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TOURISM MINISTER AVRAMOPOULOS SUPPORTS TILOS NATURAL PARK

The Tilos Park Association [TPA] would like to extend its sincere appreciation to Hellenic Tourism Minister Dimitris Avramopoulos for his personal two day visit to Tilos last September and for his letter of support to the TPA Director concerning the establishment of the proposed Tilos Natural Park. In his letter, he said "I believe that this is a worthwhile initiative which will contribute on its own merit to the general promotion of our country."

The TPA believes in resolving important socio-economic issues through dialogue and mutual cooperation between

the private and public sector at all levels. During his September visit, Minister Avramopoulos demonstrated this shared philosophy as he met with island residents at the TPA office, answered questions and discussed subjects of island concern at length before touring the island to better comprehend the local issues.

It is well known that during the last ten years Tilos, an EU registered Special Protection Area, has undertaken private and municipal efforts to develop ecotourism around the anticipated Natural Park. In

furtherance of this aim, the TPA was founded in 2003 to manage the proposed Park and thereby relieve the Hellenic government of any obligation to maintain it. The TPA looks forward in the future to working with Minister Avramopoulos, whose recognition of the merit of the anticipated Park and whose efforts to assist the islanders in their ecotourism based economy will serve to benefit the region and support the national economy.



TILOS' CHANCES IN THE MARKETING SEGMENT OF ECOTOURISM

By Dr. Mario F. Broggi

Translated by Wilfried Kaufmann

Mario F. Broggi (60) is a graduated Forestry Engineer and Ecologist. He is a university lecturer at the University of Basle and at the University of Vienna. He is the former General Manager of the Swiss Federal Institute for Forests, Snow and Landscape Research. Today he is working for the Council of the Swiss Federal Technical University (ETH Council, specialising in issues of regional development and sustainability. He is also a Counsellor in various private Foundations involved in environmental protection.

According to Tourist Guides written in German, Tilos ought to be one of the last calm and contemplative Islands in the Aegean. This issue alone is enticing enough for a fan of Greece and a nature freak anyway to visit this Island. Since 1973 a group of naturalists having their roots in the Alpine Rhine Valley targets their uprising Spring feelings to Greek Islands, exploring the local flora and fauna. In the Dodecanese, Karpathos, Symi, Kalymnos, Leros and Astypalea rank among their targets hitherto visited.

An internet interrogation on Tilos brought forward our innate curiosity when the focus came on the "Tilos Park" Project. Let's go to that Island!



Minister Avramopoulos with the TPA Director



Eristos Beach, Tilos

TILOS' ECOTOURISM (CONTINUED)

First Impressions of the Island

My first reconnaissance trip in October 2004 as well as the subsequent excursion the six of us in April 2005 brought about the following facts:

- Astonishingly enough we hear from a general hunting ban on the Island, valid as from 1987.
- Various finds of the Chukar partridge confirm the positive outcome of this feat.
- We learn about a feasibility study for a Tilos Park explicitly extending the existing natural resources according to EU criteria.
- We are able to watch the otherwise rare Eleonora's falcons regularly during our stay on the Island.
- In the hotels we find information on the Island's natural resources.
- The Tilos Park Association, still a "nestling", has installed an information centre in Livadia.
- We felt the Island authority's creative impulse to install a modern garbage scheme.
- An own shuttle hydrofoil called "Tilos Sea Star" to Rhodos and vice versa is operated.
- The Island's busses are new, much in contrast to rusty vehicles we met so many times in other parts of the Aegean.
- At the pier the municipality informs about the tourist infrastructure.
- The port facilities are in full revitalisation.
- Old chapels are renovated.
- And not very long ago, in the course of our human history, dwarf elephants the size of St. Bernard dogs lived on the island. In a cave called Charkadia bones were found as proofs.

- There are old paved paths leading to former agricultural summer residences which now serve the hikers.
- And, after all, an aspect of great importance: The Island has not yet been afflicted by building and construction ordeals.

What does Ecotourism mean?

Environmental protection and tourism were initially two hostile notions in contrast to each other for a long time and very frequently. Ecotourism tries to harmonize the controversies. Ecotourism means caretaking travelling in natural habitats, and conversely environmental control includes welfare of the local population. With this, ecotourism proves to be an important factor in sustainable regional development in rural areas.

Up-to-date Park concepts try to combine utilization and protection, highlighting "sustainability". This is the trial to balance tourist use and sustainable landscape revenue in large protected habitats. Sustainable development implies that it does not hamper the interests of other people, regions and generations. Sustainable development takes care of preservation of natural living structures, focussing on fairness between individuals and society.

The motive to "experience nature" when travelling abroad has been growing in importance in the last years. Roughly 30-40 % of the tourists coming from Germany, Austria and

Switzerland are impressionable for ecotouristic offers. Moreover, they are willing to pay extra for a tourism they consider supporting nature and social promotion. Apart from insight into nature, ecotourists are highly interested in ecological interrelations and activities aiming at environmental control.

The Phantom Picture of an Ecological Tourist

Polls of guests in Mid Europe entail the following phantom picture of ecological tourists:

- Their age is between 30-70 years.
- They have an advanced standard of education and a regular income.
- They live in agglomerations or a big city.
- On vacation they are rather in quest of recovery instead of action.
- Their general philosophical needs go for relaxed pace and spiritual meaning.
- They want to explore new landscapes and they are in favour of including nature and culture. In other words, they respect the needs of the local population.
- They want to pass comfortable holidays, they like good food and prefer regional products.
- They are out for small locations rather than internationally known and crowded regions.
- A vast majority of these people would be ready to pay visitors paybacks for ample information and environmental protection measures.

"Ecotourism means caretaking traveling in natural habitats, and conversely environmental control includes welfare of the local population."

TILOS' ECOTOURISM (CONTINUED)

Which Prerequisites Would Tilos Be Able To Offer?

- An attractive mountain region easy to survey, with high-ranking natural and cultural values.
- Numerous testimonies of history as well as from former larger settlements than today.
- Fertile plains with stock of trees and agricultural growing.
- Beautiful round footpaths.
- A good gastronomy with individual small lodgings.
- Finally, Tilos spreads a certain creativity of relaxed pace bereft from everyday stress, a feat which normally requires a relatively longer journey from home for the tourist.

What Are Further Conditions Providing Ecotourism With Durable Success?

- A persisting credibility and authenticity of future actions securing their own identity in order to distinguish the destination Tilos from others.
- This in turn requires coordination and tuning of all decisions for the unique goal of an utmost and intact preservation of the rich natural and cultural heritage.
- Tilos is in need of a regional planning scheme identifying protected and utilization zones on the Island, a scheme which also secures a controlled development in areas

reserved for building and construction.

- An ecologically beneficial organisation and garbage control with the liquidation and clearing of the old waste sites.
- An economical scheme for drinking water and clearing of sewage.
- A consequent further development of ecotourism setting forth the appropriate infrastructure (e.g. a multilingual Nature and Culture Guide), warranting the maintenance of marked roads and footpaths as well as the renovation of museums.
- Introduction of as many as possible home agricultural products in excellent bio quality and their marketing for tourism, aiming at the creation of local added-value chains. This in turn originates new jobs.
- Substantial reduction of small livestock down to an ecologically beneficial extent in order to avoid erosion and to secure biodiversity. This requires a sophisticated pasturing management with capacity limits.
- Cooperation and exchange of experience with destinations of a similar constellation (e.g. reciprocal visits of Armutalan in Marmaris).
- Cooperation with touristic chains willing to support ecotourism (e.g. Laskarina Holidays)
- Cooperation with experts in environmental control.

Tilos - An Exciting Experiment

In Tilos, the skeleton conditions for a successful ecotourism are favourable. The constitution of the envisaged Natural Park would conspicuously underline the intentions. The Island possesses the necessary potential, and the European demand exists. This is proved by the increasing number of visitors coming to the Island. The Island Administration under the chairmanship of Anastasios Aliferis offers the necessary facilities. May the Tilos Park Association under the enthusiastic management of Konstantinos Mentzelopoulos be successful in effectively accompanying this project!

Finally, the Island needs appropriate entrepreneurship willing to develop these fundamental quests together with the people of Tilos. Europe requires good-practice examples.



Livadia Bay



Dr. Peter Goop, TPA Director, Dr. Mario Broggi and Wilfried Kaufmann on Tilos

“In Tilos the skeleton conditions for a successful ecotourism are favourable ... The island possesses the necessary potential and the European demand exists.”

WETLANDS FOR WILDLIFE

“This proposed development would create naturally sourced wetlands with a biological ecosystem”



Little Bittern

Since Spring 2005, the Tilos Park Association has been very fortunate to receive experienced counsel from Dr. Mario F. Broggi concerning a proposed multi-purpose expansion and development of the existing island water reservoir into a wetlands. Dr. Broggi is well known to the European Union Parliament and Commission representatives for his extensive Mediterranean and Aegean territorial science research and pan European action plans during the last thirty years. This proposed development would create naturally-sourced wetlands with a biological ecosystem, including plants, that would help to reduce the intense water evaporation that the island experiences.

Currently, rainwater is the only island water reservoir source. Rainwater is seasonal, subject to annual variation and subject to intense evaporation. The natural

supplement to create the wetlands and ensure its continuing sufficiency would be the fresh water underground springs on Tilos. Tapping into the underground springs would supplement the island rainwater and thereby serve the water needs of island residents as well as our resident and migratory wildlife.

Dr. Broggi explained to the TPA Director that unused water cisterns and the loss of two previously existing wetlands in Livadia and Eristos have resulted in the near island extinction of certain amphibious species on Tilos which are a valuable link in the island wildlife ecosystem. The wetlands loss has also contributed to a diversion and loss of wild bird species from Tilos that have historically rested and

refueled in this Special Protection Area during pan African-European migration. Without the former wetlands, resident wildlife experience increased dehydration and stress resulting in reduced breeding and reproduction and premature mortality as water becomes more difficult to access.

Dr. Broggi's advocacy of naturally sourced wetlands without reliance upon any artificial devices, such as an electrical pump, demonstrates his analysis of securing a natural, non-polluting, long term solution to ensure the integrity of the project for the enhanced health and biodiversity protection of the island's natural environment.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES RESEARCH ON TILOS

The TPA has been approached by a European doctoral candidate with impressive professional experience concerning the feasibility of conducting alternative energy research on Tilos for the candidate's doctoral thesis. This is a subject of increasing international importance and urgency to implement renewable energy programs in European communities like ours gifted with penetrating natural elements.

If approved at all levels, this proposed research would focus on the integration of alternative energy sources available on a Mediterranean/Aegean island with a tourism based economy. The aims include reducing energy costs as well as solid, liquid and gas pollution while increasing clean energy efficiency in the functions of the public and private sector.

Other coastal European communities have long been exploring the feasibility of wind, geothermal, solar, tidal stream and wave based technologies in their efforts to become less dependent upon foreign energy sources. Georgia, Ukraine and many EU countries have been adversely affected this winter by the recent disruptions and unpredicted price increases in energy deliveries to the detriment of their economies and public health.

California, the sixth largest economy in the world [The Economist "World in 2005"], will be required by state law to provide 20% of its total energy from clean, renewable sources in 6 years. Denmark has become a leader in the wind turbine industry. Britain, with well publicized renewable energy

programs, is currently being urged by the Carbon Trust [a low emission technologies enterprise] to expand its renewable energy research by supporting wave based devices and tidal stream installations which are calculated to generate 20% of UK electricity from the sea, according to Martin Wright, Managing Director of the Devon pilot project. Wave based devices generate electricity from the movements of the sea surface. Tidal stream installations are positioned on the sea floor to utilize the regular ebb and flow of the tides. Carbon Trust pilot projects are also being conducted in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The TPA is making every effort to make the exciting prospect of island research and natural energy development a reality for the benefit of Tilos, as a registered Special Protection Area, as well as an Aegean model for the future.

“This proposed research would focus on the integration of alternative energy sources available on an island with a tourism based economy”

EU LIFE NATURE PROGRAM ON TILOS

The EU Life Nature Program on Tilos began one year ago in January 2005. The purpose of the 3 year program is to facilitate the restoration of three endangered wild bird species to a favorable conservation status: Bonelli's eagle [*Hieraetus fasciatus*], Eleonora falcon [*Falco eleonora*] and the Mediterranean shag [*Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*]. These species indigenous to Tilos are required under the provisions of EU Birds and Habitats Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC, respectively, to be protected by EU Member States because their species survival is at risk according to the European Union Ornithological Committee of ornithological experts.

These EU Directives obligate all Member States to select areas for the protection and preservation of endangered species and refrain from introducing activities that would significantly disturb their breeding and reproduction. The European Court of Justice has characterized the importance of preserving endangered European wildlife as a "trans-frontier" problem requiring pan European coordination of solutions.

To comply with these EU Directives, Tilos, along with its 14 uninhabited islets, was selected by the Hellenic government and approved by the European Union to be designated and registered as a Special Protection Area and Natura 2000 Network site. Subsequently, Tilos was awarded a Life Nature Program investment of €824.212 to be administered

by the EU with contributions and partnership actions from the European Union, Hellenic Government, Tilos Municipality, Oikos E.P.E. [environmental development enterprise] and Tilos Park Association.

The EU Life Nature program focuses on (1) restoring, developing and preserving the natural island habitat by planting indigenous trees and cereal crops to accommodate the selected bird species' needs within a biological ecosystem to permit adequate feeding, resting, breeding and reproduction; (2) documenting the current population of the targeted bird species and subsequent annual changes in the population; (3) restoring existing walking paths and developing new ones with directional signage to permit visitors and bird watchers to enjoy the island countryside without disturbing sensitive nesting areas; (4) ensuring the security of the program site; (5) enlightening political representatives with national, regional and local jurisdiction over the SPA about their collective responsibilities in governing an EU registered SPA; and (6) informing the public including school children as to the nature, aims and benefits of the EU sponsored program.



Promising Ornithological News

Dr. Haralambos Alivizatos, the chief Tilos Life Nature ornithologist, officially reported in October 2005 that Tilos is the seasonal home to more than 10% of the entire world population of Eleonora falcon. Dr. Alivizatos was an important contributing ornithologist to the research and preparation of the 1999 International Species Action Plan for *Falco Eleonora* recognized by the European Union. According to Dr. Alivizatos, Tilos has more than 625 breeding pairs of this endangered falcon species that return each year from wintering in Madagascar to colonies spread throughout the island and its islets. Tilos officially ranks as the third most important site for this falcon in all of Europe.

Dr. Alivizatos and his team also observed what appears to be our fourth breeding pair of Bonelli's eagles which is expected to be officially confirmed this spring. In 1997, the entire European population of the species was conservatively reported to be only 862 breeding pairs in total. Continuing food shortages, habitat loss and human disturbances have resulted in its dangerously declining population. Ornithologists are cautiously optimistic that the environmental conditions on Tilos will continue to provide a safe environment for this species to successfully breed and reproduce.



Falco Eleonora

"Tilos officially ranks as the third most important site for the Falco Eleonora in all of Europe."

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NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH: ISLAND STYLE

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in January, Mrs. Anna Panga, owner of La Seta fine clothing store in Livadia, called the Tilos Park Association after sighting a distressed sea turtle in the northern Tilos harbor of San Antonio. The TPA received immediate and generous assistance from Pericles Dafnopatides, Chief of the Hellenic Coast Guard Port Authority on Tilos, and his colleague Kostas Ioanides, Christos Koumnakis, Christos Panga, and Tellis Hadzifoudas in pulling the sea turtle to shore to determine what aid could be given. The TPA Director brought the Athens telephone number of Dr. Amilia Drougas, a Founding Member of the TPA, to the scene in the event that advice from a professional marine

biologist would be required. Dr. Drougas is a university lecturer, international consultant and specialist in Mediterranean and Aegean marine mammals.

As the sea turtle was brought to shore, it became readily apparent that the sea turtle had unfortunately died after becoming severely entangled in fishing line which caused the loss of two extremities in the process. This was the second such fatality in the last two years. The death of this latest sea turtle does not, however, diminish the value of the efforts of all of the volunteers who were on the scene within thirty minutes of the telephone report.

This prompt volunteer reaction demonstrates the

genuine spirit with which many of the islanders respond to the challenges encountered in preserving and managing our wildlife in this Special Protection Area of Tilos.

The TPA would like to recognize the generous spirit with which all of these people donated their weekend time to offer assistance to what was originally perceived to be a distressed sea turtle. The Tilos neighborhood watch is indeed alive and well in 2006.



INTERNATIONAL BIOLOGY STUDENTS TO STUDY ON TILOS



Richard Scarr, Ian and Barbara Dunsire with the TPA Director

Tilos will be the venue for an April 2006 expedition scheduled by the Campion School for international students in Athens to enable biology students to study the rich variety of indigenous flora and fauna residing in the sixteen different biotopes on the island.

Richard Scarr, Campion School Biology teacher, first visited Tilos in October to scout the island ecology to ensure its compatibility with the biology curriculum. The Tilos Park Association arranged for his tour of the island based upon a very generous offer by Ian and Barbara Dunsire to assist the TPA with Richard's visit.

Ian and Barbara provided Richard, the TPA Director and a Life Nature Field Assistant with a

complimentary luncheon and tour of all of the ecological points of interest within the 63 square kilometer island. Ian and Barbara reside on Tilos in the spring and summer during which time they explore and photograph the indigenous wildlife from nature paths and coastal beaches. From their research and exploration, they shared their knowledge of the island history, indigenous wildlife, Byzantine churches and monasteries, ancient castles, protected resident and migratory bird species, island art, music and culture. For further information regarding how to arrange an island tour with Ian Dunsire, please contact the TPA office.

