

ALBATROS PROJECT

MONOGRAPH







With the collaboration of :

The Cory's Shearwater Calonectris diomedea diomedea,

Updated state of knowledge and conservation of the nesting populations of the small Mediterranean islands

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CONTEXT

The Mediterranean Small Islands Initiative

The Conservatoire du Littoral has been coordinating, since 2005, an international programme for the promotion and assistance for the management of Mediterranean insular micro-spaces, known as the PIM Initiative for the Mediterranean Small Islands, which is financed by the Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM) (French Global Environment Facility), the Agence de l'Eau Rhone Méditerranée-Corse and the city of Marseilles. The PIM Initiative is developing a mechanism for the exchange and sharing of knowledge which is necessary for the emergence of good management practices of exceptional spaces. The Albatross project was been set up within the framework of this programme to enhance the knowledge of Mediterranean nesting bird species. To update the knowledge on these species, the PIM Initiative has coordinated the preparation of monographs which finally are to serve as a guiding document for reflecting on the conservation of these species in the Mediterranean.

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GENERAL DATA

Scientific name of the Mediterranean subspecies: *Calonectris diomedea diomedea* French name : Puffin cendré Spanish name : Pardela cenicienta Italian name : Berta maggiore

Protection Codes

Barcelona convention : Annex II Berne convention : Annex II Birds Directive : Annex I IUCN redlist: Least concerned



DESCRIPTION OF SPECIES

Cory's Shearwater, *Calonectris diomedea* is represented by three sub-species : the nominal form *C. d. diomedea* (Scopoli, 1769) present throughout the Mediterranean, *C. d. borealis* (Cory, 1881) in the Macaronesian islands and *C. d. edwardsii* (Oustalet, 1883) in the Cape Verde islands but whose taxonomic status is still uncertain (Thibault *et al.* 1997).

This pelagic bird of the *Procellariidae* family is the largest of this family nesting in Europe. It is 45 to 56 cm long with a 110 to 125 cm span. The adult average weight is 650g.

The females are slightly smaller than the males but at sea gender and age cannot be recognized. The age of the individuals can be ascertained when the young birds take to flight as their plumage is complete and contrasted whereas the adults have molted primaries and dull plumage at this time of the year.

Cory's Shearwater has a strongly contrasting plumage between the back and the underside. The bird's upper part is brown to grey-brown whereas the lower area is white. The breast, neck and head are grey.

When the young bird starts flying it has the « adult » type of plumage.

The beak is yellow, light coloured at the base and dark at its extremity, with tubular nostrils. It has pink webbed feet.

Like most Shearwaters, Cory's Shearwater flies close to the water and when the weather is calm, its flight is nonchalant. When the wind rises, it glides for a long while close to the water, is very rapid and agile.

Cory's Shearwater vocalizes in flight and on the ground, basically at the beginning and end of the night when the birds arrive at the colonies and take off again. Males and females vocalize differently so that they can be distinguished. Their cries are plaintive, raucous and noisy and similar to the crying of new-borns or lamentations. The females make more low-pitched sounds than the males. Mated birds sing as a duo when they are in the nest

before laying eggs and for quite a while during the breeding period. The colonies, however, become less noisy towards the end of the raising period as the adults become quieter and the non-breeding birds had left the sites.

Shearwaters' droppings are recognizable on the ground as they are quite liquid and whitish.

ECOLOGY and HABITAT





Cory's Shearwater breeds exclusively on islands and islets. The species nests in crevices, caves and in burrows dug out by other species and which the birds arrange to suit them. The birds can also nest on the ground under the vegetation, under roots and in artificial sites (holes in walls). This type of hypogenous nesting ensures protection against predators and the heat.

This species lays one single egg per year which is completely white and which is not replaced in case of failure. Synchronized egg laying takes place at the end of May and hatching at the beginning of July (Late July for the Balearic colonies and Italy). The average incubation and chick raising period is 52 and 89 days respectively.

The breeding adults usually form colonies of variable size, mono-specific mixed (in association with the Yelkouan Shearwater). The adults are faithful to their partners and to their breeding sites (philopatry) (Thibault 1994).

Sexual maturity is reached after 4-5 years. The young immature individuals or those ready to mate return to the colonies of their birth during the breeding period. They do a bit of prospection to find a burrow and a partner.

Cory's Shearwater spends most of its time at sea, returning to land only for breeding at the end of February to mid-October. In the colonies the birds are active only at night when searching for a burrow or for mating, taking over for incubation or for feeding the young. In general the adults are found in burrows during the day only during incubation and a few days after hatching, until the thermal emancipation of the young chick.

The Shearwater colonies are particularly active during moonless nights which are also known as « dark moon » nights. They are considerably less active when the moon is shining brightly doubtlessly to limit the risks of predation (Mougeot & Bretagnolle 2000).

During the breeding season, the breeding adults make short trips to the sea generally for a day (1 - 6 days) to feed themselves and to provide their young with food. Both male and female feed the chicks.

At sea, the individuals congregate to fish with their own kind or with other species. They are often observed in association with marine mammals (dolphins) or large pelagic fish (tuna). Before sunset, at sea they form large "rafts » comprising several hundreds, up to thousands of individuals before returning to the breeding sites.

They eat mostly small species of pelagic crustaceans, fish and cephalopods. Cory's Shearwater feeds basically by fishing close to the surface of the sea or during shallow dives of short duration. (Monteiro *et al.* 1996, Mougin and Mongin 1998). It frequently follows the trawlers to catch the waste thrown into the sea when the fish are being discarded and also the long-lines to catch the bait (Sanchez & Belda 2003). Only few birds winter in the Mediterranean (Borg *et al.* 1999). Most of them fly to the Atlantic Ocean rapidly once the young birds have flown away, going through Gibraltar between mid-October and mid-November (Telleria 1980, Finlaysson 1992). The birds return to the Mediterranean via Gibraltar in February and March (Corés *et al.* 1980) to get back to their colonies from the second week in February onwards.

The wintering zones are little known and the available data suggests that they overwinter in the Atlantic Ocean and could go as far as the Indian Ocean (Mougin *et al.* 1988; revue in Thibault et al. 1997). Data obtained through telemetry and geo-location indicate that the Mediterranean Cory's Shearwaters overwinter in the Atlantic, mainly to the north of the equator; near the current of the Canaries, near Mauritania and Senegal, in the Gulf of Guinea and near Brazil (Ristow *et al.* 2000, Bretagnolle and Thibault 2001)

The CNRS (National Scientific Research Centre) is at present implementing a programme in France (in Corsica, the Hyères islands and the Marseilles islands) to identify the marine habitats of Cory's Shearwaters during the breeding period as well as their wintering areas.

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION NUMBERS

This nominal sub-species of Cory's Shearwater is the only one present in southern Europe and thus in the Mediterranean. Its distribution area stretches from the Greek islands to the Chafarinas islands but most of the bird numbers are concentrated in the Straits of Sicily.

Until 2010, the total population of the species was estimated at approx. 80 000 pairs. A census via distance sampling in 2010 within the framework of the Mediterranean Small Island programme made it possible to estimate a population of over 100 000 nesting pairs just on the Zembra island (Tunisia), thus indeed questioning the information on the numbers of the species.





Table 1: Table of numbers of breeding Cory's Shearwaters in the Mediterranean. (Calonectris diomedea diomedea)

	Data location	Number of broading couples	
Country	Archipelago / Island or islet	Number of breeding couples	References
	Riou archipelago	280-300	CEN PACA 2010 com. pers.
	Frioul archipelago	70	
ance	Hyères islands archipelago	180-370	Pascal Gillet, PN Port-Cros com. pers.
Fre	South Corsica	300-400	Association of friends of the
	North Corsica	38-40	PNR of Corsica - 2010
	Total France	868-11	180
	Tremiti islands	300-400	Brichetti & Fracasso 2003, Baccetti <i>et al.,</i> 2009
	Archipelago of the Pontine islands	220-345	
	East Sardinia	40-150	Baccetti <i>et al.,</i> 2009
	West Sardinia	750-2450	
	Tavolara archipelago	10-50	
calie	Maddalena archipelago	615-1545	Fozzi <i>et al.</i> ,1998; Baccetti <i>et al.</i> , 2009; Rabouam <i>et al.</i> , 1995; Casaraccio & Racheli 1993
=	Sulcis archipelago	505-1050	Martin <i>et al.,</i> 2000, <i>Baccetti et al.,</i> 2009
	Aeolian or Lipari islands archipelago	30-80	
	Ustica (Sicily)	15-20	
	Egadi islands archipelago	60-150	
	Pelagie islands archipelago	10070-10120	Baccetti <i>et al.,</i> 2009
	Pantelleria (Sicily)	500-5000	
	Tuscan archipelago	230-505	
	Total Italy	13 345-2	1 865
Malta	Malta	1550	

	Comino	15-20	Sultana and al., 2011				
	Filfla	200					
	Gozo	2300					
	Total Malta	4100					
Algeria	Habibas islands archipelago	350-500	Mante <i>et al.,</i> 2007 ; PIM initiative				
	Zembra archipelago	113 720-176 750	Pierre Defos Du Rau <i>et al.,</i> 2012 ; PIM initiative <i>in prep.</i>				
Tunisia	la Galite archipelago	250-500	Vidal & Tranchant, 2008 ; PIM Inititiative				
	Total Tunisia	113 97	70-177 250				
	Columbretes archipelago	50	D.G. Medio Natural, Conselleria de Medio Ambiente				
	Cabrera archipelago	922					
	Formentera	<50					
	Ibiza and islets	200-500	Joan Mayol Serra pers. com.				
	Majorca islands & islets	220-230	Govern de les Isles Baleares.				
Spain	Minorca islands & islets	950-1700					
	Isla de Terreros and Isla Negra	30	Arcos and al., 2009				
	Isla de las Palomas	100	Garcia <i>et al.,</i> 2009				
	Islotes de Murcia	67-123					
	Chafarinas	800-1000	Arcos <i>et al.,</i> 2009				
	Total Spain	33	89-4705				
Croatia	Total Croatia	1200-1750	Budinski <i>et al.,</i> 2010				
	Crete	1245-2010					
Grooco	Agean	890-1295					
GIEELE	Cyclades	760-1395	Hellenic Ornithological Society				
	Ionian	2060-3100	– birdlife Greece. Pers. comm.				
	•	•	1				

Total Greece	5191-8275	
Sporades	30-80	
Еуvoia	81-156	
Douceanese	125-250	

> Next page is presented a map elaborated with the previous data.



Calonectris diomedea diomedea- Geographical distribution of Mediterranean breeding populations (PIM- 2012)

In addition, the following map is outlining the localization of *Calonectris diomedea diomedea* breeding pairs in the Balearic Islands (data provided by the species protection department, Govern islas Balear)



Balearic archipelago, *Calonectris diomedea diomedea* breeding pairs localization Majorca and Cabrera (left map) Minorca (upper right) Ibiza and Formentera (lower right)

Breeding Phenology:

	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
Mating												
Egg laying												
Hatching												
Incubation												
Fledging												

Table of field work periods

The Shearwater colonies are particularly active during moonless nights which are also known as the « dark moon » nights. Moonlight (and any other source of quite a strong light) affects the activity and the presence of the birds in the colonies. Thus the best results for capturing and ringing the adults is during the previous week and during a moonless night, and this is more efficient during the period of the waning crescent moon.

	Mar	Apr	May	June	July		Aug		Sept	Oct	
Control of reproduction				Laying		Hat	ching			Fledging	
Ringing	Adult	Adult					Adult	:	Adult	Young	

State of population dynamics

The species population dynamics in the Mediterranean is still difficult to evaluate. This has become even more difficult due to the recent census of Zembra island (Tunisia) population which showed almost 140 000 nesting pairs on just this island, thus questioning the information on the numbers in the Mediterranean which so far had been estimated at under 80 000 pairs.

The breeding success is highly variable from one site to another and depends on the existing threats and the management actions which have been set up. For example, the breeding success of the Marseilles islands is 0,5 young fledged per pair which reproduced in 2003 whereas it is higher than 0,85 since 2004, a year during which management actions had been strengthened (getting rid of rats namely) thanks to the Life programme "Conservation of the marine bird populations of the Marseilles islands".

In the North African islands the breeding success is generally very low (between 0 and 0,3 fledging per breeding pair). It would be important to undertake long-term demographic monitoring of these islands. The apparent stability and maintenance of these colonies is due to the long longevity of these birds (over 30 years) but long-term monitoring could in fact show a decline of the population on these sites.

Even though it is difficult to study the population dynamics on a Mediterranean scale, two types of populations can nevertheless be distinguished; those that benefited from management actions and which are stable and even increasing slightly, and those submitted to strong pressures with no conservation actions and which are declining or which maintain themselves in the « short term » due to the number of adult birds.

MAIN THREATS IDENTIFIED IN THE INSULAR ENVIRONMENT

The threats identified can be of different origin:

- Threats acting outside of the breeding sites, in direct or indirect connection with fishing activities, food source, climate phenomena or eventual pollution. These types of threats are difficult to identify and quantify.

- *in situ* threats, mainly predation or disturbances caused by introduced or indigenous species. The greatest threat is the predation of eggs and chicks by introduced mammals (black rats and feral cats) and light/noise pollution.

The following table shows the different threats identified for Cory's Shearwater at sea and on land in the breeding sites:

Threats		Zone studied	Impact of threat		
On reproduction sites					
	Feral cat (<i>Felix catus</i>)	Hyères islands and Frioul archipelago (France) Pontine islands, Tavolara, Maddalena archipelago (Italy) Zembra and Galite islands (Tunisia) Malta Linosa	Predation of prospecting and breeding adults , killing of chicks		
Introduced mammals	Black rat (<i>Rattus rattus</i>) Lapin de Garenne (rabbit) (<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>)	Almost all archipelagos I Marseilles islands (France)	Predation of eggs and young chicks in the burrow Competition for the habitat, direct or indirect destruction of the burrows		
	Wild dogs	Frioul archipelago (France) Pelagie and Egades islands archpelago (Italy) Malta Linosa	Disturbance in breeding colonies , killinf fledgings		
	Common Genet (<i>Genetta</i> genetta)	Cabrera	Predation		
	European pine Marten (<i>Martes martes</i>)	Minorque	Predation		
	Eurasian eagle-owl (Bubo bubo)	Riou archipelago(France)	Predation of adults		
Indigenous species	Yellow-legged gull	Hyères and Marseilles islands (France)	Disturbance of the adults,		
	(Larus michahellis)	At Pantaleu colony (Mallorca, Spain)	Egg predation (limited impact)		
	Peregrine falcon (<i>Falco</i>	Corsica	Chick predation		

	peregrinus)					
Anthropogenic origin	Lighting	Hyères islands (France)	Disorientation of birds due to public lighting			
		Malta				
	Human activities & tourism	Hyères islands (France)	Collapse of burrow due to visitors passing by			
		Balearic islands (Spain)	Disturbed return of birds which are also disturbed by boats mooring nearby			
		Linosa island (Italy)	Light and noise disturbance			
		Malta	Collision with telephone and electric wires			
	Taking of eggs	Maddalena archipelago (Italy)	Pratice which tends to disappear			
		Linosa island (Italy)				
	Poaching of adults	Malta	Mortality of adults			
At sea						
Human activities	Disturbance on rafting areas	Mediterranean	Behavioural disturbance			
Fishing activity	By-catch in fishing nets	South-East of French coasts	Mortality of adults due to drowning			
	By-catch through long-lines	Columbretes & Balearic islands (Spain), Gulf of Lion, Bonifacio detroit, Italian and Maltese waters	Mortality of adults captured through drowning			
	(Diminution of fish stocks)		Impossible for adults to properly feed their young			
	ightarrownot demonstrated					
Pollution due to			Contamination of birds			
hydrocarbons & chemicals						
Climate phenomena			Modification of trophic quality in wintering zones, more frequent storms			

CONSERVATION CHALLENGES & ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN HITHERTO INSULAR ENVIRONMENT





In view of the threats as explained, the conservation challenges for Cory's Shearwater on a Mediterranean scale are as follows:

- o Complete the data on the distribution of the species
- o Enhance the knowledge on the biology and ecology of the species
- Assess the state of health of the populations
- $\circ\;$ Clearly identify the threats and their impact on the breeding sites and on the wintering areas
- o Limit the causes of mortality and disturbance
- o Maintain favourable conditions for breeding and the development of the colonies
- o Promote successful breeding

A number of conservation actions have been carried out so far for this species. Here are some examples:

- o Census campaigns (France, Spain , Italy, Malta, Tunisia, Greece, Algeria)
- o Study of the biology and ecology of the species (France, Malta, Greece and Spain)
- Monitoring of the populations (breeding monitoring of and ringing)
- o Regulation or eradication of introduced mammal populations (France, Malta, Italy, Tunisia)
 - Providing artificial nesting sites (France, Spain)
 - o dynamisation of colonies free from disturbances by installing vocal bird call systems. (France)
- o Public awareness creation campaigns (France, Malta, Spain)
- Organisation and management of frequentation to reduce disturbance to colonies (France)
- Creation of protected areas

Ringing campaign underway

Ringing programmes have been set up in France (Marseilles islands, Hyères islands, Corsica) in Spain (Chafarinas islands, Columbretes, Balearic Islands). The ringing of Cory's Shearwaters (breeding adults, prospectors and young before they fledge) is essential for the acquisition of knowledge on the biology and ecology of the species. This makes it possible to identify the individuals and enhance knowledge on the demography of the species. Ringing makes it possible to know the rate of recruitment and exchanges between the different colonies, to estimate the birds' longevity, age of sexual maturity and to obtain data on the birds' behaviour such as faithfulness to the reproduction site and to the partner.

Monitoring techniques used generally for this species :

> Breeding monitoring: three controls are carried out during the breeding period. One control of egg laying, a control a few days after the hatching of the chicks and a control just before the young fledge. This monitoring is done during the day and each burrow/nest is inspected using a lamp so as to determine the number of breeding pairs, the breeding success and to detect any eventual failures and at what stage of the breeding they occur.

➢ Ringing of adults: the birds are captured directly in the burrows when these are accessible (burrows which are not too deep or artificial nests) or else enticed outside the burrow thanks to the use of a vocal call system. This operation takes place at night.

➢ Ringing of young birds before they fledge: young birds do not react to the vocal call system and only accessible individuals (burrows which are not too deep or artificial nests) are ringed. This operation can take place during the day or at night.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS ADVOCATED FOR THE SMALL MEDITERRANEAN ISLANDS

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Thematic issue 1: Set-up a international network of actors

- Set-up a working group of actors for the prioritization of conservation action at regional scale
- Elaborate monitoring protocols for the specie (census and breeding monitoring) harmonized at Mediterranean scale

Thematic issue 2: Improvement of the knowledge concerning the species

- Study the ecology of the species at sea during breeding period. The utilization of telemetry (GPS, TDR and Argos tags) already has been used by the CEFE-CNRS and provide very interesting on movements and foraging area identification
- o Study the movement during inter nuptial period using GLS devices for example,
- Set-up census missions on the area where the distribution of the specie is not known: Algeria, NW Minorca.

Thematic issue 3 : Local conservation actions

- o Reduce locally the impact of human terrestrial activities,
 - Evaluate the importance of the frequentation, and manage it,
 - Set-up communication tools for public awareness outlining the threats identified on the specie and the necessity of its conservation,
- o Reduce the impact of Yellow-legged Gulls Larus michahellis on the colonies,
 - Culling of Yellow-legged gull when the impact of this specie is proved on Shearwater,
 - Elimination of Yellow-legged Gull nests present on Shearwaters colonies,
 - $(\rightarrow$ This measure can be useful and costly, Yellow legged Gull are part of the eco-system (*com.pers.* D. Oro))
 - stop illegal harvest

• Reduce the impact of Black Rat *Rattus rattus*, of Feral Cat *Felis silvestris*, and European rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

- (Raét eradication operations)

(This operation can be considered as useful only in the short term (Igual et al. 2009))

- Control of rabbit and cat populations

- Public awareness operation concerning the impact of introduced mammals on Shearwaters colonies.

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