



BIRDWATCHING



Terres de l'Ebre

Where details capture you

GB

WATCHING BIRDS AND RESPECTING NATURE

Some advice and considerations for the birdwatcher



As a general rule you should inform the **rural guards** (tel. +34 977 706 261) or **Seprona** (tel. +34 977 500 108) if you observe grave anomalies, dead animals, illegal hunting, fires, etc.



SEO/Birdlife
www.seo.org

- 01 Respect **signs** and do not enter restricted access areas, above all during the breeding season (from February to August).
- 02 **Stay on the paths**, itineraries and, where available, the hides destined for photography and observation, avoiding disturbance to the natural areas as much as possible.
- 03 Leave nature as you found it. Take your litter with you or deposit it in the nearest waste bin.
- 04 On nature reserves it is **forbidden to disturb**, destroy or collect any animal or plant, either living or dead, or any part thereof.
- 05 Unleashed **dogs** frighten birds and are prohibited on nature reserves.
- 06 **Do not camp** in prohibited areas or sleep in the bird hides.

- 07 Leave **vehicles in the designated parking areas** or in places by the roadside where you will not obstruct other vehicles.
- 08 **You may kindly advise people who do not respect the regulations** to do so, especially those who enter prohibited areas.
- 09 It is more hygienic **not to touch dead animals** and to inform the rural guards (tel. +34 977 706 261) if you suspect that it is an endangered species killed under suspicious circumstances, or if it is injured and should be taken to a recovery centre.
- 10 It is, however, important to record the details of any ringed bird found dead, or those which can be read by telescope (ring number, place, probable causes of death) and send them to **oficina.anillas@dgcn.mma.es** or to the Park authorities.

THE TERRES DE L'EBRE: THE BIRDWATCHER'S DESTINATION



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From mountains to sea: the Terres de l'Ebre is home to the most important wetland on Spain's Mediterranean coast - the Ebro delta. Watched over by the abrupt and enigmatic mountains of the Ports, reaching up to 1.447m.

Exciting birds: 70% of the world's population of the rare Audouin's Gull breeds in the Ebro Delta. The exotic Greater Flamingo numbers thousands. From Purple Gallinules and Little Bitterns in the delta, to Bonelli's Eagles and Eagle Owls in the mountains, it's both quality and quantity that count.

Birds for all seasons: there are scores of attractive and appealing breeding and resident birds, spring and autumn migrations full of surprises, and winter wetlands bristling with life. There's no such thing as a dull day in the Terres de l'Ebre.

Close to you: Barcelona's international airport is only 150 kilometres (95miles) from the Terres de l'Ebre. Better still, the international airport at Reus is only 50 kilometres away. The coastline of the Terres de l'Ebre is well communicated by a modern network of motorways and main roads, as well as by rail.

Some special ingredients: who can resist trying the unique wines and olive oil of the region, the shellfish and fresh fish from the delta and the coast; meeting people who are warm and welcoming and well prepared for receiving the visitor; and enjoying tourism unspoiled by the masses, with its own seal of personality?

With family or friends: you'll find excellent and varied accommodation, good local food and produce, long, sandy beaches, peaks with breathtaking views, rivers and waterfalls, historical and cultural monuments. The right remaining ingredients to make you and your companions happy, **even the non-birding ones!**

EXCITING BIRDS



Audouin's Gull

This handsome and rare gull is endemic to the Mediterranean. In the year 2006 there were 15,329 pairs of Audouin's Gulls nesting in the Ebro delta. Large numbers of birds gather at the port of **Sant Carles de la Ràpita**, but the species can be seen throughout the delta in small numbers on its shores, rice fields and salt pans. Some birds remain in and around the delta during the winter months.



Black Wheatear

In Europe this attractive sedentary bird is only found in the Iberian Peninsula. Much of its Catalan population inhabits the Mediterranean mountain ranges of the Terres de l'Ebre: **Cardó, Els Ports and Montsià**. It is also found in the north of the region, in the semi-arid, deserted landscapes surrounding the River Ebro.



Bonelli's Eagle

Around 65% of this eagle's European population inhabits Spain. Its Catalan stronghold is in the Terres de l'Ebre, where it roams the abrupt mountains of the Prelitoral range, soaring over the craggy peaks, olive groves and pine clad slopes of **The Ports, Cardó and Tivissa massifs**. It prefers to hunt over rich Mediterranean mosaics, usually between altitudes of 200 and 600m.



Squacco Heron

The vast majority of the estimated 700 pairs of the Squacco Heron breeding in Catalonia breed in the **Ebro Delta**, where the protection of wetlands and beneficial changes in agricultural practices have led to a significant increase in the species' numbers. It is mostly present from April to October, although in the last few years very small numbers have overwintered.

Here is a quick look at some of the bird species you could expect to see on a birding trip to the **Terres de l'Ebre**. Some are rare, some are exotic, and many others are typically Mediterranean. Of course there are a good many species that have not been mentioned - it's so hard to choose!



Red-necked Nightjar

This species is a summer visitor to the region, between mid-April and late September. It breeds in flat or undulating dry country with scattered trees or open pinewoods. At night listen out for its hollow, knocking call, very different from that of the European Nightjar. The Red-necked Nightjar is widespread in the Terres de l'Ebre, absent only from the Ebro delta and above altitudes of 600 metres.



Slender-billed gull

The species first bred in the **Ebro delta** in 1975, when 12 pairs were found. Now more than 600 pairs of Slender-billed Gulls, representing 70-75% of the species' Iberian population, nest annually in the delta. It can be seen on salt pans, at river and channel mouths and above all along the shores of the two bays, the Fangar and the Alfacs. More than 100 birds remain throughout the winter months.



Red-rumped Swallow

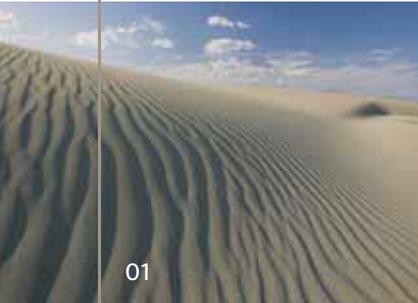
This species, present in the region from March to September, has spread quite spectacularly over parts of Catalonia in recent years. Its main population in the Terres de l'Ebre is in the comarca of the **Ribera d'Ebre**, where it nests in rocky areas and in artificial breeding sites such as abandoned buildings and under bridges. All indications are that it will colonise further areas in the coming years.



Collared Pratincole

Normally between 60 and 80 pairs of Collared Pratincoles nest in the **Ebro delta** every year, where the species can be seen between the months of April and September. It breeds at sea level in areas of low vegetation, rough pastureland and on banks between rice fields at the **Erms de la Tancada, Lo Garxal and the Canal Vell**.

BIRDWATCHING ITINERARIES IN THE TERRES DE L'EBRE



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Itineraries 1 and 2 Between them cover the major birdwatching sites in the Ebro Delta Natural Park. Declared a SPA (Special Protection Area) and listed as a Ramsar site, the Ebro Delta is a wetland of international importance with some 95 breeding species of birds. Additionally, its variety of lagoons, dunes, beaches, bays and riparian woodlands serve as an essential stopover point for a large number and range of migratory and wintering birds, and make an excellent backdrop for birders and photographers alike.

Itineraries 3 and 4 Encourage the naturalist to sample the different faces of Els Ports, a mountain chain with beautiful rivers, caves, gorges, and peaks well above 1,000 m. Apart from being a stronghold for the Spanish Ibex (*Capra pyrenaica*), there are also Wild Boar, Wild Cat, Otter, Roe Deer and 50% of the species of amphibian that can be found in Catalonia. Add to all that an exciting and varied birdlife, including a good number of large raptors, Els Ports are clearly worth discovering.

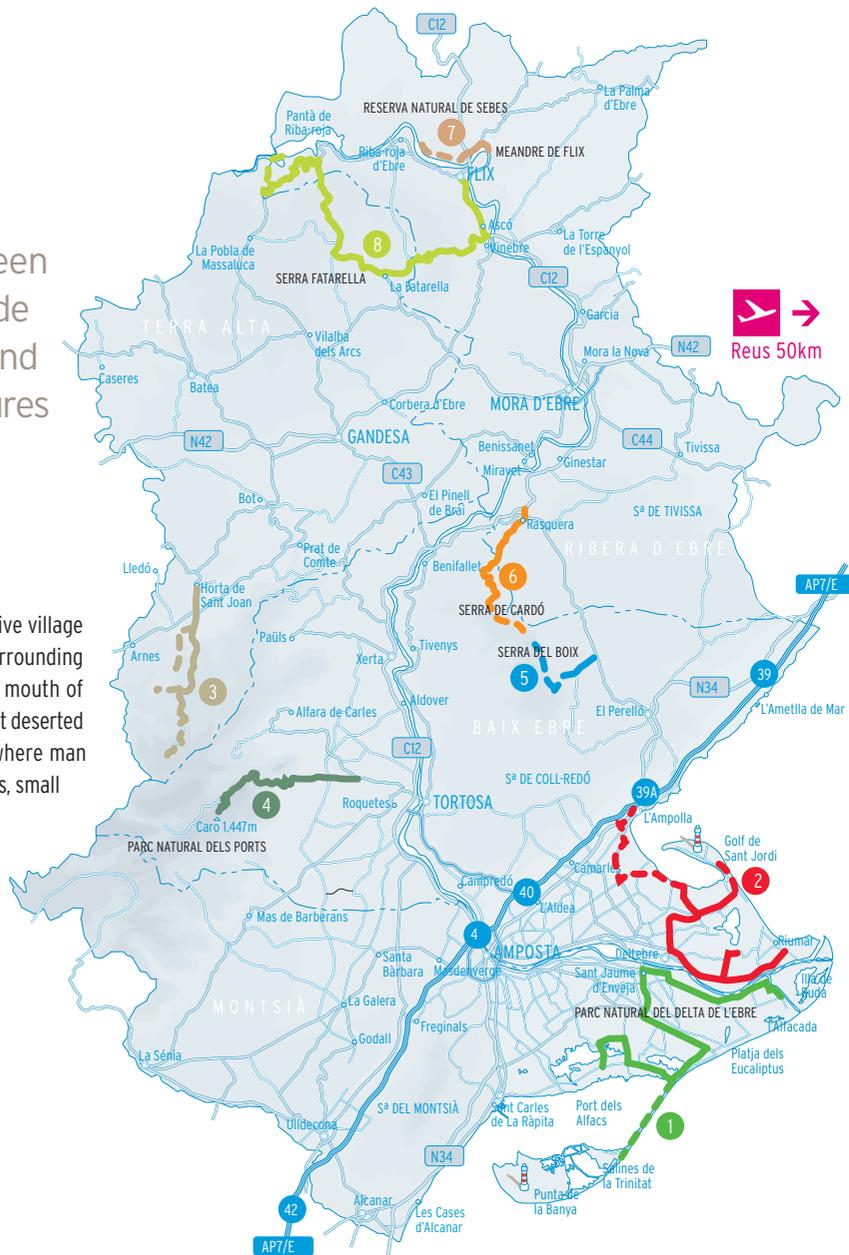
Itineraries 5 and 6 Are located in the little-known sierras of Cardó and Boix. Here the visitor can find great birds, but also much more. There is well-conserved Mediterranean woodland with pine and fine Evergreen Oaks. There are also stands of yew, some of which are believed to be more than a thousand years old. There are even ancient cave paintings, underground caves and also the characteristic Dwarf-fan Palm (*Chamaerops humilis*), Europe's only native palm tree. Currently two pairs of Bonelli's Eagle and some 5 pairs of Golden Eagles inhabit this enchanting massif.

Itinerary 7 Is a visit to the Sebes and Flix meander Nature Reserve. Located on the banks of the river Ebro it incorporates two areas separated by the Flix dam. On one side there is the wetland area of Sebes upriver from the dam, and downriver there is the meander. The reserve boasts one of the most extensive reedbeds in Catalonia, reaching over 200 metres wide. It also has well conserved gallery woodlands, with willows, white poplars, tamarisks and alders. Active conservation management of the reserve has been undertaken since 1999.

A total of **8 itineraries** have been selected and designed to guide the visiting birdwatcher around the outstanding natural treasures of the **Terres de l'Ebre**.

Itinerary 8 starts with an ascent to the attractive village of La Fatarella, offering immense views over the surrounding countryside. From here the road leads down to the mouth of the River Matarranya passing through peaceful, almost deserted landscapes. These are semi-arid, pine clad lands, where man has left his mark in the shape of terraced olive groves, small vineyards and beautiful dry stone walls. Discover lonely hermitages, either perched on hilltops or concealed in valleys where only birdsong breaks the silence. The itinerary reaches its climax at the huge river cliffs on the banks of the River Ebro.

01. Sands of the Ebro Delta. **02.** A rice field in the Ebro Delta. **03.** Els Ports. **04.** Mind the ducks.



THE EBRO DELTA

The union of earth, water and sky.
And thousands of birds.

ITINERARY 01) South of the river Ebro

Time: A full day / Starting point: The village of Poblenou del Delta.



02

Take the road leading northwards out of the village, parking by the **observation tower soon encountered on the right**. On the way look out for Squacco Herons in the ricefields. This observation tower offers views over l'Encanyissada lagoon and the possibility of seeing species such as Little Bittern, Purple Gallinule, Red Crested Pochard, Caspian Tern, Black-winged Stilt, Marsh Harrier, Greater Flamingo, Fan-tailed Warbler and Great Reed Warbler. It is also worth taking a walk along the road to look and listen for Savi's Warbler and Reed Bunting (the native witherbyi race) among the reeds.

Drive on, turn right and stop again at **another observation tower** as, in addition to the previously mentioned species, there may also be Great White Egret, Gull-billed Tern and Bluethroat (during migration or winter).

Continue towards the coast, stopping at the **Sant Antoni saltpans**. This is usually a very interesting spot for gulls, terns and waders. In the breeding season there are numbers of Sandwich, Little and Common Terns, while small groups of Caspian Terns may be found at any time of the year. Slender-billed, Audouin's and Yellow-legged Gulls are almost always present, while the most commonly found waders include Avocet,

Grey Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Greenshank, Redshank, Spotted Redshank, Ruff, Kentish Plover and Ringed Plover. Knot and Marsh Sandpiper may be found on migration, while the Iberian race of Yellow Wagtail breeds in the low scrubby vegetation.

Drive to the beach and follow the sandy track that leads down the **Trabucador to the saltpans of la Trinitat**.



01. Flamingos and gulls in the Ebro Delta **02.** Ebro Delta rice field after harvesting **03.** Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*) **04.** Looking over the Encanyissada lagoon.



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(Important! these salt pans are private property and there is no public access; please respect the signs). Here the length of the drive is optional but look out for interesting migrants in the little available cover. On the shores of the bay a good variety of waders, gulls and terns may be seen, including Turnstone, Oystercatcher, Sanderling, Slender-billed Gull and others. In the winter months the waters of the bay are a prime site for divers, Red-breasted Merganser, Black-necked Grebe and the occasional Common Scoter or Velvet Scoter.

Retrace your steps to follow **the eastern edge of La Tancada lagoon**. Look for waders in the pools on the left and Lesser Short-toed Larks in the saltings on the right before reaching the hide overlooking La Tancada. This is an interesting site for ducks, including Red Crested Pochard and the occasional Garganey. Ospreys fly over on quite a regular basis.

Between here and L'Eucaliptus resort are the **Erms de la Tancada**: an area of saltings, rough pasture with bushes and channels which is ideal for migrant birds in the spring and autumn, with a huge potential for producing pleasant surprises. Breeding birds include Skylark, Short-toed Lark and Collared Pratincole, while Richard's Pipit has become an almost regular wintering species in recent years.



04

By the road to Amposta there is the **Riet Vell Nature Reserve**, an ecological rice producing farm with regenerated natural areas. A traditional hut houses a visitor centre and two hides overlook the lagoon where, among herons, ducks and other water birds, one can see Purple Gallinule, Little Bittern, Whiskered Tern, Great White Egret, Water Rail and, on rare occasions, Baillon's Crake and Little Crake. The ecological ricefields hold species like Squacco Heron and Purple Heron, a variety of waders such as Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit, and

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05. Salt pans and the Montsià massif 06. Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) 07. Egrets and Cormorants.

even Greater Flamingo. Noteworthy seasonal visitors include Collared Pratincole and Audouin's Gull, and occasionally Great Bittern, between the harvest and the winter. Tree Sparrow and Common Kestrel breed in the reserve's nest boxes.

From here go to Sant Jaume d'Enveja and turn right for the **Illa de Buda and the Gola de Migjorn**. Follow this road past vast extensions of rice paddy and eventually past a right-angle bend and onwards to an observation tower. This offers commanding views over the Illa de Buda with its ricefields, saltings, pools and lagoons and the reedbeds and marshy areas of the Alfacada, as well as the open sea.

This area is one of the best in the whole of the delta for seeing a great diversity of birds in a short space of time. In addition to a large variety of waders, including Wood Sandpiper, Ruff, Spotted Redshank and Black-tailed Godwit there are good numbers of Purple Gallinule, Glossy Ibis, Great White Egret and a variety of ducks. As well as Marsh Harrier and Kingfisher you may also see Black Tern, Savi's Warbler, Spoonbill, Little Bittern, Squacco Heron, and Greylag Goose and Booted Eagle in the winter months.

Finally, make the short drive to the beach for a seawatch, at what is arguably the best spot in the delta for seeing Gannet, Great Skua, Arctic Skua, Razorbill, Balearic and Levantine Shearwaters, sea duck, gulls (including Mediterranean Gull), terns and waders, depending on the time of year.

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ITINERARY 02) North of the River Ebro

Time: a full day / Starting point: The town of Deltebre.



Head east out of the town to join the T-340. Follow the road until a sign indicates **"Mirador/Restaurant Canal Vell" on the left**. Follow this road, parking by the restaurant and continue on foot to the observation tower on the southern tip of the Canal Vell lagoon. Night Herons can be seen here, as well as Greater Flamingo, Great White Egret, Bittern (on migration), Little Bittern, Great Reed Warbler, Fan-tailed Warbler, Black-winged Stilt, Kingfisher, Marsh Harrier and a variety of ducks.

Return to the T-340 and follow the indications to **Riumar**. At the eastern edge of this beach resort is **Lo Garxal** - a shallow lagoon usually dotted with abundant terns and waders, often including Marsh Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank. Water Rails breed in the reedy areas along the southern edge while the inhabitants of the

dune slacks include Lesser Short-toed Larks and Collared Pratincoles. Besides being a good area for observing migrant passerines and Little Gulls, in recent years Crested Coots have become regular visitors.

Head back to Deltebre, skirting around its northern edge to get to the junction with the T-3451, which leads to the **Platja de la Marquesa**. This beach is the spot for conducting a seawatch in the hope of seeing skuas, shearwaters, seaduck and other seabirds according to the season. In the winter months Mediterranean Gulls pass by in their hundreds, as do Black Terns in late summer.

Photographers take note! This area can be excellent for close up views of waders, flamingos, terns and gulls, especially in the afternoon when the sun is behind you. Birds commonly seen here include many waders like Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Little and Temminck's Stint, Whimbrel, Black-winged Stilt, etc., Audouin's, Slender-billed and Mediterranean Gulls, all of the terns of the Ebro delta, and divers in the winter months. Over the years a good number of rarities have turned up here, including Pectoral Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Terek Sandpiper, Ring-billed Gull and Richard's Pipit.



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From here a track leads to the towards the Fangar lighthouse. The huge, flat sandy area past the dunes is a major breeding area for terns and Kentish Plover, while the on the bay side there will often be large numbers of waders, terns, gulls and ducks. The last port of call is the southern **shore of the bay, or port, of the Fangar**. Back past the restaurant Figueres there is a road that leads to the edge of the bay. From here it is possible to follow the shoreline for approximately 4 kilometres. If possible avoid the time around high tide, when most of the birds, especially the waders, are forced elsewhere.

01. Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*) **02.** Coots (*Fulica atra*) and Red-crested Pochards (*Netta rufina*) **03.** Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) **04.** El Fangar.



ELS PORTS



In the realm of
eagles and vultures.

ITINERARY 03

Horta de Sant Joan The Gronses Coll de Miralles

Starting point: the village of Horta de Sant Joan / Time: 4 - 5 hours



From de **Horta de Sant Joan** head southwards along the T-334, turning right at the junction with the T-330 and then immediately left, following the indication to **“Els Ports”**. The road passes through an attractive area of olive groves where a short stop could produce observations of Woodlark, Cirl Bunting, Short-toed Treecreeper, Serin and Hoopoe.

Once past the viewing area on the left look for a dirt track on the right. Here it is interesting to have a walk around the fields on the woodland edge, looking out for large raptors on the way, including Golden Eagle, Bonelli’s Eagle, Griffon Vulture and Egyptian Vulture.

04



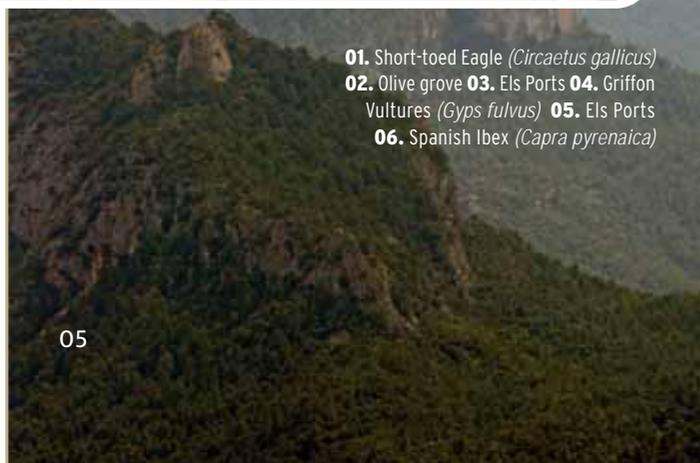
Return to the road, following on to a ridge with views of the **Roques de Benet** on the left and **the Gronses** on the right. From here a short excursion could be made to admire the scenery, as well as to encounter birds like Firecrest, Crested Tit, Melodious Warbler, Sardinian Warbler and Bonelli's Warbler in the wooded parts, or Black Redstart, Rock Sparrow, Blue Rock Thrush, Crag Martin and Alpine Swift in the rockier areas. The Gronses is also a very good place for spotting Spanish Ibex, especially early in the morning.

Return to the vehicle and continue along the same road to the **Mas de la Franqueta**. From here it is possible to follow a track up to the **Coll de Miralles**, although a vehicle with high clearance is recommended as the track is quite rough and bumpy, with many fallen rocks. This route offers attractive panoramas of the northern edge of the massif.



01. Short-toed Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*)
02. Olive grove **03.** Els Ports **04.** Griffon Vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) **05.** Els Ports
06. Spanish Ibex (*Capra pyrenaica*)

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ITINERARY 04

Tortosa – Mont Caro From the city to the mountain top

Starting point: Tortosa / Time: 3 - 5 hours



01

Approaching Tortosa from the north along the C-12 turn right at the first roundabout into the town of Roquetes. Follow the indications for **Els Ports Natural Park and Mont Caro**. Stay on this road for the 20 kilometres that will take you to the summit of Mont Caro, the highest point of the Ports at an altitude of 1,447 metres.

Make stops on the way up to admire the breathtaking views and to sample the birdlife of the different habitats. The range of species here is similar to that of "itinerary 3", with greater chances of finding Orphean and Sardinian Warbler in the olive groves at the foot of the mountain, and Rock Bunting in the more exposed, rocky areas higher up.

01. Orphean Warbler (*Sylvia hortensis*)

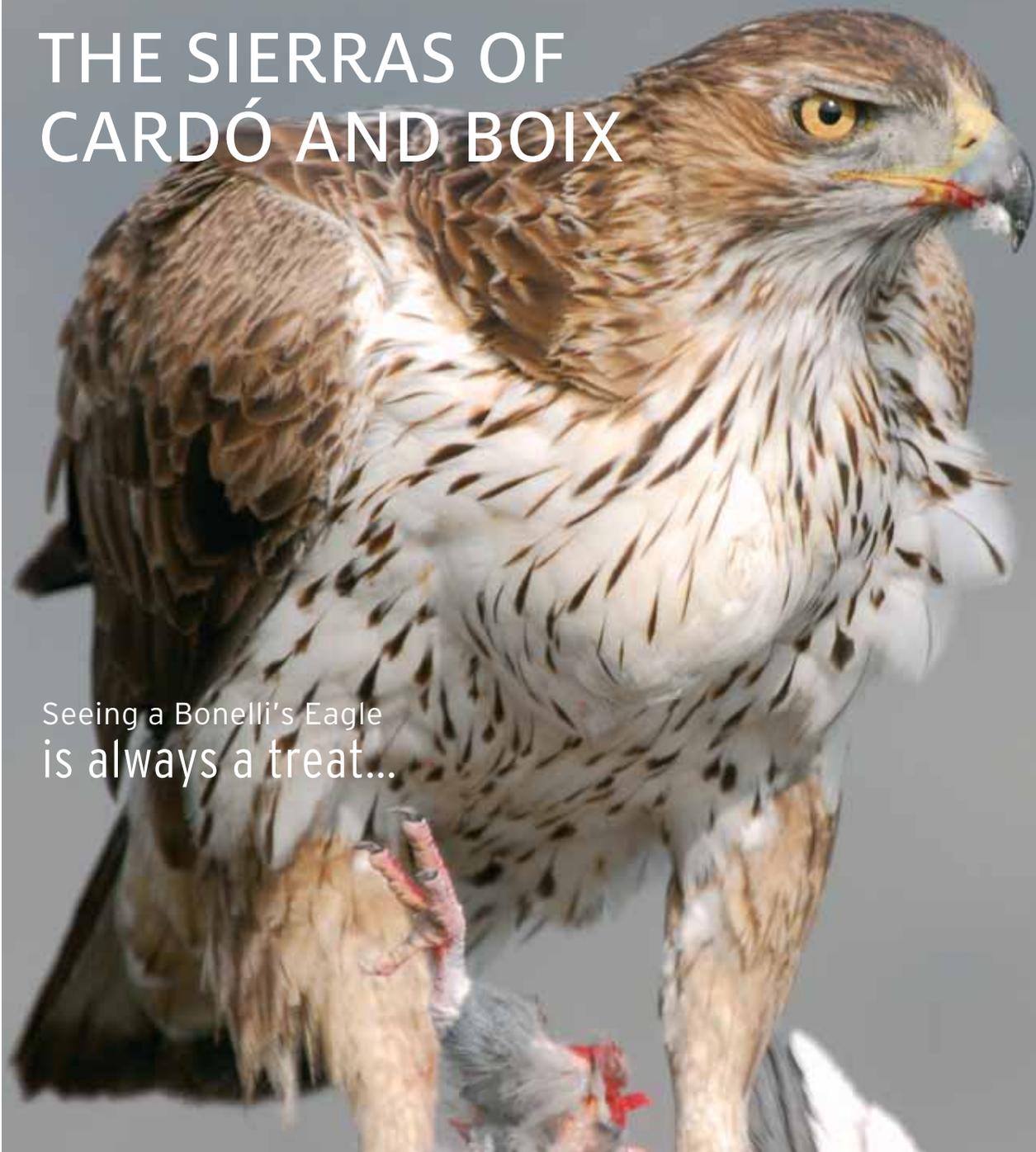
02. Firecrest (*Regulus ignicapillus*)



02

THE SIERRAS OF CARDÓ AND BOIX

Seeing a Bonelli's Eagle
is always a treat...



ITINERARY 05) El Perelló Cabrafeixet



Starting point: the TV-3022 at El Perelló / Time: about 3 hours

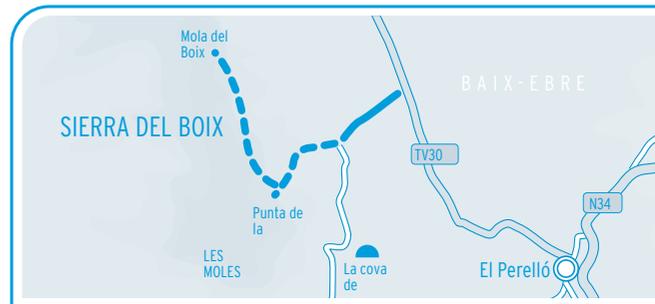
Follow the TV-3022 to the 7 kilometre marker post, turning left where a sign indicates “Pintures rupestres (4.2km)” and “**Camí del Coll de la Mola**”. The first few kilometres pass through a relatively flat, cultivated area with olive groves, maquis and some stands of pine. Stop along the way, taking short walks if desired, to see birds such as Hoopoe, Sardinian Warbler, Bee-eater, Black-eared Wheatear, Woodlark, Cirl Bunting, Turtle Dove, Serin, Woodchat Shrike and Crested Lark.

Follow the indications for the “**Pintures Rupestres**”. On the slopes look out for Dartford Warblers, and Thekla Larks in the rockier, broken areas. Continue upwards, parking in the designated area.

Continue on foot along the path to the cave paintings and beyond. The general area is good for Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Bonelli’s and Golden Eagle. If wanting to walk further it is possible to ascend along the GR-192 to the heights of the **Serra del Boix**, where there are stunning views of the neighbouring massifs and the Mediterranean sea.

Take note! If thinking of taking a late evening walk bear in mind that this area is a good one for Red-necked Nightjars.

01. Bonelli’s Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*) **02.** Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*) **03.** Woodchat Shrike (*Lanius senator*)
04. Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*).



ITINERARY 06

Rasquera Cardó Spa Creu de Santos

Starting point: the village of Rasquera. Time: 2 hours to and around the spa, around 5 hours if walking to the summit.



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Follow the TV-3021 up to the **spa** (balneari - no longer in use) of **Cardó**. The road twists and turns through dramatic scenery. On the way up stop where possible and scan the skies and the rocks for Crag Martin, Peregrine, Alpine Swift, Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Thrush, Bonelli's Eagle and Golden Eagle.

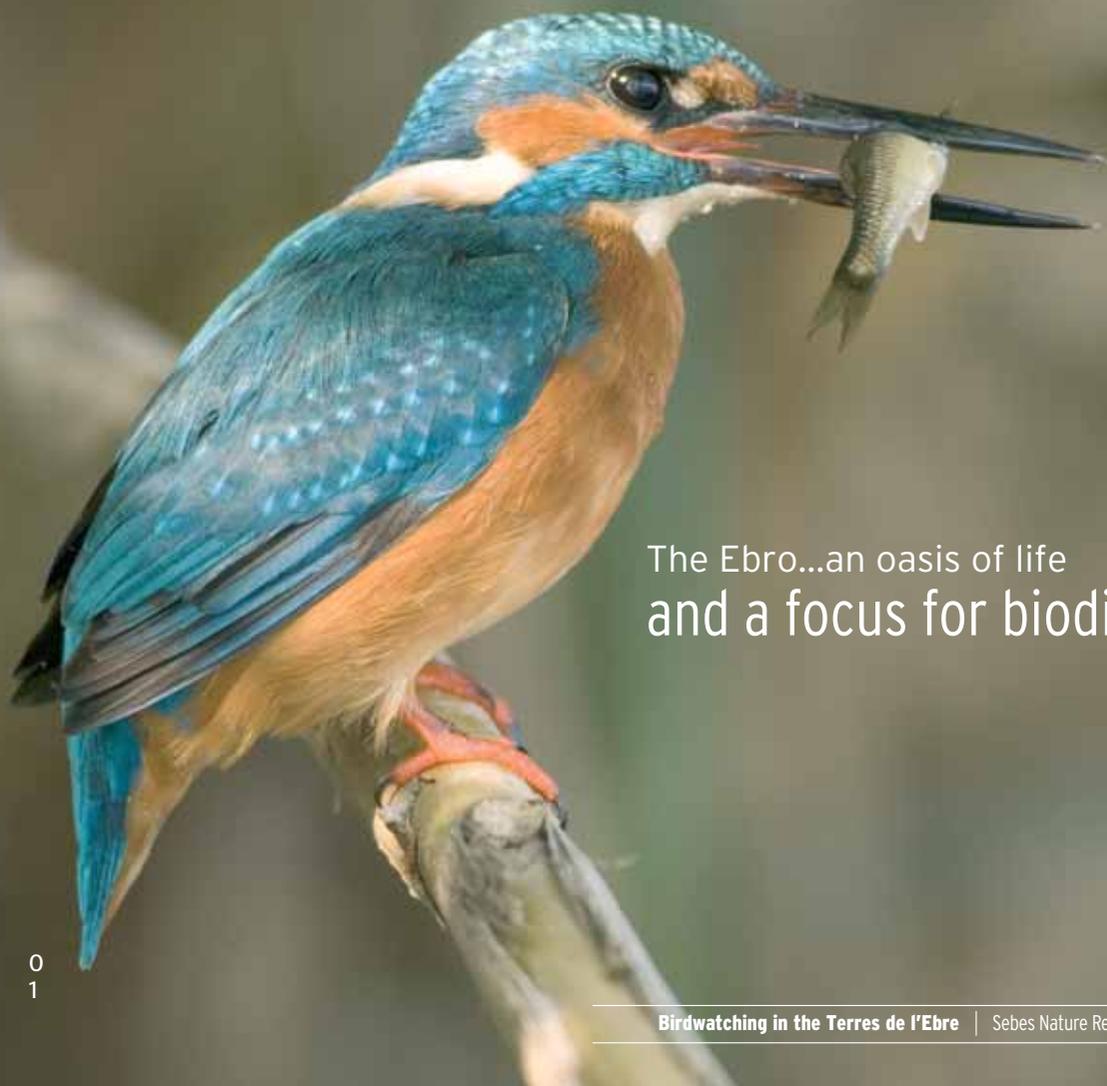
Park at the end of the road and from the spa one can follow the camí (path) de Tivenys up to the **Creu de Santos path**. This leads to the highest point of the massif, the Creu de Santos, at an altitude of 942 m, and offers a magnificent panorama. Search among the wooded areas for Crested Tit, Bonelli's Warbler and Firecrest, while in the more open areas you might find Tawny Pipit, Black-eared Wheatear and Thekla Lark.

Another interesting point of access to the massif is to follow the indications to the **Font del Teix** from the Rasquera-El Perelló road (between kilometres 16 and 17).



01. Bonelli's Warbler (*Phylloscopus bonelli*) **02.** Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) and Black-eared Wheatear (*Oenanthe hispanica*).

SEBES NATURE RESERVE AND THE FLIX MEANDER



The Ebro...an oasis of life
and a focus for biodiversity.

ITINERARY 07

Sebes Nature Reserve and the Flix Meander

Starting point: Flix bridge / Time: 3 - 4 hours



- 01. Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)
- 02. White Storks (*Ciconia ciconia*)
- 03. Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)



A walk along the track which divides low, sandy cliffs, rocky slopes and olive groves on one side, from the reedbeds, gallery woodland and flood meadows on the other, will show a stark contrast between the communities of birdlife inhabiting each habitat. Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Sparrow, Thekla Lark and Sardinian Warbler can all be seen on the sunny slopes flanking the river, while the olive groves are home to the Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Woodchat Shrike, Serin, Crested Lark, Wryneck, Cirl Bunting and Spotless Starling.

In spring and summer the reedbeds burst with the songs of the Cetti's, Reed and Great Reed Warbler and the pig-like grunting and squeals of the Water Rail. There is a small breeding colony of Purple Heron, and even the Little Bittern has bred in recent years. Observations of the Little Egret and Great White Egret are increasing, while Marsh Harriers, the symbol of the reserve, are easily spotted at this, their sole breeding site for the species in the province of Tarragona. There is also a breeding colony of Black Kites. The hide overlooking the newly created pool is one of the best places in the region for spotting the dazzling and emblematic Kingfisher.

White storks have been successfully reintroduced, and are now a common sight feeding among the Camargue horses on the flood meadows, or perched on their tower nests. Currently the reserve holds the only breeding colony of the species in the province of Tarragona.

Coming from Flix cross the bridge over the River Ebro and use the slip road 50 metres ahead to turn round, and then take the track on the right just before the bridge. It will be necessary to combine some driving and walking along this track to sample some of this area's extensive birdlife. Then drive on to the **Mas del Director**, the reserve's information centre, and walk along the path and a wooden walkway to reach the hide **overlooking the pool**.

Return to the vehicle, drive past the information centre on a track which runs parallel to the river until reaching a small parking area. Here a second walkway takes the visitor a short way into lush gallery woodland where Golden Orioles, Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Penduline Tits and perhaps a Night Heron or two may be found.

04. Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)

05. View over the River Ebro.



04

From here drive on to the compound where the White Storks are held prior to release, and where a short visit to the well-built wooden hide overlooking a wet meadow may produce a pleasant ornithological surprise, depending on the time of year, the water level and the vegetation's response to the grazing regime.

Over the years regular ringing activities during the autumn migration period have produced a number of interesting captures, like Scarlet Rosefinch, Paddyfield Warbler, Olivaceous Warbler and Marsh Warbler - all rarities to the region.

To complete the visit retrace your steps back to the main road and head towards the meander. Take the first right (C-233) towards Bovera and follow this road, making frequent stops to search for the Red-rumped Swallow.



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There is a large Sand Martin colony on the left hand side of the road. Further ahead turn right to cross over a bridge and follow the road in the direction of the "Pas de Barca" to a viewpoint from where a variety of birds can be seen feeding in the shallows of the spectacular meander.

The enchantment of a
silent, hidden valley and
the River Matarranya.



01. Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*)
02. Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron
percnopterus*) **03.** Griffon
Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*).

FROM LA FATARELLA
TO EL MATARRANYA

ITINERARY 08

Ascó-La Fatarella-Hermitage of Sant Francesc- Hermitage of Berrús-River Matarraña

Starting point: Flix / Time: 4 - 5 hours



From Flix head to Ascó and follow the sign to **La Fatarella** (T-733). The road winds and climbs past pine woods and olive groves where a short stop at any suitable site should reveal the birds typical of this habitat: Bee-eater, Woodlark, Green Woodpecker (the sharpei race), Sardinian Warbler, Cirl Bunting, Short-toed Treecreeper and Bonelli's Warbler. Glance skywards now and then as the Short-toed Eagle could appear at any point in the itinerary. Shortly the climb up the Serra de la Fatarella begins to offer panoramic views, well worth stopping for and admiring before reaching the village of La Fatarella.

At La Fatarella join the **Ruta de Sant Francesc** (San Francisco). This is a narrow road that winds and slowly descends past cultivated and maquis-covered slopes with rocky ledges, embankments, ruins and small farm buildings made of the local stone. Pay attention to the rocky areas, as the Blue Rock Thrush and Rock Sparrow inhabit these parts, while the Black-eared Wheatear prefers the open slopes with low vegetation.

Eventually the road passes the **Hermitage of Sant Francesc** and shortly after enters the area affected by a forest fire in August 2005. Just before reaching the TV-7411 look out for the Black Wheatear, one of the area's special birds, which with some luck may be found on the rocky crags. Turn left at the stop sign and follow the quiet TV-7411 towards **La Pobla de Massaluca**. Further on it is well worth taking the 200m detour to the **Hermitage of Sant Berrús** and the magnificent views it offers over the Ebro and the surrounding lands. Crag Martins breed near the bridge of Berrús and recently Spanish Ibx have been seen in the area.

At the next junction take the TV-7231 to the right which descends to the river through scrub and pine woods. Look out for Crested Tit, Sardinian Warbler, Dartford Warbler and Southern Grey Shrike on the way down. Stop near the bridge and survey the river cliffs opposite for Griffon Vulture, Peregrine, Egyptian Vulture, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear and possibly Alpine Swift. Golden Eagle, Short-toed Eagle and Black Kite are also frequent visitors to the area.

INFORMATION AND VISITOR RECEPTION



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Recovery of native wild animals

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