COMING SOON IN 2015/2016

The Network is constantly growing and our team is already working on several new reserves in different Countries. As explained before, our aim is to gather important nature areas that are frequented by the most representative target species of each country and develop in these areas responsible nature tourism, in order to be able to run concrete conservation and research projects. The new reserves include different kind of habitats: from steppe-like habitat in Spain to the boreal forest in Latvia and the wetlands of the Po Delta in Italy, and more. Private owners and public institutions constantly ask us to develop nature areas, with the goal of including them in our Network; most likely, next year scenario will see the inclusion of about 7 new reserves.

Cascina Spinola (Italy)
Frasassi Gorge (Italy)
Dona Catalina (Spain)
Central Spain (Spain)
Wild Latvia (Latvia)
Valle Cavanata (Italy)
Marisma de Alday (Spain)

7 New Reserves
40 New Photo Hides
4000 Hectares of nature
The lowlands of the Vercelli's plains are an area extremely favourable for farming, and the rice fields in the last century have become an almost uninterrupted extension. An old but still very efficient canal system has been providing the necessary water supply and the whole area has been nicknamed “the squared sea”. Until very few years ago, these rice fields have played a key role as stopover sites for migrating herons and especially waders, as well as being of great importance for amphibians and insects. But nowadays the situation is getting worse, mainly due to massive use of pesticides and a lesser use of water during springtime. This introduction is necessary to understand the importance of creating new wetlands and the need to restore habitats: traditional rice fields can no longer act as substitutes for natural wetlands. Therefore the role that Cascina Spinola is set to play is absolutely unique and extremely precious: more than a hundred hectares of cultivated farmland will be turned into a wet natural habitat, which will include open body of water, reedbeds and wet meadows.

The first restoration has already started and the first results are really promising: a number of herons, egrets, ducks and waders have used the area for feeding and roosting, and in the next few years we are sure that more and more birds will be present here. In particular, a target species is Black-tailed Godwit, which has a breeding site nearby that is threatened by agricultural works, and therefore the Cascina Spinola area is hopefully going to become a stronghold for this species. Fixed, mobile and floating photo hides will be realised soon in the whole area, and it will be possible to obtain great shots of species like all the European herons, Sacred Ibis, various ducks, marsh terns and a lot of wader species, especially during the spring passage.

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This project, as usual, is a challenging task, and if everything will go as we hope for it will be another proof that our idea of making nature a real economic value is worth to be trusted.
The Gorge has been formed due to a process of long-time erosion by the Sentino River and its over 500 meters high rock faces contain nest sites of rare and important rupicolous raptors, such as Lanner Falcon (3 nesting pairs), Peregrine Falcon (8 nesting pairs), Golden Eagle and the Eurasian Eagle Owl, uncommon in the Appennines.

The White-throated Dipper nests in the gorge at just 200 meters above sea level, creating nests in its karstic faces using moss. The agricultural landscape and the mountain pasture with old breeds of cattle as the Marchigiana cow (descending from the ancestral Auroch) are also habitats of the Short-toed Snake Eagle and of the Red Kite. Among passerines we point out the rare Ortolan Bunting that is here a common species, while Appennine Wolf and Wildcat among mammals species.

In collaboration with:

In the Frasassi Gorge, close to Genga town (AN), represents a pearl of biodiversity in an extraordinary scenery, unique in Europe. The Natural Regional Park of Gola della Rossa and Frasassi is the “green heart” of Marche Region; a karstic land of more than 10,000 hectares that includes the subterranean complex of Frasassi caves, where numerous species of bats live.

**MAIN FOCUS ON**

Lanner Falcon
Peregrine Falcon
Red Kite
Golden Eagle
Dipper

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In the Extremadura region, close to La Parrilla exclusive reserve, our team is already working to open to photographers and birders another beautiful private reserve: Doña Catalina. One of the biggest steppe-like areas of this part of Spain, a huge estate of 3500 hectares of open areas, home to several target species typical of this kind of habitat, and a famous site where lots of Black Storks stop over in late summer.

Here award-winners cattle breeds, such as the sole population of purebred Merino sheep in Spain and a traditional race of horses, are bred and graze in this boundless land where the big mansion of the landowner’s family stands out.

Among the species found here, there are Griffon, Cinereous and Egyptian Vulture, Imperial, Booted and Short-toed Eagle, Black and Red Kite and Montagu’s Harrier; Eurasian Stone Curlew, Red legged Partridge and Great Spotted Cuckoo.

Main focus on

- Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
- Black-bellied Sandgrouse
- Great Bustard
- Little Bustard
- Stone Curlew
- Iberian Grey Shrike

Doña Catalina opens its gate to a limited number of photographers to give them the chance to take excellent pictures using several different kinds of hides located in a huge property; a completely different experience from renting just a single hide or taking pictures from cars.

Different hides will be located in the reserve for Great Bustard and Little Bustard; the drinking hides will be very productive, as a lot of species will enjoy a drinking point, in contrast with the dryness and the heat of the steppes.

Being quite close to the other SKUA’s reserves in Spain (consisting of different kinds of habitats and species), it allows the creation of a combined tour that offers the best opportunities to come back home with a complete portfolio of the western Spain’s mediterranean fauna.

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CENTRAL SPAIN

“EL BARRACO” AND “EL OSO”

The system of photographic hides of El Barraco and El Oso Reserves is located in central Spain, in the eastern part of Sierra de Gredos mountains. Their proximity to Madrid (1h driving) allows an easy access and makes them a point of reference of every photographer that have the big raptors as main target. Among evocative mountains, woods and rivers, El Barraco Reserve has 15 fixed and 4 mobile hides that have been built with the highest qualitative standards; several professional prestigious photographers collaborated in the placing of the hides to guarantee optimum lighting and special backgrounds in the different seasons of the year.

Hides for big raptors offer the opportunity to photograph during all the year very emblematic species as Golden Eagle, Spanish Imperial Eagle and Black Vulture. Seasonal hides offer Goshawk y Sparrowhawk in autumn-winter and Booted Eagle during summer.

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In collaboration with:

MAIN FOCUS ON

Spanish Imperial Eagle
Golden Eagle
Booted Eagle
Crane
Steppe’s birds

The El Oso lagoon, famous wintering site for migratory cranes and ducks, it’s in the centre of El Oso Reserve and hides have been placed all around it. Here you can find 3 fixed hides for cranes, ducks and steppe birds (Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Stone Curlew, Lapwing, waders...) and 2 fixed hides for steppe raptors as for example Spanish Imperial Eagle, Red Kite and Marsh Harrier.

6 new hides will be built and placed in the Reserve in the next future to complete the photographic offer of this paradise on the steppe situated in the Avila province, at just one hour from Madrid.
Latvia is a rather small country very rich for wildlife, with lots of forests, wetlands, an interesting coastline and virtually no mountains. Birdlife is great, especially during migrations when large numbers of birds pass through on their way to the northern breeding grounds: ducks, geese, cranes, waders and various passerines are common especially during springtime. But also during the winter good concentrations of some species can be seen, and some species can be even easier to contact: Middle spotted and White backed Woodpecker, Pigmy and Ural Owl, Bohemian Waxwing are only a few examples.

In the eastern part of the country, not too far from the Russian border, there’s an area particularly productive for birds and mammals, called Lubans: vast expanses of boreal forest, mixed with open meadows, surround a large area of wetlands, lakes and fishponds, only partially used.

This varied habitat support huge numbers of ducks, grebes, raptors, woodpeckers and various passerines, as well Black grouses and Pigmy Boreal and Ural Owls. Ospreys and White tailed Eagles are particularly common, and it is not rare to see up to 9 Ospreys at the same time in summer and spring! Blyth’s reed Warbler, Booted Warbler, Citrine Wagtail are among the most interesting passerines present here. Common Goldeneye, Whooper Swan, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Marsh Sandpiper are other interesting species breeding here, not forgetting Three toed and Grey headed Woodpecker and Bittern.

MAIN FOCUS ON

Black Grouse
Lesser Spotted Eagle
Pigmy - Ural - Boreal Owl
Osprey
Woodpeckers

SKUA Nature is starting to develop a very interesting project here, with the goal to establish a new reserve in order to offer some other great photo opportunities: this will be made in collaboration with the local company Dabas Tures, which in the course of the years has developed an unmatched experience and knowledge of the area. Agreements will be made with local owners of fishponds, and new structures and facilities will be created, both for accommodation and of course for photography purposes.

Latvia will soon be another important part of the Network, offering a new environment and new habitats where to explore a wonderful nature.

INFO
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It’s not rare to see up to 9 Ospreys at the same time in summer.

Mammals like Beaver and Moose are common and can normally be observed, but also Wolf and Lynx are widespread here, though seeing them requires a bit of luck!

All the Lubans area has a relatively low human density, and it is very pleasant to spend some time here; both paved and gravel roads cross the area, passing through dense coniferous forests and more open parts, and also reaching close to the large fishponds where a lot of birds are to be seen.
Valle Cavanata
Between Fresh and Salty Water

The reserve is located in the Gorizia province (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy). In the past, it was a fishing valley like lots of areas in this part of the Italian Peninsula. The presence of several kinds of habitats in this reserve among the land and the Adriatico Sea (such as lagoons, beaches, woodlands, meadows, fishing valleys, ponds) make the area an ideal place for birds to nest, stop or winter; around 260 species have been recorded so far in this little reserve. Being declared as Wetland of international importance by Ramsar Convention and Site of Community Importance and Special Protection Area by Natura2000, this land is very famous among birders and photographers. A thick system of canals and water courses that are connected to the open sea, and woods and clearings that run along, offer refuges for numerous species of birds, as for example Purple Heron, Pigmy Cormorant, Bittern and big flocks of Flamingos, shorebirds, ducks and geese. Valle Cavanata is possible to reach by walk from the nearby Grado town, that has a beautiful old town centre, venetian style, with fishermen houses and little alleys.

In collaboration with:
M. Biasioli
T. D'Arcangelo

Marisma de Alday
The Green Heart of Civilization

The Alday marshland is a littoral wetland area near Santander (Cantabria, Spain). It represents the remains of a big ancient marshland. Even if the reserve is located in a urbanized area, thanks to the marshland’s recovery project run by the Naturalia y Hombre Foundation in these past ten years, it is nowadays one of the last biodiversity oasis in the surroundings of the Santander Bay. The reserve is divided in two main areas: a salty water zone and a fresh water zone. The main botanical species are rushes (juncus), reeds and bulrushes. On the sides of the paths there also are typical species of wetlands or riverbank forest. Local breeds of horses and donkeys help containing the invasive botanical species. A big number of bird species live together in its 75 hectares of lagoons and meadows, such us Marsh Harrier, Grey and Purple Heron, Mallard, Pintails, Black-winged Stilt, Garganey and lots more; this reserve is indeed the habitat of many wetland birds and an hot spot and refuge for lots of other bird species during migration, and this is why it’s known as an important ornitological and biodiversity area. The best period is during winter for the big quantity of migratory species and during summer for nesting and resident species (herons, cormorants, sandpipers, plovers, ducks, etc.).

In collaboration with:
M. Ravasini