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**THREATS TO MARINE TURTLES
IN THINES KIPARISSIAS BAY
(GREECE)**

REPORT BY THE NGO

*Document prepared by
MEDASSET*

Marine Turtle Conservation in the Mediterranean
*for the 32nd Standing Committee Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on
the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)*
1st Meeting of the Bureau

**DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN KYPARISSIA BAY, SOUTHERN KYPARISSIA (WESTERN
PELOPONNESE, GREECE)**

UPDATE REPORT BY MEDASSET

29th March 2012

Following the complaint submitted on 22 August 2010 for the 30th Standing Committee Meeting (T-PVS (2010) 16E) regarding developments threatening Kyparissia Bay, the response of the Greek authorities to the European Commission (sent on the 22nd December 2010) forwarded to the Bureau Meeting on 8 March 2011 (T-PVS/Files (2011) 5E), and MEDASSET's update report sent to the Bureau on 2 September 2011, we wish to present to the Bureau a summary of the current situation in Kyparissia Bay, a NATURA 2000 site, (THINES KYPARISSIAS – GR2550005).

According to Greek Authorities the law concerning Conservation and Biodiversity that entered into force at the end of March 2011 shall ensure a more effective protection regime for the priority species in all NATURA 2000 sites, including THINES KYPARISSIAS. However, enforcement of specific protective measures for the area, in conjunction with provision of information to local residents by the Prefecture of Messinia regarding appropriate use of the nesting beach, is still evidently lacking. A number of activities and illegal constructions on the site still continue to exert a considerable amount of pressure on the nesting activity of marine turtles.

A Joint Ministerial Decision, which would be drawn upon the recommendations of the Special Environmental Study (SES) produced in 2002 by ARCHELON and which would regulate all activities within the NATURA 2000 site with the aim to ensure an effective legal protection regime, has not yet been drafted by the National Authorities.

National authorities have forwarded to Local Authorities the 2002 SES, together with a Draft Presidential Decree, which includes a Management Plan for the area in question, requesting that these should be taken into account and that necessary environmental protection measures should be enforced. To our knowledge, Local Authorities have not drafted any specific protection measures for the area to date. Protection measures proposed in the Draft Presidential Decree of 2002 can only be used as guidelines by Local Authorities. Their correct enforcement and implementation would require the drafting of a Joint Ministerial Decision by National Authorities, which to this date is still pending.

To this date none of the demolition protocols issued by the State Property Service of the Prefecture of Messinia for all constructions illegally built in the area have been executed.

It remains to be seen whether the three beach bars that illegally operated in 2011 within the core zone of the protected area (Kalo Nero) **will continue to do so**. Extensions of already existing beach bars were recorded by the Land Property Service in 2011 for which new demolition protocols were issued. Again, **up to this date** none of these demolition protocols have been executed by responsible authorities of the Peloponnese Region.

Beach bars operating illegally well into night, cars driving onto the nesting beach and people's presence at night was a regular occurrence throughout the nesting season in 2011. Lights shining directly onto hatched nests resulted in disorientation of emerging hatchlings. On many parts of the protected site, wooden pathways were installed reducing the available space for nesting. **If no**

immediate action is taken, the beach section in front of Kalo Nero village will continue to be largely inaccessible to turtles and unsuitable for successful hatching in the upcoming nesting season due to huge number of umbrellas and deck chairs, as it has already been noted by the NGO. As a result boxing of a great percentage of laid nests in Kalo Nero beach will still be exercised in 2012, a method generally used as a last resort in order to protect emerging hatchlings from disorientation and subsequent death.

The main threats to the protected area, and consequently to the *Caretta caretta*, are: the degradation and erosion of the sand dunes and coastal forests, due to road construction and building activity; vehicles, uncontrolled sheep herding and the continual encroachment onto the protected land beaches for tourism and agricultural uses. The sand dune system, part of which was destroyed by the construction of illegal roads and buildings, has not been restored to its original state. The absence of specific protection measures and lack of provision of appropriate information to local residents still jeopardize this valuable ecosystem for marine turtles. The drafting of an updated SES, which would take into account the new developments and impacts, would assist competent Local Authorities to identify specific conservation measures for the area in question and subsequently enforce them. Authorities of the Peloponnese Region should also ensure that informative signs at all beach entrances and other key places are installed. The only appropriate signage installed by ARCHELON in 2008-9 (**Fig.1**) still cannot compensate for the overall lack of awareness and the need for more effective sign posting in designated NATURA 2000 site.

Figure 1. This type of informative signs should be effectively installed by local authorities at various point entrances to the NATURA 2000 site 'Thines Kyparissias'.

