

# WILD 2022

UPSCALE  
REWILDING

Rewilding  
Portugal









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# Team Leader Message

A year ago, while visiting an area further south, checking in with colleagues in the field of ecological restoration, I had the opportunity to witness the release of a pair of Iberian lynxes, at the same time as the war in Ukraine was starting. Ecological restoration initiatives in the Danube Delta and Polesia saw their efforts compromised by the advance of the Russian offensive. During this past year, the resilience of the Ukrainian people has remained strong, and Iberian lynxes have passed the one thousand individuals mark.

Close by, in Serra da Estrela, a landscape in which I have roots, the sudden disaster of wildfires also wreaked havoc on a natural park already weakened by decades of inept management, where the ecological potential of the area is ignored due to an insistence on nostalgic and ineffective solutions. Although Rewilding Portugal has contributed with innovative ideas to change the direction of this management, we continue to see the old formula of business as usual being applied, just waiting for the next disaster. How long will we wait for the return of wild fauna to the most emblematic Portuguese natural park, given the persistent belief that the return of people and traditional activities will be the solution to its problems?

In 2022 the rewilding efforts in the Greater Côa Valley continued, with the growth of the Sorraia horse herds. In spring and summer, two new foals were born, Seixo (Pebble) and Semente (Seed), thus increasing the number of Sorraias in semi-wild conditions to 21 animals. They are the pioneers of the free-spirited wild horse, and the first to come back to this landscape, in a process that is here to stay and make history. One of the herds is in the most recent rewilding area open for visitation, Ermo das Águias. For those who want to stay nearby and explore, the Rewilding Center is already operating as a Local Accommodation in the village of Vale de Madeira.

We shared with our peers and other stakeholders new visions of rewilding during the first rewilding symposium in Portugal, co-organized with Cascais Ambiente at Quinta do Pisão, which brought together a large group of experts and thinkers on the subject to discuss the foundations and paths that this approach has and will have for the future of biodiversity in Portugal.

Alongside the science of rewilding, this year we launched CÔA – Corridor of Arts, a festival of public art in the landscape that aims to bring back to the region that the Côa River crosses the artistic expression that has marked it for millennia. This event, with a contemporary twist, seeks to bring together the natural values of artistic expression with the involvement of local communities, creating a reference for years to come.

In the year that just ended, the Wild Côa Network brought together more than 30 businesses working in synergy to offer the best visitor experience, accommodation, and excellent local products to visitors. We continue to focus on training nature guides, with 16 new guides trained in partnership with Rewilding Europe, who are now able to offer unique experiences to those who accompany them in the discovery of nature.

We continue to focus on creating coexistence corridors with wildlife, and as of the end of 2022 we have integrated 64 livestock guarding dogs in various livestock farms. Now we must also improve the availability of wild prey for the predators we aim to protect.

These Rewilding Portugal initiatives are blocks that make up a holistic strategy to promote a wilder Portugal, integrating a long-term vision, and above all a generational commitment. Rewilding Portugal aims to promote a more biodiverse, resilient, and socially fair territory so that future generations can build upon our legacy.



**Pedro Prata**  
*Rewilding  
Portugal  
Team Leader*





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# Message From The Board

## Build yourself a garden

What we are today is a recent construction that, in its essence, results from the combination of values inherited from the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. These are the foundations of today's societies, deeply anthropocentric, materialistic and eager for progress.

The Enlightenment proposes the knowledge and mastery of nature in order to ensure progress and “enlighten” the spirit of men. Goethe's Faust is therefore one of the best symbols of modernity. In it, Faust, a man of science, disillusioned by the lack of knowledge of his time, makes a pact with the devil, who fills him with satanic energy and a passion for technology and progress. Faust ends up in Hell. That is the nature of the pact.

In the last 10,000 years, due to human ingenuity and a stable and favourable geological era, we have created extraordinary civilizations that have profoundly transformed our way of living. In the last 200 years alone, despite a seven-fold increase in world population, per capita GDP has increased 14-fold. But with such profound impacts on key balances of the biosphere that our future on Earth is now in question.

The current rate of species extinction is a thousand times greater than it was before the Industrial Revolution and the trend is worsening. Either we return to nature, or, as the great Seattle Indian chief warned in 1854 in his letter to the US president in response to his ultimatum offer, we will become victims of ourselves: “Whatever happens to animals will also happen to man. All things are connected. And if everything disappears, man will die in a great spiritual solitude.”

Against the Enlightenment idea of domination, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman urges us to be “gardeners”, not “hunters”, that is, to estab-

lish relations with others and the planet based on collaboration, not appropriation.

In the Chinese tradition, one of the main activities of literates was to plant a garden and tend it. As Tolentino Mendonça reminds us, “an intellectual was one who distinguished himself by tending his garden, not just one who produced ideas or words”. Indeed, in Chinese tradition, “returning to nature” and “returning to my nature” or “myself” were concepts that were intertwined.

It would certainly be easier to mobilize humanity to fight an external or passing enemy than to question and change itself, but we have no choice but to return to nature and build a garden. Will we be able?



**João  
Wengorovius  
Meneses**  
*Treasurer Of  
The Board*

<sup>1</sup>[www.kuow.org/stories/how-chief-seattle-mistakenly-inspired-environmental-movement](http://www.kuow.org/stories/how-chief-seattle-mistakenly-inspired-environmental-movement)

<sup>2</sup>José Tolentino Mendonça, Revista Expresso, Edição 2269, 23/04/2016.



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# Rewilding Portugal



Rewilding Portugal is a private non-profit organization, established in January 2019 in Guarda. Its mission is to promote nature conservation through rewilding measures in Portugal. Currently, the organization is working in the areas of Riba-Côa and Beira Alta in northern Portugal, with the goal of bringing nature back on a

large scale and promote local and more sustainable nature-based economies. Rewilding Portugal is the main partner of Rewilding Europe in the Greater Côa Valley rewilding area and is working closely with multiple partners to achieve the shared goal of making Portugal a wilder place.

## The Team



**Pedro Prata**  
Team Leader



**Marta Cáliz**  
Head of Operations



**Sara Aliácar**  
Head of Conservation



**Kayte Phillips**  
Head of Finance



**Fernando Teixeira**  
Communications and Marketing Officer



**André Couto**  
Conservation Officer



**Pedro Ribeiro**  
Conservation Officer



**Joaquim Canotinho**  
Enterprise Officer



**Miguel Pontes**  
Surveillance Team



**Gonçalo Matos**  
Surveillance Team



**Marta Vieira**  
Veterinary



**Rui Marques**  
Field Operative



**Nuno Paixão**  
Field Operative



**Marlene Vieira**  
Rewilding Center Responsible



**Paula Saraiva**  
Rewilding Center Intern



**Sofia Capelo**  
Administrative Assistant



**Abel Coito**  
Ribeira do Mosteiro Custodian



**Lurdes Coito**  
Ribeira do Mosteiro Custodian

## The Board

**Hendrick Adriaan Van Beuninguen**  
President of the Board

**Miguel Bastos Araújo**  
Secretary of the Board

**João Wengorovius Meneses**  
Treasurer of the Board



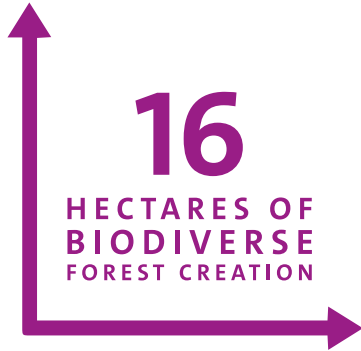
# Rewilding Portugal in numbers

These numbers are global and refer to totals since 2019





■ General ■ Rewilding ■ Enterprise ■ Communication





# Interview with Deli Saavedra

*HEAD OF LANDSCAPES AT REWILDING EUROPE, DELI SAAVEDRA HAS THE IMPORTANT TASK OF MONITORING THE EVOLUTION OF REWILDING EFFORTS IN THE AREAS CURRENTLY IN OPERATION AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL. IN AN INTERVIEW, HE TELLS US ABOUT THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF HIS POSITION, THE FUTURE OF THIS COLLECTIVE AND UNIFIED PROJECT AND THE PLANS HE HAS FOR WHAT IS STILL TO COME.*

## **What do you think sets rewilding apart from other nature conservation approaches?**

Rewilding is a more relaxed approach to nature conservation, where we do not prescribe how nature should behave, but where we give nature resilience, through geographical space (the bigger the better) and putting back the lost pieces on the ecosystems. At the same time, rewilding does not have enough with what is already protected, but it aims to go beyond, restoring nature at large scale.

## **As Head of Landscapes, what have been your greatest challenges and successes?**

I think the greatest challenge has been to “keep the plates spinning”, which means ensuring enough financing to allow the different rewilding landscapes to work full speed and to increase operations. It is difficult to find long-term sources of finance for rewilding, therefore often when we have secured it for one landscape (one spinning plate), soon another one can be ending the source of funding. At the same time, it is encouraging to have increased the number of rewilding landscapes of the Rewilding Europe network from five in 2012 to ten in 2022.

## **The new European Wildlife Comeback Fund hopes to facilitate reintroductions and translocations of fauna - tell us a little about this new initiative.**

There is abundant scientific research showing we need to increase wildlife populations, especially of those species (so-called keystone species) that have a disproportionate effect on ecosystems, removing biomass (large herbivores), shaping trophic chains (large carnivores) or removing dead animals (scavengers). Reintroductions require feasibility studies, administrative permits, and money, and often practitioners find themselves in a “catch 22” situation: it is difficult to obtain permits if the money is not secured, but it is also difficult to assure donors that permits will be obtained on time once the money is granted.

The European Wildlife Comeback Fund (EWCF) is a specific fund set up to support financially the reintroduction projects that are ready.

That means with feasibility studies in place, agreements from main stakeholders established and permits from authorities obtained. We hope to dramatically increase wildlife reintroductions across Europe, in a responsible way, and following IUCN guidelines.





**A new rewilding area has recently been launched in the Iberian Highlands. Tell us a little about this new rewilding area, and what are the plans for the next few years.**

Iberian Highlands is the name we have given to a huge region in Eastern Spain, comprising almost a million hectares from Castilla la Mancha and Aragon regions. Land abandonment is the main challenge (density of population is 2 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>) but we believe it is also the main opportunity to create one of the biggest natural areas in Europe, where landscape and abundant wildlife can add to the rich cultural heritage to build an exciting destination for ecotourism.

The plan for the next three years includes the reintroduction of large herbivores (horses and tauros), the Cinereous vulture and the Iberian lynx. Old-growth forests will be protected through compensation systems and new forest management systems will be agreed to value better the use of timber and stop the logging of full trees for biomass. A network of operators and producers (similar to Rewilding Portugal's Wild Côa Network) will be set up to support some economic activities of local communities.

**You live in an area where wildfires used to be a larger problem, but that now has good measures in place to prevent them. Could some of these measures from Catalonia be applied in Portugal?**

Well, catastrophic wildfires are a big problem in all the regions with a Mediterranean climate, and Catalonia is not an exception. I do not know well the policy and strategy behind fire prevention, and I can say that sadly rewilding is not included, but I can at least point to good prevention methods: the use of prescribed fire to decrease fuel in some areas, especially connecting big forest patches, and access restriction. Last summer, with an extreme fire risk, most nature parks were closed to the public, including on foot. It was a difficult measure, both politically and to be enforced, but the reality is that Catalonia was one of the regions in the Iberian Peninsula with the fewest hectares burnt.

**How do you see the evolution of the rewilding area of the Greater Côa Valley, and what are the main opportunities and challenges for this area in the future?**

The Greater Côa Valley is one of the big successes of Rewilding Europe and Rewilding Portugal. An area quite unknown in 2011 is presently one of the main examples of how rewilding can boost nature conservation and sustainable economic activities on a completely new way, bottom-up, working side by side with the local communities. Governments and public institutions (like the ICNF) should learn a lot from the wolf coexistence work carried out by Rewilding



Portugal. At the same time, we are showing with scientific data that we need large herbivores in the landscape, to make it less prone to burning. Resilient landscapes and resilient communities, this is the future, and the Greater Côa Valley is one of the most brilliant European showcases.

**From a personal perspective and reflecting on 2022, what would you like to see happen in 2023?**

I would love to see real action for climate and biodiversity. Everyone says we are in emergency mode, but we keep living our life like nothing serious is happening. Our society has to deeply change, and rewilding is one of the paths to follow. Our mission is to build that path while walking, maybe even running, and we will need to be bold, energetic, and persistent in 2023 to make it happen. Cheer up!



# Wildlife Comeback Report,

## the new and updated report on the return of wildlife

*IN SEPTEMBER 2022, A NEW AND UPDATED WILDLIFE COMEBACK REPORT WAS LAUNCHED, COMMISSIONED BY REWILDING EUROPE, BRINGING US THE LATEST INFORMATION, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES ON WILDLIFE COMEBACK AT THE EUROPEAN SCALE.*

### **New insights into the return of wildlife**

In 2013, the first Wildlife Comeback Report was published, to better understand wildlife return across Europe and to support it more efficiently in the future. To update this data, experts from the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), BirdLife International and the European Bird Census Council have been working on this science-based peer-reviewed overview of the return of a huge range of European wild species, which resulted in this new update released in 2022. Showing changes in numbers and distribution, this document allows a better understanding of why some species are being more successful than others. This report, which involved seventy experts across Europe, describes in detail the return of selected species of birds and mammals that have shown signs of recovery in the last 40-50 years.

### **Understanding and Embracing This Recovery**

Supporting the return of wildlife is one of the main goals of Rewilding Europe and of Rewilding

Portugal. Whether it's creating the conditions for wildlife to return on their own or reintroducing species into habitats where they have become extinct or where they cannot recover on their own. The unprecedented decline in biodiversity that we are currently experiencing makes supporting the return of wildlife a critical priority.

Despite this general decline, there are also reasons for optimism. Large numbers of wild species have made a spectacular comeback across Europe over the last four decades, proving that wild nature is resilient and can recover if conditions are right. Factors such as increased legal protection, the creation of corridors between protected areas or areas essential to wildlife, the recovery of prey species, reintroductions, and other measures to support populations, along with an ever-increasing willingness of Europeans to live together and enjoy the presence of wild animals, are all elements that have contributed to this recovery.

There are species that show an especially positive evolution, proving that reintroductions and rewilding conservation efforts can contribute to these recoveries. The European beaver is a good example of this, as it increased its distribution by 835% between 1955 and 2020, an animal that was once at risk of extinction due to habitat loss and human pressure and now has more than a million individuals in Europe.

Another species also highlighted is the European bison, an animal that during the Middle Ages suffered from hunting and habitat loss. It started to be reintroduced in 1950, reintroduction efforts that have been reinforced, including with a reintroduction program in Bulgaria in 2019, where our partners from Rewilding Rhodopes participated and which has had very positive results. So positive that this species, which was "Endangered" in 1996, is now "Vulnerable", and a growing population.







**The benefits of wildlife**

Wildlife can return if we give it space and time, and if we take effective measures to improve coexistence between it and local populations. This new publication highlights how we can support this return and the essential role that wildlife plays in our landscapes, with benefits for nature, the climate, and people.

Landscapes without wildlife are like theaters without actors: one thing needs the other to function properly. Returning wildlife can help restore functioning ecosystems, restoring much-needed interactions between species and their habitats. Healthy ecosystems, in turn, offer a wide range of benefits, including providing clean water, storing carbon, preventing fires and floods, and even socio-economic benefits for local communities.

In Portugal, for example, the return of emblematic wild species, such as the Iberian wolf or the Iberian lynx, can play a fundamental role not only in terms of functional ecosystems, but also in the creation of nature tourism opportunities that attract people, bringing new economic potential to rural areas that are often undervalued and forgotten in modern economic models.







# Portugal's first ever rewilding symposium

*THE SYMPOSIUM, WHICH HELPED PROMOTE REWILDING IN BOTH A EUROPEAN AND PORTUGUESE CONTEXT, WAS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN PORTUGAL, AND HAPPENED IN QUINTA DO PISÃO, CASCAIS. IT FEATURED A RANGE OF PRESENTATIONS FROM REWILDING THOUGHT LEADERS. IT HAS SO FAR ATTRACTED OVER 5,000 ONLINE VIEWS.*

## **Pioneering event**

Portugal's first ever rewilding symposium took place on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Quinta do Pisão Nature Park (a member of Rewilding Europe's European Rewilding Network), just outside Lisbon. Organised by Rewilding Portugal and Cascais Ambiente, the event helped to raise awareness of rewilding and the rewilding agenda of Rewilding Portugal and Rewilding Europe. With a range of thought leaders and rewilding experts present, it saw many productive discussions take place around the opportunities and challenges of rewilding in Portugal.

The event was attended by NGOs, government representatives, university students and other Rewilding Portugal partners and associates. The event was also livestreamed online and has now been watched online by more than 5,000 people. The first speaker at the event was Raquel Filguei-

ras, Rewilding Europe's Head of Rewilding.

"This was a really pioneering, productive and well-facilitated event that helped to reinforce the validity and legitimacy of the European rewilding agenda," says Filgueiras. "It served as a great platform for talking about rewilding in a Portuguese context, as well as what distinguishes rewilding from traditional nature conservation."

## **Productive discussions**

The symposium programme featured presentations by a range of rewilding and conservation experts, including Humberto Rosa (the European Commission's Director for Biodiversity at the Directorate-General for Environment), Pedro Prata (Rewilding Portugal team leader), Jordi Palau (Fundación Española de Renaturalización and a member of the board of Rewilding Spain), Henrique Miguel Pereira (iDiv and CIBIO/BIOPOLIS), Carlos Albuquerque, Director of the





Nature Conservation and Biodiversity Department at the ICNF (Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests), and Ana Salomé (Symington Family Estates).

The subjects of these presentations included the role of ecological restoration, the potential of rewilding to meeting ecological restoration goals and nature conservation in Portugal, natural grazing and its role in mitigating the risk of catastrophic wildfire, the management of classified and protected areas in Portugal and landscape-scale ecological restoration within them, and nature-based economies and the role of private enterprise in nature conservation.

“This symposium marked a turning point in terms of how nature conservation is perceived in Portugal, and of what it can be if we are creative and ambitious,” says Rewilding Portugal team leader Pedro Prata. “It was important to have a meeting where so many organisations and entities with responsibilities in the conservation space were present, to debate and co-define the future of rewilding in this country.”

Attendees at the symposium were also offered the chance to enjoy two visits to Quinta do Pisão to witness first-hand the rewilding efforts being carried out there – one at night to observe bats and birds, the other during the day to know the space better.

#### Future focus

Today, the Rewilding Portugal team are working hard to rewild the Greater Côa Valley, with the aim of creating a healthy, fully functioning and resilient natural landscape, complete with a diverse array of wildlife species and thriving nature-based economy. By demonstrating rewilding’s huge potential, their efforts will hopefully motivate other Portuguese rewilding initiatives to follow suit.

“Awareness of rewilding is definitely increasing in Portugal,” says Raquel Filgueiras. “One of the questions that came out of the symposium was: ‘why isn’t rewilding in Portugal carried out more widely?’ Rewilding Portugal are doing a great job, innovating, inspiring others, and partnering with like-minded organisations. As with all of European rewilding, it’s really time to scale up.”



See the complete symposium here!





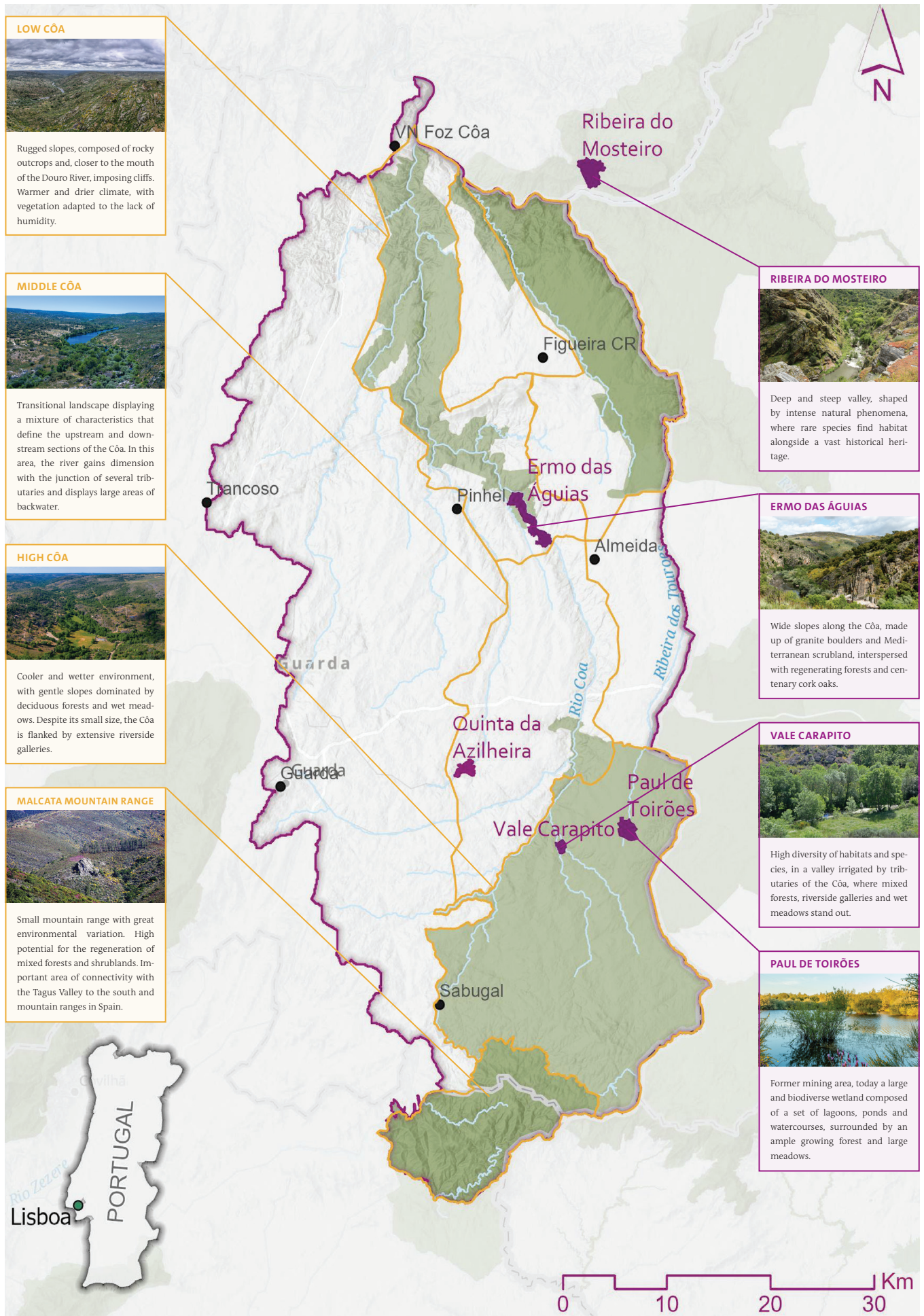
QUINTA DO RIO  
NOÉMI Alojamento Rural  
GUARDA



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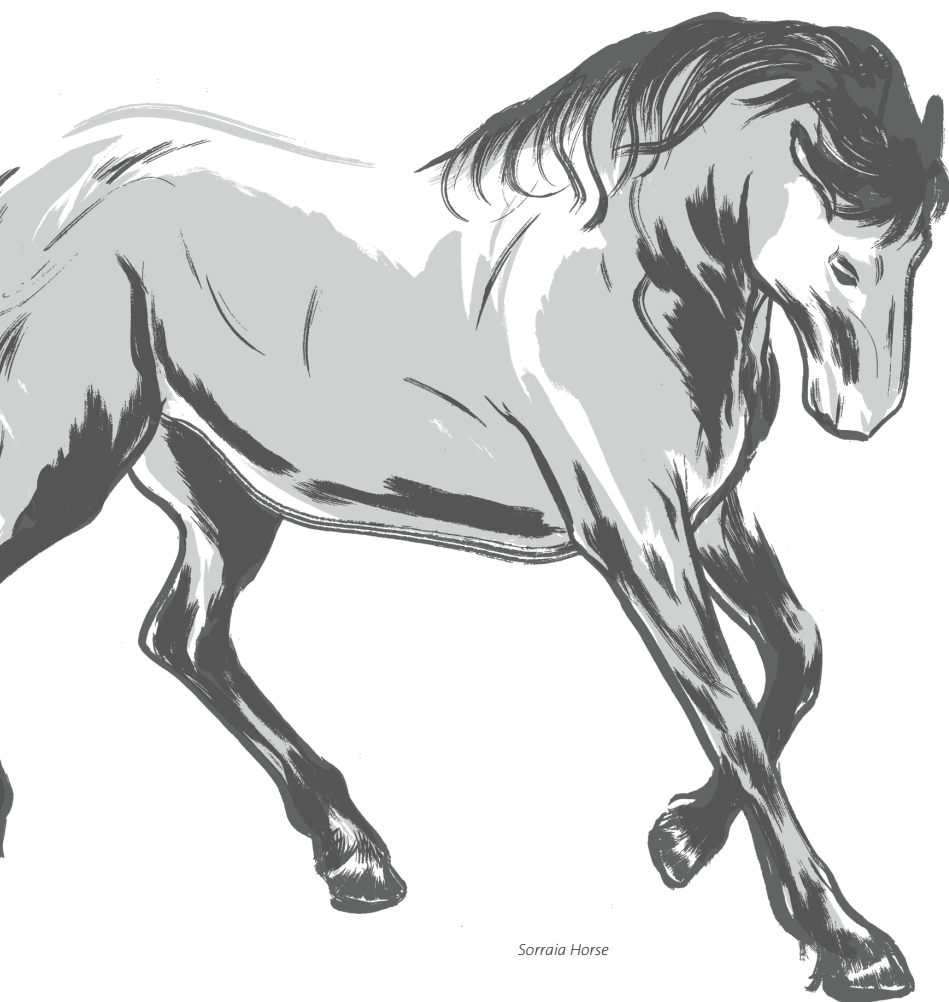






# Vale Carapito

Vilar Maior, Sabugal



*Sorraia Horse*

North of the historical village of Vilar Maior, just two kilometers from the east bank of the Côa river, Vale Carapito displays a diverse mosaic of natural habitats, irrigated by the Cesarão river and the Alfaiates stream. Mixed forests of broad-leaved trees and conifers, scrubland, and dry and wet meadows create the conditions for animals and plants with very different ecological requirements.

In this rewilding landscape, the marks of an agricultural past that ended during the rural exodus of the 20th century can still be seen. Dry stone walls and the ruins of water courses are now crossed by the roots of large alders, ash trees and various species of oak. Here the return of the roe deer to their former territories is quite evident, as well as the presence of a herd of Sorraia horses. This breed is very similar to the wild horses that inhabited all the west of Europe and disappeared with the increasing impact of human beings. The herd was introduced in Vale Carapito in order to replicate the role of their ancestors in the ecosystem, mainly through herbivory and the reinforcement of the nutrient cycle, having a positive effect for the remaining biodiversity, among which the rich communities of insects, small birds, amphibians and reptiles stand out.

Through the nature conservation work and the strong links that Rewilding Portugal continues to build with the local community, Vale Carapito represents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the impact that the rewilding approach can bring to the region, not only from an environmental perspective, but also in terms of social development and the creation of new economic opportunities.





## Biodiversity in numbers

IN VALE CARAPITO SAMPLING FOCUSED ON VERTEBRATE ANIMALS, INSECTS, PLANTS AND FUNGI HAS SO FAR BEEN CARRIED OUT, PART OF WHICH IS INTEGRATED IN THE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF NATURAL GRAZING ON BIOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES

### VERTEBRATE

---

140 species

- 4 fishes
- 9 amphibians
- 11 reptiles
- 98 birds
- 18 mammals

### INSECTS

---

222 species

- 68 butterflies and moths
- 42 beetles
- 27 bees, wasps and ants
- 57 cicadas and bedbugs

### PLANTS

---

178 species

- 24 trees and bushes

### FUNGI

---

42 species

#### **THREATENED SPECIES OF VERTEBRATES AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

10 species, namely the European honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*) and the Escalera's bat (*Myotis escaleraei*)

#### **THREATENED SPECIES OF VERTEBRATES AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

6 species, namely the European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and the Spanish pond turtle (*Mauremys leprosa*)

#### **IBERIAN ENDEMISMS**

11 species, namely the Iberian worm lizard (*Blanus cinereus*) and the Squalius carolitertii (*Squalius carolitertii*)

#### **MAIN MANAGEMENT AND REWILDING ACTIONS**

- » Monitoring and promotion of the rewilding process on 73.5 ha of land.
- » Introduction of a herd of Sorraia horses for natural grazing.
- » Construction of 2 ponds for wildlife and water retention in the driest areas.
- » Restoration of 1.70 ha of grassland, through selective clearing and enrichment of the native seed bank.
- » Removal of 2 km of obsolete barbed wire fencing.
- » Classification of the area as a non-hunting reserve, in partnership with Vilar Maior Associative Hunting Zone, allowing it to function as a refuge and population source area for species of conservation and hunting interest.
- » Creation of a visitation trail and visits with promoters and local entities.





# Sorraia herds grow thanks to new births

*THE HERDS OF SORRAIA HORSES CONTINUE TO GROW IN THE GREATER CÔA VALLEY. IN 2022, TWO NEW FOALS WERE BORN, SEIXO (PEBBLE) AND SEMENTE (SEED), BRINGING THE TOTAL OF SEMI-WILD SORRAIA HORSES TO 21 ANIMALS. THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF THESE ANIMALS ON THE LANDSCAPE HAVE STARTED TO SHOW IN VALE CARAPITO AND ERMO DAS ÁGUIAS.*

The Sorraia horse, a native Portuguese breed, has a population of only about 200 individuals worldwide. Reminiscent of the wild ancestor of the Iberian horse, the Sorraia Horse were thus named because it was a species recovered from a nucleus of animals that were found in the valley of the Sorraia River, in Coruche. They are short in stature (1.44 to 1.48m on average), with brown bay or mouse coats, with a mule stripe and greater or

lesser evidence of zebras on the head and limbs.

Sorraias are wild horses that are extremely resistant to environmental conditions, something they inherited from their primitive ancestors, whose function is intended to be recovered in the landscape. As herbivores, they play a key role, as they help shape the forest, maintaining pastures and open areas through natural grazing. They are also great allies to reduce the risk of





horses in the wild took place – Seixo (Pebble) and Semente (Seed) were born during the spring and summer of 2022 in Vale Carapito, increasing the number of animals of this threatened breed. The names of the foals were chosen through a voting process – Seixo’s name was selected by Rewilding Portugal’s Patreons, and Semente’s name through a public voting process.

The effects of the Sorraia horses in the rewilding areas, namely on vegetation, soil and pollinators are being studied to better understand their role in building more functional, heterogeneous, and fire-resistant landscapes.

Fenced plots, where grazing is totally excluded, were constructed to compare vegetation structure, diversity, and abundance of pollinators, etc., with and without natural grazing. In the rewilding area of Vale Carapito, this experience began in 2020 with the support of Terra-prima, MARETEC/IST and Tagis, who collected baseline data before the arrival of the herd.

After just one year of grazing, some changes can already be seen. Grazing reduced the height of grasses and their biomass, consequently reducing the amount of fuel (fire intensity) and increasing the discontinuity in the vertical structure of the vegetation, which reduces the risk of fire spreading to the treetops.

The short grasses are an excellent habitat for rabbits, which have also increased in these areas. A change in vegetation composition is also visible, from a dominance of grasses to a greater variety of flowering plants, an important source of food for pollinators.

In the coming years, Rewilding Portugal will continue to work so that the Sorraia herds grow and perform their functions as natural grazers, contributing to a more diverse and resilient landscape with abundant wildlife.

forest and rural fires, one of the biggest threats to nature in Portugal, which has worsened in recent years.

Rewilding Portugal currently has three herds of Sorraia horses. The first animals arrived at Vale Carapito rewilding area in 2021. A year later, in April 2022, the first horses arrived at Ermo das Águas, found near the village of Vale de Madeira, in the Pinhel municipality. Finally, in September 2022, the third herd arrived at Ribeiro do Mosteiro, located in the Douro International Natural Park.

The youngest horses in the herds, Rela, Raia and Rewilding, born in 2021, continued to grow quickly in 2022, and are now independent from their mothers. In 2022 the first births of Sorraia





# Vilar Maior and Vale Carapito

*THE VILLAGE OF VILAR MAIOR, IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SABUGAL IS A PLACE WITH A LOT TO KNOW, EXPLORE AND VISIT, ALWAYS WITH RESPECT FOR NATURE. THIS VILLAGE, NEAR VALE CARAPITO REWILDING AREA, HAS A HUGE HISTORICAL HERITAGE THAT ATTRACTS MANY VISITORS TO THE REGION, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO TRAVEL THE CÔA VALLEY GRAND ROUTE.*

The village of Vilar Maior belongs to the network of the five medieval villages of Sabugal and was founded in the 12th century. The village has a well-preserved castle on high from where you can see the whole village and the rewilding area of Vale Carapito. Besides the castle, there is still a tower, as well as part of the wall, a cistern, some arches and a staircase to get to the top. There is also a museum in the village, which tells the narrative of its history, with various pieces of archaeology, sacred art and old books. Another must-see monument is the church Igreja Matriz, inspired by São Pedro and built in the 13th century.

Rewilding Portugal has been developing different activities in Vilar Maior, thanks to a partnership with Associação Muralhas de Vilar Maior, a local association that aims to preserve and disseminate the cultural, material and immaterial heritage of the village, as well as to publicize Vilar Maior and its heritage to the outside world. For Bárbara Cardoso, vice-president of the association, the partnership with Rewilding Portugal is important to the achievement of these goals: “We consider the partnership established as strategic, coherent with our mission and goals, fundamental in the dynamisation of activities and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of Vilar Maior, even beyond borders”.

During 2022, The Wild Côa Symphony (an artistic residency supported by the Endangered Landscapes Programme) organized an event with the local community, which included a walk

to Vale Carapito and the recording of some local singing. The aim of this artistic residency is to develop an “impressionistic video sonic poem” of the Greater Côa Valley, which will be exhibited in 2023.

In 2022, Rewilding Portugal also participated in the organization of the annual festival in Vilar Maior in honour of Senhor dos Aflitos, with a day dedicated to nature, the Vila Wild Festival, which included: a peddy-paper, a photographic exhibition, an information session, the showing of a documentary and the results of the Wild Côa Symphony artistic residency, a guided tour of Vale Carapito and also concerts in the castle area.

There were also two prize-giving ceremonies for the first and second editions of the Rewilding Photo Contest, co-organized with the municipality of Sabugal, which included visits to Vale Carapito. In November, a traditional “magusto” open to the community was also held, with chestnuts and the traditional drink called “jeropiga”, which included a fado concert by the fado singer Artur Conde.

For those who want to get to know Vilar Maior, we recommend Casa Villar Mayor. A country house with a relevant historical imprint, known for its tranquility, harmony, hospitality and respect for nature. This space follows principles of sustainability and responsible tourism and is one of the members of the Wild Côa Network, a network that aims to promote the wilder side of Portugal that can be found in the Greater Côa Valley.





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# Interview with Bárbara Carvalho

## Wild Côa Symphony

*BÁRBARA CARVALHO IS ONE OF THE FACES OF THE WILD CÔA SYMPHONY PROJECT, A COLLABORATIVE ARTISTIC PROJECT THAT WON A COMPETITION FROM THE ENDANGERED LANDSCAPES PROGRAMME TO CARRY OUT AN ARTISTIC RESIDENCY IN THE GREATER CÔA VALLEY. THE PROJECT IS AT ITS FINAL STAGE AND THE FIRST RESULTS ARE STARTING TO BE PRESENTED TO THE PUBLIC.*

**What is the Wild Côa Symphony, and where did the idea for this artistic residency in the Greater Côa Valley come from?**

The Wild Côa Symphony is a collaborative artistic project, where three people with very different life stories meet and set out on a journey through the meanders of the Côa River. Me, as a guide, archaeologist and person who is also an element of this landscape, eco-artist Antony Lyons and musician-composer Jesse D. Vernon. It is a drifting journey, from the source to the mouth, in the exploration and recording of sounds, reflections, voices and music, which aims to create a poetic film-portrait of the Greater Côa Valley. I've known Antony since his first incursions along the Côa, at each meeting, the river and the people who inhabit it were always our commonplace and we had a deep desire to find a way

to share this place with the rest of the world. The artistic residency, promoted by the ELP (Endangered Landscapes Programme), with the support of Rewilding Portugal, turned out to be the lever for the realization of this wish. Our journey, portrayed on film, contemplates the various multisensory geographies of a landscape, where all things and those who inhabit and participate in it are the past, present and future of this territory.

**What were the main activities you organized during the residency, and how was the experience?**

The residency took place over a year, divided into four expeditions, between the autumn of 2021 and 2022. The initial idea was mainly to collect sounds and images of the landscape, having as background reflections, the lived and the wild, freedom, caring, sustainability and coexistence of elements. Meanwhile, the journey was



increasingly converging towards meeting communities, we wanted to explore the feeling of belonging and do something that would bring a certain cultural revitalization to the places that map this symphony. Last spring, we organized activities in Vilar Maior, Cidadelhe and Pinhel. With the community of Vilar Maior and Rewilding Portugal, a sound walk through the paths of Vale Carapito was organized, entitled “Deep Time”. The challenge was to look, share and echo past sounds and memories around the biodiversity of this valley. In Cidadelhe, a concert day was held with the local “fado singers”. Poems tuned to the guitar were exchanged, we listened to local hymns and popular songs praised by the women who once sang together while working the land. With the students of Escola Básica 2 de Pinhel, we carried out two sound and musical experimentation workshops, based on the sounds of animals and the wind. It was an incredible experience, beautiful but above all, full of generosity. The shared moments enriched us all and the work of the Wild Côa Symphony itself.

**When will we be able to see the residency results in Portugal, and where?**

In November 2022, in Castelo Rodrigo, at Cantinho Café, we presented the first excerpts of the film to a small audience. In the coming months, Antony Lyons and Jesse D. Vernon will be working on the film’s sound composition and final editing. We hope to launch the finished piece next July, in various locations in the Greater Côa Valley. The program will be announced in advance on the project’s Instagram account:

@wild\_coa\_symphony

**You work in archeology in this region, can you talk a little about your work in this area and what lessons can we learn from the past?**

I came to this territory as an archeology student over 20 years ago. The Alto Douro and Côa were unavoidable regions for anyone wanting to investigate the oldest places in human history. Large protected natural areas, the largest open-air Palaeolithic art site and the most emblematic prehistoric walled enclosures. It was where I had to be, and I ended up staying. Since then, I have



been working as a researcher and freelancer with several research projects linked to archeology, in the study and excavation of archaeological sites, in their dissemination and public mediation, but also linked to cultural heritage, in the most general sense, as is the case of the Archive of Memory, a project developed by the Associação de Amigos do Parque and Côa Museum, which has open access to a huge repository of oral testimonies, which tell the most recent history of the region. The Greater Côa Valley holds, in all its tangible and inaccessible layers, from the oldest to the most recent, an immeasurable heritage value that goes beyond all the physical borders of this bioregion. It is also a value that requires great commitment. Knowing the past taught me above all to persist, I think it instigates and teaches us to look at our existence in its various facets and dimensions, to see what is around, in context, in the sense of a journey made and others, which we can still do. For this very reason, research, in whatever area, is for me one of the great pillars of sustainability in this territory.

**What would you like to see happen in the Greater Côa Valley in the future?**

It’s hard to answer...so many things! Things that last and transform, things that ground us and make us stay, but above all, I would like to see people willing to make things happen. Thinking about the near future and about something that brings together many of these things, and which will certainly happen, the Côa – Corridor of Arts festival!







# Ermo das Águias

Vale de Madeira e Mangide, Pinhel



*Iberian wolf*

Following the west bank of the Côa River, Ermo das Águias marks an important transition in the river valley's landscape: here the gentle slopes that flanked the river from its source end, and the rough cliffs and escarpments that will lead it to its mouth in the Douro River begin.

Scrub and bare rock dominate the landscape, partly due to the soil conditions but also to the impact of fire and pastoralism in recent centuries. However, the process of regeneration is already evident in the groves of black oak, and the small holm oaks and cork oaks that appear among their large secular relatives. Along the water courses, the wet meadows are recovering their floristic diversity, previously suppressed by the intensity of grazing, which was concentrated in these more productive areas. The slopes are regularly overflowed by some of the most emblematic birds of the region, such as the golden eagle, the black stork and the griffon vulture, and the ruins of an ancient "fojo", a stone structure used to hunt the Iberian wolf, attest to the ancestral presence of this predator in these lands.

Throughout this year Rewilding Portugal developed several biodiversity monitoring and conservation actions here, including the introduction of a herd of Sorraia horses, in a semi wild regime, with the aim of replicating the extinct ecological role of the wild horse. In addition, we also inaugurated two visitation routes, and carried out various community activities in the village of Vale de Madeira, supported by the existence of the Rewilding Centre.





BLUE NOMADS / REWILDING EUROPE

## Biodiversity in numbers

IN ERMO DAS ÁGUIAS SAMPLING FOCUSED ON VERTEBRATE ANIMALS, INSECTS, PLANTS AND FUNGI HAS SO FAR BEEN CARRIED OUT, PART OF WHICH IS INTEGRATED IN THE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF NATURAL GRAZING ON BIOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES.

### VERTEBRATE

131 species

- 3 fishes
- 9 amphibians
- 11 reptiles
- 95 birds
- 13 mammals

### INSECTS

172 species

- 28 butterflies and moths
- 34 beetles
- 31 bees, wasps and ants
- 61 cicadas and bedbugs

### PLANTS

168 species

- 20 trees and bushes

### FUNGI

46 species

#### THREATENED SPECIES OF VERTEBRATES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

8 species, namely the Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and the Mediterranean horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus euryale*)

#### THREATENED SPECIES OF VERTEBRATES AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

6 species, namely the European turtle dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) and the Northern straight-mouth nase (*Pseudochondrostoma duriense*)

#### IBERIAN ENDEMISMS

8 species, namely the Spanish mole (*Talpa occidentalis*) and the Luciobarbus bocagei (*Luciobarbus bocagei*)



GOLDEN EAGLE (AQUILA CHRYSÆTOS)  
BOGDAN BOEV / REWILDING EUROPE



EUROPEAN TURTLE DOVE (STREPTOPELIA TURTUR)  
DIETMAR HILL / WILD WONDERS OF EUROPE

#### MAIN MANAGEMENT AND REWILDING ACTIONS

- » Monitoring and promotion of the rewilding process in 624 ha of land.
- » Introduction of a herd of 11 Sorraia horses.
- » Creation of 2 pedestrian trails and opening them to visitors.
- » Acquisition of hunting rights for 281 ha, enabling it to function as a refuge and population source area for species of conservation and hunting interest.
- » Creation of a pond.



# Vale de Madeira and Ermo das Águias

*THE VILLAGE OF VALE DE MADEIRA, IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PINHEL, IS THE IDEAL STARTING POINT TO VISIT THE REWILDING AREA OF ERMO DAS ÁGUIAS. YOU CAN ALSO FIND IN THIS VILLAGE THE REWILDING CENTER, A SPACE DEDICATED TO NATURE CONSERVATION AND CONTACT WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.*

The village of Vale de Madeira belongs to the parish of Alto do Palurdo and is very close to Pinhel. The village has a main church and a small oval chapel, known as Capela de Santa Bárbara. Another must-see is the fluvial beach of Vale de Madeira, which allows visitors to enjoy the Côa River in the warmer months. Close to this fluvial beach is also the Old Bridge over the Côa River, of Roman origin, which used to be the connection between Pinhel and Reigada.

Rewilding Portugal has been developing a series of activities in Vale de Madeira, thanks to a partnership with a local benefactor, Fernando Mayor Espinha and his family, for the use of a building located in the center of the village - the Rewilding Center. This center, inaugurated in late 2021, is a space dedicated to nature conservation and direct contact with the local community. Additionally, it aims to stimulate tourism and visitation to the Ermo das Águias rewilding area, and thus also benefit the village of Vale de Madeira. Working closely with those who live near or within Rewilding Portugal's areas of operation is essential for the organization's long-term goals to be successful. The commitment to local people is fundamental to the vision the organization has for the Greater Côa Valley.

In 2022, the Rewilding Center was used for several events, including training nature tour-

ism guides, running a volunteer fire surveillance program, and holding some physical activation classes for the local community. In April, an event was also organized to release another herd of Sorraia horses in a semi-wild state at Ermo das Águias. This event, which brought together about 60 people, was a good opportunity to showcase the work that is taking place in the region.

In August, Rewilding Portugal was also present and supported the festivities in honor of São Sebastião, an occasion when all the families gathered, bringing more joy and movement to the village. This event included a candlelight procession through the streets of the village, the participation of the Philharmonic Band of Santa Marinha and the traditional soccer game "Married vs. Single".

At the end of 2022 the licensing process of the Rewilding Center was concluded as a local accommodation, which is already open to the public, to attract tourists interested in conservation and nature tourism, as well as in coming to know the rich cultural, historical and gastronomic heritage of the region.





# Rewilding Centre

Wild Tourism accommodation  
in Vale de Madeira (Pinhel)

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# The role of Rewilding Portugal in preventing and combating rural wildfires

*2022 WAS A PARTICULARLY HARSH YEAR WHEN IT COMES TO WILDFIRES, ESPECIALLY WITH THE HUGE WILDFIRE IN SERRA DA ESTRELA THAT CONSUMED MORE THAN 25% OF THAT NATURAL PARK. REWILDING PORTUGAL WORKS ACTIVELY TO PREVENT AND FIGHT WILDFIRES IN THE GREATER CÔA VALLEY.*

This year's summer fires were of unprecedented severity and had serious impacts on natural ecosystems. Rewilding Portugal supports the creation of a landscape that is more resilient to fire, with more functional ecosystems, and more biodiverse and abundant fauna and flora. One of Rewilding Portugal's proposals is the use of natural grazing with large herbivores, animals that create a pattern of mosaics in the landscape, creating a natural balance between open areas of pasture and forested areas. These brigades of wild animals, such as wild bovines and wild horses, are critical to create firebreaks, and to increase landscape resilience by sequestering and storing carbon and reducing unnecessary and inefficient expenditures on landscape management.

Rewilding Portugal also has a mobile surveillance team of two elements, which has been one of the most active fronts of the organization in terms of preventing and fighting wild-

fires. The surveillance team travels through priority areas during the hottest months of the year, to identify wildfires in the early stages, so that fire combat, and resource allocation, can be done in advance and in a more organized way.

In addition, the surveillance team has also given direct support by helping firefighters and the population in fighting wildfire fronts. For example, the team was present at the Quintã dos Bernardos wildfire, close to the Ermo das Águias rewilding area, where they participated in the fight against the wildfire, helping the firefighters to find the best ways to combat the fire and manage access to the region. In that fire 30 hectares were burned, but this number could have risen to more than 100 hectares. The support provided by the surveillance team was essential to reduce the affected area.

In the Serra da Estrela wildfires, which lasted about two weeks and where 57,000 ha of forest and agricultural areas were lost, the team's participation in the fight was limited due to the size of the wildfire, so efforts were focused on assisting the GNR to keep essential intersections clear and escorting tankers to affected areas.

An essential part of this team's work is also to provide aid and support to members of local communities affected by the wildfires. According to Miguel Pontes, Senior Ranger of the surveillance team: "In the Amoreira fire, where 106 ha burned, we had the opportunity to help a sheep producer, who we work with, to control the 400 heads that were grazing in an isolated area of the village and who ended up being surrounded by the flames. We have also helped some livestock owners and breeders to access and apply for compensation measures after the wildfires".

In addition, this team has also been responsible for providing training and coordinating a fire surveillance volunteer program throughout the summer. This volunteer program was carried





out in the rewilding area of Ermo das Águias, an area of high risk, and with a history of frequent wildfires. This program operated for 22 weeks and involved 16 volunteers during that period.

During these weeks, the closest fire to the area was the Cinco Vilas wildfire, which broke out during the night and in which 120 hectares burned. In this case, it is important to highlight the role of the volunteer Ricardo Vicente, who detected the fire at an early stage, allowing the Rewilding Portugal team to reach Ermo das Águias in time to assess the situation. This volunteer program will be held again in 2023, and registration for it should open in April 2023.

The surveillance team has also played an important role in surveying burned areas and in developing a fire emergency protocol for the rewilding areas managed by Rewilding Portugal,



to train the team for possible incidents and to have a deeper understanding of the territory and its current state.

A very close monitoring work of the territory and its constituents, which has proved to be extremely important in the defense of the landscape and its biodiversity, as well as the surrounding communities, and which will continue to be developed by Rewilding Portugal in the coming years.





# Interview with Paulo Paixão

## FENCAÇA technician

*COLLABORATION WITH ALL THE FORCES PRESENT IN THE TERRITORY IS ONE OF THE KEYS TO THE SUCCESS OF NATURE CONSERVATION INITIATIVES. THEREFORE, THE REWILDING APPROACH FAVORS THESE SYNERGIES, BELIEVING THAT THERE ARE CONSENSUSES THAT BENEFIT EVERYONE AND THAT CAN BRING LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS AND ENSURE THE ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION OF THE LANDSCAPE. IN AN INTERVIEW, A TECHNICIAN FROM FENCAÇA ADDRESSES THE ISSUE OF COEXISTENCE, GOOD HUNTING PRACTICES AND THE COLLABORATION WITH REWILDING PORTUGAL.*

**FENCAÇA is the Portuguese Hunting Federation. What are the main goals of the entity and what have been the main challenges in recent years?**

FENCAÇA was created in October 10th, 1992. This federation was created to fight for game management, but mainly for the defense of associativism to manage hunting areas, affirming itself positively, being the reflection of the work demonstrated by all the hunters of managed areas, against those who only defended anarchy and disorder. As we reached this great goal, we were creating new perspectives for the hunting sector and we were broadening our horizons, having now as an objective the improvement of the qualitative aspects of the management of hunting areas, habitat conservation, hunter's training and the promotion of sport activities related to hunting to relieve hunting pressure on wild species.

**What are your main functions at FENCAÇA?**

I am the technician for the central region of Portugal, responsible for monitoring our Associates. I develop all the planning and management projects for hunting and fishing in my region. I organize and participate in hunting events, such as hunting fairs or colloquiums. I am also responsible for the Saint Hubert's Championship, a sport modality. In the context of this sport, trials are held by hunters with hunting dogs, and these consist in evaluating the performance of the hunter and the hunting dog. Its main objectives in a framework of respect for nature and ecology are: to promote the hunter's sporting spirit and to train them in the correct practice of hunting, taking into account the legal and civic technical aspects.

**Rewilding Portugal has been working with hunters and hunting associations in the districts of**

**Guarda and Viseu since 2019. From your point of view, do you think this has been an asset for the region's hunting areas?**

All the work developed in favor of conservation and good practices with wildlife are welcome, within the framework of the actions recommended by the hunting areas' management entities. From my point of view, the fact that there is a good relationship between entities that have habitat conservation as their objective will always bring added value to both. I believe that the support that Rewilding Portugal can give with the specific and scientific knowledge of non-game species, can favor good management in the development of all fauna and in the balance of ecosystems.







**Poaching is a threat to wildlife in this region. What do you consider to be the role of FENÇAÇA and hunting managers to mitigate and reduce this threat in the territory?**

The form of poaching that happens most in our region, and that can bring some threat to wildlife in a more comprehensive way, is the use of snares, a non-selective method that captures all the animals that are trapped in it, from a wild boar, for which the snare is placed, to a wolf, a deer, a dog, etc. Internally in our organization we have given many warnings to Associations/Clubs so that they can denounce and reject the use of this type of traps.

**What is the greatest challenge at this moment in terms of coexistence with the Iberian wolf?**

From our point of view, coexistence between the hunter and the wolf is completely peaceful. The biggest obstacle to coexistence with the wolf is the damage caused to livestock, not to the game species. What often happens is that the damage caused to livestock is reflected in the community at large, and this rebellion can cause a desire to eliminate the potential cause of the damage. This stems from the delays in payment of the damages and the low amounts paid. Often hunters are blamed for eliminating the wolf, but there is no obvious or coherent reason for this.

**How can hunters with good practices contribute to nature conservation?**

Nature conservation is done daily by the management entities of hunting areas. With the decrease of agriculture and the increase of abandoned spaces, biodiversity tends to drastically decrease. The Associations/Clubs in their areas of intervention, annually perform improvements for the development and maintenance of the national fauna species, such as the placement of

feeding and drinking troughs in natural spaces, the debushing of areas that were formerly agricultural areas, and sowing conducted exclusively for the use of fauna species. In addition, there are also no-hunting refuge areas (of great number) created by the management entities, which maintain and enhance the diversity of fauna. Species are released, such as rabbits, partridges, roe deer, red deer, fallow deer, etc., with enormous financial and bureaucratic burdens. Finally, degraded areas are also recovered - by wildfires, quarries, gravel pits, etc. Hunters are among the most interested in ensuring that the balance between species exists and is strengthened. At this moment we can ask: how can someone else collaborate with the Associations / Clubs of hunters to do nature conservation?

**In the future, what would you like to see happen here in the region, in terms of coexistence between hunting and nature conservation and ecological restoration of the Greater Côa Valley?**

It would be very interesting to set up hunting touristic areas throughout the Greater Côa Valley. It would be a more specific form of planning, in which one could have closer control of habitats and species and their specific interconnections.

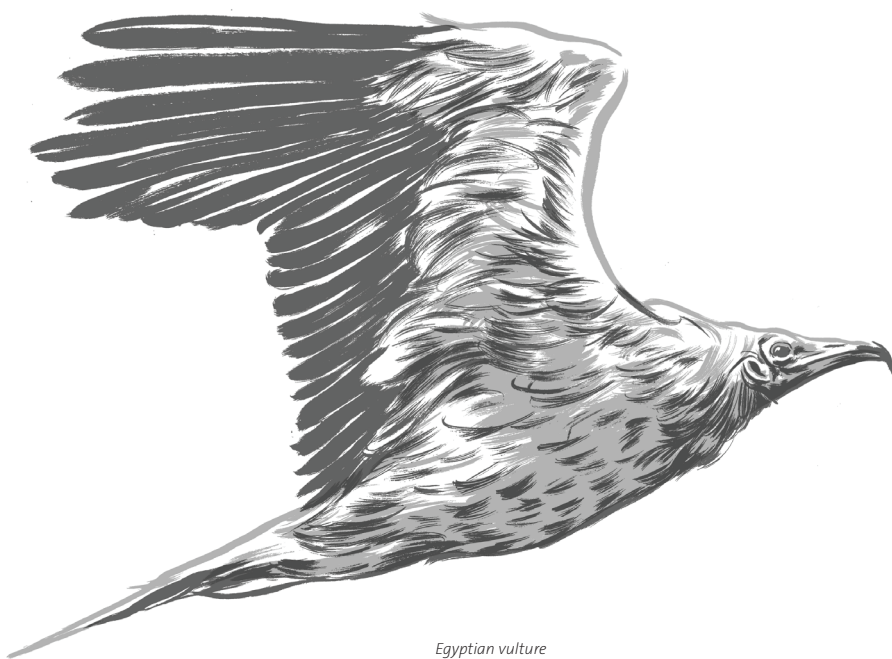
The constitution of these touristic hunting areas would bring specific management units, where the hunting act would be oriented towards the balance between the existing species populations, valuing a more controlled hunting specifically oriented towards trophies in the case of big game species.





# Ribeira do Mosteiro

Poiares, Freixo-de-Espada-à-Cinta



*Egyptian vulture*

Situated on the north bank of the River Douro, Ribeira do Mosteiro is one of the most emblematic places in the International Douro Natural Park, home to a formidable geological, biological and cultural heritage. In this rugged valley, it is possible to observe unique rock formations and walk along the famous Calçada de Alpajares, an ancient path that bears traces of human presence and coexistence with nature dating back to the Palaeolithic period.

After millennia of alterations to the ecosystem caused by human activity, a large part of the valley is currently undergoing rewilding, with ancient olive and almond groves being filled in with holm-oaks, junipers, hornbeams and other trees and shrubs that make up the region's original Mediterranean forest. The escarpments that border the landscape are nesting grounds for threatened birds such as the Egyptian vulture, the Peregrine Falcon, the Black wheatear and also the ever-present Griffon vulture. The dramatic cracks and folds in the schist are home to numerous colonies of bats and rupicolous vegetation. At the bottom of the valley, the Mosteiro stream and its tributaries combat the aridity of the slopes and provide a wealth of flora and several specimen trees.

In this area, the work of Rewilding Portugal focuses on ensuring and facilitating the process of rewilding of the landscape, reconciling the agricultural practices that still exist with biodiversity, and reducing the risk of major fires, one of the main threats to the biodiversity of the Ribeira do Mosteiro.





## Biodiversity in numbers

AT RIBEIRA DO MOSTEIRO, MONITORING OF VERTEBRATES, INSECTS, AND LARGE PLANTS HAS SO FAR BEEN CARRIED OUT.

### VERTEBRATE



129 species

- 8 fishes
- 7 amphibians
- 10 reptiles
- 90 birds
- 14 mammals

### INSECTS



246 species

- 68 butterflies and moths
- 48 beetles
- 43 bees, wasps and ants
- 14 cicadas and bedbugs

### PLANTS



49 species

- 33 trees and bushes

### THREATENED SPECIES OF VERTEBRATES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

9 species, namely the Black wheatear (*Oenanthe leucura*) and the Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

### THREATENED SPECIES OF VERTEBRATES AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

5 species, namely the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) and the Cobitis calderoni (*Cobitis calderoni*)

### IBERIAN ENDEMISMS

13 species, namely the Iberian midwife toad (*Alytes cisternassi*) and the Iberian grass snake (*Natrix astreptophora*)

### MAIN MANAGEMENT AND REWILDING ACTIONS

- » Monitoring and promotion of the rewilding process in 286 ha of land, including giving up 10 ha of unproductive agricultural area.
- » Conversion of 46 ha of productive agricultural land to organic farming.
- » Construction of 2 ponds and adaptation of 7 artificial waterways for safe use by wildlife.
- » Creation of a forest nursery with local native seeds to support reforestation actions.
- » Reforestation of 3.5 ha with 950 native trees and shrubs.
- » Selective deforestation and restoration of 5 ha of grassland.
- » Control of 1.5 ha of invasive vegetation.
- » Removal of waste in 6.3 ha.



# Monitoring of scavenger birds in the Greater Côa Valley

*REWILDING PORTUGAL HAS BEEN TRACKING THE POPULATIONS OF LARGE SCAVENGER BIRDS IN THE GREATER CÔA VALLEY AND ALSO IN THE SERRA DA MALCATA, EXCELLENT PLACES FOR THEIR NESTING. THIS HAS BEEN DONE THROUGH DIRECT OBSERVATION OF CLIFFS AND NESTS AND ALSO BY GPS TRACKING.*

The Greater Côa Valley is an excellent nesting site for griffon vultures and other cliff-nesting birds, not only because of the availability of nesting habitats (e.g., cliffs) in areas with little disturbance, but also because of the availability of food in Portugal and Spain. The largest populations of scavengers in the country are distributed between the Tagus and Douro International. The Greater Côa Valley therefore serves as an ecological corridor that connects these populations from south to north but also connects the breeding populations of Portugal and Spain along the border from west to east.

The same happens in Serra da Malcata with cinereous vultures, since with the growth of the colony present in Serra da Gata, the new pairs that form have to look for new territories, thus arriving on the Portuguese side, in Serra da Malcata. This protected area offers unique conditions for the nesting of this species, as it has many large trees in valleys with steep slopes and without human disturbance, areas of choice for the nesting of cinereous vultures.

GPS tracking of birds has helped Rewilding Portugal to understand the ecology of griffon vultures and cinereous vultures. It allows the team to learn about their use of protected areas and the Natura 2000 Network and to identify the most important areas for feeding, nesting, resting and watering.

This information is essential for the conservation of these species, namely in the protection of breeding colonies and in the increase of food availability, through the implementation and licensing of Private Areas for Feeding Scavenger Birds, where livestock corpses are available for vultures in livestock farms, instead of being buried or collected (provided for in PACAN – Action Plan for the conservation of scavenger birds, approved in August 2019).

GPS-tagging a juvenile cinereous vultures in Serra da Malcata allowed Rewilding Portugal to discover a new nest. Since the discovery of this nest, at the end of 2021, three other nests occu-

pied by breeding couples and many other natural platforms built by these animals have already been confirmed. Between 2021 and 2022, at least five cinereous vultures were born in Serra da Malcata. The real number should be even higher, since the monitoring effort at national level by the various responsible entities was not adjusted in that period to the large extension of the area.

These nests are just the beginning, says Pedro Ribeiro, a biologist at Rewilding Portugal. “In 2021, when I identified the first nests, I quickly realized that the regular number of couples and individuals present in Malcata pointed to a large and healthy colony. So far I’ve only been able to explore the core of this colony, where I’ve already found almost a dozen natural nests. Many others will be to be found in other areas of Malcata with equally regular presence of pairs of cinereous vulture”, he reveals.

Griffon Vultures have also been increasing in numbers and expanding their range much faster than cinereous vultures. In the southern zone







of the Côa SPA, Rewilding Portugal identified around 30 nests in various colonies, an increase of 67% since the last monitoring. This increase creates competition with other more solitary cliff-breeding species, such as the Golden Eagle and the Eurasian Eagle Owl. These species continue to maintain their territories but were forced to abandon their historic nests due to their occupation by vultures. The presence of couples in the territory indicates that they continue to reproduce, but in other nests that have not yet been identified.

The increase in griffon vultures goes beyond the Greater Côa Valley, as in Portugal, nationally and in the period from 1999 to 2018, populations increased by 325%, according to the last national census coordinated by SPEA and ICNF. This increase is also seen in Serra da Malcata, where in 2022, Rewilding Portugal confirmed another colony with seven occupied nests.

The increase in populations of large scavenger birds is excellent news, not only for the species themselves, but for the entire ecosystem, which becomes much more functional and with a more effective clean-up crew.





# Monitoring fungi in rewilding areas

FUNGI ARE POSSIBLY THE ORGANISMS WITH THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE FOR ECOSYSTEMS AND FOR OUR LIFE THAT WE KNOW THE LEAST ABOUT. THEY ARE THE MAIN DECOMPOSERS IN MOST TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, RECYCLING ORGANIC MATTER IN A WIDE VARIETY OF FORMS, FROM DEAD WOOD TO ANIMAL CARCASSES, AND ALLOWING NUTRIENT CYCLING TO CONTINUE. THEY CREATE SOIL AND FORM SYMBIOSES WITH OTHER ORGANISMS, MAINLY PLANTS, AND ALMOST INVISIBLY ALLOW HEALTHY FORESTS TO EXIST. AMONG VARIOUS OTHER ROLES, FUNGI HAVE ALSO BEEN AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF MEDICINE AND FOOD FOR HUMANS.

Like other regions of Europe, the Greater Côa Valley has a strong culture of mushroom collection and use, but this knowledge is focused on species with greater gastronomic value such as boletus (*Boletus spp.*), parasols (*Macrolepiota procera*) and “míscaros” (*Tricholoma spp.*), with other species going more or less unnoticed both in popular culture and in terms of scientific knowledge about areas of distribution and abundance.

Thanks to a happy coincidence, this year it was possible to do a first survey of fungi in our rewilding areas. João Silva and Ricardo Vicente came to the Greater Côa Valley to participate as volunteers in our fire surveillance program. However, after an extremely dry and hot summer, a rainy beginning of autumn followed, which eliminated the risk of fires in the landscape. Being the last volunteers of the season and arriving on a particularly wet week, we pondered what other ways João and Ricardo could help us during their stay at the Rewilding Center. Unexpectedly, we discovered João Silva’s great knowledge and experience in mycology, the science that studies fungi. So, it was decided that during the following weeks these volunteers would get to know the rewilding areas of Ermo das Águas, Vale Carapito

and Paul de Toirões, and document all the fungi species they could discover and identify.

João and Ricardo traveled through several habitats of the Greater Côa Valley, from oak woods and scrublands to riverside forests, meadows, and marshes. As a result, it was possible to confirm the presence of at least 104 species of fungi, most of them corresponding to fungi that produce fruiting bodies, the mushrooms, but also species that form lichens (consociation between a fungus and an algae) and coat the rocks and tree trunks of these places. Several of these observations correspond to uncommon species about which there is scarcely any information at the national level. The presence of *Protostropharia luteonitens* in Ermo das Águas, for example, is the first confirmed record in Portugal. This is a rare species, saprophytic (decomposing dead organic matter) and sometimes coprophytic (decomposing excrement), whose mushrooms can be observed in areas with woody debris and pastures. Another interesting record, this one in Vale Carapito, was that of *Deconica montana*, a species of cold zones that appears associated with mossy surfaces, having been previously observed in our country only in regions further north or with higher altitude.

Several specimens found are still awaiting identification by microscopy of the spores, which will be done soon, as well as the scientific publication of these data, but it is apparent that there is still much to discover about the mycological diversity of the Greater Côa Valley.







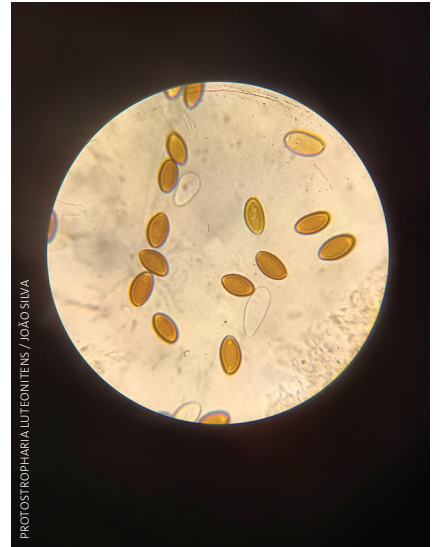
PROTOSTROPHARIA LUTEONITENS / JOAO SILVA



PROTOSTROPHARIA LUTEONITENS / JOAO SILVA



ANTONIO COELHO



PROTOSTROPHARIA LUTEONITENS / JOAO SILVA



ISABELLE CHALANTON



MIGUEL VEIGA



HUGO AMADOR



CLAUDIA PAULO



JOAO LELO



PROTOSTROPHARIA LUTEONITENS / JOAO SILVA



PEDRO LEMOS



# Interview with Marco Ferraz



*FOR THOSE WHO COME TO DISCOVER THE GREATER CÔA VALLEY AND OUR REWILDING PROJECTS, THERE IS NO BETTER GATEWAY THAN A TRUE “JOURNEY INTO THE PAST” THROUGH THE ROCK ENGRAVINGS THAT THE PALAEO-LITHIC LEFT US. MARCO FERRAZ IS THE BEST HOST FOR THIS JOURNEY. EXPERIENCED GUIDE IN THESE AMBIEDUCA ADVENTURES AND MEMBER OF THE WILD CÔA NETWORK, AND HE ALSO MANAGES CASAS DE VILLAR FOR ACCOMMODATION.*

**Tell us more about your two tourism projects in the Greater Côa Valley, Ambieduca and Casas de Villar.**

AMBIEDUCA is a touristic entertainment brand whose main goal is to create pleasurable activities in contact with Nature and Heritage. One of the areas in which it operates is within the Côa Valley Archaeological Park, World Heritage by UNESCO since 1998, where it is an authorized operator to visit the three nuclei of rock art that are open to the public. The night visit to the Penascosa nucleus is undoubtedly one of the high points of the visit to the Park, a real journey back to the time of the hunter-gatherers of the Côa Valley, where we can see in loco wild horses, mountain goats, deer, aurochs, among other animals carved in the rock. Another area of activity is nature tourism within the Special Protection Area of the Côa Valley and the International Douro Natural Park. The interpretative walks or safaris in all-terrain vehicles allow

birdwatching, searching for tracks and traces of other animals and understanding nature, creating affective bonds that lead the public to better understand the conservation and ecological restoration actions that are being implemented. As for the “CASAS DE VILLAR” located in the village of Vilar de Amargo, in Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, they are village houses with a lot of charm, ideal to enjoy unique moments in an authentic rural village of the Douro Superior and where you can listen to the silence in communion with the music of the birds and the flocks that cross the village and give the perfect tone for an unforgettable stay! They are located at the southwest entrance of the International Douro Natural Park and the Upper Douro Wine Region, only 15 minutes away from the Côa Valley Archaeological Park (UNESCO site) and the Greater Côa Valley. Casas de Villar” are the ideal starting point for those who want to discover and feel the immense natural, archaeological, cultural and gastronomic heritage of the region.



**You came to live in this region and ended up settling here and starting your own individual activity here after other professional projects. What made you fall in love with this region and this territory?**

I used to live in Porto and actually what made me come to this area was my wife's origins in Vila Nova de Foz Côa. I wanted a refuge in the countryside, away from the noise of the city and so I looked for a ruin to rehabilitate in a picturesque village in the region to give my son the contact with his origins, with the earth and with nature. I found it in Vilar de Amargo, a picturesque shepherds' village that belongs to Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo and is strategically located between the Greater Côa Valley, the Archaeological Park of the Côa Valley and the International Douro Natural Park. Indeed, it was love at first sight: the landscape, the wild nature, the people, the cultural heritage...

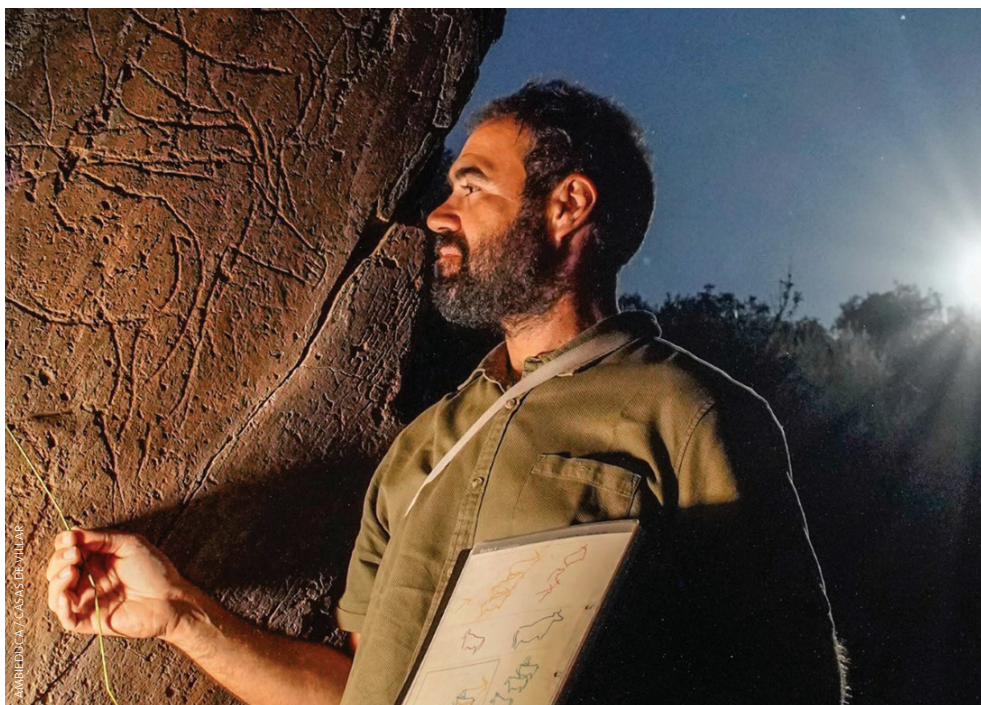
**How do you look at the growing collaboration you have been developing with Rewilding Portugal and the many visits you have made this year with us?**

It is undoubtedly very positive to have Rewilding Portugal as a strategic partner, because it has contributed to the dissemination of my projects, but also with the request of services directly or indirectly, recommending my services, and this was translated into increased sales. No doubt this is an important way to support, because in this way we are generating value in the territory and contributing to a new economy, with people and projects that respect the rewilding principles and are committed to the promotion and dissemination of these principles. In addition, Rewilding Portugal has supported my training as a "Nature Guide and Host", which will culminate in January 2023 with participation in level 3 of the Rewilding Europe Tourism Training program in the Central Apennines, Italy, thus contributing to improving my skills.

**Excited to start giving guided tours in rewilding areas like Ermo das Águas? What are your plans for them? What can you already reveal to the readers?**

In fact and after visiting the area, I will be launching in 2023 the "On the Wild Horse Trail" Guided Walk in the rewilding area of Ermo das Águas. A beautiful walk that will give visitors the chance to enjoy an interpretative walk, that is, one that allows them to connect with the natural environment, understand what is being done to make the area even wilder and that culminates with the possible observation of beautiful specimens of Sorraia Horses in freedom, direct

descendants of the wild horses that were eternalized by our ancestors 25 thousand years ago in the Côa engravings and that are coming back to the Côa Valley, contributing positively to the biodiversity and bio abundance in the Greater Côa Valley. Undoubtedly an experience you won't want to miss in 2023!







# Paul de Toirões

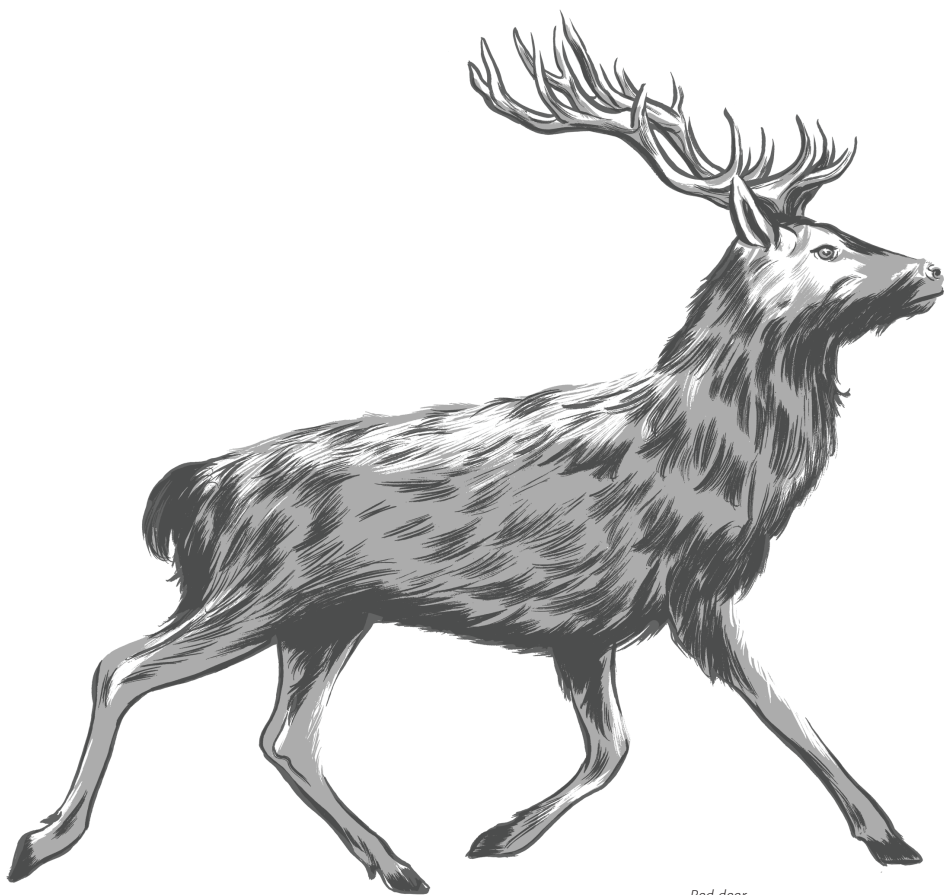
## Malhada Sorda, Almeida

Previously known as Quinta de Santa Margarida, the most recent area to be managed by Rewilding Portugal also received a new name, Paul de Toirões, which illustrates the future envisioned for this land on the eastern edge of the

Côa Valley, close to the Spanish border.

The mining activity, which ceased almost a decade ago, gave rise to one of the largest areas of water in the entire Greater Côa Valley, and unlike what happens in dams and reservoirs in the region, this water is distributed in a wide variety of environments such as canals, permanent and temporary ponds, interconnected by seasonally flooded wetlands and full of aquatic and riparian vegetation growing on the old tungsten and aggregate extraction areas. Around all this water, a young but extensive forest occupies the flat land, composed mainly of black oak, holm oak and cypress. This area is already of high biodiversity importance, with rich communities of aquatic flora and fauna, including the beautiful European pond turtle, and the black stork which regularly feeds and takes refuge here.

Some of the first management measures planned for Paul de Toirões are earth movements in the most recent mining areas, smoothing some slopes, facilitating access and reducing the risk for wildlife, and increasing the flooded area, and also the diversification of the forest with native species. In a future conditioned by climate change, the Paul de Toirões may act as an oasis for wildlife in Greater Côa Valley, ensuring the permanence and return of many species essential to the ecosystem, and demonstrating how rewilding can be a viable solution even in the most human-altered landscapes.



Red deer





AGATARJUN

## Biodiversity in numbers

OVER THE COURSE OF THIS LAST YEAR IT HAS BEEN POSSIBLE TO CARRY OUT SOME PRELIMINARY SAMPLING OF ANIMAL AND PLANT BIODIVERSITY IN OUR MOST RECENT REWILDING AREA. IN ADDITION, THE FIRST FUNGI SURVEY WAS ALSO CARRIED OUT. OVER THE NEXT YEAR THE FIRST SYSTEMATIC SURVEY OF VERTEBRATE FAUNA WILL BE CARRIED OUT, AS WELL AS SEVERAL OTHER STUDIES.

### VERTEBRATE

133 species

- 1 fish
- 4 amphibians
- 3 reptiles
- 115 birds
- 10 mammals

### PLANTS

12 species

- 12 trees and bushes

### FUNGI

40 species

### THREATENED SPECIES OF VERTEBRATES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

7 species, namely the Black stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and the European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*)

### THREATENED SPECIES OF VERTEBRATES AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

11 species, namely the Southwestern water vole (*Arvicola sapidus*) and the Pelobates cultripes (*Pelobates cultripes*)

### IBERIAN ENDEMISMS

2 species, namely the Granada hare (*Lepus granatensis*) and the Bosca's newt (*Lissotriton boscai*)



BLACK STORK (*CICONIA NIGRA*)  
BLUE NOMADS / REWILDING EUROPE



EUROPEAN POND TURTLE (*EMYS ORBICULARIS*)  
ANDRÉ GOÛTO



RED DEER (*CERVUS ELAPHUS*)  
CANVA / IMAGEM DE DOMÍNIO PÚBLICO

### MAIN MANAGEMENT AND REWILDING ACTIONS

- » Planning and preparatory actions for the ecological restoration of water bodies created during mining activity.
- » Environmental DNA analysis to survey aquatic biodiversity.
- » Start of work to soften the banks and to increase the flooded area.





ANDONI CANELA

# Transboundary meeting on Iberian wolf monitoring

*REWILDING PORTUGAL HAS BEEN WORKING FOR SEVERAL YEARS ON THE CONSERVATION OF THE IBERIAN WOLF SOUTH OF THE DOURO RIVER. IN JUNE 2022, A TRANSBOUNDARY ROUND TABLE WAS HELD IN GUARDA, FOCUSED ON MONITORING EFFORTS OF THIS THREATENED SPECIES, WHICH BROUGHT TOGETHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO DETERMINE HOW COLLABORATION CAN BE INCREASED AND ENHANCED FOR THE STUDY OF THE STATUS AND POPULATION TREND OF THIS SPECIES.*

The Iberian wolf is a threatened species in Portugal, whose subpopulation south of the Douro River is highly fragmented and has a small number of individuals. Monitoring the species is therefore crucial to learn about population trends and define priority conservation areas for the species. However, the low densities at which the Iberian wolf occurs in many areas south of the Douro Rivers, make monitoring more challenging.

The connectivity between the Portuguese and Spanish Iberian wolf packs south of the Douro River is very limited, which compromises the long-term viability of the Portuguese packs, making sharing information and collaboration in monitoring the species between the two coun-

tries even more important.

The round table was a working session organized by Rewilding Portugal with public and private entities responsible for, or involved, in monitoring the wolf in the border area south of the Douro River, which resulted in practical conclusions on monitoring the Iberian wolf, particularly in areas of low density and expansion of the species. The event was attended by interested Portuguese and Spanish entities, namely national/regional authorities, universities, and other relevant organizations. Among the entities present were the ICNF, Junta de Castilla y León, and Junta de Extremadura, as well as other entities such as Grupo Lobo, University of Aveiro, CIBIO, and the Doñana Biological Station, among others.





After presentations by various entities involved in the monitoring of the Iberian wolf and several sessions of discussion and sharing of ideas, the participants reached a set of conclusions about the role of genetic analysis in the monitoring of the Iberian wolf, standardized minimum criteria for monitoring in areas of low population density in the Iberian Peninsula, and sharing of information between groups and administrations.

Among the conclusions of the round table, the use of detection dogs was pointed out as a good methodology in low density areas, which can be used to monitor several species. Additionally, genetic analysis of scats was considered one of the best tools available to confirm the presence of wolves in these areas. Genetic analysis makes it possible to avoid population overestimates and avoids human error, since the error rate in identifying scats can reach 40-50% in low-density areas.

Rewilding Portugal has been collecting genetic samples from the corpses of domestic animals potentially preyed by wolves, through a partnership with the ICNF. These samples offer useful information to assess dubious attacks in Portugal. This approach was considered a good practice that could be replicated in other areas and that also provides information on wolf presence and distribution.

Taking into account that there is no platform where the currently existing Iberian wolf genotypes are all gathered and available, it was suggested that the creation of a platform at the Iberian level could be an asset, and could result from an agreement between laboratories, promoted and supported by the relevant national authorities.



Another relevant conclusion of the event was the importance of cooperation between Spain and Portugal in the conservation of the Iberian wolf. One of the main problems identified with the sharing of information at an Iberian level is the lack of continuity in the initiatives that are created. One of the options proposed to deal with this problem was the creation of a technical group at the Iberian level. It is important to have a secretariat that ensures the logistical part of this type of working group. The creation of this working group will be developed in future meetings of this group.

The aim of this and future meetings is to create regular spaces for transboundary dialogue about the Iberian wolf. While the 2022 round table focused on monitoring the species, in 2023 a round table will be organized with the theme of implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of damage preventive measures and promoting coexistence with the Iberian wolf.

The round table was part of the LIFE WolFlux project, whose goal is to guarantee the long-term viability of the Iberian wolf subpopulation south of the Douro River, working on the different threats to reduce ecological and social barriers to the presence of the species in the region. The project's lines of action include promoting a positive coexistence with the species and reducing the impact on livestock, increasing the availability of wild prey, and developing strategies for valuing local products.







# Habitat restoration of burnt areas in Iberian wolf territory

*REWILDING PORTUGAL CARRIED OUT HABITAT RESTORATION ACTIONS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE TOURO PARISH COUNCIL AND THE VILA NOVA DE PAIVA HUNTING AND FISHING CLUB IN 16 HECTARES OF COMMON LAND AFFECTED BY WILDFIRES TO PROMOTE THE REGENERATION OF NATIVE FOREST AND THE PRESENCE OF WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE FOR THE BENEFIT OF WILDLIFE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.*

In almost a decade, between 2009 and 2018, 25% of the distribution area of the Iberian wolf south of the Douro River, which comprises the districts of Guarda, Viseu and the Arada and Freita Mountains in Aveiro, was affected by wildfires. Wildfires destroy breeding and refuge habitat for wild species and when they occur over large areas, they cause the death or displacement of animals. In poorer areas or those where wildfires are more recurrent or intense, the seed bank is affected, greatly reducing the diversity of spe-

cies found in an area and conditioning the development of native forest. The landscape becomes frozen in a stage dominated by continuous brush that is highly flammable, creating a vicious circle of vulnerability to fire.

In these situations, ecological restoration can help bring back missing species and restore landscape diversity and the services that nature provides to the local communities that depend on it. With this goal, Rewilding Portugal completed in early 2023 ecological restoration actions in



collaboration with the Touro Parish Council and the Vila Nova de Paiva Hunting and Fishing Club in 16 hectares of common land affected by recurrent wildfires in 2008, 2009, 2010 and particularly in 2012, which depleted the seed bank and promoted the homogeneous growth of scrub, increasing the risk of fire and reducing the landscape's ability to retain water.

The restored area is part of the territory of an Iberian wolf pack and to where roe deer, one of the wolf's most important prey, is gradually returning. The area is also inhabited by other species such as European rabbit, wild boar, and partridge, and has nesting potential for species such as the Eagle owl or the Golden eagle. For the local population, this area is important for recreational activities, hunting, livestock farming and for popular culture.

The interventions carried out include 16 hectares cleared to promote the regeneration of natural grasslands and planting biodiverse woodlands of no more than 5 hectares, composed of 10 different species of native trees and shrubs, to promote the establishment of native forest that was failing to regenerate. Native fruit-bearing species that serve as food for birds and mammals were preferred, such as Pyrenean oak, strawberry tree, chestnut, holm oak, cork oak, wild cherry, birch, hawthorn, sloe, and hornbeam. By feeding on the fruits, the fauna will help disperse the seeds and help expand the forest. A mix of Mediterranean and Atlantic species was chosen, adaptable to the Mediterranean climate with oceanic influence of the region, and also some species from more arid zones, preparing the landscape for an increasingly dry and hot scenario due to climate change.

Five ponds were also created to increase water retention in the landscape and the permanent presence of water for the benefit of wildlife and people, particularly in the drier periods.

The restoration activities are part of the LIFE WolFlux project, which aims to ensure the long-term viability of the Iberian wolf subpopulation south of the Douro River by working on the different threats to reduce the ecological and social barriers to the presence of the species in the region. The project's lines of action include promoting positive coexistence with the species and reducing the impact on livestock, increasing the availability of wild prey and developing strategies to enhance the value of local products.





# A year of growth for the Wild Côa Network

2022 WAS A YEAR OF GROWTH FOR THE WILD CÔA NETWORK, WITH AN EVER CLOSER CONNECTION BETWEEN REWILDING PORTUGAL AND THE NETWORK MEMBERS, AS WELL AS BETWEEN THE MEMBERS THEMSELVES, INCREASINGLY UNITED IN SYNERGIES AND JOINT OFFERS. IN TOTAL THERE ARE NOW 38 MEMBERS IN THIS ENLARGED NETWORK, WHICH SEEKS TO OFFER LOCAL AND NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR TOURISTS VISITING THE GREATER CÔA VALLEY, THE WILDEST SIDE OF PORTUGAL. THIS YEAR WAS ALSO MARKED BY SEVERAL REGIONAL PRODUCERS JOINING THIS NETWORK, BRINGING LOCAL AND SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS TO OUR OFFER, PRODUCTS THAT CAN NOW BE PURCHASED IN THE REWILDING PORTUGAL E-SHOP. IN THIS SAME STORE, GIFT VOUCHERS FOR VERY SPECIAL NATURE TOURISM EXPERIENCES WILL APPEAR THROUGHOUT 2023. MEET ALL OUR MEMBERS:

## ACCOMMODATIONS



## VISITATION/TOURISTIC OPERATORS



## RESTAURANTS AND REGIONAL PRODUCTS







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# Interview with Chef Miguel Veiga

*CHEF MIGUEL VEIGA IS ONE OF REWILDING PORTUGAL'S OLDEST PARTNERS, HAVING ALREADY PROVIDED CATERING SERVICES IN SEVERAL OF OUR EVENTS AND BEING PART OF THIS BIG FAMILY. RECENTLY, HE ALSO BECAME A MEMBER OF THE WILD CÔA NETWORK TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN THIS CONNECTION AND INCREASE SYNERGIES WITH OTHER MEMBERS.*

**Tell us about your catering project, as well as the various products that you currently have available for sale to the public as part of your activity.**

Well, my project "Chef Chez Toi" started in 2008, when I started making my own seitan, which was called "Seitan666" and sold it in packages of about 666gr. Meanwhile, at the same time, we started having dinner parties with friends, where I almost always cooked, and it was after visiting New York, where I went to see a vegetarian cooking school, that I got the bug to become a professional in this area of cooking. With the crisis at that time, the price of the course increased, which made me choose to return to London, where I had lived before, and work in vegetarian restaurants to learn the trade at a more professional level. I returned to Portugal in the summer of 2010, and in 2011 I enrolled in a one-year cooking course at the Escola Superior de Turismo e Hotelaria, to certify the knowledge that I had brought from abroad. The project officially came about then and gained momentum as time went by. Now I serve meals at our Quinta das Vinte Quelhas, in Aldeia Viçosa, in Vale do Mondego, and I also cook at the homes of people who request it. I also have a weekly takeaway ser-

vice, with a pack of five meals that can be frozen and used later, and that can be taken to work, for example. I have also created several unique products in recent years: the seven veganBurgers; a totally vegan ramen broth, fermented pâtés, homemade granola, and I also produce several vegetables on the farm, as I think food should always be made according to seasonality. All these products are available by order. I also give workshops, do catering and weddings, and also field trips around wild mushrooms, an ingredient I love and always try to learn more about.

**You have done numerous external catering services for Rewilding Portugal, including major events. How do you see this growing collaboration?**

I have been doing more and more events for Rewilding Portugal and it is something that makes me happy, first because it is an organization with which I identify a lot... I love nature and I think that Portugal is far from having a balanced biodiversity, we lack a lot of fauna, especially large herbivores that can help in the "cleaning" of the vegetation. Therefore, I look at this collaboration with good eyes and much happiness because I keep track of the various activities and initiatives that are being made and I am extremely happy to be able to have a small role in this great gear, leaving people with full bellies and smiles on their faces with what I am serving them. I think that a connection with the endogenous products of our area and the area where Rewilding works, and someone who prepares or presents them in a meal, is an added value for both the region, which is being known "across the border", as well as for the local economy, because those who come from abroad spread the word, and can generate more and more interest







in getting to know this region of the Interior.

**Meanwhile, you have joined the Wild Côa Network, both with catering and food products. How do you see the added value that this network can bring to your business?**

I think this network will benefit me as well as other members, since it is a way to make known what is done here, whether in terms of endogenous products or services. There is no better advertising than word of mouth, and if someone likes what they take away from here, they will certainly tell other people about it, thus creating a certain curiosity in others, which may result in more people wanting to experience those same experiences, bringing them here and consuming the good things that are produced here.

**You have developed many of your services using the facilities of the Rewilding Center. Do you consider this space an asset to the region and why?**

No doubt the Vale de Madeira Rewilding Center is an asset to the region, because besides being close to areas managed by Rewilding Portugal and the beautiful river beach on the river Côa right next door, it is in a village characteristic of the region and with an aging population, something common throughout the Interior of Portugal. Besides, it has an excellent geographical location! It is right next to Pinhel, the Falcon town with its Medieval castle, a good wine growing area, good local craftsmen, and the land of the famous Cavacas. And it is close to several historical and special places in the region too: Trancoso, Moreira do Rei, Mêda, Marialva, Longroiva, Almeida, Guarda... It is also very close to the Douro and the mouth of the Côa river, with its mythical cave paintings site, which is without a doubt a magical place too. And it is also near the Serra da Estrela Natural Park. I really think

that the Vale de Madeira Rewilding Center is an excellent place to use as a “base of operations” for tourists to stay and explore this region of ours. With the development of this space, small businesses can also develop in the surrounding region, which can be a reversal of the trend that only an aging population lives in these villages, because a regional economy is created again, now based on nature. Just see that: the local shepherd now has a livestock guarding dog integrated by Rewilding Portugal; that there are young people from the region who now belong to the organization’s surveillance team, having a fundamental role in fire prevention; the owner of the old village café providing me vegetables from her garden to serve... Rewilding creates life, in a village with very few people, with nature tourism being a diamond in the rough in this region.





# Interview with Ana Varela

*NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED ACTRESS, ANA VARELA IN THE GREATER COA VALLEY LAST YEAR WITH HER COLLEAGUE AND ACTRESS SARA PRATA, TO GET TO KNOW THE REGION AND THE WORK OF REWILDING PORTUGAL. SHE IMMEDIATELY FELL IN LOVE WITH WHAT SHE SAW, AND THIS HAS BEEN A BOND THAT HAS GROWN CLOSER, WITH A VERY IMPORTANT NEW CHAPTER THIS YEAR: ANA WILL BE THE VOICE-OVER FOR THE NEW DOCUMENTARY WE ARE PRODUCING.*

**How did you get to know Rewilding Portugal and what made you become interested in the organization and its work?**

I first came across Rewilding Portugal at “Circular 2021”, a Reboot project based on four pillars (Materials, Energy, Nature and Transport) and Pedro Prata, Director of Rewilding Portugal, presented this project of nature preservation and I was very interested in this new concept (I confess it was the first time I heard about it) of ecosystem rewilding. We exchanged contacts and the curiosity to get to know this project more closely persisted, and if there is one thing I enjoy, it is getting to know projects from the inside, the work on the ground and seeing the impacts and transformations they bring about. And this is what happened and what I experienced later when I visited the project on the ground.

**In the meantime, you had the opportunity to get to know “in loco” the Greater Cõa Valley and the work that Rewilding Portugal has been developing in recent years. How was the experience? What excited you the most?**

First, the whole idea of going on an adventure and getting to know the work of the organization. I went with Sara Prata (my colleague, friend, and sister), full of a desire to discover and learn. And second, because we did it almost as tourists, we went in a “show us what is happening here

and the work you are doing” mode. It was very interesting because we witnessed the release of the Sorraia horses in a semi-wild state and realized the role that these large herbivores have in rewilding these spaces - but it was not only the beauty of that moment and the surroundings, it was also very beautiful to watch the whole social involvement of the local community and the Rewilding team in this project. And that was what stayed with me the most, the union that is being achieved with the great goal of preserving the landscapes of that region. This union is very beautiful, and this was exactly what excited me the most. Man, when he wants to, can unite to produce positive changes in ecosystems, in this case in the Greater Cõa Valley.

**You also had the opportunity to cross paths and enjoy the services and products of several partners of the Wild Cõa Network. What do you think about this tourism project around rewilding? Do you think that this type of differentiated tourist offers, based on the preservation of natural heritage, have a place in the current panorama?**

I find the synergy that is being achieved very interesting. Small brands, when they want to launch themselves in the market, face great difficulties penetrating markets, great competition, unfair competition against more muscular companies... I think that linking this tourism more connected to nature, based on a value chain that has the mission to preserve and not only the pure obtaining of income, that takes advantage of it but preserves it, makes a lot of sense. For instance, the synergy between producers and Rewilding Portugal, like Matreira and Flor Alta, from which I was able to try several products. They are local products, a showcase of what is made in the region and nowadays when you want to know a specific city, you want to know and taste what is made there and in what way. The fact that Rewilding is bringing all these partners together will make them stronger and more united. A synergy that I think, when the tourist gets it, is very beautiful and has a lot of power. It has all the place in the current landscape, it should be supported.





Without this network maybe these local producers would not have as much visibility as they have now. Products and, of course, services.

**As a recognized figure in the world of television/cinema, as well as a digital influencer, especially in sustainability and the environment, what do you think is the importance that this kind of role has in helping nature conservation projects? How do you see yourself in this mission of making these projects and organizations known? How did this passion of yours for natural heritage and this cause come about?**

I think that if there is any impact I can have, it is to amplify the projects I talk about, and because of this I am always very careful about which projects I choose to amplify. That is why it makes as much sense to know the projects I talk about from the inside as it does to know the work of Rewilding, so that when I amplify it and share it with my community, I can be sure that it is worthy of that amplification. What I wish the most is that my role could give, and I am sure it does, fruits and results so that this noble work and these synergies that are so important for the environmental and social regeneration of these regions can happen. The fact that I was born in the countryside and am the granddaughter of farmers and people linked to agricultural production, who worked directly with the land, the soil, the wind, the rain... helped a lot in the sense that I know how important it is to preserve nature to also be able to enjoy it, something that I think in this society is a little forgotten. We forget that to be sustained by nature we must take care of it, and a lot comes from that, from my past connected to the land, and from seeing this current panorama in which I see that the focus is not on preserving what sustains us, and that this is not right. We have to be very grateful to this planet that sustains us and this gratitude has to be manifested by respect and care, we have to go back there: to respect the cycles of life, the cycles of nature and realize that our species can only continue if we re-enter this recognition of the great power of nature and how much we need it.

**In the meantime, you were invited to be the voice-off for Rewilding Portugal's new documentary, currently being produced and which will be aired between the end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024. Was it an immediate yes? Are you excited about this new experience?**

It was an immediate yes! The fact that I already know Rewilding and have been on the ground with you, "in your house", with the people you work directly with, your team, your partners, seeing the results on the ground of rewilding, makes me wear the Rewilding Portugal t-shirt completely and when you invited me to be the voice



of the new documentary it was a privilege and of course yes, I want to be a part of it! First because of this connection we have and then because while I am narrating, I am sure I will learn a thousand more things because of your work and your experience on the ground. I see this not only as a privilege, but another opportunity to learn more things. I am always available to learn and know what is happening. I will be proud to use my voice to pass on the message about what Rewilding Portugal has been doing these past years and what is being achieved, I am proud!

**What inspires you most in this approach to rewilding?**

I see more and more and with great regret this disconnection of human beings with the cycles of nature. Nowadays, to talk about this is even kind of hippie, when in reality it is our DNA, our basis, our genesis. We all live in concrete boxes in overcrowded, ugly, closed cities, and most of our children do not even know where the vegetables or fruits come from, what we eat... And it saddens me. This rewilding approach wants to give nature back the time and space to regenerate itself, recognizing the wisdom of nature itself. And that is what fascinates me the most. If we give nature space right now, and we have had examples of this even during the pandemic when we removed the human element from certain spaces and environments, it can regenerate itself, not least because its power is immense. This rewilding approach is based on that respect for nature and its space and time to heal itself. It believes in the mastery of nature, and I also believe very much in the same. This approach, this knowledge, makes perfect sense to me, and that is why it inspires me, and that is why it makes a lot of sense for me to be with you.







# Art returns to the wild in the Greater Côa Valley with the festival CÔA – Corridor of Arts

*THE CÔA – CORRIDOR OF ARTS FESTIVAL ARRIVES IN THE GREATER CÔA VALLEY IN JULY 2023, PASSING THROUGH FIVE MUNICIPALITIES AND TAKING ART AND NATURE TO THE ENTIRE REGION IN A SYMBIOSIS NEVER SEEN BEFORE. A FESTIVAL THAT SEEKS TO CONNECT ARTISTS WITH COMMUNITIES IN A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, TO CO-CREATE WORKS OF ART THAT WILL INTEGRATE THE LANDSCAPE ITSELF. THIS IN ADDITION TO A STRONG AND DIVERSE CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM.*

This festival will have a mobile format, taking place in five different sections of the Greater Côa Valley (Sabugal, Almeida, Figueira Castelo Rodrigo, Pinhel and Vila Nova de Foz Côa), following the Côa River itself from its source to its mouth, on five consecutive weekends throughout the month of July, and with programming throughout the week. There will be six international and established artists who will be in artistic residency in the region this year, creating pieces of art in the landscape that can only use natural materials, pieces whose natural decay will be

respected, integrating naturally in the evolution of the landscape.

The festival concentrates a very diverse artistic program, both in modalities and styles, together with the various municipalities that will be part of the festival, in these five weekends, but also having a strong scientific and visitation component, where rewilding will be clearly highlighted, and will accompany the weekly programming. There will be thirty days of activities, without breaks and a strong touristic attraction for the entire region, showing that nature tou-





rism and with a strong component of rewilding is an option for the present and the future of this region that is becoming the wilder side of Portugal.

On these weekends, the event will take place in a central place in each of the municipalities, in the open air, and will feature cinema, theatre, music, dance and many other scenic arts, in addition to small fairs where producers and local operators will have the opportunity to showcase their products and services to visitors, as well as food and drink spaces to provide all amenities to visitors. The festival will also have a specific program dedicated to the youngest, in a dedicated children's space full of animation.

Throughout the week, the program will feature workshops and activities in nature, science, and recreation, as well as visits and walks to art pieces developed by the artists who carried out the artistic residencies. These will include field trips related to astronomy, biology and geology with specialists in these areas, visits to rewilding areas and many other activities inserted in the spirit and concept of this festival.

The CÔA – Corridor of Arts is therefore a route that becomes a true open-air museum of art integrated in the landscape and which will blend naturally with it. It is intended that the development of these works creates a special connection between the artists and the surrounding communities, making them part of the creative process. A route to be visited and traversed at a slow pace, respecting the slow rhythms of nature itself.





# Meet the six artists who will carry out residencies in the Greater Côa Valley

*THIS FESTIVAL IS BASED ON THE IDEA OF CREATING A TRUE OPEN-AIR MUSEUM, TO CONTINUE THE EXPRESSION OF ART IN THE LANDSCAPE AND THE REPRESENTATION OF THIS LANDSCAPE THROUGH ART, AT THE INTERSECTION OF TWO INSEPARABLE WORLDS. THERE WILL BE SIX ARTISTIC RESIDENCIES ALONG THE GREATER CÔA VALLEY.*

There were more than 300 applications to participate in these residencies, and a long and very demanding selection process was necessary to reach the six winners, chosen by a panel of four curators: Pedro Prata (Rewilding Portugal), Sérgio Novo (ASTA), Nantje Wilke (KIT – Kunst

im Tunnel) and Pedro Russo (Leiden University). And the selected artists? Gaspard Combes (Switzerland), Michèle Trotta (France), Antony Lyons (United Kingdom), Rumen Dimitrov (Bulgaria), Marcelo Moscheta (Brazil, living in Portugal) and elparo (France).

## GASPARD COMBES

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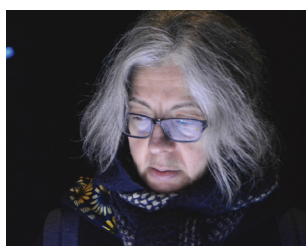


Gaspard Combes will develop his piece in the Ermo das Águias rewilding area. He has divided his life between Switzerland and France and is a visual artist trained at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam, having also done worked in Jerusalem. He has done several artistic residencies around the world, including France, Swit-

zerland, Holland, and the United Kingdom. His last works were in Quebec (Canada) and Dar Es Salaam (Tanzania). An artist who likes, in large-scale works, to question the current human who is disconnected from the natural world and put into perspective the fleetingness of our existence.

## MICHÈLE TROTTA

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Michèle Trotta will have her piece in the vicinity of the Côa Museum. Born in France, Michèle has clear influences from Arte Povera in her artistic expression, favoring the process over the finished object. True paradoxes that travel between the natural and the unnatural, reflecting ambiguous relationships between gravity

and lightness, empty and full, real, and virtual. She privileges the time her works take to execute as an element that is part of the process, transforming the work into the result of a meeting between her inner universe and the territory in which she operates and in which she relates with the inhabitants, with the history, practices and surrounding nature.

## ANTONY LYONS

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Antony Lyons will develop his piece in the Faia Brava Reserve. Born in Ireland, Antony lives in the UK and is an ecological artist, who is mainly dedicated to site-specific installations like the one he will develop here, as well as video/audio and photography work. An artist who works a lot with the community and involves it throughout

the entire process. His creative practice unites art with science, and he already has vast experience working in this region, having also been responsible for developing the Wild Côa Symphony project - an artistic residency organized by the Endangered Landscapes Program in the Greater Côa Valley.





LUIS AGOSTINHO

## RUMEN DIMITROV



Rumen Dimitrov will develop his art piece in the center of Sabugal, next to the banks of the Côa River. A Bulgarian artist, Rumen is a sculptor and enjoys working on large outdoor sculptures, particularly enjoying working with wood in its

purest state. An artist with a lot of experience in landscape art and who spends most of the year working abroad, having already traveled the whole world doing what he loves most. His last project was in South Korea. He has his own NGO promoting landscape art, Duppini.

## MARCELO MOSCHETA



Marcelo Moscheta will have his piece installed in the rewilding area of Vale Carapito, in Vilar Maior. He was born in Brazil, but currently lives in Coimbra, where he is completing his PhD in Contemporary Art. An artist for 22 years, his process consists of collecting elements and images

on the ground, reproducing them through drawings and photographs and thus creating objects and artistic installations. In recent years, Marcelo has won several awards and carried out works all over the world, with his recognition preceding him.

## ELPARO



Elparo will have his piece installed in the old Termas da Fonte Santa, in Almeida. A self-taught artist, who grew up between the suburbs and the countryside of Paris. He started by exploring pictorial art early on, dedicating himself now completely to works of art adapted specifically

to each location. Much of his work involves creating large pieces of art from branches and trunks, having immense experience in international projects, and having already been to Portugal in 2019 to develop a piece at the Bienal of Vila Nova de Famalicão.



# 2nd Edition of the Rewilding Photo Contest

*IN 2022, REWILDING PORTUGAL AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF SABUGAL TEAMED UP TO CARRY OUT THE SECOND EDITION OF THE NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST “REWILDING PHOTO CONTEST”, AN EDITION THAT BROUGHT MANY NEW FEATURES, NEW PRIZES, AND MORE CONTESTANTS. COMUNIDADE CULTURA E ARTE WAS ONCE AGAIN THE COMMUNICATION PARTNER OF THIS PHOTO CONTEST.*

The Nature Photography Contest “Rewilding Photo Contest”, has as its main goal to promote the Portuguese natural heritage and its respective enhancement and protection, through nature photography as a means to make the community aware of the magnificent ecosystems and respective species of fauna and flora that we have in our country. In the year 2022, the contest was divided into four different categories: Fauna; Flora and Fungi; Landscapes with natural habitats, and the Greater Côa Valley (in this category photographs on any nature theme could compete, as long as they were taken in the region).

The jury of the contest was composed of one element of Rewilding Portugal, one element of the Municipality of Sabugal, one element of

Comunidade Cultura e Arte, and João Cosme, a recognized nature photographer who has won several awards. The number of prizes increased and became more attractive, to encourage greater participation in the event. Three photographs in each of the four categories were awarded, and there were also honorable mentions to be attributed by the jury.

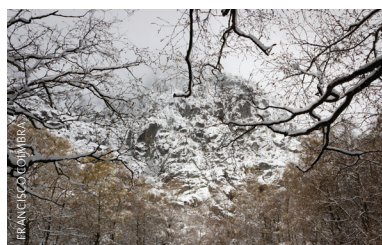
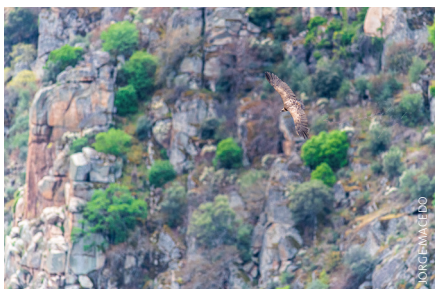
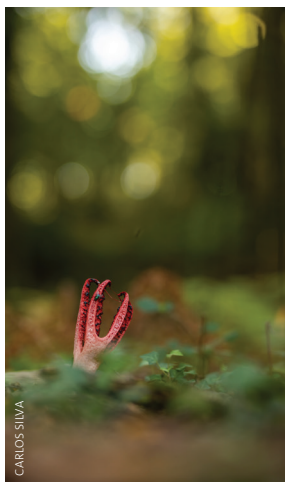
As for the winners, in the Fauna category, the first place was given to Norberto Esteves, the second to Daniel Santos and the third to Brais Palmás. In Flora and Fungi, the winner was Guilherme Limas, followed by Pedro Esteves and Carlos Silva. In Natural Landscapes, the winner was Margarida Marreiros, followed by Pedro Silva and Francisco Coimbra, the latter the only repeat winner from last year’s awards. Finally, in the Greater Côa Valley category, first place went to Jorge Macedo, second to Agnes Sobon, and third to José Amaral. The jury also decided to award four honorable mentions to photographs that, although not having won a prize, were considered worthy of recognition for their quality by the jury, and were also highlighted at the award ceremony, to: João Lelo, Hugo Amador, Jorge Costa and Diogo Nazaré.

The award ceremony took place in October and was held in partnership with the Municipality of Sabugal, in the auditorium of the Sabugal Museum. There was then a lunch-party in Vilar Maior, at Casa Villar Mayor (member of the Wild Côa Network) and a guided tour to the rewilding area of Vale Carapito, by the Rewilding Portugal team.

The contest returns in 2023 for a new edition, which promises even more news and surprises, aiming to cement itself in the national photographic panorama.





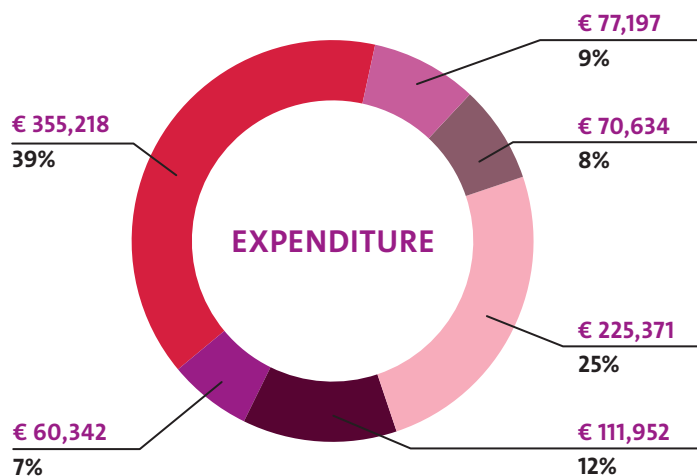
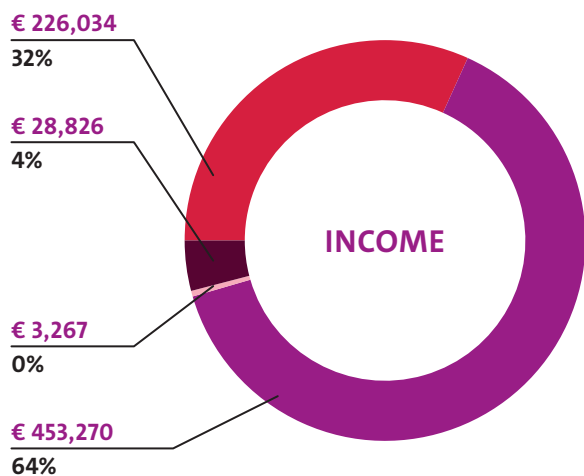






BLUE NOMADS / REWILDING EUROPE

# Financials 2022



- ELP - Scaling up Rewilding in GCV
- Other Income
- Donations from trusts & Foundations
- Sales & Stock in hand

- Staff Costs
- Travel & Transport
- Equipment & Infrastructure
- Other Conservation Activities
- Consumables & Overheads
- Land Purchase



# Partnerships

## FUNDING



## COLABORATORS

### Strategic Partner



### Project Partners



### Others



## MEDIA PARTNERS



## PATRONS

GONÇALO PEREIRA; AHREN JEFFRIES; SIMÃO COSTA; BRUNO BARBOSA; SANDRA BATISTA; FILIPE COSTA; ALEXANDER VON HILDEBRAND; OLGA DUCHEVA; JOON YU; SALVADOR VASSALO; TERESA RAMOS; ADRIANA ALMEIDA; ENTANGLED OTHERS STUDIO; RITA AHLBORN; LUÍS CARDOSO; JOAQUIM FREITAS; DAVID SCHUBACH; MIGUEL ESTIMA; MÁRIO BARREIRA; DAVID NEVES; SUE MAGEE; CRISTINA MONTEIRO; CÉSAR CARPINTEIRO; FRANCISCO GOMEZ; TIAGO ALVES; CARLA COSTA; RITA LEAL; ANA VARELA; FRANZISKA KAUFMANN; ADRIANA ALBUQUERQUE; MÁRCIA AUGUSTO; JULIE HODGSON; RUI GUERRA; LUÍS RAMOS; DUARTE VALE; JADWIGA RUCHLEWSKA; MARIA KOWALSKI; NÁDIA CABRAL; LUÍS AFONSO; ANDREI KURBYKO; ANDRÉ VAN ECK; CATARINA PALMA; CARL SPURLING; PAUL JOSEFSSON; STEPHEN MOSS; JIL COELHO; FÁBIO PAULOS; ÂNGELA GONÇALVES; TIAGO CAXIAS; PEDRO VIANA; JORGE COSTA; DAVID SHAICH; JOÃO AMORIM; HECTOR; JEAN JOSEPH HENRY; ALAN SCHUT; ALEXANDER HUSUM; MIGUEL VELLOSO; VASCO COTOVIO; MÁRCIA CARVALHO; M&M; CAMILA FIGUEIREDO; ANDRÉ CAMPOS.





# Supporting Rewilding Portugal's work

There are many ways to support Rewilding Portugal's work. Visiting the Greater Côa Valley and our rewilding areas through the members of the Wild Côa Network is a great way to contribute directly to the conservation efforts in the region, since a small percentage of the costs of those offers revert back to the organization.

In addition, enjoying the products and services of this network is a positive and practical way to support nature-based enterprises in the region, that support rewilding efforts.

With the opening of the Rewilding Center as a local accommodation, if you need a place to stay in the region, choose to book your stay with us in this new space, which will also help finance our work. You can also visit the rewilding area of Ermo das Águias, which is very close by.

Also, for the enterprises interested in developing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) models, there are many options, such as:

- Funding the acquisition of land dedicated to nature conservation;
- Acquiring carbon credits and/or rewilding credits (still in development);
- Bring your employees to participate in one of our Nature Positive Rewilding Weeks/Weekends, which include team building activities tailored to your company's needs.
- Check out our e-shop where you can find local products and some merchandising.
- Supporting the strategic growth of rewilding in Portugal.

Finally, Rewilding Portugal is on Patreon and it is possible to help the organization with a small monthly contribution, gaining access to exclusive content about the work of the organization. The subscription can be cancelled at any time. You can subscribe to Rewilding Portugal's Patreon by accessing this link:

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