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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

35<sup>th</sup> meeting  
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**RECOMMENDATION NO. 182 (2015)**  
**ON THE CONSERVATION OF *CARETTA CARETTA* AND ITS**  
**HABITAT AT PATARA**  
**(TURKEY)**

*Document  
prepared by  
the Directorate of Democratic Governance*



Convention on the Conservation  
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

**Recommendation No. 182 (2015) of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, adopted on 4 December 2015, on the conservation of *Caretta caretta* and its habitat at Patara (Turkey)**

The Standing Committee to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention,

Having regard to the aims of the Convention to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats;

Recalling that Article 3 of the Convention provides that each Contracting Party shall take steps to promote national policies for the conservation of the habitats of wild flora, wild fauna and natural habitats, with particular attention to endangered and vulnerable species, especially endemic ones, and endangered habitats;

Recalling that Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention provides that each Contracting Party shall take appropriate and necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the conservation of the habitats of the wild fauna species, especially those listed in Appendix II to the Convention;

Recalling that Article 6 of the Convention provides that, for the species listed in Appendix II, the deliberate damage to or destruction of breeding or resting sites shall be prohibited;

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

Recalling recommendations No. 8 (1987) on the protection of marine turtles in Dalyan and other important areas in Turkey, and No. 12 (1988) concerning the protection of important turtle nesting beaches in Turkey;

Having further regard to the following specific Recommendations of the Standing Committee:

- No. 7 (1987) on the protection of marine turtles and their habitat recommending – among others - that relevant Parties – including Turkey - give adequate legal protection to the main nesting beaches for marine turtles, urgently enforce the relevant conservation measures, and avoid any new touristic or other development in important nesting areas, unless very strict regulations are applied to respect the ecological needs of sea turtles,
- No. 24 (1991) on the protection of some beaches in Turkey of particular importance to marine turtles, recommending Turkey to take urgent practical steps to protect the seventeen nesting beaches, including by – inter alia – implementing prohibitions against sand extraction; giving priority to turtle conservation over other activities within SPAs; and halting constructions at Fethiye and Patara beaches until management plans for the areas are drawn-up,
- No. 54 (1996) on the conservation of *Caretta caretta* at Patara, recommending Turkish authorities to – among others - ensure that the protection of Patara site prevents any human settlement behind the beach; control tourist flow; carry out regular monitoring of marine turtles during the nesting season; restrict car access to the beach and ban motor traffic from the north section; improve signage; raise awareness about turtle's needs among tourists and the local population,

- No. 66 (1998) on the conservation status of some nesting beaches for marine turtles in Turkey, recommending Turkish authorities to – among others – to reassess tourism investment projects that may result in making the beaches unsuitable for turtle nesting; carrying out EIA prior to any development project affecting a nesting beach; take urgent measures to fully implement the protection status of SPAs; remove effects of anthropogenic pressures on the nesting beaches; take urgent and stringent measures to enforce legislation against illegal sand extraction; ensure respect of low speed limits for water sports during the nesting season; assure inter-ministerial cooperation on these matters;

Considering the unique ecological heritage value of the Patara beach as one of the important *Caretta caretta* nesting site in Turkey (Baran and Kasperek, 1989);

Recognising that the Government of Turkey has taken - in the past - 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 achieved at Iztuzu beach, Dalyan, through the setting-up in 2009 of the Sea Turtle Rescue Center (DEKAMER) tasked, among others, with the monitoring of the nesting beach, and encouraging the continuation of the support to this exemplary work;

Very worried by the degradation since 2010 of the SPA legal protection regime, including the lack of clear regulations to respect the ecological needs of sea turtles and their habitats, and lack of resources to enforce and monitor the implementation of the relevant conservation measures;

Referring to the report by Mr Paolo Casale [document [T-PVS/Files \(2015\) 40](#)] following the on-the-spot appraisal to Patara and Fethiye in the frame of the complaint against Turkey for “Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in Patara and Fethiye”;

Acknowledging that the nesting habitat in Patara has not been permanently modified and that its capacity of host nesting activity and egg incubation under natural conditions is not yet irreparably compromised by the current anthropogenic threats;

Concerned however by the weak level of implementation of the past recommendations issued by the Standing Committee;

Worried about the high predation level that represents a vulnerability factor for turtles, as they become dependent on continuous activity of nest protection;

Noting the problems deriving from the slow but continuous expansion of facilities for tourists in the southern access of Patara beach, that results in a disturbance to nesting activities if not adequately managed, particularly at night;

Taking into account the possible future increase of residents and visitors following completion of the ongoing large scale summer house development inside the SPA;

Regretting that current management of the nesting beach and enforcement of proper regulations are not adequate,

Recommends the authorities of Turkey to:

1. Urgently ensure that Patara nesting beach receives appropriate legal protection and management, in line with its exceptional, 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 enable the removal of abandoned illegal facilities and restoration of the 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 beach entrances; (iv) prohibit illumination of the beach; (v) prohibit fishing with nets in front of the beach; (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 nesting beach; (viii) define fines for non-compliance with above regulations;
3. Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated for the control, management and enforcement of regulations;

4. Continue to prevent uncontrolled human settlement behind the beach, particularly where these may result in making the beaches unsuitable for turtle nesting;
5. Ensure that litter is periodically removed from the beach and dunes;
6. Address the problem of predation, including through population control's programmes;
7. Ensure the proper fencing of all nests in areas with high human presence during the day, so as to protect them from trampling and from beach furniture;
8. 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;
9. Improve information to and awareness of tourists about sea turtle nesting and on correct behaviour for the sustainable use of the beach and install clearer signage to indicate the nesting zone;
10. Improve information and education of the local community about sea turtle nesting, correct behaviour for the use of the beach, and intrinsic value of nature; and involve them in the protection, conservation, and management of the nesting beach;
11. Keep the Standing Committee annually informed about the implementation of this Recommendation.