



BirdLife Malta's recommendations on the Intent and Objectives:
Malta Yelkouan Shearwater Species Action Plan 2022-2030
28 October 2022

The compilation of the National Yelkouan Shearwater Species Action Plan 2022-2030 is a long-awaited initiative to which BirdLife Malta has contributed to including, but not limited to, through the LIFE Arcipelagu Garnija project – LIFE14 NAT/MT/991 (2015-2020), as well as our continuous work on monitoring, advocacy and during field visits.

The intent of the SAP is quite explicit. We would like to share our suggestions in relation to refining certain objectives as follows:

- ❖ vi. to implement identified conservation measures for the Yelkouan Shearwater and evaluate their effectiveness within Natura 2000 sites ***both terrestrial and marine;***
- ❖ ***vii. to effectively manage marine SPAs to ensure safe foraging and rafting areas, and that human activity offshore (fisheries, aquaculture, offshore renewable energy and bunkering ships) has the required mitigation measures***

Furthermore, the SAP could benefit if the objectives are aligned with SMART parameters (such as, the objective (ii) may deliver a clearer message if the desired rate expressed quantitatively).

Additionally, the list of relevant ecological pressures should include such a concerning and frequently overlooked issue as seabird bycatch, as follows: “The achievement of such objectives will be sought through management of anthropogenic activity that may result in pressures including inter alia predation by ***rodent species***, light and noise disturbance and ***incidental catch in fishing gear (bycatch)***”.

We have noted an outstanding initiative to extend the Action Plan with the purpose to cover Scopoli's shearwater and Mediterranean Storm-petrel who also breed in Malta. Such a step is expected to be highly beneficial in terms of improvement of the seabird species conservation status, and BirdLife Malta will gladly contribute to these efforts with our knowledge and expertise. Importantly, the plans should be compiled specifically for each of the three seabird species.