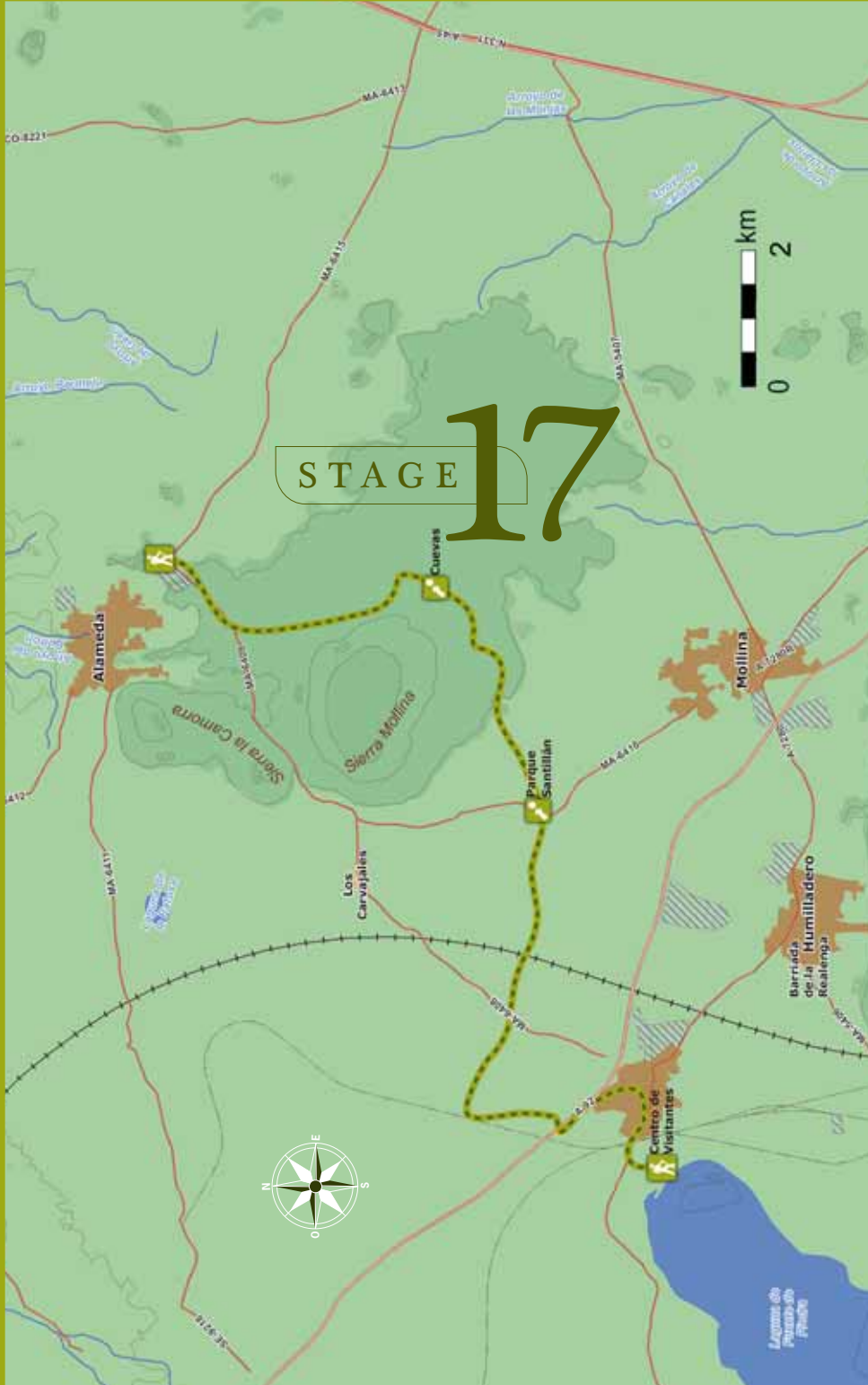


STAGE

17





STAGE 17

Alameda - Fuente de Piedra

LOCATION

Stage 17 starts at the intersection of Ventorrillo, along the road which leads to the village of Fuente de Piedra. The first section of Stage 17 is parallel to the road. Once you get around the hills of Sierra de la Camorra and the picnic area at Arroyo de Santillán, the landscape becomes mainly farmland. The end of the **18,6 km** long Stage 17 is at the Visitor's Centre of Laguna Fuente de Piedra, located at the Cerro del Palo hill. You will need to cross an overpass above the train line from where you can see the Visitor's Centre.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The initial stretch of this stage of the walk takes you along the road surrounded



Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin. PHOTO: JLM

by crop fields, which continue until a small wood of holm oaks and then quite a dense pine wood in Sierra de La Camorra. You will be flanking this sierra around its southern tip, leaving its highest peaks on your right, where you can also see woodland vegetation characteristic to this area; young holm oaks and wild olive trees which stand out because of their round shape. The downhill section leads towards the Santillán, picnic area where the terrain becomes flat and stays that way until you reach your destination, as you walk

DID YOU KNOW?

A clergyman named Antonio Ponz Piquer (1725-1792), who travelled in 1791 from Seville to Malaga, comments in the ninth part of his "*Viage de España*": "...its first major village is the Ciudad de Antequera... After walking for a league you come to a lake called *de la Sal* (Salt Lake) as the water taken out of the lake turns to salt. This lake's circumference is three leagues; it is one league long and almost one league wide. ... Two other smaller lakes or ponds are next to it where I saw ducks and other waterfowl.". TEXT: SMB



The sculpture in front of the Visitor's Centre. PHOTO: ARM

past grain fields and olive groves. Once you are at Cerro del Palo, at the end of Stage 17, you will find a few pools where waterfowl are the star species; the pools maintain their water level thanks to the water originating from Fuente de Piedra.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

The environment composed of farmland, mainly cereal crops and olive groves with almond trees in some sections, supports the species mentioned in two previous stages. The main species are Common



Inside the centre. PHOTO: ARM



Greater Flamingoes. PHOTO: JAS



Red Kite. PHOTO: JLM

Buzzard, Common Kestrel, Red-legged Partridge, European Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Barn Swallow, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, Crested Lark, Calandra Lark, Skylark, Song Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, Common Chiffchaff, Great Tit,

Azure-winged Magpie, Spotless and Common Starling, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Common Linnet, Serin and Corn Bunting. As you walk uphill and enter the forest mass in the sierra, the Azure-winged Magpie becomes more abundant, as



Herding flamingos to be ringed. PHOTO: MA



Azure-winged Magpies. PHOTO: JLM



well as Common Blackbird, Great Tit and Common Chaffinch joined by other typical forest species including European Turtle Dove, Common Wood Pigeon, European Robin, Song Thrush, Redwing, Crested

Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Wren and Eurasian Jay. Other birds which occur in the holm oak copses and, mainly, in the pine woods, are Red-necked Nightjar, Stonechat, Black Redstart, Common Chiffchaff, Southern Grey Shrike, Raven and Cirl Bunting. Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin deserves a special mention at Stage 17, a migrating species which spends its winter south of the Sahara desert. In Spain it exclusively occupies the south of the peninsula in an intermittent manner; for the last two decades it has shown an apparent decline both in its distribution area and its population levels. At the moment the causes of the bird's progressive decline are unknown. Its nesting grounds at Stage 17 are located close to the mountainous section in olive groves, vineyards and the stretches of natural vegetation where wild olive is the predominant plant.

Black-headed Gull. PHOTO: JLM





The Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin owes its name in Spanish, *Alzacola*, (“*alzar*” meaning “to raise” and “*cola*” being the word for “tail”) to the habit of cocking its tail up as it perches, which makes the bird quite noticeable (the tail is reddish brown with a black and white band at the tip). In the vicinity of the lake you can see various species of waterfowl flying back and forth from the seasonally flooded areas. Greater Flamingo, Black-winged Stilt, gulls and ducks make up, in most cases, the major part of such flocks.



Avocets and Black-winged Stilt at Vicario path near Visitor’s Centre. PHOTO: ARM

TIMING

Stage 17 can be done all year round except for the hottest months. However, if the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin is your target species, the best time to do this stage would be from mid May to mid July.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A tour of the Visitor’s Centre is recommended. Named after José Antonio Valverde, the researcher who discovered breeding Greater Flamingos in the area, the centre provides detailed and high quality information about the biodiversity and functioning of the wetland. Around the centre and at other points of the lake there are birdwatching hides and using them is highly recommended as well.



Hoopoe. PHOTO: JLM