



LOGGERHEAD TURTLES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN UNDER THREAT

05 Apr 2006 - Crete, Greece – Uncontrolled tourism and rapid development of Greece’s beaches continue to effect the long-term survival of the largest nesting population of Mediterranean loggerhead turtles on the Greek island of Zakynthos.

Some 800–1,100 loggerhead nests can be found in the National Marine Park of Zakynthos, but poor management and lack of government support is threatening the future of this endangered marine turtle.

“The situation on Zakynthos is totally unacceptable,” said Demetres Karavellas, WWF-Greece’s Chief Executive Officer. “Violations within the protected area happening summer after summer. As loggerhead females always return to the same nesting ground, it is crucial that their natural nesting habitats are protected.”

In January 2002, the European Court of Justice declared that Greece had failed to protect the loggerhead turtles in Zakynthos and was in violation of European Union law. WWF and other organizations focused on sea turtle conservation in the Mediterranean believe that the Greek government has not been enforcing a European Union decision to implement effective measures to protect the endangered loggerhead turtles.

Loggerhead females start coming ashore to nest at the end of May and finish nesting by the end of July. The peak of the tourist season coincides with the start of the hatching of the turtle eggs in August.



“The Greek government is taking little to no measures to stop illegal beach development and tourists from flooding the nesting beaches which will result in the destruction of the nesting area,” added Gerald Dick, WWF’s European Species Coordinator.

“To safeguard the nesting sites, the government must ensure that existing legal measures are enforced, minimize the impact of the tourist industry and provide adequate support to the already established management authority.”

These issues are being put to the Greek government at the annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation & Biology taking place in Crete, Greece from 2-8 April.

END NOTES:

- The loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) is one of the two marine turtle species that reproduce in the Mediterranean. The other species is the green turtle, which nests in Turkey and Cyprus.
- The National Marine Park of Zakynthos (NMPZ) was established in 1999 for the conservation of marine turtles and the sustainable development of the island. WWF-Greece and the NGO Archelon are represented on the management body of the NMPZ.



Source: WWF – World Wildlife Foundation International (<http://www.wwf.org>)
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