

# The Latest on Mediterranean Forests

N°11 September 2008



## Editorial

collective step forward.

We know only too well that in the worldwide debate on the environment, the Mediterranean Rim, which touches three continents, is overlooked and that foresters the world over, as they get to grips with their main issues, classify the Mediterranean area as just another “hot” dry region.

Ancient history, so often cited by commentators who wax lyrical on the subject, tells us that the lands of the Mediterranean Rim were united throughout the whole area on a number of occasions in the past, whereas recent (modern) history can only record strife, revolt and difference.

Yet for us ecologists, foresters, agronomists, geographers, to name but a few, the Mediterranean does indeed form a whole which, stretching from Cape Finisterre to the Euphrates and from the Pyrenees to the Sahara and Anatolia, displays a rich array of specific features\*, as much anthropic as ecological.

It is for this reason that, following on initiatives for collaboration with the MAP (UNEP)\*\*, based on the Blue Plan and the Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development, as well as with WWF, the IAMF has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the EFIMED, the Mediterranean branch of the European Forestry Institute.

It's also the reason the IAMF is more than willing to cooperate with every organisation whose aim is the knowledge and understanding, management and preservation of Mediterranean forests and natural areas

**Jean BONNIER**

**IAMF Executive Secretary**

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\* Cf. MEDSTAT article (Eurostat) pp. 3-6

\*\* MAP: Mediterranean Action Plan, UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

## Recently, IAMF took part in...

### Montpellier (France) June 5 2008

David Gasc, project manager, attended the OCR Incendi Seminar "Improving forest fire prevention: results of an inter-regional cooperation project", organized by the Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council.

### Southern Alps (France) June 12-13 2008

Jean Bonnier and David Gasc participated in the Franco-Moroccan Seminar "Erosion, Risks, Populations", organized by the French association Forêt Méditerranéenne.

### Corte (France) September 3-4 2008

David Gasc went to Corsica to participate in the exchange forum on current forestry knowledge of the VEGETATIO project, organized by the ODARC.

### Marseille (France) June 14 2008

The IAMF held its 13th Annual General Meeting, followed by a meeting of the Administrative Board Council.

### Tour du Valat (France) September 16 2008

Denys Poulet participated in the meeting of the "Water-Environment" working group organized by the Regional Development Agency (MDER).

### Nice (France) June 9 2008

Jean Bonnier, IAMF executive secretary, took part in the seminar "Ozone pollution and its effects on the forest and vegetation", held within the framework of the VEGETPOL-LOZONE project, organized by the ADEME.

### Vivès (France) July 19-20 2008

David Gasc and Louis Amandier, administrator, attended the VIVEXPO 2008 International Conference "The Cork War", organized by the Mediterranean Cork Institute.

### Orvieto (Italie) September 17-20 2008

Jean Bonnier took part in the EFIMED Business Meeting and in the EFI field trip.

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# The Mediterranean region: a showcase of biodiversity

Extract from the article appearing in Eurostat "Environment and energy" 12/2008

The Mediterranean region is regarded as one of planet Earth's 25 "hotspots", embracing some of the world's most unique biogeographical areas and harbouring outstanding biological diversity. Hotspots are characterised both by exceptional levels of plant endemism and by serious levels of habitat loss (at least 70 per cent) and, therefore, are the focus of conservation efforts.

The Mediterranean basin is the largest of the world's five Mediterranean climate regions. It stretches west to east from Portugal to Israel and north to south from Italy to Morocco and includes around five thousand islands.

## **Mediterranean biodiversity is unique and under threat**

The Mediterranean basin's location between Eurasia and Africa, its geographical characteristics (e.g. the Mediterranean climate, dominated by cool, fairly wet winters and hot, dry summers; the fragmented relief; and temporary shifts of the tropical/temperate zone) and its role as shelter for high mountain species during glacial periods have contributed to its great diversity and the high level of endemism.

For the latter the Mediterranean flora is a showcase. Of the 25 000 known spe-

cies of Mediterranean plants (corresponding to 9.2% of the identified species worldwide and found on only 1.5% of the terrestrial surface), half are particularly well adapted, for example to dry periods, and are to be found nowhere else in the world (endemic).

The biodiversity of the Mediterranean region is, however, particularly threatened by human activities. As the number-one tourism destination, this densely populated and intensively developed region is exposed to a wide spectrum of anthropogenic impacts.

## **Wealth and vulnerability of Mediterranean biodiversity**

The great number of islands as well as Mediterranean bordering countries such as Spain, France, Italy and Morocco

contribute considerably to making this region a biodiversity hotspot. Excluding the "biodiversity islands" Cyprus (CY) and Malta (MT), the data provided here by the 9 Mediterranean partner (MED) countries illustrate the wealth and vulnerability of biodiversity in the Mediterranean.

In particular, when the number of known species is related to the surface area of the countries, the huge capital of biodiversity in rather small MED countries such as Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territory stands out (Fig. 1).

The 9 MED countries reported on flora (vascular plants, mosses, lichens, macrofungi and algae) and fauna (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, marine and freshwater fish as well as invertebrates, including insects). The data is based on either inventories or

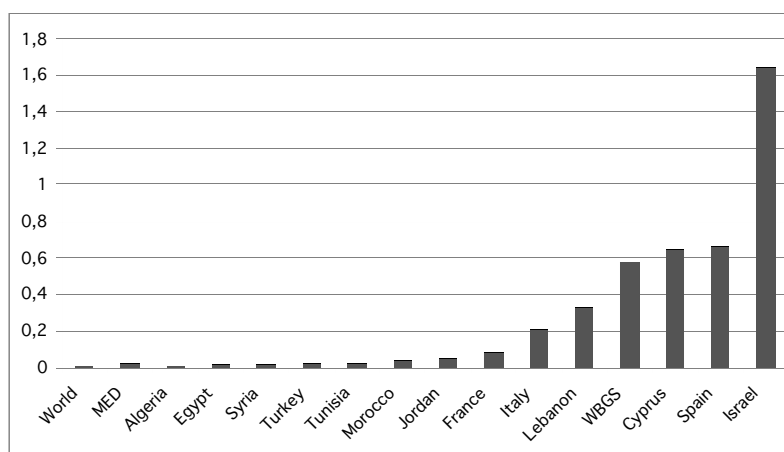


Fig. 1: Number of known species per square metre in the MED countries and in selected biodiversity-rich Mediterranean neighbouring countries (Cyprus, Italy, France, Spain and Turkey). Malta exceeds the present scale (value of 19,5)

continuous scientific monitoring. However, the data currently available might be biased, and discrepancies within the numbers of known species, e.g. the number of identified insects, may be explainable by differences in research foci and efforts between countries.

Regarding the diversity of plants, the richness of Morocco, Algeria and Egypt is particularly impressive (Table 1). The number of known plant species differs widely among the 9 MED countries: from 641 in Syria to 6 990 in Morocco. The largest Mediterranean populations are ferns as well as marine species such as *Posidonia* seagrass forming underwater meadows (*Posidonia oceanica*, which creates specific conditions and is considered a key ecosystem for Mediterranean coasts).

As shown in Table 1, animal diversity is also significant within the Mediterranean basin, with large populations of invertebrates including its particularly species-rich class of insects. The latter is highlighted by Israel, with about 30 000 known species of insects, and by Morocco, with over 13 400.

At present, around 500 bird species are known as being permanent and breeding

within the Mediterranean neighbouring countries. The largest bird species diversity of the 9 MED countries can be found in Egypt (Table 1). In addition, many migratory species (more than 150) travel twice a year through the straits and natural passage-ways of the region (e.g. Gibraltar, Cape Bon, Strait of Messina, Bekaa Valley and Isthmus of Suez).

Reptile and amphibian species diversity is significant, particularly in the arid zones. In Table 1, the relatively large numbers for Syria, Israel and Morocco evidence the importance of reptile biodiversity, as do the relatively high numbers for amphibians again documented for Syria and Morocco as well as for Algeria.

Because their vulnerable habitats (wetlands, inland and coastal waters) are threatened, reptiles and amphibians are also endangered, such as for example the sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*, VU), a species of particular concern within the Mediterranean.

In the small group of mammals, representing the uppermost level in the food chain, 77 species were counted in Jordan and 132 in Egypt (Table 1). In the 9 MED countries, the worst

losses in biodiversity have, however, occurred amongst the mammal populations. One of the most well-known in the region, the monk seal (*Monachus monachus*, EN), is among the 10 most threatened species worldwide.

## Threats and conservation action in the Mediterranean region

Biodiversity is exposed to human-induced threats and is, therefore, diminishing over time. Anthropogenic disturbances are causing deterioration and degradation of the diverse ecosystems and exert a tremendous pressure on biodiversity. Consequently, the functioning of a previously intact natural system is disordered and, for example, water and air quality are reduced and (forest) fires occur more often.

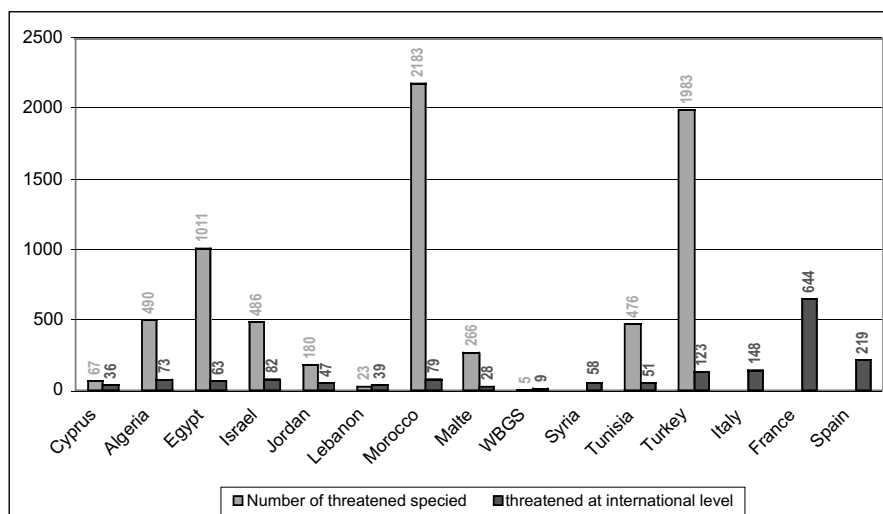
Fragmentation of natural areas also strongly affects biodiversity. As a result of urban development, industrialisation, etc, what remains of the original habitat is scattered in small patches. In the Mediterranean region, tourism is having massive (direct and indirect) impacts on ecosystems, some of which are very sensitive, and is considered to

Table 1: Number of known species (flora and fauna) also summed up per country.

Country	Flora	Mammals	Birds	Reptiles	Amphibians	Fish	Invertebrates	of which insects	Sum
Algeria	4 287	107	336	70	12	300	2 716	1 900	7 828
Egypt	4 284	132	514	90	8	766	7 899	7 324	13 693
Israel	2 238	105	210	105	7	1 154	30 300	30 000	34 119
Jordan	2 834	77	418	89	5	1 026	n.a.	n.a.	4 449
Lebanon	1 063	65	338	48	5	382	1 540	n.a.	3 441
Morocco	6 990	113	317	98	11	1 189	17 893	13 461	26 611
WBGS.	2 493	95	470	93	7	284*	127	n.a.	3 569
Syria	641	125	360	127	16	452	1 500	1 500	3 221
Tunisia	2 924	78	362	63	8	336**	334	n.a.	4 105

Note: \* marine species only; \*\*: freshwater species only

**Fig. 2: State of biodiversity in MED countries and selected biodiversity-rich Mediterranean neighbouring countries (Cyprus, Malta, Italy, France, Spain and Turkey)**



be one of the most significant pressures on biodiversity within the basin.

Furthermore, the introduction of invasive species and the over-exploitation of natural resources are among the most serious problems.

According to the 2006 edition of the IUCN Red List of threatened species, 16 119 species worldwide are endangered\*. This is equivalent to 1% of known species, but 12% of birds, 23% of mammals and 32% of amphibians are identified as threatened. In the 9 MED countries, the percentages are even higher, with averages of 14% for birds, 39% for mammals and 49% for amphibians.

This gives an idea of the present level of threat within the Mediterranean region. Regarding the 9 MED countries, the absolute numbers vary from 5 to 2 183 species endangered per country (Fig.

2), i.e. from 1% to 12% of the identified MED species. As shown in Figure 2, in Morocco over 2 000 species of animals and plants are threatened with extinction (critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable). In Egypt over 1 000 species are considered threatened and in Algeria, Israel and Tunisia the expected loss in species reaches 500.

Additionally, the numbers in Figure 2 show that few of the species of the 9 MED countries are regarded as threatened at international level. Being threatened at international level means that the species in question are threatened on a large scale. In the 9 MED countries most of the species are endemic and might therefore not be classified at international level.

For example, in Morocco the flora is comparatively rich, with nearly 7 000 identified species (Table 1) of which around 1,000 are endemic.

However, one in four is endangered (Fig. 3). Also a high percentage of mammals, birds and reptiles are considered threatened species. For other MED countries, the situation is even more striking (Fig. 3), in particular for amphibians (more than 70% in Israel and Tunisia) and for mammals (more than 55% in Israel and Jordan).

The conservation of biodiversity has thus become a priority worldwide. Correspondingly, an increasing number of protected areas have been created in the Mediterranean basin, such initiatives being regarded as the main biodiversity conservation measure. Today, we count more than 4 400 protected areas in the Mediterranean, covering about 96 million hectares (7% of the world's total according to WDPA, 2006). The nationally designated areas in the 9 MED countries currently cover 115 194 km<sup>2</sup>, i.e. 2.52% (2005) of their total surface area is dedicated to the protection of biodiversity.

### ***Mediterranean protected areas more numerous***

The evolution of the cumulated surface area under protection in the 9 MED countries

\*This formulation applies to all species exposed to the risk of imminent disappearance or extinction. The threatened category includes the following sub-groups: critically endangered (CR), endangered (EN) and vulnerable (VU).

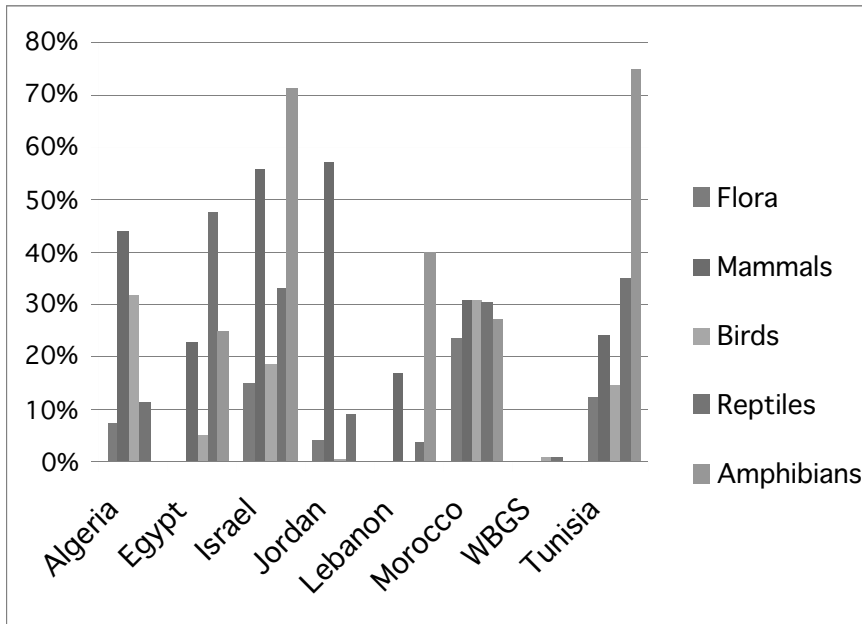


Fig. 3: Percentage of selected threatened species within MED countries

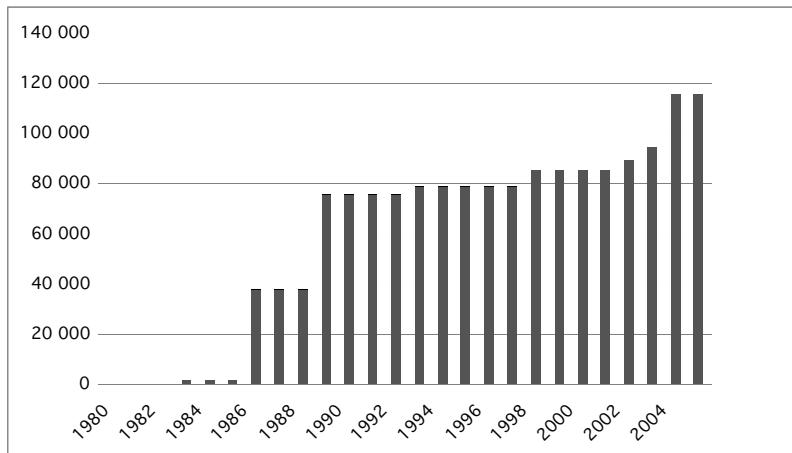
reveals a significantly positive trend in the implementation of protected areas (Fig. 4). However, the score of 2.52% remains low compared to the target of 10% advocated by the World Park Congress (1992) as well as in comparison to the 12% of the total surface area in the Mediterranean part of Europe (IUCN, 2007).

The census of protected areas remains complex owing to the large number of classification systems (national clas-

sifications, IUCN, European Directive on Birds and Habitat, etc.) and conventions (CBD, Ramsar, CITES, etc.) for the protection of natural areas. In some cases, an area selected for protection may be protected for various different reasons and may be fully or partly classified under one or more specific protection category or class.

Moreover, management objectives are not clearly identified or assigned in most of the countries. Only in certain

Fig. 4: Cumulated surface area (km<sup>2</sup>) of protected areas in the 9 MED countries between 1980 and 2005



countries are efforts being made towards implementing the IUCN categories.

In order to help find solutions for the sustainable management of natural resources, reliable statistical data is needed. The availability of such data also needs to be improved given the importance of diversity within the various ecosystems as well as the changes and pressures biodiversity is facing.

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**Complete article**  
**available on the MEDSTAT**  
**website of Eurostat**  
**(<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/medstat>)**

## ... a new administrator at the IAMF



*During its last Administrative Board Council meeting on 14 June, the IAMF coopted Mario Velamazán Ros as a replacement for Ricardo Velez who wished to resign his administrator position. His nomination will be submitted to members during the next Annual General Meeting, in accordance with the statutes.*

Mario Velamazán Ros has been a member of the IAMF for 3 years.

A Spaniard, he is a forest engineer from the Madrid Polytechnic University. Since 2001, he has been working for Latizal S.L., in Murcia, as a consultant specializing in natural resources management, species conservation, forest management and sustainability certification, as well as in projects for international cooperation.

Notably, he participated with the Murcia Regional Government in the RECOFORME (2003-2006) project "Structuring networks and cooperative action concerned with Mediterranean forests" ([www.recoforme.net](http://www.recoforme.net)).

Currently, he is working again in close cooperation with the IAMF to finalize the Qualigouv project implementation (presented at the first call

for the MED programme), which is concerned with governance and the quality of forest management in Mediterranean protected areas. He brings to this project his technical skills and hands-on knowledge, in particular thanks to his position as Technical Director of the Sierra Espuña Nature Park.

He also attested to the implementation of another MED project which aim is to set up and develop a Mediterranean network of "model forests". His participation underlines the Murcia Regional Government's dynamic ongoing commitment to cooperation in forestry matters.

You can contact Mario Velamazán Ros in Spanish or English at:  
[mario.velamazan@carm.es](mailto:mario.velamazan@carm.es)

## ... a staff on the move

✓ **Charlotte Courtin-Ordner** left the IAMF at the end of last summer. She has opted for a career in finance management auditing. We thank her for her 4 years' work at the IAMF and wish her a great professional future.

✓ **Denys Poulet**, back from an MBA executive training programme, has decided to change horizons. He will become an administrative

and financial director for an investment network. Congratulations on his new appointment and a big "thank you" for the 8 years spent at the IAMF.

✓ **David Gasc**, whose hard task it was to submit 3 European projects during the first half 2008, has joined our permanent team. He becomes the technical officer of the IAMF.

✓ **Gaëlle Fossoy**, who stood in brilliantly for Charlotte and Denys during their absence, is now in charge of the publication of your Bulletin *The Latest on Mediterranean Forests*.

# Mediterranean forests, the talk of the town!

For more details and the latest updated information, don't forget to check the diary on our website ([www.aifm.org](http://www.aifm.org)).  
And don't forget: tell us about any event that doesn't appear in the diary - it will make it that much better!

## Issues concerning present knowledge and the need for research on Mediterranean forests

23 September 2008 - Saint Maximin (France)  
Webpage: [www.foret-mediterraneenne.org/evts.htm](http://www.foret-mediterraneenne.org/evts.htm)

## Local Development and Natural Resources Management in Dry Areas

30 September 2008 - Paris (France)  
Website: [www.naturalite.fr](http://www.naturalite.fr)

## Issues concerning the organization of research on Mediterranean forests and its transfer

30 September 2008 - Montpellier (France)  
Webpage: [www.foret-mediterraneenne.org/evts.htm](http://www.foret-mediterraneenne.org/evts.htm)

## 5<sup>th</sup> Regional Forum of privately-owned forest (open to the public)

24 October 2008 - La Bastide des Jourdans (France)  
Contact : Forestour  
Phone: +33 4 42 51 43 19  
e-mail: [contact@forestour-paca.org](mailto:contact@forestour-paca.org)

## Seminar "Biodiversity, Naturality, Humanity"

27-31 October 2008 - Chambéry (France)  
Website: [www.arenidf.org/cooperation/developpement-sept08/developpement-sept08.html](http://www.arenidf.org/cooperation/developpement-sept08/developpement-sept08.html)

## International conference: "Water and forests - a convenient truth?"

30-31 October 2008 - Barcelona (Spain)  
Contact: Efimed  
Website: [www.efi.int/portal/about\\_efi/organisation/regional\\_offices/efimed/information\\_and\\_dissemination/water\\_and\\_forests\\_conference\\_2008/](http://www.efi.int/portal/about_efi/organisation/regional_offices/efimed/information_and_dissemination/water_and_forests_conference_2008/)

## International conference on the European forest-based sector: "Bio-responses for

## addressing new climate and energy challenges"

6-8 November 2008 - Nancy (France)  
Website: [http://www.gip-ecofor.org/publi/page.php?id=2&rang=0&domain=34&lang=en\\_GB](http://www.gip-ecofor.org/publi/page.php?id=2&rang=0&domain=34&lang=en_GB)

## Conference: "Phytosociology faced with the challenges to the understanding and sustainable management of natural areas"

12-14 November 2008 - Velaine-en-Haye (France)  
Website: <https://www2.nancy.inra.fr/collectif/colloque-phytosociologie>

## A challenge for both researchers and managers: sustainable production of goods and services in Mediterranean forests

27-28 November 2008 - Etang des Aulnes (France)  
Webpage: [www.foret-mediterraneenne.org/evts.htm](http://www.foret-mediterraneenne.org/evts.htm)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Drylands, Deserts and Desertification

14-17 December 2008 - Sede Boquer Campus (Israel)  
Website: <http://cmsprod.bgu.ac.il/Eng/Units/bidr/desertification2008>

## Congress "Biodiversity hotspots in the Mediterranean area"

22-28 June 2009 - Cagliari (Italy)  
e-mail: [info@ccb-sardegna.it](mailto:info@ccb-sardegna.it)

## 13<sup>rd</sup> World Forestry Congress on the topic "Forests in Development: a Vital Balance"

18-25 October 2009 - Buenos Aires (Argentina)  
e-mail: [info@cfm2009.org](mailto:info@cfm2009.org)  
Website: [www.wfc2009.org](http://www.wfc2009.org)

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