



ACTION PLAN FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN MONK SEAL (*Monachus monachus*)

Started in 1988



The populations of the Mediterranean monk seal have declined rapidly and drastically. Concerted and effective action by all the concerned countries of the Mediterranean is required in order to reverse this trend. Plans must be made using the best data available, and then adjusted if necessary as more information is obtained. The major threats to the monk seal are deliberate or accidental killings of adults and human disturbance of breeding areas.



The population of the Mediterranean monk seal before 1900



The population of the Mediterranean monk seal in 2000

OBJECTIVES

The Action Plan for the management of the Mediterranean monk seal outlines both immediate and longer-term actions which, if taken together may succeed in reducing pressures to permit gradual recovery. No one action by itself is enough. The different components of the management plan are mutually reinforcing and must be taken together to have a chance of success.

PRIORITIES

The first priority is the preservation of remnant populations of the monk seal. The challenge is then to find that delicate balance between the biological requirements of the monk seal and human uses of the Mediterranean and its resources that will allow the species to recover to a viable population level.

Reduction in seals mortality

- Encourage the co-existence of fishermen and monk seals

Establishment of a network of marine reserves

Creation of a network of marine reserves across the Mediterranean, covering both existing and potential monk seal habitats. Monk seal reserves should protect suitable caves or other breeding and resting areas, and should be surrounded by a buffer zone to minimise disturbance.

Research, data collection and rehabilitation

- Development of programme on data collection on seal biology and ecology and the interaction of seals with fisheries
- Establishment of national networks of observers
- Evaluation of compiled information on a regional basis
- Exchange information
- Establishment of rescue centres

Information programmes

- Development of special information activities for fishermen and fishing communities and tourists and the tourist industry
- Production of Information materials for military authorities, industrial developers and the shipping industry
- Development of Training programmes for protected area managers responsible for monk seal reserves

ACTIONS TO ATTAIN THESE OBJECTIVES

- Support to countries to identify seal critical habitats and populations, involving national official institutions (e.g: Croatia, Albania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Syria and Cyprus)
- Formation of local research and conservation teams since 2003
- Organisation of experts and country representatives' meetings to spread and coordinate actions on behalf of the species in the whole Mediterranean region, with the official support of the countries

