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'Centre for Sea Turtle Studies' Established in Zakynthos

SEA TURTLE CENTRE

J. Plessa 1, GR - 291 00, Zakynthos, Greece

Systematic studies of marine turtles in Greece began about 12 years ago. Since then studies and conservation efforts have grown, particularly in the past seven years, as seven semi-permanent field stations have been established by the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece (STPS). The nesting activity of the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) is monitored each season on more than 150 km of beaches in Zakynthos, Kyparissia, Lakonikos Bay, Crete, and Rhodes. Furthermore, "doomed" nests are relocated to beach hatcheries and the main factors which affect nesting are determined. In the context of these projects, more than 2,800 female loggerhead turtles have been tagged, mostly in Zakynthos. About 3% of the tagged turtles have been recovered elsewhere in the Mediterranean. These long distance recoveries have yielded important information on the movements of turtles at sea. Recently, STPS established a Centre for Sea Turtle Studies on the island of Zakynthos. Zakynthos is the most important nesting area for *Caretta* in the Mediterranean, supporting 900-2,000 nests, depending on the year, on 3.5 km of beaches. The initial objectives of the Centre are the following:

1. Create a data bank for all the information collected,
2. Formulate a reference library,
3. Encourage the initiation of similar projects in the Mediterranean region,
4. Educate and train researchers on current monitoring techniques, and
5. Distribute information and supply tagging equipment for small-scale projects in the Mediterranean.