



# Conservation of wetlands in the Carpathians

9 December 2009



“Conservation of wetlands in the Carpathians” was the theme of an

international conference held at the tourist village Tatranská Štrba at the edge of the High Tatra Mountains National Park in Slovakia on 16-19 November 2009. The conference was attended by 65 experts from all seven Carpathian countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine), the Carpathian and Ramsar Convention Secretariats, and WWF’s Danube-Carpathian Programme. After an initial workshop in April 2004 and a strategic planning meeting in November 2006, this was the first major event organised in the framework of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative, one of the 15 regional initiatives endorsed by the Ramsar Standing Committee as operating within the framework of the Ramsar Convention.

The conference was ably organised by former Ramsar Standing Committee member Ján Kadlečík, of the Slovak State Nature Conservancy, and Viera Šefferová Stanová, of the Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology. In order to create a common baseline understanding about the wetland resources throughout the Carpathian mountain range, each of the national focal points first briefly presented the wetland types, their distribution and status in the respective countries and introduced briefly the national policies used for their management and wise use. In addition, the 2006 Memorandum of Cooperation between the Carpathian and Ramsar Conventions was recalled, and Harald Egerer of the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention gave an update on progress with the ratification of its new protocol on biodiversity and ecological corridors and how this could be used to support work focusing on wetlands, with additional financial support for regional cooperation from the European Union Interreg programme.

Then the country representatives discussed in smaller groups the challenges and priorities for regional cooperation and drew up a number of concrete conclusions for the 2010 work plan of the Carpathian Wetland Initiative (cf. the attached conference report [here](#)). They concluded that a small “action group” should take a leading and coordinating role to assure the further development of the regional initiative, that it is important to develop a common understanding of wetland terms and management and restoration approaches throughout the Carpathians, that managers of protected areas (especially those with wetland ecosystems) need to be fully involved, and that it is important to develop the visibility and a CEPA programme for the Carpathian Wetland Initiative in order to reach out to other sectors. On the technical side, particular focus should be given to the role of wetlands in climate change mitigation, the control and eradication of invasive alien species, and the development of a wetland restoration programme. Concretely, the establishment of a Carpathian Wetland Centre in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, was proposed, and the opportunity underlined to link a major activity of the regional initiative in 2010 with the planned field symposium of the International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) in Slovakia and Poland in July 2010.

The second part of the conference was devoted to the “Conservation, restoration and wise use of rich fens in the Slovak Republic”, the theme of a UNEP-GEF project focusing on the ecology and hydrology, and their restoration, of rich (alkaline or calcareous) fens, a wetland type particularly important in the Carpathian region. This included a visit to the nearby Belianske lúky Nature Reserve, a potential Ramsar site.

The conference was also the opportunity for the Carpathian EcoRegion Initiative (CERI) to present their resource

handbook “World of the Carpathians”, a teaching tool with an impressive number of fact sheets on all aspects linked to Carpathian biodiversity. A specific working group discussed how best to use this resource by school teachers, and what role it can play in a comprehensive CEPA programme. Interested teachers and others can ask for a copy of the “World of the Carpathians” resource folder by contacting Anna Guttová of CERI ([guttova@daphne-sk](mailto:guttova@daphne-sk)).

All in all, a very rich and informative meeting that set the Carpathian Wetland Initiative on a strong footing and prepared it for an active programme of work ahead of Ramsar COP11, which will be hosted in 2012 by Romania, one of the Carpathian countries. And probably, it can also inspire other Ramsar regional initiatives how best to organise their work?



Jan Kadlecik animating a discussion among Ramsar national focal points on the work programme of the initiative



A folkloric group playing High Tatra music during the evening reception

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