



PROTECTING OUR WETLAND

It's up to all of us



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



www.prespapark.org

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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.

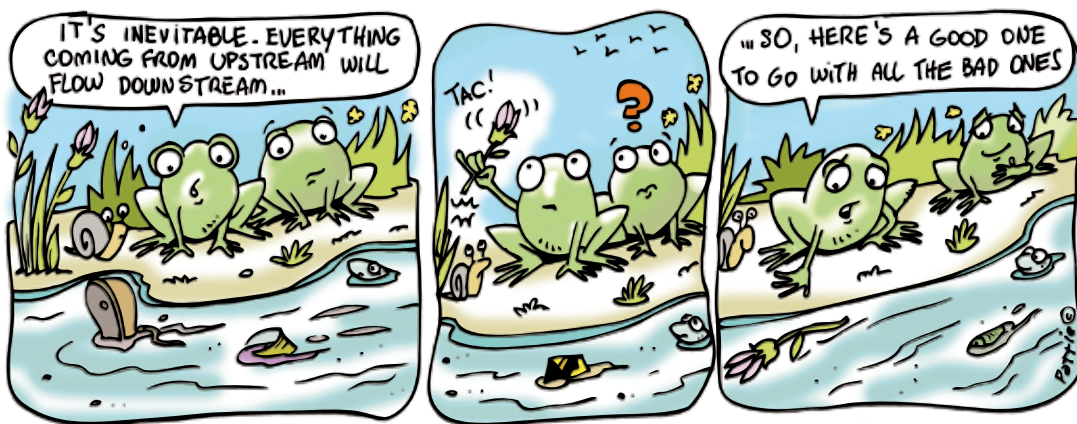
Prespa Park Coordination Committee





PROTECTING OUR WETLAND

The story about Prespa is a story about its waters and about its biological diversity – various animals and plants, and special places they need to live. We can call it *biodiversity*, but we could also say – the more, the merrier! Because this is what it is – biodiversity is simply the variety of life. Biodiversity is all living things all around us. It is in our forests and mountains, our rivers and lakes, our gardens and parks. Biodiversity supports all our lives, it is vital for our survival and it shows us how healthy is our planet.

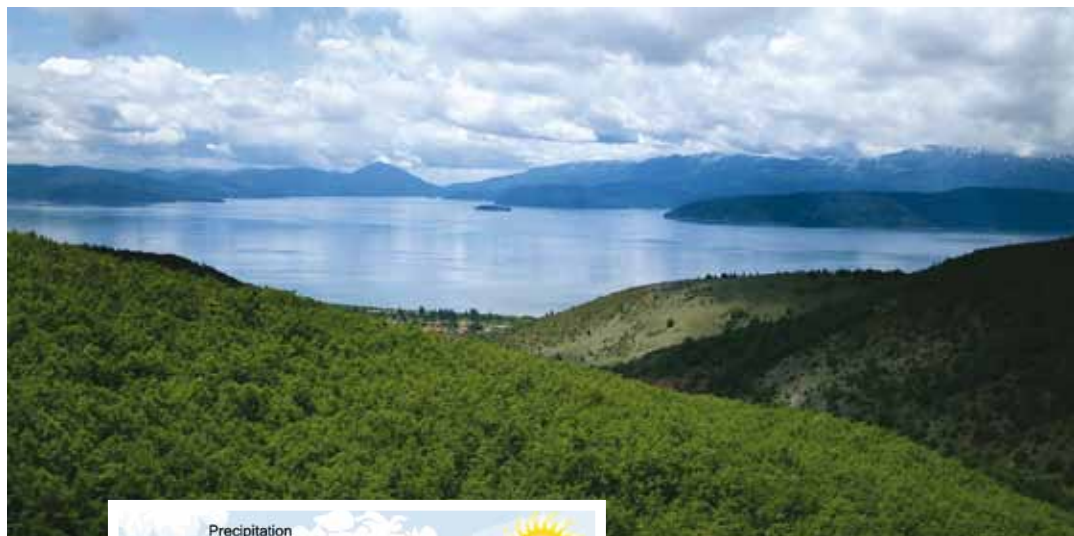


Upstream-downstream
Courtesy of the Ramsar Convention on
Wetlands Secretariat

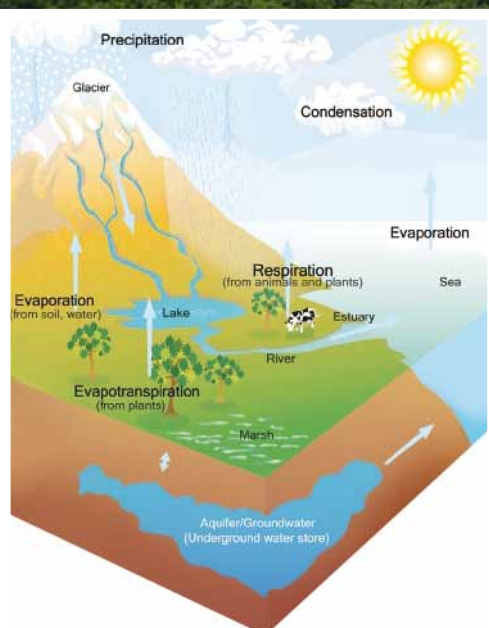
It's up to all of us

Some 12 million years ago – scientists say – there was a very big lake high up in the Balkans mountains. And then part of the mountain fell into the lake and separated it in two. This is how lakes Ohrid and Prespa were created. They are among the oldest lakes on Earth. The time was generous to Prespa (Ohrid too,

but this is a story about Prespa). It allowed for many different plants, fish, birds and animals to develop in and around the lakes. Some of them are very rare, while others do not exist anywhere else in the world – they are *endemic*, and this is what makes Prespa special.



Slivnica, Kurbinovo



The global water cycle

Courtesy of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Secretariat

The other thing that is also vital for our survival, and that is all around us, is water. It constantly moves around, between the air, the land and the wetlands. This is called the *water cycle*. When the rain falls, it may seep into the ground and end up in groundwater, or it may remain as on the surface and get to the sea through rivers and lakes. Eventually, it evaporates again into the clouds, and starts a new cycle with rain. We have recently found that wetlands – such as the Prespa Lakes – purify water and air.



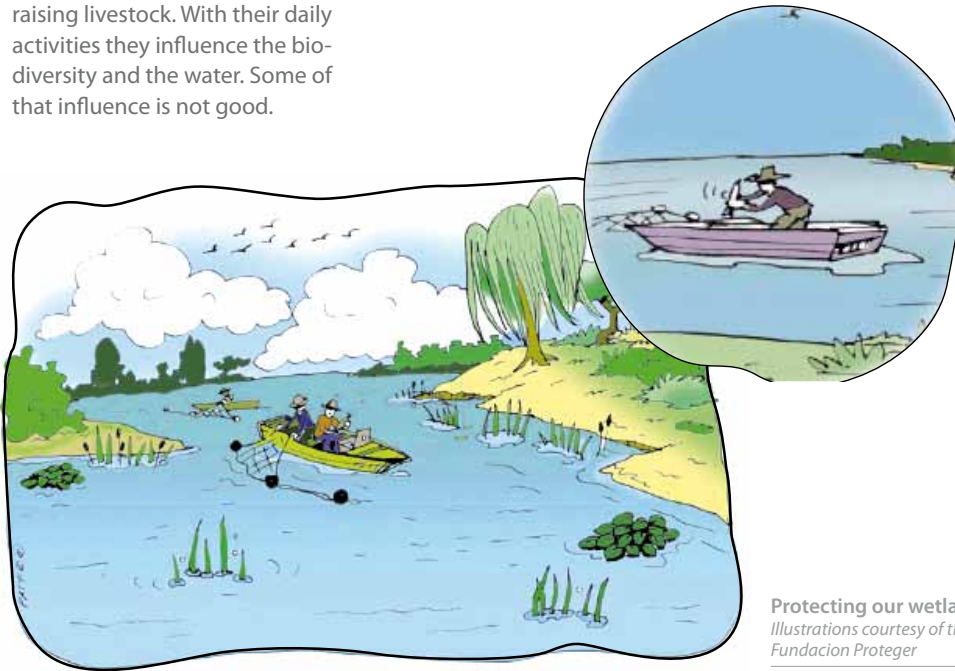
PROTECTING OUR WETLAND

Wetlands are precious for all life on the Earth. By protecting wetlands we protect all life in and around them.



Through the ages, human beings have developed their lives around the waterfront, by growing crops in the fields and raising livestock. With their daily activities they influence the biodiversity and the water. Some of that influence is not good.

Protecting our wetlands
Courtesy of the Fundacion Proteger



Protecting our wetlands
Illustrations courtesy of the Fundacion Proteger



Dalmatian pelican
Photo by Nehru Suleyman

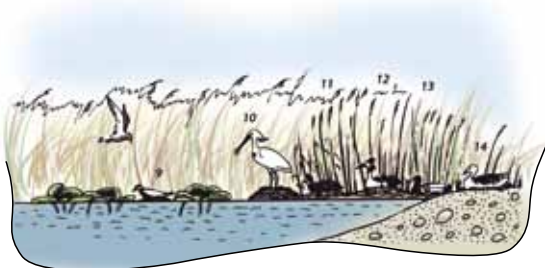
Protecting waterbirds

Prespa is home for many various animals and plants, but it is also a shelter for *migratory birds*. It is the place where they stop and stay for some time during their spring and autumn migrations between distant places. Birds travel without caring about borderlines decided by humans.

Migratory birds come to Prespa every year, some of them just to rest, others to make nests, lay eggs and teach their chicks to fly, and then they leave. When they come again, if they see that the lake has changed and is not good for nesting any more, or that there is no fish to eat, they leave to other places.

Nesting habitats of Prespa birds

Adapted from the sketch by G. Catsadorakis, Society for the Protection of Prespa Information Centre Texts, Ag. Germanos, 1995



1. Goosander, 2. Black-crowned Night-Heron, 3. Grey Heron, 4. Pygmy Cormorant,
5. Common Tern, 6. Dalmatian Pelican, 7. Great White Pelican, 8. Cormorant,
9. Whiskered Tern, 10. Common Spoonbill, 11. Coot, 12. Great Crested Grebe,
13. Mallard, 14. Graylag Goose



PROTECTING OUR WETLAND

This is what happened to Dalmatian Pelicans, one of the most ancient birds on Earth.

Many Dalmatian Pelicans used to come to Prespa regularly since long, long ago. Local fishermen still tell old stories about them, and how caring they are towards their young. Some even believe that the presence of pelicans brings lots of fish – which is good for fishermen.

And then slowly the pelicans stopped coming, because of changes to the places where they used to nest on the Micro Prespa Lake. Some 30 years ago, there were only 90 pairs that laid eggs on Prespa. Scientists and other people got worried, and decided to do something about it.

So the people built small islands of branches and other natural material on isolated shores to make space for the nests. They



Dalmatian pelican spreads wings to up to three meters from tip to tip

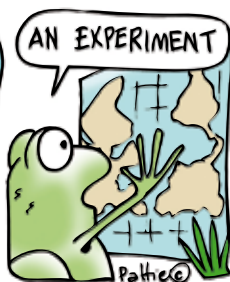
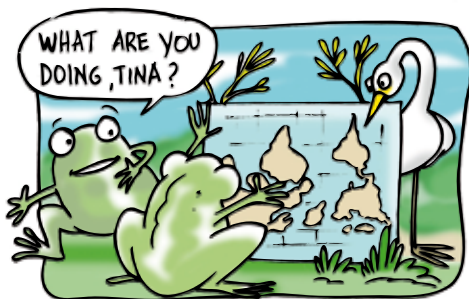
Photo by Nehru Suleyman

also replaced some dangerous electricity wires with new ones so that birds do not get caught in them, and they started telling the others how important it is not to disturb the birds. And the Dalmatian Pelicans returned!

Today, more than 1.100 pairs come to Prespa every year, and it is their largest colony in the world!

Do you know about pelicans?

They have a big bill with a pouch to catch fish and bring it to their young. There are seven kinds of pelicans in the world, but only two of them live in Europe, the Dalmatian Pelican and the Great White Pelican, and both lay eggs on Prespa. Dalmatian Pelican is among the largest birds on Earth. It has a body that is as long as the body of a grown man, and when it spreads its wings they stretch to more than 3 meters from tip to tip! There are not very many pelicans in Europe and if we do not do something, they may disappear.



Working together

As you can see, protecting birds means protecting the environment they need to breed, eat, and rest. Since nature knows no borders, this means that different countries need to work together to protect the environment, and of course, the wetlands as a very important *ecosystem*.

In Prespa, the three neighbouring countries – Albania, FYR of Macedonia, and Greece - have realized how important and special the area is for all of them. Their representatives meet regularly to decide how to preserve the waters of the rivers and the lakes, the fields around the lakes, and the nearby mountains. These are all part of the Prespa Lakes Basin, or *watershed* – the area from which all the waters end up in the Prespa Lakes. Through water, everything is interconnected, and we all depend on each other.

If the water is polluted, we will not have fish to eat, if the soil is polluted, our crops will not grow, our apples and beans and mountain tea will not be as tasty, and the forest not as green... If we drain the water from Prespa to make fields, or towns, or because we simply



Colourful shrub along Golema reka

Photo by Alvin Lopez/UNDP

use too much, we will lose the wetland that purifies the water we all need. Without frogs we would have more insects, without some birds – who knows? Perhaps too many frogs?

Children's stand at the Apple harvest festival

Photo by UNDP





PROTECTING OUR WETLAND



We can only act wisely if we plan in advance, and if we know what is good for Prespa, and what is not. We need rules on how we use water, cultivate, catch animals or fish, pick plants, and develop the land. We need to keep an eye and to regularly check whether there are some bad changes caused by something people do.

Protecting our wetlands
*Illustrations courtesy of the
Fundacion Proteger*

Nature keeps fragile balances, and we need to give back to it what we take for living. We need to care. We need to be wise, and to think about tomorrow, not only about what we need today. And we need to learn. We need to know how to keep using all that Prespa has to offer for the wellbeing of the people, but in a way that animals and plants can also live in their natural environment, and water is protected. This is called *the wise use of wetlands*.



Kittens on the roof in Aghios Germanos, Greece
Photo by Sonja Seizova

Our governments decide on how to do that, and our local communities and National Parks' authorities too. But this is not enough. Everybody who has any stake in Prespa needs to get involved. Fishermen, farmers, factory owners, tourists ... They are all called stakeholders. They all in some way depend on Prespa, and at the same time they can influence Prespa – for better or for worst.



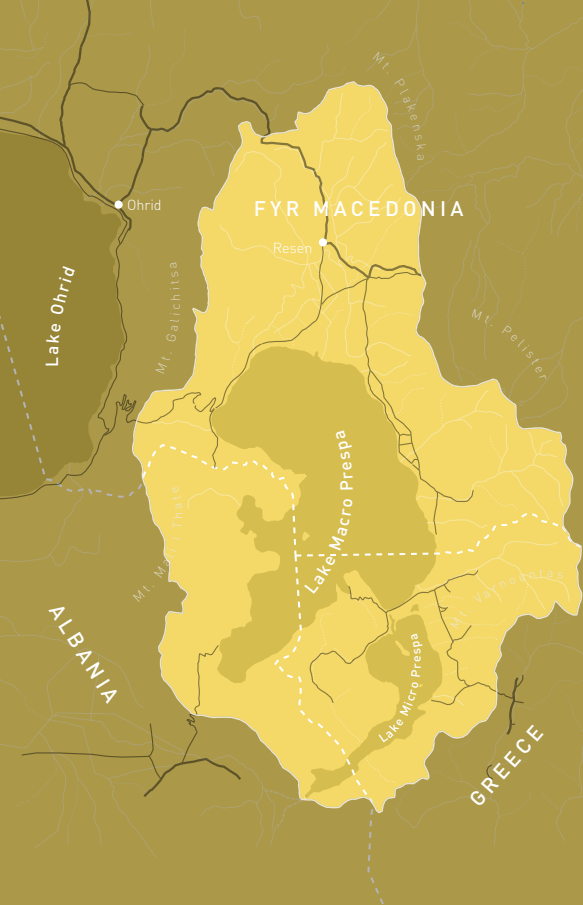
Learning together to manage together
Illustration by M. Fredrich, courtesy of HarmoniCOP



You are a stakeholder too. This special place on Earth called Prespa is your home. What would you like it to be in 20 years?

It's up to all of us.

Protecting our wetlands
Courtesy of the Fundacion Proteger



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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