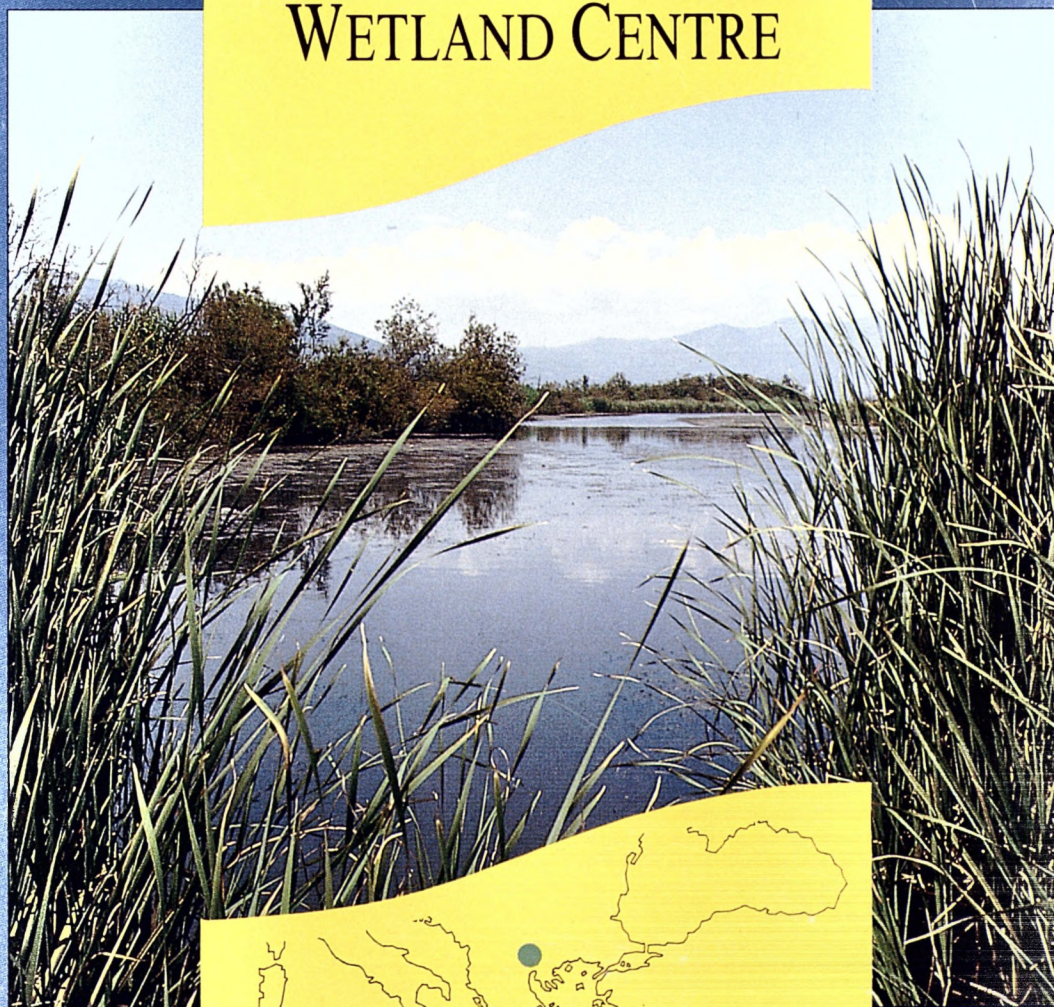


THE GOULANDRIS NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM



GREEK BIOTOPE WETLAND CENTRE



HISTORY

In early 1991, the Goulandris National History Museum accepted a proposal by the Greek Ministry of the Environment and the Commission of the European Union DG XI) to establish the Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre (EKBY). The idea of creating EKBY was first proposed in 1988-90, during the execution of the project "Conservation and Management of Greek Wetlands: Strategies and Action Plan" by the Ecology Laboratory of the Faculty of Agriculture of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre is a non-profit organisation based in the prefecture of Thessaloniki and has been operating since September 1991, under a charter approved by the European Union.



WHY A

"GREEK BIOTOPE/WETLAND CENTRE"?

During the last few decades it has been scientifically established that biotopes are natural resources with many functions of great value to Man. Thus, Greek wetlands are today considered among the most important natural, economic, social, and cultural assets of Greece, and indeed of all Europe.

Nevertheless, their quality is deteriorating and their area is decreasing, because society has not yet adopted, let alone implemented, the concept of sustainable use of renewable natural resources. Thus, little progress is being made in drawing up national and supra-national policies in agriculture, industry, housing, tourism and fisheries which would ensure sustainable development of resources and environmental conservation. Further, even if the proper policies were worked out, they could not be successfully implemented without adequate scientific knowledge and efficient coordination. It is therefore hardly surprising that one witnesses daily destruction of Greek biotopes and



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especially wetlands by drainage, destruction of natural vegetation by fires and other causes, unwise use of surface and underground water resources, illegal building, pollution, misuse of agrochemicals, illegal hunting, overfishing, overgrazing, etc. These actions not only threaten nature, which is a non-negotiable asset, but also jeopardise the economic future of the Greek people.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective is **to help arrest and reverse the loss and degradation of wetland and terrestrial natural systems, primarily in Greece but also in the rest of the Mediterranean region.** EKBY is active in the fields of renewable natural resources, ecosystems; biotopes, biocommunities, habitats, biodiversity, and Man as manager and user of natural resources.

The specific objectives in these fields are:

- To advance scientific knowledge.
- To monitor those natural processes and human activities in the fields of agriculture, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, housing, recreation and tourism which may cause environmental deterioration in the future, and to contribute to reducing these threats.
- To provide the Greek government and collaborating environmental agencies in the European Union with the scientific data they need.
- To raise public awareness of the natural, economic and cultural values of wetland and terrestrial systems and encourage a positive attitude to them.
- To promote education and training in the sustainable development and management of renewable resources.
- To provide the competent authorities with documented arguments for policies and laws leading to sustainable development as well as services relevant to the wise management of natural systems in actual field conditions.



ENTRE

ACTIVITIES

The Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre:

- Collects, processes and disseminates information acquired from inventory and monitoring, and records the principal habitats, flora and fauna of Greece.
- Supports government efforts to delineate and manage natural systems by preparing specifications of management plans, by evaluating the results and by assisting in the implementation of management measures.
- Promotes public awareness by producing pertinent material, and organising seminars and special events.
- Promotes coordination and cooperation with government services, local government, non-government environmental bodies, and educational and research institutes.
- Conducts and supports studies aimed at management problem solving and at the adoption of sustainable policies.
- Cooperates with international organisations in the field of natural resource management.
- Supports the efforts of the European Union



and the Greek government to establish and operate the European protected areas network (Natura 2000), with the support and guidance of the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture and the cooperation of many scientists from Greek universities and research centres.

PATHWAYS OF COOPERATION

EKBY implements its programme using both its own staff and outside collaborators. It also supports other organisations undertaking projects in the same field, and helps to coordinate these projects whenever possible. EKBY cooperates closely with:

- government services, particularly with those responsible for the management of biotopes and especially wetlands,
- pertinent services of the Commission of the European Union, the Ramsar Bureau and agencies participating in international projects,
- non-government environmental organisations, educational and research institutes in Greece and abroad.





● **WETLANDS ARE...**

areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres. A cardinal characteristic of the transitional zone between the permanently flooded and the strictly terrestrial areas is the presence of hydromorphic soils and hydrophytic vegetation.

The most common wetland types are: rivers, estuaries, deltas, lakes, lagoons, springs, reservoirs and saltworks.

Those wetlands which have not yet been degraded by Man support a wonderful world of living organisms that form complex food webs. A notable wetland feature is the wealth of waterfowl which reproduce, nest, feed, and rest in wetland habitats. Several of these bird species are migratory and are protected by international conventions (e.g. Ramsar, Berne, Rio) and European Union Directives (e.g. 79/409/EEC on Wildfowl, 92/43/EEC on Habitats).



● **GREECE HAS TODAY MORE THAN...**

400 large and small wetlands covering over 200,000 hectares. Wetlands are valuable natural, economic, social and cultural assets because they help sustain biological diversity, provide drinking and irrigation water, enrich groundwater, protect against floods, support fish and game, provide rich grazing land for farm animals, and offer opportunities for recreation, sports and education. They are intimately linked with Greece's history, myths and culture.

GREECE IS BLESSED...

with a wealth and variety of wetland and terrestrial ecosystems, biotopes, habitats and wild fauna and flora. It is the only country in the Mediterranean and indeed in all Europe where one meets such a wide variety of ecosystems, ranging from the semi-desert ecosystem of the Cretan palm groves to the alpine ecosystems of Mt. Olympus. No other European country has preserved so much biological diversity in such a natural state. Even the degraded forests and scrubland still preserve their natural composition. Greece is also home to more than 6000 plant species; only the Iberian peninsula can boast more. The country is also among the richest in Europe in fish species: 107, of which 37 are endemic. The same holds true for amphibians (16 species) and reptiles (58 species). Moreover, about 450 bird species have been recorded in Greece, of which 250 nest in Greek habitats. This high diversity of vegetation, flora and fauna is reflected in widely ranging ecosystem types.



● STRUCTURE

EKBY is governed by a Managing Board chaired by Mrs Niki Goulondris. A multi-member Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture, CEC, Greek and international non-government environmental organisations, and Greek and expatriate experts advises the Board on matters of organisation and policy. In the planning of activities and in the evaluation of results the personnel of the Centre is assisted by experts representing a wide range of disciplines related to the wise use of natural resources. The scientific personnel of the Centre, assisted by administrative officers and assistants, includes experts in hydrology, soil science, botany, zoology, ecology, agriculture, forestry, and communications.



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