

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MÁLAGA PROVINCE ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION

By Dr. Lucía Vera Herrera



INTRODUCTION

The Málaga Province Environment Foundation (MPEF) will channel new sources of funding to boost local initiatives working to protect and restore nature. Málaga Province hosts a treasure trove of biodiversity within its coastal, terrestrial, and marine ecosystems. However, these rich natural assets are gravely threatened by climate change, pollution and development.

MPEF has been founded by friends and family of Malaga following the proven model of place-based philanthropy created by [Conservation Collective \(CC\)](#), and inspired by the environmental commitment with which [The Marbella Club](#) supports the local community and works to protect Málaga natural resources and biodiversity.

CC is a global network that has launched and supported 20 local environmental foundations. Over £15 million has been raised since 2020 for local nature protection initiatives.

MPEF aims to protect and restore nature in the Málaga Province by raising funds from people and businesses who care passionately about the region.

Funds will be distributed in a targeted way, as grants, to local environmental organisations.

A local executive director will identify the best local solutions to the global climate and biodiversity crisis, and propose them to the steering committee for funding.

Projects will be selected by a Steering Committee, a group of actively involved donors. Projects will be screened by technical and scientific experts.

MPEF will give grants to, and work through local partners to strengthen conservation efforts and support sustainable, community-led practices.

Join us!



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Everywhere you look there are brilliant, passionate people working to create positive environmental change. Small amounts of funding, strategically directed, can supercharge this work. I’m so proud of this growing global movement.

BEN GOLDSMITH, FOUNDER, CONSERVATION COLLECTIVE

CONSERVATION COLLECTIVE PHILOSOPHY

The Malaga Province Environment Foundation will join a family of 20 other funds across the world, operating as part of Conservation Collective.

Environmental philanthropy faces two key challenges: persuading donors to give more to green issues (which attract less than 10% of UK foundation giving), and making sure that money is used effectively (which applies to how grants are managed, as well as what they are given to).

Conservation Collective has a proven formula for both parts of this equation.

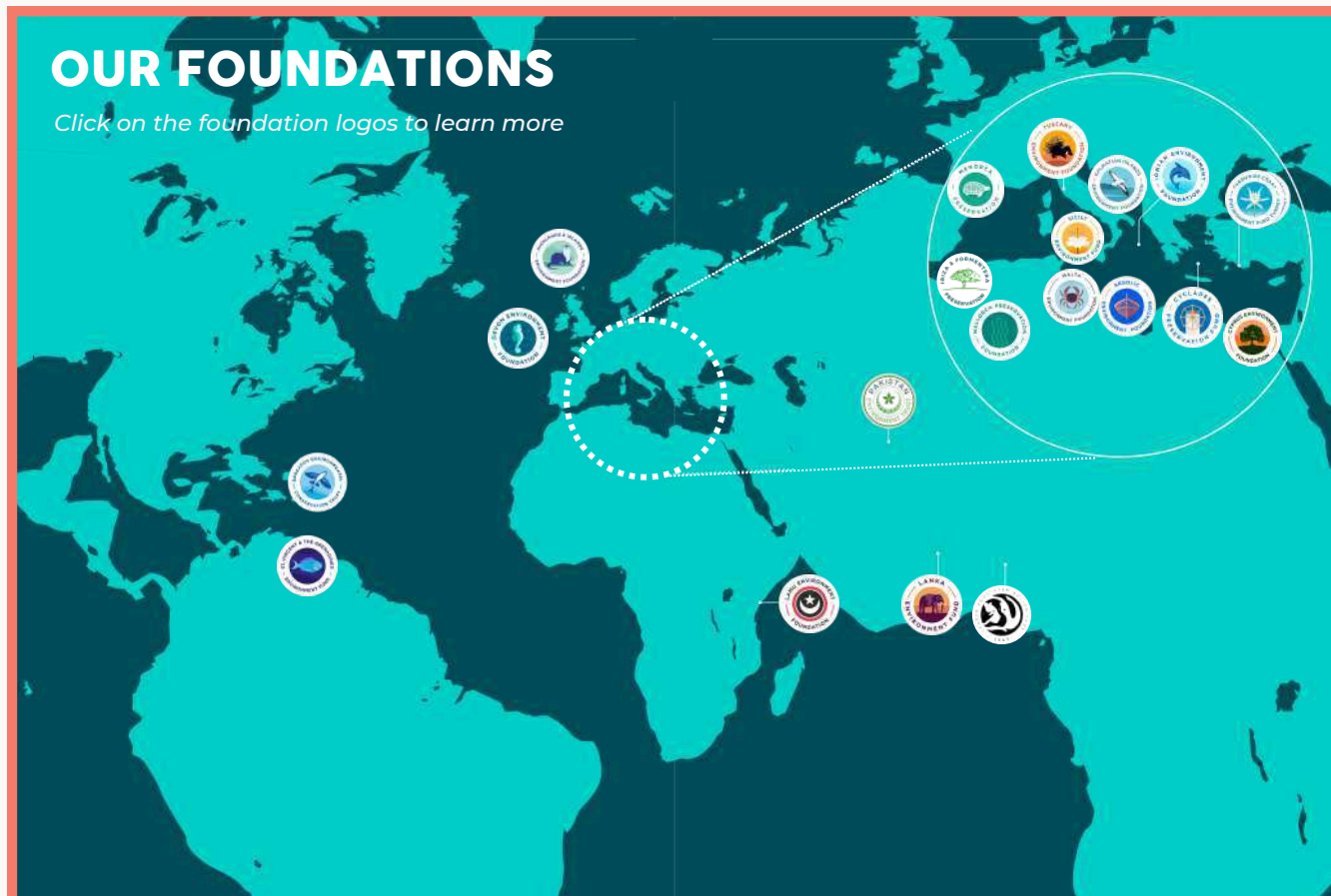
Conservation Collective launches and grows grant-making Foundations centred on specific counties, regions or countries.

We build clubs of donors linked to places with special meaning for them. This opens up new channels of green giving, which our Foundations direct to an array of nature and climate work, helping local environmental heroes to fulfil their potential as agents of positive change.

Wherever we go, we find great appetite among donors for this model, as a means of protecting the places they love.

Our growing network of Foundations has already raised millions of pounds for impactful initiatives, and we are only just getting started...

The power of Conservation Collective lies in our ability to replicate our model in new locations, raise funding effectively and efficiently, and share knowledge and expertise across the network. As a global ecosystem, we pride ourselves on removing barriers, empowering communities and getting things done.



2020-2023

CONSERVATION COLLECTIVE AT A GLANCE



FUNDS RAISED
£12,148,719*



FOUNDATIONS
20



FOUNDATION AVG SIZE
£199,837



COUNTRIES
12



PROJECTS
505

*Funds raised estimated over £15,000,000 as at Aug 2024.



MARBELLA CLUB

*Conservation Collective is proud to be partnering with **The Marbella Club** to create the Málaga Province Environment Foundation.*

The Marbella Club, a proud member of the Leading Hotels of the World, is one of Spain's most iconic hotels, celebrated for its timeless elegance and unmatched luxury. Its lush botanical gardens, inspired by the founder's profound passion for nature, reflect a legacy of safeguarding biodiversity and preserving natural beauty.

In recent years, the Marbella Club's current owner, Jennica Shamoon, has expanded this legacy through strategic investments in initiatives aimed at achieving the highest standards of environmental and social responsibility, while setting a clear course toward a nature-positive future.

MARINE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION WITH SEAHORSEMED

As part of this enhanced commitment to sustainability, the Marbella Club has focused on regenerating its local marine ecosystem by forming a long-term partnership with Fundación Aula del Mar Mediterráneo (FAMM) on their flagship SEAHORSEMED project. This initiative maps seahorse populations, studies their reproductive biology, and raises awareness of the critical roles seahorses and their seagrass habitats play in monitoring ecosystem health and mitigating climate change.

Beyond providing funding, the hotel installed a seahorse breeding aquarium in its Kids Club, engaging employees in research and creating innovative educational activities for children.

Key achievements of the project include documenting **127 seahorse sightings** along the Andalusian coast, gaining insights into their preferred habitats, and successfully breeding seahorses in captivity.

COMMITMENT TO NET ZERO AND SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

Aligned with its broader sustainability goals, the Marbella Club is committed to achieving **Net Zero by 2050**.

This ambition is supported by decarbonization initiatives, including transitioning to renewable energy, adopting electric mobility, installing solar panels for hot water generation, and implementing SMART metering systems.

Additionally, the hotel champions a circular economy through internal composting and advanced waste monitoring, ensuring continuous reductions in waste. Its environmental performance is guided by an Environmental Management System aligned with ISO 14001 and 50001 standards, ensuring legal compliance and driving ongoing improvements in sustainability.

RECOGNITION FOR SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

These comprehensive efforts were recognized in March 2024, when the Marbella Club earned the prestigious Butterfly Mark certification from Positive Luxury. After a rigorous three-year evaluation of its governance, environmental, and social responsibility practices, the hotel achieved an impressive 77% rating, the highest in the hospitality industry, cementing its reputation as a leader in sustainable luxury hospitality.



MÁLAGA PROVINCE

The province of Málaga is located in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, in the south of Spain. Despite being the Andalusian province with the smallest surface area, with 7308 km², its complex and varied topography develops mountainous reliefs, countryside, inland plains and coastal areas, with altitudes ranging from sea level to 2065 m. Specifically, its coastline covers 180 km of littoral, where we can distinguish the bays of Málaga and Estepona. Málaga enjoys a Mediterranean climate, with long and dry summers and wet winters, but its location and geography favour two distinct microclimates: oceanic Mediterranean in the western region and subtropical Mediterranean in the east. Regarding rainfall, the province generally has a low rainfall regime, with annual averages between 400 and 800 mm.

The province has 1.75 million inhabitants distributed among 103 municipalities and nine districts. Since the 20th century, it has maintained a continuous population growth concentrated on the coast, driven by industrialization and expansion in the tourism and construction sectors. This accelerated population growth generated environmental problems related to the inefficient channeling and treatment of wastewater, the critical disappearance of green areas, and the inefficient management of energy resources, among others. Tourism is undoubtedly the main economic activity of the province, followed by the construction and real estate sector, and the information and communication technology (ICT) sector.

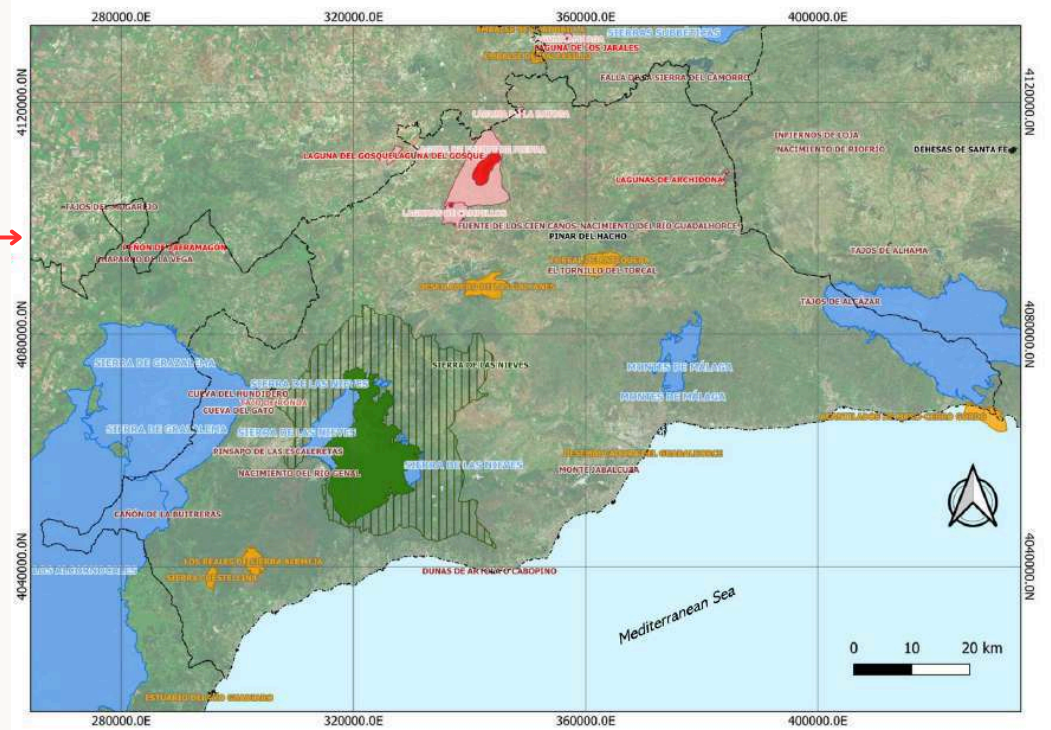
In 2023 Málaga received 6.2 million visitors (61% foreign), mainly on the Costa del Sol, where beach resorts and luxury hotel complexes predominate. This sector boosts related activities such as commerce and hospitality, but faces challenges such as seasonal employment, rising real estate and property prices, displacement of local residents and urban saturation.

Environmentally, tourism in the province contributes to the unsustainable use of resources as well as to the notorious increase in GHG emissions. For example, in 2019, the high air mobility linked to the Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport caused a total of 10808.5 tCO₂e.

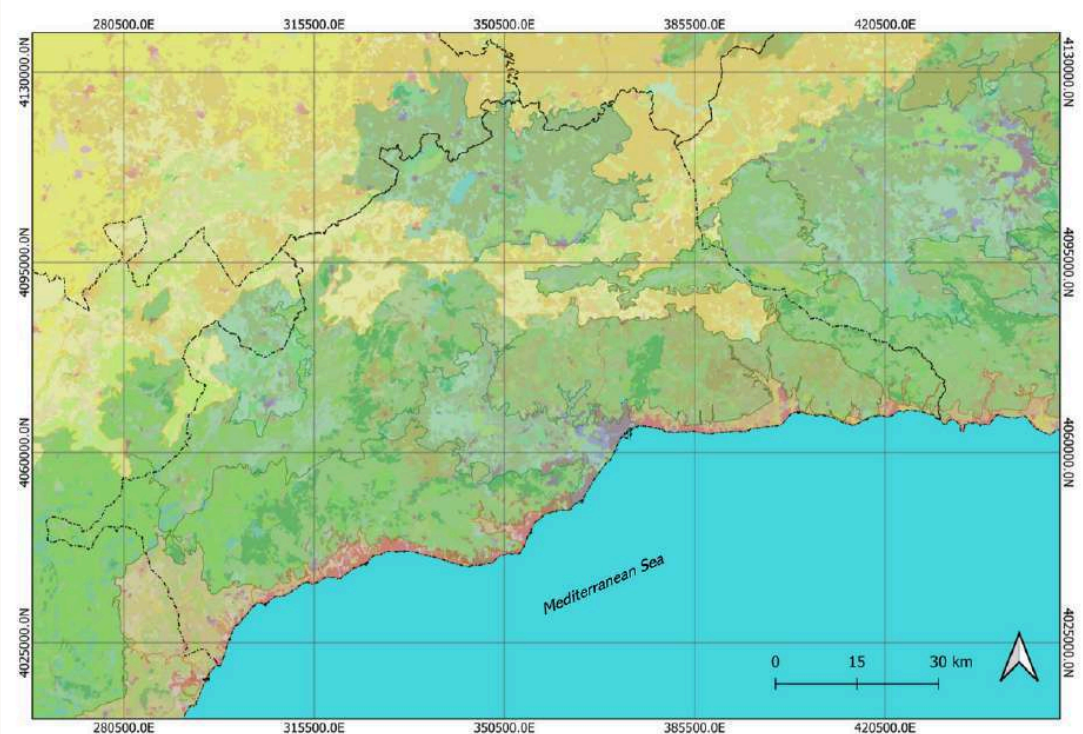
Recently, sustainable tourism strategies have been implemented, promoting authentic cultural experiences and respect for natural resources. This approach seeks to mitigate negative impacts, diversify the inland offer and preserve the cultural and environmental richness of the region.



MÁLAGA PROVINCE'S NATURAL PROTECTED AREAS



ENVIRONMENTAL MAPPING

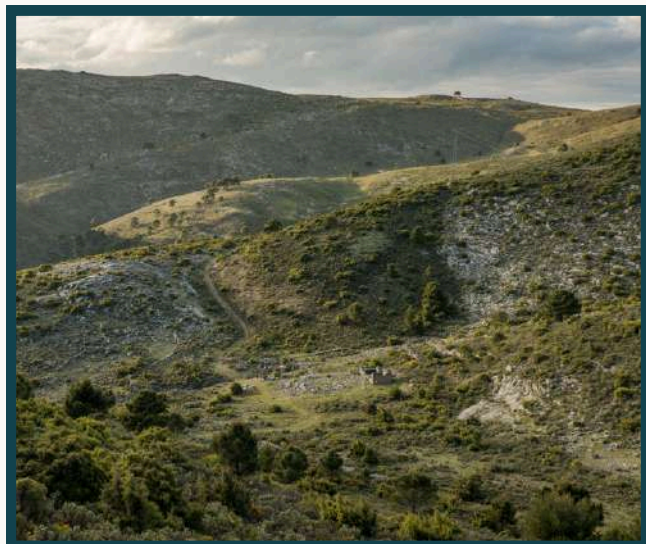


ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

TERRESTRIAL ENVIRONMENT

Málaga province boasts remarkable terrestrial biodiversity due to its geographical location, diverse topography, and Mediterranean climate. It is home to over 3000 species of vascular plants, including 80 endemic species such as the Spanish fir or 'pinsapos', which forms extensive forests, and the critically endangered white rosemary. The fauna includes 370 bird species, 31 mammals such as the emblematic Iberian ibex; and notable endemics like the Betic midwife toad (classified as 'Endangered') and the Sierra de las Nieves butterfly.

The province hosts approximately 128,000 ha of protected areas. The Sierra de las Nieves National Park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is especially significant as it preserves over 70% of the existing Spanish fir population in its protected area of 75119 ha. Other relevant protected natural areas are the Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park, Los Alcornocales Natural Park, the Sierra Tejeda, Almijara and Alhama Natural Park, and the Laguna de Fuente Piedra Nature Reserve, the largest saltwater lagoon in Andalusia, protected by the Ramsar Convention and an exceptional breeding area for the pink flamingo, among many other protected natural sites.



Sierra de Grazalema Natural Park, a natural park in the northeastern part of the province of Cádiz in southern Spain.



Iberian ibex - According to the IUCN Red List, the total population size of Spanish ibexes is around 50,000 individuals.

However, Málaga's biodiversity face significant threats. Habitat degradation and loss from intensive agriculture, monoculture plantations, and urban expansion are major concerns. Infrastructure developments such as roads, communication networks, and energy facilities contribute to habitat fragmentation, which particularly affects larger birds and small mammals. Pollution of aquatic habitats by waste dumping, or by pesticides in agricultural areas; as well as the direct impact of human activity, through illegal hunting practices or littering, also disrupt the province's ecosystems.

Furthermore, in Málaga there are numerous invasive alien species, such as the "Uña de gato", the zebra mussel or the Kramer's Parakeet, which currently pose a serious threat to the survival of native species, as they compete for the same resources with more effective means of propagation, or cause direct damage to the local organisms or their natural habitats.

COASTAL & MARINE ENVIRONMENT

The Málaga province coast, bordered by the Alboran Sea, features diverse ecosystems that offer vital ecosystem services and exceptional biodiversity, reflecting the transition between Atlantic and Mediterranean environments.

The province's dune systems, such as the Dunas de Artola Natural Monument and the Reserva Ecológica Dunas de Marbella, harbor diverse wildlife, including birds like the Kentish plover and mammals like the European hedgehog. The Paraje Natural de la Desembocadura del Guadalhorce, a 64-hectare coastal wetland near Málaga city, is vital for migratory birds, including the reintroduced marbled teal. The Paraje Natural de Los Acantilados de Maro-Cerro Gordo features dramatic cliffs and supports significant migratory seabird populations, like the Atlantic gannet.

Málaga's marine areas are important biodiversity hotspots due to dynamic currents and upwelling, fostering rich plankton communities. Specifically, the Alboran Sea hosts commercially important pelagic fish like the bluefin tuna or the school shark, and cetaceans such as bottlenose dolphins, killer whales, and sperm whales. The seabed supports diverse communities of algae, corals, sponges, echinoderms and fish, such as the unique seahorses. Particularly crucial are *Posidonia oceanica* meadows, endemic to the Mediterranean, which serve as vital marine local habitats and play a significant role in Málaga's coastal erosion protection and carbon sequestration.



OTHER RELEVANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

In addition to the impacts on the province's ecosystems described above, other relevant environmental issues must be considered, such as the severe water shortages, driven by high agricultural (70% of demand) and tourism needs, including hotel facilities and golf courses. There is also limited transition to renewable energy and a high per capita waste generation that ends up in landfills. In addition, the impacts of climate change are already highly noticeable in the province. Increasing droughts aggravate water scarcity, and rising temperatures impoverish the soil, increasing the risk of fires. Moreover, torrential rains are becoming more frequent, causing severe flooding and destroying coastal infrastructure.

Málaga province boasts four Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The Bahía de Málaga-Cerro Gordo LIC, whose *P. oceanica* meadows cover 10.02 ha. The Calahonda ZEC, the province's most biodiverse marine site, contains seagrass meadows supporting gorgonians and endangered species such as the *Patella ferruginea*. El Saladillo-Puntas de Baños ZEC shelters well-preserved *P. oceanica* meadows with threatened species like *Asterina gibbosa*. Finally, Fondos Marinos de Estepona ZEC maintains healthy marine phanerogams over 1.11 ha.

However, human activities pose severe threats to Málaga's marine biodiversity. Coastal urbanization, construction, and sand extraction damage habitats, especially seagrass meadows. Pollution, from urban and industrial discharges, deteriorates water quality and increases turbidity. Unsustainable fishing practices, such as trawling, harm seabeds and pelagic species. Boat traffic and anchoring disrupt habitats and injure cetaceans. Additionally, invasive algae, like the harpoon seaweed and the Asian seaweed, outcompete native flora, degrade seabeds, and reduce biodiversity.

CURRENT CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Several environmental NGOs and local groups in Málaga province lead impactful conservation efforts.

- WWF (Málaga local group) has implemented significant projects, including reforestation in Mijas after a 2012 fire and participation in the ANDARRÍOS Programme for river restoration. They also engage the public through birdwatching and cultural activities.
- UICN-MED, the Mediterranean arm of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, has advanced research on seagrass meadows through projects like LIFE Blue Natura, analyzing blue carbon stocks and restoration feasibility. • SEO/BirdLife (Málaga local group) carries out important ornithological conservation actions such as population monitoring, tracking migratory movements, and restoring Málaga's important natural areas for birds.
- FAMM (Fundación Aula del Mar Mediterráneo) leads marine conservation through initiatives like Bosques Sumergidos, mapping Posidonia oceanica meadows, and the SeahorseMed project, aimed to monitor their populations in the province, ex situ research and the conservation of their habitats.
- ProDunas, centered in Marbella, protects dune systems through reforestation and invasive species eradication. Their recent monitoring of marine seagrass meadows includes educational seminars and community outreach.

RESEARCH & INNOVATION

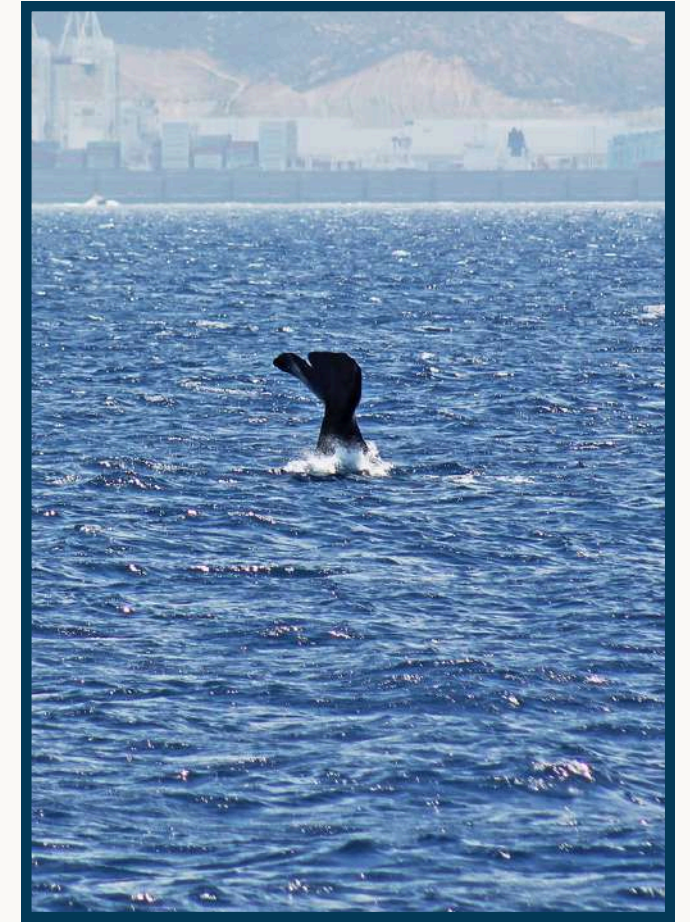
Málaga, hosts numerous research institutions focused on areas related to sustainability, environmental restoration and climate resilience. Some institutions include:

- University of Málaga (UMA) conducts regional studies on plant conservation, forestry management, and marine ecosystems.
- IHSM La Mayora, jointly operated by UMA and CSIC, excels in agricultural innovation through biotechnological research, including studies focused on drought-resistant crops.
- Centro Oceanográfico de Málaga (IEO) Specializes in Mediterranean marine research, including a project on Alboran Sea and Strait of Gibraltar ecosystems.
- IFAPA: Promotes sustainable agricultural, livestock, and fisheries innovation. The Toruño center in Cádiz explores solutions for invasive algal blooms affecting Málaga's coast.
- Additional relevant institutes include the ICMAN in Cádiz, which studies the effects of pollution on marine organisms; and the IRNAS and IAS, which focus on natural resources and sustainable agriculture, respectively, advancing solutions for arid climates and Mediterranean farming systems.

GOVERNMENT LED INITIATIVES

In Málaga province, three key government bodies lead environmental efforts:

- Junta de Andalucía: Oversees Spain's largest public environmental data repository: the REDIAM. In addition, it leads actions for the monitoring and recovery of Andalusian marine populations and develops carbon footprint registers and climate risk plans, integrating regional biodiversity, sustainable development and climate data.
- Diputación Provincial de Málaga: Manages the Málaga Viva program, promoting climate awareness and leading projects like the Adapta Málaga Climate Change Adaptation Plan.
- Málaga City Council's Environmental Sustainability Area: Supports initiatives such as LIFE LUNGS and LifeWatch Alboran, contributing to national conservation efforts.



BARRIERS TO RESTORATION

Ecological restoration in Málaga province faces several barriers that hinder progress:

- A lack of collaboration between political leaders, scientists, NGOs, and businesses results in poor knowledge-sharing and a lack of coordinated action.
- Financial constraints, exacerbate the issue, with reduced state budgets and limited political prioritization of regional conservation projects.
- Bureaucratic and administrative inefficiencies significantly slow down decision-making and the implementation of environmental actions.
- Fragmented efforts among small environmental groups, often caused by poor communication, result in the duplication of projects, diluting their overall impact.

MPEF GOALS AND STRATEGY

In the context of the major environmental challenges affecting the province as well as the identified barriers to environmental action, the Málaga Province Environmental Foundation (MPEF) will act as a catalyst to strengthen grassroots actions. The main goals that will define its vision and strategy are:

1. Promote collaboration and support between the regional scientific community, local conservation groups and governments, to optimise resources, time and efforts dedicated to environmental actions, expand their scope, and foster governmental support, giving them greater visibility.
2. Raise awareness and educate the local population about the value of the province's natural spaces, their biodiversity, and the resources and ecosystem services they provide, improving understanding of impact mitigation and adaptation actions, and encouraging direct participation.
3. Fostering environmental responsibility in the private sector, with special attention to local agricultural producers and the hospitality industry, providing training and tools to facilitate their transition to a more sustainable activity.

To achieve these aims, MPEF will embrace the core values of Conservation Collective—positivity, openness, and collaboration—prioritising tangible, effective local solutions. Its efforts will focus on seeking funding, strengthening links with administrative entities, providing tools and logistical resources to local organisations and promoting networking between Change Agents, through a clear strategy of awareness-raising, conservation and restoration of the local natural environment.

Its lines of action would include:

- Terrestrial Conservation
- Marine & Coastal Conservation
- Direct participation towards resilience and mitigation
- Sustainable resource and waste management

The foundation will support existing projects and launch new initiatives composed of correlated synergistic actions to maximise environmental, social, economic, and political impacts. From the outset, MPEF will allow the development of tangible actions, which will inspire and encourage donors' participation and long-term engagement.

Conservation Collective's Impact Measurement Framework

CC and its members have developed a unified data-collection tool to track progress across four impact goals: Restoring Natural Habitats, Protecting Native Species, Reducing Pollution, and Building Climate Resilience. These outcomes and their indicators provide a valuable framework for MPEF, its grantees, and Conservation Collective to measure and demonstrate impact on the ground, share learnings, and report to donors. This, in turn, helps build momentum and escalate support for environmental and climate solutions. See details overleaf.



LAUNCHING THE FOUNDATION

New CC Foundations follow a series of steps along a journey. MPEF's progress has been illustrated below.

The Foundation will be based on CC's best practice toolkit. CC sets up about two new foundations annually, offering 30,000 (local currency) in seed funding, donor introductions, financial management, and facilitating UK taxpayer donations.



CC SUPPORT SYSTEM

Conservation Collective equips member foundations to bring about more and more effective environmental philanthropy.

A core team of ten based in the UK strengthens the ecosystem of Foundations, ensuring high governance standards and sharing best practices. Foundations have access to a tools and resources library, templates, and guidelines across the following areas:



Fundraising

CC acts as a trusted funding intermediary for private donors, trusts and foundations, and businesses, often bringing new funding into the environmental sector. Networking and events for Málaga's diaspora, home and business owners will be arranged.



Speaking with a Collective Voice

CC aims to boost local impact stories by promoting them to global audiences through digital marketing, press, and events. A communications toolkit will be shared with the local leadership team, with hands-on support for storytelling and brand-building provided.



Governance & Risk Management

CC ensures robust internal controls are implemented to ensure good governance, high levels of risk and financial management and compliance. The target is to give 75% of funds raised out as grants within three years.



People & Culture

We build happy, high-performing teams with HR support and training courses through a supportive global community. Once a year local directors will have the opportunity to meet at one of CC's global locations for knowledge exchange meetings. A global advisory panel is available to complement local knowledge.



Impact & Learning

A measurement, evaluation and learning tool has been developed based on CC's theory of change. A Salesforce based application and reporting tool will be locally configured, and regular strategic webinars hosted by experts are arranged.

JOIN US!

Ultimately, MPEF seeks to cultivate and build a more aware, responsible and committed local society that values Málaga's biodiversity and natural spaces, actively contributing to their preservation and restoration.

In the words of Luc Hoffman, Swiss ornithologist, conservationist and philanthropist:

"Conservation is not the protection of nature against human development, but the preservation of life supporting systems and processes as a basis for a lasting development."

- **Drive change** at the grassroots with fellow people who care passionately about Málaga.
- **Learn and engage** with local conservation experts.
- Become part of a **global movement**.

You can support as an annual private donor, a steering committee member (min €10,000 per year) or a business partner. You could also spread the word, help raise our profile through introductions or hosting events.

To discuss - please contact:

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Thank you to all who contributed to this report: Dr. Lucía Vera Herrera and the Marbella Club.



The arrival of the Conservation Collective marks a game-changing moment for biodiversity conservation in Málaga, bringing together skilled individuals and organizations under a unified strategy to tackle the region's most critical environmental challenges. For businesses like the Marbella Club Hotel, it provides a clear, effective, and low-risk pathway to support high-impact, restorative biodiversity conservation initiatives, eliminating the uncertainty of finding the right partners. By centralizing fundraising and strategically allocating resources, the organization fosters collaboration rather than competition among NGOs, enabling them to work collectively towards a shared vision. This unified approach ensures stronger, more coordinated efforts to protect Málaga's biodiversity, guaranteeing results far beyond what any single organization could achieve.

LEIGH A. BARRETT, DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY, MARBELLA CLUB





Protect and restore
the wild places we know and love

