

Turtle News

The Newsletter of the Marine Turtle Conservation Project

<http://www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/projects/cyprus/>

Issue 14 2003

Editorial

Welcome readers to Issue 14 of *Turtle News*. Another successful monitoring season has come to an end under the expert guidance of MTRG's Wayne Fuller and Ian, Celia and Keco of the Society for the Protection of Turtles in Northern Cyprus (SPOT). As you will read later in this issue, Celia has recently retired from SPOT after 19 years of dedication. At this point I should say that she will be greatly missed etc etc and of course she will....but the fact is, she can hide but we will find her! And Ian will surely not allow her to escape our clutches! Celia has been our Cyprus Mum/Project Social Worker, and to me and many others, a close personal friend, for the past 12 years, in addition to her active role within SPOT. We thank her for all of her hard work...tears and strife...see you in May!

Please note that the MTRG has moved again and is now based at the University of Exeter. No more moves in the near future...we hope!

For those of you receiving this newsletter as a hard copy, please consider accessing it via our web site and receiving updates electronically. All that you require to view it on your pc is a copy of Acrobat Reader, available at our web site. Although *Turtle News* is now freely available from our web site, we hope that you will still renew your subscription and remain supporters of the project. Please also note that you can now renew your subscription as a supporter of the project by credit card via our web site.

Please email me on abroderick@seaturtle.org if you would like to receive electronic updates.

Annette Broderick

'TEMPORARY' ROAD DEVASTATES BEACH

2003 brought with it the shock of a temporary road routed along the back of Alagadi beach (the 5th most important nesting beach for green turtles in the entire Mediterranean), whilst the new north coast road was constructed. Sadly, although only in use for a few weeks, the temporary road has devastated some areas of dunes that surround the beach. Not only did the road damage the dunes, it also increased the points of access to the beach, which caused widespread erosion. The permission was given for this temporary road under the proviso that it would be returned to its former state once the new road was constructed. However, at the time of writing this (December 2003), the temporary road was still present, which, once the winter rains begin, may cause irreparable erosion and possible damage to the sand quality of the beach, affecting future nesting attempts. Another beach, near to Esentepe (see picture below), has already been partially destroyed by the construction of this new road and there are fears that the extension of the road along the coast to Kaplica, where there is another extremely important turtle nesting beach, will cause more loss of habitat for these endangered species. There are moves afoot to put our point in the strongest terms possible, so hopefully our comments will be taken on board and no further damage will be done to these important nesting beaches.

Wayne Fuller



The new north coast road in close proximity to a nesting beach.

A New Home...Again!

We (the MTRG) have moved again! First it was the University of Glasgow (1992-1998), then the University of Wales Swansea (1998-2003) and now the University of Exeter (in Cornwall; 2003-). We are slowly working our way down the west coast!

At last, one of us has a permanent job! Brendan has been awarded a Lectureship in Conservation Biology, a position that he will take up in April 2005 once his current NERC Fellowship ends. Whilst we are employed by the University of Exeter, we are actually now based at the Tremough Campus near Penryn, Cornwall. Here a new site is under construction and will be the home of the Centre for Ecology and Conservation. All of our projects will continue as before, and eventually all of the MTRG staff and students will be based at Tremough. MTCP leader Wayne Fuller will remain at Swansea for one more year before transferring in order to make full use of the facilities there, which are not yet available at Tremough.

For a full range of our projects, and details of how to volunteer to be a member of the Cyprus team please see www.seaturtle.org/mtrg.

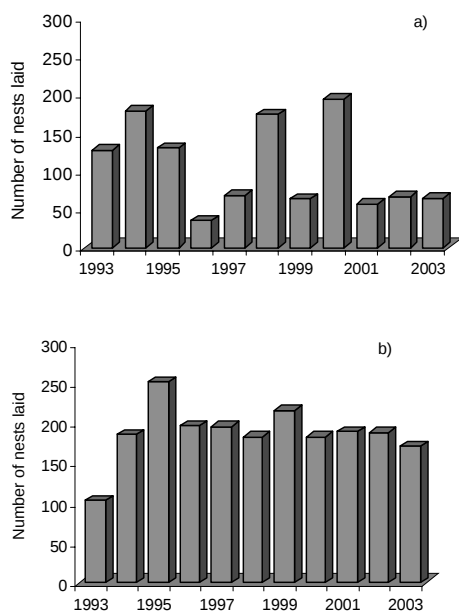


Figure 1. Number of cutches recorded in zones 4 and 5 of a) the green turtle and b) the loggerhead turtle in Northern Cyprus 1993-2003.

THE 2003 NESTING SEASON

In 2003, 65 green (*Chelonia mydas*) and 207 loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) clutches were laid in the three survey zones monitored by MTCP, a very similar total to that of 2002 (see figure 1). However, in 2002, the majority of green turtle clutches were recorded at Alagadi beach, our main study site, with the west coast beaches holding only 6% of nesting...a dramatically low level in comparison to previous years, and one which we were very concerned about.

In 2003, 42% of green turtle clutches were laid on the west coast beaches, a level similar to previous years, which is great news for the turtles. The low number in 2002 is likely to have been a result of natural inter-annual fluctuations in nesting numbers, typical of green turtle populations. But we are still cautious!

In 2003, a record 75% of green turtles nesting on Alagadi beach were remigrants, having been recorded nesting in previous years and returning after intervals of 2-5 years. One female (number 9) previously nested in 1992, 1995, 1998 and 2000! Of the loggerhead turtles nesting at Alagadi, 32% of females were recorded returning from previous years after intervals of 1-6 years. Details of the females that returned to nest are given in Table 1. As we reported in *Turtle News* 13, this was the last year of our current adopt a turtle scheme. However we will present similar information each year in this newsletter and hope that you will still be able to keep up to date with your turtle's progress.

Species	Female No.	Tag Nos.	No. clutches laid	No.
Green	9	947/88/1294/422	5	
Green	15	47/1062/702/703	5	
Green	55	702/47/703/1062	5	
Green	62	708/788/705/789	3	
Green	70	682/592/774/967	2	
Green	71	779/567/974	3	
Green	73	1295/942/581/944	3	
Green	86	707/1435/706/1436	2	
Green	163	834/831	2	
Loggerhead	71	1350/1349/477/476	2	
Loggerhead	162	479/889	1	
Loggerhead	216	823/824/691	4	
Loggerhead	223	858/833/857/855	2	
Loggerhead	31	1378/277/1380/535	1	
Loggerhead	114	1039/1038	0	
Loggerhead	115	1041/821/1025	2	

Table 1. Female turtles that returned to nest at Alagadi Beach in 2003.

ATTENTION ALL TEACHERS

The SEATURTLE.ORG Satellite Tracking Program (see page 4) provides a unique opportunity to engage students in a fun and exciting manner. Satellite tracking can be used to develop lesson plans covering a number of subject areas, including biology, maths, geography and even politics. Pages specifically aimed at teachers are currently under development at:

<http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking/teachers/>

Here we suggest how you can use the data generated from this project in your classrooms to bring the latest science and technology to your students. Once registered (which is free) you can access datasets to use for teaching, for example to calculate min/max/daily speed of travel, to plot lat/long coordinates, examine bathymetry of oceans and much more.

We would appreciate both your help in the design of these pages and in using and promoting these data to increase awareness amongst your pupils.

It would be a bonus if you would also consider supporting this project through adopting one of the tracked turtles (via the site \$25, \$50 or \$100) or financing a transmitter and naming a turtle to be tracked next summer (\$3000/£2000).

REFLECTIONS

At the end of the 12th season I decided it was time for me to face up to old age and retire. Not letting me off easily Annette has asked me to write a few reflections but instead of anecdotes I thought I'd outline how it was, is and maybe.

In the prehistoric times of the 80s a few of us decided to try and help the turtles. When more help was needed the call went out and the work got done. We focused on Alagadi, but one very hot July two of us took off, camping in a Renault, and checked all the other beaches. To our amazement we found turtles came in more or less everywhere there was a speck of sand. We felt more knowledge than we had was needed, and the Turtle God tuned in and sent us Glasgow University students. (We must have been very wicked in previous lives!). So now we come to historic times.

I think if you want to start a project its good not to know anything about it – otherwise you would see the obstacles and be sensible and not start. At first the authorities found the idea of young people (especially female) walking the beach at night to look at turtles a bit unlikely. We found the idea that they could be based with the

firemen at the Karpaz also strange, but really once you held on friends in high and low places guided you along – a Foreign Minister here, a jeep driver there – and the project started to take shape. As its importance became apparent the Veterinary Dept seconded a Vet. to the Environment Dept. This was the first step in our hopes for Cypriots to start protecting the turtles themselves. When enough knowledge was passed on the project handed over the Karpaz beaches and concentrated on the west and north coast.

Recent history is The Goat Shed and the Sleeping House – what luxury compared to that of the trail blazers of earlier years. Of course the out base at Akdeniz has its moments of shock, electrical and jeep wise, but Long Beach by any standards is 5star. SPOT's role has changed with the advent of email and mobile phones. No longer midnight calls from worried parents (who forgot the 2hr. difference) and Brendan doesn't phone from freezing Glasgow call boxes. When winter for Brendan and Annette was Ascension Island it meant computer skills were essential for SPOT.

Over the years patterns and paths have been laid and followed by the next

leader and team. Of course there is the odd jolt to keep you on your toes, like an oil spill or this year the team's transport falling apart. (If anyone has a tank like jeep with the undercarriage and exhaust high and is good for bouncing over rocks and sand dunes when heavily loaded – could we borrow it!).

So am I retiring because things have been achieved and follow paths previously carved out? Regrettably no, it's the opposite. It is because I think we are now in danger of losing what has been achieved. N. Cyprus is being built up at an alarming rate. Inland greenery is bulldozed away replaced by concrete. The new coastal road already encroaches on nesting beaches. When finished, accommodation blocks will follow fast. Sea grass meadows worldwide are depleting due to sewage pollution....will ours go the same way? There is much protection work to be done.

At the moment most local energy is directed towards the election on 14th December. There are a few brave thoughtful souls worried about the environmental future of the North. I know I do not have the fire in the belly that is needed for anything worthwhile to be achieved. So I am leaving a space for people who have. I wish them success, and reflect with pride and pleasure on what came out of a casual midnight walk on Alagadi in the 80s.

Celia Moorley-Bell

A P.S. from Ian Bell.

How we who remain in SPOT shall miss her continuous help, her mastery of Turkish and her ability to solve insoluble problems at the drop of a turtle hatchling. Thank you very much indeed Celia for your 19 years of hard work with our turtles – how you coped with those terrible strudles for the past twelve years I will never understand!



A juvenile hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) captured in Anegada, British Virgin Islands

Darwin Fellow Appointed

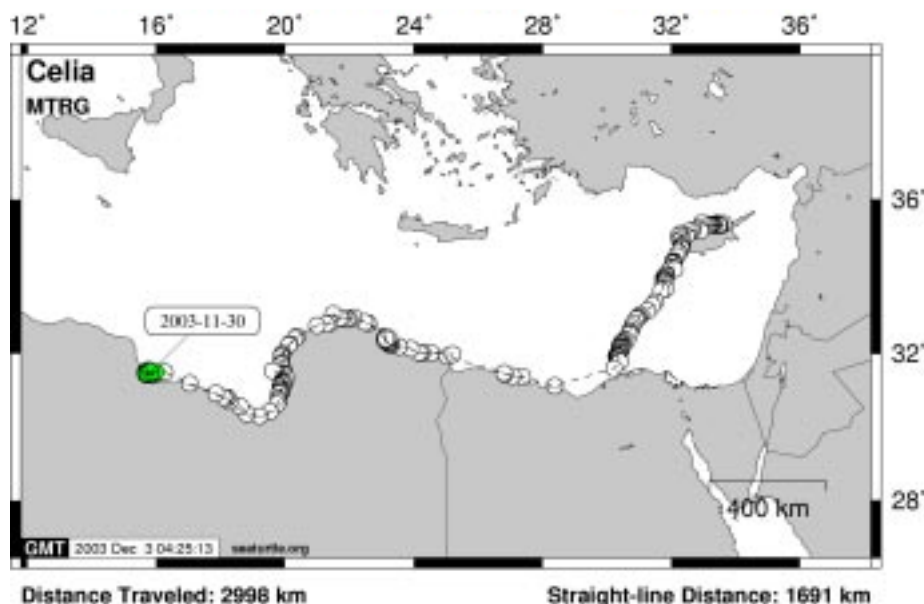
Some of you may remember Andy McGowan, Project Leader of MTCP in 1997, deputy leader in 1996 and team member in 1995. Yes, the tall lanky Scotsman that had such long legs anyone walking the beach with him could not keep up! Well, we are pleased to report that Andy will be joining the Marine Turtle Research Group as Darwin Research Fellow, running the Darwin Initiative funded project *Darwin Biodiversity Action plan of Anegada, British Virgin Islands*. His long legs will come in very useful monitoring the turtles, birds and flora of Anegada.

Since obtaining a first class honours degree at the University of Glasgow in 1998, Andy completed his PhD at the University of Sheffield, before obtaining a post-doctoral position at the University of Berkeley, California. It is great to be working with him again.

Green Turtle Tracked Live on the Web

For many years we have been working with Dr Michael Coyne, Director of SEATURTLE.ORG, a non-profit web-based NGO, which provides instant public access to information on sea turtles and currently hosts the web site of the MTRG, Marine Turtle Newsletter and the International Sea Turtle Society. After a lot of hard work and the fantastic IT skills of Michael, many of the turtles now being tracked by MTRG and other projects can be followed in their migrations around the world's oceans! Of the females that nested at Alagadi Beach, Northern Cyprus in 2003, one green turtle is currently being tracked via satellite. The daily updated track of the turtle, which we have named Celia (in honour of Celia Moorley-Bell of SPOT see article on page 3), can be viewed at www.seaturtle.org/tracking/. You can also view an animated map of her journey so far and receive regular updates of her progress. Celia is one of our old girls – in more ways than one! She was first tagged whilst nesting at Alagadi Beach in 1995, and returned to nest in 1999. In 2003 she laid a total of 4 clutches before departing for the north African coast of Egypt in early August. She is currently located off the coast of Libya near to Tripoli. In 2004 we would like to live track more turtles, if funding is forthcoming, and promote this site in English, Turkish and Greek all over the Mediterranean, with particular emphasis on schools in Cyprus. Please support our efforts. You can support this project through adopting one of the tracked turtles (via the web site) at a cost of either \$25, \$50 or \$100, or financing a transmitter and naming a turtle to be tracked next summer (\$3000/£2000).

Of the other MTRG projects, there are currently three sea turtles being tracked that nested in the Cayman Islands in 2003, and 4 loggerhead turtles that nested at Bald Head Island, North Carolina, USA in 2003. Please visit the site and follow the progress of these turtles.



Route taken by Celia, an adult green turtle, tracked via satellite from Alagadi Beach in Northern Cyprus in July 2003 to her present position off the coast of Libya, November 2003.

Contact details:

Project Co-ordinators

Annette Broderick &
Brendan Godley

Marine Turtle Research Group
Centre for Ecology and Conservation
Department of Biology
University of Exeter
Hatherly Laboratories,
Exeter EX4 4PS, UK

Email: abroderick@seaturtle.org

Web site :

<http://www.seaturtle.org/mtrg/>

Project Leader

Wayne Fuller

School of Biological Sciences
University of Wales Swansea
Singleton Park,
Swansea SA2 8PP, UK

Email: W.J.Fuller@swan.ac.uk

Society for the Protection of Turtles in Northern Cyprus

P.K. 42, Girne,
Mersin 10,
Turkey

E-mail: ianbell@iecnc.org

Acknowledgements:

The 2003 project was funded by: **Apache, Atlantic Car Hire, BP Egypt, British Chelonia Group, British High Commission, Kibris Turkish Airlines, Long Beach Hotel, NERC.** Equipment was donated by: **AnimalCare Ltd., Atanco, Immap.** Thanks to Terry Thomas @ iecn