



STAGE

28

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# STAGE 28

## Genalguacil - Casares

### LOCATION

Stage 28 begins close to the Genalguacil church at a car park. The **20.5 km** walk leads through woodland and a lush valley to Casares in the western Costa del Sol. Casares is an excellent vantage point to see the Strait of Gibraltar and the African continent.

### DESCRIPTION

#### ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

In Genalguacil and Casares you will have a chance to see typical urban birds, while along the entire route forest birds are the predominant type of species. The rivers and streams also contribute their own birds and

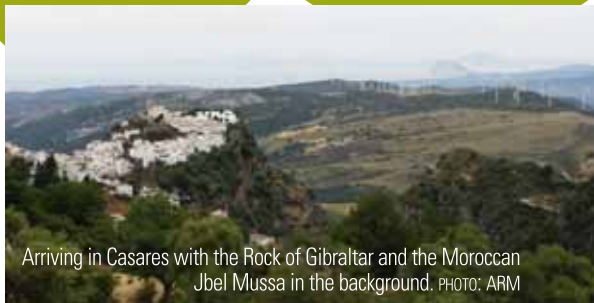
at the end of the stage cliffs and crags appear, which support breeding populations of Griffon Vultures, among other rock-dwelling birds. The broad views that characterise Stage 28 give you a good opportunity to scan the sky for birds of prey.

### HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

The two villages visited at Stage 28 hold a great number of birds, however spring and summer birds are most noteworthy, when you can also see Swifts and Swallows constantly flying

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Irishman William Bowles (1714-1780), the Age of Enlightenment traveller who published "*La Introducción a la Historia Natural y a la Geografía Física de España*", (An Introduction to the Natural History and Physical Geography of Spain, originally in Spanish) in 1775, remarks about the Serranía de Ronda «There is a rare peculiarity in these mountains; its parallel ridges, so close together that their bases touch, are in part red and in part white. The first part, although slightly higher, does not retain snow permanently; and the other is almost always covered by it, so that in the summer all the neighbouring lands use the snow supply to cool their drinks. The white rock only holds cork oaks and holm oaks; the red rock does not have any of these trees, and is covered with firs». This is the first record of the Spanish fir (*Abies pinsapo*) in the Serranía. TEXT: SMB



Arriving in Casares with the Rock of Gibraltar and the Moroccan Jbel Mussa in the background. PHOTO: ARIM



Almarchal river. PHOTO: ARM

overhead. Genalguacil has a remarkable population of House Martins and Barn Swallows and, to a lesser extent, Red-rumped Swallows. Collared Dove, House Sparrow, Common and Spotless Starling are the predominant species in the village, although the diversity of birds which can be seen from the viewpoint (located at the starting point waymark) is very high, thanks to the privileged location of Genalguacil. Without having to leave the village you will be able to enjoy such birds in flight as Short-toed and Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Northern Goshawk and Common Kestrel, as well as a variety

of forest species named below. The Great Spotted Woodpecker is common in the area, as proved by the many holes found in the trees along the way. Also, the Green Woodpecker, Wood Pigeon, European Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Wren, European Robin, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush and Redwing, Common Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warblers, Bonelli's Warbler, Firecrest, Spotted Flycatcher, Coal Tit, as well as Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper, Eurasian Jay, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Greenfinch, Serin, Hawfinch and Cirl Bunting. Along the watercourses, especially the Almarchal river, such birds may turn

View from Monte del Duque with Genalguacil in the background. PHOTO: ARM





Mixed woods along the path. PHOTO: ARM



Robin. PHOTO: JLM

inhabited buildings, and this environment supports Common Kestrel, Little Owl, Red-rumped Swallow, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear, Spotless Starling and House Sparrow. The path through the forest of the Monte del Duque can be considered a real treat,

up as Common Sandpiper, Kingfisher, White and Grey Wagtail, Nightingale, Cetti's Warbler and Golden Oriole, among other species. In open spaces where the main type of vegetation is shrubs, you can also see Black-eared Wheatear, Bee-eater and Stonechat. Among the nocturnal species, the Tawny Owl is present and quite common; also Scops Owl and Red-necked Nightjar occur. Along the stage you will be passing by both ruined and





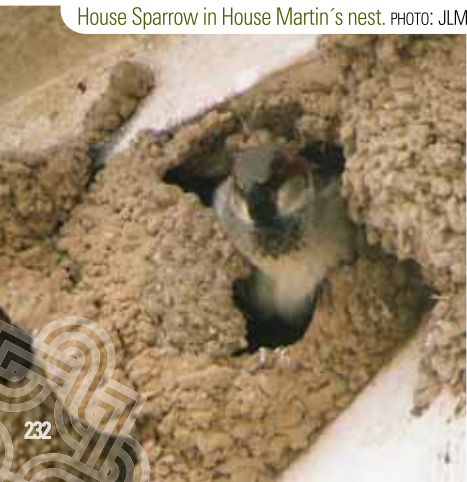


First rocks appear as you arrive in Casares. PHOTO: ARM

since it is a superbly preserved cork oak wood, well maintained throughout the cork harvests.

Around here you can also detect by ear the presence of many of the species that have been mentioned previously. As you leave the Monte del Duque, more varied vegetation appears gradually: oaks, pines, olive trees and some Portuguese gall oak. Soon you will be passing by on your right the vertical walls of Sierra Crestellina and a breathtaking view of the

Strait of Gibraltar and The Rock, the Mussa mountain in Morocco, and El Hacho in Ceuta whenever the morning haze clears. The rocky environment begins here and this is where the Griffon Vulture plays the leading role, but you can also see Bonelli's Eagle, Black Wheatear, Jackdaw and Red-billed Chough. In addition, these mountains are one of the few places in the province where you can find Egyptian Vulture during the breeding season. Once you are in Casares, the



House Sparrow in House Martin's nest. PHOTO: JLM



Juvenile Robin. PHOTO: JLM



A section of the path suitable for cycling. PHOTO: ARM

castle and its viewpoint are worth a visit, where you can see Lesser Kestrel during breeding season, and, occasionally, in winter. This is unusual as the species normally winters in the region of Senegal and Gambia. Besides the Lesser Kestrels you can enjoy close flybys of Griffon Vultures right over the village of Casares, as well as Booted Eagle and Common Buzzard in flight.

### TIMING

Stage 28 is recommended throughout the year, although the greatest diversity of birds is found in the spring and summer months when the species that overwinter in Africa are here. During the migration, both pre-breeding and post-breeding passages, it is easy to see large concentrations of raptors and storks, since the Genal and Guadiaro valleys serve as migration channels for those birds which use the Strait of Gibraltar to cross to the African continent in summer and in autumn, and from Africa to Europe during the spring.

### NATURAL VALUES

Along Stage 28 you will note the presence of the reddish rocks of Sierra Bermeja.



Common Chiffchaff. PHOTO: JLM



Grey Wagtail. PHOTO: JLM



View of the Rock of Gibraltar and the Jbel Mussa in Morocco, the two pillars of the Strait. PHOTO: ARM

These are the biggest outcrops of serpentinite in Spain and one of the largest in the world, which support numerous endemic species of flora and fauna associated with this globally rare ecosystem. The list of species recorded for Red Natura Sierra Bermeja includes a total of 20 endemic plant species, 17 species of unique invertebrates exclusive to this massif, and one endemic species of fish, described for science in 2006 (Doadrio & Carmona, 2006). The *Squalius malacitanus* chub is unique to the Genal, Guadalmina, Almárchal

and Guadaiza rivers, but also appears in some streams linked to Sierra Bermeja. Due to its restricted range it is classified as Critically Endangered, based on IUCN criteria (see Perea *et al.* 2011). The community of aquatic invertebrates includes a high diversity of Diptera and Trichoptera. More than 80% and 65%, respectively, of all the known families in the Iberian peninsula occur here (source: Mediodes).

The dragonflies found in the river Almarçal include Orange-spotted Emerald *Oxygastra curtisii* and Splendid

Adult and juvenile Egyptian Vulture. PHOTO: JLM






Great Spotted Woodpecker. PHOTO: JLM

Cruiser *Macromia splendens*. These are special due to their rarity and precarious conservation status and both are considered endangered. Although the Otter is one of the most emblematic species of the stage as far as mammals are concerned, you may also find tracks of Fox, Genet, Badger, Weasel and Egyptian Mongoose. In addition, around Monte del Duque Red Deer could cross your path.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Monte del Duque was first mentioned in written documents dated 1491, the same year when the Catholic Monarchs sold the village of Casares and all its land to the Duke of Cadiz, Don Rodrigo Ponce de León. From that moment the mountain has been recorded in writing as Monte del Duque (Duke's Mountain). It had been passed from hand to hand until the early twentieth century, when, already the property of the town hall and forming part of the confiscation of monastic properties (*desamortización de Madoz* decree of 1855), the Monte del Duque was sold to Miguel Martínez de Pinillos y Saenz, grandson of the founder of the Naviera Pinillos. In August 1928, Martínez de Pinillos sold the estate to Federico García Rodríguez, (father of Federico García Lorca) and other partners, for a total of 1,250,000 pesetas. Federico owned 8% of the farm until his death in 1945. In the 1970s a court order determined the sole owner of the property to be the Capella family. In the 1980s current owner purchased the property. For more information visit the Spanish website [www.iluana.com](http://www.iluana.com). 

Griffon Vulture in flight. PHOTO: JW

