

Administration News

Associated members - The network of district level nature conservation organizations is developed. Existing or newly established local NGOs becoming GCCW associated members. The network already covers the following districts: Telavi, Lagodekhi, Akhaltsikhe, Batumi, Poti and Kazbegi.

Membership – 450 members in different categories are registered to date.

New staff – Dr. David Tarkhnishvili has joined the GCCW staff as a Species Program Manager.

Trainings – GCCW administration staff has participated in the institutional development trainings organized by the Horizonti Foundation /USAID;

Office - GCCW has purchased the office space and moved there in February 2003;

Fundraising – (a) Three large projects proposals and several smaller projects are developed and submitted to different donors; (b) More than 30 local private organizations are contacted with partnership proposals; (c) local fund-raising events are planned.

Environmental Education News

Schools for Nature Program - The program is initiated in 2003, and as a first phase the needs assessment was developed - interviews with biology and geography teachers was conducted in 120 middle- and high schools (40 in Tbilisi and 80 in other districts). The obtained materials are in the process of analyses, and based on the results the program outline and strategy will be developed;

Media relations – the agreement is developed with one of the most popular Georgian newspaper (“Ultra”) to provide one full page for GCCW materials. The newspaper circulation is 15,000 and is produced weekly. GCCW provides materials since April 2003;

Bird of the Year Campaign – the Caucasian Black Grouse is declared as a bird of 2003 and campaigning is in progress;

GCCW journal – the initial steps are made to start the journal production: the market research is conducted, the consultations with other conservation organizations and possible donors are made, and the outline is developed. The process is continuing and it is planned to start production from January 2004.

Books – the agreement is developed with a private publishing company to produce books jointly. One book (Birds of Georgia) is already prepared, and second (Animals of Georgia in IUCN Red Data List) is planned.

Involvement in National Biodiversity Conservation Activities

During the first half of 2003, GCCW has been actively involved in the following national activities:

- Development of Javakheti National Park Establishment Program: KFW, WWF, Ministry of Environment (MoE);
- Biodiversity Assessment Update for Georgia: USAID Caucasus Mission;
- Development of Wildlife and Biodiversity Management Plan in Georgia for BTC: BP and URS Corporation;
- Water Bird Mid-Winter Counts in Georgia: Wetlands International;
- Wintering Bird Survey in Kolkheti National Park: Integrated Coastal Zone Management Center
- Rapid Assessment and Prioritization of Protected Areas Management in Georgia: WWF and Department of Protected Areas;
- Self Assessment of Country Capacity Needs for Global Environmental facility: MoE.

**Members in Friendship category:
Keith Bildstein (USA) and Mike Hirschler (the Netherlands)**

Projects News

Caucasian Black Grouse Conservation - The project takes place at three pilot sites in Georgia - Borjomi, Lagodekhi and Kazbegi districts, and uses an integrated approach to species conservation combining 4 major elements – field study, public awareness campaign, eco-tourism development and international experience sharing. The participatory mechanism is widely applied in all activities by involving local stakeholders in research and planning discussions. The results achieved to date are: (1) Baseline inventory work is completed with objective to assess habitats quality and threats, and identify locations for further monitoring; (2) Training is provided to local experts (including the Protected Areas staff) to build capacity at local level for species monitoring and conservation; (3) A poster on Caucasian Black Grouse and newspaper articles are produced widely distributed among stakeholders; (4) International tour operator agencies are identified, materials are provided to them and the bird-watching promotion trips are conducted at pilot sites; (5) International conference is in the stage of preparation. It will be held in Kazbegi during September 20-22, 2003.

***Phasianus colchicus* Assessment Study** - The newly developed draft management plan for the Kolkheti National Park (KNP) foresees rehabilitation measures to restore wild population of the pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*). GCCW has conducted the study to assess the species and its habitat status in KNP during the period of May-June, 2003. The park administration has provided valuable input in the study design and selection of the most appropriate habitats for assessment, and KNP employees have participated in fieldwork in their associated units. Based on the sites visits the following recommendations were developed: (1) Habitat quality management is needed in identified locations to increase suitable habitats for Pheasant in Kolkheti National Park. The management could include: improved protection against grazing and mowing and scrub and bush planting or improvement; (2) For certain suitable sites that are outside of KNP should be considered prescription of management guidelines, or their inclusion within Park boundaries; (3) Reintroduction of Pheasants can be considered, but

only simultaneously with habitat quality improvement activities; (4) Genetic analyses are suggested as part of reintroduction process in order to avoid introduction of alien species or sub-species; (5) Monitoring of pheasant population should be included as essential part of rehabilitation.

Important Bird Areas (IBA) - This is one of the main strategic programs of GCCW and the following activities have been conducted during the period of January – June 2003: (1) New field data are being collected to complete Identification and delineation of IBAs by the end of 2004; (2) IBA caretaker network is developing – new groups are established and involved in the program in 11 IBAs; (3) IBA promotion materials are being developed; (4) IBA program is included in the Georgia National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan; (5) First Georgian IBA workshop is in preparation stage; (6) Zura Javakhishvili, an IBA Coordinator, has participated in IBA Monitoring in Europe workshop. All activities under this program are implemented in a close partnership to BirdLife International.

Vulture studies - There are four species of vultures in Georgia - Griffon Vulture, Bearded Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, and Cinereous Vulture. During the first half of 2003 the field studies are conducted in the following locations: Kazbegi, Sagarejo and Akhaltsikhe districts, Vashlovani Nature Reserve and Khrami basin. Local specialists and the Protected Areas staff are intensively involved in this program too. Besides, our US partners - Keith Bildstein (Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Pennsylvania) and Marc Bechard (Boise State University, Idaho) were involved in field studies. The results achieved during this period are: (1) The nest occupation is surveyed for vulture species at above location; (2) Two Griffon vultures is wing-tagged; (3) Food remains are collected from all vulture species; (4) Blood samples are taken from one Griffon Vulture; (5) Three Georgian young biologists took part in fieldwork and got the training on survey and monitoring methodology.

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GCCW is an affiliate of BirdLife International in Georgia