



Education Programme for Hatching Season

A learning experience based on the research and conservation conducted on the island of Kefalonia to study and protect sea turtles and the coastal ecosystems.

Requirements

- Able to walk along a beach with rocky terrain for up to 2 km in sunlight
- Confident swimmer – able to swim 25m increments unaided in depths of up to around 5m and familiar with snorkeling
- Any health conditions must be discussed before signing up
- Minimum age 7 yrs old. One adult required per max 2 children under the age of 18



Nesting Beach Survey, Nest Check, and Beach Clean

Researcher teams survey the beaches of Kefalonia to monitor hatching sea turtle nests from August through early October. The teams arrive in the early morning, walk along the beach looking for fresh hatchling tracks, and check they're all going to sea. Nesting beaches can be up to 2 kilometres long and the team may collect litter from the beach during or after the survey depending on the schedule.

The primary goal is to ensure each nest is properly protected, hatching, and the tracks are headed in the correct direction rather than towards any light pollution at the back of the beach.

Snorkel Surveys

Seagrass meadows are a larger carbon sink than the rainforests and play a critical role in mitigating climate change. They form an important ecosystem, providing habitats and nursery grounds for many marine animals and other organisms. Teams will snorkel on the sea surface (no diving necessary) and will be monitored by both a land-based and a sea-based (paddleboard) safety supervisor. The safety supervisor will accompany the research team throughout their in-water shift. All team members will wear a life jacket (provided) and will be limited to a small group size during snorkeling.

Our focus areas are the coastal and nearshore marine zones near the Argostoli area which are covered by *Posidonia oceanica* seagrass meadows. These areas are also utilized by many different species including sea turtles, monk seals and several types of fish.



All snorkel shifts are weather-dependent and will be canceled if the sea conditions are deemed unsafe



Harbour Survey

Over 300 adult and sub-adult sea turtles swim in the Bay of Argostoli and the Koutavos Lagoon throughout the summer with some of them even staying over winter. Every morning, many of these turtles concentrate on the harbour front of Argostoli, where fishing boats return with the morning's catch. The turtles that swim along the harbour spend time feeding off the bivalves that colonize the harbour walls, eating fish scraps the fishermen and tourists throw in the water, and exhibit a variety of behaviours between them. This gives us a unique opportunity to study their feeding behaviour and their social interactions, which are mostly antagonistic.



During harbour surveys, researchers will observe these turtles and record information regarding their foraging and social behaviours. If a turtle at risk is spotted, usually having swallowed fishing hooks and lines or plastics, on survey researchers will observe our team capture the turtle and treat it or transport it for further examination and treatment.

Evening Nest Checks

Throughout the season, it is important to review the data collected for each nest-such as GPS coordinates and distance to the sea-to improve our nest maps and monitor their progression. You will observe our team conducting these nest checks and, when possible, observe nest inventories to assess hatching success and other parameters. A nest inventory is usually carried out a few days after the first hatchling has emerged. After a nest hatches, it contains empty eggshells, all of which must be counted. Some unhatched (undeveloped) eggs may also be present. Occasionally, a few hatchlings remain in the nest because they were unable to emerge with the others; we release them so they can make their way to the sea.



*Please note that times and dates are subject to change based on nest developments.



Coastal Clean-up

Being an island, Kefalonia is susceptible to plastic pollution washing up from all directions. This pollution affects sea turtles, sea birds, marine mammals and many other marine and terrestrial species. The beach and coastal clean-ups performed by our team show the impacts of our consumerism and the items we dispose of daily, while also making a difference by helping protect local wildlife, restore coastal areas, and support habitat recovery.

Presentations

The presentations given throughout the programme will help inform each participant about our scientific methodology. It will also provide an understanding of the importance of each shift, why and how we conduct them and how their time is making a difference. Other presentations will focus on broader conservation topics like drone use in conservation and climate change which are important global topics in conservation.



Learning Objectives (knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired):

- Recall information from the scientific presentations given
- Conduct coastal research with an emphasis on Posidonia meadow mapping and species identification
- Interpret hatchling sea turtle tracks headed towards the sea
- Observe first-hand the effects of human development on nests and hatching
- Demonstrate standard scientific methodology used in the field
- Build teamwork and leadership skills
- Improve investigating, analysing and problem-solving skills
- Acquire a thorough understanding of standard research practices and conservation principles
- Demonstrate the ability to maintain a professional image and inform the public
- Improve planning and organizational skills



Hatching Season Researcher Sample Rota

Day	Morning Activity	Afternoon Activity	Evening Activity
Thursday	9:00 meet at Coffee Break/Argostoli ferry port shelter and bus to campsite (All) 9:30 Orientation and Morning Survey Training Presentation (All) Break- 5mins 10:10 Sea Turtle Biology Presentation (All) 10:30-11:00 Sea Grass Ecology and Fish Identification Presentation (All) Stay at Campsite	12:15 stay at campsite and meet in cafe 12:15 Snorkel Safety talk on beach Snorkel Practice at Beach after talk (All) Shuttle back to meeting point	
Friday	7:45 meet at Argostoli Bridge 8:00-10:00 Harbour training and Survey (All)	12:30 meet at Coffee Break/Argostoli ferry port shelter and bus to coves (All) 13:00-14:15 Snorkel Survey (Group 1- 1hr 15min session) 13:00-14:00 Drone use in Conservations Presentation at campsite- Group 2 14:15-15:30 Snorkel Survey (Group 2- 1hr 15 min session) 14:15- 15:15 Drone use in Conservation Presentation at campsite - Group 1 Shuttle back to meeting point	
Saturday	5:45 Bus departs from Argostoli Bridge Nesting Beach Survey, Nest Checks and Beach Clean 11:00 Arrive back at Argostoli Bridge (All)	13:30 meet at Coffee Break/Argostoli ferry port shelter and shuttle to beach 14:15-15:30 Snorkel Survey (Group 2- 1hr 15min session) Shuttle back to meeting point	
Sunday	5:45 Bus departs from Argostoli Bridge Nesting Beach Survey, Nest Checks and Beach Clean 11:00 Arrive back at Argostoli Bridge (All)	13:30 meet at Coffee Break/Argostoli ferry port shelter and shuttle to beach 14:15-15:30 Snorkel Survey (Group 1- 1hr 15min session) Shuttle back to meeting point	18:00 Bus departs Argostoli Bridge to Lourdas 18:30:00-20:00 Evening Nest Checks 20:30 Arrive back at Argostoli Bridge (All)
Monday	7:45 meet at Argostoli Bridge 8:00-10:00 Harbour Survey (All)		18:00 Bus departs Argostoli Bridge to Lourdas 18:30:00-20:00 Evening Nest Checks 20:30 Arrive back at Argostoli Bridge (All)
Tuesday			17:30 meet at Argostoli Bridge for Coastal Clean-up and Farewell and summary (All)

***The rota is weather dependent and subject to change.**

***The rota includes pick up/ departure times or presentation start times.**

Group Breakdown:

Group 1- up to 10 Researchers

Group 2- up to 10 Researchers

****Families or participants coming together will be kept in the same groups and will not be separated for activities**

Participation cost includes: Transportation to the nesting beaches, staff members to lead the group during surveys, educational presentations, research equipment for surveys, fins/flippers and life jackets provided. There is a packing list provided, which includes a snorkel mask and recommended attire and footwear.

Requirements and Expectations for all participants for the Education Programme

Snorkel Survey:

- Participants will be swimming in deeper waters (around 5m deep) for the snorkel practice and all snorkel surveys.
- Participants should be comfortable wearing a snorkel and mask (participants are not inhibited by claustrophobia and sensory sensitivity/tactile sensory).
- To participate in the snorkel surveys, the participant must complete both parts of the snorkel practice. The snorkel practice allows safety observers to confirm that each participant is a confident swimmer. All swimming during snorkel surveys is conducted with a mandatory life vest.

The snorkel practice includes 2 parts:

Part 1-

- Participants are required to swim unaided 25m to the paddle board, tread water for 1 minute and swim 25m unaided back to shore. The participant may rest between treading water and swimming back to shore by holding onto the paddleboard.
- Unaided means no use of any floatation device when swimming e.g. arm bands, pool noodle, life vest, including not holding onto another person to swim.

Part 2-

- Participants are required to swim 50m to the paddle board wearing the life vest and fins provided by Wildlife Sense, and their own personal snorkel and mask.
- Once at the paddle board, participants clear their mask and then swim back 50m to shore.

During the snorkel survey participants must be able to follow the safety rules:

1. Life vests must be worn at all times.
 2. Diving down is strictly prohibited. All snorkelling must remain at the surface.
 3. A pool noodle must be held onto at all times while in the water.
 4. Follow all instructions given by staff for personal safety and the safety of the group.
- All participants must sign the Snorkelling Waiver and Safety Agreement upon arrival.
 - Nesting beach survey- participants must be physically able to walk at least 2km over rocky terrain in the hot and sunny conditions.
 - Any health conditions and learning difficulty must be discussed before signing up to join the Education Programme and specific details must be given of any health conditions or learning difficulty.
 - Certain presentations are requirement of the programme. The presentation must be attended for training and shift specific information, for example Nesting Beach Survey. Unless agreed and discussed in detail with the Agency and Education Associate.
 - Participants may attend other activities that are open to the public. Participants need to be aware that if attending a public activity, they will be treated as a member of the public.
 - Participants must have a good level of the English language to ensure they can fully understand essential safety information and shift-related instructions.
 - For family groups- family members will be added to the What'sApp group on the first day of the programme, not before.