

## Foreword

**S**ustainable tourism is a growing need all over the world, a sphere where man can experience and learn to enjoy our valuable and vulnerable environment. One of the main priorities of the Society for the Protection of Prespa is the development of public awareness of the natural world and the promotion of ecotourism within the Prespa National Park. These efforts of our organization have increased during recent years and more especially since the establishment of the Prespa Transboundary Park. The publication of this guidebook and the eco-maps ought therefore to be seen as a pilot project to develop our goals within a broader Prespa context.

The project essentially is an attempt to upgrade the information available on previous maps of Greek Prespa, illustrating in a more systematic fashion and in greater detail than before the landscape and man-made features of the area. By mapping and describing the fourteen selected walking trails – in both a Greek and an English edition – we aim to encourage the environmentally-minded visitor from Greece and from abroad, as well as local residents, to learn about and to come to value more profoundly the natural world of Prespa and man's relationship to it. Thus both maps and book have an educational purpose aimed at satisfying the informed non-specialist, but at also addressing the interests of school students. A side benefit of equal importance is that the maps should provide valuable resources for use by scientists and others undertaking future conservation-oriented research in the Prespa basin.

The first idea for the project occurred in 2006, and soon afterwards some enthusiastic members of the SPP established a working group. When a generous donation from the Danish Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation in spring 2007 made the project possible, a group of specialists on geology, botany, entomology (insects) and lepidopterology (butterflies) was assembled and asked to join the project. The guidebook and maps are the result of the close co-operation between the specialists, the editor and the project working group. From countless hours of field work and endless meetings of the working group, many new and valuable facts about the nature of Prespa have been collected. All this information will be kept in the new Prespa Centre for Nature and Anthropos in Laimos, including that which, owing to lack of space, could not be

recorded in the book. On behalf of the SPP I want to express my gratitude to all who have been involved in the project.

I hope that the maps and guidebook will be of great help to those who want to go on an adventure and enjoy wonderful walking experiences in the beautiful natural world of Prespa. The Prespa National Park is one of the largest national parks of Greece and the richest in terms of biodiversity, and it is protected by various national, European and international laws and conventions. But an important part of the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of Prespa depends on the everyday respect and love for the environment shown by the people who visit it or who live in the area. Our hope is that this book, with its maps, will inspire people to learn more about the Park and to love it more fully.

**Myrsini Malakou**

*Director*

Society for the Protection of Prespa