



IUCN Countdown 2010

Progress in 2008



Hungary

Countdown 2010

Progress in 2008

1. Enhancing the network of designated sites:

National Protected Areas

One of the main purposes in the national nature conservation is to increase the proportion of areas owned by the state and managed by the national park directorates, especially in national parks. Similarly to previous years the proportion of state-owned protected areas continued to increase.

During 2008 the extension of the area managed by the National Park Directorates increased by 1985 ha, the larger part of that (1852 ha) due to land purchase, the smaller part (133 ha) as a result of taking over the land management right. Most of the land purchase (1138 ha) was supported by EU funds. These state-owned protected areas have very high nature conservation value, so at the same time they are included in the Natura 2000 network, too.

New protected area in 2008 (97.2 ha):

- **Bél-kő Nature Conservation Area**

Enlargements and modifications of the protected areas in 2008 (2770.5 ha):

- **Lázbérci Landscape Protected Area**
- **Baláta-tó Nature Conservation Area**
- **Hevesi Füves Puszták (grasslands) Landscape Protected Area**

Natura 2000

Concerning the Pannon Biogeographical Seminar the list of the planned enlargements of Natura 2000 and their databases were finished in December 2007. At the same time the Natura 2000 database improved continuously. The updated database was submitted to the European Commission in autumn 2008.

Ranger Service in nature conservation

The Ranger Service staff was increased in 2008 by 67 rangers (from 200 to 267). 80 percent of the staff have higher education degree. The average operating area per ranger is 348 km², with 31.5 km² nationally protected area and 74 km² Natura 2000 area. Due to this large working area, it would be necessary to increase the number of rangers to 500.

Biosphere Reserves

The Hungarian-Croatian Joint Committee for Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation was established and the first meeting was held on 6th October 2008. The main reason of this meeting was to create the Hungarian-Croatian Transboundary Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve.

The plan and the application document of the Hungarian Croatian Transboundary Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve were prepared on the basis of the Seville Strategy on Biosphere Reserves for sustainable development. This proposal was negotiated at the meeting of the MAB National Committee on 28th October 2008 and it will be submitted in autumn 2009 by the Hungarian coordinators.

The most important goal to create this biosphere reserve is that in the Mura-Drava-Danube area there are some very special habitats with rare natural values and it helps to enhance the local people's livelihood.

National Spatial Plan and National Ecological Network

The amended Act on the National Spatial Plan came into force in July 2008. The National Ecological Network (core area, ecological corridors, buffer zones) are determined by this plan, so the updating of this database was also finished till the above-mentioned date.

Most of the Natura 2000 sites were also classified into the zones of the National Ecological Network, so the protection of these sites has been assured on planning level.

Ramsar sites

Two new Ramsar sites were designated and one was enlarged in Hungary during 2008 (altogether 28,200 ha). The restoration of the marshlands and grasslands on the Egyek-pusztakócsi Ramsar site were finished in a LIFE Nature project. The Hungarian National Committee of the Ramsar Convention was re-established for a term of three years, after the mandate of the previous committee had expired.

2. Complying with EU legislation and international conventions signed by Hungary in the field of nature conservation:

- The “Tourism for the Nature” international program was finished with great success (complete title: Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Sound Tourism Development in Biosphere Reserves in Central and Eastern Europe). This program involved three Biosphere Reserves (Sumava, Babia Gora and Aggtelek), belonging to three countries (Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary). In Hungary, the program was carried out by the collaboration between the Ecological Institute for Sustainable Development and the Aggteleki National Park Directorate, and its purpose was to create and develop nature-friendly tourism in the Gömör-Tornai Karst area.
- A collaboration was started with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development concerning the improvement of Hungarian genebanks and the conservation of plant genetical resources. The Parliament assured financial resources for gene conservation assessments in 2009.
- Our Ministry prepared a project application to establish a “Pannon Seedbank” for the ex-situ conservation of native higher plants. It was submitted to the European Commission jointly with the following participating institutes: Agrobotanical Center, Institute of Ecology and Botany of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Aggteleki National Park Directorate. The Ministry undertook to cofinance the five-year project.
- We started to adjust the boundaries of the Natura 2000 sites to the Hungarian land register parcels. This is necessary to help the administrative work of the authorities in implementing regulations related to the Natura 2000 network.
- The Natura 2000 sites cover almost 485,000 land register parcels. The Natura 2000 status has to be registered in the land registry system, in order to implement the law. The registration began in spring 2007 in the local land registry offices. Good progress has been made, although it is a very time-consuming process and is a serious administrative burden. Presently, it is 95 percent complete.
- An EU-funded project to prepare the monitoring of Natura 2000 species and habitats, based on the Birds and Habitats directives, was finished in 2008. The results provide many new data about the distribution and population size of many species and habitats and a number of different monitoring methods and protocols have been worked out in the frame of this project.

- In February 2008, the Ministry of Environment and Water and BirdLife Hungary made an agreement known as ‘Accessible Sky’ with the Hungarian electricity suppliers. The purpose of this agreement is to reduce avian mortality along power lines. The implementation of this agreement is supported by some LIFE projects, for example the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*), Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) and Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) LIFE projects. On the basis of the agreement the electricity suppliers have designed a new type of pylon at their own cost and have revisited all former designs and bird-friendly applications as to their efficiency. The newly designed pylon is tested by all suppliers and the inventor company will gradually shift to using this bird-friendly design in the future.
- Connected to the above mentioned agreement, the nature conservation law was amended by the Parliament: on installing or renovating electricity power lines, only such technical solutions can be used that are not dangerous for birds.
- Naturally, the above mentioned LIFE projects have positive results to numerous other species living in the same habitat, not only to the targeted flagship species. The Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) LIFE project was accomplished with great success. Unquestionable result that the Hungarian stock started to increase during the last two years caused by this project.

3. Strengthening financial and legislative capacities for nature conservation:

- In 2008, the elaboration of the new agri-environmental scheme was continued under the New Hungary Rural Development Program, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Due to the revision of the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA), farmers can enter the 5-year scheme and apply for environmental subsidies on more than 914,000 hectares from 2009. The financial support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development makes nature-friendly agricultural practice possible on 300,000 hectares (three times more than it was in the former years).
- The “KöM decree No. 12/2001. (V.9.) on the protected and strictly protected plant and animal species, on the strictly protected caves and on the publication of plant and animal species of Community interest” was amended. Its list was enlarged by 35 newly protected animal species, 5 new animal species of Community interest, 3 newly protected lichen species, 27 newly protected plant species and 2 new strictly protected caves. At the same time 8 protected plant species were reclassified and gained strictly protected status.
- Government decree No. 275/2004. (X.8.) on the Natura 2000 sites was also amended. After approval by the European Commission, the “proposed Sites of Community Interest” (pSCI) became “Sites of Community Interest”. Furthermore, the process, the criteria system and detailed terms of appropriate assessment on Natura 2000 sites are regulated in Article 10 of the decree.

4. Raising public awareness for the 2010 biodiversity target:

- In 2008, kindergartens were the main targeted age-group in environmental education. On the basis of joint project applications of the Ministry of Environment and Water and the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Green Kindergarten network was enlarged by 97 kindergartens, so by now more than 200 institutes possess the “Green Kindergarten” title. A 30-hour postgraduate training for pedagogists, to be accredited in the near future, serves to enhance environmental education activity.

- For the fifth time, the Ministry of Environment and Water and the Ministry of Education and Culture announced a call for applications for the “Ecoschool” title. This title aims to acknowledge schools with a strategy in practice on environmental awareness and education, sustainable consumption and development. 354 ecoschools exist now in Hungary.
- In the frame of the Nature School Program, 96 qualified Nature Schools and 1 Nature Kindergarten are in service. The last one is especially important because it can receive handicapped children, too.
- Once again there was a wide-ranged interest concerning educational competitions among young students in 2008.
- The Ministry of Environment and Water motivates schools to participate in international environmental education programs (GLOBE, BISEL, “Measure the time”, Danube encyclopaedia) which are focussed around practical measurements and observations.
- “Eco-clubs” have been operating since 2007 as the youth program of the Ministry of Environment and Water. These clubs operate in 7 Hungarian institutions of higher education and 4 institutions abroad.

LIFE projects

In the frame of the LIFE+ Fund, four new Hungarian nature conservation projects were approved for funding in 2008. These projects lay special emphasis on raising public environmental awareness, in addition to their practical conservation goals.

- *Restoration and conservation of priority habitats and species in the Eastern Bakony area.* The general objectives of the project are the implementation of Community Environmental policy through its integration to military practice and supporting the further development and implementation of the Natura 2000 network. The specific objectives of the project are managing future Natura 2000 sites in the Eastern Bakony area and rehabilitate natural habitats which have been damaged by past military actions and neglect. Attention will be paid to sustainable long-term maintenance of the sites and informing stakeholders and the general public about the natural values and conservation efforts of the area.
- *Restoration of sodic lake sub-type of the Pannonic salt steppe and marsh habitat in the Hortobágy.* The primary objective of the project is to eliminate unfavorable and detrimental processes affecting the project site, namely: draining of natural rainfall, dramatic decline in the size of seasonal waterbodies, sewage runoff getting into natural water bodies, decline in the numbers of grazing domestic animals and disappearance of traditional small-scale grazing systems, loss of biodiversity, conflicting interests of locals and conservationists, lack of possibility/infrastructure to raise awareness of natural heritage, lack of environmental education for stakeholders and the wider public, presence of anthropogenic pollution and human-induced stresses and unregulated access to the area.
- *Conservation of alluvial habitats of community interest on the Szabadság Island and side channel in Béda-Karapanca pSCI.* The main objective is to provide a long-term, sustainable method for the conservation of *Salicion albae* alluvial forests (91E0), to develop methods and a mechanism which is implemented and tested on a model site. The project aims at eliminating or mitigating the factors that threaten the habitats of community interest of the project site: the spread of alien species, improper forest management practices and the accelerated silting-up process (colmation) in the side channel. Project goals are to clear the project area from invasive species and non-native tree plantations and to restore the sound water flow in the side channel in order to improve water availability for riparian forests during low water periods.

- *Conservation of Hungarian meadow viper (Vipera ursinii rakosiensis) in the Carpathian-basin.* The project targets the critically endangered Hungarian meadow viper (*Vipera ursinii rakosiensis*). The species lost radically its former range, and recent populations are fragmented. Population sizes and numbers of the species will be increased with direct actions and size of habitats will be increased through grassland reconstruction. As the release of a venomous snake is an issue that can be easily misinterpreted, strong emphasis will be put on PR-campaign in order to avoid any hysterical reaction by the broad public.
- A webpage was created concerning the implementation of a Transition Facility project to raise public awareness and acceptance of Natura 2000. This homepage presents the 20 Natura 2000 sites which had been selected for the preparation of conservation management plans. It helps to cooperate and disseminate information for the municipalities, the local land owners, users and authorities, too.

5. Protection and management for habitats and species:

- Nature conservation management plans were announced in ministerial decrees for the newly designated mentioned in chapter 1. Beyond that, management plans were also announced for 8 formerly designated national protected areas in 2008. Thus, a total of 51 nature conservation management plans were announced till the end of 2008.
- The implementation of the monitoring and management in line with the Birds (79/409/EEC) and Habitats (92/43/EEC) Directives connected to Transition Facility project granted in 2006 was finished. The localities for 44 species of community importance were monitored as the result of this program. Monitoring protocols have been worked out and tested to monitor the nature conservation status of each species. In the frame of this application 30 habitatmaps and monitoring methods for Natura 2000 sites were created. These components will give the basis of the country report according to Article 17 of the Habitats Directive in the period 2007-2013.
- The National Biodiversity-monitoring System, which investigates the status and trends of Hungarian biodiversity has been operating for 11 years. Previously running projects were complemented by the monitoring of species and habitats of community importance. The number of monitoring localities and components is continuously increased, and the protocols are also regularly revised. The results of the system have been presented at many scientific conferences. The large numbers of data from the monitoring system are stored in the biotic module of the Nature Conservation Information System. On the basis of the collected data and experiences, Hungary joined the establishment of the Life Watch information network.
- The Ministry of Environment and Water, cooperating with other ministries, started to work out the national strategy against invasive alien species, in line with the European Strategy of the Bern Convention. The compilation of the list of invasive alien plant and animal species and collection of data from research and from practical defense projects were started.