

## **The Madrevieja Environmental Station, a reserve of more than 240 moth species**

- **The observation and reproduction of the Willowherb hawkmoth, a species protected by the EU, has been documented; this is the furthest south on the Iberian Peninsula that it has ever been recorded.**

The Madrevieja Environmental Station, the biodiversity recovery project that the Fundación Cepsa launched ten years ago in San Roque, is home to more than 240 species of moths.

Ornitour, the company that manages this environmental enclave, explains that Lepidoptera (group of moths/butterflies) are of great ecological interest for their role in pollinating a large number of plants and for being part of the food chain for countless species. They are also ecological indicators of the diversity and healthiness of the ecosystems they inhabit. There are two large groups: diurnal, which are popularly known as butterflies, and nocturnal, known as moths. Currently, there are 482 species of butterflies in Europe, while the latter group is much larger with around 10,000 species. The same is true for the Madrevieja Environmental Station where a total of 243 species of moths have been inventoried to date, with several more specimens yet to be identified.

To record the moths, specific specimens are gathered from light traps (minimum three and maximum nine) which are placed in the area once a month. During each session, photographs are taken of the captured specimens, which are all later released, except for those that need to be identified in the laboratory.

The star species in the Madrevieja Environmental Station is the Willowherb hawkmoth (*Proserpinus proserpina*), which has been documented living and reproducing in this enclave for two consecutive years (2017 and 2018). Although this species is strictly protected in Europe and classified as a Species of Community Interest, much is unknown about its biology and the population in Spain. At a national level, it is included in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and the Andalusian Catalogue of Endangered Species – CAEA.

This species is known to be primarily distributed throughout the northern half of the Iberian Peninsula and has rarely been observed in the southern half. It had only been observed four times in Andalusia, all in the province of Granada and prior to 1992. Therefore, the observations in Madrevieja count as the most southern sighting, the first in the province of Cadiz, and the most recent.

The Madrevieja Environmental Station is a research center and nature reserve owned by Fundación Cepsa, which has worked to restore the wetland since 2009. Since its inauguration in 2014, Ornitour has been working not only to conserve the area, but

also to recover species and the passage of birds in this corner of Campo de Gibraltar, which is open to the public to enjoy and learn from.

### **Fundación Cepsa**

Fundación Cepsa is a general interest, non-profit entity that aims to carry out initiatives that serve the needs and priorities of the local communities where its founder, Compañía Española de Petróleos S.A. (Cepsa), conducts its activities. The areas of action for Fundación Cepsa are social, cultural, environmental, scientific-educational, and support for amateur sports.

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