

STAGE

4





STAGE 4

Torrox - Nerja

LOCATION

Stage 4 is a short one, **10,5 km**, and it begins at the town centre of Torrox. Follow direction south till you arrive at the *cañada real*, or the former drover's path, from Motril to Málaga. Cross a few riverbeds, such as Torrox, Seco and Chillar, and many plantations of sub-tropical species (avocado, mango and loquat) with a few representatives of native vegetation (oleander, holm oak and Mediterranean hackberry). Having crossed the Río Chillar you will arrive at Nerja.

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

The beginning of Stage 4 is marked by a criss-cross of riverbeds, the type called "*rambla*" in Spanish, seasonally dry and often serving as a walking path. Typical vegetation of these *ramblas* are copses of oleander, enriching the bird community when compared to the rest of the stage, occupied mainly by crops. The presence of a few remaining specimens of holm oak



A specimen of chameleon. PHOTO: ARM

indicates the existence of holm oak woods which once must have covered the area, now taken up by numerous subtropical crops. These, in a way, imitate a forest favouring the presence of some typically woodland species. The riverbeds you will cross, mainly the Río Chillar at the end of Stage 4, bring with them the typical species of river environment.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

At the beginning you will see typically urban species such as domestic pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, Pallid Swift, White Wagtail, Swallow, Common Blackbird and Sparrow.

DID YOU KNOW?

The **Mediterranean Chameleon** is a splendid-looking reptile adapted to life in tree branches where it hunts insects thanks to its prehensile tail, a projectile-like tongue and independently moving eyes. The chameleon is represented scarcely in Europe and the Axarquía is the area where its population reaches highest density. From April to September, its most active months in the area, it is easiest to be able to find this reptile and this stage of the walk is an excellent place to do that. TEXT: JSM



The open areas you will come across at the beginning of Stage 4 with the vegetation mainly consisting of retama and broom contain few bird species mostly including Crested Lark, Common Stonechat, Sardinian Warbler and Goldfinch however you can also see Common Kestrel, Little Owl, Red-legged Partridge, Bee-eater and, providing there are sturdy trees close by, the Hoopoe.

Another predominant type of environment at Stage 4 is the tropical tree plantation, the avocado being the main crop. In this type of environment you will mainly find Common Blackbird, Great Tit, Spotted Flycatcher and finches and finches such as Goldfinch, Serin and Greenfinch, during breeding season. The list is rounded up by Robin, Song Thrush, Black Redstart, Blackcap, and Common Chiffchaff in winter. You will also be able to see a few Chaffinches where the vegetation reaches tree size and Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, Woodchat Shrike and Corn Bunting in more open areas. Other species present along Stage 4 are



House Sparrow. PHOTO: JLM

European Turtle Dove, Common Wood Pigeon, Cuckoo, Scops Owl, Red-necked Nightjar, Barn Swallow, House and Crag Martin, Wren, and Raven. At the very end of Stage 4 you will be crossing Río Chillar, where you could spot Little Ringed Plover, Grey Wagtail, Common Nightingale and Cetti's Warbler, along with typical



Greenfinches. PHOTO: JLM



White Wagtail. PHOTO: JLM

urban dwellers such as Monk Parakeet, Eurasian Collared Dove, Spotless and Common Starling and House Sparrow.

T I M I N G

The short length of Stage 4 and the type of species which are found along it allow you to do this stage of the walk any time of the year, keeping in mind that during the cold months the abundance of birds increases with the typical wintering species.

N A T U R A L V A L U E S

Thickets of retama shrubs are home to the populations of Mediterranean Chameleon, and this habitat is being broken up probably faster than the species can cope with to assure its survival on the long run. In the Nerja cave, at the end of this stage, as well as in other natural shelters in the surroundings a broad

selection of bats have been recorded, among them the Greater Horseshoe Bat, Grey Long-eared Bat and Common Bent-wing Bat. Other mammals present in the area are the Spanish Ibex, which is quite easy to see, and other species linked to rocky environment, namely Stone Martin, Fox, Genet and Badger.

A D D I T I O N A L I N F O R M A T I O N

Very close to the end of Stage 4 you will be crossing the Río Chillar, a highly recommended place in summer months as the low water level allows you to walk along the riverbed itself. This river's source is in Sierra Almirajara, at over 1200 meters above the sea level and its course is marked by a few gorges carved in dolomite marble. Interestingly enough, even during draughts, the water level in this river remains quite constant all year round.