

The Formentera Council's environment department reports that this week, a coalition of environmental advocates and bird-watching enthusiasts called GEN-GOB (Grup d'Estudis de la Natura / Grup Balear d'Ornitologia) has completed the second part of an on-the-ground initiative which received funding from last year's Save Posidonia Project.

Beginning in July and dubbed “Posidonia and sustainable marine strategies for Formentera”, the operation is aimed at quantifying the pressure that anchoring ships place on the meadows of *Posidonia oceanica* seagrass located along Formentera's coast. Operatives also intend to study the success of conservation efforts under way.

To get there, members of the operation have travelled by boat to locate watercraft anchored on sand, rock, posidonia meadows and another seagrass, *Cympodocea nodosa*. The tracking operations used a system known as AIS (Automatic Identification System) which enables boats to broadcast their coordinates and other relevant information. Divers were dispatched in an effort to assess the state of posidonia meadows.

Preliminary findings

Some four hundred ships anchored on Formentera's coastline were counted in August. Dives took place at ses Illetes, Llevant, es Racó de sa Pujada and Migjorn.

Based on analysis of the data gathered, observers have noted that fewer ships are stationed along the coast than in the past. Previous years saw as many as 760 boats dotting the coastline. Ses Illetes and Cala Saona are historically areas where strain on the seaboard is greatest.

Likewise, drops have been registered in the number of boats anchoring on posidonia thanks to motorboat patrols and more informed seafarers.

Environment secretary Daisee Aguilera, who welcomed the decline in boats dropping anchor on the seagrass, encouraged continued participation in Save Posidonia Project. “This year will be the project's second”, said Aguilera, “and we need everyone to get involved if we're going to push ahead with research and outreach to preserve this undersea treasure”. She pointed out that anyone interested could still adopt square metres of the seagrass at the **www.saveposidoniaproject.org** website.

Phase three of the GEN-GOB project is set to take place in September.