

## RECENT TRENDS IN THE STUDY OF THE GREEK FAUNA

By A. LEGAKIS

The fauna of Greece has always attracted considerable attention from naturalists and zoologists all over the world. Of course it has not been studied as copiously as other parts of Europe but its geographical position between Europe, Asia and Africa and its insular as well as mountainous character has given it a special zoogeographical position.

Our knowledge on the greek fauna starts from ancient times. Aristotle was the first to compile lists of species that he had observed. Since then and up to the beginning of the 19th century, no serious study was carried out. We only have sporadic references by european travellers who visited Greece and among other things, mentioned the presence of a few animals. Only in the beginning of the 19th century we observe the appearance of systematic works either on large regions of Greece or on certain animal groups. One of the first such publications is the report on the scientific expedition to the Peloponnese (1832-1837) carried out by a French group.

Since then, there is an increasing number of articles and books appearing in the european zoological literature. Figure I shows the number of articles every five year period. We can see the increasing number since 1830. One very characteristic peak occurs in the 1925-1930 period and since then, the number of articles is evidently higher. This peak is most probably due to the publication of the Biological Abstracts in 1926. The Biological Abstracts was the first serious attempt at a world biological bibliography and it certainly abstracted many periodicals that had been unknown to many researchers up to then. However, the world economic crisis that exploded in the late 1920's and the war which followed, averted many scientists from visiting Greece, a fact that is clearly seen in the continuous fall of the number of articles per year from 1930 up to 1950. From the 50's onwards we see a rapid increase of the number of articles which reaches its peak maximum in 1977 with 147 articles recorded so far. At the same time, we see an increase in the percentage of greek researchers and also an increase of the number of articles published in greek periodicals. During the five year period between 1974 and 1978, the articles written by Greeks increased by 20.6% over the previous five year period while the total number of articles increased by only 18.5%. In the whole ten year period, the numbers of articles written by Greeks amounted to 32.7% of the total.

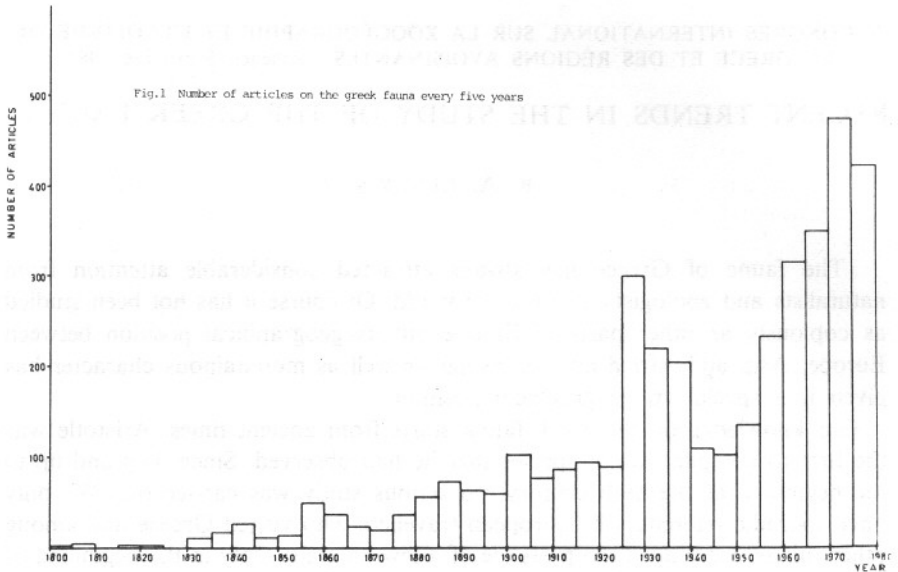


Fig. 1. Number of articles on the greek fauna every five years.

At the same time, there were similar increases in the articles in greek periodicals, a 21.4% increase between 1974-1978 and 1969-1973. For the ten year period between 1969 and 1978, articles in greek periodicals amounted up to 27.6% of the total. Of these, the majority, 45%, were published in *Biologia gallo-hellenica*. Other important greek periodicals that attracted articles on the greek fauna were the *Annals of the Benaki phytopathological Institute* with 13% and the two publications of the *Institute of Oceanographic and Fisheries Research - Hellenic Oceanology and Limnology* and *Thalassographica* - with 10%. Among the periodicals of other nationalities, 15% appeared in W. German periodicals, 9% in french, 8% in british, 7% in italian and 6% in dutch and swiss periodicals. Finally, articles in periodicals from another 20 countries accounted for the remaining 22%. It is obvious that apart from the Greeks, the german speaking researchers are the ones that are mostly interested in the study of the greek fauna. This fact has always been the case in the 20th century and still remains valid. Most german, austrian and swiss natural history museums have large collections from Greece while french and british museums have concentrated on other parts of the world. It is also characteristic that the german speaking researchers work on a wide variety of animal groups, from molluscs to mammals, while for example the british concentrate on butterflies

and birds and the greek researchers on the marine fauna and on applied entomology and nematology.

Looking at the number of articles written for each animal group in the ten year period between 1969 and 1978, we observe that most articles are related to the phylum Arthropoda (61%). In detail, Arachnids account for 8%, Crustaceans for 8.5%, Myriapods for 1.5% and Insects for 44.5%. Among Insects, most popular are the Lepidoptera and the Coleoptera (11.3% and 10.9% of the total). Out of the remaining phyla, the Chordata amount to 20.2% with the birds being most popular and the Mollusca amount to 6.4%. In some groups there is satisfactory coverage of the fauna. For example, most of the vertebrates, the butterflies and some other smaller insect groups are well known. However, in most groups there are big gaps regardless of the number of people that have studied them.

If we occupy ourselves with the geographical distribution of faunistic research in Greece, we will observe a heavy bias towards the islands both in the Ionian and the Aegean Sea. The biggest percentage of articles since 1800 has been written for the insular fauna and most organised expeditions have been carried out on the islands (Werner in the Aegean and Ionian islands, Paget and Kritscher in Rhodes, italian expeditions in the Dodecanese, Senckenberg Museum in the Northern Sporades etc.). The mainland fauna and especially the mountains, have been largely ignored. The reasons for these preferences are dual. One is the considerable zoogeographical interest that the islands have to offer and a second is the tourist attraction that permits many to combine both their scientific interest with the pleasures of the greek islands.

One characteristic that strikes the observer of the bibliography of the greek fauna is the complete absence of ecological works either for a specific region or for a species or group of species. Apart from sporadic references on some ecological aspects of various species, there hasn't been a synthetic article or series of articles. This kind of work requires of course the coordinated effort of a group of researchers and a considerable amount of time spent in the field. Under the present circumstances, it is difficult for a large group of foreign researchers to stay in Greece for such a long time. It is left to the Greeks to carry out this most important task and we can say that there are some encouraging signs in the horizon.

What is also missing here in Greece is a series of basic reference works and some general background knowledge of the greek fauna. These works, useful for both the newcomer and the advanced researcher, include identification keys, lists of species, lists of characteristic biotopes and ecosystems, zoological collections, review articles, books etc. It is characteristic that although a lot of people, perhaps 300 or 400, are working on the greek fauna, there is no coor-

dinated effort because each one is working on his or her own specialty. This congress is therefore a serious chance to achieve this aim.

## REFERENCES

- KANELIS A., 1967. Bibliographia faunae graecae 1960-1966 et supplementum. *Sci. Ann. Fac. Phys. Math. Univ. Thessalon.* 10:183-207.
- KANELIS A., HATZISSARANTOS CH., 1950. Bibliographia faunae graecae (1800-1950). *To Vouno* 1-78.
- KANELIS A., HATZISSARANTOS CH., 1960. Bibliographia faunae graecae 1950-1960 und Nachträge. *Verh. zool-bot. Ges. Wien* 100: 96-105.
- KANELIS A., LEGAKIS A., 1979. Bibliographia faunae graecae 1967-1978 et supplementum. *Biol. gallo-hellen* 7 (supl): 1-69.
- LEGAKIS A., 1979. Bibliography of the greek fauna. Supplement A: Applied Zoology. *Biol. gallo-hellen.* 7 (supl): 71-90.
- LEGAKIS A., 1979. Bibliography of the greek fauna. Supplement B: Specialised articles. *Biol. gallo-hellen.* 7 (supl): 91-126.

*Zoological Laboratory,  
University of Athens*