

MARINE TURTLE NESTING IN LEBANON

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A complete re-survey of the Lebanese Mediterranean coast was conducted in 2004, aiming both at assessing the current status of coastal habitats and the nesting potential for marine turtles. Sandy beaches in southern Lebanon tend to be longer, while the beaches in the other parts of the country are mostly relatively short and narrow. This factor together with tourist and other development means that the overall nesting potential for marine turtles is mostly in the south. Nesting status on Palm Island off Tripoli remains to be re-assessed. El-Mansouri beach in southern Lebanon, which has been monitored yearly by MEDASSET since 2001, is the most important nesting beach in the country. During the 2004 survey it was found that significant nesting also occurs at El-Aabbassiye/El-Bourgheliye beach, which is the only beach in Lebanon with significant sand dunes. Marine turtle nesting included nine nests of the critically endangered green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). In the Tyre Coast Nature Reserve nine loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) nests were found. The 2004 project in Lebanon was a joint effort by the Lebanese Ministry of Environment, MEDASSET, MedWetCoast and the EU funded MSC project. It included awareness building amongst the local population who use the beaches for recreation. Future conservation efforts should include the El-Aabbassiye/El-Bourgheliye beach and should cover the marine turtle nesting grounds and also rehabilitation of rare and endangered coastal habitats.