STEPS TO BUILDING LONG TERM SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION PROGRAM IN YEMEN CONTD.

With three generous awards from US Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Marine Turtle Conservation Fund, issued in 2011, 2013, and 2014; and with the participation of local communities, this project is ongoing.

Because of its unique biodiversity, and being nominated a world heritage site, Socotra Island was selected to start the project's activities (Nasher and Al Jumaily, 2013). After several meetings with community members and their Sheikhs, they were convinced to collaborate. Activities started with awareness programs, training, and capacity building. By the end of the 2012 nesting season, it was time to establish a community based organisation. Meetings and discussions with community members of Salmahu and Qadama led to the establishment of "Socotra Society for Sea Turtle Conservation" through which monitoring and protection of turtles on Socotra continued to date.

In Hadhramout, contact was established with the "Friends of Environment Society", an NGO that was established over a decade ago in Addees Al Shargia, east of Hadhramout. In the past, members of this society have carried out some activities on sea turtle protection at Sharma, but these activities were discontinued due to shortage of funding. Meetings were also held with communities living near Jethmoun. Because many of them were educated, they immediately welcomed the idea and offered to collaborate. Eventually they established "Halfoon Wildlife Protection Society" which joined the sea turtle conservation project, and proved to be the most active. The next station was Ras Imran and Azizi Island where hawksbill turtles nest. After three meetings with the fishermen in this area, "Ras Imran Society for Sea Turtle Conservation" was established. Finally after two visits to Al-Mahra, collaboration was established with "Al-Fatk Fisheries and Service Association", and sea turtle monitoring started in June 2014.

Under the supervision of qualified scientists, monitoring activities were carried out by volunteers from the communities. Their role was to patrol from 6 PM to 3 AM of the next day during nesting season and keep records of nesting females. The presence on the beach of these volunteers, prevents those who intend to slaughter turtles from approaching, thus protection is achieved indirectly. They were doing this for a nominal monthly compensation which covered the cost of snacks and refreshments.

Results obtained so far indicate that Yemeni marine coasts and waters are ideal for nesting and feeding of marine turtles. Of special interest, is Sharma-Jethmoun site (see Stanton, 2008); a 50 km long sandy beach interrupted by several large rocky outcrops. The nesting season begins as early as April, when a few turtles start emerging, and extends to October, with the peak during June to August. Large numbers of green turtles *Chelonia mydas* arrive to nest every year. A few loggerheads *Caretta caretta*, and hawksbill turtles *Eretmochelys imbricata* were also encountered every night during the nesting season. Three Olive Ridleys *Lepidochelys olivacea* were recorded in July 2014, two on the 17th and one on the 24th, but none of them nested.

Turtle species	2013		2014		
	September	October	May	June	July
C. mydas	4,032	1,584	3,456	8,360	15,828
C. caretta	20	10	10	2	8
E. imbricate	11	4	6	6	5
L. olivacea	0	0	0	0	3

In conclusion, with collaborative efforts between government officials and people, sea turtles can be protected and conserved in Yemen, which can be recognized as a globally important region for sea turtle nesting.

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