

**CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM  
PARTNERSHIP FUND**

A joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank.



**CEPF Footprints**  
Across the Caucasus Hotspot

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2009



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## Message from CEPF Executive Director

Partnership is a central component needed for success. It is an essential foundation for truly sustainable development. It enables diverse groups to find common strength and purpose to address environmental challenges. It also links groups at local, national and international levels into networks for information sharing and joint action.

Partnership is central to the way in which CEPF works. Recognizing the complementary strengths of government, nongovernmental organizations and local communities, our investments foster alliances for action that engage different actors in conservation. Our approach transcends political boundaries and fosters coordination and joint efforts across large landscapes for both local and global benefits. In few parts of the world has this been better demonstrated than in the Caucasus biodiversity hotspot.

Since 2003, CEPF has invested \$8.5 million to support civil society efforts to help preserve critical ecosystems in the Caucasus. The first stage was to convene stakeholders to prepare an 'Ecosystem profile', which set the five-year strategy for our investment. Under this strategy, CEPF investment was envisioned in four thematic areas: strengthening mechanisms to conserve biodiversity; supporting civil society efforts to promote transboundary cooperation and improve protected area systems; implementing models of sustainable resource use; and increasing the conservation awareness and commitment of decision makers. To maximize impact on the ground, investment targeted five transboundary corridors and the protected areas on which they are anchored.

The benefits of CEPF investment in the Caucasus are many and varied. Our support has enabled civil society partners to make important contributions to establishing, extending and strengthening of protected area systems; the conservation of globally threatened species; and vital cooperation between the region's diverse nations. CEPF support has also catalyzed national, regional and international partnerships to support conservation. In relation to wider sustainable development, CEPF-supported partners have demonstrated new approaches for sustainable natural resources use, and developed alternative livelihoods for local communities.

These achievements have only been possible through the hard work and ambition of more than 100 NGOs, academic institutions and grassroots groups whose work we helped make possible. Able support and guidance from the WWF Caucasus Programme Office was a fundamental ingredient.

Looking to the future, our thoughts should not dwell only on the most tangible achievements but also on the strengthened foundations that now exist, in terms of civil society capacity, and upon which this success can be further built and endure for future generations.

**Bobbie Jo Kelso**  
Acting Executive Director



## Message from the CEPF Leadership Team / Coordination Unit in the Caucasus

CEPF Investment in the Caucasus Hotspot was a unique and valuable opportunity for the region to strengthen and coordinate transboundary cooperation and initiate new regional interactions for biodiversity conservation. The corridor approach encouraged regional and transboundary partnerships, as each priority corridor crosses the boundaries of two or more countries of the hotspot.

We believe that the CEPF Leadership Team / Coordination Unit in the Caucasus drawing on the WWF network and its capacities in the region played a crucial role in the successful realization of the CEPF Investment Strategy. We did our best to guide the implementation process effectively and to involve all stakeholders, including local communities, in the programme's biodiversity conservation efforts. The Leadership Team supported the development and review of proposals, regularly seeking opportunities to improve collaboration between projects working in similar geographic areas or on related themes. CEPF made an invaluable contribution to building partnerships between governments and the non-governmental and scientific sectors, as well as with all forms of media at both national and regional levels. CEPF investment in the Caucasus has illustrated how joint efforts and strengthened networking by civil society groups across the region can help achieve concrete conservation outcomes. This investment has significantly strengthened the foundations of capacity, knowledge and partnership in the region on which future conservation efforts can be built.

The CEPF Leadership Team gratefully acknowledges the support from the CI and CEPF staff during this five-year programme. This support was crucial for realizing the CEPF goals for biodiversity conservation in the Caucasus Hotspot.

Our special thanks go to the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Turkey for their critical revisions and approval of the initial CEPF Ecosystem Profile, and then their valuable support in CEPF's Investment Strategy implementation.

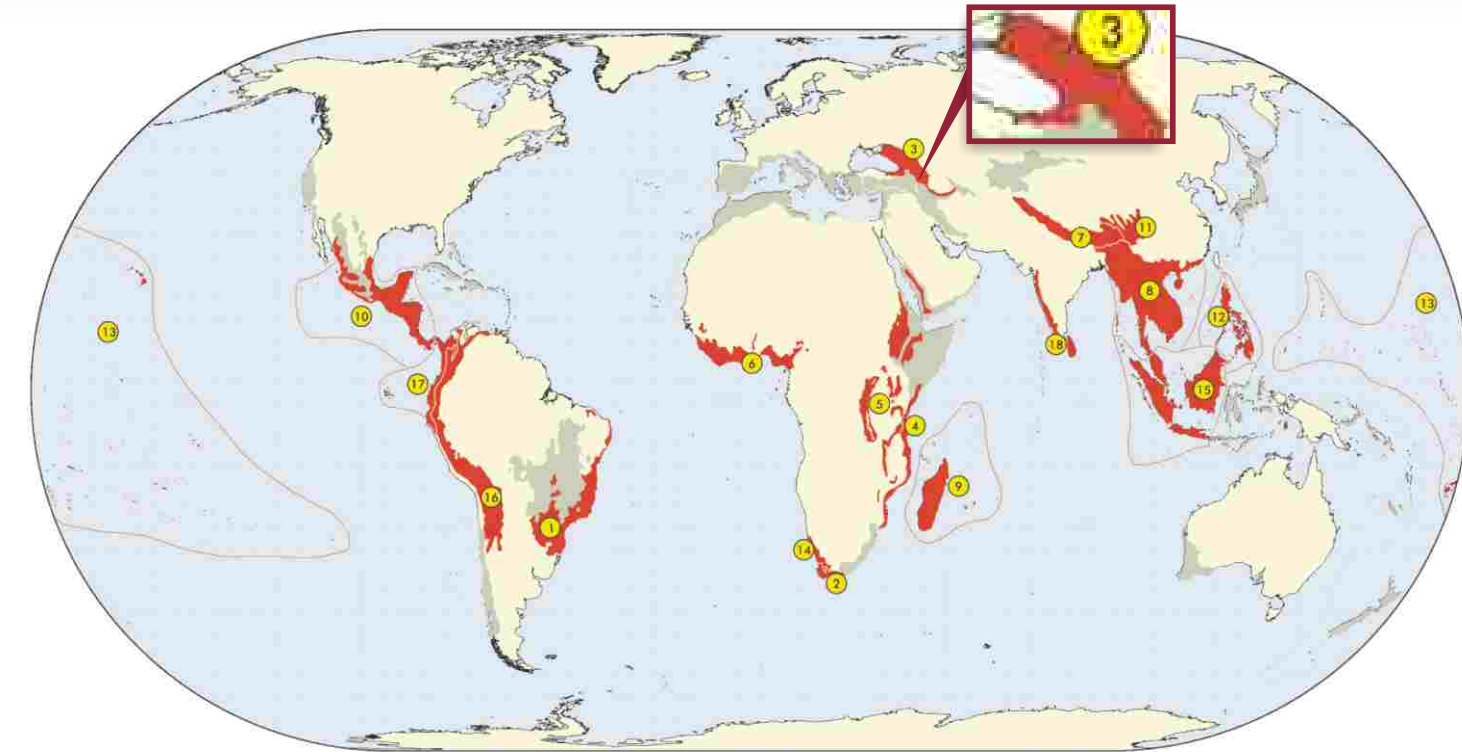
We also thank all grantees, organisations and individuals involved in the implementation of the CEPF Investment Strategy in the Caucasus for their dedication and great efforts contributing to Ecoregional conservation.

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## CEPF and Hotspots where the Fund Supported Civil Society

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. CEPF is a global leader in enabling civil society to participate in and benefit from conserving biodiversity hotspots, the biologically richest and most threatened areas in the world.

Since 2000, CEPF's investments have encompassed 18 biodiversity hotspots, including the Caucasus, and it aims to expand to new hotspots over the next five years. Prior to investment in each hotspot, CEPF determines its niche based on a stakeholder-driven prioritization process that includes socioeconomic features, conservation threats and current investments, as well as conservation outcomes based on biodiversity science. An Ecosystem Profile is a document which presents CEPF's investment strategy for a particular hotspot and the justification that underpins it.



Biodiversity Hotspot – one of the most biologically rich and threatened areas in the world. Thirty-four Biodiversity Hotspots have been identified on the Earth. These hotspots contain especially high numbers of unique species, yet their combined area now covers only 2.3 percent of the Earth's land surface. Many encompass priority areas in multiple countries. Each one faces extreme threats and has lost at least 70 percent of its original habitat.

- |                              |   |   |   |  |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| <b>biodiversity hotspots</b> |  CEPF investment |  1 Atlantic Forest                   |  7 Himalaya                            |  13 Polynesia-Micronesia      |
|                              |  other           |  2 Cape Floristic Region             |  8 Indo-Burma                          |  14 Succulent Karoo           |
|                              |   |  3 Caucasus                          |  9 Madagascar and Indian Ocean Islands |  15 Sundaland                 |
|                              |   |  4 Coastal Forests of Eastern Africa |  10 Mesoamerica                        |  16 Tropical Andes            |
|                              |   |  5 Eastern Afromontane               |  11 Mountains of Southwest China       |  17 Tumbes-Choco-Magdalena    |
|                              |   |  6 Guinean Forests of West Africa    |  12 Philippines                        |  18 Western Ghats & Sri Lanka |

## The Caucasus Hotspot

The Caucasus Hotspot is one of 34 biodiversity hotspots in the world and one of WWF's 35 Priority Places, identified as focal among globally outstanding 200 Ecoregions. It has also been named a Large Herbivore Hotspot by WWF's Large Herbivore Initiative and as an Endemic Bird Area by BirdLife International.

The Caucasus Hotspot spans 580,000 km<sup>2</sup> of mountains in Eurasia, between the Black and Caspian Seas. It includes all of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the North Caucasus portion of the Russian Federation, north-eastern Turkey and part of north-western Iran.

The region's unique geology and terrain, consisting of three major mountain chains separated by valleys and plains, have meant that a variety of microclimates, soils and vegetative conditions have developed. This has resulted in a broad range of landscapes and unusually high levels of species diversity within the Temperate Zone. Climatic conditions are very diverse, with precipitation ranging from more than 4,000 mm per year in the south-western Caucasus to less than 200 mm a year in deserts of the eastern Caucasus.

The Caucasus Hotspot has the greatest biological diversity of any temperate forest region in the world. It includes more than 6,500 species of vascular plants, at least 1,600 of which (25%) are unique to the region. This is the highest level of floral endemism in the temperate world. Forests, high mountains, wetlands, steppes and semi-deserts contain more than twice the plant and animal diversity found in adjacent regions of Europe and Asia. At least 153 mammals inhabit the Caucasus Hotspot, one-fifth of which are endemic. As many as 400 species of birds are found here including four endemics. The coasts of the Black and Caspian Seas are important stop-over sites for millions of migratory birds which fly over the isthmus each spring and autumn between their breeding and wintering grounds. Twenty-two of the 77 reptile species are endemic to the hotspot and 14 species of amphibian are found, of which four are endemics. More than a third of the 200 species of fish in the rivers and seas of the hotspot are found nowhere else in the world.

In addition to its outstanding biological value, the Caucasus Hotspot is a offers wide cultural diversity, where a multitude of ethnic groups, languages and religions intermingle over a relatively small area.





## The CEPF Investment Niche and Priorities in the Caucasus Hotspot

CEPF commenced its work in the Caucasus in August 2003. The WWF Caucasus Programme Office (WWF Caucasus PO) led the development of a CEPF Ecosystem Profile for the Caucasus Hotspot.

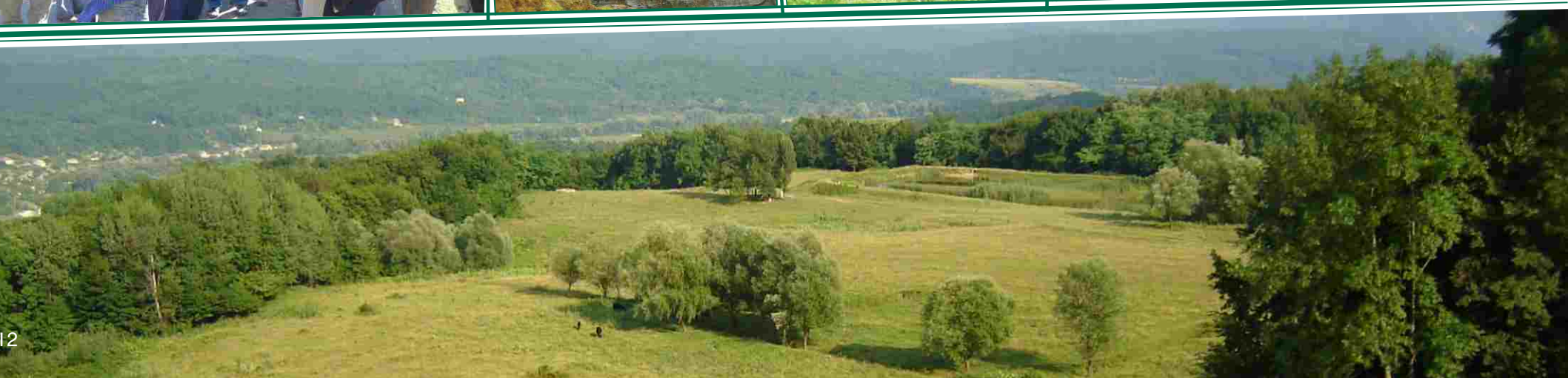
The process was science-based, using conservation outcomes to define the targets for CEPF investment. Combined with WWF's ability to guide regional-scale strategy development (expertise gained in part through its experience putting together an Ecoregional Conservation Plan for the Caucasus), this resulted in a clear investment strategy with broad stakeholder support. WWF brought together more than 130 experts from the six Caucasus countries to consider how CEPF could best add value to the region's conservation efforts. The Ecosystem Profile focused on conserving the hotspot's globally threatened species, most of which are found in key sites within focal corridors.



## Overview of CEPF Footprints Across the Caucasus

The CEPF Investment was officially launched in May 2004 and a total of \$8.5 million was committed over five years for biodiversity conservation in the Caucasus Hotspot. This investment was coordinated and managed through the mutual efforts of CEPF and the WWF Caucasus PO. During the investment period, CEPF awarded 42 grants to civil society organizations. The grants to international organizations included a grant to WWF which meant that the WWF Caucasus PO could then create a Small Grants Program to contract and support the management of 86 smaller grants under \$20,000 each. Almost all of these were made to local organizations. A total of 128 grants and sub-grants were awarded by CEPF and WWF Caucasus PO.

Large investments were made in the West Lesser Caucasus, East Lesser Caucasus and Greater Caucasus Corridors, with considerably smaller investments in the Caspian and Hyrcan Corridors. As for multi-corridor projects, generally they covered all five priority corridors, with most going to the Greater Caucasus, West Lesser Caucasus and East Lesser Caucasus Corridors.



CEPF funding succeeded in reaching civil society organizations from grassroots to the international level. This significantly increased local organizations' capacity to contribute to conservation, creating a strong foundation for future conservation initiatives in the region. Around 90 organizations were involved in the implementation of the CEPF Regional Programme with over 75 local NGOs and scientific institutions receiving CEPF grants. In many cases local organizations with less capacity to manage small grants were trained in proposal writing, reporting and project management by the WWF Coordination Unit. The full range of conservation outcomes attained through CEPF investment included:

- contributions to the establishment, extension and strengthening of protected area systems;
- species-focused and site-specific conservation activities;
- strengthened capacity of civil society to become directly involved in biodiversity conservation;
- establishment of a regional biodiversity monitoring network;
- demonstration of approaches for sustainable natural resources use;
- raised public environmental awareness, with a special focus on biodiversity values and conservation issues;
- promotion of policy changes to support biodiversity conservation;
- development of alternative livelihoods for local communities;
- promotion of national, transboundary, regional and international cooperation and partnerships to support biodiversity conservation.





## PARTNERSHIPS FOR CONSERVATION: PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN



The Caucasus is known for its many diverse cultures and ethnic groups, where a multitude of languages, religions and traditions intermingle within a relatively small area. In addition to this cultural diversity, there is an almost universal respect for the natural environment in every country of the Hotspot. For the sake of the unique biodiversity found here, scientists, conservationists, and local communities as well as governments worked across boundaries and sectors. They shared information to ensure that species and sites are protected for the future. Partnerships between governmental, non-governmental and scientific sectors contributed to a greater impact for conservation by bringing a wide range of skills and experience together. Also, strong networks between civil society organizations fostered changes in government policies and actions. Significant efforts were made by CEPF in each country to involve journalists, media and civil society organizations to both raise public awareness and to advocate for improved policies in biodiversity.



**Success Story:** CEPF contributed to the effective functioning of the Caucasus Biodiversity Council (CBC), which was established in 2004 through support from the MacArthur Foundation. The CBC is a regional body, consisting of officially nominated government representatives and NGO delegates from all countries of the hotspot. The council also invites academics to participate in its meetings, organized twice a year. Since its establishment, the Council has proved itself invaluable by promoting and monitoring the implementation of an Ecoregion Conservation Plan (ECP) for the Caucasus. It has also supported regional programmes and projects, providing a forum for exchange of opinion and promoting transboundary activities. The CBC has become an important mechanism for promoting conservation and for building confidence vis-à-vis donor agencies and the conservation community.

### Caucasus Biodiversity Council

**Lesson learned:** Building partnerships and cooperation among such a wide range of stakeholders as the Caucasus was a challenge: with its varied types of government and political systems, multi-ethnic issues like language diversity, and even differing approaches to scientific research, all had to be addressed where possible with careful planning, diplomacy and flexibility.

The grants awarded from the Fund succeeded in reaching the communities and organizations. This has supported them in raising their capacities significantly so they can contribute to biodiversity conservation, providing the human resources and skills for future conservation initiatives in the Caucasus. CEPF investment strengthened civil society and played a crucial role in forging new partnerships among government agencies, non-government sector, scientists, journalists and local community watch groups resulting in more efficient actions on the ground.

The main ways CEPF worked with people at the local and national levels were through creating interest and information, trainings, mobilizing communities, raising awareness, and through encouraging professional and scientific contributions to data in each country. At the local level, this often occurred through forming and raising the capacities of volunteer groups. It worked through training caretakers, rangers and guides who sometimes already worked on the ground for nature conservation. CEPF also supported the direct involvement of local civil society groups in concrete biodiversity conservation activities, including mitigation and monitoring the impacts of development projects in selected priority corridors.



### Success Stories:

Through the grant implemented by BirdLife International, in close cooperation with its national partner NGOs, conservation action was taken for 31 CEPF priority sites, containing 32 Important Bird Areas (IBAs). These included 20 sites in Azerbaijan, five in Armenia, five in Georgia, and one in Turkey. Networks of 'IBA caretakers' were established in each country, covering 29 sites. All caretakers are members of the local community who are able to promote, carry out and/or contribute to monitoring globally threatened bird species and the conservation status of their habitats. Regional Action Plans were developed for seven globally threatened bird species: Imperial Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Almatian Pelican, Lesser White-fronted Goose, Red-breasted Goose, Marbled Teal, and White-headed Duck. The recommended actions took the form of 4 local site Action Plans (SAPs) across the four countries. These local language agreements between the BirdLife partner NGO and the local caretaker draw up details on what the caretakers can and should do to address identified threats. All grants to caretakers at 14 CEPF priority sites supported the SAPs. This project had a very strong capacity development component for the national partner NGOs and IBA caretakers. National partner NGOs were trained in project management, fundraising, integrating conservation and development, site management and monitoring. Caretakers received training in baseline surveys, biodiversity conservation and monitoring, and were involved in various fieldwork and educational activities, particularly in schools.

Through grant to WWF-Russia, 80 IBAs (72% of the total) in the North Caucasus region of Russia were covered by 86 caretakers, organized into seven caretaker groups. 29 IBAs in the Greater Caucasus Corridor and Caspian Corridors were covered by 42 caretakers in three groups. New data on 14 priority bird species were obtained through 17 micro-projects, and Conservation Action Plans for these species were developed and produced as a bilingual book in English and Russian. In addition, all priority IBAs were studied and monitored and a book on them was published, containing Action Plans for the 29 priority IBAs. As a result of the project, 43 new IBAs were identified, described and entered into the World Bird Data Base. The project featured a capacity-development component for local partners, with 50 caretakers trained in priority bird species, threats to IBAs, IBA monitoring and conservation issues.

**Lesson learned:** Direct involvement of local communities in conservation actions is a challenge for both locals and conservationists, though it helps to disseminate conservation actions across the Hotspot at the grassroots level, helping to develop a culture of volunteerism for nature conservation.



## Highlights of CEPF Footprints Across the Caucasus

- Species
- Protected Areas
- Sustainable Forestry
- Alternative Livelihood for Local Communities
- Policy Improvement and Implementation
- Public Awareness and Better Journalism

## SPECIES / FAUNA

CEPF supported conservation actions for species identified as priorities in the Ecosystem Profile, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and plants. Of the 50 priority species identified in the Ecosystem Profile, 94% were targeted by CEPF-funded projects. The main activities carried out by species-focused projects were: (i) field-studies and population status assessments; (ii) global and national Red List assessments of under-represented taxa; (iii) improving or creating databases; (iv) formulating regional or national species conservation action plans; (v) mobilizing local people for species conservation projects by creating volunteer or caretaker networks; (vi) consulting key stakeholders such as government, NGOs and academia, to seek recommendations; (vii) promoting regional and transboundary cooperation.

**Success Story:** At the beginning of the CEPF investment period, a regional workshop dedicated to the conservation of priority Caprinae species was organized, where leading experts from the Hotspot discussed and agreed a common vision and practical conservation approaches for the Bezoar Goat, West Caucasian Tur, East Caucasian Tur and Armenian Mouflon.

Based on the results of this workshop, CEPF supported priority conservation actions for the Armenian Mouflon and Bezoar Goat.

Field surveys were carried out for the Armenian Mouflon, its current status assessed, and National Conservation Action Plans were developed in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Investments to conserve the Bezoar Goat were made all across the hotspot. Projects included field surveys and species status assessments in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia and Turkey; support to captive breeding efforts in Georgia; and development of National Conservation Action Plans in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia.

CEPF also provided follow-up investment in conservation efforts for the West Caucasian Tur and East Caucasian Tur in all three countries where they are found--Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia. Field surveys were made that included taxonomic status investigations and, current species status. National Conservation Action Plans were developed in each country.

Each grant dedicated to Caprinae species included a component on public awareness raising and consultations with key stakeholders.

GIS-based habitat modeling for Caprinae species was developed which enables researchers to: (i) predict species occurrence in different areas of the Caucasus Hotspot; (ii) highlight areas where the species could occur in the future if populations recover, and plan corridors accordingly; (iii) define the most suitable areas for conservation activities; and (iv) develop strategies and conservation action plans.

**Lesson learned:** As species their habitats and the threats to habitats do not recognize international or political boundaries. Regional and transboundary cooperation is a key to ensure biodiversity conservation.



## SPECIES / FLORA

Although only one of the 50 CEPF priority species identified in the Caucasus was a plant, this reflected the state of knowledge at the time the Ecosystem Profile was prepared. Consequently, CEPF invested in filling the major information gap that existed with regard to the endemic plants of the Caucasus.

**Success Story:** The IUCN, in close cooperation with Missouri Botanical Garden, USA, established an effective network of Caucasian plant specialists in the form of a Caucasus Plant Red List Authority under the IUCN Species Survival Commission. A comprehensive list of Caucasian endemic plant species, subspecies and varieties, comprising 2,800 taxa, was compiled. Of these, 1,100 taxa were assessed according to the IUCN Red List categories and criteria. Of these around 600 taxa (mostly ones with very restricted distributions) were assessed as globally threatened. The results of this research were compiled as the Caucasus Plant Red List, scheduled to be published in 2010. The IUCN project also led to the identification of Important Plant Areas (IPAs) in the Caucasus, which made a major contribution to updating the list of Key Biodiversity Areas in the hotspot. Also a draft Regional Plant Conservation Strategy was developed for the Caucasus.

**Success Story:** CEPF supported a more focused survey of endemic plant species of the Ajara-Shavsheti transboundary floristic region in the West Lesser Caucasus Corridor. As a result, the global threat status of 48 endemic species was assessed according to the IUCN Red List criteria and recommendations for in-situ conservation, and further update of the national Red Lists of Georgia and Turkey were formulated. Seed banks for several endemic species were created to initiate their ex-situ conservation.

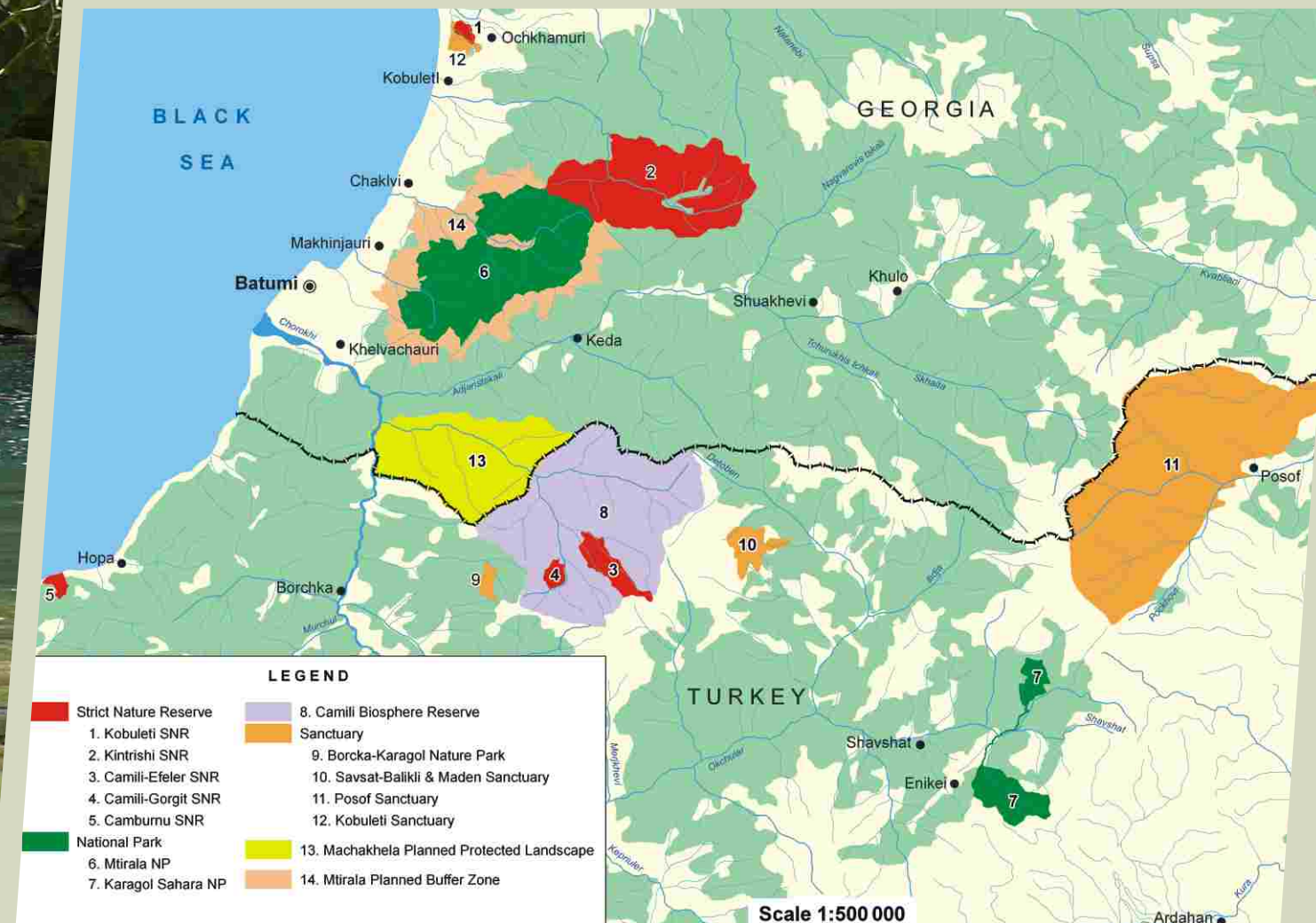
**Lesson learned:** Close cooperation as well as sharing knowledge and experience between scientists and other stakeholders across the Hotspot are invaluable. This is true for research, field studies, monitoring and effective conservation activities. These provide guarantees for tangible and sustainable results at the Regional level



# PROTECTED AREAS

CEPF invested significantly in Protected Area of the Caucasus, providing the basis for conservation efforts of all kinds. CEPF investment contributed to: (i) system-level planning; (ii) expansion and creation of new protected areas; (iii) strengthening of management at existing protected areas; and (iv) developing sustainable financing mechanisms. All of the grants awarded featured an awareness-raising component and adopted participatory approaches.

**Success Story:** In the West Lesser Caucasus Corridor, the Natural-Landscape Territory of Mtirala and Machakhela was created with a combined area of 22,941 hectares, through the development of a spatial planning document which enables establishment of two new protected areas: (i) a buffer zone to Mtirala National Park (10,202 hectares); and (ii) Machakhela Protected Landscape (12,739 hectares). This special planning document was approved and endorsed by the local government. The next step is to establish a protected area under the Georgian law on the PA system. Machakhela Protected Landscape has the potential to be further developed into a transboundary PA between Georgia and Turkey along the Machakhela gorge. Jamili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey is a short distance from the Mtirala buffer zone and borders a proposed protected area in Georgia's Machakhela region. Close cooperation between the countries would strengthen conservation in the region while promoting tourism and other economic opportunities for communities.





**Success Story:** A management plan was developed for Posof Wildlife Reserve (59,589 ha) in the West Lesser Caucasus Corridor. This plan, which was adopted by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, is the first of its kind for Turkish Wildlife Reserves, and has good potential for replication at other reserves. Already, this success of the CEPF project prompted the management planning of Urfa Wildlife Reserve, a steppe habitat in southeastern Turkey.

**Lessons learned:**

*Applying innovative and complex approaches to establish new protected areas requires considerable time and patience, because it is necessary to ensure that key partners and local stakeholders, including local communities, properly understand the main concept and have right expectations.*

*Involving key stakeholders, including local communities, when protected areas are at the initial stages creates a strong basis for future success and partnership. This helps avoid potential conflicts between protected areas and local communities.*

*Any initiative to develop the protected areas system needs to be implemented in close cooperation with national government, and allowances should be made for the unpredictability of timelines for official adoption of the relevant documents.*

# SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

CEPF investment made a significant contribution to sustainable forestry and sustainable natural resource use in the Greater Caucasus, West Lesser Caucasus and East Lesser Caucasus Corridors. The full range of activities included (i) development of a sustainable forestry training manual; (ii) establishment and application of different models of sustainable forestry and sustainable natural resource use; (iii) training governmental officials in sustainable forestry, biodiversity assessment and monitoring; and (iv) planting sustainable forestry plots.

**Success Story:** The Armenian Tree Project (ATP) and the Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry at Yale University conducted one of the most in-depth studies of the forests in the East Lesser Caucasus Corridor ever. The raw data were taken to the USA for analysis then brought back to Armenia for dissemination. This process helped clarify the most appropriate methods for identifying species that would thrive in northern Armenia and led to the planting of two forestry demonstration plots (10 and 4 hectares) with tens of thousands of indigenous trees. These plots will serve as training sites for current and future foresters. As the trees grow, they will be monitored and the data gathered will help to identify techniques that encourage high survival rates and to determine sustainable extraction rates. The project culminated in a sustainable forestry training manual, produced by the Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry and ATP. The manual received significant peer review both at Yale and by several government ministries, academic institutions and local foresters in Armenia. The final version was rolled out during a national level participatory workshop attended by 30 participants from state agencies and NGOs. A curriculum was developed for future seminars on sustainable forestry techniques to be held throughout Armenia. ATP staff members were trained in sustainable forestry techniques, rotational grazing and general natural resource conservation techniques, and 30 local community members received training in sustainable range management.

**Success Story:** In the Turkish part of the West Lesser Caucasus Corridor an Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Plan for the Firtina Valley was developed, which covers an area of 80,000 hectares including Kackar Mountains National Park. This plan was developed in a participatory manner, involving local stakeholders from the government and non-governmental sectors. To complement the plan, guidelines for sustainable tourism, water use, grazing and infrastructure development in the Firtina Valley were prepared. The plan was endorsed by the Firtina IRBM Council and the local government, and, accordingly, there is a strong commitment to implement it. The council was established as a local monitoring mechanism for implementation of the IRBM Plan and is made up of local government officials, village heads and representatives of universities and NGOs. More than 100 stakeholders from the local government, NGO sector and local communities, were trained in different directions such as the IRBM planning, implementation and communication, advocacy for nature conservation, project cycle management and EU nature conservation approaches.

**Lesson learned:** It is important to involve local stakeholders, including local communities, in the whole process and raise awareness around the main issues of sustainable forestry. A greater understanding of the vital importance of sustainable forestry and sustainable resource use for their own communities, they are keen to protect biodiversity.



## ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

CEPF invested significantly in developing alternative livelihoods for local communities in the East Lesser Caucasus, Greater Caucasus, Hyrcan and Caspian Corridors. Examples include (i) development of bee-keeping, training in special bee-keeping techniques and the creation of selective-tribal bee families as well as publication of bee-keeping methodology; (ii) creation of rabbit, goat, sheep, goose, quail and duck farms; (iii) establishment of a sustainable hunting area and (iv) training in ecotourism issues where representatives of local communities explored new ways of making a living by working as ecotourism guides in Protected Areas.



**Success Story:** A honey production farm was created in the Kvareli district in the Georgian part of the Greater Caucasus Corridor. The initiative funded the purchase of 100 bee families, and new equipment and materials. Products have been licensed. One innovation of this initiative was the establishment of a 'Biodiversity Fund' for the Kvareli district, into which bee farm owners contribute 25% of their annual income from honey production. Money from the fund is then allocated for priority biodiversity conservation activities at the district level, through small grant. The first grants have been awarded under this scheme for environmental education activities and for monitoring the implementation of management plans in selected protected areas.

### Lessons learned:

*Local communities, especially near protected areas, often need economic alternatives if they are to turn to protection instead of overexploitation of natural areas. Alternative income generation and sustainable resource use projects are very important to motivate and inform people on how to protect biodiversity.*

*CEPF made significant efforts to provide alternative resources and livelihoods in order to reduce illegal natural resource use and contribute to poverty alleviation. However there is a need for more innovative and effective approaches, adapted skills and training to offer better livelihood practices that will benefit local communities.*

*Conservation issues are often quite low on the agenda of local people and authorities alike. Thus it can be difficult to recruit conservation volunteers because of the lack of status for this work, the socioeconomic situation which isn't always improved for the volunteers, and lack of a "culture of volunteerism".*

# POLICY IMPROVEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The CEPF portfolio included several grants to civil society organizations in support of their efforts to advocate for policy improvements with regard to biodiversity conservation. It also, provided significant support to improve the implementation of MEAs related to biodiversity,. These comprise the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar), and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and its agreements.

**Success Story:** In Armenia, CEPF supported a civil society campaign to save Shikahogh Nature Reserve (12,000 hectares) in the East Lesser Caucasus Corridor. Initially, the government planned to run a highway through this sensitive reserve, which boasts 1,074 species of plant and many of them endemic. The highway project threatened to destroy at least 30 hectares of the reserve's territory, and would have inevitably led to the loss of some of Armenia's unique virgin oak forests. With CEPF support, more than 20 Armenian NGOs were united around a single clear goal: to save Shikahogh Reserve and keep it untouched. Different ways of campaigning were used, including widely broadcasting a specially commissioned documentary - Shikahogh. The NGO coalition proposed 4 alternative highway routes to the Government to avoid construction of the highway through the most valuable part of the reserve. Finally the goal was achieved: one of the alternatives was adopted by the Government. This was a very clear example of how policy change can be initiated and motivated by civil society.

**Success Story:** CEPF supported specific steps to enhance CITES implementation in Azerbaijan. A national-language guidebook on CITES-listed species was prepared, published and communicated to all customs services and the central administration. In parallel, around 200 customs officers were trained in CITES implementation. Based on the success of the project, the National Customs Committee decided to publish the CITES guidebook in a large format and disseminate it to all customs services.

**Lesson learned:** In policy related cases only through the joint efforts of several organizations and close partnership with the Government can some concrete tangible outcomes be achieved.



## PUBLIC AWARENESS AND BETTER JOURNALISM

CEPF invested in public-awareness-raising activities in all corridors, with a main focus on Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. These activities contributed significantly to increase awareness and understanding among local populations on environmental protection and the value of biodiversity. The range of public-awareness-raising activities was very broad and included: (i) documentaries on biodiversity; (ii) publications and articles; (iii) TV and radio broadcasts; (iv) press-trips; (v) conferences, meetings, festivals and other events .on biodiversity value and conservation.

**Success Story:** CEPF supported an impressive range of public-awareness-raising activities in Azerbaijan. A coordinated series of activities with the slogan "picture your nature" included a travelling photo exhibition targeted five key cities. These activities attracted the attention of the Government, school children, students, NGOs and the public. A private, nationwide TV channel aired a documentary about Azerbaijan's biodiversity and threatened species. Four press trips took journalists from 12 nationwide newspapers to regions in the Greater Caucasus, East Lesser Caucasus, Caspian and Hyrcan Corridors. Ten TV reports were organized from the corridors and over 50 articles appeared in different newspapers and electronic mass-media. These articles were discussed widely in Azeri society and the best ones received awards. A special dictionary of environmental terms was published, and 500 copies were distributed to environmental journalists and other interested parties.

CEPF trained more than 200 journalists in environmental and biodiversity conservation issues, communication and writing techniques and reporting from the field. Very importantly, cooperation between journalists and local governments was strengthened.

**Success Stories:** A network of environmental journalists in the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) was established, which now consists of 76 journalists. Subsequently, 11 training courses with field trips for a total of 120 local journalists, 40 local decision-makers and 45 NGO representatives were carried out. These trips and courses addressed environmental and biodiversity conservation issues and communication techniques. Two transboundary media tours (Armenia-Georgia and Azerbaijan-Georgia) were organized and 10 stories on the importance of transboundary cooperation on environmental issues were developed. The best environmental stories were communicated to key audiences and, also, placed on the REC Caucasus web-site: <http://www.rec-caucasus.org/>

CEPF also supported the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) to train journalists in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Russia in environmental journalism techniques. Around 100 journalists attended the trainings which included field-trips to practice reporting from the field. In 2007, 2008 and 2009, ICFJ organized a 'Biodiversity Reporting Award' for the Caucasus. The winners and their stories were announced on Conservation International's Biodiversity Awards web-site: <http://www.biodiversityreporting.org>

**Lesson learned:** Public awareness and better journalism raises the profile of key biodiversity issues and increases the interest of the public at large for contributing and looking for a greater understanding of biodiversity protection.



# GRANTEE PARTNERS

Agro-Meslehet Organization, Azerbaijan  
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Armenian Forests Organization  
Armenian Tourism Association  
Association - `Eco-Pulse`, Georgia  
Association - Journalists and the Society, Georgia  
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