Thinking Green Digest 2021

Highlights from 2021

#MarineEnvironment
#GibraltarNatureReserve
#ClimateChange
#Recycling
#Awareness

Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Heritage

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CONTENTS

THINKING GREEN DIGEST 2021

Produced by the Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Heritage (DESCCH).

This document aims to present an overview of some of the work carried out during 2021 by DESCCH, as well as important information relating to our environment.

MARINE

Gibraltar is surrounded by the marine environment. We depend on this environment for recreation, well-being, transport and commercial purposes. Taking care of our marine environment is taking care of our future.

AIR QUALITY

Air quality is an important aspect of our local environment. Traffic and energy generation have a key role to play in the quality of Gibraltar's air.

ENERGY

New buildings and a move to technological dependence increases our demands for energy, namely electricity. Being aware of your consumption patterns helps to minimise demand and contribute to an energy efficient environment.

WASTE

With a lot of our waste being generated by excess packaging and a consumer society, small changes can have large impacts in contributing towards a more sustainable and healthy environment.

AWARENESS

With increased information comes increased awareness of environmental issues as well as a better understanding of how to minimise negative environmental impacts.

FEEDBACK

Data collected across all fields help to inform and enable effective decision making as well as furthering our understanding of our unique environment.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate Change encompasses many processes and actions that have an effect on the natural balance of our environment. Understanding of, and positive actions, in order to preserve and enhance a healthy environment, should be at the forefront of every individual's daily life.

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Gibraltar Marine Reserve

MARINE OIL SPILL

MARCH 2021

Part 1

The inner harbour of the Port of Gibraltar is host to a variety of marine flora and fauna. One of the most notable intertidal species is the highly protected and endangered marine invertebrate called the Mediterranean Ribbed Limpet (*Patella ferruginea*). It is listed in the EU Habitats Directive and Nature Protection Act 1991.

An oil spill occurred early on Friday 12th February 2021 in the Bay of Gibraltar. The oil spill was attributed to the Liberian-flagged bulk carrier AM Ghent. The oil spill affected parts of the western shore of the Rock, in particular the Small Boats Marina, Westview Park and GASA Bathing Pavilion.

Given the scale of the oil spill, the Gibraltar Port Authority (GPA) requested additional assistance to help with clean-up operations. In addition to GPA and Brightside Services Ltd, additional members of staff from the Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate and Change and Heritage (DESCCH) and Gibraltar Joinery & Building Services (GJBS) Ltd were deployed. Amongst other issues, DESCCH technical officers were tasked with assessing the extent of shoreline contamination by documenting impacts and collecting photographic evidence.

Oil spills can have wide-ranging impacts that are often long lasting. Oil spills are harmful to marine birds and mammals, fish, shellfish and other marine organisms. The effects of an oil spill will depend on a variety of factors including the quantity and type of oil spilled and how it interacts with the marine environment. Prevailing weather conditions will also determine and influence the oil's physical characteristics. Other important factors to consider include the ecological and biological attributes of the areas affected by an oil spill; the ecological significance of key species and their sensitivity to oil pollution. Although fish, shellfish, and corals may not be exposed to oil immediately, they may come into contact with oil if mixed into the water column.

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Gibraltar Marine Reserve

MARINE OIL SPILL

MARCH 2021

Part 2

A Mediterranean Ribbed Limpet *Patella ferruginea* partly covered with oil. A large number of limpets were observed as being partially or entirely covered by oil as well as fully exposed to water contaminated with oil.

Other species such as the Snakelocks anemone *Anemonia viridis* were found directly beneath the oil sheen inside the harbour. The long-term impacts of spills such as these on anemones and other subtidal species can be difficult to quantify.

Some rocks in the worst affected area within the harbour were entirely covered with oil. The oil was very viscous therefore making it extremely difficult to wash away by wave and tidal movements alone.

The Small Boats Marina was one of the worst affected areas. The image shows a Great Cormorant perched on a revetment that is contaminated with oil. The Cormorant does not seem to be affected by the oil but the image demonstrates how easily vulnerable some species are since the areas affected form part of their habitat.

This image shows two Marbled Crabs *Pachygrapsus marmoratus* covered in oil. It is likely that the level of contamination proved fatal to both specimens given that the oil is both toxic and very viscous, making it extremely difficult to wash off.

The shoreline surveys showed that the areas investigated had been largely affected by the oil spill. The worst affected areas included the Small Boats Marina, the revetments outside the Calpe / Mediterranean Rowing Clubs and Westview Park. As a result, both high and low pressure washing remedial techniques were employed as part of the cleanup operation under supervision from the DESCCH Technical Staff.

In the image below, heavy oil contamination is being contained within an absorbent boom and removed using a suction hose. In addition to the actual oil contamination, a lot of contaminated marine flotsam and jetsam was collected.

During clean-up operations, some seabirds that had been contaminated with fuel oil were rescued and immediately taken to the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic for treatment.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* covered in fuel oil.

Thanks to the combined efforts of all Government Departments, Agencies and private companies involved in the clean up operation, the long-term effects to our marine environment were minimised. The polluter, AM Ghent, was held accountable and incurred the costs of the clean up operation as well as being charged with the offence of damaging an important breeding/foraging habitat and wildlife.

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Razorbill killed by fish hooks

Officers from the Department of the Environment and Climate Change's Environmental Protection and Research Unit (EPRU) collected a dead Razorbill from one of our marinas in January 2021.

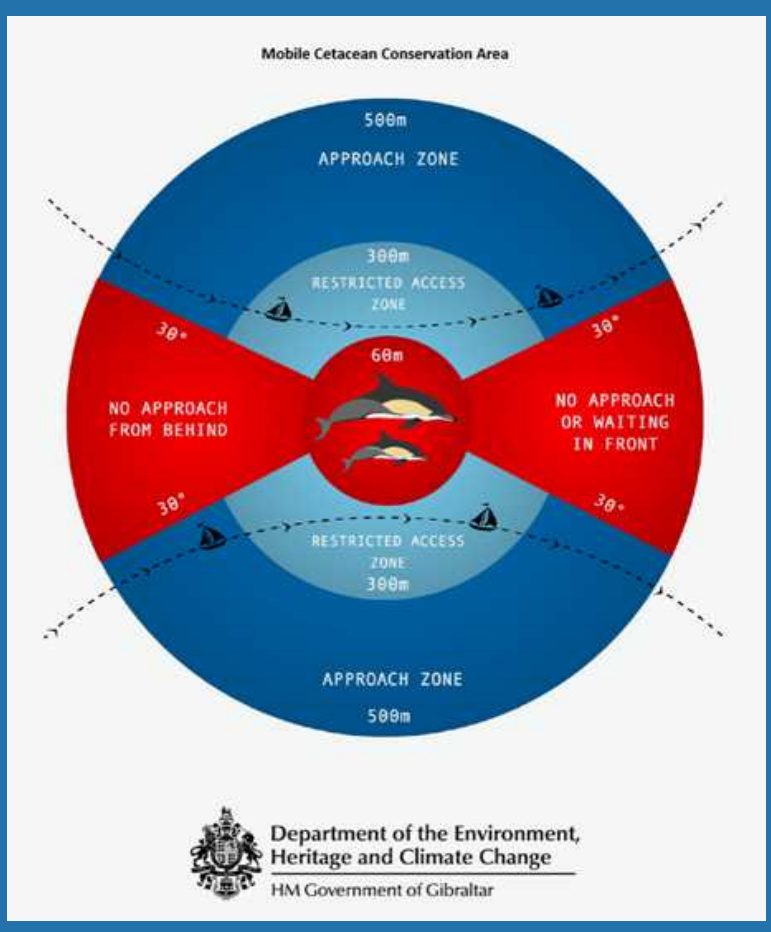
Razorbills are gregarious birds that nest in large colonies and belong to the Auk family. They feed on fish caught by diving from the surface and swimming underwater usually down to 25m depth. Some are even known to have been recorded swimming below 100m. They are usually seen in Gibraltar during the Winter months and migrate up North to spend the summer breeding in the northern Atlantic coasts including the UK.

As part of its marine wildlife stranding and response programme, a necropsy was carried out on the animal by veterinary officials from the Gibraltar Veterinary Clinic which revealed that the death was sadly attributed to the ingestion of two jiggers, or treble hooks, typically used in recreational fishing. This incident serves to highlight the importance of responsible angling practices especially in the vicinity of seabirds that can be attracted by fishing lures. Some basic recommendations that can be followed include not casting lines near seabirds, keeping bait scraps and discarded baits in a covered location and ensuring that these are disposed of only when fishing has stopped. No fishing tackle should be left on site or discarded into the sea. If a seabird is accidentally hooked or entangled on a line, the Department's EPRU should be contacted immediately on 58009620. Anglers should be as gentle as possible and avoid handling seabirds any more than is necessary. Damage to feathers or wings can affect their ability to fly while hook injuries can affect their ability to feed.

Anglers are encouraged to be vigilant during winter months when species such as Razorbills, Great Cormorants, Northern Gannets and Mediterranean Shags are frequently seen diving and feeding around our coastline; a spectacle that we are privileged to observe and must continue to protect in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters.

Cetacean Protocol

The Department of the Environment would like to remind all boat users of the need to be vigilant whilst navigating in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW) and to respect marine wildlife by keeping a safe distance at all times and not interfering with any animals. Reports of migrating Fin Whales, for example, are a now common occurrence in BGTW during summer months every year when these majestic animals are seen making their way out of the Mediterranean towards their feeding grounds in the North East Atlantic Ocean. These sightings highlight the importance of our waters as a migratory corridor, not just for whales, but for a variety of marine wildlife such as turtles, sunfish, sharks and seabirds.



All whales and dolphins are protected in BGTW under the Nature Protection Act 1991 and Gibraltar's Cetacean Protocol was introduced in 2014 under the Marine Protection Regulations.

Under these laws, the following conditions must be strictly met by boat users at all times:

1. The free movement of cetaceans must be permitted in all directions by not intercepting their trajectory, cutting across their path, navigating towards or in close proximity to them.
2. Vessels are required to maintain a distance of 300 metres from any dolphin or whale if there are adults with young animals. The Protocol also establishes a 500 metre radius from the animals within which vessels are only allowed to travel at no more than 4 knots or no greater than the slowest animal in the group. Under no circumstances must a vessel get closer than 60 meters except in an emergency situation.
3. If whales or dolphins approach or appear within 60m of a vessel, the engine will be placed in neutral or stopped if possible.

Further information on the Cetacean Protocol can be obtained from the Department of the Environment's Thinking Green website at:
http://www.thinkinggreen.gov.gi/uploads/biodiversity/2018-Cetacean_Protocol.pdf.

Loggerhead turtles are also strictly protected. Regular sightings are observed during the spring / summer periods when the animals are observed foraging or migrating towards the North Atlantic. Some of them can reach as far as the Caribbean and North America. They may sometimes be seen floating motionless on the surface basking in the sun. This behaviour is normal in Loggerhead turtles and the public is reminded not to touch or disturb the animals in any way.

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The Department would once again take this opportunity to remind boat users that the Environmental Protection & Research Unit (EPRU) closely monitors vessel activity to ensure that the requirements of the Cetacean Protocol are met. Any contraventions of the Protocol or the Nature Protection Act will be investigated and may result in legal proceedings being initiated against the skipper of offending vessels. The EPRU should be called immediately on 58009620 if any animals are being disturbed or in distress.

Loggerhead Sea Turtles

The Loggerhead Sea turtle is the world's largest hard-shelled turtle. Adults have an average weight of between 80kgs and 200kgs. The average length of its upper shell is between 70cm and 95cm.

The head and upper shell are normally between yellow-orange and reddish-brown in colour. Their underside is pale yellow, whilst the neck and sides are brown on the tops and yellow on the sides and bottom.

Loggerhead Sea turtles spend most of their lives in the open ocean and in shallow coastal waters. They rarely come ashore besides females during the breeding season.

They are omnivorous with a greater list of prey than any other sea turtle. During migration through open sea, loggerheads eat jellyfish, squid and flying fish.

Sea turtles are endangered and are protected in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW) as well as in International Waters. Commercial fishing with nets is one of the main threats to turtles in the Mediterranean Sea. The loss of suitable nesting beaches, disturbance and plastic waste are other important issues which affect the survival of this species.

Ensuring that all plastic waste is disposed of correctly, avoiding beach litter and using reusable shopping bags all help promote a healthier marine environment in which Loggerhead Turtles can survive and thrive.

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Gibraltar Marine Reserve

THE ATLANTIC PUFFIN:
A WINTER VISITOR TO THE STRAIT

The Atlantic Puffin, *Fratercula artica*, also known as the Common Puffin, is the only Puffin species native to the North East Atlantic Ocean.

'They breed in Greenland, Nova Scotia, Ireland and Scotland, to name but a few locations. The Atlantic Puffin will return to coastal areas at the start of the breeding season. Their preferred nesting habitat is on cliffs with grassy coverings along sea coasts and they typically nest in large colonies. These colonies are mostly found on islands with no terrestrial predators but adults and newly fledged chicks are at risk of attack from other birds including gulls.

Atlantic Puffins feed on small fish and crabs which they catch during dives, reaching depths of up to 60m and using their wings for propulsion. Like many other seabirds, the Atlantic Puffin spends most of the year far away from land in the open ocean. They are occasionally seen rafting in the Strait of Gibraltar during the Winter. As the Spring approaches, they begin to migrate back to their nesting grounds in the North as early as February although the most intense passage in the Strait occurs in March.

Since the Atlantic Puffin spends its winters on the open ocean, it is susceptible to human actions and threats such as oil spills out at sea. The Atlantic Puffin and other pelagic birds are excellent bioindicators of the environment, as they occupy a high trophic level (the position it occupies in a food web). Heavy metals and other pollutants are concentrated through the food chain, and as fish are the primary food source for Atlantic Puffins, the potential is great for them to bioaccumulate heavy metals such as mercury and arsenic. Measurements can be made on eggs, feathers, or internal organs, and beached bird surveys. Accompanied by chemical analysis of feathers, this can be an effective indicator of marine pollution.

Climate Change may well affect populations of seabirds in the northern Atlantic. Breeding success depends on ample supplies of food at the time of maximum demand as the chick grows. In northern Norway, the main food item fed to chicks is the young herring. If water temperatures are not adequate for the fish larvae to grow, this has a corresponding effect on their availability for Puffin chicks.

The Atlantic puffin has an extensive range with Europe holding approximately 90% of the global population. Despite this, in 2018 BirdLife International reported that the Atlantic puffin was threatened with extinction.

An Atlantic Puffin spotted in the Strait by the Department's Environmental Protection and Research Unit during surveillance monitoring duties

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ATLANTIC BLUE CRAB

An invasive species on our shores

The Atlantic Blue Crab *Callinectes sapidus* is a species of Crab native to the waters of the western Atlantic Ocean from Nova Scotia to Argentina including the Gulf of Mexico. In the United States of America the species has a high commercial and culinary value.

The species has recently been introduced to Europe where it is considered an invasive species and now occurs in Gibraltar. The Blue Crab is omnivorous with a diet that includes bivalves (e.g. oysters and clams), crustaceans, fish, worms and also plants, detritus and carrion. It is considered aggressive towards other species and competes with other crabs for food and space. The species is also a host to several parasites and diseases.

Numerous records of Blue Crab on the eastside of Gibraltar have been reported to the Department of the Environment. The public is advised to contact the Department's Environmental Protection and Research Unit on 58009620 in the event that any specimens are found.

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GIBRALTAR NATURE RESERVE

Tovey Cottage Field Centre

Tovey Cottage Natural History Field Centre Inauguration

The Minister for the Environment, Professor John Cortes, officially inaugurated the new Natural History Field Centre in the Gibraltar Nature Reserve on 20th April 2021. Located along Queen's Road, near Princess Caroline's Battery, the site known as Tovey Cottage will now serve as an educational facility in the heart of the Nature Reserve for schools and young people to enjoy as part of project-based nature learning initiatives. The Centre will also be used to help raise awareness on the wealth of biodiversity found in Gibraltar.

Visitors to Tovey Cottage will have the opportunity to learn about different species and habitats found in Gibraltar from within the Reserve, something that has been missing until now, as well as obtain first-hand experience of the rewilding programme being spearheaded by the Department of the Environment and Climate Change and the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society. Barbary Partridges, wild rabbits, birds of prey and reptiles form part of the rewilding programme which will be showcased at the Field Centre in the future.

Dedicated staff from the Gibraltar Nature Reserve Management Team have helped build the facility and convert it into a platform that can be used to inspire young and older generations alike.

May 2021 saw the first pupils visit and enjoy the facilities. The Centre served as a base for pupils from St. Joseph's Lower Primary school to learn about Gibraltar's Natural Heritage. They enjoyed the tranquil settings and were able to make use of the classrooms for lunch, observe the minibeast hotel and explore the pond with aquatic creatures. The Cottage provided a safe and scenic environment for the exhibition and workshop provided by GONHS. The children were lucky enough to engage with an Eagle Owl and Peregrine Falcon.

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GIBRALTAR NATURE RESERVE

Educational visits Tovey Cottage

Children from across our schools have visited Tovey Cottage for educational talks on our birds of prey, delivered by Vincent Robba from GONHS Raptor Unit. He displayed a Lesser Kestrel, a Peregrine Falcon and an Eagle Owl. Reuben Senior showcased the Department's Barbary Partridge breeding programme and talked about his role in habitat management.

Tovey Cottage is an educational centre that provides visitors with the opportunity to learn about different species and habitats found in Gibraltar from within the Nature Reserve. Presentations are often provided to visitors, informing them of all the work that is carried out within the Upper Rock. These talks are often related to the Barbary Partridge breeding programme, Raptor rehabilitation, and other re-introduction initiatives that enhance local biodiversity.

Tovey Cottage is equipped with a number of digital displays which provide details of the rich variety of flora, fauna, and invertebrates that can be found across the Upper Rock. Highlights from the Gibraltar Nature Reserve Management Plan also feature on these displays so people can learn about the Nature Reserve's history, and the effective management measures in place to preserve this gem today.

The Field Centre is currently made available to schools who may want to receive educational talks from the Department or use the site as a base for their project-based learning activities. The vision, however, is to also eventually open the site to members of the public and tourists alike who are interested in learning about all the things that make up Gibraltar's unique and wonderful natural environment.

BREEDING BIRDS OF GIBRALTAR

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EURASIAN EAGLE OWL
(Bubo bubo)

COMMON KESTREL
(Falco tinnunculus)

PALLID SWIFT
(Apus pallidus)

SPOTLESS STARLING
(Sturnus unicolor)

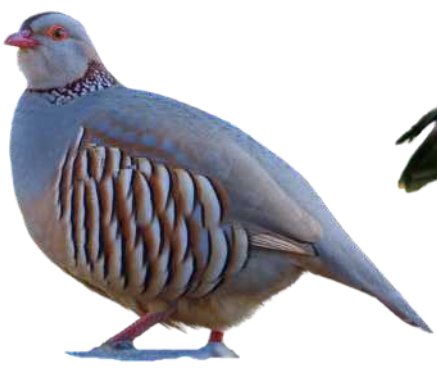
COMMON HOUSE MARTIN
(Delichon urbicum)

EURASIAN BLUE TIT
(Cyanistes caeruleus)

BLUE ROCK-THRUSH
(Monticola solitarius)

PEREGRINE FALCON
(Falco peregrinus)

LITTLE OWL
(Athene noctua)



BARBARY PARTRIDGE
(Alectoris barbara)

WREN
(Troglodytes troglodytes)

EUROPEAN SHAG
(Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii)

SARDINIAN WARBLER
(Sylvia melanocephala)

GIBRALTAR NATURE RESERVE

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TALUS SLOPES

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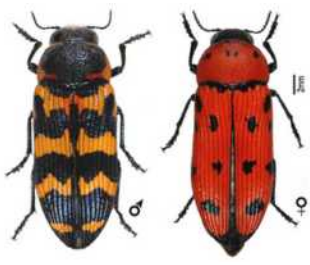


THE JEWEL BETTLE
(Buprestis (Yamina) sanguinea)

THREAD-WINGED LACEWING
(Nemoptera bipennis)

STONECHAT
(Saxicola rubicola)

MOORISH GECKO
(Tarentola mauritanica)

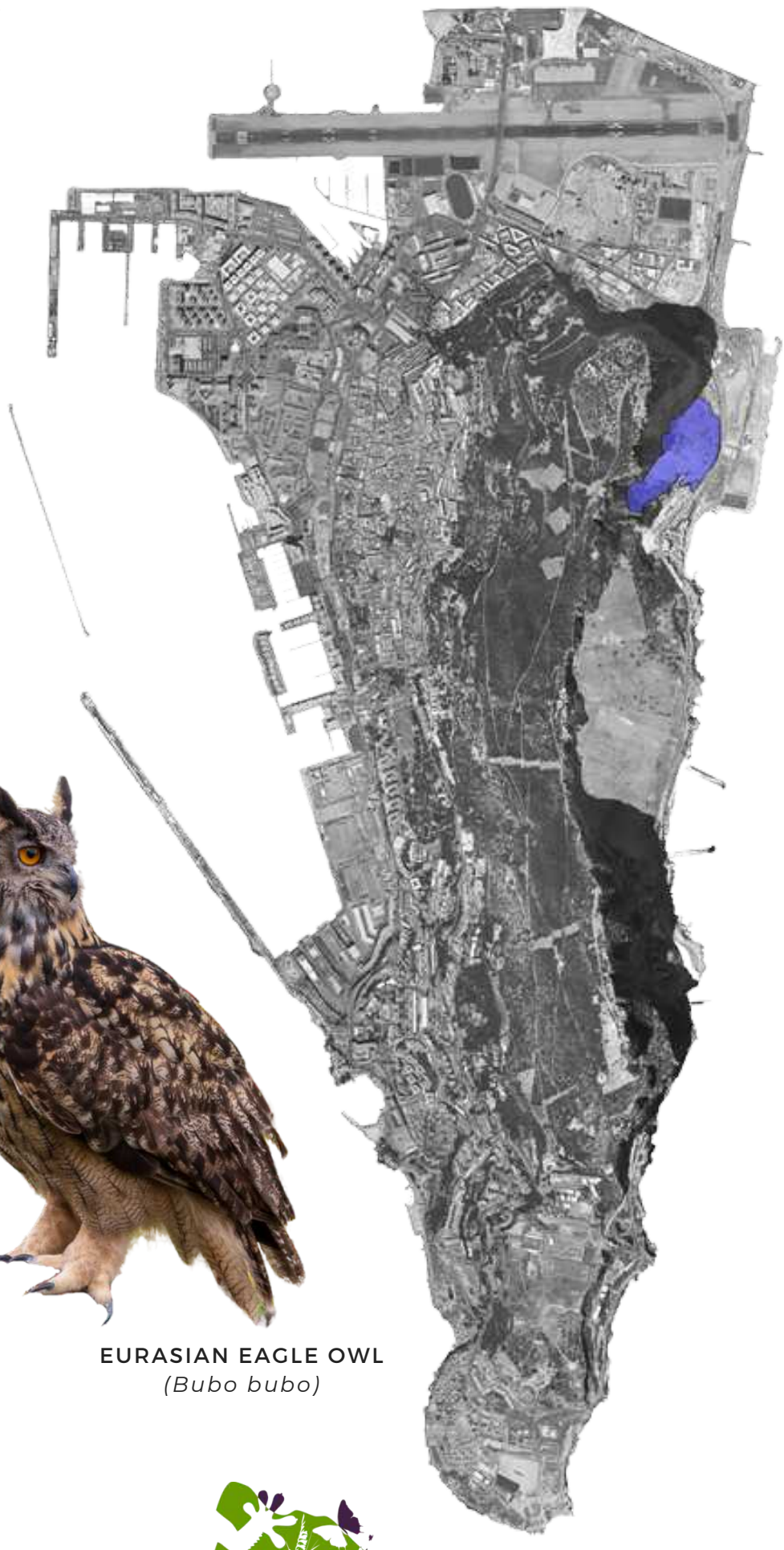
MASTIC TREE
(Pistacia lentiscus)

COMMON KESTREL
(Falco tinnunculus)

GIBRALTAR CANDYTUFT
(Iberis gibraltarica)

JOINT PINE
(Ephedra fragilis)

MONTPELLIER BROOM
(Genista monspessulana)



EURASIAN EAGLE OWL
(Bubo bubo)

GIANT MULLEIN
(Verbascum thapsus)

GIBRALTAR NATURE RESERVE

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THE GREAT EASTSIDE SAND SLOPES

WHITE ASPHODEL
(Asphodelus albus)

WILD RABBIT
(Oryctolagus cuniculus)

BARBARY PARTRIDGE
(Alectoris barbara)

WILD LEEK
(Allium ampeloprasum)

COCKS FOOT
(Dactylis glomerata)

SQUIRTING CUCUMBER
(Ecballium elaterium)

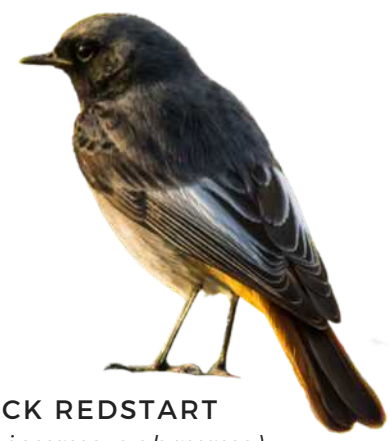
YELLOW-HORNED POPPY
(Glaucium flavum)

TREE MALLOW
(Lavatera arborea)

EMPEROR DRAGONFLY
(Anax imperator)

BROWN BLUEBELL
(Dipcadi serotinum)

BARBARY MACAQUE
(Macaca sylvanus)



BLACK REDSTART
(Phoenicurus ochrurus)

WILD OLIVE
(Olea europea)

GIANT TANGIER FENNEL
(Ferula tingitana)

THREE-TOED SKINK
(Chalcides striatus)

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WINDMILL HILL FLATS

ITALIAN SAINFOIN
(Hedysarum coronarium)

WILD CLARY
(Salvia verbenaca)

YELLOW WAGTAIL
(Motacilla flava)

BEE ORCHID
(Ophrys apifera)

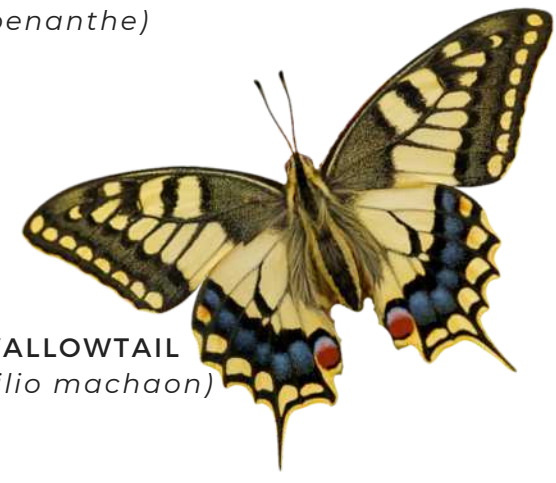
EUROPEAN MANTIS
(Mantis religiosa)

THEKLA LARK
(Galerida theklae)

NORTHERN WHEATEAR
(Oenanthe oenanthe)

SOUTHERN BROWN
(Argus aricia cramera)

RED-VEINED DARTER
(Sympetrum fonscolombii)



SWALLOWTAIL
(Papilio machaon)

SPANISH OYSTER PLANT
(Scolymus hispanicus)

WESTERN BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR
(Oenanthe hispanica)

BARBARY MACAQUE
(Macaca sylvanus)

SOUTHERN AUTUMN CROCUS
(Crocus serotinus subsp. *salzmannii)*

LADDER SNAKE
(Elaphe scalaris)

SAND WASP
(Bembix rostrata)

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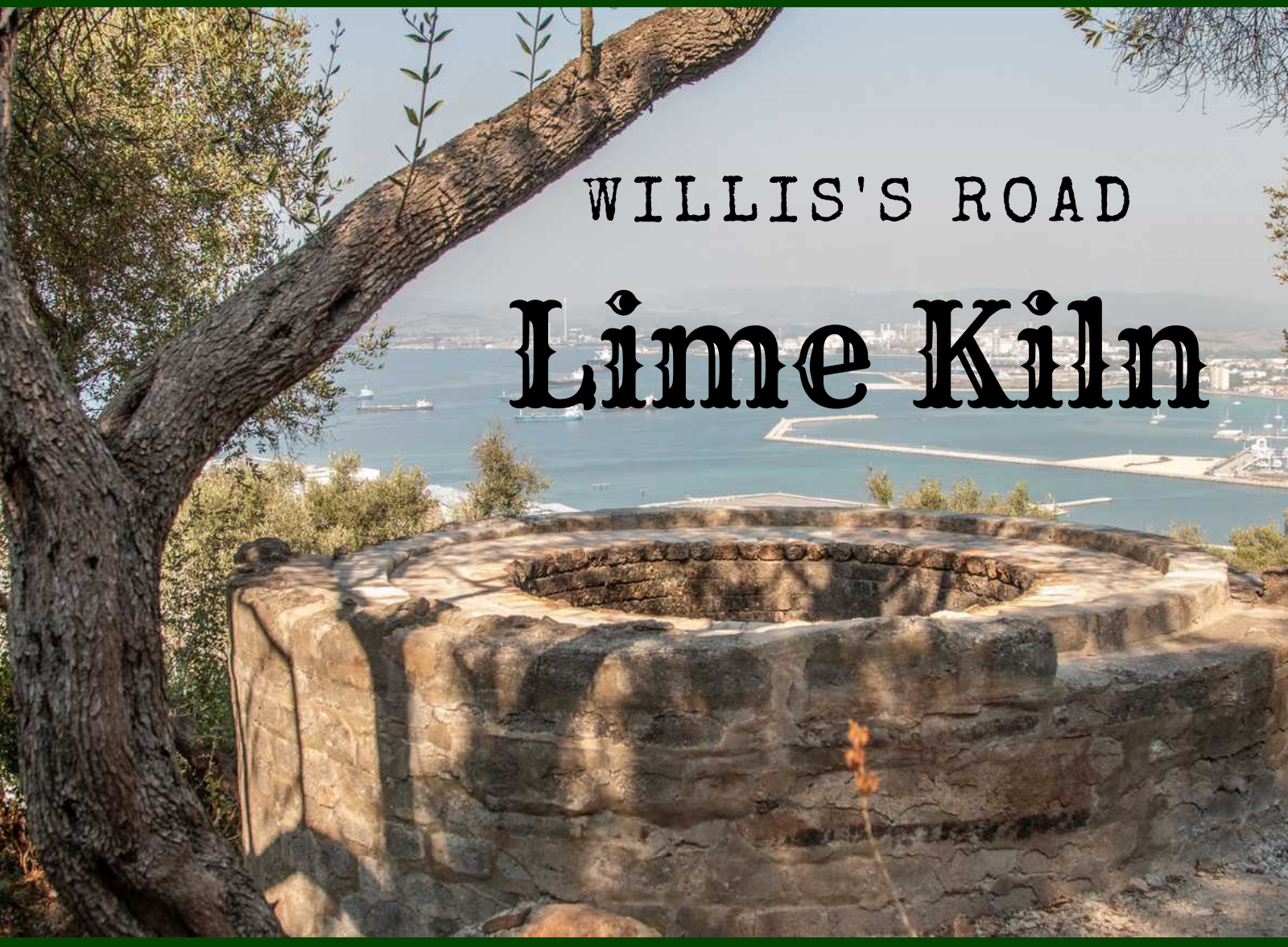
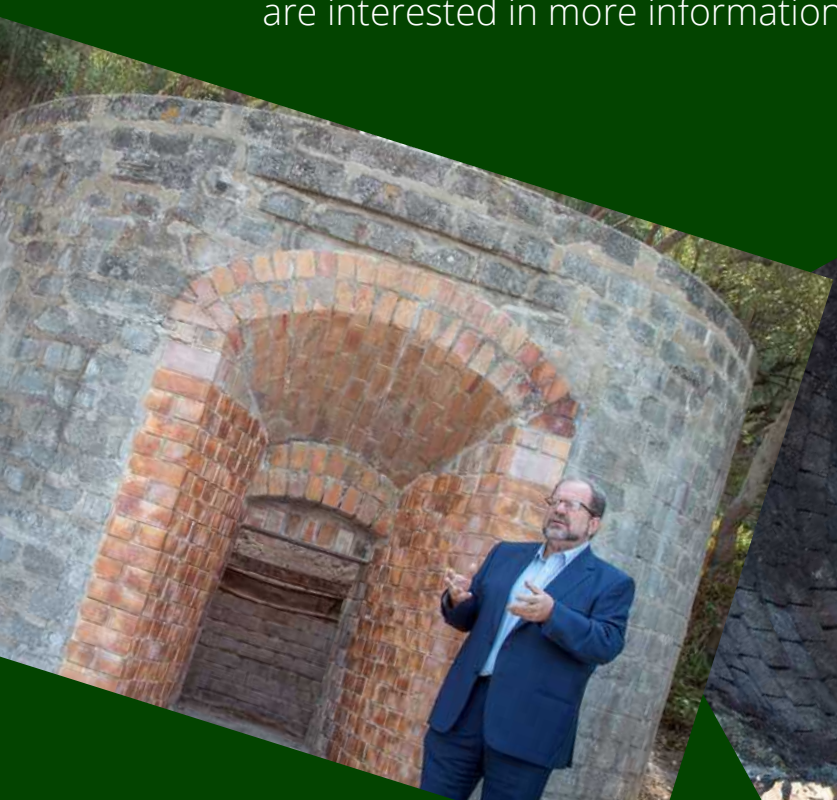
GIBRALTAR NATURE RESERVE

As part of an on-going programme of works aimed at restoring Gibraltar's Heritage, the Ministry for Heritage and the Gibraltar National Museum have completed restoration works on the Old Lime Kiln located at Willis's Road in the Upper Rock.



This lime kiln may have supplied the quicklime needed to whitewash the large area of rock above the Moorish Castle which had been stripped of vegetation and prepared as a water catchment for the collection of rainwater and to whitewash the reservoirs and tunnels where the water collected by the east side water catchments was stored. Rail tracks leading from the kiln are still visible: these may have led directly to the Waterworks themselves.

The immediate area has also been enhanced with further repairs and an interpretation panel that will be linked to the Ministry for Heritage website if any visitors are interested in more information about the Lime Kiln.



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MORE TREES PLANTED AROUND GIBRALTAR

The autumn to early spring is the best time to plant out trees in our Mediterranean climate, when cooler weather and rainfall help to get them established.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, contractors working for the Department of the Environment and Climate Change were busy planting trees around Gibraltar during 2021.

A total of 69 trees of 12 different species were planted between November 2020 and February 2021, of which 12 were relocated or replacements for trees lost, resulting in a net increase of 57 trees for Gibraltar.

CAMPION PARK

The largest number of trees planted was in Campion Park where 47 new trees were planted.

Trees have also been planted in other areas including Trafalgar Cemetery, Red Sands Road and Governor's Parade.

Apart from its value as a historical site, the Trafalgar Cemetery has an extensive collection of trees; no fewer than 83 species, many of them planted over the past few years. A specimen of each species of tree within the site has now been labelled, with more interpretation to be added.

Specimens include mature and naturally occurring wild Olives; Narrow-leaved Ash, another native species that only survives in Gibraltar's garden areas; Turkish Oak, Atlas Cedar, Camphor Laurel and Brazilian Fire Tree. The Trafalgar Cemetery now also holds Gibraltar's only Sweet Chestnut, transferred to the site last year from its previous location at the old Westside School in Queensway.

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everyday is EARTH DAY

Small Steps to Reduce our Carbon Footprint

Use your own reusable shopping bag

It's effective and practical, no need to collect plastic bags in your house.

Turn off the light during daytime

The sun lights the house brighter than the lamp, turn it off!

Reduce your food waste

Don't waste your food. Buy and cook only as much as you can eat.

Move on from paper and hard-copy files

It's the digital era, stop using lots of paper. Save the trees!

Unplug the electric equipment after using it

It prevents unwanted accidents and saves more energy.

BE THE CHANGE

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RECYCLE

Landfills produce toxins and greenhouse gasses due to the breakdown of materials. By recycling, you can reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills.

BUY SECONDHAND

The fashion industry is responsible for over 8% of greenhouse gasses. Buying secondhand reduces waste and conserves natural resources.

USE LESS PLASTIC

Single use plastic items like plastic bags are generally used only once before they are thrown away. Bring your own cloth bags with you when you shop to reduce your use of single use plastic.

PROPER DISPOSAL

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) can be toxic if not disposed of correctly. Dispose of all your WEEE in the pink recycling bins or at Gibraltar's Civic Amenities Site on Dobinson Way.

CONSERVE

Recycling has many benefits but challenge yourself to see how you can avoid the recycling bins altogether. Buying less and reusing items you already own help reduce generating waste and your spending!

Single Use Plastic Ban

It is important to remember that both our terrestrial and marine environments are not exclusively for human use. We share these spaces with a multitude of species. Experts estimate that up to a million birds and 100,000 marine fauna are killed each year as a result of plastic debris including plastic bags.

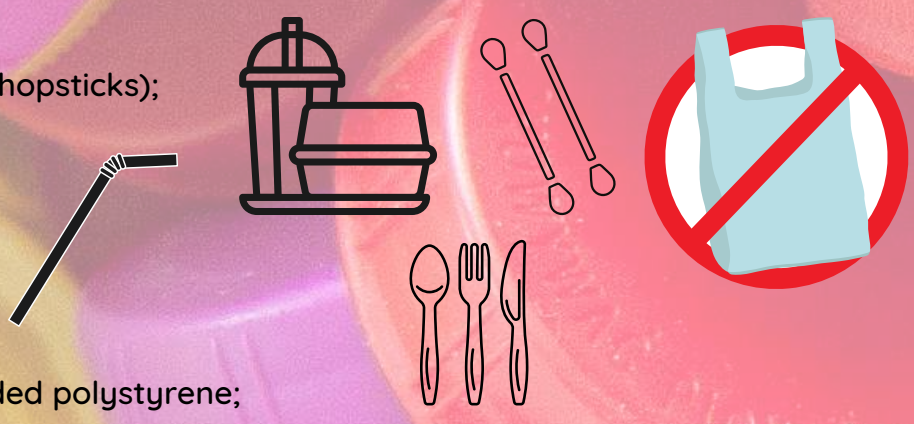
Leatherback, Green and Loggerhead Turtles can be found in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Leatherback turtles have seen their population numbers drop by 95% partly due to plastic ingestion. Plastic bags appear to turtles as jellyfish, their staple diet, and being unable to distinguish between plastic bags and jellyfish, will consume these. The plastic blocks their digestive system and leads to their death from starvation. Currently all three species of turtles are endangered. If plastic bag pollution continues, these species could well become extinct.

In addition to the immediate effects of plastic bags and other plastic items on our wildlife, as plastic breaks down into smaller pieces, this results in 'microplastics', since plastic never fully degrades. This then becomes easier for fish and other marine life to absorb resulting in the introduction of plastics into the food chain with humans being the ultimate consumers.

Whilst emphasis is given to the effects of plastic on the natural environment and its wildlife, it must also be remembered that in encouraging the continued use of plastic bags and other plastic items we are also causing great harm to ourselves and our children even though the effects are not currently as obvious as those now seen on our wildlife.

As part of the Department's efforts to reduce our dependence on single use plastic items and continue to protect and enhance our environment, we would like to remind the general public of legislation which recently came into full force.

From the 1st August 2021, the following items, made from plastic, are banned from importation in any number:



- Cotton bud sticks;
- Cutlery (forks, knives, spoons and chopsticks);
- Plates;
- Bowls;
- Toothpicks;
- Straws;
- Beverage stirrers;
- Balloon sticks;
- Food containers made from expanded polystyrene;
- Beverage containers made from expanded polystyrene, including their caps and lids; and
- Cups made of expanded polystyrene, including their caps and lids.

The general public is reminded that no quantity of any of the above items will be allowed into Gibraltar and will be confiscated on discovery. Exemptions are listed within the legislation.

The Department of the Environment and Climate Change would also like to take this opportunity to remind the general public and all commercial entities that bags made wholly or partly from plastic and of a thickness of less than 100 microns are also banned from importation and will be confiscated on discovery. These refer to those bags commonly found in commercial properties including those selling fresh produce. Exemptions are listed within the legislation.

Please note that under current legislation, items referred to as “made of plastic” include ‘bio-based plastic’, ‘biodegradable plastic’, ‘oxo-degradable plastic’ and ‘polymer’ based items.

Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Heritage

HM Government of Gibraltar

Gibraltar Marine Reserve

GIBRALTAR NATURE RESERVE

THINKING GREEN

New "plastic" alternative, or is it?

Polylactic Acid (PLA) is a new product which is designed to mimic plastic but is actually produced from fermented plant starch such as corn or cassava pulp.

There are seven grades of plastic, the first six of which are crude oil-based plastics. These plastics can all be recycled in the yellow recycling bin.

The seventh grade of plastic is PLA. PLA is not recyclable and contains Bisphenol A (BPA). Health risks have been associated with products containing BPA when used for the consumption of foods and drinks.

In addition, PLA has been globally branded and promoted as a biodegradable plastic. This is not correct. Whilst PLA is made from natural products, the process by which PLA breaks down into its original organic components requires certain conditions to be met.

For PLA to decompose properly, the polymer needs to be broken by adding moisture, and / or a catalyst and heat to it. The levels of heat required in order to breakdown PLA do not occur naturally in the environment. Temperatures of between 50 and 120 degrees Celsius are required for between 45 and 90 days in order to successfully break down PLA. This is commonly known as industrial compositing conditions. **Therefore, the current claims by manufacturers and companies trying to sell PLA products as biodegradable is incorrect.**

Biodegradable products are those that are capable of being decomposed by bacteria or other living organisms and therefore avoiding pollution. Should PLA products end up in the natural environment, whether land or marine, the same issues we are facing from plastic waste would also apply to PLA products.

Furthermore, the use of PLA products locally means that these need to be disposed of in the normal food bin instead of the yellow recycling bin. Individuals not aware of the difference in plastic products could inadvertently dispose of PLA products in the yellow recycling bin and lead to the contamination of the plastic recyclate.

In order to ensure a sustainable and healthier marine environment, Gibraltar has taken the first steps in implementing legislation to ensure our natural environment is protected. Further to the Microbead ban in 2017, the following legislation has been implemented.

Single-Use Plastic Regulations

These Regulations restrict and prohibit the importation of certain single use plastic products into Gibraltar, to reduce litter on land and sea thereby preventing the environmental harm that the disposal of such single use plastic products causes by endangering marine life and land animals as well as to promote the use of suitable and more sustainable alternatives.

Most PLA products are currently produced as single use items and are therefore also captured within the single-use plastic regulations.

Plastic Bag Ban

Whilst certain exemptions have been created to ensure hygiene and safety standards are met, these regulations prevent any individual or commercial entity, from importing a number of plastic bags with a thickness of 100gsm or less. HMGoG hopes that this ban will encourage all individuals to use reusable bags and therefore eliminate the possibility of marine plastic pollution from plastic bags locally.

Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Heritage

HM Government of Gibraltar

THINKING GREEN

4 Easy Ways to Reduce Your Plastic Waste

Bring your own shopping bag

Reduce plastic waste by bringing your own reusable produce bags or skipping them entirely.

Stop buying bottled water

Unless there's some kind of contamination crisis, plastic water bottles are an easy target for reducing waste.

Bring your own tumbler

Speaking of refillable, bringing your own tumbler for to-go coffee is another way to reduce your plastic footprint.

Say no to straws

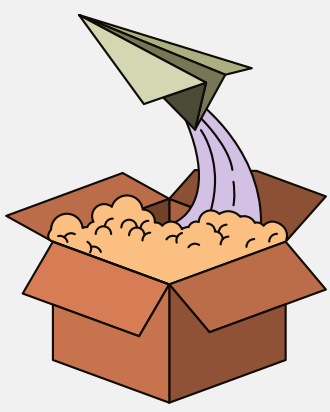
Paper straws are often a single-use item that's just not necessary.

RECYCLING GUIDE

Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Heritage

HM Government of Gibraltar

PAPER & CARDBOARD



Anything made out of paper can be recycled in the blue recycling bin.

Examples include: Newspapers, Wrapping Paper, Birthday and Christmas Cards, Magazines and Egg cartons.

WEEE

Anything that uses electricity to function can be recycled in the pink recycling bin.

Examples include: Chargers, lightbulbs, clocks, watches, battery powered toys, electronic tools, kettles, TV, computers and DVDs.

GLASS

Anything made from glass can be recycled in the green recycling bin.

Examples include: wine bottles, perfume bottles, window panes, drinking glass and glass plates or bowls.

COOKING OIL

All types of oils used in cooking can be recycled in the orange recycling bin

Please dispose of waste cooking oil in a suitable container to avoid any spillage.

No waste car oil to be placed in this recycling bin.

RECYCLING GUIDE

Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Heritage

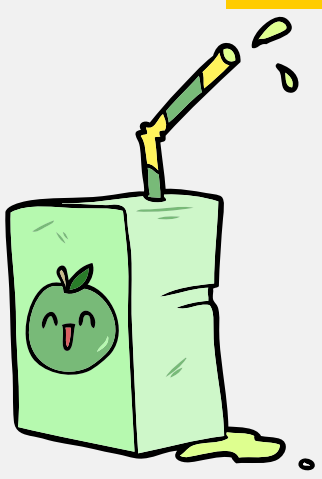
HM Government of Gibraltar

PLASTIC

Anything made out of plastic can be recycled in the yellow recycling bin.

Examples include: Polystyrene boxes; biscuit, chocolate and crisp wrappers; drink bottles; plastic take-away containers; shampoo bottles.

TETRABRIK



Tetrabrik can be recycled in the yellow recycling bin.

Examples include: Milk cartons, Juice cartons and tomatoe sauce containers.

METAL

Anything made from metal can be recycled in the yellow recycling bin.

Examples include: drink cans, food tins, broken metal cutlery, aluminium foil and metal bottle caps and lids.

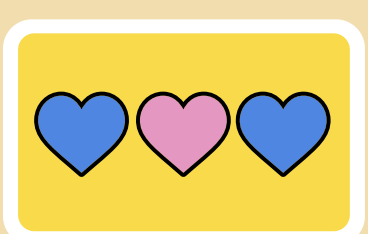
BATTERIES

All types of household batteries can be recycled in the red recycling bin

All types of household batteries accepted. **No car batteries should be placed in this recycling bin.**

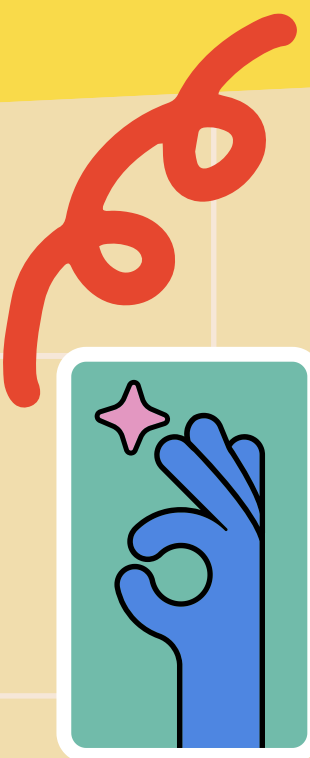
Keep Our Environment Healthy

Do not litter! It doesn't look nice and it is bad for our wildlife.



Remember to switch the lights off when leaving a room.

Recycle as much as possible!



Walk, cycle or use the bus, to travel around Gibraltar.

CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION

The Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change & Heritage kicked off Government's Climate Change vulnerability and risk assessment consultation during July 2021.

Climate change is happening with increasing speed and intensity. Efforts to date have focused largely on mitigation - that is attempts to limit emissions of greenhouse gases. It is now acknowledged, however, that the world is already experiencing the effects of climate change and moreover, that historic emissions are locked into the system and will result in further climatic change, regardless of how much we reduce our emissions today. The impacts of this could range from infrastructure damage and supply chain disruption to health impacts, biodiversity loss and the spread of vector-borne diseases.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that adaptation "involves reducing risk and vulnerability, seeking opportunities; and building the capacity of nations, regions, cities, the private sector, communities, individuals and natural systems to cope with climate impacts, as well as mobilising that capacity by implementing decisions and actions".

The consultation process was carried out in collaboration with UK consultants Ricardo Energy and Environment, and began with a presentation to key actors in Gibraltar's community – from government officials through to NGO's, the business sector and other community actors. It also involved a series of questionnaires and interviews over the weeks that followed. These helped to build a more complete picture of Gibraltar's potential climate hazards and impacts, identify strengths and weaknesses as well as solutions and areas for action.

Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Heritage

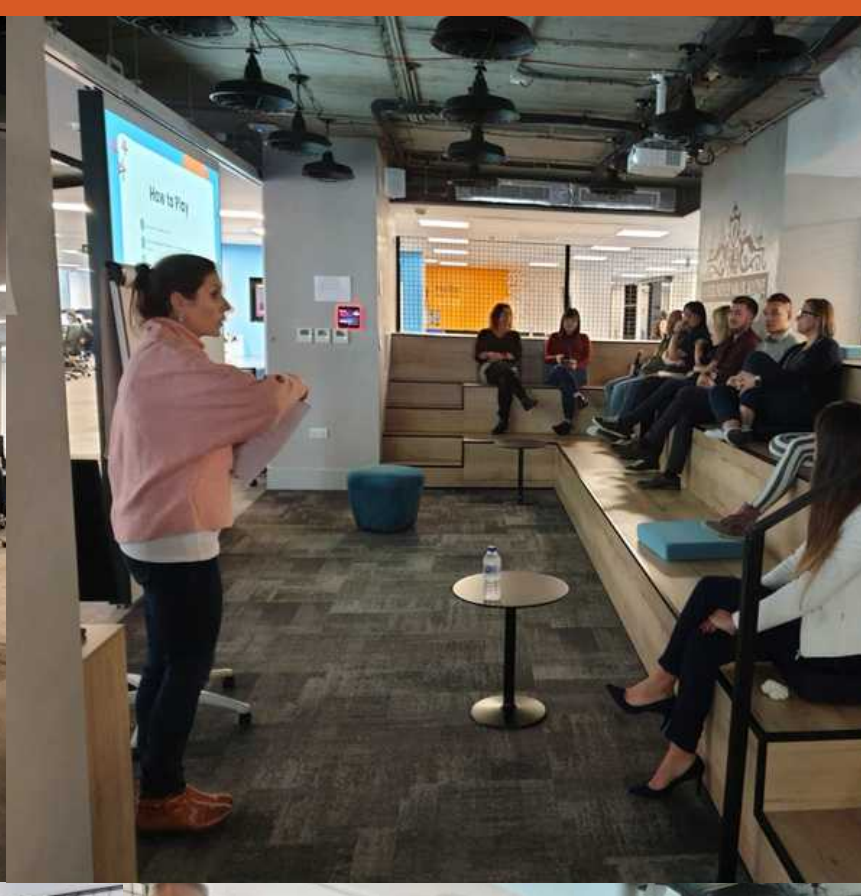
HM Government of Gibraltar

Corporate Social Responsibility

Gibraltar's relative contribution to overall global carbon is small but this is no excuse for complacency. Quite the contrary, it should be seen as making carbon neutrality for Gibraltar all the more achievable. Small countries must not feel compromised by their size nor limited by their means. They must serve as examples of commitment and effective action.
H.M. Government of Gibraltar recognises that, regarless of efforts made at a global scale to reduce GHG emissions, the world will continue to experience some degree of climate change. Gibraltar will not be immune to the impacts of this and Government recognises that it has a duty to safeguard Gibraltar's living and built environment for future generations.

As part of a company's Continous Professional Development (CPD) programme, the Department of the Environment's technical and scientific team can deliver a talk or workshop on sustainability, climate change or any related contemporary environmental issue.

If your place of work has a commitment to green initiatives under its Corporate Social Responsibility agenda and you would like to share or action these, please contact us via info.environment@gibraltar.gov.gi.
We would love to hear from you and help in any way we can!
In these pictures you can see our Energy Officer engaging with BetVictor, delivering a great session where many ideas were exchanged.



Department of the Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change and Heritage
HM Government of Gibraltar

CONTACT US

Many well meaning citizens tend to post on social media in an effort to bring attention to particular problems in relation to the environment. Social media platforms are not official reporting formats and therefore, there is no guarantee that government officials will see or then be able to act upon matters reported in this manner.

In this context HM Government of Gibraltar's, Department of Environment, Heritage and Climate Change, would like to remind members of the public who need to report environmental matters, that they can do so by contacting the numbers or email address below.

The numbers listed can be used for a wide range of environmental issues, including but not limited to; Macaques, gulls and pigeons, air or water pollution, oil spills, fishing, litter, fly-tipping, cleanliness, wildlife issues, environmental nuisance, trees and planted areas, beaches, upper rock, dog fouling, and noise pollution. If a member of the public is unsure of what number to call, please call the Environmental Protection Officer On Call, in the first instance.

Environmental Feedback Section

+350 200 65964
+350 200 65963

env.feedback@gibraltar.gov.gi

09:00 - 15:00 Winter Hours
08:00 - 14:30 Summer Hours

Environmental Protection Officer On Call

+350 58009620

Avian Control Unit

+350 200 66588

(24 Hour Answering Machine)

Animal Welfare Clinic

+350 200 43352

09:00 - 17:00 Winter & Summer Hours

Environmental Agency

+350 200 70620

+350 58297000
(On call after hours)

08:45 - 16:30 Winter Hours
08:00 - 14:30 Summer Hours

Macaque Team

+350 56002297

(On Call - 24 Hours)

Beaches

+350 200 71648

ur&beaches@gibraltar.gov.gi

09:00 - 15:00 Winter Hours
08:00 - 15:30 Summer Hours

Fishing Permits

+350 200 71061

info.environment@gibraltar.gov.gi

09:00 - 15:00 Winter Hours
08:00 - 15:30 Summer Hours