

## Conservation of the Loggerhead Turtle in the Western Mediterranean: coordinated solutions for the bycatch reduction in the foraging population of the Comunidad Valenciana (Spain) 2021-24



Years: <b>2021-24</b> Country: <b>Spain</b>	
Action Area: <b>Spanish Mediterranean</b>	
Action Line: <b>Marine Turtles</b>	
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### PROJECT SUMMARY:

The project is carried out in the marine fishing region of the Valencian Community and the Gulf of Cádiz, where the most abundant marine turtle is the loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*). This species is globally considered Vulnerable (IUCN Red List), included in Annexes II and IV (priority species) of the EU Habitats Directive and categorized as Vulnerable in the Spanish Catalog of Endangered Species .

Loggerhead turtle populations of Atlantic and Mediterranean origin converge in the feeding area of the western Mediterranean and, in addition, the Gulf of Cádiz is part of an important migratory corridor (entrance and exit of the Mediterranean). These same migration and feeding areas are used by different regional fisheries that add up to nearly 2,000 boats between the Valencian Community and the Gulf of Cádiz. In 2014, it was estimated that the Valencian trawling fleet incidentally captured 238 loggerhead turtles per year, and between 300 and 450 turtles by fleet of the Gulf of Cádiz. In addition, in both regions, artisanal fishing is abundant, so the potential impact of bycatch continues to be monitored.

According to experiences in other countries and the Loggerhead Turtle Conservation Plan in Spain, the use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TED) and the use of luminous devices in fixed nets are actions that can play a very important role in avoiding or reducing the bycatch of sea turtles, without significantly affecting the capture of the target species. Economic incentives related to product valorization programs through the use of several measures that reduce this bycatch can also be means to favor the reduction of negative impacts and a more sustainable fishing. For all these reasons, actions to advance in these aspects are included in the project.

Recreational fishing is a growing sector, so another objective of the Project is aimed at assessing the possible impacts of this fishery on the Loggerhead in the Gulf of Cádiz. In addition, the study of the impact of solid waste on sea turtles will continue—including its affectation by microplastics—. Also, an analysis will be carried out on the geographical distribution of the trawling and artisanal fishing effort in the Gulf of Cádiz, in order to have a more complete perspective of the fishing interaction with threatened species and the possible measures to reduce it. On the other hand, it is intended to consolidate a network that jointly promotes the conservation of the Loggerhead turtle and other species in the Gulf of Cadiz, through the participation of entities from Morocco, Portugal and Spain. Finally, awareness-raising actions aimed at the fishing sector, as well as at civil society, will continue to communicate different bioecological aspects of the Loggerhead turtle, the impacts they suffer and possible measures to minimize them.