

A four-monthly electronic newsletter of ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece

# TURTLE TRACKS



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Editor: T. Benos-Palmer

Design: J. Margaritoulis

Contributions by:

Theodoros Benos-Palmer

Theoni Karkoulia, Aliko Panagopoulou,

Pavlos Tsaros, Athina Tsekoura



Solomou 57, GR-104 32 Athens, Greece

Tel-Fax: +30 210 52 31 342

e-mail: [stps@archelon.gr](mailto:stps@archelon.gr)

URL: [www.archelon.gr](http://www.archelon.gr)

## EDITORIAL NOTE

This issue of TURTLE TRACKS, on the occasion of ARCHELON's 25 years of existence, is devoted to its field projects, mainly on the beaches of Zakynthos, Peloponnesus, and Crete, as well as to the volunteers' programme. The article was drafted by Aliko Panagopoulou, the Projects Coordinator of ARCHELON. The next issue of TT (No 42) will be dedicated to the scientific achievements of ARCHELON. So, with the present and the next issues of TT together with the previous issue (No 40), which was devoted to the Rescue Centre, you will have an overall picture of the major activities of ARCHELON over its long history.

TRIBUTE No 2:

## ARCHELON'S FIELD PROJECTS AND VOLUNTEERS

### FIELD PROJECTS

#### An overview

Every summer from May to October, the heart of our Society beats stronger. That happens because it is the time that the sea turtles come to the nesting beaches to lay their eggs, from which two months later the hatchlings will come out to scurry towards the sea. ARCHELON for the last 25 years, dedicated to this important interface, is present on the most important beaches to protect the turtles, the nests and the hatchlings.

The field projects of our Society started in 1983 on Zakynthos and Kyparissia Bay which are the most important nesting beaches in Greece and in the Mediterranean. Later, while new and important nesting habitats were being discovered the projects of Lakonikos (1986), Rethymno (1990), Chania (1991), Messara Bay (1992), and Koroni (1995), started. Today the Society continues to work in these areas making efforts to extend its activities beyond the egg-laying period.

Even if each of the areas we are working in has its own peculiarities and needs special attention, the basic strategy that is followed is the same and is based on three elements:



**1** Observation of the reproductive activity of the sea turtles and protection of their nests. With the collection of various nesting and hatching data we observe the trends of the population on a long term basis, while with the protection of the nests we ensure the entrance to the sea of the greatest possible number of hatchlings in order to join the existing populations.

Public awareness. This is carried out through seasonal information stations, presentations in hotels, activities for children, and is directed both to the local community as well as to the visitors of each area. Our target is to transfer, to as many people as possible, the message that protecting sea turtles we protect the health and quality of the



**3** Elaboration, promotion and implementation of management plans for the long term protection of the nesting habitats in Greece. ARCHELON makes an effort to involve stakeholders for any management proposals to be implemented in the turtle's habitats.



## In brief, each year, ARCHELON:

- Monitors regularly about 74 kilometers of nesting beaches.
- Registers and protects 2,500-3,000 nests (about 75% of what we believe to be the total number of nests all over Greece). Out of these nests about 210,000 hatchlings reach successfully the sea.
- Applies identification marks (tags) to turtles and recognizes previously marked turtles (about 500 individuals).
- Operates 9 seasonal Information Stations in the nesting areas and conducts over 1,000 presentations in tourist facilities informing over 200,000 people.

Thanks to the scientific documentation provided by ARCHELON and its lobbying efforts, the majority of nesting areas in Greece have been included in the NATURA 2000

network of protected areas of the European Union.

The following chart shows the comparative data in the nesting areas of *Caretta caretta*, monitored by ARCHELON in Greece.

## The field projects per area

### 1. Zakynthos

The Bay of Laganas in Zakynthos hosts by far the largest nesting aggregation of loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in Greece and in the Mediterranean. The dominant threat that the

NESTING AREA	Km	Annual number of nests (Min-Max)	Annual number of nests (Average)	Years of observation
Zakynthos	5.5	833-2,018	1,244	25
Kyparissia Bay <sup>1</sup>	9.5	286-927	621	25
Lakonikos Bay <sup>2</sup>	23.5	107-288	197	22
Rethymno	10.8	166-516	324	18
Chania Bay	14	45-192	94	16
Messara Bay	7.8	15-80	51	15
Koroni	2.7	35-66	50	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73.8</b>	<b>1,487-4,087</b>	<b>2,581</b>	

<sup>1</sup> While the southernmost 9.5 km are monitored everyday (considered as the core area), the number of nests refer or extrapolated to the entire beach length of Kyparissia Bay (about 44 km).

<sup>2</sup> Since 2006, everyday monitoring has been reduced to the 5-km Mavrovouni beach, considered as an "index" area, while nest numbers refer or extrapolated to the entire nesting area of Lakonikos Bay (23.5 km).



turtles are facing here is the downgrading of the beaches due to tourist development, while in the past many sea turtles had been killed from speed boats. ARCHELON fought a long-standing battle and finally along with other environmental organizations succeeded to establish, in 1999, the National Marine Park of Zakynthos. The Park's establishment by the Greek government was done under the threat of conviction from the European Union. Today ARCHELON continues to work in the area in co-operation with the Management Agency of the Park, and also participates in the Management Board of the Park together with WWF Greece.

## 2. Peloponnesus

Peloponnesus is home to some relatively unspoilt by tourism beaches. The projects at Peloponnesus were the starting point of many new ARCHELON initiatives, such as the cooperative programmes with fishermen, the creation of permanent Environmental Information Stations (Evrotas in Lakonikos Bay and Agiannaki in Kyparissia Bay), and the creation of infrastructure like nature-interpretation trails, observation points and sand dune restoration. ARCHELON has implemented successfully

two LIFE-Nature projects, co-funded by the European Union, one in Kyparissia Bay and the other, in co-operation with the Hellenic Ornithological Society, in Lakonikos Bay. Today ARCHELON is still active in these two areas and in the region of Koroni. The Bay of Kyparissia is the most significant of the nesting areas in Peloponnesus, being the second most important site in the Mediterranean Sea. For this area ARCHELON has concluded a Special Environmental Study together with a Management Plan, in the framework of a LIFE Nature project, which could assist the Ministry of Environment to issue a specific legislation towards the long-term protection of this largely unspoilt area. Our vision for this area is the creation of a national park which will guarantee the safeguarding of nature and the prosperity of the local community through eco-tourism.

## 3. Crete

When nesting sites were first discovered on the island of Crete, the impact from tourism was already severe. The erosion of shores and sand dunes

due to housing and tourism infrastructures, the daily use of heavy beach-cleaning machinery, the occupation of the beaches by great numbers of sun beds and umbrellas, the bright lights, the noise and the presence of people at night on the beaches disturbed for many years turtle nesting. Further nests were destroyed and there was a high mortality on hatchlings. The consequences are evident nowadays with a noticeable reduction of the number of nests especially in Rethymno and Chania. The period 1995 – 97 was of great importance: the until then three separate projects of Rethymno, Chania and Messara Bay were united under one coordinator, while ARCHELON concluded a Management Plan in the framework of a LIFE-Nature project. Since then ARCHELON has been working for the implementation of the plan in cooperation with the local authorities and the tourist industry. In 2004, thanks to another LIFE project, a new permanent Environmental Information Station was founded in Pagalohori in the region of Rethymno.



## VOLUNTEERING

ARCHELON's strength is its volunteers, without whom our work would be incomplete. Over the last 25 years ARCHELON was honoured to have worked with thousands of volunteers (450-500 per year) coming from all over the world – even from countries as far as Chile, Malaysia, Puerto Rico, New Caledonia – in order to help protect sea turtles in Greece. While being with us they work hard, often under harsh conditions, such as the flaming summer sun, doing difficult shifts or even all-night-long observations. They reside in camping sites with very basic comforts. But still they work with

### COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF 2,200 VOLUNTEERS (2002-2007)

Origin Country	Percentage
G. Britain, Ireland	39,0%
Germany, Austria	11.1%
Greece	10.5%
France	7.7%
United States, Canada	7.5%
Scandinavian countries, Finland	5.6%
Italy	4.5%
Australia, New Zealand	3.7%
Spain, Portugal	3.1%
Belgium, Holland	2.6%
Switzerland	1.9%
Other European countries	1.3%
Asian countries	0.7%
Latin America	0.7%
Africa	0.4%
TOTAL	100.0%

enthusiasm and dedication, creating everlasting bonds of friendship between them – not to mention the cases of those who met their life-partners and the subsequent numbers of weddings that have taken place, some times on the nesting sites. Upon leaving, their back-packs

### WHY THEY HAVE JOINED THE SOCIETY

In order to obtain work experience/for their studies	39.9%
Alternative holidays	29.8%
Interest for the environment and the sea turtles	29.4%
Other reasons	0.9%

### HOW THEY HAVE FOUND OUT ABOUT THE SOCIETY

After speaking with a previous volunteer: 44,6%  
 Articles and books about volunteering: 17,6%  
 Alternative tourism travel agencies: 6,7%  
 Internet: 33,1%

### AGES OF 2,200 VOLUNTEERS (2002-2007)

Age	Percentage
18-23	62.4%
24-30	27.8%
31-35	5.0%
36-45	2.6%
>45	2.2%

Average: 23.9 years  
 Average time of participation: 34.9 days

are filled with unique experiences and emotions.

To the thousands of volunteers who have worked for the projects of ARCHELON, and to those who will join us in the future, we wholeheartedly extend our gratitude.

«...Once upon a time in our little, loving city came a group of young people, introducing to us this new kind of Man, rebels volunteering to work for the environment... They came from lands far away, students working really hard... in order to protect... our dignity perhaps... motivated for a creature some locals did not even know existed, called sea turtle... And quite sometimes these youngsters shed a tear and got enraged, but there was something within them that made them strong. It is this feeling that you have just found a treasure, at the crack of dawn, when you discover the traces of the turtle that nested in the night, when you touch the eggs before marking the nest, when you observe the laying of the eggs as it happens or when the first hatchlings emerge from the sand. A godsend gift, a lifetime experience! And then again you get disappointed upon discovering a dead turtle, but hope dwells in your heart once more when patrolling the beach at night you discover fresh turtle tracks. And if a wounded turtle comes along, you feel compelled to save this little giant lying helpless at your feet that you do everything possible. And a new smile lights your face when the half-dead turtle you rescued some months before is now, thanks to the care taking of the Rescue Centre, strong and returning to its home in the sea».

Original text in Greek by Eirini Kladou

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **ARCHELON SEMINARS**

Four seminars took place in the Rescue Centre in the period May-June 2008.

- 2 and 3 May 2008: The field leaders that work on the nesting beaches from May to October were trained. After the end of this seminar, the field projects began.
- 2 and 3 May 2008 also, a seminar was organised for volunteers involved in formal or non-formal environmental education entitled "The art as a tool in environmental education -Theatrical play, puppet show" and how the young ARCHELON club of "ChelonoParea" works. The seminar was held in cooperation with of the art group Parodos and the Merlin puppet show team. The action was funded by the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection.
- 10 May and 31 May 2008: People who are interested in sea turtle rescue attended a special training session. 17 and 15 persons took part respectively and they were informed about theoretical and practical matters concerning the sea turtle rescue.

### **PARTICIPATION IN VARIOUS EVENTS**

During May and June we participated in the following events:

- 4<sup>th</sup> ECOLIFE exhibition, 16-19 May, we were at the old airport exhibition venue together with other environmental and non environmental organizations and spoke with around 600 people who visited our stand. On our screens Lefteris Fylachtos's documentary "ARCHELON Bubble" was projected. On Sunday, 18 May we made a presentation on "Applied environmental education techniques: the case of ChelonoParea" by Theodoros Benos-Palmer, Anna Kremezi-Margaritouli, Athina Tsekoura and Smaro Touliaou. The presentation was funded by the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection.
- The 7<sup>th</sup> Volunteer Celebration, Saturday 17 May at the pedestrian road of Thisseio. ARCHELON was there with its volunteers and its portable exhibition to inform and attract new volunteers.
- Environmental Awareness Festival in Palaia Fokaia 27-30 June with events such as concerts, beach and sea bottom cleaning etc. The reason for this celebration was the closure of a rubbish dump after 32 years of operation. The subject was of course the protection of the environment. Visitation to our information kiosk from the citizens and especially the children was impressive.

### **TURTLE RELEASES**

For the volunteers that take care of the turtles in the Rescue Centre, the most beautiful moment is when the turtles are ready to go back to the sea. See below the last releases!

- "Gerasimos" was released on Legrena beach near Athens on 7 May. He was found in Kefalonia in August 2007 where he had swallowed a hook and was entangled in ropes. See more on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Gerasimos release ARCHELON)
- "Kapetanio" was released at Legrena too. He was found in Rafina in 5 August 2006 with a hook in his stomach. His release was filmed by a French TV channel. See more on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (Kapetanio release ARCHELON)
- "Angelos" was released on 28 May in the open sea, in cooperation with Sea Gate and Athina Diving Centre. He was found in September 2007 in Pylos, caught in fishing nets and had a hook in his throat. See more in [www.sea-gate.gr](http://www.sea-gate.gr) (Sea turtle back to the sea).
- "Matilda" had swallowed a hook when she was found in Rhodes on 30 July 2007. She was released on 7 June in Zakynthos. The release was covered by a Japanese TV Channel in live transmission.

## INFORMATION ACTIONS WITH THE SPONSORS' SUPPORT



### • With the support of the **VODAFONE GROUP FOUNDATION:**

On Friday 2 May, at the Rescue Centre, besides the seminars for the field leaders, training also took place for the volunteers working on the public awareness programme on Crete and Zakynthos. The Director of ARCHELON, who is the coordinator of the "We can live together" project of ARCHELON, a public awareness project supported by VODAFONE GROUP FOUNDATION, also presented the schedule for the Mobile Exhibition which would be visiting Chania, Gerani, Palaiochora, Plakia, Matala, Ammoudara, Malia, Ierapetra, Palaiokastro, and Rethymno between 11 July and 8 August.



• With the support of **PIZZA HUT and KFC**, 'ChelonoParea' (the young ARCHELON club) welcomed summer along with 31 friends at the Rescue Centre, on Sunday 8 June. The aim of this event, for children and youngsters between the age of 8 and 18, was to write an article for "ChelonoParea's" newsletter with the presentation of people related to the sea, e.g. Coast Guard officers, fishermen, swimmers and of course "turtlers" (Chelonades in Greek)!



• From **Johnson Diversey Company**, 100 employees from around the world arrived at the Rescue Centre on an early afternoon, on 14 May. They had a guided tour of the Centre, listened to a speech about ARCHELON's work and just like children they had fun while playing games, painted and wrote messages about the environment and turtle conservation. It was a pleasant break from their Conference for which they had traveled to Greece from many places like Cote D'Ivoire, Congo, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.



On the World Environment Day (5 June) on the TRAM with the cooperation of the General Secretariat for Youth

James Spotila, head of Dept. of Science and Environment of Drexel University, at the Rescue Centre during his visit in Greece.



## FUNDERS-THANKS



For the support and promotion of "ChelonoParea"



For the support and promotion of "ChelonoParea"



VODAFONE GROUP FOUNDATION  
— For the information programme and the operational support of the Rescue Centre



For the sponsorship of cleaning and hygiene products used for one year at the Rescue Centre



For the sponsorship of our action in the Prefecture of Herakleion, Crete



Sponsorship of communication services

**Want to become a volunteer?**

Now is the time to apply by visiting ARCHELON website:  
<http://www.archelon.gr>

### Important Notice!

This is the second issue of Turtle Tracks appearing in electronic format. We have stopped printing it on paper to reduce ARCHELON's environmental footprint. If you wish to receive it straight in your computer, please send a message to: [stps@archelon.gr](mailto:stps@archelon.gr)