



Strasbourg, 30 August 2019
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T-PVS/Files(2019)37

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

39th meeting
Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2019

**Follow-up of Recommendation No. 9 (1987) of the
standing committee on the protection of *Caretta
Caretta* in Laganas bay, Zakynthos (Greece)**

- REPORT BY THE COMPLAINANT -

*Document prepared by
MEDASSET*

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Ms Jana Durkošová
Chair
Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

Athens, 30 August 2019

Our Ref. 24744

**Re: Updated supporting information in relation to Zakynthos Recommendation No. 9
(1987)**

Dear Ms. Durkošová,

Following our previous letters dated 08/03/18, 06/08/18 and 05/03/19 (enclosed), we wish to reiterate that the stated conservation issues within Laganas Bay have not been addressed by the Greek authorities. Subsequently, MEDASSET carried out a three-day assessment of the conservation status of the nesting sites in Laganas Bay (11 – 13 August), and hereby submits an update on the implementation of Recommendation No. 9 (1987) on the protection of *Caretta caretta* in Laganas Bay, Zakynthos (Greece).

- 1) The two new illegal buildings that were constructed in 2017 within the boundaries of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos (NMPZ), stable (150m²) and house (80m²), behind the nesting beach of **Gerakas** (see T-PVS/Files 2018 21) have not been demolished and the site has not been restored, despite the issue of fines by the competent authority.
- 2) The 1984 Presidential Decree regarding maritime regulations and the developed turtle spotting guidelines are (almost completely) disregarded by both commercial and privately hired vessels, which are over 400. Boats are entering restricted zones, cruising within Zone A, where all sea crafts are prohibited. During MEDASSET's three-day assessment, four boats were observed within the restricted zone (Fig. 1). ARCHELON's volunteers so far throughout the season have recorded 22 violations¹. Large vessels from other parts of Zakynthos are visiting the near inshore waters of the bay (where they are not supposed to be) for turtle spotting (Fig. 2). Regularly more than two boats (Fig. 2) were seen surrounding a turtle. ARCHELON volunteers have recorded 362 violations¹ of more than two boats observing a turtle and the highest observed during 2019 was 13² boats. Numerous vessels were observed over the three day assessment violating the six knot speed limit throughout the Bay (Fig. 3). ARCHELON volunteers have recorded 1, 161 violations exceeding the speed limit¹. Two incidents during 2019's nesting season have been attributed to boat collisions with sea turtles within the bay; one is currently being treated at ARCHELON's Rescue Centre, the other was found dead on **Sekania Beach**².
- 3) Restrictions of maximum numbers of beach visitors as stated in the Presidential Decree were by far greatly exceeded in both **Daphni** (max. 100) and **Gerakas** (max. 350), with approximate counts of 300 people at 13:00 and 400 people at 11:30 respectively. Although not visited during our three day assessment, beach visitor numbers, according to ARCHELON volunteers, greatly exceeded at **Marathonisi Island** (max. 200, Fig. 4), with counts of between 400 to 600 visitors.².
- 4) Regulations concerning beach furniture on the nesting beaches were severely infringed (e.g. numbers and density, distances from the back of the beach and their removal at sundown). During the three day assessment, MEDASSET counted approximately 240 sunbeds in **Gerakas** on 11th August, legal limit is 120 and 945 sunbeds on 13th August² (with ARCHELON) in **Kalamaki** (142) and **East Laganas** (803), when the legal limit for both beaches is 300. In **Daphni** sunbeds are not permitted but the operators of the illegal businesses disregard this regulation and during our assessment, approximately over 350 sunbeds were counted on the 12th August. (Fig. 5). ARCHELON who regularly monitor the number of sunbeds, because of continual violations have recorded 11 incidences of failed nesting attempts so far this year². A of complaint letter was sent

to all relevant competent authorities¹ at the end of July; to date no reply has been received². Pedalos were not removed at night from the front of the beach at **Kalamaki** and **East Laganas** (Fig. 6).

- 5) Illegal businesses, such as tavernas (equipped with showers) and accommodation rentals continue to expand and operate on the nesting beach of **Daphni**, unhindered. Three of the illegal buildings offer rooms to rent for tourists (Fig. 7) and the privilege to stay on the beach after sundown to watch nesting turtles (Fig. 8). In the immediate surroundings (previously sand dunes) of the illegal tavernas and accommodations, owners continue to grow and to water introduced alien grass and plants (Fig. 9), causing runoff onto the nesting beach and inundation of nests. Furthermore, due to the operation of these illegal businesses, there is no delimitation of a protected nesting area and visitors move freely across the beach in close proximity to nests (Fig. 10).
- 6) Absence of NMPZ wardens at **Kalamaki** beach resulted in illegal access of visitors to the beach at night, thus disturbing nesting and hatchings. Two incidences were recorded by MEDASSET's observer; one on 13th and one 14th August at 23:30 and 06:00 respectively. Night Patrols are conducted by ARCHELON volunteers to assist the management agency with the shortage of wardens and 1, 822 violations of people entering the nesting beaches were recorded².
- 7) The saturated illegal landfill that was operating within the NMPZ boundaries and also a part of the NATURA 2000 site, remains inactive since December 2017; however, the final assessment for its restoration is yet to be completed by the local authorities, despite relevant obligations and official orders. This delay is causing severe pollution, leaking toxins into the Bay especially over the winter months from rain runoff.
- 8) The restoration of the illegally constructed road between **Daphni** and **Gerakas**, (Dec. 2015) within the NMPZ and partially a NATURA 2000 site, has still not been carried out, despite competent authorities issuing fines and orders for its restoration, since 2016.

Several other important conservation and management problems exist after the 20th anniversary of the NMPZ constitution. A complete in-depth report is expected to be submitted to the Standing Committee in October 2019 by ARCHELON.

We would appreciate if this updated information of the continual violations within the NMPZ is taken under serious consideration at the upcoming Bureau Meeting, together with our previous letters (enclosed) and ARCHELON's 2017 and 2018 reports^{3,4}.

We urge the Bureau to consider tabling the Zakynthos issue for discussion at the 2019 Standing Committee Meeting, in order to assist and encourage the Greek Authorities to urgently implement the protection of Laganas Bay.

We are at your disposal for any further information.

With very best wishes,



Lily Venizelos

¹ Competent Authorities - Municipality, public land authority, coast guard, ministry and management agency of the NMPZ

MEDASSET President

Member of IUCN-Species Survival Commission: Marine Turtle Specialist Group

Enclosed:

- Figures 1-10
- MEDASSET letters dated 5 March 2019 (MEDASSET Ref. 24675), 6 August 2018 (MEDASSET Ref. 24613) and 8 March 2018 (T-PVS/Files 2018 21)

CC:

Mrs Iva Obretenova, Secretary of the Bern Convention, Council of Europe

European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment:

Mr Andras DEMETER, Env. D.2 – Natural Capital - Biodiversity

Mr. Fotios Papoulias, Env. D.3 Natural Capital – Nature Protection

Mr. Yannis Couniniotis, Env. E.3 — Implementation and Support to Member States – Environmental Enforcement

¹ Based on data provided by ARCHELON, The Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece, as recorded until 12/08/2019. ARCHELON Zakynthos monitoring project runs from early May to early October.

² Based on data provided by ARCHELON

³ Report: "Conservation efforts during 2018 at the nesting habitat of *Caretta caretta* in Laganas Bay, Zakynthos, Greece" (www.archelon.gr/contents/photos/Files/ARCHELON_2018_Zakynthos_Short_Re.pdf)

⁴ T-PVS/Files 2017 (36) (<https://rm.coe.int/follow-up-of-recommendation-no-9-1987-on-the-protection-of-caretta-car/1680762b40>)

FIGURES 1 - 10

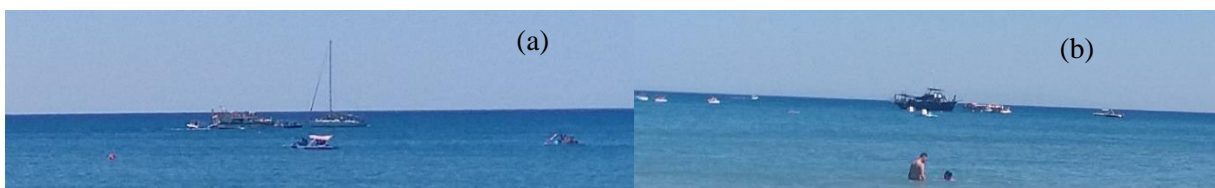
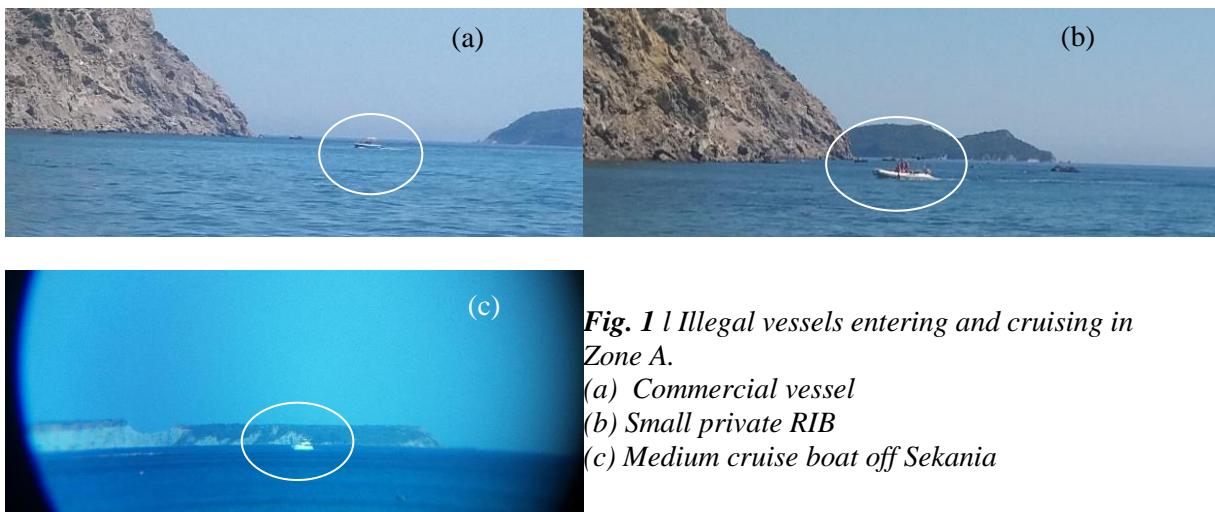




Fig. 2 | Turtle Spotting guidelines to reduce disturbance and stress not adhered to. (a- c) more than two vessels surrounding a turtle (c) with two large tour boats in turtle spotting zone, along with five smaller vessels surrounding a sea turtle.



Fig. 3 | Small motor vessel exceeding the maritime speed restriction of 6 knots, increasing the risk of collision with turtles in the bay.



Fig. 4 | High levels of touristic activity on and around Marathonisi





Fig. 5 | Sunbeds placed at Daphni beach by illegal business owners, (a,b) on the back of the beach, the altered sand dune system, and (c,d) on the front beach area. Wooden cages/ bamboo, marks nests identified by ARCHELON.



Fig. 6 | Infringements in relation to the night removal of beach furniture and pedalos in the NMPZ, obstructing sea turtle emergence: (a) East Laganas, (b) Kalamaki (Crystal Beach), (c) Gerakas

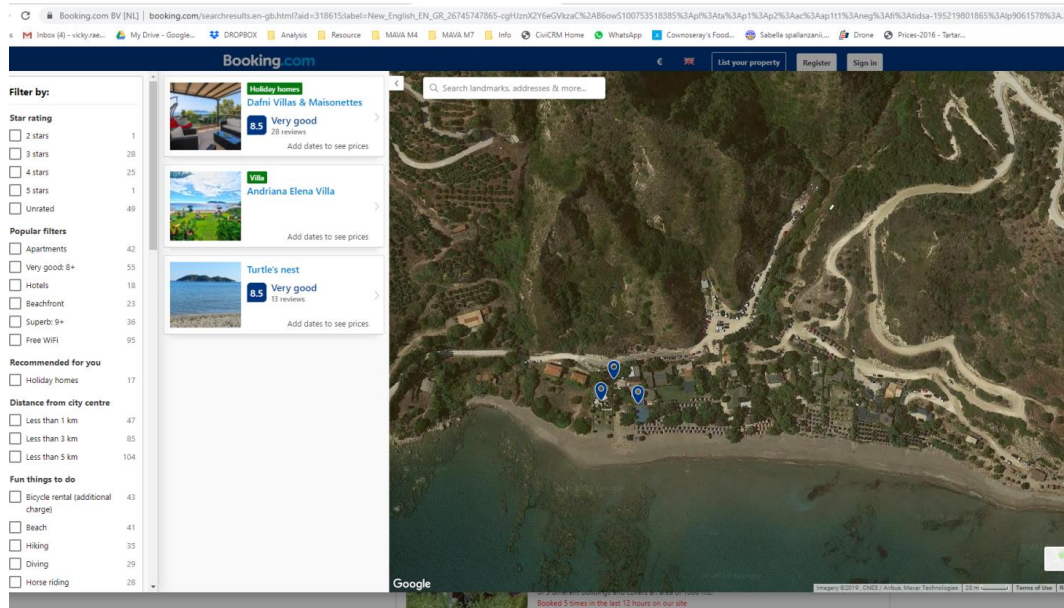


Fig. 7 | Location of three of the illegal buildings providing tourist accommodation on Daphni. Sourced 20/08/19: www.booking.com/searchresults.en-gb.html?aid=318615;label=New_English_EN_GR_26745747865-cgHJznX2Y6eGVkzaC%2AB6owS100753518385%3Ap1%3Ata%3Ap1%3Ap2%3Aac%3Aap1t1%3Aneq%3Afi%3Atidsa-195219801865%3Alp9061578%3Ali%3Adec%3Adm;sid=e85f0c573358adadcb1ac6c6ae35a688;city=-830159;expand_sb=1;highlighted_hotels=1318931;hlrd=no_dates;keep_landing=1;redirected=1;source=hotel&gclid=EAIaI QobChMIXKai85qR5AIVUfIRCh2UoAJeEAAyASAAEgJ-1_D_BwE&#map_opened-map-header-cta

Alison, United Kingdom
Reviewed: 16 July 2018
Turtle nests at Daphne beach, drlicious sea food and very welcoming hosts.

😊 · This property is all about the sea and beach which is a turtle nesting beach and is therefore a very special place. It's in the protected marine park so the sea is very clear and there are no boats allowed which kerosene it very peaceful. Although you are supposed to leave the beach at sunset and not go back until 7.00am to protect the turtles, the owner does allow you to stay on the sunbeds in the hope of glimpsing a turtle. You done see them during the day at all, as there are many day visitors to the beach and I think the noise keeps them away.

Fig. 8 | Review left by tourists staying at Daphni Villas. Sourced 19/08/19: www.booking.com/hotel/gr/dafni-villas-amp-maisonnettes.en-gb.html?aid=356980;label=gog235jc-1DCAsoXEIcZGFmbmktDmlsbGFzLWFtcC1tYWlzb25ldHRlc0gzWANoXIGBAZgBCBgBF8gBDNgBA-gBAYgCAagCA7gCmZbr6gXAAgE;sid=e85f0c573358adadcb1ac6c6ae35a688;dist=0&keep_landing=1&sb_price_type=total&type=total&#tab-reviews



Fig. 9 l (a & b) Alteration of the natural environment and cultivation of grass and plants at the back of Daphni beach, (c) Local worker/ owner watering introduced vegetation



Fig. 10 l Daphni Beach: Maximum restrictions of visitors exceeded. No restrictions or zoning present on the beach.