



In Memoriam Professor Kamal Batanouny

Professor Kamal Batanouny died at the age of 75 in his beloved Egypt. Hillary Masundire appointed him as his Regional Vice Chair for West Asia and North Africa. The impression he made on us - his buoyant lifestyle, the energy with which he pursued the cause of conservation in his region until the very last moment, his outspokenness and warm feelings for all people around him - ensures that he will always remain with us.

Thank you Kamal for all you did for us and for the world we live in.

Much is going on within our commission these days and the following is just highlighting a few of the activities to which I have the honour to be associated.

CEM matters

Our steering committee meeting in the Fiji was very successful. The minutes will be on the web shortly. The meeting was very well organised by Taholo Kami, the Director of IUCN's Oceania Office, and his staff. An island state like Fiji has many interests that have to be addressed in a very limited space. For that reason, the associated conference and excursion examined River Basin Management and its impact on the different stakeholders of the main island of Fiji. Milika Sobey, our Regional Chair, together with Radhika Murti from EMP/IUCN invited the Minister of Primary Resources to open the conference which he did. The Conference and excursion were extensively covered by the national newspapers and television.

About one third of our members took the trouble to fill in the enquiry we sent around about the functioning of our Commission. In general statistical terms that is a good percentage, but for a Commission like ours it is not enough. As the enquiry led us to believe most of you are not troubled much with requests for input into the Commission's work. Please remember: membership is not only what the Commission can do for you, but also what you can contribute to the achievement of the Commission's goal and objectives. Each one of us will benefit as an expert when CEM takes a central position in all places where novel approaches of ecosystem management are discussed and developed. We are all part of that happy few and we should make it work!

I would like to remind you of a number of recent appeals made to (part of) our membership which include an invitation to participate in the discussion on IUCN's involvement with indigenous peoples, nominations for the Luc Hoffmann award, your experience with the application of the 12 principles of Ecosystem Management, and the testing of the draft-criteria of the Red List of Ecosystems in your region. If you have missed these appeals

and like to contribute to any of them, please let me know so that I may put you in contact with the focal points for each of these topics.

The CEM-newsletter is a major tool to promote internal and external communications about CEM and the work of its members. There has been a large backlog as many members nowadays submit short notes to be published in the newsletter, more than Radhika Murti has been able to cope with. The Steering Committee decided that we would produce an issue in which all of the backlog would be published after which Radhika will design some new criteria for submission in order to keep the newsletter short enough to remain attractive for our readers.

From the Thematic Groups

At the invitation of the Chair of the SSC, I participated in a workshop in Bath (UK) where a task force of SSC and CEM got together to discuss the latest scientific evidence on the impacts of neonicotinoids on the environment, and in particular on honey-bees. Given the importance of these insects for pollination (a major ecosystem service), the presence of the chair of CEM was solicited.

At the time that I am writing this, Jon Paul Rodriguez is holding his first workshop on the Red List of Ecosystems funded by a grant from the MAVA foundation. Jean-Yves Pirot of IUCN-HQ helped us to secure a substantial amount of money to enable Jon Paul to start his first of a series of workshops to test the methodology. Our thanks go to Jean-Yves and Jon Paul of course, but in the first place to the MAVA foundation for their visionary attitude towards conservation, as exemplified by this grant. *Un grand merci!!*

The Thematic Group on Connectivity has a new Leader, Nicolás Urbina-Cordona from Colombia. Nicolás is actually planning his program of activities. The substantial Latin-American expertise with ecological corridors in the Andes will be of great help to him in this task.

At the suggestion of Peggy L. Fiedler and Chen Yin Noah of the University of California, specialists in subtropical ecosystems, we have decided to establish a thematic group on the conservation and management of Mediterranean Ecosystems.

From the Regions

As sometimes people get disturbed by the title “Regional Vice-Chairs” (“*who will then be Regional Chair?*”) the steering committee decided to that from now they will be entitled **Regional Chairs**.

Our Regional Chair for Central Africa, Dr. Corneille Ewango has been awarded the Leaders for Nature Award in Arnhem, The Netherlands. This prestigious award is an initiative from the Netherlands Committee of IUCN and the Arnhem Zoo. Corneille was not granted a visa to receive his award himself (Belgian-bureaucracy for which I feel very ashamed), but his professor accepted it on his behalf. The personal risk Corneille took (and still takes) to conserve the Ituri forest, the only place where the Okapi occurs in the wild, were mentioned as one of his major achievements in conservation. Congratulations Corneille, we are proud that you are part of our CEM-family!!

To honour the memory of Kamal Batanouny, we are trying to raise the funding necessary to organise a conference in the Middle-East on religion and ecosystem management.

In April in Merida (Mexico) a conference will be organised by the Society of Ecological Restoration international (SERi) together with CEM on the restoration of the Mexican Gulf after last year’s major oil spill.

General IUCN-matters

The financial crisis is affecting IUCN and the commissions are affected as well. The Director General has decided to cut our Commission Operating Fund. This does not mean that we can no longer contribute with seed-funding to members’ activities, but we will have to be more selective about what we will fund.