

PROCEEDINGS OF PAPERS, THE 6TH MEDITERRANEAN CONFERENCE ON MARINE TURTLES

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This Supplement issue of *Natura Croatica*, international scientific journal of the Croatian Natural History Museum, contains selected, peer-reviewed collection of papers from the 6th Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles held at the Valamar Diamant Hotel Conference Center in Poreč, Croatia, between the 16th and 19th of October 2018.

The history of the Mediterranean Marine Turtle Conferences goes back to 1998, when the organisation of a Mediterranean conference on marine turtles was proposed by the Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species at the UNEP MAP-RAC/SPA meeting for the revision of the Action Plan for the Conservation of Mediterranean Marine Turtles in Arta, Greece. The initiative was endorsed at the RAC/SPA Meeting of Experts for Priority Actions (Tunis, February 1999), and the proposal was formally adopted by the Fourth Meeting of the National Focal Points for SPAs in the context of the Barcelona Convention (Tunis, April 1999). The Secretariat of the Bern Convention supported the idea, and eventually the three conventions, in collaboration with the IUCN/SSC Marine Turtles Specialist Group (MTSG), organised the First Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles in Rome in 2001.

The 6th Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles was organised by the Department of Biodiversity of the University of Primorska (Slovenia) in collaboration with the Blue World Institute of Marine Research and Conservation (Croatia), in the picturesque town of Poreč in Croatia, located on the coast of the northern Adriatic Sea - one of the most important feeding habitats for Mediterranean loggerhead turtles. The organisation was supported by UNEP MAP-RAC/SPA, Bern Convention, IUCN/SSC MTSG, and by the Croatian Natural History Museum – the institution that initiated the first studies on marine turtles in the Adriatic Sea 25 years ago.

Since the beginning, Mediterranean Marine Turtle Conferences had the same mission: to gather together those who share the common goal of the conservation of marine turtles and their environment, acting as a platform for enhancing collaboration, exchanging ideas, and sharing the state-of-the-art knowledge on sea turtle biology and conservation in the Mediterranean. The 6th Conference joined over 180 participants who presented 30 oral and 88 poster contributions assigned to five thematic sections: (i) Population biology and ecology, (ii) At-sea distribution and movements, (iii) Conservation and monitoring, (iv) Threats, and (v) Health and rehabilitation. The program also included six workshops: (i) Bio-logging for marine turtles; (ii) Using drones for marine research and conservation; (iii) Towards a strategy to mitigate illegal trade in

Mediterranean marine turtles; (iv) Whose biodiversity, whose values? Engaging with stakeholders to understand their perceptions; (v) Impact of marine litter on sea turtles, and (v) Marine turtle medicine and rehabilitation. Two plenary lectures entitled “Dynamic ocean management: a novel approach to interactions between people and oceanic pelagic organisms”, and “Introducing multi-species approach to conservation of marine megafauna beyond borders: the Adriatic case-study” were given by Dr. Larry B. Crowder (Hopkins Marine Station, Stanford University, USA) and Dr. Caterina M. Fortuna (National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research, Italy), respectively.

The scientific committee made awards to two students, Maissa Louhichi for the best student oral presentation and Jessica Ruff for the best student poster. Mr. Eladio Fernández-Galiano received the Lifetime Achievement Award for his accomplishments and dedication to the conservation of marine turtles in the Mediterranean.

This Supplement issue of *Natura Croatica*, funded by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, was intended to provide Conference participants with the possibility of publishing their results and making them available to the scientific community. On behalf of the Scientific Committee and the referees who reviewed all received submissions I hope that you will enjoy this special issue.

Bojan Lazar,

Guest-editor and president of the 6th Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles