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A Leatherback Sea Turtle Entangled in Fishing Net in Mersin Bay, Mediterranean Sea, Turkey

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Three species of marine turtles, the loggerhead *Caretta caretta*, the green turtle *Chelonia mydas* and the leatherback *Dermochelys coriacea*, are found regularly in the Mediterranean (Godley *et al.* 1998; Margaritoulis 2003; Rees *et al.* 2004). Loggerhead and green turtles nest in the eastern Mediterranean, while leatherbacks are considered migrants from the wider Atlantic (Godley *et al.* 1998; Margaritoulis 2003; Casale *et al.* 2003).

Casale *et al.* (2003) reported a total of 411 records of leatherback turtles for the whole of the Mediterranean. Rees *et al.* (2004) reported a live leatherback turtle in the coast of Syria. From the coast of Israel, one leatherback was captured incidentally in a trawler net, and subsequently died from debris ingestion (Levy *et al.* 2005) and another stranded dead entangled with a static long-line (Levy 2010). Bearzi *et al.* (2015) reported a leatherback in the semi-enclosed Gulf of Corinth, Greece. Türkozan & Kaska (2010) summarized records for this species from the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts of Turkey, including a dead leatherback found stranded on the shore of the Anamur-Bozyazı Highway in southeastern Turkey (for details, see Taşkavak & Farkas 1998). Here we report on another leatherback entangled in fishing nets on the coast of Mersin.

On 11 May 2016, a leatherback was observed in Mersin Bay, about 3 m from the shoreline on Adnan Menderes Avenue, Mersin (36.7766 °N, 34.5837 °E). The leatherback's head, front right and left flippers were entangled in a piece of net that appeared to have been clipped from a larger net, presumably by a fisherman. The leatherback was observed passively floating at the surface of the water, entangled in the piece of net. One of the authors (AHU) swam to the turtle and cut the net with clippers, in order to free the head and right front flipper. Subsequently, the turtle was observed to breathe and use its flippers. Soon after, the turtle dove beneath the surface of the water before the net attached to the left front flipper could be freed. The turtle appeared to swim away easily, and it was assumed that the remaining net would fall off eventually. The turtle was not measured and sex was not verified. The total length of the turtle was less than the height of the researcher who freed it (180 cm). The turtle was photographed but it is not possible to discern

tail length (Fig. 1). We recommend that efforts should be made to include the tail in photographs of future incidents of stranded turtles, to allow sex to be assigned.



Figure 1. Floating leatherback, entangled in fishing net, off Adnan Menderes Avenue, in Mersin Bay, Turkey, on 11 May 2016.

	Location	Date	Type of encounter	Condition	Sex	Reference
Aegean coast of Turkey	Edremit Bay, near Ören, Balıkesir province	1997-10-05	Entangled in gill nets set in 10-13 m water	Dead	A large subadult, male	Baran <i>et al.</i> 1998; Taşkavak <i>et al.</i> 1998
	İzmir Bay, between Foça and Karaburun, İzmir province	Last week November 1997	Captured in trammel net, brought ashore, released back to sea	Alive	Unknown	Taşkavak & Farkas 1998
	Coast of İzmir Bay, İzmir province	2011-10-28	Stranded on the coast; two deep transversal cuts on carapace	Dead	Mature, female	Taşkavak <i>et al.</i> 2015
Southern coast of Turkey	Antalya province	1985	Captured by fishermen and brought to the harbor of Antalya	Unknown	Unknown	Baran & Kasperek 1989
	Strait of Hurma, Karataş, Adana province	1994	Photographed by officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Services, Karataş District Directorate, as it landed on the shore dead in the Strait of Hurma	Dead	Adult, unknown sex	Oruç <i>et al.</i> 1997; Oruç 2001; Türkozan & Kaska 2010
	Karataş, Adana province	1995	Found dead in nets by the fishermen of Karataş	Dead	Unknown	Oruç <i>et al.</i> 1997; Oruç 2001
	Coastline near the Anamur-Bozyazı Highway, Mersin province	1998	Stranded between rocks on the shore	Dead	Unknown	Taşkavak & Farkas 1998
	Beach in İskenderun Bay, İskenderun, Hatay province	2006-06-06	Stranded dead on the beach; originally tagged in 2005 while nesting at Matura beach, Trinidad	Dead	Adult female	Sönmez <i>et al.</i> 2008.
	In Mersin Bay, off Adnan Menderes Ave., Mersin, Mersin province	2016-05-11	Observed about 3 m offshore, entangled in fishing nets	Alive	Unknown	This study

Table 1. Reports of the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), coasts of Turkey.

Local fishermen report that they occasionally encounter leatherbacks (Oruç 2001). To date, there are three records of leatherbacks from the Aegean coasts of Turkey (Taşkavak *et al.* 1998; Taşkavak & Farkas 1998; Taşkavak *et al.* 2015) and five records of leatherback from southern coasts of Turkey (Baran & Kasperek 1989; Oruç *et al.* 1997; Oruç 2001; Taşkavak & Farkas 1998; Sönmez *et al.* 2008) (Table 1). This new record of the leatherback turtle is reported from the coast of Mersin, Turkey, increasing the total number of records in southern coasts of Turkey to six and the total number of records in coasts of Turkey to nine.

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