

Danubeparks Newsletter 23.03.2011

Latest Developments

New network partner Djerdap National Park



The Network of Danube Protected Areas is still enlarging - this time in January 2011 with the partner [Djerdap National Park](#) from Serbia, located directly at the important location of the Iron Gates at the border between Serbia and Romania.

The Director, Vice-Director and International Relations Expert came for a [study visit to Donau-Auen National Park](#) to discuss bilateral and transnational cooperation options. The result was the signing of a Declaration of Interest for Observer Partnership, which stated already the main fields of cooperation: Communication about DANUBE PARKS in Serbia, participation in the Danube Festival and the Life+ project for Danube Sturgeons, as well as implementation of the Serbian part of the transnational Monitoring of Little-ringed Plover.

The new cooperation has immediately been put to life, as proves the fact that representatives of Djerdap will participate in all three upcoming task force meetings of the network!

DANUBEPARKS became official observer to the ICPDR



Already at the Steering Committee Meeting in Mohács in July 2010, the [ICPDR](#) invited DANUBEPARKS to become an observer. Now in winter 2010 / 2011 the relevant documents have been signed, so that DANUBEPARKS will now be represented in the [observers of the ICPDR](#).

This is the logical step after very close cooperation between the Danube Protected Areas and ICPDR already in the past - which can be seen also in the beside picture, which was taken at a study visit of Phil Weller, Secretary General of the ICPDR, at Kalimok-Brushlen Protected Site in Bulgaria.

EU Strategy for the Danube Region: DANUBEPARKS listed as Flagship Project



The [Danube Strategy](#), which has been presented in December 2010 and will be ratified this year, sets the guidelines for future development of the Danube River Basin Macroregion.

Within the Biodiversity section of the accompanying Action Plan, DANUBEPARKS is listed as one of the first flagship projects. More details and documents regarding the Danube Strategy can be downloaded [here](#), presenting also several aspects of DANUBEPARKS and its role in the Danube Region.

Upcoming Events

March 30th - April 1st 2011: [International Sturgeon Conference](#) in Tulcea, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, Romania

May 26th-27th 2011: International Conference on River Revitalization in Vienna, Austria

June 29th 2011: Danube Day, activities regarding Little-ringed Plover monitoring in many Protected Areas along the Danube

September 4th 2011: Danube Festival in Orth/Donau, Donau-Auen National Park, Austria

Autumn 2011: International White-tailed Eagle Conference in Duna-Dráva National Park, Hungary (date to be announced)

Dynamic rivers - endangered habitats



Natural sand and gravel banks as well as islands can be found only on rivers with existing river dynamics and active morphological processes. Due to hydromorphological alterations (dams, embankments, dykes) these are some of the most threatened habitats in Europe.

Some sections of the Danube River still show intact dynamic processes and offer suitable habitats for numerous endangered and very well adapted species. So the clutch of the Little-ringed Plover which is nearly invisible on the Danube gravel. Can you see anything but stones on this picture? Do you see the nest and the three eggs of the Little-ringed Plover?

It is worth to have a careful look on these habitats to learn more about their secrets. And it is necessary to work for their conservation. Due to river regulation they are disappearing rapidly!

Disappearing breeding places

Rivers nowadays are mostly channeled and embanked for navigation reasons, disrupted by

hydropower plants, and floodplain areas are cut off from the river by embankment or dams. As a result, many formerly abundant habitats such as gravel and sand islands and shores or steep river slopes have nearly disappeared. This means also, that many of their inhabitants have difficulties finding breeding places, such as the beautiful Little-ringed Plover and Sandmartin.



The Little-ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*) is a small bird breeding on gravel islands and gravel banks. At the Lower Danube, it is also adjusted to sand banks.

This type of habitat only occurs in dynamic rivers, where the river can shape its bed by the natural succession of high floods and low waters. Nice fact: As the eggs lie directly in the sun, the bird wets its feathers and actually sits on the eggs not to warm them as many birds do, but to cool them!



Steep slopes and walls initiated by side erosion of dynamic rivers provide suitable breeding sites for the Sandmartin (*Riparia riparia*).

In the countries of the Upper Danube only very few breeding colonies of the Sandmartin can still be found at natural river banks, most of the time this bird is forced to choose artificial secondary habitats. The protection of the last breeding sites on river banks are of high priority for nature conservation. At the Lower Danube very big colonies of the Sandmartin are still existing, some of them comprising thousands of breeding pairs. This spectacular scene underlines the high value of these areas.

Indicators for dynamic rivers



Because of the above mentioned habitat requirements for breeding, Little-ringed Plover and Sandmartin are perfect indicator species for dynamic rivers - especially, because they are not severely threatened yet and still occur along the whole Danube River.

For these reasons, they have been chosen by the DANUBEPARKS Network for a Danube-wide monitoring which will take place in spring 2011. The partners from all protected areas will assess the occurrence of both species along the whole river, and draw conclusions on sites that need stronger protection or revitalization measures.

What can you do?

Existing and potential breeding sites should have high priority for conservation actions; hydromorphological alterations by embanking and damming have to be avoided. For protecting species and habitats, not only scientific, protection and revitalization measures are important, but also the help of all people interacting with the river! So it is important to keep some of the few left natural spaces free from human disturbance, so the animals can use these for breeding and feeding. What you can do, is to check on regulations when visiting protected areas. Information can usually be found on their [websites](#).



The DANUBEPARKS are also trying to raise public awareness on dynamic rivers, the disappearing habitats, and the needs of species that inhabit them.

A new [online game](#) can now be found on our website, that you recognize with the Little-ringed Plover mascot on the left. Play the game and win little prizes from the Danube Protected Areas!

On Danube Day 2011, many activities are going on in the Danube Protected Areas. The winners of the online game will be selected, but also special excursions, childrens games, and monitoring activities for visitors are organized. More information can soon be found on the [Danube Day website](#), which is coordinated by ICPDR.

Drop by the nearest Protected Area to your home

town and experience the fascinating animals and landscapes of the Danube floodplains in nature!

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