

#### ENDANGERED LANDSCAPES PROGRAMME

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The Endangered Landscapes Programme offers an exciting and inspirational vision for the future in which European landscapes are enriched with biodiversity, establishing resilient, more self-sustaining ecosystems that benefit both nature and people.

The programme is funded by Arcadia, a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin, and is managed by the Cambridge Conservation Initiative.

Cambridge  
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#### PROJECT OVERVIEW

## RESTORING MARINE ECOSYSTEM CONNECTIVITY IN SOUTH WESTERN TURKEY



ENDANGERED  
LANDSCAPES  
PROGRAMME



Where the Central Aegean and the North East Levantine Seas meet, Mediterranean waters provide critical habitat for some of its most charismatic species, including sandbar sharks, loggerhead turtles and sperm whales. These waters have long provided local people with sustainable livelihoods through fishing, but this traditional way of life is being threatened by illegal and unregulated fishing activity, damage from tourism and invasive species from the Red Sea. To achieve recovery of this essential seascape for native species in the face of climate change, this project will scale-up a successful pilot project to restore more than 500 km of vulnerable marine habitat along the Turkish Mediterranean coast. This will help re-establish ecosystem connectivity, provide space for habitat and species recovery, and strengthen the first line of defence against invasive species from the Red Sea.

### THE TURKISH MEDITERRANEAN COAST

The project area straddles the meeting of two Ecologically and Biologically Sensitive Areas (EBSAs) in the Mediterranean Basin: the Central Aegean Sea and the North East Levantine Sea. Dotted throughout this project area are important pockets of intact seagrass beds and coralligenous habitats, which provide a home for some of the Mediterranean's most charismatic species including monk seals, sandbar sharks, loggerhead turtles and sperm whales, as well as important commercial fish species (such as Dusky grouper and Bluefin tuna) and migratory sea birds.



### PROJECT CONTEXT AND OPPORTUNITY

Despite its ecological interest, the Mediterranean Basin is vulnerable to irrecoverable habitat and species loss. As global sea temperatures rise, an increasing number of invasive marine species are entering the Mediterranean from the Red Sea via the Suez Canal - 900 invasive species have already been recorded. The number of native species is simultaneously dwindling as unregulated fishing activity and unsustainable tourism erode ecosystem functionality and damage the habitat on which these species depend. These activities are also reducing numbers of the predatory species that currently help keep invasive species in check.

Local communities have already been seriously affected by these changes to marine life; over the last 15 years there has been a sharp decrease in catch size and number of target species, much to the detriment of the livelihoods of nearly 70,000 people living in the area who depend on healthy marine resources.

A pilot marine habitat restoration project in nearby Gökova Bay has, however, yielded exciting results. In just five years, there has been significant recovery of habitat and fish stocks, an increase in fishing incomes, reduced abundance of invasive species and the return of predatory sandbar sharks and Mediterranean monk seals. This project will scale-up this successful model along more than 500km of vulnerable Turkish Mediterranean coast.

### WHAT THE PROJECT WILL DO

This project will remove barriers to the recovery of marine ecosystem from Gökova Bay to Cape Gelidonya, triggering the revival of healthy ecosystem processes. A fully-functioning ecosystem which keeps invasive species in check will generate sustainable benefits for local people and increase resilience to climate change.

To achieve its aims, the project will:

- Work with local people and government to protect and sustainably manage marine habitat along the Muğla and Antalya coast, including the establishment of new no-fishing zones patrolled by community-based ranger teams
- Reduce pressures from illegal and unsustainable fishing, improving ecosystem health and fish numbers and catch size over time
- Raise awareness about the threats posed by invasive species and create markets that encourage trade in these species, thereby reducing their impact in hampering habitat and native species recovery
- Help local stakeholders generate revenues through more sustainable use of marine resources, such as development of licensing schemes for divers, and permits for boat moorings or recreational fishers
- Develop best practice guidelines for marine tourism, including waste management
- Regulate boat mooring to enable seagrass recovery



### PROJECT LEAD:

Fauna & Flora International

### PROJECT PARTNERS:

- Akdeniz Koruma Derneği (AKD)
- Ege University
- Fisheries and Agriculture General Directorate (FAGD)
- UNEP-WCMC

...in collaboration with other key partners in state and university institutions

**“Fishing has been a traditional way of life in the Mediterranean for thousands of years, but is increasingly unviable due to dwindling fish stocks. Restoring the seascape will enable this way of life to continue, offering a model for replication elsewhere in the Mediterranean”.**

**Zafer Kizilkaya**

President of Akdeniz Koruma Derneği