

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY 2010 IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Before the International Year of Biodiversity started, the Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection published at the end of 2009 a study "Nature and Landscape in the Czech Republic - the Message about the state in 2009". It was a comprehensive assessment of the landscape, natural habitats and species status and their recent development. The Czech version is available at: http://www.mzp.cz/cz/priroda_krajina_2009. At the same time a number of representatives from the government as well as NGOs formed the coordination team under the guidance of the Ministry of the Environment in order to prepare the International Year of Biodiversity.

The IYB was officially launched at the Ministry of the Environment (MoE) press conference on 19 January 2010. The deputy minister, Dr. Frantisek Pelc briefed the journalists about the outcomes of the recent nature and landscape assessment, presented the official IYB slogan "For diverse nature, for the future", explained the purpose of this information campaign, the main planned activities and their timetable. A number of events were to be held under the auspices of the MoE, whereas Ministry of Agriculture, the Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection, the National Parks and a number of NGOs were prepared to actively cooperate or were planning to organize their own events. The MoE also created a special section on its website with all information about the IYB in the Czech Republic. The information is still accessible at: http://www.mzp.cz/cz/mezinarodni_rok_biodiverzity.



Main activities and events with the participation or under the umbrella of the MoE:

Information fact sheets

MoE published each month at its website, its monthly bulletin and on separate leaflets information about one animal species, one plant species, one natural biotope and one multilateral environmental agreement. Thus, information about 24 species, 12 different biotopes and 12 MEAs were presented to the public over the course of the year in an interesting form and flexible downloadable format. The aim of this project was to show the diversity of natural biotopes in the Czech Republic and associated diversity of plant and animal species. We also demonstrated through these information fact sheets the actual problems we deal with in our effort to conserve some particular biotopes and species, which are often endangered or under the threat mostly from the human induced activities. The fact sheets also brought the information on where and how can the public participate and contribute to our conservation efforts. More or less independently on the information about species and biotopes specific multilateral agreements related to nature conservation and its sustainable use were presented.

The table below summarizes the list of species, biotopes and MEAs presented over 2010 (*for the reporting purposes only and the international understanding, the species here are given the scientific name*):

Month	Biotopes	Species and their actual issues ¹	MEAs ²
January	forests	<i>Lynx lynx</i> - a successful reintroduction of the species, <i>Boletus regius</i> - the diversity of lower forms of living organisms.	the European Landscape Convention
February	peat bogs, moor lands	<i>Carabus menetriesi</i> , <i>Sphagnum sp.</i> - draining, unsuitable management of localities, climate change, interesting and often invisible biodiversity of some biotopes.	the Ramsar Convention on wetlands
March	water-courses	<i>Astacus astacus</i> , <i>Salmo salar</i> - pollution and eutrofization, unsuitable water-course engineering, bad conservation status of fish populations, invasive alien species.	Bonn Convention
April	city environment	<i>Apus apus</i> - the coexistence of humans and wild animal species, <i>Tilia sp.</i> - the most common tree planted in our cities.	CITES
May	orchards, gardens	<i>Zamenis longissimus</i> , <i>Sorbus domestica</i> - biodiversity in our home gardens and orchards - the important parts of our landscapes, traditional varieties of fruit trees.	CBD

¹ http://www.mzp.cz/cz/zivocich_rostlina_mesice

² http://www.mzp.cz/cz/umluva_mesice

June	agricultural landscape	<i>Agrostemma githago</i> , <i>Alauda arvensis</i> - a close borderline between one species being considered a weed and an endangered species, unsuitable (intensive) management of agricultural sites.	UNCCD
July	steppes	<i>Stipa pennata</i> , <i>Spermophilus citellus</i> - biodiversity hotspots and relict species living in steppe ecosystems.	Memorandum of Understanding on <i>Otis tarda</i> (under the Bonn Convention)
August	grasslands, pastures	<i>Maculinea teleius</i> , <i>Orchis tridentata</i> - humans as the part of the nature, traditional management as the necessary means for the species survival.	Carpathian Convention
September	caves, rocky ecosystems	<i>Vespertilio murinus</i> , <i>Cortusa matthioli subsp. moravica</i> - seemingly inhospitable environment with surprising biodiversity richness, interesting niches of particular species.	EUROBATS
October	alluvial forests	<i>Ulmus laevis</i> , <i>Liomelopum microcephalum</i> - Dutch elm disease, drainage of alluvial ecosystems.	Bern Convention
November	fish ponds	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i> , <i>Coleanthus subtilis</i> - intensive breeding economically important fish species and associated loss of water fowl species.	AEWA
December	mountains	<i>Picoides tridactylus</i> , <i>Gentiana asclepiadea</i> - biodiversity of mountains ecosystems, tourism development and its impacts on species and biotopes.	the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling

Artwork competition "Miraculous world of the bats"

On 11 February 2010, the MoE announced the art competition for children. By 15 May, the deadline for participating in this contest, MoE collected more than 1000 paintings or drawings of bats in their natural environment made by children up to age 15. The main purpose of organizing this event was to promote interest of children and youth about bat species and their interesting way of life. The MoE used the best pieces and created an exhibition for the 6th Session of the Meeting of Parties of EUROBATS, held in Prague, 20-22 September 2010 and for the annual environmental film festival "Ekofilm", held in towns of Ceske Budejovice, Cesky Krumlov and Trebon, 4-10 October 2010.



Light for Prague ten years later

The NGO Protection of fauna of the Czech Republic³ organized with the support of other partners including the MoE the exhibition called "Light for Prague ten years later". This event was a continuation of the very popular and at the same time controversial exhibition held in 2000. The National Museum hosted this exhibition from 11 May till 3 October 2010 and its main purpose was to show the progress made over the last ten years on safety measures for birds that have been fatally injured by high power electricity lines. Protection of fauna sparked the attention of the broad public ten years ago when it organized the exhibition showing dead birds in closed glass boxes - the results of the injuries by electricity. But not only public was shocked. The representatives of electricity power plants and municipalities also fuelled the debates. The discussions resulted in a victory for birds - a great number of protective devices were installed and the situation improved significantly. However, the job has not been finished yet and some power lines are still imposing a danger to birds. More information can be found at: <http://www.svetloproprahu.cz/why10years-later-eng.php>.

³ <http://www.ochranafauny.cz/>

Spring alive

The Czech Society for Ornithology⁴ organized under the guidance from the BirdLife International this pan-European project aimed at bird watching of migratory bird species in early spring. The website shows the characteristics of different bird species and the public can learn how to recognize them. Then, in the real situation when particular birds are spotted, people can go back to the website and note down their findings. These activities promote the interest of adults as well as children and youth and also help to create interesting statistical database. In 2010 the Czech Republic was the 6th most active European country in adding new bird observation records.

A week for biodiversity

MoE organized a discussion week (24-28 May 2010, Prague) about different biodiversity issues and with the participation of the broad public. The event was framed as a series of evening lectures (each day from 16:00 to 18:00) followed by an additional hour of open discussion on specific predetermined themes - Monday: the present state of biodiversity research and the outlook for the future; Tuesday: the impacts of climate change on soil degradation and loss of biodiversity; Wednesday: new technologies and biosafety measures (Cartagena protocol); Thursday: environmental education and awareness and finally Friday: biodiversity in the Czech Development Assistance (the detailed programme is available at the MoE website: http://www.mzp.cz/cz/den_biodiverzity). Discussions, in which participated around 40 experts and approximately 400 people, lead to the formulation of the final recommendations. These points are accessible at the MoE website and will be further used in our work: http://www.mzp.cz/cz/zavery_tydne_pro_biodiverzitu.

⁴ Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO) is a non-governmental organisation uniting birdwatchers, nature lovers, amateurs and professionals interested in the research and protection of birds. It is the Czech national partner of BirdLife International.

Wild Wonders of Europe

This unique exhibition, in which around 70 authors collaborated, presented nature and biodiversity jewels from around 50 European countries in more than 100 large-scale photographs in Prague from 22 June to 22 August 2010. This project, previously showed in Hague, Netherlands, was organized in the Czech Republic under the official auspices of Jan Fiser, prime minister of the Czech government and Mrs. Rut Bizkova, minister of the environment of the Czech Republic. Mrs. Bizkova officially opened the exhibition in one of the major squares in Prague (near Rudolfinum) on 22 June 2010. A number of smaller independent exhibitions and displays accompanied the event - mainly presentations of representatives of 4 National Parks, 25 Protected landscape areas and the MoE. The exhibition team also launched a special website, where some photographs and other interesting information can still be found: <http://www.wild-wonders.com/>.



Tree of the year

This annual survey, organized by the Partnership Foundation⁵ was held also during in 2010. The tree of the year campaign is an interesting contest where everybody can sign up and provide a picture and also interesting information or story surrounding this particular tree. The Foundation then chooses 12 finalists among which the public chooses the winner through voting by the paid text phone messages. From 1 August to 10 October 2010, more than 50 thousand people took part in this campaign, which ranks it among the best environmental campaigns and public awareness activities ever. Thanks to this broad public interest more than 170 000 CZK were collected (approximately 10 000 USD) and used for new tree plantings. More information on this and other activities of the Partnership Foundation is available at: <http://www.nadacepartnerstvi.cz/stromzivota/zakladni-informace>.

⁵ Partnership Foundation is a leading Czech foundation supporting sustainable development projects. Throughout the Czech Republic provides foundation contributions to nonprofits, schools, municipal offices and individuals.

EUROBATS

The MoE organized the 6th Session of the Meeting of Parties of EUROBATS, held in Prague, 20-22 September 2010. This meeting was planned well in advance but it was also a good opportunity to commemorate and celebrate the IYB. The EUROBATS agreement belongs to one of the important internationally agreed documents under the Bonn Convention. The discussions resulted in adoption of several resolutions dealing with conservation of bats and their environment. MoE also participated in the preparation of the book "A tribute to bats" that summarizes the history and the present aspects of research and conservation of these interesting species. You will find more information at: <http://www.eurobats.org/> .

Ekofilm

The already 36th environmental film festival was held in three towns - Ceske Budejovice, Krumlov and Trebon from 4 to 10 October 2010. The main and overarching theme was the International Year of Biodiversity. 226 films from 40 countries were sent to the festival. The Czech Republic had 63 films, Germany, 45, France 15 Iran 12, Slovakia 10, additional films were sent e.g. from Canada, Congo, Greece, Kenya, Japan, Peru and other countries. More than 7800 people visited the festival last year. The film projections were accompanied by additional programme activities, e.g. seminars, workshops, talks, theatre performances, concerts, etc.

Conference on biodiversity conservation

The Czech Union for Nature Conservation (CSOP)⁶ organized in cooperation with other partners a one-day conference on biodiversity, which was held on the occasion of 2010, the year being declared as the International Year of Biodiversity. The event took place in the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic on 7 October 2010. A number of high-profiled speakers participated in this event, e.g. Mr. Tomas Tesar, the deputy minister of the MoE; Dr. Frantisek Pelc, director of the Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection; prof. Bedrich Moldan, senator and director of the Charles University Environment Center; Dr. Ladislav Miko, European Commission, and others, who were discussing various biodiversity protection issues, including financial issues, the role of NGOs in biodiversity conservation or issues related to ecosystem services. The detailed programme can be found at: http://www.csop.cz/docs/up/konference_bio_2010.pdf.

Biosafety and Cartagena protocol

In addition to the information above, you will find below a separate list of workshops organized in 2010 within the UNEP/GEF Project "Support for the Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework – Czech Republic" and also in order to celebrate the International Year of Biological Diversity. During the workshops, a number of outreach materials and promotional materials were displayed and disseminated, including the IYB2010 logo.

- **Use of Genetically Modified Organisms in the Czech Republic and Public Awareness** - organized in cooperation with the Scientific-technical Society on 28 January, Prague. It was held on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and beginning of the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity.

⁶ CSOP is a civic association of people who share an active interest in nature conservation and the environment. Its mission is to protect and restore nature, the landscape and the environment, to promote environmental education and support sustainable living.

- **News from Genetic Modifications Field** - workshop for experts on scientific use of genetically modified organisms organized in Prague in cooperation with the Institute of Chemical Technology, and Biotechnological Society on 15 May.
- **New Technology and Biodiversity Conservation** - organized within the MoE, a series of workshops organized on the occasion of the 2010 IYB, May 26, Prague.
- **Biotechnology in Forestry II.** - workshop for forestry experts organized in Prague on 2 June where information on 2010 IYB and related international commitments were given to the participants.
- **Genetic Resources – Biosafety Principles and Risks of Genetic Erosion** - workshop for experts organized in cooperation with the Technical-scientific Society in Prague on 10 June.
- **International Year of Biodiversity – Related Projects and Programmes** - workshop organized for both experts and a wider public in cooperation with the Technical-scientific Society, Prague, November 2.
- **Genetically Modified Organisms and Biosafety Measures** - workshop for experts and university students organized in cooperation with University and Centre for Agricultural Research in Olomouc on 3 November.
- **Nature Diversity Conservation and Role of International Organizations** - workshop organized for general public on 26 November.
- **Nature Diversity Conservation and 2010 International year of Biodiversity** - workshop organized for general public on 27 November.
- **UNEP/GEF Project – Final** - workshop organized both for experts and a wider public in cooperation with the Technical-scientific Society, Prague, November 30.
- **Czech Commission on the Use of Genetically Modified Organisms and Genetic Products – Open and instruction meeting for applicants on request** - workshop highlighting examples of the use of genetic modifications in biochemical research, in pharmacy, medicine and food production, questions around genetically modified salmon, example of risk assessment procedure of GMOs took place in Prague. The workshop was organized by the Czech Commission on the Use of Genetically Modified Organisms and Genetic Products, in cooperation with the Institute of Chemical technology, and was open to the public. Technology, Prague, December 2.
- **Workshop on Food Safety** - workshop for public organized by the Centre for Environmental Education and Ethics in Trutnov on 1 December 1.
- **Questions about Genetic Modifications** - workshop for public organized by the Centre of Environmental Education and Ethics, December 13, Trutnov.
- **Questions about Genetic Modifications** - workshop for public organized by the Centre for Environmental Education and Ethics, December 14, Hradec Králové.