



Natural values



The Llanos (plains) de Libar path goes from Montejaque to the Cortijo (farmhouse) de Libar, to the west of the Serrania de Ronda District, across some beautiful dolines (typical karst formation consisting on a more or less wide flat depression surrounded by hills in which a very fertile soil allows the development of agriculture and livestock farming) and very

mature holm and Portuguese oaks “dehesas” (pastures in open forests), between the jagged limestone mountains of the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park.



Despite this site is always worth a visit at any time of year, November witnesses the arrival of thrushes coming from the north of Europe to feed from the abundant berries of hawthornes and dog roses.



These are some of the bird species we can enjoy here in November: Red-legged Partridge, Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Bonelli’s Eagle, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Little Owl, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Woodlark, Crag Martin, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, Dunnock, Robin, Black

Redstart, Black Wheatear, Stonechat, Song Thrush, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Ring Ouzel, Blue Rock Thrush, Blackcap, Sardinian Warbler, Chiffchaff, Firecrest, Wren, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper, Jay, Chough, Raven, Spotless Starling, House Sparrow, Rock Sparrow, Chiffchaff, Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Siskin, Serin, Cirl Bunting, Corn Bunting and Rock Bunting.



How to get there

Type “Avenida Europa, Montejaque” in Google Maps. Access the avenue from the very north end of the village either if you come from the road MA-8403 or from Benaolan (road MA-8402) and take the first street to the right. Set your counter to cero here. You will soon see a board with a map of the path on the right while driving this steep stretch of the track.

The Cortijo de Libar is 9.3 km. from here so we have to drive there unless we are ready for a really long journey, though this is always the healthier and most enjoyable option. In case you decide using the car, watch out for rocks on the track which could damage the vehicle!

The Hacho mountain cliffs

Our first stop will be next to a water deposit made of stone on the left at km. 0.4. We have very nice views of Montejaque from here and very high cliffs stands to the north.

The flights of the big Griffon Vultures over the top will quickly call our attention as well as the calls and flitting of smaller birds around us. Blackcaps, Greenfinches, Serins, Goldfinches, Blackbirds, Great Tits and Robins will be found fluttering about the olive and almond trees while Sardinian Warblers, Rock Buntings and Stonechats will show up in the scrub.



A more detailed observation of the cliffs will give us Crag Martins, Choughs, Spotless Starlings and Blue Rock Thrushes. Let's pay attention to less visible raptors over the cliff as Kestrels, Sparrowhawks, Peregrine Falcons and the superb Bonelli's Eagles may show up there.

We can go on up to km. 0.8, where we will find a little cliff on the left with a few huts for dogs and hens at its base, where Crag Martins, Spotless Starlings and Rock Sparrows can be very close to us. This is also a good view point to the Hacho mountain cliffs from a different angle.

Sierra de Juan Diego north faces

The track goes uphill from here on. At 600 m. from our last stop (km. 1.4), we will find some cliffs on the left with shaded slopes covered in hawthorns and lots of mistletoe on them. This is the north end of Sierra de Juan Diego that extends to the south west from here and will limit our route to the south until we reach El Pozuelo doline.



These north faces are the best place to find Ring Ouzels and Redwings though they always show a very elusive behaviour. Wrens, Robins, Black Redstarts, Stonechats, Chaffinches and Rock Buntings are common species around here. Look for the Peregrine's silhouette on top of the cliff, either sitting down looking at you or patrolling the ridge in search for some fare.

If we turn our eyes to the north, we will find a rocky "island" down the track, in the middle of this doline, usually frequented by Black Wheatears. Beyond the doline, on an isolated peak, vultures sunbathe and Kestrels strive to keep Choughs away from their perches. Hearing the song of Red-legged Partridges from here is not unusual.



On the way to El Pozuelo doline



As we go past the cliffs, a rocky landscape opens out around us. Keep an eye out on the fences along the track, as they are often used by birds to watch the cars go by, and on top of the rocks, Little Owl's favourite perches. We go across a cattle grid at km. 3.1

so drive carefully as there can be cattle and Iberian pigs on the trail.

The uphill stretch finishes at km. 3.7, where three big holm oaks raise to the left of the track. We can have a look to the impressive limestone pavement landscape from here and look for



birds like the Cirl Bunting in the scrub.

The track now descends towards El Pozuelo doline where finches, Corn Buntings and White Wagtails are very common in the farmlands.



The dehesa

There is a gate at the south end of the doline (km. 5.9) that might be closed. In this case, open it, go on and leave it closed again.

We will enter a beautiful holm and portuguese oaks forest where Iberian pigs are reared. Let's drive carefully uphill, taking care of livestock and some dangerous rocks on the track. There is another cattle grid at km. 7.4 and the track levels again.



This is the most beautiful part of the woods. We can park anywhere and have a walk in a surprisingly damp atmosphere amongst stunning old oaks hosting a wide set of forest birds like Robin, Mistle Thrush, Firecrest, Chiffchaff, Great and Blue Tits, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper, Jay, Great Spotted and Green

Woodpeckers.

The forest is surrounded by the Sierra de Libar to the right (north) and the Sierra del Palo to the left (south), where chances are higher to spot the Golden Eagle over the ridge.



The forest converts into a wide grassy meadow when we reach the Cortijo de Libar at Km. 9.3. A walk around the farmhouse will give us some of the mountain and scrub birds like Black Wheatears, Stonechats, Black Redstarts, Rock Sparrows and Choughs besides the Woodlark, whose humble beauty perfectly fits this striking scenery.

PHOTOS:

1. Montejaque.
2. Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*).
3. Top: Rock Sparrow (*Petronia petronia*); Botom: Serin (*Serinus serinus*).
4. Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*).
5. Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila fasciata*).
6. North face of Sierra de Juan Diego.

7. Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*).
8. Griffon Vultures (*Gyps fulvus*).
9. Black Wheatear (*Oenanthe leucura*).
10. Corn nBunting (*Miliaria calandra*).
11. Cirl Bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*).
12. El Pozuelo doline.
13. Portuguese oak (*Quercus faginea*).
14. Cortijo de Líbar.
15. Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*)