

Columbretes

Legal status	Marine reserve
Foundation year	1990
Foundation text	Ministerial order of april 1990
Management body	Secretaria General del Mar
Superficy	4450 ha
Management category (IUCN, 1994)	IV



Territory



The Columbretes Islands are located 30 miles off the coast of Catello. This is a small archipelago, composed by f groups of islets, L'Illa Grossa, LaForadada, La Ferrera & El Carallot, 30 nautic miles off the coast of Castellón.

The sea around the islands protects up to 122 Km².



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Columbretes Island has been a SPAMI since 2001 thanks to the presence of terrestrial endemics, the importance of shelter both to benthic and pelagic species and its educational programmes.



Physical features

The Columbretes Islands are of volcanic origin. They rise over the continental platform from the sea bottom 80-90 m depth in form of submerged reefs and emerged islands. This volcanic field is considered as one of the scarce examples of Quaternary vulcanism in the continental shelf of the Mediterranean.

The sea around Columbretes islands is quiet rocky with caves and volcanic structures. The submerged reefs cover 5.000 ha, with platforms, pithons and underwater caves.



Specificities and Importance

Mediterranean infralitoral and circalitoral communities are well represented and preserved in the Columbretes Island Marine reserve. *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows occur around parts of La Ferrera, La Foradada and El Carallot islets.

Hard substratum communities, ranging from photophylic algal communities to coralligenous assemblages, are present around the four main islets groups, as well as in rocky submerged banks. Maërl beds cover most of the deep substrata in the Columbretes archipelago.

Many fragile species and communities are present in this area. Deep algae communities (*Cystoseira spp.* and *Laminaria rogriguezii*) are well developed in the bottoms surrounding the islands. Significant *Pinna nobilis* and *Pinna rudis* populations are distributed in the *Cymodocea nodosa* meadows, maërl beds and rocky substrate. Fragile benthic colonial cnidarians such as *Cladocora caespitosa* and *Paramuricea clavata* have developed important facies in the Columbretes sea bottom. And fish assemblages, scarce in Mediterranean waters, have an important presence in these waters.

Turtles (*Caretta caretta*) and cetaceans (i.e. *Tursiops truncatus*) are present in the Marine Reserve. In the last 10 years over 1750 individuals of five cetacean species have been recorded.

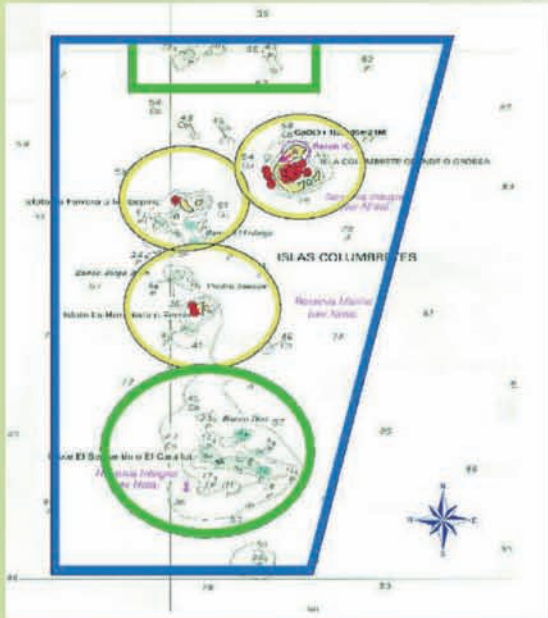


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Threats and pressures

Restrictions in activities and uses in the Marine Reserve waters are essential to grant an efficient protection of this location. The main activities attached to these limitations are scuba diving and recreational fishing.

Commercial fisheries take place in the Marine Reserve outer boundaries, taking advantage of the spillover effect of the protected area.



Management

Since 1994 Management Plan is in force. The management plan concerns only the terrestrial part, the marine part is elaborating.

The terrestrial zoning offers 1% of the total emerged land for public use.

The Marine reserve special protection areas cover 2676 ha, including 2 Integral Marine Reserve and 3 Zones of Restricted Uses.

The staff is basically adequate with 8 permanent members.

Basic financing ensured through cooperation protocol between Regional Environmental Authority and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries.

Vigilance in the Marine reserve is granted by 2 warden teams working and living in the islands in 15 days shifts. Scientific and management activities are supported by 2 persons in the Marine Reserve offices in Castellon.

Thanks to the protection granted by the Marine Reserve, Columbretes Islands are nowadays a reference of well preserved Mediterranean habitats, making this little archipelago a very interesting site for marine scientific research. Scientific activities are supported by Columbretes Reserve wardens and a marine biologist. The Marine reserve is outfitted with oceanographic instruments, a ROV and a pneumatic boat for marine surveys.

The main Island, L'Illa Grossa, is equipped with a building which includes the wardens and scientific staff housing and laboratory, although in the near future the restored lighthouse of L'Illa Grossa will offer improved accommodations and laboratories.

Scientific collaboration with scientific organizations such as the Instituto Espanol de Oceanografia (I.E.O.), Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas (C.S.I.C) and many spanish Universities, is crucial in developing the previous monitoring studies.

Columbretes Information Centre, located in Castellón coast, offers educational programmes and exhibition to 20.000 visitors/year.

A snorkel itinerary is trying to be implemented in summer.

