

# WELCOME TO THE NATURAL PROTECTED AREA OF RAZO-BALDAIO: A SPACE OF HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE THAT WE SHOULD PRESERVE

The beach, the marsh, and the lagoon of Baldaio make up one of the natural protected spaces included in the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at Costa da Morte, which is part of the Natura 2000 Network, a European network of Natural Spaces seeking to protect the habitats and the most endangered species in Europe to contribute to the preservation of biodiversity in our continent. Besides, as it is a most important habitat for birds, it has also been catalogued as a Special Protection Area for Birds (ZEPA in Spanish) at Costa da Morte (North).

Its lagoon and its marsh, its coastal rocks, beaches, and dunes make it a great natural complex where every little detail proves most interesting whether it is the smallest living being or the simplest rock.

## Un enclave imprescindible para a supervivencia de plantas e animais únicos que se encontran ameazados

Baldaio is home to some natural habitats whose preservation is a priority in Europe, including the fragile grey dunes, where endangered plants grow, some of them endemic to the province of Coruna, such as the **Iberodes littoralis**, the **Linaria aguillonensis**, the **Rumex rupestris**, or the **Limonium doodartii**, all of them critically endangered in Spain.

It also provides refuge for amphibians such as the **tree frog** and the **Iberian painted frog**, reptiles such as the **ocellated wizzard** or the **slowworm** and mammal such as the **otter**, which feeds in the channels of the marshes.

The origin of Baldaio dates back 2.5 million years, when there was a fracture in the ground, which sunk, thus allowing the sea to enter the sunken areas. After thousands of years, because of the action of currents and the uninterrupted supply of sand, a huge barrier of sand was created, closing the bay, and creating the lagoon.

Up until the 1960s, this coastal space was one of the main wetlands of Galicia but then a series of unfortunate business initiatives compromised its preservation. The opposition of the locals, however, contributed to the recovery of most of this natural space.

## A most important coastal space for the migration of many waterfowl and sea birds

The sea next to the beach, the marsh or the Baldaio dunes provide a habitat for a huge variety of birds, sometimes leading to great concentrations of migratory waterbirds and wintering birds, which, in their long journeys from Northern Europe to sub-Saharan Africa, take advantage of this space to feed and rest, this being one of the most important natural spaces in the Iberian north-western for these birds.

Over 250 species of birds gather in this most precious natural space, making it one of the jewels of Galician ornithology: Anatidae, herons, seagulls and terns, cormorants; waders (Eurasian curlew, plovers, dunlins, common sandpipers, oystercatchers, plovers...), Montangu's Harrier, red-throated divers and shearwaters and many Passeriformes...

There are also birds that are rare in these latitudes such as the **Short-eared Owl**, the **Snow Bunting** or the **Kentish plover**, which usually breeds on the sandbanks or the rarest and most endangered *Emberiza schoeniclus lusitanica*, a subspecies of the **Common Reed Bunting**.



*Linaria polygalifolia*



*Iberodes littoralis gallaecica*



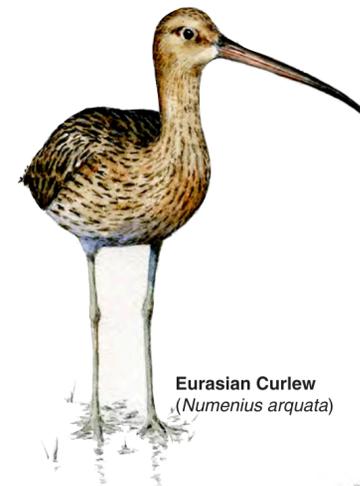
*Limonium doodartii*



Tree frog  
(*Hyla molleri*)



Otter  
(*Lutra lutra*)



Eurasian Curlew  
(*Numenius arquata*)



Western Marsh Harrier  
(*Circus aeruginosus*)



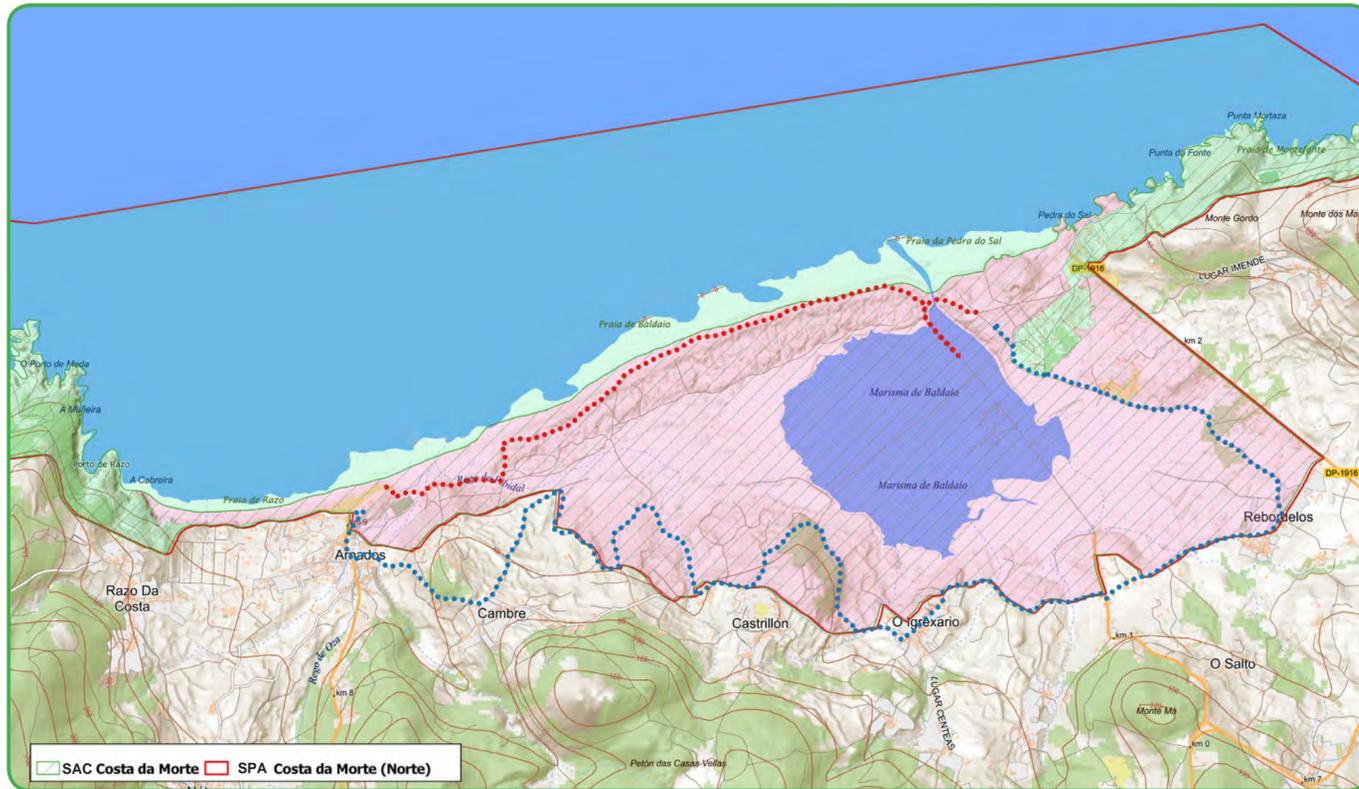
European Shag  
(*Gulosus aristotelis*)



Eurasian Wigeon  
(*Mareca penelope*)



Common Reed Bunting  
(*Emberiza schoeniclus*)



## The Kentish plover, a little jewel that breeds on the sandbanks of Razo-Baldaio

The Kentish plover is not just one of the birds that breeds or rests on the sandbanks of Baldaio and Razo, but sadly it is one of the endangered species of Galicia, with a small population that across the whole Cantabrian-Atlantic sector of the Spanish coast it is only found here with a population of barely 100 couples.

But the increasing human pressure on the sand areas (bathers, dogs, kites, kitesurf...), which coincides with its breeding season (which starts mid-March and lasts until the end of the summer), means that in most beaches in Galicia, despite the untiring efforts by these birds, which they can make up to five lays in one season, not even one fledgling reaches adulthood.

The Natural Protected Area of Razo-Baldaio is one of the most important places in Galicia for them to breed and this is why these sandbanks are a priority area in the Preservation Plan for this species.



### It is up to you: you choose to preserve this natural space

Baldaio suffered several mishaps that resulted in serious ecological imbalances: the construction of channels, seawalls, hatches, and dirt roads as well as the removal of sand, urban sprawl, and hunting to mention but a few.

As visitors, we are essential to place Baldaio where it deserves as one of the best natural spaces in Galicia and do our bit to preserve it

-  Respect plants and animals. They are an inseparable part of nature. Many species are very sensitive or are endangered.
-  Do not pile up pebbles at beaches as by doing this you are destroying the habitat of small invertebrates and disturbing coastal geology.
-  Take with you any rubbish you may have and put it in the right bin for recycling.
-  If you go to the beach, respect the Kentish plover exclusion cages: the survival of this species also depends on you.
-  Do not use vehicles on the dunes or outside the authorised areas for vehicles. Park on designated areas only.
-  Fire can destroy life. Refrain from lighting fires and do not litter cigarette butts.
-  Do not free camp or stay overnight in your camper van, motor home or RV. Use the designated areas for this activity you will find in the vicinity.
-  Do not bring exotic plants or animals in the areas as they upset the natural balance and seriously damage the ecosystem.
-  Your contribution is essential to the preservation of the species and the ecological balance in this important natural space.
-  Unleashed dogs often scare birds looking for a rest place in this natural space. They may also kill bird chicks of many species, including the fragile fledglings of the Kentish plover. Remember that unleashed dogs are not allowed on the beach during the breeding season of the Kentish plover (from 15 March to 15 July) and throughout the year on the lagoon and marsh areas as well as on the Baldaio dunes.  
Besides, dogs are not allowed on the beaches of the municipality between 1 June and 30 September, Easter, weekends and the public holidays between April and October.

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## An indispensable enclave for the survival of unique endangered animals and plants

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(*Lutra lutra*)



Tree frog  
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*Iberodes littoralis galleacica*



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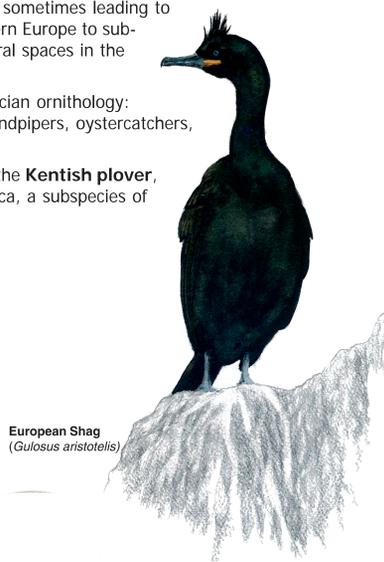
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Sergo Chaires  
2012

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# NEW AND OLD USES THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH PRESERVATION GO HAND IN HAND IN THE PROTECTED NATURAL AREA OF RAZO-BALDAIO



The north of the municipality of Carballo consists of a narrow coastal strip that goes from Leira to Razo, which is mostly occupied by the Razo-Baldaio sandy area, one of the longest in Galicia and which opens to the Atlantic Ocean almost touching one of the ends of Costa da Morte.



## A space that has been an important source of resources used for centuries

Many have been the resources that the inhabitants of Baldaio have used commercially for hundreds of years, most particularly fishing and shell fishing on its coasts and its lagoon as well as farming in the lands around it.

We can find here a great variety of molluscs, crustaceans... and fish that have been traditionally commercially used. Still today, within the lagoon, shellfish gatherers collect the abundant **cockle**, but also **pod razor**, **oyster** and **Palourde clam**. The also gather the occasional polychaeta such as **lugworms**. In the tidal channel, **mullet**s, **eels**, and **plaices** abound, and under the sand we find the "pións de Baldaio" or **sand lances**, which are caught by many anglers using a tool called "foucella" to use them as bait for fishing sea bass, a use documented by geographer and naturalist José Cornide Saavedra in 1784. They may be also eaten.



Lugworm  
(*Arenicola maritima*)



Cockle  
(*Cerastoderma edule*)



Sand Lance  
(*Ammodytes tobianus*)

One of the most ancient uses of natural resources, which is the origin of the place name As Saíñas, consisted in creating some shallow ponds or pools where seawater evaporated to get salt.

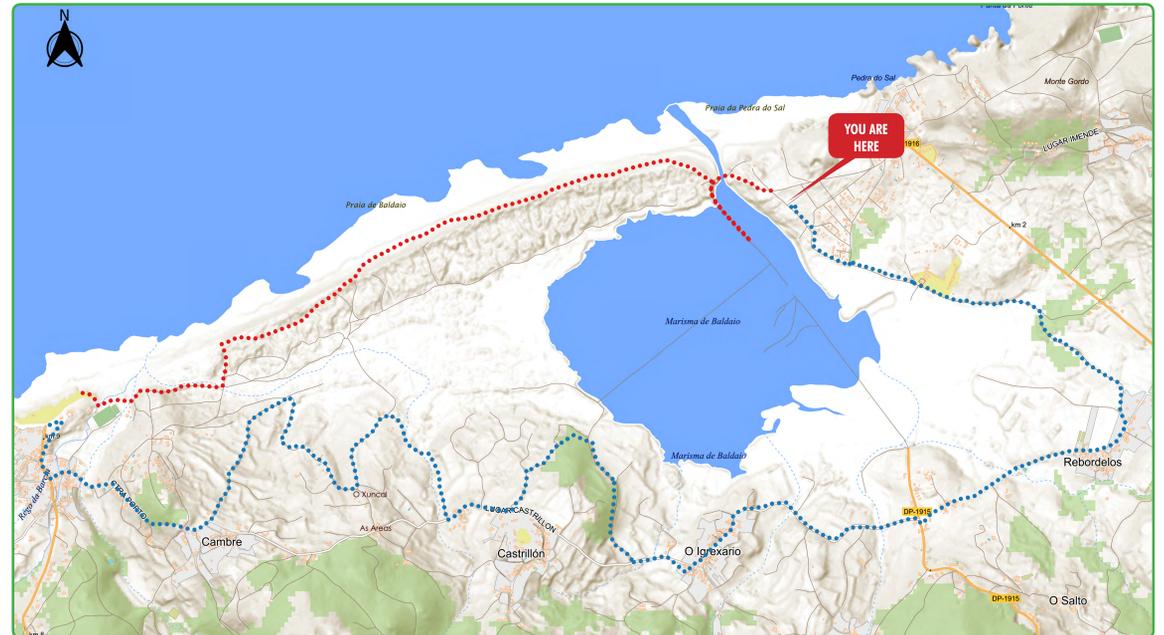
There are also records of the existence of a bathhouse, which remained open up to the 1950s. Some people used to go there for revitalizing baths at a time when going to the beach was uncommon.

Today, with the new times, new uses have been developed that must be sustainable and compatible with the preservation of this natural space: hiking, nature photography or surf, bathing, diving...



## Routes to discover the environmental and heritage values of this natural space

From the car park at Baldaio beach, we suggest two routes. One of them is only for hikers but the other is both a hiking and a cycling route. They will take us through the natural history of the combination of habitats so that you can discover the impressive geological, ecological and landscape value of this coastal area that makes up the Protected Natural Area of Baldaio-Razo.



### Route 1 From Baldaio beach to Razo beach along the coast

This walking trail will take us from the car park at Baldaio, in parallel to the coast, to the southwest, and then to the gates to get a view of the lagoon and the marsh to retrace our steps to head to the beach on our way to Razo.

Distance	4,5 km
Difficulty	Medium-low due to walking on sand. Not accessible to people with reduced mobility
Duration	2,5 hours
Starting Point	Baldaio Beach Bird Observatory
End Point	Razo Beach

### Route 2 From Baldaio Beach to Razo Beach through the interior

It begins at the bird observatory. Most of the trail is along paths and dirt roads around the back of the marsh, on the southern section of the Baldaio lagoon, until we finally reach the beach of Razo.

Distance	Approx. 10,2 km
Difficulty	Medium. Mountain bike
Duration	1,0 hour
Starting Point	Baldaio Beach Bird Observatory
End Point	Razo Beach

## The Protected Natural Area of Razo-Baldaio was recovered for the public thanks to the efforts of the local people.

In 1948, the Francoist government granted an administrative license for the use of the Baldaio lagoon and the marsh for fishing and shell fishing purposes, but the project never materialized as such. Instead, the license was used for years to extract sand for construction purposes. Besides, the licensees prevented locals from shell fishing, an activity they had traditionally been performing. To make things worse, they built dirt roads, several dams and sluice gates that damaged this important natural space.

Although complaints and protests by the locals began as soon as the licence was granted, it was not until 1975 that they took on a new dimension following the death of a shell fish gatherer who was forced by the guards of the extraction site to walk back, fully drenched and carrying a sack full of cockles he had gathered, to the Civil Guard station of Caión where he spent the night after being arrested. This resulted in his death days later.

Barely one year later, on 8 May 1977, on a Market Sunday, a demonstration in the town was attended by thousands of people to demand that the license should be revoked. It was severely repressed by the Civil Guard. On that afternoon, demonstrators went to Baldaio to continue with their protest, and like in the morning, they were severely repressed by the Civil Guard, with many wounded and several arrested.

This was the beginning of the end of the licence, which would be revoked by the National Court in 1988, a decision later upheld by the High Court in 1991.

The long process of tireless protests by the locals eventually resulted in achieving their ultimate objective, which was to return the natural space of Baldaio to the general public for their use and enjoyment.

In recent times, important environmental restoration works have been conducted to recover its original splendour.



LA CORUÑA  
**MEJORAN LOS HERIDOS EN LA PLAYA DE BALDAIO**  
Castro miembros de Comisiones Laborales, multados por incitar a la manifestación

LA CORUÑA. Después de un largo proceso judicial, el Tribunal Supremo ha condenado a cinco miembros de las Comisiones Laborales de Baldaio a cuatro años de prisión por incitar a la manifestación del 8 de mayo de 1977. Los condenados son: Manuel Barja, Juan Carlos Barja, Juan Carlos Barja y Juan Carlos Barja. Los condenados a tres años de prisión son: Manuel Barja y Juan Carlos Barja. Los condenados a dos años de prisión son: Manuel Barja y Juan Carlos Barja. Los condenados a un año de prisión son: Manuel Barja y Juan Carlos Barja.

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Miércoles 11 de 1977



The uses and the new forms of leisure that take place in the Protected Natural Area of Razo-Baldaio must not be detrimental to its preservation.

*Because unique plants live here, many of them endangered and endemic to the province of A Coruña and Galicia.*



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