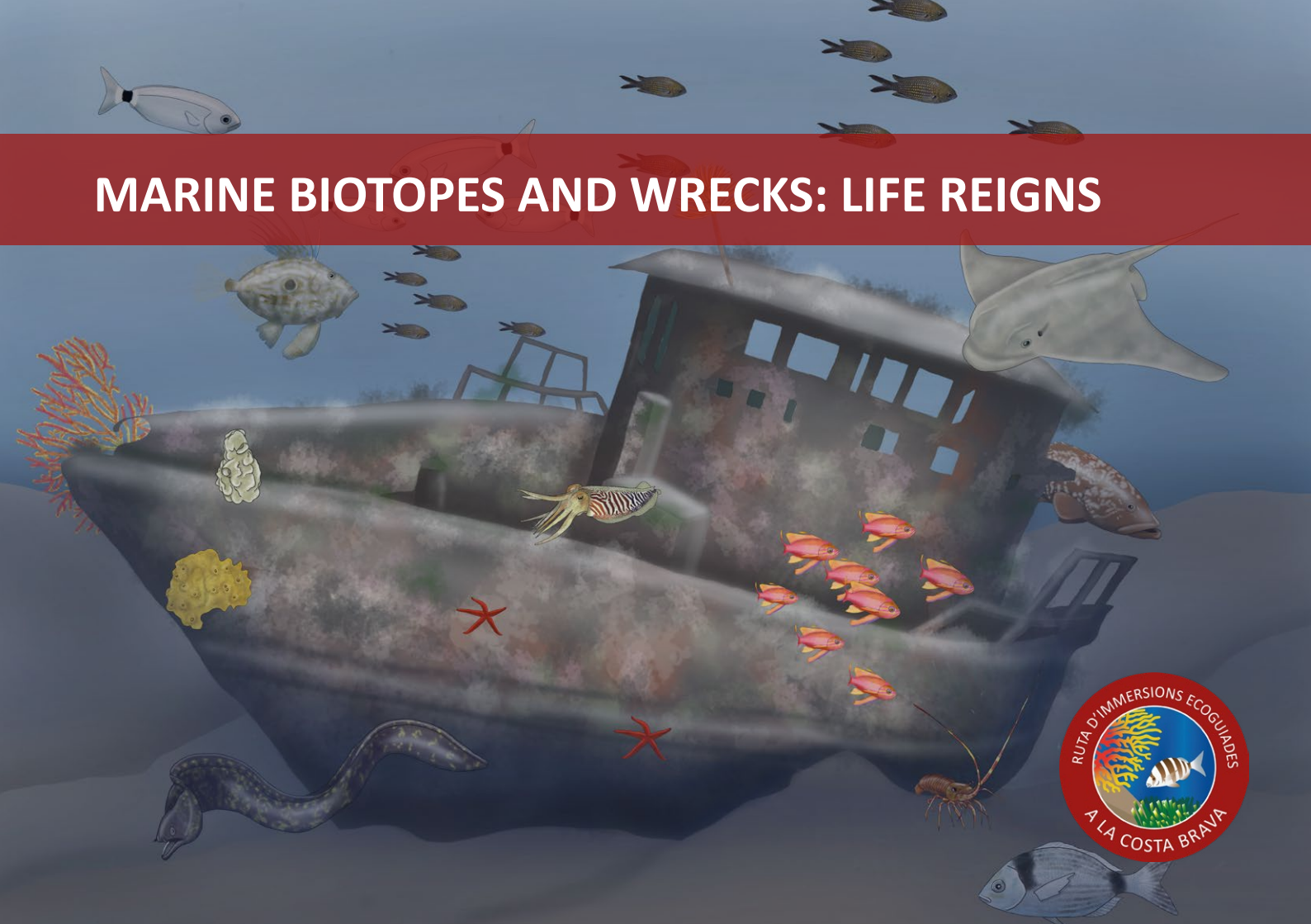
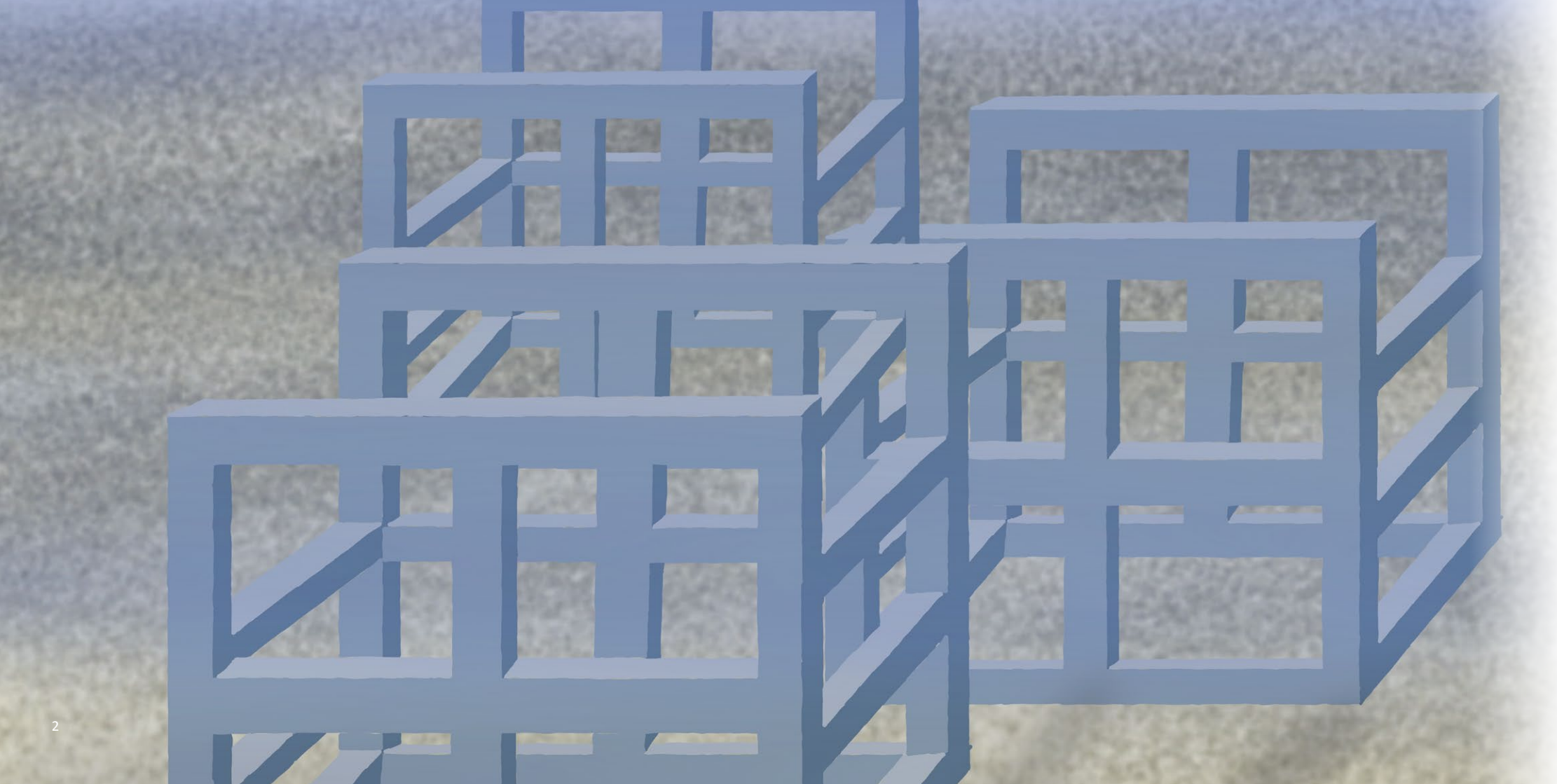


# MARINE BIOTOPES AND WRECKS: LIFE REIGNS





## **MARINE BIOTOPES AND WRECKS: LIFE REIGNS**

Biotopes are artificial underwater structures that originate from human intervention. They create a new habitat, which is quickly exploited by all kinds of species which develop there.

In fact, any artificial reef or any sunken structure can be considered a biotope. Although in some cases they are purposely installed to create a new habitat and in others they end up carrying out this function by accident, as is the case with sunken boats.

## WHAT ARE THE BIOTOPES LIKE?

Biotopes which have been designed specifically to act as a new underwater habitat are said to be for production, and they are structures with holes and hiding places that will enhance the settlement of marine organisms, they are made of neutral materials, which don't generate any chemical impacts on the seabed.

There are also designed to preserve the seabeds, known as protective biotopes, in this case they are submerged star-shaped structures, which avoid getting caught in dragnets in vulnerable or protected areas such as those containing posidonia. Breakwaters and jetties are also considered to be protective biotopes.

But those most valued by divers are without a doubt the wrecks, sunken boats, sometimes due to a shipwreck and others which have been sunk expressly as an attraction for divers.

## WHEN EVERYTHING BEGINS

When a new biotope sinks into the sea, the first thing to happen is that it needs some time to settle, as the type of seabed, the currents and other factors will change its position, which can condition which species end up prospering there.

As it settles the colonisation begins, firstly, it will become a temporary refuge for less territorial fish when the current takes larvae there from different specimens, which will stick to it and prosper, colonising the new space. The habitat will gradually become more mature, diverse and structured, until it becomes a place in which marine life springs forth.

Each biotope will end up being ideal for specific species: conger and moray eels, lobsters, groupers, banks of fish passing through, large fish and small organisms that need to adhere themselves to structures in order to live. Each biotope will create a different landscape with different species.





## WRECKS ON THE COSTA BRAVA

The best-known and most valued biotopes for divers on the Costa Brava are the wrecks, and it's almost impossible to resist this imposing combination of nature and history.

The Boreas, the Reggio Messina, the Marmoler, the Saint Prosper, the Constantin and the Woodside, among others... are names that evoke not only an island of biodiversity, but a specific episode from our history.

The **Boreas** and the **Reggio** were sunk on purpose as an attraction for divers, one in Palamós and the other in Montgrí. The Reggio was a ferry, and the Boreas was a tugboat from the Second World War.

Similarly, the **Constantin** survived the Second World War to end up being shipwrecked in a storm off the coast of L'Escala, while the **Saint Prosper** sunk in the 1930s when it hit a mine in the same area. One of the oldest wrecks, whose structure has survived to this day, is the **Woodside**, which has been submerged since the 19th century.

Nowadays, all of them are an important refuge of underwater life, whether they are stuck to their surfaces, or looking for hiding place in its nooks and crannies.



## DID YOU KNOW THAT:

In the 1980s a number of biotopes were installed with the intention of protecting the posidonia and make fishing easier.

Over the years many of these structures have been lost, either because they are broken, they have sunk into the sand or have ended up being dragged by the sea currents, but those that still stand are true oases of life.

Currently, there are projects running to continue installing biotopes and creating wildlife refuges, often associated with scuba diving areas.

## WHERE THEY CAN BE SEEN

The easiest biotopes to be observe are shipwrecks, as diving centres organise regular excursions to see them.

The dams and breakwaters are also very interesting and accessible areas. Both during the day and at night, they conceal a great deal of marine life, and they offer the advantage of being able to do dives there protected from the bad weather and departing from the beach itself.

## HOW TO SEE THEM

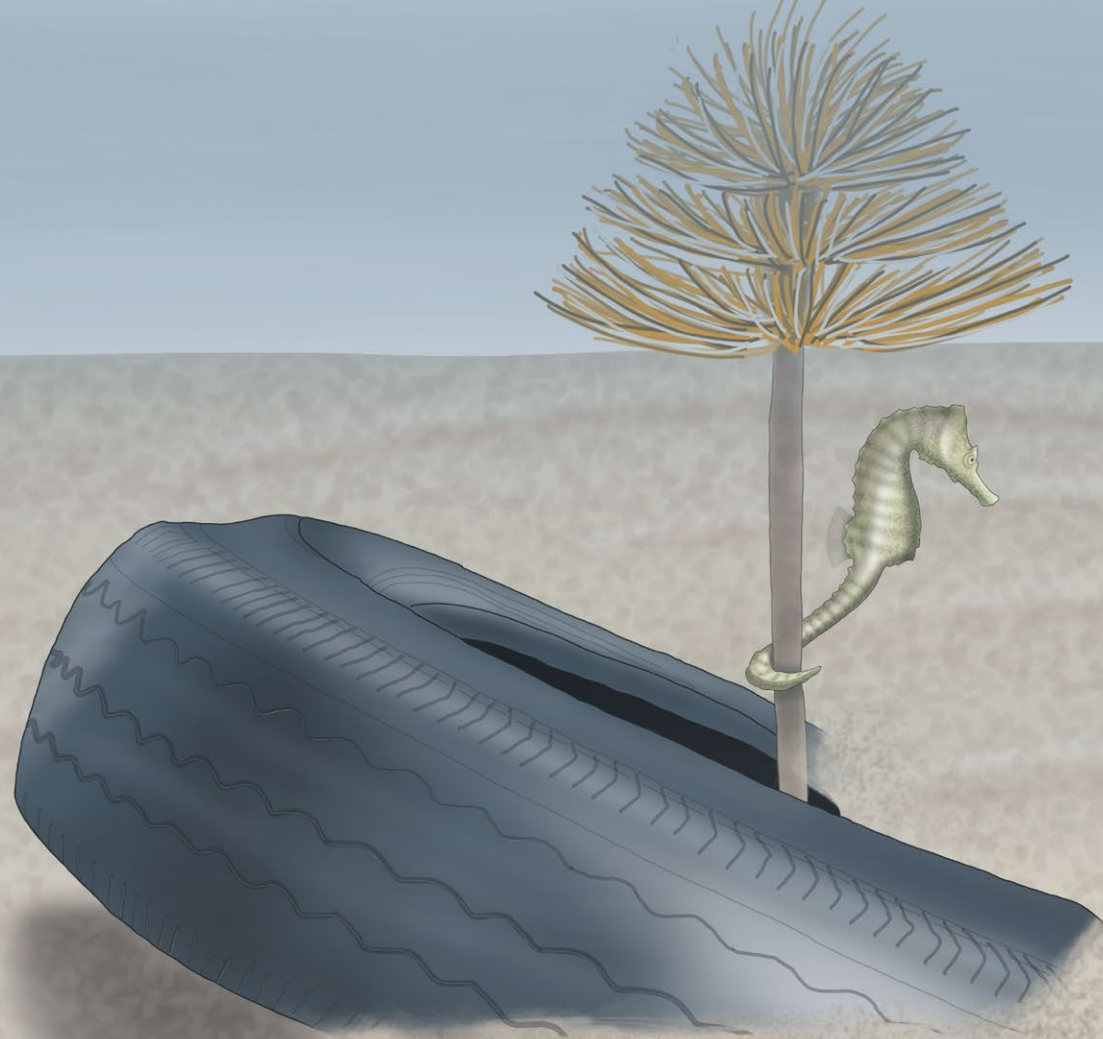
To observe the biotopes, it is necessary to monitor the depth limits and the dive times, since they can be in deep waters (especially the boats) and the dive must be planned well.

The wrecks usually have a buoy attached to them for divers, which, following the chain, leads us directly to the boat. It is necessary to bring a torch to enjoy the vivid colours that cover them to the full.

The breakwaters and jetties have a large amount of fauna associated with them, with many of the organisms that live there hidden among the rocks and that can often only be seen at night.







## PRECAUTIONS

It is necessary to be careful when swimming near abandoned fishing gear that can make a dive more difficult: tangled nets and fishing lines are common along the jetties and productive biotopes. Be sure to take a knife with you and keep at a safe distance.

The common diving areas are the safest option, since the diving centres take care of removing anything that may cause danger.

## ALSO...

Don't forget to take a look at any small, abandoned structures such as an anchored mooring buoy or some clay pots used for octopus fishing, especially if they are on the sandy bottoms, as they attract lots of organisms.



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