

Highlights FY2012

Conserving the Green Heart of Europe

WWF Danube-
Carpathian Programme

1 July 2011-30 June 2012

The Danube-Carpathian region





Take action

Last year, in spite of economic and financial crises, people in Central and Southeastern Europe showed that nature conservation is a major concern for them.

In Romania, a WWF campaign gathered over 100,000 signatures and massive media coverage that made protection of virgin forests a political priority and has now led to their formal protection. Popular support also enabled WWF to stop dangerous amendments to the country's forest legislation.

Meanwhile, in Bulgaria, WWF and civil society partners mobilised a series of mass protests that finally put a stop to determined government efforts to amend the Forest Law to permit construction in protected areas.

Across the region, a string of important wetland conservation and restoration initiatives moved forward under the leadership and close involvement of WWF, including on the Drava ("Europe's Amazon"), the Lower Danube Green Corridor and March-Thaya.

One important factor, for WWF, behind these successes were the synergies and support gained from closer cooperation between WWF-DCPO and other WWF organisations working in the region, especially from Austria and Hungary.



But more important was the evident concern of people across the region for the future of their natural heritage, civil society and rule of law.

In short: people cared, took action – and made a difference.

We at WWF are committed to supporting such action to protect the region's rich natural heritage and build a better future. The following pages highlight some of our work over the past year and hopefully provide inspiration for the future.

*Andreas Beckmann, Director
WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme*



Romanians sign up for forests

In Romania, WWF launched a vigorous campaign for protection of the country's remaining virgin forests. The six-week campaign collected 110,000 signatures and massive media coverage and put the fate of the nation's virgin forests at the center of public awareness and political attention.

Protection for Romanian virgin forests

The WWF campaign and lobbying finally were crowned by a ministerial order protecting Romania's last remaining virgin forests. We also drew on supporters of the virgin forest campaign to stop potentially damaging amendments to the Romanian Forest Act.





Bulgarians take to the streets to save their treasures

In Bulgaria, WWF and partners from civil society organised a series of public protests and concerted lobbying that finally put a stop to government efforts to amend the Forestry Act to permit development in protected areas.





A precedent for the rule of law

Another important precedent was set with the dismantling of the illegally constructed Golden Pearl resort in Stranja Nature Park in Bulgaria – a case that WWF and partners campaigned on and brought to court five years ago, and that is the first such illegal development in Bulgaria, and presumably the region, that has actually been dismantled.





Responsible forest management

We continued promoting responsible forest management, providing training and technical support for FSC certification as well as identification of High Conservation Value Forests. Romania and Bulgaria are on track for FSC certification of over 2 million ha of forests.



Protected Areas for development in Ukraine

In 2012, WWF completed a long-term project supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that strengthened the capacity of protected area administrations and promoted local development. Aspects of the project are now being used as a model for protected area management and stakeholder involvement for the country as a whole.



Conservation and development in the heart of Romania

WWF began a major project with an integrated approach to nature conservation and local development over an area of 260,000 ha in the heart of Romanian Transylvania. The *Podisul Hartibaciului* Natura 2000 site at the focus of the project is Romania's second largest protected area after the Danube Delta. The 4-year, €3 million project sets an important precedent for the use of EU Structural Funds, which are better known for supporting infrastructure and are often at odds with nature conservation.



Europe's wilderness

Last year we also started important initiatives focused on conservation of two of Europe's last great wilderness areas in the Southern Carpathians and Danube Delta. At EU level, we contributed to efforts to define wilderness and propose EU guidelines for wilderness management in Natura 2000 sites.



Danube-Drava-Mura

The vision of creating Europe's largest riverine protected area to protect the Mura-Drava-Danube corridor came a big step closer to realisation with the designation of the Hungarian and Croatian stretches of the Drava River as a trans-boundary protected area. The addition of areas of the Mura-Drava-Danube river corridor in Serbia, Slovenia and Austria will put ca 600,000 ha under protection and create the world's first 5-country Biosphere Reserve.



Lower Danube Green Corridor

The Lower Danube Green Corridor aims to make the Lower Danube a living river again, connected to its natural flooding areas and wetlands, reducing the risks of floods and offering benefits both for local economies and for the ecosystems along the river in Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine. We continued contributing to this initiative by setting the framework for cross-border conservation and management of 11 Natura 2000 sites in Romania and Bulgaria, by supporting the designation of 400,000 ha of wetlands as Ramsar sites and by promoting wetland restoration in the Danube Delta region for climate change adaptation.



New protected area for Bulgaria - Vesselina River

On 22 May, International Day of Biodiversity, Bulgarian Environment Minister Nona Karadjova declared the designation of a new protected area - the Vesselina River. The protected area is situated along an old river bed where WWF has done groundbreaking work on river restoration.



The Danube's wetland treasures

The Danube River basin is the most international river basin in the world, draining 19 countries on its 2,800 km journey from the Black Forest in Germany to the Black Sea.

The Danube has lost more than 80% of its wetlands over the last 150 years. But today water quality is improving, and there is growing commitment to conserve and restore valuable wetlands across the Danube basin.

New hope for Danube wetlands

Wetland restoration projects moved forward at sites across the Danube basin, including new projects near the Drava-Danube confluence in Serbia and Croatia and on the March/Morava in Austria. To date, WWF has 25 wetland restoration projects completed, in the pipeline or ongoing across the Danube basin.

Morava-Dyje floodplains

The floodplains of the Morava (Morav) and Dyje (Danube) rivers are among the most important wetlands in Central Europe. They are home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the floodplains and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Vienna NEPOM

The NEPOM (New European Project for the Restoration of the Danube) is a major initiative to restore the Danube's natural state. It includes the creation of new wetlands and the restoration of existing ones. WWF is supporting the project and working to improve the living conditions of the local population.



A green economy fuelled by wetland restoration

Wetlands are a natural source of green energy. They store carbon and produce oxygen. WWF is working to restore wetlands and improve the living conditions of the local population. This will help to create a green economy and improve the environment.



Lower Prut wetlands

The Lower Prut wetlands are a major wetland area in Romania. They are home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the wetlands and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Liberty Island

Liberty Island is a small island in the Danube River. It is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the island and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Carpathian wetlands

The Carpathian wetlands are a major wetland area in Hungary. They are home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the wetlands and improve the living conditions of the local population.



The Lower Danube Green Corridor

The Lower Danube Green Corridor is a major initiative to restore the Danube's natural state. It includes the creation of new wetlands and the restoration of existing ones. WWF is supporting the project and working to improve the living conditions of the local population.



Ermakov Island

Ermakov Island is a small island in the Danube River. It is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the island and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Tataru Island

Tataru Island is a small island in the Danube River. It is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the island and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Balka Gerasimov

Balka Gerasimov is a small island in the Danube River. It is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the island and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Garla Mare

Garla Mare is a small island in the Danube River. It is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the island and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Balka and Cernavca Islands

Balka and Cernavca Islands are small islands in the Danube River. They are home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the islands and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Kabakov Marsh

Kabakov Marsh is a small marsh in the Danube River. It is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the marsh and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Belene Island

Belene Island is a small island in the Danube River. It is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the island and improve the living conditions of the local population.



Veselina River

Veselina River is a small river in the Danube basin. It is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life, including the European otter. WWF is working to restore the natural state of the river and improve the living conditions of the local population.





Restoring nature's balance at Liberty Island

One of the WWF river and wetland restoration initiatives was at Liberty Island in the Danube in Hungary. Hydro-engineering works started at WWF Hungary's largest conservation project, aiming to restore the island's natural floodplain forest and secure drinking water for local communities. Once the river ecosystem is restored, it is hoped that many native fish and bird species will return to the area.



Business for wetlands

There are growing examples of business good practice for wetlands. In Romania, we supported Lafarge to create a rich wetland area out of a former wet quarry. In Bulgaria, we worked with the Association of Gravel Extractors to stop illegal quarrying from rivers. And in Serbia and Croatia, The Coca-Cola Foundation supported restoration of 2 wetland sites at the confluence of the Drava and Danube rivers.

Protection for Danube giants

We initiated a major project to identify and conserve spawning areas of Danube sturgeon in Bulgaria. The support for the project from EU Structural Funds is also an important precedent for use of EU funds in the region.



Reducing pressure on sturgeon

Bulgarian authorities confirmed that a one year ban on sturgeon fishing in the Danube river is to be extended for a further four years, matching the Romanian ban on the other side of the Danube border. However, a report commissioned by WWF pointed to gaps in controls of illegal trade in caviar in both countries.



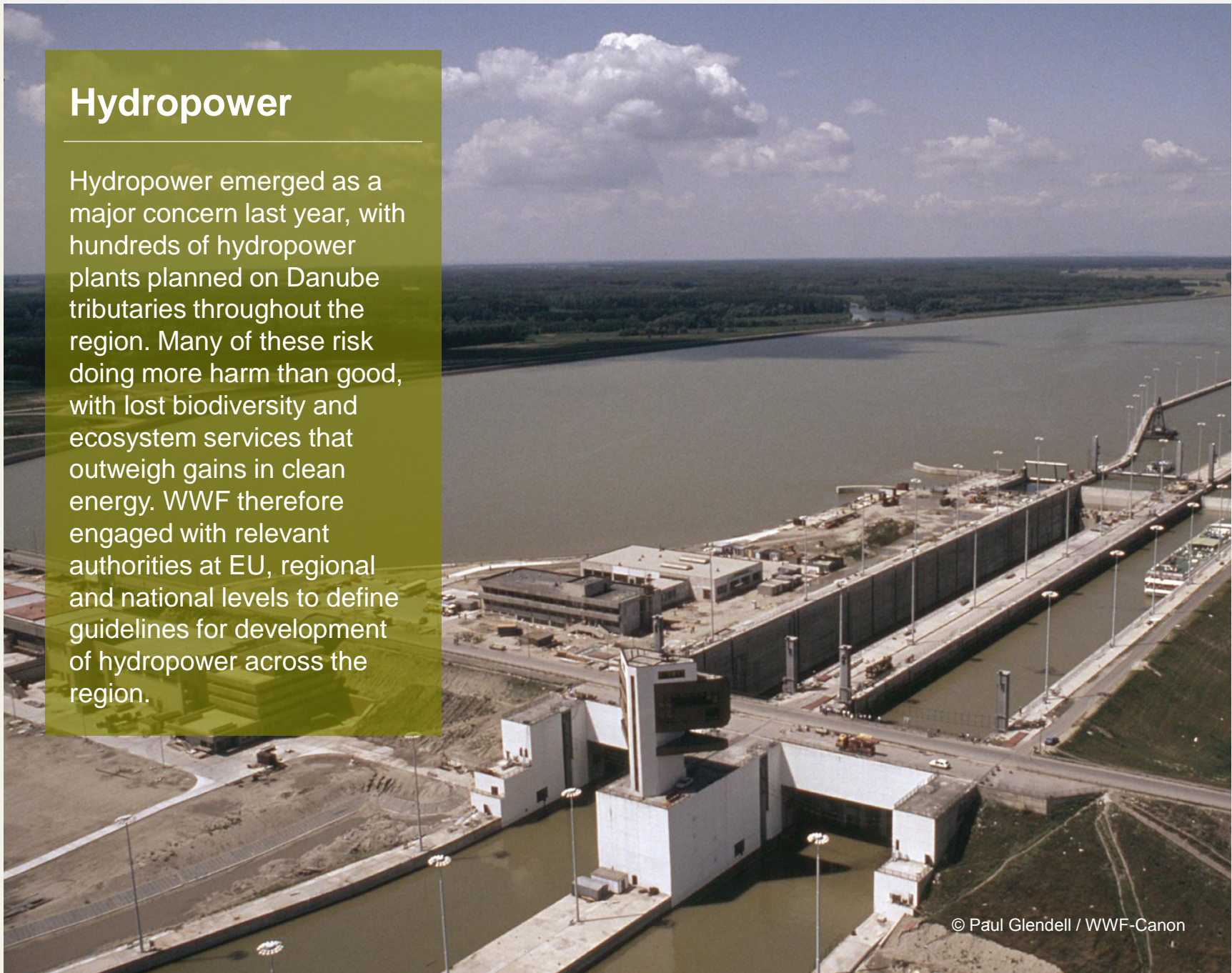
Inland navigation

WWF promoted implementation of guidance for development of inland navigation endorsed by the ICPDR and other parties to avoid damage to rivers and the ecosystem services they provide. While we seemed to make progress on navigation planning for some sections of the Danube and tributaries, including in Austria and Serbia, on other sections we remained at loggerheads with navigation promoters.



Hydropower

Hydropower emerged as a major concern last year, with hundreds of hydropower plants planned on Danube tributaries throughout the region. Many of these risk doing more harm than good, with lost biodiversity and ecosystem services that outweigh gains in clean energy. WWF therefore engaged with relevant authorities at EU, regional and national levels to define guidelines for development of hydropower across the region.





EU Danube Strategy

We continued our active participation in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, contributing especially to planning for mobility (Waterways), water quality and environmental risks. We also helped initiate a special task force on Sturgeon within the Biodiversity Priority Area, which is one of the first initiatives within the Danube Strategy to have a truly integrative approach, crossing over from biodiversity to issues of navigation, energy generation, and other areas.

Public money for public goods

In the run-up to decision-making in Brussels and EU capitals regarding the use of EU funds in the next financial period 2014-20, we continued our efforts to improve the targeting and delivery of EU funding programmes available for nature conservation and green economy, both through our involvement in relevant monitoring committees and working groups as well as through support for local farmers and other beneficiaries.



Payments for ecosystem services

We continued developing innovative financing mechanisms for nature protection and ecosystem services, and shared this experience across the Danube and with other international river basins. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River officially invited the team to join its Economic Working Group.

Phosphates ban paying off for the Danube

WWF's efforts to secure a ban on phosphates in laundry and dishwasher detergents paid off when the European Parliament agreed to eliminate high-content phosphate detergents from the European market. The new restrictions, which will apply from 2013 for laundry and 2017 for dishwasher detergents, will reduce the amount of phosphates spilled into the Danube and the Black Sea.



EU standards for Ukrainian Carpathians

A project implemented by WWF and other partners, introduced the principles of the EU Habitats Directive to the Ukrainian Carpathians.



WWF and Red Cross partner to address climate change

We continued an innovative partnership with the Red Cross to promote action on adaptation to climate change in Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro – one of the regions considered to be most vulnerable to climate change in Europe. The partners will expand the initiative to Ukraine, Moldova and Caucasus in 2013.



European Schools for a Living Planet

The 4th year of the ESFALP programme brought together over 60 teachers and pupils from 11 countries of the region to share learning and projects on education for sustainable development and active citizenship.





Big launch for WWF Living Planet Report

The biggest splash for WWF's two-yearly "health check for the planet" was in Romania, where the press conference was attended by Prime Minister Victor Ponta, Minister of Environment Plumb and the Vice Governor of the Romanian National Bank.



Bulgarian Nature Parks Day

More than 2,200 volunteers took part in the National Day of Nature Parks, organized by WWF with the support of Globul. Participants collected over 12 tonnes of rubbish and repaired tourist infrastructure. For the fourth year, all eleven Bulgarian nature parks participated in the event.



Rowing for Clean Water in Slovenia

Clean water got top billing at the World Rowing Championships which took place in Bled, Slovenia in late August. The clean water message was everywhere at the globally televised event thanks to the recent strategic alliance between WWF and FISA, the World Rowing Federation.



Focus on water and water resources

WWF's Water Tour, led by WWF-Hungary, visited Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania and Ukraine promoting wise use of water and the value of wetlands.



Danube+ launched

WWF launched an interactive, map-based online platform to promote understanding of the river and the challenges and opportunities it presents. The tool has been developed with support of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River and The Coca-Cola Company.

danube.panda.org



DANUBE +
Explore and Share

Earth Hour

With the official support of close to 300 cities across Hungary, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and Ukraine, Earth Hour has become one of the biggest environmental events observed by hundreds of thousands of people in Central and Eastern Europe. The campaign reached over 44 million people in Hungary alone, i.e. each Hungarian more than 4 times over.

Business partnerships

In Romania, we partnered with Garanti Bank to launch the WWF Bonus Card, the first green affinity card on the Romanian market. 0.5% of all purchases will support our conservation work. Garanti Bank also became the main partner of our Wild Romania exhibition of spectacular images of national and nature parks by renowned photographer Dan Dinu, which visited major cities.



Kiev body art festival

A body art festival in Kiev's Central Park in October provoked participants to think about animals that are suffering from Climate Change. During the event organized by WWF in partnership with Canon, professional artists painted masks of tigers, pandas and polar bears on the faces of Kiev citizens.



Flying start for Direct Debit in Romania

An historic milestone was passed for face-to-face fundraising in Romania – not just for WWF, but for the country as a whole – with the first direct debit donation that was made to WWF in Romania.



Adopta un urs

Adopt a bear

We started online fundraising in Romania in 2011. To date, more than 950 donors have given an average donation of €25.





Working as One

Last year we took further steps to integrate more closely WWF's work across our region. With WWF-DCP/Bulgaria, WWF-DCP/Romania, WWF-Austria and WWF-Hungary we developed for the first time one shared Strategic and Annual work plan and implemented a common system for monitoring and evaluation.





Our supporters

The WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme depends on support from a wide range of supporters and partners to fulfill its mission of promoting environmental protection and sustainable development across the Danube and Carpathian ecoregions. Without their generous support, we couldn't do the work we do.

Organisations that provided financial support in FY2012 are listed below.

- European Commission (for Structural Funds project in Romania)
- IKEA (via WWF-Sweden) (for responsible forest management)
- Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (via WWF-Norway)
- MAVA Foundation (via WWF-International)
- WWF-International
- UNEP/Global Environmental Facility
- WWF-Austria
- Erste Foundation
- WWF-Netherlands
- WWF-Germany
- WWF-Belgium
- Rewilding Europe
- The Coca-Cola Foundation
- Cosmo Bulgaria Mobile
- Garanti Bank (Romania)
- Lafarge Romania
- WWF Mediterranean Programme Office
- The Coca-Cola Company Serbia
- Centre for Environmental Information Bulgaria
- Alfred Toepfer Akademie fuer Naturschutz
- Hundreds of individual donors

Note: Only includes financial support provided to WWF-DCPO, WWF-DCP/Romania and WWF-DCP/Bulgaria. Support for related projects or activities of other organisations, including WWF-Hungary and WWF-Austria, are not included here.

The list also does not include many valuable non-financial contributions , partnerships and support .



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Where we work

The **Danube River** basin is the most international river basin in the world, draining 19 countries on its 2800 km journey from the Black Forest to the Black Sea. From the largely untamed middle and lower stretches of the river to the spectacular Danube Delta at its mouth, the Danube is home to some of the richest wetland areas in Europe and the world.

The **Carpathian Mountains** are Europe's last great wilderness area – a bastion for large carnivores, with over half the continent's populations of bears, wolves and lynx, and home to the greatest remaining reserves of old growth forests outside of Russia.



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

WWF IN SHORT

+100

WWF is in over
100 countries, on
5 continents

1961

WWF was founded
In 1961



+5000

WWF has over
5,000 staff
worldwide

+5M

WWF has over
5 million supporters