


SICILY ENVIRONMENT FUND



ANNUAL REVIEW 2023





“Everywhere you look there are brilliant, passionate people working to create positive environmental change. Small amounts of funding, strategically directed, can supercharge this work”.

**BEN GOLDSMITH, FOUNDER,
CONSERVATION COLLECTIVE**

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The Sicily Environment Fund is a member of Conservation Collective, a global network of local foundations funding effective grass-roots conservation initiatives to protect the environment, restore nature and safeguard against climate change.



OUR VISION

The Sicily Environment Fund (SEF) aims to protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems of our beloved island of Sicily.

The SEF was established in 2022 to support local environmental and conservation initiatives, helping communities becoming leaders in the transition towards long-term resilience.

OUR STRATEGY

- Raising funds from people and businesses with strong connections to Sicily.
- Supporting projects that benefit environment and local communities and which can be scaled up and replicated.
- Building a strong network of people across Sicily, united in boosting the work of local environmental champions.



"Sicily is a biodiversity hotspot in the Mediterranean basin. Our mission at SEF is to provide essential resources to local champions committed to take action to protect and restore Sicilian nature."

GAIA AGNELLO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Gaia, MSc in Ecology and Conservation, has been active in conservation over the past 10 years, working with grassroot organisations in Italy and abroad. She has been involved in community-based projects and protected areas management, fostering participatory and co-creation approaches to tackle environmental challenges.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

5

Projects
funded to date

7

Local partners

21

Supporters



AREAS OF INTEREST

1 Marine biodiversity

Sicily is a major biodiversity hotspot for coastal and marine life. It is also a region with one of the highest numbers of Marine Protected Areas in Italy; its spectacular coastlines and large number of islands are crucial ecosystems which must be protected.



2 Terrestrial biodiversity

Sicily has one of the highest levels of floral diversity in the Mediterranean region. Human disturbance, including wildfires and unsustainable agriculture, threaten biodiversity and damage economic and social activities related to nature and rural areas.



3 Sustainable food systems

Sicily's landscape has changed significantly due to human activities. Land use is dominated by agriculture, creating a mosaic of many traditional rural landscapes, threatened by degradation and modern agricultural methods.



4 Ecological transition

Sicily is particularly vulnerable to climate change. Waste management is also a pressing concern. Action and adaptation plans to tackle pollution require ecosystem-based and interdisciplinary approaches which take into account physical and cultural elements.



OUR WORK

CAPER PLANT NURSERY IN STROMBOLI

Attiva Stromboli

A caper plant nursery has been set up on land previously devastated and abandoned by wildfires. The local community has been managing and restoring the land, protecting it from fire outbreaks and reducing the hydrogeological risk. Drystone walls, terraces and an agricultural cistern were restored. An irrigation system was also installed, powered by a solar panel.



REWILDING GUIDE TRAINING

Astrid Natura, Collettivo Rewild Sicily, Riccio Blu - Patronage Dipartimento Ambiente Regione Siciliana

Nature guides from different corners of Sicily joined the rewilding training, aimed at valuing their knowledge as territorial custodians. Through the use of innovative tools for environmental interpretation, they will monitor biodiversity and human impact, providing data for evidence-based land management, fire prevention and future rewilding measures.

GHOST NETS RECOVERY IN USTICA

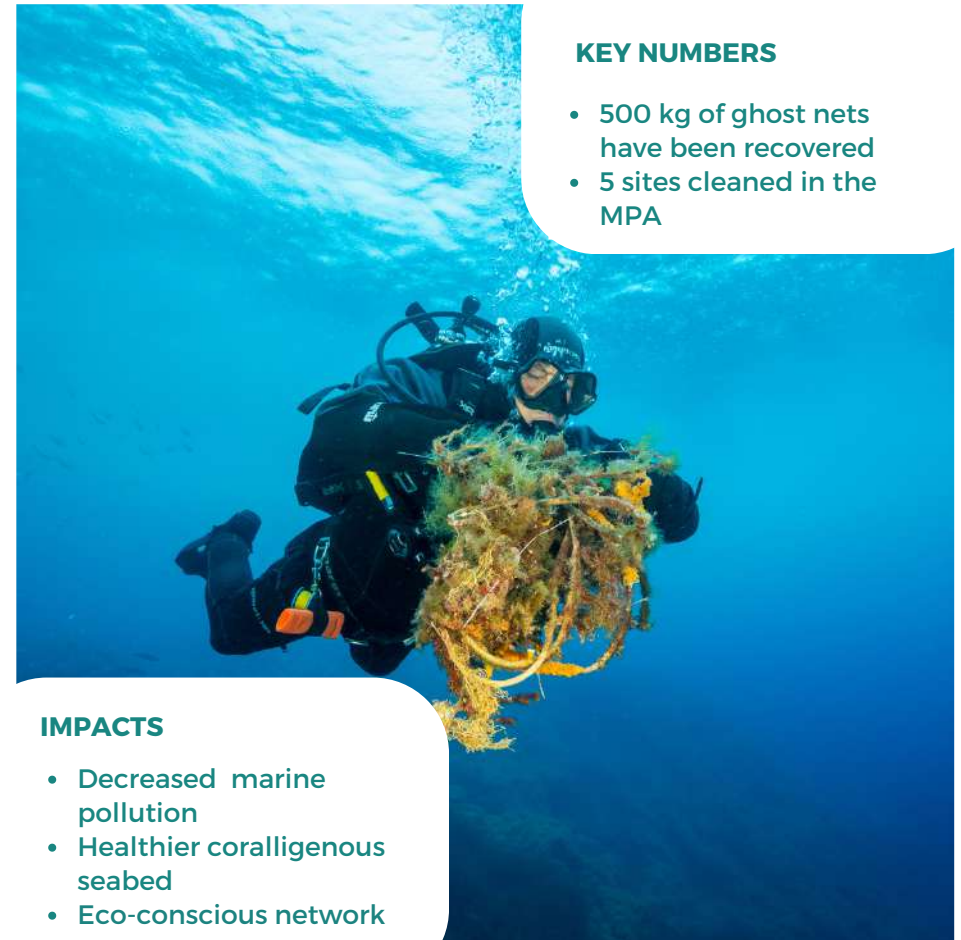
Mare Nostrum Diving, Ustica Island MPA

Abandoned and lost fishing nets have been collected in the Ustica's Marine Protected Area, contributing to restore marine habitats. Students from the Biological, Geological and Environmental Sciences Department of the University of Catania conducted a study on the fauna associated with ghost nets. A documentary on the project has been produced, to share experiences and inspire future action.



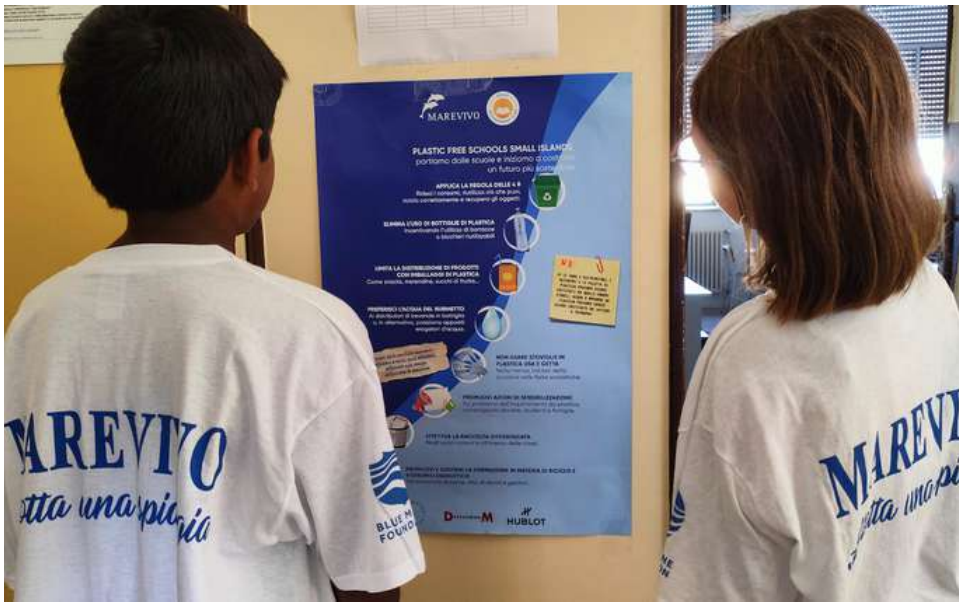
KEY NUMBERS

- 500 kg of ghost nets have been recovered
- 5 sites cleaned in the MPA



IMPACTS

- Decreased marine pollution
- Healthier coralligenous seabed
- Eco-conscious network



PLASTIC FREE SCHOOLS SMALL ISLANDS

Marevivo Sicilia

This project tackles plastic pollution in schools on the small islands of Sicily. A competition is engaging students and teachers in a campaign to reduce plastic usage. The three winning schools are awarded with water filtration machines and reusable water bottles. This project has been supported by Depeche Mode and Hublot through the Memento Mori Tour charity partnership with Conservation Collective.



“RESPONSEABLE CONSUMPTION” GUIDE

Blue Marine Foundation, Kurma

The guide promotes the responSEAbLe consumption of seafood in Italy. It outlines seasonality, fishing method, risk of extinction and minimum catch size for 26 marine species commonly found in the Mediterranean. The guide, available online, is displayed on Caronte&Tourist ships and ticket offices.





"I am delighted with the results we achieved together. Our passionate team has been actively identifying and developing relevant environmental initiatives, and I believe our commitment will be a driving force to inspire community-led action and sustain the unique beauty of Sicilian nature."

CINZIA RUTSON, CHAIR, SICILY ENVIRONMENT FUND

WHAT'S NEXT

Our priority is to increase the amount of funding available for local, tangible, nature-based solutions by inspiring more people and organisations to get involved.

We aim to encourage more grassroots regenerative projects to start-up or scale-up, by providing mentoring, expertise, connections and vital financial support.

Our forthcoming focus entails expanding the pool of funding accessible for grassroots nature-based solutions in Sicily, igniting greater participation from individuals and enterprises.

Your support would enable us to seed even more nature-based solutions; while showcasing project successes that ignite hope and wider action, that will accelerate systemic change.

OUR TEAM

Our local team consists of the Executive Director in charge of day-to-day management & coordination of work on the ground and a PR and Communications Manager, assisted by Steering Committee and Advisory Board.



Gaia Agnello
Executive Director



Ambra Messina
PR & Communications

Steering Committee and Honorary Members



Advisory Board



Steering Committee

Cinzia Rutson
Jon Moslet
Rossella Beaugié
Stefania Calice
Elisa Schembari
Lorenzo Maticena
Salvo Moschella

Honorary Members

Ben Goldsmith
Jade Brudenell

Advisory Board

Giuseppe Barbera
Andrea Sforzi
Margherita Vitale
Giuseppe Parisi
Eleonora Riva Sanseverino

Our Network



Our Partners





THANK YOU

to all our donors and supporters.
We couldn't have done it without
your generous support.

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LEARN MORE



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