

El Pardo Woodlands



Visit

Nota importante

Eco-trails will soon be opened in the El Pardo Woodlands.

History

The El Pardo Woodlands are a large natural space of extraordinary ecological value. They are considered the most important Mediterranean forest in the Region of Madrid and one of the best preserved of its type in Europe. The woodlands lie to the north of the capital and cover an area of 15,821 hectares.

They are an important ecological and biological reserve of typical Mediterranean Holm oak with a strong continental feel, gently rolling hills and peaceful meadows along the Manzanares River, which flows through the area from north to south.

Aside from Holm oak, the main species, these woodlands are also home to Portuguese oak, juniper and corn oak, with ash, willow and poplar trees found along the river. The most common shrubs are rockrose, broom, phillyrea, rosemary and Spanish lavender.

There is also a remarkably diverse range of wildlife; in addition to iconic species such as the Spanish imperial eagle, the black vulture and the black stork, there are also numerous mammals (deer, fallow deer, boar, wild cats, rabbits, badgers, foxes, genets, weasels and many more). Reptiles found in these woodlands include the ladder snake, the ocellated lizard and the Spanish Psammmodromus lizard. The El Pardo reservoir is home to the majority of aquatic animals found in the area.

Between 1083 and 1085, when Alfonso VI reconquered the land that is now classified as part of Madrid, the hills of the Guadarrama Sierra were repopulated. As a result, the El Pardo Woodlands became yet another point of contention between Madrid and Segovia, although it is possible that the Crown had been using these woodlands to hunt in from the beginning. Indeed, the Libro de la Montería (book of hunting) by Alfonso XI praises this area as already well-used hunting grounds.

From 1405 onwards, when Henry II built a hunting lodge at El Pardo, these woodlands were considered as Crown property; however, their boundaries would continue to be redrawn over 15th century.

In the end, Phillip II issued a Royal Decree in 1571 that specified the definitive surface area and protected zones, which were extended through land purchases during the 17th century.

These woodlands would come to be protected by a nearly 100-km perimeter stonewall that has survived to this day. It was built under the reign of Ferdinand VI, although other neighbouring land was purchased at the same time and remained outside the wall, such as Viñuelas, la Moraleja or Batuecas. These areas remained separated from the rest during the 19th and part of the 20th century.

The El Pardo Woodlands, effectively converted into private hunting grounds, were altered again at the start of the 20th century with various areas being dedicated to sport or science, creating a corridor that linked Madrid with the urban centre of El Pardo.

Extending over 15,821 hectares, the El Pardo Woodlands are divided, according to tradition, into sectors or "quarters".