

Project Update: December 2018

During the third quarter of the project, we conducted 84 surveys and recorded 174 turtles at our five index foraging grounds in the Marsa Alam area. We also received sighting reports of 307 turtles from 63 citizen scientists. Overall, 52 new turtles were added to our existing catalogue. We now have a total of 366 individual turtles in our catalogue.

Divers and snorkelers from 26 different dive operators are now contributing to the project by sharing turtle sightings.

In cooperation with some of those dive operators, we organised short presentations of the project addressed to small groups of tourists as part of their excursion to famous turtle feeding grounds in Marsa Alam area: we shared with them basic information about marine turtles and the main guidelines to follow when snorkeling or diving with turtles.

In November we organised a 2-day workshop for the students of the Smith Collins International School of Hurghada. Seven kids and three teachers attended the activities.

We prepared two short lectures on marine turtle biology and ecology and on pollution and the threats marine turtles face during their life. We prepared also games, quizzes and interactive activities to integrate the theory part. What the kids learnt during this workshop has been included in the school's science curriculum.

Through our project we discovered seven injured turtles, five of which were hit by a speedboat and presented clear signs of collision with propellers. Reports of injured turtles and interactions with speedboats have been reported more and more frequently throughout this year. It became obvious that there is a gap here that needs to be addressed: while the number of speedboats is increasing in shallow areas that are also important feeding grounds for endangered marine turtles and marine mammals like the dugong, there is no regulation in place. Therefore, as a starting point, we developed and distributed a flyer illustrating the code of conduct for speed boats. Through our project and thanks to the support of our data providers, we have been able to follow up the recovery process of the seven turtles, and we are currently working on a short note to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal on recovery rates of marine turtles in the wild.

Finally, we could contribute to the release of two green turtles kept in captivity in a fish shop in north of Egypt. Thanks to a "turtle watcher" that made a report to TurtleWatch – Egypt team, we could contact the Ministry of Environment and the local authorities who finally found the turtles and released them into the sea.

For the next quarter, we will be continuing with our regular surveys and compiling data received by citizen scientists. We aim at organizing further awareness events, possibly including field trips with local schools addressed to children and teachers. We will also be working with local dive centers and local authorities to see what can be done to reduce injury rates of turtles by propellers.



Figure 1: Workshop at Smith Collins School of Hurghada: lecture in the classroom and Turtle-Memory game to learn how to identify individual turtles . ©Abdallah Taher



Figure 2: Workshop at Smith Collins School of Hurghada, handicraft: learning how to identify turtle species by building a marine turtle using recycled materials. ©Abdallah Taher



Figure 3: Workshop at Smith Collins School of Hurghada: learning marine turtle life cycle and the threats they face at each stage by playing a game. ©Abdallah Taher



Figure 4: Workshop at Smith Collins School of Hurghada: students, teachers and TurtleWatch-Egypt team. ©Abdallah Taher



Figure 5: TurtleWatch-Egypt presentation and training for tourists in Marsa Eglia in collaboration with E-Motion. ©Laura Mesha



Figure 6: TurtleWatch-Egypt presentation and training for tourists in Marsa Eglia in collaboration with E-Motion. ©Doreen Huber (E-Motion)



Figure 7 and Figure 8: Injured turtle in Makadi bay (Hurghada): details of the wounds at the moment of the first sighting (F.7) and five weeks later (F.8). ©Carlo Cogliati and Ivan Puglisi (IDive Makadi Bay)

TURTLEWATCH - EGYPT 2.0

Code of Conduct for Speedboats

Some important info:

Marine turtles can often be found in shallow coastal bays and lagoons feeding, resting, cleaning or swimming. These areas are usually frequented by high numbers of divers and snorkelers. Therefore, when using a speedboat, it is essential to understand how to best drive it without injuring or affecting turtles and people!

- **GO SLOW!** In areas where you know turtles might be feeding, reducing speed is the most effective way to reduce the risk of collision.
- Make sure that there is a person on the lookout at the front and sides of your boat. Ask your guests to help you avoid turtles.
- Do not anchor in seagrass areas or in proximity of coral reefs as turtles may be resting or feeding at the bottom and could be hit by the anchor.
- Avoid going in very shallow areas (i.e less than 3 meters) to drop your guests. Instead, ask your guests to put their snorkeling and diving gears on and point them in the direction of the turtles from a distance.
- If you see an injured turtle, please report your sighting to us. We are in constant communication with specialised veterinaries that provide guidance on what to do in case of injuries.



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or you can send us a private message!

or you can e-mail us: turtlewatch@hepca.org

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Material: TurtleWatch Egypt "Code of conduct for speedboats" flyer



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