



The International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG) is an international network of specialists having a particular interest in mire and peatland conservation. The network encompasses a wide spectrum of expertise and interests, from research scientists to consultants, government agency specialists to peatland site managers. It operates largely through e-mail and newsletters, and holds regular workshops and symposia. For more information: consult the IMCG Website: <http://www.imcg.net>

IMCG has a Main Board of 15 people from various parts of the world that has to take decisions between congresses. Of these 15 an elected 5 constitute the IMCG Executive Committee that handles day-to-day affairs. The Executive Committee consists of a Chairman (Jennie Whinam), a Secretary General (Hans Joosten), a Treasurer (Philippe Julve), and 2 additional members (Tatiana Minaeva, Piet-Louis Grundling).

Viktor Masing (†), Hugo Sjörs, and Richard Lindsay have been awarded honorary membership of IMCG.

Editorial



„If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never slept with as mosquito.“

While our northern hemisphere membership is enjoying the field season, IMCG itself is growing in numbers and effectiveness. This newsletter reports on recent developments, achievements, and set-backs in international mire conservation. One of the set-backs is the current limited attention of Ramsar for peatland priorities, in a time when more and more people become aware of how these wonderful landscapes connect globally burning issues of climate change, poverty, biodiversity, water scarcity, and desertification.

The Ramsar meeting in Kampala (Uganda) will be one of the places where IMCG will be actively present, with a side-event, an excursion, and new promotion material. After Kampala, we will focus on Tierra del Fuego (Argentina), where the November symposium has attracted so much attention, that the excursion places are already booked out.

With this Newsletter the registration is opened for the IMCG Field Symposium and General Assembly in Finland 2006. If you are interested, please register as soon as possible, but not later than 30th September 2005. We will get ample opportunity there to discuss the issue of burning peat that Finland still considers as a renewable fuel. This in contrast to the World Bank, that takes the opposite point of view, see this Newsletter! Also ecolabeling of peat is hotly debated in the European Union and this Newsletter reports on the latest developments.

As always the newsletter contains a variety of peatland news from all over the world, a presentation of recent new literature, and an overview of relevant future congresses and conferences.

Please send all your proposals, discussion contributions, news, publications, etc. to us, and with your help we will again prepare an interesting Newsletter. Deadline for the next Newsletter is 18 September 2005.

For information or other things, contact us at the IMCG Secretariat. Address updates should be sent to Jan Sliva (sliva@wzw.tum.de). In the meantime, keep an eye on the continuously refreshed and refreshing IMCG web-site: <http://www.imcg.net>

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A note from the (southern) Chair

Over the past (austral) summer, I was fortunate to visit the peatlands of subantarctic Kerguelen Island, under a joint project with the French Polar Institute. Not surprisingly, the Kerguelen peatlands had many similarities with the peatlands of the Australian subantarctic – Macquarie and Heard Islands. However, the rate of glacial retreat and the impacts of climate change came as a surprise. While the subantarctic is predicted to undergo major climatic change in the near future, it is clear that change is already occurring. It is quite dramatic to see the exposed glacial moraines now visible for ten kilometres from their original extent, with plant colonisation occurring right up to the edge of the retreating glacier. Our French colleagues are recording the species that colonise newly deglaciated sites and quantifying the rate of plant expansion. The combination of increased rabbit numbers and reduced precipitation has meant that there has been a loss of plant diversity in some peatlands in the eastern part of the archipelago. The establishment and spread of alien species is likely to increase as climatic conditions ameliorate. It is not clear whether all or some of the peatlands on Kerguelen are still accumulating peat.

In Australia there has been a major win for the conservation of Sphagnum peatlands in the Victorian Alps. After decades of debate and the earlier removal of cattle and/or sheep from the Alps of New South Wales and Tasmania, it appears that the long campaign by alpine scientists and conservationists to remove summer cattle grazing from the Victorian Alpine National Park has been successful. Besides compensation for the graziers who use the alpine national park for summer grazing, there is funding for weed and feral pest management, as well as Sphagnum mire restoration works. Decades of cattle grazing combined with the intense bushfires of January 2003 have resulted in large areas of Sphagnum peatlands that have been destroyed or degraded.

IMCG is entering a hectic phase, with the upcoming RAMSAR convention in Uganda – which will include a focus on the Global Action for Peatlands Program – with the IMCG field symposium in Tierra del Fuego in November and with the new combined IMCG/IPS journal. All these activities will continue to raise the profile of the ecological importance of peatlands.

Jennie Whinam

Upcoming IMCG Field Symposia

Tierra del Fuego (Argentina) 2005.

Registration for the November 2005 Field Symposium in Tierra del Fuego (Argentina) has been overwhelming and all available places for the excursions are now fully booked. Our Ushuaia members Rodolfo and Adriana are extremely busy with organizing the logistics for the event, that – we expect – will effectively stimulate mire conservation in Tierra del Fuego, South America, and the Southern Hemisphere.

For more information, see www.imcg.S5.com or contact Rodolfo under: imcg2005@yahoo.com

Finland 2006

You can now register for the IMCG 2006 field symposium and general assembly in Finland. For more information, see further on in this newsletter or surf to www.imcg.net

Central Asia 2007?

A possibility that is being considered in the IMCG Executive Committee at the moment is to have a field symposium in Central Asia in 2007. Climate change, desertification, and human impact are there leading to massive threats to peatlands that until now remain largely unnoticed internationally. This field symposium will enable a connection to the UN Desertification Convention.

Georgia / Caucasus 2008?

In South-Africa we did not decide yet on a venue for the Field Symposium and General Assembly 2008. One of the offers was Georgia, where we can visit the Kolkheti lowland peatlands, with their large conflicts between mire conservation and oil infrastructure, and the Caucasus with its high mountain problems. The IMCG EC is currently discussing the options.

IMCG field symposium and general assembly Finland 2006

Second circular

On behalf of the organizing committee we cordially wish you welcome to the biennial IMCG field symposium and general assembly in Finland to be held from 13 to 26 July 2006. The main organizers will be the Ministry of the Environment, Finnish Environment Institute, Regional Environment Centres, Forest and Park Service and the Finnish Nature Conservation Association.



The field symposium starts with an excursion through Finland from Kittilä in Lapland to the coast of the Gulf of Finland in the south. We will travel along western Finland and see different kind of aapamires and raised bogs as well as young mires in the land uplift coast. We will visit sites with rich flora and bird fauna. Another focus will be on mires with conservation problems due to ditching, groundwater pumping and mining. We will see different solutions for the problems and visit restored sites. A number of the field sites are included in the RAMSAR treaty (Teuravuoma, Martimoaapa, Oivassuo, Liminganlahti, Salamajärvi, Levaneva, Kauhanava

and Torronsuo). We will also visit national parks (Seitseminen, Kurjenrahka, Lauhanvuori, Liesjärvi) with old-growth forests, small watercourses and traditional human settlements connected with the mires. Altogether we will travel about 1100 kilometres in a bus during 9 days.

After the excursion there will be a three days symposium and IMCG general assembly in Tammela, southern Finland.

If you are interested to participate in this Symposium and field excursion please send the following data to the address raimo.heikkila@ymparisto.fi as soon as possible, no later than 30th September. If you have not participated in IMCG events earlier, please write a short description about yourself and your mire conservation activities.

| |
|---|
| Name |
| Status and title (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr.) |
| E-mail address: |
| Postal address: |
| Phone: |
| Fax: |
| Organization: |
| I want to participate (X for your choices) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The excursion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Symposium and general assembly |
| Do you want to make a presentation or present a poster? |
| Comments: |

Registration Fees:

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Full Package | 1000 euros |
| Pre-congress field trip | 900 euros |
| Symposium: | 200 euros |

The prices include transport, accommodation, meals, programme and excursion and symposium materials. Special fees will be available on request to a limited number of participants from countries with currency problems. Information for bank transfer payment will be available in the Third Circular in autumn 2006.

The number of participants for the field excursion is limited to 50. Professional participants will receive first preference, and accompanying persons are welcome if there is space for them. Those who send the preliminary registration will have priority if all those who send registration do not fit in the bus. If there are more than 50 willing to take part in the excursion, the organizing committee will take care of regional and professional coverage.

Tapio Lindholm and Raimo Heikkilä

Important reactions to IMCG Resolutions

During our September 2004 General Assembly in Paarl (South Africa), a total of eight resolutions were adopted (see the full texts under www.imcg.net/docum/sa04/sa04.htm#a2). Recently we received some very interesting reactions.

China increases peatland protection

In its resolution to China, IMCG urged the central Government of China and the provincial administrations,

- To urgently make an inventory of undrained peatland sites and to protect these sites and their catchments, also as Ramsar sites;
- To restore degraded peatlands and to develop and implement wise use management systems for agricultural peatlands;
- To improve awareness and understanding of peatlands functions and to stimulate and support scientific research and international cooperation in peatland conservation, management, and wise use.

The State Forestry Administration of China, the Chinese Ramsar Convention implementation agency, has now forwarded the letter to our IMCG Main Board member Meng Xianmin with the request that the Northeast Normal University in Changchun (with an important concentration of peatland expertise in its Mire and Peat Institute, where Meng is working) plays a central role in organizing information communication and training in peatland protection.

Meng is preparing now a workshop on peatland conservation in China next summer with officers from the central government of China, managers of peatland reserves, professional peatland researchers from relevant universities and research institutes, and foreign experts. The Sino-German Science Centre is interested to support such workshop.

As we wrote in our Resolution: "The International Mire Conservation Group will be pleased to assist in these important tasks by contributing its expertise and providing training facilities in peatland ecology, conservation, management, and wise use ...and to support community participation, education, and public awareness raising."

IMCG will now further address the Department of Science and Technique of the Ministry of Education of China, which is in charge of wetland education and public awareness in China, and the Department of Countryside and Social development of the Ministry of Science and Technology, which is in charge of research programme management with respect to peatlands in China.

World Bank condemns peat as a renewable fuel

In our Resolution to the European Union, the United Nations, and the Global Environmental Facility, we noted with concern that peat is increasingly being promoted as a renewable fuel. In this way, the Russian Ministry of Economy and Trade had applied for a grant of over 20 million US\$ from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to fund its "Renewable Energy Program (RREP)" in which peat is presented as a renewable resource.

In our resolution we made an in-depth analysis of the sophisms of the peat lobby. This analysis convinced the Global Environmental Facility (www.gefweb.org). In its letter from April 13, 2005, GEF responded:

"We share your concern about the preservation of peatlands. Not only are they not renewable on a societal time scale; their low rate of renewal is also too slow to be relevant for the objective of climate change mitigation. As a matter of general policy, we therefore do not endorse peat as a renewable energy resource.

If peat fuels were mentioned in the Russia Program, it was an oversight on our part, and we apologize for that. We will pay heed that in the further development of this project and the GEF renewables portfolio, peat will be excluded from the support of the GEF. Unfortunately, however, this might not influence the definitions and terminology that governments are using for their national legislation, as we are a country driven mechanism, but it will ensure that GEF resources are not used for promoting peat."

An important decision that should be widely used against similar false assumptions in Finland, Sweden, and the European Union, that all provide peat with tax reductions because of its alleged renewability.

Ramsar protection in Czechia.

Our IMCG Resolution to the Czech Republic noted that, though protected by preliminary legislation, the Krušnohorí mires deserve further acknowledgement at the national level and subsequent recognition as a Ramsar Site.

On May 13, 2005, the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic informed IMCG that Minister Ambrozek had approved the proposal of the Czech Ramsar Committee to include the Krušnohorí mires as 12th Czech Ramsar Site in the List of Ramsar Sites and that the request will be delivered to the Ramsar Secretariat at the meeting of the Standing Committee June 7 – 10, 2005. Congratulations to the Czech Republic and the Krušnohorí mires!

No news was received to date about the other issues raised in the resolution:

- The proposed retraction of the Law of 1956 that allows utilization of pristine peatlands and irreversible damage to natural peatland ecosystems,
- The development of adequate programmes of expert evaluation, monitoring, and conservation of mires within Natura 2000 sites,
- The conservation of small peatlands in humid mountains and floodplains, and
- Sufficient attention to the water regime and the hydrological connections of peatlands and their surroundings.

Far and wide ...

In its resolution to Germany and Lower Saxony, IMCG addressed the issue of the Esterweger Dose, the largest bog complex in Lower Saxony. We criticized how, reacting on lobby from the peat industry, the new Minister of Environment had stopped the – almost completed – process of designating the Esterweger Dose as a nature reserve. We stressed how this may severely hamper the long-term integrated development of the area as one of the most extensive and most promising bog restoration sites of West and Central Europe.

In its letter of June 1st, 2005, the Ministry of Environment of Lower Saxony affirms that all relevant areas have been reported as protected areas under to the EU Habitat Directive, a status that has been confirmed by the European Commission in December 2004. Furthermore the whole area is a Protected Bird Area according to the European Birds Directive.

To secure the area it was planned to assign a nature conservation area. During that process many comments and doubts were raised, that now have to be evaluated by the responsible authority. The peat industry has demanded to exclude those parts of the Esterweger Dose complex, where peat mining is still continuing. It took much time to go through all these objections. “Your statement that the protection process was stopped, is from that point of view not correct”.

The Ministry ends its letter with: “I hope, that this protection process will be completed in a foreseeable future, moreover because I am convinced, that no major differences exist with respect to the long-term conservation concepts for the area.” So far the Ministry.

What is the actual situation:

- The process of preparing the designation of the whole Esterweger Dose- complex as a nature reserve started 2000 and was completed by the administration in 2003.
- After the elections in Lower Saxony (Feb 2003) the peat lobby successfully convinced the new minister not to protect areas, where peat excavation is still going on. This is important for the peat industry, because it is much easier to change peat mining permits, if an area is not protected.
- Ironically, the peat industry has caused the largest damages to the Esterweger Dose complex by extracting more peat than was allowed. The local authorities are still fighting for a compensation for these damages – which is not easy, when the Minister of Environment himself does not support his own policy.
- Even more ironically, *Pluvialis apricaria*, which is very rare in Lower Saxony, has its largest (if one can call 4-8 pairs “large”) breeding grounds in the Esterweger Dose, exactly in those parts, where peat extraction is still going on. The presence of Golden Plover is exactly the reason, why this area is a Bird protection area (SPA).
- What the letter does not mention is the fact, that the Minister wants to sign for a conservation area that does not include the centre of the mire complex, where *Pluvialis apricaria* is found. This is also the area, where the two largest peat miners - Klagsmann-Deilmann and Griendtsveen – want to expand their peat extraction activities.

This means that the Esterweger Dose is still endangered by peat industry and nowadays also by a minister, who ignores Lower Saxony’s responsibility for bog conservation in Germany. The Esterweger Dose is not the only mire complex that is endangered in this way. The same accounts for the Vehnemoor-complex, the Aschendorfer Obermoor-complex, the Dalum-Wietmarscher Moor, the Georgsdorfer Moor, the Huvenhoopsmoor and so on.

In a World, where even developing countries are beginning to recognize the values of mires, in this part of Germany the peat industry still has a stronghold and, due to the new government, is able to prevent the necessary protection of – for example – the whole Esterweger Dose-complex.

IMCG is looking forward to a more active role of Lower Saxony in mire protection.

5th European Conference on Ecological Restoration

co-organised by IMCG

IMCG will co-organize the 5th European Conference on Ecological Restoration. The theme of this SER Conference – to be held in Greifswald, Germany, 22.–25 August 2006 – will be:

“Land use changes in Europe as a challenge for restoration: ecological, economical, and ethical dimensions.”

There will be special attention to the restoration of peatlands in a session cluster hosted by the International Peat Society and the International Mire Conservation Group.

Themes of the Conference:

a. General aspects

- • Economics of restoration / Ecosystem services and their economic evaluation
- • Ethics and socio-cultural aspects of restoration
- • Planning, managing, and monitoring of restoration projects
- • Unifying concepts in restoration ecology (Restoration theory)
- • Restoring biodiversity in semi-natural landscapes (ecosystem and population level)
- • Restoration policy and legislature
- • Synergies and integrative concepts

b. Special ecosystems

- • Coastal ecosystems (salt meadows, marshes, dunes)
- • Rivers and inland waters
- • Peatlands
- • Woodlands
- • Semi deserts, dry grasslands, and heaths

- • Large-scale restoration and nature development: abandoned agricultural, mining, industrial, and military areas

Key note speakers include our IMCG colleagues:

Michael Succow (Professor of Geobotany and Landscape Ecology, Greifswald University, Germany; 1997 Alternative Nobel Prize winner): “Restoring the Earth: global crises and regional opportunities”

Jan Roelofs (Professor in Aquatic Ecology and Environmental Biology, University of Nijmegen (Netherlands): “Physico-chemical key processes in restoration ecology”

The Prime Event on Ecological Restoration in 2006.
Join Us!

The Conference is hosted by the European Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) (<http://www.ser.org>), and is organized by Greifswald University.

Greifswald, situated in eastern Germany at the Baltic Sea coast, is a founding member of the Hanseatic League of Towns (1299). Its 550 year old university (1456) is situated amidst extensive forests, peatlands, lakes, seascapes, and ecological agriculture, including seven national parks and biosphere reserves and many large restoration projects.

For more information: SER2006@uni-greifswald.de
www.uni-greifswald.de/SER2006



INTERNATIONAL MIRE
CONSERVATION GROUP

News from Ramsar

The Ramsar Convention is our most important global political mechanism to conserve mires and peatlands. Therefore we try to keep you informed on all developments connected to mire conservation in the Ramsar process. The following news comes from IMCG EC member Tatiana Minayeva, who is nominated as Ramsar STRP member on behalf of Russian Federation, but also supports and represents the peatland interests there with help of other IMCG members who join the meetings. In the last Newsletter we have reported on the STRP meeting held in Gland in the beginning of February this year. Since then a number of important events have been taking place in Ramsar. These include:

- The meeting of the Coordinating Committee on Global Action on Peatlands (CC GAP) in Wageningen, 22-23 April;

- The Regional Meeting of the African Contracting Parties, 4-8 April;
- The Ramsar COP9 Preparatory Regional Meeting for Asia 13-16 May; and
- The 31st meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee, 6-10 June.

The following contributions report on some of these important meetings. Unfortunately the only information on the meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee is that is found on the web-page of the Ramsar Convention. Hopefully our longstanding IMCG member in the Standing Committee, Karen Jenderedjan, will enlighten in the next Newsletter what the key decisions for peatlands were and what he would recommend to integrate the CC GAP outcomes into the COP decisions.

CC Gap

by Tatiana Minayeva

The meeting of the Coordinating Committee on Global Action on Peatlands (CC GAP) 22-23 April in Wageningen, was initiated to finalize the peatland related documents for Ramsar COP9 planned later this year in Uganda. The previous COP8 in Valencia had requested in Resolution VIII.17 to install this CC GAP to report on the progress in implementing the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands and to develop a GAP implementation plan for the near future. CC GAP represents a unique example of mutual and productive cooperation between various peatland stakeholders including IMCG and the International Peat Society (IPS), our main partner in peatlands wise use implementation.

The meeting was facilitated by the Ramsar Secretariat (Tobias Salathe) and Wetlands International (Marcel Silvius) with organizational support from Alterra (Herbert Diemont). Representatives from both organizations spent their private time and money to prepare the best possible overview of what the contracting parties to the Ramsar Convention have done and need to do for peatland conservation and wise use.

The resulting report is very comprehensive and contains well-justified and reasonable priorities. To limit the number of resolutions (cf. Resolution VIII.45) the Ramsar STRP meeting had decided to present only two resolutions for the next COP: one "reporting resolution" and another to define the priorities for the future. Therefore CC GAP refrained from preparing separate resolutions on peatlands and developed six short phrases addressing the globally

most urgent peatland problems to be integrated into the "priority resolution".

Regretfully the formulation of one of the priorities, as laid down in the draft-minutes of the meeting, is unconsidered. The wording "...URGES CPs and the international donor community to develop and implement a survival plan for tropical peat swamp forests and to support efforts to establish a multi-donor trust fund, considering the alarming rate of destruction of tropical peat swamp forests..." can be falsely understood as a plea for foreign, even violent intervention, if a country abuses its peatlands, irrespective of its causes (e.g. lack of knowledge). This issue requires more careful phrasing.

The second disappointment is that the peatland items were hardly integrated in the draft Ramsar "priority resolution". Peatlands are only mentioned in two paragraphs of Draft Resolution 2:

26. In relation to attention to peatland ecosystems as another example area of the application of the wise use concept, and in the context of Ramsar's role in the Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands (GAP), disseminate information, monitor implementation of GAP by Parties, identify gaps, and assist in fundraising for GAP implementation. [Secretariat; GAP Coordinating Committee] (STRP12)

27. Develop and implement a survival plan for tropical peat swamp forests. [CPs, donors] (STRP12)

So, the survival plan is in! But nothing about peatlands and water, about peat fires, about peatlands and climate change, about peatlands and biodiversity, all these other urgent priorities that CC GAP had identified. The Standing Committee has approved the draft resolutions in June and we cannot expect many changes anymore...

Now the question is: what can we do? We have used all available mechanisms to raise awareness for peatland hot spots in the Ramsar process and they all seem to fail, in spite of the extra attention for peatlands that Ramsar CoP8 requested in 2002.

One option is – in a concerted effort of IMCG and IPS - to try again and integrate peatlands into the resolution drafts. The other solution could be - if the Ramsar Bureau and Standing Committee continue to neglect the huge peatland related problems, that CC GAP reports directly to COP9 as Resolution VIII.17 requests and permits.

Soon we will expose all materials from CC GAP on the IMCG web page to enable our members to find the relevant documents more easily. You can also try www.ramsar.org. Inform yourself and support effective intervention in Ramsar decision making!

Ramsar Asian regional meeting

by *Tatiana Minayeva*

One of the democratic instruments of Ramsar are the Ramsar Regional meetings. Ramsar has divided the World into five regions: the Americas, Asia, Europe (including the Asian part of the Russian Federation), Oceania, and Australia. The contracting parties (CPs) of these Ramsar regions meet in the year before the CoP to coordinate their positions and to formulate specific regional problems. Three regional meetings have taken place till now: the European in Armenia (December 2004), the African in Tanzania (April 2005), and the Asian in China (May 2005). Peatland items were raised in the European and Asian meetings. Unfortunately we have not heard that IMCG members have attended the African meeting.

During the European meeting there were several presentations on peatlands: peatlands restoration by Kozulin, peatlands in Scandinavia by Larsson, and peatlands and Ramsar in Europe by Minayeva. The outcome of the European meeting was reported, but no formal decisions were taken.

During the Asian Regional meeting in Beijing, peatlands were the subject of a separate working group. The working group was attended by 25 representatives from nine countries (Brunei, China, Indonesia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Russia), four international organisations (IMCG, Global Environment Centre, IUCN, Wetlands International), and the Ramsar Secretariat. The meeting was chaired by Tatiana Minaeva, peatland representative on the STRP. Rapporteur was Faizal Parish of the Global Environment Centre.

Presentations

In her presentation “Guidance for Global Actions on Peatlands”, Tatiana Minayeva informed on peatlands

in relation to the Ramsar Convention and on the guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands. The work of the Coordinating Committee for GAP and the priority issues that CCGAP had identified were discussed.

Chen Kelin (Wetlands International China) gave a presentation on the “Peatlands of North-East Asia”. He discussed the characteristics of the peatlands and highlighted specific peatlands in selected countries of that region. Drainage, degradation, and overgrazing were identified as common key issues. The Lanzhou Statement from the International workshop on peatlands in July 2004 was distributed.

Faizal Parish and Adelina Kamal (ASEAN Peatland Management Initiative) gave a talk about the “Tropical peatlands in SE Asia” in which key issues and the development of the ASEAN Peatland Management Initiative and associated Strategy were presented.

Ms Cui (Chinese Academy of Forestry representative on the STRP) informed that China is establishing a network of wetland monitoring stations that will be important in assessing the condition and trends of peatlands in the country. The Chinese government is increasingly aware of the importance of peatlands and hopes to develop further measures to build on Ramsar Resolution VIII.17.

Mr Park (Ministry of the Environment, Republic of Korea) reported on the monitoring of mountainous peatlands since 2002 and on the designation of peatland Ramsar sites in these areas. Jangdo island bog, on an isolated island 104 km from the Korean peninsula, was designated in March 2005. The peatland plays a key role in storing freshwater and is important for biodiversity as well as for supplying water to the people on the island.

Priority issues

The working group supported in general the priority issues identified by the CC GAP, but noted that some fine-tuning of the wording and further consultation on the national level is necessary when the revised texts are provided by the Ramsar secretariat. Given the importance of peatlands, the recommendations on peatlands should be highlighted appropriately in the special draft resolutions (DR1 or DR2) or as a separate statement.

A comment was made that appropriate institutional and financial mechanisms are needed to support the implementation of peatland activities including a partnership between relevant stakeholders building on the achievements of the CC GAP and linking to sub-regional mechanisms in different regions.

Other issues of importance to the region for inclusion in the Ramsar decision include:

- The need for specific action towards UNFCCC as peatlands constitute one of the world's major carbon stocks
- Strengthening of regional and international cooperation with respect to peatlands
- Peatland research and monitoring
- The role of peatland in mesoclimate regulation
- Rehabilitation of degraded or abandoned peatlands
- Additional guidance needed on peatland management
- Poverty reduction for local communities in peatland areas (with support from international donors)
- The problems of the high altitude peatlands

A sub-group should be convened to propose specific wording.

Sub-regional activities

The group noted that the peatlands in Southeast Asia cover 30 million ha, representing more than 60% of the world's tropical peatlands and that they are very important for biodiversity conservation, carbon storage, water regulation, and support for local livelihoods.

The meeting applauded the work of the 10 ASEAN countries to develop the ASEAN Peatland Management Initiative and the associated ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy and recommended this be recognized appropriately as a model mechanism to implement the Ramsar Convention in the region.

The group also recognized the importance of peatlands in Northeast Asia and emphasized some of the priorities identified in the Langzhou statement. The group supported the establishment of a NE Asia peat (information exchange) network and welcomed the offer of Wetlands International China, IMCG, and others to develop this network through their ongoing collaborative programme. It was noted that Russia has very important peatlands in Asia and has a strong interest in networking and exchange in the region. This should not be constrained by the (artificial) Ramsar region arrangements. The group encouraged further work between the countries of the NE Asian

region to share experience and best practice and establish an appropriate framework for formal cooperation on peatland management.

Also peatlands in the arid/semi arid subregions of central and western Asia may benefit from regional exchange of expertise and information.

The issue of peatland management should be included more clearly in the following existing and proposed subregional Initiatives:

- The Himalayan Initiative
- The Mekong region
- The Amur Region

Especially stronger connections should be made of peatlands with climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives and plans.

The meeting identified the following additional priorities:

- Developing multiple sustainable use options in an integrated manner
- Empowering local communities to play an important role in the protection and sustainable use of peatlands
- Improving the protection of peatland biodiversity
- Strengthening peatland inventory, assessment, monitoring, and research
- Developing rapid assessment methods for peatlands
- Improving guidance for peatland management and restoration
- Integrating peatland management both for biodiversity and climate change values

Appropriate wording should be developed by a drafting group.

Peatlands and other COP9 resolutions

The group appealed to the CC GGAP and Ramsar Secretariat to integrate peatlands issues in relevant COP9 Resolutions, based on the following Recommendations on Peatlands from the Asian Ramsar Meeting:

1. Recognize the importance of peatlands in the Asian Region for biodiversity conservation, water regulation and climate balance and urge CPs in the region to strengthen the action for improving the protection including designation of more protected areas and Ramsar sites and stopping unsustainable harvesting and development practices.
2. Recognize the lack of information on extent, status and values of peatlands, intensify efforts for assessment, inventory and monitoring activities.
3. Acknowledge that many peatlands in Asia have been degraded by inappropriate and unsustainable management activities often without recognizing their unique wetland character and functions, urge that peatlands are managed and restored according to their ecological and hydrological character in harmony with local knowledge and systems; develop practical guidance on sustainable peatland management and rehabilitation as well as establish demonstration and pilot sites.

4. Recognize that many local people in Asia depend on goods and services from peatlands and that peatland degradation reduces livelihood options and contributes to poverty while at the same time local communities are often not involved in the management of peatlands. Therefore peatland management in Asia should be undertaken wherever possible in conjunction with local communities and other stakeholders and should seek to optimise the benefits to such communities from sustainable peatland management.
5. Agree on the important need to strengthen cooperation and exchange of experience on peatland management and use in Asia. Because of the similarity in management issues in different subregions, propose a subregional approach for regional cooperation as follows:
 - a) Welcome the establishment of the ASEAN Peatland Management Initiative, encourage parties and international organizations to support its implementation and commend it as a model to other sub-regions and elsewhere.
 - b) Support the immediate establishment of a NEAsian Peatland Network as recommended by the Langzhou Workshop and encourage active participation in such a network as a first step towards more formal cooperation among countries in the region.
 - c) Encourage further discussions on the establishment of a regional exchange mechanism related to the mountain peatlands of Central Asia, which are facing similar management problems.
6. Peatland issues should be incorporated in and highlighted by other regional wetland initiatives such as the Himalayan wetlands, the Amur basin management, and the Mekong Basin wetlands initiatives.
7. The recommendations from CCGAP to the COP should be further strengthened and incorporate issues from the Asian perspective.

Peatland side event at the Ramsar COP 9 Kampala, Uganda

The Coordinating Committee of the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (CoCo GGAP), the Global Peatland Initiative (GPI) and the IMCG intend to organise a joint side event presenting the results and progress of the GGAP, as well as a peatland-related pre-excursion prior to the official start of the Ramsar Conference of Parties (CoP) 9 in Kampala, Uganda later this year.

The envisaged side event will emphasise the importance of the work of the CoCo-GAP and to promote the peatland recommendations prepared for CoP9. In order to attract wide interest, this may be coupled with some cultural presentation, focusing on Africa and African peatlands. The event is planned to be held during the lunch break (13:00-15:00) on Friday, 11 November or on Saturday 12 November. Catering (sandwiches, beverages) for delegates will be provided and up to 160 people are expected.

One two-day or two one day excursions are also planned, focussing on Ugandan peatlands and peatland-related wetlands. Depending on the programme, the accessibility of the sites and vehicles

available, the pre-excursion may be also offered officially to delegates of the CoP9.

Uganda has the most comprehensive wetland inventory on the African continent. Nearly 30 % of the country is covered by wetlands. The purpose of this side event is also to learn as much as possible from the Uganda people about their success in wetland management. This will result in the building of local, regional and international capacity and the much needed transfer of peatland and mire related skills and knowledge.

Please visit the wetland website of Uganda if you are interested to find out more about the country and its wetlands at: <http://www.ugandawetlands.org>

Please contact Jan Sliva or Piet-Louis Grundling if you would like to contribute to the success of this event at CoP9.

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EU ecolabel and peat

The current criteria for EU eco-labelling of soil improvers and growing media became effective in 2001 and will expire in August 2006. The first meeting of the Ad-Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on the Revision of European Eco-label criteria on Soil Improvers & Growing Media was held 15 March 2005. One of the points discussed was the exclusion of peat from eco-labelled product.

The group stands more or less united in their view that peat should not be applied in Eco-labelled *soil improvers*.

The majority of the AHWG, however, is in favour of admitting a certain level of peat in *growing media*. An overview of some arguments:

- The non-interest in industry for the current European Eco-label for GM is largely due to the complete ban on peat. In the vast majority of applications, there is a clear need for peat to ensure quality of the GM.
- In Ireland, Bord na Móna have proven successful with marketing large quantities of compost in combination with peat as a growing medium. These market experiences confirm that peat gives compost the added value to be applied as a growing medium;
- Peat can be used as a vehicle for developing and marketing alternative growing media; in combination with peat, much more waste derived products can be recycled. There has emerged a clear market for diluted peat products; if that is regarded to be a good development for the environment, the European Eco-label should be open to it;
- Technically, compost and waste products make a good combination with peat since waste products usually contain fairly high levels of potassium (K) whereas peat typically has a low potassium level. In addition, peat is a lightweight product which improves the handling properties.

There are, however, also arguments against the admission of peat. There is still too much use of peat without respect for nature or regulations. In view of the weight given to the ban on peat in the 2001-revision, the admission of peat in Eco-labelled products would also be difficult to explain to the consumer. It would only be marketable when built on very convincing and firm new arguments. Possible criteria should be strict, solid and explainable, giving special attention to the following topics:

- The state of the art in mire conservation regulations and peat bog restoration. The Wise Use Guidelines drafted by the IMCG in cooperation with the IPS could be an important source of information. This should be looked at in further detail;
- The importance of tracing and tracking of materials. As it should at all times be avoided that ‘unverified’ peat enters an Eco-labelled product;

In order to assess the state of the art in mire conservation and the possibilities to implement elements of the Wise Use Guidelines for Mires and Peatlands [WU 2002], some questions were asked to Hans Joosten, the international secretary of the International Mire Conservation Group. These questions and answers can be found in the previous IMCG Newsletter.

The Working Group advises to explore the possibility, on the basis of an overview of environmental benefits and doubts, of a restricted admission of peat in GM (there is a broad consensus on the continued ban of peat in Soil Improvers). An important precondition linked to a possible admission of peat in GM should be the continued credibility of the European Eco-label in the eye of the end-consumer. Peat would only be acceptable if it came from sustainably managed and properly traceable sources.

Background documents can be found on the Environment webpage of the European Commission: http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ecolabel/product/pg_soilimprovers_en.htm#revision

Meanwhile, various European organisations have reacted to the proposals of the AHWG. The European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (UEAPME), an employer’s organisation, welcomes the proposals to allow for peat in eco-labelled growing media, with the argument that the current ban on peat does not allow the growing media industry to use the EU Eco-label. If this ban were lifted, the EU Flower would obviously represent an opportunity for different players in Europe. This is especially true for products intended for the retail market and for products that are intended for local communities.

In contrast, the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) states: EEB cannot approve the inclusion of peat in this Ecolabel. The extraction of peat is frequently associated with environmental degradation, particularly the loss of important and increasingly rare ecological niches. There is some progress towards a more sustainable use of peat, but the EEB cannot agree that this process is well enough advanced to allow use of ‘sustainable’ peat in an ecolabel.

The inclusion of peat, even if found to be environmentally defensible (which EEB doubts), would raise two serious problems. The first is traceability, which might cause some practical difficulties. But the more serious problem is one of communication and image. It has required a lot of work over many years to educate people about the damage to the environment (biodiversity, climate change...) that may be caused by peat use. It is thanks to this long and patient work by environmental organisations that peat producers are beginning to

become more environmentally aware and draw up guidelines for 'wise use of peat' etc. Approving an ecolabel which allows peat use could be understood as a complete U-turn. As stated in the minutes of the first AHWG meeting, "the admission of peat in ecolabelled products would also be difficult to explain to the consumer. It would only be marketable when built on very convincing and firm new arguments. Possible criteria should be strict, solid and explainable..." The EEB has not found "very convincing and firm new arguments".

The present Ecolabel should concentrate on encouraging the development of alternatives to peat, by remaining peat-free. While respecting the argument that allowing a certain percentage of peat may encourage more growing media producers to adhere to the Ecolabel, EEB does not agree with lowering environmental standards for short-term gains, but would prefer to encourage the alternatives to peat that are being developed. Allowing peat in ecolabelled growing media would disavow efforts made by some producers to offer peat-free media, and would slow down the replacement of peat by more sustainable alternatives.

EEB feels that other tools, such as the taxing of natural resources used (peat in this case) and stringent environmental safeguards applied to peat extraction, would make peat more costly and thus stimulate the search for and use of alternatives. The Ecolabel should remain ahead of mere market forces.

Furthermore, EEB concludes, the comments by the secretary of the International Mire Conservation Group on pages 9 and 10 of the 2nd background document seem to be conclusively against including peat in the Ecolabel.

Also the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) remains opposed to the inclusion of any peat in the specifications for both soil improvers and growing media, believing that there are too many ambiguities, unresolved issues and environmental question marks to allow the use of peat to be included in the Ecolabel, as well as the difficult issue of public perception of any such change. RSPB also believes that the ecolabel should reward best practice, rather than the 'halfway house' stage of peat reduction, particularly in view of the many peat free growing media products that are available to both consumers and horticultural growers (yes, there are professional growers using peat-free growing media, which doesn't come across in the background paper). The RSPB also notes that very few of the growing media products which currently are peat-free appear to carry the ecolabel. This refutes the suggestion that the moratorium on peat in the ecolabel is holding back peat replacement, or holding back interest in the ecolabel, because the industry is not yet using the ecolabel in the many situations where it can do so. There is no point having a logo scheme that allows every product to use it - the value of the logo then becomes meaningless.

The RSPB further stated that the Dutch RHP hallmark scheme has some serious flaws with regard to the environmental aspects. Legitimate extraction still occurs on UK bogs designated for nature conservation, and indeed on sites proposed as Natura 2000 sites; this extraction is, however, damaging to the biodiversity interest of the sites and is due to historical precedence rather than to wise use. Restoration is weakly defined: there must be a clear presumption to restore to the habitat that has been lost to peat extraction, and a clear attempt to redress the environmental damage that commercial use has caused.

In a following meeting 20 June, the AHWG did not reach agreement on allowing peat under stringent requirements nor on excluding peat from Ecolabelled products. Key arguments were brought forward and disputed over and over, and weighed differently by the various stakeholder groups. It is decided to ask the Competent Bodies (CB's) for their opinion, presenting in an unbiased way the arguments pro and contra. The Competent Bodies are independent and neutral organisations responsible for implementing the Community Eco-label award Scheme at national level. (for their addresses see http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ecolabel/tools/competentbodies_en.htm)

This approach seems most straightforward, since it will ultimately be the CB's who have a strong say in the final proposal of revised criteria to the Commission. The aim is to communicate feedback from the CB's before the next meeting of the EUEB on the 27th of September 2005.

In a reaction to this hesitant position, Gerald Schmilewski of Klasmann-Deilmann, a large German peat mining company, and coordinator of the Horticultural Peat (HOPE) Working Group of IPS Commission II on industrial utilizations of peatlands and peat, wrote that in his opinion "the whole eco-labelling scheme for growing media will again (just like the current criteria) be a flop if peat is not admitted and the criteria too stringent –including any track and trace systems the Eco-labelling Board might come up with.

Valuable resources (money) are wasted by the Eco-labelling Board and members of the AHWG, if technical reasons for the admission of peat in the criteria are not followed. There will be little – if no – interest by the producers of growing media in eco-labelling. A product must work and there is such a thing as product liability. That's what it comes down to! Wishful thinking is one thing, product performance is reality."

Paul Waller of Paul Waller Consulting supported Schmilewski and went so far as to propose to add one sided argumentation *for* the inclusion of peat to the minutes of the meeting.

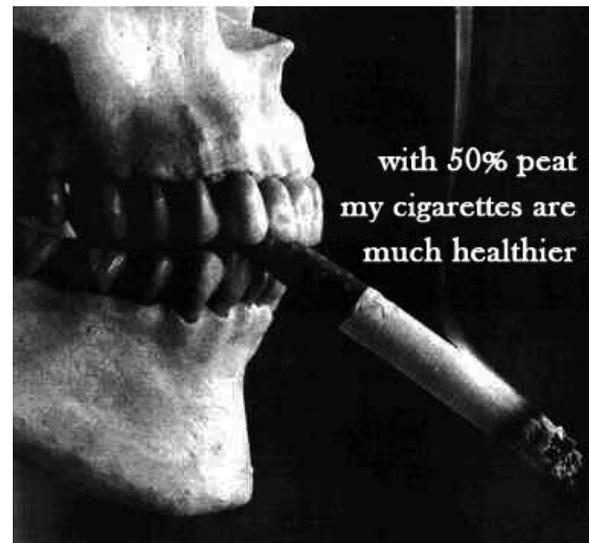
Instead of using an environmental seal of approval as a mere tool to regulate the market economy, it would be more appropriate to use existing tools like taxes

and subsidies and not dilute and ridicule the meaning of a prestigious seal for short term financial gains. To increase the use of composts is a laudable goal and certainly a step in the direction of a greener, more environment friendly world, but that in itself does not deserve an ecolabel, certainly not if that ecolabel would then also support the continued destruction of valuable biological and landscape diversity. Peat extraction simply is *not* “green”, it is *not* environmental friendly. Peat extraction is evil. If the “eco” in ecolabel means anything, the inclusion of peat is a no-go.

Awarding an ecolabel to peat based growing media or to growing media containing even a small amount of peat is like giving a health reward to cigarettes because they “only” contain a little amount of carcinogenic substances. They do contain them and therefore they are bad and therefore not healthy and thus they do not deserve any reward for being healthy.

With a peat content of “only” 50% or 75%, growing media do not become healthier. Every pristine peatland that is drained for peat extraction is another nail in the coffin of our natural environment. It is high time the peat extractors leave their primitive

hunter gatherer mentality and move to become wised up farmers who only reap what they themselves have sown.



See the previous IMCG Newsletter for a detailed background on eco-labelling and peat.

A global handbook for peatland restoration

The International Mire Conservation Group is a partner in the UNEP-GEF project “Integrated management of peatlands for biodiversity and climate change”. The project has asked IMCG to assist in delivering one of its key products of the global component: a global handbook on peatland restoration.

First discussions on such a handbook were held in February 2004 in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and in June 2004 in Tampere (Finland), but since action has been meagre. Now Martin Schumann (Greifswald, Germany) has taken on the task to coordinate the process.

The aim is to produce a guideline that is science-based and that will be a practical guide to peatland restoration for policy makers and site managers. The work will have relevance to all peatlands of the world but will especially focus on the core regions of the UNEP-GEF project: Indonesia, China, Western Siberia, and European Russia.

The guideline will consist of at least six parts, starting with a basic overview on characteristics, types, and distribution of mires and peatlands, on important peatland functions and values, as well as on the impact of different damaging operations on these functions.

The central part of the handbook will provide assistance in questions of strategic and site

management planning for restoration projects. Guidelines will be given to assess the actual status of the peatland and to identify and set realistic objectives. This will guide the user to relevant construction and management actions that will be amply explained and illustrated.

An important part will be a catalogue of restoration activity providing an overview of and links to a great variety of current and past restoration projects. The last part will present some case studies in closer detail.

The handbook will consist of a short hardcopy text and a dynamic e-version on the web that can easily be updated. It will be available in the first half of 2006.

Only with the help of specialists all over the world a satisfactory output can be reached.

Therefore, any information (especially grey literature and oral information) on conditions, planned or undertaken measures, costs, results, monitoring techniques, funding, and other background knowledge will be gratefully received by:

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Volcanoes curb wetland emissions

According to an article by Vincent Gauci, Nancy Dise, and Stephen Blake, recently published in *Geophysical Research Letters*, volcanoes may have a stronger cooling effect on the Earth than previously thought. Large eruptions can lead to competition between different types of bacteria in peatlands and other wetlands. Dust and gas from large eruptions are known to block out sunlight, cooling Earth for two or three years. New data show that bacteria producing the greenhouse gas methane are suppressed by other bugs, further cooling Earth. The time needed for the methane-producing bacteria to recover to pre-eruption levels is between five and 10 years. Sulphur dioxide in volcanic plumes turns to sulphuric acid in contact with water and falls to Earth as acid rain. The impact of acid-rain fallout on methane-producing bacteria can outlive the short-term cooling effect of sulphuric acid in the atmosphere. The potential impact could be extended up to decadal scales. To simulate the sulphurous fallout from the Laki Craters volcanic eruption in Iceland during the summer of 1783, 20, 2x2m plots of peatland in

Scotland's Moidach More were treated with sodium sulphate on a weekly or monthly basis between July 1997 and December 1998. Results showed that methane production from the plots had fallen by between 30 and 40% by 1998, the last year of treatment. In 2000, methane production was still suppressed. The abundant emissions after a volcanic eruption may allow sulphate-reducing bacteria in the wetlands to out-compete the methane-producing microbes (methanogens). The methanogens become excluded from exploiting a significant proportion of their energy source, resulting in lower methane production.

Over much of geological time, natural wetlands have been the major contributor of global methane. Today, natural and man-made wetlands (rice paddies) contribute about 50% of the total methane source.

Gauci, V., Dise, N., Blake, S. (2005) Long-term suppression of wetland methane flux following a pulse of simulated acid rain. *Geophys. Res. Lett.*, Vol. 32, No. 12

Mieczysław Jasnowski

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the death of Mieczysław Jasnowski, a symposium on The Future of Polish Peatlands was organized on 13 September 2003 (see IMCG newsletter 2003-3). The proceedings of this meeting have now been published (see below). Here we reproduce parts of the biography of Jasnowski as published in the volume by his wife Janina Jasnowska.

Mieczysław Jasnowski (1920-1993) distinguished himself as a prominent scientist, specialising in peat and peatland science. Following his Masters, he continued on the scientific path of the Polish peat-science school, led before World War II by Prof. Stanisław Kulczyński and later, in Wrocław, by Prof. Stanisław Tołpa. Wide ranging research on peatlands in different areas of Poland was carried out by Professor Jasnowski and his team in close cooperation with the leading specialists from the country and from abroad. He was looking for new solutions to difficult problems in peat science and outlined new directions of research.

From the very beginning of his research Prof. Jasnowski studied mire vegetation and peat-forming processes in relation to the stratigraphy of peat and



gyttja deposits, in which he saw an excellent source of knowledge on the genesis of these systems.

His doctoral thesis, entitled "The classification and genesis of the Quaternary moss peats" (1957), was a pioneering work, forecasting the modern genetic classification of peat. It was a follow-up of his earlier works: "Moss flora of rheophilous deposits of the Quaternary" (1957) and "*Calliargon trifarium* Kindb. in the stratigraphy and flora of the Holocene peatlands in Poland" (1957). The peat classification proposed by Tiuremnow et al., based on botanical composition of peat and applied in the PhD thesis of Jasnowski, was critically analysed. He distinguished groups of associations in which the mass growth of peat-forming mosses occurred, such as *Caricetum rostrato-vesicariae* of the *Magnocaricion* alliance, *Caricetum diandrae* of the *Caricetalia fuscae*, and an association called provisionally *Caricetum flavae* of the *Tofieldietalia* order.

Also the need to intensify in-depth studies on these plant communities, which disappeared fast due to natural succession and to human impact, was stressed by Jasnowski. He pointed out that mass occurrence of these communities is possible only under the special hydrological conditions existing in springs and percolating fens. In respect to the genesis of such mires he stated that "the reconstructed mossy, peat forming communities and the described phytocoenoses point only to historic environmental

conditions in which the mires formed. They are neither identical nor unchangeable during the whole course of peatland development.”

His habilitation thesis “The stratigraphy and vegetation of peatlands in Szczecin, Pomerania” (1962) was the first study of this rank published in Poland after World War II. It presented the natural distribution and typological differentiation of mire types in relation to the spatial variation of climatic, geological, geomorphological and hydrological conditions of the region. The work contained:

- a characterization of peat stratigraphy, based on modern typological criteria, including palynological studies;
- a geobotanical survey of the plant cover of peatlands according to the syntaxonomical approach; the full phytosociological characteristic of mire plant communities was presented, including plant communities already very rare in Poland, such as: *Scirpetum maritimae*, *Mariscetum*, *Juncetum subnodulosi*, *Buxbaumietum*, *Schoenetum nigricantis*, *Ericetum tetralicis*, *Sphagnetum papillosum*; and a new association - *Caricetum ripariae*;
- a study on mire flora, with special elaboration of the frequency of species and their occurrences in particular mire phytocoenoses.

Unfortunately, this valuable monography was unavailable to the general public for a long time, due to censorship restrictions that put large weight on peatlands for state security. Luckily, the thesis was known to a few specialists in the country and abroad, setting new standards and giving inspiration for similar investigations elsewhere.

A special place in the work of Jasnowski is taken by his peat classification system based on the phytosociological analysis of peat-forming plant associations, the “System der genetischen Klassifizierung der Torfe Mitteleuropas” (1964), elaborated in cooperation with S. Tolpa and A. Pałczyński. The new classification was the first to take a phytosociological-geobotanical approach, taking into account the peat forming plant communities (recognised from the plant remnants in peat) as well as the environmental conditions of the formation of particular peat types. The concept was later applied in several countries. The obtained results not only had theoretical, but also practical consequences, as they formed the basis of peat classification for technology and soil science. In Poland the peat classification system has been officially accepted and implemented as a “Polish Industrial Norm” for use in the peat industry.

After the World War II, Polish peatlands were mapped for practical use. Jasnowski took an active role in outlining this research and in methodological training of teams performing the surveys. He himself

took part in numerous large-scale field studies, accumulating valuable scientific material. As a result of the project ca. 49 thousand peatlands were documented across the country. Jasnowski and his team prepared an atlas of peatlands in Poland. This large data set that was collected is still waiting for complete elaboration. Until now it has been used only partially to solve specific scientific problems. However, a map “Peatlands of Poland” was prepared by Jasnowski, Markowski and Wolejko and published as a part of the “Atlas of resources, values and threats to the natural environment of Poland” (1994).

Jasnowski had a particular interest in glacial and post-glacial “relic species” in mires and associated problems of mire protection. This was a subject of numerous publications, reports and projects on mire nature reserves, as well as advisory work as head of the Provincial Nature Protection Council in Szczecin and head of the Mire Protection Commission of the State Council for Nature Conservation. In the course of this work a “Program for Peatland Protection in Poland” (1973) was elaborated. It contained an analysis of peatland status in the country, pointing out to their destruction and gradual disappearance, and at the same time formulating a proposal for the establishment of a network of mire reserves. The threats and protection needs for wetland plant species were evaluated in the publication “List of threatened species of mire flora in Poland” (1977). Jasnowski co-authored the list of species in need of strict protection that became an official law in 1983. Due to his efforts several nature reserves and landscape parks protecting mires, were established in Western Pomerania. A good example is the Polish-German landscape park “Lower Odra Valley”, established in 1993.

Besides his purely scientific interests, professor Jasnowski always took good care of the practical follow-up of his work, setting directions for the proper use of peatlands and underlining their role for the national economy. An example is a publication “Peatlands in the Słupsk Voivodeship – status, resources, management and protection” (1990) formulating principles for the commercial use of selected peatlands. Jasnowski always stressed the need for deciding on the future use or protection of mires in the light of scientific knowledge and law, enabling a compromising balance.

Yet in another appeal, presented in his last publication, Professor Mieczysław Jasnowski stated: “I conclude with a reminder. Mires found in cultural landscape are peculiar oases of life in the desert of civilisation. With increasing human impact these biocoenoses disappear with accelerated speed. We have to remember, that these resources are non-renewable”.

Regional News

News from Norway: New mire museum

In 1994, during the last day of the 6th IMCG field excursion in Norway, we visited Toppmyr on the island of Smøla, a raised and blanket bog complex covering more than 5 km². We spent the night in a guesthouse in a small fishing village (Veidholmen) far west on Smøla. More than 10 years later, the same mires are in the news again, when in June 2005, the Norwegian Mire Museum was opened on Smøla, in one of the largest mire landscapes in Norway.

Smøla is about 200 km² in size, and is regarded as the largest area of the "strandflat" in Norway; the mean height above sea level is 15m. Mire vegetation (including peatlands with more than 30 cm of peat) cover more than half of the land area, and *Calluna* heathlands cover large areas as well. Superficial deposits (drift) are absent or thin; the peat (and raw humus) mostly lies directly on the bedrock. Smøla is an open, highly oceanic area and its mires and other types of wetlands are of the highest protection value. Farmland takes up 12 km² of Smøla, a large part being cultivated peatlands. In the 1930s, a major agricultural project to cultivate mires started on Smøla, mainly in the central part, which had the largest area of mire at that time. A mire research farm (station) was established in the centre of the area, helping the farmers with information on ditching, fertilisers, etc. Growing carrots and swedes on cultivated peat has earned good incomes for decades on Smøla. However, large areas have been taken out of production in recent decades as the thin soil (cultivated peat) has shrunk, and the bedrock, often as ridges interspersed with standing groundwater, is visible on the surface.

The mire museum is in the large outbuilding at the former research station, and the exhibitions occupy 720 m² in two floors. The exhibitions can be separated into three main parts:

- Agricultural part. How to drain, cultivate and fertilise mires, peat cutting, etc. Machinery and tractors.
- Cultural part. Farming on newly cleared land (peat on Smøla), how people lived, their homes and the work done by women at home.
- Natural history. Development of mires, mire types (hydromorphology), vegetation types and flora, hay fens, Sphagnum, mire protection in Norway.

The mires on Smøla were first described in a monograph by Hugo Osvald (1925). Some mire areas on Smøla were proposed for protection in the Norwegian national plan for mire nature reserves (e.g. Moen & Singaas 1994, Moen 1995), and the Toppmyra mire was classified as being of international significance. There are still no protected wetland areas on Smøla. However, a very ambitious plan to protect wetlands, including mires, freshwater and marine areas, has been discussed for many years.



The author inside the new peat-museum

This discussion now seems to be drawing to a conclusion with the protection of about 30 % of the land area of the island, and large areas of shallow water.

Smøla certainly has one of the most interesting areas of wetland and mire in Norway. The next time you visit this area, you should also spend some hours studying the exhibitions in the Norwegian Mire Museum.

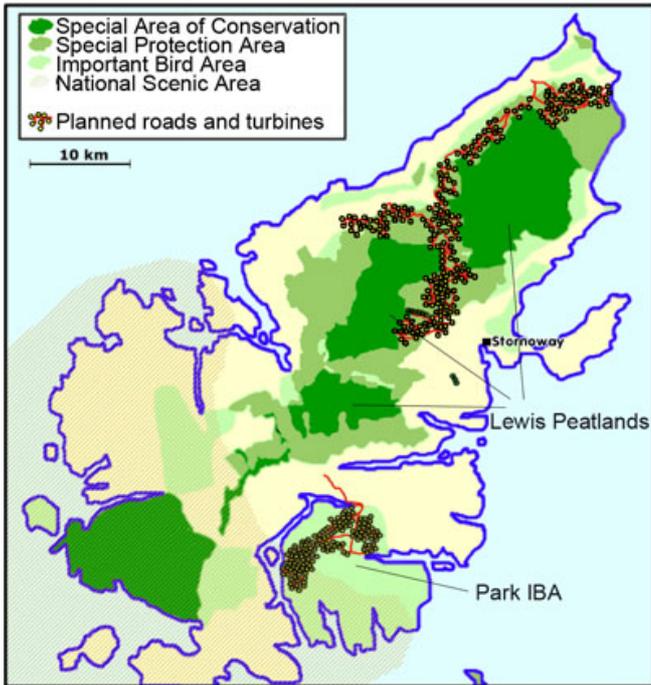
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Asbjørn Moen

News from UK: Wind farms on Lewis Island

Beinn Mhor Power has applied for development consent to erect 133 125m-high wind turbines in the Park Important Bird Area (IBA) on Lewis Island (Scotland, UK), together with an 80 km network of roads and drains, ancillary equipment, transmission infrastructure, and rock quarries. This Eisegin Wind Farm project is partly in a National Scenic Area (NSA) and in close proximity to the North Harris Mountains Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and the Lewis Peatlands SPA SAC Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar). The Lewis Peatlands SPA SAC Ramsar is already the subject of a 234-turbine project by AMEC Project Investments and British Energy (see previous IMCG Newsletters), also currently in development.



Windfarm plans on Lewis Island

The Eisgein Wind Farm is proposed on a site almost entirely composed of active blanket bog and Atlantic wet heath (both Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive). The site is also an IBA classified by BirdLife International for its Golden Eagle population. The developer's habitats and hydrology survey is cursory, and has no regard for recent developments in the understanding of the impact of wind farms in peatland areas.

Bird species at the site include Redthroated Diver, Black-throated Diver, White-tailed Sea Eagle, Golden Eagle, Merlin, Golden Plover, and Dunlin (all Annex I Birds Directive). The Black-throated Diver, White-tailed Sea Eagle, and Dunlin populations are of national importance, and likewise its population of Greenshank (Annex II Birds Directive). Like the rest of the island, the Park IBA also serves an important function in the north-east Atlantic migratory flyway of waterbirds.

The site's Golden Eagle population is of international importance and the potential impact of this project on Golden Eagle is of extreme concern. Park IBA hosts the second highest density of this species in the European Union. It meets the UK selection criteria for SPA classification but has not been so classified, contrary to Article 4.1 Birds Directive. Golden Eagle is known to be particularly vulnerable to wind turbine impact and is already under stress at the site due to significant habitat deterioration in recent years (overgrazing by Red Deer).

The Eisgein Wind Farm developer plans further severe deterioration of this internationally important Golden Eagle habitat. The developer predicts that death by blade strike, breeding range abandonment, population attrition; habitat loss, reduction in prey, disturbance, and reduction in productivity are likely.

Wind turbines do not have to be located in Important Bird Areas. Plenty of alternatives exist. The Lewis Windpower Scheme proposed for Northwest Lewis has received about 5000 objections, at least 3200 of which were sent from Lewis addresses.

For more information contact Paul Smith:
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 or visit www.mwtlewis.org.uk

News from Germany: Bog body found

A body found in a peat bog in northern Germany, first thought to be a murder victim, turned out to be a sensational archeological find: the 2,700 year old mummified corpse of a teenage girl.

At first the police thought the body of a teenage girl they were alerted to was evidence in an unsolved murder case. But upon closer examination, it turned out the suspected victim of foul play found in a peat bog in the town of Uchte, Lower Saxony, was actually slightly older than first thought, some 2,700 years older.

Many of the body's hundred-odd parts were first dug out of the bog in 2000. At the time, the police homicide unit was assigned to the case, but when they failed to solve it, the file was archived and the bog body forgotten.

In January of this year, a local worker discovered a shriveled hand in the bog while digging turf. The police were once again put on the case, but this time, they recognized that the body was an archeological find rather than a criminal one.



photo: dpa

Radiocarbon dating showed the bog body belonged to a teenage girl – her age is estimated between 16 and 20 – who lived around 650 BC. All the parts of the corpse appear to have been found except for one shoulder blade, though much of it was strewn about by modern digging equipment. Even the hair on the corpse's head was intact.

The State Museum of Lower Saxony said it is the only extensively preserved human body dating from

the pre-Roman iron age to be found in Europe north of the Alps.

Technological developments have made the discovery of intact bog bodies increasingly rare. Whereas people used to dig peat by hand, today huge machines shred everything to pieces. Thus small, mummified body parts – which are almost the same color as the peat – remain undiscovered. A mummified body was last found in Lower Saxony 50 years ago.

Paleobiologist Andreas Bauerochse said the “Girl of the Bog” will be examined for clues to life 2,000 years ago. The find will keep scientists busy for a long time. The body will be on display for a short time in the State Museum, where the public will have a chance to see the body before scientists begin their work.

Source: Deutsche Welle

News from Lithuania: Klasmann-Deilmann gets a larger cut

Klasmann-Deilmann GmbH has acquired another three peat cutting operations in Lithuania, adding to the existing facilities in the country, as well as in Germany and the Netherlands.

Klasmann-Deilmann has, in the course of the privatisation of the Lithuanian utility company AB “Kauno Energija”, acquired the operations of UAB “Naujasodzio Energijos Paslaugos” and is sole shareholder since 15 April 2005. The negotiations involved went on for almost two years.

The Ezerelis, Paliai and Susis peat operations, situated close to Kaunas, have at their disposal a combined total of just over 2,000 hectares of raised peat bog fields, from which both white and black peat is extracted. These facilities currently employ around 190 people.

Dr Norbert Siebels, managing director of Klasmann-Deilmann GmbH, was delighted at the new acquisition: “This will be instrumental in securing our long-term supply of ‘raw materials’. We are investing in the future of the company and in its employees, and in our partnership with Lithuania.” Dr Siebels announced intentions to make large-scale investments aimed at smoothly and speedily integrating the peat cutting facilities into the Klasmann-Deilmann Group’s quality-assurance system. The planned measures, he said, are all about enhancing extraction and increasing extraction output.

Klasmann-Deilmann GmbH has been active in Lithuania since 1992. In 1999 it acquired, through its associated company “Baltische Torfgesellschaft mbH” (BTG), two operations – UAB “Silutes Durpes” and UAB “Laukesa-WTL” – adding a third, UAB “Gedrimu Durpes”, in 2003. Silutes Dorpes is the company responsible for cutting away half of the famous Augstamal bog, where C.A. Weber laid the foundation for modern peatland science.

Up to now Klasmann-Deilmann has invested more than 5 million euros in these Lithuanian operations. The substrate factory in Silute is among the most modern in the Baltic region and produces almost 400,000 cubic metres of growing media per year, marketed in more than 40 countries.

The Klasmann-Deilmann Group, based in Gross Hesepe in the Emsland region of Germany, is the global market leader in the production and marketing of growing media. Including its new operations, the Group employs more than 1,000 employees at its corporate head office and in its extraction and sales companies all over the world. During the financial year 2004, the Klasmann-Deilmann Group achieved a turnover of 120 million euros.

News from Ukraine: Danube delta canal

In 2003, a joint UNESCO and Ramsar Convention mission visited Ukraine in order to examine different choices for the re-establishment of a navigable waterway through the Ukrainian part of the Transboundary Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and Ramsar Site. In its report, the mission reflected on issues concerning navigation vs. biodiversity and delta dynamics, the need for compensation of ecological damage, and the need for transboundary cooperation. Much has happened since then and the concerns of international bodies remain. An update on the situation can be found on the Ramsar Website: http://www.ramsar.org/ram/ram_rpt_53e_update.htm

The 2003 report:

http://www.ramsar.org/ram/ram_rpt_53e.htm

News from Mesopotamia: Iraq and Iran plan transboundary Ramsar site

Iraq and Iran have agreed to work together to designate the shared Hawr Al Hawizah wetland, one of the major remaining parts of the Mesopotamian Marshlands, as a transboundary Ramsar Site of International Importance. This hopeful agreement was struck during the ‘High-level Conference on the Restoration of the Mesopotamian Marshlands’, held in Manama (Bahrain) on 28 February and 1 March 2005, co-organised by UNEP and ROPME (Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment). The meeting was well attended by representatives of most of the governments of the region, UN agencies, the World Bank and a number of NGOs already involved with these wetlands. A delegation from the indigenous Ma’dan people, the Marsh Arabs, was lacking.

The great Mesopotamian Marshlands, one of the iconic wetlands of the world, were inhabited by a proud people, inheritors of the Sumerian civilisation, with a vibrant culture and a unique architecture based on the ingenious use of reeds. They lived in balance with nature, in a vast area (of about two million hectares), fed by the waters of the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers, rich in biodiversity. In the early 1990s, the impact of large upstream dams in the countries sharing their catchment basin resulted in a dramatic reduction of freshwater inflow. The coup de grace was given by Saddam's government, which implemented just after the first Gulf war and within 2-3 years a policy of draining the Marshlands. The result was the almost total destruction of the wetland ecosystems and the flight of the inhabitants to the towns, while a large number of refugees crossed the border to Iran.

After the fall of the Saddam regime, starting in late 2003, returning Ma'dan breached some of the dikes and initiated the re-flooding of the marshes. The interim Iraqi government agreed to the restoration of the wetlands and established CRIM (Centre for the Restoration of the Iraqi Marshlands) to co-ordinate this major effort. The UN (mainly through UNEP), a number of countries (such as Canada, Italy, Japan and the US) and various organisations rallied to assist. Already a considerable number of the Ma'dan have returned to their wetland villages, and, in spite of a variety of difficulties, the outcome for the future may be considered as positive.

The designation of Al Hawizah as a Ramsar site presupposes the accession of Iraq to the Convention on Wetlands. The Iraqi delegation expressed its willingness to complete rapidly the necessary procedure, with the advice of the Ramsar Secretariat, and to take part in COP9 with an observer status. All in all, the potential contribution of the Ramsar Convention to the rehabilitation of the Mesopotamian Marshlands was highly appreciated by the participants, who would welcome a more active role by this international body. In a broader context, the need of a regional wetland initiative was felt by many of the participants, and Iran suggested it would consider playing a catalytic role for its launch.

Source: www.ramsar.org

News from South Africa: Goukou and Duivenoks Wetlands

Japie Buckle from Working for Wetlands, whom the delegates from the recent IMCG Congress in South Africa met in September 2004, has recently reported severe erosion in the palmiet (*Prionium serratum*) fens associated with the Goukou and Duivenoks River systems, near Heidelberg in the Southern Cape Province. Japie and a multi-disciplinary team surveyed the area with a helicopter on 8 June 2005 to ascertain the extent of the wetland degradation after extensive flood damage occurred in December 2004.

The survey team consisted of representatives from the Department of Agriculture, the Provincial Department of Agriculture, DWAF, Cape Nature, District Municipality, Working for Wetlands and Fred Ellery (another well known face to the IMCG delegates) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The Goukou and Duivenoks rivers rise in the east and west striking Cape Fold Mountains (comprised mainly of sandstone) and drain southwards into the Indian Ocean, across gently undulating marine sediments.



A typical palmiet (*Prionium serratum*) fen. Note the presence of exotic invader species in the background

The wetlands of the study area were all strongly associated with peat – either the entire wetland basins were filled with peat or portions of them were peatland. Without exception, palmiet (*Prionium serratum*) was an important floristic element, either dominating the entire wetlands or large parts of them. The hydro-geomorphic setting of the wetlands associated with these rivers varies from valley-fill with- and without-streams to floodplains. Agricultural activity and infrastructure development has been associated with canalization of water in ways that has fundamentally altered wetland characteristics, converting them to a state of increased flow concentration.

These wetlands have numerous values, especially with respect to erosion control, water quality enhancement – with respect to sediment trapping in particular – flood attenuation, improvement of water security to downstream users, biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration.

All of the wetland systems have been highly modified as a consequence of one or a combination of several factors – most notably:

- Encroachment into wetlands by agricultural activity, with concomitant flood control and flow confinement structures such as dykes and drainage ditches. These activities have confined flow and sedimentation processes to a narrow zone of the former wetlands.

- Invasion of wetlands by alien plants, particularly the black wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*), so that the indigenous, natural vegetation is shaded out.
- Construction of roads across wetlands with narrow culverts and canals to confine flow entirely in a narrow zone of the wetland.

The scale of devastation in these wetlands is difficult to comprehend. All but one of the observed tributary streams (of the Goukou) were deeply incised, and according to local accounts, all of which were supported by observations in the field, erosion was progressing rapidly upstream.

Palmiet wetlands of the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces are under extreme threat, linked largely with alien invasives, roads and agriculture. The conservation of these systems is a national priority.

The team has requested emergency funds to mitigate the current degradation in these systems, both within the wetlands but also in the respective catchments. These include amongst others:

- arrest the further erosion of the Palmiet peatland in Tierkloof (a tributary draining into the main Palmiet wetland system in the upper reaches of the Goukou River catchment).
- Deactivate the headcut on the Palmiet wetland in the Duivenoks River above the Duivenoks Dam
- Deactivate the headcut at the top end of the main Palmiet wetland in the Goukou River

The problems in the Kruis River (tributary of the Goukou River) involve the cooperation of landowners and can be addressed over a longer period.

An initial amount of ZAR 1.5 million (Euro 200 000) is required to stabilize the current situation. Thereafter a massive operation will be needed that would address restoration on a catchment level.

Peat mining under threat

The karst fen located in Gerhard Minnebron wetland near Potchefstroom (2 hours drive south, south west of Pretoria), in the North West province, supports two mining operations and supplies about 80 % (35 000 m³ per annum) of the local market's peat demand. This 90 ha peatland, in the catchment of the Mooi River (the "Beautiful" River) is now additionally threatened by pollution.

The Harmony Gold Mine, more that 60 km upstream of Gerhard Minnebron got approval to release vast volumes of polluted mine water into the catchment of a tributary of the Mooi River, immediately upstream of the peatland. Some of the peat miners have already reported that polluted water has spilled over onto the peatland. Their greatest fear is that it may pollute the peat resource.

This might save the peatland from being mined in future, but will it survive the pollution!

Officials of the Department of Agriculture have recently indicated that the output of South Africa's

peat mines has dropped from about 70.000 m³ to 40.000 m³ per annum. This is mainly due to the refusal of the Gauteng Province's Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment to issue a permit for the expansion of the Culterra peat mining operation in that province, as well as the closure of the Vindex operation due to a lack of resources.

Bark products are also replacing peat products in the horticulture industry, especially when it comes to potting soils. However, the boom in development of golfing estates has created another demand for peat. Peat is being imported and both operators at Gerhard Minnebron (Duffuel and Stander Veen) have applied for the expansion of their current operations. Operations by Middleground have also commenced in the Schoon spruit mire.

For more on South African wetlands and peatlands, contact Piet-Louis Grundling: peatland@mweb.co.za

News from Korea: New peatland Ramsar site

The Republic of Korea has designated an island peatland area as its third Wetland of International Importance, effective 30 March 2005. Jangdo Island peatland in Chollanam-do province (34°41'N 125°23'E) is one of 1,596 islands that are part of the Tadohae-Haesang National Park. The site is a pristine mountainous wetland (230-267m asl) that is the largest peatland associated with the Korean Peninsula, surrounded by marine landscapes with five major areas of peatland, mountainous area, small streams, transferred zone and residential area. The peat thickness ranges from 70 cm- 80 cm over clay beds, which make it the largest source of high quality freshwater in the island critical for the survival of 294 species of plants, 146 of insects, 5 of amphibians and reptiles, 44 of birds. Human settlements lie around the lower ridges of the peatland. It provides a habitat for national Natural Monuments and IUCN Red-listed species like *Falco peregrinus*, the otter *Lutra lutra*, the orchid *Dendrobium minutiflorum*, *Hobbsseus cristatus*, and *Marsdenia robusta*. Nearly 50% of the wetland is forested peatland dominated by *Machilus thunbergii*, *Salix spp.* and *Camellia japonica*. Prior to designation as a National Wetland Conservation Area in 2004, the main land use involved grazing -- currently, all activities are strictly prohibited. The site was recently proposed for ecotourism with plans for awareness raising, bird observation and site patrolling. The jurisdiction is under the South Cholla Province and the management by the Nature Environment Division, Environment Bureau of Yeongsang River Basin Environment Office. Ramsar Site No. 1458.

News from Indonesia: Support for peatlands of central Kalimantan

The Global Peatland Initiative (GPI) has received an official invitation from the Dutch DGIS/Ministry of Foreign Affairs to lead the development of a proposal for the implementation of the Central Kalimantan Peat Swamp Rehabilitation and Management Programme. DGIS has identified the GPI as a short to medium term facility to assist planning, technical support, funding disbursement and internal monitoring of interventions of the project. The GPI is a global partnership of NGOs, science agencies and private sector concerned with the wise use and conservation of peatlands. Its Steering Committee involves the International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG), the International Peat Society (IPS), IUCN-Netherlands Committee, the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage, Alterra (Secretariat), and Wetlands International (Chair + administration). The GPI has, as one of its activities over the past years, implemented a global small grant scheme for promoting and supporting wise use and conservation of peatlands, financed by DGIS (€1.5 million) and co-financed (> €3.5 million) by many donors around the world.

Total available budget for the Central Kalimantan project is €5 million for a period of 2 years. The proposal will build on the findings of a DGIS consultant who carried out a mission to Indonesia/Central Kalimantan in February/March this year.

The GPI chair and secretariat, Wetlands International and Alterra, will be working in the coming weeks to develop the proposal in consultation with local stakeholder organizations and government. The proposal will primarily focus on the implementation modalities of the programme, identifying roles and mechanisms and options for a rapid and smooth project mobilisation. The latter is crucial in view of the expected dry season and related urgent needs for fire prevention and fire fighting.

For more information on the GPI and projects it financed in the past (including some projects in Central Kalimantan), please see www.peatlands.org or contact Marcel Silvius:

marcel.silvius@wetlands.org

or Herbert Diemont: Herbert.Diemont@wur.nl

False Gharial surveys in West Kalimantan

The False Gharial (*Tomistoma schlegelii*) is one of the world's largest (4-5 m total length) yet least-known extant crocodylians. It occurs in lowland swamp forests in Borneo (Sarawak and Kalimantan), eastern Sumatra and Peninsular Malaysia, but is now extinct in Thailand. Information on distribution, abundance and status are absent from many regions, and thus conservation priorities are unclear. Kalimantan (Indonesia Borneo) retains extensive areas of potential nesting habitat (peat swamp forest) and is thought to support the largest remaining False

Gharial populations. False Gharial surveys were conducted in West Kalimantan Province (August-September 2004), in areas that had not previously been surveyed for crocodiles. The aims were to assess current population densities, identify threats, gather local knowledge on past densities and identify sites that may be important for False Gharial conservation in the future. The opportunity was taken to extend crocodile survey techniques to local government agencies and conservation NGOs. The study was funded and jointly implemented by the Tomistoma Task Force of the IUCN-SSC Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG-TTF), People, Resources, and Conservation Foundation (PRCF), provincial Department of Conservation of Natural Resources (BKSDA) and the National Geographic Society (NG).



The false Gharial (Tomistoma schlegelii)

Spotlight surveys were conducted in 227 km of waterways, in nine rivers, in the south and north-east of West Kalimantan Province. Only eight False Gharials were sighted, mostly <2 m total length but one large (4-5 m) adult male. Breeding was confirmed (presence of nests, eggs or juveniles) in two national parks, and local knowledge suggested it occurs in at least two other protected areas: the species may thus be well-represented in the protected areas system of the Province, although densities are low. Local knowledge indicates scattered populations may persist in the south, central and north-east of the Province. Local people described the species as "common" in protected and unprotected waterways. Logging (legal or illegal) and forest fires were observed in all survey sites, and is resulting in the large-scale loss of the swamp forest habitat False Gharials use for nesting. A similar situation exists in Sumatra and is reported in other waterways within Kalimantan. The general picture is one of reduced populations, perhaps increasingly fragmented, throughout West Kalimantan Province. Increasing disturbance along river banks, increased river traffic and the opportunistic collection of False Gharial eggs for food consumption, may all be real threats.

Training in crocodile survey and conservation techniques assisted in raising awareness of the species among provincial conservation agencies and local conservation NGOs. The project report (http://www.tomistoma.org/pa_contents/2004surveys.html) is being widely disseminated among relevant

Indonesian agencies, and the provincial BKSDA has started to collect False Gharial reports from its field staff and local communities. Publicity about the species was further highlighted by a National Geographic film team spending two nights with the survey team and filming the capture of a small False Gharial.

Mark R. Bezuijen (bezuijen@ozemail.com.au)

News from South East Asia: Tsunami and coastal wetlands

A workshop on the Tsunami and Coastal Wetlands held in India on 9th February 2005 and attended by 250 experts from over 20 countries, recognised the important role that coastal forests – especially mangroves and beach forests played in reducing damage and loss of life from the recent Asian Tsunami. Policy makers in several countries in the region have prioritized the establishment of greenbelts to protect the coastline from future wave and storm damage. In most countries, however, implementation mechanisms are still being developed. Coastal forests in the region were degraded before the tsunami and are likely to be further impacted if action is not taken soon. There are risks that many independent activities related to planting of coastal vegetation may take place causing un-necessary duplication or conflict as well as use of inappropriate species or techniques. Linkage between government and community activities needs to be strengthened. Given the transboundary nature of the tsunami and the lack of appropriate existing coordination and exchange mechanisms an Asian Tsunami/Coastal Greenbelt Initiative is being developed to enable collaboration in supporting the protection and rehabilitation of coastal forests in the Region.

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News from Canada: Peat cutting in New Brunswick

In New Brunswick, peat is considered a quarriable substance and, as such, it belongs to the landowner. Twenty companies were extracting peat in the Province in 2004. Most of the development is concentrated in northeast New Brunswick, mainly in the Acadian Peninsula and in the Baie-Sainte-Anne

region. About 80 % of the production comes from Crown lands.

Updated peatland inventory data shows that in 2004 there was 5 000 ha of peatland area used for the extraction of peat in New Brunswick. Abandoned commercial peatland area totals 1 150 ha of which 260 ha have undergone restoration. Peatlands protected within the park system or inside protected conservation zones total about 15 500 ha.

For more information consult the 2004 report under: www.gnb.ca/0078/minerals/peat-e.asp

Inventory of abandoned peatlands

During the year 2005, a second inventory will be carried out of recolonisation of peatlands in Canada abandoned after exploitation. The inventory will be coordinated by Monique Poulin (flora) and André Desrochers (birds). The first inventory was carried out in 1994-1995. The long term succession and development of vegetation on bare peat will be studied as well as the re-establishment of bird populations.

For more information contact:

Stephanie.boudreau@plg.ulaval.ca

UNESCO online courses

September 1st 2005 is the starting date of two online courses that UNESCO-IHE and the Partnership of Water Education and Research (PoWER) are jointly offering. Besides an online course on Wetland Management, there will also be an online course on Integrated River Basin Management.

Both courses are based on training material successfully used in various formats, settings and regions. They are currently offered in full distance learning mode to attract those who do not have the time to take a course that lasts several weeks abroad and who like to combine education with daily work and have the possibility to directly apply acquired knowledge and skills.

More detailed Information about these courses is available on the UNESCO-IHE website:

<http://www.unesco-ihe.org/education/ilarning.htm>

where you can also find information about other online courses available. You can also contact Anne van Dam (coordinator online course Wetlands Management) or Wim Douven (coordinator online course IRBM).

IMCG Newsletter now also available in HTML

Surf to www.imcg.net to read the Newsletter online.

Fast access and better on-screen readability

New and recent Journals/Newsletters/Books/Reports

CCBA. 2005. Climate, Community and Biodiversity Project Design Standards (First Edition). CCBA, Washington DC. May 2005. At: www.climate-standards.org.

Standards certifying land-use projects that reduce global warming while helping communities and conserving biodiversity were launched at the 2005 Carbon Expo in Cologne Germany.

The CCB standards are primarily designed for projects that mitigate climate change. Land-use projects, also called land use, land-use change and forestry projects in climate circles (abbreviated to LULUCF) can reduce or prevent emissions by managing land in specific ways. Conserving threatened ecosystems, reforestation, agro-forestry, and bio-energy projects that grow wood for energy are examples of LULUCF activities that help lower atmospheric greenhouse gases. LULUCF projects in the past have been the subject of intense and sometimes acrimonious debates among governments, environmental groups and others. Disagreement over LULUCF projects partly contributed to earlier deadlocks on the Kyoto Protocol before it finally entered into force a few months ago.

Current policies to reduce global warming emissions do not do enough to encourage land use projects with biodiversity and social benefits. With these new standards there is a chance to change that and ensure multiple environmental gains. Requiring that projects pass the CCB Standards will bring credibility to any climate change policy or initiative, not just the Kyoto Protocol. Incredibly, the Kyoto Protocol ignores tropical deforestation - the source of 20% of human greenhouse gas emissions. If the world wants to stabilize atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions at a reasonable level, stopping tropical deforestation has to be part of the solution. A project that meets the CCB Standards by saving tropical forests deserves international support. These are high-quality projects that an international peer review process has agreed help fight global warming while achieving local community and biodiversity benefits.

To earn approval under the CCB Standards, projects must satisfy fifteen required criteria to demonstrate compelling net benefits for fighting climate change, conserving biodiversity, and improving socio-economic conditions for local communities. Independent auditors will use the criteria to determine whether prospective projects demonstrate they yield truly additional benefits, in other words benefits that would not have occurred without the project. The mandatory criteria also ensure, among other things, that monitoring programs are in place, no carbon credits will be earned from GMO trees, and that communities are appropriately involved in the design of the project. Exceptional projects can earn Silver or Gold Status depending on how many optional criteria are met. Optional criteria cover

issues such as native species use, climate change adaptation, water and soil resource enhancement, and community involvement.

The CCB Standards are the result of a rigorous development process, including expert input, peer-review and field-testing. Starting in 2003, various meetings were held to scope what the Standards should look like. An early draft was publicly circulated in the summer of 2004 to solicit broad feedback. Based on the comments received, subsequent drafts were developed and deliberated by more than a dozen expert authors. Later draft versions were field tested in Indonesia, Madagascar, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Tanzania and Scotland. Finally, the authors and the three independent Advising Institutions discussed all the comments and field test results. Agreement on the First Edition of the Standards was reached earlier this spring.

Download a PDF of the Standards from <http://www.climate-standards.org>

Wolejko, L. & Jasnowska, J. (2004) The future of Polish mires. Agricultural University of Szczecin. 274 p.

The „Future of Polish peatlands” is devoted to Professor Mieczysław Jasnowski in the 10th anniversary of His death. The book encompasses the most important problems in the field of peat science that have been a subject of work and publications of Prof. M. Jasnowski and still haven't lost their actuality. The book is divided into six thematic sections, concerning the genesis and stratigraphy of mires (Chapter 1), the dynamics and landscape function of mires in the light of eco-hydrological methods of their investigation (Chapter 2), the current status of nature and the discussion of the needs and methods of mire protection in Poland (Chapter 3) followed by selected case studies of Pomeranian mires (Chapter 4). An important issue of peatland utilization and the related threats are discussed extensively in Chapter 5. Each section is preceded by an introductory chapter, prepared by the leading authors in the field. Several case studies, based on detailed research carried out in selected objects, supplement the scientific documentation on each topic. The conclusions of all the chapters as well as of the summary of panel discussions and field excursions, which took place during the Conference “Future of Polish Mires” (Szczecin, September 13-14, 2003), are presented as concluding remarks and guidelines for future activities (Chapter 6).

In the closing chapter several conclusions are presented, which are aimed to become guidelines for further scientific investigations and practical activities in protection of Polish mires and peatlands.

Nuyim, T. (2005) Manual on Peat Swamp Forest Rehabilitation and Planting in Thailand, 96 p.

In Thailand of 64 000 ha of intact peat swamp forests only 9 0000 ha remained in a natural state after wild fires, conversions for agricultural purposes and charcoal production. Natural reforestation processes will require some 100 to 200 years. Therefore the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department of Thailand developed a manual to offer guidance to researchers and other interested parties in cases of planting, nurturing and rehabilitation of peat swamp forest. The author, Tanit Nuyim, has been involved in studies on peat swamp forests during the last 10 years. He presents experiences and findings in form of descriptions, photos and tables. After a general introduction into the special conditions of tropical peat swamp forests, species that are suitable for reforestation are presented and compared by their growth and survival rates. The species are described by text and photos. Further chapters give advice in preparation of seedlings and cultivation plots. Also suggestions of nurturing the plantations and for the prevention of wild fires are given. The book can be ordered via e-mail from Wetlands International – Thailand Office:

asae@psu.ac.th or asaesayaka@yahoo.com
Global Environment Centre: gecnet@genet.po.my
Pikulthong Royal Development Centre:
tanituyim@hotmail.com

Adinugroho, W. C., Suryadiputra, I N.N., Saharjo, B.H. & Siboro, L. (2005) Panduan Pengendalian – Kerbakaran Hutan dan Lahan Gambut. Wetlands International, Bogor, 142 p. (in Indonesian)

Indonesia's peatlands have been burned and drained to make room for agriculture and settlements for decades. In 1995 the so called Mega Rice Project quickened the pace of destruction by turning Central Kalimantan into a rice bowl by logging and draining approximately 1 million hectares of peatland. In 1997 the El Niño weather phenomenon brought eight months of drought to the region. The peatlands, sucked dry by canals, went up in flames. Forest fires in Indonesia are regional and global disasters. Therefore strategies and techniques for fire control, the installation of a fire information system as well as knowledge about rehabilitation possibilities are required.

The Manual provides input and alternative choices for dealing with the problem of land and forest fire, especially in the peatland areas of Indonesia. It contains a variety of illustrations and diagrams which are easily comprehensible and practical.

The manual can be ordered via e-mail from Wetlands International – Indonesia Programme:
admin@wetlands.or.id

(An English version is in preparation and can be ordered soon.)

Noor, Y. R., Herlisah, L. & Sutaryo, D. (2005) Bibliografi: mengenai GAMBUT dan topic terkait di Indonesia dan wilayah sekitarnya. Wetlands International, Bogor, 136 p. (in Indonesian)

This is a bibliography of publications and documents related to wetlands and peatlands especially of Indonesia. It provides access to current information on wetland topics to scientists, managers, educational institutions and policy makers. The presented references are grouped by the name of the author. They discuss scientific researches, fire control strategies, biodiversity, land use conflicts, management and restoration of peatlands as well as the global importance of peat swamp forests.

The manual can be ordered via e-mail from Wetlands International – Indonesia Programme:
admin@wetlands.or.id

Najiyati, S., Muslihat, L. & Suryadiputra, I N.N. (2005) Panduan Pengelolaan Lahan Gambut untuk pertanian berkelanjutan. Wetlands International, Bogor, 241 p. (in Indonesian)

The book is motivated by deep concern to peat land degradation caused by human activities. Many people live in peat swamp areas dependent on the use of the land in bad economic conditions. Their right to live in these areas stays in conflict with the protection of peat land. The book provides an illustration about agriculture in peatland and about the development of a wise farming strategy, to get optimal and sustainable crops. It also gives several information about land use conflicts in swamp areas, peat characteristics, constrains and strategies for cultivation and development.

The book can be ordered via e-mail from Wetlands International – Indonesia Programme:
admin@wetlands.or.id

Wibisono, I. T. C., Siboro, L. & Suryadiputra, I N.N. (2005) Panduan Rehabilitasi dan Teknik Silviculture di Lahan Gambut. Wetlands International, Bogor, 174 p. (in Indonesian)

The book is divided into four chapters. Chapter one and two introduce into the properties of peat swamp areas in the tropics. Also the degradation of vast areas because of different land use techniques is outlined. In section three detailed background informations, results and experiences of rehabilitation projects are given. The main part is taken by introduction into silviculture as the science, art and practise of caring for forests.

The book provides an overview of attempts at peat swamp forest restoration as well as detailed knowledge about recultivation on secondary peat swamp habitats. It identifies and introduces species that have a high survival or recolonisation rate and that may be considered for restoration activities. Photos, tables and sketches make it a clear

and vivid handbook of silviculture in tropical peat swamp areas.

The book can be ordered via e-mail from Wetlands International – Indonesia Programme: admin@wetlands.or.id

LUNG (2003) Stoffausträge aus wiedervernässten Niedermooren. (in German)

This online publication deals with matter dynamics of rewetted fen peatlands in northeast Germany. There are seven articles dealing with physical changes of the soil, emission of greenhouse gases, retention and release of elements, the effects of rewetting on phosphate cycling and with hydrological analyses. The articles can be downloaded as PDF files from www.lung.mv-regierung.de/insite/cms/umwelt/natur/moorschutz.htm

Reeves, P.N. & Champion, P.D. (2004) Effects of Livestock Grazing on Wetlands: Literature Review. NIWA Client Report: HAM2004-059

This report reviews the available scientific literature on the effects of livestock grazing in wetlands. It specifically identifies the effects of livestock grazing on the physical and biological components of estuarine, riverine and palustrine wetlands with the aim of providing preliminary guidelines for livestock grazing in these wetland types. Research gaps are then identified that could contribute to the development of more definitive wetland grazing guidelines.

PDF available at:

www.wetlandtrust.org.nz/documents/grazing.pdf

Garbisch, E. & McIninch, S. (2005) Propagation of Wetland Plants: Herbaceous Plants, Shrubs and Tree. Environmental Concern Inc. 350p. \$54.95

This book synthesises over thirty-two years of wetland horticulture experience. It covers more than 100 species and contains over 200 illustrations. The book includes detailed tables that contain flowering periods, seed ripeness indicators, and seed collection times. In addition, there is a glossary of terms, and an index of botanical and common names.

For more information: www.wetland.org

Johnson, P.N. & Gerbeaux, P.J. (2004) Wetland types in New Zealand. 184 p. NZ\$40.00.

This book is the final output of a Ministry for the Environment project on coordinated monitoring of New Zealand wetlands. The emphasis of the book is on inland freshwater wetlands, those near coastal estuaries, and those of lake and river margins. Fully aquatic systems of lakes and rivers are covered in much less detail, these topics having their own complexity of literature in hydrology and limnology.

A draft structure for classification of geothermal and plutonic hydrosystems and of marine, lacustrine, and riverine hydrosystems has yet to be finalised.

The main purpose is to describe and illustrate how wetland types can be recognised and named. Section 2 deals with the classification system, noting some of the background to wetland classification, and then describing the classification tiers. Section 3 demonstrates patterns in wetlands and shows how the classification system can be applied to them. Section 4 describes how wetlands function, especially in relation to the variables of hydrology, nutrients, and substrates, and discusses how wetlands change over time. Section 5 provides some direction on wetland survey methods, use of the classification system, and a guide to further information. A glossary of terms is provided at the end.

The book can be downloaded as a PDF:

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/Publications/004~Science-and-Research/Miscellaneous/070~2004.asp>

Breeding totals of the ornithofauna in Bulgaria., 2004.

Overview in the framework of the Bulgarian Natura 2000 project. With landcover classes coverage (including 11.525 ha of “inland marshes” and 439 ha of “peat bog”) and breeding bird populations. In Bulgarian and English, 32 p. For more information contact Simeon Marin: office@natura2000bg.org

Trampales de Larreder, pequeños humedales de gran valor.

Poster with information on the value of small mire-like habitats in Basque country. In Basque and Spanish. For more information: Patxi Heras & Marta Infante: bazzania@arrakis.es

Schotman, A.G.M. & Kwak, R.G.M. 2004. Moerasvogels op peil, deelrapport 2 – successie versus success van moerasvogels. Alterra-report 828.2 (in Dutch). 54 p.

Study on the relation between vegetation succession and the occurrence of mire bird species in the breeding season. With recommendations for management. Downloadable under:

www.alterra.wur.nl/Internet///Modules/pub/PDFFiles/Alterrarapporten/AlterraRapport828.2.pdf

Lammertsma, D.R., J. Burgers, R.J.M. van Kats & H. Siepel 2004. Moerasvogels op peil. Deelrapport 4: Voedselsituatie voor insectenetende moerasvogels. Alterra-report 828 .4, 25 p (in Dutch)

Study on the potential food availability of insect-eating mire birds and how it is influenced by vegetation succession and management. Downloadable under

www.alterra.wur.nl/Internet///Modules/pub/PDFFiles/Alterrarapporten/AlterraRapport828.4.pdf

Proceedings of Workshop on the ASEAN peatland management initiative. 16-17 October 2003, Bogor, Indonesia. ASEAN/GEC. 90p.

This workshop was organised to review the status of peatland management in ASEAN (SE Asia) member countries and to elaborate on activities needed. It further addressed the problems of haze in the region. Besides general information and a workplan for a regional strategy, this report provides interesting country wise overviews of extent, status, and threats to peatlands in the region. For more information: ASEAN Secretariat: public@aseansec.org

Moncorge, S ; Moreau, C. 2004. Tourbière « Sur les Seignes » (Frambouhans et les Ecorces, 25) : compte-rendu des travaux de réhabilitation réalisés en 2003 et mise en place du suivi scientifique. Espace Naturel Comtois. 16 p. (in French)

The largely tree covered raised bog of “sur les Seignes” was industrially exploited between 1968 and 1984. In 1997, attempts at restoration started. The first part of this report focuses on the technical aspects of the restoration activities. The second part presents the developments following the restoration measures and the resulting state after 6 years.

For more information: Espace Naturel Comtois: cren-fc@wanadoo.fr

Les tourbières en contexte agricole et forestier / document de restitution du 2ème Séminaire technique des tourbières du Massif Central 28-29 septembre 2004 à Limoges (87). 69 p. (in French)

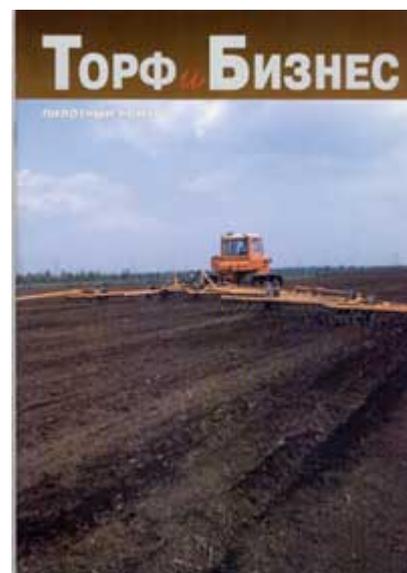
Report on a workshop on peatlands in relation to agriculture and forestry. The report can be downloaded in 5 instalments (PDF) from this page: <http://www.pole-tourbieres.org/Documentation.htm>

Peatland restoration in Russia – the role for Russian regions. Proceedings of Seminar held 11-12 March 2003. Nizhny Novgorod, 2004. 92 pp.

The proceedings of a seminar held in Nizhny Novgorod by Wetlands International Russia Programme and the NGO Dront, with supervision of University Dundee and financial support of the Nizhny Novgorod administration and the Darwin Initiative. The Proceedings contain 12 articles on peatland restoration and a resolution adopted during the seminar. Although the seminar was held two years ago and all articles (except one by Olivia Bragg) are in Russian – it is still very valuable. There was not much experience in Russia on peatland restoration at that time, but it was all presented at the seminar. There are plans to make the proceedings available on the Peatlands in Russia web-site (www.peatlands.ru)

Peat and business. Pilot issue.

This colourful 45 page magazine is the first issue of a new Russian peat journal initiated by Rostoprom – the Russian branch of IPS. With a circulation of 1000 copies, the journal is focused mainly on the peat “industry”. Conservationists are invited to participate and we hope to dissolve the high concentration of industry in the next issue by some conservation. The development looks very promising.



REGISTER

Please fill out the IMCG membership registration form.

Surf to <http://www.imcg.net> or contact the secretariat.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

See for additional and up-to-date information: <http://www.imcg.net/imcgdia.htm>

POSTPONED

International Workshop on Sustaining Tropical Peatland Resources: Setting a Course for Wise Use

5 – 7 July 2005, Bogor, Indonesia.

For more information surf to www.imcg.net/imcgdia

INTECOL ESA joint meeting: Ecology at multiple scales

7-12 August 2005, Montreal, Canada

for more information contact the conference website

<http://www.esa.org/montreal>.

Dissemination of ecological knowledge and practical experiences for sound planning and management in raised bogs and sea dunes

22-26 August 2005, Latvia and Estonia

second workshop in the LIFE Co-op project

for more information contact

g.vanduinen@science.ru.nl

Mire Ecosystems in Northern Europe: Diversity, Dynamics, Carbon Cycle, Resources and Conservation

30 August - 2 September 2005, Petrozavodsk, Karelia, Russia

download first circular:

<http://www.imcg.net/docum/kar05.pdf>

Third scientific school on "Bogs and Biosphere"

12- 15 September 2005, Tomsk, Russia

More information: labor@mail.tomsknet.ru,

www.ltorf.tom.ru/nschool.htm.

Wise Use of Peatlands in Russia

20 – 25 September 2005, Moscow and Tver, Russia

For more information, please contact Tatiana

Minaeva at tminaeva@wwf.ru or

visit www.peatlands.ru.

WETPOL Wetland Pollutant dynamics and Control

4-8 September 2005, Ghent, Belgium

for more information contact the conference website

<http://www.biomath.ugent.be/wetpol>.

17th Annual Conference Ecological Restoration: A Global Challenge

September 12 - 18, 2005, Zaragoza, Spain

for more information visit Society of Ecological Restoration International conference website:

<http://www.ser.org/content/2005Conference.asp>

W3M conference. For wetlands: monitoring, modelling, management

September 22 - 25, 2005, Wierzba, Poland

for more information contact

<http://levis.sggw.waw.pl/wethydro>

Knowledge Transfer Workshop on the Canadian approach to peatland restoration

3 – 7 October 2005, Québec, Canada

For more information:

http://www.gret-perg.ulaval.ca/fr_colloques.html

Ramsar Cop 9

8 - 15 November 2005, Uganda

for more information contact www.ramsar.org

IMCG Field Symposium in Tierra del Fuego

21 November to 1 December 2005, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina

See elsewhere in this Newsletter; for more

information visit <http://www.imcg.s5.com/> or read

imcg newsletter 2004_1.

Land and Water Management for Sustainable Agriculture Scientific Symposium

14 – 16 February 2006, Malawi or Lesotho

For more information: www.sadc.int

International Conference on Hydrology and Management of Forested Wetlands

8-12 April 2006 New Bern, North Carolina

for more information visit

<http://www.asae.org/meetings/Forest2006/>

IMCG Field Symposium and General assembly in Finland

13-26 July 2006, Finland

for more information read the second circular elsewhere in this Newsletter.

5th European Conference on Ecological Restoration

22.–25. August 2006, Greifswald, Germany

See elsewhere in this Newsletter

13th International Peat Congress After Wise Use - The Future of Peatlands

9 - 15 June 2008, Tullamore, Ireland

For more information, surf to IPS conference

website: <http://www.peatsociety.fi/events/events.htm>

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<http://www.imcg.net>