

## ***El Oso Wetlands***

Weekend Route

Ávila Province, Salamanca

### INTERESTING SIGHTSEEING

- Laguna del Oso
- Valhondo Countryside
- Tierra de Campiñas, Special Bird Protection Area (ZEPA)
- Lavajo Salado and Azud de Riobos Wetlands

### REPRESENTATIVE BIRDS

Water birds and steppe birds

### SCHEDULE

#### Day 1

In the Ávila plains you can find four different types of habitats: the cereal plain, the tree wood mass, the wetland areas and the rural area. The cereal plain represents the largest ecosystem having the greatest ecological value. It is home to a number of bird species receiving the highest level of protection worldwide, such as the great bustard and the little bustard, which coexist with other equally important and beautiful birds, such as Montagu's harriers, stone curlews sandgrouses and black-bellied sandgrouses. Many of the bird species that build their nests in the other habitats mentioned earlier rely on the cereal plain to find food or merely to cross the plain during migration flights.

This route begins in the vicinity of Arévalo, a town located right next to highway A6, which also houses a Nature Interpretation Center.

From Arévalo, going south towards Ávila, after a 9 km (5.6 miles) travel, an asphalt track diverges on the left. This forest track leads to an area close to Adaja River. Along this path, you'll be able to observe forest birds and birds of prey. If you continue along the highway, 30 km (18.6 miles) from Arévalo, you'll reach El Oso Wetland, where Laguna del Oso (Bear Lagoon) is found. This SEO-birdlife managed wetland is visited by water birds during the fall season. During the winter season, it becomes one of the most important sleeping places for cranes in Castilla y León.

While in Arévalo, another option is to take highway CL-605, which takes you to Castellanos de Zapardiel. From there, you can take a vehicle tour through the tracks in Campiñas del Valhondo and get to see several species of steppe birds. All the roads crossing these highways entice you to go into the cereal plain, where you can observe great bustards, little bustards and black-bellied sandgrouse. In addition, you'll be able to see alaudidae birds, such as crested larks, chalk-browed mockingbirds and larks.

Once you arrive at the town of Moraleja de Matcabras, you'll go down the highway until you reach Madrigal de las Altas Torres. This county, home to a huge variety of birds, lies within the Special Bird Protection Area of Tierra de Campiñas. The Extramuros convent houses a colony of lesser kestrels. It is worth stopping by to watch it.

There is also a nature interpretation center where you can watch lesser kestrels in real time through a webcam.

## Day 2

The stop along this route is Lavajo Salado, a wet patch located at the end of Rasueros. You can enter from local highway C-106. Make a left on the road to Torreón de Astudillo, between Madrigal de las Altas Torres and Rasueros. The importance of this location derives from the fact that it contains water all year long, thus becoming a refuge for both hibernating birds and birds that come here for mating. Here, you'll have the opportunity to observe common moorhens, grebes and black-winged stilts. During the winter season, you can see northern shovellers, common snipes, etc.

From Rasueros you'll arrive at Campo de Peñaranda. At the edge of this town, on the left hand side, there is a track that leads to the Pedrezuela de San Bricio estate and to Azud de Riobos. This artificial wetland has become an ornithological area of great interest, where an ornithological hiking route begins. This route runs along the entire swamp perimeter through an asphalt track that starts in El Campo de Peñaranda. There, you will also have the chance to consult ornithology books in a specialized bookstore. Due to their peculiarity, it is worth highlighting the presence of certain species, such as white-headed ducks and common spoonbills. Also important to this area are the black-winged stilts, as well as the large concentrations of greylag geese, mallards, northern shovellers, pintails and coots. Finally, it is worth noting the presence of colonies comprised by lesser kestrels. One such colony is found at the Riobos farmhouse, in the north side of the reservoir.

Local Action Group: ADRI (Association for Comprehensive Rural Development), NORTHEAST OF SALAMANCA



