



WHERE AND WHEN TO WATCH BIRDS



IN THE SOUTHERN UPLANDS OF SORIA PROVINCE, SPAIN



Proyecto
LIFE
Ricotí
Bird watching Soria

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Introduction

Soria is one of the least known of the Spanish provinces, despite its cultural and environmental richness, as revealed by the traditional lifestyles of its inhabitants, its historical and artistic heritage and its natural diversity. It is the last of these, as apparent in the southern sector of the province, that is the subject of this book.

The habitats and natural landscapes of Soria are magnificent. Within its area of over 10,000 km² you can find high mountain pastures and scrublands; dense woodlands of Scots and Maritime Pines, Beech and Pyrenean, Portuguese and Iberian Holm Oaks, open woodlands of Spanish Juniper, cereal croplands, parameras – the treeless dwarf shrub moorlands of the uplands, valleys and rivers, gorges and escarpments, among other habitats. A diverse fauna inhabits these places, among which the many bird species are perhaps what most capture the attention of wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers alike.

This book is intended to increase awareness of the ornithological richness of southern Soria and to help those who want to experience it. It directs you to the places where the most characteristic species of the region may be seen and advises you when best to go there. This guide covers the south of the Province, an area of some 2,500 km² that includes two special protection areas for birds (SPAs), the Altos de Barahona, and the Páramo de Layna y Monteagudo de las Vicarías. The bird list for this part of the province comprises 216 species, including residents, winterers, passage migrants and occasional visitors. This book is not of course an identification guide but several excellent and well known fieldguides cover the region.

The core of the book comprises 16 site accounts, each of which covers the following:

- General information on conservation status, location and recommended access routes, ease of access and likely duration of a visit, and recommended time of year to visit.
- A detailed description of each site and of suggested itineraries within it, with maps and other suggestions.
- An account of the most characteristic species, giving the seasons at which these occur.
- Suggestions for family-centred visits, giving other nearby locations that are suitable for shorter visits with children or family parties.
- Lists of resident, breeding (in bold), wintering and migrant species for each site.

The final section is a summary table of all the species covered in the book, giving their abundance and season(s) of occurrence at each of the 16 sites.

Complementary information is available to Spanish-speakers in the form of the “Guía de aves del sureste de Soria”. This guide to the birds of southeastern Soria is by Juan Luis Hernández and published in 2012 by ADEMA (Asociación por el desarrollo endógeno de Almazán y otros municipios – the Association for the development of Almazán and other municipalities). At present it is available online at:

<https://www.adema.es/multimedia/web/adema/archivos/adema-1899589540.pdf>

The present publication forms part of the Ornithological Tourism Programme promoted by the Soria Provincial Government within the framework of the LIFE Ricotí project (LIFE 15 NAT/ES/000802). Its chief objective is to promote bird observation as a touristic resource and as a stimulus to the local economy.

Soria shares with Ávila the distinction of having the highest mean altitude, 1,000–1,100 metres above sea level, of all Spanish provinces. It owes this not to high mountains or a lack of low-lying terrain but instead to the existence of broad expanses at 1,000–1,200 metres. Geological history has determined that Southern Soria makes up the wide and more or less structurally homogeneous zone that links the southern flanks of the Northern Iberian Range with the Central Range, via the Sierra de Pela towards the west. Nearly all of it is Mesozoic sedimentary terrain, chiefly Triassic and Jurassic deposits.

Nearly all the Sierra de Pela ridge lies between 1,450 and 1,520 metres, the highest point of the region being Pico Bordegal (1,543 metres). The quite extensive peak of dolomite and other calcareous rock extends eastwards via the Altos de Barahona peneplain at 1,100 metres. The high peneplains on weakly folded and broken Mesozoic material extend from Barahona through Medinaceli as far as Iruecha, the most southeasterly sector of the Province. Here they reach more modest elevations, the highest being the Sierra del Solorío (1,350 metres), a much less prominent peak than the Sierra de Pela. Before this, around Sierra Ministra (1,310 metres), lies the watershed of the Duero, Tajo (Tagus) and Ebro basins. The Ventosa del Ducado area is the only sector of Soria province that lies within the Tagus basin.

This level expanse of peneplains and high moorlands (parameras) merges seemingly uniformly with the mesic paramos of the Duero meseta, although the apparently unbroken terrain is actually dissected by the small gorges (hoces) eroded by the minor rivers and streams of the region. Examples include the river Talegones gorge between Torrevicente and Lumías and the Escalote gorges between Barcones and Rello, that extend into the calcareous terrain that comprises the paramo towards Villasayas and Caltojar. More striking is the Jalón valley, where the river has cut off a branch of the Iberian range in the form of high tablelands such as those that surround the town of Medinaceli and its neighbouring peaks. Beyond Arcos de Jalón the river passes from Triassic materials into soft Miocene clays. Here lies the lowest part of Soria Province, at around 750 metres where the river flows via Santa María de Huerta towards Zaragoza province.

The high mean elevation of the region makes for a continental Mediterranean climate. Mean annual temperatures fall between 9° and 10°C across most of the territory, closer to 11°C in las Vicarías and the Jalón valley, although here as elsewhere frosts are frequent. Precipitation is also modest, with a west/east gradient from the annual 600–700 mm of the Sierra de Pela flanks to the 350 mm at Montegudo de las Vicarías, the driest area of the province. Various sites see intermediate precipitation, the 566 mm of Barcones contrasting with much drier locations such as Arenillas (454 mm) and Barahona (449 mm).

SOUTHERN SORIA: TOPOGRAPHY AND VEGETATION



Vegetation

The parameras (singular paramo) or natural dwarf-shrub steppes particularly characterise the region, both in terms of their relative extension and regarding their importance for the conservation of Dupont's Lark. They comprise a good part of the southern flanks of the province, including practically all the area adjoining Guadalajara province from Lumias as far as Judes-lruecha, although junipers predominate in the latter sector. Away from this extremely large zone there are parameras extending towards the Duero valley across tertiary terrain at Rello-Bordecorex-Caltojar, or in the form of Cretaceous pavements exposed by various rivers and streams, such as Pradejón and Valpierre between Paones, Brías, Berlanga and Morales.

All parameras may appear structurally uniform in view of their level, stony terrain, lacking trees and dominated by low shrubs. However, they are far from homogeneous, the nature of the predominant shrubs – furzes, sages, thymes or brooms – defining a range of distinct types.

A sizable part of the parameras falls within the Altos de Barahona and Páramos de Layna Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds. The Dwarf Genista broom (*Genista pumila* ssp. *rigidissima*) is the predominant shrub at Layna, where the low broom cover is punctuated by clumps of gorse, lavender, sage, savory and various thyme species. The paramos around Medinaceli, outside the SPA, have very similar vegetation to those at Layna, especially that at Ambrona. The vegetation changes further west, the broom being practically absent at the Altos de Barahona. Gorse and large expanses of thyme predominate at Alcubilla de las Peñas and Mezquetillas. Gorse is also predominant at Barahona-Alpanseque whereas sage predominates at Rello.

It is often evident that these parameras have arisen following the degradation of the original forest cover. Proof of this takes the form of the incursions of Iberian Holm Oak and Juniper around the margins of many of these paramos following the disappearance of many of the sheep flocks that formerly destroyed any tree seedlings. Although cultivated land and pastures are the chief land use in the region, both coniferous and broadleaved woodlands arise where naturally stony or otherwise poor ground have saved them from the axe or the plough. These are mainly at the two extremes of the region although there are woodland patches comprising tree islands within some cultivated fields. The characteristics and principal species of all these habitats are now described.

A Pinewoods

Most such woods are actually young plantations resulting from the edicts of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union, although most of the pine species that may be encountered within the province: the Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Black Pine (*P. nigra*), Aleppo Pine (*P. halepensis*), Stone Pine (*P. pinea*) and Maritime Pine (*Pinus pinaster*), are represented. The bulk of these plantations, which have largely been unsuccessful, have been within paramo habitat, where they represent a significant reduction in the habitats of Dupont's Lark and other steppic species. Only the Stone Pine woods have grown with some vigour, which is surprising since this species is not native to the province. There are also some more mature pinewoods, resulting from plantations established in the 1950s and 1960s, at Barahona, Barcones, Medinaceli and Arcos de Jalón, mostly of Black Pine on meseta areas and Aleppo Pine in the Jalón valley.

The Pinar de Losana, a natural Scots Pine wood on the Sierra de Pela that is protected as Site of Community Importance (SCI), is especially noteworthy. It includes mature specimens although these are of modest dimensions given the calcareous substrate. They are surely a remnant of more extensive pinewoods, such as still occur in nearby sectors of the Central Range in Guadalajara and Segovia provinces.

B Juniper woods

The most renowned juniper woods of Soria are those of the Sierra de Cabrejas, Calatañazor and Cañón del Río Lobos but two widely separated parts of our area of junipers that are their equal. One ascends from the Duero valley through Morales,

Aguilera and Mosarejos, mixing with Holm Oak woodlands in the vicinity of Fresno de Caracena and Carrascosa de Abajo and extending to the environs of Morcuera and Torremocha de Ayllón. There are some tremendous specimens, 20 metres tall and two metres in diameter, on the Duero margins in the town of Morales. The other great Juniper wood covers the Sierra del Solorio in the far southeast, in the hinterland of Chaorna, Judes and Iruecha.

C Iberian Holm Oak woods

This, the typical woodland of Mediterranean Spain, is common across a good part of the paramos to the south of the Almazán basin. Finding large specimens of *Quercus ilex* is difficult however, since most of the trees are exploited in the traditional fashion for firewood and charcoal. The resulting coppicing makes for low and often very dense woody scrub. Recent years have seen a clear recovery of this species within what was formerly marginal agricultural land. Extensive Holm Oak woods (encinares) include that between Romanillos and Yelo extending into Guadalajara province, the Jalón encinares in Jubera and Somaén and the Lumías encinar.

D Other oak woods

These include Pyrenean Oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*) and Portuguese Oak (*Quercus faginea*) woodlands. The former species is always on siliceous substrates and is associated with areas that are relatively humid, even though it tolerates well both the summer drought and cold winters. It appears mixed with Portuguese Oaks in woodland between Romanillos de Medinaceli, Mezquetillas and Miño de Medinaceli.

The Portuguese Oak, in contrast, favours drier areas particularly on calcareous substrates. It is often found mixed with Holm Oaks, whose ecological requirements are similar. The Portuguese Oak woodlands present spectacular autumnal displays at such locations as the Bordecorex valley, between Fuentegelmes and Bordecorex, along the same river at Jodra de Cardos and at Romanillos-Mezquetillas, among other sites.

E Riparian woods

The riverine trees that adorn the courses of small rivers and streams are often the only trees to be seen in many parts of the region. These apart, and especially along the Duero, there are some magnificent riparian woods, despite considerable losses to cultivation and the expansion of Canadian Poplar (*Populus x canadensis*) plantations. The principal native species involved are the Black Poplar (*Populus nigra*), White Poplar (*Populus alba*), Grey Poplar (*Populus x canescens*), Narrow-leaved Ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia*), various willows (*Salix alba*, *Salix atrocinera*, *Salix fragilis*, etc.), Field Elm (*Ulmus minor*) and occasional White Birches (*Betula alba*). There are well-preserved woods in the Talegones valley at Lumías where, apart from poplars and ashes, there are outstanding Walnuts (*Juglans regia*) and Montpellier Maples (*Acer monpessulanum*). Other notable examples are along the waterside walks on the river Escalote at Barcones and La Riba, the stretch of the river Jalón from Lodaes and also the river Nágima at Monteagudo, where there are Tamarisks (*Tamarix gallica*).

Rivers

Despite this being the driest part of Soria province, the various and diverse watercourses have conspicuously sculpted the landscape and have influenced the siting of human occupation, most settlements being within the river valleys. The principal of these are the Duero, which marks the northern boundary of the region considered, and the Jalón.

The Duero here already takes the form of a low-gradient river. It drains a number of small rivers to which we will often refer, given their ornithological importance resulting from the various spectacular gorges that they have cut through calcareous substrates.

These include the Escalote and its tributary the Torete (or Bordecorex), the Caracena and its tributary the Manzanares and the Pedro.

The Jalón, in the extreme provincial southeast, flows away from the Duero basin, eventually to reach the Ebro. Its two headwaters are at Esteras and Benamira, both at 1,130 metres in the foothills of the Sierra Ministra. After 48.5 kilometres the Jalón leaves the region at Santa María de Huerta, at 755 metres one of the lowest points of the province. This river is accordingly fast-flowing and it and its tributaries have markedly eroded their courses. It may well be that thousands of years hence one of these latter might eventually divert the Duero itself.

The stretch of the Jalón between Jubera and Arcos de Jalón is especially noteworthy, marking the transition from Triassic to Jurassic deposits and receiving the waters of the river Blanco, the most significant of its right bank tributaries and the only one that amounts to more than a stream. All these drain the parameras and calcareous hillsides of Layna, Judes and Iruecha. The left bank tributaries of the Jalón are mainly of little importance although the river Nágima has its headwaters in the paramos of Velilla de los Ajos, Bliccos and Serón de Nágima.

Good stretches of all these rivers have eroded modest-sized gorges in the calcareous terrains of the region. The broad flat expanses of the parameras were long ago assaulted by the then faster-flowing streams that carved small precipices and ravines on their way to the Duero. These afford the landscape significant structural diversity, as evidenced by the variety of species that occur there.

The most important of the Duero basin gorges are:

1 Río Talegones gorge

Between Torrevente and Lumias. One of the most attractive gorges of both the region and the province. It accommodates not only the rupestral avifauna but also a leafy woodland of Holm Oaks, Portuguese Oaks, Aspens and Ashes, among others.

There is a small gorge at Cabreriza, where the river is often low. Another small gorge is just before the junction with the Duero, around Aguilera, an extension of the adjacent Valpierle and Pradejón gorges.

2 Valpierle and Pradejón gorges

Dry gorges within the immense pavement that runs west from Berlanga de Duero. Two stream beds, the Valpierle that descends from Brias and the Pradejón from Alaló, almost meet in a gorge among junipers and Teaplant (*Lycium intricatum*). Nearly all rup-estral bird species of the region occur.

3 Río Escalote gorges

The Escalote canyons can be divided into three zones.

- 3.1 The stretch between Barcones and Rello. Here the river dries up in summer. The walls are low, sparse and separated. The aspect is semiarid.
- 3.2 La Riba de Escalote. The road between La Riba and Caltojar traverses this small but interesting gorge.
- 3.3 The Berlanga de Duero stretch. Near the confluence with the Duero, on the Coborrón slopes and below the Berlanga de Duero castle.

4 Arroyo de la Hocecilla (de la Hoceca) gorge

Opposite Rello the small, seasonal stream, which is dry most of the year, has carved a very small gorge that blends perfectly with the surrounding paramera given the absence of arboreal vegetation, such as the Holm and Portuguese oaks that appear along the Talegones.

5 **Río Bordecorex gorges**

Three stretches are of interest, as with the Escalote.

- 5.1 The upper sector between Ermita de la Virgen de Santa Cruz and Yelo. Not strictly speaking a gorge, being on sandy substrates, but offers various small banks attractive to rupestral birds.
- 5.2 Alcubilla de las Peñas to Jodra de Cardos. Swathed in dense cover of Holm and Portuguese Oaks.
- 5.3 Fuentegelmes to Bordecorex. Also offering a lush cover of Holm and Portuguese Oaks.

6 **Fuente Arenaza gorges**

The principal stretch lies between Mosarejos and Recuerda. Another small gorge, with lower and less striking rock faces than the former, runs parallel to it from Galapagares village.

7 **Río Pedro gorges**

The chief sectors of interest are between Cuevas de Ayllón and Ligos and again between Ligos and Molino de Torraño. The Pozo Moreno stream, running parallel to the main gorge, forms a quite extensive gorge between Licerias and Torremocha de Ayllón and the Bocalavoz scarp. There is also a small gorge between Torremocha and Morcuera.

8 **Río Caracena gorges**

Among the longest and most spectacular of the region, particularly the stretch between Tarancueña and Caracena. Good rock faces also occur between Caracena and Carrascosa de la Sierra. Finally, and before joining the Duero, the river has cut another spectacular stretch between Fresno de Caracena and Vildé, known as the Vildé gorge.

9 **Río Tiermes (or Manzanares -or Adanta) gorges**

These are quite sizable although not as spectacular as those on the nearby Río Caracena (or Adanta). The stretch between Carrascosa de Arriba and Hoz de Arriba offers dense cover of Holm Oaks mixed with junipers, the latter predominating at the Hoz de Arriba. There are small gorges adjacent to Hoz de Abajo village and at the Fresno de Caracena mill, near the Duero confluence.

10 **Arroyo de Montejo scarps**

On sandy substrates and hence not gorges, strictly speaking, but these make up a lengthy and characteristic face that is very attractive to raptors. They extend from the abandoned hamlet of Manzanares to Tiermes, and on to Cuevas de Ayllón. Further east there is a similar sandy escarpment running mainly between Conquezueta and Miño de Medinaceli, with a less significant branch between Alcubilla de las Peñas and Romanillos.

In the south the river Jalón forges its way towards the Ebro cutting through the dolomitic limestones of the high Triassic and Jurassic parameras that comprise this southern branch of the Northern Iberian System. Springs at Medinaceli/Benamira are the sources of the Jalón but canyon formation first appears beyond Lodares, the most impressive sector being between its confluence with the Río Blanco and Somaén. The right bank tributaries especially have eroded significant gorges, given the steep existing gradient. These include:

Arroyo de Sayona. A small stream (arroyo) descends from this small abandoned village towards Azcamellas and the Jalón.

Arroyo del Pradejón. A very broad valley with characteristic isolated rock chimneys, known in Arbujuelo as 'los hermanitos' (the little brothers).

Arroyo de La Hocecilla. A gorge offering marked contrasts since beyond Lomeda a stepic landscape alternates with a very large Holm Oak woodland at the Jalón confluence.

Río Blanco. The Obétago-Layna-Velilla stretch largely lacks rock faces but is notable for the tufa formations made by the river. At one of these, upstream from Velilla, the river drops some way at La Chorroneira waterfall. A very dense Holm Oak woodland, with some deciduous oaks, junipers and other trees, fills the valley below Velilla.

Arroyo de los Siete Hoyos. The principal stretch extends from the abandoned village of Avenales. This too is a very wooded sector, with poplars and ashes along the stream and Holm Oaks in the valley. At its confluence with the Jalón it shares the highest rock faces of nearby Somaén.

Arroyo de Sagides. The marshy surrounds of Fuente del Cura, upstream from Sagides, are almost more interesting than the rocky walls. Below Sagides the bed is rocky and the river forks where it reaches Almadeque fort.

Arroyos de Chaorna and Los Pilonés. The calcareous terrain is clearly evident at Chaorna village, with its integral castle. The massive adjacent rock face is traditionally occupied by Egyptian Vultures. Various waterfalls appear here after rain. The gorge offers sheer walls further downstream, especially along Los Pilonés stream and the Cabeza Negra, although the route of the high-speed train (AVE) has completely disfigured this spot.

Arroyo de la Sima. From Judes onwards this is a beautiful valley with abundant junipers and tall limestone cliffs just before the boundary with Aragón.

Arroyo del Otero. Widely known as the location of the homestead and fountain of Algondrón, the summer retreat of the monks of Huerta. They chose well since the valley is cool in summer. Holm Oak woods extend to Algondrón and there is a magnificent juniper stand towards Judes and Iruecha.

Not all rock formations are linked to the activity of existing rivers. In the south, at las Vicarías, a series of testimonial hard limestone and sandstone crags have remained, isolated castle-like in the middle of the plains. They are known as 'cabezos' (buttes) at Monteagudo. Something similar occurs on the mesetas between Arcos de Jalón-Valladares and Santa María de Huerta, on the right bank of the río Jalón.

Lakes and pools

The advent of modernity saw the disappearance of many of the lakes and pools of the region, which had come to be regarded as unhealthy places and sources of disease. Those lost included the Laguna de Yelo and the most important of all, the Laguna de Conquezueta, which extended to 80–100 hectares in wet years. Those that remain, a series of endorheic lagoons all within agricultural land, are a poor remnant of what once was. The principal ones are:

Lakes and pools of the Barahona farmlands. The hinterland of this village and also Alpanseque has various small endorheic basins that include small lagoons – the Laguna del Ojo and Laguna del Sabuco – and various dewponds (navajos).

Laguna de la Sima de Miño de Medinaceli. La Laguna de Miño is a barely surviving remnant associated with the now drained Conquezueta and Ambrona wetland.

Other lakes and pools. Small waterholes (balsas), dependent on rainfall or small brooks, that once served livestock still remain in some villages. The most interesting birdwise are the La Laguna de Irucha and the pools at Mezquetillas, Romanillos and Torre Vicente, among others.

Endorheic basins apart, there is the Laguna de Judes in the south, the sole lake of karstic origin in the region. This is usually dry and has even been ploughed at times. However, the rise of the water table in very wet years may fill it spontaneously. The water may persist for some time on such occasions but the lagoon may disappear promptly if the water table drops again suddenly. It is the only wetland in this large area and so is a regular haunt of waterfowl, herons and other waterbirds, even though its seasonal nature means a total lack of waterside vegetation.

Reservoirs

These artificial wetlands have become important refuges for waterbirds. The most important of these was and remains the Monteagudo de las Vicarías reservoir. The majority if not all aquatic species of the region appear here at some stage of the annual cycle and many have not been found anywhere else. That said, the importance of the reservoir has diminished significantly in recent years, most probably because of the decline in submerged aquatic vegetation brought about by introduced fish species, notably the Black Bass.

Monteagudo has existed since the 19th century but its present form results from works carried out in 1982. Until then the principal inlet of the reservoir was the Regajo stream, which descends from the Puerto de Alentisque and Valtueña. It is now fed mainly by the river Nágima, via a dam that was constructed in Fuentelmonge district.

Also interesting is the mid 20th century dam that was constructed in Vildé, in the river Caracena gorge, which served to irrigate the numerous orchards.

The dams on the Duero: the Azud de Bubones in Gormaz and the Azud de Navapalos may also be regarded as reservoirs. The reservoir of the small hydroelectric dam on the river Blanco is also worth mentioning.

Other wetlands

Salt pans. The Xalon valley has salt deposits. Two salt pans survive in Xalon village.

Birding is nothing new, far from it, but recent years have seen something of a boom in the numbers of those who watch birds as a means of drawing closer to nature. Watching birds is certainly a pleasure but it can have a downside, which can be avoided through awareness of the negative impacts that may arise. The birder must therefore always have in mind, and follow, the best practice code, particularly so when birding away from familiar haunts.

Most ethical birding codes are based on that developed by the American Birding Association (ABA). Here we largely follow the version of that code produced by SEO/Birdlife in its Manual of Good Environmental Practice for Ornithotourism, adapting it to the circumstances of the southern Soria Special Bird Protection Areas (SPAs).

BEST PRACTICE WHEN WATCHING BIRDS



The Ethical Birding Code

1 The birds come first, ahead of your wish to see them.

The well-being of birds is the primary concern. Back off if you find that your presence or activity may be disturbing them or disrupting their behaviour. Act prudently.

2 Their habitat is essential to birds. Care for it.

Our SPAs offer an excellent example of scarce ecosystems that are very sensitive to disturbance and whose key elements are vulnerable to disruption. Hence:

- Leave no litter
- Do not collect or damage flora or other natural elements.
- Tread carefully, keeping to paths and tracks wherever possible.
- Keep quiet, to avoid disturbance to fauna and other observers.

3 Ensure your activity does not affect bird behaviour.

A graphic example to the contrary would be the parent who approaches a vulture cliff and makes loud noises to flush the birds for the children to see. The tolerance of birds to human disturbance differs according to species and season. Disturbance should always be avoided but this is especially important in the breeding season, when it may cause nest abandonment and clutch loss. In winter too human presence may keep birds off a feeding ground, with possible severe effects on their survival.

How do you know whether your presence is causing disturbance? The inexperienced may find it hard to judge when they are provoking a change in behaviour but the more knowledgeable birder will know when a problem is likely to arise. There are nonetheless occasions when great care is especially needed:

When you find a nest.

Birds are especially sensitive to disturbance when nesting so particular care is necessary during the breeding season. Nests should not be approached nor should you linger near any that you come across. Eggs or young should not be touched or handled. Nesting colonies should especially be avoided since disturbing even one bird may result in the entire colony taking flight, exposing all nests to serious danger.

Using song playback during the breeding season.

Attracting birds in this way, and in particular the repeated use of playback at the same spot, should be avoided during courtship periods. The resulting energy loss and increased exposure to predation that the birds may incur are highly prejudicial to their survival. Using playback to find Dupont's Lark is especially frowned upon and should not be done.

Approaching resting flocks, such as Lapwings on fallows.

Migrant birds that are resting or feeding should not be disturbed. They may be in especially vulnerable condition and needing to build up strength in order to resume their journey. Enforced additional activity may be fatal to them. Particular care is needed when approaching flocks since if even just a few are flushed all the rest may follow.

At roosts.

Many birds gather in communal roosts, whether species-specific or shared with other species, after the nesting season and throughout the autumn and winter. Once again care is necessary to avoid flushing the birds and compelling them to seek another roosting site, which exposes them to additional energy costs and unexpected dangers given that the new roost site may not be safe.

Weakened individuals and birds exposed to unfavourable climatic conditions.

Snowfalls, gales and heavy rains are not uncommon in the uplands. Keep a safe distance from birds during such conditions, or when snow is lying. If the birds are reluctant to fly off it may be because they are weakened and fleeing may prove fatal to them. In such conditions alertness to their behaviour and allowing them to move around undisturbed may result in very rewarding observations.

4 Always inform the authorities if you find a bird in danger or an injured or dead bird in suspicious circumstances.

In such cases it is important to inform the competent authorities, SEPRONA or the Environment Agency of the regional government of Castilla y León. This is especially necessary if a bird is injured since these authorities are responsible for taking it to the wild animal recovery centre in Burgos, where such birds found in Soria are looked after. Phone 975226611 or 112, who will direct you. Telephone numbers of government regional offices are also available on-line:



<https://www.jcyl.es/web/jcyl/Portada/es/Plantilla100DirectorioPortada/1248366924958/0/1142233556769>
DirectorioPadre

The relevant office for the Páramos de Layna, Jalón valley and Monteagudo reservoir is at Arcos de Jalón. For the Altos de Barahona and nearby areas contact the offices at Almazán or Bayubas de Abajo. It is especially important to make the authorities aware of suspected cases of poisoning, electrocution or illegal hunting, so that they can take the necessary action and deal with those responsible if required. The environmental agents will need to investigate possible causes and gather evidence. It is therefore very important not to touch a dead bird or to disturb the surroundings, not least because a poisoned bird may be laced with lethal toxins.

Similar advice, but with a more positive slant, applies if you find a nest of an endangered species and feel that it may need protection. Only inform the authorities, who will take appropriate measures, and do not revisit the site yourself during the breeding season. An example could be if you find a nest of the Black-bellied Sandgrouse, a very scarce and local species on our paramos. Any disturbance of the site may lead to nesting failure. The responsible authorities may be expected to exercise due prudence when monitoring the site.

5 Do not harass vagrant or rare birds.

Finding a new species for your patch or one that you have never seen before is one of the most exciting events a birder can experience. Such species, depending on the degree of rarity, can potentially draw in many birders even from far away places, particularly because news travels fast on the internet, especially on rare bird news websites. Should you publicise news of a rare bird? This is difficult to answer, particularly when disturbance by large numbers of observers is likely to occur. Avoidance of disturbance is the key consideration. Such birds may have come a long way and may be in a weakened

state, so that the last thing they need is to be chased around so that someone can get a better view or photograph.

Rarity records may be sent to the Spanish Rarities Committee, run by SEO/Birdlife: rarezas@seo.org. It is most important to do this since the Rarities Committee maintains the List of the Birds of Spain. Moreover, the information it gathers allows it to determine the occurrence patterns of rare species in Spain and to derive fuller knowledge of such birds and of the locations that attract them. The most productive site for rarities in our area is the Montegudo reservoir.

6 Always respect bird protection laws.

Wild birds are protected by law (Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Law 42/2007). This legislation results from the work of various generations of birders, scientists and enthusiasts.

7 Respect the rights of landowners.

One of the great advantages of the lands where the birding routes described in this guide are located is that few farms restrict access, unlike those in many other parts of Spain. Landowners' rights should always be respected. Always ask for permission to enter and stay on the recommended tracks. Entering private land without permission may amount to trespass and may also cause problems for the birds that occur there.

A farm that sees little human movement, on account of being private, may encourage the establishment of nesting birds or populations that would encounter difficulties elsewhere. Casual entry by those unfamiliar with a site can result in disturbance or damage.

8 Respect the rights of other site-users.

As a birder you may well find yourself alone for hours and hours at a particular site, depending on the time of year. This does not of course confer any rights to exclusivity and any annoyance that you may feel when you do meet someone else, other birders excepted, needs to be suppressed. They too share the same rights to enjoy the natural environment and its wildlife.

Birding can take place in all types of situations and so it is not unusual to encounter persons that are also observing birds or are perhaps involved in professional, leisure or other activities. It is important not to be obstructive or to disturb what others may be doing. In particular, within a farming and livestock area such as ours it is important not to block roads, tracks or farm access with your own vehicle. A farmer may have to waste valuable time looking for you if he has to get through. Farming implements and other objects belonging to local people that may impede our observational activities should not be removed without permission or should be replaced where they were if they are moved. A respectful and generous attitude towards other site users makes a great contribution to promoting a positive collective attitude to bird watchers.

9 Share records with local observers.

Much of what is known about the birds of an area results from the voluntarily shared records of dozens or hundreds of observers. For example, nearly all censuses of scarce species result from collaboration by local ornithologists. Your own records are thus potentially an important contribution to a fuller knowledge of the local avifauna and hence to its protection and conservation. Record submission is very much recommended.

It may often appear that revealing sensitive information, such as nest location or the presence of scarce species, may be counterproductive for those birds, as noted in point 4 above. However, valuable sites or habitats have often been destroyed due to a lack of awareness of their importance. An example is the afforestation that occurred in the two SPAs in parameras inhabited by Dupont's Larks, before the Castilla y León regional government received detailed information on the birds' presence.

Conversely, it may often be thought that our own observations are of little scientific value. This idea is mistaken since many investigations, especially of common birds, rely on collection of local data by numerous observers, not necessarily expert, whose combined efforts result in highly valuable larger scale works. Examples include the Winter Atlas, the various Breeding Bird atlases and the Common Bird and Nocturnal Bird monitoring programmes, among others. All these are organised by SEO/Birdlife using volunteers and the results are available on-line (www.seguimientodeaves.org).

10 Act as you would wish others to do.

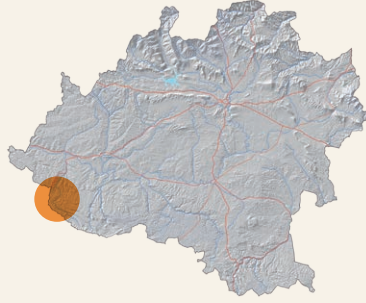
Appropriate conduct and compliance with the above norms makes observers ambassadors for the conservation of birds and their habitats. Good example is the best way of spreading our message, wherever you go. Do not forget also to make your presence felt in a positive way by making use of local facilities and consuming local products.

There follow 16 itineraries distributed throughout the southern fringe of the province. Four are within the Altos de Barahona SPA, one in the Páramo de Layna SPA and one in the Monteagudo de las Vicarías SPA. Each account provides information on getting to the area, a map of the recommended route, a description of the itinerary and its main birding attractions, advice on when best to come and some alternative ideas for family outings. Finally there is a list of which bird species may be seen there. For breeding birds, bold type indicates species that occur year-round.

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES



Río Pedro gorges



1

Location and access

105km southwest of Soria city, in the Tierra de Ayllón. From Soria take the N-122 to San Esteban de Gormaz and then the N-110 nearly as far as Ayllón in Segovia province. Before reaching Ayllón take the road on the left signposted Tiermes. Head for Cuevas de Ayllón and/or Ligos. The area is 150km from Madrid on the Autovía de Burgos (A-1).

Status: No special protection. Within IBA 076, Tiermes-Caracena, part of the SEO/Birdlife Important Bird Area network.

Terrain: Karstic gorges among slopes covered with Mediterranean scrub and young Holm Oak and Juniper copses. Good riverine woods.

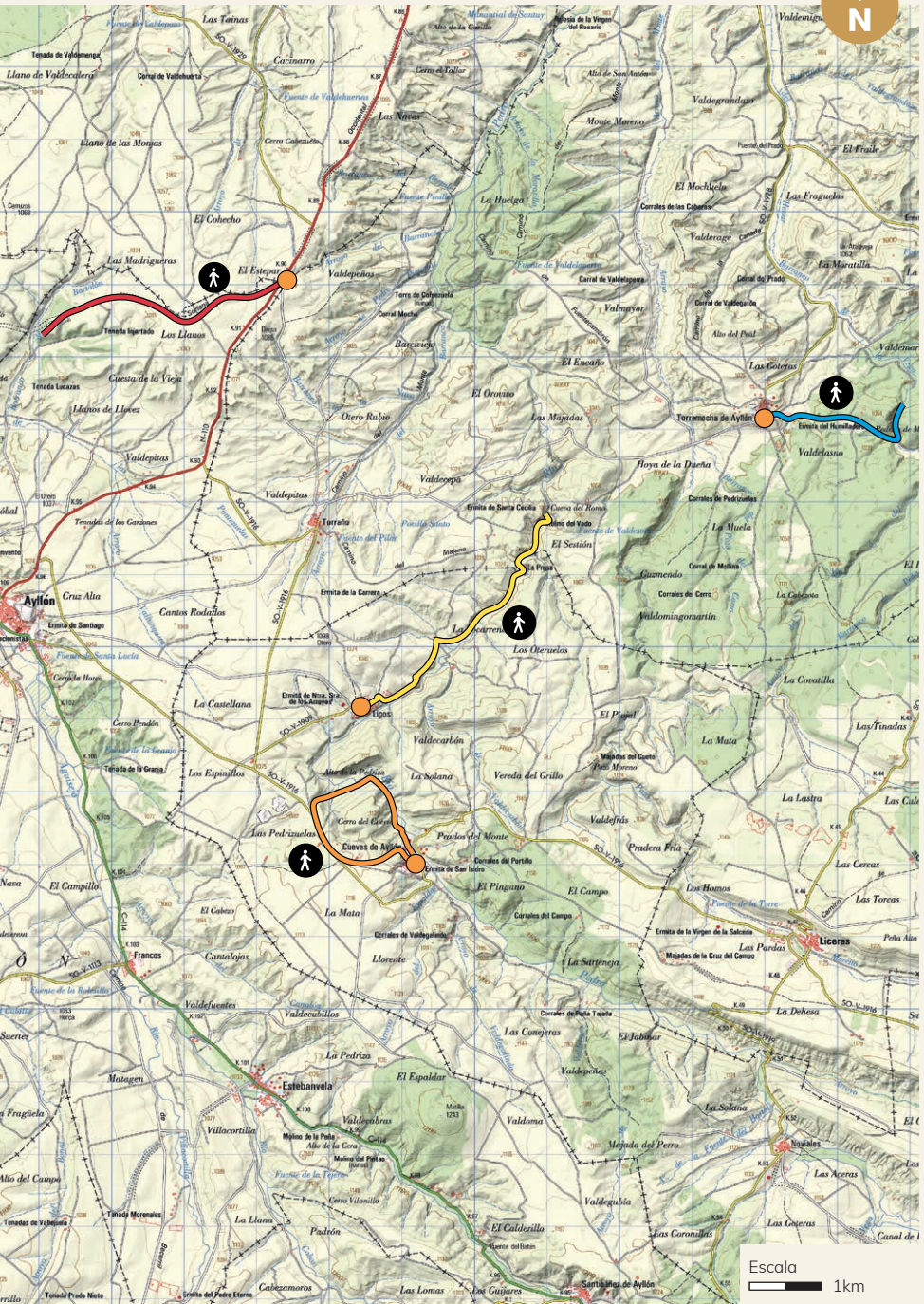
Access by: Own vehicle.

Ease of access: Medium. There are no roads or tracks at various points of the gorges so prevailing conditions will determine accessibility.

Visit duration: Very variable. Lengthy for extensive visits taking in all the diverse gorges. Visits of one or two hours to specific points are feasible.

Timing: The gorges and valleys are best visited in spring.

Comments: Tracks tend to be in poor condition so particular care is needed during the rainy season. Take care especially during the Roe Deer hunting season – essentially all spring days – by wearing conspicuous clothing, not camouflage. This will make little difference to birding provided you are quiet and do not approach nests.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary on foot
- Start Itinerary
- Itinerary 2
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary by car

Site description and itineraries

The year 1833 would have been a bad year for an imaginary Sorian 'nationalist' since it was when the minister Javier de Burgos decided to redraw provincial boundaries more in accord with the times. He established the boundaries that exist to this day. In this process Soria lost much territory in the north – Cameros – and to the south – the Duchy of Medinaceli, but gained parts of Burgos and Segovia. In particular, this ancient land of Ayllón became part of Soria province, for reasons that remain unclear.

Such considerations mean nothing to the wildlife and the enchanting nature of these landscapes. Here you find one of the most attractive of the gorges that descend from the Iberian System into the Duero depression. The area offers small meadows, Juniper and Holm Oak woods and expanses of Everlasting Plants (*Helichrysum* sp.) with beautiful stands of Black Poplars, Aspens and White Poplars in the gorge bottoms. Once the river Pedro has crossed the village of Cuevas de Ayllón and its surrounding red sandstones, so characteristic of the basal platform of the Sierra de Pela, it reaches the Cretaceous limestones of the Ligos pavements, one of the grandest geological formations to be seen in Soria.

The river changes course at Ligos through nearly 90 degrees, from west to north, heading for the Duero. Before this it runs through a series of cuttings comprising a small gorge that starts at Ligos but is more striking in the Torraño hinterland, at the Vado windmill, or Torraño windmill as it is popularly known.

We propose two routes, to be followed wholly or in part as desired. Unless otherwise stated, routes here and elsewhere are intended for exploration on foot.

1 **The first leaves Cuevas de Ayllón**
on a track running parallel to the left bank of the river. Here you will notice that the river bank is hard to follow because a good part of the tracks and paths have been worn away. It is only impassable when the river is very high, however. You reach a point opposite the Ligos pavement after about one kilometre. A road on the left bank

ascends the slope and joins the local road, along which you can return to Cuevas. It is well worth stopping at the highest point to view the pavements.

2 **The second route leaves Ligos**
along a track above the left bank of the river. This leads after some 4km to Torraño mill and traverses all the main habitats of the area, including a small paramo where Dupont's Lark still occurs. It is possible to walk along the bottom of the gorge from the mill until it becomes impassable. Retrace your route or, if two cars available, walk to where you have left one at the bridge across the river Pedro on the road that links Torraño with Torremocha de Ayllón.

What birds to see and when

Winters are hard in these valleys and paramos. It is really only in the juniper woods in the northeast that there is much activity then, given the attraction of wintering birds to the juniper berries. Good numbers of thrushes, blackbirds, Azure-winged Magpies and tits may be seen here. This is also when Griffon Vultures and Eagle Owls begin their breeding season.

By February some slight environmental changes begin to be apparent, with the arrival of some Woodlarks in any of the open woodlands of the area or of Crag Martins on the cliffs. Nuthatches, recent colonists here, are among the most active and noisy occupants of the riverine woods, alongside Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers.

The starting pistol for spring is fired in March. Wintering birds begin to depart and other species arrive, including Serins and Black Redstarts, which are partial migrants in this region. The Egyptian Vulture, that characteristic bird of the gorges, arrives in March; several pairs traditionally occupy the rock faces, where they can readily be observed. These same escarpments are reoccupied at this time by birds that have abandoned them for the autumn and winter and are now drawn back to the crevices and crannies by the urge to reproduce. They include Choughs and Jackdaws, although the latter especially are ever more scarce here and elsewhere in Soria, perhaps



Eagle Owl

Bubo bubo

a consequence of the decline in sheep flocks. Ravens take possession of the gorges and provide early warning of the appearance of a Golden Eagle, which they pursue with unrestrained fury. The occasional Peregrine Falcon can also be seen here.

More species appear as the spring progresses: Blue Rock-thrushes, Rock Sparrows, Stock Doves, Common Kestrels and, the last of all to arrive, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrushes. On account of all these, the cliffs are a hive of activity in May and June, as the breeding season reaches its peak. Later still, there are new arrivals of such birds as Griffon and Egyptian Vultures until July and/or early August, as individuals fledged elsewhere leave their nests.

The complement of valleys, fields and uplands allows for spectacular birding here. On the uplands, specifically the

paramo de Torraño, along with Dupont's Larks there are Black-eared Wheatears, Greater Short-toed Larks, Tawny Pipits, Ortolan Buntings, Spectacled Warblers and Orphean Warblers. The last of these also quite common in the juniper scrub. Meanwhile, the banks of the río Pedro resound to a chorus of many species that arrive around this time. They include Nightingales, Common Chiffchaffs, Robins, Spotted Flycatchers, Golden Orioles and both Red-backed and Woodchat Shrikes.

If the urge to see more remains, there are Montagu's Harriers on the fields around Ligos and Torraño, as well as Common Buzzards, Booted Eagles and the occasional Sparrowhawk and Short-toed Eagle. It now only remains to get up at dawn or stay late into the evening in order to hear the Red-necked Nightjar, a scarce species in Soria but recently found



here alongside the commoner European Nightjar. Scops Owls will also be evident, these still being common in the riverine woods.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Viñas Viejas gorge at Torremocha de Ayllón.** The gorge at Torremocha de Ayllón is highly accessible, so much so that extra care is needed during the nesting season so as not to cause too much disturbance. Take the good track north of Torremocha that leads to the Morcuera to Licerias road. The small limestone gorge appears on the left after some two kilometres, concealed behind good-sized junipers. The site is known locally as the Barranco de Bocalavoz. The typical rupestral avifauna described above is also found here: Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Red-billed Choughs, rock-thrushes and Eagle Owls, all on two large escarpments. The foot of the gorge is always dry, the parent stream lacking water even in the rainiest seasons.

B **Western Cañada Real Soriana.** This traditional drove road appears in all its splendour at the provincial boundary with Segovia, where it retains its original width and extent. It is within the intensely cultivated farmlands of Ayllón district, where it represents the only area of natural vegetation. As such it provides refuge, foraging space and nesting habitat for such open-country birds as Skylarks, Calandra Larks, Crested Larks, Northern Wheatears, Linnets and Yellow Wagtails, among others. The most interesting observation here would be a sighting of a male Little Bustard. These occupied their display sites all along the Cañada from mid-April until late June but only one bird was present in 2016. The species is disappearing before our very eyes.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Sparrowhawk, Montagu's Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Little Bustard, Eagle Owl, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Greater Short-toed Lark, Dupont's Lark, Skylark, Woodlark, Crag Martin, Tree Pipit, Tawny Pipit, Black-eared Wheatear, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Bonelli's Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Nuthatch, Red-backed Shrike, Rock Sparrow, Spanish Sparrow.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin, Meadow Pipit, Fieldfare, Redwing.

[→]

Migrants

Ring Ouzel, Alpine Accentor.

Itinerary

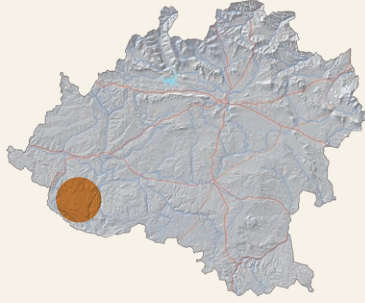
Tiermes

Arroyo de Montejo



Location and access

100km southwest of Soria city. From Soria take the N-122 to San Esteban de Gormaz, from where you follow the SO-P-4003 to Montejo de Tiermes. From Madrid take the A-1 and then the N-110 as far as Ayllón and then the SO-135 to the Tiermes archaeological site. This is in the middle of the zone although the core area of interest is at Montejo de Tiermes.



Status: No special protection, despite a long but unsuccessful campaign to register the area as an SPA. Within IBA 076, Tiermes-Caracena, part of the SEO/Birdlife Important Bird Area network.

Terrain: This part of the Sierra de Pela foothills is a succession of slopes and valleys covered with Cistus scrub and Pyrenean Oak regrowth. The rivers and streams have sculpted the triassic sandstone landscape to form a very characteristic landscape of red rock formations.

Means of access: Own vehicle.

Ease of access: The tracks are generally in very poor condition and driving in the wet season is not advisable.

Visit duration: This extensive area makes for visits to specific points or longer excursions on foot or by bicycle that will take at least half a day.

Timing: Spring or autumn visits are recommended. Winters are harsh and poor in species. The area is not as hot in summer as in some other parts of the meseta but bird activity is much reduced then.

Comments: Here as in many other sites beware of game drives during the general hunting season, October–February, and of Roe Deer hunting during April–August. Hunters turn up almost anywhere. It is also surprising that although the Tiermes archaeological site is of the the greatest importance it is currently in a state of neglect if not abandonment. For example, it is unfenced so anyone can enter, sheep graze there, and the Sotillos de Caracena/Manzanares road crosses it.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

Tiermes district has one of the lowest population densities within the markedly depopulated province of Soria. Various villages that were formerly dedicated to subsistence cereal cultivation and whose inhabitants grazed abundant sheep flocks are nowadays completely abandoned. Land abandonment has enabled a very substantial increase in forest cover, including at its best some pine plantations as well as regrowth. However very often the outcome has been extensive *Cistus* scrub formations that greatly impede transit on foot across such areas.

That said, the most striking and noteworthy features from the birding viewpoint are the widespread sandstone ridges that run between the source of the river Manzanares and Tiermes, and also between the archaeological site and Cuevas de Ayllón, along the Arroyo de Montejo. This is where we need to head for in search of the rich community of rupestral birds that occurs there, notably including such carrion eaters as Griffon and Egyptian Vultures and Ravens. We suggest two routes:

1 A three-kilometre route running from the Tiermes archaeological site following the GR86 path markings as far as the abandoned village of Manzanares. Rupestral species apart, several small mixed woodlands of oaks and Aspens here are attractive to many birds, particularly in spring.

2 For another option take the road leading from Montejo de Tiermes towards Pedro. It is notable how the sandstone cuttings are completely invisible from Montejo since the escarpments all face south, with level expanses of cultivation and pasture on the northern sides. The road descends to the Montejo stream, where the recommended route begins. Take the track upstream along the right bank, which offers unimpeded views of all the escarpments. Please keep to the track, especially during the January to July nesting season, since the vulture nests are plainly visible and sensitive to any disturbance from close approach. SEO-Soria found 121 breeding Griffon Vulture

pairs here in 2018, the second largest colony in Soria after the Cañón del Rio Lobos.

What birds to see and when

December/January. The first national census of Griffon Vultures, organised by SEO in 1979, found just 60 pairs in the entire province. Had the declining trend that then affected this species continued it would surely have disappeared as a nesting species here. We mention this lest the familiar sight of its enormous form be taken for granted, now that the bird is no longer endangered. The 'abanto', as the Griffon is known colloquially over much of Soria, performs its annual courtship on clear days in December and January. At this time, the lifelong partners fly together in close formation, repair their bulky nests and mate enthusiastically on the rock faces.

Either of the two recommended routes allows you to enjoy this spectacle and there is the additional benefit that for once there is no need for an early start. If you are inclined to linger until dusk on such anticyclonic days you quite probably will hear the territorial calls of Eagle Owls. Seeing the birds themselves is harder but not impossible since at this time they are sometimes active before it is quite dark. The Eagle Owl is another species that has increased considerably.

March. Although the Griffons are the greatest occupants, in every sense, of the skies of the region, they share these with their African cousins, the Egyptian Vultures, which arrive in March. These are quite easily seen, even by visitors to the Tiermes archaeological site, since several pairs nest here. Here too you can see some other species that make the escarpments their home, that also arrive from March onwards. Crag Martins are the first arrivals, although these absent themselves temporarily during any prolonged wet or cold spells. The songs of male Blue Rock-thrushes, relative newcomers here, are heard from late March as these reclaim their territories. Now too the Ravens are busy repairing their nests and the occasional pair of Peregrine Falcons, very scarce here, establishes its eyrie.



Griffon Vulture

Gyps fulvus

April. Jackdaws were probably very common here once, nesting in all the rock faces of the area, but these have now disappeared. There remains only the odd pair of Red-billed Choughs, also declining steadily. Rock Sparrows though remain numerous and may now be seen investigating the crevices in which they will nest. Spotless Starlings too, long known locally as 'tordos', are here and may occasionally be mistaken for Blue Rock-thrushes. The Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush appears from the end of the month: it is a spectacular sight, with its multicoloured plumage especially as it performs its parachuting display flights. As if all this were not sufficient, a new inhabitant has found accommodation in the recesses of the cliffs. These are the Red-rumped Swallows, first found nesting here early this century and now well established. One pair nested within the ruins themselves, in a cave alongside the 'Puerta del Oeste' but the nest failed, perhaps on account of the close human presence, and the site was abandoned permanently.

May. A key month, throughout which the breeding season provides unflinching

interest, from those birds that begin late to those, such as the vultures or falcons, that have well-grown chicks by now. Remember, once again, not to approach nests closely or otherwise cause disturbance, for any reason.

We almost forgot to mention the ubiquitous Black Redstarts, probably the most abundant passerines in the rocky scree, and the Northern Wheatears that also select rocky areas, scree and buildings.

June. The busiest month everywhere; on the escarpments, in the riparian growth and in the woodlands. Fledged young of many species are about during the first fortnight, during which the heat is still not too oppressive here. Griffons and Egyptian Vultures still have young in the nest, until July and August respectively, but other species are now at a key stage of their breeding cycles.

Many other birds guarantee an entertaining time in the surrounding areas. Red-backed Shrikes, Hoopoes, Bee-eaters, Green Woodpeckers, Golden Orioles who said that Spanish birds aren't showy?



Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Source of the Río Pedro.** Pedro village lies at the foot of the Sierra de Pela. The source is just before the village, a karstic upwelling that disgorges a good quantity of water during rainy periods. The nascent river Pedro tumbles rapidly through the village outskirts, forming small rapids and waterfalls. The course is marked by dense growth of Aspens and other poplars as well as small orchards and meadows separated by hedgerows with abundant Walnut trees. This is a very good area for woodland birds such as Robins, Wrens, Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers, Chaffinches and tits. An excellent spot for a rest or picnic in spring and summer.

B **Pyrenean Oakwoods of Carrascosa de Arriba.** The valley of the river Manzanares (Adanta) is one of the most splendid throughout its length, from its source at the eponymous village to its confluence with the river Caracena (Adante) at Fresno de Caracena. The valley flanks are covered with impressive woodlands of Portuguese and Holm Oaks at Carrascosa and Valderromán.

The largest Portuguese Oaks are on the slopes west of Carrascosa, which you can reach along a trail that crosses the river in the direction of Torresuso, before you get to Carrascosa. A stroll along this trail or an inspection of the valley from the upper levels of Picorzo peak, preferably both, is recommendable. At times the Portuguese Oaks house a roost of Griffon Vultures, Ravens, Carrion Crows and the occasional kite. The commonest birds there year-round include Nuthatches, Jays, Chaffinches and tits. In spring these are joined by Bonelli's, Subalpine and Orpheat Warblers. In autumn good-sized flocks of Wood pigeons and Mistle Thrushes are evident, particularly in good acorn years.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Booted Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Eagle Owl, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Greater Short-toed Lark, Dupont's Lark, Skylark, Woodlark, Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Tawny Pipit, Dunnock, Black-eared Wheatear, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Bonelli's Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Nuthatch, Red-backed Shrike, Rock Sparrow, Spanish Sparrow, Crossbill.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin, Siskin.

[→]

Migrants

Dotterel, Cranes.

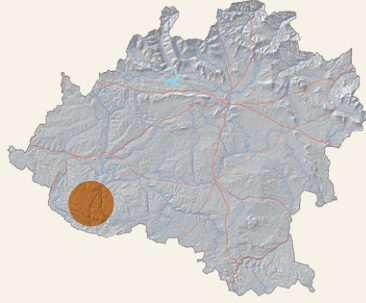
Itinerary

Caracena Gorge

3

Location and access

90km southwest of Soria city. From Soria take the N-122 as far as El Burgo de Osma, and then the SO-V-1601 to Caracena. Access from Madrid is via the A-1, then the N-110 and then the N-122 to El Burgo de Osma.



Status: No special protection, despite a long but unsuccessful campaign to register the area as an SPA. Within IBA 076, Tiernes-Caracena, part of the SEO/Birdlife Important Bird Area network.

Terrain: One of the deepest and most typical limestone gorges of this sector of the meseta. There are paramos on the uplands and also residual Holm Oak and Juniper copses.

Means of access: Own vehicle.

Ease of access: Moderate. The recommended route is subject to the state of flow of the river Caracena, given that it crosses the river at various points.

Visit duration: The return journey between Caracena and Tarancueña is some 18km: allow at least six hours when viewing birds. Shorter visits are possible according to personal preference.

Timing: Spring is the best season, as is generally the case at moderate elevations. Autumn is also a good time to come, although there are fewer species then. Summer visits are only advisable if you start very early, since it gets very hot along the gorge floor, where there is little shade.

Comments: Visits by tourists and ramblers have increased in this area so you may meet quite a few people, by Soria standards, along the recommended route. Early in the morning, and away from the main route, there is little difficulty in getting to enjoy the solitude of this region.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary 2
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary by car

Site description and itineraries

The Caracena is another of the small rivers that emerges from the Sierra de Pela and heads for the Duero. It crosses diverse calcareous mesetas that it and its tributaries have eroded extensively, creating a landscape of gorges and escarpments. The slopes continue to erode, the abundant sheep flocks of yesteryear having largely deforested the entire area.

The Caracena gorge is highly attractive, and not only on account of its aesthetic merits: it is one of those landscapes that surprises if not forewarned. Alongside the screes and escarpments, the landscape includes a mosaic of small fields and paramos of natural vegetation that connect with nearby areas that we also consider here – the paramos of La Perera-Madruédano. There are also Holm Oak and Juniper copses on the slopes and paramos, and riverine woodlands. Particularly outstanding among these are the Valderromán Holm Oak wood and the riverine woodland around the Fuencaliente spring.

1 The main route follows the sector of the GR86 long-distance trail that follows the canyon floor, between Caracena and Tarancueña. This is a clearly signposted stretch, eight kilometres one-way. If you start at Caracena the final two kilometres are less interesting if you are looking for rock-loving species, since there are no noteworthy escarpments there.

2 Access to the surrounding paramo is available from Caracena, specifically from the road leading to the castle – itself offering views of a spectacular landscape – leaving behind to either side the Gargantas and Pilonos escarpments. This road leads to Valderromán but if you are keen to explore this sector of the paramo on foot you should take the track that leads eastwards in a cultivated area following the boundaries of Tarancueña and Caracena districts, returning eventually to the castle.

What birds to see and when

Soria province boasts many historical villages that are also a delight for a birding visit, especially those settlements that are in rocky terrain. Walled villages such as Calatañazor or Rello, and those on hilltops such as Peñalcazar or the castle at Gormaz, nearly all appear to be extensions of the surrounding rocky ground. Carcena, once the headquarters of a more flourishing town and country community than now exists, is one such village. It is difficult to imagine a place with so many historical and artistic attractions within such a small area. It merits careful inspection.

Imagine arriving there very early one May morning. At once the bustle of Rock Sparrows and Black Redstarts draws attention. The former greatly outnumber the rather scarcer House Sparrows. If you decide to ascend to the castle you will be accompanied along the way by paramo and rocky area birds: Linnets, Northern and Black-eared Wheatears, Tawny Pipits and Woodlarks, among many. One or two pairs of Black Wheatears used to nest at the castle and in the nearby gully: the decline of this species throughout the region is a puzzle but it has disappeared almost everywhere. Crag Martins and both Blue and Rufous-tailed Rock-thrushes do remain and these, together with the ubiquitous and generalist Rock Sparrows and the acrobatic display flights of Choughs, make a visit to the castle unforgettable.

The continuous and cheerful song of scores of Skylarks will accompany you if you decide to explore the fields and steppe. Dupont's Lark is also found here, mainly in the south, but is relatively scarce. Greater Short-toed and Thekla Larks, Spectacled Warblers and both Rock and Ortolan Buntings are easier to find. You may or may not encounter the few remaining Black-bellied Sandgrouse.

During August–September, there is a very good chance of encountering Dotterel here, as on nearly all parameras. If you choose to return to the village and to follow the canyon you will encounter birds associated with the river, such as Robins, Wrens, Nightingales, Bonelli's Warblers and Song Thrushes. There will also be the species that use the escarpments: Griffon and Egyptian



Egyptian Vulture

Neophron percnopterus

Vultures, Common Kestrels, Golden Eagles, Ravens, Red-billed Choughs and Crag Martins, with Dartford Warblers and Rock Buntings among the scrub. Autumn is a good month to visit the gorge since several migrant species then occur: including Siskins and Yellowhammers, and Alpine Accentors on the rocks.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A Valderromán Holm Oak wood. It is only a few years since a tarmac road has linked the Caracena and Tiermes district via Valderromán. The road crosses the Valderromán oakwood, which is noteworthy for its centenarian oaks, some of them five metres in girth. Unfortunately heavy snow in 2018 brought down a branch of the finest tree, the only signposted specimen. A short stroll here should find a good range of

woodland birds, notably Nuthatches year-round and Common Redstarts, both on passage and nesting in small numbers.

B Fuencaliente–Virgen del Monte. The erosion activity of the river Caracena does not end at the town but some way further downstream (see Site 4, Vildé gorge). Two kilometres along there is a stretch of very characteristic rock formations, along the road to the Virgen del Monte hermitage and the Fuencaliente spring, where there are the remains of an illegal encampment. Rupestral species – Egyptian and Griffon Vultures, Peregrines and Crag Martins – occur, and Song Thrushes, Nuthatches, Wrens, Robins and Common Chiffchaffs inhabit the lush riverine vegetation. Spanish Sparrows have recently established colonies here. A climb to the Arab watchtower promises splendid views of the entire valley.





CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Black-bellied Sandgrouse? Eagle Owl, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Greater Short-toed Lark, Dupont's Lark, Skylark, Woodlark, Crag Martin, Grey Wagtail, Tawny Pipit, Dunnock, Black-eared Wheatear, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Bonelli's Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Nuthatch, Red-backed Shrike, Rock Sparrow, Spanish Sparrow.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin, Alpine Accentor, Siskin, Yellowhammer.

[→]

Migrants

Dotterel.

Vildé rock formations and gorge



4

Location and access

70km from Soria city, in the centre-west of the province. From Soria take the SO-100 as far as Berlanga de Duero and then the local road through Aguilera and Morales to reach Recuerda. From here take the Fresno de Caracena road and the turn-off to Vildé. Access is also possible from Burgo de Osma or San Esteban de Gormaz via Rasa and the Caracena road, passing through Navapalos.

Status: No special protection, despite a long but unsuccessful campaign to register the area as an SPA. Within IBA 076, Tiermes-Caracena.

Terrain: Originally level terrain in the Duero valley where erosion has given rise to a diversity of Cretaceous outcrops. These have witnessed how the rivers have created small gorges or canyons that break up the uniformity of these lands. At this point the lower reaches of the river Caracena have created one of the grandest of the gorges of this region.

Means of access: By car to the surrounding villages, such as Vildé, Villanueva de Gormaz and Fresno de Caracena. Thereafter on foot or by bicycle, given the poor state of the tracks.

Ease of access: Easy. However, strong footwear is advisable on the stony pavements, where there are a lot of loose rocks.

Visit duration: The core area can be seen in two or three hours.

Timing: Spring is best but visits at any time of year, even midwinter, are worthwhile.

Comments: A small reservoir in the centre of the gorge overflows the riverside path making it seemingly obligatory to continue along the bordering slope, practically at the foot of the escarpment. This is not advised during the breeding season when you may disturb the nesting birds there. You can take a short detour instead.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary on foot
- Start Itinerary
- Itinerary 2
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary by car

Site description and itineraries

Cretaceous limestone domes are a frequent feature of this part of the Duero valley and nearly all result in rather similar landscapes. The Burgo de Osma formation, dissected by three rivers: the Ucero, Abi6n and Sequillo, is nearby, as are those at Berlanga de Duero, eroded by the river Escalote, and Paones. However, the Vild6 gorge is certainly the most spectacular of all. At the eastern end, Gormaz castle, separated from the core area by the river Duero, is no less magnificent.

The process by which the river Caracena began to wear away this limestone pavement began millions of years ago and continues today. Erosion has revealed the the calcareous substrate and grazing pressure has kept it practically bare of tree cover. The remaining vegetation is nonetheless of interest. Many slopes support a varied cover of herbaceous perennials and such shrubs as brooms. Such expanses are the habitat of steppic species, including Dupont's Lark and the Black-bellied Sandgrouse, which have outpost populations here at some distance from their larger concentrations in the southern paramos.

The landscape contrast here is between the canyon of splendid, if not very high escarpments cut by the river and the riparian growth that carpets the riverbed, except for an 800m stretch where a small, century-old, irrigation reservoir fills the gorge from side to side, adding further diversity. The tree cover here, a favoured refuge of a great variety woodland birds, comprises tall, shapely, Black and White Poplars. We recommend two routes:

1 From the fountain side of Vild6 village square take the unmarked path southwestwards that leads to the right bank of the river. Continue through the gorge as far as the reservoir dam, which you should cross to the left bank. As mentioned above, it is undesirable to continue along the escarpment margin for fear of startling and flushing all the birds there. Instead return to Vild6 along a track on the left that heads eastwards, crossing a good stretch of the limestone pavement with its typical birds.

2 The other route starts at Villanueva de Gormaz. A track from the village crosses the limestone pavement to the river, upstream of the reservoir and where you can see some of the tree cover. Unless the river is high you can cross to the left bank where a small path leads to Fresno. You can continue along this path to explore the central area of pavement, and see some of its typical byres and corrals, returning along a parallel track to Villanueva.

What birds to see and when

May is the best month in which to see all the breeding species in all habitats. Nearly all will have arrived by the beginning of the month and the clamour of song in the gorges and on the paramo is overwhelming. The Blue Rock-thrushes, several pairs of which nest here, will have been singing strongly on the escarpments since mid March, with their relatives the Rufous-tailed Rock-thrushes taking over in May.

Meanwhile, in the riparian growth, the Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Golden Oriole, Robin, Cetti's Warbler and Bonelli's Warbler vie with each other to make themselves heard. Griffon and Egyptian Vultures continue their nesting, the latter with eggs or very small chicks, the former with larger chicks. Nesting by the entire range of other rupestral birds is also in full swing.

Undoubtedly, however, the arrivals on the slopes of the limestone pavement are especially noteworthy. Ortolan Buntings appear here from mid-April onwards, their beautiful song a constant feature in some areas. They are also among the most frequent birds encountered on the slopes between Navapalos and Fresno. Black-eared Wheatears precede them and also occupy stony areas, or the corral walls. Arrivals include Greater Short-toed Larks and Tawny Pipits, these joining the Dupont's Larks that still occur here. We have already commented on the difficulty of seeing these last but their fluting song can be heard at daybreak in May and early June.

This paramo is not only worth a visit in spring. The scarce Dotterel may turn up here in late August or throughout



Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus



September. The area seems very attractive to Dotterels, which occur nearly annually, although you need to be alert to their characteristic and far-reaching call. Listen too for the 'churr' of the Black-bellied Sandgrouse, a few of which a few survive here, moving between the paramo and cultivation further south, towards Villanueva de Gormaz. The reservoir and escarpments together still offer a good range of species during this period, some of them on passage and others summer visitors that are still present. There are nesting Mallard, Moorhens and Water Rails at the reservoir. A few Cormorants begin to appear in autumn, along with Grey Herons, Kingfishers and Common Sandpipers.

Species diversity declines as the autumn progresses. Among wintering species Meadow Pipits appear on the paramera; Common Chiffchaffs, and Siskins in some years, occur in the riverine woodland, and the call of the occasional Alpine Accentor is heard on the escarpments. Crag Martins, Black Redstarts and Blue Rock-thrushes disappear progressively – let us know if you see any of these in winter. However, just as all seems quiet we are approaching the courtship period of the Griffons and the ululations of the Eagle Owls can be heard on clear nights in December and January. As you can see, there is always something of interest here year-round.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

– **The Duero gorge at Gormaz.** In geological terms this lies within the same area as the limestone pavement but the river Duero imposes its own character on this small gorge. The river is held back here by the Bubones hydroelectric plant. A road leads to a fountain alongside a fish farm – that is in use contrary to what some maps indicate – alongside which a track leads through this gorge. Griffon Vultures are a constant presence here alongside such other rupestral birds at Choughs, Ravens, Common Kestrels and rock-thrushes. The widening of the river at this point has enabled the establishment of small islets of emergent vegetation that are very attractive to such aquatic birds as Marsh Harriers, Mallards, Kingfishers and Grey Herons. The last Little Bitterns of Soria province used to occur here.

– **The river Duero at Navapalos.** The recent establishment of a small hydroelectric plant here has involved a widening of the river, encouraging the presence of certain waterbirds. According to season you may find Cormorants and herons, various waterfowl, Kingfishers, Little Grebes, Sand Martins and Marsh Harriers, as well as abundant reedbed passerines such as Reed and Cetti's Warblers and Wrens. All these are readily observable from the bridge, which is also a good viewpoint for raptors. Look towards the slopes around Navapalos since the hundreds of hectares of apple orchards on the northern side of the river have greatly reduced the ornithological merit of that area.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Little Grebe, Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Booted Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Common Kestrel, Marsh Harrier, Red-legged Partridge, Eagle Owl, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Greater Short-toed Lark, Dupont's Lark, Skylark, Woodlark, Crag Martin, Tawny Pipit, Black-eared Wheatear, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Bonelli's Warbler, Common Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Nuthatch, Red-backed Shrike, Rock Sparrow, Spanish Sparrow, Ortolan Bunting.

[❄]

Winterers

Great Cormorant, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Meadow Pipit, Siskin, Reed Bunting.

[→]

Migrants

Black Stork, Dotterel, Osprey.

Fuente Arenaza juniper woods and gorges



5

Location and access

Sur de la provincia. En el In the centre-south of the province, near the river Duero. The entry point to this region is at Recuerda or in the south via the villages of Mosarejos or Galapagares. Take the SO-100 to Berlanga de Duero and from there the SO-152 as far as Recuerda. You can also reach Recuerda from Burgo de Osma on the SO-160.

Status: No special protection.

Terrain: Small limestone gorges – generally dry – eroded by the Fuente Arenaza stream, among extensive Juniper woods.

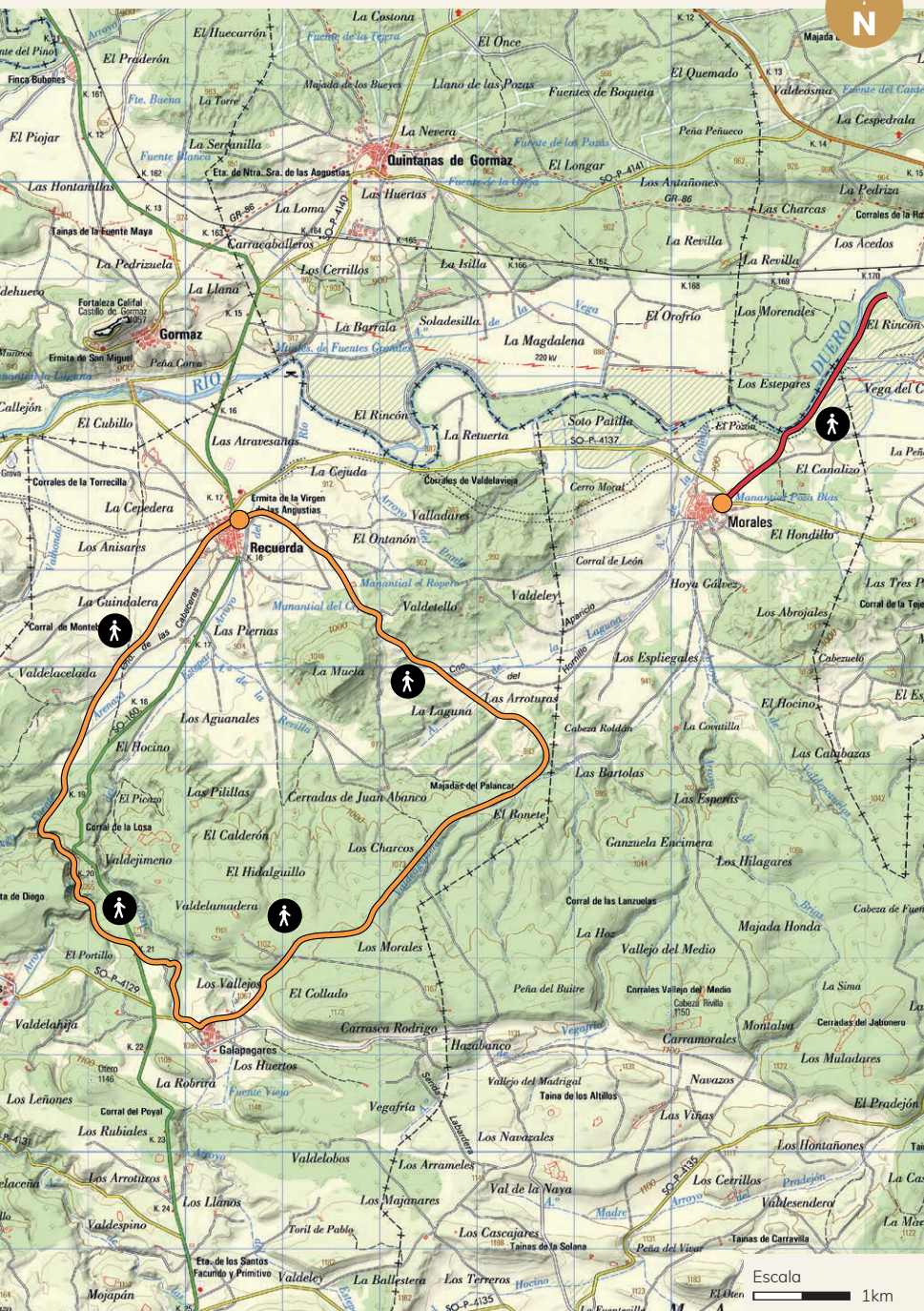
Means of access: Own vehicle. There is no public transport to these villages.





Ease of access: Easy. A good network of roads and paths gives access to the proposed routes.

Visit duration: Variable as preferred. The proposed route may take five or six hours, there and back.

Timing: Spring and autumn are ideal for seeing the most typical species. Winter too can produce interesting observations of wintering birds associated both with the rocky areas and the junipers.

Comments: One of the least known parts of the province. Such villages as Mosarejos, Galapagares, Brías and Abanco are almost, if not quite yet, abandoned. They therefore offer no public facilities of any kind.



-  Itinerary 1
-  Family itinerary A
-  Itinerary on foot
-  Itinerary by car
-  Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

Anyone reviewing closely all the routes and itineraries that we suggest in this book will note the obvious abundance of small gorges that score this landscape. Rivers and streams, generally draining limited watersheds or practically dry, have eroded small cuttings in the limestone layers from diverse geological periods in this zone. The only rivers with permanent water are those that originate from the Sierra de Pela. Those that start further south, for example those streams located between Pico San Cristóbal and the descents towards Berlanga, only carry water along particular stretches and/or during exceptionally wet periods. It is thus normal to find this part of the Fuente Arenaza stream dry.

This is the most attractive gorge and the best for birds in this area, along the stretch between Mosarejos and the exit towards Recuerda. Other similar gorges are that of the Arroyo del Estepar, running from Galapagares, and that of the Arroyo de Brías at that village. All these are very different from other closer gorges, around Caracena or Vildé, since they are embedded within one of most extensive Juniper woods of this part of the central Duero basin. They cover some 3,500 hectares of regenerating woodland, although a few years ago some hundreds of hectares were incinerated by a forest fire.

The main route will take you along the Fuente Arenaza stream, the most interesting option as we have said, which should be straightforward since it has long formed part of the GR86 long-distance trail. The path runs from Recuerda towards Galapagares. You can start at Recuerda or further along where cultivation gives way to Junipers.

Once at Galapagares, if you wish to extend the route to take in the Juniper woods, the best option is to take the road that leads northeast from there towards Morales. Quite soon, after some three kilometres, turn off on the road leading towards Recuerda.

Another interesting option, if time is limited and for a quick overview of the area, is to stop on the crest of the road between Recuerda and Mosarejos, between km-20 and km-21. Recent

roadworks have led to the abandonment here of a part of the former road, nearly alongside the highest part of the gorge. Sad to say, others have taken the opportunity to dump rubbish into the gorge here, as visible below. It is advisable not to linger too long in order not to disturb or flush any birds that you may see just below this viewpoint.

What birds to see and when

Thus far in this book we have not given much attention to nocturnal birds. In fact these are relatively scarce in Soria province and especially so in this area. Following the disappearance of Barn Owls from nearly all the villages, and the increasing scarcity of Little Owls, only the Scops Owls in the small woods and the Eagle Owls in the gorges seem to be doing well. Eagle Owls in fact occupy more sites than was the case 20 or 30 years ago and it is not unusual to find them in apparently unsuitable locations, as they take advantage of the solitude of our lands. The male Eagle Owls begin to call in December.

We referred above to the viewpoint or 'mirador' on the Recuerda/Mosarejos road. This is a ideal place to wait quietly and silently at dusk on calm winter evenings for Eagle Owls to appear. While you wait you will see the Griffons on the gorge walls, engaging in their early matings; Red-billed Choughs and the ever-scarcer Jackdaws. The arrival to roost of small flocks of Rock Sparrows and, if you are very lucky, perhaps an Alpine Accentor. These accentors are common in winter in the northern sierras of the province but they occur only very locally in these southern gorges.

Until a few years ago a pair of Golden Eagles could also be seen from the same viewpoint. One of their nest sites was on the facing gorge wall. This pair has since disappeared, for reasons unknown. Golden Eagles have poor breeding success in Soria province and their population has shown a series of ups and downs in recent years, on account of a range of factors. Where they occur they can be observed displaying in January and into February, given their lengthy courtship period.



Golden Eagle

Aquila chrysaetos

Also in winter, if the fruit crop has been heavy it is advisable to visit the Juniper woods, which then attract scores of thrushes. Redwings, Fieldfares, Song Thrushes and Mistle Thrushes can easily be seen here, the first of these in particular. Only the Mistle Thrush remains here year-round.

The gorge avifauna has already been detailed in other site accounts above. The various species arrive in turn as the spring advances. The Crag Martins are first, followed by the Blue Rock-thrushes, a pair of Egyptian Vultures and then the Rufous-tailed Rock-thrushes. Ring Ouzels are frequent on passage in April. The gorge is a wonder to behold in April but the Juniper woods do not lag behind. The warblers are especially noteworthy, this being where the Orphean and Subalpine Warblers attain their highest provincial densities. Alongside them are the Bonelli's Warbler and, offering a splash of colour, the Common Redstart, which is scarcer here than in similar places north of the Duero. The Dartford Warbler is also common in the less dense Juniper clumps, whether or not intermixed with gorse or stepic vegetation. The Sardinian Warbler too has become common here in recent years: this, the typical Mediterranean scrub-warbler, is quite scarce in Soria and it has one of its provincial strongholds here.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A Morales Juniper woods. Near Morales, between the village and the river Duero, a number of Juniper copses have withstood the spread of cultivation. Here you can see the same species described for Juniper woods above. The presence of some magnificent examples of junipers have encouraged us to recommend these woods. In particular, there is a well-preserved juniper, called 'La Pica' by the locals, that is nearly 15 metres tall and three metres in girth. It is included in the inventory of noteworthy trees of Soria province. There are other smaller but still good-sized trees nearby. The closeness of the river makes for a richer bird diversity than elsewhere.

B Valpierre and Pradejón gorges. The great Juniper wood of this district extends very close to Berlanga de Duero. Gorges created in the limestone terrain by the Arroyo de Pradejón, the Arroyo de Valpierre and the final stretch of the river Talegones converge here. The gorges are small but together they still offer all the rupestral bird species that nest in Soria province. Access is via a good track from Berlanga de Duero that leads to the margin of two gorges after crossing the river Talegones. The



Berlanga carrion dump is barely one kilometre from here, as reflected in the number of vultures that repose and nest

here. The Black Vulture appears here with some regularity and the Spanish Imperial Eagle has also been noted.



CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Egyptian Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Eagle Owl, Wryneck, Dupont's Lark, Crag Martin, Common Redstart, Mistle Thrush, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Subalpine Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Orphean Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Nuthatch, Red-billed Chough, Jackdaw, Ortolan Bunting.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Alpine Accentor, Dunnock, Fieldfare, Redwing, Siskin, Hawfinch.

[→]

Migrants

Ring Ouzel.

Itinerary

Parameras of la Perera

Madruédano

6

Location and access

From Soria city take the SO-100 to Berlanga de Duero and then the SO-132 as far as Lumías and the heights of La Lastra, on the road that links Atienza with El Burgo de Osma. Heading for El Burgo you will encounter the turn-off for Madruédano in Sauquillo de Paredes and that for La Perera in Nograles. The area is approached from Madrid via the N-110 as far as Ayllón and then the SO-135 to Retortillo.



Status: No special protection. The Altos de Barahona SPA extends further west than its name suggests to take in all the paramos of Retortillo de Soria, a key site for Dupont's Lark in the province. These present paramos, a natural extension of the above, were however excluded. A proposal to include the present site in a new SPA, to be called Tiermes-Caracena, on account of its importance for Dupont's Lark and such other species as the Egyptian Vulture, was not taken forward.

Terrain: Extensive parameras with a few small patches of cultivation and scattered Holm Oaks. There are small limestone scarps, such as that of Fuente Arenaza, but not the large gorges found further down.

Means of access: Own vehicle.

Ease of access: Easy. These are public roads and there is no fencing. The land was divided up into smaller plots a few years back, these marked by a network of pointless tracks running here and there all over the zone. Please keep to the tracks.

Visit duration: As desired, although a full survey on foot would take 4–5 hours.

Timing: Spring visits, in May and June in particular, are undoubtedly ideal. Summers are hot and winter visits are ill-advised given the harsh climate and lack of birds then.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary 2
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary 3
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

Just as we commented in Site 5 regarding how little known and isolated that area is, what can be said about this present site and its villages: La Perera, Madruédano, Modamio and Nograles among others? These too are all but abandoned, and may be cut off for days during snowy winters. They come to life to some degree only in summer when some former residents return. This is largely because these uplands are barely cultivable. Aerial photos of the stone boundaries of the former fields on the limestone paramera suggest a lunar landscape. Most of these fields now form part of the paramera since their small size makes cultivation uneconomical. This 500–600 hectare paramera, contiguous with the great paramo of the Alto de la Lastra in Retortillo, is one of the most attractive of the province. Along with this large expanse of paramos – bounded in the west by the Caracena canyon – there are small copses, of Holm Oaks mainly, at various stages of regeneration.

The only more or less extensive cultivated areas are between Pozuelo and La Perera. There is also an escarpment zone between La Perera and Modamio, with a small but gorgeous Aspen wood in that little valley.

1 Our recommended approach to the paramo is from Madruédano, ascending via the road that flanks this hilltop village to the west. This road runs for three kilometres before it reaches the limits of Caracena district, into which the division of the land into plots did not proceed. Stop here on the road, especially if you are trying to detect Dupont's Lark.

2 If you intend to walk, shortly after reaching the paramo look for a track that heads northwards towards a modern sheep byre. The paramo is full of old stone sheep corrals and byres, nearly all them in ruins unfortunately. You can walk along this road to search for Dupont's Lark and the other steppe bird species. Curious to say, the paramo here is known locally as 'la pesadilla' – the nightmare. The description may be

merited on some windy days and during the winter cold. The paramo is scattered with small parapets intended to shelter shepherds during such conditions. However, keen birders can expect some very enjoyable encounters here.

3 Before or after visiting this area you can stop in Modamio and walk northwards along the track that descends to the north along the right margin of the Fuente Arenaza stream towards La Perera. The distance is five kilometres but it offers a chance to see the birds of practically all the local habitats. The solitude alone makes the walk worthwhile.

What birds to see and when

You might assume that all the summer migrants will have arrived here by the end of April. This is just a supposition since spring comes late to these lands. The new season can only really be said to have arrived when the explosion of birdsong includes the 'swee-swee-swee, dee-dee' of the Ortolan Bunting, from its perch on some small tree or shrub.

The good thing about steppe fauna is that it is often readily observable, with little by way of obstruction. The ability of Dupont's Larks to make themselves invisible is therefore all the more remarkable. You can hear the song but cannot guess where the singer is perched. Fortunately for us, not all species are so evasive. Skylarks sing incessantly overhead and both Thekla Larks and the numerous Black-eared Wheatears perch conspicuously on the stone walls and corrals. As you progress you will come across Greater Short-toed Larks, Tawny Pipits, Linnets and, where there is some scrub, the occasional Spectacled Warbler. Here too you may encounter two of the scarcer steppe species. The Stone-curlew, known locally as 'plovers', are one of these. They are summer visitors here, arriving in early or mid April. They used to be very common, being well known to the shepherds, especially at dusk. Less numerous are the Black-bellied Sandgrouse that overfly the entire district, overlapping with those that used to occur on the Lastra paramo at Retortillo or on the paramo



Black-Bellied Sandgrouse

Pterocles orientalis

on the other side of the Caracena gorge towards Cañicera and Valderromán, and further south towards Villanueva de Gormaz and Vildé. These used to be common but barely two or three pairs survive here and their future prospects are not encouraging.

The paramo is not simply a place where you can see steppe birds. Raptors are much in evidence. A nearby pair of Golden Eagles hunts the area throughout the spring, alongside Booted and Short-toed Eagles. Griffon Vultures are numerous and the occasional Egyptian Vulture is attracted to the remaining livestock byres at Madruédano.

Summer is hot and scorching, although you may see a variety of family groups of birds if you start very early. As time passes and once well into August you can attempt to find some interesting passage migrants. This is a reliable site

then for Dotterels. The vantage point of San Cristobal de Madruédano also sometimes sees the passage of scores of Honey Buzzards, numerous Black Kites, Booted and Short-toed Eagles and the occasional Black Stork or Osprey. Autumn proper brings little new but a stroll through the copses around La Perera, Madruédano or Nograles promises good observations of woodland birds.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A Pozuelo. Reached via a good road from La Perera – or from Mosarejos to the northeast. One km short of Pozuelo a track leads to some ruins. The going may be poor if it has rained. It is hard to imagine that the



ruins were inhabited up to 50 years ago but their desolate appearance alone makes the visit worthwhile, if only from a sociological or cultural viewpoint. House Sparrows abandon villages when the people leave but Rock Sparrows and Black Redstarts remain in residence. An extensive cultivated area to the north has its typical species whereas to the south and, especially, to the west, in the Arroyo de Valhondo, you can once again find the paramo birds, including Dupont's and Greater Short-toed Larks, Black-eared Wheatears and Ortolan Buntings.

B La Perera. Nearly all the course of the Arroyo de Fuente Arenaza is dry with the exception of the stretch adjacent to this village and within the small gorge through which the access road passes. The adjacent copse of poplars and aspens here deserves careful scrutiny, offering ideal opportunities to see common species. Here, in a habitat that is a marked contrast with the arid surroundings, you can find Nuthatches, Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Robins, Red-backed Shrikes, Song Thrushes and others. There is also a notable concentration of nesting Spotted Flycatchers, a scarce species elsewhere in Soria.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Golden Eagle, Griffon Vulture, Montagu's Harrier, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Stone-curlew, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Stock Dove, Eagle Owl, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Iberian Green Woodpecker, Crag Martin, Greater Short-toed Lark, Dupont's Lark, Calandra Lark, Thekla's Lark, Woodlark, Tawny Pipit, Black Redstart, Black-eared Wheatear, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Subalpine Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Orphean Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Woodchat Shrike, Red-backed Shrike, Red-billed Chough, Raven, Rock Sparrow.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin.

[→]

Migrants

Dotterel, Meadow Pipit, Ring Ouzel, Common Redstart, Whinchat.

Talegones gorge



7

Location and access

From Soria head for Berlanga de Duero and take the SO-100 local road from there. After passing through Paones and Alaló you reach the SO-132 heading for Barahona. Turn eastwards and after 1.5km you reach the village of Lumías, the recommended access point for the site.

Status: Within the Altos de Barahona SPA.

Terrain: A small limestone canyon excavated by the river Talegones between Torrevicente and Lumías. The course of the river is lushly vegetated.

Means of access: Own vehicle. There is no public transport.

Ease of access: Easy – except when the river is high after heavy rainfall, when the stepping stones and tree trunks that bridge the stream may be under water.

Visit duration: Variable, according to preference. The proposed route may take four to five hours there and back.

Timing: Spring and autumn visits are ideal for finding the most typical species. The harsher conditions in summer, and especially in winter, dissuade visits then.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary 2
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

Ravines, gorges and cuttings are one of the most characteristic landscapes within the geography of Soria province. They are valleys of generally modest dimensions but offer a contrast to the paramos and sierras. The greatest concentration of ravines is in the southwest corner, where the rivers that rise in the Sierra de Pela and its vicinity have eroded the Jurassic limestones and Cretaceous pavements on their way to the river Duero. Among these is the narrow valley of the river Talegones, from Retortillo as far as Aguilera. The roughest sector, both on account of the height of the walls – although these still do not exceed 60 metres – and the vegetation, which makes the going difficult in places, is between Torrevicente and Lumías. The course of the Talegones is marked by Black Poplars, Aspens, Maples and Portuguese Oaks, with Holm Oaks creeping up the scarps. Alongside, at Torrevicente, there is excellent paramera where with luck you may see Dupont's Lark and other steppe birds. There are orchards and walnut groves near Lumías village, many of them abandoned.

1 The main route is the path that runs alongside the Talegones between the two villages, a long-established secondary branch of the GR86 long-distance route. The distance is 6.5km each way and you can start from either village, although Lumías is the better starting point in the morning since you then have the sun behind you.

2 If you finish at Torrevicente it is well worth returning by ascending to the flanking paramo and following a track across the stony terrain, with its many stone walls and corrals. The track is 9km long, leading to an old watermill downstream of Lumías.

What birds to see and when

This is one of those places that grabs a visitor's attention, irrespective of whether he or she is a birder or just somebody who enjoys rambling in the countryside. There is nothing about either village to prepare you for an encounter with what

seems to be a small oasis in mid-paramo. You will have realised from glancing at this guide that the paramo is very far from being a desert, especially birdwise. Nevertheless, greenery, water and woodlands have much wider appeal.

During winter 2017–2018 you would not have got far in the gorge without getting wet. Following an exceptionally dry year, in which the river dried up for many months, an exceptionally wet period made the path unusable. Even then it was possible to enjoy the small Griffon Vulture colony, with Jackdaws and Choughs, that is visible from the road at the entrance to Lumías. A visit here, and to the adjacent village and its surroundings, is feasible year-round.

A visit to the gorge in, say, mid-March will find the Griffon eggs on the point of hatching and the Egyptian Vultures beginning to arrive. The meadows nearest to Lumías then bring forth a sea of wild Narcissus, standing out against the still bare Poplars, Maples and Oaks. This is an idyllic backdrop against which to observe the flight of Peregrines and Golden Eagles, of Choughs and Ravens and of various woodland birds. The delightful song of the Blue Rock-thrushes echoes from the gorge walls.

New species continue to appear as April progresses, both in the gorge and in the woodland. Cuckoos, Wrynecks, Tree Pipits and Red-backed Shrikes join the Robins, Jays, Hawfinches, Nuthatches, Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Green Woodpeckers.

Both the Tree Pipits and Red-backed Shrikes are recent colonists here, as has happened at many other southern locations. The typical shadiness of the woods makes them attractive to birds of more northern distribution. The contrast with the surrounding paramera is stark. Here, in May and June, the paramera is the land of Skylarks, Crested Larks, Dupont's Larks, Tawny Pipits and both Northern and Black-eared Wheatears.

These species remain in summer although no longer singing. Early morning is then a good time to visit, to enjoy the sight of numerous family parties. Pay special attention to any residual pools in the water course, where many birds come to drink. However wet the winter, the river is generally dry in summer, at least in its central sector,



Red-Billed Chough

Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax

although it may retain water at Lumías, where there are several springs above the town.

Postbreeding migration, of Spotted and Pied Flycatchers, leaf- and scrub-warblers and Bee-eaters, is quite evident by late summer. Little Owls are present on the Torrevicente paramo, where you may also find Dotterels that range between here and nearby parameras in Guadalajara or at Retortillo–Madruédano.

An autumn visit is also worthwhile, if only to see the spectacular red of the Montpellier Maples. Then, as also in April, Ring Ouzels are not hard to find at various points of the gorge. The last Crag Martins, and perhaps also a Blue Rock-thrush, linger into early November.

Once into December the natural cycle recommences, with the courtship flights of Griffons by day and the song of Eagle Owls by night.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Cerro de las Arribas–Arroyo de la Hoz.** There is another small gorge north of the Talegones gorge and east of the village of Sauquillo de Paredes. It is simply called the Arroyo de la Hoz (Brook Gorge), the brook being dry and within a steppic environment, with scrub-covered slopes. The gorge walls are very low but are nonetheless big enough to support another community of rupestral birds, including Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Red-billed Choughs and both Blue and Rufous-tailed Rock-thrushes. The scrubby slopes are the domain of scrub warblers; Dartford and Sardinian Warblers year-round joined by Spectacled, Subalpine and Orpheap Warblers in the breeding season. There is ready access along a track that links Sauquillo de Paredes with Abanco. Keep the speed down when driving on such tracks and do not drive off-road.





CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Egyptian Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Montagu's Harrier, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Stone-curlew, Eagle Owl, Wryneck, Dupont's Lark, Crag Martin, Grey Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Spectacled Warbler, Orphee Warbler, Nuthatch, Golden Oriole, Red-billed Chough, Jackdaw, Hawfinch, Ortolan Bunting.

[❄]

Winterers

Woodcock, Meadow Pipit, Siskin.

[→]

Migrants

Grey Heron, Hen Harrier, Dunnock, Ring Ouzel, Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Flycatcher.

Itinerary

Parameras de Rello and La Hoceca

8

Location and access

There is ready access to Rello via Barahona on the C-106, which you may reach via Almazán, or via Jadraque if coming from Madrid. From elsewhere in Castilla you can also follow the Riba de Escalote, via a series of local roads from Berlanga de Duero.



Status: Entirely within the Altos de Barahona SPA.

Terrain: A small calcareous gorge immersed within the paramos that link the meseta with the foothills of the Southern Iberian Range.

Means of access: Own vehicle.

Ease of access: Easy. Public roads and unfenced land.

Visit duration: A full survey will take five or six hours.

Timing: Mid-spring, May and the first half of June, is ideal for seeing the steppic birds. Winter visits are inadvisable on account both of the cold and the lack of birds; even some 'residents' of the meseta, such as the Stonechat, Blue Rock-thrush, Woodlark and Black Redstart, are absent then.

Comments: Great care to avoid disturbance is advised when following the valley floor given the low height of the gorge walls, where some Griffon and Egyptian Vultures nest.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Family itinerary B1
- Family itinerary B2
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

Soria is one of the last refuges of Dupont's Lark, the province accommodating of its largest populations. This is especially evident on these southern paramos, where extensive 'fallows' persist both on the cenozoic paramos of the meseta or on the eroded expanses of mesozoic terrain. The Duero tributaries have formed small valleys across both surfaces, some including gorges or small canyons according to the hardness of the rock. One of these streams, the Arroyo de la Hoceca, originates at Alpanseque to join the waters of the Escalote near the walled village of Rello. Alongside the rupestral avifauna – and this is an ideal site to see both Rufous-tailed and Blue Rock-thrushes and, formerly, Black Wheatears – the main attraction is the surrounding paramos. Here resides one of the most outstanding Dupont's Lark populations in Soria province. Here too may be seen Stone-curlews, the small Little Bustard population that returns to these chilly lands on late April or early May and, with considerable luck, the some of the few remaining Black-bellied Sandgrouse.

The proposed route starts at Rello, following the section of the GR86 long-distance path that leads towards Marazovel-Alpanseque, ascending for three kilometres along the floor of the Hoceca valley – termed the Hoz Seca on many maps and Hocecilla in others. You reach a point where tracks ascend from the right bank of the stream up to the paramo. From here you return to the starting point crossing broad expanses of paramo and small patches of cultivation, via a track initially that later becomes a drivable road.

What birds to see and when

We have already commented that spring is the best time to enjoy the diversity of birds that occupy this site. These are by no means only the steppic and rupestral species.

A paradise for scrub-warblers. A short early morning walk in May through the

riparian woodland of the river Escalote below Rello as far as the valley floor, with its scrub-covered sides, offers a chance to see nearly all the scrub-warblers that then occur in the Iberian Peninsula. Of these, only the Common Whitethroat does not stay to breed but it is common on passage. The remainder do nest here, and in good numbers. Blackcaps and Garden Warblers confine themselves to the cool Aspen woodlands. The valley floor accommodates Subalpine and Orphean Warblers, at one of the highest densities of anywhere in the northern half of the Peninsula. Sardinian Warblers have appeared in recent years, these hot southern valleys being one of their few strongholds in Soria. Dartford Warblers seem scarcer but are still not uncommon. The same applies to the Spectacled Warblers, locally termed Broom Warblers on account of their affinity for these shrubs. Such other species as Melodious Warblers, Woodchat Shrikes and Ortolan Buntings also make use of the shrubby paradise that has developed on the floor and slopes of the valley. All this makes a May or June visit an authentic delight.

Dupont's Larks. Given that we have said that this is one of the best sites for Dupont's Larks not just in Soria but in the whole of Spain, it is only fitting that we suggest when best to see them. Bear in mind though that this can be very difficult, giving the skulking and crepuscular behaviour of this species. It should be noted that use of call or song playback to attract the birds is strictly forbidden. Scientific investigations have shown conclusively that such use may result in nesting failure for some pairs, in which the male may smash the eggs in its own nest possibly for fear another neighbouring male might have fathered the clutch.

Detecting, if not seeing, Dupont's Larks is straightforward, thanks to its highly characteristic, far-carrying and drawn-out call 'pu-cheeee.....'. However, the peak in territorial song activity comes an hour and a half before dawn. It can be heard as early as February on clear, calm days. By March song activity increases, becoming general in April, but peaking in May and during the first half of June. Although song peaks before dawn this is not to say that the birds are silent in



Dupont's Lark

Chersopilus duponti

daylight. They sing airborne as do other larks but most daytime song is from perches on the ground or hidden from view atop some shrub-sheltered stone. Patience is called for when trying to locate such song perches, some of which are often very close to the tracks that cross the paramo.

Dupont's Larks are very hard to see in summer, when the heat leads to reduced activity, as in most other species. However, a small resurgence in their song occurs from mid September/October, ending in November/December. By those dates a visit to the paramo may prove frustrating since you may see few birds even on fine days.

An occasional Little Bustard may also be heard between mid May and mid June, unfortunately one of the

last few remaining birds perhaps, since this species shows every sign of disappearing not just from here but also from many places in Spain, unless measures are taken to conserve them, which does not appear to be happening.

Our final recommendation is to visit the paramos in late summer, between 20 August and 20 September approximately. Species diversity then increases with the presence of such passerine migrants as martins, swallows, wagtails and Whinchats. In particular, the Dotterel then regularly selects the paramos as stopover locations during its journey from its nesting places in the Arctic tundra to its North African wintering grounds. Flocks (trips) of up to 30 have been recorded between Rello and Barahona.



Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **La Riba de Escalote gorge.** The river Escalote continues northwards and, after passing through the village of La Riba de Escalote and collecting the waters of the Salobral spring, it runs through the gorge that it has carved. The road that links the area with the Tierras de Berlanga also passes through this gorge. The river always has water and Mallards, Water Rails and reed warblers inhabit the riparian growth, although these are not always easy to see. The more interesting feature is then perhaps the proximity of the colonies of rupestral birds that inhabit the gorge, from Griffon Vultures and the noisy Jackdaws and Red-billed Choughs to Crag Martins, Rock Sparrows and both Rufous-tailed and Blue Rock-thrushes.

B **Torre Tiñón.** From Caltojar in the north or from Rello, you can take a good quality track to the Torre Tiñón, one of the arab watch-towers of the district. This one has been restored and, with care, you can climb to the top from where a large part of the paramo is in view. You can see for many kilometres all around, making this a good watchpoint for seeing Griffons and other raptors, as well as hearing Dupont's Larks. Other steppic birds of the area, such as Tawny Pipits, Greater Short-toed Larks and both Northern and Black-eared Wheatears may be detected in spring or summer, with Skylarks, Rock Sparrows, Carrion Crows and Linnets present year-round.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Golden Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Montagu's Harrier, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Little Bustard, Stone-curlew, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Stock Dove, Eagle Owl, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Iberian Green Woodpecker, Crag Martin, Greater Short-toed Lark, Dupont's Lark, Calandra Lark, Thekla's Lark, Woodlark, Tawny Pipit, Woodchat Shrike, Black Redstart, Black-eared Wheatear, Black Wheatear (extinct), Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Subalpine Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Orphean Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Red-billed Chough, Jackdaw (extinct), Raven, Rock Sparrow.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin.

[→]

Migrants

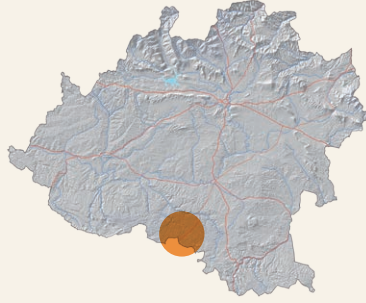
Black Stork, Dotterel, Meadow Pipit, Ring Ouzel, Common Redstart, Whinchat.

Farmlands and wetlands of Barahona–Alpanseque

9

Location and access

55km southeast of Soria city. Take the A-11 Madrid road as far as Almazán, and then the CL-101 to Barahona. From Madrid there is easy access along the old historic route from Jadraque, both to Barahona and to Alpanseque.



Status: The entire area is within the Altos de Barahona SPA. Two lagoons are included in the List of Wetlands of Special Interest of Castilla y León: the Laguna del Ojo (SO-19) and the Laguna del Sabuco – listed as the Laguna Cerrada- (SO-18).

Terrain: Small dewponds – locally called 'navajos' – and endorheic lagoons, surrounded by cereal cultivation.

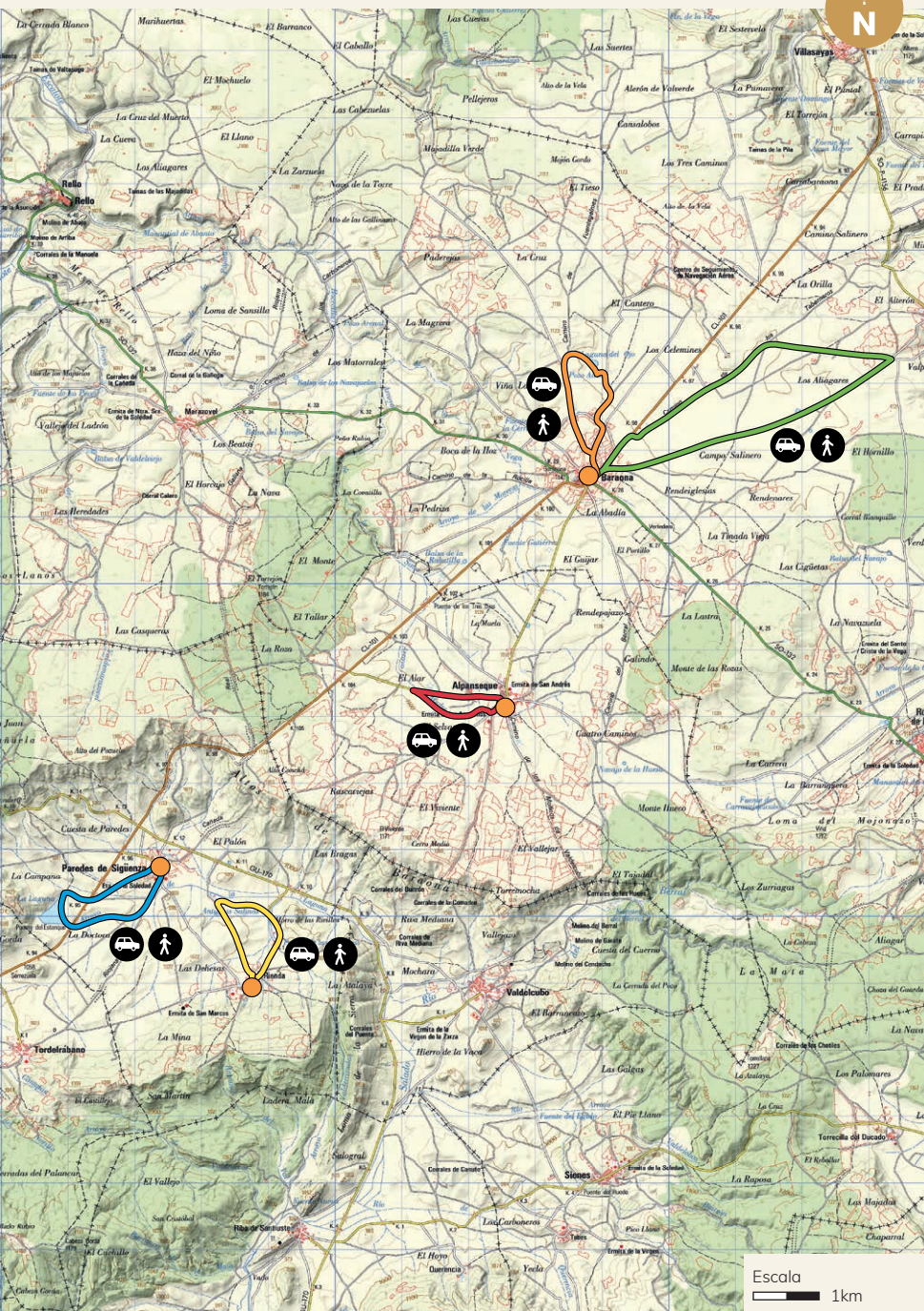
Means of access: Own vehicle.

Ease of access: Easy. All roads are of public access.

Visit duration: As preferred, this being a very accessible area. Two to three hours are needed to visit all parts.

Timing: It is important to ascertain whether or not there have been heavy rains during the preceding winter/spring. This being so the wetlands will be full and visits from late January until late spring will be worthwhile. Visits from July to October are also offer the chance of seeing flocks of Great and Little Bustards.

Comments: Barahona is a regional centre that has seen better days, as is the case unfortunately over much of the province. The area is quite windy, something to bear in mind when planning a visit if such conditions are forecast.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary 2
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary 3
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

The SPA, which is characterised by the dwarf shrub paramos where you can see Dupont's Lark, may be named after Barahona. However, the hinterlands of these two villages have long been devoted to cereal cultivation, sprinkled with quite a few lagoons and dewponds locally known as 'navajos'.

We cannot resist mentioning that the 14th century Prince Juan Manuel when describing this area in his book on hunting wrote: "Don Juan says that of all places where he has been he has never seen anywhere better for all types of falconry, and especially for exercising large falcons, than between Barahona and Paredes etc.", "Thereabouts are many ducks, herons, cranes and Barn Owls, making for very pleasing hunting; in summertime there are numerous Stone-curlews and Little Bustards, and always many hares and partridges..."; "Between Barahona and Paredes there is a stream and lakes where there are many ducks, a good spot for falconry". Nearly 600 years later much has been lost and there are rather fewer species than the Prince found, but we can still identify and see those locations.

The lagoons are not signposted. Very often it is the birds of their surroundings that are of interest, rather than those on the lagoons themselves.

1 You should start with the Laguna del Ojo. Like the others this is an endorheic lagoon, with no feeder stream or spring, and it has suffered in the past from vegetation clearance and deepening of the basin. You should explore the surrounding pastures as well as the two large pools that form nearby in wet years. One of these is between the lake and the local road.

2 The other and the larger of the two is between the road and the track that leads to Pinilla del Campo. In very wet years, such as occurred in 2001, 2003, 2013, 2015 and 2018, the latter pool amounts to a lagoon and is ideal for seeing waterbirds.

3 There are a couple of small pools near Alpanseque but a stream, the

Arrojo Madre, downstream of that village is of greater interest.

What birds to see and when

In accordance with Prince Juan Manuel, we here consider species that already characterised this area hundreds of years ago.

Cranes. These have a stopover site during their spring migration in the fields around the Laguna del Ojo, provided that it holds water. Some good-sized flocks may stage here between mid February and mid March. They are much less likely to appear during the postnuptial migration when the land and wetlands are largely dry, given the absence of any summer rain.

Plovers. Hundreds of (Northern) Lapwings can be seen from late February through the whole of March. Once again, the pastures and fields around the Laguna del Ojo are the best places to see them, often in mixed flocks with Golden Plovers. The autumn passage, as with the Cranes, is much less significant but they can be seen in November especially. The attraction of this area to Lapwings sometimes leads to the occasional pair remaining to nest, this and the Monteagudo reservoir being the only provincial sites where they may do so.

A Sociable Lapwing was present here for over two weeks in March 2018. This rare Asian species is being reported wintering in the Peninsula increasingly often. Some Dotterel have also been seen with the Lapwings in March. The Dotterel finds good stopover sites here and in many of the paramos and fields of southern Soria province. It occurs sporadically in March and April but is a regular presence in August–September.

Ducks. Virtually all dabbling duck species may be seen in these wetlands. The most interesting are the Garganeys that appear on the second, unnamed, large pool mentioned above. Ducks are present from February until late April. From May onwards there only remain the Mallards that stay to nest on all the lagoons as well as by pools and small streams.



Great Bustard

Otis tarda



Grey Herons. The Laguna del Ojo is the only site in the province where the Grey Heron has been proved to have nested, although it is suspected to have done so at the Laguna del Sabuco. These sporadic nesting attempts are no doubt linked to the nearby colony, a few kilometres away, at the Laguna del Madrigal, Guadalajara (see below). Grey Herons may be seen year-round, even in summer.

Other waterbirds. Spring is best for waterbirds, again particularly in years with heavy rains. Of these, waders will be the most obvious and many common species can be seen here, Ruffs and Common Redshanks being the most numerous. Waders can be seen from mid March to mid May. The first rails appear in mid March. The three common rails – the Moorhen, Common Coot and Water Rail – nest at these lagoons. This is one of the highest elevations at which Coots nest in Spain.

Another breeding species is the Marsh Harrier, some two or three pairs nesting in the marginal vegetation at the Laguna del Ojo, even when it is dry. We must also mention the White Stork, a common non-breeding migrant here. Sizable stork flocks choose to roost on the church at Barahona, especially in August and September.

Great Bustards. Great Bustards begin to appear here from mid June. They are males of the Madrid region population that abandon their nesting grounds to head north to more elevated and cooler areas such as this. The numbers of overwintering Great Bustards here have declined in recent years. The reasons are unclear but it is known that males are increasingly remaining in their breeding areas thus avoiding the increased mortality, from diverse causes, that is suffered by those that do migrate. Alpanseque was the best place to see Great Bustards during the 1990s, and many locals remembered that they nested there in the not too distant past. The best site is now between Barahona and Pinilla del Olmo, from mid June to early October, viewed from the road that links the two villages.

Little Bustards. Good-sized flocks of Little Bustards, derived from the population of nearby plains and paramos, could also be from the road mentioned above in late summer and early autumn. Numbers have declined markedly in recent years, in keeping with the population decrease reported widely in Spain. During the early 1990s there were still flocks of up to 100 but nowadays you are lucky if you see 30.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Laguna de Madrigal.** This lagoon lies barely five kilometres beyond the Guadalajara provincial boundary, once past the village of Paredes de Sigüenza. This is a permanent lagoon, mainly covered by a dense reedbed. It is barely five metres from the road, the main drawback being that there is scant opportunity to park there. This is the largest regional lagoon, at seven hectares. A Grey Heron colony has become established here and there are always such waterbirds as Common Coots, Little Grebes, Mallards and Marsh Harriers.

B **Salinas de Rienda.** These disused salt pans, that are still in quite good repair, are also near Paredes de Sigüenza. They are readily accessible and a very good place to see such locally uncommon breeding species as the Black-winged Stilt and Little Ringed Plover. Many commoner species, including the Yellow Wagtail, Zitting Cisticola and Corn Bunting, attain high densities here. Spring is the most promising time for a visit but since there is some water year-round something surprising may turn up at any time.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Mallard, Montagu's Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Moorhen, Common Coot, Water Rail, Little Bustard, Stone-curlew, Little Owl*, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Greater Short-toed Lark, Dupont's Lark, Calandra Lark, Skylark, Woodlark, Tawny Pipit, Rock Sparrow.

[*]

Summering non-breeders

Great Bustard, Lesser Kestrel.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin, Meadow Pipit.

[→]

Migrants

White Stork, Black Stork, Wigeon, Shoveler, Gadwall, Teal, Garganey, Crane, Lapwing, Golden Plover, Dotterel, Common Redshank, Ruff, Green Sandpiper.

[*]

Rarities

Sociable Lapwing, Glossy Ibis.

Upper Bordecorex valley

10

Location and access

65km south of Soria city. From Soria take the A-11 motorway for Madrid and leave at exit 65, heading for Yelo-Miño. From Madrid take the same motorway and leave at the exit for Medinaceli-Fuencaliente, continuing via Ambrona to Miño.



Status: No special protection apart for the Laguna de la Sima, which is included as SO-19 in the regional inventory of wetlands of Castilla y León. The protection gained by the lagoons from inclusion in this inventory is nominal, given that this lagoon has often seen its vegetation burned and it is degrading year after year without anything being done to conserve or protect it.

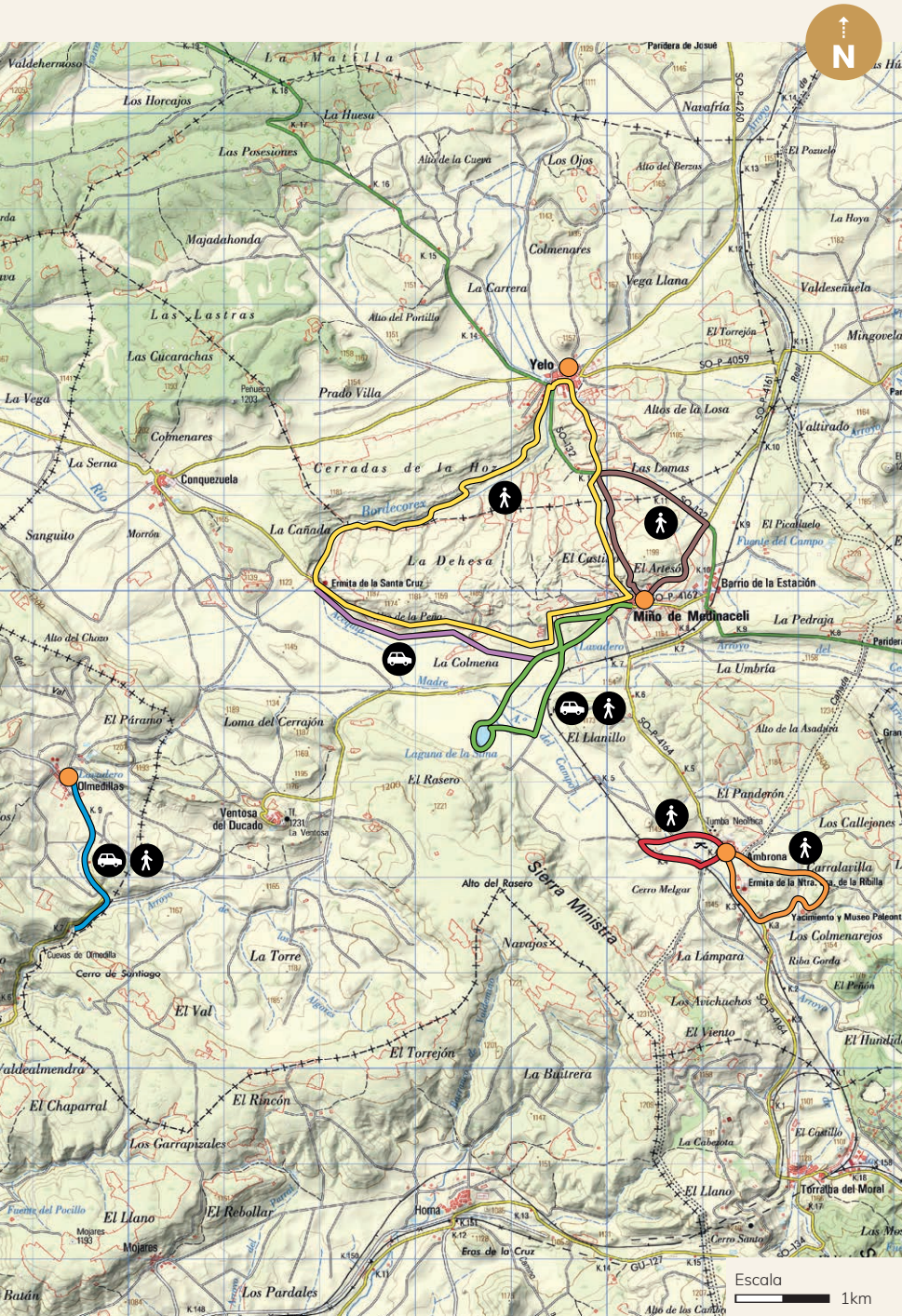
Terrain: The varied habitats include the broad central plain that featured one of the largest lagoons in the province, the Laguna de Conquezueta, until the mid 20th century. This is now farmland but still accumulates water during very rainy periods. The basin is fringed to the south by various limestone hills whose habitats are suitable for steppic birds despite being partly marred by infelicitous reafforestations and a windfarm. There are Pyrenean Oak copses on sandstone outcrops in the north.

Means of access: Own vehicle.

Ease of access: Easy. All roads and tracks are public.

Visit duration: Variable. Two to three hours are sufficient to take in the main areas but more time is needed if you are to visit the Bordecorex valley, as we recommend.

Timing: The site is at an altitude of 1,100–1,200m and so winters are very cold here. Nevertheless, December and/or January visits, continuing to late April and early May, are worthwhile if the former Laguna de Conquezueta has accumulated water. As for other sites, late spring is the most rewarding period.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary on foot
- Start Itinerary
- Itinerary 2
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary by car
- Itinerary 3
- Family itinerary C
- Itinerary 4

Site description and itineraries

The nearby Ambrona valley and this valley of the river Bordecorex have together been recognised as a centre of prehistoric culture, as a result of investigations and some excavations of the many archaeological sites found there. Neolithic remains are the most evident and it appears that some of the settlements found here may have been on stilts, given the extension, depth and persistence of the extensive sheet of water that once filled this endorheic basin.

The Laguna de Conquezuela is no more than a memory now, having been drained during the mid 20th century by means of a canal, which passes water into the nascent river Bordecorex, which then flows towards Yelo. Now and then, however, periods of heavy rain fill the basin faster than the canal can drain it, and the lake reforms partly, below the Santa Cruz hermitage. This has occurred during not a few years of the present century, a sizable lake having been formed in 2018 by the abundant rains of February and March.

The Laguna de la Sima persists but is very small and, being a typical endorheic lake, it dries up for long periods. It is a shame that it has suffered environmental degradations such as fly-tipping and, especially, the burning of the marsh vegetation. This lagoon is not signposted so use the maps to locate it.

1 An itinerary with several stops that allows you to see the birds of the area should begin at Miño de Medinaceli, visiting the cane-brakes north of the village.

2 A second stop at the Laguna de la Sima and a third stop in the vicinity of the Santa Cruz hermitage.

3 An intermediate stop is advised if the Laguna de Conquezuela has water since there are then good viewing opportunities along the Miño to Conquezuela road.

4 For birding on foot a recommended circular route can include Miño to the hermitage along the roadside, thereafter descending along the right

bank of the river Bordecorex to reach the GR86 path, following this back to Miño de Medinaceli.

What birds to see and when

Winter. Although this is a cold area there are plenty of days with anticyclonic weather, when splendid sunshine follows a frosty start, during which some interesting birds may be found. Such species as the Brambling, Yellowhammer, Hawfinch, Siskin and thrushes are not uncommon here then, with Spanish Sparrows also appearing in recent years. These last are given to nomadic movements in winter and roosts of over 100 birds may form around the Laguna de la Sima.

The formation of the Conquezuela wetland during rainy winters guarantees the presence of waterfowl, especially Teal, Pintail and Mallard, that appear right away. As January and February progress they are followed by herons, storks and some early passage waders, notably Green Sandpipers and flocks of Lapwings. Cranes and geese are also recorded here but to a lesser extent than at some other regional wetlands such as Barahona.

March–April. Aquatic birds continue to draw attention. Waders are more numerous since small plovers and shanks join the sandpipers and Lapwings, some remaining until the wetland dries up entirely, usually in early May. The attention is then drawn by the rupestral birds on the sandy outcrops nearby: Egyptian Vultures, Common Kestrels, Crag Martins, Rock Sparrows, Ravens, Red-billed Choughs and both Blue and Rufous-tailed Rock-thrushes. We should not forget the Laguna de la Sima which holds water longer and attracts small numbers of Mallards, Little Grebes, Common Coots, Water Rails, Moorhens and Great Reed Warblers.

May–June. The nearby oakwoods are slow to come into leaf, sometimes not until the end of May. These are regenerating woods, with few mature trees, but they still offer an interesting avifauna, including some species of typically more northern distribution in



Common Redshank

Tringa totanus

recent years. Tree Pipits, Song Thrushes and Red-backed Shrikes may be seen here. It has been curious to witness how at the same time as some northern species have spread southwards there have also been arrivals from the south, such as the Sardinian Warbler and Spanish Sparrow.

An even more considerable list will result if you visit some of the nearby paramera areas, to find Thekla and Greater Short-toed Larks, Tawny Pipits, Spectacled Warblers and Black-eared Wheatears.



Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Cuevas de las Olmedillas.** A partial venture into Guadalajara province allows you to see these curious limestone formations where prehistoric human remains have been found. The right bank of the river is in Guadalajara province but the left bank lies in Ventosa del Ducado district, Soria. Rupestral bird species are predominant here. Griffon Vultures, Golden Eagles, Red-billed Choughs and good flocks of Jackdaws are present year-round, with Crag Martins and both rock-thrushes evident in spring. Eagle Owls can be seen here and also at Conquezuela.

B **Ambrona.** The neighbourhood of Ambrona village offers two places of interest. The first is the surroundings of the paleontological site there. After viewing this you can continue along the access road into the paramo. You should at least hear Dupont's Larks and see other steppic species. Thereafter, for something completely different, there is the picnic site in the poplar copse alongside the village. Aside from the recreational area, the spring by the trees allows the ready observation of many common birds, such as Golden Orioles, Blackcaps, Robins and Collared Doves.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Mallard, Montagu's Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, Moorhen, Common Coot, Water Rail, Little Bustard, Stone-curlew, Little Owl, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Greater Short-toed Lark, Dupont's Lark, Calandra Lark, Skylark, Woodlark, Tree Pipit, Tawny Pipit, Blue Rock-thrush, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Red-backed Shrike, Nuthatch, Rock Sparrow, Spanish Sparrow.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin, Meadow Pipit.

[→]

Migrants

White Stork, Black Stork, Wigeon, Shoveler, Gadwall, Teal, Garganey, Osprey, Crane, Lapwing, Golden Plover, Dotterel, Little Ringed Plover, Common Ringed Plover, Common Redshank, Greenshank, Ruff, Green Sandpiper, Black-headed Gull, Roller.

Arbujuelo valley



11

Location and access

From Soria city take the A-15 as far as Medinaceli, the starting point of this itinerary.

Status: The entire valley is within the 'Paramo de Layna' SPA and Special Conservation Area. It includes a small, recently designated, botanical reserve, SO-001: "Microrreserva de flora de las Salinas de Medinaceli"

Terrain: A typical valley of the upper Jalón basin, running between largely deforested hillsides and through small crop fields along the Pradejón stream. The brackish water of this stream enables the existence of saltpans – the only ones in Soria – near Pradejón village.

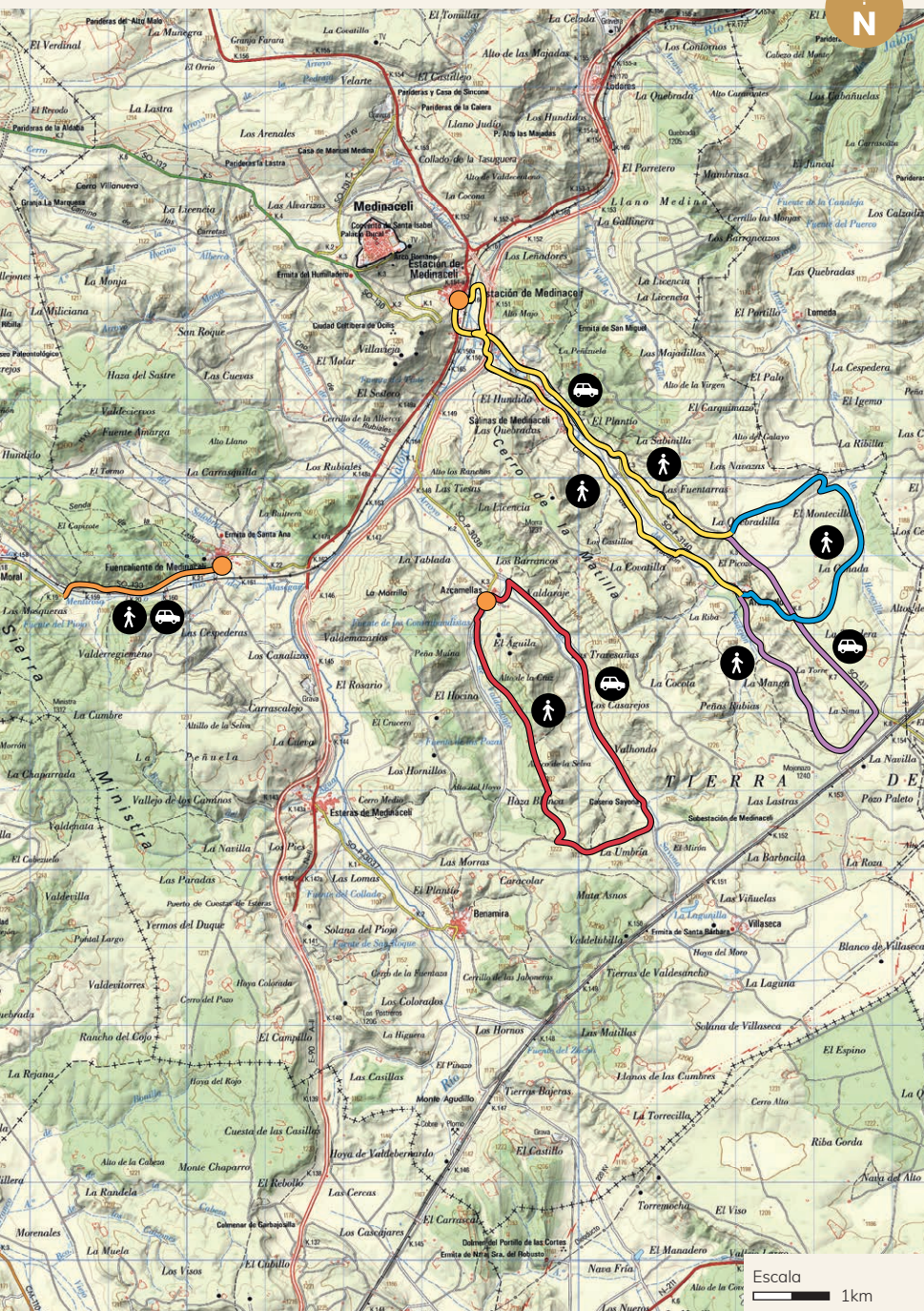
Means of access: Unlike nearly all the other sites covered here the village of Medinaceli has excellent communications, given its situation alongside the Navarra and Aragón motorway (A-15). There is also railway access.

Ease of access: Easy, and suitable for a short visit or a longer one that takes in the adjacent parameras.

Visit duration: The main suggested itinerary will take some two hours if limited to the Medinaceli reserve and the adjacent saltpans. Continuing to Arbujuelo and ascending via the GR86 path to the paramera along the Layna road is recommended and would take a further two to three hours.

Timing: Spring visits are best but something of interest may be seen year-round.

Comments: Human impacts on the environment, in the form of road noise from the nearby motorway, aggregate workings and windfarms, are an unwelcome presence.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary on foot
- Start Itinerary
- Itinerary 1.1
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary by car
- Itinerary 1.2

Site description and itineraries

The Valle del Arbujuelo is a line of communication between Castilla-Jalón and the Alto Tajo. It is a deep valley, excavated by the Pradejón stream that is fed by small springs that drain part of the Layna paramo to the north, some of the slopes of the Cerro de la Matilla to the west and the slopes above Medinacelli in the east. Between the Mojonazoto the south, at 1,240m, and the Jalón at 1,020m, the hillsides comprise bare treeless slopes with curious rock formations formed by erosion, such as the stony pinnacles known as the 'hermanitos' (little brothers) of Arbujuelo.

The salty sediments of the lower valley seem to have been exploited as saltpans since Roman times. The vegetation here is halophytic, perfectly adapted to the salty soil, as recognised by the botanical reserve. This is the site of the only records for Castilla y León of two species: the Sea Milkwort *Glaux maritima* and the composite *Scorzonera parviflora*. Two other characteristic halophytes here are the glasswort *Salicornia ramosissima* and the Sea Sowthistle *Sonchus maritimus*.

I The best route coincides with this sector of the GR86 long-distance path. Medinacelli is worth a visit for its cultural, historical and landscape attributes but, unlike similar settlements, there is no corresponding birding merit. The birding route commences at Medinacelli station from where you can access the walkways that preserve the protected flora, that has withstood the onslaught of the aggregate workings, car parks and rubbish.

Before you cross the motorway the path borders the river Jalon and a goldfish farm. The latter is private but some interesting birds may be seen from outside. Beyond the motorway the path runs near the saltpans but not alongside, so you should leave it for a closer view.

It is some six kilometres to Arbujuelo, passing through poplar stands and fields along the river, with its reedbeds. There are two options from there. **(1.1)** You can follow the Layna road back to Medinacelli, although there is some traffic to contend with. **(1.2)** Otherwise you can continue up the Arbujuelo valley along

the track that runs parallel to the river as far as the bottom of the valley, ascending the slope where a pothole is signposted.

What birds to see and when

This short stretch of the river Jalón is a good place for birding year-round. The recent construction of the Medinaceli water treatment works has improved its water quality considerably. Birds attracted to it include Grey Herons, Mallards, Meadow Pipits, Zitting Cisticolas, the occasional Marsh Harrier, Water Rails, Moorhens and Cetti's Warblers.

As spring progresses there appear Yellow Wagtails, Tawny Pipits and Reed Warblers as well as passage migrants such as Sedge, Great Reed and Grasshopper Warblers, Kingfishers and Montagu's Harriers. Little Ringed Plovers also appear at the saltpans, where at least a couple of pairs may be found every year.

Away from the wetlands the quantity and diversity of birds that may be seen in this area are greatly reduced outside the spring period. Only the hardiest species overwinter on these slopes: Dartford Warblers, Rock Buntings, Rck Sparrows, coveys of Red-legged Partridges – not easily hunted here – and Thekla Larks, with Common Kestrels, Griffons and Golden Eagles overhead. This valley is one of the best sites for seeing Golden Eagles, with birds from nearby territories nearly always hunting here.

The situation changes markedly in spring, May and June being spectacular birding months here. The reedbeds along the stream in the valley fill with Yellow Wagtails, Reed Warblers, Nightingales and Stonechats. Bee-eaters and Hoopoes are not hard to find. The poplar copses at Arbujuelo attract Wrynecks, Golden Orioles, Chaffinches, Blackcaps, Garden Warblers and Robins. The best option is a good stroll keeping a sharp eye out and ears attuned to the birdsong on the slopes. Ortolan Buntings appear here in good numbers; these lovely birds are best being located by their song. Nearby, and according to the available cover, there will be Melodious, Orphean, Subalpine and Spectacled Warblers, alongside the abundant resident Dartford



Rufous-Tailed Rock-Thrush

Monticola saxatilis

Warblers and, in some years, Sardinian Warblers. There may also be a pair of the ever more threatened Turtle Dove.

If you ascend the slopes you can readily find the Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush on the screes, in the company of the noisy Rock Sparrows as well as Northern and Black-eared Wheatears, Linnets and Hoopoes. The Blue Rock-thrush also occurs here, especially at the rock formation known as the Dos Hermanas (two sisters) de Arbujuelo.

The longer option will have brought you on to the paramo. According to the time that you get there the chorus of Sky Larks, Greater Short-toed Larks and Tawny Pipits will be accompanied by the 'pu-cheeee' of the Dupont's Larks. It makes for a fitting conclusion – or start if doing the route in reverse – to a day on these high southern Sorian uplands.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Sedge bed at Fuencaliente de Medinaceli.** The village name implies no shortage of water and indeed the Arroyo de la Mentirosa carries water year-round, fed here by springs and by its headwaters at Torralba and Ambrona. Take the road to those villages and shortly after a wide bend across the railway line you come across 'El Masegar', a broad expanse of marsh vegetation. Reedbeds and sedges cover nearly a hectare of this hollow that draws water from the nearby slopes. The easiest birds to see here in spring are Reed Warblers, Zitting Cisticolas and both Montagu's and Marsh Harriers. The surrounding splendid woodland of Portuguese Oaks, still young but spreading, allows you to add Golden



Orioles, Green Woodpeckers, Jays and Turtle Doves to the bird list, not to mention the Roe Deer that are incredibly numerous in this valley. The bridges across the railway line have nesting House Martins, as well as Red-rumped Swallows, which are quite recent arrivals here. The Fuencaliente poplar plantations have Spanish Sparrows.

B Azcamellas. To the west of the valley formed by the Arroyo del Pradejón there is another valley of similar characteristics, where the Arroyo de Sayona descends from the depopulated village of Sayona. If time is short a stop on the outskirts of Azcamellas will allow you to see a good number of the bird species that occur at Arbujuelo. This valley is perhaps somewhat more arid, with no riparian woodland of any type. A pine plantation on one of the slopes may produce one or two additional species, such as the Coal or Crested Tits. Once again, though, the occupiers of these apparently inhospitable slopes include Ortolan Buntings, scrub-warblers, rock-thrushes and Golden Eagles. A stroll towards Sayona village will increase the species list.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Griffon Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Sparrowhawk, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Eagle Owl, Wryneck, Red-rumped Swallow, Crag Martin, Mistle Thrush, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Spectacled Warbler, Orpheat Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Reed Warbler, Golden Oriole, Red-billed Chough, Ortolan Bunting.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin, Meadow Pipit.

[→]

Migrants

Kingfisher, Ring Ouzel, Bluethroat, Sedge Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler.

Itinerary

Río Blanco valley



12

Location and access

From Soria take the A-15 towards Medinaceli and the SO-411 from here as far as Layna. From Guadalajara/Madrid via the A-2, turn off for Alcolea del Pinar via the N-211 and then take the GU-411 to Layna.

Status: Bounded entirely to the west by the Páramo de Layna SPA but outside it. Includes a small botanical reserve: SO-004, Dehesa de Urex de Medinaceli-Río Blanco, as well as the Cerro Pelado paleontological site.

Terrain: An open valley fed by various watercourses of karstic origin that drain the surrounding paramera. Includes Portuguese Oak woods, Poplar copses and pastures.

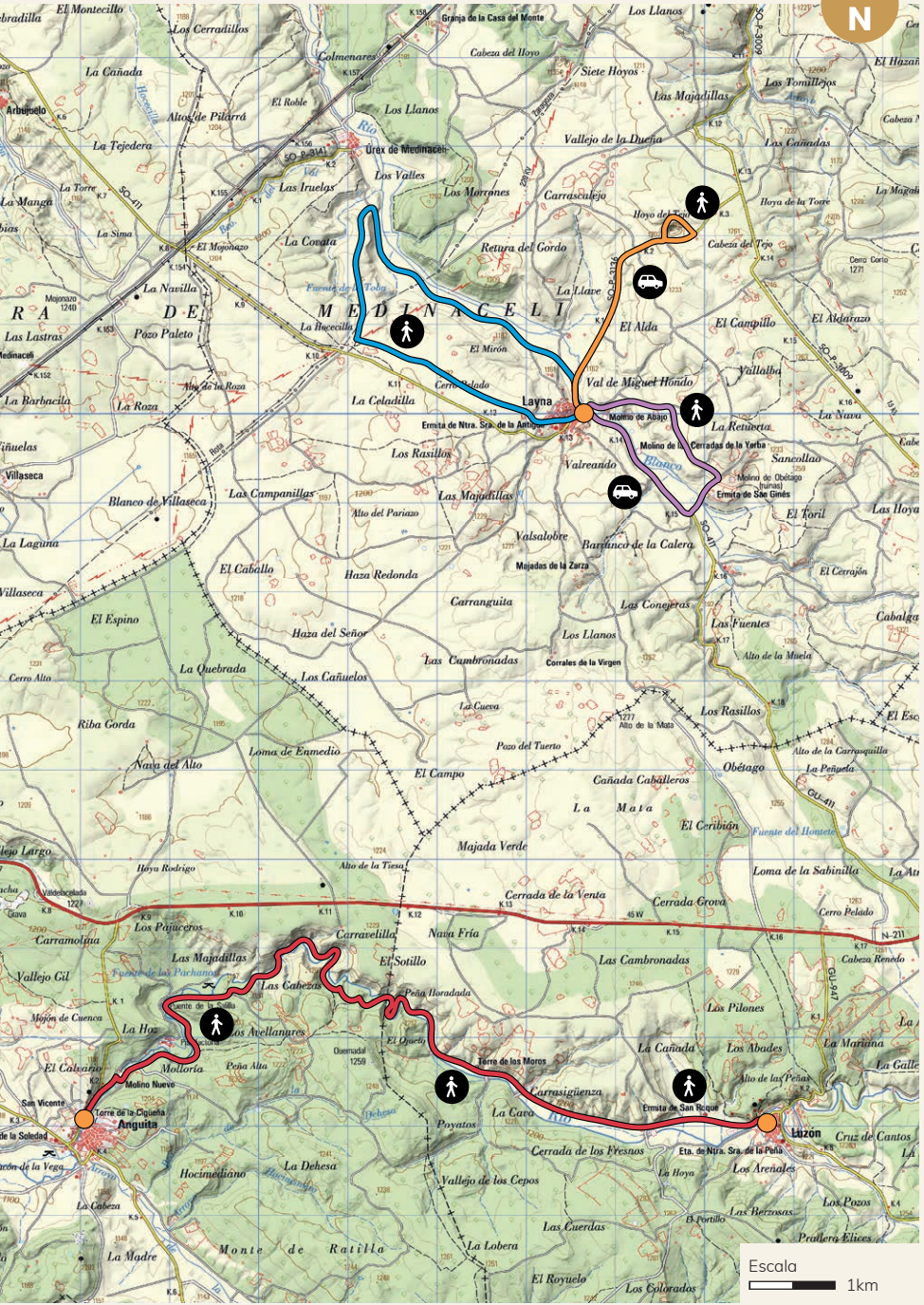
Means of access: Own vehicle.

Ease of access: Easy. Largely via roads and tracks with gentle gradients.

Visit duration: Dependent on the routes chosen. The most interesting parts can be seen in three to four hours.

Timing: Late spring and early summer are most productive.

Comments: The high speed train (AVE) passes just by Urex village, creating a powerful visual and acoustic impact when it does so.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary 2
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

The río Blanco is the most important river in southern Soria province. According to geographical indications it seems to arise in the Maranchón or Luzón districts in Guadalajara but its true origins, in the form of regular and permanent headwaters, are at 'Las Fuentes' in Layna district. It is yet another of the karstic upwellings of the province. Along its course to Velilla de Medinaceli the river receives various tributaries, the more interesting and significant of these being in Urex district.

One of the best areas on this itinerary lies there two kilometres in the Velilla direction. It consists of 14 hectares of wet pasture, together with a small poplar plantation, making for an ideal habitat for many bird species. This valuable and well-conserved marshy environment lies along a sinuous stretch of the river Blanco, in the form of floodplains on both sides of the basin featuring a diversity of sedges and other plants. These last include some very interesting orchids such as *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, *Orchis palustris*, *Epipactis palustris* and the only known population in Castilla y León of *Platanthera algeriensis*. The diverse very rich flora features plants of both northern and southern affinities, including numerous rarities such as *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, *Sonchus maritimus* subsp. *aquatilis*, *Thalictrum flavum* subsp. *costae*, *Berula erecta*, *Senecio carpetanus*, *Carex rostrata* and *Carex disticha*, whose presence implies the high level of conservation of the habitat.

Although the valley sides are quite open they are less so than in other nearby locations, there being a good Portuguese Oak wood at the head of the valley and another sizable Holm Oak wood adjacent to Urex de Medinaceli.

The distance from Las Fuentes to the pastureland mentioned above is some ten kilometres, each way. It is therefore probably best to follow two separate routes both starting from Layna.

1 One heads to the provincial boundary along the road, returning via the deserted village of Obétago.

2 The other would be from Layna along the road to Urex and the pastures. From there you can reach the road and paramo via the small gorge known as 'La Hoceilla', from where a track parallel to the road leads back to Layna. You will have passed near the Cerro Pelado archeological site but you would be lucky to notice it since it is very poorly signposted.

What birds to see and when

The river Blanco valley ranks as something of an oasis within such a steppic and apparently birdless landscape. Certainly those who are familiar with the paramo environments are aware that they are far from birdless. However, bird diversity is very much enhanced by the presence of water, small copses, pastures and cultivation.

May is the best month for achieving a more than respectable bird list. If you choose the Layna–Pastizal de Urex option you will find a succession of the birds of agricultural lands, woodlands and paramos. It is not unusual for example to be walking along the road and hearing Dupont's Larks singing on the paramo above, provided you have made an early morning start. You will also see Dartford and Spectacled Warblers and Northern and Black-eared Wheatears, and hear the song of the Ortolan Bunting, on the open hillsides that descend from the paramo. A brief search should let you see the buntings.

Alongside these species, the poplar plantations and the riverine pastures draw in a varied collection of birds that include species of northerly affinities such as the Song Thrush and Red-backed Shrike. The abundance of Yellow Wagtails is noteworthy, these alongside Cetti's Warblers and Zitting Cisticolas. Water Rails may be heard in the damp pasturelands, where there are Mallards and both Marsh and Montagu's Harriers breed. Corn Buntings are everywhere. You may also expect Stonechats – and Whinchats on passage – Goldfinches, Linnets and Woodchat Shrikes in what is a birding hotspot of the first rank.

Chaffinches and Bonelli's Warblers predominate in the Urex oakwood but both Subalpine and Orphean Warblers



Northern Wheatear

Oenanthe oenanthe

occur there in good numbers. There are also Turtle Doves, even though you are 1,200m above sea level here.

We have mentioned May but, given the high elevation of the area, June and early July are also very suitable for birding here. Family parties of nearly all species are about in July. The neighbourhood of Layna is bustling with swifts, swallows, House and Rock Sparrows, Magpies, Collared Doves, Spotless Starlings, Crested Larks and Thekla Larks, species associated with human habitation but no less worthy of mention for all that. By then the Marsh Harriers, but not yet the Montagu's Harriers, will have fledged young. These are the most evident raptors at this time, alongside Booted and Short-toed Eagles, Common Buzzards and Common Kestrels.

The valley and its neighbourhood offer good opportunities to see migrating birds, especially raptors, in August–September. Large flocks of Black Kites and Honey Buzzards then occur, together with parties of Bee-eaters and others.

Autumn and winter are relatively quiet, especially on the surrounding paramos from which many species disappear. However, Redwings and Fieldfares appear in the fringing woodlands, where good sized flocks of Rock Sparrows and Chaffinches also remain. Large coveys of Red-legged Partridges may be seen on the hillsides if they have had a good breeding year. Not infrequently a Hen Harrier may be seen hunting the partridges here. Yellowhammers also arrive from the north to overwinter in the valley.



Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A Tejo sinkhole. This remarkable sinkhole is on the left of the road towards Sagides, 2.5km from Layna. It is not the only one to have formed here. There are also some perfect sinkholes a further 2km to the north but these are hard to find. The sinkhole in question is near the road and surrounded by woodlands of Portuguese and Holm Oaks, enabling woodland bird species to be seen here. In winter these include some Fieldfares, Redwings and Goldcrests.

B Luzón Gorge. This lies in Guadalajara province but is a good additional option. The gorge has been formed in the limestone paramera by the river Tajuña, between Luzón and Anguita. A track along the bottom of the gorge covers the eight kilometres that separate the two villages. Poplar plantations, cultivation and some pastures and rocky stretches promise good observations of a typical assortment of the bird species of these uplands. They will include Egyptian and Griffon Vultures, Peregrines and Golden Eagles. The most interesting sector is between the fish farm at Anguita and the Peña Horadada at Luzón.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Golden Eagle, Griffon Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Sparrowhawk, Booted Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Water Rail, Eagle Owl, Little Owl, Wryneck, Dupont's Lark, Greater Short-toed Lark, Song Thrush, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Spectacled Warbler, Orpheap Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Reed Warbler, Golden Oriole, Red-backed Shrike, Red-billed Chough, Ortolan Bunting.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin, Meadow Pipit, Yellowhammer.

[→]

Migrants

Honey-buzzard, Black Kite, Lesser Kestrel, Ring Ouzel, Bluethroat, Sedge Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler.

Villaseca plain



13

Location and access

From Soria take the A-15 as far as Medinaceli and the SO-411 from there until you reach the high speed train (AVE) line. From Guadalajara/Madrid via the A-2, leave at Alcolea del Pinar to take N-211 and later the GU-411 to Layna.

Status: Entirely within the "Páramo de Layna" SPA.

Terrain: Limestone pavements and paramos forming part of the Páramo de Layna. Includes cereal crops on red soils and a small endorheic humid zone.

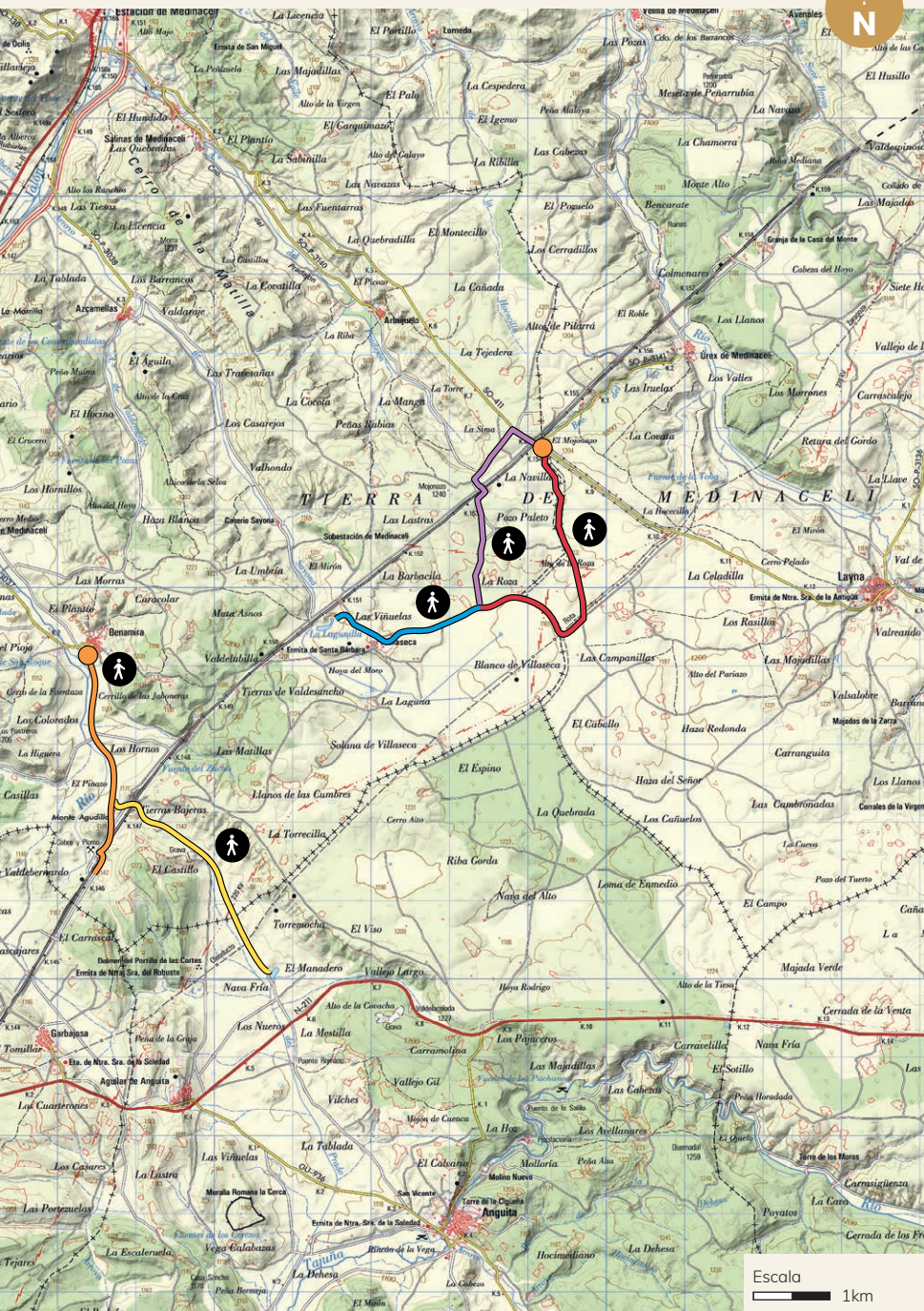
Means of access: Own vehicle. Access to the deserted village of Villaseca is closed to vehicles but is permitted on foot.

Ease of access: Easy, on account of the generally level terrain.

Visit duration: Three hours will suffice to visit the most important areas.

Timing: Spring visits are recommended.

Comments: Here too the AVE shows the less friendly face of economic development in these parts, having taken up a sizable amount of land. If we add the electricity gantries of the Ave, wind farms and the afforestation of a considerable extent of paramo some years ago, the general outlook is somewhat sobering and pessimistic.



Escala 1km

- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Itinerary 1.1
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary 1.2
- ↑ Itinerary on foot
- ↑ Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

The harshness of the climate and the lack of economic development on the former Tierra de Medinaceli is evident in that many of the villages are now deserted, a pale reflection of the former occupancy of these cold lands. Sayona, Corvesín, Yuba, Avenales, Loméda, Obétago... many more than a few settlements have been abandoned.

The desertion of the village in question, Villaseca, accelerated during the 1950s and 1960s. It now comprises a cluster of ruined houses disfigured by two modern agricultural warehouses. It is hard to imagine why anyone thought to build a village here, on treeless terrain, open to the four winds with no available shelter and offering limited possibilities for subsistence. Nevertheless, many bird species find ideal living conditions here. A significant portion of the best areas for Dupont's Lark is in this region of the Layna paramo, where hillocks covered with a sparse scrub of thyme and broom alternate with a few farms. To the south there is a more extensive region dedicated to cereal crops, comprising the largest farms in the SPA, El Llano and El Blanco de Villaseca.

It is likely that this may once have been a wetland of considerable extent given the shallow gradients and that the stream that drains it is an artificial, straight channel. As it is, there exists a more or less permanent wet area, Las Lagunillas, barely a hectare in extent and covered in marsh vegetation, held back by the AVE embankment immediately north of Villaseca. In the south of the region, within Guadalajara province, a Black Pine wood that was planted some years ago holds most of the woodland birds to be seen here. There otherwise remain some clumps of Portuguese Oaks forming small copses towards Benamira.

The proposed itinerary starts by taking a track that heads southwards on the right just beyond where the Layna road passes through a tunnel under the AVE line. After a couple of kilometres through worked land and scraps of paramo you get to where a gas pipeline is signposted. Follow the pipeline as far as a large expanse of farmland. Head northwards along the edge of this

until you reach a good track of white gravel, that runs as far as Villaseca. Here you can choose **(1.1)** to continue to Villaseca, to have a look at the wetland there, or **(1.2)** retrace your steps. This itinerary is almost certain to produce all the interesting birds of the area.

What birds to see and when

Here you are in one of the best areas in which to find the steppic, paramo birds. Winters are harsh here and heavy snowfalls are not infrequent. Few species or individuals are hardy enough to withstand these conditions. Hence it is in spring that these lands burst into life, visits in April, May or June being ideal for observing the following.

Dupont's Larks. Their songs are a constant accompaniment almost as soon as you leave your car. Remember though that using playback to attract them is prohibited. You should remain along the tracks or field edges, not risking causing disturbance at a critical stage of the nesting season. They again make themselves noted in October, when there is a brief resurgence in song, but most disappear in winter for destinations as yet unknown.

Little Bustards. For the time being this is one of the few places in Soria where it is possible to see several males within a relatively small area. The first farmlands that we visit are chosen by Little Bustards for their leks. They arrive late here, perhaps not until early May, spending the month in trying to attract the few remaining females with their calls and displays. It is sad to note that the Little Bustard population is in steep decline and many of the residual populations seem to comprise males but no females.

Stone-curlews. Another of the steppic species that is absent in winter, arriving here in April. It may still be encountered in small numbers. Early morning visits are advised since this and other species are then highly vocal but become much less active as the day progresses.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse? The question mark is on account of the



Little Bustard

Tetrax tetrax



irregular occurrence of this species. Hardly any are seen in some years but there are seasons when they are more evident. Little is known of their seasonal movements but it seems clear that birds from other zones appear here at times.

Great Bustards. From June onwards male Great Bustards appear on the central plains of Villaseca, shown on maps as El Llano or El Blanco de Villaseca. Their origin is the same as those that occur around Barahona: they are from the Madrid population and are individuals that abandon their breeding grounds to spend the summer in higher and cooler regions. Up to 30 have appeared on these plains and on adjacent parts of Guadalajara, but visits by these giants of the steppe seem to be on the wane.

Other paramo birds. We always mention Dupont's Larks but this is one of those places where many other interesting species may be found in good numbers. Greater Short-toed Larks, Tawny Pipits, Rock Sparrows, Skylarks and Thekla Larks make up a contingent of dun-coloured birds that search for food on these plains. Both Marsh and Montagu's Harriers nest in these fields and in the nearby valleys. Together with Booted Eagles they are the most frequent hunters of the paramo passerines. The Little Owl also is present here. If you follow the route between mid August and the end of September it is not unlikely that you may come across the Dotterel, a bird that is much given to stopping over on the paramos.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Source of the Jalón.** Although many contend that the source of the river Jalón is the springs of the Esteras de Medinaceli, the 'official' source of this significant river is in hinterland of Benamira, at the Fuente Vieja, very close to the boundary with Guadalajara. A track from Benamira runs for some three kilometres to the base of a hill, at the Fuente. The poplar plantations at the village offer easy opportunities to see common birds.

Along the road, in spring or summer, you will see many Yellow Wagtails and constantly hear Reed Warblers singing in the reed beds along the river. You are likely to see a Montagu's Harrier quartering the valley and the 'zip-zip-zip' song of the Zitting Cisticolas will also be evident, unless the previous winter was very cold. The hillsides have the same avifauna as those of the Blanco or Arbujuelo valleys, the Ortolan Buntings being especially noteworthy.

B **El Prado salt pans and pastures at Aguilar de Anguita.** Once more we cross the provincial boundary into the Alcarria region of Guadalajara. The track that leads to the source of Jalón continues under the AVE track. Some salt pans appear on the left once past Aguilar de Anguita. These are disused but still hold some water in very wet years.

The Little Ringed Plover is a regular inhabitant, as at the Salinas de Medinaceli. Thereafter, continuing along the same track and crossing the N-221 Maranchón/Aguilar road, there appears a signposted Roman bridge. This marks the start of a kilometre-long expanse of pasture and sedgebeds, offering such birds as Yellow Wagtails, Reed Warblers, Water Rails and Mallards, and also interesting flora.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Booted Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Water Rail, Stone-curlew, Little Bustard, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Little Owl, Dupont's Lark, Greater Short-toed Lark, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Spectacled Warbler, Orphean Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Reed Warbler, Golden Oriole, Rock Sparrow, Ortolan Bunting.

[❄]

Winterers

Hen Harrier, Merlin, Meadow Pipit, Yellowhammer.

[→]

Migrants

Lesser Kestrel, Dotterel, Great Bustard, Bluethroat, Sedge Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler.

Jalón juniper woods at Chaorna



14

Location and access

From Soria city take the A-15 as far as Medinaceli, from where you take the A-2 Zaragoza in the Zaragoza direction as far as Arcos de Jalón. From there take SO-P-3008 to Chaorna. The road continues to Judes and Irucha. From Chaorna you can also take a good quality track to Sagides.

Status: Comprises the “Sabinares del Jalón” special conservation zone (ES4170057). This 19,068ha EU-designated site also includes the Laguna de Judes, site SO-31 in the Inventory of Wetlands of Special Interest of Soria province.

Terrain: Copses of Spanish Juniper *Juniperus thurifera* on hillsides, valleys and limestone escarpments.

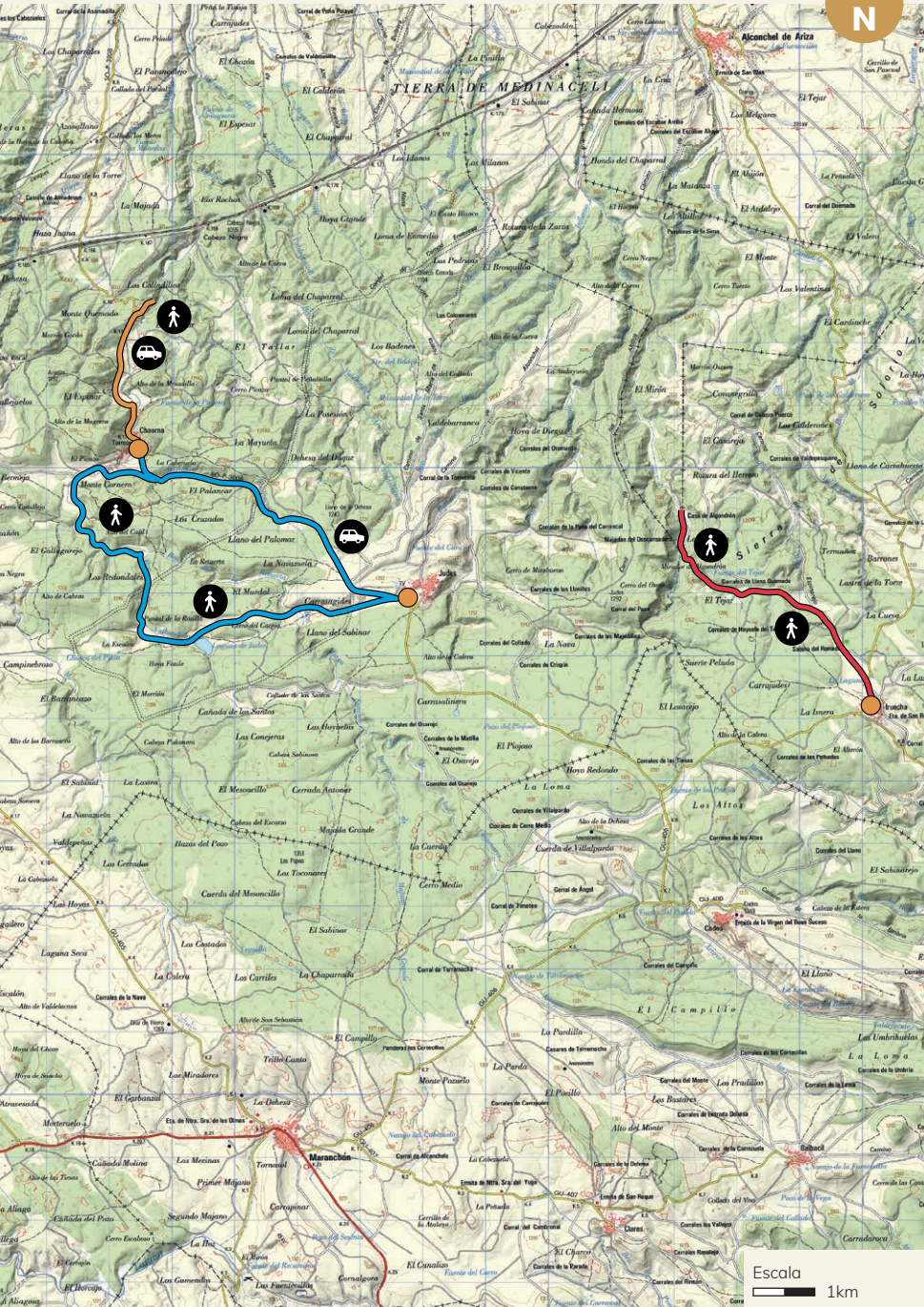
Means of access: Own vehicle. Inaccessible by public transport.

Ease of access: Juniper woods are generally quite open but these are unusually dense. Together with the calcareous substrate it means that progress may be difficult away from any tracks.

Visit duration: The main recommended itinerary may be completed in 3–4 hours, including stops to watch birds. A longer route would take 5–6 hours.

Timing: In contrast to the other sites, the best time to visit is in winter. This is because the fruiting junipers then attract large numbers of thrushes and other birds. Summer is comparatively quiet.

Comments: The poor signposting – except along the GR path – and the poor condition of the paths make it inadvisable to wander from the road or the few available tracks.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Family itinerary B
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

This southeastern corner of the province appears covered by a very important expanse of Spanish Junipers. These are well separated from the main juniper woods of Soria, which are in centre-west of the province. The southeastern woods extend into northern Guadalajara. They are characterised by their good state of conservation and higher tree density than elsewhere, despite some losses of important areas in recent years to agricultural expansion and forest fires. The woodland extends across a good part of the slopes of these valleys, which include small canyons at various locations, which support very interesting fauna.

This last feature is evident at Chaorna village itself, whose eastern end is backed by a large rock wall. Chaorna in any case merits a visit on account of its location and architecture, water having played an important role in its development. The karstic nature of all this northern sector of the Sierra del Solorio has resulted in a terrain that is full of streams, rivers and upwellings, whose flow is conditioned by the intensity of the seasonal precipitation.

This being so, there may or may not appear the Laguna de Judes, the only lake of karstic origin in Soria province. It occupies a depression west of Judes but this is normally empty. It only floods during very rainy periods, which generally occur here from January to March. Water upwells from below so the lake may be empty one day and nearly full the next. In similar fashion, it may dry up very quickly since water is lost to the substrate and not just by evaporation.

I The proposed route is intended to run through part of the Juniper woodland to the surroundings of the Laguna de Judes, by way of the Arroyo de Valhondillo. Head southwestwards from Chaorna along the road towards Sagides, leaving this to take a track that, between some small farms, enters the woods. By remaining on this track you reach the Laguna de Judes after some five kilometres. You can retrace your route or extend it to 13 kilometres by continuing eastwards to Judes, returning to Chaorna along the road.

What birds to see and when

In November the nearby fields and woodlands are emptying of birds. Even in the Holm Oak woods, adjacent but lower down, there is little movement even in a good acorn year. The Junipers however may be bustling with winter thrushes, which stopover here on their postnuptial migration. Of the thrushes only the Mistle Thrush nests in the Junipers. At this season, however, there arrive thousands of Redwings – the most abundant thrush – Song Thrushes and Fieldfares. Some Ring Ouzels occur, in areas adjacent to rocky hillsides. Hawfinches and Chaffinches also appear, in good numbers. All these guarantee plenty of activity until February, when these birds begin to return north.

March tends to be poorly attractive since the high altitude means that summer visitors are slow to arrive. Snowfall in March or April is not uncommon. The first arrivals at the Somáen gorge are the Crag Martins. The Griffon Vulture population of the district fluctuates but these birds are a constant presence, there being much interchange between the large colonies of the meseta and the smaller ones of the Sorian stretch of the Jalón valley. Woodlarks are the most obvious birds in the Juniper woods at this time, their songs resounding everywhere.

April sees the arrival of a myriad species, headed by Bonelli's, Subalpine and Orphean Warblers, together with Hoopoes, Wrynecks in areas with trees, Tawny Pipits and Black-eared Wheatears in more open parts and both Rufous-tailed and Bue Rock-thrushes on the escarpments. Booted and Short-toed Eagles appear from mid morning, as day warms up.

The birdlife at the Laguna de Judes depends on what time of year it may hold water. If this is in March–April you may find a Grey or Purple Heron, ducks such as Mallards or Garganeys, or some wader such as a Green Sandpiper or Common Redshank. Only Mallards and Little Grebes may nest here, but there is very little information available.



Mistle Thrush

Turdus viscivorus



Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Arroyo Almuquera/Cabeza Negra.** The stream at Chaorna flows gently between small farms, over largely level ground. In spring some species that are otherwise scarce locally may be seen here. They include Nightingales, Wrens, scrub-warblers and Golden Orioles. However, two kilometres further on the stream drops through a splendid and colourful ravine that ends at a distant escarpment called Cabeza Negra. This last section has, however, lost a great deal of its enchantment since the high speed Madrid–Barcelona train (AVE) runs through it.

The first stretch of the ravine is easily observable. You can leave your car near some sheep pens alongside the road and make a careful approach to the edge. Here the Junipers have largely given way to Holm Oaks. Red-billed Choughs, Ravens, Carrion Crows and Jays are evident and, with luck, you may see one of the Golden Eagles that retain a constant presence in these valleys.

B **El Algodrón.** The homestead and ravine lies five kilometres west of Iruecha. Access is via a good signposted track, although you are advised not to take your car along the final stretch, within the valley. The ruined house seemed to have served as a retreat for the monks of Huerta monastery, who used to seek refuge from the summer heat in this cool valley. The monks chose well since here you readily feel at one with nature. The birds of the Juniper woods have been mentioned above but here there is also a breeding population of the Common Redstart, otherwise typical of the juniper woods of the provincial centre. Strange to say, though, two other species that are also typical of central Soria, the Crested Tit and Azure-winged Magpie, do not occur here.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Egyptian Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Sparrowhawk común, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Eagle Owl, Wryneck, Crag Martin, Common Redstart, Mistle Thrush, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Spectacled Warbler, Orphean Warbler, Golden Oriole, Red-billed Chough, Hawfinch, Ortolan Bunting.

[❄]

Winterers

Meadow Pipit, Fieldfare, Redwing, Siskin.

[→]

Migrants

Ring Ouzel.

Itinerary

Avenales ravine



15

Location and access

From Soria city take the A-15 to Medinaceli, and then the old N-II in the Zaragoza direction, leaving at exit 154 heading for Lodarés and Jubera. Continue on the N-II as far as the village of Somaén, the starting point of this route. You can also start from Velilla de Medinaceli, whose access road you will have passed several kilometres back, on the right.

Status: No special protection.

Terrain: A small limestone gorge excavated by the Arroyo del Salobral de Avenales, between the abandoned village of that name and the river Jalón at Somaén.

Means of access: Own vehicle. Neither village is served by public transport.

Ease of access: Straightforward. There is a track that becomes a partly signposted path, allowing easy access.

Visit duration: Variable according to preference. The proposed itinerary would take 5–6 hours there and back.

Timing: Spring and autumn are ideal for seeing the typical species but some interesting observations are also possible in winter.



- Itinerary 1
- Family itinerary A
- Family itinerary B
- Family itinerary B.1
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

The Jalón basin in this part of Soria province offers a succession of valleys and small gorges, carved into the limestone rocks of this part of Iberian Range. The rivers and streams all the way along the right bank of the Jalón are especially significant. They all descend, north to south, from the spurs of the Sierra del Solorio.

The river Blanco, the most important of these and the most permanent watercourse, given that it is fed by springs that drain a good part of the Paramo de Layna, appears here. So does the much more modest sized Salobral de Avenales brook, whose bed is often dry. The Jalón itself takes the form of a mountain river, with rapids, in this sector although it is much constrained by works that have held it back between the double railway line and the main road.

All these rivers have formed gorges and ravines of variable spans. The largest and most attractive rock walls are those at the end of the Avenales ravine and in the surroundings of Somaén vilage. The village itself merits a visit on account of its attractive traditional layout and location. The river banks have hardly any noteworthy arboreal growth, unlike the slopes that are covered by a lush Holm Oak wood throughout this sector.

The main itinerary runs along the Avenales ravine, between that village and Somaén. You can walk there and back since the distance is barely three and a half kilometres each way. However, those who enjoy walking will prefer a circular route. For this, starting from Somaén, you come to Avenales. From there a track heads westwards which brings you to Velilla de Medinaceli two kilometres further on. From Velilla take the local road that descends to the old main road in the Jalón valley, offering views from an elevated position of an excellent tract of Holm Oak woodland as well as the rocky valley scarps. It may be worth a diversion before this stage to the old Velilla hydroelectric station, a small dam that feeds the chief hydroelectric plant of the river Blanco.

Once on the old main road you can continue to Somaén, stopping at the old mill half a kilometre before the village, to

view the large cave that has been the site of interesting records of such birds as Wallcreepers during the autumn–winter period.

What birds to see and when

Such rivers as the Jalón and Blanco have seldom featured in our itineraries. Only the river Caracena offers similar characteristics. We mention this because the present site offers observations of the birds of fast-flowing rivers, the Dipper in particular. The Jalón does experience periods of sparse flow but it never dries up entirely in this sector. The Dipper disappears below Arcos de Jalón and Santa María de Huerta, on account of water contamination by these villages and the absence of steep gradients with their typical waterfalls. The Dipper can thus only be seen along the present stretch, where it is becoming ever scarcer.

Male Dippers can already be heard singing in January as they dispute their territorial limits with each other. They nest as early as March. Eagle Owls also begin to call during January–February. There is a sizable Eagle Owl population throughout this district, although the birds often keep a low profile. Together with Griffon Vultures, a few Red-billed Choughs and small woodland birds, they help to enliven months in which bird diversity is generally sparse.

By March the Crag Martins will have arrived. They are present all year in some nearby areas but not here. The same largely applies to the Blue Rock-thrushes on the screes, although the occasional individual may overwinter. Most of them leave early in November, returning during February–March. The same months see the courtship displays of two of the most spectacular raptors of the ravines, the Golden Eagle and the Peregrine Falcon. The eagle occurs in the Avenales valley and the falcon on the Jalón escarpments. Once again we remind you of the importance of not disturbing the gorge birds near their nests, at a time when there is a risk that they will abandon their clutches.

The beginning of nesting by the eagles and falcons coincides with the arrival of the Egyptian Vultures: typically a



Dipper

Cinclus cinclus

pair settles near Somaén. Another of the most characteristic species of this ravine also appears now on the same large escarpment near this village, near the vulture-whitened rocks. It is that great aerial performer, the Alpine Swift, otherwise found regularly in Soria province only in the Cañón del Río Lobos. It is delightful to see these swifts and hear their far-carrying calls. They are here alongside Rufous-tailed Rock-thrushes, Red-rumped Swallows and House Martins; the rupestral species that are the great attraction of this site. Many other summer visitors will have arrived in May and June. Scrub-warblers are a particular highlight of

the woods and hillsides. Nearly all the species nest here, the exception being the Whitethroat that only appears on passage. There is a good population of the Sardinian Warbler, a very local species in the province. Subalpine and Orphean Warblers frequent the oakwoods, the latter also alongside Dartford and Spectacled Warblers on the hillsides between Avenales and Velilla and with Blackcaps, and the scarcer Garden Warblers, along the Jalón and in the last stretch of riverine woodland of the Arroyo del Salobral. The density of Bonelli's and Melodious Warblers, among other woodland species, is very noteworthy.



Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **La Chorrонера waterfall.** The river Blanco is a minor marvel. We have described its upper reaches in another site account (12). Here, above Velilla de la Medinaceli, the river tumbles between rocks of precipitated limestone, forming a small waterfall 'La Chorrонера'. Access is signposted from Velilla, where you should leave your car. This will be a typical stroll producing such common birds as Goldfinches, Linnets, Corn Buntings, Stonechats, Wrens, Blackbirds and Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers. The poplar plantation around the waterfall has such birds as Golden Orioles, Bee-eaters and Turtle Doves in spring. Worth a visit.

B **Jubera.** The river Jalón passes through rocky stretches between Lodaes and Jubera before reaching the sector covered above. Jubera, a modern village by regional standards, is also a good birding location. A tarmac track leaves the village, climbing the slopes and passing under the motorway, in the direction of the abandoned village of Valladares. You may opt to go all the way there, viewing a mediterranean landscape of a succession of crop fields, scrub and small copses. However, just a stroll along the tarmac track serves to find the typical scrub and hillside species of the area, particularly the Dartford and Sardinian Warblers, Northern and Black-eared Wheatears and Blue Rock-thrush. If you take the track to the ruined castle you will enjoy views of the whole valley. Sightings of Griffon Vultures and Golden Eagles are practically guaranteed here all year round.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Egyptian Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Eagle Owl, Wryneck, Crag Martin, Alpine Swift, Turtle Dove, Grey Wagtail, Dipper, Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush, Blue Rock-thrush, Spectacled Warbler, Orphean Warbler, Sardinian Warbler Nuthatch, Golden Oriole, Red-billed Chough, Hawfinch, Ortolan Bunting.

[❄]

Winterers

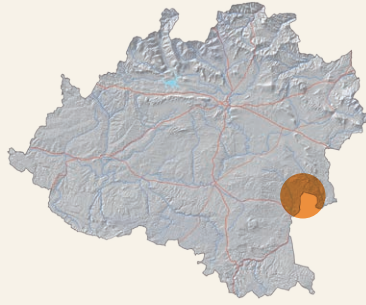
Woodcock, Meadow Pipit, Alpine Accentor, Siskin.

[→]

Migrants

Wallcreeper, Bullfinch.

Monteagudo de Las Vicarías reservoir



10

Location and access

70km SE of Soria city, in the corner of Las Vicarías. From Soria city take the A-11 Madrid motorway as far as Almazán, from where you follow the C-116 to Morón de Almazán and Monteagudo. From Monteagudo take the provincial road for Serón and Gómara. The reservoir is signposted on the left after 2km. Access from Madrid or Zaragoza is similarly straightforward, taking the N-II until the diversion for Soria and Almazán is indicated. Monteagudo is barely 8km further on.

Status: Included in the Inventory of Wetlands of Special Interest of Castilla y León. The reservoir and a broad peripheral zone comprise an SPA (15,541 hectares). Hunting is prohibited. Fishing was not allowed for a long time but since 2005 is permitted in about half the reservoir, south of an imaginary line linking a viewpoint with the main parking area.

Terrain: An artificial inland wetland.

Means of access: Own vehicle.

Ease of access: Easy. All tracks in the area are for public use.

Visit duration: Allow 2–3 hours to view the entire reservoir. The ease of accessibility means you can spend as much time here as you wish.

Timing: Of interest year-round except perhaps in mid winter (December–January). Passage periods, April–May and August–September tend to be the most rewarding times. The ornithological interest of the reservoir has greatly declined following the large scale introduction of carp and other exotic fish species. In winter especially there is often little of interest here now.

Comments: You are advised not to approach the shoreline. If the water levels are high – as has usually been in the case in recent years – the use of a telescope is greatly recommended. There is a hide at the extreme west of the reservoir. Unfortunately this is in a neglected dirty state, having lost the reed screen on the access track and lacking replenishment of bird recording forms.

The location has a continental climate. It is cold and bleak for much of the time, and frequently very windy. In contrast, the birding hide offers the only shelter from the implacable sun in summer, when early morning visits are recommended.



- ▬ Itinerary 1
- ▬ Family itinerary A
- ▬ Family itinerary B
- Itinerary on foot
- Itinerary by car
- Start Itinerary

Site description and itineraries

What is undoubtedly the most important wetland of the province is in the driest part of Soria, the region of Las Vicarías, where annual rainfall is barely 300mm. The reservoir has a long history, the first work on its small predecessor being in 1883. This initial reservoir was enlarged to its present size in 1982, extending over 123 hectares and with a capacity of two cubic hectometres. There are two inflows, the Arroyo del Regajo that arrives via Valtueña, and the river Nágima, which drains Fuentelmonge district. Only the latter of these regularly provides water.

The current aspect of the reservoir is quite different from what it was during the 1980s and until 1995. Water levels are typically high and there is a total lack of marsh vegetation. Previously it tended to hold little water and there was a large peripheral reedbed that accommodated such birds as Reed Warblers, Moorhens, Water Rails and Marsh Harriers, all of which have ceased to nest here.

There is no particular recommended itinerary. A tarmac track borders part of the reservoir perimeter almost as far as the parking area. From there a track leads to the birding hide and ends at the Morón to Monteagudo road. This track is very muddy after heavy rain, when there is a high risk of getting your vehicle stuck. A track on the opposite shore leads to a viewpoint (mirador) from which the whole reservoir may be viewed. This track too becomes very muddy when wet. You are urged not to approach the shoreline, especially during the nesting season.

What birds to see and when

Before describing what may be seen here let us outline what was the case up to the very recent past. Two of the formerly most important species now hardly appear. The largest colony of Black-necked Grebes (57 nests in 2002) in the province used to occur here. This was also a post-breeding moult site for over 1,000 Red-crested Pochards. In winter too, the reservoir attracted large numbers of waterfowl: 1,000 birds on average in the 1980s, 700 in the 1990s until the early years of the 21st century,

but barely 100 birds thereafter. All these negative changes have affected birds that depend for food directly or indirectly on subaquatic vegetation, that has been almost destroyed by carp and other introduced fish. Nevertheless, many bird species may still be enjoyed here, as follows:

Cranes (Mid February/March and late October/mid November). These surely comprise the greatest spectacle that can be seen here. The location of Monteagudo on the migratory flyline of these, and many other bird species, means that Cranes regularly use the reservoir as a stopover site. With luck you may encounter several thousand here. If they stop to roost they do so on the northwestern shoreline, the only part with no nearby track. Walking there will flush the birds and so is highly inadvisable. The mirador offers the best views of the birds. From here an early morning visit may find the birds dispersing, whether to continue their journey or to foraging sites in nearby cereal croplands, notably those of the plain that extends to Fuentelmonge.

Lesser Kestrels (mid July to late August). This species does not breed here nor anywhere else in Soria province. Nevertheless up to 50 birds use the powerlines at the reservoir entrance as perches, from which to hunt their small invertebrate prey. Such post-breeding gatherings are also seen elsewhere in the province and involve displacements from breeding sites on the southern meseta and in the Ebro valley, when the summer heat has largely eliminated prey supplies, to cooler locations further north.

Ospreys and Black Storks (March/ May and mid August/early October). The European populations of both these species have fortunately increased and seeing them at inland wetlands is not so unusual as may have been the case 25 or 30 years ago. With luck you may see an Osprey plunging for fish. If it is successful it will head for a nearby pylon, to devour it. You should always inspect the pylons and powerlines that surround the reservoir since these are often used as perches by raptors, such as Black Kites; Booted, Short-toed and Golden



Common Crane

Grus grus



Eagles, Common Buzzards and Hobbies, especially in spring and summer. Carrion Crows are omnipresent too, year-round.

Great Crested Grebes (mid February to November). Together with Mallards, Great Crested Grebes are the most characteristic of the reservoir waterbirds, since Coots declined. Their magnificent and spectacular courtship displays may be seen all over the lake. The grebe population may number 50 birds by late summer. The occasional bird may remain in winter but normally all are absent then.

Garganey (March to mid April). Mallard are present year-round and all the common dabbling ducks of the Iberian

peninsula occur in small numbers on passage. They include the Garganey, which still occurs in good numbers on spring migration. They totalled a noteworthy 205 birds in March 2009.

Passerines and other small landbirds.

Although you may not have passerines in mind when visiting a wetland site it would be foolish to overlook the many such species that may be seen here. They are evident even in winter, when there are large flocks of Rock Sparrows and Linnets. Both Crested and Thekla Larks occur alongside each other here, offering identification challenges. Water and Meadow Pipits, and White Wagtails, feed along the shoreline.



The first hirundines appear in March, and are numerous in April, although not in the numbers that occur in autumn, when there may be many thousands of Barn Swallows, House Martins and Sand Martins. The three steppic passerines that are commonest here, the Greater Short-toed Lark, Tawny Pipit and Spectacled Warbler, arrive during April. Yellow Wagtails appear at the waterside. In early May you may be fortunate to see Common and Alpine Swifts hawking for insects. By this time nearly all summer visitors will have arrived, these including the Northern Wheatears that frequent the dam and surrounding areas. The maximum presence of migrant passerines is seen post-breeding, from

late July, through August and until mid September. Such skulking or scarce species as the Grasshopper and Savi's Warblers, and Bluethroat, occur annually here.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse/Stone-curlew/Little Bustard. The cereal croplands that surround the reservoir and extend towards Fuenlmonge and, in particular, towards Almaluez, have been a traditional site for these species. The sandgrouse population, which numbered an estimated 25–30 pairs at the start of the century, was the main reason for the listing of the site as an SPA. Now, however, the sandgrouse have declined greatly and the spectacle of seeing them



overflying the reservoir and descending to drink no longer occurs. Stone-curlews too no longer nest on the slopes and fields alongside the reservoir. To see these species, and perhaps Little Bustards as well, the best option is to follow the road linking Monteagudo with

Almaluez in spring, stopping along some of the tracks that you may find. Here, with luck, apart from the nuptial flights of the omnipresent Calandra Larks, you may see the hasty flyby of a pair of Black-bellied Sandgrouse or come across a male Little Bustard.

Other nearby places for family-centred visits

A **Castillo de La Raya.** Along the road that leads towards Monreal de Ariza, the shape of La Raya castle appears some four kilometres from Monteagudo. The castle is so named because it is sited on the boundary line (La Raya) between Soria and Zaragoza provinces. The hermitage of Nuestra Señora de la Torre lies at its foot, in Zaragoza province, although it is said that those who were baptised there could choose whether to become Castillian or Aragonese. You should leave the car on the approach road to the hermitage since this is in poor condition and space is limited. This is typical habitat for Dartford Warblers – present year-round – as well as Spectacled Warblers. Crested Larks and Rock Buntings also occur but the icing on the cake here is that the castle houses a pair of Black Wheatears, a very scarce species in Soria province.

B **Balsa de Almaluez.** If you have opted to drive from Monteagudo to Almaluez in search of steppic birds you may also stop at the latter village, where there is an irrigation pool (balsa) alongside the municipal swimming pool. Access is via the weighbridge there. The two hectare pool is fenced off but there are always waterbirds to be seen here: Mallards, Little Grebes, Common Coots and Moorhens. The odd Cormorant appears in winter as well as the occasional Common Pochard or Garganey on passage. The reedbeds at the pool and in the nearby ditches offer sight and sound in spring of both Common and Great Reed Warblers, Zitting Cisticolas and Stonechats. In September it is a good idea to follow the track that runs alongside the irrigation channel on the plain, where you can see Spanish Sparrows or look for Bluethroats or Grasshopper Warblers on passage.

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

[o]

Breeders

Little Grebe, Black-necked Grebe (no longer annual) Great Crested Grebe, Mallard, Montagu's Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Golden Eagle, Common Kestrel, Hobby, Red-legged Partridge, Common Coot, Black-winged Stilt, Stone-curlew, Little Ringed Plover, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Little Bustard, Little Owl, Long-eared Owl, Calandra Lark, Greater Short-toed Lark, Crested Lark, Thekla's Lark, Skylark, Tawny Pipit, Yellow Wagtail, Stonechat, Northern Wheatear, Dartford Warbler*, Spectacled Warbler, Rock Bunting.

[❄]

Winterers

Great Cormorant, Grey Heron, Gadwall, Teal, Shoveler, Common Pochard, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Lapwing, Meadow Pipit.

[→]

Migrants

Little Egret, Purple Heron, Great White Egret, Black Stork, White Stork, Spoonbill, Greylag Goose, Common Shelduck (one pair nested in 2003), Wigeon, Pintail, Garganey, Shoveler, Red-crested Pochard, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Black Kite, Osprey, Crane, Great Bustard, Avocet, Common Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Ruff, Common Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Common Redshank, Green Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Black-headed Gull, Yellow-legged Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Common Tern, Black Tern, Whiskered Tern, Common Swift, Sand Martin, Barn Swallow, House Martin.

[*]



Occasional isolated records

Squacco Heron, Cattle Egret, Barnacle Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Marbled Duck, Ferruginous Duck, Greater Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Collared Pratincole, Bar-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Turnstone, Great Skua, Little Gull, Common Gull, Little Tern, Greater Flamingo – the sole Soria record.

The Table below lists all the birds that have been recorded in this region, in alphabetical order by English name. It includes a simple indication of abundance:

X *Mayúscula*: Common
x *minúscula*: Scarce
(x): Very occasional or rare

The time of year when a species may be seen is indicated in general terms by the following colour code.

-  Present year-round
-  Summer visitor
-  Winterer
-  Migrant
-  Partly migratory: Most disappear in winter but occasional individuals may remain.

LIST OF THE BIRDS OF SOUTHERN SORIA PROVINCE



ITINERARIES																			
English Name	Spanish Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
ALPINE ACCENTOR	Acentor Alpino	<i>Prunella collaris</i>	(x)		x	(x)	x		(x)	(x)							x		
ALPINE SWIFT	Vencejo Real	<i>Apus melba</i>															x		
AVOCET	Avoceta Común	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>									(x)							x	
AZURE-WINGED MAGPIE	Rabilargo Ibérico	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>				X	X												
BARN OWL	Lechuza Común	<i>Tyto alba</i>				x													
BARN SWALLOW	Golondrina Común	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	x	x	X	x	
BEE-EATER	Abejaruco Común	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	X	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x		x	X	
BLACK KITE	Milano Negro	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			X	
BLACK REDSTART	Colirrojo Tizon	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	x	X	X	x	
BLACK STORK	Cigüeña Negra	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>				x					x							x	
BLACK TERN	Fumarel Común	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>				(x)													x
BLACK VULTURE	Buitre Negro	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	x	x	x		x												
BLACK WHEATEAR	Collalba Negra	<i>Oenanthe leucura</i>																	x
BLACK-BELLIED SANDGROUSE	Ganga Ortega	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>	(x)		(x)	(x)		x	x	x		(x)	x		x				
BLACKBIRD	Mirlo Común	<i>Turdus merula</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	X	X	X	x	X	X	x	
BLACKCAP	Curruca Capirotada	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	X	X	X	x		x		
BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR	Collalba Rubia	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X		x	X	X	X	x	X	x	
BLACK-HEADED GULL	Gaviota Reidora	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>				x													x
BLACK-NECKED GREBE	Zampullín Cuellinegro	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>																	x

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ITINERARIES

English Name	Spanish Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
BLACK-TAILED GODWIT	Aguja Colinegra	<i>Limosa limosa</i>									(x)							(x)
BLACK-WINGED KITE	Elanio Común	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>		(x)														(x)
BLACK-WINGED STILT	Cigüeñuela Común	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>									(x)							(x)
BLUE ROCK-THRUSH	Roquero Solitario	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		x	x				x	
BLUE TIT	Herrerillo Común	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	X	X	x	X	X	x
BONELLI'S WARBLER	Mosquitero Papialbo	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	X	X	X		X	X	x
BOOTED EAGLE	Águila Calzada	<i>Aquila pennata</i>	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x
BRAMBLING	Pinzón Real	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	x	x	x	x	x		x									x
BULLFINCH	Camachuelo Común	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			(x)													
CATTLE EGRET	Garcilla Bueyera	<i>Bulbuculus ibis</i>																x
CETTI'S WARBLER	Ruiseñor Bastardo	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	x	x	x	X	X		x	x	x	x	X	x	x		x	X
CHAFFINCH	Pinzón Vulgar	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
GIRL BUNTING	Escribano Soteño	<i>Emberiza cirius</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X
CITRIL FINCH	Verderón Serrano	<i>Carduelis citrinella</i>		x	x													
COAL TIT	Carbonero Garrapinos	<i>Periparus ater</i>		x		x	x	x	x			x	x		x			
COLLARED DOVE	Tórtola Turca	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	X	x	x	x	X	x	x		X	X	X	X		x	x	X
COLLARED PRATINCOLE	Canastera Común	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>																(x)
COMMON BUZZARD	Busardo Ratonero	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x				x
COMMON CHIFFCHAFF	Mosquitero Común	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	x	x	X	X			x	x

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COMMON COOT	Focha Vulgar	<i>Fulica atra</i>									X							X
COMMON CRANE	Gruña Común	<i>Grus grus</i>	x						x		X		x					X
COMMON CUCKOO	Cuco Común	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	X	x	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x
COMMON KESTREL	Cernícalo Vulgar	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	x	X	X	X	X	x	X	x	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x
COMMON MAGPIE	Urraca	<i>Pica pica</i>	x	X		x					x		x					x
COMMON POCHARD	Porrón Europeo	<i>Aythya ferina</i>																x
COMMON REDSHANK	Archibebe Común	<i>Tringa totanus</i>									x	x						x
COMMON REDSTART	Colirrojo Real	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	x	x	x	X	X	x	x	x		x	x	x	X	x		
COMMON RINGED PLOVER	Chorlitojo Grande	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>									x	x						X
COMMON SANDPIPER	Andarrios Chico	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>				x					X	x	x					X
COMMON SHELDUCK	Tarro Blanco	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>																(x)
COMMON SNIPE	Agachadiza Común	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>									x	x						X
COMMON STARLING	Estornino Pinto	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	x	x		x					X							x
COMMON SWIFT	Vencejo Común	<i>Apus apus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
COMMON WHITETHROAT	Curruca Zarcera	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	x	X	x	X	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
CORN BUNTING	Triguero	<i>Emberiza calandria</i>	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	X
CRAG MARTIN	Avión Roquero	<i>Phyanoprogne rupestris</i>	X	x	X	X	X		X	x		x	x		X	X		
CRESTED LARK	Cogujada Común	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	X	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	X	X	x	x				X

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CRESTED TIT	Herrerillo Capuchino	Lophophanes cristatus	X	x		x	X	x	x		x		x		x			
CROSSBILL	Piquituerto Común	Loxia curvirostra		X		x	X		x		x	x	x		x	x		
CURLEW	Zarapito Real	Numenius arquata										(x)						x
CURLEW SANDPIPER	Correlimos Zarapitín	Calidris ferruginea																x
DARTFORD WARBLER	Curruca Rabilarga	Sylvia undata	X	X	X	x	X	x	x	X		x	X	x	x	x	x	x
DIPPER	Mirlo Acudático	Cinclus cinclus			(x)													
DOTTEREL	Chorlito Carambolo	Charadrius morinellus			x				x	X	x							
DUNLIN	Correlimos Común	Calidris alpina									x	x						x
DUNNOCK	Acentor Común	Prunella modularis	x	X	x	x		x	x	x	(x)	x	x	x		x	x	x
DUPONT'S LARK	Alondra Ricotí	Chersophilus duponti	x	x	X	x	x	X	X	X	x	X	X	x	X			
EAGLE OWL	Búho Real	Bubo bubo	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x		
EGYPTIAN VULTURE	Alimoche Común	Neophron percnopterus	X	X	x	x	x	x	X	X		x				x	x	
EUROPEAN NIGHTJAR	Chotacabras Gris	Caprimulgus europaeus	x	X	x	x	x	x	x			x	X	x		x	x	
FIELDFARE	Zorzal Real	Turdus pilaris	x	x	x	x	X	x	x			x	x	x		X	x	
FIRECREST	Reyezuelo Listado	Regulus ignicapilla	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
GADWALL	Anade Friso	Anas strepera				x					x	x						x
GARDEN WARBLER	Curruca Mosquitera	Sylvia borin	X	X	x	X	X	x	X	x		x	X	x			x	
GARGANEY	Cerceta Carretona	Anas querquedula																X
GOLDCREST	Reyezuelo Sencillo	Regulus regulus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							x	x	

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GOLDEN EAGLE	Águila Real	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x
GOLDEN ORIOLE	Oropendola	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
GOLDEN PLOVER	Chorlito Dorado Europeo (Común)																
GOLDFINCH	Jilguero	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
GOSHAWK	Azor Común	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x				x	x	x
GRASSHOPPER WARBLER	Buscarla Pintoja				x	x						x					x
GREAT BUSTARD	Avutarda Común									x				x			(x)
GREAT CORMORANT	Cormorán Grande				x	x											x
GREAT CRESTED GREBE	Somormujo Lavanco				x												x
GREAT REED WARBLER	Carricero Tordal				x	x			x		x	x					x
GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO	Críalo Europeo			(x)						(x)							
GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER	Pico Picapinos	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
GREAT TIT	Carbonero Común	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
GREAT WHITE EGRET	Garceta Grande				(x)												x
GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK	Terrera Común	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
GREEN SANDPIPER	Andarríos Grande				x					x	x	x					x
GREEN WOODPECKER	Pito Real	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

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GREENFINCH	Verderón Común	Chloris chloris	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
GREENSHANK	Archibabe Claro	Tringa nebularia									x	x				x			x
GREY HERON	Garza Real	Ardea cinerea			X	X	X		x		x		X						X
GREY WAGTAIL	Lavandera Cascadeña	Motacilla cinerea	x	x	x	x	x		X	x			x						x
GREYLAG GOOSE	Ansar Común	Anser anser	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
GRIFFON VULTURE	Buitre Leonado	Gyps fulvus	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
GULL-BILLED TERN	Pagaza Piconegra	Gelochiledon nilotica																	x
HAWFINCH	Picogordo	Coccothraustes coccothraustes	x	x	x	x	x		X			x		x		x			x
HEN HARRIER	Aguilucho Palido	Circus cyaneus	x	x	x	x	x		X	x	x	x	x	x	x				x
HONEY BUZZARD	Abejero Europeo	Pernis apivorus	x	x	x	x		x				x	x	x					x
HOPOE	Abubilla	Upupa epops	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
HOUSE MARTIN	Avión Común	Delichon urbicum	X	x	x	X	x	x	x	x		X	x	X		x	x	x	x
HOUSE SPARROW	Gorrión Común	Passer domesticus	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF	Mosquitero Ibérico	Phylloscopus ibericus	x	X	x	X	x	x	X	X			X	x					x
JACKDAW	Grajilla	Corvus monedula	x		x	(x)	(x)		x	x									
JAY	Arrendajo	Garrulus glandarius	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
KENTISH PLOVER	Chorlito Patinegro	Charadrius alexandrinus																	(x)
KINGFISHER	Martín Pescador	Alcedo atthis				x	x						x						X

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LAPWING	Avefría Europea	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	x								x	X						x
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL	Gaviota Sombria	<i>Larus fuscus</i>																x
LESSER KESTREL	Cernicálco Primilla	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	x			x					x				x			X
LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER	Pico Menor	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>		x		x												x
LINNET	Pardillo Común	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
LITTLE BUSTARD	Sisón Común	<i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	x							x					x			x
LITTLE EGRET	Garceta Común	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>																x
LITTLE GREBE	Zampullín Común	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				x					X	x						
LITTLE OWL	Mochuelo Común	<i>Athene noctua</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
LITTLE RINGED PLOVER	Chorlitojo Chico	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>				X					x	x	X		x			X
LITTLE STINT	Correlimos Menudo	<i>Calidris minuta</i>																x
LONG-EARED OWL	Búho Chico	<i>Otus scops</i>	x			x	x						x					x
LONG-TAILED TIT	Mito	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		x		
MALLARD	Ánade Azulón	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
MARSH HARRIER	Aguilucho Lagunero Occidental	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	x			x					X	x	x	x	x			x
MEADOW PIPIT	Bisbita Pratense	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
MELODIOUS WARBLER	Zarcero Común	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
MERLIN	Esmerejón	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

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● En paso

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MONTAGU'S HARRIER	Aguilucho Cenizo	Circus pygargus	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x				x
MOORHEN	Gallineta Común	Gallinula chloropus				x	x					x	x					x
MSTLE THRUSH	Zorzal Charlo	Turdus viscivorus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
NIGHT HERON	Martinete Común	Nycticorax nycticorax																x
NIGHTINGALE	Ruiseñor Común	Luscinia megarhynchos	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
NORTHERN WHEATEAR	Collalba Gris	Oenanthe oenanthe	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
NUTHATCH	Trepador Azul	Sitta europaea	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								
ORPHEAN WARBLER	Curruca Miriona	Sylvia hortensis	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
ORTOLAN BUNTING	Escribano Hortelano	Emberiza hortensis	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x				
OSPREY	Águila Pescadora	Pandion haliaetus				x				(x)	(x)							x
PALLID SWIFT	Vencejo Pálido	Apus pallidus																
PENDULINE TIT	Pájaro Moscón	Remiz pendulinus																x
PEREGRINE FALCON	Halcón Peregrino	Falco peregrinus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								
PIED FLYCATCHER	Papamoscas Cerrojillo	Ficedula hypoleuca	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
PINTAIL	Anade Rabudo	Anas acuta									x	x						x
PURPLE HERON	Garza Imperial	Ardea purpurea				x					x		x					x
QUAIL	Codorniz Común	Coturnix coturnix	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
RAVEN	Cuervo	Corvus corax	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
RED KITE	Milano Real	Milvus milvus	x	x	x	x	x	x	x									x

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RED-BACKED SHRIKE	Alcaudón Dorsirrojo	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	x	x	x	x	x					x	x	x				
RED-BILLED CHOUGH	Chova Piquirroja	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	X	x	x	x	x	x	X	x			x		x	x	x	x
RED-CRESTED POCHARD	Pato Colorado	<i>Netta rufina</i>																x
RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE	Perdiz Roja	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x		X	X	X	x	x	x	X
RED-NECKED NIGHTJAR	Chotacabras Pardo	<i>Caprimulgus ruftcollis</i>	x															
RED-RUMPED SWALLOW	Golondrina Daurica	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	x	X		x							x					
REDWING	Zorzal Alirrojo	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	X	x	x	x	X	x						x	X	x		
REED BUNTING	Escribano Palustre	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				X	x			x	x	x	X					x
REED WARBLER	Carricero Común	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				X	x			x	x	x	x	X				x
RING OUZEL	Mirlo Capiblanco	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	x	x	x	x	x		x	x						x	x	
ROBIN	Petirrojo Europeo	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
ROCK BUNTING	Escribano Montesino	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
ROCK DOVE	Paloma Doméstica	<i>Columba livia</i>	X	x		X	X	x	X	x			X	x				X
ROCK SPARROW	Gorrión Chillón	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ROLLER	Carraca	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>										(x)						(x)
RUFF	Combatiente	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>										x	x					x
RUFIOUS-TAILED ROCK-THRUSH	Roquero Rojo	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X		x	X	x	x	x	x	x
SAND MARTIN	Avión Zapador	<i>Riparia riparia</i>				X	x						x					x
SANDERLING	Correlimos Tridactilo	<i>Calidris alba</i>																x

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SARDINIAN WARBLER	Curruca Cabecinegra	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	x		x		X		x	X		x	X	x			x	
SCOPS OWL	Autillo Europeo	<i>Otus scops</i>	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x		x	X	x		x	x	x
SEDGE WARBLER	Carricera'n Común	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>				x			x	x								x
SERIN	Verdecillo	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	X	X	x	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	X
SHORT-TOED EAGLE	Culebrera Europea	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x				x
SHORT-TOED TREETREEPER	Agateador Común	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x			x
SHOVELER	Cuchara Común	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>				x					x							X
SISKIN	Lúgano	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	x	X	x	x	x		x	x	x				x	x	x	
SKYLARK	Alondra Común	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	x
SOCIABLE LAPWING	Avefría Sociable	<i>Vanellus gregarius</i>									(x)							
SONG THRUSH	Zorzal Común	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	X	x	x	x
SOUTHERN GREY SHRIKE	Alcaudón Real	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
SPANISH SPARROW	Gorrión Maruno	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X
SPARROWHAWK	Gavilán Común	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
SPECTACLED WARBLER	Curruca Tomillera	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	X	x	x	X	X	x	x	X		X	X	x	x	x	x	x
SPOONBILL	Espátula Común	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>																x
SPOTLESS STARLING	Estornino Negro	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	X	X	x	X	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X		x		X
SPOTTED FLYCATCHER	Papamoscos Gris	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	x	x	x	x

● Presente todo el año ● Estival ● Invernal ● En paso ● Migrador parcial

ITINERARIES																		
English Name	Spanish Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
SQUACCO HERON	Garcilla Cangrejera	<i>Ardea ralloides</i>																(x)
STOCK DOVE	Paloma Zurita	<i>Columba oenas</i>	x			x			x									x
STONECHAT	Tarabilla Común	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X
STONE-CURLEW	Alcaraván Común	<i>Burhinus oediacnemus</i>	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
SUBALPINE WARBLER	Curruca Carrasqueña	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
TAWNY OWL	Cárabo Europeo	<i>Strix aluco</i>																
TAWNY PIPIT	Bisbita Campestre	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TEAL	Cerceta Común	<i>Anas creca</i>				x					x	x						x
THEKLA LARK	Cogujada Montesina	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TREE PIPIT	Bisbita Arboreo	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	x	x	X	X	x	x	x	x		x	x	x				x
TREE SPARROW	Gorrión Molinero	<i>Passer montanus</i>	X	x	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	X					X
TUFTED DUCK	Porrón Moñudo	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>																(x)
TURTLE DOVE	Tórtola Europea	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	x		x	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	X			x	X
WALLCREEPER	Treparriscos	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>														(x)		
WATER PIPIT	Bisbita Alpino	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	x	x		x				x	x	x	x					X
WATER RAIL	Rascón Europeo	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
WHINCHAT	Tarabilla Norteña	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
WHISKERED TERN	Fumarel Cariblanco	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>																x
WHITE STORK	Cigüeña Blanca	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	x	x		x					x	x						X

● Presente todo el año ● Estival ● Invernal ● Migrador parcial

		ITINERARIES																
English Name	Spanish Name	Scientific Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
WHITE WAGTAIL	Lavandera Blanca	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
WIGEON	Silbón Europeo	<i>Anas penelope</i>									x							x
WILLOW WARBLER	Mosquitero Musical	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	x	X	X			x	x
WOOD SANDPIPER	Andarrios Bastardo	<i>Tringa glareola</i>									x	x						x
WOODCHAT SHRIKE	Alcaudón Común	<i>Lanius senator</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
WOODCOCK	Chocha Perdiz	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	x	x	x	x	x					x		x				
WOODLARK	Álondra Totavía	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	
WOODPIGEON	Paloma Torcaz	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	X	X	x	X	X	x	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	x
WREN	Chochín Común	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x		X	x	X		X	X	x
WRYNECK	Torcecuello	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	X	X	x	X	X	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
YELLOW WAGTAIL	Lavandera Boyera	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	X	x		X	x		x	x	X	X	X	X	x			X
YELLOWHAMMER	Escribano Cerillo	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		x	x							x						
YELLOW-LEGGED GULL	Gaviota Patiamarilla	<i>Larus michahellis</i>																x
ZITTING CISTICOLA	Buitrón	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>				X	x				x	x	x					x



FURTHER READING

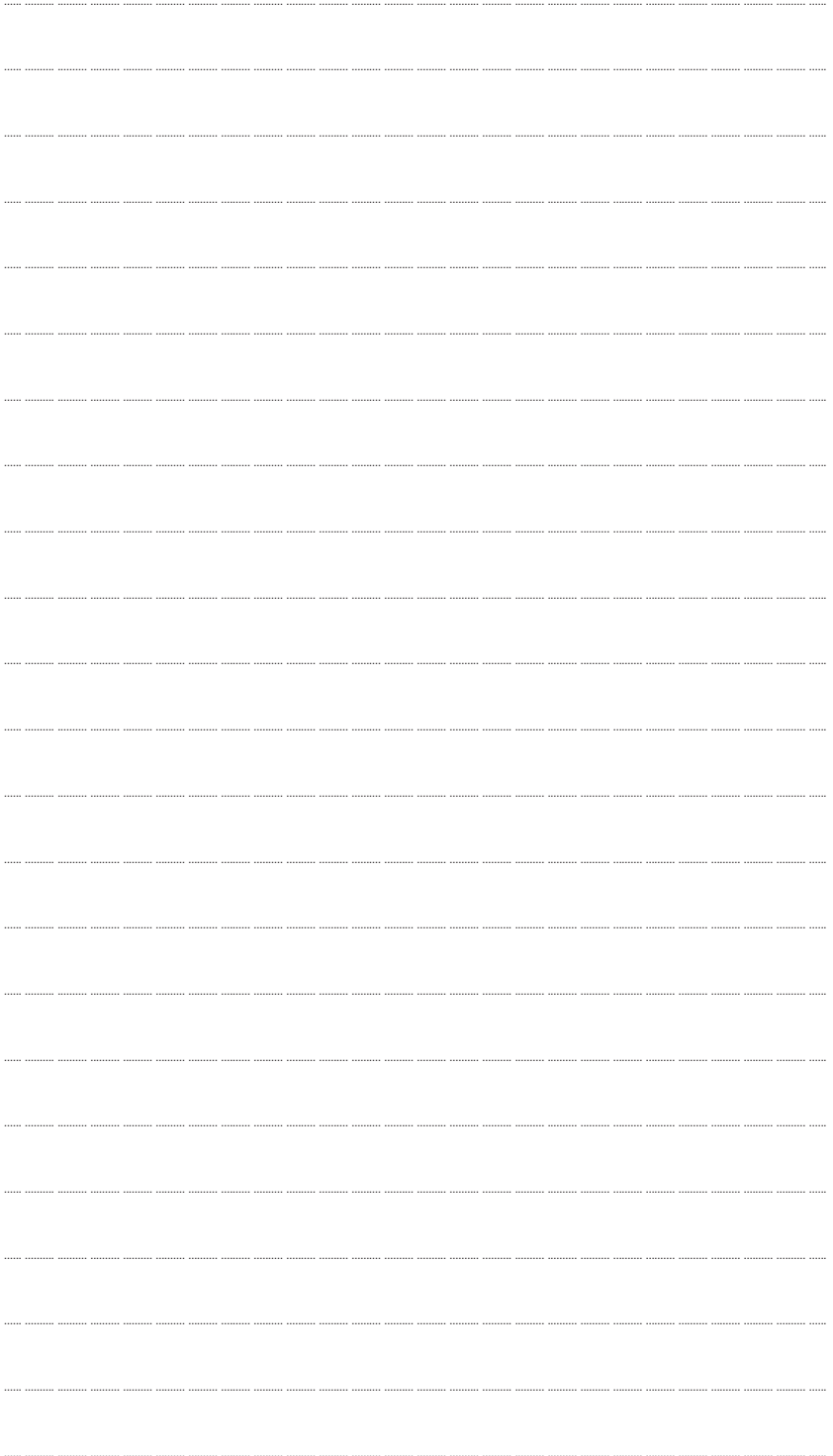


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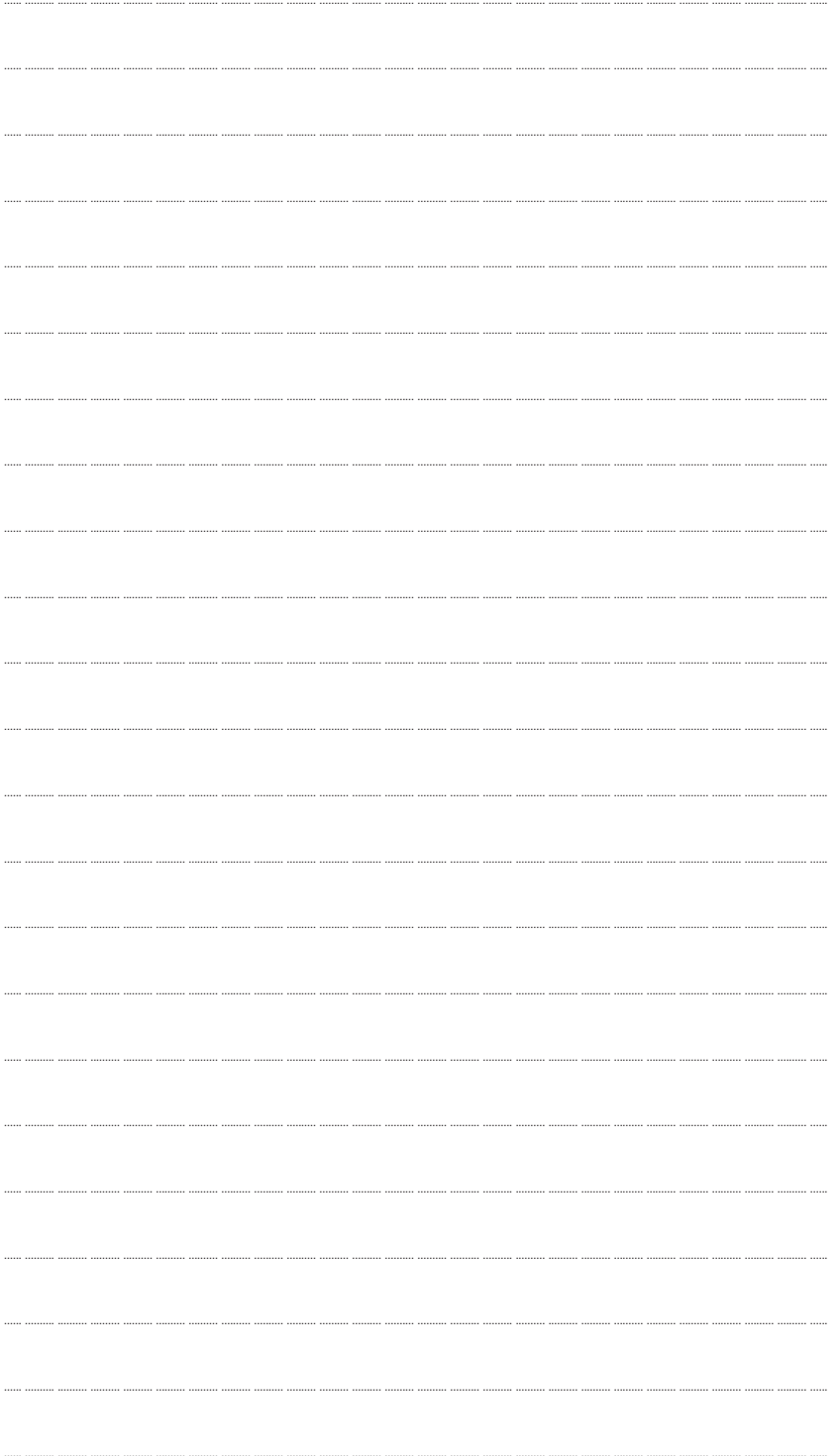
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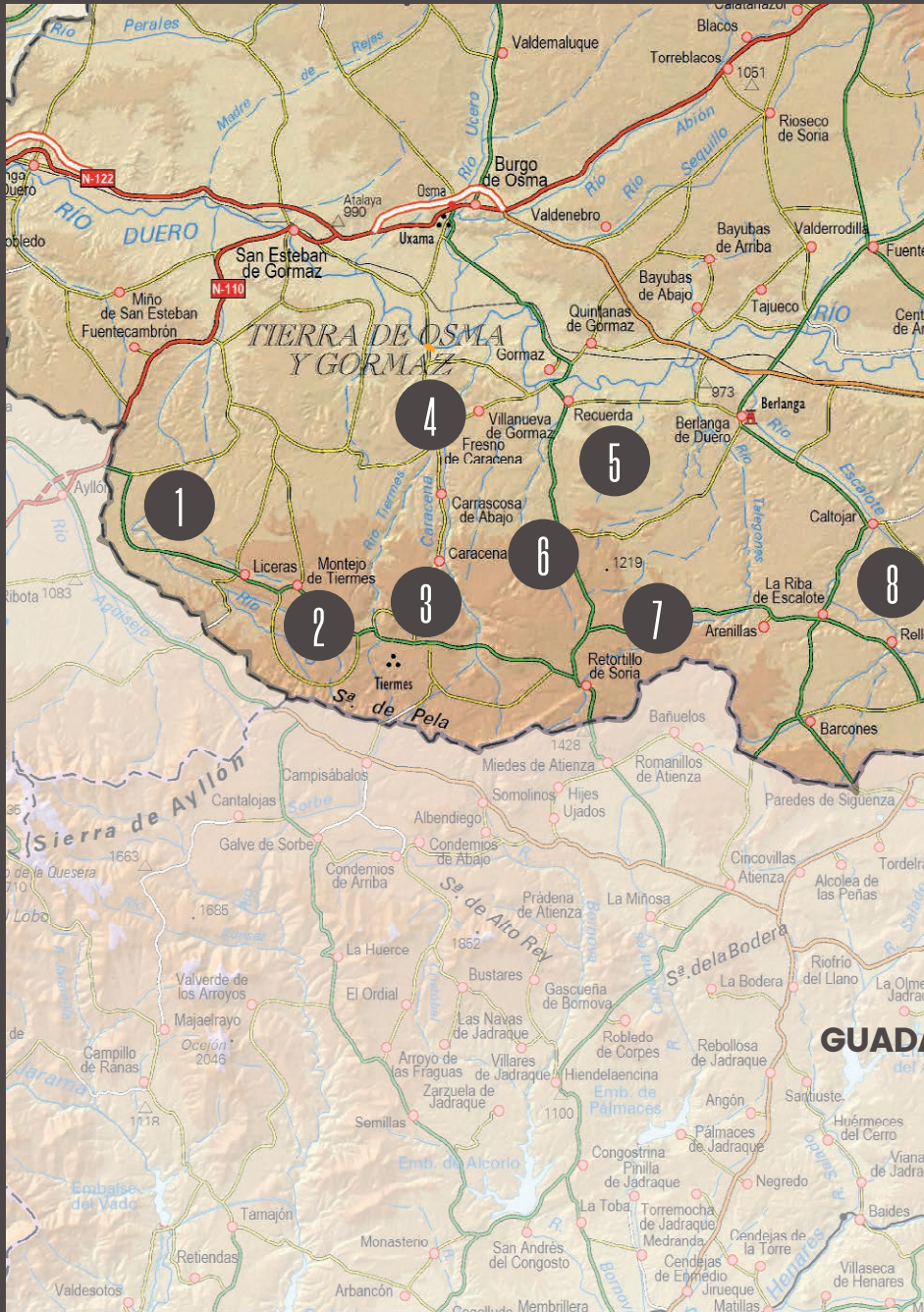
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ROUTES LOCATION WHERE AND WHEN TO SEE BIRDS IN THE SOUTH OF SORIA



LIFE RICOTI PROJECT

ORNITHOLOGICAL TOURISM PROGRAM

CONSERVATION OF THE DUPONT'S LARK AND ITS HABITAT IN SORIA (SPAIN)

LIFE15 NAT/ES/000802

Project financed by the European Union



Bird watching Soria, is a project coordinated by the Department of Development and Tourism of the Diputación Provincial de Soria