

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: IUCN - The World Conservation Union

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): Global Reptile Assessment – Wider Caucasus Regional Workshop

Implementation Partners for This Project: Doğa Derneği; European Commission's Environment Directorate-General; Conservation International – Center for Applied Biodiversity Science

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): 1 January 2006 – 30 November 2008

Date of Report (month/year): January 27th 2009.

II. OPENING REMARKS

Provide any opening remarks that may assist in the review of this report.

The Caucasus region is widely recognized for its unique flora and fauna and overall high biodiversity value. Among the reptiles and amphibians recorded here are many locally endemic species for which the current conservation status is unclear. Of particular note are the many evolutionary interesting lizards of the genus *Darevskia* that continue to persist as parthenogenic populations, and several attractive viper species that despite CITES listing continue to be threatened by the international pet trade.

An international workshop to review the current global conservation status of the reptile species present in the region was convened in Antalya, Turkey, 22-26 September 2008.

This workshop, uniting key scientists from the Caucasus countries, Europe and the US allowed direct collaboration and cultural exchanges between these scientific communities with a view towards forming a clear consensus on the conservation status of each reptile species found within the region.

Data gathered during the workshop are fundamental for the prioritization and planning of national and regional biodiversity conservation activities within the Caucasus and surrounding areas. It is intended that the outcomes of the workshop process will strengthen mechanisms to conserve biodiversity of the Caucasus hotspot with emphasis on species, site and conservation corridor outcomes.

In addition, the information collected at the workshop will form the regional contribution to the Global Reptile Assessment (GRA), a major initiative to produce a comprehensive assessment of the current conservation status for the world's ~8,750 reptile species. The data gathered through the GRA will be directly incorporated into the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species - internationally recognized as the definitive list of globally

threatened species. The finalized assessments and supporting documentation (including spatial data) will be publically accessible from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species website (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>).

III. NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What was the initial objective of this project?

The initial objective of this project was allow have an accurate assessment of the conservation status of the reptile species occurring in the Caucasus Hotspot, thereby addressing the Strategic Direction #2. '*Strengthen mechanisms to conserve biodiversity of the Caucasus hotspot with emphasis on species, site and corridor outcomes*'.

Through the collation of these current, accurate, and freely available base data on the state of each reptile species in the Caucasus hotspot it is intended that conservation prioritization activities within the region can be better informed.

Potential uses of these data broadly include (not exclusively) the management or gazetting of conservation sites; individual species management plans; analysis and identification of regional corridors and Key Biodiversity Areas (http://cms.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/wcpa/wcpa_resources/index.cfm?uNewsID=548); identification of possible Alliance for Zero Extinction sites (<http://www.zeroextinction.org/>).

2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how.

Although the objectives of the project did not change during implementation, they were expanded to include an update on the status of additional European reptile and amphibian species as part of matching funding requirements from the European Commission's Environment Directorate-General. This will form a contribution to the development of a European reptile and amphibian regional red list.

In response to a request by the local partner organization, Doğa Derneği (<http://www.dogadernegi.org/english/>), updates into the status of Turkish reptiles and amphibians previously assessed as part of the GRA were also undertaken (including an assessment of each species at the national level), with a view to the compilation of a national red list for Turkey that will include all species found in the Turkish Caucasus.

3. How was your project successful in achieving the expected objectives?

The objectives are outlined below, with comments on their progress:

- Building conservation capacity within the area by bringing together national and regional experts on the reptiles of the Caucasus

Experts were identified through consultative processes with Doğa Derneği and other important experts on the region. The workshop was attended by 24 participants in total; this included participants from Turkey, Armenia, Russia (including from the Caucasus), several European countries and two leading experts from the USA (see following photograph). Participants were able to share knowledge on each species during the formal working groups, and informally outside of the groups. The opportunity for participants to meet and discuss the conservation of reptiles within the Caucasus was greatly appreciated, and it is anticipated that this will allow greater overall collaboration.



Participants of the September 2008 GRA workshop.

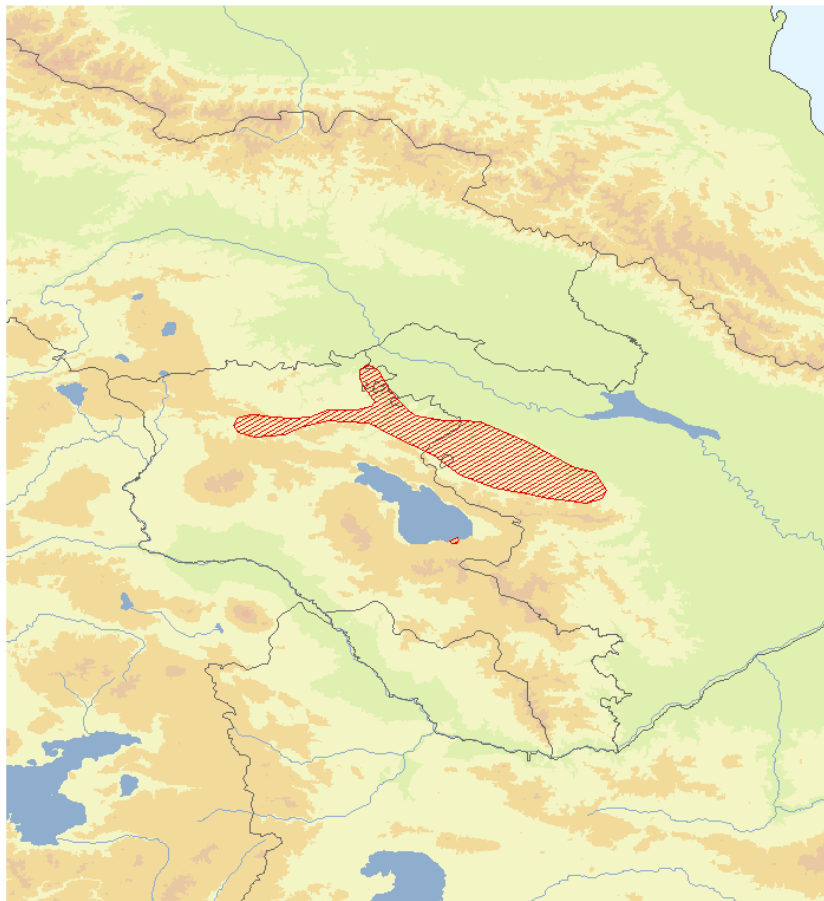
- Collecting and reviewing, through expert discussion, of detailed information on the threats and conservation measures needed for each species

Pre-workshop draft species accounts with details of the distribution (including a map), population, habitat and ecology, threats and conservation measures (including whether a species is present in a protected area) were compiled by IUCN from literature sources and input from earlier related workshops (for non-Caucasus endemic species). These were posted on an ftp site in advance of the workshop, allowing participants to download and review the pre-workshop data before travelling to the workshop.

During the workshop, experts were divided into small working groups focused on reviewing the species information for a particular group of species. Experts kindly provided the working group facilitator with additional material not previously included within the draft accounts, and corrected the accounts where necessary (see attached Appendix I document as an example of a species account). This often included important local knowledge that is not readily available in published literature.

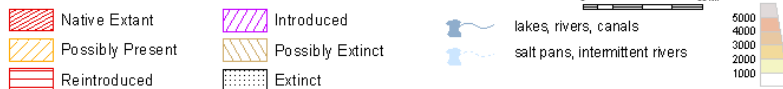
- Accurately mapping (electronically) the current known distribution for each reptile species

As part of the pre-workshop data collation process mentioned above, maps generated from electronic shapefiles containing details of the species distribution were reviewed at the workshop, with subsequent corrections to these undertaken during the post-workshop data consolidation (see example of map for a Caucasus endemic species below). In addition to providing information on the distribution range of each species, these shapefiles will enable analysis of all reptile distributions within the Caucasus, including identification of areas with high species diversity, or areas with significant concentrations of threatened species.



Darevskia rostombekovi

total range area = 4,352 km²



Example of species distribution map generated at the GRA workshop.

- Assessing the conservation status of each species through the use of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria classification system.

Following collection of the above mentioned base information, the conservation status for each species was assessed against the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>).

- Identifying conservation priorities for the reptile species in the Caucasus with regards to threatened species

In total, preliminary results indicate that of the 514 reptiles and amphibians (393 reptiles; 121 amphibians) assessed at the workshop, 88 are globally threatened species (Critically Endangered = 23 species; Endangered = 31; Vulnerable = 34), 47 are Near Threatened, 25 are Data Deficient and 354 are categorized as Least Concern.

There are 146 species of reptiles and amphibians distributed within the Caucasus region. Of the 123 recorded reptiles, 22 are globally threatened species (Critically Endangered = 8 species; Endangered = 5; Vulnerable = 9), 10 are Near Threatened, 4 are Data Deficient and 87 are Least Concern. Of the 23 recorded amphibians 2 are globally threatened species (Critically Endangered = 1; Vulnerable = 1), 5 are Near Threatened, 1 is Data Deficient, and 15 are Least Concern.

Species recognized as being globally threatened are of the highest priority for conservation actions within the region. Full details for each one of these species will be made available on the IUCN Red List website.

- Strengthening and complimenting biodiversity data for the Caucasus region collected during the Global Amphibian Assessment (GAA), and the earlier CEPF funded Global Mammal Assessment (GMA) – Wider Caucasus Regional Workshop (21st-24th November, 2005)

Details for the reptiles of the Caucasus region were collected in the same standardized format as those for the earlier GAA and GMA IUCN projects. All of these data are now freely available to download from the IUCN Red List (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>) for comparison with data collected during the GRA workshop.

- Significantly contributing to the refinement of Key Biodiversity Areas and Site Outcomes within the Caucasus region.

Through the collection of current and accurate electronic distribution maps (shapefiles) it is possible to enhance conservation prioritisation activities within the Caucasus region. The local partner in the project, Doğa Derneği, has been at the forefront of developing KBA methodology (see: Eken,G, *et al.* 2004. Key Biodiversity Areas as Site Conservation Targets. *BioScience* 54: 1110 – 1118). Doğa Derneği and CI-CABS will

use data collected at the workshop to better define KBA's for Turkey and surrounding countries, in collaboration with associated organizations from the Caucasus region.

All of the finalized information resulting from the workshop will be made freely available for download via the open-access IUCN Red List website by any user (as is complementary material gathered during the GAA and GMA), allowing independent assessments of conservation priorities within the Caucasus.

4. Did your team experience any disappointments or failures during implementation? If so, please explain and comment on how the team addressed these disappointments and/or failures.

We experienced some initial difficulties in finding matching funds to the initial ~US\$ 20,000 funded by CEPF. The additional funding was principally needed to allow the participation of several key experts from outside of the region. This delay necessitated a rescheduling of the workshop, with two no cost extensions agreed with CEPF before matching funds were obtained.

The 2008 South Ossetia War (2008 Russia-Georgia conflict) in August 2008, immediately before the workshop (late September 2008) regrettably meant that a key participant, Dr David Tarkhnishvili, was unable to attend the workshop. All post-workshop data in initial draft format have been made available for download on an ftp site for workshop participants, and other interested experts who may not have been able to attend the workshop in person.

5. Describe any positive or negative lessons learned from this project that would be useful to share with other organizations interested in implementing a similar project.

IUCN has considerable experience in organizing conservation assessment workshops such as the Global Reptile Assessment – Wider Caucasus Regional Workshop. The key recommendations for holding a similar workshop are good preparation of material to the best possible standard before the workshop, and availability of facilitators in the immediate post-workshop period to prepare a second (post-workshop) draft for distribution to participants, and finalize data following any final input.

6. Describe any follow-up activities related to this project.

All information collected during this project is a contribution to the ongoing Global Reptile Assessment, a major initiative to produce a comprehensive assessment of the current conservation status for the world's ~8,750 reptile species. All information from the GRA will be made freely available on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species website (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>).

Information collected on Caucasus species that range more widely into Europe will also be made available through an EC website linked to the IUCN Red List as part of the funding requirements of the EC contribution to this project. This website will have a similar format to the earlier, complimentary, information gathered for Europe as part of

the Global Mammal Assessment
 (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/species/ema/index.htm>).

Where species range from the Caucasus into Central Asia or the Arabian Peninsula, additional details on the status of these species within these regions will be gathered at subsequent GRA workshops, with a view to finalizing the draft Red List Assessments for these often wide ranging and Least Concern species.

In collaboration with the local partner organization, Doğa Derneği, the data collected as part of the workshop will contribute towards the development of a National Red List of Reptiles and Amphibians for Turkey, and possibly towards a general journal publication describing current reptiles and amphibian conservation issues within Turkey.

7. Please provide any additional information to assist CEPF in understanding any other aspects of your completed project.

N/A

IV. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
European Commission's Environment Directorate-General	A	\$31,120	Contribution as part of a wider project to review the status of reptiles and amphibians in Europe.

***Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:**

- A** Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)
- B** Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF project)
- C** Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)
- D** Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)

V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Matching support for this project, to the value of **\$31,120**, has been secured from the European Commission's Environment Directorate-General to cover costs of most international travel, and accommodation, food, the venue and local transport for participants originating outside of the region, and costs of all workshop facilitators.

VI. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. One way we do this is by making programmatic project documents available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these in our newsletter and other communications.

These documents are accessed frequently by other CEPF grantees, potential partners, and the wider conservation community.

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