

PrespaNet PONT/Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation project

PROJECT: Strengthening NGO-led Conservation in the Transboundary Prespa Basin (2018-2021)

Description of the situation: Against of background of long-term efforts to foster transboundary collaboration in the basin, the PrespaNet NGO network was established in 2013. The network aims to strengthen transboundary co-operation between NGOs, as well as with protected area management authorities, acknowledging the fundamental principle that such co-operation is essential for the success of conservation efforts, reflecting the integrity of the catchment basin, its eco-hydrological functions and management needs. The network partners recognised that in order to achieve these aims the local NGO presence should be strengthened in order to better facilitate collaboration, engagement and the active participation of stakeholders in conservation issues, as well as establishing closer contact with civil society in the other two countries of the basin, as PPNEA and MES are national organisations, though they have worked in Prespa for many years.

Project objectives and specifications: The project aims to: establish the network partners in the region with local offices in Albania and North Macedonia; strengthen the network's collaboration through concrete conservation activities in the region, building their respective capacities through sharing knowledge and expertise; deepen stakeholder engagement through volunteer activities, also bolstering the connection of the region's young people from all three countries with each other and with conservation; build a paradigm for integrated cross-border co-operation on biodiversity protection.

The project has three main pillars of action:

- **Pillar 1:** *Action 1:* The partners are carrying out NATURA 2000 habitat-type mapping of shoreline wetlands in both North Macedonia and Albania, and developing recommendations for the management of important habitats. A basin-wide synthesis report will also be produced under this action. *Action 2:* A variety of communications activities promote the project, disseminating the knowledge gained under its activities. *Action 3:* Environmental education programmes seek to educate junior-school age children on the environmental values of the basin.
- **Pillar 2:** *Action 1:* MES is carrying out a 3-year 'People, plants and Prespa' programme, aiming to build support for plant conservation, protect specific species and develop a volunteer community on this said of the basin. The programme builds on experience gained during Plantlife supported Natural Networks projects carried out elsewhere in the country. *Action 2:* The partners are holding a summer school in each country. In 2018, PPNEA hosted a summer school on environmental education and interpretation, while in 2019 MES held a summer research field camp in Pelister National Park. In 2020 the SPP will carry out a summer school on wetland and water management and monitoring, in partnership with the LIFE Prespa Waterbirds project.
- **Pillar 3:** *Action 1:* This action concerns two transboundary studies on large mammals. The first, a 3-year camera trap study, will determine the presence of mammals such as lynx and jackal, as well as provide data on the reproduction and habits of other large mammals. The second, 2-year, study focuses on analysis of the diet of brown bears in order to better understand their movements around the basin over the year, as well as a genetic study that will determine the population of brown bear in Prespa. *Action 2:* Action 2 relates to a survey on depredation by large mammals in Albania and North Macedonia, and a corresponding survey on damage by wild boar in Greece. *Action 3:* The final action in this pillar foresees the development of a model of human-large mammal conflict hotspots, a set of country specific guidelines on

mitigating human-large mammal conflict and a series of pilot actions in Greece to address such situations.

Project area: Transboundary Prespa basin

Project managers and partners: The project is shared between the PrespaNet partners, the Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP), Protection and Preservation of the Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA) and the Macedonian Ecological Society (MES), with the facilitation of EuroNatur and technical support from the Swiss large carnivore NGO, KORA.

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Opening of the new MES local office in Resen



Environmental education



Mapping Natura 2000 habitat types



Summer school 2018



Research on large mammals – Working with volunteers