

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

# TURTLE TRACKS



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## 1. How it all began ...

Comprehending the increasing need for rehabilitation of injured sea turtles, ARCHELON in collaboration with the Municipality of Glyfada and with the authorisation from the Ministry of Agriculture, founded in 1994 the Sea Turtle Rescue Centre in Glyfada, Attica. The centre is comprised of 5 train wagons, donated by OSE, the Greek Railway Organization. It became the first "hospital", exclusively for marine turtles, in the Mediterranean.

**a. Objectives:** Rehabilitation and Public Awareness

The main objective of the Rescue Centre is the rehabilitation of injured sea turtles while also educating and sensitizing the public, mainly schoolchildren. The Rescue Centre also hosts the Centre for Education and Training for Volunteers, which is an area specifically designed, with photographic material, for the organisation of seminars, meetings as well as presentations regarding sea turtles and environmental education. The major tasks at the Centre are:

Rehabilitation of sea turtles:

each year approximately 50 wounded turtles are sent to the Centre from all over Greece. Their causes of injuries may vary, however the most frequent are: entanglement in fishing gears and deliberate injuries, collision with speedboats and ingestion of plastic bags often being confused with jellyfish by turtles.

**Environmental Education:** The Rescue Centre also functions as a site for raising public awareness. The Centre for Education and Training for Volunteers, which was established in collaboration with the General Secretariat for Youth, is specifically designed for presentations and it displays photographic material on the evolution and the biology of marine turtles as well as biodiversity. There are also organised environmental programmes for students in collaboration with the Environmental Education Directorates. Each year, 20,000 individuals including schoolchildren visit the Centre.



### **b. Installations:**

The Rehabilitation Centre is separated in various working areas. Below you will find a plan with these areas and their uses.

### **c. Personnel:** Volunteer Staff

The Rescue Centre owes its operation and effectiveness in rehabilitating marine turtles greatly to its volunteers. Over 40 volunteers from all over the world staff the Centre over the year. Under the supervision of a veterinarian, the volunteers attend daily the injured turtles until they are fully recovered and released.

### **d. Sponsors:**

The sponsors of the Centre play a very important role. Without their support, not only by covering running costs but also by providing

periods of several months. Our most consistent one is Alexandra Tsakonias who has been supporting 'Mina' for many years. 'Mina' is a wounded turtle that came to the Rescue Centre in 2003 with a severe head injury. Additionally, there are many "small" contributions from individual citizens.

## **2. REHABILITATION: our main duty!**

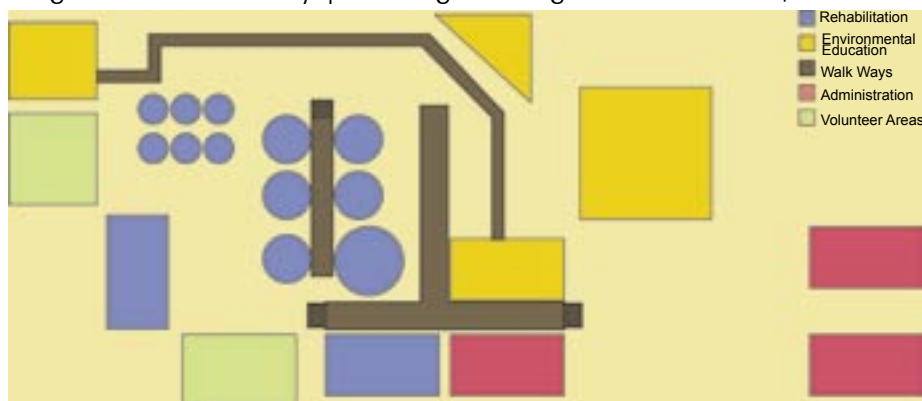
### **a. Geographical origin of stranded turtles:**

Wounded turtles are found all over Greece and, with the help of the Port Authorities, members of the Stranding Network and other citizens, are transported to the Rescue Centre. Most strandings occur during the summertime, which co-

medication.

### **d. Protocols of re-establishment:**

The veterinarian visits the Centre on a weekly basis. She checks the turtles and modifies the treatment where it is needed, changing the medication that is provided to the turtles. When required, operations are programmed for the removal of ingested hooks. This year an innovative operation was used for removing hooks. With the new method we gain valuable time and energy. When the turtle behaves normally, especially as far as diving and feeding are concerned, then its health is evaluated and it may be released back to its natural environment. The release of a turtle will take place either on a desolate beach or from a boat offshore.



equipment and services, rehabilitation of the turtles would have been almost impossible. The Municipality of Glyfada is the longest-lasting supporter of the Centre from its very beginning by offering the land to set up the Centre and by also covering part of the expenses in electricity and water. Also, the operation of the Centre and the rehabilitation of the turtles have been funded by the VODAFONE GROUP FOUNDATION, which for the last two years, "has adopted" the Centre and has assisted in the expansion of its installations. The company Johnson Diversey, which has offered free cleaning material for one year and the company Fresenius Kabi which has offered the annual pharmaceutical material, are two very important sponsors. At the same time, many are the citizens that "adopt" wounded turtles for

incides with the nesting season for sea turtles in Greece. Below is the table of strandings for the last 14 years, which shows the arrivals to the Centre of injured turtles and the releases of rehabilitated ones.

### **b. Type of wounds:**

Over the past 15 years certain trends have been observed. Two important types of injuries are treated at the Rescue Centre. The first can be connected directly to fisheries. Ingestion of fishing hooks, entanglement in fishing gears, such as nets, represents 34.5%. The second type of injury, representing 34.5% of all injured turtles at the Rescue Centre, is head traumas.

### **c. Daily protocol:**

Following the veterinary guidance and instructions, the volunteers undertake daily treatment procedures. The programme includes cleaning, feeding, providing



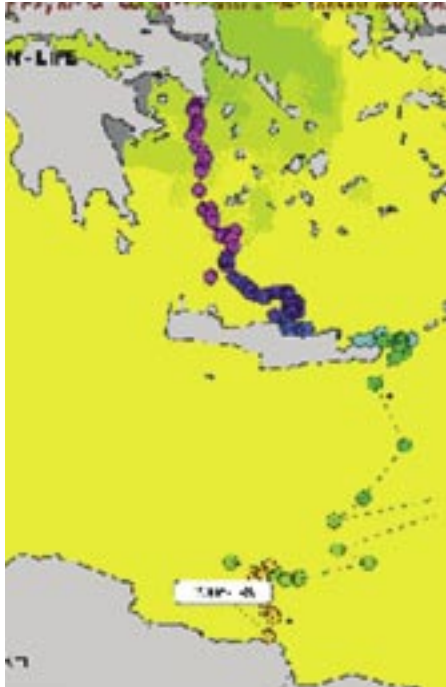
## **3. WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED: 283 releases!**

Two hundred eighty three turtles have been successfully rehabilitated and released in the wild. Several cases have been presented in previous issues of Turtle Tracks. Herewith we present two more:

### **Case study 1: "Sofia"**

'Sofia' was found in Mesologgi, on 26 May 2000, with a severe head injury and a concomitant inability to dive. The transportation to the Rescue Centre was organised thanks to the National Sea Turtle Rescue Network coordinated by ARCHELON (see next section). The head injury healed within a year but the diving problem remained. Using a new technique of fitting weights to its carapace, we were able to facilitate her diving and within the year she regained control of her buoyancy. 'Sofia' was released, after five years at the Rescue Centre, on

10 November 2005, and a satellite transmitter was fitted on her carapace. She headed south until she reached Crete and then



eastwards along the coast. For a week she stopped sending signals which was a cause for worry, but afterwards she transmitted regular signals as she continued to swim towards Africa for possibly overwintering.

### Case study 2: "Sampson"

"Sampson" arrived at the Centre on 21 August 2006 from the Island of Aegina. It is a male loggerhead turtle with a curved carapace length of 84.7 cm which makes him the largest male that was admitted at the Centre that year. X-rays showed that he had ingested two hooks, one situated at the bottom of the intestine, the other high in the esophagus. After a few weeks the first hook was rejected. Various antibiotics and vitamins were administered to him while for 1.5 months he was force fed. After this time interval he started feeding on his own. The amount of food he received was gradually increased from about 1 to 2 kg. Pharmaceutical oil was also administered to him in order to facilitate rejection of the second hook through the intestine. Later it was decided that there was no need for the second

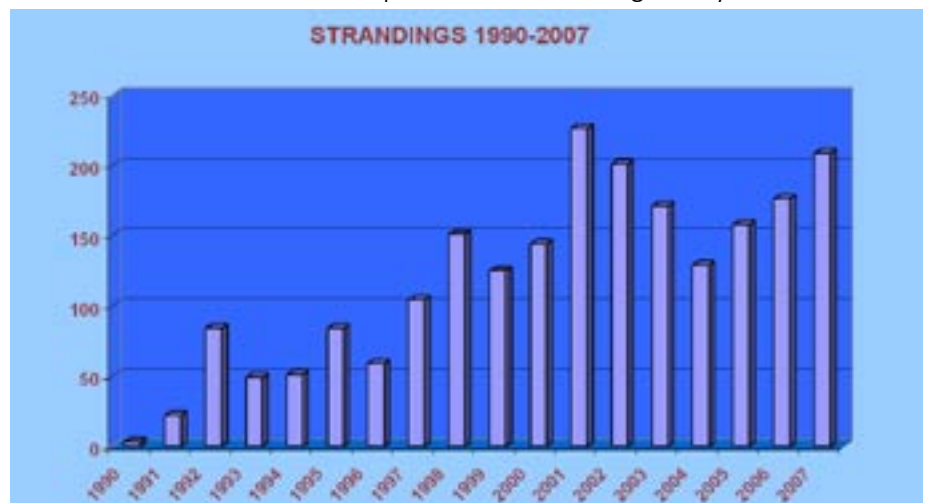
hook to be removed as it did not appear to have any serious affect on his behaviour. After 4 months of nursing "Sampson" was healthy



again and his release in the wild is scheduled. Already a satellite transmitter is fitted on his carapace

increase in public interest has evolved a substantial expansion of the Network which today includes other organizations and concerned individuals as members. Without these collaborators we would not be informed about dead or injured turtles. The Network members are the "antennae" of the Society in areas where we cannot be present. Also seminars are organized regularly to inform and train active or future Network members.

Each year about 300 dead or injured sea turtles are reported. In case of a dead turtle, the Coast Guard collects the relevant data and ensures that the carcass is buried by the local municipality. In case of an injured turtle they see that the turtle is transported safely to the Rescue Centre. In the diagram we can see the annual increase of stranding reports. This shows how public awareness has risen during the years and how



so as to monitor his marine journey after being released.

## 4. STRANDINGS AND THE RESCUE NETWORK

### a. The National Sea Turtle Rescue Network:

The Rescue Network now covers the entire Greek coastline and is administered by ARCHELON in close cooperation with the Coast Guard. After the Network's initiation in 1990, a strong

people show their interest in nature conservation.

### b. Stranding Form

A stranding form was designed for the Coast Guard to record turtle strandings data. This method allows ARCHELON to collect valuable information on strandings. To this purpose, the operation of an open phone line for calls all over Greece helps. Information material is sent to all members of the Rescue Network.

## IONIA ODOS THREATENS KYPARISSIA BAY

A new motorway, IONIA ODOS, planned to pass along the western Peloponnesus coast, is threatening Kyparissia Bay, the second most important nesting area of loggerhead turtles in the Mediterranean. The new highway will actually turn the existing into a high-speed road by building new wider lanes. The problem for the turtles is focused mainly at the southern part of the Bay, which comprises the core of the nesting habitat, hosting more than 83% of all nests along the entire Bay. In the southern part, and specifically at Vounaki, the noise and the headlights of the cars are already affecting the nearby nesting beach. It is expected that the increased vehicular traffic and higher speeds, with the new road, will increase greatly these disturbances. Further, the lighting of the new motorway will also affect the

nesting area as the road is visible from the nesting beach at this part. However, the largest problem is expected to be the construction of secondary side roads for local traffic. These secondary roads are most likely to be made along the coast or through dune fields, to avoid costs for expropriation of private lands. In southern Kyparissia Bay this practice will be detrimental as the nesting area has been preserved so far largely because of the limited vehicular access towards and along the sea. It should be noted that the southern Kyparissia Bay is included in the Natura 2000 network. ARCHELON has already drafted a letter to the Minister of the Environment and Public Works and soon will take other necessary steps for the protection of this very important nesting area.

## "CHELONOPAREA", THE PROMISING YOUTH CLUB OF ARCHELON

After a long-time planning ARCHELON eventually established its youth club, named CHELONOPAREA. The primary objective of the club is to provide the opportunity to young people, less than 18 years of age, to participate directly in actions for sea turtle conservation. The idea of CHELONOPAREA has evolved from ARCHELON's environmental education projects, where the strong interest and adequate abilities of the young participants have been solicited. The members of this promising youth club can provide substantial assistance to ARCHELON's public awareness projects, at the Rescue Centre, and in various actions on field



projects. On certain occasions due to their young age, members of CHELONOPAREA should be accompanied by their parents. This fits well with a new idea that has been born: family volunteerism. The youth group has acquired already its first members and a quarterly newsletter has been issued. This summer CHELONOPAREA is establishing a summer camp in Lakonikos Bay under the guidance of Athina Tsekoura and Smaro Touliatou. The great benefit of CHELONOPAREA is that these young people are gradually becoming the new generation of volunteers dedicated to sea turtle conservation.

## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF ARCHELON

The Annual General Assembly of ARCHELON, held on Sunday 2 March 2008, elected the new Board of Directors. This year's General Assembly was also "constitutional". The Society amended its Constitution for the first time after 24 years, harmonizing it with modern requirements. The new constitution foresees a more comprehensive description of the Society's objectives, goals and means. Further, it renders a two year term for the Board of Directors. This will help with more efficient and long-term planning. The new Board of Directors convened and elected:

President: **Dimitrios Dimopoulos**

Vice-president: **Ilias Pitsikas**

Secretary General: **Dimitris Margaritoulis**

Treasurer: **Nikolas Raissis**

Members: **Anna Kremezi-Margaritouli, Vivi Raissi, Petros Synodinos.**



## THE 28<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SEA TURTLE SYMPOSIUM

The 28<sup>th</sup> Symposium took place from 21 to 26 January 2008 at Loreto of Baja California in Mexico. This year, unlike the previous years, the 600 participants of the Symposium did not constitute a "close system" isolated in a big hotel, but were dispersed in a small town of Mexico, which is closely related to sea turtles as many residents are fishermen or live on eco-tourism. Accommodation was provided in small hotels and town pensions. Certain meetings took place in simple classrooms of the small local university. The mounted posters were set up in the mission-church square, where the traditional acquaintance banquet also took place with excellent Mexican food provided by the restaurants and taverns of the town in covered makeshift huts around the square.

On behalf of ARCHELON, oral presentations were made by Dimitris Margaritoulis and Aliko Panagopoulou, both related to the recent years' negative trend on the annual number of nests observed in Rethymno, Island of Crete. Posters were presented by Chris Dean (on the timing of the hatchlings' emergence at Sekania, Zakynthos) along with Bronwen Gill (on the factors influencing

nesting on Sekania), Liz Scott (on the consequences of nest shading at Gerakas), Paul Whittock (on the consequences of the rise of sea level at Sekania), Judith Zbinden (on satellite tracking of turtles in the Mediterranean after their nesting on Zakynthos). It is worth noting that Paul Whittock's work was awarded the prize in the conservation category for posters.

A particularly original presentation was made by the Cuban graphic artist Nestor Navarro-Viamontes on the philosophy behind the creation of a logo and public awareness pamphlets. Apart from the very vivid and pleasant presentation, he mentioned that he was inspired by the logos of 4 relevant organizations, one of which was ARCHELON's.

Very important was also the fact that other participants of the Symposium approached us presenting samples of their work, especially as far as cooperation with the tourist sectors is concerned, saying that they had been inspired by past presentations of the Society.

Before the start of Symposium on 21 January, the Mediterranean meeting took place, which traditionally takes place during the

Symposium, where 22 attendants from 7 countries participated. Aliko presented what happened in Greece during the last year. On 22 January, the annual meeting of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group took place, where Dimitris Margaritoulis and Paolo Casale, regional co-chairs for the Mediterranean, presented the existing situation and the prospects for sea turtles in the Mediterranean Sea.

Many former collaborators of ARCHELON were present at the Symposium. Apart from those who presented papers, in cooperation with ARCHELON, and were mentioned above, we also met Maria Oikonomopoulou (presently working at Queensland University of Australia), Stamatina Skliri (working in Costa Rica), Christina Davy (working at the University of Toronto), Pilar Santidrian Tomillo (working in Costa Rica in cooperation with Drexel University), Claire Atkinson, Nima Moin, and Angela Lazou. The National Marine Park of Zakynthos was represented by Gail Schofield who presented three posters.

The next Symposium (the 29<sup>th</sup>) will take place at Brisbane in Australia, 14-19 February 2009.

## BRIEF NEWS

On 11 April 2008, ARCHELON's President Dr Dimitrios Dimopoulos signed a self-binding chart for social responsibility and accounting together with other 17 NGOs in the presence of the former President of Hellenic Republic and other officials. The NGOs that signed the Chart, among them WWF Greece, Arctouros, and the Society for the Protection of Monk Seals, are voluntarily binding themselves to be transparent, socially responsible and provide legitimate accounting through independent auditors.

A 30-minute video made by ARCHELON volunteer Leteris Fylaktos has won an award at the 10<sup>th</sup> Cinema Festival of Thessaloniki. Leteris filmed his video at the volunteer camp in Rethymno and named it "The ARCHELON Bubble". It is an excellent film showing the everyday life and the mentalities of our volunteers on the summer projects. Congratulations to Leteris and the volunteers who participated in the filming.

The Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (ELKETHE) has published in English a 466-page volume entitled «The State of Hellenic Fisheries». ARCHELON was invited to present an article regarding the impact of fisheries on sea turtles, which was drafted by Dimitris Margaritoulis, Andreas Koutsodendris and Aliko Panagopoulou.

On 16 February and 22 March ARCHELON organized two retreat sessions for its staff, members of the Board of Directors, and long-time volunteers. The idea was to exchange views on revisiting our vision and mission, and our "philosophy" on important conservation matters. Further, certain negative and positive examples were discussed. The value of these gatherings lies in the fact that they make us rethink important issues, which sometimes may get forgotten or neglected in the hectic daily routine work.

## ARCHELON CELEBRATES ITS 25<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

In November 2008 ARCHELON completes 25 years of actions, achievements and agonies for the conservation of marine turtles. For the case a new logo has been created with the motto "Together for more". Besides various events planned at the project sites during the summer, a central celebration will take place on 3 November 2008 in Athens at Technopolis, a large venue offered by the Municipality of Athens.



You are all invited at this particular event! Further, a commemorative publication is being prepared and for this reason we have asked our volunteers (old and new) to share their memories, thoughts and feelings on their experience they had with ARCHELON (both negative and positive). If you want to participate please send a short text (less than 300 words) with your contact details and a photo of yours to Anna Margaritoulis [anna.k-m@archelon.gr](mailto:anna.k-m@archelon.gr)



## FUNDERS-THANKS



**Want to become a volunteer?**

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

### Important Notice!

This is the first 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)