



## **Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention adopt a Recommendation to urge Greece to protect prime European sea turtle habitat in Kyparissia Bay**

*The Standing Committee of the Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats - also known as the [Bern Convention](#) - took a decisive step towards the protection of the Mediterranean populations of loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*).*

*Strasbourg, 5 December 2014* – At its 34<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention adopted a Recommendation to ensure the conservation of the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and of sand dunes and other coastal habitats in Southern Kyparissia Bay, an important Natura 2000 site.

The Recommendation comes in response to the urgent need for further protection of this key NATURA 2000 site by Greek Authorities. Following a complaint by the environmental NGO MEDASSET about the degradation of the site due to inadequate protection and housing development plans which would affect the protected habitats and species, a case file was opened in 2013 and an on-the-spot appraisal was carried out in July 2014.

The appraisal confirmed a series of current conservation problems and identified a set of recommended actions which, if implemented, should lead to an improvement of the conservation status of the site.

In its Recommendation the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention recommends that Greece considers giving the key sea turtle nesting areas 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. Along with the implementation of several management measures to mitigate current impacts, Greek authorities are recommended to permanently restrict or prohibit as appropriate the construction of any buildings and new roads in those key areas and to restore the original habitats to their original natural state.

In order to avoid a possible breach of the Convention, Greece should take immediate action to prevent the deterioration of these natural habitats in order to protect *Caretta caretta*, a vulnerable species, threatened with extinction.

***More information: [www.coe.int/bernconvention](http://www.coe.int/bernconvention)***