

BLUE BERET



Sustainable fishing key to maintaining marine habitats

NICOSIA, 7 June 2017 - Do you ever wonder why do we have to eat frozen and imported seafood even though we live on an island? While we indulge ourselves in the crystal clear waters of the Eastern Mediterranean all summer, we need to start to spare a thought for the marine habitat.

This was the message of Dr. Burak Cicek, guest speaker at an event at UNFICYP HQ to mark World Environment Day. Upon the invitation of UNFICYP's Environment Committee, Dr. Cicek delivered a presentation on "Artificial Reefs and Sustainable Fisheries" on 7 June, highlighting the need for us to connect and give back for a win-win situation for both the fishermen and the environment.

In line with this year's World Environment Day theme – Connecting People to Nature – Dr. Cicek informed the audience, in a highly interactive presentation, that as we are all part of nature and are dependent on it for survival, we must also work to protect it and allow marine habitat to flourish.

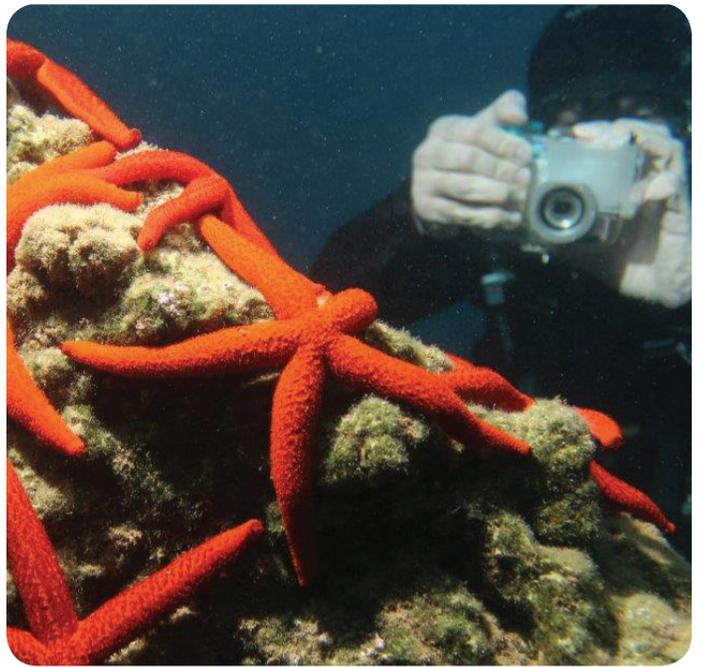
Dr. Cicek is part of the EU-financed Artificial Reefs project, which aims at achieving effective integration of economic and social development for people in the region while conserving the environment and reducing the pressure put on the limited resources through the implementation of artificial reefs in the Iskele-Famagusta Bay. The pilot intends to broaden its geographical scope across the island in the future.

Poor productivity, low biodiversity and oligotrophy (nutrient deficiency), which result in the clear waters so celebrated by the tourism sector, all put unwanted pressure on species such as monk seals (*Monachus monachus*), sea turtles (*Caretta caretta* and *Chelonia mydas*) and dolphins.

The conundrum of preventing fishermen from fishing these species while continuing their activities is a difficult one to overcome. Following numerous meetings with the fishermen in the area, it was agreed that certain areas will be off-limits to fishermen, allowing nearly 2000 "artificial reefs" to be deployed with the goal of providing a habitat with a protected area for nesting, feeding and mating. In the meantime, in order to allow the fishermen to increase their earnings by removing the middlemen, the project supported the construction of a fish market that is now operational. In addition, the fishermen have now met under the umbrella of a cooperative to stand together to have a say in creating new legislation and, importantly, to establish an insurance mechanism to lower the burden of damages caused by storms in winter.

The scientific observation and research aspect of the project is still underway as Dr. Cicek and his team are producing academic work. But as he notes, there is still a long way to go on this research. In the meantime, as we enjoy fresh fish on the grill this summer, let's ensure we're protecting their habitat!





For further reading:

Artificial Reefs in Fisheries Management
Stephen A. Bortone, Frederico Pereira Brandini, Gianna Fabi, Shinya Otake
ISBN 9781439820070 - CAT# K11058

Artificial Reefs in Fisheries Management brings to the forefront the current state of knowledge regarding artificial reefs and their pragmatic application to furthering fisheries sustainability. It presents a timely compilation of research to increase options for the implementation of artificial reefs for fishery and natural resource managers. The book offers an inclusive and encompassing description of the field by chapter authors drawn from diverse geographical areas. This approach gives readers the broadest of perspectives and reflects regional interests and experience with artificial reefs in different parts of the world. Coming at an opportune time in the field of artificial reefs, Artificial Reefs in Fisheries Management aids researchers and natural resource managers more carefully consider the special features of artificial reefs in their application to resolving fisheries management problems. This book is an important step toward improving the prescribed use of artificial reefs as a viable option in many of the world's fisheries in the quest to make more of the world's fisheries sustainable.

ARTIFICIAL REEFS IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT



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