

Newsletter

Hot in this issue: Bat Monitoring Network

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Newsletter for WWF Caucasus and CEPF mutual effort for biodiversity conservation in the Caucasus

In this issue:

- **Bat Monitoring Network**
- **Establishment of new National Park in Armenia**
- **Promotion of Non-timber Forest Products**
- **Protection of priority amphibian species in Azerbaijan**
- **Conservation of Common tortoise in Russia**



Vil. Asalgori situated near Tusheti National Park, Georgia. © Tusheti NP.

Bat Monitoring Network in the Caucasus



Western Barbastella – *Barbastella barbastelus*. Photo by Campester.

Conservation of the Earth's biological diversity is one of the major problems in the planet's sustainable development. Biodiversity conservation is a basis for the humanity's well-being. This accounts for the growing support recently offered to practical efforts targeted at biodiversity conservation. One of the key issues in this direction is support to civil society efforts to promote transboundary cooperation and improve protected area systems. Keeping in line with these important initiatives the CEPF grantee - Field Research Union Campester is conducting project to develop and build capacity of bats transboundary monitoring network in the Caucasus. *Cheiroptera* are one of the most diverse classes of mammals in the Caucasus. The comprehensive approach to the protection of Caucasus threatened *Cheiroptera*

species requires a special international program embracing evaluation of the current threatened *Cheiroptera* status, inventory of their colonies and key habitats throughout the Caucasus region, and development of a transboundary action plan to protect threatened *Cheiroptera* species and their habitats. Taking into account modern approaches to discovered species, the overall number of *Cheiroptera* in the Caucasus region estimates to 35 - seven of them being CEPF priority species.

This challenging initiative is conducted in cooperation with the Theriological Society under the Russian Academy of Sciences, NGO - Mammalogists of Azerbaijan and NGO - Armenian Nature Protectors Union. The project will input significantly in conservation of all globally significant bat species in the Caucasus hotspot. This will be achieved through: capacity building of experts and volunteers involved in monitoring of bats; compiling key habitats database for each of the globally threatened bat species; elaborating regional conservation action plans; initiating of establishing model protected area in the region, to demonstrate approaches to effective conservation of key bat species and their habitats. The project also envisages production of various popular materials for raising public awareness on importance of the bats species and their habitats.



Colony of bats in the cave. Photo by Campester.

Establishment of “Arpi” National Park



View to planned Arpi National Park. Photo by WWF.

NGO - “Biodiversity and Landscape Conservation Union” conducted a feasibility study on establishment of national park in south-east Armenia. In order to evaluate this many specific aspects of prospective area has been reviewed. In the first place the detailed analysis of local flora and fauna, social and cultural background and other specific regional features was carried out. All the research was conducted in close cooperation with Department of protected areas, institutes of botany and zoology of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, local administration, stakeholders and other

interested parties. These activities

resulted in production of the management plan of the national park which will be named "Arpi". The management plan was presented to respective governmental structures for consideration and further implementation.

Establishing of Arpi National Park will be even more important considering the fact that Georgia plans to establish "Javakheti" National Park which will border the Arpi from Georgia's side. Both parks will represent natural ecosystems of the region and provide safe cross-border paths for various animals.



National Park. Photo by WWF.

Honey Production - Promotion of Non-timber Forest Products in Georgia



Inspecting the beehives. Photo by Durujis

Many villages located along the border of protected areas undergo dramatic shortages in income and their dependence on natural resources is still very high. This often generates conflicts between the local communities and protected areas. Providing alternative income generation solutions in these conflict areas will help to improve local economy and provide solid background for better acceptance of protected territories by local population. NGO

“Durujis Madli” is working on promoting honey production in Georgia and demonstrate its

economical and nature conservation benefits in a model community – Kvareli, situated in the eastern part of Georgia. The NGO has set up pilot honey production farm, which is already producing fully marketable products. Significant part of this project is dedicated to promotion and advocacy of sustainable honey production on regional and national levels. Additionally, Durujis madly has established Biodiversity Fund for Kvareli and part of the revenues gain by honey marketing will be directed to this fund.



Poster showing ready product. Photo by Durujis Madli.

Protection of priority amphibian species in Azerbaijan



Caucasian mud diver. Photo by D. Tarkbnishvili

Center for Biodiversity carries out project dedicated to support of protected areas for improving protection of priority amphibian species - Caucasian toad (*Bufo verrucosissimus*) and Caucasian mud diver (*Pelodytes caucasicus*) in Azerbaijan. These species are included in the red books of Azerbaijan, and IUCN. These species are extremely sensitive even to the subtle anthropogenic influences. At the same time, the local population is generally unaware of the benefits which are rendered by amphibians to the agriculture - as natural enemies of many insects harmful for crops.

The project activities include: compilation of database describing condition of rare

amphibian species; investigation of distribution area and mapping of dwelling places; preparation of action plan for ensuring protection of these species; raising awareness of local population on the importance of amphibians. The action plan will be presented to the Ministry of Nature Protection of Azerbaijan for further actions.



Advocacy leaflet produced for the project. Photo by Center for Biodiversity.

The project activities include: compilation of database describing condition of rare

Conservation of Common tortoise in Russia



Common tortoise – rare species in Russia.

Interregional community organization - “Russian Botanical Society” (Dagestan Branch) carries out project dedicated to conservation of intraspecific diversity of Common tortoise (*Testudo graeca*) in the Russian part of the natural habitat. These objectives will be achieved by: evaluation of number and spreading area of tortoise populations; revealing of main factors influencing number of populations in order to work out measures for territorial protection; conducting public awareness campaign in local population; prepare recommendations for establishing of protection territory dedicated to

conservation of most viable populations; compile legislative corrections to local legislation on environmental protection

which will be more oriented to the protection of rare species. Various visual materials - calendar, booklet, posters - will be produced and distributed in local communities during project implementation.



A small village in Tallish Mountains near Hyrkan National Park, Azerbaijan. Photo by WWF.

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The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

www.panda.org/caucasus/CEPF/