

**REPORT OF MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL
HABITAT SURVEY ALONG SW TURKISH COAST
PERFORMED JOINTLY
BY SAD-AFAG & IFAW
July 2007**

SAD-AFAG

**Underwater Research Society
Mediterranean Seal Research Group**

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Ankara**



The Underwater Research Society - Mediterranean Monk Seal Research Group (SAD-AFAG) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) undertook an extensive survey between Dalyan Beach and Antalya, South West of Turkey, in search of possible breeding caves and habitats of Mediterranean monk seals this summer. IFAW members Anna Moscrop, Richard McLanaghan, Magnus Danbolt, Tim Lewis, Olly Boisseau, Evelyn Philpott and SAD-AFAG team members Cem Orkun Kır aç, Harun G u l soy, Volkan H rsever and Zafer Kızılkaya spent two weeks between 15 and 27 July 2007 on board IFAW's marine mammal research vessel, 'Song of The Whale', following the entire coastline, which is around 500 km. in total. The survey teams in inflatable boats checked the coastline with slow speeds between 2 to 8 n. miles per hour to spot coastal caves with surface or underwater entrances. Scuba dives were made, where necessary, by SAD-AFAG team members in order to locate caves with underwater entrances. Each cave including those judged suitable for breeding was noted and carefully mapped for future studies. 'Song of The Whale' was constantly in radio contact and followed the survey boat at a safe distance from land.

The survey area in Fethiye Bay comprised the end of east coasts near Cape Iblis and some of the Gocek Islands as the rest of the bay had been previously investigated by SAD-AFAG. Of the five caves discovered in Fethiye Bay, one contained evidence of seal activity/presence. Between Fethiye Bay and Oludeniz Beach, teams encountered three promising caves. The geologically unique and totally unspoiled coastline between Oludeniz and Patara Beach represented some of the best monk seal habitat discovered. Rocky high sea cliffs with little or no protected anchorage sites keep this area tourist free in almost every season. Interviews with fishermen along the route reveal that the number of monk seals in the area is much higher than SAD-AFAG estimated. The research team discovered eight more caves in this area, one of which contained seal traces.

The coastline from Patara Beach to Finike is one of the most important monk seal habitats studied and previously noted by SAD-AFAG. Diving centers in Kalkan and Kas report numerous sightings of monk seals. The survey team discovered eight promising caves in the area; two of which need immediate attention. Mavi Magara (Blue Cave), a very famous cave near Kalkan, and another cave in the Kekova area, have seal traces with very promising breeding beach and platforms. Unfortunately both caves have entrances large enough to enable tourist boats, kayaks and jet-skis to enter. SAD-AFAG points out that preventing people entering these two important caves is crucial for the protection of the breeding habitat in the area. The team also points to other ecological highlights observed in the area, including the third breeding colony of the endangered Audouin's Gull (*Larus audouinii*) discovered in the islands off Kas,



Turkey and abundant numbers of Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*) in the study area.

Song of The Whale sailed east of Finike along the coast of Bey Daglari National Park (between Cape Gelidonya and Kemer) where rugged sea cliffs and limestone walls dominate. The research team discovered numerous caves in the area, however; only one or two contained suitable breeding platforms inside, otherwise excellent resting caves for seals. SAD-AFAG considers installing artificial platforms in some of those caves in the future. Off Cape Gelidonya in Besadalar (Five Islands), the expedition team observed two adult male monk seals' territorial behaviors for over an hour. Kemer was the most easterly point of the expedition. In interviews, fishermen affirmed the existence of a healthy population of monk seals in the area and to the research teams surprise complained about the damage of dolphins to fishing nets rather than seals..

Turning west, Song of The Whale sailed to the last survey destination of the expedition. In the offshore waters of Fethiye Bay, we encountered a large sperm whale and observed it for 15 minutes before a deep dive.

Located between Marmaris and Fethiye, Dalyan Beach is a famous loggerhead turtle nesting habitat under huge cliffs on the east side. Between Dalyan Beach and Cape Kurtoğlu at the east corner of Fethiye Bay- unspoiled rocky coastline including Aşı Bay and Cape Disibilmez contains spectacular monk seal habitats. The research team found five caves with great potential for breeding grounds.

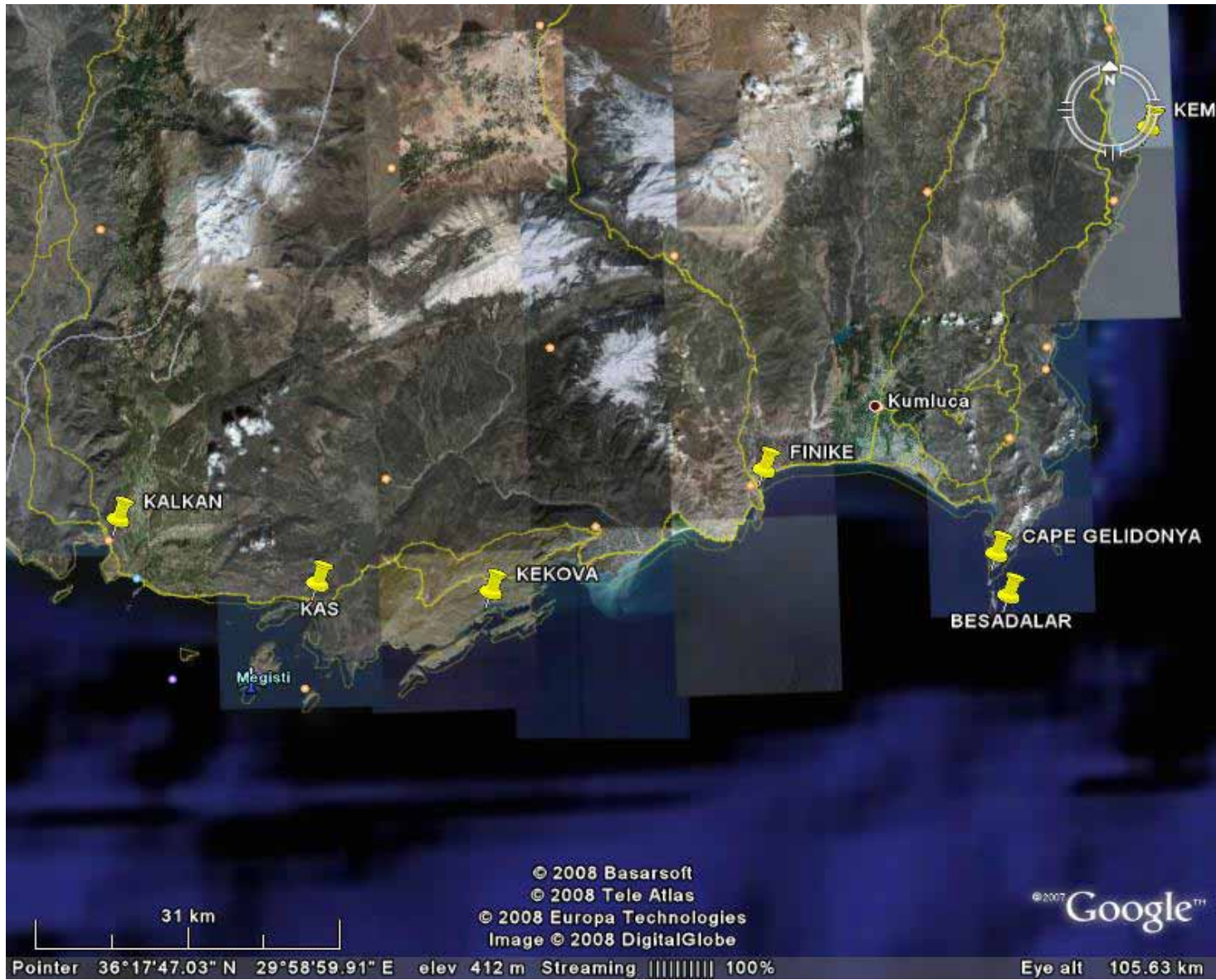
Overall, the research team discovered 29 possible breeding caves between Dalyan and Kemer. An unspoilt coastline, together with seal traces in the caves give researchers a lot of hope for the future status of seals in the region. The area between Oludeniz and Patara beach especially, which has been a question mark for long years, come out with very promising figures. In June 2008, SAD-AFAG commences a three-year surveillance project between Fethiye Bay and Patara Beach by installing camera systems inside the caves. In the light of this surveillance, monk seal population dynamics including the number of pups born will be available for the first time over an extensive habitat area.

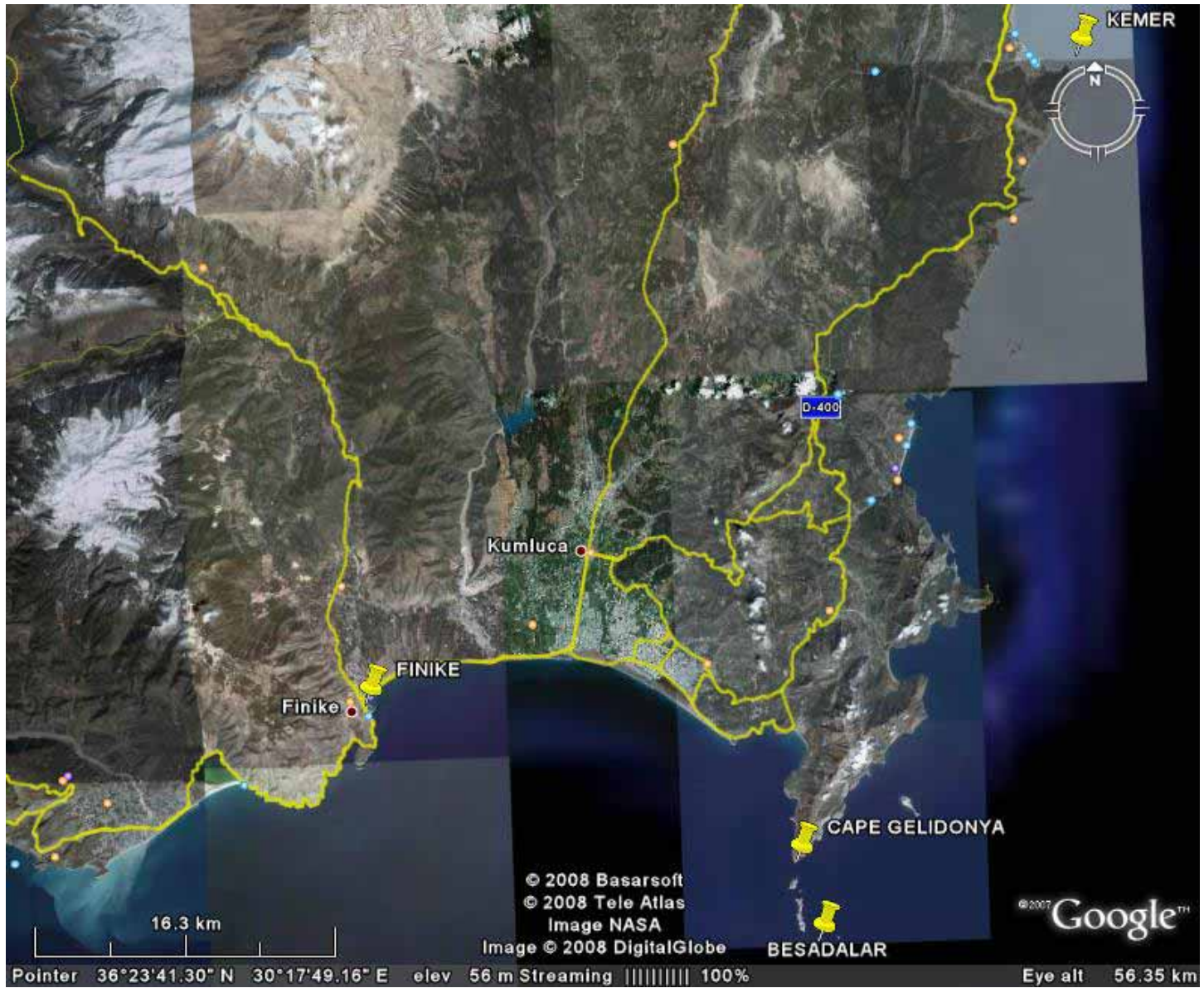
This successful cooperation between IFAW and SAD-AFAG yielded the research and the findings will benefit for monk seal population of SW Turkey through further conservation activities.



Fig-1 : SW Turkish coast monk seal survey area (between Kemer, Antalya and Dalyan Beach) with main locations.









Annex: Survey photos



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey, Fethiye Iblis Cape vicinity, SW Turkey 16.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Zafer Kızılkaya



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Prior to cave diving. Levent Yüksel, Murat Draman and Magnus Danbolt. Kaş, SW Turkey, 19.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kırac



IFAW & SAD AFAG Survey, Near Patara, SW Turkey
Anna Moscrop, Richard Mc Lanaghan and Ollie Boisseau 17.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG Cem Orkun Kirac



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Divers ready for cave diving.
Zafer Kızılkaya and Murat Draman. Kaş, SW Turkey, 19.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kırac



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Magnus Danbolt and Harun Güçlüsoy approaching Kekova Island near Kaleköy to check monk seal caves. Kaş, SW Turkey, 19.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kırac



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. SOTW in mission, Kekova. Kaş, SW Turkey, 19.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kırac







IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Kaleköy from SOTW approaching.
Kaş, SW Turkey, 19.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kırac



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Audouin's gull *Larus audouinii*. Kaş Islands, SW Turkey, 19.07.2007
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IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Audouin's gull *Larus audouinii* breeding colony.
Two adults and a young on the right. Kaş Islands, SW Turkey, 19.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kiraç





IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Yellow-legged gull *Larus cachinnans* non-breeding colony. Kaş Islands, SW Turkey, 19.07.2007.
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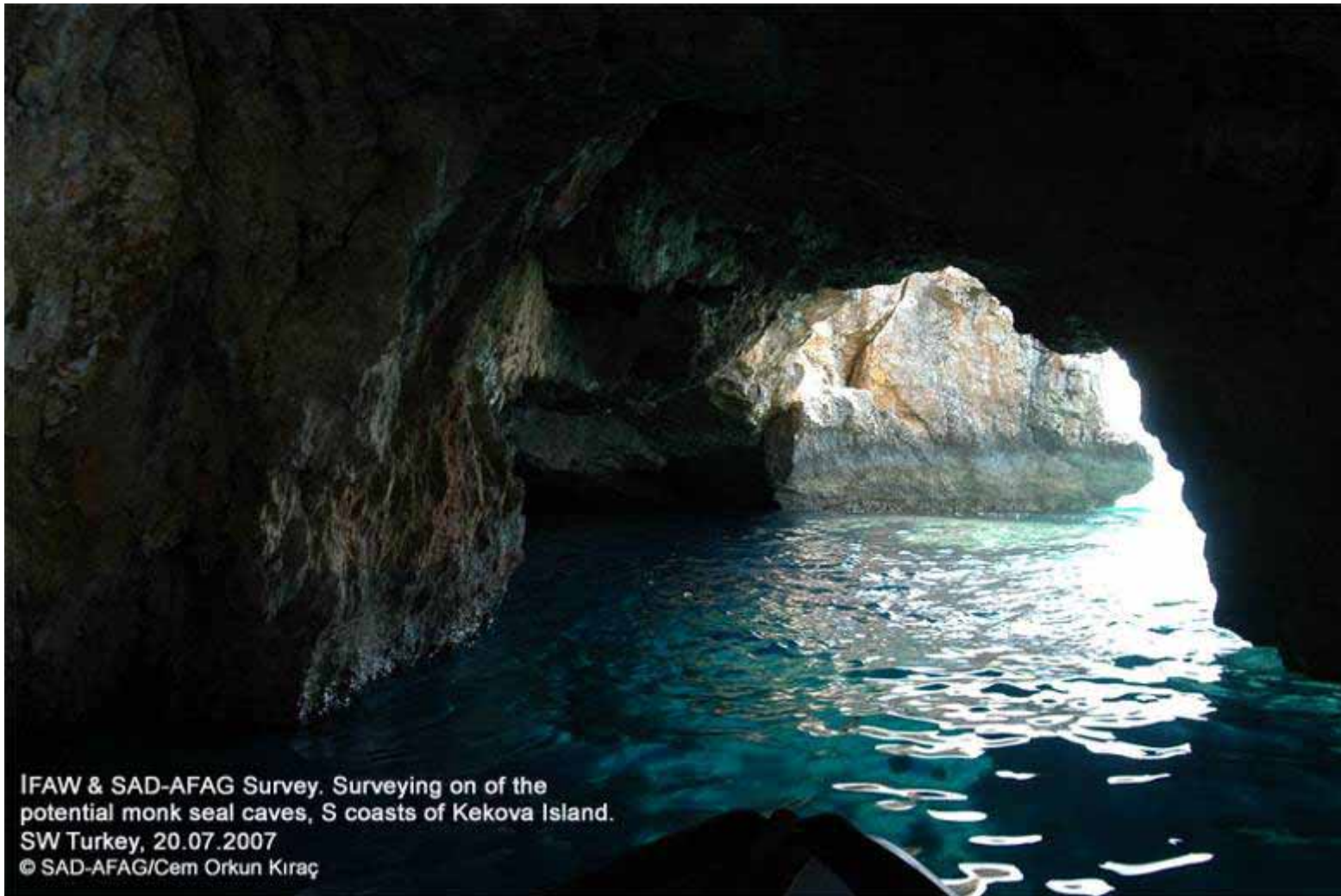


IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Kaleköy, Kekova.
SW Turkey, 19.07.2007
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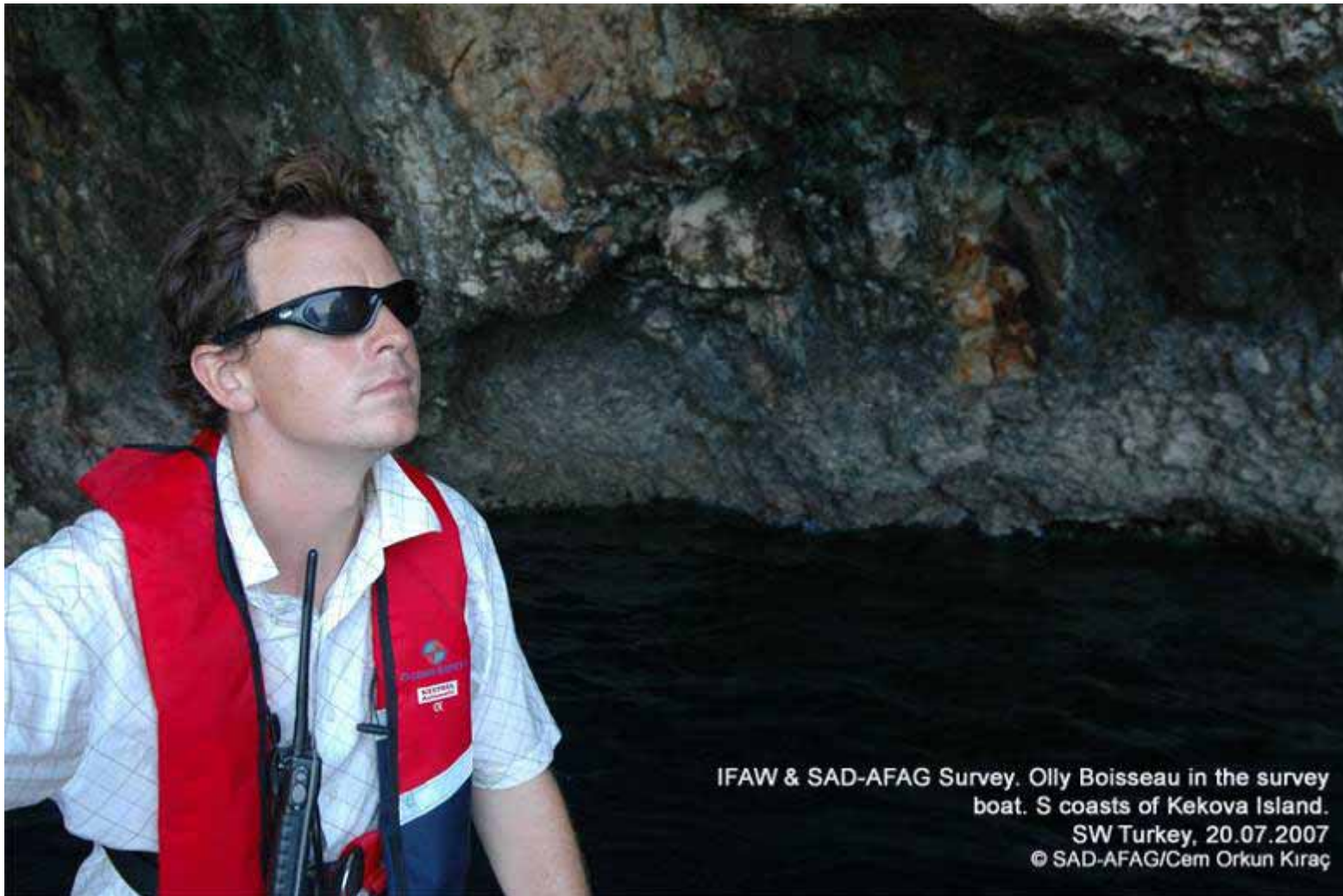




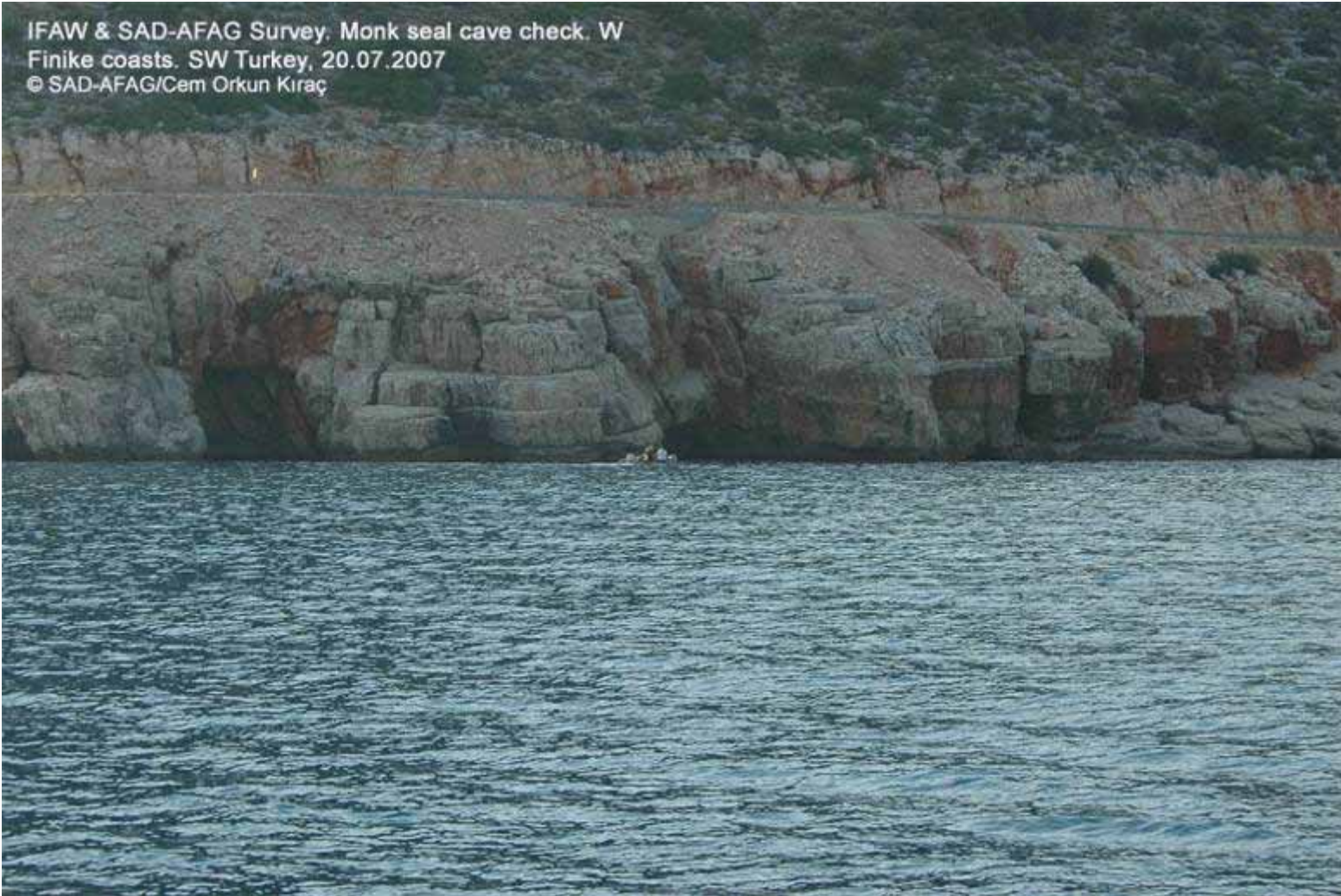
IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. S coasts of Kekova Island.
SW Turkey, 20.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kiraç



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Surveying on of the potential monk seal caves, S coasts of Kekova Island. SW Turkey, 20.07.2007 © SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kırac

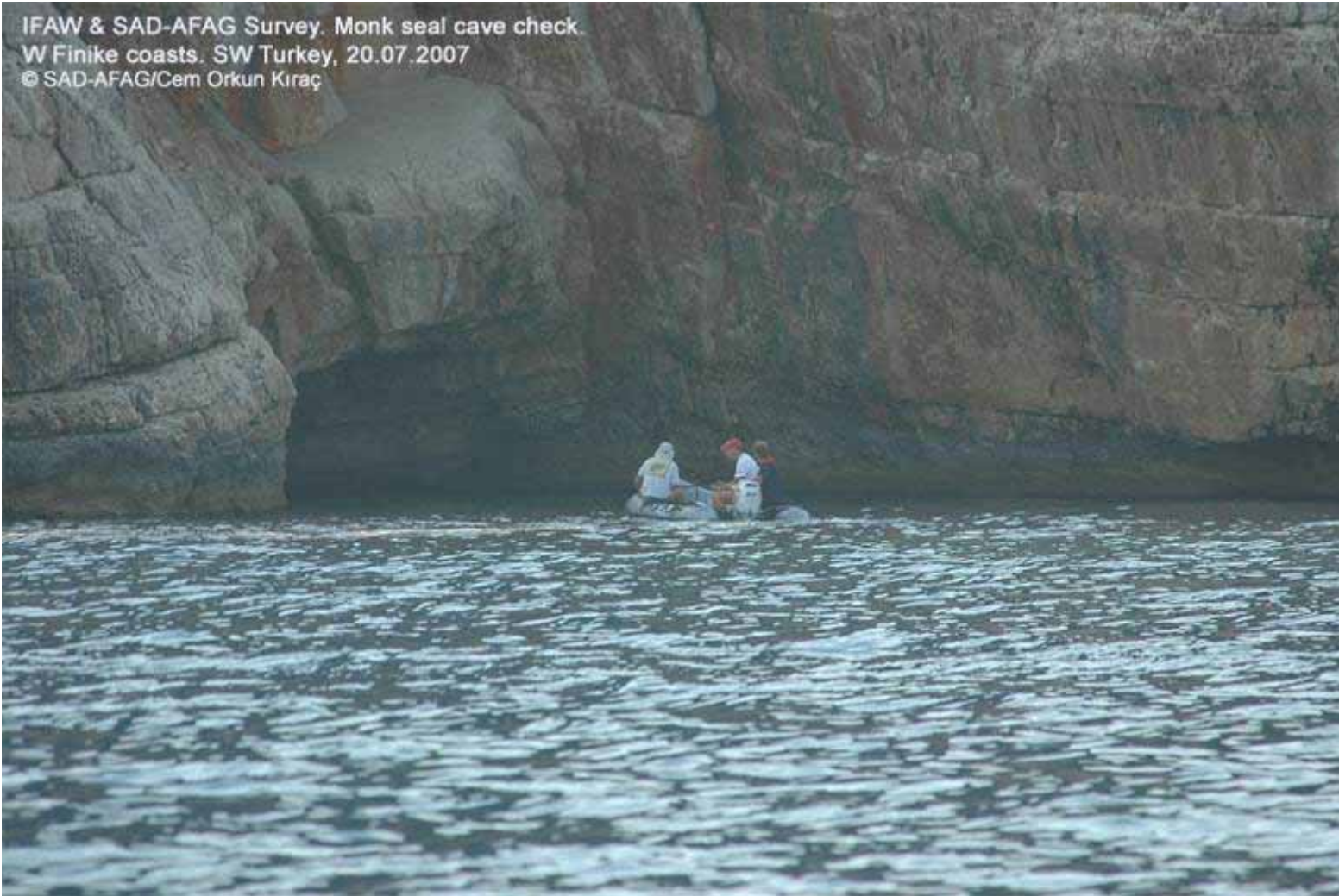


IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Olly Boisseau in the survey boat. S coasts of Kekova Island. SW Turkey, 20.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kiraç



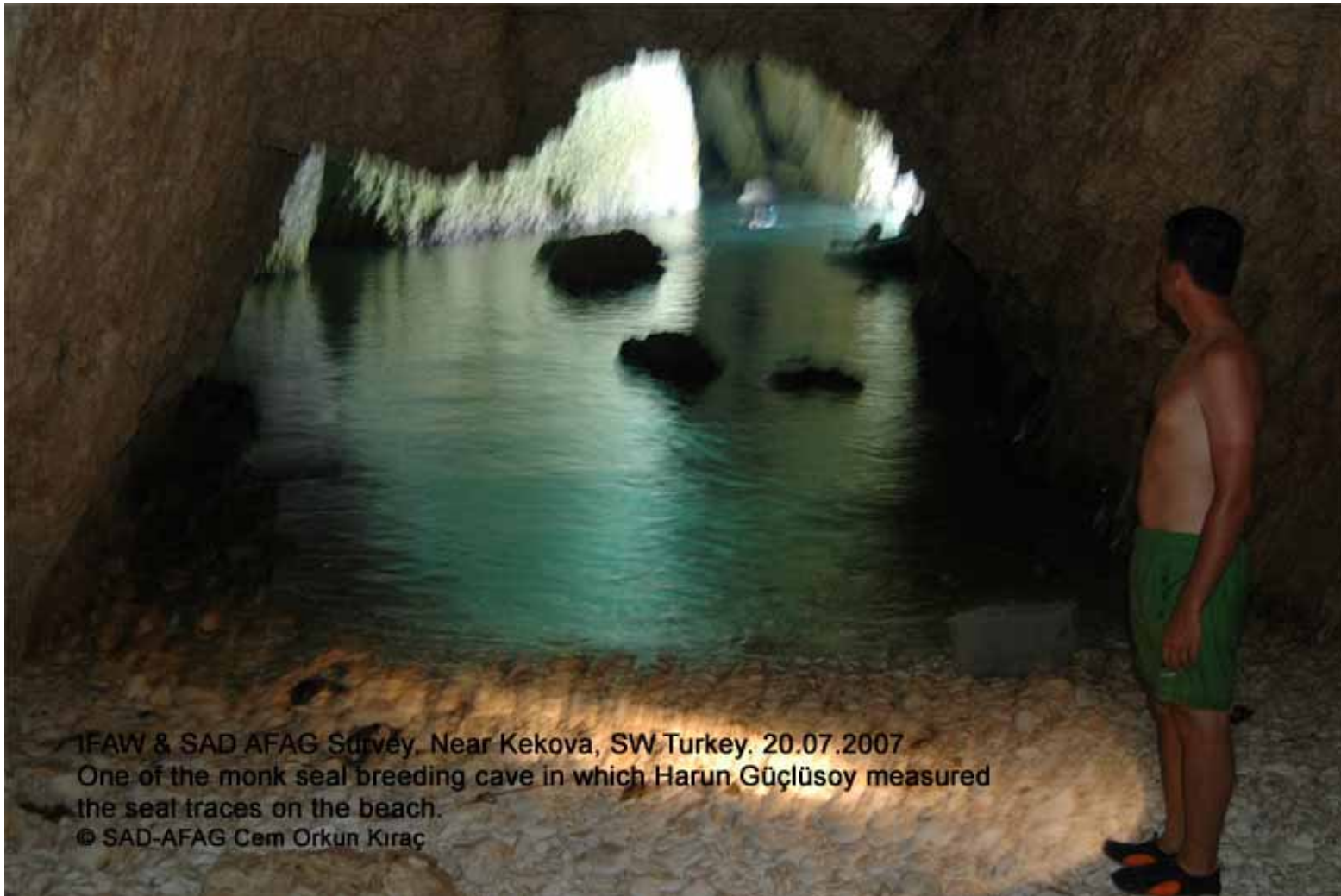


IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Monk seal cave check.
W Finike coasts. SW Turkey, 20.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Cem Orkun Kirac

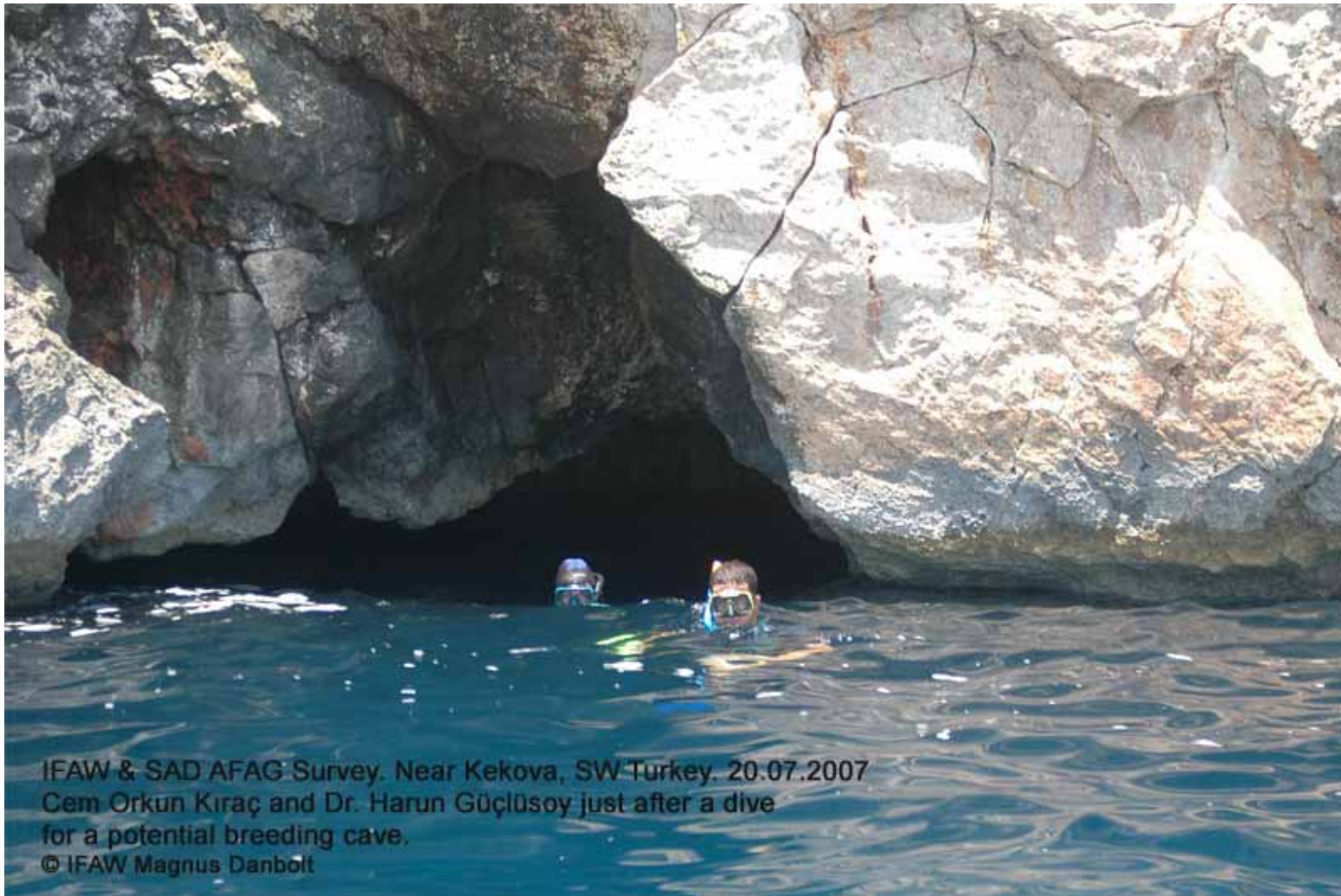




IFAW & SAD AFAG Survey - Rekova from Kaleköy, SW Turkey, 20.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Zafer Kizilkaya



IFAW & SAD AFAG Survey, Near Kekova, SW Turkey. 20.07.2007
One of the monk seal breeding cave in which Harun Güçlüsoy measured
the seal traces on the beach.
© SAD-AFAG Cem Orkun Kırac



IFAW & SAD AFAG Survey. Near Kekova, SW Turkey. 20.07.2007
Cem Orkun Kırac and Dr. Harun Güçlüsoy just after a dive
for a potential breeding cave.
© IFAW Magnus Danbolt



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. SOTW in mission, SW Turkey 23.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Zafer Kızılkaya



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* observed along the coasts of Beşadalar, Kemer. S Turkey. 23.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Zafer Kızılkaya



IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus*,
Beşadalar, Kemer, S Turkey 23.07.2007
© SAD-AFAG/Zafer Kızılkaya





IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. SOTW in mission SW Turkey, 26.07.2007
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IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey, Sperm whale
Physeter macrocephalus, Fethiye, SW Turkey 26.07.2007
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IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey. Sperm whale
Physeter macrocephalus, Fethiye SW Turkey 26.07.2007
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IFAW & SAD-AFAG Survey, Sperm whale
Physeter macrocephalus, Fethiye SW Turkey 26.07.2007
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