

SAVE EXTREMADURA, NOW!

SEO/BirdLife wishes to express to the Extremaduran Government in the strongest possible terms, its opposition to the destruction of the wildlife and countryside in the Autonomous Community of Extremadura. The projects for the construction of a refinery in Tierra de Barros, 'combined cycle' power stations, illegally approved wind farms, the authorization of thermo-solar powerplants in Casas de Hito – at the heart of the principal area for wintering cranes and wildfowl in Extremadura – , and roads and motorways with high environmental impact, together with increasing illegal urbanisation in protected areas, threaten the biodiversity of one of Europe's best conserved regions.

We ask that, in accordance with the current legislation, these areas under high risk of destruction are respected, and that the Extremaduran Government works seriously to conserve the natural heritage which falls under its responsibility.

Wind farms

The cabinet of Extremadura Government has approved, in an irregular manner, the installation of 22 wind farms. Of these, 10 should be considered as of high risk to protected species such as Eurasian Black Vulture, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Black Stork, Bonelli's Eagle and Lesser Kestrel, amongst others. Particularly worrying are those 4 projects approved in the Cíjara and Altamira Sierras, the five in the Sierra de Gata and that situated on the edge of the peripheral protected area of Monfragüe National Park. The Junta has already announced the modification of the decree regulating the installation of wind generated power in the region, with the specified aim of being able to authorise yet more projects.

Thermo-solar powerplants

A genuine avalanche of projects for huge thermo-solar plants is descending on Extremadura. These occupy 150 to 200 Ha each and also mean the construction of hundreds of kilometres of new power lines. The gravest case to date is for the two plants of 50 MW each (covering 400 Ha) in the Casas de Hitos estate, in the middle of the Llanos de Zorita and Embalse de Sierra Brava SPA and at scarcely 1000 m from the principal wintering crane roost detected in Spain of 11000 individuals.

The powerplant and the 40 km of associated power lines are situated between the Sierra Brava, Cubilar and Gargáligas Reservoirs, which support over 200 000 wintering wildfowl and more than 30 000 cranes. In 2006, this area, mostly protected as an SPA, was the most important area for wintering wildfowl in Spain, more than even the Marismas de Doñana and the Delta del Ebro. All of this makes it one of the jewels in the crown of Extremaduran ornithological tourism.

Oil Refinery and combined-cycle power stations

The Extremadura Government, contrary to recommendations by scientists and the European Union directives, is exacerbating climate change. Extremadura wants to be a region exporting polluting energy, as shown by its determination to promote and authorize an oil refinery and several combined-cycle powerplants. The Balboa refinery is a project promoted by the Junta de Extremadura itself, not only by providing almost one third of the initial capital investment, but also by lobbying directly the national government in an effort to gain the project's approval. In addition, the Junta could approve four projects of combined-cycle powerplants in the Mérida area.

Transport projects

The Extremadura Government is approving and constructing new roads before evaluation and approval of the PIVEX (Extremadura Road Infrastructure Plan). In this plan, the construction of several motorways and the widening and changes in route for almost 2000 km of roads in the region are foreseen. Some of these projects involve grave environmental impacts. One of these is the Cáceres-Badajoz motorway, which is not justified by the low traffic density seen on the existing EX100 road, and which will have a high negative impact on legally protected species and wildlife sites. Another very worrying case is the project for the Cáceres airport, which is proposed at a site with a direct impact on the Llanos de Cáceres and Sierra de San Pedro SPA, as well as on the species for which it was declared.

Illegal building in protected areas

More than a thousand homes have been constructed, and continue to be built, with total impunity in Extremadura's protected areas, infringing the Habitats Directive and the Strategic Environmental Evaluation Directive. The Junta de Extremadura and the town council simply turn a blind eye, while our landscapes and the habitats of our protected species disappear under illegal chalets. Among the affected sites, the Orellana Reservoir - a RAMSAR wetland of international importance, SPA and regionally protected area -; the Sierra de San Pedro, SPA and regionally protected area; the Llanos de Cáceres y Sierra de Fuentes, SPA and regionally protected area; the Sierra de Gredos, Site of Community Interest; the Alange Reservoir, SPA; etc.