

Danubeparks Newsletter 20.12.2012

In July this year, the DANUBEPARKS Network received the positive news, that the second joint transnational project [DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0](#) has been accepted by the [ETC South-East Europe Programme](#). Apart from negotiations of conditions and dealing with administrative issues over the summer months, planning for a successful project start began immediately. Before getting into what's going on now, we will outline what the new project is all about. Finally, we would like to start presenting to you in our newsletters one of the Protected Areas each time - we will start of course at river kilometre 0, in the Danube Delta!

DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0: Building on success & lessons-learnt

For the STEP 2.0 project, the main aim was defined to anchor the DANUBEPARKS stronger in the region, with stakeholders, on policy level, as well as in the minds of all of our Protected Area staff. To do this, we are **building on the most outstanding achievements** as well as lessons-learnt from the first project. This includes the activities mentioned below for specific protection themes, but also the **strategic enlargement** of the network with additional important Protected Areas along the Danube, and efforts to strengthen our own network structure as well as cooperation with other existing networks.



Regarding **White-tailed Eagle**, for which the [Action Plan](#) (published by the Council of Europe) was elaborated in the first project, we are working on implementation actions by the Protected Areas in the second project. Additionally, to raise awareness with the public and strengthen a coherent database, a Danube-wide winter count will be done in 2014 with public involvement and events.



A direct result from the "[Perspectives for Danube Floodplain Forests](#)" is the selection of a new DANUBEPARKS flagship species, the **Black Poplar**. It stands both for rejuvenation areas resulting from intact river dynamics, as well as for the value of old or dead wood, which calls for a wise and cooperative use of the floodplain forests.

Within STEP 2.0, under the lead of Vojvodinašume, the forestry company of Vojvodina (Serbia) managing the regions Protected Areas, a Black Poplar cadastre will be established and a genetic analysis done to determine local genotypes and prepare for future reforestation actions. To encourage cooperation on this field between nature protection and forestry, a cross-sectorial conference will be held in Novi Sad in spring 2014.

River dynamics were an important topic in the first project, and will stay so: The [Danube-wide monitoring of indicator species](#) will be repeated, this time in the framework of the Joint Danube Survey, coordinated and implemented by the ICPDR. This cooperation gives much higher – also political – value to the results and our joint work.



Additionally, we will develop an Action Plan for River Morphology: Main topics are conservation of last natural sections, restoration of deteriorated stretches, and sediment balance. Those three main approaches will also be exemplarily worked out in more detail with the planning of three pilot projects, at Lower, Middle and Upper Danube. In this field, the cooperation with navigation and waterway stakeholders is indispensable for a successful approach. A joint conference in autumn 2013 is therefore planned together with the NEWADA duo project, the Network of Danube Waterway Administrations.



Last but not least, also in **nature tourism** the focus is on cooperation with stakeholders and collection of data for further use: A three-week assessment journey in spring 2013 will give a clear picture about nature education infrastructure along the Danube, allow a joint learning process by experience exchange, and provide the basis for future cooperation.

Based on this, we are developing quality guidelines for our own offers as well as a capacity-building plan to help achieving the jointly set goals. More topics in tourism are carrying capacities and offers for disabled people, and not to forget the jewel in the crown: We are developing the concept for a DANUBEPARKS visitor centre, which will be situated in the Danube Bend and run by Duna-Ipoly National Park. It will (re)present all Protected Areas along the Danube, and the concept of the indoor exhibition and outdoor nature trail will be developed in a joint process.

Kick-Off Meeting in Neuburg and Ingolstadt



The actual [Kick-Off Meeting](#) on October 24th was surrounded by numerous additional events, first and foremost a Bavarian stakeholder workshop by the Priority Area 6 (Biodiversity) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. A joint excursion of DANUBEPARKS and EUSDR participants allowed for networking and exchange.

The Kick-Off meeting itself was very productive and fulfilled its main goal, namely to give a clear picture to all partners of the general process for each activity, as well as the concrete next steps.

In addition to the Tourism Task Force Meeting, taking place on the first day, also a Project Managers Training on “Leadership” was organized on the last day. These trainings – six in total – should raise the capacity of all Project Managers within the partner areas to apply for, manage and represent a transnational project.

Implementation work started: First Task Force Meetings



Already end of November, the [tourism group met again in Esztergom](#) (Hungary) to plan the joint **DANUBEPARKS visitor centre**. A visit to the site of the future centre inspired the participants. The results were an agreed mission of the centre, as well as several main messages to be transported and a broad collection of ideas for exhibition and nature trail installations.



In mid December, [another meeting took place in Sombor](#) (Serbia). Vojvodinašume presented to the partners the methodology for **mapping Black Poplar** and collection of genetic material. The method for the Danube-wide **winter count of White-tailed Eagle** was discussed on the basis of existing experiences in some countries. A field trip to the Apatin and Strbac areas of the Gornje Podunavlje Special Nature Reserve provided insight into forest management and White-tailed Eagle monitoring in this part of the Danube.

Journey along the Danube: The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (Romania)



At kilometre 0 of the Danube, a Garden Eden opens up at a surface of nearly 600.000 hectares: floating islands, the world's largest compact reed bed, shifting sand dunes, flooded meadows and many more habitats provide perfect conditions for more than 7000 animal and plant species:



Visitors will be able to experience this wildlife and landscape with experienced nature guides from local tour-operators, or can visit the numerous visitor centres in the villages of the Delta, as in Tulcea, Crişan, Sulina, Murighiol, and Sf. Gheorghe.

Apart from the natural treasures, the Danube Delta – of which almost 20% spreads to Ukraine – is also rich in cultural heritage: Roman, Byzantine and Greek cultures have left their traces, and the living traditions of about 14 ethnic groups in the Delta provide for a fascinating journey.

<http://www.ddbra.ro/en>

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