

# VRINË MARSHES

## ALBANIA

• Tirana  
ALBANIA  
• Vrinë

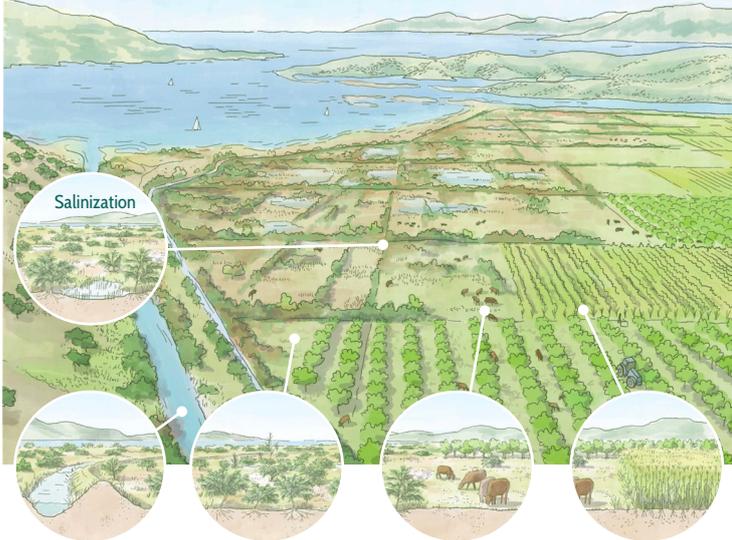
Vrina Marshes, part of **Butrint National Park**, a **Ramsar Site** and **UNESCO World Heritage site**, represents one of Albania's few remaining opportunities to restore a mosaic of coastal freshwater-brackish wetlands. This biodiversity hotspot plays a vital role in supporting community water resilience.

But Vrina is rapidly degrading: illustrated by the sharp decline in waterbird populations (**from 11,200 to 1,000 in just 22 years as of 2024**). Invasive Tamarix is spreading, and seawater intrusion threatens biodiversity and local farming.

This project aims to **restore degraded marshes** and enhance **ecological integrity** to build **climate resilience** and **sustainable ecotourism opportunities** for local communities.

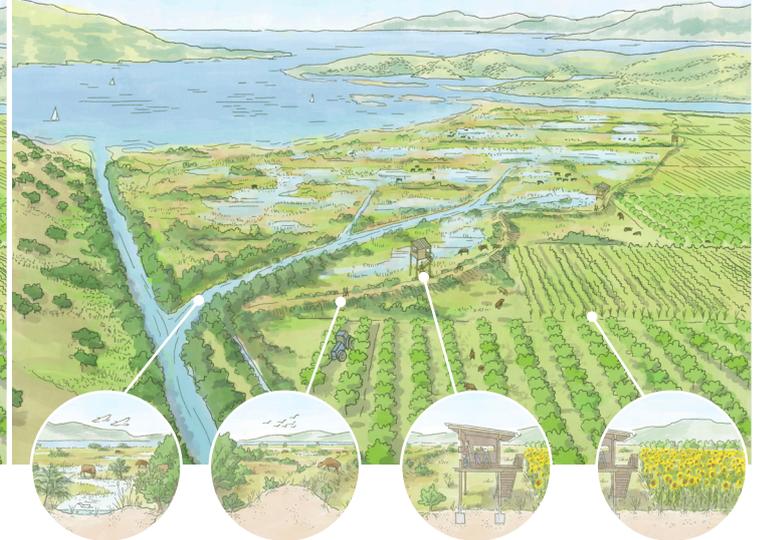
Our vision: A **healthy mosaic** of Vrina marshland that supports a **wide diversity of species** and brings lasting **benefits to the local community**, allowing nature and heritage to thrive as a model for resilience in the Mediterranean.

### BEFORE



Salinization  
Channelized waterways  
Invasive species  
Overgrazing  
Intensive agriculture

### AFTER



Riparian vegetation  
Sustainable grazing  
Ecotourism infrastructure  
Sustainable agriculture

#### ? OBJECTIVE

Establish 300 hectares of self-sustaining wetland ecosystem in the Vrina Marshes to promote biodiversity conservation, enhance water resilience, and create socio-economic opportunities for both nature and local communities.

#### HOW

- Stakeholder engagement
- Ecotourism plan
- Hydrological studies
- Hydraulic engineering solutions (bunds & river diversion)
- Rehabilitation of the riparian vegetation
- Monitoring and adaptive management
- Communication and knowledge transfer

#### IMPACTS

- 300 ha restored
- A dynamic mosaic brackish marshes grading into freshwater
- The recolonization of native wetland flora and fauna, amphibians and target species such as *Limonium anfractum*
- Re-established ecological connectivity and contribution to species movement across the Adriatic Flyway
- New opportunities for local communities
- Resilience of ecosystems and population

#### WHO

The Albanian Ornithological Society (AOS), in collaboration with local stakeholders and support of the Mediterranean Alliance for Wetlands.

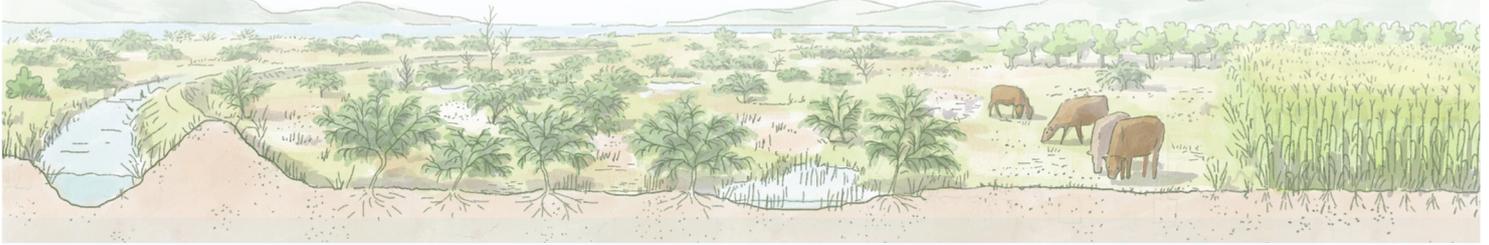
#### WHERE

The Vrina Marshes lie within Butrint National Park, located in the southwest of Albania, in front of Corfu Islands in Greece.

#### WHEN

Anticipated duration : 3 years

# BEFORE



# AFTER



Northern Lapwing  
*Vanellus vanellus*



Dark Spreading  
*Lestes macrostigma*



## PHASE 1

### BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR RESILIENT WETLANDS (YEAR 1)

- 1.1 Empowering communities for change (*consultation, co-planning*)
- 1.2 Laying the groundwork for water resilience (*studies, planning*)
- 1.3 Establishing an ecological and hydrological monitoring system

## PHASE 2

### IMPLEMENTING ENGINEERED SOLUTIONS FOR IMPACT (YEARS 2–3)

- 2.1 Restoring hydrology of the wetlands
- 2.2 Implementation of bunds, river diversion, and ditch management (*depending on phase 1*)
- 2.3 Green Tourism development for livelihoods and conservation (*ecotourism infrastructure, introduce grazing*)
- 2.4 Enhancing biodiversity through targeted action

## PHASE 3

### ENSURING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY (YEAR 3 AND BEYOND)

- 3.1 Sustaining ecotourism
- 3.2 Securing water management infrastructure (maintenance)
- 3.3 Long-term ecological monitoring



Great Fen-sedge  
*Cladium mariscus*



Epirus Water Frog  
*Pelophylax epeiroticus*



Eurasian Otter  
*Lutra lutra*