**Title of the Story:** Actuaciones de recuperación y conservación del sistema DUNAR de la PLAYA DE RIS EN NOJA

**Destination Name:** Noja, Cantabria

**Country:** Spain

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**Position:** Click to enter text.

**Nomination Category:** (Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)

- [ ] Localizing the destination supply chain
- [ ] Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
- [ ] Culture & Communities
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- [x] Nature & Ecotourism
- [ ] Tourism Reset & Recovery
- [ ] Other

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Noja Town Council is starting to carry out work on the Recovery and Conservation of the Ris beach dune system. The project aims to improve the state of conservation of the priority habitats of this natural space which, due to the presence of a large number of visitors, has suffered erosion, loss of sand and the consequent degradation of the vegetation cover. This impact has resulted in a multiplicity of paths and high levels of trampling that prevent vegetation from fully developing. In addition, several species of invasive flora have taken over the site, such as plumero (Cortaderia selloana), chilca (Baccharis halimifolia), cat’s claw (Carpobrotus edulis) and pittosporum (Pittosporum tobira), Arctotheca calendula. Other secondary, but no less important objectives of this project are: To contribute to improving the knowledge and social perception of the natural habitats of the area of action and of the Protected Natural Area of the Natural Park of the marshes of Santoña, Victoria and Joyel in general; and To promote social responsibility in the conservation of natural habitats.

This project is carried out as a second phase of the project that was carried out in 2019 of "Actions for the Conservation of coastal habitats of Punta de la Mesa, in Noja", so that very similar works are executed since the environment and the problems are also the same, therefore, and taking into account the good results obtained in the initial phase with the other project, it has been decided to continue with these works in the dune system of Ris beach, as these are actions that do not require a large budget, they are non-technological, non-invasive adaptation actions, in which natural materials are used, which integrate very well into the environment and allow it to evolve naturally, achieving clear objectives in the fight against climate change. And most importantly, for all these reasons, it is a project or actions that are highly transferable to other destinations and that help us to also achieve or go in line with the SDG 2030.
In order to achieve recovery, information and management actions have been implemented to contribute to the reduction of this trampling, as well as passive restoration actions aimed at controlling erosive processes and regenerating soils and vegetation.

Specifically, the project is structured in three different actions. The first is the installation of information panels and signs. On the one hand, two information panels measuring 100 x 100 centimetres will be placed with information on the environmental values of the area, the aims of the project and the conservation measures and responsibility of users. They will be placed at the main entrances to the pedestrian route that runs through the area of action.

On the other hand, 15 signs measuring 25 x 30 centimetres have been distributed throughout the dune system to warn and request the cooperation of users in respecting the protection measures.

The second action is focused on conservation and restoration and has consisted of the installation of passive sand collectors (flexible wicker collectors) in the areas where the dune has lost its morphology. They have been arranged in alignments 6 to 8 metres apart, with a density of 3 kg/ml.

Dune vegetation has also been planted to regenerate the vegetation in the trampled areas that have been closed to the public. The plants come from the Loredo nursery of the Cantabria Coastal Demarcation. This action has also included the manual removal of invasive flora.

The last of these actions consists of protective measures such as dissuasive closures, to dissuade walkers from accessing the areas under restoration, 350 linear metres of the stretch next to the playa dorada leisure centre park will be closed off. The marking will be carried out with wooden posts placed every 2/2.5 ml and plastic sheep netting, in coherence with the model used in the actions of the LIFE + ARCOS project.

Installation of wooden directional beacons to mark the accesses to the beach. They are placed every metre to identify the route of the path and attract the user’s attention, thus reducing traffic outside the limits of the route. These last two installations have the fundamental objective of guiding public use and avoiding the deterioration of the dune system.
Key success factors

What helped you tackle the issues? Click to add your text

1. Commitment of the City Council of Noja with the conservation and protection of the natural values of the municipality;
2. Drafting of a good report and action plan, in this case done by Seo/BirdLife, with extensive experience in this type of projects, since it is a protected and highly sensitive area;
3. Collaboration and involvement of Seo/BirdLife in the management of the building works resulted in the achievement of very good results.

We also consider fundamental, the placement of small warning and respect panels for roads and dune areas, to make citizens and visitors aware of the importance of respecting this sensitive area.

Lessons learned

While implementing the Good Practice what challenges were faced, and how were they overcome? Click to add your text

The main problems we have faced are the processing of authorisations before the competent bodies, such as the Coastal Demarcation in Cantabria and the Directorate General for Biodiversity, Environment and Climate Change, which are causing a delay in the start of the works. This delay may cause the works to be carried out in less suitable climatic conditions (less rainfall and higher temperatures), which may make it difficult for the plant to take root in the dune. To overcome these problems, it is possible that an extension may have to be requested for the completion of the work, and we may have to extend the deadline by two months, which is sufficient time to complete the work properly.

Results, achievements and recognitions

What were the qualitative and quantitative results of the good practice? Has it received any rewards? Click to add your text

Ris beach has or contains an extensive dune system adjoining the town of Noja. In general, the dune system is developed but very narrow and steeply sloping, which is why the primary dune line is almost non-existent and the marine branch coverage is very low. It has a reduced wind dynamic, possibly due to the screening effect of the cliffs. Two zones can be distinguished; the eastern zone, which is better preserved in terms of vegetation, and the western zone, with very low wind dynamics and a large abundance of invasive vegetation, especially cat’s claw.

The low wind dynamics means that, together with the negative effect of the promenade and the high pressure of beach users, there is a notable regression of the dune system, especially in the central area. This dune system is accessed by an enormous number of users from Noja and the surrounding area.
From the point of view of habitats, the dominant ones in this dune are the white or secondary dune and the grey dune. The lack of an area close and accessible to the sea prevents the presence of an embryonic dune, so the dune series begins in the secondary dune already mentioned. Within the community, species such as the dune thistle (Ammophila arenaria), dune thistle (Eryngium maritimum) or sea holly (Pancratium maritimum), together with the sand dune bindweed (Calystegia soldanella) are the most representative of the secondary dune, while the tertiary dune is more diversified, with species such as the carnation plant, rabbit's tail, various grasses of the genera Agrostis or Festuca or the coastal spiny dogfish being representative of the habitat. The dune reaches its greatest development in the area around the Mesa point, so that here it is possible to contemplate the series of cliffs together with the dune habitats and the coastal scrub and pre-forest. This is undoubtedly an area in which the mixture of communities is probably its greatest hallmark.

The good results obtained in the first phase of this type of action, through the project carried out in 2019 of "Actions for the conservation of coastal habitats of Punta de la Mesa, in Noja", made us realise that with small, non-invasive, low-cost actions, and using natural materials, we could achieve the objectives we were looking for in an easy and very effective way (in the photographic annex you can see the good evolution and effectiveness of the actions carried out). The greatest achievement has been to obtain the expected results in an effective way, at a low cost and with actions that can easily be transferred to other destinations.

The benefits of these actions are not only environmental, so that a degraded area is regenerated and restored, but also economic and social, economic because an improvement of the environment is obtained and has repercussions on a greater number of visitors who go on ecotourism, walks, routes, etc., and social because employment is provided for the carrying out of the work and local employment oriented towards ecotourism, such as guides, environmental trainers, etc. Moreover, visitors stay in the municipality during the summer season and weekends and invest in this nature and ecotourism attraction.

Additional references
Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from Youtube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL.

The total budget for the project, so that neighbours and visitors can enjoy the area in a more sustainable way, amounts to 30,000.00 euros (amount of the subsidy granted by the Dirección General de Biodiversidad, Medio Ambiente y Cambio Climático, de la Consejería de Medio Rural, Pesca y Alimentación, complying with the requirements established in Order MED /37/2016, of June 20, which establishes the regulatory bases for the granting of subsidies in the Network of Natural Protected Areas of Cantabria.

For more information, see the uploaded document “Memoria Valorada”. Ver noticia en: https://www.europapress.es/cantabria/canabria-sostenible-00437/noticia-noja-restaurara-dunas-playa-ris-subvencion-30000-euros-gobienro-20201112134127.html
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