

## SHORT COMMUNICATION

### **Preliminary report of a stranding case of Mediterranean Monk Seal *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779) on Antalya coast, Turkey, April 2013**

**Erdem Danyer<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Elif Özgür Özbek<sup>2,3</sup>, Işıl Aytemiz<sup>1,2</sup>, Arda M. Tonay<sup>2,4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Istanbul University, 34320, Avcılar, Istanbul, TURKEY

<sup>2</sup>Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TUDAV), P. O. Box: 10, Beykoz, Istanbul, TURKEY

<sup>3</sup>Antalya Metropolitan Municipality, 07120, Antalya, TURKEY

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Fisheries, Istanbul University, Ordu St., No. 200, 34470, Laleli, Istanbul, TURKEY

\*Corresponding author: erdemdanyer@gmail.com

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#### **Abstract**

The Mediterranean monk seal, *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779), which lives on the Mediterranean and Aegean Sea coast of Turkey, is one of the critically endangered species in the world. On 30 April 2013, an adult male monk seal was found dead on the coast of Antalya. Evidence of deliberate killing was found as a result of gross necropsy carried out after two days. This paper summarizes the preliminary findings of the gross necropsy.

**Key words:** Mediterranean Monk Seal, *Monachus monachus*, deliberate killing.

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#### **Introduction**

The Mediterranean monk seal, *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779), is Europe's most endangered marine mammal and it is protected by the Barcelona Convention (Fourth protocol species), Bern Convention (Appendix II), Biodiversity Convention (Eligible species), Bonn Convention (Appendix I and II) as well as CITES (Appendix I). *M. monachus* is also listed in Red List of IUCN as critically endangered status (IUCN 2008). There are about 100 individuals in the Turkish Coasts (Güçlüsoy *et al.* 2004). The number of

identified seals in the northeastern Mediterranean Sea is given as 42 by Gücü *et al.* (2009). Fishery interaction is a very common cause for adult monk seals mortality (Öztürk 1992; 2007; Androukaki *et al.* 1999; Güçlüsoy 2008). Fishermen and fish farmers use lights, feeding with pesticide-injected fish, noise generation, warning and direct shots with rifles and physical exclusion of seals to keep seals away from cages and nets (Güçlüsoy and Savaş 2003). Güçlüsoy *et al.* (2004) reported that 5 records out of 22 dead seals had been deliberately killed. Öztürk (2007) also reported that 12 out of 24 mortalities observed during 1986-1996 were due to deliberate killing.

An adult male Mediterranean monk seal stranded on the coast of Aytap Region, Uğrak Village, Antalya (36°19'7.84"N, 32°14'6.29"E) on 30 April 2013. This seal was found floating at the sea and local people brought it to the shore. Turkish Marine Research Foundation learned about this stranding through media, then contacted the local authority in Antalya to keep the animal for necropsy. After the gross necropsy was performed, the carcass was buried in soil for the preparation of the skeleton. Since Mediterranean monk seals are sedentary animals (Öztürk 1992), this animal was also recognized and even nicknamed "Duman (which means Smoke in Turkish)" by local people.

#### *Results of the Necropsy*

The necropsy of the seal was performed on May 2, 2013. The specimen was a normally developed adult male with a length of 238 cm from nose to hind flipper end, 202 cm from nose to tail end and the body weight of approximately 200-300 kilograms. On the external examination revealed there were nine circular lesions, approximately 1 cm in diameter, of head injury and focal subcutaneous emphysema (Figure 1). The lesions were first thought as gunshot injuries by the local people who found the animal but there was no evidence of pellets internally. Pellets are small in diameter (about 7.5 mm for wild boar) can be buried in muscle or blubber easily. X-ray and intracranial examination could not be performed. Extremities showed normal formation. It had begun to decompose, showing skin slippage. There was no lesion in the oral cavity and the colour of mucosa was pale.

Blubber was measured 2.8 cm thick on the thoracic ventromedian line and was normally distributed. There were bleeding and petechial haemorrhages over the abdomen due to blunt force trauma. There were four lesions approximately 0.5-1 cm in diameter (Figures 2 and 3). These lesions may have been made by gunshots. The musculature area of the chest and abdomen was hyperemic and congested. Massive intra-abdominal hemorrhage was observed. Intra peritoneal organs were hyperemic. Stomach, which was full with contents, collected and stored in the deep freezer for further examination.



**Figure 1.** Circular lesions on the head



**Figure 2.** Circular lesions on the right side of abdomen



**Figure 3.** Circular lesions on the left side of abdomen

Examination of the internal organs revealed that the death occurred during digestion. Kidneys were autolysed. Bladder was full and colon was containing gaita. There were no macro-parasites in intestinal tract.

There were internal bleeding in thorax and also pericardium had blood inside. Lungs were pneumonic, emphysematous and congested. Heart was congested and hyperemic and containing chicken fat clot. Trachea was clear. Esophagus was containing digestive fluid and fish pieces.

On the basis of necropsy findings, the cause of death was determined as hypovolemic shock due to internal bleeding into the thorax and the abdominal cavity caused by first step gunshot trauma and followed by blunt force.

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## **Türkiye Antalya sahilinde, Nisan 2013'te karaya vuran Akdeniz foku *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779) hakkında ilk bulgular**

### **Özet**

Akdeniz ve Ege Sahillerimizde yaşayan Akdeniz Foku *Monachus monachus* (Hermann,1779) dünyanın nesli kritik olarak tehlikede olan hayvanlarından birisidir. 30 Nisan 2013 tarihinde Antalya kıyılarında erişkin, erkek bir Akdeniz Foku bulundu. İki gün sonra nekropsisi yapıldı. Nekropside dış etkilerle ölüme dair bulgulara ulaşıldı. Bu yayında vakayla ilgili ilk bilgiler paylaşılmaktadır.

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