

Wild fires threaten biodiversity hotspot on Canary Islands

Title

Whilst the wild fires in the Teno Rural Park on Tenerife have been stabilised, the [Garajonay National Park](#) in La Gomera, Canary Islands, is still in flames. These fires pose a serious hazard to people, their property and livelihoods and affect key sectors including agriculture, livestock and tourism. The forest of La Gomera is an important pillar in the local economy due to tourism (especially nature tourism). [SEO/BirdLife](#), (Spanish Partner) is concerned about the serious environmental damage caused by the fires in Garajonay National Park - one of Europe's biodiversity hotspots. The fires have already destroyed more than 700 ha of the National Park and are still spreading, which could endanger some populations of species that are unique to the island. The park has the largest continuous expanse of laurel forest on the Canary Islands, located in the central area of La Gomera. Other habitats include heath, scrub and exotic coniferous woodland. In the Teno Rural Park, located in the northwest of Tenerife, the fires have been intensive but seem to be under control for now. The habitat in this protected area is one of the best preserved laurel forests in the archipelago. The National Parks are strongholds for typical laurel forest bird species, such as the Dark- and Light- tailed Laurel Pigeon *Columba bollii* and *C. junoniae* respectively, which are both endemic to the Canary Islands. Smaller Canary Island species like the Island Canary *Serinus canaria*, and on Tenerife the Blue Chaffinch *Fringilla teydea*, may also be affected. The bird species richness and uniqueness means these areas have been declared [Special Protection Areas for Birds](#) (SPAs) by the Spanish government and the European Union and are inventoried as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by SEO/BirdLife. SEO/BirdLife expresses sympathy to the victims and gratitude to all the people and institutions working to extinguish the fires on the Canary Islands. Further reading: [Important Bird Area Garajonay National Park](#)
