

Editorial

In this issue we draw your attention to the 4th Biodiversity for Europe Conference, due to be held in Croatia from 22 to 25 February. ECNC is involved in the preparations and in the conference itself, which is to review progress towards the biodiversity 2010 target and prepare for the European input into the next Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Brazil. We will inform you of the outcome of the conference in the next issue of the *ECNC Update*.

Further in this issue we report on two important new projects being undertaken by ECNC, 'Aggregating indicators for policy purposes' (see page 4) and the BioScore project (see page 5).

News from ECNC headquarters includes the appointment of members of the new ECNC Scientific Council, and ECNC's membership of Eurosite, the largest network of organizations devoted to nature conservation management across Europe.

*On behalf of the Editorial Team
Glynis van Uden*

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4th Biodiversity for Europe Conference preparations – counting down

On 23 January a prep meeting took place in Paris to discuss the preparations of the 4th Intergovernmental Conference 'Biodiversity in Europe', which will be held from 22-25 February in Croatia. This conference will prepare for the European input into the next Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (in Brazil) and will also take stock of the progress of realizing the Kyiv 2010 biodiversity target of halting the loss of biodiversity all over Europe by 2010. The conference will be hosted by the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

As for the previous conferences, ECNC has a substantial input into both the preparation of the conference and the conference itself. Together with UNEP and the Croatian Ministry of Culture ECNC will lead on the media aspect for this conference, and ECNC will provide input into discussion papers on education, communication and awareness, on protected areas and ecological networks, and



on monitoring and indicators. ECNC representatives have been requested to participate in the forums that will discuss these subjects.

At the conference, ECNC will present a European map indicating the number of European countries that have national ecological networks.

More information: www.strategyguide.org or ecnc@ecnc.org

Executive Group approves the Countdown 2010 Declaration



(Photo: Countdown 2010)

On 13 December 2005 the 5th Countdown 2010 Executive Group meeting was held at the IUCN Office in Brussels. ECNC's Executive Director Rob Wolters chaired the meeting. The meeting approved a new partnership procedure, which includes a Countdown 2010

Declaration, and agreed on the main thrust of a Countdown 2010 business plan. By signing the Countdown 2010 Declaration, partners of Countdown 2010 support the 2010 biodiversity target and encourage European decision makers to contribute to it. Each organization chooses a tailored set of actions it will take within Countdown 2010. The Executive Group encourages all organizations committed to saving biodiversity to sign the Declaration.

ECNC is an active and committed partner of Countdown 2010, and has been involved from the very beginning. ECNC coordinates a number of Countdown related projects, including Countdown and the regions.

For more information on Countdown 2010: www.countdown2010.net

3rd LIFESCAPE Partner Forum: joint activities full steam ahead!

LIFESCAPE – YOUR LANDSCAPE is a project about using our landscape to bring people together to create added value and quality of life. From 7-9 December 2005, the third LIFESCAPE Partner Forum was held at St. Omer, France, the location of the offices of a LIFESCAPE partner: Le Parc Naturel Régional des Caps et Marais d'Opale.

The objectives of the Forum were to exchange the lessons learnt in implementing the Transnational Key Actions (TKAs) and to agree on future joint activities and exchange programmes. These issues were discussed in breakout groups, covering the three poles of activities (Connecting People, Marketing & Branding, and Instruments & Measures). Several joint activities started at this Partner Forum:

- learning from all the national differences in the approach to education;
- jointly developing a landscape marketing and branding manual;
- organizing two exchange visits per year per pole in addition to the Partner Forums.

Also, the LIFESCAPE Steering Committee got together to discuss the past and future LIFESCAPE activities and its own advisory responsibilities. All in all, this LIFESCAPE Partner



(Photo: PNR des Caps et Marais d'Opale)

Forum proved to be an excellent means to learn from the activities of the other partners and to strengthen the possibilities for future joint activities.

For more information on LIFESCAPE, contact Peter Nowicki, Programme Manager – Ecology and Economy; nowicki@ecnc.org, or visit: <http://www.lifescapeyourlandscape.org/>

Nature Valuation and Financing Symposium

8 December 2005, Ede, the Netherlands

The aim of the symposium 'Nature valuation and financing – making the priceless valuable' was to contribute to bridging the gap between policy, research, business and practice in the field of ecosystem valuation and financing. ECNC's Executive Director Rob Wolters facilitated the session on 'European biodiversity investment funds' and presented the results to the plenary. The conference was organized by Wageningen University, the Department of Knowledge of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, and Tropenbos International. During the symposium the Dutch platform on Nature Valuation and Financing was launched. More information on the outcome of the symposium can be found on: <http://topshare.wur.nl/naturevaluation/71787>

Researchers to assess value of composite indices

On Monday 12 December 2005 European researchers met at ECNC headquarters in Tilburg to discuss the usefulness of aggregating biodiversity indicators into indices. This issue is inspired by the observation that on the one hand scientists are concerned with detail, reliability, replicability, accuracy, etc.



(Photo: Saxifraga-Janus Verkerk)

(in indicator criteria mostly summarized as 'sound science'), whereas high-level politicians are interested in the broad picture, the key message, preferably a value of biodiversity condensed in one figure on a scale from 0 to 10.

The meeting, attended by 12 representatives of 8 ALTER-Net parties, was the start of the project 'Aggregating indicators for policy purposes: sense or nonsense?', which is being carried out by ALTER-Net. The project investigates this dilemma by reviewing

existing indices (Species Trend Index, Natural Capital Index, Red List Index, etc.), their value for reporting on progress of achieving the 2010 target (CBD, EU and pan-Europe) and their robustness from the perspective of science. Interviews with producers and users of these composite indices will be carried out at European and national level and the outcomes will be published in a peer-reviewed paper.

This ECNC-led ALTER-Net project will also analyse the data collected in the Long-term Ecosystem Research sites to find out to what extent these data could contribute to producing indices.

An international workshop will be held in May 2006, during which ways of how best to communicate these indices to the policymakers and the general public will be presented. Policymakers, scientists and experts in communication will be invited to this event.

More information: Ana Nieto, Senior Project Officer; nieto@ecnc.org

ECNC to quantify policy impacts on biodiversity

ECNC has received a grant of nearly €1 million for a three-year project to support Community policies. The BioScore project (Biodiversity impact assessment using species sensitivity scores) will develop a tool to support biodiversity monitoring and to quantify the impacts of selected Community policy measures.

Biodiversity indicators and monitoring frameworks are currently developed at global and European levels. A key tool for monitoring progress in achieving the EU target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 is the set of EU headline biodiversity indicators. A requirement by the EU is to complement the indicator set and biodiversity monitoring frameworks with tools that allow assessing the impacts of Community policies on biodiversity in a cost-effective way.

The BioScore project will satisfy this requirement by developing a tool for linking pressures from policy sectors to the state of biodiversity as measured by the presence and abundance of selected species. The tool (a database) will contain information on the ecological preferences of individual species in relation to sectoral pressures and to selected Community policies. This tool will be applied for assessing impacts and effectiveness of biodiversity conservation policies based on historic data and on existing scenarios. The BioScore tool will be integrated

into existing biodiversity monitoring frameworks, and incentives for uptake will be formulated. Furthermore, the tool will be accessible on the Internet.

The project started on 1 February under ECNC's coordination. The nine European project partners met on 14-15 February to kick off the work and to start a dialogue with policymakers to ensure that the project meets policy requirements right from the start.

BioScore is a Specific targeted research project under the EC's Sixth Framework Programme, Priority 8.1.B.1: Sustainable management of Europe's natural resources, and receives additional funding from the partner institutions. ECNC receives co-financing from the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (RIVM).

More information: Ben Delbaere, Senior Programme Manager – Biodiversity; delbaere@ecnc.org

News from ALTER-Net

During its second meeting, the ALTER-Net Advisory Committee discussed progress in ALTER-Net's activities and gave specific advice on three selected topics: ALTER-Net's role in the CBD process, integration of social sciences, and interaction of science and policy. ECNC organized the meeting, which was hosted by the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity in Paris.

The Advisory Committee, representing international policymakers and end users, was particularly pleased with the ALTER-Net developments towards a Biodiversity Observation and Research Network. This will largely build on the Long-Term Ecosystems Research site network while integrating social aspects, and have a strong policy focus. The Advisory Committee felt that the integration of natural and social sciences is one of ALTER-Net's strong points that should be developed further. It also discussed at length the possible role the ALTER-Net could play in providing input in the CBD process and more

particularly the forthcoming 8th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Brazil. At this event ALTER-Net's coordinator Terry Parr will give a presentation during a side event organized by the European Commission. Finally, much useful information and advice was given on the role of the Advisory Committee in ALTER-Net's objective to create a durable science-policy interface. In this respect the cooperation with the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy will be stepped up.

More information: Ben Delbaere, Senior Programme Manager – Biodiversity; delbaere@ecnc.org; and www.alter-net.info



ECNC Organizationally

New ECNC Scientific Council appointed

In 2005 ECNC began the process of electing a new Scientific Council. The aim was to establish a smaller Council, which would be able to operate more effectively and contribute to the quality of the ECNC work programme.

All ECNC Network partners were offered the chance to nominate individuals for membership of the Council. The Board had to make a

decision between eleven very strong candidates, all eminent experts in the field of nature conservation and biodiversity management. Faced with making a difficult choice, the Board strongly took into account the necessity to have a wide diversity in expertise among the Council members, as well as the wish to establish a geographically balanced Council, consisting of representatives from the different regions of Europe.

The new Council members are:

- Dr Sjur Baardsen - University of Life Sciences, Norway
- Prof. Dr Ruslan Butovsky - Institute for Sustainable Communities, Russian Federation
- Dr Mark Felton - English Nature, United Kingdom
- Prof. Dr Jozef Keulartz - Wageningen University, the Netherlands
- Dr Julius Oszlanyi - Institute for Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak Republic
- Mr Carlos Sunyer - Terra, Spain.

The newly appointed Council will meet for the first time in March 2006 in Tilburg. One of the items on the agenda will be the election of Chair for the Council.

More information: Sandra Rientjes, Head of Programme Development; rientjes@ecnc.org

ECNC joins the Eurosite network

In January 2006 ECNC's application to become a Supporting Member of Eurosite was approved. Eurosite is the largest network of organizations devoted to nature conservation management across Europe. Members include public bodies, private organizations and Non-Government Organizations.

For information on Eurosite consult: <http://www.eurosite-nature.org>



Staff news

Edina Biró, Programme Coordinator – European Ecological Network, left ECNC at the end of December 2005. Ms Biró was based at ECNC's Regional Office in Hungary, where she had been working since January 2003.

Ignah Boekhoudt, Secretary and Personnel Officer, left ECNC at the end of December 2005 after eighteen months of service.

Ad Vlems, who joined ECNC in September 2005 as a volunteer, has been given a tem-

porary contract until July 2006 as IT and Information Officer. He will stand in for Information and Communication Officer Heidi Janssen during her maternity leave.

At the beginning of January, Project Manager Ágnes Bruszik moved from ECNC's Regional Office in Hungary to ECNC headquarters in Tilburg.

In January Wim Kersten joined ECNC as a volunteer; he will be assisting in the activities of the Brabant & Europe Partnership.

Recent issues of *Journal for Nature Conservation*

Volume 13, Issue 4 of the *Journal for Nature Conservation* (published by Elsevier in affiliation with ECNC) was published in December 2005.

Volume 14, Issue 1 was published in January 2006.

For further information, consult: <http://www.elsevier.de/jnc> and <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/16171381>



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