

Audouin`s Gull Losing Ground



Audouin's Gull, is evaluated by Birdlife International as Near Threatened and is largely restricted to the Mediterranean. North Cyprus hosts the world's easternmost breeding colony. The only consistent breeding region in the island is the Kleides Islands off the Cape Andreas, where it coexists with endangered subspecies of *Shag Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii* and the Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*. As a result, Kleides Islands has been declared an Important Bird Area since 2004.

Since 2008, KUŞKOR has organised annual census of the birds breeding on the Kleides Islands, monitoring the Audouin's Gulls in particular. Historically, >40 pairs bred at the site but this has steadily fallen and in 2015 we recorded the lowest numbers at a mere 8 pairs. This is a clear indicator that the future of the species on our island is in grave danger.

The most apparent reason for this decline is likely human disturbance by rod fisherman using the islands. As the islands are small, regular landing by humans can be the source of great disturbance pressure. As a consequence of KUSKOR's campaigns with the Turkish Cypriot authorities, landing on the islands without a permit has now been banned within local law.

KUSKOR has in collaboration with the Turkish Cypriot Authorities, this year placed three warning signs at the most intensively used places in the region and at boat landing sites to provide information about the ban.



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The islands are likely ratted. Competition, predation and kleptoparasitism by nearby nesting Yellow-legged Gulls, are likely impacting breeding success. Foraging ecology and interaction with fisheries in the region are unknown. Studies are therefore urgently required in order to draw up an appropriate management plan to secure the future of the North Cyprus colony.

