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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

33rd meeting
Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2013

Possible File

**Threat to the Mediterranean Monk Seal
(*Monachus monachus*)
in Turkey**

REPORT BY THE COMPLAINANT

Document prepared by
METU – INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCES

MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL BREEDING CAVE IN YESILOVACIK – MERSIN - TURKEY

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Northeastern Mediterranean Sea hosts one of the last and continuously breeding populations of monk seal in the Mediterranean Sea. On the other hand the number of suitable caves for breeding is very few, limiting the size of the colony. The Balıklı cave which is located in Yeşilovacık-Mersin is one of these breeding caves along the Mersin coast and it has been monitored since 1994 by the research team of Middle East Technical University (METU), Institute of Marine Sciences (IMS).

Within the framework of the recent research projects carried out by METU - IMS with the financial support of RAC/SPA and Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), the Balıklı cave has been monitored by photo-traps since 4 April 2010 (355 seal photographs were obtained until now).

Some of these photographs are given below in chronological order. Photo-identification analyses performed on the photographs indicate that the Balıklı cave had been actively used by 2 females, 2 males and 1 monk seal pup within the last 2 years. Moreover, number of seals using the Balıklı cave could probably be higher than the number of seals observed by the research team since the Balıklı cave has several chambers with platforms used for haul-out galleries, and only a few of those could be monitored due to technical constraints.

The monk seal pup photographed in January 2013 was born in the Balıklı cave. This was not the first whelping documented in this cave. Two more pups had been documented earlier in 1990's however number of pups born in this cave could probably be higher since the cave had not been monitored on a continuous manner in order not to create any disturbance on seals especially during the breeding season.

The cave is still being monitored by phototraps and it may worth to note that the number of seal activities (number of photo-trap triggering) is remarkably low compared to the period before the construction.



Figure 1. Female Mediterranean monk seal resting on the beach in the Balıklı cave - captured by photo-trap on 8 April 2010



Figure 2. Young male resting on the beach in the Balikli cave - captured by photo-trap on 2 May 2010



Figure 3. Female monk seal resting on the platform, P1 (located on the right wall in the Balikli cave - captured by photo-trap on 17 August 2010 (unusual appearance of her belly is possible a sign of pregnancy)

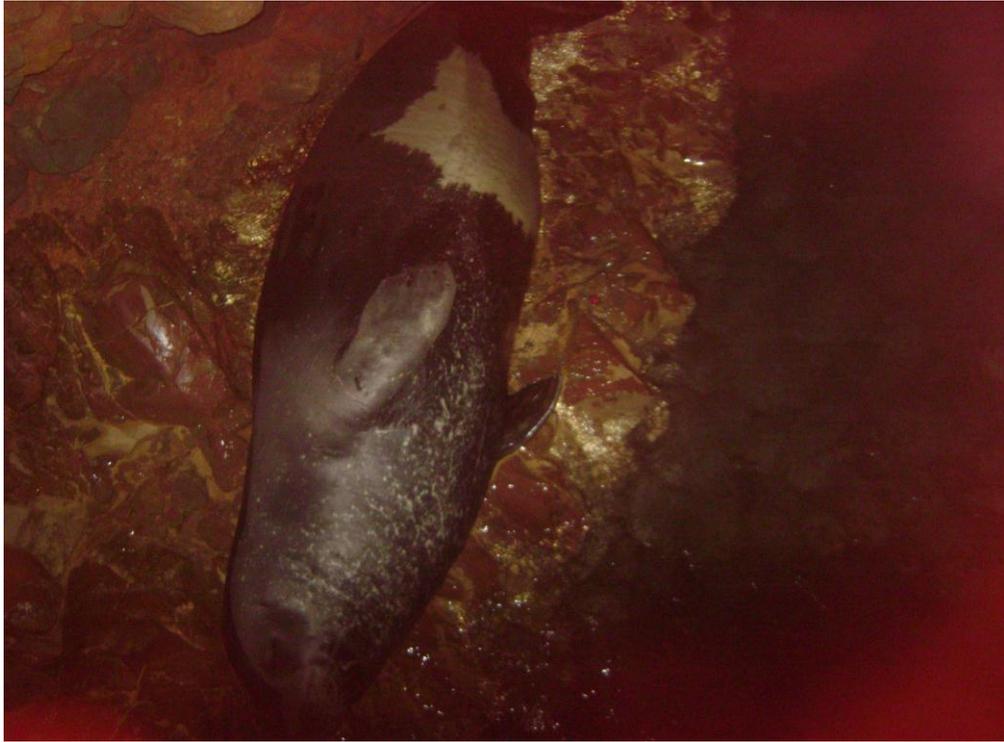


Figure 4. Adult male resting on the rocky platform, P1 - captured by photo-trap on 16 September 2012



Figure 4. Approx. 50 days old monk seal pup, (“the hapless”) resting on the rocky platform the L2 chamber in the Balıklı cave - photographed by photo-trap on 15 January 2013



Figure 5 Approx. 50 days old monk seal pup, “the hapless” resting on the rocky platform the L2 chamber in the Balıklı cave - photographed by photo-trap on 15 January 2013



Figure 6 Approx. 50 days old monk seal pup resting on the rocky platform the L2 chamber in the Balıklı cave - photographed by photo-trap on 15 January 2013



Figure 7. 50 days old monk seal pup, “the hapless” resting on the rocky platform located in the left side of the Balıklı cave - captured by photo-trap on 15 January 2013



Figure 8. Approx. 50 days old monk seal pup, “the hapless” resting on the rocky platform the L2 chamber in the Balıklı cave - photographed by photo-trap on 15 January 2013

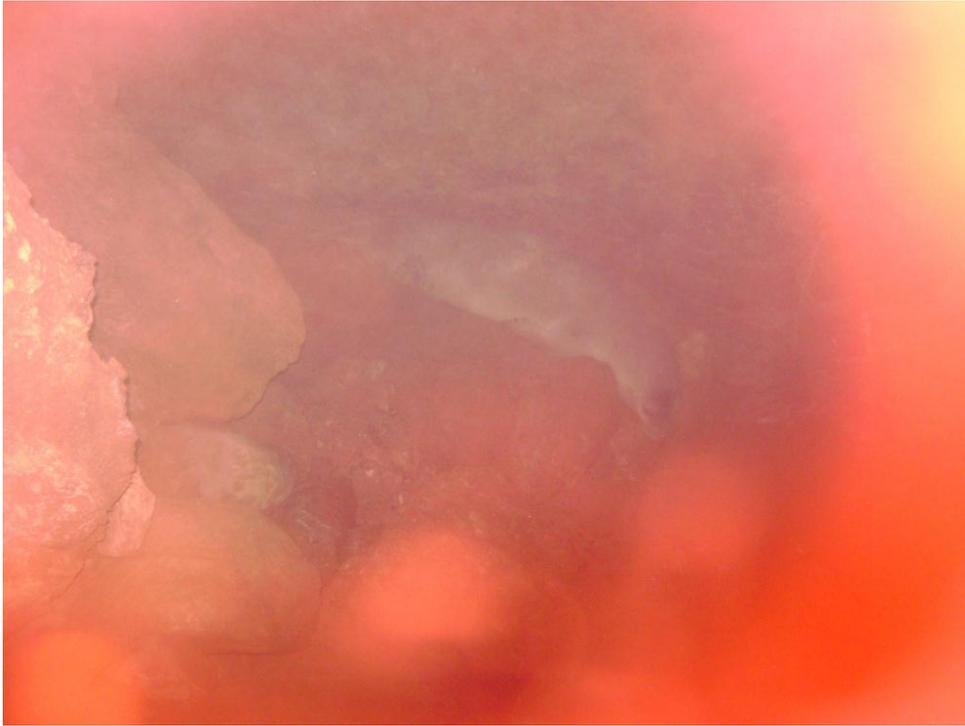


Figure 9. Female monk seal resting on the rocky platform in Balıklı cave on 4 March 2013

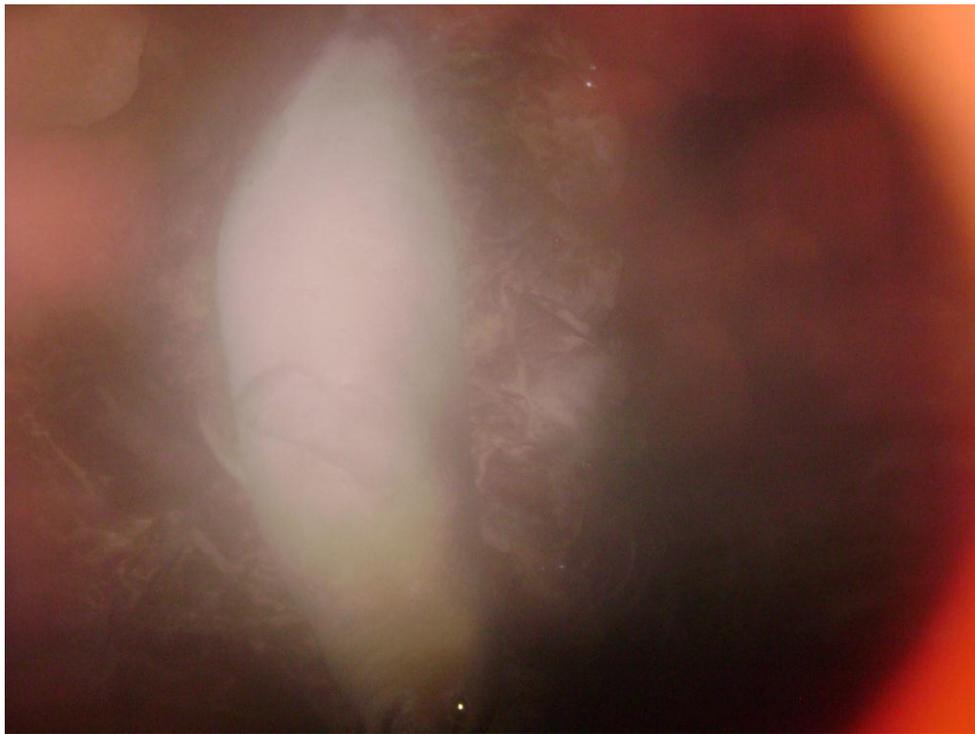


Figure 10. Female monk seal resting on the rocky platform located in the right side of the Balıklı cave - captured by photo-trap on 7 March 2013

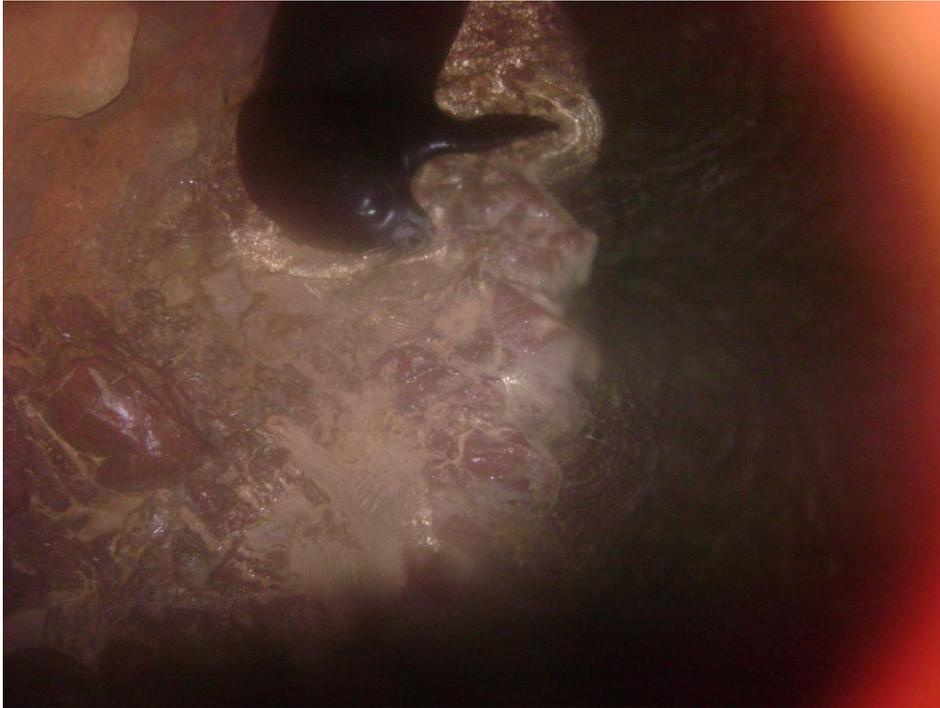


Figure 11. The pup “Hapless” resting on the rocky platform, P1 located on the right wall in the Balıklı cave - captured by photo-trap on 5 May 2013

There is a fishing port near to the seal cave in question. The following 3 pictures show how the harbor looked like in February 2013. It is used also by the ship (red) visible on the photos. The ship is loaded and unloaded (quartz ore) by a conveyor belt.





The following photos were taken 13 May 2013 to display the construction.





The following photo was taken from a point on top of the cave to show the distance between the construction and the cave

