



CARPATHIAN ECOREGION INITIATIVE

CERI

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CERI – is a coalition of NGOs and research institutes working toward a common vision for conservation and sustainable development of the Carpathians.

Photo B. & C. Promberger

Save Carpathians Together!

Newsletter

Produced by CERI for those who worry and want to act.

Development of a Carpathian Ecological Network

hot item

Strengthening the capacities of the Carpathian Eco-Region Network (CERI) to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention

By Anna Guttova (Local Project Manager) & Henk Zingstra (International Project Manager)

The Carpathians exhibit complex geology, magnificent scenery, vast tracks of forests and meadows, and a wealth of natural biodiversity unparalleled in Europe. One significant mani-

festation of this is extensive high grasslands and meadows created by clearing upper level forests for sheep grazing since about the 15th century.



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Photo B. & C. Promberger

Since 1991 the political, social and economic changes have added various threats to the rich landscape and biodiversity of the Carpathians. This includes the re-privatization of the land to the original owners, changes in agriculture including land abandonment on the one hand and intensification on the other hand, intensification of forestry practices and uncontrolled development of tourism.

As a result of the extension of the EU in 2004, a new threat was added – formation of a new distinguished border that cuts the Carpathians into two, both politically ecologically, preventing co-ordinated transboundary management of the unique biodiversity of the Carpathians.

Long-term protection and management of the natural resources of the Carpathians in a sustainable way cannot be achieved by each individual country on its own and requires trans national cooperation. This trans national cooperation on the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians is also of great importance in the context of the 'Environment for Europe' process.

Having this in mind, Wageningen International (NL), CERi, WWF-DCP (A), Bio/consult (DK) and DAPHNE – Institute of Applied Ecology (SK) joined forces to design and submit a project proposal that aims to develop a transboundary ecological network linking hotspots for biodiversity across the Carpathians. The project was recently approved and funded by the Dutch government under the BBI-Matra Program. Wageningen International holds the overall responsibility for the project implementation while CERi will act as Local Project Implementation organization. Partners in the project are Alterra (NL), DAPHNE – Institute of Applied Ecology (SK), ECNC (NL), Orbicon (DK), WWF-DCP (A) and Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention. The implementation process started in April 2006 and the project will last three years. Due to the conditions

set by the Dutch government, the project will focus primarily on non-EU members of the Carpathians; Ukraine, Romania and Serbia but will not be limited to these countries.

The project also aims to strengthen the capacities of the CERi to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention.

The proposed results include

- A joint Carpathian Biodiversity Information System
- Concept for the Carpathian Ecological Network based on an analysis of existing protected areas, (p)SCIs and SPAs and other priority areas linked through a network of ecological corridors, taking into account the requirements of the Habitats and Birds Directives, the CBD and the Pan European Ecological Network
- Strengthened organisational structure and capacities of the CERi to support the implementation of the Carpathian Convention and to design, implement and monitor sustainable development in the Carpathians
- Enhanced capacity of the NGOs in the Ukraine, Romania and Serbia, which are involved in development of ecological network, and the implementation of relevant Directives and agreements. (Natura 2000, Emerald, PEEN)

To achieve the above mentioned results a great variety of activities will be carried out in close co-operation with the CERi members in the three focal countries. Based on an analysis of the training needs a number of trainings and workshops will be organised. DAPHNE will continue to improve the existing data base to develop the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System, which will require significant input from experts in the focal countries. This data base will be used for the design of the

Carpathian Ecological Network. This work will be headed by WWF-DCP. In addition, the CERI secretariat will supervise activities aimed to strengthen the organizational structure and capacities of the CERI network.

Who is who

A Project Management Team responsible for the day-to-day management consists of the following people:

- Henk Zingstra – International Programme Manager (henk.zingstra@wur.nl)
- Anna Guttova – Local Programme Manager (guttova@changenet.sk)
- Jan Seffer – Local Programme Director, Chair of the Work Group for development of Biodiversity Information System (jansef@changenet.sk)
- Karina Kitnaes – Chair of the Work Group for training in principles and techniques of N 2000 implementation, responsible forestry and ecological network designing (ksk@bioconsult.dk)
- Mike Baltzer – Chair of the Work Group for Ecological Network Development (mbaltzer@wwfdcp.org)
- Monika Chrenkova – Chair of the Work Group for capacity building of the CERI (ceri@changenet.sk)

The Project Steering Committee will guide the implementation process to make sure that the outcomes of the project are taken on board by respective government authorities. Members of the Steering Committee are Harald Egerer – Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, The National Focal Points of the Carpathian Convention, and the International Project Manager, Local Project Director, Local Project Manager, a representative of

WWF-DCP and a representative of the European Centre for Nature Conservation.

What has been done so far

The experts for the Work Group for the Carpathian Biodiversity Information System were identified in Ukraine. Identification of experts ongoing in Serbia and Romania. The method for data collection and processing has been leaving enough space for the ecological network experts' suggestions.

A core of the Work Group for Development of the Carpathian Ecological Network have met and discussed the methodology and procedure, which will be used to design the ecological network. Members from the CERI countries will be nominated after there is more clarity about the required expertise.

The Training Needs Assessment is being prepared and will be discussed at the CERI General Assembly in November 2006.

The Work Group for Capacity Building is working on identification of threats and obstacles for sustainable development of the Carpathian Ecoregion and on elaboration of the strategy for enhancing sustainable development in the Carpathians and the proposed role of CERI.

The project is open to all CERI members or potential members who wish to contribute to the process of designing the network and supporting sustainable development of the Carpathians. ■

For more information:

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Photo B. & C. Pomberger

The Golden Eagle is Back in the Beskydy Mountains

By Petr Orel, Bartosovice Animal Rescue Center, Czech Republic (csopnj@applet.cz)



Golden Eagle on feeding site in Beskydy.
Photo: P. Colas

The idea to bring back the Golden Eagle to the Czech Republic has been nourished in the heads of its promoters for a couple dozen years. The first steps such as research of historical data on eagles occurrence in the country were made in mid nineties. The work on reintroduction project started in 2000.

The Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) is a critically endangered species in the Czech Republic and indeed it is protected by the Bird Directive of the EU. Golden Eagle is a beautiful and kingly bird with a two-meter wing span. Its weight in the Carpathian popu-

lation varies between 2,5 and 4,5 kg. Males are usually of 1/3 smaller than females. Adults live in permanent pairs and built their nests on rocky cliffs or on trees. The female usually lays 2 eggs but only one chick survives. The younger nestling dies because of „cainism“, when the stronger one either kills the younger or pushes it to the edge of the nest where it dies of cold.

This flagship species is very adaptive in terms of its prey. Frogs, slow-worms or animals up to the size of a fox can be found in its diet. It is a very conservative species in terms of its place of birth, which it is very strongly attached to. This fact has been the major importance in implementation of the reintroduction project that started with releasing the birds in 2006 and will continue in the following five years in the Beskydy Mountains. The young birds must be „born“ in Beskydy and accept this place as their place of birth.

The golden eagle has not been nesting on the territory of the Czech Republic for more than 100 years and few nesting pairs were pushed away by man. And this is another reason why we have decided to start with this project, it is a moral and ethical issue. This bird of prey on the top of the food web is missing in Beskydy ecosystems and its comeback can support the equilibrium status of all habitats.

The nearest wild population of Golden Eagles is only 30 km away in Slovakia. The first four nestlings were brought into Beskydy from Slovakia in May 2006. Three females „Cecilka“, „Anca“, „Babka“ and a male



A 30 day old nestling of Golden Eagle.
Photo: P. Orel

„David“ were reared and adopted by a female Golden Eagle „Dina“. She has been in captivity since 1977, when she was cured after injury from a smooth-bore shotgun. After 33 years she finally got her first nestlings and reared them as her own ones perfectly.

When the juveniles were 60 days old, they were transported from the Animal Rescue Center Bartosovice to a releasing aviary (10×8×4 m) on the edge of the Beskydy Mountains. The young birds were released to nature after a month. They have been in the wild for two and half months now. They fly perfectly and their fear of man is ever increasing. They are still being fed though. Their current development is comparable to their counterparts reared in the wild. All the eagles have radio-telemetric devices, so their movement can be monitored for around 4-5 years. In addition, they also have rings and microchips, and their blood samples were taken for DNA analysis.

Very promising is the fact that a wild two to three-year-old male has been seen in the area for a couple of months and is in the contact with released birds. Perhaps the birds released are the reason for his presence in the area. This can be very significant for the future development of the project.

Reintroduction of Golden Eagles will continue until 2010. Four to five birds will be released each year. These eagles are being given to the Czech Republic as a gift from the Slovakian State Nature Conservancy. An awareness raising campaign is an integral part of the project and we hope that it will result not only in protection of eagles but also in protection of large carnivores and the entire protection of Beskydy Mountains and surroundings.

The project is organized by a local branch of the Czech Union for Nature Conservation from Novy Jicin



Golden Eagles 5 days after release in Beskydy.
Photo: P. Orel

that operates the Animal Rescue Center in Bartosovice. The Government Agency for Nature Conservation – Protected Landscape Area of Beskydy, Zoological Garden Ostrava, State Forest company from Frenstat pod Radhostem and web server Aktualne.cz as well Czech TV Ostrava are participating in this project.

The implementation of the project has become possible only thanks to understanding and close cooperation with colleagues from Slovakia, the world experts on this species. Slovakia has a detail conservation strategy for the Golden Eagle. A lot of useful experience was also obtained from Irish colleagues, where similar project has been successfully implemented since 2001. ■

Database of biodiversity of Carpathian Serbia is completed

from venues

By Jovan Angelus, 'Ecolibri-Bionet'. Serbia

When the state and the authorities have difficulties in implementation of some international conventions, some expert NGOs offer their help to complete the job. In case of implementation of the Carpathian convention, which Serbia signed at the 5th Pan European Ministry Convention in Kiev in 2003, a role belongs key to the Agency for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development 'Ecolibri-Bionet'.

At the suggestion of the former Ministry for Environment Conservation, a very limited area of the national park 'Djerdap' on the right Serbian bank of the Danube, was included into Carpathian slopes in Serbia without any expert analysis. At the same time a major part of the Eastern Serbia was not included, for no apparent reason, although that area, except for Stara Mountain, belongs to the slopes of the Carpathians by its geological and tectonic composition, which can be seen in expert geological maps. Therefore, the 'Ecolibri-Bionet' hired Professor Dušan Gavrilović, D.Sc. and his associates to develop a scientific ex-

pertise of the real boundaries of the Carpathian Serbia. The expertise confirmed what our geographers and geologists already knew: the real boundaries of the Carpathians in Serbia occupy the area ten times the size of the area designated by the government experts to be included in the convention.

Possibly influenced by the above mentioned research, the Ministry of Science and Environment Conservation of the Republic of Serbia has recently announced an open competition for defining of the boundaries of the Carpathian Serbia as a part of the preparation for the ratification of the Carpathian convention.

This was the first important step of Serbia towards the Carpathian Ecoregional Initiative (CERI). The government of Slovakia and a Canadian foundation CIDA supported and helped the first Carpathian project in Serbia called 'Support for developing capacities for the implementation of Ramsar and Carpathian Conventions in Serbia.

Thanks to this support and with the expert help of the Institute for applied ecology DAPHNE from Bratislava and our biological scientists, during the last two years the Agency 'Ecolibri-Bionet' compiled the first contemporary database of the biodiversity of the Carpathian Serbia

The database contains information about the legal framework of environment conservation, types of habitations, vegetation, plant species, main groups of animals, forest management, agricultural development, about potentials for the development of hunting and fishing, about existing capacities for the development of tourism and recreation, about water management, industrial and transport infrastructure, about factors and maps.

After it was checked and evaluated according to the internationally defined technology, this information system of the Carpathian Serbia became an integral part of the joint database of the countries of CERI, which is based in the Institute for applied ecology DAPHNE in Bratislava. In this way Serbia has formally started applying the Carpathian convention and made its contribution to European efforts to protect



biological and cultural diversity of the Carpathian Mountains.

The project results got national and international recognition from all participants of the final workshop of the project 'Support and development of capacities for the implementation of Ramsar and the Carpathian Conventions in Serbia' (19. 9. 2006, Belgrade). ■

The Green Carpathians Coalition – Poland

By Monika Ochwat, Ekopsychology Assotiation, co-ordinator of the Polish part of the ANPED project to support public participation in the implementation of the Carpathian Convention.

Polish organisations were involved in the Carpathian Ecoregion Initiative process from the very beginning. Since the 1990s they have undertaken a number of projects in order to integrate all stakeholders around joint activities in the Carpathian region. The most successful of those projects were the Carpathian Memorial and Mountain Area Memorial.

However, it is obvious that all these activities need to be coordinated. Therefore, it was decided to establish a coalition of organisations working actively for protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians. The Koalicja „Zielone Karpaty / Green Carpathians Coalition“ was started in 2006. The informal „Green Carpathians Initiative Group“, which

consists of such NGO's as the Polish Ecological Club, the Environmental Partnership Foundation, the League for Protection of Nature, and the Polish Society for the Development of Mountain Areas (2004), comprises the core of the coalition. Over all, the coalition has twenty-six active members so far.

In 2006 the League for Protection of Nature was successful in securing a grant from the EU Phare Co-operation Fund to support a programme of activities, aimed to develop and strengthen the Green Carpathians Coalition. As a result, members of the coalition set up working groups and held numerous training sessions, meetings and consultations that reached over a hundred of organizations at different levels and involved people with a wide range of interests, including schools and farmer groups.

Future activities of the coalition will be focused around the following areas: promoting the Carpathian Identity, securing social protection of local natural sites, designing eco-and cultural trails in model villages, supporting cultural heritage sites, developing agro-tourism, educating the public about the region, promoting regional products, establishing the Carpathian university – a research and study programme for the history, culture, skills of the Carpathians.

A long-term objective is to bring about the signing of an agreement on the sustainable development and protection of the Carpathians. Initially, the signatories of the Agreement will be the Carpathian Marshal Offices (of the Małopolska province, Podkarpackie province and Silesian province), the Ministry of



Consultations „Future of Carpathians“, Jeleśnia

Panel Expert, Krakow. From right Rafał Serafin (Polish Environmental Partnerships Found – CERI Focal Point in Poland), Pam Mc'Carthy (Northern Alliance for Suitability), Bożena Haczek (Ministry of Environment, Carpathian Convention Focal Point in Poland)



from venues

Environment, the National Fund for Environmental Protection and the Water Management and Provincial Funds for Environmental Protection and Water Management. Other interested organisations and institutions will join the agreement at a later stage.

The League for the Protection of Nature has received funding from the Polish GEF Small Grant Program-

me to co-ordinate a small grants scheme for local communities to develop local projects under the aim „Future of the Carpathians'. It is open to all eligible organisations within the Carpathian region and is expected to boost activities within the Zielone Karpaty Koalicja. ■

News from the Working Groups

Environmental Policy and Rural Development WG

By Nenad Robajac, the WG coordinator

The location and value of the Carpathians are well known among the CERI members.

We can do nothing about the location but what can we do to preserve the value of these mountains? Do we know all values and threats? If we know that, is it enough? Is it enough that only we know of those values or threats? Who else can help us to protect the nature and improve life in the Carpathians but ourselves? What should be CERI's role among governments, business sector and Carpathian people? What should be and what is our strength? There are many questions to answer, aren't there?

The Environmental Policy and Rural Development Working Group (EPRDWG) tries to find answers to those questions. We will develop our strategy and try to find tools to involve all stakeholders in process of conservation and sustainable development in the Carpathian Mountains.

Everybody's ideas and help are welcome!

Tourism WG

By Hildegard Meyer, the WG coordinator

The CERI Tourism WG has recently been established to support high quality tourism with special focus on ecotourism in the Carpathians, which has an enormous potential to bring together nature conservation and rural development. The working group consists of 13 people representing the CERI members from all over the Carpathians.

At the first workshop held on October 2-3 this year, not only members of the CERI Tourism WG, but also interested people working in the field of ecotourism or in Protected Area Authorities, came together to actually set up the group and discuss future plans. Beside finalizing formalities (Terms of Reference, work plan for 2006/07 and budget for 2006) and finding clear definitions for tourism/sustainable tourism/ecotourism, the group elaborated a list of threats and obstacles for sustainable development in terms of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians. The list will provide a basis for a fact sheet series. Furthermore, the CERI Tourism Group agreed to develop a Carpathian-wide ecotourism project, which

will be its major task for the near future and will help to strengthen the 'Corporate Identity' within the Carpathians.

Education for sustainable development WG

By Miroslav Tadic, the WG coordinator, Ecological Society ENDEMIT, Serbia

CERI members from Poland, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia adopted the Program for education for sustainable development in the Carpathian EcoRegion at the seminar held in Belgrade. The participants also agreed on the content of the Workbook which will be used for implementation of this Program.

The program will be implemented, mainly by NGOs, through seminars in the local communities of the Carpathian EcoRegion and will be focused at the local stakeholders representatives primarily (local government officials, journalists, teachers, industry and business representatives, other NGO representatives etc). Later on, when the Program is well established in local communities, it will be possible to hold seminars for specific, smaller target groups. Resources provided by leading implementing NGOs as well as local communities, will make it possible to hold seminars for pupils and students.

Final version of the Program will be distributed among CERI members shortly.

Communication WG

By Tamara Malkova, the WG coordinator, Green Dossier, Ukraine

We may underline the first outcomes of the Communication WG activity. Some of them are very positive, some raised more questions than we are ready to answer today:

- we prepare our Newsletter together – this way of communication between CERI members is effective;
- we provide discussions on different points through the mailing list – this approach proves to be correct;
- not all of CERI members send information to the Newsletter – this means they are not interested.



Coming events

- **First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention.**
Monday, 11 December – Wednesday, 13 December 2006
Kyiv, Ukraine
- **Side events: Carpathian Eco-Region Initiative (CERI) (including BBI-Matra Project Development of an Ecological Network for the Carpathians 1st Steering Committee meeting).**
11 December, 13:30 – 15:00

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We need to know why and what we can do to get them involved;

- the Newsletter goes outside CERI, but how far? And what should we do to activate dissemination of our information and opinions?

Our next task is to build a communication strategy, which will be based on this experience. The discussion on this issue is going on at the GA.

Management Planning WG

*By Milan Janak, the WG coordinator,
DAPHNE, Slovakia*

Preserving biodiversity nearly always means balancing the conservation requirements of species and/or habitats with socio-economic use and development. This process, which can be generally regarded as nature resource management, certainly needs serious planning. It should include analysis and evaluation of relevant natural and socio-economic features. As it is usually undertaken for specific site(s), result of such planning is the site management plan. There are a lot of approaches how to undertake management planning. However, the nature does not respect administrative borders nor local planning peculiarities, e.g. the wolf in the Western Carpathians does not care much about either. So it is up to humans to secure comparable and favourable conditions for the wolf in the entire Carpathians.

To promote development of common management planning approaches and provide platform for exchange of knowledge the Management Planning Working Group is being recently established within CERI. It currently includes experts from Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine, but it is open to all Carpathian countries to contribute to envisaged goals. The first meeting of the MPWG will take place during the CERI General Assembly on 20th – 21st November 2006 in Poprad, Slovakia. The first MPWG meeting will discuss national management planning approaches in the Carpathian countries, experience and expertise in management planning within CERI, identify obstacles for the conservation of the Carpathians resulting from management planning and formulate principles and plan for development of a common management approach for the Carpathians.

Biodiversity WG

*By Vasyl Pokynchereda,
„Carpaty” Eco-club, Rakhiv, Ukraine*

Currently the Biodiversity Working Group (BDWG) includes 21 people, which represent 19 organisations from 7 Carpathian countries and WWF-DCP. The main objective of BDWG is creation of an active International network of CERI members, which will liaise in the areas of conservation, renovation and sustainable use of the Carpathian biodiversity.

Conservation of endangered, endemic and relict species of the Carpathian flora and fauna, large carnivores in particular; contribution to formation of the eco-network in the Carpathians, development of the protected areas network in the Carpathian region and to implementation of the Carpathian Convention, namely to Article 4: Conservation and sustainable use of biological and landscape diversity are among the group's major tasks. In the context of Carpathian Convention, an important task of BDWG is to participate in implementation of the Biodiversity Protocol. The working group will also use appropriate achievements of former CEI, which will be adapted to present conditions.

Biodiversity Information System WG

*By Jan Seffer, the WG coordinator,
DAPHNE, Slovakia*

Development of Carpathian Biodiversity Information System (CBIS) will be based on existing biodiversity data in Carpathian countries which can be in database format (minor amount) and in published or non-published information sources. They will be sent to Central Database/GIS (CD-GIS) and stored in appropriate format. Structure of fields in CD will be restricted to minimal necessary content – crucial information is name (species or habitat), date, location and source of data.

Information threshold on location is orographical unit as it was used for identification of Carpathian biodiversity important areas, more precise information on locality of species/habitat (coordinates, point, lines, polygons) will be asked to have one per priority species and habitats and orographical unit. Additional spatial information linked to CD from national and/or international sources (CORINE Landcover, DTM, satellite images, etc.) will be used for data analyses and mapping outputs.

Clearing house mechanism will be developed to facilitate scientific and technical cooperation both nationally and internationally. The clearing house will gain information from CD-GIS. Full access to information will be available to organisations which will significantly contribute to CD-GIS, CERI members and nature conservation organisations. Other clients and public will have access to aggregated data information.

Organisation of data collection will be based on organizations with relevant experience and capacity in the particular Carpathian country. Capacity of CERI members to manage database/GIS will be improved through trainings organised by DAPHNE. CD-GIS will be established in DAPHNE based on already built partial databases and available GIS layers. Methodologies and software environment for data transformation, controls and analyses will be created. Duration of activities will be during whole project span, but establishment of initial CD-GIS linked to clearing house will be finished until end of 2007 ■