

**Press release: International workshop on Carpathian upper mountain forests**

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2002

**Keywords:** mountains, forests, forest conservation, workshops, Carpathian.

International Workshop "Carpathian upper mountain forests" was held on 26-28 April, 2002 in the village Kostryno, Trans-carpathian region (Ukraine) on the territory of the Uzhansky National Nature Park as a part of the International Biosphere Reserve "Eastern Carpathians". Researchers, nature conservationists and NGOs representatives from Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary (altogether over 30 members) took part in this event. The Workshop was organized by Laboratory for Nature Conservation and Department of Botany of the Uzhgorod National University, Institute of Ecology of the Carpathians NASU and Uzhansky National Nature Park, and was carried out within the International research project, supported by the Carpathian Foundation.

The main aim of the Workshop was create a consolidated forum for scientists, specialists in nature protection, practitioner and the public of the Carpathian region who rather frequently have an opposite attitude to the evaluation of the state and possible ways of the mountain forests conservation and management; for exchanging of results, discussing of eventual failures and exploring knowledge gaps on this priority field.

26 reports were prepared during the plenary and 7 workshop sessions. The reports were prepared by famous scientists from the Ukraine - S. Stoyko and K. Malynovski (Institute of Ecology of the Carpathians NASU), V. Komendar (Uzhgorod National University), Hungary - Z. Rakonczay (WWF-International, Danube-Carpathian Programme Office), Czech Republic - A. Bucek and Z. Hruby (Mendel University of Agriculture), M. Rezek (DUHA Movement - Friends of Earth), Poland - W. Mroz (Institute for Nature Conservation PAS) and J. Mitka (Jagellonian University). Great attention was paid to practical problems of transition to stable forestry in mountain ecosystems. These problems were elucidated in reports of the following: V. Kichura (Department of Forestry, State Administration in Trans-carpathian region), F. Herbut (Carpathian Forest Research Station), Ju. Pavley (Uzhansky National Nature Park), T. Bauman (Ukrainian Land and Resource Management Center) and others.

The main attention of NGOs was paid to the problem of public participation in saving and monitoring of mountain forests. Representative of the "Wolf" Forest

Protection Movement R. Micanik from Slovakia shared such experience of activity. This organization is a coordinator of the programme on forest conservation in Central-East Europe for a long time. President of the Our Home Association Ju. Wasidlow dwelt upon the questions of peculiarities of the process of joining of the Ukraine to the Kyoto Protocol as well as the celebration of the International Year of Mountains. Some videos and presentations on the experience of one or another organization were seen during the Workshop. Information on ecological-education activity of the Trans-carpathian Ecological Naturalistic Centre of Youth, which was presented by its Chairman A. Herevich and achievements of the Tisza Ecological Centre on conservation of the biodiversity, which were told by Ja. Syvokhop, attracted the special attention.

Among the most topical tasks of research, nature protection and practical activity, Workshop participants determined the problem of renaturalization of upper treeline in the Carpathians, which under the long-term anthropogenic pressure for the last centuries decreased hundreds of meters down. As a result of anthropogenic transformation an ecological balance in forest formations of upper mountain zone has destroyed, decreasing their biological stability and water protection functions have taken place, and all of this caused more frequent disastrous floods, landslides, karst phenomenon and other dangerous slope processes.

In the carried resolution, the Workshop participants considered the priority for providing sustainable development of the Carpathian region next directions of ecological studies and nature protection actions, which can promote optimization of ecological balance and prevention of dangerous natural process.

- Ecological background of renaturalization of optimal upper treeline to improve the water and soil protection functions of forest ecosystems in the upper mountain zone.
- Improving of functions of self-regulation, self-renewal and self-protection of the mountain forests as well as increasing of forestry at the expense of reconstruction of bush vegetation and forestry of waste grounds.
- Foundation of database of the most important components of mountain ecosystems biodiversity in the region (rare species of plants, plant communities, biotopes) and their integration with the spatial information by GIS.
- Using the principles of the floristic classification (by Braun-Blanquet method) adopted in Europe for unification of methods of vegetation study in the Ukrainian Carpathians.
- Conservation of mountain forests of the region by the way of further development of nature protected fund, in particular creation of the National Nature Park "Zhdymir" on the territory of Svaljava, Volovets and Mizhgirja districts (Trans-carpathia, Ukraine).

- Carrying out of complex monitoring of mountain forests using of modern information technologies; studying of dynamics of the forest biodiversity under the influence of global climate changes.
- Implementation (exemplified by a number of foreign countries) of reliable system of the forest certification with the aim of ecological evaluation of forest growing and wood exploitation.
- Improvement of propaganda measures and ecological education, increase the public participation in the process of providing of sustainable forestry development.

Commending a great actuality of studies, carrying out by collaborators of the Laboratory for Nature Conservation of the Uzhgorod National University, Workshop participants approved the proposal to request the financial support from the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine, which is one of the co-founders of the Laboratory, for study on the problem of upper mountain forests.

Workshop participants carried out interesting excursions to the Stuzhitsa massif of the Uzhansky National Nature Park where fragments of beech and green alder krummholz on the upper treeline has been conserved best in all Ukrainian Carpathians. They visited also unique in world practice monitoring research plots in beech-fir virgin forests in the Javornik, which were founded by famous Czech scientist-geobotanist prof. A. Zlatnik more than 60 years ago.

During sessions and field excursions Workshop participants were satisfied with the wealth and grandeur of the Carpathians, to ponder over increasing of scale of ecological problems and to think about their solution. History teaches us that folk wisdom is how the people saves its environment and use natural resources. If we want to be alive in a new millenium and do not lose our home - Wooden Carpathians, it is the time for common activity.

Vladimir KRICSFALUSY is a Senior Researcher of the Uzhgorod National University He is also a Coordinator of the International Project "Carpathians upper mountain forests" and the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the International Workshop.

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### **Notes to readers**

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