



OF URBAN OASES AND WILD TERRAINS



find out more

WILD CATALONIA

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2 x 50 min., 4K, 5.1



Catalonia is renowned for its vibrant culture, stunning landscapes, and dynamic city life. Stretching from the sun-soaked Costa Brava to the rugged Pyrenees this region of northeast Spain offers diverse natural habitats. Catalonia is a region of striking contrasts where urban development and climate change intersect with rich natural landscapes. From the microhabitats of Barcelona to the extreme environments of the Costa Brava and Pyrenees, we showcase Catalonia's wildlife, its resilience and adaptability in urban spaces, in wild places, and in the face of climate change.



Over two episodes, we explore the wild side of Catalonia and how its wildlife is adapting to the challenges of the modern world.

EPISODE 1: WILDLIFE IN BARCELONA

Barcelona, the capitol of Catalonia, is a global icon of art and architecture, a hub for culture with a thriving atmosphere but the city is also a host to unexpected wildlife, in unexpected places.

Amid the bustling cityscape conservationists have worked to reintroduce peregrine falcons which had vanished from the region. These birds of prey now nest on urban buildings and towers, showcasing a successful integration of wildlife within the city. Their presence is a testament to effective conservation practices and a sign of the city's evolving relationship with nature.

Barcelona is also undertaking a significant green expansion initiative. By 2030 the city plans to increase its green spaces by over 1.5 million square metres. This ambitious project is transforming the urban environment into a more sustainable and biodiverse habitat by developing parks and planting greenery on roofs and walls. These new green spaces already attract wild bees, butterflies and small mammals that have successfully adapted to the urban jungle and

now contribute to this complex urban ecosystem. A striking example is the male jumping spider which performs intricate, choreographed dances to attract mates!

The Mediterranean coast of Barcelona plays a crucial role in marine biodiversity. The waters are frequented by several whale species including bottlenose dolphins and fin whales. Whale-watching tours have become a popular activity, offering a unique opportunity to observe these majestic creatures in their natural habitat. Their presence is testament to the health of the marine environment and ongoing conservation efforts.

Back on land, urban green spaces like Montjuïc Hill provide homes for various owl species. Owls are essential for controlling rodent populations – just one example of how incorporating wildlife habitats into urban planning is of huge benefit to both wildlife and people.

Amphibians like the midwife toad also thrive in Barcelona's parks. This rare species is known for the male carrying its eggs on its back. Even in the heart of Barcelona, on the city's most well-known street, La Rambla, wildlife finds a way to coexist with throngs of people. Wall geckos can be

spotted hunting moths attracted by city lights. And at Gaudi's masterpiece Park Güell, bats roost in man-made caverns. Barcelona, one of the densest populated and most visited cities in the world has become an example of how urban areas designed for people, can also provide essential habitats for lesser-known wild citizens.

EPISODE 2: HOT DAYS IN CATALONIA

Beyond its bustling cities Catalonia reveals a landscape of extremes. The Costa Brava, known for its beautiful beaches, is also home to unique wildlife. The region's cliffs are nesting sites for European shags and large, dark-green cormorants. Despite the summer influx of tourists, these birds continue their lives undisturbed, showcasing the adaptability of wildlife in crowded areas.

Further south the unspoiled sandy beaches and wetlands of the Ebro River delta spread out. The delta is a haven for waterfowl and home to the brown ibis. The ibis forage in large groups, helping manage invasive snail populations that threaten local agriculture. Conservationists like David Bigas work to educate farmers on how these birds can act as allies in pest control, promoting harmony between agriculture and wildlife.

The Ebro delta is a habitat for around 400 bird species including the iconic flamingo. Each year volunteers help band flamingo chicks, a practice that has become a cherished ritual. However, this paradise is under threat as the Ebro River's water levels now decrease during the long, hot summers. Finding a balance between the water needs of wild habitats and human agriculture poses a growing challenge for conservation efforts.

Catalonia's mountainous regions also face challenges. Montserrat is famous for its Benedictine abbey, built into stunning rock formations. Here, recent efforts to reintroduce the nearly extinct Iberian ibex are at risk

NATURE



Environment matters

of failure. Rising temperatures and droughts have led to an increase in devastating wildfires which threaten the ibex's long-term survival. Effective fire management strategies may help preserve the area and its majestic nature.

The Pyrenees, near the French border, is home to the western whip snake, a tree-dwelling species that now faces competition from the larger and more aggressive Montpellier snake. Climate change has facilitated the Montpellier snake's spread into higher altitudes, threatening the whip snake and other native reptiles.

Olga Nicolás, a former veterinarian turned conservationist, is deeply concerned about the impact of these changes on the brown bear

population in Catalonia. Since 1973 brown bears have been protected and their numbers have slowly increased. Nicolás and her team monitor the bears, by checking automatic camera traps to track their health and reproductive success. Although the bears are currently adapting well, the long-term impact of climate change on their habitat remains uncertain.

The plains around Lleida are also experiencing severe drought. Located in the rain shadow of the Pyrenees, this area is one of the driest in Spain, with summer temperatures often exceeding 40 degrees Celsius. The local steppe environment is home to species like the spurred lapwing which is adapting to these harsh conditions. The lapwing, which survives on the few available water sources has developed unique behaviours to survive in this extreme climate.

At the foot of the Pyrenees where the dramatic cliffs of Cap de Creus peninsula meet the clear Mediterranean waters there is a different story. The peninsular is now a nature reserve. Since its designation in 1998 the area has seen an impressive recovery of its flora and fauna. Offshore, the protection of coral reefs has allowed species like the scorpion fish and parrotfish to thrive. The region's biodiversity benefits from both terrestrial and marine conservation efforts, attracting eco-tourists and supporting local economies.

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