

## **The spoonbill returns to Laguna Primera de Palos sixty years later**

- **Nests with hatchlings of this bird were detected weeks ago by biologists who collaborate with Fundación Cepsa, calling it an environmental landmark**
- **The Delegation of Sustainable Development of the Regional Government of Andalusia highlights the development as the successful result of public-private collaboration**
- **More than 90% of the breeding population of this endangered species in Spain is located in Andalusia, mostly in Doñana**
- **Once the breeding process comes to an end, Fundación Cepsa will perform maintenance work to continue promoting biodiversity in this area**

Fundación Cepsa's project to restore and protect Laguna Primera de Palos is undergoing an environmental landmark. The natural park, adjacent to the industrial facilities and recovered by the energy company more than 20 years ago, has seen breeding of pairs of spoonbills, a bird whose historic colony disappeared from the area of Laguna Primera de Palos 60 years ago. Since then, there has only been one case of nesting in the natural park, but it was not successful.

Nests with baby spoonbills were detected weeks ago by biologists who collaborate with Fundación Cepsa, which is in charge of maintaining the area. From that moment on, a nest monitoring plan was activated to determine if the breeding was successful. Jesús Velasco, head of Fundación Cepsa in Andalusia, calls the return of the spoonbill a landmark event. "The spoonbill is an endangered species; we know that more than 90% of its breeding population in Spain is located in Andalusia, mostly in Doñana, followed by Marismas del Odiel. In recent years, the population has been decreasing due to the retreat of wetlands and increased water pollution. This circumstance gives us valuable information about the success of the works performed at our lagoon and encourages us to continue working to improve the natural environment that coexists in harmony with our industrial facilities in Huelva."

The territorial delegate of Sustainable Development, José Enrique Borrallo, expressed his satisfaction: "We are proud that a public-private partnership can produce examples of biodiversity as important as this one. The management entrusted to the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development of Laguna de Palos y Las Madres Natural Park has shown significant

progress over the past two decades with the support of Cepsa and its Foundation.”

Borrallo explained that “the monitoring and conservation work of the breeding colonies of spoonbills in the Marismas del Odiel Natural Park has provided for recolonization of different enclaves on the Iberian Peninsula. The spoonbill has been reproducing for some years at the Dunas del Odiel heritage site, and now some specimens are making their way toward Laguna Primera de Palos.”

The Regional Ministry recently conducted a monitoring flight and survey of the breeding situation and confirmed the presence of a mixed colony in Laguna de Palos with six spoonbill nests living alongside the purple heron, squacco heron, glossy ibis, cattle egret, and little egret.

Fundación Cepsa, in collaboration with the Delegation for Sustainable Development of the Regional Government of Andalusia in Huelva, has worked for years to improve the reception capacity for aquatic birds. This work, as well as the creation of shallow areas and islands to facilitate breeding and protect them from predators such as wild boars, foxes and, particularly, feral dogs, has been pursued with the advice of expert biologists and has culminated in these nesting sites.

Over the years, these actions have turned Laguna Primera de Palos into an attractive area for birds. The islands created have been vital for the regular breeding of rails, ducks, terns, white-faced geese and herons, such as the imperial and little bittern.

The spoonbill is a wading bird. It inhabits shallow wetlands where it scours the water using its sensitive beak, whose shape gives it its name, in search of small fish and invertebrates. The species is very susceptible to disturbances and therefore nests in inaccessible places. Once the breeding period is over, towards the end of July, they migrate southwards along the Andalusian and Moroccan coasts until they reach Mauritania and Senegal (about 3,000 km away), where they remain until December.

Fundación Cepsa has decided to wait until breeding has finished to carry out pending maintenance work, which will further improve the site to increase its biodiversity and eliminate invasive species.

**Fundación Cepsa** is a general interest, nonprofit entity whose aim is 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, environmental, and scientific-educational.

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