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First Phase in Freshwater Crab Conservation Project Completed

HSBC Malta Foundation and Nature Trust announce the successful conclusion of the first phase of the Freshwater Crab Conservation Project - a multi-year initiative aimed at protecting one of Malta's most ecologically unique and vulnerable species.

Launched in 2019 with a €40,000 donation from the HSBC Malta Foundation, the project was structured in two distinct stages: species-specific research and habitat assessment.

Led by Mr Ray Caruana from Aquatic Resources Malta, the first stage focused on studying the freshwater crab (*Potamon fluviatile*) population in Bahrija. Juvenile crabs were raised in a controlled environment at the former Aquaculture Directorate Research Centre. Researchers monitored behaviour, climate adaptability, feeding patterns, and social interaction, while also collecting data on territory size, stress factors, and water quality.

The second stage, carried out by Adi Associates Environmental Consultants Limited and Dr Eman Calleja, evaluated the Bahrija valley ecosystem. Environmental consultant Mr Adrian Mallia explained that the assessment included detailed studies of water resources, ecosystem resilience, and human impact on the area. Stakeholder consultations informed a comprehensive action plan for habitat restoration and conservation.

Vincent Attard, President of Nature Trust – FEE Malta, said: "With a solid foundation of scientific data now in place, we are actively engaging with the Environment and Resources Authority and exploring partnerships to prepare a full EU funding proposal. The next phase will aim to implement practical conservation actions and long-term habitat protection measures in the face of climate change."

Dr Paula Mamo, Deputy Chair of the HSBC Malta Foundation, added: "Thank you to everyone involved in bringing Phase One of this project to a successful close. This is a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when dedicated people work together for nature. We're proud to have kickstarted this initiative, which we hope will now move into an even more ambitious second phase."

The next phase of the project will focus on implementing direct conservation interventions, restoring critical habitats, and developing long-term strategies to ensure the survival of Malta's freshwater crab species.



Photocaption: From the left: Mr Vincent Attard, Hon President Nature Trust - FEE Malta, Mr Adrian Mallia – from ADI Associates, Mr Raymond Caruana from Acquatic Resource Malta, Dr Paula Mamo – Deputy Chair Person for the HSBC Malta Foundation and Glenn Bugeja – Head of Corporate Sustainability for HSBC Bank Malta

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