

The Path of Coexistence



An environmental education
program on conflicts and coexistence
between local communities and wildlife.

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Through a tour of the forests and the glades, the rivers and the bridges of the area, the "Path of Coexistence" provides the traveler with the essential information on the brown bear

and its habits, on the problems caused by living in the same area with humans and their activities, as well as on the suggested solutions.

1. Agriculture and Wildlife



We are in the area where the village is gradually giving way to meadows and forest. Usually we meet here old and new pens, fields, vegetable gardens and fruit trees.



Livestock breeding and agriculture has, for centuries, shaped the landscape of the mountains of Northern Pindos. Wild animals such as the bear and the wolf, had to adapt to this situation and thus learned to seek their food among the villages, the farms and the flocks, causing, of course, damages in production.

Unfortunately, those damages are often the cause of illegal killing of wildlife. However, the long tradition of coexistence of wildlife and livestock breeding in Greek forests can be continued today, with the adoption of appropriate preventing measures.



The first box is hidden in one of the paths that a bear would have followed to reach the village. Find it and learn more about preventing measures. In this way, you can recommend yourself how the locals can effectively protect their production.



2. The Brown Bear



We are in a small glade between the forest and the old orchards. Around us, we find a scenery with small and large shrubs and scattered trees. Ideal for a bear who wanders the area in search of food!



The brown bear is the largest in size wild mammal in European mountains. It is considered to be an animal with extraordinary intelligence, good memory, prudence, and curiosity. They are omnivorous

but they mostly prefer to feed on plants, such as fruit bushes and fruit trees. In order to protect itself against man, and also against the heat, the bear prefers to move primarily at dusk, night and dawn. At other times it looks for quiet, sheltered corners, usually under large shrubs, as known as “dens”.



The next box is hidden in a den as the ones mentioned before. Find it and you will learn how to identify bear traces along the route.



3. The Forests of Pindos



Now we are in the woods, surrounded by oaks and hornbeams. Deciduous trees like these cover a large part of Pindos, mainly in middle altitudes (as 1,000 m).



Later, down in the gorge we will meet riverside forests of willows, alder and elm trees. At higher altitudes, we can see large, productive forests of beech and black pine, several times mixed with fir and Bosnian pine.

Even higher, the forests give way to alpine meadows. In all these habitats we found more than 1,100 species of plants important part of which are endemic, i.e. found only here.



Find the next box, under the big rock, next to two twin oaks. Inside the box you will find information on forests of the region, as well as appropriate instructions to identify the trees around you.



4. Springs, Rivers and Canyons



We are now deep in the gorge. At this point, the locals call the river "Xeropotamos", which means "Dry river" as it has no flow around the year.



A little further, to the north, Xeropotamos enters the Vikos Gorge, receives water from the sources of Voidomatis and ends at Aoos. Aoos, Venetikos and Arachthos are the three rivers that originate from the National Park of Pindos. Depending on the origin

of their larger volume of water, rivers are divided into those that get their water from rain and snow and those who get it from springs. At this specific area, Xeropotamos belongs to the first category, and it presents large fluctuations in supply through the year.



Find the box above the line that forms the greater height of the river bed. There you will find tools and information on how the rivers of the region are created.

5. The Life at Old Zagori



Between the arched bridges "Missios" and "Kokkoris", we see abandoned fields, especially designed with stone walls, fruit trees and other remnants of the way life used to be in the rural areas of Pindos.



Zagoria, a single set of 46 historic villages, have developed in this place based on livestock breeding, small mountain farming, logging, trade, crafts and - of course - building with stone. The aforementioned activities have been transforming the landscape, for centuries,

in a way that one cannot distinguish anymore what is "natural" and what is "artificial". The wildlife adapted to coexisting with these activities, and their reduction in the last decades can also lead to losses for the wild life of the area.



Discover the last box, beneath a stone wall, between three large walnuts. Inside you will find a small collection of relics, traces and testimonies of life in old Zagoria.



The Path of Coexistence

Starting: Vitsa

Termination: Bridge Kokkoris

Length: 3.9 km

Altitude difference: 940 m path start and ending at 750 m

Average duration: 1 ½ hours

Educational program duration:
about 3 hours

Our educational program consists of five topics: rural life, the brown bear, the forest, water and the history of the area. For each of the topics, we provide the reader with the necessary knowledge and propose a series of activities and games in order to understand the complex relationship between nature and society, identify the problems caused by the coexistence of humans and wildlife and then to look for solutions, with the aim to maintain this coexistence.

Every topic is developed in a special point of the path where visitors will meet a relevant information board. But the most interesting information material is hidden in five boxes that are buried

through the path, and the visitors are asked to explore and find them following the instructions in this guide. After they find each box, the material that will be found in it will enable the visitors and/or the pupils to involve in several education activities.

The education programme is addressed mainly to pupils of the last classes of primary school and to all the classes of secondary school. In order to engage to the education activities both visitors and pupils must bear with them this guide, where as the teachers or professors need to have the "Teacher's guide to the path of Coexistence" (which can be obtained from Callisto or from the Management Authority of Northern Pindos National Park). All the leaflets are also available online on www.callisto.gr



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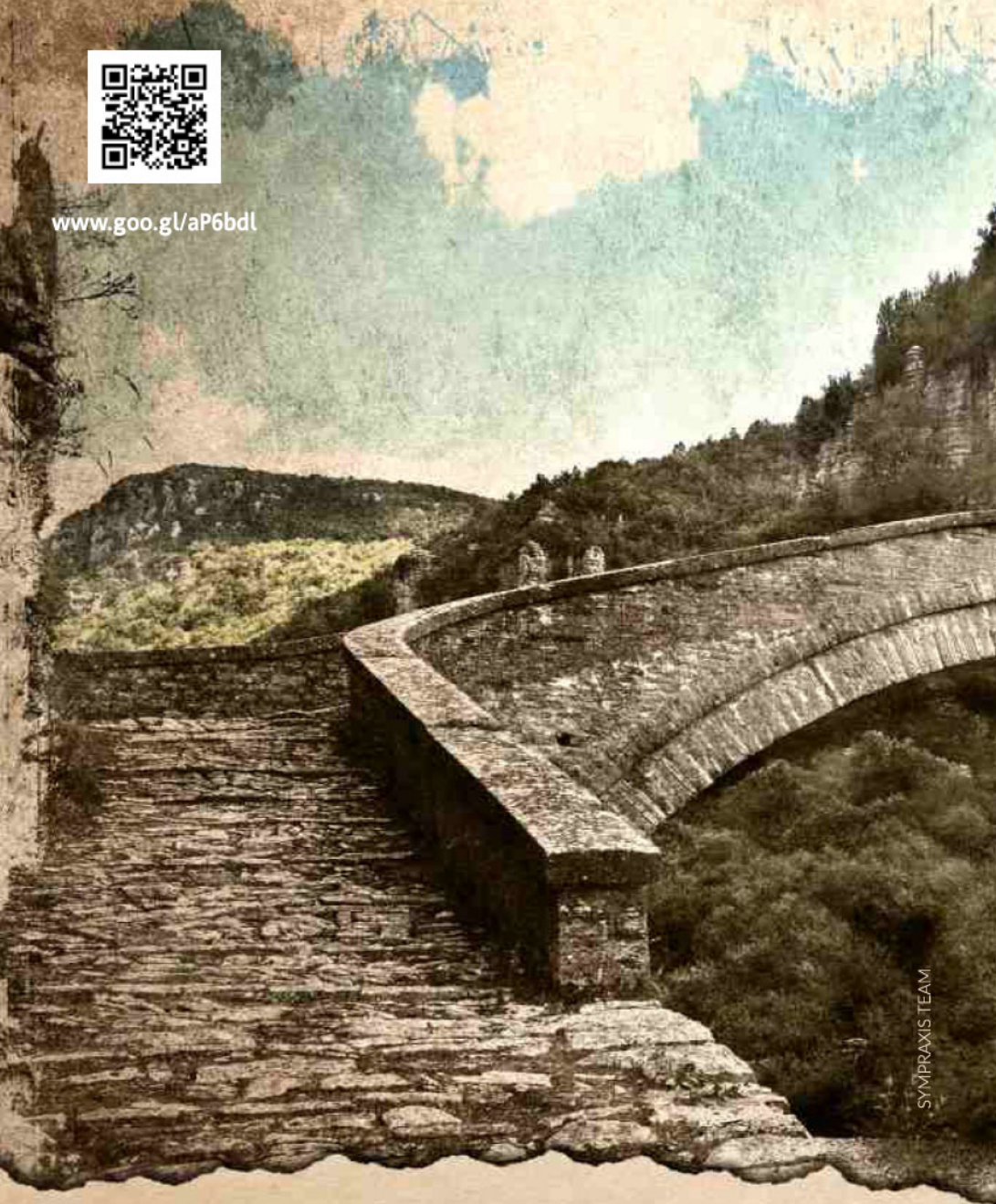
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The Path
of
Coexistence



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