

# FINAL REPORT

**Project Name:** Community-based Conservation of Lake Kuyucuk, Kars, Turkey

**Project Id:** 180818

**Reporter:** Önder Cırık

**Reporting Period:** 1 April 2008 – 31 May 2008

## Milestones of the Project

1. **May 2008:** Lake Kuyucuk project was awarded by Whitley Fund For Nature from United Kingdom. Out of 11 finalists all around the world our project received the Whitley Gold Award.
2. **October 2008:** I. Kuyucuk Nature Festival was organized by our NGO KuzeyDoga Society and Turkish minister of Culture & Tourism honoured the festival with his participation on October 5, 2008.
3. **October 2008:** Wetland Commission of ministry of environment & forestry identified the protection and RAMSAR boundaries of Lake Kuyucuk and proposed it as the 13th RAMSAR site of Turkey to national wetland commission on October 8, 2008.
4. **April 2008:** National wetland commission of Turkey confirmed the protection and RAMSAR boundaries of Lake Kuyucuk wildlife reserve on April 2, 2009 and took a decision to apply international RAMSAR secretariat to designate lake Kuyucuk as international RAMSAR site.
5. **May 2008:** The old dirt road which bisects lake Kuyucuk was converted into an island with the support of Kars Governorship in order to provide a safe haven for the breeding birds of Lake Kuyucuk. It has been the first artificial island of Turkey due to wildlife protection. The opening of the island was done with the participation of local villagers, local administrators, students and nature lovers who came to Kars from different parts of Turkey for XI. Turkish Birding Conference between 16-19 May 2009.
6. **May 2008:** Lake Kuyucuk of Kars has become Turkey's 2009 European Destination of Excellence (EDEN). KuzeyDoga Society applied the competition in March 2009.
7. **May 2008:** Ministry of Environment & Forestry decided to prepare the management plan of Lake Kuyucuk Wildlife Reserve and assigned our team to organise the management plan process by providing financial sources, logistics and experts.

# 1. In terms of Science:

## 1.1 Bird Ringing Studies

A total of 1932 birds of 72 species, mainly shorebirds, swallows, sand martins and larks, were ringed at Kuyucuk Station in 2008.

119 birds out of 24 species were ringed in spring 2008 at Lake Kuyucuk. Ringing was carried out for a very short time between the dates May 13 and May 28, 2008 due to rainy weather and lack of licensed ringers.

1813 birds out of 68 species were ringed in the fall at Lake Kuyucuk. Ringing was carried out between August 21 and October 15, 2008.

We could not carry out ringing studies in spring 2009 due to rainy and cold weather, lack of licensed ringers and construction of the island at Lake Kuyucuk.

Our work has received its first feedback from Kazakhstan. A garganey (*Anas querquedula*), which was ringed by our South African volunteer ringer Michael Ford in the fall 2008 at Lake Kuyucuk, was shot by a French hunter in Kazakhstan last winter.

We also carried out breeding bird surveys in 20-21-22 April & 27-29-30 May 2009. According to our results of two months we identified that 45 species are breeding most probable, 18 species are breeding probable and 5 species are confirmed breeding.

## 1.2 Bird Surveys

When we started this CLP Project the bird checklist of Lake Kuyucuk was 163. When we finished the Project on May 31, 2009 the checklist of the lake reached to 207 after our studies and surveys for a year. Our team observed six individuals of the globally Endangered Red-breasted goose (*Branta ruficollis*) at the site during the migration period. Our team member Emrah Coban observed a white-tailed lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*), which is the furthest east record of this species in Turkey. It is also the first record of the species in north-eastern Turkey. We also recorded spur-winged plover (*Vanellus spinosus*) and greater sand plover (*Charadrius leschneaultii*) at the site, also the first records of these species in north-eastern Turkey. We observed 9 white-headed ducks (*Oxyura leucocephala*) breeding on Lake Kuyucuk in the spring of 2008. This bird is another globally Endangered species and the biggest world population of these ducks winter in Turkey.

## 1.3 Wetland Restoration Studies

In 2008 ecological restoration work at Lake Kuyucuk began on April 21, 2008. Six experimental exclosures were placed around the lake in order to monitor the effects of grazing. These exclosures were 15 x 10 meters and consisted of 1 meter tall metal stakes covered in chicken wire in order to keep the cattles out so that vegetation cannot be grazed.

We will monitor the vegetation, bird, insect and amphibian diversity and abundance inside and outside the enclosures by doing regular surveys, to understand the effects of grazing. This experiment will provide the basic data required for the master plan to protect the biodiversity of the lake.

Assistant Professor Dr. Sean Anderson of California State University Department of Environmental Sciences, a wetland restoration ecologist, is co-leading this effort with KuzeyDoğa. Before the work began, KuzeyDoğa team organized a meeting with local villagers in order to explain how to use the lake in a nature-friendly manner and to get their feedback about our plans. We also collected data from the villagers about the lake's past. This scientific study is supported by the Governorship of Arpaçay district, Kuyucuk people and Kafkas University. The governor of Arpaçay provided the funding to build the cattle enclosures and Kuyucuk villagers and students donated their labor. The results of the study will be shared with the public, will help shape the conservation master plan of Lake Kuyucuk and will be published as a scientific article.

We repeated the same study with the support of Kars Directorate of Forestry & Environment in May 2009 at Lake Kuyucuk. We repaired the cages, identified the shoreline, reedbed area, the island by GPSing in order to receive data to compare later in order to see the change at Lake Kuyucuk.

## 2. In terms of Awareness Raising

Our team worked with local people and administration very often during the project and followed a participative approach. To raise the awareness of local people, our team visited villages several times, organized workshops, meetings, movie presentations, important day celebrations and festivals. Here is a list of activities we did for awareness raising:

**10 April 2008** - The Winged Migration (Le Peuple Migrateur) movie was shown to the Kuyucuk village students on April 10, 2008. 22 school kids watched the movie.

**27 April 2008** – Our team organized a sustainable bio-cultural tourism workshop on April 27, 2008 in Kuyucuk. Nine women, 25 men, and four children from Kuyucuk village attended this workshop for two days. Esra Kartal, who was the project manager of a former UNDP project on sustainable nature tourism in Gediz Delta in İzmir also attended this workshop in order to share her experiences with Kuyucuk villagers.

**11 May 2008** – For the first time in eastern Turkey, United Nations World Migratory Birds Day was celebrated at Lake Kuyucuk in Kars. Over 120 people in Kars participated in birdwatching, environmental education and bird counting during the World Migratory Bird Day celebrations carried out by KuzeyDoğa Society. The celebrations were honoured by the participation of Arpaçay governor Murat Demirci, Akyaka Governor Hakan Ezgi.

**5-6 June 2008** – Our team participated in the World Environment Day celebrations both in Kars city and at Lake Kuyucuk. Kars Directorate of Environment & Forestry organized a half-day programme in Kars downtown. Kars governor Mehmet Ufuk Erden and many other decisionmakers attended this programme. Head of the Environment & Forestry directorate made an opening speech and then Kars governor Mehmet Ufuk Erden talked about the importance of the day. Later Project team leader Onder Cirik made a presentation about the conservation activities at Lake Kuyucuk and gave information about the Whitley Fund for Nature gold award given to KuzeyDoğa. Kars governor presented a plaque to KuzeyDoğa to honour our efforts to conserve Kars' environment and benefit local communities.

The next day a second celebration was organized at Lake Kuyucuk with the participation of deputy governor Mustafa Ozkaynak, heads of all directorates in Kars and Arpaçay and district governor Murat Demirci. Kuyucuk and Carcioglu villagers, students, nurses, Arpaçay schools, security forces and gendarms of the region, exceeding 200 people, also took part in the celebrations. KuzeyDoğa Projects Coordinator Onder Cirik gave a speech to explain the environmental importance of the lake and the conservatoin work KuzeyDoğa carries out there. A nest full of eggs in the reeds by the lake greatly impressed the decisionmakers and they saw what could happen if the reedbed area around the lake is fully protected. School kids and teachers birdwatched with binoculars and scopes, played games and had a picnic while the Kuyucuk villagers offered ayran to the visitors.

**2-5 October 2008** - The first Kuyucuk Nature Festival was organized by our team and celebrated at Kuyucuk between 2-5 October 2008. The three-day festival had over 410 participants from five countries and 14 Turkish provinces. A group of 20 guests from other parts of Turkey came to Kars by bus, train and air on October 2, 2008 and we transported them by bus provided by the Kars Municipality to Kuyucuk village where they stayed for the following three days. Festival guests were welcomed by Kuyucuk villagers and settled in the Kuyucuk guesthouse, the former village school and in tents in the school yard. All meals for the guests were provided by KuzeyDoğa Society and Kuyucuk villagers. Kuyucuk villagers prepared and served all meals to the guests in a food tent set up in the school yard.

**5 October 2008** - Because of our team's rigorous efforts, the Culture and Tourism minister of Turkey Ertuğrul Günay attended the World Birdwatching Day celebrations at Lake Kuyucuk and became the first minister who attended a World Birdwatching Day activity in Turkey.

Lake Kuyucuk broke another Turkish record of attendees on World Birdwatching Day celebration on October 5, 2008. In addition to the participation of Turkey's Culture & Tourism Minister, Kars governor Mehmet Ufuk Erden, Arpaçay district governor Murat Demirci and Akyaka district governor Karahan Dastan, around 310 visitors from surrounding villages, Kars city, 14 different provinces of Turkey, USA, UK, India, and South Africa were at Lake Kuyucuk. This equals 54% of World Birdwatching Day attendees in all of Turkey. More than 24,000 birds of 78 species were observed at the lake in one day. This constituted 58%

of all birds and %65 of all bird species observed that day around Turkey. Mr. Gunay became the first minister of Turkey who attended a World Birdwatching Day activity anywhere.

**9 May 2009** - We have celebrated the 2009 World Migratory Bird Day at Lake Kuyucuk. Over 150 people and 85 students participated from Kuyucuk, Durakli and Carcioglu villages, Arpacay district Boarding School and Kars. The celebration was honored by Kars Director of Environment and Forestry Mr. Erol Bilgir. During the press conference we announced the formal recommendation, by the Turkish government, of Lake Kuyucuk as Turkey's 13. and eastern Turkey's first Ramsar site. This was followed by lunch and birdwatching at Lake Kuyucuk.

**18 May 2009** – XI. Turkish Birding Conference was organized by our team in collaboration with Kafkas University here in Kars in 2009 and more than 100 birders all around Turkey came and attended this conference. As an excursion activity of the conference this group of people attended the opening of the first artificial island of Turkey for wildlife conservation at lake Kuyucuk and very welcomed and hosted by Kuyucuk villagers for a day.

**5 June 2009** – World Environment Day was celebrated at lake Kuyucuk with the participation of local students, villagers and administrators. 235 people attended the celebration by the lake and our team presented a plaque to Kars governor Mehmet Ufuk Erden because of his support for the protection of Lake Kuyucuk. School kids spent all day by picnicing, bird watching and playing on the huge green meadows of Lake Kuyucuk.

**A very significant output of awareness raising:** Kuyucuk villagers established a NGO called *Society for the Protection of Kuyucuk Birds* in March 2009.

### **3. In terms of Lobbying**

#### **3.1 Two guards from Kuyucuk village employed**

As a result of our committed work at Lake Kuyucuk for the protection of birds, local administration decided to hire two guards for the protection of the lakes. **Mehmet Çiftçi** from Kuyucuk village started to work in July 2008. Another guard from the village called **Sakin Parıltı** was hired in April 2008. They work 9 months a year in order to keep poachers, hunters and cattles out of the lake. They are also giving information to the visitors about lake Kuyucuk and recording visitor statistics.

#### **3.2 Lake Kuyucuk becomes a RAMSAR site**

As a result of our effective lobbying for local administrations, RAMSAR process was started and completed almost in half a year with the full support of the local administrations.

#### **3.3 Kuyucuk has become EDEN of 2009 in Turkey**

During the selection of European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) competition local administrations had close touch with the ministry of Culture and Tourism and provided a big support for our applications. Our governor Mehmet Ufuk Erden understood the importance of the award and he gave a dinner to the EDEN commission during their evaluation visit to Kars to show his full support to our team.

### **3.4 Road becomes Turkey's First Island Sanctuary for Birds**

Our lobbying for converting the old dirt road into an island became very successful and Kars governorship did it for us. It was impossible for us to cover the cost of construction by our own resources because it costed about 100.000 \$ of two months work.

### **3.5 Lake Kuyucuk attends the British Bird Fair on August 21-23, 2009**

We encouraged Kars Directorate of Environment & Forestry to attend the British Bird Fair which is going to be organized between 21-23 August 2009 in order to promote bird life of Kars and Lake Kuyucuk. They agreed with us and two representatives from their office and our team leader Onder Cirik will be representing Kars in the fair and will have a stand for 3 days. All expenses will be covered by directorate itself.

### **3.6 Our team prepares the management plan of Lake Kuyucuk Wildlife Reserve**

Our committed, extensive and professional work attracted headquarters of Ministry of Environment & Forestry and our team was assigned to organize the management plan process of Lake Kuyucuk. Ministry will provide us funds, logistics and expertise to complete the management plan as soon as possible.

## **4. In terms of Promotion**

### **4.1 Internet Promotion**

Our team leader Onder Cirik also has web designing talents and he designed a website of the Lake Kuyucuk project in February 2008. It is accessible at: [www.kuyucuk.org](http://www.kuyucuk.org)

The site has been designed very comprehensive, visual and bilingual (Turkish & English) including informative texts about the site, hundreds of pictures, tens of videos about our work, several documentaries, press cuts and recommendations for visitors. Since February 2008, our web site has been clicked more than 41000 (18000 in 2008, 22000) times from 13 different countries.

Our project has a facebook group which has 151 members who receives the most updated news about the project regularly. Also other 227 members of our KuzeyDoga Society facebook group receives the same news, too. Press releases made in English language are also shared with other CLP alumns in CLP 2008 facebook group. Updates are being shared in

several Turkish birding e-groups whose names and the number of their members are as follows:

Toygar – 651 members

Yelkovan – 369 members

Gedizkuslari – 542 members

Grus grus – 290 members

We also started two blogs in Turkish and English languages in order to keep people updated all the time. These blogs mainly aim to publish daily records of birds ringed or observed and what is happening at Kuyucuk Bird Station during ringing seasons

Turkish blog: <http://kuyucukgolublogspot.com/>

English blog: <http://kuyucukbirdstation.blogspot.com/>

#### **4.2 Media Coverage**

Our project received an extensive media coverage in 2008 and 2009 in local, national and international press because of its project activities at lake Kuyucuk, the Whitley Award, EDEN award, various exhibits, conferences, meetings and special days organized by our team. National and International TV and radio stations, including American National Public Radio (NPR) and BBC, broadcast news about our conservation, education and ecotourism efforts in Kars. Turkish president Abdullah Gul sent out a press release and congratulated Dr. Cagan Sekercioglu, who is our president of our NGO, and our conservation efforts after we received the Whitley Gold Award. Yaban TV (Turkish Wildlife TV channel), was impressed with our efforts and they sent a documentary team in April 2008 to film our work in Kars. After a week of filming, Yaban TV compiled all scenes and produced a 50 minutes documentary called the Kars-Igdir Biodiversity Project which was shown locally and nationally. The Turkish Minister of Culture & Tourism Ertuğrul Günay visited Kuyucuk Bird & Research Education Center in order to celebrate World Birdwatching Day & the First Kuyucuk Nature Festival, and this event was given as the major news of the week on the ministry web site.

Our Project is covered 71 times in local press, 51 times in national press and 19 times in international press between April 1, 2008 and 31 May 2009. TRT 1, TRT 2, BBC, SKYTURK, NTV, Haber 24, Yaban TV and TGRT TV national and international TV channels featured our work, our team members gave interviews to TRT Radio 1, American National Public Radio (NPR), BBC, National Geographic Voice of America radios.

**Videos are at:**

[http://www.kuyucuk.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=37](http://www.kuyucuk.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=37)

**Press cuts are at:**

[http://www.kuyucuk.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=46](http://www.kuyucuk.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8&Itemid=46)

### **4.3 Publications**

We published two posters of the Lake Kuyucuk project. The themes and pdf versions are as follows:

Birds of Kuyucuk: <http://www.kuzeydoga.org/images/pdf/kuyucuk2009.pdf>

Bird Paradise of Kars: [http://www.kuyucuk.org/images/pdf/kuyucuk\\_poster.pdf](http://www.kuyucuk.org/images/pdf/kuyucuk_poster.pdf)

## **5. In terms of Developing Bio-Cultural Tourism**

We carried out various activities during the project to improve bio-cultural tourism at Lake Kuyucuk. 12 Turkish tourists from Istanbul and Ankara spent the New Year's eve in Bogatepe and Kuyucuk villages of Kars. They stayed in the villagers' houses and spent 4 days experiencing Ani ruins, lakes Çıldır and Kuyucuk, local cuisine, folklore and the village life of Kars.

Projects coordinator Onder Cirik designed a bilingual web site, [www.kuyucuk.org](http://www.kuyucuk.org), giving detailed information about and about Lake Kuyucuk. Popular articles about Lake Kuyucuk were published in the national publications *Atlas* travel magazine, *National Geographic Turkey*, *National Geographic International* and *Hurriyet* Newspaper, as well as in *Winging it*, the bulletin of American Birdwatchers. *Birds of Kuyucuk 2008 Calendar* and Lake Kuyucuk poster were produced and delivered to all shops, hotels, schools and governmental offices in Kars in order to promote Lake Kuyucuk to the visitors coming to Kars.

Our team converted the former teacher's house of Kuyucuk village into a guesthouse with the support of Arpaçay district and Kars province governorship. The guest house provide six bed housing, bathroom, toilet and kitchen. We also started a project called "Kuyucuk Multilingual". We made short movies of tourists explaining their Kuyucuk experience in their mother tongues. These videos are available at

[http://www.kuyucuk.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=50&Itemid=58](http://www.kuyucuk.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=50&Itemid=58)

In 2008 over 30 foreign visitors of including one Austrian, one Brazilian, 4 French, 2 South African, one Indian, 6 British, one Irish, one Swiss, 4 Hungarian, one Mongolian, 6 Dutch and 4 Americans came to Lake Kuyucuk. A Turkish and Dutch botanist group of 30 came to Lake Kuyucuk and had breakfast by Lake Kuyucuk on August 30, 2008. Around 30 Turkish tourists from different provinces in Turkey visited Lake Kuyucuk during the I. Kuyucuk Nature Festival. We gave basic training to the villagers on how to market their local products in our workshops and village women sold the hand-made wool socks to the visitors who came for Kuyucuk Festival. They sold the entire inventory they had prepared for the festival.



Our research and ecotourism activities led to over 800 visitors from 12 countries visiting Lake Kuyucuk. At least 52 of them spent at least one night in Kuyucuk and over 20 people spent more than two weeks each. These visitors spent thousands of dollars in each village, contributing substantially to the local economy.

By winning European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) award of 2009 Lake Kuyucuk will be presented and promoted by European Commission to European tourists and become a part of EDEN network throughout Europe.

## **6. AWARDS**

### **6.1 Whitley Gold Award of 2008**

Dr. Cagan Sekercioglu, president of KuzeyDoğa Society, was awarded the most important grassroots conservation award of United Kingdom by the Whitley Fund for Nature for his conservation, research, ecotourism, and ecological restoration efforts at Lake Kuyucuk. He received both the Whitley Gold Award and the Willam Brake Whitley Award.

60 thousand pounds were also given to KuzeyDoğa Society to use for project activities in the following two years. This project was chosen among 11 finalist projects from different parts of the world. More than 100 projects from six continents had applied for this award and only 11 of them became finalists. This was the first time a project from Turkey even made it to the finals. The awardees received their awards from the guest of honour of the award ceremony, Her Royal Highness Princess Anne and the president of the Whitley Foundation, Mr. Edward Whitley. The award ceremony took place in the Royal Geographic Society Hall of London and Dr. Cagan Sekercioglu received his award from Princess Anne, the daughter of Queen Elizabeth II. The spokesperson of the ceremony was the famous BBC documentary maker Sir David Attenborough and more than 350 VIP guests attended this ceremony.

Dr. Cagan Sekercioglu stated that he is very happy and be honoured to receive the top award of the Whitley Foundation which was established on the 15th birthday of Edward Whitley's daughter Ella in order to support nature conservation projects throughout the world.

Sekercioglu spoke to Princess Anne during the reception following the award ceremony and presented her the local cheddar cheese produced in Kars. Princess Anne said that she would taste this cheese and thanked Sekercioglu for it. Sekercioglu also gave her the 2008 calendar of Birds of Kuyucuk and the poster of the Birds of Iğdır produced by KuzeyDoğa Society.

The other award winners were from Bangladesh, Borneo, Brazil, China, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Chile and Peru. A total of 350.000 pounds were given to award winning projects and Edward Whitley spoke that the aim of the Whitley Foundation is to find out and support people who work for sustainable natural resource management and nature conservation, and to take responsibility protecting the environment along with people. He

also mentioned that Sekercioglu, who studied at Harvard and Stanford Universities, refused a financial career at Wall Street and made a difference to nature conservation.

Sekercioglu said, “KuzeyDoğa Society, of which I am the president, carries out a wide range of conservation and research projects from conducting wolf and bear surveys in Sarikamis Forests of Kars to bird ringing studies at Lake Kuyucuk and Aras valley.”

Sir David Attenborough, who is the most famous BBC documentary maker of the last 50 years, narrated a short movie about KuzeyDoğa’s conservation work which was filmed during our field research, compiled by the BBC, and shown at the award ceremony.

Sekercioglu stated that KuzeyDoğa Society is thankful for the support and contributions of the KuzeyDoğa team, Kars governship, Kars Municipality, Kars directorates of Environment & Forestry and Education, local municipalities, Arpaçay and Akyaka district governship, Kafkas University, Kuyucuk village and other individuals and organizations who took part in their work. He mentioned the valuable support of Kars governor Mehmet Ufuk Erden, Profesör Dr. Ali Demirsoy and Professor Dr. Gerardo Ceballos who wrote the reference letters supporting Dr. Cagan Sekercioglu’s application for the Whitley awards.

## **6.2 European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) Award of 2009**

Kars’ Lake Kuyucuk Wildlife Reserve, a haven for tens of thousands of birds of 207 species and rising, the first RAMSAR candidate site of eastern Turkey, and where conservationists have built the first island ever created in Turkey for wildlife, has won the first place in Turkey in the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) tourism competition ([www.edenineurope.eu](http://www.edenineurope.eu)) organized by the European Commission, in collaboration with Turkey’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Following KuzeyDoğa Society’s application in March 2009, Lake Kuyucuk and other finalists went through a rigorous selection process. On June 1, 2009, Lake Kuyucuk was chosen the winner, and Kars province became Turkey’s 2009 European Destination of Excellence. This award, which has no monetary value, will provide worldwide publicity and promotion of Lake Kuyucuk and Kars, highlight the region as a center of nature tourism, and help raise the tourism revenue of Kars and neighbouring provinces, especially the villages and towns around Lake Kuyucuk.

The application by KuzeyDoğa Society was done in collaboration with the Kars Governorship, Arpaçay District Governorship, Kars Directorate of Culture and Tourism, and Kars Directorate of Environment and Forestry, with the aim of improving and promoting sustainable nature tourism at Lake Kuyucuk and around Kars. The 2009 theme of the competition was “Tourism and Protected Areas”, for which Lake Kuyucuk Wildlife Reserve, a Key Biodiversity Area and eastern Turkey’s first Ramsar candidate, is uniquely suited. The competition aims to promote protected areas and their surroundings where an economically viable tourism product can be developed using the protected area as an asset, all the while respecting its protected environment and meeting the needs of local residents and visitors.

Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism collected applications throughout Turkey and nominated Lake Kuyucuk as one of the four finalist sites after the initial screening. Lake Kuyucuk wildlife reserve competed with the finalists Yedigöller National Park and Abant Lake Nature Park (Bolu), Gideros Bay Natural Site (Cide/Kastamonu), and Uluabat Lake Wetland Area (Uluabat Lake/Bursa).

These four finalist sites were visited by the expert selection committee of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The committee came to Kars during May 12-14 2009, visited Lake Kuyucuk and other nature tourism attractions in the region with the KuzeyDoğa team, and was impressed with the full support of Kars administrators for the conservation of Lake Kuyucuk. By coincidence, the committee arrived at Lake Kuyucuk the day when Turkey's first man-made island for wildlife conservation was cut off from the mainland. The committee was impressed with the unprecedented support of the Kars governor Mehmet Ufuk Erden for nature conservation and with KuzeyDoğa Society's regional work on conservation, wetland restoration, ecological research, environmental education, and community-based bio-cultural tourism.

Kars province will now be presented to the European Commission as Turkey's 2009 European Destination of Excellence. European Commission will promote the EDEN sites throughout Europe, encourage European tourists to go and visit these sites, establish a network between the winner sites of each country and present them the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) awards by organizing a ceremony at the European Tourism Forum.

### **What is European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN)?**

EDEN is the acronym for European Destinations of Excellence, a project promoting sustainable tourism development models across the European Union ([www.edenineurope.eu](http://www.edenineurope.eu)). The project is based on national competitions that take place every year and result in the selection of a tourist "destination of excellence" for each participating country. Through the selection of destinations, EDEN effectively achieves the objective of drawing attention to the values, diversity and common features of European tourist destinations. It enhances the visibility of emerging European destinations, creates a platform for sharing good practices across Europe and promotes networking between awarded destinations. This European quest for excellence in tourism is developed around an annual theme, chosen by the Commission together with the relevant national tourism bodies. This theme functions as a leitmotif: so far, rural tourism, intangible heritage and protected areas have been the main EDEN themes.

The key feature of the selected destinations is their commitment to social, cultural and environmental sustainability. The recipients of the award are emerging; little known European destinations located in the 27 Member States and candidate countries. The EDEN project helps to spread the sustainable practices used in the chosen destinations across the

Union and to turn these places into all-year-round venues. The process thus aims to help de-congest over-visited tourist destinations.

## 7. LESSONS LEARNT

- When working with locals, try to have at least one or two female members in the team so that they can communicate with village women easily.
- Encourage and lead local authorities for using their funds and sources for nature conservation as we did during the construction of the island and hiring local guards for the protection of the lake.
- Establish very good relations with local press correspondents so that any activities of your project should be presentable at any time very easily.
- Use internet very efficiently through web sites, blogs, e-groups, facebook and visualize your work with photos and videos in order to receive more attraction.
- Keep a regular relation with local people at your project site. See people and visit the site at least once a month even if it is very harsh winter as it happens at Lake Kuyucuk.
- Try to include foreign volunteers and experts in your project so that it has more attraction by the local people and local press. It raises awareness of local people more about the importance of the site and the work when they see a foreign person coming, visiting and volunteering for the project from different parts of the world.
- Do your work bilingual as much as you can to spread more information about your project.
- Listen to the other problems of local people and let local authorities know about them even if the subject is not in your area. It improves your credibility among local villagers. (e.g. Health clinic in Kuyucuk village was in a very bad situation. Villagers complained about it to us and we made Kars governor know about it in a meeting that we organized with local authorities. After a week the clinic was repaired and painted by the Kars directorate of Health.)
- Honour people who give support to your project as we named the island with the last name of Kars governor, ERDEN. Do not forget to use their names and organizations in your press releases, publications, TV interviews and radio speeches.
- Try to reach the top authority and convince them in order to reach your project goals easily. In provincial level it is the governor and in ministerial level it is the minister or the general director of ministry's branch dealing with your site and work. It always

makes your job easier if local authorities create problems in terms of nature conservation.

- Give the image that you are the expert of the job that you are doing and be intolerant when it is needed if there are decisions and actions taken which do not benefit nature and wildlife. Let local people and authorities know about your red lines.

## 8. BUDGET

Budget (USD)					
	CLP	Expenditures	Overplus	Idea Wild	Residue
Communications	250	372,21	-122,21	0	<b>-122,21</b>
Insurance	350	230,11	119,89	0	<b>119,89</b>
Team training	450	96	354	0	<b>354</b>
Reconnaissance	450	0	450	0	<b>450</b>
Medical Supplies	200	0	200	0	<b>200</b>
Equipment	3300	2419,96	880,04	1058,72	<b>-178,68</b>
Materials	450	472,3	-22,3	0	<b>-22,3</b>
Fuel	2000	2490,09	-490,09	0	<b>-490,09</b>
Food	2400	2235,27	164,73	0	<b>164,73</b>
Transportation	1500	2341,73	-841,73	0	<b>-841,73</b>
Outreach	450	78,67	371,33	0	<b>371,33</b>
Administration	300	132,47	167,53	0	<b>167,53</b>
Report Production	300	0	300	0	<b>300</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12400</b>	<b>10868,81</b>	<b>1531,19</b>	<b>1058,72</b>	<b>472,47</b>

**Budget Justification:** In the proposal I miscalculated the total and we required 12100 \$. But when sum up the expense headlines, it sums up at 12400. Most of the expenses have been made in fall and spring seasons since our activities are very much. We exceed fuel because Turkey uses the most expensive gas in the world because of government tax. We also exceed transportation because we had to rent a car very often for our busy schedule in May 2008 & in May 2009 because of EDEN award, island construction and breeding bird surveys. We have a residue of 472,47 \$ and we are planning to publish the project's report bilingual and disseminate it.