

Danubeparks Newsletter 10.02.2010

Dear Friends of DANUBEPARKS,

Welcome to the first newsletter of DANUBEPARKS - The Danube River Network of Protected Areas! As it will be always in the future, we first let you know about main activities and outcomes of the DANUBEPARKS Network and then have an article about a specific topic. As this is the first newsletter, DANUBEPARKS is presented in more detail and with some sample activities for all fields of cooperation. At the very bottom, learn about our next events!

We wish you an interesting time reading our information and hope you follow DANUBEPARKS activities in the future!

Kind regards, the DANUBEPARKS Team



Network and its Task Forces established

In June 2009 the Danube River Network of Protected Areas has been established by signing the [Declaration of Vienna](#). At the Kick-Off Meeting, the main tasks for the starting period of the Network have been established, and a Press Conference in Vienna has been organized to inform the public.

Within DANUBEPARKS, five task forces care for different topics and activities. All of these specialized groups have met already during December and January, to coordinate the transnational tasks and to exchange experience in various pilot projects already realized.



Action Plan for the White-tailed Eagle at the Danube River

The International White-tailed Eagle Conference in Illmitz (2007) has underlined the importance of transnational cooperation for the conservation of this species. Based on the experiences of all Danube Protected Areas first steps towards a Danube wide Action Plan have been taken at the [Task Force Meeting Birds](#) in the Duna-Drava National Park/Hungary in January 2010. Literature research is published and questionnaires are already analyzed. The International White-tailed Eagle Conference in the Duna-Drava National Park planned for 2011 will be a milestone for the coordination of conservation activities along the Danube river.



LIFE+ project for the Danube Sturgeons

The [Task Force Meeting Fish](#) in December 2009 continued the elaboration of the transnational LIFE+ Sturgeon project and gave an overview on the various options and priorities in different countries. At the moment, under the lead of Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve/Romania and the Donau-Auen National

Park/Austria experts start to define priorities for this conservation project.

A good omen for next steps for the conservation of the Danube sturgeons could be the capture of a live male of the extremely rare Ship sturgeon (*Accipenser nudiiventris*) in the Duna-Drava National Park on December 2nd, 2010.



Best Practice guide on Natura2000 Management

Experts of the Danube-Delta Biosphere Reserve/Romania - responsible for the elaboration of a best-practice guide on management of NATURA 2000 areas - have done their first study visits to the Bulgarian areas Persina Nature Park, Kalimok-Brushlen Protected Site and Srebarna Managed Reserve in November 2009. Later on, in January 2010 experiences on

NATURA 2000 have been exchanged with colleagues of Nature Park Kopacki rit/Croatia and of the Duna-Drava National Park/Hungary.



Wetland and Grassland restoration in Duna-Drava National Park

As a first pilot activity regarding floodplain management, the Duna-Drava National Park realized the restoration of wet- and grasslands close to Dunaszekcső village. The ground was prepared for regular habitat management activities including

controlling invasive species. So this natural grassland can develop again over the next years as habitat for characteristic species.



New study trail opened in Béda-Karapanca

The region of Béda-Karapanca at the Duna-Drava National Park in Hungary includes habitats with some of the most outstanding natural values of the Hungarian Lower Danube valley. As part of DANUBEPARKS activities, a new study trail was realized outside the village Kölked in late summer, leading along strictly protected areas, to the Danube and large floodplain pastures. At the occasion of the first [Task Force Meeting Tourism](#) in January, experts from all Protected Areas have visited the study trail for more detailed discussion.

DANUBEPARKS - what is this all about?!

DANUBEPARKS – why do we need it?

The Danube River Network of Protected Areas has been founded in 2009 to improve the coordination of nature protection activities along the Danube. 12 Protected Areas from 8 Danube countries are now cooperating on a permanent basis in their conservation activities.



The need for it is there: Many of Europe's most valuable wetlands are situated along the Danube, but the fast economic development during the last years of the South-East European countries are threatening these remains of natural areas, often habitats for endangered species such as the White-tailed Eagle or the Danube Sturgeon. The need for coordinated activities along the Danube River is also shown by the plan of the European Commission to develop an integrated EU Danube Strategy within the near future.

Protected Areas are – contrary to transport providers and industry – very often not speaking with a joint voice on an international level, considerably lowering their impact on strategic decisions and regulations. DANUBEPARKS now starts to give this strong joint voice to the Protected Areas along the Danube River!

DANUBEPARKS – what will we do?

The main focus of the Network however is the development of joint strategies for nature protection issues that can only be solved on a transnational level, and the implementation of regional pilot projects. In all five fields of interest where the Protected Areas work together under the roof of DANUBEPARKS, the base is an experience-exchange among the Partners to learn from each others successes and mistakes of the past. Building upon this, transnational action plans, conservation strategies and statements are developed. As the most practical part, pilot projects are prepared and implemented.



River Morphology and River Revitalization

For all Danube Protected Areas the management of river habitats including restoration is of high relevance. Working on the spot, nature protection is always confronted with the interest of inland navigation. Therefore, one main transnational activity of DANUBEPARKS is the elaboration of a Joint Strategic Paper on Conservation and Navigation. Based on exchange of experiences on river restoration a

compilation of best-practice projects as well as a concept for future priorities will be worked out. The results will be presented on the International Conference on River Revitalization in 2010. Additionally, strategic pilot projects are being implemented, such as re-linking of old river branches to the main Danube and the removal of checkdams.



Floodplain Management and Habitat Network

Main focus is on the creation of several cross-border management plans and conservation strategies for protected areas situated directly at the state border. These management challenges underline the need for transnational or at least cross-border cooperation of Protected Areas. As a joint activity of the Network, Forestry Guidelines for management of Floodplain Forests will be published to contribute to a more sustainable and ecological forest management in and close to Protected Areas. Finally, pilot restoration projects are planned for forest as well as for grassland habitats.



Conservation of Danube Flagship Species

White-tailed Eagle and Danube Sturgeon have been selected as flagship species for the DANUBEPARKS network. First, because by protecting their main habitats also many other important species' habitats are covered, second; because their way of living – huge territories covering often cross-border regions as well as migration routes coming up to Danube from the Black Sea – marks the importance of transnational cooperation in nature protection very well. For both species therefore, a coordinated transnational conservation approach is needed.

Based on the elaboration of a Danube wide Action Plan for the White-tailed Eagle, concrete conservation activities like protection of nesting sites will be implemented. The International White-tailed Eagle Conference in 2011 organized by the Duna-Drava National Park will bring together international experts for the exchange of their experiences.

For the Danube Sturgeons, main focus of DANUBEPARKS is on the elaboration of a transnational LIFE+ project for conservation of these highly endangered species.



Monitoring & Natura 2000

The Network will implement a best practice research and exchange on the management of NATURA 2000 areas bringing together the experiences of all Danube Protected Areas. Pilot monitoring activities will be done for Mammals (Beaver, European Mink), Fish (establishment of a transnational fish database) as well as Birds (Danube wide monitoring of Little-ringed Plover and Sandmartin as indicator species of dynamic river habitats).



Danube Nature Tourism

Nature Tourism can be an important source of income for remote areas with valuable natural heritage – which is the case for all Partners in the Network. Also, the fact that most touristic offers of Protected Areas have a strong educational element strengthens the efforts of awareness-raising for nature conservation. There will be joint activities such as a Joint Ranger Training, Staff exchange or creating common marketing materials, in order to clearly lay out the touristic activity options along the Danube for customers. Many partners also have pilot actions planned, such as buying boats or bikes for offering new kinds of nature tourism activities, or creating new study trails.

DANUBEPARKS – how will it evolve?

The first phase of establishing the Network is co-funded by the EU Programme European Territorial Cooperation in South-East Europe. This ETC-Project is running until February 2012 and has a total budget of 2.7 Mio € to be spent by all partners together. Elaboration of future follow-up projects and a continued cooperation is one main task of the Network in the upcoming years, as this should lead to our main long-term goal: A well-established and permanently functioning Danube River Network of Protected Areas, being enlarged by new partners, giving nature protection a strong voice in international decision-making processes, and above all: Increasing the effectiveness of nature protection activities by a transnational approach, thus keeping a sound environment for future generations!

Next Events:

June 5th / 29th 2010: A Chance for the Blue Danube in Danube-Delta Biosphere Reserve

The Danube-Delta has organized an art competition "A Chance for the Blue Danube" since 10 years already. With DANUBEPARKS, this competition and exhibition goes international and mobile: Schools from various countries will be invited to send in their videos and posters, and the exhibition will be shown in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia!

July 3rd-4th 2010: Danube Festival in Duna-Drava National Park

The Duna-Drava National Park hosts the Danube Festival in July 2010, the weekend after the Danube Day on June 29th. The festival will include activities of Duna-Drava National Park, cultural events such as shows of the organization of the Croatian minority in the region, and an exhibition and activities of several partners from DANUBEPARKS.

Imprint

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