

Editorial Note

In 1992 the British Government launched the *Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species*. This is part of the U.K.'s response to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED) where the »Convention on Biological Diversity« was adopted, the aim of which is to combat the global loss of biodiversity. The aim of the *Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species* is to promote biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources in developing countries by providing small grants and drawing on British expertise. In 1997 support from the Darwin Initiative was gained for a sea turtle project in Egypt. This aimed to establish the status of marine turtles along the Mediterranean coasts of Egypt by investigating their use by nesting Green and Loggerhead Turtles (*Chelonia mydas* and *Caretta caretta*), to protect nesting areas, eggs, hatchlings and breeding adults and to raise public and government awareness of the serious situation facing turtles in the eastern Mediterranean.

One special aim of the Egyptian Sea Turtle Project was the holding of an international workshop where the results of the project could be communicated to an audience of interested parties from neighbouring countries in the region. This meeting was held in Cairo 13–16 November, 2000, and was attended by 110 people. It included representatives from the worlds of science, industry, both central and local government, fishermen and fishery personnel and the media. At the end of the meeting recommendations for the conservation of marine turtles in Egypt were formulated and were presented to the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency and the Egyptian Minister of the Environment.

This issue of the journal *Zoology in the Middle East* emerged from that meeting. It includes scientific papers presented there, and other papers which refer to the eastern Mediterranean.

The largest nesting grounds of Loggerhead and Green Turtles in the Mediterranean are found in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. More still significant nesting takes places in other parts of the Mediterranean and the regular migration of both species within the Mediterranean Sea show the narrow interrelations among the various countries. It seemed therefore appropriate to put the focus of this publication onto the eastern Mediterranean, but not to strictly confine it to the geographic limits usually applied by the journal *Zoology in the Middle East*. In this sense, this publication includes, for example, information on the northern Adriatic Sea, to where significant numbers of eastern Mediterranean Loggerhead Turtles migrate. With this more holistic approach, it is attempted to contribute towards a better understanding of the eastern Mediterranean as a single unit for sea turtles.

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