

Newsletter

Hot in this issue: Caucasian Salamander

July-August 2007

Monthly newsletter for WWF Caucasus and CEPF mutual effort for biodiversity conservation in the Caucasus

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This year Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park has become a ninth member of PAN Parks family.

Georgian grantees meeting in Shindisi



Meeting was conducted in a small village near Tbilisi. Photo by WWF.

Meeting of Environmental organizations was held in Shindisi, Georgia beginning of June 2007 in the frame of CEPF regional program. The main objective of the meeting was to evaluate CEPF projects midterm achievements, to strengthen cooperation between CEPF grantees, to identify the common topics and share lessons learned.

Grantees made presentations on ongoing and completed

projects. Presented ongoing and completed projects have shown obvious success.

The CEPF Programme has encompassed key species of mammals, birds, amphibians and fishes. Conservation projects for large mammals include Moufflon, Tur and Bezoar goats. These projects consider habitat modeling and threats estimation which gives the possibility to work out concrete conservation action plans.



CEPF county coordinator for Georgia discussing running projects with grantees. Photo by WWF.

Endemic Caucasian Salamander - our pride under danger



Caucasian Salamander relaxing on the plant. Photo by D. Tarkbnishvili.

For the nearest future, this CPEF funded project launched in March 2006 and conducted by Caucasian Endemics Research Center, aims to fill in background information necessary for implementation of conservation strategy for Caucasian salamander (*Mertensiella caucasica*). For this purpose it is planned to conduct expeditions to the western slopes of Trialeti ridge, southern and eastern slopes of Meskheta ridge and also Shavsheta ridge to investigate Salamander habitats. The conservation of Caucasian Salamander has become a difficult task, as the scientific expeditions revealed illegal logging

of ancient forests - a dwelling place for these beautiful animals. Some areas still undergo illegal forest logging pressure. The pictures made with 15 years interval clearly show this very unfortunate tendency. In many places this species is still available, but the high degree of ecosystem degradations limits reproduction opportunity.

For further information you could peek in a website dedicated to Caucasian Salamander: <http://www.biodiversity-georgia.net/mertensiella/page.php>



Distribution map of Salamander in western Georgia and Turkey. By D. Tarkbnishvili.

Bee-keeping - a non-destructive small business venture benefiting from forest



Zoologists and project participants discussing bee-keeping problems.

Removing humans out of nature conservation and focusing exclusively on wildlife is definitely not the way to go. Our mutual aim is to conserve nature and enjoy its invaluable resources with care and caution, especially in areas adjoining to the conservation hotspots - our main target for protection. CEPF small grants program concentrated exactly on this issue and launched bee

keeping project to show the benefits of non-destructive forest resource use. Non governmental organization Azerbaijan Society of

Zoologist set the goal to reduce dependence of local communities from natural resources through offering or helping to improve the capacity of existing alternative livelihoods. As a result, beekeeping network has enlarged in the region.

Another NGO, Center for Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage, endeavored the same direction - they concentrated on Caucasian mountain grey bees. This type of bees is well-known worldwide as the longest trunk bees distinguished by unique peaceful character, high honey productivity and as the best plant pollinator - a good drive for plant biodiversity.

In a completing stage the Center for Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage will create selective-breeding beekeeping farm of bee queens and bee families of Zaqatala population of Caucasian mountain grey bee breeds.



Publications produced in the framework of these projects has become popular - even some fake printings were spotted in the town.

CBC Regional Meeting

6th CBC meeting was held on July 2007 in Batumi - a beautiful seashore area of Georgia. Members of the council - representatives of Government and NGO community of Caucasus hotspot countries and invited representatives from the scientific community gathered once again in Batumi Georgia to work on strengthening transboundary cooperation and coordination in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Caucasus, also to help build regional partnerships among representatives of governmental, nongovernmental and scientific sector.

CBC is financially supported by CEPF as it is very important for development of regional and transboundary cooperation; also, it can play significant role in solving environmental problems in the Ecoregion. In addition to usual activities the CBC 2006 Annual Report was discussed at this meeting.



Debating and discussing - a working environment. Photo by WWF.

Mtirala National Park - another victory of conservationists



An annual precipitation of 4000mm is responsible for the name of NP - "Mtirala" which translates as crying.

The Caucasus mountains - made up of two separate mountain ranges, the Greater Caucasus and the Lesser Caucasus - straddle Europe and Asia, crossing through parts of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, north-eastern Turkey, and a small part of northwestern Iran.

"Although the natural integrity of this protected site is largely intact, some areas are threatened by overgrazing, fuelwood collection, and is potentially at risk from agriculture expansion and uncontrolled land use development," says Nuzgar Zazanashvili, Conservation



Even bridge fits in this beautiful environment.

Director of WWF's Caucasus Programme Office.

WWF provided technical assistance in drafting the government bill that established the Mtirala National Park. The global conservation organization will continue to work with local and regional authorities in developing a management plan for the new park, which includes promoting and implementing sustainable conservation measures that are compatible with other land uses.

CEPF funding will aid just in time - support buffer zone development for the Mtirala NP. The project has been started recently and will be implemented by Association for Environment Protection and Sustainable Development "Mta-Bari" to create the management plan for the territories surrounding the National Park.

27th of June was a remarkable day for all of nature addicts in Georgia - Mtirala National Park was officially inaugurated by Georgian government. The NP covers 15,806 hectares to protect a unique ecosystem of forests and wildlife in the eastern part of the Black Sea Basin in Georgia's Lesser Caucasus mountain range - a rich storehouse of biodiversity. Numerous important species include lynx and brown bear, as

well as golden eagle and black vulture.

The Caucasus mountains - made up of two separate mountain



Village "Chakvistavi" is just in the heart of Mtirala NP.

Yeni Dalgā - endeavors to mobilize Civil Society for the sake of biodiversity

The Independent Producer Center «Yeni Dalgā» (IPC) has a significant experience in movie-making, communication and now, supported by CEPF, they are in struggle for clean environment with their new project which is targeted to: increase the level of awareness of the public and decision-makers on problems of biodiversity; improve the potential of the organizations of civil society and mass-media; raise the level of ecological education of the population and to aggravate interest in the solution of existing problems. We wish good luck to our Azeri friends in fulfilling these ambitious objectives.



During expedition - selecting film shooting scenes. Photo by IPC



Inauguration of Mtırala National Park. From Left: Levan Varshalomidze, Head of Ajara Autonomous Republic; Jon Ramberg, Ambassador of Norway to Azerbaijan and Georgia; Chris Hails, WWF Director for International Relations; David Tkeshelashvili, Minister of Environment Protection and Nature Resources of Georgia. Photo by WWF.

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CEPF 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 engage civil society in biodiversity conservation.

www.panda.org/caucasus/CEPF