneo, which you must cross using the Arroyo Hondo underpass. First part of Stage 34 follows the motorway and leads uphill along the Tajo del Quejigal and to the Cerro Calamorro, which can also be reached by the Benalmádena cable car.

During the **12, 3 km** this stage takes you from the southern slope of the Sierra de Mijas to the mountainside facing the Valle del Guadalhorce. The route ends in the area of Urbanización de los Manantiales housing estate, in the Camino de las Viñas in the town of Alhaurín de la Torre.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Even though Stage 34 clearly has a woodland flavour, the scrub and low vegetation is predominant and in some places there are mature

DID YOU KNOW?

Pallid Swift. PHOTO: TT

The high peaks are a very good place **to see Swifts** during the spring and summer months. This is a bird which is best adapted to flight, to the point that it only lands during the breeding period, in order to lay and incubate the eggs; the rest of the year is spent in the air. Their diet is based exclusively on insects, which makes. Swifts a highly beneficial group of birds. In the province of Malaga you can mainly see 3 different species, two of which are very similar (Common and Pallid Swift). The third species is visibly bigger and easily distinguished as it has a white belly and throat. House Martin and Barn Swallow may be confused at first with Swifts, however if you take into account some basic features you will be able to distinguish them easily. Although all nest on buildings, Swifts do not build nests unlike Swallows and Martins; they use existing holes and cracks. Another unmistakable difference is that Swifts rarely fly low to the ground, while Swallows and Martins tend to do so. Finally, probably the clearest difference is the colour of plumage when seen at close range; in the case of Swifts it is completely dark, while Barn Swallows and House Martins have white underparts. When comparing the Common and Pallid Swifts, the differences are not easily discernible and require good light to be able to tell the tone of the plumage; they can also be identified by their call if you have a well trained ear. Other less common species of Swifts, which you may also see, are White-rumped Swift and Little Swift, the latter started breeding in the Iberian Peninsula about ten years ago. TEXT: ARM

Stonechat. PHOTO: JLM

formations of fine scrub consisting of juniper, myrtle, terebinth and mastic. You will also come across pine tree formations and interesting rocky ridges. Consequently, you will find here birds associated with wood formations, open spaces and rocky environment.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

You will be leaving Benalmádena along a motorway and because of this the influence of populated area on the birdlife at the starting point of Stage 34 is less noticeable than at the beginning of other stages. Very soon you will be in a pine wood with dwarf palms, mastic, esparto grass and some juniper. Still, you will see a few Collared Doves, Common Kestrels, Starlings and House Sparrows. At the Tajo del Quejigal, which you reached during the previous stage, you will be able to see Common Wood Pigeon, Turtle Dove, Pallid and Common Swift, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Chaffinch, Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Siskin, Crossbill and Rock Bunting. This environment also provides an opportunity to see Booted and Bonelli´s Eagle, Sparrowhawk and Common Kestrel along with such species as Black Wheatear, Black Redstart and Blue Rock Thrush. At the foot of the Tajo you will find maritime pine accompanied by mature vegetation which supports Wren and, in winter, Song Thrush and Redwing, plus a few Dunnocks.

Tree Pipit. PHOTO: JLM

Higher up, where the vegetation is sparse, Sardinian Warbler is one of the most frequent birds; it appears in smaller numbers at other points of the walk from the very beginning.

Additionally to the Sardinian, there is Crested Lark and Stonechat year round and some Meadow Pipits in winter. Similarly to the previous stages, along the higher sections of the path you can watch Swifts during the time when they are with us, mainly from March to September. Past the Puerto Blanquillo there is a formation of Aleppo and maritime pine where you can spot the Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper and Eurasian Jay, as well as previously named woodland species. In the surroundings of Jabarcuz the woodland birds continue, as well as birds which favour bare rocks. You will be able to see again the Bonelli´s Eagle, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear, Jackdaw and Rock Bunting, among other species. At sunset, at the end of autumn, you may hear the Eagle Owl at this site.

Whinchat. PHOTO: JLM

Sardinian Warbler. PHOTO: JLM

Once you are in the Barranco de Zambrano with its exuberant vegetation which includes many types of climbing plants, you will notice a higher abundance of birds. The most common ones are Blackbird, Blackcap, Bonelli´s Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Great Tit and Chaffinch. The last section of Stage 34 crosses cultivated areas where you can find Blackbird, Stonechat and finches. Farmland gives way to buildings where the main species are Collared Dove, Common Starling and House Sparrow.

TIMING

The most interesting birds of Stage 34 can be seen year round since the seasonal changes in birdlife are not very marked here. In winter there is a higher abundance of birds, with the added wintering birds. During migration passages you are very likely to see migrating birds of prey and passerines.

NATURAL VALUES

In the sandy areas along this stage you can find the Spiny-footed Lizard, a reptile which is well adapted to sandy terrain and very typical in this

Whitethroat. PHOTO: JLM

type of habitat. It has a red tail as the Spanish name of the lizard, Coliroja, indicates (cola-tail, roja-red). Juveniles have vertical black and white lines on their backs which makes identification quick and easy.

Serin. PHOTO: JLM


STAGE
35
La Castañeta
A-7845
A-357
A-7054
A-7054R
Málaga
MA-20
MA-21
Zapata
Acueducto "Arcos de Zapata"
Peñón-Molina
A-7
A-7051
Paraje Natural "Desembocadura del Guadalhorce"
MA-21
A-7
km
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E
S
A-404
Churriana
San Julián
Guadalmar
Los Tomillares

STAGE 35
Alhaurín de la Torre - Malaga

LOCATION

Stage 35, the last stage of the Great Malaga Path, begins at the Peñón de Zapata, a district of Alhaurín de la Torre. The flat **12, 9 km** walk gets you through a complex metropolitan area and reaches the beach promenade Paseo Marítimo Antonio Banderas, where you will find kilometre zero of the Great Malaga Path at the entrance of the Diputación Provincial de Málaga building.

White-headed Ducks. PHOTO: JAS

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The area around Peñon de Zapata is strongly marked by agriculture, by the proximity to the Río Guadalhorce and to the airport.

DID YOU KNOW?

Vicente Martínez y Montes (1812-1876), a Granada-born doctor who resided in Malaga, in his work *"Topografía Médica de la Ciudad de Málaga"* from 1852 commented on Malaga city´s ornithology: «we follow the banks of Río Guadalhorce, the fertile plains and adjacent vegetable plots; we encounter non-web footed riverside birds, the Grey Heron, White Stork, Cormorant, Avocet, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Turnstone, etc». He includes the web-footed birds: Moorhen, Coot, Black-headed Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Greylag Goose, Mallard, Northern Shoveler and Eurasian Teal. He also records the presence of the White-headed Duck, *(Oxyura leucocephala)* for the first time for the Iberian Peninsula at the Desembocadura del Río Guadalhorce, which he names *Sarceta de cola espinosa* (Spiny-tailed Teal). Francis Carter (1741-1783), referring to the Río Guadalhorce, comments in his *"Journey from Gibraltar to Malaga"* that: «The river of Malaga is large and not fordable; its banks are inhabited by numerous tribes of the beautiful Aveluco (*Abejaruco,* the Bee-eater), whose brilliant plumage shines with yellow, blue and green tints, are not to be equalled by any of the feathered tribe in Europe: these birds are of the size of a large thrush, and are only to be met with in this province». TEXT: SMB

Flock of Black-winged Stilts. PHOTO: ARM

From the very beginning of Stage 35 you will be walking past orchards, vegetable plots and farmland with crops that become an oasis for birds during migration periods. Here, the irrigation canals and ditches play an important role for wildlife during dry periods. Soon, you will encounter the Guadalhorce river, where in addition to numerous water birds you will have a chance to see other birds that frequent the area in search of water and food. Shortly after crossing the Guadalhorce river, the walk takes you to Malaga city where typical urban species are predominant.

Glossy Ibis. PHOTO: JAS

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

This stage crosses the area of the province of Malaga with the most number of bird records, the lower stretch of the river Guadalhorce. In the beginning you can see species linked to populated areas, Eurasian Collared Dove, Pallid Swift, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Common and Spotless Starling and House Sparrow, and as soon you enter cultivated areas with irrigation channels and trees, you can observe various species of herons

Osprey. PHOTO: JLM

and egrets (Grey Heron, Little Egret and Cattle Egret), Turtle Dove, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, and passerines typical of this type of environment (Crested Lark, White and Grey Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Common Stonechat, European Robin Common Nightingale, Bluethroat, Common Blackbird, Song Thrush, Cetti´s Warbler, Zitting Cisticola, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Woodchat Shrike, Golden Oriole, Jackdaw, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Eurasian Siskin and Corn Bunting). This is an environment where the birds gather during migration, although crops have been encroaching on their territory in a gradual but unstoppable manner. In the fields of alfalfa some of the rare species have been recorded such as Aquatic Warbler and Savi's Warbler. If you make this trip late in the evening or very early

Booted Eagle. PHOTO: JLM

Bluethroat. PHOTO: JLM

Marbled Duck is an occasional breeder in the Paraje Natural. PHOTO: JB

Coot. PHOTO: JLM

in the morning, preferably in summer, you will have a chance to find Little Owl, Barn Owl and Red-necked Nightjar. As soon as you start walking along the Río Guadalhorce you may be able to spot Great Cormorant, Night Heron, Grey Heron, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Mallard, Common Pochard, Common Buzzard, Osprey, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Quail, Coot, Moorhen, Stone-curlew, Little Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Yellow-legged, Lesser-black Backed and Black-headed Gulls, Collared Dove, Monk Parakeet, Kingfisher and Red-rumped Swallow, besides other species. At the site called Paraje Natural de la Desembocadura del río Guadalhorce, the mouth of the river, you can view up close the Great Cormorant, Grey Heron, the previously named gulls, the Booted

Eagle, Common Kestrel and Jackdaw. As you cross the bridge over the Río Guadalhorce, the bird diversity decreases, since now you are entering the city itself. However, the bird species which are present here can reach very good numbers. Crested lark, Zitting Cisticola, finches (Goldfinch, Greenfinch y Serin), can bee seen around here mostly thanks to the existence of open fallow land. Most common species however include Yellow-legged, Lesser Black-backed and Black-headed Gull, Eurasian Collared Dove, Rock Dove, Common and Pallid Swift, Monk Parakeet, Spotless and Common Starling plus House Sparrow. It is a good idea to have a look at the tops of the tall chimneys which mark the end of Stage 35, and the end of The Great Malaga Path, since they serve as habitual perches for the Peregrine Falcon.

TIMING

Although Stage 35 can be done throughout the year given its short route, migration time and winter season are most appropriate for birdwatching. In summer, the number of species is significantly lower.

NATURAL VALUES

Irrigation canals host populations of two vulnerable species of Unionidae family, the *Potomida pictorum* and the *Unio littoralis*. These large freshwater molluscs are very sensitive to the introduction of exotic species. Passing through the channels you will be able to see shells of molluscs eaten by Otters.

Purple Heron. PHOTO: MG

Knot. PHOTO: MMA

The first part of the stage, up to the Guadalhorce river crossing, holds different species of mammals. Worth a mention are the Otter, Badger, Genet, Weasel and Water Vole. A well-conducted search for prints along the muddy paths will allow you to detect the presence of these animals.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Stage 35 passes through the northern edge of Paraje Natural del Río Guadalhorce. This site has viewpoints/hides for birdwatching, and a very large diversity of species which makes visiting the site highly recommended. There is a network of footpaths connecting the different viewpoints which show you the site´s different natural environments (beach, tamarisk formations, salt marshes and lagoons). Although the site is an area of great

Kingfisher on the beach. PHOTO: MMA

importance for wintering birds, the migration periods are highly recommended since the mouth of Río Guadalhorce is a rest area for a lot of species. Over seventy species can be easily seen during this time of year in a single day´s outing. During the months of June, July, August diversity is lower but the species which are present are quite interesting. The most prominent species include Little Bittern, White-headed Duck, Common Scoter, Marsh Harrier, Audouin´s Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Sandwich Tern, Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Purple Swamp Hen, Short-eared Owl, and Barn Owl. This is also a well-known site for species which are considered rarities and they can be spotted in the area fairly frequently; for example White-winged Tern, Richard´s Pipit, or Isabelline Shrike.

Monk Parakeet at the entrance of the nest. PHOTO: ARM

Water pipit. PHOTO: JLM

The Best Birding Sites of the Great Malaga Path

The Great Malaga Path provides a magnificent setting for the development of birding tourism. However, if you consider the most common profile of a birdwatcher in the South of Spain so far, their interest would be focused mainly on certain stages of the Great Path and, in some cases, on particular sections of those stages. Even more so, it is vital to differentiate between two types of birdwatching tourists. A specialised tourist travels to Malaga from far away places and intends to optimize his or her visit by seeing the biggest number of species possible. Then, there is a tourist whose interest for birds may be peeked just by a certain stage of the walk, but their main objective is walking, and birds are just added value to the outing. For this second group of tourists all of the 35 stages have some elements of interest. Gradually, there will be educational materials made available and information panels put up to promote watching and identifying bird species as well as the interpretation of landscape and its birds.

The Bee-eater, a common species along the Great Malaga Path during migration and breeding periods.
PHOTO: TT

STAGE 2. Rincón de la Victoria – Vélez Malaga

The most interesting part of the stage is centred around the Vélez river. Although the river mouth does not form part of the Great Malaga Path, it is worth a visit throughout the year´s cycle, especially the migration periods and breeding season. There is a birdwatching viewpoint and information panels.

Squacco Heron, a species which can be seen frequently on migration. PHOTO: MG

STAGE 3. Vélez Malaga – Torrox

Puerto de la Caleta stands out from all of the stage, considering its appeal for watching sea and coastal birds practically year round, especially gulls in winter and spring.

Lesser Crested Tern is a rare species which can be seen in the area during migration periods, mainly in autumn. PHOTO: TT

STAGE 6. Frigiliana – Cómpeta

The high altitude sections of this stage hold a community of interesting mountain species. This community is highly valuable to a birdwatching tourist. The section between Arroyo Zarzadillo and Cortijo María Dolores is a highlight, where Dartford Warblers are joined by Rock Bunting, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear, and Short-toed, Golden and Bonelli´s Eagle.

Rock Bunting emitting its typical call. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 8. Canillas de Aceituno – Periana

The first section between Canillas de Aceituno and Alcaucín stands out at this stage, where you can see mountain species in an area with highly valuable landscape.

Adult Bonelli´s Eagle, a species easily seen along this section. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 9. Periana – Alfarnatejo (Pulgarín Alto)

The most interesting part of this stage can be accessed in a vehicle. This is the part between the area around Cortijo de Marchamonas and the end of the stage in Pulgarín Bajo.

Red-billed Chough. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 10. Alfarnatejo (Pulgarín Alto) - Alfarnate

The surrounding area of the cliffs of Tajo de Gómer and Doña Ana constitutes a great setting to watch species typical of environments with sheer rock faces. Moreover, there is a varied and interesting community of passerines.

Woodchat Shrike. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 11. Alfarnate – Villanueva del Rosario

The section of this stage which leads along the highest altitudes, in the Sierra de Jobo until the area of the Mirador de Hondonero, also harbours highly interesting species such as Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Black-eared Wheatear, Common Rock Thrush and Red-billed Chough.

Subadult Golden Eagle. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 12. Villanueva del Rosario – Archidona

This Stage leads through dehesas of great value however the most interesting area is focused around the Hoz de Marín, where you can find river birds combined with rock-dwelling species in an environment with beautiful landscapes.

Hawfinch. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 16. Cuevas Bajas - Alameda

In spite of the fact that this stage leads entirely through farmland, it also passes through the Barranco Hondo, a very interesting area to observe steppe birds.

Male Little Bustard. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 17. Alameda - Fuentedepiedra

This stage contains two areas of special interest for birdwatchers. The section which crosses the Sierra de la Camorra is probably the best place in the province to see the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin and the last section contains a set of lagoons which allow you to see interesting aquatic birds year round.

Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin bringing food for its chicks. PHOTO: TT

STAGE 18. Fuentedepiedra - Campillos

Breeding colony of Greater Flamingoes, with some pairs of Lesser Flamingoes. PHOTO: ARM

The stage leads through an area of highly valuable birdlife from beginning to end, and thus the entire stage can be recommended. At the beginning the closeness of the Fuente de la Piedra Lagoon allows you to see aquatic species although the path does not follow the very edge of the lagoon and thus lets you see as well the winter concentrations of Golden Plovers and Stone-curlews. The southern tip of the lagoon and the grain fields found after crossing the stream Arroyo de las Tinajas are good areas for Cranes and Calandra Larks. The area around the lagoons Lobón and Dulce de Campillos will get you close to Montagu´s Harrier, Lesser Kestrel, Gull-billed Tern, White-headed Duck, Ferruginous Duck, plus others.

STAGE 19. Campillos – Campillos (reservoirs)

At this stage the areas which constitute the points of major interest for birds are the wetlands you pass by directly, such as Laguna del Cerero, de Camuñas and de la Marcela.

Moreover, the Lagunas de Capacete, Salada and Dulce de Campillos are also recommended as they are close to the route even though the path does not take you to them directly. The species of interest which can be seen at the lagoons are White-headed Duck and Ferruginous Duck.

Ferruginous Duck next to Common Pochard. PHOTO: JR

STAGE 20. Campillos (reservoirs) – Álora (El Chorro station)

This stage can also be recommended practically as a whole. The section which are worth highlighting for birdwatching is the Tajo del Cabrito, which holds highly important rock-dwelling species and is a place with great diversity. Also, the final section of this stage, as soon as you reach the great vertical rock faces.

A subadult Egyptian Vulture. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 23. El Burgo – Ronda

Possibly this is the stage with greatest birding value for a tourist from central or northern Europe. The first section, up to the holm oak which marks the spot where you turn off a forest track and take a path, allows you to see river species, woodland birds and rock-dwellers, where Bonelli´s Eagle and Peregrine Falcon can be quite easily encountered.

The next highlighted section leads from Puerto de Lifa up to the Cortijo de Lifa where there is a medley of woodland species and mountain scrub species.

Juvenile Short-toed eagle. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 24. Ronda – Benaoján station

A pair of flying Griffon Vultures. PHOTO: JW

The starting point of this stage is a good place to spend some time birding as it holds highly interesting species which treat the Tajo de Ronda as a substitute of a large rock face. What is more, the presence of a river makes the passerine community very diverse. A site to be recommended, even though the Great Malaga Path does not pass by it, is the Cueva del Gato cave.

STAGE 25. Benaoján station – Jimera de Líbar

The length of this stage and the diversity of species you can see make it recommended along its entire itinerary. During migration periods it is easy to see a variety of birds of prey.

Hobby, a species which can be seen on migration; occasionally it may nest along the stage. PHOTO: JW

Booted Eagle. PHOTO: JW

STAGE 26. Jimera de Líbar - Benalauría

The section of major interest of this stage is between the settlement of Siete Pilas and the village of Benalauría, and, mainly, the area surrounding the Puerto de Benalauría, where a community of interesting rock-dwelling species resides. Also, during migration season it is quite easy to see a great diversity of raptors.

Great Spotted Woodpecker. PHOTO: JLM

STAGE 27. Benalauría - Genalguacil

This is an eminently wooded stage with a wide variety of species which can practically be seen along the entire itinerary and the stage can be recommended as a whole. This stage leads you through an area of valuable natural vegetation which holds various species of quercus and typical riverside vegetation.

STAGE 29. Casares - Estepona

The final section of previous Stage 28 (Genalguacil–Casares) can also be recommended because of its great value as far as landscapes are concerned, especially the views of the Strait with the towering Rock of Gibraltar, and Jbel Mussa in Morocco.

Moreover, the contrast between the centre of Casares with Sierra Crestellina adds a very interesting touch. From the very village of Casares it is possible to see Griffon Vultures at short distances, as well as other birds of prey and soaring birds, mainly during migration periods.

A flock of Griffon Vultures in flight. PHOTO: ARM

STAGE 30. Estepona - Marbella

This is a stage which allows you to see a great quantity of sea birds. During migration periods and winter season it is worth using a telescope to be able to reach those birds which pass by somewhat further away from the coast. Other interesting sections are the mouths of the rivers Padrón, Velerín, Guadalmansa, Guadalmina and Guadaiza.

Turnstone is common along the beaches at this stage in winter season. PHOTO: TT

STAGE 32. Ojén - Mijas

Unfortunately the 2012 fire has burnt down a great part of this stage which has caused a notable decline in bird communities. Even so, there is a recommended section of this stage, the so-called Mirador de las Aguilas, at the foothills of The Sierra Alpujata, a place with valuable landscapes where great concentrations of soaring birds occur during post-breeding migration.

Migrating Black Kites. PHOTO: ARM

STAGE 33.
Mijas - Benalmádena

This stage´s highlight is the last section which leads along the Arroyo del Quejigal, given the closeness to the centre of Benalmádena and the diversity of mountain and rock-dwelling bird species which can be seen, including the Bonelli´s Eagle.

Blue Rock Thrush in its typical environment can be seen along this stage. PHOTO: TT

STAGE 35. Alhaurín de la Torre - Malaga

Birdwatching is very rewarding throughout the whole stage. The cultivated land at the start holds an interesting variety of species which becomes notably more bountiful during migration periods. As soon as you arrive at the riverbed of Río Guadalhorce the aquatic species will draw your attention.

Little Bittern is a breeding and wintering species in the Paraje Natural Desembocadura del Rio Guadalhorce. PHOTO: JB

Even though this stage does not cross the Paraje Natural Desembocadura del Río Guadalhorce, a visit is recommended especially that there are hides available and there is a great wealth of species.

A view of a Great Cormorant roost which occurs in the central lagoon of Paraje Natural de la Desembocadura del Río Guadalhorce in winter season. San Antón Mountain in the background.
PHOTO: ARM

The Great Malaga Path provides an excellent sample of the wide variety of habitats and landscapes in the province with a great diversity of bird species. However, there are sites which, for now, are not included in the route or in the 35 stages of this book. This map shows locations of these important birding sites as well as sites which are attractive because of their environment and interesting landscapes, such as the Torcal de Antequera.

BEST SITES

1. Torcal de Antequera
2. Western sector of Laguna Fuente de Piedra
3. Lagunas de Campillos (Marcela, Capacete, Salada, Cerero and Lobón)
4. Laguna de La Ratosa
5. Lagunas de Archidona
6. Río Grande, upstream from the confluence with Río Guadalhorce
7. Refugio de Juanar
8. Surroundings of Refugio de Quejigales (Sierra de Las Nieves)
9. Llanos de Líbar
10. Río Jorox
11. Complejo Tajo del Molino-Peñarrubia
12. Punta de Calaburras Birdwatching Point
13. Montes de Malaga
14. Mid-section of Río Guadalhorce

Legend:

- The Great Malaga Path
- City/Town/village centre
- Motorway
- Road
- Train line
- River
- Reservoir
- Province limits

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BIRDWATCHING in MALAGA ALONG THE GREAT PATH

Birdwatching is an activity which is accessible to anyone and it can be a very gratifying way of getting closer to nature. The vivid colours, fascinating behaviour, diversity of life strategies, the ubiquity (try to imagine a place you can go to and not hear or see some sort of feathered species), the ability to fly.

It is namely this ability to fly and to undertake long journeys which, in my humble opinion, gives birds their most fascinating and seductive characteristic, their unpredictability. Birds can turn up practically anywhere, but, will they? Which ones will you see? Will today be the day of your first Red-rumped Swallow of the year or the first Lesser Spotted Eagle of your life? For someone intent on enjoying nature, especially birding, the game never stops.

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