

## **What is LIFE Andros**

LIFE Andros is an environmental European Union project, implemented by the Municipality of Andros in cooperation with two partners, (NCC Ltd, Hellenic Ornithological Society). It is funded by the European Union, the Ministry of Environment Green Fund and own resources.

### **Area**

The project area is the Special Protection Area (SPA) of Andros island, which is part of European Natura 2000 sites (code GR4220028), and includes inland and coastal terrestrial habitats, as well as coastal marine areas on Andros island and the surrounding islets. The SPA hosts 180-200 breeding pairs of Eleonora's Falcon (*Falco eleonora*), 2-3 pairs of Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*), over 60 pairs of Mediterranean Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*) and 25-30 pairs of Audouin's Gull (*Larus audouinii*).

### **Objectives**

The project aims to implement urgent conservation measures for direct conservation of all 4 priority species in the SPA of Andros Island, Greece. The overall objective is to establish a well structured, effective, socially acceptable and economically viable Management Scheme for the SPA, capable to coordinate the activities of competent authorities within the site, and to carry out the core of the management needed for achieving and maintaining the Favourable Conservation Status of priority species in the SPA and implement its trial full scale operation.

### **More specifically**

More specifically, this 48 month project aims to produce basic SPA management tools and infrastructure, with primary being the SPA Management Plan and to form a permanent SPA Management Scheme which will then initiate and implement a full-scale, long-term management of the Andros SPA, through implementation of project's concrete conservation actions for direct conservation of its target species. The results of these activities are expected to achieve a significant improvement of the conservation status of all project priority species in the SPA of Andros, by implementation of concrete conservation actions to deal with the urgent threats their breeding and foraging habitats are facing.

The actions foreseen are in accordance to the guidelines and priorities identified by the European Commission and Birdlife International in the International Species Action Plans for the 4 target species

An extensive public awareness and communication campaign is foreseen to disseminate the project approach and results to the local society, visitors and the general public.

## Implementation

The project is being implemented by the **Municipality of Andros**, in cooperation with the **Hellenic Ornithological Society** and ecological consultancy **NCC Ltd**, with the contribution of the **European Commission** and Ministry of Environment **Green Fund**. This project is the result of three years of effort and planning for the benefit of Andros island environment. There is strong local support and high expectations for the implementation of the foreseen actions aimed to protect species and habitats.

The partner organizations have significant experience and expertise, which will be used to deal with the following conservation problems:

1. Lack of management planning for the SPA, as well as of any management authority devoted to the conservation of the site
2. Predation of alien invasive species such as Black rats (*Rattus rattus*) on the eggs and nestlings in the island colonies of the target species.
3. Yellow-legged gull (*Larus michahellis*) predation on nests and competition for food with *L. audouinii* and *P. aristotelis*.
4. Lack of suitable nesting habitats for island nesting birds.
5. Reduction and abandonment of traditional agricultural practices on terraces as well as degradation of coastal wetlands causing reduction of insect and bird prey availability and *F. eleonora* foraging habitat degradation.
6. Lack of protection and management of *H. fasciatus* breeding and foraging areas causing, reduced Chukar and pigeon prey availability.
7. Climate change threatening food availability and foraging habitat quality of *F. eleonora* and *H. fasciatus*.
8. Degradation of primary inshore seabird foraging areas due to human activities such as anchoring resulting in reduced diversity and abundance of seabird prey species.
9. Lack of public awareness of threats and conservation of target bird species and their habitats as well as implementation of Natura 2000 network result in lack of public support and participation in conservation.

Threats and problems described above will be effectively dealt with in a series of actions implemented by the project partners.

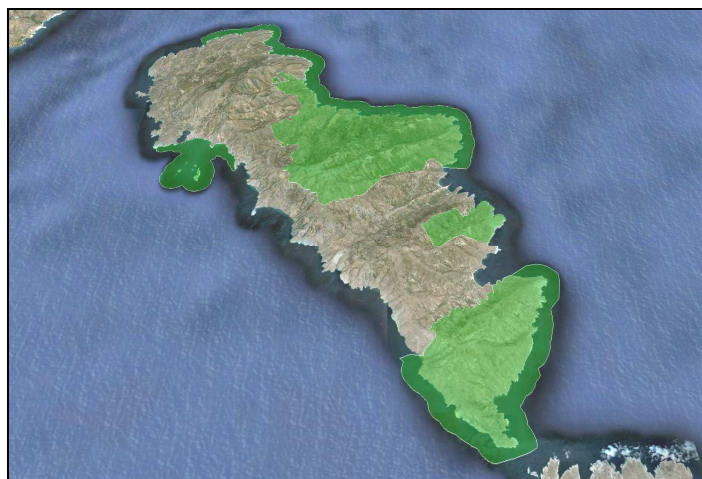


## Actions and means involved

- ✓ Elaboration of the SPA **Management Plan**, operational plans and **technical studies** for the concrete conservation actions foreseen. These plans include target Species Action Plans, Monitoring, Surveillance Plans and Dissemination Plan, sensitivity mapping, setting up of Favourable Reference Values for the 4 target species populations in the SPA, in order to achieve their Favourable Conservation Status.
- ✓ Production of a **Feasibility Study** for the SPA management, to identify key parameters for the long term financial viability of the proposed SPA Management Scheme, and propose realistic fund raising scenarios for the Scheme.
- ✓ **Management of nesting habitat** for the islet nesting bird species including rat eradications in selected colonies of *F. eleonora*, *L. audouinii* and *P. aristotelis* and to control local populations of *L. michahellis* for mitigation of egg/nestling predation and food competition and to increase breeding success of the target species.
- ✓ Establishment of thickets of native **shrubs** and **bushes** and creation of **artificial nesting sites** for islet nesting bird species, namely *F. eleonora* and *P. aristotelis*, to increase the number of suitable nesting sites.
- ✓ Identification, management and protection of primary marine foraging habitats for *L. audouinii* and *P. aristotelis* and installation of **seagrass-friendly mooring buoys**.
- ✓ Identification of important terrestrial foraging areas of *F. eleonora*, **revitalisation of agricultural fields** to increase insect abundance, creation of small ponds and limited-scale interventions of **coastal wetland habitats** to increase water availability and habitat quality for insects and migratory bird prey availability for *F. eleonora*.
- ✓ Management of Chukar (*Alectoris chukar*) and pigeon (*Columba* spp.) populations through local crop cultivation, watering and revitalization of traditional **pigeon lofts** to increase food availability of *H. fasciatus*.
- ✓ Establishment and pilot operation of the **SPA Management Scheme** and **the SPA surveillance- patrolling** programme, with the use of project **car** and **vessel**.
- ✓ Implementation of an extensive and well-focused **public awareness** campaign on the basis of the SPA Dissemination Plan, targeting various focus groups, for the conservation of the target species as well as the promotion of the Natura 2000 network and protected areas concept on Andros. The campaign will involve **environmental education** activities, special **publications**, a **documentary**, an **exhibition**, stakeholder **meetings**, **media** work at the international, national, regional and local level, information **signs**, and extensive use of the **internet** media.
- ✓ Implementation of **workshops** and **formal meetings** regarding concrete conservation actions and management of project SPA.
- ✓ The overall project operation will be facilitated through careful and strict **project management**, and the regular operation of the Project Steering Committee, to monitor project actions and provide guidance for their implementation (coordinating and associated beneficiaries).
- ✓ Project scientific **monitoring** and **networking** will assess and enhance the effectiveness of the project actions

## Expected results

- ✓ A well structured and effective project management to ensure smooth and effective project operation and implementation.
- ✓ Production of SPA Management Plan, 4 target species Action Plans, Monitoring Plan, Surveillance Plan, Dissemination Plan and GIS compatible information infrastructure
- ✓ Establishment and pilot operation of the SPA Management Scheme and the Surveillance programme.
- ✓ A complete removal of introduced predators (rats) from colonies of *Falco eleonora*, *Larus audouinii* and *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*.
- ✓ Yellow-legged gull population control on islets around Andros affecting *Larus audouinii*.
- ✓ Construction of artificial nests and plantation of endemic shrubs for improvement of nesting site availability for *Falco eleonora* and *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*.
- ✓ Revitalization of abandoned terrace fields, traditional local crop farming and operation of pigeon lofts for the improvement of insect availability to *Falco eleonora*, as well as pigeon and Chukar availability to *Hieraaetus fasciatus*.
- ✓ Establishment of a local Wildlife First Aid Centre at Korthi, in cooperation with ANIMA (Association for the Protection and Welfare of Wildlife)
- ✓ Significant benefits by promoting environmentally friendly forms of tourism, helping to highlight the comparative advantages of the environment of the island.



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