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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

33<sup>rd</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2013

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**Possible File**

**Presumed degradation of nesting beaches in  
Fethiye and Patara SPAs (Turkey)**

**REPORT BY THE NGO**

*Document prepared by  
Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles (MEDASSET)*

## UPDATE REPORT BY THE NGO

### Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean

#### UPDATE ON LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE (*CARETTA CARETTA*) CONSERVATION MONITORING IN FETHIYE, TURKEY

September 5<sup>th</sup> 2013

*Document presented by  
MEDASSET - the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles*

*for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Standing Committee Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on the  
Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)*

## BACKGROUND

The loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nesting beaches in Fethiye (Mugla Province, Turkey) are among the 12 most important nesting beaches in Turkey.<sup>1</sup> The protection of these breeding grounds is not only significant in terms of nesting numbers at a Mediterranean level but also to ensure the genetic diversity of the loggerhead population in the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup> Fethiye's nesting beaches importance increases because of the relatively higher proportion of male-producing nests.<sup>3</sup> The nesting beaches belong to the Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protection Area (SPA) established in 1988. Threats to the nesting population have constantly been increasing since 1993-4.<sup>4</sup> Real estate and tourism development is progressing with no regard for the sea turtle nesting population and the protected coastal ecosystems of Fethiye. Scientific studies have shown that nest numbers in Fethiye are severely declining.<sup>5</sup>

Since 2008, MEDASSET has been monitoring and reporting on the lack of management, poor spatial planning and build-up in Fethiye's coastal zone. MEDASSET submitted a complaint to the Bern Convention in August 2009 on the severe degradation of the protected sea turtle nesting beaches in Fethiye. The complaint was discussed at the 30<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention in 2010, in relation to "Recommendation No. 66/1998 on the conservation status of some nesting beaches for marine turtles in Turkey". Commitments for improved protection were made by the Turkish authorities in 2010,<sup>6</sup> and in 2011 positive steps were taken to mitigate some of the tourism-related impacts during the nesting season.<sup>7</sup> During the 2012 nesting season, these management measures were not sustained and further coastal buildup was also recorded.<sup>8</sup> At the 32<sup>nd</sup> Standing Committee Meeting in 2012, Recommendation No. 66/1998 was discussed and the Delegate of Turkey stated that authorities would monitor the situation more closely in 2013 and that matters were expected to improve; the Standing Committee decided to consider the case as a possible file at its 2013 meeting.

## SUMMARY

**In 2013, there was no improvement to the protection and effective management of the nesting beaches in Fethiye SPA, with the exception of beach furniture management in approx. 1.5 of 8 km of the nesting beaches and some new signage which, however, remains insufficient.**

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<sup>1</sup> Türkozan 2000; Margaritoulis *et al.* 2003; Canbolat 2004

<sup>2</sup> Yılmaz *et al.* 2008

<sup>3</sup> Kaska *et al.* 2006

<sup>4</sup> Oruc *et al.* 2003

<sup>5</sup> Türkozan 2006; Ilgaz *et al.* 2007; Katilmis *et al.* 2013

<sup>6</sup> T-PVS/Files 2010 23(Government report); letter B.18.1.OÇK.0.07.00.01.230.99 of the former Environmental Protection Agency for Special Areas, in Annex 1 of MEDASSET, December 2011

<sup>7</sup> MEDASSET, December 2011.

<sup>8</sup> MEDASSET, September 2012.

### **Threats identified to the nesting population:**

1. Lack of beach furniture management in the largest part of the nesting beaches (6.5 km)
2. Lack of effective guarding and rules enforcement by authorities
3. Ineffective signage
4. Uncontrolled access by people and vehicles during the day and night
5. Plantations on nesting beaches
6. Light pollution
7. Litter on nesting beaches
8. Motorised watersport activities directly off nesting beaches.
9. Habitat destruction and coastal buildup continues: a road running parallel to one of the nesting beach sections was constructed, parking spaces and new businesses have been established on unbuilt sections of the nesting beaches, further reducing the available habitat, removing natural vegetation and increasing disturbances

In conclusion, since the complaint was submitted in 2009, it is clear that no effective or adequate measures have been applied in Fethiye to sufficiently protect sea turtles and their habitats. Without such measures the recorded negative trend of nesting shall not be reversed and the few remaining areas in Fethiye SPA that have not been damaged will continue to be encroached upon for unplanned development. So far, Recommendation No. 66 (Articles 1a, 1c ,6 and Article ‘Species Requirements- *Caretta caretta*-Fethiye’) has not been observed or put into effect in Fethiye. **Given that real habitat damage has already occurred within this protected area, with obvious impacts on the protected species, and there is little or no progress despite previous commitments, the issue merits the special attention of the Standing Committee. We request that the application of Recommendation No. 66 as regards Fethiye be discussed at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Standing Committee Meeting in December 2013, and that the Committee reconsiders this case as a possible file, as per the decision of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Standing Committee Meeting**

The next section of the report presents a detailed account of the status of the nesting beaches, the developments and threats recorded during the 2013 nesting season, as well as a list of recommendations. Similar recommendations have already been suggested in the past by scientists,<sup>9</sup> but have yet to be applied. The recently published economic analysis for the Fethiye-Göcek SPA, also identified intensive use of turtle nesting beaches and excessive and uncontrolled housing and tourism developments among the many threats to the SPA and recommends enforcement of use and conservation principles, improved management and sustainable development of tourism.<sup>10</sup> With the support of the government, scientific teams have been monitoring and caging nests each year to protect them from disturbances, as well as raising awareness among beach users; these efforts however cannot be fruitful in the absence of effective management of the SPA by local and national authorities to deal with the continuous expansion of economic activities and the subsequent increase of disturbances and destruction of the habitats.

### **DETAILED ASSESSMENT OF SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION IN FETHIYE SPA IN 2013**

*For a description of the Fethiye SPA nesting beaches see MEDASSET, September 2009.*

MEDASSET briefly visited the area in late April/early May 2013 and in mid August 2013 to assess and document the conservation situation on the nesting beaches in Fethiye SPA.

<sup>9</sup> See fore examples references in current document.

<sup>10</sup> Published by the GEF-funded 2009-13 project “Strengthening the system of Marine & Coastal Protected Areas of Turkey” which includes Fethiye-Göcek SPA among project sites. Although the project is tackling anthropogenic impacts in some of the SPA’s marine areas which will benefit sea turtle conservation, the project does not include implementation of conservation measures on the land area of the SPA. At the management level, the project aims to create the SPA’s business plan however implementation of effective management of the land area is not within the scope of the project. No management plan seems to exist for the entire SPA (marine and land areas). Use and conservation principles have been introduced in the marine area of the SPA’s Göcek Bay. It is unclear if upon the completion of the project, similar principles and zoning will be applied in the marine area of Fethiye Bay to regulate boat traffic (including water sports).

Since 2011, FETAB (Fethiye Turizm Altyapi Birliği) is responsible for the implementation of beach furniture management measures. Monitoring and conservation studies for the sea turtles population on Fethiye nesting beach have been undertaken by Pamukkale University during the last 3 years.

### 1. Monitoring and conservation

To our knowledge nest monitoring and caging started after the first nest was identified in the second half of May 2013.

### 2. Beach furniture

In Çalış nesting beach (see Fig. 1 for map):

- In Section A (nesting beach lined by promenade), as in 2012, two rows of beach furniture were placed on the beach, were well spaced and positioned outside the core nesting zone. However, the remaining beach area, the core nesting zone, where umbrellas and sunbeds are prohibited, was not kept clear and beach guests placed their personal umbrellas and tent sun shades (Fig 2). Sunbeds were turned on their sides at night, in order to not obstruct the passage of nesting females and hatchlings. Showers and changing cabins erected in 2012 remain on the nesting beach; shower water has been channelled to drain into the sea instead of directly onto the beach but drain blockage leads to runoff on the nesting beach.
- In Section B (nesting beach section not lined by promenade), multiple rows of densely spaced beach furniture were positioned by all restaurants, bars, and hotels, similar to previous years (Fig. 3). Additional beach furniture was installed by new “Calis Spor Cafe” (Fig. 4) including small tables and chairs, approximately 22 sunbeds and 19 umbrellas. New beach bar/disco “Bakrac” also installed new sunbeds and umbrellas on the nesting beach (Fig. 5). False carpeting was once again placed on the nesting beach in front of and around the “Surf Cafe” area together with dense beach furniture and bean bags, encroaching onto the nesting zone (Fig. 7-9). There was no effort to collect/stack beach furniture at night; regulations implemented in Section A do not seem to apply to Section B, a large part of which is under the jurisdiction of Çiftlik municipality that is a member of FETAB.

In Yanıklar, similar to 2011-2, both major hotels (Lykia Botanika and Majesty Club Tuana), placed two rows of beach furniture and arranged them so as to not to occupy the entire width of the beach. However, these are situated at the upper part of the beach and are not removed or repositioned during the night, thus hindering potential nesting.

In Akgöl, which was furniture-free till summer 2013, beach furniture and nine pavilions have been placed on the nesting beach and remain there on a 24hour basis (Fig. 23 & 25).

### 3. Signage

Lack of effective signage remains a problem, hence the vast majority of users would be unaware that the beach is a sea turtle nesting site and of the appropriate code of conduct. In Section A of Çalış nesting beach, where there are approximately two dozen beach entrances,<sup>11</sup> one sign was present on the promenade running parallel to the beach. An information desk is also operated during the evening on the promenade. In Section B of Çalış, throughout the approx. 1.8 km nesting beach, only two information signs were available to beach users, at a very small distance from each other, at the beginning of the beach, in the same inappropriate location as the sign erected in 2011 which had disappeared in 2012 (Fig. 10). One new sign was placed in the middle of Akgöl nesting beach (Fig. 11), in addition to the existing damaged (installed in 2011). In Yanıklar nesting beach, where there are more than six possible entry points, one sign was placed between “Yonca Lodge” and “Onur Camp” (Fig. 12) and the existing sign in front of hotel Lykia Botanika Sun & Fun Club is still present.

A more appropriate location of signage would be at each entry point, so that the public is informed about the existing regulations, e.g. that night access is prohibited, prior to their actual entry.

<sup>11</sup> i.e. steps leading from the promenade to the nesting beach

#### 4. Beach access

People accessed Çalış and Yanıklar nesting beaches at night, during prohibited hours (8pm-8am), and bonfires were lit on some occasions. In Çalış and Yanıklar, beachside businesses, including the new disco, operate during the night.

Vehicle ruts were visible on Section B of Çalış, in Yanıklar and in Akgöl beach (Fig. 13-15).

In Akgöl, new parking areas have been created by bulldozing of the riverbed and clearing of the vegetated area at the northern end of the nesting beach (see point No. 7 for more details).

In Section B of Çalış, a road running parallel to the nesting beach was constructed in April/May 2013, to offer a shorter route to the beach and the businesses operating on the beach (Fig. 16-17). It is unknown if the road construction was officially permitted and if the project was carried by local businesses or authorities. This road is providing major access along the backside of the beach. The area is being dug up and prepared for future construction.

#### 5. Light pollution

In addition to existing light pollution in Çalış Section B nesting beach, new disco “Bakrac” has installed and uses disco lighting equipment which light up the beach during night hours (Fig. 5). Public lights at Çalış Section A (promenade section) have been screened, however the lights from the numerous businesses that line the beach have not been effectively shaded and light pollution continues.

In Yanıklar, camping sites have placed a strong light (streetlight type) on the nesting beach, about 30 m from the waterline. Majesty Club Tuana hotel turned off pier lights after midnight. Lykia Botanika hotel removed lights from their pier. To minimise light pollution, the parts of the lights shining onto the nesting beach had been painted black by Lykia Botanika in previous years, but in 2013 the hotel seemed to have replaced the bulbs with new ones and these are no longer shaded. Light pollution in Yanıklar disorientate hatchlings emerging from nests on this beach, but also in Akgöl.

#### 6. Litter

Litter was observed on all nesting beaches.

Along Çalış Section A, waste containers were present at regular intervals at the mid-beach level, which contributed to less waste being observed on this beach. In the other nesting beach sections, some small containers were present. In Section B of Çalış nesting beach, some of the ditches dug in 2011 (as an ineffective method to hamper vehicles access) were still visible in 2013 and were full of waste (Fig.18).

#### 7. Buildings and structures

In Çalış nesting beach, Section B:

- “Bakrac”, an open-air beach bar/disco was created between “Surf Center” and “Koca Calis Restaurant” (Fig. 13) with one entrance on the new road (see point No. 4) and one on the beach. It has also placed a platform/stage on the beach near the waterline (Fig. 6). In addition, it has placed furniture on the nesting beach and uses light show equipment (see points No. 2 & 5).
- A new cafe, “Calis Spor Café”, opened between “Sunset Apartments” and “Surf Center” (Fig 13). The cafe’s wooden hut was installed on the nesting beach together with a cement patio in 2012<sup>12</sup> and has further encroached on the beach in 2013 (Fig.4 and point No.2).
- Two volleyball courts have been erected next to the new “Calis Spor Café” (Fig.4).
- The large wooden hut for storing surf equipment that was erected in 2012 on the beach was no longer present.

In Yanıklar, similar to 2011-2, the Lykia Botanika Hotel and Majesty Club Tuana Park volleyball pitches were not removed from the nesting beach (Fig. 19). A camping site has placed a wooden

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<sup>12</sup> T-PVS/Files 2012 42

pavilion and a permanently fixed large sunshade construction (about 13 m long) on the nesting zone (Fig. 20).

In Akgöl, at the northern end of the beach, the area between the beach and the road running parallel to the beach was completely cleared of natural vegetation, making way for parking space and a new small snack bar which placed beach furniture on the nesting beach (Fig 21-23). In addition, the streambed at the northern end of the beach was mechanically filled with sand and pebbles and is used as a parking area (Fig. 24). The stream is the outlet of a wetland/lake located just behind and to northwest of the beach, and is dry in the summer. As mentioned, an existing beach bar also placed beach furniture and 9 pavilions on the nesting beach (Fig. 25) and also erected a mobile barrier on the road behind the beach bar beyond which customers are asked to pay a fee for parking (as stated on the barrier)(Fig. 26).

## 8. Plantations and sand extraction

In Section B of Çalış, acacia trees and bushes planted since 2001 nesting beach have not been removed. Their shadow and the dense network of roots of the first lines of planted trees, has greatly obstructed sea turtle nesting on the remaining thin strip of sand between the pebble zone and the vegetation. The new businesses (disco and cafe) have planted trees in the beach zone and these are being extensively watered. The beachfront complex “Jiva Beach Resort” (established in 2012) and its neighbouring “Sunset Apartments” have introduced a line of decorative plants in the upper beach strip.

Sand extraction and mechanical ploughing has been recorded as a considerable problem for several years. In 2013, similar to 2012<sup>13</sup>, beach ploughing occurred in late April in Çalış and in Yanıklar.

## 9. Motorised water sports and fishing

Water sport activities directly off Yanıklar nesting beach continued (Fig 27). This is particularly the case between Lykia Botanika and Majesty Club Tuana hotels where there is continuous speedboat traffic (due to the fact that these hotels have installed private piers). The former EPASA reported that the boats’ propellers would be substituted with a propulsion system to avoid injury of turtle;<sup>14</sup> it is unknown if this measure has been applied.

Fishing activities off the nesting beaches were not monitored during the current assessment and observations are not available.

## 10. Shipyard/Drydock

No news has been received regarding the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment or on the decision regarding the shipyard construction in Akgöl nesting beach (also known as Karaot). However, the 2013 report ‘Economic Analysis of Fethiye-Göcek Special Environmental Protection Area’ mentions that “an EIA has been approved for a new boat repair zone in Karaot section”. MEDASSET, the IUCN and the Bern Convention have already expressed objection to such a project.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Guarding** needs to be reinforced and increased to enable correct implementation of management and conservation measures (control of beach access, correct beach zone use by visitors, recording and acting upon violations, etc). Guarding should commence at the start of the nesting season. The beach area not to be used by visitors in order to protect nests should be made evident via cordoning, signage or other effective means suitable for each beach area.
- **Scientific monitoring and nest protection** should continue to commence at the start of the nesting season to ensure protection of all nests, as the tourist season kicks off in April.
- **All sunbeds** should be removed from the beach at night, or rearranged in an upright position and secured or hung on the umbrellas. The number of sunbeds and umbrellas should not increase. In all cases, sunbeds should not be placed in the sections of the beaches that serve as prime nesting areas. Multiple rows of dense sunbeds and umbrellas need to be rearranged and reduced to permit

<sup>13</sup> Fig. 18 in Baskale et al. 2012

<sup>14</sup> MEDASSET, December 2011.

nesting turtles to access the beach and hatchlings to return to the sea unhindered. Fixed structures, such as pavilions and cabanas should not be allowed.

- **False carpeting, acacia trees and planted bushes** should be removed from the nesting beach.
- Water from **beach showers** should continue to be channelled to not directly run off onto the nesting beach, or beach showers should be relocated away from the beach.
- **Information sign** location should be corrected and additional signs should be installed at the start of the nesting season at all major entry points to the beaches.
- **Vehicle and visitor access** problems need to be tackled effectively. Fencing, that cannot be removed, should be installed and be complemented by effective guarding, signage at the points of entry, and education of residents, business owners and visitors. Bonfires, night parties, fireworks and camping should not be allowed.
- **Parking space:** appropriate areas that would not involve the flattening of dunes and removal of natural beach vegetation should be chosen.
- **Damaged sand dunes and vegetated areas should be restored to their natural state.**
- Remaining **unbuilt beach area** should be secured against development
- A code of conduct that will regulate fishing and motorised water sport **activities in the marine area** should be adopted and communicated to the local businesses and community. Speed restrictions and zoning should be applied to avoid injury of sea turtles during the day and night.
- **Lights:** business owners should be required to screen or paint with dark colours all lights shining onto the beach that cannot be switched off during night hours during the nesting and hatching season. This does not incur a high cost and is feasible along the entire Fethiye coastline. Light show equipment should be prohibited.
- **Litter:** a coordinated effort can be pursued so that beach clean-ups combined with awareness raising among locals can be conducted at the start of the nesting season and at the end of hatching season. Rubbish collection should be done manually and not with the use of heavy machinery (e.g. bulldozers). Daily litter collection could be combined with beach furniture collection/re-arrangement at the end of the day. Beach litter poses a lethal threat to hatchlings as it attracts predators and entraps hatchlings on their way to the sea. Beach litter blown into the marine area may also be consumed by nesting adult turtles.
- **No shipyard, drydock or marina should be constructed on the nesting beaches.**

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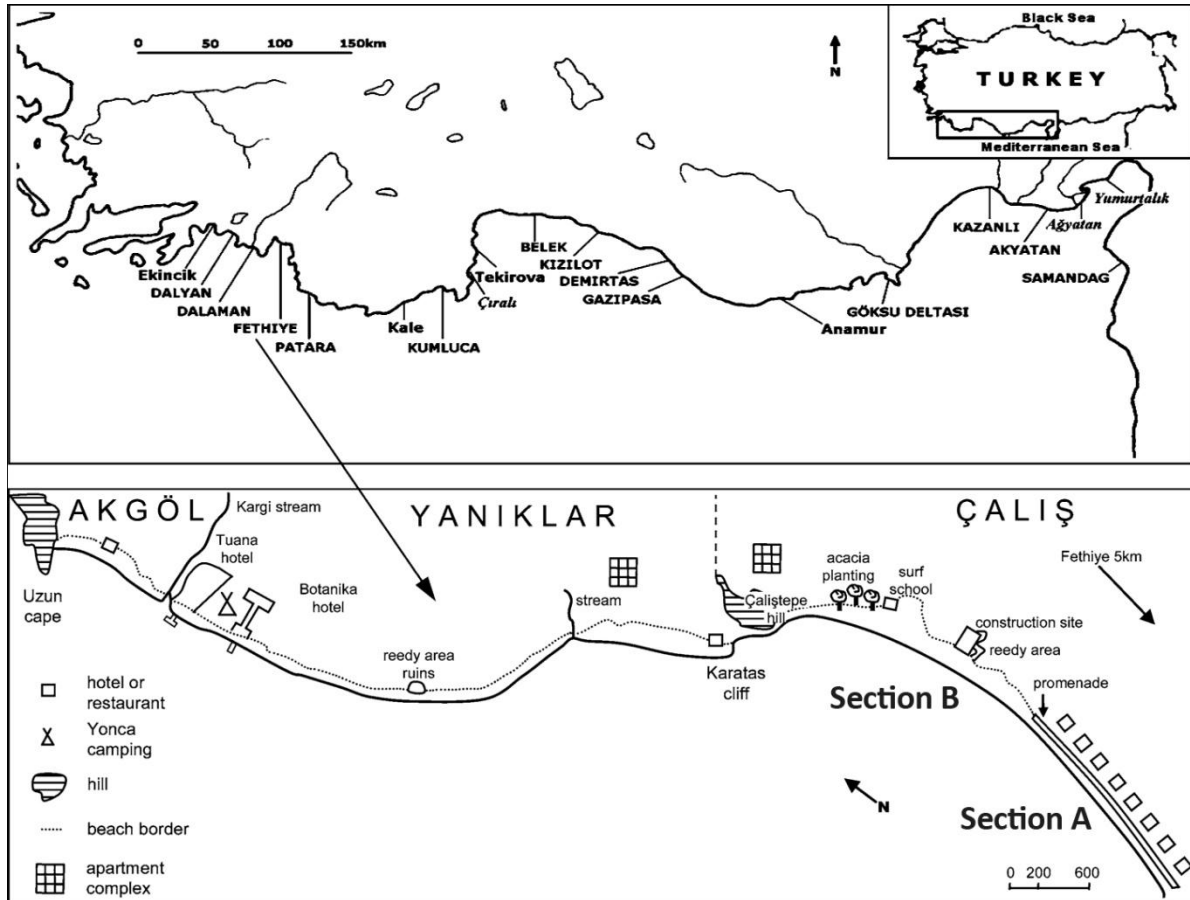


**RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE:**

Recommendation No. 66 (1998) on the conservation status of some nesting beaches for marine turtles in Turkey. Available online at: <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1487927&Site=COE>

Recommendation No. 24 (1991) on the protection of some beaches in Turkey of particular importance to marine turtles. Available online at: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1485887&Site=COE>

## MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS



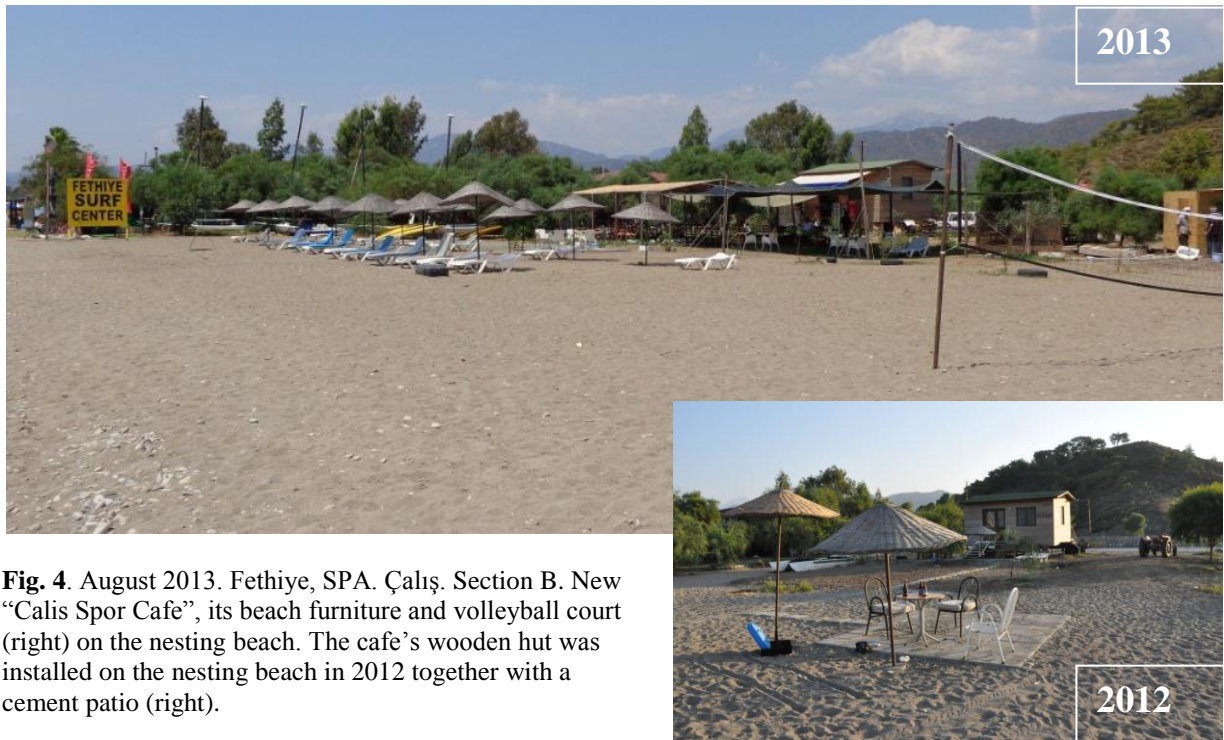
**Fig. 1.** Location of Fethiye among other important nesting beaches (top) and Fethiye nesting beach sub-sections (bottom). Developments since 2006-7 are not shown here. Source: Ilgaz *et al.*, 2007.



**Fig. 2a-b.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section A. The beach zone where umbrellas and sunbeds are not allowed was not kept clear and beach users placed their own umbrellas and tent sun shades. Note protective nest cages in this zone.



**Fig. 3.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Businesses, dense rows of permanently placed sunbeds, bean bags and sunshades occupy the entire former nesting zone.



**Fig. 4.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. New “Calis Spor Cafe”, its beach furniture and volleyball court (right) on the nesting beach. The cafe’s wooden hut was installed on the nesting beach in 2012 together with a cement patio (right).





**Fig. 5a-c.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. New disco/beach bar “Bakrac” inaugurated in 2013 on the nesting beach and includes a dance stage, light show and sound equipment (b-c). It also placed beach furniture and wooden platforms for beach furniture on the nesting beach (a).



**Fig. 6.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. New disco/beach bar “Bakrac” placed a large stage near the waterline which forms an impenetrable barrier for nesting turtles.





**Fig. 7a-b.** May/April 2013 (a) and August 2013 (b). Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Water sports equipment and false carpeting on nesting beach around “Surf Cafe”.



**Fig. 8a-b.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Rows of densely spaced beach furniture and carpeting on nesting beach around “Surf Cafe”, which are neither stacked nor collected at night.



**Fig. 9.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Watersport gear on nest in front of "Surf Cafe".



**Fig. 10.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Only two information signs were available to beach users (note sign in the foreground and sign in the background), placed at a very small distance from each other in the same inappropriate location as the sign erected in 2011 (note wooden stakes).



**Fig. 11.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Akgöl. New metal sign erected in the middle of the nesting beach.



**Fig. 12.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Yanıklar. New sign placed between "Yonca Lodge" and "Onur Camp".





**Fig. 13.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Vehicle ruts on nesting beach are indicative of poor beach access control.



**Fig. 14.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Yanıklar. Vehicle ruts on nesting beach.



**Fig. 15.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Akgöl. Vehicle ruts on nesting beach.



**Fig. 16.** Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Top: 2004 satellite imagery. Bottom: 2011 satellite imagery; note coastal buildup, plantations and beach use in bottom image in comparison with top image, i.e. areas A-C. Developments in 2012-2013 are highlighted in bottom image, from left to right: white dashed line is location of new road (2013), note existing road further inland; '1' is location of new disco "Bakrac" (2013); '2' is location of new "Calis Spor Café" (2013); '3' is location of "Jiva Beach Resort" (2012).





**Fig. 17a-d.** April/May 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Road construction works. See previous figure for location.



**Fig. 18a-b.** April/May 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Çalış. Section B. Litter on nesting beach (left) and in ditches dug using an excavator in 2011 (right).





**Fig. 19.** April/May 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Yanıklar. Hotel volleyball court on the nesting beach.



**Fig. 20.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Yanıklar. From forefront to back: wooden pavilion and permanently fixed sunshade construction (about 13 m long) on the nesting zone; note information sign in background.



**Fig. 21.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Akgöl. From left to right: polygon shows de-vegetated area, making way for parking space and new business. Cross shows location of new information sign. Rectangle shows location of 9 wooden pavilions. White thick line shows location of mobile barrier.



**Fig. 22.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Akgöl. Area cleared of vegetation at the end of the beach. Note new business with small hut and various beach equipment.





**Fig. 23.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Akgöl. A mix of beach furniture placed by the public and the new snack bar (in previous figure) at the end of the nesting beach. There is no beach zoning.



**Fig. 24.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Akgöl. The outlet of the stream at the end of the nesting beach was bulldozed and blocked, and is used as a parking area together with the area cleared of vegetation.



**Fig. 25.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Akgöl. Nine newly erected pavilions, sunbeds and umbrellas on nesting area. Note wooden sign right in front of the first pavilion, which was installed in 2011.



**Fig. 26.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Akgöl. Mobile barrier on the road behind the beach.



**Fig. 27.** August 2013. Fethiye, SPA. Yanıklar. Water sport activities directly off nesting beaches continued. Jetski (left) and motorboat are speeding within the area is marked with a buoy.



## **UPDATE REPORT BY THE NGO**

### **Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean**

#### **UPDATE ON LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE (*CARETTA CARETTA*) CONSERVATION MONITORING IN PATARA SPA, TURKEY**

**6<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

*Document presented by*

***MEDASSET - the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles***

***for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Standing Committee Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)***

### **BACKGROUND**

The problems threatening Patara Specially Protected Area (Antalya Province, Turkey) were first raised by MEDASSET in 1988 and the issue was subsequently discussed on a regular basis at the Standing Committee Meetings of the Bern Convention. In 1996, a case file was opened and Recommendation No. 54 was adopted. The case file remained open until 2001. MEDASSET continued to monitor and submit reports to the Standing Committee until 2009.

In September 2012, MEDASSET submitted a complaint on a large scale summer house construction project (400-750 villas) taking place within the Patara SPA and on the failure of the current land use and management plan to secure adequate protection for both the natural and archaeological site. The complaint also presented an interpretation of the multiple changes to the zoning and the management plan of Patara SPA, which made construction within the the 3rd Degree Archaeological protected area possible, in disregard of expert opinion provided by archaeologists and planners since 1978. The original plan did not allow any new permanent constructions in the 3rd Degree Archaeological protected area apart from those necessary to cater to the needs of the small village and envisaged the development of low-impact, small-scale tourism facilities, with the aim to maintain cultural, historical, archaeological and natural components of the site. No information on an EIA or carrying capacity study prior to the approval of the project is available. As described in the complaint, the project will impact the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nesting population, by increasing disturbances and habitat damage. To our knowledge the approval of the construction project was not matched with an updated plan to manage and mitigate the impacts of the increase in users of the archaeological and natural area, including the sea turtle nesting beaches.

### **2013 SUMMER UPDATE**

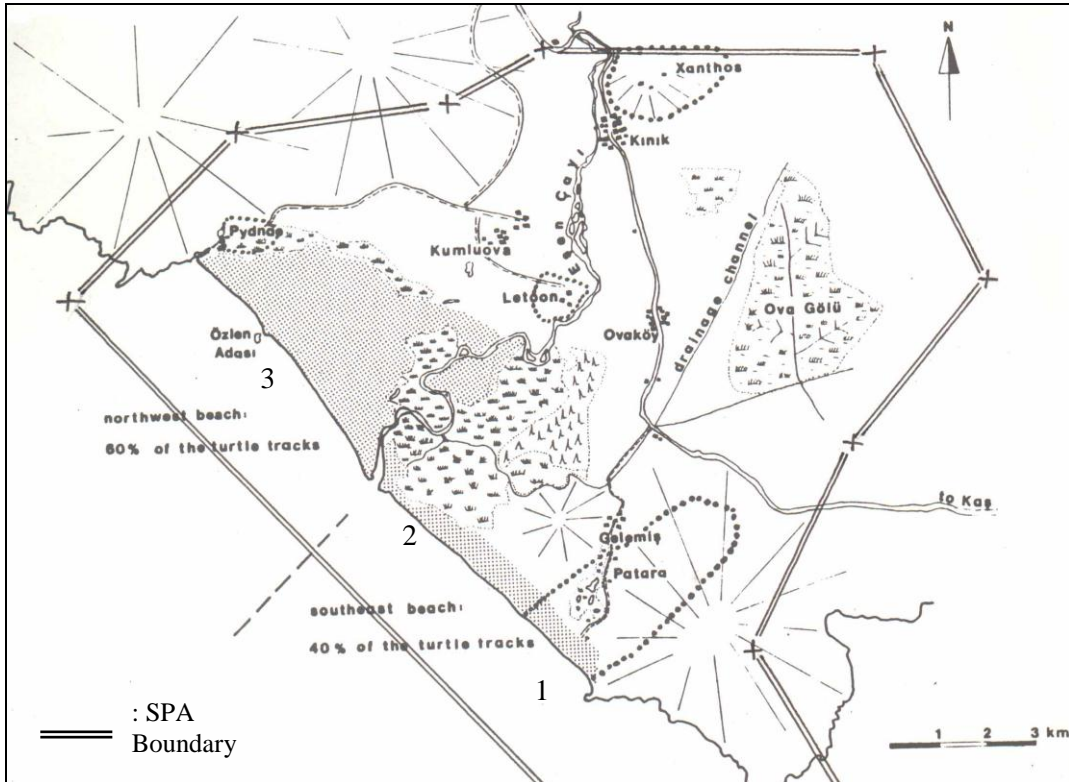
The construction of 27 villas (and swimming pools) by Ozlenen Deniz Housing Cooperative has been completed, and these could be inhabited by summer 2014. HITIT Housing Cooperative has announced that it will begin construction within the protected area on 15 October 2103 (document [2012 Yönetim Kurulu Faaliyet Raporu](#) available at <http://yenihitityapi.com>). We are unaware of when KUMKO Housing Cooperative will commence construction.

As regards the conservation status of the nesting beaches, signage is inadequate: although there are information signs at the Patara Beach main entrance, there were no signs at Özlen and Çayağzı beaches and at the Patara Beach entry point via the sand dunes (which is the closest entry point for the new villas). Unlike previous years, there were no guards to enforce conservation rules on the nesting

beaches. Litter is a problem in Çayağzı beach, especially close to the Eşen river outlet. Camping was documented in Özlen nesting beach. Visitors accessed the nesting beach at night, and bonfires were lit on some occasions. A fire occurred in the sand dune area on the 23rd of August 2013; a similar fire occurred in 2008.

The above is indicative of inadequate management and protection of the SPA. The current local population during the summer is ca. 1000. The population will increase by at least 10% once the 27 new villas are inhabited and by 300% once the entire project is completed (400-750 villas). It is evident that pressures and disturbances already occurring will increase likewise. The scale of the project should be urgently re-evaluated. A comprehensive action plan, that will strengthen management and ensure adequate protection of the natural and archeological site, is urgently needed together with the necessary financial and human resources that will ensure enforcement of regulations and measures.

We call upon the Bern Convention Standing Committee to consider whether the construction of 400-750 summer houses within Patara SPA is compatible with the Recommendations on the conservation and management of Patara beach: Recommendations No. 12 (1988), No. 24 (1991), No. 54 (1996) and No. 66 (1998). **We hereby wish to request that Complaint No.2012/9 be placed on the Agenda of the 33rd Meeting of the Standing Committee. MEDASSET would be ready to invite an expert on land use and heritage site management to further inform the Standing Committee, if requested by the Secretariat.**



**Fig. 1.** Patara SPA nesting beaches : Patara is No. 1, Çayağzı is No. 2 and Ozlen beach is No. 3



**Fig.2.** Satellite Map of SPA. Construction site pinpointed with white arrow, within the 3rd Degree Archaeological Site which is area in blue. Area in yellow is 1st Degree Archaeological Site; red line shows SPA borders. Red cross shows location of sand dune fire. Arrow shows beach entry point which will be used by villas, where no information sign is present.

## DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED TO THE BERN CONVENTION

- T-PVS (96) 53A: MEDASSET (P. Yilmaz, University of Akdeniz): Conservation of Loggerhead Turtles, *Caretta caretta*, and Construction Projects on the Beach of Patara (Turkey), 2 pages. (Follow-up report with Comments on the: 'Status Report on Patara Specially Protected Area, Turkey' by the Authority for the Protection of Special Areas, APSA (23/5/96)).
- T-PVS (96) 53: MEDASSET: Conservation of Loggerhead Turtles, *Caretta caretta*, and Construction Projects on the Beach of Patara (Turkey), 9 pages. (Brief Update on MEDASSET's action to "Save Patara" 1989-1996).
- T-PVS (97) 45: P. Yilmaz, University of Akdeniz: Marine Turtle Conservation in Patara, Turkey, follow-up report, 4 pages.
- T-PVS (98) 49: MEDASSET (additional information P. Yilmaz, University of Akdeniz): Specific Site, Marine Turtle Conservation in Patara, Turkey, 13 pages.
- T-PVS (99) 69: MEDASSET: Specific Site, *Caretta caretta* in Patara (Turkey), 11 pages. (Status Report and Review of Nature Conservation Measures).
- T-PVS (2000) 57: MEDASSET, (information supplied by P. Yilmaz, University of Akdeniz and Trevor Jones): Conservation of the marine turtle, *Caretta caretta*, in Patara Turkey, 13 pages. (Update Report and Review of Nature Conservation Measures).
- T-PVS (2001) 72: MEDASSET, (information supplied by P. Yilmaz, University of Akdeniz, Trevor Jones and 4 volunteers): Review of Nature Conservation Situation in Patara Spa, Turkey, 11 pages.
- T-PVS/Files (2002) 14: MEDASSET, (information supplied by P. Yilmaz, University of Akdeniz): Update Report and Review of Nature Conservation Measures in Patara SPA (Turkey), 10 pages.
- T-PVS/Files (2003) 12: prepared by Dr. Monica Aureggi, Update Report and Review of Nature Conservation Measures in Patara SPA (Turkey), 25 pages.



T-PVS/Files (2004) 13: Commissioned by MEDASSET, information supplied by T.A. Cutbush, A. Cutbush and Dr. P. Yilmaz, Update Report and Review of Nature Conservation Measures in Patara SPA (Turkey), 7 pages.

T-PVS/Files (2005) 09: Commissioned by MEDASSET, information supplied by Dr Pamir Yilmaz and Stephanie Perkin. Update report and review of nature conservation measures in Patara Spa (Turkey), 9 pages.

Published without a T-PVS reference (2007): Commissioned by MEDASSET, information supplied by T.A. and A. Cutbush. Update Report and Review of Nature Conservation Measures in Patara Spa, Turkey, 7 pages.

Published without a T-PVS reference (2009): 13th Update Report and Review of Nature Conservation Measures in Patara SPA, Turkey, 11 pages.

Published without a T-PVS reference (2012): Complaint to the Bern Convention addressing the threats facing the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) nesting beaches in Fethiye, Muğla province of Turkey. Available online at:

<http://medasset.org/en/resource-centre/publications/technical-reports-position-papers-and-policy-recommendations/174-complaint-to-the-bern-convention-construction-of-summer-houses-within-patara-spa-turkey>

T-PVS/Files(2013)09: MEDASSET. Update Report on conservation issues relevant to marine turtles and their habitats in Turkey, 3 pages.

## UPDATE REPORT BY THE NGO

### Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean

March 1st 2013

*Document presented by*

***MEDASSET - the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles***

***for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Standing Committee Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)***

MEDASSET hereby reports on conservation issues relevant to marine turtles and their habitats in the Mediterranean, in light of the upcoming Bern Convention Bureau Meeting (8 April 2013).

#### **TURKEY**

##### **1. Patara SPA**

With reference to the Secretariat's letter dated 1 February 2013 (Bern Convention request of report to Turkish authorities regarding complaint No.2012/9), acknowledging the fact that Rec. No. 66 (1998) applies to both Fethiye SPA and Patara SPA, and although we take stock of needs for time-effective approaches, we wish to urge the Secretariat to consider the complaints lodged for Fethiye SPA and Patara SPA as distinct: the complaint and the subsequent update reports submitted to the Secretariat referring to Fethiye SPA highlight the lack of implementation of conservation and management measures, as well as the construction of new hotels and other buildings on the nesting beaches; on the other hand, the problems highlighted in our complaint referring to Patara SPA at this stage focus on the ongoing large scale construction projects taking place within the protected area and failure of the current land use and management plan to secure adequate protection status to the SPA at both the ecological and archaeological heritage management level. Information on sea turtle conservation and management in Patara SPA by the authorities will be most valuable, however, relevant detailed information addressing the issues raised in the complaint and a clear position of the authorities regarding the current and planned developments within the SPA, should be primarily sought. **We hereby wish to request that Complaint No.2012/9 be placed on the Agenda of the 33rd Meeting of the Standing Committee. MEDASSET would be ready to invite an expert on land use and heritage site management to further inform the Standing Committee, if requested by the Secretariat.**

##### **2. Fethiye SPA – Possible new file**

With reference to the statement made by the Delegate of Turkey at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Standing Committee Meeting (2012), that the images presented during the Meeting by MEDASSET on the situation in Fethiye SPA made him 'uncomfortable' and that the authorities would monitor the situation more closely, we wish to reiterate our request for a detailed report by the Turkish authorities with an **account of conservation and management measures to be applied in Fethiye SPA before and during the 2013 nesting season.**

**The latest scientific evidence confirms the continued decline of nest numbers** in Fethiye SPA, due to poor management and protection of the habitat. The abstract of a poster presentation at the 2013 International Sea Turtle Symposium in Baltimore, USA, titled: *Decline of loggerhead turtle nests on Fethiye Beach, Turkey* (Katilmis *et al.*; full abstract attached) with 2011-2012 nesting data, states:

*...the number of nesting turtles is still in decline at Fethiye beach. The main reasons of the decrease can be excessive use of the beach by the people,*

*lights from the back side of the beach, and boat traffic on the shore. Such a potential negative trend at a key Turkish nesting beach and need more sharp effective conservation programs.*

### **3. Kazanli – Follow up on Case File No. 2000/1**

We wish to remind the Secretariat that there has been no news or report on progress for the safe disposal of the 1.5 million tons of highly toxic solid waste located right next to Kazanli's most important green turtle nesting site, posing a threat to the environment and human health. Recommendation No. 95 (2002) on the conservation of marine turtles in Kazanli beach was last on the agenda of the Standing Committee in 2009. During the 30<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee Meeting in 2010, though Kazanli was not on the Meeting's agenda, and following MEDASSET's intervention during the Meeting's discussion on Recommendation No. 66 (1998), very brief information was provided by the Turkish delegate on the issue. **MEDASSET urges the Secretariat to follow up through the Turkish Government regarding progress made over the past three years for the removal, neutralisation and safe disposal of the toxic waste, as well as information about the sea turtle conservation programme in Kazanli. We wish to request that a follow-up of Recommendations relevant to the Kazanli case be included in the 2013 Standing Committee Meeting Agenda.**