

A call to COLLABORATE

in the conservation of marine turtles and the Mediterranean Sea

Marine turtles should be regarded by Mediterranean people and visitors as a real biodiversity treasure. The Mediterranean is an exciting place for some species of marine turtles, with prospects of range expansions and new colonization, and where long-term conservation projects have achieved stable or even positive population trends in the countries. However, there is still a long way to go before marine turtles in the Mediterranean can be considered to be safe. Indeed, many major threats, particularly coastal occupation, pollution and degradation of marine habitats, climate change-driven alterations and high fishing pressure as well as bycatch, need to be addressed to conserve Mediterranean sea turtles. To that end, a solid network of stakeholders, including the public, professionals of the sea and fishers, conservationists, researchers and local and national decision-makers must continue to focus its energies on the actions needed to assure that Mediterranean marine turtles survive and thrive into the future. Fortunately, the Mediterranean conservation community, despite its disparity of cultures

and languages, has formed a consolidated and collaborative network of individuals, institutions and governments dedicated to this worthy goal.

Sporadic loggerhead nesting activity on Western Mediterranean beaches is not a remnant of a past population but the result of long-distance dispersal events from both Mediterranean and Atlantic populations. If we are witnessing new colonization events of nesting beaches, this is an extraordinary and exciting fact, which implies some measures should be urgently implemented so that these animals have suitable habitats for their needs. Conservation programs to mitigate the impact of anthropogenic activities coupled with extensive monitoring of potentially suitable habitats will be crucial to facilitate the stabilization of the possible new nesting populations in the Western Mediterranean. It is everyone's responsibility to study these natural processes linked to climate change to understand and improve the management of the loggerhead turtle populations in the Mediterranean.

Public release of a rehabilitated turtle in Romanos Peloponnese, Greece.

