

## **Sea Turtles in the Mediterranean: A Dangerous Journey for Their Survival**



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Mediterranean Sea turtles constantly “sail” in hazardous waters seriously threatening their survival. The Mediterranean is a small sea, very similar to a big salty lake, as well as a serious threat to the survival of marine turtles due to its physical and hydrographic characteristics and the presence of a high number of Countries, really diverse from each other, along its coasts.

Out of the three species of sea turtles populating the Mediterranean (*Caretta caretta*, *Chelonia mydas* and *Dermochelys coriacea*), the first two species evolved local populations and are demographically independent from their Atlantic ancestors, that implies their major vulnerability compared to those in the neighborhood Atlantic. The pressure of human activities, as bycatch, marine pollution, and in particular marine litter, as well as the use of nesting beaches for recreational activities and climate change have severely impacted marine turtles and therefore immediate actions are required to recover both the biological populations and their habitats.

The current conservation efforts cannot be successful whether based only on laws and regulations. They should be mainstreamed in a common shared strategy going well beyond the socio-economic, cultural and ethnic Mediterranean barriers.

Pending the achievements of the said political targets, in order to significantly reduce the mortality of marine turtles, several rescue centers for the cure and rehabilitation of these animals have been set up in strategic points of the Mediterranean.

Further, a number of Aquarium have also included the cure and rehabilitation of sea turtles among their conservation activities for endangered species, to foster the increasing of wild populations and, at the same time, allow people to have a closer look on these endangered species by raising awareness on their crucial role in our environment.

Sea Turtles are charismatic animals attracting the attention of both scientists and generic audience. These species play important roles in the ecosystems in which they live, although much is still unknown on the said roles cause populations currently are seriously depleted.