

MISSION ORCHIS MILITARIS

Nicola Bernardelli - Maud Bihan - Rozenn Grosjean - Christelle Pourrot



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**ECOLE
EMILE
COHL**





The Ministry of Defence is one of the main drivers behind the implementation of national sustainable development policy today. It has a special responsibility in terms of the environment, particularly in protecting biodiversity. Occupying vast natural areas sheltered from urbanisation and intensive agriculture, the Ministry of Defence has become a key player in the conservation of habitats and species that are increasingly scarce in France.

This biodiversity protection policy is based on a series of partnerships with public establishments (Office national des forêts, Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage, Conservatoire de l'espace littoral et des rivages lacustres) and NGOs working in nature conservation (Fédération des conservatoires d'espaces naturels, Ligue de protection des oiseaux, Union nationale de l'apiculture française).

This comic book illustrates the work done by the first European LIFE project carried out on French military land. Leaving prejudice behind, the military and naturalists have achieved remarkable results in safeguarding biodiversity while preserving soldiers' capacity to prepare for operational combat: it's a win-win partnership!

It is an institutional commitment, but also a civic and individual commitment that motivates these actions. I hope that in reading this comic book, every civilian and military member of staff at the Ministry will learn about the reasons for their shared investment. What's more, I hope that people outside the ministry of Defence will understand the investment of the military beyond their normal duties, working to preserve biodiversity.

Philippe NAVELOT

Director of remembrance, heritage and archives
Senior civil servant for sustainable development at the Ministry of Defence

We are four students, in our final year at the Emile Cohl school in Lyon.





This partnership is beneficial for both parties...
preserving biodiversity can help maintain the bases to allow military activities.
It's a "win-win" situation, basically!



We want you to visit certain bases
in order to see things for yourselves,
as you'll be telling your story
in a comic!

So, as I understand it,
we're going on a road trip around
military bases!

What about hiring a van?

Better! A jet!



Uh, will I be able to
get in with
my Italian passport?



CHAMBARAN

This is the first time we've been on a military base, so we're rather shy and a little bit nervous...
We're expecting cold and severe looks from people.



But the meeting with camp commander Captain Jean-François made us feel at ease straight away.



The captain takes us to the shooting range to view the training.

We observe soldiers shooting in all positions.

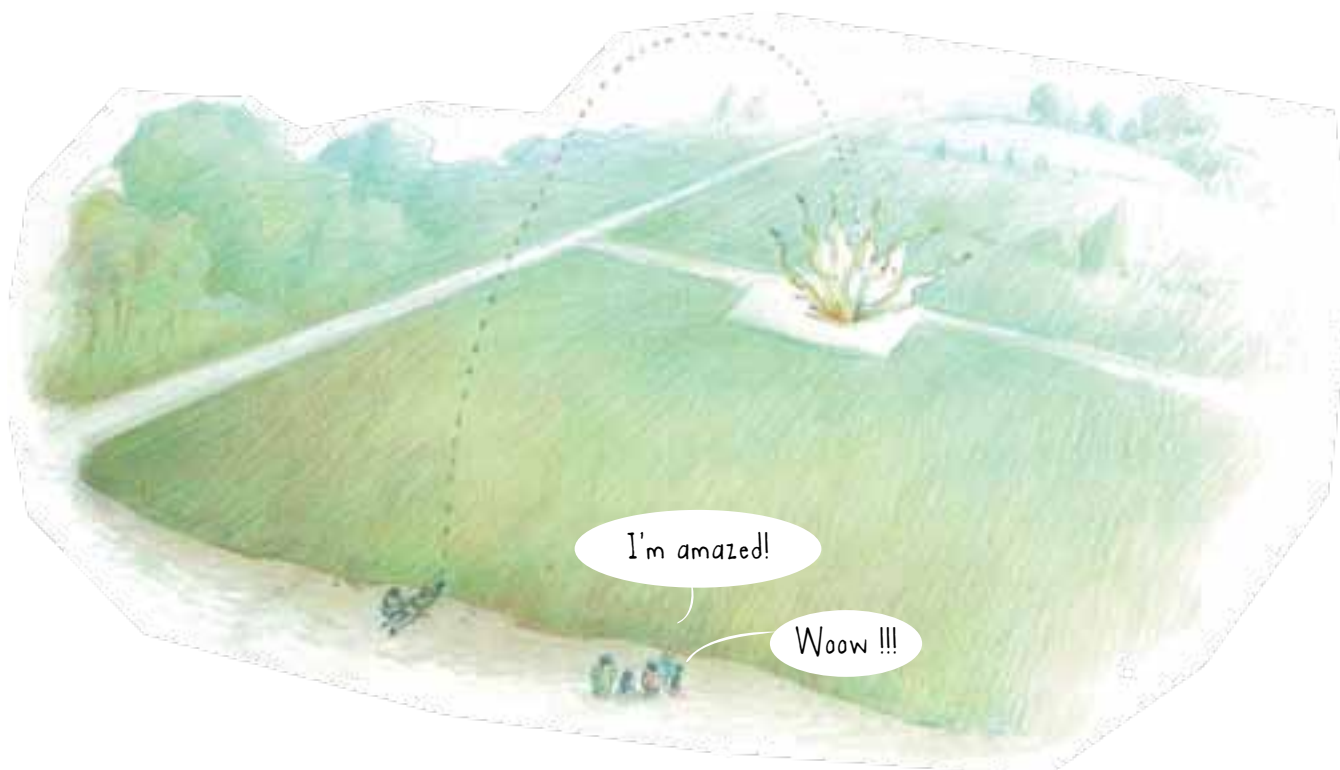


Their exercises seem very unusual, we certainly weren't expecting to see a soldier sticking his gun into the ground!

But how do they aim?!

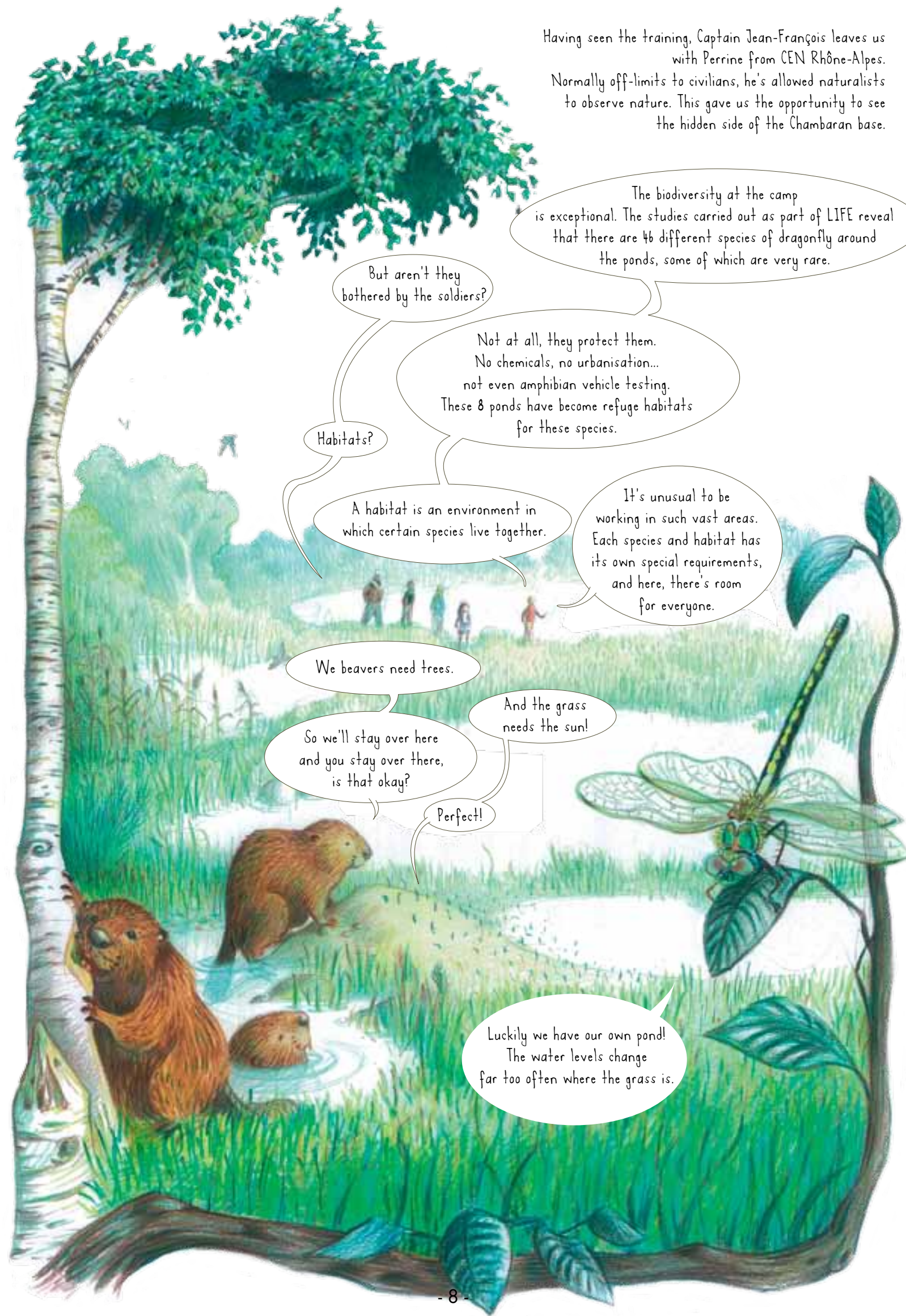


And yet...



I'm amazed!

Woow !!!



Having seen the training, Captain Jean-François leaves us with Perrine from CEN Rhône-Alpes. Normally off-limits to civilians, he's allowed naturalists to observe nature. This gave us the opportunity to see the hidden side of the Chambaran base.

The biodiversity at the camp is exceptional. The studies carried out as part of LIFE reveal that there are 46 different species of dragonfly around the ponds, some of which are very rare.

But aren't they bothered by the soldiers?

Not at all, they protect them. No chemicals, no urbanisation... not even amphibian vehicle testing. These 8 ponds have become refuge habitats for these species.

Habitats?

A habitat is an environment in which certain species live together.

It's unusual to be working in such vast areas. Each species and habitat has its own special requirements, and here, there's room for everyone.

We beavers need trees.

So we'll stay over here and you stay over there, is that okay?

And the grass needs the sun!

Perfect!

Luckily we have our own pond! The water levels change far too often where the grass is.

Perrine explains to us that one of the rare habitats found at Chambaran is amphibious grassland. In this environment, we can find some very demanding plants. Amphibious grassland needs pure water with varying levels, soft banks, no silting and no trampling. So it's a good indicator the pond is in good health.



And that's very important as the water from these ponds feeds the underground aquifers that the local water supply draws from.

He's right!



Help us! Humans are trampling us, the reeds are taking over and the silt is building up...

Look! In this pond you will be safe.

Luckily the military have quickly established a programme for keeping this equilibrium: no chemical products, bank maintenance, coordinated drainage and drying out between the 8 ponds, improving the water treatment station...



Amphibious grass, to survive,
needs drawdown, that is to say,
changing water levels.

For the time being,
everything here
takes place naturally,
with rainwater evaporation.
But it's good to have
functional dykes for
artificial drawdown...
You never know.

Help!
We're drowning!

Help!
We're drying out!

I don't care!
I want my roots
to reach the water,
I don't care if I rupture
the dyke and
cause a leak!

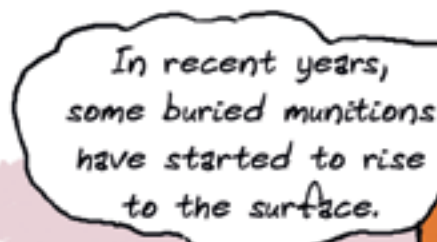
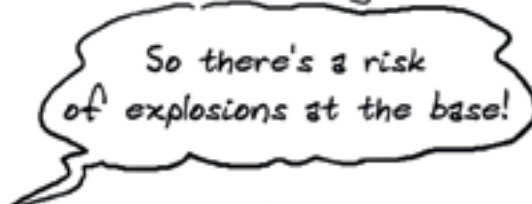
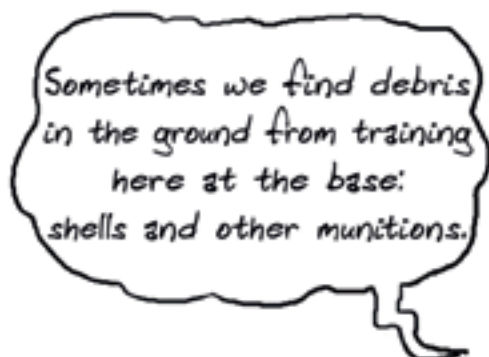
Ahem...

So it's important to maintain
the dykes properly.
As part of LIFE project,
students taking part
in «natural environments and
fauna management»
training have come to prune
the trees and trim the dykes.

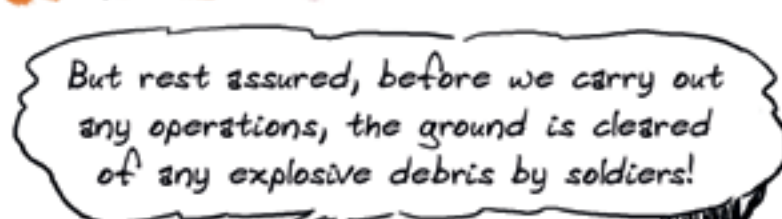
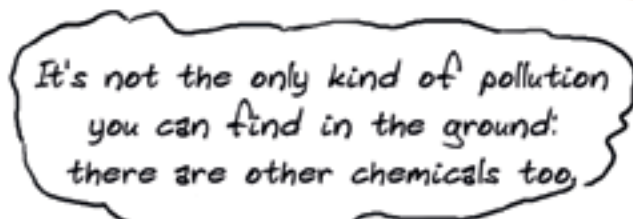
Let's get to work!

Their work helps out the military too,
because it's very useful for maintaining the base.
Now, the soldiers regularly mow the edges of the cleared dykes.





... It's the same at Chambaran!

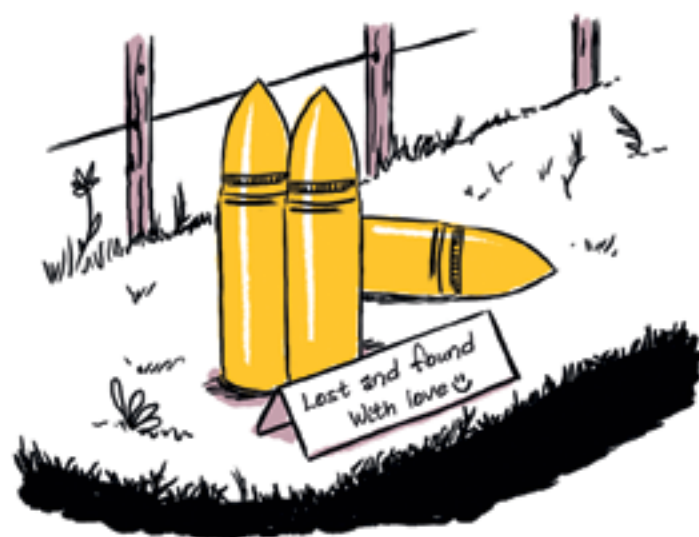
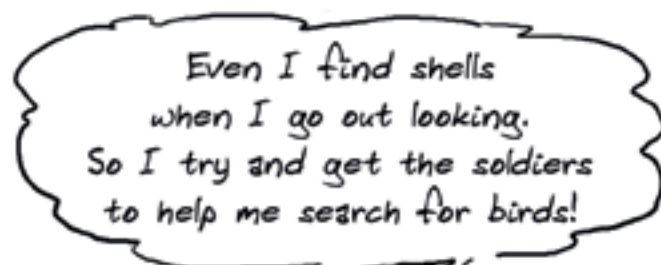
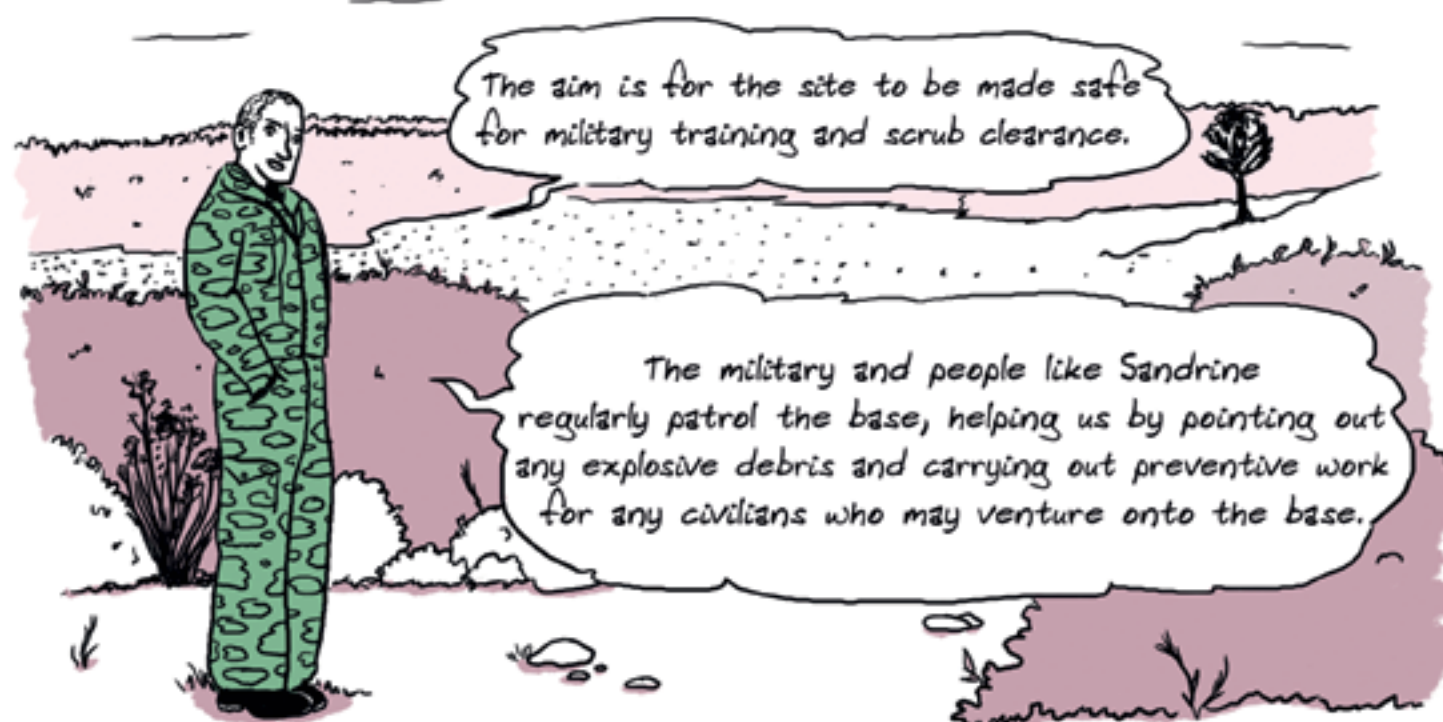


Conflicts and incomplete archives mean that there is a lack of awareness of historic pollution. These days, training is contained, unexploded munitions are recovered and the areas are regularly cleaned.

What's more, after an accident on site in 2012, the army began de-polluting the land and researching the history of the base and magnetic anomalies in the ground.



An example of a shell found at the base



Walkers sometimes venture onto the base, even though they're not allowed.



It's the "green heart" of Nîmes, people are very attached to it.

People live around the edges of the base, so it can be hard for them to keep out of the restricted area.



There's no barriers between the base and the village, it's almost their back garden!

It's easier on our side...



In order to avoid disturbing nesting birds of prey, we've agreed on a security perimeter that we can't cross during that period.

Yeah!



I'm already doing you a favour by sharing my territory, you can at least give me a bit of privacy!

Thankfully the soldiers are very respectful of the zone!



Indeed, the base is host to a range of species, including the Bonelli's eagle, the woodlark and the Dartford warbler.



Bonelli's eagle

Following the disappearance of 60% of these prestigious eagles in fifty years, there are now just 32 pairs in France, some in the Gardon gorges.

Woodlark

Some consider the song of the lark even more melodious than the nightingale's. Their current decline, due to abandoned agricultural prairies and declining hedgerows, means they're under threat.



Dartford warbler (Fauvette pitchou)

Pitchou means "little one" in Provençal! This wild scrubland bird adapts its diet: insects in summer, berries the rest of the year!

These birds need vast open habitats. These are ideal hunting areas. So the military has established a partnership with breeders to maintain a low level of vegetation. This allows them to maintain their training areas at the same time.

To give flocks better access to drinking water, a lagoon has been built, a sort of basin for catching rainwater. Wild animals also use it!



What about this?



Rabbits are a key link in the food chain in our scrubland. As numbers fall, we're re-introducing them. Over here, we're building a warren...

Work began this summer, but unfortunately there was a lot of rain this year! The military helped us by pumping out the water.



It's a stone structure covered with earth, that's it! A real rabbit apartment!



We are planning to create food plots, squares on which we can leave butcher's offcuts and carcasses for vultures and kites. These are real scavenging birds of prey, natural renderers.



But LIFE's main activity on the base is still ground clearance.

Before the military arrived in the 1870s, the base was open to shepherds and regularly maintained as a result.



When it was closed off, the scrub took over completely.

Scrub is a concern, as it increases the risk of fires.



The town borders on the camp, it's a question of protecting the population.

Scrub clearance helps us to reduce this kind of risk, and also facilitates military manoeuvres.



It's a favourable environment for birds and plants at the base.

From a naturalist's point of view, it's great for biodiversity...



Do they always eat this much?

It's the foreign legion... They need to build their strength up!

Doooh...

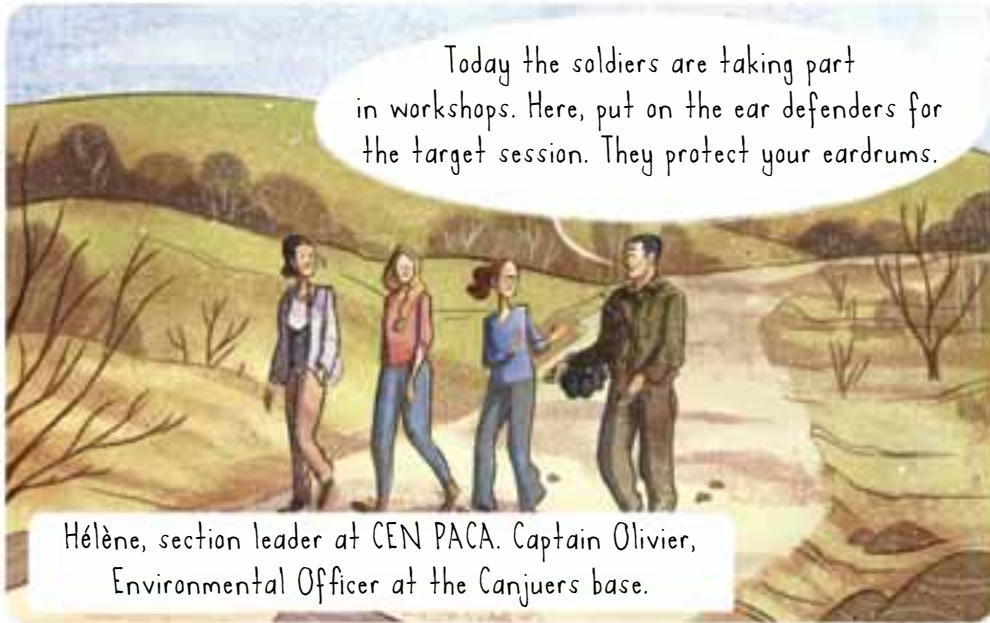


Bon appétit!

5 chickens,
3 roast beef
and half a field
of potatoes



Okay then! I wonder if Maud and Rozenn are eating this well at Canjuers...



Here you can see infantry armoured combat vehicle training.



In the Luby sector, former munitions destruction areas have formed pools.

Contrary to what you might think, all of these little temporary shallow ponds add real diversity to the rather dry environment found elsewhere in the camp...

A shooting range will soon be built in this area. We've been working on developing these new training areas in accordance with the configuration of this wetland.

So, for example, a low level construction would block the flow of the streams.

Water would have accumulated, which is not beneficial for the base or for us.

Really? Why?

A large swampland area would upset the balance I was talking about.

There are
24 native species
in the Luby area.

Native species?

Yes, this concerns all of the protected,
endangered and rare species.
And sometimes even other species
that may be of scientific interest.



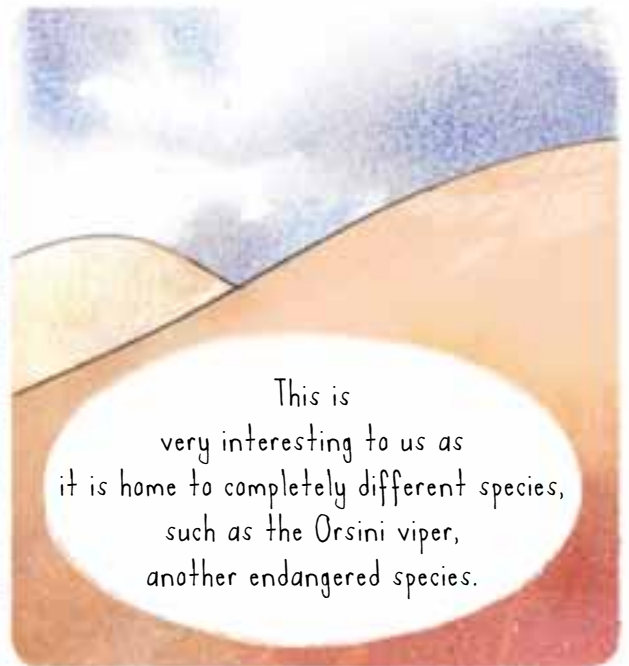
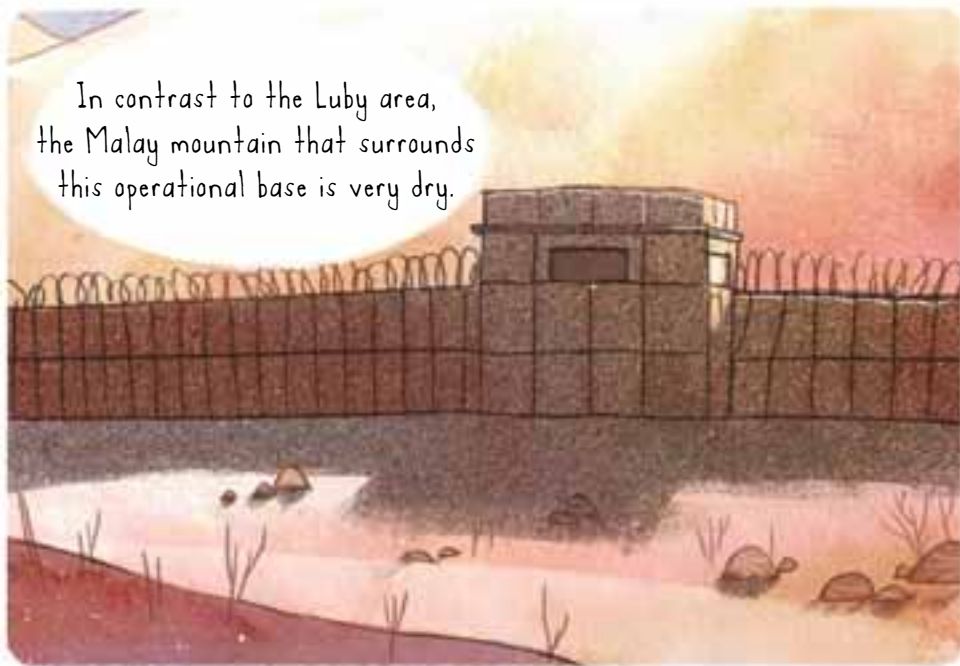
The southern grey shrike

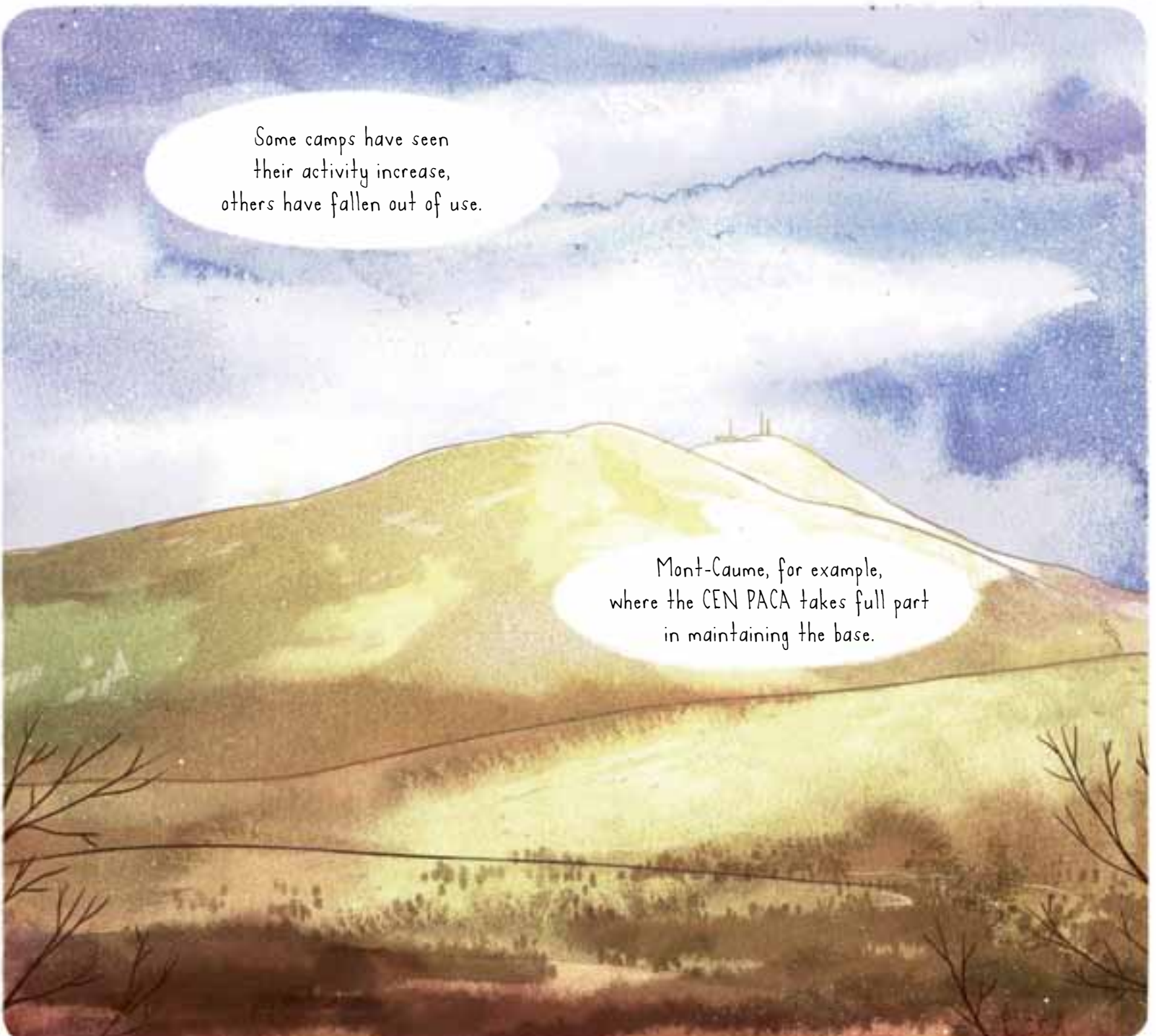


The giant steppe grasshopper

The common parsley frog







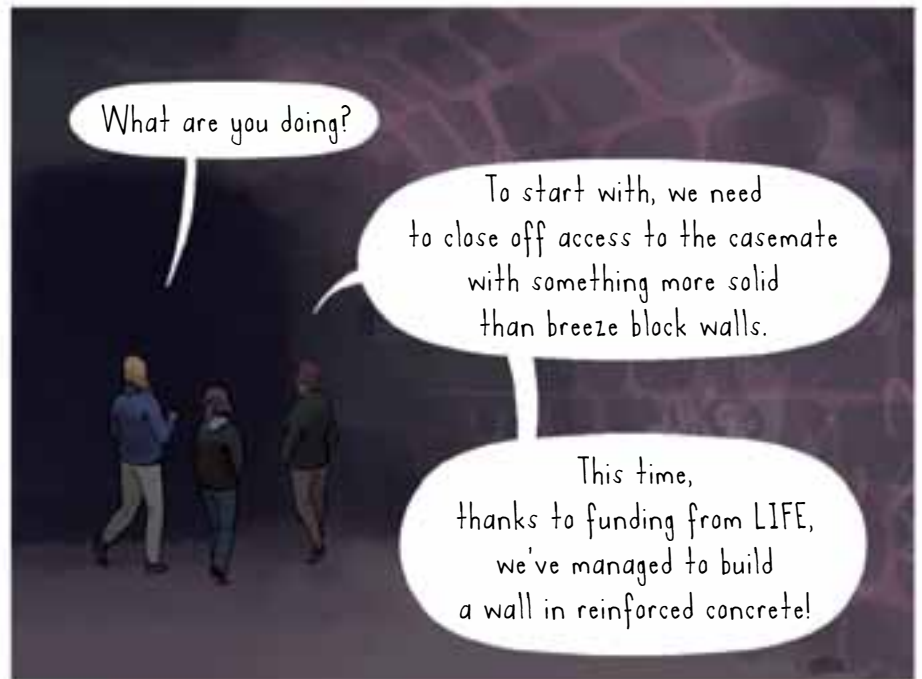
MONT-CAUME

Over there, you can see the former military installations at Mont-Caume.

How come there are no more soldiers at this site?

The site has seen no strategic use since the end of the Second World War.





But won't the military be needing
the base again sooner or later?

In theory, no.

As part of LIFE, the CEN is currently in charge
of the ecological management of the Mont-Caume site.
Thanks to the partnership with the army,
we have authorisation and funding to convert
former military buildings for use by bats.

And there's a chance that
the Ministry of Defence will give up this site.

What a fine new house!

Hey, guys!!

I heard that the CEN and the army
are working on an agreement for military land
of ecological interest to be handed over
to specialists.

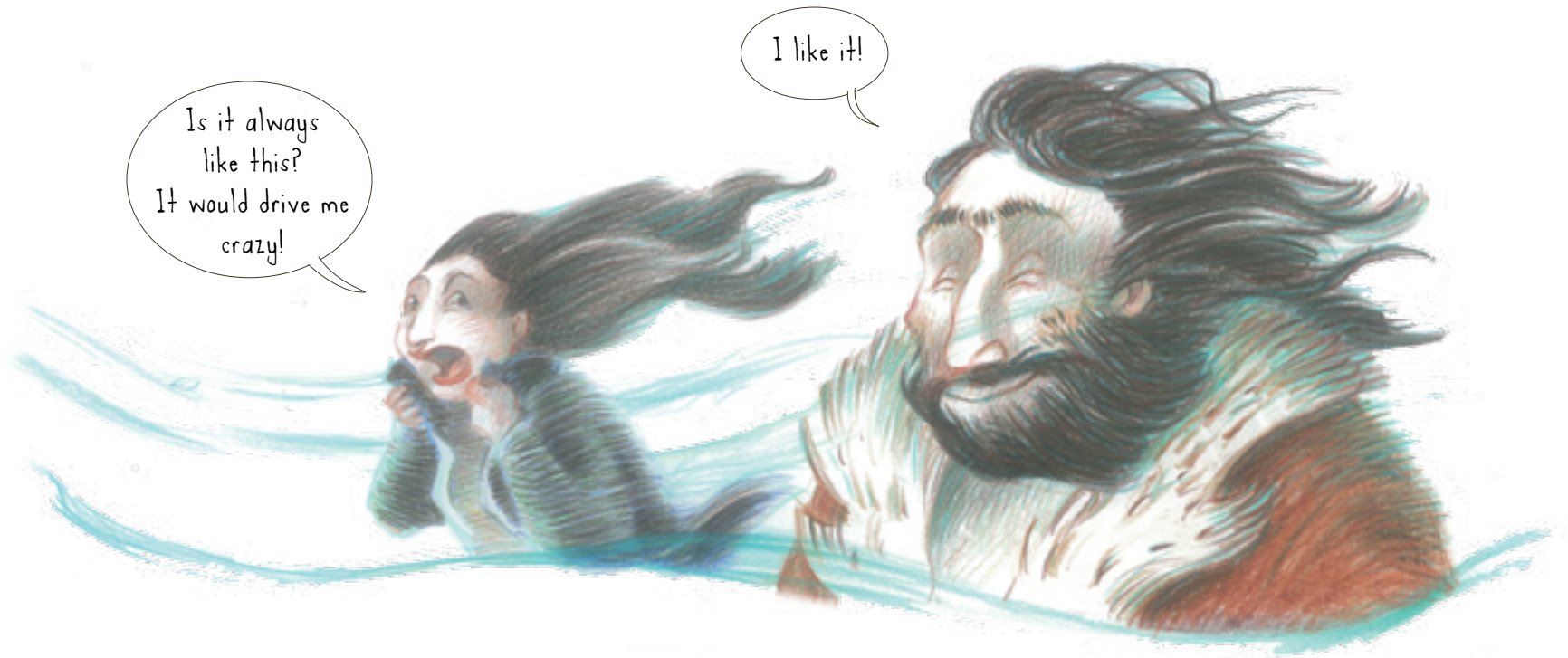
Is that true?

That's very good of them!



ORANGE

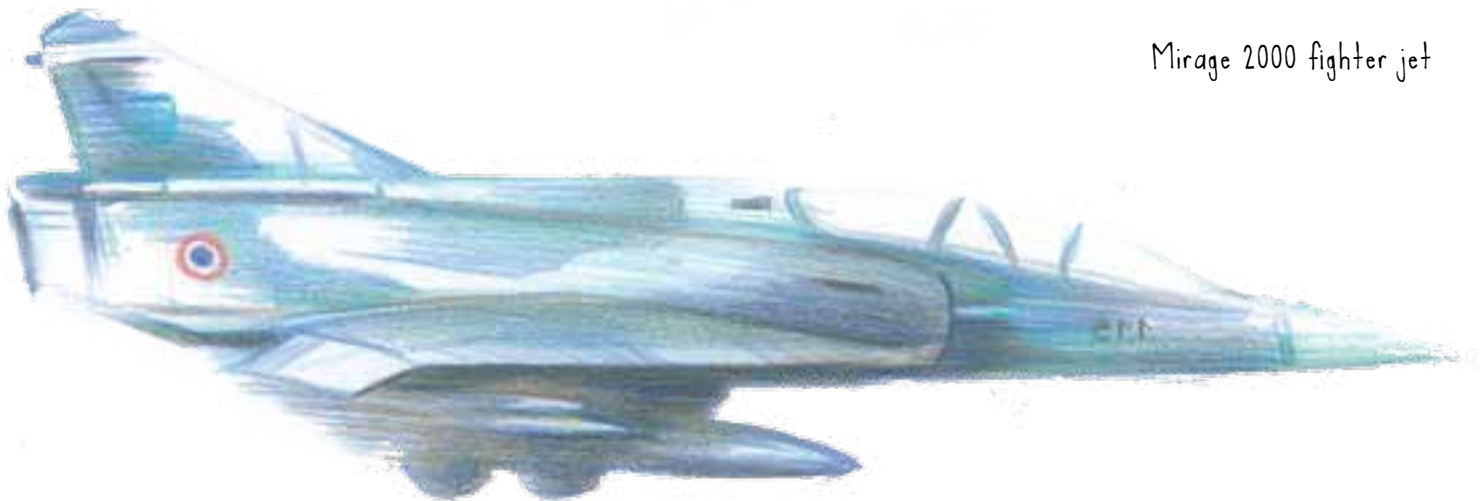
The Mistral welcomes us in its own way to the 115 air base in Orange.



We're going to look at the nests
of large birds roosting on the base...



...And we're going to do some sketches!



Mirage 2000 fighter jet

Fennec helicopter



Hello,
would you like
to go inside?

YES!!!



As soon as
we get an alert from
the Mount Verdun detection
and control centre in Lyon,
we're ready to take off in a
few minutes. We're a team:
two pilots, the team leader
and the air commando.

Our principal
mission is to
ensure the peace
and security
of the local
population.

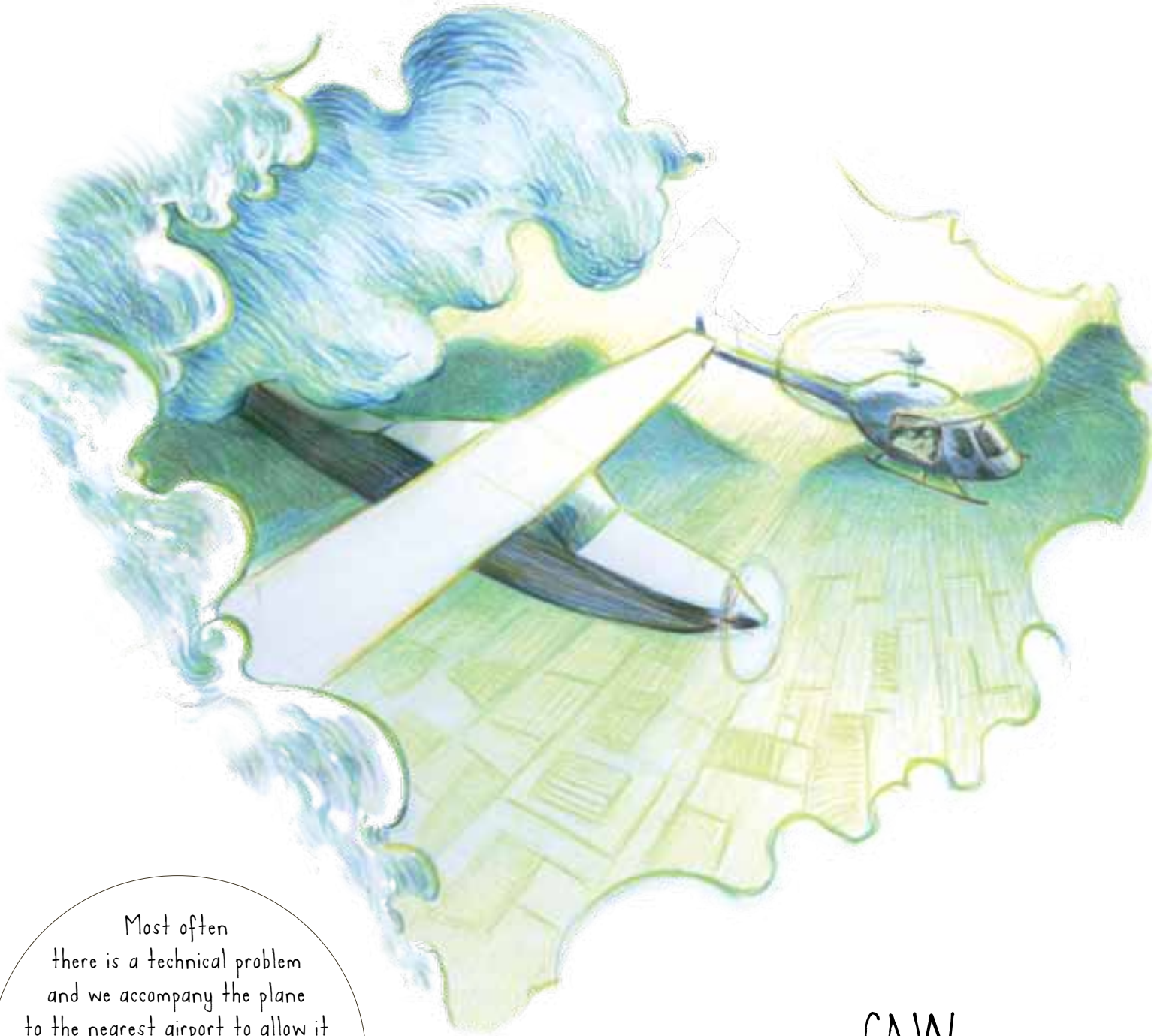


Pilots

Team captains

Air Commando

If the detection and control centre in Lyon detects an aircraft without a unidentified flight path on their radar screens, that they can't communicate with, we take off immediately to investigate whether the aircraft is in distress, has a technical problem, or something else. We catch up with it quickly and we then give the order to communicate by radio or illuminated sign.



Most often there is a technical problem and we accompany the plane to the nearest airport to allow it to land in full safety. Our aim is also to intercept any hostile aircraft attempting to carry out terrorist activities on French soil.

CAW
CAW CAW

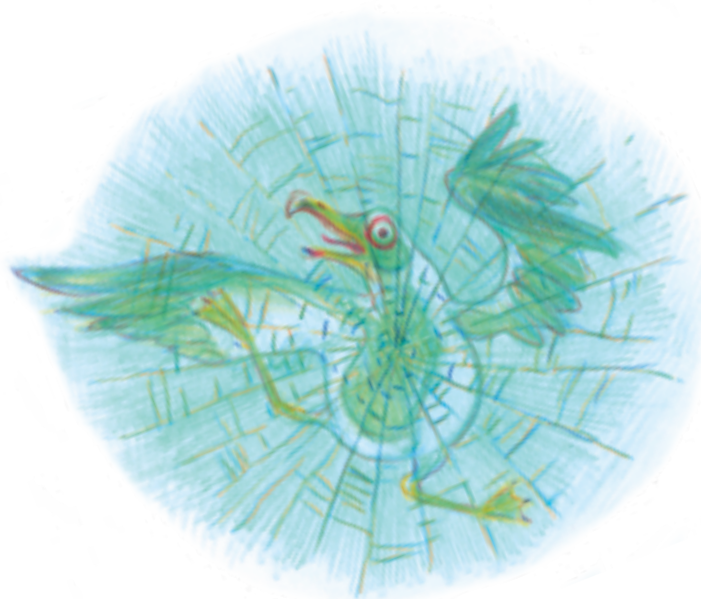
What's that noise?



It's the bird scarer.
It is used on the runways
to keep birds away.



The pilot explains to us
that birds are very dangerous
to the machinery.
With the power of flight,
the largest birds can shatter windows...
And in the case of planes,
they can get into the engines
and cause huge damage,
sometimes even a crash.



We patrol all day long,
reproducing the distress calls of that species
or the sounds of predators...

If that doesn't work,
we use the sound of gunfire as a last resort,
but we try and avoid this if possible
so as not to disturb the bustards.



Bustards?

The Little Bustard

The bustard is an endangered and protected species and the air base is their only nesting area in the region.

They take refuge here during the hunting season.



The bustard is also a danger if it takes off in the path of aircraft. That's why the bird scarer drives them away from the runway before each landing. But the difference from other birds, which panic and fly off unpredictably, is that bustards take shelter in the long grass next to the runway and they don't move.







In addition to the naval base,
Aspretto covers a range
of public services.



So our missions
are quite varied.

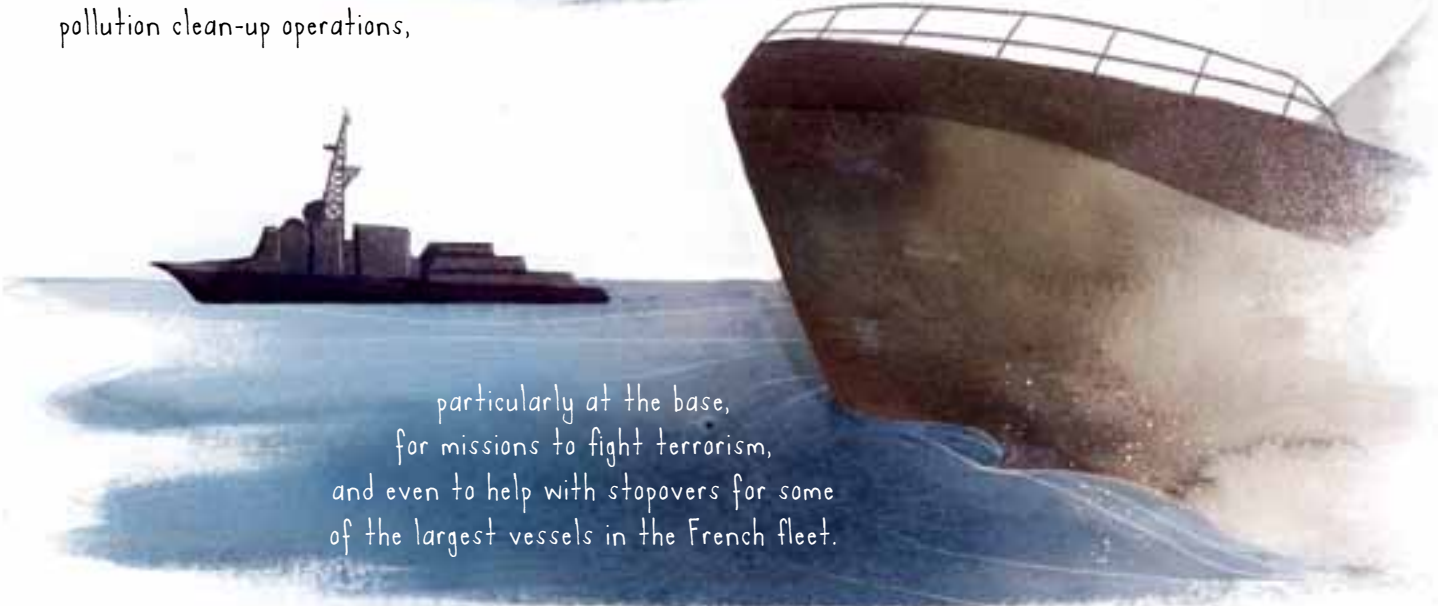
Second-in-command
Marc-Eugène.



We may be called
upon for acts of piracy,

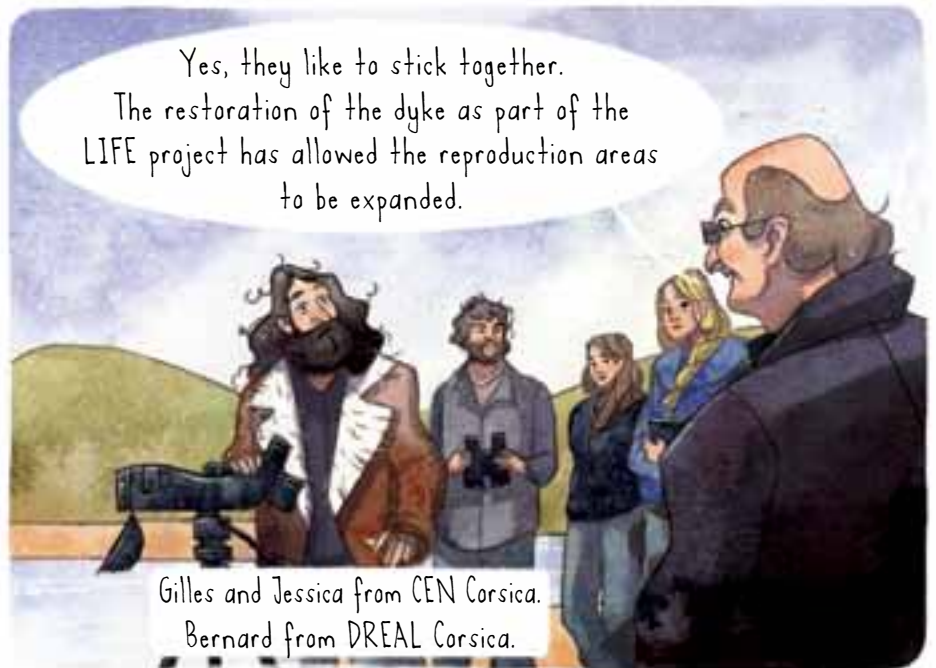


pollution clean-up operations,



particularly at the base,
for missions to fight terrorism,
and even to help with stopovers for some
of the largest vessels in the French fleet.





Then we can monitor their reproduction. There are increasing numbers of birds hatching at Aspretto: 45 in 2014! That's a real success! With this ring and GPS systems, we can also monitor their movements. We know that the gulls seek their food in the bays of Ajaccio, Propriano and Porto.

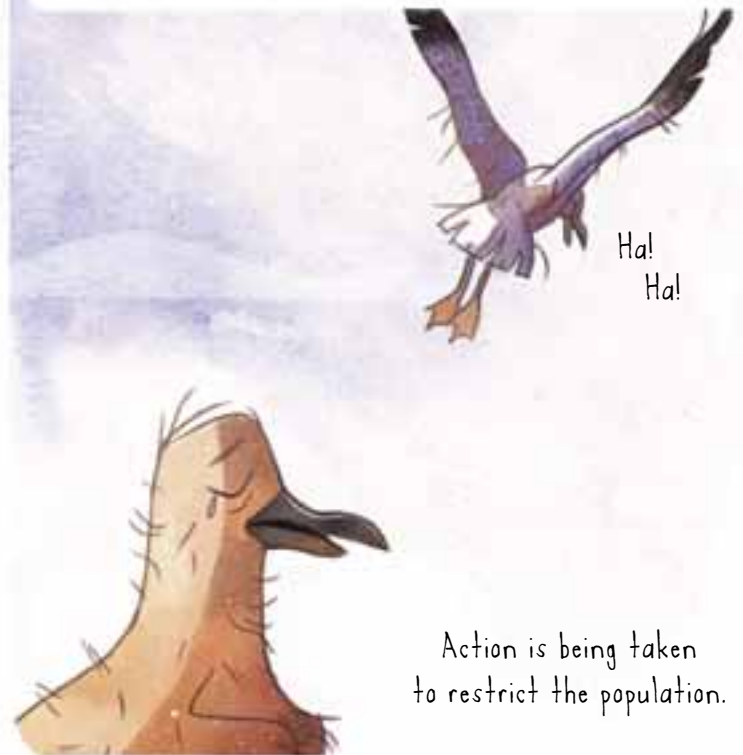
In 2014, during nesting season, one female we tracked with GPS made it to Sardinia, over 100km away! You can also see that some birds travel as far as Morocco and Spain during autumn and winter, and to Italy in the spring. Some have even made it to Senegal!





Yes, that's a yellow-legged gull, you could call it the «nasty» gull.

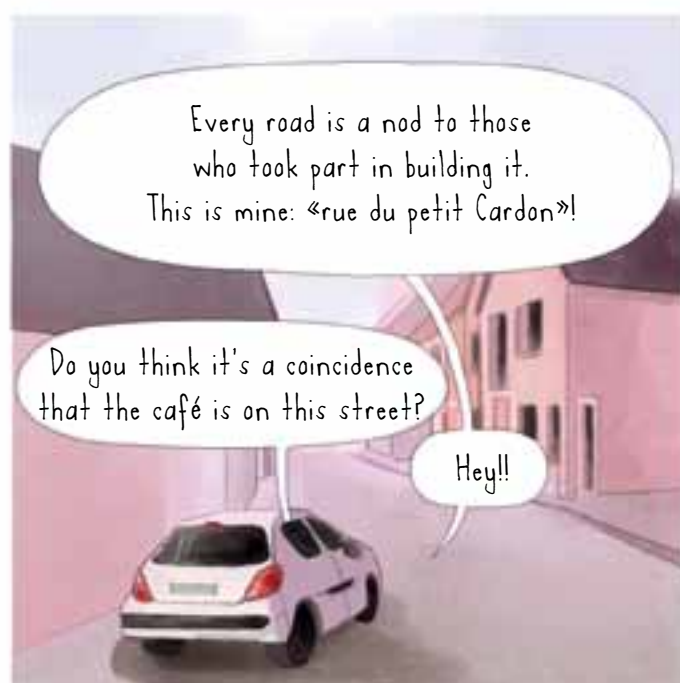
It's an opportunistic species that lives off the waste from the town and its surroundings. It settles one month before the Audoin's gulls and takes over the site.



Action is being taken to restrict the population.

The developing Audoin's gull population is closely monitored by DREAL, CEN Corsica and the ONCFS. That's why the navy and naturalists are working together to ensure that this last colony is maintained.





On site, the manoeuvres are explained to us.
Every soldier has simulation sensors
that are activated when they're hit.



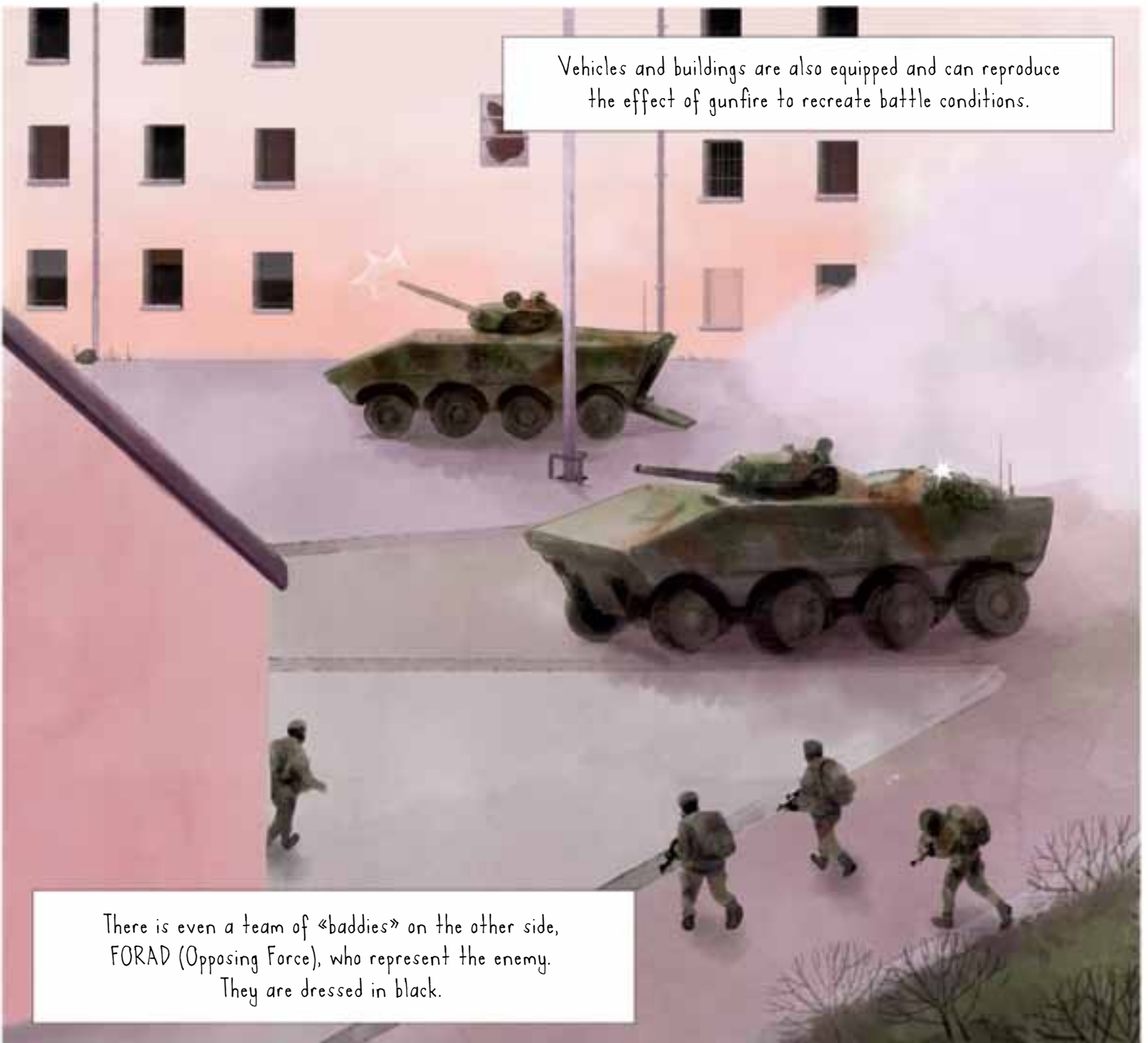
It's a bit like laser quest!

The simulation also allows you
to geolocate «players» and to map the effects
of weapons on the buildings.

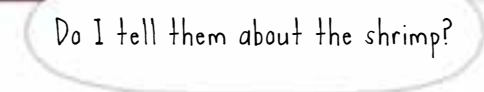
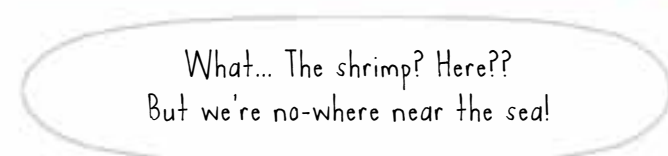


He's going to hit a barrier
if he carries on in that direction.

Vehicles and buildings are also equipped and can reproduce
the effect of gunfire to recreate battle conditions.



There is even a team of «baddies» on the other side,
FORAD (Opposing Force), who represent the enemy.
They are dressed in black.





We implement an action plan with the soldiers to ensure the ecological management of the rest of the base. We have a restoration programme for the overgrown clearings and maintaining the pastures.

Exactly! This programme has been partially funded by the Defence Ministry's Fund for Environmental Action. We are currently pursuing this partnership with farmers.

To restore the dried-up grass?

Ah! This allows us to preserve the species of flora and fauna that are typical to these areas, such as the wood anemone.



That's true, and it's one less thing for us to do to maintain the base. Scrub clearance reduces the risk of fires. It's a win-win situation!

We have heavy hooves, so helping with scrub clearance by trampling shrubs is easy for us.

Mmm, a young shoot!

Me on the other hand, I prefer maintaining existing pastures.





In the old days, protecting the environment wasn't really my thing. But since I've been working at the CEN, that's all changed!

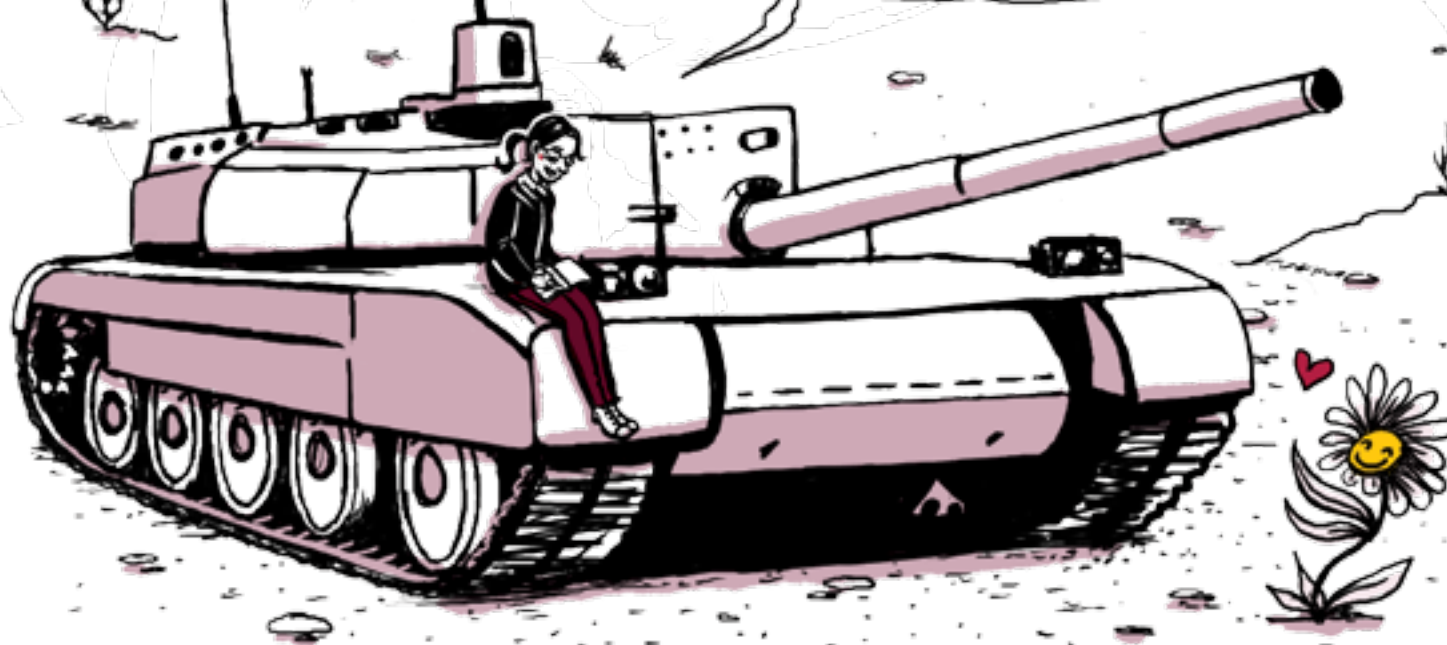
We're really pleased that the sheep are maintaining the drop zone.

Imagine if you had to land in the scrub!

Ouch ouch

The partnership relies on the creation and maintenance of mutual trust between the military and naturalists.

This involves a lot human relationships, and sometimes goes beyond that.



If the partnership works, it's because parties on both sides are motivated and working intelligently.

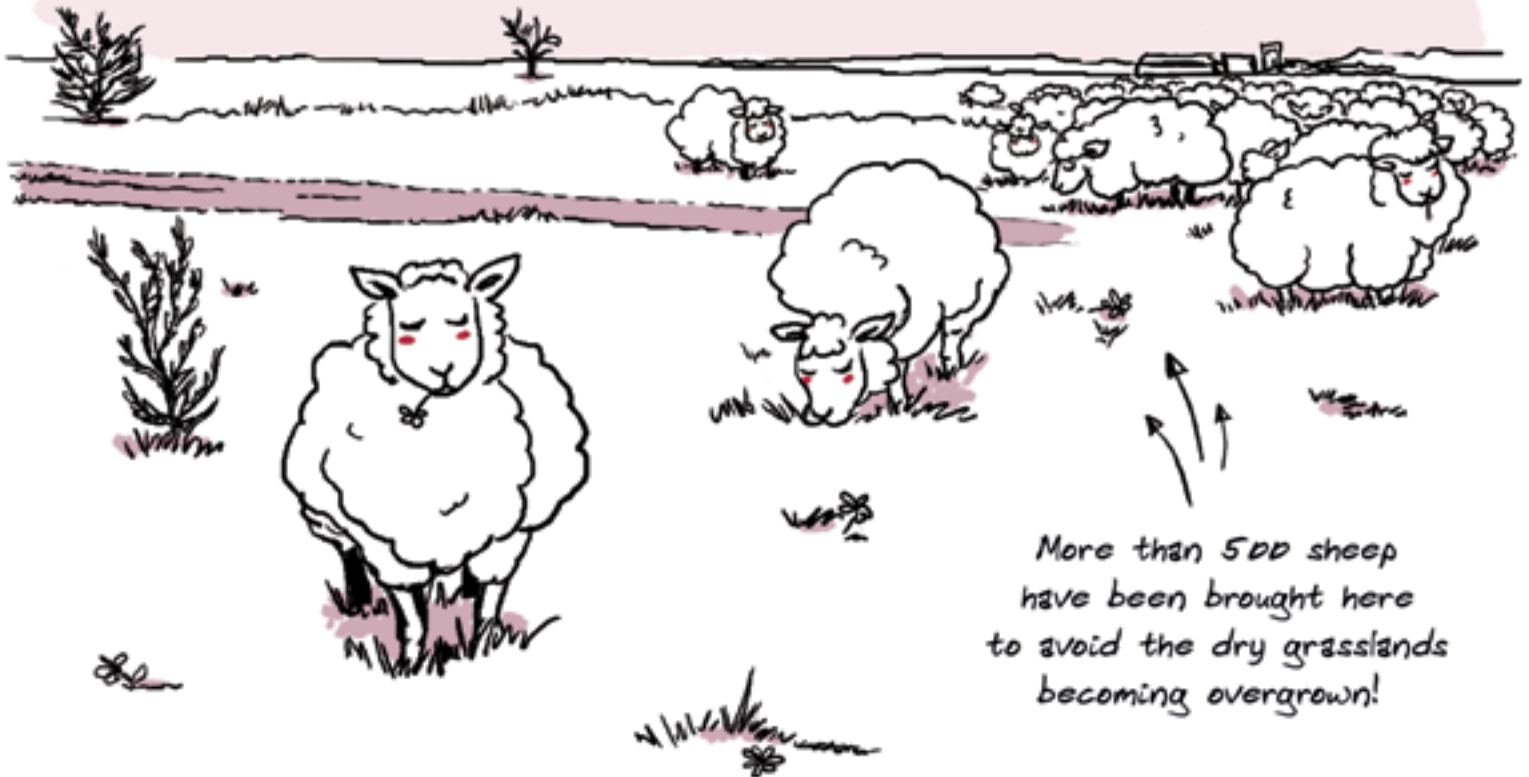


Stanislas,
deputy property
and environment director
at the Ministry of Defence



The idea for the Ministry is to benefit from the technical know-how at the CEN in order to preserve biodiversity at our bases!

Local partnerships use the services of professionals to keep the Defence ministry informed about environmental conservation. They initially began working together in the 1990s at the Valbonne base in the Ain departement, a "test site", so to speak.



More than 500 sheep have been brought here to avoid the dry grasslands becoming overgrown!

We are at the origin of the national between the Ministry of Defence and the Federation of Conservationists signed in 2009!



Lastly, the military and naturalists share the same concerns!



One group wants to protect the national territory, and the other wants to protect the plants and animals it contains.

The actions we carry out together
are beneficial to both parties...
You will have seen this
during your road trip!

Indeed! And what about
the future of the partnership?



The project will carry on,
we are committed to working
for the European Commission
to pursue the conservation
of biodiversity at these bases.

We now hope
that similar programmes will
appear elsewhere in France!



And what have you learned
from this experience?

It was great!

Very informative!

Yes,
it was really good.



We discovered a world we didn't
know existed, we met loads of people...

And you got some fresh air,
it must have made a change
from your drawing tables!





This comic book has been created as part of the European **Life Défense Nature 2 Mil** project. In order to achieve a better balance between biodiversity conservation and the military base use, the project has carried out activities that demonstrate a return to conservation status of endangered species and scarce natural environments. Four sites have taken part in these trials: The Aspretto naval base (Corsica), Chambaran camp (Drôme and Isère), Garrigues camp (Gard) and Mont-Caume (Var). Find out more: www.lifeterrainsmilitaires.fr

We would like to give our warmest thanks to everyone who met with our artists / reporters.

Mission Orchis militaris

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The Emile Cohl school specialises in teaching art and has trained almost 2,000 professional contemporary artists over the past 30 years, including many famous names from the worlds of animation, video games and comics.

As the only establishment in the Lyon region offering professional training in comic book design, the Emile Cohl school strongly believes in developing its links with the local artistic fraternity through collaborations with festivals, writers' workshops and businesses.

In the Illustration and Comic art strand, the Emile Cohl school offers students at the end of their training the possibility of gaining a part of their diploma by making their skills as illustrators available to local companies and institutions for media projects. This has led to groups of students working on problems of land development, immigration and the environment, in the case of the «Mission Orchis Militaris» comic book.

Each year, the Emile Cohl school looks for professional partners in the region to support shared projects.



Olivier Jouvray
Scriptwriter and lecturer in comic art at the Emile Cohl school.

Nicola Bernardelli



Born in Verona, Italy, I studied literature before coming to the Emile Cohl school. I work in two main disciplines: engraving and colour pencil.

bernardelli.jimdo.com

Maud Bihan



I've always liked telling stories. But very soon, ideas and words were not enough. When I left secondary school, I came to the Emile Cohl school where I spread my wings with illustration and children's comics.

maudbihan-illustration.jimdo.com

Rozenn Grosjean



Having met an illustrator who showed me what their job was about, I decided to focus on design. Nature is my main source of inspiration it enriches the dreamlike world of my illustrations.

rozenn-illustration.jimdo.com

Christelle Pourrot



After a BA in English Literature, I turned to illustration and comics. I like working in black and white, ink and pencil and to experiment with different techniques: linocut, dotwork...

ellea-bird.com



Orchis Militaris is an orchid that can be found on the dry slopes of prairies such as those found at the Valbonne camp. The natural evolution of the species has gradually led to its flower taking on the form of a human wearing a helmet.

This had led to scientists giving it the name Orchis Militaris.

Comic book funded by:

