

Corsini-Foka M., Tsaros P., Kondylatos G., Santorinios E., Margies P., Margaritoulis D., Kaska Y. 2016. A successful case of bi-national Mediterranean cooperation for sea turtle protection. Page 56 in Book of Abstracts. 51st European Marine Biology Symposium. Rhodes, Greece, 26-30 September 2016.

A SUCCESSFUL CASE OF BI-NATIONAL MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION FOR SEA TURTLE PROTECTION

Maria Corsini-Foka¹, Paul Tsaros², Gerasimos Kondylatos¹, Elias Santorinios¹, Panagiotis Margies³, Dimitris Margaritoulis², Yakup Kaska⁴

¹Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, Hydrobiological Station of Rhodes, Cos Street, 85100 Rhodes, Greece

²ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece, Solomou 57, 10432 Athens, Greece

³Niiridon 36, 85104 Kremasti, Rhodes, Greece

⁴Pamukkale University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Biology, Denizli, Turkey

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the Hydrobiological Station of Rhodes (HSR) of the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research has systematically collected data on sea turtle strandings along the coasts of Rhodes island, providing first care to live injured specimens, in the frame of the Nationwide Sea Turtle Stranding Network established by ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece, and in close cooperation with the Port Authorities and the regional Forestry Agency. A female *Caretta caretta* (named Laura) (carapace curved length n-t 73 cm, carapace curved width 66 cm, weight 50.5 kg), stranded alive in 5 October 2013 on a beach of the Northwest coast of the island and she was immediately transferred to the HSR facilities. Apart a deep injury on the head, she was seriously distressed, unable to feed and dive in the hosting tank. The turtle had the Tag TRY-0212/Ministry of Forest and Environment of Turkey, applied after her nesting on Dalyan beach, Turkey, on 30 May 2012 and she was subsequently observed also on 19 June 2012 on the same beach. After a long period of treatment and rehabilitation at the HSR, under veterinary and sea turtle expert assistance, Laura was released (weight 57 kg) in the same stranding area on 17 July 2014, with two tags, the first mentioned above and a second one, A917/Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece. On 23 March 2016 she was observed near Dalyan beach during the mating season, carrying only the Greek tag. She seemed healthy and ready to nest, and she was re-tagged with TRY-2734. Between 1984 and 2015, a total of 204 *Caretta caretta* strandings were recorded in the island: among the 48 live specimens stranded, Laura was the only one bearing a tag.

Concluding, a Dalyan turtle, rehabilitated in Rhodes, goes back to Dalyan for nesting; its identity resumed over the years by alternating Turkish and Greek tags. This interesting case shows that a migratory species can only be protected through international cooperation.