

Investigation on Mediterranean Monk Seals, *Monachus monachus*, (Hermann, 1779) in the caves along the Coastline of Western Black Sea, Marmara and Aegean Seas

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**ABSTRACT:**

This research has been done in a nearly three months period, from 20 th of June to 10 th Septembe in 1989, with the aim of finding out the number of monk seals inhabiting Turkish Coasts. All observations were recorded by film at the same time, to get more information about the environment they live in the caves, and how they behave in water.

During the reserach, two in the western Black Sea, two in the Marmara Sea and twelve in the Aegean sea, totally 16 caves, an islet were closely observed while observing the caves dives also have been done in to caves, however no monk seals were seen and all were abandoned.

The only place where we could have the chance to observe an adult monk seal was a isolated islet in the Aegean Sea, near Çeşme. This observed, individual monk seal was taken in to a film under broadcast standarts. Oceanographic measurement around the islet revealed the water temperature on surface as 22 °C in agust and the current speed as 2 miles per hour. Chronoatric aesaurements revealed that she was spending different periods of time under the water, varying from 1' 49" to 4' 56" minutes.

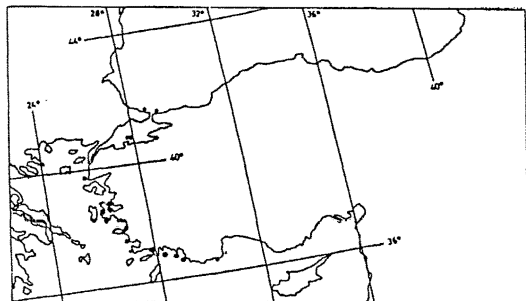
**INTRODUCTION:**

Mediterranean Monk Seal, *Monachus monachus*, which, considering the enormous reduction in their number, is now forming endangered species in habits these caves, breeds and grows the pups. These monk seals habitats are usually located on isolated islands or shores and known by local fishermen.

The purpose behind this research is to find out the present conditions of the caves where monk seals used to inhabit and investigate the pattern of their behavior with observations and films both on surface and underwater. Our other important aim is, by showing the film to masses, to focus Turkish People's attention on the subject and provide their support. An additional target was to get more information about the physico-chemical properties and meteorological parameters of the water where monk seals prefer living.

**MATERIAL AND METHOD:**

During the whole research period a 25 meter long fishermen boat has been used, which had a speed 15 miles per hour and a capacity of 20 people. The research has begun in the western Black Sea. Night and day observations and scuba dives have been done to on islet near Çeşme and totally 16 caves which, with the order of our proceeding direction, were as follows; Two in Igneada and Sile, two is Ekinlik and Marmara Island in the Marmara Sea, 12 in the Aegean Sea (Foça, Hayırsız Island, Esendere, Ildır, Süngükaya Island, Alaçatı, Dilek, Kiremit Island, Nar Island, Toprak Island, Sulu Island, Üc Islands).



Map 1 : Mentioned caves is the research and localisation of the islet the monk seal inhabited. All these previously determined caves have been observed and dived having the aim of coming across with monk seals or their traces.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

It was only five years ago that these caves were famous and known as "Monk Seal Caves". However during our 80 day-research program neither monk seals nor their traces were come across. This made us to reduce that the monk seals have migrated from the shores to desolate islands. We think that the monk seal we observed in Süngükaya, the desolate islet near Çeşme, is actually one of the monk seals which abandoned Alaçatı Coasts. Because the caves is Alaçatı, Çeşme and the Süngükaya Island are only two miles apart from each other.

As a conclusion, the Süngükaya Island should be preserved as a National Park. All necessary precautions should be taken to keep the fishermen away from all monk seal habitats. It is a must and the crux of our message that all these islands and coasts serving as monk seal habitats should be turned in to preserved National Parks. In addition against all disturbances and conciousless or ignorant touristical settlements or urbanization must be ensured. It is also extremely important to emphasize the need of more detailed research opportunities.

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