Plant diversity in South East Europe

Elizabeth Radford, Plantlife International

Plantlife

An NGO dedicated to saving all forms of plants in their natural habitats, in the UK, Europe and across the World

International work:
Important Plant Area Programme

European and Global Strategies for Plant Conservation

(Plants and livelihoods programme)
An NGO dedicated to saving all forms of plants in their natural habitats, in the UK, Europe and across the World

**International work:**
- Important Plant Area Programme
- European and Global Strategies for Plant Conservation
- Plants and livelihoods programme

**South East Europe:**
- Phenomenal floral diversity
- Endemism
- Quality
- Considerable threats - in transition
- Opportunities – EU accession
IPA programme in south east Europe

1. Identify the best sites for plant diversity and provide site based information:
   - to target conservation action
   - improve local, national and regional policy
   - for a gap analysis for biodiversity protection
   - to help measure the impact of policy implementation

2. Engage stakeholders in conservation action
   - links within botanical community at scientific level
   - links between scientific community and applied conservation community
   - between science and policy
   - engagement of local people in conservation

IPA programme around the World

- 66 countries embraced the IPA concept
- 16 countries in Europe have identified IPAs
- Contributes to target 5 of the CBD Global Strategy for Plant Conservation 2010-2020
- Contributes to the CBD Strategic Plan
Important Plant Areas (IPAs) are:

- Internationally important sites for plant diversity
- Identified at national level
- Using standard criteria applicable at global level
  - Threatened species
  - Species richness
  - Threatened habitats
In Europe:

- Threatened Species (A) include: EU Habitats Directive (and Bern Convention) species

- Threatened Habitats include: EU Habitat Directive (and Bern Convention) Habitats

- PLUS -Species Richness, allowing inclusion lower plants, fungi and the best examples of non-threatened but unique and irreplaceable habitat/vegetation types

291 IPAs; 3,853,934 ha

BG: 125
HR: 98
MK: 42
ME: 27
AL: 45
RS: 62
TR: 144
SL: 57
Regional Overview

Site statistics

- Location
- Size
- Key botanical features
- Threats
- Land use
- Ownership
- Protection status

National reports
Threatened Species on IPAs
(BG, HR, MK, ME)

- 291 IPAs
- 205 IPAs - contain threatened species
- 55 species occur on 1 IPA
- 333 species <5 IPAs
- 40% of sites selected for threatened species covered by European legislation
- 55% selected because of endemic/restricted species, threatened but NOT on European legislation
- Macedonia: 8 species covered by EU legislation

_Centaurea pseudoaxillaris_ and _C. mannagettae_ Endangered Bulgarian endemic species (Aiii)
Not recognised on European threatened species lists i.e. not on the EU Habitats Directive or the Bern Convention
Threatened habitat on IPAs

- 93% - contain threatened habitats
- 16 threatened habitats found on only one IPA
- 152 threatened habitat types across all IPAs
- Forest and grassland habitats predominate

Pannonic sand steppe
Bulgaria – Priority habitat
Protection of IPAs

- 41% protected national level
- Varies between countries 18 - 71%
- Mostly lower level of protection
- 90% *should* qualify for Natura 2000 or Emerald network

But what about implementation?

How many of the 291 IPAs had management plans in 2009?

A: 127
B: 49
C: 13
D: 5

How many of the 13 management plans contain measures for plants and plant habitats?
IPAs and other biodiversity in SEE

- There are 180 Important Bird Areas in the 4 project countries – half of them are also IPAs.
- There are 66 Prime Butterfly Areas 44 are also IPAs.
Addressing threats.....

Exploring opportunities...

51% of IPAs threatened by DEVELOPMENT - tourism, roads and urban
• 31% of IPAs threatened by tourism
• 15% by infrastructure and transport
Poor FORESTRY practises – 43%

- Mainly deforestation and intensified forest management, threatening Europe’s largest tracts of virgin old growth forest
- Need: sustainable forest management in practice

Matka canyon, Treska Gorge IPA, Macedonia FYR, only locality for *Thymus oehmianus* – previously considered extinct.

WATER MISMANAGEMENT affects 26% of IPAs, dams and barrages 8% – irreversible damage
LAND ABANDONMENT – 34%
INTENSIFICATION – 28%

• Reduction of traditional low input agricultural systems

IPAs, grasslands and agriculture

• 220 (76%) of IPAs in the project countries contain grassland habitats
• 61% contain habitats of European importance
• 41% contain ‘priority’ habitats
• 43% used for grazing animals
• 7% haymaking/mowing
• 12% mixed farming

These IPAs are prime examples of HNV farmland: agriculture major land use, associated with high species and habitat diversity and presence of threatened species.
IPAs, grasslands and agriculture

• Landscapes and their biodiversity formed by millennia of low input (‘traditional’) farming practices
• Are best maintained through maintaining these practices
• Safeguarding the biodiversity therefore depends on supporting the users of this resource
• (considerable other social, cultural and economic benefits in doing so)
Thank you