

Birding Málaga

Where to go birding in April:
Genil River banks (Cuevas Bajas)

Natural values

The Genil River makes up the border of Malaga with Cordoba province between Cuevas de San Marcos and Cuevas Bajas in the Northeast District of Malaga. The lush vegetation alongside the banks is one of the last samples of native river forest mainly composed of poplars, ashes and elms.



Live bursts in this forest in April when Serins, Greenfinches, Blackcaps, Cetti's Warblers and Nightingales perform a chorus of extraordinary powerful and sophisticated songs.

Some of the birds we will find here are Mallard, Gadwall, Short-toed Eagle, Marsh Harrier, Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Moorhen, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Turtle Dove,

Cuckoo, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Wryneck, Crested Lark, Barn Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow, House Martin, Grey Wagtail, Robin, Nightingale, Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Zitting Cisticola, Cetti's Warbler, Wren, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Penduline Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Azure-winged Magpie, Jackdaw, Raven, Spotless Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Corn Bunting and Common Waxbill (non-native species).



How to get there

Type "Antigua Fuente Municipal Calle Real, Cuevas Bajas" in Google Maps. Keep driving down till the end of Calle Real where you will see signs for "Observatorio de Aves" (they could be covered by waste containers!) to the right. Set the counter to zero here and follow the signs to the birds observatory.

We recommend doing this trip on walk (it is around 7 kilometres long return) though we can also drive and stop in a few places to have a look around. If we want to do it on walk, we can park in the industrial state and follow the road. In this case, please, mind the road traffic!



The bridge over Genil River



Some urban birds like House Sparrows, Collared Doves and Spotless Starlings are common around here, and we can even watch the flights of Kestrels over the village. We will soon start hearing finches, Crested Larks and Corn Buntings. After wet winters,

there will be a big patch of swampy ground between the road



and the river where we can spot Mallards, Gadwalls, Black-winged Stilts and Zitting Cisticolas.



We can follow the signs of the Gran Senda de Malaga to walk away from the road unless it had rained recently and heavily. As we approach the river forest, the calls of the Cetti's Warblers become ceaseless and the Blackcaps, the main figures of this



area, call and sing from every bush and tree.

There is a ford at km. 1.3 that could be difficult to overcome either on walk or by car after heavy rains. The bridge over the Genil River is just 100 metres away from the ford. There is more room to park the car on the left once we drive across the bridge. Despite we will stay on the left bank of the river, a careful search of this stretch can be very profitable from the bridge and its opposite end, by walking a track to the left at the other end of the bridge, and another swampy area with sedge from where lots of frogs can be heard. We can see the first



flights of Marsh Harriers, Common Buzzards and even Short-toed Eagles here, Grey Wagtails and Moorhens in the river, and Great and Blue Tits, Wren, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Short-toed Treecreeper and Common Waxbills on the trees and bushes.



Other birds like the Sparrowhawk and Wryneck will be difficult to spot but be sure they will be watching us... Nightingales will also be very difficult to make out while singing from the thicket.



Los Fernández Lake and La Agusadera Waterwheel

Back to the left bank of the river, we will go along the road. The first Azure-winged Magpies will show up flying from a big pine tree by a farmhouse and the river forest.



The entrance to the birds observatory is around 800 metres from the bridge. Access is not allowed for cars. Los Fernández Lake extends on the right hand side of the track and we can observe Mallards and Moorhens there. The path to the birds observatory will be very difficult after rainy days. Apart



from the river forest birds already mentioned, Jackdaws, Ravens, Common Buzzards and Marsh Harriers will be very active over the sand cliff in front of the observatory.



The path goes on, following the Gran Senda de Malaga signs upstream, towards the Agusadera Waterwheel, where there are a few tables to have a seat, have a bite to eat, listen and watch the birds. Pay attention to Penduline Tits and raptors here.

If the path from the birds observatory to the waterwheel is too swamped, we can go back to the road, and walk 700 metres until we find the signs of the Gran Senda de Malaga near a farmhouse. Let's walk down to the river and walk downstream towards the waterwheel.



PHOTOGRAPHS:

1. Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*)
2. Cetti's Warbler (*Cettia cetti*)
3. Road traffic danger sign
4. Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*)
5. Corn Bunting (*Miliaria calandra*)
6. River forest
7. Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)
8. Genil River from the bridge
9. Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*)
10. Short-toed Treecreeper (*Certhia brachydactyla*)
11. Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*)
12. Los Fernández Lake and Birds Observatory
13. Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)
14. Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)
15. Agusadera Waterwheel
16. Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)