



our history

**40**  
YEARS





**1983** The Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece is established

## 1983

On 20 November 1983, six years after the first scientific discovery that loggerhead sea turtles reproduce in Zakynthos, Greece, the non-governmental, non-profit organization 'Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece' is founded. Its purpose is the study and protection of sea turtles and their habitats.

There are 22 founding members, and Eugenia Roidou is elected as the first President. In the years to come, Nikos Charalambidis, Dimitris Margaritoulis, Nikolas Rasis, Anna Margaritouli, Dimitrios Dimopoulos, and Thomas Arapis serve as Presidents. In 2008, the statute is modified, and the Society acquires its new title, 'ARCHELON'.



**1984-1985** Start of the Sea Turtle Monitoring Projects & first school presentations

## 1984-1985

The establishment of the first research stations in Zakynthos at Laganas Bay and in the Peloponnese at southern Kyparissia Bay (1984) and later at Lakonikos Bay (1985) marks the beginning of the long-term monitoring of the reproductive activity of the loggerhead turtles in these sites.

The main participants are students from Greek universities. The Environmental Education project begins in the schools of Zakynthos (1985), aiming to educate students about sea turtles and the threats they face, and it will soon be extended to schools throughout the country.



**1986-1988** Public awareness on the beaches & the first volunteers from abroad

## **1986- 1988**

In the shade of a large white tent at Laganas Bay, Zakynthos, the major public awareness project for tourists begins (1986). In the following years, operation of seasonal information stations begins in Zakynthos at Laganas (1987) and Gerakas (1988). Volunteers from abroad join in the Zakynthos and Kyparissia projects for the first time (1987).

The first measures to prevent building development in the area behind the sea turtle nesting beaches of Zakynthos are introduced, and some locals react negatively towards the organization (1986).

The first fundraising campaign 'Adopt a sea turtle' begins in Zakynthos (1988).



**1989** The sea turtle rescue network & identification of sea turtle nesting areas

## 1989

The increasing number of reports about injured turtles leads to the establishment of the nation-wide Sea Turtle Rescue Network, with the cooperation of the Greek Coast Guard and the Ministry of Environment.

A project aiming to deal with the increased number of stranded sea turtles begins in Lakonikos Bay with the collaboration of fishermen (1989-91).

Beaches from Corfu to Rhodes are surveyed during the Rapid Nesting Beach Identification Project (1989-91), with the aim of recording any reproductive activity of loggerhead turtles in these areas. The process of land acquisition behind Sekania beach in Laganas Bay from WWF begins through the mediation of ARCHELON. It is the first step towards the creation of a Marine Park.



**1990-1993** Monitoring sea turtle nesting in Crete & pioneers in environmental education

## 1990-1993

New sea turtle nesting beaches are identified in Crete, and long-term systematic monitoring and protection projects begin in Rethymno, Chania, and Messara Bay (1990). Awareness programmes are being implemented through new information stations in all major sea turtle nesting areas. Presentations begin at hotels in Zakynthos, Rethymno, and Chania.

The first environmental educational package in Greece, 'Turtle Suitcase', with its photos and educational material, starts traveling to schools all over the country. In the following years, three new educational publications will be added to the environmental education material.

ARCHELON's work is recognized internationally at the Ford Conservation Awards in Belgium (1993).



**1994** The first Sea Turtle Rescue Centre in the Mediterranean becomes a reality

## 1994

A milestone for ARCHELON is the establishment of the Sea Turtle Rescue Centre in Glyfada, Attica, in collaboration with the Municipality of Glyfada, with the aim of treating injured sea turtles from all over the country. In the following years, over 1,250 turtles are admitted to the Centre, and more than 700 of them are rehabilitated and safely reintroduced into the sea.

School groups attend the environmental education program of the Centre regularly (1995). Working as a volunteer inspires thousands of students every year, and the number of visitors to the Centre slowly increases.

Another international award comes in the same year, this time from Europe's largest tourism organization, TUI.



**1995-1999** Monitoring nests in Koroni & environmental planning in nesting areas

## **1995 - 1999**

Monitoring of the sea turtle reproductive activity in Koroni, Messenia (Peloponnese), begins (1995). The Management Plan for the sea turtle nesting beaches in Crete is completed and implemented with the cooperation of local authorities (1995). Preparation of a dedicated environmental study for the establishment of a protected area in southern Kyparissia Bay begins (1998).

Several years after the announcement of the joint proposals of environmental organizations and local communities for the creation of a National Marine Park in Zakynthos, the Presidential Decree of the Park is issued in 1999. It is a huge step for the protection of marine life in Greece.





**2000-2004** Environmental Stations in Kyparissia & Lakonikos, the start of Amvrakikos Project

## 2000 - 2004

Two environmental science stations with relevant exhibits are created in the Peloponnese: in Kyparissia Bay (Agiannakis) and in Lakonikos Bay (Taxiarhes). The Amvrakikos Gulf in central western Greece is identified as an important feeding ground for sea turtles (2000), and turtle movements are monitored with use of satellite transmitters (2002).

At the same time, actions are being developed to reduce the deaths of turtles from fisheries interaction; the new education package "Fishers and Sea Turtles" is created and the first environmental exhibition on wheels starts traveling in Greece, showcasing sea turtle conservation.

Scientists from many countries join the Mediterranean Workshop on the care of rescued sea turtles held in the expanded Rescue Centre in Glyfada and organised by ARCHELON (2004).



**2005-2009** The International Sea Turtle Symposium in Crete

## **2005 - 2009**

The third environmental science station is established in Pangalochori, Rethymno (2005).

The following year, the 26th International Sea Turtle Symposium takes place in Crete with great success, with the participation of 700 delegates from 76 countries.

Environmental organisations alert public opinion about the lack of institutional funding for the management of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos, and the illegal constructions observed within the Park.

Almost all important sea turtle nesting areas in Greece are included in the European Union NATURA 2000 network.



**2010-2013** The first Turtle Friendly Hotel & new environmental issues on the nesting beaches

## 2010 - 2013

Monitoring and protection of nests begins on the beach of Romanos in Messenia in collaboration with Costa Navarino, which is the first hotel to implement sea turtle protection standards as part of its planning phase (2010).

A heated 'intensive care' unit is constructed at the Sea Turtle Rescue Centre to speed the recovery of rehabilitated turtles (2010).

Environmental organisations alert public opinion about illegal constructions observed in Kyparissia Bay. A significant reduction in the number of nests in Crete is noted. Reports show that Greece is home to almost 80% of the loggerhead nests in the European Union, and almost 50% in the Mediterranean.



**2014-2018** Research on plastic pollution & turtle migration observations by satellite transmitters

## 2014 - 2018

The program for recording sporadic sea turtle nesting with public participation begins. ARCHELON collaborates in research on the detection of plastics in sea turtles, where it is shown that the magnitude of the problem is quite serious (2018). Satellite transmitters are attached to turtles nesting in Kyparissia Bay to monitor their movements.

The Nature Protection Area in Kyparissia Bay is established, where in recent years the largest number of loggerhead turtle nesting in the Mediterranean has been documented (2018).

This is another great step for the conservation of loggerheads in the Mediterranean. Later on, at the Natura 2000 Awards, the Kyparissia project is recognised as one of the best conservation initiatives in Europe.



**2019-2022** National Action Plan for the Loggerheads, volunteers & friends help out during the pandemic

## **2019 - 2022**

There is a record number of 750 volunteers participating in ARCHELON projects (2019). The National Action Plan for the long-term conservation of the loggerheads is elaborated and is officially endorsed later in 2021. Impressive support from volunteers and friends, Greek and international organizations, businesses, and institutional funding allow the continuation of ARCHELON's operations during the pandemic. Schools from all over Greece join in the 'Rescue Centre Online' live tours (2021).

New rehabilitation techniques give impetus to the Rescue Centre where a new 'intensive care' unit, a food preparation room, and a solar seawater heating system are in progress (2022). ARCHELON participates in the creation of the Network of Greek NGOs for the Rescue and Rehabilitation of Wildlife (2022).



## 40 years went by with...

many hours of walking on the beaches, sea turtles nesting, nights on the beach, tags, callipers, hatchlings, nest excavations, data sheets, a lot of sweating.

many T-shirts, stickers, table games, motorbikes, inflatable boats, off road vehicles, automobiles, donations and adoptions.

many phone calls, turtle stranding emergencies, tanks to clean, turtles to feed, turtles rescued and released or dead.

many schools, colouring books, information kiosks, hotel presentations, suitcases with sea turtle education kits, reports, camp sites, invoices.

great successes, threats, dangers, some failures, petitions, networks, awards, protected areas and conservation strategies.

careers, collaborations, research, travels, conferences, presentations, development of skills, PhDs, appeals to courts.

the love and support of so many people, many celebrations, parties, retreats, a huge number of romances, some weddings, oppositions, 'envies', and, inevitably, deaths.

# *We can all live together*

We grew older and so did many thousands of volunteers and friends who passed by. Each one of us has their own story of meeting with ARCHELON, especially with the sea turtles they met, the large loggerheads and the others, the green turtles with the white belly. Everyone has left a small stone on the path for ARCHELON to reach this point. Our story has indelibly touched many more people than we can imagine. Thanks to the will, the persistence, the patience, the influence, the contribution of so many people and our good luck, ARCHELON made it to here and it seems we are continuing the journey even further. We continue with respect to each other, devotion and responsibility, based on the knowledge and experience gained. Sea turtles are our starting point and direction and through them we come to touch the many social and environmental challenges of the world. Let's try to answer this: **who would we be without ARCHELON?**





**Humans  
and  
turtles:  
*we can all  
live  
together!***

