

Natural Networks

for plants and people

Newsletter No. 1 - Autumn 2015

A warm welcome to the first issue our **Natural Networks for Plants and People** newsletter. Exciting activities have been going on throughout the summer in the Balkans, Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa, and our aim here is to keep you all up to speed on progress across the network. Disseminating experience and learning from one another are key objectives for the IPA network across the Mediterranean, and we hope this newsletter facilitates this exchange.

We were keen to get something out to you all quickly, so this first newsletter is somewhat shorter than we anticipate for those that follow. This is **YOUR** newsletter, so please tell us what you'd like to see included. We'll be asking for brief updates to enable us to compile subsequent newsletters – but do please send us anything, at any time, which you'd like to see included in subsequent newsletters.

Teresa, Marcos, Seona and Steve



Volunteers discuss plant monitoring methods, Long Beach IPA (© Green Home)

Who's who, and where?

The current (2014 – 2017) phase **Natural Networks** project is overseen by the IUCN Mediterranean Programme Office (Teresa Gil and Marcos Valderrabano) and Plantlife International (Seona Anderson and Steve Jones). The real work - a busy programme of activities - is being led by local partners in Turkey, Macedonia, Montenegro, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Palestine and Lebanon.

TURKEY AND THE BALKANS

Attached with this Newsletter is the second report produced for IUCN by Plantlife with input from partners, which provides an overview of activities accomplished within Turkey, Montenegro and Macedonia up to June this year. Below, we highlight the lead partner contacts and IPAs covered in these three countries:

Turkey

National lead: Rubicon Foundation (<http://www.rubiconfoundation.org>)

Main contact: Canan Orhun

IPAs: Ahir Dagi, Berit Dagi, and Binboga Mountains

Montenegro

National lead: Green Home (www.greenhome.co.me)

Main contact: Ksenija Medenica

IPAs: Scadar Lake, Vrsuta, and Long Beach

Macedonia

National lead: Macedonian Ecological Society (www.mes.org.mk)

Main contact: Natalija Angelova & Ksenija Putilin

IPAs: Prespa Lake, Dojran lake, and Ilinska Mt



Volunteers monitoring *Gymnospermium scipetarum* at Vrsuta IPA (© Green Home)

NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Fieldwork to improve knowledge of the status and distribution of selected plant species and habitats that defines IPAs is taking place in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon.

Each country had selected several endemic and threatened species that require a study of their conservation status and distribution. This diagnosis is the basis to establish conservation actions.

All the field work teams follow a common methodology that was established during the “Species field data collection workshop” that was held at Rabat and Maamora Forest (Morocco) between 22 - 26 March 2015. This methodology is available at IPAS-MED Project Documentation Platform <http://www.uicnmed.org/projects/documentationplatform/68>

The mapping unit is a kilometer square (1x1 km). The taxa selected for field inventories are sought systematically within the perimeter of each of the IPA, in areas where there are habitats that could support them. Data on other rare taxa observed during field research are also collected.

The partners from North Africa and Middle East countries and the IPAs they are working are:

Morocco

Partners: High Commission for Water, Forests and Desertification Control, and the Scientific Institute of Université Mohamed V-Agdal, Rabat

Main contact: Mohamed Taleb

IPAs : Jbel Bou-Naceur and Eastern High Atlas National Park

Algeria

Partners: Direction Generale des Forets, Ministère de l’Agriculture and Université des Sciences et de la Technologie Houari Boumediene

Main contact: Nassima Yahia

IPAs: Gouraya National Park and Aures Chelia

Lebanon

Partner: American University of Beirut-Nature Conservation Centre

Main contact: Mohamed El-Zein

IPAs: Samine-Knaisseh and Nahr Ed-Damour

Tunisia

Partner: National team of independent Botanists

Main contact: Zeineb Gharbi

IPAs: Ichkeul National Park and Dyr el Kef

Egypt

Partner: Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency EEAA and National team of independent Botanists

Main contact: Karim Omar

IPAs: Omayed Biosphere Reserve and Saint Katherine

Palestine

Partner: National team of independent Botanists

Main contact: Banan El Sheik

IPAs: Wad Qana-Wad Eshai'r and Yaseed-Ibzeik

In addition, the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC), Commission for Ecosystem Management (CEM) and World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) are supporting several activities of the IPA-MED project in North Africa and the Middle East.

The Natural Networks Platform and web sites

Key objectives for this project include fostering communication across partners, ensure effective and efficient project management, to build a network of experts for plant conservation and to make available project materials as they are produced. To this end, the IUCN Mediterranean Programme team has set up an online NN Platform. To ensure that this platform facilitates document sharing and keeps everyone up to date about the project's progress, we ask that all partners upload project documents as they are produced. A password and username had been provided to the partners by the coordination teams (Plantlife and IUCN) to have access to folders with private access. If you are a partner of the project and do not have yours, please contact the coordination team. Access the Platform here:

<http://www.uicnmed.org/projects/documentationplatform/62>

More information on the project can be found at the following web sites:

https://iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/iucnmed/iucn_med_projects/?18398/Conserving-wild-plants-and-habitats-for-people-across-the-Mediterranean

http://www.plantlife.org.uk/international/wild_plants/natural_networks_for_places_and_people/

<http://www.obanettr.net>

<http://www.greenhome.co.me/index.php?IDSP=743&jezik=eng>

http://mes.org.mk/nov-sajt/?page_id=2380&lang=en

Further and updated web site links will be provided in the next newsletter.

The Natural Networks Facebook page

Facebook is a widely used platform and an excellent way to update the wider public on project activities. We urge all partners to post as many updates – with lots of photographs – as often as possible. We'll endeavour to do likewise! Access the Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/Natural-Networks-for-Places-and-People-393875763984966/timeline/>

The IPA online database

Seona has begun the process of entering the IPA questionnaire data from the 2007 to 2010 reports in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. She is planning to contact all the coordinators in the next two months to tell them more about the database and to create logins so that national coordinators can edit and enter their own data. She is also making sure that all the data sharing agreements are in place.

Plantlife is planning a major overhaul of the database within the next year to make it easier to hold image files, to use difference scripts, and to make it easier for public browsing and querying.

UNEP WCMC have recently asked for permission to use basic IPA shape and qualifying feature data to use in their map of critical habitats as a 'first look' of sites to be avoided or investigated further in any proposed planning. This map would be published in a peer reviewed journal and they hope to create a dynamic online map in the future. We hope that many more individuals and organisations will use the data from IPAs when they are considering conservation and planning priorities.

Funding

We are enormously grateful to the MAVA Foundation and the Ernest Kleinwort Foundation for supporting the current phase of the Natural Networks Project. A key task for IUCN and Plantlife is to identify and apply for further funding to support and expand the current project. As possible funders are identified, we will be in touch with partners to discuss how we might proceed with grant applications. Should partners spot potential funding opportunities, including, for example, local businesses, do please pursue these and ask for help from IUCN and Plantlife.

External events of interest

3ème Congrès International de la biodiversité Végétale. 9-11 October. Morocco.
<http://www.cibv2015.com/>

Eco plant Med International conference. Lebanon

Ecological Restoration in the Mediterranean region: Challenges and Opportunities", Beirut, Lebanon , 14 - 16 October 2015.
<http://ecoplantmed.eu/>

Second Newsletter

The second, more detailed issue of this Newsletter will be published at the end of November – please let Steve have any stories, updates or other features you'd like included.