



SEAMUS SHORTT

THE MONTEVIVO

WILDLIFE GLOSSARY

Welcome to the Montevivo Wildlife Glossary.

Here you will find out about the real-life situation of the animals that appear in the Montevivo Series.

The PDF includes:

- Factual information about their conservation status.
- Beautiful photographs taken by leading wildlife photographers.
- A Manifesto in defence of Nature.

THE WILDLIFE GLOSSARY

Special thanks to Miguel Ángel Pérez Vega

- Degree in biological science / life sciences.
- Doctorate in the teaching of science.

With the guidance of my biologist friend Miguel Ángel, I have written a brief text to accompany photographs of the animal characters that appear in the Montevivo Series. My intention is to offer readers a clear picture of each creature, its habitat requirements and, where appropriate, an overview of how threatened or in danger of extinction certain of these species are.

In terms of the rarer animals' distribution I have focused on their populations in Spain, although in some cases I have extended data to include a broader European and global view. As far as any specific statistics are concerned, I have based these on studies carried out by conservation groups in 2018. However, depending on the source, population numbers of certain animals were sometimes found to vary. Therefore, readers should take this information as a general guide and not as a scientific field study.

MAMMALS

European brown bear (*Ursus arctos pyrenaicus*)

Conservation status – With around 300 individuals living in the remote mountains of the Iberian Peninsula, this species is at critical risk of extinction. As with other “Critically Endangered” fauna; important European Union funding has been channelled through the Environment Life + Programme to reintroduce, monitor and manage these struggling populations. Numerous conservation groups (amongst them FAPAS, which was founded in 1983) have also been playing an important role in endeavouring to save the species.

Habitat – Extensive mixed and deciduous broadleaved forest.

Diet – Bears are omnivores.

Distribution – Wild bear populations have been reduced to isolated mountainous territories in partially protected areas of the Pyrenees and Picos de Europa. These mountain ranges provide enclaves where bears can freely move about relatively undisturbed and also offer safe refuge for winter hibernation in caves. Despite protection, their main threats are loss of habitat, snares, poisoned bait and poachers.



Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*)

Conservation status – This feline is one of the most endangered wildcats in the world. Conservation experts estimate that there are around 500 roaming free in specific areas of the Iberian Peninsula.

A complex breeding programme in captivity has been under way over the past decade, aimed at releasing individuals back into the wild, in an effort to save the species from extinction. Although lynxes remain on the IUCN “Critically Endangered” list of wild animals, promising results have been achieved, raising hopes for the future.

Habitat – It lives in well-conserved, wooded Mediterranean scrub.

Diet – Carnivore. The lynx is a nocturnal predator: rabbits constitute its main diet supplemented by other lightweight mammals, rodents and birds.

Distribution – Most of the very few remaining wild lynxes are located in two separate areas of Andalusia: Sierra Morena and Doñana National Park. Rare sightings have been reported in other parts of Spain and Portugal.



Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*)



Conservation status – Due to the degradation of its aquatic ecosystem this species is catalogued as “Vulnerable” by the IUCN. Otters are highly sensitive to the contamination of waterways by pesticides and heavy metals. Accordingly, the presence of otters along riparian boundaries is a reliable biodiversity indicator.

Habitat – Mainly to be found in rivers, lakes and reservoirs although may also live around sheltered sea coves.

Diet – Otters are solitary nocturnal hunters. They are agile swimmers and divers whose staple diet comprises fish along with other aquatic animals.

Distribution – Europe, Asia and North Africa.

European badger (*Meles meles*)

Conservation status – Although latterly numbers have declined in the Iberian Peninsula, they are not threatened.



Habitat – Mixed and broadleaved woodland where they excavate badger sets.

Diet – Omnivorous, including: worms, insects, reptiles, small rodents, grubs, bulbs, roots and fruit.

Distribution – Europe and parts of Asia.

Black rat (*Rattus rattus*)

Conservation status – The future of this species has no survival problems.

Habitat – Easily adapts to any type of environment, such as farmland, rubbish tips, cities and wherever else food can be scavenged.

Diet – Omnivore.



Distribution – Its prolific breeding capacity, omnivorous diet, ability to adapt, and hardy constitution have enabled it to colonize practically every part of the world where humans have settled. It lives in social groups that vary in numbers.

Pine marten (*Martes martes*)

Conservation status – It is not a threatened species.

Habitat – Coniferous and beech forests.

Diet – Omnivore; mainly preys on small mammals, birds, insects and reptiles, supplementing its diet with forest fruits, seeds and birds' eggs.

Distribution – Limited to the northern strip of the Iberian Peninsula. Also found in most of Europe.



Stoat (*Mustela erminea*)



Conservation status – It is not a threatened species.

Habitat – Woods and open countryside.

Diet – Carnivore; typically hunting rodents and rabbits in their burrows.

Distribution – Most of Europe, Asia and North America.

Wild boar (*Sus scrofa scrofa*)



Conservation status – No risk of extinction. The domestic pig is descended from wild boar.

Habitat – Woods and scrubland.

Diet – Omnivorous scavenger that will eat almost anything: predominantly forest fruits, acorns, berries, roots, tubers, carrion, grubs and insects.

Distribution – Ranges across most of Europe and Asia.

Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)



The red fox can be found in suburbs and woods throughout Europe, North America, Asia and North Africa. It is not at risk due to a versatile ability to adapt its habits and omnivorous diet in a rapidly changing world.

Iberian wolf (*Canis lupus signatus*)

Conservation status –

A “Critically Endangered” species in Andalusia and, where not extinct, considered “Vulnerable” elsewhere in the Iberian Peninsula. Its estimated population is between 900 – 1,200, a figure some way above 600 which marks the “Critical” (IUCN Red List) limit of an endangered species.

Empirical figures are hard to come by, however with possibly fewer than 750 breeding adults, the Iberian wolf’s future remains in the balance.



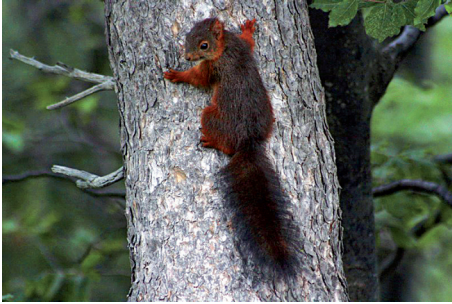
Habitat – As a general overview, the Iberian wolf is restricted to mountainous woods, heaths, and scrublands of natural game reserves. In the Sierra de la Culebra in Zamora, subject to authorization, it can still be legally hunted. The difficulty that sheep farmers have in receiving compensation from local authorities for losses in their flocks means that the age-old persecution of wolves continues. Hence uncontrolled hunting, snares and poisoned bait, along with the destruction of its natural habitat are the principal reasons for its decline.

Diet – Carnivore. Fundamental in controlling the excessive numbers of ungulate species such as wild boar and deer.

Distribution – Around 90% of the population is localized in the north east of the Peninsula where sustainable hunting of wolves is supposedly regulated.

In Andalusia, the uncertain numbers that exist in Sierra Morena are a protected species.

Eurasian red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)



Conservation status – While not threatened, it is catalogued as “Vulnerable”.

Habitat – Lives and nests in coniferous and broad-leaved woods.

Diet – Pine nuts, acorns and beach nuts supplemented by forest fruits, fungi, berries and bulbs.

Distribution – Common in central and southern Europe extending as far south as Andalusia.

European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

Conservation status – This was one of the Iberian Peninsula’s most common mammals, however there has been a drastic decline in its numbers since the 1950s due to disease (Myxomatosis and Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease). This species is fundamental to the survival of the lynx, the imperial eagle and other predators.



Habitat – Prefers a mixed habitat of prairies, copses and hedgerows.

Diet – Herbivore: mainly grazing grass, leafy plants and seasonal flowers.

Distribution – Rabbits are an autochthonous species in the Iberian Peninsula and have been introduced to practically the rest of Europe.

Water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*)

Conservation status – Until recent times it was relatively common, however due to the degradation of the aquatic ecosystem there has been a reduction in their numbers.

Habitat – This semi-aquatic rodent lives by rivers, streams and irrigation canals which provide a slow, constant flow of water. Also found around lakes, ponds and coastal areas.

Diet – Herbivore; mainly riparian vegetation.

Distribution – Spread across most of Europe.



Dormouse (*Gliridae*)

There are many subspecies of this charismatic animal that live in mixed woodland habitats across Europe and Asia Minor with the garden dormouse (*Eliomys quercinus*) being probably the most common. They are widely recognized as being a highly sensitive biomonitor so their presence is indicative of biodiversity. For the present it has a viable future, however overuse of pesticides has meant a decline in its numbers in certain intensively farmed areas.



Its diet is omnivorous, based around seasonal flowers, seeds, fruits and invertebrates. Occasionally it will catch larger prey such as baby voles or newly hatched birds.

European brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*)



Conservation status –

Despite suffering a decline in numbers, caused by extensive modern farming techniques, it remains widespread. This is not the case of the Broom hare (*Lepus castroviejo* pictured in the photograph) which is a rare species – classified as “Vulnerable” by the IUCN – endemic to a limited area of the north west of Spain.

Habitat – Lives primarily around open farmland and pasture that borders hedgerows and woods.

Diet – Herbivore: predominantly grass, leafy shoots and plants.

Distribution – Populates cultivated areas of Europe and the Middle East as far as Asia.

European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)



Conservation status –

This species is not considered to be threatened, however the contrary may be said of the North African hedgehog which can still be found in a few regions of Spain.

Habitat – Woods, spinneys and hedgerows which also includes parks and gardens.

Diet – Mainly insectivorous: predominantly worms, insects, slugs, grubs and berries. Tiny rodents, frogs and ground nesting birds’ eggs may also be consumed.

Distribution – Found across most of Europe.

Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*)

This great herbivore ranges across the mountains, and heaths of Spain and much of Europe. The females live together in herds rearing their young, while the males tend to be solitary. Adult males shed their old antlers and, if they are healthy, grow more spectacular ones each year. They then joust against each other in autumn with the winners earning mating rights over females.



Because their main predators have disappeared, their high numbers often need to be controlled by culling and licensed shooting.

Spanish ibex (*Capra pyrenaica*)

Conservation status –

Despite suffering an epidemic of mange in the 1980s (which decimated their numbers) it is not threatened and remains amongst the most prized species for hunting in the Iberian Peninsula.



Habitat – Highland woods, scrubland and mountains.

Diet – Herbivore.

Distribution – Scattered around the Peninsula in mountainous regions. Noteworthy populations can be found in the sierras of Andalusia.

European mouflon (*Ovis orientalis musimon*)



Originally inhabiting Corsica, this subspecies of the wild sheep was introduced to the Iberian Peninsula and other parts of Europe. Being a rugged herbivore, it adapted well to the mountainous regions of the mainland and nowadays has stable populations in numerous National Parks. As with the Spanish ibex, the adult males' impressive horns make it a sought-after hunting trophy.

Common mole (*Talpa europaea*)



The different subspecies of mole (*Talpidae* family) are difficult to identify. There are three very similar types in Europe of which the common mole (*Talpa europaea*) is the most widespread.

Habitat – Moles live in underground tunnels and galleries which they dig in meadows, parks and gardens.

Diet – Predominantly earthworms and grubs.

Distribution – Extends over most of Europe excluding the southern and northern tips of the continent.

Genet (*Genetta genetta*)

The genet is related to the mongoose. It is found in parts of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, usually preferring dense woodland habitat. This agile creature is an excellent climber and can squeeze through any hole that its head can fit through. Although considered to be omnivorous it prefers eating animal over plant matter and generally hunts at night, preying on small birds, bats, rodents and insects. The presence of this creature in forested areas is a good measure of biodiversity. Its population while not extensive is stable.



Wildcat (*Felis silvestris*)

The wildcat is an ancestor of the domestic cat and crossbreeding has long been common. In its appearance the European species is similar to the typical domestic tabby cat, albeit slightly larger and with better night vision.

There are different subspecies found across its range through Europe, Asia and Africa. The European variety can be found living in woodland and mountainous areas where it makes its den in the hollows of old trees or fissures in the rocks. It is a voracious hunter and in particular stalks waterfowl, small birds, rodents, rabbits and hares.

The IUCN Red List considers the species to be declining, nevertheless it is categorized as "Least Concern".

Wildcat kitten



Greater noctule bat (*Nyctalus lasiopterus*)



This is Europe's largest bat with a wingspan of up to 460mm.

Conservation status – “Near Threatened” in Europe according to the IUCN Red List. More information is needed on population size, trends and potential threats.

Habitat – Prefers wooded river valleys where it roosts within old trees or buildings.

Diet – Mainly insectivorous but will also prey on light-weight birds.

Distribution – Low density patches through central and southern Europe, parts of Asia and North Africa.

Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)



This bat takes its name from the shape of its nose. It is one of the smallest bats in the world with a wingspan of less than 255mm. It can be found in south west England, Wales, parts of Ireland, across central and southern Europe and in certain territories of North

Africa, the Middle East and reduced areas of Asia. They inhabit wooded foothills where they feed on insects and generally roost in caves or old buildings.

This species is in decline due to the loss of suitable habitat and the widespread use of pesticides in agriculture.

BIRDS

Iberian imperial eagle or Adalbert's eagle (*Aquila adalberti*)

Conservation status – Considered one of the most endangered birds of prey in the world, it is only found in specific south western territories of the Iberian Peninsula. Like so many other large raptors, its numbers have been decimated by unwittingly consuming poisoned bait and electrocution from colliding with high voltage power cables. Habitat fragmentation as a result of human activity has also had a negative impact on numbers. There are an estimated 400 breeding pairs in Spain and their future, as with all “Critically Endangered” species, depends on active conservation management.

Habitat – Mediterranean alluvial plains and marshes, hills and high slopes with wooded scrubland, where it favours big, mature trees for nesting.

Diet – Rabbits constitute its favoured prey.

Distribution – Sierras of Extremadura, National Parks of Cabañeros and Doñana, and Sierra Morena.

Juvenile imperial eagle



Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos homeyeri*)



Conservation status –

This majestic bird of prey is catalogued as “Vulnerable”. Reduction in suitable habitat and indiscriminate theft of its eggs when nesting are its most serious problems.

Habitat – Mountains and steppes.

Diet – Mainly rabbits, hares and other small mammals and birds.

Distribution – The Iberian subspecies is smaller than the northern European Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos chrysaetos*). It is found across the Iberian Peninsula, the south of France, and parts of North Africa.

Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)



Conservation status –

This small vulture is considered “Vulnerable” within its European range. Strict monitoring and feeding sites are required to guarantee its future. Its population is more extensive in Africa and Asia, however numbers are declining in these areas too.

It faces the same problems as most other birds of prey, namely, the indiscriminate use of poisons to eradicate so-called vermin that then gets into the food chain; electrocution, theft of its eggs, forest fires, illegal shooting, and the loss of suitable habitat for breeding.

Habitat – It typically nests in mountainous gorges on high cliff-faces.

Diet – Like all vultures, its diet is based around carrion although may also include organic waste, young vertebrates and birds’ eggs.

Lammergeier or Bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*)

Conservation status – This enormous vulture, whose wingspan can reach over 2.8m, is in danger of extinction in most of its few European enclaves. Its main European population is in the Pyrenees. The species became extinct in Andalusia in the mid 1980s although a complex programme of breeding in captivity is under way to reintroduce the species back into the Sierras of Cazorla, Segura and Castril (www.gypaetus.org). Electrocutation, illegal shooting by hunters and eating poisoned animals are its main threat.

Habitat – Exclusively limited to mountainous areas where it nests on inaccessible cliff edges. Each breeding pair rears one chick, however the death rate is high.

Diet – Scavenges bones from the corpses of large mammals which it then drops from a great height with extraordinary precision. The splintered bones are then eaten. This habit is unique amongst birds.

Distribution – Pyrenees, Corsica, Crete, regions of Africa and Asia. Reintroduced into specific areas of eastern Andalusia and also the Austrian Alps.



Black vulture (*Aegypius monachus*)

Conservation status – This is the Iberian Peninsula’s largest bird with a wingspan of over 3m. The Spanish population is estimated at around 3,000 breeding pairs, which constitutes almost the entire European population. It is catalogued as a “Threatened Species” in Andalusia and “Vulnerable” in the few other areas of Spain where it can be found. Poisoned bait, scavenging carcasses laced with toxins from lead shot, and electrocution are often the causes of unnatural deaths. Forest fires and human encroachment on its habitat are also a serious threat, as these birds are known to abandon their nest if they feel intimidated.

Habitat – Mediterranean wooded scrubland and mountainous areas, where it nests in the upper branches of large trees.

Diet – Usually amongst the first scavengers to arrive at a carcass; it eats flesh and meat in preference to offal.

Distribution – Found over the central / eastern highlands and plains of the Iberian Peninsula including Andalusia, with a minor population in the mountains of Mallorca. A reintroduction project in the Catalan Pyrenees hopes to link Iberian and French populations. This would in turn increase genetic variability.



Eurasian griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*)

Conservation status –

This great bird is considered to be out of danger but nevertheless occupies a status of “Special Interest”. Needless to say it faces the same threats as all other birds of prey.

It nests on rocky ledges in mountainous areas where it uses the thermals for soaring over a large territory to scavenge for carrion, including dead livestock and other ungulate mammals. Its main European populations, over 85%, are found in Spain, with lower density enclaves in a few other Mediterranean countries. Outside Europe the species can be found in North Africa and parts of Asia.



Tawny owl (*Strix aluco sylvatica*)

Conservation status –

Not threatened.

Habitat – Woods, spinneys and mature urban parkland with water close by.

Diet – Hunts small birds, bats, rodents and insects.

Distribution – Excluding the northern tip of the continent, it is widespread across Europe and can also be found in parts of Asia.



Eurasian eagle owl (*Bubo bubo*)



Conservation status –

This species is vulnerable to a reduction in its natural habitat and unwittingly consuming poisoned bait. These are two factors which have taken their toll on the eagle owl population.

Habitat – Mixed woodland and steppes, preferring open countryside for hunting.

Diet – *The lord of the night* is a powerful raptor, hunting rabbits, hares, rodents, and many types of woodland birds. Its owl pellets are testament to the fact

that occasionally it preys on hedgehogs and fawns as well as juvenile foxes, genets and pine martens.

Distribution – Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Eurasian scops owls (*Otus scops*)



Conservation status –

This is the smallest nocturnal raptor in the Iberian Peninsula. It is not threatened, although latter day censuses have detected a significant decline in numbers, which give rise for concern.

Habitat – Woods, agricultural / pastoral landscape and parkland. Many fly south to winter over in sub-Saharan Africa.

Diet – A staple diet of worms, small lizards and insects makes it susceptible to pesticides.

Distribution – Southern and eastern Europe, North Africa and Asia.

Black stork (*Ciconia nigra*)

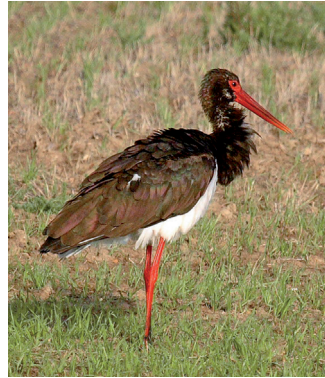
Conservation status –

Numbers have been dwindling since the 1960s and it is now catalogued as a “Critically Endangered” species within Spain. Sensitive conservation management is fundamental to saving this bird from further decline.

Habitat – Usually nests in large trees near to areas of water such as lakes, marshes and rice fields.

Diet – Fish, reptiles, large insects and amphibious creatures including river crabs.

Distribution – Small resident year-round population in the south and south east of the Iberian Peninsula. Migrating summer populations are found in certain other European countries. Its global winter migratory range includes tropical parts of Africa and Asia. There is also a resident population in South Africa.



White stork (*Ciconia ciconia*)

Conservation status – The population size is large, hence this bird does not approach the threshold for being classified as “Vulnerable”. Despite these positive figures, death from electrocution, poisoned bait, and contact with pesticides take their toll on overall numbers.

Habitat – These storks make their nests in big trees near to water, although they are often found nesting on spires and towers in towns surrounded by farmland or pastures.

Diet – It has a varied diet based around little rodents, juvenile amphibians, fish and insects.

Distribution – Warm and dry regions of Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. It generally migrates in the winter to sub-Saharan Africa or temperate parts of Asia.



Greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*)



Conservation status –

While the most common of all flamingo species, it is nevertheless considered bordering “Vulnerable” status in certain areas of its range.

Habitat – It congregates in salt lakes and lagoons feeding on aquatic organisms. Its peculiar shaped bill rakes along the lakebed filtering edible shrimp and algae from the water.

Distribution – It breeds in many tropical and sub-tropical coastal regions worldwide including North, Central and South America, Africa, Turkey and Asia. In Europe it is found in Sardinia, Albania, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, and the Camargue region of France. In Andalusia, there are important breeding colonies in Doñana National Park and Fuente de Piedra lagoon.

Grey heron (*Ardea cinerea*)



Conservation status –

With a widespread and numerous population, the grey heron is not threatened. That said, numbers have been directly affected by a progressive loss of marshland and flood plains, which are amongst its principal habitat.

Diet – Its diet consists predominantly of fish, amphibians and aquatic insects.

Distribution – Being a migratory bird, it can be found across Europe, Asia and Africa.

Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*)

Conservation status –

While stable in territories spread across eastern and central Europe, the Cantabrian subspecies (*Tetrao urogallus cantabricus*) is in “Critical Danger of Extinction”. After the last ice age it had disappeared from most of the Iberian Peninsula leaving two isolated enclaves in northern Spain.



Its population is estimated at around 300. Efforts to repopulate this protected species have, as yet, met with little success.

Habitat – Coniferous and mixed woodland with undergrowth, clearings and near water. They nest on the ground, whereby eggs and hatchlings are often eaten by predatory mammals such as foxes or wild boar. Illegal egg collectors are also responsible for the decline in numbers.

Diet – Fresh green shoots, forest fruits, small reptiles and insect larvae.

Distribution – The loss of its natural habitat has reduced it to localized areas within the Picos de Europa and parts of the Pyrenees.

European magpie (*Pica pica*)

The magpie has adapted well to the changing landscape of the last century. It is an omnivorous bird that ranges across Europe, Asia and parts of Africa, where it can be seen across a great variety of habitats, favouring farmland and pastures with scattered woods.



AMPHIBIANS

European toad (*Bufo bufo*)



Conservation status – The common toad abounds across Europe. Due to its resistance to low-level contamination in waterways, its breeding has remained relatively unaffected compared to other more delicate species.

Habitat – Found from sea-level up to mountainous areas in and around slow-moving or still water.

Diet – Its tadpoles eat aquatic larva and plankton. The adults' diet is based around insects, snails, slugs and other invertebrates.

Iberian green frog (*Pelophylax perezi*)

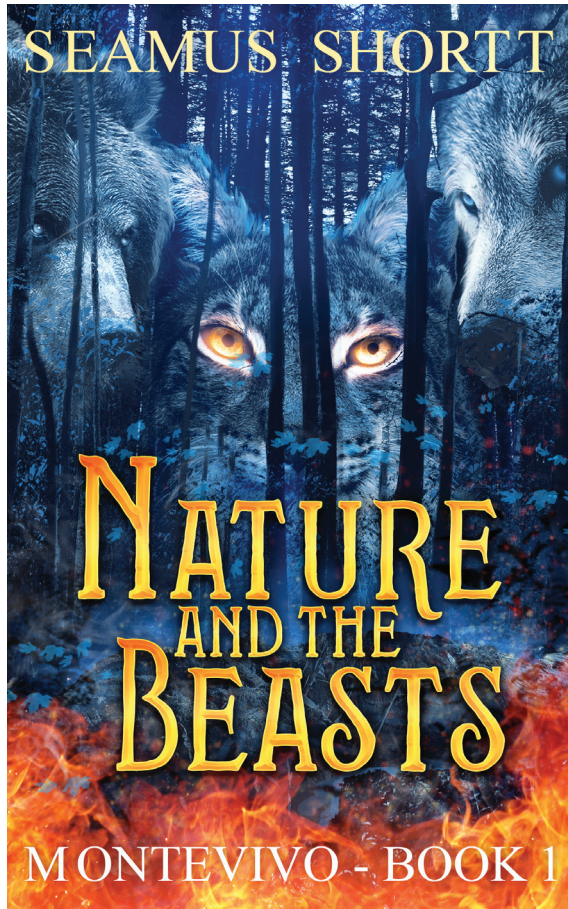


This semi-aquatic frog inhabits a wide variety of flowing and stagnant water habitats in the Iberian Peninsula. It feeds on insects, spiders, small fish and other amphibians, and hibernates in winter. As is so often the case, numbers have declined drastically in areas where chemicals, heavy metals and pesticides have contaminated waterways.

Stripeless tree frog (*Hyla meridionalis*)



This is not a threatened species although loss of breeding habitat is creating isolated populations. It is found scattered across parts of southern Europe, living in wooded hinterland near to fresh water. As with all frogs, it depends on water to spawn and eats small invertebrates.



Now you have discovered the animals in Montevivo you can read **Nature and the Beasts - Book 1** in the series.

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All reviews of '**Nature and the Beasts**' on Amazon and social media platforms will be much appreciated. Please help spread the environmental message.

MANIFESTO

WE WILL

Nature is the greatest work of art that exists; its infinity knows no boundaries. Humanity forms an integral part of this organic masterpiece and yet in many ways we have lost sight of this fact. Would it not be wise to remember that planet Earth, with its rich biodiversity, is a treasure to be shared, marvelled at and cherished?

One of the greatest challenges of the 21st century is not just to protect our planet's few remaining wildernesses, but also to tend every sanctuary for its diminishing variety of flora and fauna. In many cases these may be local parks, nature reserves or other areas of valuable habitat. Achieving these objectives will lay the foundation stones to solving related problems that are inextricably balanced with a sustainable, healthy and thriving environment.

The Montevivo Book Series hopes to contribute to bringing Nature's pulse to the forefront of our consciousness where it belongs. Make a gesture, a donation or a pledge in order to help some conservation projects, and together we will save Earth's natural heritage for the future benefit of all.

GLOSSARY PHOTOGRAPHS

My gratitude goes to all those wildlife photographers who gave permission to use their beautiful photographs. In particular I would like to thank Antonio Vázquez and Juan Carlos Poveda Vera.

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