



Evaluation of marine litter impact on loggerhead sea turtles in the Western Mediterranean sea

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Marine litter is any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment. Ingestion of marine litter can have lethal and sublethal effects on wildlife that accidentally ingests it, and sea turtles are particularly susceptible to this threat. The European Commission drafted the 2008/56/EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive with the aim to achieve a Good Environmental Status (GES), and the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*, Linnaeus 1758) was selected for monitoring the amount and composition of litter ingested by marine animals. An analogous decision has been made under the UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea, following the Ecosystem Approach. The aim of this study is to evaluate the quantity and composition of marine litter ingested by loggerheads in Sardinia, thus supplying for the lack of data in the existing literature for this area. The presence of marine litter was investigated using a standardized protocol for necropsies and lab analysis. The collected items were subdivided into 4 main categories, namely, IND-Industrial plastic, USE-User plastic, RUB-Non plastic rubbish, POL-Pollutants and 14 subcategories, to detect local diversity.