



# BIODIVERSITY

Nature's wonder, our treasure



THREE COUNTRIES, TWO LAKES, ONE FUTURE  
ΤΡΕΙΣ ΧΩΡΕΣ, ΔΥΟ ΛΙΜΝΕΣ, ΕΝΑ ΜΕΛΛΟΝ  
ТРИ ДРЖАВИ, ДВЕ ЕЗЕРА, ЕДНА ИДНИНА  
TRE VENDE, DY LIQENE, NJË E ARDHME



[www.prespapark.org](http://www.prespapark.org)

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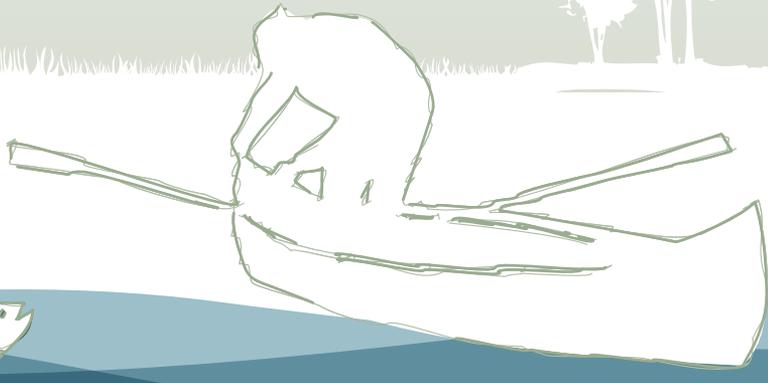
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Our **VISION** is Prespa lakes basin managed jointly by the three countries, for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and the wellbeing of its peoples.

Our **MISSION** is to offer ways to restore and keep this balance.

**Prespa Park Coordination Committee**





The word *biodiversity* is short for biological diversity. It is the variety of species, their genetic make-up, and the natural communities in which they occur. The biodiversity we see today is the result of millions of years of biological evolution. It has been shaped by natural processes and, increasingly, by the influence of humans. Biodiversity supports all our lives, it is vital for our survival and it shows us how healthy is our planet.



Hermann's Tortoise *Testudo hermanni*

Photo by Alvin Lopez / UNDP

### Nature's wonder, our treasure

We depend on biodiversity every day. The air we breathe is a product of photosynthesis by green plants. Insects, worms, bacteria, and other tiny organisms break down wastes and aid in the decomposition of dead plants and animals to enrich soils. Also, biodiversity has direct

economic benefits. Without the products and services that natural systems provide, we would not be able to survive, let alone prosper. Many medicines are developed from plants and animals. Also, for most people, the natural world is beautiful and valued for its aesthetic appeal.

### Prespa: A Global Hotspot of Biodiversity

The basin of the Prespa lakes is endowed with an exceptional biodiversity. The region has been recognized as a European and Global Hotspot of Biodiversity, not only because of the sheer number of species and habitats present, but also due to their quality, such as rarity and conservation significance.

For instance, there are 1249 species of higher plants in the Prespa National Forest in Greece alone. The studies of the FYR of Macedonia part of the basin identified 13 habitat types of European importance, 33 globally



A frog *Rana sp.*  
In Ezerani Strict Nature Reserve  
Photo by Alvin Lopez/UNDP

significant plant species and 84 globally significant vertebrate species. Let us mention, among others, the endemic forest with *Juniperus* species, the Macedonian pine (Balkan Pine), *Viola eximia*, Pelister stream trout, Dalmatian Pelican, Pygmy

Cormorant and the Balkan Lynx. The uniqueness of the basin is assured by numerous local endemic species both plants and animals, to be found in the basin and nowhere else in the world.



Foliage and cones of the endemic Molika, or Macedonian pine *Pinus peuce*  
Photo UNDP archives



Prespa Park Protected Areas map

Courtesy of the Society for the Protection of Prespa

### Protected Areas: The Guardians of our Natural Heritage

Various human activities in the basin have been threatening the rich and important biological diversity of Prespa Lakes leading

to loss of habitats and species. To mitigate these threats to biodiversity in the basin, over the past six decades, national governments of the three countries have established a

number of protected areas in the basin. These protected areas are essential for safeguarding our unique natural heritage and the benefits these areas provide to human well-being.



Bird observation platform at Ezerani Strict Nature Reserve  
*Photo UNDP archives*

### Pelister National Park

Pelister National Park in FYR of Macedonia is the oldest protected area in the basin. It was proclaimed in 1948 to protect some 10,000 ha of the Baba Mountain, including the primary habitat of the Macedonian Pine (Balkan Pine). Currently the park covers 17,150 ha, reaching the border with Greece. More than a dozen of plants have been described

from the park, including two local endemic species. The park is also significant for its animal life, including several endemic – found nowhere else in the world – invertebrate species.

Wild boar *Sus scrofa*  
*Photo UNDP archives*



### Strictly Protected Ornithological Reserve Ezerani

This reserve in FYR of Macedonia occupies 2,080 ha of the coastal area to the north of Lake Macro Prespa. In 1995, the reserve, together with the FYR of Macedonian part of Prespa Lake have been designated a Ramsar site, i.e. a *Wetland of International Importance*.



### Galicica National Park

Galicica National Park in FYR of Macedonia was proclaimed in 1958 to protect the woodland of the Galicica Mountain (25,000 ha). Biodiversity in the park is rich and exceptional. There are 12 species of higher plants to be found in this mountain only and the total number of higher plants of conservation importance exceeds 200. The rich biodiversity of plants is matched only by the varied and exceptional animal life. There are 71 local endemic invertebrate species in the park, 100 species are Macedonian (e.g. endemic to FYR of Macedonia) and 123 are classed as Balkan endemic species.

### Prespa National Forest

Prespa National Forest in Greece was designated in 1974. It spans an area of 19,470 ha, covering most of the Greek part of the Prespa lakes basin. The “core area” covers Lake Micro Prespa (4,914 ha), the adjacent reed belt, small land areas on the north and east side of the lake and a small area with age-old cedars near the Psarades village (0.120 ha). The south-eastern part of PNF has also been proclaimed a Wildlife Refuge -



Galicica National Park signpost  
*Photo UNDP archives*

Sfika (6,700 ha). Moreover, the Greek part of lake Micro Prespa is a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Its limits coincide with the “core” area of the PNF, except for the Agios Giorghis site.

The Ramsar status strengthened the conservation of freshwater biodiversity in this part of the basin. As a result, today lake Micro Prespa hosts the world largest colony of the Dalmatian Pelican (1,000 breeding pairs), rated as a Vulnerable species internationally.

Dalmatian Pelican  
*Pelecanus crispus*  
*Photo by Nehru Suleyman*





Mali i Thate, Prespa National Park, Albania  
Photo by Ardit Konomi/UNDP

### Prespa National Park

Prespa National Park in Albania was established in 1999 to provide for the protection of both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the Albanian part of the Prespa lakes basin (27,750 ha). The terrestrial ecosystem is dominated by the calcareous Mali i Thate (Suva Gora) - an extension of the Galicica Mountain in FYR Macedonia. The aquatic component includes the Albanian shares of the Prespa lakes (including the island Mali Grad).

Wild cat *Felis silvestris*



Brown bear *Ursus arctos*



Otter *Lutra lutra*

### Prespa Park: Safeguarding Biodiversity Across the Borders

The transboundary Prespa Park constitutes an important step forward toward a coordinated and integrated approach in

Photos UNDP archive



the conservation and management of biological diversity in the Prespa lakes basin. The implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park will contribute to a more effective management of the existing protected areas and, more importantly, bring a crossborder, basin-wide framework for the protection of Prespa's biodiver-

sity. More specifically, following the Strategic Action Plan, the Prespa Park Coordination Committee will oversee a range of efforts including:

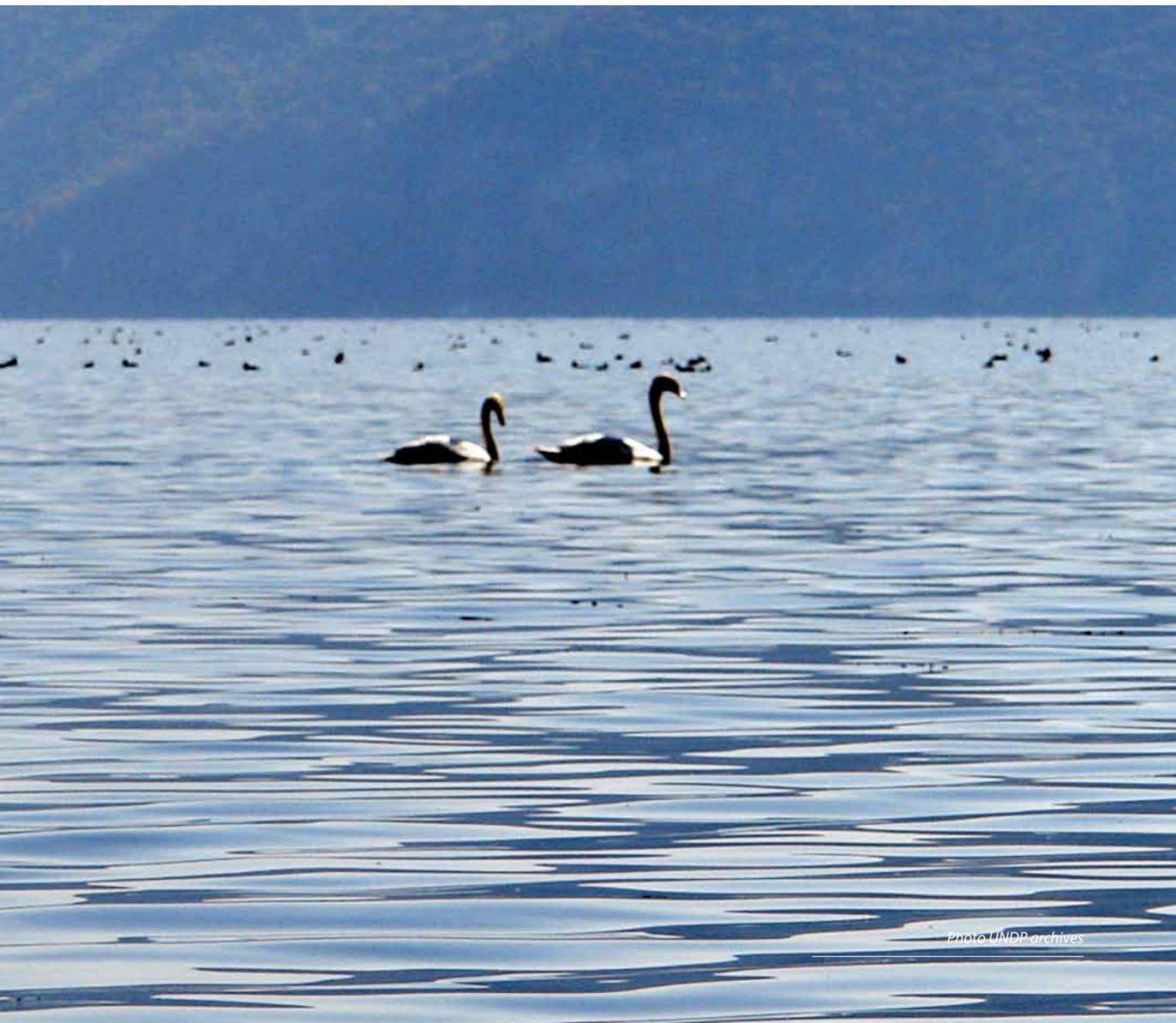
- Coordination of activities for integrated water management in the basin;
- A basin-wide assessment and transboundary management of fish and fisheries;

- Implementation of joint conservation measures on key transboundary species and ecosystems (e.g. joint forest management plan);

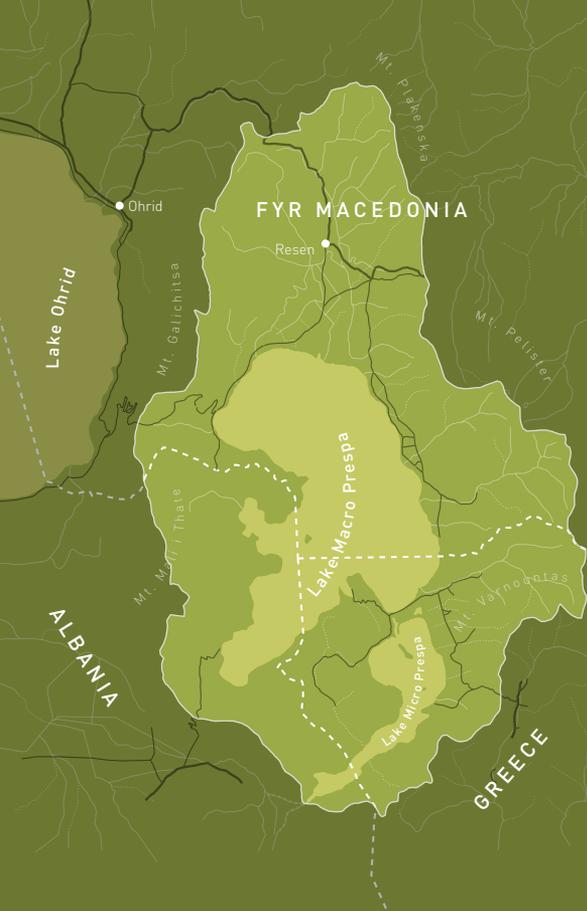
- Establishment and implementation of a basin-wide transboundary monitoring system which includes emphasis on biodiversity and pollution.



Hermann's Tortoise  
*Testudo hermanni* hatching  
Photo by Berthold Werner



*Photo UNDP archives*



**Prespa Park boundaries**

*Adapted, courtesy of the Society for the Protection of Prespa*

The Prespa Lakes basin (Southeast Europe) is a globally significant ecological and cultural landscape comprising four National Parks and several protected areas with unique habitats, flora and fauna.

In 2000 the Governments of Albania, FYR Macedonia and Greece agreed to work together to maintain the natural values of the area and introduce environmental management practices in the Prespa Park by integrating ecological, economic and social goals.

Two Wetlands of International Importance, designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, lie within the Transboundary Prespa Park boundaries. The area has been acknowledged as a Gift to the Earth by WWF-International, and European Union has included Prespa Lakes in its policies on water and species protection.

The Prespa Park Coordination Committee is a trilateral body representing governments, local authorities and civil society. It supports environmental protection and sustainable development in the Prespa Park for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and the wellbeing of its peoples.

Since 2006 a GEF/UNDP Project supports Integrated Ecosystem Management in the transboundary Prespa Lakes Basin, to last until 2011.



**Prespa Park Coordination Committee Secretariat**

530 77 Aghios Germanos, Prespa, Greece

Phone: +30 23850 51211; Fax: +30 23850 51343

[www.prespapak.org](http://www.prespapak.org)

