

STAGE

26





STAGE 26

Jimera de Líbar - Benalauría

LOCATION

Stage 26 starts in Jimera de Líbar, at the natural spring and the old wash house on the route through the village, where you need to follow the direction to Atajate. After **15,3 km**, and having passed through the Puerto de Benalauría, you will walk away from Río Guadiaro and approach Río Genal, finishing the walk in Benalauría.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

At this stage of the walk you will

be crossing pine and holm oak woods, scrub and areas of cereal agriculture. Consequently, the composition of bird species is quite varied. Although along the whole route you can see rock faces which mark the valley of Río Guadiaro, you will be able to get close to that environment and enjoy rock-dwelling species once you have climbed to the pass called Puerto de Benalauría. Along the last section of Stage 26 you will be passing through chestnut groves which also will be very discernible during next two stages.



View of Laguna Florida. PHOTO: JSM



DID YOU KNOW?

Stripeless Tree Frog (*Hyla meridionalis*). PHOTO: JLM

less Tree Frog, Iberian Water Frog (Perez's Frog), Southern Marbled Newt, Iberian Ribbed Newt and Penibetic Fire Salamander. TEXT: JSM

The westernmost tip of Malaga province, characterised by the presence of mountain chains and woodland of great value, harbours a rich amphibian community, which includes Common and Natterjack Toad, Iberian Painted Frog, Parsley Frog, Stripe-



HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

Stage 26 starts off in Jimera de Libar with urban birds. However the privileged location of the village provides the opportunity to enjoy a good number of mountain birds from the very first moment. Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Kestrel, Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Common, Pallid and Alpine Swift, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Barn Swallow, House and Crag Martin, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, European Robin, Common Stonechat, Common Blackbird, Song and Mistle Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Eurasian Jay, Common and Spotless Starling, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Serin and Greenfinch are the species present in the *dehesa* area at the first part of Stage 26.



The Seven Troughs (pilas). PHOTO: ARM

The Siete Pilas site. PHOTO: ARM





Having climbed the uphill section, you will be passing by farmhouses where House Sparrow occurs and in the cork oak areas you may also see Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper, Nuthatch, as well as Hawfinch. Other forest species which are present include Short-toed and Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpecker and the Golden Oriole in areas with tall riverside vegetation, joined by Nightingale and Cetti's Warbler. Next, you will be coming to an open area with beautiful views of the village of Cortes de la Frontera on the slopes of the Sierra Blanquilla. Crossing olive groves and patches of cereal fields and scrub you will also be able to see Bee-eater, Black-eared Wheatear, Zitting Cisticola, Melodious Warbler, Woodchat Shrike and Corn Bunting.

Another climb takes you across a mature holm oak wood flanked with



A section of the walk. PHOTO: ARM



Rock Thrush. PHOTO: JLM





Short-toed Eagle, third calendar year bird. PHOTO: JAS



hawthorn and to a settlement called Siete Pilas, now directly *en route* to your destination, the Puerto de Benalauría. Before the steepest climb and outcrops of limestone (which makes up these sierras), you will be passing through open farmland, where

it is worth turning around to enjoy the landscape. It is mainly Crested and Thekla Lark, Sardinian Warbler and Zitting Cisticola which keep you company at this point, together with Woodchat Shrike and Melodious Warbler in summer season. Along the climb towards the pass Puerto de Benalauría, among the pine trees, the first rock faces bring the mountain species with them, including Bonelli's Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart (breeding and wintering), Black Wheatear, Southern Grey Shrike, Raven, Jackdaw, Red-billed Chough and Common Linnet, as well as Golden Eagle, Griffon Vulture, and Common Kestrel. This is also a suitable environment for the Eagle Owl. The walk downhill to the village of Benalauría leads through holm oaks where, besides the already named species, you can see the Woodlark.

Bonelli's Warbler. PHOTO: JLM



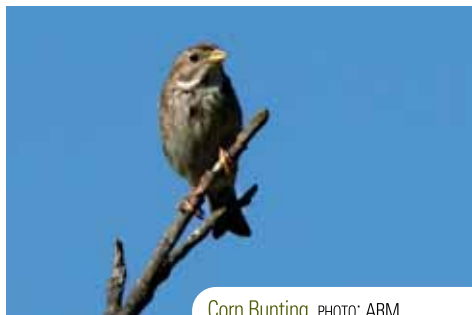


Remember now to pay attention to the sky to search for birds of prey, listening to the calls of forest birds (the type of species which will take the lead during the next stages), and enjoying the birds as you arrive in the village, greeted by Swallows, Starlings and House Sparrows.

TIMING

The diversity of birds is greatest during spring and early summer, due to the presence of summer season species, although the winter months are also a good time to birdwatch at Stage 26. Keep in mind that this route lies on a flight path used by numerous migratory birds as they approach the Strait of Gibraltar to cross to Africa in summer/autumn or head north in the spring. Because of this you can observe species which are present here only for a short time.

Black Redstart. PHOTO: JLM



Corn Bunting. PHOTO: ARM

NATURAL VALUES

In the nearby rocks of Benadalid you can see rock-dwelling raptors. It is best to use a telescope to enjoy the birds fully, given the long distance to the rocks from the viewpoint or any, even closest, point in the village. You can frequently observe Bonelli's Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. During the 2014 breeding season, 2-3 pairs of Griffon Vulture bred in the area, which was first such record for this site. ○

Black-eared Wheatear. PHOTO: JLM

