

Newsletter

Hot in this issue: Capra sp.

September-October 2007

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

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Georgian government decides to conduct FSC certification of forests leased for long-term use as the measure which will ensure sustainable use of these invaluable resources. A really good example to follow!

NGOs conduct projects related to conservation of *Capra* species



Caucasian Tur - a powerful creature. Photo by NACRES.

The tur is a fascinating creature, a symbol of strength and pride. It inhabits such impenetrable and severe places that its stoicism in extreme conditions causes astonishment and makes it of great interest for study. However, tur, like many other large mammals inhabiting Georgia, is seriously endangered. It is difficult to survive under diverse human interference: the pressure of hunting, habitat degradation, destruction and fragmentation.

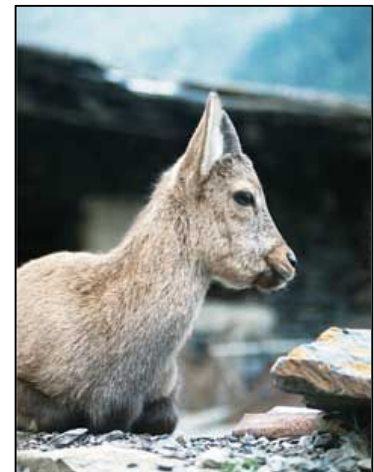
Tur inhabits only the Greater Caucasus. Here two species of tur are found: East Caucasian tur (*Capra cylindricornis*) and West Caucasian tur (*Capra caucasica*). Both species are in the

red list of the World Conservation Union (IUCN): East Caucasian tur is listed as vulnerable (VU), and West Caucasian tur as endangered species (EN). Correspondingly, it is the focus of the conservationists and scientists.

NGO NACRES carried out the project **Conservation of the *Capra* Species in Georgia**.

Project envisaged the conservation of both *Capra* species in Georgia through participatory elaboration of the species conservation action plan (CAP) and integration of CAP principles into the programs and projects of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of Georgia (NBSAP); Project main outputs were: (i) publication of the status report on two *Capra* species; (ii) publication of the adopted *Capra* Conservation Action Plan - CAP; (iii) production of national proposal for the inclusion of *Capra caucasica* and *Capra cylindricornis* in CMS Appendices which are submitted to the Government for future submission to CMS Secretariat.

Another NGO **Georgian Center for the Conservation of Wildlife** is conducting a project covering several linking corridors in the Caucasus and not only for *Capra* species but also for *Ovis ammon*. The project entails grid-based standardized analyses of habitat requirements of West Caucasian Tur (*Capra caucasica*), East Caucasian Tur (*Capra cylindricornis*), Bezoar goat (*Capra aegagrus*), and Argali (*Ovis ammon*) in the Caucasus. The main objectives of the project include: use of existing data, conducting of fieldwork, and building GIS database of habitat variables. All collected information will be used to create species habitat models. The habitat models can be applied to the Caucasus to (a) predict the species occurrence areas and (b) highlight areas where the species may occur in the future if the populations grow due to positive effect of conservation activities. The models will define which areas are best suited to major conservation efforts for the species, and which variables included in the best-fit habitat models are manageable. The project will help developing the strategy and action plan.



Hopefully this little calf will find a peaceful place in its habitat. Photo by NACRES.

Stimulation of eco-journalism to monitor problems of environment protection

Ecolur News NGO has conducted a project which aims to creating eco-journalists network on the territory of east lesser Caucasus in order to:

- provide connection between wide public, governmental structures, nature conservation NGOs, donors and other stakeholders;
- insure availability of information in local and state-wide mass media on problems in nature conservation, as well as existing achievement;
- facilitate information delivery to the civil society;
- ensure consideration of regional approach to all



Ecolur director Inga Zarafyan (right) discusses running project issues. Photo by ECOLUR.

nature conservation problems.



Some of printed material produced by Ecolur for the project. Photo by ECOLUR

In the final phase the Ecolur aims to have effectively functioning information network of eco-journalists in Armenia, which will transform mass media from passive observer to active participant of nature conservation projects. This network will ensure connection between civil society, governmental structures, nature conservation NGOs, donors

and other organizations operating in nature conservation field. One of the planned activities is organization of media tours and their results will be summarized in the manual

which will be published after completion of the project.



View to planned Arevik National Park. Photo by WWF.

Establishment of new protected area Zangezur in southern Armenia

The "Khustup" NGO was recently established by experienced conservation specialists. The organization is actively involved in activities on nature protection in Armenia. Khustup is conducting a project on establishment of Zangezur specially protected natural area (SPNA) which will fill-up the "gap" remaining between neighboring protected areas in the region and ensure to link the protected areas both in Armenia (the existing Shikahogh reserve and planned "Arevik" NP) and in neighboring countries (Iran, Nakhichevan Autonomy

of Azerbaijan). This will contribute to the conservation of many migrating, as well as endangered species in the region.

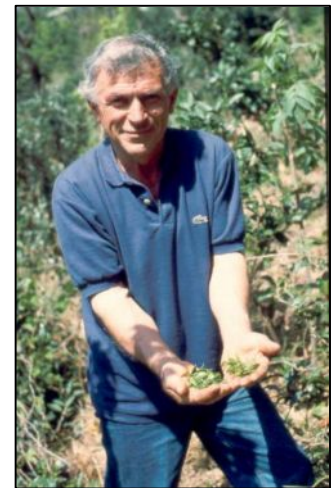
Wild plant certification project launched in the Caucasus



Processing of natural products prepared exclusively from wild plant fruits. Photo by CWC

The rural population of the Caucasus owns a widespread tradition and knowledge in the use of medicinal and other wild plants. After the break down of the former system mainly subsistence agriculture, a growing demand for natural resources and a strong pressure on environment, as well as uncontrolled and illegal use of all kinds of nature resources can be seen all over the Caucasus. In order to regulate some aspects of medical plant use and standardize approaches Caucasus Wild Plant Certification Center (CWC), supported by CEPF, endeavored to conduct capacity building and preparation for national controlling and international certification of wild plants in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. This will include: creation of regional network of inspectors and provision of initial training;

elaboration of a basic training program for collectors on sustainable harvesting of wild plants to fit international certification criteria and standards; provision of support to collectors with the certification of the sustainable use of natural resources, e.g. basic training programs on harvesting of wild plants. This should provide a better access to the international, as well as national markets.



A local collector shows tea leaves. Photo by CWC

Update to the red lists of Armenia and IUCN



Vipera sp. found in northern Armenia. Photo by G. Sanadiradze

The Institute of Zoology of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia is conducting a project, which will include creation of database of rare species and those facing extinction in order to include them in the Red Book of Armenia. The grantee will update situation of amphibians and reptiles based on recent scientific researches. The special brochure with list of species and short information will be published for all interested parties. One of the important achievements will be the harmonization of local red book data with that of IUCN, which will give possibility to work on red list on various levels.

In final phase of the project the results of necessary changes to the red lists will be presented to Species Survival Commission of IUCN.



A view to the Zangezuri mountain ridge. New protected area Zangezür will be established here soon. 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