

CARETTA CARETTA (Loggerhead Sea Turtle). PREDATION.

Caretta caretta is predated, at various stages of their life cycle, by several species of marine and terrestrial animals (Stancyk 1995. *In* Bjorndal [ed.], *Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles*, pp. 139–152. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.). In the marine environment, it is assumed that predation rates are greater at early life stages and decline as turtles gain larger sizes (Bjorndal 2003. *In* Bolten and Witherington [eds.], *Loggerhead Sea Turtles*, pp. 235–254. Smithsonian Books, Washington, D.C.; Stewart and Wyneken 2004. *Bull. Mar. Sci.* 74:325–335). Marine predators for larger size *C. caretta* are mainly sharks (Witzell 1987. *Japan. J. Herpetol.* 12:22–29; Fergusson et al. 2000. *Environ. Biol. Fish.* 58:447–453) as well as Mediterranean Monk Seals (Margaritoulis and Touliaou 2011. *Mar. Turt. Newsl.* 131:18–23), and large fish (Yeiser et al 2008. *Herpetol. Rev.* 39:344).

We report here predation of a juvenile *C. caretta* by an angler fish *Lophius* sp. in the northern Aegean Sea, Greece. ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece, has since 1992 operated a nationwide Stranding Network, which reports injured and dead turtles found along the Greek coastline. Members of the network include Coast Guard officers, local NGOs, and concerned citizens. Upon location of a dead turtle, members of the network fill-in a standardized Stranding Sheet with information on turtle's species, its condition, shell measurements, etc. This form, along with photographs, is then conveyed to ARCHELON. In the case of an injured turtle, network members arrange for its transportation to the ARCHELON Rescue Centre in Glyfada, close to Athens.

On 13 March 2010, the Coast Guard officers on duty at the fish market of Nea Mihaniona (40.45907°, 22.85971°; WGS 84), northern Greece, conveyed to ARCHELON a Stranding Sheet reporting a juvenile *C. caretta* that was taken out of the stomach of a 65 cm long (total length) anglerfish (*Lophius* sp.; Fig. 1). The anglerfish was caught by the bottom trawler “Michalis T.” (reg. no 961). The turtle, fresh and totally intact (Fig. 2), was photographed and measured (30 cm straight carapace length, 25 cm straight carapace width) by the Coast Guard officers. The turtle's total length was estimated at 40–45 cm.



FIG. 1. A 65-cm long anglerfish (*Lophius* sp.) at the fish market of Nea Mihaniona (northern Greece) that had consumed the 30 cm long (SCL) *Caretta caretta*.



FIG. 2. The 30 cm long (SCL) *Caretta caretta* taken intact out of the stomach of a 65 cm long anglerfish (*Lophius* sp.) caught in the northern Aegean Sea, Greece.

As far as can be ascertained no previous record of *Caretta* predation by this fish species has been reported in the Mediterranean Sea. Anglerfish (*Lophius* sp.), distributed widely in the Mediterranean as well as in the eastern Atlantic, are a target species of bottom-trawl fisheries (Ungaro et al. 2002. *Sci. Mar.* 66:55–63). Anglerfish are opportunistic predators feeding mainly on fish, crustaceans, and to a lesser extent on cephalopods, gastropods, bivalves, and echinoderms (López et al. 2016. *Est. Coast. Shelf Sci.* 175:15–23). Among 61 fish species examined in the northern Aegean Sea, anglerfish had the largest mouth openings (Karachle and Stergiou 2011. *Acta Ichthyol. Piscat.* 41:265–275). Anglerfish rest on the seafloor and take passing prey by surprise or by luring prey with their angling spine (illicium) close to their wide mouths (Armstrong et al. 1996. *J. Northw. Atl. Fish. Sci.* 18:99–103). *Caretta caretta* is abundant in Greece (Margaritoulis and Panagopoulou 2010. *In* Casale and Margaritoulis [eds.], *Sea Turtles in the Mediterranean: Distribution, Threats and Conservation Priorities*, pp. 85–111. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland). The current observation suggests that anglerfish in Greece are likely opportunistic consumers of juvenile *C. caretta*. We thank the two Coast Guard officers who provided the measurements and the photographs.

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