



# UNDERSTANDING THREATS TO SEABIRDS FROM BYCATCH AND MARINE LITTER

Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development Sunce

The main goal of the LIFE Artina project is to address key conservation issues and threats to three seabird species in the Adriatic - Audouin's gull, Scopoli's shearwater, and Yelkouan shearwater (in local dialect artina).

Previous research in the Mediterranean has shown that longlines and gillnets are the fishing gear types that pose the greatest threat to seabirds. At the beginning of the LIFE Artina project, very little was known about the bycatch of seabirds in the Adriatic Sea.

During this project, research on the mutual impact of fishermen and seabirds and research on **reducing the impact of fishing activities on seabirds** by identifying and promoting best practices were conducted. The results indicated that small-scale seabird bycatch also occurs in Croatia. However, fishermen do not record this data in the logbooks, mostly out of fear of facing sanctions and potential new fishing restrictions. We also **tested customized fishing gear**, collected data on the functionality and practicality of the test tools, and made recommendations for reducing seabird bycatch.

The project has identified new important areas in the Adriatic Sea for Scopoli's shearwater, Yelkouan shearwater, and Audouin's gull, which is one of the first steps towards reducing seabird bycatch, but also other impacted species such as turtles, sharks and rays. Changes in fisheries practices and gear types may be needed in areas where endangered species are present, for both to co-exist. For the measures to be effective and to ensure that fishermen comply with them, they need to be simple, suitable for each fishing method, cost-effective, practical, safe, and accompanied by economic or social incentives.

Through the LIFE Artina project, we carried out **monitoring of marine litter on the island of Lastovo and the surrounding sea**. This represents the first scientific research of marine litter washed up on beaches as well as on the surface of the sea based on a unified methodology in the area of the Lastovo Archipelago. Monitoring was conducted on 3 beaches.



Lead weights for static longlines



Hookpods



Signal (LED) lights for static longline nets



Kremena



Saplun



Sito



**754 KG**  
**MORE THAN**  
**42,000 PIECES OF**  
**WASTE**

With the help of (local) volunteers, we also conducted underwater and beach cleanup actions on and around Lastovo Island. After **31 clean-up actions**, we collected **14 tons of waste**. Sources of collected waste can be associated with **fishing and mariculture, tourism and recreational activities, poor management of municipal waste disposal sites, sewage, and maritime traffic**.



For the protection and conservation of seabirds to be successful, we have also involved **the local community** and have been actively working on **educating children in the project area** providing opportunities for active involvement, strong partnerships, and sustainable conservation actions. We collaborated with **8 educational institutions and conducted 76 workshops where more than 230 children participated**.

