



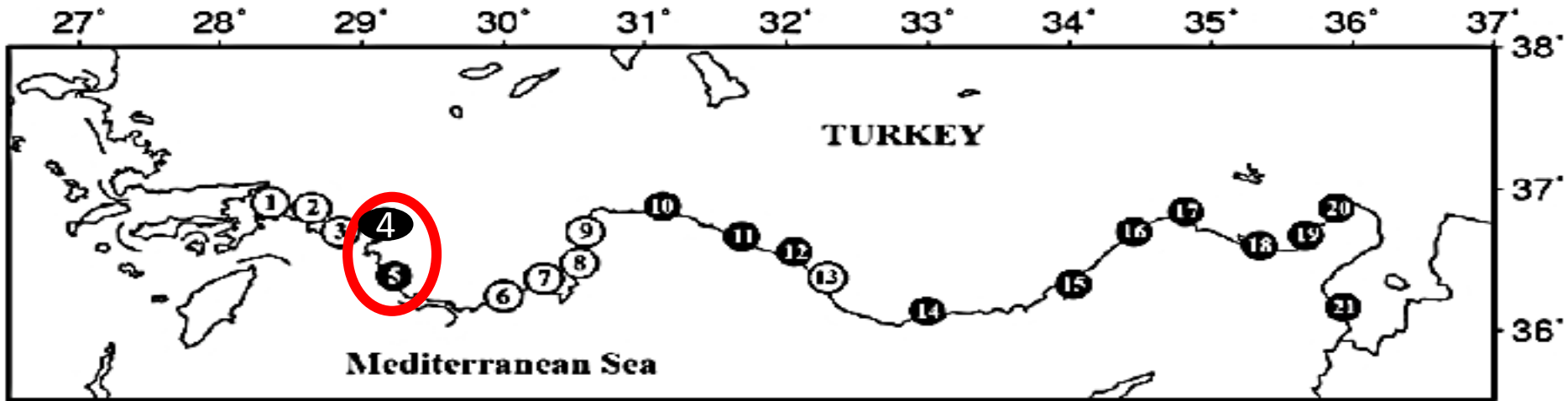
**MEDASSET**  
Mediterranean Association  
to Save the Sea Turtles

## Agenda Item 6.1: Files opened

# Turkey: Degradation of nesting beaches in Fethiye & Patara Specially Protected Areas

**43<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention**  
27 NOVEMBER – 1 DECEMBER 2023

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

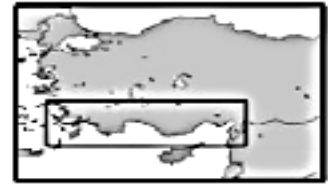


- 1- EKİNCİK
- 2- DALYAN
- 3- DALAMAN
- 4- FETHİYE**
- 5- PATARA
- 6- KALE

- 7- KUMLUCA
- 8- ÇIRALI
- 9- TEKİROVA
- 10- BELEK
- 11- KIZILOT
- 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 2023, we observed certain improvements; however, the main unresolved conservation problems that are negatively affecting the nesting beaches remain. As a result, additional measures must be taken to provide the Patara nesting beach the appropriate protection and management.*
- *Access to the 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 as can be seen in the pictures below.*
- *The SPA borders have still to be confirmed and no final maps are available online. It is unclear if the entire nesting beach (North and South section), the nearshore marine areas and the entire sand dune areas are appropriately zoned and protected against any further development.*



# 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 permanent structures on the southern end of Patara Main Beach and the Green Park *have not been removed*.
- *There is alarming coastal erosion* due to the disturbed dune statics caused by *sand removal and no restoration*.
- 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*.



Coastal erosion



Sunbeds in the nesting zone at night



Private umbrellas inserted everywhere

# 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* was reduced. In the North Beach, at the camping site on the Letoon Beach side there were fewer lights. There were no lights on Özden Beach, from visitors or the facilities of Green Park, other than one bonfire.
- *Rod and net fishing was observed* near and at the mouth of Eşen River. Net fishing was also observed at Özden Beach, near Özden.
- We observed tents near Çayağzı Beach. The *camping site* at the other side of Eşen River (on Letoon Beach) *continues to be a problem*.



Bonfire on the beach



Fishing with nets



Setting up tents

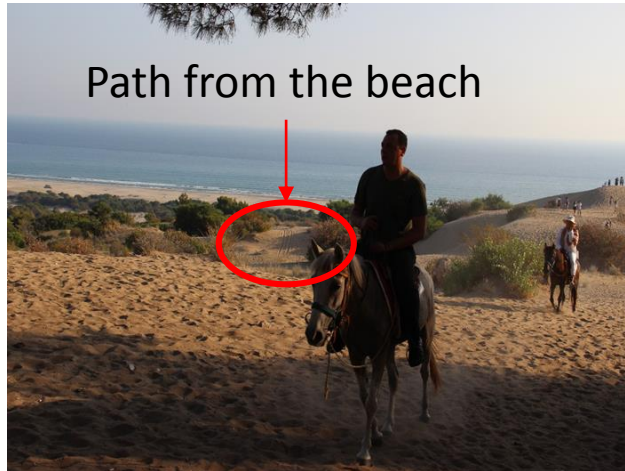
# Patara Recommendation No. 182

**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**

- *Horse tracks and droppings were observed in front of the dunes and towards Çayağzı. Several visitors on rented horses were seen climbing up the dunes, following the path from the beach.*
- *4x4 tracks were observed around the dunes, and the beach coming from multiple entrance points.*
- *Prof. Eyüp Başkale from Pamukkale University, who is leading the monitoring project at the SPA this year, recently highlighted the problem of ATV entrance to the beach and called the authorities to act to prevent it.*



# Patara Recommendation No. 182

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

- *There is no management on Letoon Beach, where visitors are able to enter the beach from several points. The entrance point near Green Park at the northern end of Özden River was fitted with a tall sliding -and chained- barrier although no control personnel was seen.*
- *Gendarmerie was seen on Patara Main Beach and patrolling the top of dunes at night. **We encountered no one patrolling the beaches at night**, only visitors and fishermen at the outlets of Eşen and Özden rivers.*





# 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 still continues in a few locations, although it seems to be largely finished.*
- *No newly started constructions were seen. Satellite images of the same location reveal the scale of the development in the region over the course of 10 years*



# Patara Recommendation No. 182

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

- *The South Beach, and the Main Beach in particular, had almost no litter. The North Beach was more littered than the South.*

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

- *No predated nests were seen on the South Beach. In the North Beach, **almost all of the nests were predated by crabs and/or foxes.** Two-day-old sea turtle tracks in this section were not marked, suggesting **there is no daily monitoring.***



*Collecting litter on the beach and emptying garbage bins before sunset*



*Predated unprotected nest by a fox*



*Tracks leading to unmarked nest*

# 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;**

- Nests near the facility on *Patara Main Beach on the South section were protected* with prism cages bearing signs. However *the North Beach entirely lacked nest marks, nest sticks, and cages* –except for the single cage with no protective grill seen in Özden Beach. Tracks were not marked and *all the nests were predated*.

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

- There are clear indications that *the South Beach is monitored daily, in contrast to the North Beach*.
- We strongly suggest that the research team monitoring the SPA is granted sufficient funds and manpower for monitoring both sections as effectively, while also keeping personnel at the information kiosk all day.



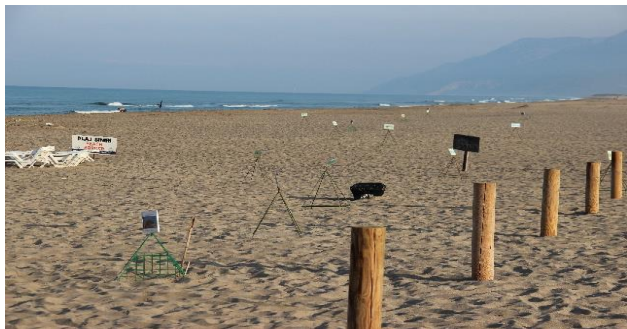
# Patara Recommendation No. 182

**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 are installed on the South beach. However the topography and characteristics of the nesting beach **was not taken under account**. On some sections of the beach the entire nesting zone is stretching well beyond the posts. No wooden posts are erected on the North beach.*
- *Information signs, including beach rules, were present at the facility entrance of Patara Main Beach, at the entrance point at Çayağzı Beach and next to the Green Park facility. No other signs were observed on the SPA.*

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

- *Based on our assessment, the local community is **not involved** in the conservation and management studies of the protected nesting area in any way.*



Wooden posts marking nesting section - South beach.



North beach. No wooden posts along the entire area.

# Patara Recommendation No. 182

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

- It is of high priority for authorities to take further action and resolve the remaining unresolved conservation and management problems on the North and South Sections with no delay.
- To date, Recommendation No. 182 (2015) is only **partially implemented**. 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).

# Fethiye – Habitat destruction due to rampant development!



# 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.**

*Construction continues and new permanent structures are built*

- *The promenade area in Çalış A, renovated in 2021-2022 was crowded and lively both during the day and at night.*
- *Two new major permanent structures were seen in Çalış B, a mesh barrier filled with large stones lining the back of the beach and a large facility on the beach, which will likely become a **cafeteria**.*
- *In Yanıklar, a **third hotel** is being constructed inside the large enclosed area observed behind Deniz İncisi in 2022. With this new hotel construction, **the wetland that was once present at this section is now entirely destroyed.***



**New hotel. Complete wetland 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.**

*Construction continues and new permanent structures are built*

- *The entire area is fitted with horizontal and vertical walkways. One of the vertical walkways extends right into the sea, connecting to a scaffold-like structure.*
- *A **new lifeguard tower** was also installed on the beach. Towards the northern border of Çalış B, some facilities began building **new tiny houses** within their premises, with more being built at the back of the beach in enclosed*





# Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

Rec. pt. 2: Remove any structure from sand zones.

Rec. pt. 5: Map the whole Fethiye coast using long-term data, maps and imagery to identify the past, current and potential most suitable zones for sea turtle nesting, and set a maximum percentage limit of sandy tracts where touristic structures are allowed on the nesting beach

- Wooden posts marking nesting zone are placed *incorrectly* and nesting takes place behind the posts. Sensitive nesting ground is *excluded* from the zoning.
- Cushions and AstroTurf carpets remain on the designated nesting zones. We observed AstroTurf carpets on the beach and water sports equipment placed close to the waterline at all times.



*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.

- Piles of sand mixed with pebbles were observed near Çalış Hill and at Akgöl Beach.

## 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

- Akgöl beach was **heavily used with personal beach equipment**, including umbrellas inserted into the sand. A total of 16 prism cages were observed in the core nesting area but could not be checked due to the crowd. No regulation or enforcement of rules.



*Akgöl beach full of visitors with personal beach equipment and vehicles parked close to nests!*



*Sand extraction at Çalış B*

# Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

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

*Improvements in certain areas were observed however more needs to be done:*

- *The majority of facilities in Çalış B were fitted with orange lights, but the lights of some were very close to the sea, particularly the orange hanging lights of Surf Beach. Lights on top of the dressing cabinets near the new facility were **brightly illuminating** the surrounding sections. **Wedding events** in five different locations (Bahar, Ays, Petunya, Zentara and Surf Cafe) **caused major light pollution** on the beach.*
- *In Yanıklar, Karataş Beach was making light shows in blue and green at nights, **constantly illuminating the entire SPA** with additional aerial light shows*



Çalış A. Night time visitors freely using the beach with lights.



Çalış B. Terrace Café's strong lights at night.



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**

- *Permanent barriers that prevent vehicle access to the beach have increased in number. However vehicles still enter the beach in many sensitive areas.*
- *The northernmost part of Çalış B, is used a caravan area, where people park their vehicles next to the water line and have picnics and barbecues on the beach.*
- *Vehicle tracks were observed in the pristine section of Yanıklar, especially around the uncontrolled vehicle entrance point in mid-section, where a 4x4 was also seen passing by. Many other violations were recorded.*



Çalış B, caravan area



A 4x4 next to a nest cage



Cars parked on Yanıklar beach

# Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

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

- *Fishing boats, speed boats and cruise yachts were seen at various sections in the SPA. Their traffic during the entire sea turtle nesting/hatching season is regulated by a number of laws, but enforcement remains uncertain. Open water borders were marked with floating ropes in all sections.*
- *There was considerable maritime traffic by the small island across the pristine section in Yanıklar, where over 20 touristic boats were seen near the shore.*



# 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.**

➤ *The SPA is still protected on a seasonal basis, by DEKAMER almost every year. However, the efficacy of the monitoring team seems questionable, in terms of numbers and the quality of work. The pristine section of Yanıklar was monitored irregularly instead of a daily basis, as **no proper markings or protective cages were seen**, and all observed **nests were predated**. **In comparison to 2022, the monitoring efforts this year looked very poor.***

➤ **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**

➤ *Campers were seen in all sections, with either tents or caravans. Barbecue fires and bonfires were directly observed in several sections at night. Campers in Yonca Lodge were having barbecue right by the sea at night.*



Camping and bonfire at Yanıklar pristine section



Free camping at Çalış B

# 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.**

- Fethiye SPA in general was *more polluted than it was in 2022*. Bins in Çalış B were *overfilled with garbage*, most of them spilling on the roads. The beach was full of litter. Public usage areas in Yanıklar were also quite littered.
- The main channel near Çalış Hill continues to be a concern, as it collects the draining water from all greenhouses and usage water from the houses around it.

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

- Zabita personnel were seen at the entrance of the promenade area, but they took no action to enforce rules or remove people from the beach at night. No night control was observed in Çalış A or B.



Çalış B. Litter on beach.



Yanıklar. Polluted drainage channel



Zabita officers, chatting instead of enforcing night time regulations in the section

# Fethiye Recommendation No. 183

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

- No information exists on financial and/or human resources. However the lack of controls lead to believe that resources are *not adequate*.

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

- People seem aware of the region's importance as a sea turtle nesting site, but the survey in 2023 *failed to observe any form of community involvement or a proper use of the beach by the public*. The sea turtle observatory next to the Municipality's facility in Akgöl was closed.
- The number of signs in the SPA did not change in 2023, with the addition of just one seemingly incomplete new sign behind the newly built mesh barrier in Çalış B



Çalış B - New incomplete sign.



# 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.**

- *In comparison to 2022, the protection efforts this year looked very poor. A single volunteer was seen patrolling the beach in Çalış early in the morning, alone.*
- *Nests in Çalış A, Çalış B, and in Akgöl were protected with prism cages, however **all of the nests that could be identified in the pristine section of Yanıklar were fully predated.** The overall number of nests in the pristine section was considerably lower this year.*



Yanıklar – all nests predated.



Çalış B nest cage next to a walkway



Çalış B nest cage

# 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 2023.
- **Serious problems remain**, imposing serious threats to the turtles and their habitat, necessitating immediate actions.
- **Eight years** since the adoption of Recommendation No. 183 (2015), and Fethiye nesting beaches still **require further protection efforts** and the implementation of the measures under Recommendation No. 183. Partial implementation of the measures and the **destructive development** that was allowed during past years in **complete disregard of the Bern Convention's Recommendation is of great concern.**



# 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.
  - **Produce SPA management plans for both sites that include zoning and that cover both the land and marine areas, including clear descriptions of permitted land uses and activities.** The current law (Circular) provides general guidelines, but a management plan for each SPA is necessary to specify and localise these regulations.
  - 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 (guards, vehicle barriers etc.)
  - In relation to Patara, **confirm Patara SPA's zoning**, publicize the maps and 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.



**MEDASSET**  
Mediterranean Association  
to Save the Sea Turtles

**Thank You  
for your attention**

**MEDASSET**  
**Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles**  
**medasset@medasset.org**  
**www.medasset.org**

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