

The "Parque Natural de Monfragüe" is a Natural Park located in Extremadura, a Spanish region, southwest of Madrid, along the Portuguese border, famous for its white storks which build enormous nests on top of churches, especially in the Province of Cáceres.



The park runs from east to west along the valley of the dammed River Tagus (Río Tajo / Rio Tejo) and includes a long mountainous ridge. At the centre of the park the river has cut through this ridge, creating on the western side an impressive rock face, the Peñafalcón. On the eastern side, a castle, el Castillo de Monfragüe, is situated. The River Tiétar enters the park from the north-east and joins the Tajo just to the east of Peñafalcón.

The Parque Natural de Monfragüe has four natural points of entry, located at Trujillo, Navalmoral de la Mata, Plasencia and Cáceres. It contains the following villages: Torrejón el Rubio, Serradilla, Malpartida de Plasencia, Toril, Serrejón, Jaracejo y Casas de Miravete.

Currently a "natural park" with regional protection only, it is to become Spain's 14th national park later this year, to be enjoyed by all.

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The Monfragüe Natural Park extends over a total surface area of 18,000 hectares of prime Mediterranean forest, in which the glorious flora and fauna of the area around Cáceres bursts forth in its entire splendor. It provides some of the finest examples of Mediterranean plants and animals, both in terms of the number and variety of species to be found there. Indeed, the reserve is home to more than 75% of Spain's protected species, including the Iberian lynx.

Habitats in the park include extensive dense scrub, small oak woodlands, and numerous cliffs and rock faces. It is one of the largest forests in Spain with over 1,400 different species of trees.

It is an outstanding site for raptors, with more than 15 regular breeding species, including the world's largest breeding concentration of Eurasian Black Vulture (287), a large population of Griffon Vulture (510), and several pairs of Spanish Imperial Eagle (12), Golden Eagle and Bonelli's Eagle (12).

Other breeding birds for which the park is important are Black Stork and Eurasian Eagle Owl and there is a high density of Azure-winged Magpie. It is also home to colonies of black-shouldered kites, grassland birds including great bustards, sandgrouse.... and one of the few locations in Europe where White-rumped Swift breeds.

Iberian Lynx *(from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)*

<p>Spanish Lynx Conservation status: Critical</p>

<p>Scientific classification</p>
<p>Kingdom: Animalia Phylum: Chordata Class: Mammalia Order: Carnivora Family: Felidae Genus: Lynx Species: <i>L. pardinus</i></p>

The **Spanish Lynx** (*Lynx pardinus*, sometimes *Felis pardina*) or **Iberian Lynx** is sometimes classified as a subspecies of the Eurasian Lynx, but most authorities regard it as a separate species. While the Eurasian Lynx bears rather pallid markings, the Spanish Lynx has distinctive, leopard-like spots. It is furthermore smaller than its northern relative and hence hardly able to hunt animals larger than hares, and rabbits as its main prey. However, when hungry, the Spanish Lynx may attack young deer or mouflons.

This lynx was once distributed over all of Spain and Portugal. It is now largely restricted to mountainous areas, because it is extinct in the lowlands. Spanish Lynxes prefer open grassland with few trees. They hunt at night, and in the daytime they hide under the shrubs.

The Spanish Lynx is critically endangered and the world's most threatened species of cat. Estimates of March 2005 have put the figure in as few as 100, down from a thousand a decade ago, scattered in tiny reservations. A very few may remain in Portugal, but in fact the only breeding populations left are in Spain, located in the Coto de Doñana National Park and in the Sierra de Andújar (Jaén). Lynxes and their habitats are fully protected and not hunted anymore, but they are critically endangered, mainly due to road casualties, illegal hunting and the decimation of hares and rabbits, its almost exclusive prey, by diseases like myxomatosis and haemorrhagic pneumonia.

Spanish Imperial Eagle (from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

<p>Spanish Imperial Eagle Conservation status: Vulnerable</p>

<p>Scientific classification</p>
<p>Kingdom: Animalia Phylum: Chordata Class: Aves Order: Falconiformes Family: Accipitridae Genus: Aquila Species: <i>A. adalberti</i></p>

The **Spanish Imperial Eagle** or **Adalbert's Eagle** (*Aquila adalberti*) is closely related to the Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*). It occurs only in SW Spain, Portugal and possibly northern Morocco. Until recent times, the Spanish Imperial Eagle was considered to be a subspecies of the Imperial Eagle, but is now widely regarded as being a separate species.

The Spanish Imperial Eagle is smaller and darker than its oriental cousin, and it is a resident species (*A. heliaca* migrated to SE during winter). This eagle feeds mainly on rabbits, but it can predate over many other animals, like rodents, hares, pigeons, crows, ducks and foxes. The species is classified as Vulnerable. Threats include loss of habitat and illegal poisoning. There has also been a decline in the Spanish rabbit population, as a result of myxomatosis and other viral illnesses. The current population is estimated at around 400.

In Spain there are currently around 170 pairs reported and it is making a very slow recovery although it is still an endangered species. A small population is preserved in Doñana National Park, Spain but the bulk of its population live in the Mediterranean woods of the central and southwestern quarters of the country.

Black Stork (from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

<p style="text-align: center;">Black Stork</p> <p><u>Conservation status:</u> Least concern</p>

<p>Black Stork</p>
<p><u>Scientific classification</u></p>
<p>Kingdom: Animalia</p> <p>Phylum: Chordata</p> <p>Class: Aves</p> <p>Order: Ciconiiformes</p> <p>Family: Ciconiidae</p> <p>Genus: Ciconia</p> <p>Species: <i>Ciconia nigra</i></p>

The **Black Stork** (*Ciconia nigra*) is a large wading bird in the stork family Ciconiidae.

It is a widespread species that breeds in the warmer parts of Europe, predominantly in central and eastern regions. It is a strong migrant, wintering in tropical Africa. However, the Spanish population is resident.

This is a broad-winged soaring bird, which relies on moving between thermals of hot air for sustained long distance flight. Since thermals only form over land, storks, together with large raptors, must cross the Mediterranean at the narrowest points, and many Black Storks can be seen going through the Bosphorus.

This is a huge bird, nearly 1m tall with a 1,8m wingspan. It is all black except for the white belly and axillaries, and its red bill and legs. It walks slowly and steadily on the ground. Like all storks, it flies with its neck outstretched.

It breeds in large marshy wetlands with interspersed coniferous or broadleaved woodlands, but inhabits also hills and mountains with sufficient network of creeks. It builds a stick nest high in trees. This is a shy and wary species, unlike the closely related White Stork.

The Black Stork feeds mainly on fish and also amphibians and insects. This stork has a rasping call, but rarely indulges in mutual bill-clattering when adults meet at the nest.



Black Stork

Black Stork

Black Stork, young

Black Stork, young