

# Fires are destroying the main biodiversity hotspots in Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Title

The greatest ornithological hotspots in Bosnia and Herzegovina , the natural park Hutovo blato and Livanjsko polje (the biggest karst field in the world),were destroyed by fires in early October. The fires, according to the ornithological group 'Our Birds' are the result of negligence and a complete lack of interest for nature conservation from the authorities in the county.

Fires are a common problem in Bosnian biodiversity hotspots because local people use burnings for weed control. However, fires are also damaging soil and biodiversity and left uncontrolled they threaten protected areas. The nature conservation system in Bosnia and Herzegovina fails in many aspects.

The main problem is the lack of interest by the authorities. The limited budget and human capacity do not provide for the implementation of suitable management, conservation and protection programmes. For example, the natural park 'Hutovo blato' has been burned to the ground in the last few days, probably by setting fires to burn unwanted vegetation. The park is a Ramsar site and IBA and is formally designated as a protected area.

The government has been reducing conservation budgets each year, which lead to the dismissal of Ranger services, increased poaching and no control or maintenance of the park infrastructures. The group 'Our Birds' is ringing the alarm bell on those serious problems and hopes that the decision makers will come out with a pro-active solution to improve the legislation on conservation and protection of the biodiversity in Bosnia and Herzegovina .

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