



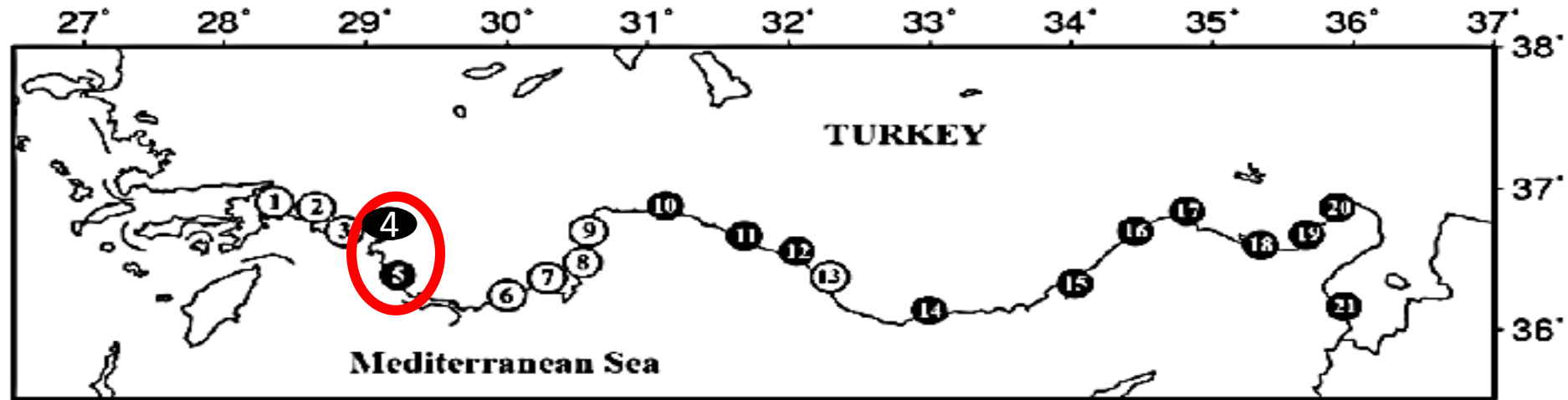
MEDASSET
Mediterranean Association
to Save the Sea Turtles

Agenda Item 6.1: Files opened

Turkey: Degradation of nesting beaches in Fethiye & Patara SPAs

**44th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention
2 – 6 DECEMBER 2024**

Fethiye & Patara are among the most important sea turtle nesting beaches in Turkey

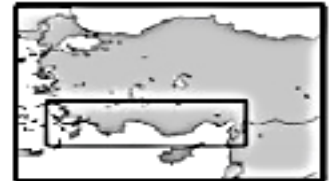


- 1- EKİNCİK
- 2- DALYAN
- 3- DALAMAN
- 4- FETHİYE
- 5- PATARA
- 6- KALE

- 7- KUMLUCA
- 8- ÇIRALI
- 9- TEKİROVA
- 10- BELEK
- 11- KIZILOL
- 12- DEMİRTAŞ

- 13- GAZİPAŞA
- 14- ANAMUR
- 15- GÖKSU
- 16- ALATA
- 17- KAZANLI
- 18- AKYATAN

- 19- AĞYATAN
- 20- YUMURTALIK
- 21- SAMANDAĞ



● *Caretta caretta* + *Chelonia mydas*

○ *Caretta caretta*

Patara Specially Protected Area



- **White arrow:** construction site of summer house village. “a”: new second road connecting villas and Gelemiş village. “b:” is archaeological site fee collection point with daytime vehicle barrier.
- **No. 1-5 are entry points:** 1) **Patara Main Beach** entry point, snack bar & beach furniture; 2) Entry point via **sand dunes**, connecting the beach with summer houses; 3) **Çayağzı Beach** entry point; 4) **Letoon Beach** entry point & abandoned SPA information kiosk; 5) **Özden Beach** entry point, Patara Green Park (bar, camping site – closed since 2021) (Özden River outlet). **Eşen River** outlet lies between **No.3&4**.

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Rec. pt. 1: Urgently ensure that Patara nesting beach receives appropriate legal protection and management, in line with its exceptional, natural and ecological value.

- *In 2024, we observed certain improvements; however, the **improvements are limited primarily around the Main Beach**, while the rest areas are neglected and the conservation problems affecting the nesting beaches remain.*
- *Access to the Main Beach at night was enforced more effectively, however human presence was still observed on the sand dunes and vehicle tracks were present in the northern part of the South Beach and several locations of the North Beach.*
- *The new borders of the Patara SPA are **finally shared online** . All articles of the Master Development Plan for Patara can also be found online.*



Two solar-powered camera towers provide live-feed to the Gendarmerie at the Main Beach entry points.



The large crowd of visitors at the dunes around Sunset were removed by the Gendarmerie.



Motorized vehicles access the nesting beach at several locations

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Rec. pt. 2: Urgently set up, enforce and monitor the implementation of strict regulations.

- (i) prohibit further development on the beach (including buildings, structures, roads) and enable the removal of abandoned illegal facilities and restoration of the dunes;
- (ii) regulate the extent and use of furniture on the beach and ensure beach furniture is removed from the nesting zone at night;

- The illegal facilities on the southern end of the Main Beach, and at Green Park *have still not been removed*.
- Near Eşen River on Çayağzı Beach, new makeshift structures and bungalows have increased in number.
- There is *alarming coastal erosion* due to the disturbed dune statics. The construction of “Patara Bridge” negatively *impacted the river dynamics* which affect the beach.
- We documented *poor* management of beach furniture on the Main Beach. Furniture was *not removed* from the nesting zone at night. Sunbeds were stacked *close to the waterline*.
- Visitors are free to bring their own umbrellas and *insert* them in the nesting beach sand *anywhere they want*.



Makeshift structures and bungalows have increased in number.



Alarming coastal erosion. No effort towards the restoration of dunes.



Poor management of beach furniture. Visitors insert umbrellas anywhere they want.

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Rec. pt. 2: Urgently set up, enforce and monitor the implementation of strict regulations.

(iii) prohibit illumination of the beach;

(iv) prohibit fishing with nets in front of the beach;

(v) prohibit camping on the beach and on riversides in view of the beach;

- *Light pollution in the North Beach is still problematic, especially around the campsite on Letoon Beach and at Özden Beach*
- *Rod, boat and net fishing was observed near and at the mouth of Eşen River, at Özden Beach and Letoon.*
- *The camping site at the other side of Eşen River (on Letoon Beach) continues to be a problem.*



*Light pollution at the the campsite
on Letoon Beach*



Net fishing at Letoon nesting beach



Camping at Eşen River

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Rec. pt. 2: Urgently set up, enforce and monitor the implementation of strict regulations.

(vi) prohibit horse riding and 4x4 or quad safaris on the nesting beach

(vii) define fines for non-compliance with above regulations

- Horses are **still rented** at the top of the dunes. A few horses were seen taking people all the way down to the nesting beach and then back up. Five horses were seen **galloping along Özden Beach** and crossing the river.
- Several **motorized vehicles and their tracks were seen on the nesting beach**, in all sections except Patara Main Beach
- According to regulations entrance to the beach is banned from 20:00 to 08:00 between 15 May and 30 September. It is also prohibited to light bonfires and barbecues, set up tents, and drive vehicles. As of 2024, the **administrative fine** for those who violate these bans is 387,141 TL.



Horses galloping at Özden Beach



ATVs and cars were observed everywhere except the Patara Main Beach.

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Rec. pt. 3: Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated for the control, management and enforcement of regulations;

- *The team monitoring the SPA do not have the authority of enforcement.*
- *There is inadequate control, management and enforcement, except for the Patara Main Beach, where nests were properly marked and caged. For example there is no management on Letoon Beach, where visitors are able to enter the beach from several points. Also while the entrance point near Green Park was fitted with a tall sliding -and chained- barrier there was no control personnel.*
- *Gendarmerie was seen on Patara Main Beach and patrolling the top of dunes and the beach at night. **We encountered no one patrolling the other beaches at night**, only visitors and fishermen at the outlets of Eşen and Özden rivers.*



Unattended sea turtle tracks to the north of main dune area.



Unattended hatchling tracks to the north of main dune area.



Inadequate control, management and enforcement of regulations.

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Rec. pt. 4: Continue to prevent uncontrolled human settlement behind the beach, particularly where these may result in making the beaches unsuitable for turtle nesting;

- *Construction works in Gelemiş village seem to have finished, with no new constructions in sight during our survey. Satellite images of the same location from 2003 and 2024 reveal the development in the region over the course of 21 years*



2003



2024

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Rec. pt. 5: Ensure that litter is periodically removed from the beach and dunes;

- *Litter was seen on all sections of the SPA (least of at Patara Main Beach), even though new bins were placed at the Main Beach, at the top of the dunes, the entrance point by Eşen River, and on Özden Beach. The dunes were partly littered, mostly with cigarette ends and horse droppings.*

Rec. pt.6: Address the problem of predation, including through population control's programs;

- *Crab predation is problematic in the entire SPA, as protective grills fail to protect the nests from crabs. Predated egg shells were seen in all sections including Patara Main Beach. Dog tracks were seen in a few locations although they were not around predated nests. No hoof prints were observed this year.*



Litter left by daily visitors: food and beverage containers, diaper, plastic bags, a broken umbrella



Predated egg shells at Patara Main Beach

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Rec. pt.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;

- All of the *nests around the facility on Patara Main Beach were protected* with prism cages bearing signs and with protective grills underneath. A few cages were seen near the Eşen River on Çayağzı Beach, which did not have protective bases. *However the North Beach entirely lacked nest marks, nest sticks, and cages.*

Rec. pt.8: Urgently set up long-term conservation and research programs entrusted to a permanent team;

- Even though the team monitoring Patara SPA has been led by the same person for many years, issues raised and emphasized in our report suggests *lack of manpower or finances to monitor the entire SPA equally and efficiently.* The North Beach entirely lacked any sign of monitoring (marked tracks, sticks, cages, etc.).



South vs North Beach

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Rec. pt.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;

- Wooden posts *installed on the entire South Beach still do not reflect the actual nesting zone*, as clearly proven by the presence of nests behind these posts. *There are still no wooden posts and a serious lack of information signs along the North Beach*, with the only signage present at the vehicle entrance point at Özden Beach

Rec. pt.10: Improve information and education of the local community;

- The local community and visitors have *minimal basic knowledge* about the sea turtles and they are not involved in the conservation and management studies. The information kiosk near the facility at Patara Main Beach seems to be only *used as a storage area*, instead of serving as an actual information providing spot.



Patara Main Beach. A nest behind wooden posts supposedly marking the nesting zone.



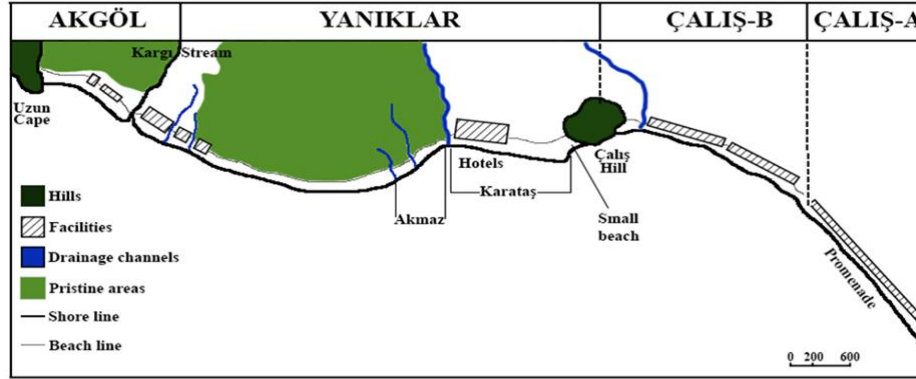
Patara SPA, Patara Main Beach. Information kiosk used as merely as a storage area.

Patara Recommendation No. 182

Summary findings: Partial implementation-the main unresolved conservation problems remain!

- As we have previously indicated, improvements in the management and control for effective implementation of the Recommendation, **over both sections of the beach**, will allow this unique natural and heritage site to become a showcase example, similar to the much renowned nearby Dalyan SPA (İztuzu beach).
- It is of high priority for **authorities to take further action** and resolve the remaining unresolved conservation and management problems with no delay.

Fethiye – Complete Habitat destruction!



Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 1: Stop any further development of permanent structures along the entire coast of the nesting site complex, in order not to reduce further the nesting habitat.

- *Complete disregard of the recommendation point 1*
- The channel mouth near Çalış Hill was reshaped with boulders, *causing coastal erosion* in Çalış B and the southern side of the channel, now has *new coffee shops and bars*
- A *new facility run by Fethiye Municipality* is now operational. Wooden walkways, a lifeguard tower, two blocks of dressing cabins, toilets and showers were built and visitors can also freely use their personal beach furniture
- In Yanıklar, *a third hotel* is almost finished, built over *the wetland, which is now entirely destroyed*.



coastal erosion



new facility and structures



Destroyed wetland

Third hotel

Zoning post extremely close to the sea

Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 2: Remove any structure from sand zones and restore the sandy zones.

Rec. pt. 5: Use long-term data, to identify the past, current and potential suitable zones for nesting, and set a maximum percentage limit of sandy tracts where structures are allowed on the nesting beach

- Sunbed stacking at night was observed in a few spots in Calis A, but in an *ineffective way* and always within the nesting zone. Furniture stacking was not seen anywhere else in the SPA.
- While wooden posts mark the nesting zone border in large sections of the SPA, in many areas *the zoning is incorrect*. In Çalış B, wooden posts supposedly marking the nesting zone mostly mark the semi-wet zone, while *the dry zone (including the nesting zone) is almost entirely occupied with beach furniture*.
- *Wooden walkways*, both vertical and horizontal, exist in many locations, and *AstroTurf carpets* were still being used at Surf Station/Mavi Beach and Surf Café/Surf Centre.



*Wooden posts incorrectly placed while the nesting zone is occupied by beach equipment.
AstroTurf carpets, walkways and sunbeds in nesting section.*

Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 3: Stop sand extraction.

- The sand piles observed at the mouth of main channel outlet near Çalış Hill in 2023 were used in reconstructing the river mouth. Signs of **new sand extraction** were observed in front of the new hotel construction in Yanıklar.

Rec. pt. 4: Remove planted vegetation, acacia in particular.

- Planted vegetation in the SPA is **expanding**. Acacia, agave, and palm trees remain.

Rec. pt. 6: Prohibit the use of beach furniture and other structures or facilities on the sandy zones of Akgöl beach, regulate use of the core nesting area in the sandy northern end of the beach, and carry-out the necessary controls to check enforcement

- Visitors are still free to **use personal beach equipment**, including umbrellas inserted into the sand. **No prism cages** were observed in the core nesting area. **No regulation or enforcement** of rules was observed.



Akgöl beach visitors **with personal beach equipment, barbecue and vehicles parked close to nests!**

Sand extraction in front of new hotel

Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 7: Reduce light pollution to a minimum along the whole coast during the nesting/hatching season

- In Çalış (both A and B) *light pollution continues to be a problem*. Visitors at the promenade area heavily use the beach at night using flashlights. In Çalış B, *weddings continue* as we witnessed at Bahar Beach.
- Worrisome incidents have been reported regarding the staff of Jiva Beach *intentionally flashing lights towards the beach to scare off sea turtles* crawling out the sea to nest.
- Construction machines at the new hotel operate for 24 hours straight, *causing severe light pollution* with overly bright white spotlights.
- *Many more incidents* of light pollution included in our detailed report.



Yanıklar. Liberty Fabay hotel creates *extreme light and noise* pollution with its beach bar and disco



Çalış B. Wedding venues at night.

Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 8: Build permanent barriers (not ditches) on the roads to prevent vehicles from accessing the beach, designate parking spaces and official picnic areas away from the beach

- The **new permanent barrier** (mesh scaffold filled with large stones) in Çalış B looks effective in preventing vehicle access to the beach. However, the northernmost part of Çalış B is **still used by caravans**, where people can park their vehicles close to the water line, have picnics and generate light pollution.
- In Yanıklar Beach, all facilities to the south of the pristine section control vehicle entrance. However, **vehicle tracks were observed in the pristine section**, close to the vehicle entrance point in mid-section. Tracks were also seen in front of the new hotel's construction site.
- The Akmaz picnic area still **occupies the entire nesting beach**.



Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 9: Regulate maritime traffic during the nesting/hatching season

- Fishing boats and speed boats were seen in all parts of the SPA, *even the pristine section*
- Maritime traffic during the entire sea turtle nesting/hatching season is regulated by a number of laws, and are subjected to fines, but the *level of control and enforcement is inadequate.*
- Open water borders were marked with floating ropes in all sections.



Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 10: Set up long-term research and conservation programs conducted by a permanent team recruited on a long-term perspective.

- *Monitoring of the SPA was assigned to EKAD this year, by a last-minute decision of the Ministry, and EKAD sent **a team of four, which is definitely inadequate for the entire SPA**. The pristine section of Yanıklar was **not properly monitored**.*

Rec. pt. 11: Prohibit camping and bonfires and set appropriate time limits for the operation of beach bars at night during the nesting and hatching season

- ***Bonfire remains** were observed in Yanıklar, in the pristine section.*
- ***Sporadic tents** outside the designated camping areas or facilities were seen in the pristine section and Akgöl, at the part where there used to be pavilions.*



Camping and bonfire traces at Yanıklar pristine section

Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 12: Take measures to clean the beach and empty appropriately located bins on a daily basis, and ensure sewage is not discharged into the sea.

- Beach *litter was problematic in the entire SPA*. Çalış A and B had litter left behind by visitors. Ungulate droppings, litter and bonfire remains were frequently encountered along Yanıklar. Akgöl also had beach litter due to visitor use.
- Drainage channels reaching the sea remain a *serious sources of pollution*, and the construction site of the new hotel in Yanıklar had a pipe draining directly into the channel bordering the area. *Mucilage* was observed on the sea surface.

Rec. pt. 13: Set up adequate regulations and enforcement for the measures above, including regular day and night controls along the entire coast.

- *No controls and/or enforcement of regulations* were observed during our survey.



Çalış B. Litter on beach.



Yanıklar. Litter everywhere



Mucilage on the sea surface

Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 14: Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated to the control and management of the beaches.

➤ The Ministry assigned a team of four for the fieldwork, including night shifts, *which is inadequate for the entire SPA*

Rec. pt. 15: Improve information to local community and tourists about sea turtle nesting and sustainable use of the beach.

- An information kiosk has been placed on the promenade area but it was closed around 17:30 in the afternoon. The information kiosk next to the Municipality's facility in Akgöl was abandoned and used as a beverage storage space instead. No businesses seemed to support or get involved in the conservation efforts
- The number of signs in the SPA *increased substantially*, with new information/warning boards bearing the Ministry's name frequently placed in most sections, even though some had fallen on the ground.



Information kiosks in Çalış A and Akgöl. The latter now used as a storage area for the beverages sold at the Ministry's facility.

New information signs

Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 16: Continue to protect all nests with cages, until the different conditions obtained through the other measures above will allow again a more natural process.

- *Only two prism cages were seen in Çalış and none in any other sections –including the hot spot in Akgöl.*
- *In Yanıklar, nests in front of the hotels were protected with prism cages. Liberty Group hotel had its own wooden prism cages and info/warning signs. Nests in the pristine section were properly caged against predation.*



Liberty Group hotel had its own wooden prism cages and info/warning signs



Yanıklar. Nests properly caged against predation with subsurface grills.

Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Summary findings: Partial implementation fails the purpose!

- Habitat **destruction due to development construction** on and behind the nesting beaches, continues. New developments were observed in 2024.
- **Serious problems remain**, imposing serious threats to the turtles and their habitat, necessitating immediate actions.
- **Nine years** since the adoption of Recommendation No. 183 (2015), the implementation of the measures either have been partially or have not materialized. **The destructive development occurring over the past years in complete disregard of the Bern Convention's Recommendation has severely affected the sea turtles and their habitat.** The few improvements for some recommendations cannot reverse the damage. Actions must be taken immediately to fully implement the recommended measures.

Majority of measures under Recommendations 182 & 183 (2015) **NOT** implemented

We call upon the Standing Committee to:

- Keep the case file **open** for further monitoring.
- Request Turkish authorities to:
 - Urgently fully implement Recommendations No. 182 & 183 (2015) through a comprehensive and updated action plan.
 - In relation to Fethiye, provide an official map of the beach and adjacent land area that are under dispute, and of the areas that have been permitted for development. As per Measure 1 of the Recommendation, declare a building moratorium to prevent any further development (hotels, jetties, etc.) on or directly behind the nesting beaches and correct the zoning errors.
 - Provide the necessary resources for the effective protection of the beach
 - In relation to Patara, ensure that the entire nesting beach (North and South sections), the nearshore areas and the entire sand dune areas are appropriately zoned and protected against any further development.
 - Address the concerns raised in MEDASSET's complaint regarding the Patara now largely completed summer house construction project, its scale, the associated impacts, the lack of an EIA and of a carrying capacity study. Provide detailed information on the additional houses constructed outside the summer house construction project.



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**Thank You
for your attention**

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