

Birding Málaga



Where to go birding in May:
Sierra de Mollina and La Ratosa Lake

Natural values



The Sierra de Mollina is a prominent round hill isolated in the middle of the flat lands north of the Antequera District. It is covered by a lush Mediterranean scrub and surrounded to the south by an Aleppo Pine forest mixed with the remains of some abandoned olive groves with

beautiful clearings where we will enjoy nice views of Wood Pigeon, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Hoopoe, Thekla Lark, Woodlark, Nightingale, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodchat Shrike, Azure-winged Magpie, Raven, Spotless Starling, Golden Oriole, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Hawfinch and Common Crossbill.



La Ratosa Lake Nature Reserve is located north of the Sierra de Mollina, very close to Alameda. It is an endorheic temporary lake that may host almost the same species that we can find in



the nearby Fuente de Piedra Lake, specially Shelduck, Mallard, Gadwall, Pochard, Red-crested Pochard, Black-necked Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Greater Flamingo, Marsh Harrier, Black-winged Stilt, Lapwing, Black-headed Gull, Coot, Whiskered

Tern, Bee-eater, Nightingale and Yellow Wagtail, plus all the typical farmland birds like Crested and Calandra Larks and finches.



In May, both the woods and the lake will show their best face after the spring rains in the middle of the birds' display season.

How to get there

We will describe a route by car starting at Mollina. Type “CEULAJ, Mollina” in Google Maps. If you want to skip the visit to the Sierra de Mollina, you can also type “Laguna de la Ratosa”.

Sierra de Mollina

Set the counter to 0 at the entrance to Calle Sevilla in Mollina. Follow the street up to Plaza de Málaga (km. 0.5) and turn left at the end of the square into Calle Sierra de la Camorra. The street ends up in a dirt track with signs of the Gran Senda de Malaga which we will follow towards the sierra that stands just in front of us. Take left at the junction at km. 1.5.

We will find a junction at km. 3.8 with signs of the Gran Senda de Malaga. We will take the track to the left on our way back from the forest but we will go on for now and park in a trail that starts to the left around 300 m. from the junction.



We can have a walk from here. There are clearings right of the track where Woodchat Shrikes, Azure-winged Magpies, Wood Pigeons, Blackcaps, Hoopoes, Golden Orioles and Hawfinches may be very active. If we walk



towards the sierra into the scrub, we can find Thekla Lark and Sardinian and Dartford Warblers, and hear the songs of Woodlarks and Cuckoos coming from the hills.



We can also get inside the thicker pine woods to watch (if possible!) Turtle Dove, Nightingale, Western Bonelli's Warbler and Short-toed treecreeper.

You will really enjoy the place if you like orchids: Pink Butterfly, Naked-man, Mirror Bee and Yellow Bee Orchids are very common in this area.



Laguna de la Ratosa



We will turn back and take right at the junction, following the signs to Santillán. Please, drive very carefully here and mind some rocks in the track that could hit the engine of your car! Your counter should show 7 km. when you reach the road at Santillán Park. We will turn right into the road.

In the junction at km. 9.9, we go straight on towards Alameda. Further on, at km. 12.1, we will turn left into a road without signs heading towards a quarry. Once at Alameda (km. 14.5), we will turn left in the first roundabout (mind the traffic light!) into road MA-6411 towards La Roda de Andalucía.



The entrance to La Ratosa Lake is on the left at km. 17.9 (just after MA-6411 km. 3 sign). We will first find the small Laguna de la Castañuela to which we can have a look at from the entrance to the track. Further on, we will see the



signs of the Laguna de la Ratosa to the right. We can park the car



in a track on the right that goes to the lake just past the signs and have a look around.

Please, do not go beyond the ring of reeds around the lake, remember this is a nature reserve

and birds should never be disturbed! Enjoy the lake!



PICTURES:

1. Mixed forest of aleppo pine, olive tree and Mediterranean scrub.
2. Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*)
3. Sierra de Mollina
4. Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)
5. Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)
6. Clearings in the pine wood
7. Woodchat Shrike (*Lanius senator*)
8. Azure-winged Magpie (*Cyanopica cooki*)
9. Butterfly Orchid (*Orchis papilionacea*)
10. Naked-man Orchid (*Orchis italica*)
11. Mirror Bee Orchid (*Ophrys speculum*)
12. Yellow Bee Orchid (*Ophrys lutea*)
13. Junction to Santillan
14. La Castañuela Lake
15. Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*)
16. La Ratosa Lake
17. Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)
18. Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*)