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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

39th meeting
Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2019

Complaints on stand-by

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

- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -

*Document prepared by
the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Serbia*

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- July 2019 -

Progress Report according to Appeal No. 2016/6 – which assumes the risk of the national disappearance of Great Bustard (*Otis Tarda*) population in Serbia.

In reference of the request of the Secretariat of the Bern Convention on Complaint No. 2016/6 – which assumes the risk of national disappearance of Great Bustard (*Otis Tarda*) population in Serbia from 3th June 2019., we would like to inform you on behalf of the Ministry of Environmental Protection as following:

1. Protection regime for the protected area as its zoning

1.1. Conservation, improvement, sustainable use and presentation of the Great Bustard and its habitats within the protected area of the Special Nature Reserve are carried out according to the Decree of the Government on establishment of the Special nature reserve "Pasture of Great bustard" ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 86/2018) and Annual Management program fro 2019. which was approved by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (Approval No: 353-02-

2881/2018-04 Dated: 19. 02. 2019.).

Special Nature Reserve "The pastures of Great bustard" are located in the territory of the town of Kikinda and the municipalities of Čoka and Novi Kneževac and covers a total area of 6779.77 ha.

In accordance with Articles 6. and 7. of the Decree, protection regimes are regulated as following:

- Article 6

On the areas where were established the regime of protection third (III) degree, the proactive protection is being carried out in order to restore, revitalize and overall improve the protected areas.

In addition to the prohibition of works and activities which are as such established by Article 35 of the Law on Nature Protection, on the areas where the protection regime of third (III) degree were established, the following shall be prohibited:

- 1) any type of activity within a radius of 150 m from the registered Great bustard nests;
- 2) disturbance and destruction of areas under grassland vegetation, in particular their cultivation and establishment of agricultural production;
- 3) change of land use except for the purpose of revitalization;
- 4) removal of grass cover with surface layer of soil;
- 5) introduction of autochthonous species of plants and animals;
- 6) performing works that disturb the hydrological and morphological characteristics of the areas;
- 7) chemical and physical pollution, deposit of solid and liquid waste and waste contaminated water;
- 8) pollution by noise and light;
- 9) opening of oil and other drill holes;
- 10) construction of objects and infrastructure, except for the management of natural areas and sustainable grazing;
- 11) paving and filling of roads with hard materials;
- 12) flight of agricultural aircraft over the protected area;

- 13) watering by the system of artificial rain;
- 14) capturing live rabbits;
- 15) movement of pigs at a distance of more than 100 m from the farm;
- 16) all the other actions that could endanger the Great bustard and other natural values of the Special Nature Reserve "Pasture of the Great bustard".

On the areas where the protection regime of third (III) degree were established, works and activities were limited to:

- 1) use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers;
- 2) planting and cutting trees and shrubs;
- 3) burning open fire for the purpose of managing the habitat;
- 4) construction and adaptation of farm and other objects;
- 5) geological and other research that are not in contrary to the objectives of preserving and improving the natural values of the Special Nature Reserve "Pasture of the Great buster";
- 6) exploitation of mineral resources only on the basis of the results of already started geological explorations, which have been approved in accordance with the law.

-Article 7

On the areas where regime of protection second (II) degree, active protection was carried out in order to preserve and improve natural values, in particular through the management of wild plant and animal populations, the maintenance and improvement of conditions in natural habitats and the traditional use of natural resources.

Except for the prohibition of works and activities as defined in Article 35 of the Law on Nature Protection and Article 6 of this Decree, on the areas where the protection regime of II degree is established, the following shall be prohibited:

- 1) performing agricultural works on arable land in the period from April 1 to July 31;
- 2) use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers;
- 3) setting up of night flocks and shepherds shelters.

On the areas where regime of protection second (II) degree, works and activities are limited to:

- 1) grazing and mowing in line with the life cycle of the Great bustard;
- 2) agricultural works and the presence of agricultural machinery in line with the life cycle of the Great bustard;
- 3) sowing of agricultural crops, such as: rapeseed, cereals, alfalfa and anise;
- 4) hunting in the period from 1 April to 31 July, to the strictly controlled trophy of shooting roebuck and controlling predator population of Great bustard.



Figure 1: Zoning system – protection regime of the second (II) and third (III) level of the protection

1.2. The regulations for the use of the area

In accordance with Decree on establishment of the Special Nature Reserve "Pasture of the Great bustard", within the procedure for approving the management plan, Ministry of Environmental Protection obtains the opinion of competent authorities for science, education, agriculture, water management, tourism, mining, energy, economy and finance from their consideration in accordance with their legislation.

Planning documents, plans and programs in the field of game management, water management, agriculture and tourism, and other programs and plans relating to the use of natural resources and space in a protected area of the Special Nature Reserve "Pastures of great bustard" should be harmonized with the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, regional spatial Plan of the Autonomous of Vojvodina Province, Decree on establishment of the Special Nature Reserve "Pasture of the Great bustard" and management plan of this PA.

2. The status of the 1-year management programme implemented in the area and the last winter census results

2.1. Hunting association „Perjanica” as a manager, in accordance with Article 8 Decree of establishment of the Special nature reserve „Pastures of Great bustard” („Official Gazette of RS”, Number 86/18) was delivered to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Program to manage Special reserve of nature „Pastures of Great bustard” for 2019 year for approval. Decision on adoption of the Management program was brought by Steering committee of Hunting association „Perjanica” at the meeting held 15 November 2018.

In accordance with the suggestions given by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, on 14 February 2019 the corrected Management Program was submitted, to which the Ministry of Environmental Protection gave its consent.

The Management Program was given the consent, bearing in mind that it contains priority tasks, organizational and material-financial assumptions and elements for performing management tasks, regarding the goals of protection and sustainable use, possibilities and limitations for their realization, detailed presentation of annual tasks on conservation, maintaining, improving, displaying and sustainable use of the protected area for the needs for science, education, recreation and tourism and overall socio-economic development, the presentation of specific tasks in the preparation and adoption of management documents, display entities and organizational and material conditions for the execution of the program, the amount and sources of the necessary financial resources, in accordance with Law on Nature Protection, Decree of protection on Special reserve of nature „Pastures of Great bustard” and Decision on conditions of the protection of nature Provincial institute for nature protection (Number 03-325/2 on 29. November 2018).

- Management plan as long-term planning document has not yet been adopted. Draft plan *nac been* developed for period than 10 years and it is in the process of the consideration by the Ministry of Environmental protection and Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province.

2.2. Monitoring

Continuous monitoring of all activities of the population of Great bustard, regular activity and obligation of the Manager, which will be carried out daily in the course of 2019. As in the previous planning period, monitoring of the population of great bustards implemented security guard and professional service SRP "Pastures of great bustard" in cooperation with the Provincial Institute for Nature Protection.

For the year 2019, the following main activities related to monitoring the populations of large Great bustard in the area of SRP "Pastures of Great bustard" are ongoing:

- Determination of the population size of the Great bustard - winter census, was carried out in the period January-March 2019.
- Locating and mapping active nests which are in reproductive period.
- Locating the points of retention of females in the reproductive period and the movement of the young birds.
- Monitoring the endangering factors and the effects of active protection measures.
- Monitoring of the behavior of Great bustard during and after the construction of the necessary fence in the Reserve as part of the realization of the international project of cross-border cooperation between Hungary and Serbia under the acronym PANNONSTEPPEES.

2.3. Report on execution of the activities in project period 4: Monitoring of the key species of the Pannonian Steppes within the Project Interreg-IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Program Hungary-Serbia.

The project title "Conservation of the key animal species of the Pannonian Steppes in the border region between Hungary and Serbia" under the acronym PANNONSTEPPEES officially began in January 2018. Project ID: HUSRB/1602/12/0065. Lead Beneficiary: Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province. The project was approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) of the Interreg-IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Program Hungary-Serbia.

Monitoring of the Great Bustard was implemented by the project members team in collaboration with experts from the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province in north part of Serbia. Field work for monitoring of distribution, population size, ecological characteristics and temporal changes of Great Bustard (5 days including period from 21.01. 2019. to 18. 04. 2019. – Interreg Project Report attached of the this Report).

Data gathered in this report period showed that during this period Great Bustard specimens are located in January in Vajlerka locality in the vicinity of main road Mokrin-Crna Bara. After that in March birds moved near asphalt road „Naftaski put“ and border of PA-Special nature reserve. In April Great Bustard appeared on grasslands inside PA Special Nature Reserve and very close to protective fence. Individual female Great Bustard feeding on grasslands inside area of protective fence is spotted on 26. April, 10. and 11. May 2019. by the rangers of this PA. Data confirms that females of Great Bustard have already accepted this artificial structure as well as area inside protective fence, with a good opportunity to start safely breeding there.

3. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Central European Population of Great bustard (*Otis tarda*)

The SMC Secretariat was sending Notification 2019/009 from 15th April 2019 to the Parties on new signatory to the CMS Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Central European Population of Great bustard (*Otis tarda*)

The Republic of Serbia signed the Great Bustard MOU on 10th April 2019. in Belgrade.

This brings the total number of Signatory States to 14. The Great Bustard MOU has been in effect since 1st June 2019.

By accepting the Memorandum of Understanding, the Republic of Serbia, in cooperation with the signatory states and relevant stakeholders at national level will endeavor to:

- Provide the maximum protection of Great bustard,
- Providing adequate protection measures for individual individuals or small groups of Great bustard that occurs during migration or in wintering sites in pastures or agricultural areas, and
- Carries out the provisions of the populations of Great bustard Western Palearctic, *Otis tarda* for the implementation of the Memorandum.

4. General Conclusion

Considering different risk factors and impact on survival of Great Bustards in Serbia, implementation of various protection measures achieved to decrease them, Ministry of Environmental Protection continues with undertaking protection measures and habitats management, in order to provide appropriate conditions for increasing the Great Bustard population size in Serbia, including cooperation with competent authorities, technical and scientific organizations and civil society.

Coordinated and prepared by:

Ms. Snežana Prokić, MSc, Focal point for the Bern Convention,

Head of Department for Ecological Network and Appropriate Assessment

Belgrade, 22nd July 2019

- February 2019 -



Republic of Serbia
MINISTRY OF
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Number: 337-00-00147/2018-04

Date: 28. 01. 2019.

Немањина 22-26

Belgrade

Iva Obretenova, Secretary
Council of Europe
Biological Diversity Unit
Secretariat of the Bern convention
F-67075Strasbourg Cedex
France

Subject: Progress Report according to Appeal No. 2016/6 – which assumes the risk of the national disappearance of Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) population in Serbia.

Dear Ms Obretenova,

In accordance with Council of Europe Complaint No. 2016/6 – which assumes the risk of national disappearance of Great Bustard (*Otis Tarda*) population in Serbia from 5th October 2018. regarding the notification of the Association Epar Subotica (Serbia), on behalf of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, we would like to inform you of the following:

1. DECLARED THE EXPANSION OF PROTECTED AREAS

1.1. Decree on the proclamation of the protected area of the Special Nature Reserve "Pasture of Great bustard"

Special nature reserve "Pasture of Great bustard" was established by the Decree of the Government in November 2018. ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 86/2018).

Special Nature Reserve "The pastures of Great bustard" are placed under the protection in order to preserve a unique mosaic of steppe, salt marsh and wetland habitats and the only remaining populations of Great bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia. In the area of the Special Nature Reserve " Great bustard", it was identify over 20 different fragile types of plant communities which represent of rare and endangered flora (*Trinia ramosissima*, *Silene viscosa*, *Beckmannia eruciformis*, *Peucedanum officinale*, *Plantago*

schwazenbergiana, *Centaurea sadleriana* and *Scilla autumnalis*) and fauna (*Ophiogomphus cecilia*, *Pelobates fuscus*, *Burchinus oediconemus*, *Asio flammeus* and *Spermophilus citellus*) and 135 species of birds, which represent a condition for the survival of the Great bustard, one of the most endangered bird of the world.

Special Nature Reserve "The pastures of Great bustard" are located in the territory of the town of Kikinda and the municipalities of Čoka and Novi Kneževac and covers a total area of 6779.77 ha.

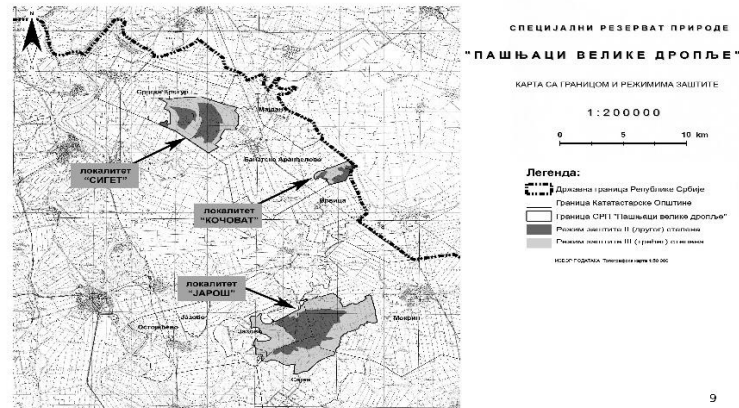


Figure 1: Map of the protected area

The Special Nature Reserve "Pasture of Great bustard" is entrusted to the management of the Hunting Association "Perjanica" from Mokrin.

Conservation, improvement, sustainable use and presentation of natural and other values of the area of the Special Nature Reserve is carried out according to the management plan, adopted by the Manager for a period of ten years.

Until the adoption of the Management Plan, the Manager is obliged to adopt the annual management program and submit it to the Ministry for approval within 30 days, from the date enters into force of this Decree.

The management program for 2019 was submitted to the Ministry for approval on 26th December 2018. (Number:353-02-288/18).

1.2 Annual Management Program for 2019

1.2.1 The objectives and tasks of the protection, enhancing and sustainable use of SRP "Pasture of Great bustard" in 2019 are:

- Protection, conservation and promotion of critically endangered populations of Great bustard.
- Improvement of habitat conditions, conditions of nesting and diet of Great bustard.
- Taking active protective measures for the population of Great bustard.
- Monitoring factors threatening the Great Bustard and its habitat.
- Creating a strategy for artificial breeding of Great Bustard.
- Activities on realization of the international project under the acronym PANNONSTEPPEs.
- Population monitoring of (*Asio flammeus*).
- Monitoring of (*Spermophilus citellus*).
- Monitoring of breeding population of (*Falco vespertinus*).
- Monitoring of (*Perdix perdix*).

- Monitoring of breeding population of (*Burchinus oediconemus*).
- Monitoring of (*Aquila heliaca*) at the site of "Siget".
- Entomological research of insect fauna.
- Monitoring and control of the number of populations of potential hairy and feathered predators of Great bustard in accordance with the new Decree on Protection and the Law on Wildlife and Hunting RS ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 18/10).
- Preservation and improvement of unique natural grass habitats.
- Preservation and improvement of plant species and typical plant communities.
- Preservation and improvement of the state of natural factors of the environment, water, soil, water and air, as well as protection of noise.
- Preservation of the ambient features and biodiversity of the protected area.
- Sustainable use of natural resources.
- Co-operation, guidance and control of the activities of the users of the space in accordance with the prescribed conditions of nature protection and within the protection regime.
- Inclusion of the local population in activities related to the promotion and development of a protected natural goods.
- Development of ecotourism in accordance with the prescribed conditions of nature protection and with the capacity of the protected natural goods.
- Providing and arranging a visitor center, arranging its ambient and regular maintenance of orderliness and cleanliness, marking and arrangement of space and facilities.
- Editing, equipping and maintaining an educational path in the length of 8 km in order to develop the tourist and educational function of the Reserve.
- Activities related to the presentation and promotion of the value of the protected area.
- Establishment of a database in accordance with the obligations of the Manager specified in Article 68 of the Law on Nature Protection.
- Drafting a new Management Plan in accordance with the Nature Protection Act and the Decree on Protection.
- Drafting Rulebook on Internal Order and Security Service and Compensation Act.
- Creation of the Fire Protection Plan of the SRP "Pastures of Great bustard".
- Marking the boundaries of the protected area in accordance with the Rulebook on the manner of marking the boundaries of protected natural assets.
- Extending of the security service in accordance with • Rulebook on conditions to be met by control of the protected area ("Official Gazette of RS" No. 85/2009).
- Procurement of a field vehicle for the SRP Guard Service "Pastures of Great bustard".

1.2.2 Monitoring

Continuous monitoring of all activities of the population of Great bustard, regular activity and obligation of the Manager, which will be carried out daily in the course of 2019. As in the previous planning period, monitoring of the population of great bustards implemented security guard and professional service SRP "Pastures of great bustard" in cooperation with the Provincial Institute for Nature Protection.

For the year 2019, the following main activities related to monitoring the populations of large Great bustard in the area of SRP "Pastures of Great bustard" are planned:

- Determination of the population size of the Great bustard - winter census, which will be carried out in the period January-February 2019.
- Locating and mapping active nests which are in reproductive period.
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- Monitoring the endangering factors and the effects of active protection measures.
- Monitoring of the behaviour of Great bustard during and after the construction of the necessary fence in the Reserve as part of the realization of the international project of cross-border cooperation between Hungary and Serbia under the acronym PANNONSTEPPEs.



Figure 2. Great bustard at the "Weilerka" site November 2018

1.2.3 The Project of conservation and improvement the Great bustard

The international project entitled "Conservation of the key animal species of the Pannonian Steppes in the border region between Hungary and Serbia" (preservation of key animal species of the Pannonian steppe in the border region of Hungary and Serbia) under the acronym PANNONSTEPPEs officially began in January 2018. The project was approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) of the Interreg-IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Program Hungary-Serbia.

In addition to L.U. The "Perjanica" project participants are the Provincial Institute for Nature Protection, as a leading partner, the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection, as well as the National Park "Kiškunjšag" Hungary.

The main project activity in the protected area refers to the raising of the necessary protective barrier for Great bustard, which should enable to successful breeding and reproduction of Great bustard, protection from predators and regulation of habitat conditions in a way that will ensure optimum habitat conditions not only for reproduction, but also for feeding of this species. Works on raising the fence began in October 2018.

Planned project activities in 2019, relate to the implementation of agro - ecological measures to form a high-quality habitat for Great bustard. These measures involve the cultivation of soil within the fence and the planting of plant crops, which are of great importance in the diet of Great bustard, primarily because of the unique fauna of insects and small mammals that inhabit this type of vegetation and play a significant role in the diet of Great bustard. In addition to sowing suitable agricultural crops, project activities also include the maintenance of natural grass vegetation suitable for Great bustard. This primarily refers to the remove of high weed vegetation, which is largely avoided by Great bustard in

natural open habitats. Regular maintenance of space around the fence is also one of the activities foreseen by the project during 2019.

During the course of the project, the Manager is obliged to perform permanent monitoring and control of the number of hairy and feathered predators of Great bustard, inside and in the immediate vicinity of the fence. As in the previous year and during 2019, the project will be adequately broadcasted.

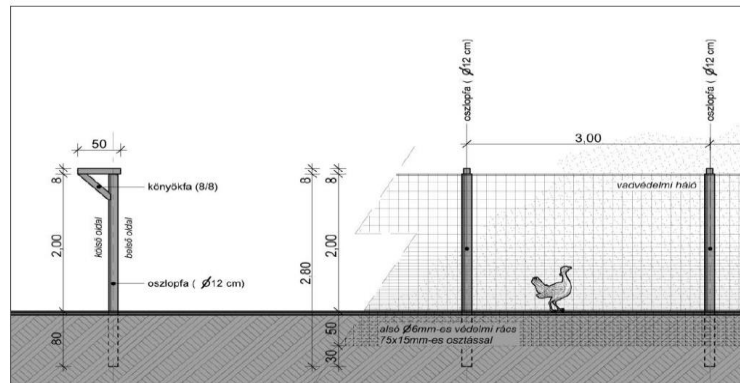


Figure 3. A sketch of a protective fence for Great bustard



Figure 4. Guardrail for the great bustard built in SRP "Pastures of great bustard"

2. THE SIGNING OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN POPULATION OF GREAT BUSTARD (*OTIS TARDA*)

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has adopted a decision on the authority of Goran Trivan, Minister of Environmental Protection, on behalf of the Government to sign the Memorandum and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of the Central European Population of Great bustard (*Otis tarda*) with the amendments to the Memorandum.

This procedure will be implemented soon in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and the Secretariat of the Convention.

By accepting the Memorandum of Understanding, the Republic of Serbia, in cooperation with the signatory states, shall endeavor to:

- Provide the maximum protection of Great bustard,

- Providing adequate protection measures for individual individuals or small groups of Great bustard that occurs during migration or in wintering sites in pastures or agricultural areas, and
- Carries out the provisions of the populations of Great bustard Western Palearktik, *Otis tarda* for the implementation of the Memorandum.

3. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Considering different risk factors and impact on survival of Great Bustards in Serbia, implementation of various protection measures achieved to decrease them, Ministry of Environmental Protection continues with undertaking protection measures and habitats management, in order to provide appropriate conditions for increasing the Great Bustard population size in Serbia, including cooperation with competent authorities, technical and scientific organizations and civil society

Looking forward to hearing from you soon and thank the Secretariat in advance, for the highest consideration of this report.

Sincerely Yours,

MINISTER
Goran Trivan