

OC28 - Conservation of *Anaocypris hispanica* (Saramugo) in the Guadiana Basin (Portugal) - Project LIFE Saramugo

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Saramugo, *Anaocypris hispanica*, is a freshwater fish endemic of the south of the Iberian Peninsula, known to occur only in the middle and lower sections of the Guadiana river basin and in tributary of the Guadalquivir river. In Portugal it occurs essentially on temporary rivers tributary of the Guadiana river. The reduction in the distribution area and the population decline of this species, which took place from the 1970s onwards, is still happening today, with a very significant reduction in terms of abundance and distribution taking place, especially in the upper and central region of the Guadiana river basin in the Portuguese territory. Currently, in Portugal its presence is only detected in 5 sub-basins of the Guadiana river.

Intrinsically dependent on the freshwater conservation status and adapted to survive in the small ponds of river that maintain water during the summer period, *Anaocypris hispanica* is classified as Endangered at a global scale and as Critically Endangered in Portugal. At the European Union level, it is a species of community interest and is included in Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive.

This species prefers temporary rivers with moderate currents, in narrow (< 20 m) and shallow (< 60 cm) watercourses with coarse substrate (e.g. gravel, rocks) and aquatic vegetation (immersed and along the river margins).

The LIFE Saramugo Project (LIFE13 NAT/PT/000786) aims to conserve Saramugo populations in 3 sub-basins of the Guadiana river (Xévorá, Ardila and Vascão) located in 3 different Sites of Community Importance (SCI) of the European Natura 2000 Network (namely Guadiana, Moura/Barrancos and São Mamede). In order to ensure the survival of this species, the main objectives of the project are: 1) Update the species' population status in the Portuguese Guadiana River basin; 2) Rehabilitate aquatic and riparian habitats to provide shelter, feeding and reproduction habitats; 3) Clarify the potential impact of the co-existence with bleaks (*Alburnus alburnus*) in *Anaocypris hispanica* populations; 4) Reduce pollution in water bodies derived from livestock in order to improve water quality; 5) Demonstrate techniques for removal and control of the expansion of exotic species in order to reduce the impact of this threat; 6) Contribute to the long-term conservation of *Anaocypris hispanica* through the involvement of landowners, farmers, fishermen and other stakeholders; 7) Promote and raise awareness for the Saramugo conservation with different target audiences, namely schools, landowners, fishermen, amongst others.