

2005: A Year of Mixed Messages for the Future of Brown Bears in Greece

Alexandros A. Karamanlidis
 Department of Genetics
 School of Biology
 Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
 54124 Thessaloniki, Greece
 Email: alkar@bio.auth.gr
 Phone: +30 6976362844

Research Associate
 Hellenic Society for the Study and
 Protection of the Monk Seal
 Solomou 18
 10682 Athens, Greece

With another year coming to an end, a critical review shows that 2005 has been a year of mixed messages for the future of the brown bear in Greece. On the one hand, efforts to mitigate negative effects from construction of large infrastructure projects in the country are well underway and cooperation between

environmentalists, representatives of the central government and the construction companies seems, for the time being, to be fruitful. Additionally, there have been encouraging signs of the species' reappearance in areas where it had been extirpated. Apart from the reappearance of the brown bear at Mount Olympus, the species was also sighted for the first time in the Prefecture of Nafpaktia. According to a press-release by the NGO Arcturos, bears reappeared at the mountainous region of the Nafpaktia region; this location constituting the southernmost appearance of the species within the European Union.

On the other hand however, the future of the species is far from secure. Arcturos also reported another incident of a fatal bear-car collision in the Prefecture of Florina. As with

most of the recent cases, this accident involved a juvenile individual. Additionally, progress in the launching of the effective operation of the long awaited management bodies of the countries' national parks has been delayed once again, leaving the future of both bears and humans living in these areas in limbo.

Mixed messages are not negative per se. They can be destructive however, when, as in the case of Greece, they imply the lack of a thoroughly planned national strategy and a lasting commitment to the protection of the brown bear, the mountainous ecosystems and their inhabitants.

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