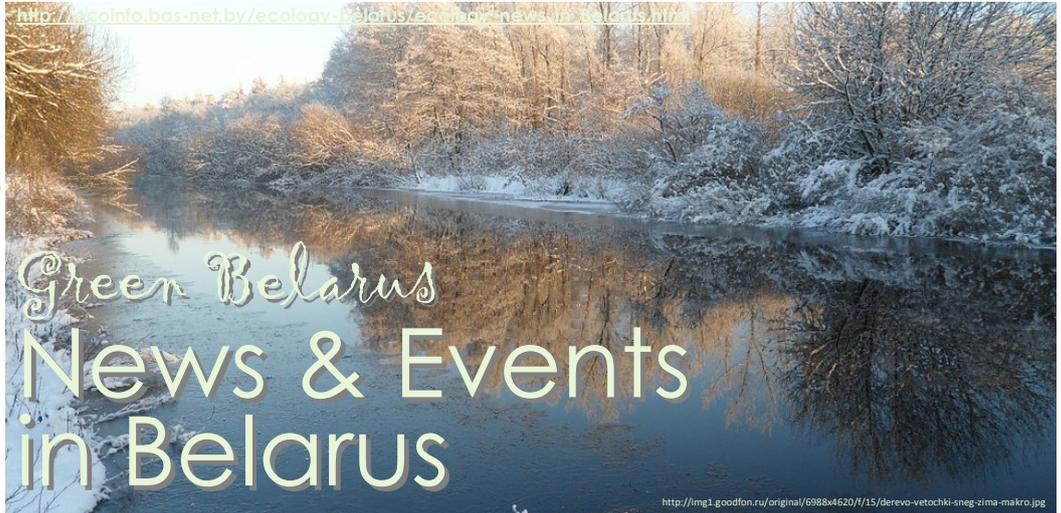




SUPPLEMENT
TO THE DIGEST "GREEN BELARUS"

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CENTER
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Green Belarus News & Events in Belarus

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ANOTHER THREE BELARUSIAN SITES GET INTERNATIONAL STATUS

Another three Belarusian wetlands have received the international status, Belarusian Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Andrei Kovkhuto told journalists before the presentation of the National Strategy for Conservation and Rational (Sustainable) Use of Peatlands on 2 February, BelTA has learned.

"Another three Belarusian wetlands have received the international conservation status in addition to seventeen wetlands that have already had the status for some time," the minister said. These are Polesye Valley of the Bug River, Servech, and Vileity.

"Today we mark the World Wetlands Day. It is very symbolic that we present our National Strategy for Conservation and Rational (Sustainable) Use of Peatlands today," Andrei Kovkhuto said.

"Three Belarusian sites have been included in the Ramsar list of wetlands. These territories already fall, to some extent, within the scope of responsibility of international organizations. It will therefore be easier for us to prepare projects and contact donors for financial assistance to rehabilitate and develop these lands," said Natalia Minchenko, Head of the Biological and Landscape Diversity Department at the

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.

Belarus joined the Ramsar Convention (Convention on Wetlands) in 1999 when the reserve Zvanets was added to the Ramsar list.

The National Strategy for Conservation and Rational (Sustainable) Use of Peatlands was approved by a resolution of the Council of Ministers on 30 December 2015. The basic principle of sustainable development of peatlands is that all natural peatlands (total area of 863,000 hectares) are subject to protection. Economic activity can be carried out only on the peatlands previously drained and inefficiently used. In addition, the degraded peatlands are subject to rehabilitation. The successful implementation of the strategy will allow Belarus to keep 684,000 hectares of wetlands in their natural state by 2030, restore at least 75,000 hectares of degraded peatlands, preserve more than 7 billion m3 of freshwater, and prevent about 500 million tonnes of carbon from getting into the atmosphere.



BELTA,
2.02.2016

BELARUS, UNDP IMPLEMENT PEATLAND REHABILITATION PROJECTS WORTH ABOUT \$10M

Since 1999 Belarus' Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and the UNDP have implemented a number of peatland rehabilitation projects worth about \$10 million, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus Sanaka Samarasinha said before the presentation of the National Strategy for Conservation and Rational (Sustainable) Use of Peatlands on 2 February, BelTA has learned.

"The United Nations Development Program has been working with Belarus in this area since 1999. We have been actively developing the projects that aim to rehabilitate and conserve the wetlands and peatlands in Belarus. Jointly with Belarus' Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection we have implemented projects with the total budget of about \$10 million," said Sanaka Samarasinha.

According to him, all these projects were aimed at re-swamping, rehabilitating and maintaining peatlands.

Sanaka Samarasinha stressed that he is very proud that Belarus was the first country among the CIS countries to adopt such a strategy and that the

UNDP is part of this process. I personally visited many regions of Belarus which are home to peatlands. Their examples show that residents of Belarus and other countries can enjoy all the benefits of peatlands and that there is no need to destroy them and harm the nature, he stated.

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BELTA,
2.02.2016

NEW BELARUS-RUSSIA UNION PROGRAM ON GEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION IN DEVELOPMENT

A concept of the new program of the Union State of Belarus and Russia on geological exploration and nature management has been developed, BelTA learned from Andrei Kovkhuto, Belarusian Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Minister, after the plenary session of the 1st Eurasian Mining and Geological Forum, on 2 February.

The official said that the concept of the new Union State program on geological exploration and nature management has already been developed and approved by the relevant ministries of Belarus and Russia. Financial matters are now being addressed as well as the list of concrete projects that will become part of it. "It is one of the mat-

ters we are discussing during the forum," noted the Belarusian Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Minister.

In his words, negotiations are supposed to take place within the framework of the forum to discuss the harmonization of the geological assets and the signing of bilateral agreements between organizations of Belarus (in particular, the R&D Center for Geology), Kazakhstan, and Russia.

The Eurasian Mining and Geological Forum is scheduled to take place in Minsk on 2-4 February with assistance of the Belarusian Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry, the state enterprise R&D Center for Geology, the Belarusian State Technological University, and the international

consulting company IMC Montan. The key items on the agenda include the formation of a common market of raw materials inside the Eurasian Economic Union, the mining policy of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, risks and capabilities of mining industry enterprises in view of the development of integration processes in Eurasia, the formation of transboundary mining clusters, and the development of public private partnership in the mining industry.

The Eurasian Mining and Geological Forum is supposed to offer a permanent venue for discussing mining industry problems in view of the development of interstate cooperation and supranational integration associations in Eurasia.



BELTA,
2.02.2016

OVER 150 UNDP-FUNDED PROJECTS WORTH \$200 MILLION IMPLEMENTED IN BELARUS

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has implemented more than 150 projects to the total tune of some \$200 million in Belarus, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus Sanaka Samarasingha said at a solemn event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the UNDP on 24 February, BelTA has learned.

"Over the past years, Belarus has made a leap forward in terms of the development of human potential. Belarus' achievements in the international arena are obvious. The United Nations Development Program is happy to note this and add that more than 150 UNDP-funded projects worth some \$200 million have been implemented in this country," Sanaka Samarasingha said.

The UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus thanked government authorities for cooperation and praised the achievements of many of the Belarusian minis-

tries. He pointed out that the initiative UN70 Express was one of the key projects carried out in Belarus.

"Belarus has done a lot to improve the quality of life of people. But now the country is facing new challenges. It is worth noting that they are associated, to a greater extent, with external factors, developments in the region and the world in general. But the country will be able to overcome them by continuing to move forward," Sanaka Samarasingha said.

The UNDP's priorities in Belarus in 2016-2020 will be sustainable economic development,

inclusive, responsible and accountable governance, maintaining favorable environment and

sustainable use of natural potential based on the principles of green economy, providing access to a wide range of social services, and promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Special attention will be paid to the most needy.

The UN Development Program was established in January 1966 through the merger of two organizations: The Expanded Program of Technical Assistance (EPTA) and Special Fund (SF). Today, the UNDP operates on a global scale and relies on local initiative and local interests.



BELTA,
24.02.2016

EARLY SPRING BIRD MIGRATION IN BELARUS IN 2016

The first spring birds were already spotted in Grodno Oblast, BelTA learned from Dmitry Vinchevsky, an ornithologist, deputy chairman of the regional branch of the public organization "APB-BirdLife Belarus.

In Berestovitsa District ornithologists spotted a couple of wild geese.

Usually the birds of this species appear in this area at the end of February but the



abnormally warm weather has had an impact on them.

"Geese belong to the so-called close-distance migrants, i.e. those who winter in western or southern Europe. They navigate by weather, even make up their weather forecast and when the weather gets warmer, move closer to the breeding grounds," said Dmitry Vinchevsky said.

convenient places to nest. So the birds hurry back. Storks, starlings, lapwings live by the similar logic. Therefore we should not be surprised by their early sightings.

"The other day the birdwatchers spotted a couple of great white herons on the Neman River. Typically these birds do not winter in our regions. Most likely they came back to Grodno from warmer regions. Whooping swans were also sighted," Dmitry Vinchevsky said.

However, there is no reason to expect mass arrival of migratory birds in the near future. The so-called long-distance migrants that winter in Africa and Asia navigate by the length of daylight hours rather than by weather, and therefore they come back on the schedule they have developed over many years.

The logic is simple: birds that arrive earlier have more opportunities to settle in the most

BELTA,
1.02.2016

2015 HOTTEST YEAR ON RECORD, UN SAYS

2015 was the hottest and driest year since pre-industrial times, BelTA learned from the UN News Center.

The previous year was marked by an earthquake in Nepal, downpours in Pakistan and India, a cyclone in Yemen, landslides in Guatemala and a hurricane in the Western hemisphere. The greenhouse gas emissions reached the record high level. The situation was aggravated by the exceptionally strong El Nino. More than 24 million people in Africa suffered from 32 devastating droughts in 2015.

The damage caused to the countries by natural disasters is estimated at more than

\$300 billion per year, said Dr. Robert Glasser, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction.

There were 90 severe storms last year. Storms killed 242,000 people for the last 20 years. Thanks to the proactive measures, the number of people killed in storms in India, the Philippines, Malawi and



Mexico was record low (923 people during the year). An average of 9,500 people was killed in storms every year during the last 10 years.

All in all, 98.6 million people were affected by natural disasters last year, approximately 22,800 died.

BELTA,
18.02.2016

PELICAN'S WINTER MENU

This winter the extreme cold and heavy snow has only been enjoyed by children. Of course, they don't need to dig out cars covered with snow, rush to get to work, wishing for the warmth at home, while children are sliding down the hill with pleasure. Are our forest dwellers as active on a cold winter's day we wonder? Do they have enough food and the energy to find it? We asked Alexander Vinchevsky, Director of the APB BirdLife Belarus Public Association, how our feathered friends manage in the extreme weather.

Even pelicans have changed their migration pattern

The greatest problem for overwintering birds during this time of the year is foraging. If they can find enough food, they will have enough energy to live through the hard frosts. The Dalmatian pelican spotted in the Mogilev Region, is not afraid of frosts. This species differs from others as it has the ability to sustain low temperatures. Why do you think birds fly south? Not because of the warmth as many people think, but mainly because the daylight hours there are longer. While in our country in the winter, birds do not have time to find enough food during the short daylight hours.

Ornithologists are especially keen this year to give recommendations on feeding birds. This is the first time I recall being asked to help birds in this way. What is the reason for that?

We recommend only feeding small perching birds which, because of the deep snow, cannot find food. Sunflower or pumpkin seeds will be

suitable for them. Both bluetits and woodpeckers enjoy unsalted suet. Sparrows, greenfinches, and finches like nuts.

Waterfowl, however, do not need a great deal of attention. They are capable of changing their habitat to find food. When birds are fed by humans they may lose this desire to follow food sources and remain in the same place to their detriment. In the autumn, we campaign for people not to feed the birds, especially in areas where the water freezes. Nevertheless, annually, in Minsk alone, about 5 thousand birds remain for overwintering, this year being no exception. Ornithologists have counted similar numbers on the Svisloch and Komsomolskoe lakes, the Tsnyanskoye basin and the Krinitza basin. Among them seagulls, wild ducks, swans and goldeneye.

Do you think city birds are more comfortable in the winter than their forest relatives?

I wouldn't say so necessarily. There is a chance that people may take care of them, but it doesn't always happen. City birds, as a rule, forage on the ground which is not ideal when there is heavy snow. Goldfinches and greenfinches which eat seeds from tall weeds (if people don't remove them) fare much better. The main thing, of course, is that there is no ice for them.

Each winter offers different challenges. Last winter was warm with little snow. While currently it's the exact opposite. What is the optimum winter for our feathered friends?

Alas, there is no one type of perfect weather for all birds. The birds we see in Belarus repre-

sent northern, southern, western and eastern regions. This means that each bird is adapted to its own weather. For southern birds it is better that there is no snow at all, as they search for food on the ground or in open reservoirs. For the northern varieties, such as willow grouse, the more snow the better. Having white winter plumage, they are exposed to predators if there is no snow to afford camouflage.

The north of our country attracts fewer birds, as it is cold. Polesie and the Brest and Grodno regions are more attractive owing to their warmer climates.

The effects of climate change mean that more and more southern birds remain in our country for the winter, where they previously flew to Western Europe and Africa. Sandpipers, egrets, wrens, warblers and wagtails that eat insects, now feel more comfortable in our country. Many of them remained until New Year. While northern species, such as willow grouse, are disappearing. Just a hundred years ago this bird lived in Polesie, now the species can only be seen on two or three bogs in the Vitebsk Region.

Apart from the Dalmatian pelican, what other atypical new species, have ornithologists observed recently?

Besides the pelican, four new species have appeared in Belarus in the last two years. Before that we saw the pink-footed goose, yellow-browed warbler (Siberian species) and American wigeon.

*The Minsk Times,
17.02.2016*

NO PLANS TO BUILD BATTERY PROCESSING FACTORY IN BELARUS FOR NOW

No plans have been made to build a battery processing factory in Belarus for now, BeITA learned from Andrei Shakhemirov, Head of the State Environmental Evaluation Office of the Belarusian Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry, on 25 February.

"When the idea of building a factory to process batteries was debated, a number of aspects were taken into consideration, including econom-

ics. The factory has to process at least 35,000 tonnes of waste per annum and Belarus doesn't have that much waste. This is why we've decided against building such an enterprise for now," noted the official.

Andrei Shakhemirov explained that if Belarus is unable to get used batteries processed abroad, the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Ministry will re-consider the possibility of building a processing factory. "There are some

difficulties already. Most often we take the batteries to Poland or Russia. In the last few years Poland has been presenting us with additional requirements for the physical parameters of the waste while the Russian companies we worked with turn up in criminal news. This is why we are inclined towards having a processing factory of small capacity at least in Belarus," he said.

*BELTA,
25.02.2016*

EU TO PROVIDE €3M TO ADVANCE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION BETWEEN BELARUS, UKRAINE

On 1 February, the Belarusian city of Brest played host to Information Day held to mark the launch of the Call for Proposals under Belarus-Ukraine Territorial Cooperation Program, BeITA has learned.

The overall amount made available by the EU under the Call for Proposals is €3.3 million. Applications will be open till 19 April 2016. Priority will be given to projects aimed to benefit a wide range of organizations and individuals. Healthcare, SMEs, culture, sports, tourism, and environment are in focus of Belarus-Ukraine Territorial Cooperation Program. One joint project may receive from €60,000 to €250,000.

"This is the first EU-funded program for cross-border cooperation between the Eastern

Partnership countries that EU member states are not directly involved in. The partner countries can define their priorities and jointly address problems in border regions promoting economic and social development at the local level," said Alexei Sekarev, the head of the expert group on Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Support Program.

Brest Oblast has many years' experience of participation in such programs. Deputy Chairman of the Brest Oblast Executive Committee Mikhail Serkov that the region expects to get one-third of the budget of the new program. "We believe that Brest Oblast will be given not less than €1 million. We should do our best to get the grant, to attract the money to the re-

gion. An initial set of proposals has been prepared. At this stage, the main thing is to develop an idea that will boost the economy of the region," he emphasized.

The Call for Proposals under Belarus-Ukraine Territorial Cooperation Program was announced on 20 January. In the near time, potential participants will meet with experts to get advice on how to write applications keeping in mind the Belarusian and Ukrainian legislation and other aspects. Pinsk will host Information Day on 2 February, Gomel on 3 February. Similar events will be held in the Ukrainian cities of Chernigov, Kiev, Zhitomir, Rovno, and Lutsk.

*BELTA,
1.02.2016*

SAMARASINHA: UNDP ADMINISTRATOR MAY VISIT CHERNOBYL EXCLUSION ZONE

UN Deputy Secretary General, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme Helen Clark may visit the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone during her trip to Belarus ahead of marking the 30th anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus Sanaka Samarasinha told media on 19 February, BeITA has learned.

The UN Deputy Secretary General is expected to visit Minsk on 24-25 April 2016. While in the Belarusian capital, Helen Clark, as coordinator of the UN international cooperation on Chernobyl, will take part in the conference to mark the 30th anniversary of the accident. It is expected that the meeting will be attended by high-level representatives of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

The UNDP Administrator is also set to visit other events to mark the date. Their goal is to analyze the international Chernobyl cooperation and define further ways to mitigate the consequences of the accident, restore and sustainably develop the hit regions.

The program of the visit is currently finalized, said the UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus.

According to Sanaka Samarasinha, the visit to the exclusion zone was in the program of Helen Clark's previous visit to Belarus. Then these plans were spoiled by bad weather (a helicopter flight was envisaged).

*BELTA,
19.02.2016*



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INFORMATION CENTER OF BELARUSIAN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT ATTRACTS CROWDS

More than 10,000 people have visited the information center of the Belarusian nuclear power plant since it was opened, BeITA learned from Eduard Svirid, Head of the Information and Public Relations Department of the state enterprise Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant, on 17 February.

According to the source, the information center moved to new premises on 1 November 2015. Foreign delegations from Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, the USA, Finland and other countries have visited it since the information center was opened.

The information center offers information about the construction, operation principles, and safeguards of the Belarusian nuclear power plant,

and the influence of the nuclear energy industry on the environment. Visitors can also peruse the latest environmental impact assessment reports and learn about the history and prospects of the town of Ostrovets, which development is now heavily influenced by the Belarusian nuclear power plant project.

Access to the information center is free.

The information center of the Belarusian nuclear power plant was opened in 2009. It is meant to raise the nation's awareness about matters concerning the nuclear energy industry and the construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant.

BELTA,
17.02.2016

QUALIFIED PERSONNEL WITH HIGHEST RESPONSIBILITY

Exact copy of Belarusian NPP control board enables modelling of over a thousand situations possible during life of nuclear power plant

"The copy of the control board enables us to model over a thousand scenarios, from launch through to regular use, at the station. It's vital for our training of specialists, allowing them to prepare theoretically and practically," notes Vladimir Gorin, deputy chief engineer for personnel training at the Belarusian NPP. Training is conducted via a range of scenarios, which call upon skills taught to personnel.

Between three and five people will work on the plant's control board during a shift, each chosen for their psychological suitability as well as their professional experience and skills. Psychologists will consult during training and after employment. "Undoubtedly, people working on the control

board will be paid higher salaries than most of the other NPP staff, as they'll be working with one of the most complex sections," explains Mr. Gorin.

At present, the simulated control board is being used for training male employees, but women are also eligible, as Mr. Gorin emphasises, noting that women are employed in such roles at other nuclear power stations worldwide. "As far as age is concerned, we take into account competence and skills, education and working experience from the past three years," he adds.

The full-scale simulator is located at the educational and training centre of the Belarusian NPP, and was launched in test mode early this year. Based on a mathematical model, it is an invaluable part of the educational and training centre's work. The latter covers theoretical preparation, as well as practical training, and administrative rooms.

The Minsk Times,
25.02.2016

ATTACKING AIDS WITH BITES

Belarus' National Academy of Sciences presents top ten scientific results of 2015.

A study which resulted in chemical combinations being discovered achieved the top of the scientific table: these are to be used for developing a drug against the 20th century plague: AIDS. In modern science, significant discoveries are often made on the edge of disciplines, as seen by this recent work by the Bioorganic Chemistry Institute and the United Institute of Informatics Problems, where methods of molecular modelling have been used by chemists.

The project leader and chief scientific officer at the United Institute of Informatics Problems,

Doctor of Chemical Sciences Alexander Andrianov, has been investigating computer modelling methods for potential drugs against AIDS for about a decade. This enormous task is assisted by the Institute's Supercomputer Centre. HIV has been thoroughly studied and it

wasn't too long ago that antibodies were detected to fight against it. Those whose immune systems create these antibodies will not suffer from AIDS. Our scientists have set a goal to find chemical combinations which would have interacted with HIV, involving coated proteins similar to these antibodies.

"Our major goal in this project was the computer screening of extensive databases of chemical combinations. There are millions of them; it's impossible to do without large capacity computers. Initially, we select the combinations which potentially have the required features. Later, these are used to choose the molecules that will specifically and efficiently interact with functionally important parts of the virus. This has involved many calculating experiments," commented Professor Alexander Tuzikov, the Director of the United Institute of Informatics Problems and a corresponding member of Belarus' National Academy of Sciences. He adds that it took many

months for a team of researchers to solve the problem, using supercomputer resources. As a result, several dozen combinations have been identified; at least in theory, to neutralise the AIDS virus. Around ten years ago, a search such as this was manual, involving much finance, time and effort. After the advent of modern virtu-

al testing, much hope is pinned on real experiments as they are necessary to objectively assess whether a combination is efficient or not in fighting the virus.

The Minsk Times,
3.02.2016