

## **Biodiversity preservation on military camps : 16 foreign delegations in the Garrigues camp**

150 people, 16 different nationalities, biodiversity specialists and armed force have come today on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Foreign Regiment Infantry military camp (REI) of the (French) Army. They discovered actions developed to protect biodiversity and they immersed themselves in military sphere, attending to shot and close combat manoeuvres. They also had the opportunity to visit three infantry armoured fighting vehicles (VBCI), new Army's fighting and troops transport chars.

Participants observed the site biodiversity, starting with European bee-eaters, very colourful little birds that nest on the camp. The Garrigues camp extends over almost 5 000 hectares. Comprised of scrublands, moors and dry lawns, it constitutes a remarkable biodiversity reserve. There, many protected bird species, as Bonelli eagle, take shelter. In partnership with the Joint Union of the Gardon gorges (SMGG), Ministry of Defence and locally the 2<sup>nd</sup> Foreign Regiment Infantry took into account preservation imperative of this biodiversity while pursuing operational activities of training and shot manoeuvres.

Thanks to European Life Defence Nature 2mil project, driven by the Conservatoire d'espaces naturels Rhône-Alpes, these actions benefiting biodiversity have been stepped up: half the camp was cleared to restore open spaces in favour of operational readiness activities and... of birds feeding ! In the future, a herd of sheep will take care of vegetation routine maintenance. For their watering, an artificial watering hole built in dry stone has been contemplated by the participants.

Delegations were then invited to look upon to warrens : these shelters are intended to facilitate acclimation of the wild rabbits that have been reintroduced on the camp in order to feed remarkable raptors. Thus, four warrens were built in September 2015 and 40 rabbits from Aveyron were brought. Raptors – that eat carrion – now have an eating-plot, regularly supplied by a breeder.

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