



**AKDENİZ
KORUMA
DERNEĐİ**

Mediterranean Conservation Society

2023 ANNUAL REPORT





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OUR VALUES

Our Vision

To work for a Mediterranean ecosystem where all living things live in harmony and balance.

Our Mission

To develop and carry out science-based projects to protect the biodiversity, ecosystem and cultural heritage of the Mediterranean basin and to raise awareness.

Science:

To produce nature-based solutions based on scientific methods to ensure the survival of species and the continuity of habitats, and to increase their resilience against the effects of climate change.

Inclusivity:

To share responsibility with every person and institution that we can meet on the common ground about conservation of the nature, to act together with all local partakers, and to establish national and international collaborations with specialized institutions and individuals.

Harmony:

To support the use of resources in harmony with nature, considering the economic and cultural needs of local communities, as well as working for the conservation of biodiversity.

Transparency:

To share the process and results of our work with our members, volunteers and donors; to hold the responsibility of presenting any concrete outputs to the public.

Equality and Respect:

To respect the diversity in nature and to reject discrimination in our corporate culture and the programs we run.



CONSULTANTS

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 Gökhan Serdaroğlu - Public Accountant
 Assoc. Prof. İnci Tüney Kızılkaya, PhD - Scientific Monitoring Advisor
 Nejdet Bozkurt - Lycian Orchid Project Coordinator and Wetland Project Coordinator
 Prof. Kerim Çiçek, PhD - Scientific Advisor on Wetlands

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 Lecturer Olgaç Güven, PhD
 Assoc. Prof. Sinan Mavruk, PhD
 Tolga Taymaz, PhD
 Prof. Vahdet Ünal, PhD
 Prof. Zafer Tosunoğlu, PhD

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Zafer Ali Kızılkaya
 Doç. Dr. Harun Güçlüsoy
 Prof. Dr. Zafer Tosunoğlu
 Yasemin Ulusoy
 Hakkı Caner Bayrak

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Leri Yaman Saduk
 Nejdet Bozkurt
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OUR TEAM

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 Büşra Zerif Kanpak - Administrative Affairs Assistant
 Ceyda Cihan - Finance Assistant
 Emre Güren - Fethiye-Göcek Marine Ranger
 Engin Taşkaya - Communications Specialist
 Erol Niyazi Güren - MPA Manager
 Elif Yerebakan İncedemir - Datça-Bozburun Field Manager
 Ezgi Saydam, PhD - Scientific Monitoring Specialist
 Gizem Akdoğan - Secretary General
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 Tolunay Tabak - Data Management Specialist
 Vahit Alan - Scientific Monitoring Specialist
 Yunus Emre Yapıcı - Gökova Field Manager

THANKS

Individuals who support our mission in 2023 by participating in our Management and Supervisory Board, as well as joining our team for one term, included:

Efe Kurdaş
 Funda Kök
 Özkan Anıl
 Tankut Kurt
 Zeynep Mufti

FOREWORD

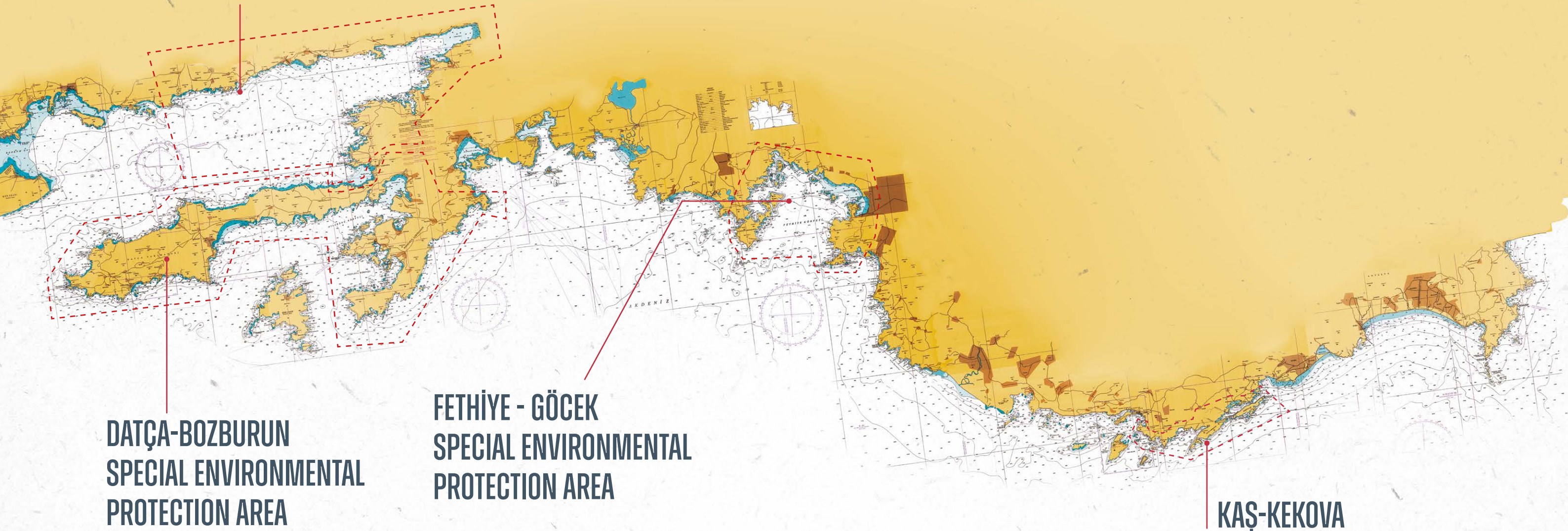
Zafer Ali Kızılkaya
Chairperson of the Board of Directors

2023 has been more exciting and exhausting for all of us, than the previous years in terms of protecting our seas. In the last year of our major project under the Endangered Landscapes and Seascapes Program (ELSP) we observed how far we have come and how much our team has grown. What excited us the most was being awarded the world's most prestigious environmental prize, The Goldman Environmental Prize. Thousands of participants attended the ceremony in both San Francisco and Washington DC. Thus, the Mediterranean Conservation Society has now become a global brand in the field of Marine Protected Areas. In the following period, many foundations and associations contacted us about our work. We are currently sharing information and experience within the scope of many Marine Protected Area projects from Indonesia to the UK. 2023 was an important year of cooperation with the Med Sea Alliance, where we took a joint stance against illegal trawling throughout the Mediterranean. In this context, MCS supported the filming of an important ocean documentary series on bottom trawling, which will be broadcast in 2025. The data we obtained from our monitoring studies reminded us of an important fact. The number of invasive fish continues to increase each year. Increasing sea water temperatures contribute significantly to the spread of these species during summer months. The data shows us that by 2030, one third of the fish on our Mediterranean coasts will be invasive species. Our work on the consumption of edible non-indigenous species that we purchase from small fishers will become even more important. In 2023, many restaurants have already experimented with these species, particularly Devil firefish, and have started to include them to their menus. We foresee a permanent demand and market balance in this area in the future. In the context of Gökova, the ongoing increase in the income of small-scale fisheries shows that as effective protection continues, the contribution of protected areas to fishing also increases. Our aim is to achieve the same increase in Datça-Bozburun and Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protection Areas. In this regard, we are also excited to have started marine conservation activities in Hisarönü Bay. One of the biggest surprises of 2023 was undoubtedly the kiss of life we gave to the endangered Lycian orchid. One of the biggest surprises of 2023 was undoubtedly the kiss of life we granted to the endangered Lycian orchid. Successful germination of many of the microscopic seeds that we have been trying to germinate in the laboratory environment for several years and the fact that we started to see the first leaves can be considered as a breakthrough in terms of the continuation of the species' extinction. Our goal now is to ensure the growth of leafy individuals.

We have a lot of exciting work ahead of us. I would like to thank all MCS staff, volunteers and the institutions that support us.

GÖKOVA SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AREA

AKDENİZ HARİTASI Mediterranean Map



OUR FIELDS OF WORK

KAŞ-KEKOVA
SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AREA

* FOÇA SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AREA

2024-2029 STRATEGY

As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, we are strengthening our mission of leaving a more livable and sustainable environment to the world and future generations by taking our successful work one step further in nature and Marine Protected Areas. As we expand our goals, we aim to take more comprehensive and effective steps for the protection of marine ecosystems and the sustainability of biodiversity. By increasing our consciousness raising efforts, we encourage communities to protect the value of natural resources and create awareness on environmental sustainability. We are also actively involved in policy-making processes, working to expand nature conservation areas and strengthen conservation policies. Through these efforts, we aim to play a leading role in nature and Marine Protected Areas globally, preserving the unique ecosystems of the Mediterranean.



Protecting Biodiversity

Protecting and enhancing the size and quality of populations and habitats of species aspired by the Mediterranean Conservation Society by identifying threats to biodiversity that stem from climate change and human activities.



Strengthening the Marine Protected Areas Network

Supporting the increase of numbers of scientifically designated and ecologically connected Marine Protected Areas of ideal size, and protecting these areas fully and effectively; integrating these conservation methods into existing/new Marine Protected Areas.



Removal of Non-Indigenous Species from the Seas

Monitoring the non-indigenous marine species that have emerged in the Mediterranean and evaluating their impacts. Transferring the market of edible species, which MCS has contributed to the formation of in the last 10 years, to Fishery Cooperatives and market actors.



Supporting Cultural Heritage

Detecting Early Bronze Age and Hellenistic remains and wrecks that have strong cultural links, located near Marine Protected Areas and to supporting underwater excavations.



Sharing Responsibility for Nature Conservation

Organizing communication and awareness-raising activities to increase the participation and support of communities and partakers in conservation efforts.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023



- We have left behind 10 years of the Marine Conservation System, which we first started to implement in Marine Protected Areas in Türkiye in 2013.



- In 2023, our Marine Rangers covered 11,020 km with 954 patrols conducted in 17 different Restricted Fishing Areas with a total of 1796.67 hours. During these activities, a total of 182 illegal activities, 100 of which were illegal fishing, were detected and reported to the authorities.

- The Goldman Environment Award, also known as the Green Nobel, which is given every year to people from six geographical regions of the world who stand out with their successful work in the field of environmental protection, was awarded to our Chairperson Zafer Kızılkaya this year.

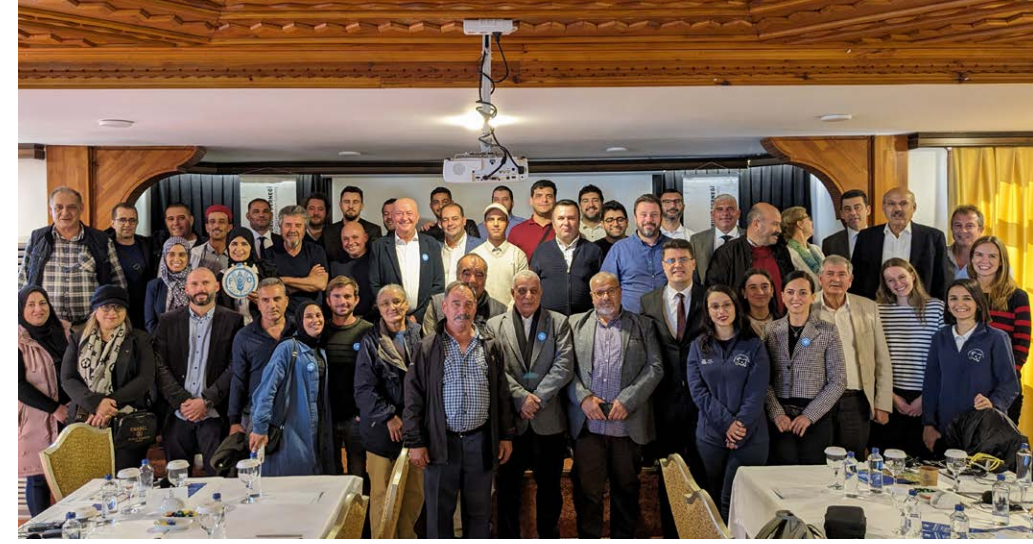
- Boncuk Bay in the Gökova Bay was selected as an Important Shark and Ray Area (ISRA) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) with the proposal we presented in the light of our studies on sandbar sharks. Gökova Bay was declared a connected area. The protection of these areas is very important for maintaining the balance and integrity of marine ecosystems.

- With 4 underwater and 3 coastal cleanups we organized in 2023, we removed 11.4 tons of waste from marine life and over 9 tons of waste from the coastal ecosystem and supported their recycling.



- 256 children living in our fields of study had the chance to get to know the ecosystem of the region they live in closely, and learned how to protect endangered species and their habitats.

- Representatives from 12 different countries working in the field of nature conservation visited our fields of study to learn about our work and see our programs closely. During these visits, we shared with the participants the information and experience we gained from our study.



- The Small-Scale Fisheries Forum, organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Mediterranean Fisheries General Commission, was hosted by us in Akyaka.

- We removed 4.1 tons of invasive and foreign fish from the Mediterranean ecosystem by purchasing them from small-scale fishers from 9 different cooperatives. We mediated bringing these fish to consumers in 27 restaurants.

- Gökova Special Environmental Protection Area Management Plan monitoring committee held its first meeting with the participation of representatives of institutions responsible for the governance of the region. A status assessment of the activities targeted to be realized in the Management Plan was made and another important step was taken for effective conservation.



- As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, we initiated a project to protect the Gökçe Wetland in the Gökova Bay, which we have been monitoring and preserving for many years. The project aims to create a species inventory of the region and prioritize the problems encountered.

- Our web-based internal data management and monitoring application, which we started developing at the beginning of 2023, was awarded at the Dashboard Case Study organized among ELSP partakers at the end of 2023.



- Within the scope of the protocol we signed with Bozukkale, Çamçalık, Kızlan Underwater Excavation Presidency, we conducted cleanup work at excavation sites this year as well to support underwater archaeological excavations.

- In 2023, we updated the Vision, Mission and Values of our Society in the light of the work we have carried out in the past 10 years.

OUR AWARDS

THE GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE 2023 GOES TO ZAFER KIZILKAYA

The Goldman Environmental Prize, also known as the Green Nobel, which is given annually to people from six geographical regions of the world who stand out with their successful work in the field of environmental protection, was awarded to our Chairman Zafer Kızılkaya this year. Zafer Kızılkaya was one of six environmental advocates from around the world to receive this award.

Established in 1989 in San Francisco by philanthropic civil society leaders Rhoda and Richard Goldman, the Goldman Environmental Prize is awarded each year to six environmental heroes from six continents around the world. In 34 years, the Prize has had an unparalleled impact on the planet. To date, it has honored 219 winners from 95 countries, including 98 women. In 2023, the award, which honors people around the world who have taken extraordinary steps to protect the planet, was presented to Zafer Kızılkaya, who has been working with the Mediterranean Conservation Society (MCS) since 2012 to protect Türkiye's coastal waters and incredible biodiversity. Zafer Kızılkaya received his award at the ceremony at the San Francisco Opera House.

2012

Marine Conservation Leadership Award,
Marsh Charitable Trust, UK

2013

Whitley Nature Conservation Award, Whitley Nature Fund, UK

2014

Equator Prize,
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), USA

2017

Whitley Nature Conservation 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 Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Mediterranean Fisheries Commission, Malta

2022

Marine Conservation Leadership Award, Marsh Charitable Trust, UK

2023

Goldman Environmental Prize, USA

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) aim to protect and maintain biodiversity by closing a certain area of the sea to human activity, thereby increasing the amount of fish available in the area and protecting the livelihoods of local people and transferring them to future generations.

As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, we share the data we have obtained from our studies with decision-makers to identify areas that are hot in terms of biodiversity and in need of protection. Utilizing this data, we take part in the effective conservation of Marine Protected Areas declared by the relevant institutions and carry out studies with the permission and coordination of public institutions.

We carry out scientific monitoring and conservation activities in Marine Protected Areas located in the Gökova Bay, Fethiye-Göcek, Datça-Bozburun, Kaş-Kekova Special Environmental Protection Zones on the Turkish coasts.



We are a partner of the MedPAN network, which brings together 127 institutions and non-governmental organizations from 21 countries to collaborate on the management of Marine Protected Areas.



As an accredited partner of the United Nations Environment Programme - Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), we monitor the implementation of the plan in our country and represent it internationally.

- At the 14th Monaco Ocean Week, hosted by Prince Albert II Monaco Foundation, we, as the Mediterranean Conservation Society, shared the challenges, concrete achievements and 2030 vision for the management of Marine Protected Areas in Türkiye in two different sessions.
- Zafer Kızılkaya, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of our Society, was elected to the Steering Committee of the Med Sea Alliance Platform, of which we are a member. Med Sea Alliance aims to bring together non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups working to improve marine health and productivity in the Mediterranean.
- We participated in the Management Plan Steering Committee Meeting in Gökova, which includes Marine Protected Areas, and we also attended the 1st Evaluation Meeting of the Management Plan Preparation Project in Fethiye-Göcek and presented the experience we gained from our studies.
- As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, we continued our work in 2023 within the scope of the 'Integration of Marine and Cultural Protection for Ecosystem Restoration Project', which we implemented in 2022 to protect biodiversity and create a healthy ecosystem in the Datça-Bozburun Special Environmental Protection Area. We collaborate with local communities, civil society organizations and relevant public institutions/organizations, and work with small-scale fishers and local cooperatives to support the effective monitoring of Marine Protected Areas and Restricted Fishing Areas within the Datça-Bozburun SEPA, create demand for edible invasive species, deter illegal fishing activities and promote economic benefits for those operating within the law.

MARINE RANGER SYSTEM

With the 'Marine Ranger System' developed by our Society for the first time in Türkiye, we record illegal activities (fishing, improper boat anchoring, dumping waste into the sea, etc.) that we encounter in restricted fishing areas and report them to the local units of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change through the established communication network.

Through all these efforts, we aim to reduce the pressure on the ecosystem while supporting coastal fisheries, which are negatively affected by declining marine species, habitat destruction and the climate crisis.

Each year, we organize vocational trainings for our marine rangers, who are selected from among those living in the region, so that they are familiar with the geographical structure of the area and establish more comfortable relations with the local community. In 2023, we aimed to increase capacity by continuing these trainings.

In 2023, we have left 10 years behind in our Marine Ranger System, which we started to implement in Marine Protected Areas.



MCS CONSERVATION FRIENDLY BOAT PRACTICE

Within the scope of the Conservation Friendly Boat Practice initiated by our Society, boats that are friendly to the sea with their attitude are given the Conservation Friendly Boat Flags. Boats with the Conservation Friendly Boat Flags agree to comply with the articles in the goodwill agreements they sign and inform their guests about them. Conservation Friendly Boats do not engage in illegal fishing in Restricted Fishing Areas, do not dock or swim near Mediterranean monk seal caves, do not anchor on seagrass meadows, do not dump their waste into the sea, and exhibit other good behaviors to protect marine life.

As of 2023, we have given the Conservation Friendly Boat Flag to 11 individual and tour boats within the scope of our Conservation Friendly Boat Practice. You can run into Conservation Friendly Boats in Fethiye-Göcek, Gökova and Datça-Bozburun.



1.796,67^{hours}
954^{patrols}
11.020^{km}

In 2023, our Marine Rangers covered 11,020 km with 954 patrols in 17 different Restricted Fishing Areas with a total of 1796.67 hours. During these conservation activities, a total of 182 illegal activities, 100 of which were illegal fishing, were identified and reported to the authorities. In 2024, we will start regular patrols at our station established in Datça - Bozburun Special Environmental Protection Area.

%34

Based on the data collected from Akyaka, Akçapınar, Göcek İnlice and Fethiye Çalış Fishery Cooperatives, the average monthly income per boat of the 4 different cooperatives in 2023 increased by 91% in TRY and 34% in USD compared to 2022.



To support the development of fishery cooperatives, we organized a “Cooperatives and Experience Sharing Workshop” with women and men fishers from Akyaka, Akçapınar, Göcek İnlice, Fethiye-Çalış, Karaköy, Palamutbükü, Cumalı, and Selimiye Fishery Cooperatives. While Cooperative Development Expert Alper Akbulut made a presentation on the first day of the two-day workshop in İzmir, on the second day, Urla Fishery Cooperative, one of the successful examples of fishery cooperatives in Türkiye, shared their experience and the workshop ended with a visit to the auction.



More than 50 small-scale fishers and partakers from nine Mediterranean countries gathered in Akyaka to discuss solutions to the rapid spread of non- indigenous species in the Mediterranean Sea. The Small-Scale Fisheries Forum, organized by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), was hosted by the Mediterranean Conservation Society (MCS). During the Small-Scale Fisheries Forum, participants exchanged experiences and discussed market-oriented blue economy solutions to the rapid spread of non- indigenous species affecting the Mediterranean.



We participated in the Communiqué Workshop organized by the Central Union of Fishery Cooperatives (SÜR-KOOP) in December 2023 and presented our views on the Communiqué 6/1 Regulating Commercial Fishing to be published by the General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture in 2024.



TRADITIONAL FISHING TOURISM

Fishing tourism (Pesca Turismo), developed in Italy to provide an alternative livelihood for small-scale fishers and to support sustainable fishing in an environment where fish stocks are declining, is one of the practices that have become widespread in Europe in recent years. Although we, as the Mediterranean Conservation Society, carried out pilot applications for fishing tourism in the Gökova Bay between 2013-2014, the system could not be implemented due to the lack of relevant legislation. As of 2021, the necessary infrastructure has been provided with the coordination and cooperation of public authorities for the implementation of fishing tourism practices in the Gökova Bay and Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protection Areas. During this process, the boat of Mehmet Doğan, a fisherman in Gökova Bay, was made available for Pesca Tourism. In the last months of 2023, tours started to be organized again with the permission granted.

SUPPORTING SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

While we prioritize the conservation of species and habitats in our marine conservation efforts, we indirectly support the continuity of small-scale coastal fisheries and work on providing the information and infrastructure support needed by fishery cooperatives to implement sustainable fishing practices in Türkiye. Additionally, we collaborate with fishery cooperatives and the General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to acquire daily fishing data for species monitoring and to assess the effectiveness of the “Marine Protection System.”

We periodically collect individual fishing data from a total of 10 different fisheries, including Akbük, Göcek, Karaköy, Fethiye, Palamutbükü and Sarsala regions. These are technical and specific data, including information such as the weight and number of species caught, as well as the type and characteristics of the fishing gear, the duration of the net in the water, fishing location/depth, mesh size/length, and number of hooks. As a result, according to the fishing gear characteristics and fishing type of the fisherman, we obtain information such as where, when and how much of which species were fished, the size

and weight of the fished species, as well as their spatial and temporal distribution and species composition. We transfer the data we receive from the cooperatives on a monthly basis to the digital database of our organization where we conduct indicator-based analysis, generate tables, graphs, and basic statistical analysis.

Through these calculations and the results, we obtain information on the diversity and quantity of economically important species that support the income of small-scale fisheries and observe changes over the years. We also assess the efficiency of fishing vessels and share this information with decision-makers to contribute to the development of small-scale fisheries.

Through our data tracking studies with Muğla Akyaka, Akçapınar, Göcek İnlice and Çalış Fisheries Cooperatives and their fishers, we calculate monthly income of cooperatives, the composition of different species in income, and average estimated income per boat.

We regularly visit Fishery Cooperatives in our areas of study and provide information about our work. We also try to find solutions to the problems faced by fishers.



WOMEN IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY

While the presence of women in the fishing industry has a long history around the world, their labor is often overshadowed by men. The most common role of women in fisheries is to work in family businesses or to assist their families in fishing activities. The most common challenges women face in the sector include unequal wages, gender-based discrimination, workplace safety issues, and limited access to finance and training opportunities.

We are conducting efforts to make the contributions of women engaged in fishing in marine and inland waters in

our country more visible and to address their social and economic issues. We have been working in the Gökova Bay, Datça-Bozburun Peninsula and Beyşehir Lake in order to find solutions to the professional problems of women in fishing, to enhance their capacity in being organized and professional knowledge, and to increase the public visibility of women fishers. Our aim is to share the information obtained from these studies with the public and decision makers.



In 2023, we came together with women involved in fishing activities in the Gökova Bay at our traditional breakfast event.



The women fishers of the Gökova Bay and the trainees of the public education center participated in the workshop of jewelry making from the spines of the Devil firefish, one of the new fish species of our seas, which took place in the Akyaka Workshop of the Ula Public Education Center. Many accessories such as necklaces, earrings and key chains were produced in the workshop. The products made in the workshop were offered for sale at the Akyaka Local Producers' Market.



PRODUCTIVE WOMEN OF THE SEA

We have launched the "Productive Women of the Sea" project with the partnership of İzmir Commodity Exchange Education, Culture and Social Integration Foundation (BORSAV). The project aims to empower young women in the 18-29 age group called "NEET" (not in employment, education or training), who are neither in education nor employment, and to enhance their participation in social and economic life. The project will identify the human resources needs of fish farms, food businesses operating in

fisheries and aquaculture, and fishing net manufacturing companies, and ensure that trainee women receive practical training in these companies and are then employed in these companies. Within the scope of the project, it is also planned to increase the knowledge and awareness of the trainee women about business life and the profession they will practise, and to identify their problems and needs through seminars, surveys and interviews during the course and after they are employed.

MONITORING THE IMPACTS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, we monitor the impacts of the climate crisis on the seas and the ones that use the area. By collecting data on the extent and speed of the destruction, we transfer the information obtained to decision-makers and partakers who can contribute to reducing and ceasing the negative impacts of the destruction. In addition, within the scope of our communicative efforts, we assume responsibility for the public to be more informed about the issue and to bring about behavioral change.

In 2023, governments, private sector and non-governmental organizations came together at various conferences in the international arena to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis. In an era where we are observing the effects of the climate crisis more and more severely in all areas of life, serious steps are being taken to increase the level of knowledge and awareness and to take more constructive decisions.

IMPORTANT



At the 23rd Conference of the Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (COP23) held in Slovenia, it was decided to establish a Regional Activity Center for Climate Change in Türkiye with the approval of all parties.

MONITORING SEA WATER TEMPERATURES

By continuously measuring and recording seawater temperature, we monitor changes in seawater temperature. This monitoring is important for understanding seasonal and annual variations in seawater temperature and the impacts of factors such as climate and human activities. Monitoring sea water temperatures is usually carried out using thermometers and other instruments used to measure sea surface temperature, seafloor temperature or temperature of a given seawater depth.

Since 2015, we have been recording seawater temperatures daily with temperature data loggers placed every 5 meters from the surface to a depth of 40 meters in the Gökova Bay, and as of 2020, in Fethiye-Göcek, Kaş-Kekova and Datça-Bozburun Marine Protected Areas. According to the data we obtained from our studies, the difference observed especially between 2022 and 2023 is the most striking figures obtained so far. In 2022, the thermocline level was at about 25 meters, but in 2023 it was clearly below 30 meters. Temperatures between 27°C and 29°C were observed in August and September 2023 down to a depth of 30 meters, and especially in October 2023, a temperature of 26° C was observed down to a depth of 40 meters. Compared to the previous year, October 2023 water temperatures blazingly increased by 3-4° C. This increase means that invasive and foreign fish and invertebrate species are increasing their impact in deep waters, and that sponge and coralline species native to the Mediterranean are exposed to severe heat stress.

When we observe Kaş, we see that the highest water temperature compared to Gökova was recorded in 2021, with water temperatures of 29° C in August and September 2021 reaching almost 40 meters deep.

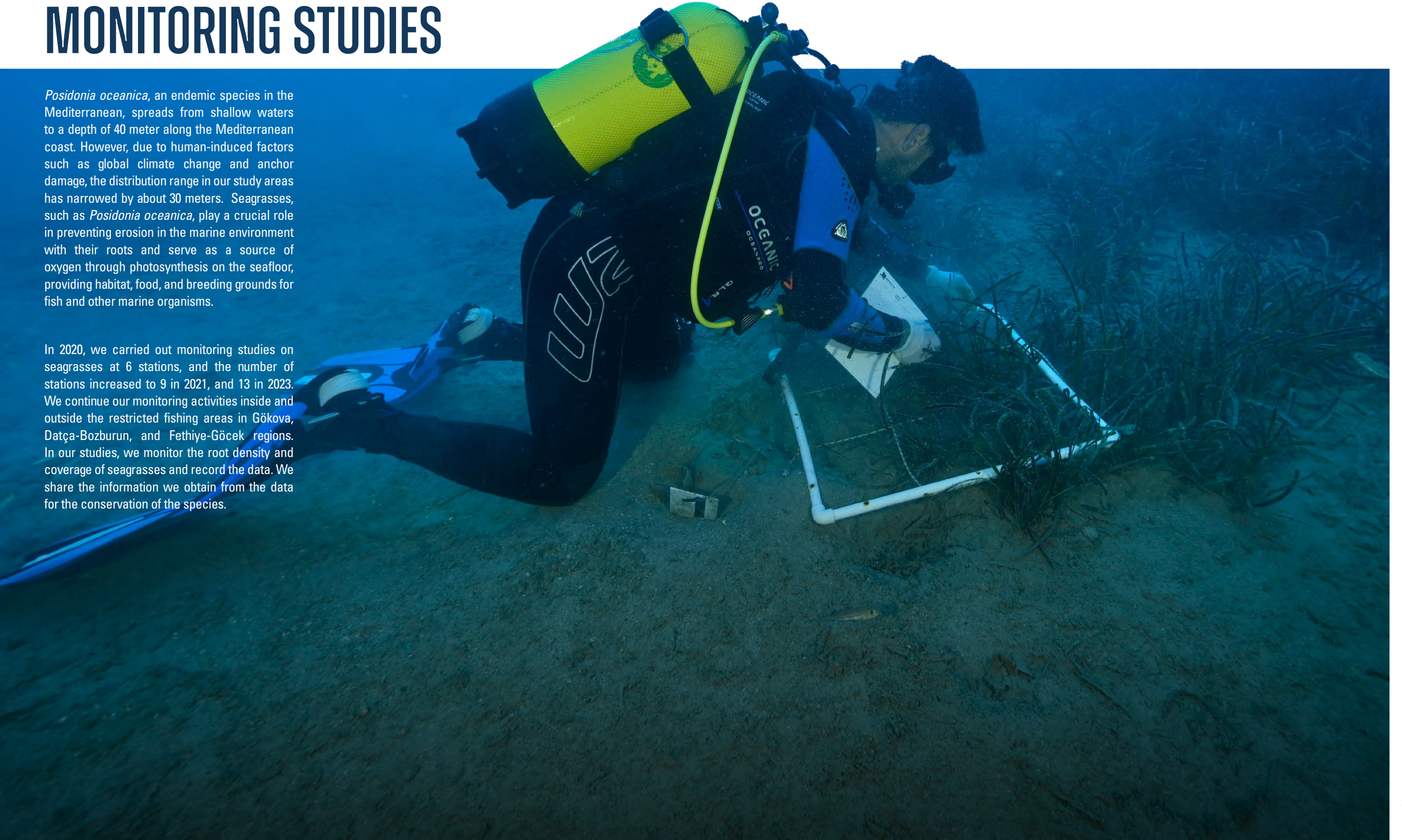


According to the data we collected throughout the year, the highest temperature in our seas in 2023 was observed in September.

SEAGRASS MONITORING STUDIES

Posidonia oceanica, an endemic species in the Mediterranean, spreads from shallow waters to a depth of 40 meter along the Mediterranean coast. However, due to human-induced factors such as global climate change and anchor damage, the distribution range in our study areas has narrowed by about 30 meters. Seagrasses, such as *Posidonia oceanica*, play a crucial role in preventing erosion in the marine environment with their roots and serve as a source of oxygen through photosynthesis on the seafloor, providing habitat, food, and breeding grounds for fish and other marine organisms.

In 2020, we carried out monitoring studies on seagrasses at 6 stations, and the number of stations increased to 9 in 2021, and 13 in 2023. We continue our monitoring activities inside and outside the restricted fishing areas in Gökova, Datça-Bozburun, and Fethiye-Göcek regions. In our studies, we monitor the root density and coverage of seagrasses and record the data. We share the information we obtain from the data for the conservation of the species.



IMPACT OF FOREST FIRES ON TERRESTRIAL AND MARINE SPECIES

During the forest fires that occurred along Türkiye's South Aegean coasts, we supported the extinguishing efforts with contributions of volunteers and donors. As part of our Marine Conservation System implemented in the region, our Marine Rangers conducted coordinated work with the teams responsible for extinguishing the fires and evacuating people from the area. While forest fires severely damaged the ecosystem of the region, serious efforts were needed to rehabilitate the area after the fire. In this regard, we have initiated monitoring studies in collaboration with our international partners to assess the effects of ash reaching the seas through the first rains after the wildfires with regards to ocean acidification.

In 2022, we hosted Dr. Simone Farina from the Genoa Marine Centre (GMC) Institute at the Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn—National Institute of Marine Biology, Ecology and Biotechnology, as well as Laura Tamburello and Federica Ragazoola from the Napoli Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn Institute. They shared the data and methodologies from their research project investigating the effects of the 2021 wildfire in Sardinia,

and we collaborated on a joint study to investigate the impact of the 2021 fire in the Gökova Bay on marine environments in the Göcek and Gökova Bay areas. The monitoring activities, which lasted for a total of 6 days, included SCUBA diving and snorkelling. As a result of these efforts, we developed a common methodology for the monitoring studies in Sardinia and Gökova, and prepared a joint work schedule for the monitoring activities.

We have been monitoring the status of the populations of the Marmaris Salamander (*Lyciasalamandra flavimembris*), which we have been tracking for many years, affected by the 2021 mega fire. In this regard, we are conducting studies to identify the species' destroyed habitats during the 2021 fire and to define the impact of forestry activities carried out in the area on the species after the fire. By continuing these studies in the coming years, we aim to collect information on the population health / trends of the Marmaris salamander, a species unique to the region. In the light of the data to be obtained, we mediate on planning potential restoration work in the species' habitats.



PRESERVATION OF THE CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, we have added new aims to the strategy we developed in 2023 for the years 2024-2029 for the conservation of the cultural heritage of the Mediterranean Basin on our coasts. Within the scope of the protocol we signed with Bozukkale,

Çamçalık, Kızlan Underwater Excavation Presidency, we aim to support the excavating process of the recently discovered, unprotected Early Bronze Age and Hellenistic period remains and wrecks. By setting our goals in regards to this purpose, we continued our efforts in 2023.

CARIAN TRAIL

The Carian Trail, a route that intertwines historical remnants and nature in the Mediterranean, is being revitalized and safeguarded to ensure its preservation for future generations. For thousands of years, the Mediterranean, which has been home to many civilizations, have meant "The Cradle of Civilization" among different languages. Besides its historical and cultural richness, the Mediterranean Basin is also a habitat for numerous terrestrial and marine species. Demonstrated through the remnants found, the Mediterranean, which has been the home of numerous civilizations since ancient times, still contains many traces from the past. The Carian Trail, with its traces dating back to 7000 BC, is like a route of historical footprints in the Mediterranean. Taking its name from the ancient Carian civilization that once inhabited this region, the Carian Trail passes through numerous rural settlements with unique architecture, untouched coves, hills covered with olive and almond trees, and ancient cities, some of which can only be reached on foot. Being Türkiye's longest hiking trail with a length of 850 km, the Carian Trail consists of five different sections. Starting from İçmeler in the Bozburun Peninsula, the Carian Trail crosses the peninsula for 150 kilometers before reaching the Datça Peninsula.

From the Datça Peninsula, it continues towards Gökova- Akyaka, and then, Bodrum. Additionally, a branch from the Gökova Bay separates from the main trail at Bozalan village and goes to Milas, extending further to the Beşparmak Mountains, and finally ending in the Karpuzlu district of Aydın. The Carian Trail, stretching through nature, is home to a variety of species. Its forests host many species such as red pine, black pine, juniper, and sweetgum trees, while harboring aromatic plants like sage, thyme, and lavender, as well as many other colorful and fragrant plants during the spring. With unique and colorful companions like Carian tulip, purple bee orchid, and Anatolian orchid, the Carian Trail blossoms with vibrant flowers. Additionally, it serves as a habitat for various species including lynx, badger, red fox, coracias garrulus, gull-billed tern, and black-winged stilt. Together with the Carian Trail Team, which have been working since 2009 to unveil the current state of the route, we are conducting studies specifically for the section of the route located in the Datça-Bozburun Peninsula. Our collaborative efforts include documenting the existing trails and cultural assets in the region, identifying new species in the area's biodiversity, and working towards the conservation of endangered species.

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ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

Ecosystem restoration is a set of methods and activities designed to restore a degraded or damaged ecosystem to its former or as close to its natural state as possible. These methods are used to prevent the loss of plant and animal species which may be possible as a result of the degradation of natural habitats and ecosystems, to increase the functionality of ecosystems and to preserve biodiversity.

Since 2012, our Society has adopted an ecosystem-based approach in its restoration efforts, considering the socio-economic components.



NEW FISH

Some of the species that rapidly adapt to their new ecosystem and exert pressure on native species, certain habitats, and fishing activities are actually edible and delicious fish. These edible non- indigenous fish species include Randall's threadfin bream (*Nemipterus randalli*), Lessepsian lizardfish (*Saurida lessepsianus*), Marbled & Dusky spinefoot (*Siganus rivulatus* - *Siganus luridus*), Goldband goatfish (*Upeneus moluccensis*), Devil firefish (*Pterois miles*), Redcoat (*Sargocentron rubrum*), Bluespotted cornetfish (*Fistularia commersonii*), Red Sea goatfish (*Parupeneus forsskali*), Blue-barred parrotfish (*Scarus ghobban*), Porcupine sea urchin (*Diadema setosum*), Blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*), and Striped piggy (*Pomadasys stridens*).

As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, in 2023, we have continued our 'New Fish Program' that we initiated with Randall's threadfin bream (*Nemipterus randalli*) in 2015 to increase the incomes of small-scale fishers and households by bringing economic value to these species, and to serve ecosystem restoration by reducing pressure on native species. We conducted communication campaigns addressing fishers, restaurants, chefs, and end consumers to increase awareness and knowledge about these edible new fish species. In addition to these activities, we organized tasting events in different cities to reach a wider audience.

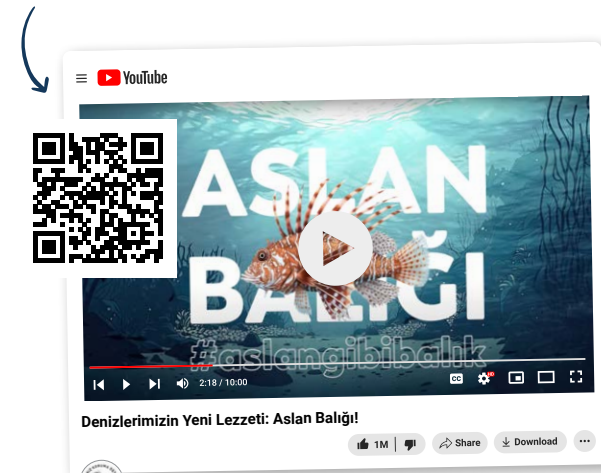


We removed 4.1 tons of non-indigenous fish from the Mediterranean ecosystem by purchasing them from small-scale fishers from 9 different cooperatives and we mediated bringing these fish to consumers in 27 restaurants.

In 2023;

- We removed 4.1 tons of non-indigenous fish from the Mediterranean ecosystem by purchasing them from small-scale fishers from 9 different cooperatives and we mediated bringing these fish to consumers in 27 restaurants.
- We made informative visits to Fishery Cooperatives and restaurants in the Bodrum region about non- indigenous species.
- We continued to work on the development of new fishing gear for catching non- indigenous species with members of our Scientific and Technical Advisory Board.
- We aimed to raise awareness on edible species through informative materials, videos and social media content.
- We continued our tasting and promotion events in 2023. In this regard, we organized tasting events in Akyaka, Akçapınar, Bodrum, Göcek, Datça, Istanbul and İzmir.
- We held meetings with companies from the retail sector for new species to attain a place in the market.
- At the end of 2023, we prepared a kit and sent a letter of thanks to the chefs who supported MCS's New Fish Program.
- We organized a jewelry workshop that promotes using the spines of the Devil firefish for upcycling and proposed a new income source model for women actors in the fishing industry who participated in this workshop.
- Through the data obtained from fish counts conducted inside and outside Marine Protected Areas, we observed that the increase of non- indigenous species in Marine Protected Areas is lower compared to other areas.

- We participated in the meeting of the UNDP SGP funded project "Don't Waste, Eat Striped Piggy" with contribution of Mersin University, and METU Marine Sciences, and in cooperation with Mersin Chamber of Commerce, Slowfish and Biosphere Association and we shared the information and experience on our New Fish Ecosystem Restoration program.
- To increase the consumption of New Fish at home and to understand consumer behavior, we updated our communication strategy based on the results of the research and survey we conducted at the end of 2022 and shot the Devil firefish animation film with reference to these results.



- We launched the New Fish website in 2023 to share more information: www.yenibaliklar.com



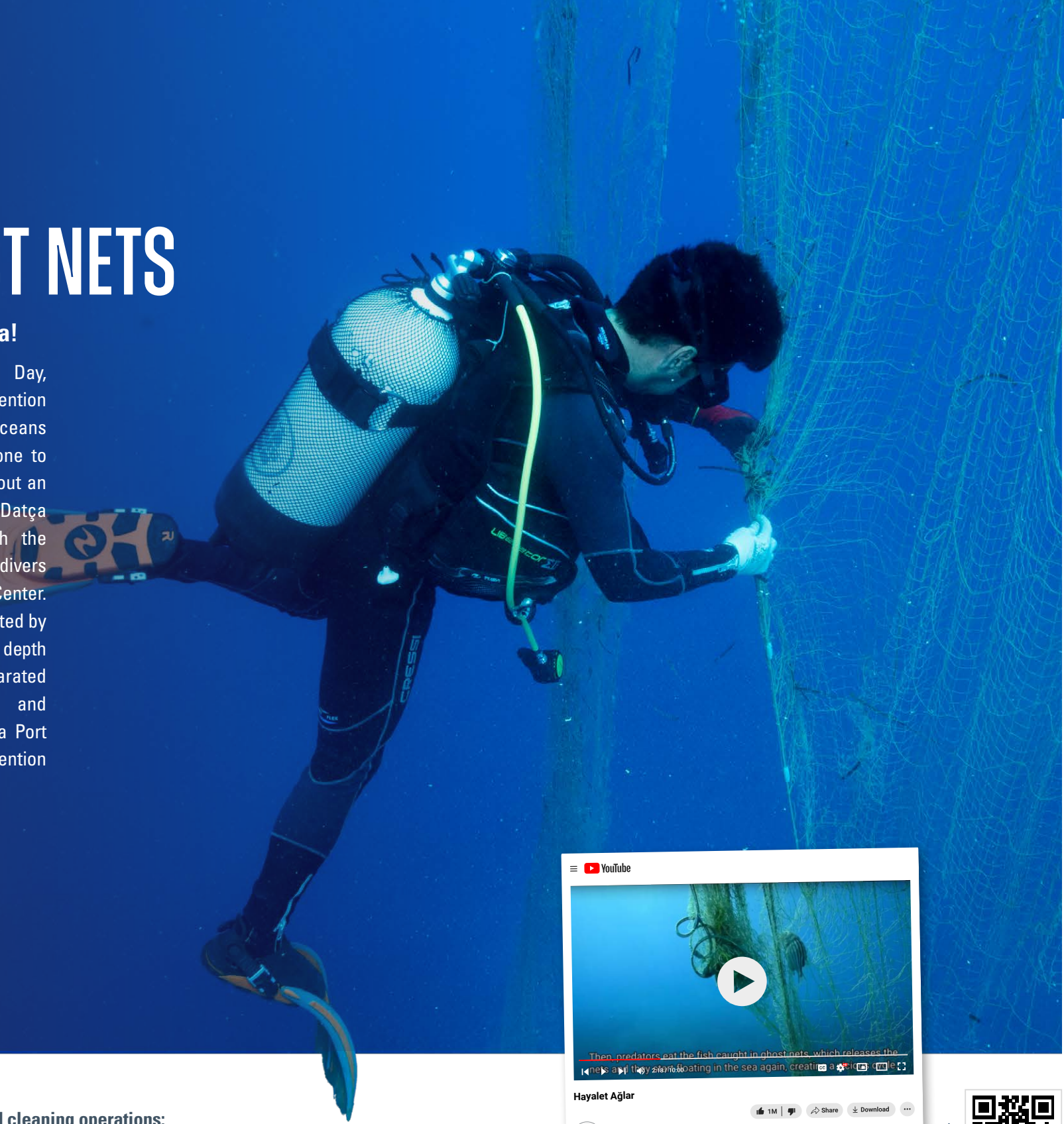
We developed a project cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to make non- indigenous species be more recognized and help them gain market value.

SEABED CLEANING REMOVAL OF GHOST NETS

When the nets that are caught in an obstacle during fishing, are not taken on the boat due to the current, cannot be found where they were left, forgotten or intentionally discarded, and somehow continue to entangle and catch marine life in inland waters and seas, the situation is defined as ghost fishing. These fishing gears are characterized as ghost nets. These nets, which remain underwater for various reasons, continue to hunt passively and damage the ecosystem by covering the bottom habitats of marine organisms. In 2023, we carried out underwater cleanups in different areas, especially in our fields of work.

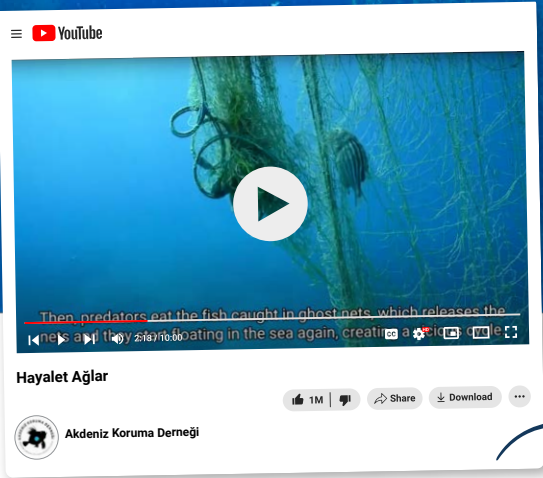
Diving for a Clean Sea!

On World Ocean Day, celebrated to draw attention to the significance of oceans and what needs to be done to protect them, we carried out an underwater cleanup in Datça Topan Island region with the participation of volunteer divers from Uçanbalık Diving Center. Some of the wastes extracted by professional divers from a depth of 30-35 meters were separated by Datça Municipality and exhibited in front of Datça Port Exhibition Hall to draw attention to the pollution in the seas.



Waste removed from the marine environment during seabed cleaning operations:

 Lead 44,4 kg	 Glass 558 pcs.	 Textile 389,4 kg
 Metal 279,75 kg	 Tire 336 kg	 Plastic 358,18 kg
 Ghost Net 20,2 kg	 Rope 366,2 m	 Other 76 kg



What is a Ghost Net?

Ghost Nets refer to abandoned, discarded, or lost fishing gear that continue to entangle and catch marine life.



➔ In 2023, we conducted underwater cleanups in Bozburun, Yeşilada and Söğüt region, Göcek Hamamönü, Datça Harbor with our expert diving team.



➔ In cooperation with Samsung Türkiye and the Repairers Club, we organized the 'Lighting Upcycling Workshop from Waste Nets' to inspire products to be produced with waste from the sea.

➔ In 2023 we began studies to carry out a research that reveals the extent and spatial status of microplastic pollution in the seawater surface, sediment (beach) and fish digestive system in the Datça - Bozburun Special Environmental Protection Area (SEPA) with the intent of using the information obtained to raise regional and national awareness. We aim to establish a database for the continuation of the medium and long-term pollution research, and to install stations for monitoring over a 5-year period. We also aim to develop work opportunities with national partakers and to share the data obtained with public institutions and organizations, universities and NGOs by organizing a workshop in Datça-Bozburun SEPA. Within the scope of the studies, we aspire to publish the data and raise awareness in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education, local primary and secondary schools and teachers to prevent marine pollution in the long term. In this regard, at the end of 2023, we completed our exploratory study to identify pollutant sources in the coastal areas in the Datça-Bozburun region and designated the stations for sampling.

WETLANDS

Following tropical rainforests, wetlands are the only areas in the world that harbor biodiversity. Wetlands, which are spawning and breeding grounds for many species with their unique natural structures, also reduce pollution in water and sequester carbon. Considered as the richest and most productive ecosystems on Earth, Wetlands contribute to the livelihoods and nutrition of local people. 35% of the Wetlands, Earth's generous host, have disappeared in the last 50 years. The preservation of Wetlands, which are the direct source of life for many people and living creatures, is of great importance. If conservation efforts are not stepped up, we will rapidly lose these habitats.

We started our study in 2023 to implement the "Green Light for Mediterranean Wetlands" protocol, coordinated by Tour du Valat and funded by Foundation Prince Albert 2 of Monaco (FPA2), in Gökova, Türkiye. As Tour du Valat identifies wetlands and buffer zones in Gökova and creates an inventory of the creatures in these areas through the program we conduct, we aim to update the literature, identify threats to the wetland ecosystem, collaborate with local partakers to take the necessary measures, and raise awareness about the importance of this ecosystem by

identifying wetlands and buffer zones in Gökova, and creating an inventory of the creatures in these areas. With this study, we hope to identify wetland areas suitable for restoration or rehabilitation in Gökova, and to spread a shared vision and awareness for the preservation of the ecosystem with the consensus of local partakers, taking into account the conservation-utilization balance. In this context, we organized a meeting that brought together public institutions and non-governmental organizations of the region in order to draw a road map for the study to be conducted on the Wetlands in the Gökova Bay. With professors at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, we initiated the study to monitor water quality with samples taken from a total of 10 stations in Kadın Azmağı and Akçapınar Azmağı. In addition, together with Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, we started to conduct visual fish counts at 4 different points on the coasts within the Akyaka Restricted Fishing Area. We also came together with students of Cahit Belkis Güneyman Secondary School in Akyaka for a two-day training. On the first day of the training the children learned about the wetland ecosystem, and we visited Gökçe Wetland on the second day.

© Vankey



➤ Together with Ula Municipality, we organized a cleanup to clear the Gökçe Wetland, an important stopover for migratory birds and local wildlife, of anthropogenic waste. With the cleanup, we removed approximately 9 tons of rubble and waste from the area.



➤ We designed a brochure on bird species seen in Gökova Wetlands.



MACROALGAE RESTORATION

We completed the 'Testing Intervention-Macroalgae' study, which we implemented to investigate how macroalgae restoration activities should be carried out under the pressure of invasive herbivorous species (*Siganus luridus*, *Siganus rivulatus*), within the scope of the Endangered Landscapes & Seascapes Programme in 2022. In this study, designed as a continuation of the European Union (EU) Horizon 2020 project, of which our organization was a partner between 2016 and 2020, cages were placed at the depths of 5-10 meters within the scope of the experiments and macroalgae were transplanted into the cages. The cages were monitored monthly, and we observed

that macroalgae thrived and even new individuals were formed. As a result of the studies, we have observed that microalgae restoration can be carried out successfully. We removed the cages of the macroalgae that reached a sufficient size and placed GoPro cameras in front of the setups. The video recordings showed that the Marbled spinefoot consumed the macroalgae in a short time after the cages were removed. This study has once again demonstrated how intense the pressure of invasive herbivorous species on macroalgae populations is. With the experience gained in two international projects, we will continue our studies on macroalgae restoration in the coming years.



ENDANGERED MEDITERRANEAN SPECIES

Although the Mediterranean Sea covers only 0.7% of the world's ocean and sea area, it harbors 7.5% of the world's marine fauna and 18% of the marine flora. It is one of the most important reservoir areas for marine and coastal biodiversity as 28% of the species it harbors are endemic.

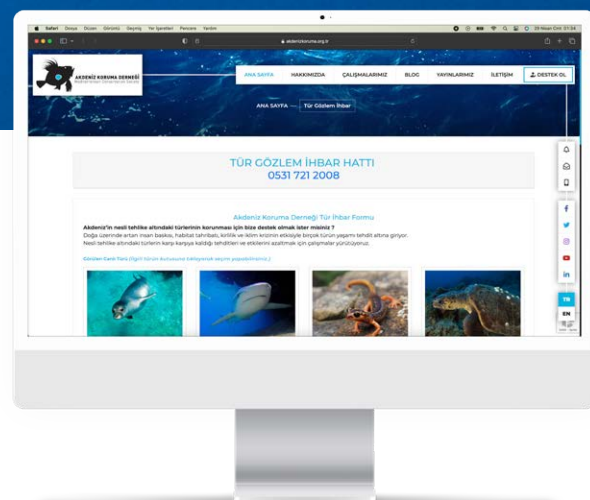
Being one of the seas with the highest human impact in the world, the Mediterranean Sea is rapidly being degraded due to excessive and illegal fishing, as well as intensive tourism and overuse of coastal areas mainly on the northern coasts.

We participated in the consortium of the DiverSea project to standardize data management in scientific monitoring and to develop a citizen science strategy. DiverSea project's main objective is to improve existing marine mapping and monitoring systems, aiming to provide new and better tools for decision makers and research on coastal marine ecosystems. To achieve this goal, the project focuses on research development and meta-data analysis, as well as information dissemination, enhancement of marine literacy and citizen science. DiverSea is funded by the Horizon Europe Program, an international consortium coordinated by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) with 17 partners including universities, research centers, private companies and NGOs. As Mediterranean Conservation Society, we will take part in the field studies of the project in Dardanel, Foça and Göcek, and participate in eDNA sampling studies. In addition, we will support the proliferation of the project by working with a wide range of partakers such as public institutions, non-governmental organizations and universities to integrate citizen science.



WHAT IS THE IUCN RED LIST?

The IUCN Red List is an inventory prepared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This inventory assesses the conservation status of species around the world and determines whether each species is endangered. The IUCN Red List is used to determine the conservation status of species around the world. These statuses are divided into nine categories that specify whether species are endangered: Not Evaluated, Data Deficient, Least Concern, Near Threatened, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, Extinct in the Wild and Extinct. The Red List is a source used by scientists, conservation organizations, governments and other relevant institutions. It is an important tool for prioritizing conservation efforts and developing policies for the preservation of natural resources.



You can scan the QR code to Access the Species Observation Report Form.



MEDITERRANEAN CONSERVATION SOCIETY SPECIES OBSERVATION REPORT HOTLINE

We carry out monitoring and conservation efforts for endangered Mediterranean species such as the Mediterranean monk seal, Sandbar shark, Marmaris salamander and Lycian orchid. In order to address the threats faced by endangered species and mitigate their impacts, we have launched the Species Observation Report Hotline. If you encounter endangered Mediterranean species within the scope of citizen science, you can contact us via the MCS website or call 0850 307 25 12.

By reporting species observations:

- You will assist in notifying the relevant authorities responsible for intervening and aiding animals in need.
- You will support efforts in monitoring species and identifying individuals.
- You will contribute to determining where and how often species are exposed to potential threats and assessing the impacts of these threats.
- You will help in planning conservation efforts for the species.



ENDANGERED
MEDITERRANEAN SPECIES

MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL

(*Monachus monachus*)

The Mediterranean monk seal is endemic to the Mediterranean and is listed as “Endangered (EN)” globally on the IUCN Red List, while it is categorized as “Critically Endangered (CR)” in the Mediterranean region. As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, we are conducting various activities to mitigate the threats faced by this rare species and reduce their impacts. We work in collaboration with authorities to protect the seals

and their habitats. We actively continue monitoring and awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of this species and the need for its conservation. Within the scope of these efforts, we are conducting studies with motion-triggered photo-trap cameras and remote monitoring systems that provide simultaneous image transfer from 12 caves along the 710-kilometer coastline from Gökova Bay to Kaş-Kekova.

A new assessment has been published for the conservation status of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*), which was classified as “Endangered (EN)” worldwide and in the Eastern Mediterranean according to the Red List published by the World Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). According to the publication on December 11, 2023, as a result of the last assessment

in June 2023, the species is now in the “Vulnerable (VU)” category worldwide. In Türkiye, the species’ habitats have still been facing the same threats. For this reason, we believe that conservation efforts for the Mediterranean monk seal and its habitats in Türkiye are critically important. Thus, within the scope of IUCN’s Red List assessment, the Eastern Mediterranean population is still considered “Endangered (EN)”.



In 2023, we monitored 7 Mediterranean monk seals in the same cave.

➤ Oryx Magazine featured the Mediterranean monk seal on the cover of its March 2023 issue and published a blog post about the article we prepared about our artificial platform study in 2019.

➤ A scientific article titled “Revealing the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*)’s Cave Preference in Gökova Bay on the Southwest Coast of Türkiye” was published in MDPI Sustainability magazine in August.



GLOBAL RISK

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	< VULNERABLE >	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX

RISK IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	< ENDANGERED >	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX

SANDBAR SHARK

(Carcharhinus plumbeus)

Sharks are one of the oldest species on the planet and are among the most important indicator species for healthy marine ecosystems. Unfortunately, sharks are often portrayed as aggressive, deadly, and vengeful globally, but they are actually very shy creatures. Moreover, their population is threatened due to human activities.

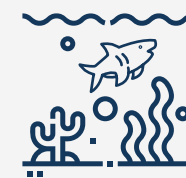
According to the IUCN, approximately 40% of shark and ray species are facing the risk of extinction. One of the major threats to the species is non-targeted fishing. Despite being a species with a long lifespan, the Sandbar shark is listed as “Endangered (EN)” on the IUCN Red List both globally and in the Mediterranean Basin due to fishing pressure and low reproductive rates. We are conducting conservation studies for the endangered

Sandbar sharks living along the coasts of Türkiye, specifically in Boncuk Bay, located in the Gökova Special Environmental Protection Area, with the coordination of the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change.

Within the context of the National Geographic project with the partnership of the Morris Kahn Marine Research Station of the University of Haifa, Israel, the first of the marking studies of the endangered sandbar sharks using acoustic transmitters was carried out in March-April 2023 on the Israeli coast and the second in Boncuk Bay in early July.

Snorkeling as a Method of Tracking Sandbar Sharks

Another method we use in our sandbar shark monitoring studies is the snorkel transect method. Snorkel surveys are conducted along a 400-meter long transect (straight line) along the northern wall of Boncuk Bay. Teams consisting of our squad and volunteers swim back and forth at a constant speed on this line starting from the beach of the bay up to its mouth. Teams of two people swim along the transect for a total of 50-60 minutes. The study is carried out using a snorkel, mask and fins, and the information obtained is recorded with an underwater camera and 1 PVC writing board. This data is then analyzed with the help of a computer.



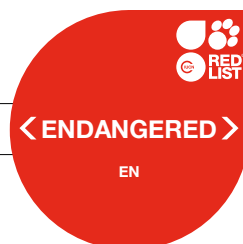
Boncuk Bay in Gökova is selected as an Important Shark and Ray Area (ISRA) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) based on the proposal we submitted in the light of our studies on sandbar sharks. Gökova Bay has been declared a relevant area. The protection of these areas is crucial for maintaining the balance and integrity of marine ecosystems.



We started working on the use of artificial intelligence for species identification in underwater real-time camera monitoring systems in Boncuk Bay.

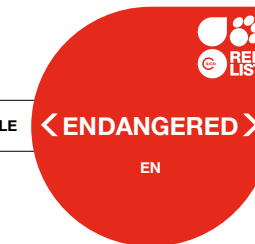
GLOBAL RISK

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX



RISK IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX



MARMARIS SALAMANDER

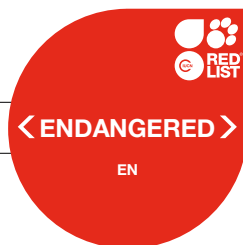
(*Lyciasalamandra flavimembris*)

Endangered and endemic to Anatolia, the Marmaris salamander is one of the six Lycian salamanders living in Türkiye. Unfortunately, it is facing habitat loss and degradation like many other species. A large part of the habitat of the Marmaris salamander, which we have been monitoring since 2018, was damaged by a mega fire in 2021. Although the species hibernates during the summer months, the forestry activities carried out in the area after the fire put great pressure on it. Urbanization is another important pressure factor on the species. Habitat loss and degradation due to urbanization and forest fires threaten many amphibians. In this regard, we do not have enough information on groups that show high habitat dependency, such as salamanders. According to the findings we have obtained so far, it is observed that the population health of the species is good in habitats affected by fire but not intervened after the fire, but the population of the species tends to decrease in intervened areas. In the coming years, we will continue our studies on post-fire population health and the severity of urbanization pressures on the species within the scope of Marmaris Salamander monitoring program.



GLOBAL RISK

NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
NE	DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX



ENDANGERED
MEDITERRANEAN SPECIES

LYCIAN ORCHID

(*Ophrys lycin*)



© Nejdett Bozkurt

The Lycian orchid (*Ophrys lycin*), named after Lycia, the land of light, is one of the endemic orchid species of the Mediterranean. The species, which is distributed only in Kaş district of Antalya, was discovered in 1980 by Swiss botanist Jany Renz in a village cemetery. The IUCN conservation category of the species is "Critically Endangered (CR)" and the number of roots in nature has fallen below a thousand. If the species is left to its fate, all of its existing populations, including cemeteries, will soon be on the brink of extinction.

As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, in cooperation with Ege University, within the scope of the project 'Pollination Biology of *Ophrys lycin* (Lycian orchid), an Endemic Species, Reproduction and Conservation in In Vitro Conditions',

we aim to protect the pollen and seeds of this species in the gene bank, produce them in laboratory (in vitro) conditions and bring them back to nature. Within the scope of the project, we carried out field studies in February, March, April, May and June 2023.

We visited the habitats of the *Ophrys lycin* species, pollinated the identified individuals and collected the seeds. We obtained seeds by pollinating other orchid species distributed in the same region. We dried the seeds obtained, fixed their moisture content and transferred them to the mini seed bank we created at Ege University & Herbarium Application and Research Center Directorate.

We have ongoing discussions about delivering some of the seed samples

to the National Seed and Gene Bank at the Aegean Agricultural Research Institute for long-term preservation.

In November and December 2023, we started planting seeds for propagation under in vitro conditions. We continue observing the germination process after planting. During our observations, we monitored that the first germination process was successfully completed in the *Ophrys lycin* species. We aim to continue the efforts by taking the germinated seeds into the photo period. We expect the first plants to grow in 2024. We also have obtained successful results in the germination process in other orchid species. We will continue our studies by transferring the germinated individuals to new growth culture.

TRAINING

SCIENTIFIC DIVING TRAINING

In 2023, we continued to provide trainings on basic marine biology, underwater research and monitoring methods, marine habitat restoration techniques, underwater sample collection and storage methods, as

well as sportive diving practices and rules in accordance with PADI (Professional Association Diving Instructor) standards, with the instruction of expert divers from the Mediterranean Conservation Society.



One of our Scientific Diving Trainings was organized with the participation of representatives of various public institutions in our fields of study.

ECOLOGY TRAINING

As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, we bring the information we have obtained from our studies to more people through training programs. With the training department established

within our organization in 2023, we presented face-to-face trainings with the content we planned in accordance with the target audience.

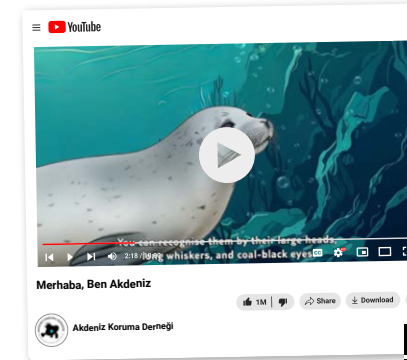


We signed a cooperation protocol with the Muğla Provincial Directorate of National Education within the framework of the “Protecting Natural and Cultural Heritage and Transferring it to Future Generations” program. With the protocol, we organized trainings and activities in 2023 within the scope of the Muğla Blue Green Schools Project, a unique project of the Muğla Provincial Directorate of National Education.



We organized trainings and seminars for primary and secondary school students in Muğla Ortaca in line with the Mediterranean Monk Seal Monitoring and Awareness Project within the framework of Sea The Change Türkiye program of the TUI Care Foundation. During the training sessions, we developed the Mediterranean Guardians card game to help children learn with fun.

Hi, I am Akdeniz



With the Protecting Natural and Cultural Heritage protocol we signed with Marmaris District Directorate of National Education, we came together with primary and secondary school students in Marmaris Günnücek National Park at the Ecology Meeting. At the Ecology Meeting, we aimed for 4th and 6th grade students to get to know the marine and wetland ecosystem of the region where they live, through the games we prepared with the Dört Mevsim Association and to learn about the species we are working to protect.



256 children living in our fields of study had the chance to get to know the ecosystem of their region closely and learned how to protect endangered species and their habitats.

ACTIVITIES

CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE WORKSHOP IN DATÇA

In 2022, we organized a Civil Society Dialogue Workshop in Datça Bozburun Special Environmental Protection Area within the context of the 'Integrating Marine and Cultural Conservation for Ecosystem Restoration Project'.



COASTAL CLEANUPS

Within the scope of the Blue Green Schools Project, and in cooperation with Datça District Directorate of National Education, we carried out coastal cleanups around Taşlık Beach, Ilıca Lake and City Park in Datça with primary and secondary school students.

We carried out a coastal and underwater cleanup on Sedir Island in the Gökova Bay. The coastal cleanup, which took place with the participation of representatives and volunteers from the Sedir Island Excavation Presidency, was simultaneously accompanied by underwater cleaning with the participation of expert divers from our organization and divers from Muğla Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry.

As the Mediterranean Conservation Society, we accompanied the students of Orhaniye İnci Narin Yerlici Secondary School for the 18th annual coastal cleanup event. At the end of the event, our team informed the students about plastic waste.



Within the context of the "Green Light for Mediterranean Wetlands" program, which was initiated in 2023 by Tour du Valat (TdV), we cleaned the Gökçe Wetland, also known as Gökçe Beach, located in Gökçe village. We collected approximately 9 tons of anthropogenic waste during the cleanup we carried out in cooperation with Ula Municipality.

CARBON FOOTPRINT STUDY

In 2023, we were trained to determine our Carbon Footprint by professional institutions in the area and two of our colleagues started to calculate our Carbon Footprint. They continue their work with the data available in our system in line with the information they receive from the institution. Based on our Carbon Footprint data, we will continue our efforts to reduce our carbon burden on the environment.





THE STORY OF OUR LOGO, THE JOHN DORY

Our Society, which was established in 2012, has been using the logo since its inception, and in 2022, we celebrated its 10th anniversary. The story of our Society's logo is narrated by Zafer Ali Kızılkaya, one of our founders and the current Chairperson of the Board:

"It starts with Sait Faik Abasıyanık's story 'The Death of the John Dory': 'Their eyes are all beautiful. Their scales, while alive, are worth adorning women's dresses, women's ears, women's chests...'

In fact, The John Dory fish doesn't even have scales. It is covered with a membrane that changes from green to cream, and in the center, there is a dark spot that is the reason for its name 'St. Peter's fish.' According to the legend, this fish, once a monster, turned into a gentle and miserable fish with the touch of Jesus. One day, Sait Faik sees a John Dory fish hanging from a tree in front of a fisher's cafe. The fish is about to die, hanging by a string.

"It was the moment when its color emerged from the sea. Only the thin, soft membranes that surrounded it were trembling. I had never seen such movement... This trembling was actually a death dance. It was as if the soul of the John Dory, blown by the wind, was leaving through these delicate membranes; as if there was nothing left..." Sait Faik's story about the horror, sadness, and what the fish might be thinking in its death actually opens the doors to our more humane emotions.

"I felt the fear that filled the heart of the John Dory fish inside me. It was a fear that we all know: the fear of death."

Sait Faik then imagines the John Dory fish joining us and living with us, wondering how we would torment it and make it sad. He emphasizes that we would turn this innocent fish back into a monster.

Thus, starting from the death of a fish and leading to criticism of our humanity, this story and the subsequent decline of the unfortunate John Dory concluded with its selection as the logo of the Mediterranean Conservation Society. We are glad that we made that choice.

We would like to thank Miraç GÜLDOĞAN, who helped us with the design of our logo even when he was just a student.

AREAS

SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AREAS (SEPAs)

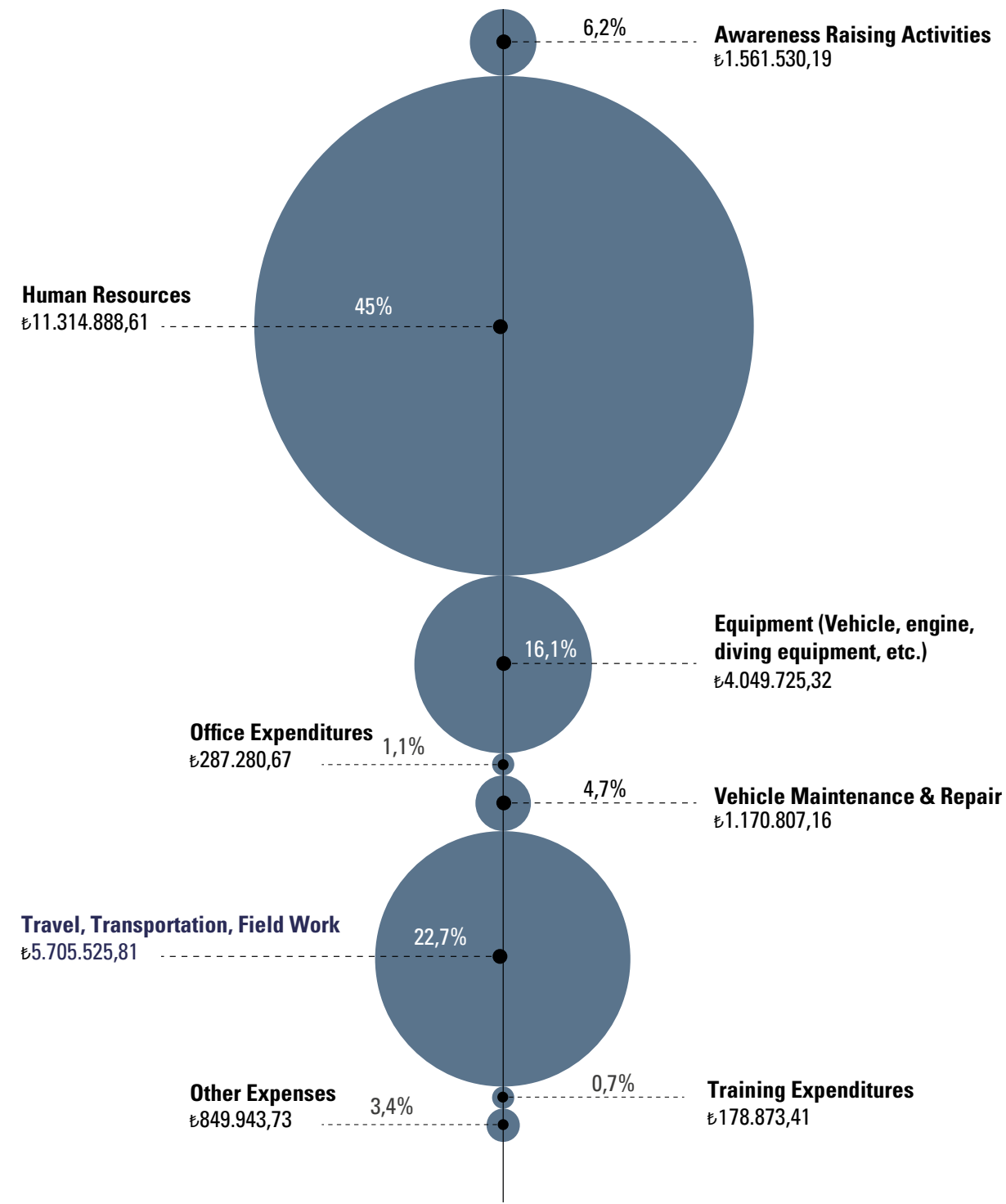
BALIKÇILIĞA KAPALI ALANLAR

Balıkçılığa Kapalı Alanlar, 22 Ağustos 2020 tarihli 31221 sayılı Resmi Gazete'de yayımlanarak ilân edilmiştir. Haritada işaretlenen ve koordinatları belirtilen alanlarda



BUDGET

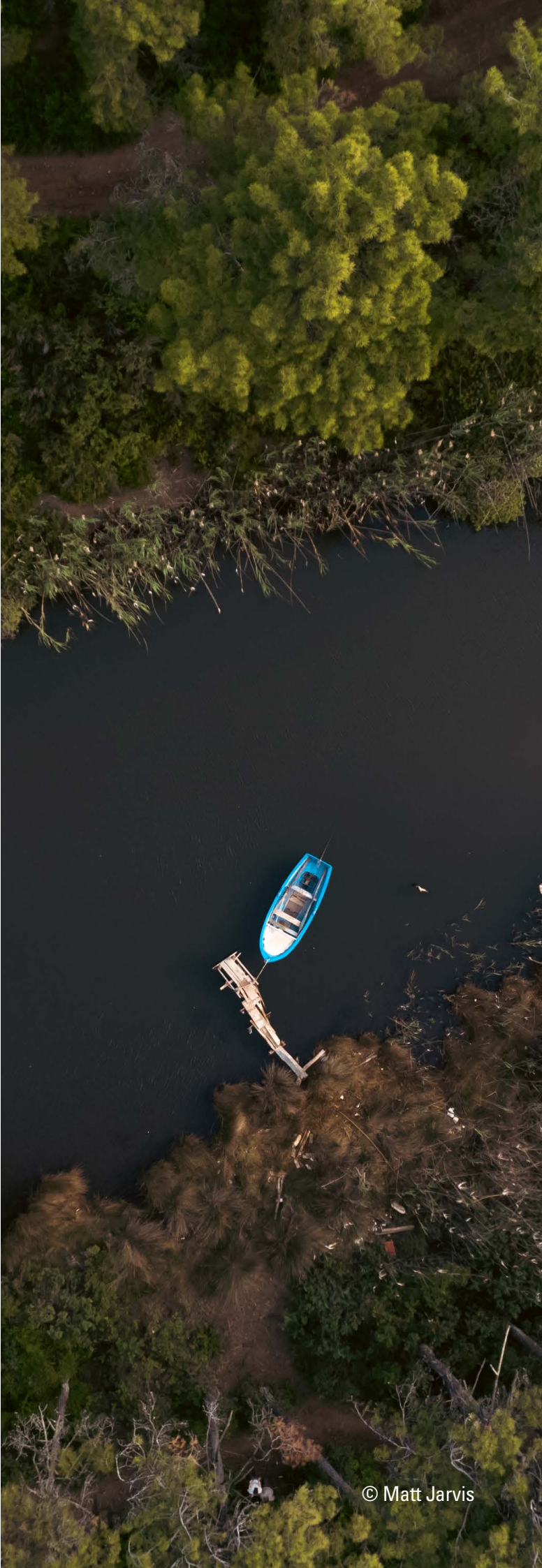
DISTRIBUTION OF EXPENSES



TYPES OF INCOME

Project revenues are converted into Turkish lira according to average annual exchange rate.

Membership Fee	₺5.611.72
Individual Donation	₺12.373,59
Other Income	₺35.569,88
Institutional Donation	₺37,598.51



THANKS

We would like to thank the individual supporters who have supported the activities of the Mediterranean Conservation Society through their donations.

We also extend our gratitude to our followers who support us by following our social media accounts, helping our work reach a wider audience, and encouraging us with their likes and comments.

FOUNDATIONS AND DONORS

Fauna & Flora International
Blue Marine Foundation
Endangered Landscapes & Seascapes Programme
Sigrid Rausing Trust
Audemars-Watkins Foundation
The MedFund
TUI Care Foundation
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Rufford Small Grants Programme
GEF Small Grants Programme
Gen EM Foundation
The Prince Bernhard Nature Fund
Marine Ecosystem Restoration in Changing European Seas- MERCES
Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC)
Arcadia
MedPAN
Med Sea Alliance
Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) - UN Environment Programme
Transform Bottom Trawling Coalition
Tour du Valat Foundation

ORGANIZATIONS

Martı Marina
Mersin Chamber of Shipping
Slow Fish Mersin
Slow Food Gökova
Hadi Balık
The Culinary Arts Academy
Ula Artcraft Club

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Levent Yüksel
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Selma Akad
Haluk Bozkurt
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Ali Arif Çekici

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS/INTERNS

Zeynep Sude Akçay
Hélène Valentine Ferreira Martins
Ecem Güvercin

IN MEMORY

We commemorate our teammate Dear Mehmet Aytuğ who passed away in 2023. We are very happy to have worked together for the protection of the seas he loved so much. His memory will always be with us.



WHO WE WORK WITH

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Public Institutions

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Interior Coast Guard and Gendarmerie Commands

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Culture and Tourism

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change General Directorate for the Protection of Natural Assets

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Mediterranean Fisheries Research, Production and Training Institute

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Culture and Tourism General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums

Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks

Republic of Türkiye, Muğla Governorship

Republic of Türkiye, Muğla Provincial Directorate of National Education

Republic of Türkiye, Marmaris District Governorship

Republic of Türkiye, Fethiye District Governorship

Republic of Türkiye, Ula District Governorate

Republic of Türkiye, Datça District Governorship

Republic of Türkiye Menteşe District Governorship

Republic of Türkiye, Ortaca District Governorship

Republic of Türkiye, Dalaman District Governorship

Republic of Türkiye, Kaş District Governorate

Republic of Türkiye, Demre District Governorship

Republic of Türkiye, Foça District Governorship

Ege University

Dokuz Eylül University

Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University

Dokuz Eylül University, Institute of Marine Sciences and Technology

Ege University, Environmental Problems Application and Research Center (ÇEVMER)

Ege University & Herbarium Application and Research Center Directorate

MUNICIPALITIES

Muğla Metropolitan Municipality

Izmir Metropolitan Municipality

Ula Municipality

Fethiye Municipality

Marmaris Municipality

Datça Municipality

Kaş Municipality

Menteşe Municipality

Karataş Municipality

Foça Municipality

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

WWF Türkiye

Marine Life Conservation Society

NorthNature Association

DEKAMER (Sea Turtle Research, Rescue and Rehabilitation Center)

Izmir Commodity Exchange Education, Culture and Social Integration Foundation

Biosphere Foundation

Natural Balance Association

COOPERATIVES

Central Union of Fishery Cooperatives (SÜR-KOOP)

Muğla Fishery Cooperatives Regional Union

Marmaris Fishery Cooperative

Akbük Fishery Cooperative

Akyaka Fishery Cooperative

Akçapınar Fishery Cooperative

Karacasöğüt Fishery Cooperative

Datça Fishery Cooperative

Selimiye Fishery Cooperative

Söğüt Fishery Cooperative

Palamutbükü Cumali Fishery Cooperative

Karaköy Fishery Cooperative

Fethiye Çalış Fishery Cooperative

Gocek Inlice Fishery Cooperative

Demre Fishery Cooperative

Kalkan Fishery Cooperative

Urla İskele Fishery Cooperative



THE WARMING SEAWATER OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN IS ONE OF THE GREATEST THREATS TO SPONGES, CORALS AND OTHER CORAL REEF ORGANISMS.

ABBREVIATIONS

Mediterranean Conservation Society	MCS
Fisheries Restricted Area	FRA
Marine Protected Area	MPA
Special Environmental Protection Area	SEPA
United Nations Environment Programme	UNEP
United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre	UNEP-WCMC
International Union for Conservation of Nature	IUCN
Fauna & Flora International	FFI
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	FAO

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SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS



Saydam, E., & Güçlüsoy, H. (2023). Revealing the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*)'s Cave Preference in the Gökova Bay on the Southwest Coast of Türkiye. *Sustainability*, 15(15), 12017.



Saydam, E., Güçlüsoy, H., & Kızılkaya, Z. A. (2023). A novel approach for Mediterranean monk seal conservation: an artificial ledge in a marine cave. *Oryx*, 57(2), 149-151.

SCIENTIFIC PROCEEDINGS



Atay B., Güçlüsoy H., (2023). Sandbar Shark (*Carcharhinus plumbeus*) Observations at Gökova Bay in 2022, Gökova, Türkiye. 3th International Congress of Engineering and Natural Sciences Studies (ICENSS-2023), May 24-25 2023 Ankara / Türkiye, Pp. 49.



Kızılkaya, I.T., Yiğit, E.O., Alan, V., & Kızılkaya, Z. (2023) Effects of alien invasive herbivore species on the Mediterranean marine ecosystems. 1st international conference: Conservation of Eurasian biodiversity: contemporary problems, solutions and perspectives. Part II. 15-17 may, 2023, Andijan State University, Andijan, Uzbekistan, p.158.

SUPPORTED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH



Öndes, F. & Ünal, V. (2023). The dominance of non-indigenous species in small-scale fisheries catch composition: A case study from Türkiye, Eastern Mediterranean. *Acta Ichthyologica et Piscatoria* 53, 2023, 27-35. DOI 10.3897/aiep.53.96788.



Tosunoğlu, Z. (2023). Trials involving fishing gears designed specifically for NIS (Non-Indigenous Species) in the southern Aegean Sea, Türkiye. FAO-GFCM SMALL-SCALE FISHERS' FORUM. Non-indigenous species: from health and safety to marketing opportunities, 21-23 November 2023, Gökova Bay, Türkiye.



Tosunoğlu, Z. (2023). DALKO (Dalyan Fishery Cooperative)'s marketing success for the non-indigenous Atlantic blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus* Rathbun, 1896). FAO-GFCM SMALL-SCALE FISHERS' FORUM. Non-indigenous species: from health and safety to marketing opportunities, 21-23 November 2023, Gökova Bay, Türkiye.

SUPPORTED THESES



Atay, B. (2023). The current status of Sandbar shark (*Carcharhinus plumbeus*) in Muğla coasts: A study with the special emphasis to Boncuk Bay. Dokuz Eylül University / Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences / Marine Science and Technology / Live Marine Resources (M.Sc.). Advisor/Supervisor: Assoc. Dr. Harun Güçlüsoy. İzmir: 64 pages.



Kök, F. (2023). Evaluation of Gökova Special Environmental Protection Area management plan in the framework of marine protected areas. Ege University / Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences / Department of Environmental Sciences / Department of Environmental Sciences (M.Sc.). Advisor/Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hacer Gökür Şişman Aydın. İzmir: 136 pages.



Saydam, E. (2023). The current status of Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779)) in the Gökova Bay and its interaction with tourism and fishing activities. Dokuz Eylül University / Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences / Department of Marine Science and Technology / Live Marine Resources Science (Doctorate / Ph.D.). Advisor/Supervisor: Assoc. Dr. Harun Güçlüsoy. İzmir: 245 pages.



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