

# **TURQUOISE COAST ENVIRONMENT FUND**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2024-2025**







# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

Vision & Strategy	4
Note from the Team	6
A Year in Review	8

## OUR WORK

Map of Our Work	10
Areas of Interest	11
Projects Spotlights	18
Grantee Testimonials	20
Earthquake Region Fund	42

<b>OUR TEAM</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>THANK YOU</b>	<b>51</b>



# STRATEGY

TCEF specialises in identifying and supporting impactful, community-led environmental projects that protect and restore Türkiye's marine and coastal ecosystems.

We address critical funding gaps by providing flexible grant support to grassroots initiatives that combine biodiversity conservation with social and economic benefits for local communities.

Our work is strengthened by collaboration with local organisations, practitioners, and experts who help shape our funding approach and ensure projects respond to on-the-ground environmental priorities.

**Since 2022, TCEF has supported 42 grassroots projects, mobilising over €420,000 to advance biodiversity protection, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable livelihoods along Türkiye's coasts.**

We believe in the power of community-driven conservation to address the climate and biodiversity crises, while building resilience, hope, and long-term stewardship for nature.

# VISION

The Turquoise Coast Environment Fund (TCEF) works to protect, restore, and regenerate the natural beauty, biodiversity, and ecosystems of Türkiye's marine and coastal environments.

Established in 2022, TCEF empowers local communities to play an active role in advancing sustainable food systems, biodiversity protection, and ecosystem conservation. We believe that environmental sustainability and economic renewal are mutually reinforcing, and that lasting conservation outcomes are achieved when local communities are central to decision-making and implementation.

*Image credit: Emin Yoğurtçuoğlu*



# NOTE FROM THE TEAM



Image credit: Erol Yüksek

From children encountering nature through hands-on learning to local organisations gaining the tools to defend ecosystems and livelihoods, this year reaffirmed the power of community-led action.

In a time of climate pressure and recovery, we saw how care for nature and care for people move forward together—and how our role is to stand beside these efforts, listening closely and supporting work rooted in shared purpose.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who believes in our mission and stands with us; your support is what allows these bold, local solutions to thrive.



**OZGE SONMEZ**  
Executive Director

This year, our community's enduring commitment and the visible transformation of our shorelines have been truly inspiring to me.

2025 marked a historic turning point as we celebrated our first fundraising gala in Çeşme and our first London-based networking event, creating new bridges between local action and international allies.

Together, we are not only safeguarding nature but nurturing a spirit of unity and resilience that will shape the future of our coasts for generations to come.



**ONUR EREN**  
TCEF Chair



# A YEAR IN REVIEW

The 2024–2025 period marked a significant moment of growth and visibility for the Turquoise Coast Environment Fund (TCEF). During the year, TCEF strengthened its presence both nationally and internationally, bringing together conservation, culture, science, and philanthropy to support locally led environmental action along Türkiye's coasts.

A major milestone was TCEF's first fundraising gala in Çeşme, which raised over €30,000 in net funds. Beyond its financial contribution, the event played a critical role in cultivating a shared philanthropic culture around marine and coastal conservation in Türkiye, bringing together donors, practitioners, and community leaders around a common vision.

Internationally, TCEF expanded its engagement through events in London, including the East to West Mediterranean documentary screening and panel discussion, which created meaningful dialogue among researchers, practitioners, donors, and cultural actors and reinforced TCEF's role as a connector between local action and global audiences.



Özge Sönmez, Executive Director of TCEF, speaking at the CC's Steering Committee Gathering in London.



Organized an in-person Steering Committee meeting in Bodrum, where grantees shared project updates.



East to West Mediterranean film screening & panel in London



We joined the opening panel of the Fish of Here Project by Suyader in Foça.



TCEF held its first fundraising event in Çeşme and 30,000€ raised.



Opening of the Bozcaada Coral Reef Installation Exhibition



TCEF Team at the Gölbaşı Lake Festival



# MAP OF OUR WORK

**42** GRANTS ACROSS THE  
AEGEAN, MARMARA, &  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN



**€428,000**  
FUNDS AWARDED



*Nature and Culture  
in Aegean Coasts  
Project by Yolda  
Initiative, 2022-2023*

*Local Stewardship for  
Kavakderesi River Project  
by Bodrum Classical  
Music Association,  
2023-2024*

*Safeguarding Sharks  
and Rays in  
Samandağ Project by  
Nature and Science  
Association 2024-2025*

**PROJECT DISTRIBUTION**  
**MAP OF TURKIYE**



# AREAS OF INTEREST



Türkiye lies at the crossroads of three major biodiversity hotspots — the Mediterranean, Irano-Anatolian, and Caucasus — making it one of the most ecologically significant countries in the world. Its extraordinary range of endemic species and diverse ecosystems underscores the urgent need for targeted conservation efforts.

In response, TCEF focuses its funding on three interconnected areas that reflect our commitment to integrated, community-led solutions that benefit both nature and people.

## BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Türkiye's coastal, marine, and adjacent terrestrial ecosystems face accelerating pressure from climate change, habitat fragmentation, pollution, and unsustainable land and resource use. Despite their ecological significance, many of these ecosystems lack long-term, ecosystem-based management approaches grounded in scientific evidence and local knowledge.

TCEF supports community-led conservation initiatives that protect and restore marine, coastal, and terrestrial ecosystems through holistic and transparent resource management. Our funding prioritises projects that combine scientific research, local ecological knowledge, and participatory approaches to restore forests, wetlands, agroecosystems, soils, and coastal and marine habitats.

By strengthening ecosystem resilience and promoting nature-based solutions, TCEF contributes to the long-term protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services that underpin climate resilience, food security, and community well-being along Türkiye's coasts.



Nature and Culture in Aegean Coasts of Türkiye Project, Aegean Sea

## SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Small-scale fisheries, agroecological practices, and local food systems along Türkiye's coasts are increasingly threatened by overexploitation, climate impacts, market pressures, and declining intergenerational knowledge transfer. These pressures undermine both ecosystem health and local livelihoods.

TCEF supports projects that adopt holistic, farm-to-fork approaches, including agroecology and small-scale artisanal fisheries. We prioritise initiatives that reconnect producers, consumers, and ecosystems, and that promote socio-economic practices aligned with environmental sustainability.

Through strengthening sustainable food systems, TCEF contributes to healthier ecosystems, improved food security, and more resilient coastal livelihoods rooted in local knowledge and responsible resource use.



## EMPOWERMENT OF LOCAL NGOS

Local civil society organisations play a critical role in defending ecosystems and environmental rights, yet many face persistent challenges, including limited access to flexible funding, fragmented advocacy efforts, and insufficient technical and legal capacity to engage effectively with decision-makers.

In response, TCEF funds projects specifically designed to strengthen the enabling environment for civil society action. Through flexible grant support and opportunities for collaboration, we support initiatives that enhance the institutional, legal, and organisational capacity of local NGOs, practitioners, and community leaders.

These projects focus on capacity building, networking, and knowledge-sharing that help civil society actors operate more effectively and sustainably.

By supporting this work, TCEF aims to contribute to more resilient, collaborative, and impactful civil society engagement—helping create the conditions for long-term stewardship of coastal and marine ecosystems and more equitable environmental governance.



Study of Birds and Biodiversity in the  
Ayvalık Islands



# OUR WORK

The projects presented below reflect TCEF's three Areas of Interest. While each addresses a specific local challenge, together they illustrate how funding, capacity building, science, and community engagement combine to support long-term coastal and marine stewardship.

*Image credit: Hatay's Unique Wildlife: Mountain Gazelle and Striped Hyena Project, Abdullah Ögünç*



**Grantee Partner: Eastern Mediterranean Research Association**  
**Grant Awarded: 441,000 TL**  
**Project Dates: Aug. 2024 - Nov. 2025**

Island ecosystems are among the most vulnerable to climate change and wildfires, yet they are often underrepresented in long-term conservation planning. This project delivered a comprehensive, science-based assessment of vegetation resilience on Bozcaada and Gökçeada, combining field research, spatial analysis, and climate modelling with local ecological knowledge.

The project generated critical evidence to inform wildfire management and climate adaptation strategies for island ecosystems. By translating scientific findings into practical, nature-based recommendations, it strengthened the foundation for long-term conservation planning and more resilient land and forest management approaches in Mediterranean island contexts.

The methodology developed through this work offers a transferable model for other island and coastal ecosystems facing similar climate pressures.

# FIRE AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT ISLANDS: BOZCAADA & GÖKÇEADA



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Mapped and classified vegetation types across both islands
- Assessed ecosystem resistance and recovery capacity under current and projected climate conditions
- Identified priority areas for nature-based restoration and adaptive forestry
- Developed actionable recommendations to inform wildfire management and land-use planning
- Produced a practitioner-oriented booklet for public institutions and decision-makers

This booklet brings together key insights from detailed mapping and analysis of vegetation cover and structure across both island ecosystems, highlighting their responses to wildfire and climate change.

By combining scientific research with local ecological knowledge, it offers practical, nature-based guidance to support long-term ecosystem resilience, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable land management on Mediterranean islands. Read it [HERE](#).

## Yangın ve İklim Dirençli Adalar: Bozcaada ve Gökçeada





# GRANTEE REFLECTION

Reflections from İrem Tüfekçioğlu - Forest Ecologist, Eastern Mediterranean Research Association



“

Our findings show that island ecosystems will be significantly affected by increasing drought, rising temperatures, and changing fire regimes. While some vegetation types are under serious pressure, others demonstrate a remarkable capacity to resist and recover.

This project went beyond documenting ecological change on Bozcaada and Gökçeada. It helped translate scientific knowledge into practical guidance for climate adaptation and post-fire restoration.

By working closely with public institutions and local stakeholders, we were able to develop nature-based recommendations that are both scientifically robust and directly applicable. Perhaps most importantly, the approach developed through this project offers a model that can be adapted to other island and coastal ecosystems facing similar climate and fire risks.

”



GRANTEE TESTIMONIALS





# RAISING A NATURE-PROTECTING GENERATION IN MUĞLA

Grantee Partner: Aquatic Life Association  
Grant Awarded: 445,000 TL  
Project Dates: Jan. 2025 - July 2025

Environmental awareness and nature literacy among children and families remain uneven, even in biodiversity-rich coastal regions. Without early engagement, opportunities to build long-term stewardship and community ownership of conservation efforts are often missed.

The project delivered environmental education to more than **1,000 children**, exceeding its original participation targets. Programmes were implemented across multiple youth centres and local institutions, combining classroom-based learning with hands-on activities such as wildlife monitoring, birdwatching, and awareness of marine species.

By actively engaging educators and families, the initiative extended its impact beyond direct participants and fostered a broader culture of environmental stewardship.





# GRANTEE REFLECTION

Reflections from Banu Serin - Project Coordinator, Aquatic Life Association (SUYADER)

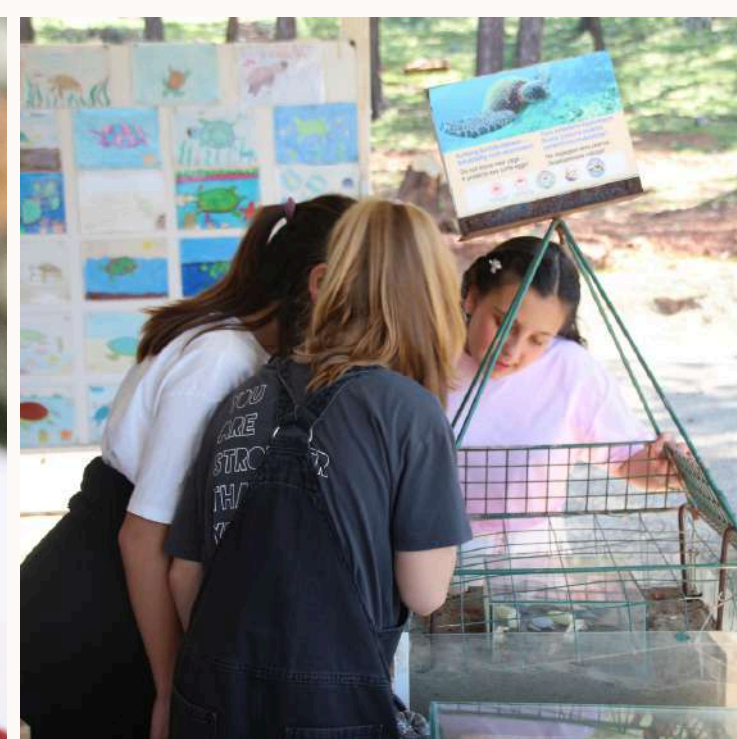


“

Touching the camera trap they had only seen in photos, setting it up themselves, and placing it in nature left a deeper and more lasting impression on the children.

After a training session, a child told us she would ask her father, a fisherman, not to throw invasive lionfish back into the sea but to use them as food instead. That small shift showed us how knowledge shared with children can influence entire households. Experiences like this confirmed that early, hands-on engagement with nature can foster long-term, more responsible attitudes toward the environment.

”







## STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND ADVOCACY CAPACITY

Grantee Partner: HUDOTO (Law, Nature and Society Foundation)

Grant Awarded: 450,000 TL

Project Dates: Sept. 2024 - Aug. 2025

This project addressed a critical but often overlooked barrier to effective environmental protection: limited legal capacity among civil society actors working on coastal and marine conservation. Focusing on Türkiye's Aegean and Mediterranean regions, the initiative aimed to strengthen rights-based, ecosystem-informed legal advocacy by equipping NGOs, lawyers, and environmental defenders with practical tools to use national and international law more effectively.

Through four structured capacity-building activities, the project engaged more than 80 legal professionals, civil society actors, activists, and representatives of public institutions, strengthening legal and advocacy capacity for coastal and marine conservation across Türkiye's Aegean and Mediterranean regions.



This report outlines legal capacity needs for coastal and marine protection in Türkiye, drawing on insights from surveys and interviews. It highlights key gaps in the use of national and international legal tools and provides a strong foundation for future training and advocacy. Read the full report [HERE](#).

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Conducted a comprehensive needs analysis, identifying significant legal capacity gaps related to coastal and marine protection.
- Delivered targeted trainings and workshops bringing together civil society organisations, lawyers, public institution representatives, and academics.
- Strengthened understanding of constitutional coastal rights and the use of national and international legal instruments, including the Bern and Barcelona Conventions.
- Fostered collaboration between legal and ecological expertise through applied, field-based learning.



Training participants reported increased confidence and competence in using legal mechanisms to challenge environmental harm, engage in advocacy, and contribute to policy discussions. By strengthening the legal foundations of civil society action, the project enhanced the long-term protection potential of coastal and marine ecosystems and created a replicable model for rights-based environmental advocacy across Türkiye.



# GRANTEE REFLECTION

Reflections from Özlem Altıparmak - Founder of HUDOTO- Law, Nature and Society



“

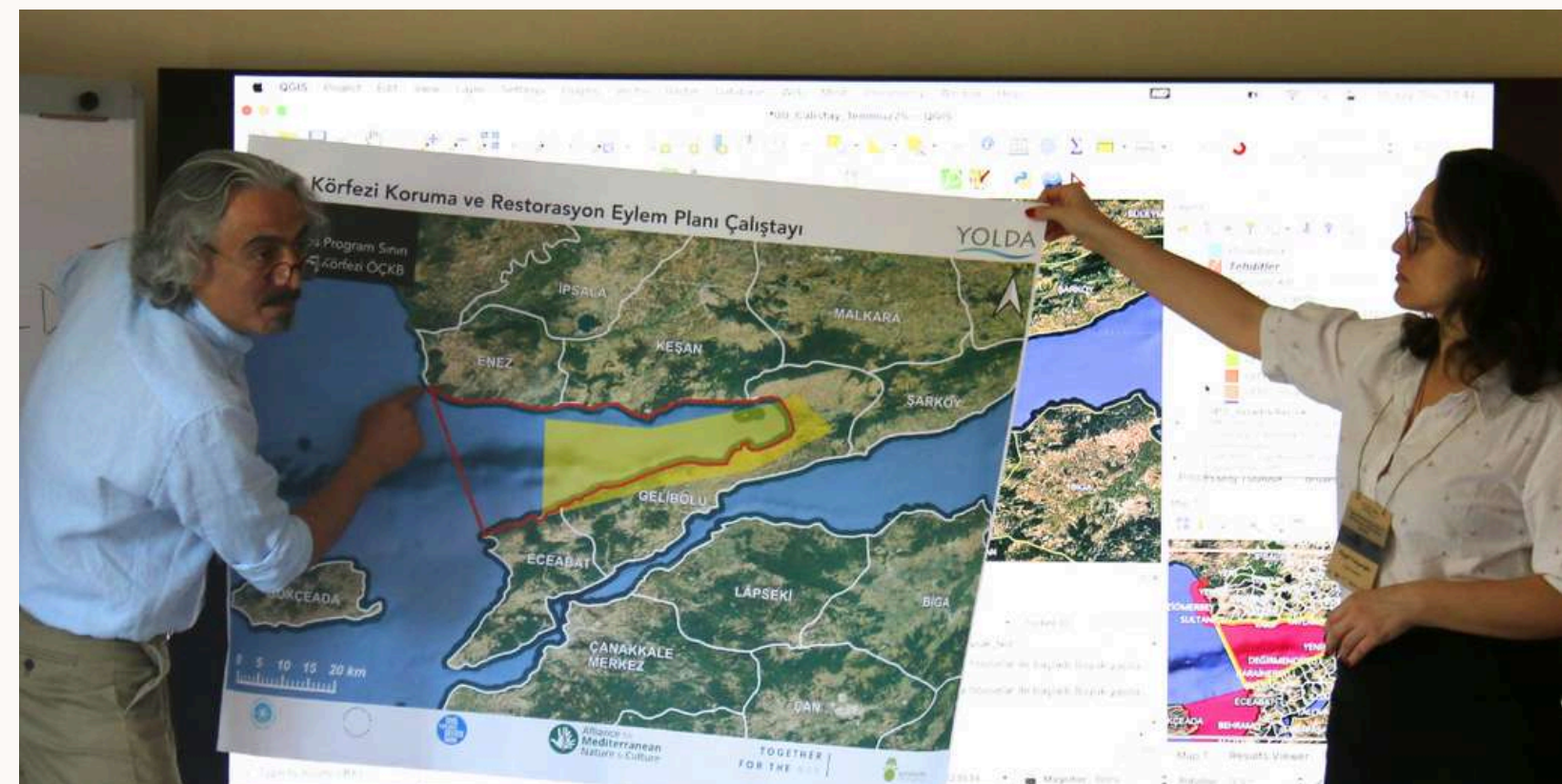
One of the most meaningful outcomes of this project was seeing participants grow more confident as stewards of coasts and seas, and recognising that the capacity built through the training is already evolving into new collaborations and networks. Learning did not remain theoretical; it was grounded in field observation, shared experience, and collective problem-solving.

The process demonstrated that environmental law becomes far more effective when civil society actors, lawyers, and local defenders learn and act together. This shared capacity is essential for building more durable, rights-based approaches to environmental protection.

”







## SAROS BAY CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION PLANNING

Grantee Partner: YOLDA Initiative

Grant Awarded: 450,000 TL

Project Dates: Oct. 2024 - Nov. 2025

This project supported the protection and restoration of the Saros Körfezi ecosystem through a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach. By bringing together public institutions, civil society organisations, small-scale fishery cooperatives, and academic experts, the initiative focused on building a shared understanding of ecological pressures and co-developing long-term conservation priorities.

Through field research, stakeholder consultations, and a multi-stakeholder action planning process, the project strengthened dialogue and cooperation among key actors responsible for coastal and marine management. Rather than delivering short-term interventions, the project laid the groundwork for ecosystem-based governance by fostering local ownership, institutional coordination, and a shared vision for the future of Saros Körfezi.



# GRANTEE REFLECTION

Reflections from Engin Yılmaz - Executive Director, Yolda Initiative

“

This project confirmed for us that effective conservation planning can only emerge through inclusive, multi-actor processes. Bringing together small-scale fishers, public institutions, academics, and civil society actors created a shared understanding of both the ecological challenges and the solutions needed for Saros Körfezi.

The participatory approach strengthened trust between stakeholders and transformed scientific analysis into a collectively owned action plan. We believe this process has laid a strong foundation for long-term, coordinated conservation and restoration efforts in the region.

”



**YOLDA**  
**NATURE-CULTURE  
COEXISTENCE**  
A SPATIAL PRIORITIZATION  
ALONG THE AEGEAN SEASCAPES IN  
TÜRKİYE  
2025



Yolda produced a comprehensive spatial prioritisation study integrating biodiversity conservation with sustainable small-scale fisheries across Türkiye's Aegean seascapes.

Developed through a two-year, multi-stakeholder process, the study brought together biological data, fisheries knowledge, and participatory inputs to identify marine areas where conservation action is both most urgently needed and most likely to be effective. By analysing ecological value, threat intensity, and the level of past conservation investment, the work highlighted priority areas that have received limited protection despite their high importance for both biodiversity and local livelihoods.

The study generated concrete, action-oriented outputs for decision-makers, practitioners, civil society organisations, and donors, and directly informed the launch of a long-term conservation and restoration programme in Saros Bay. Read the study [HERE](#).







## LOCAL FISHERIES SUPPORTING FOOD SECURITY

**Grantee Partner: Sustainable Living Association SUYADER**

**Grant Awarded: 700,000 TL**

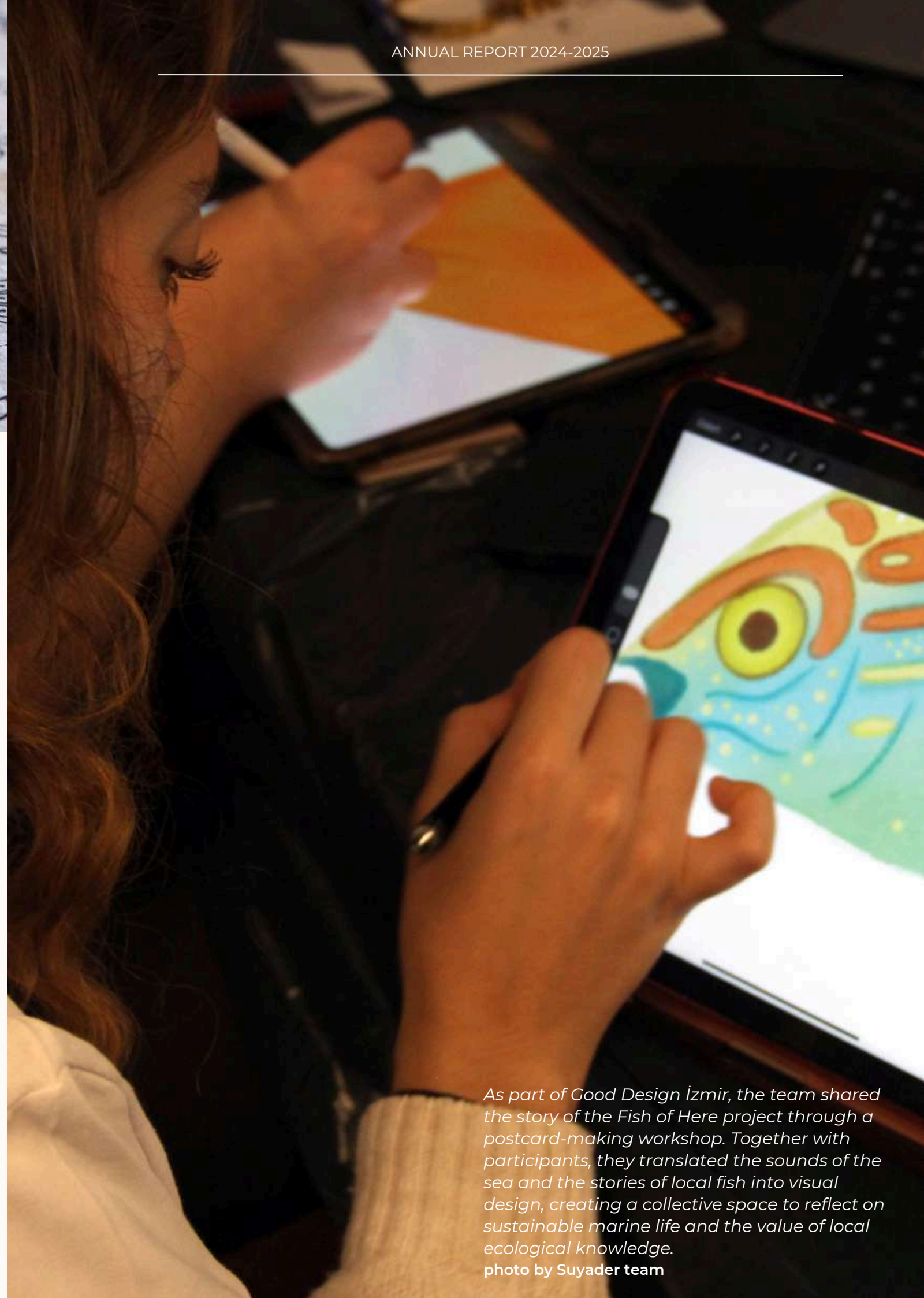
**Project Dates: April 2025 - March 2026**

This project is strengthening Foça's sustainable seafood culture by reconnecting residents, fishers, chefs, and young people with locally caught species. Through close collaboration with culinary professionals and educational institutions, newly tested dishes featuring underutilised local fish are being introduced into restaurant menus and culinary training programmes.

The project has also encouraged more open dialogue with small-scale fishers around responsible harvesting practices, particularly for species that are less commonly consumed.

At the same time, new communication tools—including a dedicated website, printed materials, and a growing volunteer network—are increasing public awareness of Foça's marine biodiversity and local seafood heritage.

Looking ahead, preparations for the Local Fish Festival in Foca, scheduled for 28-29 March, demonstrate strong engagement from fishers, cooperatives, schools, and restaurants.



*As part of Good Design İzmir, the team shared the story of the Fish of Here project through a postcard-making workshop. Together with participants, they translated the sounds of the sea and the stories of local fish into visual design, creating a collective space to reflect on sustainable marine life and the value of local ecological knowledge.*

**photo by Suyader team**



# PROTECTING BOZCAADA'S CORAL REEFS

Grantee Partner: Social Climate Association

Grant Awarded: 680,650 TL

Project Dates: April 2025 - March 2026

The Social Climate Association's project combines scientific research, artistic expression, and community engagement to raise awareness of the *Cladocora caespitosa* coral reef colonies around Bozcaada.

Initial scientific dives documented both healthy coral areas and colonies showing signs of stress, generating critical baseline data to inform future conservation efforts.

Underwater video footage collected during the research phase will support long-term monitoring and inform discussions on potential marine protected area planning.

The project's visibility and interdisciplinary approach prompted early engagement from the Ministry, opening preliminary discussions around the potential designation of a marine protected area and highlighting the role of culture and science together in advancing marine conservation.



*"Sounds of Reefs" installation, attracted approximately 5,000 visitors in Bozcaada over a seven-day exhibition period, significantly expanding public awareness of Bozcaada's marine ecosystems.*





# FROM MEGA FIRES TO HONEY FORESTS



**Grantee Partner: NATURA (Nature and Culture Conservation Association)**  
**Grant Awarded: 685,000 TL**  
**Project Dates: April 2025 - March 2026**

The Nature and Culture Conservation Association's project explores how post-fire forest landscapes in Muğla can support biodiversity, sustainable beekeeping, and cultural heritage.

Using GIS-based analysis, the project identified microhabitats suitable for nectar-rich plant species, helping guide ecologically informed restoration design in fire-affected areas.

In parallel, traditional stone apiaries were documented in collaboration with local communities, revealing strong local support for their preservation and potential revival.

The project demonstrates how post-fire restoration can move beyond ecological recovery alone, simultaneously supporting biodiversity conservation, local livelihoods, and the protection of cultural landscapes.

Through field-based monitoring, camera traps recorded frequent brown bear movement, providing critical evidence to inform conflict-mitigation planning between wildlife and beekeepers.







## IN THE WAKE OF PİRİ REİS: MARINE LITERACY VOYAGE

Grantee Partner: Turkish Marine Research Association (TÜDAV)  
Grant Awarded: 700,000 TL  
Project Dates: April 2025 - March 2026

This project combines scientific research with public engagement to strengthen marine literacy and conservation action in the Aegean Sea. Through a research voyage retracing the route charted by the Ottoman cartographer Pîrî Reis, the project conducts biodiversity and pollution monitoring while engaging coastal communities at key ports along the Gelibolu–Çeşme route.



Aboard the TÜDAV MARU research vessel, scientists conduct visual observations and sampling of marine biodiversity, microplastics, and pollution, while open-ship visits and port-based events translate scientific knowledge into accessible public dialogue. By connecting Türkiye's maritime heritage to contemporary environmental challenges, the project bridges science and society, fostering awareness, shared responsibility, and collaboration to protect Aegean marine ecosystems.





# RESPONDING TO THE 2023 EARTHQUAKES: THE EARTHQUAKE REGION FUND

In response to the February 6, 2023, earthquakes, TCEF—together with Conservation Collective, Turkish Philanthropy Funds, Turkey Mozaik Foundation, and the Support Foundation for Civil Society (STDV)—launched the Earthquake Region Fund to support civil society organisations addressing environmental challenges in affected coastal provinces. The fund is grounded in the understanding that long-term recovery depends on protecting and restoring ecosystems alongside social and economic rebuilding.

In its first funding phase, the Earthquake Region Fund supported seven local organisations, enabling projects focused on marine and coastal protection, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable land and water management in Hatay, Adana, and Mersin.

These projects have now been completed, contributing valuable learning and locally grounded solutions during the early stages of environmental recovery.

Building on this experience, a new funding phase was launched in 2025, supporting six additional projects currently underway. This second cohort focuses on long-term, ecosystem-based approaches to recovery, including wetland and river basin protection, species conservation, legal and institutional resilience, and community livelihoods linked to nature restoration.

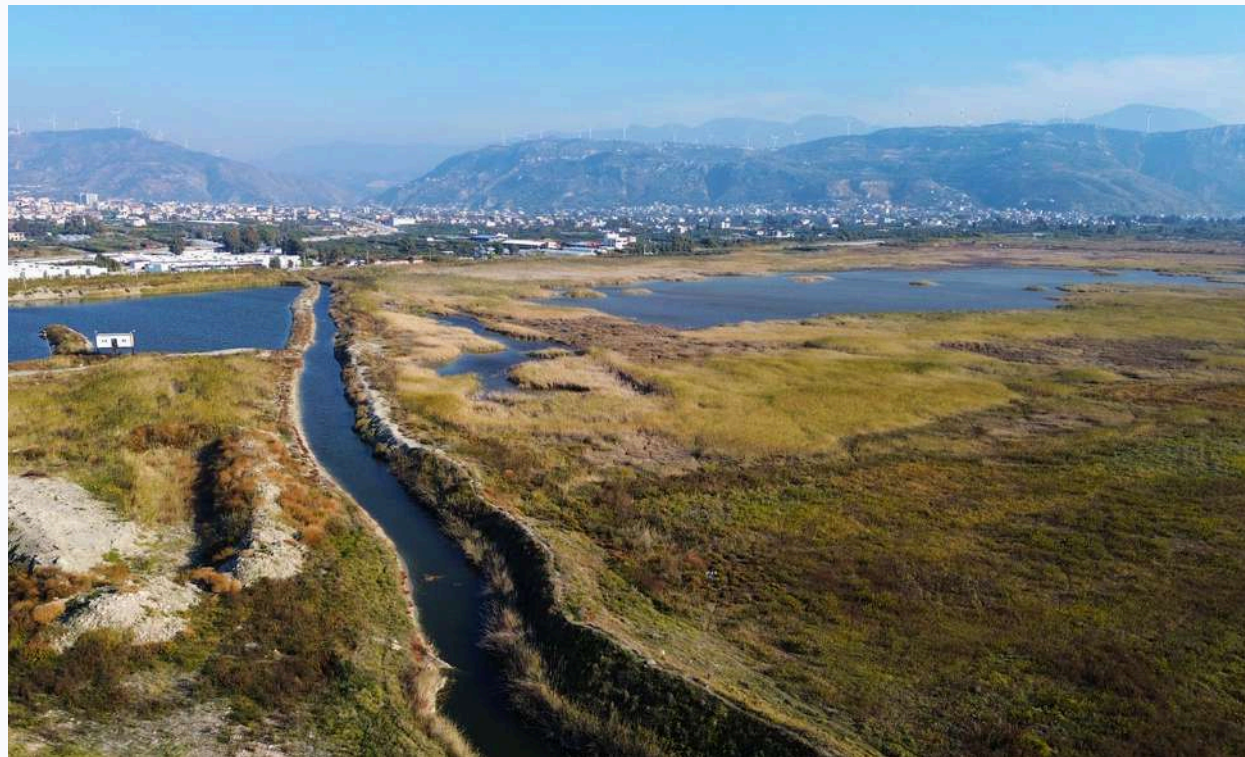
Together, these two funding phases reflect TCEF's commitment to moving beyond emergency response toward sustained environmental resilience—supporting local organisations as key actors in shaping recovery that is both ecologically essential and socially just.



TURKISH  
PHILANTHROPY  
FUNDS







## ASI 30\*30: ENVIRONMENTAL VISION PLAN CAMPAIGN

Grantee Partner: Antakya Environmental Protection Association

Grant Awarded: 524,790 TL

Project Dates: Sept 2025 - Sept 2026

The February 2023 earthquakes have intensified existing pressures on the Asi River Delta, Milleyha Wetland, and the Samandağ coastline—ecosystems already threatened by uncontrolled development, waste dumping, and climate change. These areas are critical habitats for migratory birds, sea turtles, and wetland-dependent species, yet unregulated construction and debris disposal have further weakened their natural resilience.

Building on the first phase of the Asi River Basin Environmental Vision Plan, previously supported through the Earthquake Region Fund, this project advances a targeted public awareness and advocacy campaign that brings science, communication, and storytelling together. Aligned with the global 30×30 biodiversity target, the initiative aims to strengthen protection efforts by mobilising public support and encouraging institutional action to safeguard at least 30% of terrestrial and marine ecosystems by 2030.



## HATAY'S UNIQUE WILDLIFE: MOUNTAIN GAZELLE AND STRIPED HYENA

Grantee Partner: Hatay Environmental Protection Association

Grant Awarded: 546,000 TL

Project Dates: Oct 2025 - Sept 2026

Hatay is Türkiye's only region where the endangered mountain gazelle (*Gazella gazella*) and striped hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*) coexist. These species face increasing pressure from poaching, habitat degradation, and human-wildlife conflict—risks that have intensified in fragile landscapes following the February 2023 earthquakes. Persistent misconceptions and negative attitudes toward wildlife further threaten the long-term survival of both species.

This project combines scientific field monitoring with community-based engagement to reduce conflict and strengthen coexistence between people and wildlife. Through camera trapping, ecological data collection, and participatory mapping of conflict zones, the initiative builds a robust understanding of species behaviour, habitat use, and risk areas. Local knowledge gathered through interviews with shepherds, hunters, and villagers is integrated with scientific analysis to inform practical, locally grounded solutions.





## DISCOVER THE FISH OWL BEFORE IT DISAPPEARS, PHASE II

**Grantee Partner:** The Slow Food Earth Market Association

**Grant Awarded:** 370,8000 TL

**Project Dates:** Sept 2025 - August 2026

The endangered Fish Owl (*Ketupa zeylonensis*), one of Türkiye's rarest bird species, continues to face significant threats from poaching, habitat loss, and persistent negative cultural perceptions. While Phase I of this initiative established a strong foundation—through habitat mapping and early efforts to reduce persecution—long-term conservation requires formal recognition and national-level legal protection.

Phase II focuses on securing this protection by combining community engagement, education, and policy advocacy. The project works with local communities, schools, and cultural platforms to build awareness and foster positive attitudes toward the species, while simultaneously engaging national and regional authorities to advance Türkiye's first official Species Action Plan for the Fish Owl.

By linking grassroots awareness with institutional advocacy, the project aims to move Fish Owl conservation from local concern to formalised national action. In doing so, it seeks to establish a durable framework to protect both the species and the freshwater ecosystems on which they depend.

## ECOSYSTEM-BASED LEGAL RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE AND DISASTER RISKS

**Grantee Partner:** The Law, Nature, and Society Foundation

**Grant Awarded:** 550,000 TL

**Project Dates:** Sept 2025 - Sept 2026

In southern Türkiye—particularly in Adana, Mersin, and Hatay—coastal and terrestrial ecosystems face growing pressure from rapid industrialisation, climate-related risks, and post-earthquake recovery processes. While these pressures intensify environmental threats, civil society actors often lack the legal knowledge and advocacy capacity required to defend environmental rights and hold decision-makers accountable.

This project strengthens ecosystem-based legal resilience by building the capacity of local civil society organisations, lawyers, and environmental defenders. Through a structured programme combining online legal training, a field-based workshop in Tarsus, and peer learning, participants will develop practical skills to monitor environmental risks, pursue legal remedies, and engage more effectively in environmental governance processes.

A central output of the project is the co-creation of an Environmental Justice Roadmap, developed collaboratively with participants and shared with local institutions and authorities.







## ASI RIVER & GÖLBAŞI LAKE: WATER HYACINTH UPCYCLING

**Grantee Partner:** Tursiyev

**Grant Awarded:** 550,000 TL

**Project Dates:** Sept 2025 - August 2026

In the Asi River Basin and Gölbaşı Lake, the rapid spread of invasive water hyacinth has severely reduced oxygen levels and disrupted aquatic biodiversity. Following the February 2023 earthquakes, ecosystem pressures have intensified, accelerating eutrophication and further weakening the resilience of already fragile freshwater systems.

This project responds by transforming a harmful plant into a chance for communities to rebuild. It will train 50 women to craft items using water hyacinth, supported by practical workshops, environmental education, and local cooperation. By combining skills training, ecological education, and local partnerships, the project connects environmental restoration with long-term social resilience.



## PROTECTING THE MILLEYHA WETLAND AND SAMANDAĞ COAST

**Grantee Partner:** Hatay Environmental Protection Association

**Grant Awarded:** 546,000 TL

**Project Dates:** Oct 2025 - Sept 2026

The Milleyha Wetland and Samandağ coastline are facing increasing pressure from illegal dumping, unregulated tourism, and post-earthquake reconstruction. These cumulative threats are degrading critical habitats, while limited awareness among local businesses and low levels of community participation have constrained effective long-term stewardship. This project addresses these challenges by linking habitat protection with local economic and social engagement.

By introducing a “Milleyha-Friendly Certification” scheme, the initiative encourages businesses to adopt environmentally responsible practices while strengthening local ownership of conservation efforts. Public awareness campaigns, documentary storytelling, and educational materials complement this approach by broadening visibility and support for ecosystem protection.



# OUR TEAM

TCEF's local team consists of one local Executive Director and one Programme Assistant, assisted by scientific and technical advisors and the Steering Committee.



**Ozge Sonmez**  
Executive Director



**Didem Karagence**  
Program Officer



**Onur Eren**  
Chair



**Ben Goldsmith**  
Conservation Collective



**Beti Mizrahi**  
Steering Committee



**Can Koseoglu**  
Steering Committee



**Ergem Senyuva Tohumcu**  
Steering Committee



**Jade Brudenell**  
Conservation Collective



**Kivılcım P. Kocabıyık**  
Steering Committee



**Shirley Au**  
Steering Committee



**Secil Kınay Yılmaz**  
Steering Committee



**Tijen Eren**  
Steering Committee



**Ezgi Attisani**  
Steering Committee



**Senay Ataselim Yılmaz**  
Steering Committee

## Advisory Board

Dr. Antoine Dolcerocca, Environmental Sociologist | Burcu Meltem Arık, Environmental Education and Sustainability Advocate | Prof. Dr. Çağatay Tavşanoğlu, Ecologist | Ece Milli, Sustainable Development and Climate Policy Specialist | Dr. Eda Acara, Sustainable Design Researcher | Prof. Dr. Emine Aksoydan, Public Health and Nutrition Specialist | Prof. Dr. Herdem Aslan, Environmental Psychologist | Prof. Dr. Oğuz Türkozan, Marine Biologist and Sea Turtle Conservation Expert | Prof. Dr. Levent Kurnaz, Climate Scientist and Environmental Policy Expert | Prof. Dr. Sedat Gündoğdu, Marine Pollution and Microplastics Researcher | Yaprak Arda, Sustainability Strategist | Yaz Güvendi, Ecological Architect | Zafer Kızılkaya, Marine Conservationist

## Our Global Network



Turquoise Coast Environment Fund is a member of Conservation Collective, a global network of local foundations funding effective grass-roots conservation initiatives to protect the environment, restore nature and safeguard against climate change.

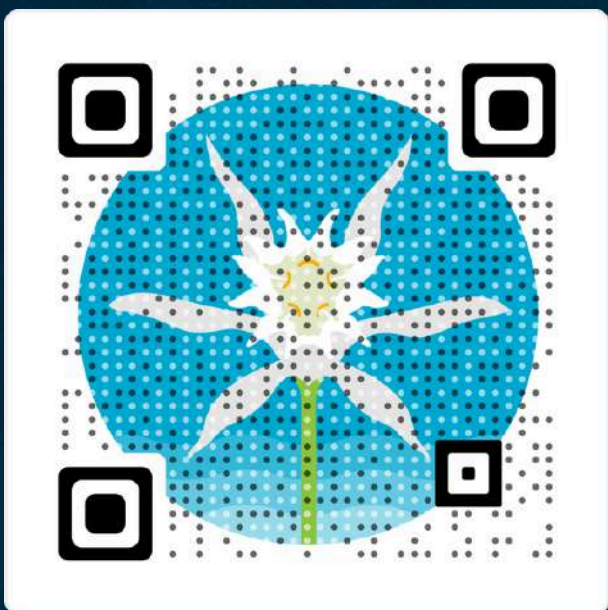
## Partners & Supporters







# THANK YOU

To all our donors and supporters.  
We couldn't have done it  
without your generous support.



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 @tcef\_turquoisefund

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 Turquoise Coast Environment Fund -  
Turkey