

Fishermen from Isla Cristina Join 'SOS Caretta' Project for Sea Turtle Conservation

- **The *Virgen del Carmen* Fishermen's Guild and the Isleña Association of Fishing Boat Owners join the project 'S.O.S Caretta: Fishermen for Biodiversity'**
- **The project, coordinated by *Hombre y Territorio* in collaboration with Fundación Cepsa, promotes commitment to sustainability by the fishing sector in western Andalusia.**

The 'Hombre y Territorio' (HyT) association, together with Fundación Cepsa, is launching *S.O.S. Caretta: Fishermen for Biodiversity* along the coasts of Cadiz and Huelva. The aim of the project is to promote the rescue and conservation of sea turtles by the fishing sector in Andalusia.

The project targets the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), which the project is named for, and the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), the largest sea turtle on the planet. Both species, which are critically endangered, can be observed by fishermen or rescued if entangled in marine debris or fishing gear.

The Virgen del Carmen Fishermen's Guild and the Isleña Association of Fishing Boat Owners have joined this collaborative project. The coastal town has one of the largest fishing fleets on the Andalusian coast, so their participation is key to the conservation of sea turtles in this region.

Fundación Cepsa participated with the Public Agency of Andalusian Ports (APPA), which is also a part of the project, in the delivery of educational material and containers for receiving the turtles to the Virgen del Carmen Fishermen's Guild and to the Isleña Association of Fishing Boat Owners. The event took place at the port of Isla Cristina together with *Hombre y Territorio*.

"Our participation in the project is key to showing our commitment to biodiversity," said Mariano García, Senior Skipper of the Fishermen's Guild, present at the event along with Francisco Faneca, Chairman of the Isleña Association of Fishing Boat Owners. According to Faneca, "fishermen can do more for the conservation of these species than they can imagine."

Fundación Cepsa was represented by Teresa Millán, the manager in Huelva. According to Millán, "Fundación Cepsa is committed to biodiversity and it is our goal to seek out projects and initiatives in addition to those we already have for the enhancement and conservation of natural spaces, where collaboration between different sectors is especially relevant." Through its fishing posts at the different ports, Cepsa also supports the outreach work by delivering material to fishermen.

Training activities will soon be conducted for the fishing sector and other interested sectors, to improve the chances of survival of the rescued specimens, promoting the activation of the rescue protocol through 112. "It is key to incorporate the sector in the protection of sea turtles and to make its role in this task more visible. That is why we launched the message 'Fishermen: we need heroes'. It is their time; we need their help for the conservation of these endangered species," says Patricio Peñalver, project coordinator at HyT.

Currently, in this initial stage, S.O.S Caretta has the support of fishing entities operating in the Gulf of Cadiz, specifically in the towns of Isla Cristina, Punta Umbria, Sanlúcar de Barrameda and Tarifa, although it will continue to involve entities during its development.

The project also has the support of environmental and fishing administrations at the national and regional levels, such as the Ministry of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge (MITERD) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Sustainable Development of the Andalusian Government, as well as entities representing the fishing sector, such as the Andalusian Federation of Fishermen's Guilds and the Andalusian Federation of Fishing Associations.

HyT is an association with extensive experience in the conservation of marine species and environments. A collaborating entity of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Sustainable Development of the Regional Government of Andalusia, it has participated in sea turtle conservation projects in this region. Furthermore, it has international experience as regards sea turtles and their relationship with the fishing sector.

Fundación Cepsa is a general interest, nonprofit entity whose aim is to carry out initiatives that serve the needs and priorities of the local communities where its founder, Compañía Española de Petróleos S.A. (Cepsa), conducts its activities. The areas of action for Fundación Cepsa are social, environmental and scientific-educational.

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