

Camping la Cota, La Vecilla (Leon, Spain)

The second campsite that our team stayed at was Camping la Cota, located at La Vecilla in the mountains of Leon. The surrounding town is very quiet and rural, trees and young plantation surround the campsite. This was, by far, the hottest site that we stayed at, with temperatures reaching 36°C. We stayed at this campsite for 2 nights, whilst we conducted our pollinator study. The campsite staff were accommodating and environmentally aware, setting up nature-friendly features, such as bird feeders and nest boxes on site.

On the day that we arrived the flying ants were beginning to take off, whilst this was a great spectacle to witness, it did make setting up camp rather difficult. When we arrived we encountered many different butterfly and caterpillar species, mainly the Puss moth caterpillar, *Cerura vinula*, and observed multiple bird of prey species flying overhead.

Heathlands are hotspots of biodiversity, but are currently at risk of degradation and loss, due to the reduction of traditional management activities that they depend on (Moran-Ordóñez et al., 2013). This part of Spain contains a lot of heath and scrubland, which have traditionally been managed by fire to create open areas for grazing, but as time passed these farming areas were abandoned, leading to autosuccession (Calvo et al., 2012).

The early stages of the relaxed management can often prove to have a positive effect on butterfly and moth populations, however if management practises are not reinstated butterfly and moth populations will likely decrease as succession proceeds. Conservation efforts for the butterfly and moth species should aim to incorporate reduced-intensity management techniques (Dover et al., 2010).



Photograph of a Puss moth caterpillar, *Cerura vinula*, taken by James Sokolnicki at the Camping la Cota site on 18/07/2016.



Photograph of the SERT team in front of the mountain ranges of Leon, taken by Melissa Stephens at the Camping la Cota site on 18/07/2016.



Photograph of a homemade bird feeder placed by the staff of Camping la Cota, taken by Eleanor Carlton on 18/07/2016.



Photograph of a butterfly resting on an identification chart at the Camping la Cota site, taken by James Sokolnicki on 18/07/2016.



Photograph of the tents set up at the Camping la Cota site, taken by Eleanor Carlton on 18/07/2016.

References

Calvo, L., et al., 2012. Changes of Species Richness in Heathland Communities over 15 Years following Disturbances. *International Journal of Forestry Research* [online]. Volume 2012, Article ID 547120.

Dover, J., et al., 2010. Land-use, environment, and their impact on butterfly populations in a mountainous pastoral landscape: individual species distribution and abundance. *Journal of Insect Conservation* [online]. 15 (1), 207-220.

Moran-Ordóñez, A., et al., Temporal Changes in Socio-Ecological Systems and Their Impact on Ecosystem Services at Different Governance Scales: A Case Study of Heathlands. *Ecosystems* [online]. 16 (5), 765-782.