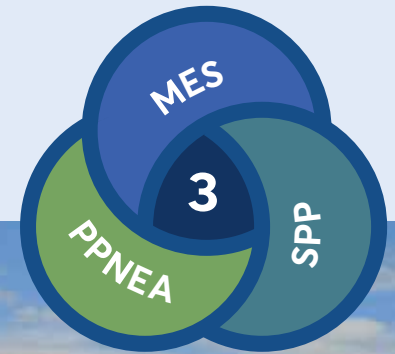


# prespaNET

A NETWORK OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS FOR PRESPA



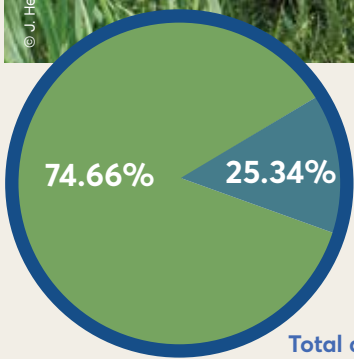
## Conservation at the heart of Prespa



Despite 2020 being a tough year for all of us, at **PrespaNet** we have been working hard to achieve the best results we can in these difficult times. Since we started our project, in 2018, the number 3 has been a lucky charm for us; over these last 3 years our 3 organisations from the 3 different countries have co-operated closely, striving to help protect the Prespa we all love. But, the 3 we are proudest of are the 3 regional offices we now have in Prespa, as both MES and PPNEA have joined the SPP with local offices in the area!

These new offices bring the two organisations much closer to their communities and the nature of Prespa, enabling them to listen to and better understand the needs of both people and biodiversity and helping us all to see how intimately linked biodiversity and natural resources are in the basin. ***Working together at transboundary level is the only way to tackle the biggest issues, for the benefit of all around the lakes.***

# Closing the circle of shoreline habitats



- Villages, agricultural land & plantations
- Ecologically valuable land

Total area of shoreline surveyed in all three countries, of which 33.98% is EU priority habitat types

6,822 ha

This year saw the partners complete work on mapping and assessing important shoreline habitats across the basin. The same expert team that supported MES and PPNEA for their related studies in 2018-2019, headed by Georgios Fotiadis of the Agricultural University of Athens, finished the transboundary assessment with an update on the shoreline habitat types to be found in Greek Prespa. **We now have a vitally important picture of the extent of these important areas at transboundary level for the first time**, which enables us to join forces, together with the protected area authorities of the region, and see how best to protect these habitat types and the biodiversity they support in an integrated way.

Why not join us in celebrating the amazing variety and value of Prespa's habitats and plants by taking a photo of your favourite plants or places and letting us know why they are important to you at [#prespaplantplaces!](#)

# A river of games, knowledge and experiences



**320** children reached through our programmes



If water is the life blood of Prespa, animating our lakes, our wetlands and our fields, and bringing the green of spring each year, then rivers and streams are veins carrying this precious resource – fallen as rain or snow – down to the lakes in a seemingly endless flow. Both nature and people rely on these rivers and streams for our lives and our welfare, and for wetlands they are an essential source of the water on which they depend for their existence.

This year's environmental education programme looked at these critical parts of our lakes ecosystem and how mistreating rivers can have negative consequences all along their course. Through a stimulating mix of activities, **the programme was used to teach children across the basin about the worth of rivers and streams, once again bringing common environmental values to classrooms in all three countries.** The pandemic brought extra challenges to the task, but the teams still managed to reach out to youngsters through the use of the internet, or converting the classroom package into an innovative 'home schooling' booklet that children could learn from during lockdown.



# Discovering the secrets of Prespa's mammals



Many of you will have seen last year's leaflet and video about the secret lives of the mammals that live alongside us in Prespa. We've been working to uncover some of those mysteries, watching mammals as they go about their lives with a three-year camera-trap study led by MES. Our recent photo of a **Balkan lynx** (*Lynx lynx balcanicus*) confirmed the amazing presence of this animal in the basin, after an earlier chance photograph caught by the staff of Galičica National Park!

In Greece, the SPP carried out a survey on damage caused by wild boar, an increasing phenomenon on this side of the basin in recent years. In a pilot response to marked wild boar activity in the Lesser Prespa wet meadows, some areas have been fenced off for cattle grazing, in co-operation with the LIFE Prespa Waterbirds project. The PrespaNet team are using trap cameras to learn more about the impact on wild boar movements of increasing this kind of human activity in this area.

The **co-existence of large carnivores and livestock farming**, was the subject of a parallel study carried out by PPNEA and MES into instances of conflict with these mammals. The results showed that, although such conflicts do exist, there seems to be a high level of tolerance and acceptance amongst the shepherds taking part, likely due to the fact that the local population has been living alongside large carnivores for millennia. The study also shed light on other important issues facing local shepherds on these two sides of the basin, such as the lack of young people involved in stockbreeding and market instabilities.

Lastly, in a second pilot activity in Greece, the project team restored a water trough near the border area where a new crossing and road are being planned. Many mammals cross down to the lakeside through this part of the basin, and the new trough not only provides a safe source of drinking water for these iconic and vulnerable species, but also for local shepherds and their flocks.

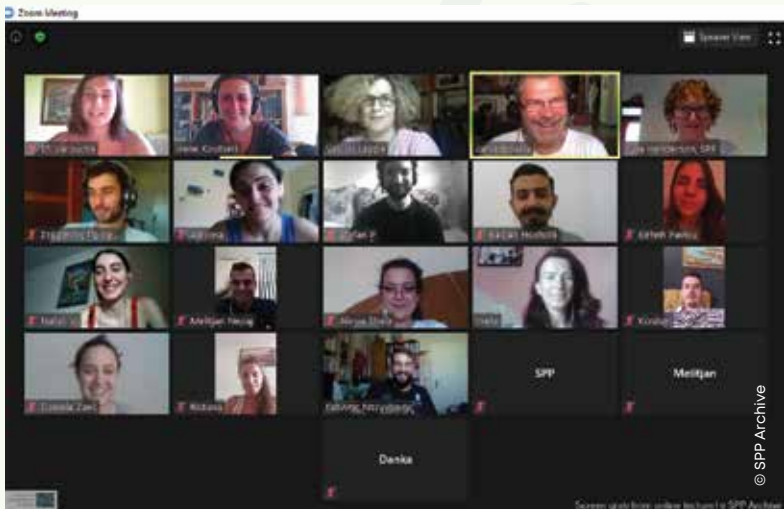


Mammals caught on our cameras in the three countries in the last three years



# Together from afar for wetlands

The last in a series of summer schools and camps during the project, the summer of 2020 saw a first for the basin, with the SPP's online transboundary summer school on wetland management and monitoring. The school drew students from all three countries sharing the basin, and focussed on the work of the LIFE Prespa waterbirds project, as a case study in wetland management, as well as utilising the transboundary work of the PrespaNet partners to produce a truly unique virtual experience for the students attending the two-week course of lectures, discussions and assignments.



**The school was a rich mix of input from many different tutors and a wide variety of aspects of wetland management – from climate change to waterbirds, vegetation mapping to transboundary water collaboration, and governance to fish monitoring.** This interdisciplinary approach really stimulated the participants to think about the complexity of wetlands and their management. In their evaluations, the students highlighted this diversity and the 'feeling of international collaboration' they experienced, as well as the opportunity it afforded them to develop ideas together, across borders.

Over the three years of the project, the partners have brought a new generation of scientists and conservationists to Prespa, investing in the potential for future research and knowledge that will help us to understand the region's multifaceted ecology and environmental needs.



**Our three teams are looking forward to keeping up this work, together with our volunteers and the protected area authorities, helping to make Prespa a safer home for nature and people alike!**

PrespaNet is a network of environmental NGOs for Prespa: The SPP, based in Agios Germanos, and working in the area for almost 30 years; MES, based in Skopje with a local office in Resen and one of the country's oldest NGOs; and, PPNEA, Albania's first environmental NGO, based in Tirana with a local office in Prespa and working with stakeholders in the area since the mid-1990s.

The three NGOs are working together on a three-year project, 'Strengthening NGO-led Conservation in the Transboundary Prespa Basin', funded by the Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust and the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, with support from EuroNatur. The project aims to boost transboundary conservation and collaboration in the Prespa basin.