



BioTopic



Threatened Species in Georgia – A Topic in Georgian Public Schools

During the last centuries the living space of a lot of animal and plant species has been destroyed due to human activities. This development took place in Georgia as well as in all other countries of the world.

In Georgia, biodiversity is severely threatened by large scale habitat destruction like timber logging, degradation of water ecosystems and intensive pasture farming. Pasture farming is mainly problematic for the sub-alpine and alpine ecosystems of the high mountains as well as the semi-arid zones found in the south-eastern parts of Georgia where, in both cases, large numbers of grazing livestock (especially sheep) result in soil erosion. In addition to that, species populations are severely threat-

It is estimated that on the whole world 50 - 100 species are lost per day and some of them even without being discovered. In addition to that, 16300 species are extremely close of getting lost forever. That is why call for actions to save biodiversity has become so urgent recently!

ened by poaching and illegal fishing as well as illegal logging activities. Due to this unsustainable type of use many species like red deer, tur, chamois, bear and numerous of fish species as well as the wild relatives of agricultural plants like the wild oat became endangered and almost disappeared in Georgia. On the other hand, the use of non-timber forest products (for food, medicinal purposes and decorative plants) is still not legally regulated. In addition to that, the status assessment for herbaceous species has not yet been completed so that rare and endemic species still remain unprotected by legislation. Also, through the construction of technical infrastructure (roads, dams, railways, channels, etc.), industrial zones and settlements species are getting threatened. The construction of dams along the migration routes of anadromous species (i.e. sturgeon), for example, has formed impassable barriers for species (like the sturgeon) moving to spawning areas. Currently, 29 mammal, 35 bird, 11 reptile, 2 amphibian, 14 fish and 56 woody plant species are endangered in Georgia and therefore listed in the

National Red List. In addition to that, 44 vertebrates found in Georgia are globally endangered and included in the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) Red List. Species like the goitered gazelle as well as the southern population (Trialeti ridge) of the wild goat became extinct in Georgia, already in the last century. The leopard as well as the striped hyena are still present but most likely just exist as isolated individuals, whilst the number of red deer has drastically decreased (only three small populations have been preserved) in Georgia.

Globally, people recognized that the loss of biodiversity is a major problem that needs immediate attention if life on earth should be maintained. For the planning and implementing of measures to protect or support endangered species it is necessary to know the state of the species. Therefore, Red Lists have been elaborated. A Red List contains species which are threatened and face risk of extinction. The most comprehensive and globally accepted Red List has been prepared by the interna-



tional organization IUCN. Apart from that, Red Lists are also prepared on country level. As a reaction to the severe loss of biodiversity, also Georgia has prepared its own Red List. In this document, threatened species living or which used to live in Georgia are listed. The Georgian Red List categories are shown in the box beside.

Vulnerable:

Is given to a species which is currently not under threat but which can be endangered in the nearest future;

Endangered:

Is given to a species which currently is not facing extinction risk, but extinction can be real soon;

Critically Endangered:

Species are categorized as critically endangered if they are extremely close to get extinct;

Extinct:

Species, which do not appear anymore in Georgia are classified as extinct.

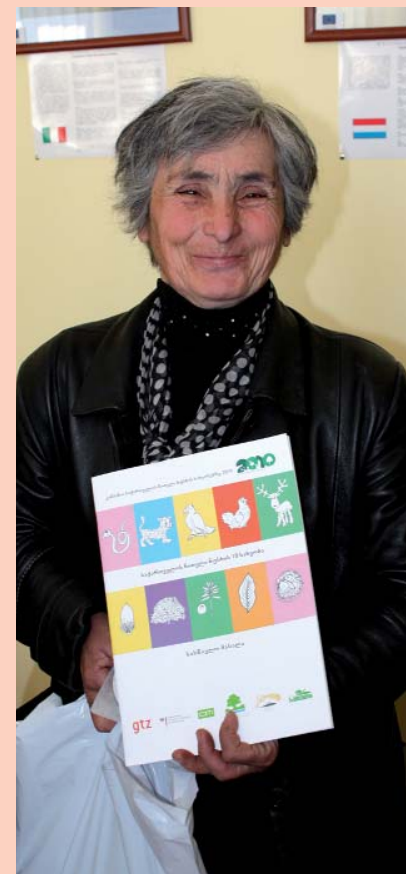
To raise the public awareness on threatened species the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources together with the Tbilisi Zoo and the Botanical Garden organized the country wide Campaign on Red List Species. This campaign is one of numerous activities in Georgia to celebrate the year 2010, which has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Biodiversity. It is implemented in the context of the German-Geor-

gian Technical Cooperation Project "Sustainable Management of Biodiversity" (GTZ) and is supported by a German Integrated CIM (Center for International Migration and Development) Expert working for the Biodiversity Protection Service of the Georgian Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources.

The environmental education Campaign on Red List Species is taking place in about 300 public schools all over the country. The main objective of the campaign is to raise the awareness of school children and teachers on ten species, which became rare during the last decades in Georgia and therefore have been classified as Red List Species. As the focus is lying on five animal and five plant species, which appear not just in Georgia but also in neighboring countries, it is expected, that the involved pupils and teachers are extending their awareness on threatened species from a national up to a regional level.

From March 22nd to March 31st 2010 a special preparatory training on the objectives, rules and principles as well as the content of the campaign was held for the teachers of public schools in all regions of Georgia. Until the beginning of the summer holidays the teachers again are introducing the campaign to the pupils. During this learning session pupils are informed about biodiversity and its

threats as well as the importance of National and International Red Lists. In addition to that, the kids are learning about the special characteristics of the 10 Red List Species like their appearance, nutrition and habitats. A special focus is put on the threats the species are exposed to in Georgia and in the Caucasus. After summer holidays the pupils are finally asked to draw pictures which will be compiled and published by the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources.



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