

Preface

Integration; linkages; networks are all buzz words of today's society, and nowhere more so than in the field of nature conservation. Many countries and communities created protected areas during the last 30 years of the last century that remained as islands in the countryside - existing only to delimit and protect a small area of biodiversity - rich habitat in an otherwise agricultural or semi-urban landscape.

Around the world over the last 10 years or so there has been increasing recognition that in linking these areas together, providing corridors for wildlife, and in maintaining the ecosystem linkages of the ecological processes that sustain them, these islands could be brought together into a coherent and managed network, providing benefits to wildlife and people alike.

For protected areas in the Mediterranean region, where landscapes have long been modified by human land-use, the additional vision of social connectivity between the people living in and around the protected areas has increasingly been seen as a means to maintain habitats that depend on human activity (such as grazing) as well as promoting increased social acceptance of these areas. People are recognised as a major element in protected area management, and integration and participation, rather than exclusion, is increasingly promoted.

This publication includes the outcomes of the workshop *Environmental connectivity. Protected areas in the Mediterranean context*, held in Málaga from the 26th to the 28th of September 2002, and co-organized by the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation and the Environment Andalusian Regional Government. It represents a contribution to assessing how far we have come, and how far we must go to achieve full ecological and social linkages in the Mediterranean landscape.

The book is structured in four chapters. In the first chapter, environmental connectivity in the Mediterranean basin context is introduced. The second deals

with concepts and general approaches in relation to environmental connectivity and protected areas. The third chapter refers to case studies on connectivity from around Mediterranean countries. Finally, in the fourth chapter some reflections on the Mediterranean contribution to the next World Park Congress (Durban-2003) are presented. This last chapter also includes the general conclusions from the Málaga meeting.

The main issues discussed in relation to environmental connectivity include those related to networks; physical barriers to ecological processes; fragmentation and other issues that need to be resolved if Mediterranean fauna and flora is to be maintained through an effective network of protected areas. Many challenges remain, however, especially within the field of promoting social connectivity, and how to measure and plan for ensuring ecological connectivity within marine ecosystems.

I am very grateful to the Direccion General de la RENP y SA for their financial and technical support to the workshop, and trust that the findings and conclusions will be of interest at the Durban World Parks Congress and within the Mediterranean region.

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