Sea Turtle Research, Rescue And Rehabilitation Centre (Dekamer), Dalyan, Muğla-Turkey; Results of The First Four Years

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NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-SEFSC-645

PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRTY-THIRD ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON SEA TURTLE BIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION

5 to 8 February, 2013
Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Compiled by:
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
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OVERVIEW OF SOUTHEAST FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER FISHERY OBSERVER PROGRAMS AND BYCATCH ANALYSIS

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Sea turtles are incidentally captured in commercial fisheries, and these interactions must be documented and quantified to understand the extent of the problem. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) operates Fisheries Observer Programs to collect vital catch and bycatch data from commercial fisheries in the southeast United States. Those fisheries currently observed by NMFS in the southeast include the pelagic longline, reef fish, shrimp trawl, purse seine (menhaden), shark gillnet, and shark bottom longline fisheries. Fisheries observers undergo extensive training to accurately characterize fishing gear, and to identify and quantify target and bycatch species for stock assessment and biological studies. NMFS observers document protected species interactions in careful detail. When a sea turtle is captured by a fishing vessel, the observer records the species, identification criteria, condition at capture and release, fishing gear details, specific hooking location or tow times where applicable, entanglement status, amount and type of gear remaining at release, morphometrics, and resuscitation efforts and condition evaluation for comatose or unresponsive turtles. Interaction data are used to generate estimates of sea turtle bycatch rates and to investigate patterns in injury and mortality. Observers in the pelagic longline fishery also document the presence of required careful release tools on the vessel. Turtles are tagged, measured, and biopsied so that demographic and life history parameters can be used to enhance recovery efforts of these endangered and threatened species.

SEA TURTLE RESEARCH, RESCUE AND REHABILITATION CENTRE (DEKAMER), DALYAN, MUGLA-TURKEY; RESULTS OF THE FIRST FOUR YEARS

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The first sea turtle rescue centre (DEKAMER) in Turkey was established in 2008 and its activities during the first four years are shown in these results. A total of 61 injured, sick or problem turtles were admitted to the centre, 56 *Caretta caretta*, 12 *Chelonia mydas* and 2 fresh water turtles *Trionyx triunguis* were admitted to the centre during the first four years 2008-2012. With 2 of the 70 sea turtles having been readmitted after previous treatment and release. Thirty-nine in total were treated, recovered and released back to the sea as healthy individuals. There are currently 6 sea turtles still undergoing treatment and rehabilitation at the centre. Injured turtles were mainly found and collected from within the Muğla province. In order to determine the true cause of mortality, autopsies were conducted on all dead turtles. The main causes of injuries and deaths were found to be related to fishery and boat activities, such as fishing line and hook ingestion (16%), fishing line entanglement (33%), propeller cuts (14%) and speed boat crashes and impacts (7%). Mean treatments take two and half months (77 days). This varies depending upon the type of injury, and size and depth of wounds being treated.