

Birding Málaga



Where to go birding in February:
Lagunas de Campillos

Natural values.



The Lagunas de Campillos is a set of six endorheic temporary small pools with more or less brackish water, located east and south east of Campillos, in the Guadalteba District. Every pool is a nature reserve itself in the Andalusian Network of Protected Natural Sites, and they all lie within a peripheral protection area of 1,257 hectares mainly devoted to grow cereals and olives. It is also Birds Directive Special Protection Area, Site of Community Importance and Special Area of Conservation of Natura 2000 network (ES6170015).

The main attraction of the Campillos Pools and farmlands in



February is the wintering of more than 2,000 Cranes that we will find feeding or flying in their typical V formations around the pools.



The mixture of wetland and farmland creates extraordinary conditions for the presence of many different species of birds. These ones are easy to find (always relatively in wild environments!) in the pools at this time of year: Shelduck, Mallard, Gadwall, Shoveler, Teal, Pochard, Red-crested Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Tufted Duck, White-headed Duck, Black-necked Grebe, Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Greater Flamingo, Marsh Harrier, Moorhen, Coot, Black-winged Stilt, Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Crag Martin, White Wagtail, Blackcap, Zitting Cisticola, Cetti's Warbler and Chiffchaff. Obviously, the presence of these birds depends on the existence of water in the pools. More specifically, diving birds like Pochard, Red-crested Pochard, Ferruginous Duck, Tufted Duck, White-headed Duck and grebes require a minimum level of water. Purple Swamphen, Avocet, Water Pipit and Reed Bunting will be a bit more difficult to spot.



The most emblematic birds of the farmlands in winter are the Red-legged Partridge, Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Hoopoe, Skylark, Crested Lark, Calandra Lark, Meadow Pipit, Robin, Black Redstart, Stonechat, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Sardinian Warbler, Great Tit, Iberian Grey Shrike, Raven, Starling, Spotless Starling, House Sparrow, Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin and Corn Bunting. Other species that will require some more luck to be found are the Hen Harrier, Black-winged Kite, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Little Bustard, Stone Curlew, Golden Plover, Little Owl and Spanish Sparrow.





Laguna Dulce and farmlands.



The Laguna Dulce will be our starting point. Type “Laguna Dulce, Campillos” in Google Maps to know where to go. This pool is the biggest one and you can comfortably watch the birds from a hide just by the A-384 road to the south of the lake. When the autumn rainfall has been normal and the level of water is high enough, you can find here most of the birds in the area as well as Rabbits and Iberian Hares, very common in the region.



Our next stage will be the farmlands between Campillos and Laguna de Lobon, a tiny pool outside the protection area. Distances are long between the pools, the fields are very open and we inevitably flush the birds as we go along on foot so, this time, we recommend doing the routes in the car which will act as a very good hide, though we can stop as many times as necessary.

Our next stage will be the farmlands between Campillos and Laguna de Lobon, a tiny pool outside the protection area. Distances are long between the pools, the fields are very open and we inevitably flush the birds as we go along on foot so, this time, we recommend doing the routes in the car which will act as a very good hide, though we can stop as many times as necessary.



We go back to A-384 towards Campillos and take the first track to the right just as we go past Zerimar storehouse. From here on, we should drive slowly, preferably with the windows open so that we can hear the birds. This is a good place to find some of the more difficult species like Little Bustard and Golden Plover. Let’s pay close attention to the ground as flocks of Skylarks, Meadow Pipits and Calandra Larks may go unnoticed if they do not fly off. Other birds like Corn Buntings, Stonechats and the ever-whistling Crested Larks will be easier to spot.



Past an old wind mill, we will take to the left at the junction and drive until we get to the Lobon pool just in front of a big ruined farmhouse. After having a look around the pool we can scan the walls of the farmhouse in search for Kestrels and Little Owls, and also the dead tree just in front, which is really a magnet for birds. We have recorded Kestrel and Lesser Kestrel (at springtime), Common Buzzard, Peregrine Falcon and even Black-winged Kite there.

Past an old wind mill, we will take to the left at the junction and drive until we get to the Lobon pool just in front of a big ruined farmhouse. After having a look around the pool we can scan the walls of the farmhouse in search for Kestrels and Little Owls, and also the dead tree just in front,



We will turn around here back to Campillos. This time, we will try the track on the right at the wind mill junction to explore some more fields on the way to the village.

Laguna Salada, Laguna Redonda and Laguna de Capacete.

These three pools are located to the south of the protection area and we have to drive across the village to get there. We turn left at the petrol station and immediately right into Calle Real. We take left twice at the square and reach Glorieta (roundabout) D. Jose Macias, where we turn left towards Colegio San José.



Past the tunnel below A-357, we enter road A-7286. 600 m. ahead, turn left into a track that takes us to the Laguna Salada, where flocks of Greater Flamingos are common.

Back to the road again, we will soon find the Laguna Redonda on the left. Like Laguna Dulce, the Redonda has a little car park and a hide. Iberian Grey Shrikes use to sit on top of the Tamarisks around and it is worthwhile having a look at the puddles after the rains, as there can be more birds like Black-winged Stilts and Lapwings than in the pool itself!



The best place to observe the Laguna de Capacete from is an elevation south of the pool. To get there, let's drive into a track to the right, past the bridge over the railway, just close to the km. 11 sign, park close to a well, and walk up to the view point. Warning: do not take the previous entrance where the information board

of the pool is located; if we suddenly come out to the lake there, we can flush all the birds away! This pool may host big flocks of waterfowl and seagulls.

Laguna del Cerero and Laguna de Camuñas.

There is a track that joins Laguna de Capacete and Laguna Dulce and goes by the Cerero and Camuñas pools, but it is not in very good conditions around the Camuñas pool so it is better to access this track near the Laguna Dulce. To do so, we take the A-7286 back to Campillos. Once at the Glorieta D. Jose Macias, we take left this time following the signs to Antequera. After we



drive past the junction to Campillos into the A-384 towards Antequera, we take a track to the right just past km. 109 sign. We will soon reach the Laguna del Cerero which may host a very good sample of waterfowl, including Red-crested Pochard and Ferruginous Duck when in good conditions.

The track goes on and reaches the Cortijo (farmhouse) del Cerero. We take right at the crossroads but it is better to park the car here and walk, following the Gran Senda de Malaga posts, towards the Laguna de Camuñas as this stretch of the track is in very bad conditions. The Camuñas pool is the smallest and shallowest one, and it is surrounded by hills covered in native vegetation: Mediterranean scrub and some Holm Oaks that rounds off our trip with a final touch of diversity.



PHOTOGRAPHS:

1. Lagunas de Campillos
2. Cranes (*Grus grus*)
3. Cranes (*Grus grus*)
4. Pochards (left, *Aythya ferina*) and Tufted Ducks (right, *Aythya fuligula*)
5. Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*)
6. Coots (*Fulica atra*)
7. Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)
8. Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)
9. Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*)
10. Calandra Lark (*Melanocorypha calandra*)
11. Iberian Grey Shrike (*Lanius meridionalis*)
12. Waterfowl at Laguna Dulce
13. Laguna Dulce from the hide
14. Little Bustards (*Tetrax tetrax*)
15. Laguna Dulce from the farmlands
16. Laguna de Lobon and farmhouse
17. Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*)
18. Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) at Laguna Salada
19. Laguna Redonda
20. Laguna de Capacete
21. Laguna del Cerero
22. Laguna de Camuñas