



Natural values



The Monte San Anton is a 495 metres above sea level high hill dominating El Palo district, at the east end of the city of Malaga. Its south face is still part of the city though a big cliff separates the housing developments from the slopes towards Jaboneros Stream to the west.

These slopes are a botanical heaven, showing a fantastic set of species included in the “termomediterranean” (type of weather where temperatures do not usually fall below zero degrees centigrades in winter but are very high in summer, producing a strong water stress in the vegetation) scrubland, and some Mediterranean endemics like the carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*) or the dwarf fan palm (*Chamaerops humilis*). The sweet Mediterranean winter is a perfect time to come and enjoy this handy natural gem.



These are some of the birds we can find here in December: Red-legged Partridge, Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Wood Pigeon, Thekla Lark, Crag Martin, Meadow Pipit, Dunnock, Robin, Black Redstart, Black Wheatear, Stonechat, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Blue Rock Thrush, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Raven, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin and Rock Bunting.



How to get there

Type “Pinares antiguo, Malaga” in Google Maps. We can get there from the A-7 motorway by taking exit 246A to “El Palo”. Once at the roundabout, set the counter to cero and take the north exit of the roundabout towards “Urb. Pinares de San Anton”.

Turn left at km. 0.5 into Av. San Anton, and left again at km. 0.6 into C/ Almendros. There is a fork at km. 1.0 where we take left towards “Parque Lagarillo Blanco”. Once we drive past the entrance to a house at km. 1.6, we turn left following the sign to “Parque Lagarillo Blanco” and go straight on 100 metres ahead towards “Estancia superior”. The car park is at the end of the track, km. 1.9.

We will begin our walk by taking a path towards the hill starting from the car park, not before enjoying the superb perspective of the city of Malaga from the viewpoint.



The olive grove



The vegetation downhill on our left is dominated by an old abandoned olive grove that has developed a very rich scrub layer. Blackcaps, Chaffinches, Robins, Chiffchaffs, Great Tits, Goldfinches and Serins feel very happy in this habitat. The red berries of the mastic trees attract lots of Greenfinches and the olives are sustenance for most of the birds mentioned above plus Blackbirds and Song Thrushes.

The olive grove and the rocky slopes below the cliff is where the Common Buzzards and Ravens usually move about. Some of the Booted Eagles wintering in Malaga often show themselves overhead as well.



As we walk on, Blue Rock Thrushes, Black Wheatears and Black Redstarts may show up on the rocks to the right, as well as Rock Buntings in the scrub, and the flights of the Sparrowhawks and Crag Martins are frequent in this area.

The paths across the scrubland

The track ends at an old fallen fence supported by concrete posts. This is the start of a network of small paths across the scrub. Some of them go down towards the stream; another one surrounds the north face of the hill; mind a few bee hives!



There are trees scattered around this area. The most common ones are the carob trees, but we can also find holm and kermes oaks and some Aleppo pines. Some parts are fully covered in dwarf fan palms. All this varied vegetation hosts Sardinian and Dartford Warblers, Robins, Stonechats and Meadow Pipits and it is a good place to try the Dunnocks, one of the best examples of how the behaviour of some birds changes between their breeding and wintering quarters. In this case, Dunnocks, as opposed to their friendly



close relatives, the Alpine Accentors, show a much more elusive conduct here. We can wander about the paths to try and spot all these funny feathered little friends.



If we pay attention to the cliff, we may discover the Peregrine Falcon's silhouette sitting at the ridge or on some of the bushes



growing in the crags. It is not easy to find them indeed. They are such little birds as compared to the huge rocky wall. But they will sooner or later fly along the rock face or they will emit their characteristic calls to help us know where they are.

A couple of Bonelli's Eagles used to nest in the cliff many years ago. Can you imagine, enjoying the most emblematic bird of Malaga province at just five minutes from the city? We have described 36 places to go birding in Malaga province all year long. We hope we have been able to raise a lot of love for birds and

make so many magical places known for both locals and visitors along the nine districts that make up Malaga's geography: Axarquía, Northeast, Antequera, Guadalteba, Sierra de las Nieves, Serranía de Ronda, Western Costa del Sol, Guadalhorce Valley and Malaga City. We wish this knowledge about Malaga's birds and so diverse habitats create the conditions for Bonelli's Eagles to come closer to people again... With Mr. and Mrs. Peregrine permission!



PHOTOS:

1. Monte San Anton
2. Carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*)
3. Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)
4. Malaga
5. Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)
6. Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)
7. Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)
8. Mediterranean scrubland
9. Dwarf fan palm (*Chamaerops humilis*)
10. Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)
11. Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)
12. Monte San Anton's west face