

Protected Spaces to enjoy the most natural Galicia

With almost hundred thousand hectares considered as Zone of Special Protection for Birds (ZEPA), the Galician region is an excellent observatory of hundreds of unusual species, some of them threatened, which live in different natural environments of singular beauty.

Galicia has a surface of 29.574 km² in which there is a great variety of habitats thanks to its geographical position and to its varied relief. The variety of existing climates causes environments such as the oceanic, Mediterranean, mountain... These circumstances favor the consolidation of Galicia as one of the best destinies to practice Ornithological Tourism.

Nowadays, there are fifteen places that, according to the different regulations, are considered zones of special protection for birds (ZEPA) and, therefore, they are magnificent observatories for the seekers of singular birds.

The selected zones are Illas Cíes, Ribadeo, Ría de Ortigueira e Ladrido, Complexo Intermareal Umia O Grove, A Lanzada, Punta Carreirón e Lagoa Bodeira, Costa da Morte, Illa de Ons, Costa de Ferrolterra Valdoviño, Complexo Litoral de Corrubedo, Costa da Mariña Occidental, Ría de Foz, Ancares, Esteiro de Miño, Baixa Limia Serra do Xurés, Serra da Enciña da Lastra and Pena Trevinca.

All of them reach a total surface

of 94,089 hectares of protected space, a whole natural bet for preservation of these ecosystems and natural environments and of the birds living on them.

Hereinafter we take a short closer look to the main attractions of these zones, highlighted by the beauty of their landscapes and the singularity of the species they protect.

Os Ancares (Lugo)

This Natural Space, protection zone for the brown bear, takes a very wide area, shared with the Autonomous Region of Castilla y Leon and the Principality of Asturias. The river Navia and its many affluent run through this territory dotted of bushes and in which vegetation floods the mountain slopes.

Here we discover Eurosiberian species, some of them almost extinguished, such as the common grouse, the middle spotted woodpecker and the woodcock. We also find an interesting population of raptors and the birds typical of bushes, grazing land and rocky bush.

WETLAND OF CORRUBEDO.

This space formed by a spectacular dune's complex and the lagoons of Carregal and Vixán, is protected by the figures of Natural Park, ZEPA, Ramsar Site and LIC.





The observer cannot miss the exceptional marine birds that live in the beautiful Islas Cíes

Costa da Morte

This ZEPA includes the coastal areas of Baldaio (marshes and sandy areas), the Sisargas islands, the coastal stretch of Punta de la Nariga-Punta Roncudo, the estuary of the river Anllóns, the coastal complex of Traba and the coastal stretch of Arou-Cabo Villano. It includes marine waters and rocky islets that favor the exist-

ence of colonies of common guillemots, kittiwakes and black-backed gulls, among others. However, this entire zone is an area of regular transit and stop for hundred thousands of migratory and overwintering marine birds, which shall surprise visitors. The waters between Baldaio and the Sisargas Islands and the Roncudo cape are zones of special

relevance. The non-marine birds related to the coastal cliffs must also be highlighted and includes species such as the red-billed chough, the peregrine falcon or the crow. The wet zones and beaches also receive interesting populations of aquatic birds with Baldaio and the inlet of Insua as main points to visit by the traveler.



Illas Cíes (Pontevedra)

The heavenly archipelago was included in the inventory of important areas for birds in Spain, since it holds very interesting colonies of marine birds, some of them with an exceptional importance. In group, the nesting birds count at least with 45 species.

Ons (Pontevedra)

Its 923 hectares include important colonies of marine birds distributed by the entire archipelago. The most singular are the yellow-legged gull and the shag.

On the other hand, the availability of cultivated areas, bushes and trees cause that the terrestrial birds of Ons is the most varied of all the Galician islands, with around 50 nesting species and numerous migratories.

Costa da Mariña Occidental

This ZEPA is also formed by various differentiated areas and counts with an extension of 2.168 hectares. The main value of the natural space resides in its interesting colonies of marine birds, mainly located in islands and islets. The

ECOSYSTEMS

Previous page: Coast of Baldaio in Costa da Morte. Up, Costa da Mariña Occidental. Down, left. Illas Cíes. Over these lines, Birds in the Ons Archipelago.





VARIETY

Up, Corrubedo, which holds rear observation populations that nest in dunes. To its right, O Grove, one of the main bird hibernation zones in Galicia. Down, left, another image of Corrubedo. In the center, Valdoviño, with important colonies of marine birds. To its right, a spectacular perspective of the Ría de Foz.



yellow-legged gull, that has in this area some of the most numerous colonies of the Cantabrian and Galician Coast and the shag are the most abundant species.

Corrubedo (A Coruña)

Although the quantity of its bird population is relatively small, we must highlight its large diversity, in accordance with the habitat variety, and holds infrequent species

or of much localized distribution. Nesting populations highlight in sandy and dune areas, of two species of threatened shorebirds in Galicia: the stone-curlew and the Kentish plover.

To know it better, it is convenient to visit the Interpretation Center of O Vilar-Carreira in Ribeira.

Umia O Grove (Pontevedra)

Due to its specific richness and its

abundance, it is the main zone of hibernation of aquatic birds in Galicia and, together with the marshes of Santoña (Cantabria), the most outstanding of the Cantabria and Galician coasts. The ZEPA receives every January from 13,000 to 16,000 birds. On the other hand, it is an important point of migratory stop for various species.

Valdoviño (A Coruña)

This beautiful place counts with interesting colonies of marine birds such as the European storm-petrel, the shag and some small colonies of yellow-legged gull. In the Gabeiras islands we find an important winter dormitory of great cormorant. The birds of the cliff include the peregrine falcon, the blue blackbird, red-billed chough and the Eurasian jackdaw.

Ría de Foz-Masma (Lugo)

This zone holds interesting populations of aquatic birds, especially during winter and the autumn migratory pass. It stands out as stop zone of a moderate number of anatids such as the mallard, the common teal, the Eurasian wigeon and the rear brent goose, as well as various shorebirds and Eurasian spoonbills.

Ortigueira e Ladrado (A Coruña)

Estuary complex formed by the mouth of the rivers Mera, Baleo and other five water flows of lower significance with an extension of more than 3,000 hectares. The main interest of this ZEPA resides at its capacity to receive especially varied aquatic birds and important contingents of various species. It is one of the main zones of Galicia by the total hibernating aquatic birds (6–7,000 units), and by the concentrations of shorebirds (1,500–1,900) and anatids (2,500–3,000).

Ribadeo (Lugo)

This coastal wetland declared ZEPA and Place of Communitarian Importance, results very interesting by its aquatic bird populations, especially during winter. We must mostly highlight its contingent of anatids, and particularly the hibernation of Eurasian wigeon and pintail. Also to highlight is the population of Eurasian curlew, among other species of shorebirds.

Estuario Miño

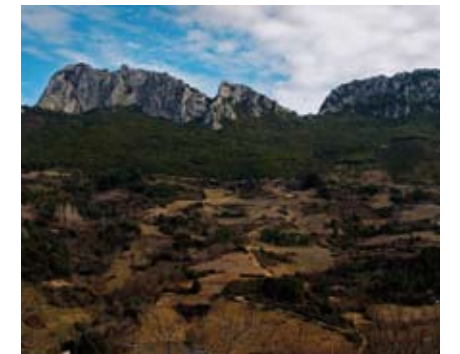
This is the main winter quarters in Galicia for shorebirds such as the sanderling, the Kentish plover. It also holds a considerable hibernating population of great cormorant. Especially important are also its nesting and migratory populations of reedbed passerine species, among which we highlight due to their rarity, the savi's warbler, the aquatic warbler and the endemic subspecies of the reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus* subsp. *Lusitanica*).





ZEPA RIBADEO AND RAMSAR SITE RIA DE EO

The Rías Altas reach its maximum stylization with the 800 meter average width that separates the margins of the Eo River. Up to 4,000 specimens of migratory birds spend their winter here.



MOUNTAINS

Up, Encoro (reservoir) of Salas in the municipality of Muiños part of the ZEPA of Serra do Xurés. Down, left, examples of the goat of the Xurés, in process of reintroduction. In the center, the Estuario do Miño where the threatened Kentish plovers hibernate. Right, Enciña da Lastra.

Serra do Xurés (Ourense)

It stands out the presence of raptor birds, including very threatened species and with much localized distribution, as it is in the case of the golden eagle, the bonelli's eagle, the eagle owl and the ortolan bunting.

In contrast, the natural space holds some species typically Eurosiberian, such as the tree pipit, the garden warbler, the red-backed shrike, the common bullfinch and the yellowhammer.

Enciña da Lastra (Ourense)

Such high diversity of habitats in an area of bioclimatic transition

are determinant for the existence of the most singular and richest nesting bird community of the Galician Autonomous Region, with more than 100 species, an excellent representation of rupicola and Mediterranean birds in the Galician area and a rich community of raptor birds. Among these lasts, we must highlight the presence of at least 21 species and there is also a varied mix of Eurosiberian and Mediterranean birds.

This varied sample of destinies for the observation and the knowledge of birds is completed with the recent incorporation, following the criteria of the EU, of a new ZEPA (Pena Trevinca) and the next declaration of another one (A Limia)



Galicia



soon.

Wetlands

Within the abovementioned zones, we must highlight the wetlands as points of special interest, since they hold unique habitats that need to be preserved. In these places, due to their special characteristics, there are multiple ecosystems so that the coexistence between different types of species is very frequent. The inventory of wetlands of Galicia includes more than 1,000 places, mainly distributed between the coastal sectors, the interior sedi-

mentary depressions and the sub-litoral and central mountain areas. The coast of the province of A Coruña, in accordance with its larger length, concentrates the highest number of marine and coastal wetlands (the 70% of the Galician coastal wetlands), followed by Pontevedra (22%) and finally by Lugo (8%). The list of wetlands of International Importance promoted by the Ramsar Agreement includes to the date a total of 1,500 wetlands distributed through the entire planet. Among them, five are inside the Galicia's territory. The contribu-



OBSERVATORIES
Four images of the dunes and birds in the Complejo Húmedo de Corrubedo, which constitutes a space of great ornithological importance since it holds 35 hibernating species with a total number of specimens between 1,000 and 5,000.



tion of Galicia to the listing began in December 1989 with the inclusion of the Complejo intermareal Umia - O Grove, A Lanzada, punta Carreirón and laguna Bodeira and las Rías de Ortigueira e Ladrado, spaces to which joined in 1993 the Laguna y Arenal de Valdoviño and the Complejo de las playas, laguna y duna de Corrubedo and, finally in 1994, the Ría del Eo. The wetland of Ortigueira y Ladrado holds an important diversity of coastal habitats. These areas sustain overwintering populations of migratory birds that follow the route of the Eastern At-

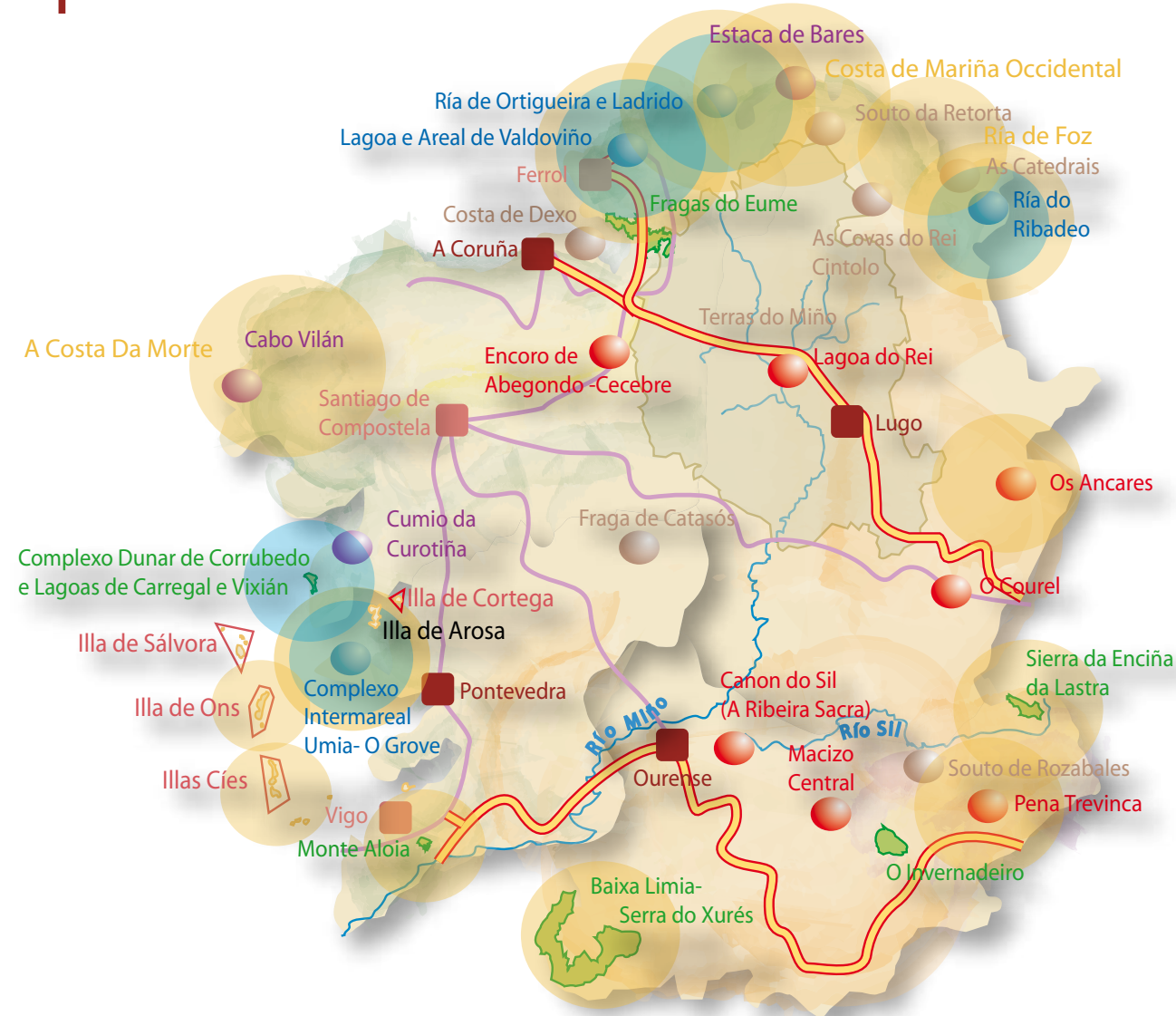


lantic, while constituting a refugee area for the marine birds in periods of adverse climate conditions. In the dunes and lagoons of Corrubedo there are very curious endemic species and an important nesting place for aquatic birds. The lagoon and the sandy area of Valdoviño show typical dunar ecosystems with adapted species. The Complejo Intermareal Umia - O Grove holds three different wetlands and fourteen habitats, while the ría de Ribadeo is mainly an estuary wetland formed in the mouth of the river Eo in which intertidal habitats predominate.



OBSERVATORIES
Up, mouth of the river Mera in the wetland of Ortigueira. Down, from left to right, birds in the archipelago of Ons. In the center, Complejo intermareal Umia-Grove, really formed by three different wetlands. Finally, estuary of the river Miño.

Espacios Naturales de Galicia



- Atlantic Islands National Park ○
- Natural Monument ●
- Some places of Communitarian Interest-Red Natura 2000 ●
- Natural Site of National Interest ●
- Biosphere Reserve ●
- Natural Park ●
- Wetlands RAMSAR Agreement ●
- ZEPA (SPA Special Protection Area for Birds) ●

info

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NATIONAL PARK
Up, Galicia holds since 2002 the thirteenth national park of Spain: the named Parque Nacional Marítimo Terrestre de las Islas Atlánticas de Galicia, which contains the archipelagos of Cíes, Ons, Sálvora and the island of Cortegada, with 7,138 maritime hectares and 1,195 terrestrial hectares. Its marine bottom is an authentic natural garden, with more than 200 species. It is the kingdom of marine birds such as shags, yellow-legged gulls, and common guillemots. To the left, Illas Cíes.

