

## IUCN ROfE e-Bulletin: Balkan Highlights

Dear All,

Welcome to IUCN ROfE e-Bulletin: Balkan Highlights - IUCN's bi-monthly newsletter. This is the first issue of the newsletter through which we will be providing you with updates on the major conservation and development issues relevant to IUCN and its constituency in the Balkans. As part of the IUCN ROfE, the newly established IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe has a special focus on protected areas and biodiversity conservation in a transboundary and regional context. Accordingly, these thematic areas will correspond to the main themes of the electronic bulletin.

We hope you will find it useful and look forward to your suggestions and contributions for the next issue of the newsletter, which you can send by email to [maja.zitkovic@iucn.org](mailto:maja.zitkovic@iucn.org).

With best wishes,

***IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe***

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## News

### 1 IUCN expands its conservation activities in South-Eastern Europe

**Serbia and Montenegro, March:** Beginning with March 2004, IUCN Regional Office for Europe (ROfE) started strengthening its influence in conservation activities in the South-Eastern European countries by establishing a new sub-regional Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe (SEE). The IUCN SEE office, based in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro, will endeavour *"to influence, encourage and assist Balkan societies in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, thus contributing to new joined regional understanding and co-operation and a better international image and promotion of the region"*. The SEE office will promote Balkan region as a treasure chest of Europe's natural and cultural heritage on broader European level as well as in the international context.

IUCN SEE will aim to further develop nature conservation in the region through the two main thematic fields:

1. protected areas and transboundary cooperation; and
2. biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

In March 2004, IUCN members in South-Eastern Europe met for the first time to discuss a strategy for a newly established IUCN Programme Office for SEE. The workshop, hosted by the Serbian Institute for Nature Protection, also gathered potential new members and UNESCO Regional Office for Science and Technology (ROSTE). The participants agreed on the priorities for the Union's work, supporting the Union's transboundary focus which builds on the IUCN "Parks for Peace" concept, and indicating urgent action is needed in improving the clearing-house mechanism over biodiversity related projects, protected areas coverage and management, and modifying the current environmental impact assessment procedures.

Detailed goals and themes of the IUCN SEE office are outlined in the Strategic Plan "Conservation without Frontiers-Towards a new Image for the Balkans", an electronic copy of which can be obtained by contacting the sub-regional office.

IUCN hopes that relevant regional stakeholders will benefit from the establishment of the new office and invites you to join us in our work towards further strengthening of transboundary cooperation in the regional conservation work.

For further information contact **Maja Zitkovic** at email: [maja.zitkovic@iucn.org](mailto:maja.zitkovic@iucn.org).

### 2 NGO gathering towards halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010

**Belgrade, May 4:** A one-day NGO training and round-table, organised by young Researchers of Serbia and Central and East European Working Group for Enhancement of Biodiversity (CEEWEB), was held in Belgrade on May 4<sup>th</sup>. The training was carried out in the light of the goal of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010, which has been the subject of several key international agreements, amongst others the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development and the Environment Ministers' commitments made in Kiev in May 2003.

More than 20 environmental NGOs from all over Serbia, joined by UNDP and the Directorate for Environmental Protection of the Ministry for Science and Environmental Protection of Serbia, participated at the round-table discussions, facilitated by Mr. Michael Mayer from CEEWEB. Participants discussed present state of biodiversity conservation in Serbia, international conventions, legislations, Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, potential funding sources, and level of cooperation within NGO community. Special attention was given to the level of awareness about the Countdown to 2010 initiative, which gathers major international NGOs, IUCN member organizations, the Presidency of the European Union, the European Commission, European

Environment Agency and the Council of Europe, who share a common vision of seeing a halt of the European biodiversity loss by 2010.

Also, several recommendations for future activities of NGOs in Serbia were outlined, such as increase of cooperation and information sharing, full recognition of NGOs as stakeholders and their capacity building, law enforcement, effective management of protected areas, and establishment of a monitoring system.

For further information about the round-table contact **Tijana Konstantinovic** at email: [tkbionet@eunet.yu](mailto:tkbionet@eunet.yu). For information about Countdown to 2010 initiative, contact **Tim Christophersen** at email: [tim.christophersen@iucn.org](mailto:tim.christophersen@iucn.org).

### **3 Vojvodina benefits from the new expert society for protection of nature**

**Novi Sad, May 20:** On May 20<sup>th</sup>, Novi Sad was the place of launching the new society for nature protection of Vojvodina, the northern province of Serbia and Montenegro. The Academic Society for Research and Protection of Nature will gather academic staff, researchers and conservation enthusiasts with valuable expertise and experience in conservation issues. It is foreseen the Society will be one of the strongest of its kind in Vojvodina.

For further information about the society's activities contact **Oliver Fojkar** at [fojkaro@ptt.yu](mailto:fojkaro@ptt.yu).

### **4 Common Quail & Turtle Dove hunting ban requested in Serbia and Montenegro**

**Novi Sad:** After a panel discussion held in Novi Sad in October 2003, the Bird Protection and Study Society of Vojvodina and the League for the Ornithological Action of Serbia and Montenegro, together with Ecological Movement of Stanisic, requested State officials to remove Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* and Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* from the game bird list and permanently prohibit further hunting. *"Since in our country, hunting of migratory species dominates, especially hunting of Turtle Dove and Common Quail, after the pressure by numerous NGOs, and because of irregularities and affairs in which hunters, hunting associations and tourist agencies are apostrophised, this kind of hunting will be reduced to minimum, and maybe even prohibited, as in Hungary."*, says Dr. Miloš Beukovic, Secretary of Hunting Association of Vojvodina. This is the first time that a high official of national hunting association directly admits "domination of migratory species hunting", prevailing public opinion about causes of affairs connected with the hunting management in Serbia, and states that this kind of hunting will be "reduced to minimum, and maybe even prohibited" after pressure of numerous NGOs.

While fully protected in neighbouring countries (e.g. Croatia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia), both species are under intense hunting pressure during autumn migration in Serbia. Traditionally, these two species are not of interest to local hunters and are mainly offered as game birds to visiting foreign hunters (predominantly Italian). Also, under cover of Quail hunting, it is not unusual for other protected species to fall victim. Among these species, a globally threatened species Corn Crake *Crex crex* is being killed.

Hunting inspectors are unable (or unwilling?) to control commercial shooting organized for visiting clients by hunting tour agencies. In order to satisfy the 'customer demand', hunting agencies are often using tape recorders prohibited by both Serbian law and the Bern Convention. Beside the tape recorders, also widespread is the illegal use of pump-action guns able to take more than two cartridges. It is estimated that more than 90% of all the Quails in Serbia are killed using these illegal techniques. These shoots are no different from the recent Balkan Birds affair, when protected species were hunted in Serbia and smuggled to Italy as restaurant delicacies!

For further information contact **Dragan Simic** at [ddsanic@eunet.yu](mailto:ddsanic@eunet.yu).

## 5 Keeping the eyes on Chamois of Romania

UNESCO Pro Natura has committed to protection of chamois in Romania, in a project financed by Pro Natura Switzerland. This represents the beginning of the environmental NGOs' involvement in sustainable wildlife management in Romania.

The chamois sub-species, *Rupicapra rupicapra carpatica*, is an attractive animal residing in the Carpathian high mountains and representing a symbol of wilderness, natural beauty, freedom and vulnerability. As the biggest chamois sub-species, it is often key target of trophy hunters and poachers. Thus the project for its protection is highly needed. The project's site is Rodnei Mountains Biosphere Reserve and National Park. Because of intensive poaching, chamois of Rodnei Mountains faced total extinction back in 1924. Repopulation began in 1964 by releasing 24 individuals, which reached about 500-600 individuals in 1990. After 1989 when the state authority declined, poaching spread widely resulting with significant population decrease.

As a result of UNESCO Pro Natura's work on monitoring of chamois population, we know today that Rodnei Mountains are populated with less than 30 exemplars, thus making 95% of the late 90-ies' population extinct. Now is the last minute when chamois can be saved. UNESCO Pro Natura is active in organising stakeholders' meetings, counting of chamois (together with foresters), surveys on local communities' opinions, media campaigns, presentations of the situation at national and international level. An NGO coalition for chamois protection in Romania, and a public awareness raising campaign was also established. A result of this work is the upcoming "**National Conference on Chamois Management**" organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development on **May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004**. Transfer of knowledge on chamois protection from Swiss specialists will be continued in the near future.

For further information contact **Peter Lengyel** at [lengyelpeter@hotmail.com](mailto:lengyelpeter@hotmail.com).

## 6 Testing the Aarhus Convention in South-Eastern Europe

Implementation of the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) is a challenging task in the South-Eastern European countries. IUCN has undertaken a mission to contribute to the review of the Aarhus Convention's implementation over biodiversity related projects in the region and actors, thus endeavouring to achieve better access to the information on environmental matters and civil society's participation in decision-making.

Some countries in South-Eastern Europe have not yet signed this Convention (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro), and therefore have no commitment to follow its recommendations. Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia (FYROM) and Albania have ratified the Convention, while countries like Croatia and Slovenia, by signing but not ratifying the Convention, face serious challenges in its execution.

Some potential protected areas of Slovenia have been marked for NATURA 2000 designation, but due to various reasons and despite of civil society's protests, the conservation status was never designated. What is the destiny of public participation in conservation matters in the rest of the region where civil society is probably even less strong and less organised than in Slovenia?

IUCN believes Aarhus Convention should be signed and ratified by all countries in the region, thus putting its recommendations on a well deserved place in the national laws of the countries.

## 7 Wind farm plans on Mount Sneznik

**Mount Sneznik, May 19:** More than 40 wind turbines are foreseen to be set up on Volovja reber, hill ridges on the southern slopes of Mount Sneznik, Slovenia. Slovenian NGOs fear the wind farm plan might bring serious damage or destruction of the exceptionally beautiful and valuable

conservation area, which was once set up for designation as a special protection area. This designation process of Mount Sneznik as a Regional Park and further as part of the European ecological network NATURA 2000, was stopped due to the Elektro Primorska company's plans to establish a wind farm.

Mount Sneznik is the highest non-Alpine mountain in Slovenia with numerous endemic and endangered plant species, and rare and endemic animal species. Due to its valuable habitats and species, IUCN identified this area, which is bordering with Croatian high karst mountain of Risnjak, as one of the important transboundary areas in South-Eastern Europe.

Several national NGOs demand from the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy a temporary protection decree for the Volovja reber. NGOs foresee that the development of a wind farm would cause serious devastation of the vulnerable limestone ridges, resulting with destruction of scenic beauty of the area, as well as with disturbance of large carnivores and many bird and bat species.

For more information contact **Marjeta Svetel**, email: [marjeta.kersic.svetel@netsi.si](mailto:marjeta.kersic.svetel@netsi.si).

## **8 Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Serbia and Montenegro**

UNDP/Global Environment Facility (GEF) is looking at starting the project Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Serbia and Montenegro, in partnership with the Ministry for Science and Environmental Protection in Serbia and the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in Montenegro. The project is a direct response to the CBD and will produce republic strategies and action plans. A country report will also be produced.

With the same partners, UNDP/GEF will be looking at the country's capacity to implement the Rio conventions (CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD). The republics will produce republic action plans for capacity building in these areas.

Further information can be given by UNDP Serbia and Montenegro GEF Focal Point, Saba Nordstrom, [Saba.Nordstrom@undp.org](mailto:Saba.Nordstrom@undp.org).

## **9 IUCN 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conservation Congress on-line registration**

**Bangkok, Nov 17-25:** IUCN is now offering the service of registering for the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conservation Congress (WCC) online. If you are an IUCN member or you have received an invitation or wish to join this large conservation forum to be held in Bangkok in November 2004, visit [www.iucn.org/congress/index.cfm](http://www.iucn.org/congress/index.cfm) for further information about WCC and online registration. The registration will be opened until the event and only those who have secured funds for travel and accommodation can register now. Participants who require sponsorship will find a link on this website where they are asked to contact their regional offices in order to get more information about sponsorship.

## **Events**

### **1 Countdown 2010 – Life is ticking away: Halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010!**

**Malahide, May 25:** The Countdown 2010 initiative is gaining momentum across Europe, with a wide range of IUCN members and other organisations pledging participation and support. The aim of Countdown 2010 is to encourage and enable key decision makers to meet the courageous commitments that EU heads of State and pan-European Environment Ministers have signed: "to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010".

To this end, a growing number of European organisation are pledging to pursue the five Countdown 2010 objectives:

1. **Focus** public and stakeholder attention on the 2010 biodiversity targets to keep biodiversity on the political agenda
2. **Keep pressure** on all stakeholders to achieve the 2010 biodiversity targets
3. **Mobilise** all stakeholders to contribute to achieving the 2010 biodiversity targets
4. **Catalyse** and facilitate collective action for implementation of relevant commitments, policies and agreements
5. **Amplify** the activities of IUCN members and other organisations by relating working programmes to the 2010 biodiversity targets.

#### The Countdown launch – Connect!

On May 25<sup>th</sup> in Malahide, Ireland, key European decision makers will be assembled to launch the Countdown initiative during an Irish EU Presidency biodiversity stakeholder meeting. An electronic message will be sent out at the exact time of the launch to all IUCN members across Europe, and other interested organisations around Europe, to connect to the Countdown, and thus streamline conservation work all across Europe towards the 2010 biodiversity targets.

#### Joining the Countdown

Connect your organisation to the “synapses” of the Countdown all across Europe on the day of the launch or at a later date:

1. Visit [www.countdown2010.net](http://www.countdown2010.net) after May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004, to link your organisation to the Countdown 2010.
2. Place the Countdown 2010 logo and link on your homepage. On the day of the Countdown launch, you will receive an email with the file for your homepage.
3. Inform the Countdown 2010 Secretariat of your ongoing activities towards the 2010 biodiversity target – and use the Countdown as the European amplifier to make your message of conservation heard at European level.

## **2 UNESCO and IUCN join forces for Balkan transboundary cooperation**

**Belgrade/Tara National Park, June 13-17:** Biosphere Reserves in South-Eastern Europe (SEE) have strong potential to streamline and facilitate transboundary cooperation in protected areas. Led by this goal, UNESCO and IUCN have joined forces in organisation of the international workshop "MAB Biosphere Reserves and transboundary cooperation in the SEE region", to be held from June 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> in Belgrade and Tara National Park, Serbia and Montenegro. The workshop, supported by Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), and organised in close cooperation with the Serbian Institute for Nature Conservation, will serve as an awareness-raising tool for co-management of transboundary protected areas, providing participants with concrete regional examples.

The workshop will gather regional and international experts in the conservation field in order to identify innovative practices in reconciling the relationship between biodiversity conservation and local sustainable socio-economical development, as well as to design more effective ways of interaction among relevant stakeholders in the protected areas management.

For more information about the UNESCO-IUCN workshop, visit [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php@URL\\_ID=18771&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php@URL_ID=18771&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

## **3 IUCN celebrates opening of the Belgrade based Programme Office**

**Belgrade, June 14:** The newly established IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe (SEE) will celebrate the official opening on June 14<sup>th</sup> in New Belgrade. The opening of the office will be held in the premises of the Serbian Institute for Nature Protection, an IUCN member organisation, which had generously provided IUCN with office space.

#### **4 IUCN Mediterranean members meeting**

**Naples, June 19-22:** A four-day IUCN Mediterranean Members Meeting will be held in Naples from June 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>. The objectives of the meeting are to discuss the evolution, achievements and programme of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation; engage the Members and IUCN Commissions in the Mediterranean Programme; prepare the Mediterranean input to the World Conservation Congress in Bangkok; discuss outputs of the IUCN Vth World Parks Congress and favour creation of networks.

For further information contact **Virginia Tschopp** at [virginia.tschopp@iucn.org](mailto:virginia.tschopp@iucn.org).

#### **5 SAVE workshop discusses rare and missing breeds of the Balkans**

**Dimitrovgrad, Sept 24-25:** During the next "Regional Fair of Balkan Agrobiodiversity" in Dimitrovgrad (Serbia and Montenegro) in collaboration with Natura Balkanika, SAVE Foundation organises a workshop on the status of rare and missing breeds in the Balkans. The foreseen meeting will gather regional experts with an aim to exchange information and knowledge about rare and missing breeds, the need for action, and to draft rescue actions and to network regionally the stakeholders. The workshop will focus on the non-governmental aspect of conservation activities.

For further information and registration to the workshop, contact **Hans-Peter Grunenfelder**, e-mail: [monitoring@swissonline.ch](mailto:monitoring@swissonline.ch).

### **Funding opportunities**

#### **1 French consultancy in search for Central European experts**

A French consultancy is looking for independent environmental consultants from Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania that are interested in being involved in a proposal to be submitted to DG REGIO's call for tender on "technical assistance for assessing environmental projects". Interested experts should contact **Jean-Paul Grandjean**, email: [oreadeschirmeck@wanadoo.fr](mailto:oreadeschirmeck@wanadoo.fr).