

Sea turtle conservation, Greece

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I attended volunteering with Wildlife Sense in Kefalonia on 4th June 2019 – 18th June 2019. I stayed in the smaller town of Lixouri which was a ferry ride away from the airport. The volunteering activity involved turtle conservation.

In the morning, beach surveys were completed at 5am to assess for turtle tracks. At this time of year, female turtles were laying their nests. Necessary training was done in order to recognise half-moon shapes that are indicative of turtle tracks. If found, photos were taken of tracks and a nesting attempt was noted into the survey note sheet. An attempt could be: no attempt, body pit, extended body pit, abandoned egg chamber or a nest. If it was established that the attempt was a nest, then the potential nest was dug up to around 30cm using hands only. The nest was dug until the top layer of eggs were uncovered. Once found, the depth of the eggs was recorded in order to work out if the eggs were deep enough for good incubation. The surrounding area was also scrutinised in case relocation of the nest needed to occur. The nest would then be covered up and protected using bamboo in order to minimise disturbance to the eggs by humans. In the day time various other activities would be completed depending on the shift rota, such as beach profiling, harbour, bike maintenance, sand sifting for plastic and cooking meals for the rest of the volunteers. At night, surveys were also completed on the longest beach Mega Lakkos, this involved measuring and tagging female turtles coming into nest.

This trip helped my career development as it gave me relevant work experience in the field I am interested in. It gave me valuable team working skills, as well as leadership skills as there were many times that I was field leader and was responsible for the group. It was interesting working with people from many different backgrounds, with differing levels of knowledge on marine biology. Overall it has definitely helped with future career planning.

