

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
Full Name	Bengi ATAY
Project Title	Improvement knowledge of sandbar shark ( <i>Carcharhinus plumbeus</i> ) in Boncuk Cove, Gökova SEPA, Turkey
Application ID	38381-1
Date of this Report	13 November 2024

**1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.**

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Tagging with acoustic receivers		X		Two different field studies were carried out for the activity. In the first study, acoustic receivers were placed underwater. The second study was carried out in Boncuk Bay to capture sandbar sharks and place acoustic transmitters on them. However, tagging was not successful. Sharks were neither observed nor caught during the five days of the tagging period. It was thought that the reason for this might be that the species was not showing feeding behaviour in the bay and that it might have been disturbed by the engine noise of the boat used.
Awareness-raising activities for the local fisheries			X	A meeting was held in the Akyaka Fisheries Cooperative with the participation of seven fishers (2 women & 5 men). Exchanges were made about bycatch safe handling during the meeting. Information was provided to fishers about cartilaginous species and their importance. Their conservation status was explained as well as the need for more caution based on the likelihood of encountering these species in the region. Furthermore, a presentation was given on bycatch; most common species (sea turtles, sea birds, cartilaginous species) that are subject to bycatch were listed, bycatch prevention methods were discussed and fishers told us

				about their own experiences on the subject.
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## 2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

**a).** Knowing that Boncuk Bay (located in the Gökova SEPA (Special Environmental Protection Area)) is closed to all boat activity, it was considered that the sandbar shark frequently uses the bay regardless of the holiday resort and the people swimming. However, there were no traces (no bite marks on the baits, no observations on underwater cameras) of sandbar shark during the tagging period.

Additionally, Boncuk Bay was declared an ISRA (Important Shark and Ray Area) in 2023 because it is an important reproductive area for sandbar sharks.

**b).** Fishers were already aware of the importance of bycatch and have already put their own measurements (similar to the ones in our presentation) in place to reduce bycatch. This shows that local fishers have their own way of conserving the marine ecosystem.

**c).** It should also be considered that some expensive bycatch prevention/reduction methods like acoustic deterrent devices for cetaceans and electromagnetic deterrents for cartilaginous fishes especially sharks are not realistic for Turkish small-scale fishers which usually have low income. Some fishers said that other preventive suggestions like the use of differently shaped hooks would keep the fishers from catching their target species.

## 3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Since the small-scale fishers in the region periodically engage in tourism during the season (May-September), it was very difficult to gather them for an awareness-raising activity (bycatch safe-handling exchange meeting). This caused the project to take longer than planned. We solved this by postponing the activity to the end of the tourism season.

## 4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

Even though fishers from local communities were already aware of by-catch because they were experiencing it firsthand, with the help of this project they were able to understand how endangered these cartilaginous species (and other aquatic species subject to bycatch) are, why it is important to protect them and their key role in the balance of the ecosystem. They learned about other efforts around the world to prevent by-catch and how to rescue an animal if they encounter such a situation.

## 5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Considering the difficulties of catching sharks in the bay, for future studies it was discussed to try tagging using pop-up and/or dart methods that could be used to tag the animal without catching it, instead of tagging using acoustic transmitters.

**6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?**

Because tagging of the sandbar shark was unsuccessful, there isn't enough material to publish the study. On the other hand, data from observational studies (snorkelling transect & underwater camera) will be added to AKD (Mediterranean Conservation Society)'s database.

**7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?**

The best next step would be to obtain more information about the species (behaviour, observation frequency, relations with abiotic & biotic factors etc.), why sandbar sharks particularly prefer Boncuk Bay and to continue further studies in the light of the new information obtained.

**8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

Yes. We had t-shirts and flags made for the bycatch safe-handling meeting with fishers. We also added the Rufford logo to the first slide of the presentation.

**9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.**

**Bengi ATAY:** Project leader. Coordination, logistics & budget planning, reporting & correspondence. Fieldwork (snorkelling & tagging) execution & data collection, conducting awareness-raising activities & presentation.

**Serena PENNETTI:** Fieldwork (snorkelling & tagging), data collection and reporting. Planning activities & awareness-raising. Designing & organising t-shirt and flag production.

**Mustafa Tunca OLGUNER:** Fieldwork (receiver placement & tagging), overall advising for planning and logistics.

**Misra KOLAÇ:** Snorkelling, awareness raising.

**Ahmetcan İMBATESEN:** Snorkelling, awareness raising.

**10. Any other comments?**

Thank you for this opportunity. We learned a lot about managing a small grant project. It allowed us to create a link with local fisheries cooperative and small-scale fishers even though we weren't able to meet them all face to face during our meeting. Least of all, now we have their contact information for future endeavours. Thanks to this cooperation we hope to be able to continue our work with the sandbar sharks and to better understand these elasmobranchs.