



Press Release

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2015

## Gyaros through the photographic lenses

*Five photographers with passion and love for the natural environment, several scientific field expeditions, some of the best scientists, moments captured by the photographic lenses, rare sceneries and species, unique habitats in need of conservation, a monument spellbound from history and memory. All of the above constitute a different view of Gyaros, captured through the photographic lenses.*

This unique view is revealed in the following fascinating 10 min video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTKL4LmOk8A>



*Aerial picture of the team in Gyaros – WWF Greece/G.Stefanou*

“I am thrilled that I can participate with my photographs in promoting the CYCLADES LIFE project” states George Stefanou an expert in aerial pictures while the...”underwater” Giorgos Rigoutsos adds “the need to protect and keep our sea alive is like our need for oxygen: without it, we can’t go on living. The project CYCLADES LIFE embraced me and I embraced it back. I feel very lucky that I have the opportunity to actively engage in and contribute to it and I will continue doing so anyway I can”.



*Underwater cleaning- WWF Greece/G.Rigoutsos*

All of them, be it volunteers or not, have a common passion about photography but also share the vision of this ambitious project. To use the words of Antonis Lemonakis “nature is threatened especially in the past years from “intelligent” people, I am in full support of projects like CYCLADES LIFE. I hope with my photographs that I added even a tiny pebble in the achievement of its goals and the conservation of the environment”.



The project’s goal after all is to create a novel and model Marine Protected Area (MPA), around Gyaros island in the Cyclades, Greece, together with the local societies (of Syros and Andros) that will be managed effectively for the benefit of both humans and the natural environment. “As a biologist and photographer, for me Gyaros is unique because it combines incredible scenery, diversity, seasons, species of flora and fauna, terrestrial and sea birds, and each expedition is one small adventure” adds Andrea Bonetti.



*Common shag in Gyaros – WWF Greece/A.Bonetti*

Gyaros, which in 2011 was included into the European Natura 2000 network of protected areas is home to the most important Mediterranean monk seal population of the entire Mediterranean. This population is regularly monitored by MOM's scientists. "The biologists of MOM have been continuously monitored the *Monk Seal* population of Gyaros, for a decade now. The scientific evidence so far has proven that the island is one of the most important breeding areas for the monk seal, *Monachus monachus*, in the Mediterranean and this formed the foundation for the island and its surrounding marine area to be included in the Natura 2000 network of protected areas. Thus, it became obvious that Gyaros except for a very important historical monument is also a critical biodiversity hotspot for the Mediterranean" says the biologist/photographer Dr. Panos Dendrinou. In addition during one of the field expeditions to the island, important protected underwater habitats were discovered, critical for the Mediterranean monk seals such as Posidonia Seagrass beds and coralligenous reefs, as well as, a very important colony of globally endangered seabirds, Yelkouan Shearwater.

"I am very lucky to live in a place with numerous natural pictures, like an endless canvas, ready to be used" said Giannis Vavitsas, "the avifauna expedition that I captured with my lenses, together with scientists from WWF Greece and the Hellenic Ornithological Society was one of the nicest but most challenging expeditions to which I have ever participated."



*WWF Greece/G.Vavitsas*

The project is being implemented by WWF Greece together with the Ministry of Reconstruction of Production, Environment and Energy, the Decentralized Administrative Authority of the Aegean, the Development Corporation of the Cyclades SA, the Harokopio University of Athens, MOm/Hellenic Society for the Protection of the Monk Seal and the Italian Institute Tethys.

For more you can visit our website [www.cycladeslife.gr/en](http://www.cycladeslife.gr/en)

**More information**

Jason Kantas, Press Officer WWF Greece, tel: 210 33 14 893, cell: 697 185 9632, [i.kantas@wwf.gr](mailto:i.kantas@wwf.gr)

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The project CYCLADES LIFE, “Integrated monk seal conservation of Northern Cyclades”, is being implemented with the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Union and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. ([www.fpa2.com](http://www.fpa2.com))

