Dear Readers,

It is our pleasure to share with you the 24th issue of IUCN South-Eastern European e-Bulletin, that closes 2010 – International Year of Biodiversity. This might be the right moment to take a break and reflect on what has been achieved and look at what lies ahead for biodiversity in the coming years. Will we see greater momentum for nature conservation; will high level commitments translate into concrete action; who will be the key players? Read more in the latest issue of Conservation made clear: next steps for biodiversity.

We thank you for contributing to this issue and for your continuous interest in this publication. Please note that the bulletin is available online at www.iucn.org/southeasterneurope, while guidelines for submitting articles can be found at the last page of this issue.

We wish you a pleasant reading!

IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe
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IUCN SEE staff news

IUCN SEE team is strengthened by its new member, Jelena Stjelja, who joined in as Operations Assistant in November 2010.

As an English language graduate, she is enthusiastic about IUCN’s mission and is looking forward to broaden her knowledge on office management, administration and finance. Her position covers wide range of tasks and provides day-to-day support to SEE office.

Welcome Jelena!
1. Thousands for biodiversity!

Countdown 2010 was officially closed on 20 October at 20:10, at a dedicated event in Nagoya, Japan, at the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity summit. “The greatest achievement of the Countdown 2010 initiative has been to bring together actors which were not traditionally linked to conservation” said John Kidd, IUCN Head of Global Communications.

Summarizing the Countdown 2010 initiative achievements, a number of success stories have been selected out of nearly 1,100 partners and published within Made in Countdown 2010 publication. These stories have helped to make a difference for biodiversity and come from partners worldwide. Examples of successful actions include adoption of protection measures, implementation of action plans, raising awareness and reduction of biodiversity impact. Existing Countdown 2010 partners will be invited to join the new initiative, starting in 2011.

For further information please contact Countdown secretariat at office@countdown2010.net or visit http://www.countdown2010.net/.

2. Creating a Pan-Alpine Ecological Network

During the last few years, a pan-Alpine ecological network has been established to maintain biodiversity of the Alps. Results achieved through The Ecological Continuum Initiative, the ECONNECT project and the Platform Ecological Network of the Alpine Convention can be helpful for connectivity activities in other parts of Europe and wider.

The Ecological Continuum Initiative has created the basis for ecological networks in the Alps; it has established pilot regions, evaluated suitable methods and compiled a catalogue of potential measures supporting the establishment of ecological networks.

Since 2009, the Continuum Initiative is active in promoting and mentoring, providing know-how and awareness building. Launched in September 2008 and financed through the EU’s Alpine Space Programme, the three-year ECONNECT project “Restoring the web of life” focuses on ecological networks in seven pilot regions. Its aim is to demonstrate how ecological connectivity can be improved at the local level and beyond protected areas. The Platform Ecological Network of the Alpine Convention was established in 2006, to promote the cooperation across borders. It brings together the relevant authorities in the countries of the Alps, the Alpine Convention observers and other actors from administrative bodies, the research community and the regions of the Alps.

For further information and tools download (the services section) please visit http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org and http://www.econnectproject.eu.
3. European Green Belt: From Paper to Practice

**Finland:** The 4th European Green Belt conference took place in October 2010 in Kuhmo, Finland, in the frame of the 20 years anniversary symposium of Finnish-Russian friendship in cross-border cooperation. One of its main conclusions is that European Green Belt initiative continues to prove its rationale and deliver across its span – it is quite vivid on the ground with numerous activities taking place or being planned. Moreover, there is a potential for the initiative to grow in the future. It is right time to launch discussion on how the Green Belt could strengthen its operations in order to embark on a new phase and expand its outreach.

Jointly organized by IUCN, Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services of Finland (NHS), the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), with the support of Finland’s Ministry of Environment, Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management, and numerous Green Belt partners, the conference reaffirmed the viability of the initiative by showcasing variety of activities taking place along the route. “The Green Belt has proven to be one of the most viable conservation initiatives in Europe. It appeals both for its conservation and local development goals. The strength of the initiative is measured by its ability to reconcile the two,” says Boris Erg, Director of IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe.

For further information please contact Boris Erg, IUCN SEE at boris.erg@iucn.org or visit http://www.iucn.org/europe.

4. The Global Outlook for the Next Decade

**Slovenia:** Held in August 2010 under the title “The Global Outlook for the Next Decade”, the 2010 Bled Forum tackled some of the major challenges of the decade: from the energy transition to the water challenge, re-vitalising the economy, and the transformative power of the Internet. It also included an exchange of views on the EU’s role in a changing world, new ways to reconnect the Western Balkans, and the priorities for Central Asia.

In his keynote speech, the President of Slovenia, Dr Türk identified three key principles of good governance: honesty, practical realism and innovation. He made the point that we currently have enough information to make an honest assessment of the state of the planet and identify the main challenges that we will face in the coming decades. IUCN Regional Director for Pan-Europe, Dr Hans Friederich met Dr Türk to discuss the upcoming United Nations General Assembly, focusing on the Millennium Development Goals and the biodiversity crisis. HE President Türk and Dr Friederich talked about the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity study and the need to account for environmental costs and services. They also talked about engagement of the private sector and about ways to better communicate the biodiversity crisis.

For further information please visit http://www.iucn.org/europe.
5. Balkan lynx – second phase

**Germany:** From 2006 to 2009, the four NGOs EuroNatur, KORA, Macedonian Ecological Society (MES) and Society for the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA) successfully implemented the first phase of the “Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme”. In July 2010, the second phase of the BLRP was started, again conducted by the same project partners and financially supported by Swiss MAVA Foundation.

Project focuses on the preservation of the last remaining habitats of the Balkan lynx and its prey in the border areas of Albania, FYRO Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo (UN1244) as well as on awareness rising among important stakeholder groups such as hunters and farmers. Other aspects are environmental education of school children in Balkan lynx habitat areas as well as the extension of the activities towards Kosovo (UN1244) and Montenegro. Within the SCOPES project (funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), running in parallel to the BLRP Phase II, and conducted by KORA, PPNEA and MES, main focus is put on scientific work on the Balkan lynx. In order to inform interested parties about the project progress and latest news from the Balkan lynx, project partners will publish a Balkan Lynx Newsletter twice a year. The first edition of the newsletter will be released in January 2011. To subscribe, please email your contact details to balkanlynx@euronatur.org.

For more information, please contact Annette Spangenberg, EuroNatur, at annette.spangenberg@euronatur.org

6. Nature walks for wetlands along the Mura River

**Slovenia:** Mura, Drava and Danube Rivers form the longest connected river ecosystem without dams in Europe, as pointed out by Euronatur’s research from the early 90’s, European Greenbelt initiative IUCN (Programme of Work 2005) and GREENBELT project 2008 (Interreg III B Cadses). Their floodplains are the most important sources of fresh drinking water in this part of Europe. Therefore the proposal to establish Transboundary Biosphere Reserve that would cover more than 1000 km of wetlands along the borders of Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia.

At the moment Mura River wetlands are not on Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. In order to raise public awareness on the need to protect Mura River wetland, Slovenian NGO Tabrih celebrates World Wetlands Day by organizing guided nature walks along the river since 2000. This year the event will take place in Križovec, on the border between Slovenia and Croatia, on 30 January. At the same time, 10th anniversary of protected Landscape area in Medjimurska
7. Binding Award: under the sign of the Green Belt Europe

The Binding Prize is worth CHF 50,000 and is awarded to individuals who exemplify the goals of nature conservation and work for environmental protection. In November 2010, it was awarded for the 25th time to five individuals who have one thing in common: for many years, they have been strongly and extraordinarily engaged in protecting the Green Belt.

This year’s recipients of the Binding Prize - Dr. Martin Schneider-Jacoby (project manager at EuroNatur), Borut Stumberger (former President of the organization DOPPS BirdLife Slovenia and Regional Coordinator for the protection of migratory birds in South East Europe at EuroNatur), Dr. Uwe Riecken (Head of habitat protection and management of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation), Dr. Kai Frobel (species protection officer for the nature conservation and initiator of the project “Green Belt Germany), and Alois Lang (former coordinator of Green Belt Europe at IUCN) - played a decisive role in the conservation of the European Green Belt. “The award is an incentive to continue efforts to preserve this important part of our European cultural and natural heritage” said Gabriel Schwaderer, managing director of the international nature conservation foundation, EuroNatur.

For further information, please visit www.binding.li

8. UNESCO Designations – Transboundary Aspects

Italy: The Italian National Research Council (CNR) organised a workshop on the ‘European Protected Areas and UNESCO Designations’, co-financed by the Italian Ministry of the Environment and Land and Territory (MELT) and with the patronage of the Italian National Commission for UNESCO. The workshop results were taken to the EUROPARC’s 2010 conference in the Abruzzo National Park.

During the workshop, the participants analyzed management and legal aspects of two widely known UNESCO designations: World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves. The goal was to obtain conclusions on impacts deriving from these international designations, and relationships between protected areas and surrounding zones. Representatives of IUCN WCPA Transboundary Conservation
9. EU Conservation Directives in Serbia

**Serbia**: Two-day workshop „Building Capacity – Supporting the Implementation of EU Nature Conservation Directives“ was held in October 2010 in Zrenjanin, organized by IUCN SEE and Bird Protection and Study Society of Vojvodina, in the frame of the project “EU Environmental Policies and Strategies in South Eastern Europe: Capacity Building for the Implementation of EU Environmental Policies and Strategies in FYRO Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia” and supported by European Commission.

Workshop displayed the process of Natura 2000 sites selection and designation, and in particular Birds Directive implementation, using Tamiš River Valley as an example. Extensive information was given on the legislative aspects of the two Directives and particular attention was given to the potential benefits and opportunities of Natura 2000 areas for local communities. The workshop attracted local stakeholders: forest enterprises, water management organizations, hunter and angling associations, representatives of municipality authorities, local development agencies, Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province and CSOs actively working in the area. Participants practiced their knowledge in two working groups discussing about potential benefits from Natura 2000 designation and management objectives for Tamiš river valley, respectively. A field trip was organized on the second day, covering the most important biodiversity hotspots in the Tamiš Valley, ending on astonishing Baranda Fish farm.

For further information please contact Marko Tucakov, Bird Protection and Study Society of Vojvodina at marko.tucakov@pzzp.rs.

10. Yearly speleological research camp

**Romania**: Following 49 years old tradition, volunteers of the exploratorii Speleological Association, all passionate cavers, participated in yearly speleological research camp. In August 2010 the group revisited a Natura 2000 site: Poiana Roșchii in the “Nera Gorges – Beușnița National Park”. The objective of the research camp was to explore one of the largest hydro-karstic
11. Thethi summer programme

**Albania:** Balkans Peace Park Project (B3P) ran a four week summer programme in the local school, village of Thethi. Young people were taught English, geography and environmental topics by a team of volunteers and local teachers. Organized for a third time, summer programme made an impact, helping local people to recognise their valley’s natural resources and giving them the language skills needed for communication with incoming tourists.

First B3P’s international course in permaculture was held in Thethi, attracting participants from all over Europe.

First steps were also made in the establishment of a needlecraft enterprise for the women of Thethi. Craft pieces made in the valley are sold in the UK with profits benefitting B3P’s projects in Thethi. Additionally, this year B3P organized a summer camp in the Rugova valley, Kosovo (UN1244). There were 38 teenagers (Albanian, Bosniak and Roma) that took part in various activities including hiking, orienteering, litter picks, English lessons, and photography. The camp was a joint venture between Environmentally Responsible Action (ERA), The Ideas Partnership (TIP) and B3P.

For more information please contact Antonia Young, Former Chair - Balkans Peace Park Project Committee UK at A.TI.Young@Bradford.ac.uk or visit www.balkanspeacepark.org

12. Busy year of the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** In April 2010, the first national park was established in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: NP Una. The selection process for Director’s position was held and the Government of the Federation of BiH will appoint the Director of this Public Enterprise soon.
In July, the city of Capljina hosted the first International Conference on Transboundary Cooperation in the Dinaric Arc and in the framework of the “Environment for people in the Dinaric Arc.” It was organized by IUCN, SNV, WWF, the Embassy of the Republic of Finland and Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The conference was officially opened by Federal Minister of Environment and Tourism, Ph.D. Nevenko Herceg. At the same time, Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism has prepared a draft of the new Law on Nature Protection that entered a procedure for approval by the Parliament. The Law includes a new definition of the IUCN categories of protected areas, which have been approved at the World Conservation Congress, Barcelona 2008. In September, in Bihac, the International Conference on National Parks in the development of tourism was organized by the Chamber of Commerce of Una-Sana Canton under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism. There were two main topics: Position of NP Una in light of the new Law on Nature Protection and Regional Parks as a model of cross-border cooperation in the Dinaric Arc.

For more information please contact Azra Korac–Mehmedovic, Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism at azrak@fmoit.gov.ba.

13. Local community helps to save bats

**Slovenia:** Throughout the Nature Park Goricko, at least 17 of 29 recorded species of bats in Slovenia are known to occur. Unfortunately, many of them are at risk because of the destruction of bat roost sites with the renovation of buildings, the prevention of access to buildings by latticed windows, general light pollution etc.

To raise awareness on these issues and to inform the general public, The Slovenian Association for Bat research and conservation (SDPVN), Nature Park Goricko and Evangelical-lutheran congregation Bodonci organised the 12th European Bat Night (EBN).

More than 40 people, mostly children with parents, gathered to attend an interactive presentation lectured by biologist Monika Podgorelec (SDPVN) about biology and threats and conservation of bats. In order to help bats, children and their parents built 10 bat boxes. As a potential new roost sites they will place the bat boxes on trees, on the facades and roofs of houses. Furthermore, children promised to inform us on new “inhabitants”. At the end of EBN we took a walk around the church to listen to bat sounds. During an hour, several individuals of the Serotine Bat, the Noctule Bat and the Kuhl’s pipistrell Bat, were seen and their calls recognised by bat vocalization detectors and interpreted by Monika.

For more information, please contact Gregor Domanjko, Nature Park Goricko at gregor.domanjko@goricko.info or visit www.park-goricko.org.
14. Building Natura 2000 in candidate countries and potential candidates

About 50 people from the Dinaric Arc region had the opportunity to learn about Natura 2000 through several presentations given by experts from European Commission, WWF, BirdLife and other organizations. Held in Brussels in mid September, organized through People 2 People programme, training “Building Natura 2000 in candidate countries and potential candidates: the role of civil society” was prepared for NGOs, to help them understand their role in implementation of Natura 2000 in their countries. Participants came from Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, FYR Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (UN1244), Albania and Turkey and Island as only countries not coming from Western Balkans.

Very interesting presentations were given by Natura 2000 experts from WWF, BirdLife, and Naturalists Club Poland. Participants learned about lobbying European institutions, the role of NGOs in promoting mainstreaming of biodiversity and advocacy examples from European institutions. There was a presentation on the role of the ETC (European Topic Centre) on biological diversity in implementing the EU nature directives, and, Commission experts talked about the Civil Society Facility, People 2 People programme, EU institutions, enlargement policy, environment chapter no 27, RENA and Natura 2000 and EU policy in the field of biodiversity protection.

For more information, please visit the blog “Natura 2000 in Western Balkans” at http://ngonatura2000.blogspot.com/2010/09/weve-returned-from-brussels.htm

15. Danube goes beyond - Danube Competence Centre

**Serbia:** National tourism organization launched an initiative trying to draw away from pure promotion of national interests, aiming at creating a joint regional focus of the Middle and Lower Danube with its neighbours. In Feb 2010 a new regional association registered in Belgrade with 22 members from the six countries between Croatia and the Black Sea and started its work - the Danube Competence Centre (DCC).

The aim of the newborn cooperation is to network tourism stakeholders from the Danube region, to enhance their cooperation and to work towards the sustainable (tourism) development of the region, which could also be seen as contribution to the implementation of the upcoming EU Danube Strategy. The member mix of public and private tourism organisations, NGO’s, city councils etc the DCC started its ambitious projects creatively but pragmatically. Aware of sensitive political neighbourhood stories in this region, the member organisations are both interested to integrate their national governments and to focus on grassroots groundwork, urgently needed and convincing through simple facts and figures. First concrete activities were implemented – a cross border
16. Mission to WH site Butrint

Albania: 24 - 26 August 2010 an UNESCO-ICOMOS advisory mission was carried out to the World Heritage property of Butrint. The site was inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List in 1992 and is also a designated site under the Ramsar Convention since March 2003. The key task of the mission was to review the impacts on the outstanding universal value and integrity of Butrint caused by the road reconstruction from Saranda to Butrint.

The findings of the mission are under elaboration and the excellent cooperation of the UNESCO - ICOMOS mission team with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports of Republic Albania, the Institute for Monuments of Culture of Republic of Albania, the Institute for Archaeology of the Republic of Albania, the Office for Administration and Coordination of the National Park of Butrint, and the Road construction authority of Republic of Albania should be noted.

For more information, please contact Sinisa Sesum, UNESCO Venice Office at s.sesum@unesco.org.

17. Serbian Owl Conservation Center

Serbia: The Serbian Owl Conservation Center is founded in 2010 by a group of young and enthusiastic bird conservationists who already gained experiences in owl research and conservation. This non-governmental and non-profit organization is based in Novi Sad. The Center is fully dedicated to owl conservation throughout practical activities in the field, and research and promotion of owls and their habitats. The best known project done by Center’s members is the Long-eared Owl (Asio otus) winter roost survey which is conducted since 2005.
Several small conservation projects are run on Tawny (Strix aluco), Ural (Strix uralensis), Barn (Tyto alba) and Little Owls (Athene noctua).

For more information, please contact Milan Ruzic at milruzic@yahoo.com or visit www.sove.org.rs.

18. Twinning project: sectoral workshops on Natura 2000

**Serbia:** In the framework of the Twinning project “Strengthening administrative capacities for Protected Areas in Serbia (NATURA 2000)”, three sectoral workshops on NATURA 2000 for stakeholders were held during November 2010. Their objective was to inform key stakeholder sectors about NATURA 2000, and to foster their participation in the process of preparation of this network in Serbia. Nature conservation and Forestry sector WS were held in the Palace of Serbia in Belgrade on 9 and 30 November, respectively; while the Agriculture sector WS was conducted on 11th November in the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province.

The working atmosphere in the sectoral workshops on NATURA 2000 was positive and constructive. During the workshops more than 50 questions on NATURA 2000, from general to sector-specific, were collected and majority of them were answered by the Twinning project team. Nevertheless, all questions and answers will be published on the Twinning webpage. In addition, about 100 inputs and comments regarding opportunities, benefits, challenges, concerns, cooperation and working together, are the result of interactive group work.

Workshops were organized by the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and the project team of the Twinning Project. Project’s objective is to develop a system for nature protection in the Republic of Serbia in line with the EU Environmental Acquis.

For more information, please contact Katarina Vuksic, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning at Katarina.Vuksic@ekoplan.gov.rs

19. Supporting development and implementation of Agri-environment schemes

**FYRO Macedonia:** Workshop held on 25-26 November in Probistip aimed at increasing the level of understanding among participants on how the agri-environment funds can be used, but also at preparing civil society organizations for active participation in the consultation process during the elaboration of the national agri-environment programme. The countryside and farming practices in Macedonia still allow for good compatibility of agriculture production and biodiversity conservation. Streamlining farming practices into nature protection is essential for maintenance of good status of the rural landscape at the same time improving the lives of local people.
Agriculture plays a significant role in the economy of rural areas of Macedonia where it is the primarily generator of income with a share of 18% in total employment and of 13% in GDP. The Rural Development policy provides financial stimuli to make farmers adopt environmentally-friendly farming techniques such as low-intensity pasture systems; organic agriculture; preservation of landscape features such as hedgerows, ditches and woods that go beyond usual good agricultural practice. One of the financial instruments for the candidate countries is the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development (IPARD). In Macedonia the financial aid of this fund equals 45.5 million allocated for the period 2007-2011. However, candidate countries have often been experiencing low uptake of the funds provided by the EU, the main reason being insufficient capacity of the country's institutions to prepare documents and procedures. NGOs and other stakeholders’ familiarity and understanding of the functioning of agri-environment schemes are essential in enhancing its effective implementation at the national level.

For more information, contact Veronika Ferdinandova, IUCN SEE at veronika.ferdinandova@iucn.org

20. A Public Advisory Council for the Central Balkan National Park Established

Bulgaria: Launching ceremony of the Public Advisory Council to the Park Directorate was held on 30 November in Sofia, as the final stage of the project “Management model with the participation of stakeholders of the Central Balkan - part of the National Ecological Network”. Park administration Director, Mrs. Rachevitz, stressed out involvement of local community and a wide range of stakeholders as one of the main results of the project.

Formed Public Advisory Council to the park directorate actively contributed to development of long-term vision for Central Balkan National Park (2010 - 2050): “A View at Our Common Future.” Constitutive protocol signing ceremony was held in the presence of Ms. Karadjova, Minister of Environment and Water, Her Excellency, Hon. Ms Tove Skarsteyn, Ambassador of Norway to Bulgaria, Ms. Zolfrid Foss, Senior Adviser and Ms Elizabeth Yernkvist, Legal Adviser in the Ministry of Environment of Norway and wide range of stakeholders. The Project “Management Model of Interested Stakeholders of Central Balkan - Part of the National Ecological Network” was financially supported by the Fund for NGO formed by the countries of the European Economic Area - Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. It was implemented by the Foundation “Time” Sofia, in partnership with the Park Administration.

For further information please contact Diana Terzieva, Central Balkan NP Directorate at did@centralbalkan.bg
21. New pigmy cormorant colony discovered on the Danube

**Bulgaria:** A two week expedition under the patronage of WWF (part of the Green Borders LIFE-funded project), exploring bird populations along the Danube discovered at the end of June 2010 a new colony of the threatened pygmy cormorant on the territory of Bulgaria. The team of biologists travelled from the river Timok on the Bulgarian-Serbian border to Srebarna bird sanctuary next to Silistra on the Bulgarian-Romanian border.

Until recently on the Bulgarian coast there was only one known bird colony, that on lake Srebarna. But the expedition discovered three new coastal bird colonies – in Ostrovsko Marsh and in the protected area Kalimok Marsh next to Turtakan. The predominant species in the bird colony in Kalimok Marsh is the threatened pygmy cormorant. The experts counted more than 300 pairs of birds. The number of pygmy cormorants have doubled in Bulgaria over the last four years. But at the same time the bird colonies of nesting birds on the islands of Vardim and Mishka have dramatically decreased, some colonies having disappeared altogether. The main reason for this dramatic fall is the disturbance of birds by foresters and fishermen. WWF carried out a similar census in 2006. Data comparison shows that the total number of bird colonies on Danube islands has been preserved at 10. One Bulgarian colony – on the island next to Srebarna bird sanctuary – has disappeared, but a new colony was formed on a Romanian island. A total of 3600 pairs of birds were counted along the Bulgarian stretch of the Danube. In 2006 there were 3900.

For further information please contact Olga Apostolova, WWF Danube - Carpathian Programme at oapostolova@wwfdcp.bg or visit www.panda.org/dcpc.

22. Agri-environment measures for conservation: a way forward in Moldova and Ukraine

**Moldova:** International Conference closed the 2 year long project and drawn the public attention to recommendations for development of agri-environment Programme and support for High Nature Value farming both in Moldova and Ukraine. Conference was organized by IUCN in cooperation with Moldovan Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry that presented the newly registered logo of organic farming of Moldova. The conference was held on 17 December 2010 in Chisinau, Moldova and its purpose was to share the data collected and results of the work carried out in Moldova and Ukraine. Land abandonment, under grazing and rural communities’ poverty are common reality markers in these countries. Farmers and their communities lack alternative income sources connected to farming practices which benefit landscapes and biodiversity. Therefore, the general conclusion leads to organic farming promotion and support to agri-environment measures.
for conservation. The conference was a closing event of the 2-year project implemented by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) in cooperation with BIOTICA Ecological Society and NECU (National Ecological Centre of Ukraine). The project was financed by Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

For further information please contact Tomasz Pezold, IUCN SEE at Tomasz.pezold@iucn.org.

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23. LIFE for Danube Flagship Species

**Bulgaria:** The team at the WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme has been working on a cross-border initiative – the Green Borders project - in Bulgaria and Romania to protect two flagship Danube species: the Pigmy Cormorant (Phalacrocorax Pygmaeus) and the Ferruginous Duck (Aythyia Nyroca). According to the EU Birds Directive, both species require special conservation measures for their habitats, which are important areas for breeding in Europe.

Currently, only about 18,000 pairs of Ferruginous Duck and about 39,000 pairs of Pygmy Cormorant are nesting in Europe. The Lower Danube, one of the world’s most important ecoregions, hosts an important number of these two species, according to Birdlife International, 2004: 7% of the Ferruginous Duck population and 17% of the Pygmy Cormorant. The novelty of the project is in its cross-border approach. This will allow for the first time in the Lower Danube area for an adequate implementation of conservation measures, resulting in the long-term self-sustainability of the populations of the two priority species across key Natura 2000 sites. In order to strengthen the trans-boundary approach and ensure the favorable conservation status for the bird species, the necessary steps will be taken in order to designate a cross-border Ramsar site.

The main activities of the project will therefore focus on coordinated conservation efforts through improved, cross-border management of the network of Natura 2000 sites along the Lower Danube, on increasing the knowledge of the species status and ecological needs for a wide range of stakeholders in Romania and Bulgaria, on creating disturbance free and improved breeding and feeding conditions at key sites through implementing best management practices of fishponds, reedbeds and forest and on improving the ecological status of the wetlands used as breeding and feeding sites for the two bird species. The new Pygmy Cormorant colony discovered in Bulgaria earlier this year encouraged the team to intensify the conservation measures that paid off so well.

For further information please contact Olga Apostolova, WWF Danube - Carpathian Programme at oapostolova@wwfdcp.bg or visit www.green-borders.eu.
24. Protection of Yıldız- Strandja Mountains

**Turkey:** The project “Protection and Sustainable Development of Natural Resources and Biodiversity in the Yıldız Mountains in Turkey” was implemented by Ministry of Environment and Forestry in the Yıldız Mountains, Kırklareli Province in the course of 2009. The project area comprises the Turkish part of the Yıldız Mountains, which extend to Bulgaria as the Strandja Mountains. The objective was to protect biodiversity and support sustainable use of natural resources of Yıldız (Strandja) Mountains on a collaborative base in Trachea Region. The cooperation with Bulgarian partners was strengthened through several exchange visits and study tours to the neighboring Strandja Nature Park.

Close contact was maintained with the regional Burgas Forestry Directorate and some 12 research centers and NGOs in Turkey. Project results were preliminary management plan and the Nomination Dossier for the UNESCO MAB Program. In addition satellite imagery was used for data gathering on flora, fauna, cave systems, ecohydrology, and land and vegetation cover mapping.

For more details, please contact Reyhan Akarsu, Department Director for National Parks at reyhanakarsu@gmail.com or Nihan Yenilmez Arpa, General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks at nihanarpa@yahoo.com.

25. Wings across the Balkans

**Serbia:** The Bird Protection and Study Society of Vojvodina has joined the „Wings across the Balkans“, project financed by the European Commission and led by the BirdLife International. The overall objective is to raise the level of environmental and biodiversity protection in the Western Balkans through renewed environmental legislation complying with EU directives. Project supports more proactive role of civil society organizations in protection and management of natural resources. Also, one of the objectives is to establish an effective network of seven nature conservation organizations in Croatia, Serbia, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia & Herzegovina, well trained and informed to stimulate government action for biodiversity conservation through civil society mechanisms. The project will be done throughout the activities such as trainings for national coordinators, development of simple conservation action plans for the most important sites, comparative analysis and identification of gaps between nature protection legislation and the EU Wild Birds Directives, identification, development and advocating for legal measures to address the unsustainable species exploitation in the target countries, data collection and identification of direct and indirect threats on IBAs, establishment of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with some of the main stakeholders which affect the conservation of IBAs, preparation of proposals for designation of new protected areas and followed by advocacy and campaigning.

For more information, please contact Milan Ruzic at milruzic@yahoo.com or visit www.pticevojvodine.rs.
26. Protection areas across borders- learning by visiting

Representatives of Albania, Macedonia, and Kosovo visited protected areas of Czech Republic and Germany eager to learn about best practices and successes in organization and management of protected areas across borders. During the study tour conducted between 6 and 12 of September, a group visited National Park Bavarian Forest, National Park Berchtesgaden and Šumava National Park, examples of modern ways of protected areas management in the European Union. Group learned about management of cross border protected areas including aspects such as community involvement, tourism development, environmental education, visitor management and guidance, and ways to organize the ranger service.

Project reinforces the cross border cooperation of actors involved in the trilateral border region of Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia. This region is characterized by outstanding biodiversity values. It is implemented in close cooperation with BfN (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation) and funded by German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety through The Federal Environment Agency.

For more information, please contact Tomasz Pezold, IUCN SEE at tomasz.pezold@iucn.org

27. After 30 years Imperial Eagle seen in the Deliblato Sands

Serbia: In August 2010 the Imperial Eagle was photographed in the eastern part of the Special Nature Reserve, in the area of Zagajica Hills. Younger bird of prey was noticed in early afternoon taking off the sand dunes covered with steppe vegetation. Areas that kept pristine appearance, pastures, preserve the traditional extensive livestock. The site is Europe’s largest habitat for blind dogs with significant European ground squirrel colonies. Distinctive nutritional base and difficult terrain accessibility, with rare presence of the few people occupied with seasonal agricultural work, enabled the appearance of this magnificent bird.

Identification of the species was confirmed by experts from the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina, Natural History Museum (Belgrade) and an ornithologist Istvan Ham, who has extensively researched this species in a ten-year period, which was regularly nesting in Deliblato sands until 1983. Monitoring of birds of prey throughout the territory SRP “Deliblato sand” and in its broader environment has been intensified after this information, hoping to find evidence that the imperial eagle nests on sandstone again.

For more information, please contact Marius Oldja, JP Vojvodinasume at sgpaplan@banatsume.rs.
28. Mountain Research Initiative

**Romania:** In the frame of the “Mountain Research Initiative” an International Conference was held in August 2010 in Timisoara, gathering participants from more than 15 Balkan countries. The Initiative aims at enhancing interdisciplinary research in mountain regions around the world and more concretely in the Dinaric Alps countries.

Conference objective was to elaborate the “Catalogue of researchers” that would define main topics related to sustainable development of mountain areas in the region. The main themes are: Climate Change Adaptation and Paleoosciences; Sustainable Tourism, Institutions and Mining. Conference participants agreed on the road map related to communication, networking and project development activities to be pursued in the course of the next two years.

For more information, please contact Djana Bejko, REC Country office Albania at dbejko@rec.org.

29. Ecotourism improvement in the Special Nature Reserve Zasavica

**Serbia:** Draft management and development plan for SNR Zasavica is elaborated within the project „Protection and Management of Zasavica Special Nature Reserve as a tool for Sustainable Rural Development“, implemented by the Dutch organisation „Wageningen International“ as a project leader and „Nature Conservation Movement“ from Sremska Mitrovica as a local partner. Project’s objective was to integrate protection and management of the SNR Zasavica and sustainable rural development, particularly the development of sustainable agriculture and tourism.

Part of the project funding was used for improvement of the tourist reception area of the SNR Zasavica at the pasture Valjevac. The “Visitors centre” gate with souvenirs and tickets shop, new lecture facilities and hiking trails with information boards and signs are fully operational and improve the eco tourism in SNR Zasavica.

For more information, please contact Mirjana Bartula, SNR Zasavica at zasavica@zasavica.org.rs.
30. Bird watching weekend in Djerdap

**Serbia:** Organized within the project “Exploration of the state and protection of priority bird species in the National Park Djerdap”, the bird watching weekend held in October 2010 started with presentations and discussions about the Natura 2000 network implementation and different experiences related to birds protection. Representatives of the Veterinary Institute of Kraljevo gave the presentation on bird diseases that can endanger the human’s health. The bird watching was organized in the Little Vrbica in Kladovo.

For more information, please contact Marija Milenkovic-Srbulovic, NP Djerdap at marija@npdjerdap.org.

31. Rio Conventions Project finalized

**Bulgaria:** The primary goal of the UNDP/GEF Rio Conventions Project was to facilitate the integration of global environmental issues and the objectives of the three Rio Conventions (UN Convention on Biodiversity, UN Framework Convention on Biodiversity and UN Convention on Desertification) into Bulgaria’s regional development policies. Final meeting held in October 2010 was attended by representatives from the Parliamentary Environmental Committee, key departments at Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW), Ministry of Environment and Waters (MoEW), UNDP, Sofia University and NGOs. The Rio Conventions Project is the first from a series of projects in SEE and NiS regions in the cross-capacity building area of environmental protection and regional development, funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).

The major results achieved under the project include development of training courses within Sofia University focusing on the implementation of the three Rio Conventions at the different planning levels and training of more than 350 experts from MRDPW, MoEW, district and municipal administrations to apply practical tools and knowledge in their daily work to facilitate meeting the national objectives under the Rio Conventions.

The system of 7 strategic indicators was developed as well, used for monitoring and evaluation of the impact of strategic planning documents on the environment. The prototype GIS application at MRDPW is created, based on the 7 strategic indicators, and the pilot testing done on the update of the District Development Strategy of Plovdiv District.

For further information please contact Nataliya Dimitrova-Popova, UNDP/GEF Rio Convention Project at natalia@rioconventions.org or visit www.rioconventions.org
32. Belgrade - Urban Migration Watchpoint

**Serbia**: Belgrade watchpoint was set on the Usce Tower that overlooks a wooded and protected Big War Island reserve, part of the Confluence of the Rivers Sava and Danube IBA (Important Bird Area). This idea was realized in September 2010 by League for Ornithological Action of Serbia with the support of David Lindo, The Urban Birder and gathered 35 people with a common goal: to watch for migrants.

For further information please contact Dragan Simic, League for Ornithological Action of Serbia at birdingserbia@gmail.com.
1. Adriatic flyway – closing the gap in bird conservation

EuroNatur has published Proceedings of the Adriatic Flyway four year project showcasing that the Adriatic Flyway running along the east coast of the Adriatic Sea is a very important corridor for birds migrating between Eastern Europe and North and sub-Saharan Africa. There are still several obstacles to be overcome, but the project fieldwork demonstrated once again the outstanding value of priority sites and wetlands in the region for nature conservation. Based on project results, and with the help of NGO’s (including hunting NGO’s) and governments in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro, much progress has been made and will be made in future.

Many indicators show that the Adriatic Flyway Project contributed to improvement of protected areas network along the Adriatic East Coast and its hinterland. A great boost to this end was provided through results of bird monitoring and habitat mapping that have taken place in the countries participating in the project. Monitoring and mapping confirmed the outstanding value of the priority sites and wetlands for nature conservation in the region. Results of this work partly supported several important changes in national legislation for the protection of birds and habitats. These changes have the potential to exert very positive long-term impacts if properly implemented.

For more information, contact M.Schneider-Jacoby, EuroNatur at Martin.Schneider-Jacoby@euronatur.org or visit http://www.euronatur.org/Facts-and-Figures.936.0.html

2. Europe’s ecological backbone: recognising the true value of our mountains

Europe’s mountain areas have social, economic and environmental capital of significance for the entire continent. This importance has been recognised since the late 19th century through national legislation; since the 1970s through regional structures for cooperation; and since the 1990s through regional legal instruments for the Alps and Carpathians. The European Union (EU) first recognised the specific characteristics of mountain areas in 1975 through the designation of Less Favoured Areas (LFAs). During the last decade, EU cohesion policy and the Treaty of Lisbon have both focused specifically on mountains.

The publication recently published by European Environment Agency examines social, economic and environmental aspects of European Mountains. It can be downloaded from: http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/europes-ecological-backbone
3. Portal launch: Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE)

The Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE) is a single entry point for data and information on biodiversity in the EU. Bringing together facts and figures on biodiversity and ecosystem services, it links to related policies, environmental data centres, assessments and research findings from various sources. It is being developed to strengthen the knowledge base and support decision-making on biodiversity.

BISE is a partnership between the European Commission (DG Environment, Joint Research Centre and Eurostat) and the European Environment Agency. It incorporates the network of the European Clearing House Mechanism within the context of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

To access the portal please visit: http://biodiversity.europa.eu/

4. Sustainable management of wild plant resources

Worldwide application of a new standard for sustainable harvesting of wild medicinal, aromatic, dye and food plants and trees is charting new ways to protect the species and their habitats and benefit the communities that depend on them, according to a new report from world wildlife trade monitoring network, TRAFFIC. “Wild for a cure” details projects ranging from South America to Southern Africa and South-East Asia where new methods were devised to protect key natural resources from the wild while improving the livelihoods and benefits for local people through application of guidelines on sustainable wild collection.

Among other five projects components, the FairWild Standard was implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A sustainable harvesting scheme for the collection of Wild Garlic Allium ursinum in the Vlasenica region was devised to demonstrate the flexibility and application of the sustainability criteria for a non-threatened species. The project team drew up the Vlasenica Allium ursinum Management Plan (VAMP) and these experiences will now help private companies and the government authorities in extending the scheme to threatened species in the region such as Yellow Gentian Gentiana lutea, Smilj or Immortelle Helichrysum italicum and Bearberry Arctostaphylos uva-ursi. The VAMP commits to improved collection practice, amending licensing procedures, supervision of collecting to prevent illegal harvest and development of a monitoring system. TRAFFIC also contributed to the development of a ‘Rulebook of Conditions for Utilization and the Methods of Collection of Other Forest Products’, the legislation governing collection of wild products from forest in the Republica Srpska – entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The report was prepared under a ‘Saving Plants that Save Lives and Livelihoods’ Project supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is available under Wild for a cure: ground-truthing a standard for sustainable management of wild plants in the field.

For more information, contact: Anastasiya Timoshyna, TRAFFIC Anastasiya.timoshyna@wwf.hu or visit www.fairwild.org.
5. “Birds and wind power, conflict or coexistence”

Center for Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro (CZIP) has published a monograph “Birds and wind power, conflict or coexistence” in light of the announcement of construction of windpaks on Mozur and Krnovo, in Montenegro. The publication focuses on: renewable energy, wind energy, wind power, and reviews the impact windparks have on the environment: risk of collision, sensitivity index of certain predators to the presence of windmills, habitats loss and modification, effect of barrier, noise, negative impact on the sea bottom, degradation of landscapes and impact on bats.

Monograph is a useful guide through the benefits and risks of windfarms construction, and gives special focus on proper planning combined with all the necessary research and prior assessment of the possible impact on birds and bats.

For more information please contact Bjanka Prakljacic, Center for Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro at bjanka.czip@t-com.me.

6. TB eNEWS – 2nd issue online

The 2nd issue of electronic newsletter dedicated to all aspects of transboundary conservation worldwide is available online on the website www.tbpa.net. It is prepared by IUCN WCPA Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group.

For more information please contact Maja Vasilijevic, Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group at maja.vasilijevic1@gmail.com.
1. NatuRegio: vocational training programme for SEE experts

NatuRegio offers a vocational training programme for young professionals (not older than 40 years) working with Floodplain/Wetland/Aquatic Ecosystem and Protected Areas Management in the Central and Lower Danube River Basin (Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine).

The trainees will pass a vocational training programme dealing with latest issues of nature conservation and regional development in river basins with additional focus on professional skills like project management and international communication. The programme is constituted as a five week (2 May – 4 June 2011) seminar in Germany at 5 different sites at the river systems of Elbe, Danube and Rhine and a “Cross Border Workshop” (11 - 15 July 2011) at the Danube. The trainees will develop projects for their home countries which will be implemented in 4-5 months subsequent to the “Cross border Workshop” by the trainees, supported by an international project team. All necessary travel costs and the costs during the stay in Germany and the Cross-Border-Workshop as well as the project funding are covered by the programme. Deadline for application is 31 January 2011.

Please find detailed information and the application form on our website: www.naturegio.nna.de. or contact the project co-ordinator Dr. Martina Meeske: naturegio@nna.niedersachsen.de.
Guidelines for contributing to the IUCN SEE e-bulletin

IUCN welcomes articles in which you report on the activities related to transboundary cooperation in protected areas and biodiversity conservation. Please inform the public on the status of your projects and actions, as well as events that you attended. You are welcome to announce new meetings and workshops and briefly report on new publications and announce funding opportunities. Please send a photo to accompany your article if appropriate and indicate your email and/or weblink for further reference.

The articles should be 150-250 words in length. Please note this as the interest to distribute news articles through the bulletin is extremely high and we are trying to secure space for all of you to contribute.
You are responsible for any content that you post or transmit. The editors reserve the right to shorten and modify the text if necessary.

Thanks for taking these guidelines into consideration!

All contributions should be sent to Aleksandra Nesic, aleksandra.nesic@iucn.org.

Regional Office for Pan-Europe

Regional Office for Pan-Europe (ROfE) is a Regional Office of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature). Along with offices and commissions around the world, it links back to the President, Director General and Council of IUCN. For a history of IUCN and an explanation of the global structure please visit www.iucn.org.

IUCN’s Pan-European Region covers the whole of Europe and North and Central Asia. Four offices located in Brussels, Belgrade, Gland and Tbilisi deliver IUCN’s Pan-European Programme, supported by the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation in Malaga. Together we strive to meet our goals for a sustainable Europe by using local expertise and the strength of the global IUCN network.

Pan-European Mission

“To foster and fortify a European network of excellence in environmental research, policy and best practice, with the aim to contribute to IUCN’s global mission, support the integration of biodiversity conservation into economic development and to support innovative initiatives for the multifunctional, sustainable use of natural resources.”