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Javakheti National Park, Georgia. © A.Heidélberg

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School Forestry Education Program in Southern Armenia

In May 2015 the FLEG II Program initiated school forestry education program in the Syunik Region of Armenia for the schoolchildren of several communities. It will be implemented till the end of 2015 in close collaboration with the state forest manager “Hayantar”, State Non-Commercial Organization.

The school forestry includes in-door educational seminars and field forest activities on a selected forest area, forest cleaning events and school contests on the topic of forests. Theoretical part of the training covers various forest related topics including forest biodiversity and protected areas, behavior in forest, forest rehabilitation, anti-fire activities and others. Field forest activities include work in the selected forest area such as tree planting, maintenance and others.

Since the beginning of the program on school forestry three series of indoor sessions and outdoor activities were carried out with participation of 27 school children, two teachers and two school directors from three communities. Foresters from “Syunik” Forest Enterprise of “Hayantar” SNCO guide the field activities and demonstrate implementation of different field works. Field tools were donated by FLEG II to Tatev School to be used during the school forestry field activities.

School forestry initiative is appreciated by the school administrations and community leaders as an important tool to raise awareness on environmental protection. “School forestry initiated by WWF-Armenia for the schools of Tatev, Svarants and Tandzatap communities is important for provision of forestry and environmental knowledge to school children and making them more motivated for nature protection. It is crucial to involve distantly located communities in such activities.” – says Norvard Movsisyan, Director of Tatev School.

The participants of the school forestry are very enthusiastic and wait for further activities planned in the frames of the FLEG II school forestry education program. The experience and lessons learned from implementation of school forestry program in Syunik region can be used for implementation of similar activities in other forest regions of Armenia.

For additional information please contact:

Siranush Galstyan, WWF-Armenia

sgalstyan@wwfcaucasus.org



Gazelle are coming back to their historical places

It is encouraging every year to observe juvenile gazelles following their mothers in their historical places which, over the 50 years, have been deprived of these beauties.

The story of Gazelle in the Caucasus was sad indeed. Just a century ago the steppes of the southern Caucasus were covered by ten thousands of gazelles. In the first half of last century the number of gazelles declined dramatically and only about 200 gazelles were counted in the whole territory of Azerbaijan. It was an alert to the danger of extinction these beautiful animals in the country.

After establishment of Protected Areas in steppes of Azerbaijan the number of gazelles has increased and reached more than 6000. It was right time to reintroduce gazelles into their historical range after 50-60 years of extinction. Development of PAs' system in Azerbaijan during the last 10-15 years has positively influences the gazelle habitats and newly released animals feel comfortable under the strict protection.

To-date, by joint efforts of WWF, the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, H. Aliyev Foundation and IDEA PU and financial support of BMZ more than 130 gazelles have been reintroduced from Shirvan NP. In 2013, according to the agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgian governments 10 gazelles from Shirvan NP were reintroduced to Vashlovani NP in Georgia. 18 more animals were released directly at the border and they occupy new transboundary areas with Georgia, occasionally crossing the borderline in both directions. Goitered gazelles in new areas were fitted special radio collars which allow to monitor their behavior, range use, migration and other ecological characteristics.

In order to support conservation works WWF conducts different public awareness campaigns in gazelles's new areas. Publication materials about gazelles were published and distributed among local people. This year two summer camps "Let's protect Gazelles!" for schoolchildren were organized in cooperation with IDEA PU and Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan. More than 60 participants were involved from 23 villages located around the gazelle reintroduction sites.

For additional information please contact:
Sevinj Sarukhanova, WWF-Azerbaijan
ssarukhanova@wwfcaucasus.org



Ilisu State Nature Reserve. © WWF-Azerbaijan



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Leopard Returns to the Caucasus

Within realization of The Persian Leopard Conservation program we got an arrangement with one of the French zoos about supply of one more male of a Persian leopard for his further preparation for release in to the wild nature. As a result, preliminary, in spring of 2016 we will release not 2, but 3 animals in to the wild. This quantity of animals is confirmed by experts of IUCN and EAZA.

The accounting of number of a bison in Ossetia is carried out in spring. At this moment we have 97 animals. The aim of a project is increasing of livestock of a bison up to 120 animals till 2017. Also, part of the territory allocated for creation of the North Caucasian Center of cultivation of rare species of animals in Ossetia is transferred to the enterprise, which will work on its creation and will be responsible for its operation (in total 542 ha).

Feasibility study for establishing nature monument "Tarki-Tau Mountain" were complete (Republic of Dagestan, 2 243 ha).

For additional information please contact:
Vyacheslav Moroz, WWF-Russia
vmoroz@wwf.ru

New protected areas in southern Georgia

Javakheti Protected Area is located in southern Georgia along the border with Armenia and Turkey. The park occupies 16 209 hectares, which include unique volcanic mountains, grassland steppe, an abundance of lakes as well as sub alpine meadows. Protected areas include Javakheti National Park, Kartsakhi Managed Reserve, Sulda Managed Reserve, Khanchali Managed Reserve, Bugdasheni Managed Reserve and Madatapa Managed Reserve. The ecosystem is recognized as a globally important staging and breeding ground for migratory and resident bird species, of which several are listed as endangered in the IUCN Red Data Book. Together with Lake Arpi in Armenia the two parks make up one the first trans-boundary protected area in the region and both are considered hotspots for bird watching.

Here you can find velvet scoter, ruddy shelduck, ferruginous duck, corncrake, dalmatian and white pelicans, marsh and terek sandpipers, great black-headed gulls, gull-billed terns, white-winged terns, white storks, wryneck, goshawk and white-throated dipper.

A new Visitors Centre opened at the Javakheti Protected Area, offering tourists birdwatching, fishing and horse riding opportunities and information about camping areas and local hikes.

New exhibition space represents educational center and aims to inform visitors. Exposition presents biodiversity of Javakheti region. Exhibits from the Georgian National Museum's collection (Insects, fishes, reptiles, birds, mammals, stuffed animals and herbariums) and multimedia technologies will allow visitors to perceive uniqueness of the nature and will raise awareness in environmental responsibility.

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For additional information please contact:
Ana Tsintsadze, WWF-Caucasus Programme Office
atsintsadze@wwfcaucasus.org

WWF Caucasus Programme Office

11 Aleksidze St.
Tbilisi 0193, Georgia
Tel: (+ 995 32) 237 500
Fax: (+ 995 32) 237 501
Email: office@wwfcaucasus.org
www.panda.org/caucasus

WWF Armenia Branch

11 Proshyan St.
Yerevan 0019, Armenia
Tel/Fax: (+ 374 10) 58 89 83
Email: office_am@wwfcaucasus.org
www.panda.org/armenia

WWF Azerbaijan Branch

M.Mushfig St., Blok 501, 2K
Baku AZ1073, Azerbaijan
Tel/Fax: + 994 12 53853162
Email: office_az@wwfcaucasus.org

WWF Turkey

Büyük Postane Cad. 43-45 Kat 5
Bahçekapı İstanbul 34420, Turkey
Tel: + (902 125) 282 030
Fax: + (902 125) 282 040
www.wwf.org.tr

WWF Russia (office in Moscow)

19 Nikoloyamskaya St., 3 building
Moscow 109240, Russia
Tel: + 7 (495) 727 09 39
Fax: + 7 (495) 727 09 38
Email: russia@wwf.ru
www.wwf.ru



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

www.panda.org/caucasus

Regional projects in Turkish and Russian parts of the Caucasus are coordinated and implemented accordingly by WWF-Turkey and WWF-Russia in close cooperation with WWF Causus PO under one vision of Ecoregion Conservation Plan.

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