



# GOOD PRACTICES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF WILD BIRDS - BONELLI'S EAGLE AND THE EGYPTIAN VULTURE

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## How to consult this leaflet

The brochure is organized by themes: chemical substances, water management, fire prevention, agriculture and nature tourism. It is not intended to be a reference document, but rather a reminder of the actions that we can all take, but in a more environmentally friendly way. These are small advices and simple actions that we propose to take on a day-to-day basis, but which together can make a difference. Animals are thankful and give back in the form of ecosystem services - the services they provide us in an almost invisible and silent way, contributing to the quality of water, air and soil, to the regeneration capacity of the ecosystem and protection against global warming.



## Who is this guide for?



The “Friends of Egyptian Vulture Network” was created in 2018, as a result of the LIFE Rupis 2015-2020 project, dedicated to the Conservation of Egyptian Vulture and the Bonelli's Eagle of the Douro Internacional / Arribes del Duero river canyon. This group of owners and producers brings together companies, private organizations and individuals, who are somehow linked to the maintenance and promotion of the traditional landscape of the Douro plateau and to the sustainable development of the region, showing respect for the natural values of the Douro - fauna, flora and land use.

This leaflet gathers some of the good practices promoted by the network's producers and owners. Some have been carried out by the owners themselves while others are supported by scientific studies. All of them are aimed at harmonizing production practices and visiting activities with wildlife conservation.

## Why protect birds of prey?



Birds of prey, also known as raptors, are essential elements of wildlife guilds, maintaining the good health of ecosystems. Raptors control countless rodents: the common-buzzard, in Spain known as “ratonero” (rat-eater), or the owl, one of the great pest controllers of rodents. The eagles, in turn, choose larger prey, showing their beneficial role in eliminating weak or sick animals. They defend large territories, thus controlling medium-sized predators, maintaining the balance between species.

Vultures, on the other hand, eat dead meat and do not hunt. Their role in nature is very important, removing the bodies of wild and domestic animals from the fields and preventing the spread of diseases. For this reason, they are considered the “cleaners” of nature. In the Douro Internacional Natural Park / Arribes del Duero Natural Park, there are 3 species: the Egyptian Vulture, the Griffon Vulture and the Cinereous Vulture.



# Bonelli's Eagle and the Egyptian Vulture

Both species are emblematic of the Natural Park of Douro Internacional, constituting an visiting card of the two border protected areas - The Natural Park of Douro Internacional and the Natural Park of Arribes del Duero, but their importance is not limited to that. Here is the identity card of each one:



## Bonelli's eagle

It is a top predator in the food chain, that is, in adulthood it has no predators. It is one raptor that hunts other birds in flight, which reveals its skill in flight. It belongs to the group of large eagles in Portugal.

## Egyptian Vulture

It is the smallest of European vultures. Unlike other vultures, it is not attracted to carcasses of large ruminants, preferring to feed on dead meat shavings, placentas of animals born in the field or insect larvae present in the meat or excrements.



These birds are important for the natural and touristic value of the Douro Internacional / Arribes del Duero and therefore are also part of a balanced and sustainable local economy. This leaflet shows some ways we can contribute to the conservation of these animals and the ecosystem on which they depend.





# Good environmental practices



## Chemicals and Pesticides

**Eliminate or Reduce the use of chemical herbicides** - the alternative is mechanical weeding, “mulching” (covering the soil with plant material preventing herbs from germinating) or contact herbicides that do not leave chemical residues in the soil.

**Adopt inter-row grassland**, an agri-environmental measure in force for vineyards, olive groves and other permanent crops. The advantages range from soil protection, reducing maintenance costs, increasing auxiliary insects (agricultural pest controllers) and consequently reducing the number of phytochemical treatments, as well as increasing pollinators.

**Monitor the illegal or inappropriate use of pesticides** (biocides, fungicides, herbicides, insecticides, molluscicides, rodenticides) - these substances are poisonous to humans, domestic and wild animals. If you find any domestic or wild animal and suspect poisoning, ALWAYS call SEPNA, Linha SOS Ambiente e Território - 800 500 520 - to take care of the occurrence. **DO NOT** leave the carcass in the field or in the trash. Poison is a criminal and public health problem.





## Protection of fountains and water storage

**Clean the vegetation that prevents access of animals to water mines and springs** - cleaning is not the elimination of all vegetation, but the removal of the material necessary for domestic and wild animals to have access to water. The vegetation on the banks contributes to their stabilization, erosion control and water quality; tree-shrub vegetation acts as protection of water and humidity around the water cooler.

**Create ponds or keep the existing ones** - just like the previous one, the shrubby tree vegetation that holds the land from the margins and shadows water and margins avoiding evaporation and stagnation; rushes and boards contribute to the self-cleaning of the system.

Irrigation tanks and cisterns - introduce a ramp, which can be an inclined board at the edge, which will allow the escape of animals that have accidentally fallen and avoid water contamination. Many of the chemicals used in agriculture and domestic activities have a strong contamination effect on the food chain, through which they can also affect domestic animals, especially if they are transmitted through water - **be especially careful when using these products in the vicinity of water lines**. water and always place the packages in appropriate containers.







## Wildfire Prevention

With the increase in the number and severity of droughts, the threat of fires becomes more pressing. What you can do?

**Avoid burning fires to get rid of organic residues from agriculture** - choose to destroy / fragment woody and green materials whenever you can and spread them over the soil - they will enrich the soil with organic matter, increase the capacity to retain moisture and limit the appearance of new undesirable plants.

**Keep an eye out when working with agricultural machinery** - in very dry weather a single spark resulting from the shock between metal and stone can start a fire - always carry a fire extinguisher, as the rules indicate.

**Consult and respect the civil protection notices.**



## Measures for biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of animals and wild plants that exist in natural spaces. The more diverse this set of species is, from the smallest invertebrates to the largest mammals, the richer and more balanced the ecosystem will be, as the web of relationships between species keeps the system under control. The advantages of a biodiverse environment for agricultural systems are a reduction in the incidence of pests and diseases, an increase in the water and organic matter retention capacity in the soil, an increase in natural pollinators and a reduction in long-term net investment.



**Wild shrubs such as rosemary, rosehips or thorns attract pollinators and insects that control agricultural pests, benefiting the farmer;** let them grow on the edges of the cultivated area and as a border for the vineyard terraces; on the contrary, exotic plants such as the poke or poke weed (*Phytollaca* sp.) or acacia, are invasive of the fields and must be removed.

**Build fauna shelters, such as simple clusters of and wood,** which provide shelters for beneficial fauna.



**Keep dry stone walls or build stone walls between terraces** – they are ideal refuges for reptiles, insects and even birds, which act as pest controllers.





**Hang nest boxes for tits and other insectivorous birds, or shelter boxes for bats** - excellent aids in controlling invertebrates.

**Set up perches for birds of prey when there are no natural ones** - kestrels, hunting eagles and other birds will help you tackle rodents - a simple 2 m pole in an open field means many hunted mice.



## Cattle and Grazing

Extensive grazing is often the best way to control the vegetation between the lines - in addition, it has the advantage of naturally fertilizing the land. Consider the association with livestock producers, namely sheep, for thinning vegetation on your property. Recall that some anti-parasites for cattle, also prevent the activity of natural dung decomposers.



Trained shepherd dogs are the best way to defend livestock. Cases of attacks on livestock should be documented as much as possible and reported to the authorities through the SOS Ambiente e Território number - 808 200 520 - or to the municipal veterinarian. Cases suspected of being wolf attacks must be reported to the ICNF / Natural Park. No trusted reports of attacks attributed to vultures, which appear with newspapers and the internet, and which are almost always attacks by stray dogs or wild mammals.





## Tourism and recreation

All tourists are welcome to the Douro, but here they are some rules of good conduct, which you can pass on to your visitors: Respect the periods and places of protection of endangered species, following the indications of the authorities of the natural parks.

For the international Douro: International Douro Natural Park:

<http://www.icnf.pt/portal/turnatur/resource/docs/ap/codigos/codigcondu>

Los Arribes del Duero Natural Park:

<https://www.jcyl.es> <https://patrimonionatural.org/espacios-naturales>

Before you leave:

- choose the walking route you want to follow,
- take suitable clothing and shoes, a hat, water and food with you, map / compass and a trash bag. On the ground:

On the ground:

- do not get off the rails,
- do not pick flowers or plants - photograph them and keep a souvenir perennial of your tour,
- stay discreet and you will see that you can better enjoy the sounds of the nature,
- keep all the garbage you produce with you and dispose of it in an appropriate place.



Many people like to stroll through forests and pick mushrooms - a traditional activity, but reserved for good connoisseurs of mushrooms. If you're one of those connoisseurs, don't take plastic bags - **use baskets or mesh bags and contribute to spread the spores through the forest** - a small but significant way of giving back for that that nature offers you.





## SUPPORT



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