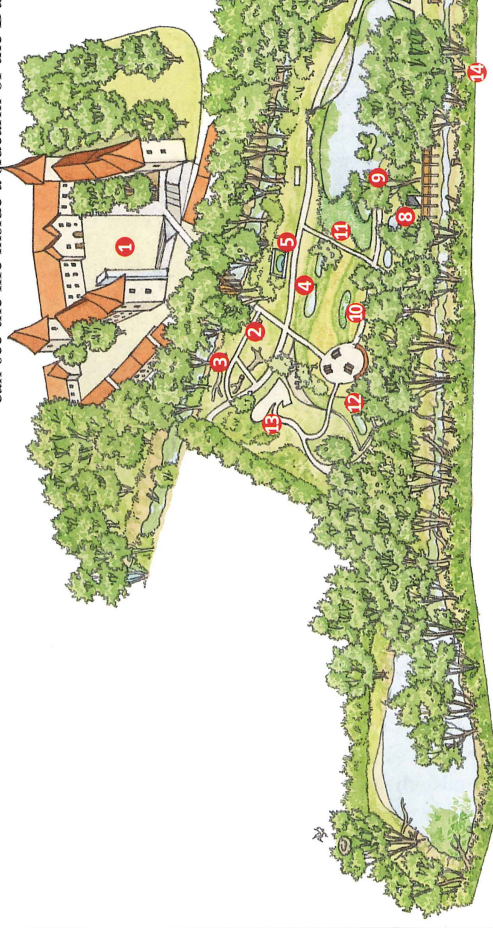


Castle's Island 2007

Another attraction will be inaugurated on in 2007: The Castle's Island. Visitors will Flood Plains amidst their natural environment can see the life inside a sidearm of the Danube.



Illustrations with legends by Dominic Groebner



Kofinanzierung
EFRE und
BMWA

Dear guests,

It is nice to have you here with us. For a very long time all of us in the wetland forests as well as in this castle have become used to our calm environment. Yet, during those last two or three centuries our existence also became somewhat boring due to the lack of joyful festivities and hunters' parties - the latter now and then keeping one or the other flirtatious court lady hidden in the coppice a little longer than regarded to be decent.

Some diversion is really welcome to us now. You, our guests, bring life back to the old walls of the Castle of Orth. These guys working for the National Park had a lot of ideas to illustrate our lives in the wetland forests during the millennia - and we kept an eye on them to ensure they did everything correctly.

From the very start I felt comfortable in the settings of the Wetland Forests' Theatre. But the speed of the Time Machine made me feel dizzy at the beginning. If you take into account that I am a faun and almost 2000 years old you will understand I felt like being on a roller coaster. On the other hand even I was able to find new information on the giant map - to get such a complex overview is a very special chance. Maybe I'll dare to ride in such a balloon one day, that would be great.

What was a real challenge to our nerves was the photographers' diary. Every day at exactly the same hours we had to watch out like a hawk in order not to allow ourselves to be seen on the pictures. Yet, after a while the jaybirds had learned to give us a new kind of alert: "Attattattention cacamera!" That made our lives easier. It would have been very embarrassing if I had suddenly turned up in one of those pictures!

Well, it is certainly worth your while to investigate everything around. You are not at a museum here. It is you who animate the castle, our theatre and the map. Don't hesitate to touch all you are interested in or to look behind the scenes. When you will come out to our realm after your tour of the castle you will have a better notion of the wetland forests. And, maybe, we'll even meet there for a chat?

Looking forward to that encounter,
Yours sincerely

Claudius Bocksfus
*Faun and authorized speaker for the animals
and the plants of the wetland forests*



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Wetland Forests Show

*Illusion and Reality
In the Theatre of Nature
designed after a Baroque Model*

"From their origins onwards the wetland forests along the river have been subdued to continuous changes. This was restricted, but in no way stopped, by the regulation of the Danube. Yet, as long as the forests could be freely flooded the eternal sequence of destruction and rebuilding became much more manifest. Soil and water were in permanent motion." - Elfriede Wendelberger

The riverine forests of the Danube were a rich and dynamic natural habitat. The regulation of the stream has had its influence on it, but it could still be preserved until now.

Baroque theatres dating back to the 17th and the 18th centuries inspired the performance of the Wetland Forests Show. In those days the Danube was an unregulated stream with manifold side arms. Varying floods created new landscapes while devouring other parts along the riverside in irregular intervals as the beds of the river changed. In the course of time islands turned into mainland, flooded side arms became segregated old arms and ponds. The show illustrates this eternal metamorphosis. (The massive regulation of the Danube in and around Vienna was initiated in the 1870ies only.)

The pictures on the movable settings present the main inhabitants of this typical landscape in regard to flora and fauna. The mobility of the scenery is a reflection of the landscape's dynamism and the recurrence of destruction and creation.

You participate in the show

The audience here is not supposed to be passive. Instead some volunteers amongst the lookers-on should actively participate by putting the settings onto the stage at the right moment - that is, when you are told what to do.

The frame of the stage

A baroque scene greets the audience. Putti - those typical well-known children's figures - carry garlands of flowers and fish. Europa with her bull empties her cornucopia onto the scene. Faun joins them. Even Neptune and a mermaid came up from the depth to watch the presentation.

The animals' world is present, too: the wood mouse, the fawn, the song thrush, the precious butterfly and the polecat. A fairy borrowed the wings of the Viennese Great Peacock and watches from aside. There may also be a mosquito somewhere - where may it be hidden? To the right and to the left of the curtain flames rising from plates are surrounded by water lilies and wild wine. A distinguished audience watches scenes of baroque hunts decades ago amongst refined deceptions of architecture and opulently arranged flowers.

Plants shown: genuine wild wine (ancestor of our cultivated grapes), great water lily, Siberian or yellow iris, clematis ...

Animals shown: great peacock, wood mouse, pike, starlet, barb, green tench, fawn, polecat, blue, song thrush, mosquito ...

Scene 1 - The birth of an island

The spectacle starts. The curtain opens and reveals a wide water-surface.

In the inner area of a bend the speed of the current is slower than in the rest of the stream. Therefore in this area the bed load accumulates. A gravel bank grows. Cormorants, mallard ducks and common goosanders are among the first inhabitants.

But then the floods come and the newborn island submerges. Beneath the surface it breaks the current and thus gathers additional pebbles. As the waters withdraw again the island comes up, larger now than it was before. During years with little precipitation it may be visible all the time. First plants sink their roots into the gravel. Only purple willows and black poplars will be capable to resist high waters in the long run.

The enduring plants now collect fine sediments from the river and make the island grow further. By and by it will no more be flooded by high waters other than extreme. Sand collects on the area. The plant cover becomes more diversified and dense.

Two or three decades later the barren gravel bank has become a fertile environment.

Plants on the settings: Purple willow, special worts, knotweed.

Animals: Sandpiper, cormorant, little ringed plover, grey heron, common goosander, mallard ducks.

Scene 2 - Willows are the pioneers

The new settings must be pushed to the stage quickly, the performance goes on with new actors arriving.

Seeds taken in by wind and water find a most favourable environment on the wet and soft sandbanks. They grow fast. But the diversity of willows soon is overgrown and dominated by the white willow. Lacking sunlight in its shadow the others vanish. Two or three decades later just the pillar-like trunks of the white willows are left.

This wetland forest is still very humid and repeatedly flooded. Because softwood like willows dominates here this part is also called the softwood forest. Among the other plants like grass or small bushes there are few that can cope with the extreme conditions close to the ground.

Yet, each high water accumulates new sediment, and the island becomes higher and higher. By and by the ground becomes too dry for marshland plants. New settlers arrive between the white willows: nettle, blackberry, bird cherry, ground ivy. Beavers, too, have come to stay, building their lodges and slides. The white tailed or sea eagle comes to reside.

Plants on the settings: White willow, black poplar, bird cherry, nettle, blackberry, ground ivy, elder.


Animals: Sea eagle, Eurasian beaver, red admiral.

Scene 3 - Poplars and alders suppress the willows

Additional settings with new actors fill the stage.

Thanks to the falling leaves and the humus created by the plants on the ground the earth becomes ever more fertile. White poplars and alders invade the place at the cost of the ageing white willows. Still, the island is flooded periodically. But the higher the land comes up the thinner the sediments of sand and mud left by the high waters become. In parallel the layer of humus thickens and the diversity of its inhabitants widens. Now the density of the many species of trees, bushes and weeds now gives an almost tropical impression.





In the tangle of its roots, stems, leaves and branches a great variety of wildlife find their homes.

Plants on the settings: White poplar, deadnettle, alder, bird cherry, purple loosestrife, snowball bush.

Animals: Ring dove, European stag, red fox, European pond terrapin, kingfisher, red kite, penduline tit, purple emperor, green woodpecker.

Scene 4 - The hardwood forests shelter a great variety of game

Diana, goddess of hunting, gallops in on horseback. She carries a falcon on her arm, and clematis decorates her hair.

The evolution of the wetland forests with all their opulence has not come to a standstill. The soil continues to become darker, ripier and more fertile. Higher up in the landscape the comparably dry areas are being conquered by hardwoods with deep roots like oaks, ash trees and elms.

Beside their trunks there is a complex thicket composed of bushes. That coppice consists of adapted wetland plants and newly arrived ones preferring a more arid environment like the snowball bush, hawthorn or the Cornelian cherry.

Blooming plants like lilies of the valley and woodruff spread through the forest. In the glades bellflowers enjoy the open spaces.

The hardwood forest covers the highest terraces of the lowlands along the river. Water is no longer abundant here. Floods only happen once in the lifetime of humans. The vegetation is exuberant; the forests are rich in wildlife. The game attracts hunters, and hunting lodges are being built on the edges of the woods. Wide alleys are cut into the forest to allow easy access for the elegant hunting parties.

Plants on the settings: Oak, ash tree, snowball, harebell, hawthorn, clematis, deadnettle, hop.

Animals: Falcon, woodcock, wild boar, hawk, black and spotted woodpeckers.

Scene 5 - The End

During the finale the settings are automatically removed. Once more all the pictures of unspoiled nature in its details and its might turn up for the audience. Stag beetle and praying mantis grow to gigantic dimensions; the southern festoon transforms into a beautiful fairy with wings on her back. Even the shy grass snake ventures out of its hiding place to try its luck in hunting. Typical habitats tuft up - an old arm of the Danube or the dry meadows with their specific flora and fauna. Man's influence becomes visible, too, when the walls of the castle of Orth emerge from the background.

Then, with an intensifying and scaring roar a soaring flood pours into the wetland forests, drowning plants and animals alike. The narrator tells us that a new island will be born. The curtain closes.

Plants on the settings: Ash tree, oak, Siberian iris, clematis, birthwort, burnt orchid, black poplar, fungi, water lenses, water lily, blackberry, genuine wild wine, white poplar.

Animals: Blue tit, southern festoon, praying mantis, golden oriole, emperor dragonfly, fire bellied toad, pool frog, grass snake, stag beetle, otter, long tailed tit.

After the performance at the Wetland Forests' Theatre you may closely examine the stage. Then you can start your fascinating journey with the help of the time machine.

Baroque theatre - the historical model

The Wetland Forests' Theatre is conceived after the model of baroque theatres of the 17th and the 18th centuries. In those days fantastic worlds were created with the help of complicated mechanics and sophisticated machines. Settings arranged one behind the other gave the illusion of an enormous depth of the stage. The audience was impressed by very realistic special effects.

Paintings: Raja Schwahn-Reichmann, Vienna
The script of the Wetland Forests' Theatre follows Elfrune Wendelbergers book „Grüne Wildnis am großen Strom“.
Script: Christopher Widauer, Salzburg-Wien
Production: Kraftwerk Living Technologies - www.kraftwerk.at
Fotos: Armin Bardel





The Time Machine

*Changes of landscapes and leaps in time -
a multimedia journey*

Attention - danger of dizziness! Come in to see how everything began. The time machine makes millions of years pass by within minutes, it shows you the surge of the continents, illustrates the forces of the ice-ages and documents the slow formation of a large river - the Danube. On this journey you watch the metamorphoses of the riverine forests from the ancient days up to now.

The forming of Europe

400 million to 2 million years ago

Incredible forces set free by the motions of the earth's crust lay the foundations of the continents and start shaping what is Europe today. Mountain ranges rise, seas emerge and disappear. A prehistoric river-system of the Danube originally flows westward. With the rise of the Northern Alps the direction changes towards the east.

Water and ice

2 million to 15.000 years ago

Glaciers covered large parts of Europe during the ice-ages. Beneath them rocks were ground to pebbles and sand under the giant layers of frozen water. Rising temperatures and melting ice let the rivers carry those stones with them. The Danube was one of them, thus creating the very terraces we know today along its bed. In the respective highest layer the stream always finds its newest way, which is accompanied by wetland forests.

First settlers

7000 to 6000 BC

The abundance of game, fish and wood secures the existences of the first settlers. They learn to cope with the repeated floods and to understand nature's warnings. The hill of the Wagram towards the north and the steep riverside south of the Danube remind them of the dangers associated with the recurrent floods.

Carnuntum, provincial capital

6 AC to 400 AC

Ancient Roman civilization reaches the southern bank of the Danube. Soldiers and civilians build their roads, bridges and ports along the limes. The needs of around

60.000 inhabitants of Carnuntum in regard to food and firewood constitute a first and grave challenge to the ecosystem of the wetland forests.

Villages, towns, fortresses

900 to 1700 AC

On both sides of the river farmers cultivate the fertile land. Villages are built even amidst the forests. The fortified town of Hainburg as well as the castles of Orth, Eckartsau and Hof protect the roads and the passages across the Danube in the interest of the feudal lords. The castle of Orth is set on fire several times and is rebuilt again and again. After the first Turkish siege Count Niklas Salm refurbishes it as a magnificent Renaissance castle.

Baroque lifestyle

1700 to 1750 AC

The wetland forests degenerate as a setting for the nobility's luxurious lifestyle. Precious castles like Hof, Niederweiden and Eckartsau with their abundant gardens put their marks on the landscape at the edge of and within the forests. The largest part of the land remains an imperial property. Just a selected few are permitted to enjoy hunting within this area.

Regulation causes thorough change


1870 to 1905

Devastating floods and catastrophes caused by ice wrenches up to the northern parts of Vienna are being halted by a complete regulation of the Danube after a series of unsuccessful attempts. Side arms are cut off and loose their connection to the stream; a dam in the north fortifies the riverside and large blocks of broken granite stabilize the banks.

The end of a dynasty

1918/19

The original wilderness of the wetland forests has survived the regulation of the stream. For the Habsburgs the woods still represent an attractive hunting ground. Not just as a hunter but also as an early biologist and lover of nature Crown Prince Rudolf spends much of his time in Orth. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, an obsessive hunter, refurbishes Eckartsau, which will become the final refuge of the last Austrian Emperor Karl in his home country.



"Reichsjagd-Gebiet" and petrol stocks

1938 to 1945

Even after the end of the monarchy, during Austria's first republic, access to the wetland forests along the Danube remains restricted. To get access to Lobau a ticket has to be bought. After the annexation to the "Dritte Reich" Hermann Göring, field marshal and top professional hunter, secures the woods as "Reichsjagd-Gebiet". The wounds inflicted then are unhealed still - including oil storage systems and port structures in the middle of the wood. Luckily the projected Donau-Oder-Channel remains a fragment.

The miracle of Hainburg

1984

The very last remaining passage of the freely flowing river east of Vienna came under immediate threat by plans to build a hydroelectric power plant at Hainburg. It should have become the largest in Austria - with irreversible damage to natural life in the area. But not only the young Austrian ecology movement fiercely contested the plan, remarkable parts of civil society joined in. Thousands of demonstrators built camps and stayed in the forests in the winter of 1984 with temperatures significantly below zero. In the end they succeed in preventing the realization of the project after some violent clashes with the police. The government gave in to mounting public pressure. The foundations for the National Park were laid.

Invaluable nature for generations

The National Park, founded in 1996, tries hard to regain as much as possible from what manifold human influence has changed for the worse.

The original character of the landscape is being restored as far as possible for instance by reopening cut off side arms of the Danube and thus bringing back the waters of the river to the wetland forests. But the challenge is enormous. The cities of Vienna and Bratislava are still growing, the whole region faces change. New residential areas are being built as well as industrial sites, highways and roads - all of them menacing the narrow ribbon of the Danube and its wetland forests.

The room in the tower

The time machine is installed in a special part of the castle: in the room in the tower, also named "Salmzimmer"

after Count Niklas Salm who rebuilt the medieval castle of Orth around 1550 after the invading Turks had destroyed it in 1529. His father had taken part in the successful defence of Vienna against the Turkish attack and siege. Archduke (later Emperor) Ferdinand I gave the castle of Orth, the hunting grounds and the local court to this Captain Count Niklas Salm II (the Elder) as a hereditary feud.

Vault and terracotta-panels

Salm's heirs had the castle adapted according to the demands of their days. Renaissance came in with dominating elements, although the character of a fortress was preserved in times of political unrest. The vault in Salm's room was decorated with panels made of terracotta showing emblems, fauns and animals.

These decorations allude to decorations made from terracotta in the Salms' original castle Neuburg/Inn, where the painter Wolf Huber from Passau created comparable panels. The figure of the faun as an antique element or an allusion to antiquity was possibly chosen as an instrument for political or, even more frequently, religious disputes. Thus the owner of the building was able to communicate personal views to a small elite in a masked way and did not have to fear punishment for his criticism. Unfortunately those messages cannot be decoded any more in our days.

The faun

The faun or satyr is an allegoric creature of nature dating back to Greek/Roman mythology. As the companion of Bacchus (Dionysos) he is linked to wine, to fertility and to theatre-performances. Crowds of fauns populate bacchanals and are clearly recognizable as creatures of nature by their horns, goats' hooves, leaves and flutes. Frequently they are associated with special sites like trees or wells. Last but not least the faun serves as an intermediate between humans and gods, between the real world of man and the inexplicable, fantastic world of nature.

Script: Christoph Widauer

Historical contributions: Manfred Rosenberger

Production: Kraftwerk Living Technologies

Music: Starmill

Animation: Werner Pötzelberger, yama

Alexander Wilhelm, visioneers

Bird's eye view of the riverine forests

The landscape as it is seen by the sea eagle - a walkable map

The Danube Floodplain National Park is unique not only because of its landscape but also because of its geographic position. In order to visualize these characteristics the idea to fly across the wetland forests' region was born.

The geographic position of the National Park

The aerial photo shows the segment of the Danube between the water power plant Greifenstein and the storage lake of the Gabčíkovo plant. This is the last remaining part of the river, where the waters flow freely without regulation. The area of the National Park connects two European capitals - Vienna and Bratislava - and stretches at least to their outskirts if not into them. At the same time the National Park is a link between the eastern foothills of the Alps, the Vienna Woods, and the submontane parts of the Lesser Carpathians near Bratislava. In-between the riverine forests form a narrow strip along the Danube with agricultural areas around. Until 1989 the region was separated by the Iron Curtain along the border between Austria and then still communist Czechoslovakia.

The aerial photo

Seen from above the view of the wetland forests truly is exceptional. What looks giant on the ground turns into a tiny part of the impressive composition of the landscape. The map of "Au-Flug" is a colossal aerial photo of the region between the power plant of Greifenstein (A) and the dam of Cunovo (SK). On 40 square metres the entire area of the National Park is presented, the scale being 1 : 8.900. Visitors may not only regard the map but are also encouraged to walk across it. A multitude of additional instruments help to turn it into a large playground as well.

Flights across the wetland forests

The photos were gathered in two phases. The airspace in Austria as well as in Slovakia was flown over in August and in September 2004.

The aeroplane with its special equipment for surveying and mapping was guided by a GPS-navigation system. At several thousand metres above the ground the plane flew along narrow lines of up to 50 km in length, which had been defined beforehand, from the east to the west and back. Thus it meticulously covered its object from the north to the south.

Equipment on board

The photos were taken and processed with the help of devices and methods also common in space research, surveying and cartography - including a sophisticated special-purpose camera with several lenses and sensors for high resolution photos.

The making of the mosaic

The exact positions of the different parts of the map had been established using GPS-data and the country's coordinate plane in order to completely cover the whole area. The inevitable distortions of the aerial photos were subsequently corrected with the help of a digital topographic model. In a challenging final procedure the single photos were united to form the huge picture using a special programme for image processing.

Photos, techniques and documentation:

Meixner Vermessung Wien

Production: Kraftwerk Living Technologies

The games

The magnifying glass

How does the Castle of Orth look from above, how the famous Central Cemetery in Vienna? Hold one of the large magnifying glasses over the object on the map and you will realize the details.

Looking for special places

It is much more than geography for beginners. To find special places on the map is a trying job and needs a detective's flair. The numerous tokens situated next to the map have to be put into the correct positions.

Wanderers' red deer game

Wanderers, give your attention to the red deer. It is a superb walker. In a single night it can cover distances up to 30 km roaming around. Yet, there are barriers on its way. Who can find a route that offers the animal sufficient cover on a 30 km long trip without insurmountable hindrances?

In earlier times red deer covered enormous distances with seasonal variations. Today their trips are becoming ever more restricted by busy roads, fences (those protecting deer from traffic included), agriculture and human settlements. The very last remaining passage between the Alps and the Carpathians leads right through the wetland forests of the Danube Floodplain National Park.

Cross-linking of watercourses

The map for this game can be laid over the aerial picture. It shows how the watercourses looked before and after the regulation of the Danube and illustrates how new cross-linking of watercourses is being done.

This endeavour is a task of the National Park in the field of water engineering. Side arms, which have been severed from the main stream by its channelling, are being re-connected. Thus the waters become revitalized, natural currents return and the original conditions for life are re-established.

The game of dice

(Please, see the map of this game in the German edition.)

Who is the first finishing a tour of the Danube Floodplain National Park? With some luck in throwing the dice the distance is quickly covered. The youngest player starts. When you are sent on from one station to the next the instruction linked to that point is invalid. Next time the dice are thrown normally.

1. Orth. The trip begins and ends at the Castle of Orth.

2. Haslau. In 1989/90 the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) bought the so-called Regelsbrunner Au with the help of donated money. Up to now this is one of the core elements within the National Park. You are so happy because this green biosphere could be preserved that you can advance once for every green piece of clothing you wear!

3. Eckartsau. This is the place that hosts the youth camps of the National Park. Pupils get an opportunity to intensively occupy themselves with the wetland forests as a wildlife habitat. Here you learn a lot about the riverine forests. The knowledge you gather helps you to continue towards Stopfenreuth!

4. Carnuntum. You look for the sight of the region, the antique archway Heidentor, and discover it amidst modern wind turbines. The player on your left side explains to you that meanwhile 9.000 kilowatts of electricity are being generated by wind power in the district of Bruck/Leitha. This covers the needs of all households in Bruck. The two of you start an intense discussion about renewable energy sources and pause once.


5. Stopfenreuth. Several thousand people occupied the wetland forests of Stopfenreuth during the winter of 1984/85 to prevent the construction of the water power plant Hainburg. The project was given up, and the region declared a protected zone in 1996. Participants of 1984 now are permitted to add one point to every number on their dice (3 become 4 etc.).

6. Bad Deutsch-Altenburg. You sadly realize that the quarry has again become larger since you saw it last. Another part of the Hainburg mountains is lost forever. Looking for comfort you visit the wine cellars of the famous Carnuntum-vineyards and forget your sorrow. You pause two times!

7. Hainburg. From the lookout point Braunsberg you enjoy the marvellous view across the whole region of the National Park. Delighted you change positions with the most advanced player.

8. Devin. Here you find the nature reserve of the hill of Devin. A singular knoll formed of sandstone is a place of special interest, because bones of tapirs, monkeys and predators have been unearthed there. You examine the spot together with the player on your right side and take him or her to Devin.

12. Rusovce. You gather information about the LIFE-project, which tries to turn the remnants of wetland forests around Bratislava into a natural environment again and to preserve it. Delighted you visit the protected area of the large bustards, too!



13. **Cunovo.** Wind causes high waves in the enormous reservoir of the Gabčíkovo power plant. Your boat fills with water. Throw the dice again: with the numbers 1 or 2 you are able to safely reach the bank and recover. If you get 3, 4, 5 or 6 you overturn and have to leave the game.

21. **Marchegg.** Here you visit Europe's largest colony of white storks breeding on trees. This visit gives you wings and you fly across the next five stations.

23. **Castle of Hof.** This place once was surrounded by elaborately arranged baroque gardens. In the course of the centuries they degenerated into wilderness. Now they are being re-established in detail according to the original model. The relaxed walk in the beautiful park lets your energies grow - throw the dice once again!

26. **Reserve of bustards (Marchfeld).** You cross a field and involuntarily scare away a breeding large bustard. Shocked you let your purse fall down and pause once.

37. **Greifenstein power plant.** This construction was built into the area of wetland forests now destroyed. You try to imagine what the place may have looked like in earlier times and therefore you go to the information centre of the National Park in the Castle of Orth. Back to the start!

42. **Vienna - Starting point of the NationalparkBoot.** Here the ship leaves to take interested visitors to Lobau. You join them and advance to station 45.

44. **Prater.** In this area, which was a real wetland forests' zone long ago, you are not so interested in the beautiful meadows, alleys and ponds. Instead, you stay in the amusement park ("Wurstelprater"). You spend all your money there and have to borrow some in order to be able to get home. From now on you must reduce every number of your thrown dice by one point (1 becomes 0, 2 turns to 1 etc.)!

45. **Lobau.** The NationalparkBoot arrives in Lobau. Here you visit the dry meadows, a semi-arid and rough environment. Because you want to experience the wetland forests in all their complexity you decide to look for a clearly humid place and move on to the beavers!

47. **Untere (lower) Lobau.** The noise of the planes taking off and touching down spoils your stay outside. You decide to go to Marchegg, where you can enjoy the storks soaring and landing instead. Their rattling sounds like music to you!

49. **Fischamend.** The eastern highway blocks an ancient passage of the red deer. Therefore they are no longer able to cross over between the Alps and the Carpathians. Upon your arrival in Fischamend you must wait until bridges covered with natural vegetation are built and allow you to cross the highway. You may only continue after two of your colleagues have got a 6 each.

50. **Beaver.** The Danube Floodplain National Park offers perfect conditions to the beaver, the largest rodent of the Northern Hemisphere. Along the Danube there are lots of territories inhabited by those animals. The beaver helps you to finish and sends you to the final station!

Wetland Forests' Diary

Constancy in Change

In the fourth room the diary of the wetland forests offers you informative insight into the metamorphoses of a landscape around the year. Since February 2001 five photos are taken every day from a tower set up in the forests of Orth. A selection of more than 100 of those pictures arranged as a slide show shows how the scene changes with the four seasons. It also demonstrates the alterations following the cross-linking of watercourses started in 2001. These are important measures for the revitalization of the former side arms, which have turned into land after they were cut off the main stream due to the regulation.

Cross-linking of watercourses Orth/Donau

The ground-braking ceremony for the cross-linking project of the waters near Orth was held in May 2001. In three places the banks were opened for the Danube to flow into several former side arms, which had been severed from the stream almost completely because of the regulation. The path along the riverside was lowered to 1m beneath the medium water level of the Danube in these places. Now the stream is connected to the side arms on the surface for about 290 days per year in average. Thus their banks become eroded by and by and their courses wander a few metres to the sides every year.

Remarkable changes

Since the cross-linking of watercourses started remarkable changes can be realized. Accumulated sediments have partly disappeared, pebbles have replaced mud. The two floods of 2002 accelerated these developments. Locally these changes show up in the composition of societies of species. Endangered species like the kingfisher, the dragonfly, the red bellied toad, the Danube warty newt, the Danube salmon or the European mud minnow are gaining new habitats thanks to the measures. Visitors can hardly reach large parts of these areas, where endangered species of birds breed. These places are supposed to remain protected against further human influence and to develop naturally. The softwood forests will expand further, willows and poplars will conquer the new soil. Additional gravel banks will help birds breeding there like the severely endangered sandpipers and the little ringed plovers.

The Camera on its Tower

In order to document the effects of the cross-linking of watercourses on the side arms and the surrounding landscape of the wetland forests a tower carrying a camera was erected in February 2001 on the northern riverside near Orth. The tower shelters a miniature reflex camera with a 24 mm wide-angle lens. Every day it automatically takes five pictures of the same scene. Powered by solar energy and batteries it works independently. Only members of the National Park's staff come regularly for servicing purposes and to change the cartridges. After four years of operation the camera tower is regarded as a unique project.

The idea

One of the aims of the cross-linking is to re-establish natural conditions in these parts of the Danube's riverine forests. Thanks to the camera on its tower these processes can be documented and illustrated without human interference.

Idea and Photos: Gerald Navara

Music: Starmill

Production: Kraftwerk Living Technologies

Castle of Orth - History

12th century - construction of the medieval castle with moat

1529 - complete destruction by the Turks

from 1532 - reconstruction by Count Niklas Salm

around 1700 - construction of the so-called new castle on the western wing

from 1784 - for 200 years the castle serves as a granary

1824 - it is included into the Habsburg family funds

from 1875 - the castle becomes a favourite residence of Crown Prince Rudolf

from 1950 - refurbishment to shelter the museums of local history, of beekeeping, fishing and the Danube

1983 - Lower Austria presents its provincial exhibition "Fishing once and now" in the castle

2003 - the fishing and the Danube-museums are closed as outposts of the Lower Austrian Provincial Museum

2005 - opening of the Castle of Orth as the information centre of the National Park and home to events organized by the community of Orth/Donau

The Lookout Tower



The mighty southwestern tower of the castle, which in former times carried the clock, offers an impressive view as far as the cities of Vienna and Hainburg from its dormers.

Special exhibitions are being shown in the rooms of the tower. The stork of Orth is an additional attraction: Many years ago it built its nest on the roof of the castle and stays there all around the year. Meanwhile a female stork moved in as well. Every year in spring they breed here and raise their fledglings. The storks' family of Orth can be closely watched with the help of a lifecam in the utmost room of the tower.