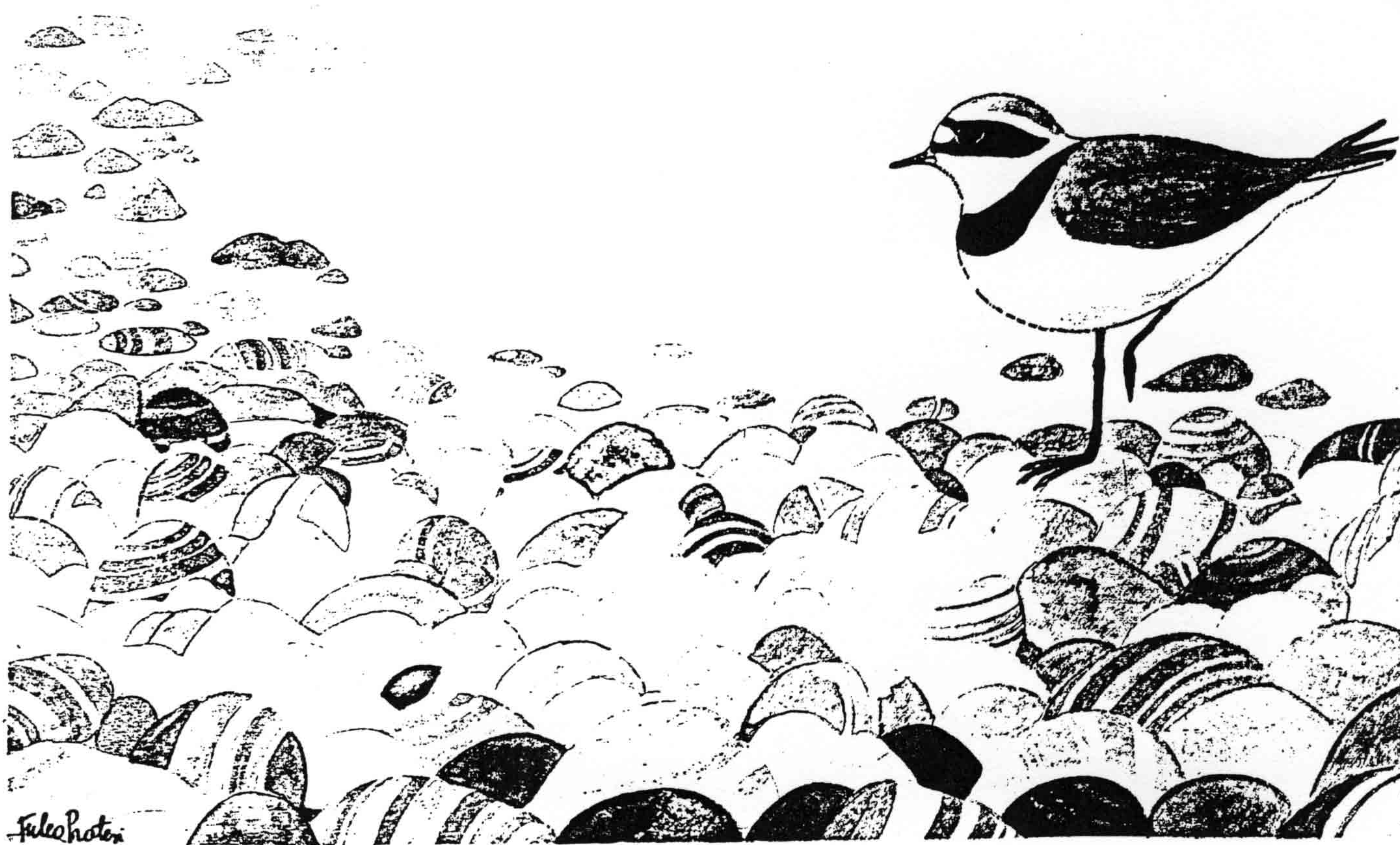


Côtes et parcs marins
de la Méditerranée

Actes du Colloque de Bastia



4^e colloque organisé
par le Centre Naturopa

Bastia (Corse), 30 mai – 1^{er} juin 1991

ACTES DU COLLOQUE DE BASTIA
PROCEEDINGS OF THE BASTIA COLLOQUY

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Interventions présentées lors du
Quatrième Colloque International

sur

Côtes et parcs marins de la Méditerranée

Bastia (Corse), France
30 mai au 1er juin 1991

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Statements presented at the
Fourth International Colloquy

on

Coasts and marine parks of the Mediterranean

Bastia (Corsica), France
30 May to 1 June 1991

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THE EXPERIENCE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Eleni Voultsiadou-Koukoura

Aristote University of Thessaloniki, Department of Zoology, Box 134,
GR - 54096 Thessaloniki

Several areas in the Aegean Sea need protection for various reasons, while at the same time they could be used as sites for entertainment and environmental education. This means that these areas should have been or should be characterised Marine Parks. However, only one area all over the Aegean, that of the North Sporades Archipelago, located in the central-western part of the North Aegean, is today a Marine Park.

The first idea for the establishment of a Marine Park in the Aegean Sea came up before 1970, but its realisation began 20 years later. An attempt to investigate the subject was started in 1972 by the Greek National Centre for Marine Research, in the island of Rhodes, but it had no result. In the following years, the presuppositions for the establishment of a Park in the area of the North Sporades started to arise. The presuppositions were strengthened by the sensitivation of the people and the authorities mainly through films on the importance of the ecosystem of this area, since it is one of the few remaining habitats of the dramatically decreasing population of the Mediterranean seal *Monachus monachus*.

So, at the end of 1982, the Ministry of Environment, aiming to establish a Marine Park, asked from the European Communities to finance a scientific project on the biology and ecology of the Mediterranean seal and the study of the flora and fauna of the terrestrial and marine ecosystem of the North Sporades. The Ministry also proposed the creation of a biological station in the area which would help in the running of the Park. The contract between the Greek Government and the European Communities concerning the above project was signed in December 1983 and the research started in 1984 mainly by the Universities of Thessaloniki and Athens.

The results of the research carried out in the frame of this project were preliminary presented in a meeting held in Alonnisos Island (North Sporades) in June 1986. Here, it was pointed out that other reasons, besides the protection of the Mediterranean seal, made necessary the establishment of a Marine Park in this area. The most important of these were the strikingly high diversity of flora and fauna, the great stocks of the commercially valuable red coral *Corrallium rubrum*, the existence of remarkable ancient shipwrecks and areas of high aesthetic value as well as the cultural and popular heritage of the islands. In the same meeting, it became clear that the main goals of this Marine Park should be the following in order of importance:

- a. Conservation of the Mediterranean seal *M. monachus*
- b. Protection of rare animals and plants living in the area
- c. Protection of the environment aiming in the improvement of the archeological and aesthetic value of the area
- d. Socio-economic development of the islands through the creation of an attractive environment for tourists and through a rational exploitation of the natural sources.

In September 1986, the Marine Park of the North Sporades Islands was established on a proposal of the Greek Ministry of Environment. The Park consists of two zones having a different status: a zone called A, in which an absolute protection is enforced and a buffer zone B. The islands of Kyra Panagia, Youra, Skanzoura and Piperi are included in zone A. The eastern coasts of Pilion mountain and the islands of Skiathos, Skopelos and Alonissos form the buffer zone B.

Fishing activities have been regulated with the agreement of local fishermen. Only coastal fishermen are allowed to fish around the coasts in zone A, apart from the coast of Piperi where fishing is strictly forbidden. This regulation has already existed for three years. A special regulation for navigation in the area has been issued by the port police. Hunting is regulated by the forest service.

The establishment of the Park was accompanied by the following short-term objectives:

- i. The Park will be run experimentally until 1990, when it is expected to be economically self-sufficient.
- ii. The final master plan and the legal frame will be elaborated during the experimental phase, in order to deal with all features.
- iii. Besides the biological station being built in Alonissos, two houses for the guards on the islands of Youra and Piperi will be built. In the biological station, laboratories will be organised for the study of the monk seal and of the marine ecosystem in general. Two rubber boats and a speed boat will be available for patrolling. Complementary buildings for the rescue station are also planned to be constructed. A jeep and a computer will be bought.
- iv. An airplane of the port police will regularly oversee the area. The guards will be present in the Park permanently. During the reproduction period of the monk seal, three additional guards will be there.
- v. The Ministry of Environment, will provide the Universities of Thessaloniki and Athens with the necessary financial support in order to be able to record the habitats of the monk seal all over the Greek seas, to estimate as accurately as possible the existing population and to study in the area of the Park the biology and the ecology of the monk seal as well as the structure and function of the ecosystem.

During 1986, the monk seal population was estimated at about 40 individuals. At least three pups were born this year.

The period during which the Park was supposed to be run experimentally was over in the end of 1990, and very few of the above objectives have been realised. The Park is still very far from being self-sufficient. On the opposite, it is necessary to be further financially supported so that the substructure works will be completed. The building of the biological station is not ready, since there is no furniture and organs; there is also no electricity, fresh water and telephone and the jeep has not yet been bought. This causes problems because the road connecting the station with the village is in bad condition. The payment of the guards is not permanently guaranteed and the small boats used by them are problematic.

The above discouraging condition should not be attributed only to the bureaucracy. All the co-operating groups and the organisations should share responsibility more or less.

In 1990, although some money was given for the protection of the monk seal and secondarily for the Park, the co-ordination of the works has got more difficult due to the interference of some other organisations such as the recently established University of Thessalia and the Society for the protection of the seal.

In order to get over these problems, the Greek Society for the protection of the environment and the cultural heritage has undertaken the financial management of the Park. This society will be responsible for everything concerning the Park from now on. The plans of the above society can be summarised as follows:

i. It will gather and take under consideration the suggestions of the various authorities and groups interested in the Park such of those made by the fishermen of Alonissos who are asking for a review of the protection measures existing. On the basis of these suggestions as well as on the basis of the experience acquired, the Society will propose improvements on a preliminary law-frame made by the government.

ii. The society will guarantee the guarding of the Park finding the money for the payment of the guards.

iii. It will take care of the function of the biological station in spite of the existing difficulties, mostly because it is considered of great importance by the European Communities. Its best possible exploitation is necessary for research purposes, including an investigation on the possibility of running a reproduction centre for captured animals in the Park.

The realisation of the above plans greatly depends on the timely and sufficient financial and administrative support of the whole effort, both by the European Communities and the Greek government, as well as on the good co-operation among the groups working for the Park.

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