



LATVIANATURE



Together for Nature: Merging Public and Private Efforts



Rīga, Latvia
September 25-26
2025



📍 Nature park "Adamovas ezers"
📷 Vladislavs Kundziņš



Citizenship as a Key Element in Tackling Invasive Alien Species

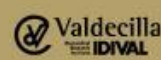
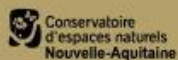
Laura Capdevila Argüelles

***Voluntary Contributions to Habitat and
Species Management***





Our target species is
Cortaderia selloana



Cortaderia selloana (Pampas grass)

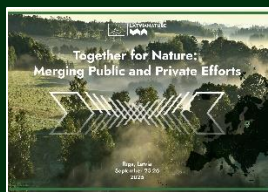


- *Cortaderia selloana* is probably the best-known invasive plant in the Atlantic Arc.
- Native to South America. Introduced into Europe as an ornamental plant.

Cortaderia selloana (Pampas grass)



Pampas grass displays a strong invasive character, as observed in diverse locations such as North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Europe.




In Europe, it is
present as an
invasive species
in Atlantic Arc
countries






It has the ability to modify the habitat by forming dense stands that compete effectively with native flora:
IT IS A TRANSFORMING SPECIES

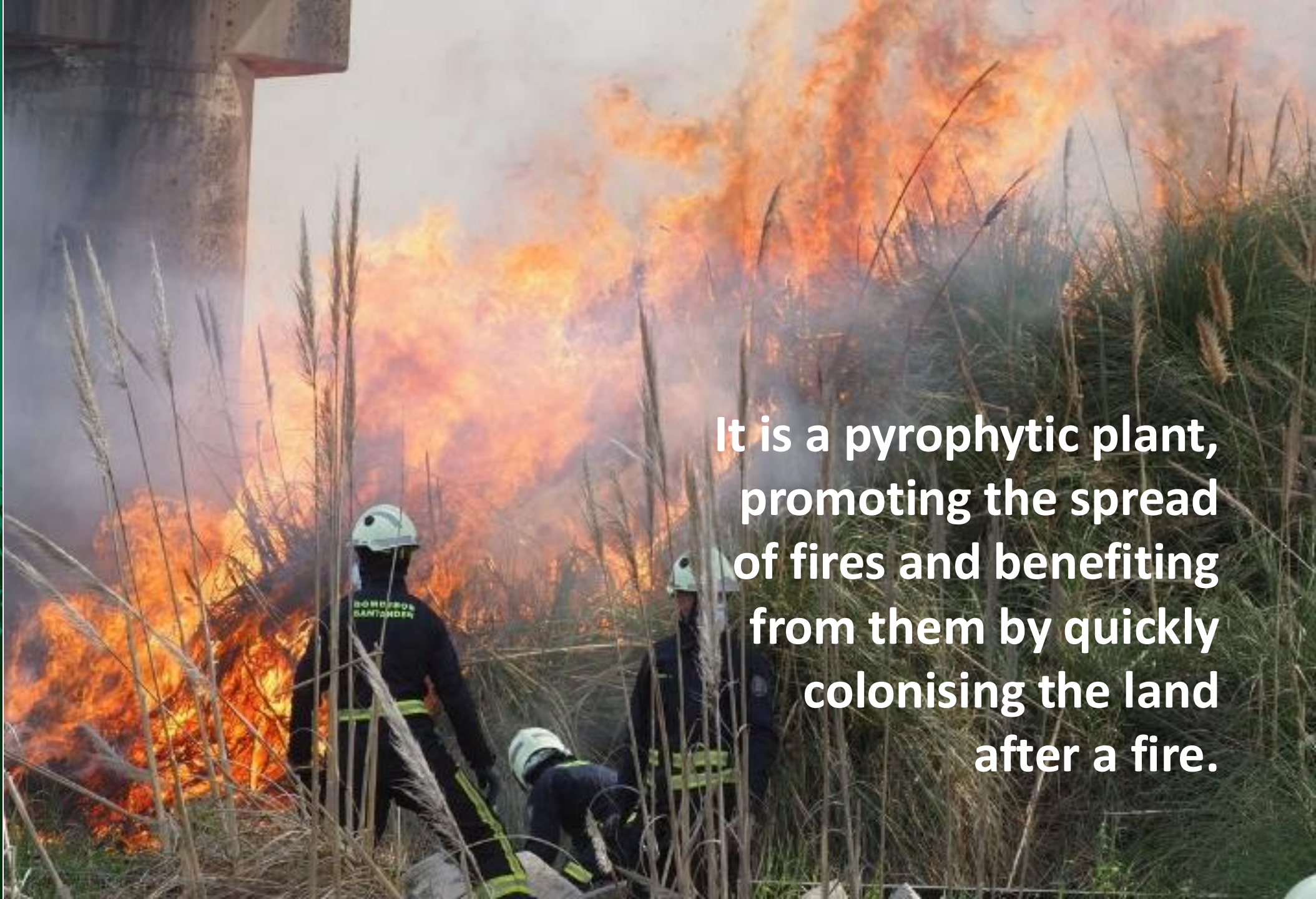




Pampas grass forms monospecific masses that almost completely exclude other vegetation.

A person wearing a yellow safety vest, green pants, and a helmet with a face shield is using a chainsaw to clear a path through dense vegetation. The path is made of brown mulch or wood chips. The vegetation consists of tall, thin, green and brown grasses (Pampas grass) and several trees with green leaves. The scene is outdoors, likely in a park or natural area.

Pampas grass forms monospecific masses that almost completely exclude other vegetation.

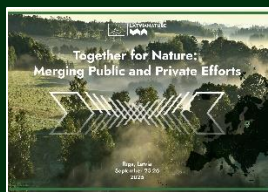


It is a pyrophytic plant,
promoting the spread
of fires and benefiting
from them by quickly
colonising the land
after a fire.



It also has an impact on health as it is an allergenic species that causes a second peak in allergies in autumn.





Pampas grass **reproduces by seeds**, which can be carried by the **wind** for miles. Therefore, to stop its spread, it is crucial **to remove** not only **large areas of pampas grass**, but also **isolated specimens** or **small groups** that are sometimes hidden.





LIFE Coop Cortaderia Project

The Life Coop Cortaderia project unites **11 partners from Spain, France and Portugal** with one clear goal: to clear at least **1,000 hectares** of land invaded by *Cortaderia* and **restore the affected ecosystems.**



SOCIOS
COFINANCIADORES



red eléctrica

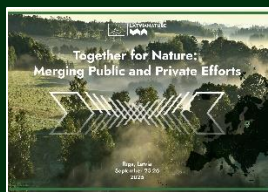


LIFE Coop Cortaderia Project



However, this goes far beyond simply eliminating an invasive plant.

Our goal is to mobilise everyone involved — administrations, companies, associations and citizens — to stop the spread of *Cortaderia* and recover the territory.



Why?

Because no one can solve this problem alone. It is a collective challenge.





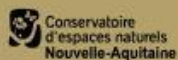
And this is where volunteering becomes essential



Environmental volunteering is more than just work: it's direct action, education and participation. This is what makes it so valuable.

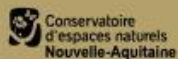


For us, volunteers are more than just helping hands.





We take great care designing activities of our volunteers. We focus on the ultimate goal:
conserving and restoring habitats degraded by the presence of *Cortaderia selloana*.



Our actions fall into two main groups:

- Recovery of environments invaded by *Cortaderia*: eradication and restoration.
- Prevention of the spread of the *Cortaderia*: cutting inflorescences; detection of *Cortaderia* specimens.

Let's look at some examples.





Recovery of habitats invaded by *Cortaderia*

Some habitats are not targeted by our Life project, yet they are invaded by *Cortaderia* (urban environments, for example).

The presence of Pampas grass in these areas threatens nearby natural ecosystems



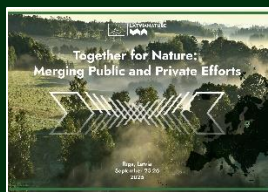
SEO BirdLife





For example, in our **reforestation** projects, volunteers first learn to **identify** the Pampas grass and **how to effectively remove it.**





Once removed, they plant native trees and shrubs, restoring the ecosystem.



The result?

- They learn real-world **ecological restoration techniques**.
- They see the **before-and-after of the landscape** with their own eyes, which is **highly motivating**.



In other types of activities, for example, we **create amphibian ponds in urban areas** with small areas invaded by pampas grass.





We collectively remove all the *Cortaderia* specimens and build the pond in the area that was invaded by the species.



The result?

- Volunteers learn to recognize the species and avoid planting it in private gardens;
- They learn how to properly remove them;
- And, finally, they build a small wetland, helping to **re-naturalize the city**.





They see the before-and-after of the landscape with their own eyes, which is **highly motivating.**

Prevention of pampas grass spread

Cortaderia spread can be prevented by cutting the inflorescences.

Preventing the spread of *Cortaderia*: cutting inflorescences

We carry out this action at a very specific time: **the end of summer**. By this time, *Cortaderia* has already **flowered**, but has not yet produced seeds. In this case, our actions with volunteers **focus on cutting the inflorescences to prevent future seed dispersal**.



TARGET AUDIENCE:

These types of initiatives are aimed at social organizations that work with **people with disabilities**, companies that provide corporate volunteering, and the general public.



Many of our volunteering programmes involve people with disabilities. And I want to highlight something important: with the right training, they are just as effective as anyone else. **One thing that sets them apart is their admirable motivation and commitment.**





A good example of this can be found in **our forestry teams**, which are made up entirely of **people with disabilities** who are working to eradicate pampas grass. This adds an extra value, that of social inclusion, to our environmental project.

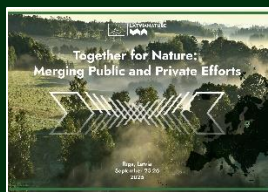




Their work proves that inclusion is both possible and necessary.

And their example becomes a powerful tool for the social integration of groups at risk of exclusion.





Citizen Science

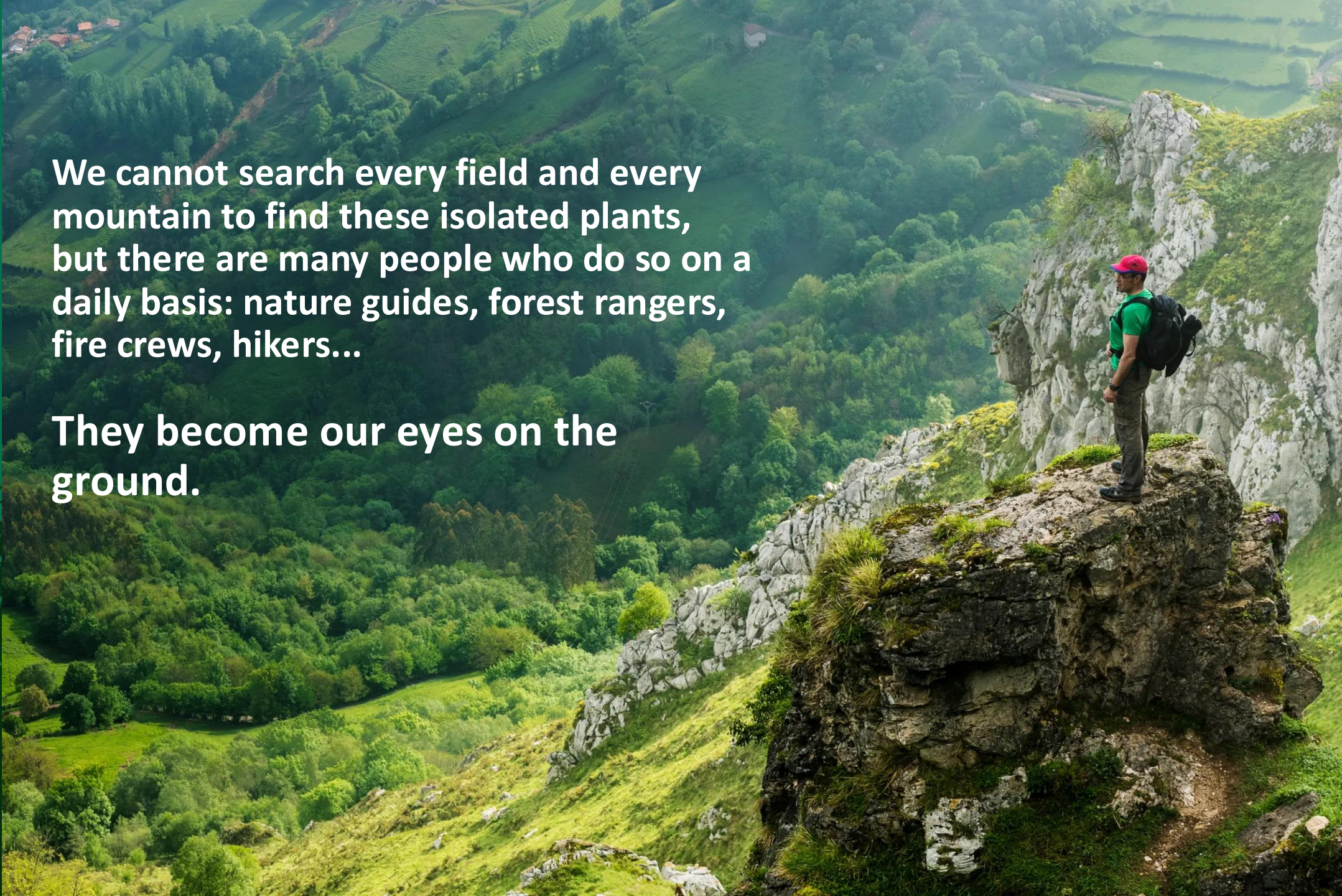
Detection of isolated *Cortaderia* plants

The seeds of pampas grass can fly many kilometers. This is why they appear in the most unexpected places or where they are difficult to find.



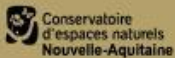
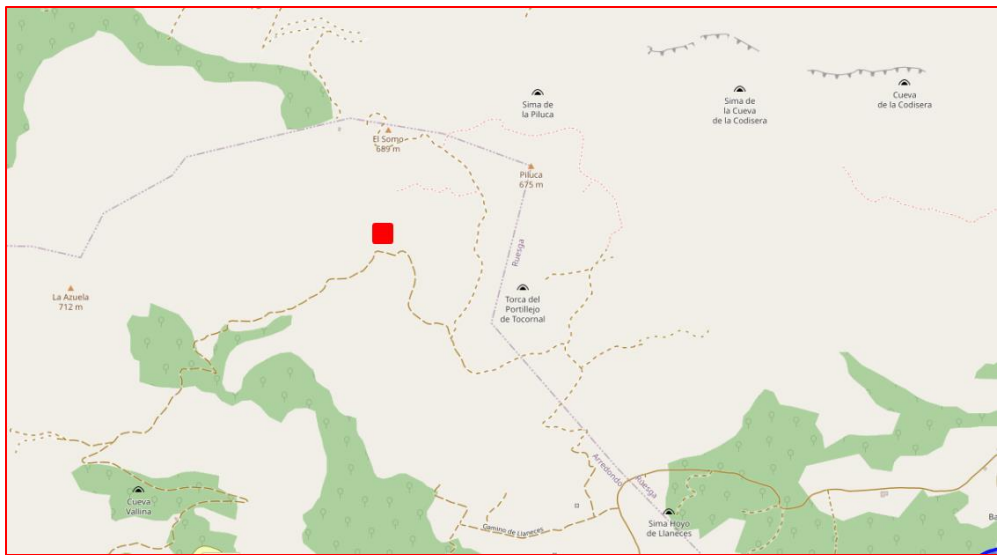
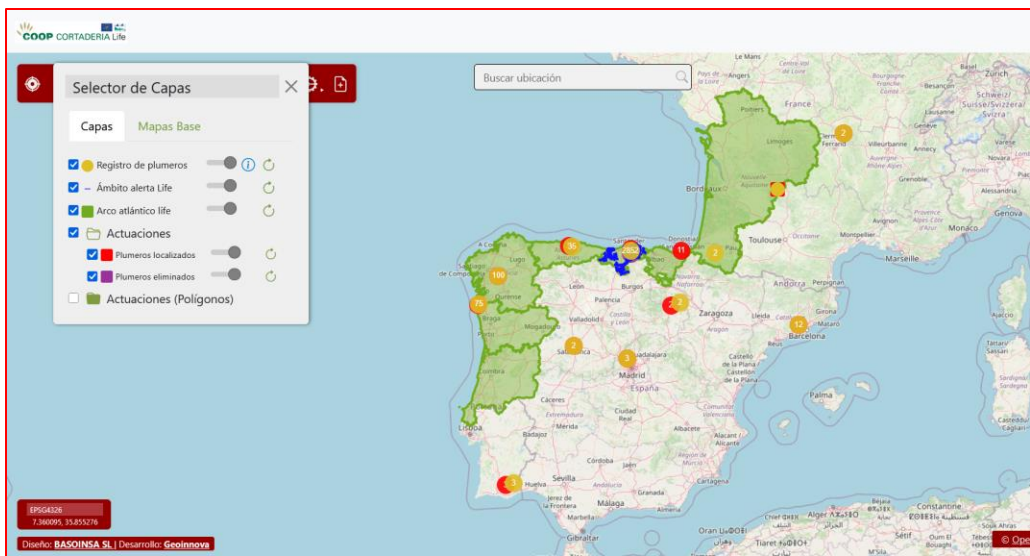
We cannot search every field and every mountain to find these isolated plants, but there are many people who do so on a daily basis: nature guides, forest rangers, fire crews, hikers...

They become our eyes on the ground.





We have a **citizen science platform** where anyone can register and locate these isolated plants using geolocation.





We organize volunteer days to learn how to use it and to search for isolated specimens.

Target Audience: Nature guides, forest rangers, mountain clubs, etc.





The most interesting aspect of these activities is that participants continue to collaborate when they venture out into nature.

Thanks to them, we can detect solitary specimens or small clusters before they become a major problem.

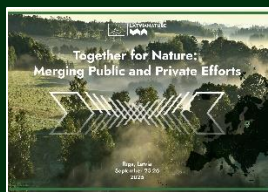


INVASIVE SPECIES WEEK

Every year, we co-organise the “Invasive Species Week (SEI)” in Spain and Portugal.

This event highlights the importance of citizen cooperation in tackling one of the greatest threats to biodiversity: **biological invasions**.





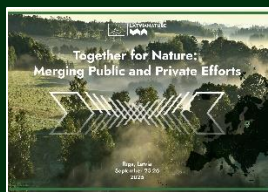
SEMANA SOBRE ESPECIES INVASORAS
PORTUGAL & ESPAÑA #SEI2025



During this week, **all kinds of voluntary activities** are carried out, including **detection, mapping, information campaigns,** as well as direct **management actions** for invasive species in **both countries.**

INVASIVE SPECIES WEEK





SEMANA SOBRE ESPECIES INVASORAS
PORTUGAL & ESPAÑA #SEI2025



This year's edition saw an impressive level of participation: **387 activities organised by 255 entities, with more than 7,800 people** directly involved.

Most importantly, we break records every year. **The number of activities, collaborating entities and participants is growing year on year.** The SEI has firmly established itself as a key event on the Iberian Peninsula with growing visibility.

INVASIVE SPECIES WEEK



Beyond the Environment

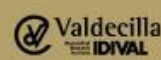
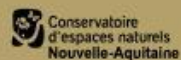
It's not only about removing a plant.
But also about **creating opportunities to educate, include people, and raise awareness.**

Volunteering = Participation + Learning + Social Transformation





We are not where we are
simply to take care of nature;
we are here to build a future
with it.





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Thank you very much for your attention!

Laura Capdevila Argüelles

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