

Administration to plan and manage nationally for biodiversity conservation. In particular, the project aims to strengthen legislation for protected areas, develop models of participatory planning for park management, and to identify gaps in the current protected areas system. The project will also improve the management of biodiversity information across the country, and will eventually put in place a national system of monitoring for biodiversity management. The eventual aim is to incorporate biodiversity into all forest management planning procedures. All these efforts will be supported by a national public awareness programme.

On the ground the project focuses on a series of three sites in the Carpathian Mountains – a National Park (Retezat), a Natural Park (Piatra Craiului) and a Forest Park (Vanatori Neamt) – that will provide models for protected area management practices across the country.

Under the project a new Park Management Authority has been established for each of these sites. Within the project the parks are focusing on obtaining and organizing the necessary data to support and monitor park management (including geographical, social and biological data), developing park management plans, developing community outreach programmes (including investigation of local income generation opportunities, such as ecotourism), training of park staff, and the development of park infrastructure. Over the coming years the three sites will also identify potential opportunities for the parks to contribute to their own financial sustainability.

Within the first 18 months of this 5-year project significant progress has already been achieved:

- A comprehensive biological survey for each of the three parks is providing baseline data to assist decision-making in the management planning process.
- Data storage and organization are underway at each park, using Geographical Information Systems.
- All three parks now have draft management plans that are due to undergo a process of national review – and eventually adoption by the government – later this year.
- The park staff have been working directly with local communities to engage them in park management through Consultative Committees. Communities participated directly in the development of the draft management plans earlier this year – the first time this has happened in Romania.
- A review has been initiated to identify opportunities for economic development linked to the parks, with an initial focus on the potential of tourism development.
- Small grants programmes are under development at each park – with the involvement of the local

community – and will be operational by the end of 2001.

- At a national level, the project has led the review and revision of legislation to support protected areas in Romania.
- Procedures have been identified to strengthen national systems for managing biodiversity information, and eventually to identify the gaps in the current network of parks.
- Training and capacity building programmes are underway at both national and park level.

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Snow leopard conservation: a NABU project in Kyrgyzstan

Since 1999, NABU, the German Society for Nature Conservation, has been organizing the conservation of snow leopards *Uncia uncia* in Kyrgyzstan in an international project in cooperation with the Kyrgyz Ministry of the Environment, Emergencies and Civil Defence and the Kyrgyz Ministry of the Interior. The animal, with its typical grey-beige patterned fur and bushy tail, is one of the most endangered big cats in the world. It is categorized as Endangered on the 2000 IUCN Red List and is on CITES Appendix I.

Approximately 4500–7500 snow leopards survive in the wilderness of Central Asia's mountains and the Himalayas. Until recently Kyrgyzstan was the home of one of the largest populations, but since the early 1990s numbers have fallen to an estimated 260–700 animals. This dramatic decline is mainly because of an increase in poaching.

The threat to the snow leopard is a result of a tremendous demand for furs, with 6–11 snow leopard skins needed to create one coat. Snow leopard bones are also being increasingly used in traditional Chinese medicine as a substitute for tiger bones. In cooperation with the Kyrgyz Government and local experts, NABU has developed a project that aims to contain the illegal hunting of snow leopards. At the centre of this project is the Snow Leopard Conservation Task Force 'Gruppa Bars'. In the 2½ years since the beginning of the cooperation between NABU and the Ministry of the Environment more than 120 poachers and traders have been arrested and more than 700 furs, and 400 weapons and traps have been confiscated. Unfortunately a member of this anti-poaching team was recently injured during an attempt

to arrest a group of traders who wanted to sell a young snow leopard.

Further information on the NABU project in Kyrgyzstan may be obtained from Birga Dixel, NABU Snow Leopard Conservation Project Co-ordinator, Naturschutzbund Deutschland e.V. – NABU, Invalidenstr. 112, D – 10115 Berlin, Germany. Tel.: +49 30 2849840; E-mail: schneeleo@nabu.de; Web: <http://www.snow-leopard.de>

Wasting the woods

The very high waste levels involved at all stages of timber use have a significant impact on forest and tree conservation, yet the issue has received relatively little attention to date. As part of the Global Trees Campaign, Fauna and Flora International (FFI) has produced a report examining the sources and disposal of wood waste in the UK, and the potential for greater waste reduction, re-use and recycling. For example, approximately 300 tonnes of reusable tropical hardwood are thrown away in the UK every working day from the demolition of old buildings alone, and up to 50 per cent of sawn timber is wasted in the manufacture of furniture and joinery. The report finds some encouraging signs that re-use of surplus and waste timber is increasing, driven by government policies to reduce landfill, but far more needs to be done. With funding from Fenside Waste Management, FFI is now working to raise awareness of the issue, and is acting as an information resource for anyone interested in tackling wood waste. Other work includes a revised consumer guide to buying timber that emphasizes reclaimed sources, to be published jointly with Friends of the Earth early next year. For a copy of FFI's report *An Introduction to Wood Waste in the UK*, e-mail: woodwaste@fauna-flora.org

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Unparalleled species richness found on the coral reefs of Raja Ampat Islands

The latest expedition of the Marine Biodiversity Program of Conservation International (CI) found unparalleled species richness in corals, fishes and molluscs on the previously unsurveyed reefs of the Raja Ampat Islands, west of Irian Jaya, in Indonesia. The survey took place during the 3-week Rapid Assessment Program (RAP) expedition in March and April of this year. The

team included 10 Indonesian and international marine scientists, who inventoried the fauna of the islands' reefs, assessed their condition and conservation status, and researched the use of marine resources by the nearly 8000 people living in the 22 small communities around the islands.

Conservation International's Dr Gerald Allen registered 950 coral reef fish species and broke the world record for the number seen in a 1-h dive, 283. The total number of fish species is predicted to exceed 1100, including four new species. Damselfishes, one of the most abundant inhabitants of coral reefs, totalled more than 108, nearly as many as those recorded for all of the reefs surrounding the entire continent of Australia. More than half the world's total coral species, 450, with at least seven new to science, were recorded by team member Dr J.E.N. Veron of the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS). Nearly 700 molluscs were recorded by Dr Fred Wells of the Western Australian Museum; the highest number recorded for any Marine RAP.

Jabz Amarumollo and Mohammed Farid, Indonesian scientists working with CI, found that the local communities are dependent on the maintenance of the health and biodiversity of these reefs. More than 90 per cent of the adult population is engaged in subsistence-level fishing, and while commercial exploitation is minimal, some communities are using damaging cyanide-containing chemicals. The amazingly rich marine biodiversity of the Raja Ampat coral reefs is threatened by illegal fishing methods (e.g. dynamite and cyanide fishing) and other human activities such as deforestation. The results of the assessment point to the need for management guidelines to be drafted in conjunction with national and local government and village leaders to ensure the long-term survival of their precious natural heritage.

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Community-based protection successful for the Pemba flying fox

Concerns about the status of the Pemba flying fox *Pteropus voeltzkowi* were initially raised by a report in *Oryx* (Seehausen, O., 1991, The Pemba fruit bat – on the edge of extinction? *Oryx* 25, 110–112), and the species was consequently listed as Critically Endangered. Subsequently *Old World Fruit Bats, An Action Plan for their Conservation* (Mickleburgh, S.P. et al., 1992, IUCN,