

Balkan Rivers News



Dear Friends of the Balkan Rivers,

A lot has happened in the past few months. To keep you updated, please find the key information below. The Blue Heart Team wishes you a nice Christmas holiday and a happy new year. Keep fighting for rivers!

*** Bankwatch study: “Green energy” funding for hydropower threatens Balkan rivers**

A wave of hydropower development fuelled by European public funding and EU companies is endangering pristine river environments in the Balkans. The [extensive analysis](#) shows that multilateral development banks are playing a key role. [More](#)

Media coverage: [The Guardian](#)



The Lesce hydropower plant on Croatia's river Dobra has caused numerous problems since its commissioning in 2010. © Goran Safarek

*** Kelag against Huchen on Sana river**

The Austrian-German energy company is constructing a hydropower plant on the Sana River (Bosnia-Herzegovina), which is one of the six most important rivers for the globally threatened fish species. While Kelag is destroying one of the healthiest Huchen occurrences on the Balkans, millions are spent to regenerate rare Huchen populations in Austria [More](#)

Media coverage: [Fena](#), [Buka](#), [Front Slobode](#), [BN TV](#)



Medna project on Sana river, constructed by Kelag company.
Credit: Za vodo Podgorice

*** Hope for Mavrovo National Park**

After they conducted a fact-finding mission in Mavrovo NP, Macedonia, the Bern Convention's standing committee calls for a halt to hydropower development within the park. The EBRD and World Bank are asked to withdraw their funding of projects. [More](#)



Hope for Lukovo Polje? This landscape could be saved. Photo: Ljubomir Stefanov

*** Balkan Lynx added to IUCN Red List**

In November, the Balkan Lynx was recognized as subspecies of the Eurasian Lynx and officially added to the [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#). The Mavrovo National Park is the only confirmed breeding ground of this critically endangered cat. [More](#)



Mavrovo NP is home to the last known reproducing population of the critically endangered Balkan Lynx © MES

*** European Anglers and Blue Heart Team in EU Parliament against dams**

On November 10th, the European Anglers Alliance organized the event “How green is hydropower?” in the European Parliament to draw attention to the negative impacts of dams. Blue Heart campaign coordinator Ulrich Eichelmann (Riverwatch) was one of the speakers. [More](#)



Advocating for rivers at the EU Parliament ©Cécile Fouquet

*** Sava: EIA process for Mokrice is halted**

The Slovenian authorities halted the EIA process for the Mokrice dam project on the Sava river after we uncovered violations of domestic and international legislation. Amongst other illegalities, the project endangers 11 fish species, protected under the EU Habitats Directive. We are currently preparing an EU complaint. [More](#)

Media coverage: [Dnevnik](#), [Delo](#), [RTV4](#)



The endangered Danube Roach (*Rutilus virgo*) would lose its spawning ground if Mokrice was built. Credit: Kurt Pinter, Boku IHG

*** Vjosa: Prime Minister Rama announces to build more dams on Vjosa**

After telling the Blue Heart Team personally in spring that he supports our vision of a Vjosa National Park, PM Edi Rama is now planning to finalize the disputed Kalivac project along with another project downstream and more on its tributaries. We will do everything to stop these plans and to initiate Europe's first Wildriver National Park instead.



The Vjosa, still flowing unobstructed. © Christian Baumgartner

*** Balkan Rivers Days: 120 people from 18 countries in Belgrade**

Between September 25th-27th, Belgrade became the center of European river conservationists and dam opponents. 120 people from 18 countries discussed how to stop the dam tsunami in the Balkans and in other regions in Europe. Check out the [extensive gallery](#) and the [official video](#)!



*** Hydropower plants in Una National Park stopped**

Good news: responding to the public pressure, the Bihać City Council has stopped the construction of two small hydropower plants in the Una National Park in Bosnia and Herzegovina which would destroy one of the most magnificent rivers in the Sava River Basin. [More](#)



Štrbački Buk, the famous waterfall on the Una River © Paola Lucchesi

*** Three new insect species discovered in Macedonia**

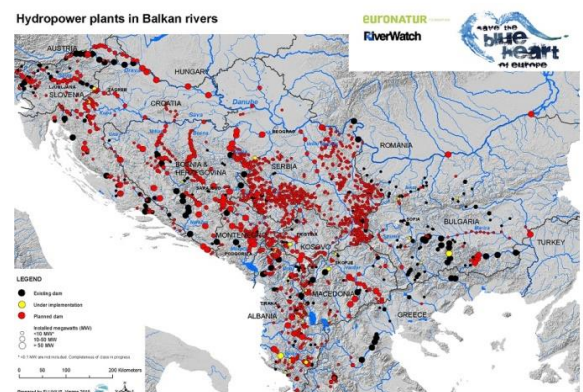
A team of scientists discovered three previously unknown caddisfly and stonefly species inside the Mavrovo National Park in Macedonia. The species are already at risk of extinction, since the Macedonian government plans the construction of 22 hydropower plants inside the park. This would affect also those creeks in which these species find habitat. [More](#)



Photos of the newly discovered species do not yet exist. Here a similar stonefly species. © Wolfram Graf

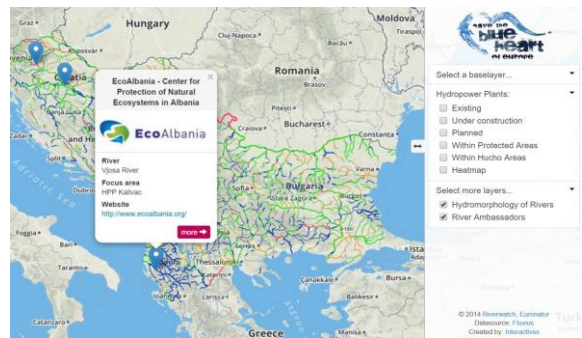
*** Study: Dam tsunami bigger than expected**

In a follow-up study of the initial research of dam projects in the Balkans from 2012 (U. Schwarz), we update our data and also included small hydropower plants. A total of 2,683 future hydropower projects have been recorded on the Balkan Peninsula. Additionally, 714 existing dams were found in this region. The full study can be [downloaded](#) and the data is already updated in our [interactive map](#)



***Become Balkan river ambassador!**

Following the Balkan Rivers Days, we decided to visualize a network of initiatives and people who fight for rivers in the Balkans. For this purpose we have created a “River Ambassadors” layer in the [interactive map](#) on our website. We would like to add you as well! If you want to be included [follow these instructions](#)!



*** Campaign brochure now available!**

[Download](#) our campaign brochure and enjoy stunning photos and insightful information. You are also welcome to order brochures for the cost of standard delivery charges.

katharina.gohn@euronatur.org (within Germany and internationally)

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*** Video: One for the River – The Vjosa Story**

Our Balkan Rivers ambassadors in kayaks ‘Leeway Collective’ paddled the Vjosa from its source in Greece to its mouth into the Adriatic Sea in Albania. Their documentary features stunning impressions of beauty and value of this spectacular river! [Watch it](#)



*** Short movies about Balkan rivers**

We produced [three short films](#) about the Balkan Rivers: one about its biodiversity, one about its threats and the third features people standing up for their river. Enjoy!



All the best,

Your Blue Heart Team