

MEETING REPORT

Second Turkish National Sea Turtle Symposium (25-27 October 2007)

Yakup Kaska

*Pamukkale University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Biology, Denizli-Turkey.
(E-mail: caretta@pau.edu.tr)*

As some of you may know, The First Turkish National Sea Turtle Symposium was held in Istanbul, in 2003. At this meeting, we decided to organize this event every two years. However, due to the hosting the second Mediterranean Marine Turtle Conference in Antalya, Turkey in 2005, we postponed the Second National Sea Turtle Symposium until 2007.

The symposium took place in Dalyan, a well-known loggerhead turtle nesting area in Turkey. The symposium took place in Club Alla Turca Hotel, the only hotel which has a conference room in this town, with the hospitality of the Dalyan Municipality.

The symposium organized in cooperation of the Directorate of the Conservation of Nature and National Natural Parks, the Authorities for the Specially Protected Areas of the Turkish Ministry of Environment of Forestry, the municipality of the Dalyan, Ecological Research Society, WWF-Turkey and Pamukkale University. Some financial support also came from the Scientific and Technological research Council of Turkey (TUBİTAK).

In Turkey, marine turtle-related conservation studies are coordinated by three committees: a local committee, the scientific committee and the national committee. The local committee consists of the representatives of the closest university, municipality and provincial offices of several Ministries (such as the Ministries of Environment and Forestry, Agriculture, Education, Tourism, etc.) and local NGOs. These local committees are set for each province (Mugla, Antalya, Mersin, Adana and Hatay) and they are also help to collect information on turtles and inform the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Forestry of any problems occurred in their region. The Turkish Ministry of Environment and Forestry (Directorate of the Conservation of Nature and National Natural Parks and the Authorities for Specially Protected Areas) financially supports the projects and managed the beaches according the recommendations of experts at various Turkish universities that conduct research on the nesting beaches (in alphabetical order, Adnan Menderes University, Akdeniz University, Dokuz Eylül University, Hacettepe University, Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, Mersin University and Pamukkale University). The scientific committee, which meets twice a year, consists of experts from the above-named universities and authorized people from relevant governmental departments and two NGOs. Protocols for conservation research on each beach in Turkey must be supervised by at least one member of the scientific committee. The national committee, coordinated by the chair of the Turkish Ministry of Environment, meets once in a year, to ensure inter-ministerial compliance of marine turtle conservation activities.

Many research projects that focus on the biology of sea turtles are supported by University Research Funds, TUBİTAK and/or the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Forestry. The objective of the national symposium was to gather the results of all scientific studies

together with the related NGOs and other relevant partners. This year, the principal topics of presentations included basic fieldwork data, genetic diversity of the Turkish sea turtle population, sex ratio estimates, and evaluations of conservation studies on different beaches. There were also two presentations on the soft-shelled Nile turtle, a species that usually overlaps with sea turtles on nesting beaches and thus many of us usually collect additional data on that species.

For the symposium, there were two days of presentations, for a total of 23 oral and 19 poster presentations, 3 video presentations and 2 art exhibitions, and also two workshops. The first workshop focused on the general conservation problems present on the beaches and their solutions; the second discussed the possibility of setting up a sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation centre, including: how and where to establish and the basic requirements of a first aid stations and a rescue centre. By consensus it was decided to work towards establishing a rescue and rehabilitation centre in Dalyan.

Five international participants from three different countries were represented at the symposium. Dr. Flegra Bentivegan, from Stazione Zoologica, Italy, gave a talk on "The commitment of the Stazione Zoologica to the protection of marine turtles: Moving towards a safer world by exchanging experiences". She made contributed valuable input during the second workshop as well. Lily Veniselos, from *MEDASSET-Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles*, made one oral presentation (*MEDASSET's Field Conservation Assessments in Turkey 1989-2007: A Retrospective*) and one poster presentation (*Dalyan Nesting Beach: Looking Back to Move Forward*). She made also presented two video. The first was entitled "Can Tourists and Turtles Mix?", by Richard Brock (former BBC producer and working with Living Planet Productions), and the second was called "Turtles in Trouble," which was produced by The Travel Foundation, Marine Conservation Society and Juniperblue in collaboration with MEDASSET. Monica Aureggi and Sibel Paralik from SAVE (Supporting Activities that Value the Environment) from Northern Cyprus made a poster presentation on SAVE and Marine Turtles Conservation. Hasibe Kusetoğulları, from Environment Protection Office of Northern Cyprus gave a talk on marine turtle conservation in Northern Cyprus.

We had also two invited speakers from Turkey. Prof. Dr. İbrahim Baran (now retired) and Prof. Dr. Sedat V. Yerli (Hacettepe University) gave talks on an evolutionary perspective on conservation and scientific studies on sea turtle in Turkey. I suggest we are the third academic generation working on sea turtles in Turkey, given that Prof. Dr. R. Geldiay and Prof. Dr. M. Basoglu (advisors of Prof. Baran) initiated sea turtle studies in Turkey.

There were 210 participants in total representing 11 Universities and 11 NGOs and around 20 different governmental offices other

Beach	Km	Average nests/ season (range)		2006 data		2007 data	
		CC	CM	CC	CM	CC	CM
Ekincik	1	9-12		ND		ND	
Dalyan	4.7	57-330		269		Canbolat	
Dalaman	10.4	69-112		73		104	
Fethiye	8.3	72-191		72		Canbolat	
Patara	14	35-127	2-2	127		Canbolat	
Kale	8.5	39-109		52		ND	
Kumluca	21	75-305	0-7	ND	ND	Canbolat	Canbolat
Çıralı	3.2	23-96		96		105	
Tekirova	3.7	4-23		ND		ND	
Belek	29.3	68-819	2-8	1053	1	Canbolat	Canbolat
Kızılot	15.7	50-270	0-3	ND	ND	Canbolat	Canbolat
Demirtaş	7.8	41-137		137		ND	
Gazipaşa	7	14-53		ND		Canbolat	Canbolat
Anamur	12.2	146-674	1-1	674	1	Ergene	Ergene
Göksu Delta	25.6	36-151	3-20	107	12	ND	ND
Alata	3	16-32	20-198	16	198	Ergene	Ergene
Kazanlı	4.5	2-26	73-403	11	385		191
Akyatan	22	3-31	108-735	31	562	Türkozan	Türkozan
Sugözü, Yumurtalık	3.4	1-1	213-213	0	198	1	57
Samandağ	14.2	7-20	20-440	9	440	8	65
Total	219.5	767-3519	442-2030	2727	1797		

Table 1. The number of nests recorded on Turkish beaches, from Kaska 2007. Most data from 2007 have yet to be formally prepared in reports - the surname of key researcher in 2007 for each beach is identified. Bold text indicate beaches that were recently included in annual monitoring protocols. CC = loggerhead, CM = green turtles, ND = no data available.

official groups, such as the local, scientific and national sea turtle committees, related to the sea turtle conservation. It was a great pleasure for all of us to get together not only as scientists but also NGOs, conversationalists and decision-makers from within the governmental.

Some of the many important outcomes of the symposium include establishing a rescue center in Turkey, conducting a workshop to solve the problems present on the beaches, and establishing a national database of the nest numbers for all beaches (i.e., a national SWOT database). This is particularly important as there is evidence of declines in annual numbers of nests laid by both loggerhead and green turtles in the Mediterranean.

The symposium reaffirmed that the Mediterranean coasts of Turkey are important nesting grounds for both loggerhead and green turtles. Of the entire Turkish coastline (2577 km), 606 km consist of sandy beaches and more than a third of these support turtle nesting (Baran & Kasperek 1989). Based on nest numbers within the Mediterranean, Turkey holds the most important green turtle rookeries (Kasperek *et al.* 2001; Broderick *et al.* 2002) and

the second most important loggerhead turtle stocks (Margaritoulis *et al.* 2003). Baran & Kasperek (1989) identified 17 important nesting grounds. The Turkish Ministry of Environment and Forestry financially supports turtle monitoring projects every year for almost all marine turtle nesting areas. Recently, three additional nesting sites (Çıralı, Alata and Sugözü-Yumurtalık) were included amongst those that are annually monitored (Table 1).

One of the outputs of the symposia was the compiling of the nesting information from Turkish beaches. The total numbers of the nests reported for each beach can be found in different papers and reports but it is, most of the time, too difficult to find all related information in one summary table. The national symposium provided an opportunity to summarize numbers of sea turtle nests laid in Turkey in the past two years (Table 1).

Between 767 and 3519 loggerhead turtle nests and 442-2030 green turtle nests are laid annually on Turkish beaches. Using the assumption that each female nests an average of 3 times in a season every 2-3 years (Groombridge 1990), this means that approximately 256-1173 loggerhead and 147-677 green turtles nest annually on the beaches of Turkey. According to Groombridge (1990), there were 2000 loggerhead adult females and 500 green turtle adult females reproducing on Turkish beaches in the late 1980s. The data compiled in Table 1 suggest that numbers have changed in recent years or there was some error associated with the original estimates. The compilation of international data for the Mediterranean (i.e., Margaritoulis *et al.* 2003; Margaritoulis 2005) and national data via symposia will help clarify the status and trends of the Mediterranean Sea turtle population.

We hope to come together again in the Third National Sea Turtle Symposium in Mersin University in 2009, highlighting the critically endangered status of the Mediterranean green turtle, which is not well known by the public. With a regularly occurring national symposium, we are the only Mediterranean country acting in parallel to the Mediterranean Marine Turtle Conference, which will be held next in Tunisia in 2008.

The proceedings of the symposium were published in November 2007 and were accompanied by a DVD containing photos and presentations from the 2007 symposium, together with electronic PDF files of the proceedings of both the First and Second national symposia and other informative electronic files. These were distributed to the participants and other relevant bodies within the region. Both the hard copy and electronic files of the proceedings can also be downloaded from the symposium web page. <http://caretta.pamukkale.edu.tr/sempozyum/sbildirge.htm>. The symposium logo can be seen here: <http://www.seaturtle.org/cgi-bin/image/lib/index.pl?photo=3644>

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NEWS AND LEGAL BRIEFS

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THE AMERICAS

Warm Weather Delays Arrival of Sea Turtles on Cape

Chilled and disoriented sea turtles have begun washing up on Cape Cod beaches, arriving a couple of weeks later than usual this year because of the warmer than usual weather, experts at the New England Aquarium said today. Twenty-five to 150 sea turtles are stranded each year as the water temperatures turn colder. Usually, the turtles begin to wash up around the end of October. This year, beach walkers in Brewster and Dennis found the first three turtles of the season in November. Ninety percent of the turtles that wash up are Kemp's Ridley turtles, an endangered species. For some reason, many of the young turtles, rather than migrating south in the fall, get caught on the north side of the Cape as water temperatures drop. Then, when temperatures dip below 50 degrees, they become hypothermic and drift helplessly, stunned by the cold. Volunteers hike Cape Cod Bay beaches after high tide, hoping to rescue the turtles before raccoons, birds, or dogs find them. The turtles are examined by veterinarians and biologists at the aquarium who get them back into shape. Nearly all survive and those that can forage for themselves are released back into the wild, the aquarium said. Source: *Boston Globe*, 12 November 2007.

Beasley Named Animal Planet's 2007 Hero of the Year

Jean Beasley, founder and director of the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center in Topsail Island, has been named Animal Planet's 2007 Hero of the Year. The announcement was made on Nov. 1, following an eight-month search for the Hero of the Year, which began with more than 2,200 nominations submitted by the public. Ten finalists, including Beasley, were chosen by a panel of judges in September, and the winner was selected based on online voting, accomplishments and impact of the nominee's actions, and the inspirational value those actions have had on others. The award includes a \$10,000 donation to the sea turtle hospital and a trip to Hawaii for Beasley, which she said just happens to coincide with her

50th wedding anniversary. The \$10,000 donation will be applied toward the construction of a new facility for the sea turtle hospital, which is crammed into an 850-square-foot facility. The land for the new facility was donated by a family on Topsail Island, and Beasley hopes to build a much larger facility that will include an education center to accommodate field trips and other visitors, as well as a gift shop. There are currently 17 turtles at the hospital. Beasley said the best thing about the award is that it helps bring attention to the plight of sea turtles. The recognition comes just as the hospital is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Beasley founded the center in 1997 in memory of her daughter's efforts to assure the survival of sea turtles. Source: *Lumina News*, 08 November 2007.

Unusual Loggerhead Sea Turtle Washes Ashore Near Seaside

Christmas Eve brought an unusual and ancient traveler to the north Oregon coast – one so old it's related to the dinosaurs. A large sea turtle washed up on a beach in Gearhart. The loggerhead sea turtle was reported still alive after drifting up with the tides in the early afternoon of December 24th. It died shortly after it was recovered by staff at the Seaside Aquarium, dying sometime on Christmas day. This is the first sea turtle to come ashore in this area in the last five years. That's not to say they're uncommon in this area. They normally swim far enough out to sea they rarely show up on land in the northwest. The adult male loggerhead was four feet in length with a three-foot shell, weighing approximately 100 pounds. Though the age of this turtle is unknown, their life expectancy can exceed 50 years. Though loggerheads have been spotted as far north as Alaska, they only come ashore in this region when distressed. Source: *Salem-News.com*, 28 December 2007.

CARIBBEAN

Nevis Known for Its Relative Obscurity

It may look like a little shack on Nevis's white sand Oualie beach, but a short visit inside will forever change the way you look at