

Mediterranean Marine Science

Vol 24, No 1 (2023)

VOL 24, No 1 (2023)



First sighting of a pelagic seabird entangled in a disposable COVID-19 facemask in the Mediterranean Sea

GEORGIOS KARRIS, IOANNIS SAVVA, ELEFThERIOS KAKALIS, KYRIAKI BAIRAKTARIDOU, CHLOE ESPINOSA, MATTHEW STEPHEN SMITH, PETROULA BOTSIDOU, STAMATIOS MOSCHOUS, MARIOS-DIMITRIOS VOULGARIS, ELENI PEPPA, PANICOS PANAYIDES, HARIS HADJISTYLLIS, MARIOS IOSIFIDES

doi: [10.12681/mms.31918](https://doi.org/10.12681/mms.31918)

To cite this article:

KARRIS, G., SAVVA, I., KAKALIS, E., BAIRAKTARIDOU, K., ESPINOSA, C., SMITH, M. S., BOTSIDOU, P., MOSCHOUS, S., VOULGARIS, M.-D., PEPPA, E., PANAYIDES, P., HADJISTYLLIS, H., & IOSIFIDES, M. (2023). First sighting of a pelagic seabird entangled in a disposable COVID-19 facemask in the Mediterranean Sea. *Mediterranean Marine Science*, 24(1), 50–55. <https://doi.org/10.12681/mms.31918>

First sighting of a pelagic seabird entangled in a disposable COVID-19 facemask in the Mediterranean Sea

Georgios KARRIS^{1,2}, Ioannis SAVVA^{3,4}, Eleftherios KAKALIS⁵, Kyriaki BAIKAKTARIDOU⁵, Chloé ESPINOSA^{1,6}, Matthew Stephen SMITH⁵, Petroula BOTSIDOU⁵, Stamatios MOSCHOUS⁵, Marios-Dimitrios VOULGARIS⁵, Eleni PEPPA², Panicos PANAYIDES⁷, Haris HADJISTYLLIS⁷ and Marios IOSIFIDES⁸

¹Department of Environment, Ionian University, M. Minotou-Giannopoulou str. Panagoula, 29100, Zakynthos, Greece

²ADENS-Advanced Environmental Studies S.A. Vas. Sofias 98A, 11528 Athens, Greece

³Marine & Environmental Research (MER) Lab, 202 Amathountos Avenue, Marina Gardens, Block B, Offices 13-14, Limassol 4533, Republic of Cyprus

⁴Department of Maritime Civilizations, The Leon H. Charney School for Marine Sciences, University of Haifa, 199 Aba-Khoushi Avenue, Mount Carmel, Haifa 3498838, Israel

⁵ENVIR-Environmental Research Services, 84011, Folegandros, Greece

⁶Laboratory of Oceanology, MARE Centre, University of Liège, B6C Allee du 6 Août, 15 Sart Tilman, 4000 Liège, Belgium

⁷Game & Fauna Department, Ministry of the Interior, Republic of Cyprus

⁸Department of Fisheries and Marine Research, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, Republic of Cyprus

Corresponding author: Georgios Karris; gkarris@ionio.gr

Contributing Editor: Vasilis GEROVASILEIOU

Received: 19 November 2022; Accepted: 29 December 2022; Published online: 16 January 2023

Abstract

Seabirds are increasingly recognized as important bio-indicators of marine ecosystems that are useful in assessing environmental disturbance on the marine biota. Over the period 2020-22 and during the first national systematic recording of the sea waters surrounding the Republic of Cyprus, we recorded the spatio-temporal presence, abundance and behaviour of seabirds using the ESAS (European Seabirds At Sea) methodology. Here we present the observation of an accidentally entangled pelagic seabird in COVID-19 material which to the best of our knowledge is the first incident in the Mediterranean Basin. The systematic recording of entangled marine birds in personal protective equipment (PPE) used to prevent COVID-19 transmission worldwide seems to be of crucial importance for one of the most important emerging threats for the conservation of seabirds at global scale.

Keywords: Marine Birds; Marine Ecosystem; marine litter; Levantine Sea; *Puffinus yelkouan*; Yelkouan Shearwater; pandemic-related debris; personal protective equipment (PPE).

Introduction

Plastic debris is recognized as one of the most insidious forms of pollution, persisting for a prolonged period of time, from intact items to degraded fragments. At global scale, the main oceanic gyres, together with the Mediterranean Sea, have been shown to retain the largest concentrations of floating micro- and macro-plastic debris (Suaria & Aliani, 2014; Cózar *et al.*, 2015; Constantino *et al.*, 2019; Soto-Navarro *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, the semi-enclosed nature of the Mediterranean, the surrounding multinational coastline and its dense human population, as well as extensive commercial shipping activities, are responsible for the formation of this plastic debris hotspot (Suaria *et al.*, 2016). Surveys of floating

marine litter conducted in the Mediterranean Sea suggest a spatio-temporal variability that is largely determined by the circulation patterns between the western and eastern basins (Macias *et al.*, 2019), although, less attention has been given to the latter. Qualitative and quantitative characterization of floating macrolitter in the Levantine Sea is described in a short-term survey conducted by Constantino *et al.* (2019), south of Cyprus, and is under further assessment by an ongoing 2-year study in the waters of the Republic of Cyprus, with densities estimated between 235 items per km², and 217.5 items per km² (1st Survey's preliminary results; Savva *et al.*, unpublished data), respectively.

The high floating macrolitter densities recorded during these surveys, may have negative implications on the ecol-

ogy and biodiversity of the region, as it is home to several emblematic and protected megafaunal species, including cetaceans (Boisseau *et al.*, 2010; Snape *et al.*, 2020), seabirds (authors' unpublished data) and the critically endangered Mediterranean Monk seal (*Monachus monachus*), a small population of which is established along the coastland of Cyprus (Nicolaou *et al.*, 2021). The region is also a nesting and overwinter foraging ground for two species of sea turtles, namely, the Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and the Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), which use migratory corridors between Turkey, Cyprus and the Mediterranean Afro-Asian coastline (Stokes *et al.*, 2015; Snape *et al.*, 2016). The interaction of floating plastic debris with megafauna has been well-documented at global scale (Derraik, 2002; Kühn & van Franeker, 2020). Specifically, entanglements have been reported for almost all main marine animal taxa (Kühn & van Franeker, 2020; Høiberg *et al.*, 2022) with the incidences often associated with ghost gear (lost or abandoned fishing nets and lines), strapping bands and loop-structured plastic items (Derraik, 2002; Butterworth, 2016) that come in many forms and different plastic polymers (Wilcox *et al.*, 2016; Law & Narayan, 2022).

Since 2019, a new challenge has emerged for marine biodiversity. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; COVID-19) outbreak has led to mass production of personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent COVID-19 transmission (Canning-Clode *et al.*, 2020). Two years after the outbreak of the pandemic, this environmental impact on the world's shorelines has become evident, with the improper disposal of COVID face masks and rubber gloves increasing the already enormous amounts of marine litter (Canning-Clode *et al.*, 2020; Benson *et al.*, 2021; Hatami *et al.*, 2022). Until recently, the impacts of discarded PPE were based on theoretical extrapolations from other, similar types of marine debris (Tessfaldet & Ndeh, 2022). Here we present the first incident of a pelagic seabird entangled in a disposable COVID-19 face mask in the Mediterranean Sea.

Materials and Methods

Study area

The study area is the island of the Republic of Cyprus located in the North-Eastern Mediterranean Sea (approx. 33° E and 35° N). Covering an area of 9,251 km², Cyprus is the third largest Mediterranean island. The region is the warmest, saltiest, and most oligotrophic part of the Mediterranean Sea (Coll *et al.*, 2010).

Data collection

Data were collected during a systematic survey of seabirds for the Republic of Cyprus. Data collection followed the ESAS (European Seabirds at Sea) recording methodology (Fric *et al.*, 2012; Zakkak *et al.*, 2013) with the aim

to designate possible marine and coastal protected areas for seabirds (Camphuysen & Garthe, 2004). Data about human activities at sea as well as marine litter were also gathered during the fieldwork. The surveys were carried out during two consecutive years (2021-2022), each divided into three periods of 7-10 days (2021: 12-18 April, 9-18 September and 27 October - 4 November; 2022: 9-17 April, 4-10 June and 20-30 September). During the first expedition in April 2021, the study area was divided into two main buffer zones, a coastal zone (0-12 nm) and a pelagic zone (12-40 nm). Each zone was zigzag surveyed by two different vessels operating simultaneously; according to relevant studies on shipboard line transect surveys of animal populations (Strindberg & Buckland, 2004; Pettex *et al.*, 2017). The operational plan for the other sampling periods was changed and focused on coastal-coastal surveys as well as zigzag routes for the 0-12 zone since the great majority of seabirds seemed to avoid the highly oligotrophic pelagic zone.

The data obtained from on board surveys were stored in an MS Access data-base and were further spatially examined using ArcGIS 10.1 software. A map representing the location where the seabird entangled in a disposable COVID-19 face mask was found was generated using the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNET) (<https://www.emodnet-bathymetry.eu/>) as a source for bathymetry data and the European Environment Agency (EEA) (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/eea-reference-grids-2/gis-files/cyprus-shapefile>) as a reference grid for the Cypriot coastline. Minimum distance from the coastline was estimated using the 'near' proximity tool, which forms part of ESRI's ArcGIS toolboxes (ESRI, 2007).

Results

Onboard surveys covered about 4,700 nm on 42 days. In total, 18 seabird species were observed with only the Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*) and the Mediterranean Shag (*Gulosus aristotelis desmarestii*) breeding on small satellite islets or inaccessible coastal areas of the Republic of Cyprus. On the 10th of April 2022 (2:20 p.m.), i.e., during the early stages of the breeding season, a Yelkouan Shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*) was observed entangled in a disposable COVID-19 face mask at a distance of about 7.3 nm south of the south coast of Cyprus (long: 34.036589° N; lat: 34.884374° E), in 700-800 m deep waters (Fig. 1). The weather conditions (<3 on the Beaufort scale) and the visibility were good (6-9 km) and allowed us to identify the entangled bird and take photos showing the negative impact of the COVID-19 waste on flight performance and behaviour (Fig. 2). Even though the bird seemed exhausted, possibly due to restrictions on effective foraging, it was not feasible to approach and capture it so as to release it from the entangled mask. It is worth mentioning that only 30 (5 ± 3.74) individuals of Yelkouan shearwater were observed during the six on-board surveys in the Republic of Cyprus, indicating a rare appearance of that pelagic species in the Levantine Sea.

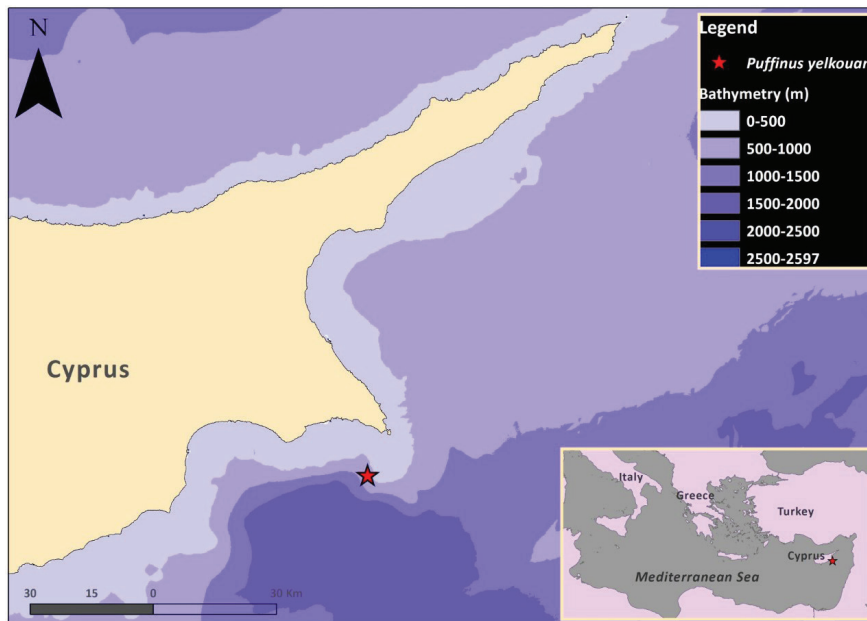


Fig. 1: Location of the Yelkouan Shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*) found on 10 April 2022 entangled with a disposable COVID-19 face mask (Cyprus, Levantine Sea, and Eastern Mediterranean). Sources: Bathymetry-European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNET) (<https://www.emodnet-bathymetry.eu/>); Reference Grid-European Environment Agency (EEA) (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/eea-reference-grids-2/gis-files/cyprus-shapefile>).

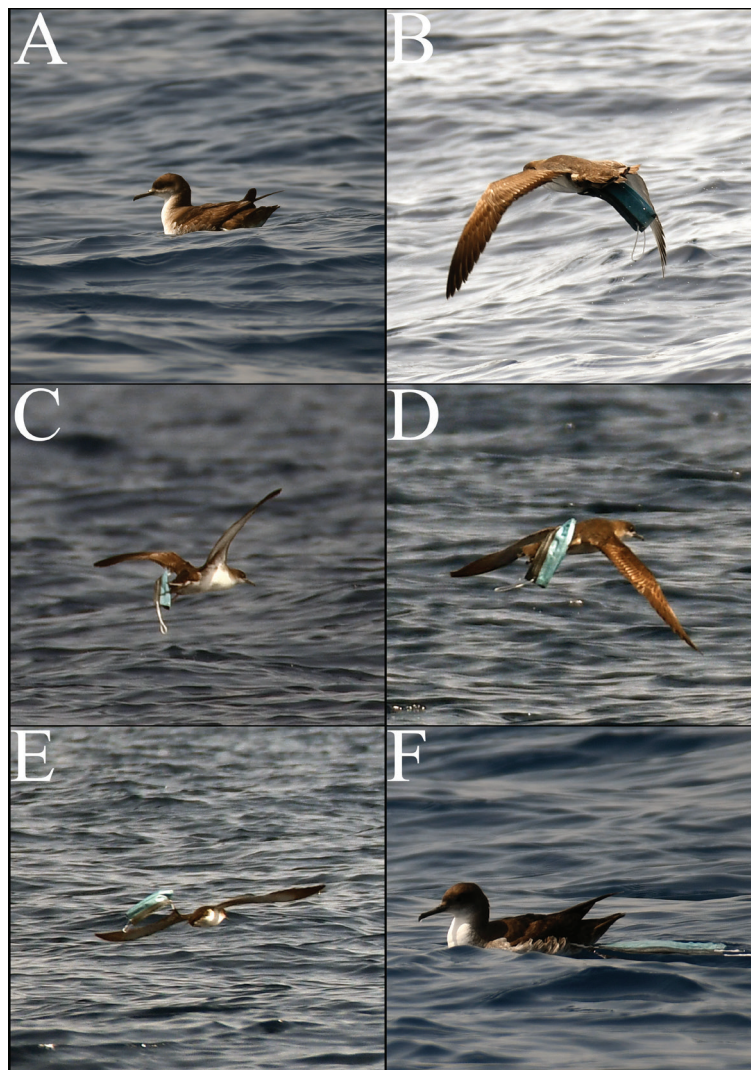


Fig. 2: **A.** Entangled Yelkouan Shearwater (*Puffinus yelkouan*) with a disposable COVID-19 face mask floating on water; **B.** Taking off while dragging mask; **C., D., E.** Flying over sea with the face mask entangled around its wing and **F.** landing again with face mask trailing.

Discussion

Seabirds are generally long-lived and are often threatened both on land and at sea by numerous factors, including invasive mammalian predators, by-catch incidental mortality in fishery gears, marine pollution and accumulation of plastics, over-fishing, and large-scale climatic phenomena (Dias *et al.*, 2019; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2019). Seabirds are increasingly recognized as important bio-indicators of marine ecosystems that are useful for assessing environmental disturbance and the effects of climate change on marine biota. Consequently, they are used as key species in conservation and management planning.

Plastic waste from disposable pandemic-related debris (e.g., medical face masks, plastic gloves) is considered a threat for the conservation of fauna in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems (Hiemstra *et al.*, 2021; Ammendolia *et al.*, 2022). According to a recent study tracking possible impacts of COVID-19 material on wildlife, marine birds appear to be particularly susceptible to the impacts of pandemic-related litter (Ammendolia *et al.*, 2022). Such negative interactions have been reported from across the globe, in the form of entanglement, entrapment, ingestion, as well as use of PPE as nesting material (Table 1).

Here we report for the first time on the entanglement of a pelagic seabird species in the Mediterranean Sea, the Yelkouan Shearwater. It is worth mentioning that the other two documented incidents of seabirds entangled in COVID-19 material in the Mediterranean Basin refer to Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) in Gibraltar and *Larus* sp. in Turkey (Table 1). The Northern Gannet is not a typical Mediterranean seabird since it breeds in the North Atlantic and occasionally can be found in the Mediterranean during winter while no specific conclusions can be drawn for the unidentified gull species (Harrison *et al.*, 2021). Yelkouan Shearwaters are endemic to the Mediterranean and Black seas, although the exact spatial distribution of the species has not yet been determined accurately and population estimates are disputed (Bourgeois & Vidal, 2008; Keller *et al.*, 2020). It is listed in Appendix I of the Birds Directive and is classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International, 2018) due to recent population declines. At the same time, technical reports further indicate a potential decrease in survival rates in recent years (Derhé, 2012). Yelkouan Shearwaters are known to breed in the Eastern Mediterranean on offshore islets in the Aegean Sea (mainly in Greece while breeding is also assumed in Turkey), but

Table 1. Documented interactions between different seabird species and COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE).

Species	COVID-19 material	Interaction	Country	Reference
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	UK	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	Canada	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	Netherlands	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	Glove	Ingestion	Canada	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	USA	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Atlantic Puffin (<i>Fratercula arctica</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	Ireland	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Silver Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	Australia	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Great black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>)	Face mask	Nest material	Scotland	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Great Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)	Face mask	Nest material	Finland	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Razorbill (<i>Alca torda</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	Scotland	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Ring-billed Gull (<i>Larus delawarensis</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	Canada	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Yellow-legged Gull (<i>Larus michahellis</i>)	Face mask	Ingestion	Italy	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Common Murre (<i>Uria aalge</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	UK	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Northern Gannet (<i>Morus bassanus</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	Gibraltar	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Gull (<i>Larus</i> sp.)	Glove	Ingestion	Canada	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Gull (<i>Larus</i> sp.)	Face mask	Entanglement	UK	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Gull (<i>Larus</i> sp.)	Face mask	Entanglement	Turkey	Ammendolia <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Double-crested Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>)	Face mask	Nest material	Canada	Damian & Fraser (2020)
Magellanic Penguin (<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>)	Face mask	Ingestion	Brazil	Gallo Neto <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Gull (<i>Larus</i> sp.)	Face mask	Entanglement	Netherlands	Hiemstra <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Gull (<i>Larus</i> sp.)	Face mask	Entanglement	UK	Hiemstra <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Yelkouan Shearwater (<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>)	Face mask	Entanglement	Cyprus	current study

long-term monitoring data on the breeding areas of the species are few and fragmentary (Derhé, 2012; Keller *et al.*, 2020). The species returns to its breeding grounds in late October-early November. Egg-laying takes place from mid-March to early April, followed by hatching in May, with the chicks fledging from July to early August (Bourgeois *et al.*, 2008). During the non-breeding period, the species spends time in Greece and possibly Cyprus as indicated by relevant studies (Borg & Sultana, 2012; authors' unpublished data) and open-access data obtained from BirdLife's global seabird telemetry database (Seabird Tracking database: <http://www.seabirdtracking.org/>).

The COVID-19 pandemic appears to be an emergent global challenge for marine ecosystems in the Mediterranean due to the extensive use of PPE-related material and its contribution to ongoing plastic pollution (Mghili *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, a recent study which was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 established a baseline for beach litter along the Cypriot coastline (Orthodoxou *et al.*, 2022a). While the study did not focus on COVID-19 related debris, it reveals that 0.1% of the litter found on all 20 sites was PPE. According to the supplementary material (Orthodoxou *et al.*, 2022b) and our calculations, PPE densities along the entire Cypriot coastline are estimated at 0.0005 ± 0.0001 items per m² for 2021. However, a more detailed study is currently ongoing and will tackle this particular question in depth. Pelagic seabirds, such as the Yelkouan Shearwater, are already susceptible to marine plastic pollution worldwide and, therefore, the increase in plastic waste in the marine environment caused by disposable pandemic-related debris has become an additive risk that contributes and plausibly amplifies the overall threat (Wilcox *et al.*, 2015; Fadare & Okoffo, 2020). The current study highlights additional direct impacts of COVID-19 PPE material on marine birds as well as the urgent need to assess possible relevant incidental entanglements and the rates of pandemic-related plastic exposure at a national, regional and global scale.

Acknowledgements

This study was funded by “Operational Programme ‘Thalassa’ 2014-2020”, financed by the European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) 2014-2020 under Tender number 13/2020 ‘Seabird surveys in the Marine Waters of Cyprus’ and the Republic of Cyprus. We are very grateful to the skippers and crew of the Marine & Environmental Research (MER) Lab of Cyprus for their assistance during onboard surveys, as well as to Maria Christou and Panagiota Santikou for their contribution to seabird observations and to Athina Kokkali for preparation of the map. Lastly, we also thank three anonymous reviewers for their useful comments.

References

- Ammendolia, J., Saturno, J., Bond, A.L., O’Hanlon, N.J., Masden, E.A. *et al.*, 2022. Tracking the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic-related debris on wildlife using digital platforms. *Science of the Total Environment*, 848, 157614.
- Benson, N.U., Bassey, D.E., Palanisami, T., 2021. COVID pollution: impact of COVID-19 pandemic on global plastic waste footprint. *Heliyon*, 7 (2), e06343.
- BirdLife International, 2018. *Puffinus yelkouan*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2018:e.T22698230A132637221. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2018-2.RLTS.T22698230A132637221.en>. Downloaded on 14 November 2022.
- Boisseau, O., Lacey, C., Lewis, T., Moscrop, A., Danbolt, M. *et al.*, 2010. Encounter rates of cetaceans in the Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area. *Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom*, 90 (8), 1589-1599.
- Borg, J.J., Sultana, J., 2012. The Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* at I-Irdum tal-Madonna, Malta. p. 48-53. In: *Ecology and Conservation of Mediterranean Seabirds and other bird species under the Barcelona Convention*. Yé-sou, P., Baccetti, N., Sultana, J. (Eds). Proceedings of the 13th Medmaravis Pan-Mediterranean Symposium. Alghero (Sardinia) 14-17 Oct. 2011. Medmaravis, Alghero.
- Bourgeois, K., Vidal, E., 2008. The endemic Mediterranean Yelkouan shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*: distribution, threats and a plea for more data. *Oryx*, 42 (2), 187-194.
- Bourgeois, K., Vidal, E., Comor, V., Legrand, J., Dromzee, S., 2008. Colony-site selection drives management priorities for Yelkouan shearwater populations. *Journal Wildlife Management*, 72 (5), 1188-1193.
- Butterworth, A., 2016. A Review of the Welfare Impact on Pinnipeds of Plastic Marine Debris. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 3 (149), 1-10.
- Camphuysen, C.J., Garthe, S., 2004. Recording foraging seabirds at sea: Standardized recording and coding of foraging behavior and multi-species foraging associations. *Atlantic Seabirds*, 6 (1), 1-32.
- Canning-Clode, J., Sepúlveda, P., Almeida, S., Monteiro, J., 2020. Will COVID-19 Containment and Treatment Measures Drive Shifts in Marine Litter Pollution? *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 7, 691.
- Coll, M., Piroddi, C., Steenbeek, J., Kaschner, K., Ben Rais Lasram, F. *et al.*, 2010. The Biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea: Estimates, Patterns, and Threats. *PLoS ONE*, 5 (8), e11842.
- Constantino, E., Martins, I., Salazar, J.M., Bessa, F., 2019. Abundance and composition of floating marine macro litter on the eastern sector of the Mediterranean Sea. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 138, 260-265.
- Cózar, A., Sanz-Martín, M., Martí, E., González-Gordillo, J.I., Ubeda, B. *et al.*, 2015. Plastic Accumulation in the Mediterranean Sea. *PLoS ONE*, 10 (4), e0121762.
- Damian, M., Fraser, G.S., 2020. Incorporation of anthropogenic debris into double-crested cormorant nests, Toronto, Ontario. *Journal of Great Lakes Research*, 46 (6), 1761-1766.
- Derhé, M., 2012. Developing a population assessment for Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*. pp. 65-73. In: *Ecology*

- and Conservation of Mediterranean Seabirds and other bird species under the Barcelona Convention. Yésou, P., Baccetti, N., Sultana, J. (Eds). Proceedings of the 13th Medmaravis Pan-Mediterranean Symposium. Alghero (Sardinia) 14-17 Oct. 2011. Medmaravis, Alghero.
- Derraik, J.G.B., 2002. The pollution of the marine environment by plastic debris: A review. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 44 (9), 842-852.
- Dias, M.P., Martin, R., Pearmain, E.J., Burfield, I.J., Small, C. *et al.*, 2019. Threats to seabirds: A global assessment. *Biological Conservation*, 237, 525-537.
- ESRI, 2007. ArcGIS Desktop: Release 9.2. Redlands, CA: Environmental Systems Research Institute.
- Fadare, O.O., Okoffo, E.D., 2020. Covid-19 face masks: a potential source of microplastic fibers in the environment. *Science of the Total Environment*, 737, 140279.
- Fric, J., Portolou, D., Manolopoulos, A., Kastritis, T., 2012. *Important Areas for Seabirds in Greece*. LIFE07 NAT/GR/000285 – Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS / BirdLife Greece), Athens, 208 pp.
- Gallo Neto, H., Gomes Bantel, C., Browning, J., Della Fina, N., Albuquerque Ballabio, T. *et al.*, 2021. Mortality of a juvenile Magellanic penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus*, Spheniscidae) associated with the ingestion of a PFF-2 protective mask during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 166, 112232.
- Harrison, P., Perrow, M.R., Larsson, H., 2021. *Seabirds. The New Identification Guide*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, 600 pp.
- Hatami, T., Rakib, M.R.J., Madadi, R., De-la-Torre, G.E., Idris, A.M. 2022. Personal protective equipment (PPE) pollution in the Caspian Sea, the largest enclosed inland water body in the world. *Science of the Total Environment*, 824, 153771.
- Hiemstra, A.-F., Rambonnet, L., Gravendeel, B., Schilthuizen, M., 2021. The effects of COVID-19 litter on animal life. *Animal Biology*, 71 (2), 215-231.
- Hoiberg, M.A., Woods, J.S., Verones, F., 2022. Global distribution of potential impact hotspots for marine plastic debris entanglement. *Ecological Indicators*, 135, 108509.
- Keller, V., Herrando, S., Voříšek, P., Franch, M., Kipson, M. *et al.*, 2020. *European Breeding Bird Atlas 2: Distribution, Abundance and Change*. European Bird Census Council & Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, 967 pp.
- Kühn, S., van Franeker, J.A., 2020. Quantitative overview of marine debris ingested by marine megafauna. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 151, 110858.
- Law, K.L., Narayan, R., 2022. Reducing environmental plastic pollution by designing polymer materials for managed end-of-life. *Nature Reviews Materials*, 7 (2), 104-116.
- Macias, D., Cózar, A., Garcia-Gorriz, E., González-Fernández, D., Stips, A., 2019. Surface water circulation develops seasonally changing patterns of floating litter accumulation in the Mediterranean Sea. A modelling approach. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 149, 110619
- Mghili, B., Analla, M., Aksissou, M., 2022. Face masks related to COVID-19 in the beaches of the Moroccan Mediterranean: An emerging source of plastic pollution. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 174, 113181.
- Nicolaou, H., Dendrinou, P., Marcou, M., Michaelides, S., Karamanlidis, A.A., 2021. Re-establishment of the Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* in Cyprus: priorities for conservation. *Oryx*, 55 (4), 526-528.
- Orthodoxou, D.L., Loizidou, X.I., Baldwin, C., Kocareis, C., Karonias, A. *et al.*, 2022a. Seasonal and geographic variations of marine litter: A comprehensive study from the island of Cyprus. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 177, 113495.
- Orthodoxou, D.L., Loizidou, X.I., Baldwin, C., Kocareis, C., Karonias, A. *et al.*, 2022b. Seasonal and geographic variations of marine litter: A comprehensive study from the island of Cyprus– the Dataset (Version 1) [Data set] Zenodo, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6141878.
- Pettex, E., David, L., Authier, M., Blanck, A., Dorémus, G. *et al.*, 2017. Using large scale surveys to investigate seasonal variations in seabird distribution and abundance. Part I : The North Western Mediterranean Sea. *Deep Sea Research Part II: Topical Studies in Oceanography*, 141, 74-85.
- Rodríguez, A., Arcos, J.M., Bretagnolle, V., Dias, M.P., Holmes, N.D. *et al.*, 2019. Future Directions in Conservation Research on Petrels and Shearwaters. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 6, 94.
- Snape, R.T.E., Broderick, A.C., Çiçek, B.A., Fuller, W.J., Glen, F. *et al.*, 2016. Shelf life: Neritic habitat use of a turtle population highly threatened by fisheries. *Diversity and Distributions*, 22 (7), 797-807.
- Snape, R.T.E., Çiçek, B.A., Hadjioannou, L., Öztürk, A.A., Beton, D., 2020. Two sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) sightings in Cyprus from social media. *Journal of the Black Sea/Mediterranean Environment*, 26 (2), 238-248.
- Soto-Navarro, J., Jordá, G., Deudero, S., Alomar, C., Amores, Á. *et al.*, 2020. 3D hotspots of marine litter in the Mediterranean: A modeling study. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 155, 111159.
- Stokes, K.L., Broderick, A.C., Canbolat, A.F., Candan, O., Fuller, W.J. *et al.*, 2015. Migratory corridors and foraging hotspots: Critical habitats identified for Mediterranean green turtles. *Diversity and Distributions*, 21 (6), 665-674.
- Strindberg, S., Buckland, S.T., 2004. Zigzag survey designs in line transect sampling. *Journal of Agricultural, Biological, and Environmental Statistics*, 9 (4), 443-461.
- Suaria, G., Avio, C., Mineo, A., Lattin, G.L., Magaldi, M.G. *et al.*, 2016. The Mediterranean Plastic Soup: Synthetic polymers in Mediterranean surface waters. *Scientific Reports*, 6, 37551.
- Suaria, G., Aliani, S., 2014. Floating debris in the Mediterranean Sea. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 86 (1-2), 494-504.
- Tesfaldet, Y.T., Ndeh, N.T., 2022. Assessing face masks in the environment by means of the DPSIR framework. *Science of the Total Environment*, 814, 152859.
- Wilcox, C., van Sebille, E., Hardesty, B.D., 2015. Threat of plastic pollution to seabirds is global, pervasive, and increasing. *PNAS*, 112 (38), 11899-11904.
- Wilcox, C., Mallos, N.J., Leonard, G.H., Rodriguez, A., Hardesty, B.D., 2016. Using expert elicitation to estimate the impacts of plastic pollution on marine wildlife. *Marine Policy*, 65, 107-114.
- Zakkak, S., Panagiotopoulou, M., Halley, J.M., 2013. Estimating the abundance of shearwaters and gulls in the north Aegean Sea. *Marine Ornithology*, 41 (2), 141-148.