



### Natural values



El Torcal is one of the most important karst samples in Europe. Its limestone rocks are capriciously shaped for your imagination to create faces, animals and objects in a world of dreams and magical labyrinths.

El Torcal is located to the south of the Antequera District, belongs to the Andalusian Network of Protected Natural Sites with and it is included in the European Natura 2000 Network as Birds Directive Special Protection Area (ES0000032). It was also appointed World Heritage by UNESCO in 2016.

May is the best month to come birding to El Torcal as a number of very exclusive (they will not go much further north) breeding species will arrive from Africa and join a very interesting list of other resident birds.



Some of the birds we can find at El Torcal in May are Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Alpine Swift, Thekla Lark, Crag Martin, Nightingale, Black Redstart, Black-eared Wheatear, Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Thrush, Blackcap, Western

Orphean Warbler, Sardinian Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Wren, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodchat Shrike, Chough, Spotless Starling, Rock Sparrow, Chaffinch, Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Serin, Cirl Bunting and Rock Bunting.



### How to get there

Type "Centro de Visitantes El Torcal Alto Antequera" in Google Maps. El Torcal is a very busy place, specially at weekends, when the Visitors Centre car park can be full and access from the main road is interrupted, so the best option is always an earliest possible start around the Visitors Centre and then stopping in a few places, that we are going to describe below, on the way down.

### The surroundings of the Visitors Centre



We have several options once at the Visitors Centre. A simple walk around the car park and to the Mirador (viewpoint) de las Ventanillas may give us Rock Bunting, Black Redstart, Great and Blue Tits, Blue Rock Thrush, Subalpine and Sardinian Warblers,

Spotless Starling, Rock Sparrow and Griffon Vulture.





The other options imply getting into rough paths in limestone pavement that require all our attention to avoid stumbles and falls. The easiest option is taking a path that departs southeast direction from the entrance to the car park towards “El Tornillo” (the screw) Natural Monument. This walk may add Western Orphean and Melodious Warblers to the

list and increase the chances to see Subalpine and Sardinian Warblers and Blue Rock Thrushes.



Another option is walking past the Visitors Centre into the Yellow and Green paths. This will lead us to a first “torca” (karstic hollow, whose common presence gives name to this place), and then, following the path, after climbing a steep rock stairs, to a wider and wooded second one where we can spot Bonelli’s, Orphean,



Subalpine, Melodious and Sardinian Warblers, Blackcap, Nightingale, Cirl Bunting, Wren, Short-toed Treecreeper as well as Rock Sparrow and Chough in the big cliff dominating the hollow.



And the final option, if you are ready for a longer walk, is taking the Green or Yellow paths both starting from the north end of the car park.

In any case, always pay attention to the sky in search for Griffon Vultures, Choughs, Alpine Swifts, Bonelli’s Eagles and young Golden Eagles that use to end up here after being expelled from their parents’ territories in the nearby limestone sierras. And, please, remember: for your own safety, do not walk and watch the birds at the same time!



On the way down

Set the counter to cero at the exit from the car park:



Km 0.8 The road widens in the middle of a very open rocky place where we can have a look around on top of the rocks in search for Rock and Blue Rock Thrushes, Thekla Larks and Spotless Starlings, as well as warblers in the bushes to the right of the road.



Km 1.6 Park on the left at the entrance of a dirt track closed with a chain. Walking up the track you will reach a beautiful plateau with spectacular views to Antequera and the “Peña de los Enamorados” (Lovers’

Rock). This is a good place for Rock Sparrow, Spectacled Warbler, Rock Thrush, Thekla Lark and Black-eared Wheatear.



Km 1.9 Mirador (viewpoint) Diego Monea in front of a small quarry. Park the car on the left



and search for Black Wheatears and Thekla Larks both in the quarry and down from the viewpoint.



Km 2.8 Park on the right at the entrance to another track (closed with a chain again) next to an abandoned farmhouse. Walk the track towards a small quarry and pay attention to Thekla Lark, Spectacled Warbler, Linnet, Black and Black-eared Wheatear and Stonechats. Scan the cliffs in search for Crag Martins.



Km 3.4 Car park. Look for Woodchat Shrike, Orphean, Melodious, Subalpine and Bonelli's Warblers in the trees and bushes by the fence, Crag Martins in the cliffs, and Griffon Vultures and maybe Bonelli's Eagles in flight over the ridges and fields.



#### PICTURES:

1. El Torcal
2. Rock Bunting (*Emberiza cia*)
3. Subalpine Warbler (*Sylvia cantillans*)
4. Las Ventanillas viewpoint
5. Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)
6. Path towards El Tornillo Natural Monument from the car park
7. El Tornillo Natural Monument
8. First "torca" from the Visitors Centre
9. Rock Sparrow (*Petronia petronia*)
10. Second "torca" from the Visitors Centre
11. Green and Yellow paths from the car park
12. Western Orphean Warbler (*Sylvia hortensis*)
13. Parking place at km. 0.8
14. Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*)
15. Track entrance at km. 1.6
16. Black-eared Wheatear (*Oenanthe hispanica*)
17. Diego Monea viewpoint
18. Thekla Lark (*Galerida theklae*)
19. Track entrance at km. 2.8
20. Spectacled Warbler (*Sylvia conspicillata*)
21. Car park next to the main road
22. Melodious Warbler (*Hippolais polyglotta*)