

MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL PUP “BADEM” RELEASED BACK TO THE SEA IN TURKEY

*CMS Secretariat welcomes successful release of monk seal pup in Turkey and expresses its gratitude to the involved individuals and organizations. CMS will keep on supporting the conservation efforts for the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*).*

The decline of the monk seal is the result of adverse interactions with humans, mostly through direct exploitation in the past, and deliberate killing, incidental entanglement in fishing gears, destruction or alteration of coastal habitat, overexploitation of fisheries, and pollution.

An international team of activists and environmental organizations successfully released the Mediterranean monk seal pup Badem found on 5 December 2006 on Didim, Aegean coast of Turkey on 28 April 2007. A team comprising staff of SAD-AFAG, Foça Municipality, Turkish Coast Guard, businessman Mr. Mustafa KOÇ and Zeehondencrèche Lenie't Hart performed the transportation of Badem from Foça to Gökova Bay, SW Turkey and released her on the pristine coasts of the bay.



© M.A. Cedenilla / CBD-Habitat

CMS has been focusing on conservation measures for the Mediterranean Monk Seal for a long time. The species is included in Appendix I (Endangered Species) of the Convention text, which implies that Member states are committed to: 1.) conserve its habitat to counteract factors impeding movement and migrations, 2.) survey other threat factors, 3.) ban seal hunting and capture, and 4.) prevent disturbance to the species.

The Mediterranean Monk seal is also included in Appendix II of CMS, meaning that its conservation requires International Co-operation Agreements. Over the last years, an Action Plan for the Conservation of the Eastern Atlantic Monk Seal was elaborated and finally approved at the Eighth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in Nairobi, Kenya in

November 2005. The Plan provides a new focus for monk seal conservation by specifying the commitment of the countries in the species' distribution range, as signatories to the Bonn Convention. It is the first time that monk seal conservation actions in the Atlantic region have been approached in a spirit of co-operation and international co-ordination.

The Action Plan is a guideline that lays down the procedures to implement co-ordinated actions. It provides a means to combine programs from different states, local and private organizations into effective, efficient, concentrated efforts, which should lead to the recovery of the depleted population of the species. The immediate goal is to stop the decline and, in medium term, promote recovery. The latest **Conference on monk seal conservation** held in 2006 at Antalya, Turkey, aimed at coordinating actions by strengthening common approaches and programmes between the Mediterranean and Atlantic range states.



The CMS Secretariat would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to all the individuals and organizations involved as well as to the Turkish government for their ongoing support of conservation efforts. Although, Turkey is not yet a Party to the Convention on Migratory Species, it has already begun to participate in and benefit from CMS-sponsored instruments and activities.

The Turkish Ministry of Environment and Forestry hosted the **Second Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles** in Kemer, Turkey in May 2005.

Also, Turkey has participated in the Joint Work Program between CMS and CBD, by submitting the case study 'Bird Migration and Flight Safety Subproject for Bird Migration' in relation to seven of the JWP's thematic and cross-cutting issues in 2003. Turkey has numerous programmes to protect its biodiversity and a number of national institutions are involved with the study or conservation of migrant species or their habitats. Protected areas such as the Kus Cenneti National Park, home to many migratory bird species and the Köycegiz Dalyan protected area have been established. The Bosphorus Strait is not only a migratory route for birds but also for fish between the Marmara Sea and Black Sea. With Turkey as a member of CMS, other parties will certainly benefit greatly from Turkey's policy input and management expertise for many species.

The CMS Secretariat extends again its congratulations for the successful release of Badem, and its wishes to count Turkey as a Party to the Convention soon.