Spatio-temporal distribution and behaviour of three common seabird species in Laganas gulf and Argassi (SE Zakynthos, Ionian Sea, Western Greece)

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The distribution of seabirds in the Eastern Mediterranean is poorly known while species like *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*, which is an endemic Mediterranean subspecies and of conservation priority for the European Union, and *Larus michahellis*, which is considered as a superabundant species and a possible threat for other seabirds, are known to live in this area. This work which was partly funded by the LIFE07 NAT/GR/000285 aimed to establish baseline information about the spatial and temporal distribution of the two pre-mentioned species as well as their associated behaviour in SE Zakynthos (Ionian Sea, Western Greece) which mostly belongs to the National Marine Park of Zakynthos. A third species, *Calonectris diomedea diomedea*, was included since it was abundant at one of the stations were the observations took place. The methodology was based on a combination of coastal counts sessions at 3 determined stations and onboard observations along the whole coastline of Zakynthos Island. Results showed that the location, the seasons and the daytime period had an effect on their distribution and behaviour to different extents. Behaviour was also a factor that influenced the species distribution. The total population of *L.michahellis* and *P.a.desmarestii* could be estimated as well as the average number of *C.diomedea* using Zakynthos' eastern offshore. Conservation purposes include further monitoring of the three seabird species ideally thanks to telemetry, the further investigation of possible influences of anthropogenic food resources (e.g. fishery discards and landfills) as well as the maintenance or even reinforcement of the restricted access of the core area of the Marine Park.