

THE STATUS OF THE BERN INVERTEBRATES IN GREECE

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Among the 81 invertebrate species listed in the Appendices of the Bern Convention there are 20 that are known to exist or at least to have existed in Greece. The knowledge of the fauna of Greece is very poor. Up to the late seventies, research was almost exclusively carried out by foreign specialists who usually came to Greece for a limited amount of time, collected specimens and published species lists and descriptions. These articles totalling at the moment about 6,000, were often published in obscure, difficult-to-find journals and sometimes the authors had never visited Greece but worked on museum collections. Since the seventies, the Greek community of zoologists has grown but not sufficiently to be able to verify the previous records and to cover all groups, especially invertebrates. Therefore, what will follow is most probably incomplete both regarding the species themselves and their distribution and status. Some of these species may no longer exist in Greece and some of those that will not be mentioned may be present and either not recorded so far or recorded somewhere which we were unable to trace.

The only measures that have been taken to protect invertebrates in Greece is a presidential decree of 1981 which includes many species both vertebrates and invertebrates and prohibits capturing, wounding, killing, keeping, selling, buying and exporting. However, this law has never been applied because no customs official or policeman or other authority knows the Latin names of species - this is the way they are present in the law - there is no public education, no publicity on these species and there are no provisions for the protection of their biotopes.

The biggest part of the information provided here comes from the archives of the Greek Fauna Documentation Centre of the Hellenic Zoological Society, which is an attempt to record all the species of the fauna of Greece in a computer based form. The assistance of the following persons must be acknowledged: Drs M. Mylonas and M. Thessalou of the University of Athens, Dr A. Zenetos of the National Center of Marine Research and MM. A. Trihas, D. Kollaros and K. Paragamian of the University of Crete.

Notes on species

Annelida

Hirudo medicinalis

There are very few and old data. Ten years ago it was still used for medicinal purposes in Salonica (northern Greece). Freshwater pollution must have caused decrease in population.

Mollusca

Helix pomatia

Scattered populations in eastern Macedonia and Thrace. This species is collected for local consumption and also for exporting.

Anthropoda
Crustacea

Astacus astacus balcanicus

Austropotamobius torrentium macedonicus

Both these species live in western Macedonia and Ipeiros (Albrecht, 1982). They are relatively common but decreasing in the last few years. Because they are sympatric and because there exists no recent review, we cannot say whether both are common or just one of them.

Insecta
Odonata

Lindenia tetraphylla

Widespread but local and uncommon. An important breeding place is Limni Volvi (Van Tol & Verdonk, 1988).

Stylurus flavipes

Recorded from several river systems in central and northern Greece (Van Tol & Verdonk, 1988).

Coleoptera

Osmoderma eremita

Buprestis splendens

Cerambyx cerdo

Rosalia alpina

Lucanus cervus

They have all been recorded from forests in northern and central Greece. In the past they existed in southern Greece (Peloponisos) as well but not any longer. Status of populations is unknown.

Lepidoptera

Papilio alexanor

Widely distributed all over mainland Greece but rare.

Parnassius apolloa

Distributed in central and northern Greece but rare.

Parnassius mnemosyne

Present on mountains above 1700 m. Locally common in all mainland Greece.

Zerynthia polyxena

Widely distributed in central and northern Greece but rare.

Lycaena dispar

Known from very few localities in western Macedonia and Thrace. Endangered.

Maculinea arion

Known from eastern and central Macedonia. Rare.

Apatura metis

Known from three localities in northern Greece.

Euphydryas aurinia

Distributed in Ipeiros, Macedonia and Thrace. Status of populations unknown.

Hyles hippophaes

Known in Greece from only one locality, the island of Limnos in the northern Aegean.

Notes on other species

Some notes must be added for species that have not been included in the Bern Convention. It is well known that Greece has a large number of species, much larger per area than in most other European countries. This is due to its position on the crossroads between Europe, African and Asia, on the fact that glaciation did not fully reach Greece but created many refugial areas in the mountains, on the high number of islands and the many changes in sea level and on the karstic nature of its rocks that gave Greece the highest number of caves in Europe after Yugoslavia. At the same time, Greece has had a long history of human settlement and a constant degradation of its natural environment. Therefore, there are many species of invertebrates that are very narrowly endemic, rare or seriously threatened and that need not only national but international protection. To this should be added another reason, namely the need to press the authorities who in general are not environmentally conscious, towards adopting policies of protection and conservation of nature. The threatened status of species like the red coral, Corallium rubrum, the Cyclades edible snail, Helix godetiana and most cave inhabiting invertebrates, to name a few examples, illustrate that the Bern Convention invertebrates are of limited use for Greece, as many more species are more seriously threatened with extinction.

References

Albrecht H., 1982. On the origin of the Mediterranean crayfishes. Quad.Lab.Tecn.Pesca 3(2-5): 355-362.
Van Tol, J., Verdonk M.J., 1988. The protection of dragonflies (Odonata) and their biotopes. Council of Europe, 181 pp.