

SPECIES OCCURRING in the Mediterranean Sea

Out of the seven species of sea turtles currently inhabiting the world's oceans, three can be found in the Mediterranean but only two of them breed in the region: loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*) and green (*Chelonia mydas*).

The Mediterranean Sea is a semi enclosed sea connected with the Atlantic Ocean through the Strait of Gibraltar, the Black Sea through the Marmara Sea, and the Red Sea via the Suez Channel. It has a coastline of 46,000 km and is surrounded by 21 countries in addition to overseas territories.

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There are also occasional records of leatherbacks (*Dermochelys coriacea*), olive and Kemp's ridleys (*Lepidochelys olivacea* and *Lepidochelys kempi*).

Mediterranean loggerheads are the smallest specimens of this species in the world, and their stable nesting areas range from the Western Mediterranean to the Levantine coast in the East, with most of the estimated 8,000 egg clutches laid annually occurring in the Eastern basin, especially in Greece. Loggerheads are known to occur in large numbers in different areas of the Mediterranean Sea, with juveniles from the Mediterranean population and early adults that migrate from the Atlantic and are abundant in

pelagic habitats in the Alboran Sea, around the Balearic Islands and southwest Italy. Demersal habitats of adults are localised in the Eastern area, in the Nile Delta and in front of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Northern Adriatic Sea and the wide Tunisian continental platform. The major breeding grounds are located in Greece, Turkey, Cyprus and Libya, with low numbers of egg clutches laying in several other countries around the Mediterranean (Table 1).

Green turtle nesting is confined to the easternmost part of the Mediterranean, mostly in Cyprus and Turkey, and fewer sites in Egypt, Israel and Lebanon, as well as some Greek Islands in the Cretan Sea. It is estimated that more than 2,200 egg clutches are laid each year. Information on post-hatching dispersal and the occurrence of high densities of small oceanic, juvenile green turtles, supported by the high incidence of stranding of small turtles on the south coast of Turkey suggest that the Levantine basin is the main nursery area for this species (Table 2).

An exceptional nesting event of green turtle was recorded in the summer of 2019 in the Kuriat Islands, Tunisia representing the western most nesting record of the green turtle.

Migration routes of sea turtles populations based on mark/recapture methods and satellite tracking between the Mediterranean Sea and multiple pelagic and coastal foraging and nesting regions located in temperate and tropical waters.



- Observed movements of loggerhead sea turtles from the Mediterranean into the Atlantic Sea
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- Observed movements of leatherback sea turtles from Guyana through the Atlantic
- Possible movements of loggerhead sea turtles between Cabo Verde and the Mediterranean