

# Stronger together

Nine separate foundations that fund local conservation projects in different parts of the world are now joined together by a new global network to help raise awareness of their work

**I**t all started in Ibiza. Eleven years ago, the financier and environmentalist Ben Goldsmith teamed up with his friends Serena Cook and Will Aitken to create The Ibiza Preservation Foundation (IPF), which funds conservation and sustainability projects on the island.

IPF has had a number of significant conservation wins over the years and now focuses on four clear programmes: protecting *posidonia* seagrass beds (a crucial but vulnerable marine habitat) from pollution and yacht anchors; reducing single-use plastics in Ibiza and Formentera; promoting Ibiza's local produce; and funding a much-needed sustainability observatory, which studies the impact of the extreme population fluctuation between the winter months and the summer tourist season.

Last year, IPF raised more than €400,000 from individual donors, who mostly contributed €5,000 to €10,000 each, and from corporate partners such as hotels and restaurants that added €1 for IPF on top of each bill.

Recognising the success of IPF's model, in 2015 various groups of friends began to replicate it elsewhere. In the volcanic Aeolian Islands, a UNESCO World Heritage Site near Sicily, the Aeolian Islands Preservation Fund (AIPF) is working to support the creation of what could be Italy's ►



Currently nine separate funds form part of the network



‘The model links people who are passionate about a place with those working hardest to protect it’



## ‘It made a lot of sense to formally unite all of these separate funds so the Conservation Collective was formed’

largest and most effective marine protected area.

The St Vincent and the Grenadines Environment Fund (SVGEF), has been central in lobbying the government to place a total ban on the killing of sea turtles. It is now working with former whaling communities to encourage a transition away from killing whales for food, by supporting alternative livelihoods through the development of a sustainable whale watching industry.

In 2017, Jade Brudenell joined Goldsmith to coordinate the local funds, to provide strategic and operational advice, and to proactively replicate this straightforward but extremely effective model in new locations around the world. There are now nine core funds in Ibiza, Mallorca, Menorca, the Aeolian Islands, Greece’s Cyclades and Ionian Islands, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados and Sri Lanka. It made a lot of sense to formally unite all of these separate funds with a single brand, so The Conservation Collective was launched last year. It also works with associated funds in Pakistan and the Leuser ecosystem in Indonesia. The extensive pipeline includes the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Tuscany, the Cayman Islands and Devon, to name but a few.

What the funds have in common is a shared vision to develop their area into a model for sustainable management. They are focussed on involving, empowering and strengthening local communities, and becoming proactive agents of positive, long-lasting environmental change. The funds are independent, locally based, not for profit, and provide accessible funding.

Each fund has one full-time, locally based executive director whose job is administering grants and fundraising. There’s also a steering committee made up of the most active donors, who review and decide



**The Aeolian Islands Preservation Trust has seen success on land and sea**



PHOTO: YASAS RATNAYAKE

**Some of The Conservation Collective’s member funds are working to encourage sustainable fishing in small, locally owned boats with self-regulating codes of conduct**

grant recommendations and contribute to fundraising, and a technical advisory board who help to source and assess grant proposals.

As a whole, The Conservation Collective raised more than €1,000,000 in 2019 and is aiming for a 30% increase in 2020. The Collective is also now a UK-registered charity, which will enable it to seek additional funding to supplement the support it currently gives its members.

Corporate partners are a growing revenue stream, with contributions from a wide range of businesses including restaurants like Franco Manca (a gourmet pizza chain with heritage in the Aeolian Islands) and fashion brands such as LoveBrand and Swarovski, whose collections are inspired by some of the species our funds are working to protect.

This year, the environmental agenda and tackling climate change are high on everyone’s priority list and The Conservation Collective’s model is in high demand, thanks to its focus on linking those who care passionately about a place with those working hardest to protect it. The pipeline is growing fast, as is the opportunity and ambition to involve a more diverse range of funders from private individuals to corporations, trusts, foundations and in some cases bilateral or multilateral funding agencies.

Going forward, The Conservation Collective’s main objectives are to provide additional funding to the projects that are set to deliver the biggest conservation wins; to seed new funds; and to create a central team that can boost its fundraising capacity, scale up efforts to leverage co-funding, and provide more support for local executive directors.

‘We have great ambition to roll this model out far and wide in the future,’ Goldsmith says. ‘Everywhere you look there are brilliant, passionate people working to create positive environmental change. Often they work to advance their projects and campaigns with little or no budget.’

‘The aim of the local environmental re-granting funds of the Conservation Collective is to make it easy for individuals and local businesses to provide financial support for the most effective organisations working for the protection and restoration of the natural environment of the place that they love,’ Goldsmith explains. ‘Small amounts of funding, strategically directed, can supercharge this work – as we are seeing in the places where we have created these funds. If you make it possible for people to help restore nature in their own backyard, they’re almost always likely to be receptive.’

## Conservation Collective success stories

With support from individuals, businesses and other charities, Conservation Collective funds are already making a difference, supporting grassroots initiatives whilst focusing on goals such as eradicating single-use plastics, establishing and enforcing marine protected areas and protecting native flora and fauna

### Aeolian Islands Preservation Fund

One of the fund's big successes has been developing a strong, small-scale, sustainable fishery. Three ice machines have been installed in Salina and Stromboli, enabling local fishermen to keep their daily catch fresher for longer. The fishermen are self-regulating their fishing via a voluntary code of conduct.

More than ten tons of 'ghost nets' – lost or



Olive oil is being produced for the first time on Stromboli in the Aeolian Islands



PHOTO: FRANCESCO CICCIOSESSE INSET: CARMIELO ISGRÒ

The waters around the Aeolian Islands could be Italy's largest, most effective marine reserve

abandoned fishing gear, a major type of marine pollution – were recovered over two years. They were then reclaimed and transformed into Econyl yarn, an infinitely recyclable nylon used in the fashion industry. 6km of illegal driftnet, 197 FADs (Fishing Aggregating Devices), and 280

km of polypropylene lines were confiscated and removed from the sea in two years.

For the first time ever, in 2019 Stromboli got its own olive oil mill, and in its first year of operation three tons of olives were harvested and processed on the island.

### Ibiza Preservation Foundation

IPF created an alliance that successfully prevented oil drilling projects in the waters around Ibiza and Formentera and is now campaigning for a change in law to prevent all oil and gas exploration in the Med.

It also encouraged more than 100 businesses to reduce single-use plastics through a 'Plastic Free' movement, whose core goal is to eliminate their use on both islands by 2023.

To stimulate Ibiza's almond market, another IPF initiative supported the planting of more than 1500 native almond trees and provided an almond cracking machine for the local farming cooperative.

An IPF campaign with local partners convinced the Balearic Government to create two new marine reserves in 2018 in the waters around Ibiza.

IPF has also developed an app that helps yachts to avoid anchoring on posidonia seagrass. Recent official data showed that the proportion of boats anchoring in the seagrass meadows around Ibiza fell from 25% to 7.4% in 2019.



PHOTO: MANU SAN FELIX

Posidonia seagrass is a crucial 'nursery' habitat for many fish species

# Conservation Collective success stories

PHOTO: PANOS DENDRINOS



Sustainable fishing in the Cyclades will benefit the Mediterranean Monk Seal

## Cyclades Preservation Fund

CPF is helping to promote the 'Fish Smarter' initiative. This is an educational programme highlighting the importance of sustainable fishing and fishing tourism, which has engaged with 92 professional fishermen in 10 Greek islands.

Another important project that the Cyclades Preservation Fund is supporting is Clean Blue Paros, a plastic-free initiative which is engaging local businesses (such as tavernas, hotels, cafes, restaurants and bars) and encouraging them to commit to plastic reduction targets, in return for giving them a Clean Blue certification. The targets are based on the businesses eliminating the use of plastic straws; and phasing out other single-use plastic items such as coffee cups, bags and bottled water.

CPF has also established the first Seabins (automated rubbish collectors) in the harbours of Syros and Paros, collecting hundreds of thousands of pieces of floating litter.

## St Vincent and the Grenadines Environment Fund

A big win: SVGEF persuaded the government to ban the killing of sea turtles and parrot fish.

Another initiative launched the first two whale watching boats in Barraoullie and arranged training and exchange programmes for the guides, one of whom is a former whaler.

The organisation also funded research and helped locals to protect the endangered Union Island gecko, which now has CITES protection.

PHOTO: JENNY DALTRY



There's now a brighter future for endangered wildlife in St Vincent and The Grenadines

## Menorca Preservation Fund

MEPF supported a pilot scheme in which 12 local fishmongers handed out more than 80,000 biodegradable bags and single-use plastic alternatives. As a result, the Ciutadella fish market made biodegradable materials mandatory. Mahon, the island's capital, is now considering doing the same in its fish market.

After the local government created a new Marine Protected Area around Isla del Aire, with 7,192km<sup>2</sup> of habitat and 634 species of marine life, MEPF played a key role in surveillance, protecting it from illegal fishing and harmful anchoring on posidonia meadows. They stopped 166 boats from fishing in the area and explained the new rules to 238 people.

In 2019, MEPF partner Beachclean Menorca



PHOTO: JUANJO PONS

Menorca's natural environment is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and its aquifers are being replenished

organised 143 beach clean-ups. More than 5.5 tonnes of plastic waste was collected.

MEPF is also working with local farmers on water management, improving traditional rainwater collection systems to protect fresh water stocks in Menorca's aquifers. This project has already saved more than 1,200 tonnes of water a year.

## Funds founded last year get their first grants

The Ionian Environment Foundation is supporting the Save Erimitis campaign, which aims to protect one of the last two pristine areas on the east coast of Corfu from illegal development. Erimitis comprises 500 km<sup>2</sup> of coastal habitat including two formally protected lakes, a landscape of immense natural beauty and coastal waters – a whole ecosystem of unique richness in Mediterranean biodiversity.

The Lanka Environment Fund is supporting work to identify and establish forest corridors in the central highlands of Sri Lanka, using the leopard as an umbrella species to protect entire habitats and ecosystems.

The Barbados Environmental Conservation Trust is supporting a coral regeneration project, using an innovative 'bio rock' technology that has shown great potential for accelerating coral regrowth.