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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

43<sup>rd</sup> meeting

Strasbourg, 28 November - 1 December 2023

**Open case-file: 1986/8**

**Recommendation No. 9 (1987) on the protection of Caretta  
Caretta in Laganas bay, Zakynthos (Greece)**

**- GOVERNMENT REPORT -**

*Document prepared by the  
Ministry of Environment & Energy, Greece*

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- October 2023 -

**Ministry of Environment & Energy  
General Directorate of Environmental Policy  
Directorate of Natural Environment Management & Biodiversity  
Department for Biodiversity**

Athens, 24 October 2023

**To the Secretary of the Bern Convention**

Dear Mr POUTIERS,

**Subject:** File 1986/8: Greece: Follow-up to Recommendation No. 9 (1987) on the protection of *Caretta caretta* in Laganas Bay, Zakynthos

Greece would like to provide the following supplementary information concerning the open Case-File No. 1986/8 to the attention of the Bureau of the Bern Convention in view of the recent September 2023 Bureau meeting.

A first training video conference involving the surveillance and scientific staff of OFYPEKA<sup>1</sup>/NECCA took place on 25 May 2023 with the participation of representatives from several national authorities (e.g. the Hellenic Coastguard, Forest Service, Department for Environmental Inspection, the Police) introducing to the trainees the main aspects of control in case of infringements. In addition, specific guidelines on drawing up on-the-spot-appraisal reports, issuing certificates on violation and conducting environmental inspections within the jurisdiction of the Management Unit were sent to all members of the staff of NECCA by the Directorate-General of the latter in July 2023.

Secondly, in the case of the illegal road in Laganas Bay, the offender recently appealed (about 1 month ago) to the Supreme Court ('Areios Pagos' is the Court of second instance), but the ruling has not yet been issued.

To our knowledge, the cases of some illegal developments in the area have been brought to justice and the national authorities will implement the rulings, when the latter order specific actions to be taken by the authorities. Otherwise, it is obvious that the administration cannot unilaterally intervene in these cases without being ordered to do so. On the other hand, the complainant must specify if their claims have to do with these cases or not. If the complaining NGO is referring to other cases of illegal developments, they are kindly requested to provide specific geographic coordinates or the names of the owners of the illegal developments to support their claims.

The number of eco-guards in Laganas Bay is quite satisfactory in order to lessen the impacts of visitors and recreational activities on the reproduction process of sea turtles through the dissemination of information on site and the whole public awareness infrastructure in place (e.g. cameras, panels, barriers, leaflets, information center, etc.). Illegal activities are recorded, and official complaints are made to the local authorities (e.g. the Hellenic Coastguard, Public Estate Service). It is also noteworthy that every infringement having any immediate impact on loggerhead sea turtles is addressed due to the close cooperation between the local Management Unit of NECCA in Zakynthos and the NGO 'ARCHELON'. Therefore, under a specific research permit issued for the NGO 'ARCHELON', the staff of the latter are committed to reporting any infringements to the local Management Unit immediately; the latter, in turn, is obliged to undertake all necessary measures dealing with any issue affecting sea turtles. Light pollution, the occurrence of stray dogs and cats, night intrusion in protected beaches, boat intrusion in forbidden marine areas, marine speed issues, placing of illegal umbrellas are among the issues addressed through cooperation. The same also applies in the case of the NGO 'WWF Hellas', especially when it comes to the strictly protected area of Sekania, since the everyday presence of their staff in the area aims to prevent fires in summertime. The close cooperation between this NGO and the local Management Unit is crucial, since the latter is called to act immediately in case of illegal entering the protected area, particularly the adjacent strictly protected marine area.

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<sup>1</sup> Natural Environment & Climate Change Agency. A public entity under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment & Energy. NECCA consists of local Management Units of Protected Areas throughout Greece.



The use of camera-monitoring systems in significant nesting beaches for sea turtles, namely Sekania and Gerakas, undoubtedly increases the quality of protection provided by the Management Unit. At this point, it should also be highlighted that in 2023 the number of nests (more than 2050 nests based on provisional data) reached a peak over a 39-year monitoring period, a fact that is also supported by a positive trend in the nesting activity recorded during the last decade. The conservation targets, which were recently adopted by a Ministerial Decision for the protection of *C. caretta* in Greece, clearly set a target value of 940 nests/year in the area of Laganas Bay, a Natura-2000 protected area with the code name 'GR2210002', (Government Gazette No. 1807/B/2023, see 'Table GR2210002\_2.1. *Caretta caretta* (1224)', p. 16909). This number can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the taken management measures and provide concrete protection for the species.

It is also expected that extra seasonal personnel will be hired in the future, particularly during summertime, to strengthen the existent staff who are in charge of surveillance and public awareness. When it comes to the number of people visiting the area, this is the average number within the specified limits. However, it should be stressed that in the cases of Gerakas and Daphni, strict adaptive management measures are implemented limiting considerably the interaction between visitors and the nesting areas (e.g. delineation of the nesting area with ropes, banning of umbrellas in some areas, dissemination of environmental information to tourists) in order to ensure the normal process of egg maturation during the day. Although some peaks in marine traffic might also occur in summer, the local Division of the Hellenic Coastguard is in place to constantly monitor marine traffic and impose fines accordingly. Finally, due to the close cooperation between the Coastguard and the Management Unit, the number of dead or injured turtles found in Laganas Bay was significantly low this year (one dead and one injured individual due to a collision with a boat; both cases were filed by the Coastguard).

We remain at your disposal for any clarification you may need.

Sincerely yours,

Dr Evangelos Badieritakis

-The national focal point to the Bern Convention-

- July 2023 -

**Ministry of Environment & Energy**  
**General Directorate of Environmental Policy**  
**Directorate of Natural Environment Management & Biodiversity**  
**Department of Biodiversity**

Athens, 31 July 2023

**To the Secretary of the Bern Convention**

Dear Mr POUTIERS,

**Subject:** File 1986/8: Greece: Follow-up to Recommendation No. 9 (1987) on the protection of *Caretta caretta* in Laganas Bay, Zakynthos

Greece would like to provide the following information concerning the open Case-File No. 1986/8 to the attention of the Bureau of the Bern Convention in view of the Autumn 2023 Bureau meeting.

First of all, we would like to clarify that the funding of surveillance and monitoring activities in the area of the NMPZ<sup>2</sup> (e.g., surveillance, wages of the scientific staff, cost of fuel for vehicles, equipment, infrastructure, maintenance, etc.) has been secured by the NECCA/OFYPEKA<sup>3</sup>, through the uninterrupted operation of the recently (2022) established Management Unit of National Parks Zakynthos, Ainos and Protected Areas of Ionian Islands-headquarter Zakynthos (PAMU 11), thus allowing the continuity of mitigation measures which have been implemented in the protected area since 2000.

As regards the case of the illegal road constructions in the area, the Ministry of Environment & Energy was recently notified by the Protected Area Management Unit 11 of NECCA/OFYPEKA (former Management Agency of the NMPZ) that the offender was recently criminally condemned by the appeal court, but further appeal has been made in court of second instance.

In addition, art. 182 of the new national law no. 5037/2023 (Government Gazette, no. 78/A/29.03.2023) stipulates that the surveillance and scientific staff of NECCA/OFYPEKA Management Units of Protected Areas & their Annexes throughout the country, are from now on authorized to conduct environmental inspections within their jurisdiction, draw up on-the-spot appraisal reports, summon people against whom on-the-spot appraisals have been carried out or even issue any certificates of violation that may include recommendations addressing to the involved people or a fine proposal to the competent authorities. These certificates are subsequently forwarded to the prosecutor in charge of these cases, if needed.

We strongly believe that the protection of protected areas in Greece, among which is Laganas Bay in Zakynthos, is now reinforced with this legislation involving the personnel of NECCA/OFYPEKA, a public entity which has been established to implement the policy formulated by the Ministry of Environment & Energy for the management of protected areas, biodiversity conservation, promotion and implementation of sustainable development actions and climate change mitigation.

We remain at your disposal for any clarification you may need.

Sincerely yours,

Dr Evangelos Badieritakis

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<sup>2</sup>National Marine Park of Zakynthos

<sup>3</sup> Natural Environment & Climate Change Agency



The national focal point to the Bern Convention