



ANNUAL REPORT 2006



CAUCASUS ECOREGION



AZOV SEA

BLACK SEA

CASPIAN SEA

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

GEORGIA

Tbilisi

ARMENIA

Yerevan

AZERBAIJAN

Baku

TURKEY

AZERBAIJAN

IRAN

LEGEND

 Ecoregion Border

The Caucasus region is historical-geographically considered as being the isthmus between the Black and Caspian seas, and covering a total area of some 580,000 km², and spanning three countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and sections of the northern Caucasus part of the Russian Federation, northeastern Turkey, and a segment of northwestern Iran.

The region showcases natural contrasts, and is composed of several prominent landscapes and geographic pinnacles. These include the Greater Caucasus Range (with highest peak - Mt. Elbrus at 5,642 m), the Lesser Caucasus Mountain Chain and the South Caucasian Uplands. This region also shares a diversity of various species and the number of endemic ones is exceptionally high for a temperate zone and which is further related to the geographic position of the Caucasus, which lies at the junction of several distinct bio-geographic regions, as well as because of its evolutionary history.

The Caucasus is one of WWF's Global 200 Ecoregions, identified as globally outstanding for biodiversity (www.worldwildlife.org/science/ecoregions/) and is considered as being one of the most biologically rich ecoregions anywhere on earth. The Caucasus is ranked among the planet's 25 most diverse and endangered hotspots by Conservation International.

The Caucasus is also a globally significant center of cultural diversity, where a multitude of ethnic groups and languages intermingle within a relatively small land area that shares a common natural heritage.



Մեր տեսլականն է՝ դարձնել Կովկասը մի տարածաշրջան, որտեղ տեղի բույսերի և կենդանիների պուլսայացիան աճում է, բնական միջավայրերը, գեղատեսիլ լանդշաֆտները և բնական գործընթացները պահպանվում են և որտեղ նշանդուն ու բազմազան ազգերը մասնակցում են բնական պաշարների հավասար օգտագործմանը և դրանց կայուն կառավարմանը:

Biz Qafqazı bitki və heyvan populyasiyalarının çəiçəkləndiyi, yaşayış yerlərin, landşaftların və təbii proseslərin mühafizə olunduğu, müxtəlif insanların təbii sərvətlərdən ədalətli və davamlı idarə olunmasında fəal iştirak etdiyi bir bölgə kimi görmək istəyirik.

ჩვენ გვსურს, კავკასია გახდეს ისეთი რეგიონი, სადაც საფრთხე აღარასოდეს დაემუქრება მცენარეთა და ცხოველთა მკვიდრ პოპულაციებს; სადაც მათი სამყოფელები, ბუნებრივი ლანდშაფტები და პროცესები საიმედოდ იქნება დაცული; და სადაც კავკასიის ქვეყნების ხალხი აქტიურად იქნება ჩაბმული ბუნებრივი რესურსების სამართლიან და მდგრად მართვაში.

Our vision for the Caucasus is of a region where healthy populations of native plants and animals flourish; habitats, landscapes and natural processes are preserved; and where vibrant and diverse peoples actively participate in the equitable and sustainable management and use of natural resources

Kafkasya için vizyonumuz, doğal bitki ve hayvan türleri ile bunlara ait popülasyonların sağlıklı bir şekilde serpilip gelişebildiği; doğal peyzajların, yaşamalanlarının ve doğal süreçlerin muhafaza edildiği; dinamik ve farklı kültürlerle sahip insan topluluklarının, doğal kaynakların adil ve sürdürülebilir kullanımı ve yönetiminde etkin bir şekilde yer aldığı bir bölge yaratmaktır.

Мы видим будущее Кавказа как региона, где процветают жизнеспособные популяции растений и животных, где сохранены местообитания, естественные ландшафты и природные процессы, и где люди разных этносов активно участвуют в равноправном и устойчивом процессе управления и пользования природными ресурсами.

از دیدگاه ما قفقاز منطقه ای سالم برای سکنه گیاهان و رشد و نموی جانوران و بوده که مناظر و جریانات طبیعی دارای در آن ملل مختلف با اشتیاق و علاقه زیاد در امر نگاهداری و مواظبت از ذخایر طبیعی همکاری می نمایند

Organize well managed protected areas network across the Ecoreion



Caucasus Biodiversity Council

The Caucasus Ecoregion, historically interpreted as the isthmus between the Black and Caspian Seas, includes the countries of: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the North Caucasus portion of the Russian Federation, northeastern Turkey, and part of northwestern Iran. Effective coordination amongst these six countries is extremely important for biodiversity conservation efforts of the governments, the donor society and NGOs.

During the development of the first conservation strategy for the Caucasus Ecoregion (1999-2000), the stakeholders identified the urgent need to establish a coordinating body that would improve biodiversity conservation collaboration and the sustainable use of natural resources in the Caucasus.

In 2001, the MacArthur Foundation responded to the stakeholders' request by making funds available to establish an independent regional body, "The Regional Council for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Resource Use in the Caucasus." In 2006 the consortium changed its name to Caucasus Biodiversity Council – CBC.

The CBC promotes and monitors the implementation of the Ecoregional Conservation Plan (ECP), facilitates the implementation of regional programs and projects, and provides a forum for exchange of opinion and promotion of transboundary activities.

Each country selects two representatives to participate in the CBC, one from a government institution and one from civil society. This is an appropriate work format for the Council, as not only nations, but civil society and governments cooperate to realize a single conservation goal.

Working at the ecoregional level implies working in large areas, so as to ensure that ecological processes and the dynamics of wildlife populations are maintained throughout the season and under different climatic conditions. Conservation efforts include protecting critical summer and winter habitats, places for raising offspring and migratory corridors.

Encourage collaborative management through involvement of all stakeholders, from national, governments to NGOs and local communities



4th CBC Meeting

Transboundary cooperation was the main subject of this meeting. The council agreed on basic principles for promoting transboundary cooperation with a particular focus on protected areas. Constraints for protected areas were addressed specifically with the objective to find solutions. Several active and planned projects were reviewed such as: Javakheti-Arpi Lake (Georgia-Armenia), cooperation between Turkey and Georgia in the South Colchis and perspectives for developing a protected area system in the Eastern Greater Caucasus (Azerbaijan-Georgia-Russia).

Working groups with representatives from the relevant countries were established to move these projects forward. The Council agreed that promotion of transboundary cooperation will remain one of its main priorities.

Conserve and restore endangered species



5th CBC Meeting

The Council agreed to become more visible in the region and vis a vis existing and potential partners. One step in this direction was the agreement on a logo and an abbreviated name for the Council and a request to the chairman and the secretariat to explore possibilities for registering the Council as a civil association.

The Council reviewed the implementation status of the Ecoregion Conservation Plan by priority biomes and focal species. The Council noted that more work is needed to complete this assessment. Members agreed to participate actively in this review by providing information and communicating this to the secretariat. Council members will also identify the most urgent activities which are not efficiently addressed so far. A work plan for implementing action on urgent conservation issues will be prepared for approval at the next CBC meeting.

The Council accepted the responsibility for the overall coordination of a project which supports the CBC Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA). This project is targeted to create enabling conditions for implementing the CBD programme in the region. Council members will be members of the National Coordination Committees. This will help to ensure that the activities of the project are in line with the priorities of the Ecoregion Conservation Plan. Within the framework of this project the Council will identify and implement additional urgent activities for fulfillment of CBD PoWPA in the region.

Particular attention was given to the conservation situation in the Eastern Caucasus. Transboundary cooperation needs to be strengthened to provide better protection of endangered species, in particular in Daghestan. The Council encouraged its members from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia to follow up on this issue.

Promote transboundary cooperation



Protected Areas Network

The Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is a worldwide effort to globally reduce biodiversity loss. The goal of the programme is to support the establishment and maintenance of comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically representative protected areas systems by 2010 for terrestrial and by 2012 for marine areas.

WWF has developed the 2012 Protected Areas Programme which aims to contribute to the implementation of the PoWPA in six Ecoregions of outstanding biodiversity value, including the Caucasus. Most countries in the Caucasus are experiencing serious political, economic, social and institutional difficulties, and this has been associated with the collapse of socialism. Such issues must be addressed along with environmental concerns in protecting the valuable natural ecosystems. The strength of the PoWPA lies in its multifaceted, flexible and realistic nature; it addresses all relevant institutional, social, economic and ecological aspects associated with sustainable protected area (PA) management.

The aim of the proposed project is to create enabling conditions for the implementation of the PoWPA in five countries of the Caucasus Ecoregion - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia and Turkey. Three major objectives are considered centre stage to this objective: 1) focusing on the creation of an implementation mechanism, 2) capacity building and 3) fundraising in providing adequate PA financing levels.

In addition, this project will address several serious problems presently experienced in the ecoregion, such as inadequate PA management, legal and institutional gaps, a lack of cooperation both within and between the various states, staff lacking experience, and the overall low level of public awareness.

The Caucasus Biodiversity Council will be responsible for the overall coordination of the project at the regional level, while National Coordination Committees will address country-specific issues. A Coordination Team consisting of one Regional and five national coordinators will execute project implementation. Governmental organizations, such as Ministries of environment/ecology, agricultural and land use authorities, various departments and local administrations will be actively involved. In addition, partnerships with other NGOs, scientific institutions and donors are envisaged.



Restore degraded ecosystems

Leopard Initiative

The leopard was identified as a top priority species in the Ecoregional Conservation Plan, a key strategic document for biodiversity conservation in the region. Although leopards indirectly benefited from the establishment of protected areas in the last century, their numbers have dramatically dwindled as a result of intense poaching. This wide-roaming cat is truly a symbol of the need for cooperation amongst Caucasus countries, as no single country can ensure the leopard's survival.

Beginning in 2001, WWF has started to systematically investigate the status of leopards in the Caucasus through surveys and field monitoring. CBC has actively supported these activities. The next step requires drafting a conservation strategy and vision that has wide support throughout the region.

On 29 May-1 June, 2007 in Tbilisi, Georgia, the WWF and IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group brought together 40 representatives of governmental organizations, NGOs and scientific institutions from all six Caucasus countries, as well as experts from international conservation organizations to begin drafting such a strategy.

Attendees included: CBC member Mr. Mustafa Akincioglu of Turkey, Georgia's Deputy Director General for Nature Protection and National Parks, representatives from Turkey's Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Mrs. Ana Rukhadze, Department Head of Georgia's Biodiversity Protection, representatives from Georgia's Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources, and Mr. M. Taghi Farvar, the President of the Iranian NGO CENESTA and Chair of IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy.

Workshop results show that CBC support will be crucial for approval and implementation of the strategy.



Harmonize legislative and policy frameworks

Future role of CBC

The Ecoregion Conservation Plan (ECP) addresses conservation issues of regional importance and across political borders in 6 countries. The Caucasus Biodiversity Council will continue to help maintaining and promoting the regional approach to conservation. It will monitor the implementation of the ECP, identify gaps and set, where and when necessary new priorities for action. Promotion and active participation in transboundary conservation issues will become a main focus in the coming years; this will include supporting interdisciplinary and multinational working groups on specific issues, assistance in drafting memoranda of understanding, developing transboundary agreements and help in solving problems and conflicts and attracting donors.

Council members are the focal point for the ECP in their country. They will ensure the active involvement of their constituency (governmental and non-governmental) in the programme. They will drive the agenda of Council meetings by collecting items for discussion in consultation with their constituency and brief their network on the council's deliberations.

Council members will engage more actively in ECP implementation and promotion between meetings, e.g. by raising awareness in their countries about the council's activities, for instance by arranging meetings on specific issues together with the chairman, and by providing information to the media on the Councils activities.

The establishment of an endowment fund would raise the role and acceptance of the Council significantly. This would enable the Council to allocate money to issues of regional importance, e.g. seminars, strategy planning or feasibility studies.

Coordinate scientific research and monitoring across the Ecoregion, including on indigenous knowledge and local communities



Acknowledgement

Establishment and activity of the Caucasus Biodiversity Council would be impossible without our base of strong and staunch supporters. We would like to show our appreciation to Azerbaijan Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Armenian Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia, the Iranian Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources, and the Georgian Department of the Environment and Natural Resources and to the Ministries of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation, and the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

We offer special gratitude to the donors who have stood with us and believe that regional cooperation is extremely important for Caucasus biodiversity conservation and environmental integrity; that by protecting the nature of the Caucasus, this will provide the conditions to bridge gaps and bring countries of the Caucasus that much closer to one another.



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Increase environmental education and raise awareness on biodiversity conservation



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