

Seabird sanctuary threatened by luxury hotel

Ibiza/Brussels, 20 May 2014.

Sa Conillera island, one of the best preserved seabird colonies in the Balearic archipelago and home to the Critically Endangered Balearic Shearwater, is under severe threat.

Plans to build a boutique hotel in the uninhabited reserve have caused alarm across the Ibicean society. A heated debate organised yesterday by SEO/BirdLife [1] and the Ibiza Preservation Fund concluded that the highest level of precaution is needed to avoid irrevocable damage to the island's biodiversity.

«The meeting sends a strong message to the developers and to the Balearic government. – stated Iván Ramírez, Head of Conservation at BirdLife Europe [2] - Although many in society see money making opportunities in our last wild places, it is encouraging to see that the people of the Balearic archipelago recognise the area's intrinsic value».

The island is a protected national marine area and is safeguarded by EU law for its seabirds through the Natura 2000 network [3]. But all is about to change when the only building on the little island, the lighthouse, will be converted into an exclusive boutique hotel. The development and running of touristic infrastructure will disrupt the breeding seabirds, many of which nest next to the lighthouse.

«The hotel will also increase the risk of introducing predators, such as cats and mice, which would prey on seabird eggs and chicks - says Pep Arcos, Marine Coordinator at SEO/BirdLife Spain – with devastating impacts on the population of this species that is already on the brink of extinction».

The development would also be an infringement of European law, a potentially costly decision for the Spanish government. «Tourism is important, but it should not override all limits. National governments, should not abandon their EU binding commitments, such as the Marine Natura 2000 network, in the face of money-making ventures» says Bruna Campos, EU Marine and Fisheries Policy Officer at BirdLife Europe.

SEO/BirdLife has already taken its concerns to the developers and the Spanish government, and will maintain the pressure alongside other local NGOs in the hope that the decision will be overturned. Meanwhile, BirdLife Europe will ensure that EU is fully aware of the impending infringement perpetrated by the Spanish authorities.

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Notes to editor

[1] SEO/BirdLife, BirdLife's partner organisation in Spain.

[2] BirdLife International, Europe and Central Asia Division. BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 49 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people

[3] Natura 2000 is the European network of protected sites, comprising sites designated under the Wild Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive



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Contacts

Bruna Campos, Marine and Fisheries Policy Officer, BirdLife Europe - Phone: +32 (0)2 238 50 99, email: bruna.campos@birdlife.org

Luca Bonaccorsi, Policy Communications Manager, BirdLife Europe - Phone: +32 (0)2 238 50 94, Mobile: +32 (0)4 97 21 82 09, email: Luca.Bonaccorsi@birdlife.org