

Introducing the EBCC board: Danae Portolou

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Danae Portolou participating the mid-winter counts in Amvrakikos Wetland.
Photo by Margarita Tzali

What is your title and the current working position?

I am the data manager of the Hellenic Ornithological Society / BirdLife Greece, co-ordinator of all national voluntary monitoring schemes, of the national Important Bird Areas programme, as well as the seabird projects.

What is your role in the national bird monitoring and in the EBCC?

The Hellenic Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (HCBM) commenced in 2007, and I undertook its co-ordination from 2010 onwards. Through the HCBM and our collaboration with the PECBMS team, we have been able to improve our scheme, data collation and analysis, contributing to the PECBMS dataset since 2010. The HCBM scheme has suffered during the last few years, mainly due to the lack of funds but also because of the finite stock of experienced bird watchers who obviously had to support the EBBA2 project. We are optimistic that the younger batch of emerging bird watchers will become more involved in our monitoring schemes. In the EBBA2 project, I was involved as a national coordinator but also member of the EBCC Board. During the whole process, the Catalan Ornithological Institute (ICO), the Swiss Ornithological Institute (SOI) and the Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO) provided significant support in so many aspects of our national effort, from solving methodological issues and contributing in data analysis, even with square coverage in the field! Following the completion of the EBBA2 project, we are continuing with our aim to finalize the 1st Greek Breeding Bird Atlas (GBBA1) by 2023. My

involvement in the EBCC goes back to 2014 and I really appreciate the opportunity to participate and learn from this wonderful team of incredible scientists, and now friends. My role is in the communication team and especially supporting Alena, with issues relevant to the website or updating information on the numerous monitoring programmes which run all over Europe.

Communication has an important role in the EBCC. What are the main target groups of the EBCC communication?

Communication is a vital tool for EBCC, facilitating the promotion of its goals, core projects and results to target audiences, but also to locate funds, scientific collaborations and promote participation. EBCC target groups are interlinked but have very different needs and thus have to be accessed through different media. One of the most important target groups are national data providers (i.e. the national coordinators of monitoring programmes) and EBCC delegates who promote and run national projects smoothly and thus ensure continuous data provision. Equally important are professional scientists who participate in bird research and conservation, translating data into conclusions and outputs. Finally however, the loop is only complete when EBCC results and recommendations reach policy and decision makers through publications and press releases.

I know that seabirds are close to your heart. Could you please tell more about the work that you doing in Greece?

Seabirds are indeed my passion, as are the small uninhabited islets and the marine environment they depend upon. And we have thousands of these wildlife refuges in Greece, thus as you can imagine monitoring seabird populations is a huge task! At HOS we started work in 1995, initially surveying islets and island coasts in order to locate breeding colonies. Since then, we have implemented numerous projects, mainly LIFE programmes, which have resulted in the identification of 70 marine IBAs covering more than one million marine hectares. Thanks to our advocacy work, 85% of this area has now been designated as marine SPAs, however unfortunately still lacking adequate protection and management. We mainly work with the Audouin's Gull, Mediterranean Shag, Yelkouan and Scopoli's Shearwaters and European Storm Petrel, estimating population sizes, monitoring breeding performance, ringing, tagging and implementing conservation actions such as invasive species management on islets and seabird bycatch mitigation.

Which monitoring programs do you personally participate?

I really enjoy participating in monitoring programmes, as I value the strength of citizen science data! Every year, I make an effort to participate in as many monitoring programmes as possible, the HCBM, Atlasing, as well as species national censuses and Mid-winter counts. It is always a great joy to visit my HCBM plot in spring and then go for a swim in the nearby beach!

Do you have a favourite bird or birding habitat/location?

As you will probably guess, it will have to be a seabird! The Audouin's Gull is always in my heart since it brought me close to HOS and the world of birds. However, shearwaters and storm petrels always amaze me, the huge distances they cover, their endurance and their smell!