

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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WHO WE ARE

Faia Brava – Nature Conservation Association is an environmental non-governmental organisation (ENGO) that has been operating in the valleys of the Côa, Águeda and Douro rivers since 2000. We were pioneers in securing recognition for the Faia Brava Reserve as Portugal's first Private Protected Area. We create spaces for nature, and our main mission is nature conservation and ecological restoration in support of sustainable development.



GOVERNING BODIES

MANAGEMENT

Henk Smit
PRESIDENT

Ana Berliner
VICE-PRESIDENT

Nuno de Santos Loureiro
TREASURER

Ana Cristina Perpétuo
SECRETARY

José Vieira Branco
MEMBER

José Esperança
MEMBER

Carlos Sanchez
MEMBER

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Sandra Monique Beato Pereira
PRESIDENT

Marco Ferraz
MEMBER

António Monteiro
MEMBER

SUPERVISORY BOARD

João Carvalho
PRESIDENT

Rita Cristóvão
MEMBER

Jorge Proença
MEMBER

OUR VISION

The valleys of the Côa, Águeda and Douro rivers benefit from sustainable management policies that ensure the protection of biodiversity and enhance the maintenance of traditional landscapes that are resilient to climate change.

OUR MISSION

Identify and promote sustainable, scientifically-based territorial management models that warrant nature conservation and social progress

“ *Creating spaces for Nature* ”

OUR VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

RIGOUR
ADAPTABILITY
PERSEVERANCE

Faia Brava's main values are respect for life, the environment and gender equality. We are meticulous and diligent, we fight hard for our goals and accept challenges with optimism. We are committed to youth and innovation, with a sense of opportunity and the ability to adapt to changing contexts. We respect the values and traditions that favour the conservation of biodiversity and assume our mission towards society in a responsible manner. We value the traditional and technical-scientific knowledge available to support our decisions and thus achieve positive and lasting impacts.





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear friends of Faia Brava,

On June 6 of last year, we celebrated the 25 th anniversary of Faia Brava, an important milestone for our association. During the ceremony we were very honoured with the presence and contributions of so many friends, supporting our mission “Creating spaces for nature”.

We commemorated the creation of the association, and in particular two driving forces and supporters of the first moments: Lucas Hoffman and Jesus Garzon. Carlos Condesso, the mayor of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, honoured us with his presence and the inauguration of a memorial plaque installed at the miradouro located in the biologist trail.

To give you an idea of some of this year's accomplishments let me highlight the plantation of more than 6.000 local trees and bushes and some 24.000 acorns were sowed to keep increasing our forest cover. We have installed 16 new artificial nest platforms for cinereous vulture and black stork and a new herd of horses is now installed in the North of Faia Brava to help us maintaining the natural combustible biomass under control. We received many guests, reinforced relationships with the villages and the municipality, started an ambitious project to create a Faia Brava education centre in Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo. With the invaluable support of the ICNF, Civil Protection and the Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo fire brigade, it was possible to open a new firebreak on the northern edge of Faia Brava using controlled burning techniques.

All this was possible thanks to the support of all our partners of which I would particularly like to highlight the Municipality of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo and our neighbouring parishes “freguesias”, Trees for All, the VIRIDIA and Belmiro de Azevedo

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Foundations, LIFE and Interreg EU funding programmes, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, the universities of the Algarve and Aveiro, Natura Ibérica, Palombar, Naturaleza y Hombre, The Social Capital Foundation, Eternal Forest and CBD Habitat.

Despite all good things and successes, we were also confronted with the forces of nature. Fires did not enter Faia Brava but devastated most of two smaller reserves, including parts of the vulture rehabilitation centre located in the Douro International Park. A long period of drought had considerable impacts on biodiversity and our olive harvest but we don't give up and here we are for another year of activities.

We keep very motivated to continue fighting for nature, in Faia Brava, Fornos and our lands along the river Agueda and to keep contributing to establish a national network of Private Protected Areas in Portugal and lobby for further official support to manage it since they provide a public service.

On April 4 2026, the new governing bodies of Faia Brava will be elected by you as our members. Faia Brava will have new board of directors "Conselho Diretivo", a new Audit Committee "Concelho Fiscal" and the General Assembly Board "Mesa da Assembleia Geral". I will step down as president of the "Conselho Diretivo" as is normal in a democracy.

It has been a great honour to serve nature in this position for 6 years, and I wish to thank you very much for the confidence and all the good moments. I will keep supporting Faia Brava as a neighbour land owner and I am available to join a new list of candidates to the governing bodies in a different position and therefore keep serving you.

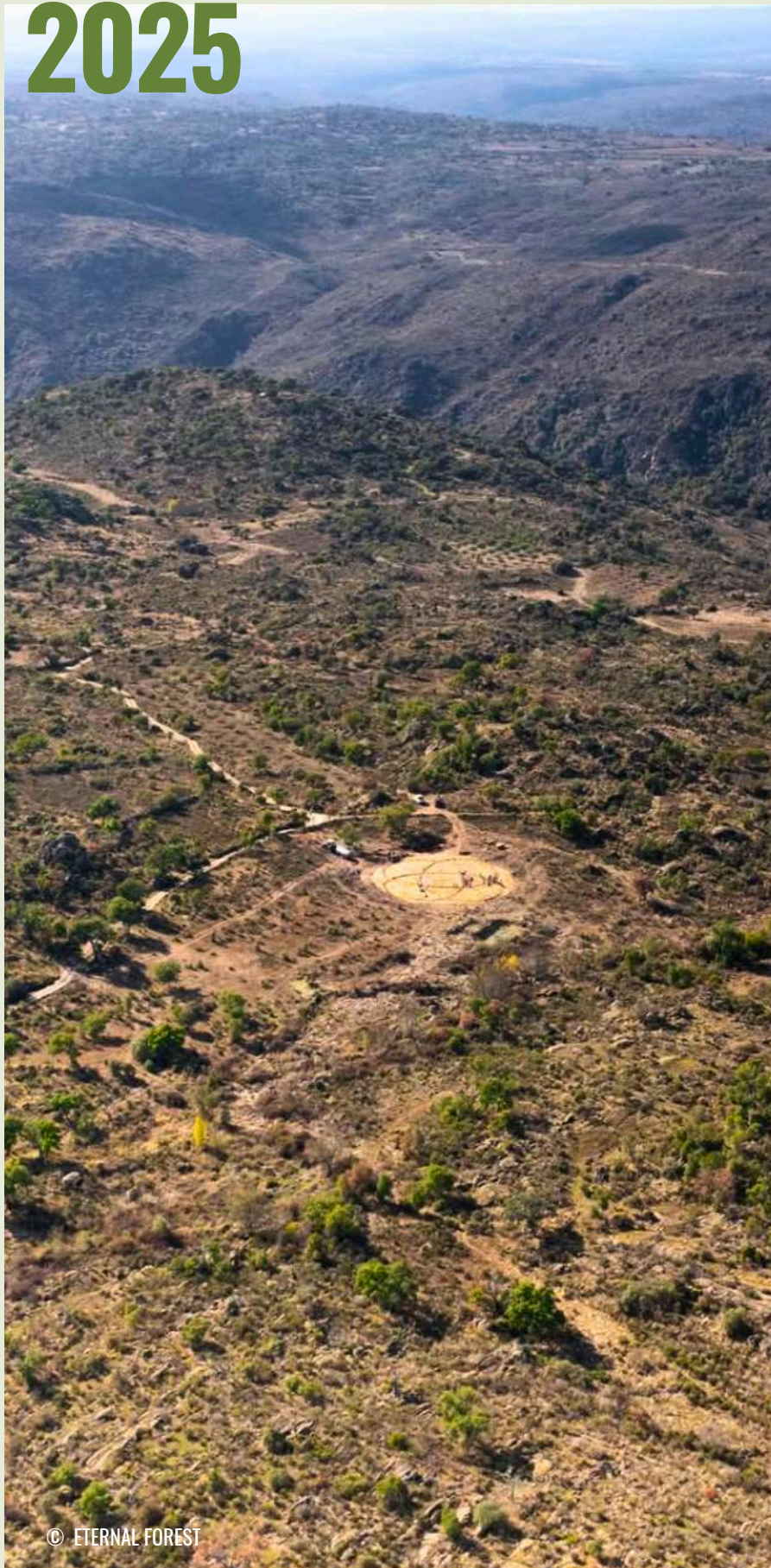
Thank you so much for being our friend, and please keep supporting Faia Brava. We hope to see you back in our General Assembly this year.

Sincerely yours



PRESIDENT

HIGHLIGHTS 2025



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FAIA BRAVA'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY



The year 2025 was marked by the celebrations of Faia Brava's 25th anniversary. We began the year by unveiling the official programme of events, which ran throughout the year. This programme included a diverse range of initiatives — activities, visits, openings and other special events — which celebrated a 25-year journey dedicated to conservation and the creation of spaces for nature, reinforcing our commitment for the coming decades.

Twenty-five years ago, the main objective was to ensure the conservation of various endangered species in north-eastern Portugal, a noble goal that remains highly relevant today. With the support of international philanthropy and funding for various projects, the then Associação Transumância e Natureza (ATN) acquired strategically located properties to achieve this objective. In 2010, the Faia Brava Private Protected Area was formally designated, the first of its kind in Portugal.

We advocate the restoration of habitats degraded by centuries of intensive exploitation and support the return of endangered and at-risk species such as the black vulture, the wolf and the lynx. We must shift away from the notion that wildfires are inevitable so that we may once again enjoy rural and forest landscapes that breathe life into the countryside. Above all, we advocate for a balance between humanity and nature, without either seeking to impose itself on the other or jeopardise the other's future.

The story of Faia Brava is the story of an active civil society that promotes the common good through the implementation of land management models based on respect for nature. We are convinced that this is the only way forward, as we believe that without nature there can be no development that is sustainable and that truly contributes to our quality of life.



On 6 June, we celebrated our 25th anniversary with an official ceremony attended by various national and international organisations, representatives from government bodies, NGOs, businesses and universities, as well as employees, partners and members. The celebrations began at the Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo Sports Pavilion, with a reflection and discussion on the past, present and future of Faia Brava.

The book “Faia Brava: 25 Years Creating Spaces for Nature” was presented, published with the invaluable support of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo Municipal Council and the Belmiro de Azevedo Foundation. Throughout its various chapters, written by a range of authors, we tell the story of Protected Areas in Portugal, we give the floor to our friends and place particular emphasis on private Protected Areas, such as our own. We then headed to the Faia Brava Nature Reserve for the opening of the new viewpoint. We also opened a new walking trail, unveiling a plaque on the Biologists’ Trail in honour of two founders and great inspirations — Lucas Hoffmann and Jesus Garzón.

The celebration concluded at Freixeda do Torrão with a dinner and musical entertainment, in an atmosphere of fellowship and appreciation. Many of you were present and offered your support and encouragement for the next 25 years, which meant a great deal to us. To everyone who took part, as well as to the members, friends and supporters who, although unable to attend, sent us words of encouragement and praise for our work, we extend our sincere thanks.

Thanks to all of you, we remain motivated and committed to creating ever more spaces for nature and keeping you informed about our activities, as we look forward to the next 25 years with enthusiasm and determination.



ETERNAL FOREST IN FAIA BRAVA — A MEETING OF ART, ECOLOGY AND COMMUNITY

For the first time, Eternal Forest and Faia Brava – Nature Conservation Association have joined forces to create a sanctuary where contemporary art meets nature conservation, in Portugal's first privately-owned protected area. This partnership formed part of Faia Brava's 25th-anniversary celebrations and represented a convergence of thought, action and regeneration, bringing together thinkers, decision-makers and various stakeholders from the fields of art, culture and ecosystem regeneration.

On 7 and 8 November 2025, Faia Brava and Eternal Forest celebrated this partnership with a symbolic and deeply rooted gesture: the sowing and planting of a new living forest — “The Seed – A Semente”. The programme began at the Côa Museum with a collaborative workshop between the Faia Brava team, the Côa Parque Foundation and Eternal Forest, promoting the intersection of art, ecological regeneration and culture to imagine more sustainable futures for the region.

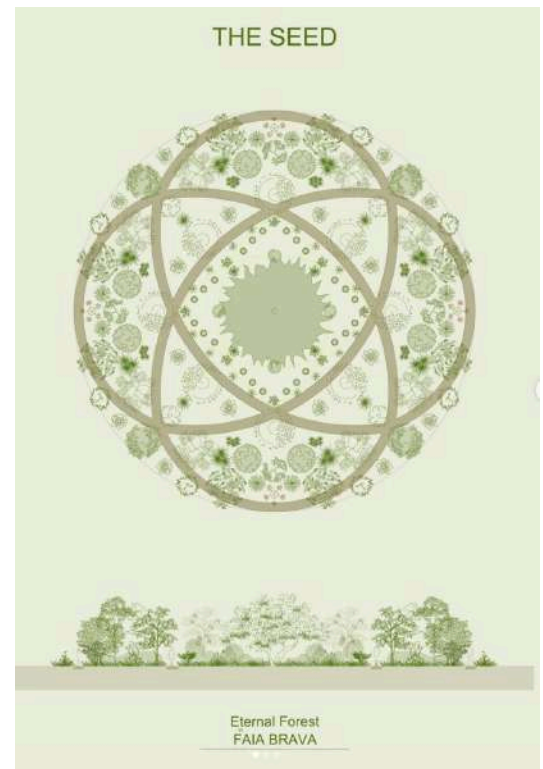
On 8 November, the celebration came to life at the Faia Brava Reserve, with the planting of the first native species and the symbolic birth of a living sanctuary — a space dedicated to the regeneration of soil, water and biodiversity. “The Seed” marks the beginning of the largest Eternal Forest Sanctuary in Faia Brava: a living work of art spanning 10 hectares, set within a protected reserve covering around 1,000 hectares. “The Seed” by Eternal Forest in Faia Brava was created by the artist Evgenia Emets, shaped by days spent listening to the landscape, following animal tracks, winding around ancient boulders and tracing the course of the streams and the River Côa.

The design of the project benefited from technical support from Fractal Regenerative Technologies and Mauricio Umann, and its implementation was carried out in close collaboration with the Faia Brava team. “The Seed” is simultaneously a work of art, an immersive experience and a future forest. During the “Semeando Eternal Forest” event, local participants and those from various regions of the country came together to plant the first trees, laying the foundations for a project that brings together nature, art and hope.

Amidst smiles, shared moments and a communal picnic, roots—both physical and symbolic—were laid for a shared future. The future Eternal Forest Sanctuary is situated along the Grande Rota do Côa, within the Côa Archaeological Park, and is open to the public. As the forest matures and the treetops begin to touch, the trail will remain open, like a silent invitation to walk, feel, listen and care for the land. Everyone is welcome to visit, camp nearby, experience the project, support the initiative and help look after the trees. This event was also supported by the Parish of Algodres, Eccos Channel, The Portugal News, Restore and the dedicated team at Eternal Forest, to whom we extend our heartfelt thanks. We hope we can continue to count on everyone’s support, including through various forms of partnership and sponsorship, to help this living sanctuary grow and increase its impact on the local area.

For the Faia Brava Reserve, the project reinforces its role as a hub for ecological innovation and a living laboratory for regeneration. The creation of Portugal’s first Eternal Forest Sanctuary establishes the reserve as an international benchmark at the intersection of conservation, art and community engagement.

The event “Sowing the Eternal Forest in Faia Brava” was not merely a tree-planting initiative. It marked the beginning of a long-term ecological and cultural commitment — a collective gesture of faith in the future, bringing together nature, art and the community to create a forest destined to endure for generations.



PLANTS DESCRIPTION

-  CORK OAK | *Quercus suber* | SOBREIRO
-  ALMOND | *Prunus dulcis* | AMENDOEIRA
-  WILD CHERRY | *Prunus avium* | CEREJEIRA-BRAVA
-  IBERIAN PEAR | *Pyrus bourgaeana* | PEREIRA-DO-MATO
-  CRAB APPLE | *Malus sylvestris* | MACIEIRA-BRAVA
-  STRAWBERRY TREE | *Arbutus unedo* | MEDRONHEIRO
-  WILD OLIVE | *Olea europaea var. sylvestris* | ZAMBUJEIRO
-  BLACKTHORN | *Prunus spinosa* | ABRUNHEIRO-BRAVO
-  HAWTHORN | *Crataegus monogyna* | PILRITEIRO
-  LAURUSTINOS | *Viburnum tinus* | FOLHADO
-  GUM ROCKROSE | *Cistus ladanifer* | ESTEVA
-  MYRTLE | *Myrtus communis* | MURTA
-  TREE HEATH | *Erica arborea* | URZE-ARBÓREA
-  ASPHODEL | *Asphodelus luisitanicus* | ABRÓTEA-LUSITANA
-  WHITE BROOM | *Cytisus multiflorus* | Giesta BRANCA
-  SAGELEAVED ROCKROSE | *Cistus salvifolius* | ESTEVINHA-BRANCA
-  MASTIC THYME | *Thymus mastichina* | TOMILHO-BELDROEGA
-  WHITE THYME | *Thymus zygis* | TOMILHO-COMUM
-  DREGANO | *Origanum vulgare L.* | DRÉGÃO
- YARROW | *Achillea millefolium* | MIL-FOLHAS
- WILD CARROT | *Daucus carota* | CENOURA-DAS-ARRIBAS



ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FAIA BRAVA CENTRE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Social Capital Foundation

Perto



Just as we have already done with Faia Brava, we are finally moving forward with the renovation of Vivenda Virgínia so that it will soon be available for everyone to enjoy. If all goes well, we will succeed.

We intend to install a new permanent and interactive exhibition at Vivenda Virgínia by the end of next year, designed to promote the Ribacôa region, its values and its people. This new ‘Faia Brava’ Centre for the Environment and Sustainable Development will serve the schoolchildren of the municipalities of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, Vila Nova de Foz Côa, Pinhel and Almeida, as well as all visitors, through the installation of a permanent exhibition and the organisation of field trips to Faia Brava. It will be a valuable tool for promoting our region, showcasing what we have to offer, and highlighting how we should go about ensuring the conservation of our rich natural and cultural heritage.

On 8 October, architects Eline Vooijs and Pedro Pereira from the architectural firm “Perto” presented an initial draft of the architectural design to a group of stakeholders and interested parties from the region. Both are specialists in the renovation of historic buildings using sustainable materials; they showed an interest in our project and expressed their intention to help us. Thank you very much, Eline and Pedro. The space available will enable us to house our new headquarters, run environmental education activities, encourage more environmentally friendly behaviour and promote sustainable development policies.



GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION'S SUPPORT



As part of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Equity & Sustainability Programme, funding has been awarded to eight environmental NGOs following a national call for proposals to which several dozen Portuguese NGOs applied. The jury for this award decided to recognise the efforts we have been making to ensure the conservation of the Ribacoa region and has awarded us €50,000, so that over the next 18 months we can strengthen our operational capabilities and expand the impact of our nature conservation work.

The "Faia Brava" in the Côa Valley and the "Arribas de Fornos" in the Douro International Natural Park are located in sparsely populated areas with a low population density. Strengthening these two conservation and sustainable development initiatives will undoubtedly help to raise the profile of the region and promote it, bringing benefits for both people and nature. With this support from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, it will be possible to strengthen the organisation's current structure, enhance the team's skills, boost its credibility within the communities, and promote its image both nationally and internationally. Securing this support will enable the organisation to enhance its track record and increase its credibility amongst its technical and financial partners.

The proposed areas of focus will enable us to: i) strengthen team cohesion and skills; ii) prevent fires with disastrous consequences; iii) contribute to the restoration of habitats vital to a number of rare and/or uncommon species, some of which are of conservation concern; and iv) promote a growing public appreciation of the history and example of Faia Brava.

VISÃO MAGAZINE ARTICLE



Entitled “FAIA BRAVA: The Art of Nature” in issue no. 1690 of VISÃO, dated 24–30 July 2025. The extensive eight-page feature forms part of the Special Report “The Struggle to Save Wild Portugal” and is written by Carlos Alberto Cupeto, a geologist, lecturer at the University of Évora and columnist for VISÃO.

At the start, the reporter explains: This is a story that needs to be shared. A story that focuses on the restoration and enhancement of ecosystems: nature comes first; everything else follows, because everything and everyone depends on it.

The text discusses the history of Faia Brava, Private Protected Areas, the best way to explore the Faia Brava Reserve, and our objectives for the next 25 years. All of this is beautifully illustrated with photographs and maps. You can read the full article on our blog, on the Faia Brava website.

RTP2 DOCUMENTARY



A new four-part documentary series, “Habitat”, directed by João Teles de Vasconcelos, has premiered on RTP2.

In the second episode, ‘The Rivers’, we were delighted to see Faia Brava featured, with stunning footage of our Côa Valley and the Reserve, as well as a glimpse into our history and the origins of ATNatureza, as recounted by our Vice-President and founder, Ana Berliner.

“Habitat celebrates the richness of Portugal’s ecosystems, but also offers an inspiring portrait of people working to protect nature. The series encourages viewers to reflect on their own relationship with nature, showing that it is possible to live in harmony with nature and that each of us can make a difference in protecting our planet.”

Watch the episode via the link : <https://www.rtp.pt/programa/tv/p47140/e2>



FOREST FIRES



Faia Brava has remained unscathed, mainly thanks to the weather, and we're doing what we can! We have a close relationship with neighbouring landowners and local communities, as well as the Fire Brigade and Civil Protection services in Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo. Without state support, we carry out daily surveillance from dawn to dusk, on foot, by car and using drones, and we have a network of camera traps on the property.

Due to a lack of resources, we have not yet done so, but with the support of the City Council and the EU Interreg programme, we will this year build a reservoir with a capacity of around 70 m³, which will enable us to supply helicopters in the future. With the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, we will strengthen our immediate fire-fighting resources, and with the support of other partners, such as the VIRIDIA Foundation and the Trees for All organisation, we are managing the Faia Brava forest as best we can to reduce the risks. There is little else we can do!

This year, several properties in the Águeda River valley were destroyed by fire – around 70 hectares – as well as in Fornos/Lagoaça, where around 130 hectares were lost. The fire started in Poiães, almost 30 km to the south, and advanced relentlessly northwards, fuelled by continuous gorse thickets, some over 2 metres tall. We rescued the cattle belonging to Nelson and Rodrigo, our rangers in Fornos, and the six black vultures that were in the acclimatisation facility we manage in collaboration with Palombar, as part of the LIFE Aegyptius Return project.

We were lucky, and now, if we can count on the support of the government and our partners in the national and international philanthropic sector, we will take steps to ensure, as far as possible, that this does not happen again in Fornos. As for Faia Brava, we will continue to do everything in our power to prevent a disaster.



VULTURE CONSERVATION

LIFE AEGYPIUS RETURN



The LIFE Aegyptus Return project continues to make progress towards its ambitious goal: to consolidate and expand the black vulture population in Portugal and western Spain. Following the strong momentum and expansion seen in 2024, 2025 brought both exciting progress and significant challenges. Forest fires, poisoning, shooting and tensions in some regions tested the project's ability to adapt – but the team remained focused.

Despite the difficulties, the joint efforts of the partners, local communities and the authorities have borne fruit. By 2025, key measures had been implemented that are helping to make Portugal a safer place for this endangered species.

The results of the 2025 monitoring exercise brought good news: the black vulture population in Portugal continues to grow. Between 119 and 126 breeding pairs were recorded (including some on Spanish territory), resulting in 56 fledglings – a very positive outcome and a significant improvement on the figures recorded before the project began.

Breeding performance remains strong. Productivity reached 0.45 chicks per pair, and breeding success was 0.50. Both figures are lower than those recorded in well-established colonies in other regions, which is to be expected, given that many of these pairs are relatively new and result from the recolonisation of Portugal from Spain. Overall, the species appears to be establishing itself consistently.

IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

As the population grows, food availability is becoming an increasingly limiting factor. To address this challenge, the project has established three traditional, fenced-off feeding areas managed by the partners (two in Spain and one in Portugal), thereby meeting the set target. In collaboration with farmers, the aim is to establish 66 unfenced feeding areas (56 in Portugal and 10 in Spain), which are currently at various stages of assessment, approval and implementation. These facilities are essential in regions where livestock farming is in decline and natural food sources are becoming increasingly scarce.

The management of nesting platforms has progressed across all colonies. Just over half of the planned artificial platforms have already been built, and maintenance of the existing nests is also approximately halfway towards the target. These artificial structures provide better nesting conditions and increase breeding success, particularly in areas where natural trees pose a risk of falling. The restoration of the artificial platforms damaged by the fire in the Douro was equally essential.

TACKLING THE THREATS

Not all the news from 2025 was positive. Poisoning remains a serious threat. In total, ten vulture carcasses were analysed in Spain to improve diagnostic and rapid response procedures, with one case confirmed in the project area. Nevertheless, three new dog-handler teams were set up within the GNR to detect poisons, and a new baseline study was launched in collaboration with the LIFE WildLIFE Crime Academy project.

Unfortunately, three vultures were shot dead, a reminder that illegal persecution remains a reality. These incidents underscore the need to maintain dialogue with hunting communities and to step up surveillance and enforcement. The forest fires also had a significant impact on the Douro region. A major fire affected six nests, and at least two chicks died – though the actual number may be higher. Recovery efforts began promptly, and the restoration of the affected habitat will remain a priority in 2026.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE

Coexistence is key to long-term success. Our partner Palombar is conducting a study on the relationship between farmers and vultures, with the aim of better understanding existing concerns and improving communication and engagement strategies.

The expansion of renewable energy poses a further risk, particularly to large soaring birds such as vultures. In response, the project has issued over 40 technical reports and held several meetings with developers and public bodies, ensuring that new projects are planned with bird safety in mind.

AWARENESS-RAISING AND COMMUNICATION

The LIFE Aegypius Return project enjoyed significant media coverage in 2025, with nationwide coverage and significant progress in the production of a documentary dedicated to the project. At the same time, efforts targeting landowners, hunters and local decision-makers were stepped up, fostering stronger partnerships and relationships based on trust. Cooperation with the WildLIFE Crime Academy was deepened, and a new collaborative initiative, NECROBIOME, received official approval.

WHAT TO EXPECT NEXT

The final phase of the project will begin in 2026 and will be particularly intensive. A number of highly significant reports are planned, including the eagerly awaited report on vulture movements and soft-release initiatives, which is due to be completed shortly.

© LIFE AEGYPIUS RETURN



Meanwhile, the annual tagging and sampling campaigns will continue in July.

The activities planned for 2026 include:

- Training hunters in the use of lead-free ammunition
- Forest management and habitat restoration
- Approval of unfenced feeding areas
- Construction and repair of nesting platforms
- Promotion of safe renewable energy
- Communication and environmental education campaigns
- Continued capacity building and response to wildlife crime through the WildLIFE Crime Academy
- Strengthening of activities under the NECROBIOME initiative

The progress made in 2025 demonstrates how the species has evolved. Despite the threats, the black vulture continues its return to Portugal. This success is only possible thanks to a collective effort: conservationists, landowners, local communities, researchers, government bodies and the European Union, all working together towards a common goal.

RESTORING BIODIVERSITY AND NATIVE FORESTS

TREES FOR ALL



We recently had the pleasure of welcoming our friends Jeroen van der Horst and Antonio Zorrilla from the NGO Trees for All to Faia Brava and Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo.

They came to visit us so that we could assess the impact of the support they have provided to Faia Brava over the last few years, enabling us to continue our work to restore the native forest. We have planted thousands of trees! Last year alone, over 30,000 acorns were sown and around 6,500 trees were planted. Our partners at Trees for All were pleased with the results of our joint efforts, despite the high mortality rates, particularly in the first few years following planting. We have lost around a third of our rainfall over the last 70 years, and the almost annual heatwaves do not make our work any easier.

However, we are not giving up, and with the support of our partners and volunteers, we will continue to plant and sow to make more and more room for nature. During the Trees for All mission, a controlled burning operation was carried out in collaboration with the ICNF, the Fire Service and Civil Protection of Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, as part of an integrated forest management initiative, using fire intentionally to manage fuel loads and reduce the risk of wildfires. It is now up to us to keep this firebreak clear to mitigate risks and facilitate the fire brigade's response in the event of a fire.



VIRIDIA



On 17 October, the Viridia Foundation, one of Faia Brava's most important and loyal partners, held its annual meeting at the Mértola Biological Station. In addition to the Viridia team, the event was attended by various civil society organisations and representatives from the academic world. Faia Brava reported on the results of one of its ongoing projects, funded by Viridia, entitled "Restoring ecosystems and conserving native biodiversity at Faia Brava". Among other significant initiatives, we would highlight the restoration and reactivation of three dovecotes, the boosting of the rabbit population and the annual autumn sowing to ensure food for prey populations, the maintenance and improvement of ponds, and integrated forest management, including selective pruning, acorn sowing and the planting of new trees, fire prevention through the installation of firebreaks, the installation of artificial platforms to encourage the black vulture to nest, and the regular provision of food to supplement the vultures' diet during critical phases of their annual cycle. Many thanks to the Viridia Foundation for its ongoing support and for the trust it places in our team.

SOIL@INT



During the last week of September, we collected soil samples as part of the Soil@int project, an initiative whose main objective is to establish a soil health monitoring network by combining remote sensing data with ecological indicators collected in the field. The project aims to develop models that facilitate continuous soil monitoring, adapted to different spatial and temporal scales.

In addition, Soil@int aims to provide local areas with tools that enhance ecosystem services and strengthen the climate resilience of their natural capital.

Coordinated by the University of Aveiro, the project involves several partners, including Faia Brava – Nature Conservation Association.

INTERREG



This project, funded by the European Union's Interreg programme, is being implemented in close collaboration with Fundación Naturaleza y Hombre, our long-standing partner. Broadly speaking, the aim of this funding is to contribute to sustainable development and regional cohesion through the protection of biodiversity and the enhancement of natural ecosystems in the cross-border area.

The year 2025 marked the second year of this project. Faia Brava has contributed through its initiatives to identifying routes to be included in the Hispano-Luso Biological Corridor, an area of immense ecological, economic and social value that will help to promote the region, its biodiversity and local culture. This is the case with the Biologists' Trail and other walking routes in the Côa Valley, which are currently being improved in terms of signposting and interpretation facilities. The aim of these project activities is to promote sustainable tourism and create new economic opportunities for the local population.

We also play an active role in implementing project initiatives more directly linked to the conservation of habitats and species. We monitor rock-dwelling bird populations annually, install artificial nesting boxes and encourage the availability of prey in Faia Brava, to ensure the presence of species such as the black stork and the Bonelli's eagle, for example. In this way, we are helping to restore biodiversity and improve connectivity along the Hispano-Luso Corridor, thereby contributing to the project's overall objective. Furthermore, as part of this project, we aim to promote environmental education and raise public awareness of the value of our cross-border region.

The year 2026 will mark the final year of this Interreg programme, which deserves our particular attention given its objectives and the fruitful collaboration with our friends in Castile and León.





EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



In 2025, Faia Brava organised and took part in a range of initiatives focused on education for sustainable development and the promotion of our region’s cultural and natural heritage, including both extracurricular activities and classroom-based activities.

We took part in the Careers Open Day, organised by the Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo School Group, where we ran a hands-on activity related to Biology and Environmental Engineering. On World Tree and Forest Day, we took part in a tree-planting initiative at the Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo Lower Secondary School, as part of the “Miúdos pelo Monte” project, promoted by the Co-Management Committee of the Douro Environmental Natural Park. We also took part in ‘Ciência Viva no Verão – Em Rede’, a national initiative, carrying out two experiments within the Faia Brava Reserve: on one day, a walk along the Biologists’ Trail, and on another, a visit to the feeding ground for scavenger birds.

RESEARCH APPLIED TO CONSERVATION

We were also visited by students from various universities such as:

- 48 students on the ‘Mammals of Portugal’ module of the Biology degree programme at the University of Aveiro;
- Third-year students of the ‘Ecology and Management of Bird Fauna’ module on the Biology degree programme at the University of Aveiro, supervised by Prof. António da Silva Luís;
- Students on the Master’s degree programme in Management and Conservation of Natural Resources at the University of Aveiro, with Prof. Paulo Silveira;
- Cristóvão Lourenço Belperin, a PhD student on the Doctoral Programme in Biology and Ecology of Global Change, is conducting his research at the Faia Brava Reserve. The study focuses on the effects of wild ungulates on the functioning of soil ecosystems in the context of climate change.

RESEARCH APPLIED TO CONSERVATION



One of the highlights of this year's research is the production of the Faia Brava Reserve Biodiversity Atlas, a project resulting from close collaboration between Faia Brava, the University of Aveiro (UA) and the University of the Algarve (UAlg). This work aims to deepen our understanding of the fauna and flora of the protected area through a systematic sampling effort and the creation of tools to facilitate the collection and management of information.

In this context, the Faia Brava Biodiversity app was also developed by UAlg, by a team comprising MSIG student João Castro and Prof. Nuno de Santos Loureiro, based on the Mergin Maps platform. Available for Android and iOS, this tool enables members and contributors to record observations of flora and fauna, automatically sending the data to a central database. The app also allows users to view known distribution maps for various species, view a detailed and up-to-date orthophoto map, and access the network of footpaths within the reserve. It is an essential resource for encouraging active participation in the creation of the Atlas.

The initial results of a major camera trapping project, carried out by a team from the UA comprising students Maria Páris, Maria Carvalho and Daniel Mêdas, and researchers Rita Torres and João Carvalho, are now available. The 60 cameras, operated continuously for two months at a rate of one per square, recorded 27,590 observations. Of these, 2,329 correspond to independent records of 12 species of wild mammals.

The start of summer marked the launch of a new camera trap campaign dedicated to studying the reserve's mammals, following the first survey carried out between November 2024 and January 2025. Sixty cameras were installed, distributed across a UTM grid comprising 60 squares, each 500 metres on a side, covering the entire Faia Brava Reserve Protected Area.



INTERNSHIPS AND VOLUNTEERS



This year we have welcomed several new members to our team. In addition to the arrival of our new Nature Warden, Davide Santos, we have received support from the IEFP – Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, I.P. – in the form of two work placements.

As part of the Estágios + Talento programme, biologist Ana Nunes joined our team on 13 January 2025, and geographer and GIS and Natural Resource Management and Conservation specialist Diogo Moreno joined our team on 3 November 2025.

This year we also had an intern with us for four months as part of the ERASMUS programme.

Giulia Montesi was born in Italy, graduated with a degree in “Animal Welfare and Protection” and obtained a master’s degree in “Wildlife Science and Management” from the University of Florence. Her passion for the environment and wildlife led her to pursue this course of study with great enthusiasm and dedication.

Giulia said of Faia Brava: “It is, without a doubt, the wildest place I’ve ever been to, a corner of the world where nature reigns supreme. Seeing the griffins circling in the sky, spotting the tracks left along the paths and coming face to face with animals I’d never seen before was thrilling and truly unforgettable.”

Thank you, Giulia. Do come back soon.





EVENTS

- **Queen's Festival of the Almond Blossom**, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo
- **Presentation of the Alcateia Programme 2025-2035**
- **Public consultation session "The future of the River Côa"**, Castelo Rodrigo Battle Interpretation Centre
- **Careers Open Day**, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo Sports Hall
- **Meeting of the Municipal Rural Fire Management Committee**, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo Town Council
- **30th National Meeting of Environmental Protection Associations (ENADA)**, Lousada Municipal Library
- **Visit to the Gulbenkian Foundation**, as part of the project/€50,000 prize awarded to Faia Brava – Nature Conservation Association
- **2nd edition of FAT- Cross-border Agricultural Fair**, Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo
- **VI Cross-Border Heritage Meeting**, Castelo Rodrigo

FINANCIAL REPORT

Faia Brava's accounts are audited by a statutory auditor, approved by the Supervisory Board, and will be made available shortly at www.faiabrava.pt. The following charts illustrate the breakdown of income and expenditure by main categories for the year 2025.

INCOME



55%

PROJETS



23%

DONATIONS/
MEMBERSHIP FEES



14%

SUBSIDIES



8%

SALES

EXPENSES



77%

CONSERVATION
ACTIONS



19%

OPERATING COSTS



2%

COMMUNICATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION



2%

OTHERS



WHO SUPPORTS US

FUNDERS AND DONORS

Câmara Municipal de Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo
 DOB Foundation
 Fundação Belmiro de Azevedo
 Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian
 Fundação LA CAIXA
 Natura Iberica
 Perto
 Social Capital Foundation
 Tal Projeto
 Trees For All
 Turismo de Portugal
 UE LIFE Program
 UE - Programa INTERREG Europe
 Viridia
 Viverina

ENTITIES

Agrupamento Escolas de Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo
 Bombeiros Voluntários de Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo
 CCDRCentro
 Fundação Côa Parque
 GNR de Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo
 IEFP, I.P.
 Junta de freguesia de Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo
 Territórios do Côa
 União de freguesias de Algodres, Vale de Afonsinho e Vilar de Amargo
 União de Freguesias de Freixeda do Torrão, Quintã de Pêro Martins e Penha D'Águia
 União de Freguesias do Vale do Côa

PARTNERS

Ambieduca
 Autoridade Nacional de Proteção Civil
 APP Fraga Viva
 APP Herdade do Freixo do Meio
 APP Vale das Amoreiras
 Casa da Cisterna
 CBD Habitat
 CERVAS
 CPADA
 Deputación de Salamanca
 Foge comigo!
 Fundación Naturaleza y Hombre
 Guarda Nacional Republicana
 Herdade da Contenda
 ICNF
 iNature
 LPNatureza
 Oriolus Ambiente
 Palombar
 Plataforma de Ciência Aberta
 SPEA
 Universidade do Algarve
 Universidade de Aveiro
 Van Hall Larenstein University
 Vulture Conservation Foundation

INTERNS




Diogo Moreno
 Giulia Montesi

TECHNICAL TEAM

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 Luís Pereira
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