

Fundación Cepsa Favors Presence of Endangered Species at Laguna Primera

- **Bird monitoring work in Laguna detects three endangered species**
- **The conservation of two significant wetlands in terms of biodiversity, Laguna Primera de Palos and the Madre Vieja Environmental Station (San Roque, Cádiz), mark its commitment to sustainability**

The avifauna monitoring work that Fundación Cepsa has been carrying out in Laguna Primera de Palos since 2001, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Sustainable Development of the Regional Government of Andalusia, has once again detected the presence of three highly endangered species. The species in question are the Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), the Red-Knobbed Coot (*Fulica cristata*) and the Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*), all of which are listed as critically endangered in Andalusia.

The Ferruginous Duck is considered the most endangered member of the Anatidae family in Spain. Their populations have declined sharply in recent decades where currently breeding fewer than ten pairs throughout the Peninsula. Sightings of this species, which nested in Laguna Primera until 1993, and maintained its presence since then, stopped for the first time in 2019, and in 2020 it was once again censused during the summer in groups of up to 5 specimens.

Meanwhile, the Red-Knobbed Coot is one of the most endangered waterfowl species in Europe. Spain is home to the only European population, and the total number of breeding pairs is estimated to be between 10 and 25. Most of them are found in a few wetlands in western Andalusia, particularly in the Guadalquivir marshes and in some lagoons in Cadiz, where they breed. In Laguna Primera de Palos it was frequent until 2009, although since then its presence has been very scarce, appearing on rare occasions. After three years with no sightings, it was observed again in 2020, although only one specimen during the spring.

Both species share the need for free-flowing, relatively deep wetlands with abundant vegetation, both marsh and submerged. Most of the diet consists of bottom vegetation but also includes a multitude of invertebrates such as worms, mollusks, insects and even small tadpoles. The worsening of water quality due to excess fertilizers and the presence of exotic species, such as carp, are among the main causes of the decline in the populations of these two birds.

Also in the news is the observation of the Black Tern. It is a very rare tern in Spain, where there are currently an estimated 40 breeding pairs. Its distribution is irregular

and is mainly centered in the Guadalquivir marshes, La Mancha lagoons and the Ebro delta. It is a migratory species that has its wintering grounds on the west coast of sub-Saharan Africa.

Laguna Primera de Palos is an important center of biodiversity on the coast of Huelva. In addition to the group of species mentioned above, there is also the constant presence of the Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*), a species also catalogued as "Critically Endangered". During 2020, a total of 35 bird species with some degree of threat were observed in this natural area.

Laguna Primera de Palos

The Laguna Primera de Palos lagoon is included in the Network of Protected Areas of the regional government of Andalusia and classified as a Nature Reserve. Since 2005, it has also had a RAMSAR classification (Convention for the Conservation of Wetlands of International Importance). The lagoon is located for practical purposes on the site owned by Cepsa, which partnered with the Andalusian regional government in 2000 to restore the marshland designated by law as a Protected Area. This area is a reference for biological diversity and recovery of vulnerable species in Spain. Since its restoration, Cepsa and its foundation have continuously done research, maintenance and public use work there. It was the first time in Spain that an energy company had participated in an initiative like this and was committed to the recovery and rehabilitation of a natural area, leading policies of respect for the environment, commitment to the surroundings, promotion of environmental education and culture, and business sustainability.

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Fundación Cepsa

huelva@fundacioncepsa.com

Tel.: (34) 959 37 95 48 / 659 679 341

www.fundacioncepsa.com