

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?



Avoid using bright lights and loud music close to nesting sites  
**For the location of the nesting sites, see the map on this leaflet**



Dispose of litter and plastic responsibly to prevent marine pollution



Take care when fishing close to seabird colonies, especially in the evening

## FOUND A SEABIRD CAUGHT IN FISHING GEAR?



If you accidentally catch a Yelkouan Shearwater while fishing, carefully remove the hook and safely release



**CAUTION!**  
If the hook has been swallowed, do not pull it out. Instead call BirdLife Malta immediately for assistance.  
Telephone number: +356 2134 7646



If you find a Yelkouan Shearwater entangled in nets but otherwise uninjured, gently free the bird and release safely at sea

Further information on seabird bycatch can be found here: [www.birdlife.org/bycatch](http://www.birdlife.org/bycatch)

## THE LIFE ARČIPELAGU GARNIJA PROJECT

The LIFE Arcipelagu Garnija project aims to secure the Maltese Islands for the Yelkouan Shearwater. Through monitoring, conservation and awareness-raising actions the project is working to reduce the threats faced by this seabird species both on land and at sea.



*The project is being carried out by BirdLife Malta over a five-year period (2015-2020) and is part-funded by the EU (60%).*

## KEEPING **YELKOUAN SHEARWATERS** SAFE AT SEA



### Keep in touch:

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LIFE14 NAT/MT/991



### Project partners:



The project is co-funded by:



MINISTRY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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## THREATS AT SEA

The Yelkouan Shearwater faces an uncertain future. In recent decades the species has suffered a drastic decline and is now recorded as 'vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List, placing it at risk of extinction unless the threats it faces are reduced. Yelkouan Shearwaters are listed in Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive, giving them special protection in EU countries. However, more can still be done to secure their long-term survival.

### Why are they continuing to decline in numbers?

#### Noise and light pollution

Yelkouan Shearwaters return to their colonies in the dark to avoid predation. They are very sensitive to light and will avoid landing if the cliffs are lit up. Light and noise pollution causes disturbance and could lead to abandonment of entire colonies and reduce breeding success.

#### Disturbance from boats

When boats stay close to breeding colonies - especially sea caves - with loud music and lights it can cause a lot of disturbance. When adult Yelkouan Shearwaters are incubating or have chicks this can cause them to become stressed, possibly making their breeding attempt unsuccessful and impacting population numbers.

#### Seabird bycatch

Every year, seabirds such as the Yelkouan Shearwaters are injured or killed in fisheries after they are attracted to baited hooks used in longline fishing or become entangled in gillnets.

#### Marine Pollution

Like other marine creatures, ingested plastic can cause digestion and feeding problems for shearwater species while oil causes them to lose the waterproofing properties of their feathers – a necessity for seabirds.



## OTHER SEABIRDS

### Scopoli's Shearwater

Maltese name: Ċiefa

Scientific name: *Calonectris diomedea*

Body length: 45-56cm

Wingspan: 112-122cm

Legal status in Malta: Protected



### Mediterranean Storm-petrel

Maltese name: Kanġu ta' Filfla

Scientific name: *Hydrobates pelagicus melitensis*

Body length: 15-16cm

Wingspan: 36-39cm

Legal status in Malta: Protected

### Yellow-legged Gull

Maltese name: Gawwija Prima

Scientific name: *Larus michahellis*

Body length: 52-58cm

Wingspan: 120-155cm

Legal status in Malta: Protected



## THE YELKOUAN SHEARWATER



Maltese name: Garnija

Scientific name: *Puffinus yelkouan*

Body length: 30-35cm

Wingspan: 70-84cm

Legal status in Malta: Protected

Yelkouans have blackish upperparts and white underparts. They have a dark beak with hooked tip and external, tube-like nostrils. They are often seen close to the sea surface, flying with fast wingbeats.



A species of seabird, Yelkouan Shearwaters make up an essential part of maintaining a healthy and balanced ecosystem, supporting other animal and plant life. Only occurring in the Mediterranean region and with up to 10% of the global population breeding in the Maltese Islands, we have a responsibility for conserving this important species.

Spending most of the day feeding at sea, these seabirds only come ashore to their nests at night situated in sea caves and steep coastal cliffs. In March, females lay a single egg which both parents incubate. When the egg hatches the parents forage for small fish, crustaceans and squid to feed their chick, sometimes travelling hundreds of kilometres in search of food and plunging up to 30m deep to catch their prey.

