

# Alborán

Legal status	Natural Park and Marine Reserve
Foundation year	2003
Foundation text	Law n° 3/2003
Management body	Department for the Environment of the Andalusian Regional Government Ministry of the Environment, and Rural and Marine Affairs, Government of Spain
Superficy	26500 ha
Management category (IUCN, 1994)	IV



## Territory

Alborán island is located halfway between the coast of Melilla in North Africa and Almería, in south-eastern Spain. In addition to the main island, to the northeast, there is the island of Nubes. It is a rocky island separated from Alborán by the Morenas Channel.



Alborán Island has been a SPAMI since 2003 because it is an important resting place in the migration of diverse groups of wildlife, such as fish, marine reptiles, birds and marine mammals.

## Physical features

Alborán island is of volcanic origin and is formed mainly by andesites. Its average height is 15 meters above sea level. The part above the water is flat, contrasting with the irregularity of the part below the water. The coast is formed by cliffs that are 10 to 12 meters high, around almost the entire perimeter of the island, with only two little beaches. The seabed is rocky, forming lined structures like dykes where sediments and remains of echinoderm, red algae and molluscs are deposited.

## Specificities and Importance

The area shows several interesting marine habitats, complex ecosystems and a high biodiversity as a result of the interaction between the cold Atlantic and warm Mediterranean waters.

Because the lack of phanerogams, algae have become the genuine owners of the seabed. Brown algae such as *Cystoseira*, *Laminaria* and *Saccorhiza* are dominant in vegetal communities. However red algae such as *Predaea pusilla* var. *alboranensis* are also present. *Diplotaxis siettiana* which is critically endangered under IUCN Criteria should be mentioned between the terrestrial plant species in the island.

Apart from cetaceans and marine turtles migrating and feeding through the Alborán sea, marine fauna is mainly represented by invertebrates such as red and orange corals, sponges and sea worms. Aoudouin's Seagull nesting area in the area is also important for wildlife conservation.

The biological richness of this area is responsible for the high interest in the exploitation of commercial fishes and prawns.





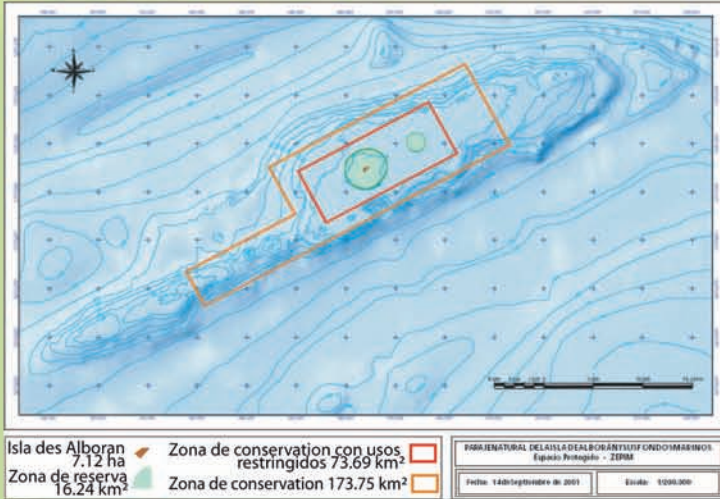
## Threats and pressures

The main dangers come from commercial overfishing and illegal sports fishing. Drag fishing affects the red prawn populations and similarly the fishing of red coral affects its capacity to regenerate. These problems are a consequence of a permanent human presence in such a small area.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the growth of underwater sports fishing, which puts a lot of pressure on certain species.



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## Management

Legal protection allows the management and basic regulation of natural resources and activities in this area.

Demarcation of Alborán area is not simple because of the different remits of legal bodies for its conservation.

First, as a Marine Reserve for Fisheries, there are three zones:

- (a) Marine Reserve – no activities allowed ;
- (b) Protected Zone – no fishing allowed ;
- (c) Fish Reserve – controlled fishing.

Additionally, regional jurisdiction covers other supervised activities in the area. Both legal bodies are complementary and successfully implement conservation protection.

The funding for this protection comes from the Department for the Environment of the Andalusian Regional Government, and the General Secretariat of the Sea (Ministry of the Environment, and Rural and Marine Affairs of the Government of Spain).

The area is also use for scientific research. Scientific support is given by Almería, Granada and Málaga Universities and the Higher Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) in Spain, as well as the Aula del Mar, a NGO in Málaga.



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