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TAKE CARE OF
YOUR PLANET!

YOU CAN MAKE THE
DIFFERENCE

LAKE BAIKAL, RUSSIA

Lake Baikal is the world's deepest lake, containing nearly 20% of fresh unfrozen water on our planet. Eventually it will become the 5th ocean due to two rifting

tectonic plates. Furthermore it's home to almost 1600 endemic plant and animal species such as the black-eyed nerpa, a fresh water seal. Unfortunately Siberia's "blue pearl" is threatened.

In this news letter you find an interview with conservationists and their efforts for preserving the environment. An almost unspoiled lake, but will it stay like this in the future?

CONSERVATION



WHAT IS CONSERVATION?

Conservation is the effort of people who try to preserve nature and its values in a way that future generations can still enjoy unspoiled nature. Not only protecting species such as the black-eyed nerpa (*Phoca siberica*), but also its environment where it feeds, grows their youngs, hides and rest.

An interview with conservationists Yevgeni and Anna Maryasovs. Both involved in conservation efforts for Lake Baikal and the construction of the Great Baikal Trail.

Why was the GBT established?

Yevgeni: Environmental impact on the lake started already with the completion of the Angara Dam which rose the water level by 1 m. To attract eco-friendly tourism the idea to construct a trail network around the lake was born. The institute was established in 2003 with the first trail opened only few months later.

How does GBT spread the word of conservation?

Anna: Our organisation raises awareness among local people. Also environmental education is a very fruitful method to educate and enthusiasm local youngsters in helping with GBT. The established relations with partner organisations abroad attract flocks of international volunteers.

Can you tell more about the volunteers who help you?

Anna: Volunteers make up a good crowd every year and build pieces of the trail network. Coming from all over the world and making up

50% of the group and the rest completed by Russians. International volunteers are enthusiastic to help the environment and tasting Russian culture. Whereas Russians feel comfortable to practice their English and have the opportunity to meet foreigners.

What are the goals for GBT in the future?

Yevgeni: The planned construction of a dam closing of the Selenga River Delta from Lake Baikal will affect Lake Baikal's ecosystem dramatically; the end of mudflats and marshes where many animal and plant species depend from. It is an international feeding, resting, and wintering ground. A campaign against the dam, with the Baikal seal as symbol, hopefully will stop the project. GBT opposes development along the fragile east coast and tries to develop ecotourism in co-operation with local people, rather than mass development the dam would cause.

Word of thanks.

I would like to thank Yevgeni and Anna Maryasovs for their time to spent with me to explain many issues about Lake Baikal. Those interested in helping the project can visit their website: www.greatbaikaltrail.ru Further reading: www.ecology.govuk.ru / www.earthisland.org / www.baikalwave.eu.org

