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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

42nd meeting
Strasbourg, 28 November – 2 December 2022

Complaint on stand-by: 2016/06

**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*

Updated Report on Complaint 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 7th October 2021., we would like to inform you on behalf of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, as following:

1. Updated Report on Complaint No. 2016/6 – which assumes the risk of national disappearance of Great Bustard (*Otis Tarda*) population in Serbia was prepared on the basis of the official documents by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Statements obtained by the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province No. 03-022-1474/2 from 01. 06. 2022. including Addition of the Statement No. 03-022-1474/4 from 14. 07. 2022. године.

2. In accordance the Amendments to the Law on Nature Protection which published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 71/2021. establishes that the Ministry of Environmental Protection issues an Act on nature protection conditions for national parks and protected areas of the I and II categories which is declared by the Government, on the expert bases of the competent Institute.

The Special Nature Reserve "Pastures of the Great Bustard" belongs to the category I protected area declared by the Government.

Based on the fact that the procedure of adoption the Management Plan of the Special Nature Reserve "Pastures of the Great Bustard" for period 2021-2030. was not finalized, the procedures for adopting the Plan by the manager and issuing nature protection conditions by the Ministry were renewed.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Environmental Protection issued the Act of the Nature Protection No 353-02-00729/2022-04 from 26. 06. 2022. which is attached to this report.

In accordance with Article 9, paragraph 5 of the Law on Nature Protection, at the request of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province, issued the Expert Analysis (03 No. 019-694/2 dated June 21, 2022) concerning the request in question.

The Act on the Nature Protection conditions defines, among others, the obligation to conserve and improve bustard population in the area of the Reserve and northern Banat, as following:

- The relevant planning document shall allow and address the matters relating to the construction of the Center for the management of the bustard population in the area of the Reserve and northern Banat, including the possibility of incubating eggs and caring for hatchlings and young birds, as well as the procedure of their release into the wild which will include the installation of the protective fence. With this in mind, cooperation with domestic and foreign partners should be planned;
- Mowing including the removal and disposal of swaths of grass cuttings and raking (removal) of invasive and aggressive types of plants, primarily growing on uncultivated land and areas overgrown with reeds, with a special emphasis on the inner part of the "horseshoe" shaped surface of Mila's Pond and the zone inside and around the raised protective fence (protecting the great bustard), as well as on sites where grass habitats were previously destroyed and damaged;

Regular sowing of suitable agricultural crops (rapeseed, alfalfa, grain crops...), especially in the area of Debeli at (8 ha) and inside the western part of the protective fence safeguarding the great bustard (12 ha);

- Cooperation with the owners of herds grazing in the Reserve, in order to support and stimulate this type of traditional use of the area, which is important for the maintenance of grass habitats, preventing their overgrowing, as well as the spread of large fires;
- Controlling the number of predators preying on the great bustard, especially within the 1 km zone around the protective fence safeguarding the great bustard, especially foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) and jackals (*Canis aureus*), as well as wild boars (*Sus scrofa*) and badgers (*Meles meles*), with regular and coordinated nest removal of hooded crows (*Corvus cornix*) and magpies (*Pica pica*);
- Maintenance, inspection and guarding of the installed protective fence protecting the great bustard which includes the following: ensuring that the wooden poles are upright (in a vertical position); ensuring the functionality of the gates and making sure that they are locked at all times; remediation of possible holes; repair of possible damage to wire netting and tension wires; preventing jumping over the fence by placing light wire netting over the top of the fence; protection of wooden struts from

rotting and their repair; regular maintenance of an 8 m wide strip of low grass vegetation on both sides of the fence and around the fence poles in order to prevent spreading of fire towards the mentioned poles;

- Ensuring favorable conditions for the retention and reproduction of the great bustard (*Otis tarda*) individuals within the fenced area, with the mandatory requirement to manage the habitats within the protective fence area, which includes regular mowing/cutting of grass and removal and disposal of swaths of grass cuttings, sowing of suitable crops in the designated location, removal of shrubbery and trees that attract predators, removal of overgrown reeds,...);

3. The Management Program of the Special Nature Reserve „Pastures of the Great Bustard“ for 2022 was approved by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, No 353-02-233/2022-04 from 7. 03. 2022.

The annual program foresees measures and activities to determine the number of the great bustard population, monitoring of individuals outside the reproductive period, monitoring and mapping of active nests in the reproductive period and the movement of young, monitoring of endangering factors and the effects of active protection measures, as well as the behavior of the great bustard after the construction of a dedicated fence in protected area.

In 2022. the Ministry of Environmental Protection granted the „Hunting Association Perjanica“, Mokrin, as a manager of the Special Nature Reserve „Pastures of the Great Bustard“, subsidy funds in the total amount od 3.290.000,00 dinars ofo the conseravtion, maintenance and presentation of the Protecetd area.

4. The Statement of the Institute for Nature Protection of Vojvodina Province presents the results and progress in terms of protection of the Great Bustard and the conservation of habitats in order to improve the population of this species, as following:

-The backbone of the conservation of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in the Special Nature Reserve (SNR) „Pastures of the Great Bustard“ is represented by the placement of a protective fence at the beginning of 2019, which was mentioned in the previous correspondence.

-Through monitoring of the Great Bustard, additional beneficial effects of the implemented measures were noted, especially that of the erected fence.

-During autumn of 2021, atypical use of the space was noted, as in the previous seasons the specimens of the Great Bustard were mostly observed in the fields in the same period some 10 km away from the SNR, whereas now the specimens were observed more in the SNR and its vicinity. The probable reason for that is the presence of the favorable vegetation/cultures for the Great Bustard, namely those of rapeseed (*Brassica napus*) and alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) in the SNR. The aforementioned change is the result of crop rotation and the good cooperation with the owners of the plots of land in the area.

-During the spring of 2022, up to four female specimens of the Great Bustard were regularly observed inside the fenced-off area, which represents an increase in comparison to the previous seasons, when only up to two females were observed within the fence. The females mostly moved along the low grass vegetation or neglected land, which indicates the need of mowing or grazing within the protective fence.

-The Provincial Institute for Nature Conservation and the Ministry for Environmental Protection have, in the reporting period, issued numerous official acts through which various activities in the SNR (agriculture, cattle ranching, water management, hunting, etc.) have been harmonized with the goals of conserving the Great Bustard. During the winter of 2021/2022, four expert assisted controls were conducted in the area through the cooperation of the Provincial Institute for Nature Conservation and the Provincial Environmental Inspection, with the aim of checking the aforementioned activities.

The Additional Statement of the Institute includes, among others, the recommendation for improvement population number of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia, as following:

-Taking into consideration the very small number of specimens, the unfavorable sex ratio and the general decreasing population trend of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia, additional conservation measures should be considered in terms of attempts to artificially boost the existing population.

-These measures would entail the introduction of new specimens in one of the three different age categories (fertilized eggs, juveniles or adults) and their introduction into the existing population. For the aforementioned activity to be conducted, it will be necessary to firstly establish new infrastructure

and equipment (a special facility with enclosures and incubators), secure funding (regular financing) and qualified staff (experts and trained personnel) within the SNR „Pastures of the Great Bustard“.

-As different experiences in this field exist in a number of European countries such as Hungary, Germany and Great Britain for instance, in order to decide which methodology to apply in Serbia, prior consultations with experts from countries with experience in this matter is crucial. The first recommendations and advice could be expected in the immediate future from colleagues from Hungary, as regular communication, cooperation and exchange of experience already exists among experts.

-Despite the need for the aforementioned measures, considerable improvement of the existing unfavorable conditions is necessary. Namely, in order to introduce new specimens into the wild in Serbia, an ideal environment for this species needs to be provided and secured first. The management of the grassland habitat is done with adequate mowing and use for pasture, whereas the fields should be sown with the appropriate cultures/vegetation.

5. Concluding remarks

In addition to the above, we inform you that the Ministry of Environmental Protection, as the competent authority for monitoring the implementation of the Berne Convention and in accordance with its competences, undertakes planned measures independently and in cooperation with other competent authorities and organizations in order to ensure appropriate conditions for increasing the population of the great bustard in the territory Republic of Serbia.

Copies of the mentioned documents with English translation are attached to this report.

Coordinated and Prepared by the
Ms Snezana Prokic, MSc,
Focal point for Bern Convention for Serbia

Belgrade, 15th Julay, 2022.

ANNEX I

Act by the Ministry



Republic of Serbia
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

Number: 353-02-00729/2022-04
Date: 29.6.2022
Nemanjina 22-26
Belgrade

Pursuant to Article 9, paragraph 8 of the Law on Nature Protection (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, Nos. 36/09, 88/10, 91/10 – corr., 14/16, 95/18 - other law and 71/21), Article 23, paragraph 2 & 24 of the Law on State Administration (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, Nos. 79/05, 101/07, 95/10, 99/14, 30/18-other laws and 47/18), Article 6, Paragraph 1 of the Law on Ministries (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 128/20), Article 136 of the Law on General Administrative Procedure (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 18/16 and 95/18 - authentic interpretation) and acting in accordance with the application of the Hunting Association “Perjanica”, Dositeja Obradovića St. 8, Mokrin, requesting the issuance of nature protection conditions, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, State Secretary (per Decision on authorization No. 021-01-13/1/21-09 dated 22.7.2021) Aleksandar Dujanović issues the following:

DECISION

on nature protection conditions

The area for which the Protected Area Management Plan for the period 2023-2032 is being developed is the Special Nature Reserve “Pašnjaci velike droplje (*engl. The Great Bustard Pastures*)”. In accordance with the Expert Analysis 03 No. 019-694/2 of 21.6.2022, and in accordance with the Regulation on the Designation of the Special Nature Reserve “Pašnjaci velike droplje (*engl. The Great Bustard Pastures*)” (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 86/18), the activities pertaining to the planned preparation of the Management Plan are approved and are to be implemented by meeting the following conditions (as stated below):

1) The Special Nature Reserve “Pašnjaci velike droplje (*engl. The Great Bustard Pastures*)” Management Plan for the period 2022-2031 shall be developed in accordance with Article 53 of the Law on Nature Protection;

2) The text of the Plan shall be developed in accordance with the Regulation on the Protection of the Special Nature Reserve “Pašnjaci velike droplje (*engl. The Great Bustard Pastures*)”;

3) The Plan shall include the following priority activities and measures pertaining to the protection and improvement of natural and man-made values, condition/situation monitoring, sustainable use and promotion, as stipulated below:

- Hiring the guard service (regular surveillance of the area belonging to the Special Nature Reserve, keeping records, preventing illegal activities...), with a special emphasis on the establishment of a regular presence of the guard service at the Siget and Kočovat sites, as well as increased surveillance and guarding of the border area of the Jaroš site in the direction of the settlements of Sajan and Jazovo;
- Implementing activities pertaining to development of the management acts prescribed by the Regulation;
- Implementing activities/works on the maintenance and improvement of the Visitors’ Center and the surrounding area (care, treatment and protection of the items and furniture made of wood, manufacturing of additional furnishings, development of new educational programmes and/or improvement of the existing ones and their “in the field” implementation);

- Designing and implementing promotional campaigns and presentations, with a special emphasis on the users of the area (agriculture, livestock, water management, hunting) and environmental citizens' organizations. It is necessary to inform the entities/natural persons who carry out the aforementioned activities of the matters pertaining to the newly declared reserve and the relevant regulations, as well as organize educational programmes in order to use the protected area and its natural values in a coordinated manner;
- The relevant planning document shall allow and address the matters relating to the construction of the Center for the management of the bustard population in the area of the Reserve and northern Banat, including the possibility of incubating eggs and caring for hatchlings and young birds, as well as the procedure of their release into the wild which will include the installation of the protective fence. With this in mind, cooperation with domestic and foreign partners should be planned;
- Mowing including the removal and disposal of swaths of grass cuttings and raking (removal) of invasive and aggressive types of plants, primarily growing on uncultivated land and areas overgrown with reeds, with a special emphasis on the inner part of the "horseshoe" shaped surface of Mila's Pond and the zone inside and around the raised protective fence (protecting the great bustard), as well as on sites where grass habitats were previously destroyed and damaged;
- Regular sowing of suitable agricultural crops (rapeseed, alfalfa, grain crops...), especially in the area of Debeli at (8 ha) and inside the western part of the protective fence safeguarding the great bustard (12 ha);
- Cooperation with the owners of herds grazing in the Reserve, in order to support and stimulate this type of traditional use of the area, which is important for the maintenance of grass habitats, preventing their overgrowing, as well as the spread of large fires;
- Controlling the number of predators preying on the great bustard, especially within the 1 km zone around the protective fence safeguarding the great bustard, especially foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) and jackals (*Canis aureus*), as well as wild boars (*Sus scrofa*) and badgers (*Meles meles*), with regular and coordinated nest removal of hooded crows (*Corvus cornix*) and magpies (*Pica pica*);
- Maintenance, inspection and guarding of the installed protective fence protecting the great bustard which includes the following: ensuring that the wooden poles are upright (in a vertical position); ensuring the functionality of the gates and making sure that they are locked at all times; remediation of possible holes; repair of possible damage to wire netting and tension wires; preventing jumping over the fence by placing light wire netting over the top of the fence; protection of wooden struts from rotting and their repair; regular maintenance of an 8 m wide strip of low grass vegetation on both sides of the fence and around the fence poles in order to prevent spreading of fire towards the mentioned poles;
- Ensuring favorable conditions for the retention and reproduction of the great bustard (*Otis tarda*) individuals within the fenced area, with the mandatory requirement to manage the habitats within the protective fence area, which includes regular mowing/cutting of grass and removal and disposal of swaths of grass cuttings, sowing of suitable crops in the designated location, removal of shrubbery and trees that attract predators, removal of overgrown reeds,...);
- Implementation of monitoring and active species protection measures, with a special emphasis on the following species of flora (*Trinia ramosissima* – lesser burnet, *Silene viscosa* - white sticky catchfly, *Beckmannia eruciformis* - slough grass, *Peucedanum officinale* – hog's fennel, *Plantago schwazenbergiana* – Schwarzenberg's plantain, *Centaurea sadleriana* - Pannonian knapweed and *Scilla autumnalis* - autumn squill) and fauna (*Ophiogomphus cecilia* - green club-tailed dragonfly, hover flies - especially *Eumerus pannonicus*, *Pelobates fuscus* - the European common spadefoot, *Otis tarda* - great bustard, *Aquila heliaca* – eastern imperial eagle, *Burchinus oediconemus* – the Eurasian stone-curlew, *Coracias garrulus* – the European roller, *Falco vespertinus* – red-footed falcon, *Asio flammeus* – short-eared owl, *Aquila heliaca* – eastern imperial eagle and *Spermophilus citellus* – European ground squirrel);
- Erecting a suitable ground observation tower made of natural materials, on a raised embankment outside the protective fence, on the north side, in order to monitor the events inside the fenced area, with a special emphasis on the presence and behavior of the bustard and the possible appearance of predators;

- Erecting three observation towers in total, for education and monitoring purposes, made of natural materials, with accompanying information boards, at the following sites: Siget, Kočovat and Jaroš;
- Improving conditions for the settlement and reproduction of rare bird species, through the installation of dedicated platforms/boxes on suitable trees, for the steppe falcon (*Falco cherrug*), eastern imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), the European roller (*Coracias garrulus*) and red-footed falcon (*Falco vespertinus*);
- Conserving the habitats and microlocations where the nests of eastern imperial eagles (*Aquila heliaca*) and great bustards (*Otis tarda*) are located, while ensuring conditions for unhindered reproduction;
- Presentation and promotion work: creation of an internet site, creation and distribution of promotional material, educational workshops, etc.

Explanation

The Hunting Association “Perjanica”, 8 Dositeja Obradovića St, Mokrin has submitted a request to the Ministry of Environmental Protection for the issuance of nature protection conditions for the purpose of developing the Protected Area Management Plan of the Special Nature Reserve “The Great Bustard Pastures” for the period 2022-2031.

In compliance with Article 9, paragraph 5 of the Law on Nature Protection, at the request of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vovodina Province, issued the Expert Analysis (03 No. 019-694/2 dated June 21, 2022) concerning the request in question.

The concerned Management Plan refers to management activities carried out in the protected area of the Special Nature Reserve “The Great Bustard Pastures”, the planning area is also in the spatial scope of the ecologically significant area “The Great Bustard Pastures” of the ecological network of the Republic of Serbia. The ecologically significant area includes the internationally Important Plant Area (IPA), named Great Bustard Pastures, the internationally and nationally Important Bird Area, named - Great Bustard Pastures RS008IBA, as well as the Emerald area RS000022 Great Bustard Pastures, based on the Regulation on the Ecological Network (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 102/10).

In accordance with the aforementioned, the Decision on Nature Protection Conditions is issued in order to develop the Protected Area Management Plan for the Special Nature Reserve “The Great Bustard Pastures”. For all other works and activities in the concerned area or in case of changes to planning and project documentation, a new request must be submitted. The applicant is obliged to inform the protected area manager about the receipt of the Decision, conditions and activities.

The applicant has paid the Republic Administrative Fee in accordance with the Law on Republic Administrative Fees (“Official Gazette RS”, No. 43/03, 51/03 – corr., 61/05, 101/05- other law, 5/09, 54/09, 50/11, 93/12, 65/13 – other law, 83/15, 112/15, 113/17, 3/18 – corr., 95/18, 86/19, 90/19 – corr., 144/20) and is exempted from paying the fee for the issuance of this Decision, based on Article 4, paragraph 1, point 1 of the Rulebook on the Amount and Method of Calculation and Collection of the Fee for the Issuance of the Act on Nature Protection Conditions (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 73/11, 106/13).

Instruction on legal remedy:

An appeal may be lodged against this Decision to the Government of the Republic of Serbia, within 15 days from the date of receipt of the Decision. The Complaint is submitted to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, in Belgrade, 22-26 Nemanjina St, 11000 Belgrade either directly or mailed, together with a proof of payment of the republic administrative fee amounting to 490 dinars, per tariff No. 6 of the Law on Republic Administrative Fees (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. [43/03](#), [51/03](#) - corr, [61/05](#), [101/05](#) - other law, [5/09](#), [54/09](#), [50/11](#), [70/11](#) – harmonized amount in RSD, [55/12](#) - harmonized amount in RSD, [93/12](#), 47/13 - harmonized amount in RSD, [65/13](#) – other law, 57/14 - harmonized amount in RSD, 45/15 – harmonized amount in RSD, 83/15, 112/15, 50/16 – harmonized amount in RSD, 61/17 – harmonized amount in RSD, 113/17, 3/18 - corr. and 50/18 - harmonized amount in RSD, 95/18, 38/19 - harmonized amount in RSD, 86/19, 90/19 - corr. 98/20 - harmonized amount in RSD, 144/20 and 62/21- harmonized amount in RSD).

STATE SECRETARY

Aleksandar Dujanović

Delivered to:

- Hunting Association “Perjanica” – SNR manager
8 Dositeja Obradovića St, Mokrin
- The Institute for Nature Conservation of Vovodina Province,
Радничка 20 а, Нови Сад
- The Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection
Inspection Department,
Novi Sad, 16 Mihaila Pupina Blvd.
- The Records Office

ANNEX II

First Statement by the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province

ПОКРАЈИНСКИ ЗАВОД ЗА ЗАШТИТУ ПРИРОДЕ
Србија ■ 21101 Нови Сад ■ Радничка 20А
Тел: 021/4896-301 ■ Факс: 021/66-16-252
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INSTITUTE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION OF VOJVODINA PROVINCE
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No. 03-022-1474/2

Date: 14.07.2022

**Ministry of Environmental Protection
Omladinskih brigada1, 11070 Novi Beograd**

Subject: Annex for the report on progress in activities aimed at conserving the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia – in relation to the complaint no. 2016/6 – assumed risk of extinction of the national population of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia and the request of the Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention

Acting upon your request to provide information from the area of our jurisdiction, with the goal of delivering a new report on the progress in activities aimed at conserving the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia, a in relation to the complaint no. 2016/6 - assumed risk of extinction of the national population of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia, we are providing you with the information in the text below.

The said report encompasses the period from July 2021 until June of 2022, having in mind that the previous report was submitted in July of 2021.

The backbone of the conservation of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in the Special Nature Reserve (SNR) „Pastures of the Great Bustard“ is represented by the placement of a protective fence at the beginning of 2019, which was mentioned in the previous correspondence.

Through monitoring of the Great Bustard, additional beneficial effects of the implemented measures were noted, especially that of the erected fence.

During autumn of 2021, atypical use of the space was noted, as in the previous seasons the specimens of the Great Bustard were mostly observed in the fields in the same period some 10 km away from the SNR, whereas now the specimens were observed more in the SNR and its vicinity. The probable reason for that is the presence of the favorable vegetation/cultures for the Great Bustard, namely those of rapeseed and alfalfa in the SNR. The aforementioned change is the result of crop rotation and the good cooperation with the owners of the plots of land in the area.

During the spring of 2022, up to four female specimens of the Great Bustard were regularly observed inside the fenced-off area, which represents an increase in comparison to the previous seasons, when only up to two females were observed within the fence. The females mostly moved along the low grass vegetation or neglected land, which indicates the need of mowing or grazing within the protective fence.

The Provincial Institute for Nature Conservation and the Ministry for Environmental Protection have, in the reporting period, issued numerous official acts through which various activities in the SNR (agriculture, cattle ranching, water management, hunting, etc.) have been harmonized with the goals of conserving the Great Bustard. During the winter of 2021/2022, four expert assisted controls were conducted in the area through the cooperation of the Provincial Institute for Nature Conservation and the Provincial Environmental Inspection, with the aim of checking the aforementioned activities.

Sincerely,

Acting Director
Nataša Sarić

ANNEX III**Second Statement by the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province**

ПОКРАЈИНСКИ ЗАВОД ЗА ЗАШТИТУ ПРИРОДЕ
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No. 03-022-1474/4

Date: 14.07.2022

**Ministry of Environmental Protection
Omladinskih brigada1, 11070 Novi Beograd**

Subject: Supplement to file no. 03-022-1474/2 from 01.06.2022

In response to your request submitted via electronic mail on 11.07.2022 for additional formulation of activities in line with the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*), we inform you of the following:

Taking into consideration the very small number of specimens, the unfavorable sex ratio and the general decreasing population trend of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia, additional conservation measures should be considered in terms of attempts to artificially boost the existing population.

These measures would entail the introduction of new specimens in one of the three different age categories (fertilized eggs, juveniles or adults) and their introduction into the existing population. For the aforementioned activity to be conducted, it will be necessary to firstly establish new infrastructure and equipment (a special facility with enclosures and incubators), secure funding (regular financing) and qualified staff (experts and trained personnel) within the SNR „Pastures of the Great Bustard“.

As different experiences in this field exist in a number of European countries such as Hungary, Germany and Great Britain for instance, in order to decide which methodology to apply in Serbia, prior consultations with experts from countries with experience in this matter is crucial. The first recommendations and advice could be expected in the immediate future from colleagues from Hungary, as regular communication, cooperation and exchange of experience already exists among experts.

Despite the need for the aforementioned measures, considerable improvement of the existing unfavorable conditions is necessary. Namely, in order to introduce new specimens into the wild in Serbia, an ideal environment for this species needs to be provided and secured first. The management of the grassland habitat is done with adequate mowing and use for pasture, whereas the fields should be sown with alfalfa, rapeseed and other adequate grain cultures.

A considerable problem also exists with the current system of leasing land within the SNR through public bidding, which is not adequate. To resolve this issue, it is necessary to secure adequate state run agricultural land in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, water and forests. Furthermore, the existing fence for the Great Bustard within the SNR needs to be maintained and improved and the SNR management needs to provide a considerably better equipped and physically present field ranger/guardian service, which implies additional funding.

Sincerely,
Acting Director
Nataša Sarić