



NEWSLETTER

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Teberda Reserve. Russian Federation. ©A. Bok

CAUCASUS ECOREGION NEWSLETTER

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Forest transformation ongoing in Azerbaijan

WWF-Germany and its partner organizations in the South Caucasus, namely, WWF-Caucasus, WWF-Armenia and WWF-Azerbaijan are involved in implementation of EU financed Project on Increasing the resilience of forest ecosystems against climate change in the South Caucasus Countries through forest transformation. The project spans across 2011-2014. The overall objective of the Project is to increase the resilience of forest ecosystems in the Southern Caucasus, against climate change impacts and to improve biodiversity and livelihoods of local populations. The overall objective addresses the overarching threat of climate change to biodiversity and to forest ecosystem services which support the livelihoods of rural communities. Those services include protection of soils and water supply and quality, and timber and non-timber forest products. Objectively Verifiable Indicator for the overall objective is that: by 2015, relevant national authorities will have adopted and started to implement policies that will make forests and the services they provide highly resilient to climate change.

As a part of ongoing activities, forest transformation measures were started in two sites of pine stands with total area of 150 ha in Azerbaijan for bringing these forests to the "close to nature" condition.

Yevlakh site is located in Kura plain where single remnants of former flood plain forest - huge poplars (*Populus alba*) are still growing. Yevlakh site is located near the Kura river and it is reach with waterfowl birds, while Agsu site is home for forest birds and mammals. The second site is located on Agsu terrain. In former times these slopes of foothills of the Greater Caucasus were covered by oak and hornbeam. These two sites with different climatic and soil conditions have been selected by forest specialists also to see how forest transformation measures are effective in two different biotopes.

Both sites are located near the highways and are equally important for educational and demonstration purposes.

For additional information please contact



Forest landscape restoration in Northern Armenia

Forests play a significant social, environmental and economic role in the Caucasus. Northern Armenia is particularly characterized by high forest cover loss and overgrazing. The damaged forest ecosystems are no longer in a position to function as habitat for endangered species, erosion control or provision of natural resources (wood, berries, mushrooms, etc.) to meet the local population. The destruction and degradation of forests caused the loss of habitat for many unique plants and animal species such as the Caucasus leopard, brown bear and various types of wild goats.

This area is an important place for preservation of biodiversity, especially - rare and endemic species. Accordingly, in July 2012, WWF Armenia together with WWF Germany and WWF Switzerland started a three-year project: "Forest landscape restoration in Northern Armenia".

The main goal of the project is restoration of forests and natural habitat of critically endangered plant and animal species, as well as income generation for the local population.

For the project implementation site Trchkan waterfall area has been selected, which is Nature Monument located in Lori province of Northern Armenia.

The site selection was also facilitated due to the fact that in 2011 a private company has decided to build a hydropower plant on the site of the waterfall but, a group of environmental organizations with participation of WWF Armenia organized a campaign against this decision, which resulted in the cancellation of the hydropower plant project.

The project implementers have completed the design activities of developing afforestation and will start field activities by the beginning of spring 2013. As a part of planned activities, the training on forest restoration will be conducted to neighboring communities of the area.

By 2015, as the project will be in completion phase, 70 hectares of mixed mountain forest will be restored. An increased incomes for at least 100 families of nearby communities through the involvement in the preparation and implementation of afforestation activities is expected.

For additional information please contact

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Leopards Zadig and Andrea arrived from Portugal to Russia

In the 20th century, the leopard disappeared from the Russian Caucasus because of humans, mostly due to poaching. The Persian Leopard Reintroduction Program is run by the Ministry of natural resources and environment of the Russian Federation with participation of the Sochi National Park, Caucasus Nature Reserve, A.N. Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution, WWF and Moscow Zoo.

Under this aegis of this project, two leopards, were introduced from Portugal. Zadig (9 years old) and Andrea (7 years old) got so used to the transport cages that they didn't want to leave them at first. Andrea was the first to come out. Zadig walked into the big enclosure several hours later. The event was attended by the Minister of natural resources and environment of Russia Sergey Donskoy, WWF-Russia CEO Igor Chestin, Lisbon Zoo mammal curator José Dias Ferreira, staff of the Sochi national park and Transaero representative Alexander Kotenko. The cats from the Lisbon Zoo will live not far from other four leopards – two males and two females, which arrived in 2009 and 2010 from Turkmenistan and Iran. Those animals had not known each other before coming to the park, and leopards are very picky when choosing a partner, so the Iranian and Turkmen cats have still not formed couples. To fasten up the project development, WWF-Russia organized the transportation of the already formed couple from the Lisbon Zoo, which was approved and supported by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria. Zadig and Andrea already had 8 kittens in three litters.

“Cats are solitary animals, but Zadig and Andrea are getting along very well. They spend most of the time in one enclosure. In the wild leopards usually meet only to mate, when the female is estrous. But Zadig and Andrea often sleep and look for food together. Sometimes they have quarrels, of course, but very short ones and without any serious fighting”, says José Dias Ferreira from the Lisbon Zoo. Zadig and Andrea have different characters. Zadig is calmer, and Andrea is more aggressive. She doesn't like visitors to come too close to the enclosure. When she has kittens, she is very protective and doesn't allow anyone come close – especially while they're totally helpless, up to three months old.

For additional information please contact
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Turkey's first wildlife corridor project by KuzeyDoga society

The Kars region of northeastern Turkey, a high plateau located at the intersection of Caucasus and Irano-Anatolian global biodiversity hotspots, is one of the most important places in Turkey for brown bears, wolves, lynx, and wild cats. In the past six years, environmental organization KuzeyDoga, in collaboration with the General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks (GDNCNP), has been doing long-term, community based conservation, ecological research, and village based ecotourism work focused on northeastern Turkey's wildlife.

KuzeyDoga is running a project studying the ecology and habitat use of the region's large carnivores (gray wolves (*Canis lupus*), brown bears (*Ursus arctos*) and Caucasian lynx (*Lynx lynx dinniki*)) to understand how they will use Turkey's first wildlife corridor. As part of this research, the KuzeyDoga team, led by Dr. Cagan Sekercioglu, a biology professor at the University of Utah, tracked wolves for the first time in Turkey and is also tracking 11 brown bears. The wolves used an area many times the size of Sarikamis, and of five wolves, only one survived for a year. The others were killed by cars, people, and dogs, collectively showing the necessity of more habitat creation, conservation and connection. Equally importantly, even during the first week of tracking, one of the brown bears followed the exact wildlife corridor route proposed by Dr. Sekercioglu, travelling from Kars to Ardahan province and back in a week.

However, legal and illegal logging of Sarikamis' shrinking old-growth forests continue, providing inadequate habitat for large mammal species, increasing their vulnerability, and potentially reducing their genetic diversity.

Turkey's first wildlife corridor will cover 23,500 hectares and will span for 82 km, from Sarikamis Forest-Allahuekber Mountains NP, through the provinces of Kars, Erzurum, Artvin, and Ardahan, all the way to the Caucasus forests on the Turkey-Georgia border. As Ardahan's Posof forests are connected to Georgia's Akhaltsikhe forests bordering the Borjomi-Kharagauli NP, Turkey's first wildlife corridor will also promote transboundary conservation in the region.

For further info: <http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2012/02/13/turkeys-first-wildlife-corridor-links-bear-wolf-and-lynx-populations-to-the-caucasus-forests/>

For additional information please contact
KuzeyDoga Society: www.kuzeydoga.org



Voluntary forest certification in the Southern Caucasus

An informal Regional Initiative Group (RIG) on the Promotion of Voluntary Forest Certification in the Southern Caucasus was established in December 2012. The decision to establish the RIG had been made during the Regional Workshop on Voluntary Forest Certification and Sustainable Forest Management Standards in the Southern Caucasus (Batumi, Georgia, May 2012). The workshop was held by WWF-Caucasus within the framework of the first phase of the regional Program on Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighborhood Policy East Countries and Russia. The Program was financially supported by the European Commission (with additional support from Austrian Development Cooperation) and implemented by the World Bank, IUCN and WWF. The second phase of the Program will start at the beginning of 2013.



The main objective of the RIG is to support and implement ecologically responsible, socially acceptable and economically viable forest management. This will be achieved by initiating the process of voluntary forest certification based on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) scheme in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Work of the group will be coordinated by WWF-Caucasus Programme Office. Key activities will include: Initiating policy, institutional and legislative analysis of the forestry sectors of the three countries in connection with FSC standards, elaborating the draft of the generic forest management standard for the Southern Caucasus which could form the basis for the future national forest management standards, harmonizing the standard development process and participating in the exchange of relevant experience with neighboring countries and regions, providing consultancy to the interested parties on the voluntary forest certification and conducting other activities promoting forest certification.

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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 Caucasus PO under one vision of Ecoregion Conservation Plan.

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