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Mediterranean News

Turkey

Illegal diving around Karaburun

According to our research and the information gathered from artisanal fishermen, illegal diving activities are taking place along the Karaburun peninsula in the Bay of Izmir region.

These divers appear to be taking advantage of fish migrations starting in October and extending throughout the winter. Some have also been accused of using chemicals to increase their catch. Reasoning that the divers pose a serious threat to marine life in the area, AFAG communicated its concerns in a formal letter to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, requesting that action be taken to clamp down on their activities. In March 2003, the Ministry replied to our appeal, requesting that AFAG appoint personnel to draw up a schedule for collaborative guarding efforts with the Ministry's civil servants based in Izmir. – N. Ozan Veryeri, SAD-AFAG.

“Tarçin” the pup is growing up

AFAG Mediterranean Project staff discovered a newborn pup during a routine cave check on 6 October 2002. The pup, a male, was later named “Tarçin” (Cinnamon) because of his colour. Subsequent checks determined that the pup appears to be in good health and continues to grow.

Tarçin is now approximately 7 months old. – Ahmet Bolat, SAD-AFAG.

KOM chooses monk seals this year

KOM, one of the world's famous swimwear companies, has this year chosen the Mediterranean monk seal as a focus for its annual design competition. The three best designs will be used in KOM's 2004 summer collection.

KOM will also donate a proportion of the income derived from subsequent sales to SAD-AFAG.

AFAG gratefully acknowledges KOM's contribution to the conservation of the monk seals and their habitats. – Çağrı Oner, SAD-AFAG.

AFAG begins new UNDP-GEF/SGP-funded projects

In April 2003, AFAG began implementing two United Nations Development Program – Global Environmental Facility/Small Grants Program (UNDP-GEF/SGP) projects.

One is the joint “SGP Networking Project” which runs in cooperation with the Bird Research Society (KAD) and Bugday Ecological Life Services. The main objectives of this initiative are to organise exchange visits between projects, to document the programme and project news and stories both through digital and print media, and to disseminate the lessons learned on a “best practice” basis.

This project will last for 18 months and is eligible for renewal if project performance warrants it.

The second project focuses on the production of educational and public awareness material for the Foça and Karaburun areas, which is to be distributed among local people, including fishermen and children.

Among some of the materials to be produced are posters on marine and coastal life in the Foça Specially Protected Area and the adjacent Karaburun Peninsula, a monk seal information brochure, monk seal stickers, a cartoon game and a children's drawing book. – Yesim Caglayan, SAD-AFAG.

Seal Watch 4 update

AFAG received the financial support of the Netherlands-based Prince Bernhard Nature Conservation Foundation to implement its Seal Watch 4 project.

Since the last update, provided in November's issue of TMG [see [Seal Watch commences on Karaburun](#), TMG 5 (2): November 2002], we have recorded some 4000 hours of video footage from the cave on the Karaburun peninsula but, unfortunately, no new seal images.

The principal reason for this was a technical glitch with the main camera, which focuses on the most often used part of the cave. The potential for disturbance during the seal breeding season prevented us from entering the cave in an attempt to fix this technical problem.

The entire system was removed from the cave in March. We plan to re-install it in May following necessary repairs. – Harun Güçlüsoy, SAD-AFAG.

AFAG outreach to schools

AFAG's educational activities continue to bring the monk seal conservation message to schools, universities and other establishments.

Between December 2002 and March 2003, 23 presentations on the monk seal and on marine conservation were given to 6 schools, 2 universities and 2 organizations in Ankara and in Izmir – mainly on the Karaburun peninsula.

The presentations reached approximately 1,500 pupils, students and other people. – Nuray Veryeri & Yesim Caglayan.

AFAG 2003 media sponsor – The Gate magazine

The Gate magazine, distributed through major airports, prestigious hotels and some airlines in Turkey, has become AFAG's media sponsor for 2003, and has also adopted a monk seal through the organisation's foster programme [see "[Adopt a Seal](#)", TMG 5 (2): November 2002].

The Gate, which won the "Skalite 2002" award – known as the Oscars of Tourism – will publish the AFAG logo and an appeal to "Save the Mediterranean seal" on its cover page this year as part of the sponsorship deal.

In Boat Show 2003, held between 14-23 February, The Gate also displayed a large seal photograph on their stand which attracted considerable public attention. – Yesim Caglayan, SAD-AFAG.

Turkey's second marine patrolling system launched



The new, purpose-built patrol boat for Aydinlik.

Drawing on experience gained from guarding activities within the Foça Specially Protected Area, a new patrol boat has been built for the important monk seal coasts of Aydinlik in the Cilician Basin.

Purchased through the AFAG-WWF SMAP initiative, [see [Coastal zone management project commences](#), TMG 5 (1): May 2002], the patrol boat will be operated in cooperation with the Local Governorship, Fisheries Cooperative and SAD-AFAG.

The boat, named "Deniz Koruma 01" (Marine Conservation 01) will be operational within a few months, manned by local guards who have previously undergone training in the Foça SPA. – Harun Güçlüsoy, SAD-AFAG.

Fishery banned along Mersin coasts

On 6 February 2003, SAD-AFAG participated in the Mediterranean Region Fishery Consultancy Committee Meeting – held in Antalya and organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs – where many issues were discussed that have an important bearing on the survival of the monk seal and its marine ecosystem. The most important result of the meeting was the banning of the Turkish *lampara* fishery (a form of night purse-seine fishing – *gırgır* in Turkish, *gri-gri* in Greek – utilising powerful lights) along the Cilician Basin coasts, from Anamur (Mersin) to the Syrian border. – Ahmet Bolat, SAD-AFAG.



Trawlers condemned in Mersin.

Monk seal deaths

Last November we received distressing reports of monk seal deaths on two occasions. The first incident occurred at Çesme's Altinyunus Marina, on Turkey's northern Aegean coast. A subsequent autopsy on site indicated that the animal – a pup born during the same year – had drowned [see [Snared and drowned](#), TMG 4 (1): May 2001].

Before even recovering from the shock of this incident, we received word that a dead adult female seal had been found by wardens within the Aydın (Dilek Peninsula) National Park. The mammary glands of the seal were still full, leading us to believe that an orphaned seal might still be in the area. Despite strenuous efforts, however, the pup could not be found.

As the Park lies adjacent to the Greek islands we also contacted MOm rescue staff in Athens, in the hope that the organisation's Rescue Network might find the animal. Sadly, no news of the pup was ever received, possibly suggesting that it, too, had died.

Another sad event occurred in January 2003, when a dead adult seal was found in Karapınar on the Karaburun Peninsula, adjacent to the Foça Specially Protected Area. A subsequent necropsy revealed that she had been killed. Immediately after the incident, an investigation was mounted by AFAG staff, Gendarmerie officers and Urla public prosecutors in an effort to trace the culprits.



The adult monk seal killed on the Karaburun Peninsula.

Sufficient evidence was gathered to implicate 4 fish farm operators in the crime. The men were accused (file no. 2003/175) by prosecutors and were requested to pay the set penalty within 10 days (€200 from each of the accused). Since the accused reject the charges against them, however, and have failed to meet the fine, they will now face trial in public court. If found guilty, the penalty for each will rise to €400, plus a €4000 administration fine. AFAG's staff are following the case. – Harun Güçlüsoy & N. Ozan Veryeri, SAD-AFAG.

Further progress for coastal zones project

The following progress has been made within our EU-funded project, "Conservation and Management of Biological Hot Spots – Forming a Mediterranean Network":

Management plans: As detailed in the previous issue of TMG [see [Progress reported in coastal zones project](#), TMG 5 (2): November 2002], detailed coastal zone management (CZM) plans have been prepared for Foça-Yeni Foça-Karaburun in the Aegean and Aydıncık in the Cilician Basin, and were submitted to the Ministry of Environment in December 2002 (2 of 5 "Important Monk Seal Sites" selected by the National Monk Seal Committee).

However, since the new government in Turkey plans to combine the two current ministries of Forestry and Environment, the meeting scheduled in March 2003 in Ankara – a meeting that had been expected to advance the conservation process considerably – has been postponed indefinitely.

Third NFZ in the Cilician to be proposed: Prior to the Aydıncık Fishing Cooperative Meeting on 11 March 2003, bilateral talks and discussions on the importance of No-Fishing Zones (NFZs) for the recovery of depleted local fish stocks were held with a majority of the artisanal fishermen in Aydıncık.

At the meeting, organised in the Cooperative's office, two provisional NFZs were identified by consensus at Kucuk Island and Sapli Island off Aydincik. The former is an important breeding site for Audouin's gull while the latter also incorporates an important monk seal cave. The creation of NFZs at these sites will soon be officially recommended by AFAG and the Aydincik Fishing Cooperative to the Advisory Group of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Aydincik Fishing Cooperative is now active: As an integral part of the AFAG project, which seeks to bring local fishermen into the conservation process, aid was provided to the Aydincik Fishing Cooperative. A 500 litre deep freeze and office equipment was provided through AFAG, while the premises are being made available rent-free by Aydincik Municipality. The Cooperative office, which officially opened its doors on 11 March, is already acting as a much-needed meeting place and interactive focal point for the local fishermen. – Harun Güçlüsoy, SAD-AFAG.



Fishermen in the new Aydincik Fishing Cooperative.

Patrol boat resumes guarding duty

The Foça SPA patrol boat *Cevre* was "beached" between October 2002 and April 2003 because funds to cover engine maintenance and repair costs could not be found.

As a result of considerable effort by AFAG, involving bilateral talks and correspondence with the relevant government offices, the required funds were finally obtained from the Izmir Environment Foundation (4 billion TL, approximately €2,250), the Municipality of Foca (1 billion TL), the Local Council of Foça (0.5 billion TL) and the Foça Fishing Cooperative (0.5 billion TL).

It is especially noteworthy that this is the first time that the Fishing Cooperative has contributed to *Cevre's* service costs.

The ultimate goal, if possible, is to cover all these expenses through the Cooperative.

For further repair of the boat, AFAG also contributed 1 billion TL, renewing the vessel's seats and electrical system.

A windscreen, a new battery and oil tank will also be added. – Harun Güçlüsoy, SAD-AFAG.

Club Salima sponsors bulletin

Club Salima, Antalya, has become an official sponsor of AFAG's bulletin *Akdeniz Gezgini* (Mediterranean Voyager).

Now in its 15th issue, the quarterly bulletin is distributed to around 1500 stakeholders in Turkey and abroad. AFAG gratefully acknowledges Club Salima's contribution. – Yesim Caglayan, SAD-AFAG.

Ecotourism experiment bears fruit

The first phase of an ecotourism experiment, designed to test the suitability of a sustainable Mediterranean monk seal conservation model in the Cilician Basin, Turkey, has been successfully accomplished [see [Cilicia on my Mind](#), this issue].

Our team in the Cilician Basin (Mersin) is running a conservation project that focuses on the ecological and socio-economic importance of a Marine Protected Area created for the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal.

The Kizilliman MPA covers a very large area (16x12 nautical miles) that is off-limits to large-scale fisheries, and also incorporates a network of small, no-take-zones established in front of the monk seal breeding caves. On land, a 75 km coastal band has also been set aside by the Ministry of Culture as a 1st degree natural asset, offering effective terrestrial habitat protection [see [Cilician Basin responding to treatment](#), TMG 3(2): 2000]. One of the major aims of the ongoing conservation project, sponsored by the United Nations Development Program GEF/SGF, is to create a sense of ownership for the MPA, especially among local artisanal fishermen.

Anticipating the potentially negative consequences that might arise by imposing restrictions upon the activities of local people living around the MPA, we consider it of utmost importance to address economic losses created by such regulations, and to investigate supplementary or alternative sustainable economic solutions that will compensate for their losses and thus avoid future pressure on the recovering ecosystem.

Many examples from around the globe indicate that, if local people can gain sufficiently from the sustainable use of such MPAs, they would be less likely to exploit the already over-fished ecosystem, and would be more likely to protect their asset for the future. In monk seal conservation, there are only very few alternatives available that could involve local people as constructive partners in protection practices, while also generating sufficient revenues to be economically viable.

One is ecotourism, in which local communities benefit from nature conservation in many areas around the world.



Cilician seal sighting.

In this context, and by carefully researching the available natural, scenic, historical and accommodation resources in and near the critically endangered Mediterranean monk seal habitat, a trial ecotourism initiative was launched last year. The ecotourists who took part in the trial were a special group organised by our partners in this initiative, the Italian [Gruppo Foca Monaca](#), and whose primary incentive was to support the conservation of the monk seal as implemented in the Kizilliman marine protected area.

The main aims of the trial were:

- to examine ecotourism as a viable sustainable income option for the local community, and thereby, to enhance a sense of ownership for the marine protected area as an asset, and
- to determine its applicability to the area as a potential conservation tool with minimum impacts and manageability.

Bearing in mind that the ultimate aim of the programme is to secure the survival of the critically endangered monk seal and its habitat, and in order not to increase the existing human pressure on the species, more diverse ecotourism resources were investigated and an inventory of alternative ecotourism products was prepared. As such, the species was used more as a symbol rather than as the “product” itself, with natural landscapes, other wildlife, people, archaeology and the protected area as a whole forming the entire ecotourism package.

The experimental trip took place between 25 October and 3 November 2002.

In total, eight enthusiasts joined the tour, led by the Gruppo Foca Monaca’s Dr. Luigi Guarrera, who is also one of the initiators of the ongoing Cilician seal conservation project.



Participants of the first phase.



Cilician coastline.

Our first impression after the experimental trip is that, if small groups of up to ten people continue to visit the Kizilliman MPA area on a regular basis in the off-season months – under the organization and supervision of the conservation project – this might provide a working model for government agencies and the managers of protected areas to undertake the legal adjustments necessary to achieve an effective ecotourism infrastructure.

Legal definitions and the status of Marine Protected Areas, as well as pertinent ecotourism legislation could be developed simultaneously, and the process hastened by the availability of a working model. To start the ball rolling, following the completion of the trial tour in the Cilician MPA, a letter highlighting the need for such ecotourism legal definitions was sent to the relevant Ministries, and the Coast Guard Headquarters.

The next step of the experiment is to involve local guides during the forthcoming tour, planned for 24 October to 2 November 2003. The aim is to encourage community involvement and a sense of ownership for the MPA. The training will focus on managing and minimizing visitor impacts on wildlife, environment and culture; with education focusing on the concepts of ecotourism, as well as drawing on lessons learnt during the first experimental trip. We

hope that ecotourism will prove an effective tool in ultimately reaching that point where the habitat will accommodate both the monk seal and its human populace in peace. – Ali Cemal Gucu and Gul Gucu, IMS/METU.

For information about the next ecotourism expedition to the Cilician Basin, please write to Gruppo Foca Monaca at grupfoca@tin.it or visit the web site www.gruppofocamonaca.it.

Further reading

Gucu, G. and A. C. Gucu. 2003. Is ecotourism an appropriate tool to ensure sustainable Mediterranean monk seal conservation in the Cilician Basin, Turkey? Evaluation report of the experimental Eco-tourism application in Bozyazi – Mersin. Middle East Technical University Institute of Marine Sciences: 1-33. [Available in the [Monachus Library](#)]

Guarrera, L. 2003. [Cilicia on my Mind](#). TMG Guest Editorial, this issue.

NET WATCH

Mass tourism versus monk seals...

“Tourist development also poses a major threat, as was the case at the Asprokremnos coast on the Akamas, where monk seals had bred in caves until they were driven away by explosions. The blasts were carried out, illegally, to make space for a massive hotel complex, the Ecological Movement said.

Along with turtles and dolphins, the monk seal has been a protected species since 1971, and anyone found trying to kill or catch one can be fined £5,000 and/or spend six months in jail.”

Source: Rare monk seal makes an appearance in Paphos harbour. Cyprus Mail, Thursday, May 22, 2003. <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/May/22/news6.htm>.