



Feasibility action for the stabilization of the Atlantic population of Monk Seal (LIFE94 NAT/E/001191)

Reintroducción de la foca monje en la isla de Lobos : experiencia piloto

Beneficiary : I.CO.N.A. - Consejería de Política Territorial Gobierno de Canarias
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Duration : 01-OCT-1994 -> 01-NOV-1996

Total Budget in € : 1.333.000

LIFE Contribution in € : 1.000.000 (75,02 %)

Description :

This present project will aim to conserve and stimulate the recovery the Atlantic population of the monk seal by re-establishing a strategic colony mid way between the two existing ones. This will be done by transferring young seals from the Cabo Blanco colony to the Island of Lobos (in Fuerteventura, Canary islands) where the species was once abundant.

However, before beginning this translocation, comprehensive studies will be undertaken of the population in Cabo Blanco. This will be supervised by an international committee of experts chaired by IUCN. Likewise, the necessary infrastructure as regards the transfer and subsequent rehabilitation of the young animals will be created. The conditions for release and rehabilitation essential for the survival of these animals will be guaranteed.

Up until the XVI century monk seals were a common sight in the Atlantic, particularly in the Canary Islands where they had established important colonies. Today the situation is very different, the species is threatened with extinction and is now only found in two areas: the Madeira archipelago (20 individuals left) and the Cabo Blanco peninsula in the western Sahara (200 individuals). The two colonies have become independent of each other as the marine currents and lack of suitable habitats have prevented any intermediate zones from being recolonised. This situation makes the long term conservation of the species particularly complex.

It was the degradation of their habitat and mortality caused by humans that

drove the species to its present dire state of conservation.

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