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### VOICE FROM THE WILD

(A Letter from the Editors)

In our second issue of Russian Conservation News, we have some urgent issues to share with our colleagues around the world. One of these is a plan for "sustainable" development in the Russian Far East — one of the largest, most biologically diverse, intact greater ecosystems remaining in this vast country. In addition to our apprehensions about the actual substance of the project, we are deeply concerned about the process (or lack thereof) of information sharing between the western aid agencies and consulting firms, and the conservation community. (See our "Far East Forest Focus" inside this issue).

The second issue about which we are alarmed is the state of virtual collapse in Russia's system of strict nature reserves. No other country in the world has a system as old and large as Russia's Zapovedniki. Russia's Zapovedniki protect fresh water seals in Lake Baikal, bison in the Caucasus, tigers in the Far East, polar bears in the Arctic, and habitat for hundreds of other rare and endemic species. They have also been the research grounds for hundreds of scientists in zoology, biology, botany, and other natural sciences. These nature reserves are of no less importance than the tropical rain forests of Central and South America. We feel certain that if immediate measures are not taken to save this system, the entire world will suffer an irretrievable loss of biological archives. Many dedicated nature reserve managers are working hard to help their reserves survive the hardships of a transitional economy, but more than dedication is needed to save these natural treasures.

We urge you to rise to the challenge which stands before us all. Throughout our articles, we try to suggest ways in which you could effectively, and positively change the situation. We believe that solving these problems depends on our ability to work together with our western colleagues. Please write letters to the Russian Ministry, to your Congress, and aid-giving organizations, especially where we have provided addresses and names, and please send copies to us, so that we know our efforts are working!

We are here to connect you with the many achievements as well as problems and needs of conservationists in Russia and the former Soviet Union. We hope to establish a dialogue between them and western colleagues — dialogue that is crucial for all of us to make gains in conservation. After reading Russian Conservation News, we hope you will let us know what you like, and what you would like to read more about. Please send us your comments, questions, and suggestions, articles, photographs, and let us know if your contacts and programs in Russia have been assisted by our informational service.

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On the cover: Arctic Fox, drawing by V.Smirin

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BCC-WHO ARE WE??

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION CENTER OF THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL UNION (BCC SEU).

The Biodiversity Conservation Center serves as a consultation, information and fundraising center coordinating a wide range of projects in biodiversity conservation. The Center is made up of specialists in protected areas management, legislation, and planning, fundraising, communications, Geographic Information Systems, ecosystem restoration and many other aspects of conservation. Governed by a board of eight conservationists, the BCC has 18 paid staff members, most of whom are part-time, and 30 to 50 volunteers.

BCC provides legal and management consultations to nature reserves and governmental agencies, and participates in drafting conservation legislation at federal and regional levels. BCC’s role in information involves collection, analysis, and publication of newsletters and handbooks for professionals and public organizations. Several projects are housed within BCC, including a Biodiversity Atlas which maintains a GIS database on rare and endangered flora and fauna.

Most BCC’s programs are implemented in close cooperation with various governmental agencies, research institutions and NGOs, including the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Institute of Geography, ISAR-International Clearinghouse on the Environment, The Nature Conservancy, Laboratory for Ecological Designs, Vodlozerski National Park, Briansky Les Zapovednik, the Ecological Club of Novosibirsk University, Tadjik Socio-ecological Union, Moscow Programme Office of World Wildlife Fund-International, and many others.

Because of its close ties with these organizations, BCC is able to provide international organizations and foundations, and potential donors with information on specific activities in biodiversity conservation in the FSU.

LEADERS OF RUSSIA’S PROTECTED AREAS TAKE DESPERATE MEASURES IN A DESPERATE SITUATION

by Eugene Simonov and Vsevolod Stepanitsky

As 1994 came to a close, Directors of Russia’s Zapovedniki (federal Nature Reserves) were called to the Financial Department in the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, which has been gaining increasing authority over Zapovedniki. (The Department of Nature Reserve Management has been deprived of any role in financial management). Asked to “defend” their proposed budgets, Zapovednik Directors were told they would not have the funds necessary to sustain their Nature Reserves.

Amidst mounting financial and other pressures, climaxed by this final blow, Zapovednik Directors gathered in Sochi, Russia in December for a conference on environmental education and community outreach. At the conference (which certain officials in the Ministry of Environmental Protection made many efforts to prevent from occurring), several definitive steps were taken. Among these is the decision to create an Association for support of Zapovedniki and National Parks. Representatives from National Parks and Zapovednik elected Vsevolod Stepanitsky, of BCC to lead the establishment of this organization. The Association will be a professional and advocacy group providing an independent forum to protect the rights of employees and uphold the laws in these protected areas in northern Eurasia.

Another measure agreed upon by the government employees who met at Sochi was the drafting of a letter to Russia’s President. Clearly, it represents the sense of desperation shared among Russia’s system of parks and nature reserves, which, if the current government policy continues, balances on the verge of being dissolved. If such a catastrophe were to occur, not only Russia, but the entire world would suffer an irretrievable loss of natural and cultural heritage.

Eugene Simonov and Vsevolod Stepanitsky are members of the Board of the Biodiversity Conservation Center

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Contributing artists, photographers: Irina Chebakova, illustrations by V. Smirin reprinted with permission of family, photographs courtesy of Vodlozerski National Park

January 1995
The letter sent to President Yeltsin follows:

We, managers of the federal Zapovedniki (Nature Reserves) and National Parks of Russia turn to you with great alarm about the fate of our national system of Zapovedniki and National Parks. Attempted measures for their preservation and development are on the verge of collapse, while in your Decree of October 2, 1992 Number 1155 On Specially Protected Territories, this direction was proclaimed as a priority in the government’s environmental policy of the Russian Federation. The system of protected areas of Russia was formed during a period of eight decades and today includes 89 federal Nature Reserves and 28 National Parks, preserving natural and cultural heritage from the Kuril Islands, from the Arctic to the Caucasus. The uniqueness of this system is recognized throughout the world.

In all civilized nations, similar nature conservation lands are supported by the government; their operation is maintained by a distribution of enough governmental financing. In Russia, however, Zapovedniki and National Parks have felt themselves to be stepchildren of the government, and more recently, the situation has become unbearable. It is impossible to preserve our protected areas without any help from the government, relying only on the enthusiasm of individuals, who consider this their life’s work.

The budget for Zapovedniki in 1994 in real prices was equal to thirty percent of the 1990 fiscal year budget. As agreed upon by the Ministry of Finance, the planned financing for 1995 is less than that by one third. In such conditions, the likelihood of supporting Zapovedniki and National Parks in 1995, and especially by the year 2000, is extremely doubtful. Zapovedniki and National Parks, designated first and foremost to maintain strict protection of their lands, are developing an acute deficit of funds, even for maintaining the most basic needs for safety equipment. They are unable to provide their law enforcement rangers with appropriate transportation and communication, weapons, and other supplies and equipment. Despite active legislation, not even insurance is provided for employees in the law enforcement service, who, on their misery wages, continually risk their lives while fighting against unprecedented organized illegal hunting and other criminal infringements of the country’s natural property. Unfortunately the price of these numerous “deficits” is often measured in human lives. A recent example of this is the tragedy in Sayano-Shushenski Biosphere Zapovednik, where in early September four employees of the enforcement service disappeared without a trace, having left on a patrol for several days without radio communication, needed equipment, and without appropriate preparation.

The structure and principles of the government’s management of Zapovedniki and National Parks as federal objects will not survive criticism. Especially after the previous structural rearrangement, the status of the sub-Division of Nature Reserve Management has sharply fallen. Moreover, questions regarding the distribution of finances and investment policy are answered not by qualified experts in the Division of Nature Reserve Management (formerly the Main Division for Nature Reserve Management!), but by employees in the financial-maintenance sphere, entirely far from understanding issues about protected areas. All attempts to adjust this situation at the Ministerial level have proven to be without result. In such an atmosphere, the Ministry stands the chance to lose many professionals in this field. In fact, the process has already begun.

We understand perfectly well the current difficult economic position and serious budgetary problems. But it is worth recalling that even in the years of WWII, management of protected areas continued to grow and had governmental support.

We are convinced that in order to stabilize the situation for federal Nature Reserves, and to maintain normal operations and development of Zapovedniki and National Parks, it is crucial to:

1) Immediately reconsider an increase in the budget that was apportioned for Zapovedniki and National Parks for 1995.
2) With the goal of maintaining qualified management leadership of the government’s system of Zapovedniki and National Parks, create within the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources a Department for Nature Reserves, and create within the Federal Forest Service, a Division of National Parks, giving these units all management functions over the Zapovedniki and National Parks, including planning, financing, construction, labor and wages, preparation and placement of staff.

December 1994.
Sochi, Russia

THE MINISTRY IS READY TO SUPPRESS THE OPPOSITION

The Department of Nature Reserves was prohibited by high officials of the Ministry of Environmental Protection from sending copies of the Resolution to Nature Reserves because it mentions the letter. And, Department officials were reprimanded for having allowed the letter to be written and sent to the President.

On the last day of January, reporting on the performance of the Ministry of Environmental Protection in 1994, the Minister Victor Danilov-Danilian named the Department of Zapovedniki as the least successful department at the Ministry. He blamed the Department’s leadership for being incapable to manage zapovedniki. Such an open and unjust assault signifies that the Ministry will not stop from dissolving the Department or firing the current Head Mrs. Natalia Danilina in order to insure that control of zapovedniki finances remains in the hands of the Financial Department. This will lead to rapid deterioration of the Zapovedniki system.

We have yet to hear a response from President Yeltsin. This situation requires immediate international intervention. Nature Reserves of Russia are too significant a part of world natural heritage for the rest of the world to stand witness as they are destroyed by neglect. We believe that the economic assistance now pouring into this country should be conditioned upon the Russian government’s provision of aid to its own Nature Reserves. We believe that attention and pressure from western organizations and agencies could make a difference in bringing a change to the dire situation. Please send letters of support for the letter Nature Reserves and National Parks immediately to:

President of Russia Boris Yeltsin
The Kremlin Moscow, 101000, RUSSIA
Mr. Viktor I. Danilov-Danilian,
Minister of Environmental Protection
4/6 Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street
Moscow, RUSSIA 123812
SPORTS IN CONSERVATION NEWS

Olympic Games in Sochi - Playing Games with Mother Nature

by Eugene Simonov and Margaret Williams

In Sochi, Russia, (the Black Sea resort town at the base of the Caucasus), local government officials are promoting development that could destroy habitat for wildlife that occurs nowhere else in the world. Hundreds of species of flora and fauna could be adversely affected by the town's plan to offer two thousand hectares of the Caucasus Biosphere Reserve in a bid to the Olympic Committee for the winter Olympic games of 2002.

When the bids are made next July, the local government of Sochi will propose 1) the construction of a new monorail across a mountain ridge to an alpine lake, half of which is in the Nature Reserve’s buffer zone, 2) the clearing of a mountain slope within the reserve that has been singled out as the only one appropriate for a slalom race course, and 3) the widening of the sleepy, narrow road that winds through mountain villages where housing and other Olympic operations would take place. All of this development is being proposed in a federal protected area where no activity other than research is legally permitted.

The Caucasus Biosphere Zapovednik, with a staff of 190 people on its staff, and its headquarters in the small Black Sea resort town of Adler is one of the largest, oldest and most valuable nature reserves in European Russia. In terms of species diversity, the Caucasus is among the most important areas in European Russia.

Due to the area’s uncommon and diverse glacial history, many endemic species of flora and fauna occur in the reserve, preserved nowhere else in the world.

Mount Mzymta is the greatest refuge in the reserve, sheltering 27 species of plants and 25 species of animals, all of which are listed in the national Red Data Book. This particular mountain is so distinct that it is classified as a separate biogeographic zone, known as Kolhida-upper Mzymta.

Other rarities in the reserve include an endemic species of spruce, and the only broadleaf forest community in European Russia where one can see five species of maples. Wildlife in the reserve include a rare viper, populations of Caucasian grouse, Caucasian partridge, bearded vulture and larger mammals such as roe deer, wild goat, bear, and an re-introduced population of Caucasian bison.

Nature Reserve biologists believe that in addition to destroying two thousand hectares within the Caucasus Zapovednik Biosphere Reserve — critical habitat for many endemic species — the development will result in large scale pollution, and exacerbate the already existing water shortage in town. So far, no Environmental Impact Assessment has been conducted.

Environmentalists feel that local and regional authorities are interested not only in Olympics as such, but in an opportunity to build a highway through the Zapovednik and undertake extensive logging in virgin forests of the reserve. Long before the idea for bidding for the Olympic games arose, the local government made some unsuccessful attempts to violate nature reserve borders with construction and logging. Now, the bid for the Olympics provide an easy excuse to do that with little retribution.

Locals say that when the foreign guests come to the area they are taken in helicopters to proposed construction sites and are never told that the sites are actually within nature reserves and no construction is permitted there.

Although Sochi National Park has a weaker protective status and suffers heavily from the intrusion of local developers and loggers, it contains valuable natural features and construction of Olympic facilities on its territory will only exacerbate the current situation. Whatever construction is proposed there is also illegal according to Russian laws, first among which is the Environmental Protection Act of 1992.

In addition to harming the Zapovednik and National Park, if the Olympic Games are held in this Caucasus Mountain enclaves, the proposed widening and “improvement” of the existing narrow road along the side of a deep gorge will destroy another protected area: a nature monument on the way to Krasnaya Polyana, the mountain village that will serve as administrative and residential base during the Games.

There is clearly political pressure on Nature Reserve employees to comply with the development plans; one biologist was threatened with his job if he did not endorse a letter of support for the project. Little support in resisting the proposed development has been offered by authorities at the federal Ministry of Environmental Protection, who claim they have never been informed about these plans, although such construction would ultimately require their approval.

In Russia it makes little sense to protest, since Sochi is a place where the highest officials (President, Defense Minister.
other ministers) come to entertain themselves, and therefore local officials who organize leisure for themselves and their associates are well protected from any punishment.

The Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC) is collecting information, maps, and legal documents and will make every effort to publicize this information in the West. BCC appeals to western conservation organizations to assist in a campaign against this development in Caucasus Biosphere Reserve Zapovednik. Any such campaign should be undertaken in such a manner that the nature reserves are strengthened as a result.

The BCC opposes the illegal and harmful manner in which the Olympic Games are being planned — not the fact that they would occur in Sochi — as we believe that less environmentally alternative plans could be developed. We insist that construction as currently proposed should be prevented, whether or not Sochi receives the bid for the Olympic Games.

In summer 1991 World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Sweden suggested that nature conservation should be part of the criteria for site selection for the Olympic Games. Now, BCC asks western conservation organizations to help insure that the current disastrous planning in Caucasus is not realized. Please send letters to:

1. International Olympic Committee
10-C Evaluation Commission
PO Box 352
2601 Lillehammer
NORWAY

2 Russian President Boris Yeltsin
The Kremlin
Moscow,
RUSSIA

3. Minister of Environmental Protection
Mr. Viktor Danilov-Danilian
4/6 Bolshaya Gruzinskaya
Moscow, 123812
RUSSIA

4. WWF - International Secretariat
Magnus Sylvén
Avenue du Mont-Blanc
CH-1196 Gland
Switzerland

5. Please send copies of your letters to RCN/BCC

CRISIS IN ONE OF RUSSIA'S NATURE RESERVES

by Margaret Williams and Eugene Simonov

On Sept 2, 1994, a group of four law enforcement rangers from Sayano-Shushensky Biosphere Zapovednik left for several days to ride the southern border of the Zapovednik. The group of four (three Zapovednik inspectors -A.N. Novoselov, N.S. Lineisev, S.S. Lavrov and a friend of one of the rangers hoping to work in the Zapovednik, A.K. Arisov) have still not been found, and investigations have failed to make definitive conclusions about their disappearance.

There were plenty of signs of the rangers in the cabin where they had spent the night of Sept 3. Warm clothes, sleeping bags, a saucepan halffull of leftover soup, unused bullets, and outside, a rifle leaning against a tree indicate that they had gone without intentions to go far or for a long time. The rangers had no radio with them, had taken provisions for only a few days, and were equipped with three rifles and a pistol.

The protected area lies on the border of two administrative units, Krasnoyarsk Krai and the Tuva Republic, although with the exception of its buffer zone, it is contained to Krasnoyarsk Krai. Conflicts over property rights and access to fertile grazing land, offlimits in the nature reserve, may be part of the problem of growing tensions between local residents, who are primarily sheep and cattle herders, and the nature reserve.

The problems probably began even before the creation of the nature reserve, when the Tuvinsti native land was annexed into the Soviet Union. Then in 1971, with the construction of the largest, most powerful dam in the world, the flowing waters of the great Yenisey flooded hundreds of hectares of fertile floodplain — land that Tuvinsti had valued for prime pasture land. Not only was pasture lost, but three communities were flooded along with a Tuvinsti burial grounds, washing away their monuments to the past. The creation of the Zapovednik along the border in 1976 was viewed by Tuvinsti as a continuation of imperial politics, which closed more economic opportunities in grazing and hunting. Access to a sacred spring that is known throughout Tuva for its healing qualities was also constrained and became regulated by Zapovednik rangers.

Tensions regularly resulted in open clashes between rangers and Tuva people. The Zapovednik has no long-term program for alleviating this tension, nor does it have sufficient capability to enforce its protective regime at its borders.

The Press Secretary of the President of Tuva, Roman Tasool has suggested that illegal gold prospectors may be responsible for the supposed deaths of the four rangers. Whatever really happened with the four rangers is viewed by the public as a consequence of this tension.

The supposed murder has further exacerbated the pre-existing conflicts. However, both sides (the Zapovednik administration and the government of Tuva Republic) have expressed understanding and willingness to start some dialogue and create joint efforts so that such tragedies are
prevented in the future. Probably some neutral third party should arrive to help them start a longterm program normalizing the relationship between Sayano-Shushensky Zapovednik and local Tuva people.

What lessons should the Russian government learn? What could be done to prevent another Sayano-Shushensky?

The Russian system of nature reserves must begin to take care of the people who are serving the public by protecting nature. This means providing at least the "basics": modern communication, reliable transportation, adequate clothing, functioning weapons, livable housing, and enough salaries so that they aren't spending half the work day gathering mushrooms or putting up potatoes for the winter. This also means providing rangers with training in self-defense, law enforcement, and public relations.

Another not less important lesson is that Zapovedniks require pro-active outreach programs to deal with local populations. While it may seem obvious that conservation cannot be achieved without the support of people, public participation in or support for nature protection is not an obvious component of Zapovednik management policy. On the contrary, most Zapovedniks have survived with little input from local communities. In cases where contact does occur between locals and Zapovednik, exchanges are often negative. Relationships are based on a system of prohibitions and rules. It's no wonder that people may feel hostile toward these protected wilderness areas.

Fortunately, the number of environmental education activities in Zapovedniks is on the rise, but there is no special training support or additional funding from the government for these programs.

This tragedy is unprecedented in the long history of Russia's nature reserves. We at the BCC implore our western colleagues to help us solve this tragic situation, and to insure that such sharp conflicts between protected areas and local communities can be resolved peacefully, with solutions benefiting both society and nature. Please send letters of concern to:

1. Shereg-oil D. Oorzakh, President of Tuva Republic Kyzel City, Tuva, RUSSIA
2 Russian President Boris Yeltsin
   The Kremlin, Moscow, RUSSIA
3. Minister of Environmental Protection
   Mr. Viktor Danilov-Danillan
   4/6 Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Moscow, 123812, RUSSIA
4. Please send copies to RCN/BCC

January 1995

LETOPI PRIRODI: CHRONICLES OF NATURE RECORDED IN RUSSIA'S NATURE RESERVES

What is the Letopis Prirodi?

Letopis Prirodi, which means Chronicles of Nature, is the title of both the program that guides scientific work in Zapovedniks, as well as the title of the yearly publication in which the research is compiled. Printed yearly in every federal Nature Reserve, these Chronicles present data on regular natural occurrences (from climate to bird migrations), changing natural processes, relationships between natural and abiotic components, and the effect of human activity on these natural systems. In the case where buffer zones exist around the core protected area, and economic activities are under way in these zones, Letopis Prirodi contains observations about the extent of ecological damage and the status of natural communities.

In some Nature Reserves, Letopis Prirodi has been continued for over fifty years. As a result, decades of environmental change have been recorded according to a standardized, uniform method. The accumulated data is one of the great achievements of the system of the former Soviet Union's Nature Reserves. Work on the Letopis Prirodi should begin from the moment the Zapovednik is founded*. The first book of Letopis Prirodi includes fundamental information about the Nature Reserve: its founding charter statements, the history of its establishment, location, description of borders of the reserve and (if existing) buffer zones; geobotanical classification, a map of the Nature Reserve and surrounding populated areas, roads or railroads, tables of sunrise and sunset, a short overview of the area's land use history, and a brief description of the natural components — geology, terrain, hydrology, climate, soils, landscape, vegetation and animal life; and a bibliography of sources related to the Nature Reserve. Each year, scientists conduct their field research under one or several of those topics prescribed by the Letopis Prirodi.

Letopis Prirodi consists only of facts presented in a short and clear form in tables or brief descriptions. Usually lengthy discussions, generalizations, or literature reviews are not included in Letopis Prirodi. However, every five years or so, scientists should make more general and broad analyses of natural dynamics— for example, on the status of populations or species composition. Names of flora and fauna are usually given in Russian and Latin.

Scientific research conducted under the Letopis Prirodi program is directed by the Deputy Director of the Nature Reserve, who is also the head of the Scientific Research Division. The Deputy Director determines a calendar plan for the collection and analysis of materials and may also participate in field work and data collection.

Employees ranging from scientists and technicians, to law enforcement rangers, as well as temporary researchers (students, scientists from other agencies) are involved in the collection of data for Letopis Prirodi. According to the official standards for the Letopis Prirodi program, only 5-6 of the individual scientists (the average size of scientific staff of Nature Reserves), along with 11-16 technical assistants are needed. But because technical assistants should also have a special education too, this actually means 16-22 specialists per reserve. While such a large staff was unlikely in the past, in current economic conditions, this large staff would be impossible to support. Furthermore, as one scientist points out, the call for "technical assistants" is now an outdated relic from the 1930's, when nature reserves had only a few specialists with a higher education. Today, older reserves may have up to 12 scientists on staff, more newly created reserves may have up to three, or none.
As a result of having small scientific staffs, many biologists in Nature Reserves are required to report on subjects outside of their expertise. In Magadanski Zapovednik, for instance, a far eastern Siberian Nature Reserve larger than Yellowstone National Park, one biologist (whose expertise is the study of black-capped marmots), is responsible for reporting on all mammal populations in the nature reserve!

In the case where special expertise is absent in the Nature Reserve, some scientists may be substituted to collect information or complete a research project. In fact, Nature Reserves were typically one of the main research bases for scientists from the Academy of Sciences. Scientific reports about research made inside reserve borders were always made through cooperative projects between the nature reserves and the Academy of Sciences. However, with the increasing federal financial crisis, providing adequate salaries to the full-time employees is enough of a difficulty. Thus, paying for special investigations that require rare specialists, such as the creation of soil and hydrological maps, inventory of fungi, lichens, mosses, insects and others of groups of biota is much less feasible now.

In theory, law enforcement rangers, living for months in Zapovednik field stations (often in remote places), should contribute a substantial amount of observational data to the Letopis Prirodi. According to protocol, on a monthly basis rangers should make 10-day treks along a defined route. On the route they should record their observations about climate, flora, fauna, and phenology and other topics listed in Letopis Prirodi into daily journals which are then transferred to Zapovednik headquarters for review by scientists. In reality, rangers’ involvement in Letopis Prirodi is difficult to achieve. Recruiting rangers who are also educated in the natural sciences is difficult and there are no special training programs in natural sciences for rangers. With eroding financial circumstances of nature reserves, many rangers are paid salaries so low that they are forced to find other ways to support themselves and their families — while on the job. Many rangers spend a good part of the tending their gardens or livestock which they are permitted to keep in some areas near their residences.

*Editor’s note: Theoretically, LP should begin immediately upon the creation of a nature reserve. However, today, with limited financing and shrinking scientific staffs, many existing nature Reserves are unable to fulfill the assignment of LP. Some newly established reserves area still without any scientific staff at all, so work on LP has not yet begun.

(Excerpts translated by M. Williams from Chronicles of Nature in Zapovednik of the USSR, by K. Filonov, D. Nakhimovskaya, Nauka Press, 1985 with editing assistance from Dr. Evgeny Shvarts)

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**Q & A**

**Russian Conservation News:** Why are many of Russia’s Nature Reserves are losing their scientists?

**Dr. Evgeny Shvarts:**

*There are many reasons for this sad tendency:*

To begin, technical assistants to scientists formerly were either members of families (the wives, sons, and daughters) of scientists or young or senior local peoples without a higher education. Many of them have been let go due to budget cuts or are searching for other work with a higher salary.

Second, and maybe the most significant negative process influencing this tendency, is also an economic question. Salaries for employees in nature reserves now are so low that without taking on some private agricultural activity, it is impossible to survive as a researcher. Scientists are becoming farmers and agriculturalists, caring for their families. They have no time to do research or study modern literature and methods. As a result of this competition for time, fine scientists are leaving nature reserves - for local pedagogical, agricultural or forestry educational institutions and universities, with lesser qualified workers continuing work as scientists in reserves.

Third, in these conditions young specialists see little incentive to work in Nature Reserves: it is impossible to receive apartments for their families, equipment is scarce, and so on; Thus, recruitment of young scientists, with modern techniques and methods, is one of the current problems for nature reserves.

Fourth, the main sources of money for rangers is the elimination of scientists in reserves.

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**Fifth, to keep current employees and to attract new ones, it is necessary to create normal working conditions for scientists in reserves - computers, printers, binoculars, microscopes, modern balances, scientific journals, and libraries. Money is needed for expeditions, participation in conferences, publications, and so on. But with the current level of financing from the federal budget, it is impossible to buy this basic necessary equipment. In these conditions, working in state-run reserves, researchers have no future as scientists.***

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**Letopis Priroda today: the current status of scientific research in Nature Reserves**

Excerpts translated from an article (“The system of state Nature Reserves of Russia and the Letopis Priroda program”) by Dr. Evgeny Shvarts

One outstanding aspect which distinguishes the Soviet system of protected areas from foreign National Park systems is the basis for the establishment of Zapovedniks. These strict nature reserves, from their beginnings, were conceived of and organized not only as protected areas — models of undisturbed natural communities — but also as sophisticated scientific institutions, taking on the study of undisturbed ecosystems and their characteristic functions in process.

Such long-term ecological monitoring is contained today in the Nature Reserves’ Letopis Prirodi, a publication which began in 1940 according to special instructions on methodology for recording observations, and was kept in virtually all of Russia’s Nature Reserves. A host of other Zapovedniks had begun to maintain constant records even before the requirements of Letopis Prirodi were published.
One of the inadequacies of the scientific research activity of Zapovedniki is the mechanism for its application in conservation. Extremely valuable, unique information about the status of wildlife and wilderness, accumulated in Zapovedniki and continued each year by Zapovedniki scientists collected data is used neither for applied management decisions, nor for yearly, regional, or global comparisons and scientific analyses.

Another problem is access of this research: typewritten volumes of *Lettapis Prirodii* are not very accessible for researchers and other experts. They are kept only in the Zapovedniki headquarters (often remotely located), and in the Department of Nature Reserves, where after 4-5 years they are transferred to official archives, and obtaining them for study becomes even more difficult and inconvenient. Even the task of Xeroxing these 250-page documents can be a formidable one, when many offices are still without photocopying machines.

For these reasons, creating a centralized, accessible computer data base of the data contained in *Lettapis Prirodii* is a priority task.

However, in the meanwhile, while such a system does not exist, an interim solution — the compilation of basic information about scientific research in Zapovedniki — has been attempted. The Biodiversity Conservation Center published the first compilation of research in Nature Reserves in 1994, and a new, updated version with an English translation is being prepared now.

One of the most important factors that will affect the survival of scientific research in Russia's Nature Reserves in this current difficult economic period is the integration of Zapovednik scientists into the national and international scientific community, to the maximum extent possible. For some Nature Reserves, this integration will be rather difficult, considering the great distance and often isolation of Nature Reserves from academic institutions, population centers, and even means of communication.

Achieving such integration requires that Nature Reserves be included in solving fundamental and applied problems, and that direct contact be established between Nature Reserves and institutions which are actively applying their work to solve problems in research and conservation internationally. Dr. Evgeny A. Shvarts is a Senior Researcher of the Department of Biogeography at the Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Chairman of the Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC) Council (Board).

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**NATIONAL PARKS IN THE NEWS**

*by Margaret Williams*

Leaders in Russia’s young National Park system (only eleven years old) are currently faced with the challenge of developing their parks in spite of the many pressures wrought by the country’s transitional economy and political system. The challenge is made more difficult in the absence of a National Park Service to set standards and guidelines and provide support. Russian National Park Directors must find their own way of resolving conflicts and problems while trying to promote their parks.

Among the Russian National Parks, Vodlozerski National Park, in Karelia, the northwestern region in European Russia, stands out as one of the most active in developing National Park management structure, educational programs, and community relations. In the three years since Vodlozerski NP’s establishment, several divisions have been created, including the Divisions for Architectural Planning and Construction, Law Enforcement, Maintenance, and Accounting.

In an effort to combine current research with public education, park Director Oleg Cherviakov created The Environmental Center of Vodlozerski National Park, which serves the dual function of research and education.

Several departments created to fulfill the park’s role in education are housed within the Center.

---In the Scientific Department, researchers and resources managers conduct water quality monitoring, inventories of the natural communities and other studies.

---The Department of Interpretation, which is currently developing environmental education programs for surrounding school districts, works closely with these scientists, re-interpreting scientific data for use by local schools and visitors to the park.

---The Department of Cultural Heritage, staffed by three specialists will undertake the task of collecting historic data on the region and cataloging the many artifacts that have been discovered on NP territory. They are also now planning a museum in Kuganavolok, the small village on Vodlozerski Lake where the Park’s field office is located.

---The Department of Eco-tourism is busily developing special hiking routes along existing trails and water routes, as kayaking and sailing around the nearly two hundred islands are popular sports on Vodlozerski Lake and the two rivers that flow out of the lake.

The Environmental Center’s staff also includes a public relations officer, a legal counsel, and a computer specialist.

In 1993, Director Cherviakov, eager to realize the educational role of the park, and revive local pride in the rich heritage of the region, arranged for a group of fifty local school children to spend two weeks in the park, studying and working to clean up litter.

Cherviakov has actively sought international contacts, especially with United States organizations. In 1993, to bring attention to the park’s value as a natural-historical area, he arranged for an international student camp to take place in the park. Twenty Russians joined twenty American students, (average age 18) along with five teachers from the Denver, Colorado area. American students, who came under the auspices of Service Adventures in Denver, and Russians studied the cultural history of the region, and did scientific field work, including hydrochemical analyses for water.

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quality studies that hadn’t been done in the region 17 years.

For three days the group worked at the Ilinski Pagost, an 18th Century chapel which once served as religious, trade, and community center for island villages in Vdolozerki Lake. This architectural treasure, exemplary of the Russian wooden architecture occurring only in Karelia, is one of three Russian chapels whose surrounding wall still remains intact. For years after WWII, the chapel fell into disrepair, icons were stolen, and the chapel received little attention. The Russian and American students worked for 3 days, clearing overgrowth and cleaning the lichen-covered fence surrounding the chapel.

Unlike the US National Park System, Russian National Parks lack special training for Park staff. Vdolozerki National Park Director Cherviakov, having visited the US National Parks, and been impressed by the American system, has tried to develop training programs for his rangers. In 1994 he arranged a joint program with the Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC) in Pennsylvania. Six law enforcement rangers from Vdolozerki National Park and one ranger from Kenozerski National Park spent two weeks visiting and learning about parks in the United States with Jack Padalino, Director of PEEC. PEEC is a non-governmental education organization that works closely with the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. A few months after their return he organized a training seminar for these and other rangers at the Park’s Petrozavodsk headquarters.

For 1995, Cherviakov has invited American volunteers from the Sierra Club, for a “working visit”, to do trail building and maintenance and learn about the rich culture and natural history of the region. American students will also return with Service Adventures from Denver.

This is just the beginning for Vdolozerki National Park. Thanks to its Director, Oleg Cherviakov, the Park has gone full speed ahead in planning for the future. The Director, 28 years old, virtually single-handedly created the park, overcoming political hostilities from local departments of the Forest Service and regional authorities. What motivates Cherviakov? As a student in Ukraine, Cherviakov traveled throughout Russia. “Some people love the mountains, some like wetlands. I love the forest. When I came here and saw this forest, I knew it had to be preserved”. Cherviakov, after graduating from university, decided not to continue his studies in physics. Instead, he took work in Kosioniksha Nature Reserve in Karelia. He spent the following two years living in a remote forest cabin, and writing proposals and necessary documents for designating the area as a National Park.

In the words of one his colleagues, “if the Ministry hired more people like Cherviakov, we would have a premier system of National Parks”.

Margaret Williams works in the Biodiversity Conservation Center’s Assistance to Protected Areas Program.

VODOZERSKI NATIONAL PARK - LEADING THE WAY IN RANGER TRAINING

Vdolozerki National Park, based in a small village near Petrozavodsk, Karelia, (northwestern Russia) recently held a five-day seminar for law enforcement rangers on staff at the Park. The course, organized by the park itself, illustrates one of the first efforts among parks and Nature Reserves to provide uniform, multi-disciplinary training for all rangers in the park.

Topics presented at the seminar included ornithology (5 hours), mammology (4 hours), wildlife population estimation and regulation of wildlife density (2 hours), ichthyology (2 hours), parasitology of fish (2 hours), forestry (4 hours), forest entomology (2 hours), forest phytopathology (2 hours), legal aspects of park management (2 hours), legal aspects of law enforcement rangers’ work, visitor safety (2 hours) and first aid (2 hours), park flora (2 hours), insects and ticks (1 hour), wetlands of the park (2 hours), medicinal uses of berries (1 hour), medicinal plants (2 hours), cultural history and architecture of northern Russia (4 hours), protected areas - general philosophy and overview of categories (1 hour).
STUDENT INTERNSHIP IN ETHNOGRAPHY, ECOLOGY, AND HISTORY IN A RUSSIAN NATIONAL PARK:

Traditional Land Use and Nature conservation on the middle-Volga

Samskaya Luka National Park and "Parkway", a non-governmental organization supporting park activities, are accepting applications from Russian-speaking foreign students (graduate students preferred). The position is an opportunity for students of land use history, culture, and protected areas to learn, while making a contribution to this National Park.

The territory of Samskaya Luka National Park, located on the shores of the Volga River, enclaves many villages that have existed long before the Park's creation in 1984. Three ethnic groups are represented within the thirty-four villages that lie within Park boundaries. These include a Russian-speaking population, a Chuvash population (Chuvash are a people of Turkish origin) and a Mordovski population (of Finno-ugric origin) ethnic groups have lived in Samskaya Luka for several centuries. They have developed traditions specific to their region, but they all share a common trait: their traditions, even, are tied to nature. These traditions represent various types of sustainable land use that may serve as examples for modern use of our resources.

Knowledge about, and respect for these traditions, is vanishing. Younger generations are not keeping the old ways, and development in the area is also eroding these native tradition. As city residents build second homes near these country villages, they are being pushed from their native lands, and natural monuments to their culture are being lost or forgotten.

The research project is a part of a long-term program in Samskaya Luka National Park, which promotes conservation and sustainable development of natural-cultural systems (within its Cultural Heritage Division). Students would assist in identifying and recording the Park's cultural resources, creating a computer database on personal histories, natural history, landscape maps, and archival materials.

The student-researchers will conduct research on land use traditions through a study of existing materials, recording oral histories, and compiling written version of final results. Students will also develop recommendations on how to conserve and develop the particular traditions of the cultures native to this region that affect natural resource use and thus the natural environment, complete preparation for tourist booklets: "Natural and cultural heritage of Samskaya Luka", "Native Writings of Samskaya Luka", and assist with other academic and informational publications.

The project leader is Yuri Roschevski, Assistant Superintendent of Samskaya Luka National Park and head of the scientific division. Mr. Roschevski is also the Director of Parkway, which acts as an advocacy and educational organization for Samskaya Luka and other National Parks in the region. Although he has a degree in education, with a concentration in chemistry and ecology, Mr. Roschevski has spent a good deal of time listening to stories and tales of village elders — but it is a job for more than one! Participation of foreign students could not only help complete this task, but international attention to the area could help raise awareness — and local pride — of the region's unique cultures.

Samskaya Luka region residents.

Duration of project:
May 15 - August 30, though dates may be flexible.

Payment:
Student researchers will need to find their own finances for travel from USA to Russia, and stipend for stay in Russia. Housing will be provided by Project Leader.

Qualifications:
Students should demonstrate
— high level of written and spoken Russian
— previous academic achievements in publications, academic research
— high level of initiative and ability to work independently
— strong interpersonal and communication skills
— enjoyment of working with people

To apply:

Please send
— resume,
— short letter describing interest in project, ability to fulfill project, and how project is tied to career goals. Also, describe any academic/institutional support you may have in following up on project upon return to USA
— letter of recommendation from Professor regarding language ability
— other letter of support from employer, professor, or academic advisor

Send applications to:
Yuri Roschevski
Tkacheva Street, 109-A, Zhigulevsk
Samara Region 446350, RUSSIA
telephone: (8462)-22874
CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND CONSERVATION

The Peipsi (Chudskoe) Lake Project, Seen through the Eyes of a Conflictologist

by Elena Chernova

Chudskoe Lake...........it is a land of unique nature, culture and history. In 1992 the re-establishment of a border regime between Estonia and Russia disrupted this place in a political event that resulted in social and economic problems in life of native people. The re-drawing of the border divided the Setu - a small nation that inhabits the Chudskoe Lake Region. Setu are Christian Orthodox and speak dialect of Estonian language, they are culturally between Estonians and Russians. At the same time they have their unique culture and traditions.

The "new" regime drew lines where borders cannot be recognized - through culture, through nature. Are the Setu Russians or Estonians, the descendants of Russian old believers, whose settlements at the Lake are over 300 years old? One result of the border has been an increase in poaching: economically valuable fish such as pike and perch, "prefer" to be near the Russian side, where Setu fishermen are not permitted now. What should fishermen, who can not fish outside of the border, do?

Before 1992, a great part of their income had come from the sale of vegetables and fish on the other side of the Lake - sources of income for local population which are now off-limits.

But now, the radical change in the political and economic situation in the border area threatens traditional types of economy, necessary for ecologically sustainable development. For the native people the Lake is not just a natural resources, it is also their Mother Land, the Home, which they inherited and which they will pass to their children.

With the re-establishment of the border, the regional environmental management system fell apart, with environmental agencies expecting legal documents or directions from central governments.

In such cases, what solutions are at hand?

In 1993, representatives of research institutes, Universities, nature conservation organizations, NGOs from Russia and Estonia, concerned with the future of the Lake joined into an international project - "Regulation of environmental problems at the Russia - Estonia border, on the Pskovsko-Chudskoe Ozero", under the leadership of Gulnara Ishkuzina. The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and Central European University supported the project with grants.

The project defined the following objectives: 1) creation of a local agreement on nature conservation and rational use of natural resources, 2) re-establishment of the connections destroyed by the declaration of the independence of Russia and Estonia, 3) development of nature conservation co-operation. All activities fell within three main themes: "Environmental situation at the Lake and its watershed", "Regional development", "International environmental law and negotiations".

Representatives of the Institute of Zoology and Botany of Estonian Academy of Science, Tartu University, The Estonian Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, Estonian National Board of Fisheries (Estonia), Hydrological State Institute (St. Petersburg), Pskov Department of Lake Fisheries Institute, Pskov Goskompriroda (Russia), other institutions, are involved in the project, and representatives of the International Center "Lawyers for Environment" participated in of the project during its first stages.

One of the main actors in the process of conflict resolution has been a group of consultants from the Russian-American Program on Conflictology (RAPC) worked on preparation, directing meetings and negotiations, assessment of the project process.

Conflictologists started with a preliminary analysis of the social and political conditions of the project implementation, which concluded that without support of the regional authorities we would not succeed. Project organizers then found local stakeholders who were interested in the situation and could influence it.

From our daily experience we all know that it is more difficult to discuss a problem at the round table than to find a solution. That is why one of the main tasks was to create a possibility of constructive cooperation. The aim of our first meeting was to start a dialogue. Our discussions, controversies, and mutual claims allowed us to clarify the positions and interests of the two sides. Finally, the various parties looked for ways to renew cooperation on ecological monitoring, information exchange, and economic development. The lawyers started working on "The Local Agreement".

To reach the agreement, RAPC introduced a form of communication uncommon for Russia - Public Session. The goal was to allow every one to express his/her opinion and interests. Leading lawyers in international law, representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Ecology of Russia and Estonia worked at the Session. An important result of the session was an agreement on a controversial issue for Russian Estonian negotiations regarding payments for pollution. If Estonia had signed the agreement, it would have had to pay for pollutants coming from former Soviet installations, including military ones.

The Ministries of foreign affairs were notified about the changes in the agreement. As a result of the project activities the Agreement was signed and a report by the ecologists will be published.

With the Agreement between governments concluded, the main task now is to involve the local public in the environmental management, using the knowledge produced by joint research. Another important task is to provide new forms of economic activities for local people: toward that end, the construction of a joint Russian - Estonian fishing plant is under consideration now.

The resolution of this environmental-political-cultural conflict holds potential for other similar situations which may occur, or already demand attention. The process of concluding the agreement, was the first time in Russia in which an nongovernmental organization (NGO) was able to enter the Ministries of Foreign affairs of two countries with its own legislative initiative and find support. For the first time a nongovernmental project participated in environmental management and planning of a region belonging to two different states. We believe that such projects may implement a new form of public interest representation in managing a region. The project proved that there is a strong potential for public self-government and self-organization in society.

Elena Chernova is a Consultant for the Russian-American Program on Conflictology
THE ARCTIC - ONCE A CHALLENGE TO CONQUER, NOW A CHALLENGE TO CONSERVE

Translated from an article by Dr. Irina Pokrovskaya

Not long ago, conquest over the severe and harsh Arctic nature was considered a feat of honor and bravery, when men of great strength discovered its endless riches. For some whose lives were connected with the Arctic, the region became a source of wealth, for others a symbol of self-realization and victory over one's weaknesses. No where else does the "conquering" of the austere conditions so greatly encourage man's psychology as "king" of nature.

In our time, however, this "victory" over the Arctic has become a false one. Development of the Arctic's resources has threatened the fragile state of Arctic ecosystems. Depletion of Arctic resources, global pollution, and disturbance of nature's balance have been identified by Canada, Russia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland as a problem needing urgent attention. Now, these governments are developing priorities for conserving their common home, the Arctic region. But the specific traits of polar ecosystems demand a special approach to environmental protection. To truly preserve the Arctic's fragile natural communities, we must overlook political borders.

In terms of nature protection, Antarctica has been more fortunate than the Arctic. Currently Antarctica is protected at least for the next 50 years by a whole set of international agreements conventions. Such a unified consensus regarding the Arctic, however, does not exist. The only existing document affecting the whole region is the Agreement for the Conservation of Polar Bears, signed in 1975.

In 1989, the Finnish government gathered representatives of eight Arctic countries to discuss cooperative measures in Arctic nature protection. In 1991, realizing that the fate of the last great wilderness area of the northern hemisphere hung in the balance, these nations began a strategy for protecting the Arctic environment, now called the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS).

During the cold war this part of Russia (which composes more than a third of its territory) was a militarized zone as it was the closest to potential opponents and as a result, was also the most guarded from foreigners. The falling of the iron curtain and the opening of the Russian Arctic for the entire world had a significant role in bringing about the so-called "Rovaniemi Process", the name given to the implementation of AEPS. The AEPS requires bi-annual conferences on the ministerial level at which presentations are given by each country and plans for cooperative action are made.

Specific work identified by the Rovaniemi Process is conducted by four working groups.

All Arctic countries admit that the most serious threat to Arctic ecosystems is the widespread contamination by organic pollutants, heavy metals, and radioactive materials. Thus the greatest attention has been given to the group evaluating pollution and monitoring systems, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program. This working group's main objective is monitoring of the pollution level in various natural components throughout the entire Arctic, including Arctic flora and fauna and the development of recommendations for decision makers. The fifth meeting of this working group took place in early March of this year in the Norwegian city of Troms. By 1996 the group will finish a comprehensive document evaluating the pollution of Arctic in two versions: a brief overview as a tool for decision makers and a more detailed document as a general base for future research. The international Secretariat of this working group is located in Oslo. (Lars-Otto Reiersen, AMAP, Stromsvin 96, PO Box 8100 Dept. N-0032, Oslo, Norway).

Another working group recently formed, the Protection of Arctic Marine Environment, (PAME) met for the first time in Oslo in May this year. Representatives from all Arctic countries attended. Among the group's objectives are the delineation of borders of territorial waters and the economic zones of each Arctic government. For this first meeting, Norway had prepared a proposal for international cooperation on preserving common waters. The international Secretariat of this working group is located in Oslo, Norway under the direction of Per Schive (Dept. of Environment of Norway, PO Box 8013, Dept. N-0030, Oslo, Norway).

The new working group created within the framework of the Rovaniemi Process is the Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response, (EPPR), which conducted its founding congress in Anchorage, Alaska from June 27-July 1. This group will be primarily involved in developing strategies to prepare for consequences of potential nuclear accidents and working with Arctic country governments to coordinate strategies in the event of an accident. The international Secretariat of this working group is based in Stockholm, Sweden under the direction of Ulf Bjurman at the Swedish Ministry of Defense, S-103 33, Stockholm, Sweden.

The fourth working group which has worked long and productively is the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna. The group has already conducted two working conferences, the last of which met in Reykjavik, Iceland in late September, 1994. The group's current priority is the creation of a circumpolar network of protected areas. The Russian side presented a list of recommendations and principles for the development of a unified system of protected areas in the Arctic region. The International Secretariat is located in Quebec, Canada. Their address is Environment Canada, 351 St. Joseph Boulevard, Hull, Quebec, Canada K1A 0H3.

One of the most significant aspects of AEPS has been the recognition of the role of native people in nature protection. Recognizing the importance of their knowledge and traditional ways in, countries participating in AEPS have attempted to include native peoples in developing a strategy for sustainable land use. Thus, the Association of Inuits of the Arctic Circle, the Northern Council of Saami and the Association of Native Peoples of the Northern USSR have been involved since the early stages of development of AEPS.

In Russia, implementation of AEPS occurs in a political, economical, and sociological sphere different from that of the other "Arctic eight". More than any other country, Russia needs international nature protection regulation. Rich raw resources of the Russian Arctic and the mysterious image of the "terra incognita" are still very attractive for the world community. And these resources were made more accessible when in June 1, 1992 Russia opened the North Sea Route for international navigation, an extremely beneficial move for many European and Asian nations.

Russian legislation has not provided for requirements of corporations involved in industrial development on Russian territory, including foreign ones, nor has it demanded that these foreign investors maintain costly protective measures which are standard throughout the rest of the world. Perhaps this is part of the attractiveness of the Arctic for the industrial world?

The international environmental community's concern over the fate of Russian Arctic wilderness was expressed in a resolution at the Fifth World Congress, which called upon western companies to use the same modern technology and high standards that are used elsewhere. However, no binding international agreements controlling industrial activity in the Arctic, have been developed yet. There is only an urgent need for creating a group within AEPS that could formulate a unified legislation for the entire Arctic and exploiting its resources. A mechanism for realizing this goal should be signed by the group at the convention, or by an agreement signed by all eight Arctic nations.

**Irina Pokrovskaya** is an expert on Arctic protected areas at the Biodiversity Conservation Center and a member of the Russian working group on the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna.
The Far East of Russia may be considered one of the world’s great “cradles of biodiversity”. The Maritime (Primor-sky) Region alone is recognized by the IUCN as one of the centers of plant diversity with more than 3,000 higher plant species. Many of these are endemics. Among a few are: Kore-an ginseng, Siberian ginseng, limonnik vine, and yew trees.

The area’s rich fauna includes leopards, brown bears, Himalayan black bears, musk deer, roe deer, spotted deer, Chinese merganser, cranes, and of course, the Siberian tiger.

The forest provides many non-timber products for Russians and indigenous people, who harvest honey, mushrooms, ferns, furs, ginseng, Siberian ginseng, limonnik, and other berries.

In the southern Far East of Russia there remains only one large piece of relatively untouched natural forest left unlogged due to its inaccessibility. It is an enormous area of more than twelve million hectares between Plastun in the South and Sovietskaya Gavan in the North. It includes Sikhote-Alin Zapovednik, the Bilkin River watershed, the new Botcha Zapovednik (created in 1994), and forested territory several times larger around these conservation areas. This is the largest remaining contiguous ecosystem in the Russian Far East, protecting habitat for tigers and bears, their prey, and all other species of Far Eastern taiga.

The Russian Far East has become an arena for a variety of joint Russian-western projects in natural resources conservation and exploitation. Multinational corporations, American and Canadian international aid agencies, and NGOs from all over the world propose to assist the region’s governments in sustainable management of their natural resources and conservation of biodiversity.

The forestry and biodiversity conservation project initiated by the US Agency for International Development (AID) demonstrates many issues and problems that have become common for international undertakings in that region.

All USAID sponsored activities in environmental protection in the NIS (Newly Independent States) are broadly referred to as the Environmental Policy and Technology Project (EPTP). CH2M HILL is the lead firm for a consortium that includes American universities, NGOs, minority-owned businesses, and other organizations with long-standing expertise in environmental and natural resource conservation and management. This consortium was awarded the contract to assist in design, management, and implementation of activities under the EPT program. In the Far East, in addition to CH2M HILL, USAID has agreements with the U.S. Forest Service, ISAR (A Clearinghouse for Grassroots Cooperation in Eurasia), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Pacific Energy and Resources Center (PERC), Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID), and GreenCOM to assist in the implementation of the project. When we speak of EPT in this article we speak of this entire group.

— Ann Rubin, Institutional Development and Public Participation Advisor Moscow EPT office

In Russian-language publications the Biodiversity Conservation Center has published several articles by conservationists concerned with the threat of forest industry intervention from the US Pacific northwest, and with insufficient and contradictory information released by US AID.

This time we want to present a wide spectrum of opinions, expectations, concerns and views associated with this project. We asked US AID to present their concept of the project, and supplemented it by an overview of concerns discussed by various conservation leaders.

USAID’S RUSSIAN FAR EAST SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROJECT

by Ann Rubin

The U.S. Agency for International Development’s (AID) program of assistance and collaboration in the Newly Independent States (NIS) focuses on a range of sectors of the national economies including energy, environment, housing, agriculture, health and education.

The goal of AID’s Environmental Policy and Technology Project (EPT) is to address the serious environmental problems facing people in the NIS by ensuring that economic and social restructuring is achieved in an environmentally sound manner. In the Russian Federation, the EPT project pursues this goal through six regional programs, all of which incorporate AID’s general objectives of pollution prevention, law reform, environmentally sound business development, environmental action planning, NGO strengthening and partnerships, and training.

(continued on next page)
In the Russian Far East, EPT’s broad goal of “sustainable development” is achieved through a resource management project with two distinct purposes — to support environmentally and economically sustainable use of forest resources and to protect biological diversity.

The EPT Far East project began with a small design team that initially outlined a five-year 3-4 million dollar program in Khabarovsk Krai focused on forest protection and rehabilitation, environmental education, and the development of an ecosystem planning and management system with public involvement. USAID then determined that the project should be enlarged to address the critical biological diversity conservation issues of the Sikhote-Alin and should therefore include Primorski Krai as well. The budget expanded to the current proposed budget of $16 million over three years.

Protection of the biological resources of the Sikhote Alin is a key element of the project. Extensive consultations with NGOs, institutes and agencies in both territories made it clear to the initial project definition team (in April) and the subsequent (June-July) design team that biological diversity was endangered by current forestry and management policies and practices.

The project has a strong policy and institutional development component. It addresses the needs and opportunities for effective reform of policies and institutions concerned with forestry, regional resource management, and the establishment and maintenance of protected areas, with strong public participation.

A second component will address forest management issues, including planning for the application of the best forestry methods in all timbering operations, fire protection and management, and forest regeneration. A small enterprise fund will be established to support a wide range of large and small businesses, including forest services and products enterprises, and home timber processing ventures, non-timber rural and forest enterprises, cottage industries, eco-tourism and so forth.

A third component will support new and existing protected area management, selected community-level conservation and establish a conservation trust fund. Approximately 35 percent of the proposed total budget for the Russian Far East project will be allocated for activities that will focus both on immediate action to preserve critical habitat in the Sikhote-Alin region and on the introduction of long-term management practices to secure resources for the future. Strengthening existing protected territories is a key part of this effort through the development of detailed conservation management plans, and improvement of monitoring and information infrastructures. Over the long-term, protected territories will be provided assistance to expand designated protected regions, and to create new protected territories, zones of traditional use and wildlife corridors.

The Project will support improvements in anti-poaching and anti-enforcement programs, promote enforcement of conservation conditions in logging districts adjacent to the reserves and develop forest fire prevention and response capabilities, including equipment for fire stations and training in fire suppression tactics.

Promoting community development and participation in conservation management and in program activities is another crucial aspect of the Russian Far East Project and specifically its biodiversity protection component. In selected communities of indigenous or rural peoples, planning support and small grants will be provided to identify and finance sustainable employment-generating activities that will be compatible with or will reinforce habitat conservation.

The public process and NGO’s will be strengthened to participate in program activities and in decision-making for biodiversity protection and sustainable forest management through a range of activities including: exchange and partnership programs and a grants program to help rural communities assume appropriate conservation management responsibilities. Grants programs to fund NGO institutional development and practical work in environmental protection; professional and technical training, study tours and educational degree programs; establishment of regional environmental centers; and a public environmental education curriculum developed in partnership with U.S. institutions will also be initiated.

The Russian Far East project can contribute to overcoming many of the problems now facing Russia’s forests both in terms of biodiversity protection and sustained economic growth.

Successes of the Russian Far East project should include reductions in the policy, legal and institutional barriers to private sector-led sustainable forest management and biological diversity conservation; increased environmentally sound private sector investments from the United States with at least 20 small or medium-scale, forest related enterprises established or successfully restructured and an additional 50 small businesses receiving training or technical assistance; greater opportunities for NGOs and local communities to influence and take part in designing resource management policy; reductions in losses from fires and improvements in reforestation, including three million seedlings per year planted in high-priority areas; and reductions in immediate and long-term threats to endangered species and habitats, including support to existing protected territories and creation of several additional ones, establishment of a separate system of multiple use areas for tiger corridors and development of the Conservation Trust Fund.

The AID proposal process is lengthy and evolving — a series of preliminary assessments and proposals take place prior to completion of budgets and plans. Although work in the Russian Far East is already underway, the project is still in the planning process. The policy of AID and EPT is to await confirmation of plans before widely disseminating information so as to avoid false expectations of EPT programs. At the same time, due to the large number of people engaged in the project and the wide circle of contacts, Russian and American, governmental and non-governmental, a great deal of diverse information about EPT projects is already in circulation. This has resulted in certain misunderstandings about the EPT Far East project goals and activities.

Should additional questions about EPT projects arise, we encourage people to call us at the numbers listed below. It is absolutely essential that members of the environmental and broader community have and use accurate facts on which to
define their positions and potential roles in the project.

We too understand the benefit of engaging in effective information exchange with the public. We shall be doing so as we design and implement community involvement in the project as well as management support activities and broader policy work. We shall encourage and create advisory bodies and other direct means to ensure that NGOs, among others, have regular access to project information and decision-making, including a project newsletter, open EPT documents archives and more. Local experts and the general public will be actively engaged in environmental impact assessments which will be conducted for every project activity that might have a significant environmental impact. We look forward to working out the details of this cooperation with the NGO community in Moscow and in the Far East.

In Washington, D.C.: USAID, Office of ENE/EEUD/ENR Room 4440 NS Tel. (202) 647-7315
Sandy Hale, Project Director/Teutiae, Communications Specialist Washington, D.C. EPT office, 1919 Penn. Ave, NW, Suite 206 Tel. (202) 835-1457; Fax (202) 835-1463

In Moscow: Regional Office of Health and Environment USAID, 6 Bolshoi Deviatinsky Pereulok, Tel. (095) 9564281
Jerry Knapp, Regional Director Am Rubin, Institutional Development and Public Participation Advisor Moscow EPT office, Miusskaya Square, 7 Tel. 2513341/6364; Fax 251-2852; E-mail: eptpro@glas.apc.org

In the Russian Far East: Dean Stepanek, RFE Project Manager Tel. (4212) 339-849/ 217-243

**Evolving Concerns of Russian Environmentalists**

**Early Concerns:** This project came under the scrutiny of conservation groups last spring when it was completely redesigned from a three million dollar “forest regeneration and fire prevention” effort in the Komsomolsk district of Khabarovsk Region into a larger, sixteen million dollar undertaking in “biodiversity conservation and sustainable forestry”. The second project was planned for the whole Sikhote-Alin range - the backbone of Far Eastern wilderness.

1. It is clear that community-based economic development is necessary for the long-term ecological protection of the region. However, it seemed highly likely that the EPT project would focus more on industrial economic development rather than on community-based economic development.

Many conservationists were concerned that the much-touted “technology transfer” from the USA would be not focused on improving timber processing, but on logging practices, with methods that will open access to the few remaining pristine areas that have up to now been protected solely due to their inaccessibility.

Conservationists also worried that with so much money to spend, USAID could be tempted to give economic support to some of the monstrous Russian state-owned forestry industrial enterprises like Dallesprom, or Primorlesprom, rather than funding real community-based alternatives.

So far, all the attempts of large-scale expansion into the region have been somewhat unsuccessful. Domestic and international conservation groups during the last five years have been very active in stopping the advance of the industry. The only major foreign operation has been Hyundai Corporation logging around the port of Svetlaya, practicing exclusively clearcutting since 1990. With that source depleted, they are running out of a supply fast since they haven’t been allowed into the Bikin River Basin.

Former attempts by the American firm Weyerhaeuser to cut forests on this territory ended in failure, having been in planned in violation of several legal procedures, in an area where the creation of a strict scientific nature reserve (Botchi River Zapovednik) had been proposed. At that time conservationists were lucky: the project was banned, and the Zapovednik was created in 1994.

It is no surprise that Taiga Rescue Network Coordinator for Russia, Alexei Grigoriev, and many other conservationists expected the EPT project to bring the next invasion of the American forest industry. Project planning documents released in late spring supported such interpretation:

The logic of USAID (expressed in documents issued in the spring of 1994) was very straightforward:

a) Sikhote-Alin is a priority for conservation - therefore we should go there, and not in already affected by logging and fires Komsomolsk district;

b) in the times of economic crisis we can do conservation only through “sustainable development”;

c) for this we need profitable, environmentally responsible forest industries;

d) US forest industries are in general profitable.
and environmentally responsible, especially in the Pacific North-West.

According to that early plan, out of $16 million, $1.5 million was earmarked for various "conservation measures"; $9 million proposed to "promote US investment", and one million to "public sector strengthening" - i.e. to pacify local officials.

2. Another concern raised by environmentalists was associated with the desire of project planners to achieve "reductions in the policy, legal and institutional barriers to private sector-led sustainable forest management and biological diversity conservation".

Although Russian forestry and conservation regulations are far from being perfect, they nevertheless set strict limitations on certain forestry practices such as maximum size of clearcuts, maximum steepness of slopes where logging is allowed, etc. Many foreign logging companies seek to "reduce" these restrictions when they start operations in Russia. Because clearcuts are prohibited or strictly limited on large territories in the Sikhote Alin region, conservationists feared that it was these regulatory "barriers" that foreign companies would seek to be "reduced".

There has been concern about the extent to which the EPT will promote clearcutting as a "sustainable" forest practice. In the Sikhote-Alin region of the Russian Far East, the primary timber harvesting method has historically been high-grading — selectively picking out the largest and most accessible trees. While damaging to the overall structure and ecology of the forests, highgrading has been significantly less damaging than the practice of clearcutting. Although much of the Sikhote Alin's forests have been high-graded, you do not see the bare clearcut patches that dot the Pacific Northwest of the United States.

Additionally, the EPT is promoting the establishment of plantations for artificial reforestation. Historically, foresters in the Russian Far East have always relied on natural forest regeneration. This is mandated by the selective cutting, the density of forest stands, and the incredible biodiversity. If a strong push is made to increase artificial plantations, it will likely lead also to an increase in clearcutting.

3. While observing the practices of international aid agencies local environmentalists and authorities feared that money would be used to "tame" the non-governmental sector, keeping them busy quarreling over resources and posing less resistance to new attempts at large scale invasion of foreign forest companies.

All these concerns and fears were exacerbated by the fact that EPT planners were having tremendous problems with communicating their mission clearly to various entities in Russia. Their plans changed daily, and thus they were hesitant to release any information to the public, or even to governmental agencies. Confusing information that became available to various groups in Moscow evoked various wild speculations regarding the EPT mission.

New Concerns Arise

Various conservation groups voiced their concerns regarding the EPT Far-Eastern project in articles, letters to EPT, conferences and meetings. During the summer of 1994, plans for the project were re-designed and discussed with a large number of "stakeholders" in the Far East. The official plan known since August is described in the USAID article above.

While the new plan does not fully remove any of concerns that were initially raised, it is much better than its precursors. Fortunately, the $9 million for support to "sound US investment" was eradicated from the plan. Also, the biodiversity conservation component was significantly strengthened, with conservation measures defined at a greater level of detail. The last version of the project plan was met with greater approval among conservation organizations.

We are now rather concerned that the project that was initially planned in a great hurry (by an agency that claimed that "US Government wants to see immediate results") has significantly slowed.

Teams of consultants have come several times to Russia and designed plans involving the participation of a large number of governmental agencies, protected areas managers, scientists and environmental NGOs. Now, local governments, businesses, communities and NGOs express desire to start the project as soon as possible. In the regional administration, certain officials have threatened to cancel the project if implementation does not start.

There is a widespread fear that resources that could be spent on support to Zapovedniki and parks, protected areas planning, ranger training, marketing of minor forest products, will be spent on yet more "clarification of the project's work-plan by EPT consultants."
Now the project is rapidly losing the credibility that was so hard to gain. Since early December, various AID offices have been clarifying and approving the official work plan — a procedure that is likely to last into February or March. Subsequently, the work plan, translated into Russian, will be reviewed by Russian “stakeholders”. I do not dare to predict how many more times it will go back and forth. The USAID article does not state when the implementation should actually begin.

AFTER EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH FAR EASTERN ENVIRONMENTALISTS WE AT THE BCC HAVE COME TO BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL BOTH FOR CONSERVATION AND FOR USAID’s REPUTATION IN RUSSIA IF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION COMPONENT OF THE EPT PROJECT STARTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, WITHOUT FURTHER PROCRASTINATION.

Written by Eugene Simonov, with contributions from Aleksei Grigoriev (Russia Coordinator for Taiga Rescue Network), David Gordon (Co-Director of Pacific Environment Resources Council), and other concerned conservationists.

UNDERLYING THREATS

by Aleksei Grigoriev, Russian Coordinator for Taiga Rescue Network

To Russian conservationists, the most alarming part of the US AID project is the basis for it — the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the United States and Russia, regarding cooperation in forest product industries. The MOU was signed on June 23, 1994 in Washington DC by USA Vice-President Gore and Russian Prime Minister Chernomyrdyn. The Russian side of the MOU is represented by State Russian Forest Industrial Company Roslesprom and its regional units. (The Chairman is Mr. M. Tatsyun).

The objective of the MOU is to facilitate $4 billion in trade for USA logging, wood processing, and paper and pulp technology and equipment sales over 5 years, in exchange for Russian forest product raw materials. Russia, including the Russian Far East, has more than 50 percent of the world’s softwood volume and is the only viable, sufficiently large source of timber for US markets.

The economic benefits for the USA???
1) preservation of an estimated 100,000 jobs in American wood processing industries, with additional job creation in related industries (stevedoring, insurance, housing, etc)
2) decrease in price of lumber, and related impact on the housing and building construction sectors
3) Russian foreign exchange earnings from log exports to the United States can lead to significant purchase of USA forest products technology and equipment exports.

Possible foreign exchange earnings for Russia (which in otherwise would not take place) could begin at $110 million in 1997 and potentially reach $1.2 billion in 2003. We are not opposed to economic development in forestry. But we are concerned about the export of US technology (demonstrated in the ravaged US Pacific Northwest) to Russia.

One of the possible implementations of the MOU are the potentially active roles the Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy (Minatom), and the American REM Capital Corporation (based in Arlington, Virginia, USA) might play in development efforts in the Far East. The Russian nuclear industry’s participation in this project is officially explained by USDA’s prohibition of log importation before the guaranteed removal of pests and disease.

To assure that Russia can deliver such timber to the USA, Russia’s Minatom will construct 11 facilities for sterilization of timber with ionized energy technology (irradiation treatment). Seven plants will be built in the Russian Far East. Participants in this deal have already applied for loans for this project from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Financial support for MOU implementation will be provided through the USA Export-Import Bank (EXIM) and Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC).

One year ago Vice President Gore met Russian environmentalists. He spoke eloquently about the needs for nature protection. And then he signed this MOU...

Despite the developments of “glasnost”, access to official documents in Russia is often blocked by a series of official obstacles. If our colleagues in America, where information is ten times more easy to obtain, can help us receive legal documents related to this MOU and development projects, we will be grateful.

Please contact: Aleksei Grigoriev, Russian coordinator of Taiga Rescue Network c/o Center for Coordination and Information, Socio-Ecological Union. P.O.Box 211, Moscow 121019, RUSSIA phone: (095) 206-8894 or 928-7608; fax: 206-9790; e-mail: soceco@glas.spc.org <for taiga rescue network> or grig@glas.spc.org

drawing by V.Smirin
RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES:
this is the first in a series of articles on the problems of protecting flora and fauna in the former Soviet Union

THE ARCTIC FOXES OF MEDNYI (COPPER) ISLAND

Written by Drs. Elena Kruchenkova and Nikolai Formozov, translated by Joanne Turnbull

Russia boasts three subspecies of Arctic fox: one on the continent, and the other two on the Commander Islands, Copper and Bering, two tiny drops of land halfway between Kamchatka and the Aleutians. The Arctic foxes of the Commanders are so distinctive as to have been classified at one time as a separate species: Bering’s Arctic fox. Today the subspecies that inhabits Copper Island, Alopex lagopus semenovi, is in danger of becoming extinct.

A little history. The Commander Islands were discovered in 1741 by the Danish navigator Vitus Bering (then in Russia’s employ) under highly dramatic circumstances. Emaciated by scurvy and the many-month-long voyage to the shores of America, Bering’s crew took the islands for what they desperately hoped was Kamchatka. One of the first to doubt this was their famous German naturalist George Steller. Steller noted that the animals on these islands, especially the Arctic foxes, were unafraid of the weary mariners, on the contrary, they were aggressively curious. To protect their provisions from the foxes, Bering’s men slept on top of them, and even so the animals managed to gnaw the meat right out from under them. The sick had to be guarded, lest the foxes devour them, too.

Beginning with Steller, the first naturalist ever to set foot on the islands, the Commanders became a sort of Land of Oz for Russian naturalists. They were drawn by the extraordinary wealth of the ecosystems. Alas, the Commanders have already lost two endemic species of vertebrates — Steller’s sea cow and Steller’s cormorant — and several endemic subspecies, including Eurasia’s only indigenous populations of bald eagles and Canadian geese. The next on this sad list may be the Arctic fox of Copper Island.

How did the Arctic fox get to the Commanders? This question tortured Steller. He supposed that the foxes had been carried to the islands on ice floes. But today the sea around the islands never freezes and ice floes in this region of the Pacific Ocean are extremely rare. Most likely, the foxes of Bering and Copper Islands have been isolated from continental populations and from each other since the end of the Ice Age or at least 5,000 to 7,000 years ago. During the glacial period, Kamchatka was linked to the Commanders in winter by an ice bridge.

What is unique about these Arctic foxes? The Arctic foxes of Copper Island are the largest in Eurasia. Their dark fur is unusually beautiful. Almost all these foxes belong to the so-called blue form. The typical white foxes were found only rarely here.

The behavior and ecology of these foxes are similarly unique. Their entire life, unlike that of continental foxes, is connected with the sea coast. They gather food along the shore, steal eggs from bird colonies and can even catch fur-seal pups several times their own size. And as Bering’s beleaguered crew learned, these Arctic foxes have no fear of man. For this reason, they make ideal subjects for researchers investigating the behavior of animals of prey in Eurasia. The structure of their social groups, too, is unusual. They have very strong family ties. Often two sisters or a mother and a daughter will unite their young in one burrow and rear them together. Non-breeding animals, remain, as a rule, with their parents and help them big up younger siblings. Even now, when Arctic foxes on Copper Island are so few, they still live in groups, they do not separate, and many free burrows stand empty.

But perhaps most astonishing of all is how these foxes have influenced the landscape. Arctic foxes, as we know, belong to the dog family, and like any dog they mark their territory. They try to leave their mark (of excrement and urine) wherever other foxes have left theirs. The Arctic foxes beat paths through the stony tundra in the center of Copper Island. At one time the foxes were so numerous that along the paths, in those places where they always left their mark, high hummocks of luxuriant grass sprouted like milestones.

The life of the Arctic fox post-Bering. The Arctic foxes were one of the magnets that drew Russian trappers to the Commanders. From the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th, hunters caught some 1,000 foxes on each island annually. This means that there was a population of several thousand on both Bering and Copper. In the 1920s, island fur farming became popular in the USSR: Arctic foxes were raised intensively and their numbers grew. But natural selection was also conducted with an equal intensity. All the foxes were caught and inspected, and the ones with “non-standard” fur rejected. It was at this point that the Commanders’ white form of Arctic fox disappeared for good.

The fur farming on Copper Island stopped in the late 1960s. In 1974, the numbers of Arctic foxes were as high as before, but in 1975, the first signs of a drastic drop were noted. In 1976, there were less than 200 Arctic foxes and virtually all the whelps died. In 1978, roughly 100 remained. During the 1980s there were only a few dozen foxes left, and some years it was feared they had disappeared entirely.
The reason for this catastrophic drop in the population of Arctic foxes was, it seems, their extraordinary sensitivity to such common canine sicknesses as ear mange caused by small ticks. The ticks evidently arrived on the island with domestic dogs. And the Arctic foxes, having lived so long in isolation, had not immunity to the ordinary non-life-threatening diseases that came with them. The ticks settled not only in their ears but throughout their bodies. The whelps suffered most, their fur teeming with millions of ticks that literally ate them alive.

What has been and can be done to save the Arctic fox?

In 1993, the Commander Islands Zapovednik (Nature Reserve) was created. But so far, little funding has been made available for research in this reserve. In 1993, thanks to money from Russia’s Fund for Current Biology (founded by Aleksandr Abolits), England’s Flora and Fauna Preservation Society and the People’s Trust for Endangered Species’ Task Force (Prof. David MacDonald), and to medicine from Germany’s Institute fur Haustierkunde (Prof. Herwart Boeklen and Dr. Dorit Feddersen-Petersen), Moscow State University oologists made their first attempts to treat sick whelps in the wild. The results were encouraging: of 36 whelps treated, 36 survived the critical period and by autumn not one had died.

Another possible approach to saving these foxes comes from history. In the 18th and 19th centuries (before Alaska was sold to the United States), Russian hunters settled many of the Aleutian islands with Arctic foxes from the Commanders. These foxes loives there still, though local ecologist see them as a threat to the sea-shore bird colonies. The question is, are the Arctic foxes on the Aleutians a pure Commander subspecies or are they a hybrid? If they are pure breeds, they could be used to preserve the genetic variability of this subspecies.

Ongoing research on the Arctic fox depends on ongoing funding. If you are interested in either joining or supporting our work, please contact:

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Dr. N. Formazov is a member of the Species Survival Commission of IUCN

Dr. Elena Kruchenkova is the coordinator of the Arctic fox project on the Commander Islands

CONSERVATION LEGISLATION

By Dr. Vadim Mokievsky

The present Russian legislation is exceedingly intricate because it consists of two very different parts - some legislative acts persisting from Soviet times and new acts and regulations that were adopted during this period of economic and political reforms. Often these acts contradict each other. Although Russia has a comprehensive set of laws covering all parts of biodiversity conservation, the main problem is in implementation of them. Here, in the first of a series, we have provided a short review on Russian conservation legislation, which may help readers become acquainted with both its general structure and particular laws and regulations.

1. Specially Protected Natural Areas

In next issue, we hope to share with you the essence of a few protected areas law that is now sitting on the President’s table, awaiting a signature. In the meanwhile we present a brief overview of basic laws now governing protected areas at the federal level. And we remind you to please refer to the first issue of Russian Conservation News for the definitions of protected areas.

The chief act regulating the issues of nature conservation in Russia is the Environmental Protection Act (1992). The act defines major types of specially protected natural areas and their protection regimes. Traditionally, there have been 4 major types of such territories in Russia: Zapovedniki (strict nature reserves), National Parks, Zakazniki (wildlife reserves), and Nature Monuments. Zapovedniki are owned by the federal government, with their territories are classified as federal natural resources (Decree of the President of Russian Federation # 2144, of December 12, 1994). Unlike Zapovedniki, the chief goal of National Parks is protection of ecosystems for recreational purposes. Although the law provides only for the creation of Parks on the federal level, de facto there are a few natural parks created under regional administrations.

Zakazniki (nature preserves) can be created on the federal or regional level. Natural Monuments are designated areas, usually small in size, protecting natural objects of special interest that can be designated both by federal and regional authorities.

Other legislative acts pertinent to the preservation of natural and cultural heritage of Russia include the Decree of the Superior Soviet of Russian Federation # 447-1 of December 25, 1990. According to the decree:

* the natural and cultural heritage of peoples of Russia cannot be privatized;
* land within designated Zapovedniki can not be sold, leased or used for extracting natural resources;
* unless a positive resolution of a state environmental impact statement is secured, federal and local administration should prohibit distribution of lands belonging to the protected areas, as well as any construction, road building, drainage, mining and other potentially destructive activities within such areas.

Not only already existing protected areas are preserved under the decree, but also those territories where protected areas are proposed for establishment in the future. Decree of the President of Russian Federation # 1155 of October 02, 1992 emphasizes that preservation and expansion of natural
protected areas is one of the priorities of the state environmental policy of Russia. The Decree proposes expanding the area under Zapovedniki and national parks in Russia to up to 3% of Russia's total land area.

However, total land area placed under protection can be substantially larger within administrative units (i.e., regions and autonomous republics) of the Russian Federation. For instance, the decree of the President of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) # 837 of August 16, 1994, prescribes designation of not less than 20% of the area of every ulus (district) in the republic as nature reserves or parks. Similar decisions have been made by other governors in the regions.

2. Conservation of rare species of plants and animals

Rare and endangered species of plants and animals are listed in the Red Data Book (Kranaaya Kniga) of Russia. According to Article 65 of the Environmental Protection Act, these species are to be exempt from any economic use throughout their geographical range. Activities which cause species' decline, or degradation of their habitat are prohibited. Similar provisions apply to the species listed in the regional Red Data Books within a particular region of Russia.

Traditionally, on a regional level in Russia, rare species were recognized in lists compiled by regional authorities. Whereas the protection of listed species was governed according to regional laws, now, according to the Article 5 of the 1993 Constitution of the Russian, all subjects of the Russian Federation are considered to have equal legal status and may establish regional Red Data Books. Thus, variation in enforcement among regions was eliminated and now, the strict provisions of Article 65 of the Environmental Protection Act would apply to all species listed in these regional Red Data Books.

In regions of the Russian Federation, considered a Republic, regional Red Books already exist or are being prepared. In similar districts of Russia, called Oblast or Krai, a list of rare species has been compiled since the early 1980s. Many of these list includes only rare species of plants; in some cases, lists also include birds, mammals, insects, and other animals.

To a large degree, biological monitoring of the status of these rare species depends on the enthusiasm of interested scientists in a given region. While recommendations for the ensuring the survival of each species are made when the species is listed, the recommendations are not binding legal documents.

Currently there are no legal provisions specifying the process of compiling rare species lists, or removing the species from the Red Data Book as its population increases or status improves.

Species are listed into the Red Data Book by a Commission of expert zoologists and botanists within the Ministry of Environmental Protection. The Commission compiles the Red Data Book every several years, at which time new species may be added or formerly listed species may be excluded.

Recovery plans of species listed in the Red Data book occurs for individual species, usually in Nature Reserves. For instance, in Pri-Oksky Terrasniy Zapovednik, European bison, (Bison bonasius) are being bred and reintroduced into the wild. Captive breeding facilities for rare species of Siberian white crane (Grus leucogeranus) exist at Oksky Zapovednik, and Voronezhsky Zapovednik is well known for its program in reintroduction of the European beaver (Castor fiber). Some federal programs exist for the conservation of rare species, such as the Siberian tiger.

Conservation and use of wildlife is also regulated by the Law of Russian SFSR on Conservation and Use of Animals (1982) until the adoption of a new act, which is in preparation in the Duma.

3. Preventative environmental protection

The Environmental Protection Act of Russian Federation requires compliance with the environmental standards and regulations for all enterprises, whether in process of creation or already operating. The law stipulates a mandatory ecological expertise (Environmental Impact Assessment) for projects which may have a serious impact on the environment. The Regulations for the State Ecological Expertise are ratified by the Decree of the Council of Ministers - the Government of Russian Federation # 942 of September 22, 1993. The expertise is based on the environmental impact assessment (EIA), performed by the organization who proposes the project. The organization must pay for the EIA from its budget. The Regulations for EIA are adopted by the Decree of the Ministry of the Environment Protection # 222 of July 18, 1994. The Regulations list types of the projects/enterprises for which the EIA is mandatory. This list can be expanded by the regional administrations at their discretion. Projects for which EIA is required but not completed, or which were classified by the EIA team as unsatisfactory, are prohibited. Deliberate evasion of Ecological Expertise, failure to comply with the requirements or providing wrong or distorted data entails administrative penalties.

4. Conservation of natural vegetation and wildlife resources

Wildlife resources are protected under the Law of Russian SFSR on Conservation and Use of Animals (1982) and normative acts, issued according to the Law by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, the Department of Game and Hunting and the Department of Fisheries of Russian Federation. Conservation of natural vegetation is regulated by the Fundamentals of the Forest Legislation of Russia and regulations of the Federal Forests Service concerns only forest resources and some other valuable plants. Conservation of plant species in natural communities outside of forests is upheld by regional administrations and local authorities at their discretion.

In the next issue, we will discuss Russia's participation in multilateral treaties and other international commitments in nature conservation.

Dr. Vadim Mokievsky is a member of the Advisory Board of the Biodiversity Conservation Center, directing the program Nature Conservation Politics and Legislation.
CONSERVATION NGO'S

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN THE NEWS....

Many western organizations wonder what is happening and who to contact in the field of environmental education in the former USSR. Below is a description of the Association for Environmental Educators. Check the CONSERVATION CALENDAR in this issue for an upcoming conference being organized by ASEKO

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS POOL
RESOURCES, SHARE IDEAS

by Vadim Kalinin

The Association for Environmental Education (ASEKO) is a voluntary public association and a branch of the Socio-Ecological Union (SEU). (The SEU is a non-governmental organization uniting over 200 independent active organizations and groups throughout the former USSR.) Established in May of 1991, ASEKO has close to 1000 individual and collective members.

The goal of the ASEKO is to assist the development of environmental education programs and the establishment of a center for information on programs and methodology in the countries of the former Soviet Union, and to unite the creative potential of teachers.

With this goal in mind, the ASEKO's undertakes the following activities:

1. Creation of a network for information exchange including:
   - networking and promotion of information exchange among ASEKO members and educational collectives;
   - establishment of an association of teachers, specialists, enthusiasts, and parents as a basis for developing general projects; provision of information and methodologies to assist educators in their work; and
   - assistance in developing a world-wide telecommunication network to exchange information on environmental education.

2. Elaboration of educational programs and projects

Within the framework of the ASEKO's activities is the development and promotion of the following programs:

* Programs for 5-10 year olds include Game Ecology that introduces the children to basic natural processes and to a general understanding of ecology; and Color Ecology that encourages the development of a creative perception of nature through the arts.

* Programs for 11-12 year olds include Tree of the Land Where I Live, a program that explains geo-botanical science and human's responsibility towards nature; and River of My Childhood, the first stage of the Water World project.

* Programs for high school and university students include Water World, an integrated research project that assesses the quality of water in the environment to improve the condition of the bodies of water.

* Programs for students specializing in humanitarian studies include Ecology and Culture that promote the use of both natural sciences and humanitarian studies to develop solutions to environmental problems.

3. Holding training seminars on individual programs and projects. (During 1993 - 1994, 20 seminars were conducted for about 400 teachers; ASEKO programs and projects are applied in more than 100 educational institutions throughout the territory of the former Soviet Union.)

Organizing annual international seminars - unique in the former USSR - that are planned, regular, and accessible to all interested in meeting with teachers who are working in environmental education programs. Close to 350 people participated in the annual seminars held in Obninsk, Uralak, and Kazan during 1991-1993.

4. Publication of informational materials and methodological literature including the quarterly ASEKO Journal - the only periodical that focuses on environmental education and is published in Russian. The first and second issues of the Journal were distributed free of charge.

The Journal helps to
- facilitate contacts between Association members, to acquaint readers with perspective developments, modern methods and technologies in the field of environmental education;
- further the active participation and inclusion of teachers and students in work on environmental education projects;
- report on main events occurring in environmental education;
- promote an ecological ethic to change how people value the environment and their understanding of their responsibility to the environment.

5. Adaptation and application of environmental education programs developed by foreign colleagues.

To this purpose, the ASEKO has undertaken the following activities:

- establishment of a library of foreign literature;
- translation and adaptation of foreign textbooks;
- invitation of foreign experts and conducting workshops for former Soviet teachers; the goal of workshops is not only to teach teachers how to teach students, but to establish constant and dependable contacts between a number of countries working in environmental education;
- work on a number of foreign programs and international projects in environmental education: Project GREEN, a well-known international student network that monitors and protects bodies of water; Project Ecology and Universal Language, at promote the exchange of children's art and creative works with environmental themes; joint projects that work to establish a system for monitoring water quality by students and teachers in the respective countries of the former USSR.

Vadim Kalinin is the Coordinator of the Association of Environmental Education

Russian Conservation News
NATURE SHOULD HAVE HER OWN PEOPLE
by Julia Sayapina

“We consider it our moral duty to protect nature from barbarian destruction by humans. We feel ourselves to be part of nature. We cannot sit idly, watching her die. We defend what we love…Nature should have her own people everywhere.”

(From the Manifesto of the “Druzhina” Student Movement for Nature Conservation, adopted in 1994)

After 22 years of existence, this fall the Druzhina Student Movement for Nature Conservation adopted its first public Manifesto stating the beliefs, values, and goals of its dedicated membership. First organized at a student conference in 1972, the Movement was formed upon genuine democratic principles in the midst of a communist society, and from it came many of today’s environmental and democratic leaders.

The Druzhina Movement originated quietly in the 1960’s when students and scholars in biology, soil science, geography, forestry, and game management became tired of passively watching the rapid destruction of nature in the Soviet Union. They could no longer study the results of the destructive processes without being able to stop or slow the destruction. They simply rose to nature’s defense, as individuals and small groups of colleagues — without a formal manifesto or confrontational declaration.

The movement expanded rapidly. Representatives of 28 groups from around the Soviet Union attended the first seminar in 1972. At its peak in 1987, over 100 member organizations belonged. Without ever having a single paid staff member, the Movement held regional seminars, workshops, and national conferences.

During the Soviet years, the Druzhina Movement was a highly effective, yet inconspicuous voice for nature conservation. The Movement cooperated well with the authorities, and cleverly used existing opportunities within the state framework to satisfy its “selfish” conservation interests. Because the opinion of the general public on conservation issues was not permitted to appear in the press (even opinions expressed by the most competent experts in the field were not allowed), the Druzhinas solicited the participation of the most famous scientists for their activities.

On the local level, Druzhinas successfully used massive letter-writing campaigns to persuade authorities, conducted state-sanctioned public inspections of nature reserves, and performed volunteer research, construction, or interpretive and educational work. Supported by scientists, and bureaucrats in the government and semi-quasi “nature protection societies,” the Druzhinas compelled local authorities to establish protected natural areas and to adopt regulations protecting vulnerable species (based upon a priority list compiled by the Movement). Later, the Druzhina would ensure that the regulations were enforced, first through state-sanctioned “public inspections,” then by monitoring the responsible state agencies.

But the Druzhina Movement’s existence as an organization was rarely mentioned, so that the Soviet authorities would never have the slightest hint that an unregistered, self-created and self-governing body existed. Although the movement posed no real danger to the regime, it simply did not fit into any established category of allowable public activity for Soviet Citizens. Unlike officially recognized “public” organizations, the movement was not built upon the principle of democratic centralism and subordination of a minority to the majority. Instead, the movement was based upon the principle of democratic principles, horizontal connections between the different Druzhina groups, and consideration of minority interest. The Movement itself never made it’s group members act against their will — all joint expeditions, inspections, and activities were carried out upon the mutual approval of all sides involved.

In the new Post-Soviet era, such genuinely democratic principles led to the creation of the most extensive and successful environmental alliance in the former Soviet Bloc — the Socio-Ecological Union (SEU). The backbone of the SEU in many regions consists of former Druzhina members, or “alumni.” Indeed, many of today’s most influential environmentalists participated in the Movement as students, including Aleksei Yablokov, the chief Environmental Advisor to Yeltsin.

Today, the Druzhina Movement consists of about 50 organizations, created and run by students and young professionals at universities and institutes throughout the former USSR. New times in Russia are complex. Sweeping changes in the economy, the breakup of the nation, drawing of new borders and barriers, surges of nationalism, rampant inflation, and increased transportation costs challenge the strength of the Movement. And yet, the members continue to organize research and survey expeditions, develop management strategies for proposed protected areas, enforce protection regimes, launch public campaigns, and lobby officials. They meet regularly at workshops and conferences and together share the history of the Movement, rich in events, experiences and traditions, and still vividly present in legends, books, and songs.

Julia Sayapina has been a member of Druzhina since 1984, was a local Druzhina leader for five years, and participated in the creation of the Socio-Ecological Union.

In its recent manifesto, the Druzhina Movement puts its true principles on paper for the first time in its history:

“The Movement of Druzhinas on Nature Conservation has been and remains first of all a movement to conserve living nature. This implies that:
1. We recognize the right of all living creatures to live and to enjoy the freedom enjoyed by human beings.
2. We do not accept the moral claim of humans to assume an exclusive and superior power over nature.
3. We perceive the illusory character of such a claim. We see that the activities of humans closely resemble the behavior of other species, put in a situation with neither external nor internal constraints. This behavior is indicated by the over consumption of natural resources leading to the degradation of the species’ habitat. The only outcomes here are either death of the species or considerable reduction of its population size. For humanity it appears that controlling mechanisms are fatal epidemics and international conflicts. Local but expanding zones of ecological catastrophe coupled with general degradation of human health are but two signs that something is deadly wrong with the way we treat nature.
4. We hope that the reason of humans will find its ultimate expression in the ability to understand the perilous path of modern civilization and to stop and choose another way while there still is time.
5. For its own part, the Movement will struggle for:
   - Changing people’s attitudes towards nature and their place in it;
   - Protecting healthy natural ecosystems;
   - Preserving and restoring wild nature on lands disturbed by humans;
   - Encouraging careful and rational use of natural resources within appropriate limits, and having the sustainability of natural ecosystems as a top priority.”

(The Druzhina workshop was made possible through the generous financial support of ISAR (USA) and the regional Nizhegorodsk Administration and organizational support from the Nizhegorodski University)
WWF IN RUSSIA - 
WORLD WILD FUND FOR NATURE 

By Laura Williams

Currently the WWF "family" is comprised of 23 national organizations in different countries of the world and four associated members, for which the general headquarters is located in Gland, Switzerland.

WWF's work in Russia began several years ago, mostly by conducting joint expeditions. The first experience in providing practical help to Russia was the financing of planning for the Big Arctic Zapovednik in 1991-1992. WWF activity in Russia gathered momentum in 1993, when WWF and the Socio-Ecological Union compiled an investment package on urgent measures for conserving Russia's biological diversity.

The project, supported by a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, incorporated over 100 authors: experts from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Zapovedniki (Nature Reserves), various scientific research institutes, and non-governmental organizations. The final document contains about 100 proposals for projects which are divided into three categories: Projects of federal significance include proposals for training courses, coordination centers, and development of environmental education and ecological tourism. Projects at the regional level are directed at developing and strengthening regional nature conservation capacity. The third category of projects divided specific programs by "bioregions". These projects include conservation of rare and endangered species, creation of new nature reserves, and support for existing Zapovedniki. Based on 1993 prices, the overall budget for these programs is $20 million.

The final investment package received high marks of approval from the international conservation community and was accepted by WWF as a foundation for practical help to Russia in determining nature conservation objectives in Russia. The expansion of WWF activities in Russia brought about the need for creating an in-country structure which could coordinate such work. Thus in June 1994, the WWF Programme Committee officially approved the creation of a Russian Programme Office of WWF-International.

In 1994, seven projects began under the WWF Russian Programme Office:

1. Comprehensive project for nature conservation in Volga River Delta which provided financial assistance to the Astrakhansky Zapovednik and resulted in the creation of two new nature reserves
2. Development of a program for conservation of saiga antelope and its habitat in the Astrakhan region
3. Arctic Programme
   - Core support for the Big Arctic Zapovednik
   - Creation of a biological monitoring station in the Ust-Lensky Zapovednik
   - Expansion of the Taimyr Reserve

4. Tiger Conservation Program
   - Creation of anti-poaching brigades
   - Core support to Sikhote-Alinsky and Lazovsky Zapovednik

5. Planning of New Nature Reserves
   - Koryakski on the Kamchatka Peninsula
   - Yamalski in northwestern Siberia
   - Gydanski in northwestern Siberia
   - Amurski in the Far East
   - Tunguski in southern Siberia

6. Development of strategies for
   - Sustainable use of natural resources on Kamchatka Peninsula
   - Conservation of brown bear on Kamchatka Peninsula

7. Data collection on illegal export of wildlife products

8. GEF project preparation for the development of a Russian Biodiversity Strategy

Activities of the WWF-Russian Programme Office in 1995 include:

- Opening a projects office in Vladivostok to manage a biodiversity conservation program in the Far East (sponsored by USAID)
- Creation of a TRAFFIC-Russia office (WWF-Germany)
- Provision of field equipment to 10 nature reserves (Tuborg Foundation)
- Development of a management plan for Baikal-Lensky Zapovednik (WWF-Germany)
- Regional capacity building for conservation institutions (Eurasia Foundation)
- Expansion of Ust-Lensky Zapovednik (WWF-Sweden)
- Support to captive breeding facilities for rare birds in Oksy Zapovednik; assistance in creation of a public environmental education program in Bryansky Les Zapovednik; and core support to Niznesvirsky Zapovednik (Danish Ministry of Environment)
- Creation of a special working group for the conservation of Saiga antelope (WWF-International)

- Creation of the Udilsky Nature Reserve (WWF-Denmark)
- Creation of Shantarsky Nature Reserve (WWF-Germany)
- Developing an integrated conservation plan for the argali and snow leopard in the Altai region (Mezhkontamb).

Other possibilities include creation of a conservation trust fund, developing a training program for nature reserves, and carrying out a sustainable forestry project in the Pechora-Ilicksky Zapovednik (with anticipated funding from the Swiss government).

Laura Williams is the Projects Manager for WWF-Russian Programme Office in Moscow
ECOLOGICAL TRADITIONS OF THE KOLA POMORI PEOPLE
by Olga Lyapaeva and Irina Zaiteva

Sometimes it seems as though we have flown from another universe, and are looking at Earth below us, burned and destroyed. Scouring to fix these things, we notice only the mistakes of previous generations. Perhaps a closer look at the experience of people who have lived in nature over the course of centuries without destroying it, might teach us how to apply their lessons today. With just that goal in mind, we prepared for an expedition to the Terski shore of the Kola Peninsula.

In July of this year our expedition visited four villages in the Terski District of Murmansk Region, collecting "environmental traditions" of the Pomori people* for the Biology Department of Moscow State University. (For lack of a better term, we use this rather silly one. If people have been living for generations dependent on nature for their entire lives, interdependence between nature, traditions and economic activities are of course environmentally oriented).

We were especially interested in people who had been involved in marine hunting and use of fisheries and thus had no interest in destroying their environment. Our objective was to find examples among native cultures where uses of natural resources clearly had low impacts on the environment. Such examples can provide valuable information to conservationists about the history of natural territories, the historical use of natural resources (about which little data has been preserved), and about current land use practices. This material could be used for educational purposes and may help in protecting natural-cultural sites.

Our first thought developed linearly: having lived and fished for centuries - the Pomori observed traditional limits on taking. However, it was not exactly so. Unaccustomed as we were to these ways, it was difficult to understand that in a traditional culture life is understood not only on a rational level but on a magical one. This topic was directly interesting to us.

Having no business in the forest, they rarely went into the woods. The forest had its own "carcetaker". Many stories tell about unusual events that happened to people when they went to the forest. One tells of meeting a "good witch", another meets a wood goblin. In some cases people went to the forest and never returned! For these reasons they never strayed far from the well-worn paths of their forebears.

Most important, of course, is the river. It is the river that fed and still feeds the Pomori. The Pomori considered the Varzuga River special, for it was blessed with the salmon.

When ice began to melt, the people stood by the flowing waters on the shore, celebrating. Mothers drenched their children in the spring melt, saying "As you move, oh nourisher, take sickness away from my child, the servant of God". There was no reason to pollute the river. They understood that the wild waters of the river were dangerous. Even now they believe that the Varzuga takes one person each year. From this it is understandable why they answered our naive questions "Were there any rules against polluting the river?" with a surprised answer. "There have been no such rules. We have always drunk from the river; we cannot throw trash into the river or the sea. It's been that way for centuries. Giving reverence to each Spring was considered the norm. Crossing the river, one said "O river-nourisher, forgive me my sins". It's amazing how much more carefully they regarded living things than we do today.

A good example is the stories about "gurian", the name given to the stone labyrinths and graves of ancients Karelians and Saami. The Pomori fishermen, without fully knowing the purpose of these structures, warned their children "Do not touch, do not break what has always been there." For these peoples, lack of knowledge about something was not a license for destruction.

In addition to learning about their deep world views, many details became clear: People of the Varzuga River tried not to cut trees along the banks of the river. Hunting was permitted only in the winter: the animals don't have time enough to raise their offspring in such a short northern summer.

Today, the material we collected on this expedition is being used in environmental education work with school children and for publication in the local newspapers. In the future, we hope to visit communities of the Saami - a native Finno-Ugric people. Whereas the Pomori have settled marine and river ecosystems for the most part, the Saami control a significant part of the interior of the Peninsula.

Since ancient times, people everywhere have developed a special relationship to nature. We would be interested in hearing from others who are involved in similar studies.

* Pomori are a group of Russians making a living on the White Sea coast on marine and fish resources. The Kola Peninsula has been settled by Pomori since the 14th Century.

RUSSIAN "CONSERVATION TRAINING TEAM" TAKES TO THE ROAD ...IN THE USA WITH TNC

On October 15, 1994, a group of nine Russian conservationists representing the strongest conservation non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara and Novosibirsk, departed Russia to visit the United States for one month. They had been invited by The Nature Conservancy to learn more about the practices of one of the biggest environmental organizations in the United States.

This visit was a part of the exchange program known as the "Conservation Training Team" project sponsored by the US Agency for International Development (AID) through ISAR (formerly the Institute of Soviet-American Relations) and the Trust for Mutual Understanding. The Conservation Training Team was a joint project of TNC with the Biodiversity Conservation Center (Moscow, Russia), which serves as a clearinghouse on conservation issues. In September, a team of the senior-level managers from TNC had visited Russia to learn about conservation in the former Soviet Union (Please refer to the first issue of RCN for an article about this trip).

During their month-long trip in America, Russian conservationists visited the field offices and reserves of TNC in nine different states, including the headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. They also participated in the 21st Annual Natural Areas conference in Palm Beach, Florida, where the Russian participants made poster presentations, addressed the international session, and met representatives of many other US conservation organizations.
A word from the Conservation Training Team

Dmitry Aksenov,

Program Manager of Conservation Training Team, reflects on the trip to the United States.......

One of the most interesting aspects of TNC work for all Russian participants is the ability of the Conservancy to work at both state and national levels, combining local interests of field offices with a general nationwide policy. In Russia, few of our organizations, even the strongest of them, work beyond the regional level. In some cases, a conservation group may have great success in its given region preserving wilderness areas on a large scale (in some cases exceeding TNC acreage in a state chapter), but that success remains localized. Conservation groups work according to their own priorities and methodology and usually pay little attention to nationwide importance of protected biodiversity elements. Even the all-Russian and international associations such as the Socio-Ecological Union and Druzhinas Movement (student corps for nature conservation) do not define common conservation priorities through nation-wide programs.

I found it very useful to learn about the structure of TNC as a national organization that can operate effectively and, at the same time, on the state level. I was especially impressed by the fact that TNC's clearly stated mission and priority system are commonly shared by all the Conservancy's chapters throughout the US and in another countries.

To provide practical application of these common priorities and methodologies, TNC has developed special tools, such as the Biodiversity Conservation Database (BCD). This is exemplary for Russian conservationists: without such tools no organization

Dennis Wolkoff, Regional Director of the Nature Conservancy's New England office, traveled with the group of nine Russian conservationist in the USA. A few of his observations follow.

During the 28-day tour of TNC programs and projects the Russians may well have received the finest and most complete exposure any one has ever been given of our domestic biodiversity conservation work. (In fact, the four Americans who made the whole trip often discussed how TNC employees would benefit from such an experience.) During the trip they seemed interested in every aspect of our work: our Natural Heritage programs, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), preserve design, biological monitoring and management, easements, registry, state natural areas programs, tax law, real estate negotiation, direct mail and corporate, individual, and foundation fundraising, etc. However, there were four things about how we go about our work that seemed to surprise and impress them, and I think they will try to use these four things as they continue biodiversity conservation in Russia.

could follow a unified approach or work as effectively.

The other aspect of The Nature Conservancy's work which impressed us is TNC's involvement of different sources and interest groups in conservation. We were inspired by TNC's technique of fundraising and finding points of contact with many different parties. We marveled at what seemed to be TNC's ability to make money from nothing, and find public support almost anywhere. For me it is clear that the source of TNC's success is this non-confrontational approach to any problem in conservation.

The approaches Russian NGOs and TNC take to solve conservation problems are quite different. Russian organizations traditionally pay more attention to the value of natural communities and their role as a mechanism of sustaining ecological balance. Unlike TNC's priority system, which focuses more attention on conserving small but rare ecosystems, Russian NGOs often define as a highest priority for conservation not the rarest, but the largest and most sustainable communities.

We are looking forward to continuing the Russian-American contacts we have made through our work in conservation. TNC and the Russian participants from different NGOs would like to share more of their knowledge and experience with each other. One result of our joint programs was the agreement among Russian conservationists to create a national-level conservation association and develop together common nation-wide programs. We hope TNC will be willing and able to help in this task. In the meanwhile, TNC and BCC have submitted another grant proposal to develop this project, to establish internships for Russian NGOs, and to plan common workshops and discussions.

1. TNC tries to solve problems and address threats by working with others. From retiree-volunteers in Florida to the Mayor of Block Island, from the head of a state NGO in Maine to a farmer in Indiana, from the Fish and Wildlife and Forest Service employees in Oregon to Ducks Unlimited in California, and finally from an Osage Indian in Oklahoma, the Russians heard from our partners. Working with others is a principle almost completely foreign in a country where virtually all good and bad has been done by the government fiat. I feel that the Russians learned the values of partnerships and as they build their new NGOs that they will try to incorporate what they saw.

2. TNC cultivates relationships with partners, who are, from the Russians' viewpoint, unusual. From their first day in Washington, DC and throughout their travels, Russians were intrigued and confused by meeting venture capitalists, insurance dealers, farmers and many other "unexpected" partners. Why, they wondered, would such people be interested in TNC's work, how could we "trust" them, what did they have in common with TNC and what did they want from us?
The Russian conservation movement is based in science and comprised almost exclusively of scientists — just as TNC was, years ago. They are reluctant to include non-scientists in their movement and until this trip saw little value in doing so. However, after spending time with us and learning how business and political leaders are able to assist TNC in areas where our scientists have little experience, the Russians saw that these people are critical to our success. I believe they will slowly experiment with reaching out to see if such people actually exist in Russia.

3. TNC is strong at the national, state, and local levels. Before their trip to America, the Russians were organized primarily in local and regional groups and understandably resisted any central organization at the federal level. They saw how important it is for TNC to have a national presence to coordinate local efforts, maintain a unified mission and standards, increase its political power, etc. and at the same time allow local chapters to maintain substantial independence and in many ways to drive and shape the policies of the national organization.

4. TNC relies on planning to accomplish its goals. When we tried to discuss planning during our visit to Russia in September, they seemed uninterested, or perhaps hesitant, to consider planning. This is the one topic on which we violated our decision not to proselytize. Greg Low, Steve McCormick, Russ Hoeflich, Denny McGrath and Kent Wommack all explained how planning is critical to their work — it was a great moment for us on the last day when the Russians asked us to help them with a strategic plan for next year.

All of these four things were lessons TNC had to learn during our own history.

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**RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT TAKES UP DIALOGUE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

_by Dr. Svetoslav Zabelin_

In accordance with the Order of the Russian Federation Number 1484- of September 13, 1994, on the 3-5 June of 1995, the All-Russian Congress on Nature Conservation has been planned. It will be a gathering of all those interested in environmental renewal and sustainable development in Russia.

The suggested size of the congress is one and half thousand participants. The majority of delegates should be chosen at regional conferences (in every subject of the Russian Federation). Such conferences will be organized by regional authorities in each Republic, Krai, Oblast and Okrug [editor's note: these are all types of administrative, political units which are subjects of the Russian Federation, similar to a state in America].

The maximum we hope to achieve at the congress would be a type of "Action Plan" with the involvement of mutually responsible sides, such as:
- regional authorities and the government of the Russian Federation
- the environmental movement, including unions and political parties
- industry, including Russian enterprises

The minimum we aim for is to promulgate the intentions of all sides to invest something into environmental renewal, uphold their mutual expectations, begin a dialogue, and identify the main supporters.

The congress is a long overdue effort to consult the environmental movement on a somewhat constructive basis. It is an opportunity to report about the environmental movement as an independent political power in Russia, oriented at reviving our nation.

Preparation for the congress on the part of environmental groups involves the following:
1. The most significant obstacle (not only in environmental conservation) is the isolation of the population from the decision-making process, especially regarding their own health and welfare.

Without fixing this situation we cannot hope for improving either our natural or social environment. There is no reason to wait for a movement in this direction from organs of federal power or from the majority of regional governments. The process of preparation for this congress allows us, the non-governmental organizations, to initiate the creation of regional public controls and participate in making meaningful environmental and social decisions.

2. The second priority is a regional plan for improving environmental health and sustainable development. With an emphasis on local potential and resources, with minimum expectations from the federal budget and government.

3. I am reviewing proposals for the resolution of the congress, which will highlight regional issues, and include an address to federal authorities. More important are proposals for the resolution or demands for the organization of federal mechanisms to maintain environmental security and/or sustainable development, capable of accounting for and realizing the interests of the population.

The Center of Coordination and Information (CCI) of the Socio-Ecological Union is trying to secure information about the preparation for the conference, with proposals and documents for the conferences and other needed information for all non-governmental environmental organizations interested in this, and to make it possible for them to participate in this process.

Additionally CCI will try to begin printing and distributing the most interesting materials on issues of sustainable development.

Due to sharp deficits in the federal budget — especially in the wake of events in Chechnya — there is a good chance that the congress may not be held at all.

We would be interested in hearing from western organizations interested in participating in joint attempts to collect, translate and publish books and other materials concerning sustainable development in Russia. Even if the Congress fails to take place, such materials would be extremely useful.

Please send any correspondence regarding such potential projects to:
- Center for Coordination and Information, SEU
- P.O.Box 211
- Moscow 121019
- RUSSIA
- tel: (095) 206-8894 or 928-7608;
- fax: 206-9790;
- e-mail: soceco@glas.apc.org or svt@glas.apc.org

_Dr. Svetoslav Zabelin is a member of the Organizational Committee for the All-Russian Congress on Nature Conservation, and the Chairman of Council of the Socio-Ecological Union_
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

April 9-15, 1995 in Moscow
Topics planned: (in plenary and roundtable sessions)
- Kindergarten and Grade School Environmental Education
- Greening the School Curriculum, Research and Conservation Work with Schoolchildren
- Mandatory Environmental Education, Teacher Preparation, Mass Media and Educational Environment

The organizers of this year's conference are:

In cooperation with:
- Moscow Department of Education, Embassy of the Netherlands
- UNEP Commission in Russia

And financial assistance from:
- The Environmental Awareness Foundation (Netherlands)
- For those interested in attending and presenting, we are especially interested in presentations on:
  - sustainable development,
  - games and other technique of interactive education,
  - bioindication and easy technique of investigation.

All presentations must be oriented on practically working teachers. Registration forms should be received by February 10, preferably at the e-mail or fax below. We cannot guarantee spaces for participants registering after February 10, as we plan to accommodate no more than 200 participants. In March, participants will receive confirmation of registration and necessary information about the conference. Proceedings of the conference will be published (in Russian) in the Association for Environmental Education Journal and other professional publications.

Please contact:
Vadim Kalinin, Chair of the Organizing Committee
Association for Environmental Education
P.O. Box 152 Obninsk-1 Kaluga region 249020 Russia
FAX +7 (095) 255-2225 E-mail: vkalinin@glas.apc.org

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS.

Sept 12-16, 1995. Tomsk, Russia. State Committee on Higher Education, the Tomsk University, and the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Topics of conference: environmental and technological catastrophes; methods of monitoring; effect of pollution on ecosystems; physical-chemical basis for controlling pollution and regeneration; modern of geo-ecology and rational use of natural resources; economic, legal, and social bases for natural resources use; environmental education in institutes of higher learning. For applications or information, Write:
Planning Committee
International Environmental Conference
36 Lenin Street, Tomsk University
Tomsk, 634050, RUSSIA
E-mail: office@tomsk.tsu.su <Planning Committee>

CONFERENCE IN SAMARSKAYA LUKA NATIONAL PARK.


For more information, contact:
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Caucasus Biosphere Zapovednik. Director Nikolai T. Timukhin, 8 Karl Marx Street, A-341, Sochi, 354341, RUSSIA,
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Department of Vertebrate Zoology, Dr.s Elena Kruchenkova and Nikolai Formozov, Faculty of Biology, Moscow State University,
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Ministry of Environmental Protection. Minister Viktor I. Danilov-Danilov, 4/6 Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street, Moscow, 123812, RUSSIA, phone: (095) 252-2305

Russian Conservation News
RUSSELL CONSERVATION NEWS:
A quarterly informational bulletin with current articles by leading conservation biologists, policy makers, and environmentalists from the former Soviet Union. Each issue (16 to 30 pages) is packed with maps, diagrams, photographs and news about:

1) Protected Areas (parks and nature reserves)
2) Background information (overviews of protected areas, conservation legislation, etc.)
3) Urgent Issues
4) General Problems and organizations working to solve them
5) Conservation Finance (funding priorities, achievements)
6) Endangered Species column
7) Conservation Library and Coming Events
8) Contact List

NEW SUBSCRIPTION!!!

RUSSIAN CONSERVATION NEWS:

Ministry of Environmental Protection. Department of Nature Reserves. Director Natalia R. Danilina. 8/1 Kedrova Street, Moscow 117874, RUSSIA, phone: (095)125-5688; fax: (095)310-7093
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Parkway. Director Yuri Roschevski. 7 Tchaikovsky Street, Apt. 2, Zhigulevsk, Samara Region. 446350 RUSSIA

Russian-American Program on Conflictology. Dr. Aleksandr Karpenko, 21 Basseinaya Street, St.Petersburg, 196191 RUSSIA phone: (812)-295-9875; fax: 295-9875, e-mail: alexk@aasei.spb.su

Russian Fund for Current Biology. Professor Aleksandr S. Abolits. Moscow. Phone: 138-1862
Samarskaya Luka National Park. Asst. Director Yuri Roschevski. 109 A Tkacheva Street, Zhigulevsk, Samara Region 446350, RUSSIA Phone: (international code 84662) in-country code (84662) 22-874
Sayano-Shushenskiy Zapovednik. Acting Director Valeri Andreevich Stakhchevich. 7 Zapovednaya Street, Shushenske, Krasnoyarsk Krai, 662720, RUSSIA, phone: (893)139-3-2300
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World Wildlife Fund—Russian Programme Office:
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Socio-Ecological Union
BIO DIVERSITY CONSERVATION CENTER
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Zapovednik (zap-o-VYED-nee) = Nature Reserve; plural: Zapovedniki (zap-o-VYED-nee-kee) = areas that protect representative landscapes or unique landscape features, and have served scientific, conservation and educational purposes. Human activity is highly restricted in these territories.

National Park = areas protecting Russia’s cultural and natural heritage, where limited use for recreation and education is permitted.

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