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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

37th meeting
Strasbourg, 5-8 December 2017

File open

**Presumed degradation of nesting beaches
in Fethiye and Patara SPAs
(Turkey)**

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by
the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey*

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
GOVERNMENT REPORT ON**

**FOLLOW-UP OF IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATION NO. 182, 183
(2015) ON THE CONSERVATION, MANAGEMENT, AND RESTORATION OF
FETHIYE and PATARA NESTING BEACHES (TURKEY)**

Background:

Two different complaints, one about Fethiye and one about Patara were submitted to the Secretariat in 2012 and 2013 by Medasset. The Bureau decided on addressing these two complaints in conjunction. In the 33rd meeting of the Standing committee, a casefile was opened for both of the complaints. In 2014, the Committee decided on conducting an on-the-spot appraisal to the relevant sites. In 2015, two recommendations, Recommendations No. 182 (2015) and No.183 (2015) were prepared following an on the spot appraisal. In the Standing Committee Meeting in 2016, the committee decided on keeping the casefile open, while urging the Turkish authorities to step up their current efforts and ensuring that both Recommendations [No. 182 (2015) and No. 183 (2015)] are fully implemented in 2017.

In September 2017, the Bureau invited the national authorities to provide a report to the Standing Committee meeting on the 5th to 8th December 2017, detailing a plan to remedy these concerns. This report should provide a Timeline which clearly shows when the planned measures will be implemented, ultimately aiming to fully meet the terms of Recommendations No. 182 (2015) and No.183 (2015).

General Information on Protection of Marine Turtles in Turkey

Two sea turtle species nest in the Mediterranean; Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). Loggerhead turtles are the most abundant sea turtle species in the Mediterranean. Main nesting areas are identified as Greece, Turkey, Cyprus and Libya. The known nesting species in Turkey are: the loggerhead turtle, which is listed as Least Concern (LC) as a regional subunit in the Mediterranean, and the green turtle, which is listed as Endangered (EN) by IUCN (IUCN, 2017). This Red List assessments are updated regularly to reflect the most current and best available data, and as such the Red List status of loggerheads may change with time. This LC classification of Mediterranean loggerhead population is the result of the past nearly 25 years of protection on all Mediterranean populations. Therefore, all loggerhead subpopulations must be monitored and studied further in order to assure that conservation strategies and interventions are adjusted to respond to possible future changes.

In early years, monitoring of the beaches was only carried out on 17 nesting beaches that identified in 1988, but our monitoring teams were monitoring both these and other potential sites for nesting sites. As a result of these intensive monitoring efforts, we have identified and included 4 new beaches (bold ones were included over the last few years). These beaches from west to east are; Ekincik, Dalyan, Dalaman-Sarigerme, Fethiye, Patara, Kale-Demre, Finike-Kumluca, **Çıralı**, Tekirova, Belek, Kızılot, Demirtaş, Gazipaşa, Anamur, Göksu Deltası, **Alata**, **Davultepe**, Kazanlı, Akyatan, **Sugözü-Yumurtalık** and Samandağ beaches.

A total of 21 nesting beaches were identified along the Turkish Mediterranean coast and five (Dalyan, Fethiye, Patara, Belek, Göksu Deltası) of them declared as Specially Protected Area (SPA). These SPA beaches are monitored on a daily basis and all nests protected and the necessary scientific information were collected by the research teams and volunteers. The number of nests and non-nesting emergencies by the turtles, their biological information such as incubation duration, hatching success and predation rates. There is no need to report them again here but recent data can be found regarding the Fethiye beach (Baskale et al., 2016) and for Patara beach (Olgun et al., 2016). At the end of each nesting season, a project reports were also submitted by the research team to the Turkish Ministries.

Activities Done to Implement the Recommendations

In March 2017, the Scientific Council of the Turkish National Marine Turtle Protection Committee gathered together in Dalyan, Muğla. All the problems of nesting beaches of Turkey were discussed in this meeting. A special session was put aside for the Recommendations [No. 182 (2015) and No. 183 (2015)] of Bern Convention.

According to the recommendation No: 182 (for Fethiye) and 183 (for Patara), we are monitoring and protecting all the nests laid on the beach, the research teams are taking the necessary steps against if any negative factor occurs on the beaches. We summarise below points for the information on how we are monitoring the sea turtle beaches and specific responses to specific recommendations.

- As a general response to the past recommendations (i.e., 7,8,12,24, 54,66 and recent ones as 182 and 183) to the Turkish Government, we are making sure that not only 17 beaches identified in the past monitored and protected but also recently identified ones were also monitored. The beaches were monitored daily by the research teams on 13 (95 % of the all nesting occurs on these beaches) of these beaches in 2017 nesting season (Dalyan, Dalaman-Sarıgerme, Fethiye, Patara, Finike-Kumluca, Çıralı, Belek, Göksu, Alata, Kazanlı, Akyatan, Sugözü and Samandağ beaches). The remaining 7 beaches (Ekincik, Kale-Demre, Tekirova, Kızılot, Demirtaş, Gazipaşa, Anamur) regularly monitored by the local NGOs in coordination with Ministerial Representatives. The nesting is relatively low on these beaches and there is no need to monitor the beaches on a daily basis.
- As an effective way of nest protection, instead of 70cmX70cm sized screens, 1mx1m sized with 7,5 cm mesh size screens were started to be used for better protection of the nests against fox and/or dog, badger predation. The results are much more promising as it is rather difficult for predators to dig up to the nests.
- As on all daily monitored 13 beaches, research teams are closely working with Local Ministerial Authorities. The beaches are monitored day and night. If any negatively affecting factors are encountered, the research teams first inform the target responsible persons and report to the Government authorities if necessary. The sand extraction, light pollutions, beach umbrellas and sunbeds were checked if they are appropriate. All the visible lights of the hotels and restaurants from the beaches are screened and/or painted as black or changed to the red lights on Fethiye beach according to the recommendations.
- Regarding the Sun-bed umbrella usage on Fethiye beach, only two rows of the beach umbrellas are allowed on Çalış beach. The first row is at the back, within the 3 meters from the wall behind the beach. The second row is near the sea and within the five meters from sea. All the beach-chairs, in this second row, were taken to the back row at nights. The beach zone between these two rows of umbrellas were closed to the usage of umbrellas and/or beach chairs.
- The researchers and volunteers started the sea turtle awareness programmes on the beaches. Staff of the tourism facilities, e.g. hotels, restaurants, cafes, local people and tourists were informed about sea turtle biology and conservation on both beaches. On Fethiye beach, there is a Caretta Info Office which is open all night as contact point for both visitors and exchange of information. Hotel and restaurant owners were also informing the team of any turtle activity occurred in front of their buildings.
- Access of vehicles to the beach were stopped either putting a barrier (erecting wood posts), cement blocks, wood posts etc. Car parks were also designed by the Municipality at the back of the beach on Calis beach. All carpets and wood paths etc were removed if they were put by the stakeholders.
- The Turkish Government already stated that the plan is cancelled to build on Akgol beach. If any construction is planned then Environmental Impact Assessment and Ecological Evaluation Report should be presented to the Ministries for approval of the project.
- The fisherman and motorized water sports ownerships were reminded all code of conduct and they have a long list of rules they are obliged at the beginning of nesting season by the research

team. Any illegal activities found and seen by the project team, cost guards should immediately be informed.

- At the beginning of nesting season, three more information signs were placed on main public entrances and important places of nesting beaches on both Patara and Fethiye beaches.

As it is stated above, Turkish Government is ensuring to protect the nesting beaches of sea turtles and their nests and hatchlings. The population is improving on all beaches and the red listing status even improved as Least Concern. We are ensuring the regular monitoring of important beaches on every year and scientific reports and publication of the results as scientific papers were submitted to the Scientific Council. We would happy to provide any further evidence as photos, data and more detailed information.

References:

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