



FORESTS

Habitats of European interest



THREE COUNTRIES, TWO LAKES, ONE FUTURE

ТРИ ДРЖАВИ, ДВЕ ЕЗЕРА, ЕДНА ИДНИНА

ΤΡΕΙΣ ΧΩΡΕΣ, ΔΥΟ ΛΙΜΝΕΣ, ΕΝΑ ΜΕΛΛΟΝ

TRE VENDE, DY LIQENE, NJË E ARDHME



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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





One third of the Prespa Lakes basin is covered with forests that span 465km² including the total area of Galicica National Park and Pelister National Park. The forests in the Albanian part of the basin are all located in the Prespa National Park. In Greece, 86% of the forests are situated within the Prespa National Forest. About 40% of the 356km² of forests in the FYR of Macedonian part of the Prespa basin are located in the protected areas.



Brajcino

Photo by Nehru Sulejman

Habitats of European Interest

Forests, woodlands, and scattered trees have provided humans with shelter, building materials, fuel, food, and medicines throughout history. Today, we look to forests for a range of services, such as provisioning of goods and materials (fibre,

fuel, food, pharmaceuticals), a range of regulatory services (watershed protection, climate regulation, biodiversity conservation), but also cultural services (recreation, aesthetic enjoyment, peace and inspiration).



Grecian juniper *Juniperus excelsa*
Photo by Ardit Konomi / UNDP



Photo UNDP archives

Forests in the Prespa lakes basin constitute a wide range of habitat types. Although no habitat type can be regarded as rare at a global level, a number of forest habitat types are classed as habitat types of European interest, including the following:

The thermophilous deciduous **woodland of *Quercus trojana*** (ass. *Quercetum trojanae macedonicum*) which develops on steep, stony terrains up to 1200 metres above sea level. This type of forest habitat is registered

Molika, or Macedonian pine
Pinus peuce cone
Photo Pelister National Park



along both sides of the road between Djellas and Biglla in Albania, Ramna of Vrondero in Greece, and the area above Oteshevo and Carina in FYR of Macedonia.

Another important forest habitat type which develops in the oak forest zone is the **Grecian juniper woods** (*Juniperus ex-*



celsa) which are rare in Europe; their main area of distribution is in the Middle East. In Europe this habitat type occurs only in northern parts of Greece and in FYR of Macedonia, with the Prespa lakes basin being an important site. (e.g., Kallamas in Albania, near Vrondero in Greece, and Golem Grad, Precna Planina and Sirhansko Kale in FYR of Macedonia).

Among the forest habitat types in Pelister NP the two communities of the Macedonian Pine – Molika – stand out: the mountain molika forest (*Digitali viridiflorae* – *Pinetum peuces*)

and the sub-alpine molika forest (*Myrtillo-Pinetum peucis subass. subalpinum*). Molika forests are relicts from the Tertiary and in Pelister NP they have been preserved in their primary habitat.

Of the forest habitat types of European interest the well-preserved stand of beech forests (*ass. Calamintho grandiflorae-Fagetum* and *ass. Abieti-Fagetum macedonicum*) also need to be mentioned. Important sites for this habitat in the basin are Kalojzana – Neprtka and Volko Legalo in FYR Macedonia.



Photo UNDP archives

Silver Fir *Abies alba*
Photo UNDP archives





Pretor area in November
Photo by Sonja Seizova

Current Uses of Prespa Forests

The current uses of forests and woodland in the basin may be categorized in three groups:

Timber and fuel wood: Wood in the Prespa lakes basin is mainly used for fuel wood, both through legal and illegal cutting. Timber production is of minor importance and mainly restricted to Pelister NP as well as to Prespa NP in Albania. A

conservative estimation of the requirements for fuel wood by the population in the basin indicates that the demand may be satisfied locally on a sustainable base. However, the

firewood is sold not only to the population in the basin, but also to consumers living beyond the basin's borders. Thus, in some locations in the basin there could be a high pressure on for-

A view over Micro Prespa
Photo by Aleksandar Blazeski / UNDP





est resources. For instance, the inadequate forest management in FYR Macedonia has led to a reduction of certain plant species used solely as timber.

Fodder: Tree looping for winter fodder production is considered a problem in the Albanian part of the basin, where oak branches are reported to supply 80% of winter fodder requirements. As a result, woodland near the villages shows severe signs of degradation.

Non-timber forest products: The most important non-timber products in the study area are mushrooms, blueberries and



A view over the slopes at Micro Prespa
Photo by Aleksandar Blazeski / UNDP



cones of the Macedonian Pine (in Pelister NP only). The economic value of these products indicates that there is a pressure on these resources. Illegal hunting is reported to be a problem throughout the basin though no exact figures on hunted game numbers are available.

Photo UNDP archives



Otesevo

Photo by Nehru Suleymani

Prespa Park: Managing Forests

Within the framework of the transboundary cooperation in Prespa Park, the priority in forest management practices is given to forest restoration, fulfilment of local energy needs, and conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Special attention is paid to the specific transboundary forests biotopes, and to the

support to inclusion of some of the typical forest habitats in the zones of strict protection in the existing protected areas.

In Albania there is a need for active management of degraded forest areas through reforesta-

Molika, or Macedonian pine
Pinus peuce foliage and cone
Photo Pelister National Park





tion, rehabilitation and restoration, as well as control of forest exploitation and the development of alternative renewable energy resources, such as fuelwood plantations.

Among the priorities for forests management in Greece are the promotion of a variety of forest habitats, improvement of the status of forest fauna, and increasing biodiversity. Illegal woodcutting and woodcutting in a zone of 50m along all streams with steep slopes also present issues to be looked at.

Prespa Lakes basin forests
Photo UNDP archives



Prespa Lakes basin forests
Photo UNDP archives



Otesevo
Photo by Nehru Suleyman



Prespa
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.



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