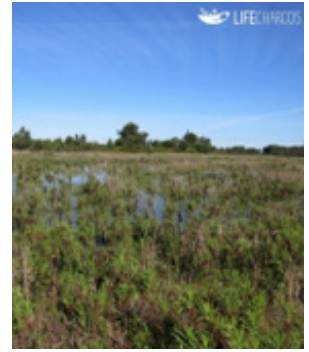




LIFE Charcos - Conservation of Temporary Ponds in the Southwest Coast of Portugal

LIFE12 NAT/PT/000997



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Project description:

Background

Mediterranean temporary ponds (CTMs) are seasonal wetland habitats, subjected to extreme and unstable ecological conditions. Due to their uniqueness and scientific value, they are listed as a priority habitat for conservation in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The coastal plain of southwest Portugal is a Natura 2000 (N2000) site (Costa Sudoeste) and hosts a large number of such temporary ponds, as a consequence of climatic and edaphic (soil-related) characteristics.

However, over the last two-decades, modern industrialised agriculture and tourism have caused a steep decline in the condition of this habitat in the N2000 site. Traditionally seen as non-productive areas, CTMs are nowadays subjected to strong anthropogenic pressures, such as deep soil turning, accelerated drainage, flattening of the surface topography or transformation into permanent reservoirs for irrigation. Therefore, urgent action is needed in order to halt this downward trend and assure their long-term protection.

Objectives

The project's overall aim is to enhance the conservation status in southwest Portugal of Mediterranean temporary ponds (CTMs). Specific aims are to:

- Compile, in a coherent and homogeneous database, the available biological information and updated cartography;

- Promote the reduction and elimination of known threats, halting the destruction of this habitat type;
- Demonstrate management and restoration techniques that will improve and enhance the conservation status of the temporary ponds;
- Create and establish a seed bank, primarily, as a tool for conservation and restoration actions, and also for safeguarding biodiversity;
- Promote locally the dissemination of knowledge about the ecology and function of temporary ponds, through demonstrations of sustainable management practices;
- Contribute to the long-term protection of temporary ponds, engaging landowners, farmers and decision makers;
- Increase public awareness about temporary pond habitat preservation and the value of the ecosystem services they provided.

Expected results: The project's main expected result is to halt the loss of temporary ponds in the Costa do Sudoeste N2000 site, reversing the declining trend observed in the past few years. Conservation and demonstration actions are planned for at least 16 temporary ponds, and in some of the ponds more than one type of conservation action will be applied simultaneously. The following outputs are expected:

- Updated cartography of temporary ponds in the Costa do Sudoeste site and a database assembling all available biological information;
- Improved knowledge of the hydrological functioning of the ponds;
- A CTM conservation status assessment index;
- Management guidelines for the conservation of each temporary pond or complex;
- Preservation in the long-term of at least 80% of the plant species in the ponds;
- Demonstration of the sustainability of extensive grazing at a minimum of three ponds;
- Promotion of pond connectivity to decrease habitat fragmentation at a minimum of two pond complexes;
- Enhancement of the favourable conservation status of at least eight temporary ponds that are less degraded;
- Functionality rehabilitation and conservation status improvement of at least four ponds that are degraded;
- Restoration of one pond for didactic purposes;
- Implementation of pond information trails;
- A best practices manual on conservation management;
- Organisation of a Pond symposium;
- Increased awareness among the general public, landowners and stakeholders is a key result of this project, as the vulnerability of temporary pond habitat is also due to the lack of knowledge about their ecological value.

Results

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Habitats - Freshwater

Keywords

protected area, wetland, nature conservation

Target species

Alytes cisternasii Barbastella barbastellus Barbastella barbastellus
Discoglossus galganoi Emys orbicularis Emys orbicularis Hyacinthoides
vincentina Hyacinthoides vincentina Microtus cabrerai Microtus cabrerai
Myotis myotis Myotis myotis Nyctalus lasiopterus Plecotus austriacus
Plecotus austriacus Thorella verticillatunundata Thorella verticillatunundata

Target Habitat types

- 3170 - Mediterranean temporary ponds

Natura 2000 sites

SPA	PTZPE0015	Costa Sudoeste
SCI	PTCON0012	Costa Sudoeste

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Liga para a Protecção da Natureza
Type of organisation	NGO-Foundation
Description	The Liga para a Protecção da Natureza (LPN) is a non profit-making, non-governmental organisation whose overarching objective is to contribute to nature conservation and the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity. The foundation's main goals are to ensure the preservation of natural resources, which are the basis for sustainability, and to conserve the natural heritage of Portugal for future

generations.

Partners

Associação de Beneficiários do Mira, Portugal
Centro de Ciências do Mar, Portugal
Câmara Municipal de Odemira, Portugal
Universidade do Algarve, Portugal
Universidade de Évora, Portugal

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE12 NAT/PT/000997
Duration	01-JUL-2013 to 31-DEC -2017
Total budget	1,977,465.00 €
EU contribution	1,483,098.00 €
Project location	Alentejo(Portugal),Algarve(Portugal)

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