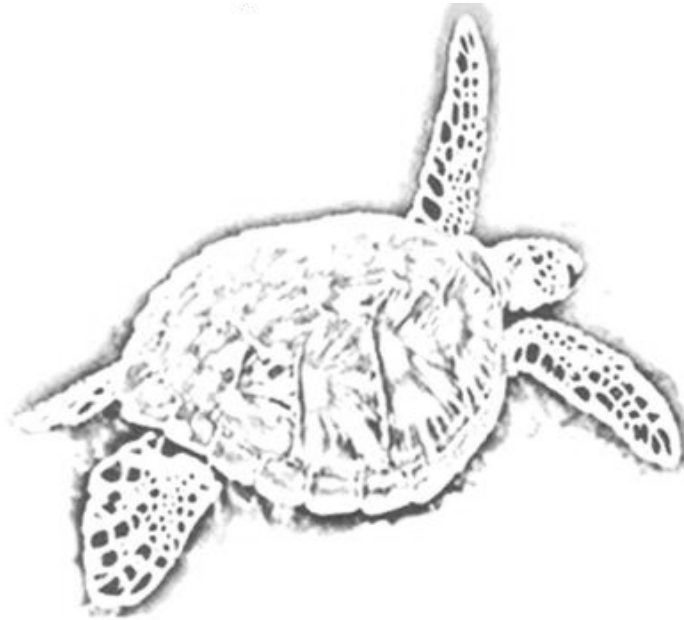


# **PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE ON MARINE TURTLES**

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**Editors:  
Andreas Demetropoulos  
Oguz Turkozan**



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**POST-NESTING MOVEMENTS OF LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLES FROM A MAJOR MEDITERRANEAN NESTING AREA ASSESSED BY SATELLITE TELEMETRY**

**Judith A. ZBINDEN (1), Adrian AEBISCHER (1), Alan F. REES (2),  
Dimitris MARGARITOULIS (2) and Raphael ARLETTAZ (1)**

(1) University of Bern, Division of Conservation Biology, Zoological Institute, Baltzerstrasse 6, 3012 Bern, Switzerland

(2) ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece, Solomou 57, GR-10432 Athens, Greece

The Bay of Laganas on the Greek island of Zakynthos hosts the by far largest known nesting aggregation of loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in the Mediterranean. Monitoring and conservation efforts have been focussing on the land based stages, while knowledge on habitat use at sea is only fragmentary. Some foraging areas have been identified through tag-returns from flipper tagging. One of the major drawbacks of this method is however that it only renders information on two point of the migration. On the Mediterranean scale, information on migration routes for loggerhead sea turtles only exists from minor nesting areas or rehabilitated individuals. We started to fill this gap by satellite tracking three post-nesting turtles from Zakynthos in 2004. All three turtles nested again after transmitter attachment, which allowed for inferences about habitat utilisation during the inter-nesting interval. They were successfully tracked to their foraging habitats, where they occupied restricted, well-defined patches. Two individuals settled down in the Adriatic Sea, whereas the third moved to the Western Mediterranean to stop its migration in a previously unconfirmed foraging ground off Tunisia. Two individuals that were still transmitting at the time, moved south during autumn: One individual left the Italian coast to move close to Corfu, while the other turtle moved into the Gulf of Gabes (Tunisia). This exemplifies that utilization and thus appropriate protection of at sea habitats is very complex. Even this very small sample size allowed to critically evaluate hypotheses on habitat utilisation put forward based on tag-returns.