

## Science and citizen participation come together in a community activity to contribute to regenerating Monte de Las Mesas

- **Approximately forty volunteers are involved in the identification of endemic species and in collecting seeds to restore the thermophilic forest**
- **It is an activity promoted by Fundación Moeve, the Natural Environment area of the Cabildo of Tenerife and the Sustainable Santa Cruz Foundation, with the help of the University of La Laguna**

**Tenerife, December 03, 2024** - Around 40 volunteers have taken part in a group activity of citizen science in Monte de Las Mesas, promoted by Fundación Moeve in collaboration with the Natural Environment area of the Cabildo of Tenerife and the Sustainable Santa Cruz Foundation, as a vital element of the environmental restoration project led by these three entities in this natural area, with scientific guidance from the University of La Laguna.

The objective of this initiative, which plans to carry out more field outings, is to involve the whole community when it comes to the regeneration of Monte de Las Mesas, promoting the identification of native flora, collecting seeds for later germination as well as raising awareness concerning the importance of protecting and preserving the biodiversity of the area.

The natural regeneration of the forest is challenged by invasive species, rising temperatures and the impacts of drought. In this context, "environmental education remains an unresolved issue. Citizens need to be sensitized and to understand that their relationship with nature should be based on respect and conservation. Moreover, there must be harmony in all actions carried out in our immediate natural environment, where environmental volunteering is a fundamental piece," stressed Victoria Eugenia Martín, professor at the Botanical, Ecology and Vegetal Physiology department at the University of La Laguna, in charge of the activity.

The group activity included a training session where attendees learned to identify native species, such as verode, cornical, or sabina, among many others, as well as how to collect seeds correctly, these being crucial elements for the future reforestation of this valuable ecosystem. To add to that, the use of

the iNaturalist phone app as a collaborative tool for recognition and registration of flora and fauna species was showcased, promoting the participation of citizens in environmental conservation.

According to Belén Machado, head of Fundación Moeve, "this approach of citizen science not only has a positive environmental impact, it also helps to bring about a form of social innovation and community collaboration in environmental conservation processes. It fosters collaborative solutions to global challenges, through thoughtful participation that reshapes the way society cares for its environment, in this case one of the most valuable natural spaces on the Island".

### **Environmental regeneration project status of Monte de Las Mesas**

Monte de Las Mesas has been immersed for a year in an environmental regeneration process driven by the public-private collaboration involving Fundación Moeve, the Cabildo of Tenerife and the City Council of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, where the community's engagement is encouraged to play a significant role. All of this is done to secure a sustainable future for this space.

With researcher Victoria Eugenia Martín, director of the Wolfredo Wildpret Botanical Garden Chair at ULL leading the way, important progress has been made over the past 12 months, such as the development of a floral catalog of the area, which identified 98 taxa of tree and shrub flora, one third of which are endemic. In addition, the state of conservation of the area has been analyzed, including the creation of a map of existing vegetation units, also assessing the risk linked with invasive exotic species that have a negative impact on the recovery of native flora. Territory zoning has also been carried out, identifying the potential vegetation of the area and the corresponding bioclimatic zones.

Finally, several actions have been undertaken concerning the production of specimens of native plant species for environmental restoration, including the collection of seeds, their germination and growth in greenhouses, with the plants being nurtured to a size that maximizes their survival rate for future planting.

**Fundación Moeve** is a non-profit, general interest organization dedicated to being an agent of change in the ecological transition. Fundación Moeve's strategic areas are three: People, aimed at promoting the overall well-being of society; Biodiversity, through projects dedicated to the care and restoration of ecosystems, particularly wetlands; and Social Innovation, to be a driving force of change in the ecological transition.

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