

Convention on the Conservation
of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

Recommendation No. 174 (2014) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 5 December 2014, on the conservation of the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and of sand dunes and other coastal habitats in Southern Kyparissia bay (NATURA 2000 – GR 2550005 “Thines Kyparissias”, Peloponnesos, Greece)

The Standing Committee to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, acting under Article 14 of the Convention,

Having regard to the objectives of this Convention, which aims to conserve wild fauna and flora and their natural habitats, by giving particular attention to vulnerable species, including migratory species threatened by extinction;

Noting that the beach and the coastal areas in southern Kyparissia Bay contain natural habitats protected by the Convention and the EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive);

Noting that most of the important habitats for sea turtle nesting in EU Member States are protected as Natura 2000 sites;

Noting that the beach of Kyparissia is a nesting beach of great importance for the sea turtle *Caretta caretta*, a species listed in Appendix II to the Convention, under threat in the whole Mediterranean Sea;

Noting that, thanks to conservation efforts during the last 25 years concerning nest protection, Kyparissia beach was in 2013 the most important known nesting beach for sea turtles in the whole Mediterranean basin, having registered up to 1450 nests;

Recalling the provisions of Article 4, paragraphs 1 to 3, and Article 6 of the Convention;

Recalling that, for Natura 2000 sites, European Union Member States are under the obligation to take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of natural habitats and of the habitats of species as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of the Habitats Directive;

Noting with concern that, roads have already been built on the dune systems in the core area of one of the Natura 2000 sites in Kyparissia Bay, and that the building of further holiday villas is planned in no less than 3 Km of the dune system adjacent to the key nesting beaches for sea turtles,

Recommends that Greece:

1. Considers giving the key nesting areas for sea turtle an appropriate protection status that may ensure the long-time conservation of their high natural values, including sea turtle nesting beaches, dunes systems, coastal forests, marine habitats and others;
2. Permanently restricts or prohibits as appropriate based on an appropriate assessment the construction of any villas or other buildings, new roads or other infrastructure, in the key areas where construction licenses have been suspended by decree thus preserving the present natural state of those areas;
3. Restores the original sand dune and forest habitat in the above mentioned area by demolishing any illegal road built perpendicularly to the shoreline, as well as other existing illegal artificial infrastructure; puts immediately effective measures in place to prevent cars and caravans from reaching the proximity of the nesting beaches and produce nuisance to sea turtle nesting and hatching;
4. Ensures that the owners of the houses that have already been built in sensitive areas in the vicinity of the core nesting area, avoid changing the profile of the dune, and controls that the communities and geomorphological dynamics; further ensures that the existing houses change or shade the lights illuminating the beach causing photo-pollution affecting negatively sea turtle nesting and hatching; remove invasive alien plants already planted in some of those areas (for instance *Carpobrotus*) as they may spread into dune and beach nesting areas making them inappropriate for sea turtle nesting;
5. Avoids any agriculture in the public domain and restore dunes to their original natural state;
6. Addresses in the whole Nature 2000 site the problem of photo-pollution, particularly in Kalonero; all lights should be shaded in a way to avoid illuminating the beach and dune areas;
7. Ensures that the beach's equipment used now in the Natura 2000 site is removed at night or stored in a way that reduces the area occupied on the beach; prohibits does not give any licences to any new beach equipment so that core nesting area remain free of obstacles for nesting turtles;
8. Prohibits any sand and gravel extraction or any new structures in the sea (breakwaters, etc.);
9. If new housing is to be built to accommodate growing tourism, favours building in areas already urbanised (such as Kyparissias town) avoiding delivering building licenses in pristine natural areas within the Natural 2000 site, independently from the ecologically friendly characteristics of the new buildings;
10. Consider regulating the navigation of vessels in the marine part of the Natura 2000 site GR 2550005 during the nesting and hatching season (April to October) so as to avoid the killing of turtles by boats; assesses existing fishing practices and prohibits those that may negatively affect nesting and mating turtles, as some are likely to be drowned in fishing nets;
11. Enforces measures aimed at avoiding people and cars visiting the sea turtle nesting beaches at night, particularly from the camping sites; controls feral dogs as they have proved to attack and hurt many nesting sea turtles;
12. Keeps the Standing Committee regularly informed about the progress in the implementation of this Recommendation.