

# ANNUAL REPORT 2007



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**Acronyms**

BBF – Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation

BSPB – Bulgarian Society for Protection of Birds

BSBCP – Bulgarian – Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme

CBC – Cross-Border Cooperation

CCs – Consultative Councils

DBU – Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt

EMEPA - Enterprise for Management of Environmental Protection Activities

GEF – Global Environmental Facility

MOEW – Ministry of Environment and Water

MP – Management plan

NNPS – National Nature Protection Service

NFB – National Forestry Board

PAs – Protected areas

RIEW – Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water

SGP – Small Grants Program

SMEs – Small and medium enterprises

APIA – Access for Public information Act

The present report is in compliance with the art.5.4 of the agreement between the SDC and the BBF and covers the period January – December 2007.

## I. The Context

After the emotions on the admittance to membership of our country in the European Union, 2007 was the year for realization the undertaken engagements as well as the new opportunities and problems relevant to this realization.

The most significant achievement in the sphere considering conservation of the nature was the introduction of the final list with potential places for Natura on the EU Birds Directive and the EU Habitats Directive in front of the European Commission. Through this act Bulgaria engages herself to ensure full protection of the potential Natura places. Now, at the end of the year the significance of this victory is controversial due to the decision of the Ministry Council considering Natura 2000, which decrees that the territories with total and detailed plan accepted to the date of announcing the individual protected areas are excluded automatically from the NATURA area (abrogated in January 2008 under the pressure of the EU). This enables to see the real boom of the investment intentions - particularly along the Black Sea coast.

All these excitements about the development of ecological network had a strong response in the society - the pressure for accepting the zones in their full size as well as the protests caused by the non - observance of the state's given promises, were a part of the public society's actions.

During 2007 all public campaigns and actions for conservation of the nature were coordinated by the Coalition "For the nature", which already includes 20 NGO and public groups which had a positive effect both on the discernment of the campaigns and the trust through which the people accepted the actions of the conservationists. At the end of 2007 the members of the Coalition were in a case of a need to rules for membership, inner communication, taking decisions. The vision, goals and the problems of the coalition were discussed.

**Annex 1** provides detailed information on project's progress (including the programme development component) against the concrete objectives and outputs of the operational plan.

## II. PROJECT "PRO-BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS: THE NATURE BEYOND CONSERVATION"

### 1. Biodiversity dialog platforms

#### Save Nature Park Strandja

During the first half of the year the campaign "For the nature" was obsessed with the excitement over the combating of NP Strandja. The public began to realize its powers and it was ready to fight for more:

"To observe the law,  
To respect people's rights,  
So that the Bulgarian nature remains! »

These were the demands on the great meeting "We won't be silent for the Bulgarian nature" in support for Strandja, Rila, Pirin, The Black Sea coast and the Freedom of the speech, which took place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July. On the occasion of this was the forthcoming reading of the modification of the Protected Areas Law in the Parliament. The meeting collected more than 2000 people – and it became the biggest conservation event in our new history.

The second half of the year past under the sign of the new big threat and the next great challenge - preserving the symbol of the Bulgarian mountain and Bulgaria as a whole, the seven Rila Lakes.

### **“Rila is precious for us”**

The campaign started with the news considering the dismissal of the Director of Rila National Park - Vasil Petrov and continued with great number of public actions:

- «Building up» of the pedestrian path on Rakovska Street with scores of cardboard boxes with the demand that «The country must at least once obliterate the illegal construction». The illegal hotels built everywhere in Bulgaria were presented symbolically through the piled up cardboard boxes (29.08.2007).
- Public control on Rila: tracking the development of the project, documentation and presenting constant information and photos to NGO and institutions.
- Subscription list which is spread both through Internet and paper blanks. Considering our former experience subscriptions are the most accessible way for informing the people for present problem and they are always an important step for the public activity. Over 18 000 signatures are collected by now.
- Preparation of 18 requests on the APIA on the case “Panichishte”. As a result it was realized that the construction of road and ski lift Pionerka - Rila Lakes (that sets the beginning of the planned ski project) is in infraction of 6 laws!

*(Detailed information for the low - breakings in the case “Panichishte” could be found in: [http://forthenature.org/cases/rila\\_panichishte\\_resort](http://forthenature.org/cases/rila_panichishte_resort))*

In the case of “Rila” MoEW claims that the infringers are drawn up 9 statements for part of the contraventions but it takes no real steps for stopping the still continuous construction in NP “Rila”. Considering the case “Panichishte” and the stagnation of the institutions the coalition prepared a press conference in BTA’s Press club: How to support the Bulgarian institutions to respect the law and to honour the public interests? The case “Pachinishte” (20.11.2007).

### **The acceptance of the list for Natura 2000 zones**

The main struggle during 2007 was for the acceptance of the full list of Natura 2000 sites and their preservation. We could congratulate ourselves with the dispatch of the final list which consists of almost all proposed zones to EC. In spite of the multiple deferment of this decision and the fact that taken alone it doesn’t give any protection of those areas, after all it is a marked and necessary achieved step.

This decision of the Bulgarian government was concomitant and demanded constantly by the coalition and the citizens who support us:

- The present process for Natura 2000 continued even after the summer holiday of the government until November included, with a great imagination and patience often for “consecutive and last time”...
- The process for sending the final list Natura 2000 sites in Bulgaria was under the control of EC, for which we consider our regular signals and meetings in the EC as contributions. Three of the six penalty procedures for Bulgaria with the topic for the environment have been already started. However, there is no such procedure for Natura 2000 due to the promises and the final sent list, which consists of the places for Natura 2000 on scientific criterions, which covers 34% of Bulgarian full area. Despite all the efforts, a part of the problems of Natura 2000 net remains:
  - There is a decree in the MC decision for Natura 2000 which enacts that the territories with accepted general and detailed spatial plan by the date on announcing the individual protected areas with ordinance to be excluded

automatically from the Natura zone. However, this decree leads to the incompleteness of the network and probable sanctions from EU.

- Rila - buffer is excluded from Natura 2000 list - the forthcoming construction of the large ski - resort of the Seven Rila Lakes is considered as a result.
- The Bulgarian government did not succeed to announce on time the protected areas for the birds as a part of the European ecological network Natura 2000.

The aim of this public activity and the purposeful efforts of the coalition lead to better opportunity for appointments with the governing bodies, the Ministries or Bulgarian politicians and parties that are interested. During the second half of 2007 the establishment of a good practice was laid: regular meetings with the Ministry of the Environment and Waters and its structures.

During July-December 2007 two meetings were organized:

- Topic of the first meeting (07.07.2007) was Irakli, and the fact that 17 parcels or about 100 ha remained outside the protection of the ordinance for prohibition of all kinds of activities on the area as a future Natura 2000 site based on Biodiversity Act.
- The topic of the second meeting (01.10.2007) was Natura 2000 again, the areas along the Black sea Coast and the construction in Rila NP.

As a whole the foundation of a true communication between NGO, the public and the Ministry was laid. It didn't exist by now and through it we have opportunity to ask our questions directly and during the press conference, after each conversation, we can show in front of the media how far we have received answer and understanding.

**Besides the governing structures we were offered meetings also from the business and from big investors.** A couple of meetings with great importance took place:

- 2 with STA Perelik who wants to ruin the whole West Rhodopes with "green project in the spirit of Rhodopes", considering their words;
- With "Rila sport" Ltd., the offshore campaign which is the investor of Panichishte;

During the meetings was showed the tendency of the investors to show their eagerness of presenting their projects as "eco" - a new fashion which we are often about to get in conflict with. Cases as this one make the work for distinguishing of the conceptions "eco - resorts" in the public area is getting even more indispensable.

In connection with this BBF participate in the Working group for sustainable tourism of the international network CEEWEB. BBF expert took part in 2 of their meetings and it is a partner in an international project for sustainable development of Strandja.

## Other cases

### ***Irakli***

- The one - year prohibition of the Minister on doing any kind of activities in Irakli expired on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August. At the same time "Irakli - Emine" was in the list with the postponed Natura 2000 zones.
- For the continuance of the expiring prohibition for whatever kind of activities were organized a couple of public campaigns and actions which remind for the public necessity of the preservation of Irakli. As a result the Minister prolonged the prohibition but he excluded particular territories of its range.

- Vaya River was ruthlessly excavated and all the trees from the Longoz forest along its shores - cut down. The dunes at the end of the beach were raked and used for bathing - beach with umbrellas.
- There was a sanctification conducted for the construction of the parcel owned by Swiss properties regardless the absence of ecological evaluation for Natura 2000 as well as the absence of licence (13.11.2007) which shows that the danger is not passed.

### ***Kamchia sands***

We put forward a letter demanding a meeting considering the renovation of the Protected area "Kamchia sands" (27.07.2007). Even in January 2007 a preposition for re-declaring the protected area again was put forward. However, there is no development thereafter. On the meetings conducted with the Ministry also weren't presented concrete actions which the Ministry will undertake for promulgating again the protected area.

### ***Kara dere***

At the end of the year we were aware of a project for Kara dere, which was constructed by the world - famous architect Norman Foster. Before revealing these names, the Association of the parks in Bulgaria sent applications for access to information for the processes of Kara dere.

A serious challenge is imminent, considering the protection of this place and the elucidation of the stability principles as a whole.

Except for these "bigger cases", the coalition is occupied with many others as well. The achieved results on one side, and the depletion of all strengths of the partners in the coalition, brought in the limelight the necessity of resolving the problems on more general level. Therefore, at the end of the year 2 coalitional meetings were conducted with the purpose of working out written rules, mission, goal and strategic plan of the campaign.

Due to all these efforts and the much love put into the campaign "For the Nature", we organized a huge concert under the motto "We saved Strandja, lets carry on for the nature".

For the three years of the project the idea for developing a dialog platform developed through the following stages:

- the platform, as a mean for debate as well as the taking of common decisions, considering the basic ecological problems such as floods, transport and biodiversity etc., fully facilitated from BBF
- the platform as a basis for development of "Eco-family" through a BBF project to Open Society
- the platform as a accelerator of the processes which brought to the unification of the leading ecological organizations in the coalition "For the Nature";
- the platform, already transformed with its own individual existence in the coalition "For the nature".

So, considering the development of the conservation society the project "The nature beyond conservation" played an essential part for realization the needs and usefulness of united positions and actions and the unification of resources and opportunities. Three years after the very beginning we could compliment ourselves with a willing partnership in between society and with the formation of a public society with active position to the problems with the nature.

## 2. *Local dynamic groups*

### **STRANDJA**

After the turbulent summer of 2007 at the end Strandja was "saved" and remained NP after the final acceptance of the changes in the Protected areas Law.

1. The campaign for saving Strandja Park won a prize for the most successful action for conservation of the biodiversity. Although there is no definite person or organization to win this prize, the jury of the Annual Awards decided to bestow it on all those known and unknown citizens who participated in the protests, who took part in the subscription for Strandja, who got out on the streets, who showed in the medias or supported the campaign in their own way. BBF decided that the best way for this is to organize a party and to invite everyone!

Therefore, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October at 19:00 h on the "Batenberg" square (on the yellow paving - stones next to the former "Mausoleum"), a great concert "We saved Strandja" was carried out. The music for the people and the nature, thanks to Ostava, Balkandj, BG3 Dobri and Pitkin, Andro Studel, Todor Yankulov, the performers of national songs and dances. The anchor of the concert was Kamen Vodenicharov! All other hot topics oh that moment were presented - the one for preserving the sacred lands of National Rila Park, "To save Irakli", Shabla like, etc.

2. Along with the case for the status of NP Strandja, the topic for the Management Plan was the topic of the day again and after all BBF decided to set the question in front of the court and to initiate proceedings against the Ministry of the Environment and Waters, in which the organization controverts the inactivity with the examining the Management Plan (MP) of NP "Strandja".

SAC with decision № 12612 from 12.12.2007 convicted MOEW to organize the examination the project of the Management Plan of NP "Strandja" - a revised version on the session of the High Expert Ecological Council in time of one month, reckoned from the return of the case as a correspondence in MOEW on the authority under article 257, paragraph 2 from Administrative Proceedings Law.

MOEW appealed against this decision of the SAC and the court controversy would be decided by a committee consisting of five members of the Supreme Administrative Court.

Thereby, after 8 years expert's efforts and 145 000 BGN invested in the preparation and the revision of the Management Plan, BBF is faced with the consecutive try of MOEW to circumvent the law and to enact considering the preservation of Strandja park.

3. The other case where we had to rely on the court system was in August when we were refused by MOEW the access to the information for the proposal of excluding the lands from PA "The Mouth of Veleka River". The arguments, concerning the reluctance of the owners of the lands and the investors who prepared the positive statement for the exclusion of parts from PA, are unacceptable and that is the reason why we turned to the court again. The case is about to be up before the court in January.

4. In association with the Directorate of "Strandja" Nature Park BBF organized educational trip in south-western Bulgaria and Northern Greece in period between 18 - 21<sup>st</sup> October 2007. The group consisted of 40 people who live on the territory of NP "Strandja" and deal with eco- and rural- tourism for more than ten years.

The meeting of the greatest importance was the one between the local people from Strandja and Belasitsa which take place in the Cultural club of Gabrene village. It was conducted under the motto "The good start leads to a good end" and gathered more than 100 people. Those who were experienced inspired confidence in those from the foothill as they mentioned that according to them Belasitsa and Petrich have all the premises needed for the development of the eco- and rural- tourism - the most important from which is the presence of enthusiasm and courage such as those which the people from Belasitsa appeared to have.

5. Since September BBF started the work over the project for development of the eco-tourism in the villages Sinemoretz and Brodilovo. It is a part of the project of Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity (CEEWEB) – „Joining the Dots: Implementation of CBD Tourism Guidelines by NGOs“. BBF prepares a detailed valuation for the tourist potential of the regions chosen from NP Strandja and offers variants for their future development as an alternative for the mass sea - tourism. The project is being accomplished in cooperation with NP Strandja Directorate and other experts with experience in this particular region.

BBF provide drafts of the tourism potential assessment study to the staff of CEEWEB Policy Office and of Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE) for comments and make requested changes when preparing the final study. We discuss the assessment and future options in a workshop on tourism development strategy preparation that will take place in Romania on December 2007 and provided information about the experiences in the preparation of tourism potential assessment study for the "Manual on the Implementation of CBD Guidelines by NGOs".

6. NP Strandja Directorate participated with a stand in the Green fair which was organized by BBF on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November in NDK. With Strandja's guide - book and the printed materials BBF succeeded to attract the attention of the huge number of visitors.

7. The national campaign of BBF considering control over stuffed preserved species also included the places of public resorts along the Black sea coast - in Nessebur, Pomorie, Ravda and Sunny beach. Policemen and representative of BBF (as the organization which gave the warning of the infractions) participated in the action. As a result of the verifications made the RIEW - Bourgas confiscated the following species: bear's hide, a common buzzard, an owl, a big hawk and an otter's hide.

8. BBF financed the researches, which took place in August, of the fish fauna in the rivers of Strandja - Rezovska and Veleka. The main goal was to determine the status of the fish populations in Veleka river after 12 years (the last examination was made in August 1995, and the one before it in 1972). Until now the frontier Rezovska river hasn't been examined considering the fishes.

BBF has in its dispose a detailed report for the carried examinations, prepared by Stoyan Mihov.

9. BBF applied for Technical Assistance for promotion of sustainable development in the Strandja / Yildiz mountain area (EuropeAid/124244/D/SER/BG) in association with AETS, BIOTOPE, BBF and IBS - unfortunately unsuccessfully.

## **PIRIN**

During the third, last year of the accomplishment of the project the activities in the region Pirin were concentrated for consolidation of the already formed partnership structures and traditions.

1. The general efforts were concentrated over the elaboration of the tour-operator Green Tale which was formed at the end of 2006. A special logo was made for the tour-operator even in the very beginning of 2007. Moreover, a domain with a website on: [www.greentale.com](http://www.greentale.com) was registered. The structure of the site was elaborated in association with the partners from Pirin region.

Considering the so called "winter" national tourist markets (in Varna and Sofia, at the end of February) special print materials for the tour-operator were prepared - the brochure "Magic mountains" and newssheets for the individual mini - destinations. The brochure was focused mainly over the inner Bulgarian market, target group - families with children, therefore it included basically offers for short weekends which are appropriate for this group; that is the reason why it was printed merely in Bulgarian. In order to attract the

attention of other purposive groups of clients in the newssheets printed in Bulgarian and English were presented more opportunities.

For a start a mini-destination was formed for the Pirin region: Pirin - Central Struma, including:

- Simitli municipality: the villages Senokos, Mechkul, Rakitna and Brejani
- from Kresna municipality: the villages Vlahi, Stara Kresna, Oshtava and Gorna Breznitsa
- Strumiani municipality: Ilindenci village
- Sandanski municipality: Liljanovo village

All the partners from Pirin region took part in the circulation of the materials. However, as it ought to be record that at the tourist market Holiday in NDK, Sofia, Green Tale's stand attracted the greatest number of visitors, which confirms our conviction that the interest in the sustainable forms of tourism, considering the protected areas is growing bigger and bigger.

Unfortunately, the first real season of the tour-operator - Summer 2007 - was much weaker than we had expected, chiefly due to the fact that the local suppliers of services (owners of houses for the guest, guides, etc.) weren't ready enough to welcome the visitors - the houses were delayed with the categorization; a part of the trained guides give up etc. However, we have all the reasons to hope that Summer 2008 would be much better.

2. The celebrations "Pirin Days" took place for the sixth in a succession during this year's summer, as it should be record that this time they were financed fully by the partnership network for Pirin - the municipalities around the Park, the Directorate of the National Park, local businesses, etc.

During 2007 the celebrations were concentrated again in July but this time they were in the form of four weekend-programs. The goal was to attract more tourists in the region mostly from the big cities such as Sofia and Plovdiv. Although this year also the finalization of the celebrations took place practically at the last moment, which firmly restricted the possible market limits, the events were comparatively well visited both from outer for the region guests and from local people.

3. The competition Natura 2000 - More than 700 students from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> class took part in the school round. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April in the Conference hall of the Regional Historical Museum (RHM) was organized the final round, given by BBF in association with RHM - Blagoevgrad and the Directorates of Rila and Pirin National Parks, in which participated 47 students. All the participators won many awards - diplomas, books, T-shirts, hats, badges and other informational materials. The rewards were given in the lobby of the museum on the background of BBF's exhibition "The Green belt - forbidden, forgotten, preserved sites ..."

4. As a part of the popularization of the biodiversity two of the exhibitions visited the regions "The Green Belt" and "Mushrooms Kingdom". The exhibitions were visited by the inhabitants of Strumjani, Blagoevgrad, Bansko and Razlog and were organized with the support of the corresponding municipalities, the Directorate of Pirin National Park and the museum in Blagoevgrad.

## **DOBRUDJA**

In the region five meetings and trainings in total were organized including:

In February 2007 11<sup>th</sup> session of Coastal Dobrudja Regional Forum was held. The main issues discussed were success and obstacles in establishment of local action group(s) following LEADER approach and the work plan for 2007. In partnership with Dobrich Business Center (Dobrich BC) and Public Environmental Center for Sustainable Development (PECSO) - Varna, BBF initiated the establishment of LAG. Dobrich BC worked

as a facilitator of the process. Number of meetings were held with the municipalities of General Toshevo, Shabla and Kavarna. As a result the local authorities confirmed their interest in establishment of LAGs for two areas - General Toshevo – Shabla on one hand and Kavarna on the other. In August two trainings were organized in the two areas with lecturers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. In the meantime the local authorities in Shabla and General Toshevo made an official registration of the LAG despite the necessity of longer process of stakeholders' involvement and following the bottom up approach and created some additional difficulties in the correct guiding of the process. Due to the local elections in October – November 2007 next steps for establishment of proper LAG according the MAF requirements will be implemented by the newly elected authorities.

In May 2007 following the initiative of the Mayor of Durankulak Village, Shabla municipality a seminar was held to introduce local authorities and local people to environmentally friendly and sustainable approaches and facilities of waste water treatment for small and medium size municipalities. Lecturer was provided by the MARIBU COMPANY. Strong interest was raised among the local people and the neighbourhood mayoralty.

In 2007 the Kaliakra Nature Center started its work with the beginning of the tourist season and the new exposition. Information boards of the Center were installed at suitable places in Bulgarevo village. Due to reconstruction works in the village center of Bulgarevo the regular access of visitors was almost blocked for the most of the active season. Despite of the difficulties the Center was visited by 600 tourists including 400 pupils.

In august 2007 representatives of BBF took part in the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the Public Consultative Councils of Durankulak and Shabla lakes Protected Areas. It was decided to form a working group of different stakeholders to prepared projects for implementation of the management plans of the two protected areas. First meeting of the working group was organized by the municipality of Shabla in October. During the meeting EU and national funding opportunities in the frame of the Operational programs 2007-2013 were presented and discussed and development of project idea on extraction of reed and mud from the lakes was initiated. In December the project idea was presented and discussed with representatives of NNPS, MoEW.

The three years work of the dynamic groups give opportunity for bringing out some very important conclusions connected to the future of the Foundation:

- a real positioning of the organization on local level appears only with the existence of local structure and local representative who must exert systematic and purposeful efforts in the work with the local communities and organizations.
- The formation of own structure, even when it takes much resources, is more successful practice from the use of the local existing organization as a local agent.
- The Foundation must keep active position in the formed partnerships and to stimulate the preparation of the joint projects in the utmost degree, then expecting to be invited for a partner.
- The Foundation needs a specified strategy for the substance and the geographical range of projects, which BBF decides to support as a partner.

### **3. Pro-Biodiversity Funds**

#### **➤ Biodiversity Emergency Fund (BEF)**

During 2007 the Fund was well known among the ecological NGO and as a result the authors of the projects were interested in advance whether their projects corresponds to the aims of the Fund and thus a couple of proposals were stopped at the level "ideas", this had nothing in common with the subject of the fund. Five projects were deposited. They were examined by a committee and were all approved and contracts for their accomplishment were signed. The sum total for the projects is 10 000 lv. After the Fund

ran low the receptions of new projects were suspended, though the ideas for the activities were set over and over again. The financed projects were:

- "Independent analysis of the management of the longoz orests along Tundja and the preparation of the proposals for their conservation" - National movement Ecoglasnost
- "Saving turtles from threatened areas on the Black sea Coast" - Chelonia Association
- "Public control over the construction of the oil pipe-line Bourgas - Alexandroupoulos" - The Institute for green politics
- "Public campaign for protection of the riverside forests" - Green Balkans Federation
- "Urgent activities for stopping the illegal construction of National Park Rila" - "For the Earth" Association

The projects contributed for solving series of concrete urgent problems as one of them - the campaign for Rila turned into a symbol of Bulgarian conservation at the end of the year.

However, the gathering of funds for such projects turns to be very hard.

#### ➤ **Students Fund**

After signing the Memorandum for cooperation with Biology Faculty of the Sofia University and as a continuance of the successful lecture course from the last year, a series of lectures were organized. The main aim this year was to purpose the students a whole program from theoretical and practical occupations on conservational biology. As lectures were attracted the leading specialists in Bulgaria on the particular topics. The theoretical part of the education was organized each Wednesday through lectures which attracted between 20 and 70 students each time. The practical part of the education was through filed camp. It was carried out in the period of 8-13<sup>th</sup> May 2007 in the area near "Studen Kladenec" reservoir. More then 40 students took part in it. All the students who attended the course on conservational biology got a certificate. An electronic group *conservationstudents* was organized with the aim of spreading the controversial information among the students and facilitation of the searching for volunteers on the particular topics from the side of the active projects or protected areas.

The last competition for financing students' diplomas was announced at the end of October 2007. By the 30<sup>st</sup> of November 26 proposals were deposited for financing on total sum of BGN 22 324, 22. After analysis of the proposals the commission suggested the financing of 11 subjects with total sum of BGN 6450. Those who won were from 5 faculties of 4 universities of Sofia, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora. In comparison with the last years the competition was considerable, besides the quality of the diplomas offered was much higher.

The development of these two funds during the three years of the project proved their usefulness for positioning the Foundation among the conversational community and the popularization of its activity in a larger sphere. On its own account the Emergency fund financed number of key for the conservation projects and thus supported the beginning of energetic activities - the case Irakli, the case Rila and the oil pipe-line Bourgas - Alexandroupoulos.

All this shows the need of efforts on the side of the Foundation for supporting these two funds and raise funds in them - from donations or through striking off funds from the trade activity of the Foundation.

#### **4. Biodiversity Awards**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September at an interesting ceremony in the "Doctor's garden", the winners of the Annual awards for biodiversity'2007 have come to light.

The jury consisted of the following members: Magdalena Maleeva, Ivailo Vatev, Gerassim Gerassimov and Georgi Lozanov. With one consent and categorically the committee decided that the Campaign for year 2007 is the one for Strandja. Undoubtedly, it is the campaign that drew into people of all ages, NGO, institutions and the media.

In the category "The best journalistic material" the award also categorically was given to Albena Pino from "Dnevnik" newspaper, who during the last year domineered as one of the most competent journalist at all topics relevant to Natura 2000, protected areas etc. However, she returned the check given and refused to accept its money equivalent. The funds from her prize were used for the concert for Strandja.

It is also of a great importance to honour two newspapers, which through the whole year demonstrated engagement and competence on the themes, relevant with the conservation - the daily newspaper "Dnevnik" and the weekly "Capital". They won a special prize - photos from the "Green Belt" regions.

At the category "Best management of protected area" the prize wins the Directorate of "Strandja" NP because they fought to the end for preserving the status of the park and never gave up from its protection.

Special prize for management of protected area wins Mr. Vasil Petrov - the ex-head of the Rila National park due to the fact that to end he defended the interests of the country and the society for preserving the biggest park as an European wealth. His prize was a participation in the exchange trip to "Lonjsko pole" Nature Park in Croatia.

The category "Donator for biodiversity" wasn't awarded.

The list of the nominated municipalities was short - merely three. It is quite often that the biggest conservational conflicts are exactly with them. The reason for this is the fact that some of them are defenders of the big investors who without any hesitation strike at the nature. However, we believe that there are such municipalities that truly want to protect and develop the natural landmarks on their territory. That kind of municipality is Strumjani, which accomplishes the great number of projects for popularization and preserving the biodiversity and especially for reducing the conflict between people and predators.

Each one who won a prize got the symbolical "Green belt", made by the kids from Cultural club "Prosveta" - Bourgas and "a check" for 500 lv. The rewarding is financed by the Swiss agency for development and cooperation. However, two of the checks for the "winners" are provided from an ecological, nongovernmental organization - "Fund for the wild flora and fauna" and the magazine "Ecology and business".

## **5. PR**

During 2007 BBF succeeded to get its way successfully in the media area and to obtain bigger public popularity. Our active participation in "Strandja" case and the maintenance of stable and regular position, the support and our partner's drawing into helped us with our better position.

### **➤ 2007 - the Year of the Balkan Chamois**

2008 was chosen for the Year of the orchids - we printed the traditional calendar in a total print of 2000 copies, a part of which would be spread in the bookshops for sale.

### **➤ The Green belt in Bulgaria**

Basic accent of our activities on the Green belt was connected with the exhibition "Green belt - forbidden, forgotten, preserved sites..." After the trip in Bulgaria, the exhibition visited Switzerland. It was officially opened on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2007 in the conservation centre of Pro Natura "Champ Pitet". BBF presented its activity and especially those connected with the protection and popularization of the regions included in the "Green belt" - Strandja, Belasica, Osogovo and Rhodopes.

- At the end of the summer we announced the competition "My summer in the Green belt" for experiences in the region of the Green belt. We received many photos, poems, tales and pictures. The best of the formers were awarded and their materials are published in our site [www.greenbelt.biodiversity.bg](http://www.greenbelt.biodiversity.bg)

A leaflet for the Green belt was printed in English in total print of 1000 copies.

➤ **DMS BBF campaign:**

The campaign in Bulgaria is supported by the Bulgarian Donors forum (we are also its member) and Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation (BCAF). The provocation for our participation was the Strandja case and the desire of many people to help not only by getting out on the street but also donating funds for buying precious lands. The campaign is called "Send one SMS - save 1 m<sup>2</sup> nature!". The code for the SMS is: DMS priroda, which is sent on number 17 777 (for subscribers to GLOBUL and vivatel). The idea of this campaign is to buy up valuable natural areas (meadows, pastures, forest, swamps), which are private property, in order to guarantee the long-term preservation of the biodiversity in them. A considerable part of Bulgaria is private property, that includes sand dunes, meadows with local endemic species such as Lillium Rhodopeum and the threatened with extinction plants such as the Orchis Provincialis and Kalopissii orchid, unique century old oak and chestnut woods. All of them are outside the protected areas and their conservation depends basically on the consciousness of the owner of the territory. These lands are low category and their prices vary between 100 and 1000 lv. for a decare.

With each year pass with quick steps Bulgaria "releases" itself of its precious and valuable nature and gives priority to the pseudo-investors, buildings, cut down forests, unsustainable used lands. Therefore, the need of preserving the lands and the forests with high conservation value recently became bigger and bigger, considering the unprecedented strikes against - Strandja, Irakli, Rhodope, Pirin, Rila.

In each contract (notarial act) for buying land would be written an express condition that these lands would preserve their function and would be used only with conservational aims.

➤ **"Green Fair"**

The autumn months were connected with the organization of an unplanned but very interesting and successful event - the organization of the final event for presenting the results from the work of SDC with the support of the "green projects" in Bulgaria, ordered by SDC.

The full conception for the event envisaged the formation of connection between what was achieved for 15 years in the sphere of nature's conservation and the future of the "products" of the Swiss help as well as the provision of opportunity for advertisement and popularization of the achievements and the results. As a whole the event must be focused on the future, not the past of the "green projects".

All the participators in the fair got cloth bag with the sign "BE GREEN" with the materials of the four "green" Swiss projects and a special brochure made by BBF with summary of the capitalization report for the achievements of the projects supported by SDC.

As first of its kind the event provoked unprecedented resonance also in the media. In spite of the election time the articles about the Green fair were published in scores of media.

During the three years of the project BBF succeeded to have its way successfully in the media field and to obtain considerable public popularity. This is no longer only ours sensation, it approved itself with the carried out investigation of the public opinion in October, organized by the Institute on sociology of BAS, which positions BBF on the 4 place among the ecological NGO. Our active participation and our role in the coalition "For the nature" as well as the maintenance of hard and regular position, the support and our partners' drawing into helped us to better position ourselves.

The great evolution began also regarding the team itself to PR of the Foundation. After our problems, connected with the unsatisfactory position, distinguishing and forcing of BBF on the public scene, at the end of this 3-year-period our team values really high the achievements of the Foundation considering its public popularity and position.

### **6. Business and Biodiversity**

The efforts of BBF's team in supporting the pro-biodiversity business in the year 2007 logically followed the activities, started in previous two years. Ensuring the sustainability of the already established partnerships through development of new projects was the main focus.

The initiative of development collective local labels for products and services, originating from protected areas, seems to be successful only in Strandja region. The Directorate of Strandja NP received financial support from the Principality of Monaco and started a project for regional label. Initially it will test certification of tourist services as the criteria and control mechanisms are clarified and similar experience already exist in Bulgaria. The second step will be the certification of local food products. This partnership project received additional support by the Replication fund of SDC. BBF has launched a public competition for the logo and design of the Regional label in the end of 2007.

The support for the Society for organic beekeeping continued from the previous years through support for the Manov honey festival in Tzarevo, which became recognized as regular event by the local population, part of the Annual culture and tourism programme of the municipality. Cooperation of local beekeepers was legally established in Tzarevo and it is expected to develop follow-up projects with the consultancy by BBF. The Society for organic beekeeping was awarded with GEF small grant for a project, developed in partnership with the Foundation.

The partnership relations with JOBS business centers continued mainly at regional level. A project for sustainable management of Suha reka – Kanaraua fetei and support for the pro-biodiversity business was developed by Business center – Dobrich and awarded with grant co-financing by PHARE CBC BG-RO. The proposal was developed in extensive consultation with BBF.

Considering the importance of the public visibility of the green business and improved environmental sensibility of the Bulgarian society, BBF put the emphasis of several public events on the relation between the nature and business. Such events were the Green party, Annual biodiversity awards, Exhibition and meetings in Champ Pitet, Switzerland and information meetings with the municipalities in Pirin area.

The new activity in 2007 was the BBF's contribution to the development of the National operational programme for fishery and aquacultures (2008-2013). The integration of Natura 2000 – oriented measures will mitigate the environmental impact from the fisheries sector development on the natural species and habitats.

### **III. Outlook for the future**

The future sustainability of the BBF after the end of 2007 is unsecured. But opportunities do exist, and the team is taking profit of all the resources and pre-requisites created during the current phase of collaboration between BBF and SDC. It is clear that being not a foundation of "American" type based on a large multi-million endowment, the BBF will be constantly facing challenges, will have to adapt and to develop new approaches and partnerships. These capacities of the BBF team will be certainly assessed as a real achievement – to be a flexible, enterprising, knowledgeable and collaborative team which is always keeping its credo – the protected nature is a better place to live.

The BBF future is to be seen in the European context. The four thematic orientations taken by BBF (the Green Belt, the protected areas and species, the water management and the

education) are giving each enough space for development of fundraising strategies – from project writing for the numerous EU-funds to donation campaigns motivating private and corporative charity. The time after the end of BSBCP has been short in order to develop real success stories in that aspect.

The lack of successes till now in access to EU funds or in attraction of important donations is only promising a difficult period after the end of the SDC support. Most of the EU funding instruments are just starting in Bulgaria (Operational program Environment, LIFE+, etc.), the level of corruption in the country is very high (see the report of Gottlieb Dandliker), the legal and social conditions for charity are not developed. All these are elements of the context which are influencing the behaviour of the BBF and they have been taken into account in the ongoing development of a new BBF Strategy.

#### IV. Management of Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation

##### ➤ **BBF Board**

The long-term Swiss counsellor of BBF Bertrand Sansonnens – Pro Natura join the Board as a new member.

During the year there were two meetings of the Board (28.03.2007 and 10.12.2007), one of which didn't take place due to the absence of quorum. The members of the Board were drawn into the following important for the development of the Foundation meetings:

- Self valuation and capitalization of the experience in the last three years, carried out in Vladaya and facilitated by Plamen Dimitrov;
- Inner self evaluation and presentation of the enquiry for valuation of the Foundation's management, prepared by Dr. R. Stoilova carried out in Chiflika.
- Opening of the exhibition "Green belt" in the centre of Pro Natura Champ Pitet in Switzerland in which Rumiana Stoilova took part.
- Part of the members participated in the Pro Natura training for attracting donors and supporters, carried out in the beginning of December in Chiflika.

##### ➤ **BBF Staff**

There are no changes in the BBF core staff emerged during the year. We must record the drawing into of associates on projects of Miglena Avramova and Peter Todorov - assistants on projects "Osogovo" and Jana Gocheva - coordinator "Student's activities".

The members of the team took part in the number of international trainings:

Jordanka Dineva	"Training on the European Agricultural and Rural Development Fund" – Hungary  "Strategic Tourism Development" – Romania
Petko Tzvetkov	Meeting of Bulgarian NGOs with the Commissioner Stavros Dimas on the subjects of NATURA 2000 implementation in Bulgaria, Belgium  III Congress of Ecologists of Macedonia, Macedonia  Pan-European Green Belt Meeting, Slovak Republic  Stakeholder involvement in the implementation of Natura 2000, seminar and study visit to the Netherlands.
Radostina Tzenova	International Summer School - Education for Sustainable Development: Climate Change (September 30 – October 3, 2007), Germany
Ventzislav Vassilev	Training in Wetlands management and restoration - Trebon - Czech Republic

	Conference "Rivers for the life of the settlements" - Olomouc, Czech Republic
Latinka Topalova	„European Funding Opportunities for Nature Conservation“ - Poland
Greece	„Natura 2000 Management and Agro-environmental Measures“ - „Harmonisation of Tentative Lists in SE Europe: Cultural landscapes, terrestrial and fresh-water natural ecosystems - Macedonia „Green week“ - Brussels, Belgium „Nature conservation and opportunities for local economic development“ -Trip to Croatia

## V. The development of BBF

During the year 2007 the team of BBF was following – with different success - the strategic lines agreed during the Strategic planning workshop held in December 2006:

- Preservation, development and effective use of the created partnerships and good international and local contacts
- Development of the good organizational image
- Capitalizing over the rich experience and the built capacity of the team of BBF
- Building a network of supporters, donators, sponsors and donors
- The management of high annual turnover and satisfying financial reserve
- The provision of long-term financial independence of BBF
- The surmount of the dependence of merely one big donor
- Better organization and prioritization of the activities
- Let us not be an alternative/screen for the national institutions (at least not gratuitous)
- Let us not allow the "reticence in the sphere of biodiversity"
- Let us not allow to be treated as one of the many - undistinguished in the society
- The prevention of the arguments with other NGO and the local authorities in the sphere of biodiversity
- The surmount of the feel for work with missing focus and the follow unclear goals
- Transformation of the too plate management system
- Prevention of the de-motivation of the people from the team

## VI. Financial Report Synthesis and Comments

Budget review shows that the BBF has spent BGN 599 474. The expenditures under Component I - Pro-Biodiversity partnerships project are BGN 181 924 (100.09 % of the budget) and under Component II – Additional funding instruments the expenditures are BGN 322 946 (99.7 % of the budget). The budget approved for the Endowment and Matching fund with last amendment is BGN 38 704, which is based on sum of donations reported till the year ended 31.12.2006. In the meantime the BBF team collected un-restricted donations amounted BGN 27 950. According to Annex 9 of the Agreement between SDC and BBF, the sum is doubled, so BGN 55 900 are included in the present

report in addition to the SDC contribution to the Endowment and Matching fund. The total amount of the funds collected is BGN 94 604.

Next table indicates the budgets planned and the unspent amounts under Additional funding mechanisms during their two years functioning.

<b>BBF Additional funding instruments</b>					
	<b>Endowment</b>	<b>Matching</b>	<b>Replication</b>	<b>Co-financing</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total budgets</b>	<b>30 000</b>	<b>105 000</b>	<b>240 000</b>	<b>245 000</b>	<b>620 000</b>
Contributions from SDC					
<b>2006</b>	<b>20 000</b>	<b>19 608</b>	<b>69 990</b>	<b>118 190</b>	<b>227 788</b>
1. Rhodopes			41 990		
2. Green Belt				44 700	
3. Strandja				27 200	
4. Living Rivers				15 000	
5. Pirin Eco-trails I				23 290	
6. Flood risk			10 000		
7. Gerzovitza			18 000		
8. Kostinbrod				8 000	
<b>2007</b>	<b>10 000</b>	<b>84 604</b>	<b>168 270</b>	<b>90 030</b>	<b>352 904</b>
1. Riparian forests			4 000		
2. Dragoman and Chepun				37 650	
3. Pirin Eco-trails II				11 000	
4. Pesapara hills				12 000	
5. Living rivers (continuation)				7 380	
6. Flood risk (continuation)			39 070		
7. Kostinbrod (continuation)				22 000	
8. Belasitza			125 200		
9. Capercaille				21 000	
10. BDA Implementation				5 840	
11. Strandja trademark				12 300	
11. Flying over borders				6 700	
<b>Total</b>	<b>30 000</b>	<b>104 212</b>	<b>238 260</b>	<b>208 220</b>	<b>580 692</b>
<b>Remaining sum</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>788</b>	<b>1 740</b>	<b>36 780</b>	<b>39 308</b>

Remaining unspent amount under the three funds is BGN 39 308. The most part of it is connected with the Co-financing fund – BGN 36 780. In 2007 there is a remarkable increase in the sums collected in the Matching fund – BGN 84 604 and the Replication fund – BGN 168 270.

Total expenditure reported by the BBF is BGN 599 474, which is 10.12 % overspend of the overall budget (BGN 55 096). This is due to the bigger amount collected in the Matching fund, but not to overspending of the At cost budget contribution.

The cash at the BBF bank account for the Agreement with SDC on 31.12.2007 is BGN 4 165.35.

## **VII. Additional projects**

### ***Conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity in the region of Dragoman marsh and calcareous hill of Chepun***

The overall goal of the project is to conserve and manage the biological diversity and resources in the region of Dragoman marsh through sustainable practices in tourism, education and agriculture.

The specific objectives are:

- To provide conservation and restoration of priority habitats and species.
- To ensure conditions for development of ecotourism and education.

The project is implemented in partnership with BALKANI Wildlife Society and the Dragoman Municipality. The project implementation will continue in 2008 based on the co-funding available from the GEF SGP grant and other projects prepared in cooperation with the project partners.

During 2007 the project was implemented in difficult conditions due to the general negative attitude towards the NATURA 2000 network in Bulgaria on behalf of investors and municipalities and the weak work and position of the National Government on the issue. This general attitude based also on local investors interests for installation of wind power generators and other construction projects within the N2000 sites blocked the process of collaboration with the Dragoman municipality in the beginning and postponed the implementation of some project activities. Only after the local elections held in November 2007 the new authority became supportive to the project and agreed to cooperate with the project team.

Despite of the difficulties met so far the most important project output is the development of the draft model management plan for N2000 site. Which raised the capacity of BBF and its partners in development of this new type of planning instruments and position them within the first organizations in Bulgaria with such an experience. The last amendment to the Biodiversity Act requires preparation and approval of a Regulation on N2000 management plans preparation. The draft management plan for Dragoman N2000 site will be finalized once the regulation is approved and the two N2000 sites according the two EU Directives are officially designated.

The project outputs achieved so far are presented as follows:

#### **Proclamation of Dragoman and Chepun protected sites**

Some of the project activities were postponed due to the delayed contract between BALKANI Wildlife Society and the GEF Small grants programme as well as the changed priorities of the Municipality supporting installation of wind power generators within the proposed protected area of Chepun hill and the proposed N2000 sites. It mainly concerns the proclamation of Chepun hill protected site as well as the development of Sustainable tourism Development Programme. RIEW Sofia is engaged with preparation of the documentation of the proposed Dragoman marsh protected site including development of recent land ownership maps in cooperation with the project partners. The maps of the proposed Dragoman Protected Site are ready, RIEW is identifying the exact landowners to participate in the final commission. Due to the appeals on behalf of the NGOs and the local people the Minister of Environments cancel the issued by RIEW Sofia permission for installation of 5 wind generators on Chepun hill within the N2000 site. Public discussions with local hunters associations and other stake holders are organized.

#### **Development of Management plan of Dragoman NATURA 2000 site**

After studying the draft N2000 MP preparation guidelines consultations and consultations with experts from MoEW it was decided that a joint Management plan will be prepared for Dragoman pSCI and Rajanovski livadi pSPA which overlap in most of the area. An inventory and assessment of favourable conservation status for all key N2000 habitats and species was prepared and the necessary conservation measures described by the individual experts. Detailed mapping of the N2000 habitats and species was prepared. Funding for Dutch KNIP Matra programme secured for tourist infrastructure in the marsh and draft model projects for utilization of EU funds for local farmers prepared to be submitted in March 2008 once the EU funding for AE measure is open for projects. Two meetings with the former and the new mayor of the Municipality of Dragoman were held. The project was presented in front of the former Municipal council of Dragoman but due to the negative reaction the development of the MP plan was postponed and the consultation process

restarted in December 2007 with the newly elected Mayor and Chairmen of the Municipality council of Dragoman. Meetings with the mayors of Slivnitsa, Godech and Kostinbrod are prepared

### **Conservation measures for habitats and species**

A programme for reintroduction of 1 species of aquatic plant - *Aldrovanda vesiculosa* is under preparation and official procedure has been initiated with the MoEW. Two programmes for reintroduction of two plant species developed by experts from the Institute of Botany, BAS - *Aldrovanda vesiculosa* and *Caldesia parnasifolia*. Official procedure according the Law on Biological Diversity initiated and public hearing held. Final approval from the MoEW is expected. Natural species of poplars have been planted on 3ha of land within the project region. In addition 1.2 ha of oak (*Quercus pubescens* and *Quercus robur*) were seeded. Monitoring of ornitofauna and other organisms was regularly done. New information is collected about the breeding species of herons (5 species) including forming of new colony. New colony of suslics found and data about Tortoises presence in the past was collected.

### **Local capacity building for sustainable tourism and environmental education and development of tourist infrastructure**

Due to private and the Dragoman municipality interests in installation of wind power generators on the hill of Chepun the development of a programme for sustainable tourism was postponed and draft text of the programme was only prepared till the end of 2007. Local guide was hired in August and the necessary equipment was purchase by BALKANI Wildlife with the financial support of GEF SGP grant. A potential visitor center building was identified in the old cinema building of the Chitalishte of Dragoman. Consultations with engineer were held and a draft contract with the Cultural Center of Dragoman prepared and discussed. Five environmental education actions implemented by BALKANI Wildlife Society in March, June, October, November and December - an average of 25 children per event participated

### **Protection of the Important plant area Besapara hills**

The main directions of the project included the following activities:

- Revision and modernization of the data for the spreading of the list of the rare species as a consequence of which were prepared alphabetic and systematic list of the supreme plants settled on the "Besaparski ridove", based on literature data, and as a result of the investigations of the area on the project. Systematic and phyto-geographic analyses were done as well as was the conservational significance of the determined supreme species was defined.

A list of 61 prior species of supreme plants for mapping was prepared. On the basis of it a working plan was made for the field examinations for mapping their deposits.

- **Development of figure model** of the mapped deposits of 26 conservational valuable plant species and 2 types of habitats. Range and frontiers of IPP "Besaparski ridove", with area of about 4035 ha were suggested. Maps of the deposits have been prepared as well as maps of the suggested areas of IPP "Besaparski ridove".
- **Preparation of the documentation for widening the protected area "Ognqnovo - Sinitevski rid" on 859,8443 ha-1**
- **Analyses of the possibilities for botanical, ecological and village tourism as well as preparation of a report. A seminar has been hold for presenting the results of these analyses and for acquaintance with the region of the tour-operators.**
- **Analysis for the possibilities for the use of agro-ecological schemes in the region of FIP "Besaparski ridove" and the elaboration of pilot schemes for the private proprietors.**

Informational seminar was organized in cooperation with BAPB. On the seminar presented attended local farmers, majors and administration for the popularization of the agro-ecological limits with the participation of experts from MAF.

### ***Living rivers***

The period 2007-2008 is crucial for setting the integrated water management in Bulgaria. The main human impacts on the waters, definition of problems and programmes of measures should be elaborated in this period according to the agenda of the implementation of Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EEC. The proper integration of the ecosystem approach and biodiversity conservation agenda at this stage of development of the River basin management plans could ensure long-term protection of river ecosystems. The project "Living rivers", which continues from the previous year, contributed to this important process with Surveys of riparian habitats along Maritza and Tundja rivers, definition of problems and proposal of measures with focus on biodiversity. The project team prepared series of presentations and expert reports for all the Public consultation meetings, organized by East-Aegean River Basin Directorate. The field surveys, carried out during the project tested methodologies for assessment of river morphology and riparian vegetation as a component of the "good ecological status" according to WFD 2000/60/EEC. Three sites along Maritza rivers were proposed for Protected areas, one of which (Popova ada island) has been already designated.

### ***Development of Ecotourism as a Tool for Biodiversity Protection in the Area of Pirin National Park***

The project started a little later than originally envisaged, and the first two project activities were run in parallel in September. The first 'acquaintance' visits to the three villages of Delchevo, Kremen and Banya were made together by the team of PTF and experts involved to develop the interpretative trails. As the experts already had certain experience in similar activities from previous year (when the same project was implemented for four villages on the western side of Pirin), it was possible to speed up the identification of trails and services.

The first visits to the villages were made in the middle of September, with the support of the partner municipalities and the village mayors. At this point, the teams visited a number of candidate-trails and selected one (the most appropriate) at each village, made lists of additional needs such as signing, placing of info boards, etc., and selected potential themes for interpretation. The first drafts of interpretative programmes for the four trails were developed by the expert team in December, on the following themes:

- For Delchevo: Deciduous forest
- For Kremen: Small creatures (butterflies, lizards, amphibia)
- For Banya: Lowland nature

In that relation and stepping on lessons learned from the project in 2006, it was decided that the envisaged training of local guides should take the form of a study trip to a nearby destination for eco and rural tourism, where practical experience and motivation might be acquired. The village of Dobarsko was chosen as such destination because it is very similar to our three villages in a number of aspects including the closeness to a national park (Rila NP), and has already gained some useful experience to share. The problem was that, in order to achieve maximum effect from such a trip, it should be done in a season allowing visits to the trails, and cannot happen in winter time. Therefore it was postponed for the spring of 2008.

### ***Conservation of river ecosystems and sustainable flood risk management***

The floods caused crisis situations, serious material damages and even took human lives again this year. The response from the competent authorities remains inadequate and very far from the contemporary concepts for sustainable flood risk management, reflected in the new Directive 2007/60/EEC on the Flood risk assessment and management. Cleaning of the forests and inappropriate construction activities in the river beds and floodplains are common activities, performed very often with the protection of the municipalities and state.

Therefore BBF has initiated several meetings and public statements from environmental NGOs. These activities together with the Case studies development were preparation for the National conference in November. The interesting lecturers from Switzerland, Netherlands and Ukraine, the vast interest from the stakeholders and media ensured the impact and the visibility of the conference.

All the presentations from the Conference, legislative documents, case studies and other reports are available in the new website <http://rivers.biodiversity.bg>. Summary reports and key EU best-practice documents are compiled in a book, distributed among the key stakeholders and all the municipalities in Bulgaria.

### ***Feasibility study for the riparian forest restoration***

This small project, funded by the SDC's Replication fund aims to study the opportunities of preparation of larger projects for the restoration of riparian habitats in Bulgaria. The project team carried out field surveys and series of meetings with key stakeholders in the river basins of Kamchia, Maritza, Tundja and Arda/Topolnitsa rivers. The status of river morphology and riparian zones were assessed in details for Maritza and Tundja and the reports were published on the website of BBF.

The preparatory work for development project proposals is expected to bring results in 2008 in relation with the calls of National operational programmes and LIFE+. The project results contributed also to the implementation of "Living rivers" and "Conservation of river ecosystems and sustainable flood risk management".

### ***Biodiversity conservation and environmental education in the Municipality of Kostinbrod***

The main objective of the project is the biodiversity conservation in Kostinbrod municipality through sustainable use of natural resources (sustainable tourism, farming and forestry) and environmental education in the schools and culture centers. The formulation of the project's activities is based on the extensive preparatory phase co-funded by SDC in 2006.

For the implementation of this 3-year project a partnership scheme has been set involving the BBF, the Municipality of Kostinbrod and a local NGO. The funding was assured by the GEF SGP and by the Municipality, with a co-funding by the SDC in 2007. Due to the late finalization of the contract with GEF SGP (end of May 2007) the activities could not begin before June.

### ***Monitoring and mapping the biodiversity***

Team of biodiversity experts has been working on the field for completing the detailed inventory and mapping the biodiversity of the territory of Kostinbrod municipality. Very informative scientific reports have been submitted concerning the species richness and

conservation value of the flora, fungi, birds, bats, dragonflies, butterflies, etc. All the data is being introduced in the Geographical information system.

### **Establishment of protected areas**

The documentation for 4 protected areas on the territory of Kostinbrod municipality has been prepared, containing detailed motivation, lists of species of conservation importance and indicative maps. The documentation has been submitted to the municipal administration for discussion. There is a need to further clarify the ownership of the land and to reach the agreement with the private owners (in some cases) and state forestry (in other cases). The proposals for new protected areas will be submitted officially to the Ministry of environment and water.

### **Sustainable use of natural resources**

On the basis of the scientific results concerning the distribution of species and habitats of conservation importance, and the recommendations given by specialists on pasture, meadow and forest management, a draft brochure on "Sustainable use of natural resources" has been elaborated. It has been presented during special workshop to the partners in Kostinbrod municipality and will be distributed among farmers, land owners and other stakeholders.

### **Workshops and trainings**

Answering the needs of the municipal administration in Kostinbrod, a special workshop has been organized discussing the opportunities of development of sustainable tourism in the municipality. Representatives of the administration, private entrepreneurs in the sector, specialists have been involved in this first discussion. There is a common understanding of the need to develop a sound Tourism development strategy on municipality level and to revitalize the work of the Municipal tourism council.

### **Educational program**

During the year an extensive program in support to the public awareness and education on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development has been implemented. The detailed program for extra-classes work in the Clubs of the young naturalists has been developed and is being implemented in the school of Dragovishtica as pilot school. The results of the scientific studies have been presented to the teachers of the municipality on a workshop. The 9 culture centers (chitalishte) have received donation of books and CDs which are provoking real interest among the young people.

During the Festival of Kostinbrod, the Mayor of the town has awarded Rossen Vassilev with special diploma recognizing the support of BBF to the development of the Municipality.

## ***Belasitsa – sustainable tourism development for biodiversity protection***

### **1. Stock-taking of the tourist resources**

A full stock-taking of the tourist resources has been made in Petrich and 8 foothill villages (Belasitsa, Kolarovo, Samuilovo, Kamena, Qzovirnitsa, Kliuch, Skryt and Gabrene) and for each village and Petrich is prepared a general passport. In association with the Historical museum - Petrich were prepared stock-taking and analysis of the cultural-historical objects in the area of Belasitsa Mountain.

### **2. Development of the human resources for stable tourism**

#### *2.1. Increasing the amount of information for the local population concerning the stable tourism*

20 informational meetings had been carried out in the villages in the period of 04-11.2008. More than 250 people are directly introduced in the principles of stable tourism. Scores of consultations have been conducted with different people who have showed interest to deliver eco-tourist services and products.

#### *2.2. Trainings in leadership, interpretation and hospitality*

The training in hospitality "Offering of general tourist services" gathered 35 people in the period between 23-25.11.2007 in bio-hotel "Moravsko selo". In the period between 13-3.12.2007 in Melnik the training in leadership and interpretation took place. The participators in it (30 people) became familiar with main principles of the leadership, the responsibilities of the leader, the peculiarities of the group psychology, and the relations between leaders - group.

### 2.3. Educational trip

30 people took part in the educational trip. Its program included visit to good examples of the village and eco- tourism in south-west Bulgaria - opportunities for diversification of the tourist product, responsible attitude to the nature, interpretation of the biodiversity and cultural-historical inheritance. The program included visit to the interpretative path "Guests from the past", "Eco-centre" - Vlahi, bio-hotel "Moravsko selo", Dobarsko, path of the dandelion and the primrose visitor's centre NP "Pirin" and the like. All of the participators filled in a inquiries for evaluation.

### 3. Development of the tourist services and infrastructure

More then 20 investigating trips were organized for selecting the adequate routes and further development of the net of the existing marked tourist paths in Belasitsa. More then 50 people had taken part in the examination and marking the short and long routes. Two of the short ones have been developed as interpretive:

1. A route of subjects "The life of the Chestnut" based on route Kolarovo-Giolcheto-Kolarovo (circle route).
2. A route of subjects "Butterflies and their friends" based on route "Qvornitsa village-Milqnova poljana - Qvornica village"

Besides this 10 interpretive boards have been made as well as 70 guiding signs, 14 informational entrance boards for the routes.

### 4. Development of marketing plan

5 offers for short-term stay (2-3 days) have been prepared as well as 1 program for longer stay (from 5 to 7 days in the region).

During May a RP-strategy was prepared for the region of Belasitsa and our activities in support of the idea for declaring the Nature Park Belasitsa.

At the end of the project an acquaintance tour for journalists and tour-operators, consisting of 40 participators, was organized. They contributed for the provocation for interest in the media and among the society for the new eco-tourist destination Belasitsa.

### 5. Promotion of the model for sustainable tourism

The promotion and popularization of each one of the stages of project's realization was achieved on local, regional and national level. More then 100 media manifestations are only a part the efforts of our team in that direction. The model for sustainable tourism was formally presented even on a Round table among all of those who showed interest (more then 50 people).

**The following parallel activities were accomplished from a branch Belasitsa during the realization of the project.**

#### 1. Process for announcing the Natural "Belasitsa" park

BBF introduced and official report of the Round table, the new variant of the full documentation (including maps and GIS model) and suggested the Ministry of Environment and Waters to appoint a committee for NP "Belasitsa" with outgoing N°71/23.04.2007. MOEW convenes an official committee on 20.11.2007, which with one consent accepts the motion for declaring NP "Belasitsa". On the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 2007 the Minister of environment and waters Djevdjet Chakyrov signed Order N°RD-925 for declaring NP

"Belasitsa", promulgated in NN copy# 8/25.11.2008. So, after more than 4 years efforts of the Foundation NP "Belasitsa" becomes the 11<sup>th</sup> Natural parks in Bulgaria.

## 2. Educational activities

### Competition "Natura2000" for Blagoevgrad municipality

In cooperation with the Historical museum - Blagoevgrad and the Managements of the national parks "Rila" and "Pirin", BBF organized a competition "Natura 2000" between the schools in Blagoevgrad municipality in the period of 02-04.2007. In the first school round participated a record number of students in comparison with the other municipalities where the competition took place. More than 700 students from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> class from 37 schools in the region showed their knowledge about the protected areas and species. 56 of them were classified on the final round.

### Educational lectures in the schools of the Belasitsa region

Two educational lectures took place during January 2007. They were organized in partnership with Regional Historical Museum (RHM) - Blagoevgrad. The lectures presented the natural wealth of Belasitsa in Petrich and Samuilovo. More than 40 children took part in them.

### Children's Saturday's broadcast "Sunny clock", Cable TV BATZ

BBF participated on 17 broadcasts in the period between 01-04.2007 as it prepared interesting questions for the biodiversity and provided prizes.

### Exhibitions

#### 1. "Green belt - forbidden, forgotten, preserved places..."

Petrich: Historical museum - 22.02. - 09.03.2007; 2000 visitors

Strumjani: Cultural club "Buditel" - 19.03.-25.03.2007; 300 visitors

Blagoevgrad: Regional Historical museum - 27.03. - 14.04.2007; over 700 visitors

#### 2. "The magic kingdom of mushrooms"

Blagoevgrad: Regional Historical museum - 18.04.-18.05.2007; over 600 visitors

#### 3. Exhibition and public discussion on the problems with climate changes, global warming and the renewable energy sources

Petrich: Historical museum - 27-30.03.2007; over 100 visitors

The exhibition was organized in cooperation with "For the earth". In addition, short films were showed.

### 3. Activities on Contract № BG 2004/016-786.01.01.01.04/08 for providing service - organizing and conducting of seminars, trainings, Round tables and formation of the council on tourism

BBF - Belasitsa branch won the auction announced by Petrich municipality on the project "Restitution of the glory of the National Cultural - Historical monument "Samuilova krepost" through the institutional (public and private) trans-border cooperation of local level in the area of Petrich, Bulgaria and Strumitsa, Macedonia", financed by FAR TGS Bulgaria-Macedonia on contract BG 2004/016-786.01.01.01.04, carried out by Petrich municipality.

### 4. Exchanging visit for people of the tourist branch from NP "Strandja" in the region of south-west Bulgaria and National "Kerkeni" park, Greece

In association with the Management of Natural Strandja park BBF organized educational trip in the region of Belasitsa and Northern Greece in the period between 18-21<sup>st</sup> of October 2007. The group consisted of 40 people who live on the territory of NP "Strandja" and occupy with eco- and village- tourism more than 10 years,

**5. Informational days for Natura 2000** - organized in the frameworks of project of the Association of the parks in Bulgaria with the aim of informing the owners of the lands about the character and importance of the European ecological net Natura 2000. The informational days were organized by BBF - "Belasitsa" branch and carried out in the villages Belasitsa, Kolarovo, Saumilovo, Kamena, Qvornitsa, Kliuch, Skryt, Gabrene, Borovichene, Gega, Dolene, Dolna Ribnitsa, Churuchene, Krystiltsi, Igralishte. More than hundred people participated.

#### ***Sustainable management of the Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*) population***

Term of Reference of the Capercaillie Action Plan was developed. We started negotiations with State Forest Agency for preparation of big project for preparation of the Capercaillie Action Plan. We bought a car.

#### ***Implementing priority activities for implementation of the Biodiversity Act in the field of species conservation***

We received more than 50 information signals for infringements of Biodiversity Act (exhibitions of stuffed protected species), which were analyzed and organized for investigations.

We organized investigations on the territory of RIEW Haskovo, Blagoevgrad, Sofia, Pazardzhik, Stara Zagora and Bourgas. The control activities were organized in collaboration with medias and more than 50 publications only in electronic medias (including a few broadcastings in BTV and TV7).

We distributed more than 400 posters for tortoises conservation in more than 167 villages in Eastern Rhodopes.

We distributed in collaboration with RIEW Pazardzhik and the National Parks about 1000 posters for Chamois conservation.

#### ***Creating a regional trademark for Strandja Nature Park***

The regional mark of NP "Strandja" aims to develop local products, agriculture, tourist services and offers based on the stable use of natural resources and "the green" image of Strandja. In addition the partnership and the agricultural possibilities would be stabilized by certificating the partners of Management of NP Strandja, including the contractors in the village and ecological tourism, farmers, apiarists, herbalists and others.

The regional label for the natural park Strandja will be a guarantee for the quality of the tourist services and the products made in it.

##### **• Familiarization with the experience in Bulgaria and abroad**

1. NP Central Balkan - We visited and stayed in couple of certificated on Pan Parks houses, we become familiar with the requirements, the method for certification and the conditions on which must response these houses who would like to use the label.

2. Trip to the protected areas in Republic of Croatia In the period between 11-16<sup>th</sup> of November 2007. More then 30 people in the region of NP "Pirin", NP "Strandja" and Western Stara Planina took part in the trip. The group from Strandja consisted of 14 representatives of all sectors - municipality, business, nongovernmental organizations, park administration. All of them are interested and will work for the formation of regional label in NP "Strandja".

The participators had the chance to exchange experience and to learn more about the benefits from combining the conservation of the environment and the stable use of natural resources in Croatia, including the opportunities for development of green business. We

were all extremely impressed by the professionalism of the Croats, their respect to the traditions and the responsibility to the natural resources.

- **Logo**

NP "Strandja" announced a competition for preparation of logo, which will represent the new regional label "Natural Strandja park" and will also provide certificated guest houses and products made in the park, services etc. The logo would be set upon labels, blanks, envelopes, advertising materials, websites and the like.

- **Conception for development of regional label NP "Strandja"**

An expert with experience in the field of tourism and regional trademark (RTM) was hired. The expert is well familiar with the specific character of the Strandja area - Mariana Asenova who made the conception that includes:

- Introduction: What is the benefit from formation and development of RTM;
- range of the regional label - geographical region and range of products and services;
- Proposal for appropriate for the region variant of RTM (writing, slogan);
- Determine of common principles and criteria for adjudication of the label;
- Proposal for mechanism/rules for carrying out the certification and control of the Plan for development of RTM: selection of the concrete tasks and steps;
- Preliminary list with the beneficiaries of RTM;

The rest activities on the project would be realized by June 2008. Logo registration and protection of the label would be prepared. A seminar for the local business partners will be held also, so that the partners could be informed for the benefits from the application of the regional label as well as to be drawn into the preparation of principles, standards and rules. A marketing strategy would be developed, which will determine the goals, priorities and the means for popularization of the value and the identity of the certificated local products and services. The team of the project will continue to work actively for popularization of the initiative.

### ***Flying over the borders***

We bought 4 GPS GSM transmitters, which were cofinanced by SDC. We paid their maintenance for one year of their functioning. We prepared the design of the web site.

**VIII. Annexes**

- 1) Annex 1 – Implementation of activities according to BBF’ project yearly plan of operations
- 2) Annex 2 – Time sheets of the BBF front office staff
- 3) Annex 3 – BBF Financial report
- 4) Annex 4 – Information materials