



**AKDENİZ
KORUMA
DERNEĞİ**

Mediterranean Conservation Society



MEDITERRANEAN CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Established in 2012 as a national non-governmental organization in Izmir, Türkiye, the Mediterranean Conservation Society (MCS) conducts scientific monitoring and restoration activities to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the Mediterranean Basin. It also develops and implements science-based projects aimed at conserving the biodiversity, ecosystems, and cultural heritage of the Mediterranean Basin and raising awareness about these issues.

VISION

Working towards a Mediterranean ecosystem where all living beings coexist in harmony and balance.

MISSION

Carrying out science-based projects to raise awareness of and protect the biodiversity, ecosystem and cultural heritage of the Mediterranean.

VALUES

Science Based: We use science and nature-based solutions to ensure habitats and species can sustain their lives and to increase their resistance to the effects of climate change.

Inclusion: We share responsibility with every person and institution we can meet on the common ground of nature conservation, act together with local stakeholders, and establish national and international collaborations with expert institutions and individuals.

Harmony: We work to preserve biodiversity while prioritizing the economic and cultural needs of local communities, supporting the sustainable use of resources in harmony with nature.

Transparency: We share the processes and results of our work with our members, volunteers and donors; we accept responsibility to present all concrete outputs from our research and activities to the public.

Equity and Respect: Just as we respect diversity in nature, we ensure there is no room for discrimination in our organizational culture or the programs we implement.

The Mediterranean, despite occupying less than 1% of the Earth's ocean surface, hosts 18% of species, making it one of the 25 regions known as the world's Biological Hotspots.

Today, the total area covered by marine protected areas in the Mediterranean, numbering over a thousand, is only about 10% of the Mediterranean's total area. Considering the increasing population and the expectation of more intensive resource utilization in the coming years, it is unquestionably necessary to focus more on the conservation of marine and coastal areas.

The yearly rise in sea levels by 4 mm and expected temperature increases of 2°C to 4°C due to the climate crisis indicate a concerning situation for such a small basin. Thousands of exotic species reaching the Mediterranean from the Suez Canal and finding opportunities to invade here due to increasing temperatures cause significant changes in the Eastern Mediterranean ecosystem and increase the pressure of invasive species on local species.

STUDY AREAS

The Mediterranean Conservation Society has been conducting studies in the Special Environmental Protection Areas along the Turkish coasts of the Mediterranean Basin. These areas include Gökova Bay, Fethiye-Göcek, Datça-Bozburun, Kaş-Kekova, Foça and Köyceğiz-Dalyan Special Environmental Protection Areas.



The Mediterranean Conservation Society supports public institutions in the preparation and implementation of Management Plans for Special Environmental Protection Areas.

PROGRAMMES

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Marine Protected Areas aim to conserve biodiversity and ensure its continuity by closing off certain marine areas to human activity. This, in turn, is intended to increase the local fish stocks, thereby protecting the livelihood of the local community and passing it on to future generations.

The Mediterranean Conservation Society plays a role in identifying biologically rich and vulnerable areas requiring protection and shares data from its studies with decision-makers. It supports the effective protection of Marine Protected Areas as declared by relevant authorities, working in coordination and with the permission of public institutions.

Marine protected areas, referred to as No Fishing Zones (NFZs), where all or part of fishing activities are prohibited, are today indispensable for species conservation and sustainable fishing. No Fishing Zones enhance the resilience of marine ecosystems against climate change and other threats.

The Mediterranean Conservation Society (MCS) collaborates with public institutions to install signs and boundary markers in the region to delineate the limits of No Fishing Zones and to inform area users.

The Mediterranean Conservation Society is the Turkish partner in the MedPAN network, which brings together 127 institutions and NGOs from 21 countries to manage Marine Protected Areas. As an accredited partner of the United Nations Environment Programme - Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), MCS monitors the implementation of the plan in Türkiye while representing it on the international stage.

MARINE RANGER SYSTEM

The Marine Ranger System was developed for the first time in Türkiye by the Mediterranean Conservation Society and is used in No Fishing Zones to record illegal activities (fishing, improper boat mooring, dumping waste into the sea, etc.). These records are reported to Provincial and District Directorates of the Turkish Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change via a communication network. The system implemented in some No Fishing Zones along the coasts of Türkiye aims to support coastal fisheries affected by declining marine species, habitat destruction, and climate change.



SUPPORTING SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

The Mediterranean Conservation Society prioritizes the protection of species and habitats in its marine conservation efforts, and indirectly supports the sustainability of small-scale coastal fisheries through these initiatives. To enable sustainable fishing in Türkiye, the organization works on providing the necessary information and equipment for fisheries cooperatives. It collaborates with these cooperatives and the General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on various issues, including acquiring daily fishing data to measure the effectiveness of the Marine Ranger System and monitoring species.



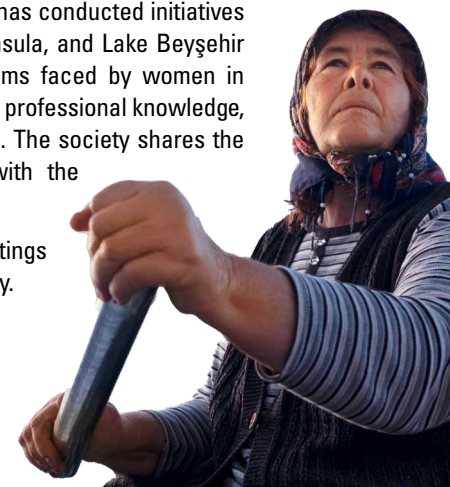
In the “New Fish” program, which aims to create economic value for the growing proportion of edible invasive and alien marine species in the biomass, suitable fishing tools are being developed and tested to enhance fisher’s ability to catch these species. Members of the Science and Technical Advisory Board of the Mediterranean Conservation Society also support these efforts.

WOMEN IN FISHERIES

Efforts are being made in Türkiye to increase the visibility of the labor of women engaged in fishing in both marine and freshwater environments and to support their social and economic wellbeing.

The Mediterranean Conservation Society has conducted initiatives in Gökova Bay, the Datça-Bozburun Peninsula, and Lake Beyşehir aimed at solving the professional problems faced by women in fishing, enhancing their organizational and professional knowledge, and increasing their visibility in the public. The society shares the insights gained from these initiatives with the public and decision-makers.

Additionally, MCS regularly convenes meetings with women in fishing sector in Gökova Bay.



MONITORING THE EFFECTS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The Mediterranean Conservation Society monitors the effects of the climate crisis on the seas and area users. It collects data on the extent and speed of the damage caused, and shares this information with decision-makers and stakeholders who can create solutions to mitigate and halt the negative impacts of the destruction.

THE IMPACT OF FOREST FIRES ON TERRESTRIAL AND MARINE SPECIES

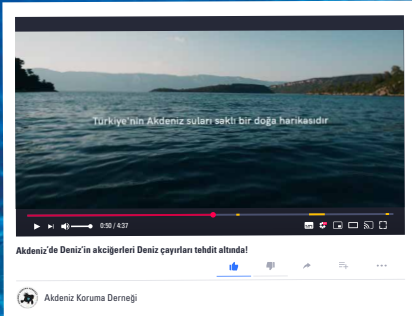
The Mediterranean Conservation Society has supported firefighting efforts with the help of volunteers and donors in response to forest fires on Türkiye's South Aegean coast. Monitoring studies are being conducted to assess the effects of ashes carried to the seas by the first rains on ocean acidification. Additionally, studies are underway to determine the impact of these forest fires on the population of the Marmaris salamander (*Lyciasalamandra flavimembris*) residing in the region.

SEA WATER TEMPERATURE MONITORING

Since 2015, sea water temperature measurements have been conducted in Gökova Bay, and since 2020 in the Fethiye-Göcek and Kaş-Kekova areas, and from 2022 in the Datça-Bozburun Special Environmental Protection Areas. Measurements are taken at every 5 meters from the surface down to a depth of 40 meters.

SEAGRASS MONITORING STUDIES

Monitoring studies of *Posidonia oceanica*, one of the most important carbon sinks and endemic to the Mediterranean, began in 2016 with the European Union's "Horizon 2020" project. These studies, which focus on the distribution, coverage, and health of *Posidonia oceanica*, continue with support from other project grants. A complementary and developmental study started in 2019 under the Endangered Landscapes & Seascapes Programme involves mapping *Posidonia oceanica* meadows using satellite imagery and on-site verification.



The seagrasses, known as the lungs of the Mediterranean Sea, are under threat!

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

The Mediterranean Conservation Society aims to assist in the recovery of degraded or destroyed ecosystems through its ecosystem restoration efforts, while also striving to protect ecosystems that are still intact.

NEW FISHES

Within the scope of ecosystem restoration, the Mediterranean Conservation Society aims to increase the consumption of edible invasive and alien marine species by adding economic value to them, thus reducing the pressure they place on algal habitats and enabling small-scale fisheries to generate income from these species. To enhance awareness about these new edible fish species, the Society is conducting communication efforts targeting fishers, restaurants, chefs, and end consumers.

Additionally, the Society is working to enhance the revenues and market presence of small-scale fishers by transferring the mechanism that facilitates the purchase of these species from small-scale fishers to restaurants and consumers, to fisheries cooperatives founded by these fishers. These efforts aim to increase their income and improve their effectiveness in the seafood market.

Podcast:
[Voices from MSA](#)
[Kitchen: New Fishes](#)



UNDERWATER CLEANUP - REMOVAL OF GHOST NETS

Lost or forgotten underwater fishing gear is known as ghost nets. Many scientific studies show that most ghost nets do not decompose in nature and continue to capture marine life passively. These nets cover marine habitats, reducing light and oxygen permeability, threatening environments such as seagrass meadows and coral reefs, while also contributing to microplastic pollution. This situation adversely affects marine biodiversity and impacts those who rely on fishing for their livelihood.

The Mediterranean Conservation Society is working to remove ghost nets from marine environments and supports their recycling or proper disposal.



As part of the conservation and extraction of underwater cultural heritage, the Mediterranean Conservation Society supports archaeological excavations in the region in collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Underwater Excavation Directorates of Bozukkale, Çamçalık, and Kızılan.



ENDANGERED SPECIES

MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL

(*Monachus monachus*)

The **Mediterranean monk seal** is endemic to the Mediterranean and Contiguous Atlantic Area, and is listed as "Vulnerable (VU)" worldwide according to the IUCN Red List, while it is categorized as "Endangered (EN)" in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Mediterranean Conservation Society conducts various activities to identify the threats this rare species faces and to mitigate their effects; it collaborates with authorities to protect the animal and its habitats. Remote monitoring is conducted using motion-triggered camera traps and cameras that provide simultaneous image transmission. Additionally, the Society conducts numerous educational and awareness campaigns about the importance of the species.

SANDBAR SHARK

(*Carcharhinus plumbeus*)

The **sandbar shark**, despite being a long-lived species, is categorized as "Endangered (EN)" both globally and in the Mediterranean Basin on the IUCN Red List due to fishing pressure and low fertility rates. One of the most important known breeding grounds for the sandbar shark in the Mediterranean Basin is Boncuk Bay, which lies within the Gökova Special Environmental Protection Area. Although fishing for sandbar sharks is banned in Türkiye, they are still accidentally caught as bycatch in fishing gear and discarded. The Mediterranean Conservation Society conducts monitoring activities in Boncuk Bay in coordination with the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks of the Ministry of Environment, Urban Planning and Climate Change.

MARMARIS SALAMANDER

(*Lyciasalamandra flavimembris*)

The **Marmaris salamander** is one of the seven Lycian salamander species in the world and is a crucial part of the Mediterranean ecosystem. It is found only in a narrow area around Muğla, Türkiye. According to the IUCN Red List, the species is classified as "Endangered (EN)" due to its declining population trend.

The Mediterranean Conservation Society is working to gather information on the population structure and dynamics of the Marmaris salamander, including reproductive phenology, population size, and density. These efforts aim to identify its distribution and the threats to its habitat. The results of these studies are essential scientific resources for species action plans and management plan efforts in the region. Additionally, MCS conducts communication and education activities targeted at various interest and age groups to increase local awareness about the species.

LYCIAN ORCHID

(*Ophrys lycia*)

The **Lycian Orchid** is considered "Critically Endangered (CR)" according to the IUCN Red List, with an estimated population of fewer than one thousand individuals in the wild. The Mediterranean Conservation Society, in collaboration with Ege University, is conducting efforts to protect this species. Work is ongoing to store *Ophrys lycia* seeds and pollen in the national gene bank for conservation, and there are plans to propagate them under in-vitro conditions and reintroduce them to the wild.

WETLANDS CONSERVATION

GÖKÇE WETLAND

While 48% of the Mediterranean wetlands have been lost, 36% of the species living in these areas are at risk of extinction. Wetlands, serving as breeding and nesting grounds due to their unique natural properties, cover approximately 2.5% of the Mediterranean Basin yet accommodate more than a third of all species.

The Mediterranean Conservation Society aims to identify wetland and buffer zones in Gökova, create an inventory of the wildlife in these areas to update the literature, and collaborate with local stakeholders to identify threats to the wetland ecosystem and implement necessary measures. This initiative also seeks to raise awareness about the importance of this ecosystem. The goal is to identify areas in Gökova suitable for restoration or rehabilitation, and to spread a shared vision and awareness for the protection of the ecosystem, considering a balance between conservation and use, in consensus with local stakeholders.

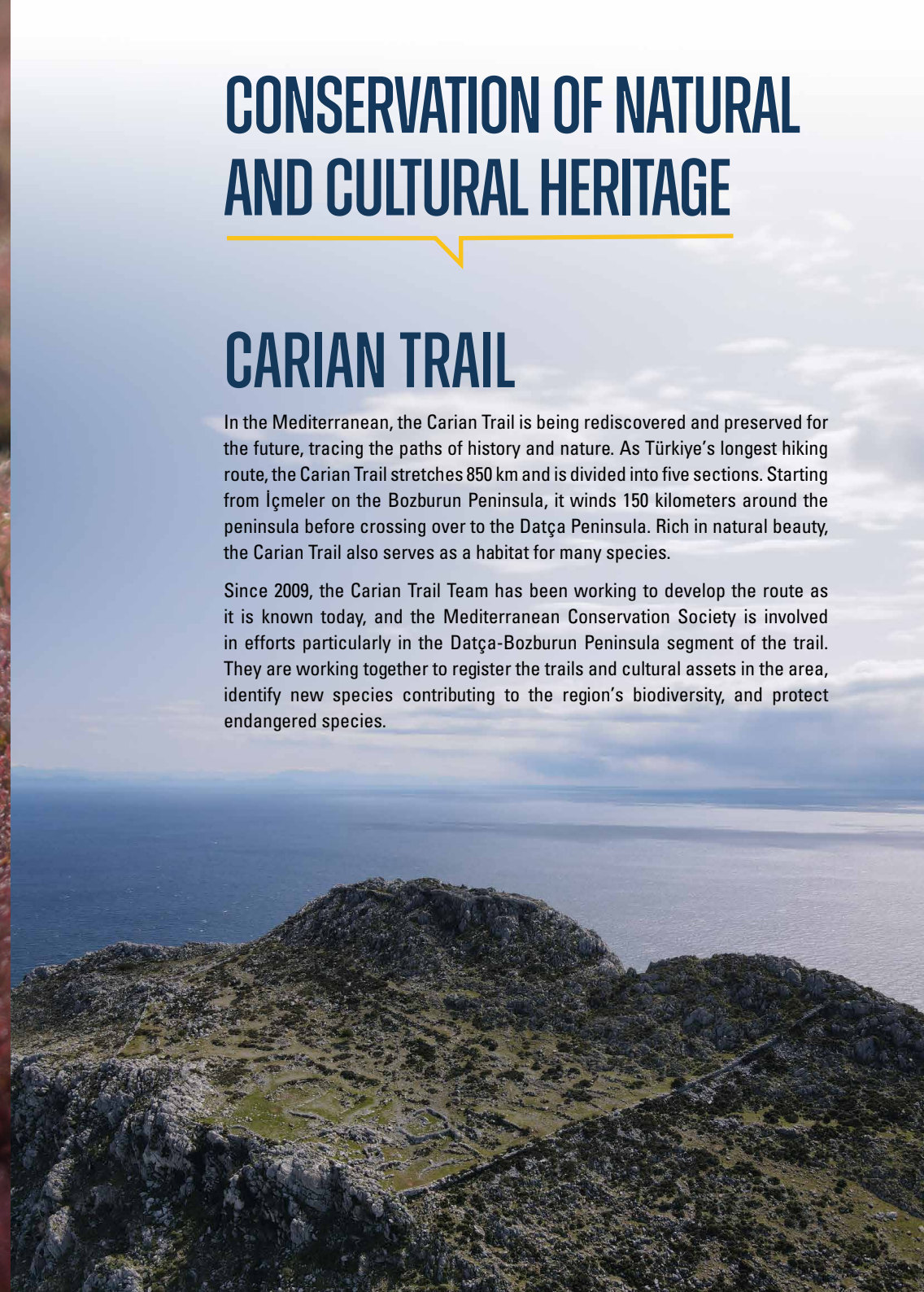


CONSERVATION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

CARIAN TRAIL

In the Mediterranean, the Carian Trail is being rediscovered and preserved for the future, tracing the paths of history and nature. As Türkiye's longest hiking route, the Carian Trail stretches 850 km and is divided into five sections. Starting from İçmeler on the Bozburun Peninsula, it winds 150 kilometers around the peninsula before crossing over to the Datça Peninsula. Rich in natural beauty, the Carian Trail also serves as a habitat for many species.

Since 2009, the Carian Trail Team has been working to develop the route as it is known today, and the Mediterranean Conservation Society is involved in efforts particularly in the Datça-Bozburun Peninsula segment of the trail. They are working together to register the trails and cultural assets in the area, identify new species contributing to the region's biodiversity, and protect endangered species.





TRAININGS & EDUCATIONS

SCIENTIFIC DIVING COURSES

Under the guidance of expert divers within the Mediterranean Conservation Society, courses are offered in line with Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) standards. These include not only recreational diving practices and rules but also fundamental marine biology, underwater research and monitoring methods, marine habitat restoration techniques, and methods for underwater sampling and preservation.



ECOLOGICAL EDUCATIONS

The Mediterranean Conservation Society disseminates the knowledge gained from its activities through educational programs to reach a broader audience. It organizes training sessions that are designed and implemented face-to-face, tailored to the needs of the target audience. Participants deeply understand the role and importance of seas within the ecosystem and can track the causes and effects of climate change and pollution using scientific research methods. Through trainings that involve creative and critical thinking games to generate solutions, the Society is increasing the number of "Mediterranean Protectors."

AWARDS

The work conducted by the Mediterranean Conservation Society is being recognized by various organizations both in Türkiye and around the world.

- 2012 Marine Conservation Leadership Award, Marsh Charitable Trust, UK
- 2013 Whitley Nature Conservation Award, Whitley Nature Fund, UK
- 2014 Equator Award, United Nations Development Programme, USA
- 2017 Whitley Nature Conservation Gold Award, Whitley Nature Fund, UK
- 2017 Changemakers Award, Sabancı Foundation, Türkiye
- 2018 Best Practice Award for Co-management of Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) Mediterranean Fisheries Commission, Malta
- 2022 Marine Conservation Leadership Award, Marsh Charitable Trust, UK
- 2023 Goldman Environmental Prize, USA



Known as the "Green Nobel," the Goldman Environmental Prize has been awarded for the first time to someone from Türkiye, Zafer Kızılkaya, the Chairperson of the Board of the Mediterranean Conservation Society.



COLLABORATIONS



The Mediterranean Conservation Society believes that collaborating with individuals and institutions possessing diverse knowledge and experience will strengthen local development and nature conservation efforts. To this end, it is developing local, national, and international collaborations with:

- Public Institutions and Organizations
- National and International Non-Governmental Organizations
- International Nature Conservation Networks
- Universities and Research Institutes
- Local Communities



REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,
URBANIZATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE



REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
AND FORESTRY



REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR



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MINISTRY OF CULTURE
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REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
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BLUE MARINE
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INVESTING IN OUR PLANET



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



General Fisheries
Commission for
the Mediterranean



DiverSea



FONDATION
PRINCE ALBERT II
DE MONACO



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