

"Dolphin Days" in Greece

An initiative by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and OceanCare

July 28th 2006: "Dolphin Days" – an initiative undertaken by the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) and OceanCare will be hosted in three different communities in Greece during the end of July and August 2006, along the eastern Ionian seacoast of Etoloakarnania. The communities will celebrate the beauty of these magnificent marine mammals who have been part of Greek history and mythology since ancient times.

"Greek mythology offers the best examples of how strongly dolphins have appealed to humans for hundreds and even thousands of years. But we need to be reminded that they are also an important part of the marine ecosystems and faced with threats posed by human activities", explains Sigrid Lüber from OceanCare the background for the events.

"We expect many local people to join the events which will be marked both by celebrations and having fun while at the same time raising people's awareness on the importance of providing strong protection for dolphins. We really need to care about them" adds Nicolas Entrup, spokesman for WDCS, who points to the dramatic conservation problems faced by dolphins in the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

A study initiated by the Tethys Research Institute about 15 years ago revealed a sharp decline of once-abundant common dolphins living in Greek waters around the island of Kalamos. Overfishing is likely to be the most serious threat for this species, that can no longer find easy prey in the area. Conversely bottlenose dolphins encountered in the semi-closed Amvrakikos Gulf in Western Greece have to deal with eutrophication and pollution.

Scientific work conducted by Tethys researchers and supported by the WDCS and OceanCare had considerable international impact which prompted a series of initiatives aimed at dolphin conservation. Tethys research is supporting management efforts to protect dolphins in the eastern Ionian Sea.

"Conservation can only be successful if it is backed by local communities based on an appreciation for natural resources and a commitment to preserve them for the benefit of future generations " says Giovanni Bearzi, President of Tethys.

The "Dolphin Days" in Greece shall take place in partnership with the UNEP's Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS) which this year celebrates its 10th anniversary.

For the exact dates and more details on the events visit: www.dolphinday.org