



Balkan Rivers News

Dear Friends of the Balkan Rivers,

In this newsletter you will read about the brand-new Eco-Masterplan for the Balkan Rivers, what happened at the first European River Summit, which musicians performed at the Concert for Balkan River in Sarajevo, which Balkan Rivers host endangered fish species, and much more! To stand up for the protection of European water, raise your voice [HERE](#) for the uncompromised continuation of the Water Framework Directive!

The Blue Heart Team wishes you a pleasant winter time!



Eco-Masterplan shows value of Balkan Rivers! This week, we [published this comprehensive assessment](#) of 80,000 river kilometers, combining knowledge about biodiversity, integrity of rivers and floodplains, and the location of protected areas. The study shows that 76 percent of Balkan Rivers are ecologically so valuable, that they should be completely off limits for hydropower development. An energy study included in the Eco-Masterplan proves that planned hydropower projects can be easily substituted by solar or wind power. A switch in energy policy is necessary and feasible. [VISUAL STORY-MAP](#)



#ProtectWater. The EU Water Framework Directive is one of the world's most advanced environmental directives, but many EU Member States want to weaken it. With the European initiative #ProtectWater, numerous NGOs, among them Riverwatch and EuroNatur, want to prevent this. Common goal: 1 million signatures to maintain the Water Framework Directive. [Follow this link](#) and raise your voice!



Balkan rivers THE topic at the first European Rivers Summit! In the end of September, Sarajevo became the center of European river conservationists and dam opponents. About 250 people from over 30 countries discussed how to stop the destruction of Europe's rivers from hydropower. Special focus was given to the threatened rivers in the Balkans. In a declaration, participants called upon the EU and governments to stop investing in hydropower. The next European Rivers Summit will be held in Porto in 2020. [VIDEO](#), [MORE](#)



All singers joined their voices in the grand finale of the Concert for Balkan Rivers. © Nick St. Oegger

Concert for Balkan Rivers in Sarajevo! Hundreds of people raised their voices at our open-air concert for Balkan Rivers at the Sarajevo's city centre, as grand finale of the Rivers Summit. They were singing along with the popular musicians Rambo Amadeus, Eda Zari, Damir Imamovic and Tamara Obrovac to raise awareness for the massive threat to Balkan rivers by hydropower, which is going on all over the Balkan peninsula. [MORE](#)



Representatives of the Save the Blue Heart of Europe campaign in front of the EBRD headquarters in London. In their hands: 120.000 signatures. © Jason Alden

Petition handover to EBRD. In June, representatives of the Blue-Heart-campaign and the outdoor company Patagonia hand-delivered 120,000 signatures to the EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development). The [petition](#) calls on international development banks to halt their Balkan hydropower investments before the last wild rivers in Europe are irreversibly destroyed. [MORE](#)



"Blue Heart" – the movie! The documentary "[Blue Heart](#)" shows the beauty of the Balkan rivers, the threat from 3,000 projected hydropower plants and the determined resistance against it. The documentation was commissioned by the outdoor company Patagonia and is available in 15 languages. The premiere of the film took place [against the spectacular backdrop of the Idbar dam](#) in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the end of April. To date, it has been screened globally at more than 600 events. Haven't seen it yet? The film is available for € 4.99 on [iTunes](#) an [Amazon](#)



Blue Heart in the European Parliament. In June, the documentary "Blue Heart" was shown in Brussels. In the ensuing debate between politicians and river conservationists, a common will was expressed to protect Europe's last wild rivers in the Balkans. [MORE](#)

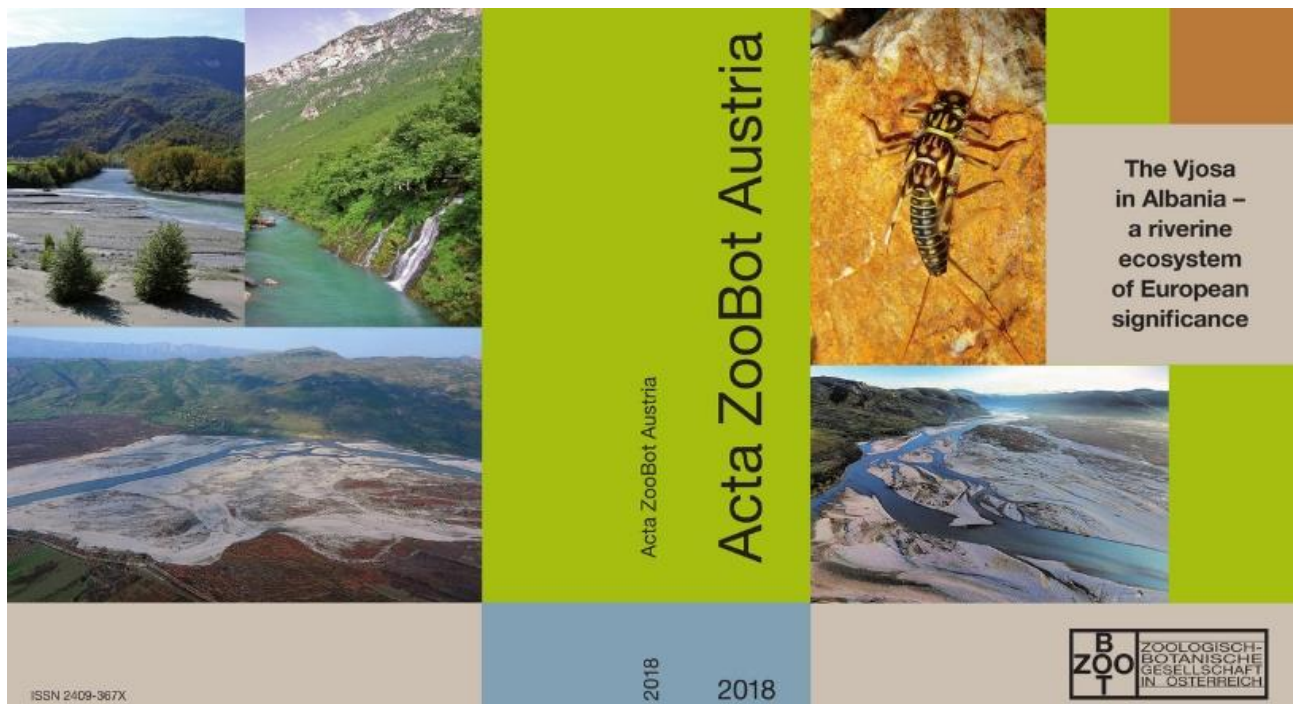
NEW STUDIES



Endangered Fish Species in the Balkans. The rivers in the Balkans constitute Europe's fish sanctuary, according to a [new study](#) presented by Riverwatch and EuroNatur in April. The study reveals that 113 endangered and rare fish species find habitat in these rivers. If the hydropower expansion goes as planned, about 50 species would go extinct or be driven to the brink of extinction. This is equivalent to about ten percent of all European freshwater fish species. Thus, hydropower constitutes the biggest threat to our continent's fish fauna. [The Guardian reported on it.](#)



Alternatives to hydropower! We commissioned a study to assess whether the projected hydropower plants in the Balkans can be substituted with other renewable sources of energy such as solar and wind. The study shows that the potential of these environmentally much sounder sources of energy exceeds the potential from hydropower by about five times and is up to twice as high as the current electricity demand. This means that the Balkan rivers could be spared, because new hydropower plants are not at all necessary! [STUDY](#)



Study on the Ecosystem Vjosa. Over the past two years, scientists from Albania, Austria and Germany have been researching the largely unexplored ecosystem of the Vjosa. Their findings were recently published in the scientific publication Acta ZooBot Austria: In "The Vjosa in Albania - a riverine ecosystem of European significance", more than 40 scientists have put together their current knowledge on 385 pages to prove the incredible value of this wild river system. [STUDY](#)

RIVERS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



The brave women of Kruščica guarding the access bridge © Andrew Burr

The brave women of Kruščica. For over a year they have been occupying a bridge day and night to prevent the construction of two hydropower plants. They even resisted police violence. In June, a [court overturned the construction licence](#), nevertheless the investor showed up with excavators in August. The unwavering women successfully fended off this violation! Before Christmas, judges are to make a final decision on whether the permits for the two hydropower projects are illegal. [MORE](#)

RIVERS IN SERBIA



Protest in Pirot close to Stara Planina Nature Park, September 2018. Photo: Miljan Andonov

Stara Planina Protests. The number one environmental issue in Serbia is currently the construction of 60 hydropower plants in the Stara Planina Natural Park. Residents and people from all over Serbia are angry and have joined continuous protests. In early September, 3,000 people protested in Pirot against these plans. After a creek in the Nature Park was displaced without a permit to pave the way for the construction of a hydropower plant, residents of Pirot/Stara Planina took it into their own hands to successfully return their river to its original bed. [VIDEO](#)

VJOSA IN ALBANIA



On-the-spot appraisal at the Vjosa. This is where the hydropower plant Poçem is projected to be built. © EuroNatur

Bern Convention. Representatives of the Bern Convention visited the Vjosa in order to investigate to which extent the projected hydropower plants Kalivaç and Poçem are jeopardizing the objectives of the Bern Convention. As a result, [recommendations](#) to stop the construction of the two planned hydropower projects were made to the Albanian government. These recommendations are to be formally adopted at this year's meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention. [MORE](#)

RIVERS IN MACEDONIA



Petition! The Macedonian Blue-Heart-team (Front 21/42 and Eko-svest) launched a petition against the destruction of the last free-flowing rivers in their country: Green Zones for Blue Rivers. [Please sign the petition](#), addressed to Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and President of the Macedonian Assembly Talat Dzaferi. [MORE](#)

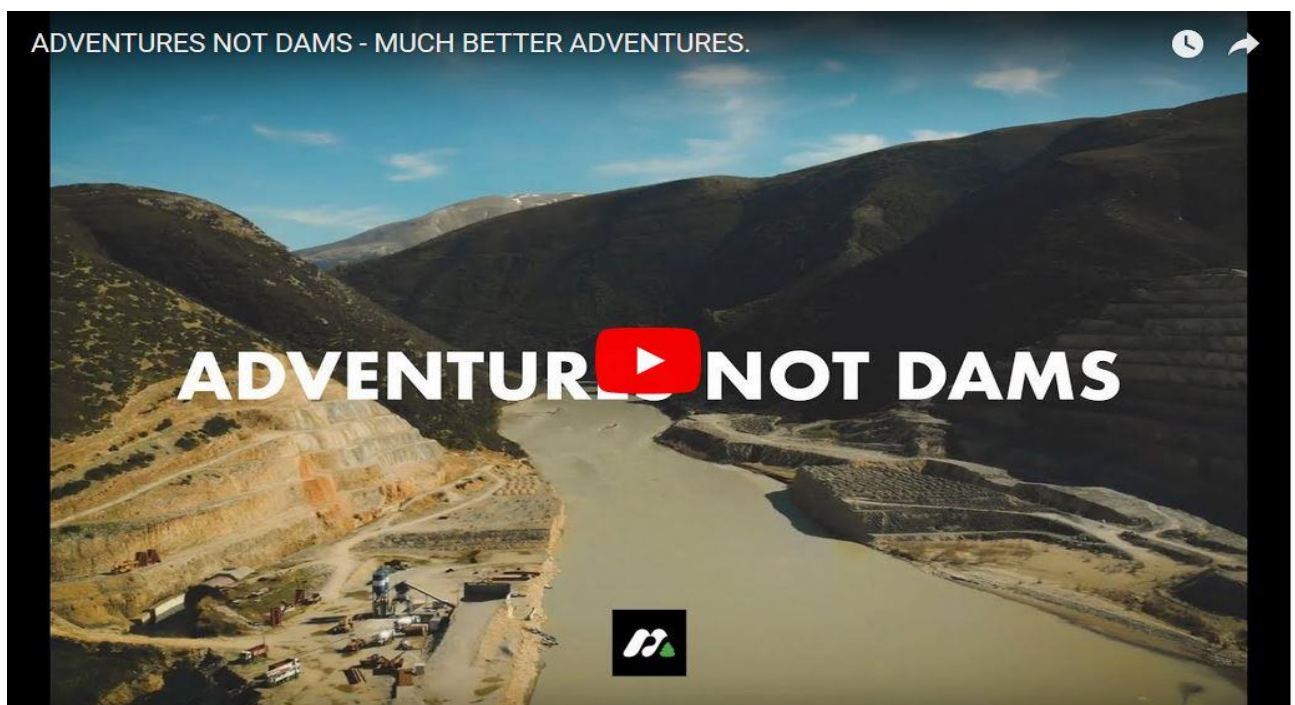
VIDEOS



My river, my fight! At the first European Rivers Summit, we asked participants to express their emotions for their rivers! The result is [this video](#). The rivers are different, but the message is always the same: Save Europe's Rivers - Stop the Dams!



Lum Lumi i Lire! Vjosa and Valbona receive prominent support! The song "Blessed be the free rivers" ("Lum Lumi i Lire!") aims to give a voice to the threatened rivers Vjosa and Valbona and create a deep echo of awareness in the public. The hit quickly made it into the Top 10 of Albanian charts. By Elina Duni, Eda Zari and many more! [VIDEO](#)



Adventures, not Dams! This short film by [Much Better Adventures](#) calls out international banks for funding dams in national parks and on Europe's last wild river – the Vjosa in Albania. As construction companies move in on Europe's last wild river, Adventures Not Dams highlights the irreversible damage this will have on the local environment, economy and communities along its banks. [VIDEO](#)

BALKAN RIVERS IN MEDIA

YaleEnvironment360

Published at the Yale School of Forestry
& Environmental Studies

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Since the start of 2018, hundreds of media reports about the Blue Heart have been published. Here a prominent selection: [YaleEnvironment360](#), [BBC](#), [The Guardian](#), [The Telegraph](#), [Ecological Citizen](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Süddeutsche Zeitung](#), [Der Standard](#), [Deutschlandfunk](#), [The Cleanest Line](#), and many more...

All the best,
Your Blue Heart Team