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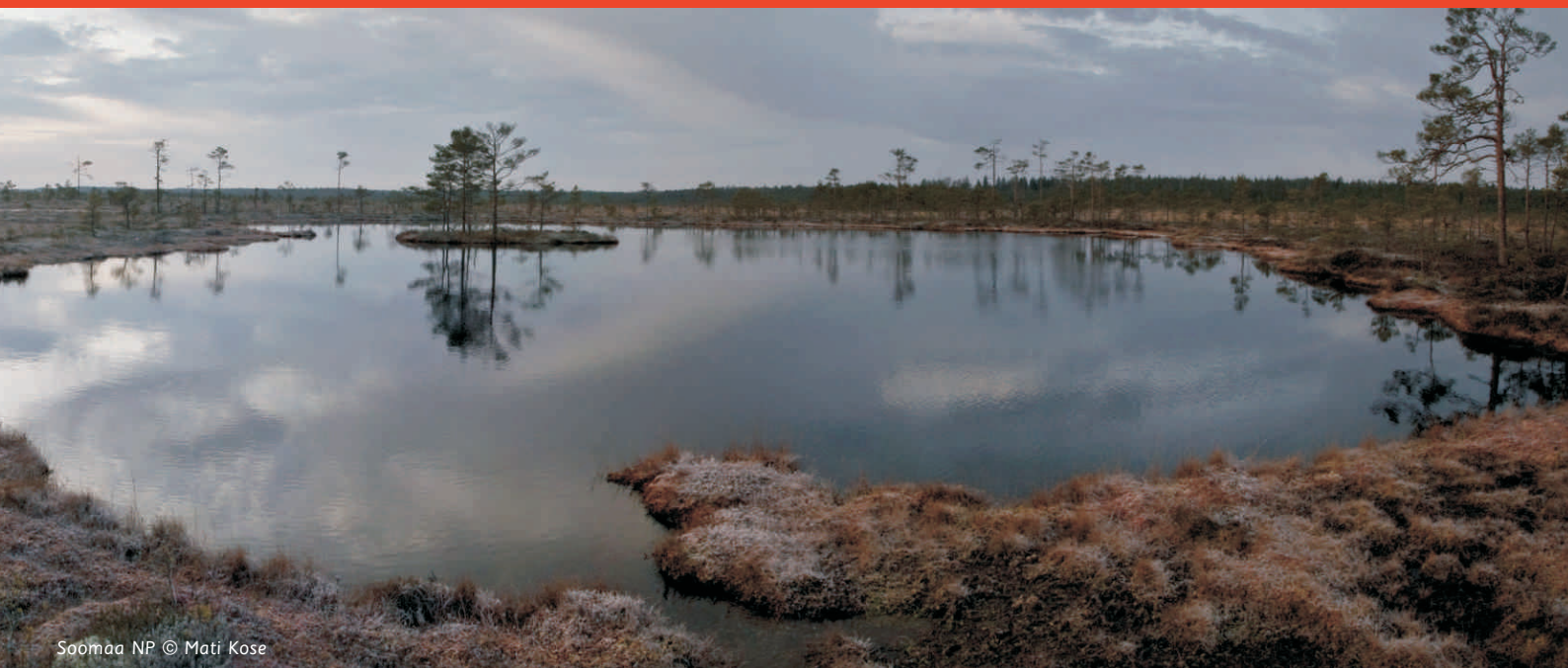


benefits for european wilderness

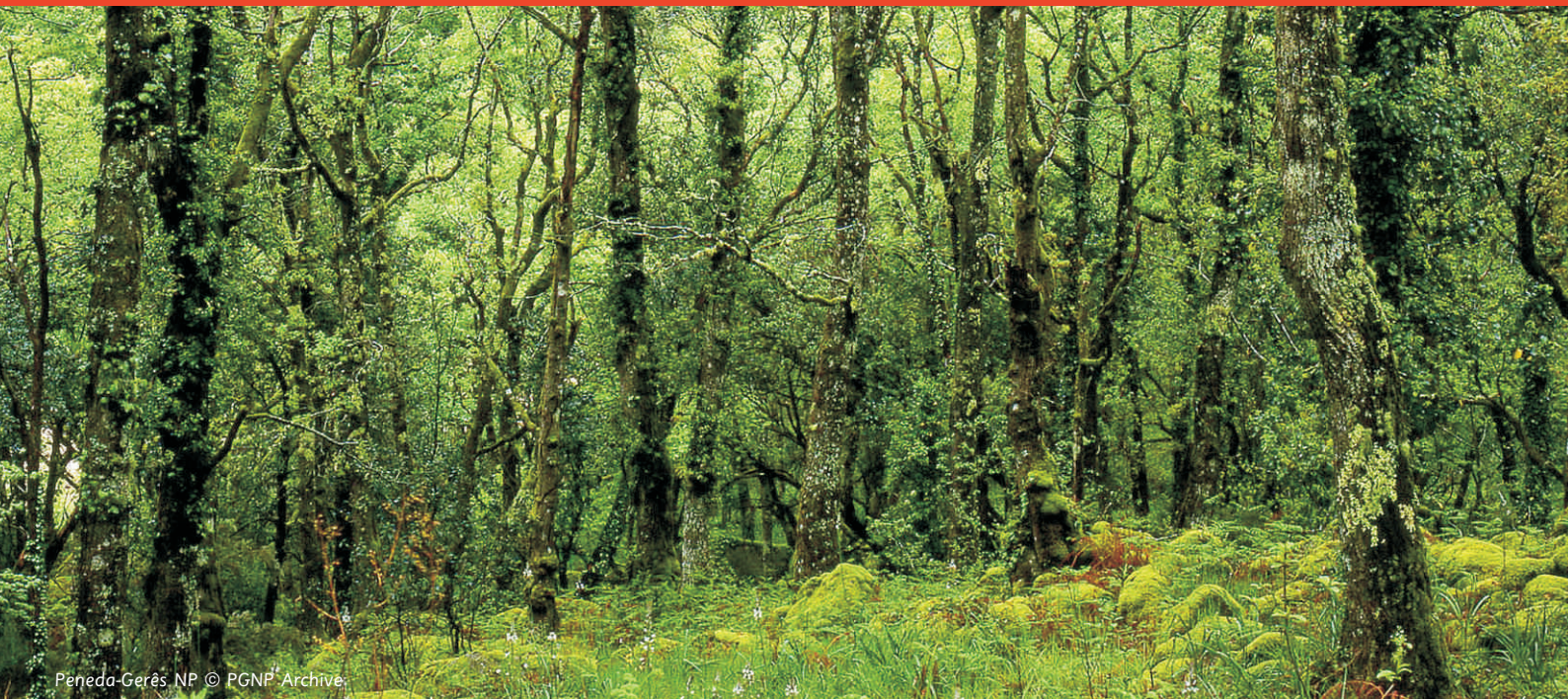
PAN PARKS ACHIEVEMENTS



Oulanka NP © Paavo Hamunen



Soomaa NP © Mati Kose



Peñeda-Gerês NP © PGNP Archive

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Gyula Hegyi

European Commission
Member of Cabinet of Commissioner László Andor
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It was a special privilege for me to be the rapporteur of the European Parliament on Wilderness Conservation. Having my report accepted with overwhelming majority among the 27 European Member States was a great success – but I know that it was just the beginning of a row of further actions needed to raise the issue of wilderness to the mainstream agenda of the EU’s environmental policy. Wilderness activists must pursue their lobbying activities to convince the public and the decision-makers of the importance of the subject. In my view, one of the best ways to do so is to show people the beauty of wilderness; those who have the chance to personally experience wilderness by just taking a walk in the untouched nature and admiring the “virgin areas” will become committed friends of wilderness. Instead of viewing it as a dangerous place to avoid, first-hand experience of untamed nature will help

people realise what a great source of pleasure nature can be: a “temporary asylum” far from the stress and troubles of our over-civilized world. This is why PAN Parks Foundation’s activities are so beneficial to the whole of Europe’s natural treasures and wilderness in particular.

There are countless reasons why Europe should pay more attention to its wilderness areas. First of all, these areas serve as a refuge as well as a genetic reserve to many large mammal species, which are unable to survive in even slightly altered conditions. There are also species waiting to be discovered, mostly in the soil or in rotting timber, which are highly sensitive to changes as well. Secondly, undisturbed areas are perfect to examine evolutionary changes in nature – an ever exciting topic to humans. In addition, the fact that these areas are ruled by nature gives them a unique element of attraction that may be employed in developing new tourism products: people will always be intrigued to see and experience “nature at work.”

The reason why it is crucial to properly conserve these areas is that they are extremely vulnerable to the impact of man-made environmental changes occurring outside their boundaries, such as climate change, the introduction of invasive alien species or changes to river systems upstream of these areas. Also, there are purely ethical reasons to keep wilderness in Europe: we have a moral obligation to ensure that future generations can enjoy and benefit from Europe’s truly wild areas. Finally, one should not forget about the social benefits of wilderness conservation. Sustainable tourism is an important aspect of wilderness in Europe as it encourages ordinary people to discover the hidden values of nature without causing damage to it, and at the same time it contributes to economically maintaining wilderness. This is why organisations that work on the proper development of wilderness conservation are of great importance in our society today.



Ladislav Miko

Director for Nature, DG Environment,
European Commission

Reasons to protect the remaining wilderness of Europe are manifold, as Gyula Hegyi, former MEP explains in his foreword to this document. I am very happy to see such a view being more and more understood and adopted continent-wide. When I first proposed to discuss wilderness protection at the EU level, my ideas were met with great support – the support of those who had already been working on protecting wilderness on their own. Recent achievements of the concerted efforts and the collaboration of national governments, NGOs including PAN Parks, scientists, individuals include the acceptance of the report on wilderness in the European Parliament, the launch of the Wild Europe Initiative, organisation of an international conference on wilderness in Prague and many other initiatives that prove that wilderness is now firmly included in the broader framework of European biodiversity policy.

Even with all these important accomplishments behind us, I am convinced there is a lot more to be done in the coming years. First of all, the wilderness concept should be better understood within the framework of a new kind of natural philosophy that keeps in mind the fact that wilderness works alone, spontaneously, without human intervention. Making sure that whatever is left of Europe's truly wild areas is properly protected is obviously at the core of wilderness policy today. However, this is just one of the three pillars the future of European wilderness should rest upon. In addition to existing wilderness, it is of crucial importance to survey our landscapes in search of further areas that have the potential to give home to wilderness either through spontaneous evolving and natural "re-wilding" processes or through active restoration projects. Both of these, if properly incorporated into wilderness protection, will in time result in the growth of self-contained wilderness areas in Europe.

This extended approach to nature protection through improved wilderness values will be included in the new European biodiversity strategy, which is based on the visions and targets adopted in March 2010. The adoption of such a philosophy will not only ensure the protection of the remnants of European wilderness but will implicitly also develop the so-called "green infrastructure" in our continent's landscapes, made possible by the restoration of important ecosystem services.

I believe that there is room for wilderness in the EU territory – and a socially emphasized need to conserve and even grow it in size and quality. This should enable us to eventually reach our target and not only stop losing some of our wilderness but make way for a steady development of EU territory with the potential for wilderness presence. Such an ambitious goal will demand a lot of enthusiastic and at times difficult work but I am convinced that PAN Parks Foundation will remain among the most active organisations in this area.



The PAN Parks Foundation works to protect Europe's wilderness, the continent's most undisturbed areas of nature. In order to promote the concept of wilderness and provide best practice examples, the Foundation has created a network of large well-managed protected areas comprising true wilderness as well. These areas, providing a unique experience for visitors, offer excellent examples of wilderness management as we believe that quality of protected areas is as important as quantity of protected territory.



There is common agreement among conservation organisations that it is at least 10 % of Earth's territory that needs to be under protection in order to ensure that biodiversity loss is halted. In spite of the fact though, that more than 17% of Europe's land surface is protected, we still have not managed to halt biodiversity loss on our continent. This also proves we need well-managed protected areas. The protection status too often remains a political

commitment on paper and is not transformed into concrete field actions. This especially applies to protected areas with wilderness character, where the conflict between protected area managers and local people are typically larger due to logical management restrictions. This is the reason why PAN Parks Foundation has been working with existing wilderness protected areas to improve their management effectiveness, showcase management excellence and mitigate local conflicts.

This document is a summary of PAN Parks' achievements both in the realm of policy-making and of actual conservation activities, showcasing field examples as well. Policy work is essential to create a supportive environment for wilderness protection while in-the-field achievements show how we cooperate with the parks to improve wilderness management in practice.

A growing network of certified PAN Parks has proven excellence in wilderness management and has contributed to finding a good balance between sustainable tourism and conservation. When parks become certified PAN Parks, they are recognised for protecting wilderness and management effectiveness. However, this is merely the start of a process that requires further cooperation and commitment from the park to improve its management practices, with special focus on wilderness. Monitoring processes and verification visits are essential to check from time to time what the parks have achieved and what they still have ahead of them to do. The process initiates and supports the parks in developing and improving their wilderness management, which inevitably leads to significant achievements in the field. These achievements, collected in this publication, were triggered and/or supported by the verification process also motivating parks to work for an improved wilderness management.

developing the wilderness movement in Europe

The PAN Parks Foundation, being the only organisation to focus solely on the protection of wilderness on a European scale has had a major role in making the issue of wilderness part of the European Union's political agenda for the first time in Europe's history.

Raised awareness of European wilderness among EU decision makers

In June 2008 PAN Parks offered an opportunity for decision makers from various countries, the European Commission and the European Parliament to experience wilderness first hand through a trip to Majella National Park. During the trip we organised a round table discussion with the participants on how to strengthen the protection of Europe's wilderness. The discussion led to the proposal of a special report on wilderness at the European Parliament.

The main goal behind the idea of the trip, namely to build support for wilderness areas that contribute to biodiversity protection, was undoubtedly achieved as inspiration from the trip resulted in the launch of numerous policy related developments.

Resolution for wilderness prepared

PAN Parks in cooperation with the Wild Europe Initiative was coordinating the preparation and submission of the resolution on wilderness to the European Commission at the end of 2008. The resolution signed by around 150 conservation NGOs and other organisations across Europe asked for special attention and a coordinated approach towards wilderness conservation in Europe. The main achievement of the resolution was to present a coordinated approach of various interest groups towards wilderness.

Guidance for Natura 2000 sites towards non-intervention practice

The PAN Parks Foundation in cooperation with the Wild Europe Initiative and Europarc Federation organised a workshop for

managers of Natura 2000 sites in Srni, Sumava National Park in January 2009. The workshop aimed to share practical examples on how to integrate the requirements of the EU Natura Directives into the practice of wilderness management. The document compiled during the workshop was used as an input to the Conference on in Prague in May 2009.

Special report on European wilderness adopted by the European Parliament

Inspired by the trip to PAN Park Majella, a Member of the European Parliament developed a special report on wilderness in Europe. The report was presented to the European Parliament for discussion and voting on 3 February 2009 and was subsequently accepted with 538 MEPs voting for and only 19 voting against it. Such popularity among members of the Parliament suggests that this report will play an important role in the process of applying already existing EU nature conservation laws more efficiently in the future.

The report is somewhat similar to the US Wilderness Act in that it is a document calling for better conservation of Europe's wilderness within the existing framework of protected areas and the Natura 2000 network. In addition, the document provides a popular mandate to work towards strengthening wilderness conservation in Europe. Beyond the general importance of the report, PAN Parks benefits from it as our network is highlighted among the list of best practice examples in the explanatory note of the report.

High-level conference on wilderness

In cooperation with Wild Europe Initiative, Europarc, WWF and IUCN, PAN Parks coordinated the Prague Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas during the Czech Republic's EU Presidency in May 2009. The conference brought together 250 conservation professionals and policy

makers from 40 countries to discuss challenges and opportunities, and to describe the way forward, for European wilderness. Such a turnout and active participation of the attendees served as proof that wilderness protection is high on the political agenda in Europe. Main outcomes included the endorsement of a Wild Area Support Network and the recognition of the urgent need for protection of remaining wilderness areas in Europe. PAN Parks played a crucial role in organising the conference as the coordinating office. There were also several presentations delivered by PAN Parks representatives and our new wilderness brand was launched during the event as well.

An action agenda for Wilderness in Europe – the Prague Message

The key outcome of the high-level Prague conference was the development of a 'Message from Prague.' Participants identified 24 recommendations within the areas of policy development, research and awareness-raising as well as possible partnerships - all key elements of the ambitious and groundbreaking agenda which aims to create a wilder Europe, both in EU and non-EU regions. Wilderness and wild areas take up less than one percent of Europe's surface but they make a vital part of its natural heritage. Many of them are facing imminent threats which require quick and effective actions to prevent further damage. The Prague Message sets the framework for the most urgent actions needed to save wilderness. The PAN Parks Foundation regularly sends reports to the European Commission describing its contributions to the agenda's recommendations, mainly from the area of policy- development, awareness-raising and knowledge-creation activities.

Wilderness Think-Tank launch at Wildland Research Institute

PAN Parks in cooperation with 11 research institutions launched the idea of the Wilderness Think-Tank during the opening of the Wildland Research Institute in Leeds University in October 2009. The Think-Tank serves as an information generating mechanism and initiates researches which are defined in the Action Agenda for Wilderness.

The three main achievements realised by the Think-Tank members so far are:

1. A review of European legislative situation in relation to wilderness, Leeds University
2. Contribution to the 3rd Global Biodiversity Outlook report, University of Lisbon
3. Development of a research proposal for the 7th Framework Programme of the EC, Collaborative consortium of 9 partners

European wilderness positioned on the global agenda

The progress made on the path to preserve wilderness in Europe was presented in November 2009 at the 9th World Wilderness Congress in Mexico (WWC9) by a representative of PAN Parks. His talk, which was part of a whole plenary session dedicated to European wilderness issues, acquainted the international audience not only with the work of our Foundation in general, but also with the outcomes of the Prague conference; a collective achievement of the European organisations dedicated to the conservation of wilderness. The representative of PAN Parks acted also as a member of the international advisory committee of WWC9.

His presentation inspired the Wild Foundation US, initiator of World Wilderness Congress events, to bring the upcoming World



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Wilderness Congress to Europe. Preparatory activities for WWC10 to be organised in 2013 have already started in Europe.

Increased know-how on wilderness protection

In 2009 PAN Parks prepared two publications on wilderness management to spread knowledge on wilderness and motivate relevant professionals to include the approach of wilderness management in their every day work. Both publications were distributed to a wide range of conservation professionals including representatives of NGOs, protected area managers, decision makers and also presented to and promoted by major conservation organisations. One of the publications entitled 'as nature intended'

collects eleven best practice examples of wilderness management from around a selection of European national parks to describe different aspects of wilderness management applied in various habitat types.

By showing the current status of a selected group of wilderness-related species in Europe, the other publication called 'last of the wild' aims to highlight the importance of large, undisturbed wilderness areas, found in Natura 2000 sites as well as that of protecting Europe's remaining wildlife.

Wilderness on the agenda of the European Habitat Forum (EHF)

The PAN Parks Foundation has joined the largest network of NGOs in Brussels in order

to represent wilderness on the agenda of EHF in February 2010. Since joining PAN Parks has coordinated the preparation of wilderness input of EHF. We have also been invited to join a meeting with the EU Environmental Commissionaire as a preparatory activity of CBD COP10.

Re-wilding in 3rd Global Biodiversity Outlook report

Co-written by a member of the Wilderness Think-Tank, the 3rd Global Biodiversity Outlook report¹ suggests the following: “There are opportunities for rewilding landscapes from farmland abandonment in some regions – in Europe, for example, about 200,000 square kilometers of land are expected to be freed up by 2050. Ecological restoration and reintroduction of large herbivores and carnivores will be important in creating self-sustaining ecosystems with minimal need for further human intervention”². The report was published on 10 May 2010 to commemorate the International Year of Biodiversity, and served as one of the main background documents for the COP10 of the CBD.

Management guidelines for wilderness areas within the N2000 network

Based on a meeting organised with the European Commission, PAN Parks and its partners in the Wild Europe Initiative encouraged the European Commission to develop a special guideline on how to approach non-intervention management within the N2000 network. The guidelines are to be finalised by the end of 2011 and will provide a coordinated approach towards wilderness conservation within the 27 member states. PAN Parks Foundation in consortium with Alterra and Eurosite has won the tender to provide the framework for the development of the management guidelines. The work is to start in early 2011.

European review of wilderness legislation

Commissioned by the Scottish government, PAN Parks in cooperation with Leeds University produced the very first comprehensive review of the legislative and management situation of wilderness and wild land areas in Europe in August 2010. The report covered Europe as one geographical entity. The report will also be presented to the European Commission along with specific recommendations on how to strengthen wilderness conservation in Europe.

Proposal handed in for the post-2010 biodiversity strategy of the EU

In September 2010-as part of the Wild Europe partnership-proposed to include wilderness protection in the post-2010 biodiversity strategy of the EU to protect the last remaining wilderness areas. With appropriate restoration, it can make an important contribution to achieving the EU biodiversity objectives.

EC Presidency conference on wilderness restoration

The event ‘Restoring the Natural Heart of Europe’ was co-organised by PAN Parks and the Wild Europe Initiative in association with the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS). The conference received official accreditation from the EC Presidency and is supported by the European Commission.

In November 2010 the conference reviewed the success stories of restoration throughout Europe, shared ambitious plans for new areas and developed a joint strategy for large scale restoration. We hope that the conference will lead to the development of a European Action Agenda for wilderness restoration.

1. Global Biodiversity Outlook is the flagship publication of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

2. page 75 of 3GBO report, at <http://gbo3.cbd.int/>.

GUARANTEED PROTECTION OF WILDERNESS

European wilderness as a phenomenon is often overlooked and considered as non-existent. Yet, the remnants of wilderness present on our continent are of global importance scientifically as well as biologically, also as a means to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Offering confined spaces of tranquility, far from the hustle and bustle of modern life, wilderness areas also carry important benefits to humans such as inspiration, mental renewal and recreation.

Unfortunately, the size of wilderness areas has severely contracted in Europe over time and the last remaining wilderness and wild areas have become cut off from each other, now being fragmented and isolated. One of the biggest challenges wilderness conservationists face today is how to connect and thus enlarge remaining wilderness territories.

The PAN Parks Foundation set out to protect Europe's wilderness by creating a network of large, well-managed areas with a special wilderness area which would provide a unique experience for visitors and benefits for local communities at the same time.

Wilderness protection can be guaranteed in many different ways. It is critically important to incorporate wilderness protection into the existing agenda of biodiversity and nature conservation both on a European and a national level. It is equally important to simultaneously implement wilderness protection in daily management via thorough management plans and zoning techniques, as well as laws and regulations on visitor management, etc. One of the most crucial issues is incorporating wilderness

protection in a zoning system that ensures appropriate management of wilderness by setting clear rules for the different zones protected areas.

As shown in the examples below, PAN Parks' verification process and its regular monitoring, supported legally by national legislation, provides guidelines as well as motivation for parks to ensure proper protection of their wilderness areas.

BORJOMI-KHARAGALI NP, GEORGIA

New zoning system created

The zoning system approved by a ministerial decree in 2007 fulfils international, IUCN standards. The protection of the wilderness zone is ensured efficiently through regular patrolling by 65 rangers. In addition to law enforcement, their patrolling activities include monitoring and data collection on the park's flora and fauna.

Applying the zoning system also makes it possible to support traditional uses of the land in designated areas. This, on the one hand, helps relieve pressure on wilderness areas and, on the other hand, evaluate the carrying capacity of the land to prevent overgrazing.

MAJELLA NP, ITALY

Management plan approved

For the first time in its history, a legally approved management plan was developed for Majella National Park. The plan clarifies several aspects in terms of what is and what is not allowed inside the Park, depending on the definitive zoning system, which is one of the most important innovations introduced by the plan. New zoning-related rules include the following: in the most strictly protected zone hikers are allowed only along

the marked trails and access for dogs is entirely forbidden (in the remaining areas they are allowed on a leash). Other activities, such as mountain climbing, biking, ski mountaineering are regulated in consideration of the zoning system and the presence and distribution of the most sensitive species. This will also help solve further pending issues such as trail and road maintenance and the development of new guidelines for the monitoring of infrastructure maintenance.

RILA NP, BULGARIA

Protection of wilderness area ensured

After designating the wilderness area within the park, protection was ensured among others by reaching an agreement with owners on the removal of abandoned buildings within the area. The new Rila National Park management plan - being elaborated at the moment - will include an implementation programme for the execution of that agreement. All human activities in the wilderness area will be clearly regulated

by the management plan, including strict rules for the previously widespread activity of sanitary logging, no longer practiced in the area.

RETEZAT NP, ROMANIA

Improved management of wilderness

Grazing and tourism are the two activities that require the most attentive management methods in the park, from the point of view of wilderness protection. The Park Administration has excluded areas still used for grazing from its PAN Parks wilderness and they now control grazing activity in the vicinity of wilderness more strictly, by imposing clear-cut rules in a much more efficient way. In addition, rules of tourism-related activities such as camping, making campfire or collecting wildflowers are now strongly promoted and enforced inside the whole park area, with special focus on its wilderness territories.

EXPANDED AREA OF CERTIFIED WILDERNESS

PAN Parks Wilderness requires a minimum of 10,000 ha of an ecologically unfragmented area of land where no extractive uses are permitted, and the only management interventions are those aimed at maintaining or restoring natural ecological processes and ecological integrity. This size is regarded as the minimum requirement needed for proper conservation of many of the key wilderness species. It provides the space and freedom for iconic species such as the brown bear of Central Balkan NP, the wolf of Majella NP or the lynx of Fulufjället NP, to roam free. In order to attain this, the PAN Parks Foundation encourages parks to ensure solid protection of wilderness areas larger than what is required as a minimum.

Presently, certified PAN Parks contain a total of 224,073 ha of wilderness. The largest PAN Parks Wilderness areas are those of Borjomi-Kharagauli NP, Georgia (50,325 ha), Paanajärvi NP, Russia (30,000 ha) and Majella NP, Italy (25,500 ha).

BORJOMI-KHARAGAULI NP, GEORGIA

Enlarged wilderness area

The total area of the PAN Parks Wilderness is 50,325 ha in this park. Such an immense size of true wilderness was attained through the combination of the national park's strict nature reserves and the so-called visitor zones. The area includes mountain forests and alpine grasslands that have been for at least 20 years undergoing a re-wilding

process. In the beginning the Park managed only the former state nature reserve covering 17,000 ha as wilderness but as a result of the PAN Parks verification process the visitor zone was also granted wilderness status, thus creating an extensive unfragmented wilderness area.

SOOMAA NP, ESTONIA

Extended wilderness to secure integrity and representativeness

In Soomaa, with the new management plan put in place, certain sections of the park will be added to the Kuresoo wilderness zone in order to make it representative of the entire landscape ecosystem, including transition mires, floodplain forests, rivers and other

related habitats.

Enlargement of the wilderness zone suggested during the PAN Parks verification process is achieved through protection rules made possible by constant discussions with stakeholders. As the next step in the enlargement process, Lemmjõe forest and river will be added to PAN Parks Wilderness in the near future.

CENTRAL BALKAN NP, BULGARIA

Improved connectivity

The location and shape of the Central Balkan NP, as well as the peculiar development of the reserves system in the past do not support an easy designation of sufficient unfragmented wilderness area but

Certified PAN Parks wilderness

Name of the park	Country	Year of certification	Total territory (ha)	Wilderness area (ha)
Fulufjället NP	Sweden	2002	38,414	22,140
Oulanka NP	Finland	2002	27,720	12,924
Central Balkan NP	Bulgaria	2003	71,669	21,019
Retezat NP	Romania	2004	38,138	14,215
Paanajärvi NP	Russia	2005	104,000	30,000
Rila NP	Bulgaria	2005	81,046	16,350
Majella NP	Italy	2005	74,095	25,500
Borjomi-Kharagauli NP	Georgia	2006	85,047	50,325
Archipelago NP	Finland	2007	50,219	10,600
Peneda-Gerês NP	Portugal	2008	69,776	10,000
Soomaa NP	Estonia	2009	39,000	11,000
Total			679,124	224,073

the management plan of Central Balkan NP certainly works towards such a goal in the long run. It identifies not only the reserves zone but also a zone with limited human impact that is to act as a connecting area

between individual reserves. The combination of the two types of land helps establish and maintain the ecological connectivity of wilderness areas on a total of over 21,000 ha of land.

RE-WILDING

Re-wilding has significant role in the wilderness conservation movement as well as in protecting biodiversity. There is solid scientific basis for the need to protect and restore big wilderness-area complexes and the principal premise is that re-wilding is a fundamental step in restoring self-regulating land communities.

Taking active restoration measures is an approach applied in wilderness protection and also encouraged by PAN Parks verification. Possible ways of restoration include undoing past damages, as in the case of some old-growth forests where the elimination of pressure due to logging and grazing will suffice; or in certain mountain plant communities where the main task is to reduce pressure from trampling. In the case of areas where more profound changes have taken place such as the disappearance of an ecological component, continued, long-term intervention may be necessary. In addition to the re-introduction of extinct species, other measures may be the removal of non-native species, the control or removal of invasive species, prescribed burning, replanting to hasten forest regeneration, seedling selection or thinning. The following examples from the network initiated by PAN Parks verification describe various solutions of wilderness restoration.

SOOMAA NP, ESTONIA

Restoration of drainage systems

In the past, several water drainage systems - called amelioration systems - were built around the present area of the park, mainly

to increase the productivity of forests and to try and control the natural water regime and the ecological processes. The restoration project in Kuresoo Edge, which is part of the wilderness area, is underway to ensure restoration of the natural water regime. The restoration process is being aided by beavers, who are resettling the floodplains of the national park.

CENTRAL BALKAN NP, BULGARIA

Pressure on pastures reduced and re-wilding supported

The park today applies the concept of wilderness in parts of its pastures. Even though the peculiar EU subsidy system of recent years caused an increased interest in grazing again, there are promising signs that reduced pasturing pressure may lead to the natural succession of mountain grasslands towards forests. Thus the park's latest scientific monitoring process on the status and alterations of grasslands is used to prepare an inventory of meadows that may still be suitable for attaching to the wilderness area. Under that scheme, abandoned pastures are being considered for inclusion in PAN Parks Wilderness as they are important hotspots for re-wilding.

PENEDA-GERÊS NP, PORTUGAL

Rare re-wilding opportunity realised

The area of Peneda-Gerês NP was extensively used by locals for centuries: native forest vegetation disappeared as a result of intensive grazing that lasted for several centuries. However, recent

depopulation of the countryside caused the most remote parts of mountains to become more and more abandoned, which in turn is a great opportunity for nature to revive and re-wild. Open landscapes spotted with scars of overgrazing are gradually covered by vegetation - first by shrubs and bushes and later by whole forests as well. During this process the character and biodiversity composition of the area is gradually changing, giving an opportunity for the park to fulfil requirements of the PAN Parks wilderness concept on another 5000 ha of its territory.

BORJOMI-KHARAGAULI NP, GEORGIA **Re-wilding a sanctuary**

The Nedzvi sanctuary was incorporated into Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park in 2006. Hunting and fishing had already been forbidden in the area by then but it had always been heavily used by logging and other exploitative activities and neglected at the same time. Reforestation is now highly encouraged, and the ca. 9000 ha territory of the sanctuary is supervised by 6 rangers to make sure visitors and local citizens comply with the new laws. Signs of re-wilding are more and more frequent: salamanders, for instance, regularly return to the area now.

IMPROVED SPECIES MANAGEMENT

The ability of large mammals to successfully breed in wilderness areas is an inevitable sign that the combination of well-managed wilderness and large unfragmented areas are suitable to provide favourable habitat for the survival of important wilderness species. An integral element of wilderness conservation is the systematic, in-depth study of species. In order to better understand and thus make proper decisions about wilderness conservation it is essential to monitor key wilderness species, especially their population dynamics and the role of wilderness in their life cycle, food supply and behaviour.

There are different methods for monitoring key wilderness species ranging from data collection by park rangers via direct observations to telemetry, photo traps, radio collars and even satellite tracking. Monitoring in PAN Parks provides conservation specialists with fundamental background information for formulating an idea of:

- short and long-term strategies for the conservation of key wilderness species;
- elements required to build up a network of protected (wilderness) areas in order to create ecological connectivity;
- how to better communicate the importance of wilderness for certain species to the public, in the form of attractive interpretation programs.

Systematic monitoring of key wilderness species is a fundamental activity to improve species management. Thus, it is a subject regularly discussed and evaluated during PAN Parks verification and monitoring missions.

BORJOMI-KHARAGAULI NP, GEORGIA **Key wilderness species monitored efficiently**

Borjomi-Kharagauli NP has improved its monitoring system to a great extent by introducing camera traps. The 10 cameras that have been in function for two years now provide invaluable information on the

life of a number of rare species such as the Caucasian red deer, the chamois, the brown bear, the wolf and the lynx, and have contributed to the discovery of yet unknown habitats of wildlife in this park.

OULANKA NP, FINLAND

Species returned to wilderness

The Peregrine falcon, now extinct in the larger part of Europe due to its low capability to tolerate the proximity of humans, has recently made a come-back to the park after 50 years. The territory of the new nesting pair is partly within the wilderness zone. Any news or sign of the recovery of such a rare wilderness species is great news to wilderness conservationists. It serves as direct proof that wilderness conservation in the park is on the right track as the Peregrine falcon will only survive in a quiet, undeveloped area of very little human impact – something that the wilderness of Oulanka NP does offer.

CENTRAL BALKAN, BULGARIA

Key species monitored systematically

Since 2007 the monitoring of species and habitats has been improving continuously and is already part of the national biodiversity monitoring system. The park systematically monitors among others population dynamics, numbers of individuals, behaviour and distribution via direct observation, counting. These data form an essential basis of management decisions, also helping better planning and management of key species and wilderness. From 2009 on the park has been monitoring the condition of 1 fish, 1 reptile, 14 birds, 7 mammals, 1 medicinal plant, 10 other plants, 3 mosses, and 4 mushrooms species, as well as forest ecosystems which is of great importance for wilderness protection. Most conspicuously, data collected in the past few years indicate the presence of more than 250 chamois, with a steadily growing population, and there are more than 60



bears and about the same number of wolves living in the park as well.

FULUFJÄLLET NP, SWEDEN

Wilderness created for species

In April 2008, for the first time in the park's history, a pair of nesting gyrfalcon was spotted, and their four nestlings were successfully brought up as well. Since the gyrfalcon's most important food is willow grouse, it is surmised that their re-appearance was an indirect consequence of the ban on hunting ordered in 2002 when Fulufjället became a national park, as that measure made the number of the bird they feed on increase.

The 2002 establishment of the park and its implementation of efficient wilderness management methods are believed to have contributed greatly to the eventual settling of wolf packs in this area. The major part of

wolf territory expands over a much larger area outside the national park, but territorial wolves do pass through the protected area, which – as regular snow-tracking reveals – presently offers a safe refuge to about 9-10 wolves.

Brown bear occurrence in Sweden is very much associated with large, sparsely populated forested areas in the central and northern parts of the country. Due to the growing pressure from various extractive uses, protected areas, particularly those with a clear wilderness management concept, such as Fulufjället National Park, are of critical importance. The precise number of individuals regularly appearing in Fulufjället NP is unknown, but a rough estimation is that there are more than 10, showing an increasing trend.

RE-INTRODUCTION OF SPECIES

Wilderness is not only about wild, undeveloped or roadless landscape but also about natural composition of native species (particularly carnivores and herbivores) and their natural interaction. It is well known that in Europe, with very limited wilderness, many important species have either been hunted out or became extinct due to their vanishing habitats. Reintroduction of these missing species is a great challenge and yet a crucially important element of wilderness restoration.

As complex a task as it may be, when carefully managed, reintroduction programmes are an essential tool in the process of restoring wilderness. In certain cases information about missing species is straightforward and easy to identify as in the case of extinct species like chamois in

Majella or Griffon vulture in Central Balkan. However, there are cases when accurate identification of extinct species is not so easy and obvious and very often it is a subject of long and difficult discussion.

CENTRAL BALKAN NP, BULGARIA

Extinct birds of prey reintroduced

Two important wilderness-indicative species, the Peregrine falcon and the vulture were reintroduced in the park. Their presence in the park proves the existence of a complete and healthy ecosystem in Central Balkan. The park also takes part in the national movement to reduce the impact of threats on large vultures in Bulgaria, and to eventually attract them to return as nesting species into the Balkan Mountains. The project involves creating favourable living conditions as well as the maintenance and

improvement of habitats to the Griffon vulture, among others. As part of the reintroduction process of that specific vulture, started in 2007, 6 of them were released in the park in October 2010. Furthermore, a feasibility study on the reintroduction of Saker falcon in Bulgaria was completed last year. Results show that Central Balkan is the most suitable place for reintroduction of the Saker falcon.

BORJOMI-KHARAGAULI NP, GEORGIA **Herbivore project started**

The Georgian PAN Park is proud to present one of the most complex collections of large carnivores and herbivores typical of the Lower Caucasus. However, due to historical

reasons an important representative of the herbivore group, the Bezoar goat disappeared from the area many years ago. An international project co-ordinated by WWF Caucasus Programme Office, supported by PAN Parks as well, focuses on the reintroduction of this threatened species with the final goal of building up a more complete ecosystem in the area. There is already a small herd of Bezoar goats located in an enclosure on the territory of Borjomi-Kharagauli NP. The project is facing numerous challenges; nevertheless this small group of Bezoar goat is considered to be the nucleus for a future larger herd whose offspring will in time be released in the wilderness of the park.

MONITORING OF ECOSYSTEM DYNAMICS

The development and implementation of a comprehensive management system for European wilderness not only requires commitment and dedication but reliable information and knowledge regarding wilderness dynamics as well. The most obvious tool to achieve this is the systematic monitoring of species, ecosystem dynamics - wilderness.

The results found and deductions drawn from monitoring Europe's wilderness will provide much needed background information and knowledge on how to protect wilderness in Europe and make wilderness management an integral element of overall biodiversity conservation in Europe.

Certified PAN Parks have also developed the monitoring of different habitats in order to improve wilderness conservation focusing on grassland and forest ecosystems and the integrity of wilderness areas.

MAJELLA NP, ITALY **Grassland and forest areas monitored**

There are two ongoing studies working

towards preparing an up-to-date mapping of high elevation pastures (over the timberline) and the vegetation dynamics in progress in some areas of the Park. The research started in the summer of 2010, and the park is now in the phase of collecting data and assessing the evolution of the environment by comparing aerial pictures from different periods (from the 1950's to present day). This will give useful information and guidelines on how to manage the remaining breeding activities outside the PAN Parks Wilderness area and on what kind of natural evolution is to be expected inside the wilderness area.

RILA NP, BULGARIA **Research to improve integrity of wilderness**

The park is undertaking significant research and monitoring activities with particular focus on the wilderness area, with the intention of mitigating threats to its integrity. Annual monitoring is done of forest and water ecosystems, grazing on park territory and visitors. Management

decisions are based on the results of the monitoring. For example, camping and other human activities are prohibited in areas important for threatened species such as the chamois, the capercaillie, or the golden eagle. Measures taken include ones that aim to disperse and decrease the visitors' flow in the busiest places, especially in the wilderness area.

There is constant research activity going on in the park, recently of relict flora in the wilderness section of the park and also complex research of alpine, threatened, endemic and rare medical plant species.

RETEZAT NP, ROMANIA

Grazing study on pastures conducted

The grazing study has established the carrying capacity of each pasture outside the core zone. The results were presented to local people and authorities with the aim of educating them about controlling their grazing activity according to actual carrying capacities.

There is a series of habitats that are protected by this grazing study, such as the Hydrophyllous tall herb fringe communities of plains and mountains to alpine levels, transition mires and quaking bogs, Alpine and boreal heaths, Sub-Arctic *Salix* spp. scrub – territories where grazing is limited.

There are also habitats where grazing is forbidden completely, like Alpine rivers with their ligneous vegetation of *Myricaria germanica* or Alpine rivers and the herbaceous vegetation along their banks. All these habitats shelter an impressive number of plants and animals that are vulnerable to the pressure that grazing sets upon them. We find a countless number of plants such as *Campanula serrata*, *Cypripedium calceolus*, *Draba dorneri*, *Ligularia sibirica*, *Tozzia carpathica*; of invertebrates such as *Callimorpha quadripunctaria*, *Lycaena dispar*; of fish such as *Eudontomyzon danfordi*, or of the mammal *Lutra lutra*, among others.

The same study included an analysis of neighbouring communities' livestock evolution as well, which shows a decrease as to the livestock that goes up in the mountain during summer. Based on recent grazing data, there is a decreasing interest in grazing certain pastures, which will be an excellent opportunity to include suitable areas in the PAN Parks wilderness area. All the findings on grazing activities was compiled, elaborated and then printed in a brochure in the summer of 2007, used as educational material for local people, stakeholders and shepherds as well.

PREVENTION OF DEVELOPMENT DAMAGING WILDERNESS VALUES

Existing and potential PAN Parks wilderness have to combat and survive the pressure of ongoing socio-economic development in Europe resulting in growing pressure from development and resource use. There are many projects threatening wilderness emerging from time to time. PAN Parks provides support in such cases to its member parks by providing targeted communication towards authorities and reacting publicly if needed. In addition to concrete actions taken on a per case basis, the Foundation

continuously works towards preventing such cases from happening. Most importantly, there is continuous policy work on the EU and national level in order to guarantee wilderness safety.

RILA NP, BULGARIA

Monitored impact of facilities

Rila NP boasts one of the best and largest pieces of unfragmented wilderness in the Balkan Mountains but is also constantly subject to projects threatening the integrity

of its wilderness. In the past these threats came mostly from forestry operations - logging or road constructions - or from agricultural activities such as massive grazing by domestic animals. During a visit to the area the team of international verifiers highlighted several key issues for successful re-verification. One such issue surfaced after monitoring was the impact of the chairlift and road at Panichishte. It was concluded that a soundly based strategy needs to be developed in order to mitigate any negative impacts in the area. The report will be

presented to PAN Parks on the findings and any legal action taken against any parties. The PAN Parks Foundation has been playing an active role in this issue and has been approaching responsible bodies requesting the prevention of any kind of damage to this unique wilderness area. As a result of protests, some further developments in the area have been stopped. The Ministry has repeatedly confirmed to us their readiness to minimise threats and pressure put on this area by developers.

INCREASED STAFF CAPACITY

Management of protected areas in general and particularly of wilderness protected areas is a more and more sophisticated issue. A growing knowledge on the importance of wilderness and a wide spectrum of expertise on biodiversity is indispensable now. Specialists will need a host of knowledge in issues ranging from biodiversity protection or species management through sophisticated educational methods, community work, communication and visitor management, to the expertise on major conservation relevant legislation and international importance. On one hand, it is essential to have the adequate number of staff, which varies from park to park: less staff in Scandinavia compared to for instance more Eastern Europe. On the other hand, it is obvious that such a wide field of expertise can only be covered by highly professional, committed and well-trained staff. Therefore training is of increasing importance. Capacity is a critical element of wilderness conservation so PAN Parks verification encourages the improvement of staff capacities. Currently all certified PAN Parks are running a variety of trainings covering the whole spectrum of protected area management duties. In addition, since 2002

the PAN Parks Foundation has been organising an annual conference entitled Europe's Wilderness Days, where participants from the wider network can exchange experience on local practices, learn from wilderness experts and thus increase their knowledge of wilderness management.

BORJOMI-KHARAGAULI NP, GEORGIA **Exchange experience within the PAN Parks network**

Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park with the support of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources attended a week-long study tour to the two Bulgarian PAN Parks in 2006. The study tour was organised for high level administrative staff and the head of rangers. During the visit the park employees had an excellent chance to learn interpretation techniques, visitor management and the general administrative role of a protected area.

CENTRAL BALKAN NP, BULGARIA **Staff capacity improved**

The concept of ranger training and visitor management, as well as interpretation through rangers and their language skills have all been improved. Rangers from all 7 park sections attended the training on how

to work with visitors. Training included the use of a textbook as well as field practice on interpretation of tourist routes, presentation of the site and educating visitors.

MAJELLA NP, Training course for staff and local businesses

A total of about 30 park employees (guards and other staff members) and volunteers participated in a course to get the licence of Volunteer Environmental Guard.

STRATEGICALLY PLANNED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable, controlled tourism is an extremely important tool of the PAN Parks concept to support wilderness protection. The sustainable tourism development process helps ensure that tourism provides real benefits for the rural communities in and around the protected areas, and at the same time reduces the pressure caused by tourism on the park. The sustainable tourism development strategy of PAN Parks is developed through a collaborative process between park managers and all relevant local stakeholders. It is a cornerstone ensuring that tourism supports nature conservation, and guaranteeing that tourism is not introduced in sensitive areas.

The PAN Parks concept is based on strict Principles and Criteria that are verified and monitored by independent verifiers. It also offers guidelines for the Tourism Development Strategy creation process containing mandatory conditions for any protected area wishing to join the PAN Parks network. All parks developed their strategy during the PAN Parks verification process, a few examples of which are described below.

SOOMAA NP, ESTONIA Improved visitor management plan

The park has drafted an improved visitor management plan within the Management Plan, including areas and quotas for activities such as canoeing and bog-shoeing, monitoring of visitors and assessing their

impact. This is especially important as there is a growing pressure from attractive tourism activities in Soomaa such as canoeing and rafting, birdwatching, hiking so a strategic way of thinking was required to develop a feasible framework for protecting and using this unique resource in a sustainable way. Hearings of the plan take place in autumn 2010.

FULUFJÄLLET NP, SWEDEN Revised tourism strategies

In Fulufjället, based on the experiences of the first 5 years of implementing the sustainable tourism development strategy, the local PAN Parks group, with the participation of local stakeholders, has put a lot of effort into revising the strategy in order to strengthen its effect in avoiding or minimising any negative effects that increased tourism might have on wildlife and the region's ecological, socio-economic and cultural resources. In 2008 the revised strategy was approved by a wide group of local stakeholders of tourism associations, local businesses and the national park. An increased awareness of communities around Fulufjället NP should strengthen the conservation activity of the park as a region with ecological, socio-economical and cultural developmental efforts.



IMPROVED WILDERNESS INTERPRETATION

As PAN Parks are best practice examples of wilderness management also from an interpretational point of view, they need to come up to certain expectations of PAN Parks verification: they are required to present wilderness towards their visitors in order to raise awareness of its special features and also the issue and significance of wilderness areas.

This helps parks protect wilderness as visitors will appreciate wilderness more and thus their behaviour in the field will contribute to the preservation of these areas rather than hindering it. This also plays an important role as visitors who experience wilderness first hand will understand the concept and will be more likely to support this cause of wilderness protection.

MAJELLA NP, ITALY **New infrastructure of wilderness interpretation**

The park improved the interpretation of wilderness and species management, in particular the role of enclosures and botanical gardens for certain wilderness-dependent species. New panels for wilderness species have been put in place, as well as information boards about wolf, chamois and red deer.

A new information board at Fara San Martino gorge was also set up to explain the natural erosion processes. A church was built in a dynamic nature area so construction work was done by the local municipalities to protect the place against

new sediment avalanches. The park authorized and watched over the works making sure that this protective structure would not disturb the view into the gorge and assuring that the work caused no impact on the species living in the area and on the surrounding environment.

RETEZAT NP, ROMANIA **Improved wilderness related education towards visitors**

Two thematic trails focusing on wilderness species have been built in the park recently: the wolf and chamois trails. The main benefit of these trails is that they educate visitors about the role of these species in the ecosystem and that they aim to improve the all-too-often negative image of wolf in people's eyes.

Trails like these are important tools in visitor education as they are bound to cause humans to behave in a less intrusive way in wilderness and in nature in general.

FULUFJÄLLET NP, SWEDEN **Improving infrastructure**

Boundaries between the different zones have been marked with signed tree poles along all the marked trails. The work was completed during summer 2008 and all trails that cross into another zone have marked poles at the borders. This is a great initiative to make visitors aware of what zone they are in.

INCREASED INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNITIES

Wilderness in Europe is located on an intensively used continent with a very complex ownership situation and tradition. For this preserving the last remaining wilderness areas can only be done in cooperation with the communities living around these areas. It is fundamental to create a forum for local stakeholders and the park administration to share their views, plans and thus ensure the support of local people for the park's conservation goals.

BORJOMI-KHARAGALI NP, GEORGIA Cooperation with local communities, businesses improved

The setting up of the local stakeholder group (Local PAN Parks Group) in 2006 resulted in a lot of new bi- and multilateral communication and cooperation among various stakeholders. Simultaneously, it brought a better understanding of the mutual needs of stakeholders, and helped support park management in making decisions about wilderness management. Setting up a local PAN Parks group helped business partners promote their businesses together with the park. The local PAN Parks group organised meetings and workshops aiming to improve services and products and share experience among existing business partners. The local PAN Parks group, along with a local organisation, worked on a promotional publication of business partners and helped them deliver joint marketing messages. As part of the joint and mutually beneficial project, a folder containing information about all business partners was distributed at tourist information centres and among the tour operators of the area.

ARCHIPELAGO NP, FINLAND Enhanced local cooperation

The local PAN Parks group offers a new channel for cooperation and the exchange of information between local stakeholders and the park. Through this cooperation between tourism bodies of 3 communities was enhanced. Cooperation has also increased between local businesses in order to develop products for visitors. The role of the park was to provide the area for their use and support building a network among businesses. To mention one example, the park organised a trip for local business partners in order to educate them about the park's features.

CENTRAL BALKAN NP, BULGARIA Increased cooperation of the park and stakeholders

The park has succeeded in winning recognition as a leading nature conservation authority in the region. The local PAN Parks Group with local stakeholders was created in order to facilitate dialogue between the park and local communities. 14 local PAN Parks business partners were certified, all committed to wilderness conservation and the development of products accepting the park's management concept. They also take part in various initiatives of the park. One of the most remarkable examples of local cooperation is that in 2007 one of the business partners, a tour operator company offering horse riding tours in the park collected donations from their clients, which was then used to support some activities from the national action plan for the protection of the brown bear within park territory.

conclusion

The policy achievements of the past 3 years show an increasing political interest and goodwill towards wilderness conservation. The breakthrough in the field of policymaking was the European Parliament's special report that gave us the popular mandate to work on wilderness protection. The areas joining our network may thus become Europe's natural landmarks. Most of the policy achievements are on a European Union level, especially at the European Commission. So far there are only a few countries that have already followed up on these political steps taken in Brussels. Germany, for instance, announced the conservation target of rewilding 2% of its territory. Our Foundation will have to work with various national governments of the member states in order to implement the different recommendations of the Prague message in the field. As PAN Parks is the only wilderness-focused organisation on a European level, we will also have to provide regular field inputs to policy and decision makers.

There are still several important milestone issues that the PAN Parks Foundation wishes to influence in the coming years such as

- developing special wilderness management guidelines for Natura 2000 managers;
- increasing the knowledge and information for policy developments through working with the academic sector;
- influencing the upcoming reform of the common agriculture policy, which might be either a threat or an opportunity for wilderness conservation;
- promoting the re-wilding of 200,000 km² which was described as a possibility in the 3rd GBO.

The PAN Parks Foundation will have to closely cooperate with various partners in order to deliver the maximum benefits for wilderness. We might even aim to have a special wilderness treaty for Europe, which

can be based on the analogous US wilderness act.

In-the-field achievements in PAN Parks show that the concept and its implementation through verification and monitoring is an essential tool in improving wilderness management in protected areas. It is effective in spreading new approaches



among protected area managers and thus improving the parks' wilderness conservation in many different aspects and fields. Besides providing verification by independent experts and regular monitoring, the PAN Parks Foundation supports parks by providing and sharing their experience of wilderness conservation.

In the future we expect PAN Parks to become true leaders of wilderness protection in Europe, through their proactive approach to safeguarding wilderness and by sharing their experience with PAN Parks network and beyond. PAN Parks can achieve this by gradually developing a long-term tailor-made wilderness protection strategy for the upcoming 25-30 years and prove that wilderness protection is a fundamental element of the protection of Europe's natural heritage. The strategies should not only

include guidance and a stepwise approach of how to protect existing wilderness but also a timeline indicating how to enlarge their wilderness areas and reduce fragmentation, restore damaged ecological balance, and revitalize damaged species composition. All the above will then hopefully lead to many further achievements in the field and a significant strengthening of the wilderness movement in Europe.





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PAN Parks works to protect Europe's wilderness, the continent's most undisturbed areas of nature. In these areas our knowledge and understanding is enhanced for the benefit of nature and humanity alike; people appreciate the pleasures offered by wilderness with the respect it deserves.



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