

A guide to  
**BIRDWATCHING**  
holidays



*A guide to birdwatching holidays*

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A guide to  
**BIRDWATCHING**  
holidays





France

**Vall  
d'Aran**

Andorra

**Pirineus**

**Paisatges  
Barcelona**



Lleida  
Alguaire

**Terres  
de Lleida**

■ Lleida

**Costa Barcelona**

Camp de  
Tarragona



**Costa  
Daurada**



Reus



Tarragona



Barcelona

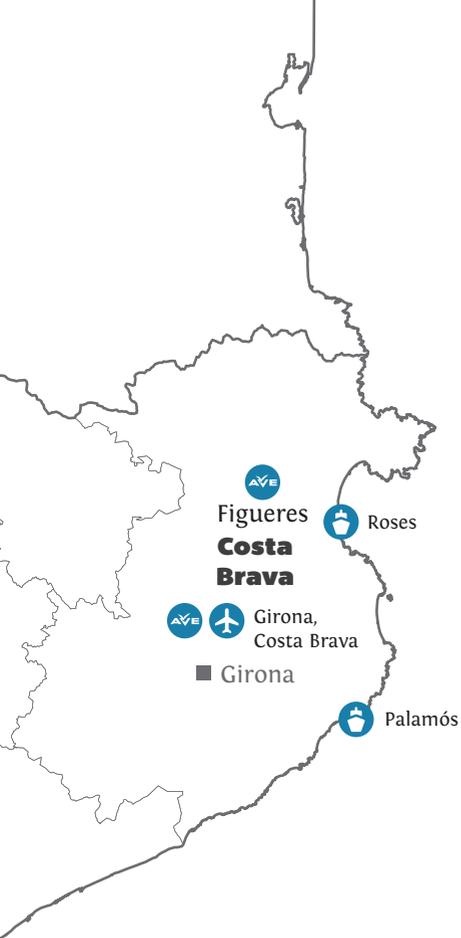


Barcelona,  
El Prat



**Terres  
de  
l'Ebre**

Mediterranean Sea



-  Airport
-  Port
-  High-speed rail

## Symbols used in this guide

-  Information point
-  Recommended observation points
-  Observation towers or hides
-  Highway
-  Railway
-  Bus
-  Automobile
-  Subway
-  Funicular-rack railway
-  Airport
-  Accessible area

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# Why watch birds in Catalonia

Walking through nature and enjoying the landscape is very pleasant activity with deep roots in Catalonia—a country with a great walking tradition. While it is gratifying to enjoy forests, mountains, coasts and wetlands, it is even more enjoyable if you are able to identify the bird singing energetically in the hedgerow, the birds of prey swooping around the cliffs, or the birds swimming in the lagoon. Birdwatching requires little more than suitable optical equipment in order to see them up close, a guide book for identification purposes, and knowing when and where you can see them. Moreover, it is suitable for people of all ages and interests, including people with disabilities, reduced mobility or special needs. The icon  identifies accessible tourism facilities and services.

This publication is an introduction to birdwatching in Catalonia. Birds are the most readily apparent vertebrates in the countryside, and the most diverse. They introduce us to a knowledge of our rich biodiversity and undoubtedly to a love of the nature that surrounds us.

## Catalonia NATURAL DIVERSITY

The Iberian Peninsula is one of Europe's poles of biodiversity. And Catalonia is one of the most diverse parts of it. It is a place where it is possible to find species of birds that can be found almost nowhere else on the continent. Among them are the **Red-necked Nightjar**, the **Red-knobbed Coot**, **Dupont's Lark**, the **Thekla's Lark**, the **Black Wheatear**, the **Balearic Shearwater**, and the **White-headed Duck**. However, it is also a place with Europe's largest populations of bird species including the **Cattle Egret**, the **Egyptian Vulture**, the **Griffon Vulture** and the **Cinereous Vulture**, the **Booted Eagle** and **Bonelli's Eagle**, the **Lesser Kestrel**, the **Purple Gallinule**, the **Little Bustard**, the **Eurasian Thick-knee**, the **Collared Pratincole**, the **Killdeer**, **Audouin's Gull**, the **Common Gull-billed Tern**, the **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, the **Great Spotted Cuckoo**, the **Hoopoe**, the **Calandra Lark**, the **Red-rumped Swallow**, the **Spectacled Warbler**, the **Treecreeper**, the **Woodchat Shrike**, the **Spotless Starling**, the **Rock Sparrow**, the **Serin**, the **Citril Finch** and the **Rock Bunting**. All of the varieties above can be seen in Catalonia, where 443 different species have been reported.

© Ricard Gutiérrez





© Ricard Gutiérrez

Furthermore, the number of species present in Catalonia changes every day of the year. The country's biogeographical position means some sedentary species live there all year round, such as the **Bearded Vulture** and the **Tree Sparrow**. Others arrive from Africa in spring to nest here, and leave in the autumn. These summer residents include the **Bee-eater**, the **Black-eared Wheatear**, the **House Martin** and the **Roller**. And there are others which pass through on their way to and from Africa, and are only present during their migration, in the spring and in the autumn: these migrants include the **Willow Warbler** and the **Red-footed Falcon**. Other birds which have nested in the tundra or in northern Europe come to spend the winter in Catalonia. These wintering birds include the **Redwing**, many species of duck and the **Brambling**. And yet other bird species arrive in limited numbers—either as a result of changes in their migration or due to weather conditions, such as cold weather or strong winds. These rare species are of great interest to birdwatchers as a complement to the regular birdlife in the region, and they may arrive from Africa, Asia, North America and even the Pacific.

Catalonia's varied relief and landscape also have an impact on the variety of its birdlife. The coast is not linear, and is rocky and winding to the north, and sandy and flat on most of the central and southern coast, with a total coastline of 826.5 km for an area of 32,108 km<sup>2</sup>. In Catalonia, we have Atlantic climates in Val d'Aran, an alpine climate in the Pyrenees and various types of Mediterranean climates in most of the country.

Catalonia is divided administratively into 42 regions, which have a varied landscape: there are the Pyrenees, the mountains in the north, where you find a mix of alpine nature and Mediterranean influence. The central depression associated with the river Ebro and its basin, contains the last remaining steppe regions, and extensive agricultural areas with some unique wetlands. The Mediterranean mountain ranges, running parallel to the coast, are located in the coastal parts of the provinces of Tarragona, Barcelona and part of Girona. There are wetlands and deltas in some places on the north, central and southern coast, and the coastline itself and the sea, which is rocky in the north—on the Costa Brava—and mostly sandy in the centre and the south—on the Costa Daurada and Terres de l'Ebre.

© Maria Rosa Ferré



The Plan for Areas of Natural Interest (PEIN) includes 31.8% of Catalonia, or 1,020,047 hectares, and is protected from urban development. Natural areas under special protection account for 323,213 hectares of land area and 6,483 hectares of sea area. Furthermore, 913,509 hectares are European Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds. In an area with 7.47 million inhabitants which receives 18 million foreign tourists a year, the combination of natural wealth, natural spaces and an increasing and widespread interest in ornithology means that, unlike other places, there is a high level of knowledge of birds, and this is widely available to the visitor. In addition to the highly developed network of information, with specialised publications and online information, there is also a comprehensive and reliable network of road and public transport links that enables visitors to plan not only holidays of varying durations in Catalonia's different destinations, but also short breaks, taking advantage of the short distances between the different regions of Catalonia, and allowing them to see the sun rise in the snow of the Pyrenees, and end the day on the Mediterranean coast. More than 210 bird species have been reported on just one spring day between the end of April and May. Today, Catalonia is the ideal destination for combining rich cultural heritage and an internationally renowned gastronomy with a unique natural heritage. And you don't have to wait until next year to do this. Catalonia can now be a destination for a short break, in search of a rare winter species or an unusual bird that has just appeared. The network of information available, to which this guide provides an introduction, will leave you amazed by the mountainous, Mediterranean and coastal landscapes and the diversity of wildlife that they contain.



© Ricard Gutiérrez

TO DATE, A REPORTED 445 SPECIES AWAIT YOU.  
*Will you find the next one?*



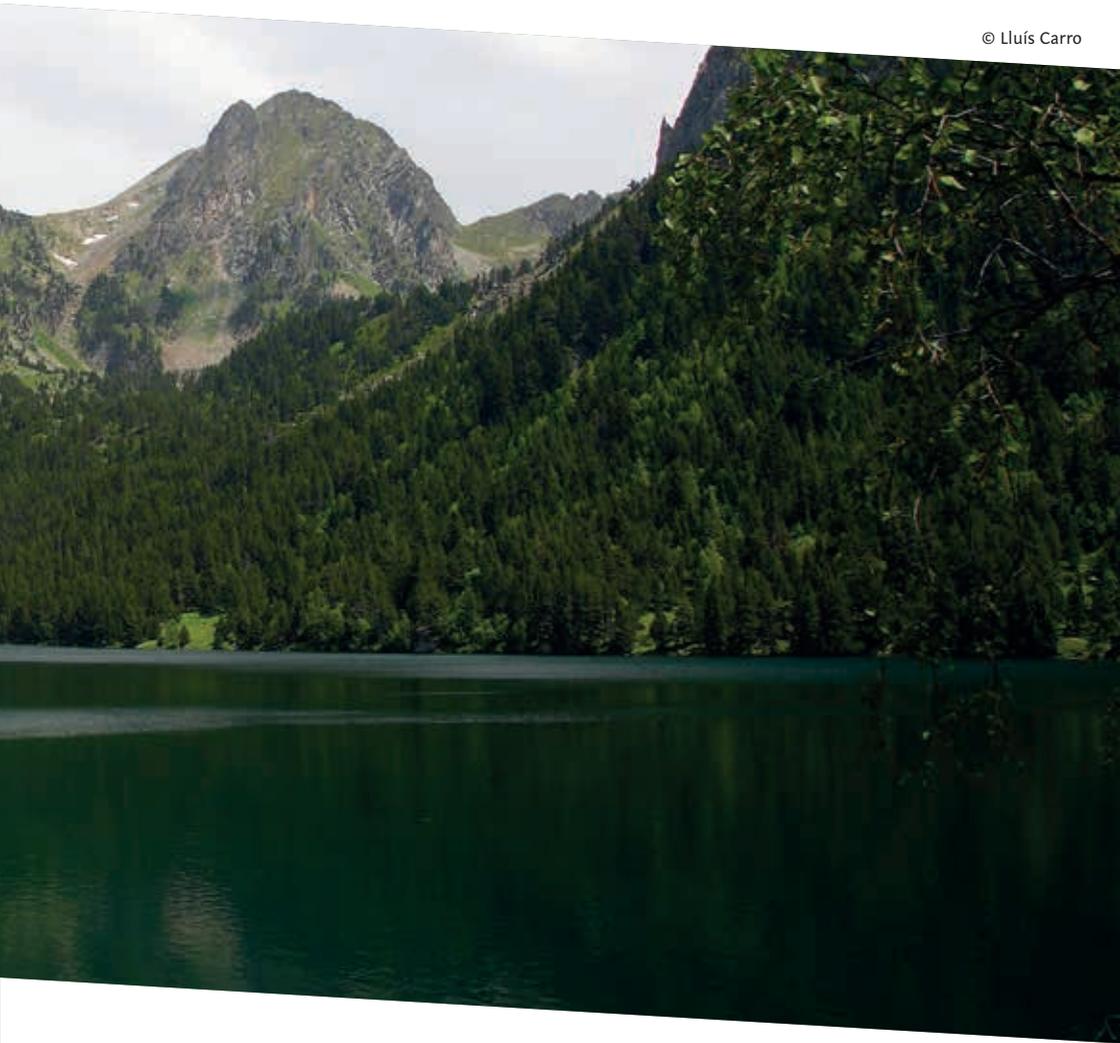


# Aigüestortes and Estany de Sant Maurici National Park

## High mountain bird life in the heart of the Pyrenees

The Aigüestortes and Estany de Sant Maurici National Park is one of Catalonia's best preserved Pyrenean areas. It is home to alpine and subalpine bird species, with all the special characteristics of the Pyrenees: the **Bearded Vulture**, the **Griffon Vulture**, the **Tengmalm's Owl**, the **Ring Ouzel**, the **Citril Finch**, the **Alpine Chough**, the **Black Woodpecker** and the **Alpine Accentor**, among others. It is a high mountain area that has traditionally been visited by walkers because of its conifer forests, alpine meadows, screes, and all the typical habitats of the axial Pyrenees.

© Lluís Carro



The Pyrenean landscape of Aigüestortes and Sant Maurici is unique in Catalonia and the Pyrenees. The typical image of the national park is of peaks with altitudes of around 3,000 metres, lakes, streams, waterfalls and bogs, containing wildlife adapted to these alpine habitats. The granite buttes of the Encantats peaks, often frequented by birds of prey and **Alpine Choughs**, rise up at the foot of the lake of Sant Maurici and are the symbol of the Park. The magnificent landscape in this area has been shaped by glacial conditions. The vegetation consists of forests of mountain pine and Scots pine, fir and beech. There are also some very damp mixed woodlands, which are unusual in the Pyrenees, containing a mixture of beech, birch and aspen.

Ornithologists will find a community of birds with a Pyrenean distribution, which in our biogeographic realm, i.e. the Palearctic, are very rarely found outside high mountain systems, such as the Alps, the Caucasus, and some mountain ranges in Turkey and the Balkans. In Aigüestortes and Sant Maurici, you can see many of the high mountain species typical of this part of Europe, ranging from forest species to rock-dwelling species, as well those living in exclusively alpine environments.

Ring Ouzel / *Turdus torquatus*



### WHEN TO GO

A visit is particularly interesting from late spring onwards, and during the summer.





Alpine Chough / *Pyrrhocorax graculus*



### Spring and summer

Visitors to the national park need to be in good physical condition if they want to go hiking or walking in the high mountains. However, you can also reach the better known areas with a four-wheel-drive taxi service (from Espot to Sant Maurici or from Boí to Aigüestortes) or by cable car (Estany Gento). Access through the Vall d'Assua (Llessui) and the car park at the Cavallers reservoir, in the Vall de Boí, is also available. There are also various entry points all along the Val d'Aran side of the national park. From the car park at Cavallers, you can explore the area around the lake (**Alpine Choughs** and **Choughs**, you might see **Wallcreepers**) and you can walk around the glacial lakes in the high mountains. Here you can climb one of the peaks near the lakes, some of which are over 3,000 metres above sea level, towards the Estany Negre lake and the mountain refuge of Joan Ventosa i Calvell, where you can spend the night if you want to spend more than one day in this area.

In all the higher areas of the park, it is worth keeping a close eye on the sky as there are often **Griffon Vultures**, but you may also see the **Bearded Vulture** and the **Golden Eagle**. Forests of mountain pine and fir at higher altitudes, at 1,800 metres and above, host pairs of **Tengmalm's Owls** that you can hear calling at night, and at dusk, in early spring, and more rarely at other times.



Species frequently seen everywhere in the park include **Choughs** and **Alpine Choughs**, which can form flocks, which are particularly large in the highest mountain areas, but they occasionally also form large groups near some refuges. Around the unforested lakes, there are **Water Pipits** and **Northern Wheatears**, and in rocky areas, especially in areas where there are cliffs, the **Rock Thrush**. The **Citril Finch** and the **Crossbill** are frequently seen in any forest in which the mountain pine predominates. The **Ring Ouzel** nests in the highest parts of the mountain pine forests, but it can be seen in lower areas after nesting. There are also **Grey Wagtails** and **Rock Buntings** with a wide variety of forest birds in the lower parts, including **Goldcrests**, **Coal Tits** and **European Crested Tits**, as well as some **Treecreepers** in the midst of **Short-toed Treecreepers**, especially in fir and mountain pine forests.

The highest parts, suitable only for physically fit birdwatchers, are inhabited by **Wallcreepers**, the **Alpine Accentor** and some **Snowfinches**, **Ptarmigans** and **Grey Partridges**.



Bearded Vulture / *Gypaetus barbatus*

Wallcreeper / *Tichodroma muraria*



### Winter

Some species leave the high mountains in winter to move to warmer regions. However, the valleys are home to **finches** and wintering birds. The birds of prey and forest birds are sedentary, and there are added attractions, such as the opportunity to see flocks of **Snowfinches**, which can even be seen from the road in some places like the Port de Bonaigua pass.

## Nearby areas of interest

L'Alt Pirineu Natural Park, in the Pallars Sobirà region, contains similar and complementary habitats to those in the Aigüestortes and Estany de Sant Maurici National Park, with smaller numbers of birds.

## Tips

- The utmost precautions are necessary in high mountain areas. Find out information about the weather conditions, avalanche risks, and bear in mind that snow and cold make access difficult for much of the year.
- The park's specific regulations must be respected at all times. Visit the information centres to find out about the latest news for visitors, and to obtain information leaflets and detailed maps.

## How to get there

The village of Esport is 215 km from Lleida and 265 km from Barcelona. The village of Boí is 152 km from Lleida and 299 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

🚗 To Esport: Take the C-16 motorway via the Cadí tunnel to Bellver de Cerdanya. Take the N-260 road to Sort. Take the C-13 road until the turn-off for Esport. Alternatively, take the A-2 to Cervera, the L-311 to Guissona and the L-313 to Ponts, the C-1412b over the Port de Comiols pass to Tremp, and the C-123 and the N-260 until the turn-off to Esport.

🚗 To Boí: Take the A-2 road to Lleida. C-13 to Pobla de Segur. Take the N-260 to Pont de Suert. Take the L-500 to Boí

🚌 To Esport: Take the bus run by the company Alsina Graells (Tel. (+34) 902 330 400) towards Esterrri d'Àneu until the village of La Guingueta d'Àneu. From there, you will need to call the taxi service in Esport (Tel. (+34) 973 624 105).

🚌 To Boí: Take the bus run by the company Alsina Graells (Tel. (+34) 902 330 400) towards Vielha until Pont de Suert. This connects with another bus run by the same company to Boí.

## Discover the area

- Romanesque churches in the Vall de Boí—a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The Falles de L'Alta Ribagorça and El Pallars festivals—UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- Val d'Aran
- Adventure sports in El Pallars Sobirà



## Facilities and services

Download the opening hours and location of the main centres and information points in the national park. More information: <http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en/aiguestortes>

Esport National Park Office  
C/ de Sant Maurici, 5  
25597 Esport (Pallars Sobirà)  
Tel. (+34) 973 624 036

Boí National Park Office  
Ca de Simamet  
C/ de les Graieres, 2  
25528 Boí (Alta Ribagorça)  
Tel. (+34) 973 696 189

Estany Gento Information Centre  
25515 La Torre de Cabdella  
(Pallars Jussà)

Llessui Information Centre  
Pastors de la Vall d'Assua  
Ecomuseum  
Antigues escoles, s/n  
25567 Llessui (Pallars Sobirà)  
Tel. (+34) 973 621 798

Senet Information Centre  
La Serradora C/ del Port, 10  
25553 Senet (Alta Ribagorça)  
Tel. (+34) 973 69 82 32

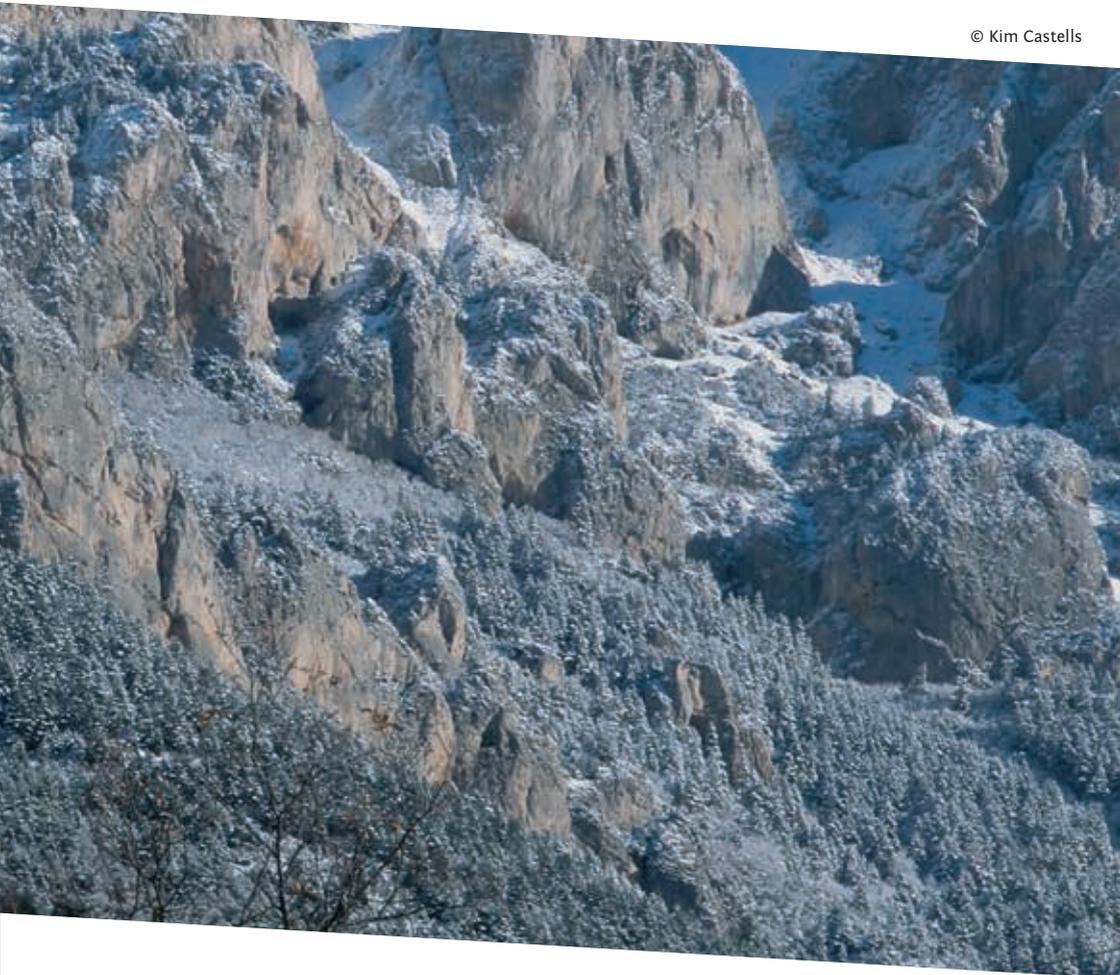


# Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park

## Accessible alpine birds

El Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park is a pre-Pyrenean mountain range that contains a wide range of species native to the Pyrenees, which cannot be found in most parts of Europe. Its major advantage in terms of accessibility compared to other areas in the Pyrenees is that two roads cross these subalpine areas (the road from Bagà to Coll de Pal and the Coll de la Creueta road). If you follow these two roads, you will reach woods with mountain pine, Scots pine, alpine crevices and rocks, where you can see some iconic species such as the **Bearded Vulture**, the **Alpine Chough**, the **Alpine Accentor** and the **Snowfinch**, without leaving your car.

© Kim Castells



The landscape is one of Catalonia's most spectacular, since the mountain barrier of El Cadí-Moixeró, with its imposing cliffs, runs from west to east stretching for more than 30 km, with altitudes ranging from 900 metres in the valleys to the south, to 2,648 metres at the peak of Puig de la Canal Baridana. With its unusual forked outline with two peaks that gives it its name, Pedraforca is the most iconic mountain in the range. It is of interest to birdwatchers because of its strong contingent of Pyrenean high mountain species, some of which can be seen relatively easily. It is one of the best places in Catalonia to observe the **Snowfinch** in winter, depending on how much snow has fallen. It is also home to the **Citril Finch**, the **Bearded Vulture**, the **Rock Thrush**, the **Grey Partridge**, the **Ring Ouzel**, the **Black Woodpecker** and the **Crossbill**, and the **Wallcreeper** can also be seen there.



Wallcreeper / *Tichodroma muraria*



Rock Thrush / *Monticola saxatilis*

#### WHEN TO GO

Mountain areas are most accessible in the spring and summer, and in the autumn, when you can find the summer species that come to nest such as **Tawny Pipits**, **Rock Thrushes**, **Northern Wheatears** and **Water Pipits**. These species live elsewhere in winter, but depending on the amount of snow, there are unique high mountain species of interest to the ornithologist.



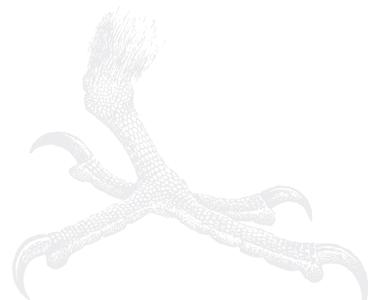
## Spring and summer

The easiest access to the high mountain region of El Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park is via the Coll de Pal pass. A road links the village of Bagà with Coll de Pal mountain refuge, and continues to the boundary with the region of La Cerdanya, past the ridge with the mountain pass. This road may be partially closed in winter depending on the level of snowfall. The natural park does not end here, and its website contains many suggestions for visits and walks.



You can hear the **Tengmalm's Owl**, in higher mountain pine forests in late winter and early spring. Diurnal birds of prey include the **Bearded Vulture**, which can be seen in the area around the Coll de Pal refuge at any time, but frequently around midday, as well as other large birds of prey such as the **Griffon Vulture** (sometimes in flocks of more than a hundred birds) and the **Golden Eagle**. The **Grey Partridge** nests around Puigllançada, and is relatively easy to see in the autumn, when they gather in small flocks. Your search for them may be a long and difficult one, although sometimes some of the chamois which are plentiful in the area can make them take flight and make seeing them easier. You can try to spot this rare species from either the Coll de Pal or the Coll de la Creueta.

Other common species in the mountain pine forests at altitudes above 1,700 metres are the **Citril Finch**, in the summer, the **Ring Ouzel**, which is regularly seen in summer on the edges of wooded areas and alpine meadows, the **Rock Bunting** and the two **Choughs**, the **Red-beaked Chough** and the yellow-beaked **Alpine Chough**, which are common in the higher areas that can be reached by car from the Coll de Pal road. The **Rock Thrush** can be found in rocky areas, in both the higher areas of the mountain range and along the road that links Castellar de n'Hug with La Molina, where it can be seen in the Coll de la Creueta area.



There are nesting pairs of **Wallcreepers**, especially on the walls of the north face, around the Tossa d'Alp mountain and the nearby massif of Pedraforca, but they are very difficult to spot, and this can even be hazardous as it is a high mountain area. This species is easier to spot in the autumn, on some of the cliffs next to the road linking Bagà and Coll de Pal.

The high mountains are also home to **Mistle Thrushes**, **Northern Wheatears**, **Water Pipits** and the occasional nesting **Lark**. The forests are home to some **Black Woodpeckers** and the more common **Crossbill**, as well as **Tits** and other woodland birds.

### Winter

If you take the road from Coll de la Creueta, you can easily see the **Alpine Accentor**, which is visible from the car, and occasionally, depending on the severity of the winter, flocks of **Snowfinches**, sometimes in their hundreds. Furthermore, if it is not closed to the public (check the state of the roads in winter at <http://cit.transit.gencat.cat>), the Coll de Pal road is a good place for spotting these two species, as well as others such as the **Bearded Vulture**, the **Griffon Vulture**, the **Chough** and **Alpine Chough**, the **Fieldfare** and the **Grey Partridge**. The **Wallcreeper** lives at lower altitudes, where it can be spotted on cliffs with little vegetation, in both shady and sunny areas.

Fieldfare / *Turdus pilaris*



Snowfinch / *Montifringilla nivalis*



## Nearby areas of interest

The **Ptarmigan** does not nest in the El Cadí-Moixeró Park, but it does nest in the mountains of La Cerdanya that border France and Andorra. The massif of Puigpedrós, in Meranges, in La Cerdanya, is home to some pairs and used to be the only place in Catalonia where the **Dotterel** nested regularly.

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## Tips

- The utmost precautions are necessary in high mountain areas. Find out information about the weather conditions, avalanche risks, and bear in mind that snow and cold make access difficult for much of the year.
  - The El Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park's specific regulations must be respected at all times. Visit the information centre for the latest information, information leaflets and maps.
- 

## How to get there

The town of Bagà is 128 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 🚗 Take the C-58 motorway to Terrassa. Take the C-16 motorway to Manresa, Berga and as far as Bagà (the Cadí tunnel).
  - 🚌 The company Alsina Graells (Tel. (+34) 902 330 400) operates a regular line that connects Barcelona with Andorra. It stops in Bagà.
- 

## Facilities and services

El Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park Information Centre  
C/ de la Vinya, 1  
08695 Bagà

### Opening hours:

Open Monday to Friday all year round, from 9 am to 1.30 pm and from 3.30 pm to 7 pm.

Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from 9 am to 1 pm and from 4 pm to 6.30 pm.

The natural park information centre organises trips, temporary exhibitions, courses, talks and lectures on nature topics.

### More information:

<http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en/cadi>

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## Discover the area

- Visit the towns of Berga and Puigcerdà
- La Patum festival in Berga
- The Falles del Pirineu festival in Bagà
- The Pharmacy in Llívia, in La Cerdanya
- Visit the mountain of Pedraforca, in Saldes
- The Camí dels Bons Homes hiking trail

Golden Eagle / *Aquila chrysaetos*



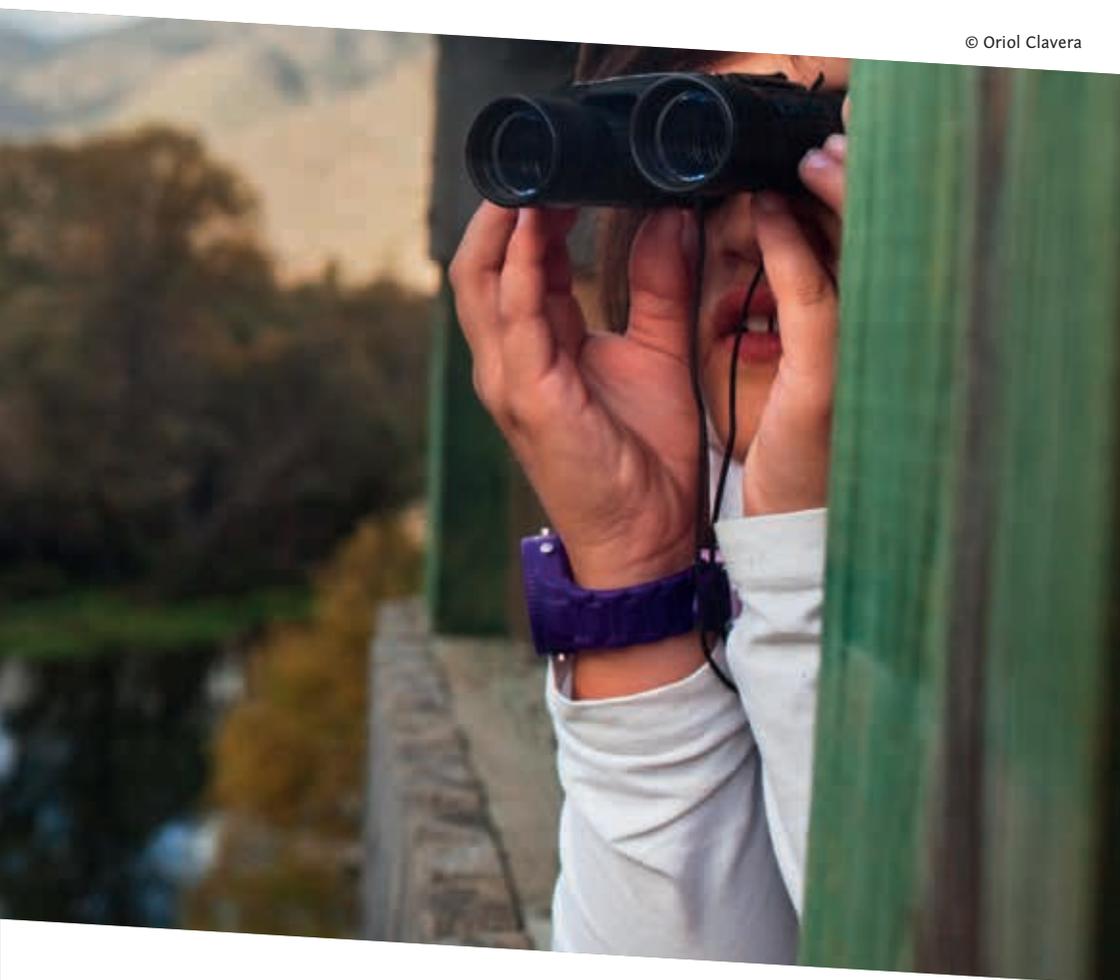


# L'Alt Pirineu Natural Park

## The most natural and unknown Pyrenees

L'Alt Pirineu Natural Park, the largest in Catalonia, occupies most of the north-eastern regions of El Pallars Sobirà and L'Alt Urgell, from the border with Val d'Aran to Andorra to the east and El Pallars Jussà to the south. It is the area of the Pyrenees with the highest peaks in Catalonia, where the brown bear still survives, which is a reflection of its wild and remote landscapes—a refuge for species such as the **Capercaillie**, the **Tengmalm's Owl**, the **Ptarmigan** and the **Bearded Vulture**. The park, which includes the valleys of Àneu, Cardós, Ferrera, Santa Magdalena and the Massís de l'Orri mountains, has great ethnological wealth and is the essence of the Pallars region.

© Oriol Clavera



L'Alt Pirineu Natural Park has some similarities with Aigüestortes and Sant Maurici, for example it has 87 different lakes and some of the highest peaks in the Pyrenees. However, it is also home to unique species such as the endemic Aurelio's rock lizard and the most important population of **Capercaillies** on the Iberian Peninsula, as well as a refuge for the brown bear, among other endangered species. The character of the natural park, which combines natural values with human uses, also reflects important cultural values, as it contains interesting popular architecture, Romanesque art and internationally renowned intangible heritage.

The visitor will find all the bird species of the Catalan high mountains, often in a very peaceful environment, which is quite remote in some areas, away from the usual tourist routes and therefore of great interest to birds. The size of the park means that there is a wide variety of environments and habitats, making this one of the best destinations in Catalonia for observing Pyrenean wildlife.



Capercaillie / *Tetrao urogallus*



Black Woodpecker / *Dryocopus martius*

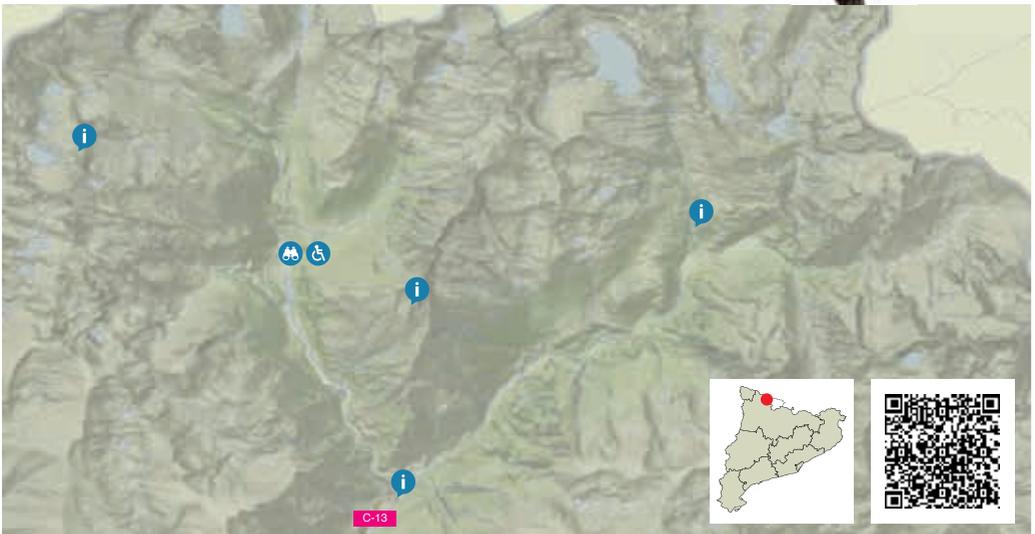
#### WHEN TO GO

Like all areas in the Pyrenees, it is more interesting to visit during the spring and summer for birdwatching. However, autumn provides the myriad shades of the deciduous forests, and the presence of all sedentary species in the forests and rivers as well as most birds of prey. Winter sees the arrival of the wintering species that come to Catalonia, such as the **Brambling**, the **Fieldfare** and the occasional **Wallcreeper** at lower altitudes.

## Spring and summer

The habitats in the Pyrenees vary a great deal depending on whether they are in the shade or the sun, and depend on the altitude. These are all factors that determine the landscape and by extension, the fauna that can be found there. At the bottom of the valley, the Noguera Pallaresa is home to nesting pairs of **Dippers**, which can be seen in the village of Llavorsí itself. **Mallards** share a habitat with otters in the marshes around Escalarre. Sometimes, another species of duck like the **Common Teal** or the **Pochard** nests here, and **Grey Wagtails** are a common sight. The riverside forests are the home of **Tits**, **Woodpeckers** and **Nuthatches**. A careful scrutiny of the sky will reveal birds of prey like the **Buzzard**, the **Golden Eagle**, the **Black Kite**, the **Red Kite**, the **Bearded Vulture**, **Griffon Vultures** and the **Egyptian Vulture**, which nests in the natural park. The sunnier slopes are home to **Rock Buntings** and **Cirl Buntings**, as well as **Bonelli's Warbler** and the **Red-backed Shrike** in more exposed areas. The vegetation on the edges of fields of crops is visited by the **Subalpine Warbler** and the **Eurasian Wryneck**, and the **Red-legged Partridge** can be seen at lower altitudes. The **Hawfinch** nests in some deciduous forests near the bottom of the valley. In areas with a mixture of cropland and Scots pine and mountain pine forests, the residents include **Spotted** and **Black Woodpeckers**, while the **Treecreeper** is usually found in higher areas, in the same habitat as **Tengmalm's Owls** and the **Capercaillie**. The **Eurasian Woodcock** can be heard in the mornings and evenings in some forests in the park, and the **Ring Ouzel** and the **Citril Finch** live where forests meet alpine meadows, and groups of **Crossbills** are also common. The highest areas are occupied by the **Grey Partridge** and **Ptarmigan**, as well as **Water Pipits** and **Northern Wheatears**.

Red-backed Shrike / *Lanius collurio*



## Winter

Road access to ski slopes and mountain passes can provide access to high altitudes that would otherwise require special equipment. Here it is possible to see the forest species that remain in the area all year round, as well as small groups of **Alpine Accentors** and even some **Snowfinches** in winter. The call of the **Tengmalm's Owl** can also be heard in shady areas at this time of year, and particularly in fir forests and mountain pine woodland.



© Servicios Editoriales Georama

Tengmalm's Owl / *Aegolius funereus*



## Nearby areas of interest

The Aigüestortes and Sant Maurici National Park is divided between the regions of El Pallars Sobirà, El Pallars Jussà, Val d'Aran and L'Alta Ribagorça. To the east is the El Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park, which can be reached from Sort through the pass of Port del Cantó and on the N-260 via La Seu d'Urgell.

## Tips

- Extreme precautions are necessary in high mountain areas. Find out information about the weather conditions, avalanche risks, and bear in mind that snow and cold make access difficult for much of the year, even in springtime.
- The park's specific regulations must be respected at all times. Visit the information centre, where detailed maps and other information are available.

## Discover the area

- The Fallas del Pallars Festival, UNESCO World Heritage
- Ethnological ecomuseums in El Pallars Sobirà
- Adventure sports in El Pallars Sobirà

## How to get there

The town of Llavorsí is 78 km from Lleida and 243 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 🚗 Take the C-16 motorway through the Cadí tunnel to Bellver de Cerdanya. Take the N-260 road to Sort. Take the C-13 to Llavorsí. Alternatively, to avoid tolls, take the A-2 to Cervera, the L-311 to Guissona and the L-313 to Ponts, the C-1412b over the Port de Comiols pass to Trepmp, and the C-123 and the N-260 to Llavorsí.
- 🚌 Take the bus run by the company Alsa - Alsina Graells (Tel. (+34) 902 330 400) ([www.alsa.es](http://www.alsa.es)) from Lleida or Pobla de Segur, as far as the Lleida - Pobla railway line (<http://lleidalapobla.fgc.cat>).



## Facilities and services

Download details of the opening hours and location of the main centres and information points in the natural park.

More information: <http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en/alt-pirineu/index>



Offices of L'Alt Pirineu Natural Park  
Carrer de la Riba, 1  
25595 Llavorsí  
Tel. (+34) 973 622 335

Office of L'Alt Pirineu Natural Park in Alt Urgell -  
Casa dels Parcs dels Pirineus  
Avinguda de les Valls d'Andorra, 33  
(The old Andorran Customs Building)  
25700 La Seu d'Urgell (Lleida)  
Tel. (+34) 973 360 954

Capercaillie / *Tetrao urogallus*



# Capçaleres del Ter i del Freser Natural Park

## The high Pyrenean mountains nearest the Mediterranean

The natural park, which covers the area of the headwaters of the rivers Ter and Freser was created in 2015, and is Catalonia's youngest. Located in the eastern Pyrenees, in the region of El Ripollès, it covers an area of more than 14,547 hectares, is bordered to the north by the French frontier and has peaks almost 3,000 metres high, such as Puigmal and Bastiments. These are the high mountains closest to the Mediterranean, with glacial peaks, cirques and gorges, as well as human uses linked to winter sports, religion and hiking in Vall de Núria.



The headwaters park is the only place in the Catalan high mountains where you can reach an altitude of 2,000 metres by train. First on traditional railway lines to Ribes de Freser, and from there by the rack railway to the sanctuary of Núria, in the middle of alpine mountain landscapes. This accessibility has earned it many enthusiasts among lovers of mountains and their flora and fauna. Beyond the valley of Núria is the Puigmal massif, the highest peak in the eastern Pyrenees (with an altitude of 2,910 metres), and the ridges that surround the cirque where the sanctuary is located: the peaks of Noufonts, Noucreus and Finestrelles. Apart from the valley, the entire Ter headwaters area is accessible from the village of Setcases, and from the entrance to the Vallter 2000 ski resort, where you can climb the peaks in the area and discover the source of the river Ter. As well as highland meadows and rocky environments, there are impressive forests containing both conifers and some deciduous trees, and mountain streams in the valleys that converge on the two rivers that give their name to the Park.

This area is interesting because of its combination of accessibility and the presence of Pyrenean and high mountain species. These include the **Bearded Vulture**, **Tengmalm's Owl**, **Capercaillie**, **Citril Finch**, **Rock Thrush**, **Ring Ouzel** and the **Water Pipit**, and on the higher peaks, the **Grey Partridge**, the **Ptarmigan** and the **Alpine Accentor**.



Crossbill / *Loxia curvirostra*



## WHEN TO GO

Like all the Pyrenean mountains, it is always better in spring and summer. In autumn and winter, it is possible to see some high-altitude species in the valleys, but the right equipment is needed in snowy weather.



Yellowhammer / *Emberiza citrinella*

## Spring and summer

Access to the high mountains is easy from various directions. Núria and Vallter are easy options. Another is the unpaved road between Queralbs and the Collada de Fontalba, at 2,070 metres above sea level. From there you can explore the alpine meadows in the area, climb Puigmal or walk on foot to the sanctuary of Núria. The track crosses various stages and types of vegetation, ranging from deciduous forests, forage meadows and forests of mountain pine and alpine meadows, and the going can be difficult at some times of year. Before you start the climb, the river Freser, before arriving at Queralbs, is home to the **Dipper** and the **Grey Wagtail**. In the surrounding forests the **Marsh Tit** and the **Nuthatch** can be seen, and the **Tawny Owl** can be heard at night. Various forest birds like the **Chiffchaff** and **Bonelli's Warbler** nest in the deciduous woodland, as well as the **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and the **Jay**. Species like the **Rock Thrush** and the **Rock Bunting** inhabit the higher areas, where marmots and hares can also be found. **Griffon Vultures**, **Short-toed Eagles** and **Golden Eagles** as well as the occasional **Bearded Vulture** may appear in the sky. The alpine meadows of this and other park areas are rich in **Citril Finches**, **Water Pipits** and **Northern Wheatears** which nest there. However, the **Alpine Accentor** and the **Ptarmigan** occupy the highest areas. The boundary between the mountain pine forest and alpine meadows is the habitat of the **Ring Ouzel** and the flock of black birds in the sky may be **Alpine Choughs** and **Choughs**. Access from the headwaters of the river Ter will also provide opportunities to see these and other species which inhabit the shadier woodlands, such as the **Tengmalm's Owl**, which also has pairs nesting in the area. In lower areas, among meadows, riverbanks and scattered groves, you may spot the **Red-backed Shrike**, the **Yellowhammer**, the **Mistle Thrush** and in some places, the **Whitethroat** and the **Whinchat**—species that in Catalonia nest in this type of mountain habitat. Exploring any area of the park is a pleasure for visitors to these mountainous environments and the species that live in them.



Ptarmigan / *Lagopus muta*

## Winter

Many of the birds that nest in the park's upper reaches are migratory and leave, such as the **Northern Wheatear**, or move to lower habitats, such as the **Water Pipit**. Birds of prey such as the **Bearded Vulture**, the **Golden Eagle** and **Griffon Vulture** can still be seen, as well as the **Dipper**, and flocks of **Crossbill** and **Citril Finches**. It is possible to see the **Snowfinch** and the **Alpine Accentor** at the sanctuary of Núria itself, or on the southern slope at the foot of the Puigmal massif, depending on the year and the amount of snow. Some **Fieldfares** also frequent these areas in winter.

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Water Pipit / *Cinclus cinclus*



Citril Finch / *Carduelis citrinella*

## Tips

- The utmost precautions are necessary in high mountain areas. Find out information about the weather conditions, avalanche risks, and bear in mind that snow and cold make access difficult for much of the year.
- Find out about the state of the unpaved roads and the possibility of access before travelling or planning routes in the area.
- In summer, you should protect yourself from the sun because the level of UV radiation can be much higher than on the beach, due to the altitude.

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## How to get there

Ribes de Freser is 98 km from Girona – Costa Brava airport and 118 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 🚗 Take the AP-7 motorway (Barcelona – La Jonquera). Leave at exit 2 (Vic – Puigcerdà). Take the C-17 to Ripoll. Take the N-152 to Ribes de Freser.
- 🚆 Take line L3 on the Rodalies de Catalunya railway network (L'Hospitalet – Vic – Puigcerdà) as far as the station at Ribes de Freser. Change to the Núria rack railway.

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## Facilities and services

More information: <http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en/ter-freser>

Capçaleres del Ter i del Freser Natural Park  
Information Centre  
Plaça de l'Ajuntament, 4  
17534 Queralbs  
Tel. (+34) 667 116 811

CEINR (Ripollès Consortium of Spaces of Natural Interest)  
C/ Sant Miquel, 44  
17534 Ribes de Freser  
Tel. (+34) 972 702 209

## Discover the area

- The Sanctuary of Núria (1,960 metres above sea level).
- Núria ski resort (10 ski slopes – 7 km skiable).
- The rack railway that links Ribes de Freser with the Núria ski resort.
- The Ripollès villages of Queralbs, Planoles and Ventolà
- The Monastery of Santa Maria de Ripoll and the Monastery of Sant Joan de las Abadesses



# Collegats and Boumort

## The kingdom of limestone cliffs and large birds of prey

The mountain ranges running parallel to the axial Pyrenees have more modest altitudes and large vertical walls due to their limestone structure. They are much warmer and Mediterranean in summer, and are home to large numbers of birds of prey, particularly **vultures**: the four species of European vultures (**Griffon**, **Cinereous**, **Bearded** and **Egyptian**) can be seen together in these marvellous areas that also provide refuge for many rock-dwelling species.

© José Luis Rodríguez



## Collegats

The Collegats gorge, divided between the regions of El Pallars Sobirà and El Pallars Jussà, is carved out by the Noguera Pallaresa river as it crosses the confluence of the rocks of Queralt and the Peracalç mountain range to the west, and Boumort to the east. The N-260 road passes through the 5-km gorge, and the old winding route has now been improved with several tunnels. The old road is now accessible on foot or by bicycle, and provides access to very attractive stretches of river and cliffs. One of them, Argenteria, inspired Gaudí to create the La Pedrera building in Barcelona. **Griffon Vultures** are ubiquitous, and you will need to look carefully when searching for a **Cinereous Vulture**, which are more frequently seen on the neighbouring mountain of Boumort. The **Bearded Vulture** can also be seen occasionally, and the **Egyptian Vulture** nests here. The **Peregrine Falcon** is also another of the predatory birds living in the cliffs in the area, and you should check the sky for birds of prey, because **Black Kites**, **Red Kites** and **Booted Eagles** may appear. The **Alpine Swift** nests in the walls of the gorge, as well as **Choughs** and **Alpine Choughs**. The **Blue Rock Thrush** is another special resident of the area. On the riverbank, you may spot **Dippers**, **Grey Wagtails**, and riverside forest birds such as **Long-tailed Tits** and even the occasional **Firecrest**. The **Crag Martin** is a regular visitor, and the **Wallcreeper** can be seen in winter.



Egyptian Vulture / *Neophron percnopterus*





## Sierra de Boumort

The walls of the Pessonada mountains can be seen from afar. The rock-dwelling birds of prey there are the same as those found in the Collegats gorge, but there is a greater likelihood of seeing the **Cinereous Vulture**. The area is very large and the population is small, and the Boumort and Carreu mountain ranges are important parts of the Boumort National Hunting Reserve, which is renowned for its amount of ungulates, particularly deer, which live there. Some forest paths go deep into the mountains, but a visit to the area around Pessonada can provide a view of many Mediterranean and rock-dwelling species including birds of prey—such as the **Golden Eagle** and the **Peregrine Falcon**—and **Bee-eaters**, **Great Spotted** and **Green Woodpeckers**, **Crag Martins**, **Blue Rock Thrushes**, **Woodchat Shrikes**, **Choughs**, **Ravens** and **Carrion Crows**, **Cirl Buntings** and **Rock Buntings**.



Cinereous Vulture / *Aegypius monachus*



Griffon Vulture / *Gyps fulvus*





# Els Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park

**The Iberian Peninsula's easternmost wetlands,  
deep in the country of the Tramuntana**

Els Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park is located in the extreme north-east of the Iberian Peninsula. Its location at the foot of the Eastern Pyrenees, in the Empordà region dominated by the Tramuntana wind, provides a combination of conditions that are ideal for watching migratory birds. The park has a good network of routes and hides for birdwatching. It contains large areas of coastal salt marshes with rivers, rushes, saltwort meadows and reed beds, as well as agricultural and pasture land and rice fields surrounded by trees, and paddocks. A sandy beach, temporarily closed during the breeding season to help the birds nest, lies between the wetlands and the Bay of Roses, which is also an area of interest for birdwatching. Riverside forests, inland areas with fresh water and crops.

© Miguel Angel Alvarez



The basically flat relief of the wetlands means that the paths are comfortable and accessible for all birdwatchers. The paths are located around coastal salt lagoons, which are surrounded by reeds, marshes, and riverside forests, and in open areas with very low vegetation in some cases. In this area, salty coastal waters meet areas flooded with fresh water, which unlike the coasts, may suffer from the effects of drought and lack of water, affecting the wildlife that lives there.



Pallid Harrier / *Circus macrourus*

However, it is possible to spot a wide variety of species in an area that is quite large by the standards of the Costa Brava. Its easterly position in Catalonia means that some migrant species are particularly regular visitors to this area. These include the **Little Crake**, the **Red-throated Pipit** and the **Red-footed Falcon**, as well as rare species such as the **Great Snipe** and the **Pallid Harrier**.



#### WHEN TO GO

The Mediterranean characteristics of the wetlands and difficulties with water management in the area mean that it is advisable to visit in winter and spring, when there will also be more species present and flooded areas. There may be large dry areas in summer, despite the fact that summer birds like the Roller and the Bee-eater will be present, as well as the always visible White Storks. Many migrants may arrive in autumn, but their quantity and diversity varies depending on the conditions of the habitats that can accommodate them.

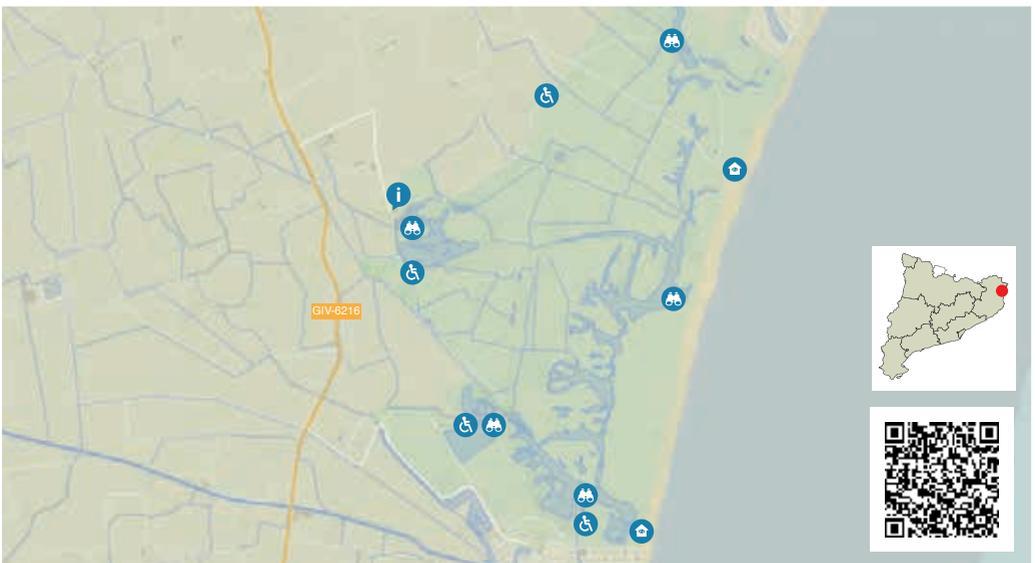
Nightingale / *Luscinia megarhynchos*



© Lluís Carro

## Spring

April is the month with the most diversity in any Catalan coastal wetland, although March and early May are also good. During this month, you may have the opportunity to see extensive bird migration, and even some late wintering species. There is a variety of seabirds on the coast, including **Cory's Shearwater**, the **Mediterranean Shearwater** and **Balearic Shearwater**, as well as **Mediterranean Shags** which can travel from Montgrí or the Cap de Creus to feed. The final wintering **Cormorants** are leaving the coastal lagoons. The **Purple Heron** and some **Egrets** can be seen all over the Park. The **Bittern**, once a regular visitor, now nests infrequently and in small numbers. Plentiful **White Storks** are already nesting, and their calls can be heard from El Cortalet, the park's information centre. It is possible to see some **Greater Flamingos** and groups of **ducks**, especially the local **Mallards**, as well as migrants on their way northwards that have been wintering here (**Common Teals**, **Shovelers**, **Northern Pintails**) and even some that will nest here (**Gadwalls** and **Garganeys**).



Every year, between March and April, the **Spotted Crake** (a regular visitor) and the **Little Crake** (a few birds every year) can be seen, and more infrequently, the **Baillon's Crake**, which has even nested here in some years.

Depending on the degree of flooding, the flooded Matà meadows will host **waders** and some **Squacco Herons**. You may see **Temminck's Stint** and some **Marsh Sandpipers**, among other more frequent waders, such as **Wood Sandpipers**, **Black-winged Stilts** and **Common Redshanks**.

Other species include the **White-winged Tern**, which may be accompanied by the **Whiskered Tern** in late April and May. In the meadows of Can Comes, you can see the **Eurasian Thick-knee** and birds found in open spaces such as the **Stonechat**, the **Wagtail** and the **Crested Lark**.

In the riverbank woods surrounding the canals, you can see the **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, which can even be seen from the El Cortalet car park. The nocturnal **Scops Owl** can even be heard during the day, and **Golden Orioles** sing in the paddocks. **Cetti's Warbler**, the **Sardinian Warbler** and **Fan-tailed Warblers** are common in all the usual environments, and those seeking migrant birds should look on the edges of paddocks and watch out for **Rollers** in more open spaces.

Eastern migrant species can often be seen in this area of L'Empordà if the winds are favourable. At these times, they become places where rare species concentrate, including the **Red-throated Pipit**, **Red-footed Falcon**, the **Pallid Harrier** and other rarer birds such as the **Great Snipe**. The long list of species seen in the area bears witness to this.

## Autumn

Autumn can also be interesting, but it depends on the level of flooding in the various areas and their capacity to host species such as **waders**, which have historically included rare or scarce species. There will be passerines passing through the riverside forests, marginal areas and wooded areas further inland, and some **Common Cranes** that have come to winter will arrive in late autumn, around November.



Red-footed Falcon / *Falco vespertinus*



### Winter

A phenomenon almost exclusively seen in the Bay of Roses adjoining the Aiguamolls is the wintering of **loons**, especially the **Arctic Loon**, but sometimes the other two as well: the **Common Loon** and the **Red-throated Loon**. Birdwatchers should check the bay from the beach at Can Comes when searching for these species, as well as **Razorbills**, **Great Crested Grebes** and **Shearwaters**, particularly the **Balearic** and **Mediterranean** varieties. There may be groups of **Dunlins** and **Grey Plovers** on the beach.

The lagoons are home to a variable number of **ducks**, above all **Mallards**, and **Common Teals** as well as a regular flock of **Greylag Geese**. Among the birds of prey, apart from **Buzzards** and **Common Kestrels**, there may be the occasional young **Bonelli's Eagle**, among other species. Regular passerine species include the **Reed Bunting**, **Water Pipit** and **Meadow Pipit**, and depending on the year, the occasional **Richard's Pipit** in the meadows between Can Comes and La Muga. The **Moustached Warbler** can be seen in reeds, especially in the Tec and Palau de Baix lakes.



Little Crane / *Porzana parva*

### Nearby areas with additional species

Visitors spending a few days in the area are strongly advised to complement their visit to the Aiguamolls with others to the neighbouring natural areas of Cap de Creus, Montgrí, the Medes islands and Baix Ter and the Albera mountains. The Cap de Creus and the Albera mountains contain species including the **Short-toed Eagle**, **Tawny Pipit**, **Black-eared Wheatear**, **Orphean Warbler**, **Thekla's Lark**, **Dartford Warbler**, **Ortolan Bunting**, **Cirl Bunting** and the **Rock Bunting**. See the relevant dossier for the Montgrí area.

White Stork / *Ciconia ciconia*



Red-throated Pipit / *Anthus cervinus*



## Tips

- Mosquito repellent is required in the summer and autumn.
- Larger groups or those with special needs should contact the park before their visit.
- Parking at the El Cortalet Centre is subject to payment.

## How to get there

The Aiguamolls are 61 km from Girona – Costa Brava airport, and 147 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 📍 Take the Barcelona – La Jonquera AP-7 motorway. Leave at exit 4 (Figueres). Take the road to Roses as far as Castelló d'Empúries. At the crossroads, head to the natural park along the GIV-6216 road.
- 🚌 The company Sarfa (Tel. (+34) 902 302 025) operates a regular line that connects Barcelona with Figueres. From Figueres, take the bus run by the same company that goes to Castelló d'Empúries. The El Cortalet information centre is 3.4 km from the roundabout at the entrance to the village.
- 🚆 Take lines R11 and RG1 on the Rodalies de Catalunya railway network (Barcelona – Girona – Figueres – Portbou). From Figueres, you need your own vehicle, or take the bus to Castelló d'Empúries.

## Facilities and services

There are 30 observation points, of which 14 are hides, in Els Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park.

More information: <http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en/aiguamolls-emporda>

- ♿ The park is accessible to people with a wheelchair and reduced mobility. Most signposted paths are adapted and accessible for people with reduced mobility and physical disabilities.

The information centre and permanent exhibitions are fully accessible.

- ♿ More information on accessibility:  
[www.turismeperatothom.catalunya.com](http://www.turismeperatothom.catalunya.com)

## Discover the area

- The archaeological site of Empúries, L'Escala.
- The cathedral at Castelló d'Empúries.
- The city of Girona. Old town, cathedral quarter, Jewish quarter.
- Cap Roig, Porta Ferrada, Torroella de Montgrí and Peralada summer music festivals on the Costa Brava.



El Cortalet Information Centre  
Ctra. de Sant Pere Pescador a  
Castelló d'Empúries, km 13  
17486 Castelló d'Empúries  
Tel. (+34) 972 454 222

*At El Cortalet, there is a documentation centre, a small shop with items of interest for the naturalist, and temporary and permanent exhibitions. There are signposted paths in the park, and further information is available on its website.*



# Cap de Creus Natural Park

## The habitat of sea and rock-dwelling birds

The Cap de Creus peninsula is located in the north-eastern corner of Catalonia, and the area protected as a natural park includes areas on land and in the sea, with the islets of Massa d'Oros and Encalladora, and inland valleys and mountain ranges, as far as the Serra de Verdera mountain range. Its seaside location and the varied underwater relief, with deep underwater canyons just a short distance from the coast, mean that it is an excellent place for watching seabirds, and even cetaceans, close-up or in passing. The Tramuntana wind also plays an important role in this marvellous place for watching bird migration, and may lead birds to gather in the area.

© Oriol Alamany



The Cap de Creus is where the Pyrenees meet the Mediterranean. The geological landscape near the sea is spectacular, and is worth a visit in its own right. It is the most comprehensive example of metamorphic rock in Catalonia. There are also folds and erosive rocks, which in some places form rocky areas of great aesthetic value. The vegetation is determined by the relief, the regular Tramuntana northerly wind, which prevents the forest from growing vertically in many places, and the salt water of the sea in the more coastal areas. There is a significant presence of Mediterranean scrubland and rocky coastal plants along the coastline in much of the area. Forest fires have shaped the vegetation, but some pine and cork oak forests still remain.

Although they are sometimes far away and suitable optical equipment is useful, the Cap de Creus is a good place to observe seabirds, as well as large numbers of migrating birds on days of heavy migration, and especially to combine all of the above with the opportunity to see Mediterranean species, such as the **Pallid Swift**, the **Orphean Warbler** and **Spectacled Warbler**, the **Black-eared Wheatear**, the **Ortolan Bunting**, the **Thekla's Lark** and **Bonelli's Eagle**.

### *Spring and summer*

From late March onwards, you can see the first trans-Saharan migrants, such as the first **Short-toed Eagles**, and the first **Woodchat Shrikes**. On the coast there will be **seagulls** wintering on their way northwards, as well as **Mediterranean Gulls** and **Black-headed Gulls**, but there may also be large groups of **Shearwaters**—**Balearic**, **Mediterranean** and the first flocks of **Cory's Shearwater**. The Cap de Creus is one of the best places to observe these three species together. Other marine species also pass through the area during the spring, including the **European Storm-Petrel**, the **Pomarine Skua Arctic Skua**, and the **Great Skua**, the **Razorbill**, the **Puffin** and the late wintering **Northern Gannets**, which can be seen until April.



Balearic Shearwater / *Puffinus mauretanicus*

### **WHEN TO GO**

It is especially interesting during the migration season, in late spring, when you can spot the summer species, and in the autumn. However, you can also see some interesting species in winter, and enjoy the spectacular landscapes during a northerly coastal storm, for example.

Resident species such as the **Eagle Owl** and **Bonelli's Eagle** are in the middle of nesting at this time of year. The **Lesser Kestrel** used to nest here, and some specimens can still be seen. Other species that normally arrive in April are the **Pallid Swift**, which is easy to see in El Port de la Selva, Cadaqués and Roses, the **Alpine Swift**, the **Thekla's Lark** and the **Crag Martin**. The **Red-rumped Swallow** also nests here, and the **Tawny Pipit** can be spotted in areas such as the Pla de Gates, near the cove of Cala Montjoi, where the **Black-eared Wheatear** and the **Rock Thrush** are also present. Its relative the **Blue Rock Thrush** is present all year round, and can also be seen near the headland of the cape.

Eagle Owl / *Bubo bubo*



**Warblers** are plentiful at the Cap de Creus, since there is also plenty of their scrubland habitat. The **Sardinian Warbler** and the **Dartford Warbler** are present all year round. Apart from migrating **Subalpine Warblers**, the Cap de Creus hosts large populations of **Orphean Warblers** (in areas with scattered trees) and **Spectacled Warblers**—a migrant that has already arrived in March. **Woodchat Shrikes** and **Rock Sparrows** are also species that live in these rocky habitats.

Dartford Warbler / *Sylvia undata*



### Autumn

The migration at the cape is interesting. Apart from small birds seeking refuge in valleys such as Montjoi to get their strength back, there are a great deal of migrating birds, and the opportunity to see birds of prey passing through. You may spot **Eleonora's Falcon** between July and September, **Booted Eagles**, **Black Kites**, and a large number of passerines, from some of the passes or from the Cap de Creus headland, on days of heavy migration.

### Winter

Mediterranean species such as the **Blue Rock Thrush**, the **Crag Martin**, the **Dartford Warbler** and the **Thekla's Lark** are sedentary and can be seen in winter, as well as birds like the **Black Redstart**, which are more numerous in winter than in the breeding season. It is interesting to watch seabirds from the cape, and they may even include the **Kittiwake** among the frequent **Yellow-legged Gulls**, and the regular **Sandwich Terns**, **Cormorants**, **Mediterranean Shags** and **Northern Gannets**. The **Alpine Accentor** is a regular visitor from November onwards, in the area around Sant Pere de Rodes and Sant Salvador de Verdera, as well as the **Wallcreeper**, although the latter is much more infrequent.

Cormorant / *Phalacrocorax carbo*



Spectacled Warbler / *Sylvia conspicillata*

## Tips

- Bear in mind that the northerly Tramuntana wind can blow very strongly at certain times of year.

## How to get there

- 🚆 Lines R11 and RG1 of the Rodalies de Catalunya railway network (Barcelona – Figueres – Portbou). From Figueres, you will need your own vehicle or take the Sarfa bus to Llança.
- 🚗 The Cap de Creus (El Port de la Selva) is 81 km from Girona – Costa Brava airport and 167 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 📍 Take the Barcelona – La Jonquera AP-7 motorway. Leave at exit 4 (Figueres). Take the N-260 to Llança. Take the road to El Port de la Selva, and then to the monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes. To reach the Cap de Creus headland, go to Cadaqués and follow the directions to the lighthouse.
- 🚌 The company Sarfa (Tel. (+34) 902 302 025) operates a regular line that connects Barcelona with Figueres and with the municipalities of Llança, Roses and Cadaqués

## Facilities and services

More information: <http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en/cap-creus>

Cap de Creus Natural Park Information Centre  
The Abbot's Palace  
The Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes  
17489 El Port de la Selva  
Tel. (+34) 972 193 191



Yellow-legged Gull / *Larus michahellis*

## Discover the area

- The Creu de Cobertella prehistoric dolmen, near Roses.
- The Ciutadella fortification, Roses.
- Gala and Dalí's House in Portlligat, Cadaqués.
- The Romanesque monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes.
- The medieval village of Peralada and its castle.
- The Dalí Theatre-Museum, Figueres.



Mediterranean Shearwater /  
*Puffinus yelkouan*



# Montgrí, Illes Medes i Baix Ter Natural Park

## Coastal cliffs, islands and wetlands in El Baix Empordà

El Montgrí, les Illes Medes i el Baix Ter Natural Park, on the coast of El Baix Empordà, combines rocky coastal habitats, with the imposing coastal cliffs of Montgrí, Catalonia's largest marine islands (the Medes), and the sandy coast of the Ter bay, which contains coastal wetlands, the mouth of the river Ter, riparian forests and crops with Catalonia's northernmost rice fields. This wealth of landscapes is home to a remarkable diversity of birds that includes seabirds, birds of prey and a wide variety of aquatic birds.



With three distinct types of landscape, this area in the northern part of El Baix Empordà combines wetlands, mountains and islands in a single protected natural area. The Medes islands are famous for their seabed, which is a renowned scuba diving area. However, it is also home to interesting bird species, and the second largest colony of **Yellow-legged Gulls** in Catalonia. The Montgrí coast is also home to nesting seabirds, such as the **Mediterranean Shag** and **Peregrine Falcons** that nest there, but it extends inland with Mediterranean habitats where **Bonelli's Eagle**, the **Roller** and the **Rock Sparrow** make their home. The Baix Ter wetlands and rice fields are very interesting in the migration season and in winter, when they can host large groups of **Lapwings**, as well as other waders such as the **Eurasian Curlew**, the **Ruff** and the **Snipe**. However, the increasingly regular presence of rare species is also a pleasure for visiting ornithologists.



© Servicios Editorials Georama



Pallid Swift / *Apus pallidus*

### WHEN TO GO

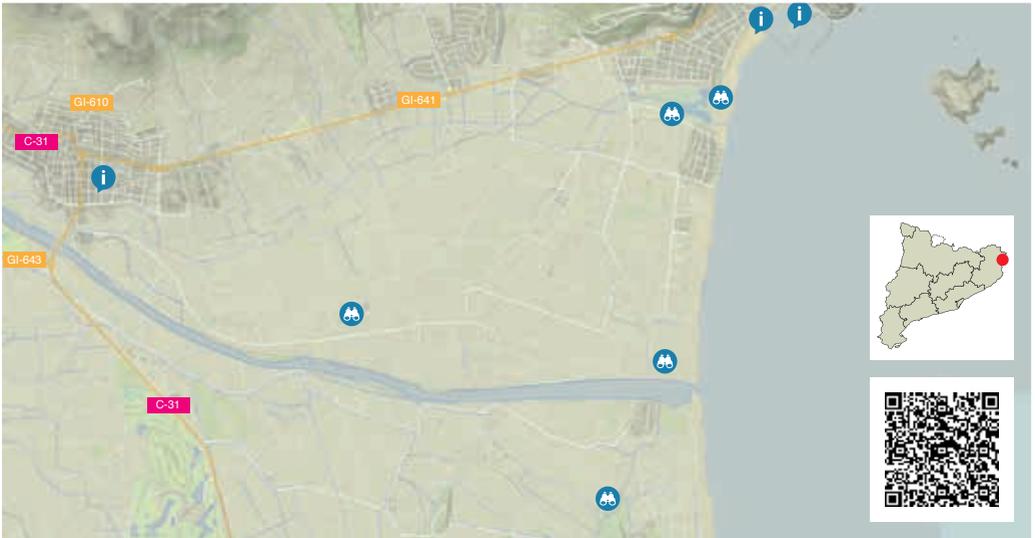
The area is interesting all year round, although the height of summer, when it receives the most tourism, is the least attractive time. Migrations attract birds passing through, seabirds winter on the coast and in flooded areas, and Mediterranean species nest here during the breeding season.

Mediterranean Storm-petrel /  
*Hydrobates pelagicus melitensis*



## Winter

The Ter bay is interesting in winter for seabirds. Every night sees the influx of **Yellow-legged Gulls** from inland, which go to sleep on the Medes islands. Between 8,000 and 12,000 are recorded every January in one of the largest concentrations of gulls in Catalonia in winter. With them are dozens of **Cormorants**, some **Sandwich Terns**, and variable numbers of **Black-headed Gulls** occupy the areas around the beaches



of L'Estartit and the Medes islands, where the **Mediterranean Shag** may have already begun to nest in December. In the bay, you should look out for **Loons**, with **Common** or **Arctic** being the most usual, but there may also be **Red-Throated Loons**. The **Mediterranean** and **Balearic Shearwater**, as well as the **Northern Gannet**, which fishes further offshore, are more commonly seen. The Baix Ter wetlands host the **Bittern** in some years. With them are an increasing but variable number of ducks, and particularly **Mallards**. The **Reed Bunting**, **Penduline Tits** and the **Common Kingfisher** may visit the reeds and lagoons, which might also conceal the **Moustached Warbler**. **Grey Herons**, **White Storks** and sometimes some **Black Storks** can be seen in the rice fields and marshes. The **Buzzard**, the **Harrier** and the occasional **Hen Harrier** are sometimes seen in the Baix Ter region, while **Bonelli's Eagle** frequents Montgrí, where it nests in the spring. The **Lapwing** is a common sight in rice fields, where there may also be **Eurasian Curlews**, the **Common Greenshank**, the **Snipe**, the odd **Sandpiper** or **Ruff**, with **Green Sandpipers** in the canals. The sedentary **Hoopoe** can be seen in the warmest places, and the **Meadow Pipit** and **Rock Pipit** join **White Wagtails**, **Reed Bunting**, **House Sparrows**,

© Ricard Gutiérrez  
Mediterranean Shag /  
*Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*



**Chaffinches** and **Corn Buntings** in the fields to varying degrees. Numerous rare birds have been observed in the Baix Ter area in late autumn and winter, including the **Red-footed Booby**, **Richard's Pipit**, the **Olive-backed Pipit** and the **Rock Pipit**, the **Dusky Warbler** and the **Siberian Chiffchaff**, the **Lesser Yellowlegs** and the **Sociable Lapwing**, as well as the **Spotted Eagle**, so it is always advisable to be alert for all the species in the area and make a careful note of what you see.

### *Spring and summer*

Although the **gulls** have not yet begun to nest in March and April, the **Mediterranean Shag**, which rears its young on the Montgrí coast and on the Medes islands, have just finished doing so. From Cap de la Barra, in L'Estartit, looking northwards, you can see birds flying from their nests to the cliffs of the Montgrí. There is a colony of herons on the Medes islands, as well as **Little Egrets**, **Black-crowned Night-Herons**, **Cattle Egrets** and a few **Squacco Heron**. They hide their nests in the vegetation to avoid predators, in the form of the 7,000 pairs of **Yellow-legged Gull** that nest on the islands. The other seabird present during the breeding season is the **Mediterranean Storm-Petrel**, which is normally nocturnal and is difficult to spot from the coast. In the spring, there may also be large numbers of **Shearwater** of all three species (**Mediterranean**, **Balearic** and **Cory's**) as well as species less commonly seen in the area, such as the **Little Gull** and the **Mediterranean Gull**. There are several pairs of **Peregrine Falcon** all along the Montgrí coast, and on the impregnable Cavall Bernat, on the Medes islands. It shares the sky with the fast **Pallid Swifts**, **Little Swifts** and **Alpine Swifts**. On the beaches of the Ter, there is a small but constantly recovering population of nesting **Killdeer**, particularly in the area around the river Ter and the coastal wetlands. **Black-winged Stilts**, the **Little Ringed Plover** and the **Eurasian Thick-knee** also nest in the park. **Black Kites**, **Golden Orioles**, **Common Nightingales** and **Penduline Tits** can be found on the banks of the Ter. Common Mediterranean species are seen in rockier and inland areas, with the **Blue Rock Thrush** and the **Rock Sparrow** in the rockier areas and **Tits**, **Treecreepers**, **Jays** and **Cirl Buntings** in more open areas.



### *Autumn*

From June onwards, you can see **Eleonora's Falcon** on the banks of the Ter, particularly near Verges. Migrating waders also take to the rice fields after they have been harvested and flooded. Migrating groups of **Yellow Wagtails** also pass through. Some of these will have nested, and wintering, marine, terrestrial and wetland birds will gradually arrive, with the groups of **Grey Herons**, **Egrets** and **Storks** which frequent the Baix Ter wetlands.

## Tips

- The northerly Tramuntana wind is not as strong as in Cap de Creus, but may still blow strongly in the Montgrí area and on the Medes islands.
  - Disembarking on the Medes islands is not permitted. However, they can be visited from the sea in glass-bottomed boats or in a kayak.
  - Access to the Montgrí area by motor vehicle may be restricted during the summer in the event of a fire hazard.
- 

## How to get there

L'Estartit is 53 km from Girona – Costa Brava airport, and 140 km from Barcelona via the AP-7 motorway.

### FROM BARCELONA:

🚗 Take the Barcelona – La Jonquera AP-7 motorway. Leave at exit 6 (Girona N/Olot/Banyoles). Take the N-IIa until you have passed Medinyà. Take the Gi-633 road to Torroella de Montgrí. Take the Gi-641 road to L'Estartit for the Montgrí coast, the Medes and the wetlands of the Pletera. Take the C-31 road towards Pals through the rice fields of the Baix Ter and the Les Basses d'en Coll wetlands.

🚌 Buses ([www.ampsa.org](http://www.ampsa.org)) link Girona and Flaçà with L'Estartit. The Barcelona – Figueres – Portbou train stops at Flaçà, 16 km from L'Estartit.

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## Facilities and services

El Montgrí, les Illes Medes i el Baix Ter Natural Park  
Passeig del Port, s/n  
Espigó de Llevant  
17258 L'Estartit  
Tel. (+34) 972 751 701

More information: <http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en/illes-medes>

## Discover the area

- Montgrí Castle, in Torroella de Montgrí
- The Villages of Pals and Peratallada
- The Iberian village of Ullastret



Cattle Egret / *Bubulcus ibis*



# Estany d'Ivars, Bellmunt and Belianes

## **A wetland in the middle of drylands on the plain and the Bellmunt mountain range**

The lake of Ivars i Vila-sana is located in the middle of the plain of Lleida, where cereals are cultivated. This lagoon was restored a few years ago, and is home to several species found in reed and permanent wetlands, as well as some with marsh and riverside forest habitats. There are species with steppe habitats just a few kilometres away, which in Europe are only found on the Iberian Peninsula. The combination of these two factors means that it is possible to spot a large number of species in a short space of time.



The lagoon is an endorheic basin about two kilometres long and almost one kilometre wide. There is a lot of marsh vegetation in the middle, such as reed beds, rushes, and some small islets. There is a path around it with three hides and an observation tower. Away from the lagoon, there are irrigated and dryland crops, which are home to species that are typical of these environments, and which house one of the few nesting populations of **Lapwings** in Catalonia. The dryland area of Belianes is 7 km away, which has an excellent range of dryland steppe ecosystems, with very interesting native flora and **Partridges**, **Little Bustards**, **Northern Long-eared Owls** and **Red-necked Nightjars**. To the north, the Bellmunt mountains combine cereal drylands with scrubland of great interest to species such as the **Little Bustard**, the **Lesser Kestrel** and **Montagu's Harrier**.



Little Bustard / *Tetrax tetrax*



Red-necked Nightjar /  
*Caprimulgus ruficollis*

#### WHEN TO GO

All the migrant species that come from Africa arrive in spring, the summer is hot and can be stuffy around the lake, while in winter it may be cooler on the plain than in the surrounding mountains because of the bucket effect, and fog may make an appearance. However, the birdlife is complementary and varied, and changes throughout the year, meaning that this area is always worth a visit.



Lesser Kestrel / *Falco naumanni*

### Spring and summer

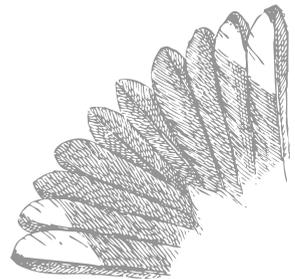
Some wintering birds still mix with the first migrants of summer in late March and early April. These include **Black-winged Stilts**, some of the few waders which nest in the lagoon. You can also spot **Common Little Bitterns**, of which a few couples nest here, **Purple Herons** and **Black-crowned Night-Herons**, which join the also sedentary **Grey Herons**. Pairs of nesting **White Stork** occupy the nests that they have built around the edges of the lake.



In the surrounding area you can also see specimens of **Montagu's Harrier**, and there are some breeding pairs within a few kilometres of the lagoon. On the paths around the lake, and in the drier areas, in the evenings it is also easy to spot the **Red-necked Nightjar** and the **Northern Long-eared Owl**, the **Common Barn-owl** and the **Scops Owl**, which also nest here. Watch out for doves, as the occasional **Eurasian Collared-dove** frequents the area around the lake. The passerines include the plentiful **Cetti's Warbler** and the **Fan-tailed Warbler**, as well as some pairs of **Penduline Tit**, which nest in the poplars at the lagoon and in the surrounding area. The **Bearded Tit** nested here one year, and visits sporadically in winter. The **Moustached Warbler** has also nested here, although it is more commonly seen in Utxesa. The song of the **Melodious Warbler** is also frequently heard in the brambles around the lake, as it is a typical and characteristic species of this wetland.

Among the resident species, the easiest to see after breeding is over include the **Purple Gallinule**, which has colonised the lake, and a few breeding pairs live there.

A colony of **Black-headed Gulls** settles on an island in the lake during the spring. It is one of the few places in Catalonia where there is a large colony of this species, but nevertheless it is declining due to the intense pressure from predators it suffers from every year. Around the colony in spring, it is not unusual to see the occasional **Mediterranean Gull** and the **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, as well as the increasingly more



common **Yellow-legged Gulls**, which have increased from one nesting pair in 2006, to between 50 and 70 in 2015. Nevertheless, the population of **Great Crested Grebes** remains constant, at between 20 to 30 breeding pairs. The **Little Grebe** nests here in small numbers and the **Black-necked Grebe** has done so in the past. Small numbers of **Red-crested Pochards**, **Shovelers**, **Gadwalls** and **Pochards** breed here, and the **Harrier** regularly nests here.

## Belianes

From May onwards, a visit to the dryland of Belianes, just 7 km from the lake at Ivars, will enable you to spot interesting species such as the **Lesser Kestrel**, the **Eurasian Hobby**, the **Little Bustard**, the **Eurasian Thick-knee**, the **Great Spotted Cuckoo**, the **Roller** and the **Bee-eater**. There are plenty of **Calandra Larks** and **Thekla's Larks**. However, the **Calandra Lark** can also be seen in winter by the croplands near Ivars lake.

Others interesting resident species are the **Red-legged Partridge**, the **Stock Dove**, the **Sardinian Warbler** and the **Southern Grey Shrike**. During the migration season, it is possible to see rarer species such as the **Red-footed Falcon** and the rarer **Pallid Harrier**.



## Bellmunt

The Bellmunt area is home to breeding pairs of **Little Bustard**, **Montagu's Harrier** and the **Hen Harrier** has been reported as nesting here. It is an interesting area for spotting the **Great Grey Shrike**, the **Little Owl**, the **Black-eared Wheatear**, and the **Lesser Kestrel** and **Great Spotted Cuckoo** also nest here. Its elevated position also makes it ideal for spotting birds of prey from a distance, which may include **Griffon Vultures**, **Short-toed Eagles** and even **Astores** and **Sparrowhawks**.



## Autumn and winter

Like all wetlands, Ivars has a fluctuating population of aquatic birds that winter there. There are also birds passing through, which in recent years have included rare species in the lake's trees and on the banks, such as the **Yellow-browed Warbler** and the **Little Bunting**. As elsewhere on the Lleida plain, it is necessary to take into account the possible presence of fog that may make spotting some birds difficult, but there is a wide variety and plenty of European wintering birds. Interesting species may include waders such as the **Jack Snipe** in temporarily flooded areas, the **Common Kingfisher**, various species of duck, the **Bluethroat** and the **Little Gull**.

## How to get there

The village of Ivars is 39 km from the city of Lleida and 132 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 📍 Take the Barcelona – Lleida AP-2 motorway. Leave at exit 496 (Bellpuig – Ivars).
- 🚌 Bus 111 links Ivars d’Urgell with Mollerussa and Lleida on weekdays and Saturdays (<http://www.atmlleida.cat/en/>).
- 🚆 Take line R12 on the Rodalies de Catalunya railway network (Barcelona – Manresa – Lleida). From Mollerussa you can catch bus 111 to Ivars d’Urgell (see timetables).
- 🗺️ To access the Belianes area, take the LP-2015 road between Bellpuig and Belianes. To access the Bellmunt drylands, go to the town of Bellmunt d’Urgell and take the LV-3027 towards Montgai and explore the surrounding area.

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## Facilities and services

There is a viewpoint and three hides on the lake at Ivars. The entire route is wheelchair accessible. There are information points in the car parks at the lake.

More information: <http://www.estanyivarsvilasana.cat/?lang=en>

Estany d’Ivars i Vila-sana Consortium  
Tel. (+34) 973 711 313  
[estany@plaugell.cat](mailto:estany@plaugell.cat)

## Discover the area

- The Tàrrrega street theatre festival (September).
- The castles of El Segarra and Sió.





# Mas de Melons, Alfés and Utxesa

## Endangered wetland and dryland species

The drylands in the south of the province of Lleida include the Mas de Melons Nature Reserve, Catalonia's first protected dryland area, and all the steppe areas between it and the area around the rivers Segre and Cinca, including unique places such as the Timoneda d'Alfés thyme shrub land, the only place in Catalonia where **Dupont's Lark** survives, and one of the most important wetlands in the country, Utxesa, which is home to endangered species such as the **Eastern Iberian Reed Bunting** (the Iberian Mediterranean strain of the Reed Bunting), the **Bearded Tit**, the **Moustached Warbler** and the **Bittern**.



Mas de Melons lies between two Mediterranean dryland habitats. On one side, there are high ridges, with valleys and hollows with rocky outcrops and walls that are frequented by species such as the **Eagle Owl**, the **Stock Dove** and the **Black Wheatear**, and wooded slopes that are home to Mediterranean forest species and ridges with **Warblers**, including some pairs of **Orphean Warblers**. On the other, there are flatter dryland areas, which are the habitat of the **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, the **Eurasian Thick-knee**, the **Roller**, the **Tawny Pipit**, the **Great Spotted Cuckoo**, the **Bee-eater**, the **Red-necked Nightjar**, **Calandra**, **Crested** and **Lesser Short-toed Larks**, with small valleys and shrub land where you can spot the **Dartford Warbler**, the **Spectacled Warbler** and the **Great Grey Shrike**.

There are plenty of larks on the plains of Alfés, and as well as **Dupont's Lark**, you can see the **Little Bustard**, the **Eurasian Thick-knee** and the **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**.

Utxesa is a reservoir where an extensive reed bed has grown in the areas where it has been flooded, where you can find species typical of this habitat. The riverside trees that surround it are home to species such as the **Penduline Tit**, the **Black Kite** and the **Golden Oriole**.



Calandra Lark / *Melanocorypha calandra*

Moustached Warbler / *Panurus biarmicus*

## WHEN TO GO

Spring is the best time of year, as all the Mediterranean flora is in bloom and the drylands are filled with the calls of **Calandra Larks**, **Crested Larks** and **Short-toed Larks**, and the most interesting birds have arrived on their migration from Africa, with **Lesser kestrels**, **Rollers**, **Bee-eaters**, **Great Spotted Cuckoos** and **Black-eared Wheatears** adding to the resident population of **Black Wheatears**, **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, **Calandra Larks** and **Eagle Owls**. In summer, you will need to rise early, as the birds' activity tails off in the midday heat. There is less activity in the drylands in the autumn and winter, which are filled with **Finches** and **Larks**, but the wetlands of Utxesa host migrating and wintering birds.

### Spring and summer

The activity of the breeding herons in Utxesa begins with the **Grey Heron**, which is followed by the **Black-crowned Night-Heron** and the **Purple Heron**, the **Cattle Egret** and the **Little Egret**. The **Mute Swan** nests here, but the introduction of the **Wels catfish** has put an end to the nesting activities of other smaller birds such as the **Great Crested Grebe**. In some areas further away from the **Wels catfish**, there are **Water Rails**, **Little Grebes** and **Coots**. The bird life in the reed beds is very interesting, and it is one of the world's last refuges for the **Eastern Iberian Reed Bunting**, a strain of **Reed Bunting** native to this country, which is distinguished from other varieties of **Reed Bunting** by its strong beak. With them, some pairs of **Moustached Warblers** nest here, as well as plenty of **Reed Warblers** and **Great Reed Warblers**. The **Bearded Tit** has its primary and almost exclusive habitat in Catalonia here. It may form small groups and its bright colour stands out in the midst of the green reed beds of spring. **Harriers** and **Black Kites** nest in the reserve, and the surrounding agricultural area hosts **Eurasian Collared-doves**, **Cuckoos**, **Bee-eaters**, **Hoopoes** and **Choughs**. In the drylands, during the breeding season you can hear the song of birds such as all the larks, including **Dupont's Lark** in Alfés, **Calandra**

**Larks**, the **Crested Lark**, the **Thekla's Lark** and **Lesser Short-toed Larks** and the **Short-toed Lark**. The **Tottavilla** can be found in the highest parts of **Mas de Melons**, as it is a bird that prefers higher slopes to the plain. There are strong contingents of typical dryland birds such as the **Little Bustard**, the **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse**, the **Roller**, the **Bee-eater**, the **Great Spotted Cuckoo**, the **Lesser Kestrel** and the **Black-eared Wheatear**. **Montagu's Harrier** is less common in this area than around **Ivars**, but it can also be seen. At night, the **Eurasian Thick-knee**, the **Eagle Owl**, **Little Owls** and **Red-necked Nightjars** predominate in the birdsong, although the **Scops Owl** occupies the banks of rivers such as the **Set**. Most of the **Starlings** are **Spotless**, and you should watch the sky carefully, because as well as **buzzards**, **Short-toed Eagles** are not uncommon and nest in the area.



### *Autumn and winter*

Once the summer birds have left, migrants and wintering birds take their place. The migration of **Common Cranes** across these Lleida plains is the heaviest in Catalonia, and is a regular occurrence in the autumn. There are also flocks of **White Storks** from central Europe, as well as the local storks from the plain of Lleida which sometimes also include **Black Storks**. Scattered subadult specimens of the **Golden Eagle** and **Bonelli's Eagle** may rest on the Lleida plains during the winter, mainly at Mas de Melons and Alfés thanks to the

abundance of available prey, including **Red-legged Partridges** and rabbits. The **Merlin** winters in the area every year, and every small hawk needs to be looked at carefully, as **Common Kestrels** aside, it could be a Merlin. The sedentary **Blue Rock Thrush**, **Thekla's Lark** and **Black Wheatear** persist in the rocky areas, and flocks of **Jackdaws** and **Choughs** give the places where they gather a special atmosphere. At Utxesa, the **Bittern** can be seen in the evening and night, when it is joined by the **Cormorants** that have come to spend the winter in the area. The number

of **ducks** varies, and the most common, apart from the **Mute Swan**, is the **Mallard**. **Black Kites** are replaced by **Red Kites** as winter progresses. Flocks of **Chaffinches**, **Linnets**, **Serins**, **Meadow Pipits** and **Larks** arrive, as do **Song Thrushes**, with some **Redwings** and depending on the year, **Fieldfares** to spend the winter. While the spring sees an explosion in the numbers of migrant species arriving from Africa, in the winter it is home to large numbers of birds with a remarkable diversity, which always makes visiting these areas a pleasant experience.



Hoopoe / *Upupa epops*



Orphean Warbler / *Sylvia hortensis*

## Tips

- The Lleida drylands is a habitat with extreme temperatures. It is extremely hot at midday during the summer, and the temperature falls below freezing during the winter. These conditions should be taken into account and visitors should be properly prepared.
- There may be persistent low fog during anticyclones in winter.
- Some areas are subject to restricted access to protect nesting species. Follow the signs and do not stray from the paths.

## How to get there

Mas de Melons is in the municipality of Castellldans, Les Garrigues. It is 23 km from the city of Lleida via the C-12 road, and 157 km from Barcelona via the AP-7.

The Timoneda d'Alfés is 10 km from Lleida via the L-702 road, and 164 km from Barcelona via the A-2.

The Utxesa Nature Reserve is 22 km from Lleida by the N-II and 177 km from Barcelona by the A-2.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- ➡ Mas de Melons. Take the Barcelona – Lleida AP-2 motorway. Leave at exit 7 (Les Borges Blanques/Mollerussa). Go towards Castellldans on the C-233 and after passing the village, take the Aspa turn-off to Mas de Melons.
- ➡ Timoneda d'Alfés. Take the Barcelona – Lleida AP-2 motorway. Leave at exit 7 (Lleida). Continue on the C-12 towards Maials – Flix, and take the turn-off towards a farmhouse one kilometre after passing under the AP-2, cross the road and explore the dryland.
- ➡ Utxesa. From Torres de Segre, follow signs to Utxesa. Follow the natural path around it.
- ➡ There are buses that link Torres de Segre and Lleida ([www.atmlleida.cat/en](http://www.atmlleida.cat/en)). It is about 5 km on foot to Utxesa from Torres. Bus number 120 links Albagés and Castellldans with Lleida. It is also about 5 km between Castellldans and Mas de Melons.

## Facilities and services

There is an information centre at Mas de Melons which is open at weekends. There are various routes through the Lleida drylands that can be downloaded from its website.

The Utxesa Nature Reserve has an equipped observation tower (tower 19) and a path that links Utxesa to Torres de Segre.

## Discover the area

- The Seu Vella Cathedral, Lleida.
- The old city of Lleida: The New Cathedral, the Institute of Lleida Studies and the Palace of La Paeria.
- The Gardeny Castle, Lleida.
- La Mitjana Park, Lleida.

Mallard / *Anas platyrhynchos*



More information:

<http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en/mas-de-melons-i-secans-de-lleida/>

More information:

<http://www.lleidatur.com/Turisme/Visita/espai-natural-cami-natural-dutxesa/176.aspx>

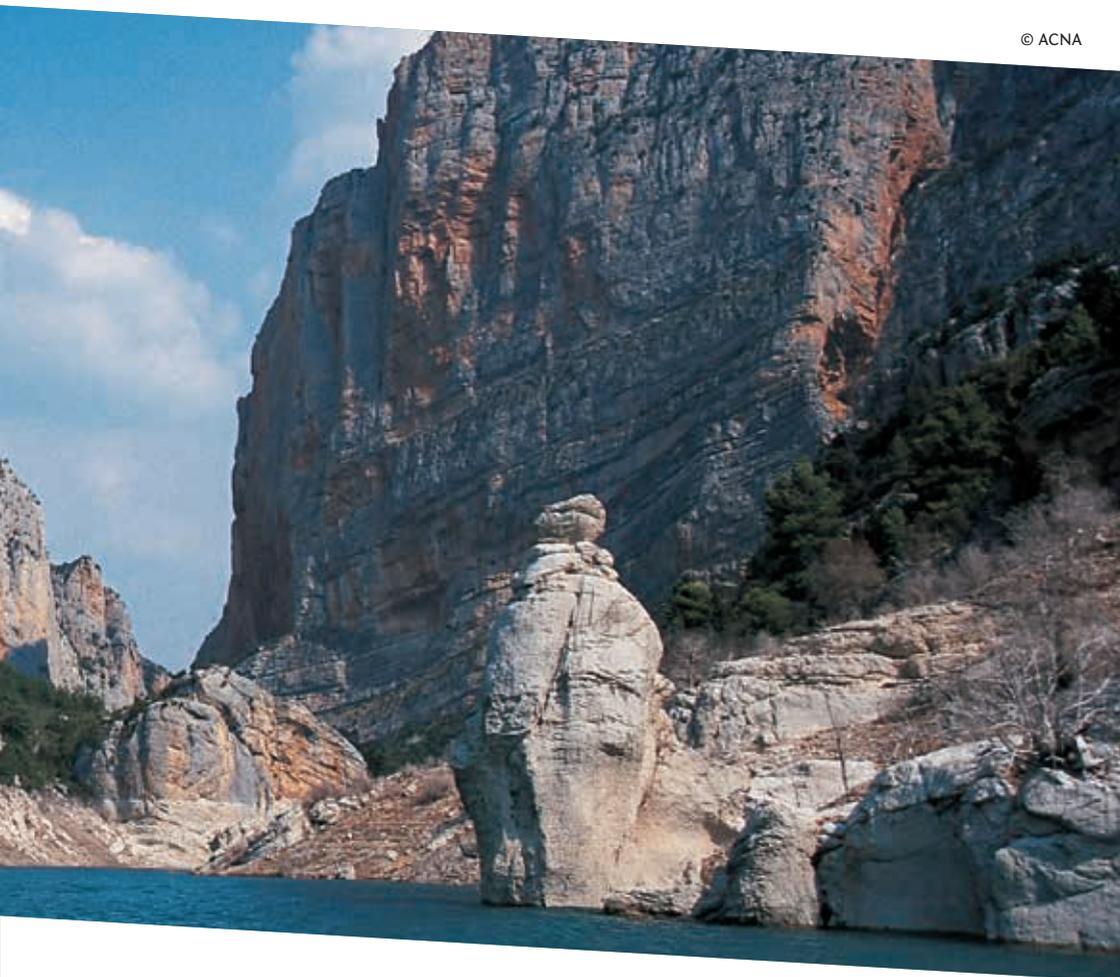


# El Montsec

## The Mediterranean mountain on the edge of the Pyrenees

The name Montsec evokes a tall limestone mountain, full of stunning cliffs and vertiginous gorges. A view that offers spectacular contrast with the Lleida plain. It is a border for species like the bearded vulture, which cannot be seen further south, and provides refuge for many species of the Mediterranean mountains, like the orphean warbler. The Lleida plain extends at the foot of the mountain and beyond its peak the Pyrenees begin. It is a special interest site, with bird species of both environments, and a combination of altitudinal zones that attract a high diversity of rock-dwelling species.

© ACNA



Between El Pallars Jussà and La Noguera, the Montsec mountain range in fact extends as far as Aragon, where it is known as Montsec d'Estall. The entire massif is more than 40 km long, and is crossed by the Noguera Ribagorçana river (through the Mont-rebei gorge) and the Noguera Pallaresa river through the Terradets gorge, as well as the C-12 road. The Montsec d'Ares lies between the two rivers and the Rúbies river to the east of the Noguera Pallaresa. It is a limestone massif with medium altitudes (more than 1,600 metres), with typically alpine nesting species, such as the Water Pipit and the Citril Finch. However, it hosts species from the higher levels of the Mediterranean mountain ranges, such as the **lark** and the **Dartford Warbler**, and a wide variety of birds of prey that are typical of these limestone rocks. The **Bearded Vulture**, **Griffon Vulture**, the **Egyptian Vulture**, the **Golden Eagle**, **Bonelli's Eagle** and the **Peregrine Falcon** are species native to the Montsec. An ascent to the upper reaches of the massif, such as from Àger, highlights the variety of wildlife associated with changes

in vegetation, and features a combination of Mediterranean species such as the **Tottavilla**, the **Crested Lark**, the **Red-rumped Swallow**, the **Orphean Warbler**, the **Subalpine Warbler** and the **Sardinian Warbler**, the **Rock Sparrow** and the **Spotless Starling** and others such as the **Tawny Owl**, the **European Nightjar**, the **lark**, the **Tawny Pipit**, the **Dunnock**, the **Black Redstart**, the **Blue Rock Thrush** and the **Rock Bunting**. The gorges are spectacular places in terms of their concentration of fauna.



Chough / *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*



Alpine Swift / *Apus melba*

The Mont-rebei gorge is almost virgin, a path dug into the rock passes through it, and is not suitable for people suffering from vertigo. The Terradets gorge allows visitors to make occasional stops in their vehicle to explore the walls. Birds of prey, **Alpine Swifts**, **Crag Martins**, **Choughs** and even some **Wallcreepers** in autumn, frequent these impressive limestone walls.





# Montserrat Mountain Natural Park

## **A massif of cliffs and vertical forests in the middle of cropland**

The mountainous massif of Montserrat—literally, the “serrated mountain”—has a steep relief, with many cliffs and walls. Its combination of vertical rock formations, holm oak and pine forests in the gullies and croplands on the surrounding plain, helps birdwatchers enjoy the species of birds of prey and rock-dwelling birds, and at the same time, Mediterranean species living in scrub and open spaces.

© Juan José Pascual



The unique outline of this complex rocky formation, made of cliffs in the form of teeth, rises steeply and is imposing in the midst of a flat landscape. Although the highest point is at an altitude of 1,236 metres, the surrounding plain means that the massif emerges on the horizon as an impressive mountain of unusual rocky needles.



© Juan José Pascual

Its ornithological interest lies in its combination of rock-dwelling species, some of which have a small natural range in Europe, and the presence of Mediterranean species in the forests and in open areas in croplands. As a result, this habitat is shared by unusual species such as **Bonelli's Eagle**, the **Eagle Owl**, the **Alpine Accentor**, the **Blue Rock Thrush**, the **Wallcreeper** and the **Rock Sparrow**, as well as other more frequent visitors including the **Sardinian Warbler**, the **Cirl Bunting**, the **Woodchat Shrike**, and the **Red-legged Partridge**, in an environment also inhabited by wild goats.

## WHEN TO GO

Spring and summer are particularly interesting, although wintering birds which inhabit rocky environments, such as the **Alpine Accentor** and **Wallcreeper**, arrive in winter.

## Spring and summer

In order to identify all the summer nesting species, you should visit the mountain of Montserrat from April onwards, when all the summer species have arrived. By the time the last migrants are arriving, others such as the **Eagle Owl** already have young.

In the holm oaks at the foot of the mountain, and in any holm oak or pine forest, it is quite common to see **Bonelli's Warbler**, the **Sardinian Warbler**, the **Firecrest**, the **Short-toed Treecreeper** and the **Cirl Bunting**. Other species are easier to hear than to see, such as the **Golden Oriole** and the **Scops Owl** at night. Climbing to the highest areas, you may spot **Crag Martins**, **Ravens**, **Peregrine Falcons**, **Bonelli's Eagle** and even the **Egyptian Vulture**, which has recently colonised the mountain.



Firecrest / *Regulus ignicapilla*



Crag Martin / *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

In the area at the foot of the mountain, where croplands alternate with woods, you may find the **Melodious Warbler** in late May, and less often, the occasional pair of **Woodchat Shrikes**, as well as the **Subalpine Warbler** and the **Rock Bunting**. Furthermore, in some places such as farms and open fields it is possible, among finches and sparrows, to see the **Tottavilla**, the **Rock Sparrow** and some **Red-legged Partridges**, among other Mediterranean species.



## Winter

Visitors in winter are very likely to see the **Alpine Accentor**, sometimes in the car park of the monastery itself, or alternatively in the higher parts of the mountain near Sant Jeroni. Some **Ring Ouzels** may also frequent these higher areas while the **Wallcreeper**, which regularly winters here, is more difficult to spot.

Alpine Accentor / *Prunella collaris*



Short-toed Treecreeper /  
*Certhia brachydactyla*

## Tips

- It is important not to stray from the signposted paths for safety reasons, and to respect the vegetation.
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## How to get there

Montserrat is 60 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 📍 Take the C-16 motorway, followed by the A-2 and C-58 roads. Leave at the exit for Montserrat.
  - 🚌 The company Julià (<http://autocaresjulia.com/es/servicios/lineas-bus-regulares>) operates a regular service connecting Barcelona with Montserrat.
  - 🚆 Take Line R5 on the FGC railway (Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya) which leaves Plaça d'Espanya for the station at Monistrol de Montserrat. There is a link from the station to the Montserrat funicular. [https://www.fgc.cat/eng/bitllets\\_oci\\_turisme.asp](https://www.fgc.cat/eng/bitllets_oci_turisme.asp)
  - 🚡 There is a funicular railway in Santa Cova and another in San Jeroni that provides access to various areas of the massif.
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## Facilities and services

More information: <http://muntanyamontserrat.gencat.cat>

La Muntanya de Montserrat Natural Park Information Centre is located in the grounds of the Monastery of Montserrat, at:

Plaza Abat Oliva, s/n  
08199, Montserrat (Monestir)  
Tel. (+34) 93 835 06 44  
(+34) 93 828 40 07

## Discover the area

In addition to being a very unusual natural park, Montserrat is a symbol of Catalan identity, and a focus for culture and spirituality. A visit to the basilica and the array of culture in the area is recommended.





# Natural Areas of the Llobregat Delta

## Ornithological rarities right next to Barcelona

The Natural Reserves of El Remolar – Filipines and La Ricarda – Ca l'Arana were established to protect the wetlands of the Llobregat delta. With other smaller natural areas, they make up the current natural areas of the Llobregat delta. Despite the proximity to the conurbation of Barcelona, there is a very wide variety of birds, which makes it internationally important, albeit in quantities related to the size of the area. There is a good network of paths, hides and viewpoints, most of which are subject to public opening hours. Its strategic location on the central coast, good transport links and the plentiful information available always makes it an interesting place to visit.

© Turismo Verde S.L.



The Llobregat delta has been subject to heavy urban development. Barcelona's El Prat Airport occupies a central position within it, and it contains the entire town of El Prat de Llobregat. The landscape is completely flat. Apart from the urban areas, there are cultivated fields of market gardens and irrigated land, the remains of riverside forests, a stone pine forest on the coast—which distinguishes it from other Catalan wetlands—coastal lagoons and marshes, and a flat and sandy beach that leads to a continental shelf with a very rich sandy and silty bed.

Its proximity to Barcelona means it is possible to combine a birdwatching visit with a trip to the city. Alternatively, visitors can spend a few hours when arriving or leaving Catalonia through the airport at El Prat, or go there on a regular basis. The list of species observed fully justifies a visit, since the diversity of habitats, the size of the area and the number of people who enjoy it have led to interesting reports of rare species and improved the knowledge of its fauna. Internationally significant species nesting here include **Audouin's Gull** and the **Common Little Bittern**, while the **Balearic Shearwater**, the **Ferruginous Duck**, the **Moustached Warbler** and the **Bittern** are present in winter.

#### WHEN TO GO

The Llobregat Delta is at its most appealing in early spring. Winter is also very interesting, while summer is usually very dry and autumn is variable, but also interesting.

There are two main areas to visit: the El Remolar - Filipines Nature Reserve in Viladecans and the La Ricarda - Ca l'Arana Nature Reserve in El Prat de Llobregat. They complement each other, and contain a wide variety of environments and species.

#### Spring and summer

Birdwatchers interested in spotting the **Moustached Warbler** are most likely to do so in March, especially during the first fortnight, when the wintering birds begin to sing and the **Reed Warblers** have not yet arrived. By the end of the month, almost all of the **Bluethroats** that have wintered here will have left. Between mid-March and April, a few **Spotted Crakes** and **Little Crakes** also migrate—the latter do so a little later. The Cal Tet or Les Filipines marshes are places to try your luck. Their larger relative, the **Purple Gallinule**, is present in the Llobregat delta, although to a lesser extent than in the Ebro.

Collared Pratincole / *Glareola pratincola*



Purple Gallinule / *Porphyrio porphyrio*





On the beach, it is still possible to see large groups of **Balearic Shearwater**, in the midst of which it is possible to make out the **Mediterranean Shearwater**, as well as **Razorbills**, **Northern Gannets**, the Arctic Skua and **Great Skua**, and also the **Pomarine Skua** later in the spring. The **Killdeer**, which used to be very common, is now rarer on the beach, where some **Tawny Pipits** have begun to reproduce at Ca l'Arana.

March and April are the months with the highest levels of migration. There are **Purple Herons**, **Black-crowned Night-Herons**—which nest here—**Common Little Bitterns** and the odd **Squacco Heron**, **Audouin's Gull** on the final stretch of the Llobregat and **Whiskered Tern** with migratory **waders**. Some of these waders have small nesting populations, such as the **Little Ringed Plover**, **Black-winged Stilts** and the rare **Collared Pratincole**, an infrequent visitor. **Little Terns** and the **Pied Avocet** have also nested here, and in the lagoons it is possible to find **Red-crested Pochards**, **Shelducks**, **Gadwalls** and **Great Crested Grebes** during the breeding season. The **Scops Owl** is frequently seen in the delta, as are **Little Owls** and **Common Barn Owls**. The passerines include nesting pairs of **Penduline Tits**, the **Yellow Wagtail**, the **Fan-tailed Warbler**, as well as the frequently seen **Reed Warblers**, **Cetti's Warbler** and **Great Reed Warbler**.



Moustached Warbler / *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

### Autumn and winter

There are flocks of **Gulls** and **Terns** on the coast during the summer. Some **waders** choose the marshes that still have water to migrate there. There are also scattered birds, such as **Little Egrets** and **Flamingos**, and even the occasional **Eurasian Spoonbill**. The ducks that winter here gather around the lagoons in the delta, where it is also possible to see **Ospreys**, **Harriers**, **Buzzards**, **Booted Eagles** and the odd **Astore**. Apart from groups of passerines, which may include **Larks** and **Finches**, there are also flocks of **Common Waxbills**, which also nest here. There are a few wintering **Eurasian Thick-knees** around Cal Tet and elsewhere in the delta, while there appears to be increasingly less space for the once plentiful **Lapwing** and **Eurasian Golden Plover**, which are now virtually restricted to the two nature reserves and the area immediately around them. There may occasionally be large groups of **Balearic** and **Mediterranean Shearwaters**, and birdwatchers should always look out for the **Loon**, the **Great Crested Grebe**, the **Northern Gannet** and the **Razorbill**.

### Nearby areas of interest

El Garraf Natural Park, south of the delta, provides opportunities for seeing rare Mediterranean species close to Barcelona, such as the **Black-eared Wheatear**, the **Dartford Warbler**, **Bonelli's Eagle**, the **Woodchat Shrike**, the **Tawny Pipit**, the **Rock Thrush**, the **Blue Rock Thrush**, the **Southern Grey Shrike** and the **Spotless Starling**. On the coast, visitors to the village of Garraf may see the **Peregrine Falcon**, the **Pallid Swift**, the **Crag Martin** and the **Blue Rock Thrush**, as well as seabirds, including **Audouin's Gull**.

Balearic Shearwater /  
*Puffinus mauretanicus*



Shoveler / *Spatula clypeata*



## Tips

- Visitors in large groups should contact the Consortium for the Protection and Management of the El Delta del Llobregat Natural Areas, which also arranges school visits to the area.
- The areas of Cal Tet and Les Filipines have limited opening hours. Check the Consortium's website for further information, schedules, suggested itineraries, ornithological information and suggestions.
- Visitors should use a mosquito repellent in the summer, and especially in the autumn.

## Discover the area

### OTHER CULTURAL IDEAS IN THE AREA:

- Colonia Güell in Santa Coloma de Cervelló, by architect Antoni Gaudí.
- The museum and prehistoric mines in Gavà.

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## How to get there

Barcelona - El Prat Airport is located between the two nature reserves, and the marshlands of Les Filipines and the lake of El Remolar can be seen from outside Terminal 1.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 🚌 El Remolar - Filipines, via the C-31 Castelldefels road towards the airport. Leave at exit 190. Take bus number 46 (Pl. Espanya - Aeroport BCN) from Barcelona to the Airport, get off at the stop with code 3307 and walk to the nature reserve.
- 🚌 Cal Tet (La Ricarda - Ca l'Arana). Take the C-31 road until exit 194B (El Prat de Llobregat) and follow signs to Delta del Llobregat/Espais Naturals.
- 🚇 Take Metro line 9 as far as Les Moreres station, and walk 2 km along the river bank until the entrance to Cal Tet. Take Bus 65 (Pl. Espanya - El Prat) and walk along the banks of the river.

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## Facilities and services

The El Remolar - Filipinas Nature Reserve has two hides adapted for disabled people (subject to opening hours), two observation towers that are always open, and seven observation screens. The La Ricarda - Ca l'Arana Nature Reserve has two hides for birdwatching (also subject to opening hours), six observation towers and four observation screens. There are small information points at the entrance to Cal Tet and El Remolar.

More information: <http://www.deltallobregat.cat/>



# Barcelona

## Urban parks, mountains and coastline

Although Barcelona is inherently appealing because of its range of activities, ideas and cultural assets, it is also home to many bird species that have made their home not only in the city's urban parks and the mountains of Tibidabo and Montjuïc, but can also be found in almost any green space in the city or along its coast.

© Arthur Friederich Selbach



### WHEN TO GO

All year round. Species such as the **Pallid Swift**, the **Alpine Swift** and **Audouin's Gull** will be present in the spring and summer, and some wintering forest birds visit in winter.

Audouin's Gull / *Ichthyaetus audouinii*



© Ricard Gutiérrez

## Tibidabo and Collserola

The mountain of Tibidabo and the entire north of the city is part of the Collserola Natural Park. Access is possible using public transport, and there is a wide variety of forest birds, including birds of prey such as the **Buzzard**, the **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** and the **Astore**. The entire mountain range is also home to populations of a naturalised species, the **Red-billed Leiothrix**, which shares its habitat with **Warblers** and **Tits**. Many species of birds of prey migrate southwards through Collserola in the autumn, and the park has been tracking them for years. There are suggestions for paths and more information on the park's website.

More information: <http://www.parcnaturalcollserola.cat/en>

## Montjuïc

The Olympic mountain of Montjuïc has been much more extensively developed than Tibidabo and Collserola. However, the large area covered by urban gardens and parks, and their coastal island effect surrounded by urban areas attracts interesting populations of forest and hedgerow birds, as well as migrants. On the coastal side, the cliffs overlooking the harbour are a breeding habitat for the **Yellow-legged Gull**, as well as the **Common Kestrel** and the **Peregrine Falcon**. It is easy to spot **Swifts** and **Pallid Swifts**, as well as **Alpine Swifts** flying through the sky between Montjuïc and the port during the spring and summer. Many gardens attract small birds, as well as the occasional **Eurasian Sparrowhawk** that takes advantage of them.



Monk Parakeet / *Myiopsitta monachus*

## Urban parks

The **Monk Parakeet** can be seen virtually all over the city. Less abundant, but also present, is the **Rose-ringed Parakeet**, which has a longer tail and more vivid tones, and can even be seen on La Rambla. Some parts of the city are home to other species of parrot and parakeet that have become feral: the **Mitred Parakeet** above Diagonal in the districts of Sant Gervasi and Sarrià, and other less abundant species in Ciutadella Park. In winter, **Firecrests**, **Goldcrests**, **Coal Tits**, **Blue Tits**, **Great Tits** and **Long-Tailed Tits** can be seen with **Robins**, **Black Redstarts**, **White Wagtails** and granivorous birds here and there across the city. Watch the sky if you visit the Sagrada Família, because a pair of **Peregrine Falcons** lives and nests there.

## Discover the area

THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR CULTURAL TOURISM IN BARCELONA.

- Visit the Gothic Quarter, including the Cathedral.
- The Palau de la Música Catalana is the modernista building par excellence, which was designed by Lluís Domènech i Montaner and is a World Heritage Site. The Nature Laboratory in the Museum of Natural Sciences in Ciutadella Park, which currently holds zoological collections for the purposes of scientific study, is by the same architect.
- Masterpieces by Gaudí: the Sagrada Família and Park Güell.
- The city's museums. These include the MNAC (the National Museum of Art of Catalonia) with its Romanesque murals. The Joan Miró Foundation in Montjuïc Park, and the Picasso Museum.

## The coast

In winter, the coast attracts large numbers of Gulls, particularly **Black-headed Gulls** and **Yellow-legged Gulls**. In the middle of them may be a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** and **Mediterranean Gull** or **Sandwich Terns**. Further out to sea are **Northern Gannets**, **Cormorants** and the occasional **Mediterranean Shag**, which is seen more often during the summer and autumn. It is also possible to spot the **Shearwater**, especially the **Balearic** and the **Mediterranean** varieties. And if the sea is calm and you have the right optical equipment and some good luck, you may see some cetaceans like bottlenose dolphins and even fin whales between April and June. In the port of Barcelona, a nesting colony of hundreds of pairs of **Audouin's Gull** has established itself in recent years, so it is not uncommon to see this threatened marine species on the coast in the city, especially between March and August.



Peregrine Falcon / *Falco peregrinus*





# Ebro Delta Natural Park

## The birdwatchers' paradise in Catalonia

The Ebro Delta is one of the best places in Europe for birdwatching. An internationally renowned wetland, it is one of the main areas of its type in the western Mediterranean, and contains a great diversity of coastal habitats, due to the confluence of marine and river waters, together with the subsoil that is found in its lakes and lagoons. A must-see destination for birdwatchers in Catalonia, El Delta de l'Ebre Natural Park has the right facilities for spotting nearly 350 species of birds that have been reported, which are often found in flocks and in quantities rarely seen in southern Europe.

© Tina Bagué





Slender-billed Gull / *Chroicocephalus genei*

This vast delta plain, with an area of 320 km<sup>2</sup>, where the Ebro river splits into branches and meets the sea, is the most important wetland area in Catalonia and the western Mediterranean.

The Delta's completely flat landscape combines the presence of sandy ground and living dunes, with lagoons and marshy wetlands at the edge of the sea, surrounded by extensive rice fields that cover the delta plain. The rice cultivation cycle accounts for the changes in the delta's landscape during the year: it is brown and dry at the end of winter and in early spring, flooded and gradually greener from mid-spring to summer, yellow at the beginning of autumn and blue, and flooded once again, during the autumn and in early winter. The islands in the Ebro and some sections of the river's banks are covered by riparian forests, while the inner delta contains small fresh water springs from the aquifer—an unusual and aesthetically beautiful touch in an environment dominated by lush landscapes.

The naturalistic and ornithological interest of the Ebro Delta is internationally renowned. It is home to endemic plants, as well as the highest concentration of endangered species of birds in Catalonia. There are breeding colonies of **Audouin's Gull**, the most important in Catalonia and one of the largest in the world, one of Spain's most important populations of the Mediterranean subspecies of the **Reed Bunting** also called the **Eastern Iberian Reed Bunting** and the Iberian Peninsula's second largest colony of **Greater Flamingos** and the **Glossy Ibis**, accompanied by **Squacco Herons**, **Collared Pratincoles**, **Slender-billed Gulls**, **Terns** and nesting waders in quantities found nowhere else in Catalonia.

© Miguel Raurich

Whiskered Tern / *Chlidonias hybrida*



## WHEN TO GO

You can see a wide variety of birds in the Ebro delta in any season of the year. And it is worth a visit all year round. Like all wetlands, the delta is an important area for migration and almost all the birds in the delta have migratory populations—accounting for either the entire population or just a part of it. Spring is a good time of year: birds arrive from Africa and because the rice fields are still dry at this time of year, the birds gather in the flooded coastal areas. But autumn is even better, when the rice harvest leads to incomparable spectacles, when thousands of birds follow the tractors through the mud to feed. One of every four birds reported in the delta nests there, and all the species that have arrived from Africa to nest are present. A total of about 100 species nest there, including around ten species of heron and egret, nine species of duck, six species of gulls and seven types of tern. No other area nearby has a similar diversity. Winter attracts many species—two out of every three of the delta's bird species—to spend the winter among the rice fields, bays and lagoons. Dozens of species of waders, ducks, herons and egrets mean that this area hosts more than 300,000 wintering aquatic birds—almost two out of every three of those which winter in Catalonia.



© Ricard Gutiérrez

Squacco Heron / *Ardeola ralloides*

## Spring

Although it is more common in winter, particularly in the Bay of El Fangar and on the coast of Montsià, in April you can see the **Balearic Shearwater**, as well as migratory marine species such as the **Arctic Skua** and even the **European Storm-Petrel**. The **Garganey** migrates in the spring, and you can spot large groups of **ducks**, such as the **Red-crested Pochard**. The **Gadwall** prefers brackish environments such as the La Tancada salt flats, and the **Mallard** is a common sight everywhere.

**Common Little Bitterns** are easy to see in the delta's reed beds from May onwards, and until the summer. Those at L'Encanyissada and the constructed wetlands at El Goleró or L'Embut, Riet Vell and L'Aufacada are good places. Other birds from the *Ardeidae* family are easy to see anywhere, such as the **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, especially in the evening, the **Squacco Heron**, the **Little Egret** and the **Purple Heron**. The **Great White Egret** has a nesting population of a few dozen pairs, compared to numbers of over a thousand that may be present during winter. From time to time, you may spot a grey or grey and white egret, which is either a **Western Reef-egret** or a hybrid between the **Little Egret** and the **Western Reef-egret**. There are one or two specimens each year between Les Olles and Canal Vell, and between La Tancada and L'Encanyissada. Other species that are commonly seen are the **Eurasian Spoonbill**, particularly on the island of Buda and at Punta de la Banya, migrating **Storks** and **White Storks** in winter, the increasingly common **Glossy Ibis**, and **Greater Flamingos**.

**Marsh Harriers** do not nest in the delta, but it is still possible to see some migrating birds in early spring. The **Peregrine Falcons** that have wintered here will gradually head northwards and only the frequently spotted **Common Kestrel** will nest here. However, any bird of prey is worth a look, as there are many species that migrate through the area.

In the rice fields and on the banks of the lagoons, you may see some interesting species such as the **Spotted Crake** and less often, the **Little Crake** and **Baillon's Crake**. The Riet Vell lagoon is a good place to try your luck. The **Purple Gallinule** is particularly plentiful in the southern part of the delta, around the lagoons, such as L'Aufacada, L'Encanyissada, including the constructed wetland at L'Embut, and Riet Vell, particularly during the time when the rice fields are dry. It is also present in the northern part of the delta in the constructed wetlands at El Goleró, Les Olles and El Garxal. Coots can rear their young in the middle of rice fields, and some endangered **Red-knobbed Coots** from the projects for reintroduction in Valencia are among them every year. El Garxal and the area around L'Encanyissada are places where they have been reported.

Among the waders, there are species common all over the delta, such as the **Black-winged Stilt**, which can be seen in all the rice fields. The **Collared Pratincole** is more scattered—you can try and spot it on the island of Buda, from the L'Aufacada viewpoint, the area around Riet Vell or near Les Olles. The **Common Redshank** and the **Pied Avocet** prefer very salty environments for nesting, such as the Punta de la Banya or the La Tancada salt flats, while the **Killdeer** is often seen on beaches and salt flats. Spring is synonymous with a wide variety of migrant waders and the bays of El Fangar and Alfacs are full of **Dunlins**, **Sanderlings**, **Little Stints** and **Curlew Sandpipers**, with **Ringed Plovers**, **Eurasian Curlews**, **Grey Plovers**, **Bar-tailed Godwits** and **Common Greenshanks**, taking advantage of these environments that are reminiscent of the intertidal habitats in northern Europe which attract these species in large numbers. Among the **Wood Sandpipers**, **Common Redshanks**, **Bar-tailed Godwits** and **Ruffs** in the rice fields and marshes, you will need to search for other less numerous species such as **Temminck's Stint** and the **Marsh Sandpiper**. Rare species of waders also appear every year, to the delight of ornithologists. Examples include the **Red-necked Phalarope**, the **Broad-billed Sandpiper**, and the **Terek Sandpiper**.

The **Slender-billed Gull** and **Audouin's Gull** are a common sight all along the coast of the delta. It is easy to see the former at El Goleró and El Trabucador, and the latter on beaches or in flooded rice fields. It is worth watching from a distance and without disturbing their breeding colonies at the La Tancada salt flats and Punta de la Banya. The terns include the **Common Gull-billed Tern** patrolling through the rice fields, and the **Sandwich Tern**, **Common Tern** and **Little Tern** on the coast. All four nest in the delta, at places that vary depending on the year. **Whiskered Terns**, which frequent the canals and rice fields throughout the season, begin to nest in late spring and early summer.



Yellow-legged Gull / *Larus michahellis*



Apart from aquatic birds, spring nights in the delta are enlivened by the calls of the **Scops Owl**, which is common in the trees of the Ebro and in urban developments like Riumar and Els Eucaliptus. The **Common Barn-owl** is also quite easy to spot while driving at night or in the Riet Vell reserve, where it nests. The **Little Owl** is less common, but there is a small population of **Northern Long-eared Owls** in the Els Eucaliptus residential area, where they can regularly be heard. **Red-necked Nightjars** can also easily be seen at dusk and at night in the more inland areas of the delta, such as around L'Ampolla and Sant Carles de la Ràpita.

Greater Flamingo | *Phoenicopterus roseus*



Among the passerines, the **Lesser Short-toed Lark** and the **Short-toed Lark** nest here, the former is more common than the latter, and accompanies the commonly seen **Crested Lark**. Good places to look for them are El Garxal, the heathland at La Tancada and the area around L'Aufacada. Other nesting birds are reed dwellers such as **Cetti's Warbler** on the bank of the river and at some ponds, the common **Fan-tailed Warbler** and **Savi's Warbler** at L'Encanyissada and L'Aufacada, as well as **Great Reed Warblers** and **Reed Warblers**. The market garden areas near the river and the areas around towns near the river are home to typical Mediterranean species such as the **Sardinian Warbler** and **Finches**, with **Spotless Starlings** and **Common Starlings**. The **Penduline Tit** nests among the trees by the riverside, and recent nesting colonisers include the **Tawny Pipit** on the coastal salt flats, with the occasional pair of **Spectacled Warblers**. The number of migrants is spectacular, and they can appear anywhere. Large groups may appear after storms at night,

with plenty of **Northern** and **Black-eared Wheatears**, **Whinchats**, **Old World Flycatchers**, **Warblers**, **Woodchat Shrikes** (including some Balearic Shrikes), **Spotted Flycatchers** (as well as some of the Balearic variety), all species of **Swallows**, and even rarer species, such as the **Red-throated Pipit** and the **Icterine Warbler**.

### Summer

In summer, almost all the rice fields are tinged green by the plant as it grows. In the midst of them, the heads of **Purple Herons**, **Egrets** and **Black-winged Stilts** show us that there may be hidden birds feeding there. Crops that have failed or which have been flooded are frequented by **waders**, which are returning from their migration in July, often with their eclipse plumage that is very interesting to study. With them come young **Black-headed Gulls** and **Whiskered Terns**, which will be nesting until August in the constructed wetlands of Riet Vell or L'Encanyissada. While these are still breeding, the **Black Tern** has migrated south along the coast and over the sea, and with it some rare **White-winged Terns**. Groups of young **Terns** call for food from the adults near the breeding colonies, which are often frequented by some migrating **Caspian Terns**, and the **Audouin's Gull** gradually leaves for Africa. **Sanderlings** and **Mediterranean Gulls** now appear on the beaches, as well as some migrants and dispersed species, such as **Eleonora's Falcon** and **Montagu's Harrier**, and the birds that will winter here gradually begin to arrive, with the first being **Lapwings**.

### Autumn

Autumn is the time when migration is heaviest, with young birds as well as the adults who have started to pass through during the summer. There may be very large groups of **waders** near L'Aufacada, in fields that have already become muddy and flooded, or at El Goleró and in the bay of El Fangar, as well as at El Garxal, depending on the water level. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** also arrive to spend winter in the delta, and mix with the other species in the rice fields, where thousands of birds gather, including **Herons**, **Glossy Ibis**, **Egrets**, **Gulls** and various **waders**, following the tractors that submerge the rice stubble in the mud, while crabs, worms and other prey that attract these birds appear on the surface.



Purple Heron / *Ardea purpurea*

At this time the **Yellow Wagtail** passes through, and may gather in large flocks, which may also include some **Citrine Wagtails**. **Whinchats** and **Wheatears** may also frequent the rice fields, while the bushes and shrubs may hold large numbers of passerines such as **Willow Warblers** and **Warblers** of almost all species. The **Bluethroat** will also be arriving soon, and some specimens will winter in the delta around the reed beds and ponds.



Autumn also brings less usual visiting birds, and every year a large contingent of ornithologists gathers at the annual Delta Birding Festival, an ornithological fair held at the end of September to search for these rare birds. As well as the almost regular **Pectoral Sandpiper** and the **Western Reef-egret**, other species reported include the **Pacific**

Bar-tailed Godwit / *Limosa lapponica*

**Golden Plover** and the **American Golden Plover**, the **Lesser Yellowlegs**, the **Spotted Sandpiper**, the **Pallid Harrier** and the **White-rumped Sandpiper**. By October and November, a patient search along river banks and woodlands can lead to rare finds, such as the **Yellow-browed Warbler** and other first-rate finds, including the **Siberian Blue Robin**, **Naumann's Thrush** and the **Shore Lark**. Because the delta is still one of those few places where when you go out for a walk in the fields, you never know what surprise might be in store.

### *Winter*

Over 300,000 aquatic and marine birds winter in the delta, which means that seeing them and enjoying significant quantities of them is guaranteed. However, visitors should remember that the delta is a place where for this same reason, a great deal of hunting takes place and some species adapt to this by moving to sheltered areas such as the bays, the sea and the Punta de la Banya. There may be rare species among these aquatic and marine birds, such as **Loons**, **Common Scoters** and **Velvet Scoters**, the **Great Skua** and the **Horned Grebe** in the sea. In the lagoons, there may be the occasional **Ferruginous Duck** or **White-headed Duck**, particularly in the constructed wetlands of El Goleró, Canal Vell, L'Encanyissada and Buda, where there are also a few **Marbled Teals**, albeit difficult to see. The **Bittern** is rare but is a regular visitor in wintertime, and can be seen in the evening at L'Encanyissada, in the area around La Platjola - Riet Vell and L'Aufacada - Buda. The **Short-eared Owl** also winters here, and you can try and spot one in the coastal salt marshes. Other interesting species are the **Booted Eagle** and the **Osprey**—which is frequently seen in the autumn—and the **Peregrine Falcon**. Some summer species may remain in winter, such as the **Common Little Bittern**, a few **Squacco Herons**, the **Scops Owl** and **Swallows** and **Sand Martins**. Small numbers of **Richard's Pipit** winter in variable numbers depending on the year. The **Moustached Warbler** is regularly seen here, and the reed beds of the constructed wetlands around El Goleró are a good place to look for it. The **Dartford Warbler** appears on the coastal heathlands, and the extremely rare **Isabelline Shrike**, the **Asian Stonechat** and the **Brown Shrike** have all been present for some years, showing that anything may appear at any time in the delta.



## Tips

- In summer, and especially in the autumn, protection against mosquitoes is necessary, and protection against the sun is required in summer.
  - The delta is flat and there are often no reference points for guidance. You should obtain a map from the information centres or via the Internet.
  - Visitors in cars should drive carefully to avoid collisions with animals. Cyclists, motor homes and agricultural vehicles are also common on roads that are often narrow.
  - Some stretches of road near the beach may be impassable, as they are flooded after storms.
  - Protected areas have special regulations and some areas are subject to restricted access.
- 

## How to get there

The Ebro Delta is 79 km from Reus – Costa Daurada Airport, and 174 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 🚗 Take the Barcelona – Valencia AP-7 motorway.
  - 🛣️ Leave at exit 39 (L’Ampolla – El Perelló) for the northern part of the delta. Take exit 40 (L’Aldea) or 41 (Amposta), for the southern part of the delta.
  - 🚌 The company HIFE (Tel. (+34) 902 119 814) operates a regular line that connects Barcelona with Tortosa. From Tortosa, you can link up with the buses run by the same company that go to the various villages in the delta.
  - 🚆 Line R-16 on the Rodalies de Catalunya railway network (Barcelona – Tarragona – Tortosa – Ulldecona). From Tortosa, you need your own vehicle or you can take the HIFE bus. There are bicycle rental outlets at various locations in the delta.
- 

## Facilities and services

El Delta de l’Ebre Natural Park has hides and viewpoints with free access in the areas of Les Olles, El Garxal, L’Aufacada, La Tancada, L’Encanyissada, Punta de la Banya and Els Ullals de Baltasar.

## Discover the area

- The archaeological site of Tarraco, Tarragona. UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The city of Tortosa. Gothic and Renaissance town centre. The Renaissance Festival in July.



### NORTHERN PART OF THE DELTA (BAIX EBRE):

 Ecomuseum. Information  
Centre

C/ Doctor Martí Buera, 22  
43580 Deltebre  
Tel. (+34) 977 489 679

Opening hours: Open Monday  
to Saturday all year round, from  
10 am to 2 pm and from 3 pm  
to 7 pm. Sundays and public  
holidays from 10 am to 2 pm.

The Deltebre Ecomuseum is  
accessible to people with a  
wheelchair, reduced mobility  
and is adapted for the visually  
impaired. Most signposted paths  
are adapted and accessible,  
incorporating ramps at  
some observation points and  
wheelchair accessible windows.

 More information on  
accessibility:  
[www.tourismforall.catalunya.com](http://www.tourismforall.catalunya.com)

### SOUTHERN PART OF THE DELTA (MONTSIÀ):

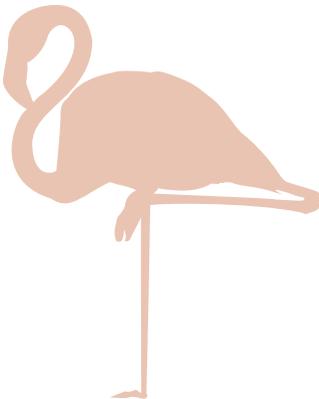
 Casa de Fusta. Information  
Centre and Ornithological  
Museum

Partida de la Cuixota  
(L'Encanyissada)  
43870 Poblenou del Delta  
(Amposta)  
Tel. (+34) 977 261 022

Opening hours: Open Monday  
to Saturday all year round, from  
10 am to 2 pm and from 3 pm  
to 7 pm. Sundays and public  
holidays from 10 am to 2 pm. The  
Casa de Fusta, located next to  
the L'Encanyissada lagoon, is an  
iconic building in the Ebro delta.  
It is also accessible and adapted  
for the visually impaired, with  
information provided in Braille.

Riet Vell Nature Reserve  
Carretera d'Amposta - Els  
Eucaliptus TV-3405, 43870  
Amposta

The Riet Vell Nature Reserve is a  
sustainable development project  
undertaken by SEO/BirdLife  
in the Ebro Delta. Research,  
conservation, awareness-raising  
and environmental education  
programmes take place there. It  
is open all year round and has  
a wooden hide of ornithological  
interest.



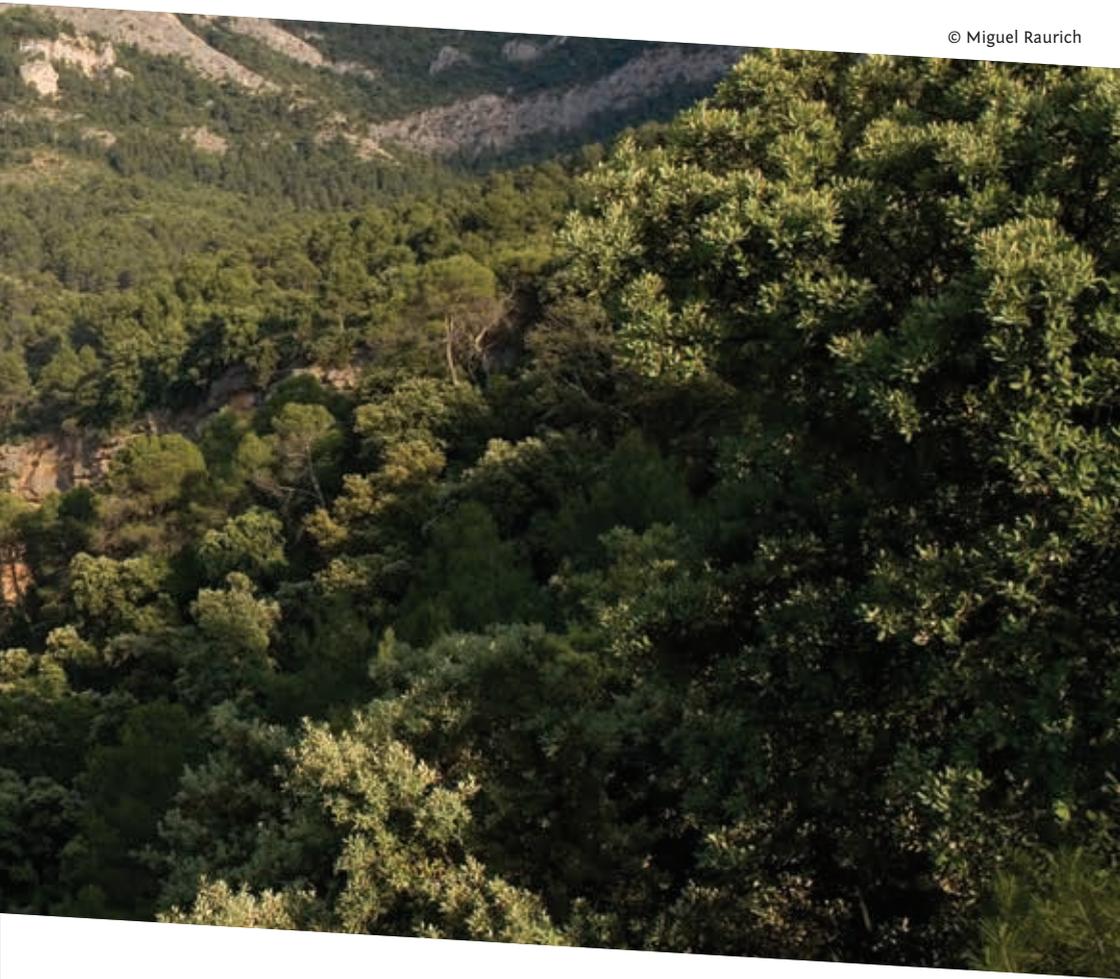


# Els Ports Natural Park

## **The land of birds of prey and small Mediterranean passerines**

Els Ports Natural Park is an abrupt and almost uninhabited mountain range, with very thick forests with many types of trees, thanks to the rainfall in the area. It contains northern trees, such as the beech, yew and oak, as well as endemic flora species. The birdlife consists of a mixture of rock-dwelling species and others inhabiting dry Mediterranean environments with other Central European species.

© Miguel Raurich



The Els Ports massif is interesting because of the contrast with the surrounding flat landscape. These mountains reach altitudes of 1,000 metres above sea level, and Mont Caro is the highest peak (at 1,442 metres). It is a heavily vertical relief, with many ravines, narrow valleys, cliffs, and pinnacles where it is easy to see wild goats. The vegetation basically consists of large woods of Austrian pine, Scots pine, Aleppo pine and holm oak. Other deciduous plants are less extensive, and located in the more humid parts and include some beech forests.

Of particular interest to birdwatchers in Els Ports is the diversity of its Mediterranean birds of prey, the presence of Mediterranean birds living in scrubland and dry forest, with a few Eurosiberian species that are rare in southern Catalonia, and the wintering of species that are rare in the Mediterranean.

### WHEN TO GO

Any time of year can provide good results. Spring is the time of year when there are the most species with a Mediterranean distribution. This is also true of summer, despite the high temperatures. Some interesting birds arrive in the autumn and winter, and can be observed in an environment that is usually free of snow.

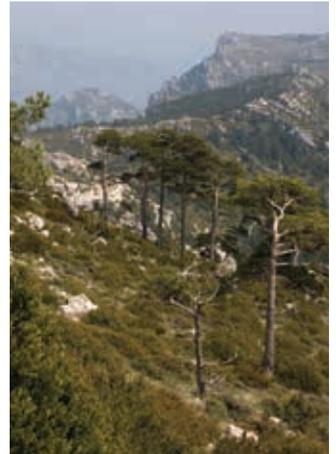
### Spring and summer

The different environments and landscapes are home to different wildlife. You should visit the lower Mediterranean environments, the forests, which have a Eurosiberian influence in the higher parts, and the rocky areas that attract interesting rock-dwelling species.

In the lower parts, where olive growing defines the more characteristic landscape, with scattered pastures, scrubland, and rocky hills surrounding the fields, you can spot species such as the **Scops Owl**, the **Little Owl**, the **Hoopoe**, the **Bee-eater**, the **Black-eared Wheatear**, the interesting **Orphean Warbler** with the more commonly seen **Sardinian Warbler**, the **Spotless Starling**, the **Woodchat Shrike** and the **Cirl Bunting**. Listen out for the call of the **Tottavilla**, which is very different from that of the **Crested Lark**.

© Miguel Raurich

Scops Owl / *Otus scops*





Thekla's Lark / *Galerida theklae*

On rocky hills, there are also species such as the **Thekla's Lark**, the **Crag Martin**, the **Alpine Swift**, the **Blue Rock Thrush**, in some places the **Black Wheatear** and the **Rock Thrush**, the **Rock Sparrow** and the **Rock Bunting**. Flocks of corvids may be **Choughs**, but the **Raven** can also be seen here. **Golden eagles** and **Bonelli's Eagle** nest on the walls and cliffs. **Griffon Vultures** and **Booted Eagles** are other nesting species, while pairs of **Egyptian Vulture** have also colonised Els Ports. In the evenings, **Tawny Owls** and **Eagle Owls** share the forests and cliffs, and the **Red-necked Nightjar** lives in Els Ports alongside the **European Nightjar**.

The forests of Els Ports contain Mediterranean species such as **Bonelli's Warbler** and other Eurosiberian species which are less commonly seen in the province of Tarragona, such as the **Nuthatch** and the **Crossbill**, and frequently seen birds such as **Tits**, the **Green Woodpecker** and the **Great Spotted Woodpecker**. There are also a few pairs of **Citril Finch** which in southern Catalonia only breed in some parts of the park.

As the altitude increases, other species will appear, like the **Tawny Pipit**, which can be found in above all in areas which have been burned, and in the scrubland where the forest is not developed the **Dartford Warbler** may be found.



### Winter

Els Ports are home to populations of generally scarce wintering birds in Catalonia, particularly in the southern areas. The lack of snow cover means that it is possible to spot these species in pleasant conditions. At this time of year, you can see the **Alpine Accentor** on the peaks of the range. This species is present on a regular basis, albeit in small numbers and in specific areas, such as in the area around the summit of El Caro. The **Wallcreeper** also winters in Els Ports and can be found in any ravine that is high enough, and particularly in the more shady areas. The area around Roques de Benet in Horta de Sant Joan is a good place to look for it. You can also find some specimens of the **Ring Ouzel** and in some years, you may even spot the **Snowfinch** in mountains like Les Rases de Maraco at Alfara de Carles. These species are in addition to the majority of non-migratory sedentary birds and birds of prey, such as **vultures and eagles**.

The normal route to Els Ports includes the climb to El Caro from Roquetes, which passes through Mediterranean environments, rocky areas, forests and mountain environments. From Mas de Barberans you can go to the ravine of La Galera, with its very well preserved high altitude shrub land and woods, where the **Rock Bunting**, **Dartford Warbler** and the **Garden Warbler** nest. Another complementary route, on the western side of the massif, starts from the village of Arnes, as far as the Arnes straits. There is much more information and suggested itineraries are available on the Els Ports Natural Park website.

Booted Eagle / *Hieraaetus pennatus*



Rock Bunting / *Emberiza cia*



## Tips

- Check the Els Ports Natural Park website, where you can find information on suggested routes and on how to visit the area and its natural assets.
  - Els Ports is a region with very abrupt relief and a low population density. For safety reasons, it is important not to stray from signposted paths.
  - You should find out about the state of the forest paths, as they can be impassable after heavy rain.
- 

## How to get there

Tortosa is 85 km from Reus airport and 168 km from Barcelona. Horta de Sant Joan (Terra Alta) is 96 km from Reus airport and 203 km from Barcelona.

### FROM BARCELONA:

- 📍 Take the Barcelona – Valencia AP-7 motorway. Take exit 40 (Tortosa) for Tortosa and the south side of Els Ports (Baix Ebre), then take the C-42 as far as Roquetes and Caro. From Barcelona to La Terra Alta, take the AP-7 motorway, leaving at exit 34 (Reus). Take the N-420 to Gandesa and the T-334 to Horta de Sant Joan.
  - 🚌 The company HIFE (Tel. (+34) 902 119 814) operates a regular line that connects Barcelona with Tortosa. From Tortosa, you can take the buses run by the same company that go to the various villages of Els Ports.
  - 🚆 R16 of the Rodalies de Catalunya railway network (Barcelona – Tarragona – Tortosa). From Tortosa, you need your own vehicle or you can take the HIFE bus to the various villages of Els Ports. Express line e5: Tortosa – Amposta – Sant Carles de la Ràpita – Alcanar.
- 

## Facilities and services

More information about the natural park: <http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en/ports>

Baix Ebre Natural Park Visitor Centre  
Av. Val de Zafán, s/n  
43520 Roquetes  
Tel. (+34) 977 500 845

Information point.  
The Ports Ecomuseum  
C/ Picasso, 18  
43596 Horta de Sant Joan  
Tel. (+34) 977 435 686

## Discover the area

Combine a visit to Els Ports with the Ebro delta to see a very long list of species. Other places of cultural interest to visit on the same trip are:

- Horta de Sant Joan (Terra Alta). Ecomuseum, old town and Picasso Centre. 'Lo Parot' ancient olive tree.
- The villages of Els Ports: Arnes, Pauils, Alfara de Carles and Mas de Barberans.
- Historical memory sites of the Battle of the Ebro (Spanish Civil War) in the region of La Terra Alta. Museum in Gandesa.
- Modernista cooperative wineries in the DO Terra Alta (Designation of Origin) in Gandesa, and El Pinell de Brai.



# Other areas in Costa Daurada and Terres de l'Ebre

## Inland mountains, wetlands along the river and seaports

As well as the Ebro delta and Els Ports, the province of Tarragona is home to two other special natural protected areas: Montsant Natural Park and Poblet Natural Site of National Interest. These inland areas combine Mediterranean landscapes and shady environments, which are unique in southern Catalonia. The banks of the Ebro are also very interesting to walk along, and the Sebes wildlife reserve in Flix deserves a visit. On the coast, among the mouths of streams, beaches and coastal rocks, the fishing ports also attract a strong contingent of seabirds of interest to birdwatchers.

© Imagen M.A.S.



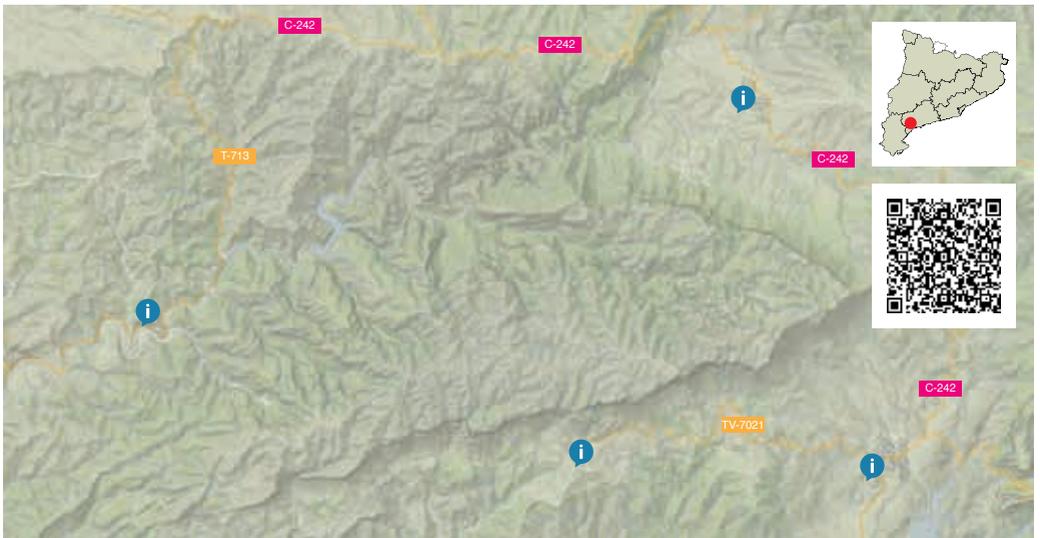
## Montserrat Natural Park

Located in the region of El Priorat, where the province of Tarragona adjoins the region of Les Garrigues in the province of Lleida, the Montsant is a series of imposing landscapes, with high cliffs on the south face and ravines and the Montsant river on the northern side. It is accessible all year round, and is home to rock-dwelling nesting species such as **Bonelli's Eagle**, the **Golden Eagle**, the **Peregrine Falcon** and the **Eagle Owl**, the **Blue Rock Thrush** and the occasional **Rock Thrush**, as well as wintering birds including the **Wallcreeper** and the **Alpine Accentor**. The southern slopes have sunnier habitats, and there are access paths known locally as *graus* providing access to the higher areas of the massif, where you can find species such as the **Lark** and the **Tottavilla**. The northern slope of Montsant provides access to the river from Ulldemolins and Margalef, and there you can find forest and river birds such as the **Grey Wagtail** and the **Common Kingfisher**, with the **Red-rumped Swallow** together with the **Crag Martin**, which are common in the area, and the **Tawny Owl**, which is regularly seen at night.



Bonelli's Eagle / *Aquila fasciata*

More information:  
<http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/ca/serra-montsant>



## Poblet and Prades

The Poblet Natural Site of National Interest includes the Mediterranean forests around the monastery of Santa Maria de Poblet, and it is the only place in Catalonia where you can see a forest of Pyrenean oak (*Quercus pyrenaica*), which, despite its scientific name, is not found in the Pyrenees. All these areas are rich in Mediterranean forest birds, such as **Tits**, **Treecreepers** and **Warblers**, but they are also home to some biogeographical particularities such as the **Nuthatch**.

More information:  
<http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/ca/poblet>

## Sebes, Flix

On the meander of the Ebro at Flix and in the Sebes area, the banks of the river around the town have reed beds and riverside forests that are interesting for birdwatchers. It is the only place in the province of Tarragona where the **White Stork** breeds. It is easy to see from the observatories in the reserve, and riverside forest species also nest here, including the **Black Kite**, the **Golden Oriole** and the **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and **Green Woodpecker**, and the **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** also probably breeds here. The reed beds can host the **Common Little Bittern**, the **Purple Heron** and the **Harrier**, as well as **Reed Warblers** and **Great Reed Warblers**. The **Bittern** is a common sight in winter, and the area becomes a large dormitory for hundreds of **Cormorants**. The surroundings are rich in Mediterranean species, such as the **Red-rumped Swallow**, the **Bee-eater** and the **Short-toed Eagle**.



Bittern / *Botaurus stellaris*

 The nature reserve is accessible to people with a wheelchair, reduced mobility and is adapted for the visually impaired, with information provided in Braille. Most signposted paths are adapted and accessible, incorporating ramps at some observation points and wheelchair accessible windows.

More information on accessibility:  
[www.tourismforall.catalunya.com](http://www.tourismforall.catalunya.com)



Red-rumped Swallow / *Cecropsis daurica*

## The ports of L'Ampolla, L'Ametlla de Mar, Cambrils and Tarragona

© Ricard Gutiérrez



The fishing ports of L'Ampolla (small-scale fishing) and L'Ametlla de Mar, Cambrils and Tarragona (with trawlers) attract seabirds in search of discarded fish, or to feed on the leftovers of the work in the port. Despite its small size, there may always be an interesting gull in the port of L'Ampolla, such as **Audouin's Gull**, and the occasional **Common Gull** in winter. The bay may attract **Marine Ducks**, **Shearwaters** and **Terns**, depending on the time of year. L'Ametlla de Mar attracts a great deal of seabirds, including **Terns**, the **Mediterranean Shag** outside the breeding season, and **Mediterranean Gulls**, **Black-headed Gulls** and **Audouin's Gull**. Look for the **Pallid Swift** in the sky. The port of Cambrils is known to attract thousands of **Mediterranean Gulls** during the winter. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls**, **Yellow-legged Gulls** and some **Audouin's Gulls** are also to be found here. Looking out to sea, it is possible to spot wintering seabirds such as **Cormorants**, the occasional **Grebe** and **Balearic Shearwaters**. In recent years, the port of Tarragona has hosted a nesting colony of **Audouin's Gull**, in areas with no public access. The species is therefore a common sight during spring and early summer. In winter, the most common seagull is the **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, but there are also **Black-headed Gulls**, some **Mediterranean Gulls** and **Sandwich Terns**.

Mediterranean Gull / *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*



## Ethical tips for the birdwatcher

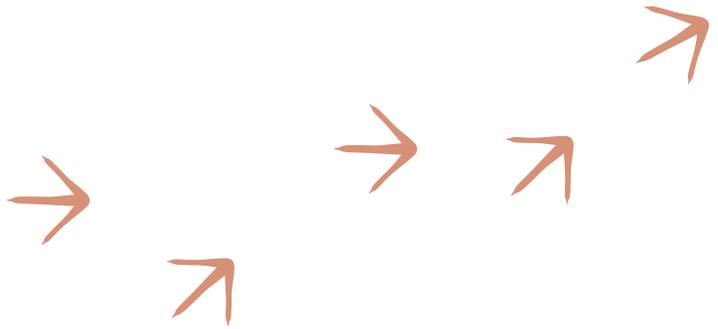
*Birdwatchers' behaviour must be completely ethical and beyond reproach, bearing in mind that the objective of enjoyment must be accompanied by the need to contribute to the preservation of the species that we are observing. There are many laws and regulations that ensure the preservation of bird species, most of which are protected. There are also some places where, because they are protected natural areas, additional restrictions are in place as well as those arising from ownership. The species and the property must be respected, since apart from a few exceptions, the countryside has an owner. Remember:*

- Avoid disturbing the birds in any way. Making a bird fly or approaching too close to it in order to see it better, to photograph it or to record it can be considered as disturbing a protected species, and subject to prosecution by current legislation. Obtaining a photograph never justifies disturbing a protected species.
- Even greater precautions must be taken during the breeding season. This is the most delicate time of the year in a bird's biology, when it gambles its survival on the reproductive success of its nest. Never approach the nests or breeding colonies. Respect any restrictions that may be in place. Use birdwatching and photography areas, including hides, observation towers and even your own vehicle.
- Disturbing areas of movement, wintering, migration and resting of protected species is prohibited. Birds are highly sensitive during these periods, when their energy expenditure is intense.
- Always stay on paths, tracks or roads. Minimise damage or harm to any type of habitat. Do not enter cultivated or fallow areas to set any species in flight. It may seem empty, but some species nest on the ground. This is considered a disturbance and subject to prosecution. Motorised traffic off the permitted tracks is legally prohibited.
- Try not to make unnecessary noise to avoid disturbing the birds and other visitors.
- Do not use lures or other types of enticement in protected areas, to attract endangered species or during the breeding season.
- If you go birdwatching and take a pet with you, bear in mind that the birds will consider it a predator. Never leave dogs or cats unleashed in the natural environment.
- Leave the area you have visited as you found it or if possible, in a better state.



- If you need to study species, photograph endangered species or preserve remains of protected species, you will need a special permit: [http://mediambient.gencat.cat/ca/05\\_ambits\\_dactuacio/patrimoni\\_natural/fauna-autoctona-protegida/autoritzacions](http://mediambient.gencat.cat/ca/05_ambits_dactuacio/patrimoni_natural/fauna-autoctona-protegida/autoritzacions)
- Help natural spaces by reporting incidents, and providing observations or comments to improve them. Find out beforehand about general information, opening hours, routes and activities: <http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/en>
- Most of the natural environment is often privately owned, even if it is not signposted as such. If there are fences or gates, or you are near buildings, ask the owners for permission for access. Use your common sense. It is better to observe from afar than risk creating a disturbance or engaging in prohibited activities.
- Follow the laws, rules and regulations regarding access, use of roads, tracks and public areas.
- If you find a protected species that is wounded or see a breach of the regulations, please notify the rural agents by calling (+34) 93 561 70 00, or 112 ([@agentsruralscat](https://twitter.com/agentsruralscat)).
- Be respectful and friendly to anyone you meet. Good behaviour will create a positive image for birdwatchers, and help to enhance the value of activities involving enjoyment of nature among the inhabitants of the area.
- Much information from your observations can be of great scientific interest. That is why we encourage you to pass on data using cooperative public science portals such as <http://www.ornitho.cat> and <http://www.ebird.com>, providing as much detail as possible if the birds you have seen are classified as rare.
- Whenever possible, always choose accommodation that has an environmental and tourism quality certificate. Many natural areas have establishments certified within the framework of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism: <http://www.europarc.org/sustainable-tourism>
- Consume local products produced by organic agriculture or livestock farming. There are natural parks with local brands that cooperate in the conservation of protected natural areas.
- Use public transport whenever possible, or vehicles with clean technology. There is a great deal of information available about means of transport and access.
- Support the conservation of important habitats for birds through local and regional associations and NGOs.

## Further reading



## INSTITUTIONS

- ICO, Catalan Institute of Ornithology (@ICOcells): [www.ornitologia.org](http://www.ornitologia.org)  
An organisation studying and monitoring birds in Catalonia. It coordinates bird atlases, monitoring programmes and scientific bird ringing.
- SEO BirdLife: [www.seo.org](http://www.seo.org)  
Spanish representative of BirdLife International created in 1954 with the aim of protecting birds and their habitats, and to carry out monitoring, conservation and awareness campaigns and projects.

## INTERNET

- Ornithological Information Server of Catalonia (SIOC): [www.sioc.cat](http://www.sioc.cat)  
Online information about the different species of birds in Catalonia, with bird atlases of nesting and wintering birds, population trends and recoveries of ringed birds.
- Ornithological Cartography Server of Catalonia (SCOC): <http://scoc.ornitologia.org>  
ICO ornithological cartography server. Contains the atlas of nesting birds in digital and Google Earth format.
- Ornitho.cat: [www.ornitho.cat](http://www.ornitho.cat)  
A collaborative web portal for public science where you can enter data about birds, as well as other animal and plant groups.
- eBird: [www.ebird.com](http://www.ebird.com)  
An international collaborative web portal where data about birds in Catalonia and all over the world can be recorded and consulted.
- Rarebirds Catalunya: [www.rarebirds.cat](http://www.rarebirds.cat) (@rarebirdscat)  
A website containing observations of rare birds in Catalonia since 2017.
- Rarebirdspain: [www.rarebirdspain.net](http://www.rarebirdspain.net) (@rarebirdspain)  
A website containing observations of rare birds and aspects of identification, photography and more in Spain since 2000.
- Reservoir Birds: [www.reservoirbirds.com](http://www.reservoirbirds.com)  
A website containing birdwatching news, articles and list competitions in.



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