

Information Network for Conservation of Fungal Diversity in Southeastern Europe

Southeastern Europe, owing to the diversity of climate and vegetation, has very favourable conditions for growth of numerous macromycetes species. This is mycologically the least studied part of Europe. However, lately, there has been an increased interest for mycological research. Mycological societies have been established in a number of countries, systematic research into mycodiversity has begun, scholarly and expert journals have been launched, and there has been an apparent contribution to the popularisation of this scientific discipline.

But there has also been an enormous interest for commercial collecting of mushrooms, and a larger number of purchasers of wild fungi. Excessive collecting seriously threatens fungi, especially the rare and sensitive species.

Fungi as a live kingdom play an irreplaceable role in terrestrial ecosystems, especially in forest ones. Yet, on all levels of education they are entirely neglected. Due to the fact that we are situated on the same bio-geographical territory, and we share identical or similar problems that do not stop at borders, we are convinced that by joint engagement we are capable of offering substantial contribution to the study and protection of macromycetes in the area of interest.

Project goal and objectives

- Establishing and raising the level of fungi conservation and of knowledge about their role in nature in the area of Montenegro, Macedonia and Croatia (in prospect, on a larger scale, in the region of SE Europe)
- Raising the level of awareness of the fungal role in nature and of importance of their conservation, and raising the quality of our relation towards nature in general.

Results

- Formation of a Regional Mycological Centre in Podgorica (Montenegro) and Acquisition of necessary equipment and supplies. Establishment of information network.
- Lectures "Nature – Fungi - Man" in Zagreb and "Diversity and Conservation of Fungi in Southeastern Europe" Podgorica.
- Exhibition of fungi photographs in Podgorica and Zagreb.
- Making of leaflet, poster (Rare and Endangered Fungi in Montenegro and Macedonia), and booklet (Endangerment and Fungi Protection in Montenegro, Macedonia and Croatia) and their distribution.
- Exhibition of fresh fungi in Croatia, exhibition of exiccata of fungi in Macedonia, and exhibition of photographs and plaster models of fungi in Herceg Novi (Montenegro)
- Opening of the mycological laboratory in Skopje, Macedonia, and organisation of an exhibition of dry fungi (16.7.2001).
- Regional symposium "Diversity and Conservation of Fungi in the Region of Southeastern Europe" in Herceg Novi (Montenegro).
- Round Table, "Diversity and Conservation of Fungi in Southeastern Europe – Initiative for Enactment of Law Legislation on Fungi Conservation".
- Elaboration of an expert basis for passing law regulations on fungal conservation in Montenegro and Macedonia.
- Official letter for enactment of law legislation on fungi conservation in Montenegro and Macedonia.
- Media campaign.
- Final meeting of partners NGO-s in Herceg Novi (Montenegro).

Conclusions

1. According to Vitaker's systematisation of forms of life from 1969, adopted nowadays by the largest scholarly circles, fungi are treated as a live kingdom on its own. In the legal acts where they are not treated in this way or where they are not even mentioned, it is essential to make supplementation by amendments or replace them by new ones.
2. Taking into consideration that the collection of self-grown fungi out of commercial reasons endangers nature balance in habitats, it is necessary where it has not been done so far to solve that issue by a regulation on control of collection of self-grown fungi and protection of endangered species.
3. The regulation ought to refer to: the quantity (per species, habitat, and collector, both for commercial and personal benefits), the ways and places of collecting, the precise registration of the quantities of collected fungi per species. Where it has not been done until now, the mycological societies are obliged to prepare a scientific basis for enactment of such a regulation.
4. Permanent conservation of localities of specific mycodiversity with presence of rare and extinct species in Europe.
5. Regulate the fungi collection for scientific purposes in national parks and nature reserves by a special act of a national park.
6. Introduce an environmental tax for the collected and exported quantities of fungi, from which a percentage will be earmarked for advancement of mycology and fungi protection.
7. State institutions for nature protection along with mycological and fungi societies, amateur mushroom collectors, and lovers of nature, should attempt to launch monitoring in accordance with the possibilities.
8. Provide mid-term and long-term protection of exploitation for the habitats exhausted by long harvest.
9. It is essential that state institutions assist in the establishment of non-governmental organisations and fungi associations, and encourage the enthusiasm and work of the lovers of nature.
10. The competent institutions ought to support projects on red list compilation.