



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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News release from SPEA/Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays

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British wildlife group supports campaign against Algarve oil exploration

A campaign that is raising concerns about potential oil exploration off the Algarve coast has been supported by a donation by a British wildlife holiday group.

A group from Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays has donated 500 GB pounds (550 euros) to SPEA, Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (BirdLife in Portugal). SPEA is part of a coalition called *Plataforma Algarve Livre de Petróleo* (PALP, Algarve Free of Petroleum Platform) that is campaigning against petroleum exploration in this region.

The money from the Honeyguide group, which was in Algarve in November 2017, has gone towards SPEA's legal costs when the issue recently came before a court in Loulé.

SPEA and PALP are concerned that the area earmarked for offshore oil exploration, about 46.5 kilometres from the coast at Aljezur, is adjacent to the Costa Sudoeste Special Area for Conservation (SAC). There is a concentration of harbour porpoises and bottlenose dolphins in this area. Cetaceans (whales, dolphins & porpoises) are known to be highly sensitive to noise at sea, such as drilling, as it interferes with their communication and echo-location.

There is also a migration flyway here for the threatened Balearic shearwater and the northern gannet. Many of the gannets are likely to nest in the United Kingdom, adding weight to the international links and support.

PALP/SPEA have protested that no environmental impact assessment has been prepared. They also stress that reliance on fossil fuels is a backward step at a time when investment should be focussed on increasing more sustainable power sources such as solar energy.

The birdwatching and wildlife group from Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays, which is based in Norwich, England, made the donation while on a visit to Algarve and Alentejo in November.

Domingos Leitão, Executive Director of SPEA said: “The risks of an accidental oil spill are obvious and very worrying, for wildlife at sea and on the Algarve coastline – and for the people and tourism businesses that depend on the coast’s natural treasures.”

Mr Leitão continued: “Protecting nature costs money so to have this support from our friends at Honeyguide is very welcome. This international link also reminds us that wildlife does not recognise national borders, especially so for the precious marine environment.”

Honeyguide proprietor Chris Durdin said that all Honeyguide holidays include a conservation donation as part of the price of the holiday.

“We always contribute to the protection of the wildlife that we come to Portugal to enjoy, and have an established long-running partnership with SPEA in Portugal,” he said. “We have seen the damage to wildlife and coastal communities in the UK from oil pollution, and are pleased to add our support to push for environmental safeguards in Portugal.”

This donation brings the total given to SPEA since the first Honeyguide holiday in mainland Portugal in 2005 to £6,252. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays is £119,322.

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Photos

Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays group in the field, at Castro Marim (Domingos Leitão).
Honeyguide group on pelagic boat trip.
Gannet *Morus bassanus* – alcatraz in Portuguese (Pedro Geraldès).

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More information

1. More information on the partnership and aims of PALP on www.palp.pt/index.php/en/
2. The Costa Sudoeste Special Protection Area (SPA), designated under the EU's Birds Directive, has its limit very close to the oil exploration block as does the Costa Sudoeste Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated under the EU's Habitats Directive. Together SPAs and SACs form the Natura 2000 network of internationally important wildlife sites protected by EU law.
3. About Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays: www.honeyguide.co.uk. Honeyguide's holiday in Algarve is based at Alte and Sagres. Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays is exceptional among wildlife holiday companies as it has a Charitable Trust through which its donations to conservation projects are passed to local conservation organisations.
4. You can help the protection of birds in Portugal by joining SPEA, BirdLife partner in this country: <http://www.spea.pt/en/how-to-help/membership/>