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## Mediterranean News

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### Bulgaria

One of the most important former breeding habitats of the Mediterranean monk seal in Bulgaria has recently been declared a Ramsar Site – the famous Zehtin borun (Maslen nos) Cape near the river Ropotamo. The website of the [Ramsar Convention](#) describes it thus:

**Ropotamo Complex** (formerly called 'Arkoutino'). 24/09/1975. Burgas. 5,500 ha. 42°19'N 027°45'E. Partially Reserve, Natural Monument, Maintained Reserve and Protected Area. The site has been extended from 97 ha to 5,500 ha and the name has been changed on 24/09/2002. The site, on the southern Bulgarian Black Sea coast, represents a diverse mosaic of various habitats – river downstream and estuary, seasonally flooded riverine and broad-leaved deciduous forests, small freshwater and brackish lagoons, sand dunes, rocky shores and fjords, a sea bay, sea inlets. The site provides refuge to many nationally and internationally IUCN red-listed species of plants and animals, among which are seven globally threatened species of birds and two plant species, eight invertebrate species and seven mammal species. Rich endemic and relict flora and fauna are recorded in the site. The main human uses are forestry, hunting, and recreational activities, and the site is a very popular destination for nature lovers, offering some facilities as well. Management plans are in preparation, and the Bulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme is active at the site. Ramsar site no. 65.

The other very important site near Cape Kaliakra and Tjulenovo covers the criteria for Important Birds Area (for *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) and will be included in the future Bulgarian Natura 2000 network.

Unfortunately, monk seals have already been exterminated in Bulgaria. – Stefan Avramov, Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds/BirdLife Bulgaria.

### Cyprus

The Cyprus Mail reports that a Mediterranean monk seal made a rare appearance in Paphos harbour over the weekend of 17-18 May 2003, coming and going over the next three days before vanishing without trace.

The monk seal has become an increasingly rare inhabitant of Cyprus and was even considered extinct until surveys established that small, remnant groups of animals continued to survive on the south and northeast coasts.

The Cyprus Mail reports that 5-6 individuals are thought to inhabit the island's southern shores, while another 5 are thought to frequent Cape Apostolos Andreas.

Of the Paphos sighting, on the west of the island, local ecologist Martin Hellicar was quoted as saying: "It may have been lost or hungry, but it's hard to say why it would swim up to the shore."

The Mail adds that the last recorded sighting of a monk seal on Cyprus took place in August 2001 at Governor's Beach near Limassol.

#### For further information

**Khadder, Tania.** 2003. Rare monk seal makes an appearance in Paphos harbour. Cyprus Mail, Thursday, May 22, 2003. <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/May/22/news6.htm>

**Dendrinis, P. and A. Demetropoulos.** [The Mediterranean monk seal in Cyprus](#). Monachus Science, TMG 3(2): 2000.

## Greece

### Finding a voice in the Sporades Marine Park

Organisations and individuals from Greece and abroad have contacted the Ministry of Environment in Athens, expressing their view that MOM, the country's leading monk seal NGO, be officially appointed a representative of the board of directors of the management authority of the National Marine Park of Alonissos, Northern Sporades (NMPANS) [see [A question of management](#), 5 (2): November 2002].

Despite earlier assurances, there has been some doubt of late as to whether conservation interests will find an adequate voice on the committee which, comprising various government agencies and local stakeholders, is likely to play a pivotal role in shaping the Park's future, both in terms of conservation and alternative economic development.

Environmental organisations and universities, both in Greece and abroad, were among those petitioning the ministry to ensure that monk seal conservation interests are adequately represented on the NMPANS administrative committee.

As some were keen to point out in their appeals to the Ministry, MOM played an instrumental role in the founding of the Marine Park and, even in the absence of an official management authority, has been consistently applying essential management actions in the area for many years, including guarding and monitoring, education and public awareness, rescue and rehabilitation.

Although the formation of the management authority fulfils an earlier public pledge by deputy Minister of Environment, Rodoula Zisi [see [Sporades receives ministerial commitment](#), TMG 5 (1): May 2002], many important issues still await resolution, including appointment of a NMPANS manager and staff, as well as annual operating budgets. The NMPANS was established by Presidential Decree in May 1992.

### For further information

[The islands at the end of the line](#), TMG 4 (2): November 2001.

[All at sea – adrift in the Northern Sporades Marine Park](#), TMG 4 (2): November 2001.



MOM's Visitor Centre on Alonissos, in the Northern Sporades Marine Park, has recently been reopened after renovation and renewal of exhibits. The Centre is the only source of public information on the monk seal in the NMPANS.

### NGOs join forces for protected areas

Environmental NGOs within Greece, including MOM, have been striving for improved ties and inter-organisational cooperation. Ad hoc meetings held over the last year have attempted to forge a common policy with regard to the management of protected areas, and NGO participation within the process.

The Natura 2000 Committee was subsequently formed at the beginning of 2003, a new institutional instrument with

consultative status towards the Ministry of Environment. The Committee has a mandate to monitor and coordinate actions that are being carried out in all of Greece's Natura 2000 protected areas, and will evaluate the implementation of relevant EU legislation.

Dr. Spyros Kotomatas, MOm's scientific coordinator, represents MOm in the Natura 2000 Committee. – MOm.

## Research confirms international importance of Kimolos and Karpathos

MOm's creation of permanent field teams in Kimolos-Polyaigos in the Cyclades islands and Karpathos-Saria in the eastern Aegean, has allowed the organisation to conduct a more detailed and systematic study of local monk seal populations and their biotopes.



Kimolos seal

The research forms part of MOm's EU-funded LIFE programme to establish marine reserves in the two areas [see [LIFE funding for Natura 2000 areas](#), TMG 4 (2): November 2001].

During 2002, special emphasis was placed on detailed monitoring of the use of caves by the seals, and the recording of births during the reproduction period.

As far as Kimolos-Polyegos is concerned, analysis of the collected data confirms the area's significance for the protection of the species on an international basis. Indeed, the total of 17 newborn seals recorded in the area over the past two years (9 during 2001 and 8 in 2002) represents the second highest number of births recorded during the

same period in any geographical area of the Mediterranean.

As far as Northern Karpathos-Saria is concerned, findings to date suggest that this area is also important for the species, as evidenced by the 8 newborn seals recorded during the past two years (3 during 2001 and 5 in 2002).

– Stella Adamantopoulou and Spiros Kotomatas, MOm.

## Surveillance systems launched

Meanwhile, drawing on its long-running experience within the NMPANS between 1990 and 2002, MOm launched a pilot surveillance system for Kimolos-Polyaigos and Karpathos-Saria, tailored to the particular needs of each area. This involved:

- The selection and training of locally-recruited field crews.
- The construction, registration and delivery of two new monitoring and research boats, the 8.5 meter *Kimolos* and the 9.5 meter *Saria*, both equipped with radar and VHS transmitters, and capable of both day and night operation [see [New research vessels for Kimolos and Karpathos](#), TMG 5 (2): November 2002].
- Devising a surveillance programme to maximise resources and ensure optimum coverage of each area.
- Designing a special data recording system and database for the detailed recording of human activities taking place within the marine zones of each area. Collected data will constitute a significant source of information on the existing state of the marine environment and its exploitation, which is essential for the future management of the areas.
- Ensuring a fruitful and effective cooperation, especially at a local level, with the Port Police authority, the official body responsible for implementing maritime law in Greece.

The pilot surveillance scheme will continue to operate until 2004, hopefully providing invaluable practical experience for the management authorities that will eventually be responsible for guarding activities in each area. – Stella Adamantopoulou and Spiros Kotomatas, MOm.

## For further information

[Uncertainty in Kimolos](#), TMG 5 (2): November 2002

## TV brings monk seal message to millions

For a month leading up to Christmas 2002, MOm's new public service announcement on the plight of the monk seal was broadcast by TV stations across Greece. As far as concept was concerned, the idea behind the 2002 ad was

innovative, focusing on conservation actions undertaken by MOm in the Northern Sporades Marine Park, Kimolos and Karpathos.

The ad was broadcast on E.T. 1, N.E.T., ALPHA TV, ANTENNA TV, MEGA CHANNEL, STAR CHANNEL (Athens), E.T. 3 (Thessaloniki), TV IRIDA, RADIO-TV COSMOS, RHODES CHANNEL (Dodecanese), AEGEAN TV, SYROS TV (Cyclades) and T.R.T. (Thessaly).

Underlining their continuing support for MOm's conservation efforts, Adel Saatchi & Saatchi provided their creative and conceptual advertising skills free-of-charge. Anna Maria Harokopou and the company Filmiki Etairia also made a substantial contribution in terms of studio work. – MOm.

### **Final pup tally for 2002**

MOm's research team has released the final pup tally for monk seal births recorded during the 2002-2003 season in the organisation's three main study areas:

Nine newborn seals were recorded in the core zone of the National Marine Park of Alonissos-Northern Sporades, 8 in the Kimolos-Polyaigos area and 5 in the area of N. Karpathos-Saria. – Panos Dendrinis, MOm.

### **Marine Workshop for Alonissos**

Following the success of the "Forest Workshop" at Evros in 2002, this year WWF Greece and MOm joined forces to host a similar "Marine Workshop" on Alonissos in the Northern Sporades Marine Park. The Workshop took place from 23 – 30 of May, at the Biological Research Station at Gerakas.

The principal aims of the Workshop were to contribute to the sound management of Greece's fragile marine and coastal ecosystems by offering personnel from public and private entities both theoretical and practical knowledge relating to the administration of marine protected areas. Participants benefited from experience gained by WWF Greece in various projects around the country, and from MOm's multi-year experience in the management of Greece's first National Marine Park.



MOm's Panos Dendrinis guiding Workshop participants through the NMPANS

Aside from theoretical lectures by WWF and MOm specialists, individual and group training projects took place both in the field and in class. Topics ranged from legal and institutional aspects of marine protected areas to addressing day-to-day management problems, ecosystem monitoring, the participation of local communities in the conservation process, and the possibilities of developing sustainable ecotourism activities within protected areas. – Vrassidas Zavras, MOm.