



Natural values



The Genal River flows across the heart of the Serrania de Ronda District, to the west of Malaga province. We are visiting a scenic stretch between the Puente (bridge) de San Juan and the Charco (pool) de la Escribana, a beautiful river forest composed of black poplars, ashes and great reeds, surrounded by cork oak and maritime pine forests.

June is the perfect month to come for a pleasant walk in the shade and even a bath in the river, but also to listen and try to spot one of the most gorgeous and elusive of our summer feathered visitors: the Golden Oriole.

Some other birds we can find in this area are: Griffon Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Booted Eagle, Sparrowhawk, Moorhen, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Grey Wagtail, Robin, Nightingale, Blackbird, Blackcap, Western Orphean Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Firecrest, Wren, Spotted Flycatcher, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Crested Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Spotless Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin and Cirl Bunting.



We can also find other animals in our route like reptiles (Spanish Terrapin and Viperine Snake), stunning butterflies like the Two-tailed Pasha and dragon flies like Western Spectre, Large and Small Pincertail, and Copper Demoiselle.



How to get there

Type "Camping Genal, Algotocin" in Google Maps. We can park the car in a trail 50 metres from the entrance to the camping, Algotocin direction.

The trip will consist on a walk downstream the Genal River from the Venta de San Juan, on the left margin of the river, just to the other side of the bridge from Camping Genal, following the signs of the Gran Senda de Malaga. We can reach the path from the Venta de San Juan car park; our suggestion is getting to the Charco de la Escribana, 3.5 km. downstream. The walk takes 1 hour and 45 minutes return, plus the time we devote to enjoying birds and nature.

The Golden Oriole

The male Golden Oriole is a fascinating brilliant yellow and black bird, the size of a blackbird, which sings, and timidly hides, from the heart of the river forest. It is amazing how a bird dressed in one of the most bright colour combinations in nature is able to go totally unnoticed on his perch. His song is a pleasing fluty sequence of short strophes, as if he was having a conversation with other orioles.



The female Golden Oriole changes males' yellow for a much more sober pale green though she shares a particular squeaky call with them.

They arrive to Malaga in May and will go back to their African wintering quarters by mid September, after raising their chicks in a neat hanging nest.



Even though they are present all along the river forest, there is a stand of big black poplars next to San Juan bridge, where we will be able to hear them, see the mobbing flights of the males and, with a bit of patience and luck discover them singing or preening on their perches. This is a good start for our trip!

The path

Once we have satisfied our curiosity with the Golden Orioles (and Green Woodpeckers, do not confuse them!), we can start walking the path. Let's follow the Gran Senda de Malaga signs from the car park behind Venta de San Juan. The first part of the path goes close to a camp site and, further on, we will find some houses and orchards to the left of the path.



Collared Doves, Spotless Starlings, House Sparrows, Serins, Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Wood Pigeons, Sardinian Warblers and Spotted Flycatchers are common around the Venta de San Juan. Once we walk closer to the river, we can spot Wren, Chaffinch, Blackcap, Blackbird, Robin, Nightingale, Great, Blue and Crested (specially on the cork oaks) Tits, Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Short-toed Treecreepers, which will stay with us all along the path.



It will not take long to reach the "pasarelas" (footbridges), set by the Diputacion de Malaga to make our walk alongside the river possible. We will have to overcome some steep stairs and

walk some narrow paths seizing the security strap. This is the densest stretch of the river forest, where we can spot birds like Orphean Warbler, Firecrest and Great Spotted Woodpecker.



After leaving the footbridges behind, we will go past the turn of the path left towards Genalguacil though we will go on along the river to reach the Charco de la Escribana, where we will find recreational facilities and a bridge with pools for a good bath. Let's keep an eye on the sky in this open area in search for raptors like Griffon Vulture, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, and Sparrowhawk. This stretch of the river is also good for Nightingales, Grey Wagtails and dragonflies.



PHOTOS:

1. Algatocín from San Juan Bridge
2. Great Tit (*Parus major*)
3. Western Spectre (*Boyeria irene*)
4. Small Pincertail (*Onychogomphus forcipatus*)
5. Large Pincertail (*Onychogomphus uncatus*)
6. Copper Demoiselle (*Calopteryx haemorrhoidalis*)
7. Female Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*)
8. Male Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*)
9. Poplars from Venta de San Juan
10. Crested Tit (*Lophophanes cristatus*)
11. Información about the "pasarelas" (footbridges)
12. Footbridges
- 13-16. Genal River
17. Turn off towards Genalguacil
18. Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)