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Thematic cycle 1 «The Role and the Work of Hunting Organizations»





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The Role and the Work of Hunting Organizations of Hellenic Hunters Confederation

1. Generally

Hunters were the social group that first pressurized and succeeded in introducing protective provisions for wildlife in modern Greece. Hunting Organizations acquired their current form in 1969 through the Law 86/1969 «Forest Code». Several of the provisions of this law copy the proposals of the Panhellenic Hunting Meetings that proceeded in the 1920s and 1930s, echoing arguments and concepts of wildlife protection that would be envied by today's late ecologists. On the basis of these provisions, and after constant pressure from hunting organizations hunting guards are hired, endangered species are protected, hunting rules are strictly enforced, the use of traps and nets are forbidden, killing and trading of protected species is prohibited and hunting parks are established.

Under the same provisions of the "Forest Code" are also the current 250 Hunting Associations throughout the country established, which are under the jurisdiction of the 7 Hunting Federations and these in turn are under the jurisdiction of the Hellenic Hunters Confederation. In this way, a network of organizations which cooperates with the state is formed, with common statutes of operation and common purpose, which is the protection and improvement of the country's game capital.

2. The activities of HUNTING ASSOCIATIONS

Almost in every corner of Greek land operates a Hunting Association that provides every year major environmental work. With more than 4.000.000 € a year, from the contributions paid by hunters, the elected Administrative Boards and the members of Hunting Associations:

- Ensure adequate hunting activity in their area
- Sow abandoned fields
- Play an important role in the Hellenic Hunter Confederation's major environmental

projects

- Hire gamekeepers and kit them out with any essential modern means
- Breed and release game in protected areas so that wild populations can establish
- Save from starving thousands of wild animals by throwing tones of food on froze lakes and snowy forests
- Plant trees on thousands of acres of burned areas or areas destroyed by other causes
- Organize fire safety groups and assist in the work of the firebrigade
- Intervene in every direction in order to avoid environmental damage or habitat degradation
- Publish newspapers and journals of environmentally friendly content

A real “army” of people restlessly works for the rescue and development of the renewable natural resource, which if exhausted, the hunter is self-abolished: the wild game populations.

3. The task of HUNTING FEDERATIONS

The multitude and variety of environmentally friendly activities mentioned above could not be directed to specific fields nor could priorities be set if there were no 7 Hunting Federations distributed in the seven geographical regions of the country. Having a leading role, Hunting Federations control the work of the 250 Hunting Associations, provide directions and solve a number of operational problems. Their main concern is to adapt the game policy to the particularities of each region, to ensure its proper implementation, as well as to coordinate and strengthen the various game and environmentally friendly activities of the respective Hunting Associations. For this purpose, Hunting Federations invest annually more than 2.000.000 €.

The Hunting Federations have also been entrusted with the coordination and to a large extent the implementation of the major programs launched by the Hunting Confederation. These are the ones that direct, assure the conditions, take action and control compliance with the methods to be applied to ensure the validity and reliability of the individual results and studies.

4. The role of the HELLENIC HUNTERS CONFEDERATION

The Hellenic Hunters Confederation, being the supreme executive body at the top of the Hunting Organization hierarchy, is the institutional interlocutor with the State for hunting issues. It is responsible for promoting all necessary actions to safeguard and develop hunting activity and to improve and enhance the natural environment.

In order to accomplish this, the Hellenic Hunters Confederation formulates specific environmental policy, develops a long-term plan for the perpetual existence and development of game and controls the Hunting Federations and Associations, ensuring the correct implementation of the decisions concerning the fulfillment of the above objectives.

Having taken on the burden of shaping strategy to tackle the thorny problems facing the natural environment today (and hence the game resource), the Hellenic Hunters Confederation observes international and community developments and provides on a national level proper guidelines for a steady “edifice” of Hunting Organizations. Through this strategy: a) the science of ecology and the contemporary view of the role of the hunter in wildlife management; b) the requirements of Community law and international conventions; c) international scientific and political partnerships; d) the decisions of the European Commission; e) the proposals of the University and other Research Centers dealing with the study, protection and development of wildlife are denominated in specific directions with the aim of their implementation by the 7 Hunting Federations, the 250 Hunting Associations and the thousands of hunters in every corner of Greece.

With the help of all the above actions and studies the Hellenic Hunters Confederation always defends the positions of the hunting world with scientifically substantiated arguments and highlights the special cultural identity of the Greek hunting, with many and great successes so far, as far the attacks and accusations that are being pursued at both national and European level are concerned.

The role and work of hunting organizations of all levels in order to obtain reliable data and information as well as improve habitats takes form through the involvement, coordination and implementation of the following major programs:

4.1 Programme to identify the phenology of migration of game birds in Greece

On the Hellenic Hunters Confederation initiative and with the aim of recording the migration of wild birds that appear every year in our country, the Confederation has launched one of the largest and most comprehensive programmes in Europe, costing 600.000 €.

With the scientific guidance of the University of Thessaloniki and in collaboration with the Mediterranean Institute for Conservation of Game and Wildlife Conservation (Mediterranean Institute Of Patrimoine Cynégétique Et Faunistique –IMPCF) (France) and the European institute for the management of wild birds and their habitats (Oiseaux Migrateurs du Paléarctique Occidental-OMPO) (France), who have decades of experience across Europe and Africa and are active in more than 110 countries,

specialized people work almost daily on behalf of the Hellenic Hunters Confederation in every important habitat of Greece.

To monitor the migration of waterfowl, 40 trained observers scan the major wetlands from Evros to Crete and from Mytilini to Amvrakikos, 3 times a month, surpassing a total of 3.500 observations per year.

At the same time, high-tech equipment is used to record the migrations of thrushes and blackbirds, with methods applied for the first time in Greece, similar to those applied across the rest of Europe.

The remaining, of hunting interest, migratory birds, likewoodcocks and wood pigeons, are recorded by specialized groups of hunters, after detailed information on the methods to be used to determine the dates of arrival and departure of these species.

By working with methods identical to those of other European countries, Greek hunting organizations can now have credible results for the migration time of these birds and, above all, the results that European Committees have been asking for for decades but we as a state have failed to provide.

Based on these results, hunting organizations, with their scientific collaborators, will now have undeniable and reliable data that will strengthen their positions about hunting periods in Greece.

The scientific documentation of hunting as a means of managing the natural environment will refute the dubious quality assessments that have been made so far, usually by occasional naturalists - observers and organizations with anti-hunting orientations.

4.2 Hunting harvest recording programme (ARTEMIS I)

The ARTEMIS I programme is a continuous monitoring study of game populations and the recording study of hunting harvest. The programme was named so to commemorate the ancient goddess protector of hunting because it is the first nationwide scale study to be conducted on hunting.

The programme is being carried out by the Hellenic Hunters Confederation and has repeatedly received praise from European organizations and recognition at World Congresses. It has already completed 12 years of implementation, with data considered to be of the most complete and notable with respect to relevant programmes implemented in Europe.

Its implementation is based on the return of a completed questionnaire at the end of the hunting season, describing the harvest that each hunter has achieved during his hunting outings, together with various details about his hunting preferences and the hunters habits.

The results that originate from this programme through contemporary statistical methods feature the image of Greek hunters, their preferences on game species and most importantly lead to very important assessments of the situation of game populations.

Abundant information is derived from the completed ARTEMIS I questionnaires which are processed by a team of scientists with many years of experience and lead to the description of the hunting harvest in Greece.

By adopting the ARTEMIS I programme 12 years ago the Hellenic Hunters Confederation has operated in the light of the future requirements of the United Europe. Indeed, it has recently been considered appropriate to apply a similar pan-European system, considering that the Greek recording system (ARTEMIS I) is fulfilling the requirements of pan-European methods of recording hunting harvest. This proposal was accepted by the European Commission at the Pan-European Conference on Hunting harvest held in Athens in June 2006, in the presence of the Commissioner for the Environment of the European Union.

The aims of the study are:

- Firstly, the estimate of national hunting harvest, i.e. the total number of game by species, hunted each year in Greece. This assessment is then further developed at the level of hunting regions (Hunting Federation Territory) until it reaches the prefecture level.
- The recording of various hunting characteristics, such as the hunting demand by game species and geographical unit, the total annual number of outings of the average hunter, the average duration of a hunting outing and the factors influencing them, the dispersal of hunters in Greece and how it differs between the inhabitants of large urban centers and the province, how many cartridges are consumed per excursion and in total, how the number of hunters of the group varies in relation to the game, etc.
- The numerical determination of game abundance indicators in order to reach conclusions on the course of game populations (trend of increase or decrease) when statistically compared from year to year. Such indicators are e.g. the average number of game encountered by the hunter in one of his outings and the average number of game that is hunted in one of his outings. Success rate of reproduction is the average number of birds of the flock of partridges, when calculated for the first days of the hunting season (~ 15 Sept.). On the contrary, when the number of birds refers to the end of the period (~ 30 Nov.) it shows the survival capacity of the herd in winter.
- The study of the entry of some migratory game species into our country, such as the woodcock, the common wood pigeon, the thrushes, the ducks etc, and the exodus of some others, such as the common quail, the turtle dove etc.





Dear hunter,

Completing the ARTEMIS questionnaire is very important. Do not forget that this is a hunter-funded research and serves the hunting world, giving valuable and reliable data for the continuation of hunting. This data is private, so do not hesitate to complete it.

4.3 Program to determine the relative abundance of game species in Greece through hunting activity (ARTEMIS II)

Following the implementation of the ARTEMIS project and with the aim of completing the image of hunting harvest and the situation of game populations in Greece, the Hellenic Hunters Confederation proceeded with the elaboration of a complementary program to assess the population structure of game species.

This program, costing 90.000 €, is based entirely on hunters' cooperation while using the potential of Federal hunting guards. The data collected daily during the hunting season through the regular checks carried out by the Federal hunting guards feed a database that will provide valuable information describing the population status of each game.

The information collected by the Federal hunting guards for the implementation of the programme includes general information on the hunting outings of the audited hunter, recording of the hunted game, and receiving, upon permission of the hunter, part of certain parts of the game such as part of the bird's wings or part of the hare's feet. All of this data analyzed in a specific way leads to an accurate knowledge of the population status of each huntable species.

Knowing the situation of the game populations, at any time, the scientists of the Hunting Organizations are able to judge the seriousness or anxiety that should create phenomena that until now have been inexplicable and possibly create an unjustified panic, such as a sudden reduction of a species' population that is observed at intervals. A typical example was that of 2002, when hunters across Europe were alarmed that the woodcocks had disappeared from their habitats. However, knowledge from similar programs allowed scientists who were monitoring the populations of the species to reassure them, saying with certainty that the populations are healthy and that the woodcocks will reappear in large numbers in the years to come, as was the case. It is obvious that knowledge of these factors prevents the hasty, dangerous and unclear conclusions that can only lead to hasty hunting bans while at the same time there can be a significant contribution to management measures in order to help specific game populations that need additional support.

Basic answers about ARTEMIS II:

4.3.1 What is Artemis II;

It is the continuous acquisition and processing of data and information concerning the hunting activity, aiming at determining the relative abundance (population trends) of the game species in our country. This program complements Artemis I, mainly in the field of the collection and analysis of biological material from game species. It is part of the work of the Hunting Confederation of Greece and is financed entirely by it.

4.3.2 How is data collection conducted?

Data collection is conducted by the Game keepers of Hunting Organizations with the help of special equipment which has been provided by the Hellenic Hunters Confederation. So in the course of their routine checks the guards firstly complete the questionnaire designed specifically for this purpose taking a short interview from the hunter.

They then ask the hunter if he is willing to give them some wings from the hunted birds, a front leg from the hare or if they can look at the denture of the hunted wild boar to determine his age. These samples are placed in special polyethylene bags and the specific label on that is associated with the serial number of the questionnaire that corresponds to the hunting outing of the audited hunter. Afterwards the samples are stored in the freezer.

4.3.3 How is data processing performed?

Twelve hunting guards scattered all over the country, who constitute the core of the program, collect these samples, each of them in his area of responsibility, and after special training, they defrost, dry them, and then specify the age and the sex of the bird or hare, to which they belonged respectively. All of these primary data are collected at the headquarters of the scientific team and, once imported into PCs, they are processed statistically.

4.3.4 Results

From the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire data characteristics of the hunting activity are studied such as:

- hunting preference by game species and its geographical distribution,
- the hunting pressure of the different regions in relation also to the origin of the hunters

- the game abundance, determined by specific parameters of the hunting game abundance indicator, such as hunting opportunity, hunting harvest, etc.

From the analysis and interpretation of the data resulting from the biological material (bird wings, hare feet and examination of wild boar teeth) the following are identified:

- Age and gender frequencies of a representative sample of individuals of different game species and the demographic trends of their populations which are deduced from the above.

- The relationship between demographic situation, movements and geographical distribution of populations of different species.

4.3.5 Benefits

There are various and very important benefits deriving from the programme. Some of them are:

1. The ability to formulate well-documented proposals to achieve a steady and equitable return of the surplus of game capital in combination with hunting pressure.

2. The potential of correlating the situation of game populations with annual or long-term changes in biotic or other factors.

3. The potential of strategically designing improvement programs required for the development and conservation of game populations by species (Action plan).

4. The potential of drawing up plans for the sustainable management of game populations by species and geographical unit (Master plan).

5. The creation of an information bank in the Hellenic Hunters Confederation, which will gather such data, which will enable her to document its proposals to the State.

4.4 Programme for habitat improvement and enhancement of resident game species

In previous years, the Hunting Federations of the country, in cooperation with Hunting Associations, have carried out several improvement interventions in many places in the countryside, aiming at strengthening the game populations. These interventions have produced many interesting results.

In 2005, the Hellenic Hunters Confederation launched a major program, with an annual cost of 600.000 €, to organize all these individual moves and to have a more efficient and more concrete way of action.

It is clear that the greatest damage to resident game species (pheasants, partridges, hares and wild boars) is caused by enormous deterioration of their habitat. With con-

certed actions, followed in all countries where endemic game is in abundance, it is possible for our country as well to see in the coming years a significant increase in these species, which accrue much of the hunting preference.

This programme is based almost exclusively on the activation of Hunting Associations under the guidance of Hunting Federations. The willingness and involvement of the members of the Associations, as well as the insistence on the organized implementation of the actions to be followed are of paramount importance to the success of this programme.

It must be made clear that the future of hunting in Greece cannot be based on and depending, as it currently stands, on migratory game species. Greek game species must occupy a greater part of hunting preference in order to unleash the Greek hunter from migratory game that is subject to management regimes in other countries without a secure future. Achieving this goal requires sustained, intense and under systematic guidance natural habitat improvement.

- **Continuity and maintenance of hunting is the tangible result of the very specific, systematic, organized, painstaking and unfaltering efforts of hunting organizations.**
- **Without the specific projects and actions of hunting organizations (Hunting Confederation, Hunting Federations and Hunting Associations) there would be no hunting for the wanted time period, neither for the wanted game species and hunting areas, focusing always on the protection and improvement of the natural environment.**
- **The Hellenic Hunters Confederation has decided to spend more than 3.000.000 € over the next years on programs that will shield the hunter's positions with data and knowledge and enhance the country's wildlife.**
- **Hunting can no longer be exercised without monitoring, programming and planning. Only then will there be certainty that the game populations will be healthy and satisfactory for the coming years.**
- **Hunting organizations in Greece are taking the scientific documentation of hunting activity in their hands because hunting must be based on studies, research and data.**







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The Project Partners are:

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- The municipality of K. Neurokopi
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