



MONK  
SEAL  
ALLIANCE

**STRONGER  
TOGETHER**



# A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO MONK SEAL CONSERVATION

---

The MSA is a consortium of like-minded foundations optimizing resources to support collaborative conservation and rehabilitation of the Mediterranean monk seal and its habitat.

---

The monk seal is one of the most iconic species of the Mediterranean, a flagship for the conservation of all marine resources. It has played a role in Mediterranean cultures, folklore, economies and mythology since Antiquity. Yet it is one of the planet's most endangered marine mammals, with less than a thousand individuals remaining.

Vigorous action to protect the species is showing some encouraging results, but two major obstacles have limited progress: a lack of coordination and collaboration among conservation actors, and a lack of sustainable, dedicated funding. The Monk Seal Alliance addresses both of these challenges.

It leverages members' knowledge of the issues and players involved in Mediterranean monk seal conservation to encourage and facilitate a strategic, cooperative approach across the species' range, while providing conservation actors with a single, strong, issue-specific funding partner.

Today, with the successful funding of sixteen projects covering the entire range of species and the development of partnerships with key stakeholders, we are inviting new donors to join the Alliance to broaden our reach and impact.

## ABOUT THE MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL

The Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) was once common throughout the Mediterranean Sea and in parts of the adjacent Atlantic Ocean. It is one of two remaining species of ancient seals (the other is the Hawaiian monk seal) and both are at risk of extinction. A third, the Caribbean monk seal, went extinct in the 1950s.

Decades of hunting, deliberate and accidental killing by fishers, disease, pollution, depleted fish stocks and the destruction and disturbance of habitats have taken a heavy toll on seal populations.

National and regional conservation measures such as creating marine protected areas, working with fishing communities and raising awareness among diverse stakeholders have borne fruit: the current population is estimated at around 900 individuals. These are concentrated at a few key sites in the Mediterranean (primarily around Greece, Türkiye and Cyprus) and in Madeira and Mauritania in the Atlantic. But conservation measures must be sustained, enforced, coordinated and expanded to maintain this positive trend and ensure the species can continue to prosper.

---



# ZOOM ON PROJECTS FUNDED

## NATIONAL

In **Greece**, where tourism has increased pressures on monk seals, the Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal (MOM) is raising public awareness while ensuring effective surveillance of protected areas within the Alonissos Marine Natural Park and on surrounding islands. The recent partnership between the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA) and MSA aims to mitigate negative impacts from human activity in areas of importance for the species throughout Greece.

In **Mauritania**, with a population of more than 350 monk seals, the MSA's support allows the Fundacion CBD-Habitat to continue to ensure the monitoring and proper functioning of the Cap Blanc reserve and to develop and experiment a methodology for translocation of seals to other sites in the Atlantic to ensure the survival and development of the Atlantic population in the future.

In **Türkiye**, SAD-AFAG and METU-IMS are strengthening data collection on monk seal sightings and disturbances, while mitigating illegal cave trespassing through a participatory information programs and enforcement, in collaboration with authorities. Both organisations are also working with the government to improve coastal zone management for monk seal conservation, focusing on construction, tourism, fishing and shipping.

In **Cyprus**, our partners SPOT and Enalia Physis are mobilized to improve knowledge on the habitat use of the species and advocate for its effective conservation, by creating protected areas and engaging stakeholders from the fishing and aquaculture sectors.

In **Lebanon**, IndyAct coordinates a national initiative aimed at creating a coalition of organisations dedicated to the protection of the species and developing a national action plan for adoption by the government.



First stages of the installation of the temporary enclosure for the translocation trial by CBD Habitat Foundation. Great hope for the survival of the species!



The SAD-AFAG team after fulfilling the deployment of a physical barrier to protect Korsan Cave, a favorite refuge for monk seals in Demre, Antalya, S. Türkiye.



Every seal matters. In Greece, MOM leads a rehabilitation program for orphaned and injured seals which are released in a protected area once back in shape.

## KEY FIGURES



**16** PROJECTS SUPPORTED

**4 600 000 €** ALLOCATED

**17** COUNTRIES INVOLVED

## REGIONAL / COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

EuroNatur is coordinating a project to prepare countries of the Eastern Adriatic (**Albania, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro**) for the return of monk seals by creating structures and capacities for their protection, as conditions there appear favourable for an expansion of monk seal populations from Greece. EuroNatur and partners are building up national capacities in habitat mapping, monitoring, cooperation and raising public awareness.

The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA RAC) is coordinating a capacity-building project in which experienced monk seal conservation actors conduct trainings in countries where the species may live in the future, particularly in the **Southern and Eastern Mediterranean**. This is linked with a project to standardise the field protocol for monitoring of the species to be able to share data.

In parallel, a working group including all of the organisations of our network has been set-up to develop a collaborative database so as to improve and share knowledge on the species and its movements, with the goal of making informed conservation decisions at regional scale.





## WHAT'S **NEXT?**

Much remains to be done to save the Mediterranean monk seal, but with concrete, concerted action, it can be done. Coordination and collaboration among funders and among actors in the field are key to achieving our common goal: to protect this emblematic species and to enable it to flourish into the future throughout its historical range.

**MSA's founding members wish to open the Alliance to include other philanthropic actors or foundations interested in working with us to protect the species and its habitat.**

Increasing our funding capacity and growing our network will allow us to launch new calls for projects to support the conservation community's work protecting current and future habitats, educating and sensitizing local populations and economic actors, and building capacity among NGOs. It will ensure the continuity and long-term sustainability of conservation measures now underway, while enabling new research into possible future actions such as translocation of seal populations.

**JOIN US!**

# ABOUT THE MONK SEAL ALLIANCE



*Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between partners of the MSA, in presence of HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco.*

The Monk Seal Alliance (MSA) was created in 2019 by five founding members experienced in funding Mediterranean monk seal conservation projects: the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the MAVA Foundation, the Fondation Segré, the Sancta Devota Foundation and the Thalassa Foundation. The Hans Wilsdorf Foundation joined the Alliance in 2022.

**The MSA supports conservation projects at local, national and regional levels.** Its calls for projects are designed to create incentives for actors to collaborate with others in the field, avoiding duplication and waste of resources and increasing effectiveness by addressing monk seal conservation strategically, holistically and throughout the species' range.

The MSA's processes rely on open and transparent collaboration and decisions are made based on the principles of consensus.

Thanks to private donors and MSA member foundations, the Monk Seal Alliance has allocated over 4 600 000 € in support to projects aiming at protecting the species and its habitat.

More than a financial partner, **MSA is developing a sense of community amongst field-organisations by facilitating communication, collaboration and pooling expertise.** It is also **advocating for engagement at the highest level** and developing key partnerships with decision makers. In 2022, an appeal to the Greek government was launched by MSA, bringing together for the first time all of the organisations dedicated to protecting the species in Greece. In 2023, MSA signed a partnership agreement with the Greek Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA) to amplify the impact of our respective actions and coordinate a specific initiative for Greece starting in 2024.

As defined by MSA's strategy for 2024-2027, **at the core of our action are the development and improvement of protected areas and the mitigation of negative human impacts** (tourism, fisheries), whilst enhancing coordination and collaboration at all levels.

FOR MORE INFORMATION | [WWW.MONKSEALALLIANCE.ORG](http://WWW.MONKSEALALLIANCE.ORG) |

| **Auriane Pertuisot** - Coordinator of the Monk Seal Alliance, Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation.

| [✉ apertuisot@fpa2.org](mailto:apertuisot@fpa2.org)

Photos credits: Monk Seal Alliance - Greg Lecœur / SAD AFAG / Fundación CBD-Hábitat