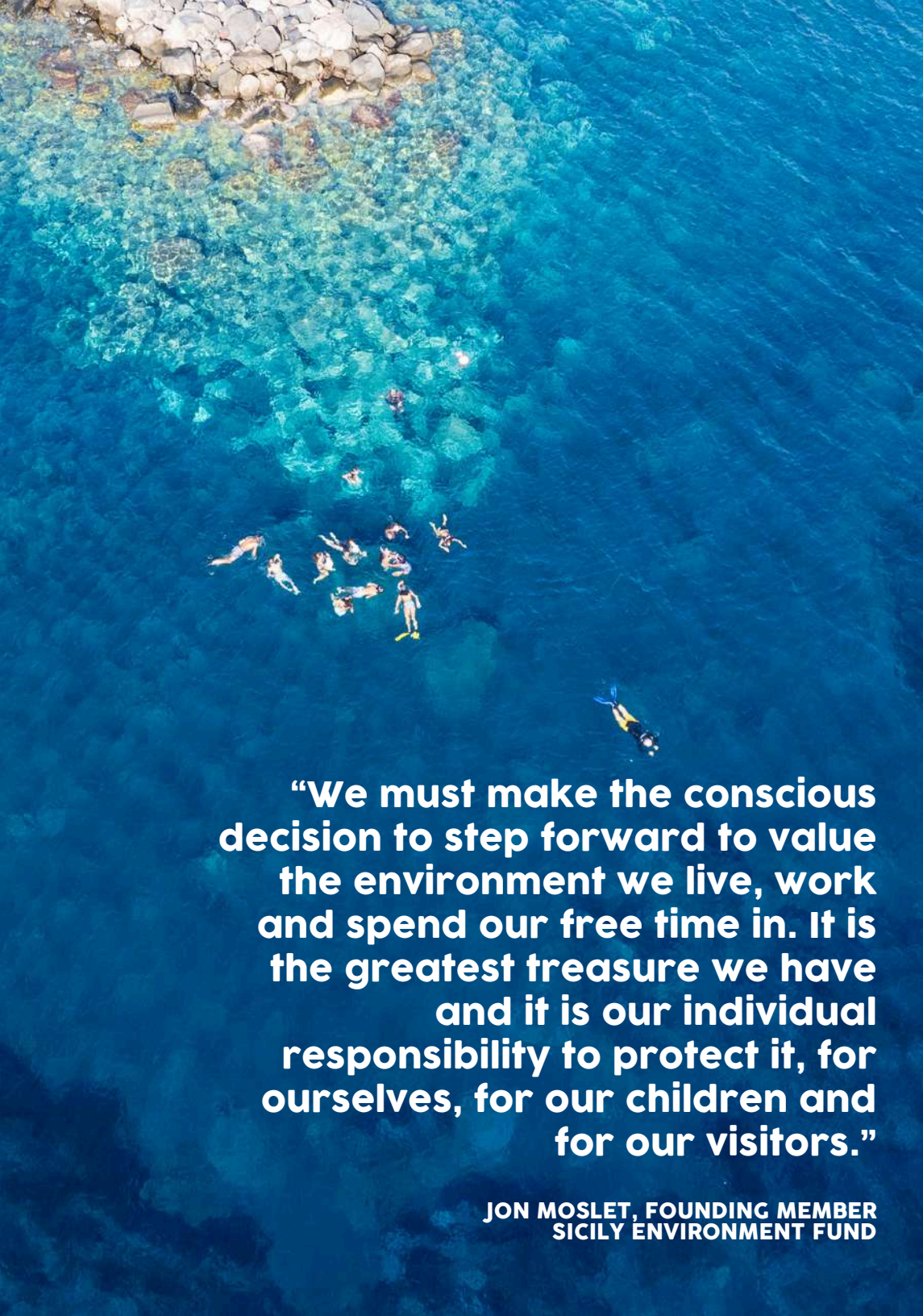


# SICILY ENVIRONMENT FUND



**ANNUAL REVIEW 2024**





**“We must make the conscious decision to step forward to value the environment we live, work and spend our free time in. It is the greatest treasure we have and it is our individual responsibility to protect it, for ourselves, for our children and for our visitors.”**

**JON MOSLET, FOUNDING MEMBER  
SICILY ENVIRONMENT FUND**

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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.

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

## OUR STRATEGY

- Raising funds from people and businesses with strong connections to Sicily.
- Supporting grassroots environmental projects which can be scaled up and replicated, and which benefit local communities.
- Building a strong network of people across Sicily, united in promoting and supporting nature conservation projects.



# IMPACT SNAPSHOT



FUNDS AWARDED  
**€135,000**



PROJECTS SUPPORTED  
**12**



LOCAL PARTNERS  
**18**

**“We are proud of the local environmental champions we work with and the new partnerships we are establishing to protect and restore nature. United, we can make a change for Sicily!”**

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**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.

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# AREAS OF INTEREST

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## 1 Marine conservation

Sicily is a key biodiversity hotspot for coastal and marine life. Protecting its ecosystems entails monitoring species, restoring habitats, enforcing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and engaging with local stakeholders and artisanal fishers, to ensure long-term ecological health.



## 2 Terrestrial conservation

Sicily has one of the highest levels of floral diversity in the Mediterranean region. Restoration and rewilding initiatives, fire prevention, and species monitoring can help halt the decline of biodiversity and prevent the damage to economic and social activities linked to nature and rural areas.



## 3 Sustainable food systems

Sicily's landscape has been significantly altered by human activities. Adopting agroecology as a holistic approach, in support of small farmers, can help improve water management and protect traditional rural landscapes threatened by land abandonment and unsustainable agricultural practices, thereby countering environmental degradation.



## 4 Ecological transition

Sicily is highly vulnerable to climate change, facing more frequent extreme weather events. Adaptation measures must adopt ecosystem-based and interdisciplinary approaches to foster responsible waste management, water security, ecotourism and community-led renewable energy.

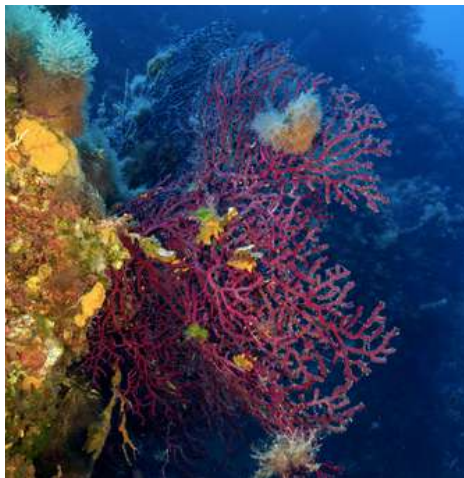


# OUR PROJECTS

## ARTISANAL FISHERS IN CORALS RESTORATION

*Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn*

The project involves artisanal fishers in the restoration of coralligenous habitats in the Marine Protected Area of Capo Gallo and Isola delle Femmine. The ecological survey is providing important data on ecosystem health. Local fishers will be trained by University of Barcelona on the recovery of coral fragments and restoration procedures. Thanks to Studio Forward and Officine Grafiche support, an awareness campaign will highlight the importance of the MPA and of coral-reef populations. The project has received support from Grimaldi Palermo Euroterminal.



## UNPACKED SHOPPING

*Rifiuti Zero Sicilia*

This pilot project is creating a community of businesses and consumers that embraces “purchase without packaging”. The goal is to reduce single-use packaging and promote a change in daily habits, such as using reusable containers for groceries and takeaways, adopting eco-friendly practices at home, and promoting sustainability at events. The project is supported thanks to funding received from Conservation Collective through their Depeche Mode and Hublot partnership.

## CITY NATURE CHALLENGE

*Muma Museum of the Sea Milazzo*

An international citizen science event whereby cities around the world encourage participants to share their observations of nature via iNaturalist app, raising awareness of biodiversity and promoting environmental education. Milazzo ranked 1st in Italy for the number of species and observations, 3rd in Europe, and 25th globally. Promoting such initiatives is crucial in amplifying the potential of citizen science to gather data on protected areas’ biodiversity. The project has received support from Esplora Travel.



### KEY RESULTS

- 224 participants
- 20,000 observations
- 2,616 different species recorded.



### IMPACTS

SEF collaborated with Sicily's Environment Department to promote an event highlighting the opportunities citizen science can bring to the management of protected areas in the region



## SALINA BLUE ISLAND

*Nesos, Kurma, Condotta Isole Slow*

This project focuses on engaging and empowering the local community ahead of the establishment of the Marine Protected Area of Salina, the first in the Aeolian Islands. Educational activities and stakeholders' workshops involve restaurants, fishers, schools and the tourism sector. A strong focus is on eco-tourism and local sustainable seafood consumption, as well featuring a snorkelling programme for students.

Together with Blue Marine Foundation, SEF are committed to supporting local efforts towards marine conservation and sustainable development on the island of Salina.

## COMMON GROUND: TERRITORIAL PLANNING TO PREVENT WILDFIRES

*Collettivo Rewild Sicily (In partnership with the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Forest Sciences of the University of Palermo and Pro Loco Alfofonte)*

Alfofonte is a area which was significantly affected by wildfires in 2023. The local community there has been involved in the development of guidelines for territorial planning to reduce the incidence of fires through sustainable land-use and traditional agro-pastoral practices. Participatory approaches are adopted for territorial planning, setting the foundations for policy tools. Measures to prevent wildfires have been implemented. This project provides a pilot case which can be replicated across the region.



## AGROECOLOGY FOR ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION OF THE PLAIN OF GELA

*CEA ODV (Geloi Wetland)*

In order to restore valuable ecosystems on the Plain of Gela, this project is implementing agroecological practices in Geloi Wetland, a private conservation area.

Training sessions for local farmers will promote sustainable agriculture, rewilding, land regeneration and fire prevention. Through challenging unsustainable practices such as the use of fire, stubble ploughing, stone removal, and reduced perennial greenery, vital habitats will be restored for key bird species (Lesser kestrel, European roller, Crested lark) while strengthening agricultural resilience of the area.

## SAVING AGROBIODIVERSITY IN WESTERN SICILY

*Associazione FICUS*

Local farmers in Marsala and Trapani are identifying ancient crop varieties at risk of extinction and adopting sustainable agriculture techniques. Crops will be propagated and cultivated at the FICUS educational centre and in surrounding farms, involving youths with disabilities and vulnerable immigrants, under the guidance of certified operators in horticultural therapy. The initiative is a complementary to the FOOD project (Ficus Beyond All Disabilities), in collaboration with ANFFAS, funded by the local government.



**“Looking back on the past year, I am proud of what we’ve achieved together. None of this would have been possible without the generosity of our supporters; thank you for helping us protect Sicily’s nature! With your help, we are bringing people closer to the island’s nature and working to keep it safe for generations to come.”**

**CINZIA RUTSON, CHAIR, SICILY ENVIRONMENT FUND**



## **WHAT'S NEXT**

We aim 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 and facilitating the creation of green jobs and opportunities in Sicily.

Increasing 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
- Lorenzo Maticena
- Salvo Moschella

## Advisory Board

- Giuseppe Barbera
- Andrea Sforzi
- Margherita Vitale
- Giuseppe Parisi
- Eleonora Riva Sanseverino
- Fabio Badalamenti

## Honorary Members

- Ben Goldsmith
- Jade Brudenell

## Our Network



## Our supporters





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# THANK YOU

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

## LEARN MORE



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