

# A T L A S

de las aves de

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# H u e s c a

Observación  
de aves en el  
Alto Aragón

Birdwatching in the  
Central Spanish Pyrenees  
and the Ebro valley

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## WHERE TO WATCH BIRDS IN THE PROVINCE OF HUESCA

In this chapter an outline is presented of places with relatively high densities of interesting birds in the Pyrenees as well as in the Ebro valley of the province of Huesca, or the 'Alto Aragón' as it is sometimes called. In the last part of this chapter sites holding the most interesting birds are indicated.

Good maps of the area you want to visit can be purchased from bookshops. Detailed maps (scale 1:50,000) can be bought from the Instituto Nacional de Geografía in Huesca (address: Plaza de Cervantes). Detailed maps of the Pyrenees (1:25,000; edition of Editorial Alpino) showing contour lines are recommended. You can buy these in shops in all the mountain villages.

Detailed information on where to watch birds in the Pyrenees may be in various books, the most interesting of which is 'Where to watch birds in the Iberian Peninsula' (1993, Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO), Lynx Edicions, Barcelona).

## WATCHING BIRDS IN THE PYRENEES

It is recommended to travel to your starting point by car, from where you may continue on foot. A birdwatching trip can be as long as you want, varying from one or two hours to one or more days.

The Pyrenees are an excellent place to see raptors, birds of high altitude and birds which like rocky places. There is no particular 'best time' to watch birds in the Pyrenees and even winter is a good time to find many interesting species, as many birds of high altitude move to the valleys or the Exterior Sierras in winter and are then often even easier to find than in their summer resorts. Moreover, winter is the time when the local avifauna is augmented with migrants.

In the villages and towns of the Pyrenees of Huesca there are always hotels, both cheap (called *hostal*) and more expensive, single rooms to rent, and campsites. Free camping is strictly forbidden everywhere, but there are plenty of campsites in the higher parts of most of the valleys.

### Itinerary

#### La Jacetania

One of the most outstanding places of ornithological importance in these surroundings are the valleys of Ansó and Hecho, and the mountain ranges of San Juan de la Peña and Oroel. The valley of the river Aragón, between Berdún and Jaca, is perhaps one of the best places to see raptors. They breed in the mountains but look for food in the lower valleys. There are also plenty of songbirds.

It is recommended to travel by car, but you should make short stops and walk around regularly. In the woods around Zuriza (Ansó), in the Selva de Oza (Hecho) and the surroundings of the New Monastery of San Juan de la Peña you could make longer trips. Foz de Biniés (valley of Ansó) is one of the better places to see rock-loving species. Park the car near one of the entrances to the pass and proceed on foot. If you want to climb the higher mountains in the area it is best to go to Zuriza, in the valley of Ansó, or to Oza, in the valley of Hecho. Leave the car and take a walk of at least several hours.

#### The Ordesa National Park and Monte Perdido

The three valleys of the park, those of Ordesa, Añisclo and Pineta, look as if they are being painted by the best landscape artist of the Pyrenees. Here you can easily find the Lammergeier as well as other typical high

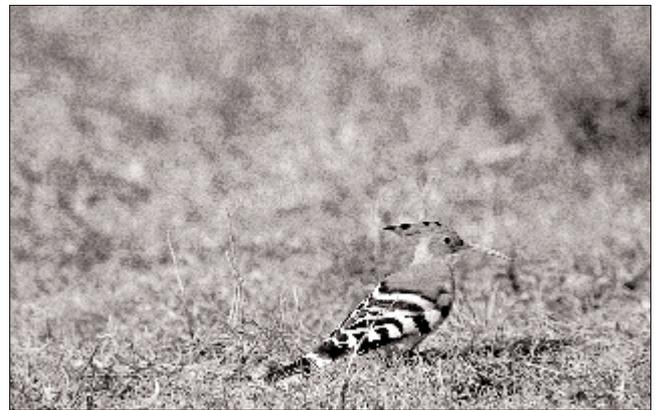
mountain species. The impressive valley walls house rock-climbing species like Wallcreepers, while in the valleys there are plenty of birds living in the woods.

From the parking places you can take either short or long walks. A nice route, which takes all day, is to go to the end of the valley of Ordesa to the Cola del Caballo and return via the Facha de Pelay. An other interesting walk is to go up to Cotatuero and return through the woods of las Hayas, or via the track below the Gallinero and return via Carriata (duration about five hours). Many species which habitually breed in a Mediterranean climate can be found near Añisclo and Escuaín. In this area you can make excursions of several hours.

#### The valley of Benasque

There are two interesting excursions to be made in this valley, during which you can either see birds of the high mountains or birds of the forest. You can either make it a whole day's trip or a much shorter one.

Close to the village of Benasque, on the right river bank, you will find the heavily forested Estós valley. After some three hours walking along the track through the forest you arrive at the refuge of Estós. You are allo-



La abubilla inverna con cada vez más frecuencia en el sureste de la provincia.

Hoopoes are increasingly common winter visitors in the southeast of the province.

(J.L. Sasot)

wed to spend the night here and it is a good place from which to make shorter or longer excursions. Practically all forest animals living in the province of Huesca can be found in this valley.

The other trip goes high up into the mountains without any problems, as the road takes you all the way to the ski station of Cerler. The turn to Cerler is a few kilometres after Benasque. You can make shorter or longer excursions on the plains of Ampriu, where the ski pistes are situated, or go all the way up to the top of El Gallinero and see all the high mountain species.

#### Los Mallos the Riglos and its surroundings

Riglos is one of the most famous places in the Spanish Pyrenees and well known for its high number of rock-loving species, raptors and warblers. You can also find many high-mountain species that come down to spend the winter. Los Mallos are the high red rocks, made up from pre-Pyrenean conglomerate, deposited on the demarcation line with the Ebro Depression.

Visit the villages of Riglos and Aguëro and their mallos. Going out of the village of Riglos you will find a track leading several kilometres along the base of the high red rocks. In the high rocks at the end of the track Griffon Vultures nest.

You can reach the Mirador of Riglos by car, leaving north from the village of Sarsamarcuello, although the last part has to be covered on foot. This village is situated opposite the wall where the vultures breed and it

offers a scenic view on the high red rocks of Riglos.

In the neighbourhood of Riglos there are two more places worth visiting: the Castillo (castle) of Loarre and the refuse tip of Ayerbe. The refuse tip lies along the road leading from Jaca to Huesca, a few kilometres beyond a quail farm, on the right hand side. In this place you will find many interesting birds, most of them carrion eaters.

#### La Sierra de Guara

The Sierra de Guara lies between the road from Huesca to Sabiñánigo and the river Vero. It is part of the broad pre-Pyrenean mountain range, with high rocky cliffs and steep ravines. The dominant vegetation consists of bushes and Holm-Oaks. The Pico Guara reaches above 2,000 metres. There are loads of raptors and rock-loving birds, while in winter the local avifauna is augmented by high-mountain species.

It is recommended to visit the southern part of the Sierra de Guara. Going south along the road from Huesca to Barbastro and taking small roads up to the sierra there are several interesting sites. You should take several walks on the mountain slopes, along the rivers and other places. Short or long excursions can be made, which are indicated on the maps of the Editorial Alpino or in specialised books on the area. The most interesting bird watching points are Salto de Roldan and Cienfuens, Vadiello, San Cosme, the area of Mascún (the villages of Rodellar and Otín) and along the river Vero (the villages of Alquezar and Lecina).  
**WATCHING BIRDS IN THE EBRO VALLEY**

In the Ebro valley (the lowlands of the province) it is recommended to travel by car as well, from which you can make several interesting observations. From certain points you can take short walks, of half an hour or so, or longer ones, lasting several hours.

The best period to see birds is between December and August. During the winter months you will find large numbers of northern and central European ducks and raptors spending the cold season here. In the Monegros enormous flocks of larks, finches and buntings roam the fields. In spring you can see typical steppe species, which breed in the dry arable fields. In autumn however, these birds have disappeared, while the winter visitors have not yet arrived.

Hotels can be found in the capital, Huesca, or in most of the larger towns. There are many small hotels, hostels and campsites. You can make excursions from places close to the Pyrenees, for instance from the area of Riglos, Huesca or Barbastro.

#### Itinerary

##### La Sotonera and Gurrea

Close to the Pyrenees and the city of Huesca there are habitats very different from each other: a reservoir and a steppe, which can both be visited in a single day.

The reservoir of Sotonera is one of the largest fresh-water bodies in the province Huesca. Thousands of ducks spend the winter here, while there are always many herons, egrets and harriers present. In spring some 5,000-8,000 cranes stop over during migration.

The area is best visited by car. The best vantage-points on a trip around the reservoir are near the dam (Tormos) and near the village of Montmesa. Between Gurrea de Gállego and Alcalá de Gurrea, in the Llanos de la Violada, there are numerous tracks from which there are opportunities to see steppe birds.

##### The surroundings of Huesca

Close to Huesca there are ponds, reservoirs and rivers with lush vegetation, all interesting from an ornithological point of view. Here you can see waterbirds, raptors, waders and small songbirds. It is best to go by

car, but take many short walks in the marshy habitats and longer ones along the rivers.

You can visit Alberca and Soto de Cortés, near the village of Chimillas. Take the turn to Alberca de Loreto (to the right) or to Pantano de Valdabrá (to the left), a few kilometres along the road from Huesca to Zaragoza (near la Universidad Laboral). Before you enter the village of Sangarrén (on the left, departing from Huesca) there is a large reedbed in which thousands of birds roost during winter. The best preserved riverine habitat is found close to Pompenillo, Tabernas de Isuela, Buñuales and Lascasas.

Other interesting bird watching spots are the rice fields of Vicién, de castle of Montearagón and the area surrounding the airport of Monflorit.

##### The lake of Sariñena

Sariñena is the largest natural fresh water lake in the province. You can find typical waterbirds like cormorants, herons, egrets, gulls and waders. Over 10,000 ducks spend the winter here.

The lake can be considered natural, but has a controlled fresh water inlet and an artificially controlled water table. Near the lake there are several hundreds hectares of ricefields. The lake is ornithologically interesting throughout the year. A track goes round the lake, from which you have excellent views. Spend plenty of time searching for birds along the water's edge.



La carraca es una especie en expansión; aquí en una casa abandonada cerca de Barbastro.

Rollers are spreading in Huesca. This picture shows a Roller at an abandoned house near Barbastro. (J.M. Cereza)

Two other places worth visiting along the road to Huesca are the small lake of Sariñena Estación and the ricefields near Capdesaso and San Lorenzo del Flumen.

##### The lower Cinca

The lower Cinca district is interesting to visit by car. You should take short or longer trips at several points near the river, at ponds and swamps, but also in the steppe. Along the river, between Monzón and Torrente de Cinca, are riverine forests, reed beds and small reservoirs. The best access is provided from the right-hand river bank. Along this side there are also excellent steppe areas.

The most interesting points along the river Cinca are the shrubs at Monzón (near Conchel), the island of Alfántega (close to the village of Alfántega), the Galacho de Ripol (close to the village of Ripol) and the surroundings of Alcolea de Cinca and Ballobar.

The steppe zone lies between Ballobar, Ontiñena and Alcolea de Cinca.

##### The Monegros

The excellent virgin steppe zone of the province is that of the Monegros, the major part of which lies in the

province of Zaragoza. It is the driest zone of the Ebro Depression, with cereal fields, remnants of pine forests and saline lakes. Go by car along the small roads and tracks and take several short or longer walks.

The area is interesting enough to visit both in winter and summer (early in the morning!) and you may expect to see among others, Great and Little Bustards, larks and raptors.

An interesting route goes along Lanaja to Castejón de Monegros and proceeds to Valfarta, to arrive in Bujaraloz. Here you can visit the lakes near Bujaraloz, proceed along the road into the direction of Sástago. This excursion may take several hours or even a whole day.

## WHERE TO FIND THE MOST INTERESTING BIRDS

To birdwatchers not all birds are equal. Some species are of special interest, generally because there are only few of them left or because they are hard to find. They may either be species of which the major population lives elsewhere, in other regions or countries, or species with a reduced population, often endangered and included in a country's Red List.

The province of Huesca holds a fair number of bird species of special interest. In order to facilitate finding them in the field, this chapter offers some indications of sites where they may be found relatively easy. Naturally, most of these birds can also be found elsewhere. Care has been taken to include only those sites where the observation of the birds will not harm their well-being.

The species selected for this chapter will not necessarily be of interest for everyone, since a birder from England may have other wishes than one from Madrid, Zaragoza or The Netherlands. The birds that are not included here are generally the most abundant species and can easily be found in the field, having studied the main text and the distribution maps.

### Night Heron

Some 50-100 Night Heron pairs breed on the islets of Mequinenza (Zaragoza), just south of Fraga. They tend to feed in the vicinity, but since they are mainly active at dusk or at night they are not always easy to find. Birds entering or leaving the colony can be seen all summer at dawn and at dusk. In July and August Night Herons occur all along river Cinca until well beyond Ariéstolas, where there is a roost. During these months the species is also present at the lagoon of Sariñena; however, it is not easy to find there.

### Little Bittern

The highest density of Little Bitterns is found along the river Cinca, between Monzón and Mequinenza. There are not many breeding pairs and it is rather difficult to spot one of them crossing the river. Moreover, in many places the noise of the river impedes localising the birds by their characteristic call, resembling a dog's barking. The odd pair also breeds in the Sariñena lagoon and the reservoir of El Pas, where calls can be heard with more ease. The best time of day for finding Little Bittern is at either dawn or at dusk.

### Cattle Egret

Cattle Egrets can be seen in many of the wetland habitats, particularly in the ricefields of Somontano and Bajo Cinca, in the lagoon of Sariñena and along the river Cinca, south of Monzón. In spring large concentrations of up to or over 300 birds are present on the islets of Mequinenza (Zaragoza) and in autumn and winter at the roosts of the Sariñena lagoon and the small lagoon of Sariñena Estación. This species is generally easier to find in winter than in summer, its distribu-

tion then being at its widest.

### Purple Heron

All through summer Purple Herons may be seen at the lagoon of Sariñena, along the river Cinca south of Monzón and in the vicinity of the village of Montmesa. They are most easily found at Sariñena, where they frequently fly to and from the colony, and where they can be seen feeding on the lagoon's densely covered banks. The odd pair may also be found at the small lagoon of Sariñena Estación. Along the river Cinca the population density is lower. In the vicinity of Montmesa, along the reservoir La Sotonera, Purple Herons probably do not breed annually, but they are generally present before and after the breeding season.

### Lammergeier

The Lammergeier is present throughout the year and all over the Pyrenees within the boundaries of Huesca. It is easy to find flying over cliff faces and valleys of the southern slope of the Exterior Sierras (Riglos, Salto de Roldán, Vadiello, Rodellar), over the highest peaks of the Interior Sierras (above the highest villages) and along the mountains of the high Pyrenees. In the vicinity of the village of Escuin, at the eastern edge of the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park, it is possible to see more than 10 individuals in a single day. In the lower parts of the valleys and the depressions the possibilities of finding Lammergeier are distinctly lower.

### Montagu's Harrier

The Montagu's Harrier frequents cereal fields between late April and early September. The best way to look for it is to drive along the secondary roads traversing this zone. The highest chances of success can be expected in the lower Cinca region. Smaller populations still survive in the Hoya de Huesca, especially east of the city, in the Monegros and in the cereal fields between Berdún and Jaca.

### Golden Eagle

The Golden Eagle is found throughout the year all over the Pyrenees, including the Exterior Sierras, and in Monegros. It is more difficult to find than the Lammergeier. The best chances are in the high Pyrenees and in the Monegros.

### Bonelli's Eagle

The best area to see Bonelli's Eagles is the southern slope of the Exterior Sierras. There are still breeding pairs in the vicinity of Salto de Roldán, Vadiello and



Un bando de grulla común parado durante su paso primaveral, el embalse de la Sotonera, marzo de 1988.

Flock of Cranes during spring migration, embalse de la Sotonera, march 1988.

(J.L. Sasot)

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along the river Alcanadre. These are areas where many vultures are in the air and the Bonelli's Eagle does not particularly stand out among them, because its flight is fast and it does not soar often. It generally takes a little effort to see it. The patient birder, prepared to settle himself for hours on end on Salto de Roldán and keep a vigilant watch on all raptors presenting themselves, will have a fair chance of spotting it and will not have to worry about disturbing this endangered species by his presence.

#### Booted Eagle

All through the summer period Booted Eagles may be found in the valleys and depressions of the Pyrenees, in the Exterior Sierras, in the northern Somontano and in the Monegros. Particularly interesting for this species seems to be the Sierra de Alcubierre, along the south-western border of the province of Huesca. It is not hard to find, especially during migration (both in spring and autumn), particularly so in the western part of the province.

#### Peregrine

Peregrines may be seen all over the Pyrenees. The best possibilities are offered by the high areas of both the Interior Sierras and the Exterior Sierras. Outside the breeding season, the Peregrine can be seen also with relative ease all over the Somontano. Thus, it is no exception to see an individual hunting over the Huesca city park at dusk, attracted by the huge numbers of Jackdaws, tarlings and Magpies assembled there to sleep.

#### Lesser Kestrel

There are several colonies of Lesser Kestrel in the southern part of the province, where the birds are present from April to August. The colony closest to the Pyrenees is found in a semi-abandoned house close to Odina, between Ilche and Terreu. There is another large colony in an abandoned house along the national highway between Fraga and Candasnos. It can also be seen hunting along the sandstone walls south of Alcolea de Cinca.

#### Ptarmigan

The densities of Ptarmigan in the high Pyrenees are very low. Most observations date from autumn (August-November), which seems to indicate this is the period when it is most easily found. It is present in the highest peaks over the entire width of Huesca's Pyrenees, but it is most frequently seen in the eastern parts. One will have to ascend to at least 2,000-2,500 metres and preferably search the areas least visited by man.

#### Capercaillie

In view of the very precarious situation of the Capercaillie in Aragón at present, you are advised not to go and look for it, in order not to disturb the areas it frequents.

#### Crane

There is a Crane roost very close to the village of Montmesa, which is used during spring migration. The birds may then be found either east or south of the village, along the banks of the Sotonera reservoir. The best time to look for them is dawn or late afternoon. When weather conditions are not favourable for crossing the Pyrenees, birds may remain in the area all day and, then, numbers present may approach to 10,000 birds. Between approximately 20 February and 15 March Cranes are generally present in this area.

#### Great Bustard

In order to see Great Bustard you have to go south to the area around Bujaraloz (Zaragoza). A small population inhabits the surroundings of this village, particularly south of it. To find them one must drive along the many small roads and tracks and search the immeasurable fields. The only really Huescan Great Bustards, which used to be observed with ever decreasing frequency in the vicinity of the villages of Gurrea de Gállego, Tormos and Torresecas, have probably disappeared in the early 1990's.

#### Little Bustard

The best way of finding Little Bustards is to drive the tracks in extensive areas of arid open countryside stopping frequently to search the fields with binoculars or telescope. They can be hard to find when only their heads are sticking out of the vegetation. There are three areas where it is still relatively easy to find Little Bustards. The first is the flat area north of El Tormillo, where there is a small area of cereal fields. The second one is larger and consists of the flats between Almudévar, Gurrea de Gállego, Alcalá de Gurrea and Torresecas. There are many records from the track between Banariés and Torresecas, a route frequently used by local birders from the city of Huesca. The last area is situated between Alcolea de Cinca, Ontiñena and Ballobar, where one should drive tracks and secondary roads.

#### Waders

It is surprising how many individuals and species of waders can be found along any small pond or reservoir in the province of Huesca, where they rest during their bi-annual migration through the interior of Spain. The best periods for watching waders on migration are between early April and mid-May and August and September. The best places are reservoirs and ponds of varying sizes with relatively flat banks and particularly the ever increasing areas of ricefields. Among these, special attention should be paid to the lagoon of Sariñena, the pond of Loreto, the reservoir Valdabrá in the Hoya de Huesca and the ponds of Bajo Cinca (for instance El Pas, Valonga and Rafales). The best ricefields are found in the vicinity of the village of San Lorenzo del Flumen, in the triangle formed by the villages of Grañén, Callén and Almuniente and in Bajo Cinca.

#### Black-bellied Sandgrouse and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse

The best way of finding Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse is to drive the tracks along extensive areas of arid open countryside and stopping frequently to take a walk in the fields. They can be seen all over the south of the province. There are two areas where they are still relatively easy to find. The first is at the flats between Almudévar, Gurrea de Gállego, Alcalá de Gurrea and Torresecas. The second is situated between Alcolea de Cinca, Ontiñena and Ballobar, where one should drive along tracks and secondary roads.

#### Great Spotted Cuckoo

The Great Spotted Cuckoo is a common bird in southern Somontano, approximately in the area between Tormos in the northwest, Monzón in the northeast, Alcolea de Cinca in the southeast and Zuera (Zaragoza) in the southwest. The best way to find it is to visit the re-afforested pine plantations or the (scarce) forests of Monegros.

#### Eagle Owl

Of course, the Eagle Owl should preferably be looked for at night. The best time of the year is February/March, when the males are calling. It is also possible to see it at dusk, emerging from its day-time

hide. Areas where it may be seen are for example the village of Biniés in the Pyrenees and the refuse tip of Huesca (along the road to Apiés), where they hunt for rats. Good sites are also the small sierra between Piracés and Tramaced and the walls along the river Cinca close to Castejón el Puente, north of Monzón.

#### Tengmalm's Owl

Tengmalm's Owls should be looked for at night in February or March, at altitudes between approximately 1,800-2,000 metres, in the zone of Black Pine. The highest densities have been found in the eastern part of the



El roquero rojo es una especie que vive en zonas relativamente vírgenes; un macho en plumaje otoñal cerca de Belsué.  
Rock Thrushes are found in relatively undisturbed habitat. Here a male after the breeding season near Belsué. (J.M. Cereza)

Pyrenees, in the valleys of Pineta, Plan and Benasque (where Vallibierna is the most famous site for this species). The immense sacrifice one has to make to see or hear this bird explains why its presence in Aragón remained unnoticed until only ten years ago.

#### Red-necked Nightjar

The Red-necked Nightjar seems to have almost completely disappeared from the province. The area where (nocturnal) searches might still produce some positive results is the eastern part of the region of Bajo Cinca. It inhabits lower and dry mountainous areas with low vegetation and it frequently settles on roads.

#### Black Woodpecker

The Black Woodpecker occurs frequently in all well-developed woodlands of the Pyrenean valleys between 900 and almost 1,800 metres altitude. It is present in all valleys, with the highest densities in the surroundings of Zuriza (valley of Ansó), the Selva de Oza (valley of Hecho), San Juan de la Peña, the valleys of Ordesa, Pineta and Estós (Benasque).

#### White-backed Woodpecker

Primarily a Central European species, the White-backed Woodpecker also maintains a reduced relict population in the north of the Iberian peninsula. In the Pyrenees the major nucleus of this species is found in the neighbouring province of Navarre, but in the westernmost valleys of Huesca's Pyrenees it has also proved to be present in recent years. The best way to find it is to search the virgin Beech forests of Zuriza (Ansó) and Oza (Hecho) during March or April. Outside the pre-breeding period the White-backed Woodpecker, like all other woodpeckers, becomes much harder to find.

#### Dupont's Lark

The Dupont's Lark is a steppe bird, only inhabiting the arid zones which have not yet been modified by man and where the original xerophytic vegetation is still intact. Until well into the 1980's two sites were known

where Dupont's Larks occurred in Huesca: close to the hermitage of Chalamera de Cinca and at about four kilometres west of Ballobar, in El Basal. It seems likely that the part of Monegros comprising Candanos, Ballobar and Ontiñena still holds a small population of this species. The best time to find it is in spring, when you should enter into the most remote areas and try to localise singing birds (also at night).

#### Lesser Short-toed Lark

Like the former species the Lesser Short-toed Lark inhabits the most arid zones of the Huescan steppes,



El gorrión alpino, un macho en el puerto de Cotefablo (a 1.500 metros de altitud).  
Snowfinches, a male at the pass of Cotefablo (1,500 m), escaping from the snowstorms on the mountain peaks. (J.L. Sasot)

found in the region of the Monegros. This species prefers bare ground with little or no vegetation. The best sites are without doubt found in the area around Ontiñena, Peñalba, Candanos and Ballobar. It can also be seen close to saline lagoons like La Playa, close to Bujaraloz.

#### Short-toed Lark

The Short-toed Lark is also a typical bird of arid areas, but its dependence on the most extreme circumstances is less marked than in the two preceding species. In spring and summer it is found in large numbers in all arid steppe zones of the province, including the extensive cereal fields west and northwest of the city of Huesca.

#### Calandra Lark

Calandra Larks are found in similar habitat as the Short-toed Lark. Nonetheless, this species is much easier to find. It is present throughout the year and it is very vocal, which makes it easy to detect. In winter Calandra Larks are gregarious and flocks of hundreds and even thousands may be seen, particularly in the south of the province.

#### Lesser Grey Shrike

In Huesca the Lesser Grey Shrike reaches the southwestern limit of its European distribution. The Huescan population primarily inhabits the fruit orchard area close to the river Cinca, south of Albalate de Cinca. One of the best sites, where observation is easy, is in the vicinity of El Pas (Belver). Lesser Grey Shrikes arrive by the end of May and they can be seen with fledglings in July, perching on poles and branches.

#### Alpine Accentor

The Alpine Accentor must be looked for in summer between bare rocks and in stony alpine areas of the high Pyrenees between 1,900 and 2,400 metres altitude. Hot-spots are, among others, Cotatuero (Ordesa),

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the Balcón de Pineta and Aguas Tuertas (valley of Hecho). The easiest way to find it in winter is driving along roads and tracks of the Exterior Sierras (Riglos, Guara), where it usually occurs in flocks up to some dozens of birds. At this time it is always present in the vicinity of the castle of Loarre.

#### Rock Thrush

The Rock Thrush is widely distributed in summer all through the high Pyrenees close to the tree limit. In spring, when males mark their territories with their distinctive song (similar to that of the Blackbird), it is relatively easy to locate. Slightly less widely distributed, but possibly easier to find, Rock Thrushes also occur in several bare rocky sites in the Exterior Sierras (for instance Salto de Roldán and the road to Vadiello).

#### Blue Rock Thrush

The Blue Rock Thrush reaches its most northerly range in Huesca more or less in the Pyrenean valley of Ansó, at Foz de Biniés. It is far more abundant in the Exterior Sierras, where it is found in the same habitat. Well-known haunts, both in summer and in winter, are the castles of Loarre and Montearagón, the Mallos de Riglos and Vadiello. Further south it also inhabits for example the sierra between Piracés and Tramaced and the walls bordering the rivers Alcanadre and Vero.

#### Black Wheatear

The Black Wheatear is a typical bird of rocky and sunny areas. In Huesca highest densities are found on the southern slopes of the Exterior Sierras and in small sierras and cliffs of the Monegros. In the Pyrenees some pairs are found in the region of Jacetania. Some particular spots where this species may be found with ease are the Mallos de Riglos, the castle of Montearagón, on the track to Salto de Roldán (about one kilometre before arriving there), the road towards Vadiello just below Santa Eulalia, the sierra between Piracés and Tramaced, the hermitage of Chalamera de Cinca and the area of Terreu and Castelflorite.

#### Spectacled Warbler

The Spectacled Warbler inhabits the low scrub areas bordering arid zones. It is found especially in the region of the Monegros, but there also is a significant population in the surroundings of Gurrea de Gállego, Tormos and Torresecas. There are several pairs close to the defence tower east of the Sotona reservoir.

#### Wall Creeper

In summer the Wall Creeper frequents the south-facing sunny cliffs and ridges in the high Pyrenees, the lowest haunts then being the Boca del Infierno (Hell's Mouth, valley of Hecho) and the Congosto del Ventamillo (valley of Benasque). In Ordesa too it inhabits south-facing walls, with for example one pair living near the pins of Suaso. In winter it is invariably present on the sunny walls of the Exterior Sierras, for example in Agüero, Riglos, Salto de Roldán, Vadiello, Alquézar and Mascún.

#### Tree Creeper

Tree Creepers are hard to find in Huesca, since they only occur in low densities and inhabit the densest forests of the high Pyrenees. There are breeding pairs in the valleys of Ansó (barranco Petrechema, Gamueta, Linza), Hecho (barranco Espata, Reclusa) and Ordesa (Faja de Pelay).

#### Snow Finch

In order to see the Snow Finch it is necessary to ascend to the highest mountains. In summer colonies (or single pairs) are found breeding at altitudes of approximately 2,200 metres. Colonies are often situated on small slopes facing southwards. A large colony exists

about ten minutes walking from the refuge of Goriz (Ordesa) on the track towards the Brecha de Rolando. In winter it often visits ski resorts, like those at Formigal and Cerler.