



## **Biodiversity preservation on military camps : French expertise presented to 16 foreign delegations**

*Thursday, June 28<sup>th</sup>*

More than 150 people, representing 16 nationalities, were present in Nîmes Police Academy on Monday, June 28<sup>th</sup> in order to share knowledge on military camps biodiversity. This event was co-organised by the French Ministry of Defence and the Conservatoire d'espaces naturels (Cen Rhône-Alpes), within the context of the European project "Life Defence Nature 2mil".

Military camps, kept away from urbanization and intensive farming, often contain remarkable flora and fauna, recalled the General Rémy Franco –deputy director of Memory, patrimony and archives (DMPA) at the Ministry of Defence. Thus, 20% of French military lands are (now) designated as part of the European network of biodiversity protection areas "Natura 2000". Preserving the fauna and flora present in the camps has become a priority for the French Ministry of Defence, the largest State's land user with 250 000 hectares used mostly for military training.

Foreign delegations were particularly impressed by French technical expertise and by the partnership policy developed to implement biodiversity protection policy. The involvement of 38 Army training camps as part of the National Plan in favor of chiropteras (bats), driven by Federation of Natural spaces conservatories, is a striking example of this partnership : military buildings indeed offer extraordinary shelters for these endangered species. The French Air Force and the League for the protection of birds (LPO) also work together to preserve the bearded vulture, a protected species of vulture in Europe: the armed forces avoid to fly over its breeding areas, that were identified by the LPO.

Another example of these win-win partnerships : the "Life Defence Nature 2000" programme showed restoration and conservation actions conducted on four military sites in south-eastern France. Each time, the actions were presented by both partners : naturalists and soldiers. Many interesting debates and encounters marked the day, many ideas were shared about pyrotechnics risks management, ways to specifically reconcile biodiversity preservation and operational training, etc.

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