

Natural values

Genal and Guadiaro rivers, both born at Serrania de Ronda, merge in Casares, in the West Costa del Sol District, next to the limit with Cadiz province, 15 kilometres away from the mouth of Guadiaro River in Sotogrande.



The last stretch of Genal River forms a fertile valley surrounded by rolling hills typical of the Campo de Gibraltar landscape. The slopes, covered by pastures, scrub and wild olive trees, are devoted to grow cattle and contrast with the lower lands, where citrus groves extend along the banks of the river. All this diversity, together with the proximity of rocky mountains like Sierra de la Utrera, next to Manilva, and Sierra Crestellina, close to Casares,

makes this place very attractive for many different birds at any time of year. December, when the scenery turns green after the first rains of autumn, is one of the best moments to visit this area.



These are some of the species we can find here in December: Mallard, Red-legged Partridge, Cormorant, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Griffon Vulture, Osprey, Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Black-winged Kite, Kestrel, Moorhen, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Snipe, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Hoopoe,

Kingfisher, Wryneck, Crested Lark, Thekla Lark, Crag Martin, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Robin, Black Redstart, Stonechat, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Zitting Cisticola, Cetti's Warbler, Chiffchaff, Wren, Jay, Raven, Starling, Spotless Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Cirl Bunting and Corn Bunting.



There is also a resident flock of Canada Geese in the river, and Rüppell's and Black Vultures do regularly mix with the Griffon ones.

How to get there

Type "Venta La Molina, Casares" in Google Maps. Take a small road on the left that goes down the hill some metres before reaching the restaurant when coming from Manilva signed "COATESA Finca Los Nogales". Set the counter to zero here.

The hills



We can stop the car after the first bend to the left and have a look around to have an overview of the valley and the hills. We might also see Ravens, Kestrels and Wood Pigeons, spot the Cirl Buntings while singing from their perches, enjoy the first Griffon Vultures of the day, and find many of the birds that will be

present along the descent to the river: Robins and Sardinian Warblers flitting in the scrub; Blackcaps, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes hiding in the wild olives; Greenfinches feeding from the berries of the mastic trees.



These upper reaches of the valley are more appropriate for Thekla Larks due to the vicinity of craggier terrain while the chance of Crested ones is higher in the farmlands closer to the river.



This is not a busy road so we will be able to park aside to watch any bird we can find around the grazing livestock, like Cattle Egrets, White Wagtails and Meadow Pipits, or sitting on the fences like Stonechats, Black Redstarts and Corn Buntings. Fences act as

magnets for some birds and the car is a perfect hide to watch them from!



The road goes across some cattle grids and next to farmhouses where House Sparrows become very common. The views to the Genal River are fantastic from the bend at km. 3.6.

The farmlands and river

A track joins the road from the right at km. 4.1; we will go on the road to the left. We can make the river out from the row of eucalyptus and the citrus groves extend in front of us with some birds we had not seen so far like Chaffinches, Jays, Starlings and Spotless Starlings. We can find Common Buzzards sitting on the posts along the road and big winter flocks of Goldfinches, Serins and Linnets in the arable plots.



At km. 7.5 we will have the first opportunity to scan the river for Ospreys, Grey Herons, Little Egrets, Green and Common Sandpipers, Snipes, Kingfishers, Cetti's Warblers, Grey Wagtails and the introduced Canada Geese. Griffon Vultures can fly very close to us over the hills on the opposite bank.





The road becomes a dirt track at km. 7.9 and we will soon reach the Genal and Guadiaro rivers junction at km. 8.7. We recommend having a look to the river from here and walking towards the previous point at km. 7.5 in order to increase our chances to spot the above mentioned river

birds and the Black-winged Kites settled in this area.



After this pleasant walk, we can go ahead up to km. 11.1, where we have another viewpoint over the river by following a track to the right at a place called



“Lugar Pacheco” after driving across beautiful farmland where we can scan for finches, wagtails, pipits, larks, kestrels and buzzards plus some wintering Booted Eagles, Sparrowhawks and Zitting Cisticolas.

PHOTOS:

1. Citrus groves
2. Sierra Crestellina, Casares and Los Reales de Sierra Bermeja
3. Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)
4. Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)
5. Cirl Bunting (*Emberiza cirrus*)
6. Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*)
7. White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*)
8. House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*)
9. Genal River
10. Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
11. Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*)
12. Genal and Guadiaro rivers junction
13. Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*)
14. Booted Eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*)