3 MAY 1995

Conservation of Biological Diversity in Russia and the former Soviet Union

Socio-Ecological Union

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION CENTER
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, Vošlozerki National Park, Bransky Les Zapovednik, the Ecological Club of Novosibirsk University, Tajik 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.
VOICE FROM THE WILD

(A letter from the Editors)

In our third issue of Russian Conservation News, we continue to update you on legislation, events, and changes affecting Russia’s system of protected areas and nature conservation groups. We are particularly concerned about the future of support for conservation efforts here and throughout the former Soviet Union. Domestic support is jeopardized by the “consolidation” of environmental funds into general budgets - potentially a huge blow to conservation work. (See article inside: Ecostuds - do we really need them?)

We call your attention to an Action Plan developed by Russian experts for Russia’s system of protected areas. The plan proposes a comprehensive set of measures aimed at conserving biological diversity. Based on previous research, field work, project proposals, and expert assessments, the plan accounts for new socio-economic conditions in post-Soviet Russia and provides strategic direction for in-country planning, foreign partners, and international donors.

The completion of the Action Plan was especially timely, as the state of the Zapovednik system is alarmingly close to disintegration. Funding for Zapovedniki, lower than ever, is allocated by the Finance Department of the Ministry while Zapovedniki policies and regulations are managed by another department that has no influence on allocation of money (and consequently hardly any influence at all). During the last several months, management structures were significantly weakened during a reorganization of the Ministry of Environmental Protection that included the creation of a Department of Biological Resources and Zapovedniki Management within the Ministry.

We fear that next step of “reforms” will involve the dissolution of the Division of Nature Reserves Management and assimilation of its disjunct units into the new Department. If this does happen, Zapovedniki will be without a single managing entity that supports and coordinates their activities. The change could be disastrous for management of Russia’s 70-year old system of strict nature reserves, as Natalia Danilina (now head of the Division of Zapovedniki Management) and the majority of professionals in protected areas management are likely to leave the Ministry.

Since the condition of the Zapovedniki system throughout years has usually reflected the state of overall biodiversity conservation policies in Russia, conservation groups in Russia are extremely concerned. They will likely have to spend the next several months (or may be years) arguing with the government to preserve strong management structures for federal nature reserves. The Nature Conservation Congress organized by the Ministry of Environmental Protection to demonstrate achievements in conservation (planned for the beginning of June) is likely to become a battlefield for the fate of the Zapovedniki system.

We ask our colleagues and neighbors who are concerned about the future of the Zapovedniki system to make every effort to voice their concerns now, by writing letters to the Russian president, and encouraging their governments to inquire on what is happening with Zapovedniki system. Please keep us informed of your efforts by sending news, copies of your letters, or any questions you may have.

EXPANDING RUSSIA’S NETWORK OF PROTECTED AREAS:

WWF works to conserve important brown bear (Ursus arctos) habitat on the Kamchatka Peninsula.

by Victor Nikiforov

Forestland forests, cedar stands, and the large number of lakes and swamps with moss-lichen tundra make the northern part of the Kamchatka Peninsula unique in the world. Creation of the Koryaksky Zapovednik to preserve this ecosystem is one of three new Zapovedniki proposals targeted by The World Wildlife Fund-Germany to protect the brown bear (Ursus arctos).

Launched at the end of 1994, the brown bear program is the latest WWF collaboration to protect more of Russia’s natural heritage. The World Wide Fund for Nature initiated cooperative efforts in the Russian Arctic in 1989, when WWF-Germany organized its first expedition in the Taimyr Region. One of the main outcomes of subsequent joint WWF-Russian Academy of Sciences activities on the Taimyr Peninsula was the creation of the world’s largest nature reserve, the Big Arctic Nature Zapovednik, with an area of over 4 million hectares (40,000 km2).

In July of 1994, WWF opened a Russian Programme Office. Priority directions for the WWF Russian Programme included support for preserving biodiversity held in Russia’s unique system of protected areas, conserving rare and endangered animal and bird species, and expanding the network of specially protected natural territories. WWF has already provided support for the creation of three and the design of five new Zapovedniki, as well as implementation of conservation programs for the Amur tiger (Panthera pardus altaica), the saiga antelope (Saiga tatarica), the Russian desman (Desmana moschata), the Siberian crane (Grus leucogeranus), and other rare species.

The proposed Koryaksky Zapovednik is vital for the study and protection of Beringia forest tundra, where the ocean affects the development of plant and animal communities. Two sites are proposed for inclusion into the Koryaksky Zapovednik’s protected regime: Parapolsky Dol (valley) and Govna Peninsula. Parapolsky Dol is a river valley with numerous lakes, streams, and swamps, and provides important nesting, molting, and resting habitat for thousands of waterfowl and marsh birds. Over 5000 geese nest here, 1300 whooping swans (Cygnus cygnus L.), 14 species of snipe, and the Canadian crane (Grus canadensis). The white-tailed eagle (Haliaeetus albicilla) nests in its floodland forests. In summertime, the population of ducks reaches 700,000 birds.

The Government of Russia issued Decree #1050 on September 13, 1994 that recognized the value of the region as...
important wetlands habitat when it included the territory of Parapolsky Dol on the list of Ramsar Convention sites (Convention on Conservation of Wetlands of International Significance, Ramsar, 1991).

The Govenka Peninsula's rocky shores host about 30 colonies of sea birds. The peregrine falcon (Falco peregrinus) and gyrfalcon (Falco grifalco), listed in the Red Data Book of Russia, nest near bird colonies and along the rocky slopes of river valleys. Overall, 153 bird species inhabit the territory of the proposed Zapovednik, and 97 species nest here.

Mammals in the proposed Zapovednik are represented by 35 species, 24 of which are non-migratory. A subspecies of the big horn sheep (Ovis canadensis), endemic to the Koryak highlands and inhabiting the Govenka Peninsula, requires special research and protection.

The new Zapovednik is particularly important for conservation and reproduction of the brown bear population. According to data from the Olyutorsky Region, about 500 bears are killed illegally, and about 100 animals are shot by licensed hunters. The most damage to the local bear population is caused by Koryak reindeer breeders, who carry shotguns and graze their deer in remote regions of tundra. Due to the general complicated economic situation in Russia, the decrease in the standard of living has resulted in targeted hunting of bears and profitable sale of skins and bile used for medicinal purposes.

Work by the WWF project team with administrations of the Olyutorsky and Penzhinsky Regions within the Koryak Autonomous District on Kamchatka Peninsula and explanation of the international significance of this project has resulted in full support of the Zapovednik proposal by regional and district administrations. The Governor of Koryaksky, Sergey Leushkin, signed Decree #232 on December 27, 1994 on "Organization of the Koryaksky State Zapovednik." According to this decree, the territory of 327,156 hectares (3272 km2) is to be completely withdrawn from economic use and allocated the fully protected Zapovednik regime.

Members of the indigenous community will actively participate in Zapovednik protection activities. A traditional land-use buffer zone of 676,062 hectares (676 km2) will be created around the territory. Reindeer pastures are located in the buffer zone, and Koryak reindeer breeders will have the guaranteed right to conduct traditional nature-use practices (reindeer breeding, fishing, hunting) on this territory.

A federal decree by the Russian Federal Government on creation of the Koryaksky Zapovednik is anticipated in July of 1995. However, formal creation does not mean much for nature conservation since, in order for the protected regime to be observed, the Zapovednik will require a protection service, means of transportation, and facilities.

The WWF Russian Programme Office has developed a project for supporting the new Zapovednik during the first three years of activities. WWF is now seeking funding (about $150,000) to support this important initiative.

Inauguration of the reserve is planned to be conducted in Koryaksky in September 1995 with participation of a WWF-Germany delegation including Dr. Georg Schwede. We hope that international assistance to Koryaksky Zapovednik will help us conserve this unique natural area.

Victor Nikiforov is Program Coordinator at the World Wildlife Fund Russian Programme Office.

RUSSIA ADOPTS NEW FEDERAL LAW ON PROTECTED AREAS

by Vsevolod Stepanitsky

On March 14, 1995 Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed the federal act “On Specially Protected Natural Areas”, previously adopted by the Parliament. The story behind the preparation and adoption of the Act is somewhat dramatic, as Russian specialists managing protected natural areas had been anxiously awaiting this moment for a few years. The adoption of the Law by the Soviet Parliament in the end of 1991 was thwarted when the Soviet Union, and the second attempt to pass the Law failed in the fall of 1993, when the Parliament was dissolved by the President.

The new law, which regulates organization, protection, and use of specially protected natural areas will be a cornerstone statute in this field in the Russian Federation. The following article highlights a few legal innovations contained in the statute.

Adding to the traditional types of Russian protected areas, such as state strictly protected nature reserves (Zapovedniki), national parks, special purpose preserves (Zakazniki), Nature Monuments, and a few others, the Act introduces a new type of protected areas in Russia: Regional Natural Parks. This category is analogous to state parks in the USA, or provincial parks in Canada. In addition, the act provides for creation of numerous other types of protected natural areas according to the regional acts and regulations.

The new act makes a clear distinction between the federal and regional level protected areas, reaffirming that territory of Zapovedniki and National Parks remains federal property, to be managed by the federal agencies. As land privatization takes place in Russia, these provisions are essential for the survival of the united national system of strictly protected areas.

The Act is the first statute of Russia recognizing that besides their value for conservation and scientific monitoring and research, Zapovedniki can and should serve as interpretive environmental centers for community education.

In addition, the law — explicitly prohibits withdrawal of any territories, as well as any natural resources of zapovedniki for any economical purposes. The previous legislation stated this only continued on page 5
RANGERS’ DISAPPEARANCE FROM SAYANO-SHUSHENSKI ZAPOVEDNIK REMAINS A MYSTERY

adapted from article by
Vsevolod Stepanitsky

In October 1994 and again in January 1995, Russian Conservation News reported the disappearance of three rangers and one voluntary inspector from Sayano-Shushenski Zapovednik. Since their tragic disappearance, (now suspected to be a murder) little news has been discovered about the mysterious disappearance of A.N Novosolov, N.S.Linetsev, S.S.Lavrov and A.K.Aristov. The four young men, on a routine September patrol ride along the nature reserve border, were without radios or vehicles; except for one rifle, they were unarmed. Growing tensions over land use rights between the Nature Reserve (in Krasnoyarsk Region) and the administration in neighboring Tuva Republic aroused suspicions of foul play.

According to official channels in the Ministry of Interior Affairs, intensive searches and investigations have been made. A letter signed December 15, 1994 by Deputy Minister Egrov described the continuing investigation of certain individuals with limited measures. And in a December 22, 1994 letter, General Attorney A.N.Yulushenko emphasized that steps taken by the Tuva Republic administration were adequate. He concluded that "the review of materials connected to the (disappearance) contains no evidence of criminal action." The General Attorney and Deputy Minister maintain that the situation is under control.

No signs of the missing men have been discovered. The Biodiversity Conservation Center has urged colleagues in Russia and throughout the world to appeal to the following individuals to demand continued attention to this tragic issue, and to take all steps to avoid such conflicts. We repeat our request here, and provide addresses to which letters can be sent.

1. Sherig-oool D. Oorzhak, President of Tuva Republic, Kyzyl City, Tuva, RUSSIA

"Russian Adopts New Federal Law on Protected Areas"
(continued from page 4)

in relation to the land, but not the resource base stipulating that natural resources and real estate of the zapovednik can not be removed in any way, nor be sold, leased or transferred by any other means to any person:
— legitimizes and clearly defines "biosphere polygons "as zones within biosphere preserves for experimental projects in sustainable use of natural resources.
— regulates for the first time a number of important issues related to the organization of visitors' services in the national parks.
— provides regulations on establishment of state nature preserves (zakazniki), including a provision that such territories can be withdrawn from their present land users, and transferred to state agencies responsible for nature preserve management.
— provides for stricter penalties for individuals violating protection regime in the natural areas, and permits

2. Russian President Boris Yeltsin, The Kremlin, Moscow, RUSSIA
3. Minister of Environmental Protection, Mr. Viktor Danilov-Danilin, Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street 4/6, Moscow, 123812, RUSSIA
4. Please send copies to RCN/BCC
c/o PECC RR 2, Box 1010 Dingman's Ferry, PA 18328
E-mail: <blinn@oregon.uoregon.edu> <odp@glas.apc.org>
<biodivers@glas.apc.org>, <seconx@glas.apc.org>

Vsevolod Stepanitsky is Director of The Biodiversity Conservation Center's Assistance to Protected Areas Program.
IUCN COMMISSION'S ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS IN NORTHERN EURASIA

by Natalia R. Danilina

The Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature has begun its work in Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union. The first stage of the Commission’s work involves preparing an action plan for protected areas of northern Eurasia.

At a March meeting this year, founding members of CNPPA from Russia proposed to invite representatives of scientific and non-governmental organizations as well as official structures managing protected areas, to join as members.

Representatives from Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan have already agreed to participate in CNPPA’s work. These countries have common traditions in managing protected areas, share long-time working contacts with each other, and are also united by common economic and political problems. Cooperation and exchange among professionals from these countries will be especially helpful in bringing together colleagues isolated from each other in the past few years to solve their common problems.

The foundation for developing an action plan will be “Parks for Life,” the Action Plan developed for Europe as well as the Protected Areas Action Plan prepared by Russian experts under the auspices of the World Bank (see RCN, p 10).

One of the most important goals of CNPPA is to assist experts in protected areas throughout the world to learn about each other, unite their strengths, and solve their problems together. To this end, the Commission for Northern Eurasia has tried to actively develop an extensive information network. The May issue of Zapovedny Vestnik (a Russian language newspapers for Zapovedniki and National Parks) is being published with funds from the Commission; in this issue, CNPPA presents its goals and welcomes participation from employees of protected areas of the former USSR in developing the action plan for northern Eurasia. In the future, Zapovedny Vestnik may be produced in English in order to inform colleagues about the activities of protected areas of northern Eurasia.

Natalia Danilina is head of the Division of Nature Reserves in the Russian Ministry of Environmental Protection, and Vice President of CNPPA

A NEW NATIONAL PARK IS ORGANIZED IN RUSSIA

On March 7, 1995 the Russian Federation created the twenty-ninth National Park, Smolnii National Park, in Mordovia Republic. The total area of the park, 36,500 hectares, was transferred from Ichalkovsky state forest enterprise.

National Parks in Russia

As of March 30, 1995 there were 29 National Parks in the Russian Federation, covering an area of 6,457,400 hectares, or 0.38% of Russia.

HIGH-SPEED RAILROAD THREATENS WILDERNESS OF CENTRAL RUSSIA

information compiled by Maria Kosolapova

Plans to build a new high-speed railroad between St. Petersburg and Moscow were created in 1991 in “Leningprotrans” Planning Institute. These plans were approved by the Russian Council of Ministers chaired at that time by Ivan Silaev. For a while the project was forgotten, but today it is resurfacing with more urgency. Construction of a new railroad along the “Novgorod route,” one of multiple alternative routes, is starting, headed by the new joint-venture “High-speed Railroad Company” (RAO “VSM”) with Mr.A.Bolshakov as General Director. The railroad will divide Valdai National Park and at least 10 nature reserves. It will also affect several areas of high archeological value. At least 230 km2 of land will be occupied by railroad construction. Territories 30 kilometers wide on each side of the road will lose their value as wildlife habitat.

Due to safety considerations, the road will be surrounded by concrete walls. As a result, four regions, Moscow, Tver, Novgorod, and Leningrad, will be dissected by a concrete corridor. Although some “crossing points” are envisioned by the plan, established passageways, both human roads and wildlife migration corridors, will be disrupted. The rationale for construction of the railroad was that the old Oktyabrskaya (Nikolaevskaya) railroad was no longer capable of serving the constantly increasing flow of passengers and shipments.

The “Novgorod route” is the most destructive and costly of all existing alternatives and the most favored by the developer. Railroad experts say it will cost 7-8 billion US dollars, and is unlikely to pay off since worldwide experience with high-speed railroads has shown their low profitability. The new railroad will pass 30 kilometers to the west from the Oktyabrskaya railroad and across the top of the Valdai Highlands. This area contains headwaters of the Volga River and the Baltic watershed, and consequences of hydrological regime alteration resulting from the construction are unpredictable.

Although several other alternative routes for the railroad are under consideration, all of these alternatives prescribe creation of a new traffic corridor crossing Valdai Highlands - a piece of wilderness that only by chance has survived in the historic center of Russia. The railroad stretching through Valdai will severely affect extremely valuable and vulnerable natural areas: wetlands, river forks, many nature reserves, Valdai National Park, and territories with high densities of architectural and historic landmarks preserved to date in excellent condition. These alternative routes are somewhat less disastrous than the Novgorod one, but they would still cause considerable damage to natural and cultural heritage.
Surprisingly enough though, there is a well-known alternative which is environmentally harmless, the least expensive, and the most practical and manageable: reconstruction of the old Oktyabrskaya railroad. The Ministry of Transportation developed reconstruction plans long ago, but the influential Mr. Bolshakov did not approve of such plans, since they could be implemented without creating his new company RAO “VSM”.

On June 1, 1994, the Center for Independent Environmental Projects (CIEP) of the Socio-Ecological Union (SEU), with the support of the Ministry of Environment, held a meeting on what procedures should be followed for an environmental impact assessment of the railroad construction project.

Representatives of the Ministries of Transportation, Environment and Economics, various institutions of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow State University, Russian Society for Nature Conservation, and other organizations attended the meeting. Main statements and ideas of the railroad construction project were criticized from scientific positions and through common sense.

On December 6, 1994, the lower house of the Russian State Duma discussed the project of the new railroad. Conclusions of the discussion were that the preliminary construction of the railroad should be stopped, and that an environmental impact assessment of the project prescribed by law should be undertaken. It was pointed out that such construction violated a presidential decree of the Russian Federation about governmental strategy on nature protection and sustainable development signed on February 4, 1994.

In a survey of potential railroad users conducted by “Novgorod” newspaper, only 82 out of 1500 people supported the construction. The project also received a negative reaction at the meetings of the Agrarian and Social Policy Committees in the Council of the Federation.

Despite the large opposition, the plans continue to progress. Two presidential decrees supported the construction of a high-speed railroad. Following these decrees, the Russian Government made a decision (signed by Vice-Premier Oleg Sokovets) on June 15, 1994 to start funding the construction, and later, on November 10, 1994, the Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin made a resolution to carry out that decision. Last summer the Central Bank declared that it was ready to cover 80% of all expenses for 1994-1995.

Conflict surrounds the issue on the regional level also. On February 24, 1995, administration of the Novgorod region made a decision to give land for the construction and start tree cutting. The total area of the lands is 21.95 km². Essentially the administration is violating several federal laws by starting the cutting. The public prosecutor of the Novgorod region, supported by the General Public Prosecutor of the Russian Federation, protested against the beginning of the land work, but, according to the General Public Prosecutor Assistant Mr. Udin, “RAO ‘VSM’; without the project development, environmental expertise, without getting permits for forest cutting, and approval of the project by environmental authorities, has started cutting.”

No environmental impact assessment was done before these decisions. The legislature did not even discuss these expenditures. The project has been passed only by RAO ‘VSM’ itself, and, according to conclusions of the expert commission, that alone “may not be a reason to begin a land-survey.”

We believe that the railroad construction, should it happen, will destroy natural values of a large territory in Central Russia. Our goal is to use all means available to prevent implementation of this construction project:

— pressure the authorities, send appeals, letters, and telegrams of protest (see the addresses below)
— publish protesting articles in local newspapers (please send copies to CIEP)
— mobilize experts (send your professional judgments to responsible governmental agencies)

Please send copies of your letters and articles to the CIEP!! They are needed for our work. Also, please share this information with those organizations and individuals that can provide any help on this issue. For more information, contact Vladimir L. Kosenkothe, the CIEP Coordinator of the “High-speed Railroad Project.”

CIEP Address:
Russia, 103104, Moscow, Malaya Bronnaya Street 12, apt 12, tel/fax: (095)118-86-86, E-mail: ciep@glas.apc.org

President of Russia Boris Yeltsin,
The Kremlin, Moscow, 101000, Russia

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 32/34, Smolenskaya-Sennaya, 121200 Moscow. Tel.: (095) 244-1606

Council of Federation, Federal Assembly of Russian Federation, 26, Bolshaya Dmitrovka Street, 103700 Moscow

Gosudarstvennaya Duma Russian Federation, 1, Okhotny Ryad, 103009 Moscow

Ministry of Environmental Protection,
4, Bolshaya Gruzinskaya Street, 123812, Moscow
Tel: (095) 254-76-83.

Alexey V. Yablokov, Chairman,
Interagency Commission on Environmental Security, Security Council of the Russian Federation, 4/10, Ipatyevsky perelouk, 103073, Moscow

Maria Kosolapova is an editor of the Russian language monthly bulletin "Okrana Dikoi Prirody" ("Wildlife Conservation") in the Biodiversity Conservation Center.
RUSSIANS MAKE A SHOW OF SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL PARKS ON EARTH DAY

by Margaret Williams

On Earth Day (April 22) this year, communities throughout Russia joined hundreds of towns in the USA as they celebrated their National Parks and Nature Reserves (Zapovedniki) in a March for Parks. In the first collectively organized event to raise public awareness for Russia’s protected areas, managers and educators of Russian protected areas cooperated with local schools, administrations, journalists, and townspeople to run the March for Parks. The theme of the event, organized by the Biodiversity Conservation Center, “National Parks and Zapovedniki — the Pride of Russia” reflects the goal of organizers to raise Russians’ pride in their natural heritage.

The idea of the March for Parks originated with the Washington, DC-based National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA), a non-profit organization established to promote and protect US National Parks. NPCA supplied organizers at the Biodiversity Conservation Center with stickers, colorful brochures, t-shirts and hats which were then distributed along with Russian materials in packets sent out by train, plane, and courier to points across Russia. From Lake Baikal National Park in Siberia to Losiny Ostrov National Park just outside Moscow, children and adults cleaned up parks, made Earth Day posters in school, planted trees, and more. In the days preceding the event, Moscow press and radio highlighted the event, including a special radio interview with three experts on protected areas management. The Russia Program Office of World Wild Fund for Nature will award cameras to three participants for their participation and contribution to public environmental education on Earth Day. The celebration was an opportunity to invite local press and the community to enjoy and learn about their local park.

Several parks and nature reserves felt the event was so successful that they have decided to make it an annual tradition.

Across Russia, the following March for Parks celebrations took place:

— Under the organization of Andrey Moroz and Valery Gerasimov, over 400 people joined at Losiny Ostrov National Park to celebrate the March for Parks with a nature walk, games for children, and a longer natural history hike for adults, followed by kite flying, traditional Russian folk singing and dancing, tug of war games, and family picnics. Families from Korea, Finland, Malaysia, Turkey, United Kingdom and America came to Losiny Ostrov for March for Parks. Children wore NPCA “March for Parks” stickers, Biodiversity Conservation Center stickers, group leaders blazed NPCA pins and t-shirts. TV and radio, newspaper and magazine journalists were present. The perfect weather topped it off and it truly was a great day!

— With the event coordinated by Tatiana Shiraeva in Vodlozerski National Park, local newspapers ran stories about March for Parks and the newly formed Association for National Parks and Zapovedniki of northwestern Russia, and park educators led talks about Earth Day and March for Parks. Hundreds of children signed petitions demonstrating their opposition to destruction of forests and wetlands, and their support for activities of National Parks and Zapovedniki in protecting nature and making their neighborhood a healthier place to live.

— In Brianski Les Zapovednik, Director Igor Shipilenok recruited about 100 participants for the celebration.

Volunteers helped build a nature trail, school children grades 1-9 submitted nature drawings for a poster contest, and Zapovednik officials held a meeting with local administrators to highlight conservation issues in the region.

— In Bolshaya Kokshaga Zapovednik, Director Aleksei Popov held a press conference for representatives of the region’s protected areas, while Zapovednik educator Svetlana Popova led an Earth Day lecture program for a local grade school.

— In Kostomuksha Zapovednik, Director Sergey Tarkhov and staff organized two contests, one for which two school children designing a solution to an environmental problem were awarded a trip to the two-week summer environmental camp at Vodlozerski National Park. Kostomuksha staff held a poster contest and organized special lectures in six local schools.

— In Voronenskii Zapovednik, staff member Tatiana Nikolaeva gathered children of all ages, from 5 to 70 years old, to join in the March for Parks celebration and clean up a river basin river bank. Zapovednik staff held a dozen lectures on conservation and science, Earth Day and March for Parks, delivering a special lecture for those residing on the territory of the reserve. In addition to a couple of newspapers, local TV covered Earth Day, focusing on the need to support the nature reserve and its conservation mission.

— Laplandski Zapovednik inspired the Manehegovsk School Department, under Valentina Yermolenko, with the idea for March for Parks. The Department (in one of Russia’s most polluted cities) held a children’s science conference, which included children who work as volunteers in the Zapovednik.

— In Samarskaya Luka National Park, with the help of Anya Kotchkina, Samara Regional Museum held a professional roundtable discussion on conservation of natural and cultural objects. In the park, hundreds of school children took part in a clean-up. The events were covered by local press, which initiated a continuing series of articles on the park. Following the March for Parks events, the regional administration ceased its attempts to lower the status of the park to a regional
level park. Now, Samarskaya Luka will remain in federal jurisdiction. With the Regional Museum, Samarskaya Luka decided to conduct March for Parks every year henceforth.

— In Kenozerski National Park, Park staff led lectures for school children who helped with a park clean-up, while elders in the small village around the park helped to seed a grove of trees considered sacred by local tradition.

Other participants included Novosibirsk Eco-Club, Kerzhenski Zapovednik, Murmansk Environmental Center (Galina Seraya), Pribaikal ski National Park, Paanajärvi National Park, and Homeland of the Cranes nature preserve.

Margaret Williams is one of the March for Parks-Russia organizers, and project assistant in the Biodiversity Conservation Center’s Assistance to Protected Areas Program.

Protected Areas

Protected Areas - Participants in March for Parks, 1995

Zapovedniki: National Parks:
1. Bolshaya National Parks:
   Kokshaga
2. Brianskii Les 8. Valdai
5. Kostomukshski 11. Lusinovskiy Ostrov
6. Laplandski 12. Marj Chodra
7. Zhigulevski 13. Paanajarvye

Other organizations:
17. “Ecocenter”, Murmansk
18. “Environmental Information Center”, Mochegorsk
20. Park “Chernoe Ozero (Black Lake)”, Uljanovsk
21. Ecological Club of Novosibirsk University, Novosibirsk
22. Historical-ecological Association “Perepsectiva (Perspective)”, Samara
23. Vodlozerski National Park, Petrozavodsk

MASS MEDIA IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: TOPIC AT RUSSIAN UKRAINIAN SEMINAR

by Irina Chebaková

Among the greatest challenges facing Zapovedniki and National Parks throughout the former Soviet Union is the need to raise awareness about their conservation mission. With changing economic and social conditions, managers of protected areas must find new ways of building public support for their conservation work. Instead of using coercive or prohibitive regulation, managers are now embarking on a strategy to raise pride in natural areas as symbols of national heritage.

Such a strategy was one of the main topics discussed at a recent (April 3-5, 1995) international working seminar on “Environmental Education in Protected Areas” held in Kiev (Ukraine). The focus of the seminar, organized by Kiev Ecological-Cultural Center, Biodiversity Conservation Center, Commission on Wild Nature Protection, and Youth League of Ukraine, was the use of mass media and publications to educate and inform the general public about the natural riches preserved in the former Soviet Union’s protected areas.

The conference was especially timely, re-connectiong Ukrainian and Russian colleagues who once worked under the same administration and had more frequent contact during the former Soviet period. The conference was important on another front: the joint participation of both governmental and non-governmental organizations reflects a growing trend in cooperation among these groups for improved conservation education and policy. Seminar participants included representatives of 17 Zapovedniki and 6 National Parks from Ukraine and Russia, representatives of Supreme Soviet of Ukraine, Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences, Ministry of Ecological Safety of Ukraine, Russian Forestry Surveys, universities, research institutes, and non-governmental organizations.

Some fifty participants discussed new methods of environmental education: techniques that could be adapted to sociological specifics of local communities, and non-traditional means of environmental “propaganda.” Successful and unsuccessful experiences in using mass media for environmental activities, including informational campaigns, special publications of Zapovedniki and National Parks, etc., were used as case studies in conservation education. Discussions led by Ukrainian environmentalists included the use of symbols and myths from Slavic paganism reflecting deep connections with the environment, idolizing objects and phenomena of nature. Discussions also touched upon the use of religious rituals, legends, and ballads as a potential component of environmental education (already demonstrated by on gardens and nature monuments that have been protected through sanctification by the Orthodox Church).
Russian Ukrainian Seminar, (continued from page 9)

Participants recognized the desperate need for training for protected areas educators before they can adequately fulfill their mission in environmental education. With the lack of environmental education materials available in Russian and Ukrainian language, many educators in protected areas are hard pressed to conduct educational programs in schools and in the parks and reserves. The lack of educational materials in turn makes it difficult to educate and attract journalists and reporters who are well-versed in conservation issues. School-seminars and scientific magazines on nature conservancy and environmental education could play an important role in training of teachers from protected areas.

Educational materials for adults and professionals are at a deficit, but in the last year and a half, several publications educating professionals in the field of protected areas management have been initiated in Russia, one of which is "Zapovedny Vestnik": a newspaper written by and for employees in Zapovedniki and National Parks of Russia. The paper has played a critical role in facilitating exchange among employees scattered throughout Russia's huge territory.

As a result of the seminar participants recognized the need to develop an international public awareness program for countries of the former USSR with the goal of raising prestige of protected areas. All participants of the seminar supported the idea of creation of International Association of Northern Eurasia Protected Areas, and called upon Zapovedniki and National Parks to help in its organization. The new Association will play a key role in achieving such programs. Seminar participants agreed that "Zapovedny Vestnik" should serve as the main publication of the International Association, expanding its role internationally.

Finally, the seminar reinforced the desire of Ukrainian and Russian colleagues to re-establish and strengthen professional ties, and replicate them throughout the former USSR. Participants hope that through individual contacts and the International Association, increased informational exchange in the field of environmental education through mass media and publications will benefit all in the continuing effort to raise public support of protected areas.

The Biodiversity Conservation Center, as a coordinator of the International Association, will welcome information from colleagues throughout the west on use of mass media in conservation education and building support for parks and protected areas. Additionally, the BCC has a small conservation education library for use by Zapovedniki and National Park educators who may want to browse and brainstorm. We welcome copies of special curricula you have developed for or about your national parks and nature reserves.

Irina Chebakova is an expert on National Parks, and a staff specialist at the Biodiversity Conservation Center in the Assistance to Protected Areas Program.

FOCUS

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA'S BIODIVERSITY: IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN FOR RUSSIA'S PROTECTED AREAS

by Margaret Williams and Eugene Simonov

March 15 marked the official end of a preparatory phase of a "Biodiversity Conservation Program for Russian Federation" planned by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). A project preparation advance was given to Russian Ministry of Environmental Protection to prepare a proposal for protecting biodiversity in Russia. During the six-month period, over 200 experts were consulted as short and long-term conservation measures were developed. The results of the preparatory phase are significant, paving the way for new programs, projects, and outlooks that could achieve important changes in conservation, especially in one of the world's premier systems of protected areas. They include:

• a watershed conference on environmental education and public outreach for Zapovedniki and National Parks (See RCN #2). This was the first conference bringing together representatives from these two types of protected areas, and the first time such a theme was discussed in a forum for federal protected areas.

• a seminar on Economics of Biodiversity in Russia, which initiated a new dialogue between biologists, protected areas managers, and economists; case studies on economic aspects of protected areas in Russia were presented for the first time.

• creation of a comprehensive training program for protected areas staff

• preliminary GAP-analysis of representatives of protected areas system

• analysis of previous financing and technical assistance for biodiversity conservation in Russia (see this issue of RCN, page 23)

• analysis of social and economic factors affecting biodiversity: (overview of the state of biodiversity, a policy matrix).

However, probably, the most significant outcome was creation of a comprehensive nation-wide program known as Protected Areas Immediate Action Plan (see below)

This Action Plan provides a strategy that could be critical for the development of Russia's protected area system. It represents an investment framework by which important reforms can be achieved. In addition to its value as an in-country planning document, the Action Plan will be useful for donors throughout the world, as it highlights priority areas for biodiversity conservation, and provides a set of criteria by which programs and projects should be selected.

During this project preparation phase, experts considered Russian protected areas as a priority for biodiversity conservation efforts. The system of strict nature reserves is
one of the oldest and most extensive, and if adequate measures are taken in the near future, could play a key role in protecting the world’s biodiversity. However, unless immediate assistance is provided to this system now, all what has been gained during the last century can be ruined just in few years of socio-economic instability. Thus, in addition to developing long-term strategies for protecting Russia’s biological diversity, experts designed a Protected Areas Immediate Action Plan, the contents of which are summarized in the following article.

The project preparation team extensively utilized the results of a number of previous assessments of problems and needs of protected areas system conducted by various international agencies during the last three years.

The Action Plan was developed entirely by in-country experts, including representatives from the Department of Nature Reserve Management, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Department of Game Management of the Ministry of Agriculture, Institute of Geography, All-Russian Institute for Nature Conservation, Eoclub of Novosibirsk State University, Bolshaya Kokshaga Zapovednik, Laboratory of Ecological Designs, Bird Conservation Union, World Wild Fund for Nature- Russian Programme Office, the Biodiversity Conservation Center, and many others.

Like all other materials produced in the preparatory phase, the Action Plan is presently being reviewed, and we are yet to see what will be considered for GEF funding. However, the significance of the Action Plan is much broader than just another funding proposal to international aid agencies. This Plan suggests in a systematic and comprehensive manner policies and practical steps that can ensure survival and development of one of the principal protected areas systems of the world.

IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN FOR RUSSIA’S PROTECTED AREA SYSTEM

Role of Russia’s Protected Areas in Protecting Biodiversity.

One of the most comprehensive attempts at biodiversity conservation in Russia has been the establishment of a extensive network of protected natural areas. Today, much of Russia’s biological diversity is preserved within Zapovedniki, strictly protected scientific reserves. The system of National Parks, founded only ten years ago, is another major component of federally-managed protected areas. Zakazniki, or Special Purpose Reserves make up the backbone of protected areas on the regional level. As of March 30, 1995 Russia had 89 Zapovedniki, covering a total area of 29,120,800 ha. (1.42% of Russia’s territory) and 29 National Parks, covering an area of 6,457,400 hectares, or 0.38% of Russia.

Defining the problem.

Despite the tremendous scale of Russia’s protected areas, many of the Zapovedniki, National Parks, Zakazniki, and other protected areas inadequately protect the diverse species and communities for which they were established. Some of these areas are virtually “paper parks”, existing in name but unable to adequately fulfill their nature conservation mission and resist the pressures which have surged since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Currently, threats to protecting biological diversity in Russia’s Zapovedniki and National Parks are closely tied to institutional and political failures. These shortcomings are apparent at all levels of protected areas management, from interagency cooperation to operation of individual protected areas. Inadequate communication and planning on and between all levels of management, now exacerbated by financial crisis, obstructs development of the protected areas system in all spheres, from applied conservation and use of information to law enforcement and public support.

In designing the Protected Areas Immediate Action Plan, experts identified an array of problems facing Russia’s management system today. These conclusions were based on over one hundred proposals received from individual protected areas, and from consultations and seminars with experts and employees in the field. They may be summarized as the following:

- Structures overseeing protected areas are weak, unable to provide centralized planning, financing and development of management policies;
- Poor coordination and communication exchange among agencies managing protected areas, and among individual protected areas;
- Inadequate and inefficient funding, leading to degradation of protected areas;
- Lack of direct application of results of scientific research to conservation programs, and lack of information in international scientific community about activities of nature reserve researchers;
- Lack of professional training and recruitment for employees in all aspects of protected areas management, from education to recreation management;
- Lack of public support in Russia and in international community for protected areas;
- Inadequate mechanisms to design and establish new protected areas.

Developing solutions, determining priorities.

Having identified the major problems preventing development of the protected areas system, the team of experts developed a framework for improving the system. A group of five priority areas were identified in which projects and programs would be organized. Each priority area includes a host of programs that are recommended as catalysts for change. And within particular programs, pilot projects were recommended at specific sites. These five broad priority directions for the Russian protected areas system are:

- facilitating institutional change in protected areas management
- improvement of protected areas operations
- training for protected areas staff
- building public support for protected areas of Russia
- expansion of protected areas network and creation of new types of protected areas
FACILITATING INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN PROTECTED AREAS MANAGEMENT

Strengthening institutions and structures now managing Russia’s protected areas is of first-order importance. Centralization of decision-making over financial and personnel issues should occur in agencies administering National Parks and Zapovedniki, creating two strong agencies to protect, maintain, and develop parks and nature reserves. This measure should be accompanied by structures that ensure communication and coordination among these key agencies and other agencies influencing land protection. An essential aspect of these reforms is the inclusion of mechanisms that make hold organizations and individuals accountable.

Achieving these goals will require a variety of measures that will increase cooperation among agencies, and individual protected areas. Other strategies should encourage participation of and scrutiny by non-governmental organizations and experts in research and educational institutions.

The five programs included in this section aim to improve the effectiveness of agencies managing National Parks and Zapovedniki. Programs describe measures for reorganization and strengthening these agencies and supporting structures. These programs aim to consolidate decision-making in two agencies, facilitate cooperation between protected areas at the regional level, improve system-wide planning capabilities and increase interagency cooperation. Programs include:

- Strengthening of Nature Reserve Management within the Ministry of Environmental Protection
- Creation of Regional Directorates for Zapovednik Management Strengthening of National Park Management within the Federal Forest Service Federal Coordinating Commission on Protected Areas
- International and Regional Associations of Protected Areas

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, National Parks and Zapovedniki unite....see this issue of RCN, page 32.

IMPROVEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS OPERATIONS

Despite the great intellectual wealth within the staff of Zapovedniki and National Parks, as organizational units (and as a whole system) typically these places operate inefficiently. The inefficiency is in large part related to extremely poor communication between individual protected areas and with the central managing agencies. The absence of proper technical equipment prevents the development of modern, efficient information and communication systems that could assist protected areas in developing wide-scale efficient information networks needed for management.

Priority should be given to programs not only providing information and modern equipment for research, such as database development, monitoring, but those that encourage its direct application in biodiversity conservation. Improving operational and planning can be achieved through strengthening planning mechanisms so that resources are project-oriented, as opposed to those that maintain the status quo. Training within all divisions of protected area management, from law enforcement to applied research will be an essential ingredient to success.

The five programs designed to address these needs prescribe measures for reorganization and strengthening of managing agencies and supporting structures. These programs aim to consolidate decision-making in two agencies, facilitate cooperation between protected areas at the regional level, improve system-wide planning capabilities and increase interagency cooperation. The programs developed are:

- Information network for protected areas
- Creation of Biodiversity Data Base to facilitate protected areas planning and management
- Fundraising and Financial planning for protected areas
- Strengthening of Protection Service
- Program for Ecosystem Monitoring in Protected Areas Coordination of Scientific Research in Zapovedniki and National Parks
- Program for Conservation of Rare and Endangered Species

Program for Conservation of Rare and Endangered Species

The creation of this program would increase capacity of protected areas and professional conservation organizations to set priorities and establish and manage programs for recovery, protection, and preservation of rare and endangered species. The program will also monitor policies and laws regarding policies in rare flora and fauna conservation in protected areas.

One model project that would be implemented under this program in the Shulgan-tash Zapovednik. Staff will construct artificial nests in Zapovedniki forests to attract the endemic honey bee, Apis mellifera, a keystone species in this southern Ural ecosystem. Many plants dependent on the bee for pollination which, in turn, provide forage and habitat to a host of wildlife. The limited old growth and fragmented native habitat for the bee as well as the introduction of a nonnative European bee species have threatened the endemic population. The conservation program will be implemented with a development of protective regulation and a public outreach program.
TRAINING FOR PROTECTED AREAS STAFF

In Russia there are no programs or courses preparing future employees at universities, or providing on-the-job training for managers with varied educational backgrounds. Substantial resources should be devoted to developing programs that create a common understanding of protected area’s missions and objectives for managers and employees in the protected areas system. Courses and on-site training should be developed which provide a set of tools (theoretical and practical) to professionals throughout the protected areas system, from managers and scientists to educators and law enforcement inspectors.

Equally important is the preparation of college students in all of these fields, in order to recruit and train a new generation of protected areas staff. Today most conservationists are educated in a scientific field. And although Russian scientists are among the most highly educated by international standards, they are usually specialists with a narrow focus in a particular field of scientific research. Funding should be provided for the development of multi-disciplinary courses which provide students with applied tools in conservation such as ecology, conservation biology, environmental education, environmental policy, and management.

Support should be given to programs that will ensure the continuing education of protected areas employees, in formal and non-formal settings. This includes efforts at increasing exchange among individual protected areas, as a way of learning from successful and unsuccessful management techniques on the ground. Programs that provide a forum for in-progress case studies, and exchange of successful experiences and failures should be supported, and continuing education should be maintained. Programs developed in this section recognize the high level of academic preparation in Russian higher education, as well as the lack of training in applied management techniques. They are aimed at all levels of current protected areas staff, and will provide a mechanism for recruiting and selecting the next generation of protected areas staff. The programs aim to provide a common set of management and conservation tools, and an understanding of the mission of National Parks and Zapovedniki to students and professionals from varied backgrounds and specialties.

- Seminar Series for Protected Areas managers
- Staff training for employees in protected areas system and publication of handbooks
- Organization of academic courses in institutes of higher learning
- Supplementary training of students for protected areas management

An analysis of staff qualifications showed that managers of Russia’s protected areas come from a wide diversity of backgrounds, ranging from forest rangers to former Communist Party officials. Deputy Directors of the 89 Zapovedniki are graduates of 74 different educational institutions. Directors of Russia’s 29 National Parks graduated from 24 various institutions. Most Zapovednik and National Park managers have professional experience as foresters, engineers, and game managers while Deputy Directors are predominantly biologists, geographers or science teachers. None of the institutions whose graduates now manage protected areas (Irkutsk Agricultural Institute, Moscow State University Biology and Geography faculties and various forestry institutes) have programs teaching theoretical aspects of nature protection, or practical conservation methods, and literature on these subjects is limited. Considering this broad range of experiences of protected areas managers, a training program that will create common background and knowledge is a priority for Russia.

BUILDING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PROTECTED AREAS OF RUSSIA

In Russia today there is little support for protected areas - a cause for much of the crises that now plague Zapovedniki and National Parks. In order that protected areas be guaranteed a sustainable existence, they should become a part of the social system. Protected areas need to be recognized as a structural part of Russian society on which people depend for health, recreation, education. Russia’s system of Zapovedniki and National Parks has been virtually kept a secret from the international community, and is poorly appreciated by its most important constituency, the Russian people. Developing such a support system is an integral step toward securing financial assistance in the future - from regional governments, state enterprises, private corporations and individual, is possible only with the help and support of local populations.

Special priority should be given to programs which make the values of protected areas known and felt throughout society. New attention should be given to developing constituencies and interests groups around protected areas, and reducing indifference and hostility toward protected areas. To make such changes, investment should be provided for all types of public education programs, including environmental education in schools, mass media efforts through publications, TV and video, and providing opportunities for ecological tourism. Building public support will require innovative changes in land management. Thus, projects demonstrating ecologically sustainable use of natural resources (sustainable development) within protected areas buffer zones should be encouraged.

These programs provide mechanisms for managers and conservationists to incorporate protected areas into the socio-economic
sphere of Russian communities. They also encourage and support the important role of Russian non-governmental nature protection organizations in providing assistance to protected areas. The projects will raise awareness and national pride in Russia's rich natural heritage. Projects will provide real benefits to local communities, thereby developing constituencies and interest groups supporting protecting areas. The following programs were designed to achieve those goals:

- Support for Publications, Promotional Materials in Zapovedniki and National Parks
- Television Programming on Protected Areas
- Publications for protected areas employees: "Zapovednyi Vestnik", "Informational Bulletin for Zapovedniki and National Parks", Journal for Applied Conservation Publication of "Zapovednyi Evasia" (see RCN article on Associations, page 32)
- Environmental Education and Public Outreach Program
- Eco-tourism
- Development Program
- Independent inspection and auditing service
- Student Nature Protection Corps (see articles on Drzchina achievements in RCN, pages 25-27)
- Registering Russia's protected areas as UNESCO World Heritage Sites

March for Parks in April....Public Outreach for Protected Areas

Russian National Parks and Nature Reserves conducted a massive public relations event, one of the first steps in a nation-wide public outreach campaign for protected areas. (See this issue of RCN, page 8)

EXPANSION OF PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK AND CREATION OF TYPES OF PROTECTED AREAS

Russia is one of the last countries where expansive wilderness areas have remained preserved in their entirety. However, many of these places are not part of the current system of protected areas. As land is being privatized, the opportunity to affordably protect large tracts of land is disappearing. Considering recent social, economic and political changes in Russia, new mechanisms for creating and designating natural areas are also urgently needed in Russia. Existing forms of protected areas are inadequate to meet the demands of nature conservation in post-Soviet Russia.

New approaches at forging partnerships between land users, land owners, and protected areas will be critical for the preservation of protected areas. As the experience of organizations in some other countries has shown, partnerships between business, non-profit and government sectors give each stake-holder an incentive to preserve the natural area. As strict protective regimes are increasingly violated, making compromises between human needs and conservation goals is critical. Buffer zones in Zapovedniki and National Parks are potential grounds for demonstrating compromises between conservation and development.

The program Planning Protected Areas of Russia would play a critical role in developing agreements between protected areas and private land users, planning and establishing new Zapovedniki. The next three years is a crucial period for ensuring strict protection of the most vulnerable and valuable priority sites before changes in land ownership prevent their preservation. GAP-analysis and other support systems will facilitate identification of priority sites for establishment of new reserves. The program should have a capability to establish 30 - 40 new Zapovedniki over the next three years.
Priority assistance in this direction should be given to programs developing consistent policies, legislative support, and viable management structures to implement these new types of protected areas. Programs designed to achieve these goals include:

Program for Planning Protected Areas of Russia Building local support through environmentally sustainable development projects in protected areas buffer zones

The program Building local support through environmentally sustainable development projects in protected areas buffer zones would aim to raise status of and support for Protected Areas among general and provide assistance to protected areas in developing projects in sustainable development.

One model project that would be recommended for such a program was proposed by Daurski Zapovednik. This Zapovednik in south-central Siberia, bordering Mongolia, is threatened by the increase in small landowners, and the encroachment of farmers and herders which have depleted grazing areas around the reserve and now threaten the same in its buffer zone. Overgrazing has led to soil erosion and compaction, putting pressure on native steppe and wetland habitat in the reserve, as well as conflicts between the Zapovednik’s protection staff and local farmers.

The Zapovednik proposes to improve relations with its farmer neighbors by developing model programs in agriculture within its buffer zone. The Zapovednik will organize a 100-hour course with theoretical and practical training in application of pesticides and fertilizer and examination. Passing the course will be a requirement for those local farmers who wish to obtain pasture rights in the buffer zone. Model plots will be established and farmed with application of organic, ecologically sustainable methods. The Zapovednik will acquire right to land use of plots in buffer zone that are owned by pensioners who formerly worked in the collective farms. In exchange, pensioners will receive monthly dividends from the agricultural enterprise.

**NATIONAL PARKS OF RUSSIA: TODAY AND TOMORROW**

*by Valery A. Soloviev*

The Russian proverb “Russians harness slowly, but ride fast” has been well proven in the pace of development of National Parks in Russia. Since the first National Parks were formed in 1983, the number of National Parks has grown constantly (in 1990, 12 National Parks existed, 22 - in 1992, 25 - in 1993, 28 - in 1994). The twenty-ninth National Park was organized in March in Mordovia Republic. Despite the high protection standards set by legislation for National Parks, most of the subjects in the Russian Federation prefer National Parks to other forms of protection of natural and cultural heritage. Considering the great variety of social and economic conditions in the country, the term “National Park”, may be understood in a variety of ways but for the most part, all National Parks of Russia have common features.

We estimate that the growing number of National Parks in Russia may settle around one hundred. In expanding the system we must determine priorities for their creation. Our main guideline should be maximum representation of natural diversity. Especially important for educational tourism, natural variety in National Parks will allow visitors to learn about diversity of the country. Today, existing National Parks cover only one-seventh of the different landscapes in Russia.

Others areas that need special conservation efforts are those influenced by large industrial cities threatened by heavy human pressure, those containing a number of important historical or natural sites, and those situated in unique locations. Examples of such regions which are not represented by National Parks are the Far East, Russian Arctic, Mountains of Southern Siberia, and the North Caucasus.

In the near future, a few new National Parks may be organized.
Rare and Endangered Species

continued from page 15

One in Krasnoyarsk Krai (region) - "Shushensky Bor" (Shushensky pine forest) - will protect an area connected with Lenin’s exile and valued for its virgin mountain taiga. And, this year, a new National Park ("Ugra") should be organized in Kaluzhskaya Oblast (Region) in central Russia. According to the program for National Park development, 30 more National Parks will be organized before the end of this century.

The future of National Parks depends heavily on the subjects of the Russian Federation, which must initiate and/or ratify proposals for National Parks before the park can achieve federal status. Whether regional authorities will be in favor of park creation is influenced by a variety of factors, including the strength of the environmental movement, motivation and enthusiasm of the public, support from public and professionals, and demand for those who use parks for recreation. The final decision to create a new National Park rests with the Ministry of Environmental Protection or the Federal Forest Service. Thus support at the Ministerial level is also critical for expansion of the National Park system. The Division of National Parks should use all possible methods to expand information about National Parks among professionals and the general public to encourage an understanding of the value of National Parks in our lives.

Valery A. Soloviev is the head of the Division of National Parks in the Federal Forest Service.

RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

This is the second of a series of articles on the problems of protecting flora and fauna in the former Soviet Union

MENZBIER’S MARMOT: THE RAREST MARMOT OF EURASIA

By Dr. V.I. Mashkin, edited by Dr. N. Formozov

High in the Western Tien Shan mountains remains a small population of Menzbier’s marmot (Marmota menzbieri). The marmot’s limited range of about 200 km² is currently split between four former Soviet states: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tadzhikistan. The small number of this species makes it indisputably a high priority organism for conservation efforts in Central Asia. Menzbier’s marmot is listed in the IUCN Red Book (second category), in the Red Book of the USSR (1984), and in the Red Books of the four former Soviet Republics.

The discovery and history of Menzbier’s marmot

This marmot species was first discovered and described in 1925 by D. Kashkarov, who named it after M. Menzbier, his teacher and a well-known zoogeographer. At the time of discovery, the Menzbier’s marmot was reported to be excessively hunted for its healing fat, greatly valued by indigenous people, and for its high-quality fur.

The local peoples, the Uzbek, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz, have long believed that the marmot was a man cursed and damned by Allah to live in holes and feed on grass. The legend that Allah endowed the marmot with a healing fat to cure his elder brother, man, as an atonement for his sins, probably derives from the marmot’s defensive behavior. Ancient shepherds described how, when the elder brother Man, armed with a stick, surprises his younger brother Marmot, the latter squats on its hind legs and, like a human being, tries to protect its head with its front paws.

Natural history and unique features of Menzbier’s marmot

Menzbier’s marmot is the smallest of all marmot species, measuring less than 50 cm long and weighing about 4 kg. Its squat and somewhat clumsy appearance is deceiving, as the marmot can skillfully maneuver its supple body through narrow gaps and crags on the rocky slopes.

Menzbier’s marmot is also distinguished from other marmots by its coloration. While the top of its head and the upper parts of its body and flanks are dark, almost black, its cheeks, the lower part of the body, and paws are light-colored, yellow and gray. Local people call Menzbier’s marmot “sary tyshkan” (yellow mouse) in the spring and “kara tyshkan” (black mouse) in autumn, when its fur becomes dark.

These marmots live in colonies comprising several families of two to ten individuals each. Marmots make their dwellings on northern and eastern mountain slopes, which accumulate a thick layer of snow in winter and thus afford a warm shelter. In spring, marmots leave their dens after a long hibernation, sometimes pushing their way through a snow layer 9 m thick. The marmot then begins to feed on wild onions, grasses, crocuses, and tulip leaves, preferring fresh shoots. Needing protein-rich food, nursing females often eat earth and catch insects.

The young are born soon after hibernation, normally in broods of 2 or 3, sometimes 4 or 5 individuals. They develop slowly for a month or even longer they remain in the den where they are nourished solely by their mother’s milk. Only after the female takes her young to bathe in the sun do they...
begin feeding on the juicy grass shoots. For several more days they may continue to be nursed by their mother. The young are playful and trusting, climbing and frolicking for hours around their rocky home. Marmots recognize each other by smell rather than by physical appearance and do not admit members of other families into their own.

Present-day marmot population and impact of human activity

At present, the total Menzbier's marmot population slightly exceeds 40,000. This seemingly large number is, in fact, dangerously low for rodents, especially considering that these mammals have many natural predators.

The major factor behind their population decline is human activity. Marmots have totally disappeared in many parts of their habitat and the remaining population is fragmented. On the Angren plateau, the population number decreased drastically as a result of landscape degradation inflicted by geological exploration.

In recent years, areas inhabited by Menzbier's marmot have been extensively used for summer pasturing of large flocks of sheep. Shepherds typically use two to eight dogs, which pose a constant threat to marmots; although not especially trained for hunting, the domestic dogs prey on the marmot colonies as they roam the mountain slopes. In addition, sheep trample and graze grass to the extent that in some places virtually nothing is left for marmots. Because of these continual disturbances, marmots have little chance to adequately nourish themselves and thus fail to accumulate enough fat for prolonged hibernation, and if there is shortage of grass in spring, are likely to die. Females also stop breeding because, lacking enough fat, they are no longer able to nurse their young.

Conservation and survival of Menzbier's marmot

In 1991, during our studies in Uzbekistan, we observed that marmot reproduction in unprotected areas of the Chatkal ridge practically ceased as a result of extensive overgrazing in its habitat. Meanwhile, the territory of the Chatkal Zapovednik, (the Uzbekistan nature reserve where Menzbier's marmot still persists), encompasses too little habitat and is thus unable to adequately preserve the species. All these factors call into question the future of Menzbier's marmot.

Lack of funding for Russian and Uzbek zoologists prevents us from developing conservation measures for this marmot. (Since 1991, the lack of funds forced Russian researchers to stop working on Menzbier's marmot). Unable to conduct in-depth studies of the ecology and behavior of this species, we do not have information essential for maintaining and reestablishing its population. Thus, reinstating support for research and conservation is of critical importance for the survival of this marmot.


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EDUCATING THE FUTURE ENVIRONMENTALISTS OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION: AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

by Dr. Aleksandr Bogolyubov and Mary Carpenter

Despite the current situation in which it seems that many adults and youth in Russia and the former Soviet Union question the use of higher education in natural science and environmentally-related studies, Ecosystem, the Eurasian Association of Environmental Youth Groups, strives to retain student interest in environmental sciences and field research. At the same time, Ecosystem is consolidating the environmental movement among young people throughout the former Soviet Union.

Ecosystem, one of the largest unions of non-governmental environmental education organizations in Russia, promotes its goals among students and teachers, introducing innovative teaching methods, new curricula, and extracurricular activities. Such methods include environmental field research, scientific research, and participation in a range of regional and local projects as well as science contests, camps, expeditions, and nature trips.

Organized officially in August of 1994, the Association is the outgrowth of work by leaders of the Central Young Naturalists Society of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, which has been developing after-school environmental education programs for the last 3 years. Such programs include holding all-Russian and international environmental science fairs, summer camps focusing on specific issues (i.e., ornithology, water ecology, etc.), teacher training and meetings, and development of school curricula.
Environmental Education

Ecosystem achieves its educational goals by uniting teachers and administrators with classes, clubs, societies, and other groups from a wide range of organizations including 552 clubs of Young Naturalists in Russia and 200 clubs in other former republics of the Soviet Union, 150 ecological and biological education centers, 300 Young Tourist Clubs, approximately 350 environmental school clubs, 160 university environmental associations, and approximately 120 community environmental youth groups. Membership in each of these groups ranges from 100 to 1500 youth along with 10 to 50 teachers. Contacts are maintained via regular mailings and participation in joint programs, camps, and expeditions.

Ecosystem is unique in Russia for its focus on hands-on field work and research programs for children. Ecosystem’s main activities include:

- Collecting and distributing information about new developments in environmental education (both for in and out of school use), about new methods of teaching field research and designing environmental projects to have more practical use than just purely scientific one, and about different contests, conferences and seminars all over the world.
- Training environmental education teachers and leaders of children’s organizations via conferences, seminars, and programs in field environmental investigation and in doing scientific research with children.
- Publishing new projects, translating foreign language literature, coordinating work on research and practical projects in different fields of biology, geography, and nature conservation.
- Organizing international research fairs for young naturalists on biology, geography, and ecology; and holding conferences and school-camps for the winners of these contests.
- Planning nature trips and expeditions throughout Russia in which ecosystems and animals, plants and geology are studied.

Over the course of the last 4 to 5 years, Association members in Moscow, together with governmental education and scientific organizations, held international and all-Russian meetings for teachers and young ecologists, including contests for young ecologists testing their knowledge of ornithology, botany, water ecology, and environmental research. Summer camps are organized each summer with the first international youth ornithological school-camp held in the summer of 1989; all-Russian camps focusing on specific themes began in 1993.

The first general meeting of Young Ecologists was held in 1994.

Ecosystem’s programs have met with great interest all over the former Soviet Union and are filling a great need in the Russian educational system. For the first time, materials and guidebooks on field research and identification of species are being made available to teachers and other interested parties through an agreement between Ecosystem and Natural History Book Service, Ltd. of Great Britain. Ecosystem is actively publishing new materials and is assisting teachers in publishing their work in catalogues as well. Ecosystem is also implementing government-initiated programs such as the development of an environmental laboratory and methods in which to work with school students.

Future programs in promoting field work among students and teachers include:

- preparing, publishing, and distributing a journal on issues of non-school environmental education;
- holding science fairs for young naturalists on ornithology, herpetology, entomology, geobotanics, ecological regional studies, and research on environmental pollution;
- holding fairs for applied research on animal and plant life protection, preservation and re-establishment of endangered animals of Eurasia, and practical environmental protection activities;
- publishing a directory detailing the work of young ecologists presented at fairs over the past three years and plans for new fairs;
- holding the 6th International Ornithology School, the 3rd All-Russian School on geobotany and flora, the All-Russian School on water ecology and water biology, and the All-Russian Conference on environmental expeditions;
- continuing work on coordination of an international ornithological research project including the European-Asiatic Bird Count and the Phenology of Birds; and
- holding the 2nd All-Russian Meeting of zoological teachers and continuing education for teachers conducting field work with students.

Ecosystem welcomes contact and cooperation with western colleagues in the field of environmental education in all subjects mentioned above. We would be very pleased if you could send us any information about your organization or your suggestions for cooperation in this field. And, we will be very glad to see you in Moscow as our guests!

Dr. Aleksandr Bogolyubov is President of Ecosystem, Mary Carpenter is a Moscow representative of ISAR.
DEVELOPMENT THREATENS SVALBARD ARCTIC WILDERNESS IN NORWAY

Information compiled by Christine Tam

Bordering northernmost Russia, the Svalbard archipelago stretches over 63,000 km² of Arctic ecosystems as Norway’s largest wilderness area. Filled with wetlands, ice-free tundra valleys, and countless populations of plants and animals, Svalbard first experienced coal-mining at the turn of the century after discovery by a Russian explorer. Now Russia and Norway have four strategic coal-mining settlements on Svalbard that pose the greatest threats to nature protection on the archipelago. In fact, a current coal-mining project threatens construction of permanent infrastructure and a setting of precedence that will clear the path to more extensive and unnecessary development.

In 1920, adjacent Arctic countries signed the Svalbard Treaty, giving Norway sovereignty over the archipelago as well as expressing concern for conservation and preservation of this vast wilderness. In more recent years, the Norwegian government has reiterated its concern for Svalbard’s environmental protection, most recently through a White Paper issued to Parliament in 1994 by Environmental Minister Thorbjørn Berntsen.

The current project proposes the first long distance road (64 km) and accompanying power line to be built between the cities of Svea and Longyearbyen. Although the environmental impact report filed by the coal company determined the road harmless to Svalbard’s natural environment, environmentalists, including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Norwegian Society for Nature Conservation, and Norwegian Ornithological Society, disagree.

This road will not only cut through previously untouched tundra and disrupt flora and fauna, but also facilitate further development and enable future access by other signatory countries through the non-discriminatory clause of the 1920 treaty. This clause provides all signatories with equal, non-discriminatory access to hunting, fishing, industry, and mining. Environmentalists fear a “domino” effect with Russia asserting claim to similar developments particularly since Svalbard has been the site of an historical competition of exploration and exploitation between the two countries.

Indeed, while coal-mining pursuits by Russians and Norwegians have proven unprofitable, they continue to receive government subsidies. The World Wildlife Fund believes the focus should turn to more “environmentally friendly” developments such as ecotourism (over 30,000 tourists visit Svalbard each year).

The Norwegian government did not address this project’s potential consequences in the Environmental Minister’s White Paper, continuing to support its progress. To help prevent the destruction of Svalbard, write the Norwegian government and urge environmental responsibility as well as voice disapproval for the road project at:

The Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland
Postboks 8001 Dep., 0038 Oslo, Norway

For more information, contact:
The World Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box 6784 St. Olavspl.
N-0130 Oslo, Norway
tel. +47-22203777, fax: +47-22200666

Christine Tam recently graduated from the University of Michigan with a M.S. in wildlife ecology and is a volunteer at the Biodiversity Conservation Center.

DO WE REALLY NEED ECO-FUNDS?

by Sergey and Elena Ponamarenko

In Russia, we do not have philanthropy for nature conservation, and the idea of corporate sponsorship is barely in its infancy. Thus, assistance to environmental organizations in the former Soviet Union from western countries, especially the USA, recently become the only source of survival for the non-governmental environmental community.

Support for non-governmental nature conservation organizations is limited by several factors. First of all, in the traditional system, environmental works was usually assigned to one particular organization created to address one kind of particular problem. This organization was created and financed by the government. Funding for all programs and all organizations came from one single trough – the central government budget. All money earned by the government was placed in this budget, while all expenses were taken from it. The system made no exception for any kind of independent initiatives. In such a system, a few problems were defined as priority and received all the funding they required.

Environmental problems were funded according to one main principle: after all other programs had been allocated funding, remaining sources were doled out to environmental projects. The amount finally granted to these projects had no relation to the amount actually needed for such work.

The deep economic crisis now engulfing Russia, did little to help non-profit, non-governmental organizations blossom. But in the early 1990’s the system of funding for environmental projects began to change.

In 1992, in accordance with the newly-passed law of the Russian Federation “On Specially Protected Natural Areas”, non-budgetary funds were established to finance urgent environmental issues. Both federal Ecological Fund and regional (for regions and districts) Ecological Funds were created. In brief, these “Ecofunds” were established with the following goals:

- A unified system of budgetary funding would be created for solving immediate environmental problems
- Ecofunds would be created in every region, the smallest administrative unit
- Funds would be created from money received as
payment for various forms of pollution and fines for violations of environmental regulations.

— Funds from the Ecofunds would be allocated the following way: sixty percent would be spent for resolving environmental problems on the local (city, district) level, thirty percent for the regional level (oblast, krai, republic), and ten percent to the federal Ecofund for federal-level issues.

— Expenditure of Ecofunds for purposes other than addressing environmental problems would be prohibited.

At the same time, the traditional sources of funding for environmental projects remained. But, as mentioned above, the traditional recipients of those sources were governmental institutions and agencies. Thus, the creation of non-budgetary funds, in our view, had significant impact for reform in post-Soviet society. They divided highly centralized funding and created a mechanism for accumulating funds that would be spent specifically on solving environmental problems.

Despite many difficulties, Ecofunds began to grow and function. In 1993 they were a realistic source of financial support for regional environmental projects, such as local landscape restoration projects, planning for protected areas, conducting environmental impact assessments, initiating environmental educational programs, and more.

The creation of Ecofunds was significant, as to a great degree they depended on a initiative “from below”; and competition developed as a great variety of organizations vied for the funding. In most regions, decisions about the distribution of these funds were made by the regional Ecological Committees. In this way, NGOs for the first time had an opportunity to develop their initiative.

Several possibilities for competition for projects at the level of the Ministry of Environmental Protection were created in 1992-1994 within the framework of two programs “Ecology of the Region” and “Environmental Security”, financed by the central budget. Although unspoken, these programs supported organizations, as opposed to projects; nonetheless, during implementation they incorporated many organizations that were not part of the Ministerial system, even NGOs.

The system for financing in the country began to move forward in these directions: 1) funding was given for projects, not organizations and 2) governmental agencies began to choose project principals on a competitive basis, with consideration of the applicant’s reputation and cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget. And 3) the practice of giving only “leftover” funding from the central budget to environmental issues ceased.

However, the new idea had hardly time to blossom before it died on the vine. Almost immediately after the creation of the Ecofunds, attempts were made at siphoning money from Ecofunds into the central budget - “consolidation”, it is called, in official terms.

In 1994, the federal Ecofund was included in the governmental budget in 1994 with a formal gesture to retain a special purpose orientation for the funding. The decision set off a chain reaction of events, followed in suit by a host of regional administrations. In 1995 many regional administrations also decided to incorporate included the regional Eco-funds into their regional budgets, essentially liquidating the fund. In accordance with the 1995 law on the federal budget, the Federal Ecofund was once again “consolidated” with the federal budget.

What we had seen as a hopeful improvement was also souring in the Ministry of Environmental Protection. For 1995 no competitive programs have been announced. Once again, funding is being distributed by high officials of the Ministry. And, the percent of funding for governmental agencies and institutions has increased.

Several cases in point.

This situation is affecting regions differently. In several regions, the original procedure of administering Eco-Funds has been preserved. In others they have been poured into the local budget. In some regions Ecological Committees are responsible for allocating the annual Ecofund budget, in others — these committees have lost their function and Ecofund moneys are now being allocated by the regional administrations. In the majority of cases, the potential for spending on vague, general programs has arisen, obviously harming the main purpose of the fund. Several examples illustrate how the federal decision has affected management of Ecofunds at regional levels.

In Belgorod region, a major environmental project fell victim to the changes in Ecofund administration, where the Ecology Committee had passed its budget for fiscal year 1995, allocating 45 million rubles to Les na Vorskele Zapovednik, a small (40,000 ha.) Nature Reserve. The Zapovednik preserves some of the last remaining broadleaf forests with stands of 300-year-old virgin oak trees. (Quercus robur) and habitat for beaver, moose, roe deer and wild boar, and migrating wolves.

This highly agriculturally developed region is a former “bread basket”, in southwestern Russia. Following the example of the Federal government, the head of regional administration appropriated money from the Ecofund, and at his own discretion, allocated money to support the now-wiltling agricultural enterprises instead. All but 15 million rubles (today =$3000) remained for environmental projects for Belgorod Region — a region with an area of 271,000 km2 (approximately equal in size to Colorado) and a population of 1,300,000 (equal to Nevada or Maine).

The Ecology Committee had allocated from the regional Ecofund 10 million to the non-governmental organization Laboratory for Ecological Designs (LED) for a project creating a buffer zone around Les na Vorskele Zapovednik. The Zapovednik borders a collective farm where intensive application of pesticides and tillage has all but destroyed the soil microflora at the reserve’s edge. Residents of the unprofitable collective farm living at a near-poverty level, place constant pressure on the Zapovednik, using it as a backyard storehouse for firewood and hunting grounds.

A cooperative project between LED and the Zapovednik was developed to reduce this human pressure by acquiring land from the farm, and re-planting native oak seedlings as a buffer zone that in the future could provide a sustainable harvest of firewood to the village. On another border of the Zapovednik, LED had planned to begin a river restoration project, cleaning and re-stocking it with native fish that would harvestable by the community also. The decision of the Belgorod administration was a huge blow to the project, putting a halt to the ecosystem restoration work.

Another typical case is found in Tula Region, where preserving islands of steppe and valuable forest is a conservation priority. During the soviet period they were simply protected with the rank of Nature Monuments, but in accordance with new legislation, they now require inventories...
and formulation of legal documentation. In 1995, the regional Ecology Committee allocated no money from the Ecofund for this work. Neglecting such work will mean that hundreds of valuable natural lands will become private property without any protective status or limitations on their use.

At the Laboratory for Ecological Designs, we tried to find out what was happening to Ecofunds elsewhere by sending out surveys on Ecofund expenditures to many regions through the SocioEcological Union’s network of electronic mail addresses. Information received as of today show that the repercussions in Tula and Belgorod are becoming more typical, with variations only on the excuses of administrations for spending Ecofund money for non-environmental projects.

In Nizhni Novgorod region, where the Department of Nature Conservation at the regional level is directed by a leader from the SocioEcological Union, the future is somewhat more hopeful. Spending for environmental purposes has been preserved. However, as of March 21, the Ecofund no longer existed, as it has been “consolidated” with the regional budget.

The disappearance of the Ecofund signifies an alarming symptom of a return to the old system of a unified financial treasury which unavoidably once again creates the “leftover” allocation approach for environmental projects. The disappearance of Ecofunds should noticeably worsen the position of environmental NGOs, which cashed (or had the opportunity to use) these funds for innovative projects.

At the end of May, SocioEcological Union will hold a conference for non-governmental organizations. This conference gives us a unique opportunity to respond immediately on a national level to the problems facing Ecofunds. At the conference we will:

1. Present information collected thus far on the regions illustrating the status of Ecofunds, and make preliminary recommendations for a strategy to reverse the process that has begun to liquidate Ecofunds;
2. Propose that the SocioEcological Union include in its list of important tasks for resolution the issue of Ecofunds;
3. Create a working group to contact regional Ecofunds and members of SocioEcological Union experienced in this field. This consultative-analytical group should collect information about the status of Ecofunds in various regions and help nature conservation groups to develop a dialogue with regional administrations. The group should also consult with local nature conservation groups on developing a strategy to retain special funds for environmental projects;
4. Develop a grant proposal to support the research, communications, travel and work needed to conduct the analysis an arrive at a practical solution.

As long as alternative sources of support from international or foreign foundations exist, this blow might not be felt so hard by many NGOs. However, we must begin immediately to fight to keep what had begun as a progressive mechanism to fund environmental work. Confronting this issue now could make a world of difference for nature conservation in Russia.

Sergey and Elena Ponamarenko direct the Laboratory of Ecological Designs.

PARTICIPATION OF RUSSIA IN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON NATURE CONSERVATION

by Dr. Vadim Mokievsky

The history of international conservation law began in 1900, when a convention on nature conservation in Africa was signed in London. Today the list of international conventions on nature conservation is extensive, consisting of over a dozen global and regional conventions and multilateral agreements (excluding numerous bilateral agreements and treaties). Russia so far has participated in four global conventions, namely the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar), the Convention on World Natural and Cultural Heritage, and the Convention on Biodiversity Conservation. Russia inherited participation in the first three from the former Soviet Union, while the latter was signed by Russia following the breakup of the USSR. Russia also has international obligations related to the conservation of wildlife which ensue from bilateral treaties and regional conventions (such as the Convention on Polar Bear Protection, the Treaty on Antarctica, and the International Whaling Convention).

International conservation law is founded, on one hand on the main principle of recognizing the sovereignty of each nation over its own natural resources including wildlife and natural communities, and on the other hand on recognizing environmental problems as fundamentally transboundary. Inasmuch as species’ distributions are independent of political borders, rational use of natural resources and effective conservation actions are impossible without multinational cooperation.

Why do we need international conventions (particularly since each country-participants remains solely responsible for managing its own resources)? First of all, conventions enable us to formulate common priorities and goals in conservation. They can list endangered and threatened species on a region-by-region basis. They can make conservation measures and, if at all possible, legislation within the countries more uniform.

The latter is especially important for countries with a federal system of government. In such countries, carrying out particular conservation measures is frequently the responsibility of local and regional political bodies, whereas signing international treaties is the exclusive power of the federal government. Participation in an international convention therefore provides the federal authorities with a chance to unify domestic conservation regulations and foster effective coordination on the regional level.

Another important aspect of international regulations is their role in “propaganda.” Even if they do not provide for explicit prohibitions or regulations, listing of a species on an international list of threatened and endangered species, for example, can boost its status and increase recognition for its
value within a particular country. Such listing imposes certain moral obligations upon the countries where the species still survives in the wild.

When an international agreement of any kind is signed, each country joining it takes upon itself certain legal obligations. Such obligations are sometimes fairly vague:

...Each Contracting Party shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory. (Ramsar Convention, Article 3);

Others are more precise. For instance, Article 6 of the Bern Convention states that each participating signatory should adopt all the legislative and administrative measures pertinent and necessary for special protection of the species of wildlife listed in the Appendix 2. Specific prohibitions include:

(a) all kinds of deliberate capture and keeping in captivity and intentional slaughter;
(b) intentional harm to the breeding or resting sites or destruction thereof;
(c) intentional disturbance of wildlife, especially during the breeding season, or hibernation, to the extent that such disturbance may be significant in relation to the goals put forth in this Convention;
(d) deliberate destruction or collection of eggs from wild habitats, or keeping of such eggs, even if they were empty;
(e) possession of or trade in these animals, whether dead or alive, including stuffed specimen and any easily identifiable part or product thereof, to the extent that such actions may be significant in relation to the goals put forth in this Convention.

There has been a tendency in current international law, though, to move from generally vague traditional conventions declaring main objectives to be implemented by each country according to its own sovereign rights, towards an effort to formulate more rigid principles of protection mandatory for each undersigned party.

To a large extent, each government’s attitude towards international treaties is shaped by domestic public opinion and the presence of an active conservation movement able to pressure the government to participate in and implement such agreements.

Global conventions are open for any nation to join, and encompass all of the world in their scope. Such conventions are Ramsar, CITES, Convention on Biodiversity, etc. Regional conventions encompass countries on a geographical basis and may range from influencing conservation in the entire Hemisphere (Convention on Wildlife Conservation in the Western Hemisphere of 1940), to relatively small regions (Mediterranean, Caribbean, etc.).

Among the regional conventions, one of the greatest of interest is the Convention on Wild Nature and Natural Habitat Conservation in Europe (Bern, 1979). Nature protection in areas that have been the most profoundly transformed by humans over the centuries, such as the European nations, require strict and well-coordinated policies. To this end, the Bern Convention presents high standards to the governments of participating countries. On the basis of the Convention, a number of additional documents were developed within the European Community (EC) to coordinate conservation actions. Developed within the EC, the Convention is open to other countries upon the invitation from the EC Committee of Ministers.

Russia occupies a special place among other European nations. Many species of mammals and birds endangered or already extinct in Europe, and in particular those listed under the Bern convention, still thrive in the European part of Russia, sometimes occurring there in abundant numbers (e.g., Arctic fox (Alopex lagopus), brown bear (Ursus arctos), otter (Lutra lutra), bittern (Botaurus stellaris), common crake (Crex crex), and many others)! On the one hand, this is an obstacle for joining the Convention, since protection of these species in Russia does not yet require taking up such rigorous measures as prescribed by the Convention for the countries of Central and Western Europe. Many species under strict protection in Western Europe are still considered common game species in Russia. On the other hand, the well-being of many Central European populations of such species directly depends on their healthy status in Russia. This situation puts a high moral responsibility on our country. Russia has received an official invitation to join the Bern Convention; however, it remains yet unclear whether Russia will join.

International agreements can be further grouped into two categories: those that protect particular natural areas, and those that protect certain species regardless of the territory they occupy. Two global conventions, the Convention on Wetlands of International Significance (Ramsar) and the World Heritage Convention fall within the former category. The conventions protect the areas identified by the participating countries on the basis of a set of criteria set forth at the international conferences. During the Soviet period, three sites in Russia were listed under the Convention at the moment of its initial adoption (Kandalaksha gulf of the White Sea, the Volga River delta, and Lake Hanko in the Far East). In September, 1994, the government of the Russian Federation added thirty-two new sites to this list, among which are Pskov-Chudskoe Lake lowlands (see RCN #2 about Chudskoe-Peipsi Lake), the Oka River floodplain, and many wetlands in Western Siberia and the Far East.

Under the World Heritage Convention, seven objects in Russia have special historical-cultural significance, including the Moscow Kremlin, the historical center of St. Petersburg, and Kizhi Museum-Reserve; regretfully, however, as of yet not a single natural object from Russia has been listed.

The Convention On Migrating Wildlife (Bonn, 1979) provides for complete protection of endangered species (Appendix 1) and their habitats. It also urges governments to sign bi- and multinational international agreements on protection of particular species or taxonomic groups, although not immediately threatened yet frequently crossing political boundaries and requiring coordinated conservation efforts (Appendix 2). Russia does not participate in the Bonn Convention; however, as the legal successor of the USSR, it is responsible for implementing a few bilateral agreements on protecting migrating birds.

In the fall of 1994, the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) signed an agreement on the protection of migrating species of wildlife within CIS boundaries. This agreement is not an equivalent to the Bonn Convention. It is rather the first step towards reunification of conservation efforts after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Dr. Vadim Mokievsky is a member of the advisory board of the Biodiversity Conservation Center directing the program Nature Conservation Policy and Legislation.
CONSERVATION FINANCE

FINANCING OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
by Christine M. Nasser and Tatiana B. Piatina

In preparation for a multi-million dollar Global Environmental Facility grant to the Russian Federation for biodiversity conservation, the Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC) prepared an inventory and brief analysis of domestic and international financing resources allocated to Russian biodiversity conservation during 1994. This report was requested by the Russian Ministry of Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources, and the World Bank to identify gaps in assistance and avoid duplicative funding efforts. In 1994 a total of $51.2 million was invested in biodiversity-related projects in the Russian Federation. Of this total, 76% was provided by various Russian governmental sources, and 24% by foreign governmental and private sources. The following article describes the major findings of that report.

To determine the domestic and international financial commitment to biodiversity conservation in Russia is a complex task, which begins with defining the term “biodiversity conservation.” For our purposes we determined that biodiversity conservation refers to activities related to protected areas and the preservation of species and habitat. We divided projects included in the inventory into the following categories:

- Protected Areas Planning (for existing or future protected areas);
- Protected Areas Management;
- Scientific or Policy Research;
- Environmental Activities/Infrastructure (support for environmental organizations or specific projects related to biodiversity conservation);
- Environmental Education;
- Natural Resource Management (related to forests or wildlife populations);
- Communications; and
- Land-Use Planning (in a rural or open space-related context).

Unless a project was related directly to protected areas management, funding for zoos, botanical gardens, and breeding centers was not included in the inventory.

**Russian Support**

Traditionally most of the support for the Russian biodiversity conservation has come from the Russian governmental sources, chiefly from the budget of the Russian Federation through several Ministries or agencies whose activities include biodiversity protection. The most significant of these Ministries include the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Minpriroda), the Ministry of Agriculture and Foods, the Federal Forestry Service, and the State Committee on Fish Resources.

Federal financing also comes from the Federal Ecological Fund (which receives income from pollutant fees collected locally and from the bank interest from the money which is not immediately used) and two federal budget line-item programs known as the “Fund for the Environmental Security of Russia” and “The Biodiversity Fund.” These two line-item funds provide direct grants to applicants for research projects related to environmental and biodiversity protection.

Federal financing is spent on general support of federal program administration itself (including the expenses of each Ministry, Committee or Service); support for the work of protected areas (including salaries, maintenance, and construction); and support for local environmental committees, national science research institutes, and marine, fishing, and hunting licenses.

In 1994 approximately $35.7 million was appropriated from the federal budget for biodiversity conservation. Of this total amount $29 million went to protected areas, approximately $6.9 million to administration in the Zapovedniks, $10.6 million to National Parks management and planning, $11.5 million was allocated to Zakaznicks and protection and restoration of game species populations. The federal “Fund for Ecological Safety of Russia” and “Biodiversity Fund” provided a combined $1.8 million for research projects. The Federal Ecological Fund allocated $600,000 to biodiversity conservation, of this money, $15,000 went to Zapovednik planning.

Projects supported by the Federal sources are numerous and very diverse. Extensive division of federal funding, however, results in small amounts received at the project level.

Additional governmental support of biodiversity comes from the local administrations of 89 subjects of the Russian Federation, which include all Oblasts, Krais, Autonomous

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Figure 1: Contribution to biodiversity conservation from various Russian funding sources in millions of dollars.
Conservation Finance

In 1994 the total funding for biodiversity conservation at the local level was about $2 million. Of this estimated $2 million, approximately 8% came from subject budgets (including special programs), 82% came from Oblast Ecological Funds, and 10% from other sources (local budgets, ecological funds and corporate donations).

Most of the funding from the subjects of the Federation was allocated to protected areas management (more than 60%). It is worth noting that similar amounts of funding were appropriated to National Parks and Zapovedniks although there are significantly fewer National Parks (29 National Parks and 89 Zapovedniks). In 1994 total support of National Parks was about $24,333,000 ($10,643,000 from federal sources and $13,690,000 from regional ones), and total support of Zapovedniks was about $19,448,000 ($6,888,000 from federal sources, and $12,560,000 from regional ones). Moreover, the 89 Zapovedniks cover 1.4% (72,802,000 acre), while the 29 National Parks cover only 0.4% (16,107,750 acre) of Russia. Although National Parks as protected areas appeared in Russia about 70 years later than Zapovedniks, their number increased very quickly. The significant funding allocated to National Parks, may indicate stronger support for protected areas which can be used by the public since, unlike Zapovedniks, which are closed to the general public, National Parks may be used for recreational purposes. (Refer to the back side of the bulletin for more information on Russian protected areas).

Among all subjects of the Federation, the largest amount of money dedicated to conservation at the local level comes from the major cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow, where significant funding is allocated for protection and restoration of green spaces, including seed and sapling purchases. Funding for these programs is included within the Environmental Activities/Infrastructure, which is about 17% of all funding at the regional level.

Scientific research and publications funded locally (about 12% of all local funding) typically include studies of fish and wildlife populations, the conditions of rare species, inventory of regional flora and fauna, and preparation and publication of lists of species to be included in the regions' Red Data Books. Although there are not many Russian non-governmental corporate sources which support biodiversity conservation, in 1994, two sources, Mezshkombank and the Actual Biology Fund provided approximately $320,000 for protected areas management and biodiversity research. Although not a significant sum of money, the very fact that corporate sponsorship exists is important. It is also interesting that a significant amount of this money was contributed to the World Wide Fund for Nature, an international organization, rather than to Russian organizations.

Input of different Russian sources into biodiversity conservation is shown in the Figure 1 (See page #23).

International support.

Sources of international support include international governmental organizations, foreign governments, foreign foundations, and in small part, NGOs. The total amount of foreign money was $12.5 million, or about 24% of all funding allocated for biodiversity conservation in the Russian Federation in 1994. Eighty-five % of the support provided by foreign sources was spent on “joint” projects (Russian-foreign partnership) or on foreign experts. This may be a result of the policies of many foreign governments and foundations to fund projects through recipients from their own nations, and may also be indicative of a higher degree of sophistication in fund-raising and project development displayed by foreign NGOs.

Most of the foreign support went to activities such as programs for sustainable development, including management of forests, wetlands, eco - tourism; exchanges, training, meetings, conferences, and visits of environmentalists; regulating trade in wildlife; organization of information centers and informational publications. Development of communications and support of NGOs (environmental fields which usually are not supported by Russian sources) have also received noticeable foreign funding.

The general range of activities supported by international sources is shown in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Percent allocation of 1994 international funding to biodiversity conservation activities.](image)
Operation “Snowdrop”: A Mission to Save Rare Spring Flowers

written by members of Druzhinas (Student Corps for Nature Protection), translated by Mikhail Blinnikov

(editor’s note: This article presents in a diary format the results of a campaign led by the Druzhina (Student Corps for Nature Protection) in the spring of 1995 to stop illegal trade of spring wildflowers in the major cities of Russia and Ukraine. Since the government in those cities largely fails to track down poachers, Druzhinas attempt to fill in the gap, ensuring that the people who profit from selling illegally gathered plants be persecuted according to the law. The campaign, held by Druzhinas every spring since 1972, is an excellent example of how a few activists have made successful gains in biodiversity protection despite hard times in the former Soviet Union.)

This year on March 8, thousands of women throughout the former Soviet Union were congratulated on International Women’s Day with bouquets and baskets of the light and fragrant flowers known as “podsmezhnik” - early crocus, snowdrops, or other spring flowers. As in previous years, in the days preceding the holiday, flower pickers make their way to the forests of the Crimean Peninsula to roam the Caucasian and Carpathian mountains searching for spring wildflowers. In a few days the flowers are brought in huge piles into the cities to be sold at street markets, while a major portion of the plants remains unsold and are simply dumped.

The tragedy of this tradition is that most of the early spring wildflowers are rare or threatened. Such plants are protected according to the Law of Russia and Ukraine. Although the regional governments of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhni Novgorod, Kharkov, Donetsk regions, as well as the city administrations of Moscow and St. Petersburg have adopted special regulations explicitly prohibiting sale of such plants by private parties, little is done to enforce those provisions. Trying to replace the poor law enforcement, Druzhina Student Corps for Nature Protection (referred to henceforth as Druzhina) members take to the streets and woods as “public inspectors on nature protection”, a status allowing them to enforce the regulations.

The campaign begins in the South of the European part of Russia and in Ukraine, where in late February to early March many wildflowers are already in full bloom. As the peak of wildflower bloom in Central Russia ends in mid-June, the campaign shifts northward. The participants in the campaign prevent poachers from gathering the plants in the first place. The next step is finding merchants at the markets, and stopping their illegal trade.

Today the situation is especially difficult, since most of the plants are gathered in now-independent Ukraine and sold in Russia. Despite the new political barriers between, the
independent states, the Druzhinas of Ukraine and Russia have
to find ways for cooperation Below we provide a brief account
in a diary format to illustrate some activities during the
campaign of 1995.

**November 1994:**
The International Conference of Druzhina Student Corps
for Nature Protection adopts a declaration to the customs
officers on both sides of the Russian-Ukrainian border. The
document calls for prohibition on transportation of the early
wildflowers across the border.

**February, 1995:**
An official memorandum is sent to the Russian customs
service from the Russian Ministry of Environmental
Protection.

An article about “Snowdrops and customs officers”
appears in “Segodnya” (Moscow). A few articles appear in
newspapers of the Crimean republic. Druzhina Student Corps
for Nature Protection of Kharkov University (Ukraine) tried to
find common grounds for work with the Ukrainian customs
office in the city of Kharkov, unfortunately without results.
On the February 23rd, the first 500 bouquets of snowdrops are
confiscated by Druzhina inspectors.

**February 23 to March 8:** In Ukraine, Druzhina members of
Kharkov State University make nine raids. issue 25 reports
and 50 warnings. They confiscate
134,600 white snowdrop, *Galanthus plicata.*
9200 Kuznetsov’s cyclamen, *Cyclamen spp.*
7,700 Geiffel’s crocus, *Crocus sp.*

**March, 1995:**
The Crimean Squad on Nature Protection sets out on a
mission in the Kubalakh Zakaznik to try to stop poachers of
rare wildflowers. Poachers fiercely resist the small group of
inspectors. Five groups of amateur pickers are detained; over
500 bouquets and 2000 individual flowers are confiscated.
A new and alarming violation is discovered: for the
collection of ivy leaves used for wrapping the bouquets of
snowdrops, the host tree was cut down. (Ivy typically grows
on oaks, beeches and hornbeams. All cases of such violations
are discovered post factum, with no poachers at the scene.

**March 4 - 8:** Druzhina of the Department of Biology of
Moscow State University together with representatives of
St.Petersburg University “Green Druzhina” raid Moscow
street markets.

Forty-three citations and six warning orders are issued.
A recorded loudspeaker announcement created by

Druzhina is played in the Moscow subway, where
approximately 12 million passengers are asked not to buy any
wildflowers in the streets.

The following flowers were seized from the merchants
(mostly citizens of Western Ukraine and Crimea):
25,700 individual plants of Geiffel’s crocus, *Crocus sp.*
273,000 white snowdrop, *Galanthus plicata.*
153,700 Kuznetsov’s and Caucasian cyclamens, *Cyclamen
spp.*
90 bear’s foot, *Helleborus caucasicum*
475 summer snowlake, *Leucojum aestivum*
73 branches of Butcher’s-Broom (Hypoglossum), *Ruscus
hypoglossus.*

Confiscated flowers are handed to the hospitals of
Moscow.

**March 5 and 6:** In Ukraine, Kharkov Druzhina members
make a raid in Zaporozhye, making citations to nine 9
poachers. This year besides Kharkov Druzhina, the campaign
joined Druzhinas from Simferopol, Zaporozhye and Lvov
Universities. Total number of confiscated flowers in Ukraine -
330,500 Galanthus plicata, 170 Kuznetsov’s cyclamen.

**On March 6:** a Moscow TV station features the illegal
trade of early wildflowers, a story initiated by Moscow
members of Druzhina. On the same day an article written by
Druzhina members appears in the supplement to
“Komsomolskaya Pravda” daily newspaper about trade of
wildflowers in Moscow.

Druzhina inspectors in Moscow believe that the sale of
spring wildflower in the streets was greater than ever before.
However, they are unable to determine whether this increase is
a result of an unusually good harvest, or a dramatic increase in
illegal picking.

The Committee on Customs of Ukraine claim that they do
not have any lists of endangered plants prohibiting their
transportation across the border. Therefore, they do not intend
to enforce any regulations. Unfortunately unlike Russia,
which inherited the former Soviet Union’s obligation as a
signatory to the Convention on International Trade in
Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES),
Ukraine never has never signed CITES.

Colleagues can help by pressuring the Ukrainian officials
to join the CITES immediately!

Address in Ukraine:
Ministry of Environment of Ukraine
5 Kreshitak St., Kiev, Ukraine 252001

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**PRESERVING FORESTS OF THE KOLA PENINSULA**

*by Mikhail Plets*

(Editor’s note: The Kola Peninsula, the northeastern tip
of Fennoscandia covers the area roughly half the size of
Finland. It is washed by the waters of Barentz and White Seas
in the north and east, respectively. This is a region of
Northern Russia uniquely diverse in geological features,
vegetation and wildlife. Unlike much of Russian Arctic, the
region has a relatively mild climate due to the Gulfstream’s
warming the port of Murmansk and the whole Barentz Sea
coast. The natural riches of the area and proximity to Western
Europe attracted development of the extracting industry
earlier in the 20th century. The article by the leading

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*conservation experts working in the area
highlights the natural
beauty of the forests in the region, and ongoing efforts
to ensure their survival.*

There are few places
in the world where
forests grow north of the
Arctic circle (66.5 N
latitude). There are only
two such areas in Russia,
one of them is the Kola
Peninsula. The Murmansk
Oblast (region)

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*Photo by A. Sevryugin*
encompasses the whole Kola Peninsula, over the half of which is covered with forests.

The landscape here has been shaped primarily by glaciers, the last of which melted away about 8 millennia ago. Following recession of the glaciers, the sparse vegetation of the tundra zone was replaced by the Scots pine (Pinus sylvestris) and birch (Betula pendula) forests. Most likely, these species arrived here from neighboring Finland. Much later spruce (Picea abies) came from the east, forcing the pine out onto the dry rocks and cliffs, and pushing the birch north to the tundra border where the spruce can barely survives in the severe conditions. The arrival of spruce brought other plants and animals typical for the northern spruce-dominated taiga. Today these species make up a substantial portion of flora and fauna in the region.

About two thousand years ago, during the climatic optimum, forests covered the whole Kola Peninsula. As evidence of this period, many plants normally found in the forest understory elsewhere still thrive in the tundras of the Kola Peninsula. It is suggested that at that time broadleaf forests grew in the south of the region, speculation supported by contemporary findings of a few forbs normally associated with broadleaf forests in the tundra and taiga zones of the region.

Climatic cooling in the late Holocene shifted the forested zone a few dozen kilometers southward. Advance of tundra was greatly facilitated by humans, who used the trees for fuel wood, crafts and other needs. Once cut at the edge of its geographical range, the forest grows back very slowly, hindered by the strong wind blowing off the snow cover. Without the snow cover their only protection, young saplings, tender shoots and buds fall victim to the razor-sharp snow dust.

Unlike in most other areas in the Russian North, it is birch, not conifers, which make up the northernmost forests in the Kola Peninsula. Some scientists attribute this to the mitigating impact of the Gulfstream, washing the northern shores of the peninsula. It makes the overall climate milder, without drastic seasonal changes of the temperature. It would not be an overestimate to say that forests can grow in the region only because of the Gulfstream. Forests do not grow in the neighboring Arkhangel region at the same latitudes as in

the Kola Peninsula, although there the northern forest fringes are composed of much more frost-tolerant Siberian larch.

South of the birch-krumhoelz zone of the forest-tundra, the rest of the region is occupied primarily by the spruce taiga. Pines grow only on the rock outcrops, on burned sites and in other disturbed places.

Pine forests with Cladonia spp. are very common. They form after a few successive fires destroyed the understory shrubs and forbs. Such forests provide excellent food for reindeer in the areas where these animals are still raised in the forest zone and in places are artificially maintained for this purpose.

Spruce forests are the main ecosystem type in the Kola Peninsula. They are also the most diverse in species. Only in spruce forests, for example, grows the endangered orchid of taiga, Calypso bulbosa listed in the Red Data Book (RDB) of Russia. Although not fully studied, the flora of mosses and lichens of the dark-needle (spruce) taiga presents a great interest. Many of these species have long ago been listed as protected in the neighboring Scandinavian countries.

Many rare and threatened animals find their shelter in the forests of Murmansk region. Birds, without a doubt, are the most interesting here. Some of the species are registered in the IUCN Red Data Book of the World, such as White-tailed Eagle (Haliaeetus albicilla). Others, like osprey (Pandion haliaetus) are listed in the Red Data Book of Russia. All these species of raptors nest on the tops of old growth trees, and are therefore every dependent on the preservation of this type of ecosystem. Three regionally rare species of owls, Great Grey Owl (Strix nebulosa), Ural Owl (Strix uralensis) and Eurasian Pigmy Owl (Glaucidium passerinum) occur only in the old-growth.

The most precious forests are the areas which have not been clear-cut since the last glaciation. Such areas still can be found in the Murmansk region, as well as in other parts of Russian North where timber production never was as intensive as in Western Europe. Regrettably, most other parts of Europe, including Russian European part, lost their virgin forests centuries ago.

We estimate that the old-growth stands in a virtually pristine state still occupy about 5 to 10% of the whole
forested area in the Murmansk region. Most of the forests there are designated within the so-called “Group Three” category of forest, those available for unrestricted commercial timber harvest. Few forests are classified as belonging to Group One (environmentally important and protected from commercial harvest), such as all the forests in the forest-tundra transitional zone.

Kola Peninsula Forests Threatened

Even the designation as a “Group One forest does not spare the forests from logging, as is the case, for example, in the projected National Park “Tersky Bereg”. According to the plan, 85% of the park territory is located within the forest-tundra zone, whereas 75% of revenues is supposed to come from the timber sales. This directly contradicts the newly adopted law of the Russian Federation “On Specially Protected Natural Areas” (see this issue of RCN), which specifies that National Parks are non-commercial enterprises. The scope of logging projected for the park territory is considerably greater than ongoing timber harvest in the neighboring Umbsky lespromkhоз (state timber enterprise).

Another serious threat to the forests in the region comes from the development of international contacts between Russian and Finnish (and lately also British) timber producers. According to our data, one of the leading British timber companies has approached the regional authorities looking for “cooperation”. The proposed logging would produce 400 thousand cubic meters of timber (about 170 million board-feet), which surpasses the amount of timber produced in the whole region in 1994.

Another recent threat to the forests in the region is rapidly developing. Due to (unfortunately for biodiversity) tremendous potential of the region for mineral extraction, there is always a great incentive for further mine development. Now there is a growing opportunity to sell some of the potential mining sites to the out-of-region interests. It seems likely that the first sites to be offered for sale would be those situated in the most remote and least accessible parts of the peninsula, since that is where local interests lack ability to develop themselves. Not accidentally, such areas are also the least disturbed and have the greatest potential for biodiversity preservation.

The last old-growth forests could therefore very soon fall victim to the voracious appetite of the international mining corporations. This can happen according to the following scenario: at first, the “out-of-state” mining enterprises would build roads and mines, develop mining communities destroying all the forests at the building sites. Domestic timber industry would quickly follow wreaking havoc with the last pristine forest stands in the surrounding area. There is also a possibility that some of the international companies will try to secure contracts to log timber themselves. This probably would not make much difference to the forests, which will be irrevocably lost.

Today, the Druzhina Student Corps for Nature Protection of the Biology Department at Moscow State University has an ongoing program aimed at forest conservation in the Kola Peninsula. The Kola Group analyzes the state of the forests in the region, makes an inventory of the old-growth sites, and works on the establishment of specially protected natural areas (preserves) where any alteration of natural processes is prohibited. As of today, one such preserve has been created through the group’s efforts. The preserve protects over 150 square kilometers of pristine and close-to-pristine forests. This is one of the last such stands in the Kandalaksha district of the Murmansk region.

Mikhail Plets is a member of the Kola Group of Druzhina Student Corps for Nature Protection.

FROM FIELDS TO FORESTS, RAGS TO RICHES: RESTORING BIODIVERSITY

by Sergey Ponamarenko

(editor’s note: While Russian conservationists have made many achievements in conservation of wildlife and wilderness, the concept of ecosystem restoration is yet a little developed technology here. The following article highlights the work of the leading organization in this field, Laboratory for Ecological Designs.)

Centuries ago, oak forests reached the shores of the White Sea. And until the 19th Century, abatis lines (forests specially maintained as barriers against invading nomadic groups) remained the largest uninterrupted range of broadleaf oak forests, which stretched like a great green swath for kilometers from west to east. Today, however, the landscape has changed dramatically.

With a grant from ISAR (International Clearinghouse on the Environment) and funding from the Russian Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Tula and Kaluzhskaya regional governments, the Laboratory for Ecological Designs (LED) has conducted a large-scale inventory of forests of Zaoski Abatis Line. 730 km in length. (See Geographical magazine, #2, 1994, and RCN, issue #1, p.11). As a result of LED’s long-term work in the area, in 1992 Kaluzhskoi Zapovednik, several Zakazniki (special purpose preserves), and nature monuments were created, and “Ugra and Zhizdra” National Park is being planned.

The main result of LED’s research, however, has been a frightening discovery: oak forests, as a whole ecosystem type, are disappearing in Russia. Although broadleaf oak forests were never a predominant forest type in European Russia, today they are under extreme pressure. The long practice of slash and burn agriculture, followed by shifting cultivation (when fields and forests were constantly alternated), as well as a century of negative selection (when the straightest, healthiest trees were cut first, and the short and crooked continued to flourish and provide seeds), all led to a gradual disappearance of oak forests.

Four hundred years ago in Novgorod region (north of Moscow), pipes for water transport were made from the solid trunks of oaks. Now in Novgorod Region, finding such oaks is impossible. Several scientists suggest that climate change is responsible for the disappearance of oaks, but a natural
experiment suggests that anthropogenic activity is more likely a cause: in Novgorod Region, indigenous populations of oaks, never accessible for human use, remain protected where they stand on remote islands in an extensive upland bog. (Currently these oaks are protected in two adjacent Zapovedniki established for wetlands preservation, Polistovsky and Rdeiskii Zapovedniki).

What is the solution? How can broadleaf-oak forests be restored?

In the past few years, LED has developed practical methods that may facilitate the restoration process. The objective is not to produce forests as quickly as possible, but to recreate ecosystems and develop means for sustainable use of forest resources. LED has designed several experimental plots for restoration work in protected areas that were established for intensive management and re-creation of a particular forest type.

The first of these plots is in Borodino Historical Battlefield, which encompasses over 40 square kilometers of forests. In 1994, upon request from the Ministry of Culture, LED developed a seventeen-year forestry plan. The project aims to reconstruct oak forests, replacing the ever-encroaching alder-aspen forests with uneven-aged oak forests containing a diversity of species of grasses, shrubs, insects, and other wildlife. Using prescribed cutting techniques, LED imitates natural disturbance in the forest, creating mosaics of species within the newly opened gap. From soil analyses and other research, LED determines which native species have disappeared from the region and replants them, leading to a diverse forest canopy. This plan, designed by LED, is being implemented by the Mozhaiskii Forest Enterprise, a state-owned firm in the region.

Another experimental plot is the Ugra and Zhizdra National Park, where LED plans to restore a recently destroyed oak forest. Our work aims to connect the few remaining fragments of old-growth oaks that are scattered among secondary forests.

Three oak (Quercus robur) nurseries have been started with seed material chosen from oaks of the highest quality, the products of which will be used in LED’s ecosystem restoration projects. In 1994, Ivanteevskii Nursery of the Institute for Forest Machine Technology transferred a collection of seedlings of high-quality oaks that had been collected by senior scientist Olga Chiminova over the course of 15 years.

In addition to restoration of forest ecosystems in the near future, LED plans to begin new work in wetlands and steppe ecosystem restoration.

Sergey Ponomarenko is Director of Laboratory for Ecological Designs.

RUSSIA OFFICE FOR TRAFFIC EUROPE - IS ESTABLISHED

by Dr. Alexey Waisman

International trade in wildlife and plants has been a powerful factor responsible for the population decline of many species. This extensive and rapidly expanding business includes trade in living specimens of flora and fauna, animal and plant parts and various products made using wild plants and animals. Such products play important roles in many industrial processes, such as pulp and paper production, processing of timber, pharmaceutical and light industry, etc. Millions of plants and animals are delivered to the pet and garden supply stores annually.

Populations of rare, and unique considered useful for industrial purposes species that are declining are a result of over-exploitation have aroused concerns among many scientists and governments in the world. In 1973 an international Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) was signed to prevent extinction of rare species, and protect the dwindling industrial resource base. As of today, the Convention has been signed by 128 countries-members, including Russia. These states have formed an alliance to ban or restrict trade in species listed under the Appendices, and to better control those species which albeit not immediately threatened, yet may become such under unrestricted trade. CITES lists include over 30,000 species of plants and about 7,000 species of animals.

Soon after CITES had been created and begun working, it became apparent that the efforts of the administrative and scientific bodies of the participating nations alone would be insufficient to satisfy all the Convention’s obligations. In order to provide as complete as possible information and support to the executive structures of CITES, two leading NGOs - World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have developed and now manage a cooperative TRAFFIC network.

TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce) was created in 1976 in order to monitor and highlight the international trade in wildlife and flora. Now TRAFFIC has become the largest and the most authoritative source of data in this field in the world. TRAFFIC enlists species of plants and wildlife which are known to become objects of illegal trade, monitors the status and trade of species, and traces the channels of the import and export in endangered species. It provides information on trade in endangered species and legal support, analyzes gathered data, facilitates workshops. An important part of TRAFFIC’s work includes collaboration with the CITES Secretariat office and national offices of the Convention. And in many countries TRAFFIC works in close contact with the national governments, assists in preparation of legal statutes and regulations, and trains professionals involved in conservation law enforcement.

TRAFFIC offices operate on all 6 continents. TRAFFIC-International network consists of the regional offices (TRAFFIC-Europe, TRAFFIC-North America, TRAFFIC-Southeast Asia, etc.). These offices are responsible for opening and supervising offices on the national level within their regions. TRAFFIC-Europe, for example, is based out of Brussels and have national offices in Italy, the Netherlands, France and Germany. On April 1, 1995 a Russian office of...
TRAFFIC was opened and is now based in Moscow.

In countries of the former Soviet Union, trade in wild species of plants and animals has become an important economic activity. There exists trade in species used by timber and timber-processing industries, species of decorative wildflowers, wild berries, mushrooms and other forest non-timber resources, fresh water and oceanic fish, game and hunting trophies. In the last few years Russia has become involved in trade in exotics as well. Most of the former Soviet republics access Western markets by shipping specimen of exotic plants and animals through Russia.

In 1994 and 1995 TRAFFIC Europe has researched the general situation with trade in wild species of plants and animals, and natural products on the Russian territory. Some species, including the rare tiger (Panthera pardus altaica) and quite numerous even a few years ago musk deer (Moschus moschiferus), saiga antelope (Saiga tatarica) and brown bear (Ursus arctos), have now become especially vulnerable since they are extensively used by the traditional Chinese medicine. Prize trophies like mountain sheep, raptors, songbirds, amphibians and reptiles now come in large numbers to the Western European markets. The results of research pointed to a great need for the creation of a national TRAFFIC office in Russia.

The work of TRAFFIC-Russia office will be focused primarily in the following areas:
- studying social and economical factors responsible for development of trade (including illegal) in wildlife species;
- monitoring wide range of sources of data on the status with trade and other uses of wild animals and plants, analyzing gathered data and making it available to the CITES administration and other state and non governmental conservation organizations;
- organization and assistance in research aimed at studying vulnerable species threatened with illegal trade or over exploitation, finding possible ways to alleviate the situation;
- assisting governmental agencies in creating a reliable system to control exports and imports of wildlife listed under CITES and its Appendices.

The main objective of TRAFFIC-Russia will be to assist the CITES Administration in Russia and other governmental structures in enhancing control over trade in wild species, putting a stop to the illegal trade. As a result, we expect that such measures will minimize adverse effects of such trade on the populations of rare species.

TRAFFIC-Russia office currently operates out of the office of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - Russian Programme office.

Alexey L. Waisman, a graduate of the Department of Biology of Moscow State University, worked at the Institute of Oceanography of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Ministry for Nature Protection of the USSR/Russia before becoming director of the Russian office of TRAFFIC.

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**CONFERENCE TO CONFRONT CONSERVATION PROBLEMS IN POST-USSR TURKMENISTAN**

*by Andrey Zatoka*

With the collapse of the Soviet political and economic system, the proliferation of capitalist ventures, and the mass emigration of “foreign” specialists, the field of nature conservation in Turkmenistan currently faces serious obstacles.

Rare species have turned into tradable goods, with profits benefiting poachers and corrupt government officials rather than Zapovedniki and institutes. Snake venom, saiga horn, leopard skins, rare insects, and terrarium-kept reptiles have all become items for sale, distracting the attention of specialists from working on monitoring and conservation of nature. Other specialists have simply become businessmen since the business of nature protection is no longer profitable nor prestigious.

The break-up of the USSR and formation of new countries hit monitoring work in Central Asia especially hard because the scientific staff in Zapovedniki had mainly consisted of “foreign” (e.g., Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian) institute graduates. A massive emigration of Russian-speaking specialists occurred, so that now only a small number of qualified experts remain in the Zapovednik system and in institutes.

Many of these foreign specialist had been educated at prestigious institutions of higher learning and had gone through tempering in student nature conservation movements, particularly the Druzhina Student Nature Protection Corps. As an example, in Turkmenistan in 1985, more than 30 graduates of non-Turkmenian institutions worked in Zapovedniki, positively affecting the level of work on ecological monitoring and the fight against poachers. Local recruits with much lower qualifications and an absence of enthusiasm have replaced those who left, and the number of positions have simply been reduced.

Paradoxically, the degradation of governmental services for ecological monitoring was accompanied by the development of the socio-ecological movement, which received strong support from western funds expanding activities in the former USSR. It became possible to do what had been completely unrealistic during times of relatively well-off nature conservation management - to get hooked up to electronic mail, to independently organize expeditions, to publish materials, and to participate in international conferences. However, all these benefits are at present primarily accessible to strong collectives or organizations based in large cities. Lone enthusiasts from some Zapovedniki, institutes, zoos, and schools are left on the side of the road of the socio-ecological movement; even with the abundance of information about what is going on, it is difficult for them to participate in competitions for grants and altogether impossible for them to influence the situation in their own institute or Zapovednik.
Thus, the current situation in Central Asia can be characterized, on the one hand, by the disastrous state of wildlife conservation, and on the other, by the extreme deficiency of professional ecological personnel and overall ecological illiteracy. Indeed, many are even unfamiliar with the term “biodiversity.” To confront these issues, a conference on biodiversity issues, entitled “Gepard-95” (Cheetah-95), will be held from November 20 to 25, 1995 in the city of Dashkavuz (formerly Tashauz) in northern Turkmenistan.

The idea for this conference came up by chance at an exercise at the seminar “Peace Corps” in Kazakhstan. At first it was intended to be a working meeting within a narrow circle of nature conservation specialists from the Central Asian Republics, but the first announcement of the planned conference stirred up much interest in the ecological society, that the need to hold the conference became even more obvious.

This conference will gather enthusiasts from Zapovednik, institutes, zoos, and social groups, providing them with the opportunity to get together and to relieve the feelings of loneliness and uselessness. We plan to discuss local problems, estimate existing resources, and determine priority problems. The general plan of activities and methods for their implementation will be determined, including opportunities for fundraising among western foundations and local donors.

A Coordinating Council on Biodiversity will be elected; each member of this council will be responsible for specific activities and will be able to take care of concrete problems and regions. In general, this Council will try to resolve issues which cannot be solved by individuals and even local groups. There are many problems of this nature: expansion or optimization of existing protected areas and creation of new ones; organization of joint expeditions, research, and conservation activities; creation of a database on rare species and professional poachers; search for and attracting qualified personnel for the system of wildlife conservation; development and improvement of environmental legislation; and development of international programs and fundraising.

The proposed number of participants is 50 to 60, including representatives from the Moscow Biodiversity Conservation Center of SEU and potential foreign donors. A registration fee is not foreseen, so we will try to pay travel, accommodation, and other expenses for personally invited participants from the CIS. Specialists from foreign countries, as well as representatives of the government and mass-media, can participate at their own expense.

Following is information on the conference’s location and organizers:

Dashkavuz is a regional center in Turkmenistan with a population of about 140,000. This region is located in the Aral Sea zone of ecological disaster, and the ecological movement here is probably more active than in the capital of the republic. The conference is being organized by Dashkavuz Ecological Club — a non-governmental non-profit group formed in 1992 on the foundation of the Initiative Group of Kaplyynkysk Zapovednik. Gepard (cheetah), serving as the conference name, is the symbol of the Club, and reflects the strategic goal of the Central Asian ecological movement — to achieve such a state of environmental and public consciousness, so as to not only save rare and threatened species from extinction, but also preserve at least a part of lost natural heritage. We hope that this conference will be a positive step in this direction. For more information, contact Andrey Zatoka at Dashkavuz Ecological Club. Mikrorazl C-1, 8, Apt. 23, Dashkavuz, Tashauzskaya region, Turkmenistan 746301.

E-mail: zatoka@glas.apc.org

Andrey Zatoka is Co-chairman of the Dashkavuz Ecological Club.

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NEWS FROM THE CONSERVATION OF ARCTIC FLORA AND FAUNA (CAFF) GROUP

by Irina Pokrovskaya

This spring the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna group (CAFF) synthesized information from the various Arctic countries to make recommendations for creating a circumpolar network of Arctic protected areas. Although goals varied widely in creation of protected areas, CAFF experts determined the priority criterion to be conservation of ecosystems in their natural condition based on the principle of maximizing representation of biogeographical and physical-geographical regions with a high diversity at all system levels: species, population, and ecosystem.

This ecosystem-landscape approach is now in its most detailed form in Canada, where in 1991, the Government adopted the “Canada Green Plan” to organize new protected territories, including national parks. The entire Canadian territory was divided into 39 physical-geographical regions, each of which required representation by at least 1 national park. Among the 39 physical-geographical regions, 16 belong to the Arctic by CAFF’s definition. A similar procedure has been conducted with marine territories in Canada, outlining 29 natural units, 9 of which belong to the Arctic region. The organization of this national park system in Canada will not be completed until the year 2000.

Although Russia historically declared the ecosystem-landscape approach a priority, these criteria are followed only in other regions besides the Arctic. Zapovedniki organizers have ignored the Arctic until the recent past (with the exception of the Kola peninsula).

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 (CAFF).
NATIONAL PARKS AND ZAPOVEDNIKI FORM ASSOCIATIONS

Material collected by Margaret Williams

Last December’s conference at Sochi, Russia, for directors of Russian Nature Reserves and National Parks (see issue #2 of Russian Conservation News) could be considered a watershed for protected areas management in Russia. The meeting occurred during one of the most trying times (politically and economically) for employees and manager of protected areas. Rising to the challenge of shrinking budgets, little public support, and weak leadership from the central government, park and nature reserve managers resolved to create an International Association of Protected Areas of Northern Eurasia, with members from throughout the former Soviet Union. In addition, individual protected areas managers planned the creation of Regional Associations of National Parks and Zapovedniki to face problems and develop solutions on a smaller, regional-specific level. For the first time in Russia, a non-governmental organization will play a central role in coordination, information exchange, and policy formation specifically for protected areas.

Why regional Associations now??

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the network of protected areas that had developed for seventy years was suddenly fragmented throughout newly independent republics. One central administration was replaced by a multitude of newly independent governments. As a result, ties between these protected areas were severed, along with opportunities to exchange experience and support.

Political and economic changes in Russia have led to an increased tendency toward local self-management and the privatization of land. Many questions regarding protected areas once under federal jurisdiction are now decided by regional governments. As regional and local governments gain in strength, Zapovedniki and National Parks need to work more closely with each other and their regional administrations to develop conservation strategies appropriate for the region’s geographical and socio-economic peculiarities. Typically, however, Zapovedniki, National Parks, and organizations who support them communicate little amongst themselves. Nor do they have a supporting organization that can unite their efforts to build public awareness and support for protected areas. Considering the little public trust in governmental agencies, a non-governmental Association will likely be more effective at gaining public support for protected areas.

So far, the following regional Associations have been formed:
- Northwestern Russia
- Middle Volga
- Far East and Maritime territories
- Lake Baikal Region
- Northern Caucasus
- Ural Mountains

The goals and mission statement of each Association differ. However, generally, they will play a coordination, training, and information clearinghouse function. Regional Associations will:

- design regional strategies to increase public support for protected areas by regional governments and communities
- unite National Parks and Zapovedniki to function more effectively as regional networks
- encourage sharing of intellectual and material resources among neighboring protected areas (creating regional conservation strategies, research programs, shared databases).
- coordinate of protected areas activities in conflict resolution
- strengthen their role in policy and legislation formation at the regional level
- participate in planning and designating new protected areas
- facilitate exchange of information
- develop training course for protected areas employees
- organize special services and employment benefits for protected areas employees
— develop programs on public outreach
— developing ecotourism within protected area networks

Funds needed for the Associations will be used for:
— technical assistance (purchase of computers, fax machines, modems, photo copying machine)
— organizational assistance (communications, mailings, office supplies)
— conducting regional training seminars to reinforce and supplement training provided by federal government
— travel and per diem for Association members or founders to meetings, seminars
— printing/publication of popular scientific materials, informational literature

The International Association of Protected Areas of Northern Eurasia will unite staff and supporters of more than 170 protected areas of Russia, Ukraine, Moldavia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tadzhikistan. This association will have a broader focus, aiming to:

— create an international information network among protected areas;
— encourage mutual support in response to direct threats to protected areas;

(For example, in 1994, thanks to international outcry, military maneuvers planned in Tigrayeva Balka Zapovedniki were stopped - see RCM#1 for story);
— conduct international educational and awareness campaigns to increase public support for protected areas;
— help integrate protected areas of the former USSR into the international community through establishment of international partnership programs and exchanges.

At this stage in the development of the regional and international Associations, what is needed most is funding support, especially for the founding meeting that should bring together representatives of all countries of the former Soviet Union. Funds (about $150,000 for start-up) that are needed for the International Association will be used for:

— technical assistance (equipment for administrative base)
— organizational assistance (communications, mailings, office supplies)
— conducting international conferences, with the participation of non-to reinforce and supplement training provided by federal government
— travel and per diem for Association meetings, seminars
— printing/publication of popular scientific materials, informational literature.

Having already established a tight working informational network among protected areas in Russia, the Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC) has agreed to take on a coordinating role for the International Association, facilitating the first international conference and continual informational exchange. A key undertaking of the public awareness activities of International Association will be the publication of a popular journal Zapovednity Eurasia (Protected Areas of Eurasia), a Russian language quarterly with high-quality photography and public interest stories featuring National Parks and Zapovedniki. Once funding has been procured, BCC hopes to add this magazine to the other publications it already produces. BCC believes the International Association will play a formative role in promoting and protecting Zapovedniki and National Parks.

Margaret Williams, project assistant in the Biodiversity Conservation Center’s Assistance to Protected Areas Program.

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RUSSIAN BIRD CONSERVATION UNION

by Elena A. Lebedeva

Russian Bird Conservation Union (RBCU) was founded as a charity non-governmental and non-commercial organization on February 9, 1993 during a meeting of more than 50 specialists and amateurs - mostly ornithologists but also general conservationists working in different governmental and non-governmental bodies of Russia. On May 7, 1993, the by-laws of RBCU were officially registered in the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation.

Activities of RBCU are aimed at the following:

— Development and implementation of programs for conservation and re-establishment of rare bird species or populations;
— Development of a national strategy for conservation of birds and their habitats;
— Identification of areas of key importance for birds as breeding, wintering, molting, or stopover sites;
— Initiation and implementation of projects for proper designation of bird sanctuaries and other specially protected areas;
— Development and improvement of national and regional legislation in favor of conservation of birds and their habitats;
— Collection of data on the state of rare and endangered species and their geographical population distributions;
— Development of environmental education and raising public awareness of bird conservation, as well as advocacy in favor of birds in Russia.

In early 1994, negotiations on cooperation started between RBCU and BirdLife International (formerly the International Council for Bird Preservation). As a result, in January 1995 the Board of RBCU signed a contract of cooperation with Vogelbescherming Nederland (BirdLife the Netherlands) for
1995 to 1997 that established a small office to coordinate all RBCU activities. On March 18, 1995 the Russian Bird Conservation Union was officially approved by the Council of BirdLife International as a new BirdLife Partner Designate for the Russian Federation. This "candidate" status will remain for two years, and if during this period RBCU is successful in developing towards self-sustainable NGO status and in implementing important projects of BirdLife International, the Council will hopefully approve RBCU as a permanent Partner of BirdLife International in Russia.

As a Partner Designate of BirdLife International, RBCU fully adopts BirdLife programs and strategies and coordinates key projects of BirdLife International within the Russian Federation. For 1995-1997 the top priority project involves Important Bird Areas (IBA). By the end of 1997, RBCU must produce an inventory of all IBA for at least the European part of the Russian Federation. Other projects are aimed at monitoring of species (e.g., White Stork, Ciconia ciconia, census in 1995), membership promotion (e.g., Birdwatch Day on October 7/8, 1995), and conservation of particular globally threatened species — corncrake (Crex crex, funding since 1994), aquatic warbler (Acrocephalus paludicola, funding beginning in 1995), slender-billed curlew (Numenius borealis, restricted funds in 1993-1995 which will hopefully increase in 1996), imperial eagle (Aquila heliaca, potential funding in 1996), and lesser spotted eagle (Aquila pomarina, funding in 1996 or 1997). The opportunity to participate in such programs and projects of BirdLife International is vitally important for the great majority of RBCU members. RBCU, however, will still initiate and join projects apart from those of BirdLife International, dependent only on the activities of specific RBCU members and branches.

Since RBCU is a membership based organization, promotion of members and establishment of new branches are the key points to its development. According to the by-laws, RBCU has three forms of membership: individual (members receive special Membership Card), organizational (members receive Diploma), and associate (members receive Diploma). Currently, RBCU does not have obligatory membership fees for citizens of the former USSR because when the RBCU was founded, the Board felt that membership fees were too much of a hardship. Memberships are renewed every third year.

For foreign members, fees are US$50 for a 3-year membership and US$100 for life membership. Members receive regular information on all the activities of RBCU. From 1995 to 1997, a newsletter will be published at least twice (probably three times) a year. Each member is welcome to participate in any program coordinated by RBCU, or to initiate projects from monitoring of bird populations to conservation education. Such initiatives must only be approved beforehand by the RBCU Board.

As of 20 April 1995, RBCU had 457 individual members, 4 organizational members, and 10 active and officially registered regional branches with centers in Syktyvkar (North-European), Yaroslavl, Ulyanovsk, Saratov, Samara, Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Tver, Cheboksary and Voronezh (Centralno-Chernozemnoye). Some of these branches produce their own membership newsletters, and most of them initiate and implement specific regional projects on bird conservation and raising public awareness.

RBCU is funded by grants (e.g., ISAR grant in 1994) and donations. The basic budget for 1995-1997 is secured through Vogelbescherming Nederland (BirdLife the Netherlands).

The coordinating office of Russian Bird Conservation Union is located in the building of Biological Faculty, Moscow Pedagogical State University. The address is: Kibalehieva Str., 6, building 5, apt. 110, Moscow 129278 RUSSIA. Telephone and fax number: +095-283-12-02. Direct inquiries to RBCU Development Officer Elena A. Lebedeva or IBA Officer Tatiana V. Sviridova.

Elena A. Lebedeva is the Development Officer for the Russian Bird Conservation Union and a senior researcher at Moscow Pedagogical State University.
CONSERVATION LIBRARY

Taiga News is a monthly newsletter on conservation and threats to boreal forests. Free of charge. Write to
<taiga@glas.apc.org> or TAIGA RESCUE NETWORK, Box 116, S-982 23 Jokkmokk, Sweden, Tel: +46-971 17039, Fax: +46-971 12057.
Taiga Trade contains basic facts on the boreal forest countries, information on trade and consumption of boreal wood products, and profiles of major companies involved in the trade of taiga products.
Send order to
TAIGA RESCUE NETWORK, Box 116, S-982 23 Jokkmokk, Sweden ($14 for NGOs, $24 for others. Prices include postage). E-mail: <kidahl@nn.apc.org>.

Conference in Northern Turkmenistan

November 20-25, 1995. Dashkhozov, Turkmenistan. Topics of conference: problems of protected areas, research and conservation activities, databases on rare species and professional poachers, environmental education and legislation, international programs and fundraising. For more information contact:
Dashkhozov Ecological Club Co-chairman Andrey Zatoka.
Mikrorasia C-1, 8, Apt. 23, Dashkhozov, Tashauzkayia region, Turkmenistan 746301.
E-mail: zatoka@glas.apc.org

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1) Protected Areas (parks and nature reserves)
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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

Raptor Link, a newsletter containing information on conservation issues for birds of prey, can be obtained by sending requests to Dr. Eugene Potapov:
E-mail: <eugene@pax.vaxt.bio.uu.se>

WWF Arctic Bulletin is a quarterly on conservation issues in Arctic territories. Requests can be sent to the attention of
Peter Prokosch, WWF-Norway, PO Box 6784. St Olavsplass, N-0130, Oslo, Norway.
E-mail: <peterp@oslonett.no>

Corrections from last issue:
The Nature Conservancy contacts for TNC-BCC's Conservation Training Team are:
Dennis Grossman, Chief Ecologist (email: 5382741@mcmail.com) and Catherine Gray, Russia coordinator (email: cgray@glas.apc.org) Address: TNC, 1815 Lynn Street, Arlington, VA, 22209. Phone: (703)841-5300

WORDLY WISE

Republic, Krai, Oblast and Okrug are all types of administrative, political units which are subjects of the Russian Federation, similar to a state in America. In total, there are 89 subjects of the Russian Federation.

Zapovednik (zap-o-VYED-neck) = 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.

Zakaznik (za-KAZ-neck) = Nature Preserve = a protected area that restricts certain types of human activities to protect unique or valuable natural objects on a temporary or permanent basis. Unlike Zapovedniki, they have no permanent staff.

Nature Monuments = similar to a Zakaznik, but tend to be smaller in area.

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