

First evidence of ingested plastics in stranded loggerhead sea turtles along the Greek coastline, East Mediterranean Sea

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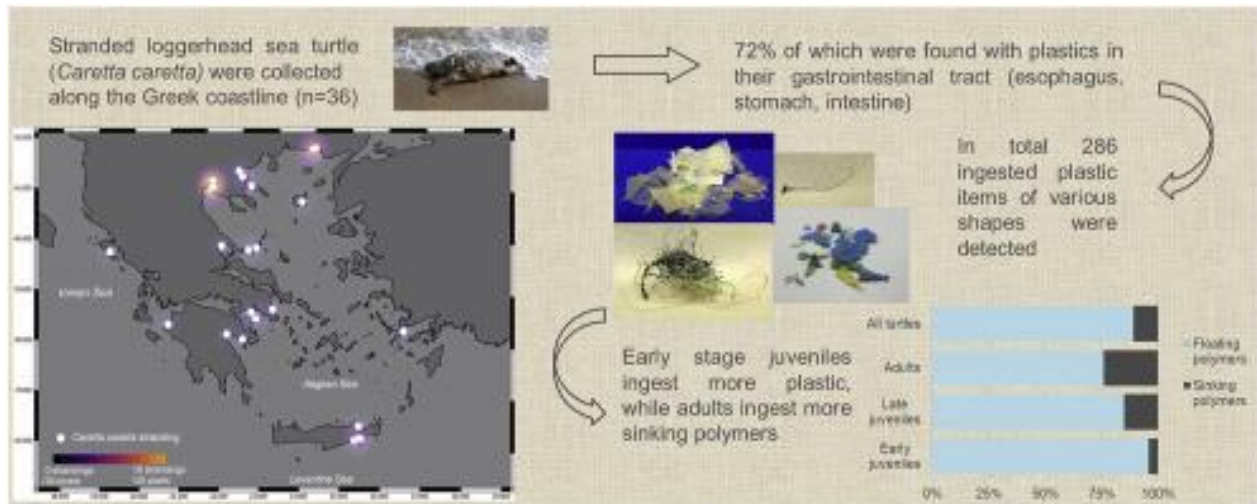
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Abstract

Plastic debris has become a major threat for the marine environment and wildlife. Sea turtles in particular suffer from plastic ingestion at global scale; however information in Greek waters is still absent. In this study, 36 dead loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) were collected from the Greek coastline area and their gastrointestinal content was analysed for ingested plastic. Twenty-six individuals (72%) were found as having ingested plastic, with an average of 7.94 ± 3.85 (SE) plastics per turtle. In total 286 plastic pieces were counted and categorised by size, shape, colour, and polymer type. Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometry revealed polypropylene and polyethylene as the dominant polymer plastic types. Variation in plastic ingestion among life stages of the loggerhead specimens was shown. The results of this study provide first evidence of plastic pollution in loggerhead turtles in the Greek waters.



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