

# Lands of Priolo

A secret to be discovered, Nature in an unforgettable experience

Natura2000 areas in São Miguel island hold several endemic and threatened species and habitats. Lands of Priolo is a catchier designation for the only territory in the world where the Azores Bullfinch (or Priolo) exists. One of the rarest birds in Europe and one of the few successful conservation stories worldwide. **Communication, promotion of tourism and environmental education also had an important role in the conservation of this species. Communicating about results, but also about the benefits of conservation; such as socioeconomic benefits and ecosystem services.**

The Priolo's Environmental Center increased the communication capability of the project. This center provides information for visitors in the Protected Area and promotes educational activities for schools and local population. More than 10.000 students participate in activities reaching all the schools in the island.

Since 2012 this territory holds the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism, joining cultural and heritage assets to the natural values. This also allowed to promote and improve visitation to the area and to involve local touristic companies in the sustainable planning of tourism for the territory. In this process, the Priolo Brand was created to symbolize the commitment with sustainability and conservation in the protected area.



## AZORES, PORTUGAL

Special Protection Area of Pico da Vara / Ribeira do Guilherme; Nordeste and Povoação councils, São Miguel island, Azores, Portugal.

## LOCATION

*Communicating the natural values of the Lands of Priolo to locals and visitors as part of the conservation efforts to save a priority species, the Azores Bullfinch (Priolo), through the recovery and protection of their natural habitat - São Miguel Laurel Forest.*

## OUTCOMES/RESULTS

- 1 First Species action plan for the Azores Bullfinch;
- 2 Increase of the SPA and a new SCI for the habitats of the protected area  
Training and establishment of a qualified team specialized in controlling invasive alien species with a team of 22 full time (at the present);
- 3 Priolo interpretation center with an average of 3000 visitors/year;

SPECIES CONSERVATION  
AZORES BULLFINCH  
PRIOLO  
HABITAT PROTECTION

## KEY WORDS

**4** First European Charter for Sustainable Tourism for the portuguese islands  
Promotion of strong public awareness campaign for the conservation of Priolo and the Laurissilva habitat through the development of activities in the intervention area and workshops or thematic lectures, and also through the creation of the project logo, projects internet sites, among others, always aiming a strong commitment between the public and the conservation work;

**5** Ensure the continuity and sustainability of the measures through the engagement with the local/regional administration and the local population, increasing the awareness leading to change the behavior amongst the stakeholders and the public economically and/or traditionally linked to this territory  
Schools program reaching more than 2000 students each year;

**6** More than 200 mentions in regional, national and international press media  
Action plan for sustainable Tourism with 55 actions developed with the help of 100 persons/organizations/companies;

**7** 40 tourism related businesses with the Priolo Brand ;

**8** Educational and information materials (leaflets, brochures, touristic guides);

**9** Several videos about the conservation work and natural values;

**10** more than 10 scientific papers, 5 master thesis and several scientific reports;

**11** more than 30 lectures in scientific events.

## MORE INFORMATION

In terms of tourism development, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism application allowed us to promote a common development goal and put several entities working in the same direction.  
Press disclosure of the projects has allowed the Priolo and the Lands of Priolo to be more known in regional, national and even international scale, and this translates in an increase of visitors to the area.

Communication about the species, habitats and conservation efforts brought the Priolo and Priolo Lands to the attention of public, students, local population and stakeholders and international conservation audience. This increase the pressure to assure the conservation of natural values and the appropriation of these values by the local population.

This work results from three LIFE projects funded by the European commission through LIFE program and cofunded from Azores regional government and other local partners (LIFE Priolo 2003-2008; LIFE+ Laurissilva Sustentável 2009-2012; LIFE+ Terras do Priolo 2013-2018).



Priolo branding

Activities with schools



**These projects' communication strategy had several target audiences and different tools were used for each of them:**

**School community** – A complete environmental education program was developed for all levels of basic education (from pre-school to 12th year) and it included activities adapted to the learning curriculum of each year. This way school children would get information about Natura 2000 conservation and benefits while learning concepts relevant for their education programme. The Environmental Education programme was designed with the contribution of teachers through several workshops. Also a teacher education program was developed with several teacher training activities developed through the years.

**Local population** – Local population was aimed through press but also through an activities and volunteering program with more than 20 activities per year that allowed locals (and sometimes visitors) to participate and learn about conservation activities taking places in the SPA for the Azores bullfinch.

**Visitors** – Priolo Environmental Centre, opened in 2007, was specifically aimed to inform visitors to the protected area about the natural value and conservation actions that are taking place. Also some information leaflets were produced about the Azores bullfinch, the priority habitats and the Ecosystem Services provided by the SPA. Later, in 2011, with the application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, a touristic guide and website not only to the SPA but for all the Lands of Priolo was produced as well as some other touristic information.

**Press** – Communication strategy of these projects had an important target on press. It was important to produce news on the projects and its achievements. Some of the actions of the project, like Priolo's Atlas, counted with invited journalists to report on them, but day-to day work and achievements were communicated by press releases produced by the project team.

**Touristic companies** – The application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) in the Lands of Priolo, allowed to involve touristic companies at a higher level than previously. Before 2011, touristic companies and guides had been involved through specific activities (show visits) and trainings but with the ECST they were invited to cooperate in the development of an action plan for sustainable tourism in the area and to be directly involved in conservation and sustainability through Priolo Brand compromises. In terms of stakeholders efforts were put into building a trust relationship with advantages for both parts.

**Stakeholders** – Project stakeholders were more personally approached. They were involved through regular project executive meetings in which relevant policy making information was discussed, but they were also approached individually when a certain policy or executive action was needed on their area of competence. In terms of stakeholders efforts were put into building a trust relationship with advantages for both parts.

LESSONS LEARNED

According to the guidelines the LIFE program and the own environmental policy of SPEA, the Priolo projects are governed by a set of good environmental practices, which we hope that may serve as an example not only to project level developed in the EU but also at international level.

1 The recovery of a priority habitat that will not only protect the target species of the project, but also a number of species of flora and fauna with unfavorable conservation status and valuable ecosystem services

2 Combining different types of communication tools helps reach a wider audience and increase the results

3 Creation of promotion materials and awareness campaigns are a great significance for the dissemination of the project and to increase the knowledge of the general population about this habitat and its main threats, allowing the continued involvement of the population, crucial to ensure the preservation of natural resources.

4 Monitoring actions, evaluation and active dissemination of results and lessons learned are crucial to engage stakeholders and population developing the basis for a long term sustainable management of the territory and its natural value

## FURTHER INFORMATION

### Websites:

- Projeto LIFE Terras do Priolo: <http://life-terrasdopriolo.spea.pt>
- Environmental Center do Priolo: <http://centropriolo.spea.pt>
- CETS Terras do Priolo: <http://www.azores.gov.pt/GRA/srrn-cets>
- Website educational: <http://umaflorestaumfuturo.spea.pt>

### Leaflets

- [Priolo, tesouro da Tronqueira - Tríptico \(PT/ ENG\)](#)
- [Laurissilva, um fóssil vivo – Tríptico \(PT/ ENG\)](#)
- [Turfeiras, fonte de água – Tríptico \(PT/ ENG\)](#)
- [Habitats naturais, proteção e bem-estar – Tríptico \(PT/ ENG\)](#)

### Laymans reports:

[Non-technical Report LIFE Priolo, portuguese and english versions](#)

### Education

Uma floresta, um futuro - Caderno de atividades (5-8 anos)  
 Uma floresta, um futuro - Caderno de atividades (9-12 anos)  
 Uma floresta, um futuro - Caderno de atividades (13-16 anos)  
 Glossário - <http://umaflorestaumfuturo.spea.pt/static/pdf/glossario.pdf>  
 À descoberta da Laurissilva | Caderno do aluno  
 A Rota da Água  
 O Valor dos Ecossistemas  
 Insetos da minha Escola  
 Aves da minha Escola

### Tourism

[Guia "Terras do Priolo" \(Bilingue\)](#)

### Some news

["Protecting the Priolo" - magazine Birdwatch - Abril 2008](#)  
["Um ícone turístico" - magazine Azorean Spirit Julho-Setembro - 2008](#)  
["A site for Azoreeyes" - magazine BirdWatching - Dezembro 2008](#)  
["Em busca do pássaro que só voa nos Açores" - newspaper Expresso Il Atlas do Priolo.](#)

### Videos

[Priolo: de Perseguido a Protegido \(2008\) - RTP – 28 min.](#)  
["Os últimos Priolos" \(2008\) - sampler of the documentary \(3 min\) "Priolo nos Açores" \(2010\) – Luis Henrique Pereira \(RTP\) Documentary – 5 min](#)  
[Priolo - news from RTP Açores](#)  
[Priolo - crowdfunding](#)  
[Il Atlas do Priolo \(2012\)](#)

### Stamps

["O Priolo" - emissão filatélica dos CTT - Maio 2008](#)

5 Working with tourism is a good option to show direct benefits to local population and increase the pressure to the conservation of natural values

6 Communication about different benefits from conservation of natural areas increase the pressure to maintain natural values by population and stakeholders (ecosystem services).

LESSONS LEARNED

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