

PROTECTED AREAS IN A CHANGING WORLD CONFERENCE REPORT





REACT TO CHANGE EMBRACE CHANGE OR CREATE CHANGE

INTRODUCING PROTECTED AREAS IN A CHANGING WORLD

The natural world is in a constant state of change. Protected Area managers embrace that, examine it and explain it to others.

However, change also exists at the organisational level, influenced by macro challenges such as climate, politics and social affairs. At EUROPARC Conference 2015 "Protected Areas in a Changing World", we unveiled some of these challenges and went further, reaching the individual dimension of change. After all, aren't people one of the most important elements in protected areas?

In EUROPARC Federation we envision a Sustainable nature valued by people. The human dimension is always one of our main scopes of work: we help people to help nature. At EUROPARC Conference 2015, inspiring keynote speakers left us messages of hope and opportunities; workshop leaders developed our skills in different fields of protected area's management; and the Marketplace gave as an excellent opportunity to learn and create new bonds with peers from our network.

By creating **positive changes in ourselves and in our organisations** we are able to deal with the direction of change in the natural world.



WELCOME

The EUROPARC conference is the most important Discussion of big scale topics such as European policy, gathering of the year, not just for members but for all protected area managers in Europe. In 2015, the lack of a keynote speakers, with analysis of more specific workshops member or country host provided us with the opportunity such as agri-ecology, transboundary co-operation, working to try something different.



CAROL RITCHIE Executive Director of EUROPARC Federation

meeting and welcomed all event. Well, we need not have worried as almost 200 people attended with representation from across the network.

We are ever grateful for the support!

The conference gave us a chance to consider the changing environment that we find ourselves working in, but too, to discover again the joys of networking, learning and finding solutions from each other.

climate change and natural capital were presented by the with youth and professional development for protected The directorate team prepared area staff. It was great to see members and sections of a smaller and even more intense EUROPARC taking the lead on these workshops.

in EUROPARC's headquarters It was exciting to see the input of our youth. Having just city of Regensburg DE. While returned from the 2nd EUROPARC youth conference and preparing the new format, camp in Aigüestortes and Estany de Sant Maurici National we wondered if our members Park, Spain. They presented a video and message to would still come to a smaller protected area managers asking to be the "Voice of Nature" in protected areas. The youth declared "Too Old is Too late", so give youth a chance to Take the Lead for Nature. EUROPARC responded by committing to having youth representation within EUROPARC and we commend our members to do likewise.

> The EUROPARC marketplace was excellently supported by members providing a great information exchange point as well as a chance to taste products from across the network. We plan to expand on this idea in future conference.

> Celebrating success is important not just to recognise the excellent achievements in protected areas, but to inspire and motivate others. In the 2015 conference we had a great deal to celebrate. The new award of the N2000 Communication showcased innovative and new ideas. The Alfred Toepfer scholarship for young professionals highlighted how study

tours can connect protected areas to learn from each other. The Award is generously given by the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung. Finally the Alfred Toepfer Medal recognised the outstanding achievement of <u>Jane Hodges at Pembrokeshire</u> Coast National Park Authority. We had the chance also to launch the new EUROPARC video, celebrating the work of the Federation and its members. Watch it here.

With an informed and responsive member general assembly, the Federation passed new statutes and took forward its strategy as well as hearing from partner organisations, Wild Europe, European Network of Outdoor Sports and WCPA. Many members stayed on to take part in side meeting on Wilderness, Biomass, Professionalism in protected area managers and rebranding of the Charter.

The energy and enjoyment of the EUROPARC network is at its most prominent at the gala dinner, where friendships are made and new partnership sealed, a testament to the success of the EUROPARC conference and the useful chance for protected area managers from across Europe to come together at this unique, learning, inspiring and fun event. The conference ended with an invite to all EUROPARC members and friends, from their colleagues in the Swiss Network of Parks and the Jura Vaudois nature park in Switzerland to join EUROPARC for conference 2016 19th-23rd October. "We are Parks"..LINK to CONF. and We hope to see you there!

IN THIS REPORT

Click on the titles!

ABOUT OUR DELEGATES

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WORKSHOPS

Transboundary Parks The Alfred Toepfer Medal The Alfred Toepfer Natural Heritage Scholarship Natura 2000 Communications Awards

NETWORKING

Marketplace and EuroParty South-American perspectives

GENERAL ASSEMBLY **EUROPARC Conference 2016**

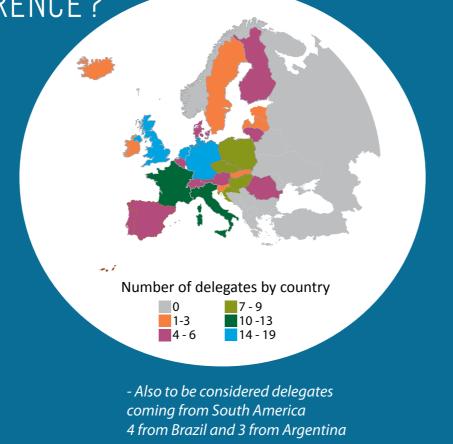


WHO CAME TO THE CONFERENCE?

TOTAL NUMBER: 185

In 2015, EUROPARC Conference followed a different model from previous editions: it was shorter (only 2 days) and it was not held in a member Park. This is probably one of the reasons for a smaller number of delegates compared to the normal attendance around 300.

Nonetheless, the number of delegates surpassed the expectations and for the first time and we had also representatives from South American parks. This year, Germany, the Netherlands and UK were the countries better represented at EUROPARC Conference, probably due the proximity with the venue. Moreover, the majority European countries from EUROPARC Network were represented.



WHY EUROPARC CONFERENCE?

We wondered what are the main motivations for attending EUROPARC Conference.

The first reason, chosen by almost all participants, was "Networking". Indeed, the Conference is the best moment for networking and getting to know peers from other European protected areas.

Curiously, delegates are more keen to "have fun with the European Colleagues" than actually "Find partners for future projects". Therefore, activities such as the Marketplace and Euro-Party are highly recommended to be repeated in future Conferences, as thes rovide opportunities for both!

The second main reason is to "Learn new subjects with the keynote speakers", which stresses the importance of having interesting subjects and renowned speakers.

"Participate in the General Assembly" comes as the third reason, followed by "Participate in workshops" and "highlight my project", giving once more relevance to the Marketplace.



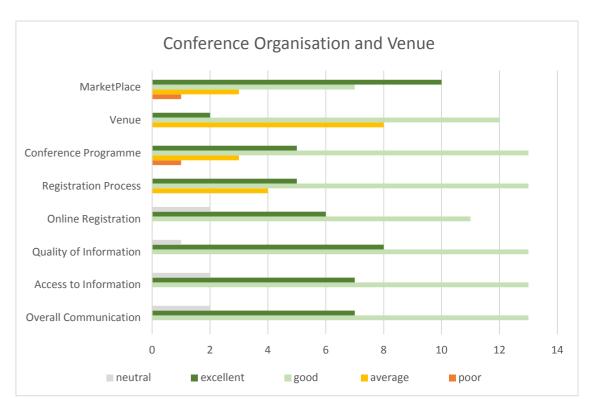
EUROPARC CONFERENCE 2015

Regensburg, 26th - 27th October 2015



Delegates were asked to evaluate the conference by filling an online form. Although only 15% responded, the data collected gives a snapshot and interesting inputs for future conferences and events and helps identifythe strengths and weaknesses of 2015 Conference.

WERE PEOPLE HAPPY WITH THE CONFERENCE?



The above graphic provides an overview of the Delegate's opinion about communications, programme and venue. Except for the MarketPlace, which was defined as "Excellent", all other aspects were mainly described as "Good".

The venue was the aspect less appreciated by delegates, along with the registration process in the venue. Regarding the programme, although the majority described it as "good" and "excellent", there were some bad opinions, which unfortunately were not further explained in the online form.

Regarding communications, the answers varied between good and excellent, proving that EUROPARC was effective in providing quality and accessible information, and had a good system for online registrations.



Are Protected Areas passive passengers of climate change or drivers of sustainability?



IGNACE SCHOPS

President of EUROPARC Federation Member of Climate Leadership Corps Goldman Prize Winner



"Climate change" and "biodiversity loss" were probably amongst the hottest expressions in 2015.

World leaders have finally reached a common understanding about the urge to reduce emissions to "safer levels". At the same time, European citizens acknowledge biodiversity loss as a serious problem, as showed in the Eurobarometer 436 (2015), with 76% asserting "mankind is responsible for biodiversity loss" and 67% recognizing "nature is essential to tackle climate change".

As nature protected areas, we also have a role in the climate change debate. All ecosystems store approximately 50% of all the carbon emissions and Protected area's in particular store 15%. PA's prevent further carbon emissions caused by degradation and, by being in the frontline of conservation, monitoring and evaluating, they sound the alarm of biodiversity loss.

WHICH OPPORTUNITIES?

The increasing land abandonment in Europe, nowadays estimated at 2 billion hectares, is an opportunity to reduce global warming, if smart planning and other measures like (re)forestation are taken. Give space to nature to give space to ourselves and the future generations. Further opportunities are to be better explored such as ecosystem services, green jobs and sustainable energy production. Let's work towards a change:



"Think globally, act locally and change personally!"







DR. LAURA MEAGHER

Technology Development Group & Honorary Fellow, <u>INNOGEN</u>

One of the main legacies inherited by Charles Darwin was the concept of change as an ongoing and ever ending process. Change is as natural as inevitable for each living being, and yet, humankind often considers it an uncomfortable process.

FROM MICRO TO MACRO

Understanding change as an internal progression, through self-knowledge and auto-reflection, can help shaping and moderate the process. By analysing the reasons of discomfort and identifying possible solutions from which one can learn, creativity will emerge and positive outcomes will sprout. At an organisational level, change can be faced by an interdisciplinary approach: a collaborative environment can lead to genuine creativity and innovation. Therefore, protected areas should consider possible partnerships and networks to develop solutions for the coming challenges.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

CHANGE IS NATURAL

What types of change are taking place or likely to be taking place within my organisation?

CHANGE IS UNCOMFORTABLE

Is something about a particular change making me, my colleagues, my unit or organisation especially 'uncomfortable'?

CREATIVITY CAN EMERGE

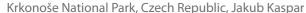
While things are changing anyway, what opportunities are opening up or could potentially be identified and pursued?

COLLABORATION CAN ENHANCE RESILIENCE

What partnership or networking activities could help to protect the issues and professional responsibilities I care about?









Are Protected Areas the new natural asset bankers?

JONATHAN HUGHES
Co-Founder, World Forum on Natural Capital
Global Councillor, IUCN
Chief Executive of the Scottish Wildlife Trust



Despite the worldwide growth of protected areas during the last decades, with over 15% of terrestrial and marine areas under some protected status, the actual coverage of protected areas is still weak.

In fact, according to OECD, 2013 "mean species abundance is projected to decline further to around 60% of the level that potential natural vegetation could support by 2050". The problem is easily explained: critical decisions affecting ecosystems are made by finance ministries and chief finance officers, often to maximise financial capital.

"The current economic system is based on understanding financial flows and largely ignores natural capital asset value and asset performance."

To have a realistic hope of halting biodiversity loss and meet global demand for conservation funding, investable cashflows need to be 20-30 times higher than they are today, according to an analysis by Credit Suisse, WWF and McKinsey. This represents an extra \$200-300 billion a year for nature conservation. In the meantime, budgets from national & subnational governments are declining and there is a massive funding gap of \$100 billion for PAs globally.

A new approach is necessary to unlock the level of private investment:

"we need to develop measurable and verifiable products which provide conservation and financial returns."

WHAT IS NATURAL CAPITAL?

Natural Capital is the extension of the economic notion of capital (manufactured means of production) to goods and services relating to the natural environment.

Natural capital is thus the stocks of natural ecosystems that yields flows of valuable ecosystem goods or services.

SOME MECHANISMS

- Area-based natural capital valuations and ecosystem services mapping;
- Payments for ecosystem services
- Green bonds / impact-based payments
- Biodiversity offsetting
- Investors and lenders policy change based on Natural Capital risk exposure
- Corporate natural capital accounting and disclosure e.g. Natural Capital Protocol



IN A CHANGING POLICY FRAMEWORK





EU Biodiversity Policy: what are the challenges and opportunities?

ALBERTO ARROYO SCHNELL
Senior Policy Advisor
Biodiversity, WWF European Policy Office

European Union Biodiversity policy framework is based on the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

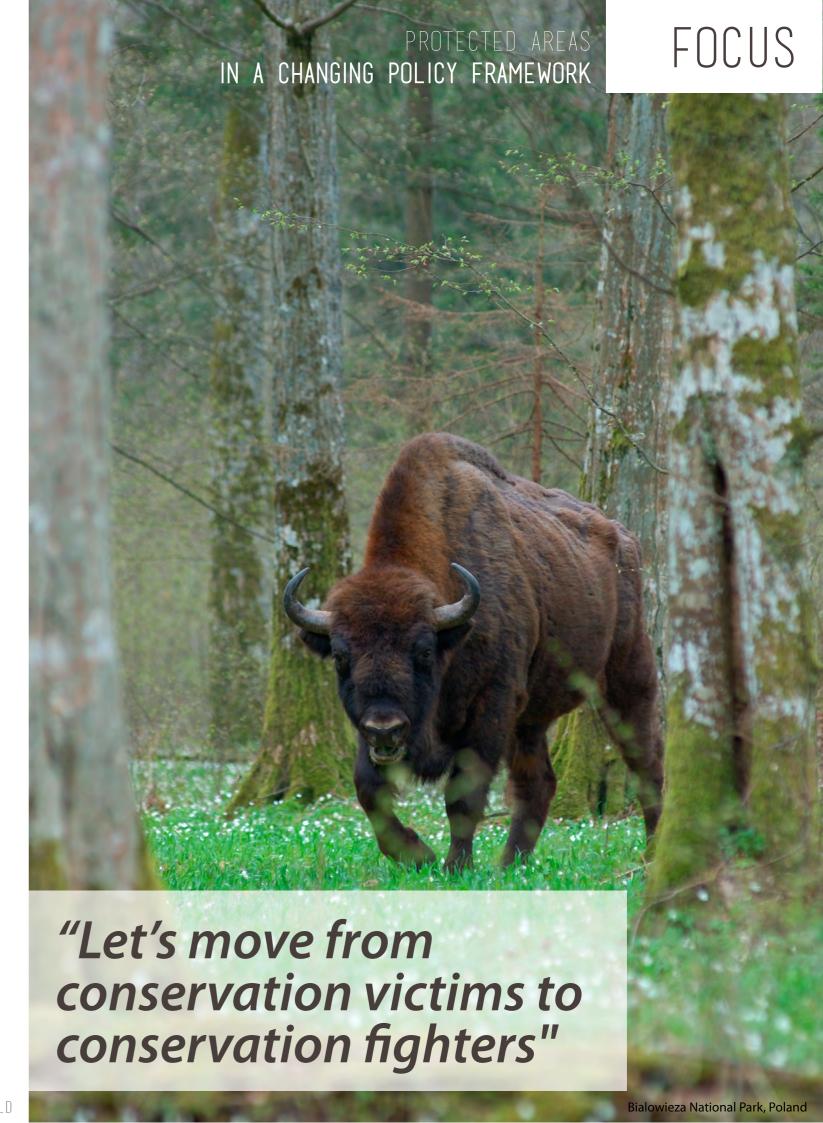


The EU Natura 2000, including both EU Nature Directives, is the world's widest network of designated nature protection areas, covering around 18% of EU land ~4% EU seas.

In 2015, the European Commission started a consultation process to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value of the two directives. The "Fitness-Check" was sent to 47 EU level organisations, representative bodies, and 112 stakeholder organizations. The participation was impressive, with over 520.000 people stating the importance of EU Directives. The final results will only be presented in April 2016.

Furthermore, it seems that environment is not a high priority at EU level at present: It is not included in President Juncker's 10 priorities and, for the first time in 25 years, there is no Commissioner just for the environment.

Nevertheless, **challenges can always be seen as opportunities.** This is the time for protected areas to highlight the positive, to provide good examples and to raise awareness on the benefits, services and return of investment of Europe's natural and cultural landscapes.





"It's now or never, we want opportunities to help!"

YOUTH

Former Junior Rangers from across Europe are now participating in the YOUTH+ Programme

"Too old is too late!"



At EUROPARC Conference 2015 their message was clear: "Youth are not just our future leaders, they can provide a great support for the nature conservation in protected areas today."

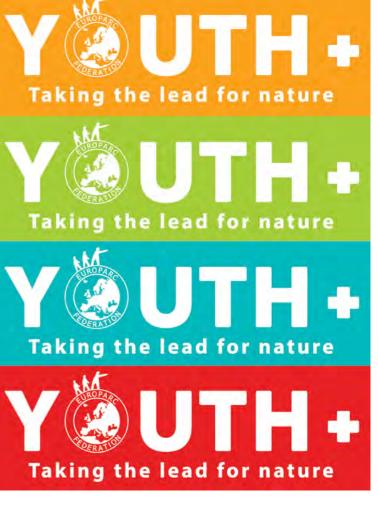
and passionate about their PAs and want to

"Aiguestortes Declaration", and assumed to be the voice of nature from and to young people.

Now, they are willing to have an active role in their protected areas, helping rangers on the development of educational programmes and voluntary activities.

"We just have to be asked to work to improve our parks, nothing else"





At EUROPARC Conference, youth presented a video with their message for protected area managers.

"We all need to do our part. Let us step in now to protected and improve our parks. So we can learn together, work together, and set a strong base for the coming generations."

stay involved.

Workshop 1

Young people in Protected Areas: Taking the lead for Nature

organised by:



A packed and participative workshop considered the challenges, solutions and changes that needed to take place if young people are to have a role in protected areas. The participants made personal commitments to take these issues forward and asked EUROPARC to take the lead.

The group shared ideas and projects from across Europe and identified some common issues.

Perception that perhaps parks staff do not see the value of youth being involved. Or that they think it's too complicated and difficult. That youth think

being involved in nature activities is not "cool". There are time and availability constraints for both staff and youth identified. The groups saw great opportunities in showing good examples and informed communications via EUROPARC.

Structures, processes and governance Issues that the way protected areas are set up and run means working alongside them is not easy or accessible for youth (and indeed other groups in society). Young people in particle were seeking a place within the management structures of protected areas. The groups urged EUROPARC to raise this with PA managers to ensure the management systems of protected areas could be more flexible and that the value and benefit of working with young people for the parks be better communicated. EUROPARC repeated its commitment to bring young people into its management.

Experience and evidence no one denied the positive contribution youth can make to the work of a park, especially those with years of previous junior ranger experience. But new opportunities needed to be provided. The new <u>YOUTH+ programme</u> being developed by EUROPARC was noted as a good way to provide a structure and training for both young people and protected area staff, but gathering of case studies and other evidence of good practise was also called for. EUROPARC will maintain social media and other communication lines with youth and protected areas to manage the gathering and dissemination of this information and seek funding for a bigger project.





Workshop 2

Professional development for Protected Area management

organised by:



Do we really know what competencies we need to manage Protected Areas and how to identify the training needs of our staff? This was the starting point for ProPark's workshop on "Professional development for PAs", which lead the participants into a fruitful discussion and share of ideas.

Participants started by brainstorming about the learning process and identified four main sources of knowledge – training courses; self-directed learning (manuals, help files, etc.); learning by doing (practice, trial and error); and informal learning from others.



Further, the group was challenged to identify the learning opportunities for different PA's staff, by bringing their personal experiences and good examples from their countries. The group highlighted different needs for senior managers, middle managers and rangers, and decided which were the most efficient tools / processes to obtain that knowledge.

By the end, all participants agreed on the importance of an ongoing professionalization of PAs staff, and defined a set of suggestions for EUROPARC Federation's future trainings.

Workshop 3

Seeds of Growth: Multi-functionality of agriculture in Protected Areas

organised by:





The participants were asked to identify prioritary actions to be implemented in protected areas' territories, within EUROPARC Federation network.

Seeds of Growth took a wide look at the multifunctionality of agriculture in Protected Areas discussing the concept of agro-ecology, the ways to combine better agriculture and biodiversity in protected areas to issue social, economical and environmental benefits.

The workshop explored the lessons learned from the great range of experiences lead by the french national and regional parks as:

The flowered meadows program;
Sentinel alpine pastures project;
UNESCO World heritage project combining
integratedlanscape management and wine growing;
biological control of pest;
local products and direct sales.

Workshop 4

The Nature of cooperation:
Managing Protected Areas in
partnership



organised by: moderated by Martin Šolar and Handrij Härtel

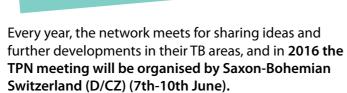
The aim of the workshop was to identify the benefits of transboundary cooperation and of the EUROPARC Transboundary certification scheme. Then, to highlight the limits and obstacles of TB cooperation and ways to attract more transboundary protected areas to join the TransParcNet.

Handrij Härtel introduced the subject with an historical background of the transboundary activities in European PAs. After, in order to share best practices and practical experience in Tb cooperation, 3 case studies were presented (covering both, certified and non-certified TB PAs):

(i) Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (by Viorica Bisca),(ii) Bavarian Forest / Šumava National Park (by Hans Kiener/ Martin Starý) and

(iii) Julian Alps Transboundary Ecoregion (by Martin Šolar).

During the final discussion, participants focused on the TransParcNet (TPN), the family of certified TB PAs.



DEVELOPING CAPACITIES

TPN members want to see the network growing, therefore, TB Certified parks were encouraged to approach individually potential TPN members in their region and to help promote the mission and goals of the Europarc's TB certification scheme.

To raise awareness about TPN and find further candidates for the certification process, potential TB parks will be invited for the TPN meeting, as well as representatives from international bodies with similar focus, such as the WCPA/IUCN Transboundary Specialists Group. During the meeting, participants will explore synergies with other close initiatives (e.g. TB UNESCO Biosphere reserves) will be explored, and partners will discuss the possibility of having a stronger link between Charter parks and Transboundary parks. Also in future, TransParcNet will need a continuous support from the directorate.



This year, the EUROPARC Conference offered again the opportunity to congratulate 3 of our Transboundary Parks for their commitment to cooperate across borders. All of them successfully passed the verification process by proofing significant progresses and were consequently re-awarded!



NEUSIEDLER-SEE SEEWINKEL NATIONAL PARK (Austria) & FERTÖ-HANSAG NATIONAL PARK

THAYATAL NATIONAL PARK (Austria)

& PODYJI NATIONAL PARK (Czech Republic)



BAVARIAN FOREST NATIONAL PARK (Germany) & SUMAVA NATIONAL PARK (Czech Republic

Every year, EUROPARC recognizes those Parks who have been with the Federation for more than 20 years. This year we had the pleasure to deliver in hand our LONG SERVING MEMBERS - CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP to:

- Kiskunsági National Park Directorate (Hungary) 24 vears
- Dzukija National Park and Cepkeliai State Nature Reserve (Lithuania) 22 years
- Zemaitija National Park (Lithuania) 20 years
- Stichting Het Nationale Park (The Netherlands) 20 years



SIDE - MEETINGS



WILD EUROPE

Toby Aykroyd, Director of Wild Europe Initiative, shared with the participants the importance of a wilder Europe and the current state of wilderness policy in Europe.



COMMUNICATION

Barbara Pais, Communications and Marketing officer of EUROPARC Federation, shared some ideas for the Charter's marketing strategy.

Participants had an active role on identifying the Charter's main targets and defining their key messages and benefits.



Matthias Mossbauer, from the German Agency for Renewable Resources (FNR) and Volkhard Maier from the Sölktäler Nature Park (Austria) introduced practical experience from the EU project BioEUParks.

5 Protected areas in Europe are developing regional models for the creation of small-scale supply chains of wood biomass in their regions, working in straight collaboration with local stakeholders.



PROFESSIONALIZATION
OF PROTECTED AREAS
MANAGEMENT

ProPark explored the professionalization of Protected Areas in EU, including competences and capacity development needs for protected areas staff.

Participants were asked to diversify the existing opportunities for individual capacity building for the current PA staff, by offering new and alternatives methods of learning, identify opportunities for mentoring, sharing information on-the-job training alternatives.

AWARDS





Alfred Toepfer Medal 2015

Jane Hodges was awarded the Alfred Toepfer Medal as a recognition for her work with the <u>Pembrokeshire</u> <u>Coast National Park Authority</u> and her astonishing contribution to nature conservation.

Recently retired from **National Park** Authority, a defining moment in Jane's career came about in 1996 with the Sea Empress oil spill. Jane was a key member of the environment team in the Response Centre and the also task groups set up by the Sea Empress Environmental Committee in the aftermath.

Alfred Toepfer Natural Heritage Scholarship

Every year EUROPARC awards the <u>Alfred Toepfer Natural</u> <u>Heritage Scholarship</u> to young conservationists, with the generous support of the <u>Alfred Topefer Stiftung F.V.S.</u>
The scholars use the award to finance visits to Protected Areas across Europe to research a particular study relevant to Protected Areas management.



Agnes Balazsi from Romenia, **Eduardo Batista** from Portugal and **Roberto Piccirilli** from Italy were the students awarded this year. They are currently developing their projects and soon their reports will be available at www.europarc.org.



AWARDS CELEBRATING SUCCESS AWARDS

Best Communication practices in Natura 2000 sites



The EUROPARC Federation and <u>ProParks - Foundation</u> <u>for Protected Areas</u> have been working together over the last few years to support and inspire managers in their communication efforts.

EUROPARC organised the first Natura 2000 Communications Award in 2015. **The award aimed to identify best communication practices in Natura 2000 sites across Europe.**

The quality of the case studies received was very high and the jury, renowned experts from the field of communication, the environment and sustainability, had a particularly hard time choosing the winner.



In the framework of LUE+ Information and Communication project: EFFICIENT MANAGERS FOR EFFICIENT NATURA 2000 NETWORK



- UK, Wales <u>Heather and Hillforts, Upland Landscape</u>
 <u>Partnership Scheme</u>, Clwydian Range and Dee Valley
- PORTUGAL, Azores Lands of Priolo, SPEA
- SPAIN, Murcia <u>Seahorses as flagship species for Mar</u>
 <u>Menor Coastal Lagoon Conservation</u>, Associación
 Hippocampus
- UK, Peak District <u>Moors for the Future</u> Partnership's Community Science Project, Peak District National Park



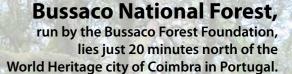
Henk van Hooft and Catrien Scholten from the National Parks Drents-Friese Wold/Dwingelderveld receiving their Highly Commended Certificate with the project "Together we achieve more"

The Netherlands, Drenthe –
 <u>"Together we achieve more"</u>
 Communicating Drenthe-Frisian
 Border Region, Province of Drenthe



The award winner was <u>Fundação Mata do Bussaco</u> from Portugal, with their excellent project "<u>Bussaco Digital</u> <u>– Reforesting Bussaco National Forest"</u>, an excellent link between nature conservation (habitat restoration), community engagement and the use of new digital channels.

Nelson Matos, environmental planner at <u>Fundação Mata do</u> Bussaco, receiving the Communications Award.



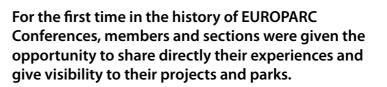
It is an area that encompasses an astounding natural and cultural heritage. In particular, it is renowned for its large number of beautiful ancient trees and patches of stunning old growth forest, which were severely damaged by storms in 2013 and 2014. After these storms the Bussaco Forest Foundation realised that it did not have enough funds to restore the damage done adequately. It decided that the best way to raise the money needed would be to turn to the public for help and therefore created the initiative Bussaco Digital.

Bussaco Digital: Increasing social commitment to the environment by bringing the digital and natural world together



MARKETPLACE AND EUROPARTY

NETWORKING



Delegates had the chance to travel across Europe and South America, with a rich and sensorial experience. In every stand, they got to know some of the most outstanding parks of our network, discovered innovative projects and tools, and were delighted by the traditional drinks and snacks from each country.



The EUROPARC MarketPlace counted with over 30 stands with organisations and initiatives from Europe to South America, it was an exciting and intense experience to be repeat in the future.

What do you think about the Marketplace?

"Market Place is a good tool"

MARKETPLACE AND EUROPARTY

NETWORKING

"Repeat next Conference, allocate enough time"

"Continuity is important. Delegates should be encouraged to attend a number of Europarc conferences as relationships and trust are built."

Information colelcted through an online survey sent to all Conference delegates



■ Yes, to display information
■ Yes, to visit
■ I don't know

EUROPARTY

After the appetizers at the MarketPlace, the Bavarian dinner fit in perfection. Energetic, joyful and inspired, we would have danced until morning....

See more pictures of the EUROPARTY here.





A very special comitive from South America attended EUROPARC Conference. They came from Brazil and Argentina to grasp the concept of our Transboundary Cooperation programme and to visit some of our TB Parks.

During the conference, those who met them at the Marketplace had the opportunity to learn more about the context of Protected Areas in South America and, specially, about the cross-border cooperation between the National Parks Iguazu / Iguaçu (Argentina / Brazil).

If you had not the chance to chat with one of Park Directors or the representatives from WWF Brazil, Instituto Chico Mendes (Brazil) and Fundación Vida Silvestre (Argentina), here you can have an overview of what our peers are developing in South America.

EUROPARC thanks to the comitivie that crossed the Atlantic to meet our European Network. A special thank you to Anna Lobo who kindly wrote us the article below.



The South American team at EUROPARC Headquarters. If you want to contact directly these organisation please direct your quest to office@europarc.org











By Anna Carolina Lobo, WWF Brazil

Anna Carolina Lobo is the coordinator of the Marine and Atlantic Forest Programme at WWF-Brazil, where she has developed a great number of projects for the implementation, conservation and effective management of protected areas, both terrestrial and marine.

The Atlantic Forest ecoregion is considered to be the hottest of hotspots. It encompasses three countries, 130 million people and unique conservation challenges in an area with some of the richest biodiversity on the planet.

It encompasses a WWF Global 200 Ecoregion, a Birdlife International Endemic Bird Area of the World and an IUCN/WWF Centre of Plant Diversity. The Upper Paraná Atlantic Forest Ecoregion (UPAF), which extends from the western slopes of Serra do Mar in Brazil to eastern Paraguay and the Misiones Province in northeast

Argentina, is home to more than 550 species of birds, 120 species of mammals, 79 species of reptiles and 55 amphibians. However, deforestation for agricultural expansion, pine plantations and cattle ranching has created a highly fragmented landscape, reducing the UPAF to 7.8% of its original size.

The region is the setting for one of the most spectacular natural sights: the Iguaçu Falls on the border between Argentina and Brazil. Situated in the heart of the ecoregion, the two national parks that protect this area (Iguaçu National Park, Brazil, and Iguazu National Park, Argentina) have been declared UNESCO Natural World Heritage sites. Approximately 1.5 million people visit each park every year, driving the local economy with the creation of new jobs and increasing regional income. Tourism is, however, still concentrated in the area around the waterfalls, with little spill over to other areas in the parks that are endowed with a similar biodiversity but

which have a limited conservation management. The close vicinity to one another and the shared biome have helped create a good working partnership between the Brazilian and Argentinian parks. They currently work together on specific activities, mostly research projects, for example, work with the Jaguar (Panthera Onça), but this cooperation could be improved and lead to better conservation efforts in the region.

With this in mind, a partnership between WWF-Brazil, Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina (FVSA) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) established the Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Services Program in the Binational Corridor Iguaçu/Iguazú National Parks (Brazil/Argentina). The programme is grounded in current principles of protected areas management, such as the ecosystem services approach and cooperation between protected areas located near international borders. It focuses on the binational corridor formed by both parks and works to engage social actors, such as managers and surrounding

communities, for park management.

The programme began in August 2014 and is already showing significant results. The products of local farmers and artisans are now being sold by the parks and are also being used as ingredients by park restaurants. This has helped to better distribute the benefits of tourism activities to communities located away from the waterfalls. Cooperation between both protected areas is also evolving positively. Meetings between the park staff take place on a regular basis and included participation in the EUROPARC Conference 2015 to learn about transboundary protected area management and collaboration.

This is just the start! The idea is to achieve much, much more together, including the joint promotion of the importance of conserving the Iguaçu/Iguazú ecological corridor, stimulation of the regional economy based on the value of ecosystem services that the parks provide, and strengthening the cooperation between the parks.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



The General Assembly 2015 opened with the official launch of the new EUROPARC Film: "Sustainable Nature; Valued by People". The movie features some of the most iconic landscapes of our Parks and introduces the role of EUROPARC Federation.

The Minutes of the last General Assembly were introduced and voted, as well as the following reports: Council, Treasurer, Auditor, Directorate and the report on the Council Vacancy. With the new Council elected in 2014 General Assembly, the GA was asked to discharge the Council 2014. Changes on the Federation Statutes and Regulations were also approved.





"Sustainable Nature; Valued by People" is also available in

german, french, spanish and portuguese

The President and Director hand-over the EUROPARC flag to the next Conference host: the <u>Parc Jura Vaudois</u> which will host the Conference and the General Assembly in Switzerland on the 18th-22rd October 2016.



Parc Jura vaudois - Switzerland



• EUROPARC partnerships with other organizations and lobbying and advocacy work in Brussels, introduced by Federico Minozzi

During the members' announcements, delegates got the latest updates on:



• Wild Europe and its recent activities, introduced by Toby Aykroyd



• European Network of Outdoor Sports and its cooperation with EUROPARC, introduced by Andreas Thoman



 IUCN/WCPA, the outcomes of the World Park Congress and on Little Sidney Conference, introduced by Andrey Sovinc

• ALPARC, the Dinaric Arc and the interest of protected areas of the Dinaric Arc to work on transboundary cooperation, introduced by Martin Solar



We Are Parks

is the theme for the coming Conference. We will be looking for the human dimension of European Parks - governance, management, communication, stakeholders engagement, capacity building and much more.

We look forward to seeing you in 2016!

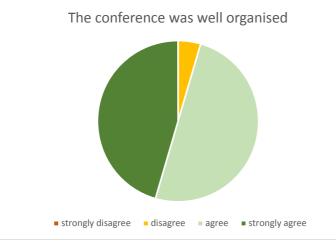
WHAT DID YOU LIKE?

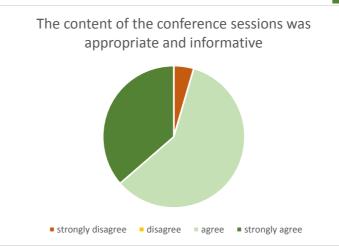
FINAL REMARKS

The following graphics represent the opinion of delegates regarding the overall conference, staff and logistics.

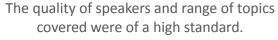
As an overall perspective, delegates were very satisfied with staff, the conference organisation and keynote speakers.

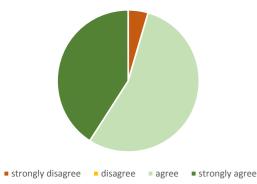
Important to refer that translations and help desk are not considered absolutly necessary by the delegates who responded, but as this was a very small sample, further analysis of this aspect will necessary if EUROPARC events are to remains as inclusive as possible.

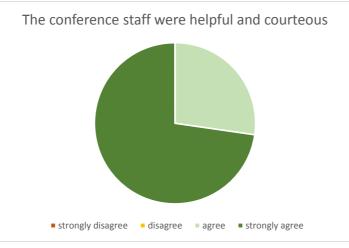




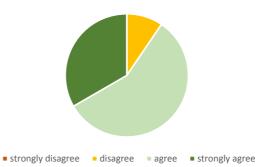


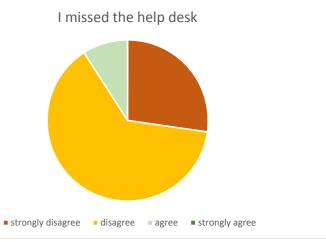












LOOKING AHEAD...

SUGGESTIONS FOR 2016

"The accommodation and the conference needs to be in the same venue in order to facilitate social networking for the entire duration of the conference."

Do you plan to attend EUROPARC Conference 2016?



Topics to be explored for future EUROPARC events

- How to value the "human capital of the Parks?
- Is there are a need to measure, monitor and quantify the immense "human capital" that European Parks have?
- Why has the EU not formally recognized Parks yet (but only N2000)?

Governance models in Europe

- Local stakeholders participation
- Citizen involment in park activities
- Volunteering in park activities
- Involvment of local busineeses in park activities

- Parkfriends' associations and public participation
- Financing opportunities and mechanisms
- Social involvement in Nature conservation (examples of Associations, Universities, enterprises, etc, cooperation with Administrations);
- Social benefits of European Parks (Health, Intangible heritage, etc);
- Parks in the landscape matrix ("green infrastructure", landscape planning; agriculture and rural development).



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