

Sierra Almijara

Oleanders lining a stream on the way to El Acebuchal. PHOTO: ARM

Male and juvenile crossbills. PHOTO: JLM

Dianthus melacitanus. PHOTO: ARM

STAGE 7





STAGE 7

Cómpeta - Canillas de Aceituno

LOCATION

Stage 7 begins in the northwest part of Cómpeta, specifically at the chapel called La Ermita de San Antonio. This stage leads from the Sierra Almijara to Sierra Tejada, then passes by the settlements of Canillas de Albaida, Salares and Sedella, and finally ends in Canillas de Aceituno. It is **25, 1 km** long.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

Stage 7 leads through the total of 5 settlements which makes it very anthropic (or transformed by humans) in character, with plenty of crop fields. The water-courses mingle with woodland and the plant formations consisting of pine trees and holm oaks demonstrate a part of the potential vegetation of the area.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

This is a stage of the walk which, in major part, takes you to areas marked



Flowering gorse and rosemary and Sierra de Almijara in the background. PHOTO: JSM

by human influence. You will visit the total of five towns and their surroundings, so the urban-dwelling species of birds are abundant. Eurasian Collared Dove, Common and Pallid Swifts, Barn Swallow, House Martin, Crag Martin, White Wagtail, Black Redstart, Common Blackbird, Great Tit, Spotless and Common Starling, House Sparrow, Goldfinch and Serin are the leading species of Stage 7. Additionally to these species, in the areas with orchards and vegetable gardens found between Cómpeta and Canillas de Albaida, you can see Stonechat, Great Tit, Common Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Serin, which will continue to appear throughout Stage 7.

DID YOU KNOW?

Supporting over 1400 species of plants, the Sierras of Tejada and Almijara constitute one of the botanical jewels of the South of Europe. This surprising diversity can be explained by the altitude, closeness to the sea and geological diversity. This diversity of plants is reflected in the great variety of pollinating insects. As an example we can quote the fact that there are 105 species of day-flying butterflies which have been identified in these sierras. (JOSÉ MANUEL MORENO COMM. PERS.). TEXT: JSM



Wren. PHOTO: JLM

In the woods of Aleppo and Maritime pines you can also see Common Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Mistle and Song Thrush, Great and Coal Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Common Chaffinch and Crossbill. Additionally, in the copses of holm oak, we should add to the list the Blue Tit, Eurasian Jay, Spotted Flycatcher and Eurasian Siskin. You will also be walking through some open scrubland, predominantly composed of broom and it is in this type of environment where the Crested Lark becomes the star species, together with such birds as Red-legged Partridge, Zitting Cisticola and Sardinian Warbler. The water channels and any other places where water is present close to main riverbeds are the best spots to see Blackcap, Wren and Golden Oriole, and to enjoy the Nightingale's and Cetti's Warbler's song. What is more, the

closeness of the mountains makes finding the great raptors easier, such as Griffon Vulture, Bonelli's and Golden Eagle, as well as the typical forest species of birds of prey which also manage to find some suitable nesting spots in this area (mainly Short-toed Eagle, Booted Eagle, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard). The list of birds can be rounded up by adding Common Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Little Owl, Scops Owl, Tawny Owl, Cuckoo, Green Woodpecker, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Girl Bunting and Corn Bunting.

T I M I N G

Stage 7 is long and it is recommended to avoid walking it during the hottest months of the year. The make up of the bird species does not vary greatly throughout the year, except for the species which are exclusively winter or summer visitors.



NATURAL VALUES

Along Stage 7 you will have a chance to see the larvae of the Iberian Midwife Toad (finding adults can prove to be difficult and generally must be done at night). This is a species of the Anura order (frogs and toads) which is endemic to the eastern part of Andalucía and Murcia; it is small (between 3, 5 and 6 cm long) and it has vertical pupils. These toads have a peculiar way of reproducing as they do not lay their eggs in water; instead, the male carries them around on its hind legs until the eggs hatch. The first individuals which were used to describe the species for science had been captured in Canillas de Aceituno, and this is why that village is considered to be the *terra típica* of the Iberian Midwife Toad. ○



Stonechat. PHOTO: JLM



Short-toed Treecreeper. PHOTO: JLM

Blue Rock Thrush. PHOTO: JLM

