

STAGE 34





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?

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



Pallid Swift. PHOTO: TT



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 Blanco 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

