



Naturopa

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Since 1993 Naturopa has been printed on chlorine- and wood-free paper.

Pages 16-17: To protect the environment, NGOs work in several fields. They carry out awareness campaigns, scientific research, activities for the protection of habitats and species... They participate in the education of future generations. Photos - Y. Noto-Campagna

NGOs through the looking glass

This issue of Naturopa is devoted to non governmental organisations (NGOs) and their role in the conservation of biological diversity. We have chosen to give them the floor so that they may themselves present what they do, and why and how they do it. In the last thirty years NGOs have flourished like a prairie in May, each with its own colour and particular character, with its own range and special perfume, with different methods and approach to problems, big or small but all useful and diverse like the very nature they stand for. A few were there in the sixties, and all have gone through dramatic change since. NGOs are no longer local romantic groups of whale and bird lovers (but we hope they still love birds and whales) or mountain hikers turned political activist (hopefully still active); they neither have lobbying as their main job. Now they own ships, buy or manage protected areas, provide technical training for a wide number of conservation workers, have extraordinary projects in developing countries, make the news when opposing some unphotogenic practices, mediate between the public and the decision-makers, are at the origin of treaties to protect some ecosystems, etc. NGOs have become very professionalised (some

even reasonably staffed), extremely well informed and have improved their methods and efficiency to a point that was hard to imagine before. They have managed to do so while keeping their freedom of thought and their soul and without becoming a sect disconnected from the society from which they spring. Dreams, action, imagination and hard work all put together.

At the Council of Europe we have always believed that it was vital for citizens to stand for democracy and civil rights so that our societies may remain free and tolerant. That is why we have always endeavoured to integrate NGOs in our work for nature conservation and in other fields. For us the increasing strength and professionalism of NGOs, and the recognition of their action by governments, are strong signs that the civil society is taking a more important place in the way our affairs are dealt with. Partnership between governments and NGOs has proved a good recipe for success. At the Council of Europe NGOs are welcome. ■

Eladio Fernández-Galiano



D. Wagner/Infra

Editorial

It is now widely recognised that the world is facing a serious ecological crisis. Renewable natural resources, such as forests and fisheries, are being threatened by over-exploitation; inappropriate agricultural practices are causing desertification. These are destroying habitats and making species extinct and transboundary air and water pollution are affecting all life on earth.

It is easy enough to gather evidence of the ecological crisis, it is much more difficult to find the right practical solutions. Purely emotional responses and what seem to be obvious solutions seldom achieve any useful results. Each issue needs to be studied with care and without prejudice. Only good science can help us to understand the problems and suggest the solutions.

It is fruitless to look for people to blame, we are all to blame. The world's population has trebled in the last 70 years and it is continuing to grow at an alarming rate. More people need more food, water, shelter, clothing and transport. These have to come from the world's natural renewable and non-renewable resources. We cannot live without them, but we can try to ensure that we do not exploit them at such a rate that there will be none left for future generations.

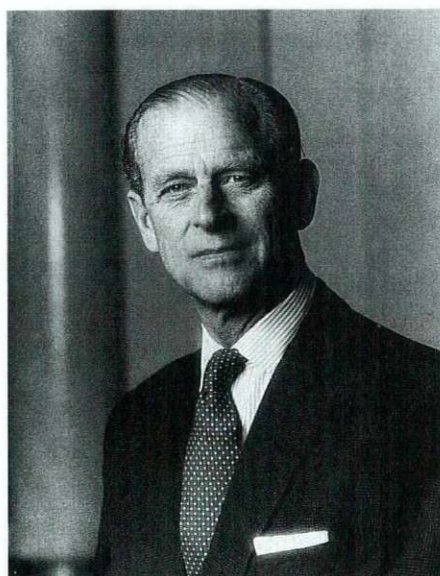
We have to adopt the general principle of sustainable use. In some cases this may mean the complete protection of certain ecosystems from any form of human exploitation or even intrusion. In other cases, it may mean controlling the numbers of some species in order to give others a better chance of survival. As it is we are having to control the numbers of species that threaten people with disease and death.

The most important thing about conservation is that it is not simple. Secondly, it needs the intelligent and enlightened support of people in every walk of life; specialists, scientists, enthusiasts; business leaders, politicians, legislators and administrators; and all the people engaged in making use of renewable resources. Thirdly, no government or conservation organisation can hope to achieve very much entirely on its own. The conservation of

tion, however well-intentioned, is more likely to be counter-productive as local people soon find that it is inappropriate to their particular problem. It is better to work towards developing general principles of conservation and then to leave it to local bodies to implement them in the context of their particular situation.

Although many people appear to think so, the situation is not hopeless. Understanding and concern is growing, environmental education is improving and getting to many more young people, conservation bodies are becoming more influential in decision-making circles and among governments, government and international agencies. The media are covering more conservation issues and the world's religions are becoming much more active in practising and preaching sustainable use of natural resources. ■

HRH The Prince Philip
Duke of Edinburgh
President, World Wide Fund for Nature -
WWF International



A. Buckley and Constantine

nature needs the active and willing co-operation of all bodies, agencies and governments if the long-term prospects are to be radically improved.

Lastly, while the problems may be global, the solutions have to be local. Blanket legisla-

Environmental education

Lene Feldthus Andersen

The Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe is a truly European organisation. Its founding fathers were experts of a group on environmental education of the Council of Europe. The founding charter was signed by representatives of France, Spain, Germany and Denmark in the Netherlands in 1981.

Today, the organisation has 18 members. They represent all corners of Europe: north,

south, east and west. Along with the increase in members has followed an increase in activities. Today, the Foundation has three major programmes of action and two minor projects.

The aim of FEEE is to foster environmental education. This aim is fulfilled through both environmental education actions, and lobbying and awareness-raising at national and European level. The Foundation is, however, first and foremost a pragmatic and action-oriented organisation.

The organisation operates through its member organisations, each representing a country and represented in the General Assembly of FEEE. The Presidency of FEEE, elected by the General Assembly, is currently held by Friluftsrådet of Denmark. The Presidency is responsible for the management of FEEE and is guided by the Executive Board.

The programmes of FEEE

Young Reporters for the Environment is an interdisciplinary project for high school students. The participating students work as journalists with issues of environment and research. The students and their schools are part of a European network, communicating and exchanging information and knowledge via electronic mail.

The project is interdisciplinary, drawing on such diverse subjects as biology, geography, social sciences, chemistry, physics and English. The students study, as young reporters, specific environmental issues and problems, and report their investigations to other groups in their community and to other schools in the network.

The students also get the opportunity to participate in international environmental research missions where they work closely with scientists, experiencing first-hand how environmental problems are researched. The theme for 1995 is "Energy protection - now and in the future".

The topics of the international research missions to which the high schools can send a student representative are:

- NOPEX : a research project in Uppsala about the exchange of carbon dioxide between forests and the atmosphere;
- SUPERPHENIX in France - the future of atomic energy.
- DYFAMED : the interaction between the ocean and the atmosphere - on a research vessel in the Mediterranean Sea;
- A UN programme on the efficiency of energy uses in residential buildings in Moscow.

The two last missions took place in March 1995.

Eco-Schools is a programme that introduces environmental education in the schools of Europe by involving the whole school (school management and board, maintenance personnel, teachers and pupils) in actual re-organisation of its management for the purpose of saving resources. At the same time, the project involves local governments, asking them to follow and contribute to the activities of the schools.

While the school becomes "green" and with that achievement is awarded a special flag to fly in the school yard, the pupils learn through play, experiments and teaching in the classroom about the environmental problems associated with water, energy and waste. The main message is how they as consumers can contribute to sensible solutions. The Tidy Britain Group is in charge of the European co-ordination of this programme.

The European Blue Flag Campaign is an award scheme targeting local governments and authorities, managing coastal areas for recreation and tourism. Through a set of criteria under continued development and evaluation, participating local governments and authorities work with environmental management of and information and education about their coastal resources. The four areas of concern are:

- environmental education and information;
- water quality;
- coastal quality;
- services, management and safety.

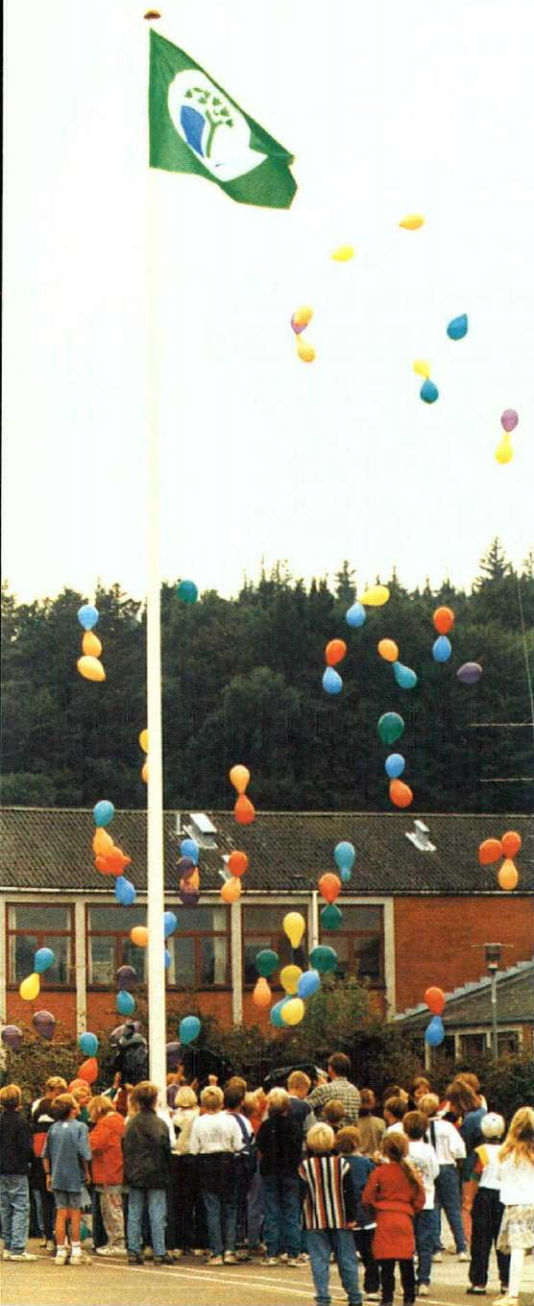
The overall purpose is to increase local responsibility and interest in the sustainable use of those resources. The campaign can bring opposing but dependent interests together. The European Blue Flag Campaign is particularly concerned that the local population becomes involved through environmental education and information activities. The Campaign is co-ordinated on European level by Friluftsrådet in Denmark. ■

L. F. Andersen

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Hoisting the "Eco-Schools" flag in a Danish school

J.A. Tvedebrink



ENCY 95 - an enhanced partnership

Patrice Collignon

The long history of co-operation between the Council of Europe and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) first became official in 1952 when consultative status with the Council of Europe was introduced for NGOs. In time, there was a huge increase in the number of NGOs enjoying consultative status with the Council of Europe, for a number of reasons, such as prestige, the increasing membership of the Council and the growing concern of associations to influence policy-making at the highest level. The NGOs brought the situation under control in 1990 by setting up interest groupings, of which there are now nine. Two of these groupings, having decided from the very beginning to work in collaboration while pursuing their specific areas of interest, have been particularly closely involved in ENCY: the grouping for towns and the grouping for the countryside.

The Task Force NGO Nature

In January 1994, these two sectoral groupings decided to form what might be called a joint venture: the Task Force NGO Nature. Its aims were essentially to:

- facilitate information exchange between NGOs and the Council of Europe and also between NGOs themselves;
- back the requests made by NGOs to ENCY management bodies;
- ensure that NGOs were more actively involved in activities organised by the Council of Europe.

A Task Force information bulletin has been published on a regular basis (six issues by August 1995) by the international association Rurality-Environment-Development to give the Grouping's activities and members a higher profile.

The number of international NGOs in the Task Force has now swelled to 51, thanks to the arrival of others operating outside the rural and environment sectors. Clearly, a forum of this kind should be open and its membership extends far wider than the circle of NGOs specialising in nature protection. Organisations with a broader role or specialising in other sectors of activity have been keen to jump on the ENCY bandwagon. This is a clear indication of the wide appeal of a properly perceived policy of nature conservation or general environmental protection. It also shows that a nature conservation policy must not only result in action specific to that area but also seek to incorporate the "nature" factor into the strategic choices of the other departments.

The setting up of the Task Force and its clear identity and representativeness in terms of NGOs have made it an essential partner in

debates. The Task Force is represented within the International Organising Committee and the ENCY Steering Group and has therefore been able to pursue its public relations and lobbying work within the decision-making spheres of ENCY.

Wide-ranging activities

The commitment of these international NGO networks has resulted in the organisation of activities as wide-ranging as their membership. Numerous colloquies and conferences have been held of course, but there have also been awareness-building campaigns targeting the educational sphere, specialist operatives (golf-course managers etc) and the general public (garden owners etc). This across-the-board approach, reaching beyond the priority targets identified at the launch of ENCY, is one means of guaranteeing the perennial impact of the campaign.

NGO joint ventures have also seen the light of day, including the organisation, from 16 to 30 October 1995, of NGO Nature Week in Strasbourg, bringing together different international NGOs to discuss three topics:

- major transport infrastructures, nature conservation and restoration;
- Habitats 2000: the protection of habitats and species in Europe;

- rural law, nature conservation and restoration.

The progress reports sent in by the national committees set up to support the campaign in many countries show that a number of associations have helped to organise ENCY at national and regional level.

Because the portrayal of nature as an important part of our environment triggers active support and has considerable symbolic power in a world seen by everyone as increasingly distant from a balanced human ecosystem, ENCY will have stimulated the interest of not only the bodies specialising in this area but also of others, for which nature is a secondary element in their preoccupations.

In this respect, nature conservation and environmental protection provide a testing ground for responsible citizenship; for some, they are also a lesson in democracy and so help to foster respect for civil rights. ■

P. Collignon

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NGO Nature Week, Strasbourg, October 1995.

From left to right: Mr. F. Albanese, Director of Environment and Local Authorities, Mr. D. Tarschys, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. A. Lennon, President of the European Committee of Rural Law (CEDR), Mr. P. Collignon, President of the Task Force NGO Nature



Dutch landscape

Countryside and tourism

Suzanne Thibal

Europe's villages and rural communities are undeniably opening up to tourism in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. This is a further illustration of the natural, historical and cultural links which can draw European countries together in joint initiatives transcending beyond regional characteristics - and all this despite the risks of conflict still lurking in all parts of the continent, both east and west.

In many cases, this upsurge in tourism in Europe's rural areas reflects an attempt to cater for all interests when tackling the acute problems affecting modern society: there is increased demand for leisure and holiday facilities on the one hand, question of socio-economic survival for many rural areas through new activities on the other hand, and in general a greater awareness worldwide of threats to the planet's natural and cultural heritage.

In other words - and in a nutshell - it is a matter of reconciling tourism and the environment through strategies geared to sustainable development.

Awareness-building

To help achieve the general mobilisation which is indispensable to the pursuit of such an aim throughout rural Europe, EUROTER - with the joint support of the Directorate General DGXI/Environment of the European Commission and the Council of Europe (through its European Nature Conservation Year 1995) - has just launched a campaign to

familiarise local councillors and tourism professionals in Europe's rural regions with the principles of sustainable tourist development, which must allow for the preservation of natural, cultural and social heritage.

A universal message, but tailored to individual geophysical situations, has gone out across Europe, in leaflets in twenty-two different languages, entitled *Tourism in the countryside and village in Europe*.

EUROTER was able to bring this operation to a successful conclusion thanks to the support of the European institutions and also the active assistance of partners (national and regional, public and private), who helped to pass on the general message throughout their own networks and areas in over thirty European countries.

Theory into practice

Examples of how these principles of sustainable tourist development were put into practice can be found in the report presenting 51 demonstration projects for village tourist development, compiled by EUROTER after its European competition "Village que j'aime", organised in 1990-91 as part of the Community's "European Tourism Year" campaign.

Consultative status

EUROTER also carries out studies and appraisals on the ground and co-operates with working groups, seminars and colloquies - particularly within the framework of the

Council of Europe - in gauging the potential impact (both negative and positive) of "tourism/environment interaction" on natural heritage, cultural identities, village communities, local economies etc - in other words, analysing sustainable local development through tourism.

It is through all these diverse initiatives that EUROTER, for nearly nine years now, has pursued its mission of giving impetus to rural tourism in Europe, watching over natural and cultural heritage and fostering values to the joint benefit of country- and town-dwellers, who intermingle in the pleasant atmosphere of tourism.

EUROTER's philosophy is to put its full weight behind efforts to ensure that schemes to enhance the tourism appeal of the countryside's natural and cultural resources, while yielding the economic spin-offs and improvements in life quality rightly expected by local communities, also give rise to a new European tourism culture, fostering peace between peoples and the preservation of the planet. ■

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"An environment for Europe"

Theresa Herzog-Zimmermann

"An environment for Europe" is the watchword for co-operation among Environment Ministers from 45 European countries together with the USA and Canada. The first Pan-European Conference of Ministers of the Environment in the "Environment for Europe" process took place in 1991 at Dobříš near Prague. In 1993 the Swiss Government convened a follow-up conference in Lucerne. The third Conference on "An Environment for Europe" was held this October in Sofia, Bulgaria. The Danish Government has just announced that it will host the follow-up conference two years after Sofia in Aarhus.

In essence, the "Environment for Europe" process was instituted by the Environment Minister of the former Czechoslovakia, Mr Josef Vavroušek. From the very start, this process had the following distinctive features:

- "pan-European": all countries of Eastern and Western Europe participate;
- "horizontal": the participating countries work together on an equal footing;
- "co-ordinating": involvement of the chief international and supranational organisations such as the Council of Europe, the EU, WHO and international finance institutions like the World Bank and the EBRD;
- "open to non-governmental organisations" (NGOs): an invitation to join in as partners has been issued to the representatives of environment and nature conservation organisations and also to associations in other sectors, eg chambers of commerce, trade unions and churches.

NGO co-operation

The Conference at Dobříš was arranged in record time by the Environment Ministry and the environmental associations of Czechoslovakia. As yet there was no fully operational form of NGO co-operation; apart from a round of talks on new human values for a sustainable lifestyle, NGO participation substantially amounted to an NGO delegation being allowed to present the Ministers with an oral statement approved by the environmental associations assembled at a nearby venue. The principle of co-operation nevertheless emerged, and this is important.

Even so, the NGOs were not drawn into the preparations for the Lucerne Conference until quite late in the process, too late for them to have any significant influence; nevertheless, the participation procedure proposed by the governments could lay claim to guideline status.

For instance, in the run-up to the Lucerne Conference the NGOs had to mount a major effort to set up liaison in all countries of eastern and western Europe, establish co-operation with the main international associations, disseminate information on both the official and the NGO processes, and arrange preparatory meetings and reporting procedures. They would not have been capable of all this without financial support from the various governments and the EU.

The "participation principles"

NGO participation in the Lucerne Conference constituted an example of true partnership:

1. NGO representatives, or their "focal point", were issued with all official preparatory documents. Likewise, NGO preparatory documents were communicated to the governmental representatives by the Conference Secretariat.
2. NGO representatives were admitted to all official preparatory meetings and working groups without restriction and with the right to participate freely in discussions.
3. The NGOs as a whole were able to take part in the Ministerial Conference through a specific NGO delegation, also entitled to participate freely in discussions.
4. A recommendation was made to the participating countries to include NGO representatives in the national delegations.
5. The NGO preparation and participation process was financially supported by the host country Switzerland, the Netherlands, the EU and the Regional Environment Centre in Budapest.

This participation machinery was extensively applied in the preparations for the Sofia Conference, and further improvements in the NGO structure have been achieved. The NGOs co-operate in a working group for the pan-European environment open to all interested associations, and have an eight-member standing co-ordinating committee and an NGO "focal point" in Sofia. Because the NGOs were able to participate from the outset in the ongoing preparations for the Sofia Conference, this time there are far better prospects of exerting influence through meaningful contributions and of being involved in discussions as real partners.

Significance of participation

The explicit recognition of the NGOs as partners in the preparation and implementation of decisions is not only an achievement but also a great challenge for them. Numerous associations have taken up the

challenge and are endeavouring to represent the grassroots viewpoint as adequately as possible and to press for the speedy introduction of workable measures for preserving all that sustains life. This involves considerable painstaking work, and no immediate or indeed spectacular successes are really to be expected. International co-operation by environmental associations nevertheless leads to mutual reinforcement and interlinkage of NGOs which is an asset in itself. Understanding of the background situations in the various countries is also fostered.

Now that representatives of private organisations are involved in intergovernmental co-operation, real pioneering work is being performed in the necessary democratisation of the international sphere. NGOs actively co-operating in the "Environment for Europe" process hope that the right of the population and of private organisations to participate and receive information will shortly be formalised in a multilateral convention or in the framework of the Council of Europe or the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE).

The importance of co-operation by all sectors of society in decision-making on terms of partnership, as affirmed in Principle 10 of the Rio de Janeiro Declaration, cannot be emphasised too strongly, particularly as regards nature conservation and application of the sustainable development concept. Unrestricted, actively promoted information on the part of governments, with involvement of the people and their private organisations in decision-making, are at the same time the first steps towards the important phase of implementing the decisions reached. Agreements on paper and declarations alone do not attain this end, however promising they may often sound. Not until they are actually applied in real life will anything be achieved on behalf of nature or towards living conditions suited to environmental as well as human needs for the present and future generations on this planet. ■

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In central and eastern Europe

Ferenc Feher

For well-known historical reasons, the environmental movements in central and eastern Europe were born in a politically charged atmosphere. At the earliest stages of development, the line between political opposition and environmental devotion was not clear. Political arguments were frequently mixed with professional considerations, leading environmentalists were often seen as popular tribunes, and political careers were saved and prolonged because they were "painted green".

The big issues raised during the movement's infancy - the Gabčíkovo Dam, for example, or certain debates on nuclear power stations - display all the symptoms of what we call "childhood" diseases: choices about actions were more emotional than rational, and motivations were confused and muddled rather than clear.

The wave of political changes in central and eastern Europe (CEE) brought with it the sudden and unexpected new responsibilities associated with a democratic society, and robbed the environmental movement of a valuable asset: leadership. "Charismatic" individuals moved into the circles of higher policy, while real environmentalists had to find their own way to achieve their goals. The desperate need for proficiency in managing programmes, getting proper publicity, organising fund-raising activities, and entering the decision-making process at local and national levels became obvious.

Progress in achieving these aims has varied from country to country. At the moment, the environmental movements in CEE represent

a wide range of organisations with varying managerial capabilities, different horizons for goal-setting, and different levels of contact with actual decision-making bodies.

Mission of the REC

The Regional Environmental Center for central and eastern Europe was established in 1990 by the United States, Hungary and the European Community. Its mission is to facilitate the development of environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and to transfer the necessary skills, information and financial support that can make them powerful and decisive partners in shaping "Our Common Future". We are adjusting our programmes to meet the needs of all present and potential partners.

Vertical co-operation

Vertical co-operation is the facilitation of information flow and mutual understanding between different sectors of society. From "grassroots" NGOs to the level of the Ministerial Conference in Sofia, REC programmes cover the whole range of possible partners in CEE environmental protection. Special projects are designed and implemented to address specific issues, such as public participation, business information and government affairs.

Education is one of the REC's priorities. Within the framework of the Junior Fellowship Programme, dozens of young members from CEE environmental organisations are trained on project management issues. The Senior Fellowship Programme

provides the opportunity for more experienced experts to work on special environmental topics during a sabbatical-type study period. The Environmental Management Training Course Network directly addresses the need to create a solid basis of CEE environmental managers.

Through the Information Exchange Team, REC offers a reliable and up-to-date information source for our partners. Apart from our library, access to international computer databases and a continuous "question/answer" service, the Team has developed special, tailor-made information packages and programmes. The NGO Directory is a comprehensive register of 1 700 environmental NGOs in the region, providing information on their main activities and contact addresses. This directory is also available electronically through the Internet. Our Media Resource Service provides reliable information to environmental journalists, and the Business Information Service will encourage businesses to adopt sustainable development practices and build the capacity of CEE firms to solve environmental problems.

Horizontal co-operation

The REC's grants programmes offer direct financial assistance to environmental NGOs in CEE. The grants are awarded through a transparent, open and competitive application procedure. Because of differing needs on the part of NGOs, the REC offers two different grants programmes.

The Local Grants Programme focuses on local capacity building. Small (up to US 5 000) grants are awarded to NGOs to cover basic operational needs, such as computers and fax machines. Local grants are also awarded so NGOs can carry out local actions and campaigns like those seen on Earth Day throughout Europe. Apart from the direct results realised from these small grants, they also serve as an "elementary school" where NGOs can gain the experience and practice necessary for successful project management.

The Earmarked Grants Programme is designed for more developed NGOs. Certain "priority topics" are identified by a yearly needs-analysis survey, and project proposals are invited for the topics chosen. The quality standards are high: a successful project proposal must fulfil a set of formal criteria as well as pass a careful examination by an international expert panel. In this programme, absolute priority is given to projects which promote regionwide NGO co-operation. Project proposals designed as "joint ventures" between NGOs working in the same field in different countries, and projects with immediate model value for the whole CEE region are selected for funding. The REC Earmarked Grants Team organises regular

View of the Danube and Budapest



Fritsch-Irmaann

meetings where representatives from NGOs with similar interests, but who work in different countries, can sit together and share ideas and experiences. In many cases, these meetings were found to be the only opportunity for such information exchange.

The results achieved by REC grantees are published as volumes in the REC's Project Summary Series, and are then circulated across central and eastern Europe. This prevents parallel efforts from being initiated and provides direction to NGOs looking for possible partners.

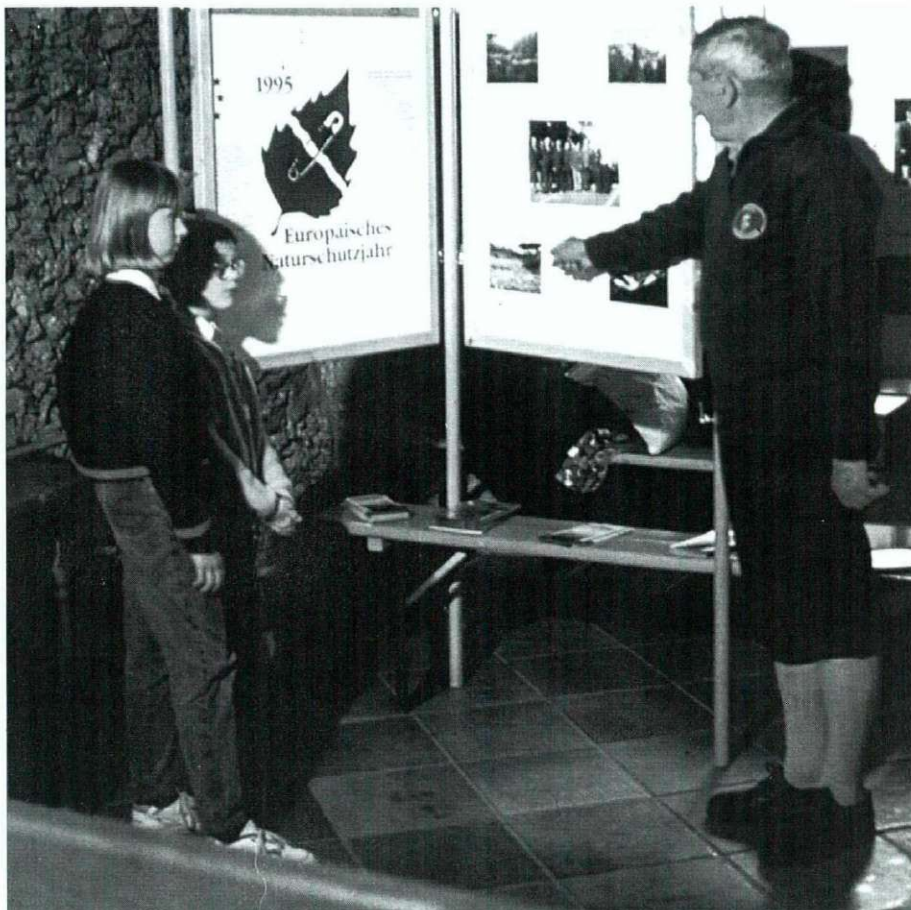
The outlook

After five years of working in central and eastern Europe, we are proud of our achievements in promoting information exchange and co-operation in the region. The increasing number of individuals and organisations using our information services and grants gives a clear indication of the positive effect the REC is having throughout the region.

But we must be aware of the many problems that have yet to be solved; we must also be aware of our weak points. The inclination of NGOs to co-operate is still not strong. It is our task to clarify the reasons for this and find ways to improve the situation. At the same time, we must establish stronger co-operation between ourselves and similar sponsoring organisations. We hope our efforts will be understood and welcomed by environmental movements across central and eastern Europe. ■

F. Feher

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Travelling exhibition of the ABNÖ, within the framework of European Nature Conservation Year

In Austria

Nikolaus Hinterstoisser

Frankly, which of us has a really detailed knowledge of each and every administrative law, decree and regulation governing not only our own community life but also our relationship with the world around us? The fact remains that human behaviour in the natural environment is crucial to survival, not only for the rapidly increasing number of threatened life-forms but ultimately for ourselves as well. The perilous career on which we are embarked is demonstrated by the daily loss of 25 hectares or more of green areas to development in Austria alone, growing danger lists of threatened plant and animal species, brimming mountains of garbage, rationalised elimination of streams, ponds and hedgerows from the landscape, water pollution, and so on. Through broadly based awareness-raising, in which the Council of Europe has also taken a prominent part for many years now, an effort is being made to change direction. Alas, this does not suffice to avert immediate dangers, or else the necessary alteration in human behaviour does not take effect promptly enough. Consequently, there is a need for statutory regulations on protection of nature and environment which in Austria are often policed by mountain and nature surveillance bodies supporting the authorities in an honorary, ie unpaid, capacity.

Legal foundations

According to the provisions of the Austrian Federal Constitution, legislative and execu-

tive responsibility for matters relating to the protection of nature, animals, caves etc. rests with the nine provinces. As a result, Austria has nine different laws and derived sets of regulations on the protection of nature and animals. The provisions may often differ in detail but are identical in purport. Thus, alongside the provisions on protection of species already in existence since the 1920s (longer still in some provinces), legal foundations for the designation of protected areas have generally been laid by now. The process was significantly encouraged by European Conservation Year 1970. At present, all provinces are intent on supplementing this body of legislation with comprehensive biotope protection provisions (eg strict protection of heathlands, streams, springs, unspoiled Alpine land, glaciers, etc), active landscape maintenance and especially private-sector, or "contractual", nature conservation initiatives.

All nine of the provincial nature protection laws stipulate that for the purposes of their application, the authorities are to be assisted by honorary nature conservation surveillance bodies. After undergoing suitable training and passing tests, the members of these various organisations are sworn in as public surveillance officers. As such, they have specific obligations but also the requisite powers, for instance authority to demand the production of papers and to confiscate certain items (eg bird snares). In some provinces they may also book offenders and in certain cases arrest them if caught in the act.



Rubbish collection action for a clean landscape

The ABNÖ

The provincial organisations associated in the League of Austrian Nature and Mountain Surveillance Agencies (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Berg- und Naturwachten Österreichs - ABNÖ) are committed to full co-operation, with the common aim of protecting human, animal and plant habitats and means of sustenance from damaging influences or interference.

The national headquarters in Zell am See (Salzburg province) serves as a co-ordination and information centre in which all the provincial organisations have an equal interest. They are ready to co-operate in preparing generally useful educational and informational material which they apply in their own spheres. For European Nature Conservation Year 1995 a mobile exhibition was mounted, and is currently on show in various municipalities within the transfrontier Austrian High Tauern National Park. Efforts are also being made to arrange block procurement of equipment and uniforms. When dealing with general present-day issues of nature, landscape or environment protection, the League is able to consult experts whose reports are made available to all provincial organisations.

The constant concern of the provincial organisations banded together in the ABNÖ is to fulfil the duties assigned to them by the public authorities in accordance with the law. The obligations which they have accepted are met thanks to voluntary, collective and altruistic efforts without regard to party allegiances, mutual co-operation across provincial boundaries and co-operation with public and private institutions. The ABNÖ is represented on the governing board of the Austrian Nature and Environment Protection Association (ÖGNU - Österreichische Gesellschaft für Natur- und Umweltschutz), the umbrella organisation of the Austrian NGOs.

Surveillance

The differing structure in each province means that the fields of action vary. In some provinces it is necessary to enforce national park legislation, provisions on the protection of caves, waste and refuse laws, fungi protec-

tion regulations, fauna protection provisions, laws regulating cross-country vehicles and snowmobiles, legislation on freedom of passage in mountain country, etc. In these circumstances, the men and women devoting their spare time to nature conservation often find it very difficult to manoeuvre within a field of tension between public interests and maintenance of an unspoiled environment at one extreme and the personal interests of land-users at the other. In many places the growth of modern cross-country sports such as mountain biking and rafting has become a particular problem, occasionally requiring the honorary wardens to settle disputes between opposing sports lobbies (eg mountain bikers and rambblers).

Protection

The range of tasks includes co-operation in programmes for landscape conservation, the preservation of species, practical biotope protection measures and assistance in maintaining unimpaired ecosystems, together with occasional restoration of minor cultural monuments or supervision of shelters. In addition, they are recurrently involved in refuse collection and countryside cleanup campaigns.

Support to the authorities

Support to the authorities includes installation and upkeep of official "protected area" signs. Specialised investigations under administrative procedure and checking notices issued by order of the authorities are among the routine mountain and nature surveillance functions, as is daily patrolling to supervise compliance with nature and environment protection regulations.

Information

Public relations work is of outstanding importance. Production of publications and joint programming of broadcasts and localised actions are designed to build nature-consciousness among Austrians as well as visitors to our country. Countless information evenings, lectures illustrated by slides and exhibitions on nature conservation in connection with local

events are staged each year by the surveillance agencies in members' spare time.

Help

In some provinces the agencies also co-operate in disaster control measures. A disaster task-force manned by dog handlers and specialists mainly from Tirol and Lower Austria has been set up in the ABNÖ framework. Its highly responsible functions include searches for missing persons, sealing off danger areas and mounting guard.

While on duty, the mountain and nature wardens can be recognised by an official badge worn on the left breast. In most provinces they are also issued with a standard uniform which is the subject of internal regulations in each province.

Some 8 500 members of the mountain and nature surveillance organisations in Austria are ready to perform these tasks on a voluntary and honorary basis. Their action extends over the whole of Austria in accordance with the slogan for European Nature Conservation year 1995:

"Look to the future. Look after nature!" ■

Dipl. Ing. N. Hinterstoisser

ABNÖ

Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Berg-

und Naturwachten Österreichs

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Training at the Valat Tower

Pierre de Rancourt

Standing at the heart of France's Camargue region, the Valat Tower was built in 1954 by Luc Hoffmann. It is to contribute to the preservation of wetlands in the Mediterranean Basin. The study of how these ecosystems function is therefore the central theme of the operational research pursued at the Valat Tower. The results are used to develop methods of management geared to the sustainable development of these areas. The research station passes on scientific knowledge to the managers of wetlands and decision-makers. Run by the non-profit-making Sansouïre Foundation, the Tower was officially recognised in 1978 and approved as a vocational training centre.

Stand-alone operator and international network

The training provided at the Valat Tower is based on its own resources (40 years of research into how wetlands function and management of 3 500 ha of natural wetlands in the Camargue) on the one hand and on its international network of partners (bodies responsible for managing natural sites, university or vocational training institutes) on the other hand.

The Valat Tower is permanently staffed by a team of training specialists capable of providing assistance at four levels:

- assessing training needs in conjunction with the body concerned;
- drawing up training programmes;
- drawing up training course specifications

and handling co-ordination between the client and the operatives;

- designing, undertaking and evaluating training initiatives (lessons, courses, field trips, project back-up etc).

Fostering integrated management

The centre's know-how covers the full range of skills required in the integrated management of a wetland and its catchment area (administration of natural heritage and management of human activity).

Thanks to the experience it has gained in the training field, the Valat Tower can either implement training schemes directly or help its local partners to do so (training for training managers and instructors).

Vocational training

A vocational training course for managers of wetlands has been set up: it comprises three 1-week modules devoted to the methodology underlying management plans, the management of vegetation in Mediterranean wetlands and co-operation with partners in the management of natural areas. The course is taught in French and English. In cases where it does not dispense the training itself, the Valat Tower helps its partners to tailor training specifications to their own needs; for example, it is helping the Catalan Environment Ministry to run a "management programmes" course this autumn for managers of protected wetlands in the Western Mediterranean area.

Mediterranean wetlands

Within the framework of the MedWet programme for the conservation of Mediterranean wetlands, the Valat Tower's training team have also developed techniques for designing training schemes geared to the management of a specific area. Back-up training for the design and implementation of integrated management projects has been provided on several sites in France, Italy and Greece.

The centre also co-operates with other training bodies (eg the National College of Rural, Water and Forestry Engineering and the National Centre for Regional Public Administration in France, the Centre for Regional Activities/Specially Protected Areas in Tunis etc) and contributes to the training of decision-makers and national, regional and local officials. ■

P. de Rancourt

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Wetlands in Camargue

Ph.E. Viallet





Meadow viper

Protection of the herpetofauna

Keith Corbett

Almost 20 years have passed since Rene Honigberger compiled his "Threatened Amphibians and Reptiles in Europe", published by the Council of Europe as No. 15 in their Nature and Environment Series. Shortly after (1979), one of conservation's bright stars was born - the Bern Convention.

At about the same time, the SEH was invited to discuss with the Council of Europe the conservation options for these particularly vulnerable animal groups. It was this single event that led directly to SEH forming its Conservation Committee, a working group which has not surprisingly striven to maintain its spawning links with Strasbourg.

Scientific action

The SEH publishes a highly respected journal (*Amphibia Reptilia*) and hosts a biennial scientific congress, both a reflection of its status as an international academic society. And, unlike other Old and New World national and regional herpetological societies, SEH has no brief towards pet-keeping or trade in these species; thus avoiding one facet of popular herpetology which can sometimes prove an embarrassment to conservation efforts.

The thrust of SEH's role has been to identify the priority taxa, habitats and sites; to fill in crucial data gaps in survey and ecological knowledge; to assess the respective conservation situations and to propose relevant actions; and to pursue our recommendations and their implementation, not least via the expert and standing committee meetings of the Bern Convention.

Habitat assessment technique

We feel rather proud of our habitat assessment technique which we have been able to apply to a number of these priority situations via our field investigations. This has of necessity embraced consideration to other flora and fauna; the past status of the threatened target taxon and of its habitat; and a practical assessment of both the existing and the potential threats.

It is only fair to say that our conclusions have not always been welcomed or initially accepted by the authorities concerned, as the case of the Majorcan midwife toad (*Alytes muletensis*) exemplifies:

This relict amphibian had been discovered surviving in an extreme refuge habitat within rock fissures, winter torrents and summer pools in a few sheer-sided gorges in limestone mountains. Even after including all possible adjacent terrestrial habitats, its known global range extended to only a few hectares. Therefore, imagine the official incredulity which greeted our proposal for a biogenetic reserve designation in the region of 40 000 hectares! We had taken account of the need to protect the water catchment from increasing pressures of barrage and abstraction to satisfy growing tourism, and to a lesser extent for the fruit farming on the source plateau above with its further risks of pollution. We were since pleased and relieved to report that a ore reserve area has now been declared covering 8 000 hectares.

Recommendations via Bern Convention

Much of this work has been compiled in the form of contractual reports for the

Council of Europe. This was initially in the mid-1980s via a set of conservation monographs on the most threatened taxa, from which consequent recommendations were then adopted by the ratifying States of the Bern Convention. This was then followed by (1) Threatened reptiles in western Europe and (2) Threatened amphibians in western Europe. In turn, these led to the formal adoption of two comprehensive Recommendations, No. 26 and 27 (1991), covering no less than 101 elements addressed to 19 countries and 47 endangered taxa (41 full species). So far good progress can be reported on their implementation, although a further level of prioritisation has recently had to be imposed in order to facilitate their practical consideration by the Standing Committee.

Our latest report on threatened amphibians and reptiles of eastern Europe embraced an additional 20 taxa spread over a further 17 countries. It has not yet proved possible to translate their conservation needs into actions via any Bern Convention recommendations because too few of those countries are yet ratifying States, and since the conflicts in old Yugoslavia and the Caucasus more than preclude attention to nature conservation.

67 taxa may seem to be rather large as a conservation target but Europe's biogeographical area is now known to support a total of 277 herpetological species (74 amphibian and 203 reptile), a group which has been rightly recognised as being particularly vulnerable to habitat change and especially those achieved at today's technological speed. The underlying problem surrounds their rather sedentary habits, small individual territories, notably poor colonisation potential, and having little instinct or ability to flee habitat loss or adverse changes.



Golden alpine salamander (*Salamandra (atra) aurorae*)

Threatened herpetofauna

If we are asked to select the most threatened of the European herpetofauna, the Chelonians would be prominent: Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) in France and Italy; Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*); the green (*Chelonia mydas*) and soft-shelled (*Trionyx triunguis*) turtles, both of which are now very close to extinction in the Mediterranean.

For the amphibians: Sardinian brook salamander (*Euproctus platycephalus*); golden alpine salamander (*Salamandra (atra) aurorae*); Majorcan midwife toad (*Alytes muletensis*); and the olm (*Proteus anquinus*) would all figure highly, as also would other reptiles such as: Hierro green lizard (*Gallotia simonyi*); Sardinian (*Natrix (n.) cetti*) and Milos (*N. (n.) schweizeri*) grass snakes; large-headed water snake (*N. megalcephala*); and the red (*Vipera kaznakovi*), Milos (*V. schweizeri*), meadow (*V. (ursinii) rakosiensis*) and Wagner's (*V. (wagneri) vipera*).

However, whereas these all represent taxa threatened across their European and sometimes global ranges, we must not ignore those equally deserving species which are declining across significant parts of their European range. These include: great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*); tree frog (*Hyla arborea*);

natterjack (*Bufo calamita*) and green (*B. viridis*) toads; European pond tortoise (*Emys orbicularis*); and the sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*).

"Assemblage reserve"

Another element of our work was to research and identify areas of high herpetofaunal diversity; we used the term "assemblage reserve" but this would now fit very well with consideration to protect Europe's biodiversity. This points to the pressing need to put together the different strands of European

wildlife conservation. While SEH has been busy identifying the key sites and areas for our herpetofauna I.H.A.s, Plantlife is currently compiling I.P.A.s, BirdLife International had already its I.B.A.s, and we are confident that Bern's experts on invertebrates are in a position to propose some I.I.A.s. Preliminary comparison already indicates degrees of overlap present in the targeting by these apparently diverse disciplines, and we believe that Strasbourg is best placed to take on the necessary co-ordination role of identifying and then of safeguarding this truly international biodiversity.

Future plans

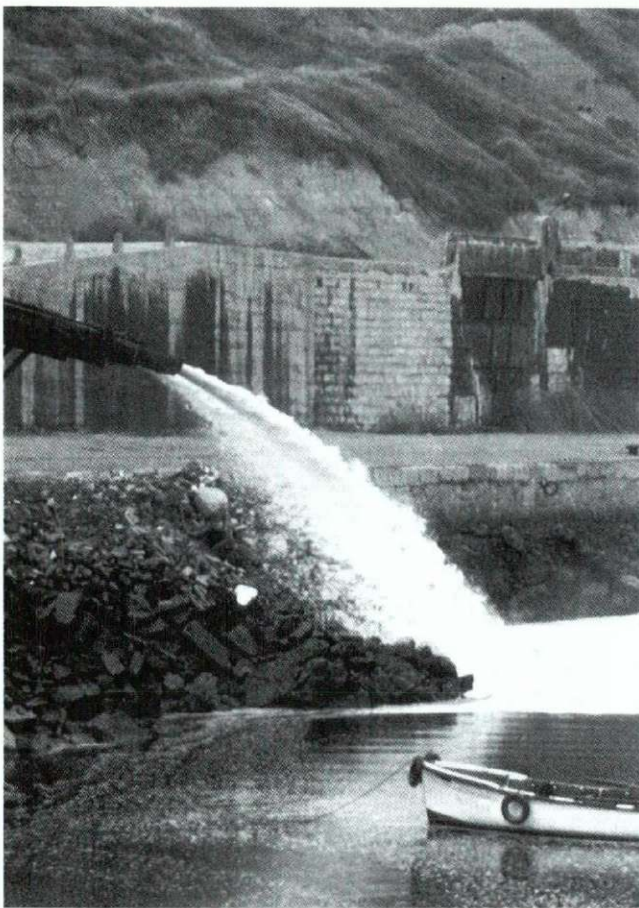
SEH's plans for the immediate future will include the publication of the European atlas of herpetofaunal distribution, while our conservation efforts will be linked with our role as IUCN's Species Survival Group of European Herpetofauna wherein, bolstered by additional expert assistance, we are committed to producing the respective action plan.

It is in our view crucial for the conservation and indeed survival of many European species that the Bern Convention continues to play an active and leading role. It alone has led the way in advocating the essential dual approach of conserving threatened species habitats in addition to botanical habitat types. Without such an integrated strategy Europe's wildlife would be inevitably impoverished. This is why SEH will continue to lobby and to give active support to the Bern Standing Committee, and not least to help progress the implementation of its relevant outstanding recommendations. ■

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Habitat of the Majorcan midwife toad (*Alytes muletensis*)





Edwards/Greenpeace

Industrial pollution of the Saja river (Spain)



Smith/Greenpeace

Greenpeace demonstration on the Venice lagoon



Greenpeace

Whale entangled in a drift net

Greenpeace-Italy: actions

Domitilla Senni

Ecology teaches us that humanity is not the centre of the universe. The world is made up of a complex web of systems, each mutually dependent upon the others for sustenance and development. Greenpeace supports this philosophy of interdependence through its various international campaigns to protect the Earth and its inhabitants.

Best known for its non-violent actions, Greenpeace is committed to reverse environmental degradation resulting from nuclear testing, the slaughtering of whales, the exports of hazardous wastes from developed to developing countries, and from marine pollution. Greenpeace is a non-profit organisation whose activities are funded by contributions from the general public. This enables Greenpeace to maintain financial and political independence from both governments and industries.

Vulnerable areas

Within the framework of this global perspective and in strict liaison with the international campaigns and initiatives undertaken in several countries, Greenpeace has chosen

to focus its actions in those areas characterised by the impelling seriousness of environmental problems and by the existence of a particularly delicate interdependence web. The Mediterranean region is one of these and Greenpeace's commitment to this highly vulnerable area is expanding with the identification and multiplication of its environmental crisis.

Campaign against pollution

Since 1986 Greenpeace has actively campaigned against toxic pollution of the Mediterranean Sea. Wastes are discharged in the marine environment with high concentrations of toxic, persistent or biocumulative compounds. The level of organochlorines contamination in the region is such as to pose a severe threat both to humans and the environment. Through discharges of more than 60 industrial plants which produce chlorine and chlorinated plastics, through drinking water contaminants, through the extensive use of chlorinated pesticides and atmospheric deposition, tonnes of organochlorines enter the marine environment each year. As a result the Mediterranean stands amongst the most contaminated regions of the world.

In February 1995, Greenpeace denounced one of the world's leading chemical group, ENICHEM, of polluting the Venice lagoon with carcinogenic compounds released from the petrochemical plants of Porto Marghera. Greenpeace's findings revealed that the pollution of the lagoon by dioxins and furans is among the world's worst. The judicial inquiry that followed Greenpeace's denunciation led to the closure of the discharging plant.

Critical juncture

The Mediterranean is at a critical juncture. Given the present trends, the coming decade will be a period of tremendous acceleration in the growth of local industry, population and tourism. The development will be unevenly distributed, posing a further element of conflict in a region characterised by political instability. International and regional co-operation are essential if pollution trends and resources depletion are to be reversed throughout the area.

The high dolphin mortality rate along the Spanish and French coastlines in 1990 and 1991 was an alarming symptom of the wide-

spread of the contamination of the Mediterranean Sea. The main cause of this fatal epidemic is a virus, but other factors helped to the spread of the phenomenon. Organo-chlorinated components and heavy metals were found in the kidneys, liver, bladder, muscles, skin, lungs and brain tissue of the beached specimens. The high concentrations of toxic substances found in the tissues had probably weakened their immune systems. It is known that a high proportion of pollutants present in the marine environment reach cetaceans through the food chain, and these animals have thick layers of fat in which such pollutants tend to accumulate.

Analysis of cetacean tissue in the Mediterranean has detected mercury levels 1 500 times higher than the maximum safety levels for human beings.

The danger of drift nets

In 1993, following repeated protests from Greenpeace, the Mediterranean countries attending the 7th Meeting of the Barcelona Convention decided to stop discharges of toxic and persistent substances into the sea by

the year 2005. In addition to the hazards contributing to the rapid degradation of the Mediterranean Sea, there are also more direct risks from fishing activities. Greenpeace has on several occasions denounced the repeated violations by some Italian fishermen of United Nations Resolution 46/215 and European Union Regulation 345/92, which prohibit the use on the high sea of drift nets over 2.5 kilometres in length. The Italian fishing fleet is by far the biggest in the Mediterranean, with some 720 boats authorised to use drift nets. However, the Italian "spadare" violate the international agreements governing their use, with an average height of approximately 20 metres and an average length of 12.5 km. The net is drifted out (as the term drift net would suggest) and is used for catching swordfish, whence the Italian nickname "spadara". In fact, only 17 or 18 of every 100 fish caught are actually swordfish, the rest are thrown back into the sea, often lifeless.

According to a report published by the United Nations Secretariat General, the total numbers of worldwide drift nets in use are:

- over 600 Italian "spadare" (in the Mediterranean);

- approximately 80 altogether for France, Ireland and Britain (in the Atlantic);
- only three others for the whole rest of the world.

In 1993, 46% of the sperm whales beached along the Spanish Mediterranean coastline were discovered, entangled in drift nets. Between May and June 1994, at least six sperm whales were caught in drift nets off the Balearic islands. Over 8 000 cetaceans are captured every year by Italian "spadare", according to a conservative estimate by the International Whaling Commission.

Despite repeated requests to the Italian Government to implement the international agreements and despite the very many protests and denunciations by Greenpeace and various other environmental protection agencies, Parliament has still not rubber-stamped any plan to redeploy these boats. ■

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IUCN

Tiina Rajamets

Founded in 1948, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) brings together States, government agencies and a diverse range of non-governmental organisations in a unique world partnership: over 800 members in all, spread across some 125 countries.

As a Union, IUCN seeks to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. A central secretariat co-ordinates the IUCN programme and services the Union membership, representing their views on the world stage and providing them with the strategies, services, scientific knowledge and technical support they need to achieve their goals.

European Programme

The programme objective is to achieve Europe-wide co-operation in the protection, restoration and sustainable use of living natural resources

Established in 1988, the European Programme has concentrated on implementing projects in central and eastern Europe in four principal areas:

- Evaluation of the status of ecosystem conservation and formulation of strategies for management and restoration - surveys have been published on lowland grasslands, wetlands and mountains.

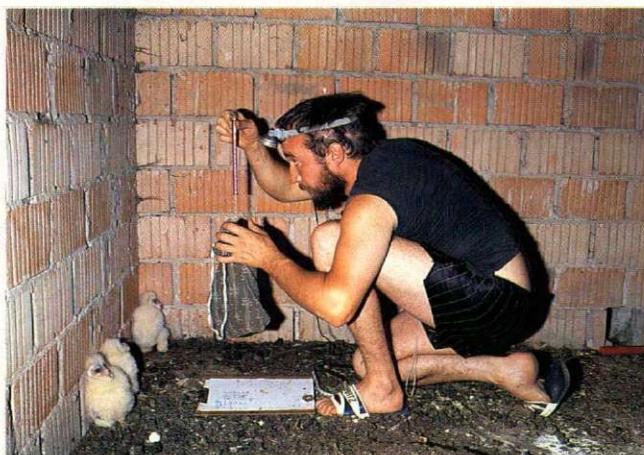
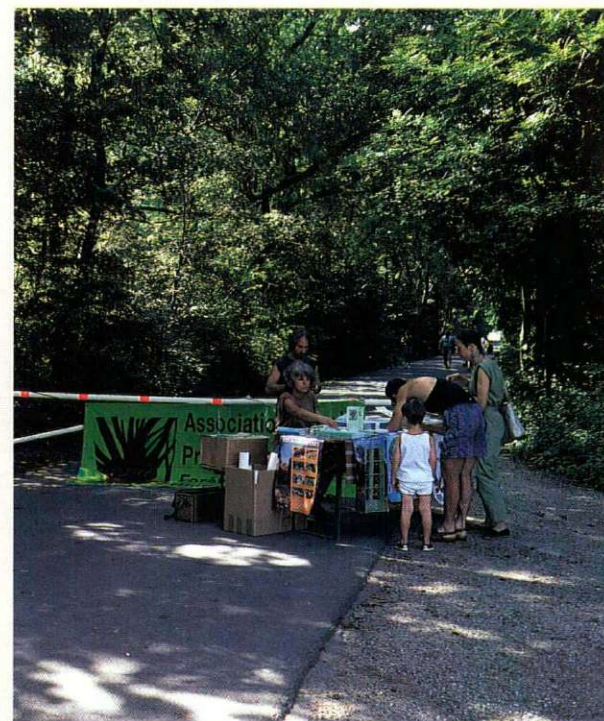
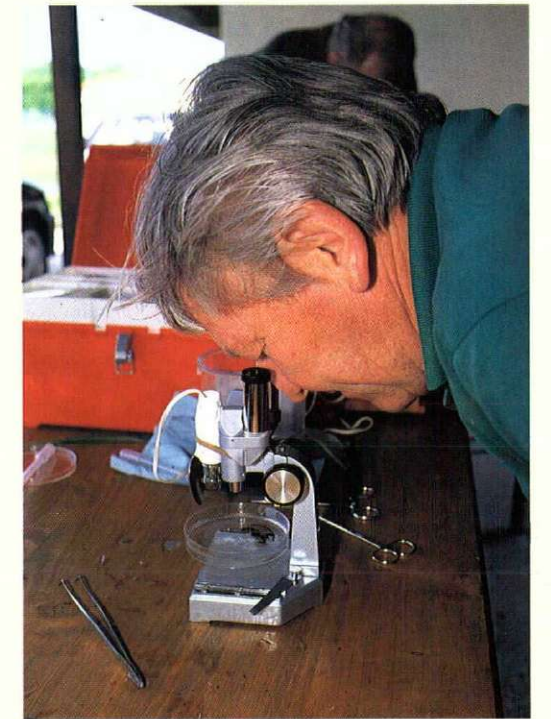
- Promotion of sectoral policies for conservation and sustainable development - the Programme has examined the impacts of changing agricultural policies on areas of high natural value in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech and Slovak Republics. It has also assisted in assessing the potential for tourism in the Danube Delta, Lake Baikal in Russia and the Czorsztyn Dam in Poland.

- Institutional strengthening and skills transfer for implementation of effective conservation and sustainable development policies - IUCN Country Offices have been set up in Bratislava, Budapest, Moscow, Prague and Warsaw and there are IUCN focal points in most other countries in the region. NGOs have been involved in all Programme activities.

- Provision and dissemination of information and technical advice - the Programme publishes a Report and Research Series, produces a Newsletter in Prague and brings together networks of experts across the region.

On a pan-European level, the European Programme has been involved in the Environment for Europe process, notably in the integration of biological and landscape diversity and five site-based projects into the Action Plan for central and eastern Europe as well as providing ecosystem and species chapters for the report *Europe's Environment: the Dobříš Assessment*. It has participated in the Task Force for the Danube River Basin Programme and has provided input to the pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy. ■

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- “Non-governmental organisations possess well-established and diverse experience, expertise, and capacity in fields which will be of particular importance to the implementation and monitoring of environmentally sound, equitable, socially responsive and sustainable development, as envisaged throughout Agenda 21. The community of NGOs therefore offers a global network which should be tapped, enabled and strengthened in support of efforts to achieve these common goals.”

Extract from Agenda 21.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio, 1992.

WWF International in the Mediterranean

Paolo Guglielmi

The Mediterranean Programme of WWF International was born in 1990, with the mandate of co-ordinating the conservation activities promoted by national offices (Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Tunisia) and of directly developing strategies and environmental protection projects in all other coastal states with no institutional presence of the association. The office of the Programme is placed in Rome c/o WWF Italy and presently comprises four persons: a co-ordinator, a supervisor, a consultant and an assistant. In accordance with the priorities set by WWF International at a planetary level, the projects of the Mediterranean Programme have been and are still conceived and developed in relation to the following biomes: oceans and coasts, forests and freshwater; and with reference to these four themes: ecology-economy, energy, agriculture and environmental education. If we only consider the projects belonging to the Programme, excluding all the others directly financed by national offices, the total amount spent per year reaches approximately 3.5 billions USD (in comparison with the 10 billion USD spent by the WWF in the whole Basin). WWF International contributes to the funding of the Mediterranean Programme by 60% of the total, while the remaining 40% comes from governmental agencies and international institutions such as the European Union, the World Bank, etc. In order to understand what the Programme is really doing for the conservation of the Mediterranean region, it is worthwhile analysing in more detail some of the projects of the Programme. The following list focuses on a brief illustrative selection of the most representative activities and on-going projects (some of them have been already completed) in different areas of the Basin.

Spain: afforestation in the Ebro Delta Natural Park wetland, Tarragona; creation of a nursery to reintroduce local plants and to offer a formal environmental education.

France: acquisition and protection of Cape Lardier, St Tropez, in co-operation with the "Conservatoire du Littoral"; census of the population of dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) together with their monitoring along the Corsican coasts.

Italy: inventory, protection, and management of wetlands (MedWet Programme), making people aware of the importance of their preservation; promotion of protected areas ("blue landfalls") along the Sardinian coast to preserve the habitat of the monk seal; camps for scientific researches and non-formal education for the protection of the nesting sites

of loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in the isle of Lampedusa; management and organisation of the activities of the Marine Park of Miramare-Trieste.

Albania: census and monitoring of the aquatic bird fauna of the coastal lagoons of Karavasta and Kune; training courses on the management of wetlands and of environmental education at Tirana University; campaigns to put pressure on the government against uncontrolled hunting; pre-feasibility study for the creation of a marine park in the Karaburuni peninsula, Vlora.

Greece: monitoring, conservation and study of the monk seal populations in the Ionian Islands; reconversion to biological agriculture of the estate of the Monastery of Ormylia; protection of the forest reserve of Dadia-Soufli; purchasing of the Sekania beach in the Isle of Zacinto to protect the main nesting site of the loggerhead turtle in the Mediterranean.

Turkey: integrated management in the Mediterranean coast; protection, studying and public awareness on the 17 remaining loggerhead and green (*Chelonia mydas*) turtles' nesting sites; estimation of coastal fisheries impact on protected marine species in the Ischenderun Gulf; management and development of bird-watching in the Menderes Delta; planning and integrated development of a system of protected areas in the east coastal region of the Black Sea.

Egypt: Plan to recover and preserve the lagoon-coastal system of El Zaranik (Port Saïd); research missions to evaluate the impact of coastal fisheries on protected marine species.

Libya: research expeditions to make a statistical estimation of the nesting population of loggerhead turtles.

Tunisia: creation of an environmental education centre at Cape Bon; pilot project to educate and make the public aware of how important is the conservation of the coastal lagoons; training and education courses on how to manage and preserve the national forest heritage.

Malta: co-operation to publish the protectionist magazine "In Nature"; campaigns to make the public aware of environmental problems and against indiscriminate hunting.

Maghreb and Middle East States: development of the project "Across the Waters" that is based on funding grants to non-governmental organisations aiming at realising environmental education initiatives at all levels.



Pilot whales

International co-operation

Even if environmental problems are addressed at a local level, the desire to work internationally to ensure adequate coverage and integration to build up an overall conservation scheme for the region appears clearly from every initiative. On the other hand, it is also evident that WWF alone will never be able to take the Region to an acceptable balance between the impact of human activities and nature conservation. That is why a consistent part of the Mediterranean Programme office's work is dedicated to establish relationships and contacts with all national and local environmental NGOs to start working together as a network. The whole environmental movement, even in perfect harmony, would be however ineffective without a direct involvement of decision-makers and governments. In a region which includes 20 countries and an incredible number of different cultures, traditions, languages and religions - in such a way that not only north/south differences exist, but even east/west ones - co-operation between all coastal states to conserve their natural heritage appears a very difficult task.

New stage

The year 1995 could represent a new historical stage of cooperation and collaboration among Mediterranean countries aimed at protecting the Basin. Indeed, in June 1995, on the occasion of the end of the second decade of its activity, the Barcelona Convention and the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP-UNEP) have been revised and renewed, after a long and difficult political process. The Convention, a legally binding agreement among all coastal countries and the MAP, a specifically created organ under the aegis of the United Nations Environ-



Mortimer/Greenpeace

mental Programme (UNEP) to put into practice the protocols defined by the Convention itself, had the initial main aim of protecting the Mediterranean Sea from pollution. In the following years, as a result of the uniqueness, the validity and the extension of the legal agreement obtained during the Barcelona Convention, it has been widely recognised the need to extend the jurisdiction of the Treaty also to other aspects of the environmental protection. One of the most interesting and important among these, has been, without any doubt, that of speeding up the process of creation and management of protected areas all along the coast of the Basin.

Little influence of SPA protocol

In 1982, then, the Contracting Parties of the Convention adopted and signed a specific Protocol on the "Specially Protected Areas" (SPA) of the Mediterranean, with the primary purpose of identifying, protecting and managing in the appropriate way all the most (ecologically) interesting coastal and marine zones. Moreover, a Regional Activity Centre for the "Specially Protected Areas" (RAC-SPA) has been created in Tunis, under the control of the MAP, in order to realise and co-ordinate the actions proposed by the Protocol SPA. Notwithstanding the good promises, the Protocol has not developed and influenced the conservation policies of the Member States as expected, remaining a simple list of goals, which during the last decade has rarely been followed by concrete legal, socio-economic and ecological actions.

Danger for the future

Beside the loss of the last pristine coastal and marine zones, the danger is that in the next

years we could face a generalised destruction of the whole coastline, caused by enormously increasing human pressure. As far as this issue is concerned, we already know what will happen in the future : the scenario depicted by the Blue Plan (UNEP-MAP) foresees an increase in the Mediterranean population residing on the coast from 133 millions in 1985 to 197-217 millions in 2025; furthermore it is foreseen an increase in tourists per year from the present 100 millions to 170-340 millions. Such a situation will turn into a much more exasperated exploitation of all available coastal resources, first of all soil and water. The Blue Plan foresees as well for example that in the year 2025, more than 4 000 km of coastal soil will be used only for buildings apt to receive tourists.

WWF, through the Mediterranean Programme, has decided to make a special effort at the international level to take an active part in the revision process of the Barcelona Convention and of the MAP. Therefore, in the preparatory meetings and in the final revision, WWF presented a complete package of proposals to all signatory States to the Barcelona Convention, aiming at improving the efficiency and enforcement of the protection agreements of the delicate Mediterranean coast. The MAP did not reach in fact good results until now. In short, 90 % of the 123 Mediterranean protected coastal areas presently included in the agreement (Protocol), are, as a matter of fact, only names on a sheet of paper. There are no managing plans, no efficient controls, no adequate structures and often not even the legal instruments have been set up . Moreover, even if we considered the 123 areas of the list really operating, on the whole, they would represent 2 400 km of protected coast compared to the overall 46 000 km of the Mediterranean area, barely 5.2% of it. The Mediterranean Sea conservation is therefore mined by both quantitative and serious problems.

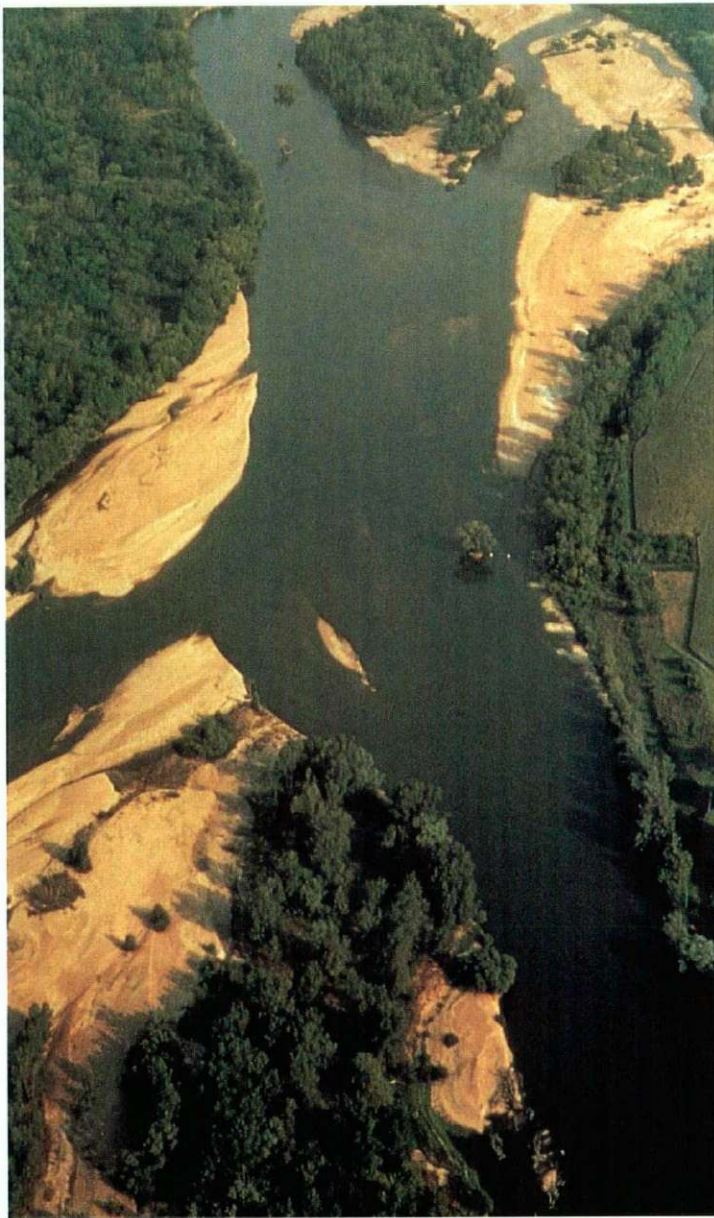
New measures

The main new conservation measures and concepts included in the Treaty and its Protocols after the Barcelona Conference are however encouraging. Here are the newest, most of which were directly taken and accepted from WWF proposals:

- to prepare and integrate in the different national legal systems specific strategies of conservation and integrated coastal zone management;
- to include in the new SPA Protocol an Annex I with a list of completely protected species and an Annex II with a list of species that need careful management;
- to examine the feasibility of creating a special fund for the promotion of projects related to nature conservation and integrated coastal management, complementary to the Mediterranean Trust Fund and aimed at mobilising and ensuring additional, necessary financial resources;
- to create a network of specially protected areas of Mediterranean importance (SPAMI), that could include, on the basis of a higher ecological value in comparison to all existing zones, a limited number of coastal areas, worthy of receiving priority adequate financial support for an integrate and durable management;
- to co-operate at both regional and national level and to involve qualified non-governmental organisation (NGOs) that the interested in the environment , in the debates and actions of the Barcelona Convention, of the MAP and of its Regional Centres.

The challenge for the next decade is to make sure that all these measures and improvements will not just only remain, like in the past, beautiful words on nice paper. The WWF Mediterranean Programme is already at work for this goal. ■

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Reprieve for the River Loire

Substantial development schemes aimed at the Loire, although still considered as one of the last untouched rivers in Europe, prompted the European Union to back a major conservation project. The prime objective of this wide-ranging programme is two-fold:

- protecting and managing natural areas of major ecological interest for the sake of both biodiversity and river dynamics;
- campaigning for greater consideration of natural sites in policies and usage.

Natural Areas of France has been given the task of general co-ordination and administrative and financial supervision of this European programme, which will cover several years. The implementation of the programme exemplifies the pooling of efforts required for such an ambitious project. There are many bodies involved in the practical aspects: the Conservatories of Central France, Burgundy and Auvergne, the World Wide Fund for Nature (France), the Rhône-Alpes Nature Protection Federation, the Upper Loire Nature Protection Federation and the Bird Protection League. With part of the programme still left to run, 400 hectares of natural sites have already been purchased and some 700 leased, in order to preserve the biodiversity of this great river and create a zone which is free of interference.

The Crau Plain

Lying between Arles and the Alpilles range, the Crau Plain is the only barren steppe-land in France. It is the result of the natural drying-up of the Durance delta and provides shelter for rare animal and plant species, some of which are endemic (little bustard, pintailed sandgrouse, lesser kestrel, ocellated lizard, Crau germander, Rhône cricket etc). For centuries, sheep farmers have used this area to graze their flocks. Unfortunately, low incomes have forced owners to sell their land and turn to more profitable undertakings. The Crau Plain has shrunk from the 60 000 hectares it covered at the beginning of the 16th century to a mere 11 000 today. In less than 10 years, over 1 000 hectares of natural land have been transformed into intensively farmed peach orchards, gravel pits or roads. In 1988, Natural Areas of Provence launched a huge conservation campaign: awareness-building, public information, appeals for funding, livestock maintenance aid and land purchasing to save what remains of this unique environment. With the support of Natural Areas of France, the regional Conservatory now protects 2 300 hectares of the Crau Plain and intends to make every effort to pursue its policy of preserving a site classified by the European Union as a priority for the survival of wild birds in Europe.

Espaces naturels de Provence



Fresh impetus for natural sites

Daniel Béguin

Although the State Conservatory for Coastal and Lake Areas fulfilled its role of coastal land administrator perfectly well, France had no real policy, in the 1970s, for running inland natural areas of note.

It was necessary to make our fellow citizens more keenly aware of the environment in order to pave the way for the initiatives taken in recent times by private bodies and associations to safeguard our country's natural heritage, along the lines of the work already long pursued in Great Britain (Wildlife Trusts), the Netherlands (Natuurmonumenten), Switzerland (Swiss Nature Conservation League) and the United States (Nature Conservancy).

The gradual and insidious vulgarisation of our finest sites and the dramatic decline of previously common animal and plant species have driven scientists, government departments and society at large to create new and effective tools to preserve and manage our most precious natural areas and landscapes: namely Regional Natural Area Conservatories. These were set up at regional level so that the necessary inter-regional financial solidarity could be brought into play to protect natural heritage in regions where nature is the most luxuriant but which have limited financial and human resources. It is also the guarantee of a well-founded scientific approach at regional level, with input essentially from universities.

This increased awareness of the threats hanging over numerous natural sites throughout France and the need for urgent action to protect them prompted the Conservatories to develop land purchasing and contractual schemes to ensure the preservation of the most remarkable biological assets of our natural areas. These initiatives mostly supplement or precede regulatory measures, which are necessary but often inadequate. Today, all the regions of metropolitan France have at their disposal these specialist technical and scientific tools for the protection and management of valuable environments.

A common ethic

The Regional Natural Area Conservatories are non-profit-making associations sharing a common ethic which is partly summed up as follows: "where a biological, geological or aesthetic asset exists on a given territory, that asset may be considered as *res communes*, ie the indivisible property of a larger community which is duty-bound and entitled to ensure that neither its integrity nor its lifespan are in any way undermined".

Partnership and consensus

The Conservatories have developed various partnership with state authorities, regions, *départements*, municipalities and the general public. In this way, they have involved the different protagonists concerned and harnessed their efforts. Since they see public involvement as vital, the Conservatories

indispensable in order to maintain its biological properties.

Control of use

Consequently, the Conservatories seek to gain control over the most sensitive natural areas (purchasing) or over their use (leases,

Conservatoire des sites lorrains



High grasslands. Nature reserve of Tenet-Gazon du Faing, Lorraine (France)

strive to build awareness of the wealth and fragility of natural environments among the general public and elected representatives. This reinforces nature protection efforts and confirms their social legitimacy. They also strive for consensus, basing their initiatives on land deals whereby landowners accept the idea of protecting nature and consequently sell or lease land or sign a management agreement.

Land purchasing

The basic idea underlying the work of the Conservatories is that there is no point in protecting animal or plant species without preserving their habitats. If our wealth of fauna and flora is to be maintained, biotopes must be respected and these are attached to a specific territory: control over that territory is

management agreements). In this connection, their co-operation with land development and rural development establishment corporations is extremely fruitful. Once control over land or its use is acquired, the Conservatory in question can manage it ecologically according to its characteristics. This management strategy, which is determined or approved by a multidisciplinary scientific board, is the key to conserving sensitive natural areas.

Thanks to these regional scientific boards, the Conservatories are now in a position, throughout France, to respond to the imperative need to conserve the genetic diversity of our wildlife and ensure the diversified and sustained management of the natural areas in which it lives.

This makes them key contributors to the Natura 2000 network in France.



N. Vaningen - J.F. Hello

Crane in Champagne-Ardenne (France)

Ecological management

The long-term management strategy laid down by the Conservatories does not exclude agricultural and heritage management which maintains the value of areas (extensive grazing by sheep, horses, cattle, waterway management, mowing meadows etc). It relies as far as possible on local partners and encourages the public to take a hand, particularly by volunteering their labour. This public participation, combined with the scientific expertise which is vital to harmonious land use, is one of the great strengths of the Conservatories. Generally, the land taken over by the Conservatories is open to the public where this is compatible with the preservation of its biological value. Special efforts are made to inform and build awareness among residents of these areas.

Since it lies outside the conventional circuits of economic assistance (subsidies and aid for farmers in particular), the ecological management of natural areas which generally produce little can be developed only with funding from local authorities and the general public. It has an undeniable immediate cost in addition to that of purchasing or renting the land. But the expenditure entailed must be viewed in terms of the heritage protected. Furthermore, many of the Conservatories' management experiments break new ground and provide a wealth of technical, economic and scientific information about new ways of managing natural areas, put to the test in varying contexts.

Different partners

The Conservatories have links not only with a range of institutions (European Union, state, regions, *départements* and municipalities) but also with the general public and public bodies such as the Conservatory for Coastal and Lake Areas, the National Forestry Office and water boards. The Environment Ministry and its external services were among the first to support the emergence of the Conservatories, which were also given decisive assistance by the French branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature.

The state remains a key partner of the Conservatories.

The European Union's environment policy is also utilised by the Conservatories to preserve natural areas of European interest: a number of European programmes (ACE, ACNAT, LIFE) have been or are being implemented (saltwater marshes in Lorraine and Auvergne, peat-bogs in the Midi-Pyrénées region, capercaillies in the Vosges hills, cranes in the Champagne region, Loire nature, alluvial valleys in north-eastern France etc).

As regional authorities increasingly realise just how effective the Conservatories are, useful partnerships and contractual links are being developed with both regions and *départements*.

Liaison points

Municipalities are the Conservatories' key points of contact: often the owners of remarkable natural sites, they do not have the technical, scientific and financial resources required to preserve and enhance their heritage. In such cases, the municipalities entrust the management of their natural sites to Conservatories, which take action to mobilise the resources required.

The general public and nature protection associations are prime contributors in the following ways:

- active and voluntary participation in site maintenance projects,
- organisation and supervision of nature education,
- identification of natural sites of major ecological value,
- dovetailing with campaigns run by nature protection associations (eg Loire and Crau regions),
- approaches to owners and beneficiaries of natural sites,
- funding for land purchases.

Finally, an increasing number of private companies, aware of the initiatives developed by the Conservatories, are prompted to provide backing for the preservation of natural environments.

New life

Both flexible tools and forums for negotiation between all protagonists in the land sector and the farmers, foresters and private and public owners who manage the areas concerned, Regional Natural Area Conservatories and their *département* agencies have carved out their niche in the countryside. They are a source of hope in connection with such wide-ranging issues as agricultural decline and cottage industry schemes in abandoned areas and the pioneers of a genuine, diversified policy to open up, protect and manage vulnerable natural areas, providing backing, thanks to their unique role of interface between agriculture,

environment and tourism, for the desire of public authorities to promote nature in France.

A federation: Natural Areas of France

In order to sustain and promote the principle and activities of the Conservatories nationally and internationally, the 21 Regional Natural Area Conservatories have banded together in the Natural Areas of France federation. Each Conservatory is a member of the Board and so helps frame the federation's general policy.

Natural Areas of France co-ordinates the work of the Conservatories and assists their internal and external development.

After just five years of existence, the Natural Areas of France federation and the Regional Natural Area Conservatories account for 500 natural areas of ecological interest covering some 16 000 hectares of protected and managed land, including numerous sites proposed under the Natura 2 000 scheme.

The Conservatories network is also a labour force, numbering 280 salaried employees and thousands of volunteers working for nature all over France; it is a force representing a powerful commitment from the voluntary sector and scientific circles to our most valuable natural sites. ■

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Fair Isle

Alexander Bennett

Recent history

Fair Isle has become almost a household name in many places, conjuring up colourful knitting patterns and shipping forecasts. But few people will know that Fair Isle lies between Orkney and Shetland in the northern isles of Scotland. It is the most remote surviving community in the British Isles, but that in itself gives no impression of the isle, its community, its varied wildlife and its rich cultural heritage.

In 1954 Dr George Waterston, an imminent ornithologist and owner of Fair Isle, decided that if the isle was to survive its declining population it needed a considerable investment. He gifted the island to the National Trust for Scotland who now hold the island for the nation in perpetuity. With the Trust's expertise and resources they set about investing in the island, rebuilding the infrastructure through housing, roads, communication links and establishing through the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, Fair Isle's reputation as an important observation station for bird migration. Fair Isle boasts one of the most extensive bird lists of anywhere in the British Isles and visitors come from far and wide to share in this experience.

Designations

Fair Isle's designations are numerous, from a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a National Scenic Area, Environmentally Sensitive Area, Special Protection Area and of course the holder of the Council of Europe Diploma, about to enter its third period. These designations, important in themselves, but collectively strengthen the hand of the National Trust for Scotland, the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust and the Fair Islanders in their day-to-day management of the island. It is within this context that these groups strive now to achieve protection for the seas around Fair Isle through Marine Protection Area status. On site designations to protect the natural history of the island are all and good, but seabirds depend very heavily for their survival on their fishing ranges in the sea around the isle, and it is therefore seen that in order to ensure the conservation of all species on Fair Isle we are looking to conserving the major food source, not only for the seabirds, but for the islanders who rely on the seas to keep their economy alive as well.

The environment of Fair Isle is fragile and vulnerable and the Braer tanker incident in Shetland in January 1993 serves to demonstrate just how vulnerable the island can be. In this instance Fair Isle avoided a major environmental disaster. As a consequence everyone involved with Fair Isle is anxious to



Fair Isle is managed by the National Trust of Scotland, which promotes the permanent preservation of countryside and buildings of historic interest and natural beauty. The most important source of the Trust funding is the subscriptions from its 160 000 members

see the implementation of Lord Jonaldson's report "Safer ships, cleaner seas", and the urgent action to see its recommendations implemented to control shipping in these fragile areas.

Management activities

In terms of a remote community Fair Isle is a success story with numerous contributing factors, not least of which is a strong partnership between the Trust as landowners, the Fair Islanders and the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust. It is the strength of this partnership which has been able to carry it through difficult times. Communications is the key, by continuing to talk through problems, difficult times, through the complexity of funding for projects, to the sensitivities of land management and to the heated debates within the community meetings, these all contribute to the democracy of our partnership.

With the population of 69 still on the increase it is difficult to imagine what these people can do to maintain their livelihood in such a small island, only 4.8 x 1.6 kilometres. The answer is diversification. Most islanders have their roots in crofting agriculture, working small parcels of land, sometimes as little as 10 acres. In this maritime climate it would be difficult not to succumb to the modern way of farming, but Fair Isle has managed to survive with traditional low intensity methods. The hardy Shetland breeds of sheep and cattle survive the long winter nights, but with the long summer days there is plenty time to grow fodder crops in the traditional ways. The community have learned to live in balance with nature and not to abuse or exploit the privilege. They take great strength from seeing another season by with good crops, quality lambs and a new crop of visitors to keep the island's economy alive.

However, with such a cultural heritage behind them the traditional crafts are alive

and well, fiddle making, knitting, boat building, furniture making, all in a beautiful blend with the cultural tradition of music making and art.

However, some would say Fair Isle, and indeed Shetland, have been buffered from the realities of the 20th century economies by the oil boom in the North Sea, but it has been the ability of Shetland and Fair Isle to manage those resources and funds wisely for the future that has been its great strength.

What of the future?

Even as we look forward to the next millennium the Island's population will still have to contend with the problems of isolation and weather and its survival will be due, as it always has been, to the determination and desire of the people to live and work there together as a community.

Every community requires a goal to drive it forward, so with the prospect of Marine Protection Area Status, the next phase of the renewable energy scheme about to happen, and with the recently announced award of the Crofting Township of the Year Fair Isle will succeed for many years to come. ■

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Action plans for the recovery of threatened birds

Borja Heredia

National plans

Action Plans for the conservation of threatened species have been written in several countries around the world. In the United States they are called Recovery Plans and are mandated by the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Two federal agencies are responsible for the preparation of Recovery Plans: the US Fish & Wildlife Service is responsible for the recovery of 96% of the domestic listed species, while the National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for the 4% of listed species that live in the oceans. Although officially approved and sometimes widely distributed, these plans are legally non-binding.

In Australia, Recovery Plans are prepared for species and ecological communities by recovery teams where individuals and agencies are represented. The attainment of objectives and the provision of funds is subject to budgetary and other constraints affecting the parties involved. They become official documents and represent the position of the Department of Conservation and Land Management after approval by the Executive Director, the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority and the Minister.

The Spanish Law for Nature Conservation of 1989 has established a process of listing threatened species under different levels of threat, and demands the preparation of Recovery Plans for the endangered species. These plans are regional and once finalised they are published as a Royal Decree and become legally binding. Until all the regional plans for one species are in place, the National Institute for Nature Conservation (ICONA) organises a working group with experts and administrators from the different regions, and puts together a co-ordinated action plan which will serve as a basis for the regional Recovery Plans. To date there are official Recovery Plans for the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), Pyrenean mountain goat (*Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica*), bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) and black stork (*Ciconia nigra*).

In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries have issued species conservation plans for wall plants, butterflies, otter (*Lutra lutra*), black grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*), grey partridge (*perdix perdix*) and spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*), following the prescriptions of the Nature Policy Plan of the Netherlands. Plans for crane (*Grus grus*) and barn owl (*Tyto alba*) are presently being prepared. The plans are elaborated with the assistance of experts and in most cases a small working group is

formed in which the plan is discussed. Sometimes parts of the plan have been written by members of such a working group, in other cases a total chapter has been written by one expert. In the case of the spoonbill and barn owl, the Dutch Society for the Protection of Birds (Vogelbescherming) has written a basic text for a plan as a technical report. On the basis of these texts the final conservation plan is prepared in the ministry. Once confirmed by the State Secretary of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, the conservation plans become official governmental plans.

In the United Kingdom, Species Action Plans are being produced by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) for 118 British "Red Data Birds". These are birds of particular conservation importance due to their rare, localised, declining or internationally important populations. Implementation of the plans guides the work of the RSPB helping to prioritise effort so that the best possible action is taken to maintain or enhance the range and numbers of these species in the UK. The plans are produced in association with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, country conservation agencies and where appropriate, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. The statutory conservation agencies for England (EN), Scotland (SNH) and Wales (CCW) have agreed to use these as a starting point for the development of their own species action plans. It is intended that objectives and policies will be common to all; actions will vary according to the role of each organisation. Hence the plans aim to have wide acceptance and ownership.

International plans

International plans for threatened species were developed in the 1970s for several populations of North American waterfowl, because of this group's economic and social importance. Notable plans include those for the Pacific Coast brent goose (*Branta bernicla*) and greater snow goose (*Anser caerulescens*). A coherent framework for those plans was developed by the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, which presents a rationale for international co-operation between Canada, USA and Mexico in the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl.

More recently, the Greenland white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) International Conservation Plan was prepared by the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee, on sub-contract to IWRB on contract to the Irish Government, following extensive consultation with interested parties throughout the species' range. The plan is being sponsored by the Republic of Ireland's National Parks and Wildlife Service, and prepared to develop as a stand-alone agreement between Greenland, Iceland, the United Kingdom and Denmark.

The International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB) and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust have produced several

Spoonbill



Eriss-Irruam

action plans for globally threatened Anatidae in recent years. The plan published for white-headed ducks (*Oxyura leucocephala*) in 1989 was accompanied by a series of educational booklets in local languages, and has led to successful implementation in the species' major wintering region in Turkey. A plan published for the white-winged (wood) duck (*Cairina scutulata*) in 1992 has led to successful implementation in Thailand and Indonesia. A plan was published for the marbled teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*) as recently as May 1993. These reports are produced through the network of the IWRB Threatened Waterfowl Research Group and include very thorough reviews of status information accompanied by recommendations for conservation action on a national level.

The African Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement (under the Bonn Convention), recently approved at The Hague, recognises multilateral Action Plans as an adequate instrument to integrate actions for the recovery of internationally threatened species. This is a very important step since it provides a legal framework for countries to adhere to these plans.

European plans

During the last two and a half years BirdLife International has been preparing action plans for European threatened birds, a project funded by the RSPB and the European Union. In total twenty-three species have been covered of which nineteen are globally threatened, three are threatened at European level (pygmy cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, cinereous vulture *Aegypius monachus* and Houbara bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*) and

Brent goose



Friess-Irmann

one is a very distinct form which has not yet been recognised as a full species, the Azores bullfinch of priolo (*Pyrrhula murina*), an endemic bird to the Azores (Portugal).

For each species a technical workshop has been organised involving the relevant experts and also people working in the administrations which are responsible for species conservation at national level. In total fifteen workshops have taken place in different points of Europe, serving the purposes of gathering the latest information on the status and threats to the species concerned and increasing the network of experts and conservationists which collaborate with BirdLife International. For each species a compiler has been appointed with responsibility for collating the baseline information and drafting the action plan. A great emphasis has been put in the process of consultation, trying to ensure that all the experts, conservation agencies and research institutions related with the species had a chance to see and comment on the draft. It has been intended to create a sense of common ownership of the plans, which are aimed primarily at the BirdLife network but also at practitioners and decision makers, including governmental agencies, research institutions, NGOs and individuals.

Each plan consists of three main blocks: Part 1 deals with basic information about status, ecology, threats and ongoing efforts; Part 2 includes the aims and objectives of the plan and Part 3 identifies priority actions for each country, cross referenced to the objectives.

Y. Noto-Campanella

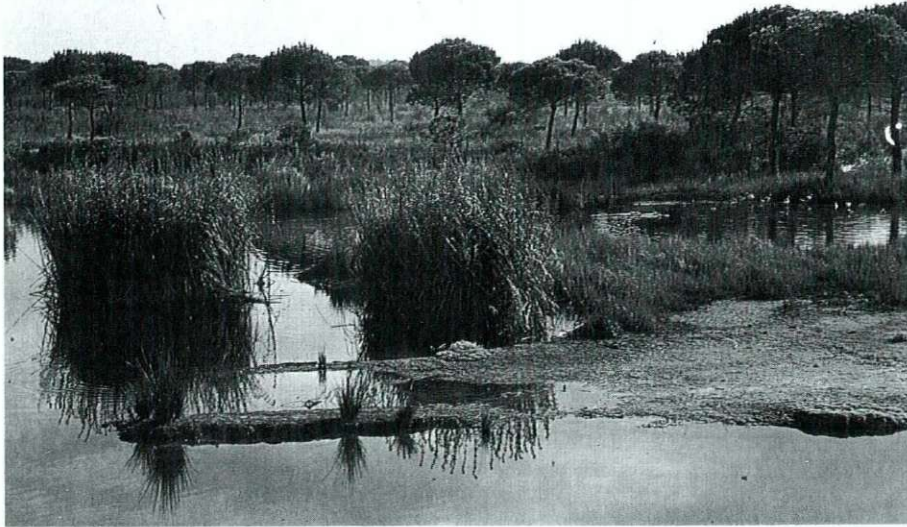


Barn owl

Each of these parts are interconnected and there is a logic that flows from the threats to the objectives and from these to the specific actions. The plans are now available in draft form in English and French but it is intended to translate them into the relevant European languages, something considered essential for their successful implementation.

In June 1995 the Bern Convention hosted a seminar in Strasbourg to present the action plans to its Range-States. The plans were considered to be comprehensive and useful documents which are already an advanced contribution to the Biodiversity and Landscape Protection Strategy that the Council of Europe is now preparing. The Bern Convention will recommend its Range-States to follow the BirdLife Plans and will encourage the development of more detailed national action plans for the species concerned. ■

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Wetlands protection is very important for maintaining biodiversity

SEO brings pressure to bear

Juan Criado

The Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO/BirdLife) uses the Bern Convention as a means of pressure on the Spanish state on conservation issues of great importance. The lack of an infringement procedure similar to that of the EU has been the main reason which could explain the few cases denounced by NGOs to the Bern Convention.

Nevertheless, SEO/BirdLife tries to keep the Bern Convention informed, as we believe that international bodies must be involved and demand environmental responsibilities when natural values or resources identified and protected by international legislation and conventions are highly threatened by human activities.

Protected species

The SEO denounces the use of non-selective methods of hunting, especially lime, strictly prohibited by Article 8, Annex 4 and the intention of hunting Spanish grey partridge (*Perdix perdix hispaniensis*) species listed on Annex 3 as a protected species.

Lagoon to protect

The Gallocanta Lagoon in Aragón is a spectacular endorreic lagoon where 90% of the cranes (*Grus grus*) of western Europe rest on the migratory way to winter at Spanish *dehesas*. The maintenance of a natural vegetation belt surrounding the lagoon is strictly necessary to avoid external impacts, mainly originating from intensive cultivation. Early this year some farmers ploughed 40 hectares of important natural saline meadows that surround the lagoon, destroying also priority habitats under the Habitats Directive, with some threatened endemic species such as *Puccinella pungens*, *Scorzonera parviflora* and *Limonium costae*. Besides, more wells have been opened in the

last months affecting the hydrological dynamics of the lagoon and decreasing the water table level, already at a critical point. The site is not protected under any Spanish protected areas scheme and therefore there is no management plan for the area. It is "protected" as Game Refuge, Special Protected Area for Birds (SPA) (under the EU Birds Directive 79/409) and Ramsar Site. This very uncertain situation and the direct damage to the habitat should change for the conservation of Gallocanta Lagoon in the near future.

Impact of windmills

SEO/BirdLife is facing a complicated conservation problem related to wind farms and bird impact in southern Spain, in the area of the Strait of Gibraltar, Cádiz. This area is unique in Spain and it is of extreme importance for bird migration in the Palaearctic. Subsequently, it has been declared a Natural Park and Special Protected Area of the EU and it is also an Important Bird Area (IBA) listed by ICBP/BirdLife International.

SEO/BirdLife does support alternative energy, but in protected areas or sites of high natural conservation value the precautionary principle should apply. This means the need for environmental impact studies for particular projects and strategic environmental assessments for plans.

268 windmills exist in the area (see enclosed map) and produce a total of 30 Mw. There are immediate plans to build up a total of 1 171 windmills in an area of less than 25 000 ha, a high concentration of infrastructures in a single place. A very recent study of SEO/BirdLife in Tarifa has shown that new locations need to be thoroughly studied in order to avoid bird impact, and different mortality rates were found at two wind parks studied (0.43 and 0.03 birds killed per wind-mill per year).

SEO/BirdLife does not want any new wind farms to be constructed until a Wind Infrastructure Management Plan, with recommendations for further reasonable developments compatible with all the natural values of the area, especially avifauna, landscape and flora, is adopted by the Junta de Andalucía, the Regional Government.

Delta to preserve

The Ebro Delta is the second most important wetland in Spain. The lack of an integrated coastal management approach and too many threats to the Delta, such as no silt coming from the river, infrastructures plans including urbanisation, harbours, dune fixation, roads and aquaculture plants which will destroy the last natural vegetation patches, doubts on the future of the rice cultures has motivated SEO/BirdLife to launch a complete conservation campaign with the support of DEPANA, BirdLife International, BirdLife the Netherlands, RSPB and SVS.

The possible endorsement by the different parties of the Action Plans for globally threatened birds elaborated by BirdLife International and discussed at a seminar organised by the Council of Europe and the Bern Convention last June, is an important step forward for the necessary international joint action to save endangered species promoted under Article 4 of the Bern Convention. ■

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No to motorway plan

Jürg Känzig

A new motorway in Switzerland has been threatening to destroy a migratory bird reserve of European importance but now, thanks to the Bern Convention, traffic will be routed through a tunnel beneath the wading birds' rest area.

On 1 July 1993 the Grenchner Witi area by the southern slopes of the Swiss Jura was included in the Federal inventory of aquatic and migratory bird reserves. The Grenchner Witi is one of the six most important stopping-places in Switzerland for wading birds during their migrations. Little ringed plovers, lapwings, dunlins and snipes also regularly alight there. The reserve was created in order to preserve the seasonally flooded parts of the Grenchner Witi which provide the birds with important resting and feeding areas.

Bird haven or asphalt?

The Grenchner Witi is situated near Grenchen in Solothurn Canton, on the Aare River alluvial plain, and encompasses an unoccupied semi-natural area of 30 km². These river flats form one of the last such landscapes in Switzerland. Through the middle of this area it is planned to build the new N5 national highway as an additional motorway link between the French region and the German region of Switzerland. It is a section of the national road network decided upon over 25 years ago. The strip of asphalt would cut through the most precious ecological heartland in the entire plain of the Aare. A number of nationally important nesting bird and common hare populations would be split into smaller sub-groups, in most cases no longer viable. A major habitat for rare animal species would be permanently ruined. The birds affected comprise 126 species of passage migrants, of which 55 are on the German red list, as well as 90 nesting species which include 18 red-listed in Switzerland.

Bern Convention to the rescue

As early as 1986 the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention received an application from the Swiss Nature Conservation League, drawing attention to a possible violation of the Convention by motorway construction in the Grenchner Witi area. The Bern Convention designates the conservation of natural habitats as a vital component of the protection and conservation of wild flora. Switzerland ratified the Convention in 1982.

Over the past 150 years at least 90% of Switzerland's wetlands have been drained and consequently eliminated as animal and plant habitats. A few important staging points for migrating waders have survived. One is the plain of the Aare in the Grenchen area,

embodying the Grenchner Witi. At the turn of the century it was already described as a resting area for a rich variety of species. Between 1980 and 1986, over 32 different wading bird species represented by 134 000 individuals were recorded there.

New main road unacceptable

Anxious citizens of Solothurn Canton petitioned for a referendum 13 years ago in order to have the project's utility, expediency and impact reviewed by the Federal Parliament. In 1983 the citizens of Solothurn voted overwhelmingly in favour. However, the Federal Council and the Federal Parliament rejected Solothurn Canton's ensuing initiative the same year, even though a cantonal commission had come to the conclusion that in principle the motorway could be dispensed with.

A national campaign for a referendum, known as the Cloverleaf Initiative, sought the cancellation of plans to construct four motorway sections including the N5. The proposal was nevertheless voted down at referendum in 1990, and the threat to the Grenchner Witi remained.

Even as the Solothurn cantonal government was conducting a detailed study of the effects which the N5 highway would have on environment, nature and scenery, the Federal Road Engineering Office stated its

readiness to contemplate an underpass beneath the Grenchner Witi on condition that it was declared a protected area of national importance.

"Ecological" motorway

In the autumn of 1994 the Solothurn cantonal council approved the N5 project on the Aare-Grenchen section, together with the Grenchner Witi farming and conservation zone. This brought a long and arduous planning process to a satisfactory conclusion. Solothurn Canton has devised a scheme which is as environmentally compatible as a motorway could ever be, thereby reconciling the interests of the highway, nature and landscape protection, agriculture and recreation. A stretch of the N5 motorway over two kilometres long will disappear into the tunnel beneath the Grenchner Witi. Without this underpass, Switzerland would be in breach of the Bern Convention. Now the onus is on the Federal Government; once it authorises the project and finally resolves on the tunnelling operation, the preservation of the Grenchner Witi can be considered secure. ■

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Grenchner Witi wetlands: stopping-place for wading birds

Partnerships with commercial companies for the Alps

Denis Landenbergue

Alp Action, for international corporate funding for the alpine environment, presided over by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, was launched in February 1990 at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. What better place to launch to an initiative aimed at linking private companies to tangible alpine conservation projects than this annual event which brings together those who take the economic and political decisions affecting our frail planet?

It is true that more and more companies are now committed to improving the quality of our environment, in some cases spontaneously but in other cases because they are bound to do so by increasingly tighter legislation on air and water pollution and even noise. Their action is prompted both by the company's "internal" environment and by a moral responsibility to tailor their production to environmental considerations. It is a responsibility which is assumed to widely varying degrees, depending on the kind of company, country and culture concerned.

Beyond the corporate sphere

Our philosophy is to encourage companies to go beyond their own sphere of interest, by involving them as partners in tangible projects to protect the alpine environment. These are projects focusing on the company's "external" environment, in the sense that they are not linked to its everyday production activity. They are also projects which have great potential for building awareness among the general public and young people in particular.

Alp Action works in close collaboration with nature protection bodies, national parks and other protected areas or municipalities in seven alpine countries, providing support for exemplary projects in highly diverse fields: protection or reintroduction of sensitive biotopes such as marshes, sparse grassland, forests, waterways and alluvial zones, revitalisation of traditional hill farming, conservation of threatened landscapes, active promotion of alternative, renewable energy sources etc.

Protecting and reintroducing species

In the French Alps, a long-term partnership with Safra Republic Holdings Bank and the French Agency for Environmental Research and Management has already succeeded, between 1991 and 1994, in reintroducing in Haute Savoie seven young bearded vultures, born in captivity, as well as the pre-

sentation as from 1995 of an exhibition on the fragile balance between Man and Nature in the Reposoir valley, where this project is carried out.

In 1996 the first centre for breeding otters in captivity in the Alps will open near Grenoble, under the auspices of the Rhône-Alpes Nature Protection Federation (FRAPNA-Isère) with support from, among others, a Swiss partner of Alp Action, Banque Unigestion.

In the Swiss Alps, several projects run by the Swiss Nature Conservation League or one of its cantonal sections came to fruition in partnerships set up by Alp Action: the building and installation of a nesting platform for common terns where the Rhône empties into Lake Geneva (Les Grangettes nature reserve) and the purchase of sparse grassland containing a wealth of flora and butterflies in Antagnès (Vaud Alps), sponsored by the Pasche bank and the Clarins cosmetics company respectively.

The Société de Banque Suisse supported a major campaign to build awareness of alpine fauna and flora, devised by the IUCN, and Crédit Suisse made a four-year commitment (1990-93) to the study and protection of bats in the canton of Fribourg.

Thanks to a partnership with the Swiss Association of Master Bakers and Confectioners, one of the oldest village bread ovens in the Valais area is being restored by the Swiss Foundation for Landscape Management and Protection (FSPAP) in Lötschental. As part of the same project the "Schweizer Bergheimat" association is providing privately sourced funding for the growing of rustic mountain cereal crop varieties.

Protecting alpine forests

The international campaign to protect alpine forests supported by Kraft Jacobs Suchard made it possible to plant 50 000 trees in Switzerland from 1991 to 1995: this was a valuable contribution towards restoring precious protective forests devastated by hurricane "Vivian" in February 1990, implemented in close collaboration with the forestry offices of the cantons of Uri and Obwalden.

In France, a thousand Siberian pines were planted in 1991, alongside a ski-run created for the 1968 Olympic Games in Chamrousse, as the opportunity was taken, together with FRAPNA-Isère, to highlight the vulnerability of the alpine environment in the face of the construction of winter sports facilities. The

continuation of this partnership made it possible in 1994 for the Vercors Regional Natural Park to purchase precious forest biotopes in the Bruyant Gorge.

In the Italian Alps, 50 000 trees were planted from in 1991 to 1993 in two areas in the upper reaches of the Aosta Valley (Morgex/Pré-St-Didier and Arvier/Val Grisenche) where forests had been destroyed by an invasion of caterpillars. In 1994-95, 25 000 more trees were planted on two forest sites destroyed by fire (Tête de Comagne and Mont Zerbion).

In Austria, 300 000 trees were planted to restore protective forests on 25 alpine sites between 1991 and 1995, in conjunction with the Austrian Association for Environmental Education and with the support of the Ministries for the Environment, Agriculture and Forestry and Education.

In the German Alps, more than 10 000 trees were planted in 1992 in the Bad-Reichenhall region with the Bund Naturschutz association in Bavaria, and 25 000 in 1994-95 in the Hindelang municipality.

In 1994 the first project supported by Alp Action in the Slovenian Alps was at last set in motion: this involved the purchase by the Triglav National Park of six hectares of primary forest frequently visited by lynxes and sometimes even brown bears.

Discovering and protecting nature

Partnership between Riso Deutschland and Alp Action resulted in the publication of a schools guide called *Discovering and protecting nature*. It emphasises the rules to follow in order not to disturb wildlife or damage nature when skiing and was distributed by the German Ski Federation throughout secondary schools in 1991, under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Education. This partnership was pursued in 1992, to foster the "Hindelang Nature & Culture" initiative, a quality label pilot scheme combining nature protection, traditional agriculture and alternative tourism on the scale of an entire municipality. The scheme had been presented for the first time at the Congress of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) held in Chateau-d'Oex. Since then Alp Action has developed a partnership with Kraft Jacobs Suchard for a further three years in favour of the Hindelang label.

In association with the Fondation de France and the Regional Nature Park of Haut-Jura,



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The Apollo, a protected alpine butterfly species, exists in mountain regions where traditional agriculture has been preserved

Alp Action has also participated in the creation of a nature trail around lake Lamoura and in the improvement of this lake's protection.

Wide coverage

Besides partnerships with companies on the principle of "one company - one project", Alp Action has also established various partnerships with media, including the international magazine Newsweek, Reuters Television, Financial Times Television and Euro-news: these are co-operation agreements which help to gain very wide international coverage for each of the projects sponsored on the ground.

Awareness among company staff

Alp Action acts as an interface between private companies, nature protection organisations and the media. In this context, the companies renowned for high levels of pollution which furthermore make no real efforts to improve the situation, are not considered as potential financial partners.

We also believe that raising awareness among company staff is extremely important. A very gradual process, which is neither spectacular nor headline-grabbing and often only produces results on a long-term basis, this public relations work is part of a strategy seeking a genuine "environment-linked enterprise culture" among some of our partners. It can take highly diverse forms.

The Pasche bank, which sponsored the floating platform for the nesting of terns by Lake Geneva, has laid on nature initiation trips with specialist guides on the Geneva stretch of the Rhône and in the Les Grangettes nature reserve for all its staff.

The Republic National Bank of New York publishes news on the bearded vultures reintroduced in the Alps three times a year in a newsletter to its staff and European agencies. A guided tour of the sanctuary where the birds are bred in Haute Savoie is also on offer to staff.

In parallel to its sponsoring of the biggest privately funded reforestation programme in the Alps, Kraft Jacobs Suchard has developed remarkable levels of corporate environmental

awareness. The use of paper bleached without chlorine, for example, called for by Alp Action for several years, has become the corporate norm in the company's subsidiaries and agencies throughout the European continent. Under another spontaneous initiative pursued since 1993, the multinational has planted a tree for every child born to a member of its staff, offering each child a "birth certificate" for their tree, indicating the species and plantation site. The group's European management took a new step towards integrating the environment into the enterprise culture in 1995: the group's European management decided to mark the retirement of one of its members by sponsoring the purchase by the Swiss Nature Protection League of three hectares of woodland in the last remaining refuge for capercaillie in the Neuchâtel Jura. ■

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During the international campaign on the protection of alpine forests, local schools were closely associated with plantation activities, such as here in the Aosta valley (with the participation of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, President of Alp Action)

At the Council of Europe



Seminar for managers of diploma-holding areas

This Seminar was held in the Peak District National Park from 11 to 14 September 1995. It was organised by the authorities responsible for the Park and the Council of Europe's Environment Conservation and Management Division.

The seminar was aimed at the managers of the 44 areas holding the European Diploma and the three current candidates for the award as well as the local authorities involved in the management of the Peak District. Its objective was to offer participants the opportunity to:

- present case studies on the themes of the seminar, namely:
 - . management plans;
 - . the role of award-winning areas as field laboratories;
 - . the role of award-winning areas in rural conservation and development;
- share information and experience relating to management;
- discuss the problems they encountered and propose solutions;
- promote joint projects, paying particular attention to award-winning areas in central and eastern European countries.

The working sessions were supplemented by on-site visits which made it possible to deal in a practical manner with matters linked to the management of a national park and explain the different tasks which managers must perform.

At the close of the seminar the participants established a set of guidelines and principles for both their own work and that of governments.

They placed special emphasis on the need to:

- keep up the high standards required to

obtain the European Diploma, whose prime objective should be the conservation of biological and landscape diversity;

- devise a management plan for each protected area based on long-term needs and establishing both the objectives to be achieved and the steps to be taken;
- develop the award-winning areas' role as invaluable points of reference for the study of changes in communities of species as well as habitats;
- promote the methods, cultures, traditions, skills and values linked to the traditional use of rural areas and the relationship between human beings and their environment.

Second Pan-European Seminar on Rural Landscapes

This second seminar was held in Poznań (Poland) from 26 to 29 September 1995. It was organised by the Council of Europe, the Polish Ministry for the Protection of the Environment, Natural Resources and Forestry, and the Centre for environmental research on agriculture and forestry of the Polish Academy of Science.

Some 70 experts, representing 19 European countries, attended the Seminar along with a representative from the Parliamentary Assembly and a representative from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

The general theme of the Seminar was: "Landscape diversity - a chance for the rural community to achieve a sustainable future".

The experts discussed the following issues:

- landscapes: a cultural heritage essential to sustainable development;
- landscapes: ecological resources essential to sustainable development;
- outcome: management and protection of landscape for sustainable development.

Those present at the seminar aimed to show that the diversity of landscapes in Europe was an environmental and cultural asset and would work in favour of sustainable rural development provided that agreement could be reached on the direction in which it would be best for rural landscapes to evolve.

Examples in which the cultural and environmental features of the landscape were used to promote sustainable rural development were presented. Activities which showed how the complementary tools of management and conservation could be used to improve both the overall value of landscapes and the quality of life of the rural population were also described.

The seminar therefore provided an opportunity to exchange information and share experi-

ences for government officers concerned with matters of rural planning as well as for local and regional authorities.

Visits were conducted to enable the participants to see the work being carried out to replant hedges and strips of woodland on the edges of fields used for farming.

In conclusion, the participants adopted a number of principles and resolutions which are available from the Council of Europe Secretariat.

Co-operation with the countries of central and eastern Europe

Three specialist colloquies have been held as part of the programme of co-operation with the countries of central and eastern Europe:

"Agriculture and related activities in protected areas", organised in conjunction with the Russian ministry of the environment and natural resources, was held in the Pushino research centre (Russian Federation) from 7 to 9 September 1995 and brought together specialists in agricultural development and agricultural and pastoral activities in protected areas;

"Nature and landscape protection as elements of the sustainable development of forests", organised in conjunction with the Swiss federal forestry department from 4 to 7 October 1995, brought together managers and specialists concerned with the protection of forests;

"Environmental education", a specialist colloquy held in Tirana on 19 and 20 October 1995, with the assistance of the Albanian ministry of education and the country's environmental protection committee, formed part of the programme of bilateral co-operation with Albania and enabled Albanian officials concerned with education and school curricula to find out what was happening in other countries.

The three events were all very successful. ■

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