



Protection of Cultural Landscapes Extremadura and Mallorca

Annual Report 2011/2012

Extremadura

The Extremadura, located in the southwest of Spain, is home to many rare animal and plant species. The Dehesas, which are areas covered with holm and cork oak trees, could be saved by the continuation of traditional grazing practices. Once the old Spanish livestock species like the white Cacareña Cows or the black Iberian pigs are no longer raised, the Dehesas will disappear also. Not just livestock but also many wild animal species benefit from this natural form of management. Eurasian Black Vultures, Imperial Eagles, owls, lynx and genet, as well as White and Black Storks still live in large numbers in the Extremadura. Thousands of cranes find ideal hibernating conditions there every year. This natural wealth must be protected.

Environmental Education

La Dehesa Environmental Education Centre

The Fundación Global Nature (FGN) is one of the founding members of the Living Lakes network. It has taken care of environmental and nature conservation issues in the Extremadura for many years. The *La Dehesa* Environmental Education Centre is located in the Monfragüe national park in Torrejón el Rubio (Cáceres). The centre has 60 beds and an environmental exhibit. Here tourists, hiking groups and volunteers benefit from inexpensive accommodations. In 2011, 660 overnight stays were counted, 13 visitor's groups were received and 6 excursions through the Monfragüe national park were offered. Volunteers were again incorporated into the work of the Fundación during the course of 2011. One of FGN's central goals is to provide a broad spectrum of environmental education programmes for the region. In 2011, FGN cooperated with the local council of Cáceres in preparing for celebrations of the biosphere reserve. The Fundación also worked closely with the Riberos del Tajo community to prepare an area celebration under the banner of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. As a result of this event, a report was put together with suggestions for future events and many participants were informed about the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

Actions and Campaigns

"The garden - a place for lifelong learning"

The EU Grundtvig project "Education for Sustainable Development in the Gardens" is financed from the funds of the EU Education Initiative and focuses on experience and knowledge transfer between different European institutions. Six European partners from Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, and the Netherlands cooperate in this project. Each of the organisations is already active in the adult environmental education sphere. All partners have considerable experience and possess diverse environmental education concepts. The aim of the project is to identify ways in which adults can help shape their personal environment in environmentally, economically and socially viable ways. The first Grundtvig meeting took place in the *La Dehesa* Environmental Education Centre in 2010. In 2011, three further meetings took place, which two FGN experts and one intern took part in. As a result of these meetings, a newsletter and a video on the design of environmental education in gardens were presented.

Extremadura

A Griffon Vulture is visiting the Environment Centre La Dehesa.



Action Plan for the Monfragüe Biosphere Reserve

In the first half of 2011, the Fundación participated in the development of a management plan for the Monfragüe biosphere reserve. FGN moderated the working group, which was made up of 15 institutions and 23 individuals. It also organised a forum during which participants dealt with the transfer of analysis results and the proposals drawn up in the action plan. The Fundación has long stressed the need to prepare an action plan for Monfragüe. The action plan is now finally becoming binding thanks to the Law for Natural Heritage and Biodiversity and the Montseny (the Spanish network for biosphere reserves) action plan. Moreover, FGN is actively working with an expert group on the registration of Monfragüe in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

Promoting Environmental Tourism in Paraguay

The Fundación is also transferring its experiences to other countries. In 2011, a project started that should provide impulses for the continuation of previous sustainable tourism development initiatives in the biosphere reserve in Paraguay. New tourist activities were developed as part of the project such as the “water falls of Ypejhú”, “living pharmacy”, “the route of Mate”, and “the raft museum”. Sustainable tourism trainings for the hotel industry are also being advanced. A tourism offer is planned in collaboration with the indigenous Aché de Arroyo Bandera community that will incorporate the protection and conservation Aché people knowledge. In 2011, more than 400 people took part in the programme to protect the Atlantic forest. An expansion of the project measures is planned for 2012. The project is financed by the Agency for International Cooperation of the Extremadura. The Fundación Moisés Bertoni from Paraguay is also a project partner.

Nature and Species Protection

The valuable habitats in the Extremadura must be monitored and taken care of. The FGN and many active volunteers take care of this. The 7,300-hectare large Talaván reserve is the most important project area. The reserve is an official bird sanctuary and borders to other reserves with widespread holm oak Dehesas, grazing lands, ponds and steppes. Wild rabbits provide an important source of food for the birds of prey in Monfragüe. The activities started in the Serradilla area in 2010, and were continued during 2011. Grains were planted on almost four hectares of fallow land and 30 manmade rabbit burrows (“majanos”) were erected. In addition, 15 artificial embankments with scrub and rock piles were created to provide refuges for the rabbits. 110 wild rabbits were then released at the end of 2011. In this way the connection of different areas to create a high-density distribution of the animals is ensured.

Nature Conservation on Private Land

In the Extremadura, the “Private Protectorates Network” is a key initiative for ecologically responsible use of private land. The idea that nature conservation is not just the responsibility of the state but can also be done in the private sphere is ground-breaking and more and more landowners are joining the network. The Fundación acts as consultant and supervisor for the landowners. This ensures site specific planting as well as appropriate protection and management measures. Currently, 29 privately owned areas totalling a collective 6,900 hectares are involved in the project. Many of these are within bird sanctuaries (SPAs) and SCI areas (areas of communal importance according to the FFH guidelines).

In cooperation with the Fundación Biodiversidad a monitoring process for environmental assessment and improvement of the network was implemented in Natura 2000 areas. To make this possible, detailed analyses and mappings of 27 service agreements in the region were done. Based on the results of the study, the relevant environmental information for each landholding will now be analysed. This information includes, for instance, threatened habitats or species, agricultural and environmental characteristics, and the efficiency of restoration and conservation measures. Suggestions are being developed regarding how best to disseminate the results at the national level. Given the importance of landowner participation and the value of such “territory guardianship”, a meeting was held with landowners at the Finca El Baldío in January 2011. Over 70 people including landowners and interest group representatives took part in the meeting. The meeting made a detailed presentation of the project and the intensive exchange of experiences possible.



Protecting Wetlands

The maintenance of existing and the creation of new wetlands in the Dehesas is one of the Fundación’s most important tasks. Through this biological corridors and areas of exceptional biodiversity are created. Therefore wetlands are even being restored on private property. Improvements were made to existing wetlands by constructing embankments and planting vegetation.

Environmentally Sustainable Farming

The Fundación’s private fincas, which help to maintain diverse habitats, are operated as model farms for organic farming. Both the old livestock species and wild animals benefit from the use of traditional farming methods. The black Iberian pigs, which are reared in the Dehesas and live on a diet of acorns, are becoming more rare. The oak trees that provide the acorns for the pigs are no longer maintained because of this. Because the traditional use of the cork oaks for wine bottles is also declining, many trees are left uncared for and become damaged in the long-term. Sheep and goat grazing give the Dehesas an open, park-like character from which wild animals also benefit. If this grazing were to decline or end completely, the Dehesas would become overgrown and become uninhabitable for many species. This is why the Fundación uses traditional farming methods on its fincas. This is not possible with financial support however, because this method of farming is time and labour intensive. By establishing a network of private protected areas, the development towards faster and cheaper agricultural production can be balanced somewhat. FGN does a lot of persuading and organised the third meeting with land owners in the Extremadura. Over 40 persons took part and exchanged their views on issues in conservation and environmental protection. A programme for the protection of indigenous livestock species is being conducted in the El Baldío finca in the Talaván community. There are currently 28 white Cacareña cows and 26 black Merino sheep at the finca. A worker was hired to take care of the daily management of the grazing land of the Dehesas, which includes tree care and planting holm and cork oaks. Because of their immense ecological value, the maintenance of the pasture ponds is another important part of the job. In addition, nesting boxes, platforms for storks and artificial rabbit warrens are built on the grounds of the finca. A major success was the brooding of a rare Booted Eagle pair on the estate, which resulted in two the birth and rearing of two young.

Mallorca

Mallorca remains the most visited vacation island in the Mediterranean. After years of small improvements the interplay of tourism and nature conservation is becoming increasingly difficult. The economic and euro crises are hitting Spain hard and the effects are becoming increasingly obvious on the Balearic Island. The unemployment rate is currently above 25 % on Mallorca. The environmental organisation GOB (Grup Balear D'Ornitologia I Defensa de la Naturalesa) has also been hit by the crisis. In 2011 some of the programmes had to be shut down and some workers were let go. Especially now the work of the conservationists is particularly important because more and more beaches are threatened by development and more golf courses are being planned.

Environmental Education

La Trapa Environmental Education Centre

GOB has been the Living Lakes partner organisation on Mallorca for years. La Trapa, a former monastery ruin is where the GOB built up a renowned environmental and information centre. Thanks to a donation, needed renovation work on the old buildings and roofs began in 2011. GOB ended its agreement with the island's government, the "Consell de Mallorca", because the government provided almost no support. In Mallorca there is money to build streets but almost none for the renovation of cultural sites or the promotion of less harmful tourism.

In 2011 olive trees were planted on La Trapa, the wild goat population that hinders the reforestation of the Tramuntana mountains were culled and measures were taken against forest fires. The success of the ecological management of the finca is reflected in the appearance of Black Vultures and common ravens, which are seen more and more often. In addition to the thousands of tourists, 4,200 school children visited the finca to take part in the environmental education programmes it offers. The *L'Ecologista* (member's magazine) and *Es Busqueret* (Ornithology) are now digital and can be read on the GOB's homepage. Countless volunteers supported the GOB in its work, whether it was campaigning to protect nature, in the ornithological area or with work on the La Trapa finca. The GOB's children and youth group also welcomes new members.



Actions and Campaigns

Fighting Against the Sale of the Island

The GOB works to protect Mallorca and the Balearic Islands' natural habitats by taking legal action against illegal building, corruption and speculation. Without the GOB, Mallorca's and the Balearic Islands' beauty would already be far more diminished. In the "Andratx" corruption scandal, additional prison sentences and orders to demolish illegally built houses were handed out. Thanks to the former government, Mallorca received the prized UNESCO World Heritage status for the Sierra Tramuntana in 2011. This mountain range on Mallorca's west coast is in large part still wild and untouched. The few villages fit into the barren and unspoiled landscape. The GOB's La Trapa finca, which was constructed from an old monastery, is located in this region. The GOB wants to ensure that the UNESCO title is taken seriously and not misused as a marketing ploy for tourists. Mallorca is in danger of losing its title because the new government wants to approve the building of a settlement near the Lluc monastery. If this building project, directly next to the most religiously significant place on the island, is realised, it is likely that UNESCO will withdraw Mallorca's status. GOB is counting on the support of the tourism industry because it profits from the world heritage title. There can be no more gigantic building projects in the Sierra Tramuntana.

We're Saving Mallorca

Using this motto, the GOB has mobilised people to work against ridiculous and damaging building projects for years. On April 26, 2012 a demonstration with a human chain was organised on the Sa Ràpita beach to protest against the construction of a luxury hotel. Although the organisers projected that 1,500 would attend, over 10,000 people took part in the demonstration. Because of the enormous resonance of the demonstration, the GNF released an international press release. In May 2011 regional elections took place on the Balearic Islands. The conservative people's party PP - in part because of high voter abstention - won with a large majority. Instead of striving towards a sustainable economic model, the government is continuing the same policy that led to the Spanish economic crisis: trying to make quick money through a building boom and house sales. New, innovative projects like the accelerated expansion of solar energy are almost completely missing. The new government also stopped the expansion of the railway between Manacor and Arta. This is making traffic problems on Mallorca even worse.

Nature and Species Protection

Nature and species protection on Mallorca is not becoming easier. The GOB believes there is a great risk that the nature zones on the beautiful Es Trenc beach will be destroyed. Although there is a reserve directly next to the beach, the entire area does not have park rangers or ecological management.

Bird Protection Projects

The Red Kite is still endangered even though 19 pairs (15 in the previous year) bred in 2011. Sadly, poisoned birds were found again. The good news is that the relocation of the Red Kite to the de Llevant natural park is making progress. There the danger of poisoning is lower and one pair has already successfully bred. The designation of hunting reserves or "Refugios de Fauna" is also making progress. In 2011, more than 150 hectares were added where it is now illegal to hunt. The sentencing of a finca owner serves as a warning to all who put out poisoned bait. Three poisoned Red Kites were found on this person's property. The finca owner had to pay a hefty fine and is banned from hunting for three years. The GOB is worried about the monitoring of the bird population because the state is not providing funds for this even though it is their responsibility. Tagging birds on Dragonera Island had to be stopped.

Protecting the Wetlands

The proposed golf course at Son Bosc was thankfully prevented and the Son Bosc wetlands are once again part of the Albufera wetlands thanks to the "Ramsar Convention for the Protection of Wetlands". At the moment GOB's most important project is to save the famous "Sa Ràpita/Es Trenc" beach. A luxury hotel with 1,200 beds and a golf course is supposed to be built near the beach. This would have far-reaching consequences for the beach and the dunes as well as for the "Salobrar de Campos" wetlands, which are part of the Living Lakes network and form a nature reserve with the Es Trenc dunes. GOB began its first campaign to hinder the development of Es Trenc in 1978. Obviously with success or today one of the most famous and beautiful natural beaches of Mallorca would look like the Playa de Palma. Using a legal trick, the building permit for the hotel was approved for the Finca Son Duri, which is also where the rare spur-thighed tortoise (*Testudo hermani*) lives. GOB is taking legal action against this. According to the GOB's former speaker, Miquel Angel March, this is only the beginning of the plans to build on this site. Currently, rules are being relaxed in order to make it easier to build on agricultural land. This would be a catastrophe for Majorcan agriculture and would promote land speculation.



Only 400 millimetres of rain fall in the Campos region near Es Trenc, making this a steppe-like or semi-arid area. The Sa Ràpita community already has great difficulties supplying adequate amounts of drinking water. The addition of a golf course and new buildings could lead to the dramatic decline of ground water levels and spoil the coastal areas further. Even a small golf course spanning only 20 to 30 hectares uses the same amount of water needed for a 4,000-person village every year. The "Salobrar de Campos" wetlands will suffer from this immense water use. To survive in the tourism industry, an alternative would be to renovate existing hotels in the tourist zones or tear down buildings and build new ones in their place. A plan to renovate the Playa de Palma has not moved forward and yet a new luxury hotel is planned by Canyamel in northern Mallorca, which would also partially lie in a protected area. The GOB is legally challenging this project and the planned expansion of the natural Porto Colom harbour.

Protecting Marine Mammals

Due to a lack of funds, GOB was not able to do many new things to protect the marine mammals around the Balearic Islands. Fortunately, there exists the National Marine Park of Cabrera, which remains one of the best managed marine preserves in the Mediterranean. Here Balearic and Cory's Shearwaters as well as fin whales and multiple dolphin species can be sighted. GOB wants to stop the development of beaches in Spain and Greece but it currently lacks the funds to do so. A new project aims to enable research on the negative effects of obstructions and overuse of beaches in natural areas. Such documents are extremely important for the protection of coastal areas. Not only marine mammals like the monk seal but also sea turtles such as the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta Caretta*) rely on protected beaches to spawn and raise their young.

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