



# IMPACT REPORT 2024





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**This document is in consistency of iSea's duties and obligations under its internal framework of actions.**

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**Revised by all iSea partners and signed by the Legal Representative, Ioannis Giovos.**

# CONTENTS

<b>CONSERVATION OFFICER'S LETTER</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>OUR VALUES - OUR VISION - OUR MISSION - PILLARS OF WORK</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2029</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FORMICULA ISLET IS URGENTLY PROTECTED</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>EUROPEAN ELASMOBRANCH ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2024</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>RESEARCH OUTPUT</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>MEET OUR TEAM</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>AQUATIC LITTER</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HUMAN &amp; AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>MARINE PROTECTED AREAS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>VULNERABLE SPECIES</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>SUSTAINABILITY REPORT</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>FUNDERS &amp; SPONSORS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ALLIANCES</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>PARTNERS</b>	<b>21</b>

# CONSERVATION OFFICER'S LETTER



Dear Friends and Supporters,

In yet another year of rising environmental challenges, iSea remained committed to protecting marine biodiversity in Greece and the Mediterranean. While the threats to our oceans grow, so does our determination. Every project, every scientific breakthrough, and every person who joins our mission brings us closer to real change.

2024 marked key milestones. Formicula Islet gained urgent protection, and we successfully hosted the largest-ever European Elasmobranch Association Conference in Greece. We updated the Greek Red List for sharks, rays, and chimaeras and tagged two angel sharks for the first time in Greece—a very important step for this critically endangered species. Our Bioblitzes mobilized 206 participants in biodiversity monitoring, while fishers stood with us for five years, removing more than 186 tons of marine litter, from our ocean. However, there are still challenges. Sometimes policy decisions do not align with scientific recommendations, as was the case in Formicula, where strict protection was advised, but not fully put into place. We must keep advocating for science-based policies at all levels.

Over the coming years, we will be implementing our strategic planning, that secures stronger and better protection for key sites and promotes science-based policies in Greece, the EU, and elsewhere.

All our work is made possible because individuals just like you - scientists, policy-makers, fishers, citizens - stand with us. Together we can ensure marine life continues to thrive.

Sincerely,  
Ioannis Giovos

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Conservation Officer



# OUR VALUES

COLLABORATION

TRANSPARENCY

SCIENTIFICITY

EQUITY

# OUR VISION

A healthy Mediterranean Sea supporting the sustainable development and resilience of the local coastal communities

# OUR MISSION

Preserve and restore the Mediterranean Sea together with local communities

# PILLARS OF WORK

AQUATIC  
LITTER

HUMAN &  
AQUATIC  
ECOSYSTEMS

MARINE  
PROTECTED  
AREAS

VULNERABLE  
SPECIES

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2029



MORE ON THE STRATEGIC  
PLAN 2024-2029

## CONSERVATION GOALS

- 1** Contribute to the sustainability of Mediterranean fisheries
- 2** Improve our knowledge regarding marine life and its threats
- 3** Improve the conservation and management of vulnerable species and key habitats in the Mediterranean
- 4** Contribute to the 30x30 goal
- 5** Improve the management and Restore Marine Protected Areas in Greece

## CONSERVATION ENABLERS

### EXTERNAL

- 6** Promote collaboration
- 7** Improve data availability and accessibility

### INTERNAL

- 8** Economic sustainability
- 9** HR stability and capacity increase
- 10** Reduce our environmental footprint
- 11** Appealing working environment



MORE ON THE RESULTS OF 2024

# STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS

## HR stability and capacity increase

The average diplomas' and certificates' score of the employees must stay above 2023 average score

# 392 %

iSea team now consists of certified DRONE pilots and more members are boat captains, capacity building also includes training on advocacy and waste crime prevention

## Promote collaboration

Become members of two networks

# 100 %

iSea joint the High Seas Alliance and the MedSea Alliance

## Improve Ocean Literacy

Implement 100 educational activities, school visits and open public events

# 100 %

iSea organized 40 educational activities, 32 school visits and 28 open public events

## Promote the active participation of citizens in environmental policymaking

Publish at least 2 reports advocating for the active participation of stakeholders in environmental policymaking

# 50 %

The report "12 years of public consultations on the environment via OpenGov" published by The Green Tank and iSea

## Contribute to the circular economy

Prevent 50 tn of mussel farming nets to reach the environment

# 48 %

iSea removed 24 tn of mussel farming nets from Axios Delta National Park in collaboration with the local mussel farming associations

## Improve data availability and accessibility

Develop new applications that will provide iSea's raw data regarding aquatic litter, fisheries and habitat mapping

# 33 %

One application developed on which raw data from marine litter samplings from iSea and anyone interested is available

## Contribute to the improvement of the Mediterranean fisheries sustainability

Train at least 200 fishers on best practices for handling and releases

# 22 %

iSea trained 43 professional Greek and Tunisian fishers on best handling and releasing techniques

## Encourage citizens to engage in Citizen Science

Increase by at least 15% the number of citizen scientists involved in iNaturalist

# 7 %

iNaturalist gained 2171 new citizen scientists involved

## Contribute to the improvement of the sustainability of Mediterranean fisheries

At least 500 participants will complete the relevant courses in MOOC platform

# 0 %

The MOOC platform is not completed yet



# FORMICULA ISLET IS URGENTLY PROTECTED



*A 200-meter protective buffer has been established around the 87-acre Formicula islet in the Inner Ionian Archipelago, though the measures fall short as fishing is allowed.*

**This unique islet that serves as a remarkable refuge of the threatened Mediterranean Monk Seal and is surrounded by Posidonia meadows!**

**Since 2022, iSea, in collaboration with Tethys Research Institute and Blue Marine Foundation, are conducting intense scientific research in the area to gather data that support policy decisions for its protection, primarily against unregulated tourism activities that threaten the wildlife. In 2024, our efforts attracted even more attention, especially from the local community, with more than 35 entities supporting this aim through a joint letter to the Ministry.**

**Finally, just before the end of the year, the Ministry of Environment and Energy issued the Ministerial Decision for the strict protection of Formicula.**

**Unfortunately, the Decision does not fully enforce the science based recommendations making it necessary for our efforts to continue toward improving the measures that will ensure the area's effective protection.**



# EUROPEAN ELASMOBRANCH ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2024

## TOPIC

Stronger collaboration for better conservation

## VALUES

Diversity - Equity - Community

**214**

participants

**19**

countries

**5**

keynote  
panels

**6**

interactive  
workshops

**54**

oral  
presentations

**39**

posters

*EEA 2024 was held in Greece, for the first time!*

Keynote speakers from all over the world including underrepresented areas shared insights on challenging topics. From innovative research to policy framework and the stimulation of public engagement, participants explored pressing issues related to elasmobranch conservation and engaged in interactive workshops.

EEA 2024 also encouraged young people to participate, with more than 40 young emerging researchers and conservationists participating in workshops and sessions, engaging in meaningful discussions and sharing their insights.

During the conference, the Angel Shark Project celebrated its 10th anniversary, setting renewed goals for the protection of Angel Sharks and fishers from Greece and Tunisia exchanged best practices for handling and releasing protected species and discovered alternative sources of income, such as fishing tourism.

Notably, EEA 2024 marked the launch of the LIFE Prometheus project, which brought together more than 30 experts from 18 partners, with the common mission of improving the conservation status of Mediterranean Sea sharks and rays.

# MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS



# 1



The conservation status of sharks, rays, and a chimaera was assessed by iSea's conservation officer, Ioannis Giovos, with the contribution of iSea team and the support of scientists worldwide, within the update of the Greek Red Book conducted by the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA), in collaboration with the IUCN, the Hellenic Zoological Society (HZS), and the Hellenic Botanical Society (HBS).

# 2



After 5 years of dedicated work for the protection of the Critically Endangered Angel sharks, this year for the first time ever in Greece, iSea encountered the first Angel shark alive in its natural environment during fieldwork, which was also captured by iSea's photographer Dimitris Tosidis.

# MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS



# 3



**This year, 4 Bioblitz events were organized in different regions of Greece, during which more than 200 participants were trained in large-scale data collection with the goal of increasing their participation in Citizen Science and enhancing knowledge about biodiversity.**

# 4



**For five consecutive years, fishers have stood by our side, aiming to reduce marine pollution and increase their awareness of data collection on benthic litter, actively contributing to citizen science. They have removed over 186 tons of waste and recorded 311,032 items in total.**

# RESEARCH OUTPUT



**9** articles in peer-reviewed journals

**4** published reports

**15** articles in International Conferences

## Selected articles in peer-reviewed journals

- **Giovos, I., Pytka, J.M., Barone, M., ..., Mazzoldi, C. (2024).** Conservation and management of chondrichthyans in the Mediterranean Sea: gaps, overlaps, inconsistencies, and the way forward. *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries*.
- **Kleitou, P., Rees, S. E., Kletou, D., Harris, H. E., Cai, L. L., Green, S., Hadjioannou, L., Savva, I., Giovos, I., Jimenez, C., & Hall-Spencer, J. M. (2024).** Marine protected areas can increase the abundance of invasive lionfish (*Pterois miles*). *Conservation Science and Practice*, e13147.
- **Sidiropoulou, N., Doumpas, N., Perrakis, E., ..., Moutopoulos, D. K. (2024).** Investigating Consumer Attitudes and Market Trading of Edible Marine Invasive Alien Species in the Greek Seafood Market. *Sustainability*, 16(19), 8479.

## Selected reports

- **Athinaïou, I., Pyloridou, K., Piselli, M., Naasan Aga -Spyridopoulou, R.** Layman's Report Series Assessing the health status of *Posidonia* meadows in the Inner Ionian Sea. Report I: *Posidonia* meadows adjacent to aquaculture facilities in Kalamos. iSea, Greece, 2024. 9pp.
- **Charitou A., Politikos D., Tzioga I., Deery E., Plitharas A., Tsoukalas K., Tsolka E., Augoustidi V., Danis K., Addamo A. M. (2024).** EValuating Marine Litter in Greece. Project "EVMAR"

## Selected articles in International Conferences

- **Athinaïou I., Pyloridou K., Naasan Aga-Spyridopoulou R., Giovos I. (2024).** Showcasing the importance of Erimitis marine area by creating a species checklist using multiple sources: A preliminary study. 5th International Congress on Applied Ichthyology, Oceanography, and Aquatic Environment (HydroMediT), Mytilene, Greece, 30 May - 2 June 2024.
- **Ciprian M., Giovos I., Naasan Aga-Spyridopoulou R., Mazzoldi C., Moutopoulos D. K. (2024).** Bycatch of threatened sharks and rays in Amvrakikos Wetlands National Park, Greece. European Elasmobranch Association, Thessaloniki, Greece 21-24 October
- **Karagiannis A. N., Naasan Aga – Spyridopoulou R., Giovos I., Kitsiou D., Moutopoulos K. D. (2024).** Small-Scale Fishing métiers in the Inner Ionian Archipelago. 5th International Congress on Applied Ichthyology, Oceanography, and Aquatic Environment (HydroMediT), Mytilene, Greece, 30 May-2 June 2024.
- **Pyloridou K., Athinaïou I., Giovos I., Naasan Aga-Spyridopoulou R. (2024).** Preliminary Results of Assessing the Ecological Status of *Posidonia oceanica* in Erimitis Peninsula. 5th International Congress on Applied Ichthyology, Oceanography, and Aquatic Environment (HydroMediT), Mytilene, Greece, 30 May-2 June 2024
- **Torrescasana Amador C., Giovos I., Naasan Aga-Spyridopoulou R., Ciprian M. (2024).** The Importance of Amvrakikos Gulf (Greece) as a Nursery Area for Sharks and Rays. European Elasmobranch Association, Thessaloniki, Greece 21-24 October

# DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT



**FOLLOWERS**

**REACH**



**24,539**

**769,949**



**4,522**

**74,052**



**2,425**



**3,478**

**81,091**



**44**

**22,211**



**22**

**3,096**



# MEET OUR TEAM

## Anastasia Charitou

Communication Officer



The most rewarding part of another year at iSea is that its story is shaped by the team! Working alongside such dedicated colleagues and achieving meaningful results constantly inspires our communication team to share our mission with passion and enthusiasm.

The greatest challenge—but also privilege—is conveying the impact of collective efforts together with our colleagues, fostering trust with our audience through clear and accurate communication, and translating research into actionable insights.

Thus, our strategy for the coming years is not just about providing information, but maintaining a genuine, lasting communication with our community and targeted audience.

## Thomas Chouliaras

Financial Officer



As an organisation with an increased number of employees, external collaborators, funders and ongoing project deliverables, efficient, but above all transparent finance management is crucial to maintaining our stability and sustainability.

In 2024, we increased our accountability, compliance and transparency of our financial decisions and resources towards our funders and partners, with information on our financial activities being easily accessible by everyone, always staying aligned with our strategic goals and core values. As we step into the new year, we are encouraged by the continuation of ongoing projects, the launch of new ones, the expansion of our collaborations, and the stability, but also diversification, of our funding sources.

Thus, we are prepared to tackle every spreadsheet, statement, and report needed to ensure that we continue serving our mission effectively.

## Martina Ciprian

Project Manager



This year our work in Amvrakikos Gulf continued, focusing on the conservation of sharks and rays, and their habitat. Thanks to the effort and dedication of our team, research activities advanced, and pioneering actions were implemented.

Looking ahead of the next year, we plan to commit to deepening our impact in the area through research and working close with the local community.

We aim to drive meaningful change by raising awareness on one of the world's most threatened vertebrate group, sharks and rays, and sharing the knowledge we have acquired with the international community of scientists and conservationists.



# OUR TEAM



# OUR INTERNS





# AQUATIC LITTER

## Prospero

35 CLEAN UPS

3,852 LITTER  
ITEMS REMOVED

978 VOLUNTEERS



## Fishing For Litter

68,671 LITTER  
ITEMS RECORDED

49 FISHING VESSELS

61 TONNES OF BENTHIC  
LITTER REMOVED



## My Beach. Our Planet.

8 CLEAN UPS

308 VOLUNTEERS

50,000 SQ M OF  
BEACH CLEANED



## #zeroplastic

13 SCHOOL VISITS

420 STUDENTS



## Home sweet...beach, keep it clean!

15 CLEAN UPS

476 VOLUNTEERS

5 TONNES OF LITTER  
REMOVED



## Marine Litter in Thermaikos Gulf

24 TONS OF MUSSEL FARMING  
NETS RECYCLED

111 PLASTIC BARRELS  
RECYCLED

23 MUSSEL FARMERS  
INVOLVED



# HUMAN & AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS



## obSERVING NATURE



## Pick the alien



# MARINE PROTECTED AREAS



## Erimitis



## Inner Ionian Sea



## East Lemnos



## Amvrakikos gulf





# VULNERABLE SPECIES

## Reposidonia



1.66 SQ KM OF POSIDONIA MEADOWS MAPPED

70 DRONE FLIGHTS TO MONITOR ANCHORING ON POSIDONIA MEADOWS

## By Elasmocatch



324 FISHING TRIPS MONITORED

45 SHARKS AND RAYS TAGGED

94 SHARKS AND RAYS RELEASED

## Angel Shark Project: Greece



2 INDIVIDUALS OF ANGEL SHARKS TAGGED FOR THE FIRST TIME

THE POPULATION OF THE 3 SPECIES ASSESSED FOR THE FIRST TIME

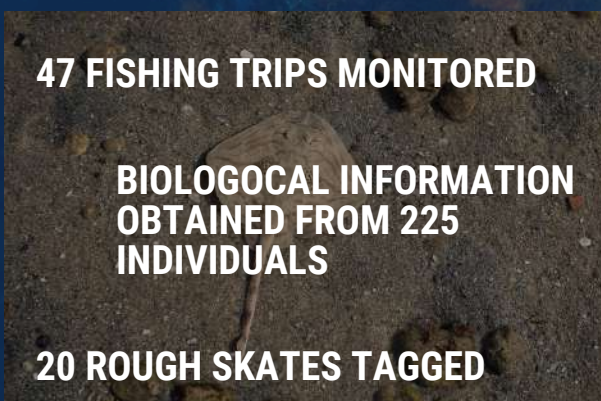
## Angel Sharks in Cyprus



1 REPORT ON THE LEGISLATION GAPS AND COMPLIANCE

SPECIES DISTRIBUTION MODELING FOR THE 3 SPECIES

## The Rough skate in the Thracian Sea



47 FISHING TRIPS MONITORED

BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM 225 INDIVIDUALS

20 ROUGH SKATES TAGGED

## Thermaikos Biodiversity Project



97 NEW DOLPHINS RECORDED

25 SNORKEL TRIPS

531 KIDS INFORMED

# CO<sub>2</sub>

## 1.98tn per person



**Transportation**  
1.56tn per person

**Boat**  
0.21tn per person



**Headquarters**  
0.09tn per person

**Field base**  
0.1tn per person



## To reduce its carbon footprint



### Headquarters

iSea improved its infrastructures by adding extra insulation in more spaces to reduce energy loss



### Transportation

iSea's car fleet consists of 2 electric cars since 2021

**7** kg of cigarette buds repurposed

supporting



**135** kg of coffee repurposed

supporting



**8,170** plastic cutleries saved

by using reusable and biodegradable cutleries in our events and workshops

**43** Lt of natural cleaning products used

instead of conventional products

# FUNDERS & SPONSORS



## FUNDERS

Blue Marine Foundation  
WWF Greece  
Athanasios C. Laskaridis Charitable Foundation  
Procter and Gamble Hellas  
Argosaronic Environment Foundation  
Rauch Foundation  
EEA Grants  
Bodosasaki Foundation  
Shark Conservation Fund  
LIFE - European Commission  
Pernod Ricard Hellas  
AB Vassilopoulos  
Ionian Environment Foundation  
Ocean Care  
Beyond Plastic Med Association  
Marine & Environmental Research Lab  
Sani Resort  
Shark Foundation  
Hellenic Ornithological Society  
WWf France  
Yubehero  
Re4earth  
American Farm School Thessaloniki Greece  
The Shark Trust  
Save our Seas  
Leibniz Institute for the Analysis of Biodiversity Change  
Individuals

## SPONSORS

Eurobank  
PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)  
Altair  
PCT  
Access Fashion  
Stone Group  
Accenture  
Kaizen Gaming  
Grant Thornton  
Saint Catherines  
Pinewood  
Bacardi  
Promo Shoot  
National Hellenic Student Association (NHSA)  
Innovasea  
Potamitisvekris Law Firm  
ELTA 90 MGR



# ALLIANCES

European Elasmobranch Association  
Amvrakikos Alliance  
Angel Shark Conservation Network  
Greek Wildlife Alliance  
Beyond Plastic Med  
High Seas Alliance  
Med Sea Alliance  
European Citizen Science Association  
Cooperation Network for the Marine Environment  
Greek Marine Wildlife Stranding Network  
European Alien Species Information Network



# PARTNERS



- Angel Shark Project
- American Farm School
- ARCHELON The Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece
- ARION
- Antigone Information and Documentation Centre
- Arion Fishing Club
- Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
- ÇOMU - Marine Science and Technology Faculty
- Erimitis Plous
- Florida International University
- GoodFairy
- Hellenic Ornithological Society
- Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature
- Fridays For Future
- Tethys Research Institute
- Terra Solutions
- The Cleaningans
- Turkish Marine Research Foundation
- HELMEPA
- Hellenic Rescue Team
- iNaturalist
- IUCN
- IUCN Shark Specialist Group
- INNOVASEA
- Ikion Diving
- InCommon
- Enalia Physis
- Skopelos Dive Center
- Save Erimitis
- SPOT
- Kyma: Sea Conservation & Research
- Katheti
- Marine and Environmental Research Lab
- Marine Biology in Libya
- MedINA
- Museum Koenig Bonn
- Goulandris Natural History Museum
- North Aegean Slops
- Oceanus-Lab
- Mamagea
- MECO Project
- PADI AWARE FOUNDATION
- Project Κα.Πα.
- Ente Fauna Marina Mediterranea
- ASCOB Syrtis
- National Rural Network
- Π3: Plastic Pollution Prevention
- The Shark Trust
- University of Padova
- University of Plymouth
- University of Patras
- Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
- WWF Hellas
- WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative
- ZSL



# IMPACT REPORT 2024



## Headquarters

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