



**REPORT**

**MARCH  
2014**

# CONSERVATION OF THE ISLAND WETLANDS OF GREECE

2004-2013

**DISCOVERING THE TRUE VALUE OF GREEK ISLAND WETLANDS**



# CONSERVATION OF THE ISLAND WETLANDS OF GREECE

2004-2013

DISCOVERING THE TRUE VALUE OF GREEK ISLAND WETLANDS







## CAN THE IMPOSSIBLE BE ACHIEVABLE?

By the time WWF Greece undertook the initiative for the protection of the Greek island wetlands, the knowledge about their number and condition was limited. At the same time the State did not acknowledge their existence or value as ecosystems. Furthermore, the deficient spatial planning and its lack of enforcement in conjunction with urban development sprawl along the coastal zone, has resulted in the continuous degradation.

To reverse this situation, we designed and implemented a 9-year project "Conservation of the island wetlands of Greece" with a series of interrelated research, documentation, public awareness and policy activities. Within this period we managed to document the existence and conservation status of all the Greek islands wetlands. In addition to this we communicated their importance and value to the public, mobilised citizens, NGO's and stakeholders, whilst prevented further degradation activities and brought the issue forward to the agenda of the decision makers.

Today, these ecological "diamonds" are finally acknowledged and delineated; their legal protection at a national and local scale has been largely achieved while all citizens have free access to the data. The first decisive step is completed. Now, it's up to the State and the people to preserve these valuable ecosystems for a sustainable future of the Greek islands.



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**PUBLISHER** | WWF Greece

**PRINTING** | Lyhnia S.A.

The project "Conservation of the Island Wetlands of Greece" was funded by **MAYA Fondation pour la Nature**



WWF Greece (2014) Conservation of the Island Wetlands of Greece (2004-2013):  
Discovering the True Value of Greek Island Wetlands. WWF Greece, February 2014, Athens, 72 pp

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This publication is printed on FSC certified paper Munken Polar/150gr

# CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER 1</u>	
Why island wetlands?	07
<u>CHAPTER 2</u>	
Greek island wetlands: Getting the attention they deserved	13
<u>CHAPTER 3</u>	
9 Years inventorying Greek island wetlands: A survey never done before	21
<u>CHAPTER 4</u>	
Making Greek island wetlands the "talk of the town"	29
<u>CHAPTER 5</u>	
Greek island wetlands are no longer treated as dirty waters	41
<u>CHAPTER 6</u>	
The team behind a successful initiative	51
<u>CHAPTER 7</u>	
What the future holds for Greek island wetlands	59
<u>CHAPTER 8</u>	
Discovering the true value of Greek island wetlands	67





KOPANA SALINE, EVVOIA  
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Half of the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900. Development and conversion continue to pose major threats to them, despite their value and importance.

WWF International

# CHAPTER 1

## Why island wetlands?

**S**adly, Greek island wetlands faced the same destiny, as since 1920, about 60 percent of them have been drained and for many years they were treated just like mires!

The opening efforts for creating the first National Inventory of Greek wetlands started back in 1980. By 1991, it was finally established by the Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre (E.K.V.Y) with the contribution of the former Greek Ministry for the Environment, Spatial Planning, and Public Works. With the valuable support and assistance of dozens of services, organisations and individuals, a “first approximation” of National Wetlands Inventory was published in 1994, including a list of 378 wetlands, with inventory data on 271 of them.

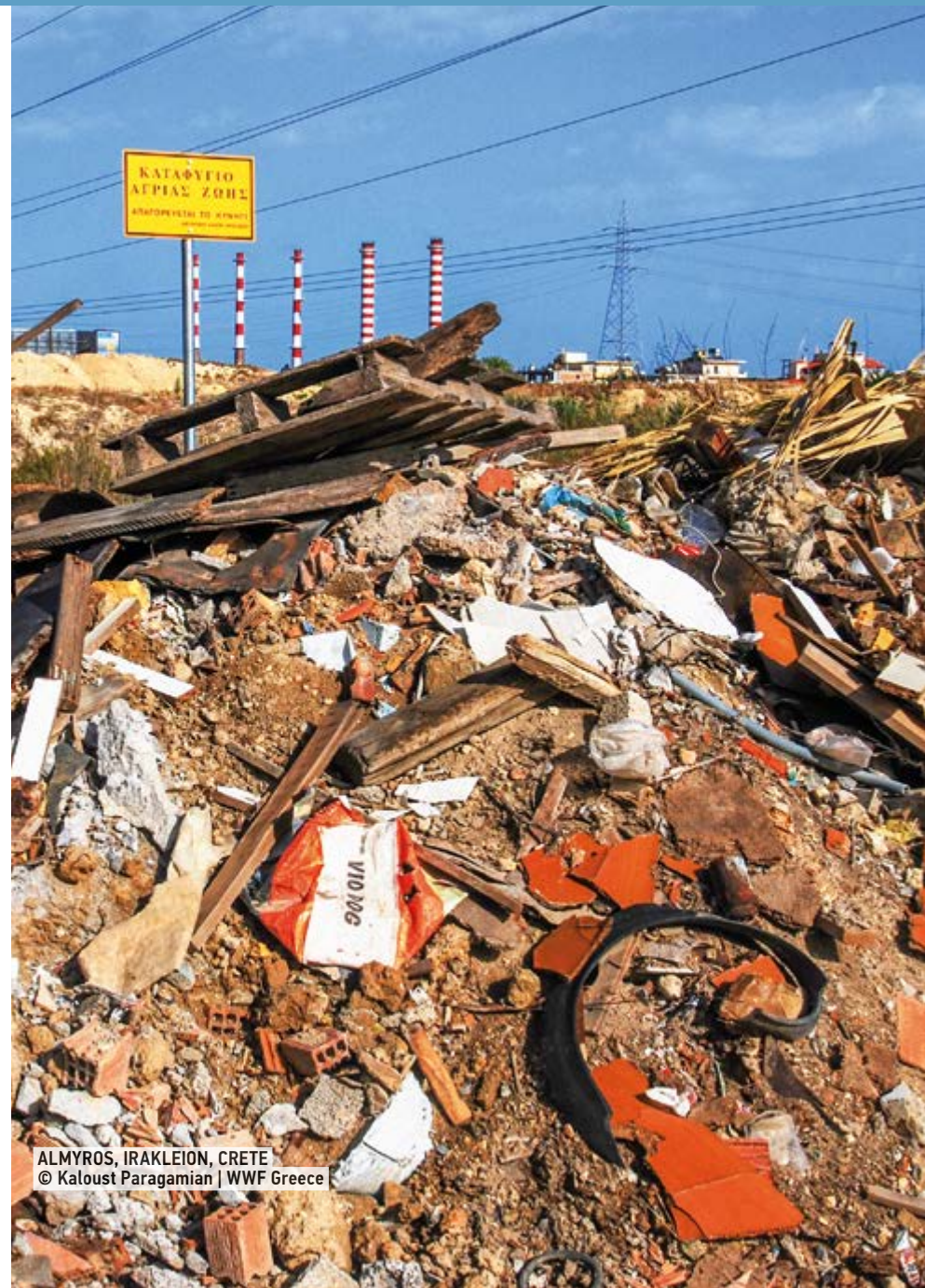
Regarding the Greek islands, a list of 107 wetlands on 25 islands was presented, with inventory data for 70 of them (13 on 4 islands of the Ionian Sea and 57 on 19 islands of the Aegean Sea, included Crete). It was clear that during its preparation, central focus has

been given on the large and important wetlands of Greece's mainland. Consequently, thousands of minor wetlands spread throughout the Greek territory were excluded, by leaving a significant gap concerning our knowledge of their wealth situation. Nevertheless, the National Inventory was indeed a first step forward, as many important wetlands received an identity.

**The first National Inventory appeared immature in giving island wetlands the attention they deserved, with the vast majority of them being virtually nonexistent for the State for many years.**

This in fact motivated WWF Greece, to design and implement a project, highlighting the urgent necessity to document the importance and conservation needs of the Greek islands wetlands, to raise awareness regarding their value and to promote their effective protection. The organisation began in 2004 the “Conservation of the Aegean Island Wetlands” initiative, focused initially on the Aegean Islands, striving to document the current situation of Greek island wetlands, highlight their importance and draw attention to whatever is needed for their preservation. In the course of the first two years, 348 wetlands larger than 0.1ha were identified in 52 islands of the Aegean Sea (Crete excluded), 230 of which were inventoried following proper fieldwork. The initiative was extended in 2008 to Crete and the Ionian Islands, involving, in essence, the whole of maritime Greece, under the project “Conservation of the Island Wetlands of Greece”.

By that time, many of the Greek island wetlands were downgraded and thus they were facing a great risk, primarily due to clearing, filling with rubble, building, road construction, and restriction or downright deprivation of fresh-water input. What's more, their small size, made them vulnerable and greatly threatened by senseless human activity.



ALMYROS, IRAKLEION, CRETE  
© Kaloust Paragamian | WWF Greece





MORONIS ESTUARY, CRETE  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece

### Greek island wetlands were highly threatened in consequence of:

- The absence of a clear legislative framework for their conservation.
- The insufficiency of environmental protection mechanisms.
- The tremendous pressure coming from the tourism industry for the development of coastal areas, as well as the impacts from building beyond city-plan boundaries.
- The fact that competent bodies, authorities and citizens were still ignoring the presence, importance and value of island wetlands.

### What happens when wetlands are not protected and conserved?

WWF Greece, decided not to take the risk of answering that question. Instead decided to take action in order to prevent island wetlands from disappearing and so, one of its longest and most dynamic conservation project began!



KERI LAKE, ZANTE  
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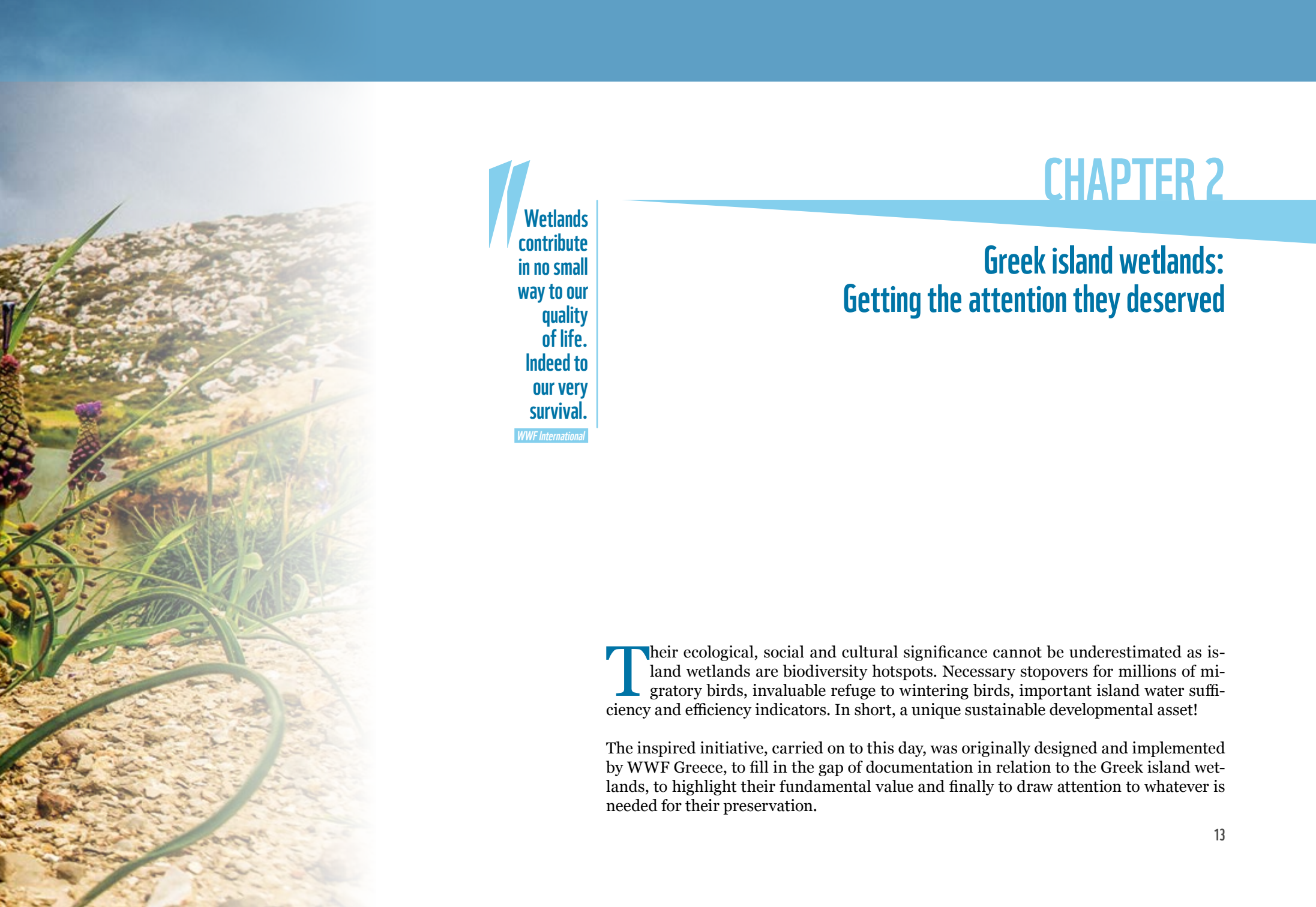






KATO LIMNIA, CRETE  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece





Wetlands  
contribute  
in no small  
way to our  
quality  
of life.  
Indeed to  
our very  
survival.

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## CHAPTER 2

### Greek island wetlands: Getting the attention they deserved

**T**heir ecological, social and cultural significance cannot be underestimated as island wetlands are biodiversity hotspots. Necessary stopovers for millions of migratory birds, invaluable refuge to wintering birds, important island water sufficiency and efficiency indicators. In short, a unique sustainable developmental asset!

The inspired initiative, carried on to this day, was originally designed and implemented by WWF Greece, to fill in the gap of documentation in relation to the Greek island wetlands, to highlight their fundamental value and finally to draw attention to whatever is needed for their preservation.

Our core mission remains the same from the beginning of the project:  
To identify and endorse the significance of island wetlands,  
as source of life for people and wildlife.

Our initial efforts (2004-2007) focused on developing internal capacities and infrastructures to carry out an extensive documentation for Aegean Island Wetlands. Up until 2010, all Greek islands included in our research and we developed a series of activities to designate and promote specific conservation proposals and their application, by mobilising central and local government in this direction. Our activities were based on four central objectives!

### One project, four objectives

- Establishment of necessary scientific knowledge base required for the protection of island wetlands.
- Promotion and guarantee of adequate protection frameworks at the national and local level.
- Diffusion of knowledge towards the mobilisation of public and civil society for the protection of island wetlands.
- Handle and avert site-specific threats during the project.



EUROPEAN TREE FROG (*Hyla arborea*)  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece

### Establishment of necessary scientific knowledge base required for the protection of island wetlands

The majority of wetlands had never been researched before, and thus our scientific work was built around research, identification, mapping and documentation. Our responsibility was to highlight for the first time the traits of the wetlands and the threats they are facing, so as to prioritise sites and conservation needs. The major challenge was to emphasise their significance as an ecological network, by suggesting and promoting horizontal protection measures and statuses.

### Promotion and guarantee of adequate protection frameworks at the national and local level

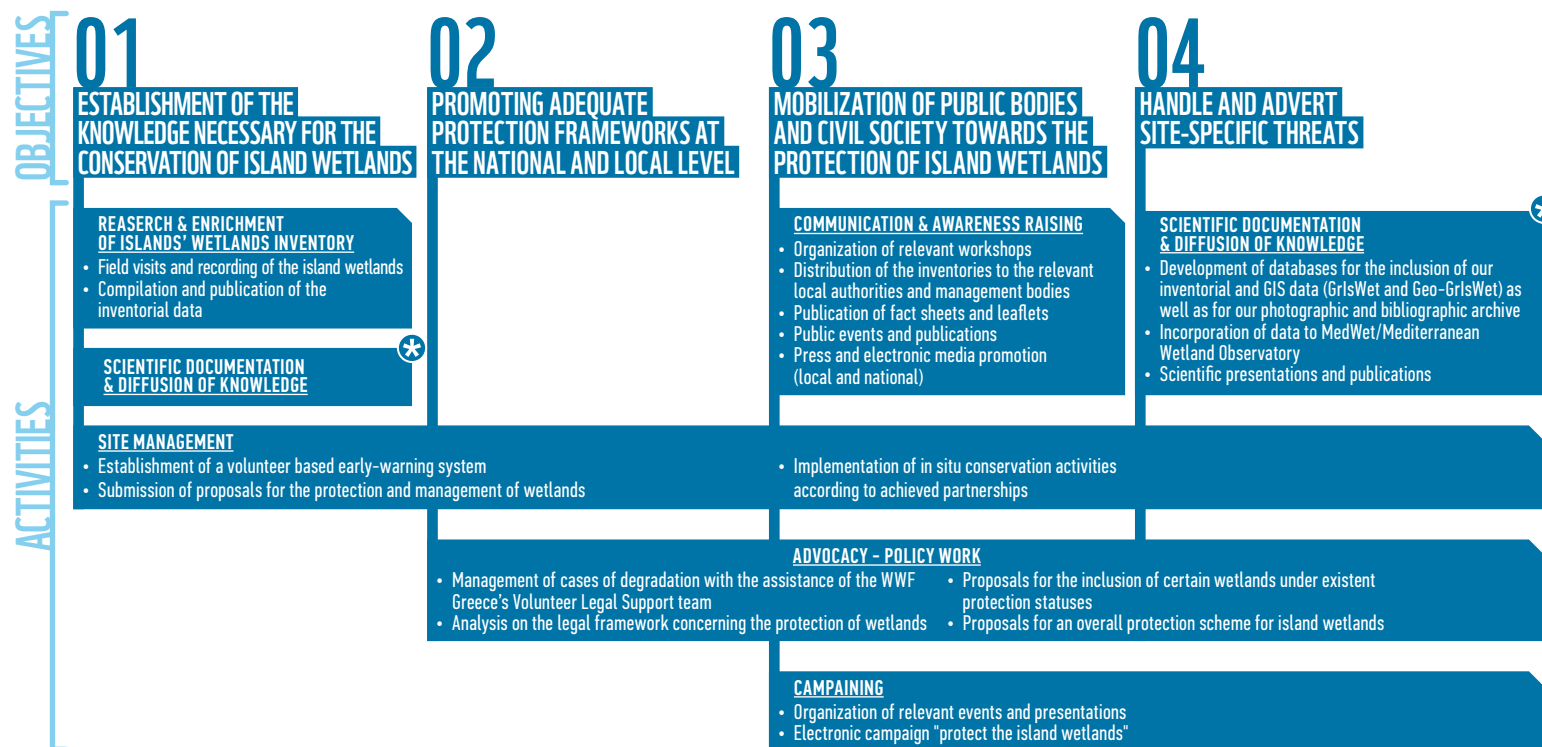
The absence of a strong legal framework for small island wetlands was more than noticeable. The distinctive features of the island wetlands (large number, small in area) and their distribution to a large number of islands (unknown at the planning stage of the project) made these ecosystems particularly vulnerable to the increasing pressure from human development. Their inclusion under a protection framework became for WWF Greece a fundamental principle.



BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*)  
© Andrea Bonetti | WWF Greece

## Diffusion of knowledge towards the mobilisation of public and civil society for the protection of island wetlands

The common human behavior concerning island wetlands was mainly expressed by ignorance and lack of interest. Bringing people closer to them, helping them discover their ecological, social and cultural impact and finally motivate local communities and activate citizens to participate in their protection, became the essential idea of the project.







BROAD-BODIED CHASER (*Libellula depressa*)  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece

## Handle and avert site-specific threats

Greek island wetlands were in danger and it was our duty to stop of site-specific threats and propose efficient management practices for preventing degradation activities. Demonstrating the scale of the problem and mobilising all relevant authorities in a systematic way, was the key to ensure the viability of the “Conservation of Island Wetlands of Greece” expected results.

The activities of the project were implemented for the successful realisation of the four objectives and they were designed under four central axes: Research, Documentation and Diffusion of Knowledge/ Site Management/ Advocacy and Policy Work/ Awareness Raising and Civil Engagement.

## The "journey" was not easy!

During this long lasting project we faced a variety of obstacles. The State had adapted only exceptionally recommendations made by NGOs for the protection of environmental assets, a concrete Ministry of Environment was absent before 2009 and above all we had to deal with the political situation in Greece that was very unstable and negative to such changes due to the economic crisis. However, we have managed to overcome successfully those barriers, through the formation of solid synergies with stakeholders and devoted supporters who actively engaged in our core mission, by gaining new partners and collaborating with existing ones.





KOURNAS LAKE, CRETE  
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MALIA MARSH, CRETE  
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## CHAPTER 3

### 9 years inventorying Greek island wetlands: A survey never done before

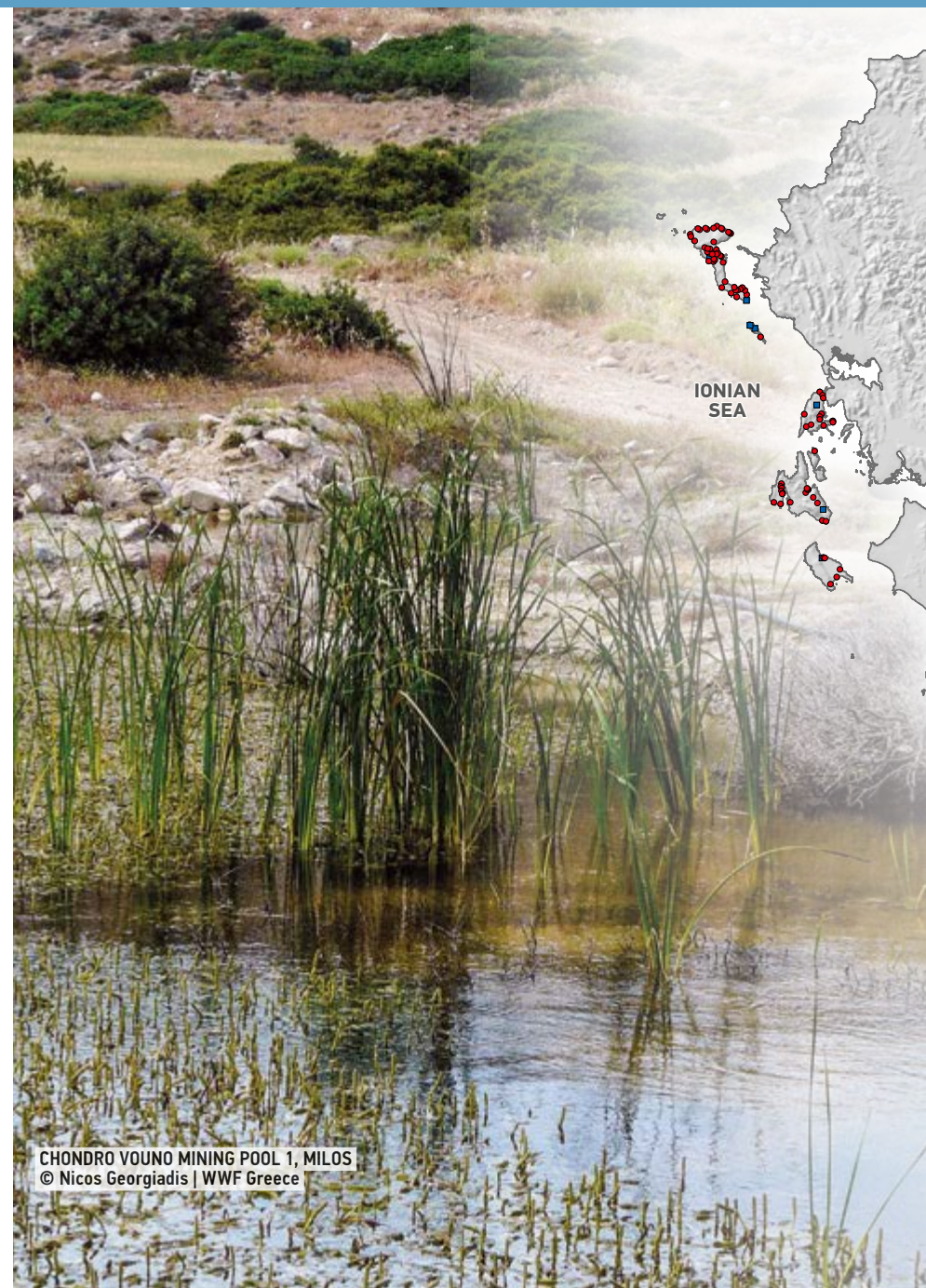
**U**p until now most island wetlands were unknown and unrecognised. Today, WWF Greece is proud to reveal their number, spatial distribution and condition thanks to a survey that has never been done before. At last, these significant ecosystems are sufficiently documented and most importantly the majority of the natural ones are under a protection status!

Safeguarding this rare natural environment was our initial goal. In order to scale up conservation efforts that meet the needs of both society and wetland ecosystem, WWF Greece designed in situ surveys to delineate island wetlands, evaluate their ecological status and their threats, by prioritising sites in terms of preservation needs. Documentation of their key characteristics was necessary for the support of horizontal protection measures, in order to come under strict protection status, like Open City Spatial Plans, the main levers for the promotion of island wetland protection on a local scale.

From its foundation, WWF Greece gained extensive hands-on experience from the execution of similar projects and has implemented successful initiatives to address critical problems by proposing key solutions for the conservation of the country's natural environment. That experience was indeed a key factor for the case of island wetlands!

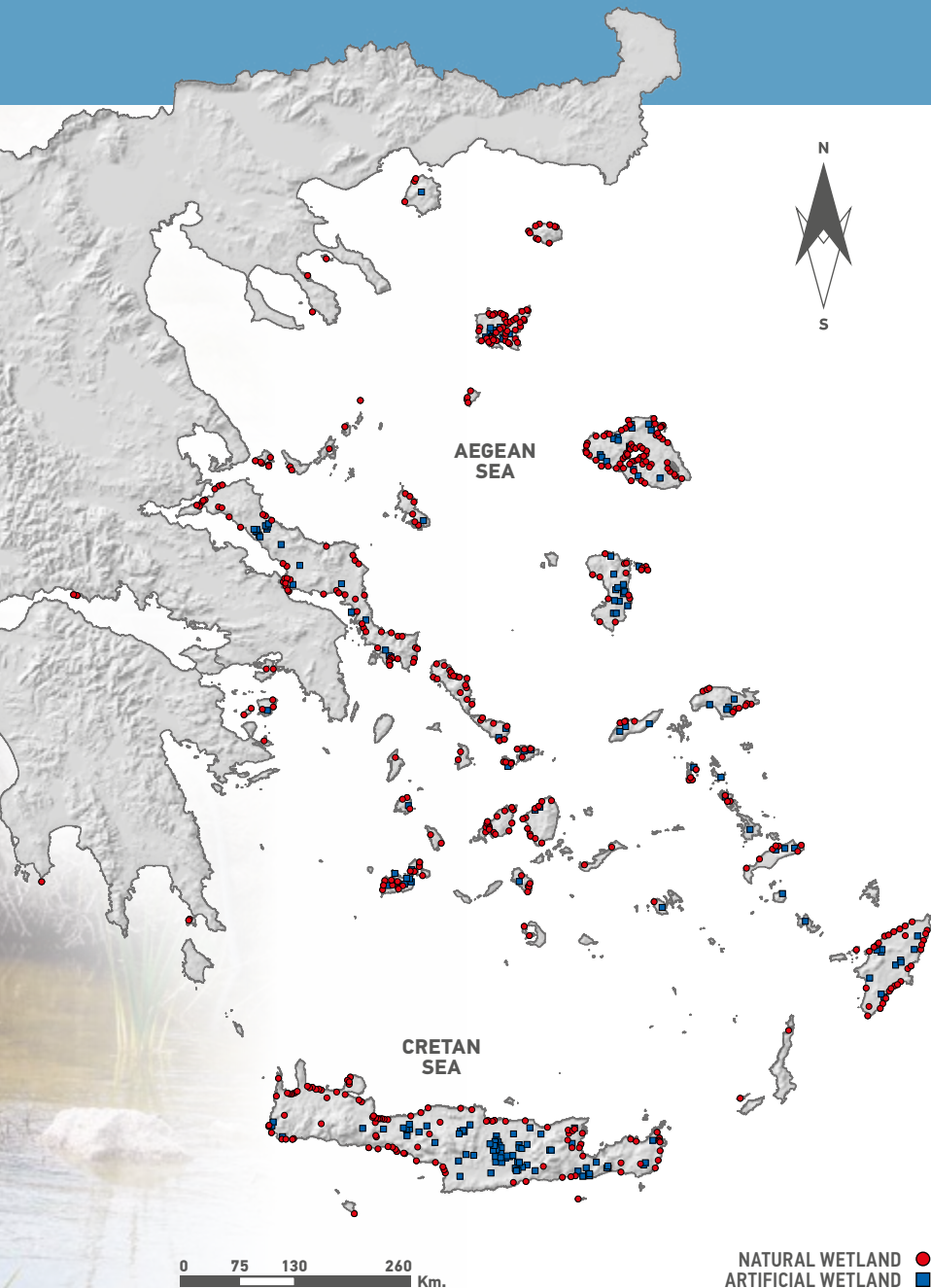
Although in situ surveys and documentation proved complex, demanding, relative stressful and tense, due to difficult and complicated circumstances (sparse positions throughout the Greek island area, inadequate communication among the network of islands and the mainland, insufficient road network in many cases, etc) the outcomes were impressive and rewarding for the team! A total of 805 wetlands larger than 0.1ha have been identified on 75 islands (100 on 8 Ionian islands, 500 on 57 Aegean islands, 11 on 7 islands of the Saronic Gulf and the Gulf of Corinth and 194 on Crete and 2 satellite islands). Of them, 592 are natural wetlands and 213 are artificial (mainly dam lakes and reservoirs). We visited, surveyed and inventoried 760 wetlands, each time filling in a special inventory factsheet, supported by extensive photographic and video documentation.

The inventory effort was by far bigger than that! 291 possible wetland sites had been pointed on Google Earth in total, with more than half of them been visited and excluded from our inventory, as they were small, destroyed or incorrectly identified.

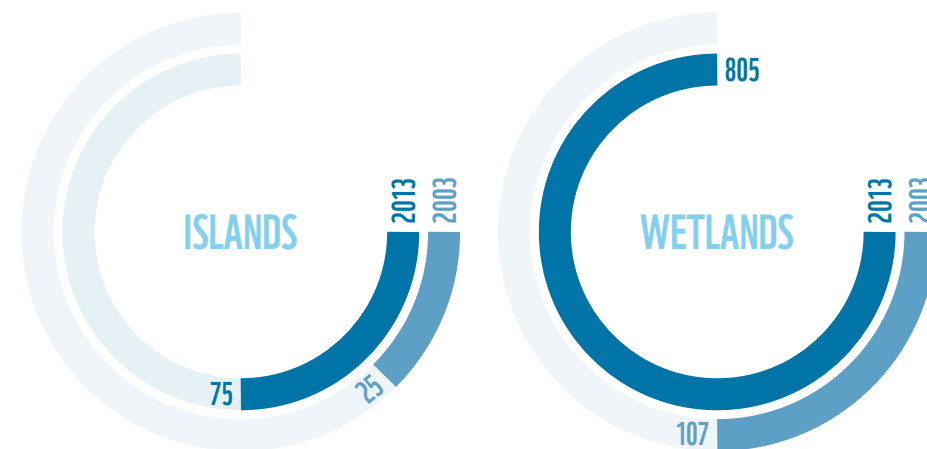


CHONDRO VOUNO MINING POOL 1, MILOS  
© Nicos Georgiadis | WWF Greece





Dimitris Poursanidis | WWF Greece



IDENTIFIED WETLANDS PRIOR AND AFTER THE INITIATIVE  
"CONSERVATION OF ISLAND WETLANDS OF GREECE"

### 5 new databases designed

The significance of our original inventorial data created the urgent need for their storage and hence we designed 5 databases!

- **GrIsWet:** Bilingual (Greek/English) and fully compatible with the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet) database, containing fields like: the protection status (European and National), flora and fauna, habitat types, wetland values, human activities (in wetland and in catchment area) and impacts, with relevant literature data.
- **Geo-database (Geo-GrIsWet):** Based on Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, including a detailed geographic database on the wetlands.
- **Bibliographic database:** Including 1,120 titles, where 712 of them have a pdf file attached with search keywords.



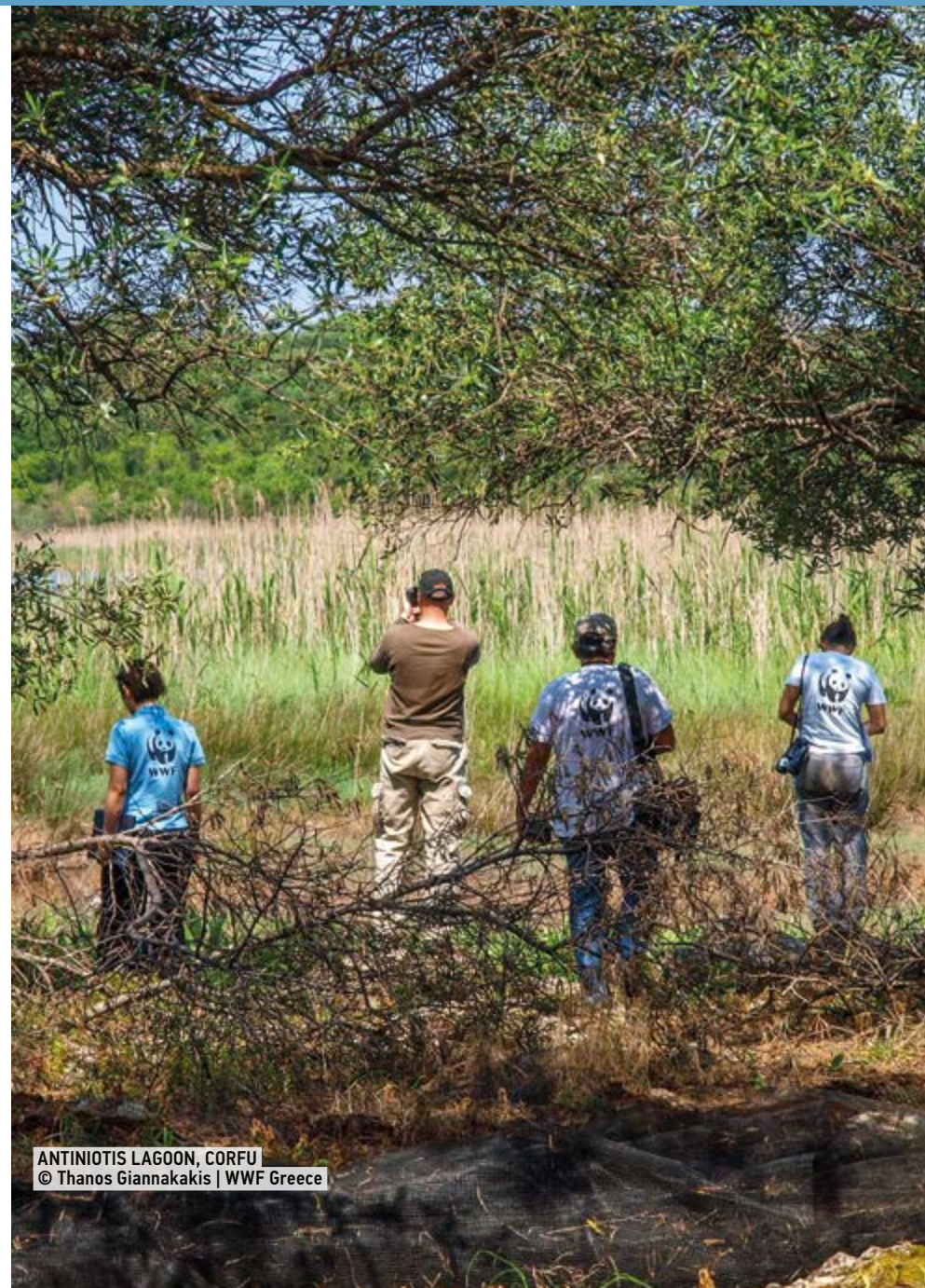
- **Photo and video database:** Including more than 40,000 photos from 760 wetlands and video footage from 420 wetlands, with search keywords.
- **Correspondence database:** Including the up-to-date archive of 795 correspondence letters in total (276 outgoing and 519 incoming complaint letters) from 140 degradation activities in 67 wetlands.

### "Ygrotopio": The first web portal about Greek island wetlands!

In order to unify the existing databases and provide free access of the inventory results to the competent authorities, stakeholders and citizens, WWF Greece created the web portal "**Ygrotopio**" ([www.oikoskopio.gr/ygrotopio](http://www.oikoskopio.gr/ygrotopio)). Entering "Ygrotopio", visitors enter the wonderful world of the Greek Island Wetlands! We provide them with data regarding the history, deliverables and achievements of the project and a dynamic database with inventorial data for more than 800 wetlands in 75 islands. Our purpose is to continually supplement "Ygrotopio" with new data, literature sources, photos and news, by making it an influential and supporting tool for education, research, policy and awareness raising professionals.

### Features of "Ygrotopio"

- Compatible with MedWet's database including inventorial data of all 805 wetlands (English/Greek).
- Photographic archive for all 760 wetlands.
- Search engine feature based on location, Ramsar wetland type, size, protection status, habitat types etc.
- Statistical data depicted in charts, about the abundance and size of the wetlands, their condition, the biological significance of artificial wetlands, habitat types and protection status.
- Information on the history and achievements of the initiative and its deliverables (geospatial data, publications, papers, studies, maps, etc).
- Free direct access to the program's inventory results such as Geo-data, studies, presentations from various conferences, seminars, workshops and public events, maps, publications, resolutions, etc.



ANTINIOTIS LAGOON, CORFU  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece





ZERVATI CAVE, KEFALONIA  
© Kaloust Paragamian | WWF Greece

- Bidirectional connection with “**Oikoskopio**” (GIS map application [www.oikoskopio.gr](http://www.oikoskopio.gr)) through which the user is directed to the exact location of the wetland in Oikoskopio and vice versa, in order to retrieve from “Ygrotopio” the report of the wetland.

### Diffusion of island wetlands’ knowledge in key stakeholders

Sharing our unique research knowledge with the Greek public was our primary goal! However, inventorial data regarding Greek island wetlands needed to be spread out in the scientific and academic community as a tool for policy intervention, but also in the State authorities to secure pressure towards their efficient protection.

We travelled from Athens to Patra, Crete, Volos, Naxos, Paros, Lesvos, Corfu, Ioannina and from Morocco to Hungary, Italy and France, to present our research results, in 19 scientific congresses (6 national and 13 international). We hosted 4 workshops with scientists, facilitating information exchange and promoting cooperation. We published 3 papers in scientific reviewed proceedings and the book “Inventory of Aegean island wetlands: identity, ecological status and threats”, while we collaborated with 3 Universities and one Technological Education Institute by supporting 5 theses.

Despite the difficulties that we faced during our surveys, research, documentation and inventory, the outcomes resulted from the initiative were our “award”, while we have succeeded in participating and actively influencing the production of horizontal protection policies and advocacy intervention for island wetlands, for the first time in Greece!













MALIA MARSH, CRETE  
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## CHAPTER 4

### Making Greek island wetlands the "talk of the town"

**K**nowledge is power and only through knowledge societies will be able to discover, understand and appreciate their relationship with nature. By providing and spreading such knowledge we contribute to a transformational change in the public perception about the image of island wetlands.

Greek citizens were evidently not aware about the existence and the importance of island wetlands. The scientific knowledge we gained during our field research proved to be a powerful tool in our hands. We transformed this knowledge and formulate awareness raising messages and educational activities to inform, educate, empower and fully engage the diverse target groups in the most appropriate way. Working with communities in a regional and local scale was especially important for achieving the institutional shielding of wetlands.

Our methods were evolving each year to expand participation. From 2004 to 2007, we kept a low profile as excessive publicity, would probably cause an explosion of fencing, filling up with debris and building at these sites. When we felt confident to guarantee their conservation with a concentrated lobbying and sensitisation effort, we began the realisation of awareness raising activities which were interconnected with the project’s policy work.

### Encouraging groups related to the project so as to actively participate in protection actions, presupposed:

- Informing citizens about the presence of island wetlands and their values.
- Training volunteers in monitoring and acting rapidly when degradation attempts detected.
- Drawing support from local communities regarding the promotion of the protection framework proposals.
- Informing locals for the required site management plans and actions and hence gaining their support for their actual implementation.

### The first official Greek island wetlands volunteer network

A key element for the protection of wetlands, was the development and gradual growth of the first Greek island wetlands volunteer network, covering Lemnos, Lesvos, Paros, Andros, Skyros and Kos. Our aim was to ensure timely detection of any degrading activity from our volunteers, so as to inform the project’s team instantly. We trained 45 volunteers from all over Greece to visit wetlands, check their status and report immediately back to us. With the project’s headquarters located in Heraklion, wetland monitoring was at its most intensive in Crete and initially it was performed by the project’s researchers, with the help of a few environmentally conscious individuals. In 2011, with the support of the Coca-Cola system in Greece (Coca-Cola Hellas & Coca-Cola Tria Ep-



MALIA MARSH, CRETE  
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**Parents and schools need to do more to educate children about nature and wetlands, including taking children out to get wet and see for themselves. It's striking how little people know about their environment - there needs to be more awareness. If you wait until people are adults, it's harder for them to understand the value of nature.**

*Denis Landenbergue WWF International,  
Freshwater Manager*

silon) and under the environmental program “Mission Water”, we created a highly dynamic network consisting of active citizens in Crete, Paros and Lesvos. The program targets the establishment of an operational scheme for raising awareness on importance of island wetlands, monitoring their status, preventing their degradation and engaging key stakeholders towards local restoration actions. The Island Wetland Volunteer Network acted also as an “early warning” system, supporting instantaneous reflexes which resulted in complaint letters and memorandums. Each time a degrading activity was detected, an official letter was drafted, in collaboration with the WWF Greece Citizen’s Legal Support Group, documenting the case, analyzing the legal framework, and raising specific issues with the competent bodies and authorities.

### **Educational & creativity journeys to island wetlands**

Our educational journey began officially in 2006, with the “Wetlands of the Aegean” booklet - distributed through the Primary and Secondary Education to a great number of the Aegean Archipelagos schools - aiming to educate its readers about the value of island wetlands and their critical problems. WWF’s contribution to education continued, by supporting the Regional Network of Schools, as scientific advisors, for the monitoring of the Cretan wetlands, a Network that was established by the Environmental Educational Centre of Ierapetra in 2009, with the participation of 49 schools and 4 environmental educational centers of the southern Aegean islands. A small thematic educational guide was produced by the Environmental Educational Centre, with our assistance, and distributed to the schools of the network.

The most inventive and successful educational activity was the tale and video student competition under the title “Wetlands: a story for my island”, with the participation of Cretan students. Our ambition was to motivate them exploring the unknown Greek island wetlands and to inspire and exploit their imagination by creating their own story, envisioning a better and sustainable future for that unique ecosystem. The results were remarkable, as 500 students participated and 130 projects (28 videos and 102 tales) were produced. The same competition is running in Paros and Lesvos with great success.

## ACTIONS TOWARDS CITIZENSHIP ENGAGEMENT

Awareness raising activities were designed to inform the public as well as the local and regional communities, in order to become further involved and engaged in substantially protecting island wetlands and in the rational management and conservation of these fragile and highly threatened ecosystems.

### Public events & presentations

The presentation of the project’s results was progressively extensive, aiming to engage the public and all the stakeholders towards their contribution in WWF’s policy intervention actions regarding island wetlands conservation and protection. WWF Greece organised environmental education-guidance activities and capacity building seminars for the support of the volunteer network, as well as workshops, round tables and public events with the participation of wetland experts, institutions and authorities (Regions, Municipalities, Forestry Departments, Police and Port Police) for the wide-ranging promotion of the initiative.

### Summer camps, field events & action days

3 training summer camps, 15 days each took place in Crete, (Chania Regional section, Irakleio and Malia). 45 volunteers took part in conservation and protection actions at Moronis estuary, Malia marsh and Almyros wetland system, attending the following activities: information of the locals for the values of the wetlands, demarcation of the marine part of the wetlands with buoys, removal of the remaining rocks from the restored part of the wetland, delineation of the sand dunes and the estuary with wooden sticks, cleaning of the wetlands, record of the location of the palm trees. The first camps strengthen our presence and set strong pressure to the authorities for wetlands’ restoration. Additionally, Citizens, NGO’s, schools and local authorities participated in envi-







WETLANDS: A STORY FOR MY ISLAND  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece

ronmental education activities, field trips and action days, contributing in cleaning up actions in 7 wetlands and fencing and information sign placements in 9 wetlands.

### Creation of new internet media tools

The need for growing our awareness actions was getting bigger and therefore we utilise the power of internet as the medium with the ability to reach a massive audience. WWF Greece launched the blog “WWF in the field” (<http://wwfaction.wordpress.com>), a quite strong tool with a great impact in a local and regional scale. Blog’s topics were reposted by other sites and blogs and varied from degradation cases to information about unknown wetlands. Additionally, we created “Ygrotopio”, the first web portal, especially designed for the Greek island wetlands. Without any doubt, the internet acted as a catalyst towards the conversion of the public opinion!

### Awareness raising materials

From leaflets and booklets, to articles, blog posts and maps, we created all the compulsory awareness raising material. More than 20,000 awareness raising brochures were distributed through Governmental authorities, NGOs, Primary and Secondary Education for Crete, Paros and Lesvos wetlands and 3 information leaflets were designed especially for the attendees in Crete’s summer camps. 60 maps have been produced and distributed through Environmental Educational Centre of Ierapetra and “Ygrotopio”, while we provided detailed information about Malia marsh for the Municipality of Chersonisos website.

### Collaboration with print & electronic media

The Greek public was about to discover the true value of the country’s island wetlands for the first time and WWF Greece ought to play the role of the messenger informing Greek



citizens about the situation and significance of these unique ecosystems. To accomplish that, we worked towards an integral media plan which included the direct communication with press representatives, as a first key step, in order to gain their support. We have managed to build from scratch a large and credible network including local and national journalists from all over Greece who ultimately believed in our mission and goals. As a result, the promotion of the program was remarkable as we gave more than 300 interviews on TV and Radio Stations, Magazines, Newspapers and the Internet motivating the local communities to embrace actively WWF’s initiative. The core message of the immediate island wetlands protection was spread to thousands of recipients and hence one of our key communication objectives was successfully achieved!

**WWF’s field activities, interventions to prevent degradation and conservation policy work, led to the significant increase of the island wetlands included in any protection scheme. Out of 805 artificial and natural wetlands, 565 (70%) are now protected with a strict legal framework, while focusing only to the natural wetlands, this proportion rises to 80% (482 out of 592 wetlands). None of the above would not have been possible without giving constant and hard “battles”!**

### **“Battles” for the prevention of degradation & institutional protection of island wetlands**

Inventorying island wetlands was indeed our initial target. However, the program’s principal goal was the essential prevention of further degradation as well as the institutional and legal protection of that exceptional and fragile ecosystem. In order to accomplish that, WWF Greece raised the voice of legitimacy and fought against those who were constantly violated island wetlands with illegal actions. Despite the threats we faced we carry on our efforts to prevent degradation activities and we finally achieved significant victories:

MALIA MARSH, CRETE  
© Andrea Bonetti | WWF Greece





- A study for the restoration, protection and sustainable management of the Moronis estuary (Souda Municipality, Chania Prefecture, Crete) was of great success as an area of more than 1 ha was restored by removing at least 12,000m<sup>3</sup> of rubble while the Municipality begun a significant attempt to complete the restoration of the wetland.
- All the construction licenses that were initially approved for Chryssi Akti in Paros Island were suspended by the administration authorities as they were tackled by WWF Greece Citizen's Legal Support Group.
- The island wetland Alyki Kallonis was included in the new Wildlife Refuge in Lesvos (Government Gazette D/387/16.9.2009) based on WWF's solid documentation work and strong political pressure.

While the project's core team was producing all the information needed to sufficiently document the island wetlands' importance and preventing local scale degradation activities, the advocacy team based in Athens was preparing to start an intensive policy work!

We collaborated with other local and national NGOs presenting numerous recommendation and informative reports, proposals, complaint letters and memoranda to competent bodies, underlining the necessity of restoring and legally protecting island wetlands in Greece. Moreover, we provided data from our extensive field research that proved to be a catalyst for the formation of momentous laws and provisions towards the legal protection of island wetlands. At last, the situation was reversed and WWF's work demonstrated a series of important legislative milestones.

## Milestone 1

**The inclusion of wetlands in Spatial Plans as “Protected Areas”!** In 2009 memoranda were submitted to competent authorities at all tiers (central, regional, prefectural, municipal) asking for the inclusion of wetlands in the Plans of Spatial and Settlement Organization for Open Cities (SHOOAPs) and/or the General Urban Plans (GPSs) that were being prepared at the time. Authorities responded positively, and 74 wetlands were included as protected areas in approved SHOOAPs and GPSs in 6 islands.



## Milestone 2

**The Biodiversity Law!** In October 2009, along with 9 more environmental NGOs, a memorandum titled “Proposal for a comprehensive legislative framework to protect the biodiversity of Greece” was prepared and submitted to the Greek Ministry of the Environment. This proposal played a significant role in the compilation of the Biodiversity Law, which, among other things provides guidelines for the protection of all island and mainland wetlands measuring up to 8 ha in surface area (Article 13). After the Biodiversity Law was passed (law 3937/2011, Government Gazette 60/A/2011), WWF Greece provided data and worked closely with officials of the Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change and the Hellenic Mapping & Cadastral Organization in preparing a Presidential Decree on island wetland protection.

## Milestone 3

**The Presidential Decree!** Finally, the Presidential Decree “Approval of a list of small island wetlands, and provision of terms and conditions for the protection and conservation of small coastal wetlands included therein” was signed in June 2012 (Government Gazette AAP 229/19.06.2012).

The Presidential Decree was without a doubt an astonishing moment for WWF Greece and the team that worked more than hard for the protection of island wetlands in Greece for 9 years. The first vital phase of the program was completed by bringing 380 natural wetlands across 59 islands under a strict protection status!



KARTEROS ESTUARY, CRETE  
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MORONIS ESTUARY, CRETE  
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OMALOS VIANOU TEMPORARY POND, CRETE  
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KALLONI SALINE, LESVOS  
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Wetlands are among the most beautiful places on Earth and have inspired artists, travelers, poets and photographers for generations. Between 300 and 400 million people live close to - and depend on - wetlands. The world simply cannot do without them.

WWF International

## CHAPTER 5

### Greek island wetlands are no longer treated as dirty waters

The initiative about island wetlands is undoubtedly one of the longest and most vibrant conservation project implemented by WWF Greece. From the design to the completion phase of the project, the team acted upon an ambitious vision:

To achieve the defined scientific, research, policy and awareness objectives, in terms of meeting the challenging conservation goals, towards a transformational change that will lead to the long-term prosperity of this seriously threaten ecosystem!

The results of this innovative initiative verify its success, as for the first time, the former negative perception has been progressively changed:



- Citizens are no longer view island wetlands as disease sources or agriculture flat lands, but instead, they learned why and how to appreciate their ecological attribute!
- Scientific community, acknowledged unique data and facts by supporting WWF's conservation holistic approaches!
- Local, National and European State authorities recognised that significant efforts should be invested and applied towards protection measurements!

### The ultimate awareness impact of the "Conservation of island wetlands of Greece"

An enormous number of citizens, scientific experts, volunteers, students, teachers, parents, locals, and other professionals from NGOs, institutions, public services and State authorities, participated actively in our events. In addition, the same groups were informed about the project through our numerous awareness raising activities.

- 5,190 citizens attended public events
- 1,330 citizens attended workshops & roundtables
- 660 citizens attended capacity building seminars
- 1,980 citizens attended environmental education & guidance activities
- 600 citizens attended field events & action days
- 45 volunteers attended summer camps
- 10,000 unique visitors per month were informed from WWF's Blog "WWF in the field"
- 35,000 WWF's supporters were informed from the "Living Planet" magazine
- 23,000 citizens were informed from WWF's informative leaflets
- 7,500 citizens were informed from WWF's books & booklets
- 130,000 citizens were informed from WWF's Greece official Facebook page
- 800,000 citizens is estimated that were informed from TV, radio, magazines, electronic media & press releases



MPERTZANOS LAKE, CORFU  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece





Approximately, more than **1,000,000 Greek Citizens** from various fields were informed about the objectives and goals of the initiative, its results, achievements and outcomes. Most importantly all these people had the opportunity to discover all the fundamental facts regarding the unknown and underappreciated wetland ecosystems of the Greek islands.

### 9 years of researching, inventorying, conserving & lobbying for wetland's protected future!

WWF Greece invested 9 years of hard work at the field trying to identify the “anonymous” island wetlands, which were misjudged and undervalued. The fact that their protection is today under a certified strict status, is the outcome of thousands of days spending at in situ surveys, documentation of research data at the office and public consultations, to scale up conservation efforts.



1. 805 natural and artificial wetlands (>0.1 ha) in 75 islands of Greece have been documented. WWF visited, surveyed and inventoried 760 wetlands.
2. Out of 805 artificial and natural wetlands, 565 (70%) are under a strict legal protection framework. More than 80% of the natural wetlands (482 out of 592) are under a protection status.
3. Primordial data for 348 wetlands in 52 islands that were gathered during the first phase of the project are included in WWF's inventory book "Inventory of Aegean island wetlands: identity, ecological status and threats".
4. All the primordial inventorial data are free for the public through "Ygrotopio", the first web portal about Greek Island Wetlands.
5. In October 2009, WWF Greece, along with 9 more environmental NGOs, a memorandum titled "Proposal for a comprehensive legislative framework to protect the biodiversity of Greece" was prepared and submitted to the Greek Ministry of the Environment. This proposal was a catalyst regarding the compilation of the Biodiversity Law (3937/2011), which, among other things recognised the importance of small island and mainland wetlands, providing measures for their protection.
6. The Biodiversity Law adopted in 2009 by the Greek Parliament, and WWF Greece persistently advocated the protection of the island wetlands and finally provided all data and worked closely with officials of the Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (YPEKA) and of the Hellenic Mapping & Cadastral Organization (OKHE) in preparing a Presidential Decree for the protection of the small island wetlands (<8 ha).
7. Following a successful public debate, the Ministry of Environment adopted our proposals and the Presidential Decree "Approval of a list of small island wetlands, and provision of terms and conditions for the protection and conservation of small coastal wetlands included therein" was signed in June 2012 (Government Gazette AAP 229/19.06.2012), bringing 380 natural wetlands across 59 islands under a strict protection status.
8. 74 wetlands were included as "Protected Areas" in approved Spatial Plans (SHOAPs) in 6 islands, while additional 5 wetlands were included in a new established Wildlife Refuge at Lesvos Island (Alyki Kallonis - Noutzaria - Kantri - Messa), in 2009.
9. More than 142 degradation cases in 67 wetlands across 13 islands were tackled by WWF Greece Citizen's Legal Support Group and correspondence exchanged 796 letters.



10. Considerable fines have been imposed and 5 cases (4 on Crete and 1 on the island of Evvoia) have been brought to court.
11. A complaint report submitted by 4 NGO's (Friends of Green Lesbos, Nautilus en drasi, Hellenic Ornithological Society & WWF Greece) to the Commission of the European Communities about the failure of the Greek Government to comply with EU directive for degradation incidents in the wetlands of Natura 2000 sites of Lesbos Island (Gulfs of Kalloni and Geras). It is still under Commission's consideration.
12. 10 recommendation reports to competent authorities for the protection of specific wetlands were presented. Some resulted to conservation actions undertaken by the Municipalities and others were fully adopted by the authorities.
13. In 2007, a letter titled "Do you know that the islands' wetlands are the most threatened ecosystems in the Aegean?" was addressed to the MPs.
14. In 2010 we forwarded the memorandum "The status of the island wetlands of Greece" to the Greek Parliament Standing Committee on Environmental Protection.
15. WWF's instantaneous reflexes each time a degrading activity was detected resulted in 19 questions from members of the Greek and European Parliament to corresponding authorities.
16. In 2009, during the 11th International Congress on the Zoogeography, Ecology and Evolution of Greece and Adjacent Regions, all the participants of the "Importance and conservation status of wetlands in Greek islands" workshop, drafted a 3 page resolution titled "Stop the degradation of Greek island wetlands" addressed to the appropriate authorities including the Greek Government, the European Commission and the 1st and 2nd Degree Municipalities.
17. In the elections of November 2010, an information letter was addressed to 200 candidate mayors regarding the situation of their Region island wetlands, urging them to undertake actions for their protection.
18. The implementation of direct field actions took place for the protection of specific wetlands like the Almyros wetland system, the Malia marsh in Irakleio, Crete. A big success was the case of Moronis river estuary in Souda, an area of more than 1 ha that was restored by removing at least 12,000m<sup>3</sup> of rubble.



## The power of numbers!

### 115 reports & documents, papers, books, publications, maps, leaflets

- 7 annual reports
- 8 volunteers' network progress reports
- 7 technical/scientific reports
- 10 informative reports
- 6 internal reports
- 3 technical documents
- 3 scientific papers
- 2 books
- 9 informative leaflets
- 60 maps

### 17 field actions

- 14 field events & action days
- 3 summer volunteer camps

### 26 workshops-roundtables & public events

- 11 workshops-roundtables
- 15 public events

### 156 presentations

- 30 presentations in scientific workshops & conferences
- 17 presentations in workshops
- 50 presentations in public events
- 27 presentations in capacity building seminars
- 32 presentations in environmental education & guidance activities

### More than 500 media materials

- 43 press releases
- 79 blog posts
- 18 popularised articles
- Over than 300 TV interviews, radio interviews, magazine and newspaper interviews



KAROUMES MARSH, CRETE  
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## PROJECT FINANCES 2004-2013

TOTAL EXPENSES 1,313,000 €

26%

OTHER SOURCES OF WWF'S INCOME  
(SUPPORTERS, SALES, TRADEMARK RIGHTS, ETC)  
341,000 €

59%

MAVA FOUNDATION  
776,000 €

11%

THE COCA COLA SYSTEM  
IN GREECE  
145,000 €

3%

MUNICIPALITIES  
(OROPOS, MALIA, PAROS)  
36,000 €

1%

CANON S.A.  
15,000 €

Research, inventory, mapping, scientific documentation and diffusion of the results, conservation policies	
MAVA FOUNDATION:	745,000 €
OTHER SOURCES OF WWF'S INCOME: (SUPPORTERS, SALES, TRADEMARK RIGHTS, ETC)	289,000 €
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES:</b>	<b>1,034,000 €</b>

Mobilisation of public: Volunteer network and environmental education	
THE COCA COLA SYSTEM IN GREECE:	145,000 €
OTHER SOURCES OF WWF'S INCOME: (SUPPORTERS, SALES, TRADEMARK RIGHTS, ETC)	52,000 €
MAVA FOUNDATION:	31,000 €
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES:</b>	<b>228,000 €</b>

Activities in local scale - site management	
MUNICIPALITIES (OROPOS - MALIA - PAROS):	36,000 €
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES:</b>	<b>36,000 €</b>

Design and construction of the web portal "Ygrotopio" <a href="http://www.oikoskopio.gr/ygrotopio">www.oikoskopio.gr/ygrotopio</a>	
CANON S.A.:	15,000 €
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES:</b>	<b>15,000 €</b>





TOU TOURKOU O LAKOS TEMPORARY POND, CRETE  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece













## CHAPTER 6

### The team behind a successful initiative

**W**e embrace synergies, instead of isolation. Every single project in our conservation history was built upon strong partnerships with different stakeholders. Joining forces is the only way to succeed and in the case of Greek Island Wetlands teamwork led us to success.

Although “Conserving the Island Wetlands of Greece” seemed to be a “dirty job” at the beginning, we have been supported and encouraged by **volunteers, scientific experts, institutions, NGOs, local communities, active citizens, teachers, students** and the **private sector**, all of whom felt obliged to participate in the project by having an active role. Along with the strong enthusiasm and commitment of our staff members, they all ensured the success of the initiative and for us a simple thank you is the least we can express.



## A diverse but strongly committed team!

### WWF Greece

[www.wwf.gr](http://www.wwf.gr)

WWF Greece was founded at 1990. Its mission is to conserve the rich biodiversity of Greece as an integral part of the Mediterranean, to prevent and eventually reverse its environmental degradation, seeking the harmonious co-existence between humans and nature. Since its inception the organisation has designed and implemented over 70 projects for the conservation of freshwater, marine and forest ecosystems of Greece, ranging from field research and monitoring of species and habitats, to environmental education and capacity building. WWF Greece has also carried out considerable policy work that has contributed to the improvement of the Greek State's environmental legislation and attitude.

### MAVA Fondation pour la Nature

[en.mava-foundation.org](http://en.mava-foundation.org)

MAVA Foundation established in 1994 as an expression of Dr Luc Hoffmann's personal commitment to conservation. Its mission is based on protecting and rebuilding the Earth's natural wealth through scientific research and application of the findings, by ensuring that nature in all its wealth remains a precious gift not just for today's generations but also for those still to come. It has a history of building relationships for the long term, in line with its philosophy that conservation takes time and sustained attention to succeed. Based on its culture regarding synergies with organisations that are on the frontlines of preserving biodiversity and fighting for a sustainable way of living, MAVA Foundation proved for once again that believes in WWF Greece and thus decided to support exclusively the initiative, contributing to the project's successful achievements.



ALMYROS, IRAKLEION, CRETE  
© Andrea Bonetti | WWF Greece





## The Coca-Cola System in Greece

[en.coca-colahellenic.gr](http://en.coca-colahellenic.gr)

The Coca-Cola System in Greece (Coca-Cola Hellas & Coca-Cola Tria Epsilon), in the frame of its commitment for responsible management of natural resources and raw materials, launched the environmental program “Mission Water” in 2006, aiming to protect and restore the good ecological status of important wetlands and coastal ecosystem in Greece. In 2011, WWF Greece in collaboration with the environmental program “Mission Water” started the implementation of the project entitled “Volunteer network for the monitoring of the wetlands of Crete”, aiming to develop a network of active citizens that will take the wetland areas in Crete, under their protection and at the same time inform and sensitize the general public & local authorities about the importance of the wetlands. The network was expanded in 2013 in Lesbos and Paros. Moreover, in 2013/2014 the student competition “Wetlands: a story for my island” was realized Crete, Lesbos and Paros.

## Canon S.A.

[www.canon-europe.com](http://www.canon-europe.com)

Sustainability is important to Canon. It involves focusing on reducing environmental impact; engaging with communities; and supporting wider economic growth. Alongside this, Canon anticipates and complies with regulations and standards and even looks to exceed them where possible. Canon S.A. supported the design of the web portal Ygrotopio which hosts all the photos from the project's activities.



### Project's core team

Giorgos Catsadorakis, Nikos Georgiadis, Thanos Giannakakis, Maria Noidou, Kaloust Paragamian.

### Other team members

Lefteris Kakalis, Afroditi Kardamaki, Nikos Panagiotou, Dimitris Poursanidis, Elias Tziritis, Fotini Vrettou.

### Policy & Advocacy

Ioli Christopoulou, George Hassiotis, Theodota Nantsou.

### Side actions support

Iassonas Kandas, Vasilis Kokkinidis, Sophia Koukoulaki, Nansy Koutava, Jenny Lazarou, Marita Panteri, Eleni Svoronou, Marina Symvoulidou, Giorgos Velidis, Marios Vontas.

### Management team

Demetres Karavellas, Constantinos Liarikos, Natasa Maragou, Pantelis Sarris.

### Active citizens and NGOs

Active Citizens of Malia “Sarpidonistas”, Adamantopoulou Stella, Aggelakis Nikos, Anagnostopoulou Katerina, Anastasaki Katerina, Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation, Arvanitis Vyron, Association for the Protection of the Environmental and Architectural Heritage of Lemnos Island “Anemoessa”, Athanasiadis Andreas, Avgeros Giorgos, Baxevani Popi, Biri Konstantina, Broggi Mario, Betrand Baijot, Bonetti Andrea, Corsini-Foka Margiolina, Cultural Association of Paros Island “Archilochos”, Daskala-



MALIA MARSH, CRETE  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece





kis Pavlos, Demetriou Eva, Dendrinou Panagiotis, Diakogiannis Giannis, Dimaki Hrysi, Dimalexis Tassos, Dimitropoulos Giorgos, Drakou Kaiti, Dretakis Michalis, Ecological Movement of Mirabello, Environmental club “Nautilus en Drasei”, Environmental Education Centre of Anogia, Environmental Education Centre of Archanes, Environmental Education Centre of Ierapetra, Environmental Education Centre of Vamos, Fournaraki Christina, Friends of Green Lesbos, Fytoka Eleni, Georgara Antonia, Giakoumis Christos, Gianniris Elias, Gotsi Glykeria, Hatzigiakoumis Vasilis, Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS), Hellenic Speleological Society-Department of Crete, Hlimpos Panagiotis, Hronakis Giorgos, Iliopoulos Giorgos, Ioannidi Vasileia, Ioannidis Giannis, Jordan Nickolas, Kagiampaki Anna, Kakalis Lefteris, Kalyviannaki Katerina, Kaniadaki Melenia, Karadaki Olga, Kardakari Niki, Kartsaki Jenny, Kazoglou Giannis, Kern Emily, KETHEA ARIADNI, Kokkinidis Vassilis, Kontopoulos Giannis, Kotsyfa Agapi, Kritikos Nikos, Kritsotakis Marinos, Latsoudis Panagiotis, Loizidou Xenia, Lymberakis Petros, Mandilaras Nikos, Maragou Panagiota, Margaritis Manolis, Marinos Giannis, Markianos Giannis, Mavromati Eleftheria, Mentzelopoulos Konstantinos, Mertzanidou Despina, Michaliadis Michalis, Miliou Anastasia, Mitrogiannis Spyros, Moschous Stamatias, Municipality of Gazi, Municipality of Hersonissos, Municipality of Souda, Mylonakis Stratos, Nanopoulou Ivi, Natural History Museum of Crete, Neamonitos Giorgos, Ntasiopoulou Glykeria, Panagiotou Nikos, Pantazis Alexandos, Papadomanolakis Manos, Papakonstantinou Kostas, Papandropoulos Dimitris, Papanikolaou Philippos, Paragamian Savvas, Paschalidis Giorgos, Paximadis Giorgos, Padiaditi Kalia, Perakis Vaggelis, Pergantis Fotis, Perrakis Giannis, Petkidi Katerina, Polykreti Nikoleta, Portolou Danae, Posantzis Giannis, Pouliou Nikos, Prombonas Nikos, Roukounakis Manolis, Sarpaki Anagia, Scharlau Astrid, Sfakianaki Vana, Sinanis Aggelos, Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal (MOM), Sokialidis Dimitris, Spinhakis Vaggelis, Stamouli Vaso, Stamoulis Tasos, Stamoulis Theodoros, Stergiannis Kostas, Stergioti Koula, Stergioti Valia, Stergiotis Vaggelis, Stergiou Kostas, The Greek Biotope Wetland Centre (E.K.V.Y.), Tounda Eleni, Tsagklis Vangelis, Tsantakis Manolis, Tsiakiris Vasilis, Tsimpidis Theodoros, Tsougrakis Giannis, Vittis Nikos, Volikas Giannis, Vouros Panagiotis, Zarifopoulou Foteini, Zogaris Stamatias.





KARTEROS ESTUARY, CRETE  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece













Wetlands perform such vital services for an ecosystem. If they are drained and developed the knock-on effects are far reaching and long lasting. Between 300 and 400 million people live close to - and depend on - wetlands. The world simply cannot do without them.

WWF International

## CHAPTER 7

### What the future holds for Greek island wetlands

The “Conservation of Aegean Island Wetlands” project proved to be one of the major conservation projects of WWF Greece’s work in the country. Through its outcomes and achievements, we have finally accomplished to spotlight the actual value of this biologically diverse and vital ecosystem and the urgent need for its protection.

Our main responsibility now is to guarantee the project’s sustainability and therefore we have made the decision to integrate it in our 5 Year Strategic Plan (2013-2017). All our future actions will be aligned with WWF’s Global Vision for 2050:

**"The integrity of the most outstanding natural places on Earth is conserved,  
contributing to a more secure and sustainable future for all"**  
WWF Global Vision for 2050



WWF Greece sets 5 strategic directions for the sustainable future of the country's island wetlands.

### Monitoring the implementation of island wetlands Presidential Decree

After the completion of the “Conservation of the Islands Wetlands of Greece”, WWF Greece decided to further fund a smaller but equally imperative project. Its core objective is to secure the implementation of the Island Wetlands Presidential Decree adopted in 2012. The risk of its weakening in case of no further action, led us to expand our activities towards this direction. The first action took place in November 2013, with a circular letter of the Minister of Environment that was addressed to all relative authorities asking for the enforcement of the P.D.'s provisions. The continuity of the wetland volunteer network in Crete, Lesvos and Paros for the year 2014 will certainly play a crucial role, as our presence in these islands will pressure the responsible public services for the implementation of the PD. Finally, more workshops and meetings with the relevant authorities are planned in order to exchange views and to increase operational effectiveness in protecting wetlands.

### Strengthening the protection status of wetlands at a local scale & advocating the legal protection of wetlands larger than 8ha

So far 74 wetlands across 6 islands have been included as Protected Areas in Local Spatial Plans. We will keep sending the inventorial data and advocating the inclusion of the remaining wetlands to the pending Spatial Plans and to those that will be developed or reformed. Furthermore, the Greek Biodiversity Law stipulates that a list of wetlands larger than 8 ha should be drawn up by the competent authorities to be protected under a Joint Ministerial Decision. As we have all the data needed, we will proceed with a documentation report for the large island wetlands and advocate their legal protection.



LAPSARNA, LESVOS  
© Kaloust Paragamian | WWF Greece





## Contributing in wetland restoration projects

A tangible and exemplary wetland restoration has been a long and essential challenge for WWF Greece. For that reason, we will make every effort necessary for completing the pending restoration projects we initiated at Moronis and Malia wetlands (Crete Island).

## Disseminating the results of the island wetlands outside Greece & promoting its replication on a wider scale (Mediterranean or Balkan)

One of our targets is to share the project's methodology on a wider -Mediterranean or Balkan- scale and to accomplish that, we plan to build partnerships with other WWF national and program offices, as well as new regional organisations. We have already teamed up with "Terra Cypria", which has undertaken a project for the inventory of the wetlands of Cyprus, based on our data and experience. The same data have been used by "Conservatoire d'espaces naturels Corse" to identify the wetlands of 2 catchments areas in Corsica. We also aim to promote the significance of the island wetlands of the Mediterranean, by submitting a Draft Resolution to the Ramsar Standing Committee to the next COP Ramsar (Punta del Este, Uruguay) in 2015.

The Ramsar Convention is the only global environmental treaty that deals with a particular ecosystem. The treaty was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and the Convention's member countries cover all geographic regions of the planet. Its mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world". The Convention on Wetlands came into force for Greece on 21 December 1975.



## Conservation of key inland freshwater ecosystems

WWF Greece will plan targeted actions to expand the Greek island wetland project, by designing campaigns for the conservation and protection of inland freshwater ecosystems (small rivers and streams, continental wetlands, riparian forests), including them in its strategy, as these ecosystems have been identified as priority areas of future engagement.

**Our views of a sustainable future vary depending on our willingness to change our attitudes! WWF Greece engages to motivate Greek citizens from diverse sectors, to vision a sustainable, better and wealthy future for island wetlands by encouraging them to adopt an active and responsible citizenship behavior in the present!**



CHIONA, CRETE  
© Thanos Giannakakis | WWF Greece









KOIROUNES TEMPORARY POND, CRETE  
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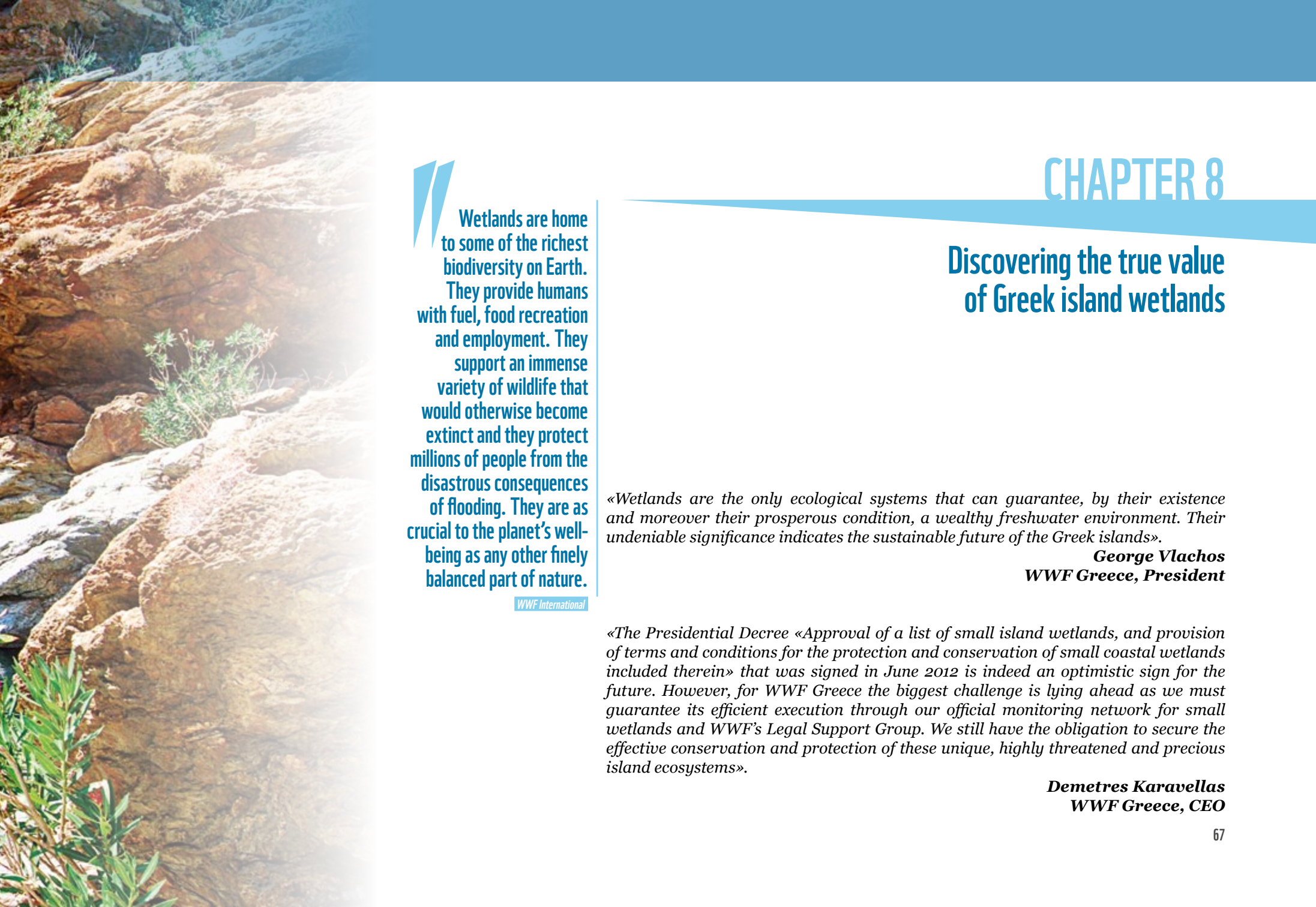






KOMITOS ESTUARY (MYTI), EVVOIA  
© Kaloust Paragamian | WWF Greece





Wetlands are home to some of the richest biodiversity on Earth. They provide humans with fuel, food recreation and employment. They support an immense variety of wildlife that would otherwise become extinct and they protect millions of people from the disastrous consequences of flooding. They are as crucial to the planet's well-being as any other finely balanced part of nature.

WWF International

## CHAPTER 8

### Discovering the true value of Greek island wetlands

*«Wetlands are the only ecological systems that can guarantee, by their existence and moreover their prosperous condition, a wealthy freshwater environment. Their undeniable significance indicates the sustainable future of the Greek islands».*

**George Vlachos**  
**WWF Greece, President**

*«The Presidential Decree «Approval of a list of small island wetlands, and provision of terms and conditions for the protection and conservation of small coastal wetlands included therein» that was signed in June 2012 is indeed an optimistic sign for the future. However, for WWF Greece the biggest challenge is lying ahead as we must guarantee its efficient execution through our official monitoring network for small wetlands and WWF's Legal Support Group. We still have the obligation to secure the effective conservation and protection of these unique, highly threatened and precious island ecosystems».*

**Demetres Karavellas**  
**WWF Greece, CEO**



*«Designation is not the end objective; it is just a first, but very important, step. I actually see it more as a powerful tool to get to the next step, which is to develop and improve the management and sustainable use of a wetland area and its natural resources. That is where the real success lies. Wetlands are not just about birds and fish, they are about complex and fragile systems that support nature and people. When wetlands are damaged or destroyed, it is not only wildlife that is at risk but also people».*

**Denis Landenbergue**  
**WWF International, Freshwater Manager**

*«There was an emotional predilection for wetlands, and also the fact that wetlands were neglected by naturalists. Wetlands play an important part in the functioning of nature but they can only play this part if they are wisely used. Therefore wise use is as important as preservation. With the pressure for destruction of wetlands increasing, we need to extend wetlands observatories to intensify permanent observation of wetlands».*

**Luc Hoffmann**  
**MAVA Founder and President Emeritus**

*«The island of Lesvos includes 85 wetland systems that are highly threaten due to repetitively degradation. By using effectively the data of WWF's 9 year program, the valuable experience of the Network for Monitoring the Status of Wetlands of Crete, the legal framework and most importantly the power of the community, citizens and local authorities demonstrated a direct interest in participating at the Network for Monitoring the Status of Wetlands of Lesvos. Their willingness proved to us that we can depend on them regarding the protection of their homeland, securing at the same time the sustainability of the program».*

**Thanos Giannakakis**  
**WWF Greece, Scientific Coordinator of the Island Wetland Program**



POLYCHNITOS HOT SPRINGS, LESVOS  
© Kaloust Paragamian | WWF Greece





*«Our students who had the opportunity to participate in WWF's inspired competition "Wetlands: a story for my island", proved that their initial desire was to discover their island wetlands and learn about that valuable ecosystem, regardless the award. Instead, their actual reward was the joy they experienced through creative teamwork and the first-hand connection they felt with their natural environment».*

**Astrinos Tsoutsoudakis**  
**Teacher of 5<sup>th</sup> Secondary School of Irakleio**

*«By looking the students' tales and videos you can witness their wish to discover and introduce with an emotional and direct manner a totally different identity of their homeland. An identity that will respect the country's natural heritage, by emphasizing the richness of our island wetlands. Their imagination, creativity and innocent glance have the power to influence the behavior of adults that up until now they choose to demolish rather than protect that alive and precious ecosystem which offers us social, ecological and cultural prosperity».*

**Eleni Svoronou**  
**WWF Greece, Project Coordinator**  
**at Training & Environmental Education**

*«After 9 years of endless sleepless nights, hundreds of meetings, thousands of miles researching the Greek islands, pressures and threats, we had the opportunity to experience lots of victories too. The Presidential Decree that brought 380 natural wetlands under a strict protection status, the citizenship engagement and the dissemination of the knowledge we gained to the Greek society, were some of them. We are prepared for the next challenges to come and determined to continue the effort we started back in 2004».*

**Theodota Nantsou**  
**WWF Greece, Head of Policy**



*«Human intervention is the main threat to island wetlands. However, we are more than happy to realise that this is changing day by day. More and more local citizens are actively participating in the protection of their home island wetlands. The case of the Moronis river estuary in Souda, was of great success as an area of more than 1 ha was restored by removing at least 12,000m<sup>3</sup> of rubble».*

**Kaloust Paragamian**

**WWF Greece, Research Coordinator at the Island Wetland Program**

*«A serious need» that «can make your day», through lots of «smiles» and «moral satisfaction». An «offer without the sense of expecting something back», in terms of a «team» that allows you to «share», by enjoying a totally different «give and take» philosophy. With these pure and full of sensitivity words and phrases, the citizens who participated at the Volunteer Seminar organised by the Directorate Primary Education of Rethymno, expressed their experience. They learned about importance of the Network for Monitoring the Status of Wetlands of Crete, by taking with them «ideas and thoughts» and the «motivation» to work towards a «hopeful future». Their feelings give us the power to continue, by expanding the Network for Monitoring the Status of Wetlands in Paros and Lesvos».*

**Maria Noidou**

**WWF Greece, Volunteer Network Coordinator Crete, Lesvos, Paros**

*«Now that all of the documents have been sent to the EC, we hope that it will intervene to protect the wetlands of our island, so that we can rest assured that finally the Greek government will honor its commitment to enforce the Natura 2000 law. The Research Plan for the Gulf of Kalloni must be approved and laws must be passed to prohibit building, landfilling, and other interventions that are destroying the wetland system. The government must authorize the regular monitoring of the wetlands to discover degradation, followed by fines high enough to stop the offenders. We are not speaking here only about the protection of wildlife, but also about the futures of our children and grandchildren».*

**Karolina Krist**

**Vice President of Friends of Green Lesbos**















# 2004-2013

*The duration of WWF Greece's research project "Conservation of the island wetlands of Greece"*

# 805

*The wetlands that were documented in 75 islands (592 naturals and 213 artificials)*



# 380

*The number of small wetlands (<8 ha) protected by a Presidential Decree (Gazette AAP 229/19.06.2012)*

# 142

*The degradation activities handled (67 wetlands in 13 islands)*

# 9.161

*The citizens that were approached with 156 presentations at scientific conferences, public events, seminars and environmental awareness activities*



*The first web portal for the island wetlands*  
[www.oikoskopio.gr/ygrotopio](http://www.oikoskopio.gr/ygrotopio)



#### **Why we are here.**

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

[www.wwf.gr](http://www.wwf.gr)