**Turtles versus Tourists**

The **Caretta-Caretta** sea turtles are a tourist attraction on the Greek island of Zakynthos. Thousands of tourists gather on the beaches to observe them in their natural environment. Unfortunately, this increased interest often proves detrimental to these incredible creatures. Females, heading to the beach to lay their eggs, are at risk of injury from the propellers of motorboats pulling water skiers or paragliders. Contact with a jet ski's propeller often ends tragically for the turtle as well.

A significant threat comes from plastic bags carelessly thrown into the water by tourists. Turtles mistake them for their prey - jellyfish. By ingesting them, they simply suffocate.

Arriving safely on the beach does not mean the end of dangers for our turtles. The noise coming from hotels, taverns, bars, and restaurants, flashing lights, neon signs, and tourists spending evenings and nights on the beach cause disorientation for the female turtles, causing them to return to the sea without laying their eggs.

Eggs laid on the beach are also exposed to various dangers. They are often run over by motorcycle or car tires, destroyed by horse hooves. Even a simple hole dug on the beach can be a deadly trap for a small turtle. It often happens that the little turtles, which hatch on the beaches of Zakynthos from early August to the end of September, instead of heading towards the bright horizon indicating the sea shore, are misled by the lights of establishments and head inland, where certain death awaits them.

To protect the **Caretta-Caretta** turtles, the Marine National Park was established in Zakynthos. A three-tiered control system limiting human access has been introduced, and a "curfew" is enforced on the beaches throughout the night.