



Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystems Project

2nd PRESS TRIP REPORT

July 2021



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1. AIM OF THE PRESS TRIP

A press trip program was organized for journalists within the scope of “Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey’s Steppe Ecosystems Project”. This program was developed as a part of “Output 3. Training program on steppe conservation and management” specifically for the journalists.

This program aims to promote the works carried out within the scope of the project, and natural and cultural values of the project pilot sites, and to communicate importance and need for conservation of the steppe ecosystems in Turkey through media.

It was consisting of field visits, interviews with related experts and local authorities, and short walks and field observations in Tek Tek Mountains National Park, visiting Kızılkuyu Wildlife Reserve, and Göbeklitepe World Heritage Site.

During the program, it was aimed to introduce important species of Şanlıurfa steppes and to draw attention to the effects of climate change on steppe ecosystems and agricultural areas. In addition, the experiences of the efforts made for the conservation and sustainable management of the Şanlıurfa steppes, where steppe and human interaction have been experienced for thousands of years, and the ancestors of grain are still naturally grown, was shared

2. PROGRAM

Upon the meetings with FAO and the project partners, 2-day press trip program was prepared, and carried out in Tek Tek Mountains National Park, Kızılkuyu Wildlife Reserve, and Göbeklitepe World Heritage Sites.

The program is given below:

26 July 2021, Monday – Arriving Şanlıurfa and Accommodation	
19.30 – 21.00	Dinner
27 July 2021, Tuesday – Tek Tek Mountains National Park	
09:30-10:45	Departure from the hotel for visiting Tek Tek Mountains National Park
10:45-15:30	Tek Tek Mountains National Park:
	Visiting the visitor center: Inform press members about steppe ecosystems and biodiversity <i>Dr. Nihan Yenilmez Arpa, National Project Coordinator</i>
	Introducing the archaeological values in the area through Rüstem Stream Valley route, Sogmatar Ancient City and Şuayip Şehri. <i>Dr. Seçil Çokoğullu, Harran University</i>
	Observing climate change effects on steppe ecosystems, introducing important plant species of steppe ecosystems and sharing conservation studies for this area <i>Prof. Dr. Ali Rıza Öztürkmen, Harran University</i>
	Lunch
15:30-16:30	Arriving city center
16.30-19:00	Visiting Şanlıurfa Bazaar
19:30-21.00	Dinner
28 July 2021, Wednesday –Kızılkuyu Wildlife Reserve	
9:30-10:30	Departure from the hotel for visiting Kızılkuyu Wildlife Reserve
10:30-14:00	Kızılkuyu Wildlife Reserve
	Observation of gazelles in the field. Raising awareness by sharing with the public the threats against gazelles, an important species of the steppe, especially fawns collected as pets.
	Explaining the studies on this subject and the strategies applied for the conservation of gazelles. <i>Ziya Atçı, General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks Şanlıurfa Provincial Branch Directorate, Wildlife Technician</i>
14:00-15:00	Lunch
15:00-16:30	Göbeklitepe: Informing the visitors about steppe-human relationship, and civilizations hosted by Şanlıurfa steppes
17:00	Arriving the hotel
17:00 (up to flight)	Leaving from the hotel

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRESS TRIP

The organizing process of the press trip program was initiated by an online meeting with FAO and DKM team. At the meeting, a draft program, and the task list for FAO and DKM were prepared. Also, local and national media organizations were listed for reaching to the target audience. Then, possible contacts have been identified, and a press release was prepared.

First, FAO project team contacted with the selected press members by sending an invitation mail giving the details of the program. Then, DKM team followed up the invitation and got in touch with the respondents to organize logistic needs. FAO team was informed during the whole process.

Dr. Nihan Yenilmez Arpa (National Project Coordinator) participated in the trip and gave information about the project, activities at pilot sites and shared information on the importance and conservation needs of the steppe ecosystems in detail. Experts on certain subjects and a wildlife technician from General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks Şanlıurfa Provincial Branch Directorate informed the press members on the natural and archeological values of the pilot sites, and cultural and natural importance of the steppe ecosystems. Mrs. Fethiye Aytaç from DKM assisted the participants during the whole program.

Press trip program participants were from different cities (Ankara, İstanbul, Burdur): 5 woman (55%) and 4 male participants (45%).

Table 1. List of press trip participants

Name - Surname	Organization
Ece Çelik Nefs	Hürriyet Newspaper
Yasin Akgül	MAGMA Magazine
Yusuf Erkan	MAGMA Magazine
Yasemin Arpa	Permanent Press Card Holder-Lawyer-Author
Kamil Yılmaz	Tünaydın Newspaper
Sonnur Yılmaz	Sonan Newspaper
Esra Öz	Independent Turk
Barış Doğru	EKOIQ Magazine
Ebru Menteş	

At the first day, Nihan Yenilmez Arpa (National Project Coordinator) shared information about the importance of steppe ecosystems in Şanlıurfa and the project at local and national scale. Tek Tek Mountains National Park Visitor Center was introduced by Nihan Yenilmez Arpa. The journalists and press members who are a part of this press trip took photographs and made interviews with the coordinator and experts about importance of the project, findings, and ongoing studies. Prof. Dr. Ali Rıza Öztürkmen informed them about climate change effects on steppe ecosystems, and its relationship with important species. He also introduced conservation studies for this area.

The importance of the Rüstemdere Valley was highlighted on the two important tree species which are *Pistacia palaestina* (Terebinth) and *Pistacia vera* (Pistachio nut). Mrs. Yenilmez Arpa and Prof. Dr. Ali Rıza Öztürkmen gave information on threats to these species and conservation measures within the scope of the project. Dr. Seçil Çokoğullu introduced the archaeological values of Sogmatar Ancient City and Şuayip Şehri.

At the second day, Kızılkuyu Wildlife Reserve, and 75th Year Gazelle Breeding Station were visited. In the station, a wildlife technician from General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National

Parks Şanlıurfa Provincial Branch Directorate introduced the station, giving detail on the life cycle of the gazelles, threats, and conservation efforts.

Lastly, Göbeklitepe which is an UNESCO World Heritage Site was visited. The site was introduced by an expert archeologist and underlined the influence of nature on civilization.

During the program, the participants had opportunity to be informed about the works carried out within the scope of the project, they also observed flora and fauna species very special to the area. According to face-to-face conversations, they inferred that archaeological value that makes Şanlıurfa unique may be related to the biodiversity of the steppe ecosystem. In fact, they've emphasized that that steppe ecosystems have great potential that can afford everything that people's survival needs. They shared that they gained a new perspective on Şanlıurfa, thanks to field observations, learning about steppe ecosystems, and their importance to the humanity. They also experienced the devastating effects of climate change in Şanlıurfa steppes.

COVID-19 Measures:

COVID-19 measures were taken in line with the FAO COVID-19 Guideline are taken for the program. A hygiene kit specific for each participant was prepared: 5 masks, 1 FFP2 masks, 100 ml cologne for personal use. The capacity of the bus in the field was organized more than twice the number of participants.

Measures taken:

- **Health checks:** No-one displaying any possible COVID-19 symptoms participated in the program.
- **Track and trace information:** Contact information and HES codes for all people at the program were recorded and all participants were reminded to contact the FAOR in case of (1) possible COVID-19 symptoms in the two days following the completion of the

program; and/or (2) positive COVID-19 tests in the ten days following the end of the program.

- **Minimise participation:** The participants are limited to 9 people.
- Participants always wore masks in closed areas.
- Majority of the group has vaccine
- Hand sanitizer was available and used before, during and after the program.
- Physical distancing was always maintained during the program.
- No food / bottled water only: Food and/or snacks were provided in individual single-use sealed food containers. When eating, physical distancing must be maintained. The water was distributed in sealed single-user bottles only.

Project Materials:

These project materials (in Turkish) were shared with the participants at the first day of the program:

- Project tote bag
- Booklet containing the works and materials prepared within the scope of the project
- Hardcopy of the project materials (brochures, booklets, activity books, neighborhood guide books)
- USB with project title, having PDF versions of the documents produced by the project.



Figure 1. The project materials

4. EVALUATION OF THE PRESS TRIP

All the participants stated their thanks for the organization in words and some of them sent follow up phones and emails after the program. During the program, participants shared their views as follows:

- This program increased my awareness on the steppe ecosystems.
- I learnt that there are different species living in the steppes.
- During our visit, we saw the impacts of drought and climate change in the region.
- I am glad to learn the ancestors of the cereals surviving in Şanlıurfa.

The participants also stated that they will prepare news for their organization on the project sites and experiences.

FAO and DKM team have the contact details of the press members and as a follow up next phases of the project will be shared with them.

5. NEWS

Press members took photographs, aerial views, video records, and made interviews with the project coordinator, experts and Nature Conservation and National Parks officials. The list and links of the news will be shared upon their publication and broadcasting.