



Turtle Conservation in Greece - Protect and conserve an important loggerhead turtle nesting area in the Mediterranean

Översikt

This project is located at the Bay of Lakonikos which can be found at the southernmost part of mainland Greece, otherwise known as the Peloponnese. Lakonikos is perhaps best known as an important nesting area for loggerhead sea turtles in the Mediterranean and GVI volunteers participating on this project will engage in daily morning surveys to record nesting activity and protect turtle nests against predation by mammals and inundation by sea water. Volunteers will also provide conservation information to overseas visitors and the local community. Having been inhabited since the Neolithic period, the area is rich in history and culture and owing to its location near the River Evrotas the area is also rich in bird life and other flora and fauna.

Projektet

The Bay of Lakonikos in the Peloponnese hosts important nesting sites for loggerhead sea turtles in the Mediterranean. The main threats for these nesting sites are the predation of nests by mammals and the destruction of the natural dune systems. With the completion of a LIFE-NATURE Programme, co-funded by the European Union in 1999, Management Plans were compiled to address these threats, while at the same time promoting a model of sustainable development that will be beneficial to the local economy. The project, active in the area since 1983, has since been working for their implementation in co-operation with the local authorities and the local community.

The Bay of Lakonikos has also been the area where pilot projects, such as dune restoration, were launched. It was also the first area where collaboration with fishermen started in order to reduce turtle mortality as a result of their capture in fishing gear. Volunteers play a key role in the daily routine of the project. Volunteers participating on the project will have a field leader responsible for co-ordinating the work and meeting all requirements for the GVI programme. Volunteers participate in all aspects of the project and initial training is provided by the field leader or experienced project members. General duties include monitoring of nesting activity and nest protection, excavations of nests (from August onwards), providing information to tourists and members of the local community as well as daily chores to ensure the smooth running of the project.

En volontär berättar

"Arriving in Greece in the middle of the night I won't pretend that I wasn't a little bit scared, the next morning however was far less daunting.

We carried out our tourist and turtle work on the local beach and during the day we did Kiosk and Beach Patrol shifts, but there was always plenty of time to sunbathe, swim, or have lunch at the local taverna. We also did around several slideshows a week in the local hotels. These proved to be a really effective way of getting people interested in the turtles and the work that we do to protect them. Then, after 11pm the excitement really began. Loggerhead turtles nest on the beaches after dark and this is when we carried out night surveys to tag them and record their nesting behaviour.

For me, the highlight of the whole project was digging an egg-chamber for a turtle missing a hind left flipper. Because of her injury she was unable to do it for herself, but, with a helping hand from us, she laid! I spent two months on the project and it felt like two weeks. I strongly recommend it, whether you have a specific interest in turtles or just the environment in general. It is worthwhile, effective and enormous fun!"

Atlanta Kassatly

Hårt arbete i solen



Vilken skillnad gör detta projekt?

The Bay of Lakonikos in the Peloponnese hosts important nesting sites for loggerhead sea turtles. The research in this area has been running since 1983 and is one of the oldest conservation projects in the Mediterranean. The main threats for these nesting sites are predation of nests by mammals, destruction of nests through inundation by sea water and the destruction of the natural dune systems. Volunteers work in co-operation with the local authorities and the local community, promoting a model of sustainable development that will be beneficial to the local economy. Protection of nests against predation by mammals and/or inundation by sea water ensures that as many hatchlings as possible are added to the population each year, while public awareness activities help people adopt friendlier attitudes towards the natural environment and possibly reduce their environmental footprint in the area.

Höjdpunkter

Hands-on work with one of the most endangered species in the Mediterranean; living in a quiet area near a traditional fishing town; exploring nearby nature reserves and admiring local architecture. The thrill of seeing turtles lay their eggs and watching the hatchlings head for the sea; experiencing Greek culture first hand in a beautiful area which you can explore in your free time; taking a great first step towards your career in practical conservation or simply making a lasting one-off contribution to the preservation of endangered turtles.

Plats

The project is based in Mavrovouni, a settlement 6 km west of Gythio, a town which sits in the centre of the Bay of Lakonikos in the southern Peloponnese. Gythio is a lively, charming little harbour town. It has a long sea-side promenade, colourful fishing boats, narrow streets and stairways typical of Greece. Mavrovouni beach is 5 km long and has several campsites and a few small local businesses.

Ute i fält

Accommodation is provided within one of the campsites along the beach of Mavrovouni, which includes all the necessary facilities (toilets, showers, etc) as well as a mini-market, a self-service restaurant, telephone, etc. Project participants live communally in a designated area within the campsite. Basic camping material (tents, mattresses, etc) are provided and cooking is organised communally by the group.

Förkunskaper

Participants must be 18 years or older. Enthusiasm and commitment for the protection of the natural environment is necessary. Work is physically demanding and participants must be prepared to work under hot summer conditions on a daily basis.

Livet på projektet

All volunteers participate in all aspects of the project work. Volunteers are expected to cover 2-3 shifts per day, averaging about 6-8 hours of work (depending on the duration of the beach work).

These shifts include:

I. NEST MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT PROTECTION

* Morning Survey conducted daily at dawn, to assess the previous night's turtle activities, as well as factors that may have an impact on the nests' safe incubation (inundation, human impact, etc.) or the coastal zone (beach cleaning, constructions, destruction of dunes).

* Nest Protection against predation, achieved through screening. Meanwhile nests laid in unsafe areas are relocated further up the beach.

* Excavation of a sample of hatched nests is carried out in order to determine hatchling success.

II. PUBLIC AWARENESS

Volunteers interact with tourists and members of the local community through participation in:

* The operation of information stations that operate daily along the Mavrovouni beach.

* Slide Shows on sea turtle biology and conservation conducted in tourist businesses around the area

III. OTHER DAY-TO-DAY DUTIES

These supportive activities are of great importance and play a key role in effective project operation.

Campsites and information stations are maintained in good condition by volunteers. Cooking is also considered part of the daily chores. Basic maintenance of equipment is also volunteer based and includes activities such as painting, preparing materials for the protection of nests, etc. Artistic skills including drawing and photography are also utilised if possible.

Leisure time is available during the day, while project participants are entitled to one day off per week. Days off may be provided any day of the week, not only during the week-ends.

Foton från projektet



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