

## Eastern Mediterranean 'Holiday Hotspots' versus Sea Turtle 'Nesting Hotspots'

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The most important loggerhead nesting areas in the Mediterranean are some of the most popular summer holiday destinations for thousands of tourists annually. In this study four of these destinations were examined; Cyprus and three areas in Greece (Cephalonia, Crete, and Zakynthos). In 1995 and 1996, the Dutch and British travel brochures for East Mediterranean destinations were assessed with respect to their inclusion of information about sea turtles (Cosijn 1995; Godley & Broderick 1996). In order to assess how the situation has evolved over the last 4 years, a similar study was repeated in the winter of 1999, using British (n=15) and German (n=17) travel brochures targeting the year 2000 holiday period. The written material in each brochure was evaluated with respect to information about sea turtles, legislation and mention of active protection organisations.

### *Proportion of brochures that mention sea turtles*

Travel brochures advertising the island of Zakynthos contained the most information about sea turtles (Table 1), with 70% providing information. This was 30% less than recorded by Godley and Broderick in 1996. Furthermore the data collected in this research show that such information in other areas remains as poor as it was four years ago.

### *Quality of turtle information in Zakynthos brochures*

The Bay of Laganas on Zakynthos, which has one of the highest density loggerhead rookeries in the world (Margaritoulis 2000), is also the primary summer holiday destination for over 380,000 tourists arriving annually by plane, with thousands more visiting from the mainland or by private boats. The proportion of brochures from each country which fulfilled a number of key criteria are given in table 2. British brochures continue to make the same factually erroneous remarks, as found by Godley and Broderick (1996). These include term such as: "resident populations" and the "rare" loggerhead turtle, and new ones such as, "the turtles that nestle at one end of the beach". This directly contrasted to German brochures (Table 2) in which there were neither biological mistakes nor omissions on legislation or how to behave while in the proximity of the protected beaches, and a focused effort to select accommodation outside of the nesting bay.

### *Using sea turtles as an advertising strategy*

Sea turtles should not be used to market mass tourism (Cosijn 1995; Godley & Broderick 1996). However, as travel companies already include information, it will be more beneficial if measures were taken to ensure such literature is accurate with respect to the biology and the protection measures, which the tourists are expected to comply with in Cyprus and all areas of Greece.

The following suggestions should be considered:

- 1) That the active sea turtle protection organisation of each area should provide a concise information text including: sea turtle biology, measures to protect the turtles, ways to assist sea turtle protection and the activities of the protection organisation. These texts should be present in all travel brochures for each specific area, and include addresses and web sites for tourists to obtain more detailed information.
- 2) Hotels should be encouraged, via their respective travel companies, to provide accurate information on sea turtles and to persuade their co-operation with the protection organisations.
- 3) Travel companies must be convinced that accurate information about sea turtles will benefit their changing images as 'eco'-companies. Mis-advertisement and mis-use of endangered species to promote holiday destinations should be made illegal by European and international law, as in the case of Holland (Cosijn 1995).
- 4) Finally, tour representatives can be of great help for the conservation of sea turtles, as they constitute the principle link between travel companies and tourists at their respective resorts. The travel companies can be regularly issued with updated information that can be distributed to all tour representatives of an area. This information can be passed directly to all arriving tourists at their introductory meetings, ensuring the message they

	Cephalonia	Crete	Cyprus	Zakynthos
British Brochures %	26	0	0	70
German Brochures %	6	6	17	100

**Table 1.** Sea turtle information found in brochures for tourist destinations, which arise in sea turtle nesting areas.

	British Brochures %	German Brochures %
Hotel allocation in the Bay	62	30
Mention of turtles	70	100
Mention of protection measures	7	100
Recognition of active conservation organisation	0	6
Promotion of antagonistic activities	7	0

**Table 2.** Accuracy of information conveyed in brochures for Zakynthos Island, for the 2000 holiday season.

receive regarding the sea turtles is at all times accurate.

On Zakynthos, in 2000, four major British brochures combined marketed over 50% of accommodation, of which over 60% was within the boundaries of the National Marine Park - the Bay of Laganas. If these brochures alone provided accurate information on sea turtles this would result in a huge increase of properly informed tourists even before arriving on the island.

At present the majority of tourists that arrive at Cyprus and Greece are uninformed or misinformed about sea turtles and respective legislation. This can be easily reversed if the brochures provide accurate information, and with direct involvement of tour representatives. The existence of sea turtles in the Eastern Mediterranean is a known and attractive lure to tourists. In order to minimise the damage caused to sea turtles and the nesting beaches it is necessary to 'advertise holidays' in such a way that will attract tourists who are 'willing to compromise' their holiday by obeying protection measures on and around the nesting beaches – this is possible but can only be achieved with the co-operation of conservation

organisations, travel companies, hoteliers and the tourists themselves.

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## **From Hook to Hook: The Odyssey of a Loggerhead Sea Turtle in the Mediterranean**

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An important interaction between long-line fishery and loggerhead sea turtles, which can ingest one or more hooks, occurs throughout the Mediterranean (Camiñas & de la Serna 1995; Godley *et al.* 1998 and references therein; Laurent & Lescure 1995 and references therein; Raga & Salinas 1990). This represents an important threat for sea turtles, but it provides the scientific community with relevant information on aspects of the biology of such species, especially on migratory movements.

Tagging and release of sea turtles was initiated in the summer of 1994 in the Hydrosphera Rehabilitation Centre of the Island of Linosa, Italy (35° 51' N - 12° 51' E). Three hundred and fifty loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) have been tagged and released over this seven year period. One of those loggerheads, marked on 4 August 1999 at Linosa was recaptured on 2 September 2000 in Santa Pola, Alicante (Spain, 38° 20' N - 0° 48' W). This sea turtle was a sub-adult weighting 30 kg with 59 cm CCL at the time of