



TURTLE TRACKS

ARCHELON, THE SEA TURTLE PROTECTION SOCIETY OF GREECE

New Horizons for Zakynthos

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A FOUR-MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER
OF ARCHELON, the SEA
TURTLE PROTECTION
SOCIETY OF GREECE

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A turning point for ARCHELON's work on Zakynthos was made in 2001, as it was the first year that the National Marine Park Management Agency fully operated. The close co-operation culminated in 2002 in the signing of an agreement under which ARCHELON undertook the task of monitoring and protecting the nests and also raising public awareness in conjunction with the work of the Park wardens.

Working together with the Park Agency for the management of the habitat and the sea turtles was a new experience, not only for Zakynthos but also for whole Greece. Zakynthos is the only protected area in Greece with a Management Agency. This new approach to managing protected areas is certainly an example to be followed by other NGOs who will be invited by the Ministry of Environment to partake in the 25 Management Agencies for protected areas soon to be established.

Working on the nesting beaches and alongside the Park wardens we managed to ensure that from the 1175 laid nests more than 60,000 hatchlings reached the sea. On the other hand, having the strong belief that we can only be successful if local people and visitors get involved, over 105,000 individuals were directly informed on the nesting beaches, at the informa-

tion Stations and the slide shows in hotels that were organised under the Agreement with the Park Agency. Two new Information Stations operated in 2002, in Laganas and Zakynthos town, spreading our public awareness activities on most of the southern part of the island.

In the context of the agreement with the Management Agency, we started a new co-operation with the turtle-spotting boats operating in Laganas Bay. ARCHELON project staff was invited on the boats to inform tourists and also ensure that the «code of conduct» recently agreed was observed.

In an effort to promote environmental friendly activities in an area ridden with mass tourism, we started various guided activities, which seemed to be more than welcomed by locals, visitors and tour operators alike. In a pilot effort in 2002, small groups were organised to attend early morning beach surveys and see how project members monitor and protect nests. Also, in the afternoons, tourists were invited to watch the excavation of hatched nests to determine the hatching success.

Having acquired this experience, we can only hope that 2003 will bring new achievements in the field of managing the National Park. ARCHELON will certainly be

on the forefront to ensure that the Management Agency augments its efforts to solve problems that remain in the area, such as the serious situation on the nesting beach of Daphni. □

Editor's note

Dear members and friends

It's been a long time since TURTLE TRACKS was last published. We apologise for this. Due to financial problems ARCHELON faced in late 2001 and throughout 2002, we had to make drastic cutbacks in staff and activities. Hence our newsletter was temporarily paused. We are back again and we sincerely hope that you will be hearing from us three times a year.

ARCHELON has come out strong. 2003 is looking more promising in both financial and working terms. We are ready to celebrate our 20th birthday with special events highlighted during the year. We will keep you updated.

Dimitrios Dimopoulos

After Rome... Where?

As we announced in our last edition of TURTLE TRACKS No 27, the First Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles was organised in Rome, 24-28 October 2001. It was organised by the three International Conventions (Barcelona, Bern and Bonn) pertaining to this issue.

This was a major event for the conservation of sea turtles in this part of the world. It brought together sea turtle specialists from all over the Mediterranean basin. There were 7 invited guest speakers on specific issues, 34 oral presentations and 35 poster sessions. Three workshops



were organised and a field trip to the Stazione Zoologica «Anton Dohrn» in Naples where a sea turtle rescue centre operates.

Overall there were 170 attendants from 26 different countries. ARCHELON was represented by D. Margaritoulis, A. Kremezi-Margaritoulis, D. Dimopoulos, K. Teneketzi and D. Panagopoulos with 6 oral presentations and 1 poster. D. Margaritoulis was on the organising and scientific com-

mittees of the Conference. D. Dimopoulos was the coordinator of one of the workshops concerning tourism and sea turtle management. Three ARCHELON volunteers were also present and offered their help, J. Zbinden (monitoring leader on Zakynthos), K. Reid (monitoring leader at Kyparissia Bay) and P. Tsaros (volunteer from Crete).

The major outcome of the Conference was the need to continue and strengthen

communication between individuals and groups working with sea turtles in the Mediterranean, the publication of the proceedings and the commitment to the continuation of the Mediterranean Sea Turtle Conference on a regular basis.

ARCHELON, who put a lot of energy in the success of the Conference, is looking forward to the next meeting. When people meet regularly and exchange expertise this can only but enhance the work that is being done and benefit the endangered populations of marine turtles in the Mediterranean. □

THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH RELEASES A SEA TURTLE

His Holiness, the Patriarch Mr Vartholomeos, released a rehabilitated sea turtle during his visit to Crete on 20 June

years, sea turtles have become a symbol for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea, its coasts and its marine life. For that reason, the

offered as a gift a silver model of a hatchling. His Holiness Mr Vartholomeos complimented ARCHELON for its work and achievements and stressed how important it is for people to protect all God's creations, like the sea turtles.

the energy to continue their hard work.

The turtle release coincided with the launch of a new LIFE-Nature project, which aims to reduce sea turtle mortality as a result of interaction with fisheries. His Holiness extended an invitation to the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul, which we look forward to honouring in the near future. □



2002. The event took place in Rethymnon and was attended by representatives of the local and central authorities receiving huge media coverage both at locally and nationally.

Owing to ARCHELON's efforts over the last twenty

sub-adult *Caretta caretta* turtle that was released on that day was symbolically named MESOGEIOS, which is Greek for Mediterranean.

ARCHELON's Vice-President, Mr Nikos Raissis addressed the Patriarch thanking him for his presence and



The annual presentation of the ARCHELON projects

On Sunday 8 December, members of the Board, the staff and volunteers of ARCHELON met for the annual presentation of the results of the 2002 work. This was a special meeting as it was convened at the end of a financially difficult year and cut backs on personnel, which put a lot of pressure on the projects staff.

Despite the hardships, there were certain major achievements. Approximately 2,500 nests were recorded

and monitored by about 450 volunteers. An agreement with the Management Agency of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos was signed and ARCHELON undertook the responsibility for monitoring the nesting beaches, raising public awareness and assisting in beach wardening. In co-operation with tourist companies and the NMPZ pilot organised guides on the nesting beaches during morning surveys were arranged and ARCHELON volunteers were

working on the «turtle spotting boats». These activities, if properly organised can reduce current disturbances to turtles, especially at sea, and provide alternatives for the funding of the Park.

On Peloponnesus a closer co-operation with local communities was established for the better operation of the two permanent Environmental Information Centres (Agiannakis, Kyparissia Bay and Evrotas, Lakonikos Bay, both built under LIFE Nature co-funded projects). About 5,000 students participated in environmental education activities held at the two Centres. On the island of Crete, working closely with the tourism sector to promote sea turtle conservation was continued with some positive results. The European programme «Blue Flags» co-ordinated by the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature, is an instrument used to ensure ba-

sic sea turtle management techniques (light and sun umbrella reduction etc.) on the heavily used nesting beaches of Crete. About 70 turtles were treated at the Rescue Centre, where unfortunately the change in staff did not allow for any other great achievements.

Year 2003 is looking brighter. A new LIFE Nature project is underway with the main objective of dealing with sea turtle mortality at sea. Also a new project co-funded by the Ministry of Environment regarding the conservation of nesting beaches is a definite boost for the work we are doing. All emphasis will be given on ensuring the viability of ARCHELON and to this end, the Board has recently announced a position for a fundraiser, so much needed at this turning point for our Society.



Turtle telemetry in Amvrakikos Bay



In 2002 ARCHELON initiated its first telemetry project, for turtles captured in Amvrakikos Bay. This is part of a EU co-funded LIFE-Nature project held by ETANAM, a local development agency.

Two forms of telemetry are

employed; remote sensing, using Argos satellites, and manual tracking involving identifying the turtles' position while on land or at sea in the vicinity of the turtle.

The satellite transmitters (Platform terminal transmitters' PTTs) send signals that

are received by circumpolar orbiting satellites. The satellites convert the messages into location fixes and any extra data transmitted by the PTTs. This information is accessed by a PC connected to the TELNET network.

The manually tracked system comprised two individual transmitters emitting radio and acoustic frequencies respectively. Locating these turtles was achieved by searching

at sea for the radio signal (which has a longer range) and then homing in on the turtles with the acoustic signal that is more directional.

The results from these tracking methods will shed light into the migratory and foraging habits of sea turtles, an aspect of their life, which has not been studied before in Greece and is little known worldwide.



The European Green Week

The Directorate General of the European Commission in co-operation with local partners all over Europe, organised

last spring, a week of activities in order to promote the «NATURA 2000» network of ecologically sensitive sites. ARCHELON as a benefici-

ary of a number of co-funded European projects (under the LIFE Nature funding instrument for the natural environment) responded to the call and participated in the «Green Week» by organising activities in Peloponnesus, Crete and at the Rescue Centre in Glyfada (Athens).

teachers and outdoor activities for students were organised. All events were publicised through the mass media and the special website set up by the Directorate General of Environment.

There is definitely an increased need for further dissemination of the European Commission's policy on the natural environment at regional and local level. This will help with the implementation of comprehensive management policies and will certainly assist in the work of ARCHELON to protect coastal habitats for sea turtles.

Turtle eggs go Canada... a follow-up

The sex of sea turtles is not determined by chromosomes but by the incubation temperatures. The general rule is, the higher the temperatures, the more females produced. To investigate the phenomenon of temperature determined sexual differentiation in Greek loggerheads, two hundred eggs were transported to Canada and Professor Morosovsky's Laboratory in Toronto (see Turtle Tracks No 27), under a CITES permit.

Prof. Morosovsky, a leading scientist in the field of sea turtle sex determination, found the pivotal temperature (temperature that produces an equal proportion of male and female hatchlings) to be approximately 29.5°C and that this was similar to other loggerhead populations around the world.

These results were presented at the 22nd International Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation and Biology, in Miami, Florida 2002 and are to be published

in a peer reviewed journal as «Mrosovsky N., S. Kamel, A.F. Rees and D. Margaritoulis, in press, Pivotal temperature for loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) from Kyparissia Bay, Greece. Canadian Journal of Zoology». Combining this information with that of beach and nest temperatures will provide important data to help ARCHELON manage the most important nesting sites of Greece.



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In our efforts to reduce expenditures and keep TURTLE TRACKS going we would like to remind you to renew your membership subscriptions. Any other contributions are highly appreciated. For those who wish to receive TURTLE TRACKS in electronic format please send a message to stps@archelon.gr with your request. This will cut production and mailing costs and also save a few trees.

All the activities organised by ARCHELON aimed at raising awareness especially amongst young children.

The events involved children, teachers, and parents and were supported by local authorities and Education Departments. In total, 894 students participated. Workshops for



SUPPORT ARCHELON

To: ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece
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As a Supporter I will be receiving the ARCHELON newsletter «Turtle Tracks» 3 times a year.

Now is the time to apply for volunteer work

Want to become a volunteer?

Apply by visiting the new (but still not finalised) ARCHELON website:
www.archelon.gr.

