



Natural values



El Burgo is a beautiful village placed to the north of the Sierra de las Nieves District and surrounded by rough mountains: Sierra Blanquilla (west), Sierra de Ortega (north), Sierra de Alcaparain (northeast), Sierra Cabrilla (southeast) and Sierra de las Nieves (southwest) from where the Rio del Burgo flows across a narrow valley surrounded by cliffs and pinewoods first, and a wider one

dotted with olive, almond and walnut trees and orchards about on it as it approaches the village.

This last stretch of the river is covered by a lush river forest made of ashes, poplars, willows, oleander, bramble and sedge, home for not only birds but also reptiles, butterflies and dragonflies. There is nothing better in August, to cool ourselves down, than sharing the ponds and dykes at the end of our route, with their cold and limpid waters, with barbels, frogs, otters and kingfishers.



These are some of the birds we can observe during our trip: Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Turtle Dove, Common Swift, Pallid Swift, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Barn Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow, House Martin, Grey Wagtail, Robin, Nightingale, Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Western Olivaceous Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Jay, Spotless Starling, Golden Oriole, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin and Cirl Bunting.

How to get there

Type “Bar El Porrás, El Burgo” in Google Maps. We have to follow the signs to Yunquera at the roundabout. Our route starts from the bridge over the river; you can park on the left just before driving across the bridge. There is a trail parallel to the river upstream but remember, there is an order issued by the Environment Department of the Andalusian Government forbidding the light of fire and the off-road use of motor vehicles in forest areas from June 1st to October 15th due to the extreme risk of fire at the country side during the summer season, so we have to get to the dykes on foot, which is the best way to watch birds ended!

Note the name given to the river in Google Maps is “Río Turón”. This is incorrect. This river is called “Río del Burgo”. The Río Turón starts around 500 m. from the bridge downstream, just where the Rio del Burgo and Arroyo (stream) de la Almenara join together.

The river forest

We will walk down towards the left bank of the river before going across the bridge. To avoid confusion: the left bank of the river is the one on the left as we look downstream. In this case, our small path goes along the left bank while the trail for vehicles does it along the right one.

The big amount of swifts, both Common and Pallid ones, as well as House Martins, Barn and even Red-rumped Swallows in flight over the village will soon call our attention, as well as House Sparrows and Collared Doves moving around the houses.



The tweets of birds and croaks of frogs tell us the river is full of life. We will walk by beautiful villas on a wide trail made of concrete until we reach the end of the street and find our narrow path along the river forest. From now on, we will find orchards on the right, some of them with majestic walnut trees that are not very common in the hot Malaga province, as hazels, also present in the river forest, are not either.

This area is frequented by Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Serins and Blackbirds, and by Cirl Buntings, whose abundance is relatively high here. You will discover Red-rumped Swallows patrolling the orchards and notice the short return flights finished off with a quick hovering of the Spotted Flycatcher in search for insects.



Bear in mind there will be lots of juvenile birds at this time of year in the woods giving out all kinds of calls; trying to spot and identify these birds will be very entertaining and the core of our trip today. Some of the hidden gems can be Nightingales, Blackcaps, Robins, tits and Golden Orioles that are very common here as we approach the biggest trees on our way upstream.



Have a look at the river every time the forest clears up. Chances will be high for Grey Wagtails and the Kingfisher might be somewhere around, and you will see fish and beautiful dragonflies.



As we move on, the orchards on the right bank of the river are replaced by pine woods from which Wood Pigeons and Turtle Doves coo from. The explosive calls of the Green Woodpecker will also become more common from now on though we have to keep our eyes well open to spot them. Other birds climbing the trees are Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Short-toed Treecreepers.





Unless it has been repaired, which I doubt as it has been that way for a long time, you will find a little puddle of water on the path coming from a leak in an irrigation ditch on the right. The path goes on below the branches of a fig tree up to the irrigation ditch which we will have to follow for some metres

until we go down towards the path as soon as we can find it again on the left. Please, be very careful here to avoid falls.



We are now entering the Sierra de las Nieves Nature Reserve and the end of the route is close. We will soon reach the Dique (dike), a great place for a bath. As we are quiet birdwatchers, needless to say never jump from the dike into the water. We can go over the dike,

reach the trail and take the entrance to the right to get to the Largo del Dique, a more shaded area where we can also take a bath and rest. This is the area where we have spotted Kingfishers and Western Olivaceous Warblers.



The distance from the village is just 2 kilometres though it can take 3 hours to get here after a slow, careful and fun birdwalk.



PHOTOS:

1. El Burgo
2. Spanish Terrapins (*Mauremys leprosa*)
3. Path alongside the river
4. Juvenile Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)
5. Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)
6. Big black poplars (*Populus nigra*)
7. Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*)
8. Juvenile Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)
9. Copper Demoiselle (*Calopteryx haemorrhoidalis*)
10. Orchards
11. Puddle and path below the fig tree
12. Stretch along the irrigation ditch
13. Border of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park
14. Dique (dyke)
15. Access to Largo del Dique
16. Largo del Dique