

1. Paradise on the verge of extinction:

2. Megalo Rema Rafinas

Our world is rapidly changing. Everyone knows that.

Climate change is the word encompassing the entirety of every alteration

that one can now examine just by taking a look out of the window, no matter where he lives.

Natural disasters are on the rise even in areas that used to remain untouched of extreme phenomena.

Most of the authorities pretend to fight against those disasters,

while they silencely contribute to them through their own woeful decisions.

Such is the case of Megalo Rema, a vast river system extending from the rocky hilltops of Mt. Pendeli and Hymettus, to the agricultural Spata valley and on to Rafina, where its estuary is located.

As its name reveals, it used to be a small stream (the greek word for it is "Rema")

which grew up to become a river after the major man-made impact on Attica geomorphology because of the expansion of Athenian suburbs

and the construction of an extensive road network during the late 20th and early 21st century.

Depending on the spot one visits he may form a different view on Megalo Rema

and that's due to the fact that it's a world in itself.

The branch of Daou and the branch of Agia Marina descend from the steep slopes, through gorgeous clumps of pine-trees, now badly damaged from the devastating wildfire of 2018, forming deep canyon-like features

that evolve into hidden waterfalls during wintertime.

Valanaris follows a similar course boasting for its 8 meter waterfalls

and paleontological finds it contains in the part of it close to Pikermi town.

Those finds, often called the Pikermi fauna are one-of-a-kind remains of Savannah-like animals

that used to inhabit the place upon the dawn of prehistory.

Petreza, nowadays the largest branch, differs significantly, its banks being close to sea level, even and located in an undisturbed area that includes few houses.

A small willow trees forest with reeds so tall as to prevent one from easily finding his way through create a fairy tale scenery, leaving the visitor in amazement, because of the virginity it retains in spite of its proximity to the urban areas.

Moreover, it creates a zone of protection for the endangered species of *Pelagus marathonicus* (Greek name: Attikopsaro, "Fish of Attica"),

endemic of South and Central Greece and dwindling in population due to the complete destruction of the vast majority of its natural habitats.

Hundreds of eels too live here, having chosen this place as their home.

All those branches, together with dozens of seasonal streams merge into one,

which reaches the sea next to Rafina Port.

The estuary formed here, albeit shrunk as a result of extensive urban growth,

is where more than 100 species of birds, many of which migrating, create their nests every year.

White proud egrets,

small wagtails,

little ringed plovers and various others

are an everyday view for any of the passersby who would pause for a moment to admire it.

A world of birds,

fish,

insects,

reptiles,

foxes,

frogs,

badgers and who knows what else.

A world of unexplored antiquities ranging from prehistoric to the late roman times.

A world of mystery awaiting the adventurous visitor to explore it.

Our little Amazon.

The largest river in cement-torn Attica.

And yet, so close to a lingering and abrupt end.

During the previous years the authorities have pressed to apply what they call an anti-flood method

and what we call a disaster.

15 kilometres of the most rich in beauty river parts are planned to be deprived of their natural vegetation.

More than 3000 trees, some of these centuries old, will be cut, never to grow again,

since the entirety of the banks and the riverbed will be covered in cement and gabions (metal boxes containing rocks),

turning what now is a diverse ecosystem into an open water pipe with no eco-value.

Despite all efforts, the plan seems to have almost fully unwrapped and its implementation is due to start in a few months time.

Greek people and politicians may eagerly announce their concern for the environment every now and then,

but few of them actually seem to care.

The plan will erase this natural landmark from the map, only to pave the road for the alleged economic growth that extensive building will bring to the area.

Practically, it will also affect the microclimate, since the average temperatures will rise.

Removal of trees will make the river's self-cleaning impossible, rendering the Attica coast prone to the critical danger of pollution rise.

Climate change always settles step by step.

Cement comes at a cost.

There will be an attempt to annul the plan in the Supreme Court of Greece but help is needed, since the situation is critical.

Our towns are devoid of sensitivity.

I'm afraid everyone's trying to profit for his own good, too settled as he is in his own ways to fight for a common cause.

Indifference reigns, not only towards nature, but at the same time towards the European legislation,

which downright prohibits alterations of this sort in rivers, advising in favor of more environmental-friendly flood management.

If you agree that this imminent danger must be avoided, please share the news with as many people as you can.

Show the pictures, discuss the subject and make it known to more and more people.

Wherever you may read this text, I'm sure something similar may threaten your area too.

Individually, no one can stop plans of this scale but all together we shall thwart every attempt against our quality of life.

Please, speak up for us and for Megalo Rema,
so that it won't go down in history as another Paradise Lost,
but as a Paradise Found.