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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

 $42^{nd} \ meeting \\ Strasbourg, 28 \ November - 2 \ December \ 2022$

Follow-up of Closed file No. 2011/4: Threat to the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) in Turkey

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

Document prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Turkey

REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

18.10.2022

GOVERNMENT REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2022

Follow-up of the Closed File No. 2011/4: Threat to the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*) in Türkiye

Background:

The Yeşilovacık Harbor Project, consisting of building a filling area and construction of a port, was carried out by Yeşilovacık Harbor Enterprises Inc. The Environmental Impact Assessment of this construction was completed in 2008 and the construction of the port was completed in 2015. This complaint was about the threat that it poses on the habitats of Mediterranean Monk Seal. However, all the construction process was completed based on an "ecosystem evaluation report" prepared by three academicians from Ankara University as a part of Environmental Impact Assessment. The area was monitored for 5 years by the university staff and then the monitoring work was transferred to the company under the control of the ministry. It has been controlled by Mersin local branch of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry since 2019.

Since the follow-up file will be brought to the agenda at the 42nd Standing Committee meeting to be held this year, a report containing the current situation is requested by the Secretariat for consideration at the Bureau meeting to be held in September 2022. The report, which includes the latest developments on the subject, information on the Mediterranean monk seal population in the region, the effects of port activities on the monk seal population, and the future action plan activities, has been prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks.

Project Monitoring Site:

Yeşilovacık Port and Filling Area Facility is located right next to the fisherman's shelter within the borders of Mersin Province, Silifke District, Yeşilovacık Neighborhood (Appendix 1).

The anchorage area of the ships coming to Yeşilovacık Port is the sea area formed by the following coordinates.

- 1) 36° 10' 36" N 033° 37' 30" E
- 2) 36° 09' 00" N 033° 37' 30" E
- 3) 36° 09' 00" N 033° 36' 00" E
- 4) 36° 10′ 00″ N 033° 36′ 00″ E

The pick-up and drop-off for harbour pilots is done at the following coordinates.

- 1) 36° 18′ 10" N 033° 53′ 00" E
- 2) 36° 10' 00" N 033° 38' 00" E

With the advanced technology "Waste Acceptance Facility" located in Yeşilovacık Port, the wastes of incoming ships are taken and their potential to create sea pollution is eliminated. It is ensured that these activities are carried out under the control of the Environmental Engineer and Fisheries Engineer Mediterranean Monk Seal Monitoring Personnel who are employed within the scope of monitoring activities at the port. In order to prevent pollution, the acceptance of highly polluting wastes such as bilge water, waste oil, sewage and garbage is carried out in this facility.

Monitoring is carried out in 6 different locations in the vicinity of the port, namely OP-1, OP-2, OP-3, OP-4, OP-5 and OP-6. The Mediterranean monk seal cave, called Balıklı, is located in the OP-2 location. "Balıklı Cave", which is a breeding site for *Monachus monachus*, is located about approximately 600 m away from the piled jetty system at the tip of the harbor.

In recent years, the monitoring studies used to be done by the academicians from the Ankara University. In the beginning of 2019, this implementation has been changed. The monitoring studies are done by an agriculture engineer who is employed by the harbor company now. The harbor company was obliged to carry out monitoring work based on the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. According to the commitment, the Mediterranean Monk Seal population is monitored by the company.

The area is monitored from 6 different observation points and the observed monk seal individuals are recorded. Among these, the object of this study, "Balıklı Cave", or Observation Point 2 as it stands, is being monitored by cameras 7/24. Two cameras installed at the edge of the port, which are capable of rotating 360° are still used to monitor monk seal activities around the port. All the images from 6 observation points are collected in regular intervals and presence of monk seals are detected from these images. After the last report which was

presented to the Standing Committee in 2020, the monk seal sightings was updated and could be found in Appendix 2 of this report. As can be seen, there is good number of new observations which shows that monk seals are using the area.

Since the construction phase, monitoring studies have been carried out in the Yeşilovacık Port and Filling Area Facility and their immediate surroundings. During the construction of the scaffold pile system 8 years ago, 1 young individual was found dead, the cause of which was not clear. The pup has cachexia (It is the regression of the body with symptoms like excessive weight loss, decrease in subcutaneous adipose tissue, decrease in muscle mass and even shrinkage of internal organs, changes in the skin, hair loss, etc. The reasons may include conditions such as long-term hunger, malnutrition) and it was concluded that it could not be fed due to the noise generated by the construction. However, with the completion of the construction process, indicator species in marine biodiversity, even pelagic fish began to be seen under the port.

In the process of monitoring; female, male and juvenile Mediterranean monk seal individuals were encountered. However; due to the distance of the images and the fact that they were recorded at night, individual discrimination was not possible every time and the population status could not be determined.

Besides, activities like observation of ships entering into and getting out of the port site, inspecting the illegal fishing activities, water quality analysis, inventory of marine fauna are still being carried out and are reported to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Inventory of marine species shows us that after completion of the construction of the port, the port site became an even better habitat, as it provided shelter for many invertebrate and fish species.

Implementations of Monk Seal Conservation Action Plan

In addition to the monitoring studies, some actions are taken within the scope of monk seal action plan prepared by the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks. These monitoring studies are carried out together with Middle East Technical University, Institute of Marine Sciences.

In order to determine ship routes within the scope of Mediterranean Monk Seal Species Action Plan; under the coordination of GDNCNP, route determination studies continue with Taşucu Port Authority, Mersin Port Authority and Erdemli METU-DBE Directorate. It is foreseen that the route determination works will be completed by the end of 2022.

Under the coordination of GDNPNC, Yeşilovacık Harbour Enterprises Inc. company produced promotional materials in order to introduce the Mediterranean monk seal to future generations, to raise awareness on this issue and to ensure a sustainable habitat management. Among these materials (App. 3), approximately 10 minutes of Mediterranean Monk Seal Promotional Video, 2000 brochures, 500 posters, 2000 stickers were produced and the materials were distributed to partner institutions and students in schools affiliated to the National Education Directorate.

In the school trainings organized in the coastal districts of Mersin, more than 1400 students were given information about the Mediterranean monk seal. Educational activities continue (App.4).

All the monitoring studies and the implementation of the action plan revealed that monk seal population has a stable trend around the region. However, there are always threats and pressures on the population, which we try to find solutions, these can be summarized as;

- At certain points of Yeşilovacık Bay, it is seen that amateur fishing activities are carried out in the form of nets, fishing rods, longlines, spreaders, harpoons, etc. Although it was thought that the gillnets might harm the immature monk seal individuals, especially in the early days, no harm has been found to any seal individuals in the monitoring done so far. Routine protection control activities are carried out by the Coast Guard Command in the relevant region.
- The people of the region and the fishermen were informed about not doing the sprinkle net fishing near the OP-2 location where Balıklı Cave is located.
- Industrial fishermen are prevented from entering the OP-2 point and its offshore as it is forbidden to fish for purse seine and trawl fishing in the prohibited area (OP-2) where Balıklı Cave is located.
- Considering that there could be environmental accidents, it is requested from MOST Denizcilik A.Ş. by Medcem Port firm, a subcontractor of the harbour company, to provide 24/7 emergency response service to the port coastal facility against marine accidents or industrial accidents, within the framework of the Law No. 5312 on the Principles of Emergency Response and Compensation for Damages in the Pollution of the Marine Environment with Petroleum and Other Harmful Substances,
- Field studies were carried out with technical and academic personnel of Mersin Port Authority, Taşucu Port Authority abd Erdemli METU Institute of Marine Sciences Directorate, regarding the determination of ship route areas in the vicinity of Akkum Party Cave, Akkuyu Beşparmak Cave and Yeşilovacık Harbour Balıklı

Cave within the scope of the Species Action Plan for the Mediterranean Monk Seal renewed for the years between 2022 and 2026. Route determination studies are continuing. Following the determination of the routes, the Coast Guard Commands will ensure that the ships do not deviate from the route.

- Since the port filling, pier and anchorage area is closed to fishing activities within the coordinates specified in the Ports regulation, published in the Official Gazette on September 24, 2019 by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, Mediterranean, monk seals forage by moving more comfortably in this region. Videos and photographs taken under the harbor pier and around the filling area support this.

Kindly submitted for the Committee's information.

Appendix 1: Google Eearth View of the Port Area and Observation Points Around (as previous report submitted to the Bureau)

Appendix 2: Monk seal sightings

Appendix 3: Educational material produced in the scope of the action plan (as previous report submitted to the Bureau)

Appendix 4: Training in schools (as previous report submitted to the Bureau)

Appendix 2(updated) Monk seal sigthings

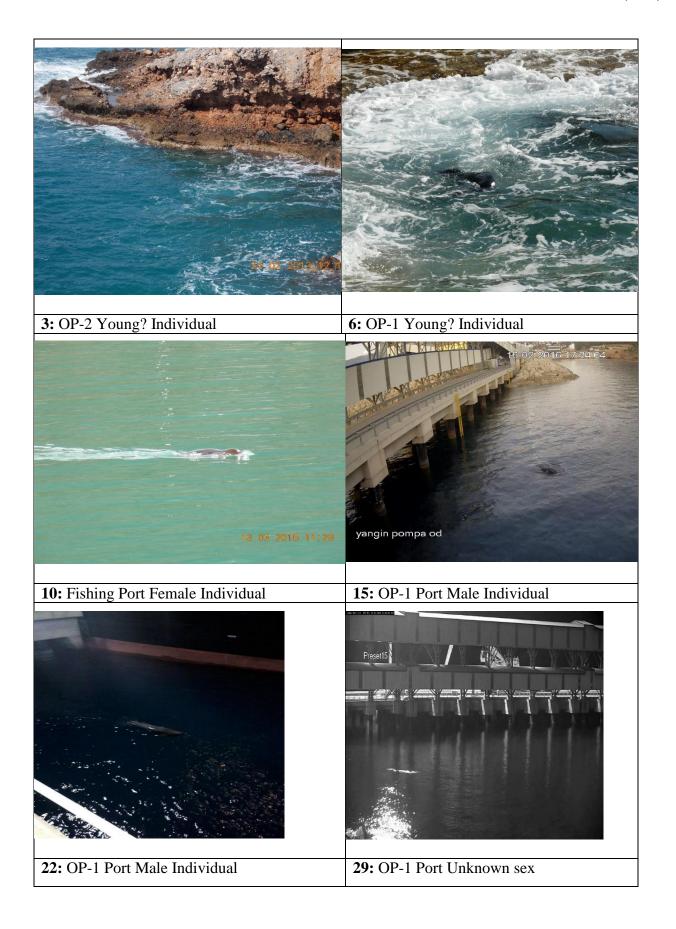
APPENDIX 2 MONK SEAL SIGHTINGS AROUND THE HARBOUR

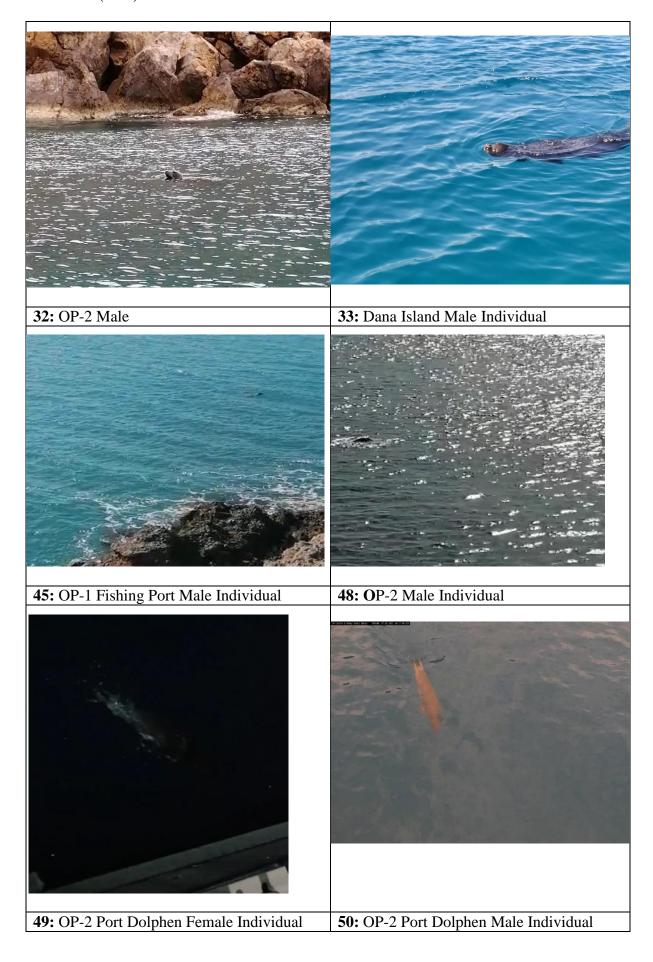
A camera system was installed at the port, against the Balıklı Cave, to be able to monitor the cave live and online. Besides, an additional camera was installed to be able to check the sides and end of the port together, and these two cameras are taking records online. By these cameras, the monk seal activity is being monitored all the time. Monk seals are recorded rarely while foraging under or near the port. Besides, interviews with the fishermen around the port is made regularly and the data obtained are added to the report. Besides, some species were recorded which settled on the pillars of the harbour. These species include but not limited to, *Chthamalus stellatus*, *Patella caerulea*, *Phorcus turbinatus*, *Brachidontes pharaonis* and *Actinia equina*, which resulted in the occurence of pelagic fish and sea turtles around the harbour area. Monk seal sigthings are recorded in a table, which is given below;

NT	O1 D.:	Ι _Τ	Ъ	TT	C	D 1.TT
No	Observation Point	Location	Day	Hour	Sex	Record Type
1	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	30.12.2012	16:49	Female	Photograph
2	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	20.01.2013	11:28	Female	Photograph
3	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	24.02.2013	12:12	? – Young	Photograph and Video
4	OP-4	Yeşilovacık	20.12.2013	16:00	? – Young	Photograph
5	OP-1	Yeşilovacık	16.02.2014	09:34	? – Young	Photograph and Video
6	OP-1	Yeşilovacık	17.02.2014	14:15	? – Young	Photograph
7	OP-5	Yeşilovacık	01.05.2014	11:25	Male	Photograph
8	OP-1	Yeşilovacık	03.02.2015	14:31	Male	Photograph
9	OP-1	Yeşilovacık	10.03.2015	17:30	Male	Photograph and Video
10	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	13.03.2015	11:00	Female	Photograph and Video
11	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	16.04.2015	20:15	? – Long distance	Photograph and Video
12	Dolphin (Companion)	Yeşilovacık	29.04.2015	10:03	? – Long distance	Video
13	OP-1	Yeşilovacık	28.01.2016	16:05	Female	Report
14	OP-1 Harbor Fill Site	Yeşilovacık	12.02.2016	21:30	Male	Video
15	OP-1 Harbor Fill Site	Yeşilovacık	16.02.2016	17:34	Male	Photograph and Video
16	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	27.09.2016	17:05	Male	Photograph
17	Dolfen (Port end)	Yeşilovacık	22.01.2017	00:13	Male	Video
	OP-1 Sub Port	Yeşilovacık	28.02.2017	22:45	Male	
18	Port North Entrance	Yeşilovacık	02.12.2017	10:50	Male	Photograph
19	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	11.12.2017	11:42	Male	Video
20	Fire Depot Gate	Yeşilovacık	19.12.2017	20:52	Male	Video
21	Port Entrance North 3	Yeşilovacık	22.12.2017	21:12	?	Video
22	Port Dolfen	Yeşilovacık	10.01.2018	00:25	Male	Photograph
23	Port No:1	Yeşilovacık	08.02.2018	01:55	?	Video
24	Tisan	Yeşilovacık	20.05.2018	18:30	Male	Photograph
25	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	06.06.2018	20:20	?	Video
26	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	13.08.2018	06:30	Female	Video + Photograph
27	Port No:1	Yeşilovacık	17.10.2018	01:42	?	Video

28	Port No:1	Yeşilovacık	17.10.2018	01:46	?	Video
29	Port No:1 Kayalıklar	Yeşilovacık	24.02.2019	21: ^{08.34} 21: ^{09.57}	?	Video
30	Mavikent	Mavikent	28.04.2019	15:33	Male	Video
31	Mavikent	Mavikent	02.05.2019	17:53	?	Video
32	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	05.05.2019	13:01	Male	Photograph
33	Dana Island	Dana Adası	12.05.2019	12:32	Male	Video + Photograph
34	Dolfen (Port end)	Yeşilovacık	21.05.2019	23:40	Male	Video
35	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	28.08.2019	08:05	?	Video
36	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	09.01.2020	10:53	Male	Video
37	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	10.01.2020	14:35	Male	Video
38	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	23.01.2020	16:35	Male	Video
39	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	11.02.2020	14:00	Male	Video
40	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	27.02.2020	16:10	Male	Video
41	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	09.03.2020	16:20	Male	Video
42	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	27.03.2020	12:45	Male	Video
43	OP-1	Yeşilovacık	16.04.2020	10:10	Male	Video
44	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	11.05.2020	14:13	Male	Video
45	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	15.05.2020	08:12	Male	Video
46	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	26.09.2020	14:01	Male	Video
47	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	03.12.2021	14:27	Male	Video
48	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	07.12.2021	17:20	Male	Video
49	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	17.12.2021	10:32	Female	Video
50	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	07.02.2022	18:15	Male	Video
51	Port	Yeşilovacık	17.04.2022	19:12	Male	Video
52	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	23.04.2022	11:43	Male	Video + Photograph







REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

22.07.2022

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Appendix 2: Monk seal sigthings

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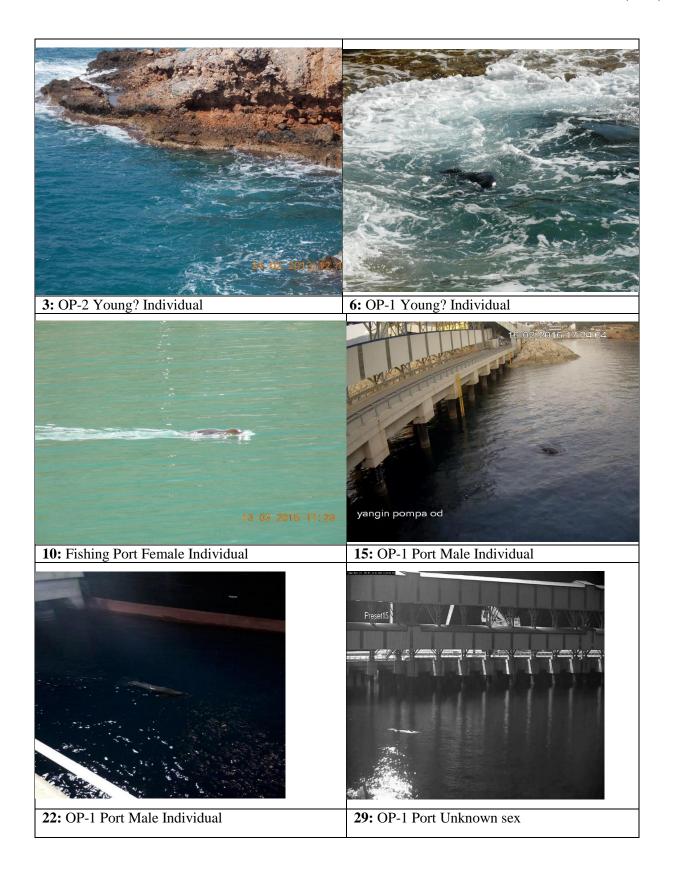
Appendix 2 Monk seal sigthings

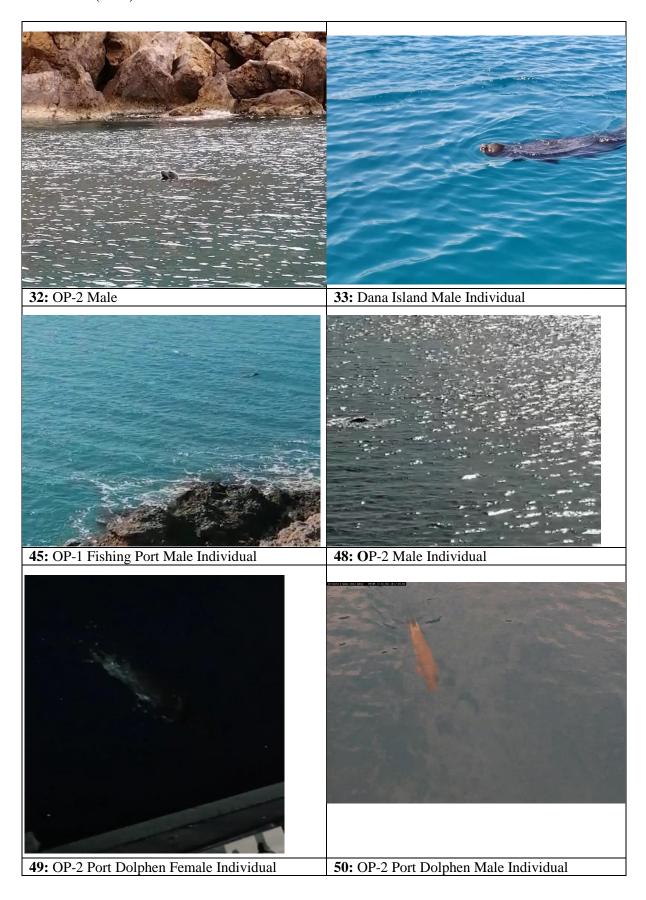
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33	Dana Island	Dana Adası	12.05.2019	12:32	Male	Video + Photograph
34	Dolfen (Port end)	Yeşilovacık	21.05.2019	23:40	Male	Video
35	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	28.08.2019	08:05	?	Video
36	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	09.01.2020	10:53	Male	Video
37	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	10.01.2020	14:35	Male	Video
38	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	23.01.2020	16:35	Male	Video
39	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	11.02.2020	14:00	Male	Video
40	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	27.02.2020	16:10	Male	Video
41	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	09.03.2020	16:20	Male	Video
42	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	27.03.2020	12:45	Male	Video
43	OP-1	Yeşilovacık	16.04.2020	10:10	Male	Video
44	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	11.05.2020	14:13	Male	Video
45	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	15.05.2020	08:12	Male	Video
46	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	26.09.2020	14:01	Male	Video
47	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	03.12.2021	14:27	Male	Video
48	OP-2	Yeşilovacık	07.12.2021	17:20	Male	Video
49	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	17.12.2021	10:32	Female	Video
50	Fishing port	Yeşilovacık	07.02.2022	18:15	Male	Video







Appendix 3 Educational material produced in the scope of the action plan



10 min video



Brochure



T.C TARIM VE ORMAN BAKANLIĞI VII. BÖLGE MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ MERSİN ŞUBE MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ



AKDENİZ FOKU (Monachus monachus)

NESLİ TEHLİKE ALTINDA OLAN AKDENİZ FOKLARINI KORUYALIM





DİKKAT

Lütfen sahilde bir fok gördüğünüzde rahatsız etmeyiniz! Foklar uzun süre sahilde dinlenmeye ihtiyaç duyarlar.

Lütfen fok mağaralarına girmeyiniz!

Mağaralarda bulunan yetişkinlerin yuvayı terketmelerine ve yavruların ölümüne sebep olabilirsiniz.

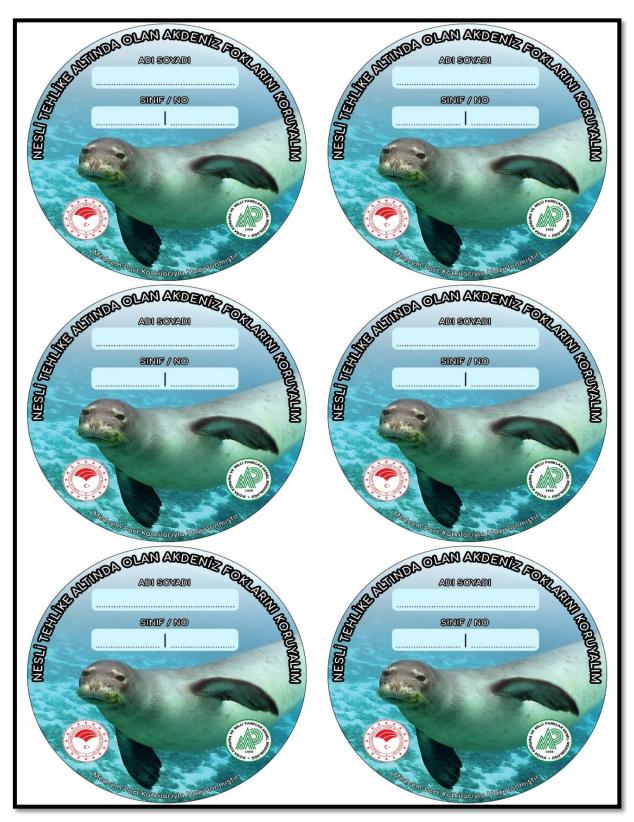
Lütfen fokları elle beslemeyiniz!

Bu şekilde tekneleri takip etmelerine neden olabilirsiniz.

Hasta yada yaralı bir fok gördüğünüzde! Sahil Güvenlik Komutanlığı ALO 158 veya Mersin Şube Müdürlüğü 0324 481 22 84 ihbar hattını arayınız

Bu Poster MEDCEM PORT Katkılarıyla Hazırlanmıştır.

Poster



Stickers

Appendix 4
Training in schools

SCHOOL NAME	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
Emin Dursun Kaya İ.Ö.O	10
Gazi Mustafa Kemal İ.Ö.O	23
Hasan Paker İ.Ö.O	26
Kurtuluş Ayşe Çomoğlu İ.Ö.O	12
Şehit Barbaros Yılmaz İ.Ö.O	8
Ahmet Necati Hancıoğlu İ.Ö.O	141
Silifke İmam Hatip Ortaokulu	84
Gazi Orta Okulu	55
Taşucu Orta Okulu	31
Seyfettin Tatoğlu Ortaokulu	85
Tosmurlu Ortaokulu	67
Akdeniz İ.Ö.O	27
Mustafa Erden Ortaokulu	45
Sinan Suverir İmamhatip Ortaokulu	50
Arpaçbahşiş Yardımcılar Ortaokulu	60
Kocahasanlı Ortaokulu	50
Selviler Ortaokulu	60
Çukurova Sanayi Ortaokulu	120
Şehit ishak İ.Ö.O	120
Şehit İTO Mehmet Güçlü Ortaokulu	63
Mezitli Merkez Ortaokulu	84
Mersin Ziraat Odası Ortaokulu	55
Turgut Özal Ortaokulu	88
Mehmet Akif İnan Ortaokulu	44
TOPLAM:	1406





