

IN 2009:

- 412 clutches were recorded
- 166 were green turtle clutches
- 243 were loggerhead turtle clutches
- ~4000-5000 holiday makers passed through our information centre.

TURTLE NEWS 2009

ISSUE 18

Record year 2009!

The 2009 season was a record breaking year, with a staggering 412 clutches recorded by MTCP. Of these 186 clutches were laid on Alagadi, our main research beaches. Here, 74 clutches belonging to loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), and 112 clutches to green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). Not the busiest year recorded for either species alone but never before have both species been recorded in such num-

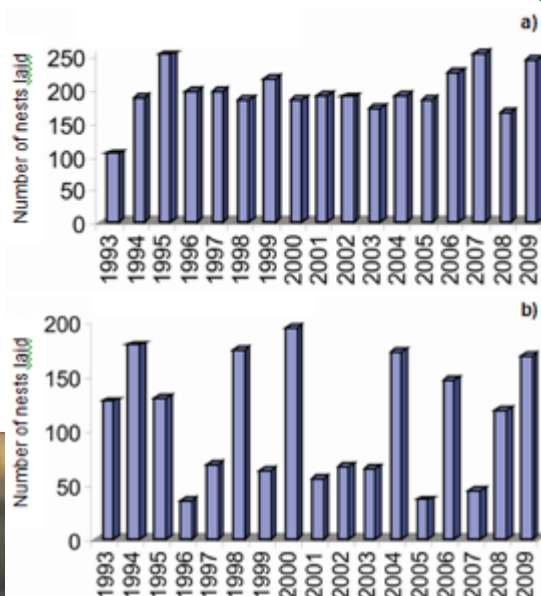
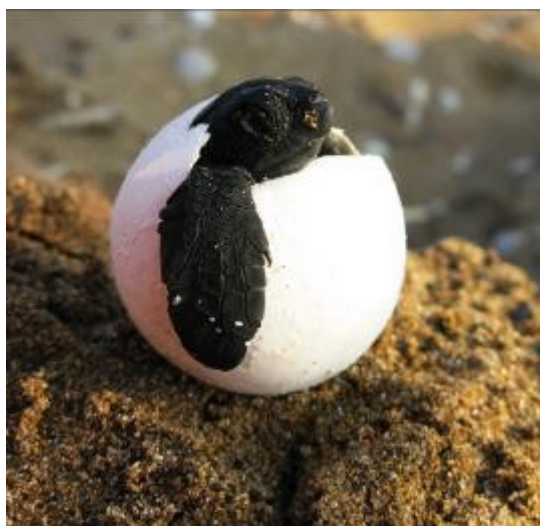


Figure 1. Number of clutches recorded on the north and west coast beaches for a) loggerhead and b) green turtles, 1993-2009.

MTCP tackles bycatch

This season (2010) MTCP is launching a new study into bycatch (accidental catch of turtles and dolphins) in the local fishery. Exeter University PhD student Robin Snape with Wayne Fuller, and Ozge Ozden of Lefke University will be accompanying fishermen and carrying out surveys to estimate the impacts of the fishery, investigating current socio-economic problems that are impacting fishermen and their attitudes towards conservation. A previous study by MTCP over a decade ago, highlighted the problem and the industry has since expanded markedly. This study is being funded with a small grant from Supporting Activities that Value the Environment (SAVE), which is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and works to better protect Cyprus' valuable natural resources.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Rubbish pollut- 2
ing Alagadi
SPA.

Satellite tracking 2
results.

Falmouth 3
Reunion 2009

Fundraising 4
Bonanza

bers during the same season (Figure 1).

This year our monitoring areas were limited to the West and North coastlines. The monitoring for the Karpas and East coast zones this year monitored by staff of the Department for Environmental Protection and Eastern Mediterranean University. We expect that the 2009 season may have been highly productive for the green turtle in Karpas as this is the area where this species breeds in highest densities.

Consecutive increases in the number of nesting green turtles over recent years, may reflect efforts on the conservation of these marine turtles in Northern Cyprus. However, as inter-nesting intervals vary between individuals and over time within individuals, this is incredibly difficult to predict. We expect a quiet season in 2010, as many greens from the last two years will be taking time out!

Rubbish work for turtle conservationists!



Litter across Alagadi Specially Protected Area was exceptional in 2009. Bins were not emptied by Esentepe Belediyesi for the entire season, apparently due to a governmental dispute. Despite appeals and many articles raising concerns in the Cyprus press, the bins remained overflowing. The

build up of rubbish not only jeopardizes the health of the wildlife and habitat surrounding the area, but also the health of the general public and MTCP volunteers.

MTCP patrolled the beaches collecting litter and handing out bin bags. Once a week 3-4 tired night workers were issued the task of emptying the bins in each car park and with the help of Gökmen Guneş (Alagadi beach bar manager) and his trusty van, hundreds of bags of rubbish were collected to the beach bar and bags were ferried to the belediya.

The project is hoping that conditions will be improved for 2010, and urge beach users to consider the environment by taking rubbish straight up to the main car park (you would make many volunteers very happy!). We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who aided our appeals last year and helping with litter picks, your help was greatly appreciated!



Tracking changes

PhD student Kimberly Stokes is coordinating a satellite tracking programme to investigate sea turtle habitat use alongside climate change. Here she reports on the success of last year's programme:

2009 was a huge year for the project's ongoing satellite tracking programme, with seven satellite-linked units deployed. A rare event kick-started this year's tracking, when a female crawled onto the beach to nest with a male still trying his luck clinging onto her back! Project leader Robin Snape was quick to grab a transmitter to maximise on this unusual opportunity. Attachment of the devices causes no harm to the turtles, and care is taken to mould the resin used into an aerodynamic shape so that it doesn't interfere with their swimming. Soon enough, our male was ready to return to the sea having been fully kitted out and named 'Randal'.

Randal's journey provided MTRG researchers with a surprise, as he travelled north to nesting grounds in Turkey before heading south on his return migration. This is the first time an adult male green turtle has been tracked in the Mediterranean, and may be an indication of how genetic mixing occurs in this population,

preventing inbreeding.

Five other green turtles and one loggerhead were selected for tracking, all females coming ashore to nest (Figure 2). The loggerhead swam east to Syria, and remained there for the nine months that her transmitter stayed on for. The five green females all headed for North Africa, where a high proportion of previously tracked green turtles have migrated, one of them at the very same place as Randal, Sabkhet el Bardawil, a vast saltwater lagoon on the north coast of Egypt.

Tracking studies provide valuable information on turtle habitat use, migration and breeding behaviour which is used for conservation planning.



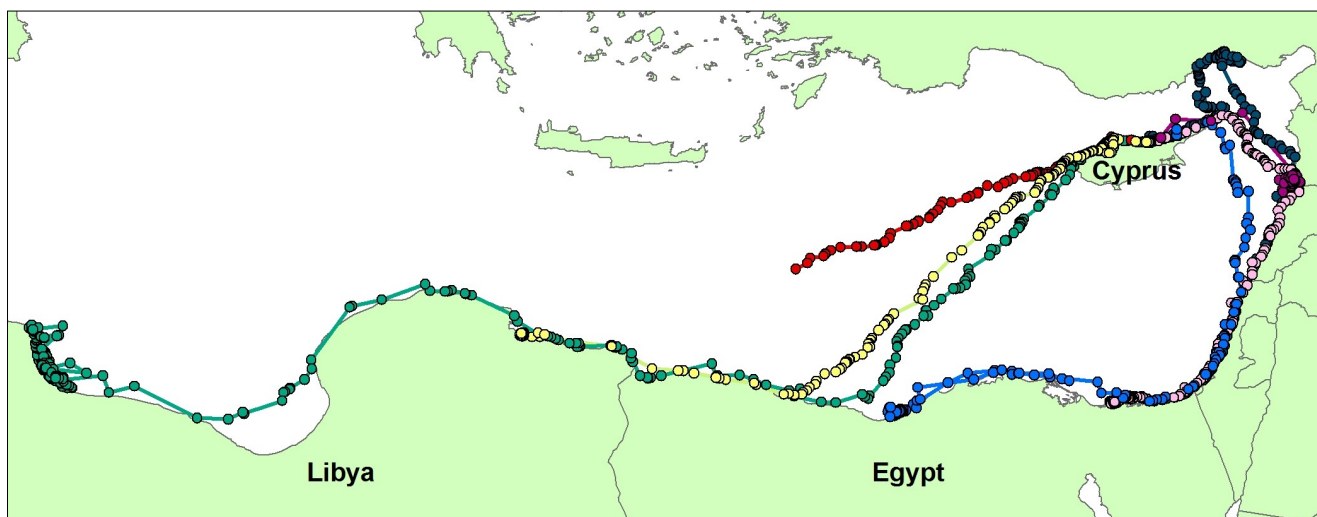


Figure 2. Tracks from the 2009 season: Five female green turtles, one male green turtle and one female loggerhead. To follow this project online, visit www.seaturtle.org/tracking/?project_id=397

MTCP Reunion of 2009: Kristine Kelso reports.....



Saturday, October 24th, a day that will live in infamy, when the unsuspecting town of Falmouth was overrun by >20 turtle trackers (aka members of the Goatshed Alliance, MTCP volunteers and veterans). The weekend was kicked off on the Friday and meeting, where else, but at the 2009 Falmouth Beer Festival! As members trickled into the tasting tents and poured out into the gardens, each one was met with hugs and cheers as they managed to navigate the festival and find our group enjoying their ale and cider. Of noted travels was Celli who hitched a ride in a farmer's truck and Sabine who flew in from Germany. We carried on to a local drinking establishment and continued on never to be deterred by lack of money or the fact we had lost our fearless leader to an intense conversation with a fisherman. The night eventually ended with us all deciding it would be a great time to relive the wonders of the Alagadi sleepy house, most of us spending the night in Kim and Iona's lovely little flat. Piled upon floors, hallways, kitchen, and any sleeping space available; we slept blissfully.

The following morning we ventured out seeking traditional English breakfast! We then managed to organize us all into convoy to the north Cornwall shore! After

months of bonding in Cyprus over sand, surf, and turtles- the beach was our natural social environment! There was Cornish Ice Cream and a coastal walk around a seal colony. The kitchen staff of Hell's Mouth Café were not impressed when at 5 minutes to closing we ordered cream teas for 20. That night we all converged upon a sleepy little pub for a rambunctious meal- complete with speeches by Robin- stating the success of the program this past year- the most nests to date! After the meal we pub crawled our way through the town, enjoyed a kebab, and danced the night away in a sweaty disco. After closing time, not wanting the night to end, we all sat on the edge of the bay for some banter and catch-up time. The groups dispersed as the pints and the tiredness kicked in and we all headed back to the "Falmouth Sleepy-house".

The following morning dawned and some went in search of Cornish Pasties. It was then time to say "BBBBYYYYYYYYEEEE!!!" to all our fellow members in true Cyprus fashion. It was a lovely weekend of shenanigans, it was sad to see everyone leave, knowing that some wouldn't return the next year. The annual migration from all over the UK and Europe to converge upon Falmouth with all the silliness of the MTCP members was a wonderful way to reconnect with friends and celebrate the success of the project this past year.



Fundraising Bonanza



Friends of SPOT had their most successful fundraising season so far in 2009.

We kicked off with "SPOT Who Dun It?" a murder mystery set on RMS Olympic, the sister ship to the Titanic. This Easter event held at Hotel Sempati including a meal was enjoyed by 85 guests and the cast alike. In July, Mountain View Hotel hosted North Cyprus's 1st "Weakest Link" quiz night & meal complete with our own 'Ann Robinson' and very well supported. In August the 6th Annual Turtle Fun Day was held at Lapethos Aqua Park, and 300 adults & children enjoyed a day of turtle orientated games for all the family. An 'African Queen' Boat Trip had been planned but had to be cancelled due to rough seas, but hopefully will go ahead in 2010.

All proceeds from these events went to SPOT and enabled them to purchase the much needed pick-up truck for the Project.

As well as organising events like these 'Friends of SPOT' run weekly stalls at 2 local Craft Markets, enabling tourists to be directed to the Goat Shed (with a map if necessary), find out nesting/hatching details,

Adopt a Turtle, purchase event tickets and buy souvenirs.

Karsiyaka Turtle Watch, now in their 3rd year, were so excited when they had an unexpected Green Turtle nest and hatch on Guzelyali beach, normally only Loggerheads nest here. Trained ex-pat volunteer turtle watchers walk the beach every morning collecting rubbish as they go and protecting any nests they find. With the help of local school children, divers and council the beach is cleaned before the start of each season.

In 2009 they protected and excavated 53 nests, from which 2458 hatchlings made it safely to sea, of these 1005 were excavated by Turtle Watch. This beach has not been monitored by MTCP previously as it is had shown little signs of activity, is small and rather stony, but elderly locals reported that 50 years ago there were huge sand dunes, until the sand was removed for construction.



Some of Karsiyaka Turtle Watch team



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ONCE AGAIN A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL THE PROJECTS SUPPORTERS!