



What's Hiding in the Ravine

The Ravine of Santes Creus is a typical Mediterranean river that's dry nearly all year round.

- Dry?
- Not completely!

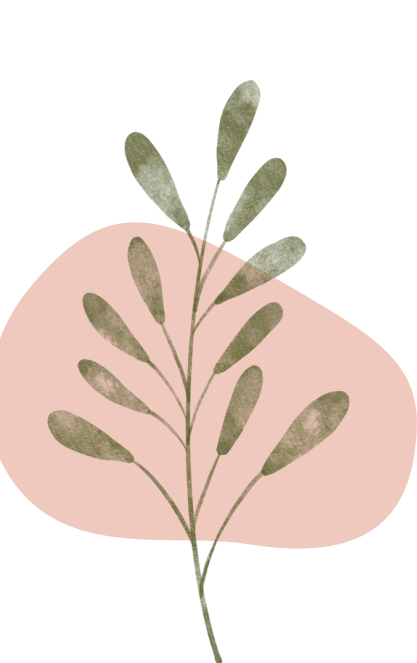
If we make holes in the ground, we'll quickly find aquifers in a few points, some with fresh water and some with slightly salty water due to the seawater moving inland underground when the strong Levante winds blow.

Ravines are spaces hardly touched by human hands, semi-wild, they are only tamed by the power of the water that runs through them year after year. This makes them a refuge for many species that have disappeared from the land close to the rivers' course. Here, in the depths of the ravine, they find the peace and humidity to flourish undisturbed.

We should imagine ravines as great underground train lines that allow different natural spaces to connect with each other, and where animals and plants travel, feed and reproduce.

We've got some species hidden around here in this ravine. Let's see if you can find them!

The Badger (*Meles meles*): at the back of the ravine, we have a couple of badgers. The badger is a mustelid that can weigh up to 16 kilos, like a medium-sized dog, with a black, triangular head and a long, white muzzle that it uses to scrabble around in the earth. At night, they leave their sett to go and hunt. These are underground passages dug into the ground, with an opening for each of the individuals that form the colony.



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The Ocellated Lizard (*Timon lepidus*): if we look at the ground in silence and stealth, we can see this reptile, currently protected in Catalonia, that can weigh more than 300 grams and measure nearly 25 centimetres. Its colour isn't always the same and can change according to its age and habitat, but it always has ocellus, small round spots, on the back of its body, that are blue (when seen from the side / on its flank).

They love to sunbathe to heat up, and you can find them eating insects, especially beetles.

The White Snake (*Elaphe scalaris*): don't be scared if you find a white snake in the vegetation or a rocky area, a snake that can reach one and a half metres in length but isn't at all dangerous.

It has a wide head and yellowish skin with two dark, parallel lines from head to tail. It prefers the daytime to the nighttime and we can see it slithering up trees to catch small mammals and chicks.

The Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*): in recent years, the wild boar has been plaguing our forests and, on many occasions, it's common to see on the roads and in villages and cities. However, it's not the wild boar's fault that it has no predators to eat it, nor that the forests have been abandoned. Once again, human beings are to blame for the imbalance of ecosystems, and wild boars, which adapt very well to different environments, have taken the opportunity to feed, grow and reproduce.

It's an omnivore, which eats everything, including our leftovers, and it can reach 100 kilos in weight. It prefers to go out in search for food at night in groups led by the females, or individually as with the male adults. We can often see evidence of them in the earth after having dug around for hidden food, such as truffles, thanks to their good sense of smell.



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The Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*): Thanks to cartoons, squirrels have always seemed charming. They're small rodents as well as skilled acrobats! Owing to their short, strong legs with claws that hook into the tree bark, and their bushy tail, they're able to live in, run along and jump between the branches of big trees like the pine.

They love to eat everything and gnaw away at pine cones right to the last pine nut. They are animals with foresight and, as if it were a larder, they hide nuts in the ground to eat over the winter. Remember to look up at the treetops while you walk, in case you're lucky enough to see a little squirrel jumping or running up a tree.

The Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

Rabbits are small animals no bigger than half a metre long, with a short tail and very long ears. They have strong back legs that they use to move around with by running and jumping at great speed. They are exclusively herbivores, and only eat plants, using their fine sense of smell and their whiskers to search for food.

If you keep going along the path, keep an eye out for all the rabbit holes that you can find there, especially at the base of trees. If you hear the leaves of a bush rustling, it would be nothing out of the ordinary if it was a rabbit hiding from you!

With the clues we have given you, no doubt you will find some of the animals we have explained. Keep your mouth shut and your eyes and ears wide open!

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