

Volunteer Help for the Monk Seals of the Aegean

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Abstract

The Central Aegean Project for the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* based in Foça, which has been operating since July 1993, offers the possibility of joining the project as a volunteer. This provides nature enthusiasts with an opportunity to become involved in conservation and research projects. By supplying manpower as well as a financial contribution, volunteers can play an important role in such projects. In the Central Aegean Project, volunteers participate in research and public awareness activities, and assist in the processing of data. Accommodation, group size, working schedule, guidance and the appointment of a responsible person to care for the volunteers' needs are some of the most important aspects to be considered by the project team. Financial aspects also require consideration, such as calculating the financial contribution required in order to meet various costs incurred, including accommodation, transport, fuel, cleaning, photocopying, and other activities. Between July 1993 and November 1998, 55 Turkish and foreign volunteers joined the project and participated in its activities, 40 of whom paid a total participation fee of 14,792 US Dollars. By involving volunteers in public awareness activities a total of 14,854 people in Foça could be reached and informed. If a programme can be run according to several clear guidelines, with a motivated team and a sufficient budget, a volunteer programme can be beneficial for conservation projects. On the other hand, it should be noted that working with volunteers is a time consuming process.