

Project Update: July 2006

Since receiving funding from the Rufford Small Grant in 2004, the sea turtle study in Morocco has been evaluating the bycatch of turtles in Moroccan waters, involving local fishermen in bycatch studies, conducting market surveys for sea turtle products, and surveying the coastline for potential nesting beaches. This work is done in collaboration with Professor Mustapha Aksissou and Wafae Benhardouze at the University of Tetouan in Morocco and with researchers at the National Institute for Fisheries Research in Morocco. The project has greatly expanded with funding from the Rufford Small Grant and continues to function on this funding as the grant goes a very long way in countries like Morocco.

Some of the preliminary bycatch data are presented in the attached poster, “Capture of sea turtles in the fisheries around Tangier, Morocco,” presented at the 25th International Sea Turtle Symposium. Bycatch work in Morocco has necessitated collaborations with local fishermen. Three workshops have been held at major Moroccan ports—Tangier, Casablanca, and Laayoune—to educate and train fishermen to collect turtle bycatch data for the project. These workshops are described in the online African Turtle Newsletter:

Workshop in Laayoune November 2006: <http://www.seaturtle.org/blog/africa/000503.html>
Workshop in Casablanca May 2006: <http://www.seaturtle.org/blog/africa/000486.html>
Workshop in Tangier November 2005: <http://www.seaturtle.org/blog/africa/000462.html>

More workshops are being planned at other Moroccan ports to establish a sea turtle bycatch project along the entire Atlantic coast of Morocco. A more extensive paper on turtle bycatch is currently being prepared for publication.

Results of market surveys in northern Morocco are presented in the attached publication, “Notes from Preliminary Market Surveys in Morocco.”

A survey of nesting beaches was recently undertaken in southern Morocco and the results are presented in the attached report, “Sea Turtle Surveys in Southern Morocco (Plage Blanche – Porto Rico) in July 2006.”

Finally, some of the activities are summarized in the poster, “The status of marine turtles in Atlantic Morocco,” presented at the 26th International Sea Turtle Symposium.