II
Spring 1997

Conservation of Biological Diversity in Russia and the former Soviet Union

A joint publication of the Center for Russian Nature Conservation, the Biodiversity Conservation Center and the Pocono Environmental Education Center
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CONSERVATION CONTACTS

The Biodiversity Conservation Center is a Russian non-profit, non-governmental organization aiming to preserve the biological diversity of Northern Eurasia. BCC's programs help to conserve wilderness, endangered species and ecosystems, promote public environmental education, and assist other nature conservation groups to achieve these goals.

The Center for Russian Nature Conservation, is project of the Tides Center, aims non conservation efforts in Northern Eurasia through information exchange, facilitation of professional exchanges, and assistance with fundraising for partner organizations.

The Pocono Environmental Education Center runs school field trips, retreats, workshops for educators and family vacation programs in order to promote better understanding of the complexities of natural and human-designed environments.
Voice from the Wild (Letter from the Editors)

The world over, spring brings renewed hope. After many months of winter, Russia is now at last experiencing springtime, and we feel inspired to compose a wish list for spring.

First on our list is the wish that government officials at all levels — federal, regional and local — would take their duties to care for the people and land under their jurisdiction seriously and try to act wisely. Unfortunately, we find that often, as with Vladimir Region’s plans to convert a forest into a landfill site, and in Kusk Region, where Governor Ruskoi has tried to push a federal Zapovednik employee from his post, regional powers overstep the limits of their authority and abuse their power.

Next we would wish to see new names — Bashkirski Ural (Russia) and Ille-Ahtau National Park (Kazakhstan), for instance — on the list of World Heritage sites and share the joy of success with their partners in the United States and Germany. As international cooperation continues and more programs, such as Wetlands International, commence activity on the territory of Northern Eurasia, we expect gaps in communication in the field of biodiversity conservation to narrow and benefits to accrue to both sides. On this point we can agree with Dr. G. Boroz, in his reply to an article on the Pan-European Biodiversity Strategy, that Russia has much to contribute to European nature conservation; we would like to see that happen as soon as possible.

Looking to Central Asia, we would wish that endangered species like the Markhor and Buested be removed from the list of commercially hunted animals, so that they might survive the transitional period in the economies of the countries they inhabit.

The political reality is that most of the newly independent states are experiencing disintegration and conflicts. Administrative borders of all types cut across ecosystems, thus reducing the potential for conservation. Opposing these tendencies, environmentalists are steadily working on connecting protected territories and uniting the efforts of experts and activists in neighboring areas. Participants in the “Heart of Russia” project are “weaving” an ecological network to cover nine administrative regions in Central Russia; the “Pechen- gy” Group in the Caucasus proposes creating protected areas across national boundaries and passing joint conservation legislation; environmental lawyers in Russia have formed a network and are calling for environmental laws and policies to be based on water sheds, rather than administrative regions. It is our strong wish to see these projects accomplished.

Undoubtedly NGOs are gaining strength and weight in promoting new protected areas and in opposing the destructive policies of regional and federal agencies. What is more, citizens are gaining courage, too — and we wish for more citizens like Olga Egorova, who defended valuable forest from construction of a landfill, and Valeri Novikov, who campaigned for creation of Ugra National Park for seven years, and finally won.

Lastly, for hope to take action, faith is needed. Faith in the future can be seen nowhere more clearly than in the tireless efforts of educators across Russia to instill in children an appreciation for the wonders of nature around them. The many activities in celebration of March for Parks this spring, and the numbers of people involved, simplify our hopes for Russia’s future, and the future of the Russian environmental movement.
PROTECTED AREAS

Now Thirty-Two National Parks in Russia

Russia's thirty-second National Park, "Ugra," was signed into being by the Russian Prime Minister on February 10, 1997. Ugra National Park is located in Kaluga Region (200-250 km southwest of Moscow) and encompasses natural ecosystems in the basins of the two largest tributaries of the Oka, the Ugra and Zhizdra Rivers. Of the total area of 98,623 hectares, 53,375 ha. represent land where some economic activities still continue inside the Park's boundaries. This is the only National Park in Russia created along river valleys. Besides being uniquely valuable in protecting the region's diverse ecosystems, its territory possesses tremendous historical and cultural heritage (please see RCP #4 for more information).

For seven years environmentalists sought official establishment of the Park on the regional level. Most of the obstacles stemmed from the great number of landowners and their unwillingness to give up their rights to exploit the land. A special public committee willing many well-known environmentalists from Kaluga and Moscow consistently promoted creation of the Park. The administration, led by Director Valeri Novikov, started developing the Park even before it was officially approved. The activists' joint efforts have finally been rewarded with success.

More Protected Areas in Ukraine!

Two new National Parks have been established in Ukraine. On June 27, 1996 President Leonid Kuchma signed a directive creating Podolski Tovtry National Park in Khmelnytski Region. The Park encompasses an area of 261,316 hectares; however, most of it (238,301 ha.) remains in limited land use by its owners, and only 3,051 ha. are under the direct management of the Park.

The Ukrainian President's most recent decree (February 13, 1997) has established Svyatye Gory (Sacred Mountains) National Park on a 40,589-hectare area in Donetsk Region. This is the first protected area of such a size in eastern Ukraine. Svyatye Gory National Park became the seventh Ukrainian National Park.

By the end of 1996, Ukraine acquired its seventeenth Zapovednik. Giegonny Zapovednik, located in Ivano-Frankivs'ki Region and covering 5,344 ha., aims to protect mountain landscapes and the unique natural ecosystems of the Carpathian Mountains.
Russian Zapovedniki Were Born at Baikal

From the editors: This is the second in a series of articles we’re offering in honor of the eightieth anniversary of the Zapovednik system.

by Semen Ust’ov


I
t is well-known that one of the stimuli for the rapid colonization of Eastern Siberia by Russian migrants and travelers was the extremely rich trade in fur animals, primarily in sable. Hunting of this animal was so widespread that it soon became exhausted from the vast expanses of tsaga. The populations that were then left isolated and quickly decreasing in numbers also seemed doomed to extinction.

Merchants’ unions, scientists, stock exchanges trading shares in fur and fur committees organized to develop common regulations in fur trading signaled the alarming decline of the sable to the government, and thus certain restrictions on fur-hunting were first adopted in Russia. At first, however, these restrictions did not pertain to the territory of Eastern Siberia. But when the Governor of Irkutsk submitted a report for the years 1910-1911 depicting the miserable state of sable resources, the Russian government responded immediately. In 1912 the ban on sable hunting was extended to the whole territory of Eastern Siberia. Moreover, a directive was issued to send scientific expeditions to the remaining habitats of this "golden" animal, in order to organize protected areas there.

Protected sites in Russia had existed well before, though they were on private property mostly belonging to the nobility. In 1889 a famous "environmentalist," the rich landlord F. Fata-Fein, created a nature reserve in Askania-Nova (Ukraine), which later became widely known. Perhaps the first to speak out officially on the acute demand for Zapovednik was Professor Ogrizki Korobeyevich. In 1909 he submitted a report titled "On the Necessity of Establishing Protected Areas to Conserve Russian Nature."

In 1912 a special Commission on Nature Conservation was created under the auspices of the Emperor’s Geographic Society, and the brilliant Russian naturalists A. I. Voeikov, G. F. Mecenov, A. P, and V. P. Semenov-Tyan-Shanski, I. P. Beredin and V. N. Sukachev joined the Commission. (Please see RCH 85 for more information on the forefathers of the Zapovednik.) An outstanding role in establishing the first Zapovednik belonged to one of the founders of game science, A. A. Silantiev. He and his colleagues developed several projects on the conservation of wildlife, including a "Survey of Sable Habitat Regions." Within the framework of this project, three expeditions set out for Baikal, Eastern Sayan and Kamchatka in 1914.

The Baikal expedition arrived at the northeastern shores of Lake Baikal on June 1, 1914, at the foot of Barguzinski Ridge. Five members of the expedition worked for one-and-a-half years in the severe conditions of Siberian fieldwork. The result of their efforts was the creation of Barguzinski Zapovednik to preserve the sable. Although the official date of the Zapovednik’s establishment was December 29, 1916, the sable population had already been taken into protection in autumn of 1915.

It went beyond obvious that Russia was indebted to Barguzinski Zapovednik for rescuing the pride of the Siberian forests, the sable, from extinction. Later, when the significance of Zapovednik was considered in a broader light, it became clear that Barguzinski Zapovednik had preserved the whole natural complex of the northeastern shores of Lake Baikal and the western slopes of Barguzinski Ridge. The Zapovednik obtained the status of UNESCO Biosphere Nature Reserve in 1986. After numerous changes, the territory of the Zapovednik now encompasses 263,176 hectares, 15,000 of which extend into Lake Baikal itself.

The network of Zapovedniki expanded in accordance with a national strategy to create a system of protected areas that represents all of the country’s biogeographic regions. After a while Baikal, as a unique natural phenomenon, again attracted the attention of environmentalists, because rapidly increasing anthropogenic impacts were...
Protected Areas

threatening its safety. In 1968 several Irkutsk University professors submitted a thoroughly documented proposal to the Council of Ministers advocating the establishment of another nature reserve in Baikal Region. The proposal was based on the results of studies carried out on the Khamar-Daban Ridge by geobotanists N. A. Epirova. She had discovered several endemic species and relics of beech-leaved forests from the Tertiary Period, as well as some other rarities, in the wilderness area south of Baikal.

A new Zapovednik, Baikalshi, was created in 1969 on a 165,124-hectare area; it later received the status of UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. When the Baikalshik Pulp and Paper Mill built nearby began operations, the Zapovednik grew in value as a purifier of the polluted air, which was transported from the factory by the prevailing northeastern winds directly towards the territory of the Zapovednik. The deleterious effects of the pulp mill have been far-reaching, adversely affecting the vegetation and animal life of the Zapovednik, and extending throughout the region’s Khamar-Daban forests.

The idea of protecting an area on the northwestern shore of Lake Baikal and part of Baikal Ridge was proposed in 1956 by O. K. Gusev, a former director of Barguzinsky Zapovednik and a leader in protected areas management. However, despite the constant efforts of environmentalists, creation of the Zapovednik was delayed for thirty years. Finally, the construction of the Baikal-Amur Railroad, with all its negative consequences for the surrounding wildlife, spurred the establishment of the nature reserve. In 1996 Baikalo-Lenski Zapovednik was established on a 699,919-hectare area. The territory encompasses the southern part of Baikal Ridge, the upper reaches of several tributaries of the Lena River, and 110 kilometers of the Lake Baikal shoreline.

Thus, today three Zapovedniki are situated around Lake Baikal; they preserve unique natural communities over a total area of 1,088,819 ha. The major difference between Russian Zapovedniki and other forms of protected areas, however, including foreign experience in nature conservation, is that they have been known as scientific research institutions since the very beginning. Besides the projects of the regular scientific staff, Zapovedniki have carried out research on two obligatory topics, by monitoring the seasonal cycles of regular natural events and monitoring rare plants and animals. These annual observations, compiled in a single volume, were later named Lesopis Priyudy, “Chronicles of Nature.”

(Please see RCN # 2 for a complete explanation.) Russian Zapovedniki have continued to collect comprehensive scientific data, as prescribed in the Lesopis Priyudy, since the day of their creation, and, as Professor Stanchinskii postulated at the time, the Chronicle has crucial significance for the prognosis of evolutionary and secular changes in ecosystems. Upon entering the list of World Heritage Sites in 1996, the nature reserves at Baikal obtained a new, higher level of significance as components of the worldwide network for nature conservation.

The history of the Russian Zapovedniki, regardless of their importance, consists of continually overcoming hardships — from the eternal deficiency of funds to the unwillingness of governmental powers at various levels to accept and support nature reserves. Even the safety zone around Baikalo-Lenski Zapovednik, the most important factor of the many things that are needed, is a constant sore point in relationships with local authorities. Federal powers also have little interest in Zapovedniki: only 20 percent of the required funding has been provided for Zapovedniki in the 1997 federal budget.

Perhaps the regional governor will hear us and offer his help, as was done by his predecessor at the beginning of the century?

Semen Utinov is one of the oldest employees of Baikalo-Lenski Zapovednik. He continues to work as a consultant and promotes the ideas of nature conservation among local people. His publications can be seen frequently on the pages of regional and local newspapers.

The works of O. K. Gusev and V. V. Dezhkin, contemporary scientists and leaders of protected areas in Russia, were used for this publication.

Lake Baikal, with all of its Zapovednik and National Parks (map by I.Bere).
Shulgan-Tash: Candidate for World Heritage Status

Based on a description of Shulgan-Tash Zapovednik by Dr. Vladimir Korotkov.

Shulgan-Tash Zapovednik, located in Bashkortostan Republic (in the Southern Urals), was officially created in 1986. However, the territory had been under protection much earlier; in 1938 it was designated as a part of Bashkirski Zapovednik. This unique natural complex encompasses well-preserved ecosystems of old-growth broad-leaved and mixed forests, meadow and petrological steppe. More than sixty types of vegetation have been identified over an area of 22,531 hectares, with 117 species of the 800 vascular plants belonging to more than 600 genera and 125 families. Diversity and richness of biota — rocks, karst relief, rivers and lakes — have yielded a high biodiversity of flora and fauna over a relatively small area, as well as strikingly beautiful and peculiar landscapes.

Great Expectations

by Ludmila Khcheva

Reprinted from "Zapovednik," the newspaper for protected areas staff.

With beds of willow-bud with fluffy crowns, a stone mosaic laid out by the river, the softness of reed-lined banks, pine shoots among the straw-colored stands — all this is Bashkirski Ural.

In Shulgan-Tash Zapovednik we welcome a scientific expedition organized by Alexei Butorin (Young Friends of Nature, Russia) — Professor Peter Schmidt (Dresden University, Germany) and cameraman Olav Civilina (Finland). Our task is preparing the required documentation to nominate several sites in Bashkortostan for World Heritage status. They've traveled thousands of miles to get here, out of concern for our native land. At breakfast our conversation hinges upon the travels of our guests. Thomas remarks about New Zealand and China. "Oh, they've lost a lot."

"In Australia and Africa, deserts are expanding. Maybe only in Amazonia can one find virgin forests, but even they are being cut down mercilessly. There are probably also forests remaining here in Russia.

Peter is leaving soon for Kenya and then Slovenia. "Is there anything left in Slovenia? Haven't all the trees in Europe been counted and labeled?" I ventured.
We demonstrated the ancient Bashkiri-an bee-keeping craft. Each of us tried climbing up the pine to the loft. The rains did it most gracefully and easily.

We started the beekeeping process after the home bees had flown away. We opened the door and looked at the tongues of honeycombs full of honey. Then we put it into a special tinden barrel, called a tapan. What an unusual occupation, and what a wonderful and unusual land!

Our anticipation of rain proved accurate. An enormous black cloud crept out of the thunders. Thundering sounds made us press on further, to Vodorab-Tunusk. The way is easy on foot: leap over the hollow, climb over the fallen twigs. My, how we journeyed then! Only owing to the skills of our drivers did we manage to break through and by night reach the glade.

Lay planks on logs, and a table is ready in a snap; talk about nature starts up again. Peter shows us the map of the world. Among the eighty sites designated as World Heritage on that map, Bashkortostan looks like a blind spot. We recalled the first attempts to nominate Shugan-Tash to the World Heritage list, in 1992. However, to compile all the materials, a special expedition was needed; an expedition required funds, and the Russian government could not provide financing. Only four years later, when the Government of Bashkortostan and the Russian Academy of Sciences (NABU) provided financial support and technical assistance, did it prove to prepare the materials. When everything is fine, the proposal to include the Bashkinski-Uzal site on the World Heritage list will be submitted to Paris for审议, 1997, and then the next session (1998) of UNESCO will come for an inspection. If we pass that stage smoothly, Shugan-Tash will enter the World Heritage list.

What will we gain then? Certainly the prestige of the area would grow, and more help could be expected from the international community. But more important is responsibility for preservation of the site. Every five years a special mission inspects the current status of the inscribed territories, and we certainly don't want to see the Bashkiri-ki Uzal a once on a certain list, that of "World Heritage Sites in Danger." However, this is a concern for the future. At the moment I worry about how our small work can be be able to help the most convincing measures, to make adequate graphs and a film proving the uniqueness of this piece of wilderness? The expedition continues along the banks of Nurgush River. This river could never be masked for any other: it has such a peculiar character! We demonstrated the bees' work, spotting three on a small thistle. The next day, again we see forests tracks and mountain rivers, but all different from what we saw yesterday and the day before that. We make one stop after another, not to miss a wonder. A big spider, a mushroom listed in the Red Data Book, pristine forest with ancient oak trees. We were lucky in seeing four Fisk Hawks fly over and a Muten dart off a tree trunk.

We returned to the "Kapova Cave" ranger's post and scientific station. Oh, without any rest, dinged into the thickets to take pictures of a woodpecker and record the sound of its pecking. This trip made everyone work hard. The territory of Shugan-Tash Zapovednik represents only one-third of the "Bashkinski-Uzal" nomination. We also took a trip around Bashkanski Zapovednik and a helicopter ride over the whole proposed territory. Then Bashkirs National Park displayed its beauty for us. We completed our field work at Isgiliv Village, in the Zapovednik's scientific department, where we compiled maps and descriptions. We returned to our hotel for the required documentation; the work in the Zapovednik was over. Parting, we exchanged gifts and kept wishing one another good luck, and off went the car with our new friends.

Later I walked the entire route we had driven together, savouring every mile, and now I'm writing my notes by a campfire under the glittering stars. Meteors are falling here and there, and I make a wish: "May everything here be always as it is now."

Ludmila Klucheva works as an environmental education expert at Shugan-Tash Zapovednik.
Ile-Alatau National Park: Taking a Step Toward Sustainable Development in Kazakhstan

Reprinted from "Ecotour News," Volume 4, No. 5.

by Kirił Zakhabtswin

Pure healthy air, a moderate climate and an abundance of clear sunny days lend Kazakhstan's Ile-Alatau National Nature Park particular attractiveness, especially in comparison to the severity of the climate in many other parts of Central Asia. With an area of 164,500 hectares (640 square miles) and 150 kilometers long, Ile-Alatau encompasses a large mountain forest zone of the Zailiisky Alatau Mountain Range, itself a section of the immense Tian-Shan Mountain Range. The new park, formed in February 1996 by governmental decree, boasts unique landscapes, natural formations, cultural monuments, and diverse plant and animal life. Part of the park consists of high mountains and glaciers with abrupt cliffs; its highest point is Peak Talgar, at 4,974 meters (16,319 feet). Yet, the park's picturesque mountain valleys, swift rivers, middle elevation forest glades, thick vegetation and alpine meadows are its most beautiful features.

However, the value of the formation of this national park extends far beyond the borders of general ecology and nature protection. The park encompasses many of the life-giving sources that support the largest socio-economic conglomerations in the country, the 1.5 million-inhabitant metropolis of Almaty. Here in the Zailiisky Alatau, moisture collects and is regulated, supplying a steady stream to the city. Furthermore, the park may help resolve some of the more nettlesome social and economic problems of Almaty. The park's readily available recreational offerings, (featuring extensive hiking trails and a ski resort) are a rare luxury for large cities of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, the park may significantly improve the social infrastructure of the adjoining territories by creating park-related jobs and a new market for traditional handicrafts.

Furthermore, the tourist potential of this area is outstanding. Because of its size and proximity (less than a half-hour drive) to a national capital with rapidly westernizing service and transportation facilities, the unique natural beauty of this park presents an unusual combination of cultural (Silk Road and Central Asia) and environmental (mountainous mountains and the Snow Leopard) attractions. Nevertheless, because of the difficult economic transitions of this young sovereign state, Ile-Alatau is being closely watched by the government, which expects the park to demonstrate its economic potential quickly. Therefore, the world community needs to recognize and adventure tourists confirm this exceptionally wise, far-sighted step toward sustainable development.

Kirił Zakhabtswin is a member of the Green Salvation Ecological Society.

Map of Kazakhstan, with its four National Parks indicated (map by J. Beller).

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Building National Parks in Kazakhstan

"Green Salvation: Ecological Society of Kazakhstan, and others, are currently at work on these matters, influencing actions, achieving results. Anyone in the business knows this is slow, hard work. Encouragement is certainly deserved." — Robert Spivey, Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (VOCA)

by Sergel Solnykh

1996 was a boom year for national parks in Kazakhstan, when three of the country's four national parks were formed. While the February 1996 formation of the Ile-Alatau National Park and the years of effort by scientists and activists that went into its creation have special meaning for Green Salvation Ecological Society, success has not brought an end to our efforts, but instead has ushered in a new period of struggle to lay the foundation for the successful operation, management and financing of the Ile-Alatau and other national parks in Kazakhstan.

At this time, several challenges threaten the very survival of the national parks. Government subsidies are trickling in at lower than expected rates. A law of protected natural areas is only now being developed. Kazakhstan has yet to sign or fully enforce a range of international environmental conventions that otherwise would support these parks and enhance their status and operations. Another problem is the lack of experience in managing parks specifically, as opposed to the other kinds of protected areas that existed under the Soviet Union. The experiences of other countries and the advice of foreign experts could therefore help resolve some of these problems.

Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (VOCA), a program supported by US AID, has provided just such expert assistance. In 1994, with the backing of the Ile-Alatau Park Management and the Republic of Kazakhstan State Forestry Committee, Green Salvation asked VOCA to help bring foreign expertise to Kazakhstan. The environmental assessment of the proposed Ile-Alatau National Park, completed by VOCA experts, was helpful in establishing the park legally.

Last fall cooperation with VOCA continued, when VOCA volunteer expert Robert Spivey spent several weeks in Kazakhstan. Having acquainted himself with the park and its surroundings, Spivey conducted park personnel trainings, penned a critical assessment of the park's activities and commented on Kazakhstan's existing environmental law. Spivey concluded that the fundamental obstacle to efficient administration of the park was the absence of both a clear legal framework for park activities and legal ownership by the park of the natural resources located on its territory. Other obstacles include the underdeveloped economic activities of the park, unclear distribution of jurisdictions between government agencies, and a general lack of specialists in the country.

Spivey recommended action be taken on all of these problems; he also gave advice on developing tourism within the park and increasing public support for conservation through NGOs and the press.

Finally, reiterating the earlier opinions of his VOCA colleagues, Spivey stated that Ile-Alatau represents a unique natural ecosystem worthy of formal recognition as a World Heritage site. Unfortunately, however, under the Paris Accords of 1972, Ile-Alatau cannot enjoy that privilege.

Green Salvation Ecological Society is a nongovernmental public organization established originally in October 1990, but re-registered in 1993 and 1996, affirming its existence to the government and justifying the legitimacy and necessity of its efforts. According to the founding charter, "the basic goal of Green Salvation is general facilitation of efforts to improve the socio-ecological situation in the republic of Kazakhstan." The organization strives to embrace wide spectrums of ecology, it participates in efforts to save nature and reform and educate society about the environment. The word "For the Earth" is its slogan, "think globally, act locally" an epitaph, and "ecological rights" and "sustainable development" — Green Salvation's organizing principles.

Green Salvation collaborates with a vast variety of groups and organizations and belongs to the Association for Ecological Education (ASEKO) and since 1995, the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Kazakhstan is more than $15,000 in arrears to UNESCO, and until Kazakhstan fulfills its fiscal duties to UNESCO, the country will be excluded from World Heritage programs. (From the editors: this situation is now changing, the process of designating the National Park as a World Heritage site is about to move forward, under the first class guidance of Natura Schutzfedera Deutschland.)

Now that these recommendations have been made, it is up to the collective efforts of the park, the State Forestry Committee and Green Salvation to see that they are effectively implemented. The question now is whether the park can be successfully developed, or whether it will sink into the miserable existence which characterizes most of the other conservation lands in Kazakhstan.

Sergel Solnykh is a member of the Green Salvation Ecological Society.
LEGISLATION

A Citizen Conservationist Tests —
and Stretches — the Limits
of Russia’s New Democracy

by Olga Egorova

Vladimir Region is the birthplace of
the Russian state, the ancient land
of our ancestors, where centuries ago
magnificent forests witnessed the
battles of Russian knights. I am lucky
to have a country house in one of the
villages in the region, where I can
enjoy summers living next to a beauti-
ful forest rich with clear springs,
medicinal plants, berries and mush-
rooms. It is a place where deer and
moose roam, where capercaille sing
matting songs, where people have
settled since the twelfth century. In the
summer of 1996, this forest was
threatened with destruction.

When I arrived in early spring, my
neighbors anxiously told me that our
forest (certainly we consider it "ours"
because we love it so much) was
scheduled to be cut down and replaced
by a huge regional landfill.

At first I didn’t even pay attention to
these words: they seemed absolutely
absurd. Besides its beauty, the forest
belongs to the First Group of forests
(those with special protective status).
Located on the highest point in the
area, the forest’s springs supply several
rivers and lakes with water. The forest
falls within the Klyazma River’s
watershed and sits above the headwa-
ters of the Voshva River and a network
of fishery-ponds. It seemed that these
factors were enough to avert destruc-
tion of the forest.

But seeing the concern of local resi-
dents and reading newspapers with
articles opposing the landfill project, I
began to realize that this might be an
awful truth. Moreover, I learned that

people from neighboring villages and
towns (since more than two thousand people)
had been protesting actively for about
two months — staging meetings,
writing to newspapers and voicing
complaints about the project through
their deputies in the legislative assem-
bly. Nevertheless, their actions had
evaded no response from the regional
authorities.

I could not just stand by and watch
I decided to act, and to act immediately.
I didn’t have any experience in legal
affairs; I had no idea how to begin, and
I definitely did not want to drown in
the ocean of laws and directives. The
first question to be resolved was what
rights I had as a Russian citizen. So I
acted in a quite straightforward
manner: I bought a copy of the Constitu-
tion of the Russian Federation, since
this is the primary law in Russia, and
read it in its entirety for the first time
in my life.

After a thorough reading, with pencil
in hand to mark all the important and
relevant points, I realized that Article 2
was the foundation of Russian policy

and legislation. This Article proclaims
that a person and her rights are of
dominant importance, and also
declares that recognition, observation
and defense of a person’s rights is the
duty of the state.

Encouraged by the idea that I was of
first priority for the state, I managed to
identify my goals. As a person whose
rights were being violated, I decided to
1) defend my rights, 2) rescue the
forest, and 3) protect the local people.

The Constitution provides me with the
right to obtain all necessary informa-
tion related to the case. Of course, I
took advantage of this and made an
inquiry. Fortunately I received assis-
tance from some local administrations
who were also concerned about the
disastrous project.

Local children protest the landfill plan.
The banner on the left says, "Guarantee us
a safe and healthy future." The poster on
the grass declares, "200 children from
Middle School No. 2 say, "No!"

(photos by Olga Egorova)

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I discovered that the authorities of Vladimir Region had made an agreement to establish a joint venture with the French firm "Laval Service." Owing 75 percent of the shares, the French partner was the actual master of the enterprise, whose sphere of activity was defined as the "gathering and processing of all kinds of wastes from the Russian Federation and any other country."

According to the agreement, in February 1996, the Governor of the region had issued a decision to designate fifty hectares of First Grove forest as a site for landfill construction. All documentation for the start of construction was supposed to be ready in May 1996. However, by that time no environmental impact assessment had been conducted, nor had any alternative projects been considered. In the habit of being above any public control, and accustomed to the passive civil conscience of the population, the administration hadn't even bothered to create a document officially offering our land for this dubious project.

I acted quickly — and in complete observance of the laws — while trying to raise maximum public awareness about the plans for the landfill. I understood clearly that only a clamorous campaign would have any effect in the struggle. Taking advantage of my rights as declared in Article 33 of the Constitution, I addressed my request of query directly to the Attorney General. Because it is our deputies who have enough power to defend their constituents in this new democracy, I called upon the State Duma Committee on Ecology with the information I had compiled. I invited representatives of the central and local press, the Biodiversity Conservation Center, TV journalists, and the famous Russian writer Soloukhin to part in a meeting along with local residents.

Three TV channels used the material in their programs, and newspapers also delivered news of the problem to the broader public.

During the meeting, regional administrators tried to persuade local citizens that the landfill would be profitable for them and, moreover, had its own nature protection value. They promised that the new forest which would grow over the buried wastes would be much better than the one they would remove.

To my great surprise, all of the agencies I had addressed responded promptly. In just a few days, the Duma Committee issued a decision to postpone the design and construction of the landfill until the environmental impact assessment was done. The State Duma supported this decision and passed it on to the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Environment and the head of the Federal Forest Service. My request to the Attorney General was referred to the prosecuting magistrat of Vladimir Region.

I had feared that if the magistrates were under pressure from the regional administration to decide in its favor, the outcome would be a negative one for the forest. However, the case was considered in detail, and it was revealed that the Vladimir administration had violated numerous laws, including the Environmental Protection Act of the Russian Federation, the Law on Public Health, Fundamentals of Civil Planning, the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, the Land Code, the Forest Code and other regulations.

All that we could have done had been accomplished and nothing happened, until one day I spotted fresh lanes cut through the forest. That meant construction work had commenced anyway. With photos as evidence of this latest transgression, I dashed to the prosecutor and found out that the regional administration had merely declared the prosecutor's protest against the project. A lawsuit became inevitable. The regional prosecutor issued a directive declaring the illegality of the decision to construct a landfill and passed it on to the court. In turn, it also sued the regional administration for violating my rights to a safe environment.

The trial was intense and extremely heated. The region's attention was drawn to the case as if the outcome would signify the destiny not only of a single forest, but of the entire population. The Vladimir administration fully armed with representatives from almost all of the higher echelons of power (the Departments of Land Use, Water Management and Water Resources, and lawyers) opposed me. By this time I had already become the talk of the town, and my name became familiar even to the French partners, who finally heard that the project was delayed because a private citizen did not wish to have a landfill next to her property.
Legislation

Thanks to a prosecutor who stood firm in support of legality, the administration’s position became shaky. After a week of debate, the final official resolution determined that the decision allowing construction of the landfill was illegal and invalid. The complaint lodged by the administration to the Supreme Court was not satisfied.

Incredible though it may seem, despite all of the pressure, insults and threats from the administration’s supporters, we won the lawsuit.

Thus my boldly elaborated program was accomplished in half a year, and we could celebrate a victory in this exhausting process. The celebration became an outstanding event in the lives of the local people. We thrilled TV and newspaper journalists, so that more people would know about this victory and be encouraged to be bold in defending nature and their own rights.

Epilogue

Well, this story ended and at last I was free to sit by the window enjoying views of the forest. However, the thought that other forests could fall victim to the landfill project bothered me deeply. The idea of creating landfills, even based on the best technologies, has raised many questions which have gone unanswered even in countries with developed networks of landfills. Thirty years ago, this technology seemed progressive. But these days more countries have rejected it as an approach that doesn’t solve the problem of waste disposal, but merely transfers it to later generations. For Russia, with its ill economy and lack of laws regulating waste treatment, fast and imprudent decisions without proper assessment (as clearly seen in this case) could become catastrophic.

I have not been sitting quietly (since our victory), but instead have spent time learning a great deal about alternative technologies in waste processing. Actually, the only issue deserving attention is the separate recycling of waste components, to which many European countries, the U.S. and Canada have turned. When I completed a search in the region for processing industries, the results were astounding: the region is completely set in all industries necessary for recycling. Moreover, unique technologies for treatment of certain wastes had been developed in regional scientific laboratories, but were without demand. What regional authorities were seeking abroad by close at hand, and in a much better form. In September 1996 a governmental program on waste processing was adopted. It advocates the recycling of wastes and opposes their burial. It has already specified the types of wastes to be processed, and labels landfills as imprudent because they devote a tremendous amount of land and exclude many resources from economic cycles.

Moving in this direction, I compiled all the information on separate processing of wastes and submitted a report to the administration with a proposed initiative on implementing this approach in the region. Fortunately the personnel of the administration has changed recently, and I hope that it will go the right way toward sustainable development.

I would like to tell all people: Do not sit still while your environment is being destroyed. Act, struggle and win — you have everything you need for this. Let my example give you courage.

Olga Egorova is an architect in Moscow. Contact her through the Moscow-based journal of ‘Russian Conservation News.’

Forests Too Often Fall to Exploitation

Aleksei Yaroshenko comments on Olga Egorova’s article, on pages 11-13, about victory in defeating a landfill project.

One of the problems raised by Olga Egorova — and a most painful one for our forest policies — is the transfer of forested lands into the category of unforested lands for various types of use. Vast areas of forested lands are put aside annually for construction projects, mining, and laying rail, oil and gas lines, while potentially available former agricultural land is being abandoned. Over most of the Russian Federation’s territory, decisions on such transfers are made at the regional level, and in many, no exact data on the scale of forest destruction can be collected on a federal level in state reports.

First Group forests occupy about eighteen percent of the total forested area in Russia; they bear certain protective functions or represent valuable ecosystems (please see RCM #9 for more information on this topic). As put forward both in former forestry legislation and in the new Forest Code, all decisions related to exploitation of these forested lands are the responsibility of the Russian Federal Government. Moreover, a transfer of First Group forests, which represent the most ecologically valuable forests, can be made only in exceptional cases and should be based on forest inventory and specialized studies.

Despite these strict regulations, transfers of First Group forests have continued on a great scale. From 1955 to 1996 alone, by order of the federal government, 35,600 hectares of First Group forests were released for exploitation. According to a recent letter by the General Attorney to the Russian Prime Minister, various violations of forest legislation are taking place on the
who needs the red data book of Russia, anyway?

by Vladimir E. Flint

Red Data Books of various statuses are some of the most important tools in the strategy for saving rare and endangered species. The problems of creating and updating the Red Data Books have always received a lot of attention, both in the Soviet Union and after its dissolution, in Russia.

The history of the Red Data Book of the USSR began in the 1960s, when a specially created public commission of expert ecologists and botanists issued lists of endangered species proposed for entry into a national Red Data Book. An official directive on the creation of a Red Data Book of the USSR was passed in 1974 by the Ministry of Agriculture, which supervised nature conservation at that time. Four years later the first edition of the Red Data Book of the USSR, prepared by the Institute of Nature Conservation and Nature Reserves, was made public. A statement about the significance of the Red Data Book was included in the “Law on Conservation and Use of Animals” adopted in 1980, an act that raised the juridical status of the Book.

This law also provided for the creation of separate Red Data Books for each republic, including the Russian Federation. In 1984, the second edition of the Red Data Book of the USSR was prepared and published. The structure of that edition — status categories and sequence in descriptions of species — took the Red Data Book of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) as its model.

In 1982 the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation passed an official decree on preparing the Red Data Book of Russia, with the Central Laboratory of Game Management responsible for its immediate compilation. The structure of the proposed book copied that of the Red Data Books of the USSR and of IUCN. When issued in 1983, it listed 65 families of mammals, 107 species of birds, 11 reptile species, four species of amphibians, 9 fishes, 15 mollusks and 34 species of insects. The Red Data Books of other republics of the Soviet Union appeared in the subsequent decade.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and establishment of Russia as an independent state induced a reorganization of the entire system of government management of nature conservation issues. New political and administrative regulations demanded creation of a new edition of the Red Data Book of Russia. This time the newly created Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources supervised the project, forming a public interagency Commission on Endangered Species in 1992 to compile the book. The most qualified experts in species conservation from various institutions across Russia were involved in the Commission's work.

Legislation

From 1992-1996 the title, structure and staff of the Ministry have been altered repeatedly (please see RCN R10 on the history of nature protection in the Netherlands). Nevertheless, despite such unstable conditions, the Commission has managed to complete a significant share of the total project. It was decided to keep the same five categories of status — endangered (threatened with extinction), vulnerable (decreasing in numbers), rare, indeterminate and out of danger (recovered) species — and add one more, “most likely extinct.” For each category a clear definition was formed, based on expert estimation of numbers and the tendency of their dynamics; standards in describing species were developed. The Commission has identified rules and guidelines for illustrations and has ordered some of them.

The Commission has also managed to revise the existing lists of recommended species and add new ones to the lists, thus compiling undoubtedly the most important part of the whole task. The total number of species recommended for entry into the Red Data Book of Russia amounts to 407; among them, 155 species are vertebrates (excluding insects), 43 are cyclostomes and fishes, 8 are amphibians, 20 reptiles, 118 bird species and 63 mammals. Nine species belong to the category of extinct animals; forty-two species listed in the first edition of the Red Data Book of Russia were removed, since new data demonstrate the relative safety of the species. For example, the Amur Forest Cat (Felis amurensis) and Snow Goose (Anser c boycerleus) are not considered threatened at present. In addition, a new list of candidate-species to the Red Data Book categories was compiled. Species such as Long-eared Hedgehog (Hemiechinus auritus), Zababalka Hamster (Cricetulus pseudogriseus), Black-headed Nuthatch (Sitta kratzeri) and several Bat species, for instance, to name just a few, require special attention and continual monitoring.

Within the framework of the project, the majority of descriptions of species were collected by 1995, and the draft of the book was completed. A comprehensive review for the final stages of preparation ended the progress. Next there followed not funds, but new official decrees. On March 22, 1995, the Federal Duma adopted a “Law on Wildlife,” which again proclaimed the significance of the Red Data Book of Russia and its periodic updates. Subsequently, Governmental Decrees No 158, signed by Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, declared that the Red Data Book of Russia was an official document containing a comprehensive set of information on endangered plant and animal species, as well as the measures required for their conservation and restoration. The Ministry of Environmental Protection, renamed and downsized, was put in charge of preparing and publishing the Red Data Book of Russia, and all necessary financing was to come out of the federal budget. The scientific provisions for compilation and regular updates of the Red Data Book of Russia were entrusted to the Institute for Nature Conservation, experienced in creating the Red Data Book of the USSR. Creating the computer version of the Red Data Book of Russia has also become the responsibility of this Institute.

Despite good intentions, no funds have been provided, neither to pay for the Commission’s completed work, nor to invest in the further compilation now charged to the Institute of Nature Conservation rather than the interagency Commission. It is absolutely unclear how to coordinate the work of two different scientific teams, both consisting of qualified experts on endangered species who often view the other team as rivals. It would not have been easy to unite them in a concerted effort, but the lack of funds has made it impossible to postpone all work related to the Red Data Book of Russia. No work has been conducted since the latest reassessment of duties in compiling the book; no results have been obtained, nor projects completed. By government order, the Institute for Nature Conservation has elaborated legal provisions specifying the process of compilation of the Red Data Book and its structure and responsibilities, but this “Statement on the Red Data Book of Russia” has not been ratified; it’s simply gathering dust on the shelves of deserted laboratories.

Contemporary realities demand a certain unity in the nonexistence of the world’s endangered species. IUCN recently developed a new systematization of endangered species categories, and many countries have already adjusted their Red Books according to the new system. However, the prepared version of the Red Data Book of Russia on the latest categories patterned after the IUCN Red Data Book of the 1960s. Updating the Red Data Book of Russia according to the new system will require additional work that is hardly possible now, when the employees of scientific institutes were last paid five months ago.

Due to the lack of funds, changing the book’s appearance has been proposed. The earlier plans for the second edition assumed the book, like previous versions, would be “for display,” with an attractive cover, high quality paper and graphics by the best artists. Now it seems better to publish a modest, cheaper book that is badly needed as a “working” document, than to postpone until some


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Rosalia alpina, a rare beetle whose numbers are decreasing (from the Red Book of the R.S.F.S.R., 1985).
Legislation

According to the "Law on Wildlife," all subjects of the Russian Federation (regions and smaller administrative units) must compile their own Red Data Books. Many of them have already compiled local Red Data Books. Recently a proposal to prepare a Red Data Book of the Newly Independent States was proclaimed. Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan have also issued their national documents. Despite all declarations and laws, the strained financial situation in Russia, as well as topics, ranging economic instability, make publication of a new edition of the Red Data Book of Russia in the near future most unlikely. Who will continue this important and necessary work in Russia?

Professor Vladimir E. Flat, chairs the Department of Wildlife Conservation at the All-Russian Institute on Nature Conservation.

Enviro-Lawyers of Russia, Unite!

by Vera Mischchenko

The thought of scores of lawyers joining forces might normally send shivers down your spine, but the main result of the 1997 Annual Conference of Russian Public Interest Environmental Lawyers could only warm your heart: the participants established a long-needed network of lawyers in defense of the environment.

The conference, combined with a Russian-American Workshop on Citizen Participation in Environmental Enforcement, was held February 5 to 8 in Tver and was co-sponsored by Ecojuris Institute, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, the Russian Environmental Law Project and the Volga Environmental Prosecutors.

The Network of Russian Environmental Lawyers is an informal association of public interest environmental law NGOs and individual lawyers with coordination centers in Moscow (Ecojuris Institute, the overall coordinator), Irkutsk (EPRA, Southern Siberia), Tomsk (Environmental Law Center, Western Siberia), Chelyabinsk (Zpok Armen, the Urals) and Chita (Chita Ecolaw, the Transbaikalsk Region).

Our colleagues from Tver (Volga Region), Vladivostok (the Russian Far East) and Krasnoyarsk (Central Siberia) are also joining. We are inviting Ira Bendakova from the Republic of Karelia (Northern Russia), who is now in the U.S. on a fellowship with EJW, to join our network, too.

The goals of the Network are: (i) information exchange on environmental law practice; (ii) professional capacity building and continuing legal education; (iii) litigation support; and (iv) publication of a periodical, "Russian Public Interest Environmental Law Bulletin," to exchange case practice and strategy among network lawyers.

Along with dozens of other NGOs and hundreds of citizens, Network members will be plaintiffs in two "mishlenki" court cases initiated by Ecojuris Institute: one challenging Presidential and Governmental decrees on the illegal construction of a high-speed railroad from St. Petersburg to Moscow, and the other opposing Governmental executive orders that illegally transform thousands of hectares of lands belonging to First Group Forests all over the country into non-forest lands for industrial purposes.

More than forty environmental lawyers, prosecutors, NGO representatives and environmental activists from various regions of Russia — the Russian Far East, Siberia, the Urals, and European Russia — participated in the conference and workshop. At least one legislator, Tamara Zlotikova, Chair of the Federal Duma Environmental Committee, also attended. American participants included Buck Parker (Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund), Ekka Retenthal (Russian Environmental Law Project), Mike Veitchuva (Western States Legal Foundation) and Tom Fennis (formerly with the EPA, now the Irish liaison with ABA-CIEL).

Lawyers and environmental activists made presentations on more than twenty topics, ranging from watershed and forest protection to environmental impact assessments and nuclear issues. Conference materials, especially case studies of active litigation, are being compiled for publication in Russian and English. Information on the event was widely broadcast by the Russian national radio station "Moskva," Russian independent television channel NTV, and two local TV channels.

The Conference adopted a Declaration and Action Plan on joint activities of public interest lawyers, prosecutors, NGOs and the public to protect public health and the natural environment. Additionally, a special Declaration recommending the ecosystems/watershed principle of organizing environmental protection in Russia was adopted, which will be sent to Prosecutor General and the Federal Parliament. Currently, the Volga Environmental Prosecutors work in the only prosecutors' office in Russia organized on the watershed, rather than the regional (oblast) principle.

Vera Mischchenko is President of Ecojuris Institute in Moscow.
Threats to Dniester River Biodiversity

by Piotr Gorbusenko, Ryta Trenbichtsiki and Tatiana Sharupsynovskaya

At 1,352 km long, the Dniester, one of the longest rivers of Eastern Europe, has its headwaters in the Carpathian Mountains and flows through Ukraine and Moldova into the Black Sea. Its fish species number more than eighty, including subspecies. However, in the post-World War II period, the fishery resources have been undermined by neglectful economic activities, and the current situation threatens to become irreversible.

In the late 1940s levees were constructed on the middle and lower Dniester, and riparian meadows that had served as spawning grounds for phytoplankton fish were lost. The Dubosevsky Hydroelectric Dam went into operation in 1954, cutting off the route of Beluga (Huso huso), Stellate Sturgeon (Acipenser stellatus) and Russian Sturgeon (A. gueldenstatidi) towards spawning grounds. Other migratory and semi-migratory fish species adapted to the new conditions, though their population sizes declined significantly. Reproduction areas for the lipophilous fish species (those that spawn on rocky substrates) were plundered by gravel mining in the Dniester riverbed.

In the 1970s and 1980s, artificial reproduction and stocking the river with juvenile Steerlet (Acipenser ruthenus), Barbel (Barbus barbus), Barca (Abramis brama), Roach (Rutilus rutilus), Carp (Cyprinus carpio) and Pikeperch (Esox lucius), among others, significantly bolstered fishery resources by compensating for the negative factors. These years were the most favorable for fishery resources, since protection was fairly well-organized, and the entire drainage was under the supervision of the Western Black Sea Fisheries Inspection.

In the early 1980s the Novodnestrovskaya Hydroelectric Power Plant was built near Novodnestrovsk, Ukraine. This structure has had grievous effects on the ecosystems and inhabitants of the middle and lower Dniester. The problem is that, in accordance with the plan, the water for power plant usage is discharged from the deeper, lower layers of the reservoir, which causes a five- to six-degree (Celcius) decrease in water temperature in the middle Dniester between the Novodnestrovskaya and Dubosevskaya dams. The Dniester has lost part of its recreational potential, and fish reproduction has declined. Egg resorption (deyay) has become a widespread phenomenon. In addition, the upper dam retains large amounts of suspend-
ed matter, causing a drastic increase in the transparency of the discharged water. Incubation conditions in the spawning grounds have further deteriorated because of oscillations of about one meter in the diurnal water level, caused by the irregular rate of water discharge from the Novodnestrovskaya Dam.

The last decade has been the most lamentable for fish populations. This river, flowing through the territories of two states, has been almost completely neglected since the breakup of the USSR. The unified fishery resources protection system has disintegrated, and poaching is thriving. In 1991-92 the Dniester was the scene of bloodshed caused by the yet unresolved conflict between Moldova and Priddnestrovie. The single existing hatchery was destroyed during military operations, and the artificial reproduction of Dniester fish ceased.

From 1988 to 1995, the output of Moldovan fisheries decreased from 140 to 26.2 tons. The river biocenosis is gradually degenerating towards that of marshes and lakes. A deep backwater of the Dubosevski Reservoir, where the Yepeyky Reserve is located, has proven less susceptible to the effects of lower temperatures. It has become a preferred spawning ground for many fish species and a habitat of choice for many riparian birds and mammals. However, this reserve, located in Priddnestrovie, is experiencing serious financial difficulties and cannot operate efficiently.

The lower Dniester has changed more than any other stretch of the river. Because the river is regulated, there are no profound spring floods. The bottomlands are almost completely drained and used for vegetable farming. The small fragments of wetlands remaining largely in the estuary area require specific protective measures. The fate of the European Mudminnow (Umbra krameri), endemic to the Danube and Dniester Rivers, is illustrative: this species’ reproductive cycle depends upon spring floods, and the European Mudminnow is already nearly extinct in the Dniester.

The Novodnestrovskaya Power Plant needs to be refurbished so that it does not affect the temperature regime of the river. BIOTICA Ecological Society is ready to undertake the task of restoration of populations in hatcheries and of planning the territories to be set aside as reserves. Partnership and financial support would be appreciated.

Piotr Gorbusenko is Chair, Ryta Trenbichtsiki Deputy Chair, and Tatiana Sharupsynovskaya a member of BIOTICA Ecological Society.

Beluga Sturgeon (Huso huso) is one of several species whose future is threatened by hydroelectric power plants on the Dniester River (from the N. A. Myakov, Atlas Guide to Fish, Moscow, Prosvetchebnoe, 1994).
ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism at Baikal: A Review of Recent Reports

by Gary Cook

Potential for Ecotourism at Baikal — Recent Studies

Some of the latest international developments in ecotourism at Baikal are reflected in two documents published in 1996. The first, a 600-page treatise prepared at the behest of the World Bank by Environmental Resources Management (ERM), a consultant group, assesses the potential for ecotourism at Baikal. The study was conducted with major funding from the Human Resources Development Fund of the Japanese government. Its purpose was to evaluate Lake Baikal as a destination capable of attracting and accommodating enough ecotourists to benefit at least some sectors of the local economy.

Almost simultaneously, Ecologically Sustainable Development, Inc. (ESD), an American-based group, has published a guidebook on ecotourism at Lake Baikal. The guidebook is less technical and more descriptive than the World Bank document, discussing why ecotourism should come to Baikal, and not so much how tourism should develop. The ESD booklet generally informs potential ecotourists how to make their trips to Baikal enjoyable for themselves and useful to the local environment; it contains information on favorite routes for ecotourists and possibilities for homestays. But the ESD booklet is purposefully limited in scope and represents but one factor that will go into attracting and regulating ecotourism at Baikal.

The ERM assessment, on the other hand, deserves greater attention because it analyzes many of the factors that will determine the impact of ecotourism at Baikal over the next several decades. As a tool for local governments to use in developing ecotourism at Baikal, the ERM evaluation could prove quite valuable. In fact, whether it turns out to be useful really depends on whether local people and policy-makers pay enough heed to its recommendations.

Among the many recommendations in the ERM assessment, its most basic advice on achieving full benefits from real ecotourism at Baikal is that ecotourism:

1) must not exceed the ecological and cultural carrying capacity of the region; and
2) must provide for maximum benefits to local communities and to the protected areas around Baikal.

Only by preparing for ecotourism can the people at Baikal ensure that these objectives are met. What's more, plans should be made so that ecotourism and its benefits are spread evenly around the lake, without the boom and bust periods that cause so many bankruptcies and other problems in related countries.

The ERM overview could help in achieving these goals, if used properly. It has already set the theoretical groundwork for development of ecotourism around the lake. For instance, ERM has identified and described the so-called "tutumal ecotourism destinations," those pristine, attractive areas where land-use patterns, as well as ecological and cultural features, allow for ecotourists' maximum enjoyment, with minimal disruption to the environment. Three areas include the Barguzin Valley, Zabaikalski National Park, Olkhon Island, Maloye More, and the southern reaches of Baikal and Pribaltakai National Park.

What is Ecotourism?

Ecotourism can be defined as any visit to a natural area that leaves "behind no sign" or "no impact" on the local people and leaves the local environment in a better state than it was before.

It's estimated that about 12%, roughly 250 million, of all the world's tourists in 1994 were so-called "ecotourists" — people who traveled to national parks, nature reserves and other areas of natural importance and somehow had a positive effect on local conditions. Given the facts that tourism is the largest industry (by far) in the world — with revenues exceeding $3 trillion yearly — and that ecotourism is the fastest-growing sector of tourism worldwide, it is only reasonable that people in such natural areas as Lake Baikal would be interested in ecotourism.

As for Baikal's potential to be competitive on the international market, ERM estimates that by the year 2004, Baikal could easily attract some 15,000 to 21,000 ecotourists annually (in contrast, there were only 800 identifiable ecotourists visiting Baikal in 1994). This is much less than the carrying capacity of Lake Baikal, which ERM estimates at roughly two million a year. However, to achieve the goal of at least 15,000 eco-visitors, ERM states that local decision-makers will have to implement investment strategies soon.

The types of investments ERM recommends, however, are open to criticism. The report asserts that tourism infrastructure is inadequate for housing so many visitors at Baikal, and that this is deterring ecotourists. They therefore argue that without improvements — and large investment — in transportation and in the construction of new roads and hotels, Baikal's ability to attract ecotourists will remain limited.

We would argue, on the other hand, that true ecotourists are not kept away...
Management

by homesteads or rough conditions, but are, on the contrary, attracted by them.

What is really scaring away many ecotourists is Baikal's inaccessibility and the high price of transportation to get there in the first place. It costs Japanese and American citizens a minimum of $1,500 to reach Baikal by air (by comparison, it costs an American tourist about $700 to reach Europe, $1,000 to get to Southeast Asia and $1,600 to reach Africa).

One must admit, however, that many of ERM's other investment ideas for institutional fortification are quite apt. ERM advises creating a regional Baikal Tourism Board that could work systematically to attract international and local investment in ecotourism. This Board could also help institutions such as National Parks and individual ecotourism businesses develop marketing strategies, and it could conduct training programs for ecotourism guides and park rangers. All of these public institutions could work together to increase the local people's involvement in ecotourism, thereby bringing greater benefits to the entire community.

ERM has identified such priorities for investment as the improvement of technical capacity and the development of public recreational facilities. ERM also suggests that the local govern-
ments in Irkutsk, Buryatia, and China try to coordinate their laws on ecotourism, so that regulations, fee standards and licensing will be more favorable to its development in the region. Local governments should ensure that ecotourism develops in accordance with current land-use plans, and that the public participates in deciding how ecotourism moves forward in the region.

ERM estimates that it will cost $11 million in public sector investment over the next five years to establish optimal conditions for ecotourism. Of that sum, $7 million could go to improving facilities and building new accommodations on a small scale ($200 new rooms spread evenly around Baikal would be adequate). The benefits would be manifold, promoting general economic growth. Government revenues and taxes on ecotourism would grow from $600,000 (in 1994) to $4.4 million by the year 2004. That fact alone should be sufficient incentive for local governments to invest in ecotourism as a business and re-invest revenue from ecotourists in development of more facilities. ERM has estimated the ratio of costs to benefits, once these investments are made, as one to five. In other words, an original investment of $1.5 million a year in ecotourism at Baikal will return some $7.6 million in annual revenues over a ten-year period.

Besides the favorable outlook on profits, ERM points out that ecotourism will have other benefits. Because ecotourism is good for the environment, the naturally high quality of Siberian life will be retained. The business sector will be able to choose ecotourism over more polluting ventures, and Baikal will stay beautiful, attracting even more investors.

However, the ERM document fails to recommend some important environmental improvements. A program for developing wind and other alternative energy sources for some of the existing and planned facilities would be essential; otherwise, those facilities would not be truly ecologically clean. Also, though the report discusses marketing at length, there are very few concrete ideas on how to bring people from other parts of Russia and the world to Baikal. There is little mention of how to attract investors and partners to the ecotourism industry, nor how to advertise Baikal systematically. What's more, most of ERM's recommendations are for local governments and international funders; they neglect the role of the business community, of local banks and ecotourism operators themselves, as well as nongovernmental institutions, which have been at the forefront of promoting and monitoring ecotourism at Baikal up to now.

Finally, and perhaps most critically, one can find great fault with any assessment program that spends so much money on a study without any follow-up funds purposely left over for investment. Of the original $600,000 given to ERM, at least some money should have been set aside for model programs or something beyond the study itself. One hopes that at the Ecotourism Forum this summer at Baikal, the World Bank and other institutions will follow their own consultants' advice and facilitate investments in the very important ecotourism sector at Baikal.

Enjoying the view at Barguzinskiy Zapovednik, on Lake Baikal (photo courtesy of Barguzinskiy Zapovednik).
Postscript: Actual Ecotours to Baikal in 1996

Summer 1996 saw about the same number of organized ecotours coming to the parks and Zapovedniki (strict scientific nature reserves) at Baikal as in previous years. International ecotour companies and environmental organizations such as Oceanic Society Expeditions, Friends of the Earth, Japan, REI Adventures, Earth Island Institute and Friends of the Russian Parks led tours to the Baikal region. Most are non-profit, public interest organizations, so in most cases, 100% of the profits wound up in the hands of local people at Baikal.

What’s more, each of these international groups collaborated — for a contracted fee — with local ecotour organizers, as well as with the national parks and Zapovedniki in the region. These local organizers, led by Andrei Sokhnoev of the Baikal Fund and others, provided full support services for the hundreds of ecotourists that came to Baikal last summer. Zapovednik employees working as guides and interpreters earned money for the Zapovedniki, so that they can continue to conserve nature.

The principal beneficiaries were the protected areas and the environmental NGOs around Baikal. Not only did they benefit financially (each ecotourist paid about $1,000 to parks and about $400 to NGOs in the region), but they also received publicity for future ecotours to Baikal. In addition, local environmental students or activists were sometimes invited to take part in these ecotours for free, to ensure that not only international tourists could enjoy trips into the more remote protected areas.

Unfortunately, few people living abroad are aware of the wonders of Baikal, and most of the eco-visitors came as individuals or families. Until the World Bank, the local governments, the NGOs and others interested in promoting ecotourism at Baikal can develop a far-reaching and systematic scheme to attract more groups of ecotourists, the real growth in ecotourism will be much more piecemeal.

Hence, we can expect profound growth in ecotourism at Baikal in 1997, but as the word spreads, and more and more international ecotourists return home with tales of the lake’s beauty and wonder, their numbers will grow precipitously, to the point where many more local people will stand to benefit from a clean, well-protected and “attractive” Lake Baikal.

Gary Cook is Director of Baikal Watch.

Russian Conservation News
by Sergei Pushkariev

Employees from seven Russian Biosphere Reserves — Astrakhan'ski, Okotski, Primorsko-Tatarsky, Tatarsko-Uzunski, Tatarsko-Chermoketny, Laplandski and Chynye Zenals — and the Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC) participated from March 24 to 27 in a special Moscow training session for working with "MAFesta," a computer program for biologists conducting inventory and monitoring activities of vertebrate animal populations. The session was organized at the initiative of the Russian Committee of the "Man and the Biosphere" (MAB) Program, a UNESCO program for international scholarly collaboration in research on the interaction of human beings with the environment. Two of the developers of MAFesta, James F. Quinn and Robert J. Meere of the University of California at Davis, conducted the training. MAFesta is an interconnected set of databases on vertebrates in the Biosphere Reserves along with a specially created shell (in FoxPro for DOS). In point of fact these are two interconnected products, MAFesta for species inventories at individual sites, and Observe, for observation-level, monitoring databases (please see the box below).

The interface of both products is very simple and comprehensible. For completing a field, in many cases it's sufficient to choose from a list of choices displayed by the program. By thereby eliminating data entry errors, standardizing nomenclatures and increasing the speed of data entry, at present the data from thirty-two countries and 190 Biosphere Reserves exist in MAFesta. Though sixteen of the eighteen Biosphere Reserves in Russia are included, the data for them are rather few; only for five — Okotski, Pechora-Ilyshski, Barguzinski, Tatarsko-Sibirskei and Veronovski — are there lists of species; data on abundance, citations and other information are practically absent. (For comparison, in BCC's database, data on terrestrial vertebrates for 167 Zapovedniki from all over the former Soviet Union are represented.)

The system of working with MAFesta is as follows: having obtained the program (it's distributed freely and free-of-charge), experts introduce new data and send them to the MAB office in Moscow. The data are then compiled and forwarded to the developers in the U.S. There they are united with and added to the existing set of databases, and the updated MAFesta is sent back. A utility to allow individual users to append MAFesta-generated data from additional Biosphere Reserves into their own installation of the program is under development.

One thing the training session participants were interested in was, "Will we be paid anything for those data we introduce and send to the U.S. MAB?"

The instructors' reply: "No. We give you MAFesta free-of-charge. Authors' note: this is the de facto standard in the world over for this type of information." This increases your chances for receiving grants for such work. And we enter the data you pass on to us into MAFesta, as well as our evaluations showing the need for the program; we ourselves receive grants for that; we update and perfect the program and pass it on to you free-of-charge."

Two small drawbacks are that the current version of MAFesta is available only in English, and that the package is oriented on data entry "from paper," so that using already prepared databases is difficult. The first problem will soon be solved: the program is already being translated into Russian.

The authors of MAFesta plan to adapt it for Windows '95 and include invertebrates in the program. In connection with the last point, they're interested in contacts with anyone who has taxonomic databases for major invertebrate groups in Russia.

A companion program, MAF丕 for vascular plants in Biosphere Reserves, is currently under development, and will be completed shortly. The Russian version of MAF丕, which has already gone into beta-testing, utilizes a database provided by O. V. Gletman (Komarov Botanical Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg), and is based upon S. K. Ctenanopov's Vascular Plants of Russia.

In conclusion, I'd like to express our gratitude to the organizers of the training session, who are now seeking funds to conduct similar courses for other Russian Biosphere Reserves.

Sergei Pushkariev of the Biodiversity Conservation Center is creating databases on the biota of protected areas and digital ranges of terrestrial vertebrates from across the former Soviet Union.

Spring 1997, No. 21
NGOs

War Among People, War Against Nature

by Gadjibek Dzhabirmirzoev

War is a tragedy for both society and nature. For more than ten years this tragedy has been going on in the Caucasus, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia and Abkhazia, Chechnya — all of these names have become famous the world over because of fierce, persistent hostilities between nations. Military conflicts in the region have developed according to a common pattern, with both sides doomed to lose regardless of their military successes. Precise figures are not known, but estimates provide terrible numbers: more than 500,000 killed and more than 2 million refugees, with the total damage inflicted on the Caucasus states and Russia coming to several hundred billion dollars. The damage to the people’s consciousness is incalculable — the tendency to solve problems with force will long bother society with the most ugly events.

The “War and Ecology” Project, developed by the ecological group Forchegoi and sponsored by ISAR, was founded to find ways to conserve biodiversity in the Caucasian under conditions of social and political tension and military conflicts. From 1994 to 1996, the working group inspected sixteen protected areas in the Caucasus and met with numerous governmental and public environmental organizations of the Caucasian states to research the actual situation in the region. Currently the group is developing a complex program on solving the environmental problems related to warfare. The primary emphasis is on increasing the role of nongovernmental organizations, strengthening the legislative base and involving the military in ecological problems.

War Against Nature

The scarce forests of the Caucasus suffered greatly during the years of warfare. The most valuable mountain forests of Georgia, Abkhazia and the Northern Caucasus were harvested and sold off. Large forest tracts in the mountains and foothill areas of the Chechen Republic also suffered a great deal from fires and hostilities. In Azerbaijan, unique subtropical forests were harvested without any oversight. In Armenia, illegal timber harvesting took place during the fuel crisis. The processes of deforestation, already a serious threat in Northern Dagstain, the Chechen Republic, Armenia and the lowland regions of Azerbaijan, were greatly augmented due to the use of heavy armor, translocations of large masses of people, and the gradual reduction of forested areas. Soil erosion has become the main factor in the loss of hundreds of hectares of agricultural lands every year. Protection of the upper reaches of Caucasian rivers has been abandoned — at least, nobody has seen the enforcement of regulations; this fact has resulted in the disturbance of hydrological patterns, the main component of ecological balance in the region.

All of the Caucasian states face the problems of global transformations of landscapes, and an entire set of urgent measures should be undertaken to restore the damaged lands. Special techniques for landscape restoration have been developed at the Staropol Botanical Garden, under the supervision of Dr. D. S. Dayzhov. They permit restoration of meadow, steppe and forest ecosystem while preserving specific species composition in each case. A pilot project can be conducted as soon as proper funds are available.

Harvest of Warfare

More than ten million hectares of the Caucasian region have been involved in hostilities. The entire area is polluted to some degree with the contents of army and explosives, oil spills and chemicals. Thousands of mines and unexploded shells remain on the territory of the region. More than 300,000 people took part in warfare, up to 100 aviation units and more than 5,000 heavy weapons were used during the various conflicts. About 50 cities across the Caucasian states were retired. Natural and anthropogenic landscapes alike were subjected to total destruction.

Russian Conservation News
Natural Zones to be United in Transboundary Reserves:

- Riparian forests of the Samur River delta, 20,000 hectares (Russia-Azerbaijan). These unique subtropical forests harbor seventeen endemic and endemic species of flora and more than twenty rare and endangered plants. The mouth of the Samur River is supposed to be entered into the list of key ornithological territories of international value.

- The high-mountain ecosystems of the Eastern Caucasus, on 80,000 hectares embracing the ranges of rare, valuable ungulates and birds, as well as pilgrimage sites for the indigenous peoples of Dagestan and Northern Azerbaijan (Russia-Azerbaijan-Georgia).

- The mountain ecosystems of the Western Caucasus, on an area 500,000 hectares (Russia-Abkhazia).

- The Western Caspian right way (Russia-Azerbaijan).

- Spawning sites and feeding areas of rare, valuable fish of the Caspian and Black Seas (Russia-Azerbaijan-Georgia-Ukraine-Georgia).

A plan for unifying existing or planned protected areas of various status (Zapovedniki, National Parks and Zakazniks) to cover the proposed zones has been developed.

It is of major importance to develop a new strategy of nature conservation, taking into account the social, economic and psychological features of the region. Strict measures prohibiting the illegal possession of weapons and the use of firearms for hunting are required to combat poaching.

Over the last decade, the illegal taking of and trade in rare animals and plants has been growing rapidly. Trade in wild spring flowers is common in all the cities of the Northern Caucasus; many rare flowers are being carried away, mainly into Russian cities. The trapping of and trade in rare animals is primarily the prerogative of visiting groups from Ukraine and Russia, Iran and Turkey also contribute poachers. The main objects of poaching are reptile species with narrow ranges - the viper, several species of lizards, the Mediterranean tortoise. This problem can be solved only by uniting public organizations, local administrations, schools and mass media. The joint efforts of customs agents and environmental organizations could have the effect on the borders of preventing the export of valuable species.

Military conflicts have intensified the social and economic problems and have thus weakened public interest in environmental issues. Our survey revealed a dangerous tendency: environmental problems rank lowest in priority among the local population; their attitude towards nature is becoming, for the most part, consumeristic. The ultimate danger is that society is losing its ability to resist ecologically dangerous projects carried out by the state or private persons. Only the consolidation of effort by environmentalists, mass media and educational institutions can counter the negative tendencies in the region.

Our work within the framework of the “War and Ecology” project has led us to the conclusion that the legislative bases for nature protection require significant improvement. All of the countries, singly and together, should undertake steps in defense of nature. Biodiversity ecosystems have suffered the most, and only the efforts of all the states can respond adequately to the threat. Attempts have already been made, such as in 1992, when the NIS governments signed an agreement on cooperation in nature protection. One point was called for restriction of economic and other activities on lands adjacent to specially protected areas. However, this document was not ratified by the parliaments, and by the end of 1992 it was replaced by the Act on the Principles of Environmental Safety in the States of the NIS. The range of problems was significantly narrowed in this document, and issues of nature protection were almost completely neglected.

Our group has developed several initiatives for consideration by the legislatures of all the Caucasian states, so that they can draw up mutual agreements and conduct joint projects for environmental protection on a regional scale. Among them are a treaty banning militarization in boundary protected areas; an agreement on the joint protection of transboundary natural ecosystems and the sites and habitats of rare species; an initiative on the organization of “ecological military forces” as an alternative form of military service in the Caucasian states; an agreement on ecologically dangerous objects and guarantees of their safe functioning; and an agreement on global strategies to counter landscape degradation.

Elaborating and adopting international agreements and legislative acts will provide a basis for coordinated activities by all of the ecological organizations in the Caucasus. In this case no one loses, and everyone can win.

Godfik Dzhambulov is leader of the “War and Ecology” project and a member of the Pecheneg ecological group of Khakass University.

Spring 1997, #11
"Heart of Russia" Slogan: 
No Sustainable Development 
Without Native Biodiversity

In an interview with Anya Menner, 
RCN Managing Editor, Nikolai 
Savichev introduces the Heart of Russia Program.

What are the principles for development of the "Heart of Russia" Program?

Nowadays it is well known that it’s the evolutionarily established diversity of species that ensures the sustainability and functioning of natural ecosystems and the Earth’s biophere as a whole. If the goal for humanity is sustainable development, conservation of biodiversity on every level should become one of the foremost priorities on route to that goal.

In what way does biodiversity contribute to sustainable development?

The necessary condition for sustainable development is ecological balance. Natural ecosystems play a crucial role in maintaining the stability of ecological balance. Due to the large diversity of species attributed to them, (called "native biodiversity"), natural ecosystems are capable of self-restoration after external impact. If adjacent territories experience disturbance and their stability is broken, natural ecosystems can compensate for the impact, thereby minimizing the consequences of that impact. However, if impact surpasses a certain level, the ecosystem can lose its ability to recover and become itself a source of ecological instability. The conservation of natural ecosystems with high levels of native biodiversity provides for stabilization of ecological balance.

What territories meet the criteria of high native biodiversity in Russia?

Certainly, in these terms Siberia would differ from European Russia, and the Russian North from the Far East. Our program operates in the Central Russian Plain (hence its name, and here we distinguish so-called “Zones of Economic Emptiness” which have proved to be most significant for preservation of natural ecosystems. These are territories with the least population density and most poorly developed infrastructure, usually located near administrative borders. Ecosystems with fully viable biota have been preserved with slight disturbance. Wilderness areas are still interconnected on these territories, forming a network. We understand an ecological network as a functionally whole complex of natural areas, though it can be topographically dissected, that have not experienced significant fragmentation and have preserved ecological links between its components. An ecological network is a unique way of preserving wildlife and stabilizing ecological balance in the region.

Do you think these territories can be secured from destruction?

Any development of the “zones of economic emptiness” without careful designs for land use will lead to destruction and fragmentation of large natural sites, and consequently to impoverishment of native biodiversity. Sustainable development of the Central Russian Plain can be possible only if its native biodiversity is conserved. This task is the main objective of the "Heart of Russia" Program.

What are your primary goals?

At the first stage, the program aims to establish a stable spatial structure of landscape, so that the regional ecological network will be preserved when economic development comes to the region. Later plans propose gradual transition to a system of “differentiated land use,” in which particular land use practices are defined individually for entire natural areas, based on their function in the ecological network.

What can be done to stabilize the structure of the landscape of the Central Russian plain?

The first step is creating protected natural areas, in order to conserve or restore all of the most valuable territories in the region as major components of the ecological network. New categories of protection should adequately respond to the growing anthropomorphic pressures.
In order to preserve large intact ecosystems rich in biodiversity beyond specially protected areas, we suggest developing land use practices that require preservation of natural ecosystems, that is, recreation and in some cases hunting. However, since these activities are connected with consumption of natural resources and cannot replace strict conservation, we should be aware that their uncontrollable development could lead to degradation of ecosystems.

In making the ecological network whole, ordinary natural territories without unique value should also be protected from destruction. This can be achieved, on one hand, by implementation of those forestry and agricultural techniques having the least impact, in order not to destroy the abilities of ecosystems to recover. On the other hand, optimal distribution of traditional land use practices could also minimize the load on ecosystems.

Preliminary Draft of the Ecological Network of the Central Russian Plain, as Proposed by “Heart of Russia”

How are you going to present the results of the program?

The draft project of the Ecological Network of the Central Russian Plain is supposed to be completed in 1997 (please see the map below for the preliminary results). It will be submitted to the State Committee on the Environment and other federal services, as well as to their regional subdivisions.

Map by B.Rusanov, D. Akserov and I. Belov.

Spring 1997, #11
Building an Ecological Network Together

A the second workshop of the "Heart of Russia" Program, held in Ryazan in February and organized by the Ryazan Laboratory on Environmental Problems (LEP), the Laboratory for Applied Ecology (LAЕ) and the Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC), it was hard to distinguish who represented administration, who was a researcher and who an activist: all were united by the fervor to do their best to fulfill the goals of the program. Twenty NGOs and their partners from the Moscow, Yaroslavl, Ryazan, Kaluga and Orel Committees on the Environment, along with colleagues from "Smolenskoe Posvyatnoye," "Ugra" and "Meshestvichki" National Parks and Oskol Zapovednik and representatives from the Russian State Committee on Environmental Protection, met to discuss their completed and future work.

This multifarious group has already accomplished quite a lot: twenty-five field trips were held on the proposed territory, and several dozen natural protected areas were inspected and no fewer designed. During the fieldwork serious violations of the forest regime were revealed and stopped in the Moscow Region. Unique Natural Monument (within Moscow city limits) was rescued from damaging activities. Participants are opposed to several government projects, such as construction of a high-speed railroad from Moscow to St. Petersburg and a plan to pump groundwater (for Moscow) that threatens the hydrological regime of the Central Russian rivers. A list of "hot spots" — valuable natural sites threatened with extinction — was also compiled. A whole spectrum of initiatives and proposals was presented which demonstrated hard, consistent work towards creation of an entire ecological network of the Central Russian Plain (please see the map on pages 25 and 27).

Below are some of the comments of "Heart of Russia" participants, some work to establish an ecological network covers a broad geographical range.

A. Sterkin (Yaroslavl LEP): "In the southern taiga, natural ecosystems should occupy no less than fifty percent of the territory to maintain ecological balance. The proposed network of protected areas in the region focuses on the main watershed of European Russia, where the Volga, Western Dvina and Dnieper Rivers begin. Seliger-Vybrinholskiy National Park and a number of other protected areas have been designed. The most serious threat to wildlife areas is the planned construction of the Moscow - St. Petersburg high-speed railroad."

I. Rodzhensvenskaya (Yaroslavl): "We propose creating a nature preserve at the source of the Tuna River to protect rare plant habitats from increasing anthropogenic pressure."

S. Golubev (Yaroslavl), Druzhina Student Conservation Corps: "We must take the White-tailed Eagle’s habitat on the shores of Rybinskiy Reserve under protection, as well as sites of concentration of goose-like birds."

B. Rossouw (Moscow, LAЕ): "The eastern part of Vladimir Region does not have a sufficient network of protected areas in the Oka River valley; additional studies will be held this year to expand the existing system of protected areas."

N. Chelkov (Ryazan LEP): "The few small nature monuments that we have now in the forest-swamp ecosystem of the Gur River cannot protect the complex adequately; it should be taken under protection entirely."

M. Kazakova (Ryazan LEP): "We have designed Kolomski-Mokshinskiy Zakaznik to conserve old growth boreal forests and key bays and bear habitats."

A. Mogilner (Oblast, Slobody Group): "By order of the Kaluga Committee on the Environment, our group designed a joint buffer zone for Kalushskiy Zakaznik Zapovednik and Orlovskoe Polese National Park."

V. Yushegorodskii (Orel Committee on Environmental Protection): "The administrative heads of Orel, Bryansk and Kaluga Regions signed an agreement on the creation of a coordinating board to manage development of protected areas. The most urgent tasks include organizing joint buffer zones for Kalushskiy Zakaznik Zapovednik, Bryansk Les Zapovednik and Orlovskoe Polese National Park which will cross the borders of three regions." Arrangements for forests of the historical abattoir line [forests specially maintained as barriers against invading nomadic groups], publication of an informational newsletter for environmental services staff."

D. Snel’tkov ("Necophora" Eco-center): "Our proposal to designate a 9,600-hectare area in Ugrskiy District (Smolensk Region) as a Zakaznik has met opposition from some land users (a former kolhoz)."

In response to Snel’tkov, V. Novikov (Ugra National Park, Kaluga Region): "The park administration supports your initiative, the best way to create this Zakaznik is by attaching it to the territory of Ugra National Park [Smolesk and Kaluga are adjacent regions] and later promoting organization of a transregional protected area."

S. Volkov (Smolenskoe Posvyatnoye National Park): "The flood plain in the upper reaches of the Dariga River is worth conserving because the habitat of a large population of Russian Desman, entered in the IUCN Red Data Book, is located there."

A. Vyrubenko (Moscow BCC): "We have designed a "Homeland of Cranes" Nature Park which should complement the already existing Zakaznik."

A. Blagovidiy (State Committee on Environmental Protection): "An outline of land use practices differentiated according to the land’s ecological value has already been elaborated in Efroizkiy District."

Russian Conservation News
N. Lebedeva (Moscow Regional Committee on Environmental Protection): "This year the Moscow Regional Duma adopted a new law 'On Natural Parks in the Moscow Region," drafted by activists of LAE."

A lot has been done, but even more is planned. Participants adopted, in general, the plan for the ecological network of the Central Russian Plain and outlined the main direction of activities for 1997: 1) detailed planning of the key parts of the ecological network; 2) identifying the optimal land use practices to support the ecological links between core areas of the network; and 3) establishing priorities in protection of those threatened species which are indicators of Important Natural Areas.

Financial support from ISAR and the Ryazan Committee on Environmental Protection, as well as the assistance and hospitality of Ryazan State Pedagogical University, made the workshop possible.

Nikolai Sebodev is the "Heart of Russia" program coordinator.
Why Russia’s Wetlands are Important

As the world’s largest country, Russia spreads across 17 million square kilometers comprising mostly of flat lowlands. Thanks in part to its humid climate, the country possesses vast areas of wetlands, including 120,000 rivers with a total length of 2,300,000 km, two million lakes with a total volume of 370,000 cubic km, and some 3.8 million sq. km of marshlands, mainly peat bogs. Russia’s coastline stretches tens of thousands of kilometers in length.

Among Russia’s most important and extensive wetlands are the Volga Delta, at 19,000 sq. km, the largest deltaic complex in Europe and one of the richest bird habitats in the world; Kandalaksha Bay on the eastern end of the White Sea and Lake Khanka in the Russian Far East, vital for the breeding and migration of waterfowl; large wetland areas along the coasts of the Black Sea and Azov Sea in the south; and the vast tundra wetlands underlain by permafrost in the north. On the plains of Western Siberia is found a continuous bog landscape, with numerous lakes and wide river valleys. This area comprises a great “duck factory” comparable to the prairie pothole country of North America.

These wetlands support a rich and globally significant diversity of plants and animals. The total population of swans, geese, ducks and coots in the country is estimated at 80 million. The area provides critical breeding habitats for many globally threatened species.

such as the Lesser White-fronted Goose (Anser erythropus), Dalmatian Pelican (Pelecanus crispus), Red-breasted Goose (Branta ruficollis) and White-headed Duck (Oxyura leucocephala).

Yet, Russia’s wetlands have not received adequate study so far — the figures above are rough approximations — but even these indicate that conservation of Russia’s wetlands should be of international concern. The loss and/or alteration of these wetlands and their catchments could result in global changes in hydrological regimes and climate.

Wetlands Conservation in Russia

Despite their high values to people and biodiversity, wetlands in most of Russia have been destroyed and degraded in this century. Great loss and alteration of wetlands was caused by major drainage schemes (so-called “amidrivation”) and dam construction on all of the major rivers. The problems of hydrological change, eutrophication and pollution need urgent, large-scale restoration measures.

In recent decades the importance of wetlands for the conservation of the natural environment has become better recognized, both nationally and internationally. Twenty years ago Russia joined the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. In 1994, Decree No. 1050 of the Federal Government of Russia designated 35 wetlands as sites of international importance (Ramsar sites). Unfortunately, implementing the decree under the current economic transition is proving difficult.

At present there is no national wetland policy in Russia, and environmental legislation is only now being developed. There are no well-defined divisions of conservation and resource management between federal and regional authorities; meanwhile, regional administrations are becoming
more independent in deciding how to use the natural resources within their territories. Land ownership is shifting from the government to local communities, thereby creating new challenges — and new opportunities — in management and protection of wetlands. Local specialists involved in wetlands conservation are often poorly versed in the Ramsar Convention and wetlands management, due to a lack of information and training. Finally, the protected areas system is critically short of money, and protection and management have suffered. Under these circumstances, there is a real danger that the human impact on the environment will increase sharply in the near future.

Wetlands International in Russia

Wetlands International is the leading global non-profit organization concerned with the conservation of wetlands and wetland species; its programs are supported by more than 120 government agencies, national NGOs, foundations and private sector groups. It has a strong membership network in the newly independent states (NIS) and a history of cooperation dating to the 1990s. The major political changes in Russia during the early 1990s have allowed greater cooperation with and technical and financial assistance from organizations and countries abroad. Recently Wetlands International has helped the NIS to undertake wetland inventories, develop and implement a regional action plan for the conservation of the Black Sea wetlands; it has provided technical assistance for the conservation of the Lower Volga wetlands and initiated a number of bird conservation activities through its Specialist Group network. Substantial support for these activities has come from the Dutch Government.

Early this year a sub-regional office was established in Moscow, located at the WWF-Moscow office, to coordinate implementation of the Wetlands International Program for Northern Eurasia. This office works in close collaboration with the State Committee of Environmental Protection of the Russian Federation. The program will focus particularly on measures to preserve Ramsar sites, such as taking inventory of internationally important wetlands and providing technical assistance for the wise use of wetland resources. Other priorities include coordinating wetlands monitoring and bird counting programs, supporting development of a national wetlands policy, and providing information through training and public awareness campaigns.

The Dutch funds are intended to serve as a catalyst, stimulating donations of additional funds from other countries and agencies. Significantly more funding will be needed from national agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors and foundations. Any agency interested in contributing to the program is encouraged to contact the Moscow office of Wetlands International.

Olga Antimonova is the Moscow-based Program Coordinator, and Irina Kamenova is Program Assistant.
March for Parks: A Spring Tradition

Introduction by Irina Chebukova

The third annual Russian March for Parks—social action in support of Zapovedniki (strict scientific nature reserves), National Parks and other protected natural territories—was held this year from April 18 to 22. Not only Russia, but also Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan took part in March for Parks—97. In all, more than 150 Marches, with around 200,000 participants (according to preliminary data), took place across the former Soviet Union.

The March in Moscow likewise went off successfully, where a press conference was held jointly with the Moscow city government. The large holiday festival in Moscow’s Sokol’niki Park opened with a grand parade of school-children bearing placards with the names and dates of establishment of Zapovedniki. Elsewhere in the capital, the Biodiversity Conservation Center organized a round table for environmentalists and Russian businessmen, a photography exhibition titled “The State Nature Zapovedniki of Russia are 80 Years Old” went on display at the Federal Duma, and numerous television and radio programs aired about Zapovedniki, National Parks and March for Parks. The events of the March were transmitted over all the central television channels and radio waves. March for Parks at Sokol’niki started off a “Green Relay” of events to be held in a series of Moscow’s city parks throughout the spring and summer.

Across the entire country, wherever Zapovedniki and National Parks are located, there were holiday meetings, press conferences, special lessons in schools, tree-planting, park clean-ups, festivals, collection of funds for support of protected natural areas and other events. Overall evaluations of the March will be presented in June, but some results are already available. For example, thanks to the March, Khinganski Zapovednik received $40,000 in support. In Bryansk the entire region took part in the March, along with the Bryansk Les Zapovednik. In Armenia and Turkmenistan the Ministries of Environmental Protection supported March for Parks on the federal level.

March for Parks in Russia is becoming a popular spring holiday and the traditional “Day of Zapovedniki and National Parks.” We are happy to report that the second annual March for Parks, held in 1996, was recognized by the Henry Ford Foundation as the best project on the national level in the field of environmental protection; it was chosen out of all the Russian and Ukrainian projects competing for the Ford Foundation European Conservation Award. I hope that March for Parks—’97 will bring results of no lesser stature for all of its participants.

Irina Chebukova is Coordinator of March for Parks at the Biodiversity Conservation Center.
March for Parks '97 Started Early in the Russian Far East

by Svetlana Titova

As spring comes to the region, cranes again begin their dances in the marshes of the Arkharinski lowlands. Along with these beautiful birds, hundreds of children came to Khinganski Zapovednik (strict scientific nature reserve) from all over the Amur Region on April 12 for a celebration called “Day of the Crane.” The holiday has become a tradition over the last few years, this year attracting more than 370 participants in the children’s art contest and scientific workshop held within the framework of March for Parks.

Students and schoolteachers marched through Arkhar village and staged a meeting on the central square. Appeals to preserve the unique wetlands of the region, which have been entered into Ramsar Convention sites list, did not go unanswered. The local governor felt obliged to promise to do his best to protect cranes and their nesting grounds. Incredible though it may seem, the next week he signed a directive on expanding the borders of Gusevskii Zakaznik [special purpose nature reserve] and strengthening the protection regime on its territory—a decision environmentalists had not been able to secure for two years.

Hundreds of children’s art works focusing on nature protection covered the walls of the local gymnasium. Cranes were featured everywhere:

simply drawn, carved in wood or embrodi-
red on fantastic pieces of art. The best works will take part in an international contest called “Crane, Bird of Peace,” to be held in Blagovesh-

chensk, and then will be on display around the world—in the U.S., China and Japan. (Please see RCN #5 for a description of the first such event.)

Kids with scientific leanings were able to show their achievements and share their ideas at the practical scientific workshop. The winners of both the art contest and the workshop will spend ten days at a summer ecological camp in a newly discovered “kid’s country”—Khinganiya (named after the Zapovednik). Children decided to name a president of their country, and Vladimir Andronov, Director of Khinganski Zapovednik, was elected to this highest position.

The main event during the celebration was a visit to the rare birds reintroduction facility at Khinganski Zapovednik (please see RCN #10 for more information on crane reintroduction), where children could see Red-crowned and White-naped Cranes released into the wild.

Financial support from Amur Region ecological funds, the Regional Committee on Environmental Protection, the Far East branch of ISAR and local sponsors helped organizers make the celebration a bright and remarkable event.

Svetlana Titova is an environmental education expert at Khinganski Zapovednik and main organizer of the celebration.

(Inset) “What’s for breakfast?” Ivy Anthonen feeds a young crane.

(Large photo) Children on the road to the Lake of White Birds, on “Day of the Crane” (photo by S. Barko.)
Bringing Kostomukshski Zapovednik to the People

by Mary Rees

Yet another round of north Karelian snow greeted Kostomuksha on the morning of Russian Orthodox Easter (April 27), but the children, parents and teachers gathering at the municipal "Friendship" Palace of Culture for March for Parks — '97 didn't seem to notice, in their holiday mood. They had other things on their minds.

Performers of songs and skins clustered nervously and excitedly near the stage. Participants in the various March for Parks contests eagerly awaited the announcement of the prize-winners. Organizers drew deep, steadying breaths while hanging hundreds of children's drawings, posters and photographs in the Palace lobby, as the final hour of eight months of preparation came to a close.

"On this day we try to draw attention to protected areas — Zapovedniki, National Parks, Zakazniki — so that those territories might find support among you, children and adults, so that on their territories no one would cut down the forests, nor kill the animals, nor destroy nature," explained Sergei Vadimovich Tarkhov, Director of Kostomukshski Zapovednik, in welcoming the audience to the third celebration of Earth Day and March for Parks in Kostomuksha.
And then the festivities began. In songs, skins, poetry and dramatic monologues, children from at least six different city schools bid the audience to observe, respect and love nature.

"Take a look around... Nature feeds us, gives us water to drink, clothes us," children from Kostomuksha School No. 6 reminded their listeners. "You're walking by a flower; bend down, look closely at the mistake. It knows how to do what no one on earth is able. It can take, for example, a grain of soft, dark earth, it deeps its roots in rainy drops, and a swallow of the blue air is washed with rays of sunshine. A flower swines all this... and then out of the same black earth, it pops up here, red, these blue, here white, there gold."

In another skit, a crow tells a tale, "Last year I thought it was the end, cold, hungry, I didn't eat for three days. Then I spied a feeder on a tree; I flew closer and saw seeds in it. That's how I survived that winter." Her companion replies, "Let's ask all the kids to hang out feeders for us."

Several young nature lovers read poems, and not only in Russian: one girl recited the work of a Karelian poet, written in the language of this northwestern republic bordering Finland; she urged that the culture, and the forests where it took root, be not forgotten, but preserved.

Besides live performances, the 1997 version of March for Parks in Kostomuksha also featured six contents, in photography, drawing, environmental stories, designing ecological projects, testing environmental knowledge and designing emblems. Work on submissions for the contests began last fall.

Indeed, the on-stage festivities were just the tip of the iceberg. Taistaa Evgenyevna Shiryayaeva, environmental education specialist at Kostomukshski Zapovednik and main organizer of March for Parks — '97, started working on the holiday last September, when teachers of geography and biology met to discuss the plans for the year. Shiryayaeva initiated two environmental education classes in local schools, and

Sunny April day in Kostomukshski Zapovednik (photo by M. Rees). Emblem of Kostomukshski Zapovednik.
nachers throughout the city encouraged their students to look around, find environmental problems and figure out possible solutions.

The children's observations eventually led to projects for environmental improvement. Prior Kleshkov, head of the municipal committee on nature preservation, said this year's proposals were "200 percent better than last year's," and that most of the problems posed "require solution in everyday life." For example, the winning team in the EcoProject '97 contest proposed that Kostenkushki residents help improve air quality by abandoning their cars and trucks in the summer months and taking to the streets on bicycles instead, and that special bike lanes be established.

"Children haven't yet entered into conflict with nature; they aren't inter-

ested in nature like adults, as a place to gather mushrooms and berries, to hunt or fish," Shiryayeva explains why her department focuses on working with children. "It's still possible to explain to them and teach them respect for nature; that if there's a Zapovednik, that monitoring goes on there because it's intact."

According to Parkhov, the goal of March for Parks, and of environmental education in general at the Zapovednik, is to make people aware "that 'home' doesn't end with their apartment walls."

"Our main goal is changing people's perception of the Zapovednik; that is, to see it as it already exists and as existing for people," Shiryayeva continued. "So that people understand that if it's being protected, then it's primarily for people, not from them."

Survey of Russian-American
"Exchanges" Yields Important
Findings

by Nadezhda Domanova
and Mikhail Blinikov

I
n early 1997 the Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC), Russia, and the Center for Russian Nature Conservation, U.S., completed a survey of Russian and American exchange organizers and participants for a project supported by the Trust for Mutual Understanding. The goal was to analyze opinions on both sides of the Atlantic about the results and needs of a number of existing and planned joint Russian-American projects in nature conservation, frequently called "exchanges." Such projects became popular in the early 1992, with the increased funding available from the U.S. Agency for International Development (US AID) and other international sources; however, very little evaluation has been done so far to assess the overall impact and usefulness of such programs.

Among the many existing fields, we focused on nature conservation, and, to

some extent, on general environmental projects. As an opening, presented below, we outline some of the responses from the Russian participants and organizers. (The American side also provided many useful comments, but they will be outlined elsewhere.)

The comments come from thirty Russian exchange participants and organizers who responded to our questionnaire and/or granted interviews. All of these people participated in exchanges supported by either the US AID Environmental and Technology Project or ISAR's Joint Projects pro-

gram, the two main sources of support for most of the Russian-American joint environmental programs in the past five years. All have traveled to the U.S., and many have also hosted Americans in their homes.

The respondents felt, almost unanimously, that the term "exchanges" or

"exchange programs" was a misnomer and should be avoided. Many Russian participants pointed out that, at least in Russian, "obmen [exchange] means 'trade of one object or skill for another, always of the same value.' What has usually been called an exchange, however, is in essence unilateral financial and methodological aid provided to the Russians, for example, teaching post-Soviet specialists American methods of problem-solving. While quite valuable, this kind of assistance would better be called "professional training." Russian specialists expect truly equal partnership in the case of exchanges: they want to contribute as much as to receive, sharing their knowledge and experience on an equal basis with their international col-

leagues, to solve some common local or global problem. The way exchanges have been done, however, has provided little opportunity for Russians to contribute. US AID projects, in fact, were explicitly supposed "to promote American values" among the Russian participants, not to help the Russians to promote their own.

Respondents expressed both positive and negative feelings about the ex-

changes. Positive impressions include the following:

March for Parks — "Got found broad support in both the public and private sectors. Money for prizes came from the mayor's office, city committee on nature protection, Mars (a local trade center), a Russian-German foundation in Moscow, the Biodiversity Conservation Center in Moscow, and Kostenkushki Zapovednik. Four Finish visitors, employees of protected areas in northern Finland belonging to the international Oulunlaitos [friendship] Zapovednik, of which Kostenkushki Zapovednik is the Russian partner, came to see what March for Parks was all about. Next year this holiday in support of protected areas will spread to yet another country, when the Finish conservationists establish a March for Parks celebration in their own nature reserve."

Mary Rees is Assistant Editor of REN.

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(a) great cultural value of the trips. Besides obtaining firsthand knowledge of another culture, participants mentioned increases in psychological stability and self-esteem. Their relations with colleagues back home improved after their trip to the U.S.

(b) learning how to present information in an interactive, informal way. This proved especially helpful to teachers, since the Russian educational paradigm has traditionally emphasized teaching theoretical concepts over making emotionally colored presentations of individual experiences.

(c) the openness and accessibility of information and the readiness (on the Americans' behalf) to share it. Professionals found this particularly important.

(d) establishment of direct contacts with American donors and partners.

Some of the negative impressions are as follows:

(a) Most programs advertised as "training" failed to provide any real training as such. Rather, they were fairly superficial "familiarization" tours demonstrating the cultural and technical achievements of the American society. Many Russian specialists who wanted to offer some of their own "know-how" in return did not get a chance to do so during the trip. Many also noted that they did not learn anything significantly new and sometimes even felt that the American side would have benefited more from learning what the Russians had to offer in the same field.

(b) Many groups were selected by the American side without any Russian input. As a result, the make-up of groups was heterogeneous, involving people with vastly different backgrounds, interests and levels of education. This made inter-group communication difficult.

(c) There was very little preparation done before the trip. A few respondents mentioned that they would have liked to have discussions with their colleagues, had they known the exact itinerary and program of the trip in advance.

Overall Results

Both the participants in and the organizers of exchanges on the Russian side agreed that the exchange programs have played an important role in promoting democracy in post-Soviet society, specifically by nurturing young Russian NGOs and their leaders. One of the major results so far is that Russia has now developed its own domestic experts able to teach fundraising, public relations, strategic planning, volunteer development, environmental education, publications and marketing, using both American and Indigenous Russian techniques. Many of these courses are better suited to the interests of the Russian audience and offer methodology superior to that of the Americans.

Another important consideration is financial. Running training programs in Russia is considerably cheaper than in the U.S. The current cost of a three- to five-day professional quality workshop for 15 to 20 people in Russia is $4,000-5,000, including travel for out-of-town participants. In comparison, American training courses cost, on average, $5,000-10,000 per person a month ($75,000-$200,000 for 15 people). However, domestic seminars cannot replace the benefits offered by immediate cultural contact with American specialists and culture.

Therefore, survey participants suggest that in the future there should be programs that do bring Russians to the U.S. to try to alleviate the problems by paying more attention to the selection and preparation of the participants. Two of the most successful programs mentioned by respondents, The Nature Conservancy (TNC)-BCC exchange in 1994 and the PDSC-National Parks exchange in 1995 (please see the BCM R 42 and R 43 for details), involved an extensive search for participants by the Russian side and pre-training of the participants well in advance of the actual trip.

The respondents would like to see more programs that enable them to work with international agencies and programs, participate in international conferences, forums and campaigns; establish business contacts with American NGO leaders and specialists, and cooperate with American colleagues in Russia. Russian NGO leaders and trainers specifically suggest that it's now time to switch from introductory tours to in-depth training programs focusing on two priorities: 1) professional training for Russian environmental activists in various aspects of NGO management, environmental education and public relations; and 2) integration of Russian scientists into the international community of scholars.

The following methods could be used:
- in-depth English language training and Internet literacy courses for NGO leaders and conservation scientists;
- travel grants for Russian specialists wishing to visit international conferences;
- individual or small group (2-3 people) in-depth training internships at the offices of specific American NGOs, such as with TNC or Audubon Society chapters, or at local or regional NGOs or at specific National Parks and other natural areas. Such projects would typically last one to three months;
- cooperative projects bringing American conservation biologists or activists to Russia with very specific goals and their own funding, partially also (it is hoped) supporting the work of their Russian colleagues;
- acceptance of Russian conservation professionals into degree programs at American universities;
- introduction of courses on international relations into the curricula of Russian universities.

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Mikhail Blumkin represents the Center for Russian Nature Conservation and BCC in the United States.
The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy Is Not Exactly a "Secret"

by Dr. Gerard C. Boere

Ever since 1976, when I visited the USSR for the first time (to attend a conference on migratory birds in Novosibirsk), I have been involved in many aspects of Russian nature conservation and related research. The following comments have their roots in many years of cooperation with both Russian governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as in experience gained during my participation in a number of expeditions to some of the most remote parts of the Russian Federation, in both the north and south.

I have read Russian Conservation News since its inception. The new column "For Discussion" increases the value of the publication, and I would like to make some comments on the article about the Pan-European Biodiversity Strategy (PEBLDS) written by an anonymous author. (The article appeared in RCN910.)

The article, while interesting, does make it not very clear what position the author himself takes. After a mixture of positive and negative assessments of the development of PEBLDS and its bodies, the author concludes with an overall negative impression, the basis for which is his opinion that a western-oriented approach is not suitable for the territory of the former USSR (referring to the differences in scale, for instance).

In my opinion the title ("Strategy to Conserve Nature... A Well-Kempt Secret") gives the wrong impression to readers unfamiliar with the way the PEBLDS has developed. I believe the author wishes to indicate that too few people in Eastern Europe are aware of the strategy, instead of suggesting that the development itself was a secret. Or perhaps the title is meant to criticize the governments in Eastern Europe that did not involve NGOs in the process of developing the PEBLDS.

However, I have a problem with precisely this point: the process was not secret at all. I am aware of a large number of efforts to stimulate the input of Eastern Europeans. Why hasn't the author mentioned in his editorial the elements he thinks are missing in the strategy? If these missing elements were actually pointed out during the strategy's development, why did they not appear in the strategy?

It could well be that logistical factors, such as the lack of a good communication system from Moscow to the regions, has led to an information deficit about PEBLDS, and vice versa. Additionally, my experience working in the pan-European level indicates that the effect of skill-extant language barriers and the high costs of translation are also significant factors limiting information exchange.

Another possible reason for the alleged " secrecy" of the conservation strategy is that, although the knowledge of flora and fauna in the former USSR is extremely high, at the same time it's generally thought that domestic expertise is biased towards taxonomic issues, only a small number of scientists are involved in the more conceptual aspects of strategies such as PEBLDS and EBCCONET. This specialized approach has probably not been conducive to the development of more integrated strategies suitable for the conservation of Russian nature.

The scale of Russian nature itself may also be a reason why the development of conceptual nature conservation strategies has not taken place: even if such strategies had existed, they probably would not have been accessible to those working on the PEBLDS.

I believe that the author is totally correct when he states that in Eastern Europe the scale of nature and its conservation and management problems is very different and not addressed in the strategy. I also believe that the former USSR has a long tradition of nature conservation of high standards—a little known fact in Western Europe. This region was and is in the forefront, for instance with its system of Zapovedniki, in comparison with systems of protected areas in many western European countries.

One should not be too negative, however, about the fact that westerners face so many conservation problems that they have initiated strategies to combat destruction of issues and stimulate its restoration. I also believe that many of the problems of Western Europe are exactly the same in Russia, albeit restricted to certain regions.

There are many more comments to be made in support or disagreement, but I would love to see such a discourse take place in an open, lively discussion. Furthermore, in that discussion I would like to avoid the present terminology of "West" and "East" Europe, which for me is too much a reminder of political times to which I do not want to return. The Russian Federation is a member of the Council of Europe and, via PEBLDS, is also becoming an active participant in the work of the Bern Convention. Russia has much to contribute to European nature conservation in general, and I would like that to happen as soon as possible. Financial constraints and logistical problems may exist, but they can be solved if the Russian Federation's governmental and non-governmental organizations take an active role in protecting Europe's existing nature and, where necessary, restoring it.

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ENDANGERED SPECIES

Hard Currency Hunts Challenge Survival of the Karaganda Argali

Excerpts reprinted from “Ecotone News,” vol. 5, No. 3.

by I. V. Kamenykov

One common collision is a subspecies of argali (or argali) and is called Western Kazakhstan, Central Kazakhstan or Karaganda Argali. The bulk of the population of this internationally recognized endangered subspecies is located in the Karaganda Region of Kazakhstan. Because of the lack of government resources, little conservation or research work has been conducted recently. In 1989, I proposed a limited hard currency hunt on the argali, since the animal fetches up to $25,000 on the world market. This hunt was specially designed for foreigners, in order to acquire funds for argali research and conservation. A preliminary census conducted in 1989 provided information on population size and density: in Karaganda Region, there were 10,000 individuals living in 1.5 million hectares. In cooperation with the Kazakhstan Institute of Zoology, subsequent air censuses have been conducted each year, they have supported our first estimates.

Initial test hunts were conducted in 1990 and 1991. Within the framework of a 1992-98 project, the Department of Conservation and Use of Biodiversity of the Ministry of Ecology and Biosources has issued a special license to the Institute of Zoology and the Karaganda Forestry Agency for the shooting of 20 bucks annually. These animals are used to gauge the feasibility of limited hunting. From 1990 to 1997, foreign hunters shot 95 argali and paid more than $900,000 for their trophies, or $12,000 per animal. Moreover, the Karaganda Forest Agency receives over $100 per day for its "services" on a typical ten-day hunt. In 1994, all the forest agencies in the country earned a total of $200,000. Of that, $173,700 came from Karaganda argali. In 1996, 18 argali brought in $216,000 and more than $18,000 in service payments.

I can say that the whole safari depends on the hunting guide’s skills. The success of the argali hunt in the Karaganda Region is complete owing to the proficiency of the rangers: seventy-five foreigners out of seventy-seven have gained trophies; two visitors refused to hunt. But I have never seen a ranger get rich through rendering this service. For example, Askar Mukashev is the best among superb rangers. He was a guide for 27 clients and earned $324,000 for a safari firm, but his payments amounts to only $400 a year. For the most part, hunting inspectors must live on the income they earn from cattle breeding.

Predators, diseases, snowy winters — the argali has a lot of enemies. According to our research, 31.4% of sheep deaths in the wild occur because of wolves. Nevertheless, now is the primary enemy of the argali; 66% of the argali remains we found were the results of poaching. At the beginning of the century, in the mountains of the Taurid Massif, more than 300 argali were taken every year. Currently, poachers take roughly 100 argali every year in only two districts of the region. Yet, the state hunting agency records only one unlawful hunt for the entire decade of the 1990s. From 1990-93, there were 18 recorded instances of poaching, although no perpetrator was ever discovered. In 1992, an unlawful argali hunt from a helicopter resulted in five dead animals.

Moreover, argali being forced off some of their territory because of agricultural activities, there are already no argali left in the Niyasa Mountains, and only rare tracks in the Tekturnas Plain. New roads also make prime habitat more, even too, accessible. Of course, not all foreign hunters operate legally; black market hard currency safaris also occur.

In the past, the major obstacle to argali conservation in Karaganda was lack of funds. Now that funds are available, the major problem is...
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The scientist in charge of managing this conservation experiment, Ryspek Basraliev, of the Institute of Zoology, noted a drop in the population of akhtub in 1995. He also noted that at the end of that year an air census had not been conducted. He concluded that while the causes of this decrease were not determined, the general situation was still alarming. So what is the benefit of the money earned from these hunts?

The akhtub is a unique animal, a treasure not only of Kazakhstan, but of the entire planet. It deserves special treatment. I am not against limited hunts for purely scientific reasons, but I am decidedly against hunts that do no more than satisfy the exorbitant and growing criminal appetite of bureaucrats — bureaucrats who at the present time are more threatening than wolves to the survival of the akhtub.

G. V. Khamzina is Chief Hunting Inspector of the Kazakhan Region Animal Conservation Agency.


The Perplexities of Hunting for Profit: Case Study, Turkmenistan

by Dr. Sergei Bukreev and Dr. Victor S. Lukashevskiy

The problem of commercial hunting is an acute one for all of Central Asia, and Turkmenistan is no exception. The first hard currency hunting here began in 1992 and from the beginning has been under the control of the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

Commercial hunting, for the most part, takes place on the territories of strict nature reserves. Zapovedniki. The main objects of the hunt are typically Mountain Sheep (Ovis nivicola, subsp. varians, bukharensis), Bezoar and Markhor mountain goats (Capra aegagrus and C. falconeri), Goral Gazelle (Gazella subgutturosa), Bactrian (Gazella bactriana), and Docile Beauty or Nohubara Bactrian (Chamaelophi

undulate). All of these animals are rare and registered in the Red Data Book of Turkmenistan, and some of them — Markhor, Gazelle, Bactrian, and Nohubara Bactrian — are listed in the Red Data Book of the IUCN.

While an absence of reliable data makes it difficult to quantify the extent to which these species have been hunted in the last few years, some general comments can be made which characterize this problem.

Conservation Mathematic: What is the sum of one erroneous plus and a bundle of mistakes.

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"The initiators of commercial hunting claimed that hunting could be beneficial—that profits from hunting would add to the slender budget of their organizations, thereby helping them to equip Zapovedniks. However, nature reserves where sport hunting has been organized are just as impoverished as ever. Where the profits go remains unknown.

"As with any profitable business, commercial hunting developed quietly, away from the public eye. This practice inevitably led to corruption and the increasing dependency of low-ranking staff on their bosses. The boss in this case is not a director of a Zapovednik, but somebody who provides accommodation and services to the hunters. Profits are divided among the inspectors and other Zapovednik employees. Those who get paid with hard currency (a significant bonus on top of salary), and those who keep struggling on scantly paychecks.

"Commercial hunting leads to conflicts between the scientific and maintenance departments of Zapovedniki. The scientists oppose hunting, and the parties that should be enforcing, not condensing such activities—the maintenance departments—are in charge of organizing hunts. Those conflicts often end with the best and most responsible specialists' being fired.

"The fact that the authorities (the Department of the Protection and Maintenance of Natural Resources in the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the administrations of Zapovedniki themselves) were the initiators of commercial hunting is the greatest problem. They are managing the sale of hunting licenses for the wildlife which they are mandated to protect! By law, hunting on protected territories is prohibited, so the licenses are given for unprotected areas. However, because rare ungulates are found only in strict nature reserves, in practice, hunting does occur on protected territories.

"The hunters' practice of offering tips to nature reserve staff and inspectors (who provide technical support to hunters) is detrimental to law enforcement. Rules are often violated by inspectors just to please the hunters and get better tips. Among the most typical violations are exceeding the allowable quotas (to let the hunters choose the better trophy), disregarding the permitted time and place for hunting, and neglecting to charge for wounded animals.

"The organization of hard currency hunting on protected territories has led to complete disrespect for the Zapovednik movement of Turkmenistan among world environmentalists and the local population alike. Over several decades, enthusiasts of nature protection and scientists conducted a long-term educational and informational campaign to raise awareness about the value of protected territories and their inhabitants. And yet now men from abroad with thick wallets are freely hunting these rare inhabitants on these valuable lands!

Conclusion

Commercial hunting does little to improve the protection of rare animals in Turkmenistan. On the contrary, its organization has created new problems for local environments, conditions, the wildlife and all of nature.

Commercial hunting severely threatens the mountain goats (Merkker), Buzhur and Hizobara Buzhur. If continued, the current practice of commercial hunting will soon lead to the complete extinction of these species in Turkmenistan. The Asian Leopard (Panthera pardus) and Bukhara Elk (Cervus elaphus burchianus) face a similar predicament. Although there is no official permission to hunt these two species (both are registered in the Red Data Book of IUCN), a few attempts to start hunting them have been made. The poaching of leopards is becoming—to the delight of wealthy foreign and local "collectors" Safari.— have not yet threatened the Urial or Bezoar as species, but local populations that once flourished have vanished. Sadly, statistical studies that could help to evaluate the modern population of rare species are not currently being conducted in Turkmenistan.

Constructive Proposals

The Environmental Departments of the Ministry of Natural Resources should not be involved in the organization of commercial hunting, thereby assuming the role of a hunting service agency. They should instead be determining and enforcing allowable quotas, determining the territories where hunting will be permitted and issuing licenses. The profits from the sale of licenses should be directly applied to rare species protection, including research and management.

A Lot of Venom, and Few Snakes

by Olga Berova

The numbers of the Blunt-nosed Viper (Vipera lebetina turanica chernov), once a numerous and very poisonous snake living in Central Asia, have become significantly smaller. A medicine for treatment of hemophilia (non-coagulation of the blood) is made from the venom of this snake, whose second name is Levantine Viper. There are two reasons for the drop in numbers of the Blunt-nosed Viper: excessive trapping and destruction of habitat. Earlier, one gram of this Viper’s dried venom cost $5,000 on the world market. At the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, the numbers of Blunt-nosed Vipers were high. A brigade of experienced snake-catchers could catch around 1,000 snakes —

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b. Allowable quotas should be determined by the results of annual surveys on designated hunting territories. The specialists of the Ministry of Natural Resources, along with independent experts, should participate in such research.

c. Standards and policies for hunting should be developed, applying international experience to this field.

d. Hunting should be prohibited not only on, but also anywhere near the territory of Zapovedniks and Zakazniks. Specialized game farms and holdings should be designated, as is done on Guyzsky farm of the Turkmen Nature Protection Society. As for protected areas (excluding Zapovedniks), hunting should be organized only as an exception, to regulate overpopulation, as was done with Gazelles in Ogurchinski Zakaznik. All such situations must be discussed on a case-by-case basis, with the participation of experts as well as the environmental community.

e. A strategic plan is needed which would remove from the list of allow-
mature, fully-viable individuals longer than 80 cm. — in a season (3 to 4 months).

Before *persteinski* snake-catching and harvesting of venom were under the government's control, and the closed borders allowed little opportunity for contraband. During *persteinski*, with the opening of the borders, the possibility of commercial sales of the Blunt-nosed Viper's venom appeared. In 1988, in one season, the deputy director of a serpentinearium made up to 30,000 rubles; at the time, that was the equivalent of five "Zhigulis" [a Soviet-made car]. Because of the earnings, newly discovered snake-catchers from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus were drawn to the area. Many inexperienced catchers were bitten, even fatally. But people succeeded by means of quantity, not quality. This surge in the extraction of the Viper unfortunately coincided with a depression in the numbers of adders. The Vipers' primary dietary component. The consequences were miserable: the population of Blunt-nosed Vipers was undermined in just a decade.

Side by side with the state's legal serpentarium, of which in Turkmenistan, for instance, there were three, appeared private, for the most part illegal, commercial ones. Conditions of maintenance in the serpentarium vary widely. The most humane version is when the captured snakes live in the serpentarium for several years, are fed, reproduce venom (in one milking an adult Blunt-nosed Viper yields about 60 milliliters of venom) and reproduce. In this form a large number of serpentariums should not have reduced the numbers of the viper. In practice, however, all this often happens otherwise. The snakes are handled brutally barbarically. In the course of one season, the venom is literally "wring out" of the captured vipers, and at the end of October, when their colleagues who have fattened themselves in freedom are preparing for hibernation, the weakened vipers are thrown out onto the steppe. About fifty percent of the snakes die almost immediately. And nobody knows how many snakes were abucted for private serpentaria in other republics — Ukraine, Belarus — insofar as the borders were transparent, and no customs control existed at all.

As a result of the mass production of venom, the market proved to be oversaturated. Literally kilogrammes of dried Blunt-nosed Viper venom fell in warehouses; now it is impossible to sell a gram of venom for even $600. Private serpentariums are closing down because of unprofitability. But the population of Levantine Vipers has already been undermined. Thus, a brigade of experienced snake-catchers in Turkmenistan now capture, in a season, about 200 snakes in all. But poisoning is not at all the only threat to the vipers: the viper’s habitat in the Central Asia region is being systematically destroyed by poisoning of cattle and ploughing. The utterly hostile attitude of the local population, heard in the cry, “Kill the snake,” makes the task of viper conservation even more difficult.

In Tajikistan, according to various data, the Blunt-nosed Viper could disappear altogether. Such is the opinion of the "Sheshki" group for Biodiversity Conservation, the Conference on the Problems of Preserving the Reptiles of Tajikistan (in which "Sheshki" participated), the Zoology Department of Tajikistan State University, the Institute of Zoology and Parasitology of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Ministry of Nature Conservation and the republic’s State Forestry Committee. Blutsch conducted by the Sheshki group revealed a similar trend among other sensitive reptile species, including the largest reptile of Central Asia, the Desert Monitor (Varanus griseus caspius Eichwald), the most beautiful gecko currently inhabiting the planet, the Turkmen Plane-tailed Gecko (Zentronotus zonatus Schlegel), the Taratay Sandboa (Eryx spatialis Lichtenstein), the Northern Wolf Snake (Lycodon cristatus hulcobi流畅), the Common Tree Snake (Boiga trigonum melanocelaena), the Steppe Ribbed Snake (Psammophis bronnii Bruch) and the Steppe Asian Cobra (Naja oxiana Eichwald).

Among the ratified decisions are the preparation of a decree banning the capture of poisonous snakes over Tajikistan’s entire territory for a period of five years and mandating strict oversight of private serpentariums. If these violations of the law “On the Preservation of Poisonous Snakes,” private serpentariums will be abolished. A ban on exportation of all types of poisonous snakes from the republic is in the formative stage. Similarly, protected territories are to be created as small Zakazniki [special purpose nature preserves].

Victor Lukarevsky, employee of the Darwin Museum in Moscow and expert consultant to the Socio-Ecological Union, commented on the situation in another republic, Turkmenistan: “In theory there’s no need for a ban on capturing snakes and keeping them in serpentariums, but the whole process must be civilized, and for that there must be active state regulation.” Lukarevsky said, “It’s absolutely necessary to work with the population, to make people change their attitudes towards venomous snakes.”

All snakes try to avoid contact with humans; they bite only in self-defense. The snake needs the venom primarily for hunting and digestion. The digestive process in poisonous snakes begins by processing the catch with venom, without that they cannot digest what they’ve swallowed. This process can be compared with the saturation of food with saliva in humans. And the arrangement of the digestive system is no reason for destroying a living creature.

Olga Berlova works as press secretary of the information service of the Socio-Ecological Union.
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History of a Species —
The White Stork in Uzbekistan

by Elena Markina

A small bus winds slowly along the road from Kokand to Syrdarya; cultivated green fields pierced by a network of small irrigation canals float beyond the windows. Occasionally tiny wide-scape plots of desert sands speckled with sage appear, reminding one of the time when a large part of this space was occupied by humans. Suddenly a white bird comes in sight beyond the window, stepping slowly with an air of importance over a flooded field and obviously nosing out something there. Then another, and a third appear ... And here there’s about to be a surprising number of white birds, calmly walking in cultivated fields near tillers.

“Khoa-Ba,” responded local inhabitants to our curiosity. Khoa-Ba Cemetery, or Tabb-Ba-Mazar, is famous for its colony of White Storks (Ciconia ciconia), which have lived here from time immemorial. This colony has been mentioned for at least 150 years in various sources. A beautiful superstition exists that Storks guard the souls of righteous persons, so people never raze their settlements or harm these birds and try not to disturb them. About 80 Stork couples nest in the Khoa-Ba Cemetery; this graveyard is considered a holy place, and people from all over come here to pray for their dead relatives. In the daytime the Storks are constantly flying to the nearby fields for food for their inquisitive fledglings, which crouch in massive nests. And at night the graveyard is pervaded with peculiar sounds, confirming the superstition about the guard that never sleeps. Short silences are broken by the murmur of birds waking from time to time, and by the hollow drumming from numerous snapping beaks. Usually someone begins alone, with the neighbors joining in support, and then there’s a noise of roll call resonating above the graveyard, not at all like the usual daytime sounds.

The Khoa-Ba is not the only place in the Fergana Valley where one can meet Storks. Currently Storks confidently occupy more and more new places, but not long ago the situation with White Storks was a bit different. The White Stork, settling close to people from ancient times, is a noticeable bird. When they disappear, leaving long-occupied places, it’s immediately observable because of their massive deserted nests, which long remind people of the white birds, evoking of the gods said to preserve happiness. Therefore there’s practically no place where the White Stork is pursued; in many cultures the murder of this bird is considered a sin that brings bad luck. It often happens, however, that life near humans turns bad for Storks, and they perish not from direct persecution, but from human economic activity.

In Uzbekistan the White Stork used to be widespread, from its eastern borders, the Fergana Valley, to the west — the environs of Bukhara and Samarkand. Practically everywhere these birds settled in small villages and towns located near bodies of water (marshes and lakes) or irrigated fields, which are their main feeding places and where the Storks spent most of their daylight hours. Changes in the system of land use, drainage of marshes, the use of chemicals in agriculture, the transformation of reservoirs and the resultant changes in their biotopes, and the disappearance of the Storks’ main food sources resulted, from the mid 1970s to early 1980s, in the disappearance of Storks from many regions of their former habitation. In blessed Bukhara, for instance, only empty nests remain, spread picturesquely over the ancient plane trees (Platanus orientalis), mosques and cemeteries as a reminder of their inhabitants, who left the city in the 1970s. The last pair of Storks was observed here as far back as 1981, but no cases of nesting are known after that. Reduction of the range and number of White Storks in Uzbekistan has caused concern among scientists, and therefore this species, or more...

White Stork nestlings shortly before their first flights (photo by B. Belov).
Endangered Species

precisely, the Asiatic subspecies nesting in Uzbekistan, was entered into the Red Book of Uzbekistan as a rare species. And really, at some point the position of the White Stork seemed critical: the old colonies, particularly in the western and southern regions of the republic, had disappeared, and new colonies were unknown. However, in the 1980s a small miracle occurred that demonstrates the ecological flexibility of this species, namely, the skill to adapt to new and changing conditions. White Storks not only did not disappear, but, on the contrary, began to occupy more and more new regions, gradually “advancing” from the east to the west.

What has happened? Probably nothing in particular; it’s simply that the Storks have learned to use new biotopes: they began nesting on power lines along rivers and canals. New settlements of Storks are particularly numerous in the Syrdarya region, where new colonies are referred to as “ribbon-like,” because of the type of settlement: usually ten to twelve nests are laid out on a power line, of course, as a “ribbon.” Storks feed on the river and channels, or on irrigated fields where the use of herbicides and pesticides has decreased because of economic difficulties—which have in turn proved beneficial for the birds. In this way the White Stork population has not only been restored, but is making progress, spreading widely through the republic and occupying more and more new, suitable habitats. This circumstance has forced a revision of its status in the republic’s Red Book. At present the White Stork is referred to as a “recovered” species, though it is difficult to speak of any particular events which determined its restoration. It is more likely an example of self-restoration, when one or several ecological factors turned out to be favorable for the existence and development of the species. There are a lot of similar examples in nature, but to trace them we would need a regulated, well-functioning system of ecological monitoring, which would allow us to notice changes as they occurred and to give forecasts far enough ahead of time.

Elena Mukhina works at the Institute of Zoology at the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences.

The last Alouetka funeral on Medoy Island (drawing by S. Povazajk).
LIVING ARCTIC

Editor’s Commentary

by Dr. Irina Pedrovskaya

The complex question of the mutual relationships of the local indigenous populations of the Aleuts and the Komandorsky Reserve is raised in the following articles by our Canadian colleagues, Helen Cerbett and Susanne Swiholt, and our Aleut colleague, V. N. Debyrin. My comments here are based on discussions with Vsevolod Stepanishkin, head of the Department of Protected Areas of the Russian Federation’s Committee on Ecology, and Natalia Gaspayum, chair of the Department of Future Development of Protected Territories.

Komandorsky Zapovednik [strict scientific nature reserve] was organized in 1993, in a complicated period of our country’s history; subsidies had been sharply reduced, hitting northern and outlying territories hard, but especially settlements of indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. The Komandorsky Islands were no exception to this sad rule.

At the same time, however, the preliminary examination of Komandorsky Zapovednik served as a standard for planning protected natural territories in areas where indigenous peoples reside and hunt traditionally. This is perhaps one of the best examples of the scholarly design of a protected natural area executed as a selective, comprehensive, complex analysis of the natural, economic and social situation of the region.

The complex, interdisciplinary “Komandorsky” program started on the Komandorsky Islands in 1981, under the leadership of the Moscow State University Youth Council on Nature Conservation. From 1976 on, a series of expeditions by the Department ofVertebrate Zoology (School of Biology, Moscow State University), under the direction of N. P. Naurov and M. E. Gol’tman, lay the foundations for the program’s beginning.

In point of fact, the basic ideology of the “Komandorsky” program anticipated by almost ten years the concept of “sustainable development,” which is now so popular. Its fundamental core was the idea of optimizing not only the ecological, but also the economic and social conditions on the islands, paying primary attention to the aborigines’ traditional use of natural resources, while taking into account their particular ethno-psychological traits.

A conference on "The Problems and Potential for Development of the Komandorsky Islands" was held in 1986, using the results of three comprehensive expeditions. There the creation of a system of protected areas was considered in the context of optimizing the preservation of traditions and the Aleuts’ use of natural resources on the Komandorsky Islands. A book titled "The Rational Use of Natural Resources on the Komandorsky Islands (The State and Preservation of Ecosystems and Problems of Economics and Ethnocultural Development)" was published the following year, based on the results of the conference.

Locally the plan for the Zapovednik was discussed widely, not only with the local government, but also with all of the laborers working in one way or another with natural resources; similar discussion of the plan took place several times on local television.

Komandorsky Zapovednik was organized in 1993 on Medny, Ari Kamien and Topokev Islands, on part of Bering Island, and on the surrounding 30-mile marine territory of the Bering Sea and Pacific Ocean. Its aim is, jointly, protection of the environment and sustainable use of natural resources. The Zapovednik’s main goal is “the preservation of the Komandorsky Islands as an ethnic territory and a unique natural and cultural site, and the restoration of the Komandorsky Aleuts’ natural conditions of life and activity.”

In order to accomplish the goals of cultural and natural preservation, particular places on the Komandorsky Islands have been identified where the Aleut population is permitted to catch salmon, collect eggs and catch various sea birds, and hunt Ringed Seals (Phoca hispida), Fur Seals (Callorhinus ursinus) and Sea Lions (Eumetopias jubatus) for food.

Not long ago, the Aleut community was given equipment to increase their capacity for marine fishing. Of the 3,648,679 hectares of the Zapovednik’s total area, 80,200 ha. have been allotted as a biophere testing area where, as our Canadian colleagues write, commercially valuable fish are being caught. At the same time, a contract between Komandorsky Zapovednik and a series of Aleut national enterprises was signed on February 6, 1996, agreeing on collaborative research that provides for joint use of the catch.

Within the framework of a Russian-Danish intergovernmental agreement on collaboration in environmental protection, two wind power-generating units were assembled and now produce electrical energy; construction of a mini-fish-processing plant is also planned.

As assistance in employing the indigenous population, nine Aleuts have now been hired onto the Zapovednik staff, including the head accountant and the senior inspector for protection.

Of course, all of the measures for preservation of the Komandorsky Islands as an ethnic territory do not exclude the possibility that misunderstandings and conflicts will arise. True collaboration and co-existence are realistically pictured as a complex, at

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times even tortuous process of searching for mutual concessions and compromises. Co-existence is possible only as the result of good will on both sides, and the recognition by both of a single goal, which is, in the last analysis, the preservation of Komandor as a unique element of humanity’s natural and ethnocultural heritage.

Dr. Irina Pokrovskaya is editor of the RCO “Living Arctic” section and a member of the Russian Conservation News advisory board.

Correction: We would like to correct a mistake published in RCO#30. On the map, “Deserte Settlements of the Indigenous Peoples...” pp. 40-41, the number “40” in the upper left corner should instead read “35.”

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Sea otter (Enhydra) on Bering Island (drawing by S. Putsynski)

**The Taking of Toporki**

By Helen Corbett and Susanne Stohl

It’s dawn in late September on Bering Island, in the Komandorski Archipelago in the Russian Far East. We are about to participate in an Aleut subsistence tradition that survived 75 years of Soviet rule and the politics of post-communist Russia. This is the second year we’ve lived on Bering Island, studying the Komandorski Aleut culture and island environment in comparison with its “island seal islands,” the Priluhofe, where we have filmed, researched and participated in the community for the past 15 years.

Approximately 200 Aleuts live in Nikolskoye, a village of 750 people on Bering Island. They are descendants of the Atka and Attu Aleuts who in the 1820s settled on Bering and Medny Islands, respectively, to harvest fur seals. The village on Medny was disbanded in the 1970s by the Soviet government, and its inhabitants moved to Nikolskoye. The Komandorski Island Aleuts are now one of the smallest native populations in Russia.

Today we are hunting toporki, Tufted Puffins (Fratercula cirrhata), on the little island of Toporko, a 30-minute boat ride from Nikolskoye. This low, flat-topped island teems with thousands of Tufted Puffins each summer. Their burrows cover the beach grass, the cliffs and the entire top of the island.

Every spring for as long as memory serves, Aleuts have traveled to Toporko to gather Puffin eggs, knowing precisely when to harvest so that the birds will lay another egg in the same year. In the fall, they return to hunt the adult birds after their chicks have been reared. Traditionally they eat some Puffin flesh and save the rest for winter.

Subsistence food is essential to the Aleuts; here, the cost of food in village stores is prohibitive. A loaf of bread costs the equivalent of two dollars; a package of American sausage, five dollars; ten eggs go for three dollars. Many of the Aleuts live on very low incomes or pensions and depend on salmon, seal, reindeer, birds, mushrooms and berries as mainstays. They can’t afford to buy anything but necessities in the shops.

We ride to Toporko in a small dory; six Aleut men, one Aleut woman and...
two Canadian women. Four nets on long bamboo poles, crafted of materials found on the beach, lie in the boat. We putter along with the help of a small Russian motor. A few Tufted Puffins bob on the sea, fish draped in their beaks. A Harbinger Seal (Phoca vitulina) surfaces nearby, studying us intently before diving. We pass several kelp, Sea Otters (Enhydra) floating on their backs, their young riding on their stomachs. Cormorants and gulls fly overhead.

Our hunting party is led by Gennadi (Genna) Yakovlev, known in many parts of Russia as an Aleut singer, storyteller and dancer. An able fisherman and hunter as well, he bears a quiet authority that commands unquestioned respect from the young men who hunt with him.

The four nets are divided among the six men, who position themselves at the bases of the cliffs around the island. Yakovlev and his partner stand below a high cliff, on the rocky shore between two lime-green pools of stagnant water. The ridge above is a "Puffin airport": the birds walk in a long line along its edge, waiting their turn to leap off, and then swoop down over our heads on an updraft that carries them to the sea.

Yakovlev and his partner begin their strenuous, yet accurate work, raising their nets at just the right moment to snare the Puffins. Though it looks easy, this hunting in fact requires great skill and coordination to anticipate the birds' speed and flight patterns. Once captured, the bird flails its wings, snapping its beak and uttering a guttural growl. The hunter carefully reaches into the net and kills the bird with a swift twist of its neck. The men have a high success rate: no wounded birds are left unattended.

The two men stop at 40 birds, which they load into their nets, slinging the poles over their shoulders as they walk back to the boat. They collect the other hunters along the way, and another ten birds are added to the harvest. The hunt is finished in less than two hours, without the use of bullets. Traditionally the valuable skins were used to create warm, waterproof parkas.

The men joke about being braquenauers, poachers hunting outside the law. For the past two years, Aleut hunting of seabirds and their eggs has been curtailed by a new institution on the islands, the Komandorskiy Zapovednik [state scientific nature reserve]. The reserve was created three years ago after a group of scientists from Moscow State University pressed for federal protection of this natural paradise. The scientists feared that commercial interests would grab the pristine islands in the chaos and scarcity that accompanied the reforms. The boundaries of the Zapovednik encompass all of the Komandorskiy Islands except the northern one-third of Shering Island.

The reserve, founded on the principles of conservation and cooperation, has proven to support the opposite. Strapped for revenue in 1985, reserve officials, with permission, harvested six tons of pink salmon for its lucrative caviar. The reserve also received approval from Moscow to begin a three-year "scientific fishing" program in the 30-mile, no-fishing zone surrounding the islands. This program, we were told, is to determine the size and type of the fish population around the island.

"This [commercial activity] is very unusual for a Russian Zapovednik," a Nikolskoye scientist told us.

Scientists are allowed to visit Medny Island every summer, with their dogs and families. Aleuts cannot understand why the reserve territory is now the exclusive domain of scientists, while they are denied free access to their former homeland and cemeteries.

Many Aleuts believe the reserve is interfering with Aleut subsistence patterns. The members of this traditional culture and their use of the islands are treated the same as any commercial users of the reserve. Every time an Aleut wishes to hunt on reserve territory, he must request a license and an escort from the Zapovednik. If the director is away, the license may be delayed and the hunting "window" missed.

The Aleuts have been prevented from harvesting Murres (Uria) and their eggs on Alika Kamen, a bird breeding island near Toporkov, for the last two years, after a scientist noted a decline in Murre populations there. This year the Aleuts were prohibited from gathering Puffin eggs on Toporkov. The reserve director told them they must travel to Medny Island, 29 miles away, to harvest those eggs. The Aleuts do not have the safe boats, motors or fuel needed to make such a long sea journey.

The Aleuts are convinced their traditional subsistence activities are not endangering local seabird populations, and that fluctuations in numbers are more likely a response to natural conditions or manmade activities far from their shores.

"Every Aleut understands the time and place to take birds and eggs," says Yakovlev.

Last spring many Aleuts signed a petition of protest about the Zapovednik. When asked about the results, they shrug, neither knowing what happened to the petition, nor believing their protest will have much impact on politicians and bureaucrats thousands of miles away in Moscow. So this hunting expedition is their quiet form of protest: they must simply defy regulations to put meat on their tables.

Back in Nikolskoye, the birds are divided among the hunters. Six birds go to Nina Kityukina, our translator and guide, to share with her family. In her kitchen Nina quickly cleans the birds, saving the skins to make an Aleut parks and the beaks for Aleut dancing gloves. Later we eat the supernal soup her mother Valentina has prepared. It is savory with rich, dark meat, onions and parsley from the tundra. Our Aleut mother on the
We thank the Aleut hunters and mariners who have sustained so many generations of their people, despite the many challenges to their culture and their recent struggles to preserve their traditional foods and way of life.

Helen J. Cotton and Suzanne Swibold, research associates at the Arctic Institute of North America, made a series of four films with the Prabhulik Aleuts in the 1980s and are writing a book about their 15-year project on the Prabhuliks. In 1993 they founded the Living Institute to address the living alien cultural and environmental issues.

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**Without Trial or Inquest, Aleuts Were Imprisoned at Home**

Adapted from the newspaper "The World of the North Peoples," #2, 1993.

by Vladimir N. Dobrynin

We didn’t expect that all the transitions in our country could touch us to such a degree. Personally, I am still in shock after the news about the creation of the State Nature Reserve on the Komandorski Islands. Who needs it, and who profits from it? Does Aleutia need a Zapovednik, as was claimed in the plan? Even in the times of the communistic-bureaucratic system, indigenous nations were not treated so badly, at least in our region. It was Aleutians who were the first people to be refused jobs in Komandorski Zapovednik. Now in order to get onto the territory of the Zapovednik and even into the buffer zone, local residents must not only have permits issued by the Zapovednik administration, but also be accompanied by a guard from the Zapovednik staff. Besides that, the tedious requirements for boats and fishing trawlers make Aleutians quite vulnerable to inspectors, who could easily cancel their licenses and take away their boats.

Can this be called "governmental concern" for indigenous Northern peoples? Why is the government now trying to solve the problems of indigenous peoples by means of laws and restrictive measures? How can bureaucrats in their offices regulate the lives of native people by setting them within the rigid framework of rules, instructions and so-called "scientific recommendations"?

For the third year now, the Association of Aleutians has existed only on paper, having no apparent power to affect policies. Local administrations get funds for development and preservation of indigenous peoples, but the people themselves hardly know what money the government receive, nor for what purposes. Administrations and the powers-that-be are using the mere fact of my people’s existence for their own profit. Who can stop the practice of neglecting the interests of indigenous people, and who will answer for the so-called "democratization" that is destroying our nation?

I would not raise the question at all in my letter, if my nation, even by a simple majority, approved of all that is happening. But there is not so nobody has even asked and will not do so now. With pain in my heart I look at my kinsmen wandering aimlessly around. There is nothing in their eyes, no sparkle of hope for the future. For many of them the only future is the possibility of acquiring some alcohol, even by means of poaching and exterminating the natural environment. I cannot myself say whether I have a future as an aboriginal dweller. Is there any hope that future generations will consider themselves to be truly indigenous, and not just temporary dwellers?

Vladimir N. Dobrynin is the Director of the Aleut Indigenous Family Enterprise. Previously, in the 1980s, he was the Vice-chair of the Aleut administrative office.
CONSERVATION FINANCE

Who Finances Nature Conservation in Ukraine?

by Oleg Listopad
and Eugenie Simonov

The state budget is still the major source of environmental conservation financing in Ukraine today. The Ministry of Environmental Protection of Ukraine (i.e., the Ministry of Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, often referred to as "Minzhokhizhstroi") continues to allocate this money and is thereby making nature protection projects less effective.

The private sector in Ukraine today does not contribute to the nature protection movement.

In this article we will highlight the foreign sources of financing, whose role is becoming more prominent. From 1994 to 1996 seven donors were the most important: the projects they financed include the following:

1. World Bank
   a. Assistance to the Carpathian Biosphere Zapovednik and a grant program in the total sum of $320,000.
   b. Assistance to Donbaske Plavni Zapovednik and a grant program in the amount of $320,000.
   c. Support for development of biodiversity conservation and a number of activities in biodiversity protection totaling over $100,000.
   d. The World Bank contributed $300,000 to the Biodiversity Conservation Trust Fund of the Eastern Carpathian Mountains. The same amount was also given by the MacArthur Foundation. These funds were deposited in the bank with a 10% interest rate, and the interest generated from the capital is spent according to decisions of the Fund Committee, which includes representatives from environmental organizations of Ukraine, Poland, the Slovak Republic and sponsors.
   e. The Environmental Program of the Dnister (Dniester) River, in which a grant program for NGOs is included. Grants were made through representatives of UNDP in Ukraine. During the year about $20,000 was given away in grants. The program committee was composed of members recommended by the Ministry of Ecological Protection.
   f. The Black Sea program of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). The three-year program ended in 1996, apparently successfully, since it has been extended for another year. For the six countries bordering the Black Sea, a new grant of approximately $1.6 million was made. Each country is responsible for a given thematic program. Ukraine's focus is industrial pollution. This round, Russia is overseeing the general management of the grant.

2. US AID provides funding through a number of channels:
   a. Through ISAR: International Clearinghouse on Grassroots Cooperation in Eurasia. Direct grants totaling about $25,000 are made per year. So far, funding is available until the end of 1997. This is the only long-term source of support for nature conservation NGOs. For many NGOs the ISAR grants provide the first (and often, unfortunately, the last) experience of receiving money through a competitive process.
   b. Through the Eurasia Foundation. Projects which have a strictly environmental focus are not financed by the Foundation. Information about projects with indirect environmental objectives is not available. It is known that a grant was made to publish a bulletin about children's environmental summer camps; another in the amount of $20,000 was given for starting a center for environmental youth organizations.
   c. Through the Biodiversity Support Program (BSP), a US AID-funded consortium of the World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy and World Resources Institute. Initially invited to facilitate the development of a National Strategy on Biodiversity, BSP is now, after discussions with the Ministry of Environmental Protection, coordinating a $200,000 program to implement a small grants program and prepare a "Conservation Needs Assessment Workshop" in the Crimea.
   d. A project to develop environmentally friendly small businesses, such as tourism, in the Carpathians. The grant is approximately $400,000, though the exact sum is unknown. These funds are part of the $1.5 million that were proposed originally for the development of the Strategy of Biodiversity Support Program.
   e. Within the environmental department of the US AID office in Ukraine a council made up of two NGO delegates and representatives from the ministries and state agencies. Generally, little is known about the activities of US AID in Ukraine.

3. Private Charitable Foundations

In Ukraine there is only one charitable foundation that has a grant program specifically targeting ecology — the Soros Foundation's "Vidromedhnya." In 1996 its program had an annual budget of about $45,000. Representatives of the board of experts for this program were selected from NGOs close to the Ministry of Environmental Protection, by recommendations of that Ministry. In 1997 this program will be concluded, along with the ecological programs of this Foundation in Russia. However, at the same time, a call for proposals was announced for projects creating protected areas. The deadline for proposals was in mid-April.
Conservation Finance

Among foundations that do not have offices in Ukraine, only the MacArthur Foundation finances environmental projects. To analyze the situation in Ukraine, this foundation has consulted with neighboring Russian NGOs. The Director of the MacArthur Foundation Moscow office has also visited Ukraine. MacArthur provided grants for three small programs at the Kiev Ecological Cultural Center; publications and natural and cultural conservation projects. This foundation has also financed several individual research projects and travel grants, including travel for one NGO representative to attend a meeting of donors and NGOs in New York.

In 1993 the Rockefeller Brothers Fund gave $100,000 through the North American Association of Environmental Education to establish the Ukraini-yan-American Center of Environmental Education and Information. The Ministry of Environmental Protection was one of the patrons of this center. A year ago the funds were discontinued, and the Ministry closed the center to avoid the needless burden.

4. Canadian Government

The Canadian Government finances a scientific program for research and restoration of the Dniester River. The amount of assistance is five million Canadian dollars. A three-year agreement between Ukraine and Canada was signed by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Canadian International Centre for Development, and Research in June 1994. The only form of public participation was the publication of four bulletins about the role of water in human life by the Committee to Save the Dniester and Smol Rivers of Ukraine. Three of the five million dollars remain in Canada. A second term of this program was signed into being recently, for another three years and another five million Canadian dollars.

5. European Union (EU)

In theory, grants from the EU are available through the TACIS program. In reality, getting the grant is very difficult, due to the bureaucratic procedures and the necessity of sending all papers to the Moscow office of this program. Examples in which funding from this program has been given for nature protection in Ukraine are unknown although it could yet happen.

6. The Embassy of the Netherlands has a program which makes small grants of up to $5,000, including grants for environmental projects. The exact annual sum is unknown, though it is not very large. It is important that the Embassies help groups receive grants from the Government of the Nether-lands and other organizations. The Ukrainian Bird Protection Society received assistance from this source.

The Government of the Netherlands has financed two IUCN: The World Conservation Union projects. One of the projects was "Observation of Forest Ecosystem" (costly $25,000). The National Environmental Center of Ukraine conducted this research, whose results are unknown. A similar IUCN project in Russia (in 1996) was subject to intense criticism, due to the low professionalism of the published results. In Ukraine we could not even gain access to the results of the re-search project.

The second project was the "European Steppe Protection Plan," and funds totaled nearly $400,000. The project was supervised by INICM (Institute of Ecology), an NGO that originated at the National Ecological Center, a close ally of Ukraine's Ministry of Environmental Protection. This project is currently in progress, but it is very difficult to find any information about it in Ukraine.

7. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The EPA spent $10,000 to arrange the first year of work of the New Regional Ecological Center (NREC), similar to the NREC in Budapest. The funds were used to procure a temporary office and organize five regional seminars to discuss the strategy and other organiza-tional issues of NREC.

Although the amount spent was very small, the project has created a record number of international and internal disagreements. There are several reasons for the disputes. First of all, the EPA had financed only one country out of five potential participants in the project. Moreover, the EPA moved too fast, before all of the counterparts had reached an agreement on what they were actually supposed to do. Further-more, the idea of establishing an "independent" environmental center was seriously discredited when the process fell under the control of the Ministry of Environmental Protection. This situation has created numerous conflicts between quasi-NGOs and other NGOs.

Conclusions

Ukraine's Ministry of Environmental Protection announces on a regular basis that it has signed various agreements related to international aid to Ukraine for nature protection. Virtually all of the funding specified in these agree-ments is spent on consultant's fees paid to the experts of the donor country, on the purchase of equipment and materi-als, and sometimes on business trips for the officers of the Ministry of Environment-al Protection.

In conclusion, we must emphasize the importance of public participation in the discussion of international projects. Information about the projects should be collected and made public. Interna-tional cooperative projects (Russian-Ukrainian, for instance) offer great potential: with such projects it's more difficult for the funds to end up in the pockets of the authorities.

Oleg Listopad is editor of the bulletin "Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Areas Management in Ukraine."

Eugene Simonov is general consultant for IUGF's Biodiversity Conservation Project in Russia.
NEWS OF THE DAY

An Ugly Assault
on a Russian Steppe Reserve

by Anya Menner
and Margaret Williams

Several hundred miles southwest of Moscow, in the agricultural region of Kursk, a battle is being waged by a "new Russian" businessman with help from a well-known political figure — Aleksandr Ruskov, former Vice-President of the Russian Federation. Using old, Soviet-style politics, the two are trying to remove one of Russia's most valuable protected areas managers from his position as Director of Tiensbral'no-Chernozemy Steppe Reserve.

Tiensbral'no-Chernozemy Steppe Reserve was created in 1935 on an area of 4,536 ha to preserve unique meadow steppe — some of the world's last fragments of native steppe. Internationally known for its important contributions to science, particularly soil science, the Steppe Reserve obtained the status of UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1979.

In 1990, Nikolai Maleshin, a former scientist at Abashir Steppe Reserve, succeeded Aleksandr Gusov as Director of Tiensbral'no-Chernozemy Reserve. Inheriting the Steppe Reserve from the previous, inexperienced director, Maleshin found it in disarray. The steppe ecosystems had been gravely threatened by Gusov's policies. In his seven-year tenure, however, Maleshin has virtually rescued the reserve, and in doing so has won international recognition.

The reserve's accomplishments are numerous and in large part due to Maleshin's efforts. In 1995 the Steppe Reserve joined the European Federation of National and Nature Parks. Experts of the European Council gave the Steppe Reserve high marks for its achievements, and this year they awarded the reserve with the European Council Diploma. In the past two years the Steppe Reserve staff, with Maleshin's leadership, have successfully brought another 400 ha. within the strict protective status of the Steppe Reserve.

As a manager, Maleshin has been praised by his colleagues for his ceaseless efforts to raise funds from nongovernmental ecological foundations when insufficient — or often absent — federal funds threatened the reserve's future. Maleshin has consistently secured money for supplies, transportation and regular salaries for his staff — no small feat for a government agency in Russia today.

While Maleshin worked to bring order to the reserve, his predecessor Gusov was thriving as one of the influential members of the "new Russian elite." Gusov helped get Aleksandr Ruskov elected to the position of Regional Governor of Kursk, and then managed himself to become Vice-Governor of International Affairs. With Gusov's rise to power came the attack on Maleshin.

As a federal employee, Maleshin cannot be legally removed by regional authorities, so they used old-style political maneuvering reminiscent of the Soviet era. Letters falsely accusing Maleshin of mismanagement and demanding his dismissal as Director of the Steppe Reserve were sent to the State Committee on Environmental Protection in Moscow, and attempts were made to divide the staff against their Director. Maleshin's life was even threatened by the regional authorities, who hoped to intimidate the Steppe Reserve manager into "choosing" to leave by making life unbearable for him and his family.

The real motive for the assault remains unclear. Some observers surmise that Gusov is lashing out at the successful Maleshin in retaliation for his own failures as a manager. Others believe that Gusov and Ruskov see the reserve as a source of grants and international contacts they would like to control. A more plausible theory proposes that Gusov's attack is backed by Governor Ruskov, who wants subordinate "supporters" in every governmental post in the region, including the Steppe Reserve.

The attacks so far, however, have been unsuccessful. Instead, the Steppe Reserve staff has rallied behind the director, writing to Regional Governor Ruskov of their loyalty to Nikolai Maleshin. The environmental community, indignant at the underhanded politics and undemocratic power plays, has started a campaign for his support. In March a "Committee in Support of Nikolai Maleshin" was created.

Please join the effort to support Maleshin!

Letters in support of retaining Nikolai Maleshin as Director of Tiensbral'no-Chernozemy Steppe Reserve can be sent to: Aleksandr V. Ruskov, Kursk Regional Governor, 390502, Kursk, Russia. Krasnaya Square, Dom Sovetov, Fax: (071-2) 56-65-73. Please send copies of your letters to the Committee in Support of Nikolai Maleshin, fax: (095) 129-0686 or 230-2090 (labeled "For A. A. Titkov").

Anya Menner and Margaret Williams are Managing Editor and Editor in Chief, respectively, of RCN.

Nikolai Maleshin, Director of Tiensbral'no-Chernozemy Steppe Reserve (photo by F. Belov)
The Sturgeon Quarterly

The STURGEON QuArterLY is a quarterly newsletter published by the Sturgeon Society, containing information about the current status of sturgeons throughout the world. The newsletter provides valuable scientific abstracts, notes on meetings and conferences, and news about conservation efforts. The editor is Dr. Vadim Birstein, at the American Museum of Natural History, New York. E-mail: birstein@sturgeons.com

Subscriptions: $20 within the U.S.; $35 for addresses outside the U.S. Payment should be made in U.S. dollars with an international money order or check drawn on a U.S. bank. Send checks to: The Sturgeon Society, 331 West 57th Street, Suite 159, New York, NY 10019.

Also: Check out the Sturgeon Society's web site: WWW.STURGEONS.COM

The Aman Dar Shovelon Sturgeon (Pseudoscaphirhynchus laevisempnis) is endangered by dessication of the Aral Sea.

New Publication Preparing for Press

The RUCNCIS Regional Group on Declining Amphibian Populations and the Institute for Problems of Ecology and Evolution (Russian Academy of Sciences) announce a new publication, the journal "Advances in Amphibians Research in the Former Soviet Union."

Papers on research on amphibians in the Former Soviet Union (FSU), written both by authors from the FSU and by foreign colleagues, are being accepted for publication. Materials on any aspect of batrachology are welcomed: systematics, distribution, ecology, behavior, protection, morphology, evolution, breeding in captivity, palaeontology and biochemistry. Submissions can be original articles, reviews, descriptions of methods and approaches, recommendations, critiques, and information about conferences, societies or new publications.

The language of publication is English. Papers should be accompanied by abstracts in Russian and English for articles by Russian-speaking authors, and in English for those by English speakers. The size of publication is limited to 150,000 characters, which translates to 85 standard pages with graphics, double interval and a character size of 12. Papers are accepted in electronic version with one oatprint copy. The author's contact information — mailing address, phone, fax, e-mail — is required.

Please send submissions to the editor:
Sergei L. Kuzmin, Institute for Problems of Ecology and Evolution, 33 Leninsky Pr., 117071 Moscow, Russia.
Phone: (095) 954-32-62; Fax (095) 954-55-34;
e-mail: e-mail: <elevin@glas.apc.org>

New Society for Amphibian and Reptile Conservationists

The Regional Society for Conservation of Amphibians and Reptiles was established in Moscow in 1996. The Society aims to study rare amphibian and reptile species, design natural protected areas, conduct environmental impact assessment of the habitats of amphibians and reptiles in different regions, and coordinate venomous snake milking and environmental education in the field of herpetology. The Society belongs to the expert council on protected areas, and by agreement with Candans, it participates in assessment of amphibian and reptile species transported across the border.

Members of the Society have managed to establish working relationships with a number of regional experts and administrations. Currently, work on designing a nature sanctuary (Zakazniki) in Astrakhan Region is already underway; a field trip to assess the status of rare reptile species in Kalmykia has begun; and development of joint projects on studies of amphibians and reptiles in Mass-El Republic has commenced.

The Society invites all interested persons and organizations for collaboration and support.

Contact:
Galina V. Polovnova, phone: (095) 249-3564, or
Anatoli T. Bozhanski, phone: (095) 529-5586, 521-4574

Russian Conservation News
BULLETIN

Forest – and Future – of Kalevala National Park Threatened

At this issue of BCN was going to press, we learned that Vaitepaa Company, of Finland, has started logging old-growth forest slated for protection in the forthcoming Kalevala National Park (in Karelia). Though other Finnish companies have been persuaded to observe moratoria on cutting, thanks to consumer pressure, Vaitepaa does not belong to any network of environmental groups such as the Finnish Forest Industries Federation and is immune to their influence.

Both the Russian and Finnish governments have agreed to establish a national park in this area. The local population (in neighboring villages) is strongly opposed to the logging, and the Finnish (and possibly Swedish and others) companies are not even paying a fair fee for the wood.

Russian and Finnish NGOs are appealing to their respective governments for intervention. At the same time, they are organizing a campaign to pressure Vaitepaa to stop the cutting.

To help, or for further information, please contact:
Dima Aksecov, Forests Project, BCC, P.O. Box 4, Moscow, 127276 RUSSIA. Phone/ fax (095) 482-1888; phone: 123-0793; e-mail: biodivers@glas.ac.org
Sergei Trifonov, Elena Surovikina, Greenpeace-Russia, P.O. Box 60, Moscow 101002 RUSSIA.
Phone: (095) 978-3950, 251-9073; fax: (095) 251-9088; e-mail: gmnmoscow@glas.ac.org

CONSERVATION

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Biodiversity Conservation Center, P.O. Box 4, Moscow, 127276, Russia. Phone/Fax: (095) 482-1888; e-mail: <biodiver@glas.ac.org>

"Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Areas Management in Ukraine" Bulletin, Oleg Listopad, Editor. Radunshyna St., 31-14, Kiev, Ukraine 252218. Phone: (044) 213-07-92, 442-3864; e-mail: <Vladimir@kekz.freenet.viasik.net>

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