

Project Update: May 2021

Preparation of digital material to be used for online training for dive centre staff:

In this first phase, we prepared the material needed to conduct the workshops for captains and the training for dive centre staff. All the material has already been prepared in English and also translated into Arabic.

In addition, we have prepared:

1. An updated code of conduct for speed boats (already available in English and Arabic).
2. New TurtleWatch Egypt flyers to provide knowledge on how to assess the health status of sea turtles and what to do in case of encounters with injured individuals.
3. A new and updated version of the TurtleWatch Egypt Manual.
4. New updated versions of all our digital materials (including species identification keys, guidelines, information on how to participate in the project).

First training event for dive centre staff:

Although only some of the dive centres based along the coast of Red Sea are open at the moment and they operate with a limited number of staff, we managed to organise a first training event. The meeting was hosted by our partner, Moments Restaurant. We were able to do our TurtleWatch presentation in person, taking into account the current Covid-19 security measures (the event was held in an open air space, respecting the security distance and not exceeding the maximum capacity for the place). We shared information about the project, sea turtle ecology and biology, codes of conduct, how to participate and how to engage and educate tourists, detailed information about past injured individuals and finally how to help prevent such accidents, how to recognise a turtle in distress and how to intervene. Seventeen people representing four different dive centres attended. The code of conduct and all new and updated digital materials were distributed to all participants.

We had very positive feedback after the first meeting, with several dive guides sharing their old and new turtle sightings and some reporting individuals showing signs of distress, meaning that the content was understood and that our activity was effective in getting participants to actually engage.

In-water awareness and training for guides in key sea turtle areas, analysing turtle reports and compiling data:

This activity was successfully launched in collaboration with dive centre staff in the main feeding grounds in the area of Marsa Alam - new individuals were found at almost all monitored sites. The data received and/or collected are being analysed and our turtle database and catalog is being constantly updated.

Interesting additional activities/findings:

- The Turtle Watch Egypt 2.0 coordinator had the opportunity to participate in a week-long liveaboard in the deep south, which marked the beginning of a collaboration with a European film production company and a video production company based in Red Sea. The team of professionals was very small, all focused on observing the wildlife. We explored very interesting dive sites that had not been visited by divers/tourists for a long time due to the pandemic. It was an exceptional

opportunity to observe marine life in quite remote areas during such a peculiar circumstance with very limited human presence. The route included Zabargad Island, one of the most important nesting sites for green turtles in the Red Sea. We spotted several turtles and were also able to record four new individuals. We also added new locations where turtles were sighted to our database. This new collaboration will certainly help the project improve outreach and gain popularity.

- The turtle nesting season began early this year (mid-March); we received the report of the first nesting activity of 2021 in the area of Marsa Alam. We investigated the site and tracks and began disseminating information about what to do and how to report nesting activity through our social media, using our updated informative material.
- We received the first report of the year of a dead hawksbill turtle in Hurghada area - possibly linked to illegal trade.
- We have extended our reach thanks to new connections: Red Sea Dive Adventures has decided to support TWE 2.0 by displaying our banner on their new website (<https://redseadiveadventures.com/>).