

## SERRA DE MONCHIQUE - Ecological status

This area has specific bioclimatic and geological conditions, namely in the central core of the Monchique mountain range, with very particular microclimatic conditions, enhancing biological disjunction. In this situation, there are adelph groves in the form of tall evergreen scrubland, dominated by *Rhododendron ponticum* subsp. *baeticum*, a habitat that can only be observed in one other site in the centre of the country. These formations can also be found in mosaics with riparian forest communities of alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). Also disjointed is the presence of *Juniperus turbinata* subsp. *turbinata*, which appears predominantly in the south-east of the country. Also noteworthy are the medronhais, tall scrubland dominated by *Arbutus unedo* and *Erica arborea*, with pre-forest characteristics, which make up the natural edges of keratin woodlands. In floristic terms, the occurrence of the mountain sub-population of the Lusitanian endemism *Centaurea fraylensis* should be noted, a species that is distributed in gorse and low heaths. The site's climatic and geomorphological characteristics also provide it with conditions for harbouring various isolated populations of fauna, such as the case of the water lizard (*Lacerta schreiberi*), whose presence is almost always associated with the adelph tree (*Rhododendron ponticum* subsp. *baeticum*).

Also important is the south-western bog (*Chondrostoma almaiai*), a new species that was previously included in the entity *C. lusitanicum*, and which occurs only in the Mira and Arade river basins, limiting its distribution to a few sites in the Algarve. The riparian ecosystems of this site are also important for the conservation of the otter (*Lutra lutra*). Site of historical occurrence of the Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) and which maintains characteristics suitable for its presence or which can be optimised in order to promote the recovery of the species or to allow its reintroduction in the medium to long term.

Dominant systems are mainly a dominant forest area with around a third of the area occupied by eucalyptus plantations, being essentially an area with forestry aptitude., and agricultural area with a predominance of non-specialised herbivore livestock, with the areas occupied by open-air horticultural crops, irrigated fruit growing, olive groves and arable crops.

## THREATENING FACTORS

Intensive afforestation with exotic species; forest fires; destruction of native vegetation (Mediterranean scrub and woodland and riverside vegetation); water pollution (especially effluent from pig farms); lack of game management, with consequences in particular for the rarefaction of the wild rabbit, which currently has a very fragmented distribution pattern in the region; poaching; expansion of invasive exotic species, (*Acacia* spp.); opening of roads and significant increase in human disturbance; mining of aggregates.