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*STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL HABITATS
(CDPE)*

Group of Specialists on Protected Areas

Strasbourg, 1 - 4 February 1993

*ORDESA AND MONTE PERDIDO NATIONAL PARK
(SPAIN)*

RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

Expert Report

by

Dr. Charles STAUFFER

A representative of the Secretariat accompanied the expert on his inspection of the park. His comments appear in item 6.

Appendix I contains Resolution (88) 9, awarding the European Diploma. Appendix II contains a draft resolution drawn up by the Secretariat for a possible renewal in 1993.

ORDESA AND MONTE PERDIDO NATIONAL PARK

1. GENERAL REMARKS

Document No. 27, drawn up on the award of the European Diploma in 1988, gives a precise overview of the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park.

Since the European Diploma awarded on 13 June 1988 is scheduled for renewal in 1993, the Council of Europe's Directorate of Environment and Local Authorities has asked me to carry out an on-the-spot appraisal to ascertain whether the recommendations on the following points in Resolution (88) 9 have been implemented:

1. Research

1.1 The Park should be run as a reserve for the conservation of a number of endemic, rare or endangered species. Lists should be made at the earliest opportunity of the species of flora and fauna in the park, particularly cavernicolous fauna, their critical biotopes located and a detailed vegetation map drawn. The latter operation should be carried out jointly with the French Western Pyrenees Park, so that a map can be established on the same bases for the whole of the protected area;

1.2 Particular heed ought to be paid to the need for urgent and thorough research into the reasons behind the stagnation in the population of ibex Caprapyrenaica pyrenaica, those in the park being all that are left. Any contact with similar sub-species should be avoided;

2. Management plan

The master plan on use and management (Plan Rector de Uso y Gestión) should be officially adopted as soon as possible. A genuine management plan should also be worked out on the basis of a vegetation map. It should describe the existing ecological conditions of each type of vegetation and each zone, possible threats and the management measures which might prove necessary;

3. Offences

National laws ought to be revised so as to create a special category for offences committed within national parks; wardens' powers ought also to be clearly defined;

4. Peripheral area and zone of influence

4.1 The Autonomous Community of Aragon should consider setting up a regional nature park around the central area in the existing zone of influence and the national

hunting reserve, which would constitute a very useful buffer zone;

4.2 Payments to municipalities in the zone of influence ought to be continued and, as far as possible, stepped up;

5. Tourism

5.1 The capacity of the car park at la Pradera must be gradually reduced and car parks created close to other access points, but outside the park. The restaurant and kiosk at la Pradera should be resited outside the park;

5.2 The tarmac road to San Urbez, which follows the Anisclo Canyon, should be closed to cars as soon as possible and fragile habitats closed to the public;

5.3 Information for visitors ought to be improved through the setting up of a museum and information centre in the former parador;

6. Infrastructure

The building of a road or railway through or on the fringes of the park might place a question mark over the award of the European Diploma;

7. Co-operation with the Western Pyrenees National Park in France

Consultations should be opened between Spain and France under the Council of Europe's auspices, with a view to determining the legal basis and practical arrangements for co-operation between the two parks, and the form which a joint body to manage the whole of the protected area could take.

2. THE EXPERT ASSESSMENT

I inspected the park on 12 and 13 August 1993 in the company of Mr J P RIBAUT, the Head of the Council of Europe's Environment Conservation and Management Division.

We were received on the evening of 11 August by Mr Ricardo PASCUAL, the Park Director, and Mr Luis MARQUINA, the Park's Head of Nature Conservation.

That evening, after preliminary acquaintance with the area, we met Mr Santiago MARRACO, the Director of the ICONA (Institute for Nature Conservation) in Madrid, Mr Fernandez de TEJADA, also from the ICONA in Madrid, Mr Ignacio RIVEROLA, in charge of the ICONA in HUESCA province (Aragon) and Mr Basilio RADA, the Deputy Director of the Park.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped to make this appraisal operation run so smoothly.

The above-named team accompanied us throughout the assessment operation. They were joined by various Park officials and, on the second day, by Michel BOUVIER, Director of the Pyrenees National Park (France) and Dominique TRIBOT, who is in charge of Public Relations at this same Park.

We were therefore able to establish that there are close links between those working in the two parks, and that Mr MARQUINA and Mr TRIBOT seem to know each other very well.

Since the award of the European Diploma, a charter on co-operation has been drawn up and there have been a certain number of joint actions, as required by Resolution (88) 9. For example, representatives of neighbouring parks attend each Management Board meeting, although they naturally have no voting rights.

The programme, drawn up by Mr Ricardo PASCUAL and admirably timed, was as follows:

12 August 1992 - morning, Ordesa valley

Future visitors' centre, showing of a film in the reception hall, visit of the parking areas and alterations currently being made.

Climbing the SIERRA DE LAS GUTAS, view over the Canyon.

Meeting with the Mayor of FANLO.

12 August 1992 - afternoon,

Visit to the ANISCLO Canyon, and, in the evening, visit to the old town of AINSA.

13 August 1992 - morning

Walk along the path from PUYARRUEGO to BUERBA.

Tour of the mountain information centre at TELLA.

13 August 1992 - afternoon

Visit to the PINETA valley.

Around 6pm, press conference with the provincial media and meeting with the mayors, of FANLO, TELLA and TORLA.

3. MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DIPLOMA-HOLDING PARK

The Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park is one of Spain's 9 National Parks.

The Ordesa National Park was created by royal decree on 16 August 1918. It was subsequently reclassified under Law 52/1982 of 13 July under the new name of the Ordesa and

Monte Perdido National Park and its surface area increased from 2,100 to 15,608 hectares.

Its zone of influence includes land belonging to the districts of Torla, Broto, Fanio, Tella Sin and Bielsa.

It has great geographical unity. It is dominated by Mount Perdido, the highest calcareous massif in Europe, from which the Ordesa, Niscle, Escuain, and Pineta valleys branch down, carved respectively by the Arrazas, Bellos, Yaga and Cinca torrents.

Its high altitude and escarpments are the result of a complicated geological and morphological history and a rigorous climate.

The park is under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which works directly with the ICONA, and its administrative offices are at HUESCA.

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THE COURSE OF THE APPRAISAL

(Analysis of the various recommendations)

4.1 Research

The research programme is laid down in a framework agreement with the CSIC Higher Council for Scientific Research).

Three programmes have been set up:

Vegetation map: The methodology for this programme is still at the co-ordination stage. The surveys have been carried out, but one question remains to be resolved: should the map include potential developments or only the existing situation. The first contracts have been drawn up.

Ibex: A programme of genetic research has been started with trials on a more common sub-species so as to perfect future in-vitro breeding programmes using domestic goats as an "intermediary host"; creation of a semi-liberty enclosure and, when this is successful, reintroduction into the park.

Expert's comment: This research gives a hope of saving this sub-species which, in my view, has been left to evolve naturally for too long.

Competition for food with other herbivores (chamois) is becoming more and more intense.

Whereas ibex push out chamois in other parks, it seems that the reverse is true in this case, and this is a clear indication of the weakness of this population.

The development of the ibex is not helped by the fact that a well-used path runs close to their sanctuary. They are obliged to take refuge in a wooded area, which is not necessarily their preferred habitat, and it is possible that this indirect lack of light might be at the root of a hormonal imbalance causing a drop in fertility in this population.

Cavernicolous fauna: Research into this fauna is being carried out by means of permits to speleologists, who are required to include a geologist and a biologist in their teams to catalogue the fauna in the caverns which are explored and to complement this study with a geomorphological map. Once explored, the caverns are fenced off to prevent access.

Expert's comments: This ingenious system enables the park to maintain its authority over this sport for which the possibilities in this region are vast.

Study on the intensity of grazing: The need to maintain traditional activities such as grazing within the park has led to the setting up of a study to determine an optimal level of grazing which will avoid both overgrazing (and the attendant destruction of the pasture) and undergrazing (facilitating the growth of woody vegetation and hence progressive afforestation and an increased risk of forest fires).

4.2 Management Plan (master plan)

It proved extremely difficult to get the plan off the ground. There were various stages:

- informing all the elected representatives,
- carrying out a one-month public interest survey,
- making adjustments following the comments of the commissioner of enquiry,
- submitting a proposal for approval at the end of 1992.

The plan will be in force for 4 years, with a possibility of an extension of 2 years, after which the same process will be repeated.

4.3 Offences

The large number of offences (908) indicates two things:

1. The effective presence of wardens
2. The large number of visitors.

90% of the offences concern parking problems, 6% concern unauthorised camping.

The parking problem in the Ordesa and Aniclo Canyons can be solved by altering infrastructures, but this is not so in

the case of unauthorised camping, which is mainly carried out by experienced walkers on long expeditions.

Expert's comment: This offence might be controlled by demarcating several carefully chosen campsites, to supplement those which are already "tolerated".

5. PERIPHERAL AREA AND ZONE OF INFLUENCE

The peripheral area set up as a national hunting reserve runs right round the park apart from an area to the South on either side of the ANISCLO Canyon.

The zone of influence extends a long way beyond the peripheral area. The activities of the Autonomous Community of Aragon, which is trying to invigorate this sector so as both to maintain traditional agricultural and craft activities and to promote the development of tourism, now a major element of the local economy and the source of a number of jobs, have had a tangible impact.

The opening up of the villages was relatively late in coming. The local forestry administration established a network of access roads to these villages, but unfortunately this came rather late since a number of residents had already moved to the valley.

There are only a few farmers left, tenaciously clinging on to their land.

The Mayor, of FANLO mentioned this problem and its socio-economic consequences at the press conference.

5.1 Construction of a road from PUYARRUEGO to BUERBA

In response to the recommendation in Resolution (88) 9 (para 5.2) that the tarmac road through the ANISCLO Canyon be progressively closed to cars, the ICONA has financed the improvement of an existing road running from NERIN to BUERBA and then from BUERBA to PUYARRUEGO.

This road will make it possible totally to ban traffic in the Canyon in a few years time and will preserve and no doubt revitalise the villages mentioned above.

The entire road runs almost entirely outside the peripheral zone and totally outside the park.

The ANISCLO Canyon will gradually be given over exclusively to pedestrians and surveillance and assistance vehicles.

5.2 Pradera car park

The redevelopment of LA PRADERA is being carried out simultaneously with the restoration of the visitors' centre (former hotel) at the entrance to the ORDESA VALLEY.

At the present time the capacity of the car park is being reduced to 150 vehicles and this project is being accompanied by a tree (re-)planting programme.

The existing restaurant will be turned into a first aid centre run by the Red Cross, and for the moment, only a small kiosk will be maintained. It is worth noting that the sanitary installations have been completely refurbished in stainless steel to limit the effects of vandalism as far as possible and for ease of maintenance.

Work is well advanced on the visitors' centre, which meets practically all the criteria laid down in my predecessor's report.

5.3 Information for visitors

There is an information centre at each valley entrance; in this respect too the park's facilities are being developed to meet demand.

The documents provided for visitors are all in Spanish except for those drawn up in collaboration with the Pyrenees National Park.

It might be wise, given the park's popularity, to work on providing documents in French and English.

5.4 Press conference

The press conference took place on the evening of 13 August at the PINETA parador. I should just like to pick out a few of the most interesting remarks. Those involved in nature protection are concerned about:

- the tarmacking of forest roads, which they fear might cause a deeper incursion of motorised tourism,
- unauthorised camping (PINETA),
- the inadequate support given to economic activities,
- the publication of the master plan,
- the shortage of park staff.

Expert's comments: my impression is that there are not too many tarmacked roads at the present time.

Forest roads made the opening up of the area possible, and the concern to support economic activities has undeniably led to attempts to improve communications.

As far as the PINETA camp site is concerned, we noted that it was heavily overused at some periods of the year. This not only causes the usual serious pollution problems, but also leads to flouting of the restrictions. It is common for camping to spill over into the park, and the ban on fires is not respected.

The number of staff and seasonal workers will have to be increased to cope with the growing flood of visitors and to cover the extended peripheral area and the numerous activities in the zone of influence.

CONCLUSION

The ORDESA AND MONTE PERDIDO National Park amply deserves the award of the category A European Diploma and in consequence, given the efforts made since the last appraisal, it deserves to keep the Diploma for a further five years.

There is clearly a strong political will, moving in the direction desired by the Council of Europe. We were able to establish that most problems were perfectly under control and to admire the way in which the Spanish authorities solve most of their problems.

With regard to relations with the Western Pyrenees National Park, a charter of co-operation was signed on 24 September 1988. The idea of creating a transfrontier park will have to wait until the French park has been re-awarded the European Diploma.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

1. To control the use of the PINETA camp site by limiting the number of campers and then by adapting the facilities and increasing the protection of the nearby central zone of the park.
2. To continue with the measures to limit parking in the LA PRADERA car park and all the ideas mentioned in Resolution (88) 9 paragraph 5.1.
3. To continue the socio-economic development of the peripheral zone so as to stabilise the population and hence keep the villages alive.
4. To stimulate research and rapidly take practical steps to save the remaining population of ibex *Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica*.
5. To amend the law so as to facilitate policing within the park and on its periphery.

6. To support the villages so that they make the most of the possibilities offered by Law No. 4 of 1989, concerning State financing of certain works.

6. Comments of the Secretariat

The Secretariat endorses the views and conclusions of the expert. The management of the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park is exemplary, particularly the way in which it actively integrates management of the surrounding area, with the two-fold concern of enhancing the cultural heritage and revitalising more or less abandoned mountain regions. This policy is clearly extremely costly but it shows the willingness of the state to accept its responsibilities.

A P P E N D I X I

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

RESOLUTION (88) 9**ON THE AWARD OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
TO THE ORDESA AND MONTE PERDIDO NATIONAL PARK (SPAIN)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 June 1988
at the 418th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE);

Having noted the agreement of the Government of Spain;

After having deliberated,

Solemnly awards the European Diploma, category A, in accordance with the regulations for the European Diploma, to the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park;

Places the aforesaid park under the patronage of the Council of Europe until 12 June 1993;

Attaches the following recommendations to the award:

1. Research

1.1. The park should be run as a reserve for the conservation of a number of endemic, rare or endangered species. Lists should be made at the earliest opportunity of the species of fauna and flora in the park, particularly cavernicolous fauna, their critical biotopes located and a detailed vegetation map drawn. The latter operation should be carried out jointly with the French Western Pyrenees Park, so that a map can be established on the same bases for the whole of the protected area;

1.2. Particular heed ought to be paid to the need for urgent and thorough research into the reasons behind stagnation in the population of ibex *Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica*, those in the park being all that are left. Any contact with similar sub-species should be avoided;

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4.1. The Autonomous Community of Aragon should consider setting up a regional nature park around the central area in the existing zone of influence and the national hunting reserve, which would constitute a very useful buffer zone;

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5.1. The capacity of the car park at La Pradera must be gradually reduced and car parks created close to other access points, but outside the park. The restaurant and kiosk at La Pradera should be resited outside the park;

5.2. The tarmac road to San Urbez, which follows the Añisclo canyon, should be closed to cars as soon as possible and fragile habitats closed to the public;

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The building of a road or railway through or on the fringes of the park might place a question mark over the award of the European Diploma;

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Consultations should be opened between Spain and France, under the Council of Europe's auspices, with a view to determining the legal basis and practical arrangements for co-operation between the two parks, and the form which a joint body to manage the whole of the protected area could take.

A P P E N D I X II

Draft Resolution (93) ...

ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO THE ORDESA AND MONTE PERDIDO NATIONAL PARK

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma;

Having regard to Resolution (88) 9 awarding the European Diploma to the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE);

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park until 12 June 1998;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. The use of the PINETA camp site should be controlled by limiting the number of campers and then by adapting the facilities and increasing the protection of the nearby central zone of the park.
2. The measures to limit parking in the car park at LA PRADERA and all the recommendations made in Resolution (88) 9 paragraph 5.1 should be proceeded with.
3. The socio-economic development of the peripheral zone should be continued so as to stabilise the population and hence keep the villages alive.
4. Research should be stimulated and practical steps rapidly taken to save the remaining population of ibex *Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica*.
5. The law should be amended so as to facilitate policing both within and on the periphery of the park.
6. The villages should be given support to enable them to make the best use of the possibilities offered by Law No. 4 of 1989, concerning State financing of certain works.