

The Tilos Park Experience

Constantine Alexander (a.k.a. Konstantinos A. Mentzelopoulos)

Natura 2000 NP Ambassador

Korthis Bay

GR-84502 Andros

Tel.: +30-697-393-7087

E-mail: Constantine.Alexander@live.com

Web: www.ConstantineAlexander.net

The Tilos Park Experience

Natura 2000 Networking Programme Conference

“Success Stories & Further Potential”

28 November 2007

Auditorium Fortis Bank, Brussels, Belgium

Rue de la Chancellerie, 1

1000 Bruxelles

Table of Contents

- The Tilos Park Association, an NGO
- Tilos, a Greek Island SPA
- Tilos Stakeholder Analysis
 - A. The Changing Culture of Three Island Generations
 - B. Spectrum of Stakeholder Behavioral Response to “Foreign” Project Participants
 - C. Parallel Development of Project Action Success with Stakeholder Support and Participation
- Stakeholder Participation Development on Tilos
- TPA Nature Protection and Ecotourism Development Actions in 36 Months with Stakeholder Support and Participation
 1. The EU Tilos LIFE Nature Project
 2. TPA Cooperation with Hellenic Environment Ministry to Establish the Tilos Natural Park
 3. The Tilos Wetlands Development Project
 4. The Tilos Park Journal
 5. TPA Action for Renewable Energy
 6. TPA Meets with Government At All Levels
 7. Avian Recovery Center (ARC)
 8. TPA Cooperation with NGO’s
 9. Volunteer Island Coastal Clean-up Actions
 10. Island Environmental Surveillance Patrols
 11. TPA Sponsors Tilos Bird Ringing Research with Stakeholder Contributions
 12. TPA Initiates Academic Ecology Field Studies on Tilos
 13. TPA Receives Hellenic Ministry Employment Assistance
- TPA Development of Stakeholder Site Operation and NGO Management
- Biographical Note of Author/Conference Speaker

The Tilos Park Experience

- **The Genesis of this Subject Concerning a Universal Experience**

The Tilos Park Association was invited to share its NGO experience on Tilos as part of the November 28, 2007, Natura 2000 Networking Program Conference in Brussels, Belgium, sponsored by the European Commission. The TPA discussion concerns: “The Tilos Park Association development of stakeholder participation in the protection of nature and the establishment of the Tilos Natural Park (Protected Area).”

During the last 3 years, the Tilos Park Association story has been unfolding in a manner that can be adapted to many locations around the world simply because of what has been learned about human nature, socio-economic development and the rewards offered in response to the efforts that are given to worthwhile endeavors.

- **The Tilos Park Association, an NGO**

The Tilos Park Association, a non-profit association (“TPA”), was founded by current TPA Director Konstantinos Mentzelopoulos in July 2004, for the express purpose of serving as an island based NGO to independently develop and implement environmental conservation actions in concert with responsible eco-tourism development in this EU Special Protection Area.

- **Tilos, a Greek Island SPA**

Tilos is a small, 63 km² Greek island with 350 permanent residents located 20 km from the southwest coast of Turkey in the Dodecanese island chain situated in the southeastern Aegean Sea north of Rhodes.

Tilos was first identified as an area of outstanding conservation importance in the mid 1980’s by the Corinne Biotopes Project. Thereafter, it was included by Greece in its first national inventory of Important Bird Areas (ICBP, 1989). In support of growing international recognition of Tilos as an important wildlife conservation location, Tilos was selected as the host site for a 1997 UNESCO international ecological conference. Tilos and its 16 uninhabited islets are an EU registered Special Protection Area, Natura 2000 site and current host to the 2005-2008 European Union Tilos LIFE Nature Project.

The unique natural environment of Tilos consists, in significant part, of 155 resident and migratory wild bird species (one quarter of which are legally protected and listed in Annex I of the European Union Birds Directive 79/409/EEC, including the Eleonora Falcon, to which Tilos is seasonal home to 5% of the entire world population); more than 387 recorded botanical species, including 28 orchid species of which 8 are identified as rare; 16 biotopes with priority habitat types; 6 mountains and the highest, regional formations of coastal limestone cliffs; 19 beaches, predominantly accessible only by foot and characterized by surrounding mountainous formations; a marine environment that shelters the IUCN Red Listed sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and the “critically endangered” Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*); underground fresh water springs that nourish Tilos, thereby obviating the need for imported fresh water; and indigenous herpetofauna, certain species of which originated in Asia Minor and Africa and are rare in the European continent.

- **Tilos Stakeholder Analysis**

The TPA organized its original actions around three universally recognized concepts:

The importance of identifying (A) the cultural history and sociological sensitivities of the local stakeholders, which in this case represent three generations of islanders; (B) the spectrum of stakeholder behavioral response to the local community introduction of “foreign” environmental conservation project participants; and (C) the evolutionary means by which foreign project participants can develop “primary” and “secondary” stakeholder participation.

A. The Changing Culture of Three Island Generations

Prior to World War II, Tilos boasted a significantly higher population of full time inhabitants. The pre-war island culture and economy was dependent upon cattle, sheep and goat herding; local fishing and hunting of wild avian species (such as the currently threatened Eleonora Falcon) as well as local vegetable and fruit cultivation for basic survival. The island was devastated by occupational enemy forces and allied bombing during the war, resulting in a significant post war population decline from wartime deaths and emigration.

WWII Generation

As a result of the post war population decline on Tilos to approximately a few dozen households and the extreme isolation of the undeveloped island which was accessible only by boat without any port facilities, the islanders survived from a continuation of their pre-war activities. However, a small population is traditionally unable to gain the attention and support of its national authorities. As a result, infrastructure investment is hindered which, in turn, limits the education and development of the community. This is currently manifested in the war-time island generation that has always valued natural resource consumption, including hunting wildlife, as an important component of their cultural history and survival.

Post War Generation

During the last quarter century of Greek membership in the European Union, EU development programs have contributed to the increased education and advancement of the post war generation on Tilos. As a result, this middle-aged generation of islanders was able to procure and develop the means to build businesses, port facilities, a school and markets to receive food produce from external sources as a supplement to island cultivation. The consumption of natural resources, such as hunting wildlife for food, gradually diminished in necessity, frequency and extent.

There is a small but influential post war generation of islanders who left Tilos and emigrated to the US, Germany, Australia and other countries in order to settle and pursue their livelihoods in more prosperous communities. This group owns real property on Tilos and is interested in the pecuniary benefits of further construction development.

Second Post War Generation

The second post war island generation has availed itself of increasingly efficient transportation, education, communication and technology sources along with greater access to information concerning European Union standards of education, health, safety and environmental standards. This development has resulted in a greater intellectual inquisitiveness and cultural reception to changing European attitudes and mores by this generation.

TPA Lessons from Island Cultural History

By talking individually with island residents, the TPA concluded that the elderly war-time generation is understandably not yet convinced about the benefits of nature conservation, because this represents a conflict with their lifetime activities and memories; however, they are in favor of developing island eco-tourism which financially supports their younger family relations on the island. This, in turn, offers the TPA an opportunity to earn their support for nature protection activities.

The middle-aged post war generation focuses on financially supporting the family and this primary interest conflicts with the incorrect assumption that environmental conservation causes reduced financial opportunities for gain.

Not surprisingly, the young, second post war generation that live on the island represent the most willing and active participants in the achievement of island nature protection and ecotourism development. It is important that this active participation be viewed within the context of the post war generation's skepticism about the degree to which nature protection actions might prevent further construction development and diminish potential profits for the family. This youthful activism must also be recognized within the context of the cultural traditions of the Greek family structure in which elders serve as both role models and guides to recommended family lifestyles for young family members. As subsequently explained, a few young islanders have overturned this traditional norm by influencing the long standing social values of their family elders as a result of their stakeholder participation with the TPA.

B. Spectrum of Stakeholder Behavioral Response to “Foreign” Project Participants

The TPA is essentially operated by three individuals representing (1) a non-Tilian, Greek national as Founder and Director, (2) a foreign-born Co-Founder and volunteer with a doctoral degree and thirty-two years of professional employment experience in Europe and North America, and (3) three Greek local stakeholders, two of whom were not born on Tilos. The origin of these five people is pivotal to this TPA experience because they are perceived by the Tilos stakeholders to be “foreign”, regardless of the national Hellenic origins of four out of five of the individuals.

History has demonstrated that the spectrum of stakeholder behavioral response to perceived intrusion by “foreign” project participants in their community commences with opposition and hostility by a noteworthy number of residents due to their fear of change. Provided that the “foreign” project participants conduct their daily personal and professional activities with honesty, integrity and patience, and further provided that the project participants begin to achieve visible success for the benefit of the community, the opposition gradually recedes and is replaced by skepticism as well as concern for any potential detriment to their way of life, income stability and personal asset protection (such as land ownership). Receding skepticism evolves into distant observation by the stakeholders of the nascent project actions. The subsequent phases of this spectrum develop into gradual acceptance of the project participants themselves and the project actions, which is followed by increasingly active participation by stakeholders.

C. Parallel Development of Project Action Success with Stakeholder Support and Participation

The TPA has characterized Tilos island stakeholder participation in nature protection and ecotourism development activities as “primary” and “secondary”. For TPA purposes, the distinction between the two is determined by whether a stakeholder’s personal and/or professional interests and activities directly touch and concern the nature protection/ecotourism development actions.

The distinction was made for one important reason: to become aware of and network with the island stakeholders who (i) have social/cultural influence with other stakeholders, (ii) are deemed to be island role models who contribute significantly to the political, economic or cultural island activities, and/or (iii) possess a motivation to join the TPA in actively implementing/promoting nature protection and ecotourism development activities (as this incentive customarily relates to prospective financial benefit or recreational enjoyment for the stakeholder).

- Stakeholder Participation Development on Tilos

Following the establishment of the TPA, the TPA Director received serious private as well as public threats of grievous bodily harm and death in the presence of witnesses on several different occasions as well as an attempt against his life. The Director was told that the threats would be realized if the TPA did not terminate its nature protection and eco-tourism development activities. The Director diffused these threats by converting the “faceless” and “anonymous” group into recognizable individuals. By turning to each person, addressing him by name and inquiring whether he personally intended the threats during group confrontations, some group members withdrew and a few even apologized. Although a small core group of opposition members still exists on a declining basis, this nature and degree of opposition is not unexpected in such circumstances.

A remarkable turn of events occurred in this continuing story which represents a departure from Greek cultural family norms, as previously described. Young adult family members of a few of the aforementioned opponents actually became the most committed stakeholder participants associated with the TPA. On their own initiative and in their own family homes, these young stakeholder participants raised their family’s awareness about the pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits of nature protection and ecotourism development as a result of their volunteer experiences and education with the TPA.

One excellent illustration of this young stakeholder participation experience with the TPA concerns a Long Legged Buzzard [*Buteo rufinus*] injured from shotgun pellets by an illegal island hunter. One afternoon this young stakeholder, whose family had been fierce TPA opponents, brought this injured raptor which was wrapped in his highly prized football jacket to the Director’s home.

After the bird was placed in an outdoor landscaped cage designed to care for injured wildlife, the Director brought his own books about European bird species out onto the patio. The Director and the Tilian sat down together and thumbed through the books to learn how to identify this bird species, the bird’s approximate age, life expectancy, geographical distribution and vulnerability status. Before leaving that day, the stakeholder volunteered to bring the raptor small, live chickens (as prey) on a regular basis as recommended by the TPA wildlife advisors (referred to in Item No. 6 below). A few weeks later, the stakeholder learned through his independent internet research that this raptor customarily

likes to perch on a large rock. So the stakeholder brought a tall, heavy rock, and during its recovery period, the raptor regularly used that rocky perch as it would in the wild. And then the stakeholder named the bird. And, thus, a relationship developed between the stakeholder and the raptor.

At the end of four months after the buzzard had recovered from its injuries, the TPA Director asked the stakeholder if he would like to assist Dr. Haralambos Alivizatos, the EU Tilos LIFE Nature ornithologist, in the first Tilos bird ringing which was performed on this buzzard. The stakeholder was eager to participate and, after the ringing and photos were taken, the stakeholder was given the well deserved honor of releasing the buzzard back into the wild. To this day, the stakeholder still expresses an interest in whether any of the Long Legged Buzzards that he occasionally observes in flight over the island is the one he came to know.

For two years, this stakeholder, (occasionally with some of his companions), volunteered without compensation to regularly assist the TPA with rescuing, feeding and caring for wild birds that are injured or weakened from migratory journeys. In addition to learning about island wildlife species, he conducted island surveillance of storm damage to walking paths and cultural monuments, illegal activities related to wildlife; accompanied student groups that visited Tilos for ecology field studies, assisted the EU LIFE Nature and Hellenic Ornithological Society ornithologist on every island visit for scientific research, contributed island photographs for island eco-tourism development in brochures and leaflets, and more. In 2007, he joined the TPA as a paid employee and was elected to the Tilos Park Association Board of Directors.

This stakeholder changed his family's opinion about the TPA and now his family supports the NGO. Stakeholder participation has therefore been a vital and indeed valuable component of a majority of TPA actions as hereinafter described.

- **TPA Nature Protection and Ecotourism Development Actions in 36 Months with Stakeholder Support and Participation**

The following represents a sample of nature protection and ecotourism development actions performed by the TPA in the first 36 months of its existence. There is also a brief, accompanying explanation of stakeholder participation.

1. **The EU Tilos LIFE Nature Project:** The TPA is a full partner in the three year European Union Tilos LIFE Nature Project established for the purpose of rehabilitating the threatened population of three wild avian species to a favorable conservation status. The LIFE Nature sponsorship by the European Union is joined in partnership by the Tilos Park Association, the Hellenic Ministry of Rural Food and Development, Oikos Ltd. and the Tilos Municipality. The €824.212 project investment actions directly and indirectly benefit all resident and migratory avian species and other flora as well as fauna on Tilos.

The TPA employed staff of stakeholders as well as unpaid stakeholder participants have accompanied the LIFE Nature and Hellenic Ornithological Society ornithologists and biologists during their island field studies. The stakeholders are equipped with books and binoculars and assist in bird observations during which time the stakeholders have learned about island wildlife species.

2. **TPA Cooperation with Hellenic Environment Ministry to Establish the Tilos Natural Park:** The most important TPA action envisions the imminent establishment of a proposed Tilos Natural Park recommended by Faidon Papatheodorou and Nikolaos Pagkas in their 1997 “Tilos Natural Park: Special Environmental Study”. As a direct result of frequent dialogue and cooperation between the Hellenic Ministry of the Environment and the TPA during the last three years, this Study was officially approved by the Ministry on October 23, 2006. The TPA undertook this cooperative action because of the inherent importance of this official approval to the TPA aims. The approval constitutes official Hellenic government acceptance of the merits of the scientific data and the government responsibility to ensure the fulfillment of the Study recommendations. These recommendations include the establishment of the Tilos Natural Park with protection zones and the permanent prohibition against hunting on the entire island for the benefit of threatened wildlife species conservation. The proposed Presidential Decree for the establishment of the Tilos Natural Park has been approved by all Greek Ministries involved as well as the regional and local governments. It is in the process of being submitted to the Greek Supreme Court for constitutional review. It is the first

time in the last twenty years that a Presidential Decree which guarantees permanence has been prepared for the declaration of a Protected Area in Greece.

The foregoing is critical to the nature protection and ecotourism development aims of the TPA because the Natural Park establishment will provide a legal framework for beneficial nature protection on the island as well as ecotourism employment and promotional opportunities for stakeholders.

- 3. The Tilos Wetlands Development Project:** The TPA independently initiated and successfully applied for the award of a 2006 EU Interreg III Tilos/Cyprus Environmental Activities Project for the benefit of the Tilos Municipality. This project for Tilos includes a €373.000 wetlands development project for wildlife, a student environmental education museum and the publication of an island nature guide.

As a result, the TPA has been working with a group of young adult volunteer stakeholders in the development of the nature and visitor guide based upon their contribution of information, map design and photographs drawn from their knowledge of the island terrain and wildlife.

- 4. The Tilos Park Journal:** The TPA publishes the quarterly Greek/English Tilos Park Journal distributed electronically and in newspaper format to over 6.000 international as well as Hellenic readers, including Members of EU Parliament, EU Commission, Hellenic Parliament and Ministry Representatives, European newspapers and magazines (e.g. French *La Liberation*, Danish *Berlingske Tidende*, German *Freiheit fur Tiere*, Greek *Athens News*, *Rodiaki*, British *Royal Society Geographical*, etc.), European eco-tour operators, international schools and universities (e.g. the *Athens international Champion School*, *University of the Aegean*, the *Daphne Environmental Program* at the *Athens Polytechnic School*), European NGO's (e.g. *Hellenic and International Ornithological Societies*, *Europarc*, *WWF*, *RSPB*, *Audubon Society*, *MOM*), European industry executives (e.g. *Membership Director of International Chamber of Commerce* in Paris, *Airbus*), local residents and more.

The ethos of the Tilos Park Journal was to establish a regular publication of Tilos island environmental news that relates directly to United Nations Environment Program action plans/aims (e.g. 2006 Mediterranean Action Plan); EU Birds, Habitats and Environmental Damage Liability Directives: 79/409/EEC, 92/43/EEC and 2004/35/EC respectively; EU Actions, (e.g. EU Action Plan to reverse biodiversity loss by 2010, EU Avian Species Action Plans); the Kyoto Protocol; IUCN aims; relevant international conventions (e.g. Ramsar Convention, Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Water Birds); and Hellenic environmental programs.

By relating the significance of the local island news to European and international institutional aims as well as actions, the Journal becomes a stakeholder educational awareness tool as well as a local promotional venue directed at a targeted international audience. This, in turn, results in (a) European philanthropic contributions of expertise to the TPA (e.g. in marine biology, geology, renewable energy, botany, and more), (b) increased stakeholder awareness of the socio-economic benefits of their nature protection/ecotourism development activities and (c) the construction of a vital bridge between the stakeholders and the “foreign” project participants by connecting the aims and philosophies of the project to the pecuniary and non-pecuniary* benefits realized by stakeholders through project actions.

*[Non-pecuniary benefits have been found to be as valuable to stakeholders as pecuniary benefits. The TPA has heard from many stakeholders that the most important non-pecuniary benefit is the creation of gainful island employment for their children in order to keep the family together. The widely publicized EU concern about “desertification of the EU countryside” continues to exist on Tilos and therefore employment for family unity and cohesion is important.]

Extensive stakeholder participation in the Journal preparation includes regular contributions of photographs taken by islanders as well as reports by islanders of threatened species observations (e.g. Mediterranean Monk Seal) and stakeholder rescues (e.g. 65 avian and other wildlife rescues in 3 years including a sea turtle rescue by a local boat tour operator and grocery store owner) used as the basis for Journal articles. In

addition, stakeholder participation in nature protection and ecotourism development actions are reported in the Journal. These reports serve to publicize the increasing frequency of exemplary nature protection actions by islanders. These reports are read by their island peers who become better informed and also by tourists who read the Journal. The resulting eco-tourist support is often manifested in the tourists' particular selection of a restaurant, boat trip operator, mini-market or other service corresponding to a Journal report about a feature of particular interest to the eco-tourist. This in turn provides a visible financial benefit to stakeholders who, recognizing this benefit, are encouraged to continue nature protection/ecotourism development activities on Tilos.

5. **TPA Action for Renewable Energy:** The TPA invited and coordinated the 2006 and 2007 visits by Antonis Iliopoulos, a renewable energy expert employed by British Petroleum, to work with the TPA on a philanthropic basis to identify and implement feasible environmental conservation actions on Tilos. Specifically, the TPA and Mr. Iliopoulos have commenced: (1) research into the feasibility of incorporating photovoltaic renewable energy sources to power certain municipal offices and hotel industry accommodations and features; (2) the delivery of cloth bags free of charge to every island resident to replace plastic shopping bag use by virtue of a matching grant from BP; and (3) the scheduled testing of a prototype electric car and electric scooter for potential acquisition by local vehicle rental agencies for use by tourists.

Stakeholder participation includes owners of hotels and vehicle rental agencies cooperating with the TPA in electric vehicle prototype tests and economic evaluations. The hotel owners and municipality have also expressed an interest in working with the TPA in cooperation with Mr. Iliopoulos in the installation of renewable energy sources for the benefit of their expanding business operations.

6. **TPA Meets with Government At All Levels:** The TPA has initiated meetings, telephone discussions and written communications with Hellenic national, regional and local government officials and elected representatives to promote government support and approval, where necessary or advisable, of environmental conservation actions on Tilos. This

basic tenet of the TPA serves to foster mutual understanding of problems and encourage bi-lateral cooperation for mutually beneficial solutions.

The TPA Director has met on Tilos with Hellenic Republic President Karolos Papoulias (who requested and received TPA membership on June 18, 2006), Hellenic Health (former Tourism) Minister Avramopoulos, former Aegean Minister Pavlides, Hellenic Parliament Member Karamarios, and Dodecanese Governor Mahairides. The TPA has sent letters with an accompanying legal/socio-economic thesis prepared by the TPA entitled “Protection of Tilos” to Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis, Cabinet Ministers and regional officials.

One of the beneficial by-products of the TPA’s frequent dialogue with governmental representatives is that stakeholders have recognized the value of the TPA as a speaker of their individual voices to elected officials. This confidence developed into the joint cooperation between the TPA and stakeholders in government meetings.

An example is when the Tilos Hotel Association President requested the TPA Director to arrange and attend a meeting with the former Hellenic Aegean Minister on behalf of the local ecotourism industry. As requested, the TPA, two City Councilmen and the Tilos Hotel Association President met with the Minister on Tilos for the purpose of discussing island boat service during the tourist season.

Stakeholder participation in these events is also developed by the TPA in different ways. An example is the procurement by the TPA of a local island artist who sculpted (without compensation) a natural wood carving which he presented as a memento to the President of the Hellenic Republic during his visit to the TPA office. In addition, another stakeholder voluntarily attended to the administrative functions associated with the Hellenic President’s request and payment for TPA membership. A third stakeholder took photographs for the Tilos Park Journal. Other stakeholders attended this visit as members of the audience.

7. **Avian Recovery Center (ARC):** An Avian Recovery Center established by the TPA provided care for 54 wild birds

representing 19 different species, 14 feral cats and 4 Eastern European hedgehogs in the last 3 years. Personal resources of the TPA Director and stakeholder volunteers have provided the food and medicine recommended by Dr. Haralambos Alivizatos, Chief Tilos Life Nature Project Ornithologist; Mr. Philipos Dragoumis, former Director of the Aegina Wildlife Rehabilitation Center and current Director of International Nature Network; and Dr. Anastasia Komninou (DVM), Professor at the Veterinary School of the University of Thessaloniki. The species that are injured or severely weakened from migration are routinely discovered and brought to the ARC by stakeholders and tourists.

Local residents have donated their own personal resources (such as locally caught fish and live chickens for the injured herons and raptors) as well as their own personal time in assisting the TPA in the care, feeding, and supply deliveries for recovering wildlife at the ARC. The Tilos Park Journal publishes news of these stakeholder participation actions.

8. **TPA Cooperation with NGO's:** The TPA networks with other NGO's for scientific research and the development of innovative nature protection and ecotourism actions on the island.

The TPA incorporates stakeholder participation in each action because the TPA objective is to transfer the day to day management and operation of these activities to stakeholders. This transfer is critical to ensure the continuing, long term nature protection and ecotourism development on the island because the ethos of these policies should be taught to the next generation by stakeholders rather than "foreign" project participants in order for these policies to become a part of the local culture.

9. **Volunteer Island Coastal Clean-up Actions:** The TPA has engaged resident island volunteers in coastal area cleaning operations for the benefit of wildlife and stakeholder owned hotels, restaurants and other tourist related services.
10. **Island Environmental Surveillance Patrols:** The TPA works with local island residents to discuss island wildlife, lawfully prohibited activities concerning wildlife, damaging natural occurrences (e.g. fires, illegal hunting/shooting, tree damage,

mountain and soil subsidence), and other nature protection issues related to the volunteer stakeholder surveillance patrols conducted throughout the island which previously did not exist.

These surveillance patrols have been regularly conducted during the last 2 years by stakeholder participants who also report their findings to the TPA and, in certain cases, engage in volunteer remedial activities with the consent of the Municipality.

- 11. TPA Sponsors Tilos Bird Ringing Research with Stakeholder Contributions:** Dr. Haralambos Alivizatos, Tilos LIFE Nature ornithologist, Hellenic Ornithological Society member and contributing author of International and European Avian Species Action Plans, has worked in conjunction with the TPA in the establishment of bi-annual bird ringing research on Tilos for Hellenic and European Union scientific data research.

The TPA received a generous contribution in 2006 from a stakeholder through the donation of his hotel and office accommodations to the bird ringing team of ornithologists in addition to the use of his private land during the bird ringing project period. Other stakeholder participants volunteer to erect the poles and nets, assist the ornithologists' project needs, take photographs and return the bird ringing equipment purchased by the TPA to the TPA office. Tilos stakeholders also ring birds under the guidance of Dr. Alivizatos and thereby learn about the unique characteristics of each ringed species.

- 12. TPA Initiates Academic Ecology Field Studies on Tilos:** The TPA invited and cooperates with Richard Scarr, Biology teacher at the international Campion School in Athens, for the twice annual Tilos ecology field studies that he conducts with biology students for academic credit. Mr. Scarr has volunteered to advise and cooperate with the TPA in expanding the number of educational institutions that participate in Tilos island academic ecology field studies. The TPA also cooperates with the Daphne Program at the Athens Polytechnic School in the conduct of Hellenic environmental research data collection.

- 13. TPA Receives Hellenic Ministry Employment Assistance:** The Hellenic Ministry of Labor approved the TPA application of funding for two employment positions for ecotourism development in 2007/2008. Two stakeholders who volunteered their participation with the TPA without compensation for the longest period of time were offered these positions. (One stakeholder is a family member of former strong TPA opponents who endeavored to convince their son that the TPA was disingenuous in its eco-employment creation aims and future offer.) The TPA recognizes that commitment to its publicly stated aims is essential to the creation of stakeholder confidence and trust for the success of any program.
- 14. Daily Operation of the Tilos LIFE-Nature Visitor Center:** The TPA operates the EU Life Nature Project Exhibition and Visitor Center and has provided information about the island's biodiversity and ecotourism value to more than 5.000 visitors in the past two years. Over the same time period, the TPA has responded to more than 4.000 e-mails that it has received from potential visitors who request information about Tilos and its environment.
- 15. Island Tours and Seminars:** The TPA operates island tours and audio-visual seminars on the biodiversity, nature protection and cultural history of Tilos.
- 16. Development & Implementation of the Tilos Park Marketing Campaign:** The TPA has designed and implemented a marketing campaign for the ecotourism development of Tilos Island. This campaign includes the development and promotion of a web site which received 120.000 visitors from 75 countries in 2007, the production of articles and accompanying photographs for Greek and international newspapers and magazines (Athens News, Rodiaki, Proodos, Demokratiki, Environment 21, The Sunday Times, La Liberation, etc.), the invitation to TV production companies to film reports and documentaries on Tilos (ASAHI TV Network in Japan, SKAI TV, Channel 4, Channel 12, Irida Channel, Greek Travel Channel, and ERT in Greece, Naturezza in Spain, TRT TV in Turkey, etc.), the participation in Travel Expos (such as Filoxenia, Student Travel Expo, etc.), the invitation to European journalists to visit the Tilos Park to report on its activities (Kathimerini, Eleftherotypia, To Vima

and Eleftheros Typos from Greece, Holiday in Greece, Wiener Journal, OON and Nachrichten in Austria, The Griecheland Report and Freiheit fur Tierre in Germany, Berlingske Tindende in Denmark and more).

17. **Selection by the European Commission to Brussels Green Week 2007 Conference Participation:** The TPA was selected by the European Commission to be an exhibitor at the Green Week 2007 Conference in Brussels, Belgium. The European Commission paid for all expenses related to this project which was visited by over 900 Conference participants in five days.
18. **Host to Annual International Volunteers for Island Nature Protection Actions:** In the summer of 2007, the TPA hosted sixty volunteers from 17 countries who engaged in nature protection actions such as countryside cleaning, walking path restoration, cultural monument maintenance, etc. The TPA engaged in cooperation with ELIX, an NGO in Athens, Greece, which provided insurance coverage and technical assistance for this project.
19. **Development of Scientific Library:** The TPA has developed a scientific library about the natural environment and biodiversity of Tilos with contributions from visiting scientists from all over the world. The library of botanical, ornithological, geological, marine and climate change information is at the TPA office which is open to the public. The latest library project involves the development of a flora searchable database which will assist visitors to easily and correctly identify plants that they encounter on Tilos with only a description of the plant to be searched.
20. **Receiving EUROPARC Internship Support:** The TPA received Europarc membership as well as technical support and was selected by Europarc Federation to be a host site as one out of only twelve 2008 Europarc Internship Program locations in the 38 countries in which Europarc operates.
21. **Receiving Local Support:** The TPA has succeeded in receiving membership support from one third of Tilos residents.

22. **Marine Conservation:** The TPA has begun the development of a feasibility study of prototype actions for threatened marine species conservation.

- **TPA Development of Stakeholder Site Operation and NGO Management**

The TPA was established with international, national and stakeholder Founding Members and Board of Directors. A primary organizational aim is to develop stakeholder site operation and NGO management under the auspices of the Board of Directors pursuant to the NGO By-Laws.

In order to ensure this development, certain pre-requisites must be established. The basic professional functions necessary to ensure the continuing growth of the TPA include, without limitation: (i) a model for revenue generating activities independent of disproportionate reliance upon government programs, (ii) accounting, and correct maintenance of books and records for government and/or member audits; (iii) a model for basic promotional venues, to ensure the continuing and increasing visibility of the NGO to attract innovative ideas and actions; and (iv) professional apprenticeship whereby the original project participants and interested stakeholder participants work together to reinforce the necessary awareness of the value of successful actions and prior unsuccessful actions.

When this has been accomplished, “foreign” project participants should prepare to take their leave. This is the ultimate manifestation of stakeholder participation and the most successful means of ensuring that the nature protection as well as ecotourism actions are truly their own to teach to the next generation.

“I promised the rainbow a better earth, a season full of soil fresh with immaculate chamomile at the bare feet ... With pure white birds I filled the wind that will go to the morning inauguration of the sea! And here we are both ready, holding hands... When we blow, the veil opens ... to beautiful years yet to come ... From that point, toil will begin and happiness will enter the crystals we awaited ...”

From “The Whole World” by Odysseus Elytis, 1979 Nobel Laureate