



Forms of Natural Protection in Greece

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NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

The irregular and constantly increasing human intervention in nature and the relentless exploitation of natural resources has resulted in the degradation of the natural environment and the disrupting of ecological balance, with unpleasant consequences even to human survival itself. The prospect of disappearing from the planet many plants and animal species or unique landscapes and the peoples' awareness of the great danger, resulted in the motivation of humanity to take action against of that disastrous course.

The establishment of the institution of protected areas

Increased damage to nature and landscape, before half a century led to the first systematic efforts to protect particular species in danger of extinction by establishing, for this purpose, specific prohibitions and arrangements. At the same time, people and organizations put "pressure" on governments to take under their protection "natural" areas of land that have special value for the conservation of valuable, unique or specific traits. Thus, the institution of "protected areas" has been created, an effort of humanity to ensure the preservation of living organisms and the specific values of nature. As a first coordinated effort to safeguard the institution of protected areas worldwide, is considered an act of US Congress in 1872, where a large area in Yellowstone National Park area marked (National Park).

Main features of Protected Areas

Protected areas are not homogeneous areas with similar characteristics. Each of these areas has its own specific characteristics and therefore, the management of each mode varies. There are sites that include undisturbed natural ecosystems and other anthropogenic, landscapes with a particular value, or a combination of the above characteristics. Depending on the needs of the region, different purposes with different intensity in each case are defined.

Generally, we can say that the basic features of the protected areas are the following:

- They are terrestrial or aquatic areas,
- Contain specific characteristics (physical, ecological, landscaping)
- They are valuable for the preservation of the natural heritage of each country
- They have specific legislation
- The protection and appropriate management is guaranteed by the state,
- They are a public good

Besides from special ecological importance, they also serve as a broader, social, economic and cultural need of man.

In accordance with the above, the following definition could be given for protected areas:

Protected areas are terrestrial or aquatic areas with particular ecological or landscaping features, that are protected by law by special management regime and they share the common purpose of preserving their specific values for present and future generations, as in serving contemporary social needs

Global concern for environmental protection has been expressed by various Declarations, Conventions, Legislation, and Programs etc. as it is:

- The General Assembly of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (I.U.C.N., 1968).
- The International Convention for the Protection of Wetlands (Ramsar, 1971).
- Man and Biosphere Program (UNESCO, 1971).
- The Declaration on the Human Environment (United Nations Conference, 1972).
- The International Convention for the Conservation of Wildlife and Natural Environment (1979).
- The Regulation EC 3528/1986 on the protection of forests against atmospheric pollution.
- The network of protected areas (sites) known as "Nature 2000" (Natura 2000) objected in better and more effective protection of endangered species and their habitat, ensuring the restoration and preservation at a satisfactory level.

Categories of protected areas

Overall, in Greece, the protected natural areas are as follows:

1. **National Parks:** 10, with a total area of 687,320 acres, which constitute the most important category of protected areas and which will be analyzed in more detail below.
2. **Aesthetic forests:** 19, with a total area of 331,060 acres (0.25% of the country). These forests or natural landscapes of special aesthetic, hygiene and tourist importance, in order to protect the fauna, flora and the great natural beauty.
3. **Preserved monuments of Nature:** 51, with a total area of 16,500 acres. So declared areas, public or otherwise, which present palaeontological, geomorphological and historical interest as well as clusters of trees or trees or rare plant species of particular botanical, phytogeographical aesthetic and historical significance. In these areas the same restrictions apply as in the cores of National Parks.
4. **Wetlands of Ramsar Convention (1971):** 11, area of 400,000 acres. The Ramsar Convention defines that wetlands are "areas consisting of marsh or swamps, water concentrations natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water stagnant or running, fresh or brackish or salt, including marine areas to their depth at low tide does not exceed six meters
5. **Marine Parks:** The land and sea areas of the Northern Sporades (1992), because it is a refuge of the Mediterranean seal *Monachus-monachus*. Imminent proclamation of another marine park in the bay of Laganas (in Zacynthos island), which is an important breeding site for the sea turtle *Caretta=caretta*.
6. **Animals' Shelter:** 550, with a total area 8.000000 ha. These are areas that qualify to meet the basic needs of endangered animals in peace, food and water.
7. **Controlled hunting areas:** 7, with a total area 1,200000 acres.
8. **Breeding shelters:** 21, total area of 293,000 acres.
9. **Landscapes of outstanding natural beauty:** 300
10. **Places of outdoor recreation**
11. **Forests and woodlands** under important protective regime or destroyed by fire, etc. and which are protected by special provisions in the case, as with their decisions was declared as reforestation, grazing ban, ban hunting etc.

The protected areas system in the country is not, yet, completely indeterminate. There are areas of importance for nature conservation, which are not yet covered by specific protective legislation, while other areas have been established as protected without having received any specific measures for special protection and management. Finally, there are still areas that contain important ecological values and measures have been taken to protect them, even though they are not yet full legally protected.

National Parks



The most important category of protected areas in Greece is the National Parks, which include forest nature areas with scientific and ecological interest and are under strict protection. Overall, the 10 National Parks cover an area of 687,320 acres, (0.52% of the country) excluding the area of the peripheral zones of the first five parks. Under a special legislation, the national parks are areas with special protection status and the foundation aims:

- The protection of flora
- To improve and increase wildlife (to leave nature free, unaffected by external influences to follow its own processes)
- The preservation of geomorphological formations
- The protection of natural beauties
- The development of tourism, to create recreation areas for the public
- The creation of employment opportunities in the tourism development of the region and revitalize the region and

- Carrying out scientific research and forestry.

Today, the National Parks of Greece, with the new extensions made to both the core and the peripheral zone, occupying a total area of 1,280,450 acres. These are the following:

1. **Olympus** (Pieria)
2. **Parnassus** (Phocis)
3. **Parnitha** (Attica)
4. **Enos** (Cephalonia)
5. **Samaria** (Chania)
6. **Iti** (Fthiotida)
7. **Pindos** (Grevena)
8. **Vikos-Aoos** (Ioannina)
9. **Prespa** (Florina)
10. **Sounion** (Attica)

The National Parks of Greece are natural areas of great ecological importance because of its rarity and diversity of flora and fauna, geomorphological formations of the subsoil, the water and the atmosphere.

Aesthetic forests







Preserved monuments of Nature





Wetlands of Ramsar Convention



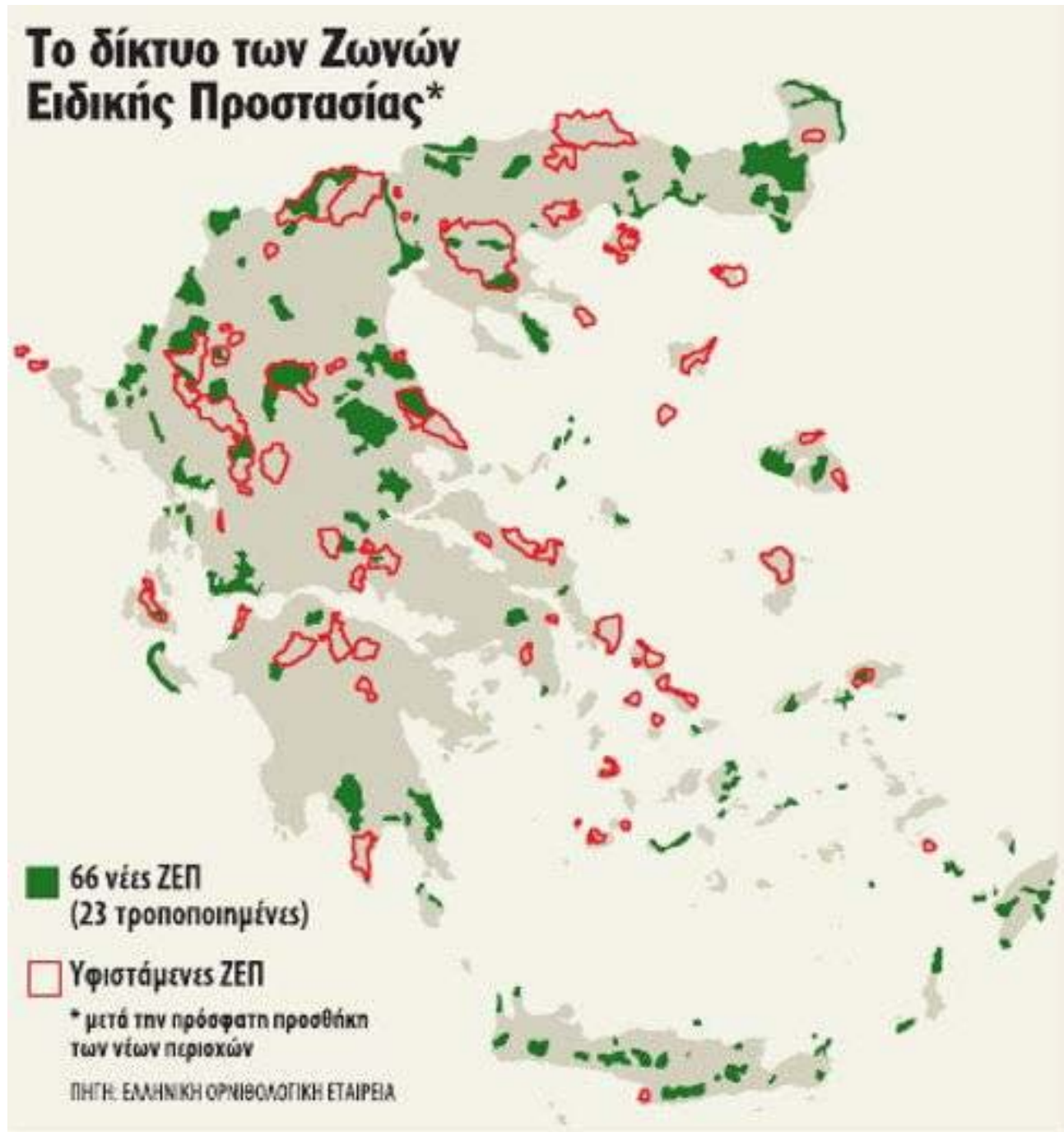




Marine Parks

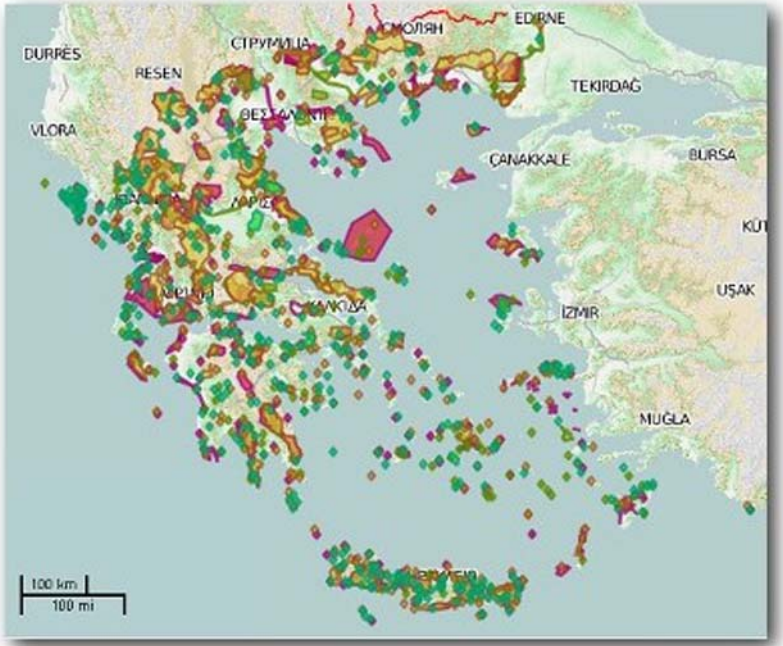


Animals' Shelter





Controlled hunting areas



Breeding shelters

Landscapes of outstanding natural beauty





Places of outdoor recreation

Forests and woodlands