

## Workshop 4

Oral presentation

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### **Direct and indirect effects of eucalyptus afforestation on plant diversity and conservation in the Serra de Monchique, Portugal**

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The Serra de Monchique of southern Portugal has a notable flora which survives despite widespread eucalyptus afforestation. These modern plantations have been at the expense of semi-natural cork oak *Quercus suber* and Strawberry Tree *Arbutus unedo* woodlands. Comparative studies by A Rocha have quantified the direct effects of this forestry policy on the native flora, showing for example a significant reduction in the richness of plant genera from cork oak to adjacent eucalyptus areas.

Indirect effects include the enhanced prevalence of fire in the region, highlighted in 2003 by forest fires which affected 78% of the Monchique district. The implications for plant species diversity are discussed in relation to a range of wooded and unwooded habitats studied immediately prior to the fires, and which are now to be monitored over subsequent years. Issues for plant conservation are set in the context of Natura 2000 implementation.

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