

## **OC26 - LIFE Charcos: Temporary ponds conservation in the Southwest Coast of Portugal**

Alcazar, R.<sup>a</sup>, Lagartinho, A.<sup>a</sup>, Baião, C.<sup>a</sup>, Gomes, E.<sup>a</sup>, Pinto-Cruz, C.<sup>b</sup>, Marques, J.T.<sup>b</sup>, Meireles, C.<sup>b</sup>, Belo, A.<sup>b</sup>, Sá Sousa, P.<sup>b</sup>, Mira, A.<sup>b</sup>, Cristo, M.<sup>c,e</sup>, Machado, M.<sup>e</sup>, Monteiro, J.P.<sup>c,f</sup>, Moreira da Silva, M.<sup>c,g</sup>, Salvador, N.<sup>c,f</sup>, and Lúcio, C.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>LPN – Liga para a Protecção da Natureza, Centro de Educação Ambiental do Vale Gonçálio (CEAVG), Castro Verde, Portugal

<sup>b</sup>Universidade de Évora, Núcleo da Mitra, Évora, Portugal

<sup>c</sup>Universidade do Algarve, Campus de Gambelas, Faro, Portugal

<sup>d</sup>ABM – Associação de Beneficiários do Mira, Odemira, Portugal

<sup>e</sup>CCMAR - Centre of Marine Sciences, Campus de Gambelas, Faro, Portugal

<sup>f</sup>CTA - Centre for Water Sciences and Technologies, University of the Algarve, Faro, Portugal

<sup>g</sup>CIMA - Centre for Marine and Environmental Research, Campus de Gambelas, Faro, Portugal

Mediterranean Temporary Ponds (MTP), are classified as priority habitat (3170\*) for conservation by the Habitats Directive. LIFE Charcos project is ongoing since July 2013 until December 2017, in the coastal plain of southwest Portugal, classified under the European Natura 2000 Network as Site of Community Importance (SCI Costa Sudoeste). This area hosts a large number of MTP, as a consequence of climatic and edaphic characteristic. In the last two-decade, modern industrialized agriculture and tourism are causing a steep decline of this habitat in this area. Traditionally seen as non-productive areas, MTP are nowadays subjected to strong anthropogenic pressures, such as deep soil turning, accelerated drainage, flattening the surface topography or transformation into permanent reservoirs for irrigation. Therefore, it is urgent to act in order to halt this decrease trend and assure their long-term protection. Thus, the main aim of LIFE Charcos project (LIFE12/NAT/PT/000997) is to enhance the MTP conservation status in SW Portugal. Until now 115 MTP were identified with different conservation status: favourable (23), unfavourable-inadequate (42), unfavourable-bad (46) and 4 not yet evaluated. This habitat is mainly distributed in the Municipality of Odemira (82) and the Municipality of Vila do Bispo (30).

Since MTP are privately owned, agreements with landowners were settled to pursue the demonstration of best practices on MTP restoration.

In order to restore the natural conditions of the degraded MTP some restoration and rehabilitation actions were executed: in 4 areas grazing management tests were applied, in 9 ponds topography was restored, in 6 MTP invasive vegetation was controlled or removed, in 3 areas measures were implemented to increase pond connectivity. Furthermore a MTP seed bank was created to be part in seed bank collections over the world and for restoration purposes and also was implemented a Nature Custody network for the MTP as well as public presentations to increase of public awareness.

All actions implemented by the LIFE Charcos Project have major conservation importance and will ensure long-term maintenance of these priority habitats.