

MOVEMENTS OF JUVENILE LOGGERHEAD TURTLES ACCIDENTALLY CAUGHT BY FISHERMEN IN THE LIBYAN SEA

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Libya has the longest coastline among the African bordering countries of the Mediterranean and it is known to be visited by both green and loggerhead turtles either during winter or as a stop-over on their migrations. However, only loggerheads nest in this region. We used satellite telemetry to investigate the movements and behaviour of turtles found in neritic Libyan waters. Three loggerhead turtles which were accidentally caught by bottom trawl were equipped with satellite transmitters and released close to their respective capture sites. Turtle 1 parted from Tajura, east of Tripoli (32.897°N, 13.35°E) and went straight to the north towards Sicily where it remained for one year circling in deep waters of the Ionian sea. Turtle 2 remained for one month in the Misurata area (32.375°N, 15.095°E) and moved then to shallow waters in the offshore area 120 km east of the Gulf of Gabes (Tunisia). Turtle 3 always remained in the Misurata area. Tracking periods for turtles 1, 2 and 3 lasted 359, 197 and 101 days respectively. Preliminary mtDNA analysis indicates that turtle 1 originated from the Atlantic while the other turtles carried a haplotype characteristic of the Mediterranean nesting populations. This might explain the difference in the turtles behaviour, since Atlantic turtles are believed to remain in the oceanic life stage and not to recruit to neritic foraging grounds in the Mediterranean. These results suggest that there is a separation in habitat use in similar sized late juvenile loggerhead turtles due to their native origins.