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CABO VERDE

2025
SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER
NEWSLETTER



**REINTRODUCTION
OF THE CAGARRA
IN SANTA LUZIA**



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CABO VERDE

ASSOCIATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE

Commitment to conservation

In October, the General Assembly was held with the participation of the Board members and the Executive Management team. During the session, the 2023-2024 activity and financial report was presented, highlighting important achievements and the ongoing commitment to environmental conservation in Cabo Verde.

In order to reinforce this commitment, the following priorities were defined for the period 2025–2026:

- Intensify community involvement, recognising it as a pillar for the consolidation of conservation programmes;
- Prepare or develop a new strategy for 2026–2031;
- Strengthen the fundraising strategy, promoting the attraction of new funders and the diversification of funding mechanisms.
- Restructure the team to ensure greater efficiency and alignment with the organisation's strategic objectives.

The Board members gave a positive assessment of the results presented, recognising the progress made and the team's commitment to implementing the Biosfera's mission.



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REINTRODUCTION OF THE CAGARRA IN SANTA LUZIA

This achievement represents a historic step forward for conservation in Cabo Verde.

The reintroduction of the Cape Verde Shearwater (*Calonectris edwardsii*) on the island of Santa Luzia marks an important moment for the conservation of seabirds in the archipelago. This species, endemic to Cabo Verde, has faced several threats over the last few decades, from the presence of invasive species to human capture. Despite the challenges, the shearwater remains one of the most striking symbols of national biodiversity and an essential indicator of the health of ocean ecosystems.

Santa Luzia, part of the country's largest Marine Reserve, was once an important breeding ground for the shearwater. However, with the introduction of cats and rats, the colony disappeared, leaving the island silent for many years. Currently, the island is home to only one species of breeding seabird, the Cape Verde Storm-petrel (*Hydrobates jabejabe*), which is also endemic, but whose colony has not yet been located due to the presence of nests in inaccessible places. It is believed that these birds have moved to areas that are difficult to access as a form of protection against predation by cats, which until recently existed on the island.

The eradication of cats allowed for the start of an ecological restoration process in Santa Luzia. The first step was the reintroduction of the Raso lark, a species endemic to Raso islet, until 2018, which has been monitored through the creation of a specific monitoring programme. With the proven success of this first reintroduction and the continuous control of invasive species, it became possible to move towards a long-desired goal: the reintroduction of the shearwater on the island of Santa Luzia. To this end, artificial nests were installed to house the shearwater chicks.



“20 shearwater chicks transported from Raso islet to the island of Santa Luzia.”

In September 2025, the first translocation took place: 20 chicks from Raso islet were carefully transported to Santa Luzia and placed in artificial nests that had been prepared in advance. For several weeks, these chicks were hand-fed and monitored daily until they were ready to fly. The aim is that, by growing up on Santa Luzia, they will recognise the island as their birthplace and return in the future to breed. This process will be repeated consecutively over the next three years, thus increasing the chances of a new breeding colony forming on the island.

This effort is part of a long-term strategy to restore Santa Luzia’s biodiversity. Although the island is close to the Branco and Raso islets, two of Cabo Verde’s most important seabird hotspots, it currently has no stable colonies of these species, except for a few nests of Cape Verde Storm-petrel (*Hydrobates jabejabe*) in hard-to-reach places. In the past, Santa Luzia was home to several seabird colonies, but they all disappeared due to the introduction of invasive species, a direct threat not only to birds but also to many endemic reptiles.

The reintroduction of the shearwater therefore represents a historic milestone and a clear sign of ecological recovery. This pioneering work, developed by Biosfera and its partners, reinforces the national commitment to conservation and demonstrates what can be achieved when science, local knowledge, dedication and collaboration come together.

It is hoped that, within a few years, Santa Luzia will once again hear the call of the shearwaters at dusk, a sound that will symbolise not only the return of the species, but also the ecological rebirth of the Santa Luzia Marine Reserve.



RASO LARK IS SYNONYMOUS WITH SUCCESS

In November 2025, the Biosfera team conducted another census of the Raso lark (*Alauda razae*) on the island of Santa Luzia, continuing to monitor the population reintroduced in 2018. This work is essential to understanding the evolution of the species and its process of adaptation to its new habitat over recent years.

For a week, the team traveled across the entire island, passing through valleys, dunes, and climbing mountains, making direct observations and counting individuals. Juveniles were recorded, as well as active nests with chicks and eggs, a very positive sign confirming that reproduction continues to occur successfully. In addition, territorial behaviors typical of the species were observed, reinforcing that the Raso lark is well established and gradually expanding its presence to new areas of the island.

This year’s results are particularly encouraging: the population was estimated at between 850 and 1,000 individuals, showing a trend of growth and consolidation after reintroduction. This census represents another important step in assessing the population dynamics of the Raso lark in Santa Luzia.

Biosfera reaffirms its commitment to protecting Cabo Verde’s biodiversity, especially in the Santa Luzia Marine Reserve and Branco and Raso islets, closely monitoring the future of our birds and ensuring the preservation of this unique natural heritage.

In 2025, the population of the Raso lark was estimated at between 850 and 1,000 individuals on the island of Santa Luzia.





SEA TURTLES

In 2025, we monitored more than 26 km of beaches to collect data (nests, tracks, rescues, etc.), including the Salamansa Hatchery, which had a hatching rate of 70.8%.

Santa Luzia, with around 2,895 nests and 5,812 tracks recorded, was our main nesting beach, where 30 adult turtles and 300 hatchlings were also rescued. Due to heavy rains in August, eight dead turtles were recorded.

In São Vicente, despite the smaller number of nests (245), several threats were recorded, such as illegal capture, attacks by dogs (7), and entanglement in fishing nets (13), highlighting the need for increased surveillance and awareness.

Monitoring green turtles in São Pedro Bay has enabled individuals to be identified and tagged, biological samples to be collected, and geolocators to be installed, which will

contribute to scientific knowledge about the bay area as a feeding and growth zone.

Despite it being an unusually low nesting season due to heavy rains across the country and logistical limitations, our teams managed to adapt to the challenges and remain steadfast in protecting the turtles.

To conclude the 2025 season, a meeting was held in December with monitors, volunteers, and partners such as the Simabo Animal Association, Volunturismo of São Vicente, the Nô Bai Association, the Turtle House, and the Calhau and Salamansa Fishermen's Associations, as well as members of the fishing communities, as a way of recognizing their contribution to the turtle protection season.

It was a challenging year, but even so, our teams managed to keep protecting the turtles, monitoring more than 26 km of beaches.

INNOVATION TO CONSERVE THE SEABED

The oceans are essential to life, contributing to the environmental, climatic, and biological balance of planet Earth. However, increased human activity and the adverse effects of climate change and marine pollution are threatening marine ecosystems, causing an unprecedented biodiversity crisis.

Despite the work of scientists, civil society organizations, and other authors, our knowledge of how marine ecosystems function is still quite limited. These limitations are even more evident in the deep ocean, which, despite representing more than 95% of the planet's habitable volume and being home to very important and extremely fragile ecosystems such as cold-water coral reefs, coral gardens, or sponge fields, it remains the least explored area of the planet and the one with the most limited information, especially in remote areas or developing countries.

As part of the BAIT Project, coordinated by the University of Aveiro, a seminar on innovative methods for mapping the seabed was held in October. This seminar addressed different tools and methods used to map the seabed, predict where these critical habitats are located, and measure human impact on them.

In addition to Biosfera, the seminar was also attended by technical and institutional partners such as the National Directorate for the Environment, the Technical University of the Atlantic (UTA), Terrimar – Environment and Sustainable Development, and Fauna & Flora.

Different tools and methods for mapping the seabed, predicting where these critical habitats are located, and measuring human impact on them.





A CLEANER SAO VICENTE (COMMUNITIES THAT CARE FOR THE SEA)

It was a busy year on our beaches and hillsides. As part of Biosfera’s “São Vicente d’Costa Limpe” project, we carried out 11 clean-up campaigns along the coast of São Vicente, with strong participation from coastal communities.

As a result, we mobilized more than 430 volunteers, who removed 4,450 kg of waste (4.4 tons) from our beaches and coastal areas, and 50 kg of marine debris, collected in an underwater operation in the community of São Pedro.

Of the campaigns carried out, five were in conjunction with the 1Mar d’Comunidade project—an initiative developed in partnership by Biosfera, APM, and P&D, coordinated by AECID, and funded by Spanish Cooperation, covering the communities of São Pedro, Calhau, Salamansa, and Lazareto. The project aims to strengthen the resilience, inclusion, and sustainability of the island’s coastal communities.

The involvement of schools, public and private institutions, partner organizations, and various volunteer groups, as well as the collaboration and direct, active participation of the local community, was essential to the success of the actions.

Although these results reveal an admirable collective effort, these actions remain mitigation measures, as they help keep beaches clean, protect turtle nesting sites, and minimize the accumulation of microplastics. However, the collected waste continues to be burned in open fires, which means that we need to improve waste management.

Even so, every action counts, reinforcing the importance of collective effort and community commitment to a cleaner, safer, and more resilient island.

11 cleanup campaigns, with strong participation from coastal communities, involving more than 430 volunteers, which resulted in the removal of 4,450 kg of waste.

“RECYCLE BOTTLE CAPS” EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

The campaign “Recycling Bottle Caps Means Caring for Our Planet” was launched by Biosfera in July 2025 with the aim of raising awareness among children, young people, and the general population about the importance of recycling. The initiative had a common goal: to promote plastic recycling and change environmental behaviors. Initially, the goal was to collect 10,000 plastic caps, but with everyone’s engagement, the number was far exceeded.

Our campaign took place on the islands of São Vicente, Santo Antão, Sal, Santiago, and Fogo, in collaboration with local NGOs Terrimar, Projeto Biodiversidade, Lantuna, and Projeto Vitó, where several collection points were set up. We had the support and participation of several partners and restaurants on the different islands. The campaign lasted six months, with a two-month interruption due to Storm Erin passing through Cabo Verde.

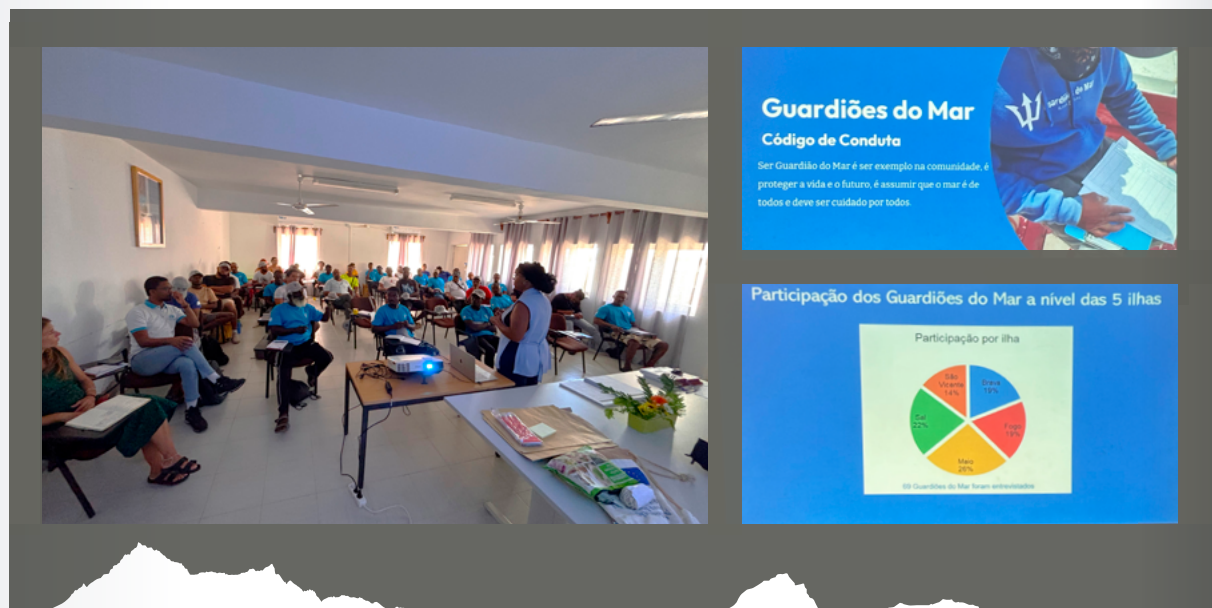
Also as part of the campaign, Biosfera organized an educational fair in front of its headquarters, involving around 150 children from five primary and secondary schools. Through educational games and a visit to Plasticina, the children were able to follow the journey of the bottle caps until they were transformed into useful objects, reinforcing the message of reuse and sustainability.

After this phase, the bottle caps will be sent for recycling at Biosfera’s plastic processing plant, Plasticina, where they will be transformed into new educational products. Our campaign has ended, but our commitment continues, because recycling means caring for the environment and ourselves.

The campaign is part of the #IlhasMais project, coordinated by SPEA, in partnership with Biosfera, with funding from the Camões Institute.

The main objective was to raise awareness among children, young people, and the general population, promoting plastic recycling and changing environmental behaviors.





GUARDIANS OF THE SEA – ETHICS AND ACTION

Throughout 2024–2025, a decisive step was taken to strengthen the Guardians of the Sea Program in Cabo Verde: the creation of the Code of Conduct and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), developed with support from the PaMAR/FFI Project.

Two consultants were hired to draft these structural documents, which will provide unified, ethical, and professional guidance for all Guardian activities in the country. After the technical preparation, a national workshop was held on Maio island, bringing together all the organizations that implement the Guardians of the Sea program on various islands. This meeting allowed for the analysis, validation, and adjustment of the content in accordance with existing practical experience, ensuring that the documents respond to both community needs and international conservation standards.

The Code of Conduct defines fundamental ethical principles such as responsibility, gender equality, respect for human rights, and commitment to conservation that should guide each Guardian. The SOPs organize the entire operation of the program, from recruitment and training to the standardized monitoring system, institutional coordination, national communication, and conflict management.

Although fully completed and validated, these documents are now in the preparation phase for future practical implementation in coastal communities. Their application will represent a milestone for the professionalization of the program and for strengthening community participation in the protection of Cabo Verde's marine ecosystems.

This Code defines fundamental ethical principles such as responsibility, gender equality, respect for human rights, and commitment to conservation that should guide every Guardian.



PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

In 2025, Biosfera reinforced its commitment to environmental education by carrying out various awareness-raising activities in schools and fishing communities on the island of São Vicente. To this end, 2,380 elementary school students were educated through visits to 32 schools, where topics such as seabirds, marine pollution, sea turtles, sustainable fishing, and the importance of protecting sharks and rays were addressed.

In addition, Biosfera was present at several community fairs - São Pedro, Salamansa, Calhau, and in the center of Mindelo, through the "1Mar D'Comunidade" project, a partnership between Biosfera, P&D, and APM, co-financed by Spanish cooperation (AECID). The purpose of the fairs was to raise awareness and inform the public about issues such as sea turtle conservation, sustainable fishing, and the impact of plastic on the ocean. Important social issues such as gender-based violence (GBV), gender equality and equity, and the role of community action in environmental conservation were also addressed.

Each community carried out clean-up campaigns on beaches and hillsides, promoting the active involvement of the population in protecting the environment. Educational activities were organized for children, such as educational games, illustrations, environmental video screenings, and an immersive experience with 3D virtual reality glasses.

Throughout the year, Plasticina – Biosfera's plastic processing unit – received more than 15 visits, most of which were from students at different levels of education. The visits included educational lectures, discussions, and hands-on activities, allowing participants to understand the importance of recycling, especially in the context of an archipelagic country, where there are specific challenges related to waste management.

Through various awareness-raising activities in schools and fishing communities on the island of São Vicente, we have successfully reinforced our commitment to environmental education.



THE NETWORK THAT CONNECTS MEMBERS

One of the strategic pillars of the Taola+ Network is to strengthen the skills of its members and synergies within the network. In this context, a training course was held in Praia, on the island of Santiago, for members involved in fundraising. It was attended by 22 participants, representing 17 environmental conservation NGOs and the country's network of environmental journalists.

The training was implemented as part of the "IlhasMais" project by SPEA and Biosfera I, financed by the Camões Institute, and was given by consultant Luís Costa from the company Nature Returns. Its objective was to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations in mobilizing resources, providing them with essential tools to ensure the financial sustainability of their activities and environmental conservation projects in Cabo Verde.

A training course dedicated to fundraising that aims to strengthen these organizations' capacities in resource mobilization, providing them with essential tools to ensure the financial sustainability of their activities and environmental conservation projects in Cabo Verde.



1ST NATIONAL CONGRESS ON FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

During 2025, APESC and its partners organized preliminary sessions on different islands to address issues related to the fisheries sector in Cabo Verde. These sessions served to identify the key points related to the sector, which would serve as guidelines for the preparation of the document for Sector Strategies 2026-2036.

All this dynamic and sharing culminated in the 1st National Congress on Fisheries and Aquaculture, which brought together not only shipowners, fishermen/fishmongers, but also scientists, politicians, and environmentalists, so that together, and in possession of the guidelines that came from the previous sessions, they could all "think" about the sector in an

inclusive and realistic way, weaving together a cohesive and diverse program that could be followed with the aim of promoting the development that is long deserved and long awaited.

Sustainability in fisheries and in all peripheral areas directly or indirectly linked to them should not only be an ideal, but a strong commitment and a goal to be pursued by all. Biosfera participated in the process and reinforced its direct involvement, through its projects, support, and contribution, in what is an economic sector that cuts across all of society and therefore has always deserved our full attention and commitment.

A meeting with shipowners, fishermen/fishmongers, scientists, politicians, and environmentalists, so that everyone can come together to "think" about the sector in an inclusive, realistic way, with the aim of promoting the development that is long overdue and much needed.

Santa Luzia ISRA: Where the Cabo Verde Sea is Strongest

More than just our largest Marine Protected Area, it is a global sanctuary (ISRA) for sharks and rays. A safe haven for the Blackchin Guitarfish, a natural nursery for the Blacktip Reef Shark, and a meeting point for the Atlantic Weasel Shark. Preserving Santa Luzia is ensuring the future of our ocean.



IUCN SSC Shark Specialist Group (2022)

with support from:

