

PEAT NEWS



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The International Peat Society (IPS) is an international, non-governmental and non-profit organization of scientific, industrial and regulatory stakeholders. It is dedicated to fostering the advancement, exchange and communication of scientific, technical and social knowledge and understanding for the wise use of peatlands and peat.

/// Harri Vasander New Chairman of IPS Finnish National Committee

With effect from **1 January 2005**, the Executive Board of the Finnish National Committee has dissolved and handed over its role to the Executive Board of the Finnish Peatland Society, chaired by Prof. Harri Vasander. His contact details are: Prof. Harri Vasander, Finnish Peatland Society (Suoseura ry), Department of Forest Ecology, P.O. Box 27, 00014 Helsinki University, Finland, phone: +358 9 191 58140, fax: +358 9 191 58100, e-mail: harri.vasander@helsinki.fi. Prof. Vasander is supported by the association's Secretary Dr. Leila Korpela, Finnish Forest Research Institute, Vantaa Research Center, P.O. Box 18, 01301 Vantaa, Finland, phone: +358 10 211 2629, fax: +358 10 211 2202, e-mail: leila.korpela@metla.fi. For further information, please visit www.suoseura.fi.

/// Mangroves Could Have Reduced Tsunami Damage

According to recent studies, mangrove forests could have protected some of the areas hit by the Indian Ocean tsunami on 26 December 2004, causing around 220,000 people to lose their lives, devastating their property, and damaging the coastal areas of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and many other countries. Especially in the heavily affected city of Banda Aceh in the North of Sumatra, mangrove forests would have provided a buffer to storms and erosion had they not been cleared for the development of the town, fish and prawn ponds, says IPS member Faizal Parish from the Global Environment Centre (GEC) in Malaysia. Currently, his organisation and Wetlands International are undertaking a scientific assessment of the issue. Pasi Rinne, who is heading the Asian Tsunami Disaster Task Force of the U.N. Environment Programme, agrees with the findings of the WWF, the Mangrove Action Program, the Ramsar Convention and other organisations that swamps and reefs may have reduced the damage caused by the tsunami, as their root system binds the shore together and acts as a shock absorber. According to Simon Cripps from the WWF's marine programme, up to half of the world's mangrove swamps have disappeared in the last 20-30 years due to the development of tourist resorts, transport infrastructure and commercial prawn fishing. All countries affected by the tsunami are now encouraged to rehabilitate or create sufficient belts of mangroves or other coastal tree species to protect the coastline. More info: www.riverbasin.org.

/// Peat Swamp Forests as Lifeline for Aceh Survivors

The intact peat swamp forests on the west coast of the Indonesian Aceh province could serve as lifeline for the tsunami survivors currently suffering from water shortage and water-borne diseases,

suggests Faizal Parish from the Global Environment Centre. The tropical peat swamp forests, amounting to about 274,000 ha, remained mostly intact due to their location and natural domed shape. After the disaster, they might provide fresh, naturally filtered and antiseptic water, prevent further saline intrusion and supply food, fibre, timber and other important goods and services to the locals. However, this option is available only if they remain intact and are not cleared, drained or burnt for agricultural or other purposes. Maps and more information: www.riverbasin.org.

/// **New Book on Conservation and Restoration of Raised Bogs**

Matthijs G.C. Schouten, a Dutch expert in restoration ecology, nature and landscape conservation, has published a book on "Conservation and restoration of raised bogs - Geological, hydrological and ecological studies" in cooperation with the Heritage Service, Ireland, the National Forest Service of the Netherlands and the Geological Survey of Ireland. The book presents the results of a Dutch-Irish cooperation in geological, hydrological and ecological studies of two Irish midland raised bogs: Raheenmore Bog and Clara Bog. The author makes original field and laboratory information accessible through maps, graphs and tables, ranging from the wider landscape down to the scales of ecotopes and plant communities and placed in a wider international context. The 219-page publication, ISBN 0 7557 1559 4, can be ordered for €49.95 from www.knnvpublishing.nl.

/// **Call for Papers: Wetland Conference in Poland**

An "International Conference for Wetlands: Monitoring, Modelling and Management" is planned to be held in Wierzba, Warmia and Mazury, Poland on **22 - 25 September 2005**. One page abstracts for the three topics can be submitted until **31 January 2005**. The conference is organized by the Warsaw Agricultural University, Department of Hydraulic Engineering and Environmental Recultivation within the "Center of Excellence in Wetland Hydrology" – a research project supported by the European Commission. The post-conference tour will allow the participants to explore four National Parks and several other protected wetland and forest areas in Northeast Poland. The complete programme is available at <http://levis.sggw.waw.pl/wethydro/>.

/// **Symposium on Soil and Plant Analysis in Mexico**

The 9th International Symposium on Soil and Plant Analysis will be held under the theme "Quality Analytical Tools for an Era of Ecological Awareness" in Cancún, Mexico on **30 January - 4 February 2005**. The aim of the event is to discuss issues of soil, plant and water analysis to achieve an efficient soil management, environmental protection as well as sustainable food and fiber production. The programme includes excursions to tropical wetlands, forests and the archaeological sites of the ancient Maya city Chichén Itzá. All further details are posted at www.spcouncil.com.

/// **Renewable Energy Sources Conference in Bulgaria**

An "International Congress and Exhibition on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Sources in Industry Sectors and Construction" will be held in the new congress center of Plovdiv, Bulgaria on **13 - 15 April 2005**. All further information is posted at: www.viaexpo.com.

/// **Extended Deadline for International Conference on Forested Wetlands**

The deadline for submitting proposals for papers for the International Conference on Forested Wetlands in Bern, North Carolina, USA on **8 - 12 April 2006** (see Peat News 12/2004), has been extended to **1 April 2005**. You can find more details on the event at www.asae.org.