



ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT KYPARISSIA BAY PROJECT

———— 2025 ————

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**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 Kyparissia Bay is part of the **European Natura 2000 Network sites** GR2550005 "THINES KYPARISSIAS: NEOCHORI – KYPARISSIA" and GR2330005 "THINES KAI PARALIAKO DASOS ZACHAROS, LIMNI KAIAFA, STROFYLIA, KAKOVATOS". The part of the beach defined by the rivers Arkadikos to the south and Neda to the north constitutes the **core nesting area**. It has a length of 9.5 kilometers and is entirely included in GR2550005. Nesting also continues north of Neda, up to Alfeios river.

The entire Kyparissia Bay was designated a Nature Protection Area by Presidential Decree issued in October 2018 including the Natura 2000 sites (GR2550005, GR2330005) and the GR2330008 site "THALASSIA PERIOCHI KOLPOU KYPARISSIAS: AKR. KATAKOLO – KYPARISSIA". The Natural Environment & Climate Change Agency (N.E.C.C.A.) Management Unit (MU) responsible for the protection and management of the sea turtle habitat is the **MU of the Strofylia Wetlands National Park and Protected Areas of Western Peloponnese**.



2 RESULTS

ARCHELON's systematic nest monitoring in Kyparissia Bay began in **1984**. Since **1992**, the vast majority of nests within the core nesting area have been protected by ARCHELON with globally recognized protocols against predation, flooding and hatchling disorientation. Since **2013**, all nests north of Neda to Tholo, along a beach of 4.3 km, have also been protected. As a result of this mass protection of the nests, a gradual increase in the number of nests has been observed since 2006, making Kyparissia Bay the nesting area with **the largest breeding population of Loggerhead sea turtles in the Mediterranean**.

In 2024 and 2025, ARCHELON deployed **satellite transmitters** to 5 and 2 sea turtles, respectively. These transmitters complement previous research, during which 29 transmitters were attached to investigate the feeding grounds used by the Kyparissia Bay population. Another important result of the research was the finding that **the nesting frequency (nests/turtle/year) is higher than previously thought**, which revises previous data on the size of the breeding population.

In 2025, ARCHELON's project for monitoring and protecting sea turtle nests in Kyparissia Bay was successfully carried out by a group of **90 volunteers/researchers** between May and September. According to preliminary data, in 2025, approximately **5,200 nests** were recorded in the core nesting area (9 km in length). Additionally, about **900 nests** were recorded north of Neda up to Tholo (4.5 km in length). This marks a **74% increase** compared to the average annual number of nests of the previous 12 years (2013-2024). Due to the large number of nests, their protection protocol was adjusted in order to achieve the greatest possible protection with the available resources. Specifically, nests were protected against predation, trampling and the effects of light pollution only in the parts of the beach with intense human presence (approximately 1/3 of the nests).



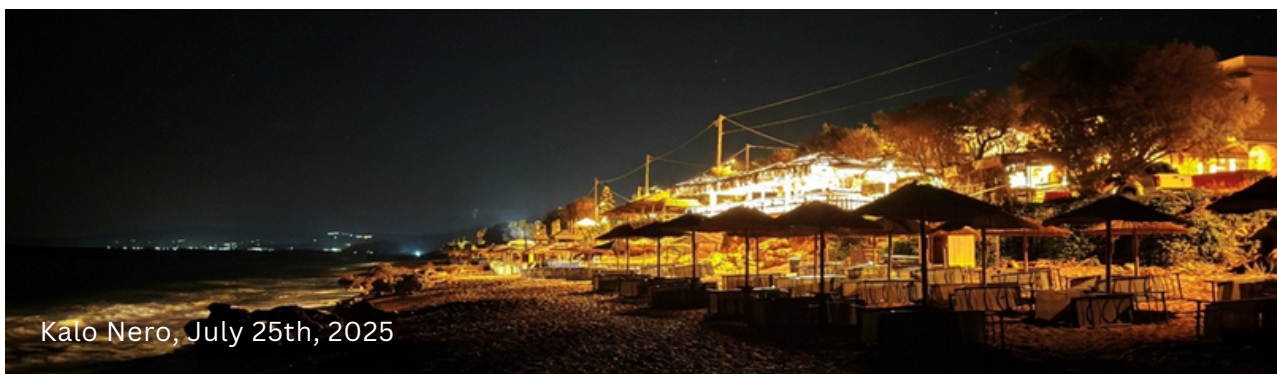
In the duration of the project, **12 cases of sea turtle strandings** were recorded (12 dead and 1 injured that was released after receiving first aid). An additional **19 dead sea turtles** were recorded in the entirety of Kyparissia Bay from the competent Port Authorities since the beginning of the year.

5,800 visitors and locals were informed about sea turtles and the threats they face through ARCHELON's public awareness activities. These activities were implemented on the beach, in various tourist units, at ARCHELON's Environmental Station in Agiannakis, at the seasonal ARCHELON Information Station on the beach of Kalo Nero (25 May - 21 September) and at the seasonal LIFE MareNatura Information Station on the beach of Kyparissia (15 July - 7 September).



3 THREATS

Seven years after the designation of the Kyparissia Bay Nature Protection Area with the relevant PD, the expected Management Plan (MP) for the area has not yet been completed. As a result, anthropogenic pressures that have not been regulated by the provisions of the PD continue to be observed. These include activities like **fishing near the coast** (that poses risk of injury or death to adult turtles) and **human presence** on the beach in the evening hours. Furthermore, the MU remains inactive in the protection and management of the area, resulting in a lack of due respect for the applicable environmental legislation and, particularly, the regulations concerning the nesting beach and the coastal habitats. Therefore, activities that cause disturbance to sea turtles and degrade their habitat (sand dunes, nesting beach) continue to be recorded. These activities include **uncontrolled tourism** (e.g. camping, limited information signs and visitors trampling sensitive habitat types), **vehicle traffic** (due to the absence of access barriers), **coastal construction**, **light pollution** (from public and private light sources that cause hatchling disorientation), **noise pollution**, **agriculture** in the sand dune zone, **illegal infrastructure** (e.g. illegal road network, platforms) and **beach equipment** that occupies the nesting area.



4 CONSERVATION

Beyond its undeniable ecological value, the coastal zone of Kyparissia Bay also undoubtedly possesses a high aesthetic value due to its natural beauty. Despite the 2018 PD, the habitat continues to face legal, institutional and management deficiencies that endanger its ecological integrity. In order to properly safeguard and effectively manage the area, NECCA's MU needs to be adequately staffed. Moreover, in order to reduce the ongoing disturbances and the continuous degradation of the habitat, it is essential that local authorities, local government and local businesses work in cooperation. The completion of **Kyparissia Bay's Special Environmental Study (SES)** must be a priority. Only then can the Management Plan be issued, offering management solutions to a series of existing pressures and creating a coherent institutional framework for the habitat.

In 2024, NECCA commissioned a study to assess the impact of existing infrastructure and activities on the habitat. This study presents the impact of various projects and activities (including those deemed illegal by the authorities) not only as negligible but even as positive for sea turtles. This raises doubts about the study's purpose and validity.



The data from ARCHELON's long-term conservation project in Kyparissia Bay show a **significant recovery of the sea turtle population**. This was achieved after many years of hard work by thousands of volunteers and is completely dependent on previous conservation efforts that need to be continued.

The **National Action Plan for the Loggerhead Sea Turtles** (established in 2021 by Ministerial Decision) provides for the recording and protection of nests and hatchlings as a top management need. However, to this day, **all relevant conservation efforts are exclusively covered by ARCHELON resources**. ARCHELON cannot continue to cover this expense in full indefinitely. A serious problem will arise if the Greek Authorities continue not to support the implementation of the National Action Plan.

Additionally, it is vital to address the threats described in this report. Otherwise, the viability of the nesting habitat will be jeopardized and the observed recovery of the breeding population may be reversed, despite the intensive efforts of ARCHELON and other environmental organizations.

Kyparissia Bay, together with the neighboring Laganas Bay (Zakynthos) gather more than **57% of the nests** of the Loggerhead nests recorded within the European Union. The Greek Government's announcement to establish a large **National Marine Park in the Ionian Sea**, which will include both areas, is a promising development for the long-term survival of the species. The relevant Environmental Study was up for public consultation until the end of September 2025. ARCHELON participated in the consultation process and submitted proposals for improvements, in order to ensure the good conservation status of the species and its habitat.