

a result, authorities decided to trap the bear and fit it with a radio collar, enabling them to keep a closer watch on him in hopes of reducing risk to human safety. WWF Austria, having considerable long-term interest and experience with bear management, lent their support to this work by Austrian and Bavarian authorities. Based on its behavior and ability to locate food in and around human settlements, JJ1 was judged by authorities as high risk.

By late May, the authorities of Bavaria and Tyrol decided to remove the animal in order to avoid the possibility of a bear-human encounter ending in a human injury or fatality. Italian authorities had initially planned to remove the bear by shooting it; however, due to strong opposition from local individuals and organizations they decided to continue with efforts to capture and move JJ1 to a captive facility.

Capturing JJ1 turned out to be a much more difficult task than anyone had imagined due to his continuous movement and habit of never returning to the same locations. Eventually, the Bavarian authorities even requested the assistance of Finnish hunting experts, flying them and their team of trained dog to Austria. However, even these experts were unable to capture the bear. In the end, Bavarian and Tyrolean authorities decided to reissue a permit to shoot the bear, and on Monday, June 6, 2006, at 4:15 a.m., JJ1 was shot close to Spitzingee, in Bavaria.

The plight of JJ1 received considerable attention from European, and even North American, media outlets. Many people could not believe that a bear, bears having been absent in Germany for decades, was shot by hunters holding a permit issued by the State. Even the Italian Minister of Environment wrote a letter of protest to his colleague in Germany, raised the case at the European Council of Ministers of the Environment, and formally asked the European Commission to open a case file against Germany.

Apart from raising a considerable political debate, the story of JJ1 clearly demonstrated the need of more effective coordination by authorities at the Alpine scale and of the urgent need to work out a clearer cross-border policy on bear management in the region. Bears do not recognize international boundaries and different management strategies should not be applied to individual bears when those individuals move from one country to neighboring countries. An additional concern raised during the debate following the shooting of JJ1 was whether or not it is appropriate for any management policy to include the possibility of removal of problem bears if those individuals pose credible risks to human safety or create unresolvable conflict. However, in the case of very small bear populations (e.g. the Central Alps population, which presently consists of six adults and 17–18 cubs), removal of even a single individual can significantly reduce the long-term probability of success in their reintroduction. Therefore, particular care must be taken in making the decision to remove a bear and should only be made after all possible alternative measures (e.g. aversive conditioning and/or capturing and radio tracking the animal in order to increase the ability to deal with critical situations) have been considered and/or attempted.

The case of JJ1 also highlighted the need for greater international coordination in management of bears living in transboundary areas and resulted in a meeting having been held this past July 4th in Trento, Italy, between relevant authorities from Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Austria. In the meeting, it was agreed that we need to establish a bear coordination committee for the Alpine region and jointly develop technical protocols to aid decision-making processes in the event of similar future cases. A decision was made to reconvene in September in Chur, Switzerland, to develop these technical protocols.

If there was a lesson to be learned from the story of JJ1, it was that countries of the Alpine region need to foster better cooperation in bear conservation and management. We hope that in the future other - and possibly more peaceful - ambassadors of the Italian recovery efforts will enter into Austria, Germany, and Switzerland and find a more friendly welcome.

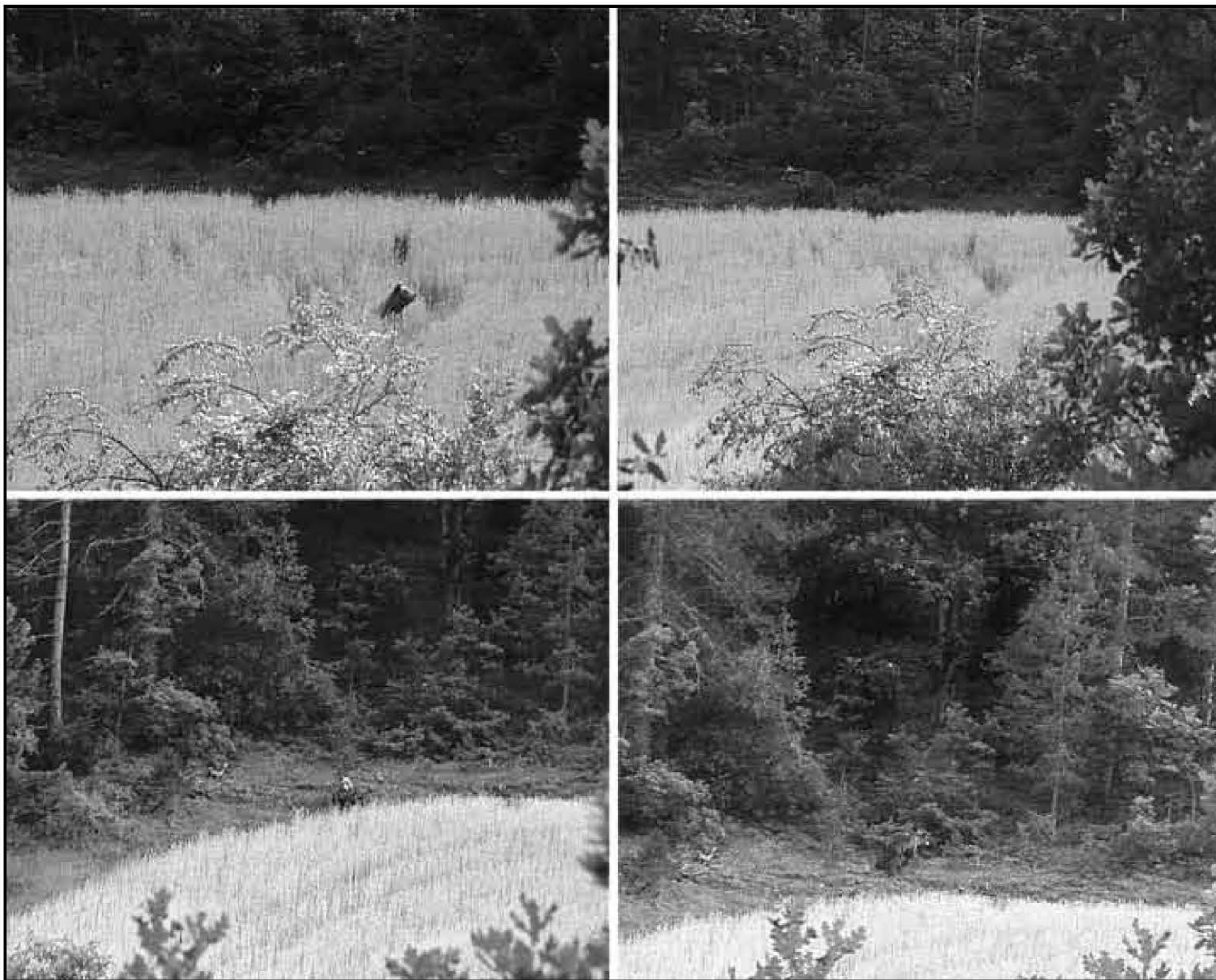
The IBA Council drafted a letter regarding the case of JJ1 which provided suggestions to competent authorities in the region encouraging the involved countries to foster coordination, with the aim of developing harmonized policies at the supranational level. For further information and to view the letter, direct your browser to <http://www.bearbiology.org/policy.htm>.

Rare Footage from Greece of a Female Bear with Two Cubs

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Capturing a glimpse of the rarest and most endangered carnivore in Greece is a special treat, not only for bear aficionados. However, capturing such moments on film can bring a bear biologist into bear nirvana!

On July 3, 2006, rare film footage was taken of a female bear and her two cubs in a wheat field. The footage shows, among other things, the mother and one of her cubs feeding in the field, the two cubs engaging in a playful fight, the mother suckling her



two cubs, and the family group leaving the scene. The footage was taken in the Prefecture of Grevena, in the Pindos mountain range, and is part of a television company sponsored effort to document the life and scientific research of this species in the country. The area where the particular footage was taken is the study site for my doctoral research in the Department of Biology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, which aims to study the marking and rubbing behavior of brown bears on power poles (For more details, see Karamanlidis 2005). This area is also the location of a large project aiming to mitigate the effects from construction of the Egnatia highway on the local ecosystem (For more details, see Karamanlidis and Mertza-

nis 2003). Since the first phase of this latter project, aimed at assessing the environmental status of the area prior to construction of the highway, has come to an end, heavy machinery and construction companies have moved into the area and started construction. The effects of such activities on the local ecosystem, and particularly on bears, should be closely monitored. Preliminary results from my research on marking behavior of brown bears in the area indicate that once frequently used poles in the proximity of intense human activity have been abandoned. Unfortunately, human disturbance is on occasion even more directly observable. For example, this unique video session was abruptly terminated when the drivers of a

construction company truck, having seen the bear family from a distance, decided it was most appropriate to greet them by honking. While there is still no law in Greece prohibiting honking in the forest, a little more consideration towards an endangered species should be expected from the employees of an environmentally friendly project.

The unique video footage provides additional evidence supporting the significance of this area to the survival of the species in Greece, as well as testimony that habitat in the area is still in good condition. Additionally, this exciting footage should provide conservationists an important tool in their effort to initiate a study to monitor for affects from construction

on bears and the environment, as well as, hopefully, remind construction company decision-makers that an environmentally friendly label is not earned simply by going strictly by the book but occasionally going beyond it and, for example, requesting that their

drivers not honk horns while working in an environmentally sensitive area, even though it's not technically illegal.

Literature Cited

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