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Back cover: (Photo W. Lapinski)

Captions to illustrations p. 16-17: *Ursus arctos* (Photos Visage / Ferrero / Labat / JACANA)

A prestigious distinction

This autumn, the German National Park of the Bavarian Forest receives the European Diploma, the Council of Europe's prestigious award to nature sites that respond to special criteria. As a tribute, it also forms an encouragement and sets an example. With especially the latter in mind and wishing to make the vast experience in managing this part of our heritage known as widely as possible, this issue gives a histor-

ic view of the Diploma, some selected typical examples and what bright future the Diploma may have. Naturopa No. 54 will highlight the need for international co-operation, especially between Europe and Africa, with the Council of Europe's Bern Convention as a catalyst, and the migratory avifauna as a vivid example for the need for such co-operation. H.H.H.



Editorial

I am particularly happy to be able to contribute with these few lines to the work of information and education which the Council of Europe has been pursuing since the early 1960s.

It was precisely during that decade that nature conservation movements developed and consolidated their position, in the sense that, although they did not represent an entirely new phenomenon, they acquired hitherto unknown social and political dimensions.

It was then that people started reflecting on the fact that every aggression against the natural environment amounted to an attack on the human spirit; that awareness dawned about natural resources being finite and limited, notwithstanding the prevailing concept of the inexhaustibility of nature; that the notion of purely quantitative economic growth began to be called into question.

In effect, man has come to scrutinise the civilisation he himself has created, to examine and analyse its excessive proliferation, the irrational development of speculation, the debilitating spirit of competition, the arms race, the restriction of human liberty by overwhelming urbanisation and the almost automatic, and sometimes irreversible, impulse to destroy the ancestral heritage, which seems to give greater satisfaction to man than his own efforts at reshaping it.

The elimination of human errors in this field, especially those with irreversible consequences, is precisely the main aspiration and goal of the conservationist and protectionist movements, because this kind of error precludes the possibility of being given a second chance and making up for past mistakes.

A new collective awareness, very prevalent among the younger generations of Europeans, has prompted the public institutions and political authorities to begin to face up to the problem.



I wish to pay tribute in this connection to the Council of Europe's commitment and the impetus it has given in this undertaking, which is gaining in importance and acceptance at both national and international levels.

The fact that its activities extend across the frontiers of the 21 member states makes it possible to entertain a number of rather more optimistic prospects regarding the future of the heritage we shall leave for future generations.

It is nevertheless necessary to preserve in the efforts now being made, and indeed maintain the sense of keen urgency in this field, while spreading the idea that, despite the aggressive profiteering and competitive rivalry of civilisation and the view that nature

is a hostile force, greater currency is being gained by the idea of a possible balance and the need for human beings in general to adopt an altruistic approach towards their fellows and their planet.

That idea must receive unreserved political support and be translated into projects which, while remaining idealistic, should nevertheless be practical and down-to-earth.

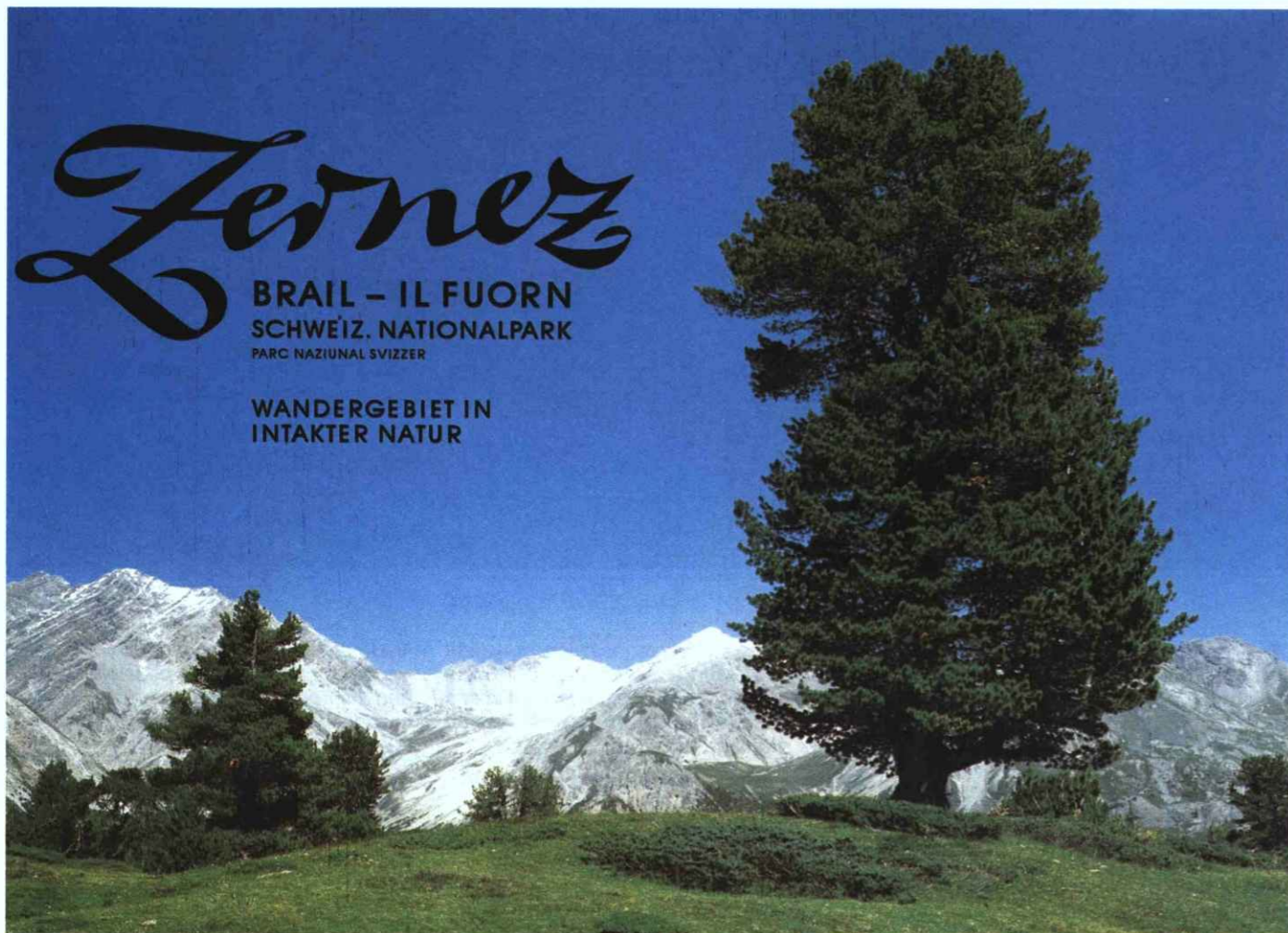
Perhaps this difficult compromise can be achieved through environmental education. The work of the Council of Europe in this respect deserves every praise; what is being done in our country with a view to improving the management of our national parks, extending the field of nature study and developing teaching methods and practice in this sector complies closely with the aims set by the Council of Europe, albeit at national level.

And this work of information is vital, for unfortunately human ignorance is closely matched by human error.

I should like to conclude by referring to the recent award made by the Council of Europe to the Doñana National Park, which has given personal satisfaction to those of us who are acutely aware of the need to step up our efforts to protect the most outstanding natural areas, and has provided gratifying professional encouragement for those who carry out the tasks of management in this site of special value to mankind.

This satisfaction and stimulus will help us in the immediate future to reinforce and intensify our policy of nature conservation in Spain and our co-operation with the other states belonging to the Council of Europe.

D. Alfonso Guerra Gonzalez
Vice-President of the Spanish Government



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The European Diploma

Jean-Pierre Ribaut

Man has always been conscious of the need to safeguard certain portions of his natural environment. Hunting preserves already existed in antiquity and the first legally established protected area dates from 1543, when the inhabitants of central Switzerland decided to safeguard the natural assets of the Kärpf massif.

After 1872, the year in which the first national park in the world, Yellowstone National Park, was created in the United States, the trend gathered momentum, first of all in North America, then in Europe, and lastly in the third world, until today when there are thousands of nature reserves, national parks and other classified sites throughout our biosphere.

The Council of Europe was the first inter-governmental organisation to realise the importance of the function of protected areas. To avoid any misunderstanding, let me make it quite clear from the outset that it is impossible to save our natural environment, namely the elements fundamental to

human life, solely by means of parks and reserves. On the contrary, all our farmland, forests and marginal land need a certain level of protection; this means that they must be exploited — or rather managed — in a balanced way so as to preserve these areas and their potential for future generations, which at present is not always the case! Apart from such considerations, however, certain sites, wetlands, etc. are of such value from the ecological, cultural or aesthetic point of view, that they absolutely must be preserved in their entirety for our descendants.

The European Diploma

Realising this necessity, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided on 6 March 1965 to institute a "European Diploma for certain protected landscapes, reserves and natural features" (Resolution (65) 6). This distinction is awarded for a period of five years and is renewable. The procedure is as follows. After examining the "supporting documents mentioning inter alia the system of protection already enjoyed by the said landscape, reserve or feature and the body responsible for the

administration of the same", the Committee of Experts for the Conservation of Nature and Landscape could make recommendations to the Committee of Ministers for the award of the Diploma.

Under these regulations, the first three Diplomas were awarded on 29 March 1966 to:

- the Hautes Fagnes Nature Reserve in Belgium,
- the Camargue Nature Reserve in France and
- the Peak District National Park in the United States.

Altogether a round dozen Diplomas were attributed under this procedure up to 1972.

With time and experience, the Committee of Experts and the Secretariat came to the conclusion that the existing regulations and indeed certain intrinsic features of the Diploma itself were unsatisfactory.

After thorough reconsideration, the responsible committee of experts, renamed the "European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources", prepared new draft regulations which the Committee of Ministers adopted on 19 January 1973 (Resolution (73) 4), the text of which is still in force. The changes made were as follows:

- instead of applications for the Diploma being submitted by the Committee of Experts, this is now done by governments which must also provide full documentary material in accordance with certain specific requirements;
- applications are first of all screened by the Secretariat and then examined by a special European Committee working party;
- if the documentary evidence submitted is considered adequate and satisfactory by the Secretariat and its European interest is recognised by the working party, a compulsory on-the-spot appraisal has to be carried out. This is done by an independent consultant appointed by the Secretary General and financed by the Council of Europe. A Secretariat official accompanies the consultant to ensure the continuity of the assessment criteria applied to the various sites. The results of this appraisal are examined by the working party which proposes to the European Committee either
 - the rejection,
 - the deferment, or
 - the acceptance of the application,
 the final decision on awarding the Diploma always being left to the Committee of Ministers.
- if a site already holding the Diploma is seriously threatened, the Secretary General may decide to have an exceptional inspection carried out, the results of which are examined by the working party. If the threat materialises, the Diploma may be withdrawn from the site concerned, even before the expiry of the five-year period.

Substantial innovations

Compared with the conditions originally governing the award, these various innovations are substantial. Admittedly, the new procedure is more complex, but it allows a much more precise appraisal both of the value of the site and the effectiveness of the prevailing protective measures. We shall now reconsider these various innovations and examine their effects in greater detail:

— **The fact that the onus is now on governments to submit applications gives the European Committee greater freedom of action and independence of judgment than under the former regulations, where it was judge in its own case.**

This independence is testified by the fact that, of some 50 applications, only 25 Diplomas have been awarded. It should be mentioned that applications do not necessarily have to concern places directly under governmental jurisdiction. The Diploma for the Minsmere Nature Reserve in the United Kingdom, for example, was granted to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds which owns and manages the site, while the award in respect of the Lüneburg Heath, near Hamburg, was made to the "Verein Naturschutzpark".

— **The technique of on-the-spot appraisals has proved extremely valuable, much more so even than the experts themselves had anticipated.** Although it only lasts for two days, if thoroughly prepared, it can provide a fairly accurate idea of the intrinsic quality and the effects of the improvement and management policy prac-



tised in the landscape under consideration. The Committee of Experts for Protected Areas, which functions as the special working party for the European Diploma, can thus reach its decision in a full knowledge of the facts and present an objective opinion to the European Committee. The repetition of the inspection every five years at the time of renewing the Diploma is also a worthwhile exercise. The appraisal is not solely designed to establish whether or not the site satisfies (or continues to satisfy) the criteria of the Diploma: it is also meant to help the managers and officials in charge of the area to resist the acquisitive designs and other pressures or dangerous projects which might compromise or impair the quality of the sites;

— **The possibility that the Council of Europe may withdraw the Diploma at any time if the site has been, or is about to be, seriously deteriorated represents the main force of this system.** True, such a decision is only taken as a last resort and after a clearly defined procedure during which an exceptional on-the-spot appraisal takes place. This has already happened in the case of the Siebengebirge Nature Reserve near Bonn which was threatened in 1972 by a project for a high-speed rail link between Cologne and Frankfurt. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe decided to have an exceptional appraisal carried out, which took place in the presence of all the parties concerned and proved most beneficial. The project was finally abandoned for a variety of reasons.

This threat of withdrawal which hangs like a sword of Damocles over protected sites has given entire satisfaction so far: in the Wollmatinger Ried, the project for extending the neighbouring airport was abandoned; at the Krimml Waterfalls, plans for further tourist facilities in the immediate proximity of the falls and schemes for new roads were trimmed and redesigned to preserve the integrity of the site. At the Council of Europe's insistence, the Italian authorities allocated considerable funds for the improvement and management of the Abruzzi National Park, which allowed the



acute problems of this important landscape area, where the bear and the wolf survive, to be effectively solved. A highly typical situation arose in the Peak District National Park: the Water Board Authority had plans to build a large water reservoir with a 15-metre concrete dam within the Park precincts. The scheme quickly met with determined opposition and the Council of Europe was called upon to act. On the occasion of an appraisal for the renewal of the Diploma, the Secretariat clearly indicated that if the project was carried into effect, the exceptional procedure would be applied with the likelihood that the Diploma would be withdrawn. This prospect was exploited by the Park authorities and the opponents of the project, very numerous and active in this country where voluntary bodies play a determining role in daily life: one only has to remember the 400,000 members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the one million-strong membership of the National Trust. As the result of this opposition, the project has been put on ice...

Over 20 years of experience

The experience obtained in operating the Diploma system for more than 20 years justifies the claim that the present regulations give full satisfaction. Thanks to the strict criteria applied, the sites having obtained the Diploma can really claim to deserve it and be legitimately proud of it. But while there are winners, there are unfortunately also some losers.

Deferred applications always represent a harrowing problem: it does happen that the governmental authorities concerned "take it badly" or insist on having the situation re-examined immediately. But in the majority of cases, the verdict is accepted, since the scientific arguments put forward are sufficiently telling. The decision to defer the award is usually accompanied by recommendations or suggestions which, if acted upon, should enable those in charge to make good the inadequacies or shortcomings to which attention has been drawn and give them a chance to obtain the diploma at some later date.

This very situation is about to arise in the case of a marine national park, remarkable from many points of view, which has requested that the Diploma application, deferred in 1979, should be reconsidered. The European value of the site and the quality of the land management were unanimously recognised by the visiting experts. The latter were obliged, however, to record the inadequacy of the measures for protection for the marine environment, where communities of posidonia algae were seriously threatened mainly by boat moorings. According to the competent authorities, the situation has considerably improved, and if this proves to be the case, the postponement will have been fully justified, since it will have encouraged positive measures to enhance the quality of the site.

This stimulation and emulation factor is very important. Further examples may be found: — on the occasion of Diploma renewals, which are often accompanied by recommendations (sometimes even conditions!) intended to improve the management of the site; — in the examination of the annual reports which each director of a Diploma-holding site must submit to the Council of Europe Secretariat. These reports provide data on the development of fauna and flora, give details of any changes that have occurred; in short, they contain much precious information — which, moreover, is soon to be stored in our data bank. After examining these reports, the Committee of Experts for Protected Areas often issues recommendations designed to help site managers and facilitate their work in the field.

Those responsible for managing Diploma-holding areas also have the opportunity of meeting periodically in order to compare notes, enable one another to benefit from their experience and study current problems. Such meetings are normally organis-

ed by the Council of Europe every two years, the most recent having just taken place at the European environmental education centre in Mont Dauphin, at the kind invitation of the French authorities.

In concluding this review of its origins, history and development of the European Diploma, it is most encouraging to record the great interest which governments continue to show in this genuinely unique venture.

Considering that the stimulation of economic growth remains the top priority in almost all our countries and that unemployment rates continue to be scandalously high, it is reassuring to know that national authorities are prepared, in a sense, to "make over" their natural assets to the Council of Europe. Without forgetting that withdrawal of the Diploma could have appreciable political repercussions, the fact that politicians nevertheless take this risk, even if it is a politically calculated one, illustrates growing awareness of the importance of our natural heritage. ■



EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

for certain protected landscapes, reserves and natural features awarded by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Whereas it is desirable to promote close co-operation between member countries of the Council of Europe, with a view to conserving and enhancing the natural environment of the peoples of Europe, for the material and spiritual well-being of present and future generations,

Whereas the Committee of Ministers has instituted to that effect a European Diploma, to place under the sponsorship of the Council of Europe certain protected landscapes, reserves and natural features of European interest;

I, Marcelino Oreja, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, hereby certify that:

The Committee of Ministers, Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma; Having taken note of the proposal made by the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources; Having noted furthermore the consent of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany;

Having deliberated thereon, Has in its Resolution (86) 18 solemnly awarded the present Diploma For **BAYERISCHER WALD NATIONAL PARK** To the **Nationalparkverwaltung Bayerischer Wald**,

Thereby placing the said park under the sponsorship of the Council of Europe until 18 June 1991.

In witness whereof I have hereto appended my signature and affixed the seal of the Council of Europe;

Done at the seat of the Council of Europe at Strasbourg, 19 June 1986.



(Photo Council of Europe)

The Krimml Falls

Josef Fischer-Colbrie

The Krimml Waterfalls offer a spectacle which is quite unique in nature. Situated on the north-western edge of the Hohe Tauern, they form the outlet of the Krimmler Ache river valley which, like the other neighbouring valleys, was gouged out by glaciers during the ice age. It emerges into the Salzach valley 400 metres below in three mighty leaps.

The falls

The first stage of the Falls (*Oberer Achenfall*) represents a drop of 140 metres; this is followed by a narrow platform, known as Schönangerl, from which the middle section of the Falls plunges over a 100-metre drop (*Mittlerer Achenfall*). The third or lower stage (*Unterer Achenfall*) is more than 140 metres high. The formation of these waterfalls — which rank among the world's highest — was determined by the geological characteristics of the mountain. The rock behind the Falls themselves consists of hard resistant central gneiss, while the narrow intermediate platforms are composed of slate. These strata of hard rock which form the steps of the waterfall have stood up to erosion not only from the ice-age glaciers but also, once these had retracted, from the constant flow of water from the Krimmler Ache.

The origin of the Krimmler Ache valley lies in the Venediger massif, where the most extensive system of glaciers in the eastern Alps is to be found. The waters of the Krimmler Ache are therefore at their most abundant during the period of thaw between May and August, when the entire Krimml basin echoes with the roar and din of the Falls. The high degree of humidity caused by the permanent haze of spray has a particularly invigorating effect on the vegetation of the immediate surroundings: the cliffs are covered with mosses, lichen and algae and hygrophilous flowers and grasses line the course of the stream, which itself flows through a forest of shady spruce.

In the cold autumn and winter months the discharge is low and the stream shrinks to a narrow rivulet which is encased from December to March in a sheath of ice which gives the Falls a curious appearance.

Many visitors

The Krimml Falls have long attracted the attention of scientists and tourists. In 1879 the first footpath (*Wasserfallweg*) was built giving access to the waterfalls. When a railway line from Zell am See to Krimml was opened in 1898 — known today as the Pinzgau local railway — the number of visitors to the Falls increased sharply. In 1962, then the Gerlos road was built linking the Oberpinzgau region in the Land of Salzburg with Zillertal in the Tirol, this led to a steep rise in motor traffic in the area which, in turn, brought a further increase in the number of visitors. Today some 400,000 tourists visit the Krimml Falls every year.

Until a few years ago, the cattle belonging to the Pinzgau farmers had to be driven to the alpine pastures in the Ache valley along the waterfall path, which was in many places narrow and steep. In 1984, a new track was laid out, adjacent to the waterfalls but following an independent route, to provide easier access to the pastures, 22 in all, and also two inns. Not only did this help farmers to make use of their grazing lands which is essential to ensure the survival of this type of agricultural landscape, but it also prevented visitors to the waterfalls from being disturbed by comings and goings connected with economic activities and the delivery of supplies.

The Krimml Falls have long been a focus of conflicting interests. On the one hand, the gradually increasing industrialisation of the region led to an interest in exploiting the considerable quantities of water power while, on the other hand, great sympathy was felt for the ideal of nature conservation.

The threats

As early as 1899, the Krimml Falls were exposed to a threat. Plans for the construction of a large power station were drawn up by a Viennese firm which obtained the right to pipe 12 cubic metres of water a second into 19 turbines capable of generating 28,000 horsepower.

From the purely technical point of view, the Krimmler Ache valley would be ideally suited, in view of its altitude, for building an enormous dam with a capacity of 180 million cubic metres of water which, given the difference in height of 400 metres, could be used to produce electricity. Not only were the corresponding plans drawn up, therefore but there was even a project for piping the water into neighbouring valleys. In order to prevent the total destruction of the Krimml Falls by a scheme of the nature, efforts were soon being made to place the immediate site of the waterfall and its wider surroundings under lasting protection. In 1951 the Austrian Nature Conservancy appealed for the total protection of the Falls; one year later the Salzburg Parliament called upon the Government of the Land to prohibit any attempt to use the waterfalls for generating power; in 1958 the Salzburg Government classified the Krimmler Ache valley and waterfalls as a "protected landscape"; in 1961 this legal protection was



(Photo LVA Salzburg)

considerably strengthened by listing the Falls as a "natural monument".

The culmination in the struggle to preserve this imposing natural spectacle came, however, with the award of the European Diploma by the Council of Europe in 1967; this award, which has already been renewed four times since, had extremely positive repercussions on the efforts by conservationists to protect the Krimml Falls: the plans for constructing a power station in Krimml together with the channelling of water from the Krimmler Ache to neighbouring valleys received a serious setback with the award of the Diploma, since the total renunciation of any kind of economic activity entailing the production of energy in the area of the waterfalls or the Krimmler Ache river, including its tributaries, was laid down by the Council of Europe as the most vital condition for the renewal of the diploma. In the case of the aforementioned road built in recent years from Krimml to the Ache valley and leading to the alpine pastures, considerable sums were spent in minimising its detrimental effects on the landscape in order to avoid any visual impairment of the waterfalls. Finally, the inclusion of the Krimml Falls in the Hohe Tauern National Park, created in 1984, can be attributed in no small part to the European Diploma which the Falls have held for the last 19 years.

An even stricter protection

For the immediate future, it is planned to designate the site of the waterfalls and their immediate surroundings within the Hohe Tauern National Park as a "special protected area", the strictest form of protection which exists under Salzburg nature conservation law. Thus, the Krimml Falls will enjoy the best possible protection, while at the same time an essential condition for the continued renewal of the European Diploma will have been fulfilled.

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that the Federal Land of Salzburg is extremely proud to possess a nature monument which has been awarded the European Diploma — still the only example of its kind in the whole of Austria — and that the Salzburg authorities are fully conscious of the great responsibility they bear for the preservation of the Krimml Falls; as in the past, great efforts will have to be made in future to preserve this unique natural monument intact for the enjoyment of the population, for its value as a beauty spot and for its scientific interest. ■

Eythor Einarsson

At the very first meeting in 1963 of the Committee of Experts for the Conservation of Nature and Landscapes (CDSN), suggestions were made to consider granting a "European award" to national parks, reserves and natural sites of European importance. This, with the Council of Europe's prestige, would ensure the international importance of its holder. I clearly remember the enthusiasm of many of the delegates participating in this discussion and the great importance all considered it to have.

Background of the Diploma

At the Committee's next meeting, draft regulations were presented and discussed. At the committee's third meeting, it was decided to propose that the Committee of Ministers institute a procedure for encouraging the effective protection of certain landscapes, reserves and natural monuments of European interest, feeling that such recognition would be an inducement to keep protection at a high level where it already existed and to improve or introduce it where it was lacking. At the same time the committee agreed upon the final wording of the regulations on the award of an encouragement which was given the name "European Diploma". Later the regulations were revised and rules on the process for applications, presentation of the Diploma, annual reports and procedure for renewal appended, but the substance of the regulations has not been changed.

The fourth meeting of the committee in 1965 recommended to the Committee of Ministers to award the first three European Diplomas, to the Peak District National Park (United Kingdom), the Camargue Nature Reserve (France) and the Hautes Fagnes Nature Reserve (Belgium). The Committee of Ministers adopted this recommendation. Since then, over 20 areas of international importance in more than half of the member states of the Council of Europe have been awarded this Diploma, and for many of the sites it has been renewed several times.

Encourage protection

Merlin (Falco colombarius), its small size and its speed make it a feared hunter; it is never common and couples are widely dispersed.
(Photo H. Bárðarson)



Many types of European landscapes

Being of a very different character, all the Diploma sites are valuable examples of Europe's rich and varied nature, ranging from regions north of the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic coast to the Marmara Sea region. Some of them are wildernesses where nature is left on its own, others have to be managed by man; some of them are spectacular coastal formations or magnificent waterfalls, others wetlands of biological importance especially for their rich bird life.

Nevertheless, many types of European nature are not yet included in the European Diploma system; several member countries of the Council of Europe where various outstanding sites of international importance are found, protected strictly enough to satisfy the requirements of the European Diploma regulations, have not yet—for various reasons—applied for the Diploma. It must be underlined that the value of the European Diploma system does not depend on the number of sites having been awarded the Diploma: its value is of course the quality and importance of each site. I believe, as the CDSN's current Chairman, that the CDSN would warmly welcome more applications for the European Diploma from protected sites of a high standard in the Council of Europe member states, from Iceland to Turkey and from Portugal to Austria.

As I have been a member of the CDSN since its beginning, I may state that, judging from the discussions taking place and opinions expressed, both while the European Diploma system and its regulations were being prepared and while applications were dealt with at the CDSN's meetings, most or all delegates have considered the European Diploma programme as one of the CDSN's most important and valuable activities in the field of nature conservation. I myself would consider it as one of the four most important activities of the CDSN, ie the activities of the European Information Centre for Nature Conservation, the preparation of charters and the Bern Convention and the work and reports on endangered species and biotopes together with the network of biogenetic reserves.

I have had the pleasure of carrying out an on-the-spot appraisal of a few sites where a renewal of the European Diploma had been applied for and thus could meet the officials of these sites. The importance of these persons attached to the renewal of the Diploma for "their" site showed very clearly the value and significance of the European Diploma: it was a token of quality both of the nature of the sites concerned and the conservation work carried out there. I have visited nearly half of the European Diploma sites and where I have had the opportunity to meet the officials or the members of the staff, I always found the

same understanding of the value of the Diploma for the sites.

The sites are very different in character and thus difficult to compare but all are linked through their international value and importance. Scientific, cultural, aesthetic and/or recreational criteria cannot but vary from one person to another, whereas it is in most cases fairly clear when the protection of a site is adequate or not. But even protection measures may be a subject of doubt and only a person with a thorough knowledge of the type of nature of the site concerned and the potential dangers threatening the site is able to make the judgment whether the protection and management of a protected site is adequate.

The founders of the European Diploma wanted it to become a valuable and significant tool to encourage the protection of Europe's natural heritage. They were right, there is no doubt about that. What has already been achieved is of great value. Let us hope that in the near future more sites in the Council of Europe's member states will be included in the European Diploma system, thus forming a firm international network of our continent's most important and representative aspects of its natural heritage. Over and beyond this, these "examples" may then as it were spill over towards other areas and become a true nucleus of European nature conservation. ■



Boschplaat natural reserve (Photo J. van de Kam)

The expert's point of view

Theo Hunziker

The award of a diploma to landscapes or natural features of European significance may with justification be regarded as one of the Council of Europe's most significant and forward-looking measures for the promotion of nature conservation and environmental protection in its member states. This holds true even though such awards undoubtedly raise certain problems and the assessment criteria — generally regarded today as such as essential requirement — may prove difficult to define and quantify precisely.

As one of the Council of Europe experts chosen to carry out appraisals of a wide variety of sites in Europe under the current regulations for the European Diploma (Committee of Ministers Resolution (73) 4 of 19 January 1973), I welcome the opportunity provided by this issue of *Naturoopa* to describe some of my findings derived from my activities as consultant, together with suggestions based on this experience.

At the same time, I strongly advocate the systematic continuation of this activity, which the Council of Europe has pursued so actively, and its extension to other aspects of the cause of nature conservation in Europe, which is one that certainly brooks no delay.

Significance of the European Diploma
In accordance with the ideals of its "founding fathers" the award of the European Diploma is intended to achieve five distinct aims in furthering nature and landscape protection within the European family of nations:

1. To arouse, or effectively promote, a sense of responsibility for the preservation of European features of natural—and hence also cultural—value;
2. To acknowledge successful cases of protection and care of landscapes and other sites of European significance;
3. To help save such natural features of recognised European importance from

- threats to their existence resulting from economic or technical projects, and thereby ensure their long-term survival;
4. To use the renewal procedure as a means of ensuring that areas and sites already awarded the European Diploma may increasingly justify their claim to be of European value;
5. To accompany the award with further efforts to emphasise the importance and urgency of conservation in general.

Lessons drawn from the consultants' reports

The vital question to be answered is what the Diploma—in addition to its declared aims—actually achieves in practice, and what tangible results it has so far produced. It is of course impossible for me to report exhaustively on this matter, but I would nevertheless like to quote just a few ex-

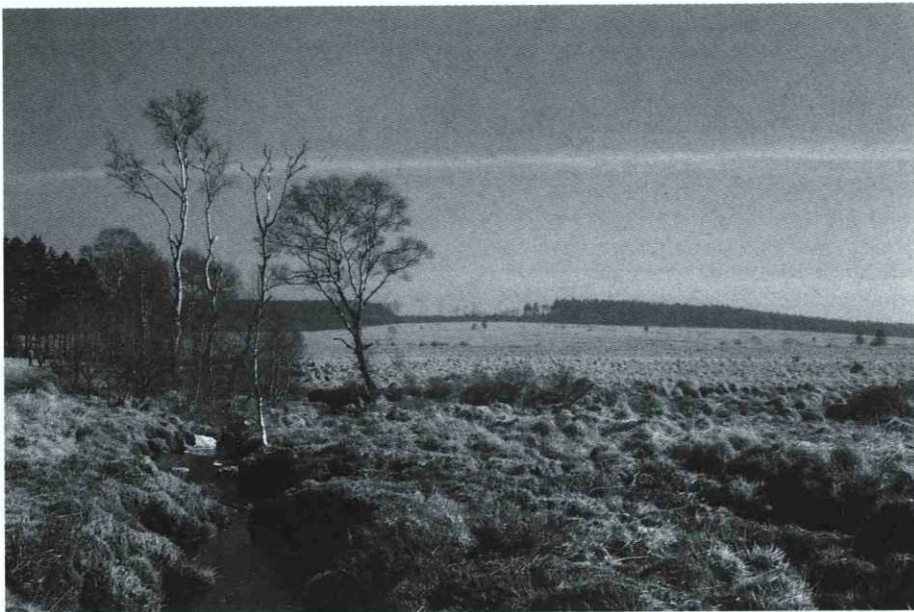
amples drawn from my own experience, which clearly illustrate what the award of the European Diploma can mean for the promotion of nature conservation and landscape protection.

The list of examples below might give the impression that the bulk of a consultant's activities were and are concentrated on preventing or hampering developments detrimental to landscape conservation. Such duties indisputably devolve upon the consultant if he is to honour his commitments towards the cause he serves; for often, the extremely valuable assets which the diploma-holding areas (ought to) represent can be preserved only by hindering or restraining such developments. But the other aims (see above) should also be constantly kept in mind. Under no circumstances, even when rejecting an application for the award or renewal of a diploma, has a con-

Site awarded Diploma	Major benefits so far obtained in the interests of conservation partly on the strength of consultants' reports.
Krimml Waterfalls Austria (27.11.67/Cat. C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Prevention of hydro-electric schemes in the neighbourhood of the Falls and their catchment area. — Construction of a new track leading from the Gerlos road via Schönangerl into the Krimmler Ache valley, designed to preserve the landscape of this recreational area and benefit the Alpine economy. — Prevention of the illumination of the Falls as a purely tourist attraction. — Curbing of uncontrolled tourist installations at the foot of the Falls.
Abruzzi National Park Italy (27.11.67/Cat. B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Halting the imminent extermination of the bears. — Suspension of a misguided tourist development scheme with holiday homes, cable railways and ski lifts, uncontrolled camp sites, etc.
German-Luxembourg Nature Park (26.10.73/Cat. C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Acquisition of the "Hosingen Wildlife Park" (approximately 150 hectares) by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and plans to bring it into compliance with the essential aims of landscape conservation.
Vanoise National Park France (15.3.76/Cat. A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Renunciation of plans for hydro-electric schemes and for the extension of tourist facilities.
Western Pyrenees National Park France (15.3.76/Cat. A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Promotion of protective measures for bears. — Renunciation of any further development of tourist facilities.
Weltenburger Enge Nature Reserve Federal Republic of Germany (3.3.78/Cat. B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Prevention of the use of the river Danube in the Enge neighbourhood for commercial shipping and tourist facilities.
Gorge of Samaria National Park Greece (13.9.79/Cat. A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Prevention of a scheme for intensive tourist development through the central area of the Gorge.

One of the numerous natural sites in Iceland worthy of the European Diploma
(Photo H. Bárðarson)





Hautes Fagnes (Photo J.P. Lebailly)

sultant failed to point out the positive aspects to be found in every site and in the way it has previously been managed. Emphasis has also consistently been laid on practical ways of making technical, organisational or financial improvements to protected areas. Putting such suggestions into effect naturally takes time, but in many instances the advice contained in the consultant's report has been acted upon.

Further benefits resulting from the award of the Diploma deserve mention. Appraisals help to strengthen the hand of local nature conservation bodies, since the latter, owing to their currently isolated situation and to unavoidable clashes with other interests, often themselves subjected to pressures. The European dialogue which takes place in connection with the appraisal of the relevant area or site provides a stimulus for both sides.

On the other hand, the Diploma represents a kind of advertisement for the national nature conservation policy, even when, independently of any award, such policy requires and merits full support.

Finally, the seminars organised from time to time by the Council of Europe for officials of areas and sites awarded the European Diploma can be regarded as an effective way of boosting the protection of these Diploma-holding areas.

Proposals

It seems appropriate to make some proposals arising out of past work as a consultant, since the ultimate aim is to ensure the perpetuation of the European Diploma by affording protected areas all possible support, while also making sure that substandard sites are deprived—whether temporarily or permanently remains to be decided—of the benefits of the European Diploma.

This very policy, moreover, adopted in appraisals in recent years has in my opinion contributed in no small way towards ensuring that member states now visibly only apply for the Diploma in respect of areas which satisfy the justifiably strict requirements.

It is therefore only logical to propose first and foremost that the member states of the Council of Europe restrict their applications for the Diploma to areas or features worthy of protection from the European point of view and which fully satisfy the requirements of the desired Category A, B or C (which implies strict pre-selection). Applications should not be motivated by considerations of national prestige. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that every area submitted for appraisal has its own distinctive qualities which should be taken into account by the experts in their assessment—but always subject to the criteria of the prevailing diploma regulations and also, but not exclusively, to a comparison with other areas already awarded the Diploma.

The links uniting Diploma-holding areas should be emphasised and all ventures bringing them closer together should therefore be encouraged in every way: mutual information, pooling of experience, joint publications and so on.

It would be a valuable exercise to invite all consultants to a seminar at which the kind of evidence required for the appraisals could be defined in advance. In this way, it would be possible to achieve some kind of standardisation of appraisal requirements, thus making the procedure of awarding the Diploma more transparent and comparable.

In the case of a first application for the Diploma and also when the renewal procedure falls due every five years after the award, experts should be supplied in good time with adequate documentary material, indispensable for prior study, in order to make the most effective use possible of the only very brief period allowed by the Council of Europe for an on-the-spot appraisal. Such documents should of course contain accurate, up-to-date information presented in condensed form, but mentioning any existing problems.

The well-tried system of inspection by a neutral consultant accompanied by a competent specialist from the Council of Europe has proved not only highly effective, but indeed indispensable, precisely owing to the short time available for the on-the-spot



appraisal, while the independent assessment by two experts makes it possible to produce findings which are hardly open to dispute, or at least less likely to be contested. In my opinion, if the Council of Europe ever decided to abandon this procedure for any reason, for example on grounds of budgetary difficulties, this could ultimately undermine the significance of the European Diploma.

Conclusions

The Council of Europe deserves nothing but praise for its idea of awarding a European Diploma for the promotion of nature conservation and the protection of landscapes. With each new Diploma, however, it becomes increasingly obvious that the number awarded cannot be allowed to become excessive without the distinction running the risk of becoming a mere formality, thereby jeopardising the validity of the Diploma itself in the more or less distant future. In other words, in defining the requirements for obtaining the Diploma, the standards cannot be set too high. The past inspections and assessments made by consultants accompanied by a qualified colleague from the Council of Europe have proved by their results that success can be achieved only through consistent and strict judgment, which should not be confused with an obstinate, indiscriminating approach.

Special care should be taken to make sure that the first inspection of an area is carried out with the necessary thoroughness (possibly by extending the time set aside for the appraisal). For it is much more difficult at a subsequent stage to obtain further improvements for the protection of the landscape concerned.

The visiting consultant and the Council of Europe representative must therefore always bear in mind not only the regulations, but also the five aims of the Diploma as defined above, together with the fact that, by virtue of their participation, they share responsibility for the way protective measures are applied in the given site, both in national and European terms.

As will be gathered from the foregoing remarks, the author attributes great importance to the European Diploma as a means of promoting the ideal of landscape conservation. At the same time, however, he would like to emphasise that many further practical efforts are of course necessary in order to promote the protection of the countryside which is the target today of so many general pressures. The award of distinctions contributes towards this end but is not sufficient in itself; it is always necessary to bear in mind the aim of nature conservation as a whole. ■





Significance for rural zones

Protected areas and socio-economic development

Spatial planning, as a means of relating the future economy to geographical requirements, must have an inherent conservation strategy covering the protection of the most sensitive and distinctive areas which represent significant elements of our common heritage. These assets are worthy of proper classification and management at local, regional, national and international levels.

The coast in general, lakes and lagoons, high mountains, karst regions and other geological features, certain wooded areas and special botanic locations are examples of the common assets which need to be preserved.

Where protected areas and nature conservation are concerned, each country has its own policy, appropriate legislation and experience of management; however, when it comes to the protection of supra-national assets, the Council of Europe has been providing valuable support for over 20 years.

Protected areas must form an integral part of regional development plans.

The regions should not forget the special features of their territory when preparing their development schemes and implementing them on the ground. Without the creation of protected areas, even on a regional scale, the conservation of natural resources will not be an easy goal to attain. Protected areas must therefore become a component of development plans.

How the rural population helps to conserve natural resources

Country people, farmers in particular, perform important social and environmental functions in addition to that of production which supplies the market with a large volume of food-stuffs and timber products.

Farmers keep rural byways open to traffic and often look after their upkeep; they provide information, assistance or shelter for town dwellers passing through these picturesque areas. Farmers create and maintain the hedgerows, boundary walls and terraces, rectify minor watercourses, act as gamekeepers and generally as nature's caretakers.

Permanently irrigated pastures (Photo PRCN)

Access to healthy natural recreation areas for town dwellers depends on country dwellers' work, which is often unremunerated. Society should recognise their important function in safeguarding and developing natural resources.

Soil conservation, pollution control, water management, the maintenance of wildlife and the protection of flora would scarcely be conceivable without the countryfolk. A balanced landscape with a human quality is a lesson in itself, and more can be gained from observing, analysing and understanding it than from abstract reading of textbooks on ecology or spatial planning.

Apart from their nature conservation function, the rural population is the cultural storehouse of almost every region.

The towns are becoming more and more uniform and the lifestyles of younger people in the various countries are no longer distinguishable. Only in the countryside can one encounter traditional ways and customs, music, folklore, cuisine, etc.

The country, apart from its productive function, is an environmental and cultural reservoir which must be preserved.

The European Diploma's tribute to the countryside

In awarding the Diploma in rural areas (parks and reserves) of European significance, the Council of Europe highlights the international importance of such areas as an integral part of the heritage and culture of the Old World. Being so rich and unique, they embody Europe's most outstanding ecosystems which, like its people and languages, establish our identity and distinctiveness in relation to the rest of the world.

The award of the Diploma to a given area not only acknowledges its worth as a heritage but is also to be regarded as a tribute to the residents and their forebears who have preserved it up to the present day.

Conservation policy can only succeed if the population of the areas concerned, as a component of the ecosystems in need of preservation, are thoroughly informed of what is intended, what is at stake and why.

Failure to enlighten the people and harmonise economic aims with government policy on the conservation of natural resources may be the undoing of such policy.

Extolling the beauties of a landscape is unconvincing to the local people when they lack the means of comparison which come with travel; what must be done is to stimulate the turnover of their farms and businesses by means of activities which revitalise the country and are suited to the conservation of ecosystems. Rural tourism in general, hiking, crafts, food, rural architecture, ethnography, ethnology, specific types of farm and forest production and related industries are aspects of the above-mentioned harmony between conservation and development, which we support.

Information and investment to avert conflict between productionism and conservation

Blind productionism ultimately leads to the destruction of resources, whereas undue conservationism alienates us from the people and proves impossible to achieve in practice. However, information and action provide a sure means of demonstrating that environment policy represents the soundest medium-term and long-term economic policy.

In order to impress this clearly upon the residents of protected areas holding the Diploma, regional and national governments will need to take measures for public information and investment and at the same time ensure local leaders' participation in the bodies administering the areas concerned.

The information work must reach out to all population groups, especially children and schools. Young people are the most receptive and open-minded; theirs is the future, and so they are the safest bet. It must be made clear to them why their area is protected, what assets are to be safeguarded and why.

Public investment must be energetic in order to lend credibility to central government policies; all the above-mentioned activities and others like them deserve resolute support from the authorities.

The involvement of local councillors in the administration of the area is a vital prerequisite of successful management. All protected areas, particularly those holding the Diploma, must be able to rely on the active involvement of local councillors in their administration. Unless they administer what is their own property, their birthplace and workplace, they will feel uninvolved in government objectives and will fail to realise the most fitting approach to nature conservation.

Conclusion

The award of the European Diploma acknowledges and reflects favourably on the role of the rural population in the conservation of the richest objects of the European natural heritage.

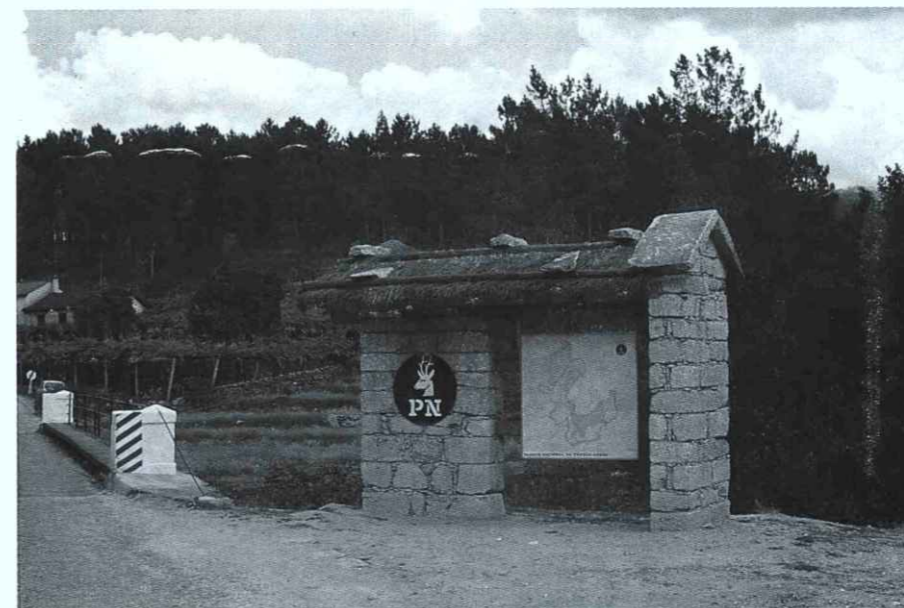
Areas holding the Diploma must become priority areas where, with the help of environmental education, local and regional development aims can be made to coincide with nature conservation policy.

The countryside is a store not only of natural assets but also of cultural and architectural treasures. Its preservation means the preservation of Europe's wealth and diversity.

Country people serve society in a number of ways. Their multiple functions must be recognised and their environment vitalised. Such will be the Council of Europe's goal in the campaign to be launched from Portugal next year.

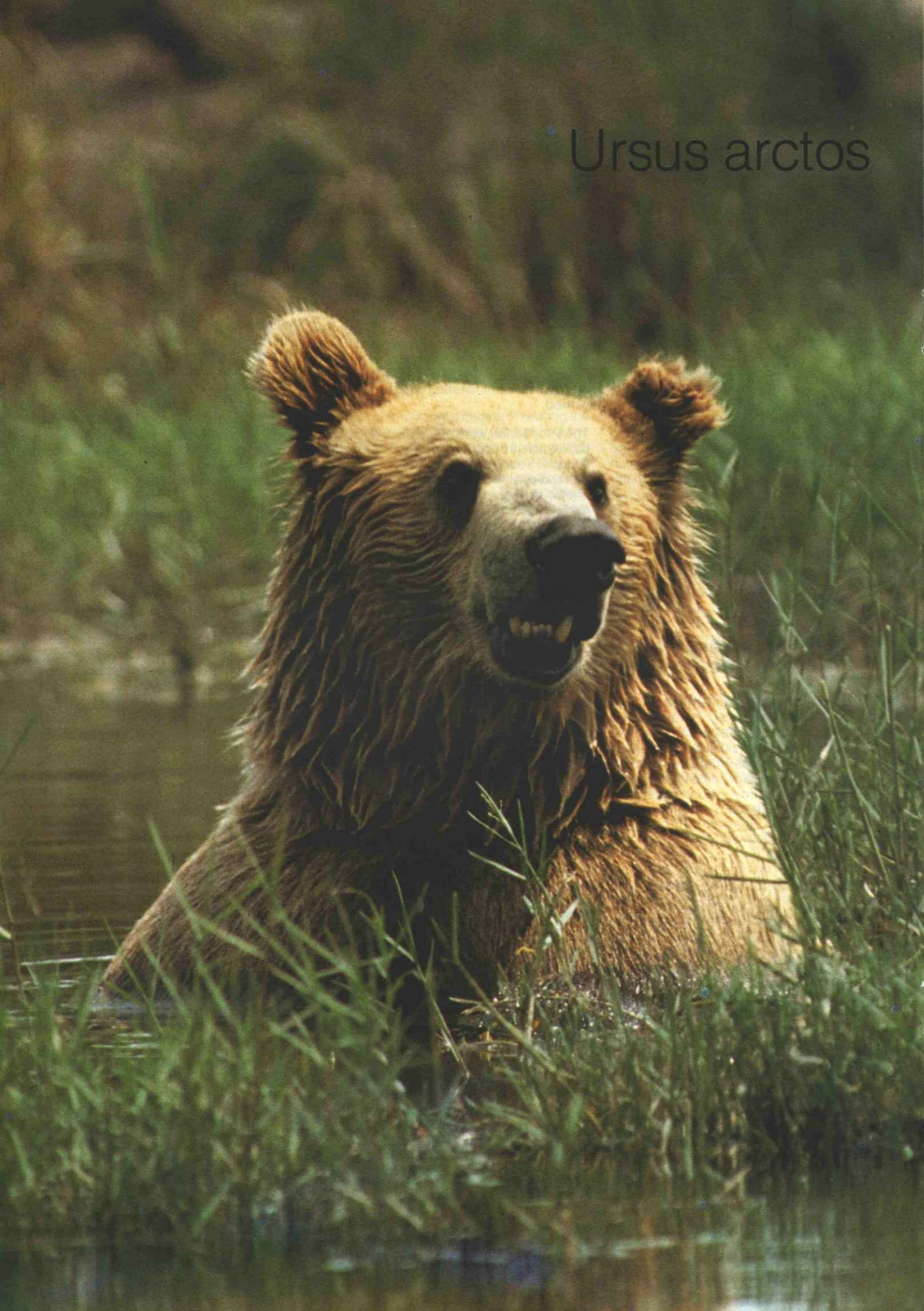
Portugal has a countryside of a great wealth, and since its policy on protected areas and nature conservation is acquiring consistency as regards structures and planning, it will be a candidate for the European Diploma in the near future. The Peneda-Gerês National Park will shortly be applying for the Diploma. ■

José Macario Correia



One of the entrances to the Peneda-Gerês National Park (Photo PRCN)

Ursus arctos



Forced to retreat by man, this magnificent mammal finds refuge in protected areas



management policy

Impact on management policy

Claudé Pairaudeau

Value of the Diploma

Without this sometimes negated but very real risk, a certain administrative complacency following the award of the Diploma might blunt the resolve of managers in upholding the often stringent rules which safeguard all the natural and cultural values under the protection of areas awarded the Diploma. However, this remark should not be misinterpreted; the resolve and dedication of the managers never falter (if so, they would be otherwise employed), and yet there are obvious reasons, of which one should be aware, for setting such store not by the Diploma in itself but rather by the undeniable fact that it provides an added value, a further positive argument, a new point of discussion and an additional security at least for the time being.

This is not equally true of all European parks or reserves holding the Diploma, which in fact appreciates in value whenever there is instability or uncertainty about the results of management. To put it another way, the problem of land tenure determines the value of the "VAT" occurring from the Diploma, and it must be seriously reckoned with in the Vanoise Park considering that the 53,000 hectares central zone (covered by the Diploma) is actually made up of 47,610 hectares of municipal land, 5,218 hectares of private property and a mere 11 hectares of government land so that the government, as the Park's highest patron, has only 11 hectares of home ground on which to enforce its policy. Elsewhere, anything supporting the idea of the Park as an international asset and not that of a community or region will help to perpetuate the "proper" management of this very special area, ensuring that it remains something apart, a world heritage rather like Notre Dame which nobody would dream of disputing.

On 14 September 1975 at the Plan du Lac Park entrance lying at an altitude of 2,400 metres in the Terminon district of Savoy, Mr E. Lucas, Director of Environment and Local Authorities at the Council of Europe, presented Mr P. Dumas, the then Chairman of the Board of the Vanoise National Park, with the European Diploma placing the park under Council of Europe auspices until 16 March 1981.

It was a momentous occasion in that by far the oldest French national park (though very young for Europe) seemed to be suddenly rising in rank and entering an exclusive circle with conditional admittance, in the full knowledge that the next "on-the-spot appraisal" might soon put everything in the balance once again.

Indeed, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that nature park managers are affected less profoundly by the award of the European Diploma than by the likelihood of its withdrawal.

National parks, as we know, are rarely spontaneous creations; negotiations which may have little bearing on nature come before a frequently protracted gestation and the equally slow materialisation of the reality of their integration into the local surroundings. Thus any additional positive factor is helpful in reaching a point where, having achieved mutual understanding, the parties involved (the park and surrounding municipalities) can jointly attempt to establish conditions under which the preservation of natural balance would cease being an obstacle to development and aid the emergence of a new pattern suiting this type of area. Such an aspiration is reasonable and natural enough in the rational spatial management of a region embodying a national park or nature reserve, but it takes a long time to iron out differences of opinion, placate all concerned and eventually bring them to speak the same language.

The award of the European Diploma is assuredly a good way of achieving this and, because it lends international value to the land under its protection, of placing the area more firmly in the local context so as to make it a full partner, a tourist factor and thus an economic factor in the long run, a real asset to the region, and gradually dispel through greater awareness the misconception regarding a set of restrictions imposed at the nation's behest on the property of communities which have not been allowed or have not taken time to grasp its incalculable value for the future. There must nevertheless be a plain and honest dialogue between the officials responsible, since the quality of human relations is vital to the process.

How the Diploma affects management

The consideration of time is followed or accompanied by that of the space to be managed: can the European Diploma, once awarded, be said to alter the course of management in a park? Can it reasonably be regarded as sufficiently influential to direct or re-direct a policy? There again the reply cannot be wholly affirmative or negative; one must judge with sufficient detachment, refraining from categorical assertions which would distort the far more complex reality.

In Resolution (76) 14 awarding the European Diploma to the Vanoise National Park, the Committee of Ministers made the following recommendations to the authorities concerned:

a) The accommodation facilities in the park should not be increased, and the network of paths should be designed primarily to protect "sensitive" zones rather than to facilitate access. The gatehouses and short walks leading from them should be regarded as a means of keeping the majority of visitors within bounds; their present amenities were well suited to that purpose:



Alpine marmot
(Photo R. Morin)

b) Relations between the Vanoise Park and the Gran Paradiso Park—at present twinned—should be put on a more regular basis, since it would be in the interests of both to compare their administrative methods and conservation problems by periodic contacts and exchanges of information, especially between their scientific councils and in the field of research.

What is the position today?

a) Accommodation facilities, gatehouses and paths.

The Board, alert to the possible hazards of overconcentration of accommodation, concluded its investigation by deciding that there should be no further human settlements inside the park, apart from standardising the chain of small refuges which in busy periods cannot accommodate walkers proceeding from buildings with far greater accommodation capacity.

The following three objectives have now been assigned to these small complexes forming the last link in the park's accommodation network:

— better quality reception and accommodation for walkers, the presence of wardens in the buildings being the essential corollary to the doubling of capacity (from 24 to 48 bunks);

— better supervision owing to the presence of a resident warden between June and September;

— an increase in the Park's own resources as overnight stays will automatically be charged for; despite the field staff's untiring efforts, this does nevertheless raise a problem in relation to the last remaining refuges without wardens.

The new refuges will therefore consist of three small chalet-style buildings which have undergone 10-12 years of testing for ability to withstand harsh weather at an altitude of 2,400 - 2,600 metres; they comprise a dormitory chalet, a chalet with a dining hall and a room for eating packed lunches and a chalet with warden's premises, services and provision store.

The "Valette" complex at Pralognan-la-Vanoise, inaugurated in September 1985, is the first part of the new network designed to balance the far higher accommodation capacity (50-60 bunks) of buildings constructed 10-12 years ago.

This arrangement (avoidance of new human settlements in the park) has been adopted in substance in the development programme for 1986-90 now under consideration, and extended to the other associates owning accommodation pre-dating the park in its present central zone (French Mountaineering Club and private refuges). Henceforth only extensions to existing buildings will be allowed, subject to prior inclusion in the development programme and payment of a fee to the park authority on the grounds that the resultant use of the buildings concerned is solely due to the amenities created by the park authority and to the information/communication policy pursued by its departments.

In fact, the idea is to achieve more satisfactory control of public access both in overall terms and through the facilities needed to channel visitors while allowing them to use the same buildings as "staging points" for information and familiarisation with the natural and cultural environment of the mountains.

The 1986-90 development plan accordingly redefines the conception of the park's gatehouse with direct or indirect reference to the recommendations made by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

These new gatehouses will have the following functions:

— to receive and accommodate ramblers (their present function);

— to serve as information centres for visitors, with their own audio-visual facilities;

— to promote and provide information about the localities bordering on the park (local knowledge and produce, craftsmanship).

At present there are 600 km of marked and maintained pathways. They have not been extended, but they effectively distribute the influx of visitors and provide for the intelligent discovery of a natural environment which in the Vanoise is vulnerable while being easily accessible to all types of visitor. Paths have recurring observation

and information points, geological orientation tables and landscape guides (interpretation paths).

b) Recommendations to the park management: Franco-Italian relations and their intensification

In 1981 the French and Italian governments decided on the creation of a "Franco-Italian neighbourhood commission" comprising in particular a working party on environment and nature protection, of which the directors of the Vanoise and Mercantour National Parks are members.

In 1986 at Aosta the *ad hoc* working party decided to confirm the setting up of three joint Vanoise-Gran Paradiso field committees for:

- health check-ups and studies on the larger fauna;
- tourism, activities and communications;
- control and supervision.

That was in January. On 3 July 1986 at its spring meeting, the Board of the Vanoise National Park appointed two of its members to take part in the proceedings of each of the three afore-mentioned committees, and an observer to the Board of the Gran Paradiso National Park, which some months before had already appointed its Deputy Chairman as observer to the Vanoise.

The outcome of this collaboration is generally positive at this stage and is not confined to inter-park staff exchange, although this is a new departure.

Migration by the greater ungulates between the Vanoise and Gran Paradiso associated national parks is monitored jointly.

The counts of marked animals and information about the colours and numbers of their ear-tags are regularly exchanged to document the migration of the ibex populations between the parks. It has been possible to make maps and after three years of close and consistent co-operation in the field the veterinary specialists and wardens can be said to have gained a near-complete understanding of the scale and diversity of the animals' behaviour.

Another objective is to design uniform signposting for the two protected areas in order to convey the idea of transfrontier parks more effectively on the spot and here again much has been possible with time.

Research programme on black grouse

The proposed research programme for 1986-90 ought to include a section dealing with points of interest to the Committee of Ministers: "the natural environment in relation to all forms of winter or summer access".



In the heart of the Park
(Photo La Vanoise National Park)



An ibex has just been captured with a teleanaesthetic rifle: after having been examined, the animal will be released with a coloured and numbered ear-tag.
(Photo M. Delmas)

This is consistent with a study conducted by the Park for four years now, "Impact of human activities on black grouse populations". It is a joint programme (Vanoise and Mercantour National Parks) aimed precisely at assessing the impact of human activities such as tourism, hunting or herding on various populations on black grouse. The programme for which the Vanoise National Park is responsible specifically concerns the impact of ski facilities in Haute-Tarentaise on the outskirts of the Vanoise National Park.

In addition to the studies carried out (count of males at leks, location of pens and nests using trained dogs, monitoring of wintering conditions in ski resorts) in 1985 was, for the programme as a whole, the first year in which results were collated. A colloquy was to alert managers to the disturbance of species so that appropriate conservation measures could be taken.

Dialogue and a friendly, sensible relationship have proved very fruitful, particularly with the Les Arcs resort, where experiments are to be undertaken with protection by nets, marking of cables etc outside the park precincts.

It is to be remarked that the above-mentioned facilities are all located outside the park and with good reason since a scheme for the protection of the black grouse can only attain its full value if conducted in such areas and voluntarily accepted and implemented by the developer.

Communication

This continues to be one of the mainstays of a successful park management policy in keeping the media constantly informed, elucidating the schemes implemented and forestalling any outbursts which might be caused by withholding information.

Activities and public access must be explained with clarity and frankness, failing which confidence would be forfeited.

The spoken, written and televised news media must realise what outstanding educational instruments parks represent; the parks have everything to gain by giving their operations greater media appeal than the occasionally, usually unpleasant occurrences, eg major enzootic diseases, which alone attracted interest in them in the past.

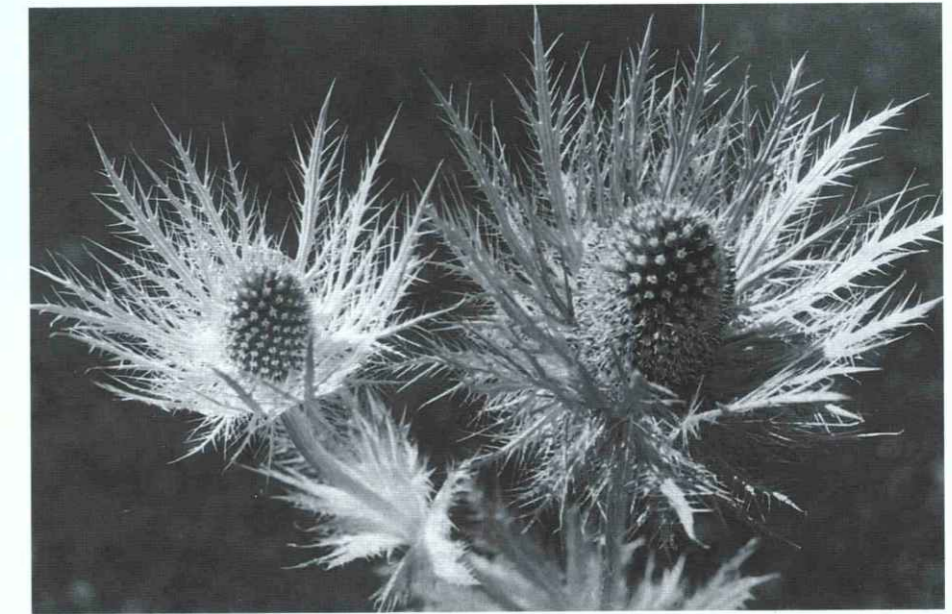
We now find that the press briefings held after every Board meeting concentrate much more on current events in the life of the park than on disease reporting.

Two years ago the Park recruited a press agent whose main function has been to establish new links between the press and the authorities.

Her arrival has contributed greatly to a new spirit and frank relations with the press as opposed to the confrontation of the past, which have benefited the Park and its public relations.

For instance, as part of its continuing action to open up the Park to its European associates, in September 1986 the Vanoise hosted the International Commission for the Protection of Alpine Regions (CIPRA) when it discussed what would nevertheless have been an explosive topic in the past, namely "Nature conservation without human action? Protected areas and local issues".

More than 30 journalists from seven Alpine countries were invited and our Italian colleagues were among the rapporteurs. It was a



Alpine thistle (Photo R. Morin)

step in the patient construction of the major network of protected areas in Europe, without which any strictly local action would not be exactly pointless, but too limited in scope.

The Council of Europe is present in this process, having approved CIPRA as an observer.

Conclusions

There are serious problems to be borne in mind: parks are coveted as new areas for tourism which is also no respecter of frontiers.

Symptomatically, the Vanoise has been spared the anticipated threats and this meets the wish expressed by the experts who came for an on-the-spot appraisal prior to the second renewal of the European Diploma.

What political weight do "Recommendations" carry at the present stage? There is

The Swedish parks

Stefan Malmberg

All the three national parks are situated north of the polar circle in the county of Norrbotten in Sweden. The national parks are owned by the Swedish state and the responsible authority is the National Swedish Environmental Protection Board (NSEPB). The local manager is the so-called Mountain Unit (Fjällenheten) situated in Jokkmokk. The Mountain Unit is an organisation shared between NSEPB and the County Council. It is responsible for the management of all protected areas and the system of trails in the mountain region in the County of Norrbotten. The national parks were awarded the diploma in 1967.

Sarek and Padjelanta

The Swedish mountains belong to the Caledonian Mountain Range which was formed 300 million years ago. There have been four Ice Age periods in the recent span of geological history in Sweden. These glaciers have given the mountain region its appearance like the great U-shaped valleys, terraces, eskers, moraines and lateral drainage channels.

Sarek is the largest and most genuine high mountain area in Sweden and it is a true wilderness. Nowhere else are there so many mighty peaks and hanging glaciers. Inside the park there are about 200 peaks over 1,800 metres above sea level and about 100 glaciers. The highest mountain is Sarektjåkkå, 2,089 metres. The high mountains consist mainly of the hard rock amphibolite. Between the mountains there are many deep valleys. The difference in altitude between peak and valley can be

extreme, in some places up to 1,300 metres. The precipitation is very high, over 2,000 mm. The valley Rapadalen is the most famous part of Sarek. It stretches from the central parts to the south-east boundary. The river Rapaättno runs through the valley. It is almost grey from all the silt coming from the surrounding glaciers.

The national park was created in 1909 and covers 197,000 hectares. Most of the park is above the coniferous forest limit: only a small spruce forest is situated at the Rittak valley in south-east. About 18,000 hectares is mountain birch forest, 15,000 hectares glaciers, 1,700 hectares bog, 3,900 hectares water surface, the remainder being bare mountains.

Padjelanta can be characterised as a wide open mountain plateau with large lakes and occasional high mountains. The highest mountain is Jeknafo, 1,837 metres.

The mountain plateaux, lying 800-900 metres above sea level, give the character to the landscape. The reason why big parts of the area are plain is because that calcareous sandstones and shales, which weather easily, are very common in the park. The high mountains however consist of amphibolite. A botanically interesting rock type, which is found in many mountains in the western parts, is serpentine stone. On a few of the high mountains, glaciers can be found. In the south-west corner is situated one of Sweden's largest glaciers, Almajekna. Other geological interesting formations are different forms of terrain generated by the Ice Age glaciers



Glutton (*Gulo gulo*) symbolises here the very rich and varied fauna of the Swedish parks where elk, lynx and bear are some of the largest animals to be seen. Lemmings and other small rodents, as well as otters and martens are also typical species. Bird life too is abundant and certain species such as the snowy owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) and the long-tailed skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) are particularly typical of these areas (Photo P. Klaesson / B.O. Olsson)

like the so-called Kisuris terraces in the north-east corner, probably formed in a large glacial lake as a delta and a very big area with tundra polygons close to Staloluokta.

The national park was founded in 1962 and covers an area of 198,400 hectares. Nearly all the park is situated above the tree-line. No coniferous trees are found. Only a few very small birch forests grow by the big lakes. The dominating vegetation type is brushwood moors. Quite common are also meadow lands and areas of willow.

What is unique for the park or for the whole mountain region in Sweden are the big mountain lakes Virihaure, Vastenjaure and Sallohaure. Only on a few other places in the mountains are found lakes with such an enormous expansive water surface.

The Lapps

Lapland, as the northernmost part of Sweden is called, is homeland for the Lapps or Samer as they are called in Swedish. Here they have kept their reindeer herds since ancient times.

The Lapps' right to land and water for reindeer raising is established by law, the present one from 1971. During the summer

Padjelanta is easier to visit in comparison to Sarek. A safe visit is however only possible during the summer months June to September. Through the park is a marked hiking trail along which you find nice overnight cabins every 10-20 kilometres. Anyhow it is necessary that the visitors have a tent and other equipment for mountain hiking if the cabins are full. The starting points are either Ritsem or Kvikkjokk situated north and south-east of the parks. A walk along the whole length of the trail takes about 8 to 10 days. It is also possible to take a flight to Staloluokta in Padjelanta either from Kvikkjokk or Vietas (situated in Stora Sjöfallet National Park).

Muddus

Muddus National Park is an enormous, very rough, wilderness area dominated of coniferous forests and bog. The total area is about 50,000 hectares. The landscape is a flat primary rock plateau with a number of softly-rounded hills. The forest, totalling about 26,000 hectares, is a genuine virgin forest dominated by pine in the south and east and spruce in the west and central parts. The forest is in the most places very old. Giant pine trees found are 500-600 years old. The oldest spruce trees are "only" 200-300 years old. Some parts have been ravaged by fires, most notably in 1920, 1933 and 1941. Recent research has shown that fires are the natural way to regenerate the coniferous forests.

More than 20,000 hectares are bog. The most common marshes are called strip-marshes, characterised by strips of peatridges surrounded by swamp. There are several lakes; the biggest is Muddusjaure.

In general it can be said that Muddus lacks a wide variety of plant species, but the bogs and the canyon of Muddusjokk are interesting for the botanist.

Muddus is very easy to reach during the summer months. From Skaite at the south-west boundary two hiking trails start and continue through the southern part of the park. Four overnight cabins and two tourist huts adjoining the trails are available for visitors staying overnight during the tourist season in the summer. ■

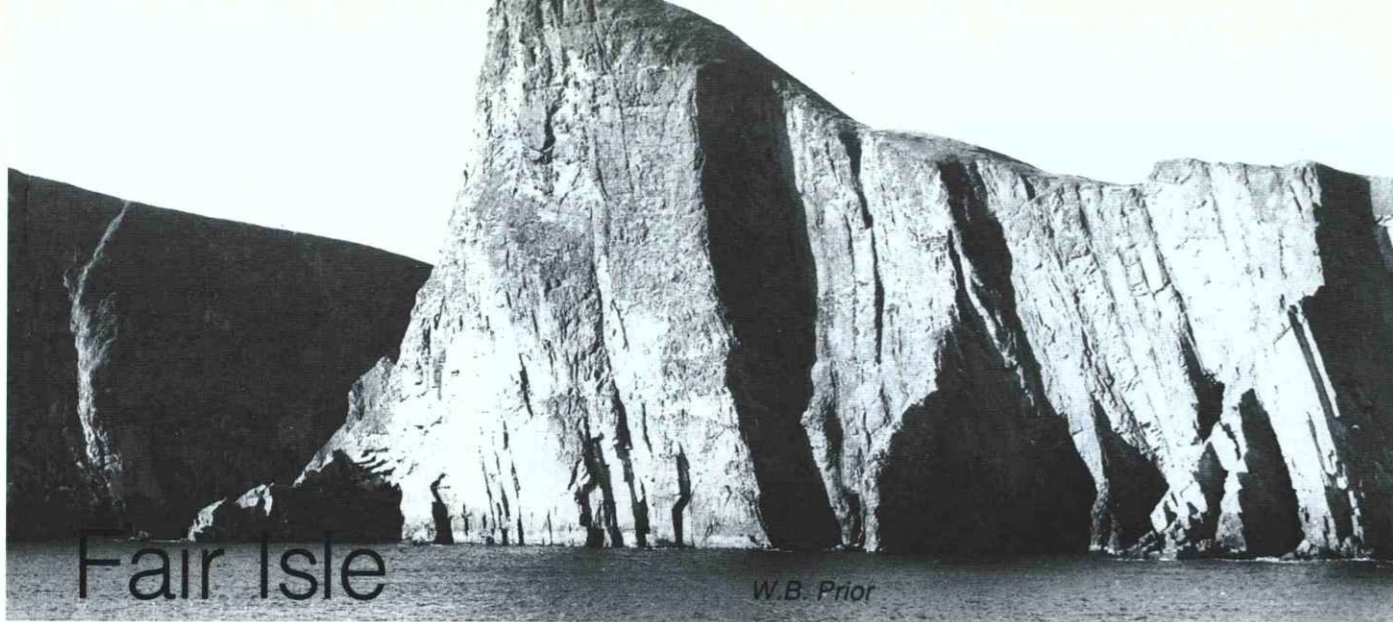
months the reindeers are grazing in Padjelanta and Sarek. Three Lapp-villages, Tuorpon, Jákkákaska and Sirkas, have their reindeer pastures inside the parks. At certain seasons and certain phases, for instance the calf marking, the reindeer-breeding can easily be disturbed, and the fruits of several weeks' hard work can be lost. It is important that visitors have respect to the Lapp's work with their reindeers.

Besides the reindeer-breeding the Lapps get their income from fishing in the big lakes.

Accessibility

The purpose of the National Parks is to preserve a mountain landscape in its natural state. Therefore you find strict regulations for both parks.

In Sarek there are no facilities for tourism except that the trail "Kungsleden" passes along the south-east boundary. Even during the summer it can be very risky to hike in Sarek. Only people with extreme good experience of hiking in the Swedish mountains can visit Sarek.



Fair Isle

W.B. Prior

The happily-named Fair Isle, which gives its name to the world-famous knitwear, is the southernmost of the Shetland islands. It lies nearly 25 miles from the nearest islands in the Shetland and Orkney groups, lapped on one shore by the Atlantic Ocean and on the other by the North Sea. A mere 3 miles in length and up to 1 1/2 miles in breadth, with a total area of only 830 hectares, Fair Isle is but a speck on the map for most people in the United Kingdom, never mind Europe as a whole.

Nevertheless, Fair Isle is home and workplace to a community of some 70 souls. Although subject to all the stress produced by remoteness and scale, the community on Fair Isle is vibrant and committed to a future on the island. There is a strong tradition of self-help and community activity which sets an example to small, isolated communities in other parts of Europe.

Although small, the island is an outstandingly beautiful place to live, with shapely headlands and dramatic sea-cliffs. The southern half of the island is dotted with the homes and buildings of the individual crofts, whilst the northern half is heather-clad peatland rising to the summit of Ward Hill.

A staging point for birds

Fair Isle is a staging point on the great north/south bird migration routes and has long been known for its value in understanding and measuring the seasonal movements of bird populations. Located on the island is the observatory set up by the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust following the Second World War, where all-year-round studies are made of migrant and resident bird populations. The Trust maintains a permanent presence in the person of the observatory warden who, with his wife, also manages the hostel where visiting scientists are accommodated.

Landscape and wildlife are protected

The island's landscape and wildlife interests have been well recognised and protected. The island belongs to the National Trust for Scotland, which has declared it to be

inalienable under its special powers, given to it by Act of Parliament. This means that, in practice, no damaging developments would be permitted. This protection is reinforced by the Shetland Islands Council, who exercise sensitive planning control, backed up by the additional protection afforded by designation of the island by the Secretary of State as a National Scenic Area on the advice of the Countryside Commission for Scotland. This mechanism brings into play special planning procedures designed to protect the appearance of the island.

In view of its scientific interest, the Nature Conservancy Council has notified part of the island as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which procedure also introduces constraints upon the management or development of the property to protect the wildlife attributes underlying the notification procedure.

Whatever the bureaucratic controls, the key to the wellbeing of the island lies in the islanders themselves. The economy is based on a system of crofting agriculture, coupled with co-operative schemes for sharing machinery and equipment and with individual skills being developed for the benefit of the whole community. As with all remote communities which have to rely on their own skills and aptitudes, they have a deep understanding of the sustainability of the kind they work for a living. The reasons which keep them away from the bright lights of the mainland will be as various as the individuals themselves but, without exception, they are committed to the island and will jealously protect it from damaging change.

This is not to say that they are not innovative or creative. For instance, the development of an aerogenerator to produce electricity from the almost constant winds that play over the island is based on high technology indeed. The adoption of this approach required a significant and firm contribution from all the islanders and its maintenance calls for engineering skills of the highest order.

Island life

Island life is demanding and stressful as well as rewarding. It has been described as an off-shore island of an off-shore island! The transport of people and supplies has been the

responsibility of the islanders themselves, using their boat the Good Shepherd. Even so, with winter storms and summer fogs, access is often uncertain and occasionally uncomfortable. The introduction of scheduled air services has been a great boon, although this too is very dependent on weather conditions. In addition to being a crofter, most people have another function.

Fair Isle has been seen to satisfy the requirements of Category C for the Council of Europe's diploma—that is to say, it satisfies the criteria for the cultural requirements of the Diploma's regulations. It is a living demonstration of the close integration of a rural community with the conservation of its scenic, scientific and historic characteristics which, in the terms of the resolution taking the island under the patronage of the Council of Europe, calls upon the authorities concerned to consider the provision and maintenance of conditions which will encourage the population to remain there and to guide the economic development of the island to conserve its special attributes. The very fact of recognition at a European level augurs well for the achievement of that objective. ■

Kuşçenneti

Tansu Gürpınar



Glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) (Photo T. Gürpınar)

In ecological terms, Kuşçenneti National Park is the heart of Kuş Gölü Lake (formerly Lake Manyas) which covers 162 km² and has a great variety of wildlife. Kuşçenneti National Park, located on the delta of the Sigaru (which flows into the lake at its north-east shores) was awarded the European Diploma of the Council of Europe in 1976 and still holds it, with renewals every five years.

Richness of wildlife

Thanks to an effective protection, the National Park is flourishing even better today than before receiving the "national park" status. However, the reputation of the lake's richness of wildlife dates back to the days of the Roman Empire, when the region with its gently rolling wooded hills was called "Paradiso". It was then also one of the best hunting grounds.

Also during the Ottoman Empire, the lake was famous for its bird life. The well-known Turkish traveller, Evliya Tchélébi noted that the lake harboured large numbers of duck, geese, swans, grebes, cormorants, pelicans, herons and gulls. The discovery of the richness of Kuşçenneti was made in 1938; a satellite research station of the Hydrobiological Institute of Istanbul was established there in 1952 and finally in 1959 the National Park status was given to the area, thus securing the efficient protection of habitat, fauna and flora.

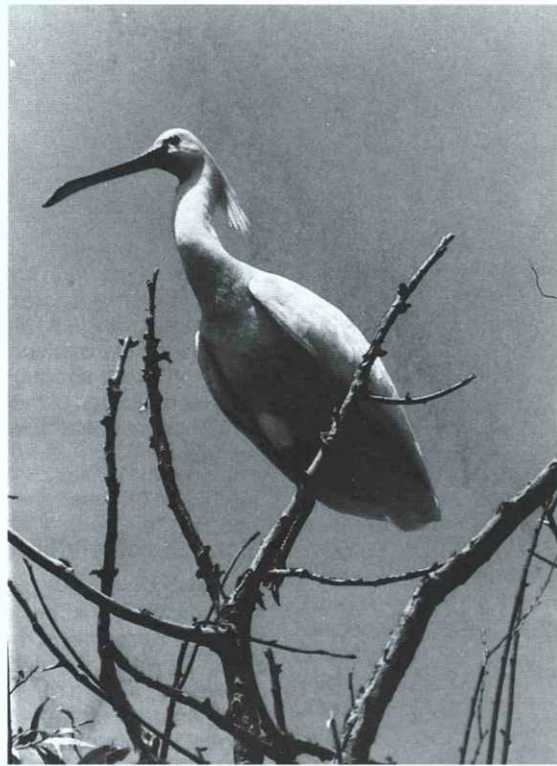
At first view, Kuşçenneti is a willow wood in the lake. In springtime, the lake's waters rise and this willow wood remains in water about one or two metres deep. Some 15 years ago, visitors were taken by boat to the nesting colonies and they could see spoonbills, ibises, cormorants at 15 to 20 metres. But this caused a great disturbance for the wildlife and was therefore cancelled. Instead of taking visitors by boat, a 15 m high observation tower was erected in 1972 entirely made of wood to fit into the natural surroundings and with a capacity of receiving 40 people.

The water under the trees means safety for the tree-nesting birds, since the predators from terrestrial ecosystems cannot reach their nests. Water also means food: fish, frog, snake, salamander and a good number of invertebrates live in and around it. The water's edge is the zone most frequented by birds in general.

Towards summer, the water level of the lake drops. Lush vegetation growth on wet, rich



Observation tower (Photo T. Gürpınar)



Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) (Photo T. Gürpinar)

alluvial soil turns the environment into an insect paradise. In fact, the high rate of primary organic production of these annual plants is an excellent contribution to the whole wetland ecosystem of the lake.

Usually, the period between high and low water level is between March and June and these few months are enough for birds to raise their young. This also corresponds to the hatching period of fishes. After the withdrawal of the water, the roots of willow trees start to breathe. The natural rhythm of the fluctuations of water makes everybody happy — birds, fishes, trees and, of course, man.

Kuş Gölü lake is large but shallow. Some years it floods and reaches up to 200 km² but its depth rarely exceeds 6 m. Limnologically, it is an argilothropic type of lake rich in oxygen and plankton. Twenty-two species of fish live in the lake. Fortunately, fishermen and birds look for different kinds of fish, therefore their relations are peaceful. The crayfish is an important species of the lake's fauna.

A bird paradise

Birds, who gave the lake its name and reputation, as well as to the National Park (Kuş means "bird", Kusgolu "bird-lake" and Kuşçenneti "bird-paradise") are the most attractive creatures of the ecosystem. I recorded about 240 species of bird when I

was Director of the Park in the early 1970s; 65 species breed in the park (44 being regular breeders) and the remaining 175 species visit Kuşçenneti during migration. Pelicans, cormorants, herons, spoonbills and ibises have large breeding colonies in the park and all have their nests on willow trees.

Dalmatian pelicans and glossy ibises were attracted by the creation of suitable nesting sites and they settled in the park in 1968 and 1973 respectively.

The total number of large birds nesting at Kuşçenneti varies between 3,000-3,700 pairs from year to year, depending on weather and water conditions. Some of these birds are on the list of "Threatened birds of Europe", for instance *Pelecanus crispus* (65 pairs), *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* (80 pairs), *Platalea leucorodia* (500 pairs) and *Plegadis falcinellus* (700 pairs). Grebes, duck, geese, coot, water rails, crakes, moorhens and reed warblers nest in reeds and rushes while Strigiformes and most of the Passeriformes prefer trees.

The breeding season also corresponds with the high season for visitors of whom students are the most numerous.

In summer, birds scatter all around the lake and river-banks nearby. Small groups of non-breeding white storks visit the park from time to time.

Migration movements of the birds start during the second half of August. Storks and pelicans come in thousands and rest and feed on the peaceful shores of Kuşçenneti. Waders and warblers stay several days at the park on their way south. Raptors and cranes glide high above the lake.

Many efforts to counteract the problems

Kuşçenneti is not exempt from various kinds of environmental problems, but the natural purity of the habitat is still preserved and there are many efforts to solve these problems, both in governmental and voluntary circles.

Kuşçenneti is at the moment the only national park with the European Diploma. There are nevertheless 16 other national parks, covering 270,728 hectares, with an important role in the field of conservation, not only for Turkey but also for Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. Some of these national parks harbour very rare and endangered species of wild animals such as Anatolian leopard and Mediterranean monk seal. In the hopefully near future, Turkey will make new applications for the European Diploma.

Recently, two new laws dealing with environment and national parks have been passed by the Turkish Parliament. Currently the General Directorate of the Environment and National Parks Department is preparing regulations for the implementation of these two new laws. At the end of 1986 most of the regulations will probably be ready and these laws will enter into force. No doubt this will be an important milestone for nature conservation in Turkey. ■

Hans Bibelriether

The Bavarian forest

According to Section 1 of the 1976 Nature Conservation Act of the Federal Republic of Germany, properly regulated farming and forestry are crucial to the upkeep of the scenic and recreational landscape and in general serve the aims of the Act. By introducing this "agricultural clause", the Parliament has established that farming and forestry do not constitute interference with the economy of nature—which is unjustifiable from the ecological point of view. This is the only possible explanation for the persistent weakness or absence of restrictions on agricultural as well as forestry operations in virtually all the larger German nature reserves, which by definition should represent the strictest form of nature protection. In fact, stands of forest in nature reserves are persistently exploited, stemming the development of woodland into a natural ecosystem which growth and decay can

proceed without human interferences. Exploitation is avoided only in some of the small nature reserves and in the "natural forest enclaves". Altogether, these constitute no more than a fraction of the Federal Republic's 7.2 million hectares of woodland. It is obvious that such small areas can hardly function as natural forests.

These larger timber forests-cum-nature reserves in Germany are in complete contrast with the Bayerischer Wald National Park, where the aim is to phase out all forms of exploitation or human intervention so that wide areas of woodland can develop fully in accordance with their own regulatory processes, under natural conditions. 6,400 hectares of the park's total 13,000 hectares have by now been closed to all forestry work or other intervention, and hunting has also ceased in the areas concerned. Furthermore, large parts of this

heartland can now only be entered by visitors using prescribed paths.

Natural features

The National Park was founded in 1970 in the heart of Central Europe's largest wooded area. It extends from the ridges of this low mountain range, which lie at about 1,450 m to altitudes of 650-700 m above sea level. The climate of the region is cool and damp. Mean annual temperatures range from 6° in valley locations to 3° at the highest altitudes, and average rainfall from 1,000 mm to 2,000 mm. Snowy winters are typical, for approximately 140 days per year a compact blanket of snow lies over 50 cm deep. The substratum consists of very ancient granite and gneiss rocks which contain no limestone and are therefore comparatively acidic. Brown soils of considerable depth predominate on the slopes while moist or wet soils are prevalent on level ground, large parts of which are taken up by low-lying or mountain moorland. The steep slopes and mountain peaks, which are bouldery and rocky, present a special soil formation.

90 % of the National Park is wooded. The forests have been used for logging for about 120-150 years, but compared to other forest areas in Central Europe their composition remains relatively natural and original. The natural vegetation zones are still clearly marked today. In the high locations at over 1,150 m above sea level, natural spruce forests (*Piceetum*) predominate. Most of the 750-1,150 m altitude range lies within the area of mixed spruce-pine-beech mountain forests (*Abio fagetum*). This sector of the forest has been subjected to the most intensive logging over the past 150 years and was the most significantly altered. For one thing, the irregular age structure which originally typified these forests was turned into a uniform one with narrow age bands, and what is more the silver fir declined significantly over large areas. The cause was not only the style of forestry but also over-population with red and roe deer. A third alteration to be noted is the general absence of dead, decaying trees.

In the cold, moist hollows, where cold air accumulates through the year under the relevant weather conditions, afforestation patterns dominated by spruce are also well-developed. These damp spruce forests, known as "Aufichtenwälder", are a



(Photo H. Bibelriether)

distinguishing mark of the Bayerischer Wald.

In addition to the principal forest biocenoses, the park has special biotopes covering limited areas, ie mountain streams rising on the wet and snowy ridges and high or low-lying moorland. In the park itself there are also a few small open stretches of grassland created by former human use as pasture. They are of cultural and historical interest as well as harbouring a wealth of species and thus also enjoy protection within the National Park as special biotopes.

The park's plant communities are broken down into 61 different vegetation units which mainly fall into the following categories of species:

- Northern species;
- Alpine species;
- East European species—at the westerly limit of their distributions;
- specialised species adapted to the various natural mixed beech forest patterns and to moorland;
- species occurring in the vicinity of running water;
- species which can exist in special locations subjected to human influence.

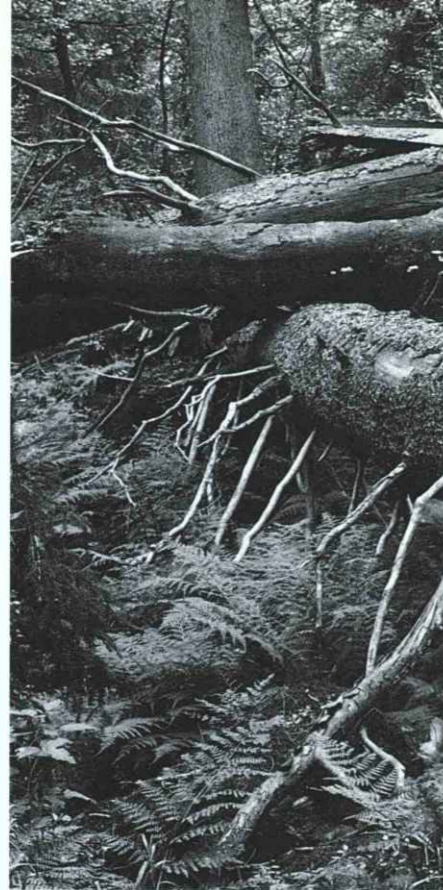
Animal species may be similarly classified; the following examples occur in the National Park:

- Northern species: capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), pygmy owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*), Tengmalm's owl (*Aegolius funereus*), three-toed woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*);
- Alpine species: alpine shrew (*Sorex alpinus*), ring ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*);
- East European species: Ural owl (*Strix uralensis*), red-breasted flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*), white-backed woodpecker (*Dendrocopos leucotos*), nut-cracker (*Nucifraga caryocatactes*);
- mixed beech forest species: garden dormouse (*Elyiomys quercinus*), stock dove (*Columba oenas*);
- moorland species: teal (*Anas crecca*), redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*).

Scientific importance

Apart from nature conservation, research is a leading objective of the National Park. The main emphasis is on inventorying of biotic and abiotic factors and continuous monitoring of their development. A close and profitable co-operation is maintained with many universities and institutions. During its 15 years of existence, the park has developed into one of the best-researched woodland areas in Europe; the list of research projects already stands at over 200.

Research findings produced within the park are recorded and made available with the assistance of electronic data processing. A grid with 100 m squares is used for collating



(Photo H. Bibelriether)

data, which is recorded in relation to the coordinates and remains on line for further research work and other purposes. The park is progressively becoming a major link in the environmental monitoring system for the Central European area.

Education and recreation

In accordance with the relevant nature conservation legislation, the park also promotes education and relaxation for visitors "insofar as nature protection considerations permit". Since 1970 the number of visitors per year has risen from 200,000 to some 1.5 million. Many facilities for visitors have been created, the most important being an extensive information centre which has already had about a million visitors since it opened in 1982. As well as exhibitions, film shows and slide lectures about the forest and its life, personal services, guided tours and talks are offered. A library and an "adventure playground" for individual experience with nature's materials are available. The Park House is surrounded by an extensive botanical and geological park open to visitors, where anyone interested can find out about the rock formations and geology of the Bayerischer Wald or about its plant communities, whether occurring naturally or influenced by man, which number over 400 different higher plant species.

According to a scientific enquiry, the National Park has acquired outstanding significance for the development of tourism in this remote part of Germany. It has been calculated that the park alone was responsible for an annual turnover of 25-30 million DM from tourism in the adjacent Freyung-Grafenau district.

Education and information work is aimed primarily at giving visitors a better

understanding of forests and of the multiple relationships which make up their complex ecosystem. The watch-word is "forest experience" — understanding of nature". This means making visitors appreciate the park's objectives and the value and vulnerability of its forests with their varied plant and animal communities, thus inducing them to generally reform their attitude to nature. One of the current priorities relates to the problem of forest destruction, which has recently afflicted the Bayerischer Wald National Park in the same way as many other forests in the Federal Republic of Germany and elsewhere.

Value and importance of the European Diploma for the park's activities

As was pointed out in the introduction, the park's primary aim of allowing the reconstitution of virgin forest over a considerable area of Central Europe through unchecked natural development represents an unprecedented goal for German nature conservation. Over the 16 years since the park was founded, this has been methodically and progressively developed and made a reality. The fact that half the area of the park, more than 6,000 hectares, is no longer subject to any kind of human influence or exploitation is of significance for the whole of Central Europe as well as for the Federal Republic of Germany. These strictly protected areas of the park now constitute the largest untouched forest complex in all Central Europe.

The award of the European Diploma (Category A) is taken as an acknowledgement of the Bayerischer Wald National Park's consistent effort to preserve natural development, natural processes and consequently evolution itself. The distinction also entails a commitment to systematically follow the course taken and phase out all exploitation and interference in the remainder of the park area. In the medium and long term, this will give rise to a natural forest of well over 10,000 hectares in the heart of Europe, a virgin forest which develops according to its own laws. At the same time, this woodland provided citizens alienated from nature with the possibility of gaining new insight and experience, a new understanding of natural biocenoses, in their encounter with primitive nature. ■

Extending the Diploma's influence

Peter Gay

More than sites have now received the European Diploma. That is equivalent to (roughly) one per member country on average. Does this really represent all the places that merit the Diploma? Surely not. In which case, would 50 be a feasible objective? Or 200? Is it realistic to contemplate that all sites that meet the criteria will even be offered by governments as candidates for the Diploma? And is it right or helpful to think of the Diploma as another example where success is judged solely by numbers? And should growth in the series of Diploma sites be left entirely to the chance of applications by individual governments, or is there any guidance that can be given on how the series could best develop so that it contributes most effectively to European nature conservation?

Representation of the range

Simply because we are familiar with the habitats and countryside types in our own country, it is easy to overlook that what to each one of us is a part of our everyday environment can so often be something special or unique when considering Europe as a whole. All such special places that merit international recognition could be serious contenders for the European Diploma. They are the sites for which in effect each country is the steward on behalf of Europe. But is it realistic to aim at such a representative role as guiding the choice of Diploma sites? I return to this later.

Protection

For a site to be even a serious candidate for the Diploma it must already be adequately

WATCH OVER THE NATIONAL PARKS

Winner of the poster competition organised by TV Times and 'Splash' in conjunction with the

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John Dower House, Crescent Place, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 3RA

April 1986

"The countryside is beautiful. I like it a lot. It's for animals and people to play in. National Parks make sure beautiful countryside is safe from factories and building sites. Countryside is for you and me."

Richard Jeffs, aged 7
Lynn, Bedfordshire

protected. Despite this, from the cases explained in the earlier articles, the Diploma undoubtedly has been very effective in helping to protect sites from undesirable changes. And as pressures on land continues, we have no reason to believe that the added protection the Diploma gives through recognition of the international importance of the sites will be any less necessary. Although this protective role was one of the reasons behind the establishment of the Diploma, since then other things have happened which should make us look for a much wider range of purposes to guide our thinking for the future. One of those developments has been the establishment of the European Network of Biogenetic Reserves.

Relationship

Both in the Diploma's protective and representative roles we should consider its relationship to this European Network. The essential purpose of this Network is to ensure that by acting together the member governments of the Council of Europe will secure the protection of the full European range of wildlife habitats — each country nominating for the Network those of its protected sites which best contribute to the overall scheme.

The Network is in its early days but has the mechanisms to achieve that objective. It will entail the eventual designation across Europe of certainly hundreds and maybe more than a thousand individual sites. This is the scale of what will be required to meet the need for a series of European representative sites. It is a scale that the European Diploma could not sensibly contemplate.

Is there then a more distinctive role for the series of Diploma sites that goes beyond the protective and representative purposes?

Experience

I suggest that much greater emphasis should be given to the role of Diploma sites as special places where experience can be gained that can be applied elsewhere. This would have relevance not just to the techniques of managing plants and animals in their communities, but (depending on the site and the "class" of its Diploma) in handling planning issues, in welcoming visitors in ways that respect the special values of the site, in schemes for interpreting and explaining the site, and in finding practical ways of integrating the conservation of nature with schemes for developing the local economy.

To some extent this is already happening — the occasional meetings that the Council of Europe arranges for the managers of the Diploma sites do enable them to draw on each other's experience. That is, the lessons learned are being passed from one Diploma site to another. But surely it is not

sufficient that this experience is just kept within "the Club". Diploma sites could play a bigger role as sources of inspiration and experience of well-tested methods for tackling the problems of other special areas in the countryside around them.

This is not something that will happen if it is left to chance. It requires a clear decision by the managing authority of the individual Diploma site that such a purpose is amongst the objectives for managing that Diploma site. Perhaps it is a matter on which the Council of Europe could give encouragement.

This is not to underestimate the importance of the protective role of the Diploma, or of the greater national recognition that comes to nature conservation as a whole through the awareness of the international importance of Diploma sites. But conservation entails use. I am suggesting that the resources of knowledge and experience obtained on Diploma sites could be much more fully used to the benefit of nature conservation throughout a country and throughout Europe.

In acting as sources of practical wisdom the Diploma sites would be providing the leadership commensurate with their status. We need such wisdom to help us to meet the challenge of guaranteeing throughout Europe a beautiful countryside rich in wildlife. And such wider influence would bring even greater recognition to the status of the European Diploma. ■

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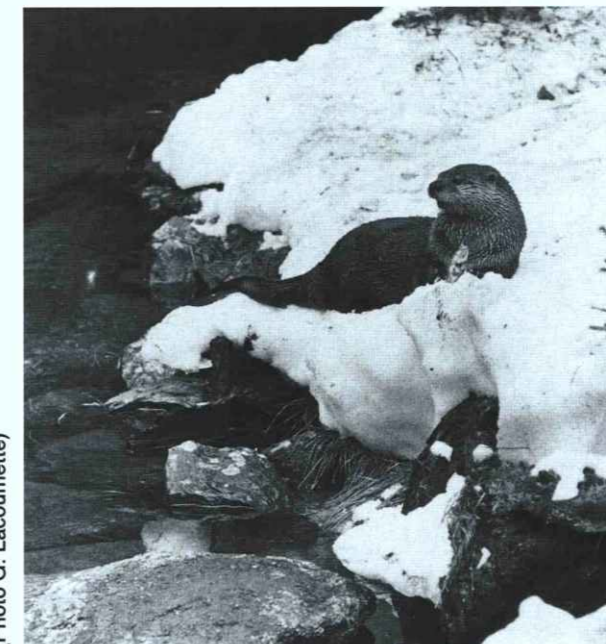
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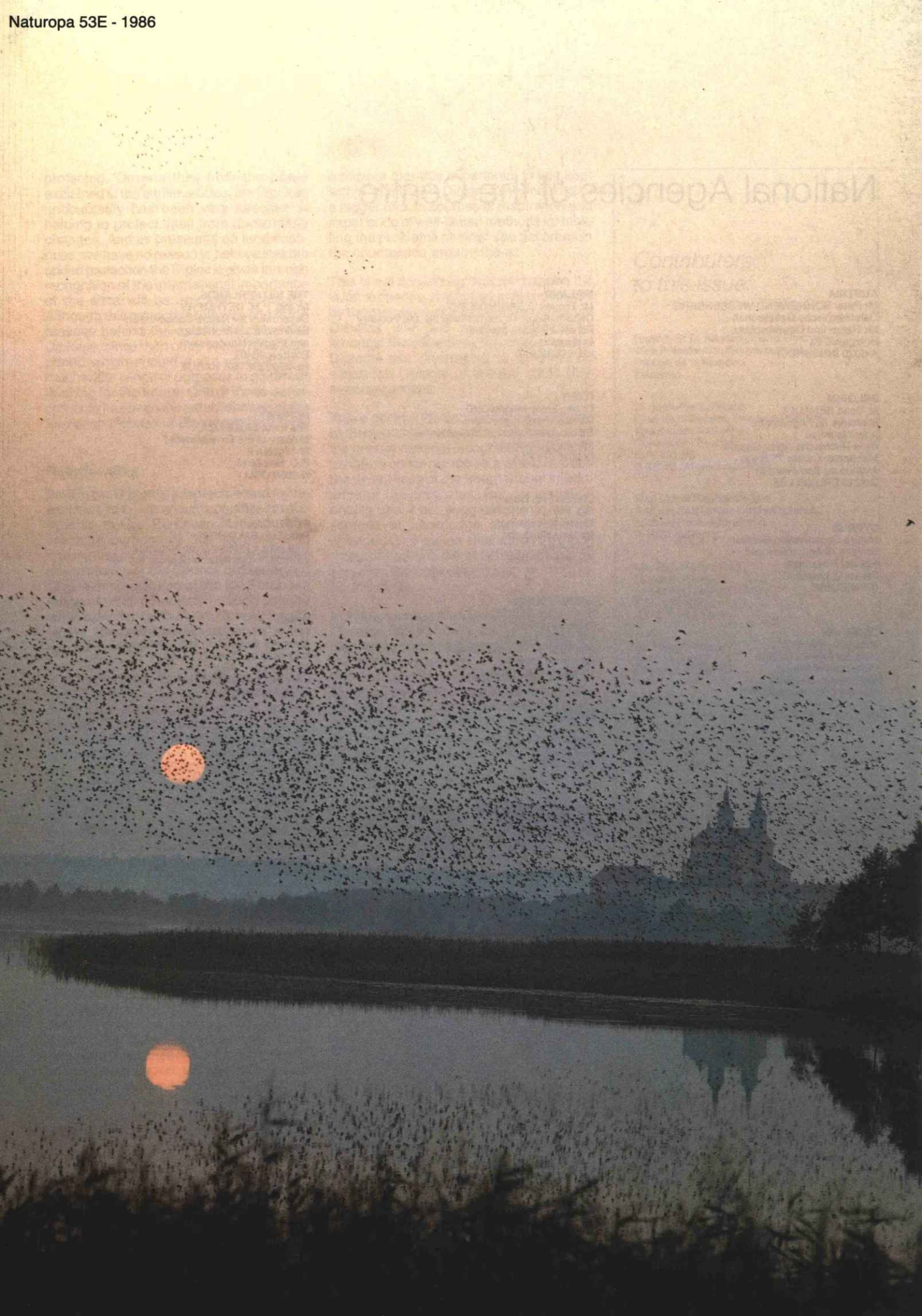
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(Photo G. Lacourmette)

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National Agencies of the Centre

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