



Hour of Garden Birds in Georgia

The Hour of Garden Birds is a bird-watching campaign initiated by the Georgian Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources. The campaign is addressed to pupils of secondary schools and focuses on birdwatching, to be carried out on the 22nd of May that is, at the same time, the International Day of Biological Diversity. 2010 is already the second year of the successful implementation of the Hour of Garden Birds in Georgia.

The Hour of Garden Birds has been designed by a German Integrated Expert (CIM) attached to the Biodiversity Protection Service of the Ministry. It is implemented jointly in the context of the German-Georgian Technical Cooperation project "Sustainable Management of Biodiversity" (GTZ). The cam-



• - Bird observation sites

"Thank you very much on behalf of pupils for involving us in the campaign. Please have us in such activities again in future to inspire even deeper love to nature among our pupils."
Tamar Maisuradze, Teacher. Lagodekhi, Giorgeti village public school. 2010.

paign's coverage across the country has been ensured by the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources via its regional offices as well as by the Ministry of Education and Sciences through regional educational centres.

Objectives

The Hour of Garden Birds aims to increase the environmental awareness of school children and to strengthen their understanding of the close linkage between the quality of nature and the well-being of people. Specific objectives of the campaign are as follows:

- Increasing the knowledge about Common Garden Birds of Georgia
- Encouraging youth to find out more about the local fauna and

in this way bringing them close to the nature

- Promoting birdwatching in Georgia
- Promoting 22 May – Biodiversity Day in Georgia

Implementation of the campaign

At local level the bird observation is coordinated by teachers who are provided with trainings well in advance before the observation event. On the basis of special learning material (brochures, posters, etc.), teachers are explaining the main procedure and rules of the campaign as well as the specific features of the preselected 25 garden birds to the school children, who are the virtual target group of the campaign. Finally the pupils should be capable to identify the birds on their own and successfully

"Birds have always appeared around me; however, did never pay attention to them. But now, after these observations, I discovered many birds." *Keti Maisuradze. Pupil from Giorgeti village public school. 2010.*



“Parents also helped us very much to carry out bird observation. They enjoyed the Hour of Garden Birds and did bird-watching with great pleasure together with their children.” *Dzadzu Jikurashvili, Teacher, Telavi #3 public school, 2010.*

join the campaign. On the 22nd of May the bird counting is taking place. After the counting is completed specially designed and filled counting sheets are sent to the Ministry of Environment for further processing. The results of the bird observation are published and finally presented to the young participants of the secondary schools. Having feedback in the form of

“I felt great delight while watching and listening to birds. I thought to myself, how wonderful the world is with its nature and birds, and how pale it would be without them.” *Natia Msuknishvili, pupil, Tsinandali public school, 2009.*

published results keeps pupils motivated for further participation in the campaign. Moreover, the publication can encourage other schools and make them willing to participate in the Hour of Garden Birds in future. Besides, pupils are also handed practical advices and recommendations about making the surrounding environment favourable to garden birds.

2010 – The second year of success

It has been already two years the Hour of Garden Birds is being implemented successfully in Georgia. In 2010 the number of schools and pupils involved in the campaign at least doubled in comparison with the previous year and even more schools express their interest in getting involved into the campaign. This year 358 schools (14.5% of Georgia’s schools) and around 7000 pupils were involved in the Hour of Garden Birds.

In 2010 pupils counted 210 051 birds. The most frequently seen five birds are as follows: House Sparrow (25 463), Barn Swallow (18 137), Blackbird (16 845), House Martin (15 164) and Hooded Crow (13 056) whilst the least frequently seen five ones are the followings: Hawfinch (1 409), Golden Oriole (4 183), Blue Tit (5 173), Eurasian Jay (5 240) and Great Spotted Woodpecker (5 290).

The Hour of Garden Birds has definitely fuelled participants’ motivation to learn about the surrounding

“The pupils approached the task with delight and a sense of responsibility. Similar events will inevitably deepen their interest and affection to the nature.” *Tsira Berekashvili, biology teacher, Tskaltubo school “Otsneba”, 2009.*

“The event aroused interest among the pupils. We have decided to organise such bird count again in future.” *Tsitsino Siradze, biology teacher, Chokhatauri #1 secondary school, 2009.*

environment. Their verbal or written feedback reflects the inspiration for getting closer to the nature and discovering more about it. The Georgian Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources will continue to implement the Hour of Garden Birds alongside other educational activities also aiming for raising environmental awareness of the public.

“Each pupil participated in the campaign with great pleasure. While preparing for the main event day, the pupils showed profound interest towards the birds distributed around their living areas. Events like this will ensure pupils’ fondness for birds, inspire them to learn about the bird diversity of their areas and make them good friends of birds. Taking care of our environment, diversity of birds, should be the everyday business not only of school pupils but also each of us. This should be proved not by simply talking purposelessly, but with action.” *Lamara Mirtskhulava, Abkhazia #12 public school, 2009.*