The history of Chough in the Natural Park of Alvão: Conservation actions

Created by the Decreto-Lei 237/83 (Ministério do Ambiente, 1983), the Natural Park of Alvão (PNAI) is located in Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, occupying an area of 7220 ha.



According to Resolução do Conselho de Ministros (62/2008, April 7th), 177 vertebrate species occurs in this area. *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* was classified as one of the three most valued species (*Canis lupus signatus*, *Galemys pyrenaicus* and *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) because his conservation, biogeographic and regional status.

Considering the importance of the natural values present, the vulnerability of some mountain habitats and the occurrence of rare, threatened and endemics species (which include *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), in September 8th of 1993 a National law was published (Decreto-Lei 834/93) to approve two conditioned zones: the Hunting Prohibition Zone (HPZ) of Figas/Fervença valley and the HPZ of Arnal (the home range of *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* in PNAl). Thus, the creation of the HPZ of Arnal could be considered as the first conservation action to this specie in the PNAl.

Although, since 1991 the specie has been recorded occasionally in the PNAI, the beginning of a systematic study was started by Nascimento in 1996. During the last 16 years, behaviour suggesting reproduction have been recorded namely, nest construction (1995), matting (1998 and 1994), incubation (2006) and egg shells remainders next to the nests (1996, 2007). However, fledglings' references or records were never found. According to Pereira (2006) a shepherd confirmed the breeding success and referred the remove of youngest pouch by village children as a common threat to the specie. In way to stop the nest robbery, a joint action between the PNAI and the Laboratory of



Applied Ecology (LEA- UTAD) was carried out by the installation of a gate near a breeding area, to avoid human disturbance. http://www.lea.web.pt

Our study carried out about the Chough in the area of the PNAl and other adjacent areas

(namely in the Barroso. In the last years, the absence of nest or roost sites conditions through degradation and/or vegetation growth became the disturbance major factors to the specie. In this way, in December 2007, the PNAI and the LEA developed an action to cut the vegetation that covers two abandoned mines. We hope to obtain better habitat conditions to Choughs' nesting or communal roost site selection in the PNAI.



