



# SAVE OUR TURTLES

## OUR ENDANGERED NEIGHBOURS

### Did you know that two species of marine turtles nest on Cyprus' beautiful beaches?

One of the oldest living creatures in the world, marine turtles are a globally endangered species. Because humans pose the most direct threat to these wonderful creatures and their habitat, every resident and visitor to Cyprus has a role to play in their conservation and protection.

Three of the world's eight species of marine turtles are found in the Mediterranean Sea: the **LOGGERHEAD** (*Caretta caretta*), **GREEN TURTLE** (*Chelonia mydas*) and **LEATHERBACK TURTLE** (*Dermochelys coriacea*). Both the loggerhead turtle and the green turtle nest regularly in Cyprus.

While marine turtles spend most of their lives in the water, their very existence depends on beaches. Beaches provide females a place to dig nests and lay eggs and hatchlings a place to be born and make their way to the sea.

**Unfortunately, many human activities throughout Cyprus are threatening their survival:**

- Tourism development (hotel, houses, etc) reduces the number of suitable nesting sites;
- Litter on the beaches creates obstacles for nesting sea turtles as they come ashore to dig their nests and hinders hatchlings from reaching the sea;
- Light (from beach restaurants, hotels, campfires, etc.) can deter sea turtles from nesting and disorient hatchlings during their first crawl towards the sea;
- Vehicles driving on the beach create paths that can disorient hatchlings;
- Dogs and foxes harass nesting turtle and attack nests during the incubation;
- Fishermen often entangle and drown both hatchlings and adult turtles in their nets.

Local authorities and conservation groups work together to protect turtle nesting sites by placing mesh wire cages over nests for protection and organizing local beach clean up campaigns before the nesting season to remove trash and debris from nesting areas. But in order to secure the well being of Cyprus' marine turtles, they need your help.



How would you feel if your house was filled with garbage like this?



Cage to protect nest from predators. Please if you see one on a beach, do not touch it.



SAVE Karpaz Student Beach Clean-Up Campaign, May 31, 2007

#### How YOU can help SAVE the turtles:

- During the nesting season (May-October), avoid nesting beaches at night;
- Pick up ALL litter from the beach and dispose of it properly in bins;
- Do not light any campfires on the beach;
- Obey any posted warning signs;
- Keep vehicles off nesting beaches;
- Do not collect or carry hatchlings;
- If you dig sand castles, please fill in the holes when you leave the beach;
- Do not touch or dig in any area that is marked by turtle monitoring teams;
- Do not camp on the beach.

This material was developed through the Supporting Activities that Value the Environment (SAVE) Project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. SAVE works to build local capacity to better protect and manage Cyprus' valuable natural and cultural resources. SAVE is dedicated to the ongoing effort to protect marine turtles in Cyprus.

