



## 5 | Cliffs and caves



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There are two key features that make up the landscape of Sant Miquel del Fai: the cliffs and the caves. Cliffs are vertical walls formed by sedimentary rocks such as sandstone, marl and conglomerate. Caves, on the other hand, are natural cavities formed by the erosive effect of water.

Despite the sheer size of the cliffs in this area, rupicolous plants—that is, those that live on rocks—are not particularly diverse, possibly due to the lack of north-facing walls and the type of soil in the region. Thus, except for some common ferns such as the maidenhair spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*) and the common polypody (*Polypodium vulgare*), strictly rupicolous plants include *Sarcocapnos enneaphylla* and the wall-rue (*Asplenium ruta-muraria*). In terms of endemic species of interest, the malling toadflax (*Chaenorhinum organifolium* spp. *cadevallii*) and the Pyrenean violet (*Ramonda myconi*) can be found. In contrast, the flora growing on scree, flat areas and rocks is more diverse. The abundance of two species that are rare in Catalonia, the giant fennel (*Ferula communis*) and *Centaurea intybacea*, is particularly noteworthy. These are also environments where numerous species of cat's claw (*Sedum* sp.), bastard hyacinth (*Dipcadi serotinum*), round-headed garlic (*Allium sphaerocephalon*), *Arenaria serpyllifolia*, Montpellier Coris (*Coris monspeliensis*) and red valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) grow.

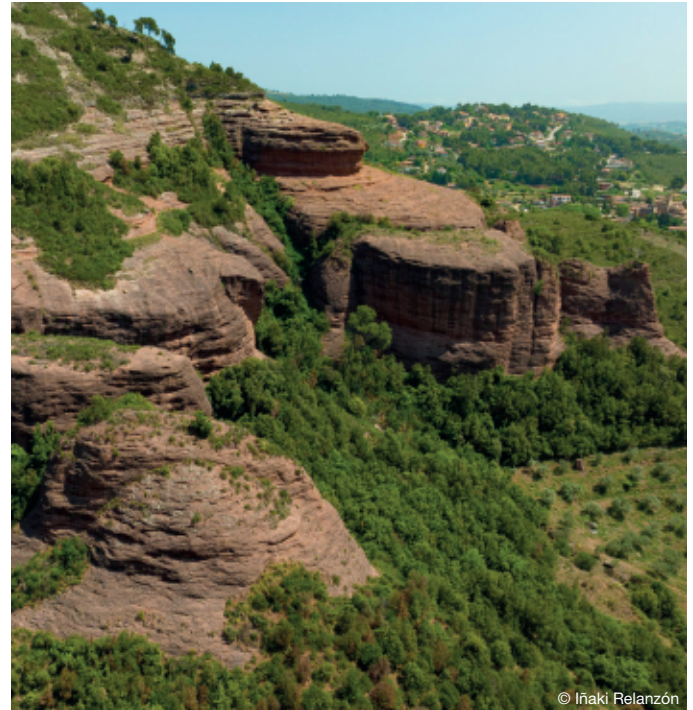
The rocky walls are the chosen environment for many birds, which make up the most interesting faunal community in the area. The list of species related to this habitat is extensive, with birds such as the Bonelli's eagle (*Aquila fasciata*), the alpine swift (*Tachymarptis melba*), the common raven (*Corvus corax*), the blue rock-thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), the Eurasian crag martin (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*), the rock sparrow (*Petronia petronia*), the stock dove (*Columba oenas*) and the wallcreeper (*Tichodroma muraria*), a wintering species.



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The rocky walls that make Sant Miquel del Fai unique are the chosen environment for many birds, which make up the most interesting fauna community in the area. The list of species related to this habitat is long, with birds such as the Bonelli's eagle (*Aquila fasciata*), the alpine swift (*Tachymartus melba*), the common raven (*Corvus corax*), the black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), the blue rock-thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), the common house martin (*Delichon urbicum*), the Eurasian crag martin (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*), the rock sparrow (*Petronia petronia*), the alpine accentor (*Prunella collaris*) and the stock dove (*Columba oenas*). This shows how important good management is to the Sant Miquel del Fai site to guarantee the protection and conservation of the ornithofauna. In addition, recent surveys have also confirmed the presence of the Eurasian hobby (*Falco subbuteo*), the tawny owl (*Strix aluco*), the European nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) and wintering species such as the wallcreeper (*Tichodroma muraria*).



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