



KYPARISSIA ANNUAL REPORT 2023

*Conservation efforts during 2023 at the nesting
habitat of *Caretta caretta* in Kyparissia Bay, western
Peloponnese*

Athens, October 2023

**ARCHELON, The Sea Turtle
Protection Society of Greece**



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1 INTRODUCTION

The nesting beach of the Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in the Kyparissia Bay is part of the European Natura 2000 sites GR2550005 "THINES KYPARISSIAS: NEOCHORI – KYPARISSIA" and GR2330005 "THINES KAI PARALIAKO DASOS ZACHAROS, LIMNI KAIIFA, STROFYLIA, KAKOVATOS". The part of the beach defined by the rivers Arkadikos to the south and Neda to the north constitutes the nesting core, has a length of 9.5 kilometers and is entirely included in GR2550005.

The entire Kyparissia Bay was designated a Nature Protection Area by Presidential Decree issued in October 2018 (Government Gazette D 391/03-10-2018, D 414/12-10-2018) and includes the above Natura 2000 sites (GR2550005, GR2330005) and the GR2330008 "THALASSIA PERIOCHI KOLPOU KYPARISSIAS: AKR. KATAKOLO – KYPARISSIA".

ARCHELON's presence in Kyparissia Bay has been continuous since the early 1980s, carrying out research activities related to the monitoring and conservation of sea turtle reproduction, while systematic nest recording began in 1984. Since 1992, the vast majority of nests within the nesting core, is protected by ARCHELON with globally recognized protocols against predation, inundation from the sea and hatchling disorientation. As a result of this mass protection of the nests, a gradual increase in the number of nests has been observed since 2006, and therefore also in the number of adult females laying eggs in the area. According to recent data, the largest breeding population of the Loggerhead in the Mediterranean is currently recorded in the Kyparissia Bay.



2 RESULTS

The ARCHELON project for the monitoring and conservation of sea turtle reproduction in Kyparissia Bay was carried out by a group of volunteers/researchers between May and September 2023 and was successfully completed. About 5,000 nests were recorded in the nesting core (9.5 km) and most of them were protected from predation, flooding, trampling and the effects of light pollution. About 1,000 nests were also recorded north of Neda, i.e. in the northern part of GR2550005 with a total length of about 4.5 km. It is noted that due to a limited number of volunteers, in 2023 the ARCHELON team did not record and protect the nests in the coastal section that stretches between the settlement of Tholos and the Alpheios River (29.5 km long).

Regarding stranded sea turtles, 9 dead turtles were recorded by the ARCHELON field team. In total, 23 sea turtles were found dead throughout the Kyparissia Bay in the first 9 months of the year, according to data from the competent Port Authorities.

Through ARCHELON's public awareness actions, 5,500 visitors were informed about the presence of sea turtles in the area and the dangers they face. In particular, the actions were implemented on the beach, in various hospitality businesses, at the ARCHELON Environmental Station in Agiannakis, and at the ARCHELON Information Kiosk (June 15 – August 15) on the beach of Kalo Nero.



3 THREATS

During the summer, in the area that ARCHELON was active, there were numerous violations of the provisions of the Presidential Decree. Violations recorded: extensive light pollution that affected a significant percentage of the existing nests, businesses that systematically left umbrellas and sunbeds on the beach at night limiting the available space for nesting, incidents of presence and movement of vehicles on the beach which lead to the degradation of the protected vegetation, camping both on and behind the beach which is a danger to adult turtles and hatchlings, holding annual local music events (festivals) right behind the beach (August 3 and 5, 2023) and beach parties (July 28 – August 1, 2023).

Furthermore, few measures were taken by the competent authorities in implementation of the Presidential Decree, to mitigate the threats that have long-term effects both on the nesting habitat and on the reproductive activity of sea turtles. In particular, for another year no action was taken to demolish the illegal wooden platforms on the nesting beach in Kalo Nero. In addition, agricultural and fishing activity continued without taking measures to minimize the impact on the protected species of the area.

Regarding the five illegal roads, which were illegally constructed by a real estate company in previous years, the concrete barricades installed by the authorities in 2021 proved for another year to be insufficient because they did not prevent vehicular access to the beach and dune zone.

The operation of beach café-bars (canteens) in the area of action of ARCHELON (Agiannakis, Elaia, Giannistochoi), but also in other parts of the Bay within the Nature Protection Area, is an important management issue, which is not regulated by the Presidential Decree. The operation of establishments situated on the dune zone continued in 2023. The attraction of visitors to these places created conditions for the gradual establishment of illegal parking areas, which led to further degradation of the dunes.



4 CONSERVATION

According to many, the high aesthetic value of this coastal area is due to its naturalness. However, day visitors and campers do not seem to be aware of the impact of their presence in this unique ecosystem. Local authorities, government and beach businesses have not shown due respect for the current environmental legislation and especially the regulations regarding the nesting beach and coastal habitats. Thus, the incomplete implementation of environmental legislation was repeated for another year. It should also be noted that the complete absence of guarding, supervision, signage, and infrastructure for the reception of day visitors and the lack of information for bathers are serious factors for the ongoing disturbances and degradation of the habitat.

