

Strasbourg, 30 July 2021
[files54e_2021.docx]

T-PVS/Files(2021)54

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

41st meeting

Strasbourg, 30 November – 3 December 2021

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*



**Republic of Serbia
MINISTRY OF
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

No: 337-00-00113/2021-04

Date: 23th July 2021.

Belgrade

Council of Europe
Biological Diversity Unit
Secretariat of the Bern convention
F-67075Strasbourg Cedex, France,
Ms Ursula Sticker, Secretary

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.

In Reference with the request of the Bureau of the Berne Convention from the meeting held from 9-10. September 2019, which refers to Complaint No. 2016/6 - which assumes the risk of national disappearance of Great Bustard (Otis Tarda) population in Serbia, on behalf of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia, we would like to inform you about the following:

1. In accordance with the new Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 30/18), by the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Nature Protection Program of the Republic of Serbia with Action Plan for the period from 2021 to 2023. which published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No. 53/2021.

The action plan of this strategic document sets out the strategic goal, measures and activities to improve the status of protection and management of species in accordance with national legislation and international agreements, including the improvement of monitoring and conservation of habitats including the status of the population of Great Bustard and other endangered species.

2. In accordance with the Law on Planning System, plans and programs in all areas are revised or adopted. Accordingly, the procedure of adopting the Management Plan of the Special Nature Reserve "Pastures of the Great Bustard" for the period from 2021 to 2030. is in progress.

3. The Management Program of the Special Nature Reserve "Pastures of the Great Bustard" for 2021 was approved by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, No: 353-02-02263 / 2020-04 from 22.12.2020.

4. The report 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:

In early 2019, the Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province finalized the works on the installation of a protective fence for the Great Bustard, within the framework of border area program Serbia-Hungary (IPA CBC Hungary) Serbia entitled "Conservation of key animal species of Pannonian Steppes in a border region between Hungary and Serbia" – PANNON STEPPES HU/SRB 1602/12/0065. The purpose of the fence is to increase the success rate of nesting by providing protection against predators (fox, jackal, domestic dogs ...). The fence was built within the Special Nature Reserve "Pastures of Great Bustard" in the length of 4610 m and covers an area of 115 ha.

Within the framework of the same project, the manager of the Reserve, the Hunting Association "Perjanica" from Mokrin, across the 12 ha-area inside the fence, carried out the sowing of agricultural crops that are suitable for Great Bustards (narrow leaf alfalfa and grain), and then mowing the grass in order to maintain the habitat. Additionally, the manager performs regular reduction of predators (foxes, jackals, magpies and hooded crow) within the fence, and occasionally in the wider environment.

Education and raising of the public awareness about the need to preserve the Great Bustard during 2019, was mostly done by the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection, also a partner in the Project.

As a part of spreading public awareness and exchanging experiences, in March 2019, an expert conference was held in Kecskemét, NP Kiskunság, on the topic of the revitalization of grasslands. On that occasion, the Public Enterprise NP Kiskunság transferred their useful experiences in the field management and protection of Great Bustards to the Project Partners from Serbia. Then, in April 2019, a meeting was held in Mokrin, on the topic of grassland management, which, in addition to exchanging experiences and raising public awareness, also served to strengthen cooperation with the agricultural sector, which in Serbia is largely responsible for the use of Great Bustard habitat. The final stage of the project activities to raise public awareness was the final conference of the Project, held in December 2019.

After finishing of the Project, in February 2020, the representatives of PE NP Kiskunság and PE NP Körös-Maros visited SNR "Pastures of Great Bustard", with the aim of further exchanging experience on the protection of the Great Bustard and the management of the protective fence.

The monitoring of the Great Bustard, conducted regularly since the beginning of 2019, confirmed the favourable effects of the implemented measures, and particularly of the protective fences. Near the protective fence, the first individual birds were moving in April 2019. At the beginning of May of the same year, the first females of the Great Bustard, one or two, were recorded inside the protective fence. This data indicates a relatively rapid acceptance of this artificial structure by Great Bustards. After that, one to two females of the Great Bustard were regularly observed inside the fence. In June, July and until September 2019. They were mostly moving near low grass vegetation or uncultivated land.

During 2020, in May, females of Great Bustards, one to three, were recorded inside and around the protective fence. In the same period, one nest of a Great Bustard with two eggs in grain was recorded, about 300 meters from the border of the Reserve. Despite the regular reporting of the situation at this location and communication with the owner of the land plot, no successful hatching was recorded. During late spring and summer no chicks were registered in the whole area.

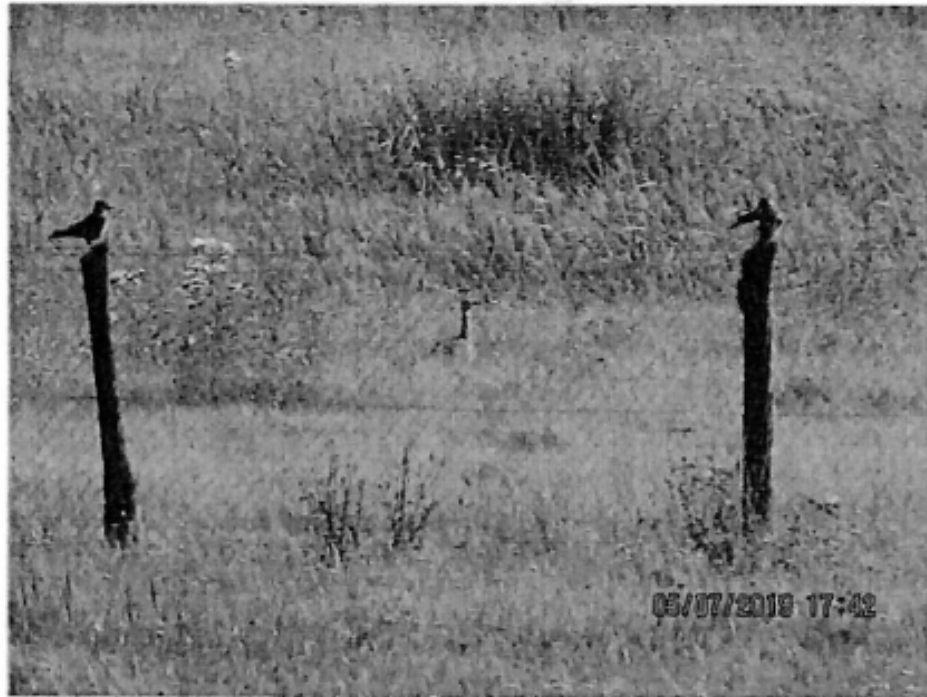


Photo: A female bird of Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) inside the protective fence

Through a systemic package of measures for the conservation of the Great Bustard, the Draft Management Plan of the Special Nature Reserve "Pastures of the Great Bustard", developed by cooperation of the Manager, the Ministry and the Institute, for the period 2021-2030, the following is planned:

- Ensuring the work of the guard service (regular control of the terrain, keeping records, prevention of illegal activities etc.);
- Works on presentation and promotion, with special emphasis on the land users (agriculture, farming, water management, hunting) and ecologically oriented associations of citizens.
- Possibility of building a Centre for managing the Great Bustard population in the area of reserve and northern Banat, which includes the possibility of incubating eggs and breeding new birds. As well as the proces of adaptation of these individuals to the wild, which will imply the use of an established protective fence. For that purpose, cooperation with the domestic and foreign partners should be planned;
- Mowing with removal of swaths and raking (removal) of invasive and aggressive plant species;
- Regular sowing of appropriate agricultural crops (oilseed rape, alfalfa, cereals etc.), especially in the area of Debeli At (8 ha) and within the western part of the protective fence for the Great Bustard (12 ha);
- Cooperation with owners of herds that graze in the Reserve;
- Control of the number of predators of the Great Bustard, with an emphasis on the zone of 1 km around the protective fence for the Great Bustard;
- Maintenance, control and guarding of the raised protective fence for the Great Bustard;
- Providing favourable conditions for the retention and reproduction of the Great Bustard birds (*Otis tarda*) within the enclosure;
- Work on presentation and promotion: website development, development and distribution of promotional material, educational workshops, etc.

In view of all the above, in the period covered by this report, the Institute issued dozens of decisions which harmonized the activities in the Reserve (agriculture, animal husbandry,

water management, hunting, etc.) with the goals of conservation of the Great Bustard. Also, expert inspections were carried out regularly in cooperation with the Institute and the Provincial Inspectorate for Environmental Protection, in order to control the above, as well as joint monitoring in cooperation with the Institute and the Manager, based on which the above data on the Great Bustard were presented.

5. Concluding remarks

During the handling of the Complaint No 2016/6 regarding the request of the Secretariat and the Bureau of the Berne Convention, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection takes planned measures in cooperation with other competent authorities and organizations, actively informing the public and involving NGOs in order to improving protected area management and providing appropriate conditions for population of the Great Bustard in the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

Also, we would like to add that various measures for the protection and restoration of the great bustard, conservation of habitats, exchange of knowledge and experiences with neighboring countries as well as education and raising public awareness of the need to preserve the great bustard are continuously applied.

Sincerely yours,

STATE SECRETARY,

Mr. Aleksandar Dujanovic

