Albino Loggerhead and Green Turtle (*Caretta caretta* and *Chelonia mydas*) hatchlings in Turkey

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Abstract. During our studies on the nesting biology of Green and Loggerhead Turtles (*Caretta caretta* and *Chelonia mydas*) on Samandağ and Fethiye beaches, Turkey, in 1994 and 1995, live albino hatchlings were encountered. The contents and various features of the nests that produced albino hatchlings are described.

Kurzfassung. Während unserer Untersuchungen der Fortpflanzungsbiologie der Unechten Karettschildkröte (*Caretta caretta*) and der Suppenschildkröte (*Chelonia mydas*) in Samandağ und Fethiye, Türkei, in den Jahren 1994 und 1995 fanden wir lebendige albinotische frisch geschlüpfte Jungtiere. Der Inhalt und verschiedene Charakteristika der Nester, die die Albinos hervorbrachten, werden beschrieben.

Key words. Albino, sea turtles, marine turtles, Loggerhead Turtle, Green Turtle, Turkey.

Introduction

Albinos are individuals lacking normal pigmentation due, in most cases, to the inheritance of recessive genes from the parents. Albinos are extremely rare in the wild because such an animal cannot survive for long without protective colouration. For Green and Loggerhead Turtles (*Caretta caretta* and *Chelonia mydas*), it was stated that among embryos the most common abnormalities are supernumerary and subnumerary scutes (8%), albinos, head and jaw abnormalities, and twinning. Albino forms were recorded as 1% of the total embryos (KASKA & DOWNIE 1999). Supernumerary and subnumerary scutes have been reported from the eastern Mediterranean Loggerheads by TÜRKOZAN et al. (in press). There are also reports on albinism from marine turtles elsewhere in the world (FLETEMEYER 1977, HARRISSON 1963, MARCOVALDI 1995). However, no published data is available from the eastern Mediterranean about live albino turtles. This study reports the first living albino Loggerhead and Green Turtle hatchlings from the eastern Mediterranean.

Material and methods

After hatchlings had completed their emergence from the nests, nests were excavated for their contents in order to detect the real clutch size and other details such as nest depth, nest diameter and compressed hatchlings. The albinos were encountered in the nests during these excavations.

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