

**Mediterranean Monk Seal of the Cilician Basin,  
Northeastern Mediterranean**

Ali Cemal GÜCÜ, Hasan ÖREK and Funda ERKAN  
Middle East Technical University  
Institute of Marine Sciences

Being the most endangered seal species of the world and because their major population has been subjected to mass mortality at Mauritania coasts recently, survival of every individual of the Mediterranean Monk Seal is of great importance. The small individual groups scattered at remote areas, which are overlooked and even ignored so far, are therefore getting more importance. The monk seals inhabiting Cilician Basin in the Mediterranean, which is the strait between Anatolia and Cyprus Island, are among the disregarded individuals of this species. No attempt to conserve this group of seals has been accomplished by the regional authorities, and unfortunately in 1994, 6 seals have been deliberately killed by the local fishermen. By the end of 1994, number of seals slaughtered by the fishermen has been increased to 10, including a new born pup. Although seals in the Cilician Basin are severely threatened by the fishermen, relatively large group of seals (groups of 3-4 seals) are still sighted at certain locations on Cilician coasts, which confirms the significance of the region for the faith of the Mediterranean Monk Seal.

The present study summarize 3 years survey on the Cilician Monk seals. The present and historical distribution of the seal colony on the region were determined. The major threats they confronted were evaluated. The size of the seal population inhabiting the region were assessed by visual census technique, photo and video identifications. The results indicate that although being under severe threat of deliberate killing, illegal and overfishing, direct disturbance and habitat loss, there is a viable Mediterranean Monk Seal population on Cilician coasts.