

# Controversial Conservation at Zakynthos

Greece hosts approximately 60 percent of all loggerheads nests in the Mediterranean. Forty-two percent of these are laid across a 5.5-kilometer stretch of six beaches along Laganas Bay on the island of Zakynthos. This is the largest known nesting density in the Mediterranean.

Despite diverse attempts to protect the bay since 1984, coastal development continues to increase, largely due to local resistance, mass-tourism development, and non-implementation of local, national, and European Commission (EC) environmental legislation. In the absence of enforcement of local and national urban planning, small-scale illegal buildings, walls, and roads have increasingly encroached on Zakynthos' once-pristine nesting beach of Daphni.

In 2000, the EC filed a case against Greece at the European Court of Justice for non-implementation of EC legislation that requires the establishment of a system of strict protection for sea turtles. This legal move became a catalyst for the formation of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos (NMPZ)—a major breakthrough in resolving the situation. Lack of financial support from the government led to the park's closure between December 2004 and June 2005, incurring a final written warning from the EC threatening multimillion-Euro fines.

The park's management agency was reestablished toward the end of the 2005 nesting season under a new managing president who received full government support. During the 2006 nesting season, most beaches were properly guarded and cleared of rubbish, and information services such as educational signage were improved.

These positive changes, however, have been overshadowed by the NMPZ president's decision to instigate and supervise the construction of further roads and development on Daphni nesting beach. Such illegal activity sets a dangerous precedent for conservation of other protected areas in Greece. Unless immediate steps are taken to establish long-term management objectives and to uphold existing national and international legislation, the future of this critical nesting area remains in jeopardy.

*Lily Venizelos, president, and Prue Robinson, international communications officer, work for MEDASSET, the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles.*



LEFT: Sea turtle tracks on an umbrella-lined tourist beach in the National Marine Park of Zakynthos. © ARCHELON  
BELOW: Eastern end of Laganas Bay. Umbrellas and chairs left in the sand overnight can become obstacles that deter sea turtles from nesting. © ARCHELON



# Zanzibar Cleans Up with Ban on Plastic Bags



In July 2006, Zanzibar's government passed bold legislation to outlaw the importation and use of plastic bags, which have noticeably polluted the marine and terrestrial environment of the archipelago in recent years. Bags made of raffia palm have been suggested as an alternative. The ban is intended to aid preservation of the natural environment and to improve tourism, the islands' top revenue-generator. Violators of the ban will be punished with a US\$2,000 fine, up to six months in prison, or both. Given that pollution, especially plastic bags, is one of the most dangerous hazards to sea turtles worldwide according to the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group, Zanzibar's bold new legislation marks a positive trend for sea turtles.

Sea turtles may mistake plastic bags as jellyfish, a favorite food, causing them to drown.  
© TRAVIS STALEY