

First record of the Leatherback Turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea*, from Kuwait

by Salim Y. Al-Mohanna and Robin H. Meakins

Abstract: An adult Leatherback Turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea*, was found on a beach in southern Kuwait in March 2000. It was dying from the ingestion of a nylon fishing line and died a few hours after being discovered.

Kurzfassung: Im März 2000 wurde eine adulte Lederschildkröte, *Dermochelys coriacea*, auf einem Strand im südlichen Kuwait gefunden. Sie hatte eine Angelleine aus Plastik verschluckt und starb wenige Stunden nach dem Auffinden.

Key words: Leatherback Turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea*, Kuwait, Northern Arabian Gulf, Middle East.

Introduction

The first record in the Arabian Gulf of the Leatherback Turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea* (Vandelli, 1761), dates back as far as 1888, when it was recorded near Muscat. The publication of this record by BOULENGER represents the first use of the presently-accepted nomenclature. The species proved to be rare in the Arabian Gulf and adjacent Arabian Sea (GASPERETTI et al. 1993). ROSS & BARWANI (1995) noted five occasions when the species was found in the Arabian Sea off Oman. GASPERETTI et al. (1993) state that solitary dead specimens were found in Bahrain and Qatar. There are also only a few records along the south-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and in the Red Sea. These include, in addition to records in Yemen and Egypt, a few observations in Eritrea (HILLMAN & GEBREMARIAM 1995) and the finding a dead individual on a beach in the Gulf of Aqaba (KINZELBACH 1986).

According to GROOMBRIDGE (1982) the Leatherback Turtle is a critically endangered species and any occurrences deserve attention.

The record

In March 2000, members of the Kuwait Diving Club collected a Leatherback Turtle from the mainland beach at Benadier, southern Kuwait. While trying to rescue the turtle from entrapment by a ghost fishing gillnet, it died as a result of drowning. Subsequent examination showed that its mouth and alimentary canal were choked by a nylon rope that it must have accidentally ingested.