

Preliminary report on some data on the biology and behavior of the Mediterranean Monk seal, *Monachus monachus*.

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Summary: During four excursions in 1983/84 to the N. Sporades, Greece, observations on the biology and behaviour of adult and juvenile mediterranean Monk seals weré made. In the course of the last year one juvenile seal has been observed from pup up to ca. 8 month old. Its activities have been registered. According to their individual colour patterns it was possible to identify two adult seals in some cases.

*Résumé: Durant quatre excursions en 1983 et 1984 au nord des Sporades, Grèce, nous avons observé la biologie et l'éthologie de Phoques moines adultes et juvéniles. Il nous a été possible de surveiller un Phoque juvénile depuis ses premiers jours jusqu'à huit mois environ. Ses activités ont été enregistrées. Deux adultes ont pu être identifiés grâce à leur robe individuelle.*

During four excursions to an uninhabited island of the N. Sporades archipelago in Greece, the endangered species *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779), the Mediterranean Monk seal, could be observed. A cave, with a pebble beach located in a bay and well known as a resting- and birth place for Monk seals, was observed throughout the time of the stay. Two other caves were inspected from time to time. The observation point was about 10m above water surface so that the seals were not disturbed by our presence.

In September 1983 (5.9.-11.9.) at least 4 different seals could be distinguished: 3 adults and 1 pup (ca. 0,8-0,9m), estimated to be about one month old. This pup was seen only twice swimming and diving fin front of the cave spending probably the rest of the time inside the cave.\* It could not swim very well yet. Its colour was uniform black. One adult animal, probably the mother, was observed swimming very often into

or out of this cave. Its size was about 1,8m, of light grey colour with white spots on the back and a yellowish belly. A white spot on the left side near its tail was a special distinguishing mark, which made the identification even on some slides possible\* (seal A).

In February 1984 (4.2.-15.2.) 3 seals could be distinguished: 2 juveniles (1,2m and 1,5m) and one adult. Once the two juveniles were observed to swim and dive together. The smaller animal was probably the pup seen in September. It was observed very often swimming and diving in the bay and into or out of the cave.\*\* In contrary, the bigger one was only occasionally in the bay but was never seen so swim into the cave. Once it was watched eating an octopus. The adult seal was of similar size and colour like seal A and the other animals seen before but could not be identified.\*\*

In April 1984 (10.4.-17.4.) no seals were seen within the observation time. Only one breathing noise was heard one evening. In July/August 1984 (30.7.-7.8.) 3 adult seals could be distinguished. Seal A could not be identified. One exceptionally big seal was seen (2,2-2,3m), of light grey colour with a characteristic dark spot above the shoulders. Traces were found several times in the cave, faeces also found in the cave will be examined soon.

In a total of 169 hours of observation 4 adult and 2 juvenile seals could be distinguished.

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\* D. Papapanagiotou & V. Couroutos August 1983

\*\* The activity of adults in the bay was less than in September 1983.