

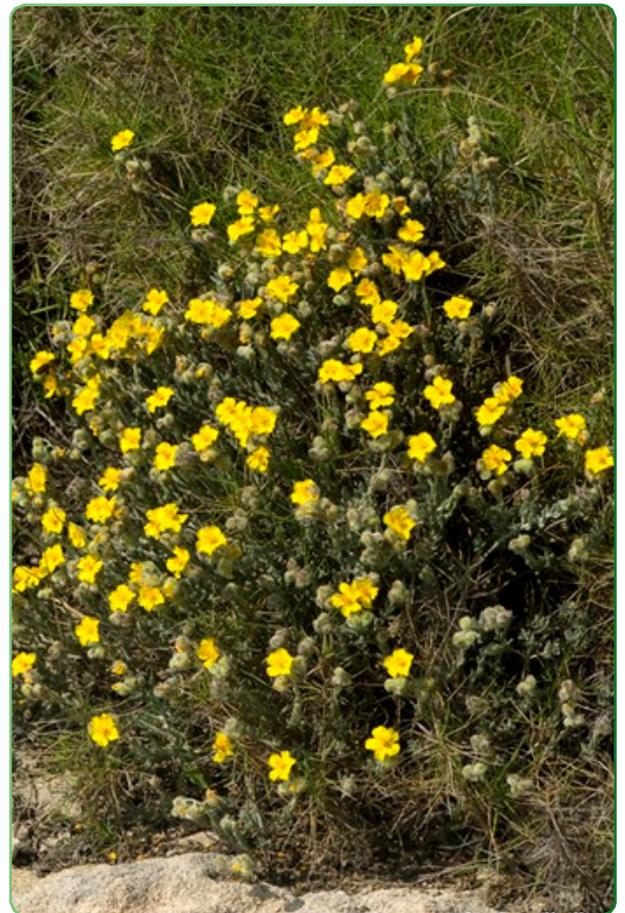
Restoration works of the Plant Micro-reserve and Site of Community Importance (SCI) of

THE RAMBLA DE LAS ESTACAS

The Cat Head (*Helianthemum caput-felis*) is a small shrub that grows in Northern Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Melilla), Sardinia, Italy, Balearic Islands and **the coastline of the province of Alicante** (municipalities of Teulada, Benissa, Calp, Torrevieja, Orihuela and Pilar de la Horadada). It owns its peculiar name to the resemblance of its flower buds to a cat's head.

The Cat Head grows in open coastal shrublands, with high insolation, on calcareous soils.

It's a **plant protected** by European, Spanish and Valencian regulations. In fact, it is included in Spanish and Valencian catalogues of threatened species within the **Vulnerable category**. **The most important Spanish population is found in the South of the Alicante province**, with 20.400 specimens (Balearic Islands: 6.800, northeast of the Alicante province: 2.810, Melilla: 700).



There are **7 plant micro-reserves** where the Cat Head grows in the Valencian Community. One of them is "**Rambla de las Estacas**", declared in 1999. It is located in the municipality of **Orihuela**, and covers an area of 0,195 hectares. In 2001 this micro-reserve was declared **Site of Community Interest (SCI)** and thus forms part of the European network of protected areas **NATURA 2000**.



Both the **micro-reserve** and the **SCI** are located within the residential areas of the **Plan Parcial C2 Playa Flamenca**. Currently the natural vegetation is being displaced by **invasive alien species** (such as the giant cane, acacia, castor-oil plant...) and there are accumulations of garden waste, as well as debris and rubble of diverse origins. **Wastewater and rainwater discharges** to the ravine have modified habitat, favouring the presence of species with higher humidity requirements. The educational use of the micro-reserve and SCI is impeded by the walls and fences built by developers that prevent a convenient access to this site.

In addition to the Cat Head, other species of conservation interest live in the **Rambla de las Estacas**. For instance, a **little snail** whose scientific name is *Tudorella mauritanica*. This species is included in the Valencian catalogue of threatened fauna species under the **Vulnerable category**. It lives in the leaf litter beneath pines and palmettos.



The **environmental regional administration (Conselleria de Infraestructuras, Territorio y Medio Ambiente)**, in collaboration with the **municipality of Orihuela**, the **Confederación Hidrográfica del Segura** and **volunteer neighbours**, will carry out restoration works in the plant micro-reserve and SIC **Rambla de las Estacas**, in order to remove invasive plants, rubble and debris and restore the natural vegetation of the area. The Cat Head and the snail *Tudorella mauretanic* are **part of our natural heritage** and their conservation is incumbent upon us all.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PRESERVE THEM?

- Do not dump garden waste, rubble or debris in the ravine
- Replace invasive plants from your garden by indigenous or exotic non-invasive plants (please find useful examples of how to do this by downloading free: *Mediterranean gardening without invasive species*.

Download here.

