



THE NATURE DEPARTMENT

From scientific expertise to land management

The François Sommer Foundation is at the heart of an ecosystem of actors combining art, nature and science. Through its activities, the Foundation contributes to the advancement and sharing of knowledge on the relationship between man and nature.



Through its Nature department, the Foundation supports and participates in ecosystem management and conservation projects, manages protected areas in France and Africa, and offers training in its fields of expertise.



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In the service of knowledge and conservation of ecosystems

Created in 2014, the Nature Department is the driving force behind the Foundation's activities in the field of biodiversity. The Foundation acts as an interface between researchers, nature managements and conservation actors - farmers, foresters, naturalists, hunters - elected officials and the general public.



THE NATURE DEPARTMENT AIMS TO

- **Develop knowledge** on species and their environments in order to improve ecosystem management and conservation methods.
- **Promote the sustainable use of natural resources** through the transmission of knowledge and by encouraging dialogues between the actors - public, private, associations.



At the French and international level, the Nature Department focuses on 3 main activities:

1 Knowledge Development Scientific Expertise

Every 2 years, **the Nature Department selects and financially supports 5 to 10 scientific or associative projects** in France, both metropolitan or ultramarine. The latest call for projects launched in 2019, focused on human-wildlife conflicts.

The Nature Department also develops projects in partnership with public institutions, research laboratories or associations on topics on which it has expertise on such as: coexistence between human activities and wildlife, land management and biodiversity conservation, anti-poaching, species reintroductions, impact of hunting on ungulate population dynamics, global change and forest management...

2 Natural Areas management

To support the actions of the Nature Department, **two sites are made to test and develop new approaches to land management:** the Gilé National Park in Mozambique (co-managed by the Foundation) and the Belval Domain in the Ardennes (owned by the Foundation). Both are dedicated to research, innovative management and training.

3 Training and awareness-raising

The Nature Department supports and organizes symposia and debates. Both are open to specialists but also to the general public; they provide an opportunity to meet people, encourage reflection, discuss several ideas and opinions and highlight innovative and exemplary actions. The Nature Department gives particular importance to the training of young researchers and students but also fields training of hunters, foresters and managers of natural areas.

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Belval, a research and training field

In the French Ardennes, the birthplace of the Sommer family and company, the Belval Domain offers a variety of ecosystems (wetlands, meadows and forest) spread over 1050 hectares. A treasure of biodiversity.



New management methods are studied and tested regularly on this large territory. **Belval believes in a more innovative forest and hunting management**, based both on the results of scientific research and on the expertise of natural area managers.

This territory is dedicated to scientific research and has become a privileged observation site on the forest/hunting balance. The study site of the «Zone Atelier en Argonne» (ZARG) project, **it integrates the network of “Zones ateliers” labeled by the CNRS** (an interdisciplinary research network on the environment and social ecosystems linked to societal issues).

The project focuses on the collaboration between life sciences, social sciences and health and is based on a network of more than **70 teacher-researchers supported by 17 laboratories and 6 institutions and about thirty local and national partners** (local authorities, public bodies, companies, schools, associations, etc.).

A training center unique in France

The Belval Domain also has a training center, the *Belval school*, which offers unique hunting courses in France about learning the needs of hunters, foresters and managers of natural areas. By addressing themes such as big game management, land use planning, forest-hunting balance, shooting, ballistics and more. The *Belval school* raises awareness on responsible and sustainable hunting and the rational management of natural environments. To organize these training courses, the Foundation partners with the French Biodiversity Office, the Tour du Valat Foundation, the National Forest Property Center and others.

Open to students, naturalist associations, land managers, scientists and artists, the Belval Domain promotes dialogues between actors and contributes to public awareness.



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The Gilé national Park in Mozambique

In Africa, the international branch of the François Sommer Foundation (FFS-IGF) works for the management of protected areas and the conservation of wildlife and their habitats.



This work is carried out in collaboration with national authorities and local communities in order to develop a more concerted management and an overall shared governance. All these actions receive support from national and international technical partners recognized for their expertise in the fields of scientific research, conservation, civil society supports or development aid (economic development, professionalization, education, health).

Since 2007, FFS-IGF has been operating in Mozambique's Gilé National Park (GNAP), a biodiversity gem and the last refuge in



the region for **50 elephants, zebras, buffalos, wildebeests and 288 bird species**. Through a technical and financial support agreement with the National Administration of Conservation Areas (ANAC) and financial support from the European Union and the French Development Agency, the FFS-IGF is responsible for **a team of more than one hundred employees in the GNAP** including 54 rangers who fight illegal activities.

In addition to the protection and reintroduction of wildlife species, ecological monitoring and infrastructure development (a 6-years program), FFS-IGF aims to develop harvesting, processing and sale of Non-Timber Forest Products (honey, mushrooms...) with and for the benefit of the communities surrounding the GNAP.



A foundation at the crossroads of nature, science and culture

Created in 1964 and recognized of public utility, the François Sommer Foundation perpetuates the vision and values of its founders, François (1904-1973) and Jacqueline Sommer (1913-1993).



In order to raise public awareness on current issues, the Foundation organizes meetings and symposium, an annual book fair *Lire la Nature* and co-edits with Glénat a biannual magazine called *Billebaude*. On the cultural and artistic level, the Museum of Hunting and Nature in Paris, created by Jacqueline and François Sommer, offers a particularly rich and diversified cultural experience, including temporary exhibitions, concerts, readings, performances and screenings.



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