

**ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
SOCIETY**



# **Volunteer Program Introductory Booklet**

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## Welcome to Our Project!

Our project is carried out on the nesting beaches of Belek and Kızılot in Antalya, a tourism centre that is becoming more crowded every year. Belek, often hailed as Türkiye's tourism paradise, is one of the largest known nesting sites for sea turtles in the Mediterranean. Kızılot, another significant nesting beach, adds to the ecological importance of the region.

The primary goal of our project is to monitor the populations of *Caretta caretta* (loggerhead sea turtle) and *Chelonia mydas* (green sea turtle), both protected under international treaties. Our aim is to scientifically elucidate the adverse impacts on these species, guide the implementation of measures to minimise such impacts, and thereby ensure the protection and sustainability of the sea turtle populations.

This program is designed to investigate and assess the sustainability and ecology of sea turtle populations. Within the scope of the program, EKAD's team conducts day and night field surveys by patrolling the beaches to locate and record nests, measuring and marking adult females, caging nests against human impact and/or predation where necessary, monitoring nests until the hatchlings reach the sea, and engaging in public awareness activities to disseminate information.

This booklet contains information about our fieldwork, camp locations, camp life, recommendations and other pertinent details that prospective participants should be aware of before applying. We strongly advise volunteer candidates to read this booklet to shape their expectations accordingly. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

**Dr. Ali Fuat CANBOLAT**

Chairman of the Board of EKAD,  
Project Coordinator



## About the Project

According to Canbolat, 2004, Belek is the second largest known nesting area for *Caretta caretta* in the Mediterranean. As of 2021, Kızılot is recognised as another crucial nesting area for sea turtles. Nevertheless, the accelerated development of both regions into prominent tourism centres poses a significant threat to the populations relying on them as nesting beaches.



The majority of hatchlings emerging from nests on these beaches face challenges in reaching the sea, primarily due to either natural or anthropogenic factors. Natural causes typically involve tidal flooding of nests and predation. Human-induced factors encompass inappropriate beach usage, presence of litter, artificial lights, interference with adults and nests, as well as boat and fishing activities.

Vehicle access to the beach poses a threat as it compresses nests under the sand, hindering the emergence of hatchlings. Deep tire tracks also serve as traps for the vulnerable hatchlings. Likewise, the removal of sand from beaches significantly disrupts the beach topography, posing a severe risk to both nests and hatchlings.





Parts of the coastline, those designated for tourism facilities in particular, intersect with the nesting zone of sea turtles. Sunbeds, umbrellas, and walkways in this zone may act as physical obstacles for adult turtles, disrupt the natural development of eggs in nests located under or around them, and pose a risk to hatchlings.



Other threats to sea turtles include fishing lines and nets, boat propellers, marine and coastal litter, as well as noise and light pollution. Artificial light sources pose a particularly serious risk as they can disorient hatchlings, causing them to crawl landward and resulting in mortality. Interfering with hatchlings, nests, and adults also reduces hatchling success.

These challenges can be addressed through the implementation of sustainably designed conservation efforts and regulations, meticulously planned and executed in collaboration with the facilities. And this is exactly what our project is dedicated to. The envisioned success of this initiative is poised not only to secure the ongoing existence of sea turtle populations in the region, but also to serve as a model of excellence for other nesting beaches facing similar threats.



## Participation Requirements

 Individuals interested in volunteering for our program must be at least 18 years old.

 As our program welcomes volunteers from diverse countries, the official language of communication in our camps is English. All trainings and meetings are in English, and volunteers should possess effective English communication skills. Knowledge of Russian and German is also preferred, considering the tourist profile in Antalya.

 The participation periods are given below. The minimum participation duration for international volunteers is four weeks for all periods. Long-term applications are always given priority. Details regarding the periods and current participation fees can be found on our website.



 Internship opportunity is available for students of biology, molecular biology and genetics, veterinary sciences, marine sciences, or other related departments, provided they participate for a minimum of 8 weeks.





## Research Locations - Belek

Belek is a town in the Serik district of Antalya. Our research area encompasses the coastline stretching for 29.5 kilometres, extending from the Aksu River in the west to the Sarisu River in the east, along Serik and Manavgat.

The region features a typical Mediterranean climate, marked by high temperatures and humidity during the summer. In July-August, daytime temperatures can exceed 40°C, with humidity levels reaching around 70%.



The region boasts diverse habitat types, including forests, rivers, streams, brackish water, agricultural areas, winter wetlands, and coastal dunes, making it exceptionally rich in flora and fauna elements. Research indicates the presence of approximately 580 plant species in the area, with 28 of them being endemic.

Belek is home to around 200 vertebrate species, with 140 of them being bird species. Among these, the barn owl (*Tyto alba*) stands out as the symbolic representative of the region.

The region is also a crucial nesting area for protected species such as the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*), green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), and Nile turtle (*Trionyx triunguis*). Notably, it is the second densest known nesting area for *Caretta caretta* in the entire Mediterranean (Canbolat, 2004).



## Research Locations - Kızılot

Kızılot is a town in the Manavgat district of Antalya, featuring a narrow coastline extending approximately 35 kilometres. Our research area is the 16-kilometre official nesting beach between the Manavgat River and Alara Stream. The eastern part of the area is characterised by dunes composed of fine sand and gravel, with small sand dunes covered in dense vegetation. Summer temperatures can soar to over 45°C.

The northern part of the region holds significance for the Side broomrape (*Orobanche sideana*), a species exclusively found here worldwide. The region is also home to a species of bellflower (*Campanula telmessi*) and a knapweed (*Centaurea pamphylica*), both endemic to Türkiye and exhibit a narrow distribution.



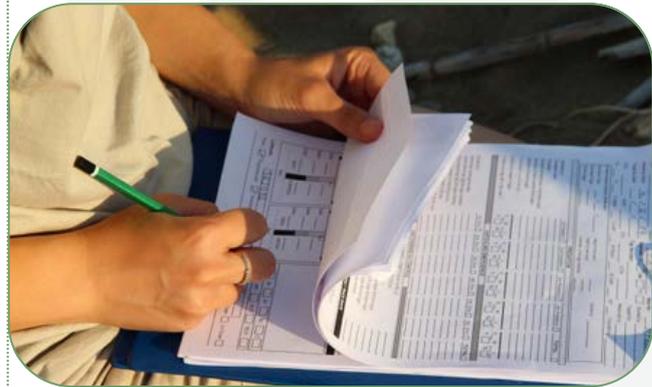
Other species seen in the region include the globally endangered dark winged groundling (*Brachythemis fuscopalliata*) and the Turkish meadow brown (*Maniola megalis*), which is endemic to Türkiye and exclusive to the Mediterranean biome. Kızılot is also an important nesting site for sea turtles and the Nile turtle.





## Project Studies

Volunteers receive theoretical training for fieldwork on the first night of each period, followed by one or two practical sessions in the field. Afterwards, they join our team in the field to begin collecting data. In each region, experienced members assist the volunteers.



Special forms are used for collecting data in the field. Volunteers learn how to fill out these forms and transfer the data to the computer by using our own software during trainings. Collecting accurate and comprehensive data is crucial to the project, and thus all volunteers must attend both theoretical and practical trainings, and understand the procedures well.

Fieldwork is conducted by teams consisting of at least two people. Each region is subdivided into sub-regions to facilitate efficient work. Having fixed teams for sub-regions ensures that everyone becomes familiar with their designated areas and monitor the nests more effectively. Volunteers interested in visiting other sub-regions may do so with the approval of the Project Coordinator.



Fieldwork may require volunteers to engage in extended walks on sand, and face challenging weather conditions such as intense sun and high humidity.



Night teams patrol the beaches from 22:00 to 03:00, while morning teams operate from 05:30 to 11:00. During the night surveys, conducted until hatchling season begins, teams observe the nesting behaviour of adult female sea turtles, mark the nest locations, tag the adults, and take several measurements.



Morning surveys are conducted throughout the entire season, with teams identifying and marking nests, implementing protective measures such as caging or relocating nests when necessary, and monitoring nests for predation. Once the hatchling season begins around the end of July, teams examine hatchling orientations and uncover nests that have completed hatching. In addition to routine fieldwork, information and education activities are regularly conducted.





## Camp Sites

Camp sites in Belek and Kızılot are situated in secure locations, and are monitored by security cameras. Emergency gathering areas are designated, and volunteers receive thorough instruction on emergency procedures.



Camps are equipped with prefabricated facilities featuring air-conditioned rooms. These rooms include bunk beds, wardrobes, bedside tables, and dressers. For those who prefer sleeping under the trees, designated tent areas are available. Individuals opting for tents are advised to bring their own tents and camping equipment (mat, inflatable mattress, etc.).

Our camps have fully equipped kitchens, including refrigerators, water dispensers, stoves, and ovens. Each camp has dining and meeting areas, a sufficient number of toilets and showers, hot water, a washing machine, and internet connection. Volunteers have access to all camp facilities.

To enhance leisure time, camp sites are equipped with gazebos, hammocks, comfortable seating areas, dartboards, and various games. During their free time, volunteers have the opportunity to explore nearby archaeological sites, including Perge, Aspendos, Phaselis, Olympos, Side, and Termessos, as well as natural wonders such as Kurşunlu Waterfall, Manavgat, and Köprülü Canyon.



## Belek Camp

Belek camp is located within the BETUYAB (Belek Tourism Investors Association) compound, nestled in the wooded area behind the corporate buildings. The camp is only a 5-minute drive from Belek centre and a 15-minute walk to the beach. A longstanding supporter of our project, BETUYAB facilitates communication with hotels in the region and provides campground security. Food, cleaning, and hygiene supplies are supported by BETUYAB hotels.



## Kızılot Camp

Kızılot campsite is situated in and around the Nature Monitoring Center, located within the Ulualan Public Beach of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The office building has been designated to EKAD by the Ministry. The camp is just a 15-minute drive to Manavgat centre and a 5-minute walk to the beach. Food, cleaning, and hygiene supplies are supported by TÜPRAG, the camp site sponsor.



**Volunteers are responsible for all cleaning and maintenance tasks at the campsites.**



## What to Bring

Local supermarkets typically carry a wide range of products, but it is important to note that there might be instances where a specific product or brand you regularly use may not be readily available.

### Must Bring:

- identity card, proof of health insurance and -if applicable- driver's license
- If staying in a tent, relevant camping equipment
- Comfortable clothing suitable for walking on the beach (light colours for morning shifts, dark colours for night shifts -for camouflage)
- Comfortable shoes for fieldwork (sneakers or sandals)
- Suitable clothing for cold and windy weather
- Regularly used medications (and prescription, if any)
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat
- Bed linen and pillowcases
- Thermos or water flask
- Coffee mug
- Toiletries/shower amenities



### Recommended to Bring:

- Beach gear
- Insect repellent
- Prescription if prescription glasses or lenses are used
- Basic medicine kit (painkillers, muscle relaxants, burn cream, band-aids, bandages, diarrhea and allergy medicine, etc.)
- Notepad
- Backpack



### Optional:

- Camera, video camera
- Musical instruments, board games
- Tablet or laptop
- Swimming and diving equipment
- Binoculars, fieldguide books



### IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- Field work may require waking up very early or staying up very late.
- Living spaces are typically shared by approximately 30 or more people. The ability to adapt to communal living and establish good relationships with new acquaintances is crucial for the efficiency of the project.
- Kitchens in the camp areas are open for volunteers throughout the day, and participants may prepare their own food whenever they wish. EKAD provides basic breakfast ingredients such as tomatoes, cheese, and eggs; therefore, volunteers are kindly asked not to expect a menu beyond these basic provisions.
- Dinner is generally provided ready-made at our Belek camp; if it is not available, it will be prepared by the camp team. At our Kızılot camp, dinners are prepared by the camp team through a shared task system. Due to camp conditions, there is no fixed menu, and meals are prepared according to the available resources.
- **Pets should not be brought to our camps.**





## Medical Advice

All volunteers are **REQUIRED** to have health insurance (private, state, or travel insurance) and must provide documentation proving this upon arrival.

Any known allergies or health issues requiring attention must be clearly indicated on the application form. It is important to remember that Antalya has biting insects such as mosquitoes and bees, and our campsite is located under pine trees.



Dietary restrictions (diabetes, vegetarian, etc.) should be clearly stated on the application form. Since we cannot guarantee a vegan diet, these individuals may need to cook their own meals.

No specific vaccination is required for the project. However, it is generally recommended for individuals engaging in fieldwork to consider vaccinations for tetanus, rabies, and Hepatitis-B.

Pharmacies, fully equipped private health institutions, and public hospitals are conveniently located near the campsites.

The following conditions may pose a risk during fieldwork, and it is recommended to receive a physician's opinion about participating in the program:

- Hypersensitivity to sunlight, high temperature and humidity
- Walking impairments (including flatfoot)
- Respiratory disorders (including asthma)
- Chronic cardiovascular diseases
- Poor night vision
- Deafness (uncorrected)
- Epilepsy

## Transportation to Camp Sites

In order not to miss the theoretical trainings, volunteers are advised to arrive at the campsite on the first day of their selected period. To avoid affecting the designated participation period, it is recommended to arrive one day before the period starts and depart one day after it ends .

### Bus:

Some companies offer bus services to Serik, Belek, and Manavgat during the summer season. If unavailable, transfer from Antalya bus station is an alternative.

By buses going in the direction of Serik-Manavgat-Alanya, you may come to:

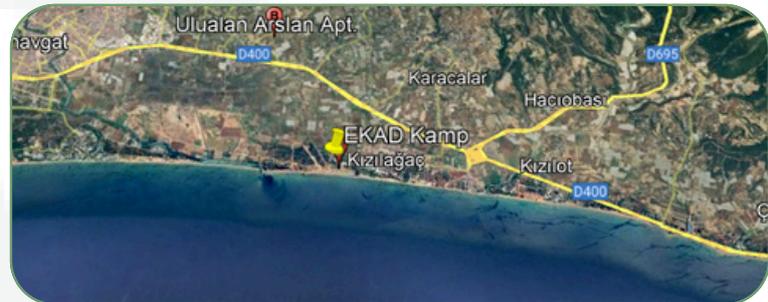
- Serik bus terminal for Belek camp,
- Manavgat bus terminal for Kızılot camp.

### Airplane:

By a shuttle bus from Antalya Airport, you may come to:

- Belek-Serik centre or Serik bus terminal for Belek camp,
- Manavgat centre or Manavgat bus terminal for Kızılot camp.

**EKAD team can pick you up from Serik or Manavgat bus terminal.  
We cannot offer airport transfer.**



Any changes or delays in arrival times must be communicated in advance.  
Emergency contact numbers will be sent to volunteers  
whose applications are accepted.