



PROTECTED AREAS IN-SIGHT

THE JOURNAL OF THE
EUROPARC FEDERATION
VOL. 13

Parks in the Spotlight.
Powered by People; Inspired by Nature

Imprint

Vol. 13 – 2021

Publisher: EUROPARC Federation 2021, www.europarc.org

Editorial team: EUROPARC Directorate, communications@europarc.org
Waffnergasse 6, 93047 Regensburg, Germany

Graphic Design: Václav Hřaba

Printing: Printed in FSC certified paper by Contour Mediaservices, GmbH

Co-funded by the European Commission

The production of this publication has been supported financially in the framework of the European Commission's (Directorates-General Environment and Climate Action) LIFE funding programme of operating grants for European Environmental NGOs. The content of this publication does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the publication lies entirely with the authors.



Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this edition.

Cover photo: Am Umbalbach Osttirol
© Nationalpark Hohe Tauern, Johannes Geyer

The EUROPARC Federation represents Protected Areas and governmental organisations in around 40 countries, who themselves manage the green jewels of Europe's land, sea, mountains, forests, rivers and cultural heritage.

Nature knows no boundaries and EUROPARC therefore facilitates international co-operation in all aspects of Protected Area management. Through networking, advancing policy and practice, sharing best practices and developing new solutions to the challenges of Protected Area management, we want to deliver a Sustainable Nature: Valued by People and ensure the value of Protected Areas is recognised at the heart of Europe.

For more information:
www.europarc.org

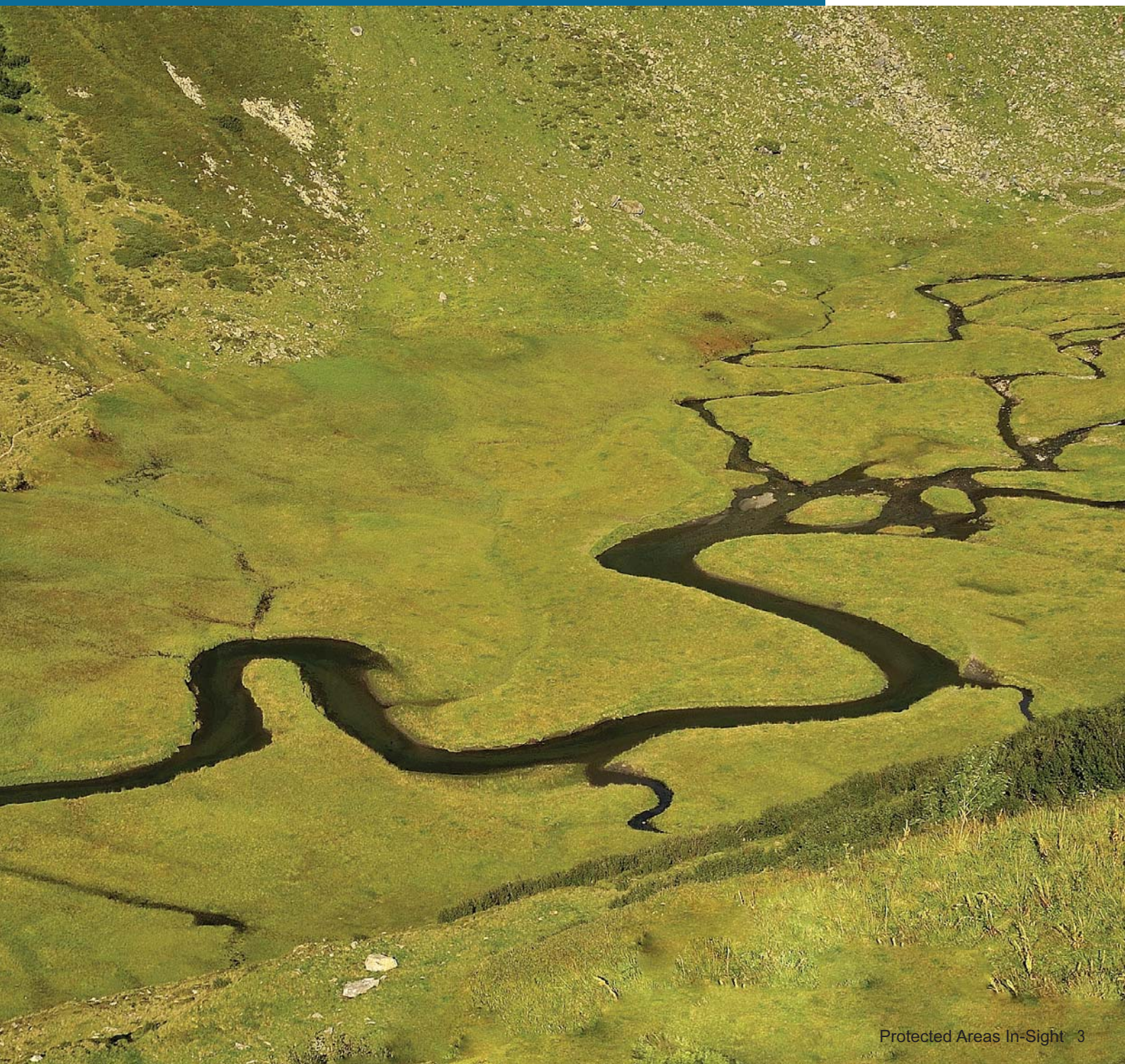




PROTECTED AREAS IN-SIGHT

THE JOURNAL OF THE EUROPARC FEDERATION

Ruhlauber forest
© Nationalpark Kellerwald-Edersee



Content

Editorial	5
Do we need wilder parks in Europe?	6
Protected Areas working together against Biodiversity Loss and Climate Change	9
Time to put nature at the heart of climate change adaptation	12
Don't forget to ask young people what they want!	15
Improving visitor management in Protected Areas - lessons learnt	18
Parks in the Spotlight ... or perhaps now, 'in the floodlight'!	20
Building Capacity & Bridges - LIFEedu to LIFE ENABLE	22
Nature is back! What is the role of our periurban areas?	24
Healthy Parks, Healthy People "in the spotlight"	26
Partnerships for nature: the Transboundary Programme	28
Celebrating 20 years of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism	30
EUROPARC Conference 2022	35

Editorial

This edition of EUROPARC's "Protected Areas In-Sight" looks at different approaches for Parks to manage the spotlight they are under.

2021 continued to be defined by the COVID-19 pandemic, notwithstanding the continued and increased tangible effects of climate change and biodiversity loss. What is also apparent is the necessity of resilience in our human capacities and in our natural world, as well as the need to retain a positive and optimistic attitude coupled with the ability to absorb, adjust and adapt to uncertainty and change. These are big "asks" in a Parks and Protected Areas community feeling the economic, environmental and societal strains present at this time.

Being part of the EUROPARC network, with a shared vision and common goals, with the reservoir of experience and innovation and being with like-minded professionals, is the ideal place within which to restore personal resources and gain new insights and solutions to the common challenges we face. Looking beyond the daily minutiae, sharing these issues and connecting with others can really help look beyond the problems, with new ways of thinking and working. It is through doing "something" and particularly doing something with others, a common endeavour, starting with small actions that will move us out of the stupor of confusion and uncertainty and begin building a new future.

This Protected Areas In-Sight takes some of the learning gained from connecting people at the EUROPARC online conference and highlights new approaches and actions in rewilding, climate change adaptation, greening our cities and the importance of periurban parks and building up the skills and competencies we need to work better and smarter. The views of youth are represented: they provide valuable insights to several key issues that Protected Areas managers should address in order to ensure young people are included in park's decision making processes.

Albert Einstein said

"The measure of intelligence is the ability to change"

Current understanding is that there are multiple intelligences as the diagram below shows, and people can exhibit differing abilities in all of these. We, as the Parks community, must ensure our "Nature and Sustainability intelligence" is high and being used to inform, inspire, innovate and influence the changes that are needed.

The Parks community cannot fall into the trap highlighted by Greta Thunberg referring to the recent COP26 climate change conference of merely offering empty promises filled with "blah blah blah". We need to create and deliver actions that affect change, that will improve our communities and our parks and indeed the very nature upon which we all work for and depend upon.



By Carol Ritchie
Executive Director
EUROPARC Federation

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences from
<https://bit.ly/3Hpp2SX>





North Velebit National Park, Croatia © Staffan Widstrand Rewilding Europe

Do we need wilder parks in Europe?

Rewilding Europe is working to accelerate landscape-scale nature recovery across Europe. Enabling such a recovery inside Europe's Protected Areas would enhance their value to both people and nature.



From protection to restoration

Protected Areas are the backbone of European nature conservation. With more than 120,000 sites designated across 52 countries, Europe accounts for more of such areas than any other part of the world. Their size varies greatly - from an individual tree to a Greenland-based national park covering nearly 1 million square kilometres. Despite the fact that many areas are small and isolated, they still represent unique and frequently awe-inspiring repositories of biodiversity.

Yet, if Europe's Protected Areas are vital, then the "protection regime" they broadly represent is not enough on its own to address critical issues such as biodiversity decline and climate change. Protection alone will not safeguard the myriad benefits that European nature delivers to Europeans such as clean air, fresh water, fertile soil, and the locking up of atmospheric carbon.

"With the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration** now underway, there is a pressing need to move beyond protection," says Frans Schepers, Managing Director of Rewilding Europe.

"We need to recover European nature and natural processes at scale, both inside and outside of the continent's Protected Areas.

As an immediate, pragmatic and cost-effective approach to conservation - an approach which allows both people and wild nature to thrive - rewilding is the best way to realise this aim."

Doing things differently

Interest in rewilding, which has shaken up the conservation sector, is now at an all-time high: an ever-growing number of initiatives are generating positive impact across Europe. Over the last 10 years, Rewilding Europe has played a pioneering role in this evolution, with its action-oriented, "showing by doing" philosophy, resulting in a pan-European network of **high-profile operational areas**, complemented by the ever-growing **European Rewilding Network**.

A set of **rewilding principles** have also been established, helping to define what is different and special about rewilding. These principles provide coherence, inspiration and transparency, and position rewilding in relation to other conservation approaches. In particular, they can be used to shape nature-based solutions and address the current climate and biodiversity emergencies.

Michael Hošek, President of the **EUROPARC Federation**, believes rewilding, based on such principles, can help to take Europe's Parks and Protected Areas to the next level of wildness.

"Looking at Europe's Parks and Protected Areas, it is clear that some are far wilder than others. But in general, we need to make more space for natural processes to reshape landscapes, rather than expending precious and often dwindling resources trying to reach and maintain artificial end points. Going forward, there will still be a need for intervention in many areas, but rewilding is an opportunity for us to reconsider our goals: an opportunity to work towards a situation where nature keeps its own balance to a far greater degree."

Wolinski National Park,
Oder Delta, Poland.
© Staffan Widstrand
Rewilding Europe



Written by
Daniel Allen,
pictured here
Frans Schepers.



A pioneering role model

An example of what can be achieved when natural processes are given free rein to reshape landscapes within European Protected Areas can already be seen in the **Swiss National Park**. This EUROPARC Federation member was also one of the first members of Rewilding Europe's **European Rewilding Network**.

Founded in 1914, the Swiss National Park may be the oldest rewilding initiative in Europe. A wide range of keystone species such as ibex and bearded vulture have been reintroduced, with iconic herbivores such as chamois, red deer and ibex helping to maintain half-open, half-forested areas through their grazing. Over time, wolves, lynx and bears have returned to parts of Switzerland and have all been sighted in the park.

"Over 100 years ago, the forward-thinking Swiss National Park authorities decided they would let nature do the job of managing itself," says Frans Schepers. "Today you can see the benefits - wild nature is flourishing, with a minimum of intervention."

Current status

The question of whether or not we need wilder parks in Europe was addressed by Frans Schepers at the **EUROPARC Conference 2021**, "Parks in the Spotlight". As a keynote speaker, Mr Schepers polled the 150 participants to ask those most active in park management to rank their Protected Area in terms of wildness: on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being fully wild), it was interesting to note that most awarded their area a score of 6 or 7.

Mr Schepers then presented a quick overview of the wildness of Protected Areas in Europe, based on an **ecological integrity** ranking. This focused on all sites within EU Member States greater than 1000 hectares falling within IUCN I-VI protected area categories - this equates to more than 29,000 sites covering over 620,000 km². This preliminary analysis showed the majority of Protected Areas with very low ecological integrity (see Map 1). While Category Ib (Wilderness Areas) and Category II (National Parks), which enjoy the highest levels of protection, typically have higher levels of ecological integrity, they represent less than 4% (just over 1000 sites) of the areas included in the analysis, with a surface area of 128,575 km² (just over 20% of the total area).

"This quick scan really brings home the huge potential to upgrade wildness in Protected Areas right across the EU," says Mr Schepers.

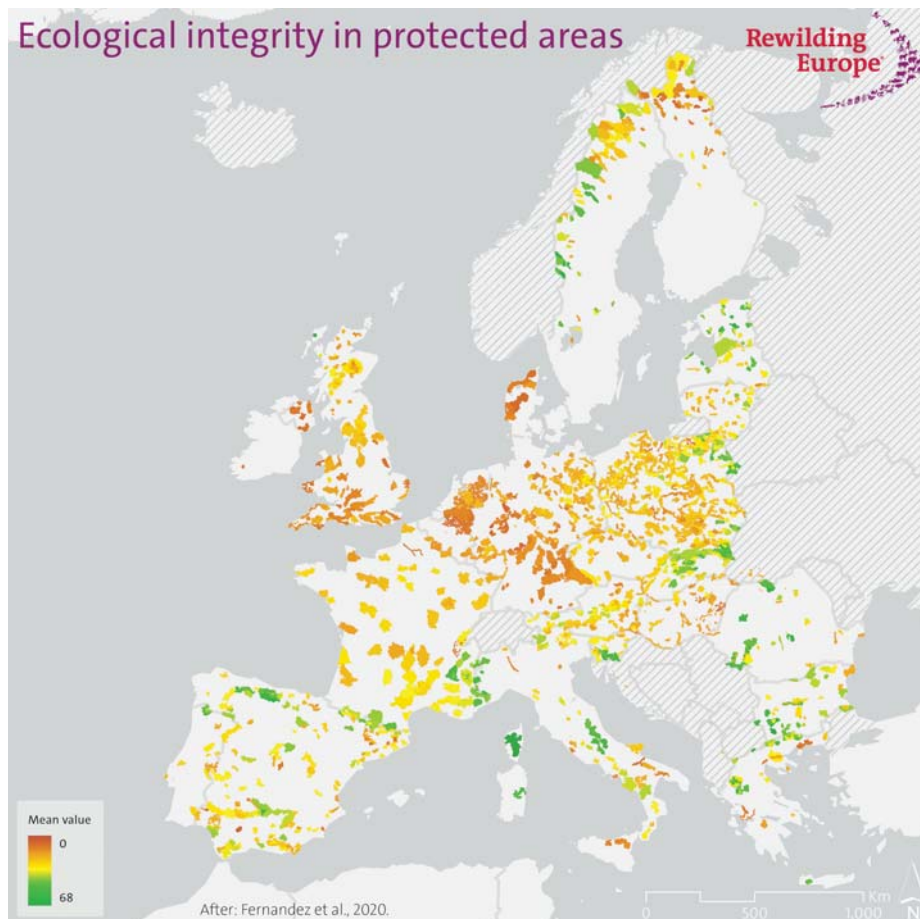
Seizing the moment

We are now moving into a decade which will see rewilding firmly established as a new and inspirational conservation narrative, as its practice, impact and benefits are scaled up across Europe. Against the backdrop of **COP26**, the **EU Green Deal** and the **Restoration Directive**, and strongly growing interest in rewilding from the financial sector, philanthropic institutions and corporations, our generation could be the first in human history to upgrade rather than downgrade European nature - if we seize the moment with both hands.

As part of a far more expansive, better connected and wilder network of natural sites and corridors, Europe's Protected Areas could play a game-changing role in this transformation. When they were first established just over a century ago, the continent's national parks focused people's minds on the importance and wonder of European wild nature. Rewilding could see them reprise that role.

To read more:

<https://rewildingeurope.com/>



Protected Areas working together against Biodiversity Loss and Climate Change

Biodiversity loss and climate change are two sides of the same coin - and the answer to both crises can be found in nature. EUROPARC and organisations in charge of some of the largest tracts of protected landscapes and marine environments across the world have come together to call on world leaders to support the work of Protected Areas at the vanguard of the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss. Orchestrated by National Parks UK, a joined statement prepared for COP26 has been signed by, amongst others, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)/ World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), NatureScot, Parks & Wildlife Finland and the USA National Parks Service.



Catriona Manders shows her signature on the front page of the International Statment at COP26

The Statement underlines the **key role** Protected Areas play in fighting both biodiversity loss and climate change. As James Stuart, Convener of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park and architect of the statement commented: *"In the fight against biodiversity loss and climate emergency, if we fail here, we will fail everywhere. We're star players, don't leave us on the bench."*

We also asked him:

Having followed the conversations around COP26, do you think adequate attention was given to Protected Areas?

Sadly, I think the role of Parks and more broadly Protected and Conserved areas in addressing climate change is still undervalued. We fly under the radar, assumed to be covered in conversations by our Governments but rarely discussed or engaged with directly. This statement helps us to draw attention to our role and to prompt a fuller discussion about how to unlock our latent potential. If we can get others to understand the huge potential of Protected Areas, then support and resources would likely be radically increased to unlock our latent potential.

What is your message to those working in Protected Areas?

We can't sit and wait, nor continue to work as we have. As a family we are responsible for some of the most important spaces and places on the planet in addressing the climate and nature emergencies. If we fail here, the rest of the planet is almost certain to fail too. So we must work more effectively together to lever our capability, we need to inspire the billions of visitors we have to improve their behaviours and we need to help decision makers at all levels to see our potential so they can help us unlock it in its entirety.

Catriona Manders signs the International Statement on behalf of future generations during COP Youth Day



Protected Areas across the world are front-line to support and lead on the green ambitions of global leaders.

Parks and Protected Areas are often the first places where people's connections with nature begin. To find solutions to the biodiversity and climate crises affecting our planet, we need to build on this, designate, protect and restore greater areas of nature, generate additional investments and develop inclusive decision making approaches that **involve people**.

Recognising that the main impacts will be felt by the next generation if we do not act now, one of the statement's signatories is Catriona Manders, Youth Committee & Junior Ranger, at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The Park is just 20 miles from the COP26 venues in Glasgow, and Catriona signed on behalf of future generations, charging governments and conservation organisations with a duty to work more closely together.

EUROPARC is especially proud of the involvement of young people in this statement. Through our Junior Ranger and Youth+ Programmes, and of course the EUROPARC Youth Manifesto we seek to empower young people and give them a place in the Protected Area community. **Inspired by the EUROPARC Youth Manifesto, the Youth Committee at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park works to represent the views, ideas and passion of young people living in and around the Park.**

James Stuart and Catriona Manders on the UK Pavillion at COP 26





"The Parks and Protected Areas of Europe stand united for nature alongside our colleagues across the world. Our natural heritage holds the key to solving the challenges presented by the climate and biodiversity crises.

We need Parks, their staff, their communities, partners and stakeholders and importantly our "army" of Junior Rangers to make the transfer from words to actions.

We call on global leaders to invest in the natural solutions that Protected Areas can deliver.

Only then will new ideas, thinking and approaches emerge that will enable us to create a better future."

**States EUROPARC's
Executive Director
Carol Ritchie.**

To get to know Catriona a bit better, we reached out and asked her a few questions.

Why did you want to be a part of this statement?

It's vital that young people are included in decision making processes from start to finish, and are constantly challenging those in power to do more to protect our environment.

What does it mean for young people in Protected Areas?

Growing up in a Protected Area, wherever in the world that may be, you have a deep appreciation for the world around you. If you care about a place, then you want to protect it - and knowing that those in power are listening, and taking action, is really important.

What is your main message for the political leaders at this time?

Political leaders have made big commitments in the last week [during the COP26, red.], and I'm sure there's more to come. My message to them would be that young people across the world are watching, and we will hold them to their promises, and challenge them to do more.

We invite all to join us and #UniteForNature by showing your support for the statement across social media. You can find the statement and all the info here.

CLICK HERE

Time to put nature at the heart of climate change adaptation

Climate change and nature loss go hand-in-hand - you need to tackle both together

Climate is changing

Whether you live in Australia, Greece or Wallonia, the summers of 2020 and 2021 have unequivocally shown the dramatic effects of extreme weather events on human communities and ecosystems. It is time to act. As part of the Green Deal, the European Union has published its Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and a new Biodiversity Strategy. Were the EU targets to be met, the nature conservation community will be responsible for managing 30% of Europe's land and sea. Nature managers have a key role to play to meet these ambitious targets: to implement management responses on the ground, they will need to integrate climate change into practices, think long-term and on a large scale. There is a need and

important opportunity to place nature at the heart of local climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

The EUROPARC community is already at work

Several of our members' nature management and restoration projects provide evidence of beneficial solutions for both biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Dynamic dune management and coastal defence in the Netherlands

At the EUROPARC Conference 2021, Myrthe Fonck, Ecology Advisor at Puur

Water en Natuur (PWN), and member of the EUROPARC Task Force on Climate Change presented the example of two Dutch Natura 2000 sites, Nationaal Park Zuid-Kennemerland and Noordhollands Duinreservaat.

In total, they manage 8,500 ha, including priority grey dune habitats. Management is challenging: in addition to protecting biodiversity, these dune sites offer multiple functions such as recreation, coastal protection and drinking water filtration.

The topography of the Dutch coast makes it especially vulnerable to rising sea levels and the increased frequency and intensity

by Olivier de Sadeleer Project Manager,
Climate Change, EUROPARC Federation



of storm surges. The impacts of climate change are taken very seriously by the authorities as the integrity of the territory and the safety of its inhabitants are at stake.

Traditionally, dune management has involved planting vegetation to immobilise them and adding large quantities of sand to counter erosion. This is no longer sustainable. As a result of the 2011 LIFE Dutch Dune Revival project, dynamic dune management has been developed and subsequently adopted on a large scale. Within the project, five notches were dug next to each other on the first line of

dunes. This allowed fresh sand, rich in limestone, to penetrate the dune system. As a result, vegetation regenerated and large white sand dunes were formed and moved inland, creating a specific habitat that had previously been lost. This effect is favourable for both biodiversity and natural coastal defences.

Large-scale restoration and flood management in Scotland

The example of Cairngorms Connect is fascinating. Jeremy Roberts, the programme manager, explained that the initiative started as a cooperative

biodiversity project between 4 land managers in the Scottish Highlands, but is bringing many benefits for climate change adaptation and mitigation. With the support of the Cairngorms National Park, the Cairngorm Connect partnership's mission is to implement a 200-year vision for the restoration of forest, peatland and wetland ecosystems. The project area covers 600km² and an altitudinal range of over 1,000m: it includes approximately 20% of the Spey catchment area, which is the second-largest river in Scotland. Among Cairngorm Connect's key management measures are:

- **Active deer population control** to support restoration actions and reduce pressure from overgrazing.
- **Restructuring and developing forest cover** to extend woodlands to their natural limits and increase indigenous species diversity. This includes planting specific species to recreate a local seed stock; restructuring through selective cutting or girdling and the creation of senescence pockets.
- **Restoration of blanket and wooded bogs** to slow down water run-offs and avoid carbon dioxide release. Healthy peat bogs sequester and store carbon

Protected Areas are the "jewels in the crown", a set of exceptional places from which we can build stable, robust and resilient territories and support human communities in the face of climate change.

over the long term. Actions aim to promote water retention by building "natural" dams.

- **Restoration of rivers and floodplains** by re-naturalising the banks, removing artificial obstacles and recreating slow meanders on the plains to slow down water flows, which supports biodiversity and species abundance.

These examples from the Netherlands and Scotland show that the management or restoration of ecological functions creates multiple benefits for biodiversity and climate change - these include:

- Increasing adaptive capacity and ecological resilience;
- Increasing carbon sequestration and reducing CO₂ emission;
- Reducing the risk of flooding;

Increasing alliances for nature

Biodiversity loss and climate change require more integrated land management, well-implemented protection and more restoration to reinstate large functional ecosystems. Developing and applying inclusive management approaches that actively engage a wide range of stakeholders are critically important.

The examples presented here highlight the important role that protected natural areas have to play in local and regional adaptation plans and the mutual gains to be realised for nature, people and communities by working together. At the same time, the examples show that:

- Natural solutions are central to ensuring structural stability and ecological integrity in ways that enhance the provision of ecosystem services;
- As living laboratories, Protected Areas are sentinels for climate change and biodiversity loss - their management practices and experiences are vital to inform policies, increase awareness of the challenges and hold the key for development of practical management solutions;
- Experimentation is required for adaptation to climate change - this includes conducting risk assessments, development of management plans, monitoring of the impacts of conservation measures and adapting where necessary to create adaptive management solutions.

2022 is a special year with 2 EUROPARC Conferences:
From 4 – 7 of October we will come together in
Argelès-sur-Mer in France to look at Climate Change
Adaptation in Protected Areas – so save the date!

LIFE NaturAdapt is a 5-year project developed with the enthusiastic support of...



© Cairngorms National Park, Scotland



Don't forget to ask young people what they want!



Marianne den Braven.
© NLDelta

By Emma Moletto, EUROPARC's Communications Assistant



Protected Areas are in the spotlight – also amongst young people! Sophie van der Schrier (22), Ambassador of the Youth Community of NLDelta, shares her perspective on youth and Protected Areas in a short interview.

Reflecting its natural and cultural features, NLDelta aims to **incorporate the development of nature, economy, and quality of life** in the area of Biesbosch and Haringvliet, in the Netherlands. Especially important, is the direct involvement of those living in the area. That is why, from October 2020, a core team of six young people started the **NLDelta Youth Community** via social media (Instagram and Facebook) with the goal of filling the gap between youngsters and nature, by involving young people in the decision-making processes. The community has two mentors who oversee the work and meet on a monthly basis.

Together with Marianne den Braven, programme secretary at NLDelta, Sophie presented the NLDelta Youth Community project at the workshop "Spotlight on Youth" at the EUROPARC Conference 2021.

Having graduated from Breda University of Applied Sciences with a bachelor's degree in Tourism Management, Sophie is pursuing a master's degree at Wageningen University in Tourism, Society and Environment. At NLDelta, she worked in the Social Media Team before moving into the Stakeholder Management department. Following the conference, we took the opportunity to ask her to share her point of view on **the relationships between young people and Protected Areas**.



Interview with Sophie van der Schrier

Ambassador of the Youth Community @ NLDelta

How did you become involved with Protected Areas, conservation, and protection?

In my childhood, I would often go hiking in Protected Areas with my parents or grandparents - that definitely pushed me towards the outdoors.

My favourite way of de-stressing and clearing my mind is to go out in nature.

In addition, Breda and Wageningen are both very green cities, so I had easy access to explore nature.

My exposure to Protected Areas began during my previous bachelor's degree. I learned about NLDelta, their programme and the position they had in the Youth Community from my university. I was enthusiastic about the project - it seemed like an excellent opportunity for me to put my Tourism Management skills into practice.

Why do you think it is important to involve young people in parks?

I think both from a young person's and Protected Areas' points of view, the importance lies in education, along with conservation and protection of nature for our future.

What do you think the pressing issues are for young people concerning nature conservation?

It is hard to find information about how to get involved. Additionally, when you are young you don't have experience about how to navigate the conservation sector.

What is stopping them from being more involved?

It is not easy for young people to see what they can do to help or how to be involved. Also, they tend to have different interests and priorities - they are involved in many things, such as school, sports, social life...

How do you think Protected Areas can act to bring youngsters back to nature?

By involving them in the process of developing the areas and by taking into consideration their interests, so that these can be combined to create new solutions.

It is a mutually beneficial situation: young people often look for fun activities, and Protected Areas often want more visitors and/or people involved. As outdoor activities might not be attractive enough for youngsters, this creates a gap. Accessibility might also be an issue, as some Protected Areas can be difficult and/or expensive to reach by public transport. Thus, creating programmes to involve youngsters in fun activities and working on accessibility might be great starting points.

What does NLDelta plan for the future?

To keep the Youth Community alive and attract more and more youngsters to get involved with nature by organising events and activities with and specifically for them. By the end of 2022, we plan to have at least 1,000 participants. The long-term goal is to write an NLDelta Youth Manifesto and to have a representative of young people participate in the NLDelta table [EM3] as a full member. The NLDelta table is a representative body that includes different organisations and helps with the development of the area.



You attended the workshop on Youth, what were your main takeaways from the session?

It is important to include young people also in the process of figuring out how to involve them, because their inputs are essential to understand their point of view.

It was great to see from the people attending that there is willingness from Parks and Protected Areas to put the spotlight on youth and to work towards finding solutions to involve young people.



EUROPARC recognizes the important role young people have in looking after our Protected Areas. The EUROPARC Youth Manifesto published in 2018 draws the attention of Protected Areas, environmental organisations and rural communities to the challenges of their youth, sparking inspiration to take action and involve young people.

Get inspired and help give a voice to young people! You can read about all the initiatives and changes the Youth Manifesto inspired on EUROPARC's website:

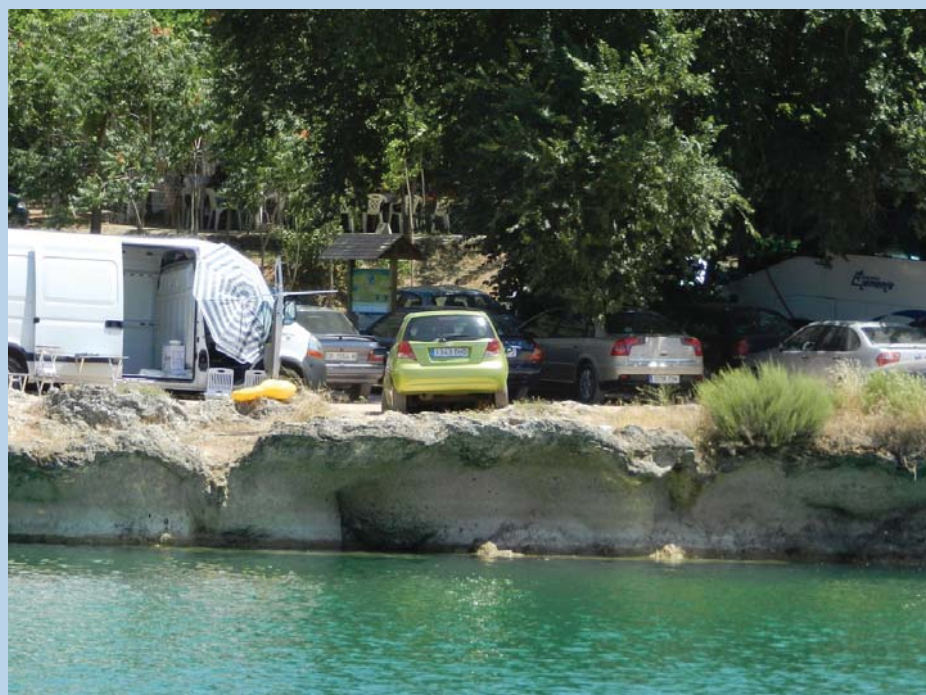
<https://bit.ly/3IsK4Rp>

Improving visitor management in Protected Areas - lessons learnt

By Marta Múgica and Diego García, FUNGOBE, EUROPARC-Spain



Protected Areas have to cope with ever-increasing demands for nature from a society increasingly concentrated in large cities. In a real sense, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the key role that Protected Areas play in people's health. At the same time, the experiences during the pandemic have provided an opportunity to reflect on the important role of Protected Areas, their connections with visitors and local communities, and the management tools and approaches we have, or should have, in place.



This topic was discussed during the workshop about Visitor Management at the EUROPARC Conference 2021. Changes in numbers and the profiles of visitors are observable, which have both positive and negative impacts. In visitor management, new trends can be summarised as follows:

- High influxes of local visitors: traffic jams and parking problems due to increases in private car use and restrictions in public transport systems. Crowding situations in camping sites, toilets, footpaths, tracks and other facilities, with related environmental impacts.
- Change in visitors' profile: more "first visitors" to Protected Areas, some of them with low knowledge about the specific values of the area, regulations and "codes of conduct". Occasionally conflicts between visitors and local communities.

*Car invasion of travertine barrier at
Lagunas de Ruidera Natural Park
(Castilla-La Mancha, Spain).
© Diego García*



Crowding situation at Teno Rural Park (Canary Islands, Spain) © Irina Martín

- Increased numbers of young people discovering the opportunities of a Protected Area.
- Bad times for local economies, particularly in Protected Areas whose visitors are mainly foreigners.
- New opportunities to attract new visitors and inspire them to get closer to nature: for many, it was their first time enjoying environmental education & interpretation experiences.

Protected Areas need to be prepared for these new changes, and develop planning tools and management measures according to the new times. Although basic management plans are available in most Protected Areas, there are relatively few practical tools to manage public use and control visitor fluxes. Some of the managers' needs in this regard include:

- Specific visitor management tools: monitoring systems (counters for people, cars), carrying capacity assessments, mobility plans.
- Different management actions to meet diverse visitor profiles and not to treat "visitors" as a singular entity.

- Traffic control & regulation: promotion of public transport services (like bus shuttles etc.).
- Better carrying infrastructure.
- More staff 'on the spot' (rangers, environmental education people) and an adequate budget for this.
- New ways to better communicate information to visitors, including listening to the channels of communication people actually use.

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) continues to provide a good starting point to address these issues. The Charter's participatory approaches emphasise the need to incorporate the tourism sector into Protected Areas' governance, improve relationships with managers, and participate in visitor management. At the same time, businesses committed to the ECST enjoy privileged promotion opportunities through their links with Protected Areas and are able to continuously improve the quality of their services on the basis of the information and content that managers provide.



EUROPARC
Sustainable Tourism
in Protected Areas



The SEE project – Sustainability and Environmental Education in outdoor sports - aims to promote better education for the natural environment, associated impacts and sustainability issues for outdoor sports leaders, trainers, guides or instructors.

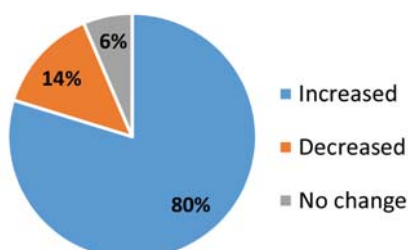
The project has already gained a **greater understanding** of the practical challenges and issues that outdoor sports can create in Protected Areas: a survey carried out with EUROPARC Federation members has produced a range of essential information to support capacity building and training processes to improve management practices.

A total of 94 responses to the survey were received: respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 0 (no issue) to 6 (major issue) what impacts a sport has in relation to specific issues. The majority of responses were between 1.5 and 2.5. This has allowed SEE partners to develop **fact sheets for 21 sports and activities**.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Popularity of outdoor sports during Covid.



Parks in the Spotlight ...

or perhaps now, 'in the floodlight'!

By Mike McClure, Chairman of the European Network of Outdoor Sports



Increased visitors means increased demand for outdoor sports - how can Parks respond adequately?

The survey asked a number of other questions, including how demand had changed during the COVID-19 pandemic: interest in being outdoors increased significantly in Parks and Protected Areas across Europe. Aligned to this, 55% of respondents noted that they were dealing with more irresponsible behaviour, while 11% indicated that they were seeing more responsible behaviour, with the rest observing 'no change'.

The survey not only looked at the management challenges, but also **what advantages outdoor sports provide** to Parks and whether managers saw outdoor sports positively or negatively. Reassuringly, only 17% of respondents highlighted that, on balance, outdoor sports had a negative impact on the area: 45% indicated that they were positive, while 38% reported being neutral.

The project will aim to **provide resources** that may help to reduce the number of Protected Areas viewing outdoor sports negatively or even neutrally.

A desktop exercise and further survey currently being conducted aims to look at how much emphasis particular sports

federations across Europe place on this topic as part of their training programmes for leaders and instructors. SEE is also looking at the information that the federations have on their websites on environmental issues. Of 411 websites of outdoor sports federations examined, **285 of them (69%) hold no 'easily found' environmental information**. However, data from the surveys indicates that over 94% of such federations regard environmental education for their instructors as being important or very important, yet only 62% provide any form of education on the subject. Again, the project will aim to bridge this gap.

The project partners are also currently involved in a practical exchange programme to **share knowledge, ideas and methodologies** to share good environmental information - these theme-focused exchange programmes in 5 different partner countries are:

- Serbia – mountain sports
- Portugal – water sports
- Sweden – winter sports
- France – trail and rock sports
- Ireland – inclusion issues

Based on these exchanges and search for good practices, the partners will develop **further training methods** to fill the gaps identified, help overcome challenges and provide highly innovative methods to motivate outdoor sports enthusiasts towards more responsible and sustainable behaviours.

A toolkit will be developed and shared with a broad range of relevant stakeholders in European outdoor sports to showcase how to better implement sustainability and environmental education in the curricula for outdoor sports leaders, guides and instructors. **The aim is to create a cascade effect, empowering users of Protected Areas to be more responsible.**

Ultimately, this project aims to raise awareness on the **importance of sustainability and environmental education** and promote ethical behaviours and codes of conduct among sports people. This is very timely given the demand on Protected Areas following COVID-19, but also as Europe seeks to implement the **Green Deal** and promote a greener economy.

Building Capacity & Bridges

- LIFEedu to LIFE ENABLE

By Sandra Grego,
EUROPARC's LIFE ENABLE Project Officer and Communications Assistant.



Creating the
European Nature
Academy for applied
Blended LEarning



EUROPARC
FEDERATION



ECO



Alfred Toepfer
Akademie für Naturschutz



Fundación Interuniversitaria
Fernando González Bernáldez
PARA LOS ESPACIOS NATURALES



METSÄHALLITUS
FORSTSTYRELSEN
MEAHČIRÁÐDEHUS



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA



LIFE ENABLE Creating the European Nature Academy for applied Blended LEarning © Sandra Grego

In August 2021, inspired by the positive outcomes of **LIFEe-Natura2000.edu**, we have commenced a new LIFE Preparatory project **LIFE ENABLE: Creating the European Nature Academy for applied Blended LEarning**. Building on the positive experiences of LIFEedu, this exciting, bigger and more ambitious capacity building project runs to July 2024.

Over the last three years, LIFEedu's project partners and participants have transformed their learning gains and new nature management insights into a rich library of replicable and up-scalable capacity building actions: 96% of project participants are applying their LIFEedu learning to benefit their Natura 2000 sites, nature and inclusive management practices. The experiences of partners and project participants alike will continue to be put to good use in LIFE ENABLE.

LIFE ENABLE aims to encourage **Natura 2000 and Protected Area managers** to reach their full potential and realise their **key role in protecting nature** and reversing the degradation of ecosystems. Open to all nature managers, there will be a particular focus in LIFE ENABLE on forest and marine managers. The project is led by EUROPARC Federation and supported by 7 project partners from Germany, Austria, Spain, Finland, France, Romania and Italy.

The project had a great start with, a LIFE ENABLE workshop called "Natural (& unnatural?) alliances" within EUROPARC's ONLINE Conference 2021. The workshop offered an opportunity to explore what types of alliances can be formed and with whom, in order to achieve the best results for nature: also, specific attention was given to identifying the competencies specifically required by managers, to create and maintain **effective and inclusive alliances for nature**.

What makes or breaks a successful alliance?

Using different participatory and interactive exercises, participants were invited to share and discuss their opinions about why some alliances work, while others don't. Participants highlighted that effective management requires **versatility and flexibility** and that powerful personal contacts and networking are the main reasons for alliances to work. Conversely, a problematic history, hidden agendas, lack of commitment and decision-making capacity, presumptions, and insufficient flexibility turn out to be some of the main reasons why alliances fail. To benefit cooperation and collaboration, it is vital that managers of Protected Areas develop the skills and competencies that they need in order to be more effective and provide better protection for nature: high quality stakeholder engagement, inclusive governance processes, effective



The project and all actions are made possible with support from the LIFE financial instrument of the European Community



Participants of the workshop Natural and unnatural alliances

What do Protected Areas' staff need?

When working with others, workshop participants highlighted the following competencies as priorities for Protected Areas' staff:

- Positive attitude - being constructive and open
- Conflict management
- Active listening leading to action
- Negotiation
- Credibility
- Dialogue
- Effective failure management
- IT/ presentation capacities
- Social skills
- Good organisation and planning
- Honesty
- Communication
- Building relationships and thinking about them as investments for the future
- Empathy and recognition of others' work
- Networking
- Learning about new solutions and tools
- Embracing new ways to communicate
- Being able to accept different opinions.

European Nature Academy

That's where the LIFE ENABLE project comes in! Recognising the needs of Natura 2000 and other nature managers, the project will create the European Nature Academy, a new and innovative tailor-made training hub to enable managers to achieve their goals and priorities for nature. The Academy will deliver widely accessible learning experiences and training activities, all of which participants will be able to apply 'on the ground' for maximum impacts for nature, people and local communities.

The European Nature Academy will boost individual, organisational and national capacities for Natura 2000 management by providing learning opportunities for individuals to train as trainers, mentors or facilitators of the project's learning experiences.

The training hub will be based on a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform and will offer learning programmes focusing on core competencies for all park practitioners, but will also include purpose-built modules for Forest and Marine Natura 2000 managers across Europe.

In order to help Europe's nature management professionals to connect, learn and network, LIFE ENABLE will continue to develop the **eNatura Smartphone App** created during the LIFE e-Natura2000.edu project. With a range of new features and functions, the App will help users to build professional networks, support their career development and act as a portal to the project's learning hub.

The need for and advantages of new digital tools is clear in the COVID-19 world. The MOOC will be able to reach many participants, create links between projects, and ensure a **rich interactive library** of useful materials and learning resources that will be available even after the project's end. While still valuing face-to-face and field training, by providing online learning opportunities, LIFE ENABLE will make the European Nature Academy accessible from wherever managers are and reduce the carbon footprint avoiding the need to travel.

communication and empathetic working are all central to nature management on the basis of productive and healthy cooperative alliances.

For Protected Area managers to be as efficient as possible in protecting our natural heritage, it is important that we recognise these valuable skills and continue to develop them.

To read more:

europarc.org/life-enable/

Nature is back!

What is the role of our periurban areas?

By Esther Bossink, EUROPARC's Communications Officer



During the EUROPARC Conference, keynote speaker Ladislav Miko highlighted that the “Green Agenda” is radically shaping new ways to meet nature’s needs, even in traditionally ‘non-green’ policy areas. What does this mean for Europe’s periurban areas?

The importance of nature in and around our cities

Climate change is continuing to put pressure on cities: for example, the ‘heat-island effect’, where buildings and roads hold onto and re-emit the sun’s heat at a far higher rate than natural areas, causes cities to reach dangerous temperatures. Additionally, due to extreme weather phenomena becoming more frequent, flooding poses a great risk for urban areas. **As such, climate change is a constant threat to people and cities.**

However, although extremely serious, it’s not all bleak: as often is the case, nature offers solutions. For example, something as relatively simple as planting trees in city centres helps both drainage problems and counters the heat-island effect. Additionally, green infrastructures like

green corridors that connect city centres to other green and open areas, form important links to support biodiversity in urban areas.


LIFE UrbanGreeningPlans

That is why, in the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, cities with over 20.000 inhabitants are called upon to create “Urban Greening Plans”. These plans aim to bring nature back into cities to support biodiversity and mitigate climate change. Our cities and more especially our Periurban Parks are in the spotlight and will need to deliver!

The new LIFE Preparatory project, “LIFE UrbanGreeningPlans”, tackles a number of practical management challenges faced when greening urban areas. The project addresses 4 of the main problems identified.

- **Lack of knowledge and expertise** among policy makers and city officers on how to implement and maintain Green Infrastructures
- **Bad connectivity and accessibility** of peri-urban green spaces due to growing cities and spatial pressure, as well as due to the historically poor urban planning of peri-urban areas
- **Poor cooperation across different sectors** within a municipality and/or different municipalities. Cooperation is needed because of the multi-scalar and multi-functional nature of Green Infrastructure
- **Lack of innovative and effective strategies** to involve local businesses and the wider public.

Seven project partners across Europe will **deliver a range of innovative actions, share best practice case studies and**



“Greening cities is good for nature AND good for people.”



Urban Greening in Brussels
© F. Didion

Philodassiki Enossi Athinon © George Pavlakis

produce guidelines. The aim is to “break down silos”, spark greater integrated approaches and put nature at the core of city planning. The project aims to pave the way for urban areas throughout Europe to include Green Infrastructure, Nature-based solutions and promote the role of healthy ecosystems in urban planning. One of EUROPARC’s main messages is the need to recognise the value of green periurban spaces for nature and our daily physical and mental well-being.

How will it work?

Within the project, a number of actions will be developed by Periurban Parks and metropolitan areas leading the way on urban greening in Brussels, Barcelona, Athens, Milano and Lisbon. Apart from the creation and implementation of innovative biodiversity measures, special importance

is given to the development of mechanisms for local public authorities to involve businesses and the general public more effectively in managing (peri-)urban green spaces.

All the experience collected by the project partners will generate an innovative ‘learning platform’: the Urban Greening Plans Knowledge Hub. The Knowledge Hub will be directly connected to the EU Urban Greening Platform created by the European Commission under the new ‘**Green City Accord**’ with cities and mayors.

The Knowledge Hub’s main target audiences will be local policy makers, green infrastructure planners and greenspace managers of other cities in Europe. It will give them concrete examples and how-to guidelines to start their own Urban Greening Plans. Videos,

interviews with experts, case studies and other resources will inspire cities to develop their plans and implement these at regional level.

Through different international workshops and webinars, LIFE UrbanGreeningPlans aims to work as a catalyser and connect experts from all over Europe to support the “Green Revolution” of our cities.

Intrigued to learn more? Take a look at the **EUROPARC website** and follow #LIFEUrbanGreeningPlans on social media!



The Life UrbanGreeningPlans project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union.

<https://bit.ly/3p6WNjT>

Healthy Parks, Healthy People

“in the spotlight”



By Pete Rawcliffe, NatureScot,
EUROPARC council member
and Chair of the Healthy
Parks, Healthy People
Europe Commission



It's been a busy - albeit virtual - few months for EUROPARC's Healthy Parks, Healthy People Europe programme. This has included two presentations at the World Conservation Conference (WCC) in France, speaking at an international symposium on health and nature organised by the Albert Einstein Medical Institute in Brazil and hosting a workshop at the online EUROPARC Conference".

Looking back at these activities, three key messages stand out for me from this period:

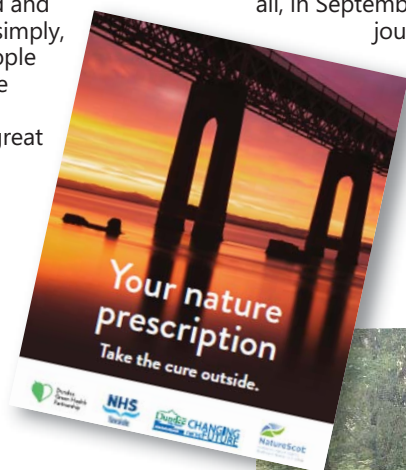
1 **It's not too many people in our Protected Areas, it's too little nature everywhere.** I'm slightly misquoting here from the head of the Wildlife Trusts in the UK who spoke at a EUROPARC Atlantic Isles webinar in July this year at a debate on the issues and opportunities arising from visitor pressures in Parks and Protected Areas since COVID-19. The importance for people to be able to experience and connect to nature across the green continuum (from urban centres to wilderness areas) was picked up at the session of the WCC superbly hosted by **Parks and Wildlife Finland on nature-based solutions for public health**. This is important not only for well-being, but it is also found to be strongly linked to the development of pro-environmental behaviours that are needed more than ever. Nature connectedness is now an established scientific concept that can be measured and evaluated. Put more simply, we need to make people fall in love with nature again. Our Parks and Protected Areas are great places to do this.

2 **Change is coming from within the health sector.** We need to work with and empower the medical professionals and health sector more generally to help them make the changes in policy and practice we want to see. At the "Nature is Good Medicine" session at the WCC, we heard inspiring stories from Canada and South Africa of the development of medical champions for nature resulting from peer to peer advocacy to encourage updating the use of "Park prescriptions" and behaviour change approaches, which start from (re) connecting medics to nature. Another visible sign of this change was evident at the symposium in Brazil in the presentations on the range of practical tools that are being developed for nursing that use sights and sounds of nature to support the treatment and recovery of patients. And, perhaps most significantly of all, in September, over 200 medical

journals including The Lancet published a common editorial which concluded: *'The greatest threat to global public health is the continued failure of world leaders to keep the global temperature rise below 1.5°C and to restore nature'*.

3 **First steps can be small, but we need to take them to build partnerships with the health sector.** Finally, at the EUROPARC workshop, we heard about the inspiring new nature-health partnership that has been established in the Limburg region of Belgium (and the Netherlands) and discussed the lessons that emerge from this case study and other good practices presented in the **Healthy Parks, Healthy People tool-kit**. We again heard calls for better evidence and examples of success - however, is it simply a lack of confidence that is now holding us back from talking to new people and groups that we will need to do to implement Healthy Parks, Healthy People in practice? If so, how can we now encourage more parks and Protected Areas to take those small first steps that are needed to fall under and then flourish "in the spotlight"?

If you are interested in learning or sharing good practice on this topic, please do get in touch – Pete Rawcliffe, NatureScot, EUROPARC council member and Chair of the Healthy Parks, Healthy People Europe Commission
(peter.rawcliffe@nature.scot)



Healthy Parks
Healthy People
EUROPE

Discussions between
health and
environmental
professionals in Limburg



Partnerships for nature: Transboundary Programme



By Stefano Santi, EUROPARC Council Member, Co-chair of the EUROPARC Transboundary Cooperation Task force, and representative of the Association "Italian Network of the European Green Belt"

‘Nature has no borders’.

Indeed, when crossing an international border it's not always obvious where one country ends and another one begins.

Habitats and migratory species have no notion or respect for border. Although nature protection laws often differ across state lines, can you imagine a situation in which a chamois, a trout, a dragonfly or a bear is asked for a passport? Of course not. Yet all over the world, **different protection regimes for species and habitats often apply in neighbouring countries.**

All this may seem absurd, however those working to protect biodiversity know it is an everyday reality. This happens, certainly to varying degrees, along borders unfortunately still affected by conflicts, as well as in areas where more or less strong cooperation initiatives have been carried out for some time.

Aware of this situation, some neighbouring Protected Areas in different countries have committed themselves to work together in a spirit of strong collaboration to overcome problems or division.

This has led to the development of various international initiatives, one of the most celebrated and successful is the **EUROPARC Transboundary Parks programme**. Over the last few years, several Parks and Protected Areas, that were already collaborating, have decided to together start the journey to be recognised as Transboundary Parks. Thanks to a certification process carried out on the basis of criteria defined by EUROPARC and verified by independent expert evaluators, it was possible to create the "TransParcNet" network that currently includes 23 Protected Areas gathered in 11 Transboundary Areas.



Bohemian Switzerland
© V. Sojka

Its members **share experiences, good practices and challenges**. Cooperation is at the heart of the programme and together these Parks identify solutions that are mutually beneficial. The concrete benefits linked to belonging to this group of Protected Areas are numerous. The network is very active and its members put a lot of energy into building cross-border partnerships that benefit nature, landscapes and local communities. In addition, once a year all certified Transboundary Parks have the chance to meet during the **TransParcNet meeting**, which is organised in a cross-border area.

A Task Force has been created to increase the effectiveness of this cooperation and make the advantages of belonging to the network even more evident. In collaboration with the Directorate of EUROPARC, it organises and supports the activities of the Programme. Within the Task Force there are Working Groups that have the task of deepening some specific topics and developing common projects.

The hope, and the conviction, is that the number of those involved in the programme will soon increase, also to cover parts of Europe that are not yet represented, but where border issues have particular relevance.

Perhaps most importantly, this network well represents **the original European spirit**. As such, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the network of Transboundary Parks worked together to highlight the importance of the event by drafting a special document underlining the need to break down the barriers between nations in a spirit of collaboration, amongst people and with respect for nature. This spirit is well represented in the new EUROPARC Strategy to 2030: the important role fulfilled by Transboundary Protected Areas are highlighted as strategic places to develop alliances and cooperation on management with local stakeholders.



Nationalparks
Thayatal Podyjí
2018
© S. Petrosillo



EUROPARC.ORG/TRANSBOUNDARY-COOPERATION

- 1 Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park (FI/NO/RU)
- 2 Oulanka-Paanajärvi Transboundary Parks (FI/RU)
- 3 Maas-Schwalm-Nette Nature Park (NL/DE)
- 4 Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland Transboundary Parks (DE/CZ)
- 5 Krkonoše and Karkonosze National Parks (CZ/PL)
- 6 Šumava and Bavarian Forest National Park (CZ/DE)
- 7 Podyjí-Thayatal Transboundary Parks (CZ/AU)
- 8 Neusiedler See-Seewinkel & Fertő-Hanság (AU/HU)
- 9 Julian Alps Transboundary Ecoregion (IT/SI)
- 10 Binnental Veglia Devero Transboundary Nature Park (IT/CH)
- 11 Internationaler Naturpark Bourtanger Moor - Veenland (DE/NL)



Celebrating 20 years

of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism



The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is celebrating its 20 year anniversary in 2021. We've asked those that were part of the beginning of this pioneer project about their experience and the potential of Protected Areas when it comes to Sustainable Tourism.

THE CHARTER IN NUMBERS:

98 sustainable destinations

from **15** countries

receive an average of **787,593** visitors annually

on an average of **181,933** ha

Amounting to **31,6** mln€

of average investments in the **1st evaluation action plans**

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: A Long and Successful Story

By Patrizia Rossi, former President of the EUROPARC Federation and former Director of the Alpi Marittime Nature Park, current Chair of the ECST Evaluation Committee 2001-2019



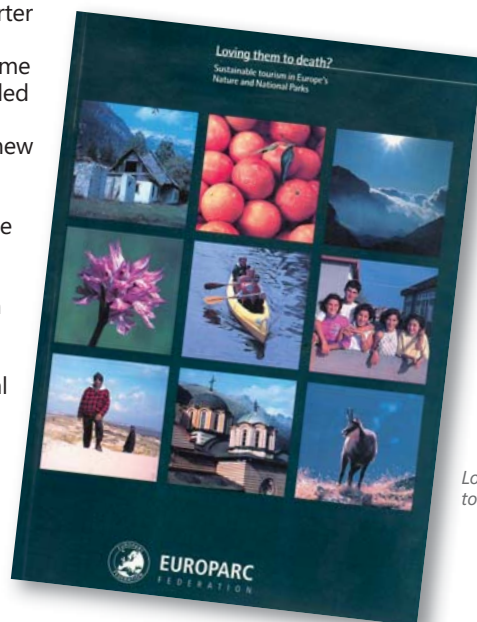
Protected Areas often have conflicting priorities: the natural environment can be fragile and requires protection, yet the beauty and tranquillity are major attractions for visitors, generating income for parks and their local communities.

Without careful, sustainable management, tourism development can be a serious threat.

In 1988, Protected Areas professionals from across Europe came together to find solutions to address these contrary factors. A specific working group under the EUROPARC umbrella was created, consisting of Protected Areas staff and tourism professionals and chaired by Norbert Heukemes, the Director of the Hautes Fagnes-Eifel Nature Park. Five years of meetings and debates lead to a report, provokingly entitled: *Loving them to death? Sustainable Tourism in Europe's Nature and National Parks*. This report stated clearly that tourism development within Protected Areas was not acceptable unless based on sustainable principles. Among the recommendations issued, was the following: "A European Charter for Sustainable Tourism ... needs to be agreed by Protected Areas managers and the tourism sector". An EU LIFE project (1996-1999), led on behalf of the EUROPARC Federation by the French Federation of Regional Parks, was then financed and completed, with a Steering Committee composed of 10 pilot parks and representatives of the tourism sector at local, national and global level. **The representatives contributed with their experience, while the results were implemented in the pilot parks.** A final version of the Charter was published in 2000 and in October 2001 the first 7 parks were approved as Charter parks and received their certificates from EUROPARC.

Today the Charter is well spread across Europe and recognised as a valuable tool for sustainable development.

When I joined the Charter project in 1996 as the Director of Alpi Marittime Nature Park, I was thrilled by the possibility of experimenting with a new approach to tourism management. I never thought that I would be involved for so many years in the project, chairing the Evaluation Committee, and even being awarded by EUROPARC with special recognition!



Loving them to death



ECST Evaluation Committee at work in 2007

Charting the Charter

– a continuing story

*By Richard Denman, Director at The Tourism Company (UK),
Chair of current ECST Evaluation Committee*



This year the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is 20 years old – well done to everyone involved!

I recall a key meeting in 1999 to consider **how to turn this embryonic Charter into a workable system**. EU funding had ceased. I argued strongly for a model which was not dependent on uncertain external funding, but which involved delivering sufficient value to participating parks to enable them to support it and meet its costs. With the Charter celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, this model proved to be a success.

Currently, there are more and more cooperations between the private world and Protected Areas, but twenty years ago the Charter was truly a ground-breaking development. The requirements for participating Parks and Businesses have been revised twice since then, but they stand the test of time. The contents and approach have been revised twice since then but remain similar and have stood the test of time.

For me, the main contribution of the Charter has been to provide an incentive and a guide for Protected Areas to meet two essential requirements – **a sustainable tourism strategy and, crucially, a stakeholder engagement structure** to deliver it. The Charter relies heavily on the fantastic work of the verifiers, who visit each applicant park, speak to a wide range of people, assess the situation and make recommendations. This is extremely important for the Evaluation Committee, informing our decisions and feedback to the Protected Areas.

While the Charter remains highly relevant, we must ensure that it keeps abreast of changing priorities for Protected Areas, businesses and communities, while seeking to strengthen its outreach across Europe.

Charter verifiers, following a training session in Siggen, 2016



Parco nazionale Cinque Terre © Marzia Vivaldi





Awarding ceremony 2021



Zona Volcanica de La Garrotxa Nature Park - bridging the gap among tourism stakeholders

By Josep Maria Prats, Zona Volcanica de La Garrotxa Nature Park, Catalonia, Spain.

Josep was responsible for the implementation and development of the Charter in La Garrotxa. He was also a member of the first committee that drafted the guidelines for the methodology and is currently a member of the ECST Evaluation Committee and a verifier for the Charter.

Since the launch of the programme in 2001, the Charter has become the reference programme for many parks in the field of sustainable tourism. Twenty years after awarding the first 7 parks, today we can speak of the Charter as an established leader for all those who wish to manage the phenomenon of tourism in Europe's Protected Areas in a sustainable way.

If there is one park that has been committed to the European Charter from the outset, it is undoubtedly the Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park (Spain). Garrotxa was one of the 10 pilot parks to define the Charter and one of the first 7 to receive its award in 2001. For 20 years, it has worked in accordance with the principles of the Charter, which has enabled it to define its strategy and develop 4 successive action plans to **achieve excellence in sustainable tourism management**.

The Turisme Garrotxa Association has been an effective Permanent Forum that has made the collaboration of all tourism stakeholders in La Garrotxa possible, involving both public and private entities. In addition, there are currently 40 tourism companies awarded with the Charter that apply for sustainable management programmes and collaborate closely with the park in achieving the objectives of the Charter. Here, the key point is that **the planning**, which is essential to ensure sustainability, is the result of an exemplary collaboration between all the stakeholders involved.

Today we celebrate the enormous endeavours and achievements over these 20 years and do so with deep gratitude to all those who have made its success possible.



La fageda Autum
© La Garrotxa Nature Park



La Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park
© Turisme Garrotxa



Turisme Garrotxa, 20 years and counting for Sustainable Tourism

By David Curós, Tourism Technician at Turisme Garrotxa

I work for the non-profit private association of public and private sector partners representing all the stakeholder in La Garrotxa. The aim of the association is to promote a sustainable tourism model of development, mainly through the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism.

In 2001, La Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park was accredited with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST). Since then, the Natural Park has been working together in cooperation with all tourism agents and administrations throughout the region for the implementation of a sustainable tourism management model. The association Turisme Garrotxa is among the key agents, serving as the **common meeting point** for the public and private sectors.

In La Garrotxa, there are already more than 50 partner businesses actively involved. The ECST accreditation reinforces and improves the close cooperation and collaboration between La Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park and the private tourism sector of the region.

To facilitate the collaborative management processes, in 2016 Turisme Garrotxa created a support service, the "Servei d'Innovació i Producte - SIP" ("Tourism Innovation and Product Service"). It engaged the most active and committed tourism companies in order to promote them and generate a **positive economic impact** following global tourism trends and the local tourism model based on ECST.

This service currently offers support and advice to almost all ECST partner businesses, all of which have improved sustainability and have achieved a specialisation of their services.

As a result of the joint work between the receiving travel agencies and the SIP companies, the Garrotxa 'Incoming Experiences Catalogue' was created. In 2019, the Government of Catalonia awarded Turisme Garrotxa for the creation of this catalogue.

All these initiatives have significantly improved the sustainability of La Garrotxa as a tourist destination and, specifically, the sustainability of the tourism companies most committed to the territory.



Award ceremony of
ECST accreditations
2021 by Turisme
Garrotxa



EUROPARC CONFERENCE 2022

2.-6.5.2022 | NATIONALPARK NEUSIEDLER SEE - SEEWINKEL | AUSTRIA

**COMMUNICATING IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
QUESTION YOUR MINDSET!**



Supported by the federal government and the European Union

 Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Climate Action, Environment,
Energy, Mobility,
Innovation and Technology

LE 14-20
Entwicklung für den Ländlichen Raum

The European
Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development:
Europe investing in
rural areas



www.europarc.org

