

THE MEDITERRANEAN: A BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT UNDER THREAT



Why is the Mediterranean such an outstanding place?

The Mediterranean basin is recognised as a biodiversity hotspot: its flora diversity is outstanding with 15,000 to 25,000 species, 60% of which are unique to the region. About one third of the Mediterranean fauna is endemic.

How many Mediterranean species are threatened?

1,912 species of amphibians, birds, cartilaginous fishes, endemic freshwater fishes, crabs and crayfish, mammals, dragonflies and reptiles have been assessed to date in the Mediterranean region. About 19% of these species are threatened with extinction: 5% Critically Endangered, 7% Endangered and 7% Vulnerable. At least 16 irreplaceable species are already extinct, including some endemics such as the Hula Painted Frog *Discoglossus nigriventer*, the Canary Islands Oystercatcher *Haematopus meadewaldoi* and the Sardinian Pika *Prolagus sardus*.

What are the main threats to Mediterranean species?

Habitat loss and degradation, for example through dam construction and coastal infrastructural development, are the major causes of Mediterranean species' high risk of extinction. Pollution, droughts, alien invasive species and overexploitation (over-fishing, -hunting and -harvesting) are also important factors for the decline of Mediterranean biodiversity.

What to do to avoid extinctions in the Mediterranean?

Urgent conservation actions are needed to preserve the future of the Mediterranean: enforcement of adequate legislation as well as sustainable management of exploited species are key measures to be promoted in the region.

Dalmatian coast (Croatia). © Pedro Regato

Mediterranean: home of wonderful species



Cetaceans
Threatened 56%
Data Deficient 44%



Endemic freshwater fishes
Threatened 56%
Data Deficient 16%



Cartilaginous fishes
Threatened 42%
Data Deficient 25%
Endemic 6%



Amphibians
Threatened 29%
Data Deficient 1%
Endemic 62%



Crabs and Crayfish
Threatened 36%
Endemic 50%



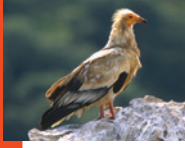
Dragonflies
Threatened 19%
Data Deficient 4%
Endemic 14%



Mammals
Threatened 14%
Data Deficient 9%
Endemic 26%

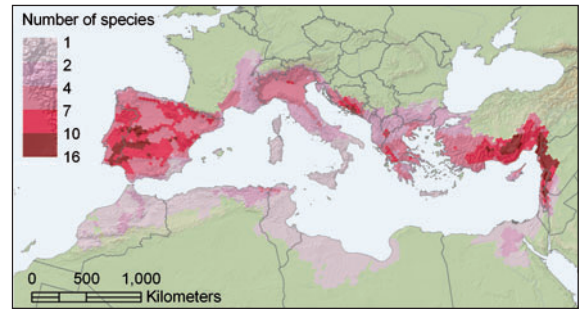


Reptiles
Threatened 13%
Data Deficient 5%
Endemic 48%



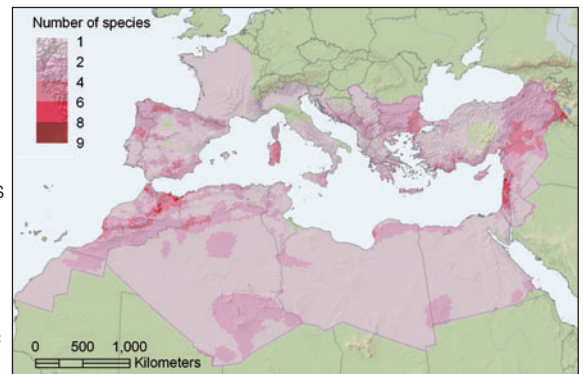
Birds
Threatened 5%
Endemic 3%

FRESHWATER life is under severe pressure – more than half of the endemic freshwater fishes are threatened – and very urgent action is needed to protect these precious ecosystems. There are geographic concentrations of freshwater threatened fauna, including amphibians, crabs, crayfish, dragonflies, fishes, mammals and reptiles in several regions, in particular the Iberian Peninsula, the Balkans and the North-Eastern Mediterranean.



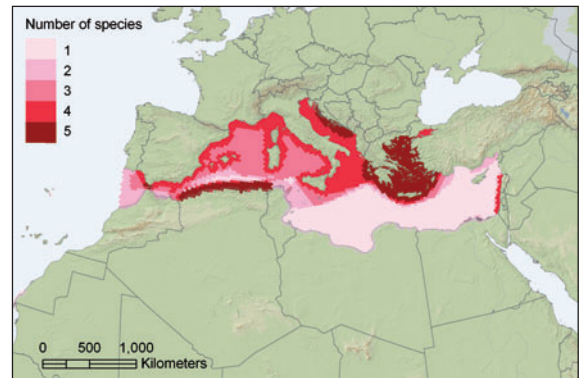
Threatened species richness for freshwater-dependent species.

TERRESTRIAL habitats in the Mediterranean are a natural and cultural mosaic of landscapes that have favoured the evolution of an extraordinary diversity of species. Distribution patterns of terrestrial threatened species, including amphibians, dragonflies, mammals and reptiles, display a fragmented mosaic of areas facing particularly serious threats.



Threatened species richness for terrestrial species.

MARINE biodiversity is still very poorly known: data are lacking to evaluate the conservation status of about one third of the species assessed so far. For example, the apparent lack of threatened marine mammals in the southeastern part of the Mediterranean Sea does not reflect a better conservation status there, but is due to data deficiency.



Threatened species richness for marine mammals.

Mediterranean main causes of threat

- Habitat loss and degradation
- Pollution
- Overexploitation
- Natural disasters
- Invasive alien species
- Human disturbance
- Bycatch



Mediterranean main conservation actions

- Species protection (Legislation and Action Plans)
- Site protection (Protected areas networks)
- Conservation of the wider environment (Ecosystem approach)
- Communication and education
- Monitoring and research

From top to bottom: Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis* © Giovanni Bearzi/Tethys. Economidichthys *pygmaeus* © Ioannis Rousopoulos. Giant Devilray *Mobula mobular* © Maurizio Würtz. Pyrenean Frog *Rana pyrenaica* © Lars Bergendorf. White-clawed Crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* © Riccardo Innocenti. Green Gompfid *Ophiogomphus cecilia* © Jean-Pierre Boudot. Spanish Ibex *Capra pyrenaica* © Pedro Regato. Desert Horned Viper *Cerastes cerastes* © Wolfgang Böhme. Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* © IUCN Spanish Committee

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