

Greece

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Northwestern Greece: Tragic Bear Incident

In September, people in the village of Perivleptos in northwestern Greece informed public authorities that a brown bear had fallen in an old drainage hole and that, with 20 cm of water remaining in it after the summer drought, was in danger of drowning. What caused the bear to fall into the hole, which lies at the periphery of the species distribution in Greece, is not perfectly clear. A shepherd, who stabled his flock just a 100 m from where the incident took place, reported hearing his dogs barking loudly the previous night. Most probably the bear tried to attack the herd, was chased away and accidentally fell in the hole.

Despite the fact that several state agencies rushed to the bear's aid (forestry, fire, police...even the local state prosecutor was informed), help arrived too late for the exhausted bear, which unfortunately drowned in the little pool of water in the hole.

Fatal Bear-Car Collision

A brown bear was killed at the end of September in a car collision in northern Greece. As the number of vehicles and roads has been steadily

increasing in the country in the past few years, this currently rare incident, shows that the existing situation might easily change. Furthermore, it points out the necessity of including mitigation measures in the planning and building of large infrastructure projects and justifies the decision to carry out a wildlife monitoring project within the framework of the construction of a major highway in the same area (see also: "Paving a new way for brown bears in Greece." *International Bear News* 12(3):8-9).

Northern Greece: Rare Attack by Bear

Bear-human conflicts in Greece are mainly restricted to livestock depredation and crop damages by bears. The cases where bears have attacked humans in Greece are rare and usually shrouded by a cloud of mystery concerning the circumstances of the attack. However, on the 10th of September a bear mauled a shepherd in Grevena/Northern Greece, while trying to escape the shepherd dogs that had been chasing it. The bear inflicted serious injuries to the hand of the shepherd before his dogs could come to his rescue. Fortunately, the shepherd, who had to be hospitalized, refused to talk to the media which tried to prey on the cliché of the man-eating beast, and has returned to his work with (almost!) no hard feelings.

Despite the important achievements in the field of bear conservation over the past years, these three incidents show that there are still areas in which public authorities and NGOs need to work to secure the future of bears in Greece.

Common Declaration from NGOs Arcturos & Callisto

For Arcturos, Yannis Boutaris
For Callisto, Spyros Psaroudas

After 12 years of operation, the environmental NGO Arcturos began revising its objectives and fields of interest. During this process, internal disagreements and a divergence of views developed on issues of strategy and final goals. The situation that ensued drove former Arcturos staff members to establish a new environmental organization named Callisto.

Arcturos will continue to exert pressure in all directions for the protection of the environment by developing sensitization, environmental education, volunteerism and ecotourism actions. It still focuses on brown bear and wild fauna, but also intends to expand its activities to the conservation of traditional domestic animal breeds, as well as to new fields of sustainable development.

Callisto defines as its main activities: scientific research, development and implementation of actions for the conservation of the natural environment, and the coexistence of humans and wildlife. It has already initiated activities and cooperation in Greece and southeastern Europe, focusing on the conservation of large carnivores and biodiversity in mountainous areas, as well as pressing for the creation and operation of Protected Areas and European Ecological Networks (Natural 2000, Emerald).

It is obvious that despite their differences, the two organizations share many points of common interest. In those fields, cooperation will be sought, while in others they will pursue their individual specializations.

Specifically: The Arcturos Environmental Center in the Prefecture of Florina is a common creation and as