

CURRENT THREATS ON EUROPEAN POND TURTLES (*Emys orbicularis*) AND BALKAN TERRAPIN (*Mauremys rivulata*) FROM VLORA BAY, SOUTHERN ALBANIA

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This study provides information on current threats for European Pond Turtle (*Emys orbicularis*) and Balkan Terrapin (*Mauremys rivulata*) in the understudied area of Vlora Bay, Albania. Two main types of habitats – freshwater channels (several channels in different areas) and two different ponds were monitored during the period 2013 – 2016. 157 individuals of *Emys orbicularis* and 47 of *Mauremys rivulata* were captured and studied (measured, individually marked, photographed and released again at the point of capture), of which 21 individuals were found dead (14 *E. orbicularis* and seven *M. rivulata*). Mortality rate resulted to be higher in *M. rivulata* population (14.8%; n = 47) in comparison to *E. orbicularis* population (8.9%; n=57). Different threats were identified to cause the death in the population of these two species, based mainly on the signs observed in the dead body of animals. In both populations of *E. orbicularis* and *M. rivulata*, 9.6% of deaths were caused by fragmentation of habitats due to the road infrastructure (death on the roads during female breeding migrations); 19.0% from casual capture at fishing; 33.4% from the different predators attack; and 38% from other causes (human attacks, natural death, etc.). While, other potential threats were identified related to the habitat of the species, as it was the loose and fragmentation of the habitat due to constructions and urbanization; the drying out of ponds and channels during the summer season as well as the interventions and cleaning of the drainage channels.