



Troops of the Sacred Band in the Square of Saint George of the Well (Kastellorizo)  
 (Nicholas Pappas archive)

## THE SACRED BAND OF KASTELLORIZO DURING WORLD WAR II

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The Sacred Band, or *Ierós Lóchos* in Greek, was a Greek Special Forces unit formed in the Middle East in 1942 known for its naval operations aimed at liberating the Aegean islands. From the existing bibliography, we know little about the Sacred Band's presence on Kastellorizo, apart from a general reference that Kastellorizo was included in its geographical sphere of action, without any reference to the time and duration of its stay, a function, perhaps, of the secrecy of its operations.

The first two documents presented are graffiti that were found in abandoned homes on Kastellorizo, and attest to the presence of the Sacred Band on the island at a critical moment in its history.

The first was the work of a member of the Sacred Band named **Michael Kyriallides** and was found on the top floor of an abandoned house in Pountos, where the above text is written:

**Michael Kyriallides**, who originated from Alexandria<sup>1</sup>, while not included in the official published lists of Sacred Band members, seems to sign as a member of it during his short stay on the island (26/9/44 - 2/10/44). At that time, the island, which had been evacuated of its population since October 1943, was a British operational base, while the settlement

26/9/44 - 2/10/44

Κυριαλλίδης Μιχαήλ εξ  
 Αλεξανδρείας  
 Heliopolis 57

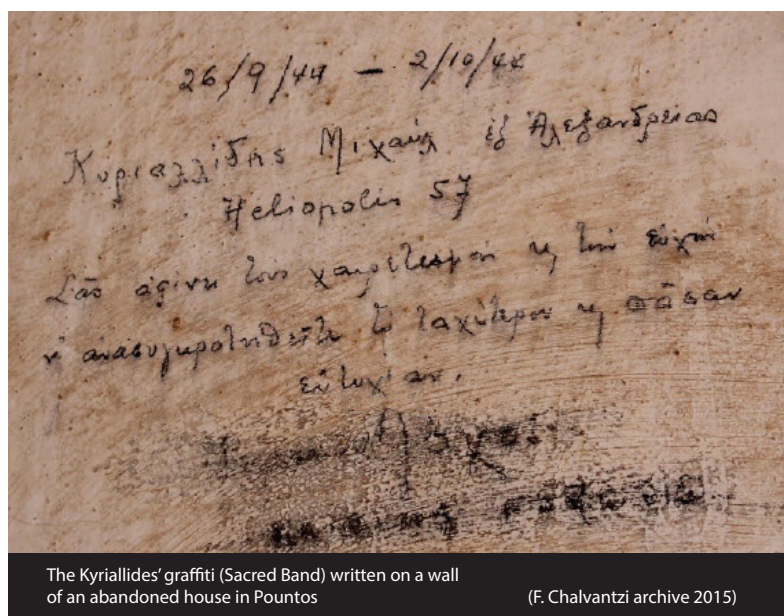
Σάς αφίνει τους χαιρετισμούς κ  
 την ευχήν ν' ανασυγκροτηθείτε  
 το ταχύτερον κ πάσαν ευτυχίαν.  
 Ιερός Λόχος (σβησμένο)

26/9/44-2/10/44

Kyriallides Michael from  
 Alexandria  
 Heliopolis 57

Sends you greetings and gives  
 you a wish to get re-organised  
 as soon as possible and every  
 happiness.

Sacred Band (erased)



The Kyriallides' graffiti (Sacred Band) written on a wall  
 of an abandoned house in Pountos



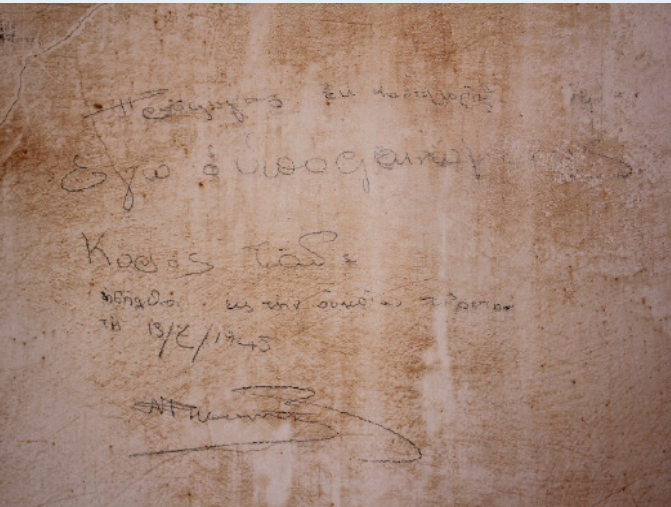
# THE SACRED BAND (Cont.)

suffered from major destruction after the German bombardments of October-November 1943 and the catastrophic fire of 6 July 1944. His emotion-laden message on the wall of the house where he found shelter, is addressed to all expatriates from Kastellorizo, to whom he wishes a speedy recovery and happiness.

Nearby on the same wall, perhaps in response to Kyriallides' wishes, another important fragment of graffiti, this time not from a member of the Sacred Band, but is worth mentioning:

Πρόσφυγας εκ Καστελλορίζου Εγώ ο υποφαινόμενος Κύριος Τάδε Ησήλθον εις την οικίαν τι' αύτην τη 13/ 7/1945 Υπογραφή (δυσανάγνωστη)	Refugee from Kastellorizo I, Myself Mr Whoever I entered the house on 13/7/1945 Signature (illegible)
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The above graffiti is of historical importance because it coincides with the date of the return of the first 151 Kastellorizians from the Nuseirat refugee camps in Palestine under United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration<sup>2</sup> guidance. Thus, this 'Refugee from Kastellorizo' was one of the first Kastellorizians to be repatriated after the end of World War II.



Graffiti of a 'Refugee from Kastellorizo' near the Kyriallides' graffiti.  
 (F. Chalcantzi archive 2015)

The second graffiti of the Sacred Band was located on the top floor of a ruined house in the area of Saint George of the Well Church. It is a list of surnames of the Sacred Band which indicates their rank, the security body and their place of origin. The list is signed by Thermiotes<sup>3</sup>, one of the officially confirmed victims of World War II, who disappeared in the North African-Tunisian operations on 15 April 1943. This is a deliberate attempt to record the short-term presence of these Sacred Band soldiers on Kastellorizo with reference to their personal data – and perhaps also to confirm their physical presence and to convey a climate of optimism. It is noteworthy that the last sentence appears to anticipate the claims of military looting that were to be made after the return of the inhabitants.

1. Θάνος / Λοχαγός Διαχειρίσεως εκ Ζαχάρως Μεσσηνίας

2. Πετροπουλέας / Υπολοχαγός Πεζικού εκ Αθηνών

3. Μπράβας / Ανθυπολοχαγός Πεζικού εκ Αθηνών

4. Πάγκας / Ανθυπολοχαγός Πεζικού Πορτ Σαίτ

5. Επιτρόπου / Ανθυπολοχαγός Πεζικού εκ Διδυμοτείχου

6. Θερμιώτης / Ανθυπολοχαγός Πεζικού εκ Μυτιλήνης

Εφιλοξενήθησαν εν τη οικία τουτη ολίγας ημέρας  
(Υπογραφή) Θερμιώτης  
Σας αφήνομεν για την καλι αντάμωσιν στην Σόφια/ Το σπίτι σας  
το ευρήκαμεν έρημο μη βάζιται υποψία για εμάς

1. **Thanos** / Management Captain from Zacharo, Messinia

2. **Petropouleas** / Infantry Lieutenant from Athens

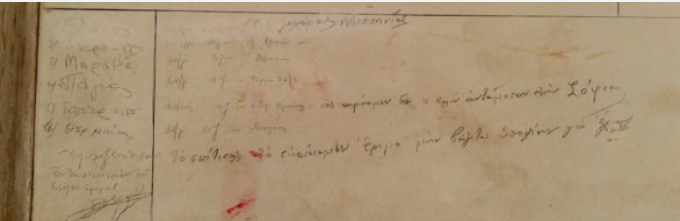
3. **Bravas** / Infantry Lieutenant from Athens

4. **Pagas** / Port Said Infantry Lieutenant

5. **Epitropou** / Second Infantry Lieutenant from Didymoteicho

6. **Thermiotes** / Second Infantry Lieutenant from Mytilene

They were hosted in this house for a few days  
(Signature) Thermiotes  
We leave you for the good reunion in Sofia / We found your  
house deserted do not suspect us



The Thermiotes' graffiti (Sacred Band) written on a wall of an abandoned house in  
 the area of Saint George of the Well.  
 (F. Chalcantzi archive 2015)

In addition to the above written testimonies, another important record of this time attesting to the presence of the Sacred Band on Kastellorizo emerges from the photographic archive of historian, Dr Nicholas Pappas. Konstantinos Camillos, born in 1922, was a member of the Sacred Band during World War II and provided the photograph that appears on the front page. In an interview, he confirmed his presence in Kastellorizo between November 1943 and May 1944, a period that coincided with the devastating German bombardments and the conversion of the island into a base for Allied craft and personnel.

War-time graffiti is often a useful tool for gaining insights into a moment in time as recorded for posterity by the graffiti's author. The examples highlighted in this article offer a rare and intimate window into the experiences of Greek Special Forces personnel who found respite on Kastellorizo during such fateful months. And in doing so, they reveal as much about each author's private feelings as they do about the situation they encountered.

<sup>1</sup> Heliopolis Street is situated in Camp Shezar in Alexandria which is now called Youssuf Fahamy Osman Street.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas G. Pappas, Kastellorizo, An illustrated history of the island and its conquerors, Halstead Press, Sydney 1994, p.195

<sup>3</sup> Struggles and casualties of the Greek Army during the Second World War 1940-1945, General Staff of the Army - Directorate of Army History, Athens 1990, p.628

# LANCE CORPORAL ANGELO NICHOLAS BARBOUTTIS - THAT MAGNIFICENT GREEK

13 MARCH 1920, DARWIN - 22 DECEMBER 1943, LAE NEW GUINEA

BY NICHOLAS BOGIATZIS, CANBERRA



Lance Corporal Angelo Nichola Barbouttis, New Guinea.



The Rosemary Army vessel (AS 59)

(Australian War Memorial)

Angelo Nicholas Barbouttis was born in Darwin in 1920, the son of Nikolaos Kyriakou Barbouttis and Maria Kyriakou of Kastellorizo. A street was named after him in Townsville where the family lived. *'Barbouttis was up there in the bow of our boat. It's hard to describe a man like that, or how he looked or what he did. He looked magnificent. He did everything so smoothly and with cold efficiency, and he was the most savage spectacle I've ever seen.'*

*...that crazy, magnificent Greek stood up there and belted them out...*

*Then the Japs shot the machine-gun out of Barbouttis's hands. That chap didn't pause in his stride. He was going after them, and nothing would stop him...*

*Then Barbouttis' (Bren) gun jammed... He ran and grabbed a bagful of grenades.*

*He was standing there, hurling them into the barges with a mad kind of fury. And none of their bullets touched him. It seem as though nothing ever could touch him... I don't think I will ever see a sight more terrifying.'*

These are extracts from the detailed account written by a survivor in New Guinea in 1943.

What is the background to this extraordinary act of heroism?

About 4pm, on a late December day in 1943, just before Christmas, a routine Australian patrol was travelling the complex waterways of then southern Dutch New Guinea. On rounding a bend the trawler crew suddenly found themselves face to face with two Japanese barges full of armed soldiers - not twenty yards away!

There was no escape. No time to turn. All would have been lost. But as gun fire was exchanged, the over six foot Angelo stood and strafed the Japanese boats. Heroically. An easy target, but untouched, or untouchable. With two guns exhausted, finally throwing grenades, Angelo was able to buy more time, allowing his trawler to turn and escape. One Japanese boat caught fire and sank, the other was stranded on the bank.

Five of the Australian crew were injured. The number of Japanese lost is unknown, but some managed to crawl to shore.

*'It was then - after it was all over, practically - that they got Barbouttis... that was the worst luck... to come through what he stood up to, without a scratch, and then get sniped from the shore.'*

*That sniper got him through the head.'*

For the survivors, they were about a week from base. Angelo had been their navigator, and no one else knew how to navigate. They *'headed somewhere out between the moon and the Southern Cross'.*

In a most formal but deeply touching ceremony, at the Australian War Memorial on the evening of 11 June, 2022, the Last Post was played for Lance Corporal Angelo Barbouttis.

Wreaths were laid. Friends and family travelled from Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. Overlooking the Pool of Reflection with the Eternal Flame in the Commemorative Courtyard, the galleries of the Memorial and the stairs were densely packed with strangers, there to witness this moving honour. There was much to reflect upon.

Angelo Barbouttis's name was projected onto the exterior of the Hall of Memory for a day each in January, April, and July, and will be again on 18 September, 2022.

Angelo was 'mentioned in dispatches'. His home town Townsville named a street after him. But strangely, no medal has been awarded to Angelo. Why? There were campaigns from the Townsville community and Greek community for his selfless act of bravery, and the giving of his life, simply to be recognized by the awarding of a medal. All have

come to nought.

*'And then they buried him with something greater than pomp and ceremony. They buried him with the greatness of great simplicity The words they had to say were crude, ordinary words, for none of them knew the right words to use. Words stick in the throat of men who feel deeply, as these men felt about Angelo Barbouttis.'*

Buried in the Arafura Sea, New Guinea.

## Footnotes:

Honours and Awards: Service number: QX37339. Unit 31/51st Australian Infantry Battalion Conflict Second World War, 1939-1945 Rank Acting Corporal London Gazette 08 March 1945 on page 1307 at position 171.

Thanks go to Flight Lieutenant Angelo Augustis who helped make this memorial event a reality. The wreath layers were Basil Barbouttis; Jack Barbouttis and Nicholas Barbouttis; Chrissa Passaris and Olga Barbouttis; Virginia Baras and Maria Kalokerinos; Christopher Passaris; and Nicholas C. Bogiatzis.





# COVID-19 ERA ON KASTELLORIZO

by Elina Doulgaroglou, Kastellorizo

Elina is a graduate of Journalism and Communication Studies and M.Sc. in International Hospitality Management and works at her family's Kastellorizo Hotel business, 6 months per year.

## THE BEGINNING

It was December 2019, when every human on earth was stunned by the news of a global pandemic. After New Year, things were getting even more serious, while we started realising how dangerous this virus actually was. Then, one by one, several countries around the world started announcing lock-downs. A phrase that was particularly difficult to comprehend. At the end of February 2020, a woman in northern Greece, who had just returned from a trip to Italy, was confirmed to be infected. Suddenly, this mysterious disease was not so distant anymore. In early March the first death due to Covid-19 was official, which spread fear across the country. This fear reached our remote island very quickly, since Kastellorizians were in stunned disbelief in front of their TVs, exactly like every other person in Europe. Suddenly, it wasn't important if you lived in China, Australia, Italy, or Kastellorizo. We were all feeling exactly the same thing: fear.

It was not long before the first governmental announcement, according to which the number of Covid-19 cases, combined with the mortality rates of this virus, had led us to a point of no return. A quarantine was probable and Greek people needed to face it with responsibility, despite their fear and discontentment. This announcement proclaimed the suspension of all educational institutions nationwide and the closing of all hospitality related businesses in the country. Kastellorizo was, of course, not an exception to this.

In late March 2020, Greek authorities announced strict restrictions to all non-essential movement throughout the country. All services in all areas of religious worship were also suspended. There were seven categories of reasons to leave one's house and citizens had to carry identification and a signed attestation in which their purpose of travel was stated. Authorities were patrolling and issuing fines for relevant offences. These rules were some of the strictest in Europe, but they kept death rates relatively low (compared to other European countries) and their excessiveness managed to control Greek people, who are not famous for being particularly rule-obeying. Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras along with other Greek cities reminisced post-apocalyptic fantasy films. But what was happening on the island that is always dreamy and peaceful?

Locals were undoubtedly afraid. Being confined in one's house was and remains a terrifying thought, especially for a reason that is invisible. We were aware that in case of an outbreak, with no hospital and intensive care unit, people would definitely be in grave danger. On the other hand, it was winter. If you have visited Kastellorizo off-season, you would know it is a quiet place. This might be an understatement. The weather is bad, the waves crash on the doors of the front houses and there are not many social activities to participate in, so permanent residents spend a lot of time at home.

Most of the bars and restaurants were officially closed, or they were functioning off-the-record with their regulars. Masks were not worn anywhere apart from the bank and post office. Kastellorizo was nothing like the big Greek cities. Spending time there during the lockdowns was soothing. You could walk around the mountains, see the sky, watch the seagulls, listen to the sea, breathe. When leaving your house, you didn't have to worry about signed attestations or

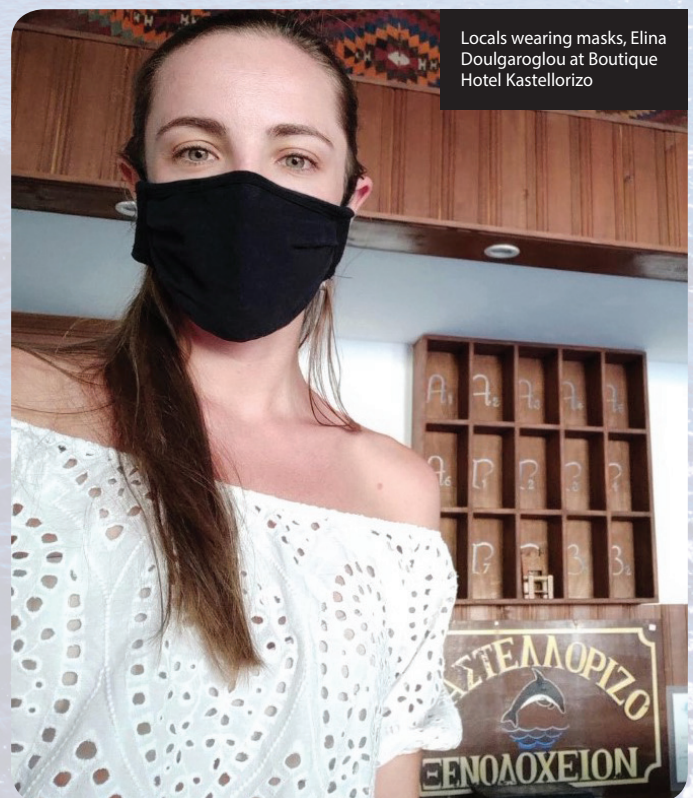
the virus itself. If you wanted to avoid interactions, it was a piece of cake.

## FIRST SUMMER WITH COVID REGULATIONS

Greece started gradually lifting Covid-19 restrictions around May 2020. Hotels were allowed to open at the beginning of July, but we were not expecting much from that summer. Many countries had travel restrictions, and some had banned travelling altogether. Reservations were moving unprecedentedly slowly and almost half of Greek hotels had decided not to open at all, because they calculated that their operating costs would exceed their earnings.

On Kastellorizo there were some individual marketing attempts by several business owners. They advertised that they would reduce their prices by half to attract more guests. Meanwhile, a new ferry was added to the subsidised boats that connect us with Rhodes, and does so free of charge for all passengers. Domestic tourism was encouraged with coupons provided by our government, as a desperate attempt to motivate Greeks to travel and spend money on small businesses. The result of all this was completely predictable: a dramatic shift of the quality of tourism in a place that is pragmatically unable to offer super budget-friendly products and services.

As far as the day-to-day operations are concerned, masks were being worn by all hotel staff members, bank and post office employees and sporadically, some restaurant, cafe and bar servers. The official government guidelines stated that masks were mandatory, but the 40°C of the summer, suggested otherwise. There were some Covid-19 reported cases that summer, but hopefully the situation remained under control, and police officers also intervened by providing specific instructions to their families on how to be extra careful to prevent spreading the disease.



Locals wearing masks, Elina Doulgaroglou at Boutique Hotel Kastellorizo



# COVID-19 ERA (Cont.)

It was such a strange summer. For the first time Kastellorizo was missing all of its Greek-Australian friends. Summer houses were empty, family reunions were cancelled, weddings were postponed. Business owners were constantly stressed for the moral and legal responsibility of a potential outbreak. Visitors were frequently reminded to wash their hands and be careful. But at least we were there, on the island where it is easier to get carried away...and then there was the second winter lockdown.

## THE VACCINE DILEMMA

In January 2021, Kastellorizo was announced to be the first Greek island to obtain Covid-19 vaccines for all residents. This was a great opportunity for those who had decided to get vaccinated. Many Kastellorizians travelled from Rhodes and other parts of the country, to get vaccinated sooner, since small islands were prioritised and they didn't want to miss the opportunity.

However, skepticism knocked on the door of many houses in Kastellorizo. There were (and still are) those who preferred to wait or those who were uncertain about the substances, or the technology used by pharmaceutical companies.

There were some great days for our lovely island. Great meaning, comical and unforgettable. Whispers and discussions on the streets about who is getting vaccinated and who isn't, jokes like "I'll do it if you do it" or "do it first and if you don't die, I'll follow", hesitance, arguments, indecision, debates. This was, again, the same situation globally, but on Kastellorizo the magnitude of the issue, along with the size of the island, gives theatrical attributes to such occasions. What a time to be alive!

## A COVID-FREE SUMMER

The vast majority of the island's population ended up getting vaccinated before summer, which apart from a sense of security, provided us also with a great advertisement: Covid-free Kastellorizo. Most countries allowed travelling in 2021 (either with some testing or with a vaccination certificate) and many of our island's regular visitors returned. Once again, the absence of Greek-Australians was conspicuous.

Masks were still officially mandatory for all hospitality related businesses, but actually worn by few. There were some extreme heatwaves during July and August that made it unbearable to wear a mask (and any other item of clothing for that matter), but apart from those periods, Covid-19 regulations were even less frequently applied than the year before. There were some covid cases reported to the medical center, but the numbers were kept low.

## THE DAMAGE

The impact of this pandemic is something destined to be discussed for decades. Future history books are more suited to fully assess the social, economic, and political implications of covid-19. Nonetheless, there are some aspects of it that are already visible.

Tourism is one of the most affected sectors on our island, since many of the locals either own or are employed by hospitality related businesses. For years the majority of our summer visitors have been originating from Australia, Italy, the U.K and Turkey. For two years we did not receive visitors from Australia, while the Greek-Turkish borders were closed. Both damaged the local economy dramatically. Fortunately, all local businesses survived the worst part and making a recovery in summer 2022.

The social impact of covid is more complicated. Us Greeks, we have always been touchy-feely, as all Mediterraneans are rumoured to be. We express our emotions openly, we give long hugs, we kiss everyone twice, we speak loudly (spitting on each other's faces, oh yes we do), we dance holding hands, we eat from each other's plates. One can easily see why this is potentially problematic during a global pandemic. Large social gatherings have been cancelled for two years. Profit's Ilias celebration in July was not celebrated between 2019 - 2021. It remains to be seen how we will manage to get back to normality without losing our unique cultural characteristics.

## THE PERKS OF A PANDEMIC

Covid-19 regulations caught our country by surprise and there was a completely unpredicted need to conduct everything online. Business websites were being built or renewed, the public sector created an official portal to allow citizens to get necessary certificates that otherwise needed weeks and/or plenty of trips to offices, stamps from authorities etc. Medical records finally started being online as well. Our whole administrative structure was torn apart and rebuilt in a matter of a few months. This proved something interesting: us modern Greeks, we are not incompetent, we just lack motivation.

Due to the location of our island and its small size, Kastellorizians until now, needed to travel for simple paperwork. The old Greek bureaucracy used to oblige locals (and visitors too) to do expensive family trips to Rhodes, just for a signature of an officer of a tax collection agency or a lawyer. We have not yet overcome this, however, during these couple of years steps were made towards the right direction: egalitarianism for island residents.

Government subsidised ferry that connects us with Rhodes, free of charge for all passengers to encourage domestic tourism





# The Natural History of Kastellorizo: Autumn & The Limani

Kastellorizo Natural History Group

This is the second article in this series, each highlighting a different aspect of Kastellorizo's Natural History.

by Robert Moorhead

As I sit here, I can hear the excited laughter of children on the Limani fishing whilst their parents enjoy a relaxing coffee. Our Limani is teeming with life and in this article, we will briefly discover some of the species you might encounter.

The Mediterranean has very small amplitude tides of just a few centimetres compared to the meter or so experienced in the adjacent Atlantic. This means that we have a very narrow intertidal zone with static harbour habitats (and incidentally why the yachts can park stern ashore).

Green algae can be seen growing on the harbour wall, rocks and ropes providing food to a range of organisms. The Limani has a rock and mud base which varies in depth from 2m to over 30m. Important Sea Grass meadows (*Posidoniaceae oceanica*) are present in the shallow waters near St George of the Well and in Mandraki providing habitat and a nursery for many fish species. Needle fishes (*Family Belonidae*) and Yellowmouth Barracuda (*Sphyræna viridensis*) can sometimes be seen darting about hunting the smaller fish.

In recent years, Loggerhead Sea Turtles (*Caretta caretta*) have been frequenting the Limani in the warmer months scavenging for food. *C. caretta* is a species of oceanic turtle distributed throughout the world with the Mediterranean population considered vulnerable. Feeding of the turtles is a problem, leading to aggressive behaviour including biting. A female occasionally tries to lay eggs on the small sandy beach at Mandraki, but we are not aware of any hatchlings surviving. Boat strikes, plastic ingestion and entanglement in fishing gear are major problems for this species.

Kastellorizo also hosts a small population of critically endangered Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*). A pup is occasionally born in the Spring in the Blue Cave. As of 2015, it is estimated that fewer than 700 individuals survive of the world's rarest pinniped species. If you are lucky, you will see their occasional visits to the Limani to play and feed. Long persecuted by fishermen, this species is holding on in Kastellorizo but needs protection. Please do not feed or interfere with them.

Jellyfish are regularly seen, with population explosions every four to five years. The Purple Jellyfish (*Pelagia noctiluca*) is most common, and whilst not dangerous, can give a painful sting. Kastellorizo experienced a significant jellyfish event in 2021.

The Common Octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) can be seen hunting along Limani wall and can be seen mostly during the summer months (and is delicious on the grill). Highly intelligent, the octopus hunts crabs, crayfish, although it eats almost anything. It can change colour to blend with its surroundings and requires a keen eye to find.

Regular visitors will also be familiar with our sea urchins, possibly from a painful sting to the foot. The native sea urchins (*Arbacia lixula*) do not tolerate nutrient pollution and have



largely disappeared from Kastellorizo and many other locales. They are currently being replaced with the invasive Black Longspine Urchin (*Diadema setosum*) with mildly venomous spines. Unfortunately, the invasive species is not as edible as our disappearing native variety.

Other common animals found around the Limani include the White Sea Star (*Coscinasterias tenuispina*), the Marbled Crab (*Pachygrapsus marmoratus*) and European Common Squid (*Alloteuthis subulate*). There has also been an observation of a Mediterranean Moray Eel (*Muraena helena*) in the rocks near the Dolphin Statue.

## Threats

The Mediterranean Sea is under immense pressure from a combination of over exploitation, pollution, warming sea temperatures and invasive species.

Invasive species have become such a threat that more than 5% of the marine species in the Mediterranean are now considered non-native. Our limani is no exception with Indian Lionfish (*Pterois miles*) and Flavimaculosus Puffer fish (*Torquigener flavimaculosus*) regularly caught.

Pollution is a very visible problem. We are plagued by plastics and there has been a worrying increase in the number of petrol spills. Petrol is toxic to both humans and the environment, with as little as 500ml able to cover 4,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps more insidious is our lack of a sewerage system with effluent entering the Limani via the drains and groundwater. You can see the difference in algal growth on the rocks inside and outside the harbour.

We can do more as a community to protect our Limani. Better control of refuelling operations at the port, improved waste management, banning single-use plastics, recycling, regular cleaning, implementing the long-awaited sewerage system are obvious examples. A small step would be to repair and maintain the Seabin that was generously donated by the Hellenic Rotary Club this year.

Perhaps the most important measure is education. Thankfully, the children of the island are aware and we can look to them to take a lead in the future.

## Key Message

**The turtles and seals are wild animals, and whilst we encourage everyone to enjoy the experience, please keep your distance, and do not feed them!**

For more information on the natural history of Kastellorizo, please follow KNHG on Facebook: Kastellorizo Natural History Group | Facebook and Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/kazinhg/> and iNaturalist: Observations · iNaturalist. Share your photos and natural history observations and contribute to the documentation and preservation of our unique environment.