



## FOREST CAPERS

# Newsletter of the BirdLife Forest Task Force

#1, September 2005

BirdLife European Forest Task Force

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#### **FTF EXTENDS MAPPING OF BIOLOGICALLY VALUABLE FORESTS TO TWO NEW COUNTRIES**

This spring FTF has started its second forest mapping project. As a continuation of the mapping of forests in Baltic States (<http://www.inspirit.ee/bfm/>) the conservation values of Polish and Belarusian forests are now under assessment. The Belarusian-Polish Forest Mapping Project held its kick-off meeting in Poland in April, when criteria for defining biologically valuable forests was initiated. The second project meeting will take place in November in Belarus where the first results will be presented. The project makes use of remote sensing and national forest database information in co-operation with national and regional forest authorities.

#### **BIRDLIFE EUROPEAN FOREST TASK FORCE FORMS NEW WORKING GROUPS FOR FORESTS**

BirdLife's Forest Task Force (FTF) has been divided into four working groups, each targeting a separate sphere of forest conservation. The groups are (1) Protection of Biologically Valuable Forests; (2) Biodiversity-friendly Forest Management; (3) Certification Issues and (4) Biological Indicators and Monitoring of Forest Health.

#### **FTF CAPACITY INCREASES**

FTF's latest forest officer is Dr Andrzej Bobiec, who will assist the FTF working groups on Forest Indicators and Biodiversity-friendly Forestry. Dr Bobiec started as the FTF's Forest Biodiversity Research Officer in August.

#### **FINNISH ENVIRONMENTAL NGOs LAUNCH NATIONAL PETITION FOR FOREST PROTECTION**

Six Finnish non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including BirdLife Finland, have launched a nationwide petition to citizens on behalf of forest conservation.

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#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

BirdLife European Forest Task Force's fourth annual meeting and workshop will be held in Central Balkan National Park, Bulgaria on 13-14th October 2005. The workshop, open to all stakeholders, will be on The Social and Economic benefits of forest conservation. The event will be hosted by the National Nature Protection Service Directorate of the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Waters, and The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB).

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## FTF IS EXTENDING THE FOREST MAPPING IN TWO MORE COUNTRIES



The essential first step towards genuine protection of forest types within a country is to specify their locations. In spring 2005 FTF has started its second forest mapping project following identification of the biologically valuable forests of the Baltic States. (<http://www.inspirit.ee/bfm/>). Following this project, the conservation values of Polish and Belarusian forests are now under assessment.

Baltic Forest Mapping (BFM), includes comparison of forests meeting at least one of BFM project criteria with forests under protection in the Baltic countries. This reveals that the region's protected forest network is insufficient to ensure proper conservation of all forest types and their associated biodiversity. The results also indicate that a considerable amount of biologically potentially valuable forest is located outside existing protected

areas. Only 8% of BFM-selected forests in Latvia are strictly protected, with about 65% of all selected BFM stands situated in commercial, unprotected forests. The situation in Lithuania is similar.

Sharing the largest remaining natural lowland temperate forest in Europe, Poland and Belarus are among the most important countries from a forest conservation standpoint, providing significant opportunities for preserving natural forest cover in Europe. The following figures give an overview of the protection status of Polish and Belarusian forests.

In Poland, forests in national parks comprise only 2% of the country's forested area. Only small zones of strict protection exist within the territories of the national parks. These zones constitute not more than 25% of the total area of National parks and only a tiny 0,5% of the total forested area in Poland.

Twenty three percent of all Polish forests have the status of landscape parks, and as such do not receive strict protection. Their legal status encourages a management regime which is hardly distinguishable from that operating in commercial forests.

Most other nature reserves in Poland are forested, comprising about 1% of the country's total forest area. Again however, strict protection rules are only applied in some of those reserves. These protected areas of the nation's nature reserves represent only 0,1% of the total forested area.

The present method of conservation of valuable tree-stands (often old-growth), is through zone protection. This form of protection is based around long-term nesting sites of threatened bird species (black stork, eagle owl and raptors). Within these zones of strict protection (100-200 m around the nest) forestry actions are forbidden throughout the entire year. The problem is that they are intended to protect breeding sites, and not the stands of trees themselves. In the event that a nest is abandoned, protection ceases, and regular forest management practices can be applied. For long-term habitat protection this system is inadequate. Nest-sites can be ephemeral and the needs of the forest require a different approach.

If we define "a strictly protected area" as "a permanent wilderness area protected by law", this currently applies to less than 1% of Poland's forests. In the remaining areas, human interference often extends far beyond what can be considered sustainable. Plans in many national parks include practices typical for commercial forests – including thinning and even logging.

### **Will the establishment of Natura 2000 protect all valuable forests in Poland?**

Polish proposals for extending the list of habitats from Annex 1 included nine forest habitat types. Only three of these were accepted without modification, three more were added by extending existing definitions, and the remaining three were rejected.

According to the Polish Shadow List, which was elaborated on by NGOs, at least 150 locations should be added to the official list of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in order to fulfill the demands of the Habitat Directive. It is also recommended that the borders of 15 official SACs be modified. The extended list of SACs would include 336 areas and cover up to 9,2% of total country area; the official list includes 184 SACs – 3,7% of the country's area.

Out of 18 forest habitat types included in the Habitat Directive, only two are sufficiently represented in the official list. Eight habitat types are underrepresented, which means that the official proposal includes only core areas without sufficient coverage of all sites. Six forest habitat types are critically underrepresented, and the data for two others are insufficient for estimation of their representation on the official list. The Polish Shadow List of Important Bird Areas includes 140 locations, with only 72 being officially designated as Special Protection Areas. Differences

between the official and shadow lists are most striking in the NW part of Poland, where large forest complexes harbouring Bird Directive species such as Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, White-tailed Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, and Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, are not represented on the official list.

Belarusian forests cover about 40% of the country's territory. These are large blocks of coniferous forests, forests on low moors and transitional bogs, as well as broad-leaved forests.

In Belarus specially protected areas cover 8% of the country's territory. These areas are classified according to their function and the approach used in their protection. The only strictly protected sites are one biosphere reserve (in Belarusian "zapovednik", called the Biarezinski Biosphere Reserve) and wilderness areas of National parks. These lands are excluded from commercial utilization. Only limited restrictions are placed on the economic use of most of national park territories and reserves - "zakazniks". Even though zones of strict protection can be designated within "zakazniks" they usually do not function as such for the lack of administration. A rough estimate of the "strictly protected areas", including bogs, in Belarus totals only about 3-4% of total forested area of the country.

The most serious and detrimental environmental changes threatening biodiversity in Belarus result from large-scale drainage of wetland areas in XX century. Hydrological conditions of extensive regions have been changed, bringing negative consequences to landscape and biological diversity on both regional and national scale. Despite this, Belarus is still a stronghold of globally threatened birds: Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, Corncrake *Crex crex*, Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, all having significant breeding populations. Another threat in Belarus is that national parks and reserves must cover their own expenses. In effect within the reserve areas timber is cut and sold to provide resources to maintain the parks. As a result, national parks give a higher priority to economic activities than to nature protection. This, along with a lack of proper administration of protected areas of national and international importance, is the cause of many ecological problems and difficulties. The Belarusian-Polish Forest Mapping Project held its initiation meeting in Poland in April, with full time Polish and Belarusian forest officers hired by FTF and national partners to coordinate the project. At the meeting the Project Steering Committee and Project Scientific Review Committee were formed, the former with an advisory responsibility, and the latter having a supervisory role. Criteria for defining biologically valuable forests were also defined at the meeting. In June the Polish partner also held a national project meeting, to which a wide range of stakeholders were invited. The second project meeting will take place in Belarus during November where the initial findings will be presented. In the methodology for defining potentially biologically valuable forests, this time partly by means of remote sensing techniques, information from satellite images will complement the existing data.

## **BIRDLIFE EUROPEAN FOREST TASK FORCE FORMS NEW WORKING GROUPS FOR FORESTS**

### *Protected forest areas WG*

Many parts of E, EC, and SE Europe hold forests that have not been intensively managed for decades or even centuries. These forests, many now critically under threat from logging, represent strongholds for several forest-specialised birds and other taxa. The main task of the working group is to create a map and database showing the location of HCWFs for all countries in Europe where this is not yet sufficiently well known.

*The Forest Indicator and monitoring WG* aims at developing and promoting an avian biodiversity indicator of forest health in Europe. One of the few organisations that can deliver such data in sufficient quantity is BirdLife. BirdLife in Europe is active in developing indicators for different habitats. The FTF will also be working actively for developing Partners' capacity to monitor forest conservation area

networks, and together with forest ecologists work to improve existing indicators.

*The WG on biodiversity-sensitive forest management* aims to ensure that all forest owners across Europe have access to information and materials relevant to their forest types about biodiversity-friendly forestry. The group also promotes biodiversity-friendly forestry at the EU level, and works to ensure that Natura 2000 / Rural Development money is used for this purpose in all Member States.

*The Forest Certification WG* aims to help the Forestry Stewardship Council develop scientifically sound biodiversity regulations for certification. This group keeps the BirdLife Partnership and other forest stakeholders informed of upcoming certification issues, particularly within the FSC.

## NEW RESEARCH OFFICER FOR FOREST TASK FORCE



Dr. Andrzej Bobiec

A forestry graduate (M.Sc., Cracow), I came to Białowieża in 1986. Since 1989 at the Forest Research Institute, Białowieża, I began studying soil/vegetation spatial variability in natural and managed ecosystems. In 1996 I defended the doctoral dissertation on the spatial structure of Białowieża Primeval Forest (BPF) communities.

In 1995 I co-founded the Society for Protection of the BPF (TOPB), an ENGO aimed at improvement of the BPF conservation standards. Among its achievements are partial enlargement of the BNP and a temporary ban on felling in old-growth BPF stands.

Hired as a BNP research officer, I extended my studies to stand dynamics and dead wood, comparing the reference assemblages of the strict nature reserve to analogous ones subject to silvicultural activity. The results, published in several scientific papers, confirm that even a "best practice" forest management policy is incompatible with the natural course. When applied to a natural forest it leads unavoidably to a dramatic change of the ecosystem character. This view, correlating with the message of BirdLife Forest Task Force's recent publication "How much – How to?" (Hanski & Walsh 2004), was reflected in the newest monographic publication devoted to dead wood: "The afterlife of a tree" (Bobiec et al. 2005).

As a TOPB representative, I participated in the negotiations on the future of the BPF involving governmental and local authorities, forestry commission and NGOs, and co-authored the project of the management plan for the entire BPF protected as national park ([www.topb.most.org.pl/topb\\_prin.html](http://www.topb.most.org.pl/topb_prin.html)). My personal research and advocacy experience correlates with the general feeling that the existing institutional/management solutions are incompatible with the state-of-the art ecology and conservation biology, and they prove very inefficient in protecting European forest ecosystems. I firmly believe, however, that European integration creates new

opportunities for the conservation efforts based on an ecosystem approach. I fully identify myself with BirdLife FTF policy and feel honoured and excited to join such a prestigious conservation community – both as a scientific expert of the Belarus-Poland Mapping Project and as FTF's Forest Biodiversity Research Officer (FBRO).

As a FBRO, I will work on indicators helping to identify natural or almost natural conditions. My inquiry will consider not only species, but also processes, structural features, historical evidence etc. It is a huge field, and I will be relying on the information collected and shared by others. I would be very obliged for comments or suggestions from others working on the same tasks. Thank you all in advance!

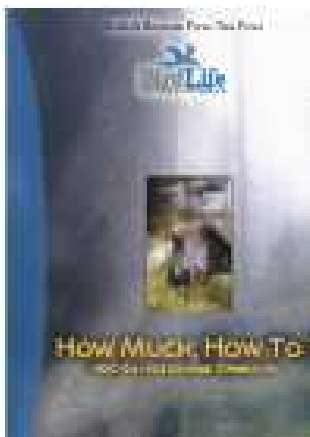
## FINNISH ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS LAUNCH NATIONAL PETITION FOR FOREST PROTECTION

In February 2005, six Finnish non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including BirdLife Finland, launched a nationwide petition to citizens on behalf of forest conservation. Outside northernmost Lapland an average of less than two per cent of Finnish forests are protected, far below the ecological threshold needed to prevent large scale extinctions of species requiring natural forest conditions to survive. Outside protected areas Finnish forests are among the most intensively managed in the world, with conditions far removed from the natural. Clearcutting is virtually the only form of final felling, with no restrictions on the size of the area.

Finnish NGOs have now opened a website where members of the public can sign a petition appealing for the protection level of forests to be increased. To date almost 100 000 people have signed the petition at the site, which also gives ecological information on why forest protection is important and answers typical criticisms often levelled against forest protection. The website is available also in English: [www.metsavetoomus.fi](http://www.metsavetoomus.fi)

## BIRDLIFE FOREST TASK FORCE LAUNCHES NEW FOREST CONSERVATION BOOK

Europe needs to protect ten per cent of her forests and manage the rest in a much more wildlife-friendly manner. This is the message of a new book "How Much, How To ? – Practical Tools for Forest Conservation published by BirdLife's Forest Task Force. The book draws together scores of recent studies in forest ecology and experiences from practical conservation programmes around Europe to make direct legal and policy recommendations to European nations about how much and in what manner to protect forests.



Professor Ilkka Hanski of the University of Helsinki, author of the "How Much" section of the book, notes that in recent years, such things as forest certification and other wildlife-enhancement measures in commercial forests have perhaps given the impression that leaving small patches of habitat here and there is enough to save even rare species. This belief is false, a fact predicted by ecological theory and confirmed in scores of field studies around Europe. Wildlife-friendly forest management has its place as a supporting measure – for example, in forming buffer zones around fully protected forest areas - but cannot replace the need for a network of protected forests where natural conditions are permitted to prevail. Many specialised species need such conditions to survive and will go extinct without them.

European forest legislation is on the whole progressive, but our policies lacks overall vision of how or even what we need to achieve. Lack of a comprehensive and logically reasoned forest conservation programme gives forest industries the impression of a never-ending forest protection crusade, when in reality protection needs are modest and could be reached relatively easily over a few decades." BirdLife's publication provides a clear programme as well as a yardstick for measuring progress towards truly sustainable forest use across Europe. For example, it demonstrates large gaps in the EU's Natura 2000 programme for forests: one of the most urgent needs we identify is for an independent ecological assessment of forest conservation gaps in Europe's forest conservation area network.

The worth of forests is still all too often measured purely in terms of saw-wood and pulp. Increasing the amount of properly protected forests is ecologically essential, but also socially sensible and economically advantageous. Larger tracts of protected forest such as national parks have enormous tourist potential as well as being repositories of Europe's natural forest heritage. Well developed tourist programmes generate more for rural areas than their timber would – logged once for the benefit of a few, and then providing nothing for decades. Environmental officials need to attach sustainable commercial development programmes to conservation initiatives, so that local people see benefits quickly that compensate for lost timber concessions. The publication is available for free download off the FTF web site <http://forest.birdlife.org>.

## 2005 FTF WORKSHOP

**FOREST CONSERVATION IS OFTEN CLAIMED TO LEAD TO ECONOMIC LOSSES, ESPECIALLY FOR LOCAL PEOPLE. WITH CORRECT PLANNING AND KNOWLEDGE THIS DOES NOT NEED TO BE THE CASE.**

### **"Economic and social benefits of forest conservation"**

- Maximising the economic and social potential of forest conservation
- Solving the bottlenecks of developing eco-tourism
- Forest conservation as a tool to improve rural livelihoods

**Central Balkan National Park,  
Bulgaria 13-14 October 2005**

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**JOIN THE FTF IN BULGARIA TO DISCUSS SUCCESSFUL FINANCING OF TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURES, TRAINING LOCAL STAFF, AND ATTRACTING HIGH-QUALITY BUSINESSES TO THE PROTECTED SITE REQUIRES SKILLS FROM MANY SECTORS!**