

Fundación Moeve successfully concludes its 4th Biodiversity Conference in San Roque

- **The initiative serves as a call for collaboration in wetlands conservation**
- **Researchers, administrations, and communicators share actions being carried out to promote biodiversity**

Fundación Moeve today celebrated its 4th Biodiversity Conference in San Roque, Cadiz, a gathering that has consolidated itself as a key space for dialog and reflection among experts, entities, and administrations on the ecosystem conservation and the role of biodiversity as a driver of sustainable development. The focus of this edition was on the ecosystems of the southern peninsula, with special attention paid to the Cádiz area and the vital importance of the wetlands for the Strait of Gibraltar's migratory birds.

The main event, held at the Alcalde Palma Building (El Pósito), began with welcoming the authorities, including the deputy mayor of San Roque, María Collado, and the director of Fundación Moeve, Teresa Mañueco. During her speech, Collado emphasized the unique value of the municipality's natural environment, highlighting its role as a privileged intersection of the maritime and land area. She insisted that progress and environmental conservation should not be conceived as opposing forces, but as allies in building a sustainable future. "Development should not be at odds with the richness and preservation of our environment," she stated, appealing to an inclusive vision that respects biodiversity and promotes community well-being.

Teresa Mañueco highlighted that the conference symbolizes the commitment of the Foundation and Campo de Gibraltar to conservation, noting that the recovery of wetlands and the promotion of biodiversity are "an environmental commitment, but also a commitment to the future for a model of sustainable development." Furthermore, she emphasized that sustainability can only be built through collaboration and participation, as the conference aims to "generate awareness and promote new synergies among those of us from different areas who work towards a common goal: to protect and restore nature."

Raising awareness through photography: Odiel Marshes

Fundación Moeve's biodiversity conference program began with the inauguration of the photo exhibit *Odiel Marshes: A landscape to discover*. This exhibit, which celebrates the 40th anniversary of the Odiel Marshes Natural Park, aims to bring the public closer to the landscape's beauty and the birdlife of unique ecosystems such as marshes, salt flats, and islands. The Odiel Marshes Park is a natural space that has been declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO and a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds. The exhibition highlights key species such as the spoonbill, gray heron, flamingos, and osprey.

Key Conclusions of the Conference

The conference aims to promote the conservation of species and habitats, highlight good practices, and strengthen collaboration networks among public and private stakeholders.

Geographer Gonzalo Muñoz, researcher and professor at the University of Cádiz, gave a presentation focused on wetland restoration from an ecosystem perspective, presenting the case of the Cetina marshes, located in the Bay of Cádiz. Muñoz emphasized that these natural spaces not only possess intrinsic value due to their ability to integrate diverse ecosystems, but they also provide fundamental services to humans, although less evident. Highlights included flow regulation during floods, blue carbon sequestration (key to mitigating climate change) and the preservation of biodiversity. "A focus on the ecosystem allows us to understand marshes as natural infrastructures that sustain life and protect coastal communities," the expert pointed out, advocating for public policies that recognize and foster these benefits.

The round table addressed the recovery of emblematic species such as the spoonbill, the marbled teal, and the European pond turtle, with the participation of Fidel Astudillo (PNRB Odiel Marshes), David Barros (Ornitour), and Macarena Castro (UCA). Astudillo spoke of advances in the recovery of emblematic species such as the osprey and the spoonbill. "Nature is tremendously grateful; as soon as it is given an opportunity to recover, it takes advantage of it," he stated.

For his part, David Barros, head of the Madre Vieja Environmental Station, highlighted the recovery of wetlands and biodiversity spaces, essential for the survival of species such as the Iberian pond turtle. This reptile, which requires habitats of high environmental quality, has been gradually disappearing from the peninsula, surviving only in small pockets within the province.

Lastly, Macarena Castro warned of the urgency to act before species become endangered. "Nature is desperate for help," she pointed out while advocating for preventive conservation. "As soon as we see that the population of a species decreases, we must strive to find a solution. "Moreover, biodiversity does not understand territorial limits or administrative competencies," she added, highlighting the need for networks of recovered areas that work cooperatively and in a connected manner.

The three speakers agreed on the importance of dissemination as a key tool for generating social awareness, and that communicating not only allows citizens to know how to act, but also serves to justify the decisions and actions taken by institutions, administrations and foundations in environmental matters.

Jacob Petrus, geographer, communicator, and presenter of the program *Aquí la Tierra* (TVE), delivered closing remarks. Petrus provided a hopeful vision by pointing out that "we are in a time of change," in which an integrated perspective towards the recovery and conservation of natural spaces is beginning to consolidate. In his view, the media plays a key role in this process: "We have to inform, teach, and raise awareness." The geographer and presenter

emphasized the need to communicate information in depth and with empathy, appealing to social awareness. "Society appreciates being shown the environmental cost of its actions and the products it consumes. Only in this way can one learn and act accordingly," he concluded, emphasizing the transformative power of environmentally-conscious communication.

The conference was framed within a strong commitment to the natural ecosystems of Fundación Moeve, whose dedication extends to wetland conservation (Laguna Primera de Palos, Odiel Marshes in Huelva, Madre Vieja Environmental Station, and Laguna Huerta de las Pilas in Campo de Gibraltar); to strengthening reforestation initiatives, highlighting the commitment in the Doñana environment after the 2017 fire; and to raising awareness and fostering outreach.

The institutional closing ceremony was led by the Deputy Minister of Sustainability of the Regional Government of Andalusia, Sergio Arjona, who called for the need for profound change at a global level to address major environmental crises, emphasizing that the current geopolitical scenario is undergoing a transformation and that, although countries have clear objectives to pursue, international priorities are evolving.

Arjona highlighted that the financial momentum for biodiversity projects will increasingly depend on collaboration between the public and private sectors. In this regard, he cited the work of Fundación Moeve as an example, which provides private resources for the recovery and conservation of natural spaces. Administrations must take on the commitment and effort to involve all stakeholders," he added. He assured that the Andalusian Regional Government aspires to reach joint agreements and commitments that guarantee a better future for all.

Fundación Moeve is a non-profit, general interest organization, whose goal is to carry out initiatives to address the main challenges of society in the areas where its founder, Moeve, conducts its work. It aspires to be an agent of change and a driver of the ecological transition. Fundación Moeve's scopes of action are people, biodiversity, and social innovation.

San Roque, November 06, 2025

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