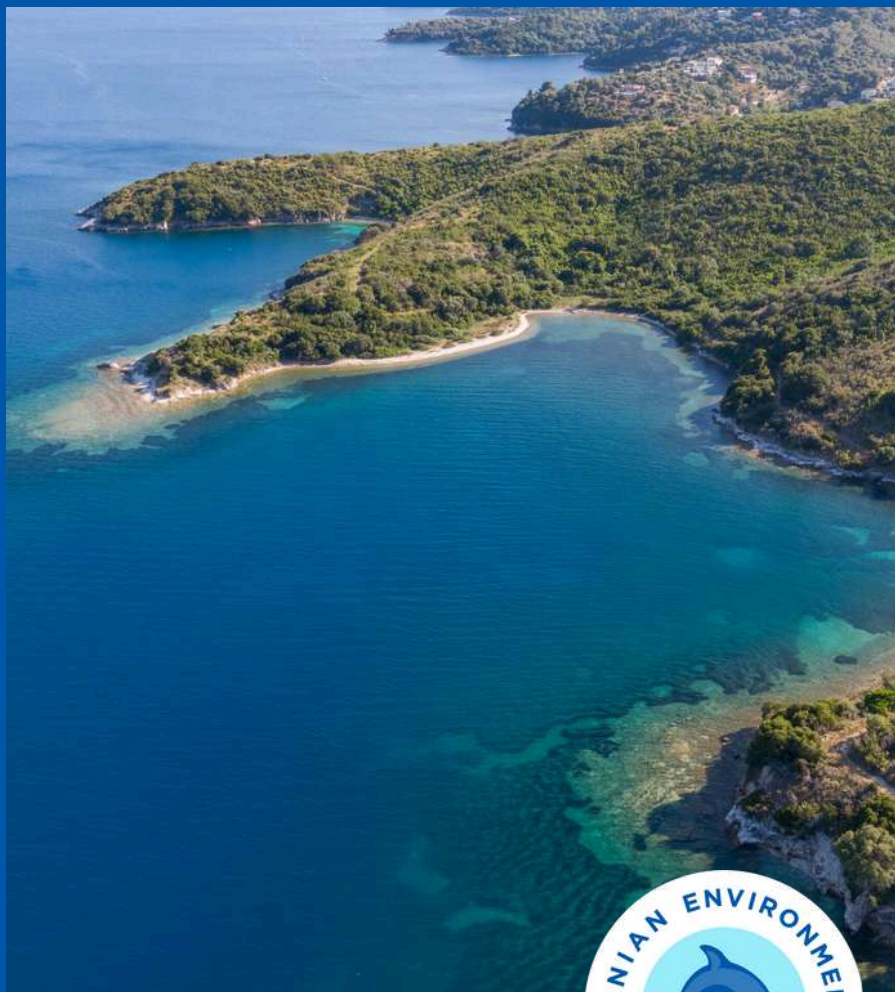


IONIAN ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION



5 YEAR REVIEW 2019-2024





The support for local environmental initiatives throughout the Ionian Islands and elsewhere in the world has been and will be transformational. Such support is like attending to the numerous and diverse parts of that clock mechanism so that they all work together. It's these home-grown, grassroots environmental actions that will eventually coalesce and offer hope for saving the planet.

Lee Durrell

Ambassador of IEF



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OUR VISION

The Ionian Environment Foundation (IEF) aims to protect, restore and regenerate the natural beauty, biodiversity and ecosystems of the exceptional marine and coastal resources of the Ionian Islands.

IEF was established in 2019 to empower communities to actively engage in environmental transformation. We believe sustainability and economic renewal must go hand in hand.

The IEF has supported 41 brilliant grassroots projects over the past 5 years, raising more than €750,000.

OUR STRATEGY

Raising funds from people and businesses who care passionately about this magical place to boost the work of local environmental champions.

Supporting effective projects that bring benefits to local communities, which can be scaled up and replicated.

Bringing together an extensive network across the Ionian, united in a mission to protect the Ionian's diverse natural assets.



IMPACT SNAPSHOT

2019 - 2024



PROJECTS SUPPORTED

41



FUNDS AWARDED

€475,000



GRANTEES

21

AREAS OF INTEREST

Civil society & capacity-building

Empowering communities is crucial for tackling local environmental challenges. IEF supports local initiatives that raise awareness, build capacity and provide training to change the hearts & minds and behaviour of local actors and visitors. By equipping communities with knowledge and skills, they can be more resilient and proactive in managing ecological pressures.



Habitat & biodiversity protection

The Ionian Islands are renowned for their natural beauty and diverse ecosystems. Sadly, tourism and construction have created major changes, and are ongoing threats, to these biodiversity hotspots. IEF supports initiatives that protect native species and regenerate habitats, on land and at sea, through research, fieldwork, campaigns, and communication projects.



Marine conservation

The Ionian Sea spans a vast area, from the shallow Adriatic in the east, to the deep Ionian Sea in the west. It is a clear, oxygen-rich environment teeming with life, including fish, whales, dolphins, sea turtles, and monk seals. Human activities have significantly reduced many species, but IEF identifies and supports organisations dedicated to improving their conservation and protection.



Sustainable development & resource management

IEF supports initiatives that promote sustainable tourism and resource management in local communities, emphasising waste reduction, recycling, and organic material management. By collaborating with businesses and tour operators, we showcase sustainable practices and scalable solutions, addressing critical regional needs.





COMMON DOLPHIN
Delphinus delphis

IONIAN DOLPHIN PROJECT

Grantee: Tethys Research Institute

Duration: 2021 - 2024

Total grants: €49,200

Area of Interest: Marine Conservation



BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN
Tursiops truncatus
by Massimo Demma

Marine mammals inhabiting the coastal waters of Greece are facing significant threats, most notably harmful fishing and habitat degradation from human encroachment and tourism activities, with some species having disappeared altogether from portions of their former range.

THE PROJECT

The Ionian Dolphin Project (IDP) ensures the long-term viability of marine mammals living in Ionian coastal waters by continued monitoring using field research methods. The organisation has been working for over 30 years to collect sound scientific data and create ecosystem-based conservation measures. These management plans can then be proposed to the main bodies concerned with marine biodiversity protection in Greece.

Together with Blue Marine Foundation, IEF has been supporting Ionian Dolphin Project since November 2021, to enable their monitoring and research in Paxos, Anti Paxos and the Inner Ionian Archipelagos. Funding from IEF has enabled coastline mapping of monk seal habitats, and the dissemination of questionnaires for fishers, to ascertain fishing gear damage caused by marine mammals, dolphin and seal bycatch, changes in the abundance of fish and ecosystem quality and management needs of the area.



IEF support has allowed us to shed light on the distribution of coastal dolphins across the central Ionian Islands and their interaction with local fisheries. As well as to develop public awareness and educational campaigns addressed to boaters and sea lovers, who frequently interact with these amazing inhabitants of our seas.

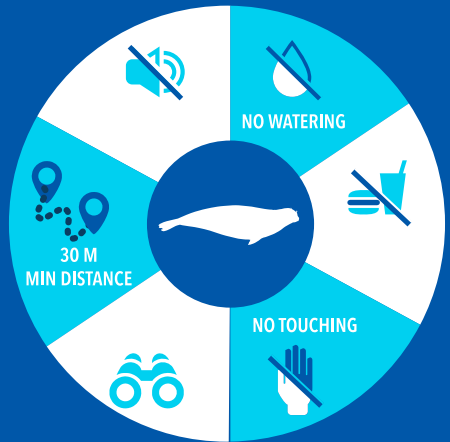
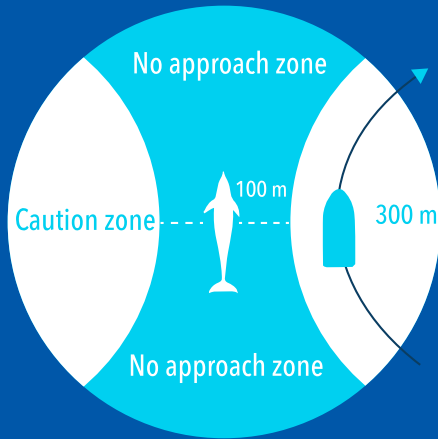
JOAN GONZALVO, IDP PROJECT DIRECTOR

LET'S BE SMART

SUPPORT MARINE MAMMAL CONSERVATION



While today's abundance of monk seals, whales and dolphins is likely only a fragment of what it was a century ago, important populations still live and reproduce in the Ionian Sea. Human disturbance to marine mammals causes them unnecessary stress. By applying the following very basic codes of conduct you will be contributing to their conservation.



S Stay back 100 metres from cetaceans

M Move away cautiously if the animals show signs disturbance (sudden change in behaviour)

A Always put your engine in neutral when cetaceans are near

R Refrain from feeding, touching, or swimming with wild dolphins or whales

T Teach others to be CETACEAN SMART

S Stay back 30 metres from seals

M Move away cautiously if the animals show signs disturbance (sudden change in behaviour)

A Avoid making noise in the presence of a seal on land and if at sea put your engine in neutral

R Refrain from feeding, touching, or swimming with monk seals, and KEEP PETS AT A DISTANCE, as they might be carriers of dangerous diseases to the seal

T Teach others to be MONK SEAL SMART



REPOSIDONIA

Grantee: iSea

Duration: 2023 -2024

Grant: €28,000

Area of Interest: Habitat and biodiversity protection

Posidonia oceanica, commonly known as Neptune grass or Mediterranean tapeweed, is a seagrass species endemic to the Mediterranean Sea. It forms large underwater meadows - an ecologically important ecosystem with a very high carbon sequestration capacity. *Posidonia* is in decline, threatened by rising temperatures, which slow its growth, as well as human pressures such as damage from anchors.

After the North Aegean Sea, the Eastern Ionian Sea has the most extensive meadows in the Mediterranean, but the habitat is poorly documented.

THE PROJECT

The objective of this project, carried out by iSea, was to improve the data available on the distribution and pressure faced by *Posidonia* meadows in the Ionian islands. Data was collected on human pressures in the Eastern Ionian including boat traffic, anchoring, sewage, aquaculture, fishing, mining and dumping of waste.

MIND OUR SEAGRASS



Do not anchor over the seagrass



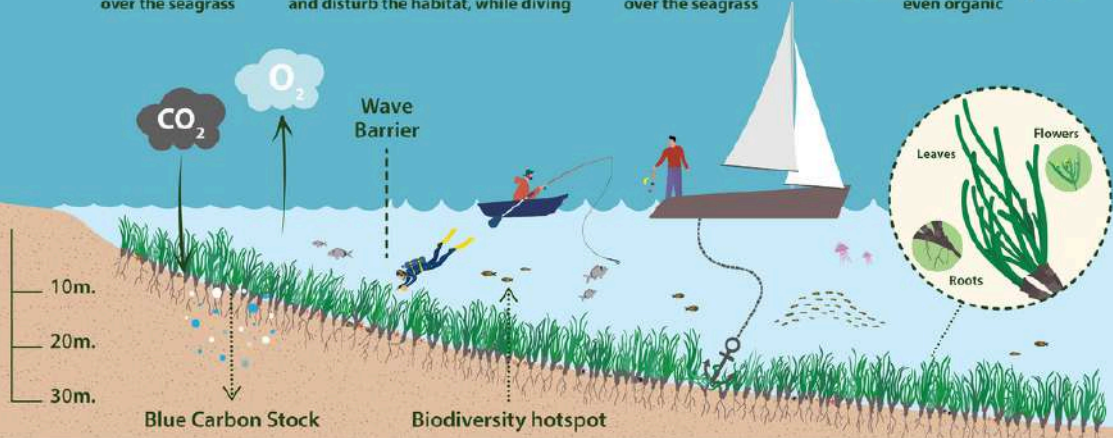
Do not damage the plants and disturb the habitat, while diving



Do not fish over the seagrass

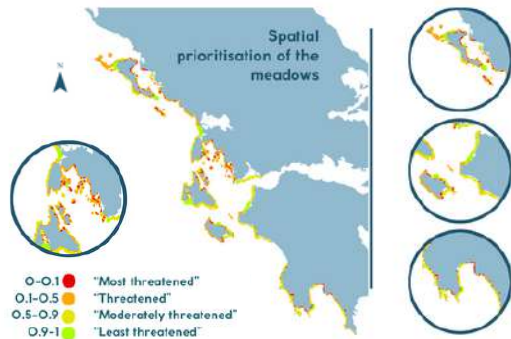


Do not discard waste of any type, even organic



A high-definition map of the distribution of Posidonia and the level of threat it faces was generated. This map identified high priority conservation and protection areas as well as helping to define areas which could benefit from environmentally friendly solutions such as eco-moorings.

Support for this work from IEF is being continued throughout 2024, with a project underway using underwater drones to assess and map the impacts of anchoring on Posidonia meadows in the Ionian Sea, specifically around the Erimitis area and islets in the Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago.



The support from IEF has been invaluable for local efforts to protect this environment and paved the way for us to conduct more research.

ROXANI NAASAN AGA-SPYRIDOPOULOU - ISEA VULNERABLE SPECIES

MONK SEALS OF N. CORFU

Grantee: Archipelagos – Environment and Development NGO

Duration: 2022 -2024

Grant: €28,000

Area of Interest: Marine Conservation

The Mediterranean monk seal, *Monachus monachus*, is an exceedingly rare marine mammal, with a total population estimated to be 700 individuals. This species faces significant threats, including displacement, habitat loss, deliberate killing by humans, and entanglement in fisheries bycatch. As a result, it has been officially classified as Vulnerable by the IUCN.

Greece, along with Turkey, hosts approximately 350 Mediterranean monk seals, the largest remaining population in the Mediterranean. More than 30 individuals are known to inhabit the central Ionian Sea. This population could potentially re-colonise the entire Adriatic-Ionian Region, if effective conservation measures were implemented, such as the monitoring of safe corridors and the establishment of marine protected areas.





THE PROJECT

IEF has funded the Archipelagos – Environment and Development NGO, since 2021, when they began identifying and surveying caves suitable for the resting and pupping of the Mediterranean monk seal. The team pinpointed potential caves on the north and northwest coast of Corfu, with sightings in Kassiopi and Ag. Stefanos. Using IR cameras, Archipelagos succeeded in capturing the first footage of seals using caves on the west coast of Corfu, proving the importance of this area for the species.

Since this early success, IEF, together with Blue Marine Foundation, have continued to support Archipelagos. The project installed and monitored cameras in caves across northern Corfu between 2022 and 2024, recording sightings and installing new cameras in suitable caves as they are discovered. A local network was established to register and record on-the-spot citizen science sightings from locals and tourists, and a report was created outlining monk seal conservation recommendations.



**FIRST FOOTAGE OF A MONK SEAL USING THE
CAVES AROUND THE NORTH OF CORFU
APRIL 2023**



OCEAN'S SECRETS

Grantee: Ocean's Secrets

Duration: June - December 2023

Grant: €6,500

Area of Interest: Civil society and capacity building



THE PROJECT

The Ocean's Secrets group is on a mission to tackle big issues such as marine pollution, through fun and engaging seminars for children. The group's ever-evolving approach makes learning about the ocean a thrilling adventure, inspiring kids to become passionate protectors of our blue planet.

In 2023, IEF supported Ocean's Secrets to connect with hard-to-reach schools across the Ionian Islands. The project aimed to develop an understanding and awareness amongst primary school children of the marine environment and man's relationship with it, through experiential and multi-sensorial approaches. The purpose of the work was to give children extracurricular activities which could enrich their school life and develop active citizens of the future who were aware of problems faced by the marine environment and felt included and empowered rather than isolated.

This initiative engaged 11 schools in Kalamos, Ithaca, Zante, and Kythira, reaching about 470 students. There was positive feedback from nursery and primary students, and teachers, after the programme's sessions on ocean pollution, marine conservation and climate change. Notably, Kalamos, the smallest school, with only seven students, expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity.



Educating the next generation is key to ensuring the protection of our environment. It empowers young minds to become passionate long-term stewards of our beloved Ionian environment.

SIMON KARYTHIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IEF



SIN PRAXI RECYCLING CENTRE

Grantee: SIN.PRAXI

Duration: 2022 - 2023

Funds: €57,500

Area of Interest: Sustainable development & resource management

In Corfu, there is a lack of awareness of the solid waste production of both residents and visitors, which amounts to approximately 70,000 tonnes annually. The island's landfill site has been full and closed since 2016, leading to the costly practice of shipping waste off the island for burial in landfills elsewhere in Greece.

THE PROJECT

Since 2022, IEF has been supporting SIN.PRAXI, a community project in northeast Corfu tackling the waste crisis. Its strategy is to boost infrastructure and education to divert waste from landfills through reduction, reuse, recycling, composting and encouraging a circular economy. In the summer, it works to manage (collect and process) high levels of waste, while in winter, it trains locals on waste management best practices.

Funding from IEF since 2022 has enabled SIN.PRAXI to purchase sorting bins and tables, fire safety equipment, building materials, signage and a Biowaste Digester Pilot. In 2023, an educational workshop, community garden & composting was established. These facilities welcome children and adults to learn sustainable waste management, aiming to change the culture around waste.



MEDICINAL PLANTS & MUSHROOMS

Grantee: The Mushroom Association of Corfu

Duration: 2023

Grant: €6,300

Area of Interest: Civil society & capacity building & Habitat and biodiversity protection

In the face of modernisation, connections to the traditional knowledge of previous generations on the uses of medicinal plants, specifically, mushrooms is rapidly fading away. This impacts the cultural fabric of communities and risks losing the potential benefits these resources can provide for the health of local communities and ecosystems.

THE PROJECT

Our grantee Eleni Christoforatu, has embarked on a quest to record the traditional knowledge of medicinal plants and mushrooms of Corfu for future generations. She has dedicated over a decade to teaching communities about the important role nature plays in our everyday lives, and together with the Mushroom Association of Corfu, actively works to promote knowledge and interest in the medicinal herbs and mushrooms of the island.

In 2024, two books will be published bridging together traditional knowledge with modern scientific research. Posters to help with identification and boost understanding of medicinal plants and mushrooms will be created. Three herb walks throughout different seasons will be offered to participants to discover plants and mushrooms in their natural habitats. This project enhances local awareness about threats to wildlife habitats, including pesticides and herbicides used in agriculture and construction.





SAVE ERIMITIS CAMPAIGN

Grantee: Save Erimitis Campaign

Duration: 2019 – present

Grant: €90,000+

Area of Interest: Habitat and biodiversity protection

The Erimitis Peninsula is a spectacular pristine wilderness in the north east of Corfu. It hosts an impressive variety of natural habitats including oak forests, phrygana (low thorny scrub), rocky coastal sections, sandy and pebble beaches, black marshes and lakes. There are brackish, marine, freshwater and terrestrial habitats supporting a wealth of flora and fauna.

The Save Erimitis Campaign was created in 2012 by members of the local community keen to defend Erimitis' local, cultural and ecological significance and avoid the overdevelopment, so common throughout the rest of the island.

PROTECTING A PRISTINE PENINSULA

Since launch, IEF has been supporting the campaign with funds to map baseline biodiversity, raise awareness through communications campaigns, make legal appeals, and research alternative models to safeguard the Erimitis for the long term.

Crucial ecological studies to prove the biodiversity value of the peninsula include calculating the blue carbon capture potential of surrounding Posidonia meadows, investigating monk seal presence in nearby caves and recording large mammal populations. EF has also been exploring ecological connections with the Butrint National Park across the water in Albania, highlighting the importance of creating a wildlife corridor, along the straights of Corfu, which may be vital for species including marine mammals, butterflies and birds.

A report by Bio Parcs Concepts International, funded by the IEF, published in January 2024, presents an alternative vision for Erimitis, Corfu's last accessible coastal wilderness. The proposal emphasizes low-impact tourism that benefits locals and supports research and community groups.

Unlike poorly managed tourism that degrades natural resources and offers minimal local benefits, this regenerative approach aims to integrate nature as a crucial element of Corfu's prosperity. The report advocates for a green, sustainable Corfu, where tourism supports a circular economy, promotes equitable prosperity, and addresses natural capital challenges such as water supply, biodiversity loss, and economic growth. It also highlights the potential for Erimitis to spearhead large-scale biodiversity restoration in the Ionian Islands.



Over the past three years, the IEF's support to our effort to protect Erimitis' ecosystem has been vital, as is their presence in our region to protect the Ionian environment!

Dimitris Fatiras - Erimitis Plous President



OUR TEAM



Simon Karythis
Executive Director



Babbis Voulgaris
Chairman



Tony Chancellor
Steering Committee



Stratis Andreadis
Steering Committee



Rodney McMahon
Steering Committee



Victoria Turner
Steering Committee



Nick Lemis
Steering Committee



Piers Williams
Steering Committee



Jade Brudenell
Executive Director
Conservation Collective



EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK THERE ARE BRILLIANT, PASSIONATE PEOPLE WORKING TO CREATE POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE. SMALL AMOUNTS OF FUNDING, STRATEGICALLY DIRECTED, CAN SUPERCHARGE THIS WORK.

BEN GOLDSMITH
Founder of Conservation Collective



OUR SUPPORTERS

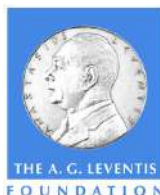
TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS



ROTHSCHILD
FOUNDATION



BLUE MARINE
FOUNDATION



IEF VILLA ALLIANCE

IEF Villa Alliance is a coalition of villa companies in the Ionian engaging and pledging to share and adopt more nature-friendly practices.

Scott Williams
unique access to extraordinary villas



IONIAN VILLAS
GREEK ISLAND ESCAPES



THE THINKING
TRAVELLER



SIMPSON TRAVEL

CORPORATE PARTNERS



EDMISTON



DARE2B



HUBLOT

DEPECHEGO M



Albania Overboard



LOVE BRAND & Co.
EST. LONDON 2014



**Ionian Environment Foundation
is a member of Conservation
Collective, a global network of
local foundations funding
effective grass-roots
conservation initiatives to
protect the environment,
restore nature and safeguard
against climate change.**

WHAT'S NEXT

Our priority is to increase the amount of funding available for local, tangible solutions by inspiring more people & organisations to get involved.

We plan to expand our team and aim to encourage more grassroots regenerative projects from all the islands of the Ionian, increasing our positive impact across the region.

In April 2024, the Greek government made bold, unprecedented pledges to protect the environment, and IEF is committed to turning those promises into tangible actions.

Your support would enable us to seed more projects, inspire more people and support more nature-based solutions.

Nurture Ionian's Nature.
Join IEF.



THANK YOU

To all our donors and supporters.
We couldn't have done it without
your generous support.



IONIAN ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION

Website: ionianenvironment.org

Director: simon@ionianenvironment.org

