



# Handbook and training manual for Volunteers

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Welcome to DEKAMER! This manual is designed to orient you to the operations and research of our facility and serve as a training guide for all volunteers. The information in this guide is very important. Carefully reading all instructions and policies will give you a working knowledge of our centre and help you to act as an informed representative of DEKAMER. Thank you for taking the time to learn this information.

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## Contact Information:

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**Web site:**

<https://www.dekamer.org.tr>



Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for your interest in assisting our work here at DEKAMER. We are grateful to all our volunteers and are pleased that you have chosen to dedicate your time, talents, and energy to DEKAMER. Your contribution is vital to the success of our mission statements and the protection of Sea Turtles around the world and especially in the mediterranean. DEKAMER is a non-profit corporation which I founded in 2008 and was given official permissions for in 2009. Our mission is to research sea turtles around the coast of Turkey, to rescue, rehabilitate and release sick or injured sea turtles, to aid in conservation programs in Turkey and around the world, to educate the public about sea turtles and their plight. Donations, sales and grant money are all used to fund our work. We are proud of the work we have accomplished and look forward to continuing our effort with your help. As a DEKAMER volunteer, we hope you will find your work here to be fun, rewarding and educational. As you become better acquainted with your role as a volunteer, you cannot help but feel proud to be a part of this wonderful organization and share your enthusiasm about our mission with others.

The information in this handbook outlines the volunteer opportunities available to you. I encourage you to read it thoroughly and speak with me or our centre manager if you have any suggestions or questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Prof. Yakup Kaska Phd.



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## **HISTORY OF DEKAMER**

The Sea Turtle Rescue Center (DEKAMER) was fully established in 2009 in Dalyan, Mugla-Turkey after a protocol was agreed upon between the Directorate of the Conservation of Nature and National Natural Parks, the Environmental Protection Agency for Special Areas of Turkish Ministry of Environment of Forestry, and the Municipality of the Dalyan, and Pamukkale University. Later that year, the Higher Educational Council of Turkey officially recognized the rescue center and its constitution was published in the Turkish Official Newspaper. Despite there being a number of nesting and foraging grounds along the Mediterranean coast of Turkey, only one turtle rescue centre has been established following the RAC/SPA (Regional Activity Center/Special Protected Areas) guidelines (RAC/SPA, 2004). The center is set up for year-round activity to help educate the public about conservation efforts for sea turtles. DEKAMER will act as the regular body, monitoring Dalyan beach for nesting activities, by accepting volunteers and students from all Universities worldwide. Any injured turtles found along the Mediterranean coast of Turkey are also brought the center, where care of their necessary medical treatment and rehabilitation is given. DEKAMER is open for both national and international collaborations in all types of scientific studies.

The sea turtles from Turkey will be monitored in the Mediterranean Sea. These turtles have either been chosen as post rehabilitation candidates and/or post nesting activity candidates.

### **Operations & Policies**

The center is open all year round to visitors with summer visiting hours between 10am and 6pm, and winter hours between 10am and 4pm.

There is no charge for admission to the centre. There is a donations box where we encourage visitors to make a donation having explained that the centres daily running costs are covered by these donations.

Visitors told about DEKAMER and given a tour of our centre, introduced to the 8 sea turtle species, informed of the sea turtles life history and cycle. Educated as to the importance of these species to the marine ecosystem and told about the anthropogenic factors that endangers them today.

One of our mission statements is to educate the public about sea turtles.



## Facility Policies

- All visitors are reminded that they can take photos but that flash photography is not permitted as it disturbs the Turtles.
  - Visitors are not permitted to put their hands in the water or touch the turtles. Only persons with experience and training are permitted to do so
  - It should be recommended to visitors who have come into contact with tank water or turtles to wash their hands with antibacterial soap provided by the sink/washing up area.
  - We will conduct special shows for groups upon request or arrival of large tour buses and jeep safaris. Group tours may be conducted by staff or volunteers. Planned tours and other events will be posted on the weekly rota in the general office.
  - No visitors are permitted in the containers, operating room, caravans, offices or x-ray room and lab, without expressed permission from the centre manager. All viewing should be from around the tanks or the walk ways/deck area.
  - There is no hunting, camping, fishing, or bbq's allowed on the beach by visitors. Only staff and volunteers are permitted to remain on the beach and camp after sundown.
  - No vehicles are allowed access inside the grounds of DEKAMER without authorization. Vehicles are not allowed to block the entrance.
  - Smoking is only allowed outside where there is not over head coverage.
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## VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

- Adult volunteers must be 18 year of age or older.
- Volunteers must schedule ahead. Please complete the on-line form at our website and after acceptance. Please send an e-mail (dekamerturkey@gmail.com) before you come into the facility and volunteer. When you first arrive at the facility on your scheduled date the staff will orient you to the site and areas in which you will be working and living in.
- Time commitment will determine where and how you can volunteer. Responsibility is allotted to volunteers based on time commitment. For example, short term volunteers are required to work under direct staff supervision and may not be able to participate in certain aspects of volunteering. Long term volunteers will be able to help with such things as events and presentations, Educational seminars and workshops, Nesting Season Beach Patrol and be hands on in assisting with the treatment of injured Turtles.
- A commitment to be dependable is required. We depend on volunteers to work their specified assignments as scheduled. DEKAMER serves thousands of people each year and we cannot afford to be a part-time, unreliable group. *If you are unable to report for your assignment*, please contact a staff member as soon as possible so a substitute may be found.

## Volunteer Protocol

- Volunteers who have problems with work allocation, a staff member or guest are to contact the professor or centre manager immediately. Doğan Sözbilen, dekamerturkey@gmail.com, the professor and centre manager will follow up as soon as possible. Any discussions involving DEKAMER volunteers or staff members will be kept in strictest confidence by all parties involved. Always check with the project assistants with any questions you may have involving volunteer policy.
- If you do not know the correct answer to a question, NEVER make up an answer or guess. Try to find the answer in the resources available, or ask a staff member. Because we are considered a respectable source of information, it is imperative that we give out correct information. It is better to say you don't know the answer than to give incorrect information.
- Telephone Use: Volunteers are welcome to use the phones as long as they follow these guidelines. Do not use the phone for long distance calls without permission from the centre manager. Do not tie up the phone lines with personal phone calls as it could delay a call about an injured animal.
- Visitor Injury or Illness: If a visitor is injured or ill, notify a staff member immediately. If you feel they can walk, escort them to the office. If you feel they should not be moved go for help or send someone to the gift shop for help. In a quiet tone of voice, reassure the visitor that help is on the way. If at all possible, stay with the ill or injured person to help keep him/her calm. If the person cannot speak and you know for certain why they are ill or injured you need to give this information to whoever comes to your assistance. DO NOT OFFER MEDICAL ADVICE and do not make any statements speculating on the nature of the injury or illness.
- Media: Volunteers are not permitted to give the media any information regarding STI. Please refer all media to the Curator.



- If someone reports a turtle stranding locate a staff member and have them speak to that person. Be sure to thank the person for their concern.
  - Please be polite to visitors. Do not get involved in discussions regarding controversial subjects with our visitors. Do not be impolite, but if they have comments they want to make, practice good listening skills or direct them to a staff member. REMEMBER: It is always better to say too little than too much.
  - Separation: The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for dismissing any volunteer whose service is detrimental to STI's visitors, staff or mission. A volunteer may be separated for any of the following reasons:
    - ✓ Being repeatedly absent
    - ✓ Failing to observe STI policies
    - ✓ Abusing drugs, including alcohol while on duty
    - ✓ Behaving inappropriately
  - Lost & Found: Any items you find on property should be turned into the gift shop. Valuable items should be tagged with appropriate information and stored
  - Personal Belongings: Do not bring large sums of money with you and make sure your personal belongings are either out of sight or secured in your vehicle. STI is not responsible for any lost items.
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## **Volunteer Accommodations and Conditions**

For Short term Volunteers accommodation is provided on site with volunteers contributing to the cost of their stay, costs are based on a monthly basis.

All Volunteers are provided with a large breakfast and evening meal. Those who want lunch are free to make themselves a snack or sandwich from the kitchen.

During the winter months accommodation is provided in the form of a container containing 4 bunk beds, sleeping 8, there are separate containers for men and women.

During the summer months in addition to the containers there are a number of 4 man tents put up on site.

All Volunteers are asked to keep the tents and containers clean and tidy and cleaning duties are rotated out amongst all workers and volunteers.

## **Volunteer Duties**

In the following pages, you will find detailed descriptions of the following volunteer positions:

- Morning Diet & Facility Prep (No minimum time commitment)
- Nesting Season Beach Patrol (Training required- long term volunteers only)
- Visitor guide (Long term volunteers only)
- Maintenance & Building Project Assistant (No minimum time commitment)









## **Rehabilitation Watch**

### **Description & Duties**

- Assist the staff members with feeding and cleaning the turtles, providing care and pre-opening preparations for the center.
- Volunteers will be trained for the following duties:
- Preparation of diets for sea turtles
- Proper techniques on how to feed sea turtles
- Daily maintenance and cleaning of tanks
- Water quality testing, temperature testing and records
- Cleaning of center
- Record keeping
- Volunteers will work under the supervision of the staff members. Volunteers may work individually or as part of a group.

### **Work Conditions**

Duties will be conducted indoors and outdoors. Outdoor work may involve exposure to heat, cold, wind, humidity, and insects. Some work may include walking over irregular and/or wet surfaces. Work will involve bending, lifting, exposure to chemicals, and handling of raw sea food.

### **Prerequisites**

- Ability to lift up to 25 kilos
- Comfortable handling raw seafood
- Ability to comprehend and follow specific directions.

### **Training Provided**

Minimal training is provided for this position. A staff member will review volunteer protocol and explain the procedures in a “learn-by-doing” setting.

### **Dress code**

Facility prep is very hands on and can be messy. We recommend older or worn clothing that you do not mind dirtying with raw seafood or bleach. Surfaces may be slippery when wet and therefore we recommend shoes with reliable traction. Please dress appropriately for the current weather conditions. DEKAMER cannot provide volunteers with appropriate dress.



## **NESTING SEASON BEACH PATROLLER**

As beach patrols are important and must be conducted correctly training is required and volunteers are to join and watch a minimum of three patrols before they can record and take data themselves. These positions are only available for those that can give a long time commitment

### **Description & Duties**

To conduct beach patrols during the nesting season. Patrollers will locate sea turtle nests by walking a 5km stretch of beach.

Volunteers will be trained for the following duties:

- Identifying tracks of nesting female
- Identifying tags on nesting female
- Recording data of nesting females, carapace measurements
- Techniques for holding and measuring nesting turtles
- Recording nest locations
- Usage of GPS and temperature recorders
- Recording dates of nest checks
- Recording data of hatchlings
- Nest controls after all clutches hatched

Volunteers will work under the general supervision of the Beach patrol Coordinators or permanent staff members. Volunteers will work as part of a team after training is completed.

### **Work Conditions**

Duties will be conducted every evening and morning between mid April to the end of October or later if there are nests remaining.

Evening patrol starts off from the centre at 09:30 pm, patrollers will walk the extent of the beach, recording as they go. Once at the end patrollers will sleep in the sun beds at the end of the beach (around 03:30 am) and start patrol again at 06:00 am, this time including the lake side of the beach (for loggerhead and Nile turtle nests), and return to the centre for breakfast. Field work ends around 09:00 am depending on nesting activity of related day.

### **Prerequisites**

Walking patrols:

- Physically fit
- Ability to walk long distances in sand in direct sunlight
- Must be able to see nesting female turtles or tracks in the sand
- Must be able to carry any required equipment



## **MAINTENANCE ASSISTANT**

### **Description & Duties**

To provide assistance in the upkeep of the centre and its equipment.

Volunteers will be trained for the following duties:

- General landscaping of the grounds and watering
- Maintenance of signs, decking and handrails
- Painting containers, signs, buildings, etc.
- General safe practice and maintenance of pump equipment.

Volunteers will work under the supervision of the Volunteer Coordinator or staff members. Volunteers may work individually or as part of a group.

### **Work Conditions**

Duties will be conducted indoors and outdoors. Outdoor work may involve exposure to heat, humidity, and insects. Some work may include walking over irregular surfaces or through wet areas and coming into contact with plants. This volunteer may also have contact with general public.

### **Prerequisites**

Ability to walk at least one mile and lift up to 25kg. Familiarity with basic tools and landscaping equipment.

### **Training Provided**

Training is provided through volunteer orientation programs or individual training with the Volunteer Coordinator or staff members.

Time commitment

No minimum time commitment is required