

Field Trip 3 - Mid-conference

WETLANDS OF PRAIA DA VITÓRIA – TERCEIRA ISLAND, AZORES

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The wetlands of Praia da Vitória, are best known for their migrant avifauna, since many nearctic species are drawn to the Azores, especially during Winter. However, due to strong human pressures – mostly urbanization and land use change, they are in need of a specific program of conservation. The LIFE + European Programme candidacy aimed to recover, restore and reorder a wet green infrastructure in Praia da Vitória coastal edge, formed by three wetlands, namely: “Paul da Praia da Vitória”, “Paul do Belo Jardim” and “Paul da Pedreira do Cabo da Praia”. At the ecological level, it is expected that the creation of a network of wetlands and the renaturalisation of these strongly humanized areas, will result in an increase in biodiversity indicators (richness and abundance of native species), as well as the improvement of the ecological conditions to support migratory birds species. Besides the ecological benefits, it is also expected that the restoration process will have a positive impact on the socio-economic sustainability of the city, for instance increasing the number of national and international birdwatchers visiting the area, and the development of a more environmentally aware society.

During this short fieldtrip, the participants will be able to visit the “Paul da Praia da Vitória”. This is the largest of the three wetlands, and has a long history of land use change. In the XX century, most of that area was converted into a grassland, but after the restoration interventions, it is now possible to see typical marshy vegetation, and the bird species are also recovering. One of the most striking bird species of this marsh is the common moorhen. At some point, it was considered as an endemic subspecies (*Gallinula chloropus correiana* Murphy & Chapin, 1929), however, presently, there is no genetic study to support this hypothesis. Although neither the season, nor the time of day are the best for the observation of birds, the researchers of the LIFE – CWR project will accompany you on a visit, showing the best features of “Paul da Praia da Vitória”. We hope you will come back and see the full potential of these areas! For further knowledge, you may be interested in some studies concerning the wetlands of Praia da Vitória and the birds of the Azores. See a selection below.

- Barata, F. 2002. *A avifauna aquática nas zonas húmidas da costa leste da Ilha Terceira – um contributo para a sua conservação*. Dissertação de Mestrado em Gestão e Conservação da Natureza. Angra do Heroísmo, Universidade dos Açores.
- Brito, M.R. 2013. *Contributo para o estudo e conservação da espécie Galinha d'água (Gallinula chloropus Linnaeus, 1758)*. Mestrado em Gestão e Conservação da Natureza. Angra do Heroísmo: Universidade dos Açores, Departamento de Ciências Agrárias. [Available at: <http://repositorio.uac.pt/handle/10400.3/2001>]
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- Leal, C. 2011. *Paul da Pedreira do Cabo da Praia - Contributo das percepções ambientais para a sua preservação*. Dissertação de Mestrado em Educação Ambiental. 171pp. Angra do Heroísmo, Universidade dos Açores. [Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10400.3/1657>]
- Morton, B., J.C. Britton & A.M.F Martins 1997. The former marsh at Praia da Vitória, Terceira, Azores, and the case for the development of a new wetland by rehabilitation of the quarry at Cabo da Praia. [Available at: http://www.azoresbiportal.angra.uac.pt/files/publicacoes_MortonBrittonMartins_1997.pdf]. *Açoreana*, 8(3): 285-307.