

MUSTELIDAE IN THE CRETAN DIALECT OF MODERN GREEK

By

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ABSTRACT: In this paper the Modern Cretan vocabulary referring to three endemic species, belonging to the family *Mustelidae*, is carefully reviewed and explained. Also extra-Cretan Modern Greek names for ‘marten’, ‘weasel’ and ‘badger’ are shortly discussed.

Species belonging to the family *Mustelidae* are found in every type of habitat, including both fresh and salt waters, and on every continent except Australia and Antarctica. Despite their widespread and common occurrence, the mustelids are rarely seen by humans because of their nocturnal, arboreal or burrowing habits (Gould, McKay 1998: 141). They are known as fur-bearing animals and their furs still bring high prices, esp. those of sables, ermines, weasels, martens, otters, minks and wolverines.

In Crete the mustelids (*Mustelidae*) are only represented by three species: Cretan stone marten (*Martes foina* ssp. *bunites* Erxleben = *Martes foina cretica* L.), weasel (*Mustela nivalis* ssp. *galinthias* L.) and Cretan badger (*Meles meles* ssp. *arcalus* L.). All the Cretan species are endemic and characterized by some typical features which differentiate them from those in Continental Europe. For example, the European beech or stone marten (*Martes foina* L.) has a throat patch, almost white, which extends far down to the forelegs, with the exception of Cretan stone marten (Dobroruka 1998: 72). The Cretan badger, as well as the Rhodian one, is much smaller than the Eurasian badger (Sfikas 1989: 20).

A. Cretan stone marten (*Martes foina* ssp. *bunites* Erxleben = *Martes foina cretica* L.).

The scientific Modern Greek name is: Ίκτις ή κατοικίδιος (Kanellis, Chadzisarandis 1963: 12; Ondrias 1967: 19; Platakis 1980: 64). The Cretan stone marten (ssp. *bunites*) belongs to the endemic animals of Greece. It lives in Crete, Carpathos, Sporades and Cyclades (Sfikas 1989: 20).

According to Platakis (1980: 64), the Cretans use two different names for designating ‘marten’: ζουρίδα is most common in Crete, whereas αλουπού