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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

37<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 5-8 December 2017

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**Other complaints**

**Presumed risk of national extinction of great  
bustards (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia**

**- REPORT BY THE COMPLAINANT -**

*Document prepared by  
EPAR-OIPA Serbia / Alliance for Nature Protection, the rights of animals and people, Serbia*

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02<sup>th</sup> June 2017

**SECOND UPDATED REPORT**

**ON COMPLAINT SENT ON 19<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2016 / No. 2016/6**

**(PRESUMED RISK OF NATIONAL EXTINCTION OF GREAT BUSTARDS (*OTIS TARDA*) IN SERBIA) - No. 2016/6**

**REGARDING CASES OF DELIBERATE AND ILLEGAL DESTRUCTION OF GREAT BUSTARD (*OTIS TARDA*) IN REPUBLIC OF SERBIA, WITHIN PASTURES OF GREAT BUSTARD SPECIAL NATURE RESERVE IN YEARS 2016-2017.**

The reason for the second supplement of the complaint is the further disinterested behaviour and lack of activity of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, Sector for the Protection of the Environment and the continuous illegal behaviour towards the Great Bustards within their only Serbian habitat, as well as the indifference of the Inspection of the Regional Secretariat for Urbanism and Environmental Protection and Regional Institute for the Protection of Nature, Novi Sad. In this manner, beside domestic law regulations, there is further breaching of Article 4 and Article 6 of the Bern Convention.

This is mirrored in the following: **1. New Facts**

1. Great Bustards have again been disturbed and chased out of the reserve area and are present on fields outside of the reserve along the main road linking Kikinda with Crna Bara, ie. On the region which is private property on which there is active, unrestricted agricultural activity, application of large amounts of pesticides, hunting and area where there is an unknown number of allegedly predator species. Great Bustards were also this year chased out of the reserve by a flock of sheep, from their habitat which is generally known as a place which Great Bustards mostly occupy during their reproduction period, location Mancul's Salaš and Monument to the Mokrin Fighters and the wider vicinity. Together with the complaint which we sent on the 19th of April, 2016, we also attached photos on which one may see Great Bustards and in the background are the mentioned objects.
2. Great Bustards have an additional difficult circumstance resulting from carelessness towards them, and this is that in the year 2016, the only adult male, sexually mature which was followed and who rounded up the females disappeared. Now, in the flock is a young male present who this year tried to display and he is about 4 years old.
3. And this year, during the second half of March, Great Bustards slowly started to return to the region of the reserve, to stay more on the disputed location. They toured the remaining several places towards Debeli At (Čičin i Pilčikin Hill) close to the Mancul's Salaš, (Debeli At is about 2 km and Čičin i Pilčikin Hill are 700 m. to 1 km from Mancul's Salaš) where last year display took place, probably looking for the only male, but during all observations, he did not appear anywhere and nobody ever saw him again, so that our fears of which we informed you on the 28th of September 2016, became a reality. By judgement, due to bad treatment of Great Bustards, the only adult male suffered misfortune and we believe that he was poisoned in the fields.

Locations: Debeli At, Čičin and Pilčikin Hill were during the previous period ploughed and here, the steppe-grassland habitat was partially destroyed, since with the monoculture arrived weeds which are even now visible.

Let us explain, in order for you to be more clear, Mancul's Salaš (Mancul's farm) is on public land, on the plot (Kadastar Parcel) No. 15616 KO Mokrin (Cadaster Community), with a surface of over 100 ha and was not active for decades, that is the small, low, partially ruined house. This is a standard picture of all desolate and neglected "salaš" in the Special Nature Reserve "Great Bustard Pastures". The land survey plot No. 15616 is registered as a pasture.

The Monument to the Mokrin Fighters near Mancul's Salaš, on a height, also alone deserted object with fence where nobody came until the arrival of sheep flocks.

West of the Mancul's Salaš on plot KP 15612, which is completely surrounded by plot 15616 and sowed in bands, 20 m wide and about 800 m long (about 30 ha) : Alfalfa, Rapeseed and Wheat and all this financed with public money in order that the reserve manager Hunting Association "Perjanica" utilizes and the fruits of these yields was sold by "Perjanica" also taking all of the money for itself. This lasted until the years 2013-2014 when we filed a complaint to the financial inspection and ask for the report on financial transactions of the Hunting Association "Perjanica" , asking where the money of the plant yields ended and yields from public lands which the Hunting Association "Perjanica" used as the reserve manager, without paying dues to the government, after which "Perjanica" stopped to cultivate this plot since the earned money it had to transfer to the account of the reserve, this she did not and did not want to, since it would lose its share of the money and in this way, the help for feeding Great Bustards supposedly just disappeared. We say supposedly because before the winter period, all Alfalfa was mowed and turned into dry clove which consequently "Perjanica" sold, during winter there was nothing for the Great Bustard left , Alfalfa until Spring was without leaf mass. As appropriate to such a place within the reserve, Great Bustards dwelled in this area, using the surrounding hills which are a characteristic of the Pannonian Plain. Grass in these places is typical steppe like, low, which is not necessary to mow and as such was recognized by the Great Bustards as a good habitat for them, for nesting and raising young.

This was as described until years 2013-2014 when on this location, a large noisy flock of sheep was introduced which surprisingly in the midst of the Bustard display period, entered the critical location, habitat of the Great Bustard with the consequence that the birds regularly left the locality and days after, the reserve itself. During Spring, numerous flocks enter the reserve, most of them without the issued conditions on behalf of the Regional Institute for Nature Protection. Spring sowing begins, daily activities take place on different localities, without any control and monitoring under the authority of the rangers of the reserve, so there is no peaceful place to satisfy the needs of the species itself as is the Great Bustard.

4. An identical scene was this this year, 2017. On the 21st of April, professional monitoring was executed by the mentor of the reserve from the regional Institute for Nature Protection, Nikola Stojnić who himself wrote in his report No. 03-1049/2 from 21.04.2017. that on this day on the line between First Mokrin length, Jančić and Mancul's Salaš he noticed 6 Great Bustard individuals. North of Jančić Salaš he noticed territorial individuals of the Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pyrgurgus*) and Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) but he did not try to define the positions of their nests and issues measures for the protection of their nests. Both species are in Serbia strictly protected on the basis of the Rulebook on Designation and Protection of Strictly Protected and Protected Species of Plants, Animals and Fungi; ( "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia" No. 5/2010, 47/2011, 32/2016)) and both species are present in the Amendment II of the Bern Convention.

Also in the report No. 03-1049/2 repeatedly ploughed plots are mentioned in the survey plot of Sajan, in the previous year of 2015, illegal ploughing was performed on a surface of about 170 ha and now it has been determined that the ploughed surface was considerably smaller, about 27.6ha. All these findings in the field, the Regional Institute for the Protection of Nature informed the Regional Secretariat for Urbanization and Environmental Protection, the inspection on 03.05.2017. Concerning the ploughing during 2015, we submitted a complaint to the inspection, but no activity was undertaken for this case under law, since the same person reploughs the same area which is entirely grassland habitat.

Despite the presence of Great Bustards on the critical location on the 25.04.2017. a great noisy sheep flock was introduced with people, dogs, a large corral was constructed for the sheep, a huge trailer was pulled in which looks like a skyscraper in this landscape and which is meant as a shelter for shepherds resulting in the Great Bustards leaving the area at the Mancul's Salaš, again left for the fields outside the reserve which really is a dangerous place for them and this has been proven during the previous period during which the Great Bustards had to spend time on the fields.

Since 25.04.2017. up to today, Great Bustards regularly visit the wider area round the Mancul's Salaš , from a distance from around 300 - 400 m observe their area, fly over the sheep but do not land

on this location and soon again leave the reserve and fly to the fields. Now it is possible to see only 3 or 4 Great Bustards instead of the previously 6.

We enclose unique photos of the flight over their habitat of one of the 3 Great Bustards flying over the sheep and all else one can now find there and previously was not present.

This is the responsibility of the mentor of the reserve from the Regional Institute for Nature Protection, Mr. Nikola Stojnić and director of this institution Mrs. Biljana Panjković, Regional Inspector of the Secretariat Mrs. Ognjenka Nikolić and current Secretary Mr. Vladimir Galić, and previous Secretary who is now the Assistant Director of the Regional Institute for Nature Protection, Mr. Slobodan Puzović. Inspector Mrs. Ognjenka Nikolić (previously Mrs. Gordana Pavkov) again did not act according to our submitted complaint under current laws and the manager Hunting Association "Perjanica" is guilty allowing again for the sheep to enter the reserve in the place where the Great Bustards dwelled.

In all written circumstances issued by the Regional Institute for the Protection of Nature it is stated that it is forbidden to perform any activities on locations with great Bustards but here we have a flagrant breaking of the law just on the side of this institution whose professional member on

21.04.2017. noted the presence of 6 individual Great Bustards, critically endangered species on a specific location and 3 days later, on this same location, he allowed a flock of sheep to enter which chased away the Great Bustards. The explanation that in this way the habitat is protected is baseless under law as the protection of a habitat by which a species is threatened for which the reserve exists, is pointless. Especially as it is the case of a location with steppe grassland. We must not forget the fire which was in the reserve on 16.03.2017. during which more than 500 ha of Mokrin plots of the reserve burned (location named Jaroš) including all dry tall grass, the reserve was totally burned and it took time for the burnt remains to recover and new grass germinates. So, this excuse does not hold and is not based in the case of habitat protection which intends to be part of the Emerald net and more the less for the protection of the critically threatened Great Bustard.

We submitted the complaint on 27.04.2017. that sheep disturb the Great Bustards and have chased them from areas where the birds swelled until 25.04.2017. On 28.04.2017 professional monitoring was again undertaken under No. 03-1011/3 including monitoring by the inspector when it was ordered that the shepherd shelter be moved for about 40-50m towards Mancul's Salaš and nothing else, sheep remained where they were, basically nothing changed and did not free the space for the Great Bustards. To be more precise, according to our submitted complaint and amendment to our complaint from 29.04.2017. with enclosed photos from the terrain, nothing was done. This is the reason why we submitted second additional complaint No 2016/6.

We would add the fact that in the reserve on 01.05.-02.05.2017. a nest of the Stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedicanus*) was destroyed on the plot No. 15722. A pair was photographed on its nest on 30.04.2017. a day before foliar spraying of sunflowers when the nest was destroyed. The nest was destroyed so that agricultural activities were undertaken on plots with sunflowers, when the egg or eggs of the Stone-curlew were destroyed. After this nest destruction, this pair of Stone-curlews moved to a new location on plot No KP 15705 which is also under sunflowers and for this reason we submitted a request to the authorities on 09.05.2017. to at least protect this nest. Unfortunately, our request, although filed as urgent, nobody reacted on time and on 09.05.2017. in the afternoon hours during the spraying of sunflowers with herbicides under strong wind, the nest was copiously sprayed with herbicides but as if by miracle, the egg remained intact. Immediately after the mechanization left from the location where the nest was, the pair of Stone-curlews returned to the nest and continues to lie on the nest. Now the sunflower has grown and it is not possible to observe the nest.

***We predict that there are more than one nest of Stone-curlews, as from the photos we enclose from 30.04.2017. 3 birds are seen on the first critical location. It is possible that there are even 4 birds, therefore it is necessary to confirm the presence of these birds prior to any activities on fields within the Special Reserve "Great Bustard Pastures", since because of these activities a nest was***



***already destroyed. By the way, sunflowers as well as maize should not be cultivated in this reserve, although they are both cultivated here.***

- Photo and video see in the addition of this second amendment to the complaint.
- **3.** We would add the fact that the described sheep flock again threatens and disturbs the Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) on the nest and this may be seen from a distance since the Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) when disturbed often fly from the nest, we did not succeed in locating the nest although this was also not done by Mr. Nikola Stojnić and he should have.

As a consequence, and due to absence of activity of the responsible persons of the Regional Institute for the Protection of Nature, Mrs. Biljana Panjković and Mr. Nikola Stojnić, on 25.05.2017. we submitted a complaint to the Regional Secretariat concerning their professional work in the reserve of the Great Bustard. We requested that the Inspection for the Protection of the environment performs as follows:

- Governing monitoring of the professional work of Biljana Panjković and Regional Institute for the protection of Nature, Novi Sad, ie. Documents issued by this Institute signed by Biljana Panjković.
- Monitoring by inspectors and cancelation of all permits for agricultural and livestock activities in the Special Reserve "Great Bustard Pastures", which were as "conditions" signed and issued by Mrs. Biljana Panjković, as they are opposite to the current: Law on Nature Protection and Decree proclaiming the Special Reserve "Great Bustard Pastures" ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia" No. 37/97);

And to - undertake lawful measures against Mrs. Biljana Panjković.

All bird species mentioned, in our country are strictly protected species according to the Rulebook on Designation and Protection of Strictly Protected and Protected Species of Plants, Animals and Fungi ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia" No. 5/2010, 47/2011, 32/2016). Their protection from killing and other threats is established according to the Art. 74 of the Nature Conservation Act ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia" No. 36/2009, 88/2010, 91/2010-corr. and 14/2016 ).

**3.** We should add that on 19.04.2017. we forwarded to the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, Sector for Environmental Protection, Belgrade, an Initiative for changing the manager of the Special Reserve "Great Bustard Pastures", and recommended the Society for the Protection of the Great Bustard from Mokrin. Way back, it has been clear that the Hunting Association "Perjanica" does not fulfill requirements and lacks professionals to be eligible as a manager of this specific reserve which has been established in order to protect the specific bird Great Bustard and other birds nesting on the ground in the grass. Up to now, we received no answer. Numbness and delay of the solution of any of the problems is the usual "strategy" of our government.

While at the same time awaiting help from the EU in the form of money from EU funds, the government avoids to do something, to invest at least a minimum and sustain the protected areas at a reasonable level, especially those that are candidates for the Emerald net, while expecting for this money as a form of help to arrive. Here it is not the case of lack of finances but the lack of respect and application of local laws and Bern Convention. Such behaviour resulted in a catastrophe for the key species of this reserve.

**Resumé :** We are forced to again contact the Secretariat of the Bern Convention because the behaviour towards Great Bustards and all the rest of the strictly protected bird species on this habitat is careless and unlawful under the government. It seems that there is no way to convince them and for them to understand that they must change their behaviour and act according to the law.

As it is, sheep are again in the place known for Great Bustards and these birds are again outside the reserve on very dangerous fields with intensive agricultural activities and use of pesticides. Such action towards Great Bustards can not be excused, there is no other greater interest than the protection and survival of Great Bustards. During nesting of birds which are on the ground in grass and during the upbringing of the young, including Great Bustards, no interventions should be allowed in the habitats which destroy individuals of these species. Grass may be mowed after this period when the

reproductive phase ends and not in the middle of the reproductive cycle. Grazing may be allowed but not on critical localities inhabited by Great Bustards or where grass nesting birds are expected. It is logical to foresee that grazing flocks will disturb and destroy nests on the ground. Grazing may start from the fringes of the reserve, it is not necessary to start from the centre as it is now forced and this has shown to be harmful to individuals and must not be allowed.

Resulting from such unprofessional behaviour towards Great Bustards, they now dwell outside the reserve all year round, for the third year in a row there have been no young, no nests have been detected, even if they were present, would have been destroyed on fields, the last mature male disappeared and this catastrophe for the Great Bustard continues.

We wish to inform the Bern Convention that only on 15.05.2017. from Mrs. Snežana Prokić, we received an answer from our Ministry No. 37-00-9/2017-17, letter forwarded to you 04.04.2017.

After reviewing all that has been written in this text, we will later on forward our answer to the Bern Convention Secretariat. The Great Bustard is the cover species of this reserve and of such a habitat and if the Great Bustard is well protected, all other strictly protected species nesting in the grass will be protected, ie. all species inhabiting this type of habitat, all being from Annex II of the Bern Convention, unfortunately still not being the case.

In the end, we wish to thank the Secretariat of the Bern Convention for the care and interest concerning the natural treasure of Republic of Serbia which is being destroyed and we express our thanks for the help when the Great Bustard is in question.

As supplement below, Annex I, see the links and photos we also submit.

Thank you

Regards

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**Annex I of II Updated Complaint to Bern Convention Secretariat by EPAR-OIPA Serbia  
on 02<sup>th</sup> June 2017.**

**1.25.04.2017.** Photographs demonstrating how the terrain looks after bringing in a great flock of sheep and the construction of the huge sheperd shelter.



**2.** We enclose 2 video materials from 25.04.2017. the introduction of sheep flocks on the habitat of the Great Bustard:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cDdi6g2RcU&t=38s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ug0BsdIdBe0>



3. Flight of 3 Great Bustards over their habitata leaving for fields outside the reserve, from 26.04.2017





4. 02.05.2017. Relocation of the sheperd shelter which changed nothing on the terrain.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjfCsyex86k&t=9s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nByBJX6P2tc>

5. Captions we contribute and photos are from 30.04.2017. on plot KP 15722. destroyed nest of Stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedicanemus*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuJ0HhvAmgE>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-67yTWM\\_ALQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-67yTWM_ALQ)





6. New nest of Stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*) on plot KP 15705 and spraying of nest with herbicides.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4kTJW2iIFA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxSPXpU-Fis>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZdNkGmmDPE>



7. **26.04.2017.** We contribute also photos of disturbed Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*) which often take off from nests since the sheep disturb them.







8. 23th May 2017 - 2 Great Bustards (*Otis tarda*) in the field of sunflowers, on plot KP 15705 , not far from the nest of Stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hDOw0T1yCw>

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11<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

**Updated report  
on complaint sent on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2016 / No. 2016/6**

**(Presumed risk of national extinction of Great Bustards (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia) - No. 2016/6 regarding cases of deliberate and illegal destruction of Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Republic of Serbia, within Pastures of Great Bustard Special Nature Reserve in years 2016-2017.**

The reason for updating our complaint which we submitted to the Secretariat of the Bern Convention dated 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2016 is the further negligence of the authorities of the Republic of Serbia concerning the Great Bustards and Special Reserve "Pastures of Great Bustard" in the village of Mokrin, Municipality Kikinda (Northeast of Serbia). No proof exists that the authorities of Republic of Serbia have changed their methods of treatment of the reserve and Great Bustards, neither did they show willingness to undertake any measures to stop the deterioration of this species and that it will not submit any report against anyone who destroys the territory of the reserve or disturbs the Great Bustards in any way. As a result of this negligence, there do not exist and have not been brought new measures for preserving this specific species, which is a cover species for preserving other types of bird species which are listed on the Appendix II of the Bern Convention. According to the Serbian legislative, all bird species which nest on the grass, as well as the Great Bustard are strictly protected (Rulebook on Designation and Protection of Strictly Protected and Protected Species of Plants, Animals and Fungi; ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia" No. 5/2010, 47/2011, 32/2016)). Their protection from killing and other threats is established according to the Art. 74 of the Nature Conservation Act ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia" No. 36/2009, 88/2010, 91/2010-corr. and 14/2016).

Pastures of Great Bustard in North of Serbia, is the only habitat of the Great Bustard in Serbia.

## **1. New Facts**

In the meantime, we have lost another great bustard, on the 08<sup>th</sup> of July 2016 the remains of one dead Bustard were discovered, the cause of death is not known. Photos of these findings and Bustard remains we have sent to You on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

Currently there are only 11 – 12 individuals of Great Bustard in Serbia (the census and monitoring of the Great Bustard was executed twice during February and March 2017-Association for the Protection of the Great Bustard, village Mokrin).

After expulsion of the entire flock of Great Bustards, from their traditional mating behaviour territory, at the end of March 2016 by the flock of sheep allowed to enter the restricted protected territory not only by the conservation manager of this protected area "Perjanica" Hunting Association, but also by the consent of the Provincial Institute for Nature Protection which is not allowed, especially during the very sensitive breeding period (swagger and nesting) all birds left the region of the reserve and since 18.04.2016. are located in the region along the Romanian border, consisting of arable fields, hunting ground and unknown number of predatory species (locality known as Vajlerka).

On the Vajlerka locality the census of the great Bustard was performed.



At the end of the year 2016, instead of bringing quick measures for the protection of Great Bustards, the Provincial Institute for Nature Protection issued new permissions for plowing plots of meadows inside the reserve. Some plots are registered by the official survey as meadows and the remaining are under government ownership and have not been cultivated for the past at least 7-8 years, some for even 40 years, so that these plots became pure grasslands, which are now being plowed.

The Provincial Institute for Nature Protection Novi Sad issued conditions:

- No. 03-2333/2, 03-2334/2, 03-2335/2, 03-2389/2, 03-2498/2, 03-2756/2 , all dated 23.11.2016.
- No. 03-2392/2 , 03-2274/2 dated 02.11.2016. and
- Conditions No. 03-2901/2 dated 12.12.2016. issued to the conservation manager "Perjanica" Hunting Association, concerning the plowing of about 50 ha of surfaces owned by the government.

The official survey plots designated as meadows becoming pastures are under government ownership, are not private, so that nobody had to give conditions for the to be plowed, as for years back, they were not plowed and became grassland habitats. Opening of the grassland habitats and sowing of monocultures, will again enable contamination with weeds and an additional threat to the area of Reserve "Pastures of Great Bustard" is the introduction of artificial fertilizers and pesticides.

- During March 2017 in the area of the reserve were two fires, one in the first days of March and the second on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017. During the first fire, about 100 ha of grassland were burnt in the SE part of the reserve belonging to the departments of villages Mokrin and Sajan. During the second fire, more than 500 ha of grassland burned, area of Jaroške fields, belonging to villages of Mokrin and Jazovo. This surface is very important for the life of the Great Bustard and it burned during the period when the Great Bustard breeding behaviour should have taken place. These fires occurred not only this time, indicating the very irresponsible reserve manager, which we suspect to have started the fires and burns the reserve as to hide the fact that no measures of protection of the reserve were undertaken, although the government gave money for these purposes.
- Besides, the reserve manager is primarily involved in the hunting business and takes interest in hunting, so that the manager in the region of the reserve at a distance of about 400 meters from the area designated as a strict area of protection, named Milina Bara, brought a barrel of 200 liters of waste machine oil which is spilt into holes in the ground as to attract Wild Boar, thus eternally contaminating the reserve with the harmful materials from machine oil. This oil should have been safely stored as dangerous material in appropriate legal storage premises for dangerous materials and their destruction but in this case, the manager uses the oil in an unacceptable and dangerous manner as described above. Please see photos in the supplement. This is not the first time this happened, we submitted complaints to the relevant inspection on several occasions, related to the pillage of oil within the reserve, but the inspection acted according to our complaint and even never made notes on this illegal activity.
- On 18<sup>th</sup> December 2016 we submitted a complaint because in the reserve beside maize for the supplemented feeding of "Trophy Wildlife" a large amount of animal waste was present, originating from swine carcasses from the local swine farm "Essentico" Mokrin. After submission of the complaint, the veterinary inspector arrived in the field, the reserve manager supposedly did not know who brought and left the carcasses although it is a fact that this was placed next to the maize, indicating that this was the activity of the reserve manager as its primary activity is hunting. Photos in the supplement.
- Further, we want to point out the fact that since the expulsion of the Great Bustards in March 2016, not one bird returned to the reserve and do not inhabit it. All birds are in fields along the Romanian border where nobody takes care of them, area of intensive agricultural production with no conditions for their survival.

On the territory of the reserve where the birds should be at this time of the year, various areas are plowed, the disturbance is great, including massive plowing of grasslands. There were also fires, the

famous place of breeding behaviour burned which we described in the complaint dated 19<sup>th</sup> April 2016, location named Manculov salaš and Monument of Mokrin Fighters.

- Since last year, after remains and many feathers of the Great Bustard were found in the reserve, the only adult male, sexually mature is absent! Thus, we have reason to suspect that this male was the victim and this fact is hidden, although the Provincial Institute for Nature Protection, Novi Sad, took all the feathers found on the spot. We do not understand the problem they have in determining which individual and of what sex was the victim. There is no information!

## **2. Pending procedures at the national level regarding the object of your complaint?**

The Hunting Association "Perjanica" many times showed and proved to be incompetent to be the ecological manager of the reserve of such a specific species which requires very strict and targeted measures of protection and because of the incapability and disinterest of the government, the current reserve manager is still authorized although it should have been substituted a long time ago.

Strongly centralized and the permanent naming of the manager which is usual here, must be liberated and changed. Every protected region including the Special Nature Reserve "Pastures of the Great Bustard" is subjected to a manager and every such region under such a manager loses its value and is ruined, as the Government of the Republic of Serbia which authorizes the manager, does not have the courage to make a bold step and substitute the manager, even when it is proven that this manager does not perform the duties for which it is placed.

In this sense, we proposed a new manager for the reserve, "Association for the Protection of the Great Bustard" from Mokrin, established in first half of 2013 for this specific purpose. This Association has professional potentials, a group of young enthusiasts- professionals in biology, ecology, geography and related sciences.

The mentioned Association from Mokrin, on the date 28.07.2015. forwarded its initiative to the Ministry for Agriculture and Protection of the Environment –Belgrade, requesting the substitution of the manager for the Great Bustard Reserve reserve. The Ministry answered with an unspecific document No. 353-02-1598/2015-17 dated 25.08.2015. / that it will study the initiative, evidently did not. Explaining that they are a new and young organization, this being an unacceptable explanation as the current manager although old, is professionally absolutely not capable even now, proven not fulfill conditions to be a manager. As a consequence we have a specific species of bird, Great Bustard now being on the brink of extinction, destruction of the region designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA RS008) and Emerald Site (RS0000022), according to the Regulation on Ecological Network ("Official Gazette of Republic of Serbia" no.102/2010). According to Appendix 3 of this Regulation 1) destruction and disturbance of habitats as well as the destruction and disturbance of wildlife is prohibited; 2) changes in land use under the natural and semi-natural vegetation (meadows, pastures, reed beds, etc.) are prohibited. For the Emerald regions it is necessary to undertake measures for protection and preservation with the aim of sustaining ecological characteristics for the Emerald candidate net. The current manager the Hunting Association "Perjanica" does not know what this means, even less how to apply this, thus any discussion on keeping the "old" manager is out of question.

We support the initiative of the young colleagues from the " Association for the Protection of the Great Bustard " and we are convinced that they would be uncomparitavely better managers in the Great Bustard reserve, as they have no interest in performing any destructive activities in the sense of damaging the habitat, they are not involved in hunting, neither are they interested in this activity. We believe that they would direct all their energies and potentials in protecting the Great Bustard, without any doubt that other relevant oraganizations would help them in this endeavor, in contrast to the situation we have now, when the current manager does not want to and does not cooperate with any NGO, although such cooperation would not lead to anything of value as the current manager is a hunting association, established as such with the sole interest in hunting and not protection of threatened species.

Finally, we wish to thank You and express our appreciation for the great effort and dedication You devote to the protection of Serbian Natural Heritage.

As supplement below, Annex I , see the links and photos we also submit.

Thank you

Regards

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*Save the nature!*

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Document prepared by  
EPAR-OIPA-Serbia / Alliance for Nature Protection, the rights of animals and people

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**Annex I of Updated Complaint to Bern Convention Secretariat by EPAR-OIPA Serbia  
on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017.**

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2017 Great Bustard on the location Vajlerka**  
(photo by David Grabovac, Association for the Protection of the Great Bustard )



1. Preparation for the plowing of pasture 14.12.2016. ,distribution of artificial fertilizers  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYIn9xdgS0A&t=49s>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pASikmT28qU>





2. Plowing of grassland habitats, 17th March 2017:



3. Fire in the reserve, 16th March 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGrfBjryVZ4&t=129s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sINigQU-UYc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNx4OHFzKdA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSM03z7kr2Y>





17<sup>th</sup> March 2017: day after fire







Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)



4. Spilling of old machine oil in the reserve and depositing of carcass remains of dead swine from the swine farm “Essentico” Mokrin



