periodicity, and nest site location were not changed and adult mortality was negligible. The majority of the nesting beach quickly returned to its normal structure and profile. The wide distribution of sea turtle nesting beaches throughout the tropical zone subject to severe storms suggests that these are a normal and passing disturbance to nesting sea turtles to which they are well adapted.

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Loggerhead Turtles in the Dalyan River, Mulğa Province, Turkey, 2004

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The most common species of marine turtle in the Mediterranean Sea is the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*). It is well known that loggerhead turtles enter rivers and estuaries on a regular basis throughout the world. These marine turtles, especially juveniles and sub adults, use lagoons, estuaries and bays as feeding grounds (Dodd 1995) such as the Indian River Lagoon in Florida (Ehrhart 1983). In the Mediterranean, records of loggerhead turtles in the brackish water of the Neretva Delta, Croatia, in the freshwater of the Skadar Lake in Montenegro (Bolkay 1924) and Prokljan Lake near Šibenik, Dalmatia (De Luca *et al.* 1990) have been described.

As part of the Caretta Action Network (CAN) project 2004 of the Aktionsgemeinschaft Artenschutz e.V. (AgA) and Bund Deutscher Tierfreunde e.V. (BdT), Germany, an extended observation of surface activities of the Nile Soft-Shelled Turtle (*Trionyx triunguis*) in the Dalyan River was carried out. The river represents a typical brackish estuary with a strong vertical salinity gradient from an average of S = 3 ‰ on the surface to a maximum of S = 27 ‰ at a depth of 5 m. The wetlands (see fig 1), holding one of the biggest populations of *T. triunguis* in the Middle East (Bride 2004), are part of the Specially Protected Area (SPA) of Köyceğiz/Dalyan in the Mulğa province, Turkey and include Dalyan Beach, one of the important nesting sites of the loggerhead turtle in Turkey (Venizelos 1999).

During the observation period from May to July 2004, at least 2 different sub adult or adult loggerhead turtles were regularly seen near Dalyan town. Their average surface time for breathing was 3.5 seconds (n = 30). One turtle was regularly observed near the Dalyan River outlet. Loggerhead turtles have been previously documented feeding in the Ala Lake and the wetland system behind İztuzu beach (Venizelos 1999).

Because the fish gate (see fig 1) from the local fishing cooperation downstream from the observed section is closed most of the year, these loggerhead turtles are entrapped in the upper area of the Dalyan River and cannot freely move. In order to allow these turtles to follow their natural life cycle, migrating and reproducing, it would be necessary to relocate them behind the fish gate and this should be considered by the SPA authorities.

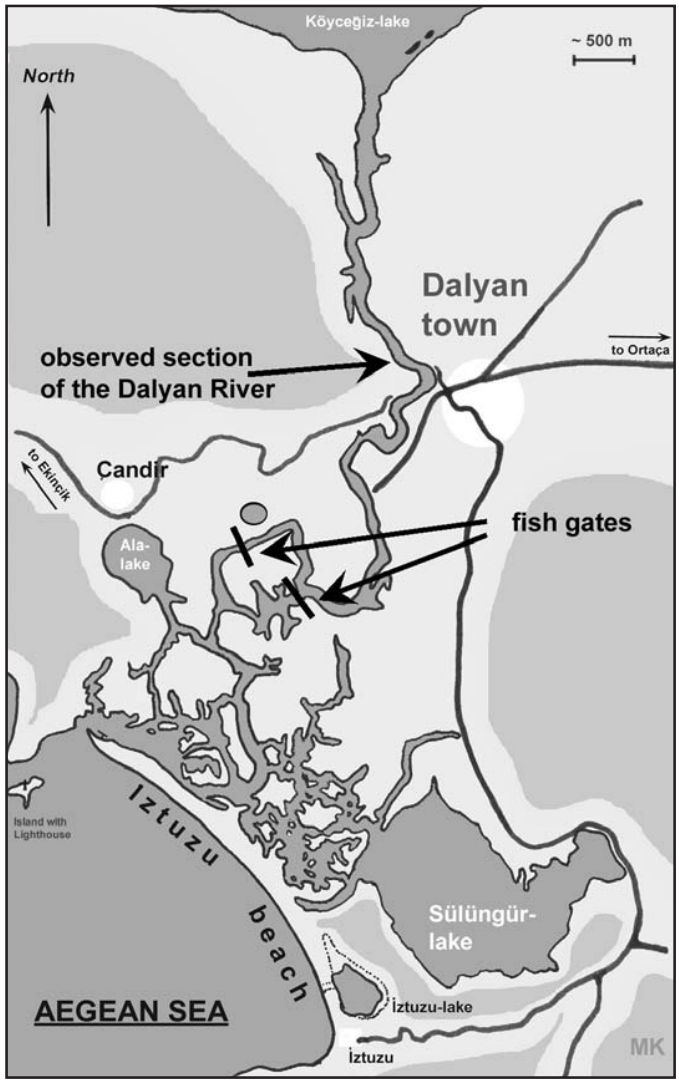

Figure 1. Map of the Dalyan estuaries between the Köyceğiz Lake and the Aegean Sea. The observed section of the river is marked as such. From there, the fish gates completely block access to the Aegean Sea for the observed loggerhead turtles.

Acknowledgements: I wish to thank Siegfried Weisel and all volunteers of the CAN project 2004 for their tireless work and assistance in the field. Many thanks to the Aktionsgemeinschaft Artenschutz e.V. and the Bund Deutscher Tierfreunde e.V. for their logistical and financial support.

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Marine Turtle Specialist Group News: Overview of Activities for a New Year

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At the start of a new year, the 25th Sea Turtle Symposium and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) are already behind us and the Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG) is gearing up for another very active year, with a suite of exciting initiatives already in the works. The following update provides a summary of MTSG activity since our last report, as well as an overview of planned activities for 2005.

Recent Activities

Padre Island National Seashore – Last December, MTSG member Carole Allen alerted the Co-Chairs to a US Government proposal to allow 5 natural gas wells to be constructed within the Padre Island National Seashore in Corpus Christi, Texas. Padre Island is home to the most important nesting beach for the Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) along the entire US coast, with 55% of all nests laid in the US in 2004. The proxy effects associated with natural gas extraction such as well construction, beach vehicle traffic, and light pollution can pose significant added threats to this already *Critically Endangered* species. In response, Co-Chair Rod Mast sent a letter to Padre Island's Superintendent, Colin Campbell, on December 22nd 2004, criticizing the proposal and offering the MTSG's assistance in ensuring effective conservation of the Kemp's ridley in the future. On January 28th 2005, we received a response from Mr. Campbell indicating that the construction of five new natural gas wells would continue as planned, with efforts made to mitigate the impact on the Kemp's ridley. Unfortunately, the legislation that established the Park in 1962 (Public Law 87-712) left the mineral rights beneath the Park in the hands of private entities, thus allowing the current resource extraction to legally continue without regard for public opinion. While we are not entirely pleased with the conclusion of this issue, we remain hopeful that all efforts will be made to ensure the future of the Kemp's ridley.

Tsunami Relief – The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 26th, 2004 had a devastating impact on coastal communities across the Indian Ocean, leaving in its wake an incomprehensible death toll and a tremendous challenge to restore the lives and livelihoods of thousands of affected people. We extend our deepest condolences to all those who were affected by this terrible tragedy. In response to this disaster and owing to the need to reestablish affected conservation projects, the MTSG, in partnership with SEATURTLE.ORG and the International Sea Turtle Society created the Indian Ocean Tsunami Fund, which will provide immediate relief to affected sea turtle conservation projects in the region. We are happy and grateful to report that the fund has already received very generous support from numerous individuals and organizations. In order to leverage these funds and maximize our efforts, the MTSG has teamed up with Conservation International, AIDE Inc., and a corporate sponsor, Working Assets, in an online funding drive that will engage internet users from around the world to generate funds through their donated 'clicks'. The goal of the drive is to ultimately provide $20,000 in aid to help the Turtle Conservation Project in Sri Lanka rebuild and reestablish their important conservation efforts in the coastal communities of Kosgoda and Rekawa.

Southern Sri Lanka has long been notorious for its innumerable faux-conservation sea turtle hatcheries that are nothing more than tourist attractions. The vast majority of these hatcheries are poorly managed and make little effort to re-create natural nesting conditions that would subsequently yield 'natural' hatchling sex ratios. As a result, these hatcheries, though billed as conservation projects, are often endangering local turtle populations further. As the post-tsunami reconstruction efforts are taking shape, the MTSG is committed to ensuring that the sea turtle hatcheries in southern Sri Lanka are reestablished according to best-practice standards for conservation. In line with this effort, MTSG member Eng-Heng