



  
GRANDE  
VALE DO CÔA  
PORTUGAL



# Rewilding for Connectivity in the Greater Côa Valley

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# Rewilding Portugal

- Created in January 2019 and based in Guarda, Portugal
- Working in partnership with Rewilding Europe on the Greater Côa Valley rewilding area.
- Mission: Landscape-scale rewilding - restoring trophic chains, natural processes, and supporting local communities

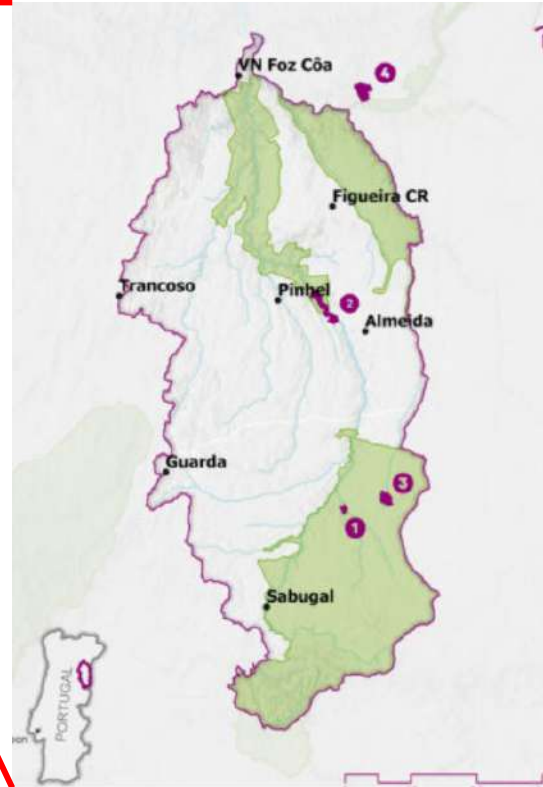
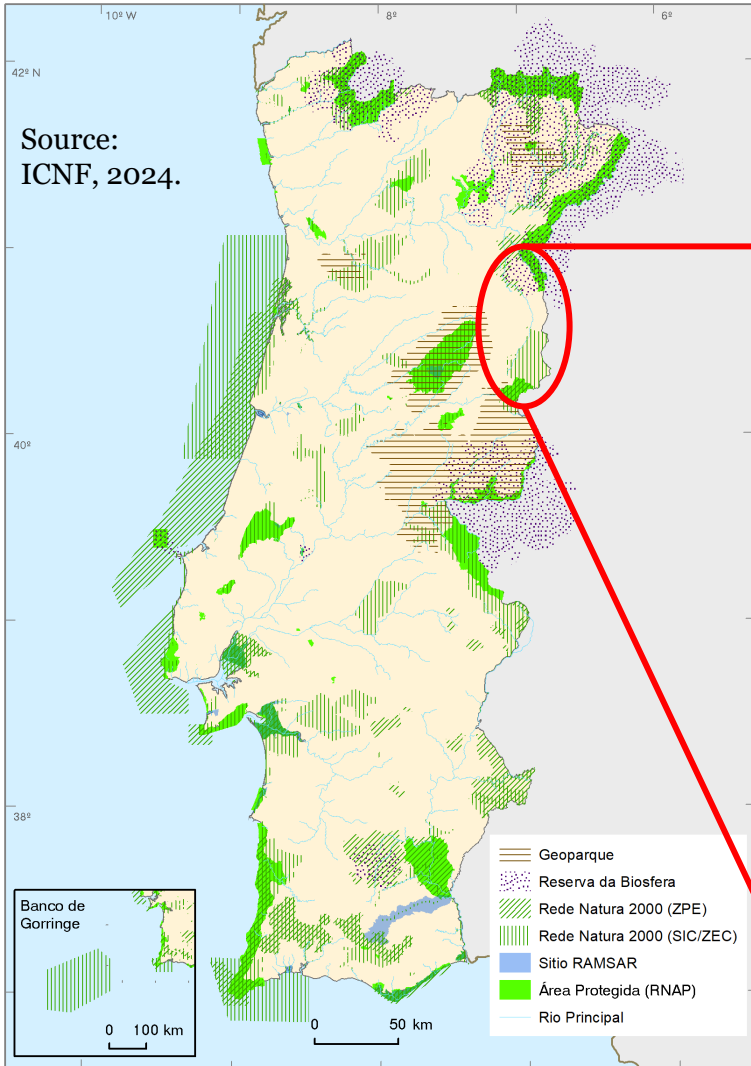


# Rewilding Europe's Network

- Eleven rewilding landscapes across Europe
- A continental joint effort to demonstrate the impact of rewilding at landscape level



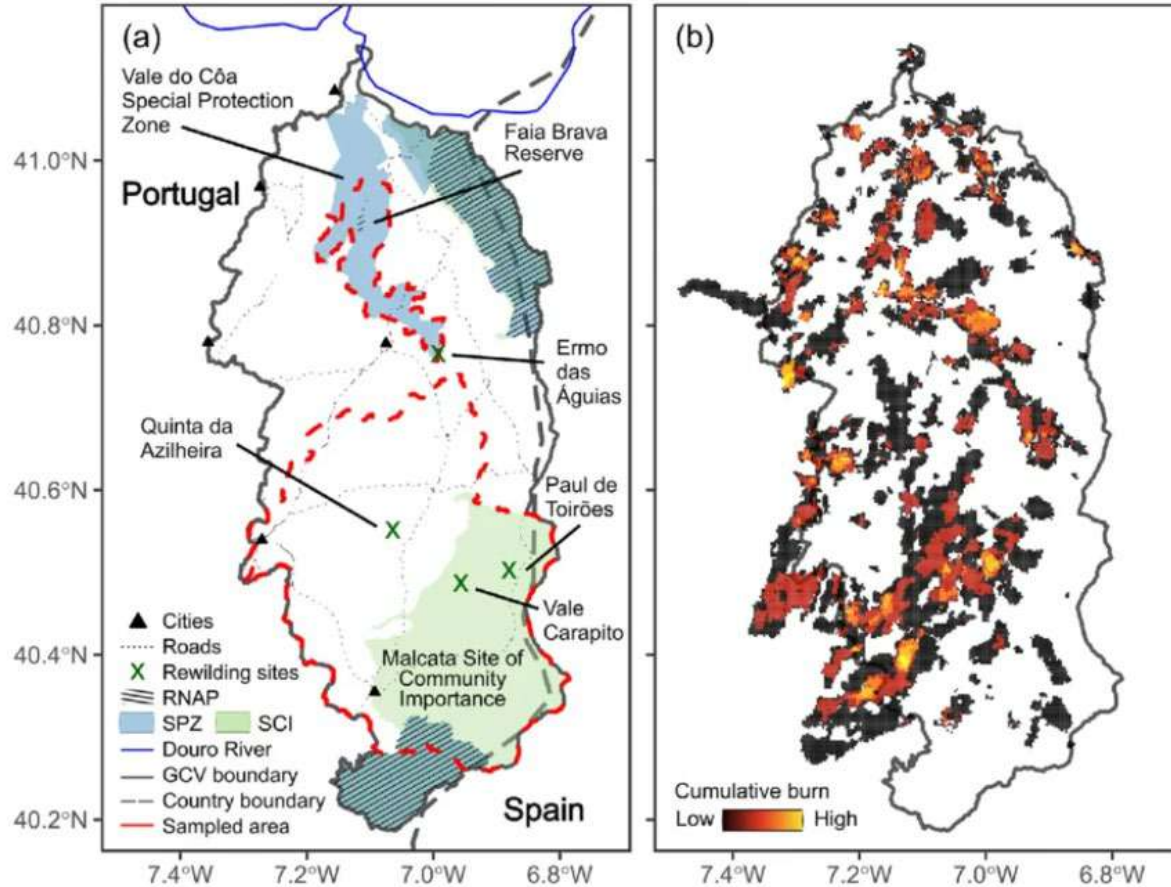
# Greater Côa Valley



- **318,000 hectares**
- **Watershed of Côa River**
- **Mostly privately owned**
- **Natural wildlife corridor**

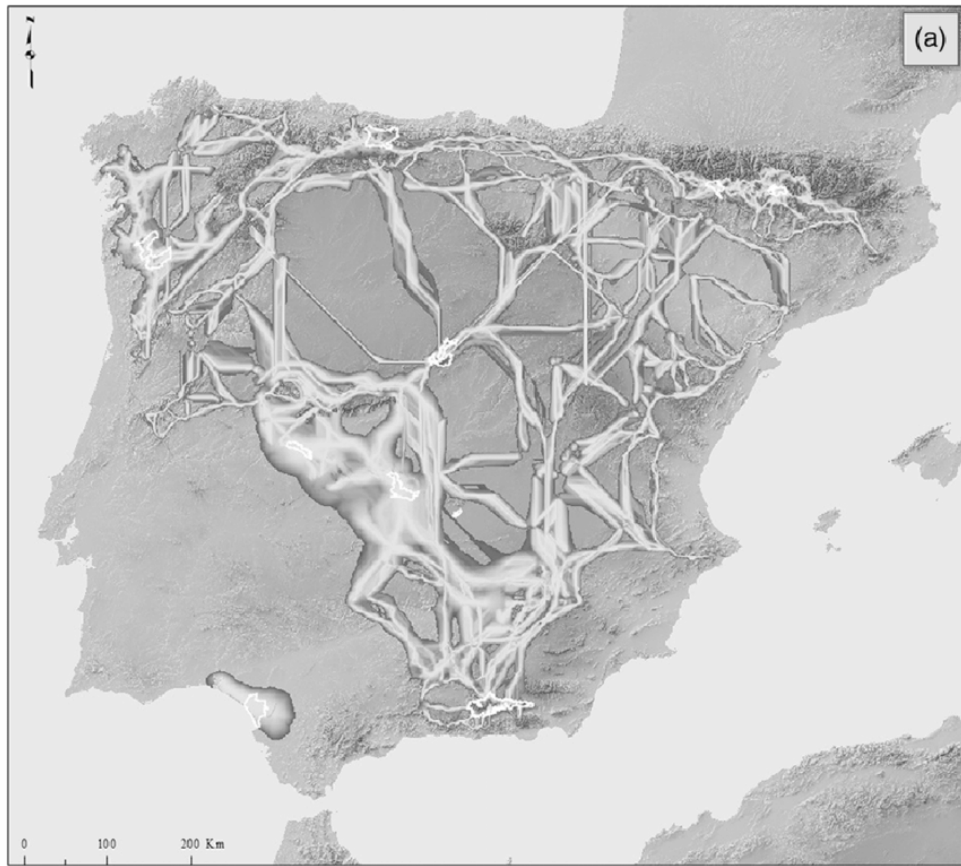


# Wildfire prone landscape



Map of the Greater Côa Valley, showing a **cumulative area burned by fires**, indicated by a black (single burning event) to yellow gradient (eight fire events), between 2001 and 2020, and b details of the study area.



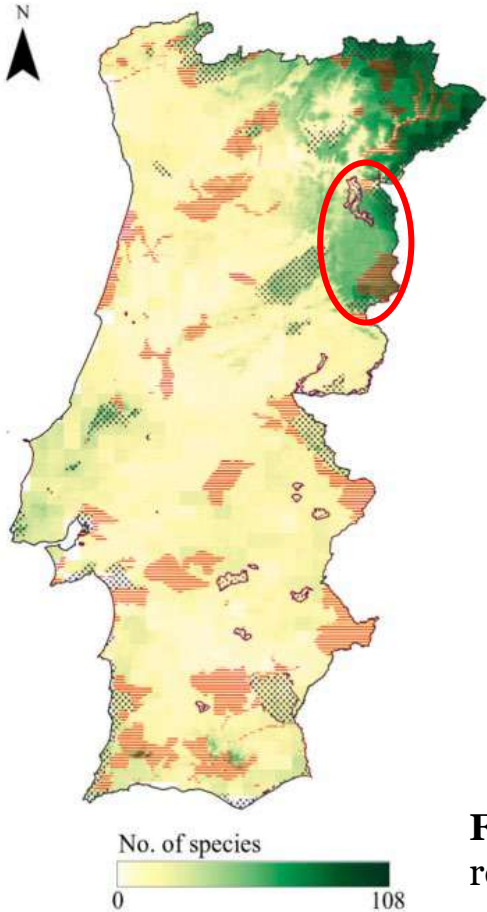


# Climate Corridors

Climatically representative areas across Iberian national parks are projected to decline by around 89% of their current extent under future climate scenarios.

If species cannot move to track shifting climate conditions, protected areas alone cannot sustain them

Source: Mingarro, Mario & Lobo, Jorge. (2021). Connecting protected areas in the Iberian peninsula to facilitate climate change tracking. *Environmental Conservation*. 48. 1-10. [10.1017/S037689292100014X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S037689292100014X).



# Climate Corridors in Portugal

“...projected to function as both a **range retention refugium**, where species currently present can continue to persist, and a **displacement refugium**, where species arriving from further south will need to establish as conditions shift.”

**Fig. 6 (partial).** Species richness of vertebrates showing climate retention patterns (left), calculated for the course of the 21st century



# Private land

- Hundreds of small parcels with multiple owners
- Complicates restoration and enforcement of laws and regulations
- Existing policy tools and agri-environmental incentives lack the scale, duration, or clarity needed to foster unified action among diverse landholders.



# Rewilding as a Connectivity Strategy

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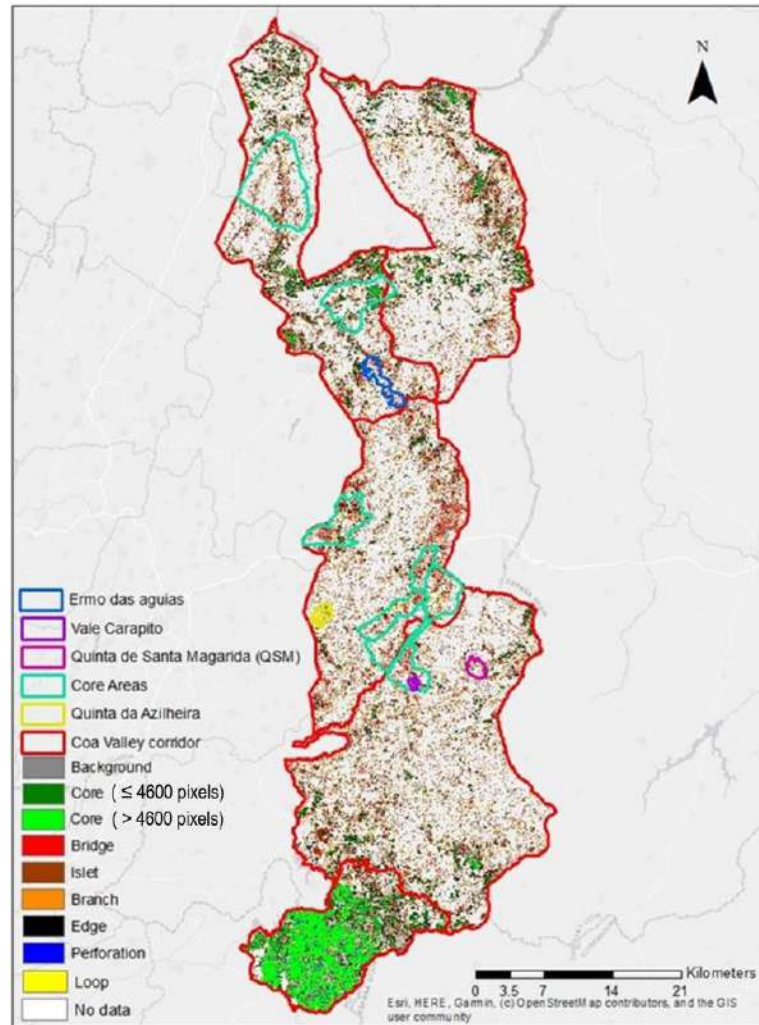
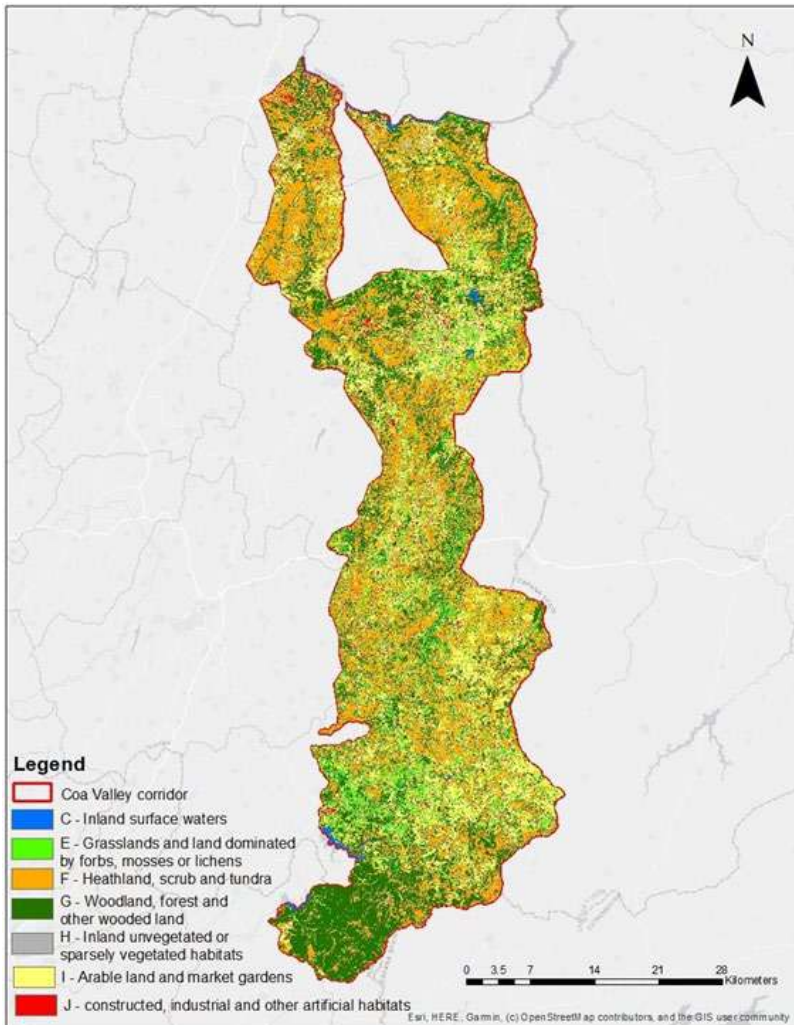
## Land Acquisition & Agreements

Stepping stone sites chosen in a constrained environment — often opportunistically.

## Natural Grazing

Sorraia horses and Tauros create mosaic structure — open grassland between woodland — supporting movement and reducing fire risk.





Source: <https://www.endangeredlandscapes.org/our-impact/monitoring-hub/habitat-connectivity/>

# What Connectivity Looks Like When It Starts Working

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## Roe Deer

Range expansion documented by University of Aveiro — measurable evidence of improving landscape permeability across the GCV.

## Red Deer

Documented northward expansion into the Greater Côa Valley

## Iberian Wolf

Dispersing individuals moving across the Greater Côa Valley — indicating landscape permeability even for large carnivores.

## Iberian Lynx

Confirmed use of underpasses beneath the A25 motorway — demonstrating that targeted infrastructure can maintain connectivity across major transport barriers.

## Cinereous Vulture

Colony in Malcata connects the Tejo and Douro populations, providing direct evidence of the GCV functioning as a live corridor for wide-ranging species.



**Looking to the future**

Rewilding  
Portugal



Thank you

