



View from the coffee balcony of the venue- The Donau-Auen National Park. Photo: Lars Erikstad

Little Sydney

Enrique Díaz-Martínez and Lars Erikstad (ProGEO)

What is Little Sydney

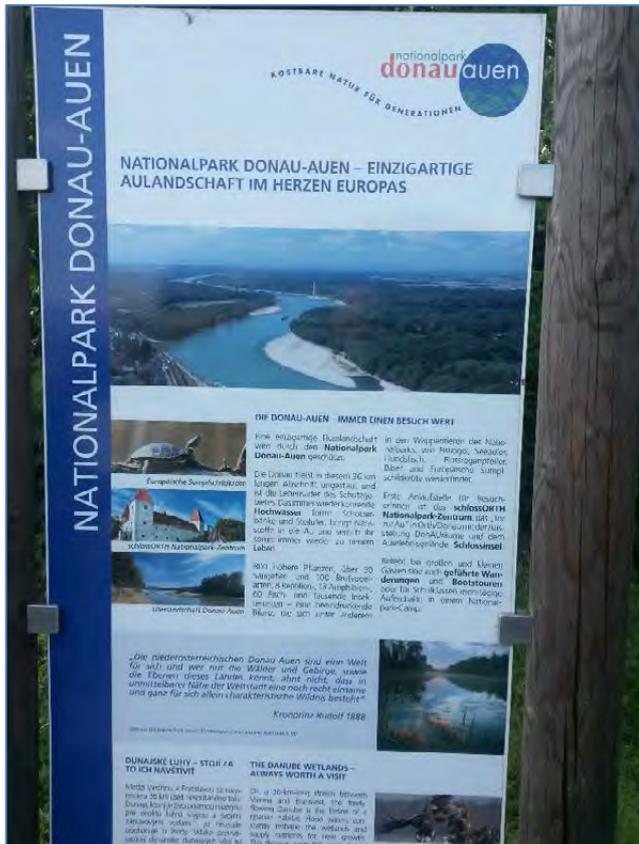
IUCN and the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), in conjunction with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, and the Donau-Auen National Park, organized a conference entitled “Little Sydney: Protecting Nature in Europe”, taking place in Hainburg, by the Donau-Auen National Park, Austria, from 28 -31 May 2015.

“Little Sydney” built on the outcomes of the recent major global event on protected areas: the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 (WPC), held in Sydney in November 2014, and which resulted in the Promise of Sydney. ProGEO had an intense participation at the WPC of Sydney <http://www.progeo.se/news/2014/pgn414.pdf>, and wanted to contribute as well into this event at European level. Lars Erikstad (executive secretary) and Enrique Díaz-Martínez (vicepresident) attended the event, participated and organized several activities as follows. Participants from all over Europe gathered and explored the outcomes of the WPC Streams and Cross-Cutting Themes of particular relevance for Europe. Key WPC

findings were presented and discussed during plenary sessions, and workshops sessions were organized around four main themes: (a) Reaching Conservation Goals, (b) Supporting Human Life, (c) Influencing Policy and Institutional Responses, and (d) Partnerships, Governance, Capacity Development and Mobilization of Resources. Both the plenary and workshop sessions were designed to maximize the quality of outputs with a view to developing a road map for protected areas in Europe.

The objectives of the “Little Sydney: Protecting Nature in Europe” conference were to discuss, share and showcase original approaches for conservation and development arising from the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014; and to facilitate the implementation of the Promise of Sydney in the European context. In particular, the conference aimed to:

- Present and discuss the outcomes of the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 and help address gaps in nature conservation and the protected areas agenda in Europe;
- Couple solutions with global challenges by generating commitments with a view to delivering on the Promise of Sydney in the European context; and
- Outline principles for a socially and environmentally responsible society based on an effective network of protected areas in Europe.



Information sign from the National Park. Photo: Lars Erikstad

The Little Sydney conference was a milestone international event aimed at finding long-term sustainable solutions for protected areas in Europe. Most of this text has been taken from the web page of the conference:

http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/europe/little_sydney_conference/

Comments on the plenary sessions (Thursday 28 and Saturday 30)

Both geoh heritage and geo diversity were mentioned in several of the plenary talks compiling the main results of the WPC in Sydney, and with a specific mention in relation to the European Soil Strategy (Ronan Uhel, Head of Programme Natural Systems and Vulnerability, European Environmental Agency). The final plenary session also included direct mention to geoh heritage and geodiversity, both when presenting the results and recommendations from our workshop session, and during the talk of Trevor Sandwith, who mentioned geoh heritage among the ambitions to be added into the nature conservation agenda for the future.

Report on the workshop session organized by ProGEO and Europarc (Friday 29)

Theme: Reaching Conservation Goals

Title: Protecting natural diversity: Identification of synergies in geodiversity and biodiversity protection in Europe

Lead organizer: Enrique Díaz-Martínez, ProGEO and WCPA Geoh heritage Specialist Group –

Partners: ProGEO, EUROPARC

Objective: Identify relationship between biodiversity and geodiversity to benefit both and to identify improvements to Natura 2000 system

Introduction: There is close relationship between geodiversity and biodiversity. How can we best achieve conservation and management of geodiversity and geoh heritage, and what lessons can be learned from protection of biodiversity in Europe? Is Natura 2000 really a coherent European network?

Programme:

1. Introduction (10'): Enrique Díaz-Martínez (ProGEO, SGE, WCPA-GSG)
2. Keynote presentations (15' each):
 - a. Lars Erikstad (ProGEO), Considering geodiversity and geoh heritage in European protected area management
 - b. Michael Hošek (EUROPARC), Natura 2000: A set of trees or a real forest? (Coherency of the European biodiversity protection network)
3. Open facilitated discussion (50') moderated by Enrique Díaz-Martínez
2. Rapporteur for conclusions, action points and contributions to the " Promise of Sydney": Roger Croft (WCPA and GSG)

Organizations/institutions involved: ProGEO, SGE, WCPA-GSG, WCPA-WH, Europarc



Roger croft summing up the workshop

Action Point	Objective	Who	By when	Desired outcome
Recommendation 1				
Action 1 underpin biodiversity conservation with geodiversity	improve sustainability of biodiversity	EU DG Env	part of Natura 'fitness check'	biodiversity conservation improved
Action 2 use ecosystem services approach to link geo and biodiversity conservation	improve management effectiveness	PA authorities and national system planners + use national geological services to help identify the synergies between bio and geo	ASAP using information in proposed Best Practice Guideline on Geoheritage Conservation in Protected Areas	real implementation of new IUCN PA definition
Recommendation 2				
Action: bring together management of area to meet objectives of different designations	simplify management on ground and achieve greater understanding and effectiveness	PA authorities and national systems planners	over 5 years after completion of Natura 'fitness check'	reduced confusion for everyone and more focused conservation management
Recommendation 3				
Action: review transboundary sites to ensure consistent approaches	ensure consistency of protection irrespective of administrative boundaries	EU Member States with help EU DG Environment	in roll out of revised Natura following the 'fitness check'	no distinction either side of administrative boundaries
Recommendation 4				
Action: develop real networks of sites for biodiversity	improve effectiveness of conservation	EU DG Env guidance on Article 10 wider countryside measures + Member States	part of Natura 'fitness check' as follow up guidance and then roll out by Member States	better conservation

Results of the session:

The discussion was fluid and dynamic, with very interesting contributions from Tim Badman (IUCN, Head of World Heritage), Roger Croft (IUCN WCPA) and others. There was general acceptance of the topic by the audience, and the need to integrate with ecosystem services. Furthermore, there was a willingness to accept a holistic approach as strategy for management and conservation in protected areas.

Key recommendations:

- recognize interdependency of geodiversity conservation and biodiversity conservation in terms of the integrity of ecosystem functions: 'nature' in the IUCN definition
- combine geodiversity sites with biodiversity sites wherever justified to achieve more effective conservation
- ensure that Natura 2000 sites are designated in consistent manner either side of national and provincial boundaries
- ensure connectivity between Natura 2000 sites to result in real ecological networks

Action Points proposed by the rapporteur in relation to the above four recommendations see table above. Another workshop session including mention to geoheritage and geodiversity was 1A1 (How much conservation land does Europe need, and where?), and it was listed among the criteria to expand protected areas in Europe, in particular reference to the review of Natura 2000 and its fitness check.

Other activities

We presented an e-poster on the activities of ProGEO, including key concepts and strategies towards geoconservation in Europe. Several fieldtrips were organized every day for participants early in the morning (7:30-9:00 am) around the Danube near the venue, and on Saturday afternoon by boat on the Danube and walking or cycling around the lake (Neusiedlersee - Seewinkel National Park). All fieldtrip's guides included mention to geological processes and geodynamics, and their importance in management of the protected area and the interaction with ecosystems.



Excursion by dinghy-boat on the Donau.

Donau-Auen National Park. Photo: Lars Erikstad

The EU fitness check

José Brilha, ProGEO President

The European Commission has reviewed the entire stock of EU legislation and decided on follow-up actions, one of which is a 'Fitness Check' involving a comprehensive policy evaluation aimed at assessing whether the regulatory framework for a particular policy sector is 'fit for purpose'. In this context, Fitness Checks provide an evidence-based critical analysis of whether

EU actions are proportionate to their objectives and delivering as expected. In the environment policy field, the Commission has now begun a Fitness Check of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, the entire package regarding nature conservation.

ProGEO has already participated in this Fitness Check sending an official position about the lack of geoconservation in European nature conservation policies. Now, the European Commission is asking for our opinion as individuals and now is the time to make our voices heard. The Commission's consultation asks several questions and below we have indicated our opinion as



answers to the questions asked in the survey. They reflect our worries with the conservation of Geoheritage. We must act now and say that we want the European nature conservation legal package also to include geoconservation in its text as well as in its implementation, in accordance with previous EU policies such as Rec(2004)3, and more recent international initiatives such as IUCN Resolution 5.048 (Jeju, 2012).

There are two parts to the questionnaire. The first part is designed for the general public and does not require extensive knowledge or experience of the Directives. You must answer the questions in the first part for your response to be taken into account. You will then be asked whether you wish to answer the more detailed questions in the second part of the questionnaire. If not, you can still make additional comments in a free text box before submitting your response.

Suggestion for answers for Part 1:

1. Very important
2. Quite familiar
3. Important
4. Somewhat appropriate
5. Very appropriate
6. Somewhat effective
7. Very Important
8. The benefits of implementation far exceed the costs
9. Not enough (in all rows)
10. Could contribute more (in all rows)
11. Significant added value
12. Some added value
13. Some added value
14. Yes

The deadline to participate in this public consultation is **24.07.2015**. Please do it on behalf of European geoheritage! It only takes 3 minutes (even non-EU citizens may participate in this consultation)!

When responding to the questionnaire, please bear in mind that ProGEO's purpose is to incorporate proper management of geoheritage and geodiversity into the future revised directive. We do not attempt to criticize the specific objectives or implementation of the prior directives (Birds or Habitats). Those were good for those specific purposes (even if they excluded geoheritage), and have had problems in implementation due to budget cuts. But the advances in the conservation of that part of nature have to be acknowledged.

Regarding further comments, we have prepared the following text which can be used as a starting point for you if you want to answer the fitness check:

Present EU nature legislation does not truly cover all types of natural elements that are under threat and with need to be properly managed. Natural heritage includes both biological and geological heritage. The latter is made up of geological sites of interest, as well as landscapes, shaped and defined by their geological features. Fossils, rocks, minerals, landforms and geologic structures are just as much part of our natural heritage as plants and animals.

Such geological features are also a major scientific asset shared by all countries, as well as an educational and cultural resource. In addition, geodiversity assures fundamental support services to biodiversity and contributes significantly to ecosystem services. EU nature conservation legislation is currently primarily focused on the conservation of biodiversity. Its implementation should be strengthened, but also aided by a wider perspective including geodiversity.

To some degree, geodiversity already can be included as it is fundamental to ecosystem functions and services, but the implementation of the directives is not clear, in part ignorant, to the abiotic aspect of nature. A clearer text in this regard and its stronger implementation will contribute to holistic nature conservation. Without it, the degradation of an important part of Europe's natural heritage - the geoheritage - will continue.

The two nature Directives as implemented today narrow the social perspective of what is nature and what aspects deserve to be conserved and managed, making it difficult for the conservation of geoheritage. Proper conservation and management of geoheritage and geodiversity will also benefit biodiversity and increase its resilience. Both are fully compatible, and nature and society will benefit of such an approach. Rec(2004)3 of the Council of Europe, and Resolution 5.048 of IUCN (Jeju, 2012) promote this holistic view of nature conservation.

Relevant web addresses

Access to the questionnaire (available in all EU languages):

<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/EUNatureDirectives>

Information about the Fitness Check:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/index_en.htm

Public consultation (available in all EU languages):

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/nature_fitness_check_en.htm

New ProGEO web address:

ProGEO has now secured a new international web address indicating our position as an international NGO. The new web address will be:

www.progeo.ngo

The old address www.progeo.se is still working and when using the new address it will be redirected to the old address as long as this is our practical working web-site.

General Assembly – Reykjavik Iceland 2015

The last time ProGEO had its general assembly was in Bari, September 2012 (see ProGEO NEWS no 3 2012). During the 8th international symposium of ProGEO in Reykjavik, Iceland, 2015, it is time for a new General assembly.

The most important elements of the agenda of this general assembly is:

1. The president, executive secretary and treasurers report
2. Election of President.
3. Election of general (elected) council members.
4. Changes in ProGEO articles.

In the General Assembly, each active (paying) member has equal voting rights. Possibilities for electronic voting will be secured.

A meeting of the ProGEO Council will also be held. At this meeting, each national contact has the same voting rights as the general (elected) members of the Council.

Agenda Council meeting 2015:

1. Election of executive committee.

All relevant documents will be distributed according to ProGEO articles.

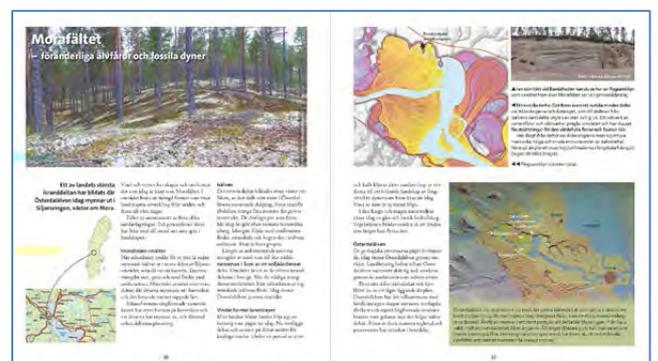
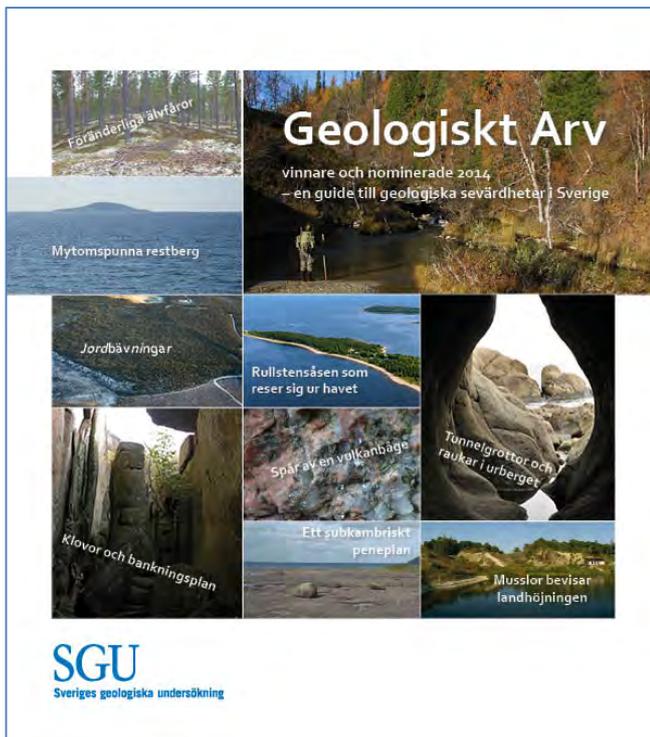
Tales about ten Swedish geological sites, worthy as heritage attractions

Gunnel Ransed, Gunnel.Ransed@sgu.se

Just in time for the summer vacations here in Sweden there is a new brochure offering a glimpse of the ten nominated candidates that competed to become Geoheritage Site 2014. This event was presented in ProGEO Newsletter no.3 2014, like:

“Swedish Geoheritage Site 2014 is an award given by the Geological Survey of Sweden (SGU) in order to highlight and promote attractive sites with an exciting geological story. In this manner, we aim to attract interest to geology in general, to the geological heritage, and to good examples how to manage them. Some of the nominated sites are already well known to the public, while others are quite unknown. However their shared capacity is that they have something important to tell us about why our part of the world looks the way it does.”

These ten sites represent a wide diversity of geology, as well as the diversity of the country. The brochure exists only in Swedish language, but this is a glimpse of how each site is presented.



Spanish meeting on geoheritage, a success

Asier Hilario (Basque Coast Geopark) and Enrique Díaz-Martínez (ProGEO)

The XI National Meeting of the Commission on Geological Heritage of the Geological Society of Spain was held at the Geopark of the Basque Coast from 9 -13 June 2015. The congress exceeded all expectations, with over 150 attendees and more than 90 communications and papers submitted, both oral and poster, representing an increase of approximately 40% compared to previous editions. We must also emphasize the attendance of a significant number of Portuguese and Latin American colleagues.

This is the first time that such a national scientific meeting is held in a Spanish geopark. Spain is the country with the highest number of geoparks in Europe. For this reason, the motto of the meeting, "Geological heritage and geoparks: forward along a trail for all" made it clear that one of the main objectives of the conference was to valorize geoparks as territories for the management of geological heritage.

Prior to the official opening of the meeting, an intensive course on "Geoparks and geological heritage" was held, oriented to those recently coming into the subject. The course was very well received and with more than 40 participants, approximately 30% of all those registered in the meeting. This fact, together with the young age of most participants, is significant in that it clearly shows that there is a new generation that understands that geological heritage can be an important niche for future employment.



The conference began with the "Dialogues on geoconservation and geoparks" an interesting format for discussion, where José Brihla (ProGEO president) and Luis Alcalá (Spanish Coordinator of the Spanish Geopark Committee and member of EGN board) chatted openly about the challenges, difficulties and achievements of geoconservation in the past, at present and for the future. Throughout the 3 days, all attendees could enjoy the 22 oral presentations and 70 poster communications, showing the important and growing activity on geoconservation in Spain, Portugal and Latin America. It was also highlighted the need to standardize terminology and concepts, especially in the current state of expansion of geoconservation and geotourism.

During the conference, attendees were able to enjoy a complete visit to the Basque Coast Geopark and its spectacular outcrops. They were active participants in



From The Basque Coast Geopark

the public use of geological heritage taking place in this area, especially characterized for the scientific activity and its geotourism programme offering 500 guided tours throughout the year. Furthermore, the ideas and contributions of conference attendees in relation to the management of several of the geosites of the geopark were very useful for geopark managers, thus enhancing the positive outcome of collaboration between geoparks and the scientific, academia and geoconservation community.

Undoubtedly, this has been an excellent workshop and training for the next coordination committee of the EGN, to be held in this extraordinary geopark in March 2016.



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- Influence as participant of our General Assembly
- Reduced cost of the scientific journal GEOHERITAGE
- Reduced price of the book "Geoheritage in Europe and its conservation"
- Reduced conference fee at the ProGEO Symposium

How to pay: See procedure on www.progeo.ngo

Deadline next issue of ProGEO NEWS: September 20th. 2015

Please do not forget to send contributions to ProGEO NEWS. Members are interested in things that happen all over the world, your experiences, geosites, everyday geotopes and landscapes, geoconservation and geotourism efforts! ProGEO news is published on the internet

www.progeo.se

Please send your contributions 500 – 2000 words with photographs, maps and figures clearly marked as a ProGEO NEWS contribution to:

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If longer texts are needed, please contact the editor

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ProGEO NEWS produced with support from the Norwegian directorate for Nature Management