



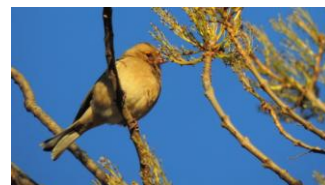
Natural values.

The village of Alfarnatejo is located to the north of the Axarquía District at a height of 858 m. above sea level so, wear warm clothes for this February trip! The Tajos (rocks) del Fraile, Doña Ana y Gómer are three huge limestone rocks that stand south of the village. They host some of the most typical cliff-nesting raptors like Golden and Bonelli's Eagles, Peregrine Falcon and Kestrel and, depending on the weather, we can find them covered in snow during February. They are some of our target birds in the area but we will find some more species in the Sabar River forest, the farmlands and the Andalusian Oak forest to the southwest of Alfarnatejo.



Some of the birds we can spot here in February are Red-legged Partridge, Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Moorhen, Thekla Lark, Meadow Pipit, Grey Wagtail, Robin, Black Redstart, Stonechat, Song Thrush, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Chiffchaff,

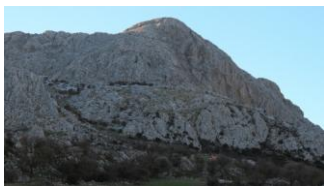
Firecrest, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Chough, Starling, Spotless Starling, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Siskin, Serin, Hawfinch, Cirl Bunting and Corn Bunting.



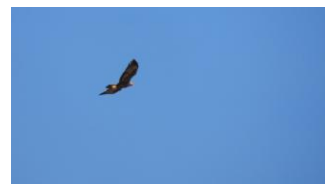
Perhaps the best way to travel around the rocks is walking stage 10 of the Gran Senda de Málaga but it is not accessible for cars from Doña Ana hamlet onwards, so we will cover the 2 km. stretch starting at Fuente del Conejo in Alfarnatejo.

The route.

Type "Fuente del Conejo, Alfarnatejo" in Google Maps to know where to go. As we leave the MA-4102 road (signed "Fuente del Conejo" and "El Torcal") and drive across the bridge over Rio Sabar, we will see an older bridge to the right where we can park the car and have a look at the banks of the river and the big poplars and ashes for Moorhen, Grey Wagtail, Mistle Thrush, Siskin, Hawfinch and Cirl Bunting as well as some of the birds that will accompany us for the rest of the day like Meadow Pipit, Robin, Black Redstart, Stonechat, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Chiffchaff, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Serin.



The first of the three rocks, the Tajo del Fraile (1,229 m. asl) rises up in front of us to the south and it is time to start watching for Golden Eagles over the summit and over the mountain range east of the village called Sierra de Enmedio.



After scanning the surroundings of the old bridge and the river forest, we can go on the track. As always, we recommend doing it on foot, but we can also drive two kilometres into the track and stop a few times to look around. Set the counter to zero and look for references below.



A hundred metres from the old bridge, we get to the Fuente del Conejo. From then on, we just have to follow the posts of the Gran Senda de Malaga (see the picture).

After leaving a fenced urbanization called Villa Alta to the right, an Andalusian Oak forest extends to the left. As we approach it, we will see the limestone pavement reaching the track from the left. This is Km. 1.3 and the rocky place is “El Torcal”



shown on the sign at the entrance to the track (do not confuse with El Torcal Nature Reserve in Antequera!). We will come back here on our way back. Nice fields extend to the right from now on where we can find Thekla Larks, Common and Spotless Starlings, Corn Buntings and Kestrels sitting on the pylons. It is also



worthwhile having a look to the ridges of the Sierra del Jobo to the north. This big mountain is the Chamizo Peak mentioned in our visit to Hondonero in January and chances are that we can spot the same Golden Eagles flying over there.



We can park the car just in front of a small farm with some goats we will find on the left hand side (Km. 2.0). We should not go on with the car if it is not 4x4. We can have another look around and also walk on the track downhill until the go



past a caprine husbandry up to a small stream across the track.

This is a very lush wood where we can find Short-toed Treecreepers and Firecrests. This is also Bonelli’s Eagle territory so watch for them airborne or sitting on the rocks. We can also see the three rocks from here: Tajo del Fraile (left), Tajo de Doña Ana (centre, 1,202 m. asl) and Tajo de Gomer, the most spectacular one (right, 1,129 m. asl).



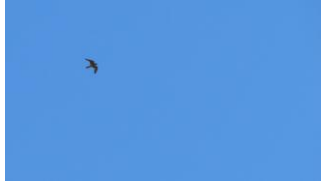
On our way back to the Fuente del Conejo, we can stop again at El Torcal if we are ready for a climb to the ridge in front of us for a closer look to the Tajo de Gomer and higher chances for



Bonelli’s Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Choughs and sometimes big herds of Spanish Ibex. This is a better moment than earlier in the morning because the sun will not shine just in the same direction. Warning: the walk over the rocks is not easy! Walk into the limestone pavement and the Andalusian Oak forest by the pylon and follow the

“goat” paths to the top.





PHOTOGRAPHS:

1. Stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*)
2. Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)
3. Tajo del Fraile (1.229 m.)
4. Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)
5. Sabar River and Chamizo Peak
6. Fuente del Conejo
7. Gran Senda de Malaga signpost
8. El Torcal
9. Thekla Lark (*Galerida theklae*)
10. Firecrest (*Regulus ignicapilla*)
11. Bonelli's Eagles (*Aquila fasciata*)
12. Tajos de Alfarnatejo. From left to right: Tajo del Fraile, Tajo de Doña Ana and Tajo de Gomer.
13. El Torcal, Andalusian Oak forest
14. You never walk alone...
15. Spanish Ibex (*Capra pyrenaica*)
16. Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)
17. Choughs (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*)