

# Lights on fishing nets can protect sea turtles

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A NetLight. Credit: Fishtek Marine

Lights on fishing nets could help save the Mediterranean's threatened sea turtles, new research shows. The work is [published](#) in the journal *Fisheries Research*.

Every year an estimated 40,000 green and [loggerhead turtles](#) are killed after being accidentally caught in [fishing nets](#) (known as "[bycatch](#)") throughout the Mediterranean.

Now researchers from the University of Exeter and Society for Protection of Turtles (SPOT), working with fishermen in Cyprus, have shown that illuminating nets using a device called a NetLight can significantly reduce the number of turtles getting caught through bycatch.

NetLight, which was developed by conservation engineers Fishtek Marine, is a small, long lasting, banana-shaped light powered by two AA batteries, that is easily attached to the ropes on fishing nets to alert turtles to the danger.

The trials with Cypriot fishermen have shown that using NetLights reduced the number of sea turtles being trapped by 42%.

"Around Cyprus, over 2,800 sea turtles die in nets every year," said Robin Snape, a Researcher at Bluedot Associates and Associate Researcher at the University of Exeter's Centre for Ecology and Conservation in Cornwall. "Our trials with local fishermen and NetLight have shown that this can be significantly reduced."

He added, "Our work has also revealed that NetLights can reduce the bycatch of other threatened species, especially rays, whose numbers fell by 53% when the lights were used. This device has real potential in

[marine conservation](#)."

Pete Kibel, co-founder and director of Devon-based Fishtek Marine, added, "These trials have been very encouraging and show that NetLight has an important role in helping protect sea turtles. This is also good news for the local [fishermen](#) in Cyprus, as bycatch of turtles can damage their nets and reduce their ability to make a living from fishing."

Professor Brendan Godley, who leads the Exeter Marine research group, noted, "Working with partners like Fishtek Marine allows us to combine Exeter's expertise in [marine research](#) with their brilliant engineering, to address major challenges such as bycatch."

**More information:** Robin T.E. Snape et al, Flashing NetLights reduce bycatch in small-scale fisheries of the Eastern Mediterranean, *Fisheries Research* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.fishres.2023.106919](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2023.106919)

Provided by University of Exeter

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