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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

31st meeting
Strasbourg, 29 November – 2 December 2011

Other complaints

**THREATS TO MARINE TURTLES
IN THINES KIPARISSIAS
(GREECE)**

REPORT BY THE NGO

*Document prepared by
MEDASSET*

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Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean

DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN KYPARISSIA BAY, SOUTHERN KYPARISSIA (WESTERN PELOPONNESE, GREECE)

Update Report by MEDASSET

Following the complaint submitted on 22 August 2010 for the 30th Standing Committee Meeting (T-PVS (2010) 16E) regarding developments threatening Kyparissia Bay and the response of the Greek authorities to the European Commission (sent on the 22nd December 2010) forwarded to the Bureau Meeting on 8 March 2011 (T-PVS/Files (2011) 5E), we wish to present to the Bureau a summary of the current situation in Kyparissia Bay, a NATURA 2000 site, (THINES KYPARISSIAS – GR2550005).

According to Greek Authorities the law concerning Conservation and Biodiversity that entered into force at the end of March 2011 shall ensure a more effective protection regime for the priority species in all NATURA 2000 sites, including THINES KYPARISSIAS. However, enforcement of specific protective measures for the area, in conjunction with provision of information to local residents by the Prefecture of Messinia regarding appropriate use of the nesting beach, is still evidently lacking. A number of activities and illegal constructions on the site still continue to exert a considerable amount of pressure on the nesting activity of marine turtles.

A Joint Ministerial Decision, which would be drawn upon the recommendations of the Special Environmental Study (SES) produced in 2002 by ARCHELON and which would regulate all activities within the NATURA 2000 site with the aim to ensure an effective legal protection regime, has not yet been drafted by the National Authorities.

National authorities have forwarded to Local Authorities the 2002 SES, together with a Draft Presidential Decree, which includes a Management Plan for the area in question, requesting that these should be taken into account and that necessary environmental protection measures should be enforced. To our knowledge, Local Authorities have not drafted any specific protection measures for the area to date. Protection measures proposed in the Draft Presidential Decree of 2002 can only be used as guidelines by Local Authorities. Their correct enforcement and implementation would require the drafting of a Joint Ministerial Decision by National Authorities, which is still pending.

To this date none of the demolition protocols issued by the State Property Service of the Prefecture of Messinia for all constructions illegally built in the area have been executed.

As a result, three beach bars continue to illegally operate within the core zone of the protected area (Kalo Nero) (**List of Figures 1-22**). Extensions of already existing beach bars have been recorded by the Land Property Service for which new demolition protocols have been issued. Again, none of these demolition protocols have been executed by responsible authorities of the Peloponnese Region.

Beach bars operating illegally well into night, cars driving onto the nesting beach and people's presence at night has also been a regular occurrence throughout the nesting season. Lights shining directly onto hatched nests have resulted in disorientation of emerging hatchlings (**List of Figures 1-22**). On many parts of the protected site, wooden pathways have been installed reducing the available space for nesting (**List of Figures 1-22**). The beach

section in front of Kalo Nero village continues to be largely inaccessible to turtles and unsuitable for successful hatching due to huge number of umbrellas and deck chairs (**List of Figures 1-22**). This summer ARCHELON project personnel has conducted boxing on more than 70% of laid nests in Kalo Nero beach (110 out of 150 nests have been boxed), a method generally used as a last resort in order to protect emerging hatchlings from disorientation and subsequent death.

Artisanal net and long-line fishing has been observed on a number of occasions by ARCHELON project personnel within the marine zone of the NATURA 2000 site just a few meters off the nesting area in very shallow waters. Long-lines and nets pose a severe threat to nesting turtles and emerging hatchlings as they increase the risk of entanglement, injury and/or subsequent death. Use of dynamite in the marine zone of the protected site has also been recorded. In most of these cases the Port Police of Messinia were notified but failed to properly address the issue of illegal fishing in the area. This year over 20 strandings of dead *Caretta caretta* turtles have been recorded by ARCHELON project personnel (**List of Figures 1-22**).

The main threats to the protected area, and consequently to the *Caretta caretta*, are: the degradation and erosion of the sand dunes and coastal forests, due to road construction and building activity; vehicles, uncontrolled sheep herding and the continual encroachment onto the protected land beaches for tourism and agricultural uses (**List of Figures 1-22**). The sand dune system, part of which was destroyed by the construction of illegal roads and buildings, has not been restored to its original state. The absence of specific protection measures and lack of provision of appropriate information to local residents still jeopardize this valuable ecosystem for marine turtles. The drafting of an updated SES, which would take into account the new developments and impacts, would assist competent Local Authorities to identify specific conservation measures for the area in question and subsequently enforce them. Authorities of the Peloponnese Region should also ensure that informative signs at all beach entrances and other key places are installed.



Fig. 1 Bull dozer on the nesting beach.

Fig. 2 Vehicle tracks onto the nesting beach have been frequently documented during the nesting period in 2011.



Fig. 3 Vehicle tracks onto the nesting beach have been frequently documented during the nesting period in 2011.



Fig. 4 Beach bar operating during the nesting season at night.





Fig. 5 Beach bar lights shining onto a hatched nest. Most nests in Kalo Nero need to be boxed to ensure that hatchlings have a higher chance of survival.

Fig. 6 Beach bar lights shining onto a hatched nest. Most nests in Kalo Nero need to be boxed to ensure that hatchlings have a higher chance of survival.



Fig. 7 Beach bars and wooden pathways on the nesting beach. Alien plant species have also been planted.

Fig. 8 Beach bars and wooden pathways on the nesting beach. Alien plant species have also been planted.





Fig. 9 Wooden pathways have been installed onto the beach reducing considerable the available area for nesting.

Fig. 10 Wooden pathways have been installed onto the beach reducing considerable the available area for nesting.



Fig. 11 Wooden pathways have been installed onto the beach reducing considerable the available area for nesting.



Fig. 12 Extensions of beach bars have been recorded this year but none of the issued demolition protocols for these illegal constructions have been executed yet





Fig. 13 Umbrellas and deck chairs along the nesting beach.

Fig. 14 Extensions of beach bars have been recorded this year but none of the issued demolition protocols for these illegal constructions have been executed yet.



Fig. 15 Extensions of beach bars have been recorded this year but none of the issued demolition protocols for these illegal constructions have been executed yet.

Fig. 16 Uncontrolled sheep herding poses another serious threat to turtles nesting in Kyparissia.





Fig. 17 Uncontrolled sheep herding poses another serious threat to turtles nesting in Kyparissia.

Fig. 18 More than 20 dead turtles have been recorded this year in Kyparissia Bay.



Fig. 19 Hatchlings disoriented by lights end up getting run over by vehicles on the asphalted roads behind the nesting beach.

Fig. 20 Hatchlings disoriented by lights end up getting run over by vehicles on the asphalted roads behind the nesting beach.





Fig. 21 Hatchlings disoriented by lights end up getting run over by vehicles on the asphalted roads behind the nesting beach.

Fig. 22 Bull dozer on the nesting beach.

