CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

On 19th September 1979, on the occasion of the Third European Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in Bern, the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and natural Habitats was opened for signature.
The Convention entered into force on 1 June 1982 and in November 1984 the following countries had ratified it:

Austria  Denmark  Greece  Ireland  Italy
Liechtenstein  Luxembourg  Netherlands  Portugal  Sweden
Switzerland  Turkey  United Kingdom
as well as the European Economic Community.

WHY THIS CONVENTION?

The wild flora and fauna constitute a natural heritage of aesthetic, scientific, cultural, recreational, economic and intrinsic value that needs to be preserved and handed on to future generations.

Numerous species of wild flora and fauna are being seriously depleted and natural habitats are suffering from non environmentally oriented development.

Pollution as a result of the industrial civilisation is threatening the biological balance of the biosphere, and the quality of life is at stake.
The aims of this Convention are to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, especially those species and habitats whose conservation requires the cooperation of several states, and to promote such cooperation.

It promotes the adoption by the contracting parties of measures and national policies for the conservation of wild flora, wild fauna and natural habitats.

The Contracting Parties undertake to give due consideration to the needs of the conservation of wild flora and fauna in their planning and development policies, and to promote education and general information in this context.
THE PROTECTION OF HABITATS

Suitable habitats is the key requirement to ensure the continuity of species. Centring on this reality, the Contracting Parties are to take legislative and administrative measures to protect the natural habitats of the species of fauna and flora listed in the Convention.

Special attention must be given to areas that are of importance for endangered migratory species or that are situated along their migration routes, where different countries have to coordinate their efforts.

In planning and development procedures attention must be paid to the conservation requirements of the areas already under protection so as to avoid or minimise any deterioration of such areas by mismanagement of their surroundings.

In this context the network of biogenetic reserves of the Council of Europe plays an important role and will be linked to the implementation of the Bern Convention.
THE PROTECTION OF SPECIES

The Bern Convention focuses its main attention on selected species, depending on their conservation status: endangered (E), vulnerable (V), rare (R), or threatened (T) with extinction.

To this end, the Convention includes some appendices where these species are listed. Strictly protected flora species (like the Balearic cornflower) appear in Appendix I, and strictly protected fauna species such as the Brown bear or all the European migratory songbirds, in Appendix II.

All of them should receive equal attention regardless of their differences.
ANYTHING ABOUT HUNTABLE SPECIES?

Huntable species may be over-exploited and local populations may be put at risk if current practices go on.

Therefore, most of the animals that are exploitable in some degree and whose populations could be jeopardised, are included in Appendix III as "protected fauna species". This means that their exploitation has to be regulated and controlled by the administration of the countries concerned.

STOP USING...!

In Appendix IV are listed non selective means and methods of killing and capture, such as snares, limes, hooks, explosives, poisoned or anaesthetic baits and artificial light sources.

These means, considered to be capable of causing the local disappearance of or serious disturbance to populations of certain species, are prohibited.
EXOTICS, NO THANKS!

Exotic species may disturb the ecological balance in the ecosystems when introduced in biotopes where they do not belong.

This is a serious threat to natural communities and therefore the Convention imposes provisions to strictly control introduction of non-native species.

AND MORE...

There is no doubt that information is the keystone to any conservation attempt. Therefore the Convention also encourages and tries to coordinate research related to its purposes.

All measures are closely followed by a Standing Committee of Contracting Parties that is responsible for the implementation of the Convention, and for its adaptation to meet changing circumstances.

The Standing Committee is being served by the Council of Europe, which has put its well structured and experienced Secretariat at the disposal of the Contracting Parties.

Text and drawings:
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The official text of the Convention is available in English and French.

A brochure entitled "Giving nature a chance: the Bern Convention" has been published in English and French (French title: "Un espoir pour la nature: la Convention de Berne"), prepared by M. F. BROGGI. (To obtain this publication: Publications Section, Council of Europe, BP 431 R6, F-67006 Strasbourg Cedex).

European Information Centre
for Nature Conservation
COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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The European Information Centre for Nature Conservation is an organ of the Council of Europe. It works for the protection of the environment. Created to be the "voice" of the Council of Europe in this field, the Centre works through a unique network of National Agencies in the 21 member countries (see list below) and correspondents in non-member countries.

The Centre realises its mandate of creating awareness and diffusing information by organising campaigns, publishing magazines and bulletins and running a documentation service.

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