Elk

The photo catches a cow elk with her two calves happily grazing on fresh willows. I cautiously approach the family to get some more pictures. But the mother strongly watches the small ones, so I respectfully stop within the range of security, and continue my walk without disturbing the dinner of the family...

Leif Östergren
Fulufjället National Park
Oulangan Kansallispuisto,
Finland

“Nature protection and pressure from growing tourism have been so successfully harmonised at Oulanka National Park that in 2002 the park was awarded the PAN Parks certificate.”

Dalademokraten, Sweden

“During a ceremony the first ten entrepreneurs in the Fulufjället area will sign the contracts to be the pioneer certified local PAN Parks partners”

Kisalföld, Hungary

“Joining the PAN Parks network has several benefits such as international recognition, increasing number of visitors and thus increasing income for parks.”

Blue Wings, Finland

About a quarter of the park’s visitors come from abroad – particularly Holland, Germany and France.

Cover Photo
Hannu Hautala
Design and Lay-out
Hammer Advertising

Blue Wings, Finland

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Blue Wings, Finland

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Since the third issue of the Courier usually coincides with many of our readers returning from their holidays, the term Mediterranean often conjures up images of long strolls along the beach, idle hours spent sun bathing, and walks exploring the back streets of the old towns.

For most Europeans the Mediterranean has become the “natural” summer resort, a title which the region has a rightful claim to with its many advantageous features. Unfortunately, this “natural” choice of the tourist poses an ever-increasing threat to the natural values of the Mediterranean. To mention just one example: the coastal areas and the marine ecosystems they sustain belong to our common European heritage and if they are lost or polluted to the extent that endangers recreational activities, the Mediterranean will lose not only visitors but also its original, fabulous landscape that attracted so many people in the first place.

PAN Parks is in the position to offer a solution to this “Catch 22.” PAN Parks combine tourist management with a committed goal to preserve nature: that’s why zoning is so important. The core area where human activities are prohibited, is specifically set aside as a wilderness area. This approach acts as a guarantee in ensuring future generations are able to see the same rich Mediterranean flora and fauna that this generation has been lucky enough to see. I myself was lucky to enjoy this beauty for two long weeks while wandering in the wild, beautiful lands in Corsica and Sardinia, and I hope this sight will be preserved for our children and grandchildren.

The Mediterranean is a priority region for PAN Parks, and this is demonstrated in the location of this year’s conference with it being held in Monti Sibillini between 7-11 October. Although the Mediterranean is now a priority region we fully understand that the area presents many unique challenges, with the reasons for why being answered on page 6-7. We hope the future will show that PAN Parks has a perspective in the Mediterranean.
**What’s New?**

**Verification in Retezat**

Thanks to the committed work of the park management and effective help from our Foundation, Retezat is ready for verification against PAN Parks Principles 1-3. Head verifier Juan Herrero and verifiers Alexander Zinke and Jernej Stritih conducted the site assessment on September 13-17, 2004. Over the past several years, the Park Administration has undertaken a number of major improvements so as to meet PAN Parks requirements. Following negotiations with the land users, the park management has succeeded in being able to provide for a grazing-free zone, where nature should be left untouched. With the generous support of the Romanian government and the World Bank, a modern day park management system has been developed, which includes the construction of a new visitor centre and a park office. Further work is, nevertheless, needed to provide for the missing buffer zone and mitigate any impact from the water dam in the western edge of the park. For results of the verification check out www.panparks.org

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**Successful verification audit**

The recent internal audit of the PAN Parks verification system conducted by Xavier Font from Leeds Metropolitan University was deemed to be a success, demonstrating that it is a robust management system with clear and well-recorded procedures. At the same time it was also found that the main challenges for PAN Parks are to move from ecology-based criteria to sustainable tourism. PAN Parks procedures were audited against ISO standards and tourism-specific proposals for the application of standards. The audit itself had two goals: an evaluation of the capacity of certification programmes to actually conduct certification and an assessment of their competence to conduct verification against their own standards. The audit procedure included 1) a self-evaluation by PAN Parks, 2) an on-site assessment by the auditor, and 3) a report from the auditor consolidating the self-evaluation and the on-site assessment. To download the summary of the verification audit visit www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification

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**DOEN support for field projects**

The Dutch DOEN Foundation (www.doen.nl) has recently awarded the PAN Parks Foundation with a grant of 95,000 Euros. As PAN Parks has agreed to match the amount, there is a total of 190,000 Euros available for projects within protected areas of Central and Eastern European countries.

The DOEN Foundation was set up in 1991 by the Dutch Post Code Lottery, with annual financial contributions being allocated to the areas of: Nature and Environment, Development Cooperation and Human Rights. Within the area of Nature and Environment the foundation focuses on projects and programmes that achieve the best possible results for nature and maximize environmental benefits. It is specifically interested in supporting initiatives that combine idealistic and trade-related objectives. Though it operates worldwide, there is special attention given to East European countries.

In 1999 the PAN Parks Foundation set up a Small Grants Fund to provide a matching fund for small-scale projects in and around protected areas. The first project was entitled *Fish-otter monitoring in Slovensky raj*, and since this time a further seventeen projects have received almost 100,000 Euros. Such projects have also mobilised at least the same amount from other sources for local development projects. Currently there is one on-going project in Bieszczady National Park that aims to develop a Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for its region, and another four pending acceptance in the following national parks: Central Balkan (BG), Retezat (RO), Duna-Dráva (H), Slovensky raj (SK). The generous grant from the DOEN Foundation will help with the realisation of these projects.

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PAN Parks Accommodation: A new partner opens its doors

‘Fulufjällsbyn,’ the first PAN Parks Accommodation officially opened on 24 September 2004 near Fulufjället National Park in Sweden. This was an occasion for PAN Parks to celebrate the creation of a new financial mechanism for nature protection.

PAN Parks partnerships open a dialogue between conservation organisations, international businesses, local companies and the management of protected areas. Information and experiences are shared with the goal of improving the quality of conservation management, tourism services and facilities in and around the park.

Supported by the local people, stakeholders of Fulufjället National Park, the park management and PAN Parks Accommodation have taken the step of beginning construction of high quality accommodations in an area of Mörkret, which is within the vicinity of the national park. The initiative is expected to provide an economic impulse and open up new opportunities for local companies. This is especially needed around Fulufjället as the population is aging, and many young people due to a lack of employment opportunities are beginning to leave the area. It is planned that the investment in Fulufjällsbyn will help to halt such depopulation, acting as a gateway for local businesses, and offering more people the chance to see these outstanding natural areas.

This article intends to clarify a frequently asked question: Is PAN Parks Accommodation not the same as PAN Parks Foundation? The answer is no, they are not the same. PAN Parks Accommodation is a separate organisation and has a licensing agreement with the PAN Parks Foundation, which gives them amongst other things the right to use the name “PAN Parks.”

Developed as an integral part of the PAN Parks concept, PAN Parks Accommodation functions as a financial mechanism for the PAN Parks Foundation and is also a local partner in the Fulufjället area.

It is also frequently asked how PAN Parks Accommodation supports local businesses. The available tourism facilities and services of the region are offered in packages to the international business partners. In this way small local companies have access to the international market through the PAN Parks marketing channels. PAN Parks Accommodation enlarges the capacity of the area leading to an increase of tourist visits, the selling of souvenirs, food and beverage. PAN Parks Accommodation co-operates with many other local companies (local PAN Parks partners) committed to sustainable tourism to complete the tourism product and render the parks an attractive destination throughout the year.

You can book your special nature holiday to PAN Parks Accommodation Fulufjällsbyn now! Look for more information at www.panparksaccommodation.com and for more information on our partners at www.panparks.org on the Fulufjället Local partners page!
Having established a successful network in both Northern and Eastern Europe, new opportunities for PAN Parks are now opening up in the Mediterranean. Vlado Vancura, PAN Parks Conservation Manager, discusses the potential in the region and the strengths and difficulties of exporting the PAN Parks concept to the south.

An endangered paradise

The Mediterranean is a unique region with respect to biodiversity, culture, history and economy. In respect of biodiversity the region hosts the last viable world population of Iberian Lynx and a number of endangered species such as big cat, Black Vulture, Spanish Imperial Eagle, migratory cranes and steppic birds. It is also home to the world’s largest cork oak forests and the last remnants of relatively unspoilt oak, beech, and conifer forests, which serve as a living habitat for such rare species as the European brown bear and wolf. The reef and sea-grass ecosystems support, feed and provide breeding grounds for a number of valuable fish species, whales, dolphins and marine turtles.

Despite having such a richness of biodiversity recent developments have, nevertheless, seriously endangered the unique natural features of the region. Besides pollution of the seas, over-fishing, logging, forest fires and desertification, uncontrolled tourism is now one of the greatest dangers to the living world. Mass tourism leads to degraded landscapes, soil erosion, increased waste discharges into the sea, the loss of natural habitats, higher pressures on endangered species and heightened vulnerability to forest fires. It also places a strain on water resources and often has a disruptive impact on local cultures.

The PAN Parks alternative

To prevent these negative developments, an extensive system of protected areas has been set up and is gradually expanding in the Mediterranean. Clearly such areas differ according to locality and situation, with for instance areas used as seasonal breeding grounds needing seasonal protection, while areas that can be termed cultural landscapes requiring a traditional and sustainable economy. With such different goals of protection come different categories of protected area.

PAN Parks strives to protect natural ecosystems, meaning the creation of large protected areas with strictly...
protected core zones. This zone, with effective management can help protect the living habitat of endangered species and provide an example of wild Mediterranean nature.

What we offer is a positive concept, a synergy between soft controlled tourism and the long-term protection of our last “wild” areas. Our vision is to demonstrate how to turn threats into opportunities and how to preserve the unique features of biodiversity for future generations. A group of committed experts and professionals have developed a wide range of tools, which have been tested in our partner parks in North and East Europe. Lessons learnt in Central Balkan, Bulgaria or Bieszczady, Poland can be adapted and also used in the Mediterranean.

PAN Parks in the Mediterranean

The goal of PAN Parks is to create a European-wide network of well-managed parks where tourism and nature go hand in hand. Based on such a focus and with tourism being a major threat in the Mediterranean somewhat naturally the Foundation has assigned the region as a top priority. While many people in the region directly depend on tourism to earn their living, unless it is developed in a manner according to sustainable tourism principles then we will soon see the last remnants of the natural, still untouched seacoasts, islands and lagoons disappear in the same way as many other, “tourist” parts of the Mediterranean - covered in concrete. The PAN Parks concept shows an alternative approach, a way whereby the Mediterranean can protect their valuable areas and simultaneously create a system generating steady benefit and income. Although the rewards may not be as high as in the first years of mass tourism, the difference will certainly pay off in the long run. PAN Parks is looking for protected areas that are still able to offer untouched “wilderness,” and that are determined to protect such areas from uncontrolled mass tourism. With its long experience and expertise, PAN Parks offers a number of effective tools on how to plan, monitor and control the impact of tourism and ultimately lessen the disruptive influence of too many visitors on the areas’ local culture. The key attraction of the Mediterranean region is its natural beauty and cultural heritage. PAN Parks certainly will not prevent people from enjoying such experiences; rather it will try to preserve the chance for future visitors to have the same experience.

A call for the future

The Mediterranean region already has a number of promising candidates for the first PAN Parks. Croatia has a strong potential to host a Certified PAN Park: the Velebit Mountain on the Dalmatian coast with three protected areas (Paklenica, Northern Velebit National Parks and Nature Park Velebit) could be our first stronghold in the region. Interest has also been expressed from the Lastovo island and a number of Portuguese protected areas. According to an internal evaluation, there are at least five protected areas in Italy and six in France that could meet the PAN Parks requirements and benefit from our network. As the preliminary findings demonstrate, there is a strong potential for PAN Parks in the Mediterranean, and our task for the future will now be to fully exploit this opportunity.

Invitation for parks in the Mediterranean region

PAN Parks welcomes any initiative from protected areas in the Mediterranean, whose interest we succeeded in awakening. If you would like to know more about us and the requirements of PAN Parks membership, please do not hesitate to visit our website: www.panparks.org, or alternatively contact us directly at vvancura@panparks.org

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National park status makes Fulufjället a must see in Sweden

“Visitors are more positive toward national parks, about one in ten visitors came to Fulufjället, purely for the reason that the area is designated a national park” - this is one of the findings of a survey carried out among visitors of Fulufjället National Park, Sweden. The article below summarises the methods and results of the survey.

National parks around the world are increasingly attracting visitors who wish to experience pristine and unique natural environments. While increases in national park tourism provides business opportunities both in the parks and in adjacent communities, there are several economic, social and ecological aspects that need to be monitored in order to sustain high quality visitor experiences. Increases in visitation may cause negative impacts on the environment, conflicts between different user groups or within groups. At the same time, data on visitor numbers, distribution and attitudes is needed in order to design efficient management strategies and provide appropriate recreation opportunities.

This study reports preliminary findings from two different surveys of visitors to Fulufjället National Park in Sweden - one year before and one year after national park designation respectively. Both surveys used on site counters and self-registration boxes to collect visitor data. Follow-up mail questionnaires were sent to a sample of Swedish and German visitors. The survey of 2001 (one year before national park designation) collected data on visitor numbers, nationalities, demographics, trip characteristics, crowding, willingness to pay, attitudes towards management actions and tourism development etc. The purpose of the 2003 survey (one year after national park designation) was to monitor possible short-term changes in some of these parameters as a consequence of the national park designation in 2002. In addition, the 2003 survey was designed to estimate the regional economic impact of the park.

The visitors to Fulufjället differ from those of other Swedish mountain regions by a high percentage of first time visitors (about 60 percent). Four out of ten visitors to Fulufjället are foreigners, which is also considerably more than in other parts of the Swedish mountain region. Njupeskär - the highest waterfall in the country - is a major attraction in Fulufjället with a high concentration of visitors, situated in an area otherwise little known. All this makes Fulufjället a special place, and the benefits of using visitor data both in park management and tourism development should be obvious.

Comparing the visitors that came the year before Fulufjället was designated a national park with those that came one year after, highlighted some interesting differences. It would seem that since designation the national park is attracting greater numbers of females, people from larger cities, people that hike, fish and hunt less, families and people who like good weather. This is clearly not what could be considered the purist wilderness orientated group. In general, visitors are more positive toward national parks and it looks like about one in ten visitors came to Fulufjället, purely for the reason that the area is designated a national park. While it looks like a national park as such matters, changes identified here may partly be driven by improvements in infrastructure such as roads, a visitor center, signs, trails - all of which took place during the study period.

National parks in Sweden are not as important for the supply of outdoor recreation opportunities as may be the case in other countries where access to private land is restricted. Nevertheless, national parks and other protected areas do play an important role in the tourism production process. More focus is needed on the relationship between park management and tourism development. Measurement of visitor satisfaction shows that people are more satisfied with their visit to Fulufjället in 2003 as compared to 2001. Data on travel patterns and expenditures also indicate that a national park matters in economic terms. Future research will explore these relationships in more detail.

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The Siberian Jay is the symbol of the park
Developing tourism potential in Bieszczady and Central Balkan

Prepared by students of the Leeds Metropolitan University, the report explores in detail both the strengths for tourism development in Bieszczady and Central Balkan National Parks and also the problems that face both PAN Parks and tour operators.

Tourism audits demonstrate that both parks have an abundance of natural and man made resources that would support different forms of tourism development, however at the present time activities based forms are the more prominent. The process of the tourism audit clearly shows that although each park has potential for tourism, further developments are required (especially in the field of infrastructure) to attract additional tourists.

The weaknesses of the tourism product are further identified through the problems that tour operators face. Five major problems in the form of accommodation, transport, language, park facilities and available data greatly impact on the development of different holiday ideas, and ultimately limit the number of viable package ideas available to both PAN Parks and the tour operators.

The report identified three key areas where PAN Parks can play a progressive role: finance, competition and marketing. All of these areas are currently limiting the development of tourism, however, there is also potential to improve the tourism product. PAN Parks are in the position to apply for further funding through the EU, which could be used to improve facilities within the two parks. Although the growing sector of sustainable tourism faces considerable competition, the fact that both parks have PAN Parks status offers a unique selling point and the opportunity to significantly improve marketing.

The report states that market research, accommodation, marketing and networking are key areas to the initial development of tourism within the two parks. Based on these findings, the students have developed a number of specific recommendations on how PAN Parks can help improve these areas.

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Eco-experience in Kalofer

Located in Certified PAN Park Central Balkan, Bulgaria, Kalofer was recently named third runner-up in the “Destination” category of the 10th Annual Ecotourism Awards sponsored by the renowned US-based travel magazine “Conde Nast Traveler.”

Chosen from nearly 100 applicants, Kalofer scored well in all three judging categories - the preservation of local nature, involvement of local people, and guest education. The Award is positive reinforcement and recognition of the quality product developed by the Ecotourism Association and its members. Since its inception much has been done to improve tourist facilities: the completion of the Byala Reka ecotrail and the opening of the Djendema Eco-Center promise new adventures and unforgettable wildlife experiences for visitors. The trail was designed as an attractive educational route in one of the most picturesque parts of the park - the river coils in the narrow mouth of the mountain amidst steep banks covered with verdant plants and wild flowers and inhabited with a miraculously diverse fauna. Located next to the Byala River on the park’s southern edge, the Djendema Eco-Center will be used for camps and outdoor activities to educate youth in the areas of nature preservation, ecology, and nature survival. The Djendema Center sprawls over a beautiful open meadow with a view of its namesake nature reserve above and includes an outdoor pavilion with tables and benches, a campfire area with seating, as well as tents and outdoor equipment for children. In the spirit of its “eco” name, the entire infrastructure is ecologically constructed, free of electricity and other modern conveniences - providing campers with a truly natural experience.

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Wilderness protection is a driving force behind PAN Parks. For political and historical reasons, wilderness - as a concept - has been a bone of contention in Europe. To increase public awareness of the concept, we provide below a comprehensive review of the interpretation and history of European wilderness and its meaning for PAN Parks. The first part was published in the summer issue of the Courier. Now readers can get acquainted with the second part of the article.

What is PAN Parks wilderness?

Wilderness has been defined as a major conceptual background for PAN Parks: “PAN Parks wilderness is a large area of land, (at least 10,000 hectares) which, together with its native plant and animal communities and the ecosystems of which they are a part, is in an essentially natural state. PAN Parks wilderness areas are those lands that have been least modified by man, they represent the most intact and an undisturbed expanse of Europe’s remaining natural landscapes.” This definition grasps the essence of PAN Parks wilderness: intact nature, where life remained more or less undisturbed from human activity - and which should remain so. This standard not only plays an important role in the PAN Parks certification process, but it also helps to identify wilderness potential in Europe.

Why do we need PAN Parks wilderness areas?

PAN Parks wilderness areas are places where wildlife thrives, natural processes are allowed to function without human interference, and people are only occasional and respectful visitors. Visitors primarily come to such areas to be entertained by the beauty of nature and to experience the feeling of wilderness. PAN Parks wilderness areas offer fabulous settings, stunning views, refreshing walks, many unique species and a real taste of European wilderness. It is also important that access is not restricted with peoples of all fitness levels and ages being able to take part in such an experience. Although all can experience the wilderness, for those
who are after the “wilder experience” there are such activities as climbing, canoeing and camping. PAN Parks offers the best opportunity to enjoy the perfect solitude of nature - at its untouched best.

What is the benefit of PAN Parks wilderness areas?

PAN Parks wilderness areas allow the natural processes of evolution to continue with minimal interference. As such they greatly contribute to the conservation of biodiversity helping to protect rare plant and animal species from extinction or endangerment. Furthermore, they have an important role in maintaining natural ecosystems and thereby providing for clean air and water. They act as a storehouse of genetic material from which future generations may obtain new food crops, drugs, clothing, and other valuable natural products. Importantly, and unlike many other land uses, wilderness areas do not eliminate any land use options for future generations.

Perhaps most importantly, they provide a place of inspiration, renewal or recreation far from the bustle and pressures of modern life. Wilderness areas give us a reminder of the aboriginal landscapes of Europe that retains immense cultural significance to the present day. By protecting our ecological and cultural values, PAN Parks wilderness areas form an integral part of the European identity.

Future perspectives

The future of the PAN Parks network mainly depends on people’s understanding and acceptance of the creation and appreciation of wilderness core zones in protected areas. I believe that conservation opportunities will continue to grow simultaneously with the will to protect and sustain such areas. There is much opposition to limiting extractive human activity in PAN Parks core/wilderness zones, and we can only succeed if we enter into discussion with all parties and raise public awareness to the importance of having such zones within European protected areas. We have to ensure that the national policies related to wilderness are in line with the international agenda such as the declaration of the World Park Congress in Durban, South Africa (2003), and that PAN Parks will also contribute to “wild” discussions at the 8th World Wilderness Congress (2005). Maintaining an international dialogue through these events facilitates the integration of the many socio-economic, cultural, scientific and ecological values PAN Parks wilderness areas sustain in the national policies of all European countries.

by Vladivoj Vancura

Network News

Building bridges

In the framework of the Swedish-Hungarian Year 2004, a Swedish delegation from the region of PAN Park Fulufjället participated in a joint seminar with Duna-Dráva National Park in Hungary on 25-28 August. The two delegations included representatives of the park managements, the nearby counties and the Ministries of Environment.

The seminar is part of a broader project, which aims to facilitate co-operation between Sweden and Hungary. As for PAN Parks, its relevance is in using the rich experience of the model Fulufjället PAN Park to help Duna-Dráva in its visitor management problems.

The seminar in August addressed the role of the ranger service in the management of protected areas with a special focus on visitor management. The program included presentations and discussions about the Hungarian nature conservation system and ranger service, and visitor management in Duna-Dráva National Park. The panel discussions gave ample opportunity for the Swedish and Hungarian delegates to compare existing practices, and investigate ways of adjusting Swedish methods to the Hungarian conditions. By participating in a field trip that involved the inauguration of a new educational path (on the Danube section of the park) the Swedish participants also became acquainted with the many natural attractions in the area.

The next seminar in the framework of the joint project is scheduled for the end of September 2004. The visit to Fulufjället is expected to introduce Swedish best practice in the areas of forest and game management, and zoning. It is hoped that by focusing on such issues more the Hungarian visitors will be able to “transplant” the practices of a successful PAN Park to their own local situation.

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Old-new contacts

Sumava National Park has recently expressed a renewed interest in co-operating with PAN Parks. In the past the Czech park and PAN Parks had good contacts but co-operation broke down following an extensive bark beetle infection and consequential logging. The initiative to renew contacts came after several years of debates, with the Czech Ministry of Environment and a new administration of the Czech National Park deciding to bring Sumava back to the international family of national parks and undertake major steps of improvement. As a result, a new zonation is under development, logging in the core zones has been stopped and an IUCN assessment was carried out in 2003. Further work is, nevertheless, needed to provide for the management of the core zone and to prevent its decrease and fragmentation.

With respect to its natural values, Sumava has the potential to become a very successful Certified PAN Park. Of particular note is the exceptional richness of the birdlife, including such rare species as the kingfisher, woodpecker, capercaillie, peregrine, bubo bubo and eagle. Larger animals are represented by the deer, elk and a small population of lynx that have been reintroduced. Also adding to the natural value and thus attractiveness of the park for potential visitors is the fact that there are more than 1,500 km of marked hiking trails for all levels of walker who want to enjoy untouched wilderness. Although there are no designated long distance routes, by linking the well-marked paths it is possible to explore the immense beauty of the mountains. Despite such attractions, what is now needed is a detailed evaluation so as to assess whether the park can meet PAN Parks standards.

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First potential transboundary PAN Park

Finnish Oulanka and Russian Paanajärvi National Parks are strong candidates to become the first transboundary PAN Park. This is the main conclusion of PAN Parks representatives visiting both parks.

Zoltán Kun, Director and Vladivoj Vancura, Conservation Manager visited Certified PAN Park Oulanka and its Russian “neighbour” Paanajärvi in July. They found that considering its size and the fact that 95% of the area counts as “wilderness,” Paanajärvi has the potential to become a “giant” amongst PAN Parks, as well as a model for our wilderness standard.

Located in the Republic of Karelia, the area of Paanajärvi is approximately 4 times the size of Oulanka (103,000 hectares), and is visited by ca. 3,000 tourists per year. The park constitutes an important part of the Green Belt between Finland and Russia, and over the years has established a fruitful and lasting co-operation with Oulanka. Examples of this co-operation include the Development Strategy for Paanajärvi and the Tourism Strategy for the Karelian Green Belt.

Signs of potential success include the fact that Paanajärvi was awarded in 2003 with the title of being the best-managed park in Russia and the recent improvements to tourist facilities such as the network of cabins with saunas and fireplaces. Although such issues are likely to benefit the park in meeting Principles 1-3, the parks management still needs to do a great deal in order to fulfill PAN Parks Principles 4-5.

As a result of the visit, PAN Parks and the Russian park’s representatives have agreed that verification for Principles 1-3 will be prepared for the summer of 2005.

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Strategic perspectives

Thanks to the joint effort of professionals and committed civilians, the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (STDS) for the Central Balkan National Park is expected to be finalized by the end of September. Since the first meeting of the committee at the end of March, much has been done to outline common goals and activities and establish concrete approaches to co-operating with local administrations, businesses and NGOs.

The willingness of the parties to co-operate and their commitment to sustainable tourism was clearly evident in the constructive spirit of the working sessions. Whilst participants agreed that the basis of the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy would be the already developed strategies, they felt that the advantages and requirements connected with having PAN Parks status should be highlighted in a new document.

As a result of the meetings (held in Gabrovo, Aprilitzi, Karlovo and Kalofer), the participants completed both a review of the tourist resources in the region and a detailed analysis of the conditions for the development of sustainable tourism. Accordingly, the leading programmes and projects of the Action plan were formulated, which is a very important step towards the development of the Strategy.

The final version is expected to be presented at the end of September in the last working session. The major task until then is to discuss and specify the key players in the local PAN Parks group.

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Travellers’ Stories

Triglav National Park

PAN Parks do not only offer beautiful places to visit but also an opportunity to take part in a diverse range of outdoor activities. In this issue, Ladislav Slosiar, Slovakia gives an exciting account of his hiking adventures in Triglav National Park.

There are many beautiful “wild” places in the areas of the new members of the European Union, which we have not yet had the opportunity to visit. With the Courier helping us to choose our destination, one bright spring day we set out to explore the Julian Alps in Slovenia (and in particular Triglav), which up until this point we only knew from photos. The 450 km-long drive from Bratislava to Mojstrana took about 5 hours but the view to the nearby mountains was so marvellous that we felt it was much shorter. While driving through Wurzenpass, we were in awe of the marvelous sight of the mountains, tunnels and steep rocks.

In Mojstrana, we stayed in the Kamne Campsite, which is located in the immediate vicinity of Triglav National Park, and due to locality offers a magnificent view of the alpine valleys of Vrata, Kot and Krma. Besides its natural beauty, Mojstrana is an ideal starting point for numerous easy and more demanding tours into the northern part of the park.

The park is named after the Triglav Mountain (2864 m), a symbol of Slovenia, which is situated in the center of the protected area. From there, the valleys spread out, supplying two large river systems, the Soca and the Sava with their water. The picturesque waterfalls offer a tourist attraction that no visitor should miss. This we can but confirm. The sight of the two Pericnik waterfalls (52 and 16 m respectively) in the Vrata valley, indeed gave us an unforgettable experience.

The flora in the park is mostly alpine, but due to its marginal situation and vicinity to the Mediterranean region there is a characteristic intertwining with the neighboring floral regions. Particularly frequent are islands of thermopile vegetation with lyrics and even sub-Mediterranean species. There is also a rich representation of park fauna with many indigenous species, including the Soca trout, the Golden eagle, the Capercaillie and the Black grouse.

It is clear there has been much effort invested in the development of outdoor facilities, particularly mountaineering. Mountaineers discovered this beautiful region in parallel with the Central Alps, and today marked alpine paths traverse the whole Julian Alps. The routes range from those for horses to those marked on the rocks for walkers and mountaineers. In addition to the marked routes there are 32 alpine houses and huts located within the park.

Although, due to bad weather it was not possible to climb the Triglav peak we made a number of easier trips in the area. On one such trip that also took in the spring of Soca River (Isvir Soce), Zadnjice valley, Pogacnikov hut (2050m), and Visic saddle (1612m) we managed to reach the top of Prisak (2547). On all the paths we took, conditions were good.

After all that hiking in the mountains, it is easy to take a short trip (only 100-150 km from the park) to the coasts of Italy, Slovenia or Croatia and relax in the Mediterranean sea. This beautiful area has everything one needs for a perfect holiday and as we did not reach the top of Triglav at least we now have a good excuse to return.

by Ladislav Slosiar
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Our Protected Area Partners

Name of area: Fulufjället National Park
Country: Sweden
Area (ha): 38 483
Number of visitors per year: 40 000
www.dalarna.se/fulufjallet

Name of area: Oulanka National Park
Country: Finland
Area (ha): 27 500
Number of visitors per year: 150 000
www.metsa.fi/natural/nationalparks/oulanka

Name of area: Bieszczady National Park
Country: Poland
Area (ha): 29 200
Number of visitors per year: 250 000
www.mec.gov.pl/kzpn/ind_gb.htm

Name of area: Central Balkan National Park
Country: Bulgaria
Area (ha): 71 669
Number of visitors per year: 25 000
www.centralbalkannationalpark.org

Other co-operating partners
These areas are working for PAN Parks verification. In brackets are the expected dates of verification.

Abruzzo National Park (2005)
Rila National Park (2007)
Slovensky raj National Park (2006)
Triglav National Park (2005)

Join PAN Parks!
If you would like to see your park on the PAN Parks map, please contact Vladivoj Vancura, Conservation Manager at vvancura@panparks.org about the verification process.