

Range) and Valle del Guadarranque (Guadarranque Valley)' and 'International Taio River and its banks

nean forest

he Mediterranean forest considered to be the habitat most closely resembling that which covered Extremadura thousands of years ago. The activities of mankind throughout history have brought about change to the forest towards other kinds of vegetation which are also of value such dehesas, heaths and pastures.

The best preserved Mediterranean forests are to be found on the slopes and upper parts of certain mountain ranges as well as in certain river valleys. The dominant species are the holm oak

oak and pyrenean oak, wich can grow so densely that their branches become entwined. They tend to grow alongside shrub and bush species which sometimes grow so thickly that they become an impenetrable jungle of vegetation

Some of the Iberian Peninsula's most threatened hird species such as Black Vulture. Spanish Imperial Eagle and Black Stork breed in this habitat, choosing the highest trees and seeking the protection which the dense vegetation of the mountain

Often the forest is made up exclusively of trees, with the shrubs and bushes having been almost completely overwhelmed. Here the bird species are typically forest dwelling such as: lay, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Less r Spotted Woodpecker, Wryneck, Nuthatch, Short-toed Treecreeper RedStart, Crested Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Chaffinch and Hawfinch, In the oak forests Bonelli's Warbler are also found

Where bushes and shrubs are abundant Robin. Nightingale, Wren and Blackcap nest,

This is also a perfect habitat for birds of prey such as Honey Buzzard -especially in the oak forests- Sparrowhawk, Gosawk, Little Owl and Tawny Owl.

The SPAs most typical of this habitat are the 'Sierra de San Pedro' (San Pedro Range), Monfragüe and the surrounding dehesas. 'Sierra de Villuercas (Villuercas

mended Seasons: SPRING AUTUMN AND WINTER

/ Jehesas

doubt, the most characteristic landscape in Extremadura, occuoving 35% of the total area of the region The dehesas are the result of the progressive clearance of the Mediterranean Forest, the reduction in the number of trees and the increase in the number of bushes and shrubs. At the same time, through periodic pruning of the trees and the clearing of shrubbery,



mankind has managed to create a complex eco-system which is an unmistakable symbol of sustainable development in the region. The debesas are composed mainly of holm oaks and of cork oaks, whilst in the upper reaches there are dehesas made up of deciduos oaks

In the denser dehesas with between 20 and 40 trees per bectare, the hird species are typical of forest, including Hoopne, Woodpigeon, Turtle Dove Green Woodpecker, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher, Orphean Warbler, Woodchat Shrike, Azure-winged Magni, Rock Sparrow, Spanish Sparrow and Greenfinch during the breeding season

Where the dehesa retains shrubs such as the rock rose, retamas and brooms, lavender or osapling oaks which have not been pruned, it's enriched by the presence of other species such as Woodlark, Sardinian Warbler, Orphean Warbler Subalpine Warbler and Dartford Warbler

When tree density reduces to fewer than 15 per hectare with a predominance of pastures with occasional shrubs, other species appear such as Thekla. Lark, Stonechat, Corn Bunting and even Stone Curlew.

In winter, one of the most typical species is the Common Crane, truly symbolic of the dehesas at this time of year. Similarly Wood Pigeons, also attracted by the abundance of acoms, arrive in large numbers in the holm oak dehesas. Other frequent visitors in winter are Lapwing. White Wagtail, Robin, Black Redstar, Song Thrush, Redwing, Chiffchaff and Bullfinch.

The dehesas are also the nesting habitat for various birds of prev such as Black-shouldered Kite, Black Kite, Buzzard, Booted Eagle, or the

Short-toed Eagle whilst others arrive in search of food such as Spanish Imperial Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle or carrion such as Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture or Egyptian Vulture.

The SPAs most typical of this habitat are 'Embalse de Cornalvo (Cornalvo Reservoir) and Sierra Bermeja (Bermeja Range)', 'Dehesas de Jerez (Jerez dehesas)', 'Vegas del Ruecas (Ruecas Meadows) Cubilar and Moheda Alta (High Moheda)' 'Monfrague and the surrounding dehesas, 'Puerto Peña and Sierra de los Golondrinos (Golondrinos Range)', 'Sierra de la Moraleja (Moraleja Range) and Piedra Santa' and 'Sierra de Siruela (Siruela Range)' and 'Sierra de Hornachos (Hornachos Range)

ocky areas

ranges are topped by quartzite rocks projecting from the dense vegetation of the Mediterranean Forest or the debsas. The security of the often inacce sible rocks and the dense barrier formed by the vegetation of the mountain slopes leacertain bird species to choose them for nest

ing purposes as they avoid humans and their natural predator

Among the typical nesting birds in the rocky areas are many threatened birds More than 40% of the Black Stork population choose to nest in the quartzite rocks rather than in the tall trees

This habitat is also very important to other species in the breeding season

such as Craq Martin, Alpine Swift, White-rumped Swift, Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush Rock Thrush Rock Runting Jackdaw Rayen and Chough In winter in the medium to high mountains Alnine Accentor may be observed and, very occasionally. Wallcreeper,

> The best rocky greas for bird-watching are in the following SPAs: 'Dehesas de Monfraque (Monfraque dehesas) and its sur rounding areas' (Salto del Gitano, Portilla del Tiétar), 'Embalse de Orellana (Orellana Reservoir) and Sierra de Pela (Pela Range) Puerto Peña', 'Sierra de las Villuercas (Villuercas Range) and Valle del Guadarranque (Guadarranque Valley)' (Pico Villuercas), 'Canchos de Ramiro and Ladronera', Sierra de la Garrapata (Garrapata Range), 'La Serena and the peripheral mountains' (Sierra de

Tiros, Tiros Range), 'Sierras de Peñalsordo (Peñalsordo Ranges) y Capilla (Torozo), 'Sierra de la Moraleja (Moraleja Range', 'Sierra de Hornachos (Hornachos Range)' and 'Sierras centrales (Central Ranges) and Embalses de Alange (Alange Reservoirs)

Leaths

he loss of trees from the dehe sas together with the reduction in the cultivation of crops and animal rearing combined with other factors such as forest fires have favoured the consolidation of a type of vegetation where Mediterranean heathlands and bushes predominate The most common vegetation is rock

se, retama, broom and wild olives, whereas in the higher areas are heaths and broom

The bird species associated with this type of vegetation are more numerous than might be expected, dependent to a large part on the variety of species which make up the heaths, their complexity (height, cover) and the presence of other elements such as

Among the breeding species are to be found Dartford Warbler Sardinian Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Tawny Pinit Stonechat Rufous Rush Robin and Linnet

When clearings are made on the heaths to make way for pasture, Northern Wheatear, Black-eared Wheatear, Thekla Lark and even the Montagu's Harrier can often be found.

In higher areas where snow often falls in winter and where only Broom and Heather grow mixed with mountain pasture:

Dunnock, Ortolan Bunting and Bluethroat can be found nesting.

Amongst the SPAs with large areas of heathland are the 'Sierra de Gata (Gata Range) and Valle de las Pilas (Pilas Valley)', 'Hurdes', and 'Nacimiento del Río Gévora (source of River Gévora)'.

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IUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

L'astures and dry farming land

hese pastures are the final phase of the degradation of the Mediterranean forest now that most of the trees and shrubs have disappeared with their accompanying heaths. It is often difficult to believe that once these same lands were dense with vegetation. They tend to

occupy large extensions of land and form a particularly flat landscape. In general, the pastures are associated with the dry farming of cereals such as whea

The most typical species to be found on the pastures is the Great Bustard with populations in Extremadura in excess of 6,500 birds whose spectacular courtship ritual is one of the major birdwatching attractions in the region. In this flat habitat, other frequently seen species are Little Bustard, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Black bellied Sandgrouse, Collared Pratincole, Little Owl, and

On rural buildings, Roller or colonies of Lesser Kestrel frequently breed and both species are fond of occupying the hundreds of nesting boxes mounted on electricity poles through the region.

Small bird communities are also very numerous, especially species like Tekla Lark, Crested Lark, Calandra Lark, Short-toed Lark, Tawny Pipit, Zitting Cis ola, Black-eared Wheatear, Southern Grey Shrike and n Bunting. It is the habitat par excellence for the Red-

> winter the area is enriched by the presence of species arriving from the North such as Common Crane, Golden

wer, Lapwing, Hen Harrier, Merlin, Meadow Pipit, Skylark Goldfinch and White Wagtail

The abundance of food favours the presence of other birds of interest which nest in different habitats such as Spanish Imperial Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Golden Eagle and Short-toed Eagle, or carrion feeders attracted by the herds of animals such as Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture and Egyptian

The SPAs with the largest area of pasture and crops are 'La Serena', 'Llanos de Cáceres', 'Llanos de Trujillo', 'Magasca', 'Llanos de Alcántara y Brozas' and 'Campilia Sur y Embales de Arroyo Carelo (Campilia Sur y Embales de Arroyo Carelo (Carelo 'Campiña Sur y Embalse de Arroyo Conejo (Conejo Brook Reservoir)'. Certain areas within the 'Dehesas de Jerez (Jerez Dehesas)', 'Llanos and Complejo lagunar de la Albuela (Lakes Complex in Albufera)' and 'Llanos de Zorita and Embalse de Sierra Brava (Sierra Brava Reservoir)' are also signific

/rrigated Agri-

extensive network of dams and channels in the Rio Guadiana basin and, to a lesser extent, in the Taio basin.



From the birds' point of view the most attractive of the irrigated crops are maize and rice (with 25,000 hectares Extremadura is the second most important rice-growing region in Spain), especially in winter. Once these crops are harvested (between October and November), the birds take advantage of the spilt grain which remains in the stubble after the harvest. Furthermore, the rice fields which continue under water for most of the winter become an attractive but shallow wetland. In spite being areas used for intensive cultivation, they receive large populations from a variety of species. Among the birds associated with irrigated agriculture are the wintering populations of Common Cranes, Black-tailed Godwit, Les er Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Glossy Ibis, Grey Herons, Cattle Egret, Squacco Heron, Little Egre

Among waders, the numbers of Curlew, Black-winged Stilt, Redshan

Amongst the birds of prey, the populations of Marsh Harrier and Hen Harer, which tend to roost in the rice fields are worthy of mention and as well as Black-shouldered Kite, Buzzard, Black Kite, Merlin and Short-pared Owl

> ome SPAs are designated exclusively for the protection of birds which inhabit irrigated agricultural areas such as 'Arrozales de Palazuelo (Palazuelo Ricefields) and Guadalperales', 'Vegas del Ruecas (Ruecas watermeadows). Cubila and Moheda Alta' and 'Uanos de Zorita and Embalse de Sierra Brava (Sierra Alta

eservoirs and dams

he two main rivers, the Tajo and the Guadiana, are dammed for almost all of their passage through Extremadura being used for hydro-electricity population and the irrigation of crops.



with the greatest length of interior coastline in the Iberian Peninsula, measuring almost 2 000 kilometres. These artificial wetlands are used intensively by birds for which they are a real oasis.

On the islands in the reservoirs, breeding colonies of Collared Pratincole, LittleTern, Gull-billed Tern, Black-winged Stilt, Little Ringed Ployer and, occasionally, Common Tern can be found. Great Cormorant has also begun to nest in recent years on some reservoirs

In the shallower dams with floating vegetation Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Coot and at times, Whiskered Tern and Lapwing make their nests. Amongst the nesting duck are Gadwall and Shoveler and sometimes Red-

The ornithological value of these wetlands is much greater in winter as Extremadura is one of the most important regions in Iberian peninsula for wintering waterbirds, with over 250,000 birds including populations of Mallard, Pintail, Wigeon, Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck. Teal and Red-crested Pochard. The wintering popula-

Osprey can be seen regularly on the reservoirs during their migration and Black Stork gathers in large numbers (over 100 birds) on reser and dams in the course of their migration after breeding.

can be seen and on occasions also Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear or Rock Bunting.

A large number of reservoirs are included in a network of SPAs in Extremadura amongst the most important being the 'Embalse de Orellana (Orellana Reservoir) and Sierra de Pela (Pela Range)', 'Llanos de Zorita and Embalse de Sierra Brava (Sierra Brava Reservoir)', 'Embalse de los Canchales (Canchales Reservoir)', 'Embalse de Montijo (Montijo Reservoir)', 'Embalse de la Serena (Serena Reservoir)', 'Embalse de Arrocampo (Arrocampo Reservoir)', 'Embalse de Brozas (Brozas Reservoir)', 'Embalse de Borbollón (Borbollón Reservoir)', 'Embalse de Alcántara (Alcántara Reservoir)', 'Embalse de Talaván (Talaván Reservoir)', 'Embalse de Valdecañas (Valdecañas Reservoir)', 'Embalse de Valuengo (Valuengo Reservoir)', 'Embalse de Gabriel y Galán (Gabriel y Galán Reservoir)' and 'Embalse de Vegas Altas (Vegas Altas Reservoir)'. The most im portant dams and lakes are 'Llanos and complejo lagunar de Albuela (Albufera Lakes Complex)', 'Complejo Lagunar Egido Nuevo (Egido Nuevo Lakes Complex)' and 'Charca de la dehesa boyal de Navalmoral (Cattle dehesa Pond at Navalmoral)



of the flow and the altitude.

es on permanent water courses are the alder, ash, popla and the willow. On the seasonal water courses al-

adapted to the lack of water predominate such as oleander

There are many bird species associated with riverbank vegetation such as Nightingale, Melodious Warbler, Robin, Blackcap, Penduline Tit, Golder Oriole and Cirl Bunting as well as nocturnal birds such as the Red-necked Nightiar. On the rivers in the north of the region Dipper. Gre Wagtail and White Wagtail can often be found the lat-

ter particularly in all types of wetland all over the region. On the rivers with emergent vegetation breeding

especies include Reed Warbler. Great Reed Warbler Cetti's Warbler and even exotic species such as Red Avadavat and Common Waxbill. Where the emergent vegetation occupies large areas it is also possible to find populations of Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Water Rail, and even much rarer species such as Purple Swanphen or Savi's Warbler.

There are sizeable colonies of heron in the trees along the river banks, some with thousands of birds where the Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Grey Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron and White Stork nest together joined at times

On the sandy river banks Sand Martin and Bee-eater build their plonies joined by Kingfisher. At times the nests of these birds are used

Among the SPAs which include river courses are the 'Azud de Badajoz', 'Embalse de Montijo (Montijo Reservoir)', 'River and Pinewoods at Tiertar', 'Riveros del Almonte' and 'Vegas del Ruecas (Ruecas water-meadows). Cubilar and Moheda Alta'

Lowns and villages

any towns and villages in Extremadura are excellent places for bird watching as they offer perfect places for nesting which are close to

> sources of food. At times historic buildings (churches palaces and castles) are the sites chosen by birds to build nests because of the openings and supports for them.

> The huge nests of White Storks in the bell-towers of churches in Extremadura have become a typical image of the

region and are evidence of the coexistence of

Old buildings are home to large colonies of Lesser Kestrels which at times exceed 50 pairs. In the same area coexist lackdaw. Pallid Swift. Common Swift and Barn-owls

On the great bridges, some dating back to Roman times, Alpine Swift breed, in places such as Mérida the population reaches 70 birds.

The urban stretches of the River Guadiana passing through Mérida and Badajoz have been chosen by herons to make their noisy breeding colonies completely oblivious to the human activity around them. These colonies can reach up to 2,500 pairs making a great spectacle for ornithologists as well as other inhabitants.

Equally shows are House Martin settled on many buildings and bridges sharing their urban space with Rarn Swallow and in more northern villages with Crag Martins

Extremadura is one of few regions to designate SPAs in urban areas of 17 towns and villages, protected because of their importance to the birds especially Lesser Kestrel. Visits are recommended to Cáceres, Trujillo, Llerena and Zafra which have much to offer to tourists. There are also important Lesser Kestrel colonies in the historic buildings of Almendralejo (Iglesia de la Purificación, Purificación Church), Acedera, Brozas, Belvís de Monroy, Fuente de Cantos, Garrovillas, Guareña, Ribera del Fresno, San Vicente de Alcántara Saucedilla and Iaraiz de la Vera

Before visiting the countryside it is recommended that you visit the Centro de Interpretación (Interpretation Centre) to obtain detailed information o the place and the birds.

You should avoid approaching the birds during the breeding season especially where there are nests or bird colonies.

You should also try not to disturb the birds during their courtship rituals remaining on the roadside or the designated spots.

Many birds nest in rocky places to which is preferable not to climb so as not to disturb them.

It is best not to approach large concentrations of birds so as



In the cereal fields, colonies of Montagu's Harrier which are sometimes accompanied by pairs of Marsh Harrier and, more rarely, of Hen Harrier establish

As in the dehesa, the abundance of Magpies makes possible the presence of the Great Spotted Cuckoo, the parasite of its nests.

ed Partridge and at times the Quail.

Great Egrets, White Storks, Greylag Goose, Pinshank, Golden Plover, Common Snipe and Ruff are significant.

tail. Shoveler and Lapwing

tions of Great Crested Grebe, Little Grebe and Black-necked Grebe can be considerable in some places. In winter several reservoirs are used as communa roosts by Common Cranes Gulls and Great Cormorants

On the walls of dams Crag Martin and Rock Dove



he river courses can be very different dependent on the associated vegetation, the width and depth

The most frequently found tree spe-

most always dry in the Summer months, the tree species best



