

What can you do to help save these species ?

Together, we can ensure a healthy population of Yelkouan Shearwaters in Malta and across the Mediterranean. Here are some things you can do:

- Take your litter home with you, especially organic waste
- When near the cliffs at night reduce the amount of light or noise you are producing. Use red lights or shielded outdoor lights when possible
- Check your boat for any invasive species like rats before approaching islets
- Keep your pets on a leash/indoors close to seabird colonies
- When driving your boat, respect the Notice to Mariners on advice on approaching seabird colonies
- Keep seas free of plastic, and act responsibly when using materials that can get lost at sea such as fenders or fishing gear
- And finally, if you find a bird that has become stranded or injured please call us on 2134 7645/6 (office hours)/7925 5697 (evenings and weekends)



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LIFE PanPuffinus!

LIFE19 NAT/MT/000982

The EU-funded LIFE PanPuffinus! project aims to protect two endemic and threatened Mediterranean seabirds, the Yelkouan Shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*) and the Balearic Shearwater (*Puffinus mauretanicus*), through a unique transboundary collaboration for joint large-scale conservation efforts.

BirdLife Malta has joined forces with its BirdLife Partners from another four countries (France, Greece, Portugal, Spain), as well as Malta's Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Greece's Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency, to tackle two major threats that these seabirds meet throughout their entire life cycle: predation by invasive mammal species on land, and accidental capture by fishing gear (bycatch) at sea. This will be done through:

- Quantifying the scale and extent of fisheries bycatch
- The development and implementation of mitigation measures to reduce bycatch
- Creation of invasive predator management and biosecurity plans
- Carrying out stakeholder engagement and awareness-raising activities

The €3.45 million project, co-funded by the European Union's LIFE programme and Malta's Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Animal Rights started in 2021 and will run till 2025.

Project Partners



Keep in touch

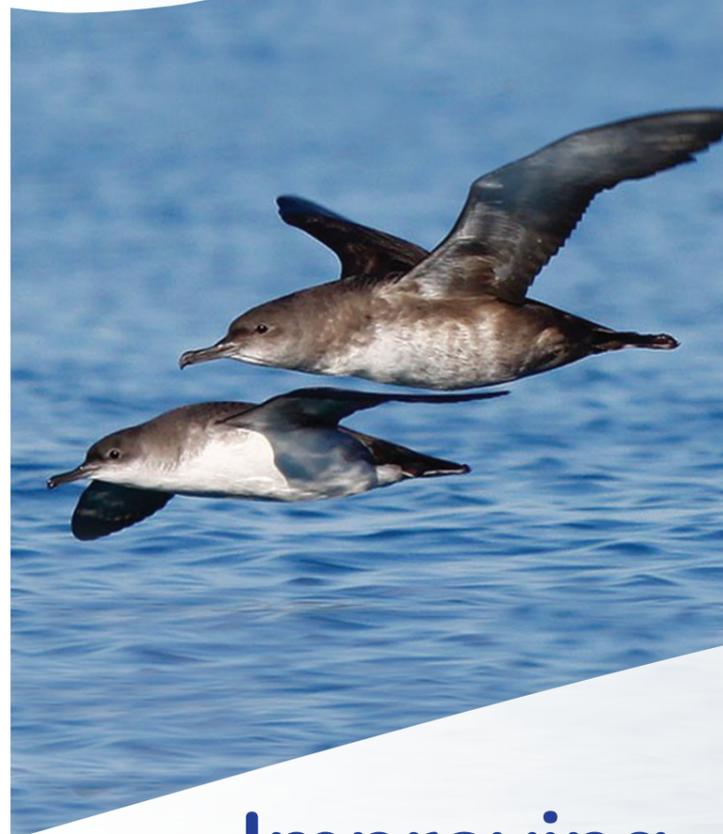
Follow more activity and find more information at <http://lifepanpuffinus.org>

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Improving the conservation status of the Yelkouan Shearwater and Balearic Shearwater by addressing threats both at land and sea

Yelkouan Shearwater

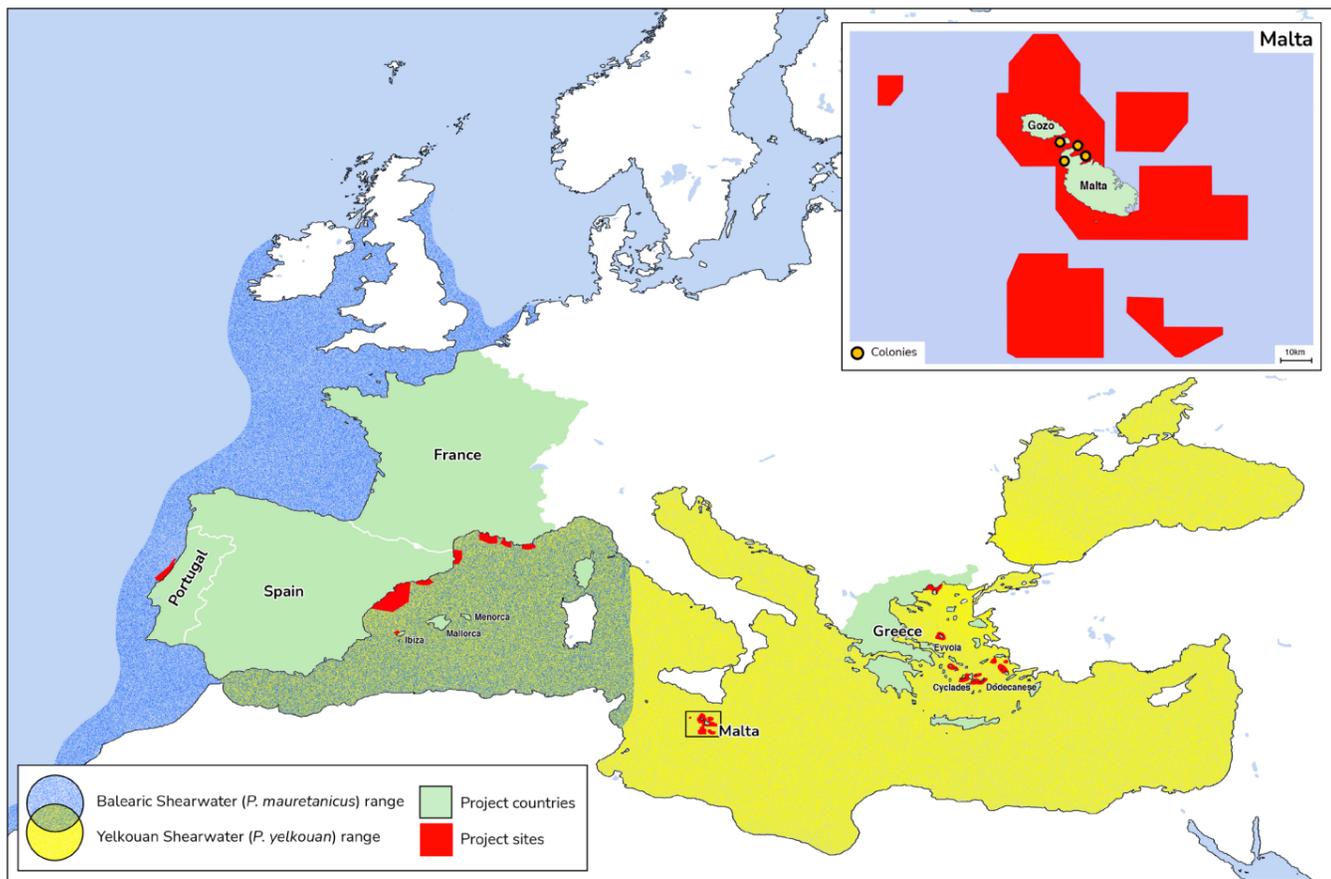


The Yelkouan Shearwater's breeding colonies are concentrated in the central and eastern Mediterranean Basin, including in Malta, France, and Greece. An estimated 1,795–2,635 pairs are known to breed in Malta, which is approximately 10% of the world's Yelkouan Shearwater population. The breeding period takes place from February to July, where they can be found nesting in caves and burrows in cliffs and rocky islets. Early spring is the time when females lay the one and only egg of the year, which is incubated for about 50 days. Both adults will travel as far as Sicily and Libya, in search for food to feed their hungry chick. During June and July, juveniles are ready to leave the nest and find food for themselves. In the non-breeding season, some of these birds migrate to the Black Sea.

Balearic Shearwater



With a population estimate between 2,000 and 4,500 pairs, the Balearic Shearwater breeds exclusively in the Balearic Islands, in caves, crevices and burrows. Females lay a single egg in early-mid March, hatching occurs in late April-early May and adults leave the colony a few days before the chicks fledge in early July. During the non-breeding season some birds remain in the Mediterranean while others migrate through the Gibraltar Strait into the Atlantic. Adults return to the very same cliffs they hatched in and breed commonly between their fourth and sixth year.



INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION PASSPORT

PASSPORT LIFE19 NAT/MT/000982

ENGLISH NAME: Yelkouan Shearwater
MALTESE NAME: Garnija
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Puffinus yelkouan*
BODY LENGTH: 30–35cm
WINGSPAN: 70–84cm
WEIGHT: 330–500g
LIFESPAN: Up to 25 years

DESCRIPTION: Streamlined body with long narrow wings, blackish brown upperparts and white underparts; slender black beak with hooked tip and external, tube-like nostrils; webbed feet.

IUCN STATUS: Vulnerable



INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION PASSPORT

PASSPORT LIFE19 NAT/MT/000982

ENGLISH NAME: Balearic Shearwater
MALTESE NAME: Garnija Balearika
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Puffinus mauretanicus*
BODY LENGTH: 35–40cm
WINGSPAN: 85–90cm
WEIGHT: 472–565g
LIFESPAN: Up to 23 years

DESCRIPTION: Streamlined body with long narrow wings, blackish brown upperparts, brownish on rear underparts shading paler on chest and throat; slender black beak with hooked tip and external, tube-like nostrils; webbed feet.

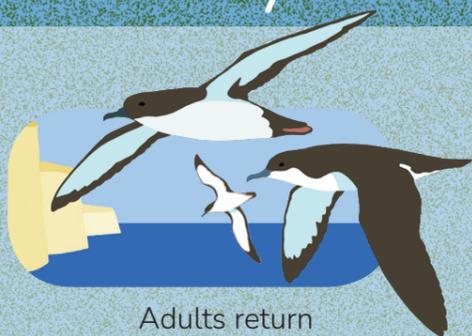
IUCN STATUS: Critically Endangered



Life cycle

Threats

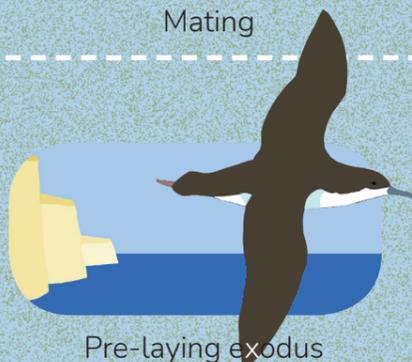
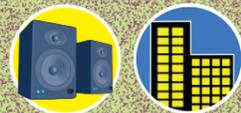
Solutions



Adults return



Mating



Pre-laying exodus



Laying



Incubation



Hatching



Feeding



Fledging



Ready to fly



Predation



Shearwater eggs and chicks cannot defend themselves, and so are vulnerable to predation by invasive species, such as rats. As part of the LIFE PanPuffinus! project, the team is working to reduce the number of rats in the seabird colonies, and design operational plans for these areas. You can help stop rat populations from increasing by taking your litter home with you when enjoying the countryside, including food waste too.



Bycatch



When foraging for fish, shearwaters accidentally get caught in fishing lines and swallow the hooks. LIFE PanPuffinus! is working with fishermen to find ways to prevent shearwaters from approaching human fishing activities. If you find a bird at sea caught in fishing equipment, please contact BirdLife Malta, who will give you instructions on how to help.



Plastic pollution



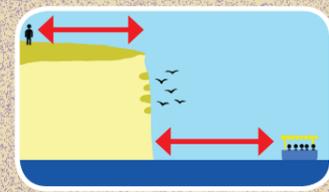
Marine animals, such as shearwaters, often eat small pieces of plastics by accident, thinking it's food. Inside the body, plastics can cause a toxic reaction, starve and weaken the animal. It is fundamental that plastic is not only removed from the sea, but that it is disposed correctly on land so it will not reach the sea. If you visit the cliffs or the beach, always take your litter home. You can also join BirdLife Malta for clean-up events and learn how to make a difference.



Noise pollution



Loud noises, such as music and boat engines can disturb and cause stress to the shearwaters nesting on the cliffs. If you want to experience nature in its purest form and help protect the feathered residents, turn off any music and listen to the sounds of nature instead. Keep a safe distance from breeding colonies whether you are on land or at sea.



Light pollution



Bright lights are very confusing for young shearwaters who are leaving the nest for the first time. Unable to find their way to sea, fledglings may become grounded on land and need to be rescued. You can help by turning off or dimming any outdoor lights, car headlamps, torches or boat if you are near the coast. If you find a stranded seabird, please contact BirdLife Malta.



Oil pollution



Seabirds may encounter toxic oils in the water that have spilled from boats, tankers or oil drilling platforms at sea. Oils damage seabird feathers causing waterproofing issues. And if ingested, oils can damage internal organs and lead to death. If you find a seabird struggling to fly at sea, or a large patch of oil on the water surface, please contact BirdLife Malta.



Timelines

