

CONSERVATION MEASURES

The future of marine turtles will be determined by our current and future actions. The development and implementation of good management plans for the conservation of these species should be an urgent priority. The emphasis should be on improving our existing knowledge and creating a more integrated approach to marine and coastal activities around the Mediterranean.

INCREASE EFFORTS IN PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS AND GAPS

In spite of major improvements in recent decades, significant gaps remain in our knowledge of the ecology and behaviour of sea turtles. Available information and datasets are not homogeneous and not always compatible, with a greater focus on loggerhead turtles; as well as on particular geographical areas or research topics. Areas where important gaps remain include the distribution of major nesting sites, the total annual number of

egg clutches laid at some nest sites, age of female green turtles at maturity, survival rates, at-sea abundance, mortality and other aspects of behaviour. Table 3 presents a breakdown of the most important actions needed

for research and conservation of Mediterranean marine turtles, ranked in order of priority and potential conservation impact. Some research requires development of novel methods or practices (priorities 2, 4 and 10) technologically challenging, whilst others such as research on Libyan populations of sea turtles are challenging due to the current country's situation. Measures to reduce turtle bycatch both through protection (priorities 1, 4 and 6) and through actions to implement technical modifications of fishing equipment (priorities 5 and 7) are politically challenging. Other priorities in conservation and knowledge, require significant investment of effort and resources but are technically feasible.

One good and important contribution to conservation efforts will be making available the large quantities of hitherto unpublished data. Further efforts are needed to update current information on nesting activity which is almost a decade old for many sites, whilst there are significant geographical and annual gaps in data. There is also a lack of published data on the morbidity and mortality effects of pollutants and particularly the effect of plastic ingestion, including the impact of phthalates released from ingested plastics.

There is a need to improve and expand networking and cooperation in the Mediterranean to improve exchange and use of knowledge of conservation of marine turtles in the region.

Monitoring of nests in Kiparisia Bay, Greece

