Biodiversity Picnic in Macedonia

5 June, 2010
Popova Shapka

The Pan-European Biodiversity Picnic was organised in 2010 for the second time in Macedonia with the support of CEEweb. This year the Macedonian Ecological Society (MES) joined forces with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Office in Skopje to mark the International Biodiversity Day and also to celebrate the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity.

The Shara Mountain was selected as the location of the picnic, where biodiversity values can be best presented to the public. As a result of the fruitful cooperation, the picnic was completed with a series of other events.

The first event was the photo exhibition on Macedonian species, which was opened in the Natural History Museum of Macedonia in Skopje. The photographs had been collected within an open competition announced by the UNDP, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and MES as co-organizers. The 30 best photos were exhibited, so that the public could get a picture of the values and beauties of Macedonian biological diversity. Three main prizes were awarded to the best photos. Before opening of the exhibition, the publication “Analysis and valorisation of biodiversity on national level” by dr Sveto Petkovski was presented. Approximately 80 to 100 guests attended the promotion and opening event.

Unfortunately the biodiversity picnic event needed to be rescheduled because of bad weather conditions from 22 May, International Biodiversity Day to 5 June, World Environment Day. The picnic was preceded by the workshop titled “Macedonian biodiversity values and obligations towards EU accession” in Popova Shapka resort. It was opened by Ambassador Erwan Fouere - Special Representative of the European Union and Head of Delegation of the European Union, Mr. Nexhati Jakupi - Minister of Environment and Physical Planning and Mrs. Deirdre Boyd, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Permanent Representative. The main aim of the workshop was to present the global, EU and national policies for biodiversity protection, the current situation with protected areas network in Macedonia and the biodiversity values of Shara Mountain.

The presentations followed with a fruitful and friendly discussion about nature conservation among high-level representatives of the Government, other institutions and organizations, NGOs and the local population. It was emphasized that stricter measures should be taken to protect biodiversity and that Shara Mountain deserved to be declared a National Park.

In order to raise awareness about biodiversity among the public, a large number of promotion materials about biodiversity values including a leaflet on the Pan-European Biodiversity Picnic were distributed. In addition two books presenting the natural values of Shara Mountain and Important Plant Areas in Macedonia, which were recently published by MES, were promoted during the workshop.

Before the picnic lunch, a short action for cleaning the solid waste at Popova Shapka resort took place with all participants. The picnic lunch included traditional food that is typical of the region, which was prepared by locals who gladly contributed to the successful
presentation of traditional and tourist values of Shara Mountain. The picnic was followed by a short walk to the famous site Jelak on Shara Mountain.

In order to reach the non-environmental target group as much as possible, all events were promoted through different channels, including an active facebook group “Macedonian biodiversity hotspot” and announcements of the event on TV and radio channels. The entire events were covered by local and national media, such as Sitel, Telma, Macedonian Radio Television, Alsat, Kiss-Tetovo, A1 and Menada.