

Danubeparks Newsletter 08.07.2013

Nature & Education

It is one of the main tasks of Protected Areas, it provides the first point of contact for many people, and it assures the support for nature protection activities in the years to come: We're talking about environmental education. What do we mean by it?



We organize guided excursions, we manage visitor centres and exhibitions, we cooperate with schools from the region, we establish junior ranger programs, and we cooperate with volunteers from companies. No matter which of those activities is concerned, our main goals with them are to establish an emotional bond between people and nature through personal experiences, and to raise understanding and knowledge about natural processes and living creatures.

Those educational activities normally also form part of the touristic offer provided by Protected Areas, that add substantially to the attractiveness especially in rural regions. In this way, educational activities strengthen the regional economy, too.

Many potential partners, many open questions



Not only we as Protected Areas offer environmental education, also other stakeholders like nature protection NGOs, water management authorities, and regional development associations are active in the field. No one really has an overview on which environmental education offers exist along the whole Danube. Many questions are open: Which offers do exist? What topics do they focus on? How do they work didactically? Does cooperation exist? Which potential synergies could be used? Which gaps do exist – both thematically and regionally?

Study tour through ten countries

Within the DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 project, we are trying to find answers to all of these questions. After intensive desk research, we have implemented a nearly three-week journey through all ten Danube countries, visiting between two and four environmental education facilities every day. Already now, you can read about what we saw and experienced in our blog: www.danubeparks.org/blogs/danube_education



At the moment, the data is being analysed. In the end, we want to present an overview map with all currently existing offers, as well as a report with conclusions from the assessment tour. We plan to use and integrate the results in many different activities: The gap analysis for the future development of our own offers, the overview map for finding cooperation partners, the benchmarking experience for formulating quality guidelines for our own offers.

Cooperation and synergies

Christian Baumgartner, Secretary General of [Naturefriends International \(NFI\)](#) and Board Member of the [Danube Competence Center \(DCC\)](#), highlights the synergies of this activity: "The results of this tour are valuable not only for ensuring the quality of environmental education offers by the DANUBEPARKS partners, but can also be used by various other organizations. The [TRANSDANUBE project](#) will receive information about the accessibility of nature tourism offers by public transport and bicycle for their database.



The DCC could use the input for future projects, focusing on nature tourism development along the Danube. NFI are currently working on nature tourism offers for people with disabilities, a topic that was also assessed during the tour, and will integrate the experiences in future work. In this way, the DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 project works together with its external partners on making the Danube's natural treasures accessible to all parts of society."

Updates on our daily work

Directors Workshop to discuss the future DANUBEPARKS Network structure



Mid of May, the [Directors of the Danube Protected Areas met in the Donau-Auen National Park](#) (Austria). The workshop was a first step in the discussion process towards the future organizational structure of the DANUBEPARKS Network - to ensure sustainability of the Network and efficiency in our Danube-wide cooperation. Speeches from ALPARC (Alpine Network of Protected Areas) and the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas provided fruitful insight information and raised the experience flow between these different Networks of Protected Areas.

Task Force Meeting to boost conservation actions



Beginning of June, a [three-day-meeting](#) brought together the DANUBEPARKS experts in Kopaonik Nature Park (Croatia) and in Duna-Dráva National Park (Hungary). This cross-border workshop contributed to boost the conservation actions for Black Poplar and White-tailed Eagle – two of the Danube-wide flagship species. On the field of river morphology, the WILDisLAND project idea was further elaborated.

Danube-wide Monitoring as part of the Joint Danube Survey



The [Danube-wide Monitoring of indicator species for river dynamics](#) (Little-ringed Plover & Sand Martin) is under implementation at the moment. The first counting of breeding pairs was done in May and June by experts of all DANUBEPARKS partners, covering also some sections of tributary rivers. The incredibly high flood and permanent high water levels caused problems for the survey. However, the final excursions are taking place these days and should deliver valuable results for the [Joint Danube Survey](#) (JDS) organized by the [ICPDR](#), which means raised political importance for our study. Several partners are also preparing public events to raise awareness on the JDS - see below in upcoming events. More about this topic can be read in our Newsletter in September!

SEE projects work together



Mid of May, the [ETC-SEE Programme](#) organized their [Annual Conference](#) in Bucharest, where DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 was invited to coordinate a [capitalization process for the nature protection projects](#). Long-term capitalization of the projects results as well as added values for each project should be created by experience exchange on nature management documents, joint events, staff exchanges and many more activities.

Journey along the Danube: Persina Nature Park (Bulgaria)



Persina Nature Park was among the first members of the DANUBEPARKS Network, being a perfect representative of an important Danube habitat: The **dynamic Danube islands**. Many endangered species nest here, like the Red-breasted Goose or the Dalmatian Pelican. The marshes and floodplains – many of them on the Persin, Milka, Kitka, and other Islands – are in a nearly natural state and host such typical plants like yellow water-lily or water chestnut.



The area is still rather unknown to tourists, making it an **attractive destination for discoverers** and nature-lovers. Located about 2 hours upstream from Ruse, it is however quite accessible for a 2-day-trip. The Persina Nature Park welcomes you in their visitor centre in Belene, where you can get all kinds of information or book a kayak tour in the reserve.

<http://www.persina.bg/>

Upcoming Events

August 20th -22nd, Vienna (AT) - Bratislava (SK): Cross-border wilderness excursion



In relation with the Joint Danube Survey, several Protected Areas (see also further below) organize public events to raise awareness on the Danube's nature, the international monitoring effort coordinated by ICPDR, and DANUBEPARKS' contribution to it. From August 20th to 22nd, starting at the press conference in Vienna, the Donau-Auen National Park invites you for a [wilderness boat excursion](#). Linking the two capital cities Vienna and Bratislava, you will experience dynamic river habitats by day and by night.

September 1st, Tulcea (RO): International Danube Festival



The Protected Areas will once again gather to celebrate the natural and cultural diversity along the whole Danube. Visiting this festival, you will receive personal information about all Danube Protected Areas within our Network, be able to try local products, and listen to local music! For children, games will be available to experience the Danube River in a playful way. Additionally, this year the festival will be coordinated with the RowMania Festival, showcasing rowing traditions of the region and including some competitions. We are looking forward to your visit!

September 7th, Kosoroszi / Szentendre island (HU): Thematic canoe tour



The Duna-Ipoly National Park organizes a [canoe tour starting from Kisoroszi](#) at Szentendre island, close to Budapest. The tour thematically focuses on topics of the Joint Danube Survey, such as important fish species of this Danube section and water quality.

September 21st, Dömös (HU): Festival with scientific focus



Also this second event organized by Duna-Ipoly National Park highlights the importance and achievements of the Joint Danube Survey. At the occasion of this festival in the village where the DANUBEPARKS visitor center will be in the future - Dömös, at the famous Danube Bend - some results and experiences from this Danube-wide scientific monitoring should be presented.

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