



ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT SOUTH PELOPONNESE PROJECTS

LAKONIKOS BAY AND KORONI

———— **2025** ————

Athens, December 2025

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



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1 INTRODUCTION

The five nesting beaches of the Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in Lakonikos Bay (Mavrovouni, Vathi, Selinitza, Valtaki and Evrotas) are included in the **GR2540003** “EKVOLES EVROTA, PERIOCHI VRONTAMA KAI THALASSIA PERIOCHI LAKONIKOU KOLPOU” site of the Natura 2000 ecological network. The nesting beach of Koroni (Zaga-Memi) is included in the **GR2550010** “THALASSIA PERIOCHI NOTIAS MESSINIAS” site (Government Gazette B 4432/15/12/2017).

The Management Units (MUs) of the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA) responsible for the protection and management of the above sites are the **MU of Protected Areas of Southern Peloponnese** and the **MU of Strofylia Wetlands National Park and Protected Areas of Western Peloponnese**, respectively.



2 ACTIVITIES & RESULTS

ARCHELON's project was carried out from late May to late September with the contribution of **64 volunteers**: 42 volunteers in Lakonikos Bay and 22 in Koroni, of whom 16 and 7 respectively carried out their university internships.

Nest Monitoring

ARCHELON has been systematically recording and protecting the loggerhead nests and hatchlings in Lakonikos Bay since 1985, and in Koroni since 1995. Since the establishment of NECCA (2020), ARCHELON has been collaborating with the competent Management Units.

According to preliminary data, in 2025 approximately **1,481 nests** were recorded in these two habitats (1,253 nests in Lakonikos Bay and 228 nests in Koroni), which were protected against predation, trampling, flooding, and the impacts of light pollution.



Furthermore, **143 additional nests** (preliminary data) were recorded at the southeastern part of Lakonia (from Plytra to Monemvasia) and on Elafonisos by members of the local association 'Tulipa Goulimi,' who had been trained by ARCHELON. 46.2% of the above nests, were found within the Natura 2000 Network sites GR2540002 (PERIOCHI NEAPOLIS KAI NISOS ELAFONISOS) and GR2540001 (ORI GIDOVOUNI CHIONOVOUNI GAIDOUROVOUNI KORAKIA KALOGEROVOUNI KOULOCHERA KAI PERIOCHI MONEMVASIAS – SPILAIO SOLOMOU TRYPA KAI PYRGOS AG.).

Tracking migration with satellite transmitters

In 2024 and 2025 ARCHELON deployed **5 and 7 satellite transmitters** respectively on Loggerhead sea turtles nesting on the beaches of Lakonikos Bay, within the framework of the EU LIFE MareNatura program. These transmitters contribute to the investigation of the foraging areas and migratory corridors used by the turtle population of the region.

Sea Turtle Strandings

During the project's run (May - September), **9 cases** of dead sea turtle strandings were recorded in Lakonikos Bay. No strandings were recorded in Koroni.



Public Awareness and Education – Collaboration with tourism business

During ARCHELON's public awareness activities, approximately **5,800 visitors and residents** (3,700 in Lakonikos Bay and 2,100 in Koroni), were informed about sea turtles and the threats they face. In total, more than **100 educational activities** were carried out on the nesting beaches, as well as in collaboration with 10 tourism businesses. Additionally, **2 seasonal Information Stations** operated for approximately 550 hours, set up in cooperation with local authorities at Koroni's central square and at Mavrovouni Beach in Lakonikos Bay.

Turtle feeding in Limeni Bay

Additionally, ARCHELON volunteers carried out targeted awareness activities in Limeni Bay (Municipal Unit of Oitylo), aiming to inform bathers about the unauthorised practice of feeding sea turtles and the resulting turtle attacks on swimmers.

In Limeni Bay (located far from the nesting beaches) a specific business has been observed to be feeding sea turtles since 2019. As a result, not only are the protected animals disturbed (consumption of inappropriate food), but attacks on swimmers and visitors have also been reported. The competent Port Authority, the local Health Center, and NECCA's Management Unit in the area recorded 32 turtle attacks on people during the summer of 2025. Despite the Management Unit's diligent efforts (installation of informative signs, on-site inspections), as well as ARCHELON's awareness activities, the unauthorized feeding practice continued in 2025.



3 THREATS

In 2025, pressures with short-term and long-term impacts on the conservation of sea turtles and their habitats continued to be recorded both in Lakonikos Bay and Koroni. Information for each nesting habitat are presented below.

3.1 LAKONIKOS BAY

Beaches: Mavrovouni (4 km.), Selinitza (μήκος 1.5 km), Valtaki (1.1 km), Vathy (1.8 km), Evrotas (15.1 km)

3.1.1 Pressures with short-term impacts

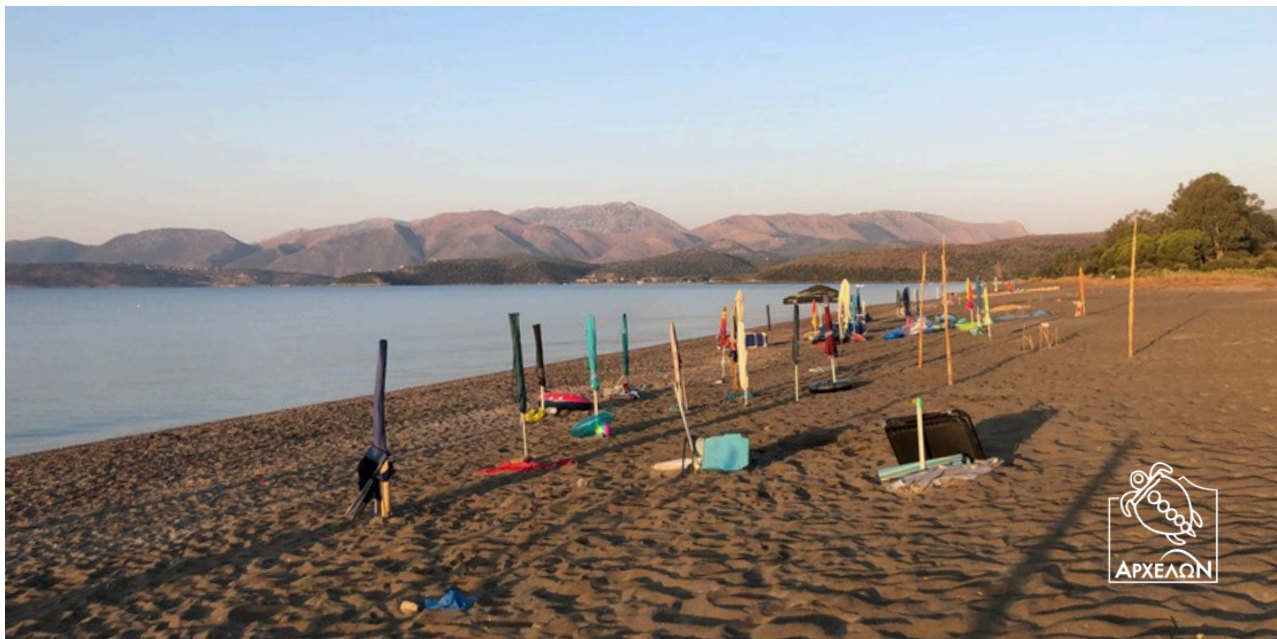
Occupation of available nesting space by beach furniture

The available space for the female turtles nesting at night was reduced because: (a) **92.9%** of businesses on the most visited beaches of Lakonikos Bay did not remove their **beach furniture** (sunbeds) after sunset. Specifically, on Selinitza, Mavrovouni, and Vathy beaches, only 2 out of 28 businesses operating in 2025 removed their sunbeds.

(b) A significant amount of **private equipment** (sunbeds and shade structures) was also left on the beaches after sunset.

Vehicles and human presence on the beach

Furthermore, vehicle traffic on the beaches and human presence at night were recorded. These disturbances can cause adult female turtles to abandon nesting attempts or lead to trampling of hatchlings. Human presence on the beaches at night is associated with amateur fishing, camping and campfires.



3.1.2 Pressures with long-term impacts

Extensive light pollution from private and public light sources causes disorientation of hatchlings

The situation is most severe at the western end of Vathy beach and the eastern ends of Mavrovouni and Selinitza beaches, where no dark areas remain. Although light sources are limited on Valtaki and Evrotas beaches, significant parts of the beaches are affected (e.g. for Evrotas the problem is concentrated at Trinisa, Kyani Akti, and Kokkinia). The percentage of nests affected by light pollution on each beach was: Mavrovouni 47.6%, Selinitza 38.7%, Vathy 19.6%, and Valtaki 18.4%.

Destruction of coastal sand dunes

Increasing degradation of coastal dunes due to illegal dirt roads on the beaches of Selinita, Mavrovouni, and Vathy poses one of the most significant long-term threats to the nesting beaches. Specifically, the width of the dirt road along Vathy and Mavrovouni beaches is so large that it also allows for car parking, destroying the dunes and coastal vegetation. The situation on Mavrovouni beach deteriorated significantly in the spring of 2022, due to the construction of the waste treatment plant in the area, where aggregates were used, along a length of approximately 2km of beach. Illegal parking is also observed on Valtaki beach, which has caused the degradation of the protected dune vegetation. Similarly, along Evrotas beach, intense pressure is exerted on the coastal vegetation, due to the constant presence of vehicles and the existence of illegal parking spaces.

Intense coastal development

Finally, on the beaches of Selinita, Mavrovouni and Vathy, intense coastal development is observed. On the beach of Evrotas, although there is no intense coastal development, unauthorized accommodations that were built in the 1980s and had been abandoned but never demolished are now re-opening (Trinisa and Kyani Akti locations).



3.2 KORONI

Zaga-Memi Beach (length 2.7 km)

3.2.1 Pressures with short-term impacts

In comparison to Lakonikos Bay, the situation was clearly better, since:

- (a) 4 out of 6 businesses operating on the beach removed their equipment (umbrellas and sun loungers) after sunset (compliance rate: 66.7%) and
- (b) the private equipment that was left on the beach daily after sunset was not numerous.

During the project's run, incidents of human presence on the beach, camping, campfires in the evening hours, vehicles on the beach and nest vandalism were observed.

3.2.2 Pressures with long-term impacts

The problem of light pollution from private and public light sources was intense at the eastern and western ends of the nesting beach, creating an increased risk of hatchling disorientation. The new lighting of the Koroni Municipal Stadium consists of 4 high-rise floodlights installed in 2023 directly behind the nesting beach (western end). However, these floodlights remained off for most of the project's run. Overall, in 2025 at Zaga-Memi beach, 40.8% of the nests were affected by light pollution.



4 CONSERVATION

As mentioned above, ARCHELON has been carrying out annual systematic nest monitoring and protection activities in Lakonikos since 1985 and in Koroni since 1995. Since the beginning, each nest that has been recorded has also been protected with appropriate methods. In recent years there has been an upward trend in the number of nests recorded in both areas. Nest protection measures increase the number of hatchlings that reach the sea each year. Thus, after years (when the hatchlings reach adulthood), an increase in the number of nests occurs, which also reflects an increase in the number of adult nesting turtles. It is necessary for nest protection to continue since the observed pressures on the species, both on land and at sea, continue.

The recording and protection of nests and hatchlings in the two areas is a high priority action according to the National Action Plan for the Loggerhead Sea Turtle, which has been institutionalized since 2021 by Joint Ministerial Decision. However, this action has been covered exclusively by ARCHELON resources until now. If the Greek Authorities continue not to support the implementation of the Action Plan in these areas, a serious problem will arise, since ARCHELON cannot continue to assume this expense in full indefinitely.



Regarding the protection of the two nesting habitats, no progress has been made in addressing their ongoing degradation. In order to reduce the aforementioned pressures, cooperation between municipal and state authorities, as well as local businesses needs to be expanded.

The sea turtle nesting habitats in Southern Peloponnese are included in the European Natura 2000 Network. The Special Environmental Studies (SES) that have been up for consultation (for Lakonikos Bay since September 2023 and for Koroni since January 2022) and have been approved, have not yet led to the issuance of the corresponding Presidential Decrees (PDs) and Management Plans (MPs) for the areas. In other words, six years have passed since the Ministry of Environment and Energy initiated these studies, without any tangible results yet.

In September 2025, the SES for the establishment of an Ionian Marine Park, whose beaches would host 86% of the Loggerhead nests recorded in Greece, was put up for consultation. This Park will also include the beaches of Lakonikos and Koroni. ARCHELON participated in the consultation process and submitted proposals for improvements to the study, in order to ensure the good conservation status of the species and its habitats.



5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Implementation of the National Action Plan for the Sea Turtle

The state must support the implementation of the National Action Plan institutionalized since 2021. It provides for the recording and protection of nests and hatchlings as a high priority action, as well as actions to address existing pressures (e.g. studies for the carrying capacity of breeding habitats, reduction of light pollution, restoration and conservation for sand dunes, reduction of mortality due to interaction with fishing).

5.2 Awareness Campaign

Raising awareness among the local community, businesses, authorities and visitors will contribute decisively to the correct implementation of the legislation and the reduction of pressures.

5.3 Completion of the Special Environmental Studies

The completion of the SESs for the issuance of MPs and PDs is a necessary condition for preventing further habitat degradation and addressing existing problems. The announcement of the new “Ionian Marine Park” is a promising development, however the relevant SES (which was put up for consultation until September 2025) needs improvements.

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