“40 YEARS WORKING FOR NATURE”

Introduction

Not too many people are aware that EUROPARC 2013 was not the first conference of the Federation hosted by the Hortobágy National Park Directorate. Back in 1978 a few dozens of nature conservationists came together to discuss the future of the Federation and at the same time to learn about the first National Park of Hungary, both organizations established five years before. At that time there were only a few thousands of cranes – the icon bird of the park – which spent some weeks in autumn at the Hortobágy region.

Thirty five years later almost 300 people from 34 countries met again in Debrecen to evaluate the past and look seriously into the future of both EUROPARC and the host organization. I just can hope that the altogether 100 thousand cranes, which we observed together during the conference in the Hortobágy National Park indicates not only the success of the management of the park, but that of our pan-European joint efforts to protect this beautiful bird species.

On behalf of the organization team I am pleased to present you the Conference Report, prepared in co-operation with EUROPARC Consulting. With the services of today’s information technology we tried to do our best to make it as interactive, digestible and enjoyable as possible.

Gábor Szilágyi
director
“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

John Muir
40 facts for 40 years

1. Is situated on the Northern Great Plain region of Hungary, and is the largest continuous natural grassland in Europe.

2. Was founded in 1973 and is Hungary’s largest regional nature conservation organisation in terms of territory and staff.

3. Is responsible for preserving, protecting, restoring and comprehensively managing the area’s natural and cultural heritage, protected areas and Natura 2000 sites.

4. Provides a unique example of the harmonious coexistence of people and nature based on the considerable use of the land.

5. Is famous for nothing! That is, the incredible plain, so rare in Europe, with uninterrupted horizon and pure open space.

6. Is mainly made of natural habitats, including alkaline grasslands, meadows and marshes.

7. Also has 6,000 hectares of fishponds, which together with the marshes are important for breeding and migrating birds.

8. Has registered 340 bird species, of which 160 species nest in the National Park, including the tens of thousands of cranes which fly over to roost in October.

9. Was inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO in 1999 in the category of cultural landscapes, having been used by humans for grazing their domestic animals for more than two millennia.

10. Boasts a large number of tough, undemanding local breeds: Hungarian Grey Cattle, Water Buffalo, Racza Sheep. Less ancient species are the curly bristled Mangalica Pig, which gives good bacon, and the Nonius horse.

TEN FACTS: HORTOBÁGY NATIONAL PARK...

To celebrate 40 years of EUROPARC and Hortobágy, here are four ‘top tens’: Hortobágy National Park; the EUROPARC conference; the EUROPARC Federation; and to finish, thoughts from ten delegates.
40 facts for 40 years

TEN FACTS: THE 2013 EUROPARC CONFERENCE...

1. Is in a long tradition – conferences existed before the federation – the first was held in 1965 for 30 delegates from 13 countries.
2. Has grown a lot! This year, 270 participants from 34 countries attended; many for the first time, but many others are regulars. One delegate had attended 31 EUROPARC conferences.
3. Was made possible by the dedicated work of a core team as well as 52 colleagues from Hortobágy National Park directorate, assisted by 20 volunteers.
4. Took 24 meetings of core team and over 500 emails in the conference inbox to plan.
5. Featured the first-ever youth conference, with a parallel meeting of 20 young people aged 17-21 years old, from 13 countries.
6. Included a trip to share the unforgettable sight of 100,000 cranes coming in to roost as part of the annual spectacle, as well as displays by shepherds and horsemen.
7. Was the occasion of the presentation of the Alfred Toepfer medal to former President Erika Stanciu, and Alfred Toepfer Natural Heritage Scholarships.
8. Transboundary awards were also made, as well as special prizes to Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia, and the Bavarian Forest National Park, Germany.
9. Included 15 workshops which were linked with site visits and reported back recommendations.
10. Was a lot of fun – the day out left the organisers short of 18 litres of Palinka, 200 litres of beer and 103 litres of four different wines.

TEN REASONS TO BE PART OF EUROPARC AND THE CONFERENCE...

1. “We joined to be part of a common vision at the European level, with guidelines based on expertise.” – ALIN CIJULA, Volunteer, Tarcau Mountains, Romania
2. “The federation and conference brings everyone together and creates a community that everyone can access – can share ideas, listen to other people and make better plans. It’s a chance to meet people you would never meet.” – GRACE BELLWOOD, youth delegate, North York Moors National Park, England
3. “It’s efficient to work together like this – learning from others successes; about funding streams, through joint ventures such as the sustainable tourism charter – we don’t have to reinvent the wheel.” – JOHN FITZGERALD, director, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Ireland
4. “Our federation has had a unique ability over the last 40 years to bring together different perspectives, opinions and cultures.” – CAROL RITCHIE, director, EUROPARC Federation
5. “Meeting a lot of people and talking about what’s new revives your enthusiasm for what we do in protected areas. Step by step you build a network of contacts – you get something, and you give something too.” – HANS SCHIPHORST, coordinator, National Parks, Holland
6. “It’s about the interactions rather than the borders.” – MICHAEL STARRETT, Federation President 2002-05
7. “It’s a continuous process; the federation and conference helps to hand on the baton from one generation to next.” – ARNOLD BOER, secretary of National Parks Commission (retired), Holland
8. “The main task is to survive – and to survive well, to develop – like nature, EUROPARC will have to change to survive.” – JOSEF STEMBERK, head of marketing, Šumava National Park, Czech Republic
9. “The conference has always given support to people in their own countries who may not have this. This is very important – it makes you feel you are not alone, and brings energy and ideas.” – ELISABETH GANZEVOORT, adviser on communication research, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Holland
10. “It was a lovely week.” – GÁBOR SZILÁGYI, host, and director, Hortobágy National Park, Hungary
“THE MEMBERS ARE THE STAFF OF THE FEDERATION IT’S A KIND OF PYRAMID OF INVESTMENT IN KNOWLEDGE THAT MULTIPLIES, AND THE MORE WE PUT IN, THE MORE WE GET OUT.”

“EUROPARC shows people who often work alone that they are not alone. At the conference people from all sorts of backgrounds met, questioned each other, and shared. It was an opportunity to join a rolling group of critics – asking questions, testing, demonstrating, in a constant peer review.

In a way, the members are the staff of the federation. Being a member fosters professionalization. The work of the local sections is also important for the federation – it scales learning outwards. It’s a kind of pyramid of investment in knowledge that multiplies, and the more we put in, the more we get out. This is the strength of the Federation over the last 40 years, which has enabled it to encompass and respond to different drives – from tourism and habitats to local development and economies.

In the future I hope for even more participation and an increasingly integrated approach. Protected areas will be part of local growth and development, and communications will be more dispersed and electronic, and communities will be more involved.”
“WE HAVE INITIATED PROJECTS LEAGUES AHEAD IN SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT”

An enduring passion

“This conference celebrated the network and the people who make it up. Our federation has had a unique ability over the last 40 years to bring together different perspectives, opinions and cultures, and while members might not always have agreed on the ‘how’, they have agreed on the ‘why’.

We agree on the importance of looking after nature, know that it can be looked after better, and hold together through thick and thin. This is a great achievement. Because we have stayed together we have been able to do many things.

Working with the wonderful resource of the connections between people and places across Europe, we have initiated projects leagues ahead in sustainable management – from business and biodiversity to trans-boundary and tourism.

But under all this, it’s the people who are the most important thing. Their passion endures, and we need to keep that fresh and alive.

In the future, as well as looking for new ways of working we must also be patient. Change can be evolutionary – we need to take our network along with us and progress it together.”

Carol Ritchie
Director, EUROPARC Federation
"WE NEED TO MOVE FORWARDS INTO AN ERA OF RENEWABLES AND NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS."

Ignace Schops
Director
Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland, Belgium

The first keynote speech was due to be given by Professor Dr Lucka Kajfez Bogataj of the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Into her shoes due to unforeseen circumstances stepped Ignace Schops, with a presentation that set the scene – and a challenge - in the widest and most important sense.

From the beginning he pulled no punches, telling delegates: “We have a fight to fight – there is only one planet earth.”

“Human beings give value, so it is up to us to change how we value things. On many levels the world is calling for change. We have known for decades that there are limits to growth. Resources are finite - peak oil, for instance, has already happened.”

Add to this the fast growth of human populations and we have a situation in which “our footprint has to lower globally, and we have to question ourselves.”

If we keep doing what we are doing, he pointed out, “CO2 will rise and cause catastrophic conditions”. Natural disasters are already happening, including flooding: “it is 500 years since the Danube flooded as it did in 2013”. And that’s not all, the extreme opposite is happening as well: “the River Loire ran dry in certain places in 2011; and hotter years have more fires too.”

Climate has impact on water, health and food, he pointed out. Water needs are a severe problem, tropical diseases are moving across the world, and all life on earth is decreasing – for instance one bird out of eight is threatened with extinction. It’s critical to take responsibility: “human beings are responsible for climate change. We need ambassadors for our precious planet.”

Delegates, and all those who work with nature, are in a good position to help, he concluded: “the natural heritage is a solution.” Everyone in the conference could mobilise: “Change is happening. We need to move forwards into an era of renewables and nature-based solutions.” There is much that can be done – for a start: “put a price on carbon, research and share your evidence base, and build and maintain strong environmental networks.”
“THE CONTRIBUTION THAT PROTECTED AREAS MAKE IS STILL VASTLY UNRECOGNIZED.”

Protected areas hold the key to solving many of today’s and tomorrow’s challenges, and are a cornerstone of IUCN work, its director general, Julia Marton-Lefèvre told delegates. And she issued a warm invitation to join the next world congress (see section 16: Invitation to World Parks Congress 2014).

She praised the “diversity and reach” of today’s protected areas, stretching across nearly 13% of the world’s land surface and around 2% of the oceans – including sites that are terrestrial and marine, local and transboundary, community conserved and privately owned, Ramsar wetlands of international importance and UNESCO World Heritage.

But as she pointed out, they do “so much more” than simply cover the globe. They also:
- Supply drinking water to one in three of the world’s 100 largest cities;
- Store the same amount of carbon as the tropical rainforests;
- Keep us healthy by being the source of clean air as well as new drugs;
- Help prevent disasters like floods and avalanches saving billions of dollars;
- Enhance food security by boosting fisheries and preserving wild relatives of crops; and
- Provide homes, jobs and livelihoods to millions of people around the world.

And yet it remains important not to rest on our laurels, she said, as the contribution that protected areas make to peace and security, economic development and health, food, water and climate security, and many other nature-based solutions they provide, is still vastly unrecognized.

And there are still too many gaps in global coverage of key biodiversity areas; too many protected areas are still just ‘paper parks’ – underfunded and poorly managed; and we are up against new and serious threats – from global climate change to the escalating poaching crisis in Africa.”

She called on delegates to focus on developing nature-based solutions to global challenges, three examples of which she highlighted. Firstly, in Colombia, protected areas provide water for one in two Colombians, and generate one-fifth of the country’s hydroelectric power.

On the other side of the world, in Japan, plans are afoot to develop a nature-based solution to disaster risk reduction, the Sanriku Fukko National Park, a green reconstruction project to protect the coastline from future disasters, as well as to secure tourism and fishing industries.

The third example came from Australia, the host of the next World Parks Congress, where the Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative emphasizes the vital link between the health of people and the health of our planet. All three show “inspiring nature-based solutions that the world desperately needs.”
“THE CARPATHIAN BASIN IS ONE OF THE MOST PERFECT PHYSICO-GEOGRAPHICAL UNITS OF EUROPE.”

Edited highlights of the keynote speech: Pannonian habitats: insights into conservation management for European protected areas, by Professor Emeritus Dr Varga Zoltán, Department of Evolutionary Biology, University of Debrecen, Hungary

An inland island

A field guide at the conference of the EUROPARC Federation in 1976 may not have imagined that 37 years later he would be giving a keynote speech to the same conference.

Today, as a professor emeritus, Dr Zoltán gave the scientific background to conservation and explained the Pannonian region’s habitats and vegetation, looking into its past, present and future.

He explained the rich mix of geology and climate, and the millennial shifts that have created this fascinating, unusual region, which occupies a central position within the Carpathian basin, surrounded by high mountains, where Europe’s general zones are transformed.

“The Alps and Carpathians filter but also transmit diverse flora and fauna; the Pannonian forest-steppe of the central lowland and hilly parts of the basin is represented by numerous regional variations. The Carpathian Basin is one of the most perfect physico-geographical units of Europe,” he explained.

Humankind’s intervention has been key: “The original ecosystem of the Hungarian Plains was fundamentally changed during the second half of the 19th century as a result of human intervention into the fluvial system of the Tisza.” The hydrological system of the lowland was transformed affecting not only the landscape and vegetation but the regional and local climate as well. The active floodplain originally covering an area of about 30,000 km² was reduced to 3000 km². The dried-up floodplain areas were transformed into arable and pasturelands.

Earthworms – some “as big as salamis” as well as small invertebrates, earthworms and snails, are species that bear witness to the complex interaction of landscape and life, habitats and nature and climatic change.

In conclusion, he said, we need some new approaches to conservation and management focusing on conservation problems of dynamic and diverse forest-steppe in transitional situations, which are especially affected by fragmentation and climate change. This would include supporting traditional agriculture rather than intensification; establishing natural corridors; enhanced prioritisation of habitat types and species; regional co-operation; and wider species recognition including of ‘less spectacular’ biota.

And crucially, we need to communicate: “All these needs can only be solved by qualitatively better communication of nature conservation to the stakeholders and to society to overcome short-term profit-oriented views.”
“PROTECTED AREAS ARE RESILIENT ENVIRONMENTAL HUBS.”

Edited highlights of the keynote speech:
40 years later – are Europe’s most prized natural areas being managed successfully to meet tomorrow’s challenges?
By Peter Ogden, Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales

The management of protected areas, and its fitness for purpose for the challenges of the future, was the subject of the final keynote speech by Peter Ogden, of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales. He pointed to the growth of protected areas over the last 40 years as ‘one of the defining successes of conservation’ with 25% of European land area now either protected under Natura 2000 or national designations.

But, he added: “designation does not ensure effective management” and went on to ask some difficult questions. “Is the network representative of the status of nature across Europe and is it efficient? To what extent do good management practices exist?
Are protected areas achieving what they set out to do?”

He called for areas to step back and look at the bigger picture: “Every protected area represented here today I’m sure will be able to look back over the last 40 years and recall the conservation successes it has achieved. Despite these individual triumphs, the success of protected areas and their role in protecting biodiversity must be assessed within the wider arenas of changing attitudes and new global circumstances.”

He suggested five inter-related approaches for future success. The first, that “people not bureaucracy will save (or destroy) nature”: we need greater and deeper public understanding and appreciation of the role of biodiversity and protected areas in sustaining our societies and, crucially, economies.

The second area of challenge is policy coherence and integrated approaches to landscape and seascape stewardship across all sectors and administrative boundaries.

Next is the necessity of scaling-up conservation, “to plug the gaps in the connectivity of the current environmental infrastructure web.”

To do this, protected areas must be more effectively linked to their wider landscapes, demonstrating their benefits with more refined advocacy and links with those who have an impact.

“We need protected areas to be outward-facing and recognised as powerhouses of integrated ecological and heritage networks. They must link more directly with areas of production, with urban landscapes and the people who live there.”

The fourth key challenge is to improve the quality and performance of management plans which guide and drive the priorities for action so they reflect not only the world within that area but also that beyond its boundaries.

The final challenge is to demonstrate the power of the protected area concept as a template for how sustainable ways of living must be achieved within responsible and justifiable limits: “We should no longer defend our areas as vulnerable conservation islands, but promote them as resilient environmental hubs, where what happens within them influences areas far beyond their boundaries.”
“NOTHING IS SO USEFUL AS SEEING AND LISTENING TO SOMEONE.”

Eszter Buchert

40th BIRTHDAY REFLECTIONS

It’s the remarkable strength of the Federation that it spans countries, professions – and time. This year over 200 participants from 32 countries gathered. Some were ‘old hands’, others new to the family. Here, as befits a 40th birthday, they talk about what they get from the Federation and conference – where they’d like to see EUROPARC heading in the future.

From those attending their first conference, to the veterans of many, we gain valuable insights into the strength and stability of the federation – and its main opportunities. Common themes were the unique value of the conference’s family spirit, networking and new ideas. Future opportunities pointed out included acting as a European lobbying voice, influencing governments to take action and bringing together strong evidence to build effective policies.

The last words go to Arnold Boer, a longstanding servant of the federation, and veteran of 31 conferences: “The youth conference is new, exciting and important. The future is an extended network, professionally developed, with a family atmosphere as a basic element. It’s a continuous process; the federation and conference helps to hand on the baton from one generation to the next.”

1ST EUROPARC CONFERENCE Eszter Buchert, vice director, Drava-Duna National Park, Hungary:

1ST EUROPARC CONFERENCE John Latham, board member, Cairngorms National Park, Scotland:

1ST EUROPARC CONFERENCE Alin Ciprian Ciuli, Volunteer, Tarcu Mountains, Romania:

1ST EUROPARC CONFERENCE Josef Stemberk, head of marketing, Šumava National Park, Czech Republic:

4TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE Sigrun Lange, consultant, ECO, Austria:

7TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE John Riddle, chair, Northumberland National Park, England:

10TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE Hans Schiphorst, coordinator national parks, Holland:

15TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE Elisabeth Ganzevoort, adviser on communication research, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Holland:

15TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE Carles Castell Puig, EUROPARC Spain:

20TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE Michael Starrett, chief executive, Heritage Council of Ireland, Ireland (Federation president 2002-05):

31TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE Arnold Boer, secretary of National Parks Commission (retired), Holland:
**“NOTHING IS SO USEFUL AS SEEING AND LISTENING TO SOMEONE.”**

Eszter Buchert

1ST EUROPARC CONFERENCE Eszter Buchert, vice director, Duna-Drava National Park, Hungary:

“Personal contacts and field trips are the most important thing; nothing is so useful as seeing and listening to someone. Psychologically you have an experience – you are on a special site, which gives you impressions, a new habitat where you have never been – a real place with real solutions. People come with new ideas from out of the area.

I would like to hear the voice of EUROPARC in political discussions, representing nature protection at a European level – a strong and trusted lobbying organisation to counter constant financial development.”
"I came here to get a better understanding of protected areas in Europe, and take back any lessons of use. I am especially interested in the wilderness workshop, and grazing reserves as my park in the UK is based on complementary landscape formation – there is always something eating something!

Above all I'm keen to see what I can learn and use to help the forward management aims of the Cairngorms National Park – conservation in tandem with sympathetic land management."

Ester Buchert

1ST EUROPARC CONFERENCE John Latham, board member, Cairngorms National Park, Scotland:
"This is our first year of membership. We joined to be part of a common vision at the European level, with guidelines based on expertise. It’s important to look onwards rather than inwards, and this provides a strong voice, a driver bringing together the people dealing with nature conservation. Because of global problems of climate change and population growth, sustainable development of communities is the only way to solve mankind’s problems, and EUROPARC is part of that. In the future above all it must find a way to get together with other European forces and be a partner with EC at decision-making level; and get involved with the conservation movement at a global level."

1ST EUROPARC CONFERENCE Alin Ciprian Ciulă, Volunteer, Tarcu Mountains, Romania:
“It is good to have this opportunity to be part of a regular meeting, to exchange information and knowledge, especially to network on particular topics.

For instance, trans-boundary parks are special. It helps to gather people and share trends. It’s not about written information, it’s the atmosphere and personal experience, finding joint problems and joint solutions. In the future, the main task is to survive – and to survive well, to develop – like nature, EUROPARC will have to change to survive.”

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4TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE Sigrun Lange, consultant, ECO, Austria:

“I have been to many other conferences and this is a special one. It really brings people together. It’s a demanding task working in nature conservation, and it helps to be part of this community, working with the same aims.

The local sections play a crucial part, and in the future their ideas could be increasingly shared and taken into consideration, making the federation more of a network. Members could define topics to be addressed, like key problems to be solved on umbrella level, as well as providing guidelines and best practice.”
7TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE John Riddle, chair, Northumberland National Park, England:

“The main value is the networking - bringing together diverse views, learning best practice from each other. In the past we have bought back many ideas and used them in our park. Protected areas are seen as being regulatory and we need to become enabling and engaging to keep us relevant to get funding.

In the future we need to influence governments more, for example on joining up, and that we can save them money on health agenda. We need to gather evidence, get our messages clear and then lobby on them. If we do that, then they have to act.”
10^TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE Hans Schiphorst, coordinator national parks, Holland:

“My major driver has been to find new ‘recipes’; they might not always be to our taste, but we bring them home and we test them.

Meeting a lot of people and talking about what’s new revitalises your enthusiasm for what we do in protected areas. Step by step you build a network of contacts – you get something, and you give something too.”
15th EUROPARC CONFERENCE Elisabeth Ganzevoort, adviser on communication research, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Holland:

“The conference has always given support to people in their own countries who may not have this. This is very important – it makes you feel you are not alone, and brings energy and ideas.

In the future, communications will be increasingly important, so I think more communications professionals should attend from the protected areas.”
15TH EUROPARC CONFERENCE Carles Castell Puig, EUROPARC Spain:

“This conference brings on young people – it’s about new generations and the continuous renewal of our purpose. There’s a broad range, so you focus on what you need, but then you get a whole new range of expertise, from tourism to ecology - a great strength that makes it interesting.

In 40 years it will be even more diverse, with more alliances, working groups and economic partnerships. Stronger networking amongst sections, with the directorate identifying cross cutting themes is the way forward.”

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“IT'S LIKE A FAMILY. WE GET TOGETHER, SHARE, DISAGREE. AND AS WITH ALL FAMILIES, WE STICK TOGETHER. WITH 40 DIFFERENT CULTURES, THERE ARE CHALLENGES IN HAVING DIFFERENT APPROACHES, BUT THIS IS HEALTHY. PROTECTED AREAS ARE MODELS, AND THE SAME PRINCIPLES SHOULD APPLY OUTSIDE AS WELL AS INSIDE THEM — THEY ARE NOT ISLANDS, THEY ARE PLACES TO SAFEGUARD AMENITY VALUE. IT'S ABOUT THE INTERACTIONS RATHER THAN THE BORDERS.

In the future we could try to make sections more connected with the centre.
In forty years I see a new generation using the charter, transboundary, young rangers, sections — and bringing forward new ideas as well.”
“This conference brings on young people – it’s about new generations and the continuous renewal of our purpose. There’s a broad range, so you focus on what you need, but then you get a whole new range of expertise, from tourism to ecology - a great strength that makes it interesting.

In 40 years it will be even more diverse, with more alliances, working groups and economic partnerships. Stronger networking amongst sections, with the directorate identifying cross cutting themes is the way forward.”

31st EUROPARC CONFERENCE Arnold Boer, secretary of National Parks Commission (retired), Holland:
The EUROPARC Federation General Assembly 2013 was chaired by President Thomas Hansson.

**Full minutes are available online>>**

**Agenda**

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Minutes of 2012 *(Paper No.1)*
3. Welcome and messages from MOU partners
4. Signing of New/Renewed MOUs
5. Awards of certificates to long serving members
6. Council/President’s Report *(Paper No.4)* Finance Reports
7. Treasurer’s Report *(Paper No.2)*
8. Internal Auditor’s Report *(Paper No.3)*
9. Approval of Auditor’s and Treasurer’s Report year 2012
10. Election of Internal Auditor for 2013/2014 Activity Reports
11. Sections Report
12. Working groups Report
13. EUROPARC Consulting Report *(Paper No.6)*
14. Directorate Report *(Paper No.5)*
15. Approval of outlined work plan for 2014
16. Report and recommendation from Council regarding future of the Federation, following the work of the Organisational Development Committee *(Paper No.7)*
17. Discharge of Council for 2012
18. Looking forward next year’s General Assembly

**Item 16. Vote: The council’s recommendation was carried.**

YES – 97
NO – 57
ABSTAIN – 20

In total 174 votes were counted three times. The number of votes registered including proxy votes: 313 votes. Registered 79 persons.

The general assembly witnessed the renewal of a Memorandum of Understanding with the IUCN WCPA, and the signing of a new one with the Baikal State Nature Biosphere Reserve, Baikal Eco-Tourism Association and Global Nature Fund to work together and support environmentally friendly and socially responsible tourism in the Baikalsk State Nature Biosphere Reserve and its surroundings as a model project for the Republic of Buryatia and the Russian Federation.
First ever youth conference

For the first time, the conference ran a parallel youth programme, with 20 young people aged 17-21 years old, from 13 countries and with diverse career aims. Alumni of the Federation’s junior ranger programme, they were nominated by their protected areas.

At the gala dinner, they bought the house down with their dynamic and to-the-point presentation of what they want to see in the future. They made three requests:

1. Greater youth representation
   Including representation on national park boards and youth parliaments; more Junior Ranger opportunities; and the opportunity for an annual youth conference.

2. A network of parks, public and investors
   Greater communication between both individual protected areas and those outside, to benefit all.

3. Green education
   Protected areas to talk to their governments to introduce green education into schools. Young people could act as the representatives and assistants in implementing this.

They finished by saying: “If you do your bit, we’ll do ours!” Here they share their personal thoughts on protected areas, and tell us what they think the priorities are for management in the next 40 years of EUROPARC.

The full Youth Conference declaration is here. >>>

Cameron Cosgrove, 17, Cairngorms National Park, Scotland, studying physics:
“It’s all new to us. What’s really impressed me is that you have realised youth are important and taken actions to ensure the youth have their say, and have had the sense to have a youth conference. You will never change anything if you don’t work with young people.
I am really excited about the outcome, and giving the presentation – we want to establish a clear message about hope for the future, and make the correlation between economics and the environment. In the future EUROPARC should do much work with young people, to teach them to love nature, until ultimately there won’t be a need for national parks and we love every area – in the end the federation should not be needed!”

Manuela Hartl, 17, Bavarian Forest, Germany, studying to be a car mechanic:
“Young people from national parks should learn what they have in order to run parks in the future – expertise and understanding should be passed on.”

Kristin Biebl, 21, Bavarian Forest, Germany, studying to be an interpreter:
“It is a growing thing – there are new national parks being set up – like new Swedish marine national park in 2009. In the next 40 years there should be a bigger network between all the protected areas, and more communication and support. If there is a problem in one park they should send experts from another park to help.”

Grace Bellwood 20, North York Moors National Park, England, studying countryside management:
“The federation and conference brings everyone together and creates a community that everyone can access – can share ideas, listen to other people and make better plans. It’s a chance to meet people you would never meet.

In the future we must get younger people involved, and catch their imagination – then it will always be inside of them. The problem is that young people don’t go out and play any more – they need to rediscover the outdoors in a more knowledgeable way, but to do this they need a bigger stake in it. We need to make it more accessible and shared – and not just for people who live in national parks.”

Ingeborg Swart 19, Weerribben Wieden, Netherlands, studying biology:
“Protected areas need to focus on how important nature is and bring it into the picture of normal people. It is good to have a name tag, bring it into attention. It should be so common to be involved in nature. It’s good that restoration has happened, and a lot that has been polluted has been restored. We need to keep species richness.”

Linde Van Den Bosch 19 Belgium, studying interior architecture:
“It was really good to host the conference in Belgium last year – people were enthusiastic and proud. In the future, a basic change in approach needs to happen. Nature is for everyone, not just interested people. More nature could be preserved, and more young people could access. The system is way too complicated – should be so clear so that people are not scared away because they don’t understand.”

Stephan Marlons 18 Czech Republic, hopes to study medicine or environmental science:
“It’s crucial to educate children how to live in and with nature otherwise they only know technology. They need to know survival skills, how to live in nature, how to communicate in a big group and share opinions. In the future there should be even more joining across national boundaries – every place should be involved.”

“You will never change anything if you don’t work with young people.”
Cameron Cosgrove

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Joining practice with theory

The workshops were a dynamic learning and sharing experience. Participants joined field trips followed the next day by linked workshops, led by experts and informed by a range of speakers.

Organised by EUROPARC Consulting, the 15 workshops and field trips brought together practitioners to explore the issues arising from the main theme of the conference: 40 years working for nature, with a focus on integrated management.

Sharing information and practice stimulated participants to think about what is important in the context of integrated management, how to get best results in managing resources, getting partners onboard and raising money to finance plans and projects.

As well as reflection and exchange of expertise, the workshops highlighted important themes, and suggested ideas to be turned into action through the federation:

- The Federation should lead on strategic direction in climate change, wilderness, invasive species, ecosystems services, working with business, and green infrastructure;
- Communication with stakeholders is critical - especially listening;
- Motivation and participation works - make partners from stakeholders;
- Sustainable tourism is still in development – time to create new market data is important and should be made open and common;
- Investing in nature pays off;
- Keep building the wider networks;
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation can be an opportunity for better maintenance of protected areas;
- There should be co-ordination of approaches to wilderness mapping, and the development of understanding of what we mean by wild;
- The Federation should facilitate fundraising for those areas most at risk;
- Mutual understanding between farmers and protected areas is profitable for all.

High-level workshop messages were presented at the gala dinner; detailed workshop presentations and the final workshop output report, featuring all the in-depth thoughts of the workshops are here.

WORKSHOP TOPICS

1. Integrated management – working to improve biodiversity
2. Planning for action – management plans that work for nature
3. Nature that counts – monitoring biodiversity
4. Working to bring nature back – restoration in a changing landscape
5. Managing wild – working with wilderness
7. Rural alliances – working with agriculture
8. Working with others for nature – involving partners beyond the protected areas
9. Working with wood – resolving conflicts of interests with commercial forestry in protected areas
10. Communication comes naturally – or does it?
11. Tourism works for nature – joining forces for sustainable destinations and ecotourism
12. Working for nature – volunteering in protected areas – benefits for nature, benefits for people
13. Natural capital – making money work for nature
14. Nature is a LIFE’s work – LIFE and integrated funding projects
15. Green infrastructure – nature working outside the box
“PROTECTED AREAS ARE RESILIENT ENVIRONMENTAL HUBS.”
Leo Reyrink

Ten years of transboundary

The EUROPARC Transboundary Parks Programme has come a long way since its launch in September 2003 at the World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa. In this, its 10th year, it celebrated a tenth member, and the confirmation of two renewed areas, at the conference.

Hainaut cross-border Nature Park (B/F) was awarded its first transboundary certificate, accepted by Reinold Leplat, Director of the Belgian Plaines de l’Escaut Nature Park and Juan Lloret-Salvo, Transboundary Officer.

Two further Transboundary Areas, Leo Reyrink’s (NL) Maas-Schalm-Wet Nature Park (D/NL) and Pasvik-Inari Triangular Park (FIN/NOP/AIDS) were evaluated and their status renewed. Tiia Kalske (NO), Tapio Tynys (FIN) and Vladimir Chizov (RUS) accepted the awards on behalf of their organizations.

A Transboundary side-meeting also took place at the conference, bringing together members of the working group and the steering and evaluation Committee (STEC). The minutes of the meeting with tasks and ideas will soon be available.

More info on the transboundary parks programme is here >>>

Two special awards were also made at the conference, to Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia, for its entry to the 2013 European Day of Parks competition – a charming collage of impressions; and to the Bavarian Forest National Park.

TRANSBORDER AWARD: representatives of Pasvik-Inari Triangular Park

TRANSBORDER AWARD: representatives of the Hainaut Cross Border Nature Park

TRANSBORDER AWARD: representatives of Maas-Schalm-Wet Nature Park

Award presented by President

Award presented by President
“QUIET, YET STRONG LEADERSHIP ENSURED THAT SCIENTIFIC AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT HELD TOGETHER.”

KAJA LOTMAN & NELE SÖBER
on Erika Stanciu

Awards for future and existing achievements were made to four women at the conference.

The Alfred Toepfer Medal, named after the founder of the EUROPARC Federation, Dr h.c. Alfred Toepfer (1894-1993) is awarded annually in recognition of a particular individual who has made a significant contribution to nature protection in Europe. The medal was presented to Erika Stanciu, nominated by the Nordic-Baltic section for her "outstanding achievements in furthering nature conservation in Europe, and as a female role model to many in the protected areas community."

Ms Stanciu, a dynamic, determined and highly effective champion of nature conservation, has had to date a career spanning forestry, national parks, NGOs and training, as well as six years as president of EUROPARC. In an emotional moment as her husband and daughter joined her on stage, she paid tribute to her mentor Aitken Clark, also a former president of the federation.

EUROPARC Federation in cooperation with the Alfred Toepfer Foundation F.V.S. also awards the Alfred Toepfer Natural Heritage Scholarships to promising young conservationists with practical experience in the field of conservation and in the work of protected areas.

With the financial support of 3000 EUR per scholarship, students undertake a study visit to one or more protected areas in a European country other than their home country. This funding aims to enhance international cooperation, promote the advancement of quality research, innovation and the European dimension of protected area management, and was awarded to:

Catherine Wynn (UK), 32, who will visit Kosovo to investigate the proposed management of the newly extended (December 2012) Sharr Mountain National Park and the application of the Viable Systems Model, for a project titled: ‘Protected areas management effectiveness: how do protected areas measure their success?’

Maris Noor (Estonia), 29, who will visit Austria and Georgia to learn effective methods of communicating the necessity of protected areas to landowners and other stakeholders connected to the protected area, for a project titled: ‘Environmental Education and Communication: What innovative techniques are protected areas using to deliver important conservation messages?’

Sabine Nouvet (UK), 32, who will visit France to study the management of natural resources in national parks of the French Alps, with a focus on successful examples of agri-environment schemes which have been developed in cooperation with farmers and their shepherds under the objective of Management of Natural Resources; in particular positive examples of agriculture and biodiversity management in protected areas.

More information about the scholarships is here >>>

Winners of the Alfred Toepfer Natural Heritage Scholarships
“IRELAND WILL WELCOME YOU TO AN ENCHANTING PROTECTED AREA WITH A MOSAIC OF HABITATS.”

John Fitzgerald

Come to Killarney!

John Fitzgerald, director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Ireland, announced that the 2014 EUROPARC conference will take place in Killarney National Park, Ireland.

Entitled ‘Understanding the value of nature’, it will be held from Sunday 28 September to Wednesday, 1 October, with delegates departing on Thursday 2 October.

Decision makers from across Europe will gather in Killarney for discussion, debate and networking opportunities centred on Europe’s shared natural inheritance.

Ireland has been a member of the Federation since 1986 and has previously hosted the annual conference at Glenveagh National Park in 1996.

Killarney National Park is located beside the town of Killarney, County Kerry, Ireland. It was the first national park established in Ireland, created when Muckross Estate was donated to the Irish state in 1932.

John Fitzgerald said: “The conference is great for getting different perspectives – everyone has the same kind of problems, in different locations. It’s also more efficient to work together like this – learning from others successes; about funding streams, through joint ventures such as the sustainable tourism charter – we don’t have to reinvent the wheel. It’s also good for staff at all levels to participate together.”
Delegate were warmly invited to be part of next year’s ten-yearly IUCN World Parks Congress, to be held from 12-19 November in Sydney, Australia: with a theme of “Parks, People, Planet: Inspiring Solutions.”

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General, IUCN, Switzerland said the conference aimed to “come out with solutions that are inspired responses to the challenges that the world faces; and to also inspire people to take action, change behaviour and influence others.”

“This is our key challenge for Sydney: we wish to position protected areas at the heart of our economies and societies.”

Above all, she said “what we hope to achieve at the next World Parks Congress is to place solutions on the table that will compel action in the decade that follows.”

She called for “a strong European voice in Sydney” and challenged delegates: “We want to hear your stories: Where do you see the gaps? What are your most pressing challenges? How can we work together to overcome them? Help us develop the programme, identify the key people to bring, and announce your commitments.”

More information about the World Parks Congress is here. >>>