



CASTILLA-
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ECOTOURISM IN CASTILLA-LA MANCHA



IBERIAN LYNXES AND SPANISH MOON MOTHS, orchids and daffodils, sandgrouses and little bustards, amphibians and reptiles, waterfalls, high peaks, beech forests, centuries-old *dehesas*, wetlands, ancient volcanoes, cliffs and gorges, salt fields ... The list of species and natural areas of Castilla-La Mancha is almost infinite. Amazing and captivating places, ideal ecotourism destinations, away from the hustle and bustle of big cities, where we invite you to disconnect and enjoy with your five senses **a special nature.**





DISCOVER A UNIQUE NATURE

It has had to change our way of life, so that we properly value the closest natural paradises. Faced with the impossibility of travelling thousands of kilometres away, there have been many tourists and visitors who in recent times have been surprised to discover the infinity of natural areas that Castilla-La Mancha treasures.

Places that are home to an exuberant biodiversity, where you will have the opportunity to meet the gaze of the most endangered feline on the planet, to be enthusiastic about the bustle of hundreds of birds in our wetlands, to admire the beauty of the dozens of wild orchids present in our territory, to be enchanted by the unimaginable coloration of countless insects and to contemplate the sky on warm summer nights.

What better proposal, to enjoy this fascinating nature, than to visit and explore our protected areas, such as our National Parks and our Natural Parks, destinations whose name we do want to remember on the following pages. Throughout the twelve months of the year, countless plans, areas and natural treasures await you in Castilla-La Mancha.

PROTECTED AREAS OF CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

With an area ten times greater than that of the Community of Madrid, or two and a half times that of Catalonia, the natural areas that are spread throughout Castilla-La Mancha region are numerous and very diverse.

We encourage you to visit and get to know our two National Parks, the Tablas de Daimiel (in the province of Ciudad Real), which is especially attractive in years of heavy rain, and Cabañeros (between the provinces of Ciudad Real and Toledo), where they mix wide *dehesas* and a dense Mediterranean forest, very well preserved.

Our seven Natural Parks are also very interesting. In the Lagunas de Ruidera, several wetlands distributed between the provinces of Albacete and Ciudad Real, you will be dazzled by the thousands of turquoise tonalities of its clean waters. You will find a very different landscape, but no less surprising, in the Alto Tajo, where the imposing rocky cliffs of sandstone and limestone are the main focus.

Tablas de Daimiel.

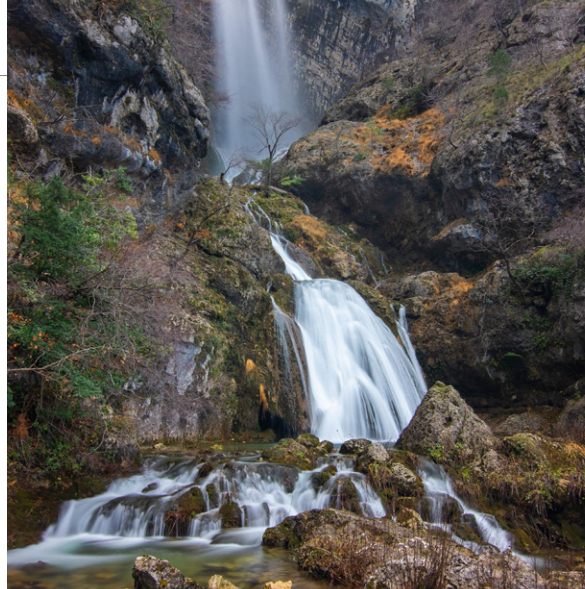


You should not miss another five protected areas, which complete the list of Natural Parks of Castilla-La Mancha. In the different routes and viewpoints of the Barranco del Río Dulce you will especially enjoy birding. In the Calares del Mundo y de la Sima, in the south of Albacete, you will be astonished by the beauty of its spectacular landscapes, where unique species of fauna and flora take refuge.

The Serranía de Cuenca, land of dense pine forests and rocky areas, is a popular destination for hiking. The Sierra Norte de Guadalajara is home to the highest peaks in the region, as well as relict forests and beautiful villages. In the Valle de Alcudia y Sierra Madrona, at the southern tip of Ciudad Real, you will be overwhelmed by the sight of its magnificent *dehesas* and meadows, stretching almost as far as the eye can see.

i More information: <https://areasprotegidas.castillalamancha.es>

Barranco del Río Dulce.





Other very valuable spaces are also part of the network of protected areas of Castilla-La Mancha. For example, the Natural Reserves (including places as interesting as Navas de Malagón, Saladar de Cordovilla or Sierra de las Cabras) and the Natural Monuments (very attractive, such as Barrancas de Castrejón or torcas de Palancares and Tierra Muerta), in addition to other protection figures. In turn, the three Biosphere Reserves (UNESCO) in our territory stand out due to their interest as ecotourism destinations: La Mancha Húmeda, Valle del Cabriel and Alto Turia.

Natural Monument Barrancas de Castrejón y Calaña.






Protected Areas and Biosphere Reserves of Castilla-La Mancha

National Parks








-  Tablas de Daimiel
-  Cabañeros

Biosphere Reserves

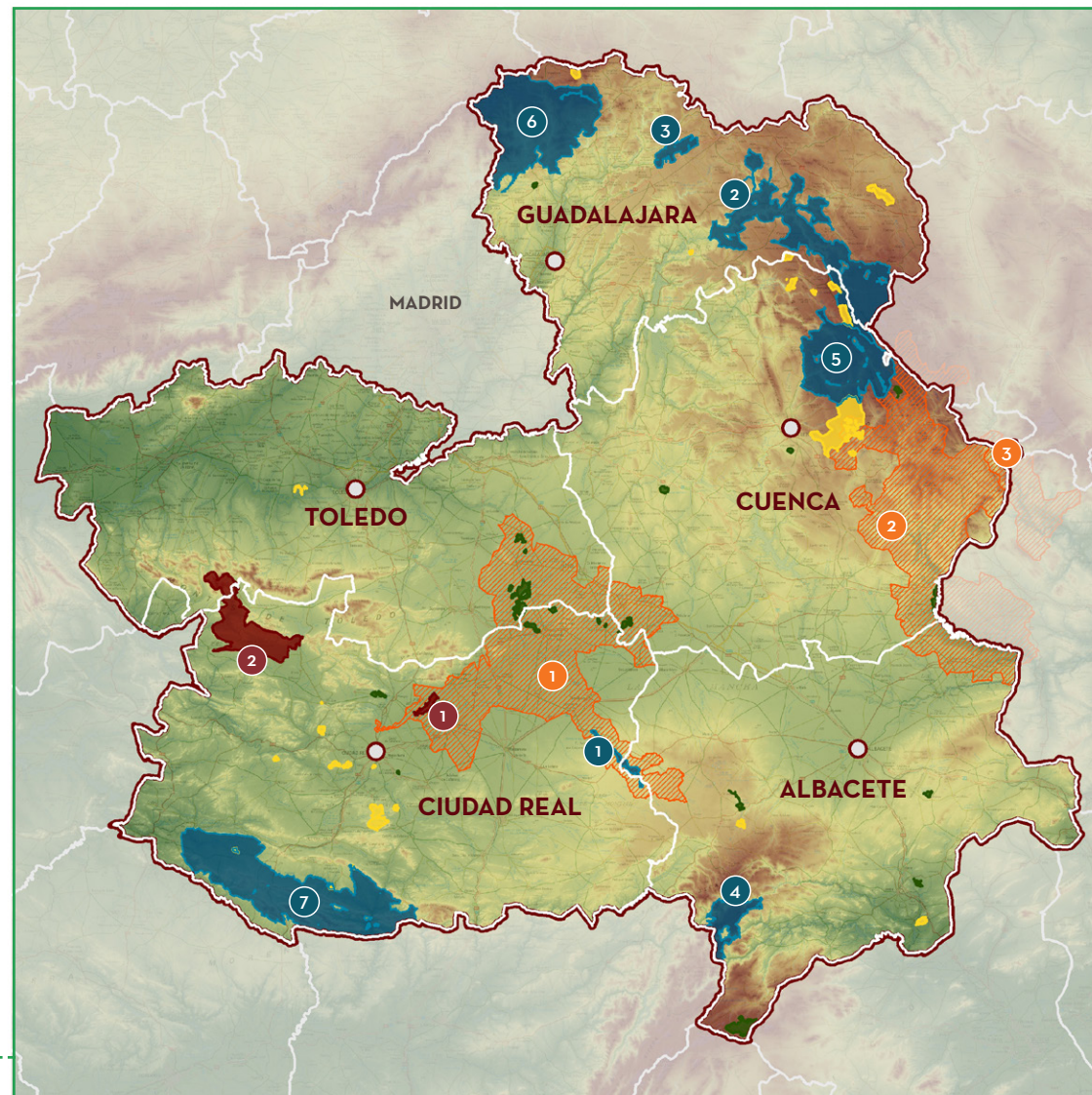
-  La Mancha Húmeda
-  Valle del Cabriel
-  Alto Turia

Natural Reserves

Natural Parks

-  Lagunas de Ruidera
-  Alto Tajo
-  Barranco del Río Dulce
-  Calares del Mundo y de la Sima
-  Serranía de Cuenca
-  Sierra Norte de Guadalajara
-  Valle de Alcudia y Sierra Madrona

Natural Monuments



Natural Reserve of Sierra de las Cabras (Albacete).



MORE THAN 3,000 PLANT SPECIES

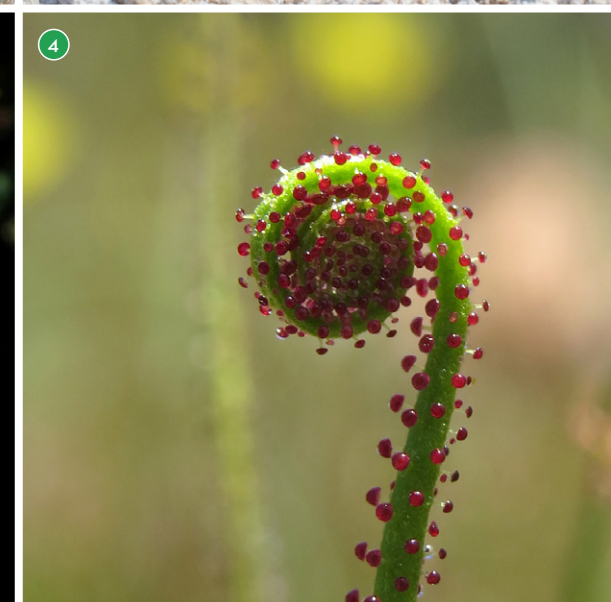
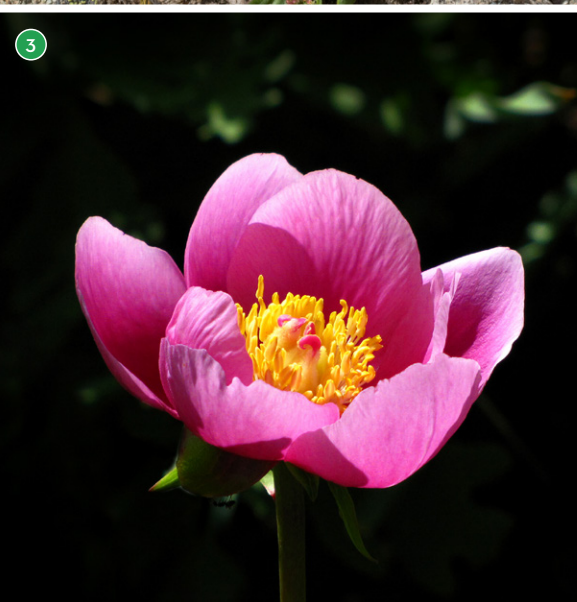
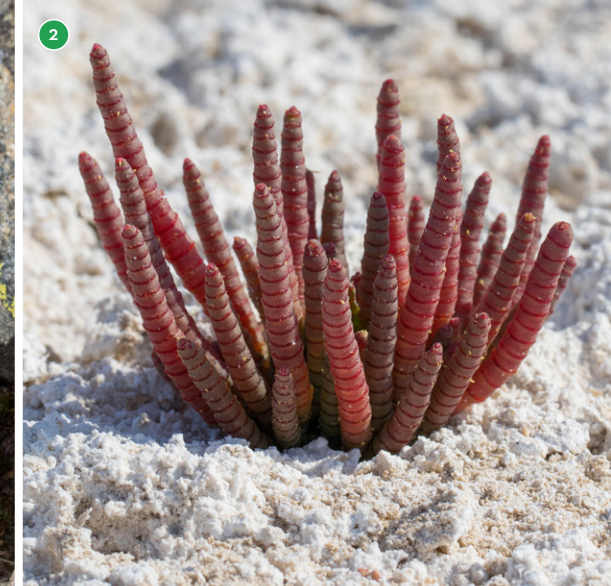
The flora and plant diversity of our territory is so great (with more than 3,000 registered species), that we would need dozens of pages just to list the botanical catalogue of Castilla-La Mancha. As an example of this amazing variety, we have selected some of our most valuable plant species.

Present only in the high mountains of the Central System, the endemic thrift *Armeria caespitosa* ❶ has its eastern limit of distribution in the Ayllón massif in the Sierra Norte de Guadalajara, where it reaches more than 2,000 m (6,500 ft) in altitude, blooming in late May and early June.

The annual halophyte *Microcnemum coralloides* ❷, called in Spain “coralillo” (*small coral*) thrives in a very different environment. This unique plant of small size typical of our salt marshes and salt fields grows in fragile and extreme habitats. It reaches its most colourful appearance in the summer months.

Peonies (*Paeonia broteri*) ❸, an endemic or exclusive species of the Iberian Peninsula, are one of our most showy flowers. With the arrival of spring, these plants will capture all your attention in the Holm Oak and Pyrenean Oak forests of the mountains of the provinces of Toledo, Ciudad Real and Albacete.

Did you know that in Castilla-La Mancha you can see several species of carnivorous plants? One of the rarest in the region is *Drosophyllum lusitanicum* ❹, restricted in our territory to some areas located in Sierra Madrona, in the south of Ciudad Real. The Round-leaved Sundew or Common Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) is more abundant, especially in peatlands or fens, ecosystems in which few other plants grow due to the lack of nutrients. Four species of the genus *Pinguicula*, commonly known as the Butterworts, can be found in some rocky areas of our territory, for example, in the Calares del Mundo y de la Sima, in the Serranía de Cuenca or in the Montes de Toledo.



i Do not forget that all these species, and many others, are strictly protected.

ORCHIDS AND DAFFODILS, TREASURES OF OUR FLORA

Perhaps many people will be surprised to learn that in our territory it is possible to see wild orchids. And not one, not two; up to 70 different species can be found in Castilla-La Mancha, a privileged region to enjoy these unique plants, which together constitute, without a doubt, one of the many treasures of our nature.

Spring is the most appropriate time to pay more attention to orchids. Throughout the months of April, May and June, especially, is when you can find a greater diversity, although in our region there are orchids that bloom since February and others that bloom into the autumn, in the month of October. Wet meadows, roadsides and clearings, among other places, can bring you the discovery of one or more of these attractive flowers.

There are renowned areas in Castilla-La Mancha for their importance for orchids, such as the Natural Monument of the Nacimiento del Río Cuervo and its surroundings, in the Serranía de Cuenca.

Among the three thousand different species of plants that can be found in our region, in addition to orchids and the species already mentioned, daffodils deserve to be highlighted. Announcing every year, with some haste, the end of winter and the arrival of spring, daffodils usually appear in our territory in the months of February and March. This will therefore be the most suitable time to delight yourself with the beauty of the flowers of the fifteen species of daffodils present in the forests and meadows of Castilla-La Mancha.

Remember that the collection of these delicate flowers is prohibited, protected by law. We encourage you to photograph the different species that you see on your hikes and visits to our protected areas, always taking care not to damage any plant or the fragile environment in which they live. It is in our hands to conserve these jewels of nature, so that we can all admire them.



Orchids:

1 *Neottia nidus-avis*

2 *Epipactis palustris*

3 *Ophrys tenthredinifera*

4 *Cephalanthera longifolia*

5 *Himantoglossum robertianum*

6 *Platanthera bifolia*

Daffodils:

7 *Narcissus fernandesii*

8 *Narcissus cantabricus*

9 *Narcissus triandrus*

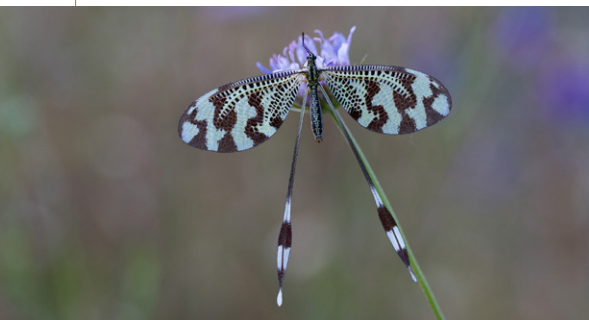
A LOOK AT THE WORLD OF INSECTS

Either because of their smaller size or because of the unfair reputation that insects tend to have as a whole, the truth is that there are few occasions in which we stop to admire the extraordinary species of insects and other invertebrates that make up a whole miniature world.

In Castilla-La Mancha, thanks to the enormous diversity of habitats and landscapes, it is possible to be fascinated by an overwhelming number of different insects, of all shapes, colours and sizes. Your attention will surely be captured by species as striking as, for example, the Spanish Moon Moth (*Graellsia isabelae*), present in the pine forests of the Serranía de Cuenca, Alto Tajo and Sierra del Segura, with nocturnal habits and considered the butterfly of greatest beauty of the European continent; the nemoptera (*Nemoptera bipennis*), a peculiar insect with graceful flight, easy to see in many areas during the months of May or June; or the “wasp beetle” (*Plagionotus andreui*), a endemic species of the Iberian Peninsula, totally harmless and discovered only a few years ago.

Did you know that there are unique insects that can only be found throughout the world in certain areas of Castilla-La Mancha? Among other endemic species –the name given to the exclusive species of a certain area or region–, the surroundings of some salt lands and salt lagoons in La Mancha are home to such surprising species as the “pipe beetle” (*Iberodorcadion bolivari*) or *Cephalota dulcinea*, another type of beetle with a literary and evocative “surname”.

Nemoptera bipennis / *Plagionotus andreui*.



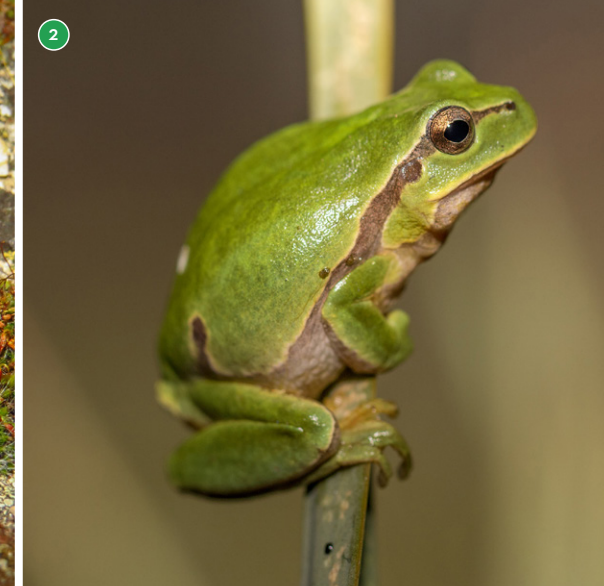
REFUGE FOR MORE THAN HALF OF THE IBERIAN AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

The rivers, wetlands and lagoons, rocky and mountain areas, forests, scrub areas and grasslands, and even the arid and almost desert plains of the region, give shelter to a remarkable number of species of amphibians and reptiles. More than half of the species present in the Iberian Peninsula have been registered in Castilla-La Mancha... a very high proportion!

Amphibians, which constitute the group of fauna most threatened in the world, are very well represented in our territory, with a total of 18 different species, of which 7 are endemic or exclusive to the Iberian Peninsula. They stand out for their interest the Bosca's Newt or the Iberian Newt (*Lissotriton boscai*) ①; the Southern Marbled Newt (*Triturus pygmaeus*); the Spanish Ribbed Newt (*Pleurodeles waltl*), also called Sharp-ribbed Salamander; the Iberian Tree Frog or the Moller's Tree Frog (*Hyla molleri*) ②; the Betic Midwife Toad (*Alytes dickhilleni*) and the Parsley Frog (*Pelodytes hespericus*). Many of these species have a twilight and nocturnal activity, so the mild spring nights will be the best ones to enjoy our amphibians, with the necessary respect and care.

On the other hand, the number of reptiles in Castilla-La Mancha reaches 28 different species, 7 of which are exclusive to the Iberian area. The European Pond Turtle (*Emys orbicularis*), inhabitant of the best preserved wetlands, such as the Tablas de Daimiel National Park, is one of them. The Schreiber's Green Lizard (*Lacerta schreiberi*) ③ deserves a special mention, one of the jewels of the Sierra Norte de Guadalajara and Montes de Toledo. And there are many other species, such as the Spiny-footed Lizard or Fringe-fingered Lizard (*Acanthodactylus erythrurus*); the Spanish Psammodromus (*Psammodromus hispanicus*) and the Spanish Algyroides or Spanish Keeled Lizard (*Algyroides marchi*) ④, of great importance, endemic of Spain and present in the southern mountains of Albacete.

There are many natural spaces and recommended places to observe and photograph the species of amphibians and reptiles of Castilla-La Mancha. Such is the case of the Cabañeros National Park and its surroundings, the Montes de Ciudad Real, the Sierra de San Vicente, the Valle de Alcudia y Sierra Madrona, the Sierra del Segura and the Sierra de Ayllón, among many other areas of enormous natural value.



IN SEARCH OF SOME OF THE ICONS OF OUR WILDLIFE

There is no doubt that Castilla-La Mancha is a privileged region for the observation of numerous species of fauna, including several of the icons or symbols of our nature.

The Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*), paradigm of biodiversity conservation in Spain, is undeniably one of our most valuable treasures. Castilla-La Mancha is currently home to 30% of the global population of the most threatened feline in the world, in slow expansion, with important areas in the Montes de Toledo, in Sierra Morena, in Campo de Montiel and in the middle valley of the Tagus (Tajo) river, among other places.

Other relevant mammal species that you could watch in our natural areas are the Iberian Ibex or Iberian Wild Goat (*Capra pyrenaica hispanica*); the Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*); the Egyptian Mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*); the Wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) and the Wolf (*Canis lupus*); the latter very rare, confined in the Sierra Norte de Guadalajara. And at the end of the summer, between September and October, do not miss the rutting season of the Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*), a show that we recommend you enjoy in the Cabañeros National Park.

Red Deer at sunset.



A BIRDING PARADISE

Did you know that in Castilla-La Mancha you can see more than 350 different species of birds throughout the year? A very high number, which makes our territory one of the most important ornithological regions of the entire European continent.

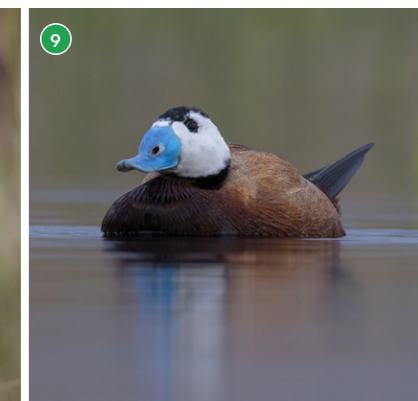
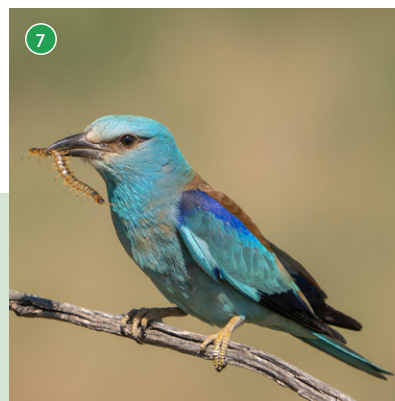
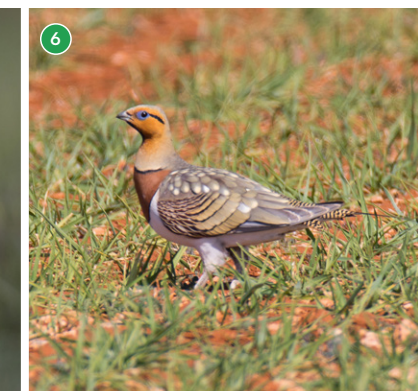
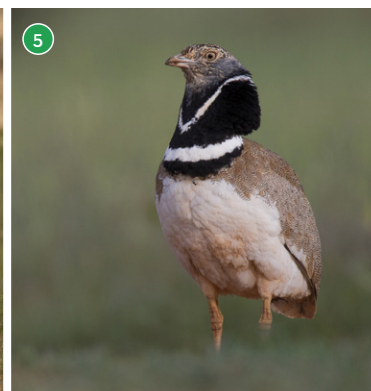
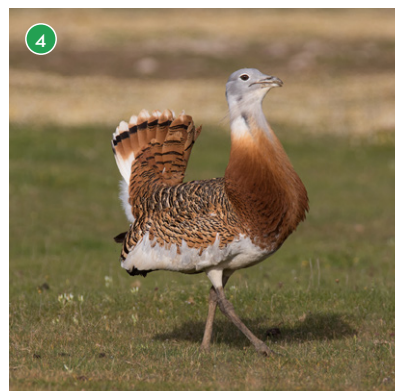
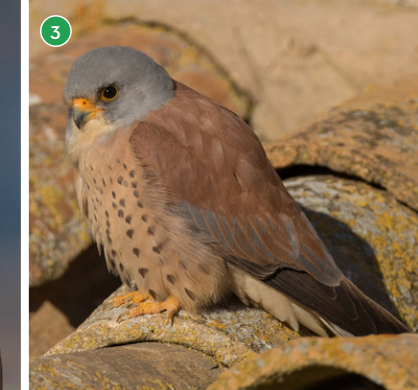
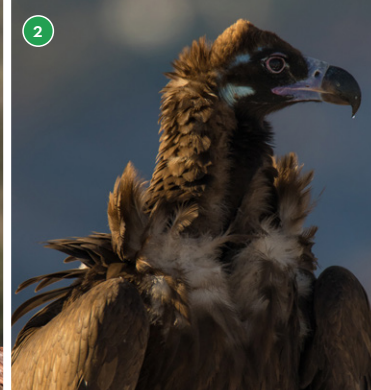
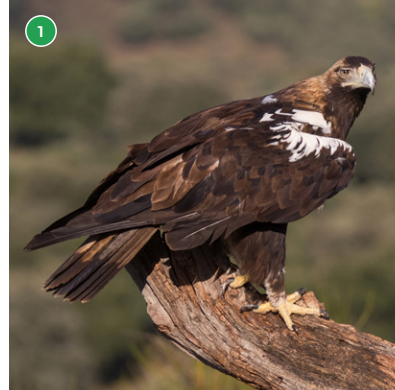
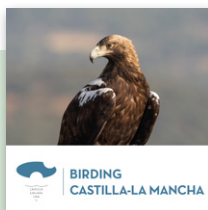
The *dehesas* and Mediterranean forest areas of the western half of Castilla-La Mancha are home to the world's largest population of our most famous raptor, the Spanish Imperial Eagle (*Aquila adalberti*) ①. Also noteworthy are the imposing Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) ②, the largest bird species on the Iberian Peninsula; and the Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) ③, Castilla-La Mancha being the most important region for this threatened species, with more than 2,800 breeding pairs in our territory.

Do not miss the opportunity to enjoy the steppe birds. The Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) ④, for example, is frequent in many plains of the five provinces of Castilla-La Mancha, where the males perform a unique show, between the months of March and May. Many other species also stand out in our farmlands and agricultural areas, such as the Little Bustard (*Tetrax tetrax*) ⑤, one of our most threatened birds, with two-thirds of its population in Spain settled in Castilla-La Mancha; the Pin-tailed Sandgrouse (*Pterocles alchata*) ⑥ and the European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*) ⑦, possibly two of our most charming bird species.

Somewhat more discreet, but no less interesting, is the Dupont's Lark (*Chersophilus duponti*) ⑧, which lives in the high moorlands in the east of the region; a fifth of its European population is concentrated here. And in our wetlands, such as lagoons and reservoirs, you will have the possibility of identifying dozens of different species, hopefully giving you the observation of such unique birds as the White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) ⑨.

Download and do not miss the "Birding Castilla-La Mancha" guide, which lists the best places and periods to enjoy these and many other bird species in our region.

<http://www.turismocastillalamancha.es/folletos-digitales/guias-viaje>



SKIES FREE OF LIGHT POLLUTION

Unlike the situation that occurs in large cities and coastal areas of Spain, Castilla-La Mancha offers an unbeatable setting for contemplation and enjoyment of the night sky, far from the main sources of light pollution. More and more people are dazzled by astrotourism or star tourism in our territory, a modality of ecotourism on the rise in recent years.

Such is the importance of the region for astrotourism, that various natural areas have been declared as Starlight Tourist Destinations, therefore counting on the support of UNESCO; the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO): the Serranía de Cuenca, the Valle de Alcudia y Sierra Madrona (Ciudad Real), the Sierra de Alcaraz y Campo de Montiel (Albacete) and the Sierra del Segura (Albacete) figure in this privileged selection of destinations. There are also many other places where you can also admire the night sky, such as Cabañeros and the Montes de Toledo, the Tiétar Valley or the region of Molina de Aragón and the Alto Tajo. 🌿

A dark night, in the *dehesa* of La Calzada de Oropesa (Toledo).





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