

SIERRA DE LAS NIEVES

Spain

Location

Extreme south of Spain, near Ronda (Malaga province)

Description

- High Mountain Conifer Forests cluster. Located in the heart of the Serranía de Ronda natural region (western Baetic Range).
- Limestone and peridotite mountains (140–1919m asl) with a patchy cover of shrublands and pine forests, holm and cork oaks, and Andalusian firs (*Abies pinsapo*, an endemic and relic circum-Mediterranean fir species).
- 1940 ha of *Abies pinsapo* forests (70% of the species total distribution area; 49 % pure stands, 20 % mixed fir-pine-oak stands, 31% scattered and isolated small “island” stands)
- Over 1500 plant species catalogued in the area (19 of them local endemisms).

Ecological values

- Traditional agriculture and livestock-raising co-existing with incipient tourism
- Silvo pastoralism for fire fighting
- *Abies pinsapo* forest restoration
- Third deepest abysses in the world at 1,100 metres
- *Quercus faginea ssp. alpestris* (mountain oak, local endemism)
- Populations of Mountain Goat, Roe Deer, Wild Boar and birds of prey such as the Royal Eagle, Bonelli’s Eagle, Booted Eagle and the Peregrine Hawk

Protection status & conservation actions

- Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park (20,163 ha); Upgrading to National Park currently pending final approval by the Spanish parliament.
- UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (93,930 ha) since 1995.
- “Adapting Mediterranean Forests to Climate Change” project
- Man and Biosphere network

Organisation

Universidad de Jaén, Andalucía, Spain



Threats

- Fire
- Forest decline and dieback symptoms reported in some areas have been associated to global change drivers (climate change, land-use abandonment, atmospheric pollutant N deposition)
- Tourist development

Strengths of the site

- Successful research experience and long-term monitoring data on *Abies pinsapo* forests conservation and adaptive management
- Very positive interaction between researchers and managers
- Successful recovery programme
- Active public participation with a volunteer programme
- Being part of the UNESCO MAB network

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