

# The Secrets of Southern Albania

## Vultures, Romans and Illyrians

A conservation tour with PPNEA



### Information about PPNEA, the European Green Belt and Euronatur

Below is a summary of information about these organisations and projects. We include hyperlinks in the text and you can of course find more information by visiting their respective websites.



EURONATUR

[www.ppnea.org](http://www.ppnea.org)

[www.europeangreenbelt.org](http://www.europeangreenbelt.org)

[www.euronatur.org/en](http://www.euronatur.org/en)

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### PPNEA & Balkan Tracks

Chris Mounsey, director of Balkan Tracks, has known the senior staff at PPNEA since 2011, when he was working near the Greek/Albanian border for the Society for the Protection of Prespa, one of PPNEA's regional partners.

Over time, an idea of a tour developed that would:

- a) show foreign guests the areas of Albania in which PPNEA work, so that more people are aware of their importance;

b) allow guests to meet with local people, who then see PPNEA bringing guests to enjoy their national parks and rich nature, which reinforces the work PPNEA are doing in these communities;

c) provide PPNEA with much-needed funds. Rather than paying guides like on a normal tour, Balkan Tracks donates this to PPNEA. Unlike project funding, which is very specific to that project's tasks, donations like this allow PPNEA to cover operational and ad hoc costs. We won't go into detail here (although by all means ask us), but finding funds for operational costs is a big issue for many NGOs around the globe.

### **So, who are PPNEA?**

[Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania \(PPNEA\)](#) is a non-governmental environmental organisation that operates throughout Albania. Founded in 1991, PPNEA was the country's first environmental organisation. It emerged in a period of turmoil and socio-economic change in the country and the wider region - a time where environmental issues were looked down upon and given marginal priority in governing and policy issues.

PPNEA's work is mostly within Albanian territory, but it is expanding all the time into neighbouring countries due to long-lasting transboundary collaboration with the main environmental organisations in Greece, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro. Their major projects include work to protect the Balkan Lynx, Birds on the Adriatic Flyway, Monk Seals and Egyptian Vultures.

#### *Communities*

A key component of conservation is to build structures for local people to join in any project. PPNEA aims to achieve sustainable environmental development through empowering local communities in a way that, amongst many other things, assures minimisation of human-nature conflicts.

### **Euronatur**

“[Euronatur is] committed to connecting nature and people in a peaceful Europe – beyond national borders. Our efforts for the protection of plants, animals and habitats are transboundary in nature; we strengthen [local conservation organizations](#) and create international networks between them. Together with our Europe-wide [partner network](#) we create solutions that allow humans to live and work in harmony with nature.

Our projects not only connect man and nature, but also people with each other. Thus we are constantly weaving a safety net for Europe's nature. By putting best practice into the public's focus, we increase pressure on decision makers to stop ecologically and economically absurd projects and to protect valuable ecosystems.”

Read more about EuroNatur's campaigns, initiatives and actions at:

[SaveParadiseForests](#)

[Blue Heart of Europe](#)

[Anti Hydropower Platform](#)

[Saving Ulcinj Salina](#)

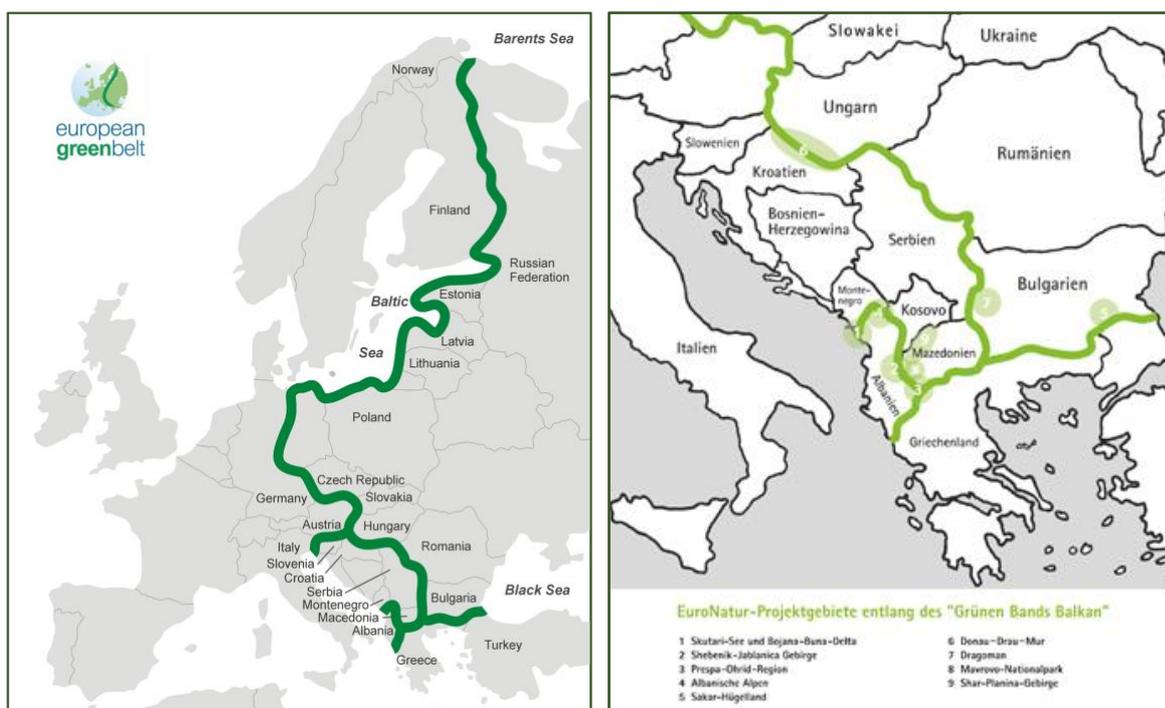
[Green Belt Europe](#)

[EuroNatur-Award](#)

## The Green Belt

As well as the Balkan Lynx Programme, PPNEA and Euronatur collaborate with the European Green Belt.

'For decades the Iron Curtain divided East and West. In the North of Europe, it is still present between Finland and the former Soviet Union. Up to 1989 it cut across Germany running on through the Balkans right down to the Black Sea. For people the Iron Curtain was an impenetrable barrier. Nature, however, benefited from the fact that the border area was largely spared human exploitation. And so here they lie – strung out across the continent like precious natural pearls in a necklace - pristine forests and swamps, traditionally cultivated landscapes rich in species as well as wild mountain ranges and river landscapes such as can hardly be found anywhere else in Europe. Here the Green Belt provides valuable habitats for [wolves](#), [bears](#), [lynxes](#), [eagles](#) and [migrating birds](#) such as the [Spoonbill](#) and [Crane](#), to name just a few.'



An extraordinary ecological network and living memorial landscape has developed along the former Iron Curtain, which divided the European continent into East and West for nearly 40 years. Along more than 12,500 kilometres – from the Barents Sea at the Russian-Norwegian border, along the Baltic Coast, through Central Europe and the Balkans to the Black and the Adriatic Sea – the border zone granted nature a pause and has created a zone of life. As the European Green Belt snakes from north to south it passes through a huge variety of European landscapes. Today, the European Green Belt forms the backbone of a Pan-European ecological network and provides a significant contribution to European "Green Infrastructure".

[Text from [europeangreenbelt.org](http://europeangreenbelt.org)]

The Green Belt was launched in 2003 by Euronatur with the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

## **PPNEA PROJECTS**

### [Balkan Lynx Recovery Programme](#)

This is one of Europe's unsung conservation victories; a multi-country success story for the critically endangered Balkan lynx, of which only 30-40 individuals exist. Since 2005, together with Euronatur and partners in North Macedonia (MES), Montenegro, Kosovo, Germany, Switzerland ([KORA](#), [MAVA](#)) and Norway, PPNEA has been studying the biology of this rare cat and working with governments and locals to protect it.

The Balkan lynx's last known reproductive populations breed in the Balkan Green Belt...

### [Balkan Lynx documentary video](#)

### [Korab-Koritnik-Sharr transboundary cooperation project](#)

Together with Euronatur and partners from North Macedonia and Kosovo, PPNEA are coordinating actions for the transboundary conservation and sustainable development of this biodiversity-rich mountain area.

### [Mediterranean Monk Seal](#)

The Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) is the rarest seal in the world and the most endangered marine mammal of Europe. It was once widely and continuously distributed in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and in the North Atlantic but today the distribution of the Mediterranean monk seal is highly fragmented and consists of three to four isolated subpopulations. They are more and more sighted along Albania's Adriatic coast and this project will find out more.

### *Balkan Wetlands*

Dalmatian pelican conservation and wetland habitat management in the Mediterranean Basin.

### *Adriatic Flyway*

Working mostly along the coastal wetlands of Albania to protect the millions of birds that migrate along the route.

### *Prespa Lakes*

PrespaNet is a network of environmental NGOs whose work and conservation interests largely overlap in the Prespa watershed.

Established on 23 March 2013 through combined efforts of the [Macedonian Ecological Society \(MES\)](#), the [Society for the Protection of Prespa \(SPP\)](#) and Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA), PrespaNET is dedicated to solving this unique region's conservation issues through fundamental research, social engagement and compromise.

Currently the project on strengthening NGO-led conservation in the Prespa Watershed rests on five pillars:

- Wetland restoration
- People, Plants & Prespa
- Large carnivore research and damage mitigation
- Communications and environmental education
- Local office
- Bird monitoring

[Text from Macedonian Ecological Society - [prespa.mes.org.mk](http://prespa.mes.org.mk)]

### *The Land of Eagles and Castles*

Integrated Coastal Zone Management to minimise the negative effects of coastal development.