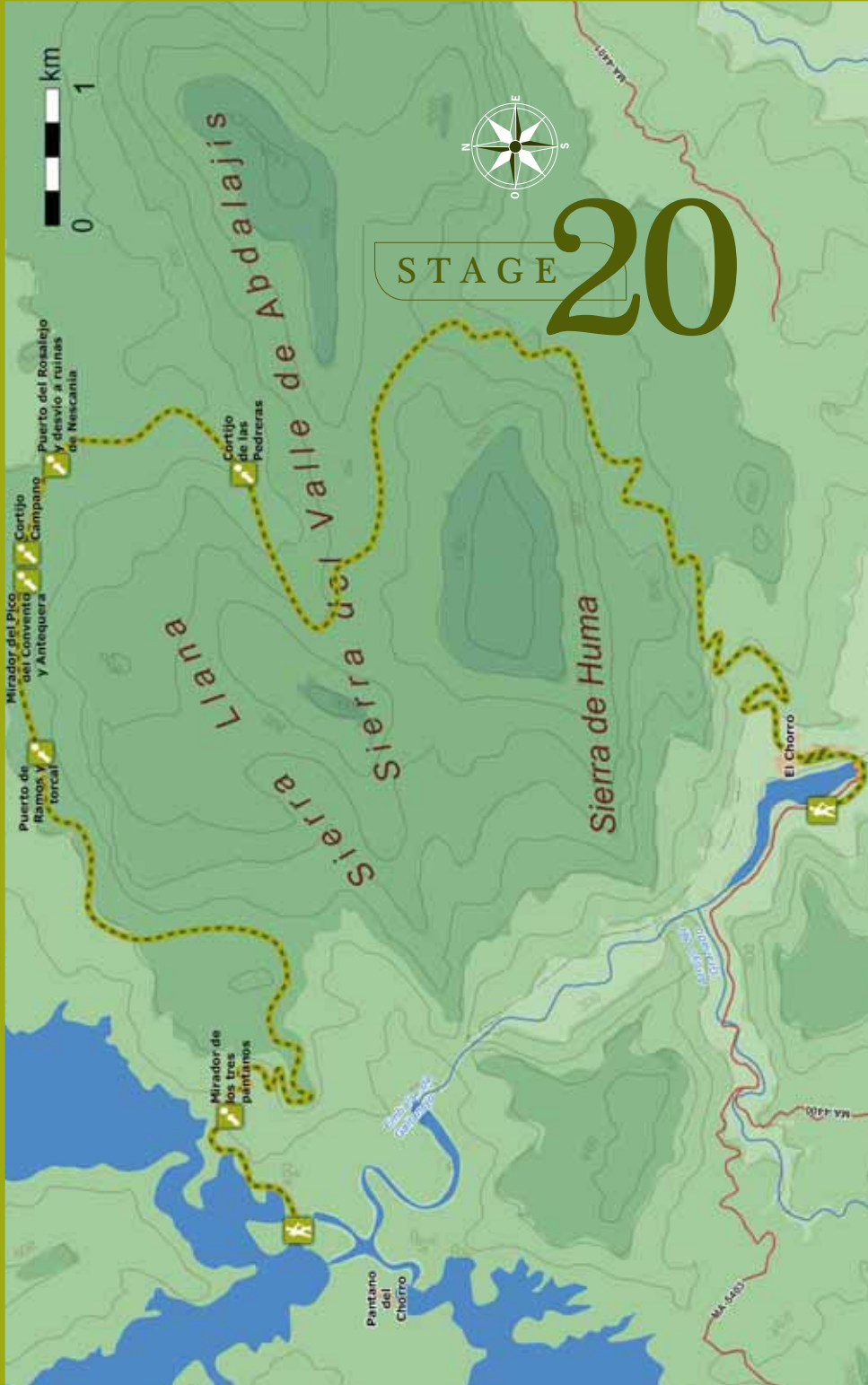




STAGE

20



Mirador del Pico del Convento Y Antequera
Cortijo de Campano
Puerto del Rosalejo y devaio a ruinas de Nescantla

Mirador de los Tres pantanos

Sierra Llana

Sierra del valle de Abdalajis

Sierra de Huma

El Chorro

Pantano del Chorro

Rio de San Mateo

MA-5403

MA-430



STAGE 20

Embalses del Guadalhorce - Estación de El Chorro

LOCATION

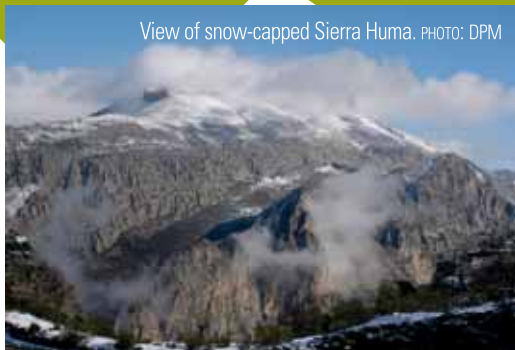
Stage 20 begins at the meeting point of two dams of the Embalses, or reservoirs, of Guadalhorce and Guadalteba, from where onwards the Great Malaga Path meets mountain ranges again. The **22 km** long walk around the Sierra de Huma ends at the Estación de El Chorro, with views to the Desfiladero de Los Gaitanes canyon.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

As you start off Stage 20 at the Embalses del Guadalhorce, water birds are again well represented along the Great Malaga Path. As soon as you set off on a climb you will be entering woodland where the predominant trees are Aleppo pines, very soon joined by holm oaks, savin juniper and juniper.

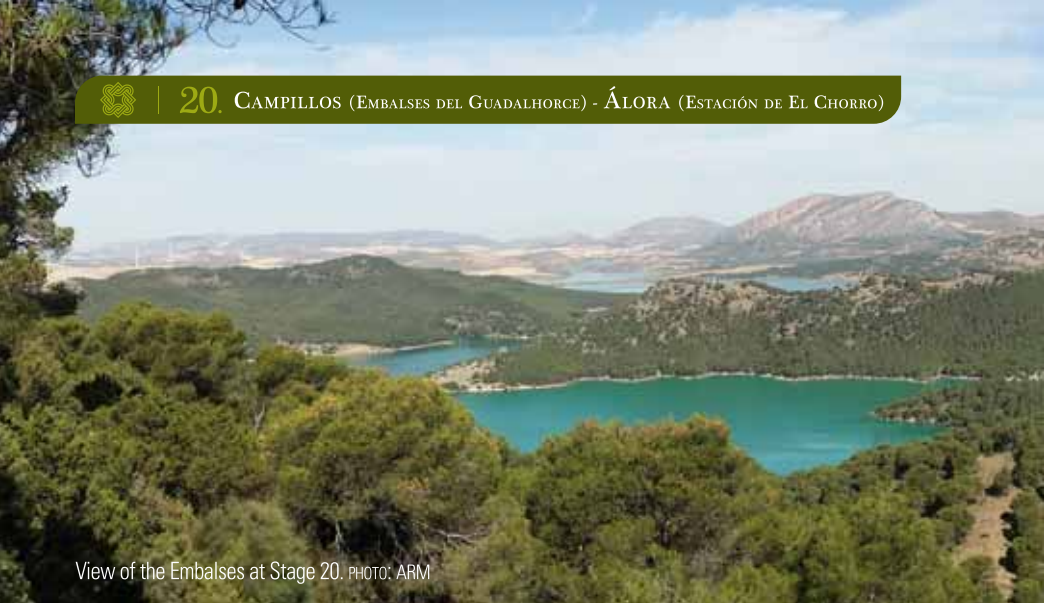
View of snow-capped Sierra Huma. PHOTO: DPM



This type of vegetation continues up to the *miradores*, or viewpoints, where the low mountain terrain takes over. The rocky outcrops, which will be quite ever-present from now on at Stage 20, hold highly prized species and to find them you will need to pay close attention to the sky and keep in mind that you may only get a few seconds to enjoy the sighting. Although the rocky areas are visibly present along the way, the footpath now enters a stretch of lentiscs and savin juniper, which is only taken over by pine on the downhill stretch towards Cortijo de Campano.

DID YOU KNOW?

The naturalist from Malaga, José Arévalo y Baca (1844-1890) published in 1876 "La Sierra de la Juma (Provincia de Málaga)", (now named Sierra de Huma), where he quotes such raptors as Griffon Vulture, highlights the presence of the Egyptian Vulture in spring, and also includes the Lammergeyer (Bearded Vulture) among other species. In the Mesas de Villaverde he notes the occasional presence of the Black Vulture. Nowadays the site, declared Paraje Natural, maintains its importance for rock-dwelling birds. TEXT: SMB



View of the Embalses at Stage 20. PHOTO: ARM

At the cortijo, scrub and rocky ridges rule again. Walking downhill you will find a natural spring called Fuente de la Viuda, which serves as a watering hole for birds. Consequently, finding certain species here is much easier. Before entering the pine wood, you will be passing through an olive grove, and, just before reaching your destination, the foot path will get very close to the impressive vertical rock faces which are dotted around El Chorro.

Passing by the Tajo de los Cabritos in the background. PHOTO: ARM



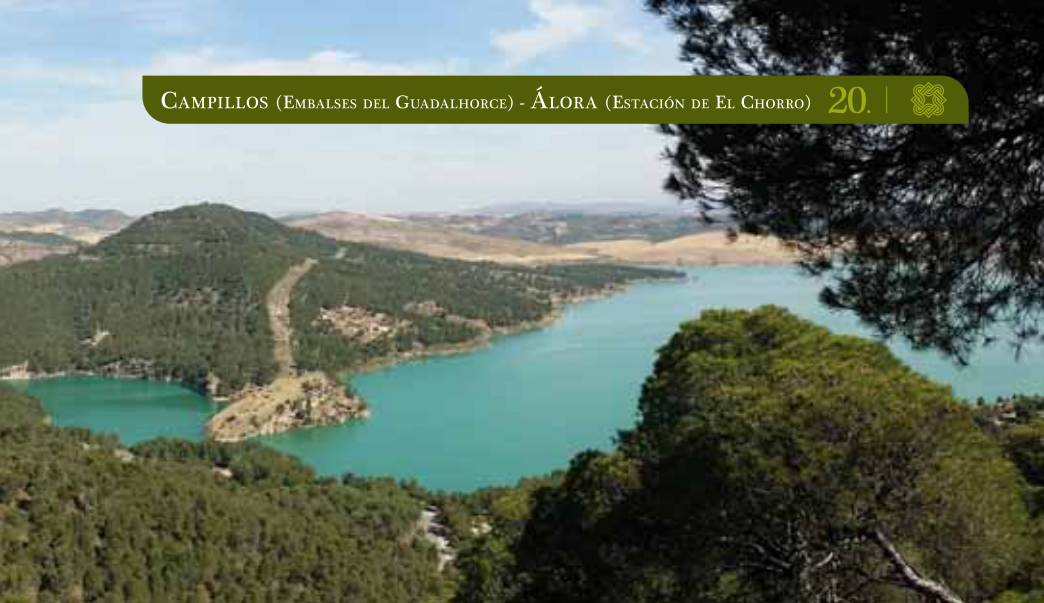
HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

It will probably be the gulls which will draw your attention first at the reservoirs. You will be able to observe different species which can reach numbers of over thousand individuals at certain times of the year.

The most commonly occurring ones are Lesser Black-backed and



Egyptian Vulture. PHOTO: ARM



Yellow-legged Gull, although you can also find the small Black-headed Gull.

Although higher numbers can be found in winter season, the presence of gulls in the area is constant all year, with a handful of Yellow-legged Gulls remaining in summer months. Other aquatic birds you can see at Stage 20 are Mallard, Great Crested, Little and Eared (Black-necked) Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Coot, and on the shores you could spot a couple of individuals of Common Sandpiper if you look carefully. Within a few metres, the

Rock Sparrow. PHOTO: JLM



Jackdaws. PHOTO: JLM



large water birds give way to smaller woodland species, usually hiding behind tree branches which make observation difficult. Great and Coal Tit, Common Chaffinch, Cirl Bunting are easier to detect if you can learn their song. This can be quite a trying



Black Wheatear. PHOTO: JLM

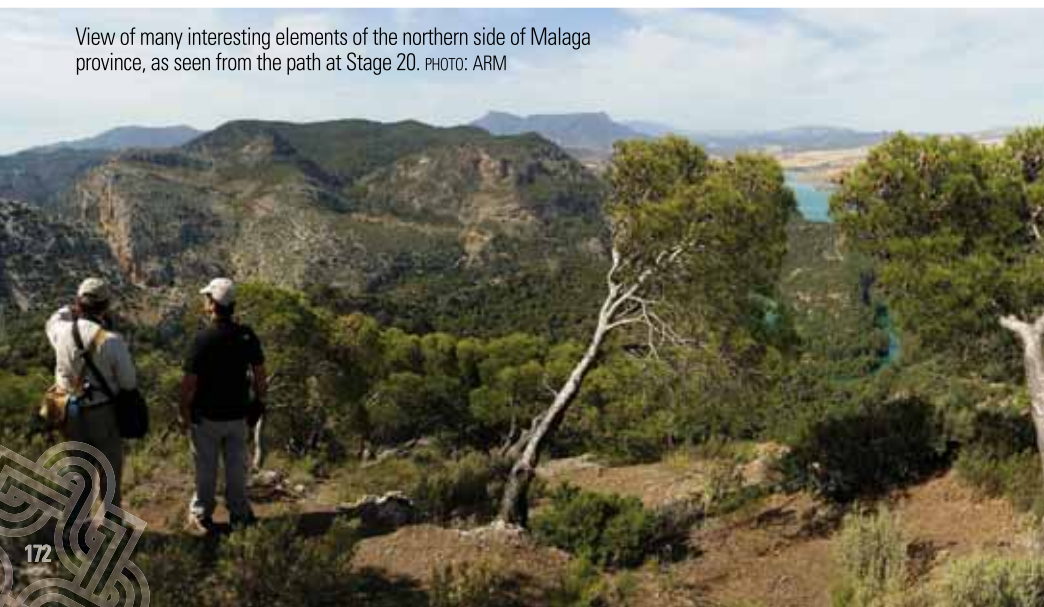


Common Wood Pigeon, Sardinian Warbler and Blackcap, Spotted Flycatcher, the mentioned earlier Great and Coal Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodchat Shrike in open areas, together with Crossbill and other frequently occurring finches (Goldfinch, Serin, Greenfinch and Common Linnet). Around the viewpoints during spring and summer months there is the constant presence of Swifts (Common, Pallid and Alpine) and Hirundines (principally House Martin and Barn Swallow) with such species as Bee-eater, Western Jackdaw and Raven adding a soundtrack to your birdwatching. This is a good area to watch birds of prey including Griffon Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Golden Eagle and Booted Eagle, Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Common Kestrel. Before you reach the surroundings of Tajo del Cabrito, the most common species are Red-legged

task at the beginning, as in theory it is quite a difficult skill to learn, but with time it will become more conceivable and fun.

Other species occurring in the pine tree area are European Turtle Dove,

View of many interesting elements of the northern side of Malaga province, as seen from the path at Stage 20. PHOTO: ARM





Rocky cliffs at Stage 20 harbour populations of interesting rock-dwelling species. PHOTO: ARM



Partridge, Crested Lark, Meadow Pipit, Common Linnet and Corn Buntings, and as you approach the first rocky cliffs, the Blue Rock.

Thrush, Black Wheatear and the boisterous Rock Sparrow could appear. If you scan the rocks carefully, you will start noticing the Griffon Vultures perched on rock shelves and you will be able to watch the acrobatic flight of Red-billed Choughs. Any spot in this area along the final part of Stage 20 could be a good setting to observe Egyptian Vulture, Bonelli's Eagle and Peregrine Falcon, additionally to the already named species of birds of prey. The first stretch of savin juniper might bring only a few birds in spring, mainly Common Stonechat, Common Blackbird, Sardinian Warbler and rock-dwelling species in flight. This picture changes in winter season as numerous Thrushes, European Robins and Sardinian Warblers appear. The surroundings of Cortijo de Campano

serves as a meeting point for the congregations of Red-billed Choughs, you will also find here species of birds which are accustomed to living close to humans such as Spotless Starling and House Sparrow. From here up to the Fuente de la Viuda natural spring you will be able to spot the Dartford Warbler, many Swifts feeding on flying insects and you may encounter the Black-eared Wheatear, a species which is progressively scarcer in its usual habitats. The site around the spring where the birds gather to drink, especially in summer months, is quite reliable for Zitting Cisticola as well as majority of species mentioned before. At this point you start walking downhill, passing through an olive grove and a very thick pine wood towards Estación El Chorro. The El Chorro landscape is exceptionally valuable and you can continue the rock-dwelling birds observation here, as well as water birds in the Embalse de la Encantada.



Common Stonechat. PHOTO: JLM



View of the uphill path to Cortijo Campano and the fields of Savin Juniper. PHOTO: ARM





TIMING

A high percentage of species observed during Stage 20 are resident, consequently they can be seen all year. Winter season however is better for water birds found around the abundant waters at the beginning and end of Stage 20. The cold months also bring bigger numbers of birds along this stage, mainly in scrubland.

NATURAL VALUES

El Chorro is an area of great geological wealth which can now be enjoyed from an exceptional perspective thanks to the Caminito del Rey walk open in 2015, a 3 km long walk built along of the Desfiladero de los Gaitanes canyon. Along Stage 20 you can see Spanish Ibex, an animal whose habits are diurnal in winter and more nocturnal in summer. ○



Golden Eagle being mobbed by Red-billed Choughs. PHOTO: JLM