



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

Maybe it is better to enumerate what this Newsletter does NOT contain: you will NOT find information on how exactly peatlands were brought into the Ramsar CoP9 resolutions, NOT on the growing perspectives of peatland conservation and wise use in Africa, NOT on the recent meetings of the Biodiversity Convention and the Kyoto Protocol in Montreal this month, NOT on the peatland orientated interventions there, NOT on the discussions that the UNFCCC AFOLU (Agriculture, Forest & other Land uses) expert group had this month in Sydney on how to include wetland and peatland as a land use category with respect to greenhouse gas emissions, and NOT on a whole lot of other peatland developments, projects, and literature. All these issues have to wait until the next Newsletter.

What this Newsletter holds, you can see in the table of contents below.

And what this Newsletter also contains are our best wishes to you all: for a happy 2006, in which we hope to meet you all again, in the field, in the world wide web, in our joint efforts to contribute to the conservation and wise use of peatlands worldwide.

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 29 March 2006.

For information or other things, contact us at the IMCG Secretariat. Address updates should be sent to Jan Sliva: [sliva@wzw.tum.de](mailto: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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## Peatlands at Ramsar CoP9



The 9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (COP 9) was held in Uganda, Kampala on 8 - 15 November 2005. The theme of the conference was "Wetlands and water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods".

In total, 793 registered participants attended the meeting.

Of them, 416 were Contracting Party Delegates representing 141 countries. 214 participants represented several international and national nongovernmental organizations. The number of observers totalled 377 persons.

In his report, the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, Peter Bridgewater, gave "six imperatives for future action" for the Ramsar Convention:

1. Understanding the new international institutional frameworks
2. Reinforcing and developing the science base
3. Managing the List of Wetlands of International Importance effectively
4. Promoting integrated management approaches
5. Developing a fully effective Communications, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) programme
6. Ensuring that the Convention has an effective management

The activities of the Coordinating Committee on the Global Action on Peatlands (CoCoGAP) and IMCG during the 9th Conference of Parties of the Ramsar Convention in Kampala, Uganda (November 2005) raised the attention to peatlands considerably. In the official papers, peatlands suffered again from the Cinderella Syndrom, as Richard Lindsay had called it at the first Ramsar meeting where IMCG was present (Brisbane 1996): very important, but hardly visible, and therefore not valued.

A whole row of events and products tried to correct this:

- an IMCG excursion tot the peatlands of Uganda before CoP9
- a side event of CoCoGAP during CoP9
- the publication and distribution of a CoCoGAP brochure "Peatlands, *do you care?*" (available as pdf under [www.imcg.net](http://www.imcg.net))
- the publication and distribution of an IMCG flyer and a poster on Peatlands in South Africa and Lesotho (also available under [www.imcg.net](http://www.imcg.net) publications)
- the distribution of many general IMCG flyers
- active intervention in the resolution discussions.

In the next Newsletter we will report more about the contacts made, the new opportunities of peatland conservation and wise use in Africa, and the

perspectives of further effective work for IMCG in Africa.

So far the new brochure "Peatlands: do you care?" has been distributed as follows:

- 1000 copies to Uganda (Ramsar)
- 1000 copies to Montreal (UNFCC & CBD sbstta)
- 300 copies for IMCG (largely distributed during the IMCG Tierra del Fuego meeting)
- 250 copies for the Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association (CSPMA)
- 250 copies to the International Peat Society (IPS)
- 250 copies to the Ramsar Secretariat
- 250 copies to Wetlands International (WI)
- 150 copies to RSPO (Singapore)
- 50 copies local distribution in Malaysia (GEC)

### Side event

The side event of the Ramsar Coordinating Committee on Global Action on Peatlands (CoCoGAP) went very well, specifically thanks to Jan Sliva and other IMCG members, who did a very good job in getting everything organised.

The meeting was chaired by Nora Namakambo from the Uganda Wetlands Inspection Division, and co-chaired by Tobias Salathé (Ramsar Bureau). The event was attended by about 130 participants.

It was opened by a great performance of a traditional Ugandan Kabira Music, Dance & Drama Group of about 30 artists who created a festive atmosphere in the great Victoria Hall of the Speke Resort. Simultaneously the motto of the side event "Peatlands, *do you care?*" was projected on the wall behind the dancers.

After the opening of the side event by Nora Namakambo, Clayton Rubec (Canada) presented an overview of the history of the Ramsar Global Action Plan for Peatlands, a history in which Clayton had played an important part. This was followed by a joint presentation from Jaakko Silpola (IPS) and Tatiana Minaeva (IMCG) on the cooperation between IPS and IMCG.

A presentation by Marcel Silvius (Wetlands International) on the wise use of tropical peatlands was an eye opener for many of the participants in regard of the climate and poverty impacts of the extensive peatland degradation and peat fires in Southeast Asia.

The joint presentation by Piet-Louis Grundling (IMCG South Africa) and Nora Namakambo on African peatlands made clear to the audience that peatlands are a common feature in Africa, have a high value for biodiversity conservation, and play a key role in the lives of many of its rural communities. One of the side event's participants wrote an article in response to their presentation in the "Civil Society update" entitled: "Peatlands: At least one thing I learned from CoP9", in which he stated that he had never realised that Uganda has so many peatlands

(over 50% of its wetlands are peatlands) and that they are so important.

Hans Joosten's presentation on "What after CoP9" hammered in the slogan "When you think about wetlands, think about peat", just to drive the message home that even within the wetlands community peatlands are under-valued and remain unnoticed. His talk included the word "peatland" or "peat" at least twice in every sentence.

The side event was concluded by the presentation and launch of the CoCo-GAP Peatlands Brochure. It was introduced by an audio-visual presentation made by the Global Environment Centre (GEC). The booklet, which is the joint product of many CoCoGAP members, was presented by Jaakko Silpola (IPS) to Peter Bridgewater, the Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention. All participants received a copy and further distribution was arranged to other CoP delegates outside the side event. After a brief photo-session, all participants were treated to a fine lunch with some nice wine and other drinks.

All in all, I believe that the CoCo-GAP made its presence felt at the Conference and peatlands did receive some useful attention. Many of the resolutions that have been adopted at the Conference make specific reference to peatlands. One of CoCo-GAP's roles will be to ensure that these will now receive the appropriate follow-up by the parties.

*Marcel Silvius*

#### *From the report of Clayton Rubec*

Trends reported by the Committee Since COP8:

- Over US\$100 million invested in peatland wise use, conservation, restoration, and poverty alleviation projects
- Advances in data bases and mapping -- gaps exist in Africa, South America and Central Asia
- 80% of the area of peatlands remains pristine - mainly in Boreal and Subarctic
- Peatlands in some regions ( especially in tropical countries) under severe pressure.
- Increasing impact of climate change in montane and arctic regions

Peatlands in the Ramsar Network are increasing:

- 30% of the Contracting Parties reported this year they have taken actions supporting the GGAP while 60% say they intend to.
- About 27% (80) of 300 new Ramsar sites since 2002 are peatlands
- Globally, Ramsar sites now include at least 200 peatlands: a valuable network for conservation, science and monitoring

#### *Highlights from the presentation of Marcel Silvius*

- Kyoto Protocol target: reduction CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 100 million tonne/year
- SE Asia: drainage annually contributes 7x the global Kyoto target

- Carbon emission from peat fires in 1997/98 in Indonesia: 810 million -2570 million tonne
- Priority No 1: Fire prevention & fighting
- Stop use of fire in cleaning & fertilising peat-based agricultural areas
- Stop illegal logging
- Raise awareness on economic, social and health impacts and costs of peat fires
- Encourage and support community-based initiatives for fire prevention:
  - Co-ops for sustainable development
  - Tenure and resource use rights

#### *The message from Africa*

*(Piet-Louis Grundling, Nora Namakambo, Jan Sliva)*

Peatlands and mires are wetlands and are like all wetlands in Africa a vital resource for its people!  
Invest in our people, save our peatlands!



Host country: Uganda; Area: 241,000 km<sup>2</sup>; open water: 20 %; wetlands: ca. 30 000 km<sup>2</sup> (ca. 14 % of land area)

Swamps: 9,000-11,000 km<sup>2</sup>; swamp forests: 360 km<sup>2</sup>; floodplains: 20,000 km<sup>2</sup>; approx. peatland area: 12,000 – 14,000 km<sup>2</sup> = 40 – 45 % of wetlands

Peatlands provide important functions and socio-economic values for the community. Threats to peatlands include degradation and loss due to human pressure and non-wise use.

Needs with respect to peatlands:

- inventory & classification (ecological types, diversity)
- specific (peatland-related) management approaches
- restoration of damaged peatlands
- awareness raising
- international co-operation, exchange of knowledge and expertise



*Valley Papyrus swamps on the Uganda-Tanzania border, peat depth 0 – 15 m*

*The final message: think about peat!*

If you think about wetlands...  
 ... think about peat  
 Peat is everywhere  
 Peat is what we eat  
 Peat is what we breathe  
 Peat is in our heat  
 Indeed ... peat  
 Peatlands are everywhere  
 From the tundra  
 To the tropics and  
 To the uttermost part of the Earth  
 From the mountains  
 To the sea

But peatlands are hidden  
 Peatlands hide under meadows  
 Peatlands hide under forests  
 Peatlands hide under frost  
 Peatlands hide under mangroves  
 Peatlands hide under swamps

Peatlands are water  
 Peatlands are climate  
 Peatlands have biodiversity  
 Peatlands are biodiversity

Peatlands provide  
 Peatlands protect  
 Peatlands preserve  
 Peatlands prevent

Peatlands erode  
 Peatlands decrease  
 Peatlands debase  
 Peatlands revert  
 Peatlands desert  
 Peatlands degrade  
 Peatlands deflate

And therefore...  
 Peatlands depend  
 Peatlands depend on  
 - - national and international attention  
 - - protection and wise use (urgently in tropics)  
 - - integration into river and water management  
 - - incorporation into UNFCCC and UNCCD  
 Peatlands depend on YOU  
 (With a little help from your friends CCGAP)

So if you think about wetlands  
 Think about peat



*Global Action on Peatlands*

*A recent reaction (22-12-2005)*

From an email "to the management of International Mire Conservation Group:

We congratulate you upon your successful concluded participation in Cop9 in Uganda. Uganda wetlands especially those in form of peatlands are highly degraded and abused. Current information on

peatlands in Uganda is very limited yet they are found in many different areas. It is treated as wasted land and it's key value is not known to Ugandans. This can be evidenced taking the place on which Manyonyo complex in which Cop9 was hosted, was built on peat lands.

KEA want to set up wise use of peat land in Uganda, create awareness of peatland functions and values; establish partnership between conservationists, scientists, research institutes and the private sector; Establish networks and partnership nationally regionally and globally in order to address peatland problems. Identify and develop projects essential to achieve the wise use of peat lands nationally. Engage Government to formulate policy framework on the protection and wise use of peatland. We are waiting for your advice, guidance and comment.

Wishing you the best seasons, greetings, prosperous and happy New Year 2006

Yours truly,  
Kaganja John,

Director Kikandwa Environmental Association (Kea)

### **Ramsar Press Release: Global Environment threatened by Peatland Mismanagement ...**

KAMPALA, 14 November 2005: Global peatland degradation is affecting the livelihood of millions and also leads to massive carbon dioxide emissions. This significant issue has been ignored for far too long. Carbon emissions from peatlands released from degraded peatlands in the tropical region alone amount to more than the emission reductions to be achieved during the first commitment period of the Kyoto protocol. Urgent work is needed to address these issues according to the Ramsar Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands (CC-GAP) in their statements at the 9th Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention currently held in Kampala, Uganda.

"Peatland degradation is currently one of the world's most serious environmental problems affecting the health and livelihoods of millions of people and pushing the world towards rapid global change" noted Marcel Silvius, Senior Programme Manager from Wetlands International. More carbon has been released to the atmosphere peatland fires in SE Asia and Russia in the past few years than the emission reductions to be achieved during the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (2008-2012) said Faizal Parish, Director of the Malaysia-based Global Environment Centre (GEC). "The first Meeting of Parties of the Kyoto Protocol will be held in Montreal in two weeks time. We hope that it will consider the issue of peatland emissions within the development of the climate regime beyond 2012" he added.

Peatlands are one of the world major wetland types covering 400 million ha in about 180 countries. There is a lack of awareness of the huge environmental and

socio-economic consequences of peatland loss. Peatlands are important for water supply and regulation, regulation of greenhouse gas emissions and global climate, high biodiversity and they are a source of livelihood for many communities. They are also used for forestry, agriculture, and a source of peat for horticulture. Unfortunately, many peatlands around the world have been misused or degraded.

"The complex problem of peat management in relation to poverty, climate change and water resource degradation and biodiversity loss has been the stimulus to establish the CC-GAP. "This is a unique partnership of representatives from different stakeholders including industry, scientific and environmental NGOs, governments and research institutions - united by a vision of wise use of peatlands" said Jaakko Silvola, Secretary General of the Finland-based International Peat Society. "CC-GAP is a great model for partnership between different sectors to address wetland wise use" added Peter Bridgewater, Secretary General of the global Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Comments were made at the launch of a new publication called 'Peatlands. Do you Care?' at the Conference of Parties of the Ramsar Convention – a gathering of over 1000 representatives of 147 countries addressing the serious challenges of wetland management worldwide. The purpose of the booklet is to promote awareness and action on the problem of peatland degradation among policy makers, experts and stakeholders.

More information on the Ramsar Convention: [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)

## IMCG Tierra del Fuego Field Symposium

Our Argentinean friends organised a fabulous meeting in Tierra del Fuego (TdF) from 21 November to 1 December 2005.

The event started with a Welcome cocktail, with as special guest the TdF Secretario de Promoción Económica y Fiscal, CPN Ramiro Caballero.

The following day we visited Tierra del Fuego National Park where we saw the first Sphagnum mires at Roca Lake and Laguna Negra. In the evening Lebrecht Jeschke presented a public presentation with an extensive overview of the mires of the world.

On 23 November 2005, we visited Andorra Valley (guided by Andrea Coronato, who wrote her PhD thesis on the glacial geomorphology of the valley) with its *Carex* mires, a peat mining operation, and the spectacular patterned bogs. The highlight was – for the ones that managed to climb it - the view over the peatlands from the hillside, after a heavy struggle through the *Nothofagus* forest. In the evening Ernesto Piana gave an exciting talk about the Yamanas culture.

The next day we visited the urban mires in Ushuaia city, the Oyarzun peat mining settlement and the Carbajal and Tierra Mayor Valley mires.

On 25 November 2005 the sloping mires of Paso Garibaldi were on the program, as were the patterned peatlands of Rancho Hambre settlement. Near Harberton, we visited an unplanned, but special mixed mire and the historical Harberton farm where we were received and informed by the legendary Natalie Goodal. The evening camping in Cambaceres was preceded by a long open air night festival with

abundant fire, food, and drinks and – by way of exception – nó rain but instead the Southern Cross sparkling over the landscape.

Next day it rained again, when we continued in eastern direction, to the Moat area and its Astelia/Donatio mires and Drimys forests, where my student Ron waited in the wilderness –without food. On 27 November we studied the sedge percolation mires near Fagnano Lake, Esperanza, and Río Fuego and shopped at the famous bakery in Tolhuin town. In the evening in Río Grande city, a lecture of Nora Loekemeyer provided an overview of the protected areas of Tierra del Fuego

On 28 November 2005 we continued our reconnaissance of the Steppe –Ecotone with a fen located in María Behetty farm and vegas in Los Flamencos farm accompanied by Marta Collantes. After a short walk to a last *Sphagnum* mire near Tolhuin, we returned to Ushuaia city.

The Scientific Sessions during the following congress in Hotel del Glaciar (29 November – 1 December, opened by the Tierra del Fuego Minister of Economy) were of high quality and broad variety. The organizers provided an extensive abstract volume of the many presented papers.

The last congress day was devoted to discussing the landscape ecology and development of various mires at the hand of an inspired overview of Ab Grootjans. Last but not least the Ushuaia Statement was conceived.

*Hans Joosten*



*Rainy weather at Moat (Foto Jutta Zeitz)*

### The Ushuaia Statement

The Government of the Province of Tierra del Fuego, the Consejo Federal de Inversiones and the International Mire Conservation Group (IMCG)<sup>1</sup> organized the International Field Symposium "Mires and peatlands: Environment management, conservation and restoration" (21 November - 1 December 2005), as part of IMCG's regular field assessments and symposia.

An IMCG delegation of 55 experts from 17 countries and 5 continents, accompanied and supported by representatives of the Fuegian Government and Argentinean scientists, travelled across a large part of Isla Grande (Tierra del Fuego, Argentina), studying the diversity and functionality of peatlands and the issues faced by them. As a result, the IMCG experts fully recognize the achievements of the Provincial Government of Tierra del Fuego in improving land use planning and developing the existing network of protected areas, including those of international importance. Furthermore, in seeking to encourage continued development of this policy, the IMCG wishes to inform the Provincial Government of the following:

- The IMCG is extremely impressed by the enormous variation in well-developed and pristine mires in Tierra del Fuego. The diversity of mire types encountered here is globally unequalled. The mires represent the most southerly concentration of peatland in the world, and, as a result of the extreme biogeographical and climatic conditions, possess species, species assemblages and peatland types found no-where else. The mires and peatlands of Tierra del Fuego, and the landscapes in which they are embedded, form a unique and irreplaceable part of the Earth's natural heritage.
- Mires and peatlands have particularly important functions for regulating the local, regional and global climate, local and regional hydrology, and for sustaining biodiversity at all scales. These functions are recognized by international conventions to which Argentina is a Contracting Party, including the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- The extensive pristine mires of Tierra del Fuego, and the impressive wild landscapes of which they are an integral part, represent an important economic resource. They provide a reliable water supply and enable a (hitherto largely untapped) sustainable source of income through ecotourism and associated activities. Furthermore the conservation of these peatlands will facilitate Argentina in meeting the goals set by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change both with respect to mitigation and adaptation.
- The IMCG greatly appreciates the work that has already gone into characterising and understanding the peatlands of Tierra del Fuego. Based on this information and what was seen during the field assessment, the IMCG emphasises that the Valle de Andorra Mires and the Rancho Hambre peatlands merit immediate action to ensure that their natural status and high potential for sustainable ecotourism are maintained and developed. Such protection measures should represent the first steps in a programme designed to create a network of sites that protects the full variety of mire types and landscapes. The extensive complex of pristine peatland and forest landscapes of the Peninsula Mitre clearly deserves a legal protection status on the provincial level and international recognition and integral protection under the Ramsar and World Heritage Conventions.
- It is clear, however, that extensive areas of peatlands have yet to be adequately assessed for their local, national and international importance. The lack of a strategic planning approach to peatland use and after-use within the Province of Tierra del Fuego is already causing difficulties for all parties involved and leads to a wasteful exploitation of valuable resources. If the current planning framework remains unchanged, such problems are certain to intensify in the future. The planning process should therefore be addressed now, while these difficulties can still be resolved. Indeed the current and potential pressures urgently require – in the manner of national peatland strategies established by various other countries - the development and implementation of a comprehensive Tierra del Fuego Peatland Strategy and Action Plan to support the conservation and wise use of peatlands in the Province.

<sup>1</sup> The International Mire Conservation Group is the global network of specialists having particular responsibility for and interest in the conservation and wise use of mires and peatlands worldwide.

- Such a framework for conservation and wise use of peatlands in Tierra del Fuego requires:
  1. Inventory of the biodiversity values and other functions of the peatlands of Tierra del Fuego;
  2. Protection of the natural values of the most important mires already identified and recognised;
  3. Prevention of damage to all pristine and near-pristine peatlands;
  4. Formulation of legislation to formalise such protection;
  5. Recognition of the international significance of these peatlands;
  6. Development, in a sustainable way, of the benefits which the peatlands bring to the region (tourism, water quality, carbon storage, biodiversity, research, international collaboration, etc);
  7. Development of programmes for public awareness, education and ecotourism, targeting all levels of society;
  8. Development of expertise and the knowledge-base necessary to inform the planning process for the conservation and wise use of peatlands, and for monitoring their status and changes;
  9. Obligatory Environmental Impact Assessment using the IPS/IMCG Wise Use Guidelines for all development proposals on and related to peatlands, acknowledging that peat mining always impacts on the environment;
  10. Statutory requirement for a peatland after-use plan as an integral part of any development approval, considering the special characteristics of the peatland resource;
  11. Implementation of restoration measures for all peatlands that have been or are being degraded.

The International Mire Conservation Group congratulates the Provincial Government with the steps already taken and offers the experience and expertise available through its network to enable the Government to meet the objectives mentioned above. We offer this support in recognition of the international importance of the mires of Tierra del Fuego.

The 2005 IMCG symposium in Ushuaia will stimulate further international interest in research, education and conservation management of this globally important resource. The IMCG feels privileged to have had the opportunity to see such a renowned part of the world's natural heritage, thanks the Provincial Government and the Consejo Federal de Inversiones for their much-valued support, and would like to join with the Provincial Government in ensuring that this unique resource is conserved for future generations.

Ushuaia

1<sup>st</sup> December 2005



After adoption of the Ushuaia Statement the symposium discussed the ways to assist Tierra del Fuego with these important responsibilities. A whole range of IMCG members offered concrete support (see table)

Tasks to be performed	Support offered by
1. Inventory of the biodiversity values and other functions of the peatlands of Tierra del Fuego	Hans Joosten, Hans Esselink Andreas Grünig, Manfred Niekisch Asbjørn Moen
2. Protection of the natural values of the most important mires already identified and recognised	Tapio Lindholm Jennie Whinam
3. Prevention of damage to all pristine and near-pristine peatlands	Richard Lindsay Piet-Louis Grundling
4. Formulation of legislation to formalise such protection	Juris Jatniesk
5. Recognition of the international significance of these peatlands	All IMCG
6. Development, in a sustainable way, of the benefits which the peatlands bring to the region (tourism, water quality, carbon storage, biodiversity, research, international collaboration, etc)	Olivia Bragg
7. Development of programmes for public awareness, education and ecotourism, targeting all levels of society	Patrick Crushell, Manfred Niekisch Piet-Louis Grundling, Olivia Bragg Izolda Matchutadze
8. Development of expertise and the knowledge-base necessary to inform the planning process for the conservation and wise use of peatlands, and for monitoring their status and changes	Olivia Bragg Hans Esselink Ab Grootjans (wise use course)
9. Obligatory Environmental Impact Assessment using the IPS/IMCG Wise Use Guidelines for all development proposals on and related to peatlands, acknowledging that peat mining always impacts on the environment	Richard Lindsay Piet-Louis Grundling
10. Statutory requirement for a peatland after-use plan as an integral part of any development approval, considering the special characteristics of the peatland resource	Piet-Louis Grundling Line Rochefort
11. Implementation of restoration measures for all peatlands that have been or are being degraded	Piet-Louis Grundling Line Rochefort

### Decisions made by IMCG Main Board during the TdF Field Symposium

During the (short) bus drives in between field excursions and some stolen moments at the symposium in Tierra del Fuego, the 10 IMCG Main Board members present (Jennie Whinam, Hans Joosten, Tanja Minaeva, Piet-Louis Grundling, Olivia Bragg, Rodolfo Iturraspe, Tapio Lindholm, Asbjørn Moen, Line Rochefort, Jan Sliva), assisted by interested other members, held some “informal” Main Board meetings to discuss and decide on running issues. The decisions made have been put to the other Main Board members for agreement. The following points were discussed

#### *2006 IMCG meetings in Finland:*

The aim of the 2006 IMCG Congress will be the assessment of conservation and wise use of Finnish

peatlands on which we will produce a statement at the end of the symposium. The meeting will be supported by the Finnish Ministry of Environment. Special topics will include IMCG history, peatlands and people, classification and terminology, conservation, restoration. The organisational team strives for the participation of many “classical” Finnish scientists.

The team will provide us with a set of background papers and with a detailed excursion guide. After the excursion there will be a 3 days scientific conference followed by the IMCG General Assembly. An excursion will be organized during the 2nd day to provide people, who can only attend the conference, with some Finnish mire experience. Full proceedings

of the conference will be published, a call for papers will go out soon.

Until now 40 people have pre-registered. Knowing the slowness of many IMCG members, this means that more people will want to attend than technically can participate in the field excursion and that a selection has to be made. So be quick in registering. Support will be available (in limited amount) for young and "eastern" participants.

After the IMCG General Assembly, there will be a meeting in Finland between IMCG and IPS, followed by a meeting of CoCoGAP (the Coordinating Committee for Global Action on Peatlands of the Ramsar Convention).

#### *2007 IMCG in Asia?*

For 2007 a (small) field excursion to Central Asia is preliminarily planned, depending on the progress of a UNEP-GEF Mountain Peatland project that is currently in preparation.

The theme will be Peatlands and Desertification, the aim to connect peatland degradation to the UN Desertification Convention.

An alternative could be Yakutia: Peatlands and permafrost, with as central theme: climate change in permafrost mires.

SE Asia has no IMCG priority because of the good work of the Global Environmental Centre and Wetlands International in that area, ongoing projects, and the attention that peatland threats are already receiving there

#### *2008 IMCG in Georgia*

In 2008 the IMCG meetings (field symposium, conference, General Assembly) will be held in Georgia (Kaukasus) with excursions to the mires of the Kolchis lowlands and of the Georgian Kaukasus.

Aim will be to discuss the peatland problems of the whole Kaukasus region, but for logistic reasons (e.g. visa) the excursion will remain on Georgian territory. In 2007 Hans will test the logistics of the excursion with a Greifswald student excursion.

#### *Scientific Journal*

As already decided, IMCG and IPS will start a free-for-all peer-reviewed academic internet journal on mires, peatlands, and peat. The name will be „Mires and Peat“, its url is [www.mires-and-peat.net](http://www.mires-and-peat.net). IMCG pays „in kind“, IPS in money and in kind.

The Editor is Olivia Bragg, the co-editor: Jack Rieley. We will try to sign the contract with IPS in December 2005. The start of the Journal is planned for January 2006, when the first publications will be put on the web. An official launch of the journal will be organized for the joint IMCG/IPS meeting in Finland (July 2006).

See also elsewhere in this Newsletter.

#### *Ramsar CoP9 (Uganda)*

Jan reported on the very successful pre-excursion and side-event. Tanja reported on the IMCG input in the Ramsar process, that worked via CoCoGAP, via

interventions during the meeting (also via WI), and via IMCG members who were official representatives of their country. Especially the latter input can still be improved, but the late availability of Ramsar documents prevented an optimal preparation.

90% of the IMCG amendments were adopted. Overall, peatlands were prominently present during the event. Further reports will follow in this and the following IMCG Newsletter.

#### *European Mires Book*

The IMCG European Mires Book has a long history, but still needs its finishing touch. Asbjörn and Hans have recently restarted and will devote considerable time in 2006. The aim is to have a final manuscript ready for Finland 2006. The basic funds for publication are secured (but more financial support is always welcome...).

#### *IMCG Web page*

The IMCG Web page [www.imcg.net](http://www.imcg.net) is working well, thanks to the efforts of Michael Trepel. An update of the "Projects" page is urgently needed (coordination Hans).

A „Present your project“-page will be developed to inform IMCG members on the projects that individual members are undertaking or have already completed (coordination Tanja).

A "Restopedia"-page will be developed on which information on peatland restoration can be exchanged (coordination Martin Schumann + Michael Trepel).

A Member's Expertise database will be made available to IMCG members via password (coordination Jan).

#### *Wise Use Book*

Almost 2000 copies of the Wise Use Book have been sold, which provided IMCG also with some financial benefits. The remaining hard copies will be sent to all national libraries, so that the book is present in all countries of the world. The full text will be made available in pdf via internet.

#### *Action Plan 2006 - 2010*

On the next General Assembly (Finland 2006) a new Action Plan 2006 – 2010 has to be adopted. In the beginning of 2006, Hans will report on the progress with implementing the Action Plan 2002 – 2006 per 01-01-2006. The discussion on the Action Plan 2006 - 2010 will be started (coordination Jennie/Hans).

#### *Finances*

The IMCG financial situation is not dramatic, but as there is no regular source of IMCG income and activities/expenses are increasing, a policy has to be developed. Jan will prepare a MB discussion paper on possible sources of IMCG income and on the general policy on IMCG expenses (esp. with respect to support for travel of strategic persons).

The policy of „no membership fee“ will be continued. Gifts are always welcome (consult Hans for possible fiscal constructions).

## IMCG Tierra del Fuego Symposium in the press

by Rodolfo Iturraspe

The IMCG Symposium held in Tierra del Fuego in November had significant repercussion in the Fuegian press. The local journal "El Diario del Fin del Mundo" highlighted the importance of the Symposium for Tierra del Fuego and the necessity to plan mire and peatland use in Tierra del Fuego.

The Journal "Tiempo Fueguino" published articles before and after the Symposium stating that peat extraction is not the only rentable use of peatlands, considering the importance of mires in the landscape from the view point of tourism, and "La Voz del Sur" wrote an interesting abstract about the results of the Symposium.

The problem of mire conservation was never as much considered by the media as in the week after Symposium. An Ushuaia TV channel aired an interview with Rodolfo Iturraspe, the Symposium Coordinator to discuss the main topics and conclusions of the Symposium. Two weeks after the Symposium, this official TV channel still broadcasts flashes with comments related to the meeting, showing images of Fuegian mires.

The IMCG Symposium produced an important impact on the TdF society, but there is still a long way to go to improve the future of mires of Tierra del Fuego. The Fuegian friends of mires are very enthusiasts to continue this important job

## Comments on the regional variation and mires in Tierra del Fuego – a comparison with Fennoscandia

by Asbjørn Moen

During the seven day IMCG excursion to Tierra del Fuego in November 2005, we visited, according to my notebook, 21 mire localities (cf. the field guide, Urciuolo & Iturraspe 2005). Here I will give some short comments on the variation in mire types and plant cover. But first some comments on biogeographical research and the regional variation.

A series of individual scientists and expeditions have worked in Tierra del Fuego and produced a voluminous literature. Certainly most famous are the expeditions of Charles Darwin. There has also been a long Nordic research tradition in the area, including Finnish and Swedish expeditions, e.g. led by Nordenskjöld, Skottsberg, Auer and Tuhkanen. In the extensive bibliography of geographical, geological and botanical publications dealing with Tierra del Fuego, Tuhkanen et al. (1990) listed ca. 900 titles, including more than 150 by Nordic researchers. A main reason for this Nordic interest is obviously that Tierra del Fuego is one of very few land areas of the Southern Hemisphere where environmental conditions are comparable with those in NW Europe.

### *Regional variation in the vegetation*

Regional variation in plant cover is a response to climate, and vegetation zones and sections are two main types of regional variation that often have been distinguished and mapped in the Fennoscandian tradition (e.g. in Moen 1999).

**Vegetation zones** display variations from equator to the poles and from lowland to upland, and are linked with the demands of the plants for warmth during the growing season. In Tierra del Fuego, as a parallel to the Fennoscandian system (e.g. Tuhkanen 1992), the lower antiboreal zone (parallel to southern boreal of NW Europe) dominates the lowlands near Ushuaia. At higher altitudes, a middle antiboreal (parallel to

middle boreal) zones occurs from 150-200 m a.s.l. up to 300-400 m a.s.l. (altitudinal limits after Tuhkanen, 1992 and my own observations). Then an upper antiboreal zone (parallel to northern boreal) is found up to the climatic forest limit at about 550-650 m a.s.l. In the Central Cordillera area, the forest limit reaches up to 750 m a.s.l. (Tuhkanen et al. 1990). In the mountainous areas of Tierra del Fuego, the forest limit (with *Nothofagus antarctica* and *N. pumilio*) is usually distinct against the upper alpine areas. Further south, middle antiboreal zone occurs in the lowlands on the islands south of Tierra del Fuego. The Antarctic zone (parallel to Arctic zone) covers the Antarctic continent (cf. map in Tuhkanen 1992).

**Vegetation sections** display the variation between coast and inland areas and are tied to differences from oceanic to continental climates. The most oceanic sections (*highly oceanic*, O3) have a climate with high humidity (precipitation up to more than 3000 mm in western part of Tierra del Fuego) and small differences between summer and winter temperatures. This is followed by the sections: *markedly oceanic* (O2), *slightly oceanic* (O1) and *indifferent* (OC), all of which occur in Tierra del Fuego. In this system, the continental sections (C1-3) have an increasing aridity (less than 400 mm of precipitation in north-eastern part of Tierra del Fuego), and larger differences between winter and summer temperatures than the more oceanic sections. Clearly different to the situation in NW Europe, where the most continental areas have very cold winters, in the lowlands of Tierra del Fuego the winters are rather mild. Limits between the sections were not drawn for Tierra del Fuego, but the southwest areas certainly belong to O3, and the north-eastern areas to a continental section. See

further Tuhkanen (1992) who separates the sections in two parts: sectors on the basis of thermic conditions (e.g. the differences between the warmest and coldest month), and provinces, on the basis of humidity-aridity (e.g. measured as the amount of precipitation). The variation is especially large with respect to the provinces.

By combining zones and sections, it can be concluded that Tierra del Fuego has a very large regional variation in the vegetation. Tuhkanen (1992), in his "cube model", mapped the climatic-phytogeographical regions of Tierra del Fuego, and he argued for an inter-hemispherically uniform system of regions. There are only few and very limited areas with climatic-phytogeographical regions corresponding to Tierra del Fuego elsewhere. Such areas can be found in the lowlands of the northern part of north-western Europe (e.g. in central Norway), on the southern and south-western coast of Alaska, on islands of New Zealand and some other southern islands; and in some mountains, e.g. in Scotland, New Zealand and in the Patagonian Andes. There are great differences in the natural flora and vegetation between these separated areas, but in natural types (e.g. in mire types) many common features can be detected.

#### *Comments to mire types and vegetation*

Based on literature (e.g. Roivainen 1954, Tuhkanen et al. 1990), three main mire regions can be distinguished in the Fuegan lowlands: "Steppenmoore" in the dry (north-eastern) region; *Sphagnum magellanicum* raised bogs in the central area, and "Polstermoore" in the rainy (western) region. In addition there is a sloping fen region in uplands.

During the excursions we saw a great variety of mire types: raised bogs, blanket bogs, sloping fens, and different types of flat fens, and spring mires. The very well developed raised bogs and the large, intact mire landscapes at the Moat area, including the typical hard cushions (lawn) communities ("Polstermoore"), were most impressive.

**Raised bogs** are bog massifs that are distinctly domed. In Tierra del Fuego we visited some very well developed, typical raised bogs, with a mire expanse (including string hummocks and elongated hollows), mire margin (dominated by drier, shrub-dominated communities) surrounded by a lagg or a soak (minerotrophic sites functioning as drainage systems for the minerogenic water). The most typical and well developed raised bog system we visited, in the Andorra valley, included three large mire massifs of eccentric raised bogs. Well developed massifs of raised bogs were also seen in other localities, e.g. at Rio Pio mire and some more localities in the Tierra del Fuego National Park, and in Tierra Mayor Valley. The "raising" of some of the bogs is amazing, e.g. for the largest massif at Andorra, a steep slope of more than 5 m height along the whole margin to the north, hundreds of meters long. The raised bogs often have more than 10 m of peat. *Sphagnum magellanicum* is

the totally dominant species of the raised bogs, both in present-day hollows and hummocks, and in the peat. Less than 10 species of vascular plants were found in the ombrotrophic vegetation of raised bogs. The differentiation between hollows and hummocks is not distinct as the dominant bottom-layer species is the same. However, *Sphagnum falcatulum* (*S. cuspidatum* coll.) is dominant in small areas of some wet hollows. Studies in the Andorra mires (personal information by Hans Joosten) indicate that the following species, additional to *S. falcatulum* are more common in hollows than hummocks: *Carex magellanica*, *Pernettya pumila* and *Tetroncium magellanicum*. A preference for hummocks was found for *Empetrum rubrum*, *Nothofagus antarctica* and *Marsippospermum grandiflorum*.

Rather few species occur both in Tierra del Fuego and Fennoscandia, but the strangest situation in Fuegan bog vegetation, compared to NW Europe, is the very few *Sphagnum* species, and the near total dominance of *Sphagnum magellanicum*. In minerotrophic mires, *Sphagnum fimbriatum* is the only additional species which is common.

Raised bogs are found in the lowlands, mainly in the lower antiboreal vegetation zone, and in the lower part of the middle antiboreal zone. This parallels the situation in Fennoscandia, where raised bogs mainly occur in the southern boreal zone or below.

**Blanket bogs** are bog massifs that cover the landscape like a blanket, covering mounds and sloping areas. The blanket bogs have a very restricted distribution in the world, only occurring in the most oceanic sections (mainly O3) of boreal/antiboreal and nemoral/temperate zones.

We saw blanket bogs in the Moat area; a typical oceanic area with high precipitation. In this area, lawn communities dominated by compact cushion species covered large areas, making the communities very distinct and strange. Most common is *Astelia pumila*, covering large areas, or in a mosaic with other cushion-forming species, e.g. *Donatia fascicularis* (making very compact and hard cushions, often with diameter of ca. 20 cm), *Azorella* spp. and *Bolax* spp. Such communities of cushion-plants are described to be the most frequent mire communities in the western islands, receiving more than 2000 mm of precipitation (Pisano 1983). So, further to the west (in Chile; not visited by IMCG) such vegetation seems to be common.

**Fens** are minerogenic mires and found wherever mires occur. Of special interest in Tierra del Fuego were the sloping fens and the rich fen vegetation.

We visited very well developed sloping fens in a locality close to Paso Garibaldi (ca. 430 m a.s.l.), and in the uplands of the Moat area. Sloping fens with a slope of more than 10 degrees of slope and at least 1m of peat occur in these humid areas. Fens with thin peat occur on slopes of more than 20 degrees.

The well developed sloping fens mainly occur in upper boreal/antiboreal and alpine vegetation zones, in areas with high humidity, mainly the most oceanic sections.

In about half of the mire localities we registered rich fen vegetation. At Fagnano mire we visited large fen areas dominated by extremely rich fen vegetation. These species-rich communities are most easily characterized by the bryophyte flora. And a majority of the bryophyte species, or vicarious species in the bottom layer also occur in Fennoscandian rich fens; e.g. species of the genera: *Aneura*, *Brachythecium*, *Bryum*, *Campyllum*, *Cratoneuron*, *Drepanocladus*, *Lophozia*, *Mnium* coll., *Philonotis*, *Riccardia* and *Preisia*.

We also visited mires with springs, e.g. a number of strong, eustatic springs in Tierra Major Valley; with species/genera typical for spring vegetation, e.g.: *Cardamine*, *Epilobium*, *Cratoneuron*, *Drepanocladus*, *Philonotis* and *Scapania*.

#### Protection plan

Valuable mires are already protected in the Tierra del Fuego National Park (e.g. the Rio Pipo and Lapataia mires). The large mire landscapes (mires in mosaic with *Nothofagus* forests and lakes/brooks) of the Peninsula Mitre certainly have the largest international protection value, however. Also the yet unprotected raised bog systems in the Andorra valley belong to the most valuable mire systems. In addition, the Hambre mires, mires in the Carbajal - Tierra Mayor Valley and Fagnano mires are among the mires with a high conservation value. Also some

other smaller mire systems, e.g. in more continental areas (flat fens, of types like Maria Bethy Fen) and many others should be protected.

We visited mires used by the peat industry, and mires are today a threatened nature type in Tierra del Fuego. There is an urgent need for a protection plan to protect these most valuable mire systems of the Southern Hemisphere (cf. Blanco & Balze 2004).

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## Los Turbales de la Patagonia



The Wetlands International report: Los Turbales de la Patagonia - Bases para su inventario y la conservación de su biodiversidad is the result of the project “An inventory of the Patagonian Peatlands: towards the wise use and biodiversity conservation”, which aimed to improve the knowledge level of these ecosystems of Patagonia, as a first step in the process of their inventory and wise use in Argentina

and Chile. This publication is in Spanish (with English Executive summary).

The book compiles the results and the information produced by the Patagonian Peatlands project, with the aim of making them easily available to stakeholders, academic community and general

public. The volume starts with a section of general remarks, including the adopted Spanish terminology and the introduction to the main features of the Patagonian peatlands. Follows the zonation of the region in six peatland zones, as a first step in the inventory process. In a second step and given the vast extension of the Patagonia, a “view modules” approach was used to exemplify with a greater scale the different peatland types occurring within Argentina and Chile. For both countries an exhaustive revision of background studies is included as separated chapters.

The volume also includes a section with information on birds, mammals and macroinvertebrates inhabiting the *Sphagnum* bogs of Tierra del Fuego, as well as a chapter dealing with peatland benefits, current uses and conservation in Argentina. A final chapter is dedicated to peatlands as wetlands of special concern for the Ramsar Convention. For more information, contact Wetlands International: info@wetlands.org

## Mires and Peat IMCG/IPS Journal

The new academic journal to be published jointly by the IMCG and the International Peat Society (IPS) will be called Mires and Peat. It will begin publication in 2006, at <http://www.mires-and-peat.net/>. The articles already lined up for Volume 1 include:

- The distribution of peatland in Europe by L. Montanarella, R.J.A. Jones and R. Hiederer;
- Chemical characteristics of some peatlands in southern Poland by M. Malawska, A. Ekonomiuk and B. Wilkomirski;
- Causes of degradation and erosion of a blanket mire in the southern Pennines, UK by D.E. Yeloff, J.C. Labadz and C.O. Hunt ; and
- Increased rate of decomposition of subsurface peat in temperate raised bogs of Sweden - are peatlands still net sinks of carbon? by Lars G. Franzén.

Mires and Peat will be a peer-reviewed internet journal publishing high-quality research papers, short communications and review articles on all aspects of peatland science, technology and wise use, including:

- ecology, hydrology, survey, inventory, classification, functions and values of mires and peatlands;
- scientific, economic and human aspects of the management of peatlands for agriculture, forestry, nature conservation, environmental protection, peat

- extraction, industrial development and other purposes;
- biological, physical and chemical characteristics of peat; and
- climate change and peatlands.

As a truly "free-to-users" publication (i.e. NO subscriptions and NO publication charges), it will be immediately accessible worldwide. A particular focus will be to achieve truly international coverage, including material by authors and from countries whose work would not otherwise be accessible to the international community. It is seriously intended also to achieve a level of content and quality that will warrant classification in the ISI Thomson Master Journal List, so that Mires and Peat will have an 'impact factor'.

If you would like to submit a paper to this exciting new peatland journal, please refer to the Instructions to Authors available on the journal's web site or contact the Editor, Dr Olivia Bragg <[o.m.bragg@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:o.m.bragg@dundee.ac.uk)>. At this time, material from outside Europe will be especially welcome; and all who presented their work at the recent IMCG symposium in Tierra del Fuego are encouraged to prepare and submit original papers based on these contributions.

*Olivia Bragg*

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## IMCG Membership fees

On our General Assembly in South Africa 2004 we again decided to keep the IMCG membership free of charge, because the costs of collecting low membership fees would exceed the fees themselves and high membership fees would chase off a large part of the IMCG membership in countries with currency problems. Some members rightfully acknowledged that IMCG needs money for its

increasing activities. The solution for this dilemma is simple: why not donate a substantial amount of money to IMCG if you have the money available and you want to support IMCG also financially. Contact the treasurer to discuss the best option for you (e.g. for having optimal fiscal advantages): [philippe.julve@wanadoo.fr](mailto:philippe.julve@wanadoo.fr)

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## European Habitats Forum

by Richard Lindsay

The EHF is a group of NGO networks that provide input and advice to European Union DG Environment, particularly relating to the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the establishment of the Natura 2000 network. The EHF meets with DG Environment twice a year after the Habitats Committee meetings and provides a co-ordinated means of communication between DG Environment and European nature conservation NGOs. IMCG is a member of the EHF.

The volume of information flowing from EHF activities is fast becoming overwhelming. This is something of a problem for an organisation such as IMCG where we have no full-time (or even part-time) staff that can devote time to reading all this material, never mind then acting upon it. On the other hand, what the current position suggests is that (a) there is a great deal of environmental activity within the European Union, and (b) that the EHF is playing an increasingly influential role within this activity. Consequently it seems fairly evident that it is worthwhile devoting time to ensuring that this information is disseminated to IMCG members in some way, and that IMCG plays an active part in EHF activities.

Now is not the time to pull together a comprehensive summary of all that has been happening. I will endeavour to do this for the next IMCG Newsletter. However, there are certain issues that will not wait, and these issues really need direct action by IMCG members to prevent a set of valuable EU-related opportunities from being lost.

There has been a long-running debate (some would say battle) about the funding process for environmental works within the European Union, specifically in relation to funding for the Natura 2000 Network. Explicit funding for this network has until now been available through the LIFE financial instrument, and many IMCG members have benefited from this. Proposals for future EU funding have involved an instrument imaginatively called LIFE+, but there have been real concerns that this would have a very small budget because it has been argued that most environmental funding should be achieved through wise and appropriate use of other funding instruments such as Structural Funds, Agriculture Funds, and Regional Development Funds. This is excellent in theory as the available funds are so much larger than anything available through LIFE, but we all know what is likely to happen in reality...

Consequently it was a real success, partly thanks to EHF lobbying, when the 1st reading (partial agreement) of the new LIFE+ Regulation made clear that this successor to LIFE would in fact have a substantial budget – a total of €9.54 billion, which is

four times larger than the European Commission had proposed. This sum is not assured, however, until the whole EU Budget is agreed. Frustratingly, this extraordinary progress may now be completely undermined by my own Prime Minister, Tony Blair, because the UK presidency has decided to play hard over the EU budget. One of the casualties of this 'strong leadership' stance is that not only might we lose the increase, we might find that even the European Commission's tiny €2.19 billion proposal is cut. This would be a disaster for Natura 2000 funding, particularly as an RSPB study has indicated that €2 billion is needed just to co-finance habitats and species actions under LIFE+.

Consequently, here is **Action 1** for IMCG members: Write to/lobby your Finance Minister to request that this area of the EU budget is not cut. In addition, you should copy this to your Environment Minister to ensure that they know what is in danger of happening at the EU level (many don't know what their Finance Minister is negotiating in relation to LIFE+). Your letter could mention: LIFE+ is the EU's only dedicated environmental budget; Finance Ministers should heed the EU Parliament's decision to increase the LIFE+ budget, particularly in the light of the RSPB study estimates; LIFE+ is currently only 0.2% of the EU budget, and should be raised to 1% as proposed by the EU Parliament; such action will significantly help the EU to meet its targets for halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010, will improve citizens' quality of life, and bring economic opportunities to remote or economically-depressed areas.

The second concern relates to what is now called the 'Biodiversity Road Map', which is a commitment made by the European Council of Ministers to halting the loss of Europe's biodiversity by 2010. The process has now entered a consultation phase, and comments are invited during the next 8 weeks.

Consequently **Action 2** for IMCG members involves going to the following web-sites: [http://europa.eu.int/omm/environment/consultations\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/omm/environment/consultations_en.htm)

Relevant DG Environment Press Release:  
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1569>

and ensuring that you make your comments known to the European Commission. Try to do this within the next 4 weeks.

Furthermore, at EHF we discussed the issue of Bird 'Flu', and it was agreed that EHF Member Organisations would take their lead from Birdlife, who have a constantly-updated website:

[http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/avian\\_flu/index.html](http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/avian_flu/index.html)

IMCG members might like to keep an eye on this, given the prevalence of waterfowl flyways that rely on peatland systems. The European Commission's main bird flu websites are:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/health\\_consumer/dyna/influenza/index.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/health_consumer/dyna/influenza/index.cfm)  
and

[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/food/dyna/press\\_rel/press\\_rel\\_ah\\_diseases\\_en.cfm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/food/dyna/press_rel/press_rel_ah_diseases_en.cfm)

Finally, the issue of 'Favourable Conservation Status' (FCS) is being subject to considerable scrutiny because Member States are preparing to establish their first 6-year reporting cycle on progress within the Habitats Directive. This has focused minds wonderfully on a number of hitherto rather ill-defined terms and concepts relating to FCS. The proposal is that FCS be measured using 'Favourable Reference Values' (FRVs), which are a set of criteria that are

meant to be measurable against defined targets. There is neither time nor room to go into the detail of these here, but be warned that I am likely to be contacting some of you about FRVs with a view to trying to ensure that FRVs for mires and peatlands are appropriate.

Furthermore, the EHF is looking for examples of best-practice monitoring for listed habitats (species are already quite well covered) that can be highlighted as a 'shadow-monitoring' exercise to demonstrate to Member States what can be done if the right approach is adopted. Consequently I am also likely to be in touch with some of you for examples of best-practice peatland monitoring that can be used for measuring progress against FCS/FRV targets. Equally, if you believe you have an excellent system, please contact me, don't wait for me to contact you.  
r.lindsay@uel.ac.uk

### Peat not allowed in EU Ecolabel: on peat extraction, ecolabelling and restoration

by Hans Joosten

The third meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) for the revision of the European Eco-label criteria to Soil Improvers and Growing Media in Amsterdam, October 31, 2005 (see IMCG Newsletter 2005/3) led to the conclusion to exclude peat from the EU Ecolabel for the next five years. Here we present and discuss some arguments of the interest groups involved during the last phase of the process, as they may influence future developments.

The "Competent Bodies" are independent and neutral organisations responsible for implementing the Community Eco-label award Scheme at national level, including drafting Eco-label criteria, assessing applications and awarding the Eco-label to companies that apply. For further information, also on national representatives (that you can lobby), see [http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ecolabel/tools/competentbodies\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ecolabel/tools/competentbodies_en.htm)

With respect to "peat", the minutes of the meeting say the following:

"In preparation to the last meeting of the European Eco-labelling Board, the Competent Bodies were asked to bring forward their position on the possible inclusion of peat. Table 1 shows that at present there is no qualified majority for the inclusion of peat. It is therefore proposed to continue the exclusion of peat (by only admitting organic materials derived from waste).

Note: in Table 1, the "No" votes represent the countries which have already stated strong opposition to the inclusion of peat. "Yes" votes are just there to see the maximum possible votes in favour that could be obtained - they are just theoretical and don't necessarily reflect any intentions on the part of the countries and CBs listed.

**Table 1: Voting Weights European Eco-label with respect to peat inclusion**

	BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	
	12	12	7	29	4	12	27	29	7	29	4	4	7	4	12	3	13	10	27	12	4	7	7	10	29	
yes		12		29	4	12	27		7	29	4	4	7	4		3	13		27	12	4	7	7	10		222
no	12		7					29							12			10							29	99
abstain																										0
absent																										0

A qualified majority is achieved with 232 votes FOR (out of the total of 321), expressed by a majority of the Member States (at least 13 delegations). In the table, 99 is the definite NO vote against any inclusion. 222 is the maximum possible YES vote for some sort of inclusion (many of these have not yet voiced intentions).

Industry expresses its deep regret on this voting and emphasizes that the exclusion of peat will result in a continued reluctance of industry to apply for the Flower (i.e. the Ecolabel sign, HJ). They fear that a number of “No” voters have failed to consult industry on this matter and have based their voting more on feeling than on facts. They would lack the required insight in product and market. Existing standpoints would have been repeated without giving the issue proper reconsideration. Others deny this and underline that the evaluation of peat has been executed all over again and was performed in a thorough and well balanced manner.

During a final discussion on peat, it is emphasized that the exclusion of peat is not dogmatic. If future developments convincingly show that peat can be produced in harmony with nature, than there is no reason why peat couldn't become part of Ecolabelled products. The issue of the inclusion of peat will therefore be definitely part of future revisions.”

Indeed, the peat lobby found this conclusion hard to swallow, and accused the countries, that voted NO to inclusion of peat, of bowing to misguided environmentalist pressure. The UK reacted by pointing out that they consulted a large number of people before deciding to support the ban: the UK concluded that reduction in peat use is extremely desirable, as peat is not a renewable resource. In the UK peat is a flagship issue. Industry and retailers promote reduced-peat products, setting different percentages of peat content as goals. If the Ecolabel would set a percentage of peat allowed in growing media, it is only a matter of time before industry reaches a lower percentage than that required by the Ecolabel, at which point the Ecolabel would lose all credibility.

The European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) agreed that the focus should be on using recycled materials, and if after five years it's not working we can think again. Nevertheless, the UEAPME representative asked what the member bodies feel about the efforts industry is making for improved peatland management. “If these efforts are going to be ignored by the environmentalists, industry may as well stop bothering and go back to “unwise” use of peat.” The representative had visited very good peatland restoration programmes and stated: “it is possible to recover over 90% of the biodiversity.”

The European Environmental Bureau replied that its position is not fixed for eternity, but that it wishes to protect the environment by whatever way is appropriate in a given situation at a given time. NGOs are always pleased when environmental impact is lessened, but it doesn't mean that any industrialist who reduces an environmental impact should get a medal – or an Ecolabel.

The purpose of the Ecolabel is to promote the use and after use of waste materials. UEAPME proposed to focus the discussions (that have so far largely focused on the ban of peat) on the mandatory inclusion of at

least 50% of recycled materials into growing media. This could help interested parties to concentrate on the valorisation of the waste materials. The inclusion of 50% of recycled materials into growing media would allow manufacturers to market ecolabelled products to a broader public and would give manufacturers the opportunity of fulfilling the objective of the Ecolabel, i.e. the use and after use of waste materials, according to UEAPME.

UEAPME also called attention to the efforts of peat extracting companies to manage their peatlands according to the Wise Use principles. UEAPME pointed out that in Germany the industry started in the early 1970s with a programme for peatland restoration and rehabilitation. All major European and North-American countries have been following this example. The European Union and National Authorities have a set of stringent regulations that control peatland extraction. UEAPME therefore requested from interested parties to reconsider “the peat issue” according to the efforts made by industry to adapt their peat extraction to Wise Use and to provide ecologically valuable peatland restoration or rehabilitation. UEAPME stressed that the next revision should “obviously” focus on these points. “Otherwise, one could fear that both pro- and anti-peat parties will continue their sterile discussion”.

It looks, therefore, as if restoration will become a major issue in future discussions on the Ecolabel.

With respect to restoration, the situation is not as rosy as UEAPME suggests. The “90% of the biodiversity” that can be restored reflects a very limited conception of biodiversity. Biodiversity is, furthermore, not the only concern of conservationists. Time and again peat extractors and their organisation display a complete lack of understanding the issues at stake, for example by presenting restoration of cut-over peatlands as an adequate compensation for the carbon emissions associated with the extraction and use of peat.

Peat extraction negatively and irreversibly affects various peatland values, such as the Carbon-store of the peat, the palaeoecological archive value of the peatland, its cultural heritage value, all kinds of natural phenomena that require a long time of development (such as micro- and macrorelief, patterns, and rare plant species), the option functions, and the value of peatlands for individual human esteem. Often these values are non-substitutable. Other values are negatively impacted, that might be restored, including CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration in newly accumulating peat, the regulation of hydrology and hydrochemistry, the habitat of various plant and animal species and their indication value, diverse landscape phenomena, and their role in recreation, aesthetics, spirituality etc.

In discussing ecolabelling and restoration, conservationists have to stress that

- important peatland values are irreversibly lost by peat extraction,
- not all environmental damage can be prevented or compensated;

- it is therefore necessary to analyse the balance between the losses (of peatland values) and the gains for society of using a not renewable resource like peat, and that
- a honest judgement can only take place after assessing the full life cycle of the peat (including extraction, use, and disposal) and the products for which it is employed.

For the wise use of non-renewable resources some simple rules can apply (cf. Hartwick 1977):

- 1) A non-renewable resource should not be squandered on low-grade applications;
- 2) The profits from non-renewable resources should be invested in the development of renewable substitutes.

The first criterion is a central issue in Wise Use. Currently peat extractors and their organisations indeed love to wave with the IPS/IMCG Wise Use concept in extenuation of their deeds. Merely publishing a book or a set of guidelines, however, does not make peat extraction “wise”. The “wise use” concept of IMCG and IPS implies weighing all costs and benefits of all (direct and indirect) effects of peat extraction on all (present and future) people. I still wait for “the other side of the balance” where the industry clearly expresses that some applications of peat have no justification, are irresponsible and unwise, and decides to ban them....

With respect to the second criterion, it is clear that “restoration” is currently still largely a pretext, a “shame green” to hide the most obvious uglinesses of peat extraction, not a step towards the development of renewable substitutes for fossil peat.

Peatland rehabilitation has furthermore largely been paid by public (also EU) funding, not by the extractors. The required after-use of many planning

permissions is also often still for unspecified or ecologically low-grade conservation (e.g. lakes or reedbeds) rather than for the restoration of the habitat destroyed by the peat extraction. And, though locally promising, the overall results of restoration are still, i.e. after several decennia of efforts, rather disappointing.

These aspects have to be taken into account in a European Union where peat is running out in the classical peat countries and the Moloch of unsustainable peat use inevitably forces peat extraction to move into peatlands that are little damaged and still easily restorable, such as in Scandinavia or in the Baltic states, where even discussions are taking place to extract peat from almost pristine, protected mires. The eager eye of peatland destruction now even focuses on more remote peatlands, e.g. a Danish company that is currently assessing the possibilities to extract peat from the extremely valuable Imnati bog (National Park and Ramsar site!) in Kolchis (Georgia).

The industry has to focus stronger on the preparation of growing media on the basis of renewable resources, including wastes (cf. the aim of Ecolabel) and cultivated plant material. Only with renewable growing media, the industry can address the societal demands for a

- sustainable development,
- conservation of biodiversity, and
- decrease in atmospheric Carbon-emissions.

This is not a matter of “misguided environmentalist pressure”, but of common sense.

Hartwick, J. 1977. Intergenerational equity and the investing of rents from exhaustible resources. *American Economic Review* 67: 972–974.



INTERNATIONAL MIRE  
CONSERVATION GROUP

## **Peat and the EU Ecolabel: reaction from and on EPAGMA**

*by Hans Joosten*

Just before the meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group, EPAGMA, the European Peat and Growing Media Association - the lobbying organisation of the peat industry, sent a position paper with the content:

“...The total volume of peat consumed in the EU (hobby and professional) is estimated to be some 20 million m<sup>3</sup> annually. If the ecolabel was taken up as a desirable and viable certification scheme by the industry, this could lead to a major increase in the use and acceptance of the European flower scheme in a very large market.

EMPAGMA considers that the current eco-label criteria are not market-oriented, are not based on the most recent and best science and do not ensure good product performance. Therefore they do not encourage manufacturers to apply for the eco-label, do not raise consumer awareness of the use of treated biowaste and related products, and do not encourage buyers to purchase labelled soil improvers and growing media.

EMPAGMA is convinced that the inclusion of peat in the eco-label criteria would support and increase the use of treated biowaste and other processed organic wastes and by-products. Peat is the only product which can dilute the negative characteristics of treated biowaste and related products on a large scale in the long term.”

IMCG immediately reacted with the following statement:

“With respect to the “peat” discussion, two things are clear:

1. Diluting composts with peat will often improve the quality of compost-based growing media.
2. There is not such a thing as “green” peat extraction. Peat extraction and the use of fossil peat is unsustainable, devastating, and polluting.

In view of these points, it is strange that it is kept unclear which market “peat diluted compost based growing media” will/should penetrate.

- The requirements of home gardeners and many professional applications are not as critical as those of other professional growers. Peat-free products perform satisfactorily on this market, as many

examples show. The use of peat is non essential here and a waste of valuable material.

- Professional growers that now depend on peat will not use peat-diluted composts, as long as better peat-based alternatives are cheaply available, as all professional growers and their organisations, that I recently consulted, have assured.

We fear that eco-labelled peat-diluted composts will

- not lead to a decreased use of peat in professional horticulture, but
- penetrate existing markets that currently use composts and other renewable products,
- therefore not stimulate but directly compete with the use of these products, and
- in case of opening new markets lead to an increased consumption of fossil peat.

The necessary change-over to peat alternatives in professional horticulture has to take place by a phase-out of peat through progressive dilution with renewable materials. We can imagine that when this dilution has proceeded far enough, the product may deserve an Eco-label.

The current proposal to dilute composts with peat starts from the opposite end. It will improve the quality of composts, but – unless large shares of peat are involved - not sufficiently to replace the use of peat-dominated growing media.

It is clear that the aims of the Eco-label programme and that of EPAGMA are completely different. EPAGMA aims at maximizing peat sales (for which it would like to use a severely “diluted” Eco-label as a marketing tool), the Eco-label at minimizing environmental impacts of products and services. The Eco-label should not try to sell the EU-flower at all costs.

As EPAGMA expresses in its Remarks of 28 October 2005: “Peat is the only product which can dilute the negative characteristics of treated biowaste and related products on a large scale in the long term.” (our italics).

The European Eco-label should not be used to further the large-scale and long-term use of unsustainable and polluting products.

*Hans Joosten, Secr.-Gen. IMCG, 31 October 2005”*

### Dramatic decrease in global peatland area

In the IMCG/IPS Wise Use Book, the total area of peatlands was estimated to be about 4 million square kilometres, or at least half of the entire global wetland area. Latest estimates, e.g. in the new CoCoGAP brochure, reduce that to just about one third.

Did the bad guys think up new ways to destroy our beloved mires? Are the peat fires, the drainage activities, and peat excavation so intense that they could cause such a dramatic decrease in such a short time?

The answer is no. The total area of peatlands has not changed at all, what has changed is the total area of wetlands. A new Global Lakes and Wetlands Database (GLWD) has been created using state of the art GIS techniques and drawing on the best available sources.

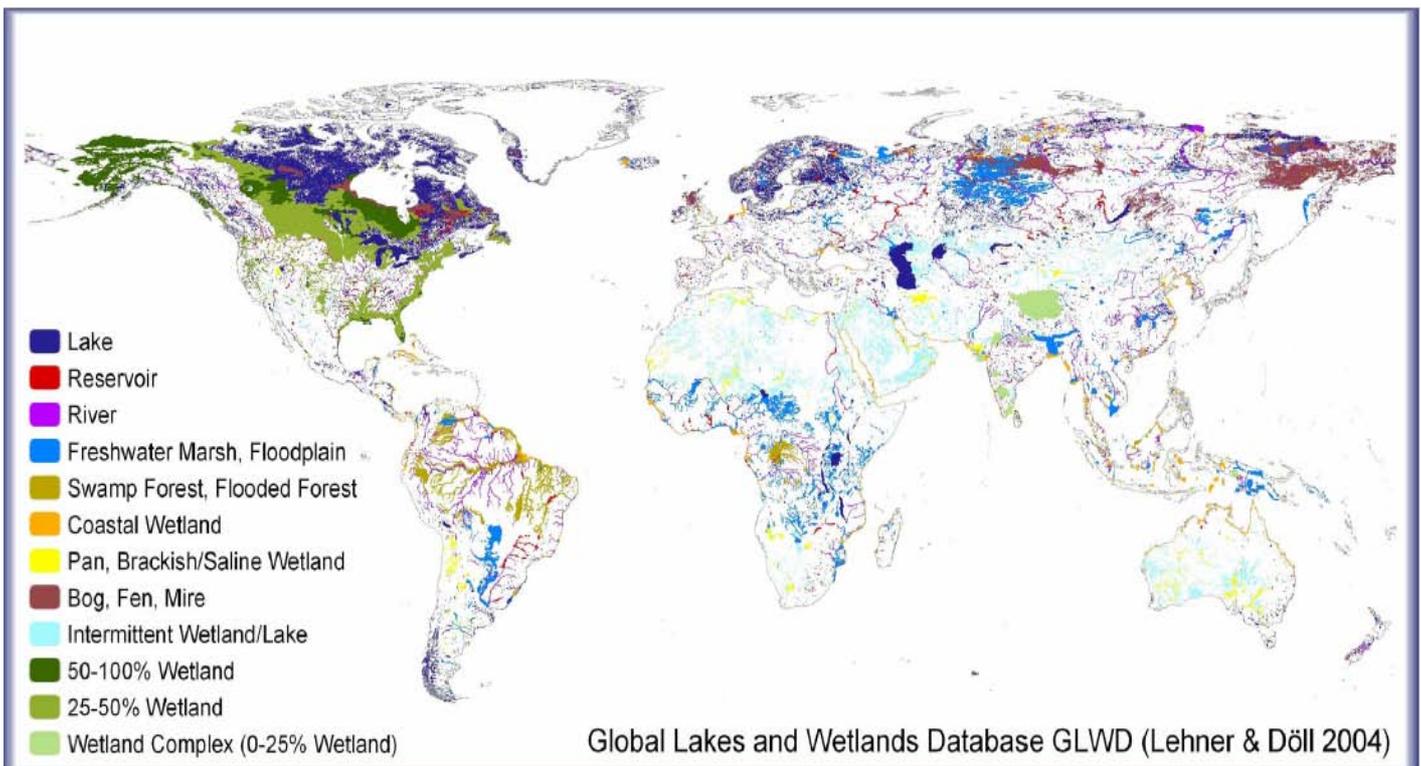
According to GLWD, lakes and reservoirs cover a total of approx. 2.7 million km<sup>2</sup> or 2.0% of the global land surface area (except Antarctica and glaciated Greenland), while wetlands are estimated to reach about 8-10 million km<sup>2</sup>, or 6.2-7.6%. An

extrapolation of GLWD data suggests that the total number of global lakes may reach or even exceed 1.5 million for lakes  $\geq 10$  ha, and 15 million for lakes  $\geq 1$  ha. With these numbers, lakes may cover about 3.2 million km<sup>2</sup>, or 2.4% of the total global land surface. Counting that all together, we end up with 10 to 13 million km<sup>2</sup> of wetlands (including lakes).

Not only was the data re-evaluated, the interpretation of the Ramsar definition of wetlands has also been stretched some more to include ephemeral or intermittent wetlands. It is a bit strange to see large parts of the Sahara desert and the Arabic peninsula covered by wetlands.

The GIS data is available for free download from:  
<http://www.wwfus.org/science/data.cfm>

A background paper published in the Journal of Hydrology is available from:  
[www.geo.uni-frankfurt.de/ipg/ag/dl/f\\_publicationen/2004/lehner\\_doell\\_JHydro2004\\_GLWD.pdf](http://www.geo.uni-frankfurt.de/ipg/ag/dl/f_publicationen/2004/lehner_doell_JHydro2004_GLWD.pdf)



## Winter

**T**hen winter fell. First came some raw frost and snow. A toddling start. Then the fierce wind braced itself in the North. All that was water in the Peel, ponds and ditches, the drain besides the road, morasses, gullies and puddles, immediately became a hard floor of blue and black ice. Frost darted off into the ground. Peat cutting soon ended all around. Some of the Peel workers were put to work cutting wood in the municipal forests. There the axe sounded through the thin frozen air. But many others, the workers who cut peat for the farmers and who ferried the sods, the diggers and straighters from the company, the loaders and unloaders of the barques, they crawled in front of their stoves at home. There they sat in a corner, their feet on the rungs of their chairs and their chins in their unemployed hands, there they sat being poor and listening to the whipping whistles of the north wind; it was bad. ...

Winter over the Peel. The workless workers, who are sitting behind their stoves, hear how the stove pipe starts to roar in the chimney. A sudden loud voice with broadly drawn whirring attacks. A sharp snow beats the windows. Across the wide Peel expanse the snowstorm drives. In the dashes of the snow, in the violence of the gusts a martyred pine stands, dancing besides the snowy road. The storm is roaring. The sod stacks are standing lost and away behind the snowbank. Across the slippery ice of the ponds and ditches the snow runs her rustling race. The snow like feathers sweeps bare the ice and amasses in a bend, heaps itself up to a wall against the steep edge of an excavation and settles in the ice on the deep wagon trails in the road. Towards the horizon all is one white swirl. One distant whiteness in the pounding wind. Beyond all roads, behind all hedges, from the bosom of the Earth the storm gathers its strength and unites with the force of the low skies. ...

At night the stars bloom over the Peel. At night the stars rustle high above the small rooftops in the earth. In front of the lowland, where the silence of the Peel lies sunken, the endless height of the night stands straight, spread in the twinkling, in the clear falling of the stars in a dance towards the depths of the darkness of the Peel and along the white stripes across the sky, in which the swarming stars turn in their shivering stream. Above a roof a low chimney rises, that chimney sits there cowering short and deep, the smoke rising from it clear and translucent. The sharp smoke of the peat fire, the stars play in it, glistering through it. The house below lies hidden in the Earth.

Antoon Coolen, 1930 - Peelwerkers  
© Nijgh & Van Ditmar

## Regional News

### News from Viet Nam: Wetland Biodiversity Project

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has pledged 7.2 million US\$ for Viet Nam to implement a project on conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in the Tram Chim National Park and the Lang Sen Wetland Nature Reserve in the Mekong Delta.

The Tram Chim National Park, covering 7,588 ha in Dong Thap province, is a small-scale model of Dong Thap Muoi (Plain of Reeds). It harbours more than 130 endemic plant species, 120 species of fresh water fish, nearly 40 reptile species and 200 bird species.

The Tram Chim Wetland Nature Reserve, covering 5,030 ha in Long An province, is home to 165 plant species and 149 vertebrate species, including 13 rare species listed in the Viet Nam Red Book.

The project will help raise the community's awareness about wetland biodiversity conservation and take proper measures to preserve and develop wetlands in Tram Chim and Lang Sen.

Source: Vietnam News Agency

### News from South-East Asia Restoration and wise use of tropical peatlands

Problems of restoration of tropical peatland following inappropriate land use change, illegal logging and fire were addressed at the International Symposium and Workshop on "Restoration and Wise Use of Tropical Peatlands: Problems of Biodiversity, Fire, Poverty and Water" held in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia on 21-24 September 2005. These meetings were attended by over 200 peatland scientists from Indonesia and 13 other countries, and land managers, representatives of national and local government, NGOs and community groups, and the private sector. The symposium focused on measures needed urgently for biodiversity maintenance, fire control and water management linked to sustainable livelihoods of local people in order to alleviate poverty and reduce natural resources and environmental degradation. The workshop participants assessed specific problems of peatland restoration in the former Mega Rice Project and the Sebangau catchment areas of Central Kalimantan, and incorporated the views of specialists and stakeholders into a holistic approach to identify solutions using the "Wise Use" approach. The importance of peatlands to national and regional economies and the environment was stressed in opening statements by the Governor of Central Kalimantan and the Indonesian Deputy Minister for Research and Technology. The Governor expressed his concern over the current situation and made a

strong commitment to support initiatives to solve the problems of fire and water management through sound science and wise use. He invited the participants to submit to him their conclusions and recommendations.

This resulted in the Palangka Raya statement on restoration and wise use of tropical peatlands. The statement and many more documents related to the Workshop can be downloaded from:

[http://www.alterra-research.nl/pls/portal30/docs/FOLDER/RESTORPEAT/p\\_download.htm](http://www.alterra-research.nl/pls/portal30/docs/FOLDER/RESTORPEAT/p_download.htm)

### News from Indonesia Sago

Sago, a largely ignored cash crop because of its long gestation period, is the subject of new research on product development and improvement, agronomic, land and water management, culture tissues and planting materials. The research is also on the usage of sago trunks and compost. Sago as a cash crop has long been ignored by farmers because its maturity period is between 12 and 15 years.

Sago can grow in peat swamps and is the third most important cash crop of Sarawak, after oil palm and pepper, generating a revenue of about RM37 million last year compared to about RM24 million in 2000.

Sarawak produced 50,000 tonnes of sago starch, the most in the world, with peninsular Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, China and the United States being the main markets.

### News from India Protective role of coastal vegetation

In Science magazine of 28 October, a short article by Finn Danielsen et al. was published that shows how the coastal mangrove vegetation played an important role in protecting the coast from the impact of the December 2004 Tsunami.

Human activities reduced the area of mangroves by 26% in the five countries most affected by the tsunami, from 5.7 to 4.2 million ha, between 1980 and 2000. Conserving or replanting coastal mangroves and greenbelts should buffer communities from future tsunami events. Mangroves also enhance fisheries and forestry production. These benefits are not found in artificial coastal protection structures.

The article can be found here:

[www.forestrycenter.org/library.cfm?refid=77335](http://www.forestrycenter.org/library.cfm?refid=77335)

### **News from China: Renewable Energy**

On 7-8 November 2005, the Beijing International Renewable Energy Conference 2005 was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The Conference called on the world to consider renewable alternatives in the era of high oil prices.

The political commitment to encourage use of fossil fuel alternatives was strengthened by President Hu Jintao and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who both delivered congratulatory messages at the opening of the two-day event attended by 1,200 representatives from more than 80 countries and regions. A declaration was adopted confirming the goals set by the Earth Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the United Nations 2005 Millennium Review Summit.

For more information and to read the declaration, visit the conference website at [www.birec2005.cn](http://www.birec2005.cn)

### **News from Russia Peat smoke over Moscow**

In October, a total of 165 fires are raging over 4,300 hectares in Russian forests and peatlands, 18 of them in the Moscow region, evoking memories of the fires in 2002 that engulfed areas of Moscow in clouds of acrid smoke.

Smoke from burning peat bogs outside Moscow produced levels of carbon dioxide twice the legal maximum in southern and southeastern Moscow.

The Emergencies Situations Ministry promised to put out the fires around Moscow within a few days, and it dispatched 1,700 firefighters, 455 fire engines and four helicopters.

Hundreds of police officers and Interior Ministry troops guarded the forests around Moscow, warding off tourists and hikers. Campfires left by them were said to be the major reason for the forest fires. Unusually clear and dry weather in Moscow had contributed to the spread of the fires.

In Nizhny Novgorod, police had to block traffic on the main highway to Moscow due to low visibility caused by smoke from forest fires.

Source: Moscow Times

### **News from Georgia: Ramsar advisory mission**

An oil terminal is planned inside the "Wetlands of Central Kolkheti" Ramsar Site in Georgia (Trans-Caucasia). The Georgian Ministry of Environment asked the Ramsar Secretariat to provide advice to the experts preparing a compensation package (in accordance with Article 4.2 of the Convention). The report of the Ramsar Advisory Mission to Georgia (14-19 August 2005) can be found on the Ramsar website. Below a summary of the report.

Ramsar Site N°893 "Wetlands of Central Kolkheti" is composed of three distinct peatland complexes (Anaklia-Churia, Nabada and Pichora-Paliastomi), Paliastomi lake, the adjoining wet forests, the Black Sea coastal area, as well as the mouths and lowermost parts of Khobi (or Khobistskali) and Rioni rivers, covering a total of 33,710 ha (55,500 ha including the marine part) in the central part of the Black Sea coastal alluvial plain. Vegetation consists of typical peatland species, with freshwater marshes supporting reedbeds and brackish areas supporting halophytic plants. Various species of birds depend on the site. Human activities include tourism, small scale fishing, agriculture, timber cutting, peat extraction and hunting. Bronze age artifacts are found at the site. Since 1999, the main part of the Ramsar Site is included in Kolkheti National Park ([www.knp.ge](http://www.knp.ge)) spreading north-south between the mouths of the rivers Tikori and Supsa, established as part of Georgia's Integrated Coastal Management Programme (with World Bank GEF support). The National Park includes Kolkheti State Nature Reserve (500 ha) established in 1947.

The mission report includes comments on the report concerning 'urgent national interests' for the Kulevi oil terminal construction submitted by Georgia (in accordance with Resolution VIII.20) and lists a number of concrete proposals on specific aspects to be dealt with by the compensation study.

The most important need is to compensate for the wetland resources lost at Khobi river mouth due to the oil terminal construction, including its access areas from the sea (deep water navigation channel) and from inland (railway track). The area lost to the terminal construction was particularly important for migrating fish and waterbirds, and probably also for marine animals. Emergency excavations show that it hosted a rich cultural heritage, dating back 3500 years ago.

The compensation package needs to integrate a number of actions, including the restoration of degraded natural areas, the provision of improved legal protection to specific compensation areas (through their inclusion into the Ramsar Site and National Park), and a number of operational, monitoring and evaluation measures, ideally to be carried out in cooperation between the oil terminal operator and the Kolkheti National Park authorities.

It is crucial to establish specific pollution prevention measures in order to prevent possible accidental oil pollution of the unique marine and coastal wetland ecosystems. Such measures have to focus on operating procedures at the terminal as well as on the transport corridors over land and at sea.

The report makes also some recommendations concerning the "Ispani II Marshes" Ramsar Site, the urgent need for update of information on the two existing Georgian Ramsar Sites, and concerning the

possible designation of two additional Ramsar Sites (Chorokhi river mouth and Javakheti plateau lakes).

For a complete report, surf to:

[http://www.ramsar.org/ram/ram\\_rpt\\_54e.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/ram/ram_rpt_54e.htm)

Tobias Salathé

#### News from Estonia:

##### Sustainable Management of Estonian Mires

On 4 – 5 November 2005, a forum on “Sustainable management of Estonian mires” was held in Jäneda, Estonia. The meeting, organised by the Estonian Wetland Society with the support of the Environmental Investment Centre, was attended by 83 participants from science, the peat industry, non-government organisations and other bodies. The attendants discussed important issues regarding the regulation of peatland use in Estonia, among them the lack of uniform understanding of mires and terminology, e.g. in statistical data, the threat of forest melioration to pristine mires, organisational issues in rehabilitating abandoned peatlands and the role of the state in choosing peatlands for extraction and in setting production limits for peat as a renewable resource.

Source: IPS

#### News from Estonia/Latvia: Raised bogs and sea dunes

From 22-26 August 2005 the second workshop in the LIFE Co-op project “Dissemination of ecological knowledge and practical experiences for sound planning and management in raised bogs and sea dunes” was held in Latvia and Estonia. Over 100 people, involved in nature management, policy making and scientific research in different disciplines, from 13 European countries participated.

We acknowledge all participants of the workshop for their input, and especially Vija Znotina, Brigita Laime, Mara Pakalne, Marika & Mati Kose, Agu Leivits, Anneli Roosalu, and their colleagues for organizing the interesting excursions to Latvian and Estonian bogs and dunes; Elve Lode, Urve Ratas and Kadri Vilumaa for organizing the outstanding post-tour!

The powerpoint-presentations presented during this workshop can be downloaded from the website of the project: [www.barger.science.ru.nl/life/](http://www.barger.science.ru.nl/life/) under “Workshop 2005 – Program”. The picture gallery has now 107 pictures of the workshop, excursions and post-tour.

We are now working on the decision support system for restoration management on bogs and dunes. If you have useful reports, references, links to websites, or other material that is useful to be put on the website of the LIFE Co-op project and/or that should be incorporated in the decision support system, please inform us!

Gert-Jan van Duinen [G.vanDuinen@science.ru.nl](mailto:G.vanDuinen@science.ru.nl)

#### News from Finland: Thirty eight new Ramsar sites

Finland has designated 38 new Ramsar sites throughout the country, totaling 606,345 hectares in surface area, with nine sites in each of Southern and Western Finland, five in Eastern Finland, eight in the middle province of Oulu and finally eight new sites in the most northern region of Lapland, which are in some cases transnational wetlands with Russia, Sweden or Norway. At the same time, the information on a further eleven Ramsar sites already designated in 1974 (Ramsar sites numbers 2 through 12) has been thoroughly updated, and two of those existing Ramsar sites have been significantly extended in area. The total area of the 49 Ramsar sites in Finland now amounts to 799,518 hectares and covers besides river, estuary and coastal areas very large extensions of peatlands, which are identified as being under-represented in the List of Wetlands of International Importance.

Many different varieties of peatlands which are threatened in Europe have thus been assigned as Ramsar sites such as palsa mires, eccentric bogs, raised bogs, aapa mires and other types. They are widely spread throughout the country, with the largest extensions in Lapland, where the various types of peatland cover more than 400,000 ha from aapa mires, bog woodland and springs, Fennoscandian deciduous swamp woods, but also spring fens, blanket and hanging bogs and others. Palsa mires such as Sammutijänkä-Vaijoenjänkä Mires (51,749 ha), which represents Finland’s largest continuous mire area in natural state, are among the most valuable breeding areas of waterfowl and waders in Fjeld Lapland.

Sedge fens with flarks and *Sphagnum papillosum* sedge fens are the most common mire types with nutrient levels varying from oligotrophic bogs to rich fens. Its entire range of types is represented through sites such as Torronsuo National Park, Kauhanava-Pohjankangas National Park, Levaneva Mires, Veneneva-Pelso Mires, Olvassuo Mires, Oulanka National Park, Riisitunturi National Park, River Luiro Mires, Teuravuoma-Kivijärvenvuoma Mires and Lemmenjoki National Park in northern Lapland, which is Finland’s largest National Park and one of Europe’s most extensive roadless and uninhabited wilderness areas.

Several new coastal sites have been designated in southern Finland along the long, complex coast of the Baltic Sea. They include large estuary and coastal areas as well as widely scattered rocky archipelagos with countless islands and islets. In addition to the newly-designated island and bay sites, the existing Valassaaret & Björkögrunden Archipelago (16,730 ha) has been vastly extended to nearly 64,000 ha, encompassing a large area of additional islets and skerries under the new name of Quark Archipelago. It is situated in the narrowest and shallowest area of the Gulf of Bothnia at the northern limit for many marine species.

Flads and gloes are another particularity in the Baltic sea, which are occurring at the coastal areas such as Bird Wetlands of Hanko and Tammisaari, the Lake Lämpträsket, Liminganlahti Bay and Lake Kirkkojärvi and Lupinlahti Bay. Both the flad and gloe forms are typical for Finnish coasts because of land upheaval but are unique in universal scale as special kinds of lagoons. Gloe lakes are a special type of freshwater lake which has become naturally separated from the sea in recent times; flads refer to such formations before the separation is complete and the site still has some contact with the sea.

Other types of lake and river wetlands, estuaries and bays are described as bird-lakes or bird wetlands such as Rantasalmi, Lapväärtti, Rääkkylä and Kitee, Heinä-Suvanto and Hetejärvi, Haapavesi and Hailuoto Island, and Siikajoki. In fact, however, most of the designated sites are important bird areas for breeding, molting, staging or wintering regardless of whether they are coastal, estuarial, river wetlands or peatlands. Furthermore the majority of sites except the archipelagos also support threatened mammals, especially wolf and globally threatened species such as wolverine, brown bear, as well as more common species such as lynx and otter.

Site descriptions can be found on the Ramsar page:

[http://www.ramsar.org/wn/w.n.finland\\_38.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/wn/w.n.finland_38.htm)

Source: [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)

### News from Poland: Five new Ramsar sites

The Government of Poland has designated five new Ramsar sites, including some with strong mire values, some with extraordinary cultural heritage, and two with potential for identification as collaborative transboundary Ramsar sites, with Ukraine and the Czech Republic respectively. Poland now has 13 Ramsar sites covering a surface area of 125,760 hectares. Ramsar's Dorothea August has prepared these brief site descriptions:

**Druzno Lake Nature Reserve.** 29/10/02; Warminsko-Mazurskie; 3,068 ha; 54°05'N 019°26'E. Natura 2000 SPA, Nature Reserve. A shallow and largely overgrown lake in the Vistula Delta region near the Baltic Coast, with surrounding wetlands, reedbeds, and alder carrs which are a relict of a much larger water body formerly part of the Vistula Lagoon. The most widespread aquatic vegetation is represented through floating communities of different associations of water lilies. The site is important for birds migrating along the Baltic coastline and provides refuge for more than 150 bird species during the summer. The region owes its origins to human draining and damming activities. In several settlements typical old Dutch buildings have been preserved and religious memorials such as 18th-century Mennonite cemeteries, pumping stations, sluices from the 19th century and inclines on the Elblag Canal are industrial monuments of European

significance. While the lake was formerly used as a water route for rafting timber, it is now appreciated mainly for tourist cruising and recreational activities. Ramsar site no. 1563.

**Narew River National Park.** 29/10/02; Podlaski; 7,350 ha; 53°04'N 022°52'E. National Park. A 35-km section of a natural swampy valley with a well-developed system of bends, oxbows and highly sinuous riverbed breaking through moraine hills. Traditionally the meadows were used for cattle grazing and haymaking, but recent social and economic transformations led to a cessation of mowing and grazing management, causing a shrinking of open biotopes and a decrease of local biodiversity. The main potential threat is a diminished water input upstream in view of the Siemianowka dam at the Belarus-Polish border and water pollution caused from towns upstream. A local historical mansion hosts both a visitor centre and the museum of the Narew river swamps, and there are tourist trails, two observation hides, and an educational path. Ramsar site no. 1564.

**Poleski National Park.** 29/10/02; Lubelskie; 9,762 ha; 51°17'N 023°27'E. National Park, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, NATURA 2000 SPA. A unique complex of shallow lakes and mires, ranging from raised bogs to transitional and calcareous mires and rare alkaline fens with vegetation indicating some features of tundra and woodland tundra in its westernmost location, situated at the watershed between the basins of the Bug and Wieprz rivers in southeastern Poland bordering with Ukraine and part of the European Ecological Corridor of the Bug River. Forest communities vary from pine woods to alder carrs with a typical hollow-and-mound structure. The site supports a wide range of about 146 breeding bird species including very rare raptors such as Lesser Spotted Eagle, Hen Harrier and Montague's Harrier. The only sparsely populated area, which hosts a rich cultural heritage of traditional wooden cottages, is used for extensive agriculture, fishing and forestry. Agricultural facilities in the surrounding area are affecting the site through water pollution. Since 2002 the National Park is also forms the core zone of the West Polesie Biosphere Reserve, and it is planned to be identified as a transboundary Polish-Ukrainian Ramsar site in the future. Ramsar site no. 1565.

**Subalpine bogs in Karkonosze Mountains.** 29/10/02; Dolnoslaskie; 40 ha; 50°45'N 015°36'E. National Park, UNESCO Bilateral Biosphere Reserve. Three subalpine bogs situated on mountain flats in the dwarf pine zone, along the Polish-Czech border in the Karkonosze Mountains. Situated at the European watershed dividing the Baltic Sea and North Sea basins, the area has special importance for groundwater recharge and flood control in the mountains. The vegetation is dominated of dwarf pine communities with cloudberry vegetation and

surrounded with spruce forest growing on sloping bogs. Most typical of the site are peat moss communities including associations resembling subarctic tundra with a combination of alpine and arctic species. The major threat for the bogs is trampling, littering and water pollution from tourist and recreation activities in the area. Since 1992 the site has been part of a MAB Bilateral Biosphere Reserve, and discussions are under way with Czech authorities of the Krkonoská raseleiniste Ramsar site about management collaboration as a transboundary Ramsar site. Ramsar site no. 1566.

**Wigry National Park.** 29/10/02; Podlaskie; 15,085 ha; 54°00' N, 023°06'E. National Park. A diverse wetland system around Wigry Lake and 42 smaller lakes of glacial origin and associated peatlands. It is dominated by woodlands of boreal character with a swampy forest communities as well as aquatic and mire vegetation in close to natural state. Amongst almost 90 non-woody plant communities, notable are mire communities, in particular those of raised bogs and transitional bogs including floating moss mats. The site harbours three globally endangered bird species, Red Kite, White-tailed Eagle and corncrake, and a further 150 bird breeding species. The numerous small rivers in natural state are habitat for beavers and affected by their damming activities. The site also includes Paleolithic archaeological sites, with remnants of Stone and Iron Age nomadic hunter settlements, a graveyard of the Jacwing people with mounds from the 3rd and 4th centuries, and a valuable baroque monastery. Timber production is a predominant land use, followed by crop production and recreational activities such as water sports or angling. Unfortunately the massive tourism with about 100,000 visitors per year brings an increasing threat for the site. Ramsar site no. 1567.

Source: [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)

### **News from Denmark: Lille Vildmose Vistor Centre**

Located in Northeast Jutland, Denmark, Lille Vildmose is the country's largest nature reserve and a candidate for becoming the first Danish national park. Notably, Lille Vildmose is the home of the largest raised bog in Denmark, which is also the largest of its kind in the lowlands of Northwest Europe. Indeed, the forests, lakes, and peatlands of Lille Vildmose constitute a unique and fascinating area well worth a visit. So far, immediate and detailed information about the area, its history, and character has been fairly scattered and therefore difficult to come by for visitors and tourists. However, this flaw will be corrected when a visitor centre, situated in the heart of Lille Vildmose, opens to the public in April 2006. The highly anticipated state-of-the-art centre includes a small movie theatre, a cafe, an Exploratorium, interactive information stands, and four exhibitions

detailing the history, the people, and the distinct flora and fauna of Lille Vildmose.

The new centre is first and foremost intended to encourage and inspire visitors to experience the many facets of Lille Vildmose up close. Thus, the centre offers visitors free of charge bicycles, as well as maps of walking paths and lookout towers in the area. In addition to the scenic landscape of Lille Vildmose, the towers make it possible to observe deer, wild boars, and a great variety of birds, including rare ones such as the golden eagle.

Furthermore, guided tours of the centre and its surroundings will be offered frequently, allowing visitors to experience an insider's take on Lille Vildmose. An exciting stop on the tour is sure to be the large fenced area containing wild boars, which is located only a short walk from the centre. Other notable Lille Vildmose sights close to the centre includes the recreated Tofte lake, the moraine hills of Mulbjerg that offers an impressive view of the Kattegat sea, and Stejlgabet – a valley that cuts through Mulbjerg from the small town of Dokkedal to the sea. However, the main attraction is perhaps the natural phenomenon responsible for the Lille Vildmose area's name (mose is Danish for bog), namely the raised bog. Thus, Smidiebakke hill provides a great overview of the raised bog area while Portlandsmosen offers the opportunity to experience it up close.

Lea Fransson Thiesen ( [lf@sejlfod.dk](mailto:lf@sejlfod.dk) )

### **News from England: Loophole in law threat to peatlands**

An embarrassing loophole has been exposed in a £17m scheme meant to safeguard a Yorkshire peatland from peat extraction and preserve it as a nature reserve. It was found that further peat could be removed in future because an area of land within the reserve is not covered by the agreement.

Recently, Environment Minister Elliot Morley visited South Yorkshire to formally open the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve, which now includes Thorne, Hatfield, Goole and Crowle Moors. English Nature spent £17.3m of taxpayers' money to buy out peat extraction rights from Scotts Company, and the area was restored before being opened up as a nature reserve.

However, the agreement did not cover a small area of land which had been used as a storage area, which Scotts now wants to exploit. If that happened it would be a severe blow for the area, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area and a Special Area of Conservation.

The area has long been a battleground between businesses seeking to exploit the peat for commercial gain and those wanting to preserve it. More than 10 years ago the Vanishing Wilderness campaign spearheaded by the Yorkshire Post led to areas of

Thorne and Hatfield Moors being handed over to English Nature from then owners Fisons PLC.

But a threat has continued to hang over the area in the intervening years with repeated suggestions that its SSSI protection could be removed.

Three years ago the Government and Scotts reached a £17m agreement to end peat cutting on Hatfield Moor by the end of 2004. But now it seems Scotts has retained ownership and peat extraction rights for around 30 hectares of the site and had signalled an intention to commence peat cutting again.

English Nature insist the land involved is only a tiny area compared to the 3,500 hectares safeguarded by the buyout deal and a spokesman said the company would need to gain permission before they were able to start any peat extraction.

No comment was available from Scotts.

Paul Whitehouse, Yorkshire Post

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### **News from Scotland: Lewis Island windfarm**

In a damning report the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland claims that the £411 million development of a windpark on Lewis Island, involving the erection of 234 wind turbines across 43km, will have a catastrophic effect on more than 6,000 hectares of protected peatland and other vital habitats.

RSPB Scotland has warned that, should the development get the go-ahead, it will set a very dangerous precedent for all internationally important sites in Scotland threatened by similar developments. This year Western Isles Council decided by 19 votes to eight to support the proposed development by Lewis Wind Power, a consortium led by British Energy and Amec.

The Executive, which will have the final say, has received more than 4,200 representations on the proposal, with just nine in favour.

RSPB is calling on the Executive to reject the scheme because of its disastrous implications for rare birds and wildlife.

For certain species, including golden plover and dunlin, the peatland habitat where the project will be sited is the best in Europe, and hosts a significant proportion of their total British or world populations.

Source: The Scotsman

For more on the Lewis Island windfarm project, surf to: [www.rspb.org.uk/scotland/action/lewis/index.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/scotland/action/lewis/index.asp)

Richard Lindsay has prepared a report commissioned by the RSPB that can be downloaded from the site. Follow the Lewis Wind Farm Peatland Report (771Kb) link.

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### **Irish Peat Society**

On 27 September 2005, a meeting was held in Dublin to establish an Irish Peat Society, which will assume from Bord na Móna the status of Irish National Committee of IPS. Mr. Donal Clarke was elected Chairman of the Society, to be supported by Secretary Pat Fitzgerald. Dr. John Feehan of University College Dublin and Dr. Roy Tomlinson of Queens University Belfast were among those elected to the Society's Executive Board. The some 30 participants accepted the interim statutes as presented. So far, the tasks of IPS in Ireland were mainly carried out by Bord na Móna. It is hoped that the new organisation will attract a wide variety of people interested in peat and peatlands.

Furthermore, it was announced that Abbey Conference Services has started working on the preparations for the 13th International Peat Congress, which was confirmed to be held in Tullamore on 9 - 15 June 2008. Please contact [donalcke@indigo.ie](mailto:donalcke@indigo.ie) for further information.

Source: IPS

### **News from Ireland: Peatland National Heritage Areas**

An intensive campaign to protect Irish peatlands, which has been ongoing since 1989, has finally come to a successful close. Sixteen years ago the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) provided information on site destruction that resulted in the EU winning a case against the Irish government regarding the lack of protection of Irish peatlands. The threat of this case and of the fines that would ensue if the Irish government did not act positively for bogs was behind many of the victories achieved for the protection of Irish peatlands throughout the last sixteen years. For example, the reduction of the minimum threshold for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for peat extraction from 50 hectares to 30 hectares; the designation of our best peatland sites as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and now finally, it has resulted in a total of 70 raised bog and 73 blanket bog Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) being formally designated by the Irish government. These sites are now legally protected in Ireland.

While IPCC is delighted with these results, there is still more work to be done. All non-bog NHAs remain as proposed NHAs and, as such, receive no legal protection, despite their conservation importance. IPCC are now focusing the campaign effort on fens, which have been sadly neglected by the government. IPCC is working together with three other Environmental NGO (An Taisce, Irish Wildlife Trust and Coastwatch Ireland) to bring a number of issues to the attention of the Minister for Environment, Mr. Dick Roche, including the lack of legal protection for non-bog NHAs (including fens) and the management and protection of our SACs and NHAs.

[www.ipcc.ie](http://www.ipcc.ie)

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### News from the USA Senate Blocks Arctic Drilling

The US Senate blocked oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in Alaska, thereby also rejecting a must-pass defense spending bill presented in the same package. Supporters placed the bill in the same portfolio to gain support for the decades old environmental issue.

The vote was 56-44 in support for the drilling, which is four votes short of the required 60. Senate leaders are expected to withdraw the legislation so it can be reworked without the drilling issue.

Senators determined to protect the refuge from development found it difficult to oppose the politically popular defense bill, which has money for troops in Iraq, relief for Katrina hurricane victims and help for low-income families to pay energy bills.

A decade ago a Republican-led Congress passed an ANWR bill, only to have it vetoed by President Clinton. This time President Bush has made ANWR drilling one of his top priorities and is eager to sign a bill.

Drilling opponents long have argued that ANWR's oil should not be exploited because of the coastal plain's fragile ecosystem and its wildlife. Drilling proponents say modern techniques can extract the oil without damaging the environment.

The bill passed the House of Representatives some days before with support of many who previously opposed ANWR drilling. They supported the included \$29 billion for Katrina hurricane relief, \$2 billion in emergency funding for low-income families to pay high heating bills this winter as well as money for troops in Iraq. The bill would funnel 80 percent of the proceeds from Arctic refuge oil lease sales to hurricane relief and 5 percent for the energy assistance program.

Alaska relies heavily on proceeds from oil production, a revenue stream that has been in steady decline as the vast Prudhoe Bay oil fields to the west of ANWR become less productive.

Source: Associated Press

### News from South America: Peatlands and páramos

In October, Jamaica was the venue of the Vth Interamerica Dialogue on Water Management organized by UNESCO and of the Meeting of the Focal Points and National Committees of the International Hydrological Program for Latin America and the Caribic (IHP-LAC) of UNESCO.

At this opportunity, IMCG Main Board member Rodolfo Iturraspe, who is also Coordinator of the Snow and Ice program of the IHP-LAC, together with the IHP national authority of Ecuador successfully presented a motion to recommend special attention to studies about the hydrological function of "turberas" and "páramos", underlining the

importance of giving international support to activities which contribute to their conservation.

Turberas are the general name for peatlands in Spanish and páramos are special tropical Andean ecosystems located between 3500-4500 m a.s.l. which include mires and peatlands.

With this motion, the IHP-LAC for the first time formulated a special recommendation with respect to conservation of South American mires. Previous recommendations usually addressed wetlands in general.

Rodolfo Iturraspe

### News from Belize: Transboundary Ramsar site

The Government of Belize has added its second wetland site to the Ramsar List, as of 19 October 2005: Sarstoon Temash National Park (16,955 hectares, 15°58'N 089°00'W) is a complex of several different terrestrial ecosystem types located in Toledo district on the southern frontier with Guatemala, bisected by two large rivers, one of which forms the international border across which lies Sarstun, hopefully a future Ramsar site. Seasonally and permanently flooded forests predominate, with some 1,100 hectares of lowland sphagnum peatlands, unique to the region, a saline/brackish inland lagoon, and 9,600 ha of saline swamps, with the country's most undisturbed and largest stand of red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*) and its only stands of Comfra Palm (*Manicaria saccifera*). Several threatened and vulnerable species are supported, such as Black Howler Monkey, the Hickatee Turtle, the tapir *Tapirus bairdii*, the West Indian Manatee, and Morelett's Crocodile. The buffer zone of the park is home to the indigenous Kekchi Maya and Garifuna people, both of which attach high cultural importance to parts of the site. Stands of mahogany, cedar, and rosewood are targets for illegal crossborder logging efforts. The Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management (SATIIM) is active in research and management planning for the site and has a co-management agreement with the government. Belize now has two Ramsar sites totaling 23,592 hectares.

### News from Côte d'Ivoire: Five new Ramsar sites

Côte d'Ivoire has designated five new sites for the List of Wetlands of International Importance, effective as of 18 October 2005: Complexe Sassandra-Dagbego, Fresco, Grand Bassam, Iles Ehotilé-Essouman, and N'Ganda N'Ganda. This significant achievement has been made possible with funds from the Swiss government, under the Swiss Grant for Africa programme, and with the support of Ramsar. The country's six sites now add up to an

area of 127,344 hectares and include a large extent of mangroves, a wetland type which has been identified as being under-represented in the Ramsar List and which should be prioritized in the designation process.

The sites are important from both a biological and socio-cultural point of view. They support a number of endangered, often charismatic species, such as the chimpanzee, forest elephant, pygmy hippo, crocodile species, and manatees; they are an important nesting ground for up to five species of turtles (green, hawksbill, olive ridley, leatherback and loggerhead); and they are also important breeding, resting or feeding grounds for different waterbird species.

At the cultural level, both the Grand Bassam and the Complexe Sassandra-Dagbego sites have old colonial cities, with an architectural and historical interest for the relatively numerous tourists who visit the sites from overseas and within the country. The importance of these sites for the local people is also very high, in terms of the natural resources that they provide (fish, reeds and wood for construction, plants for medicinal purposes, game meat, etc.), but also for religious and traditional reasons, as ceremonies take place there. Furthermore, some of the people, like the Ehotilé, believe they are the children of the lagoon of the same name by which they live. Although most of the sites are relatively well-preserved, a number of growing impacts from threats, including natural resources over-exploitation, oil exploration, reduced flows due to upstream dams and indiscriminate development, loom in the future. It is important that now that the designations have been made, the country profits from the momentum to produce and implement management plans (some have already been started) for these sites, to ensure their wise use into the future. We would like to congratulate Côte d'Ivoire again for having increased its number of Ramsar sites, after nine years since its first site was designated! We are also grateful to the Federal Government of Switzerland for its continuous support to Africa countries under the Swiss Grant for Africa.

Source: [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)

### **News from South Africa: Hydro-electric scheme threatens Okavango delta**

Less than ten years after the South African government put an end to speculations that the St Lucia dunes could still be open to titanium mining, it seems that another major southern African wetland system is threatened, this time because of Namibia's energy needs.

If approved, a dam for a hydro-electric scheme proposed by Namibia's Nampower would lead to high erosion and salination of the Okavango Delta with effects being felt within two decades. The scheme is intended for Namibia's Papa Falls on the Okavango River which flows from its main catchment in Angola, through Namibia, and ends as the spectacular Okavango Delta in the Kalahari Desert in Botswana. Although only 15m high, the dam would impact on about 60km of river and, more significantly, would change the water's sediment load and chemistry.

Despite a 96% evapo-transpiration rate, the delta has avoided becoming a giant salt pan like other similar systems because of the role of island vegetation in drawing solutes out of the flow and storing it in the islands. The delta vegetation is adapted for low-nutrient conditions and, papyrus in particular, is sensitive to changes in salinity. The higher transpiration rate in the proposed dam would result in higher salinity of the water flowing into the delta and the dam would also act as a sediment trap, resulting in erosion downstream.

In addition to being of significant biodiversity importance, the Okavango Delta is responsible for a substantial proportion of Botswana's tourism revenue and is an important resource for the dozens of nearby communities who harvest wild food, medicine and building materials from it.

This information is drawn mainly from a brief discussion with Dr William Ellery of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. More (scientific) information to follow in the next newsletter.

Rehana Dada

Ellery, W.N. & McCarthy, T.S. 1994. Principles for the Sustainable Utilisation of the Okavango Delta Ecosystems, Botswana. Biological Conservation, 70, 159-168.

## **REGISTER**

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## New and recent Journals/Newsletters/Books/Reports

### Peatlands: do you care?

The Ramsar CoCoGAP brochure "Peatlands: do you care?" is now downloadable (pdf) from our website [www.imcg.net](http://www.imcg.net)

### Peatland Restoration Guide

The Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association has recently installed the Peatland Restoration Guide on its website so that anyone can download it for free. Simply go to [www.peatmoss.com/pm-restguide.php](http://www.peatmoss.com/pm-restguide.php)

### New Brunswick peat policy

The New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources has recently added the Peat Mining Policy to its website. In English go to:

<http://www.gnb.ca/0078/minerals/Peat-e.asp> (see Regulatory Process: Peat Mining Policy)

In French go to:

<http://www.gnb.ca/0078/minerals/Peat-f.asp> (voir R glementation :Directive sur l'extraction de la tourbe)

Source: Canadian Peat News

### Assessment of NATURA 2000 mire habitats

In Germany, a working group has developed guidelines for monitoring and assessment of NATURA 2000 mire habitats. The assessment schemes for different NATURA 2000 types can be downloaded at:

[www.bfn.de/03/030306\\_akmooreundheiden.htm](http://www.bfn.de/03/030306_akmooreundheiden.htm)

### Planta Europa Newsletter Winter 2005 / 2006

The Planta Europa Newsletter can be found on the website [www.plantaeuropa.org/newsletternov2005.htm](http://www.plantaeuropa.org/newsletternov2005.htm) or downloaded as a pdf file:

[www.plantaeuropa.org/documents/penewsno2005.pdf](http://www.plantaeuropa.org/documents/penewsno2005.pdf)

The Planta Europa Newsletter is one of the most important communication tools for plant conservation in Europe. There are two articles directly related to Natura 2000 in the newsletter: one on the current state with the biogeographic seminars in the new member states, and one about the EU funding lobbying appeal for inclusion of N2K into the Regional Funds & Rural Development Funds.

Other main features in this issue of the newsletter include Red Lists and recent developments in Germany.

### Peatlands International 2/2005.

Published by the International Peat Society; with articles on Siberian permafrost melting, Peatlands on Ramsar COP9 in Uganda, on the climate impact of energy production with peat compared to using logging residues, a lot of information on IPS (that spread the magazine widely on Ramsar COP9), the information that Klasmann-Deilmann (the global market leader in the production and marketing of raw peat products and growing media) expanded further by acquiring two Belgian peat companies, and that the Latvian government has classified peat as a

"slowly renewable resource". Available under [www.peatsociety.org/user\\_files/files/pi22005final.pdf](http://www.peatsociety.org/user_files/files/pi22005final.pdf)

### DVD Wise Use of Peatlands

The IPS DVD on "Wise Use of Peatlands" can now be watched and downloaded online at <http://peatsociety.org/index.php?id=104>.

You will need the Windows Media Player and a broadband connection to display the films. Both low and high resolution files are available. You can also choose whether to watch the documentaries in your browser or to save them on your computer for later use. All documentaries on the website are in English. German, French, Swedish, Finnish and Dutch versions are available in form of a hardcopy DVD only.

The DVD on "Wise Use of Peatlands" was launched at the 12th International Peat Congress in Tampere in 2004. It visualizes the development of peatlands, their natural functions and presents their global status, the use of peat and peatlands for different purposes, as well as introduces principles of their use on the basis of the book on "Wise Use of Mires and Peatlands" by Hans Joosten and Donal Clarke. The DVD has been edited by a steering group consisting of representatives from eight countries, and it consists of materials filmed in Canada, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The DVD includes a Documentary (19 minutes) and eight short segments detailing different peatland themes under the heading More Data (total length 45 minutes), as well as an image gallery and statistics from the WUMP book.

Source: IPS

For a review of the DVD, see IMCG Newsletter 2004/3.

### La conservation des tourbi res. G ocarrefour, vol. 79, n 4, 2004, p. 267-344. (in French) 18.50  

This number of the review of geography of Lyon gathers contributions on the conservation of peatlands, on the methods of their management, and on the network of actors. The content ranges from an assessment of 12 years of conservation management in the Hautes-Fagnes (Belgium) to the management of peat filled dune slacks in the North of France. There is a synthesis of recent literature on the development of raised bogs as well as an article on the logic behind management for conservation of peatlands. Outside Europe, contributions cover Argentina, South Africa and Canada. For more information: [buisson@univ-lyon3.fr](mailto:buisson@univ-lyon3.fr)

### Echo des tourbi res, n 11, octobre 2005, 20p. (in French)

Besides an overview of the actions of the Pole-Relays Tourbi res four years after its initiation, this number covers peatlands in Brittany, in Limousin, in Picardy, at the Ile de la R union, in Languedoc-Roussillon. On

the international front the IMCG stance on the allegedly renewable character of the peat as a fuel is covered, as well as a Franco-Slovenian cooperation on the peatland meadows of Ljubljana.

**Behre, K.-E. 2005. Das Moor von Sehestedt. Landschaftsgeschichte am östlichen Jadebusen. Oldenburger Forschungen. Neue Folge Band 21. Isensee Verlag, Oldenburg, 145 p.**

Monography on the most famous floating bog of Germany, the Sehestedter Außendeichsmoor, that floats on seawater during storm tides and is gradually destroyed in this way. "Can we allow nature to destroy such a unique natural heritage? We have to, because without permanent direct attacks of the sea it will lose its special character, that makes it so valuable."

The book presents chapters on the geological development of the area (including notes on salt peat extraction and the utilisation of swamp gas), on the stratigraphy of the peatland (with typically clay layers intersecting the peat) and its spectacular movement and erosion during storm tides, on its destruction by erosion and sludge deposition, on other floating peatlands as described in historical literature (starting with Plinius), on colonisation of and agriculture on the peatland since the 17th century, on dike construction, on the present-day situation (incl. vegetation and fauna) of the currently less than 10 ha large peatland, and on conservation measures and the lifespan of the Außendeichsmoor, that possibly will survive another century.

**Sudhaus, D. 2005. Paläoökologische Untersuchungen zur spätglazialen und holozänen Landschaftsgenese des Ostschwarzwaldes im Vergleich mit den Buntsandsteinvogesen. Freiburger Geographische Hefte Heft 64, 153 p.**

PhD thesis dealing with palynological investigations in two mires in the central Black Forest (Germany) and the Northern Vosges Mountains (France) focussing on the regional vegetation development and the immigration of tree species in the area (hardly attention to development of the mire vegetation). More information: [dirk.sudhaus@geographie.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:dirk.sudhaus@geographie.uni-freiburg.de)

**Kim, Kyungwan (ed.) 2005. Wetlands in Korea. Korean NGO Report for Ramsar COP9. Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, Seoul, 96 p.**

Overview of wetlands in South-Korea, especially tidal flats and estuaries and focussing on their ornithological values. Peatland is hardly mentioned. Special attention is paid to the recent trends in rice farming as a result of changing international economic conditions and their effects on biodiversity.

For more information: [sunyoung@klem.or.kr](mailto:sunyoung@klem.or.kr) or <http://klem.or.kr>

**UN Economic Commission for Europe (2005). Sustainable Development and Biofuel Use as a way towards the Kyoto Protocol implementation and enhanced complex utilization of wood raw material and peat: discussion papers on sustainable forest management. United Nations. 106p.**

This publication contains a number of papers written in Russian and English, presented at a conference held in St Petersburg in July 2001 to discuss sustainable forest management development in the Russian Federation. The meeting included representatives from federal and regional government, research institutes and universities, forestry agencies, non-governmental bodies and international organisations.

**Le Roux, G. 2005. Fate of natural and anthropogenic particles in peat bogs. PhD diss., University Heidelberg.**

Investigating atmospheric deposition over a scale of millennial period is crucial because humans are emitting more and more synthetic and natural compounds (i.e.: pollutants and/or dust) to the environment through the atmosphere. It is therefore necessary to determine the background deposition rate of these compounds, to assess their natural variations (i.e.: temporal and/or spatial) and to understand the effects of the increased atmospheric depositions induced by humans on the environment.

The primary aim of this work was to improve the understanding of the processes affecting the fate of anthropogenic and natural particles in peat bogs, to see which geochemical processes can affect the suitability and accuracy of peat bogs as archives of atmospheric deposition, and also the effects of these inputs on the bog ecosystem.

This dissertation can be downloaded in PDF format from:

[http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/volltexte/2005/5515/pdf/PhDgael\\_le\\_rouxIIsmallsize.pdf](http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/volltexte/2005/5515/pdf/PhDgael_le_rouxIIsmallsize.pdf)

**Kunskas, R. 2005. Ežerų ir pelkių ekosistemų raida (Development of lake and bog ecosystems). ISC Cyklonas, Vilnius, 438 p.**

An illustration based review book on lakes and bogs in Lithuania, including tectonic structures, tectonic and glacial relief formation, hydrogeological conditions, peat formation, development of lakes and peatlands, and lake and peatland restoration.

**Schäfer, A. & Joosten, H. (eds.) 2005. Erlenaufforstung auf wiedervernässten Niedermooren. Duene, Greifswald, 68 p.**

Guide to the cultivation of high-quality Alder wood on rewetted degraded fen soils. An example of "paludiculture": the sustainable exploitation of peatland under wet, peat-forming conditions. Economically, Alder cultivation scores much better than all other types of forestry. Monetisation furthermore shows that, from a climate point of view, Alder cultivation is much more cost-effective than

other techniques to reduce Carbon emissions, e.g. 5 times more than hydropower, 20 times more than wind energy, and 100times more than insulation of old buildings.

Obtainable from Achim Schäfer: schafea@uni-greifswald.de

**Ten Heggeler, M.M.A., Van der Ploeg, M.J., Vurens, S.H. & Van der Schaaf, S. 2005. Subsidence of Clara Bog West and acrotelm development of Raheenmore Bog and Clara Bog East. A comparison of 1991-1992 and 2002-2003. Wageningen University, Sub-department Water resources, Report 121, 74p.**

Comparison of bog surface levels showed that Clara Bog West (Ireland) subsided more than 1 meter in its southern part as a result of marginal peat cutting and drainage *via* the underlying mineral soil (till). This change in surface slope has changed flow patterns that damaged acrotelm formation in large parts of the bog.

Restoration activities in 1995/1996 proved to work out positively on acrotelm formation in Clara Bog East and Raheenmore Bog. For more information: Sake.vanderSchaaf@wur.nl

**Beintema, A. 2005. Het begon met het Naardermeer. Fontaine, 's-Graveland, 160 p.**

A personal account in which the author, a leading Dutch ornithologist, compares the present-day Naardermeer fen area, the oldest Dutch nature reserve – 100 years old, with his own observation of 40 years ago.

**Jóža, M., Vonička, P. & kolektiv 2004. Jizerskohorská rašeliniště. Jizersko-ještědský horský spolek, Liberec, 160 p.**

Beautiful colourful monography about the mires in the Polish and Czech part of the Sudety Mountains with nice schematic presentations of the various mire

types, an overview of flora, vegetation, and fauna, and of the most important mire localities in this area.

**Kotowski, W. (ed.) 2005. Anthropogenic influence on wetlands biodiversity and sustainable management of wetlands. Warsaw University Press, Warsaw, 172 p.**

A compilation of numerous case studies from several European countries (with special attention to Poland), resulting from a 2004 WETHYDROworkshop in the Narew river valley (Poland).

**Pfadenhauer, J. & Heinz, S. 2004. Renaturierung von niedermoortypischen Lebensräumen. 10Jahre Niedermoormanagement im Donaumoos. Bundesamt für Naturschutz, Bonn - Bad Godesberg, 299 p.**

Evaluation of 10 years of fen management in the Donaumos in Bavaria with information on hydrology, nutrient dynamics, and plant productivity, on various restoration and management measures and their effects on vegetation development and fen fauna.

**Vreeken, A. 2005. Veenterpen rond Sneek. Friezen tussen klein en veen in de Romeinse tijd. Uniepers, Abcoude, 80 p.**

Archeological study of the drainage and use of peatlands in the northern Netherlands in Roman times.

**IMCG mires and peatlands field symposium Tierra del Fuego 2005 Abstracts Book. 68 p.**

Information: Rodolfo Iturraspe:  
iturraspe@tdfuego.com

**IMCG mires and peatlands field symposium Tierra del Fuego 2005 Field Guide. 66 p.**

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

### **Workshop on Vulnerability of Carbon Pools of Tropical Peatlands in Asia**

*24-26 January 2006, Pekanbaru, Riau, Sumatra, Indonesia*

This workshop is jointly organised by the Global Environment Centre, CIFOR & Global Carbon Project.

For more information: [www.peat-portal.net](http://www.peat-portal.net)

### **Wetlands, Water And Livelihoods Workshop**

*30 January – 2 February 2006, St. Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

An international workshop exploring best practices and lessons learned in integrating poverty and environment issues.

For more information: <http://www.wetlands.org/news&/NewsItems/WWLWorkshop.htm>

### **Land and Water Management for Sustainable Agriculture Scientific Symposium**

*14 – 16 February 2006, Malawi or Lesotho*

For more information: [www.sadc.int](http://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/>

### **International Peat Conference: Peat in Solution of Energy, Agriculture and Ecology Problems**

*29 May - 2 June 2006, Minsk, Belarus*

The complete Circular can be downloaded at <http://peatsociety.org/index.php?id=47>.

### **IMCG Field Symposium and General assembly in Finland**

*13-26 July 2006, Finland*

for more information read the second circular in IMCG Newsletter 2005/3.

### **5th European Conference on Ecological Restoration**

*22.-25. August 2006, Greifswald, Germany*

See IMCG Newsletter 2005/3

### **HydroEco2006**

*11-14 September 2006, Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad), Czech Republic*

International Multidisciplinary Conference on Hydrology and Ecology. For more information visit <http://web.natur.cuni.cz/hydroeco2006/>

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

*9 - 15 June 2008, Tullamore, Ireland*

For more information, surf to [www.peatsociety.org](http://www.peatsociety.org)

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