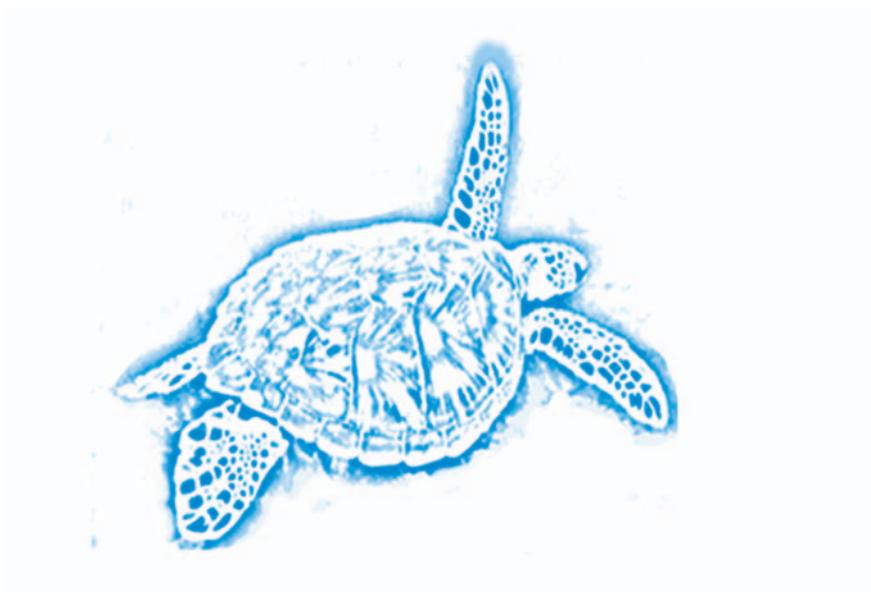


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FISHERMEN AND TURTLES: A PORTABLE EDUCATIONAL KIT FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN

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Since its inception, ARCHELON has tried to utilise the remarkable life cycle of sea turtles, as an instrument in promoting a new attitude to life (Kremezi-Margaritouli 1992). The new attitude requires equal respect for all living and non-living components of our planet. The sea turtle is just the flag species, the animal we know more about, and can better answer the questions that children ask.

It would be considered a failure of our programme, if a child who has participated in it, respected sea turtles but mistreated other organisms. No matter what organism we deal with, the results must be similar: the respect we demand for ourselves, to be able to share with other people and with all the creatures on the planet.

Since 1985, ARCHELON has been interacting yearly with thousands of schoolchildren. Most children participate directly in our educational activities, either at their schools or at the Sea Turtle Rescue Centre in Glyfada (close to Athens) where we have established facilities specifically for environmental education (Kremezi-Margaritouli 1998).

For 7 years ARCHELON has achieved direct contact, by offering four-day cultural trips in Athens area, to schoolchildren originating from the important loggerhead nesting areas at Zakynthos, Bay of Kyparissia and Crete.

Since 2000, schoolchildren have been visiting the Evrotas Environmental Centre, which was established in an abandoned school in Lakonikos Bay, southern Peloponnesus, and then are guided along a Nature Trail designed through sand dunes, in order to have a first hand experience on the plants and animals of the region. A similar Environmental Centre was recently established in the old train station at Agiannakis in the Bay of Kyparissia.

We have indirect contact with the public and especially the schoolchildren through our educational publications and even more through our portable educational kits. The "Turtle Briefcase" has been travelling since 1990 to remote destinations (Kremezi-Margaritouli 1992). It has contributed in making *Caretta caretta* very popular in Greece.

The second educational kit, "Life on the Coast" has been around since 1992. It is based

on the knowledge acquired, after a nation-wide survey, ARCHELON completed in search of new nesting areas. It aims at exploring the particularities of life on the edge, and inspired by the sea turtle that utilises both sea and land to fulfil its biological needs.

We came up with the idea of designing and creating the “Fishermen and Turtles” kit, after observing, that many turtles, admitted to the Rescue Centre, were intentionally injured by humans. It comes a time when all of us, who have worked with endangered species, wonder: how can I help, what can be my participation, in changing negative attitudes and behaviour toward animals, to positive and friendly ones.

The “Fishermen and Turtles” kit, attempts to influence and persuade schoolchildren that fish stocks will not increase if turtles become extinct; and through schoolchildren to persuade adults. All ARCHELON portable kits, aim at providing an opportunity to initiate discussions and exchange opinions, so that all parties are benefited.

This kit is targeted at young people aged between 10 and 18, and comprises the following items:

- A manual with instructions for the teacher as well as bibliography for further reading
- A three-folding desk panel with information on exemplary cases of sea turtles admitted to the Rescue Centre and first aid procedures
- A volume with three activity sheets for primary and secondary school levels, and propositions for activities to be applied indoors and outdoors
- A box with items related to fishery and turtles
- A book entitled “The Book of the Sea”
- The book “Caretta”
- The video tape “Fishes”
- A file-gift to the teacher and the school community

But the most important component of the kit, is the set of 60 slides, with explanatory text. I wish to elaborate on this, in order to show the philosophy behind the “Fishermen and Turtles” kit:

The Introduction deals with the evolution of our planet, the first fishermen and the etymology of the Byzantine word “opsarion” = fish, which mend something small that accompanies bread, the staple diet at that time.

The next chapter, Fishing Methods, deals with coastal fisheries (set gill nets and bottom longlines), bottom trawling, purse seines and high seas fisheries. It also refers to the waste of sea life, caused mainly by high seas fisheries, that sometimes may discard more than 50% of the catches.

The chapter Global State of Fisheries focuses on the depletion of fish stocks, the conflicting policy of the European Union, that, on the one hand provides incentives for

upgrading fishing boats (fleets), and on the other hand, subsidises their withdrawal and destruction. In this chapter it is mentioned that 59% of fishing stocks is fished by 1% of the world's fishing fleets, owned by Japan, USA, China, Russia and EU. Also the damage caused by drift nets, is given a mention in this chapter.

In the chapter Aquacultures, the question is posed whether this can be the answer to the problem.

In the chapter Fishermen the brave character of a traditional fisherman is portrayed. Examples of brave fishermen in Greek history are mentioned too.

The chapter Encounters: from Mermaids to Turtles describes the opposing feelings that are generated by such encounters. A daunting picture for the sea turtles is painted and the case of TED is described followed by the comment: if we want we can.

As a conclusion I copy the last two chapters of the slide show text:

How could I help

A consumer and especially a child can make a difference, if there is a will. We could avoid impacting the sea with recreational fishing. We can enjoy a dive in the sea without removing something, just like we enjoy a walk in the forest without having to hunt.

We should have a fair knowledge on the different fish species, the seasons during which they can be sold on the market, and in the restaurants and the sizes permitted for their fishing. For example: swordfish are allowed to be taken if longer than 1.2 meters (without the "sword") and bogue (ox-eye) 10 cm etc, and we shouldn't buy or eat smaller sizes.

We should not waste food by ordering more than we can consume. We should try to persuade others with our pro-environmental arguments. Knowledge will provide us with all the arguments we need to persuade others.

In general, before we take any action, we should consider, how it could affect the planet. The following example is quite interesting: Greek fishermen co-operate with the ARCHELON Rescue Centre and help protect sea turtles. Some of them even offer free fish for the turtles.

Epilogue

The fish stocks of our planet are a natural resource just like water and soil are. Once upon a time we used to consider natural resources as being limitless, and wasted them without a second thought. Today, nothing can be more wrong than these old beliefs.

ARCHELON is not, and does not want to be a law enforcer. The role of NGOs is to raise awareness and change attitudes and behaviours.

At the Rescue Centre, 100 schoolchildren participate daily in environmental education

programmes. Caretta caretta today is the most popular endangered species in Greece and usually generates positive feelings. But what happens though to the other rare species of our planet?

Jesus Christ, selected his disciples amongst “simple fishermen”. This proves the traditionally noble perception, held for fishermen. Humans are not the centre of the world. Respect to all life forms, is effectively, respect to our fellow person.

The roles of the powerful and weak, can easily change when conditions change. The only thing that does not change, is the values we all cherish, and the way we seek, to achieve the motto: “We Can All Live Together”.

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