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The monk seal, *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779), is one of the most endangered species in the world. At present, the world population is between 200 and 300 individuals. The species is in constant decline and its disappearance from the Mediterranean basin and the Atlantic coast may occur before the year 2000.

The causes of the decline of the monk seal are all linked to the activities of man:

- direct destruction by fishermen who consider it a competitor,
- loss of its habitat due to industrial and touristic development,
- over-exploitation of the fish on which it feeds.

To protect the monk seal, it is indispensable that:

- the species is protected by law,
- there are effectively managed protected areas with efficient legislation,
- the public are aware of its protection,
- injured or sick animals, as well as abandoned pups, are cared for (Rescue Center).

Rescue Organisation.

If an injured or sick monk seal or abandoned pup is found: telephone the following numbers:

- free phone: 93.33.49.49 (day) or 93.33.76.76 (night)
- Marineland Antibes, 24h/24h and 365 days/year.
- Environmental Agency of the country concerned.

In accordance with the Environmental Agency of the country concerned and the DG XI (Commission of the European Community, Brussels), the Rescue Center team can intervene immediately on the spot, to examine the animal and to give an initial diagnosis. If it appears that the animal can be cared for or raised in place, the Rescue Center team will commence treatment.

If it appears that the animal must be transferred to give it more intensive care, the Rescue Center, in accordance with the authorities of the country and respecting international conventions, will arrange for, and assume the financial costs of, transport of the seal. All will be done to guarantee transport in the best possible conditions in order to limit the eventual stress to the animal.

At the Rescue Center, the animal will receive all necessary care. This will be conducted under the sanitary control and supervision of permanent veterinarians. The personnel and the veterinarians who will take care of the animals have a large experience in the care of marine mammals.

The seal, once out of danger, will be repatriated to the country of origin. The precise site of the release will be determined by the authorities of the country. The cost of repatriation will be paid for by the Rescue Center.

Information Network

The Rescue Center is very interested in collaboration with all persons who are involved with seals. The Center would like to establish a network of observers acting as much as information gatherers, e.g. on the distribution of the monk seal, as lookouts to warn of the presence of seals requiring the rapid assistance of the Rescue Center team.

An information network, with one or several centers in each country concerned, would enable a more efficient rescue service and would permit a better knowledge of the actual condition of the seals (through regular and systematic evaluation of the populations) and their exact distribution.

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The swordfish fishery with surface long lines is a very important activity for the Spanish fleet in the Mediterranean Sea. The total catch of swordfish in Spain in 1989 was of 1132 Tm with a total effort of 7.294.495 hooks. The landings in Alicante during this year were the 37.07% of the total Spanish catches in the Mediterranean. The long liners fishermen usually develop their activity throughout the whole year, increasing it during the spring and summer seasons, working in the area between Gibraltar Strait and 6°E, although the main fishing area is located south of the Balearic Islands and the Ibiza Channel.

The analysis of the swordfish catches suggest that more than a 50% of the total catches a year belong to 0+ and 1+ age groups (ZOUROS *et al.*, 1991). The long lines used by the Spanish fleet are similar to those used in the last years, but the total catches in 1989 were 628 Tm less than the year before (ICCAT, 1991). On the basis of analysis of daily inquiry among long liner landings in Alicante during 1989, we have obtained the frequency of accidental catches of Loggerhead in the area located between Gibraltar Strait and 6°E Southern 41°N. The total of long-line boats sampled were 60 units.

From the study of accidental catches of Loggerhead made upon the sampling of Alicante, we have estimated a total catch per month (grouped in subareas of 1° x 1°) for the long-line fleet in the Mediterranean. We estimated a number of 15.339 individuals, with a maximum of 5857 turtles in June a minimum of 9 in February.

There is a correlation between total effort and accidental catches of Loggerhead, but the maximum effort is in July, which is not coincident with the higher values of Loggerhead catches. The relationship between Loggerhead catches and surface temperature in this area (MILLER, 1976), shows that the maximum catches are previous to the higher temperature. The analysis of the relation between capture areas and months, allow us to establish the following single migratory schema:

- First catches take place in the area surrounding Mallorca and Ibiza Islands.
- The catches start in March in front of Alicante and Cartagena coastline increasing its abundance in the Balearic Island in the same period.
- By June the populations have disappeared from the Balearic Island. The principal concentration is extended between the Spanish coast and Algeria, within a great band.
- The biggest concentration appears in autumn in the Alboran Sea, being possible to find some small dispersed groups of Loggerhead located in the main capture areas.
- Between November and March, the population is residual in the Western Mediterranean.

Concluding

1. The Western Mediterranean Sea is apparently a nursery ground for *Caretta caretta*.
2. In summer a migration towards the east takes place, along the Argelian coastline.
3. In autumn, the population is scarce around the Balearic Island, increasing in the Alboran Sea, probably showing a migration throughout the Gibraltar Strait towards the Atlantic waters.

REFERENCES

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