

Life Andros newsletter



LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity

Management of the SPA site of Andros Island to achieve a Favourable Conservation Status for its priority species



Life project revives traditional crops in Andros

One of the main goals of the Life project, which is realized by the Municipality of Andros with the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Union, is that its actions should focus on the most immediate threats against the species that the project is mostly interested in. Especially, concerning their reproduction and feeding habitats.

Reduction and abandonment of traditional agricultural practices in marginal areas and terraces of the island, in addition to reduced populations of their main prey, along with the degradation of coastal wetlands of Andros, were – and in a way remain – threats that put pressures on the populations of Eleonora’s falcons and Bonelli’s eagles.

The Life project aimed in reviving agricultural practices in abandoned fields (image 1, bottom), contributing to the increase of the population of wild prey for the Bonelli’s eagle (partridges – hares – small birds). The Life project’s team cooperated with the Agricultural



University of Athens, in order to know more about the farming practices of the past. The team visited every village of the island, conversed with farmers and recorded precious data. In addition, the team gathered and, thus, saved many local varieties of vegetables, crops etc. (image 2, up), which are preserved in the seed bank of Andros, a bank that has been approved by the Ministry of Rural Development. These actions have already yielded obvious results, since in the fields that are cultivated by the Life team, there has been recorded an increase in the populations of hares and partridges.

Students watched the release of Eleonora's falcons

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Eleonora's falcon: a "strangetraveler"

Eleonora's falcons are one of the four bird species protected by the Andros Life project. It is a medium size falcon that appears in the Aegean (and specifically in Andros) on April, coming from eastern Africa – and mainly Madagascar, where it spends the winter, starting in October.

According to formal data, almost all the global population of Eleonora's falcons resides

Four Eleonora's falcons were released, in Korthi and Gavrio, during the summer. The release was part of the actions of the Life Andros project.

The four Eleonora's falcons had been found injured and after being treated and fully recovered from injuries (thanks to ANIMA's precious help), they were released back into their natural habitat in Andros. Two events were organized, with the participation of locals and visitors, as well as the children from the summer camp of the

Holy Diocese of Syros, Tinos, Androsetc at Tromarchia monastery. It should be noted here that in Ormos, Korthi, in addition to the Life Information Center, also operates a First AidCenter for injured birds. During these releases in Korthi and Gavrio, information was given and a discussion was made about the Andros LIFE project and its actions, since one of the main goals of the project is public awareness and attracting more volunteers that can help in the realization of the project.



in Greece, during their reproduction period. It is calculated that the global population is 15.000 pairs, 85% of which visit our country and a large percentage of this population visits Andros.

Until the end of July, when the breeding season begins, Eleonora's falcons feed mainly on large insects. From August until October they feed exclusively on migratory birds, a

i Quarterly Review about Andros Life Project

• Editor in Chief : Giannis Mindrinos

• Articles

Giannis Mindrinos
Isidoros Nikolaou
Thanasis Karpouzis
Giorgos Gianissis

• Contact

Municipality of Andros
Life Andros project
Chora, Andros, 84500
Tel: 22823 60200

• Information Center

Life: Ormos Korthion
Tel: 22820 62319
www.androslife.gr
E: info@androslife.gr

• Art director:

Argiris Kritharoulas

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Exhibition about Life actions in Batsi

During summer season residents and visitors of Batsi, one of the most visited places of Andros, welcoming thousands of tourists every summer, had the opportunity to get acquainted with the LIFE project.

At the exhibition, that was open daily (18.00-23.00) from the 11th of August until the 6th of September, visitors had the opportunity to:

- learn about LIFE actions through photos and printed material,
- watch a thirty-minute long documentary about the project and the environment of Andros island,
- learn how they can volunteer for the LIFE project,
- find out what to do if they find an injured bird and how

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the project's First Aid Center can help,

- understand how a project concerning the environment and biodiversity can be "combined" with environmental tourism, that during the last years has become a major comparative advantage for the island.

▶ food source that, in theory, is inexhaustible. Since on the islands food is not enough, Eleonora's falcons are forced to travel large distances, even to mainland Greece, in search for food. A main goal for the Life project is the increase of prey for the Eleonora's falcons, and the other species protected by the project, through the revival of traditional crops.

The breeding season begins very late (in July) in comparison with other migratory birds, and that gives the falcon the opportunity to include in its diet the vast variety of migratory birds that fly over the Mediterranean at the end of summer on their way to the South. In reality, Eleonora's falcons have adapted (we could say) their breeding season to their needs for enough food – especially, before the big journey to Madagascar, which lasts almost a month.

