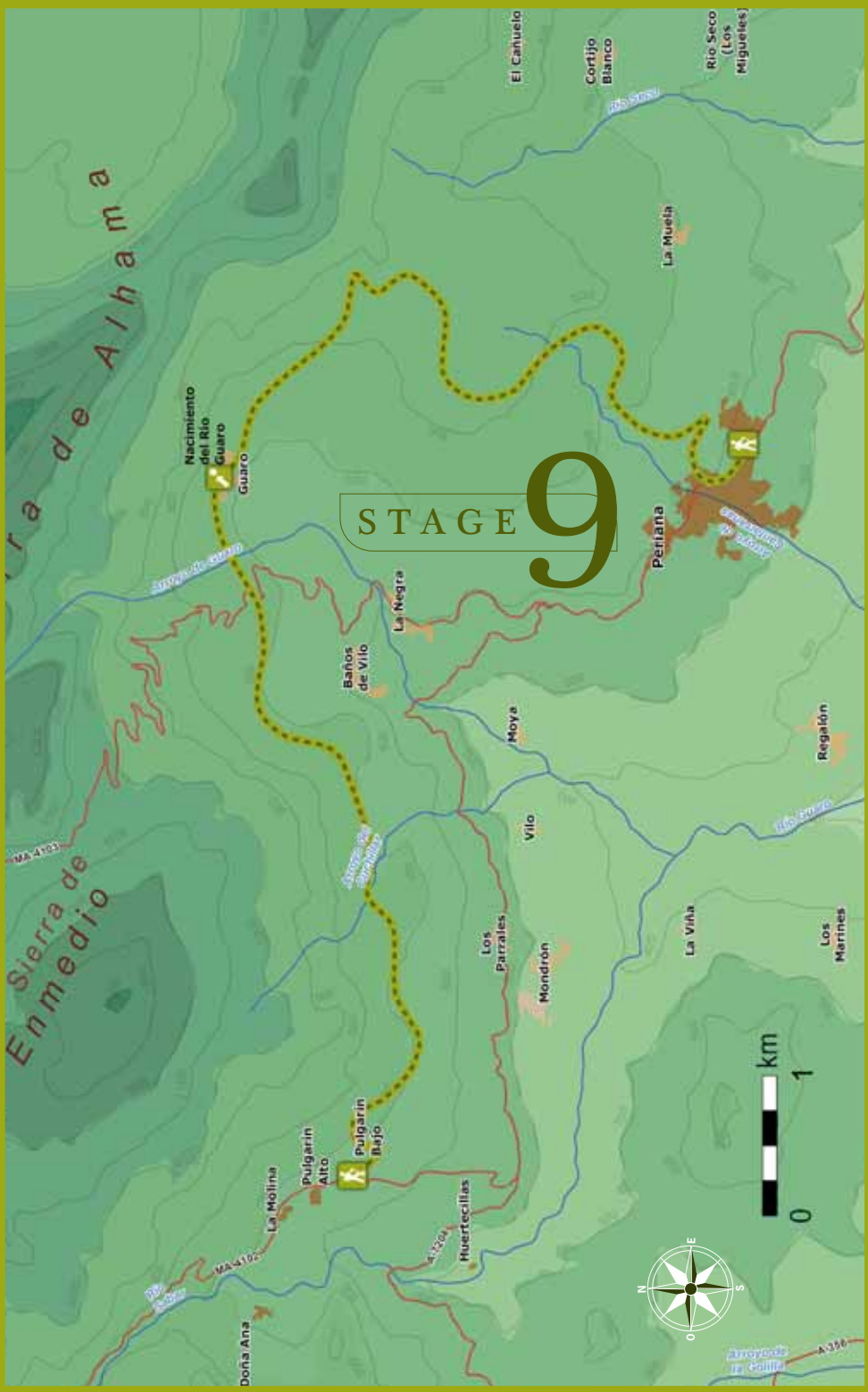


Sierra de Ahhama
En medio

STAGE 9





STAGE 9

Periana - Alfarnatejo

LOCATION

Stage 9 starts in the western part of Periana, specifically in Calle Algarrobo, where you start walking uphill. Olive groves and copses of holm oaks contrast with the pronounced ridges of limestone rocks and formidable cliffs. After **13, 5 km** you will pass through Pulgarín Bajo and then arrive at Pulgarín Alto (Alfarnatejo municipal district).

DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE BIRDLIFE:

LAs you leave Periana there are abandoned olive and almond tree groves with a few saplings of young holm oaks which show the potential of the terrain to become woodland. From the beginning you will find species characteristic to open areas together with the typical forest-dwellers, though the latter are small in numbers.



An intersection of footpaths on the way. PHOTO: ARM

Along Stage 9 there is a mix of holm oak woods, olive groves, grain fields and an area of a low mountain range, containing interesting species. It is worth mentioning that some of

DID YOU KNOW?

A Bostonian named Robert Semple (1766-1816) captures his impressions from *A Second Journey in Spain, in the Spring of 1809*. He arrives in Málaga from Granada, on his way to Gibraltar, and from Alhama he observes: "...After descending from the heights of Alhama, we passed over a fine plain nearly covered by holm-oaks, having close on our left a ridge called Sierra Texada, covered half way down with snow. Here all the dogs guarding the flocks wore collars, in which iron spikes were fastened, as a security against the wolves, which we were told abounded among these hills, and were now rendered desperate by the snow..." TEXT: SMB



The Tajo Bermejo cliff welcomes you at the end of Stage 9. PHOTO: ARM

these olive trees have been yielding fruit for over a hundred years (some of the olive tree trunks you will be passing by deserve a moment of your attention). In the vicinity of Cortijo de Marchamona and along the last section of Stage 9 you will be getting close to the impressive rock faces which give shelter to some fascinating rock-dwelling species.

HIGHLIGHTED SPECIES

At the beginning of Stage 9 you will be able to see Eurasian Collared Dove, Starlings and Sparrows close to buildings, as well as other species, including Crested Lark, Sardinian Warbler, Zitting Cisticola, Great Tit and different species of finches (Serin, Goldfinch and Greenfinch). During spring and summer swifts are constantly present in the sky (paying attention you will be able to identify the Pallid, Common and Alpine Swift) and various species of Hirundines (mainly Barn Swallow, House Martin and Red-rumped Swallow.

Before entering an area populated by pine trees you will be passing by a low mountain range with gorse, dispersed full-sized holm oak trees and some bare rock formations. In this patch the typical rock-dwelling species start to occur and woodland birds are becoming more frequent, especially Blue Rock Thrush and Black Wheatear, joined in winter by Black Redstart in the rocky sections.

Male Sardinian Warbler. PHOTO: DPM





Once you are in the gorse area very close to the pine wood, Dartford Warbler and

Woodchat Shrike show up; Common Linnet can be added here to the previously mentioned list of finches. In addition, you can see partridges, Little Owl and birds of prey such as Short-toed Eagle and Common Kestrel. In the stretch covered by pine trees you will be able to see European Turtle Dove, the Great Tit again, together with Blue Tit and Common Chaffinch. From the very first flat area at the beginning of this stage of the walk large Aleppo pines are present, which, together with grain fields allow for a greater wealth of species you will be able to watch: Common Wood Pigeon, Thekla Lark, Melodious Warbler and in the distance, flying over the rock faces towering over Cortijo de Marchamona, Red-billed Choughs. From this stretch up to Guaro you will find grain fields and olive groves with frequently occurring partridges, Hoopoe, Barn and Red-rumped Swallows, larks, Meadow



A centenary olive tree along the path. PHOTO: ARM

Pipit, White Wagtail, Black Redstart, Sardinian Warbler, Zitting Cisticola and Starling.

The path passes by Cortijo de Zapata where a natural spring helps create a small riverside wood with elms and poplars.

In spring you can mainly hear Blackcap's song which then is replaced by a deep loud clicking sound in winter.



Blue Rock Thrush. PHOTO: JLM



The view of the Viñuela reservoir from the path. PHOTO: ARM

Additionally to Blackcaps you can see Eurasian Sparrowhawk, European Turtle Dove, Common Wood Pigeon, Common Blackbird, Song and Mistle Thrush, Golden Oriole and you have a chance to hear Scops Owl, Barn Owl and Red-necked Nightjar at night. Once you leave the cortijo behind, you will be passing through a quite closed-in thicket of wild olive, where, on top of the passerines you have seen so far, the Eurasian Jay is present and it announces your arrival with its alarm calls. Especially in winter this area is populated by birds coming from central and northern Europe which find food and shelter in the wild olives which let them survive the cold months (these mainly include Song Thrushes, European Robins and Blackcaps.

Past the Cortijo de La Cueva you embark upon the last climb amongst olive trees of the *verdia* variety which

end at an area of low mountains and where you can find the Spectacled Warbler during breeding season. Along the last stretch of the walk downhill is lined with unusually thick trunks of olive trees and where the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin occurs repeatedly and can be seen in spring and summer, however in very low numbers. Local inhabitants are familiar with this scarce bird and recognise its progressive disappearance in recent years.



Female Blackcap. PHOTO: JLM



The main focus now is on the impressive cliffs surrounding Pulgarín; limestone rock faces which are predominant during the next stages of the walk. These wild landscapes are home to rock-dwelling raptors, with such outstanding species as the Bonelli's Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and the Eagle Owl. The Griffon Vulture also frequents the area however quite irregularly and generally in small numbers.

T I M I N G

This stage is especially recommended in spring, a time when some interesting summer visitors start nesting; also in winter time when the abundance of birds is quite remarkable. ○

Melodious Warbler. PHOTO: JLM



Goldfinch. PHOTO: JLM

Hoopoe. PHOTO: JB

