

## Communication on Belarus' participation in the International Year of Biodiversity

The United Nations proclaimed 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. In order to celebrate this Field-Year an Action Plan was approved at the Governmental level. Governmental bodies, local authorities, non-governmental organizations as well as schoolchildren were involved in implementing the Action Plan. Within the International Biodiversity Year there were arranged a host of activities aimed at conserving biological and landscape diversities.

There have been arranged a run of exhibitions all over the Country due to the Year. Of most interest are the exhibition "S.O.S." at the Museum of Modern Art and the exhibition by photo artist V.I. Aleshko, devoted to fauna protection "Belarus, the Country of Reserves" and the children's drawing festival at the Belarusian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection. We emphasize that exhibitions devoted to the International Year of Biodiversity were organized in all the regional and district centers of our Country.

Biodiversity-related issues have been broadly covered in the National Mass Media. The information dedicated to the International Biodiversity Year is displayed on the web site of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus ([www.minpriroda.by](http://www.minpriroda.by)). The Mass Media have highlighted topical information about campaigns, round tables and workshops. Also created were special sections on the web sites of the regional executive and administrative bodies to cover Biodiversity-related issues.

The national and local prints such as - the newspapers "Zarya", "Narodnaya Gazeta", "The Republic", "Narodnaya Trybuna" and the journal "Rodnaya Pryroda", etc.- have covered and kept the public abreast of the activities relating to the International Biodiversity Year. The journalists not only wrote about but took an active part in all the Biodiversity events.

On the occasion of the International Biodiversity Day, a press conference was organized and held on the 22th of May, 2010, in which V. V. Kulik, First Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, as well as representatives of the scientific community and non-governmental organizations took part. V.G. Stalk, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, and Antonius Broke, Head of the UN Development Program in Belarus took part in the press conference on the International Biodiversity Year held within the Ecological Forum.

Over 200 interviews, commentaries and articles devoted to biodiversity conservation were released and/or shown on TV and the radio.

In order to raise public awareness there were organized meetings at which officials from environmental authorities gave publicity to biodiversity conservation challenges and focused upon the fact that each of us shall be responsible for conserving animal and plant species especially rare and endangered ones. There were arranged over 700 meetings all over the Country.

According to the ecological calendar, the educational institutions held events of different kinds. The most interesting events are video lectures «Take Care of Nature», «Water», quizzes such as "What do we know about water?" and children's drawings contests. The cycling tour given up to the Tourism Day was organized along the ecological track in the valley of the River Neman. The Ecological Centre in Mogilev together with the faculty of natural science of the State Mogilev University arranged the expedition «Ecobackground – 2010» to familiarize with the flora and fauna of the Liubyzh forest park. The Minsk City Youth Centre initiated a special edition «Econews» that was very popular with schoolchildren.

In May there was conducted a ceremony to sum up the results of the district festival "Ecology. Creativity. Children." The most important event of this festival became the action "Do help the Zoo".

Also installed were billboards given up to the International Year of Biodiversity and the Environment along main highways and in major cities across the country.

The environmental campaigns launched by MINNAT with public organizations and international projects became the most striking events of the Year.

The action «Youth Witnesses for Reserve Territories» was launched by the MINNAT officials who made a canoe tour along the tourist routes of the National Park «Narochanski» to clean up the river banks and resort areas and bring the idea of nature conservation to the local people and representatives of local authorities.

"Lebyazhi for Birds and People! Together!" The message of this action is that we can conserve the unique natural site in the heart of our megapolis for ourselves and birds only due to our joint efforts. This event united schoolchildren, NGOs, the Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and the Heads of the Coca Cola and MTS companies.

The action «Restore the population of the starlet in Belarus!» allowed to find a new habitat for newly-hatched starlets, that will give new offspring in a few years, and the Pripjat is likely to become a permanent habitat for the starlet, a species entered into the National Red List.

It was the first time that our Country had acceded to the International Environmental campaign "The march of Parks". Within this action there were arranged book and booklet exhibitions, environmental journals, photo exhibitions, round tables, lectures, learning tours, film demonstration, as well as children's drawing contest, performances of agitation teams and other activities at the nationwide level.

The festival of children's drawings "Biodiversity is the foundation of life on the Earth", organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection did not leave indifferent even the skeptics and lent credence to the fact that the younger generation would preserve and increase the natural wealth of our country.

The International Year of Biodiversity is captured on stamps and postcards that found its rightful place at the exhibition, organized by the tenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan.

It is not surprising, since the MINNAT delegation headed by Tsalko V.G., Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, represented and actively advocated the interests of Belarus at this international forum.

The Agreements, made in Nagoya, are reflected in the new strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, which was approved by the Government of the Republic of Belarus in November of this year.

It is worth emphasizing that the greenery and flower-design of human settlements were dramatically improved. For instance, only in Minsk there were planted 46 330 plants, 138 600 shrubs, 8 533 000 flowers, 306,3 hectares of lawns as well as 125 small-scale landscape-architectural forms and complexes were created. Artificial nestings and feeders were made and hung. For example 2168 artificial nestings and 1050 feeders were made and hung only in the Gomel Region. Also was organized a subbotnik at the nationwide level. In addition there were conducted a great deal of other events such as "Forest Week-2010", the international campaign "European autumn days for bird observations".

Each region arranged various competitions including competitions and contests of wall newspapers and information bulletins, ecological bouquets, the best nesting, workmanship «Flower colours. Dazhynki-2010» and craft ware from natural materials; "Ecological routes of the Native land"; the children's environmental project "Earth - our home", etc.

The International Year of Biological Diversity is coming to its end and it should be recognized that our Country celebrated it in a worthy manner. On the 8th of December, 2010 the solemn ceremony took place at the National Museum of Nature and Ecology to sum up the outcomes of the International Biodiversity Year.

The Most active participants were awarded with certificates of honour by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection. Representatives of the mass media, business and NGOs as well as governmental bodies were among the awarded.

The representatives of more than 200 countries taking part in the Conference in Japan agreed on that 2011 opens the Decade of Biological Diversity. Our Country and other countries will keep on their work along this line. Only after combining our efforts we shall achieve progress.