

**The 26th International Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation
(Island of Crete, Greece, 3-8 April 2006)
UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS**

Dimitris Margaritoulis

*President, International Sea Turtle Society
ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece, Solomou 57,
GR-10432 Athens, Greece (Email: margaritoulis@archelon.gr)*

Breaking the record of submitted abstracts

At the time of writing this note (end of November 2005) we are only four months away from the object of our efforts, the 26th Sea Turtle Symposium. I always knew that the Mediterranean was popular but I had not realized quite how much; we have surpassed all previous Symposia in the number of submitted abstracts. At the closure of the deadline for abstract submissions we had received 501 abstracts! Thank you all for your submissions. Of course, many of the “prefer oral” submissions will have to go as posters, as the oral time slots are limited and we will try to avoid, as much as we can, concurrent sessions. We shall give, however, enough time for poster sessions and interaction with poster authors. The Program Committee has a heavy task to accomplish but I am sure they will do fine.

Schedule and Program

- On 3 and 4 April we shall have the standard regional meetings (Africa, IOSEA, Mediterranean, RETOMALA, WIDECAST) and associated workshops. For more information on the regional meetings you can contact the respective coordinators (their contact details are available on the website).
- On the main days of the Symposium (5-7 April), besides the Standard Sessions (announced in the website) and the two Special Sessions (Turtles and Climate Change, and Ecological Roles of Sea Turtles), we are scheduling a special session in memory of Peter Lutz. In this 3-hour session we will have some very important contributions on sea turtle biology. The organization of the Panel

Discussion “Cooperative Approaches to Finding Sea Turtle Bycatch Solutions in Longline Fisheries” will provide the opportunity for those working with turtles at sea to be informed on recent findings. There will also be a special presentation by the IUCN’s Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG) on various issues rendering a global interest.

- On Saturday (8 April) we schedule in the morning the MTSG Annual meeting (0900-1200), and in the afternoon the Freshwater Turtle and Tortoise Session (1300-1800).

Translation: We aspire to be able to provide simultaneous translation mainly to French, for our French-speaking colleagues from Africa, but also, if possible, Spanish.

Fund-raising: Our fund-raising efforts are going fairly well. We have already registered some generous donors as the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, Florida Power and Light, the Bern Convention, the UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan. Further, we have serious hopes of getting funds from the Disney Animal Kingdom, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the RAC/SPA in Tunisia, the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research in Greece, and several other European and Mediterranean sources. For their help, advice and efforts regarding fundraising so far I would like to thank: Roderic Mast, Thane Wibbels, Nicolas Pilcher, Irene Kinan, Jeffrey Seminoff, Earl Possardt, Barbara Schroeder, Sheryan Epperly, Pieter Borkent, Eladio Galiano, Marco Barbieri, Paul Misfud and Maria Valerga. I would like to note here that ARCHELON, the Symposium local

host organization, has drafted an agreement with Thanos Belalidis, the Symposium Coordinator, to undertake fund-raising within Greece for the Symposium. Hopefully, we will succeed in getting some much-needed funds from the host country.

Several companies and organizations have already promised to sponsor a coffee-break or part of it. We thank them very much. We need some more sponsors. I remind you that one coffee-break for 600 people will cost about 2,700 Euro (about 3,300 USD at the time of writing this) but we can do with less by splitting a coffee-break among several sponsors. Sponsors' names will be acknowledged on site, unless they do not wish so. Please, consider this need and do your best to locate potential sponsors to cover this heavy Symposium expense.

Booking of Rooms: Although we are far from the room reservation deadline yet (1 March 2006), it is advisable to reserve your room now, as rooms will be reserved on a "first-in/first-served" basis. Please note that you can extend your stay at the hotel under the same prices. The hotel has a great flexibility in type of rooms and/or bungalows in various prices and configurations. You can do your reservation through the hotel's website www.capsis.gr/seaturtle/index.htm. Please fill in all the requested items in the Hotel Booking Form. Make sure that you provide also the names of your roommates. If you encounter any difficulties, please contact Georgia Vlahou gvlahou@capsis.gr or Thanos Belalidis symposium@sympraxis.gr.

Pre-Symposium Trips: For those of you who will have a stop-over in Athens we have some ideas on one-day trips to famous archaeological sites like Delfi and Mycenae. You can find these options by visiting www.astoria.gr/seaturtle/index.htm. Please contact them directly for any arrangements that suit you

Registration and ISTS Membership: About 600 people have registered early (before 16 November 2005). I thank them all, especially those who have paid their fees because this helps us very much to proceed with preparations. You must register to attend the Symposium, and you can do that preferably through the Symposium website <http://>

conferences.seaturtle.org/, where you can find all necessary information. The early-registration deadline has passed and now the registration fee is \$150 for non-students and \$75 for students (incl. membership to the ISTS). **Please note that registration fees are higher if not accompanied by membership dues to the ISTS.**

If, however, you prefer to mail your payments, please follow the instructions below:

Ask for a Registration Form from the address below (either through e-mail, fax or ordinary post) and, after you fill it, please mail it to the postal address below **together** with a cheque (in Euro, only), payable to the **Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece**.

ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece
Attn. Chrysanthe Otzakoglou
Solomou 57, GR-104 32 Athens, Greece
Tel./Fax: +30-210-5231342,
E-mail: tanty@archelon.gr

Please send the Registration Form and the cheque by using either registered mail or private courier. Do not forget to include the cheque together with the Registration Form. You will receive a confirmation as soon as the above have been received.

During your on-line (or postal) registration you will have the option of paying also for tickets to the **Welcome Cocktail** (\$ 20) and the **Farewell Party** (\$45 for non-students and \$25 for students).

Proceedings: In this Symposium, we will make an attempt to have the Proceedings ready on-site. For this we shall need your help as follows: The authors of the accepted initial abstracts (250 words max) will have the opportunity to modify and/or extend their abstracts up to 500 words (without graphics or tables). This can be done on-line, through the Symposium website, by **15 February 2006** at the latest. Those unable to access the Symposium website can send their extended or modified abstracts to Theoni Karkoulia, either through e-mail to communication@archelon.gr or

by registered mail (or private courier) to ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece, Attn. Theoni Karkoulia, Solomou 57, GR-10432 Athens, Greece. In case you use the post or courier, please have your abstract as a Microsoft Word file, on a diskette (please avoid sending a hard copy). In case of no submission of an extended abstract, the original abstract (if accepted by the Program Committee) will be published in the Proceedings.

Cancellations: If you have a reason to cancel your oral or poster presentation, please inform both the Program Chair Dr. Brendan Godley bgodley@seaturtle.org and the Program Coordinator Dr. Kartik Shanker kartik@atree.org.

Post-Symposium Trips: We have arranged with a local travel agency some guided trips on Crete, all after the end of the Symposium. These trips, combining nature walks and archaeological/cultural visits, will be held between 8 and 10 April 2006. You may find detailed information at: www.legrand.gr/seaturtle/index.htm. Please, contact the agency directly for any arrangements you might wish. In case you encounter any difficulty or problem, please contact the Symposium Coordinator Thanos Belalidis symposium@sympraxis.gr.

Vendor & Display Tables: At the time I am writing this (end of November 2005) we have rented 15 tables. I thank all those who have already done so. The Vendor Table area is limited. If you are thinking of renting a table, please do so as soon as possible. You can do this through the symposium website. For further information, please, contact Aliko Panagopoulou aliki@archelon.gr.

Visas: You can find which nationalities need a visa to enter Greece at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website: www.mfa.gr/english/foreign_policy/eu/visa_inf.html. Please, apply for a visa **well in advance** to the Consulates of Greece in your country (contact details can be found at: www.mfa.gr/english/the_ministry/missions/). If you encounter difficulties in obtaining a visa, please contact the Symposium Coordinator Thanos Belalidis symposium@sympraxis.gr explaining the problem and providing your full personal details; we will try to help you but shall need plenty of time for that.

Communications: Please do not neglect to visit regularly the Symposium website <http://conferences.seaturtle.org/> for updating information. If you have any questions, please contact the Symposium Coordinator Thanos Belalidis symposium@sympraxis.gr.