



**INTERNATIONAL UNION  
FOR CONSERVATION  
OF NATURE**

**EASTERN EUROPE  
AND CENTRAL ASIA  
REGIONAL OFFICE  
ANNUAL REPORT 2019**



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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Boris Erg, Director of the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

This year marked the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the establishment of the IUCN office in Belgrade in 2004. We have come a long way ever since. From a small team operating a modest portfolio of activities in South-East Europe to a dedicated international team managing a diverse regional programme across Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The path has been challenging and winding, and we have managed to travel this far by working closely with our Members and Commissions, who have greatly helped us raise the profile of IUCN in the region, build successful partnerships and open new thematic chapters in our work. By working together, we have successfully contributed to policy development and institutional strengthening, priority setting and resource mobilisation for conservation action in the region, and we have also invested in knowledge generation, capacity building, and community engagement.

As far as key achievements in 2019, **the SOS Central Asia and Living Bona grant schemes were successfully launched** in support of CSO and community-led conservation action on the ground. The **Biodiversity Task Force for South East Europe** celebrated its second anniversary, evolving into a **major institutional regional cooperation platform on nature conservation in the Western Balkans**. The first phase of the Central Asia Nexus Dialogue has successfully paved the way for **innovative solutions to water, energy, and food security in the region**. Broad consultation in Central Asia has resulted in a regional thematic study identifying priority sites with potential for **World Heritage** nomination. **The first IUCN Red Lists of Threatened Species in North Macedonia were published** as a result of the cooperation of national and international experts. Finally, the end of the year saw the launch of an ambitious **Nature-based Solutions initiative in the Western Balkans**.

When it comes to membership, our family in Eastern Europe and Central Asia continues to grow. **We welcomed four new IUCN Members that include State members, government agencies and non-governmental organisations**. We successfully organised the **IUCN Regional Conservation Forum** for Europe and Central Asia in Rotterdam in July, to discuss the key elements of IUCN's Programme 2021–2024 and regional priorities in the run-up to the IUCN World Conservation Congress. The IPBES global assessment report on biodiversity and

ecosystem services reminded us how fragile the world's ecosystems are and how many species will be on the brink of extinction if we continue walking the unsustainable path and building our society the way we do today.

In order to take stock of our work and results half-way through the programme cycle, we have prepared the mid-term review of the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia available for download [here](#). Needless to say, such remarkable results would not be possible without the support of our members, expert networks, partners and donors. **We take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank all our Members and partners for their dedication and trust in IUCN's values and mission**. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia for their generous hosting of our office since 2004.

Looking forward, we expect another important year that will be marked by our preparations for the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille and the CBD COP15 in Kunming as two upcoming global milestone events, leading to a new agreement for our planet – the post-2020 biodiversity framework. We look forward to working with you all to set an ambitious agenda for our planet, taking the opportunity to rethink and redefine our relationship with nature as we enter the next decade!

Yours, Boris

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Boris Erg', written over a white background.

# IUCN AT A GLANCE

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development, and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN has evolved into the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its 1,400 Member organisations, and the input of some 15,000 experts. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it. Our experts are organised into six Commissions dedicated to species survival, environmental law, protected areas, social and economic policy, ecosystem management, and education and communication.

The ability to bring together a wide range of stakeholders and present them with the latest science, objective recommendations and on-the-ground expertise drives IUCN's mission of informing and empowering conservation efforts worldwide. We provide a neutral forum in which governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local

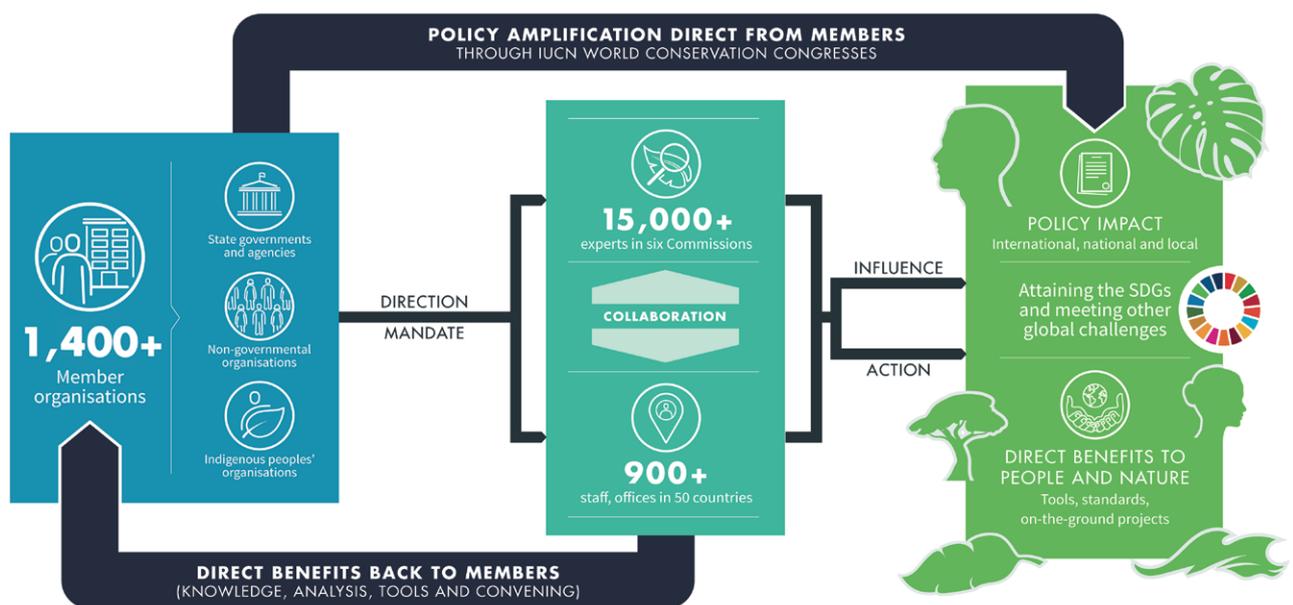
communities, indigenous peoples groups, faith-based organisations, and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges.

By facilitating these solutions, IUCN provides governments and institutions at all levels with the impetus to achieve universal goals, including on biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable development, which IUCN was instrumental in defining.

Our knowledge base and diverse membership combine to make IUCN an incubator and trusted repository of best practices, conservation tools, and international guidelines and standards. With its official United Nations Observer Status, IUCN ensures that nature conservation has a voice at the highest level of international governance.



## UNITED FOR LIFE AND LIVELIHOODS

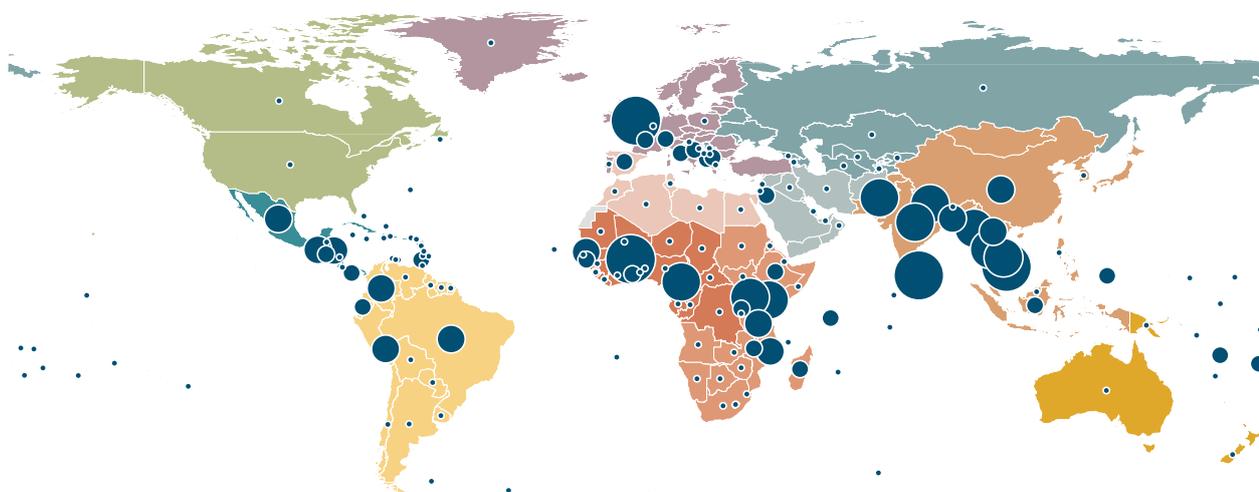


IUCN's expertise and extensive network underpin a large and varied portfolio of conservation projects around the world. Combining the latest science with the traditional knowledge of local communities, these projects work to reverse habitat loss, restore ecosystems and improve people's well-being. They also produce a wealth of data and information that feeds into IUCN's analytical work.

Through their affiliation with IUCN, Member organisations are part of a democratic process, passing Resolutions that drive the global conservation agenda. They meet every four years at the IUCN World Conservation Congress to set priorities and agree on the Union's Programme

of Work. IUCN congresses have produced several key international environmental agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the World Heritage Convention, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. We continue to help these conventions strengthen and evolve so that they can respond to emerging challenges.

Our Member organisations are represented by the IUCN Council – IUCN's principle governing body. Headquartered in Switzerland, the IUCN Secretariat comprises around 900 committed staff in more than 60 countries.



**IUCN Operational Regions**

<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#8ebf8e; border:1px solid #000;"></span> North America (Washington DC office)	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#f4a460; border:1px solid #000;"></span> Mediterranean	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#d9e1d9; border:1px solid #000;"></span> West Asia
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#209e9e; border:1px solid #000;"></span> Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#e67e22; border:1px solid #000;"></span> West and Central Africa	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#e67e22; border:1px solid #000;"></span> Asia
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#f1c232; border:1px solid #000;"></span> South America	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#e67e22; border:1px solid #000;"></span> East and South Africa	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#f1c232; border:1px solid #000;"></span> Oceania
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#9b59b6; border:1px solid #000;"></span> Europe	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#a6a6a6; border:1px solid #000;"></span> Eastern Europe and Central Asia	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:#a6a6a6; border:1px solid #000;"></span> No Status

Disclaimer: Names, frontiers, boundaries and other designations of geographical entities used and shown on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion, official endorsement or acceptance by IUCN.

# STRATEGIC ORIENTATION

The Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia (ECA) region is highly diverse, both in its culture, traditions and languages, and in its natural values and ecological features. Our work covers the IUCN Statutory Region East Europe, North and Central Asia as outlined in the Annex to the IUCN Regulations.\*

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IUCN ECARO's programme region includes Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

The ECA harbors four biodiversity hotspots, the world's most biodiverse and threatened areas. Spanning the North Pacific, the Arctic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, encompassing the steppes, deserts and mountains of Central Asia, the lush forests of South Caucasus and the karst ecosystems, underground freshwater and wetlands of the Western Balkans – this vast region hosts an exceptional array of globally important and threatened species.

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\* 2 Article 5(a) of the IUCN Statutes and Regulations stipulates that States shall be those which are Members of the United Nations or any of its Specialized Agencies, or of the International Atomic Energy Agency, or parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice". The list is regularly updated in function of the membership of the United Nations, of its Specialized Agencies, of the International Atomic Energy Agency or the parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice and with the names as published on the respective websites of these institutions.

Today, some of the main challenges hampering the long-term conservation of the region's unique biodiversity are the lack of coherent policies and resilient institutions, weak enforcement of laws, insufficient finances, under-capacitated civil society, and low awareness.

Democratic, culturally diverse, and socially inclusive societies are essential components of sustainable development. Environmentally, it is evident that many of the current natural resource use patterns in the region are unsustainable. Biodiversity loss, deterioration of forests, steppe, freshwater and marine ecosystems, climate change, and land degradation are all threats to the natural goods and services upon which the human population depends. The rural poor suffer the most, although such practice and its consequences also affect the rest of the society.

Aiming to build a more sustainable future for the region in the long-run, IUCN ECARO focuses on good governance, protection of biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources. Through its unique convening power, IUCN actively advocates diverse partnerships and dialogue, linking science, policy and action at the regional and national levels.



## IUCN ECARO MEMBERS

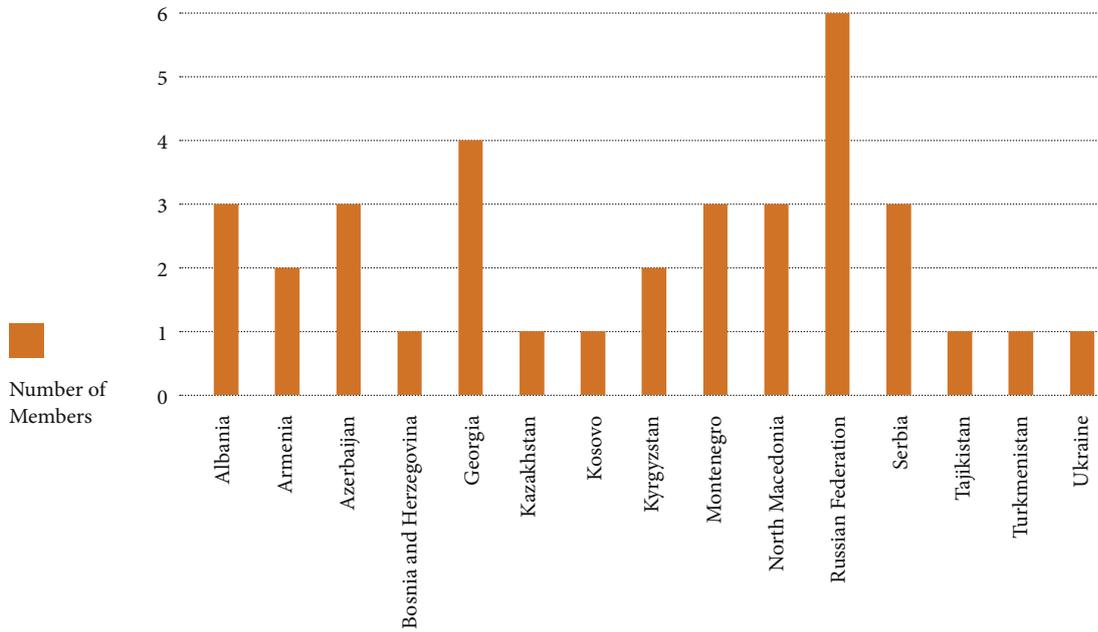
Within the Programme Region of East Europe and Central Asia, 35 Members operate in 15 of the 18 nations under the jurisdiction of the ECARO office.

\*Indicates a Member admitted in 2019

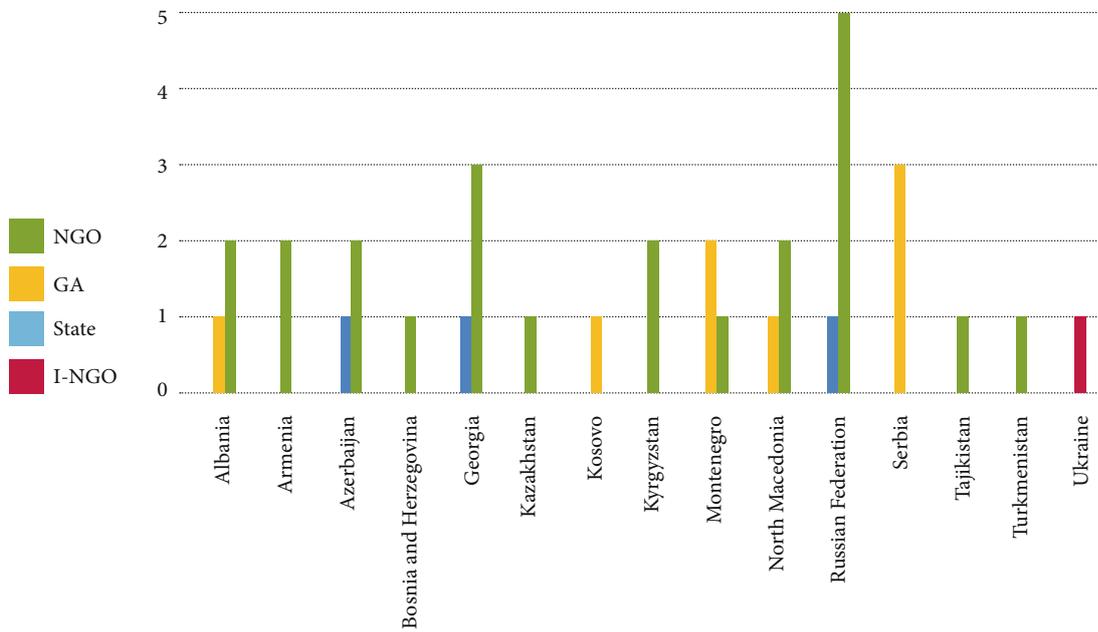
<b>Albania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA)*</li> <li>• Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA)</li> <li>• Preservation and Protection of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA)</li> </ul>
<b>Armenia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC)</li> <li>• Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds</li> </ul>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources</li> <li>• Azerbaijan Ornithological Society</li> <li>• International Dialogue for Environmental Action (IDEA)</li> </ul>
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural Heritage Protection Society – ARBOR MAGNA</li> </ul>
<b>Georgia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN)</li> <li>• Centre for Biodiversity Conservation &amp; Research (NACRES)</li> <li>• Field researchers' Union – CAMPESTER</li> <li>• Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia</li> </ul>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tethys Scientific Society</li> </ul>
<b>Kosovo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Environment Protection and Waters, Ministry of Economy and Environment*</li> </ul>
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Foundation CAMP Alatau*</li> <li>• Youth Ecological Movement (BIOM)</li> </ul>
<b>Montenegro</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism</li> <li>• Public Enterprise for National Parks of Montenegro</li> <li>• Centre for the Protection and Research of Birds of Montenegro</li> </ul>
<b>North Macedonia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning</li> <li>• Macedonian Ecological Society (MES)</li> <li>• Stichting Connecting Natural Values and People Foundation (CNVP)</li> </ul>
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment</li> <li>• European Centre for Saving Far Eastern Leopards (ANO)*</li> <li>• Biodiversity Conservation Centre</li> <li>• Environmental Education Centre Zapovedniks</li> <li>• Biologists for Nature Conservation</li> <li>• World Wide Fund for Nature – Russian Federation</li> </ul>
<b>Serbia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection</li> <li>• Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia</li> <li>• Institute for Nature Conservation of Vojvodina Province</li> </ul>
<b>Tajikistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Association of Nature Conservation Organisations of Tajikistan</li> </ul>
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkmenian Society for Conservation of Nature</li> </ul>
<b>Ukraine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment-People-Law</li> </ul>

The only officially recognised National Committee of IUCN Members in the ECARO region is the National Committee of Russian Federation.

**FIGURE 1: MEMBERSHIP IN NUMBERS**



**FIGURE 2: MEMBER CATEGORY**



2019 Regional Conservation Forum participants © BLINKfotografie

## IUCN COMMISSIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

IUCN has six expert Commissions covering a range of thematic issues relevant to nature conservation, with around 16,000 experts globally. These are the following:

**Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM)**

**Commission on Education and Communication (CEC)**

**Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP)**

**Species Survival Commission (SSC)**

**World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL)**

**World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)**



The six Commissions constitute the knowledge base of IUCN and help generate knowledge products, shape policies and implement the IUCN Programme. They play an important role in establishing and maintaining the knowledge-policy-action axis. IUCN ECARO plays an important role in mobilising experts and recruiting new Commission members in the region. It continues working closely with Commissions and its members facilitating the vast knowledge generated.

One key challenge related to the IUCN Commissions is elevating the recognition and involvement of the members of IUCN Commissions in Programme implementation.

The total number of Commission Members in the ECA region is currently 473 (dynamic number). The following table presents the number of Commission members per Commission and by country.

**TABLE 4 THE NUMBER OF COMMISSION MEMBERS**

	CEM	CEC	CEESP	SSC	WCEL	WCPA	Total
Albania	0	3	1	12	1	8	25
Armenia	0	1	0	8	1	4	14
Azerbaijan	0	2	0	8	1	2	13
Belarus	0	0	0	9	0	1	10
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	1	0	7	0	4	13
Georgia	1	1	0	15	2	13	32
Kazakhstan	3	0	0	15	1	6	25
Kosovo	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Kyrgyzstan	1	3	1	5	0	3	13
Republic of Moldova	0	1	0	2	1	0	4
Montenegro	0	1	0	6	0	3	10
North Macedonia	0	1	0	6	1	2	10
Russian Federation	9	12	3	140	7	48	219
Serbia	3	6	1	21	2	9	42
Tajikistan	1	0	1	4	0	1	7
Turkmenistan	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Ukraine	1	1	0	20	3	3	28
Uzbekistan	0	0	0	2	1	2	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>473</b>

## REGIONAL COUNCILLORS

- Ms Natalia Danilina, Russian Federation
- Ms Tamar Pataridze, Georgia
- Mr Michael Hošek, Czech Republic

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION FORUM 2019

Held every four years, the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum (RCF) is a place for IUCN Members to come together, share ideas and agree on the issues relevant to their regions. It is also an opportunity to develop and find co-sponsors for motions for the IUCN Congress, and to provide feedback on the draft IUCN Programme for the next four years.

The 2019 IUCN Regional Conservation Forum (RCF) brought IUCN Members from Europe, North and Central Asia to Rotterdam, The Netherlands on 1-3 July. The wider conservation community and renowned experts vividly discussed the post-2020 biodiversity framework and shared their knowledge in eight parallel thematic sessions. IUCN Members and Commissions **discussed the draft IUCN Programme for 2021–2024, regional work plans and concrete actions**, gearing up for the IUCN Congress in Marseille, France. IUCN Members learned about the IUCN governance reforms and the updates related to the Members Assembly – a part of the Congress during which they elect the IUCN Council, approve the IUCN Programme, adopt motions defining the general policy of IUCN and amend the IUCN Statutes. The summary report is [available for download here](#).



© BLINKfotografie

### RCF 2019 in numbers:

- 320+ participants
- 50+ nationalities
- 8 parallel thematic sessions
- 18 side events
- 10+ posters
- 50+ draft motions
- 4 excursions

## IN MEMORIAM

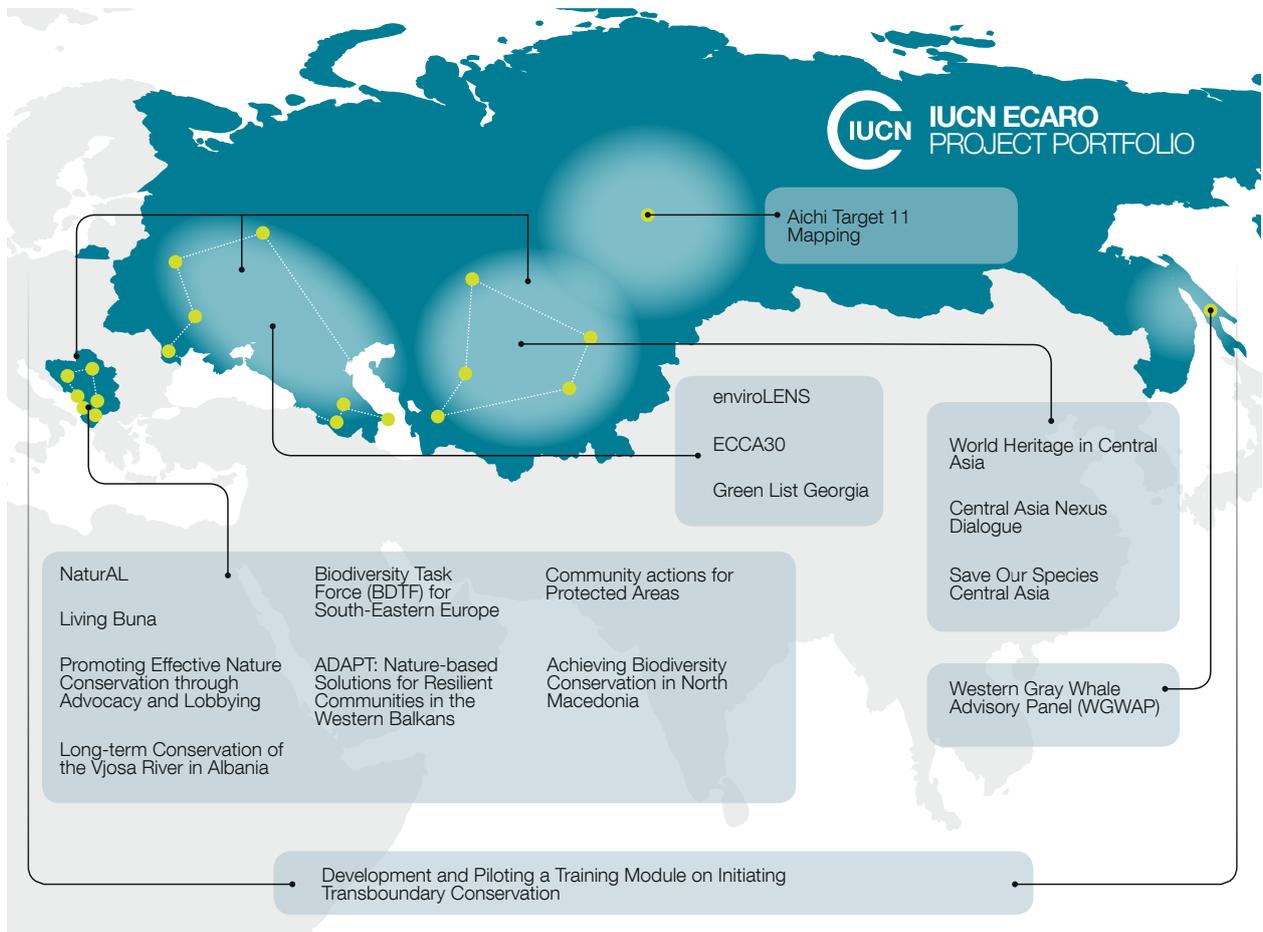
Dr Ljupco Melovski, a professor at the Institute of Biology at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics in Skopje, North Macedonia, and one of the leading conservationists in South-Eastern Europe, passed away at the age of 60.

Professor Melovski was a doyen of environmental science in North Macedonia, and a long-time president of the IUCN Member Macedonian Ecological Society, a passionate botanist, a nature protection leader, and a teacher to hundreds of young researchers and environmentalists. The passing of professor Melovski is a great loss to the conservation community.



Ljupco Melovski © Oliver Avramoski

# PROGRAMME WORK AND MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS



## VALUING AND CONSERVING NATURE

### ENHANCING THE MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS IN ALBANIA

Initiated in 2015 at the time of the establishment of the National Agency of Protected Areas in Albania, NaturAL provided instrumental support to strengthening the national system of protected areas and initiated the establishment of the Natura 2000 network in Albania. **From 2015 to 2019, protected areas management effectiveness increased from 34 to 58%, while the implementation of management plans improved from 19 to 53%.** NaturAL has managed to reduce biodiversity loss through improved management of protected areas focusing on:



*As opposed to 2015, today we have a functional system for management of protected areas in place, covering 16% of the country's territory. The numbers show a significant increase in protected area visitors. These are successful testimonies of the government's policies and investments in place, including the contribution of NaturAL."*

Blendi Klosi, Minister of Tourism and Environment opening the conference 'Towards Natura 2000 in Albania' on 16 April 2019



© NaturAL

- **Training and capacity building** – Around 100 persons from the Agency and its regional offices were trained in conservation biology, implementation of monitoring, fire-fighting and similar, and also participated in exchanges and international events;
- **Wildlife monitoring** – The National Biodiversity database (BioNNA) and the Wildlife Information Management System are in place, used daily by rangers to collect and analyse wildlife data and assess the status of biodiversity in Albania;
- **Community relationship** – Special attention has been given to local communities and their relationship with protected areas. The newly built and refurbished visitor centres in Divjaka-Karavasta, Llogora and Dajti National Parks are the best example of cohabitation, connecting visitors, rangers and the local community;
- **Natura 2000** – Initial identification of Natura 2000 Sites of Community Interest, resulting in a preliminary list of 43 proposed sites.

## DEVELOPING A CASE FOR EUROPE'S FIRST WILD RIVER NATIONAL PARK

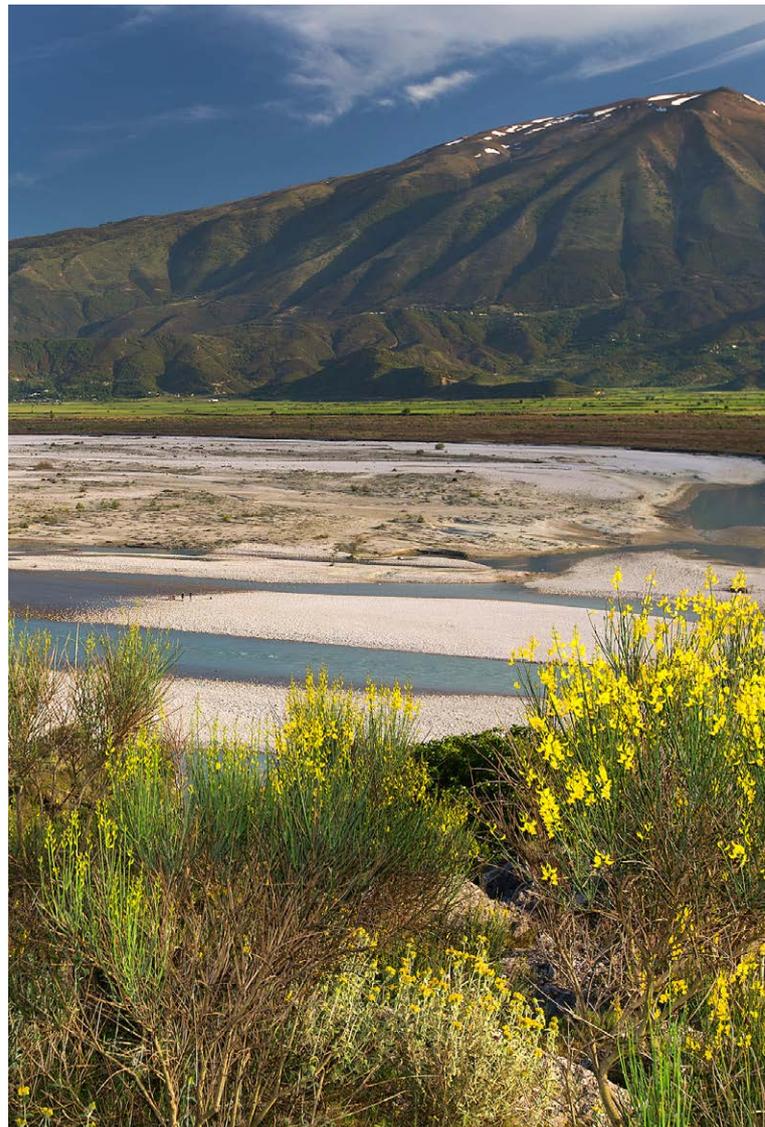
The Vjosa/Aoos River, shared by Albania and Greece, is one of Europe's last wild rivers. It is free flowing over its entire 270 km course, as are almost all of its tributaries. The whole area is currently under pressure, as the proposed construction of some 40 hydropower plants would endanger the ecosystem. IUCN has joined an international partnership aiming to develop a case for the Vjosa/Aoos River and its catchment to become a transboundary protected area – Europe's first wild river national park.

IUCN is **developing a vision for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Vjosa catchment**, aiming to protect the freshwater ecosystems and enable the development of local communities through



© NaturAL

the concept of sustainable use of natural resources as a protected area. It will further produce **a concept for the establishment of a wild river national park and define management objectives and a governance model** following the IUCN protected area standards. The team will develop a roadmap for final designation of the protected area, and identify the supporting mechanisms to achieve that goal.



Vjosa River, Albania © Gernot Kunz

## GOVERNANCE AND STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN COASTAL WETLAND MANAGEMENT

The project is an overarching initiative of the Coastal Wetland Action Plan supported by the MAVA Foundation and executed by IUCN in partnership with PAP/RAC, GWP-Med, and MedWet. It assists implementation of activities in demonstration projects of the Oristano stagni (Italy), Ghar el Melah (Tunisia) and Lower Bojana-Buna Delta (Albania). The goal of the proposed initiative is **to create an enabling environment for reducing threats to coastal wetlands and ensuring sustainable coastal development**. The implementation of tailor-made actions, composed of specific policy, capacity building and awareness raising activities, supporting governance components within pilot sites are underway to address this goal. The project aims to identify the main critical governance components within demonstration sites, preparing guidance to sites on how to improve targeted governance issues and to support implementation of specific recommendations.

## FACILITATING THE NATIONAL RED LIST PROCESS IN NORTH MACEDONIA

The global IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ is the most authoritative inventory of the worldwide conservation status of species. However, species conservation policy is typically developed at the national level. Since the extinction risk of species is often not uniform across their entire global range, developing Red Lists to evaluate extinction risk at the national scale provides additional information that is directly applicable to national conservation policy. **Towards the end of 2019, the first Red List of Threatened Species of North Macedonia** was published. By facilitating that process, IUCN assisted the national authority to increase biodiversity conservation knowledge and to build capacity among specialists and policy-makers. The Red List process included



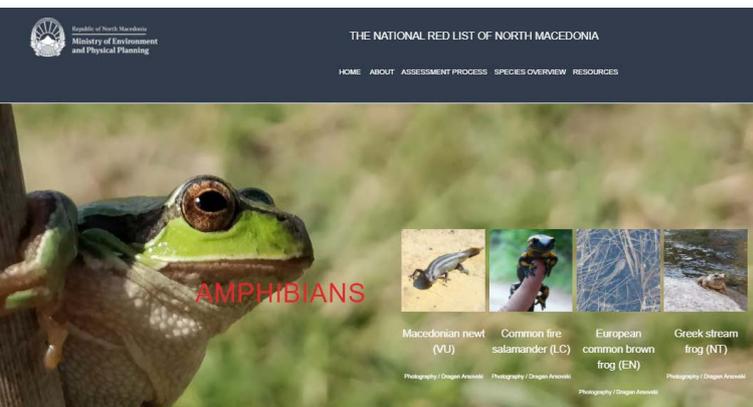
European glass lizard, assessed as threatened in North Macedonia © Dragan Arsovski

a Red List data availability assessment, Red List Assessor training, assistance with data management, and guidance for the production of first national Red Lists. Gathered data revealed that almost half of amphibians and reptiles in North Macedonia are threatened with extinction, and four vascular plant species were classified as Critically Endangered.



*We are proudly presenting the results of dedicated work of our experts that have managed to finalise full Red List assessment of 32 reptile species, 14 amphibian species and an initial 14 vascular plant species, following IUCN criteria and categories. Even though the results are quite alarming, we can use this data as an indicator and credible starting point while planning future activities related to biodiversity conservation in the country.”*

Jani Makraduli, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia, at the event revealing the findings of experts in December 2019



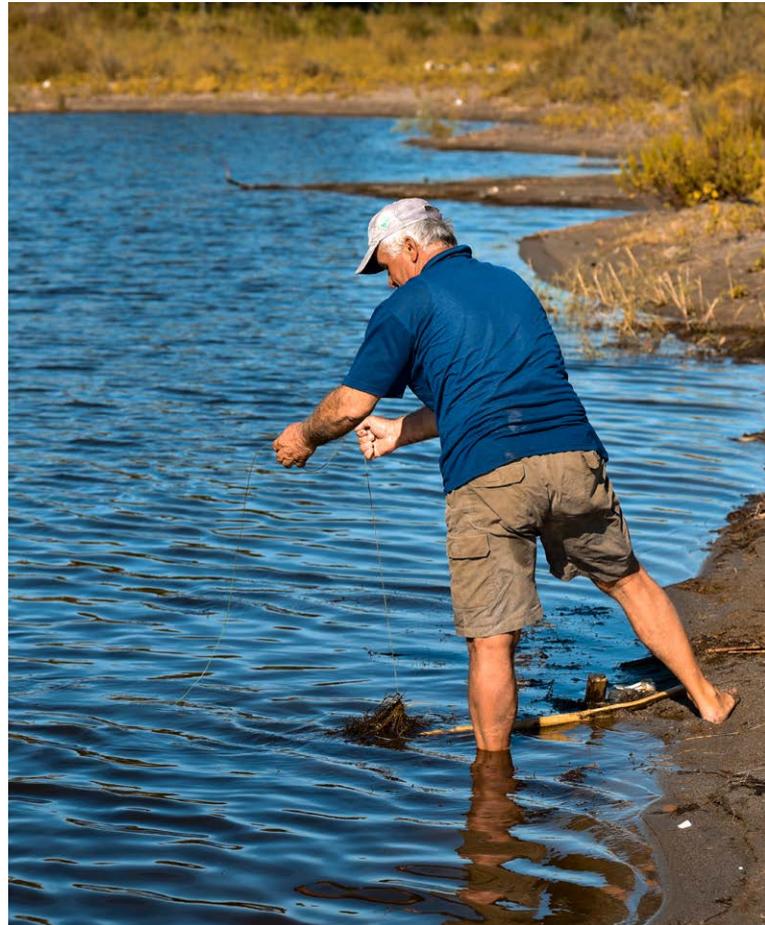


BRVPL Management Committee establishment

## SMALL GRANTS FOR PROTECTED AREA ECOSYSTEM AND HABITATS RESTORATION IN THE BUNA DELTA

Fifteen local organisations and community members received financial support to contribute to the long-term conservation of species and habitats in the **Buna River Velipoja Protected Landscape (BRVPL) in Albania**, with particular emphasis on halting or reducing unsustainable development and water abstraction. The grantees focus on one (or several) of the identified thematic priorities, such as coastal habitat restoration, agro-environmental incentive schemes, sustainable tourism and infrastructure development, and sustainable fisheries.

The **BRVPL Management Committee** was established in 2019 by the protected area authorities, and with the support of IUCN and Living Buna partners. The Committee will ensure adequate implementation of the Management Plan and coordination between stakeholders. Drawing upon the relevant legal framework, in particular the Law on Protected Areas, the operational aspects it will address include: overall purpose, goals, endorsement of the management plan and commitment to collaboration, mandate and powers, working groups, secretariat, communication, transparency and good governance.



Buna River, Albania © Arber Xhaferaj

## FUNDING CONSERVATION OF THE SNOW LEOPARD AND GOITERED GAZELLE IN CENTRAL ASIA

**IUCN Save Our Species** is a funding mechanism that supports on-the-ground conservation. The **SOS Central Asia initiative was successfully launched in 2019** to support species conservation action in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan over the next three years. Designed to support the implementation of the Programme of Work of the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), it **funds seven projects for the conservation of the Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*) and the Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*)**. Their populations are decreasing and the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ lists both as Vulnerable to extinction. By focusing on these species, which have complementary ranges, the initiative ensures that grants will benefit large parts of Central Asia's most important ecosystems: high mountains and lowland steppes, and semi-deserts.

## ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN THE NOMINATION AND MANAGEMENT OF WORLD HERITAGE IN CENTRAL ASIA

As the official Advisory Body on nature under the World Heritage Convention, IUCN led the process to identify natural sites in Central Asia with nomination potential and to improve the management effectiveness of existing World Heritage sites in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

In 2005, IUCN and the World Heritage Centre published a thematic study for Central Asia, identifying a number of sites with higher potential for the nomination. More than 10 years later, IUCN has initiated a follow-up journey to update the study, and to assist the five Central Asian countries to improve the nomination process. An in-depth desk analysis, followed by consultative process including two regional workshops and a number of on-line consultations, identified nine sites with potential for nomination or extension. **The study findings were presented at the 43rd WH Committee Session in Baku, Azerbaijan in July.** In addition, IUCN has assessed management effectiveness of World Heritage sites in Central Asia and has worked to build capacities for their improved management across the region. To that end, **the manual 'Managing Natural World Heritage' was translated into Russian**, to help managers in Central Asia better understand and incorporate World Heritage concepts and processes into the management of nominated sites.



Goitered Gazelle, Kazakhstan © Wildlife Without Borders

A workshop on natural World Heritage management was organised in Almaty, Kazakhstan in April and aimed to familiarise experts from Central Asia and beyond with the key principles and to improve site managers' capacities for effective WH management. An **analysis of key issues and threats facing natural World Heritage sites in Central Asia** was performed (currently there are three natural sites, of which one is a serial, transboundary site). The final workshop, focusing on the World Heritage nomination process, was organised in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in October. The workshop focused on **key elements of the WH nomination process**, including tentative lists, the requirements of integrity – delineation and buffer zones, and comparative analysis.



Saryarka - steppes and lakes of Northern Kazakhstan World Heritage site © IUCN/Chris Magin

## GOVERNANCE OF NATURE'S USE

### SUPPORTING A GROWING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR BIODIVERSITY IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

The Biodiversity Task Force of South-East Europe (BDTF SEE) marked two years of dedicated work on **mainstreaming biodiversity at high-level discussions and promoting a regional approach to help inspire transformative change for sustainable development**. It has contributed to the post-2020 process through regional findings, case studies, recommendations along with the summarized region-specific know-how, shared at the:

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) first Open-ended Working Group meeting, in Kenya, in August;
- Side-event at the 23rd Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 23) in Canada, in November;
- Regional consultations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework for Central and Eastern Europe, hosted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia, in April; and
- The 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in Paris, France, in April, to mention a few.

**Two associated members joined BDTF SEE in 2019 – BioNET**, an independent network of 14 biodiversity-related civil society organisations from SEE, **and Biodiversity Information Management and Reporting Regional Platform (BIMR RP)**, a consultative regional technical group in the field of biodiversity data management and reporting.



### ACHIEVING AICHI TARGET 11 IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

The Global Partnership on Aichi Target 11 aims to **facilitate the achievement of the target that calls for the protection and effective management of 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10% of coastal and marine areas**. The Partnership is composed of regional networks of partners, including governments, civil society and donors. By aligning priority activities and funding, partners can reinforce their ongoing efforts, energy and resources to reach or surpass Target 11 in 2020.

IUCN ECARO and the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas coordinate the regional network of the Target 11 Partnership for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, launched in late 2019. As a first step, countries are called to update the data in the World Database of Protected Areas to reflect the national realities. **Two regional meetings allowed for the review of national progress in the delivery of Target 11**, inviting participants to define next priority actions, announce expected designations of new protected areas, and the expansion of existing ones.



*I believe the launched regional partnership will help us take stock of where we are when it comes to the progress and reporting towards Aichi Target 11 and set future national targets in line with the post 2020 global biodiversity framework.”*

Jakhongir Talipov, International Office of the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection of Uzbekistan

## OBSERVING THE EARTH TO ENFORCE ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

Through enviroLENS, a Horizon 2020 innovation project, IUCN is aiming to **demonstrate and promote the use of Earth Observation as direct evidence for environmental law enforcement**. By using European satellite capacities, such as those provided by Copernicus, enviroLENS responds to the demands of the environmental legal sector in the context of evidence-based decision-making processes. Mobilising the knowledge and networks of its Environmental Law Centre and regional offices for Europe and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, IUCN is:

- Contributing its environmental law expertise;
- Working on on-the-ground examples to demonstrate the value of the newly developed eLENS portal and therefore the applicability and the relevance of Earth Observation for the enforcement of environmental law; and
- Promoting Earth Observation and the power of satellite imagery data as a reliable, timely, accurate and cost-effective source of evidence to the wider environmental law and conservation community.

IUCN ECARO helps to connect the developed technology to challenges of environmental law enforcement in the region through the development of use cases. By **working with stakeholders in Albania, Armenia and Montenegro, enviroLENS will showcase the practical application and power of earth observation**. The first consultations and bilateral meetings took place in Armenia during the *Forest Summit: Global Action and Armenia* in October. EnviroLENS also attracted attention at the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum held in Rotterdam in June.



*As an NGO engaged with nature conservation in Albania for the last 20 years, we see a great potential of eLENS portal. It could impact our on-the-ground action significantly and empower the civil society organisations to work on nature conservation providing the tools that could be used for advocacy and lobbying to end any illegal activities identified."*

Genti Kromidha, Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania



Sentinel-3 © ESAATG medialab

## THE LAUNCH OF ECCA30

IUCN, UNECE, FAO, the World Resources Institute and the World Bank launched a **new forest landscape restoration initiative in Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (ECCA30) in September** at UN Climate Action Week in New York, calling for increased ambition and action to reforest 30 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2030. ECCA30 will serve as a regional initiative to secure additional commitments and accelerate the implementation of the **Bonn Challenge**, a global restoration goal to reforest 150 million ha of degraded and deforested land by 2020, and 350 million ha by 2030. This is a unifying mechanism to help countries implement Forest Landscape Restoration at scale in support of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Global Biodiversity Framework, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement, Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) goal under United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Countries as diverse as Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are rising to the challenge and have committed close to 3 million hectares to the Bonn Challenge**. ECCA30 aims to generate partnerships and promote knowledge sharing on climate, biodiversity and socio-economic benefits of FLR among governments, private actors, and other stakeholders, to mobilise financial resources and technical support for implementation.



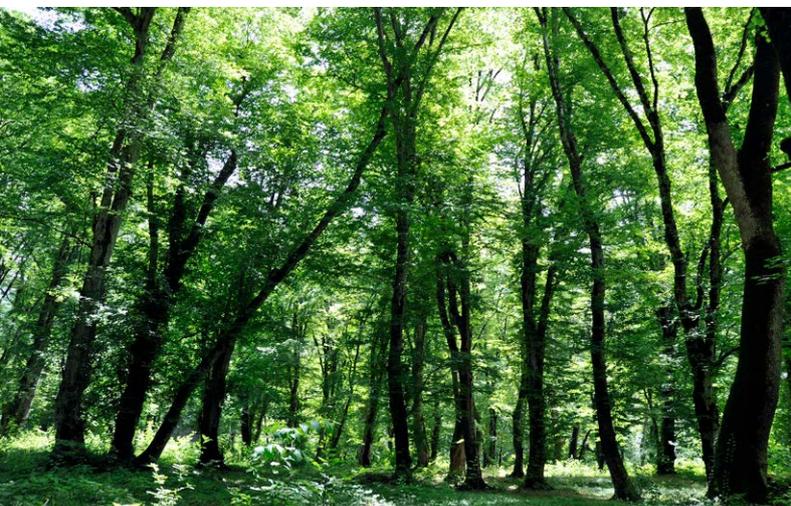


Arboreum Georgia © ENPI FLEG

## INITIATING THE GREEN LIST PROCESS IN GEORGIA

Ten national experts with diverse backgrounds have joined an **Expert Assessment Group for the Green List (EAGL)**, to lead and advise the **Green List** process in Georgia. Initial steps that led to the listing of potential site candidates included discussions related to the different types of protected area categories in Georgia, and assessments of their management effectiveness. Georgia has had a strong tradition of assessing its protected areas under various projects for the last 15 years and is keen to continue this tradition by also adding the good governance component.

The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas is the first global best practice standard for area-based conservation. By recognising well-managed and well-governed protected and conserved areas, the IUCN Green List aims to increase the number of natural areas delivering long-lasting conservation results for people and nature.



Lagodekhi Protected Area, Georgia © Caucasus Nature Fund



*Azerbaijan is a low-forest-cover country that prioritises the increase of forest cover and the restoration of degraded lands. On behalf of the government of Azerbaijan, I would like to reiterate our support for the Bonn Challenge and add our contribution of 270,000 ha of the restored area by 2030.”*

Sadig Salmanov, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan

## ADVISING FOR THE WESTERN GRAY WHALE

The feeding areas near Sakhalin – a region in the Russian Federation with large offshore oil and gas deposits, and active exploitation of other natural resources such as fisheries – are used by the whales every summer and are vital for population maintenance. Since 2004, the **IUCN-led Western Gray Whale Advisory Panel (WGWAP)** has been **examining the impacts of oil and gas development, fisheries and other threats on endangered whales found here**. The activities of companies seeking to exploit the resources can affect them in various ways. Seismic surveys produce very loud underwater sounds that can damage hearing at close



Western Gray Whale © David Weller

range and influence animal movements and behaviour, even at a considerable distance. Noise associated with platform construction, pile driving and pipeline placement can keep whales from using areas where they would normally rest, forage and care for their young. Oil and gas development also brings an elevated risk of ship strikes and oil spills.

Besides the risks associated with the ongoing intensive oil and gas development in the area, threatened western gray whales are at high risk of **entanglement in coastal salmon nets**, which often results in injury or death. Photographs have shown that around one of five gray whales off Sakhalin bears signs of at least one injury from fishing gear.

In 2019, the Panel continued providing independent advice on assessing and managing the cumulative impacts of industrial activities on western gray whales; evaluating new approaches and technologies for monitoring their population, and studying underwater noise-related issues.

## DEPLOYING NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

### SECURING WATER, ENERGY AND FOOD FOR PEOPLE IN CENTRAL ASIA

Viewing complex challenges from different sector perspectives is critical to achieving water, energy and food security. It allows Central Asian countries to tap into an entirely new array of options, scenarios and opportunities. It calls for hybrid approaches that stem from the experiences and expertise of different stakeholder groups involved in dialogue.

**The Central Asia Nexus Dialogue** saw the finalisation of its first phase in 2019. Managed by CAREC, IUCN ECARO and the IUCN Water Programme, it **aimed to increase social and environmental resilience of the region, while complementing its socio-economic development** by supporting innovation in planning, financing and preparing for the implementation of multi-sectoral projects. To strengthen dialogue and improve cooperation, IUCN presented the results of a number of reports, including an **analysis of the regional institutional environment** and **capacity needs assessment**, recommending next steps to ground Nexus thinking in the region. Additionally, CAREC and IUCN organised a study tour that took 15 experts from Central Asian ministries and interstate organisations to Vienna and Zagreb to exchange experiences with the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River and the International Sava River Basin



*Environment, development and human needs are interlinked. We cannot go ahead with business as usual, inter-sectoral Nexus approaches are key for long-term, sustainable decisions. CAREC, with the support of the European Union and in partnership with IUCN promotes the cooperation of all sectors for integrated solutions, embracing water, energy and food security of the region.”*

Iskandar Abdullaev, Executive Director of CAREC

Commission, participate in training workshops and visit a local hydropower plant and protected natural site.

The broader Nexus community learned about the key project results at the closing conference held in November in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Participants confirmed a Nexus Investment Portfolio, and were acquainted with the publication of **Nexus best practice cases**. The experience gained and the recommendations from the assessments undertaken by IUCN provide important inputs into identifying key activities of the Central Asia Nexus Dialogue going forward.



Ala Archa National Park, Kyrgyzstan © Stephanie Gentle

## TURNING TO NATURAL SOLUTIONS TO ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

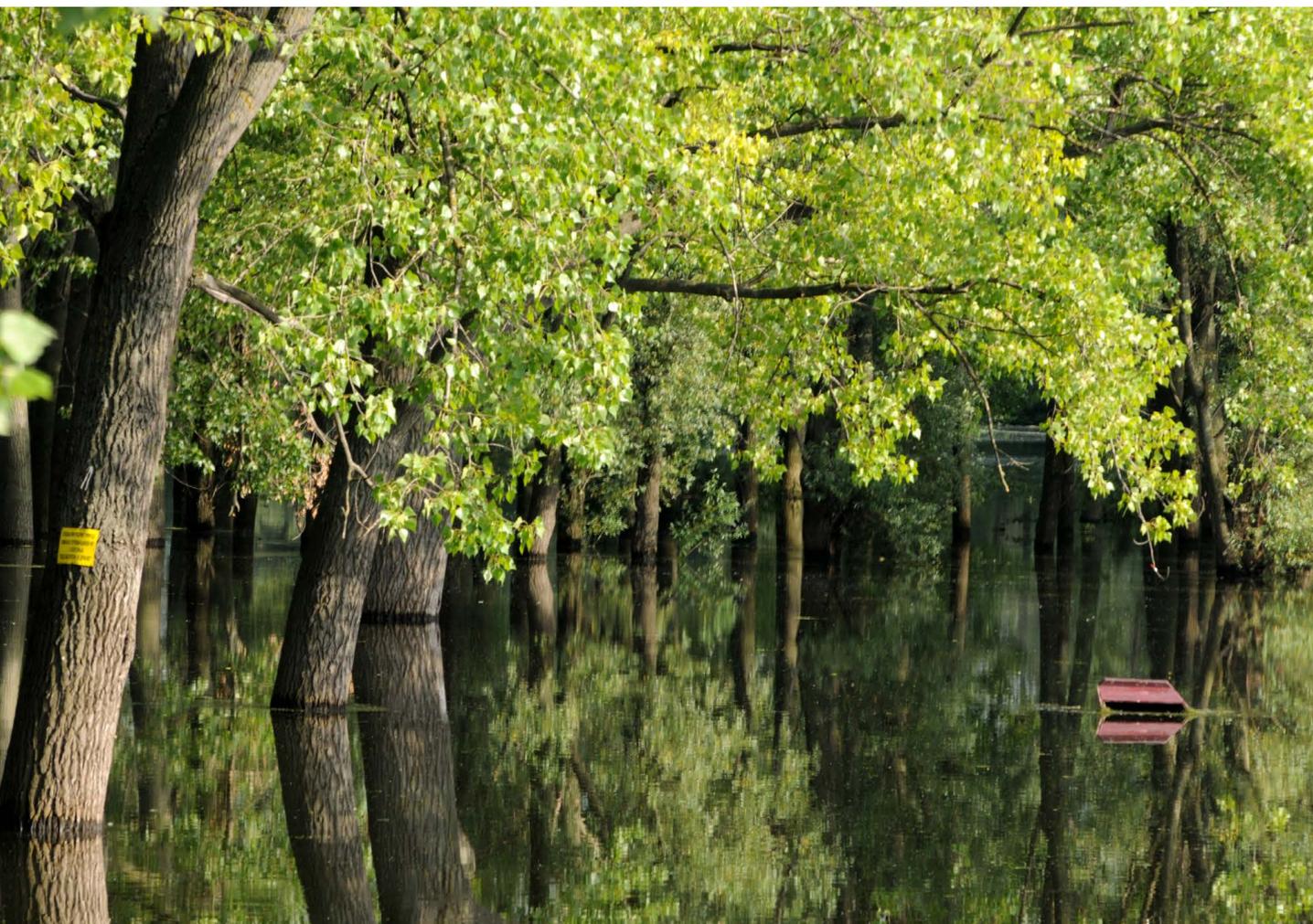
The countries of the Western Balkans are turning to innovative solutions to increase community resilience to disasters such as floods and landslides, and **to adapt to the longer-term effects of climate change and environmental degradation**. In late 2019, IUCN launched ADAPT – an ambitious Nature-based Solutions initiative, aiming to:

- Increase knowledge and awareness of nature-based disaster risk reduction solutions among decision-makers, natural resource managers and local communities;
- Integrate Nature-based Solutions and equitable climate-smart planning into adaptation and disaster reduction policy; and
- Implement two pilot projects that will focus on flood-prone areas to build community resilience and reduce further disaster risks in Albania and Serbia.



NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR RESILIENT SOCIETIES  
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Placing Nature-based Solutions at the centre of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA), the **ADAPT project aims to apply innovative solutions to increase community resilience, reduce environmental degradation, increase social and gender equality, and thus adapt to longer-term changes over an extended period of time**. This regional umbrella initiative, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency, works with six Western Balkan countries, and regional and local partners.



Koviljski Rit, Serbia © IUCN/Boris Erg

# OUR TEAM

**Boris Erg**, Director

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## VALUING AND CONSERVING NATURE

**Bruno Leles**, Project Officer, Conservation Programme

**Konstantin Gospodinov**, Senior Conservation Project Officer

**Maarten Hofman**, Species Conservation Officer

**Sofia Tvaradze**, Project Officer, Protected Areas Performance

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*I would recommend IUCN to others as a good place to work,” stated 89% of the staff at IUCN ECARO.*

*The 2019 Pulse Survey  
(Net Promoter Score)*

## NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

**Kristin Meyer**, Project Officer, Ecosystem Management

**Peter Langdahl**, Project Officer, Ecosystem Management

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## OPERATIONS AND OUTREACH

**Aleksandra Nikodinović**, Communications Officer

**Andjela Klobučar**, Human Resources Officer

**Constantine Makris**, Membership Relations Officer

**Jelena Stjelja**, Finance Assistant

**Vladimir Smaglijenko**, Senior ERP/Web Application Developer

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# PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER OUTPUTS

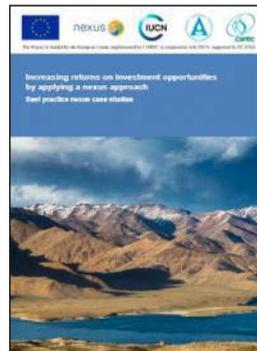
IUCN – a trusted source of unbiased and evidence-based data on conservation measures showing how nature can support sustainable development efforts.

## Managing Natural World Heritage – Russian translation



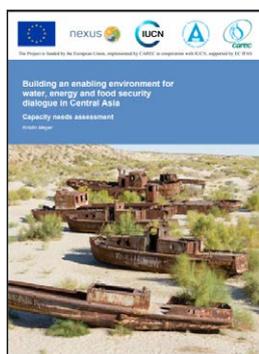
Aimed at anyone with an interest in World Heritage, in particular those responsible for managing natural World Heritage sites, managers and staff of protected areas, local communities and indigenous peoples engaged in managing sites, as well as institutions and businesses operating in or alongside a natural World Heritage site.

## Increasing returns on investment opportunities by applying a nexus approach



To showcase how increased returns on investment opportunities can be achieved by applying a nexus approach, best practices of the water-energy-food nexus were collected in the form of several case studies. The best practice cases focus on water, energy and food security dimensions that advance socio-economic development and propose the nexus as a promising approach to resolving competition over limited resources.

## Building an enabling environment for water, energy and food security dialogue in Central Asia



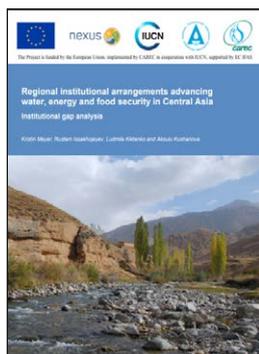
This capacity needs assessment identifies opportunities for institutional capacity development to strengthen multi-sectoral planning and implementation to create an enabling environment for nexus perspectives in Central Asia. It should not be viewed as a static capacity building plan, but rather as a catalogue to develop appropriate activities and strategies that can be further adjusted if necessary.

## The Governance of Coastal Wetlands in the Mediterranean: a Handbook



Practical guide for the governance of coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean

## Regional institutional arrangements advancing water, energy and food security in Central Asia



This institutional analysis looks at existing institutional arrangements, provides insights into barriers and opportunities of the practical application of the water-energy-food security nexus in Central Asia and considers options for improved multi-sectoral dialogue and cooperation.

## TRAINING MODULE ON INITIATING TRANSBOUNDARY CONSERVATION

Helping experts estimate the feasibility of establishment of a Transboundary Conservation Area and develop strategies to address the most important factors for its successful creation. It consists of the Trainer's Manual and eight lessons, freely accessible online. IUCN ECARO, IUCN WCPA Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group, and the IUCN Environmental Law Centre have developed and tested the [Training Module on Initiating Transboundary Conservation](#).

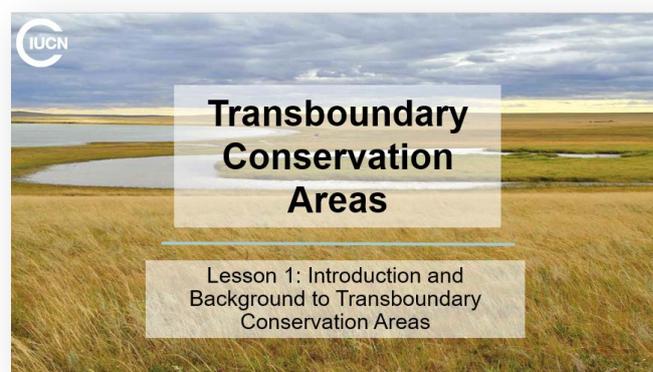
### Modules:

Trainer's Manual	Lesson 4: Transboundary Conservation Governance
Introduction	Lesson 5: Initiating transboundary conservation: Design the process I: Engage the right people and define the geographic extent
Lesson 1: Introduction and Background to Transboundary Conservation Areas	Lesson 6: Cooperative Management in Transboundary Conservation
Lesson 2: Typology of Transboundary Conservation Areas	Lesson 7: Initiating transboundary conservation: Design the process II: Negotiate a joint vision and develop management objectives
Lesson 3: Initiating Transboundary Conservation: Diagnose the Situation	Lesson 8: Final Thoughts



*The Training Module is developed to help transboundary conservation proponents better plan and design their transboundary initiatives, providing relevant guidance on these initial steps of the often complex and long-term process.*

Maja Vasiljević, Vice-Chair of the IUCN WCPA Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group



The IUCN ECARO website published 38 news stories in 2019, ending the year with a 40% increase in the number of visitors as compared to 2018.

[www.iucn.org/ecaro](http://www.iucn.org/ecaro)

A Voice for Nature Newsletter provides bi-monthly updates on ECA conservation efforts. Launched in 2016, it brings a selection of news from all three IUCN constituents – Members, Commissions and the Secretariat – to strengthen the network and facilitate information flow across the region. In 2019, we published five issues, and our subscriber list grew to 2241 contacts.



Dear partners,

It is our pleasure to share with you issue #17 of our Newsletter, that brings news from Eastern Europe, North Africa, nature conservation and sustainable use of resources.

We are taking the opportunity to remind you: there are grants for a grant under our Action for Buna call in Albania!

Since the last issue, we have gathered in Rotterdam, for Conservation Forum to mobilise the Union and start pre-Congress 2020. We saw the update of The IUCN Red List Species, that clearly shows how much humans around the world are overexploiting wildlife.

On a brighter note, we are celebrating the extension of the Heritage site in Albania, and the protected status given to Ujçin Salina in Montenegro. Read about the linkages we are making between Earth Observation and environmental law enforcement, and the advances related to embedding nexus perspectives in Central Asia. And much more!

We thank all the contributors and wish you enjoyable reading.

IUCN ECAFO Editorial



**IN THE FOCUS**



**Action for Buna - apply now!**  
 Living Buna project partners are calling interested residents of the Buna River Vajupaja Protected Landscape in Albania to apply for funding for projects that would benefit socio-economic development and ecosystem restoration of the area. Call closes on 23 September 2019. [Read more](#)



**IUCN Regional Conservation Forum**  
 More than 320 participants discussed Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework and the pressing challenges of our time as well as the proposed IUCN Programme for 2021-2024 and the regional priorities for the coming years. [More information](#)  
[Mobilising IUCN in Europe, North and Central Asia](#)  
[En Route to Marseille](#)

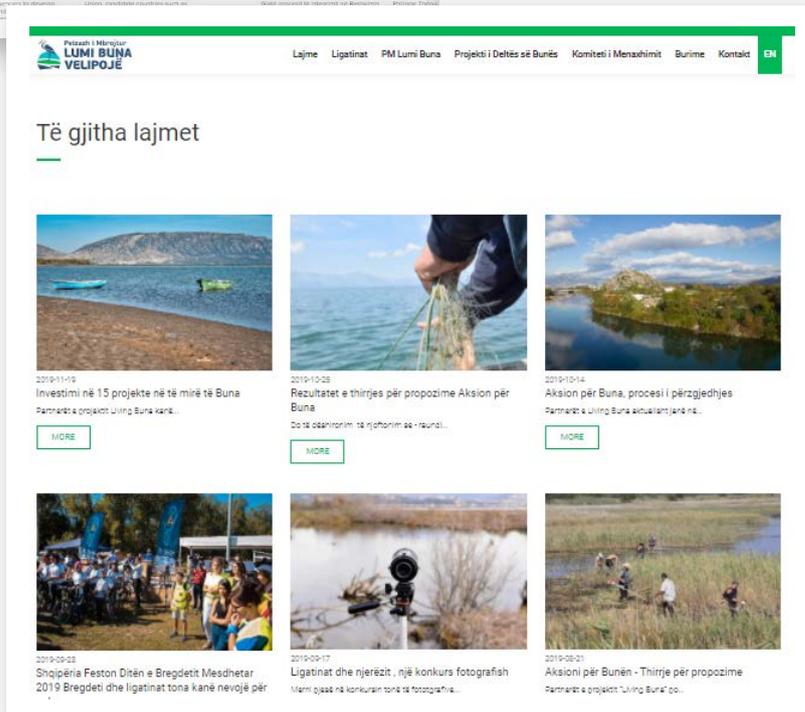
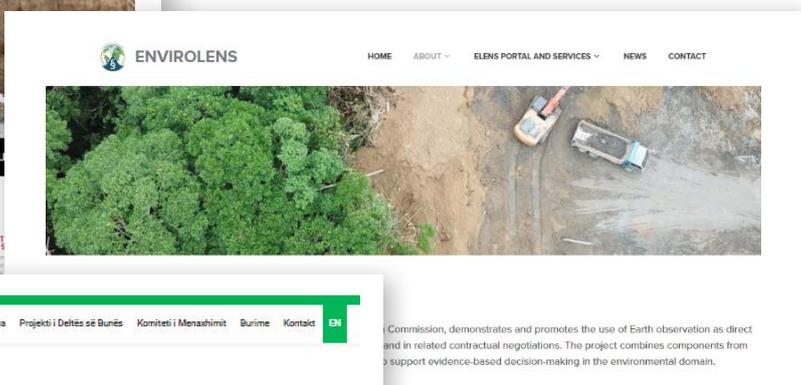
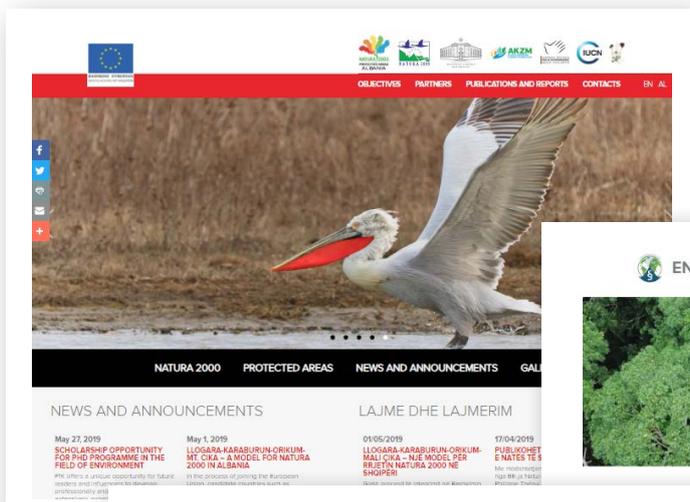
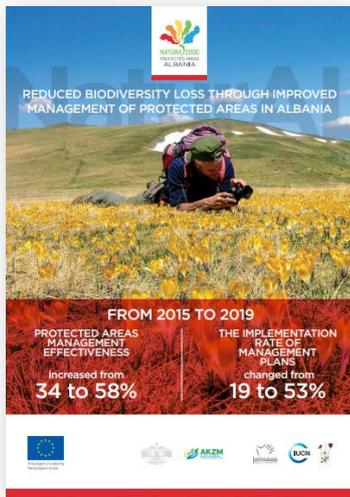


The Collection, Serbia vol. 1, February 2019



Nexus multimedia story in Russian and English

# PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS



# EVENTS AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

IUCN ECARO is highly engaged within an interactive network that organises and participates in community focused, scientific and high-level political events. Visibility initiatives and awareness campaigns in 2019 promoted the value of coastal areas and wetlands, the natural World Heritage potential of Tien-Shan and Central Asia, and the important role of protected areas, to name a few.



World Wetlands Day celebrated with the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia and the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia, in February



Central Asia Nexus Dialogue closing conference, Turkmenistan, in November



NaturAL closing conference, Albania, in May



Mediterranean Coast Day, Albania, in September



The first national Red List published in North Macedonia, event co-organised with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and UN Environment in December



Natural and geo heritage of Central Asia revealed, reception co-organised with the National Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO and UNDP Kyrgyzstan in October



Inauguration of the Divjaka-Karavasta visitor center, Albania, in March

# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



## REGIONAL FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2019

	Euro
Management and leadership	49,864.15
Valuing and conserving nature	490,978.80
Nature-based Solutions	122,117.76
Operations and outreach	105,672.66
<b>Total expenditure 2019</b>	<b>768,633.37</b>

	Euro
Donor income through projects	626,974.10
IUCN operational funding	141,659.27
<b>Total income 2019</b>	<b>768,633.37</b>

Published by: IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

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working for  
a just world  
that values and  
conserves nature



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