



Dear Friends and Supporters

This newsletter comes after a very eventful and positive year for Earth, Sea & Sky and our partner companies Ionian Eco Villagers and Nature World Travel. We started 2009 off with some excellent news that we had been selected as Finalists for the Conservation Award in the prestigious Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. We also began our own programme to attract volunteers to our project and help us with our important PR and conservation efforts within Gerakas and the Marine Park. In September we received a much needed donation of equipment and necessary expertise for the Sea Turtle Rescue Station from Finland.

Life Support System Arrives in Zakynthos

Work continued on the SOS Sea Turtle Rescue Station throughout most of the year. With the economic slowdown we did notice a decrease in donations and fundraising, however this downturn was made up for with the arrival of critical filtration equipment generously donated by various companies in Finland, along with specialist assistance from SeaLife Centres Helsinki: Markus Dernjatin - Displays Curator and Mikko Juvonen - Aquarist. A number of Finnish companies and individuals have made donations towards the Rescue Station, enabling the project to move forward. SeaLife Helsinki, Boknäs Ltd and Fluorotech Ltd and others have supported the project by acquiring and donating this critical equipment, for which ESS is very grateful!



Mikko (left) and Markus with the filter equipment packed and ready to be transported from Finland to Zakynthos .



Markus Dernjatin (SeaLife), and Yannis Vardakastanis (ESS) with Filter Equipment donated by Boknäs Ltd and Fluorotech Ltd.

The SOS Sea Turtle Rescue Centre as it looked in July 2009



Moving Forward

In early 2009 it was decided that Earth, Sea & Sky would take the plunge and branch out on our own - recruiting volunteers, running the Wildlife Information Centre at Gerakas, managing projects and compiling research and assessment reports - all on a completely independent basis. Although a lot of hard work, this proved to be a very positive and successful move for us, and we will continue to push in this direction with additional plans to create new and exciting projects. We believe this will bring us more volunteers and enable us to be involved in conservation, habitat research and wildlife management on a larger scale. Our **Zakynthos Assessment Report 2009** is available on request, please call or email us for a copy to be sent to you. We are also recruiting volunteers and interns for this season, so if you or anyone you know would be interested in working with us, details of the programme can be obtained by sending an email to: office@earthseasky.org or by visiting our website.

2009 Nesting Data

During the 2009 nesting season a total of 3,441 turtle emergences were recorded on all six beaches of Laganas Bay, of which 826 resulted in nests. Compared with results from 2008 of 983 nests, which was already below the recorded average, 2009 presented a further drop of 157 nests. Overall 2009 season represents the lowest number of nests recorded over 25 years of research.

Kalamaki/Laganas - a small drop in numbers, with 240 nests for 2009 compared to 247 nests in 2008.

Sekania - 400 nests in 2009, compared to 470 nests in 2008.

Daphni - 55 nests for 2009, a large drop from 119 in 2008. This has been attributed largely to be the affect of sand dune destruction by continued illegal building combined with high winter seas.

Marathonisi - Nesting at Marathonisi recorded a twofold decrease in 2009 compared to 2008, falling from 100 to 48 nests.

Gerakas - In contrast to the general decline in nest numbers throughout the NMPZ, nesting at Gerakas almost doubled in 2009 with 86 nests, compared with 47 in 2008. The comparative success of Gerakas is due to the fact that the beach and surrounding habitats have been protected according to the legal requirements of the EU Directives.

Dead and Injured Turtles

For the third consecutive year, there was an increase in the occurrence of turtle strandings in the area of the NMPZ, with the number of dead turtles being the highest ever recorded in one nesting season. The exact cause of death for all these turtles is difficult to assess due to varying levels of decomposition. A total of thirty-four sea turtles were reported stranded of which: Twenty-eight were found dead - 8 of which bore injuries clearly related to fisheries interaction, and 5 were the victims of boat strikes/propellers. For the rest the cause of death remains unknown.

Five were found wounded, all of which later perished. One was found alive entangled in fishing nets and was later rescued and transported to Glyfada Rescue Centre near Athens.

News and Initiatives for 2010

Green Tree Transfers - Our new Company providing pre-booked transfers and trips on Zakynthos and Kefalonia. With every single trip, we will plant a tree to help regenerate the areas of our beautiful island that have been severely affected by forest fires: www.greentreetransfers.com

Petition - Stop the Illegal Hunting of Migratory Birds. Please visit our online petition and add your voice to the appeal: www.thepetitionsite.com/2/the-illegal-hunting-of-migratory-birds-on-zakynthos-greece

Workshops - In 2010 Earth, Sea & Sky will be conducting a series of workshops for children and adults to make bird, insect and mammal houses and feeders utilising recycled and reclaimed materials.

BBC Interview - News article about the constant harassment of *Caretta caretta* sea turtles by turtle spotting boats within the protected zones of the National Marine Park: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8183308.stm>

Facebook - For all the social networking junkies out there, both Earth, Sea & Sky and Ionian Eco Villagers are now on Facebook. Join now to become a fan of our organisations, and keep up to date with news and events.