

Dealing with Bear–Vehicle Accidents in Greece

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Spring awakening does not mark only the beginning of a new year in the life of bears in Greece, but also the beginning of another difficult year for them on Hellenic roads. Traffic accidents have emerged in the past decade as one of the most frequent mortality causes for the species in the country. At the end of March, the heavy toll paid by the species recently, increased, when a bear trying to cross the vertical axis “Siatista – Krystallopiigi” of the “Egnatia” highway in northern Greece was hit by a vehicle and killed. The vehicle was severely damaged and the passenger slightly injured (Figure 1); several fatal accidents have occurred at this particular stretch of the road and the main reason for this is the lack of appropriate mitigation structures including an effective exclusion fence.

In order to increase the understanding of the activity patterns and structure of the local brown bear population, the Greek NGO ARCTUROS with the financial assistance of VODAFONE Hellas, have been implementing since the beginning of 2010 a monitoring program, that includes satellite tracking and non-invasive genetic monitoring of bears. In addition, and in order to highlight the importance of this issue to the general public in Greece and the international scientific community, ARCTUROS in cooperation with the University of Western Macedonia will be hosting the 2011 annual meeting of the European Infra Eco Network, a network of experts dealing with the impact of infrastructure on wildlife. The conference will take place on 21-24 September 2011 at the city of Kastoria and the traditional village of Nymfeo in northwestern Greece and will focus on the impact of highways on large carnivores and explore ways to mitigate them. Participants will have the opportunity to meet experts from around the continent, as well as to visit important conflict areas and get informed about the efforts of Egnatia S.A., the Greek state, ARCTUROS and other environmental NGOs to deal with this issue. Conference details will be posted soon on the ARCTUROS website (www.arcturos.gr). 🐻

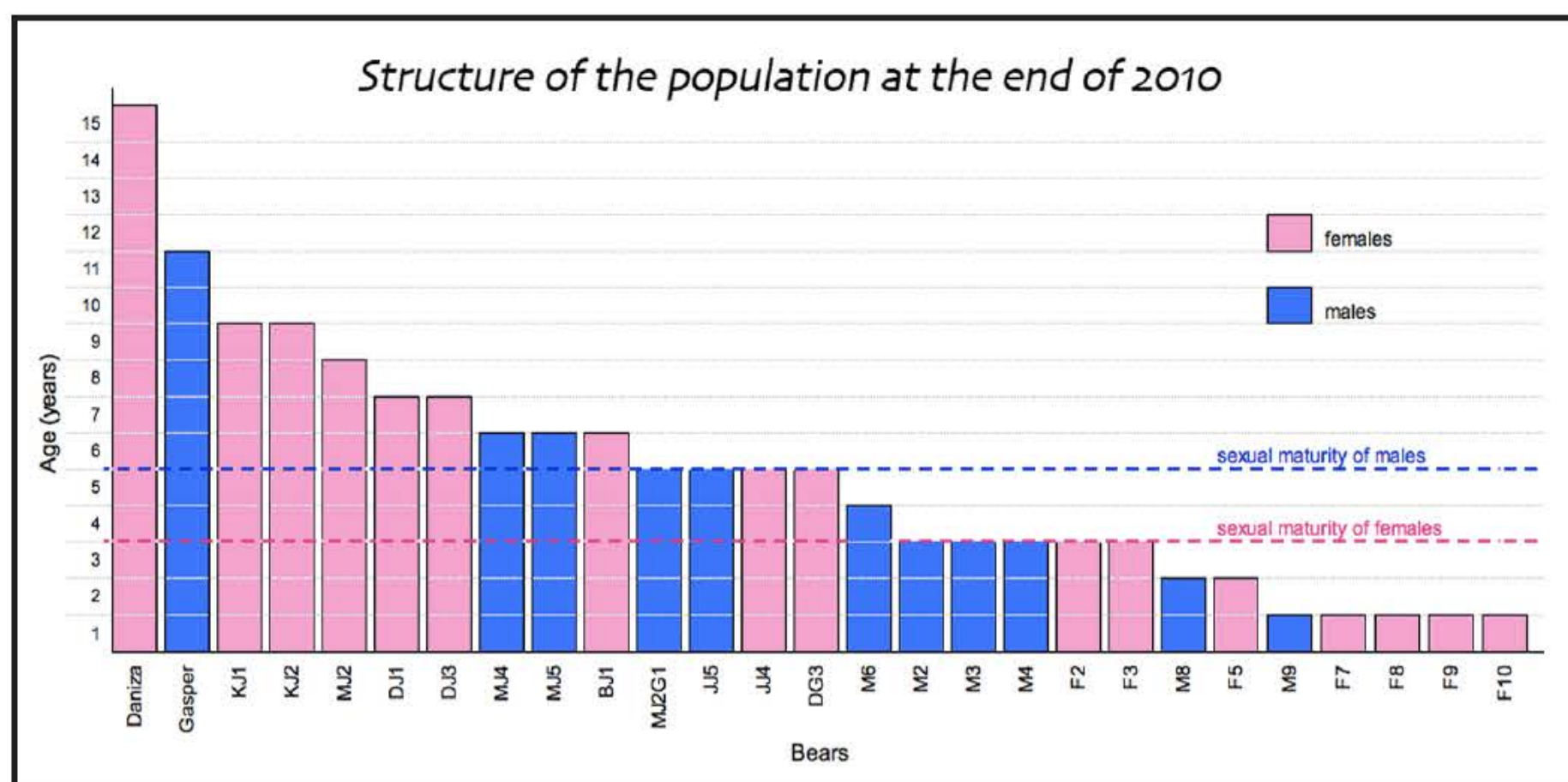


A car severely damaged after a collision with a bear on the “Egnatia” highway in Greece

The Brown Bear Population in Trentino (Italian Alps): still increasing

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A total of 681 organic bear samples were collected in the province of Trento, Italy, in 2010, bringing the total number of samples subjected to genetic testing since 2002 to 3,719. The testing was carried out by techni-



Graph 1. Structure of the population at the end of 2010