

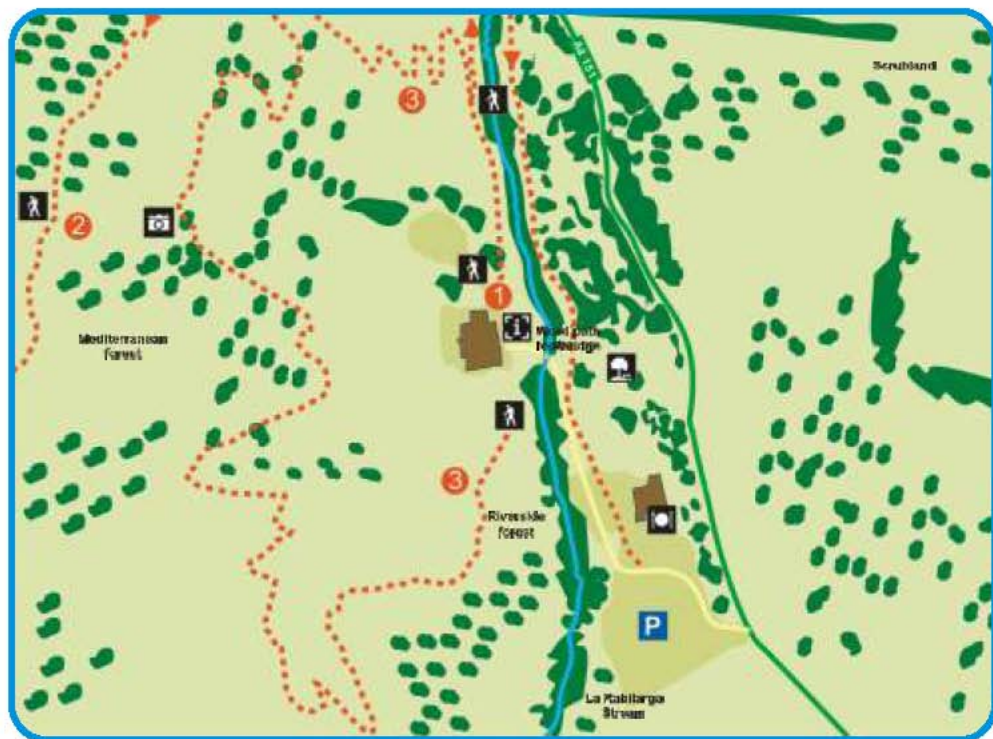
Consejería de Medio Ambiente

visitors' guide

HUERTA DEL REY VISITOR CENTRE



JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA



Visitor Centre



Parking



Recreational area



Marked path



Bar restaurant



Viewpoint



Road



Path

1

La Rabilarga Stream path

2

Las Herrerías path

3

Botanic path



Access



Sierra de Hornachuelos Natural Park, placed in the western area of Sierra Morena, is notable because of its dark slates.

Its soft relief is covered by holm and cork oak forests with different density, and together with portuguese oaks, wild olive trees, pasture and Mediterranean thicket areas. Close to the rivers are growing poplars, ash trees and black alders.

Sierra de Hornachuelos receives colonies of black and griffon vulture, a few couples of golden, Spanish imperial and Bonelli's eagles, located on top of the trees, and the endangered black stork. Among the mammals Egyptian mongoose and otters are the most outstanding, together with cynegetic species like wild boars and deers.

This Park is also known because of its great hydrographic net, made up of Bembézar, Guadiato and Retortillo rivers which run along the protected area.

Name: Sierra de Hornachuelos Natural Park.

Province: Córdoba

Surface: 60.032 ha

Declaration date: 1989



Huerta del Rey Visitor Centre

Huerta del Rey Visitor Centre is placed in the Recreation Area with the same name, in the outskirts of Hornachuelos (San Calixto road) and next to La Rabilarga stream.

The Recreation Area Huerta del Rey also has two marked paths (Botánico and La Rabilarga), the start of another three paths (Guadalora, de las Herrerías and del Águila), a viewpoint and a bar restaurant.

The center is built following patterns of traditional architecture. It is accessible by crossing La Rabilarga stream through a wooden log catwalk. The wooden porch entry lead us to a central hall, crowned by a tower which is encircled by three big symmetric cubes and a side room for multiple uses. Its main architectural features are the tile cover and the inner roof made of wooden truss.

The Visitor Centre has a permanent exhibit and an audiovisual to teach about our natural heritage. Furthermore, outdoor environmental education activities are carried-out in this area.





Huerta del Rey Visitor Centre has been divided into three areas:

Reception and Visitor Information Area

Apart from a warm welcome, you will find information about the Natural Park and how to plan your visit.

This area also provides institutional information on RENPA (Network of Natural Protected Areas of Andalusia) and about the Andalusian

Regional Ministry for the Environment in the Respanet room, thanks to computer programmes. In the Natural Park shop you can buy Natural Park Brand products and many others souvenirs. The Centre has an adapted area for children where they can play games and watch environmental movies.

Exhibit room

This room is the main area of the Centre and allows visitors to understand the importance of the Natural Park as well as its role within the Network of Protected Natural Areas of Andalusia (RENPA).

It offers a variety of informational displays: boards, multimedia presentations, diorama 3-D



scale models, interactive games, and traditional and typical tools used in the past in this protected area.

The sensory module allows feeling the sensory experiences of the park. On one side, a realistic simulation of the night, and on the other side, an artistic audiovisual representation of the main menaces faced by the park, juxtaposed with associated good practices.

Audiovisual

Through entertaining and fun presentations, guests can learn more about Sierra de Hornachuelos Natural Park and its surrounding areas.



Sierra Morena stands out due to its soft relief and its uniform appearance

These mountains represent a privileged natural area where it is still possible to admire the same natural landscape our ancestors saw.

Human interaction has also influenced this area. Some woodlands of holm oaks and cork oaks have been turned into pasture, whilst other areas have been occupied by rockroses and other noble shrub species.



Many are the animal species that inhabit these environments.

Several tributaries to the Guadalquivir River have influenced the shaping of this landscape: steep-sloped reaches hardly accessed by humans are used by large birds for nesting, whilst in the banks of the reaches with soft slopes poplars, alders and ashes grow.





Deer bellows indicate the beginning of the autumn. The voices of the male deer sound in the hills whilst the colour in the riverside woodlands changes from green to yellow and life starts to slow down.

Deer lose importance in winter hunting whilst large vultures get in season and the river flow increases due to rainfall.



Spanish Imperial Eagle

During the spring, many of the winter-coming birds fly away giving way to new dwellers that come from Africa. Deer lose their horns and the flowers blossom, filling the area with their scent.

When the summer comes, heat and cicadas gain prominence. Summer storms end the cycle waiting for a new start of life.



This large woodland is home for some of the flag species of the Park.

The Mediterranean woodland and its dwellers are the main representatives of this Natural Park. Holm oaks and cork oaks mainly occupy this area, sharing it with other species such as the olive tree, the Portuguese oak and different shrub species.

Those spots where the woodland has been cleared out are now occupied by rockroses, heathers and gorses. Filling the spring with colour, these open areas are inhabited by small birds and many other small animals that are eaten by birds.

These woodlands have permitted the survival of a vertebrate community with a high density of predators. A number of reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and small birds share this environment with black vultures, black storks, imperial eagles and with mammals such as deer, genet cats or wild boars.

Along the streams, with the sound of water as a sound track, visitors can find open areas occupied by tamarisks and pleanlers contrasting with dense woodlands inhabited by aquatic insects, barbels, frogs, water snakes, river otters and birds such as common kingfishers, dippers or tawny owls.





The abundant resources of the Park have made life easier for the human beings in its surroundings

Hunting, cork extraction and apiculture, in addition to cattle farming and natural tourism, are the main human uses of this Natural Park, Parque Natural.



Apiculture

Bees are social insects: they live making colonies where they share food and work in an organized way. Beekeeping for honey production has been carried out in Hornachuelos for centuries and it is completely integrated in this natural environment. Traditional beehives, made of cork, have been nowadays substituted by other portable beehives made of metal or wood that can be moved to those places where flower abundance leads to a better honey production.

Cork

Since the early summer, teams can be seen taking the bark out of the cork oak trees, doing it carefully in order not to endanger the tree life.

Hunting

Most of the area of this National Park is dedicated to hunting activities. Hunting has traditionally been carried out in these landscapes, although it became more popular in the 1970's, becoming one of the symbols of this mountain range.

Among the different kinds of hunting, the "montería" (hunting of big animals such as deer) is the commonest and most popular. Nevertheless, although shooting has not been so traditionally carried out, the shooting of partridges using birdballs is nowadays frequently practiced in the area.



A new world exists when the day ends

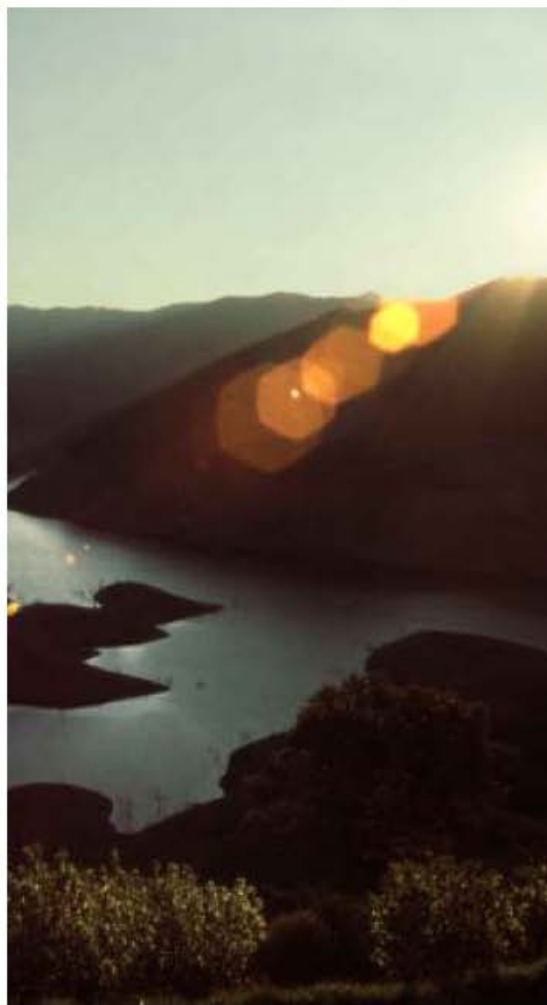
From here, we get into a different world: our eyes do not see any longer daylight, with its clear information, and they give way to the senses of smell, touch and hearing.

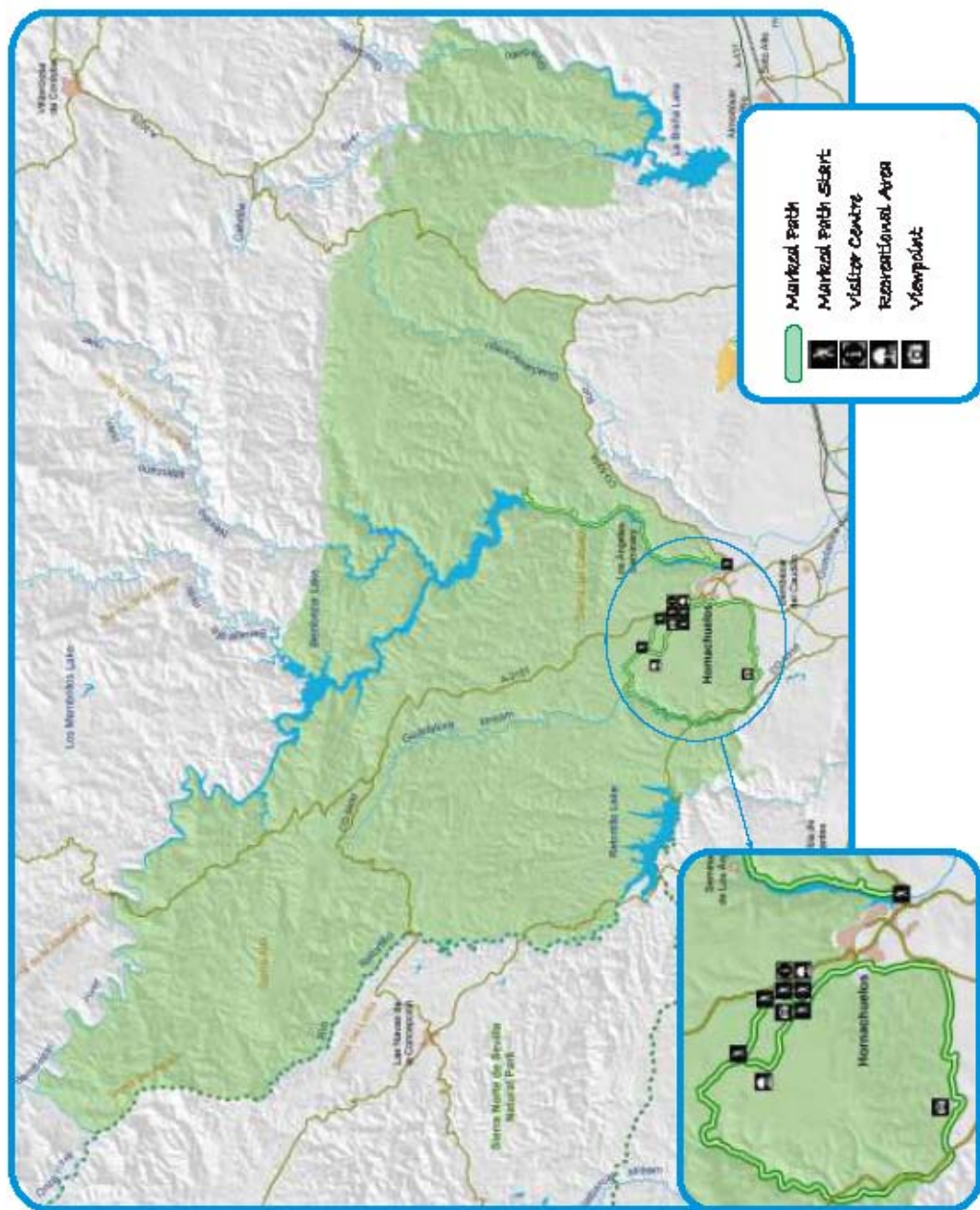
Our eyes can confuse us by making out something similar to an unrecognisable animal far away from us. The storm is approaching and we have no shelter. Near us, something has just moved. The sky is now full of stars, still dark as a wolf cave.

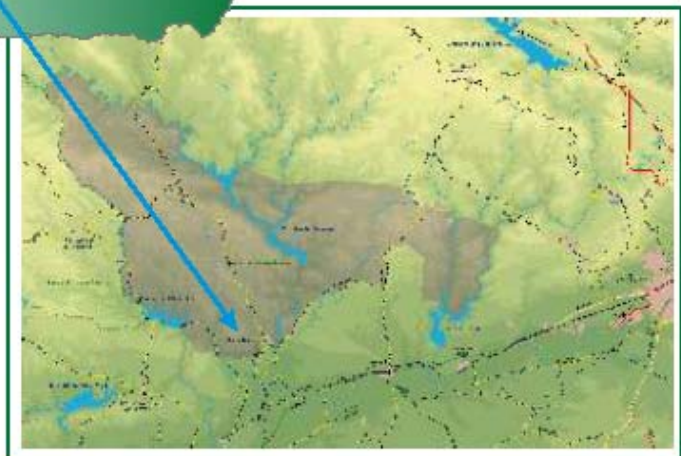


This wonderful world is threatened by arson, poaching, the overuse and abuse of its resources, etc.; they are all distorting this landscape, blurring it and altering our state of mind. Too much bad news in the media.

By good fortune, the awareness and sensitivity of the visitors and inhabitants will permit future generations to enjoy this Natural Park as we are doing nowadays.







Huerta del Rey Visitor Centre

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Visitor window web site:
www.ventanadelvisitante.es

