

PRESS RELEASE

Athens, 10 July 2025

The campaign for the protection of the Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* has successfully launched: A mission aimed to protect Greece's hidden marine treasures

The great [Seal Greece](#) national information campaign kicked off from the port of Volos on 7 July. Developed and co-led by the [Monk Seal Alliance](#) and [NECCA](#) (Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency) — it sails across Greek archipelagos on a mission to protect the vulnerable Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*), one of the world's most endangered marine mammals.

The *Awareness Voyage* will traverse the Aegean and Ionian Seas aboard two sustainable, wind-powered sailing vessels. At each port of call, the crew will engage with local communities, boaters, and tourism operators — raising awareness and inspiring collective action to protect Greece's marine biodiversity.

Sail with Care, Protect What's Rare

With fewer than 1,000 Mediterranean monk seals remaining worldwide — and nearly half residing in Greek waters — human disturbance is among their gravest threats. Many of the quiet coastal caves used for breeding and shelter are disrupted during the busy summer season by recreational boats, party cruises, anchors, noise, and untrained tourism operators.

Through real-time storytelling, local events, and interactive tools, *Seal Greece* empowers both travelers and locals to play a vital role in marine conservation.

Dr. Maria Papadopoulou, President of NECCA, emphasized the importance of the initiative:

"The Mediterranean monk seal is a precious symbol of Greece's unique marine heritage. Through the Seal Greece campaign, we aim to unite communities, sailors, and tourists in protecting these rare animals and their fragile habitats, ensuring they thrive for generations to come."

Meet Mona: Your AR Sea Guide

At the heart of the campaign is Mona, an animated monk seal brought to life through an interactive [augmented reality \(AR\) experience](#). Accessible via smartphone, the seal appears on screen to guide users in real time — especially when they are near protected monk seal habitats. Using geolocation, the app helps boaters and visitors recognize when they are in ecologically sensitive areas and offers simple, practical advice to minimize disturbance and protect these vital marine spaces.

Backed by marine biologists and conservationists, Mona appears on signage, social media, and even TikTok — where a custom filter allows users to explore, play, and learn while spreading the word of awareness.

According to Auriane Pertuisot, Coordinator of the Monk Seal Alliance, the campaign's strength lies in engaging people through creative means:

“Our goal is to foster harmonious coexistence between people and the Mediterranean monk seals. Through innovative tools like augmented reality, and community engagement, we inspire respectful behaviors that protect these magnificent creatures while allowing sustainable enjoyment of Greece’s beautiful seas.”

The Awareness Voyage: 2025 Route

From **July 7 to August 30, 2025**, in partnership with [Aegean Cargo Sailing](#), which is providing two **eco-friendly** sailing boats and their captains, **Luke, Suzanne, Nora, John and Arran** - a multi-generational and international crew of sailors, scientists and storytellers - will sail from the **Sporades to the Cyclades** and from **Corfu to Zakynthos**, supporting awareness-raising activities in marinas and ports along the journey.

AEGEAN ROUTE

- Volos: July 7–8
- Skopelos: July 9–10
- Alonissos: July 11–12
- Psara: July 20–21
- Chios (Volissos): July 23–24

- Naxos: August 2–3
- Kimolos: August 9–10
- Paros: August 17–18
- Mykonos: August 21–22
- Tinos: August 25–26
- Syros: August 29–30

IONIAN ROUTE

- Corfu (Gouvia): July 18–19
- Paxoi: July 21–22
- Preveza: July 24–25
- Lefkada: July 26–27
- Meganisi: July 29–30
- Kefalonia (Fiskardo): August 1–2
- Ithaca (Vathy): August 4–5
- Kefalonia (Argostoli): August 6–7
- Zakynthos (Port): August 8–9

Empowering a National Network of Sea Guardians

The campaign is under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, which supports the initiative with a patronage sponsorship, recognizing the national importance of the mission and its contribution to the sustainable protection of marine life and Greek biodiversity.

Seal Greece welcomes the collaboration of marinas, sailing schools, tourism operators, local authorities, and citizen groups to expand its reach and amplify its impact.

Several environmental organizations have already answered the call — and there's room for more. Groups committed to empowering their communities and protect Greece's marine heritage are encouraged to take part.



Be Part of the Change

Local marinas, charter operators, and coastal communities are invited to participate:

- Display **AR signage** and educational materials at your base, welcome area, or event venues
- Share **the virtual guidance app** through your channels and with your members
- Participate in a **Voyage stopover** or awareness event
- Promote **respectful sailing and anchoring** in protected zones

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Hashtags: #SealGreece #MonkSealAlliance #necca #savetheseals #medmonkseal

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About the Monk Seal Alliance (MSA)

The MSA is a consortium of like-minded foundations optimizing resources to support collaborative conservation and rehabilitation of one of the most endangered mammals in the world, the Mediterranean monk seal. The Monk Seal Alliance was created in 2019 by five founding members experienced in funding conservation projects: the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the MAVA Foundation, the Segré Foundation, the Sancta Devota Foundation and the Thalassa Foundation. The Hans Wilsdorf Foundation joined us in 2022.

www.monksealalliance.org