



Restoration measures for the terrestrial habitat of Deserta Grande (LIFE95 NAT/P/000125)

Medidas para a Recuperação do Habitat Terrestre da Deserta Grande

Beneficiary : Parque Natural da Madeira - Autoridade Governamental
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Duration : 01-JAN-1996 -> 01-JAN-1999

Total Budget in € : 383.467

LIFE Contribution in € : 287.600 (75,00 %)

Description :

If the measures already taken on the islands for their conservation - eg designation of protected areas, implementation of management plans for certain species - are to be consolidated it is essential that these problems are addressed urgently before they have an irreversible impact on the species of flora and fauna.

This project therefore aims to stem the erosion of Deserta Grande and restore its floral diversity - in the first instance - by acting to save the floral communities that are out of reach of the herbivores and therefore still relatively intact. This will be supported by a greater assessment of the ecological, biological and geological characteristics of the islands and of the suitable restoration techniques to be used for small insular habitats. Finally, the introduced animals will be removed from the islands, where this is necessary for the conservation of the island's biological wealth and where it is practically feasible to do so.

Situated in the archipelago of Madeira, the 'desert' islands of 'Ile Chao', 'Deserta Grande' and 'Bugio' cover in total 1,423 ha. Being of volcanic origin, they are characterised by the following habitats: shallow bays, reefs and marine caves. They also harbour a very rich and ecologically important endemic flora as well as several important species of fauna such as the monk seal, the Desertas tarantula and numerous marine birds.

The introduction of mammals such as rabbits and goats to the islands at the time of their discovery has however led to the severe regression of its endemic flora and to heavy erosion along all coastlines. This is exacerbated by the

uneven orography of the islands which makes them particularly vulnerable to erosion and by the total absence of natural predators which would otherwise have controlled the populations of rabbits, goats and rats. This situation is now especially acute on Deserta Grande which is not only at risk ecologically but also structurally.

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