The Balkans is one of the hot spots of biodiversity, and is known for a high diversity and endemism of freshwater fishes. The development of Greece was significantly affected by the climatic, geologic and orogenetic events resulting in high concentration of freshwater fish endemism. Some of the important historical events were the emergence of land bridges during the early Oligocene and Miocene, through which freshwater fishes dispersed to the Balkans from Asia and subsequently to Africa, the freshwater phase of the Paratethys sea or Alpine orogeny, which began 65 million years ago, and which gradually formed the Greek mountain systems, leading to a long-term isolation of local freshwater ichthyofauna and subsequent speciation. Other major events include Messinian salinity crisis and Pleistocene climate oscillations. Most of the freshwater fish families occurring in Greece most probably originated in the Southeast Asia, from where they colonized the Balkans by several routes. These colonizations took place repeatedly at different times and by different routes. The dispersion of freshwater fishes from Asia to Europe through Siberia started before the uplift of the Ural Mountains about 33 million years ago and continued until Pliocene. Another important colonization route from Asia was via the Balkan-Anatolian-Iranian plateau. The dispersion and subsequent speciation of species was also influenced by Messinian salinity crisis and Pleistocene glaciation.