



The Natural Park of La Albufera

The Natural Park of La Albufera is shown to us as one of the most important wetlands of the Iberian Peninsula, either for its extension (21,120 Ha) and for the valuable biodiversity it holds.

The important aquatic bird community of this space, with worldly threatened species such as the marbled duck (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*), and the rich biodiversity of fauna and flora, with the presence of various exclusive endemism of the region, has caused its declaration as Natural park.

La Albufera counts with different figures of supranational protection: it is considered since 1989 as Wetland of International Importance according to the criteria of the RAMSAR Convention and was declared Zone of Special Protection for Birds, and proposed as Place of Communitarian Interest, according to the criteria of the communitarian guidelines in force. From time immemorial, this wet-

land has been object of an intense human exploitation (saltworks, hunting, fishing, agriculture, ranching, etc.), that has caused an important modification of the natural environment. The non-cultivated surface, occupied by marsh natural ecosystems has been reduced in only a 10% of the total surface of the park.

Birds of La Albufera

In La Albufera we register exclusive botanic endemism of the Valencia Community, as well as a great number of vertebrates and invertebrates of great interest. However, it is in the birds where La Albufera presents an outstanding international value. This way, the wetland registers important winter

concentration of aquatic birds, highlighting the reached number of anatids, between 20,000-30,000 birds the last years, and some winters, and with high numbers of red-crested pochard (*Netta rufina*) and European shoveler (*Anas clypeata*). Moreover, during this period there are also important winter concentration of herons (around 4,000 birds), shorebirds (1,000-2,000 birds) and great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) with more than 3,000 birds.

The breeding period

During the breeding period, La Albufera also reaches an international outstanding roll. In the lagoon, the number of colonial herons exceed sometimes the



6,000 breeding couples, in which we find species such as the purple heron (*Ardea purpurea*) (40-60 couples), squacco heron (*Ardeola ralloides*) (150-250 couples), little egret (*Egretta garzetta*) (800-1.500 couples) or night heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) (100-200 couples). We must also highlight the reached number of colonial shorebirds such as the common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

lared pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) (a few breeding couples but with postnuptial concentrations of 250-400 units), little tern (*Sterna albifrons*) or Kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) (only 50 couples). It is the second most important place in numbers of the Iberian Peninsula (after the Delta de l'Ebre) and one of the main areas of breeding of shorebirds of the Western Mediterranean.

La Albufera has become one of the main reproduction places for herons in the Iberian Peninsula

(between 1,600-2,200 couples), sandwich tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) (between 1,000-1,600 couples), gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) (400-550 couples) or slender-billed gull (*Larus genei*) (30-70 couples).

We also register high number of black-winged stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) (300-400 couples) and avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) (60-120 couples). Finally, we must mention the presence of scant species such as the col-

Number of breeding birds

Between anatids and coots, the low quality of the superficial waters conditions that the number of breeding birds is not so high. In any case, we highlight the nesting presence of red-crested pochards, common pochard, as well as the marbled duck, endangered species, the purple swamp-hen and the red-knobbed coot whose presence is associated to reintroduction projects.

BIRDS

Previous page, flock of seagull in La Albufera. Over these lines, the named fang ducks in the lagoon.

info

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