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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

40th meeting
Strasbourg, 30 November - 4 December 2020

Specific Sites - Files open

**Follow-up of Recommendations Nos. 182 and 183
(2015) on Presumed degradation of nesting beaches
in Fethiye and Patara SPAs
(Turkey)**

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by
the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Turkey*

- October 2020 –

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

27.10.2020

Government Report on Follow-up of Recommendations Nos. 182 and 183 (2015) on Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in Fethiye and Patara SPAs (Turkey)

Background Information:

Two different complaints, one about the degradation of the habitats of sea turtle nesting beaches in Fethiye and one about that in Patara were submitted to the Secretariat in 2012 and 2013 by an NGO. 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 the on-the-spot appraisal. In the following years, the Standing Committee decided to keep the case file 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 from that on.

In April 2020, the Bureau invited the national authorities to provide a report to the second Bureau meeting that will be held in September. 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 Turkey, sea turtle conservation and monitoring studies have been continuing for almost 40 years. Nowadays, these studies are organized by two separate Ministries. The reason for that is because areas with different protection statuses are under the management of different Ministries. In early years, monitoring of the beaches was only carried out on 17 nesting beaches that were 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 which makes a total of 21 nesting beaches in Turkey (bold ones were included over the last few years). These beaches from west to east are; Ekincik, Dalyan, Dalaman-Sarıgerme, 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 managed by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, General Directorate of Conservation of Natural Assets, monitored on a daily basis by this institution and all nests are protected and the necessary scientific information were collected by the research teams and volunteers. The

number of nests and non-nesting emergences by the turtles, their biological information such as incubation duration, hatching success and predation rates are recorded. Both the results of monitoring studies conducted on SPAs and also those conducted on other 16 sites revealed that sea turtle population is increasing at a steady rate. As a result of this conservation activities, Mediterranean population of *Caretta caretta* sea turtles was reevaluated by IUCN in 2015 and due to the increasing population trend, the redlist status of *Caretta caretta*s was lowered from EN (Endangered) to LC (Least concern).

With the global COVID-19 pandemi, touristic activity has fallen sharply in 2020. This created an advantageous condition in the conservation activities. With the precautions taken in nesting beaches, it is expected that both the nest numbers and the hatchlings will be higher than those of any other year.

Current Situation on Fethiye and Patara Beaches – Monitoring and Conservation

Marine turtle conservation and monitoring studies on Patara and Fethiye-Göcek Special Protection Areas were started in May, 2020. Along with the monitoring and conservation studies, informative and awareness raising studies by scientists were also conducted during the nesting period

To protect the nests against predation, caging of the nests with surface and subsurface cages continued this year. To prevent human activities during the night on beaches, patrolling teams worked regularly. The teams that conduct the nest studies, are giving information about sea turtle monitoring and conservation studies to the domestic and foreign visitors who visit the site during the day.

Conservation Activities

1-Sea Turtle Satellite Monitoring

Marine turtles are organisms that change territories among their foraging, wintering and nesting sites. That's why it is not enough only to protect their nesting sites, but also to detect their feeding and wintering sites is important for the protection of marine life. It is very important to know their stop-by sites or the places where they spend their time except for nesting for the protection of those habitats.

For this reason, 8 adult individuals were tagged in 2020 to monitor them. (Figure -1)



(Figure-1)

2-Education and Awareness Raising

Awareness raising studies were done by using affiches, brochures, stickers, signposts as well as informative meetings to touristic enterprise employees, daily visitors, local managers and local people. Volunteers were trained about the protection studies, working principles and the concept of the protection project were given by seminars and meetings. (Figure-2)



(Figure-2)



(Figure-2)



3-Caging Studies

All the nests are caged against predators. Caging studies were conducted during night under red light, as soon as the nest is detected. This way, the success of protection studies were increased. (Figure -3). Cages used for this purpose are 1x1 m² cages. The corners of the cages are supported by pegging posts on them. They are also supported by putting 15 cm depth side cages next to them. (Figure-4). If the nests are in a place with intense human activity, then they are also supported by prism-shaped above-ground cages. (Figure -5)



(Figure -3)

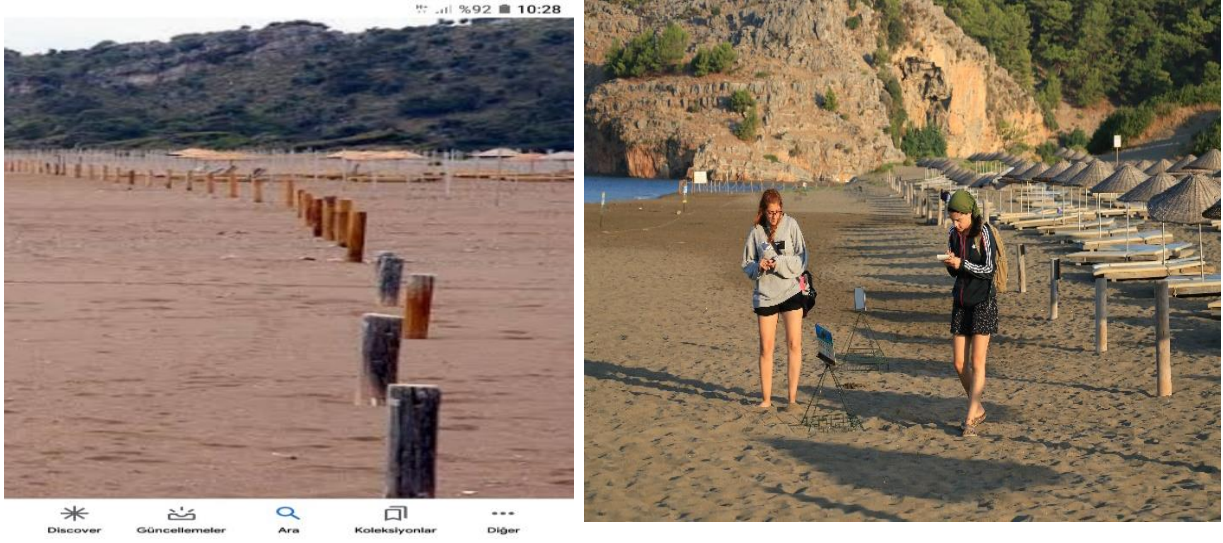


(Figure -4)

(Figure-5)

4-Making barriers to protect the sea turtle nesting zone on the beaches

Our beaches are among the most important sea turtle nesting sites. However, these areas are also under great tourism pressure. That's why, we have started a new project to sign the nesting zones. In this project, wooden poles are placed on the beach as they are shown in Figure-6 and also signposts are placed to prevent illegal activities on the beaches. That's how we prevented some of the illegal activities of the hotels, like moving the sand on the beaches, sand sieving, putting umbrellas or sunbeds on the beach etc. This project was started on 5 pilot areas, including Fethiye-Göcek and Patara beaches. Our aim with this project is to totally prevent illegal usage of the beaches. (Figure -6)



(Figure -6)

5-Underwater research:

One of the effects of global warming and climate change is on the sex determination of sea turtles. Sea turtles' sexes depends on the temperature of the nest during the embryonic development. In the last decade, there is an inclination towards females, as the temperatures over 27° C cause the nestlings to be female. In this regard, underwater research is conducted to determine the population dynamics of the whole sea turtle population in Turkey. (Figure -7)



(Figure -7)

6- Limiting the human activities on the beaches

Human activities are not allowed between 8:00 pm – 8:00 am, especially on Fethiye-Göcek and Patara SPAs. All the beach furniture is gathered on a site for the night to give room for the sea turtles. (Figure -8)



(Figure -8)

7-Cleaning of the Beaches and Restricting Illumination

Marine turtle nesting beaches start to be cleaned with the beginning of nesting season, that is, as of May, and have been cleaned regularly during the season. Besides, to prevent light pollution, changing of artificial light sources to light safe curtains are still being continued. (Figure -9)



(Figure -9)

8- Treatment of Injured Sea Turtles

Injured sea turtles are cured and treated in Sea Turtle Research, Rescue and Rehabilitation Center (DEKAMER) in Dalyan. Sea turtles which were found dead are also recorded, the reason of death and special information is also recorded. (Figure -10)



(Figure -10)

9- Number of young sea turtles reaching to the sea.

In 2020 nesting season, which took about five months, the number of sea turtles reaching to the sea increased almost 20-25% comparing with the previous years.

Number of hatchlings reaching to the sea:

Patara SPA		Fethiye-Göcek SPA	
2017	11605	2017	4593
2018	17559	2018	6802
2019	17323	2019	6195
2020	21850	2020	7120



- August 2020 –

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY**

12.08.2020

Government Report on Follow-up of Recommendations Nos. 182 and 183 (2015) on Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in Fethiye and Patara SPAs (Turkey)

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and the necessary scientific information were collected by the research teams and volunteers. The number of nests and non-nesting emergences by the turtles, their biological information such as incubation duration, hatching success and predation rates are recorded. Both the results of monitoring studies conducted on SPAs and also those conducted on other 16 sites revealed that sea turtle population is increasing at a steady rate. As a result of this conservation activities, Mediterranean population of *Caretta caretta* sea turtles was reevaluated by IUCN in 2015 and due to the increasing population trend, the redlist status of *Caretta caretta*s was lowered from EN (Endangered) to LC (Least concern).

Once around 100-200 nests, the number of nests on Dalyan Iztuzu Beach, which is inside Koycegiz – Dalyan SPA has risen to 660 in 2020. The number of nests keep increasing as the monitoring studies are continuing. In 2019 nesting period, there were 99 and 224 nests on Fethiye Gocek and Patara SPAs respectively, which resulted in the emergence of more than 1500 hatchlings in Fethiye and 1660 hatchlings in Patara. This number is around 660 nests on Iztuzu Beach, but the highest number is on Belek Beach, with around 2000 nests yearly.

With the global COVID-19 pandemi, touristic activity has fallen sharply in 2020. This created an advantageous condition in the conservation activities. With the precautions taken in nesting beaches, it is expected that both the nest numbers and the hatchlings will be higher than those of any other year.

Current Situation on Fethiye and Patara Beaches

With the current monitoring projects conducted;

- All the nests are caged by surface and underground cages.
- Human activities on the beaches are restricted considerably after 8:00 pm.
- Injured sea turtles are sent to Sea Turtle Research Rescue and Rehabilitation Center in Dalyan for medical help. If any dead sea turtles are found, they are recorded by the local branches of the ministries and the reason of death is also detected.
- Foraging sites of sea turtles in certain regions under the sea are also monitored in regular intervals by professional divers.
- By means of brochures, posters, stickers and informative meetings, personel from touristic enterprises, daily tourists and picnics, local administrations and local people are educated about the life cycle of sea turtles.

Besides, since sea turtles are migrating between their foraging, wintering and nesting grounds, it is not enough only to protect their nesting beaches. It is very important, in terms of conservation measures, to know where they are migrating, the extent of their non-breeding habitats, and when they use these habitats. For this reason, a new project has been launched to monitor these areas via satellite transmitter. One sea turtles was mounted with a transmitter on Iztuzu beach last year. The sea turtle, named Tubaa, was released from the beach and its migration routes are mapped with a lot of information like diving depth etc.

In 2020, this study will continue with the tagging of 8 other adult sea turtles, 3 from Patara, 2 from Belek, 2 from Göksu Delta and 1 from Iztuzu beach.

- February 2020 –

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

18.02.2020

GOVERNMENT REPORT ON FOLLOW-UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS NOS. 182 AND 183 (2015)
ON PRESUMED DEGRADATION OF NESTING BEACHES IN FETHIYE AND PATARA SPAS
(TURKEY)

Marine turtle conservation and monitoring studies which have been started to achieve the targets of Recommendations 182 and 183 will continue in 2020 nesting period. In this respect, the studies planned are divided into two categories as per each recommendation.

Recommendation No. 182 (2015) regarding PATARA:

- 1. Urgently ensure that Patara nesting beach receives appropriate legal protection, in line with its exceptional natural and ecological value;**

Patara nesting beach is a Special Environmental Protected Area, delineated by the decision of the Cabinet in 1990. Adequate financial and human resources are allocated each year for the control, management, protection and enforcement of regulations in Kaş (Patara beach) and its environments. A local office of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, General Directorate for of Natural Assets was established in 2017 in Kaş City (Patara) and 4 experienced staff was entrusted in the local office.

- 2. Urgently set up, enforce and monitor the implementation of strict regulations which: (i) prohibit further development on the beach (including buildings, structures, roads), (ii) regulate the extent and use of furniture on the beach (iii) prohibit access of vehicles by placing barriers at the beach's entrances (iv) prohibits illumination of the beach; (v) prohibits fishing in front of the beach during the nesting and hatching periods;**

Patara beach sea turtle monitoring and conservation project is funded by the Ministry. The monitoring and conservation studies are commenced by the 1st of May and the team remains on the site until the end of September every year. This monitoring studies have been executed incessantly in the last 20 years. In addition, monitoring team and experts from the Kaş City directorate are keeping the beach under close monitoring between May and September. In this regard, any illegal operation eg. sand extraction, fishing with nets in front of the beach, camping on beach and riversides, horse riding and 4x4 or quad safaris on the nesting beach; will be deterred in cooperation and colloboration by the staff of Ministry and Kaş Municipality. Vehicle access was restricted and/or prohibited during the breeding season. Beach furniture is only allowed on particular areas during the day. Beach furniture is collected by the tourism facilities during the night. Development of permanent structures is not allowed on the nesting zone of the beach. Seasonal prefabricated structures are built behind the nesting zone. Kaş and Seydikemer municipalities are the main responsible bodies for cleaning the beaches. Cleaning of the beaches is controlled by the staff of Ministry and Municipality.

- 3. Continue to prevent uncontrolled human settlement behind the beach, particularly where these may result in making the beaches unsuitable for turtle nesting; carry out –as already recommended -the necessary environmental impact assessments (EIAs) where these projects exist or are planned; halt the realisation of those projects until the EIAs have been made;**

Human settlement area, about 2 km far away from the beach, is within the boundaries of village settlement area. The Ministry approved the 1/5000 and 1/1000 Implementation Plans that were prepared by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and endorsed by the Antalya Culture and Natural Heritage Protection Regional Council and with the condition that protection and use balance to be considered and in line with the 1/25000 scale Patara Environmental Master plan that was approved in 1991. The large scale holiday house construction project area is within Gelemiş settlement border and in consistent with 1/1000 scale Implementation Plan. Of all plans approved previously were reduced approximately 75% - from 106.000 m2 to 28.000 m2 and holiday houses construction was confined according to this. There is no new settlement buildings other than given in this plan.

- 4. Address the problem of predation, including through population control's programmes;**

Sea turtle nests are located and all the nests that are detected are protected by grid cages against predation (crab and fox)

- 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 and from beach furniture;**

The nests detected are also protected by prism cages for informing visitors to be cautious on the beach. The nests under high predation pressure are transported in the appropriate zones. As much as possible, nests are carried to appropriate places where human densities are lower or does not exist. The rest are protected by surface cages and warning plates.

- 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 and protect all nests if necessary;**

Sea turtle research and monitoring project has been incessantly carried out on Patara nesting beach by the collaboration of universities and the Ministry since 1990. It is being monitored by a professional permanent research team during the nesting season.

- 7. Improve information to and awareness of tourists about sea turtle nesting and on correct behaviour for the sustainable use of the beach;**

Permanent and voluntary staff is engaged in information activities on the beach. They are conducting informative activities twice a week and at certain hours during the breeding season. Informative signboards are placed at the entrance and appropriate locations on the beach. They are renewed every year.

- 8. 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;**

The local community, as well as the visitors are informed by the staff of Ministry and research team during the months May, June, July and August.

- 9. Keep the Standing Committee annually informed about the implementation of this Recommendation.**

Annual reports are presented to the Standing Committee every year.

Recommendation No. 183 (2015) regarding FETHİYE:

- 1. Stop any further development of permanent structures (buildings, roads, shipyard, etc.) along the entire coast of the nesting site complex, in order not to reduce further the nesting habitat;**

Development of permanent structures is not allowed on the nesting zone of the beach. Seasonal prefabricated structures are built behind the nesting zone. The visitors of the beach and seasonal enterprises will be informed by the conservation team during the months May, June and July.

- 2. Remove any structure (wooden paths, wooden pavilions, bars, platforms, showers, etc.) from sand zones in areas with relatively narrow beach width, especially in the southern part;**

The wooden structures blocking the passage of sea turtles on the beach were removed.

- 3. Stop sand extraction and ensure the application of deterrent penalties for these illegal activities;**

Sand extraction is forbidden by the law and illegal sand extraction is subject to the fine.

- 4. Remove planted vegetation, acacia in particular, with a view to restore the remaining sandy beach;**

Plantation areas will be determined by the end of July. Actions decided will be declared during the meeting in September.

- 5. Map the whole Fethiye coast to identify the current and potential most suitable zones for sea turtle nesting, and set a maximum percentage limit of sandy tracts where to allow touristic structures on the beach and define (A) coastal tracts less suitable for turtle nesting, where beach furniture is allowed and (B) coastal tracts adequate for turtle nesting, where beach furniture and access at night are not allowed;**

The detailed map of the nesting zone including 2020 nest data will be prepared by the second week of August.

6. Prohibit the use of beach furniture and other anthropogenic material on Akgöl beach, and carry-out the necessary controls to check enforcement;

Beach furniture is only allowed on particular areas during the day time. Beach furniture are collected by the tourism facility areas during the night.

7. Reduce light pollution to a minimum along the whole coast: (i) remove all lights not strictly necessary, (ii) reduce the number of lights allowed for each business company, (iii) all lights considered as strictly necessary should be reduced in power and (iv) be red or orange-yellow, (v) all lights should be shaded in the direction of the beach. Further reduce lights after a certain time in the night, for not less than 50% of the dark time.

Screening and/or changing lights to low pressure sodium lamps will be offered to the cafes and restaurants during 2020 season. Implementation of this conservation measure will be achieved during spring 2021.

8. Build permanent barriers on the roads to prevent vehicles to access the beach;

Permanent barriers were built, and vehicle access is restricted and/or prohibited during the breeding season.

9. Regulate maritime traffic during nesting/hatching season, by prohibiting any motorised traffic near the coast, and by foreseeing corridors from the beach to open waters;

Maritime traffic will be monitored during June and July. A maritime traffic map and a plan will be prepared by the end of August.

10. Set up long-term research and conservation programs conducted by a same team recruited on a long-term perspective. This team should have adequate manpower to monitor the entire beach and protect all nests if necessary. The team should also assess across the years and with the same comparable methods: (i) the disorienting effects of photo-pollution on hatchlings, (ii) disturbance of nesting females, and (iii) predation of nests (or attempts);

Sea turtle monitoring and conservation projects are funded by the Ministry and the project has been conducted by sea turtle researchers from universities. The monitoring and conservation studies start by the 1st of May each year and the team remains on the site until the end of September. Conservation and monitoring studies have been conducted continuously for the last 20 years.

11. Set up adequate regulations and enforcement for the measures above, including regular day and night controls along the entire coast;

12. Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated to both the controls and the management and monitoring of the beaches;

Fethiye Beaches are being monitored by a team from Sea Turtle Research, Rescue and Rehabilitation Center (DEKAMER) during the nesting season. The Coast Guard is also helping protecting the bays around Fethiye. In addition, local branches of the Ministry Forestry and Water Affairs, The Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and DEKAMER extend the

monitoring area towards Göcek. Any illegal operation (eg. sand extraction) or stranded sea turtle is reported by local networks to the related authority.

13. Improve information to tourists about sea turtle nesting and sustainable use of the beach. This should include awareness campaigns to the hosts of the big resorts, in collaboration with the owners and managers;

Public awareness activities have been continuing in the area by the research team with our ministry's support during the monitoring and conservation project. Research team started "Turtle Friendly Enterprise" certification program in Fethiye in 2016. These studies will be developed, and education programs will be carried out between June and September for the next four years by Research team in Fethiye. The program includes training programs at hotels, cafes and bars, beach business and in the schools.

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

All turtle nests are protected with cages during the implementation of monitoring and conservation projects.

15. Keep the Standing annually informed about the implementation of this Recommendation.

The Standing Committee is regularly informed about the implementation.