



TURTLE TRACKS

ARCHELON, THE SEA TURTLE PROTECTION SOCIETY OF GREECE

Past Achievements, New Perspectives

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It has been 20 years since our Society was officially established. It is difficult to say how the idea was born. Although the first group of volunteers «chelones» had been working on the beaches of Zakynthos for several years, it wasn't until 1983 that the actual idea was formulated.

I recall the first inspiring gatherings in Thessaloniki and Athens in which we were formulating the mission and the objectives of the Society, and setting the procedures for a democratic operation.

The initial lack of resources and structures made us work from our homes and, as we grew in members, we met on the premises of other organisations. We relied on our own friends to assist with the turtle work as well as with other tasks. It wasn't until 1990 that we managed to open our first office in Athens, together with our monk seal colleagues.

In the meantime, our work was recognised by many people and organisations, and the Society started to enjoy financial support and awards. The Ministry of Environment relied on our long-standing data in order to include the major nesting beaches in the Natura 2000 network and establish the



Marine Park of Zakynthos.

As early as 1985 we realised the power of public awareness and of environmental education, and we developed original programmes that later were adopted by other organisations.

Our work on Crete opened new paths in coastal management and gave the opportunity for a pioneering collaboration with the tourism industry.

The expansion of our actions in the marine environment was necessary since this is where turtles spend most of their life and interaction with fisheries is a major threat. Close collaboration with fishermen, initially in Lakonikos Bay and later in other areas, created new opportunities. Developmental habitats for the loggerhead and the green turtle were discovered and their long migrations in the Mediterranean were verified through reports of tagged turtles and recently by satellite tracking. It be-

came more than obvious that a meaningful protection of sea turtles requires a concerted Mediterranean effort, and this is what ARCHELON has been advocating during the last years.

I believe that

a major achievement of the Society is that we «teach» young people to appreciate and act for nature and also to comprehend other people's opinions. Many young people have learnt these lessons. Today, many of them are prominent members of the society and particularly of other environmental organisations both in Greece and abroad. It is major award for us to hear someone proudly saying: «I too was a volunteer with ARCHELON».

Sea turtles are long-lived animals and reach maturity in 30-50 years. Consequently, the results of our work will become visible in several decades from now. Without continuation the 20-year work would be in vain, but the new generation of motivated volunteers and members will be here to witness the outcome of our work in the years to come.

Dimitris Margaritoulis
Founding member and member of the Board

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

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The highlights of AR

In 1977, Dimitris and Anna Margaritoulis during their summer holidays on Zakynthos accidentally witness nesting of sea turtles; not known until then that sea turtles nest in Greece. They immediately got involved in safeguarding the nesting beaches as tourism threatened them; they organised the first field teams and systematic monitoring was initiated. Hard work, dedication and care for nature from the first group of «turtlers» rendered the sea turtle a symbol for the protection of a species threatened with extinction.

Important landmarks in the 20 years course of ARCHELON follow:

- 1981** Very important nesting beaches of *Caretta caretta* are discovered in Kyparissia Bay.
- 1982** The first protection measures are introduced for the nesting beaches in the Bay of Laganas on Zakynthos. New nesting beaches are discovered in Lakonikos Bay and long-term tagging projects start in Zakynthos and Kyparissia Bay.



- 1983** The Sea Turtle Protection Society - later to be known as ARCHELON - is founded.
- 1984** The first Presidential Decree for the protection of nesting beaches on Zakynthos is issued.

A monitoring programme starts in Lakonikos Bay. The Academy of Athens awards D. Margaritoulis for his work with sea turtles.

- 1985** The Environmental Education programme is initiated in Zakynthos and then expands to all over Greece.



- 1986** A new nesting area is discovered in Kotychi (western Peloponnesus). The first ARCHELON Greek newsletter is issued. Lily Kornaraki organises a pilot public awareness project for tourists on



Zakynthos. The first European Ecological Meeting is held on Zakynthos.

- 1987** ARCHELON operates the first seasonal Information Station at Laganas. The first non-Greek volunteers participate in the ARCHELON's projects.

- 1988** The European Community cofinances ARCHELON's projects on Zakynthos and in the Bays of Kyparissia and Lakonikos.

- 1989** A pilot collaboration project

with fishermen is initiated in Lakonikos Bay. A three-year investigation project for new nesting areas in Greece begins with the support of the European Union. The Rescue Network to report dead or injured turtles is effected.



- 1990** Important nesting beaches are discovered on Crete and a new monitoring project is initiated. Violence against ARCHELON on Zakynthos escalates and the Information Station at Gerakas is destroyed. «The Turtle Briefcase», the first portable environmental education kit in Greece, is created.

- 1991** The Ministry of Environment starts the procedures for the establishment of a Marine Park on Zakynthos. An attempt to construct buildings on Marathonissi of Zakynthos is blocked by ARCHELON and other NGOs, local communities and the local church.



- 1992** ARCHELON proposes WWF Greece to purchase land behind Sekania beach and collaborates to this end in the

ARCHELON's 20 years

context of a European co-funded project. ARCHELON's first newsletter in English is issued.

- 1993** The second environmental education kit «Life on the Coasts» is created. Public awareness projects are initiated on Peloponnesus. ARCHELON receives a Ford Conservation award. Seminars are organised by ARCHELON for teachers on Crete.



- 1994** The Rescue Centre is established in Glyfada, in co-operation with the Municipality of Glyfada. TUI awards ARCHELON for its work.

- 1995** A LIFE Nature project begins on Crete, which includes elaboration of Management Plans for the nesting beaches.



- 1996** ARCHELON organises a seminar for the Biology and Protection of Sea Turtles, with participation of seven Mediterranean countries and support of UNEP's RAC/SPA. A monitoring project begins at Koroni, a new nesting beach in southern Peloponnesus.

- 1997** In Lakonikos Bay a LIFE Nature project is carried out in co-operation with the Hellenic Ornithological Society. It includes the first in Greece sand dune restoration project and a collaboration project with fishermen.

- 1998** In Kyparissia Bay a LIFE Nature project, including application of a Management Plan, begins. Dimitris Margaritoulis is appointed as Chair of the IUCN's Marine Turtle Specialist Group for the Mediterranean and NE Atlantic.

- 1999** The Presidential Decree for the National Marine Park of Zakynthos is eventually signed. ARCHELON participates in a European project to assess fisheries interaction with sea turtles at a Mediterranean level.

- 2000** The Zakynthos Marine Park Management Agency is established and ARCHELON with WWF Greece participate jointly on the Management Board. The first Environmental Station and a «Nature Trail» through sand dunes are created in Lakonikos Bay (Skala). ARCHELON becomes a partner to the Mediterranean Action Plan of UNEP.



- 2001** A second Environmental Station is established in Kyparissia Bay (Agiannaki). The European Court con-

demns Greece for insufficient protection of *Caretta caretta* on Zakynthos. The third environmental education kit «Fishermen and Turtles» is created.



- 2002** A LIFE Nature project is initiated aiming mainly at the reduction of mortality of turtles due to fisheries interaction. The Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, releases a sea turtle, rehabilitated by ARCHELON, on Crete. ARCHELON uses radio and satellite transmitters on sea turtles at the Amvrakikos Bay to follow their movements.



- 2003** ARCHELON celebrates its 20th Anniversary. The first mobile exhibition «Mediterranean Sea - Fisheries - Sea Turtles» is constructed. ARCHELON becomes a Board member on three new Management Agencies of protected areas.



20th anniversary celebration

On 14 November 2003, ARCHELON celebrated its 20 years of working for sea turtles. The reception was held at the Amphitheatre the Goulandris Natural History Museum in Athens. The venue was kindly offered by the museum President, Mrs Niki Goulandris.

The event started with live classical music, projection of images and the welcome by the Director of ARCHELON Mr Dimitrios Dimopoulos. The President of ARCHELON, Mr Nikolas Raissis made the opening address highlighting the milestones of ARCHELON's work. Guest speakers included a representative of

His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, Mrs Goulandris, representatives of the Deputy Minister of Environment and the main



opposition party at the national Parliament, Mr Michalis Papagiannakis as member of the European Parliament, Professor Pantis as the Chairman of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos, Professor Kimon Hatzibiros from the Technical University of Athens, Mrs Maria Valerga from Grecotel, and Dr Michael Iwand from the Environment Department of TUI. All speakers were well acquainted with the work of ARCHELON and stressed the progress made over the course of its 20 years of existence.

Mr Dimitris Margaritoulis, a founding member, outlined the national and international repercussions of ARCHELON's work and awarded Mr. Yiannis Kritikos a fisherman from Lakonikos Bay and Mr. Nikos Lalotis a long-time

member of ours from Zakynthos for their outstanding contribution to sea turtle conservation.

A special edition, with posters issued over the past 20 years in relation to sea turtles, was produced for the occasion and distributed to all participants. The edition, sponsored by TUI, was dedicated to the members, supporters and vol-

unteers of ARCHELON, who made feasible the 20-year magnificent work of ARCHELON with their devotion, outstanding efforts and professional skills. Carrefour-Marinopoulos Group offered the drinks for the buffet that followed.

Our honoured guests and ARCHELON members pointed out that a lot more work is in store for us to ensure the protection of sea turtles in Greece. It is a challenge we welcome, as we are ready especially after receiving all this national and international recognition, to further commit ourselves to this long-standing cause.

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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.

SUPPORT ARCHELON

To: ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece
Solomou 57, GR-104 32 Athens, Greece, Tel./fax +30 210 5231342.

YES, I want to become a Supporter of ARCHELON and send:

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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.**

