

# AWOM

AQUATIC WARBLERS ON THE MOVE

Europe and Africa working  
together to safeguard wetlands



## LIFE AQUATIC WARBLERS ON THE MOVE

### 1st Progress Report

Reporting Period: 1 January 2025 – 31 December 2025

**Deliverable: D1.8**

**Date: 02-26**



## 1. Project Information

<b>Project number:</b>	<b>101148382</b>
<b>Project acronym:</b>	<b>LIFE AWOM</b>
<b>Project name:</b>	<b>LIFE Aquatic Warblers on the Move</b>
<b>LIFE Call topic:</b>	<b>LIFE-2023-SAP-NAT</b>
<b>Project start date:</b>	<b>01/01/2025</b>
<b>Project end date:</b>	<b>31/12/2029</b>
<b>Period covered by progress report:</b>	<b>01/01/2025 – 31/12/2025</b>
<b>Submission Date:</b>	<b>27/02/2026</b>

## 2. Summary of Progress

### Work Package 1: Project management and coordination

During the reporting period **1 January - 31 December 2025**, project activities progressed in line with the foreseen timeline. The project established all core governance, coordination, and monitoring structures. The Project Coordination Unit (PCU), Co-beneficiary Coordination Units (CCUs), and the Project Steering Committee (PSC) were formed and became operational with three PSC meetings held in 2025.

Key project management tools, including technical and financial reporting templates, a centralized monitoring system, and a reporting timetable, were developed and shared with project partners to ensure effective implementation and compliance. All major contractual and reporting obligations were met, including the signing of the consortium agreement (D1.1), submission of the first cumulative expenditure report (D1.3), and the successful organization of the project Take-Off Conference (D1.2) in Madrid, which formally launched the project.

### Work Package 2: Site network

The Aquatic Warbler (AW) database (D2.1) has been largely completed and formally submitted, though data from several key countries remain outstanding. Additional coordination between ICO and WI-EA is underway to secure the missing inputs and strengthen follow-up.

An annual Gap Filling Survey (GFS) report (MS13) covering the period **1 January - 31 October 2025** has been produced and included in this report as Annex I. During the final two months of the first year (Y1), activities focused on organizational and preparatory work

for the 2026 GFS season, including planning and coordination for upcoming winter and spring GFS missions in Senegal, Algeria, and Morocco.

### **Work Package 3: Habitat restoration and management**

In the first year of implementation of the project (Y1), restoration actions have begun in Belgium, Spain, France and Senegal, while in Portugal, restoration actions were in a preparatory and consultative phase.

In **Belgium (T.3.1.1)**, restoration actions at the **Blankaart** site commenced and progressed during the reporting period. Activities focused on the creation of new marshland within a large, contiguous mosaic of diverse marsh habitats, the development of deep-water reed marshes, and the initiation of diversified reedbed management in collaboration with local farmers. The first cycle of phased mowing management was implemented across 6 ha of reed marsh. In addition, an environmental permit has been obtained for excavation works aimed at increasing depth variability within the Blankaart. The precise locations and implementation plans for the installation of goose-exclusion fencing (T.3.1.1.2) and the translocation of reed root clumps to limit the spread of water primrose (T.3.1.1.4) will be defined in the coming months in close coordination with the local volunteer group. With regard to compost management of vegetation residues (T.3.1.1.3), a first field trial was initiated on a local farmer's land.

In **Spain (T.3.1.2)**, habitat restoration work began in numerous wetlands and with different types of actions. The **removal of alien species** (T.3.1.2.1) made it possible to eliminate, by manual capture, 73 Common Carp in La Albufera and 32 Red-eared Sliders in Prat de Cabanes-Torreblanca. Among the **vegetation management actions** (T.3.1.2.2), planting has not yet begun; mowing is underway in Castilla y León (CyL) with a tractor, covering 17.10 ha and has also begun in the Valencian Community (CV) with an amphibious machine covering 4.15 ha, which has already allowed a small part to be shredded and composted (8 m<sup>3</sup> in Prat de Cannes-Torreblanca and 8 m<sup>3</sup> in marjal de Peñíscola); grazing has begun in the four planned wetlands, with 72 ha in the CV and 143 ha in CyL. Actions related to **water cycle management** (T.3.1.2.3) have begun in CV with the construction of new water bodies in Nules, exceeding 1.000 m<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, work on the **restoration of wetland basins** (T.3.1.2.4) has begun with the stripping of 2.18 ha in Castilla-La Mancha (CLM). Actions related to the **creation of green infrastructures** for wetland protection (T.3.1.2.5) and to **land purchase** in the Boada lagoon (T.3.1.2.6) have not yet begun. Finally, the action of **fostering restoration-food nexus in the face of climate change** (T.3.1.2.7) is in progress, with the identification of pilot wetlands, determination of potential techniques to reduce agricultural impact, the search of farmers, and drafting of agreements.

In **France (T.3.1.3)**, restoration actions have been generally on track. In the **Seine Estuary** (T.3.1.3.1), restoration works were carried out across 4.5 ha to open up the reedbed, and horses were introduced to the intervention area to provide eco-grazing and increase grazing pressure on vegetation. The horses will remain on site throughout the winter

period.

In the **Loire Estuary – Pipy Island (T.3.1.3.2)**, unforeseen setbacks delayed the contracting of a service provider for topsoil removal. However, the activity remains within the project timeline, and additional efforts are underway to secure a contractor and resume implementation in Y2.

In **Normandy**, topsoil removal was successfully carried out at the **Marais du Cap (T.3.1.3.3.2)**. Planned restoration actions at **Marais de Saint-Hilaire (T.3.1.3.3.3)** were postponed due to insufficient soil bearing capacity for heavy machinery. At **La Défends (T.3.1.3.3.1)**, legal and permitting constraints have so far prevented the start of restoration works. Steps are currently being taken to obtain the necessary authorisations and stakeholder support, with the aim of implementing the planned actions during Y2 or Y3 of the project.

In **Portugal (T.3.1.4)**, the habitat restoration measures focus on three coastal areas: Lagoa de Santo André, Lagoa Pequena, and Ria de Aveiro. **Lagoa de Santo André** and **Lagoa Pequena** are state-owned, protected areas under the jurisdiction of the National Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF). In these two sites, the first year of implementation has been mainly devoted to meetings with the ICNF to agree on the most cost-efficient restoration measures. At **Ria de Aveiro** – a complex of privately owned fields – the focus has been on establishing contacts with the regional authorities in Estarreja. The aim is to develop a more detailed restoration plan in collaboration with the authorities to be executed during Y2 or Y3 of the project.

In **Senegal (T.3.1.5)**, restoration actions focused on improving hydrological conditions and flood protection. A 2.5 km stretch of the Khoyoye Canal was cleared through mechanical removal of accumulated sediment and invasive plant species obstructing the main water supply to the site. In parallel, a 3 km-long, 2 m-wide dike was constructed to protect the villages of Debi and Tiguet from flooding.

An annual consolidated restoration progress report (**MS17**) covering the period **1 January - 31 October 2025** has been produced and included in this report as Annex II.

In addition to the habitat restoration and management activities, actions were undertaken to promote the inclusion of key AW sites in the protected area network (**T.3.2**). In Spain, FGN submitted official proposals to the regional governments of Castilla-La Mancha (CLM) and Comunidad Valenciana (CV) to update the Standard Data Forms (SDFs) for several wetlands located in these regions (**MS24** and **MS25**).

Regarding the promotion of AW habitat restoration within national nature restoration plans (NNRPs) (**T.3.3**), WI-EA organised a webinar for project partners to provide guidance on this task and to present an overview of NNRP processes. By the end of 2025, the report 'Habitat restoration needs of the AW in the EU' (**D3.9**) was produced and will support project partners in further consulting with national experts and site managers, and in contributing relevant information to national planning and consultation processes.

Finally, under the action to create of a Community Conservation Area (CCA) for the AW in the vicinity of the *Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj* (PNOD) in **Senegal (T.3.4)**, efforts focused on promoting favourable conditions within the local communities to facilitate acceptance of the establishment of the CCA. With the launch of the project and prior to initiating field work, joint discussions with the *Direction de Parc Nationaux* (DPN) enabled the team to establish a framework for collaboration and identify the group responsible for implementing the project activities. These discussions also contributed to revising the initial CCA strategy proposed in the project proposal and timeline, resulting in a more flexible and conciliatory approach adapted to the needs and expectations of the local populations.

#### **Work Package 4: Communication and outreach**

A Communications Task Force (CTF) was established at the start of the project to strengthen visibility, outreach, and public engagement for LIFE AWOM across all partner organisations. The CTF has coordinated efforts to build a unified project identity, develop core communication tools, and launch strategic communication actions at both national and international levels.

A major early milestone was the creation of the project's visual identity, which enabled the rollout of several key communication tools, including the **official project poster (D4.1)**, the launch of the project webpage on the WI-EA website, and the development of local-language AWOM pages by all partners. In parallel, the **Communications Plan (MS31)** was completed, defining target audiences, key messages, communication tools, timelines, and KPIs to guide and evaluate future actions.

All communication-related activities scheduled for Year 1 were delivered on time. By the close of the reporting period, the **teacher's and pupil's notebook (D4.3)**, the **information signboards (D4.6)**, and the **introductory video (D4.7)** have all been finalised according to the project schedule.

In addition to producing these deliverables, the CTF ensured consistent communication across languages and platforms. To enhance coherence and visibility, the unified project hashtag #LIFE\_AWOM was introduced, and a dedicated Instagram account was created to share regular updates and showcase field activities across participating countries. Media outreach and public engagement have been continuous, supported by the establishment of a centralised project audio-visual library that consolidates photos, videos, partner logos, the branding manual, and all communication assets.

#### **Work Package 5: Monitoring and Evaluation**

To improve methods for assessing the extent and quality of habitats, as well as the importance of staging and wintering sites for the AW, several actions focusing on the four monitoring components: habitat availability, food availability, fuel accumulation, and habitat use by telemetry took place.

Within the component of habitat availability (T.5.1.1), baseline habitat mapping was carried out prior to restoration activities at project sites, and a final draft (MS37) was completed. Final data sets from Portugal and Senegal are still pending due to administrative and technical delays; upon receipt, the report will be updated and finalised.

Regarding food availability (T.5.1.2), progress was made through the collection and eDNA analysis of 15 faecal samples from the 2025 migration seasons in Spain. The resulting report on prey composition in the Iberian Peninsula (MS39) is expected in early 2026, slightly later than planned due to the extended laboratory processing times.

Fuel accumulation rates (T.5.1.3) are best estimated through capture-mark-recapture methods, which require the operation of ringing stations during migration periods. Implementation is planned once the stations are fully established within the project. However, during the reporting period, a fat reserve measurement protocol (MS41) was completed, setting our standardised biometric measurements to be used in ringing campaigns.

For the fourth monitoring component, habitat use by telemetry (T.5.1.5), a telemetry pilot (MS42) was conducted in August 2025 at Laguna Boada, Spain. The team deployed automated radio-telemetry receiving nodes and aerials to test the equipment and assess its suitability for achieving the project objectives. The pilot set up and results were documented in a telemetry pilot report (MS43).

Together, these efforts have established a solid foundation for robust monitoring of habitat quality, prey availability, and bird condition across the project sites.

Lastly, within the assessment of the importance of staging and wintering sites (T.5.2), a workshop was held (MS46) during which the French ACROLA ringing protocol was presented to all partners and stakeholders in the LIFE AWOM countries. The aim was to ensure that partners consider applying the same protocol to ensure standardisation and comparability of data across project sites.

### **Work Package 6: Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results**

Work Package 6 (WP6) aims to ensure the transferability, replicability, and broader uptake of project results. At the outset of the project, WP6 developed a structured action plan to guide effective implementation and to support activities under WP3, WP4 and WP5.

Planning for the International Species Action Plan (ISAP) update workshops (T.6.1.2) was brought forward by one year, to 2027, to align with deliverables from the sibling project LIFE4AquaticWarbler. It was agreed that the international planning workshop will be organised jointly, followed with a CMS Meeting of Signatories (MOS) in 2028.

Under the valorisation of management residues (T.6.1.4), cooperation has begun in Belgium with a local farmer to explore opportunities for scaling up the use of management

residues. Themes for collaboration with project partners were identified and will be further elaborated.

Regarding activities supporting upscaling and replication, the first project year focused on establishing the foundations of the Transferability and Replicability Strategy (TRS) (T.6.2.1). This included a partner-led stakeholder analysis in each project country to ensure early and comprehensive identification of relevant actors.

Lastly, potential topics for twinning exchanges (T6.2.2), webinars (T6.2.3), and workshops (T6.2.4) have been identified. Core replication themes include volunteer engagement, valorisation of management residues, monitoring and nature management techniques, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders. As part of T.6.2.4, TdV organised the first workshop for Mediterranean site managers and rangers (T6.2.4).

### 3. Work Package Progress

#### WP1 – Project Management and Coordination

Key tasks	Progress	On track	Delayed
<p><b>T.1.1 Establish and operate project management structures</b></p>	<p><b>T.1.1.1 and T.1.1.2:</b> Within the first month of the project, the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) and Co-beneficiary coordination units (CCU) were established and detailed in a project organigram (<b>MS1</b> and <b>MS2</b>). The project organigram details names and contact information of one or more staff members from each partner organisation responsible for the different project activities.</p> <p><b>T.1.1.3 Project Steering Committee (PSC):</b> The PSC was established at the beginning of the project, consisting of a senior staff member representing each beneficiary and to meet at least twice a year. The first PSC meeting was held on 5 March 2025 (<b>MS3</b>). An extraordinary PSC meeting took place during the project Take-Off Meeting, on 20 May 2025. The second PSC meeting was held on 25 September 2025 (<b>MS4</b>). All PSC meeting minutes are shared and approved by the PSC following each meeting. Meeting minutes are available upon request.</p> <p><b>T.1.1.4 National Working Groups (NWGs):</b> NWGs have been formed in France, Spain and Senegal and include national partners and stakeholders. Each NWG coordinates the implementation of in-country actions and stands as a platform to facilitate engagement with key national stakeholders.</p> <p>In France, the NWG is led by Bretagne Vivante, who has organized 2 meetings in 2025. The next one is foreseen to happen in early 2026.</p>	<p>X</p>	

	<p>In Spain, the NWG is led by FGN, who has organized a preliminary meeting in 2024 (3 October 2024); and 2 meetings in 2025 (9 April 2025 and 5 September 2025). The next one is expected to take place in mid-2026.</p> <p>The NWG in Senegal is led by WIACO. The NWG was officially formed and met during a Project Launch event on 9 May 2025 and includes national and local stakeholders like park management authorities (DPN), representatives of the Debi and Tiguet communities, and several other technical and scientific partners. The next meeting is expected to take place in May-June 2026.</p> <p><b>T.1.1.5 Task Forces (TF):</b> Four task forces have been established under WP2, WP4, WP5 and WP6. Each task force is chaired by the WP lead who coordinates the activities of the respective WP. Regular monthly meetings are held and attended by task force members as well as the AWOM project manager.</p>		
<p><b>T.1.2 Technical and financial monitoring and reporting</b></p>	<p>The technical and financial monitoring is coordinated by WI-EA. Within the first three months of the project, WI-EA created technical and financial reporting templates and shared them with the consortium during the first PSC meeting.</p> <p>For monitoring purposes, WI-EA has created a tool (excel table) in which all activities (including milestones and deliverables) are described and marked with status indicators (to do; doing; done) to monitor status.</p> <p>In addition, WI-EA has created and shared with the consortium a Reporting Timetable detailing the internal and submission deadlines for progress reports, cumulative expenditure reports, and the periodic technical and financial reports.</p> <p>Regarding the first annual report on cumulative expenditure (<b>D1.3</b>), as required, this was submitted via the F&amp;T portal on 24 December 2025.</p>	<p>X</p>	

<b>T.1.3 Consortium agreement</b>	The consortium agreement between all 14 co-beneficiaries was agreed upon and signed by all parties by 4 April 2025. The agreement ( <b>D1.1</b> ) has been uploaded, as required, into the F&T portal.	X	
<b>T.1.4 Take-Off conference</b>	The project Take-Off conference was organised by FGN and held on 21-22 May 2025 in Madrid, Spain. The 2-day event officially launched the project and brought together project partners, national authority representatives, members of the CMS secretariat, other LIFE projects, and other key stakeholders. An event report ( <b>D1.2</b> ) was created to include event details, agenda, presentation materials and links to recordings, and event photographs.  The event report has been uploaded, as required, into the F&T portal.	X	

## WP2 – Site Network

<b>Key tasks</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>On track</b>	<b>Delayed</b>
<b>T.2.1 AW Database</b>	The Aquatic Warbler database ( <b>D2.1</b> ) has been largely compiled and the submission has been made, as required, into the F&T portal.  However, several key countries have not yet submitted their data despite showing commitments to do so. These include: France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the Czech Republic.  To obtain the missing data, further coordination has been planned between ICO and WI-EA, which have provided additional contact points within the relevant offices to reinforce	X	

	the data request and ensure consistent follow-up. Once the missing data sets are obtained, the AW database will be updated.		
<b>T.2.2 Modelling key staging and wintering sites</b>	This task is planned to begin in <b>Y2</b> of the project, not within the reporting period of this progress report.	n/a	n/a
<b>T.2.3 Site network connectivity analysis</b>	This task is planned to begin in <b>Y2</b> of the project, not within the reporting period of this progress report.	n/a	n/a
<b>T.2.4 Gap filling surveys (GFS)</b>	<p>An <b>annual GFS report</b> has been produced for the period 1 Jan. - 31 Oct. 2025 (<b>MS13</b>). This is included in this report as <b>Annex I</b>.</p> <p>For the remaining two months of Y1 (1 Nov. - 31 Dec. 2025), no field activities have taken place, only organisational and preparatory tasks for the upcoming surveys scheduled for 2026. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter GFS to Senegal (19 January - 3 February);</li> <li>• Spring GFS to Algeria (established contacts with local stakeholders in Algeria);</li> <li>• Spring GFS to Morocco (permit request, coordination of surveys in Oualidia and the desert, purchase of bird rings with specific Moroccan inscription).</li> </ul>	X	
<b>T.2.5 Assessing impacts of climate change</b>	This task is planned to begin in <b>Y3</b> of the project, not within the reporting period of this progress report.	n/a	n/a
<b>T.2.6 Blueprint for flyway network</b>	This task is planned to begin in <b>Y5</b> of the project, not within the reporting period of this progress report.	n/a	n/a

## WP3 – Habitat Restoration and Management

Key tasks	Progress	On track	Delayed
<p><b>T.3.1 Restore AW habitat at project sites</b></p>	<p>For <b>T.3.1.1</b> Restoration of AW habitat in Blankaart, <b>Belgium</b>; <b>T.3.1.2</b> Restoration and management of AW sites in <b>Spain</b>; <b>T.3.1.3</b> Restoration and management of AW sites in <b>France</b>; <b>T.3.1.4</b> Restoration and management of AW sites in <b>Portugal</b>; <b>T.3.1.5</b> Restoring sedge marshes in the vicinity of the <b>Djoudj National Park, Senegal</b>: An <b>annual consolidated restoration progress report</b> has been produced for the period 1 Jan. - 31 Oct. 2025 (<b>MS17</b>). This is included in this report as <b>Annex II</b>.</p> <p>For the remaining two months of Y1 (1 Nov. - 31 Dec. 2025), additional activities have taken place.</p> <p>In Spain (FGN):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>T.3.1.2.1.2. Removal of alien plant species:</b> 0,19 ha of Giant Reed <i>Arundo donax</i> eliminated in Nules.</li> <li>● <b>T.3.1.2.2.2 Mowing:</b> 2.85 ha La Albufera (with amphibious vehicle); + 1.01 ha Peñíscola (with amphibious vehicle); + 5.8 ha in Moro, in this last wetland with a tractor.</li> <li>● <b>T.3.1.2.3.2. Construction of new waterbodies for AW:</b> Water retention solution by recovery of clogged lagoon in Nules (1,000 m<sup>2</sup>). The team has not yet been able to measure the total area, but it exceeds 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>.</li> <li>● <b>T.3.1.2.4.1 Topsoil removal:</b> "Fangueos": 3.99 ha in Moro, Comunidad Valenciana.</li> </ul>	X	
<p><b>T.3.2 Promote</b></p>	<p><b>T.3.2.1 Provide information to the updates of SDFs of Natura 2000 sites in the EU:</b></p>	X	

<p><b>inclusion of key AW sites in protected area network</b></p>	<p><b>Natuurpunt (BE)</b></p> <p>In <b>Belgium</b>, in the most recent update of the SDF of the IJzervallei (BE2500831) on 18 March 2022, the AW was added as one of the species that require specialised conservation objectives. These conservation objectives include the conservation of the quality of the AW's habitat by conserving sedge vegetations and varied reed marshes, as well as the foraging area required by the species during its migration.</p> <p><b>Bretagne Vivante (FR)</b></p> <p>In <b>France</b>, all AW sites are already recognized in the SDFs of the Natura 2000 sites where they occur in significant numbers during migration season, thus, updates to the SDFs are not required.</p> <p><b>FGN (ES)</b></p> <p>In <b>Spain</b>, FGN requested the inclusion of the AW as a key species in the SDFs of Natura 2000 sites for several wetlands of migratory importance in the autonomous communities covered by the project: <b>Castilla-La Mancha</b> (one Natura 2000 site committed, plus three additional sites); the <b>Valencian Community</b> (seven committed areas plus two additional sites); and in <b>Castilla y León</b>, where no sites are committed to the project, the inclusion of five Natura 2000 sites has also been considered. Therefore, this sub-action <b>has been completed</b>.</p> <p>Each of the three requests were accompanied by the respective commitment letters from the three regional/autonomous governments and the document entitled 'Scientific and technical basis for the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler <i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i> in Spain and its autonomous communities', which updates the status and distribution of the AW in Spain and specifically by autonomous community, highlighting the</p>		
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importance of many Natura 2000 sites for the migratory passage of the AW. This will provide conservation managers of these sites the arguments and tools to take the AW into account in their management plans.

The following is a list of wetlands for which inclusion was requested in May and June 2025, indicating the autonomous community, name and code of the Natura 2000 site (sites committed to in the project's Grant Agreement are indicated in bold).

Castilla-La Mancha (MS24):

- **Humedales de La Mancha (ES42 ES4250010-ES0000091)**
- Lagunas saladas de Pétrola y Salobrejo y complejo lagunar de Corral Rubio (ES4210004)
- Las Tablas de Daimiel (ES0000013)
- Lagunas de Ruidera (ES4210017)

Comunidad Valenciana (MS25):

- **La Albufera (ES0000471)**
- **Prat de Cabanes-Torreblanca (ES0000467)**
- **Marjal del Moros (ES0000470, ES0000148)**
- **Desembocadura del río Mijares (ES0000211)**
- **Marjal de Nules (ES5222005)**
- **Marjal de Pego-Oliva (ES0000487)**
- **Marjal de Peníscola (ES5222002)**
- El Hondo (ES0000484)
- Marjal de Almenara (ES0000450)
- Marjal de la Safor (ES0000451)

Castilla y León:

- Lagunas de Villafáfila (ES000004) y lagunas y pastizales salinos de Villafáfila (ES4190146)
- Lagunas de Los Oteros (ES4130145) y Oteros Campos (ES0000194)
- Campos de Alba (ES0000359)
- Riberas de Castronuño (ES4180017)
- Lagunas de Cantalejo (ES4160048)

#### **SPEA (PT)**

In **Portugal**, SPEA will make the results of the Natura 2000 sites targeted by surveys under T.5.2 available to Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas (ICNF) as part of D3.3. for the following sites (foreseen for Y2 of the project):

- Barrinha de Esmoriz (PTCON0018)
- Ria de Alvor (PTCON0058)
- Estuários dos Rios Minho e Coura (PTZPE0001)

#### **T.3.2.2 Promoting the inclusion of key sites for AW in the List of Wetlands of Int. Importance in Spain:**

This sub-action is **in progress**. Two initial meetings have been held, one on February 12, 2025 and another one on May 9, 2025 at the Regional Government of Castilla y León, at the Regional Environment Service in Palencia and at the General Direction of Natural Environment, respectively. At these meetings, participants analysed how to begin gathering the information needed to update and expand the data in the Ramsar file for this wetland complex as a whole. Other difficulties were also discussed in order to anticipate the future drafting of the application form, especially regarding commitments to maintain wetlands, related to land ownership. In this regard, the ongoing land purchase processes are very positive: in the La Güera and El Hoyo sectors in the

	<p>municipality of Mazariegos for the Nava lagoon by the Regional Government of Castilla y León; and almost all of the plots in the lagoon basin by the Boada de Campos Council and other plots around the lagoon by private owners by FGN, the latter through LIFE AWOM itself.</p> <p>FGN is also in contact with the Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge (MITECO - Wetlands Conservation, General Sub-Direction of Terrestrial and Marine Biodiversity, General Direction for Biodiversity, Forests and Desertification) to learn about the Protocol for the Inclusion of Spanish Wetlands in the Ramsar List, the Technical Annex to the Protocol for the Inclusion of Spanish Wetlands in the Ramsar List, and the Protocol on Information Requirements for the Assessment of the International Importance of Spanish Wetlands.</p> <p><b>T.3.2.3 Promote the conservation of key AW sites outside of the EU:</b> This task will be implemented in <b>Y3</b> of the project, not within the reporting period of this progress report.</p>		
<p><b>T.3.3 Promote inclusion of AW habitat restoration into NNRPs and PAFs</b></p>	<p>To ensure meaningful input into this process, WI-EA hosted an online webinar on 26 November 2025 (<i>'Webinar on T.3.2.1 and T.3.3'</i>) and invited project partners involved in this task to participate (Natuurpunt, BV, FGN, SPEA). The webinar aimed to clarify the tasks and provide an overview of NNRPs, PAFs, and SDFs (in relation to T.3.2.1). Following the session, WI-EA prepared guidance on how the project will identify suitable areas for restoration.</p> <p>The data received from project partners was presented in an international report (<b>D3.9</b>) and uploaded, as required, into the F&amp;T portal.</p> <p>The information is presented in accordance with the uniform template for the NNRPs. National partners will share the national chapters (or the whole report) with the</p>	<p>X</p>	

	<p>respective national authorities responsible for preparing their NNRP. Based on the current data and recognizing that some information is still missing, this report will be updated prior to September 2026.</p>		
<p><b>T.3.4 Creating a CCA for AW in vicinity of PNOD</b></p>	<p>During the first year of implementation, WIACO focused on raising awareness about the LIFE AWOM project and mobilising local stakeholders and beneficiaries. Awareness-raising and information sessions were carried out through bilateral meetings with community leaders, eco-guards, village chiefs, and local administrative authorities.</p> <p>On 9 May 2025, the team organised a <b>Project Launch event</b> to present the project’s objectives, discuss the threats the species and its habitats faces, establish a national working group, and celebrate the 2025 World Migratory Bird Day. In preparation of these two occasions, WIACO carried out communication campaigns targeting a wider audience, including local school children. The aim of these efforts was to raise stakeholder awareness of the environmental, social and economic benefits of protecting the project site.</p> <p>The creation of the <b>CCA Management Plan (MS29)</b>, initially planned in the project timeline for the first year of the project (due 31/12/25), has been <b>delayed</b>. To ensure a participatory, inclusive, and sustainable approach, ensuring genuine ownership of the process and its outcome (the Management Plan), more time is needed to also ensure effective long-term implementation. Three main factors justify the need for this additional time:</p> <p>1. Strengthening Community Awareness</p> <p>It was essential to devote more time to raising awareness among local communities to ensure a better understanding of the issues related to site management and the proposals made regarding its protection status. These discussions help to strengthen transparency, taking into account and integrating local motivations, and thus promote</p>		<p>X</p>

	<p>effective participation of the stakeholders concerned.</p> <p>2. Continuing Discussions to Strengthen Local Buy-In and Ownership</p> <p>Traditional leaders, local authorities, and decentralised technical services must be fully involved in leading the process. Extending the consultations will allow for stronger buy-in and community ownership of the protection process and the development of the CCA Management Plan. In doing so, the idea of creating a protected site will gain significant legitimacy, an essential aspect to ensure the effective implementation of the measures to be included in the plan.</p> <p>3. Highlighting economic benefits through income-generating activities (IGAs)</p> <p>From discussions with the DPN regarding the approach and strategy for formalising the site's protection, it emerged that it is relevant to highlight and concretely illustrate the socio-economic benefits of sustainable site management. It was therefore decided to initially focus on the development of pilot income-generating activities. This will further facilitate buy-in and solidify the involvement of local stakeholders in the site protection process. These initiatives will serve as motivational levers for communities and strengthen their commitment to the conservation of the site and the implementation of the plan and its resulting actions.</p> <p>Thus, far from being a weakness in the implementation, the anticipated delay of the plan reflects a strategy for anchoring the process in a sustainable and participatory manner. By consolidating the support of local stakeholders and demonstrating the direct economic benefits of conservation, this will ensure that the process of creating the protected site, as well as the resulting CCA Management Plan, are accepted and implemented sustainably for the benefit of nature and local populations.</p> <p><b>New Milestone Date:</b> Proposal to finalise CCA Management Plan by the end of June</p>		
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**WP4 – Communications and Outreach**

Key tasks	Progress	On track	Delayed
<p><b>T.4.1 Communication and awareness raising</b></p>	<p>An annual consolidated communications progress report has been produced for the period 1 Jan - 31 Oct. (MS32). This is included in this report as <b>Annex III</b>.</p> <p>For the remaining two months of Y1 (1 Nov. - 31 Dec. 2025), additional activities have taken place.</p> <p><b>T.4.1.5 Teacher’s and pupil’s notebook:</b> The teacher’s and pupil’s notebooks (D4.3) have been designed and produced in Spanish, featuring educational material on Aquatic Warblers and wetlands, along with interactive games and pedagogical guidance for teachers. The notebooks have been finalised and uploaded, as required, to the F&amp;T portal. It is foreseen that by early 2026, the Spanish version will be translated into French and adapted to reflect the specific context of wetlands in France and Senegal.</p> <p><b>T.4.1.8 Information signboards:</b> The information signboards (D4.6) were developed collaboratively within the Communications Task Force (CTF) and finalised by the end of 2025. Both the final designs and the list of project sites where the signboards will be installed have been uploaded, as required, to the F&amp;T portal.</p> <p>The signboards are available in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch, and Catalan. Each one includes an English project description as well as information specific to the site where it will be displayed.</p>	<p><b>X</b></p>	

	<p>Printing and permit acquisition for installation are currently <b>in progress</b> and will be carried out in early 2026.</p> <p><b>T.4.1.10 Producing short videos:</b> A professional videographer was contracted and an introductory video (<b>D4.7</b>) presenting the project and featuring interviews with its main stakeholders was produced, finalised and uploaded to the F&amp;T portal, as required, by the end of 2025.</p>		
<b>T.4.2 Outreach campaign</b>	An annual consolidated communications progress report has been produced for the period 1 Jan - 31 Oct. ( <b>MS32</b> ). This is included in this report as <b>Annex III</b> .	<b>X</b>	
<b>T.4.3 Networking</b>	An annual consolidated communications progress report has been produced for the period 1 Jan - 31 Oct. ( <b>MS32</b> ). This is included in this report as <b>Annex III</b> .	<b>X</b>	

## WP5 – Monitoring and Evaluation

<b>Key tasks</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>On track</b>	<b>Delayed</b>
<b>T.5.1 Monitoring and evaluation of habitat availability and feeding conditions</b>	<p><b>T.5.1.1 Habitat availability:</b> Information on habitat mapping has been gathered for the 23 restoration sites. The data has been compiled in the draft Baseline Habitat Assessment report (<b>MS37</b>), which is available upon request. However, two main gaps remain for Portugal and Senegal, which will be addressed as soon as possible. In Portugal, meetings with the Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas (ICNF) are required before the necessary information can be obtained. In Senegal, mapping data has already been collected by the usage of a drone and now needs to be processed; this will be completed as soon as WIACO obtains the required software license. Once the</p>	<b>X</b>	

	<p>information from Portugal and Senegal is received, the Baseline Habitat Assessment report will be finalised.</p> <p><b>T.5.1.2 Food availability:</b> Feces samples were collected in Spain during spring and autumn migration of 2025. A total of 15 samples were obtained: 6 samples in spring (by FGN - LIFE AWOM) and 9 samples in autumn (6 by FGN, 1 by CSIC - both AWOM partners; 2 samples by stakeholders at other ringing stations). These samples were sent to a laboratory for eDNA analysis to determine the AW diet. The results have been received and analyzed by a subcontracted entomologist. Therefore, the Report on Prey Composition of AW on the Iberian Peninsula (<b>MS39</b>) will be finalized in early 2026; the slight delay (initially foreseen to be completed by 31/12/2025) in this milestone is entirely due to the time required to obtain the eDNA results from the laboratory.</p> <p>Regarding entomological protocols, discussions between project partners and other stakeholders have begun, drawing on French and Spanish experience as well as practices/methods implemented in the sibling project LIFE4AquaticWarbler, which focuses on the breeding grounds of the AW.</p> <p><b>T.5.1.3 Fuel accumulation rate:</b> The Fat Reserve Measurement Protocol (<b>MS41</b>) has been finalised and is available upon request. Biometric measurements to be taken from birds during the ringing campaigns have been determined based on scientific literature and expert advice.</p> <p><b>T.5.1.4 Habitat use by telemetry:</b> The pilot test was carried out in August 2025, with a slight delay compared to the initial schedule. The set-up of the telemetry pilot, originally scheduled for completion by 31 March 2025, was delayed due to developments in bird transmitters and their availability only by summer 2025. The new transmitters</p>		
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	<p>represented a significant improvement from previous models, being around 40% lighter. This was a positive development, as lighter transmitters are expected to reduce potential adverse effects on bird welfare, making them a preferred option. However, their smaller size reduces detection range by 30–50%, requiring closer spacing of sensor nodes. It was expected that the results of the pilot trial would then help determine optimal node distances to balance detection probability and spatial resolution. Additionally, the pilot experiment, initially planned for La Nava, relocated to Laguna Boada - another designated sampling site within LIFE AWOM - as the capture site in La Nava was dry due to management issues.</p> <p>During the telemetry pilot, the team deployed automated radio-telemetry receiving nodes and aerials to test the technology and assess its suitability for achieving the project objectives. Given the interdependence of the set-up of the telemetry pilot (<b>MS42</b>) and the tagging and telemetry pilot report (<b>MS43</b>), these were reported together to avoid unnecessary duplication, with the document available upon request.</p> <p>The document includes pilot test set up and results, as well as information about the operation of the telemetry equipment.</p> <p>Lastly, additional documents have been prepared to help partners order the appropriate equipment - both the types needed and the quantities required. In light of new information on the performance of different types of tags, discussions are ongoing with the relevant partners to refine the telemetry implementation plan.</p>		
<p><b>T.5.2 Assessing importance of staging and wintering sites</b></p>	<p>A webinar, the ‘International workshop on standardising ringing efforts’ (<b>MS46</b>) was held on 19 June 2025, for which an event report was prepared and is available upon request. Organized by Bretagne Vivante, the French ACROLA ringing protocol was presented to all partners and stakeholders within the LIFE AWOM countries. Prior to</p>	<p><b>x</b></p>	

the webinar, the 2008 French protocol was updated, therefore, the intention would be for all project partners to apply the same protocol to ensure standardisation and comparability of data. However, LIFE AWOM cannot impose ringing rules, as these are defined by national ringing schemes. The project therefore cannot override national regulations.

During the webinar, some concerns were raised regarding the comparability of national data with historical datasets, if the protocol is modified. The main issue concerning the use of nocturnal tapelure in some countries, as its effect cannot be fully accounted for during data analysis.

**Ringing activities in 2025:** In 2025, ringing activities funded by LIFE AWOM were conducted in Spain by project partners FGN and CSIC.

- **FGN:** Across the spring and autumn migration periods, FGN recorded a total of 5,925 captures, including 4,911 new ringings and 1,014 controls. Sixteen ringing campaigns were carried out - one per site for either spring or autumn migration - with the exception of Tancat de La Ratlla (Albufera), where both seasons were covered thanks to additional funding.
  - Spring migration: A total of 1,501 captures were made across ten sites (Charcas del Cruce, Laguna de El Longar, Laguna de Pedraza, Laguna Larga, Marjal de Nules, Marjal de Pego-Oliva, Marjal de Peñíscola, Marjal del Moro, Prat de Cabanes-Torreblanca, and Tancat de La Ratlla (La Albufera)). These included **6 Aquatic Warblers**, captured between April 6 and April 13 : 4 in Pedraza, 1 in Nules and 1 in Prat de Cabanes-Torreblanca.
  - Autumn migration: A total of 4,424 captures were made across six sites (Desembocadura río Mijares, Laguna de Boada, Laguna de La Nava,

	<p>Lagunas de Villafranca, Manjavacas, and Tancat de La Ratlla (La Albufera)). These included <b>6 Aquatic Warblers</b>, captured between July 22 and August 23 : 4 in Boada and 2 in La Nava.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>CSIC</b>: During the autumn migration ringing campaign in Donana, a total of 293 birds were captured, including 278 new ringings and 15 recaptures. Among these birds, <b>1 Aquatic Warbler</b> was ringed, on August 12.</li> </ul> <p>Ringling stations funded by LIFE AWOM in other countries will begin their activities in 2026; therefore, no other AWOM-funded ringling data is available for 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Belgium: Ringling at the AWOM site (De Blankaart) is conducted by volunteers, who were not funded by the LIFE AWOM in 2025. The funded activities will begin in 2026.</li> <li>● France: The three AWOM sites managed by MdE (Seine estuary), GONm (Marais de la Taute) and AssACROLA (Loire estuary), operate permanent ringling stations, but these were not funded by LIFE AWOM in 2025. Bretagne Vivante, acting independently and as the French SAP coordinator, manages and follows multiple permanent ringling stations, some of which will receive LIFE AWOM funding in 2026-2028. As for TdV, it coordinates a ringling station in the Mediterranean region as part of the French SAP.</li> <li>● Portugal: Ringling activities were not funded by LIFE AWOM in 2025. However, as part of national ringling activities outside of the project, <b>3 Aquatic Warblers</b> were ringed in Portugal in 2025.</li> <li>● Senegal: The first ringling campaign will occur in winter 2026-2027.</li> </ul>		
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<b>T.5.3 Monitoring KPIs</b>	The extract of the initial project data from the LIFE KPI webtool (D5.5) was completed and submitted via the F&T portal on 26 September 2026.	<b>X</b>	
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### WP6 – Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results

<b>Key tasks</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>On track</b>	<b>Delayed</b>
<b>T.6.1 Activities to ensure sustainability of project results</b>	An annual report on the implementation of the TRS has been produced for the period 1 Jan - 31 Oct. (MS54). This is included in this report as <b>Annex IV</b> .	<b>X</b>	
<b>T.6.2 Activities to ensure upscaling and replicability of project results</b>	An annual report on the implementation of the TRS has been produced for the period 1 Jan - 31 Oct. (MS54). This is included in this report as <b>Annex IV</b> .	<b>X</b>	

#### 4. Progress on Milestones (MS)\*

MS no.	Milestone name	Milestone due date	Means of verification	Achieved (Yes/No)	If not achieved, forecasted date	Comments
MS1	PCU set up	31/01/2025	Time registration	Yes		
MS2	CCUs set up	31/03/2025	AWOM organigram	Yes		
MS3	PSC meeting (Kick-off)	31/03/2025	Meeting minutes	Yes		
MS4	PSC meeting 1	30/09/2025	Meeting minutes	Yes		
MS13	Annual GFS report 1	31/12/2025	PDF document published on WI-EA project webpage	Yes		Refer to Annex I
MS17	Annual consolidated restoration progress report Y1	31/12/2025	PDF document published on WI-EA project webpage	Yes		Refer to Annex II
MS24	Official proposal for the update of the SDF of Humedales de la Mancha (ES4250010) to the regional gov. of CLM	30/06/2025	Copy of the official proposal sent to the government of CLM (in Spanish)	Yes		The official proposal for the update of the SDF of Humedales de la Mancha has been submitted to the relevant authorities on 10 April 2025. The achievement of this MS has been indicated as required in the F&T Portal on 19 June 2025. To be provided upon request, we have the following, in Spanish: Application for the inclusion of the AW in update of Natura 2000 SDF, Electronic Entry Register and the

						reception email from the relevant authority.
MS25	Official proposal for the update of the SDF to the regional gov. of CV	30/06/2025	Copy of the official proposal for the update of the SDF of l'Albufera (ES0000471), Prat de Cabanes i Torreblanca (ES0000467), SPA and SCI (ES0000148), Marjal dels Moros (ES0000470), SPA Desembocadura del riu Millars (ES0000211), Marjal de Nules (ES5222005), Marjal de Pego-Oliva (ES0000487) and Marjal de Peníscola (ES5222002) sent to the government of CV (in Spanish).	Yes		The official proposal for the update of the SDF of CV has been submitted to the relevant authorities on 22 April 2025. The achievement of this MS has been indicated as required in the F&T Portal on 19 June 2025. To be provided upon request, we have the following, in Spanish: Application for the inclusion of the AW in update of Natura 2000 SDF, Electronic Entry Register and the reception email from the relevant authority.
MS29	Management plan for the CCA in Senegal	31/12/2025	Management plan document adopted by the village councils of Tiguite and Débi.	No	30/06/2026	The management plan for the CCA needs to ensure a participatory, inclusive and sustainable approach that will guarantee a genuine ownership of the process and product (management plan) by local

						<p>stakeholders, as well as effective long-term implementation.</p> <p>For this reason, there has been a delay as more time is needed to accomplish the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Further strengthening of community awareness;</li> <li>2. Continuation of discussions and exchanges to reinforce local buy-in and ownership;</li> <li>3. Highlighting economic benefits through the promotion of income-generating activities (IGAs).</li> </ol>
MS31	Communication Plan	30/06/2025	PDF document	Yes		
MS32	Annual consolidated communication progress report Y1	31/12/2025	PDF document published on WI-EA project webpage	Yes		Refer to Annex III
MS37	Baseline habitat assessment	31/10/2025	PDF document	Yes		

MS39	Report on prey composition of AW on the Iberian Peninsula	31/12/2025	PDF document	No	02/2026	Delay due to the time needed for the samples to be analyzed in the laboratory.
MS41	Fat reserve measurement protocol	30/06/2025	PDF document	Yes		
MS42	Set up telemetry pilot	31/03/2025	PDF document	Yes		
MS43	Tagging and telemetry pilot	30/09/2025	PDF document	Yes		
MS46	International workshop on standardising ringing efforts	30/06/2025	PDF document	Yes		
MS54	Annual report on implementation of TRS Y1	31/12/2025	PDF document published on WI-EA project webpage	Yes		Refer to Annex IV

\* The milestones included in the table are those with a due date within the reporting period of this report (01/01/2025 - 31/12/2025).

## 5. Risk Management and Other Issues

### WP1 – Project Management and Coordination

During the implementation of the project, several challenges may influence the timely and effective delivery of planned actions. During this reporting period, no major risks or issues were identified in the project management and coordination aspects of the project. However, to address and mitigate possible risks at project level coordination, WI-EA has created an overall project timeline and progress tool to monitor activities and assign status indicators, such as 'not started, completed, on track, at risk, delayed'. With this monitoring tool and regular communication with project partners (e.g., project manager attends all WP task force meetings), potential delays, risks, and issues can be identified and addressed more promptly, enabling timely discussion and the proposal of remedial actions.

### WP2 – Site Network

During the first year of the project, two main areas of work have been advanced: 1) the development of an international, comprehensive Aquatic Warbler database covering the wintering and migratory flyway, and 2) the implementation of Gap Filling Surveys (GFS).

#### 1. AW Database

The main challenge encountered has been the slow response rate and long waiting times for receiving data from several countries. The delay is largely due to workload constraints among contributors, rather than a lack of willingness to collaborate.

Data from France, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands are still pending. We have used events and personal networks to contact key individuals directly. Although not within this reporting period (1 January – 31 December 2025), on 20 February 2026, a meeting was held with the French ringing office, during which they committed to providing the required data within one month. Securing data from France remains a priority, given its importance for the species' migratory pathway.

## WP2 – Site Network

### 2. Gap Filling Surveys

Planning actions for a GFS to Algeria in the spring of 2026 started at the end of 2025 and the main challenge in this area has been organising the appropriate security arrangements for the research team. The team is currently reaching out to contact points with the relevant Ministry and local stakeholders.

## WP3 – Habitat Restoration and Management

### Spain (ICO)

The main challenge encountered within the reporting period in the **Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park** was the drought affecting a subregion of the Natural Park and the targeted restoration areas in it. Discussions were held between the Natural Park and the local government to establish an environmental water flow for this dry area. Given this and discussions held between the ICO team in the LIFE AWOM project, WI-EA, and the project's Technical Monitor, it was agreed that it remained worthwhile to continue with some restoration actions to begin in Y2, such as removing alien plant species and improving grazing conditions. However, reseeding native aquatic plants will not be immediately feasible. Mitigation measures for that specific action include implementing the reseeding in another, wetter part of the Natural Park, postponing it in the hope that an agreement on environmental water flow is reached before the end of the LIFE AWOM project, or cancel the activity altogether. These options will be further investigated.

### Spain (FGN)

The **difficulty in contracting external assistance** stems from several reasons: in the rural areas of Castilla y León (CYL) and Castilla-La Mancha (CLM), the number of companies offering assistance is very low, and they are already overwhelmed with other projects. This results in delays in obtaining quotes. Added to this is the time required for the entire contracting process (from drafting the proposal and the terms of service to signing

### WP3 – Habitat Restoration and Management

the contract). At FGN, we are striving to expedite all these phases as much as possible and begin implementation according to the planned schedule.

Another problem is the **bureaucratic delays** in obtaining permits from public administrations, especially water authorities such as the Duero and Guadiana River Basin Authorities. These agencies significantly delay the response time and the granting of authorizations for water management improvement works, particularly those affecting waterways. Most of the permits were requested by FGN in 2024 and early 2025, but we have not yet received responses for some of them. We will attempt to submit the pending applications as soon as possible.

Also, the flooding of wetlands (excess or deficiency) affected by annual weather conditions may delay work. In the autumn of 2025, the drought affecting the Marjal del Moro wetlands and the floods in Valencia forced FGN to constantly modify and adapt the planned mowing schedule to keep the amphibious machinery operational. Similarly, the delayed low water level in the Villacañas lagoon postponed the stripping work from September to October, a month with more frequent rainfall, causing brief work stoppages. In view of this situation, FGN's mowing/clearing work in the wetlands of the Valencian Community (CV) is also being carried out with tractors (instead of only with amphibious machines, as initially planned). Thus, mowing with tractors was carried out in the Marjal del Moro, ending in November 2025, due to the absence of water in the wetland. This new situation will not entail any additional costs to those already planned, which are the same as for amphibious machines (transport between wetlands and fuel).

**Malfunctions in flood control systems** in some wetlands (sluice gates, weirs, channels, etc.) pose a significant risk that can affect the development of certain activities. This is the case of a section of La Nava lagoon (see section T.3.1.2.2.4 Grazing), where a malfunction since 2023 is affecting the flood zone where grazing takes place and where one of the wetland's two bird ringing stations is located. FGN has regularly reported this problem to the management team to expedite the resolution, and they anticipate the repairs will be completed before the end of March 2026.

**Breakdowns and repairing times related to machinery**, especially the two amphibious machines, is another difficulty. This year, maintenance work on the older amphibious machine and a minor breakdown of the newer amphibious machine have already slowed the harvesting rate in the CV. Fortunately, due to the fact that FGN has two amphibious machines, it is unlikely that operations will come to a complete standstill.

There was also a problem with the project's **leased vehicle** in Valencian Community, which for the first few months lacked a tow bar, delaying the reed shredding and composting operations in Prat de Cabanes-Torreblanca and La Albufera. FGN has now replaced the vehicle, and the trailer is operational.

The creation of 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> of **"bardisas"** (T.3.1.2.5) in Marjal de Peñíscola will be partially/totally transferred to another wetland/s, the Desembocadura

### WP3 – Habitat Restoration and Management

del río Mijares and/or Prat de Cabanes-Torreblanca, in order to meet the expected results in the KPIs. This situation has arisen because in Peñíscola, similar actions by the regional government and other uses in the areas initially planned do not allow the committed area to be met.

**Grazing** activity (T.3.1.2.2.4) in the Valencian Community in 2025 has not yet reached the committed areas of 50 ha in Prat de Cabanes-Torreblanca, 150 ha in Marjal del Moro and 50 ha in Marjal de Pego-Oliva. The area is still available for extensive grazing, but is being affected by several factors: lack of pasture in some areas due to drought; unexpected flooding in areas where livestock cannot access, leading farmers to use other areas outside the natural space for better CAP funding; lack of farmers; grazing management plans are currently being drafted and the regional government does not always allow new areas to be authorised for grazing. FGN is working to resolve problems and gradually gain access to the areas in question.

In the case of the **Fostering restoration-food nexus climate change action group** (T.3.1.2.7), there is enormous difficulty in selecting pilot wetlands where there is at least one farmer willing to participate with one or more pilot farms. This situation is also hindering the selection of crop types to work with in agronomic measures to assess vulnerability to climate change, and delaying the signing of stewardship agreements.

Lastly, an important issue affecting planned actions at the **Nules and Peñíscola wetlands (CV)** is that a possible incompatibility with regard to the eligibility of expenses has been detected. Nules and Peñíscola do not have Special Protection Area (SPA) status and do not have Standard Data Forms (SDFs). Both sites are currently **SCI**. Therefore, their eligibility for the LIFE programme and the associated funding could be at risk. The relevant documentation has been reviewed, and although letters of support for the project from the Valencian regional government have been provided, they **do not** have a formal commitment for the reclassification of the Nules and Peñíscola sites (within the framework of the Natura 2000 Network) before the AWOM project is over (2029). Upon identifying this situation and the associated risk, FGN immediately contacted the relevant authorities and technical staff to do everything within their reach to request the reclassification from SCI to SPA. In any case, even if all possible actions are taken, the final decision will not be in their hands. Such reclassification would have to be carried out through very long procedures developed by the public administration and would culminate in an eventual decree. As a result, FGN and WI-EA have informed the project monitor with the aim to have further discussions and to consider further discussions with the CINEA project officer and the relevant official/s from the Nature unit of the European Commission.

#### France (GONm)

Legal and permitting constraints have so far prevented the start of restoration works at **La Défends**. The work was foreseen to be implemented in Y1 and Y2 of the project, however, complications developed regarding needed authorisations and due to certain dispositions of the local law on water,

### WP3 – Habitat Restoration and Management

as stated in the *Schema d'Aménagement et de Gestion des Eaux* (SAGE - Water Development and Management Scheme), the authorities deemed that the planned actions were not allowed to take place in the area. GONm has been undergoing a long process with the relevant administrations to get the proper authorisations. Discussions have been held between GONm, the Direction départementale des territoires et de la mer (DDTM), the Office Français de la Biodiversité (OFB), the Direction Régionale de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement (DREAL), Parc Naturel Régional des Marais du Cotentin et du Bessin (PNRMCB) and the Regional Council of Normandy to further explain the intentions of the AWOM project and the restoration actions in this site. Despite the general consensus on the project goals, GONm was informed that according to the SAGE, every creation of permanent open water is prohibited, with no exception regardless of the purpose of the work. In response, GONm explained that the oscillations of the water table were such that the water would not be permanent in the ditches, but the argument was not considered by the OFB and the DDTM.

Given the circumstances, GONm, with the support of DREAL, the Agence de l'Eau SeineNormandie (AESN), and the Regional Council of Normandy) and based on discussions with Wetlands International – European Association (WI-EA, project coordinator), will once again reintroduce the petition to the local authority. There is a potential exemption in national law (SAGE Article L211-7) for cases of environmental purpose, and along with support letters from WI-EA, the European Commission DG-ENV, Dr. Martin FLADE, chair of the Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team (AWCT), and Mr. Fabien COQUEREAU from DREAL, there may be a path in the case of protection and restoration of important sites. Should the results yield to a positive outcome, the works in **La Défends** can still be implemented within Y2 and Y3 of the project.

## WP4 – Communications and Outreach

During the reporting period, two main challenges were identified:

### 1. Administrative procedures for information signboards

A key risk concerns the administrative processes required to obtain permits for installing information signboards at specific sites. Ongoing discussions with local authorities may cause delays in the implementation of certain signboards. Close coordination with the relevant authorities continues to mitigate this risk and ensure timely approvals.

### 2. Multilingual communication across partners

Given the diversity of languages used by project partners on their respective communication channels, ensuring consistent visibility and coherence of the project's public messaging presented a challenge. This diversity risks reducing the project's online visibility and may create confusion among external audiences. To address this, a unified communication approach was put in place through the communication strategy, the creation of a dedicated project hashtag (**#LIFE\_AWOM**), and an official Instagram account, helping to harmonise messaging and strengthen the project's identity across platforms.

## WP5 – Monitoring and Evaluation

During the reporting period, no major risks or issues were identified. Only minor delays occurred, none of which compromised the overall progress of WP5 or the project:

### 1. Delay in the report on prey composition of AW on the Iberian Peninsula (MS39)

Due to extended laboratory processing times and delays in receiving results, this milestone has been delayed by approximately one month. By the time of submission of this report, all data is now available, and the report will be finalised early 2026. This delay does not affect subsequent actions under T.5.1.2.

## **WP5 – Monitoring and Evaluation**

### **2. Delay in the set-up of the telemetry pilot (MS42)**

The pilot was delayed due to recent technological developments, including the release of a new tag model by CTT in early summer 2025. As a result, the team tested the system using drones instead of birds. This adaptation ultimately proved beneficial, allowing CSIC to more thoroughly test the equipment by freely adjusting the drone's movement to assess various parameters, including detectability by the SensorStation and nodes. Thus, the successful pilot results will lead to better implementation of telemetry actions later on in the project.

### **3. Need to update the baseline habitat assessment with Portuguese and Senegalese data (MS37)**

The datasets will be incorporated into the report as soon as they become available. The concerned partners have been reminded of the importance of completing the baseline mapping, as this is essential for comparing pre- and post-restoration conditions and evaluating restoration outcomes.

## **WP6 – Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results**

All WP6 tasks are currently on track, with no major risks identified within this reporting period. Regular meetings of the WP6 Task Force ensured timely coordination and planning.

A minor risk relates to WP6's dependency on timely outputs from other WPs. Delays in these WPs could impact the schedule of WP6 activities but continuous coordination across WPs is used as the primary mitigation measure.

## 6. Use of Resources

### WP1 – Project Management and Coordination

During the reporting period, WP1 did not incur any major expenditures. All financial commitments remain aligned with the approved budget, and spending is progressing as planned. Future expenditure is expected to follow the foreseen schedule as WP1 activities advance in accordance with the implementation timeline.

For additional information, the detailed expenditures for each partner for the reporting period of **1 January - 31 October 2025** is detailed in the project's first Annual Report on Cumulative Expenditure (**D1.3**), submitted on 24 December 2025 via the F&T portal, as required.

### WP2 – Site Network

During the reporting period, WP2 did not incur any major expenditures. All financial commitments remain aligned with the approved budget, and spending is progressing as planned. Future expenditure is expected to follow the foreseen schedule as WP2 activities advance in accordance with the implementation timeline.

As part of WP2, the financial implementation of the Gap Filling Surveys presents, in general, under-expenditures compared with the foreseen budget allocations. The main reasons for the identified variances are outlined below:

- The lower expenditure on travel and subsistence during the Morocco spring 2025 survey reflects the fact that the project commenced in January, leaving limited time to organize a full survey team. Consequently, only two European participants participated and required coverage of travel and subsistence costs.
- For the Morocco autumn 2025 survey, costs were limited because the gap filling activities were aligned with a pre-planned survey of BioSphère Environnement. This overlap reduced the need for additional resources and explains the absence of significant travel and subsistence expenditure.

## WP2 – Site Network

- In Mauritania (autumn 2025), the financial planning for travel and subsistence was more precise. This resulted in higher but fully justified expenses, given the larger number of participants covered and the greater logistical demands of operating in this region.

Despite the difference between the overall budgeted and actual costs for travel and subsistence, this actually provides flexibility for future surveys where larger teams may be deployed if required, as may be the case for the 2026 gap filling survey in Senegal.

## WP3 – Habitat Restoration and Management

The restoration and management activities are supported by substantial, multi-partner resource allocation designed to ensure effective implementation across all planned actions. During the reporting period (1 January – 31 December), no major unforeseen expenditures were incurred, and spending remained fully aligned with the approved budget. Such expenditures are consistent with the overall WP3 budget, with the majority of costs under T.3.1 allocated to personnel, equipment, and operational services.

To date, resource allocation has primarily focused on personnel costs, equipment purchases, and essential goods, works and services required to support restoration activities. These have included mowing and composting activities in Blankaart (Natuurpunt), mulching in the Seine Estuary (MdE), topsoil removal in Normandy (GONm), and a range of restoration measures such as mowing, topsoil removal, soil stripping, and the control/management of invasive alien species across multiple sites in Spain (FGN).

#### **WP4 – Communications and Outreach**

During the reporting period, WP4 incurred only limited expenses related primarily to the development of the project's visual identity, production of communication materials, and contracting of designers and illustrators. All costs remain within the planned budget, and spending is progressing in line with the approved financial allocation for WP4.

No significant deviations from the budget occurred and future expenditures, particularly those associated with the printing of information signboards and pupil and teacher notebooks are expected to follow the established financial plan.

#### **WP5 – Monitoring and Evaluation**

During the reporting period, WP5 did not incur any major expenditures. All financial commitments remain aligned with the approved budget, and spending is progressing as planned. Future expenditure is expected to follow the foreseen schedule as WP5 activities advance in accordance with the implementation timeline.

## **WP6 – Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results**

During the reporting period, WP6 did not incur any major expenditures. All financial commitments remain aligned with the approved budget, and spending is progressing as planned. Future expenditure is expected to follow the foreseen schedule as WP6 activities advance in accordance with the implementation timeline.

## **7. Annexes**

**Annex I:** [Annual Gap Filling Survey Report - Y1](#)

**Annex II:** [Annual Consolidated Restoration Progress Report - Y1](#)

**Annex III:** [Annual Consolidated Communications Progress Report - Y1](#)

**Annex IV:** [Annual Report on the Implementation of the Transferability and Replicability Strategy - Y1](#)