



MEDASSET
Mediterranean Association
to Save the Sea Turtles

Agenda Item 5.3:

On-the-spot appraisal/File open

**Degradation of nesting beaches
in Patara SPA (Turkey)**

Report & Recommendation

**35th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention
Wednesday 2 December 2015**

Patara Specially Protected Area



Patara Specially Protected Area

✓ SPA Designation in 1990



✓ UNESCO World Heritage Site Tentative List



Patara Specially Protected Area

Biodiversity: Sand dunes, Wetlands, Forest, etc.

Important nesting site for: **Loggerhead sea turtle** (*Caretta caretta*)
Nile Soft-shelled turtle (*Trionyx triunguis*)



Patara *C.caretta* hatchlings



Patara SPA & Bern Convention

Relevant Recommendations:

- **Recommendation No 8 (1987)** on the protection of marine turtles in Dalyan and other important areas in Turkey
- **Recommendation No 12 (1988)** concerning the protection of important turtle nesting beaches in Turkey
- **Recommendation No 24 (1991)** on the protection of some beaches in Turkey of particular importance to marine turtles

1996: On-the-spot appraisal & Case File Opened

- **Recommendation No 54 (1996)** on conservation of *Caretta caretta* at Patara

- 1. ensure that the protection of the Patara archaeological site continues to prevent any human settlement behind the beach;**
- 2. enforce regulations against illegal building;**
- 3. control tourist flow [...]**
4. organise regular monitoring of marine turtles during the nesting season, as was done in 1996;
5. make the local population and tourists aware of the importance of protecting marine turtles;
6. erect a barrier in front of the car-parks for the middle and north sections of the beach and ban motor traffic from the north section;
7. put an information sign at the end of the hillside track at the edge of the beach and ensure that a fourth way onto the beach is not formed there, drawing attention to the ban on walking in the dunes;
8. continue plantations to stabilise the dunes, particularly the hedges on the top of the first range of dunes at the back of the beach, so as to accentuate the dark side of the horizon from which the marine turtles take their bearings;
9. ensure that no powerful, tall, seaward-facing lights are erected in the village or between it and the beach.

Patara SPA & Bern Convention

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1996: On-the-spot appraisal & Case File Opened

- **Recommendation No 54 (1996)** on conservation of *Caretta caretta* at Patara

2001: Case File closed, progress made, though some problems remained

1996 - 2009: MEDASSET monitored & submitted reports

1998: MEDASSET recommends 47 measures for:

- hunting, grazing
- sand extraction, sand dune stabilisation,
- waste, light pollution, constructions,
- visitor management, public awareness
- sea turtle monitoring, protection of Nile soft-shelled turtle

2012: Complaint on impact of large scale development

300-312 holiday houses
120% population increase
(2011 media report 400-750 houses)

LOCATION:

**Inside SPA in 3rd Degree
Archaeological Site**
(blue area)

- 800 m from sand dunes
- 1500 m from beach
- 2000 m from ancient city

EXPECTED IMPACTS:

Increase of:

- built-up area
- visitors / residents
- habitat damage
- beach development
- litter etc.



Blue line: 3rd Degree Archaeological Site.

Yellow line: 1st Degree Archaeological Site

Summer house construction continues in Patara SPA

2011



2015



2015



2015



27 summer houses with pool were inhabited in 2015
New foundations laid for 300-312 houses in total

2015 Conservation Status of Patara Nesting Beaches

- **No guards** - 3rd ongoing year
2-3 biologists protect nests along 12 km beach
- **Low awareness** of visitors & community
- **Litter**
- **Fishing** close to the shore
- **Stray dogs** on beach
- **Camping / bonfires** (dunes fires in 2008, 2013-14)
- **Vehicle access** not controlled
- **Derelict illegal beach bar**
- **Lack of information**
No zoning along 11 km.
Delimitation of nesting zone is unclear in main beach.
Signs at 1 of 5 beach entrances
Single info point irregularly open
- **Sunbeds on beach at night**
- **Light pollution:** 1 light visible from main beach



2015 Conservation Status of Patara Nesting Beaches



Sunbeds not removed at night, impede nesting. Zoning posts (red circle) are hardly visible. No zoning , no signs on the rest of the 12 km beach.



**No SPA personnel to manage the derelict information kiosk.
No information material available.**

2015 Conservation Status of Patara Nesting Beaches



Vehicle access, **camping**, and bonfires are observed every season at the river outlet in view of the beach.

Quads and vehicles drive on nesting beaches.



2015 Conservation Status of Patara Nesting Beaches



Stray dogs require re-homing to prevent them from digging up nests for eggs or attacking nesting turtles



2015 Conservation Status of Patara Nesting Beaches



Bonfires on beach and in dunes, beach littering by users, agricultural and urban waste carried onshore by Esen river, are recurring problems in the specially protected area

2015 Conservation Status of Patara Nesting Beaches



Nets are used for coastal fishing, too close to the shore during the nesting and hatching season, as there is no personnel to enforce fishing rules.



Photo: Emin Bozkurt.



Photo: Emin Bozkurt.

2015 Conservation Status of Patara Nesting Beaches



Beach bar that was established in 2014, was closed in 2015, after it was declared illegal. Facilities have not been removed from the beach, nor has the dune been restored.

URGENT ACTION NEEDED

to protect Patara's natural & cultural heritage

Rec. 54 not fully implemented. New Rec. to reiterate & update Rec.54.

- **Summer House Construction: Re-evaluate scale. Authorities to inform about EIA and carrying capacity study.**
- **Management:**
 - **Revise management plan for expected increased number of site visitors/residents.**
 - **Increase financial & human resources for implementation of plan and rules enforcement**
 - **Urgent action to address identified conservation problems**
- **Official Information needed on Beach Development plans**



URGENT ACTION NEEDED

to protect Patara's natural & cultural heritage

- **Ban new entry points, roads and permanent constructions on dunes & beaches**
- **Management strengthening**

Measures & Resources needed for:

- **Guarding for control & enforcement**
- **Information signs at all entry points**
- **Manning of information kiosks**
- **Enforcement of no-fishing zones**
- **Periodical collection of litter**
- **Tackle waste disposal in rivers**
- **Barriers at all entry points**
- **Zoning of nesting area**
- **Sunbed removal at night**
- **Camping & bonfire prevention**
- **Awareness raising**
- **Re-homing of stray dogs**
- **Control of recreational activities**

Continue (as per Rec. No. 54):

- **Tourist flow control**
- **Light pollution control**
- **Monitoring of sea turtles on entire beach**
- **Prevention of human settlement behind beach; enforcement of regulations against illegal building ; removal of abandoned facilities**
- **Prevention of dune destruction; stabilisation with native vegetation**

URGENT ACTION NEEDED to protect Patara's natural & cultural heritage

We urge the Standing Committee to adopt a new Recommendation in order to

- Reiterate & update Rec. No. 54,
- Encourage & assist Turkish authorities to
 - ✓ improve protected area management
 - ✓ conserve the site against illegal or unsuitable development
 - ✓ protect unique dunes & sea turtle nesting beach against human impacts

- **We welcome the draft Recommendation and request that the Standing Committee considers MEDASSET's amendments** that aim to improve and clarify measures.

- We recognise the Turkish delegation's willingness to collaborate and **urge Turkey to implement the Recommendation before May 2016**



MEDASSET
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**Thank You
for your attention**

MEDASSET

Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles

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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS - Preamble:

Draft Recommendation No. ... (2015) of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, adopted on
December 2015, on the conservation of *Caretta caretta* and its habitat at Patara (Turkey)

The Standing Committee [...]

Having regard to the aims [...]

Recalling [...]

Noting that the loggerhead turtle is a strictly protected species listed in Appendix II to the Convention and ~~classified as endangered by~~ is included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, mainly as a result of degradation of ~~their~~-nesting areas;

Recalling recommendations [...]

Having further regard to [...]

Considering the unique ecological heritage value of the Patara beach as one of the fourth most important *Caretta caretta* nesting site in Turkey (Baran and Kasparek, 1989) and the most important and largest dune system on the Turkish Mediterranean coast;

Recognising that the Government of Turkey has taken - in the past ~~positive~~ - some positive steps to successfully protect its nesting beaches, and to designate some of them – including Patara beach - as Specially Protected Areas (SPAs);

Praising the excellent results [...]

Very worried [...]

Referring to the report [...]

Acknowledging that the nesting habitat [...]

Concerned however by the weak [...]

Worried about the high predation [...]

Noting the problems deriving from [...]

Noting the future increase of residents and visitors following completion of the ongoing large scale summer house development inside the SPA;

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS - Measures:

1. Urgently ensure that Patara nesting beach receives appropriate legal protection and management, in line with its exceptional historical, natural and ecological value;
2. Urgently set up, enforce and monitor the implementation of strict regulations which:
 - (i) prohibit further development on the beach (including buildings, structures, roads) and remove abandoned illegal facilities and restore dunes,
 - During the nesting/hatching season:
 - (ii) regulate the extent and use of furniture on the beach and ensure furniture is removed from the nesting zone at night,
 - (iii) prohibit access of vehicles by placing barriers at ~~the~~ all beach's entrances,
 - (iv) prohibit illumination of the beach,
 - (v) prohibit fishing in front of the beach ~~during the nesting and hatching periods~~,
 - (vi) prohibit camping on the beach and on riversides in view of the beach,
 - (vii) prohibit horse riding and 4x4 or quad safaris on the beach,
 - (viii) define fines for noncompliance with above regulations;
5. Ensure the proper fencing of all nests in areas with high human presence during the day, so as to protect them from walking people trampling and from beach furniture;
6. Urgently set up long-term conservation and research programmes, entrusted to a permanent team that should be granted adequate man power to monitor the entire beach (north and south) during the entire nesting/hatching season and protect all nests if necessary;
7. Improve information to and awareness of tourists about sea turtle nesting and on correct behaviour for the sustainable use of the beach; install clearer signage to indicate the nesting zone;
Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated for control, management and enforcement of regulations;
Ensure that litter is periodically removed from the beach and dunes, and collaborate with the agricultural community to tackle the disposal of waste in rivers, as this is washed onto the beach and into the sea;