SEA WATCH 2025

Annual Summary: Numbers and Photos

Removal of a ghost net spotted by a diver and reported via the app. The hazard was removed by the "Coast Patrol", funded by "The Blue Half" of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. November 2025. Photo: Eden Cohen.

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The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel
SEA WATCH
THE BLUE HALF

2025 by the Numbers

3,640
App Downloads

1,056
Total reports

of which

445
Wildlife sightings reports

and

611
Hazards and violations reports

457
Unique Reporters

99%
Of reports received an initial response by phone or email by the SeaWatch team

67%
Of reports that required action by the relevant authorities were fully resolved*

151
Hazard incidents were fully resolved thanks to reports submitted by the public via the app

of reports that required action by the relevant authorities were fully resolved

About SeaWatch

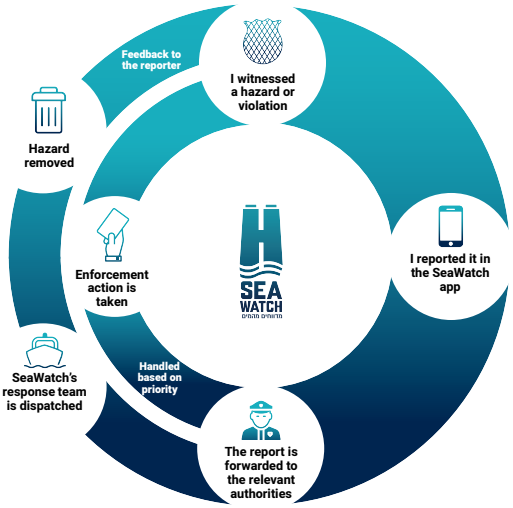
01 SeaWatch is a public reporting app for marine environmental hazards in the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Eilat. It is operated by "The Blue Half" - the marine program of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel.

02 Our goal: Enable direct public involvement in protecting the sea by automatically routing reports to the relevant response and enforcement authorities. We work to improve and strengthen real-time action on hazards and violations, creating measurable change on the ground.

03 This work also aims to raise public awareness and inform decision-makers about marine conservation challenges and the actions needed to protect marine nature.

04 The wildlife sightings feature lets the public contribute to marine research. Each wildlife sighting is sent directly to researchers at leading universities and research institutes in Israel.

05 In 2025, the app surpassed 1,000 reports in a single year for the first time (1,056 reports), averaging about 3 reports per day, a 40% increase compared to the previous year.



Download the app

Learn more about SeaWatch >>

A loggerhead sea turtle feeding, with a remora fish beneath it picking up scraps, Nahsholim, October 2025. Photo by: Shlomi (reporter).

Explore the Wildlife Sightings Section

Success Stories

January

A large amount of waste was reported at Caesarea Harbor, within the national park. The hazard was cleared by the national park team. Photo by the reporter.

February

A heavy rope was reported inside the Gador Marine Nature Reserve. The hazard was removed by the Nature and Parks Authority. Photo by the Nature and Parks Authority.

March

A ghost net was reported near Neve Yam. It was removed by volunteers from "Mishmar Hayam". Photo by "Mishmar Hayam".

Success Stories

April

Jet skis were being driven recklessly near swimmers. They were ordered out of the area by the marine police in Bat Galim, Haifa. Photo by the reporter.

May

A vehicle was driving illegally along Galim Beach. The case was enforced by Israel Nature and Parks Authority rangers. Photo by the reporter.

June

Illegal spearfishing at night in Gador Nature Reserve, during breeding season. Enforcement action was taken by the Israel Nature and Parks Authority marine unit. Photo by the reporter.

July

Illegal fishing at night in Habonim–Dor Marine Nature Reserve. Enforcement action was taken by Israel Nature and Parks Authority rangers. Photo by: Illustration

Success Stories

August

Illegal fishing in Dor Habonim reserve. The fisher was ordered out of the no-fishing area by the Nature and Parks Authority rangers. Photo by the reporter.

September

A full oil drum was spotted on a beach in Haifa. It was removed by the city's coastal department. Photo by the reporter.

October

A sea turtle washed ashore near Ashdod with fishing injuries. The Sea Turtle Rescue Center responded and treated it. Photo by Tomer (reporter).

Success Stories

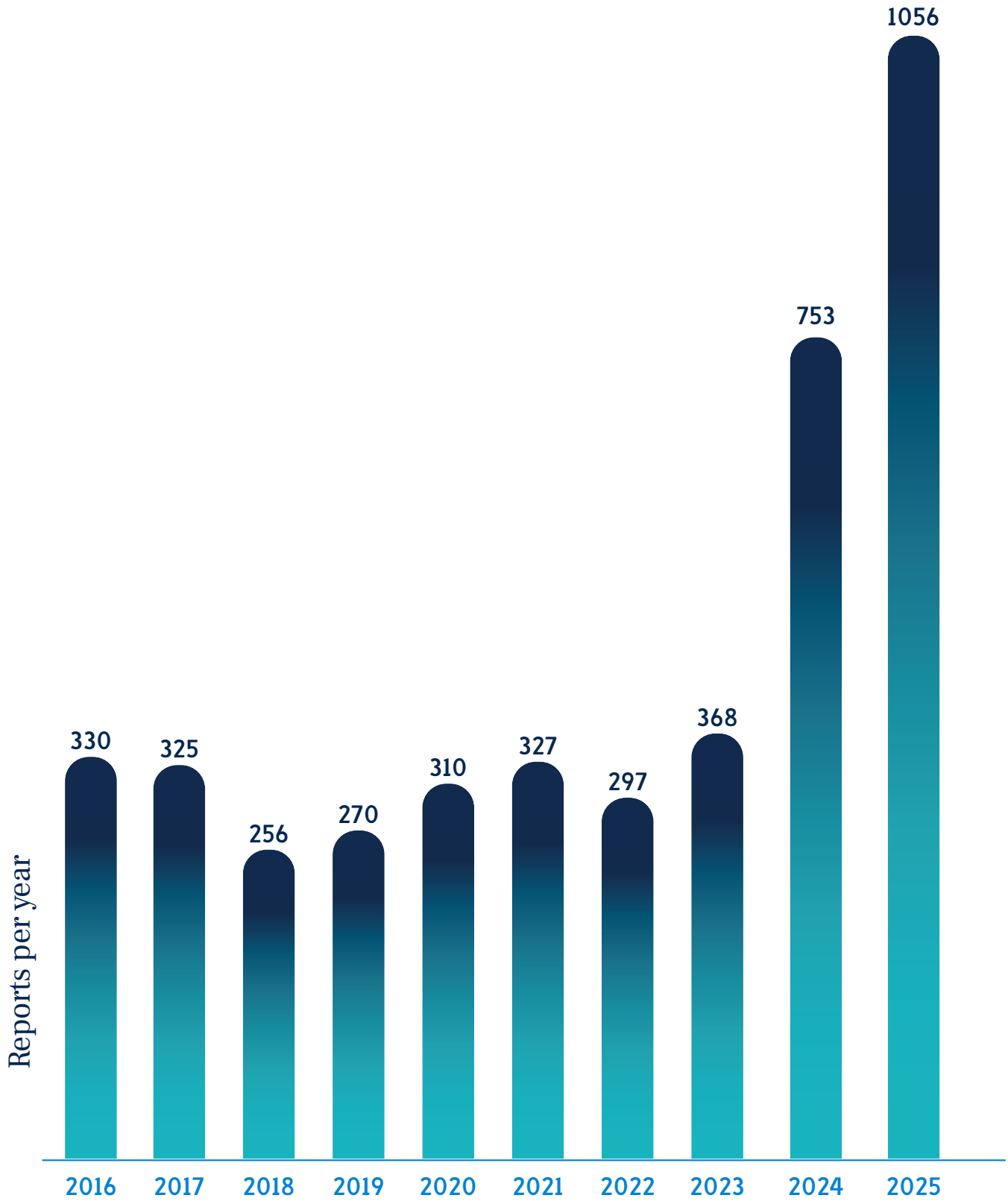
November

Drone fishing in Haifa. Enforced by the municipal coastal enforcement team. Photo by the reporter.

December

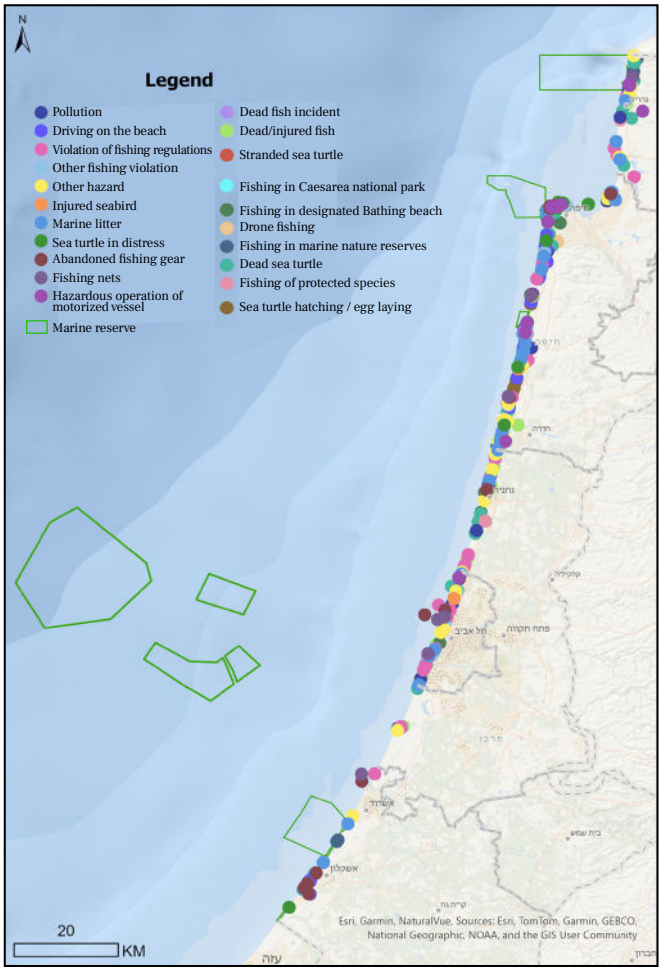
A ghost net trapping wildlife off the coast of Tel Aviv. The net was removed and the animals were released by the Coast Patrol, funded by "The Blue Half" of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. Photo by Coast Patrol.

Reports per year since app launch



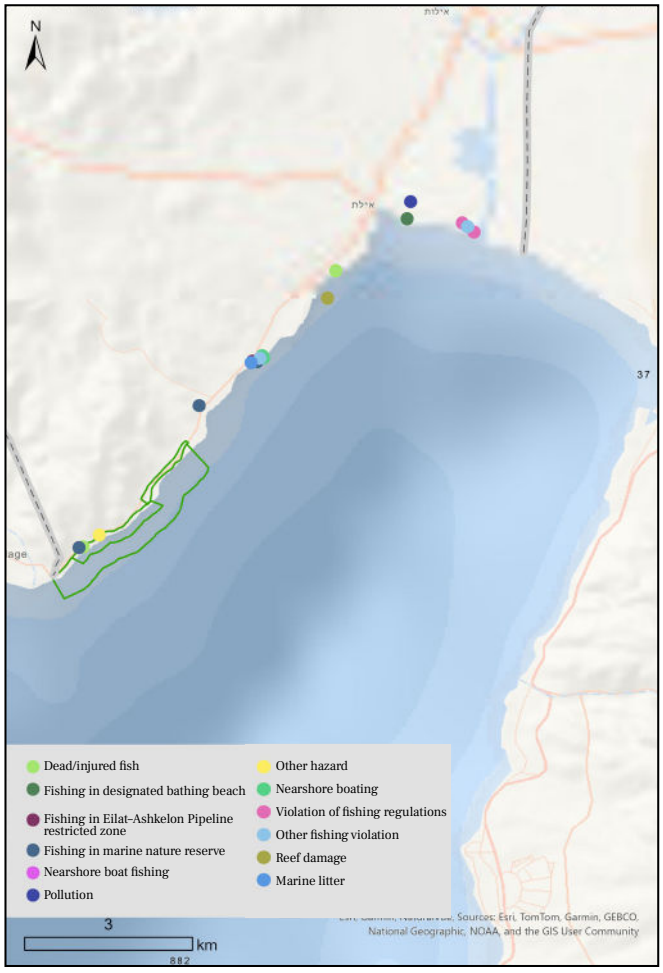
*For 2022–2025, the total includes both hazard reports and wildlife sightings

Spatial Distribution of Reports by Category in the Mediterranean and Red Sea



Mediterranean sea

Reports are spread almost continuously along the Mediterranean coastline. Higher concentrations of reports and sightings appear mainly in urban areas and around marine reserves and national parks, while the coastal stretch between Rishon LeZion and Ashdod (mostly a closed military zone) shows notably fewer reports. Although only about 6% of our sea is designated as marine reserves, around 30% of reports came from within a reserve or within 1 km of one.



Red Sea

22% of reports are from within a reserve or within 1 km of one.

Mediterranean Sea

410 Wildlife sightings sent to relevant research bodies.

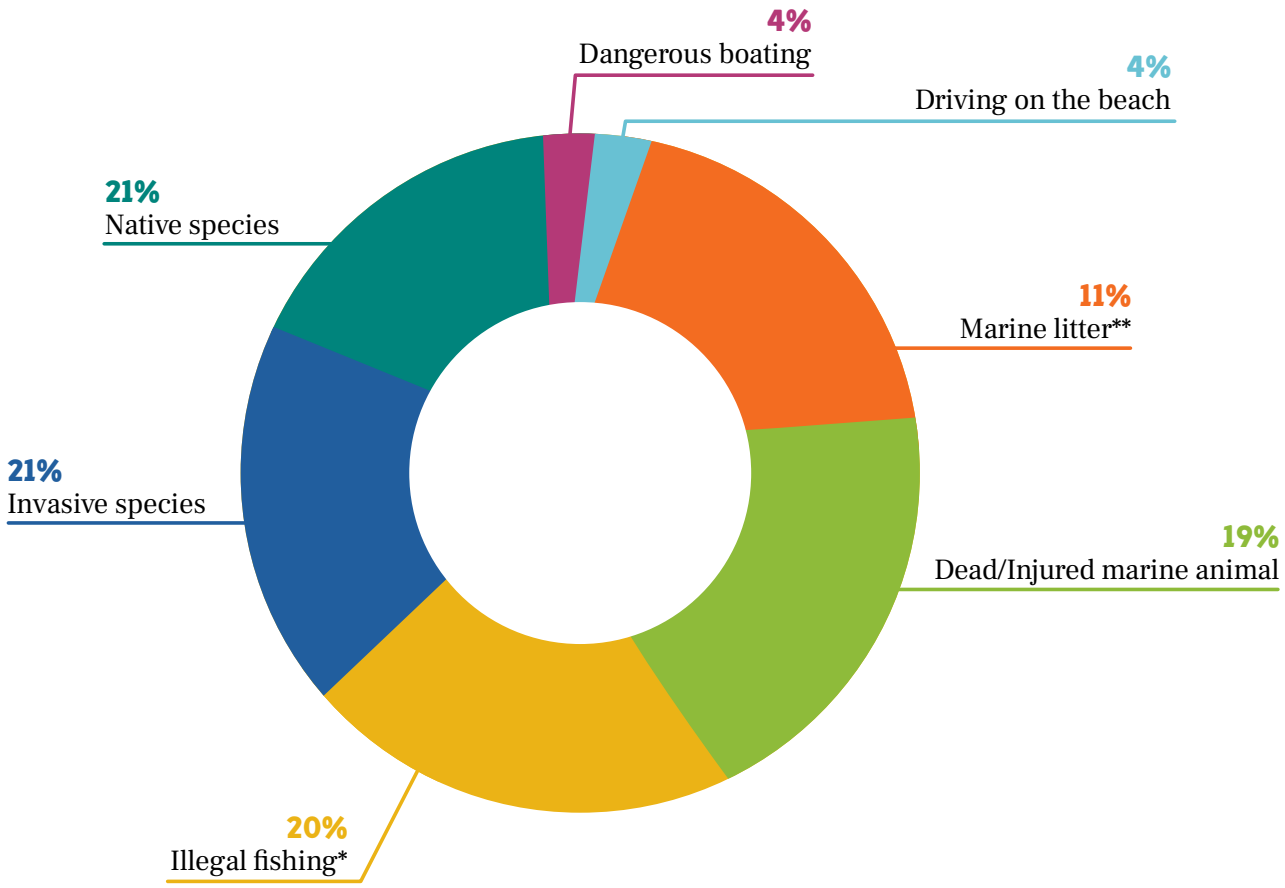
593 hazard and violation reports sent to relevant authorities.

208 reports were identified as cases requiring action.

150 of the reports that required action were fully resolved (70%)*.

* Enforcement action, hazard removal, and treatment for injured marine wildlife.

Reports by category in the Mediterranean Sea



* Violations of fishing regulations, fishing in reserves, fishing of protected species, and fishing at Designated Bathing beaches.

** Marine litter, abandoned fishing gear and suspected pollution incidents.

Hazards and Violations

Illegal fishing

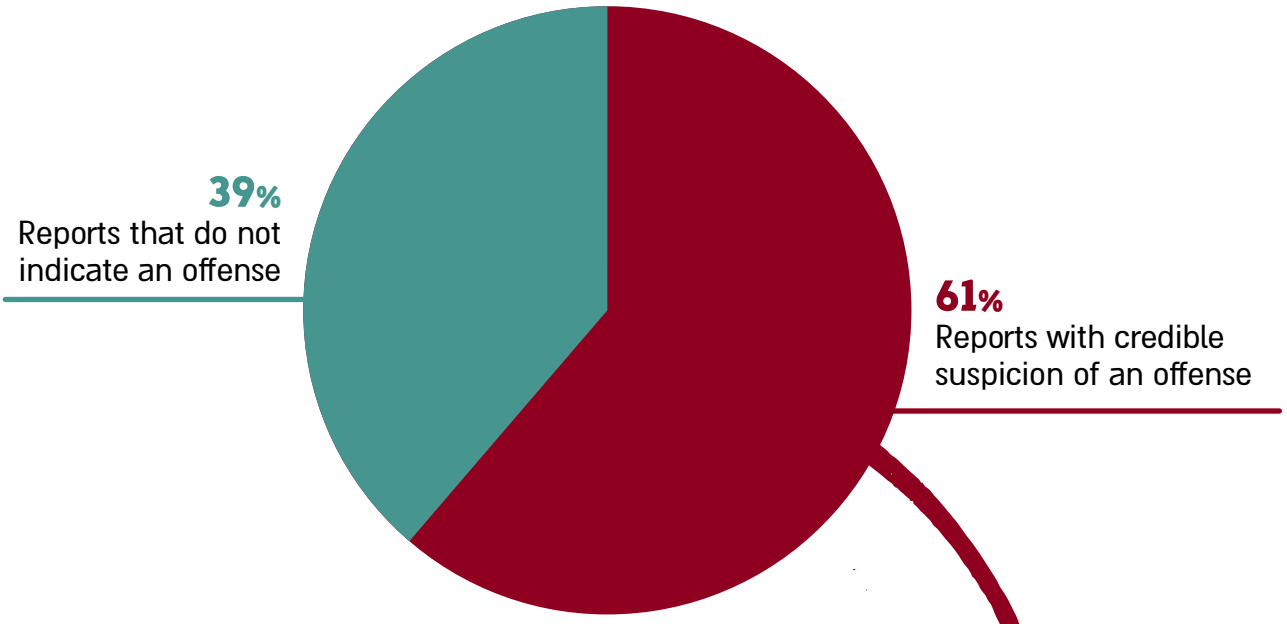
- **222** reports were received for suspected illegal fishing, of which 116 indicated suspected offenses.
- **8** illegal fishing reports led to enforcement action by the Nature and Parks Authority marine unit rangers.
- **10** illegal fishing reports resulted in warnings issued by rangers.
- **18** drone-fishing reports were handled by Haifa's Coastal Department.

Illegal shore-seine fishing incident, Arsuf, November 2025. Photo by the reporter.

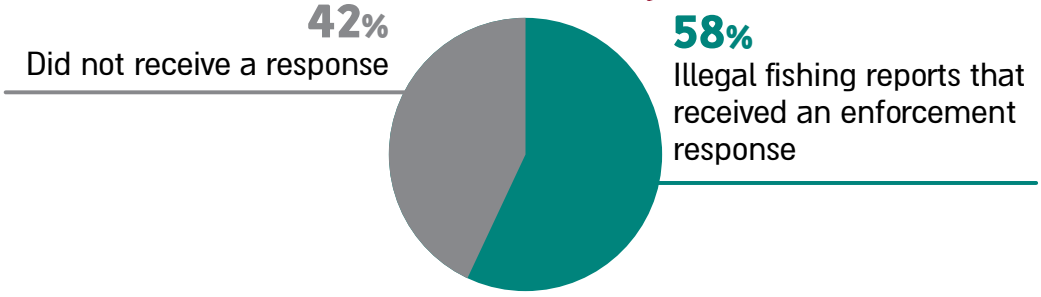
In the Mediterranean in 2025, over 68% of all reports required real action (such as real-time suspected offenses or hazards that required removal), indicating that app users are submitting increasingly high-quality reports.

We also saw an increase in beach-driving violations that received enforcement action. At the same time, reports in several categories, including illegal fishing in marine reserves, dangerous boating, and fishing in designated Bathing beaches, received limited enforcement response.

Zooming in on - Illegal fishing in the Mediterranean



There was an approximately 9% increase in reports involving suspected offenses compared with last year. This indicates growth in reliable reports that support management and enforcement efforts.



Response rates for reports in the "illegal fishing" category declined by about 13% compared with last year.

Injured Wildlife

- **2** injured seabirds were taken in for treatment.
- **3** injured sea turtles were taken to the Sea Turtle Rescue Center for treatment.
- **100** reports of dead sea turtles.
- **70** reports of dead fish.

Dead sea turtle entangled in fishing line. Photo by Ilan Feldman.

Dead sea turtle entangled in a fishing net. Photo by Zehavit Meir.

Dead sea turtle with plastic waste around its neck. Photo by Reem Neri.

In 2025, reports of dead sea turtles submitted through the app increased by 100% compared with 2024. Over the same period, total app reports increased by only about 40%, highlighting a much sharper rise in dead sea turtle reports than in overall app use.

Pollution and Marine Litter

- **83 reports** on pollution and marine litter.
- **5 oil drums** were removed.
- **5 ghost nets** were removed.
- **2 additional heavy-waste hazards** were cleared.

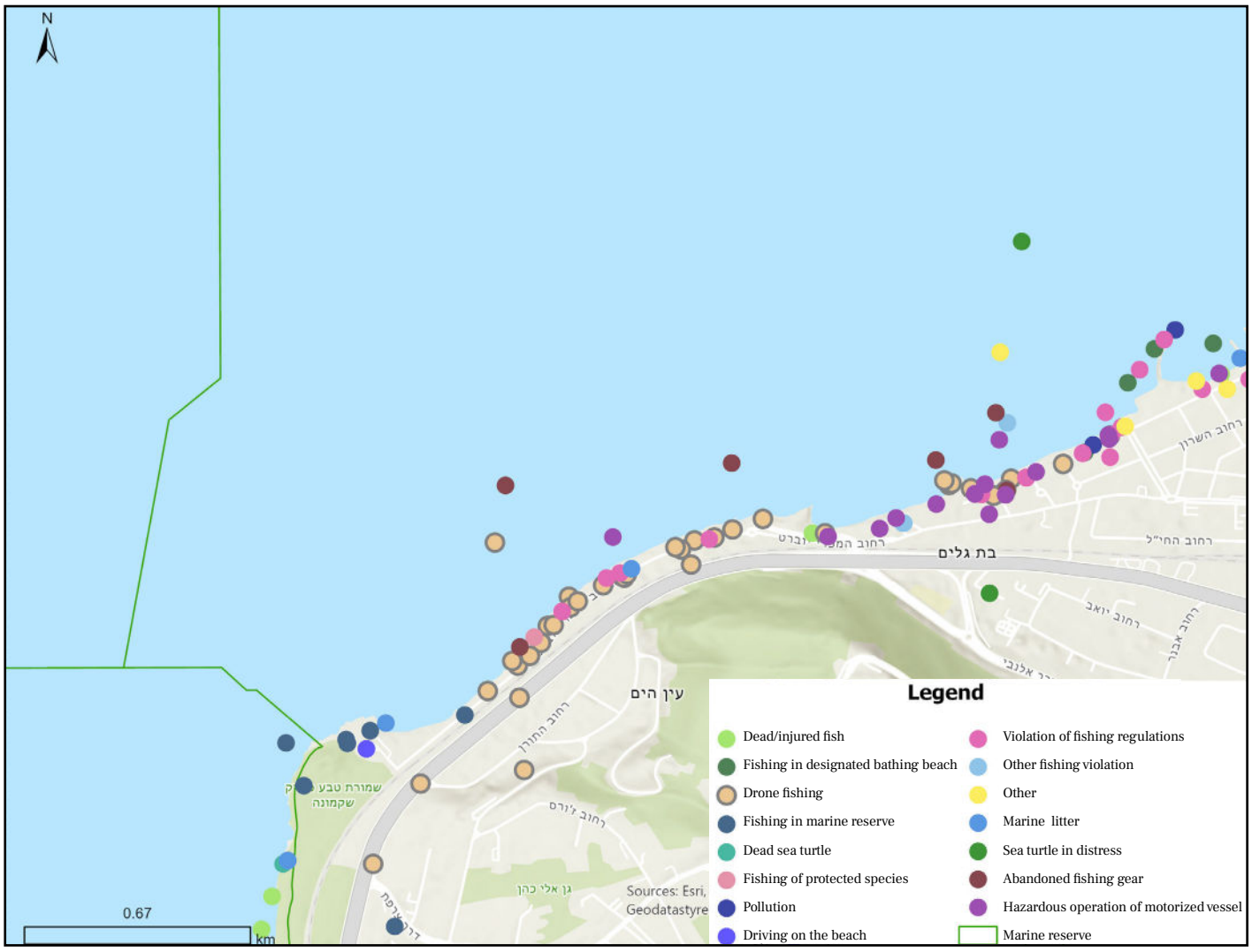
Ghost-net removal operation at Reading Port and Jaffa, November 2025. Photo by Coastal Patrol.

Driving on the Beach and Dangerous Boating

- **41 reports** of vehicles driving on the beach.
- **12 cases** resulted in enforcement action.
- **46 reports** of motorized boating near the shore.

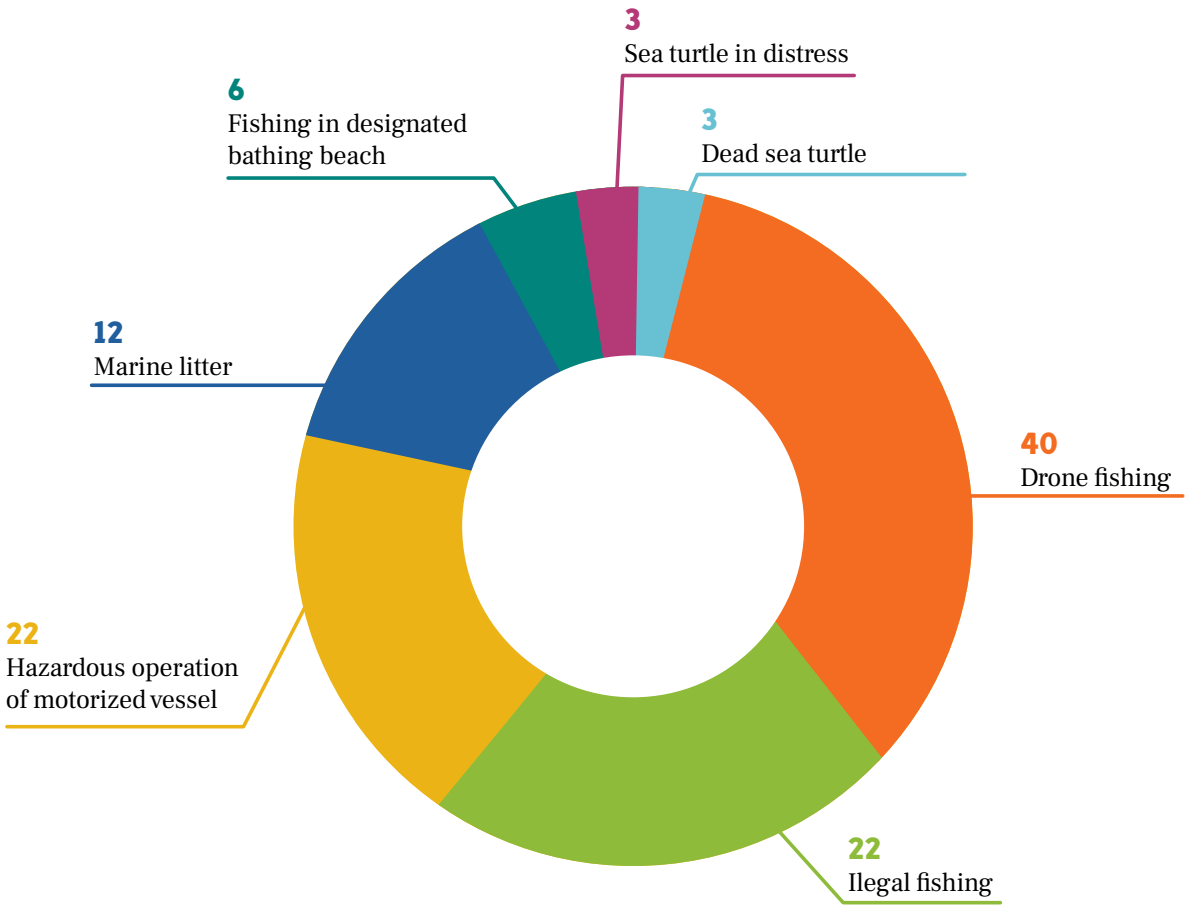
Bat Galim Hazard Mapping and Response Campaign

Throughout 2025, we worked closely with Haifa Municipality and its Coastal Department to map and address hazards in Bat Galim, a coastal neighborhood with intense marine sports activity and rich, unique marine life.



Map of hazards reported via the app in Bat Galim in 2025. The most prominent hazard was drone fishing.

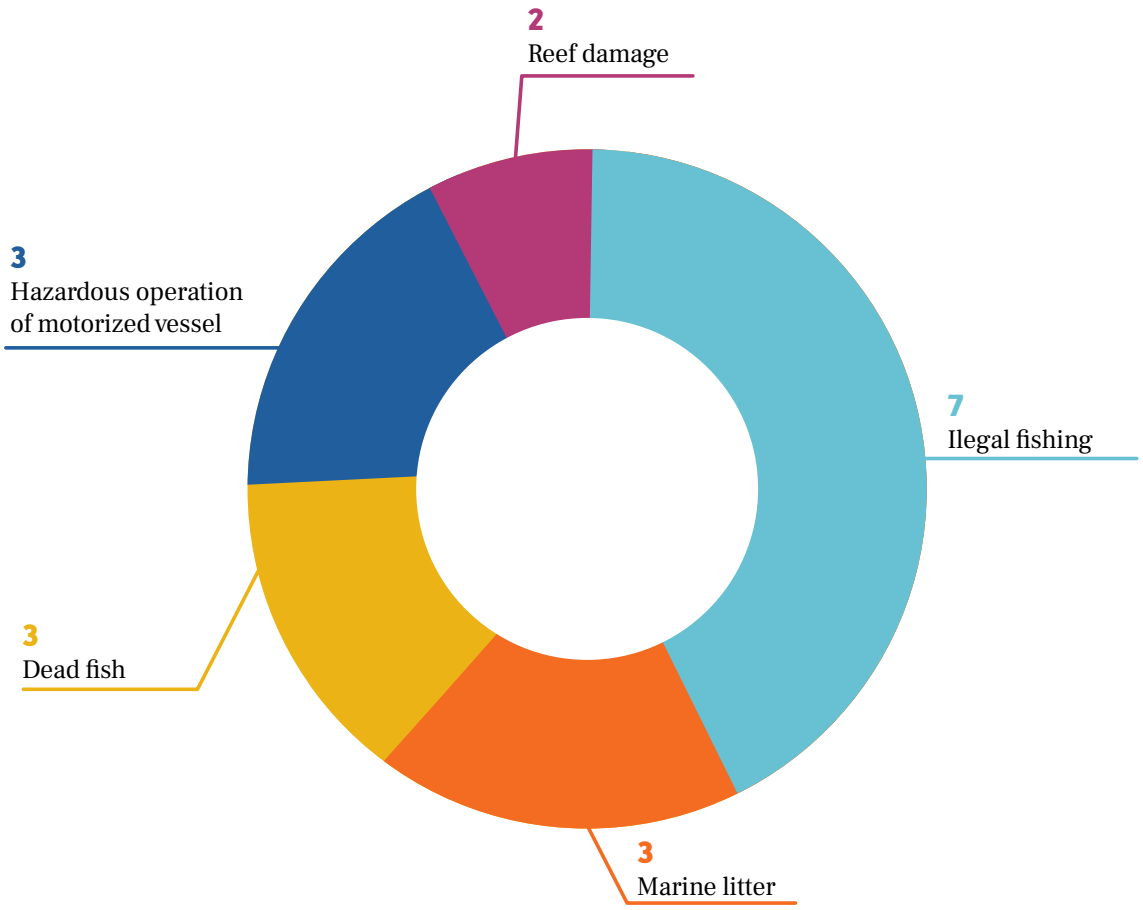
A total of 108 hazard reports were submitted from Bat Galim area in 2025. Of these:



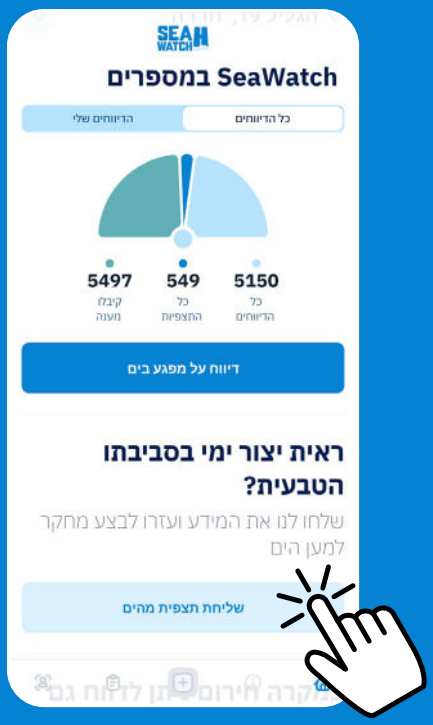
Following these reports, 18 drone-fishing cases were enforced, 4 marine litter items were removed, a jet ski that endangered swimmers was removed from the area, and one sea turtle was rescued.

Hazards and violations - Red sea

18 Hazard and violation reports → **8** Reports identified as cases requiring action → **1** report was addressed and resolved (12%)

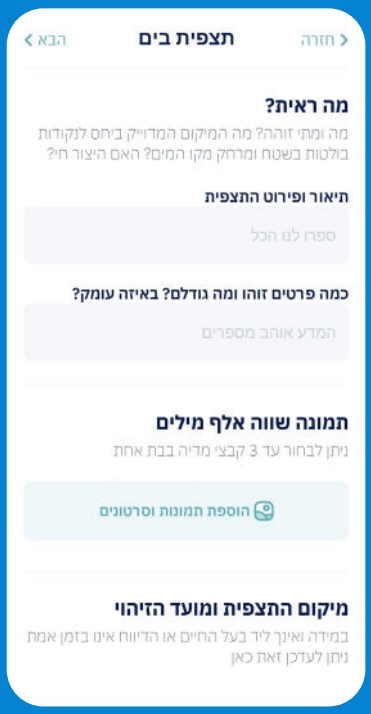


Discover the Wildlife Sightings Section

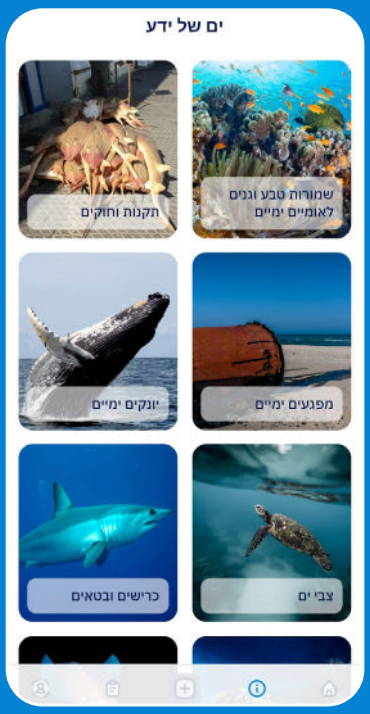


The app's home screen shows interactive data on total and personal reporting activity, and lets users submit marine wildlife sightings to research bodies and report marine hazards.

Main reporting screen with Mediterranean sighting categories. In each category, the i-button opens additional guidance for that reporting category.



The wildlife Sightings Section enables direct, simple submission of marine wildlife sightings to the relevant research bodies.



All information is available in one place via the i-button in the bottom menu, including a species guide and information on regulations, hazards, and marine nature reserves in Israel.

Explore the Wildlife Sightings Section

Wildlife sightings - Mediterranean sea

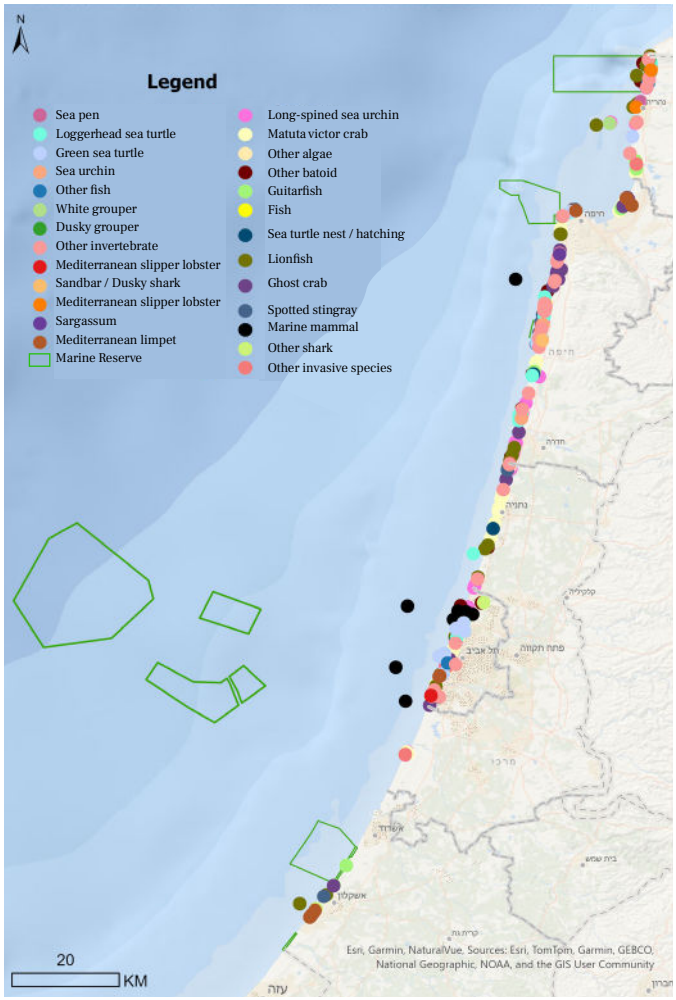
410 Wildlife sighting reports were forwarded to relevant research bodies

226
sightings of
invasive species

53
Sightings of
rays

39
Sightings of
sea turtles

10
Sightings of
marine mammals



Although only about 6% of our sea is designated as a nature reserve, 30% of reports were submitted from within a reserve or up to 1 km from one.

Sightings report of a false killer whale (a rare dolphin species) in the SeaWatch app, March 2025. Photo by Roman Podgajetski.

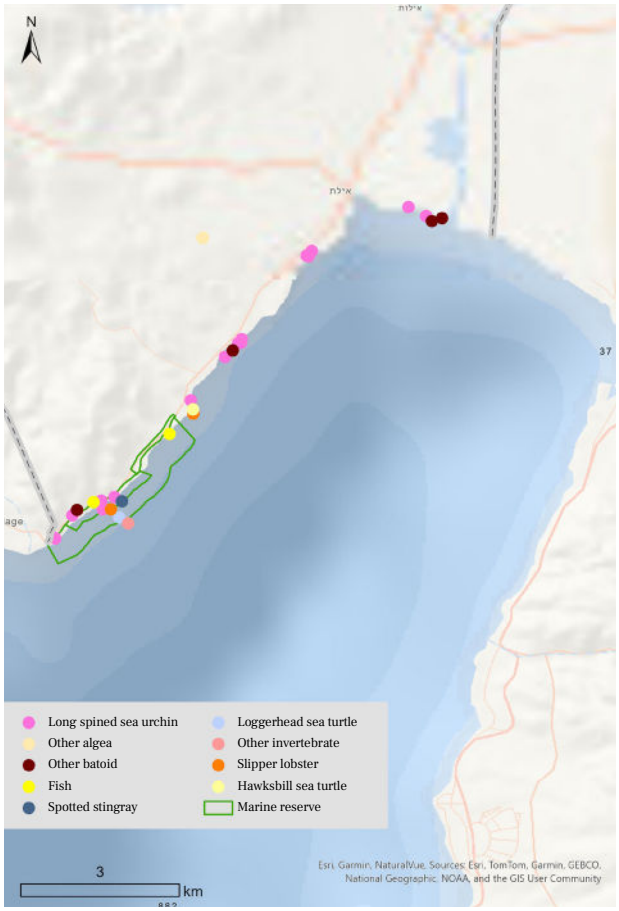
Wildlife sightings - Red sea

35 Sightings were sent to the relevant research bodies, including:

17 Sightings of
long-spined sea urchins
(a species that has nearly disappeared from the Gulf of Eilat)

5 Sightings of
sharks and rays

5 Sightings of
sea turtles



In 2025, the number of reports in Red sea rose sharply by 176% compared with the previous year. With "The Blue Half" now operating systematically in the Gulf of Eilat as part of the "Eilat Reefs" initiative, app usage is expected to deepen significantly and expand across local sea-loving communities.

Report of leopard whiprays at North Beach, December 2025. Photo by Shay Oron (reporter).

Community and Outreach

Our outreach stand continued traveling across the country, allowing us to join public events and show coastal communities how the app works and how they can help protect our sea.

Outreach stand at the Coastal Authorities Forum conference, run by gap-year volunteers from Hof Carmel Field School.

Gift giveaway at a paddling event promoting the proposed Bat Galim marine reserve at Allenby watersports club in Haifa.

We also reached diverse marine communities with hands-on talks about marine hazards and how they are addressed in real time.

Talk for the Carmel sailing community, April 2025.

Finally, much of our activity was covered in the media this year:

Seen a slipper lobster? Report it in the app

According to Bar Sternbach, SeaWatch and marine projects coordinator at SPNI, the slipper lobster was designated a protected species in Israel following years of unregulated fishing and a sharp population decline. The species, also nicknamed "Sigal" for its purple coloring, was once served in high-end restaurants until fishing it was banned.

"The slipper lobster does not have front claws, but rather flat, paddle-like appendages that help it swim and defend itself from predators, which is where its Hebrew name comes from," Sternbach explained. "It lives mainly in rocky habitats, caves, kurkar ridges, and crevices, where it shelters during the day. At night, it comes out to feed, mainly on shellfish. It is found across the Mediterranean basin and along the central-eastern Atlantic coasts, but data on its distribution in Israel is still very limited."

They went spearfishing in the Hadera nature reserve, and will pay for killing fish >

In early July, the SeaWatch app, which allows the public to report marine hazards in the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Eilat, received several reports of illegal fishing that were handled by marine unit rangers.

The first report came in at 22:30 from the Gador Marine Reserve near Hadera and documented suspicious activity involving lights in the water, which is prohibited under reserve regulations that ban presence after dark. When rangers arrived, they found two fishers spearfishing, in violation of reserve rules and during the breeding season. Another report came from the Shikmona Reserve in Haifa at 07:30 on Saturday morning and also involved spearfishing. In this case as well, rangers were dispatched and enforcement action was taken.

Thanks to SeaWatch reports, three ghost nets were removed from the sea

This week, an experienced divers team from the Coastal Patrol NGO reached the three sites, located the nets, and removed them from the water in a complex and successful operation."

Tal, the reporter, said: "During the dives, I identified ghost nets full of fish and marine animals that could not escape. When I got out of the water, I reported it in the SeaWatch app and immediately received an update that the case was being handled. I was very glad to hear that, thanks to my report, the nets were removed, live fish were rescued, and the sea is cleaner. It shows how simple reporting is and how important it is. Marine hazards, especially ghost nets, endanger marine biodiversity as well as divers and sea lovers."

Summary

This year's activity on the app once again shows the value of strong cooperation between the public and the authorities responsible for marine and coastal hazards. Together, this work helps keep the sea cleaner, safer, and healthier for both people and wildlife. Over the year, 151 reports submitted through the app were fully resolved, thanks to the involvement of reporters and close collaboration with the Nature and Parks Authority, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, municipal authorities, and additional partners.

In the coming year, SeaWatch and The Blue Half will continue to work to increase the scope of reports handled through to full resolution, and to establish deep, stable partnerships with the bodies responsible for addressing marine hazards. At the same time, we will continue to improve and upgrade the app, with the aim of improving user experience and making it a more accessible, user-friendly, and effective tool for the public, as well as for enforcement and research bodies. In addition, we will place emphasis on strengthening work with local authorities, with the goal of expanding impact beyond nature reserves into marine areas under the responsibility of different authorities, and leading meaningful, ongoing action to protect marine nature and the marine environment along Israel's Mediterranean coastline and the Red Sea in the Gulf of Eilat.

We would like to thank all our partners in the research community, as well as the response and enforcement authorities, for their meaningful and productive cooperation. Thanks to the involvement and commitment of our many partners, we were able this year to achieve exceptional results and respond to public reports at unprecedented scale and in real time.

We would like to especially note the cooperation with Haifa's Municipality Coastal Department. At the same time, a stronger response is needed from coastal authorities and the Israel Police regarding illegal fishing at designated beaches and boating activity that violates regulations. Effective cooperation with enforcement bodies, and professional, high-quality handling of public reports, are essential not only for efficient treatment of marine hazards, but also for strengthening public trust and deepening civic engagement in protecting the sea.

Finally, a big thank you to all the app users who report, and who choose day after day to take an active part in protecting Israel's marine environment. Your involvement is the foundation of our work and the force that allows it to continue, expand, and grow.

Want to help protect the sea in real time?

Come hear about the SeaWatch initiative, which enables people to report marine environmental hazards, such as injured wildlife, litter, or fishing violations, and create real change on the ground.
The talk is engaging, combines compelling field examples, and shows how all of us can be the eyes of the sea.

To schedule a free talk - seawatch@spni.org.il

Download the app

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