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REGALP research project on cultural landscape change

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In 1993 the Swiss Pro Specie Rara Foundation published a study based on a survey of livestock breeds throughout the Alps in which about a hundred endangered breeds and types were identified. In order to monitor the situation in the long term and be able to recognise negative developments at an early stage, the decision was taken to establish the Monitoring Institute for Rare Breeds and Seeds in Europe.

In 1999 the Monitoring Institute was asked to revise and update the original study and to add a section on cultivated plants. The work was commissioned under the patronage of CIPRA International and financed by the Bristol Foundation (Zurich/CH).

The decision to update the study was taken in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio de Janeiro, 1992). To implement the Rio convention in agriculture, a global plan of action was approved in 1996, imposing a duty on all the countries of the Alps to protect genetic resources in agriculture and to draw up National Action Plans.

In view of the size of the study it has been designed as a reference work in two volumes. A summary in five languages – the four languages of the Alps plus English – is already available as a pdf file and is being printed by Paul Haupt-Verlag in Berne. The printed version will also include a CD with the complete text in English and German.

See also the article on Pro Specie Rara in alpMedia no. 08 <http://www.alpmedia.net>

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Links

<http://www.monitoring-inst.de/projekte.htm>

(download of the summary of the study)

<http://www.save-foundation.net/> (Foundation for Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe)

Sustainability competition for communities in the Alps

(10.5.2002) For this year the Alliance in the Alps local authority network has announced a second competition for sustainable projects in Alpine communities with prizes for the winning project and two runners-up. The competition is open to all communities in locations covered by the Alpine Convention.

The Alliance in the Alps local authority network was established to promote sustainable development in all Alpine communities. Its annual "Community of the Future" award is intended to promote local authority projects related to sustainable development in the Alps. Local authorities can enter projects implemented in one or more of the fields covered by the various sections of the Alpine Convention and embedded in an overall concept for sustainability within the community. They are encouraged to work for sustainable development on both a communal and a global scale, and at the same time to integrate ecological, economic and social aspects.

The first prize for the "Community of the Future" will be a cheque for € 4,000, and there are two prizes for the runners-up of € 1,500 each. This year's prize-giving ceremony will be held on 25 October in the framework of the annual Alliance in the Alps conference in Salgesch/CH.

Local authorities interested in entering the competition can download the entry papers from the Alliance website at <http://www.alpenallianz.org> or obtain them from the Chairman at the following address: Gemeinde Mäder, Rainer Siegele, Bürgermeister, Alte Schulstrasse 7, A-8641 Mäder, r.siegele@maeder.at. Closing date is 2 August 2002.

Bearded vultures released in the Alps

(7.6.2002) The cross-border project for the resettlement of bearded vultures in the Alpine region is now bearing fruit. (A) Two young bearded vultures have been released in the Hohe Tauern National Park (A), and three broods were observed in spring in both the Stelvio National Park (I) and France.

In spite of the current total of some seventy bearded vultures living in the wild, the experts say that more young birds will have to be released to ensure the long-term survival of the population.

In the framework of the resettlement project, the Austrians are trying to re-establish the bearded vulture as a resident bird following their extermination in the Alps in the 19th century. The project sponsors include the Hohe Tauern National Park and the WWF (World Wide Fund For Nature).

Since 1986 a total of 114 bearded vultures have been released in the Alps. The two latest additions are called "Ambo" and "Franz" after their sponsors. They will continue to receive support from their minders in the summer to enable them to adapt to their original habitat step by step. By August they will be fully independent and will then leave the resettlement site.

Sources: Die Südostschweiz, 01.06.2002; WWF Austria press release, 31.05.02, <http://www.wwf.at/News/news679>

Bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*)



© WWF/ Hans Glader

Noise and pollutants in Alpine valleys

(17.5.2002) The closure of the Gotthard Tunnel offered an opportunity to study the effects of traffic with regard to noise and pollutant emissions in the form of a before-and-after analysis.

The cantons of Grisons, Ticino and Uri presented a report showing that HGV traffic is the main cause of air pollution in the Alpine Valleys. The study involved measuring the levels of nitrogen oxides, fine dust, soot and particulates before and after closure of the tunnel and again following reopening. The traffic diversion was accompanied by a demonstrable shift in pollutant levels. Chur and Roveredo had 112 and 142 percent respectively higher total NOx levels than in the same period of the previous year. The topography of the Alpine valleys is an additional obstacle to dispersal of air-borne pollutants. In view of the reduced ventilation of the valleys in winter and at night compared with the summer and daytime, experts are against any move to relax the night-time ban on HGVs. Similar results were obtained with regard to noise. Here, too, the mountain topography exacerbates the problem as a result of reflection of the sound waves from the adjoining slopes. Mountain valleys, the report concludes, are more sensitive to both types of impact than flat terrain.

Sources: Der Tages-Anzeiger, 14.5.2002; NZZ, 14.5.2000

REGALP research project on cultural landscape change

(7.6.2002) In recent years growing political importance has been attached in the EU to the landscape as the interface between nature and culture.

In future the cultural landscape is going to play an even more important role in regional development and will undergo still faster change at the same time.

“REGALP – Regional Development and Cultural Landscape Change – the Example of the Alps” is a research project set up to meet today’s need for knowledge with regard to the interrelationships between spatial development and changes to the cultural landscape. The thinking behind the project is to encourage new departures in national and European policymaking in the interest of sustainable development. The project is funded out of the 5th Framework Programme of the European Union.

The project team comprises researchers from six countries of the Alps and a variety of disciplines. Their research covers the whole of the Alpine space and involves close collaboration with local actors selected for pilot regions in every country.

Source: REGALP folder; <http://www.regalp.at>

The cultural landscape



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ForumAlpinum – international conference on “The Nature of the Alps”

(24.5.2002) On 23 – 27 September 2002 the Interacademic Commission for Alpine Studies (ICAS) is holding its fifth ForumAlpinum in Alpbach/A. The event is targeted not only at the research community but at all actors and stakeholders in the humanities, the natural and social sciences, and at artists, managers and politicians with an interest in developing future perspectives for Alpine research. The theme of the conference this year is “The Nature of the Alps”. The focus is not just on an objective inventory of the state of the natural environment in the Alps but also on today’s perceptions of its state, and the use and protection of the environment.

The programme is a mix of lectures, poster presentations, exhibitions, workshops and excursions. For the plenary sessions there will be simultaneous translation in English, French, German, Italian and Slovene.

Information and registration: <http://www.forumalpinum.org>

Top-level meeting on sustainability in the Alps and the Carpathians

(29.5.2002) Government representatives are meeting on 17 - 19 June 2002 in Bolzano/I to discuss Italian experience to date with regional co-operation in the Alps and to set priorities for co-operation in the Carpathian Mountains. The conference is entitled “Sharing the Experience – Sustainable Mountain Development in the Carpathians and the Alps” and it will address such topics as the preservation of biodiversity, sustainability in tourism, development and transport, and energy and water management. The meeting is being hosted by Sergej Kurykin, Ukrainian Minister of the Environment, and Italy, which this year has the presidency of the Alpine Convention. Information: harald.egerer@unep.ch or <http://www.unep.ch/roe/mtgs20.htm>

Clever Travelling – ten tips for ecological travel and attractive holidays

(24.5.2002) As a contribution to the International Year of Ecotourism, the environmentalist organisation Nature Friends International has issued a travel guide with a difference called “Clever Travelling” for tourists who want to combine ecological values with the holiday experience. The ten tips are designed to show how intelligent and considered forms of travel can actually increase the pleasure element of the active holiday experience. The brochure is accompanied by an interactive Internet questionnaire (<http://www.checkyourtravel.info/>), which permits users to evaluate their personal travel habits and to receive advice for a healthier travel ecobalance. The brochure can be downloaded from <http://www.nfi.at/deutsch/Arbeitsbereiche/tourism/ecotour/documents/clevD.pdf>

“Active for the Alps” youth competition

(24.5.2002) In the framework of the International Year of Mountains, the German representatives of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) are holding a youth competition called “Active for the Alps”. The purpose of the competition, which is open to young people aged 13 to 18, is to encourage them to reflect on the problems confronting the Alps and to help find solutions in the form of measures for awareness-building or protection for this beautiful and unique natural environment. There are prizes to be won worth a total of € 15,000. Closing date is 25 October 2002. Further information is available from <http://www.alpen-aktiv.de> or CIPRA Deutschland e.V., Heinrichgasse 8, D-87435 Kempten, kubutsch@cipra.de

Miscellaneous

New publication on “Organisation and Management of Tourist Flows”

(10.5.2002) The April edition of the quarterly journal “Revue de Géographie Alpine” is devoted to the management of tourist flows. Growth in tourism in mountain regions is no longer questioned. However, there is still a lack of knowledge on how increased mobility in tourism is impacting the natural space, the culture and also the economy of mountain regions. The articles address such topics as how to develop strategies for the sustainable management and control of visitor flows to mountain regions, and the methods and instruments to be used. The research community has a role to play in evaluating political programmes and finding solutions for the sustainable management of tourist flows at the local and regional levels. The articles, which relate to various mountain regions throughout the world, include a summary in English and/or French.

Information: <http://iga.ujf-grenoble.fr/teo/publica/rga.htm> (French)

Tax relief for HGV fuel approved by the EU

(10.5.2002) France, Italy and the Netherlands have been providing indirect tax relief and subsidies for HGV fuel since 2000, and on 6 May 2002 these practices were formally approved by the EU member states, even though the European Commission had argued against them. See the EU's White Paper on Transport.

<http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/de/lvb/l24138.htm> Sources: La Tribune, 3.5.02; Les Echos, 6.5.02

Europe's first cross-border geothermal district heating plant

(24.5.2002) On 21.05.02 Bavaria's Minister Erwin Huber opened Europe's first cross-border geothermal district heating plant. The facility is located on the Austro-German border between Simach/D and Braunau/A. Bavaria has plans to make more use of renewable energy sources and is targeting a 13 percent share of total energy consumption in the medium term. That puts Bavaria well above the German average. Out of a total of some 25 billion kWh of electricity generated from renewable sources in Germany, about 43 percent comes from Bavaria.

Source: Bavarian State Chancellery, 21.05.02

International conference: “Mountain forests: lessons learned, societal challenges and a vision beyond 2002”

(24.5.2002) From 26 – 28 June 2002 there will be an international conference in Navarra/Spain on the subject of the mountain forest. The goal is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various actors and institutions in mountain forest management. The conference is being held in collaboration with prominent international organisations and partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the Mountain Forum, the European Union and various national governments. Information: <http://www.mtnforum.org/calendar/events/0206icma.htm>

International seminar on ways of communicating the mountains as a natural and cultural heritage

(29.5.2002) From 7 – 10 November 2002, Nature Friends International, the Polish Tourism Association (PTTK) and the European Network for Heritage Interpretation are holding a seminar in Zakopane/Poland on the subject of guiding, interpretation and eco-education in mountain regions. The purpose of the event is to generate an exchange of information, experience and ideas on such subjects as the mountains as educative locations, the main messages for mountain guides, the role of mountain guides in eco-education, the choice between technical and cultural approaches to guiding, conflict or collaboration in the case of tour operators and environmental protection, etc. Simultaneous English-German translation will be provided. Information: Manfred Pils m.pils@nfi.at or Piotr Dabrowski opptk@eko-tourist.interkom.pl

Public transport in the Alps

(7.6.2002) The Krefeld group of the German Alpine Club has produced a collection of links relating to public transport in the countries of the Alps, i.e. Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland – the perfect way to plan your next visit to the Alps.

<http://www.alpenverein-krefeld.de/verkehr/verkehr1.htm>

Agenda

“Fire in the Alps”: Mountain fires throughout the Alpine space as a signal for the need to preserve the natural and cultural heritage

After nightfall on 10.8.2002; information and registration: <http://www.feuerindenalpen.org>

“Focus on the Alps”: CIPRA International's 5th summer academy

19.8.–6.9.02: general course; 29–30.8.02: seminar on “Leisure – Mobility – the Alps”; Schaan/FL; in German with simultaneous translation into Italian. Information and registration: <http://www.cipra.org>