

# The sea and coastal birds of the Galite Archipelago - Tunisia

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## Introduction

Nestled within the Galite Archipelago, a vital hub of biodiversity, our study unfolds against the backdrop of significant global changes impacting the complex dynamics of avian populations. Notably, these changes have led to shifts in the timing and routes of avifauna migration. Our research aims to conduct a detailed exploration, merging insights from a thorough analysis of historical records dating back to 1876 with empirical data gathered during field missions by the co-management team (MAN/APAL) between 2021 and 2023.

## Objective

As stewards of this delicate ecosystem, our primary goal is to compile a comprehensive taxonomic inventory of avifauna species. We specifically focus on the seabird community, giving particular attention to species that use the archipelago as a crucial nesting habitat—a pivotal point for conservation efforts. By combining historical knowledge with contemporary field data, our research seeks to unravel the intricate dynamics of avian life, providing a scientific narrative that addresses the challenges posed by global changes and establishes a robust foundation for strategically informed conservation initiatives.

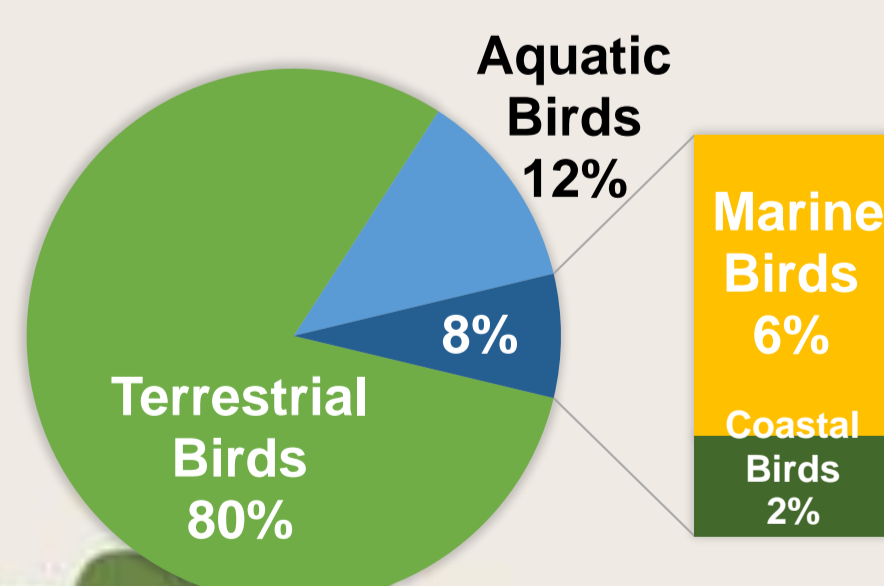
## Study site

The Galite Archipelago (Lat: 37°32' N; Long: 8°56' E) is situated off the northern coast of Tunisia, 40 km northwest of Sidi Mechrig and 64 km northeast of Tabarka.



Covering a total area of 808 hectares, it comprises the main island, Galite (752 ha), stretching 5.3 km in length and approximately 3 km in width; Galiton to the West; Galiton (29.9 ha) and La Fauchelle (13.6 ha), and the islets known as Les Chiens or Galiton to the East (12.5 ha), including Gallina, Pollastro (a simple rocky outcrop), and Gallo. These islets are characterized by mountainous terrain, with a maximum altitude of 391 m, dominated by slopes and steep cliffs.

In total, **107 bird species** have been identified over the past three decades, including **6 species** of seabirds belonging to **4 distinct families**.



**5 Specially protected species** listed in Annex II\*

\* Annex II of the Protocol concerning specially protected areas and biological diversity in the Mediterranean under the Barcelona Convention, and **considered threatened** or **vulnerable**: Scopoli's Shearwater, Yelkouan Shearwater, Storm Petrel, Shag Cormorant, and Audouin's Gull. Scopoli's Shearwater dominate, with **3005 breeding pairs**, contributing to the archipelago's ecological uniqueness and conservation significance. Audouin's Gulls, a globally vulnerable species, find refuge with around **100 breeding pairs**, emphasizing the need for comprehensive conservation measures.

## Material & Methods

Our study focuses on a comprehensive analysis of available literature on the archipelago since 1876, coupled with field missions conducted between 1995 and 2023. These missions were carried out within three distinct frameworks over the years.

### 1995 to 2000

Active team participation in the implementation of the Life TCY 97/TN/055 project (Conservation and Rehabilitation of Fragile Island Ecosystems).

### 2006 to 2013

Within the Small Islands of the Mediterranean initiative, coordinated by the Coastal Conservancy, over thirty missions enhanced understanding and protected small Mediterranean islands' fauna and flora.

### 2018 to 2023

Since 2018, our APAL/MAN team has actively co-managed the Marine Protected Area of the Galite Archipelago, funded by the MedFund.

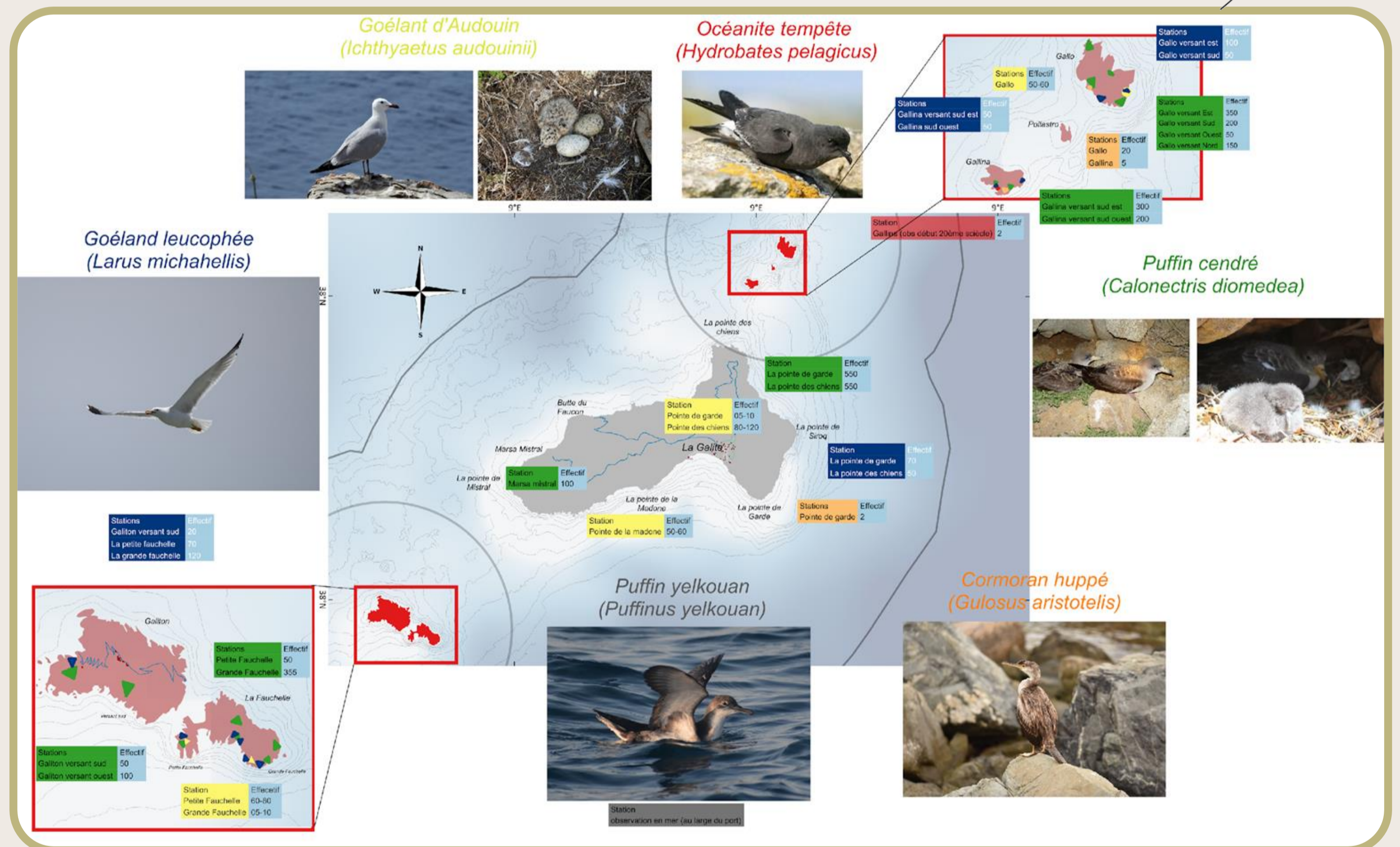
During these periods, the bird census of the archipelago was conducted through direct observation using binoculars and telescopes.

Direct presence of species (alive, deceased, or heard)

Identification of remains (feathers, bones found, etc, particularly in raptor nesting areas)

Contributing to the compilation of a comprehensive list of species present in the archipelago.

## Results & Discussion



## Conclusion

- 1. The **Galite Archipelago** hosts a diverse marine and coastal avifauna, and these results highlight the importance of these observations in guiding future scientific monitoring of vulnerable species in the archipelago, thereby contributing to a more effective conservation of these populations.
- 2. Conservation efforts must focus on protecting crucial nesting habitats, ensuring the survival of **globally rare and endangered species**.