

## Editorial

At ECNC's Bureau meeting, recently held in Madrid, Spain, Bureau members discussed progress in implementing ECNC's work plan and planning for future activities. This meeting was hosted by Fundación Biodiversidad, and discussions also covered the exploration of opportunities to strengthen cooperation with Spanish institutions and programmes.

The diversity of ECNC's activities is well illustrated in this issue. A recently started project is to examine the state of knowledge on ecological networks in Europe in order to help stakeholders and policymakers improve the implementation of ecological networks. The LIFESCAPE - YOUR LANDSCAPE project has produced a 'travelling notebook' (in four languages) for use in schools in five European countries, involving children in an international landscape project and fostering communication between children in different countries. The BioScore project has produced preliminary results on how biofuel plantations might impact on biodiversity in Europe. These are just a few examples of how ECNC works towards its goal of building a bridge between the interests of biodiversity and the wider interests of society and economy.

*On behalf of the Editorial Team  
Glynis van Uden*

## PAGE

## In this issue

- 2 Kick-off meeting 'Communicating for nature conservation in the Balkan Region'
- 3 Kick-off meeting 'Knowledge for ecological networks'
- 3 Amsterdam and Vereniging Natuurmonumenten sign the Countdown 2010 declaration
- 4 European travelling notebooks reach their final destination
- 5 Financing ecological networks in South-East Europe and the Black Sea region
- 5 ECNC studies interaction between spatial planning and ecological networks
- 6 How will biofuel plantations affect European biodiversity? Preliminary findings from BioScore
- 7 ALTER-Net Council discusses future orientation
- 7 Management Committee of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity takes stock of progress and looks ahead
- 8 ECNC Bureau meets in Madrid
- 8 Staff news

### Kick-off meeting 'Communicating for nature conservation in the Balkan Region'

2-6 April 2007, Croatia and Macedonia

The first phase of the project 'Communicating Nature Conservation' provided tailor-made training to staff of national authorities, stakeholder groups, NGOs and national parks in Croatia and Macedonia in the professional use of communication as a policy tool. The second phase of the project 'Communicating nature conservation in the Balkan region: Capacity building and pilot projects' aims to put the communication skills obtained in the training workshops into practice in a real situation. In April an ECNC team, consisting of Senior Programme Manager Dr Lawrence Jones-Walters, Programme Manager Aysegul Cil and ECNC Associate Tom Kovacs, visited Croatia and Macedonia to start up the second phase.



Neretva Delta, Croatia.  
(Photo: Aysegul Cil)

The team first met the Director of the State Institute for Nature Protection in Zagreb, Croatia, Mr D. Markovic, and his staff. The meeting was continued at the pilot site, Neretva Delta, where other stakeholders involved in issues concerning the Delta also participated.

In Macedonia a meeting was held at the Ministry of Environment in Skopje with the Director, Mr M. Jakimovski, and Ministry staff involved in the project. The ECNC team then

visited the site, Mavrovo National Park. The park management gave an extensive presentation on the current status of the park and discussed issues with the ECNC team concerning upcoming training programmes on communication and stakeholder meetings.



Mavrovo National Park, Macedonia.  
(Photo: Aysegul Cil)

The issues, problems and opportunities were explored during the site visits. Those involved participated actively, to make both meetings productive. Despite the challenges of the sites, the staff and relevant stakeholders were enthusiastic about resolving the issues that they currently face. Training workshops are being held in mid-June, with a focus on conflict management and stakeholder involvement in the selected sites, and it is expected that they will help the management of the sites to operate more effectively in future.

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## Kick-off meeting 'Knowledge for ecological networks'

23 May 2007, Tilburg, the Netherlands

The kick-off meeting of the project 'Knowledge for ecological networks', which focuses on the practical implementation of ecological networks, was held at ECNC's headquarters in May 2007. ECNC is coordinating this project.

The meeting was attended by the six project partners: Alterra, Wageningen UR (the Netherlands), Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Federal Office for the Environment (Switzerland), Leibniz-Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (Germany), and Natural England (UK).

This project will identify the current state of knowledge on ecological networks in the participating countries, make this knowledge available to relevant stakeholders, and provide an active platform for making the implementation of ecological networks more effective, through a range of the instruments and options that are available to policymakers and practitioners, and sectors. The project team discussed the process for implementing each of the project work packages. They felt that the project is unique in the implementation of ecological networks, and will stimulate the further



Project team meeting at ECNC headquarters.  
(Photo: Hanneke Wijnja)

establishment of ecological networks across Europe.

This project is funded by the Research Programme of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

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Halt the loss of biodiversity

## Amsterdam and Vereniging Natuurmonumenten sign the Countdown 2010 declaration

On 4 June 2007 the city of Amsterdam and the Dutch NGO Vereniging Natuurmonumenten signed the Countdown 2010 declaration. The signing by the Dutch capital was a successful ending to the ECNC/IUCN project 'Countdown 2010 in the Dutch region', which was funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Amsterdam pledged to invest € 12 million for biodiversity conservation and to implement a 2010 plan of action that will augment the efforts already undertaken by the city.

The declaration was signed by the chairman of the Executive Committee for Environment, Ms Marijke Vos, and the director of Vereniging Natuurmonumenten, Mr Teo Wams. Vereniging Natuurmonumenten maintains several important natural reserves near the city and expects that by working in partnership with the city government more can be done to protect the fragile ecosystems in those reserves. The city employs ecologists who work closely with the spatial planning department to ensure that species living locally can survive. Within the city perimeter





### Financing ecological networks in South-East Europe and the Black Sea region

11-13 April 2007, Istanbul, Turkey

The seminar 'Financing Ecological Networks' brought together about 40 people from various countries in South-East Europe and the Black Sea region. It focused on training representatives of local and regional communities and NGOs for successful financing of ecological networks and protected areas. The training addressed bilateral funds, corporate and banking financing opportunities, EU funds and regional funds.

After three days of intensive training, the participants concluded that the tools and information provided during the seminar were extremely useful to them in developing projects and finding appropriate funding sources. The participants committed themselves to spreading the information and knowledge gained during the seminar to

other stakeholders in the region.

The seminar was organized by ECNC together with EUCC-The Coastal Union and Eurosin in cooperation with the SEENET focus group and Europa Media as part of the SEENET programme: Facilitating the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological Network in South-East Europe and the Black Sea Area. The seminar was funded by the BBI-Matra programme of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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### ECNC studies interaction between spatial planning and ecological networks

A new ECNC-coordinated research project on spatial planning and ecological networks held its kick-off meeting on 5 June 2007.

In the framework of the project, extensive research will be carried out in relation to spatial planning policies and their inclusion of the ecological network concept, and the interaction between the two fields will be mapped. Research questions will cover:

- To what extent are policies of spatial planning and ecological networks based on the same conceptual and policy assumptions?
- What practical experiences exist for cooperation between nature conservation and spatial planning sectors in designing and developing ecological networks?
- Is the 'ecological network approach' known to actors involved in developing and implementing spatial planning policies and, if so, how useful/relevant is this approach for their work?
- How can the spatial planning sector be actively involved in the development of ecological networks in Europe in the future

(build on existing processes, instruments and networks)?

The national project partners (Syzygy, the Netherlands; Orbicon A/S, Denmark; Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development - IÖR, Germany; Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic - AOPK, Czech Republic; and Terra, Spain) provided an overview of the situation in spatial planning and ecological networks in their countries and the project team elaborated the structure of a report. In addition to national experiences from five countries, the report will summarize a European overview and recommendations on how to contribute to enlarging the involvement of spatial planning in the further development of ecological networks in Europe. The project will last for 21 months (2007-2009), and is funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, Directorate Knowledge Management.

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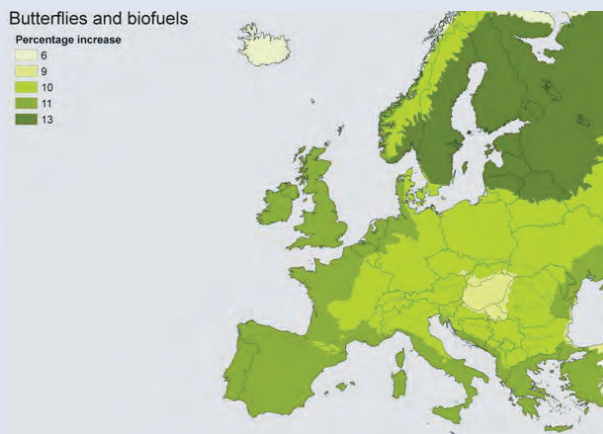


### How will biofuel plantations affect European biodiversity? Preliminary findings from BioScore

ECNC is coordinator of the BioScore project, which is developing a tool to assess European Community impacts on biodiversity.

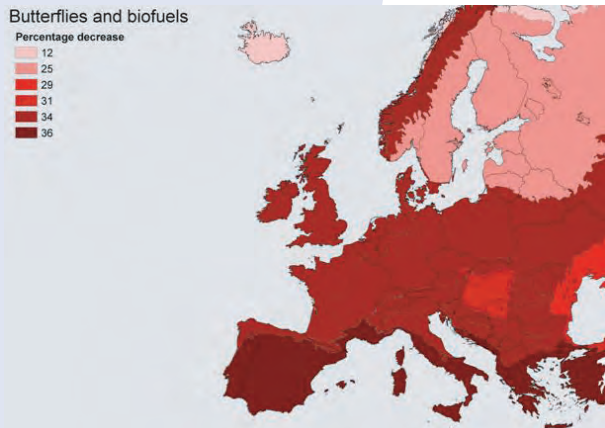
In May 2007 the BioScore project team presented the initial results on how biofuel plantations might impact on biodiversity in Europe, as one of the applications of the BioScore database.

The BioScore project team is building a database of the ecological preferences of individual species in relation to sectoral pressures. This database will help policymakers and stakeholders to assess the impacts of Community policies on biodiversity. BioScore addresses the main threats to biodiversity such as desertification, afforestation and deforestation, land-use change, eutrophication, climate change, energy consumption, etc.



Butterflies will increase in the northern region. (BioScore project)

The preliminary results of a test on biofuel policy revealed that potentially 44% of the species considered will be negatively affected and that 7% of species might benefit from the growth of bioenergetic crops in Europe (assuming increased woody plantations on



Butterflies will decrease in the Mediterranean region. (BioScore project)

abandoned and agricultural land). The effects will be different per biogeographic region; for example, for butterflies approximately 38% of the species considered will decrease mainly in the Mediterranean region and about 12% of the species will increase mainly in the northern region.

These results were presented at the BioScore Steering Group meeting on 22 May in Brussels. The meeting was attended by representatives of the European Commission (DG Research, DG Environment and Eurostat), BirdLife International and the Project Coordinator of the MACIS project. ECNC was represented by Ben Delbaere, BioScore Project Coordinator, and Ana Nieto, Project Manager. The Steering Group felt that BioScore is starting to produce valuable results. They were pleased with BioScore tackling the issue of biofuels from the biodiversity point of view as it is a topic of increasing political interest.

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## ALTER-Net Council discusses future orientation

The ALTER-Net (A Long-Term Biodiversity, Ecosystem and Awareness Research Network) has reached a stage where it needs to reflect on its future beyond the current EC funding period, which will end in 2009. The ALTER-Net 'Network of Excellence' was established with the aim of creating durable integration of biodiversity research capacity in Europe. For this to happen the Network should continue to operate beyond the funding period. As part of this process, ECNC is reflecting on its role within a future ALTER-Net.

This challenge was the main discussion item during the latest ALTER-Net Council meeting, which brought together senior management of the ALTER-Net parties. With almost two more funded years to go, important points to decide upon include the mission of the continued ALTER-Net and in particular its niche in relation to other partnerships such as LTER-Europe, Life Watch (under development) and the European Platform for Biodiversity

Research Strategy, to name just a few. Also, the funding structure of the future ALTER-Net needs thorough reflection, requiring commitment and contributions by the partner institutes.

ECNC has been actively involved in the ALTER-Net from its development stage and continues to develop its role as a science-policy interface for the Network. ECNC sees great value in European cooperation on policy-oriented biodiversity research and is therefore committed to continue its involvement in a future Network.

The ALTER-Net Council meeting was hosted by the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research in Tromsø on 24 and 25 April 2007.

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## Management Committee of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity takes stock of progress and looks ahead



Members of the ETC/BD Management Committee. (Photo: European Forest Institute)

The consortium partners of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity (ETC/BD), including ECNC, recently took stock of this year's work and discussed next year's work plan as well as plans for the longer term.

The ETC/BD is now preparing for the enormous task of processing the second round of

Member State reports for the Habitats Directive article 17. This reporting round will provide a large amount of data on Europe's species and habitats that will allow further analyses in the years to come.

Also, the work for the 'SEBI2010 process' on streamlining European biodiversity indicators has now produced a key output: the first technical report describing 26 indicators that should allow reporting on and help in achieving the 2010 biodiversity target. Gradually, the move can be made from proposals to production of indicators.

Quite some discussion was devoted to the plans for a Shared Environmental Information System, an overarching system that should allow the analysis of environmental data that are managed by the European Environment Agency, the EC DG Environment, Eurostat and the EC Joint Research Centre.

The Management Committee of the ETC/BD, a component of the European Environment Agency, met on 29 and 30 May at the

European Forest Institute in Joensuu, Finland. ECNC's Ben Delbaere chaired the meeting.

### **ECNC Bureau meets in Madrid** *25 May 2007, Madrid, Spain*

ECNC's Bureau meeting was hosted by the Fundación Biodiversidad (FD), Spain's leading biodiversity foundation. During the meeting a lively exchange of information and views took place between representatives of ECNC, the FD, represented by Mrs Sonia Castañeda Rial, Director International Affairs, and Ms Laura Donada Gutiérrez, and the Spanish Azahar programme, represented by its Secretary General Mr Jiménez García-Herrera, Executive Secretary, and Ms Elena Pita Domínguez.

In his speech, ECNC's Executive Director Rob Wolters recalled the establishment of ECNC. He pointed out that universities in Madrid and ECNC's first president, Prof. Dr Antonio Machado (Spain), were among the principal

### **Staff news**

At the end of April 2007 Gillian Heslop left ECNC, after almost six years as Executive Secretary/Deputy Office Manager. In May 2007 Astrid van Hemert joined ECNC as Executive Secretary. Astrid is no newcomer to ECNC, having previously worked here as Executive Secretary from 1999 to 2002. In June 2007 Ms Vineta Goba joined ECNC as Programme Manager – Business and Biodiversity. Vineta comes from Latvia. She obtained an M.Sc. in Environmental Management at Amsterdam University. She has worked in Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Hungary with corporate and intergovernmental stakeholders as well as local and national authorities. Ms Goba has over 10 years' professional experience in a range of topics: technical and environmental consultancy, environmental policy and management, environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, sustainable development, regional development, public participation and capacity building.

## **ECNC Organizationally**

ECNC founding fathers, and that Spain was one of the leading countries in international biodiversity cooperation. ECNC's President Sir Brian Unwin concluded that various opportunities exist for strengthening cooperation.

The ECNC Bureau welcomed the progress in the implementation of ECNC's work plan, adopted the Annual report 2006, and reviewed the strategic midterm orientation and promising opportunities for ECNC. The discussion identified various new and promising subjects. It was decided to prepare ECNC briefs on topical subjects, starting with climate change and biodiversity. The meeting welcomed the draft ECNC communication plan as an excellent tool for further improving ECNC's external and internal communication.

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