

## Policy Committee of SCB-ES Activities, products and outcomes during 2014

### Annual PC meeting

We held our yearly meeting in Bialowieza/Poland, on the border with Belarus, on 26-30 August 2014. It was attended by half the PC. We could welcome a new PC member: Francisco Moreira (Portugal). The focus of our discussions was the upcoming ICCB-ECCB (see below). We also dedicated one day to excursions to the core zone of the national park (the largest relict of temperate primary forest in lowland Europe) and different management regimes in the buffer zone. We produced a blog entry on the meeting –

<http://euroconbio.blogspot.de/2014/09/bialowieza-far-east-or-centre-of-europe.html>



### PC work on conservation policy in Europe

There is a - slowly increasing – number of long-term initiatives PC-Europe is carrying out.

#### Roadless Areas Initiative



One PC member (Nuria Selva) was member of the Program Committee of the 2014 Infra Eco Network Europe (IENE) International Conference “Life for a Greener Transport Infrastructure” (<http://iene2014.iene.info/>). PC-Europe organised one symposium, contributed a plenary talk and two more talks. Another important feat with a lot of input by the initiative was the “IENE 2014 Roadless Areas Declaration” of the conference –

<https://www.conbio.org/policy/roadless-areas-initiative-gains-support>

A book chapter on roadless areas and their conservation was recently accepted (publication due approx. July 2015)<sup>1</sup>.

## Natura 2000

The EU Habitats and Birds Directives, as well as the Natura 2000 complex of protected areas, represent another important focus of the work of our Policy Committee. EU conservation policy is currently confronted with a potential revision (including a “Fitness Check” of the directives) enforced by the EU Commission (also see below: Outlook). - A paper resulting from a survey at the ECCB 2009 in Prague was published<sup>2</sup>. For its diffusion, the paper was distributed to the respondents of the survey. - A talk on management of Special Protection Areas under climate change was held at the annual conference of the German Ornithologists’ Society in September in Bielefeld. A short article was produced from it and published in a German ornithological journal<sup>3</sup>.

## CAP / Grasslands

INSIGHTS | PERSPECTIVES

### AGRICULTURE POLICY

## *EU agricultural reform fails on biodiversity*

Extra steps by Member States are needed to protect farmed and grassland ecosystems

By G. Pe’er, L. V. Dicks, P. Visconti, R. Arlettaz, A. Báldi, T. G. Benton, S. Collins, M. Dieterich, R. D. Gregory, F. Hartig, K. Henle, P. R. Hobson, D. Kleijn, R. K. Neumann, T. Robijns, J. Schmidt, A. Schwartz, W. J. Sutherland, A. Turbé, F. Wulf and A. V. Scott

declining species and provide important ecosystem services, yet have the worst conservation status among all ecosystems (2). Declines in species richness seem to have slowed for a few taxa in parts of north-western Europe (3), albeit at a biodiversity-impaired status quo.

systems with higher environmental impact than all other policies and directives [supplementary materials (SM) part A]. Recognizing the role of the CAP for biodiversity, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2020 sets Target 3A to “maximise areas [...] covered by biodiversity-related measures under the CAP” (8). The CAP reform does not fulfill this target.

**THE DILUTION OF AMBITION.** When the European Commission launched the latest CAP reform in 2010, it outlined three main challenges: food security, environment and climate change, and maintaining the territorial balance and diversity of rural areas (9). To help address the second challenge, 30% of direct payments to farmers (“Pillar 1”) were to become conditional on compli-

In 2013 and 2014, the Policy Committee got involved in NGO consultations in the context of the final negotiations for the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU. We assumed the lead in expert surveys, among others, on existing data on high nature value grasslands. These efforts resulted in a Policy Forum paper in the Science magazine<sup>4</sup>.

Extensive follow-up activities addressed diffusion and outreach both to decision-makers and fellow scientists. In two opportunities, main messages and potential policy implications were discussed directly with Members of the Parliament in Brussels (Breakfast meeting, visit to the Parliament). An SCB-ES letter is drafted to complement a letter by the authors of the Science article to the new Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan. The letter will also contain an invitation to attend a corresponding symposium at the ICCB-ECCB 2015 (see below).

## Old-growth forests in Šumava National Park

The conservation of the remaining primary and old-growth forests in Europe has been an important topic for PC work for many years (among others, in Białowieża – see above: Annual PC meeting). Representing another move in a long-standing activity addressing Šumava National Park, a letter prepared by the PC was approved by the BoD of SCB-ES, signed by the President of SCB-ES and sent

<sup>1</sup> Selva, N., A. Switalski, S. Kreft, P.L. Ibisch (2015): Why keep areas road free? The importance of roadless areas. In van der Ree, R., Smith, D.J. and Grilo, C (eds.): Handbook of Road Ecology. John Wiley & Sons, Oxford. 552 pp. ISBN: 978-1-118-56818-7.

<sup>2</sup> Vassiliki Kati, Tasos Hovardas, Martin Dieterich, Pierre L. Ibisch, Barbara Mihok and Nuria Selva (2014): The challenge of implementing the European network of protected areas Natura 2000. Conservation Biology 29: 260-270.

<sup>3</sup> Kreft, S. & P.L. Ibisch (2014): Management von EU-Vogelschutzgebieten: Ökosystembasierte Anpassung an den Klimawandel. Vogelwarte 52: 317-318.

<sup>4</sup> G. Pe’er, L. V. Dicks, P. Visconti, R. Arlettaz, A. Báldi, T. G. Benton, S. Collins, M. Dieterich, R. D. Gregory, F. Hartig, K. Henle, P. R. Hobson, D. Kleijn, R. K. Neumann, T. Robijns, J. Schmidt, A. Schwartz, W. J. Sutherland, A. Turbé, F. Wulf & A. V. Scott (2014): EU agricultural reform fails on biodiversity. Extra steps by Member States are needed to protect farmed and grassland ecosystems. Science 344: 1090-1092.

to the President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The efforts of the SCB-ES strongly contributed to rejection of the Bill that was likely to enable activities likely to cause serious damage to the nature of Šumava National Park.

### Diclofenac and vultures

Diclofenac, an anti-inflammatory drug used for humans and domestic animals, is notorious for being extremely harmful to raptor bird species, among other wildlife. After the EU Commission's decision to allow its use for domestic animals in the EU, PC-Europe started addressing this issue on the SCB website. We then prepared a letter, which, after its approval by the BoD of SCB-ES, was sent to the EU Commission. We received a response letter by the Commission that assures to review the problematic permission for diclofenac for treatment of domestic animals. We submitted three entries to the SCB Policy website –

<https://www.conbio.org/policy/scb-europe-warns-that-diclofenac-approval-threatens-european-vultures-and-e>

### ICCB-ECCB 2015

The triannual European Congresses for Conservation Biology (ECCB) are a traditional “playing field” for PC-Europe. The upcoming ECCB in Montpellier (France, 2-6 August 2015) will coincide with the next biannual International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB). Much of our work in the last months has focused on contributions to both the scientific programme and other activities (side events etc.) of the ICCB-ECCB 2015. There are a couple of planned activities that remain to be defined (*italics*).

#### SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME: Organised by the PC:

- Symposium: The 100 priority questions for biodiversity conservation in Mediterranean-type regions of the world
- Workshop "A Mediterranean basin SCB/IALE/ISOMED initiative: Targeting goals and action plan"
- Symposium: Roadless areas
- Symposium: Natura 2000
- Symposium: Green Infrastructure, connectivity, and the agricultural landscape

#### With PC contributions:

- Symposium: Biodiversity and human development (Biber-Freudenberger, Center for Development Research, University of Bonn, Germany)
- Symposium: Conservation at the cross-roads: how roads and other linear infrastructure influence conservation (Soanes, Australian Research Centre for Urban Ecology, Parkville, Australia)
- Symposium: Moving forward Strategic Planning at Scale: Lessons from Europe, Australia and the United States (Leslie, National Parks Service, USA)
- Round-table discussion: EU Overseas Territories (Martinez, IUCN)

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES:

##### Side events:

- *Get to know the Policy Committee*
- *Open air movie night: "Surviving Progress"*

- *Informal round table addressing all the PC symposium themes - overriding theme EU conservation policy issues - or separate informal meetings/round tables*
- *workshop (mostly?) for PC members: systematic development of a EU conservation policy strategy*

#### Awards: (working titles)

- Swarovski optic green footprint prize
- European youth prize
- European conservation prize

#### Eco-friendly congress:

- Promotion of travelling on foot/by bike (see also above: Swarovski optic green footprint prize) - <http://www.iccb-eccb2015.org/content/transportation-0>
- *"Bring your own cup"/"World cup competition" (most beautiful, ugliest, catchiest environmental message)*
- *"Bring your own bag"/bag competition (same categories as with cups)*

## PC-Europe/PC-Global

The PC-Global was reorganised and revived. It now consists of the Chair of PC-Global, the chairs of the regional section PCs and the chairs of the two global subcommittees (IPBES, transsectional) –

<http://www.conbio.org/policy/about-policy-program>

PC-Europe delivered expertise for two SCB-Global statements:

- "Endorsement of global principles for and support of a moratorium on industrial activities within the world's primary forests" –

<http://www.conbio.org/policy/endorsement-moratorium-on-industrial-activities-within-the-worlds-primary-f>

- Position Statement on the Threat from Industrial Oil Palm Expansion to Equatorial Forests in Africa (Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) Africa Section endorsed by SCB-Global) –

<http://www.conbio.org/policy/scb-africa-section-issues-position-statement-on-the-threat-from-expansion-of-oil-palm-production>

Furthermore, PC Europe was consulted regarding a proposal for changes to the SCB-global policy approval process (Lengthen the period allowed for voting, Establish an appeals process).

## PC-Europe/SCB-Global Trans-sectional Policy Initiatives Subcommittee

PC-Europe contributed material on policy work on the primary forest of Bialowieza (Poland) and the old-growth forest of Šumava (Czech Republic). The website is due to go online soon.

## Outlook

Planning for a trip of approx. 10 people (SCB-ES President and PC) to Brussels around the 25-28 May 2015 is running. We have advanced to varying degrees in consolidating meetings with MEPs, the Commission and NGOs. Main topics will include engagement in the congress, CAP, Natura 2000 (ongoing Fitness Check) and ongoing work on a EU forest/forestry strategy.