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The Marine Protected Areas and Biodiversity Centre in the Mediterranean

In this issue:

Mediterranean Lesser Crested Terns A new monitoring protocol	P1
Marine turtles Monitoring of marine turtles nesting on the Kuriat islands Care facility for marine Turtles in Tyre Coast Marine Reserve	P2
Roadmap to achieve in 2020 the international goals of the CBD in terms of conservation and management of marine and coastal areas	P3
SAP BIO Assesment & updating with the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 in line with the ecosystems approach	P4



Protocol for the monitoring of Mediterranean Lesser Crested Terns (*Thalasseus bengalensis emigratus*)

Libya hosts a localized population of Lesser Crested Tern, *Thalasseus bengalensis*, a highly social seabird that is not known to nest with regularity anywhere else in the Mediterranean. The whole stock was known to be concentrated at Garah Island in the Gulf of Sirt, Libya, which has been visited by ornithologists in less than five years during the entire course of the 20th century. Very few pairs had actually been discovered in Lebanon before the Libyan colonies were found, but they were never confirmed subsequently.

Only odd pairs or single breeders paired to other species have sometime been reported from large South European tern colonies.

Three more Lesser Crested Tern breeding sites were found in Libya in recent years, none approaching Garah colony size. Despite their discovery, still Garah concentrates the largest fraction of the global population of what seems to be a Mediterranean endemic (ssp. *emigratus*). It's of utmost importance

that monitoring this species goes on with regularity, according to a consistent protocol, without putting the breeding success at risk and storing the data in a safe and accessible form. Because many colonial seabirds, and most notably terns, are prone to suffer from disturbance when they are breeding, studying other natural features at Lesser Crested Terns' breeding sites, and particularly at Garah, should take place in full awareness and respect of this unique avian component, without exposing the colony at any risk. On Garah, all activities that are not specifically addressed to conservation should be discouraged, or evaluated under a particularly strict impact assessment.

Having so much stressed the role of Garah tern colony does not entail that monitoring other breeding sites (and even non-breeding sites) should be dismissed, un-regulated, or considered of little value. In a scenario of priorities, however, a top level should be attributed to Garah only, in order to prevent that a number of secondary actions would dilute what seems most crucial for the conservation of the Mediterranean population of Lesser Crested Tern.



Thus, and aiming to provide a tool which will allow a coherent and safe approach to a population of extremely high conservation value, which is potentially vulnerable to many sources of threat, not least monitoring itself, RAC/SPA has set up a Protocol for the Monitoring of Mediterranean Lesser Crested Terns. RAC/SPA attempted to gather recent experiences carried out under its umbrella to produce this document that will be available for further sharing, that may ensure a correct continuation of activities in the next future.

This document, created within the MedMPAnet project, under the component: "MPA creation guidelines and teaching packages", presents the actions to follow at the different breeding sites in Libya (Garah island, Ftiha Island, Ulbah Island, Julyanah lagoon), at the prospection of potential breeding sites, the monitoring of stopover sites and winter quarters and data storing and evaluation.

Adapted from: © 2013, RAC/SPA, by Nicola Baccetti & Marco Zenatello



Monitoring of marine turtles nesting on the Kuriat islands (Tunisia)

As each year, over the past 17 years, and within the implementation of the Action Plan for the conservation of Mediterranean marine turtles, the Tunisian National Institute for marine sciences and technology (INSTM) with the collaboration and the support of the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA), the Agency for Coastal Protection and Management (APAL) and the Faculty of sciences of Sfax (FSS) will undertake, during the summer 2013 (July and August) the monitoring of marine turtles nesting on the Kuriat islands (Tunisia).

This campaign will be an opportunity to:

1. Raise awareness of the tourists and socio-economic actors.
2. Train students on marine turtles monitoring and ecology

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Care facility for marine Turtles in Tyre Coast Marine Reserve (Lebanon)



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Within the implementation of The "Action plan for the conservation of Marine turtles species" RAC/SPA is collaborating with Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn (SZN) and Tyre Coast National Reserve (TCNR) to support a programme to implement the monitoring of marine turtles in south Lebanon.

For that purpose:

1. A satellite tracking project of two sea turtles have been realised on July 2012 at the Ayre Coast Marine Reserve Area in order to identify their post nesting movement, migratory routes, feeding ground and breeding areas.
2. A care facility for marine Turtles will be established during the summer 2013 in order to help and rescue neighboring turtles in difficulty.

ROADMAP

to achieve in 2020 the international goals of the CBD in terms of conservation and management of marine and coastal areas

In a joint effort between the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) and the Network of Managers of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (MedPAN), a road map towards a comprehensive, ecologically representative, effectively connected and efficiently managed network of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2020 has been prepared and will be presented for adoption by the Eleventh meeting of Focal Points for Specially Protected Areas (2-5 July 20013).

In fact, of all the oceans, the Mediterranean Sea is unique by its geography, the intense pressure from populations and pollution, but also because it suffers the most from the impacts of climate change. Consequently, it should not only receive more support than other areas of the world to restore its ecosystems, rebuild its resilience and continue to provide goods and services, but also remain a key innovative region and a model for other regions in the world.

Also, it is worth notifying that the MPAs in the Mediterranean region as a whole are not yet a regional ecological network of marine protected areas, despite the fact that a network of MPA managers exists (MedPAN). Given the magnitude of the pressures and challenges, achieving the objectives of the CBD, Barcelona Convention, or those associated with EU policies and frameworks will only be possible in the short and medium term if there is a renewed, stronger, and coherent commitment from all the stakeholders (international organizations, conventions, agreements), riparian states, NGOs, the scientific community, national institutions, MPA managers, private sector, local populations/communities, etc.), and on every geographic scale (local, national, Mediterranean, European and international).

Adding to all this, and according to the Target 11 of the Aichi Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, Countries have made a commitment that by 2020, "10% of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures".

Then, the proposed roadmap aims to demonstrate the efforts which each Mediterranean country and stakeholder needs to deploy in their own way, for the short and medium term, in order for their MPA network to be operational and in accordance with international objectives. This roadmap will also contribute to identifying measures to be taken during future discussions (the Barcelona Convention COP 18, SAP BIO updating, European policies, IMPAC III, etc.)



SAP BIO

Assesment & updating with the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 in line with the ecosystems approach

The Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO) was adopted on 14 November 2003 in Catania by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to cope with the complex threats to which marine and coastal biodiversity is subject in the Mediterranean.

The actions identified by SAP BIO as having priority concerned seven main axes:

1. inventorying, mapping and monitoring Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity
2. conserving sensitive sites, species and habitats
3. assessing and mitigating the impact of threats to biodiversity
4. developing research to improve knowledge and fill in gaps regarding biodiversity
5. developing skills to ensure technical assistance and coordination
6. information and participation
7. increasing awareness.

At their Seventeenth Ordinary Meeting (Paris, France, 8-10 February 2012), the Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Protection of the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Environment (Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols invited the Secretariat to assess the progress made in applying SAP BIO and defining its options at national and regional level over the coming years. The Parties stressed the importance of taking into account the Ecological Objectives adopted for the Mediterranean and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted by the CBD in SAP BIO's new options.

In this respect, being aware of the need to revise and update any Regional Strategic Action Programme after a decade has passed since the original adoption and having regard of the need to do this assessment and updating in line with the Mediterranean Ecological Objectives adopted within the process of implementing the ecosystem approach in the MAP System activities, RAC/SPA organized the Fourth Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the SAP BIO in Malaga (Spain) on 4 July 2012 as well as the Third Meeting of

National Correspondents of the SAP BIO (4-6 July 2012). The process and roadmap were discussed with the Parties representatives. Factsheets were distributed to SAP BIO national correspondents and SPA focal points as well as to the Advisory committee members to contribute with information to the evaluation of SAP BIO.

Moreover, a consultancy, through a team of international experts and a universities consortium were engaged to undertake a forward looking and integrated analysis at policy and technical levels of the degree of implementation with regard to the adopted documents, including NAPs and RPAs, and provide adequate proposals and recommendations to further enhance their implementation. An expert meeting to further work on the assessment of SAP BIO progress of implementation was held from 2 to 3 May in Malaga (Spain). The results of the evaluation and the process followed to achieve it will be presented during the 11th meeting of Focal Points for SPAs (2-5 July 2013 - Morocco).

The orientations proposed for the future implementation of SAP BIO were elaborated taking into account:

- the analysis of the achievements and main difficulties faced in implementing the SAP BIO during the past ten years (2003-2013),
- the provisions of the priorities of the CBD's Strategic Plan (2011-2013) and
- the works being done under the Barcelona Convention for the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) in the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, other recent works and initiatives of particular relevance for the conservation of the Mediterranean biodiversity were taken into account, in particular the work done at Mediterranean level for the identification of the Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) and the recommendations of the Roadmap "Towards a comprehensive, ecologically representative, effectively connected and efficiently managed network of Mediterranean marine protected areas (MPAs) by 2020" proposed by the MAP Forum held in Antalya (Turkey) in November 2012.

The 4th meeting of SAP BIO National Correspondents and the 11th meeting of Focal Points for SPAs will be held from 1 to 5 July 2013 in Rabat, Morocco