

ABOUT SEA TURTLES

Three sea turtle species are found in the Mediterranean. The loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) and green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) nest here, and the huge leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) is an occasional visitor. It is estimated that only about 800 green adult females and 1,800 loggerhead females nest in the Mediterranean*.

In the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, Green Turtles are classified as globally Endangered and Loggerhead Turtles (Mediterranean sub-population) as Least Concern (LC), but conservation dependent.

In summer, sea turtles nest on sandy beaches. Loggerheads mainly nest in Greece, Turkey, Libya and Cyprus and in smaller numbers in Egypt, Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Tunisia and Italy. Green turtles mainly nest in Turkey, Cyprus and Syria, while a few nests are recorded in Lebanon, Egypt and Israel. Important feeding and overwintering areas have been identified, however further research is needed.

*Hochscheid et al. (2018). Sea Turtles in the Mediterranean Region. MTSO Annual Regional Report. [2]



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Enhancing the protection & conservation of Marine Turtles in the Mediterranean Region by reducing human-induced direct mortality



Photo by Jesse Schloff on Unsplash

THREATS

Sea turtles are considered as an indicator species for marine biodiversity and have populated Earth for over 100 million years. It is therefore critical that they are protected and preserved. Although they have natural predators, the greatest threat to these ancient creatures are impacts and disturbances by human activities:

- ▶ Habitat loss & degradation (tourism, coastal and marine development)
- ▶ Pollution (marine litter etc.)
- ▶ Collision with vessels
- ▶ Fisheries (bycatch, illegal fishing techniques, intentional killing)
- ▶ Exploitation (for consumption or production of artefacts, poaching)
- ▶ Climate change
- ▶ Exploitation of marine resources, specifically oil and gas

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THE PROJECT

The Project “Conservation of Marine Turtles in the Mediterranean Region” aims at the following objective: to enhance the protection and conservation of Marine Turtles in the Mediterranean Region by reducing human-induced direct mortality.

Activities take place in 13 Countries:

Albania, Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy (Sardinia), Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.

From June 2017 to May 2020 (phase 1).

Map of geographic scope of project activities

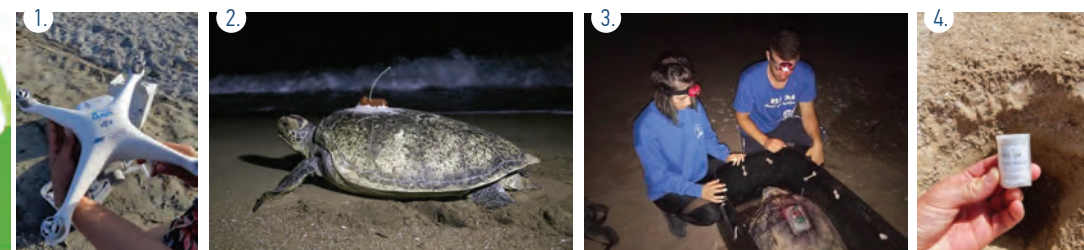


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PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

Applied research and monitoring on nesting sites and marine hotspots

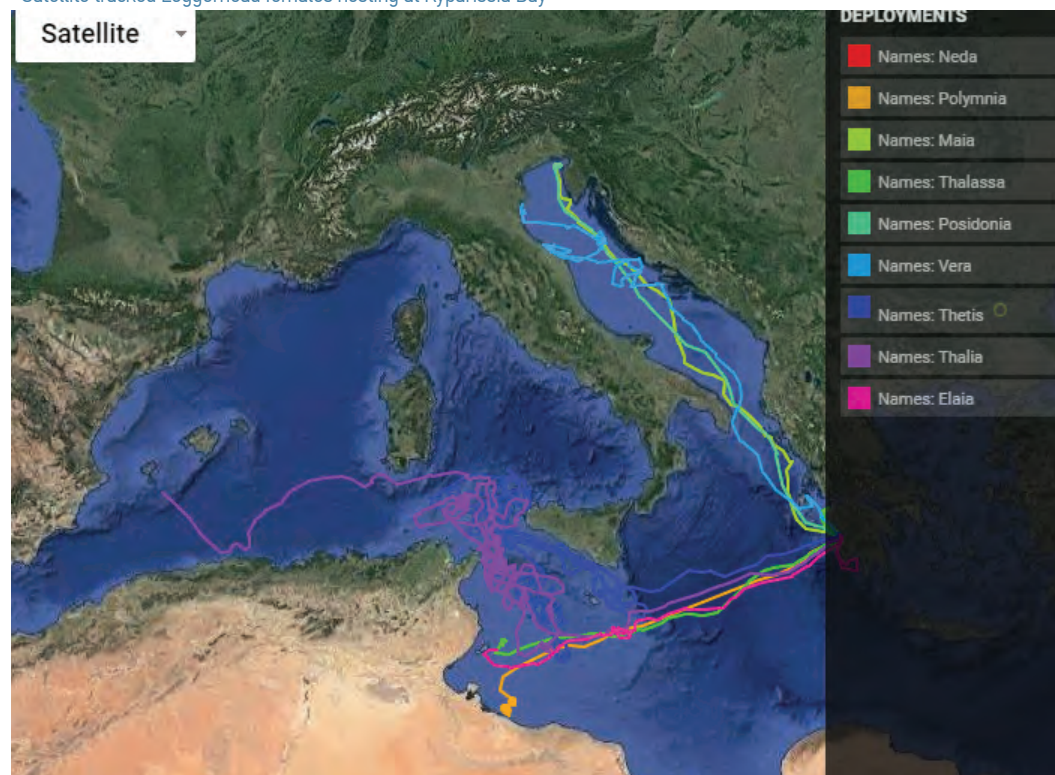
- Exploration of new nesting sites and monitoring of known sites.
- Assessment of beach quality for nesting and incubation on potential nesting areas.
- Monitoring and conservation of sporadic nesting.
- Evaluation of climate change impacts on nesting.
- Improved knowledge on migration routes and feeding sites, including satellite tracking of nesting female turtles, isotope and genetic analysis.



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- © 2019 MEDASSET, photo: E. Sacdanaku

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Satellite tracked Loggerhead females nesting at Kyparissia Bay



[7]

Reinforcement of coordination and implementation of harmonized protocols

- Identification and mapping of important Marine Turtles Areas in the Mediterranean according to relevant criteria.
- Standardized monitoring protocol on marine turtles available for Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to improve their management.
- Integration of collected data in the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform.

Capacity building for relevant stakeholders for sea turtle conservation.

- Organization of regional trainings on identification and monitoring of nesting areas, standardized assessment of beach quality and threats, satellite tracking, management by MPAs, sampling analysis.
- MPA exchange visits on managing marine turtles.
- Permanent training centers.

Improvement of management and protection of nesting sites

- Elaboration or update of National Action Plans for the conservation of sea turtles.
- Advocacy activities with case studies from pilot sites on marine turtles management.
- Rapid assessment of the conservation status of nesting beaches in Greece.
- Manual for MPA Managers based on adaptive management principles.
- Awareness raising for local communities (Turkey).
- Evaluation of socio-economic benefits linked to sea turtle conservation in Zakynthos National Park (Greece).

Reduce illegal trade of sea turtles (Tunisia)

- Assessment of the existing illegal trade by interviewing local stakeholders and communities.
- Sustainable behavior change campaigns.

[6]