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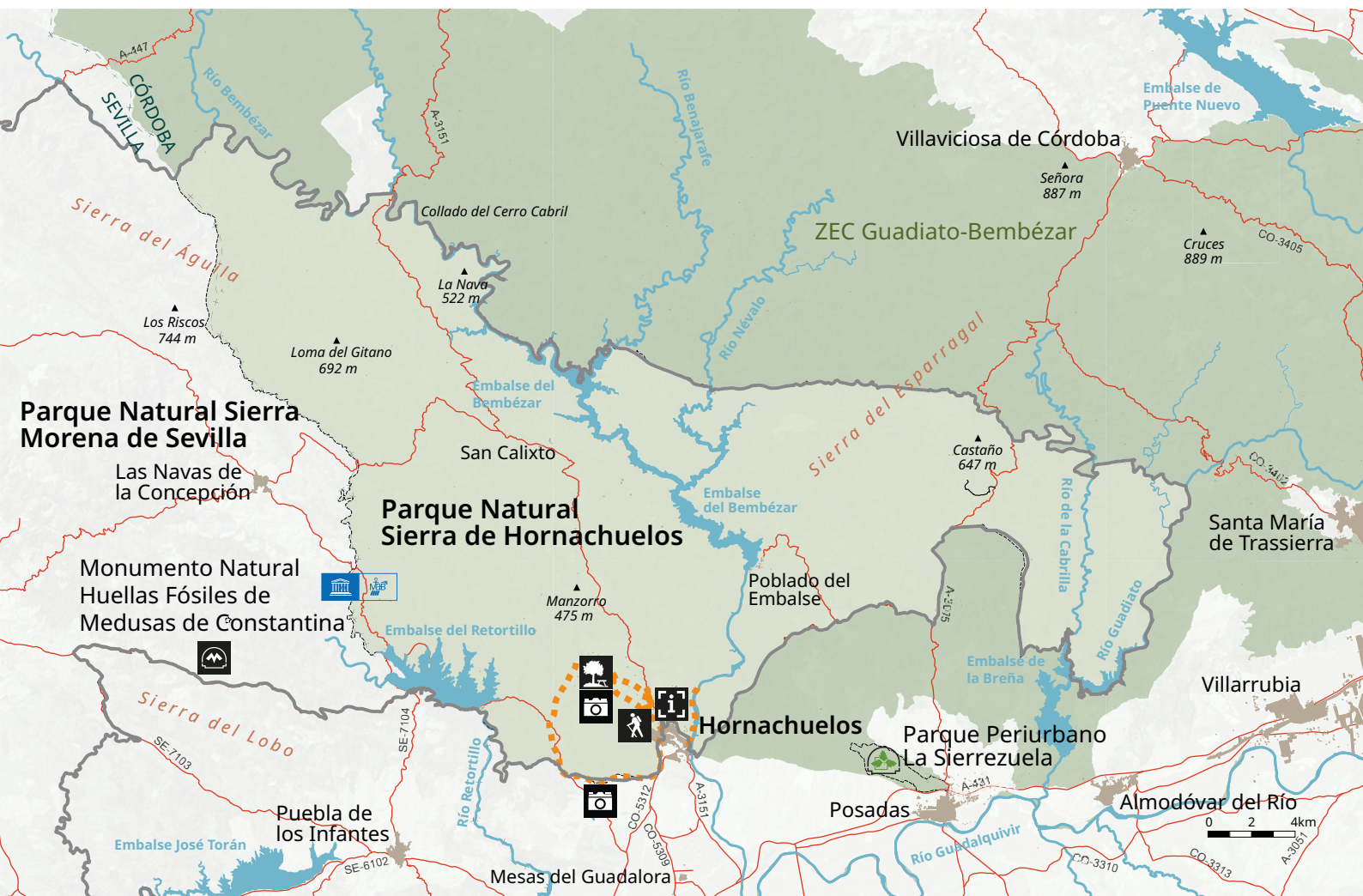
Huerta del Rey

VISITOR CENTRE

EXHIBITION GUIDE



Sierra de Hornachuelos Natural Park



- | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|-----------------------|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| | Visitor centre | | Trail | | Biosphere reserve boundary | | SAC y SPA |
| | Marked path | | Road | | Periurban park | | Special Areas Of Conservation (SAC) |
| | Viewpoint | | Path | | Nature monument | | |
| | Recreational area | | Natural park boundary | | Biosphere Reserve Dehesas de Sierra Morena | | |

Sierra de Hornachuelos Natural Park

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 especies 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, Orchids of the 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

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.

In the Natural Park shop you can buy Natural Park Brand products and many others souvenirs.

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 the Andalusian Network of Protected Natural Areas (RENPA) and the Natura 2000 Network in Córdoba province.

It offers a variety of informational displays: boards, multimedia presentations, diorama, 3-D scale models, and traditional and typical tools used in the past in this protected area.

Audiovisual

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



Visitor centre

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.



The cycle of the seasons



Grey-leaved cistus

The Sierra de Hornachuelos is a living landscape in continuous change

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.

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.



The cycle of the seasons



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 oleanders contrasting with dense woodlands inhabited by aquatic insects, barbels, frogs, water snakes, river otters and birds such as common kingfishers, dippers or tawny owls.



Human use of the area

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.

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.

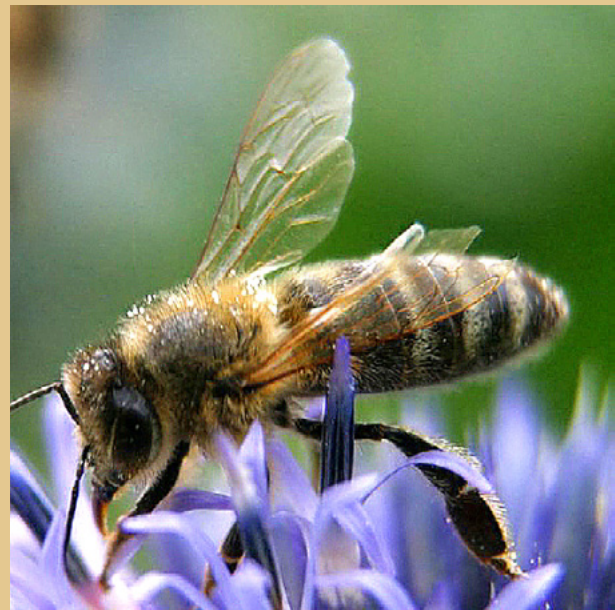
Cork

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.

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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 birdcalls is nowadays frequently practiced in the area.



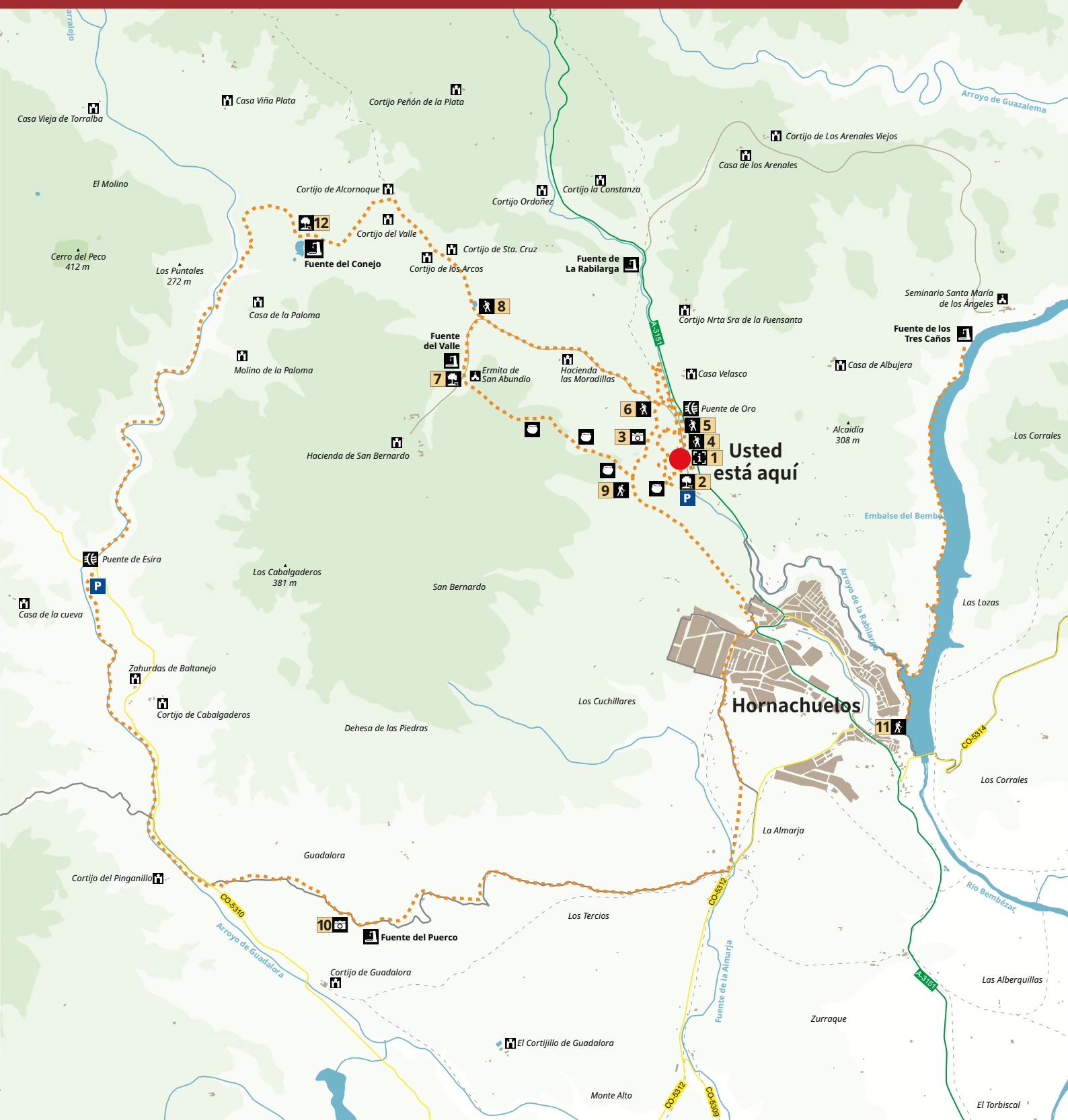
Threats

This wonderful world is threatened by arson, poaching, the overuse and abuse of its resources, etc.; they are all distorting this landscape, 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.



Public use in the Natural Park



Visitor centre

1

Huerta del Rey



Scenic viewpoint

3

Huerta del Rey

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Del Águila



Recreational area

2

Huerta del Rey

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Fuente del Valle

12

Fuente del Conejo



Marked trail

4

Botánico

5

La Rabilarga

6

Orquídeas de las Herrerías

8

Del Guadalajara

9

El Águila

11

Los Ángeles



Farmhouse



Church



Site of ethnological interest



Fountain



Bridge



Parking

Trail

Natural Park boundary

Regional road

Local road

Path

Livestock Track



Fotografía: J.H. Gallardo