

A photograph showing a woman in a light-colored tank top reaching up with her arms outstretched, releasing a large bird of prey, possibly an eagle or osprey, into a clear blue sky. The bird is in mid-flight, with its wings fully extended.

More Than a Wildlife Hospital



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Who are we?

AMUS (Acción por el Mundo Salvaje) is a national, non-governmental organisation of independent character, which has no ideological, political or religious affiliations. It was founded in Extremadura in 1995 with its prime objective being the conservation of species and their natural habitats. The AMUS staff are specialised in conservation programmes and the recuperation of wild animals.

The development of the organisation has been closely linked with that of its Wildlife Hospital, which, although it has a number of polyvalent functions such as education, training and investigation, concentrates most of its work in two main areas. These are (1) the provision of medical assistance to wild animals which are sick or injured and (2) adoption and rearing in captivity programmes involving species under threat, with a view to augmenting wild populations. Currently the main challenge is to keep pace with the huge numbers of sick and injured animals which the hospital receives on a daily basis, with the aim of returning them to the wild wherever possible.

AMUS projects are generally of an inter-institutional nature, since our preferred method of working is in co-operation with other entities, investigative centres, universities, and experts from various different countries.



Where are we?

We are situated within the Spanish region of Extremadura, in the southern province of Badajoz, near Villafranca de los Barros.

The hospital is on a plot of about 1.5 hectares, 4kms outside the village.



Why a wildlife hospital?

This area of unique landscapes still conserves highly intact ecosystems, which have long been extinguished elsewhere in Europe, and thus provides our last remaining opportunity to show that the development of human societies can go hand in hand with the conservation of natural resources and the environment. The Spanish Imperial Eagle, the Black Stork, the Egyptian Vulture and the Great Bustard are only a few of the species which, almost miraculously, can readily be found in this small corner of Europe even today.



Our wildlife is obliged to confront multiple, varied threats on a daily basis and in most cases these dangers are caused by the actions of modern society. Habitat conservation is seen as a priority but this alone is not enough. Electrical cables, circulating traffic, wind farms, diverse types of infrastructure, firearms, poisons, barbed wire, trapping and stealing are only some of the factors which make wild species extremely vulnerable. Consequently many individuals, some of which are endangered species, find survival without intervention impossible, due to their having been shot at, run over or poisoned. The most fortunate of these end up as patients at our hospital.

“Extremadura is a region whose biodiversity is unequalled throughout Europe, making it the main destination for birding and wildlife tourism in this part of the world”

“There is clear justification, a legal obligation and a moral debt to provide assistance by qualified personnel in specialised centres, leading to the recuperation and return to the wild of these damaged creatures.”

The construction of the AMUS rehabilitation facility began in the centre of Badajoz province in 1995. All Iberian species are accepted for treatment, the aim being to subsequently return them to their natural environment.

As well as acting as a hospital, the site provides a teaching facility, using individuals which are not suitable for reintroduction into the wild. Both adopted individuals and those which have been raised in captivity form part of innovative programmes to educate schoolchildren and increase public awareness.

The AMUS hospital admits more than a thousand patients annually and more than 55% of these are cured and released back into their natural habitat. Professional service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Most of the individuals treated are birds, with mammals, reptiles and amphibians making up the remainder.



What else do we do?

Our workload falls into three main areas: **conservation, investigation and formation.**

Conservation covers the tasks carried out by the hospital in providing medical assistance to the wild animals which arrive on the premises daily. We also carry out projects and campaigns involving the conservation of particular species, whose secondary aim is to actively involve and improve the awareness of the public. In all of our projects we consider the inclusion of groups such as farmers, livestock owners, environmental agents, forestry staff etc. to be of prime importance and in fact we have run some specific schemes for them such as “Pastando Biodiversidad”. This was a completely innovative programme, not seen before in Europe, which implicated the rural farming community in species conservation. We also work on international projects involving the re-introduction of threatened species, an example being the vulture programme in the Balkan mountains. We have a breeding in captivity programme for the Montagu’s Harrier and are developing others for the Bonelli’s Eagle, Black Vulture and Golden Eagle.

In our investigative work we follow some of the individuals liberated by the Centre using radio-tracking. Inter-continental collaboration between Europe and Africa allows us to track the birds whilst on migration and discover the location of their overwintering zones. We are also involved with medical programmes linked to conservation in which we investigate the epidemiology of diseases and the influence of physical changes on the resurgence of particular pathogens.

In terms of training we are a reference hospital in Spain, and indeed at a European level, and we have formal agreements with many universities, whereby students in the fields of veterinary medicine and biology can receive training and gain practical experience at our facility. We have therefore, over the years, become a site for obligatory practical training for many future professionals.



How are we financed?



Although our sources of finance are extremely varied, over the last few years private funding has become increasingly important. In fact, public funding now only plays a nominal role in terms of the functioning of the organisation as a whole.

Our work, campaigns, projects and programmes are all economically backed by entities which are mostly private in nature, as well as by personal donations. One of our main sources of income is the practical training programmes that we provide. This is supplemented by private donations and the sponsoring of individual animals in the hospital. In essence, the viability of our important work is now highly dependent on private support.

Projects which need urgent funding:

SOS Fauna: A specialised collection service for injured wildlife

One of the hospital's most important functions is the collection of injured wildlife throughout Badajoz province and sometimes beyond. We have a specially equipped van which has the equipment and materials necessary to provide urgent assistance at site if necessary.

This mobile unit is in constant contact with the veterinary team based at the hospital. The service is provided 24/7 throughout the year.



"With their feet in the water"

A programme focused on waterfowl. This project is halfway to completion. We have created an aquatic environment consisting of five lagoons where we can accommodate and treat species such as herons, storks and waders. We need to finish the installation in order to be able to assist these types of bird. This is highly specialised work, not least because these species are very demanding both in terms of environment and treatment.



The Raptor Unit

Our unit has a long history of involvement in programmes designed to improve the viability of threatened species, via the reintroduction of individuals born or reared in captivity.

We began this type of work back in 1995 with the Montagu's Harrier and we now have an additional programme whereby nocturnal raptor chicks are born to or adopted and raised by adults who are unsuitable for reintroduction, and then released into the wild. We would like to extend this type of intervention to include threatened Iberian raptors.

We already have individuals of the following three species at the Centre: Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and Black Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*). We would like to finish building the necessary living quarters for the programme, which we have already half completed.

The Hospital

The number of hospital admissions annually continues to rise and in fact has doubled over the past five years. Our current logistics and infrastructure make it extremely difficult to deal with this volume of work.

We need to create a larger facility which has the technical capacity for dealing with all of these admissions whilst at the same time providing space for a greater number of students from Spanish and European universities.

Orphans

From springtime until well into the summer the neo-natal and breeding department looks after hundreds of young from a huge variety of species. The majority are birds but baby foxes, martens, genets, badgers and hedgehogs are also attended to.

This is an extremely laborious task, involving 12 hours of work daily, every day of the week. It is carried out by one of the AMUS team plus trained volunteers.

"The medicine of conservation"

This is a project which was started some four years ago which aims to isolate and identify the pathogens affecting birds admitted to the hospital, and relate these to climatic changes and the loss or transformation of the physical environment.

This is a cutting-edge investigation which amplifies the value of medicine in a global sense and helps catalogue diseases which are also becoming world-wide due to the actions of contemporary society.



How can you help us?

- ✓ By adopting an animal in the hospital.
- ✓ By becoming a member of AMUS.
- ✓ By donating material or equipment.
- ✓ By funding some of our projects



**For more information please contact: info@amus.org.es
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