

THE CONSERVATION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL IN TURKEY: FOÇA PILOT PROJECT

(1) Güçlüsoy H., (2) Theunissen M., and (3) Savaş Y.

(1,2,3) SAD/AFAG Mediterranean Seal Research Group, P.K. 12, 35680 Foça, Turkey.

The Foça Pilot Project was initiated in order to ensure continuity of the already started conservation efforts by the National Monk Seal Committee of Turkey in 1993 as it determined Foça as the pilot area due to the conservation efforts of the Foça Local Monk Seal Committee in 1991. The project is financed by WWF-International Mediterranean Programme Office. In 1992, the boundaries of the conservation area in Foça (FPA) were set by the "Decree No.27" which regulates the harvesting of the aquatic products banning the trawler and purse-seine fishery.

The monitoring programme of the seals aims to estimate the population, to identify the individuals, their preference in habitat usage. 11 potential seal caves are being checked for seal usage twice a week by the seals if weather permits. Observations have been performed and photographs of the individuals taken, compared and evaluated for identification purposes. Furthermore, sighting information was collected mainly from artisanal fishermen.

11 potential caves have been visited 1121 times and 156 (13.9 %) times evidence of seal presence was found since July 1994. 9 seals, 2 of which were born inside the FPA, have been identified. One of the pups born drowned in a fishing net. 538 sighting information of which 165 were collected by the project team have been collected in the FPA..

The public awareness programme aims to reach local people, volunteers, trainees and tourists. Every year the programme starts by contacting all people and organisations related to tourism to ask their co-operation to inform their guests about the protected area. Further activities: manning a market stand in summer, visiting the daily tour boats, creating an attractive visitor centre and starting a volunteer/trainee programme for Turkish and foreign people.

YEAR	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97
No of people reached	116	818	3609	5424
Publications, TV, radio	47	39	21	45
Symposia and meetings (national and international)	-	5	3	7

Additionally, environmental education programmes have been performed at primary, secondary and high schools in Foça: field activities, theatre plays, drawing and writing contests, coast watch activities (all focused on the monk seal and its ecosystem). Meanwhile special training courses were given to teachers of various schools.