# Black Sea Watch – A smartphone application for monitoring the biodiversity of the Black Sea

Öztürk Ilayda Destan and Ayaka Amaha Öztürk

[1] Turkish Marine Research Foundation, P.O. Box: 10, Beykoz, 81650, Istanbul, Turkey
E-mail: idesoz@gmail.com

Dissemination, outreach and communication of scientific knowledge are becoming more and more important in today's society, where social inclusion is an integral part of environmental protection and sustainable development. This is particularly true for the world of ocean research, a world that is largely hidden from our view, representing an added challenge to the communication of marine research. From its inception, the Ocean Literacy movement has advocated closer interaction between marine scientists, educators and other stakeholders (the public, policy-makers, private sector), and inspired new events and networks all over the world.

The Black Sea is one of the most isolated inland seas in the world. The marine ecosystem is highly fragile due to its isolation and many species are in poor conservation status. Various kinds of pressures and threats affect the Black Sea negatively: over-fishing, pollution and introduction of invasive alien species, climate change, etc. BLACK SEA WATCH PROJECT is a joint initiative of Green Balkans NGO, Bulgaria and TUDAV, Turkey aiming to raise public awareness on the biodiversity and the fragile ecosystem of the Black Sea. The developed tools – a mobile app for smart phones and website – intend to raise knowledge about the flora and fauna inhabiting the Black Sea and to promote development of "citizen science" in the region. By collecting and submitting findings you can contribute to studies of the occurrence and distribution of species in the Black Sea thus creating sound scientific basis for proposal of relevant conservation measures.

First submissions have already given valuable information about an invasive jellyfish species (Mnemiopsis leidyi), migratory birds and fish species. Besides, in July and August, 2016, massive die-offs of harbor porpoise Phocoena phocoena occurred in the Bulgarian and Turkish coasts of the Black Sea and were reported with the use of the BLACK SEA WATCH App. Species catalogs were created in three languages, English, Bulgarian, ad Turkish, which include more than 200 species. They can be used by the public for reference and will be updated with their contribution of photos and reports.