

# DANUBE INSIDE



**DANUBE PARKS** 2.0  
network of protected areas STEP

## NATURE PROTECTION ALONG THE DANUBE RIVER – COOPERATION WITHOUT BORDERS

The Danube is the most international river in the world, passing through 10 countries on its 2,857 km journey from the Black Forest to the Black Sea.

It has been a transport and communication route for millennia, as well as a border of great empires. The river was divided into East and West during the decades of the Iron Curtain. Today, the Danube connects countries and cultures and through its entire river basin offers a living environment for 81 million people in a single macro-region.

The growing together of European regions and the dynamic economic development in South-East Europe in recent years have put increasing pressure on the natural treasures of the Danube. Its Protected Areas preserve the most valuable natural sites along the river. During the last

two decades, several new Protected Areas were created along the Danube. Nowadays, National Parks, Biosphere Reserves, Nature Parks and other Protected Areas play a key role in the sustainable development of the region.

Animals and plants do not recognise state borders. The success in conserving biodiversity on a Danube-wide scale heavily depends on transnational cooperation. This aspect has also been taken into consideration strongly at the political level, in particular by the recently adopted EU Strategy for the Danube Region which calls for a Danube-wide approach to nature conservation and highlights the role of DANUBE-PARKS STEP 2.0 as a flagship project in Priority Area 6 (Biodiversity).

Building on existing bilateral cooperation, the Danube River Network of Protected

Areas was established in 2009. By implementing the DANUBE PARKS project, Protected Areas from nearly all Danube countries have developed a strong and enriching partnership. For the first time, Danube Protected Areas jointly and systematically tackled common challenges and problems on a Danube-wide scale. Transnational thematic task forces were established, promoting the intense exchange of experience in habitat management, conservation of Danube flagship species and river morphology. Transnational strategies were elaborated and pilot projects of Danube-wide relevance were implemented.

However, transnational cooperation of Danube Protected Areas means more than actions for animals and plants – it also includes raising awareness of the values of intact and inspiring nature. The International Danube Festivals in the Protected Areas' visitor centres became a yearly focal point for communication, involving and inspiring the local population of the region

**Continue on page 2**

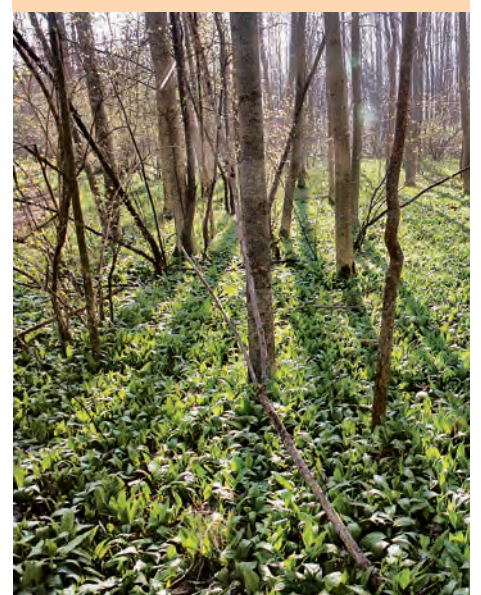
### Donauauwald Neuburg- Ingolstadt

[www.donauauen.de](http://www.donauauen.de)

**Location:**  
Germany, between  
Neuburg and Ingolstadt

**Surface:** 3,686 ha

**Good to know:** One of the largest riparian hardwood forests along the German Danube. Ambitious project to bring back river dynamics into the floodplain forest.



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and presenting characteristic music, dance and food of the Danube regions.

DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 is now poised to strengthen the Network of Protected Areas as a joint voice for the Danube's

natural heritage on the European level and to implement transnational conservation strategies. As all of us in the Danube region – fauna and flora, society and local people, Protected Areas, various stakeholders – share a common and coherent ecosystem, we will not be successful in the sustainable development of this region by standing alone. The DANUBEPARKS Network is willing to continue, deepen and enlarge this transnational and cross-sectorial approach to nature protection along the Danube River.



**Carl Manzano,**  
Spokesman of the  
DANUBEPARKS project and  
Director of the Donau-Auen National Park

# DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 AND THE GOALS WE ARE PURSUING

The DANUBEPARKS Network started with the first Danube-wide SEE-project, from 2009 to 2012. The main goal was to set up cooperation on a transnational level where it had been only bilateral or non-existent before, to find joint positions and common strategies for pressing issues and to learn from each other's practices, experience and pilot projects.

The foundation has been laid – now we need to build on those first successes and further strengthen and anchor the network on different levels. From 2012 to 2014, the new SEE-project DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 will continue with actions for White-tailed Eagle protection, set a new focus on the protection of Black Poplar as a flagship species of floodplain forests, intensify the work on river morphology and will assess and develop nature tourism offers.

We intend to strengthen the voice of Danube Protected Areas on the European level. In this respect, we work together with EU and national bodies as well as NGOs dealing with nature protection or nature tourism along the Danube, in particular with the International Commission for the Conservation of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the EU Strategy for the Danube River.

The DANUBEPARKS initiative is a growing Network. It includes partners from nearly all Danube countries, showing a growing role of Protected Areas from non-EU countries. The strategic enlargement process invites all relevant Protected Area

Administrations along the Danube River to join the Network and could also integrate riverine nature reserves on the larger tributaries such as the Sava, Drava, Tisza and Prut Rivers. In the end, experience and competence gained in transnational cooperation should raise the standing and the efficiency of the management of Protected Areas on the local level.

DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 works to preserve and develop the Danube River as an inspiring lifeline for a new European macro-region, bringing transnational policies and strategies to life by concrete and visible

## A CHANCE FOR THE BLUE DANUBE

For more than ten years, the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority has organised an art competition for pupils aged 15-18. Since the establishment of the DANUBEPARKS Network, the competition and the resulting exhibition have gone international. In 2013 and in 2014, the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve will collect your posters until the end of April each year; the award ceremony takes place in June of each year and also involves a public vote (on the spot and online).

After the exhibition opens in Tulcea, it will travel through several Protected Areas and Danube countries. Updated information can be found on:  
**<http://www.thebluedanube.ro/en>**



## Donau-Auen National Park

[www.donauauen.at](http://www.donauauen.at)

**Location:** Austria, between Vienna and Bratislava

**Surface:** 9,353 ha

**Good to know:** One of the last free-flowing river sections along the Upper Danube with well preserved coherent floodplain forests. Best-practice projects in river revitalisation.

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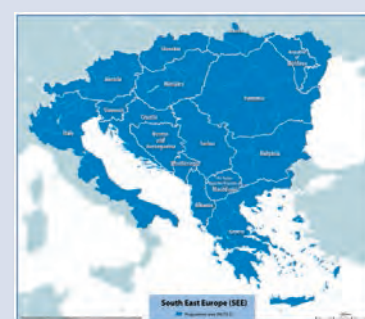
**EU-Funding Programme:** European Territorial Cooperation – South-East Europe

**EU-Co-financing rate:** 85%

**Priority Areas:** Protection and Improvement of the Environment

**Areas of Intervention:** Promote cooperation in management of natural assets and protected areas

**Website:** [www.southeast-europe.net](http://www.southeast-europe.net)



SEE Programme

actions. Anchoring the Network should enable us to build a long-term cooperation structure that will help protect the natural

heritage of the Danube River in the decades to come!



**DANUBEPARKS**  
network of protected areas STEP II

c/o Donau-Auen National Park

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**Photos:** Kovacs, Neuburg-Ingolstadt, Krobath, Valachovic, Kern, Duna Ipoly National Park, Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority, Dunajské luhy, Fertő-Hanság National Park, Special Nature Reserve Gornje Podunavlje, Peter Schmenger, Persina Nature Park, Duna-Dráva National Park, Baumgartner, Roland, Djerdap National Park,

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Imprint



## Záhorie Protected Landscape Area

[www.sopsr.sk](http://www.sopsr.sk)

**Location:** Slovakia, between the Morava River and Malé Karpaty Mountains

**Surface:** 27,522 ha

**Good to know:** The first proclaimed lowland Protected Landscape Area in Slovakia. Protecting rare habitats at the Morava River, the largest tributary in this section of the Danube.



MORAVA

## INTERNATIONAL DANUBE FESTIVALS

The tradition of International Danube Festivals, where all the Protected Areas from the Network present themselves to the local population, continues. In 2013, the Festival will take place in Tulcea, Romania on the occasion of Danube Delta Day in the beginning of September. The following year, we will travel to Bački Monostor in Serbia where the well-established Bodrog Festival will be celebrated with a focus on the Danube Protected Areas. If you live nearby or will happen to spend your vacation in the area, **drop by and celebrate with us!**

**1 September 2013:** International Danube Festival in Tulcea, Romania

**9-10 August 2014:** International Danube Festival / Bodrog Festival in Bački Monostor, Serbia



## Duna-Ipoly National Park

[www.dunaipoly.hu](http://www.dunaipoly.hu)

**Location:** Hungary, north of Budapest

**Surface:** 60,314 ha

**Good to know:** One of the most picturesque Danube sections where mountains meet the river and jointly form a unique landscape. Home of several protected endemic plant and animal species.



## Dunajské luhy Protected Landscape Area

[www.sopsr.sk](http://www.sopsr.sk), [www.broz.sk](http://www.broz.sk)

**Location:** Slovakia, between Bratislava and Komárno

**Surface:** 12,284 ha

**Good to know:** Once one of the most dynamic inland river deltas in Europe. Strongly altered by Gabčíkovo hydropower plant, but still housing numerous sites of significant biodiversity.



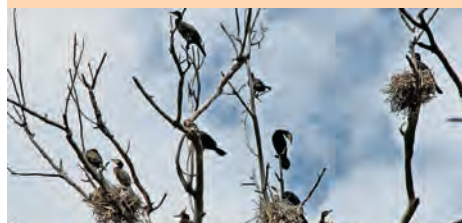
## Fertő-Hanság National Park

<http://fhnp.nemzetipark.gov.hu>

**Location:** Hungary, trilateral area with Austria and Slovakia

**Surface:** 47,182 ha

**Good to know:** Cross-border National Park at the Neusiedler See. Also manages the Szigetköz area at the Danube, bordering the Dunajské luhy Protected Landscape Area.



**Liliana Ivancenco,**  
Head of Education and Communication  
of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve  
Authority, explains the role of communication  
activities in the project:



## FROM EXPERTS TO GENERAL PUBLIC

Within the DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 project, nature protection and communication experts work together for a common goal: to involve as many people as possible – both inside and outside the Protected Areas' staff – in our nature protection activities. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority has had long-standing experience in this field, including participation in international programmes and management of information centres or environmental education in schools. Therefore, we also coordinate several activities within the DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 project, such as the Chance for the Blue Danube competition or the production of a DANUBEPARKS calendar. Other partners will contribute with brochures, a DANUBEPARKS book, promotional items, exhibitions, media work, etc. In addition, we are planning some events for public outreach of protection activities, such as the public winter count of White-tailed Eagle or the labelling of outstanding Black Poplars.

The best way to experience our joint work and the spirit of our collaboration – as felt at every Task Force Meeting and in every Staff Exchange – is to come and visit one of our two International Danube Festivals, where we all get together and celebrate!

## FROM THE DECLARATION OF TULCEA TO DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0

When the Protected Areas along the Danube met to sign the Declaration of Tulcea in 2007, they recognised the new opportunities and challenges arising from the accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU, the stronger EU nature legislation, and the necessity to ensure that nature protection along an international river was raised to an international level as well: With the commitment to form a Danube River Network of Protected Areas, the spirit of DANUBEPARKS was born. The first joint project, also funded by the ETC-SEE Programme, was implemented from 2009 to 2012 with a multitude of activities

(Project Report [www.danubeparks.org](http://www.danubeparks.org)). During this project, partners from Croatia, Serbia and Germany contributed actively to the implementation, despite lacking financial support, and new Protected Areas joined as observer partners. A second network project was called for by the success of the first one, not to mention the fact that establishing a well-functioning and sustainable network takes longer than three years. DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0, therefore, builds on the main achievements of the past years and focuses on the missing steps to anchor the DANUBEPARKS Network in the long term.



# BLACK POPLAR – SYMBOL FOR NATURAL FORESTS

**Danube Inside:** Radmila, can you tell us about your organisation and its role in the project?

**Radmila:** Vojvodinašume is the public forestry company of Vojvodina, a northern region in Serbia along the Danube River. We are responsible for the management of all forests in this province and of several Protected Areas, among them the Gornje Podunavlje Special Nature Reserve. Within the DANUBEPARKS Network we are the only forestry company directly responsible for Protected Area Management. In 2014, we will organise a joint conference for Protected Areas and forestry companies to bring them together, discuss our results and support the common understanding of forest management in ecologically valuable areas.

**DI:** The Black Poplar is a flagship species in the DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 project. What is so special about it?

**Radmila:** It is a rare tree species and protection is needed for valuable old and impressive solitary trees, but also for old growth stands. This will also help numerous other species, as they provide suitable nesting conditions for large birds or dead wood for woodpeckers. Secondly, Black Poplar is a pioneer plant and its rejuvenation depends on river dynamics – only gravel or sand banks and islands provide suitable conditions where seedlings of Black Poplar can start to grow – and this is one reason why river dynamics are crucial for a viable Danube. Finally, there is an ongoing hybridisation of Black Poplar with trees from forest plantations – a hidden and underestimated threat for this tree species.

**Radmila Sakic**, senior officer for nature conservation in Public Enterprise Vojvodinašume

**DI:** How will you tackle these issues?

**Radmila:** As a first step, we will develop a Danube-wide Black Poplar cadastre, showing single trees and old tree stands. As a second step, a selected number of trees will be tested morphologically and genetically, to determine whether they are pure Black Poplar – not mixed with hybrid poplars – and to find out about local phenotypes that also differ along the Danube. These actions will enable us to protect valuable old growth stands, as well as to select the right trees for reforestation actions. We also intend to label the most impressive tree specimens to ensure their conservation, to present them to the public, and to highlight the fascination of the Danube Floodplain forests.



## WHAT'S IN IT FOR US? THE VIEW OF A NEW PARTNER IN THE NETWORK

**Danube Inside:** Goran, you joined the DANUBEPARKS Network during the implementation of the first project. What was your motivation?

**Goran:** I really liked the approach of not focusing only on one conservation issue, but dealing in a well-balanced manner with a mix of key issues for riverine Protected Areas. Also, if we want to ensure the integrity of a riverine ecosystem we have to look beyond our borders, since the river doesn't recognise them. Conservation managers should behave in the same way. DANUBEPARKS enables us to look at the river as a whole – I believe this is the true value of this initiative. Additionally, there are very tangible reasons for joining the initiative: As we are an important area for White-tailed Eagle, it was a must for us to be part of DANUBEPARKS' action plan. Another key issue is that of hydro-morphological changes: At the Sava River

**Goran Gugič**, Director of Lonjsko Polje Nature Park

they are not yet at a level comparable to other areas, but there are regulation plans and we want to be prepared and proactive.

**DI:** What is the role of Protected Area administrations in nature protection?

**Goran:** We have a legal mandate to protect, preserve and promote a certain natural area. The pressure on those areas can be high since they mainly appear at locations of strategic importance for other sectors. Many riverine ecosystems also host extraordinary cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. Thus, managing such an area first and foremost means to balance all of these different values and interests.

**DI:** Lonjsko Polje Nature Park is situated at the Sava River. What is your benefit from the DANUBEPARKS Network?



**Goran:** First of all, the Sava River is one of the most important tributaries of the Danube. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recently recognised the huge natural and cultural values of this river. Still, there are ideas to improve navigation and build hydropower stations all over the catchment area. So there are many reasons for Protected Area administrations along the Sava to link up, which I hope to see in the near future. On the Danube, these issues are present already, so DANUBEPARKS' experience and approaches are of high value for such a future initiative.

SAVA

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### Lonjsko Polje Nature Park

[www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr](http://www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr)

**Location:** Croatia, 75 km downstream of Croatia's capital Zagreb on the Sava River

**Surface:** 50,650 ha

**Good to know:** This nature park in the Central Sava River Basin is a traditional cultural landscape perfectly adapted to the floodplain ecosystem.



### Kopački rit Nature Park

[www.kopacki-rit.hr](http://www.kopacki-rit.hr)

**Location:** Croatia, mouth of the Dráva and the Danube Rivers

**Surface:** 23,891 ha

**Good to know:** Famous inland delta at the confluence of the Dráva and Danube Rivers. Largest density of White-tailed Eagle breeding sites.

DUNA

9

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# DYNAMICS – A RIVER THAT NEVER LOOKS THE SAME

River dynamics and natural morphological processes are the key for long-term preservation of the Danube River ecosystem. Any artificial change to the river, such as damming, straightening or dyking, has massive negative effects upstream, downstream and in the adjacent floodplains: These changes hinder longitudinal connectivity, essential for fish migration; reduce side erosion and sedimentation, which provides habitats for many endangered plant and animal species; and increase flood risks. Therefore, the DANUBEPARKS Network has worked intensely on river restoration from the very beginning.

## Duna-Dráva National Park

[www.ddnp.hu](http://www.ddnp.hu)

**Location:** Hungary, near the southern border

**Surface:** 50,000 ha

**Good to know:** Protecting floodplains along Danube and Dráva Rivers. Famous nesting site of Black Stork.



**Stela Bozhinova,**  
Director of the  
Persina Nature Park Directorate,  
outlines the value of natural river dynamics.

As the river itself is not a Protected Area for the most part, but managed by waterway companies, cooperation with stakeholders is a major task in this field. During the first project, a Strategy on Conservation and Navigation was developed. Based on this, DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 intends to formulate Danube-wide demands on three main topics – conservation, restoration and sediment balance – all of them priorities in the Lower, Middle and Upper Danube sections.

For implementation, an integrative approach from nature conservation, water management, and navigation sectors is needed. In cooperation with NEWADA duo, the Network of Waterway Administrations along the Danube, a cross-sectorial conference and workshop will be organised to discuss the differing viewpoints and find solutions for the protection and restoration of valuable habitats while taking into consideration the requirements of the Danube as a transport corridor.

All conservation and restoration actions need scientific data for planning. Therefore, DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0 will repeat the Danube-wide monitoring of Little-ringed Plover and Sand Martin started in 2011. Both bird species are characteristic for dynamic river sections, breeding on gravel and sand islands or steep natural river banks. The monitoring is now part of the Joint Danube Survey organised by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), and thus gains additional importance on the political level.



DUNAV

SAVA

## CONSERVATION

Along the Lower Danube, mainly in Bulgaria and Romania, there are still large natural and dynamic river sections. The main goal is therefore to identify those valuable areas and find measures to protect them adequately from artificial structures.

Danube islands in particular represent these dynamic river habitats and are often still in a natural state and with a good habitat status. This qualifies Danube islands to serve as stepping stones between the current Protected Areas. The concept of a wild Danube island habitat corridor would contribute to better habitat connectivity and support the migration of species characteristic of these highly endangered habitats.



## RESTORATION

The Upper and Middle Danube is regulated for the most part – dykes and embankments disconnect the floodplains from the main river. The main goal here is to revitalise natural dynamics through the reduction of embankments, modification of groynes, reconnection of side-arms and more.

There is a lot of experience within the DANUBEPARKS Network, and we are integrating this experience into planning for a restoration project on the Drava River, one of the main tributaries of the Danube. As river engineering has major effects both up and downstream, we mustn't forget to deal with morphology and restoration at the main tributaries as well!



## SEDIMENT BALANCE

The Upper Danube is a highly altered river, due to a chain of hydropower plants in Germany and Austria along the main river as well as the tributaries. These dams stop the transport of sediments, induce river bed incision and thus lower the water level unnaturally, resulting in serious problems not only for nature conservation but also in water management, flood protection, maintaining infrastructure, etc.

Danube-wide concepts are needed and we intend to strengthen the voice of Danube Protected Areas in this field. A joint process with relevant stakeholders should help the Danube Protected Areas to identify actions needed and to plan measures on the local level.



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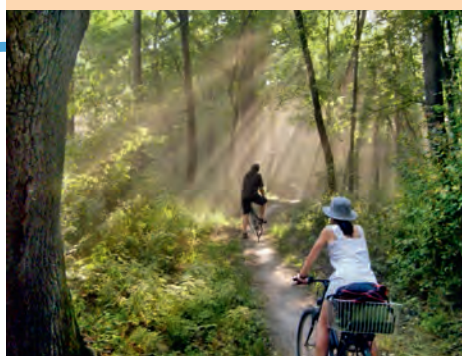
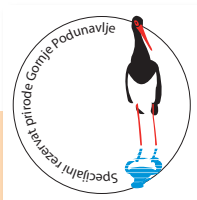
## Gornje Podunavlje Special Nature Reserve

[www.gornjepodunavlje.info](http://www.gornjepodunavlje.info)

**Location:** Serbia, on the border with Hungary and Croatia

**Surface:** 19,605 ha

**Good to know:** Forms the Serbian part of the floodplain area in the triangle cross-border region - the largest floodplain complex in the Middle Danube.





# THE DANUBE RIVER – A TRANSNATIONAL TOURIST DESTINATION?

Thomas Schneider has brought many visions for tourism into the project. He explains the thoughts behind them:

Since the beginning, nature tourism has been an important topic on the agenda of DANUBEPARKS. We see it as an integral part of wise management of Protected Areas, providing relaxation and education opportunities to visitors and locals. The implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region now strengthens our Danube-wide view on tourism.

Currently there is no overview of Danube-related educational offers, so we will do an assessment tour in spring 2013. This will provide new ideas, cooperation opportunities and a gap analysis leading to more strategic product development. Connected to this, we will also elaborate common quality guidelines which will help all Protected Areas to improve their tourism offers.

Lessons learnt will be used directly in the concept development for a DANUBEPARKS visitor centre in Dömös, Hungary at the Danube Bend. Until its realisation, digital information corners will be established in one existing visitor centre of each Protected Area, to show

the Danube as one interrelated ecosystem and motivate people to visit more of these precious natural areas.

While we want people to visit the Protected Areas, we need to respect the sensitivity of our sites: We strive to show nature's richness and value without damaging it. The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and other partners are working on an assessment of carrying capacities, an important basis for visitor management in all Protected Areas.

Developing tourism opportunities for people with disabilities was also chosen as an innovative pilot project for nature tourism activities. Duna-Dráva National Park will compile examples of good practices, and a new offer will be developed and tested jointly, with all partners and associations for people with disabilities, in the Danube Riparian Forest Neuburg-Ingolstadt.

By establishing new links with tourist service providers and cooperating with tourism networks like the Danube Competence Centre, DANUBEPARKS will further promote sustainable tourism and environmental education along the Danube River.



## ONE VISITOR CENTRE FOR THE WHOLE DANUBEPARKS NETWORK

Pál Kézdy,  
Head of the Project  
Management  
Department  
in Duna-Ipoly  
National Park



**Danube Inside:** Pál, you are the driver behind the future DANUBEPARKS visitor centre, and Duna-Ipoly National Park has been pursuing this vision for many years. What will be so special?

**Pál:** First of all, there is no visitor centre for the Network on the international level so far. The area chosen, the so-called Danube Bend, is an excellent place for showcasing our joint values. It is a great challenge to demonstrate that the natural diversity of the Danube is at least as rich as the diversity of cultures, people, languages and local stories. The area surrounding the future visitor centre in Dömös provides a taste of the historical and natural values of the river: Ancient hermitages can be found on Szent-Mihály Hill, next to them Peregrine Falcons nest and above the Danube the White-tailed Eagle flies.

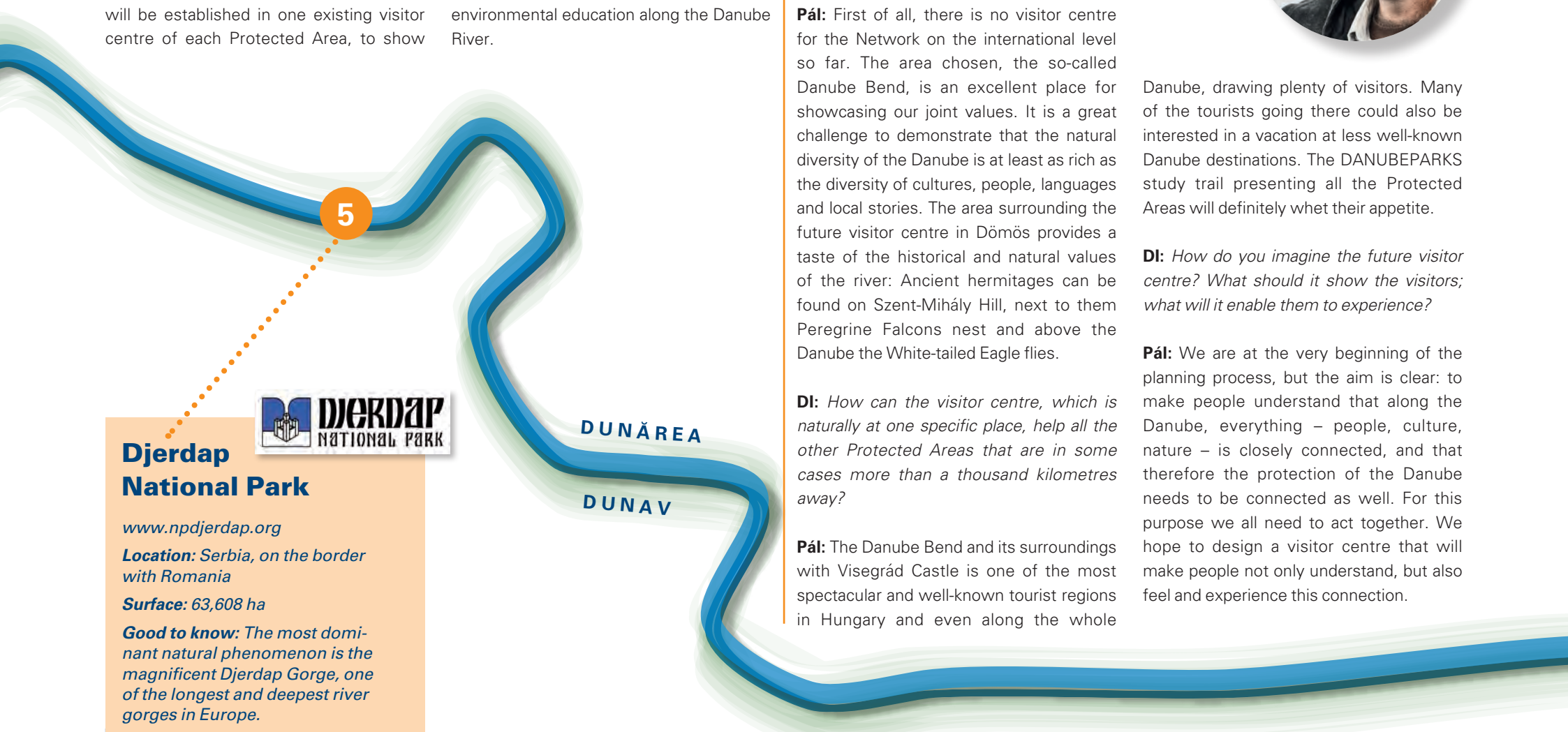
**DI:** How can the visitor centre, which is naturally at one specific place, help all the other Protected Areas that are in some cases more than a thousand kilometres away?

**Pál:** The Danube Bend and its surroundings with Visegrád Castle is one of the most spectacular and well-known tourist regions in Hungary and even along the whole

Danube, drawing plenty of visitors. Many of the tourists going there could also be interested in a vacation at less well-known Danube destinations. The DANUBEPARKS study trail presenting all the Protected Areas will definitely whet their appetite.

**DI:** How do you imagine the future visitor centre? What should it show the visitors; what will it enable them to experience?

**Pál:** We are at the very beginning of the planning process, but the aim is clear: to make people understand that along the Danube, everything – people, culture, nature – is closely connected, and that therefore the protection of the Danube needs to be connected as well. For this purpose we all need to act together. We hope to design a visitor centre that will make people not only understand, but also feel and experience this connection.



### Djerdap National Park

[www.npdjerdap.org](http://www.npdjerdap.org)

**Location:** Serbia, on the border with Romania

**Surface:** 63,608 ha

**Good to know:** The most dominant natural phenomenon is the magnificent Djerdap Gorge, one of the longest and deepest river gorges in Europe.



## PLAN YOUR NATURE VACATION ALONG THE DANUBE

Activities in the first DANUBEPARKS project established many tools to ease vacation planning for people interested in nature along the Danube River. The two main tools for this are: The online tourism platform with information on excursions, visitor centres and other offers from the Protected Areas:

<http://www.danubeparks.org/?story=8>

The online maps of the Danube River and its surroundings:

<http://www.danubemap.eu/park/en>

We are looking forward to welcoming you in our parks!





# WHITE-TAILED EAGLE: BUILDING ON SUCCESS

**Danube Inside:** Tibor, you are leading the conservation activities for White-tailed Eagle in the project. What makes this large bird of prey so important for Danube-wide nature conservation issues?



**Tibor Parrag,**  
Head of Department of Nature Protection  
in Duna-Dráva National Park

**Tibor:** The White-tailed Eagle is a magnificent raptor, and as a top predator of aquatic ecosystems it is of special conservation concern. Threats to this slow-reproducing species are manifold, including habitat destruction, disturbance or persecution. Furthermore, it has been proven to be a sensitive indicator of biocides and pollutants – so it helps us to understand ecosystems better. Finally, due to its large home ranges it cannot be preserved by single Protected Areas – so it is a symbol of the need for transnational cooperation.

**DI:** What is the role of Protected Areas for the conservation of flagship species?

**Tibor:** Danube Protected Areas play a key role for the conservation of biodiversity, especially of characteristic species of large-scale habitat complexes. A large number of White-tailed Eagles breed in the Danube Protected Areas – so we have a big responsibility for them. Through the joint elaboration of the “Action Plan for the Conservation of the White-tailed Eagle along the Danube” DANUBEPARKS has also expressed its willingness to take over a leading role in future conservation activities.

**DI:** This Action Plan, developed in the early years of DANUBEPARKS cooperation, was adopted by the Council of Europe/ Bern Convention. What can you do as a follow-up?

**Tibor:** The Action Plan was an important first step. Its goal is to secure a viable population of this largest raptor in our region by international cooperation and local actions. The daily management of Protected Areas, habitat management and wetland restoration already contribute significantly to the conservation of the White-tailed Eagle. Close cooperation with various stakeholders is needed to ensure efficient conservation, such as the forestry sector for the conservation of nesting sites and hunting associations to avoid lead poisoning. Monitoring data can deliver crucial background information

as a basis for future conservation. In DANUBEPARKS STEP 2.0, the Protected Areas will establish a harmonised Danube-wide winter census, including involvement of the public. This is an example of how Protected Areas can act as multipliers to bring interested people closer to nature.

## HELP US PROTECT THE WHITE-TAILED EAGLE!

Have you seen a White-tailed Eagle during a walk along or close to the Danube River? This is valuable information for nature protection – please let us know about it! At [www.danubeparks.org](http://www.danubeparks.org) you can register and then continuously input your observations – this will help find the best protection measures in the future!

If you would like to participate in scientific monitoring together with the experts, follow our announcements on [www.danubeparks.org](http://www.danubeparks.org) and subscribe to our newsletter. A Danube-wide public winter census of White-tailed Eagle will be organised in January 2014 – your best chance to get involved!



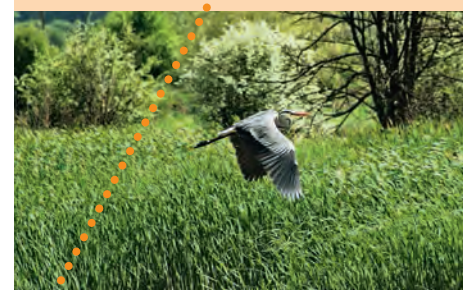
### Kalimok-Brushlen Protected Site

<http://kalimok.eu>

**Location:** North-eastern Bulgaria, 40 km downstream from Ruse

**Surface:** 6,000 ha

**Good to know:** The revitalisation of these marshes could act as a good example for more wetland restoration at the Lower Danube in the future.



ДУНАВ

### Rusenski Lom Nature Park

[www.lomea.org](http://www.lomea.org)

**Location:** Bulgaria, next to Ruse

**Surface:** 3,408 ha

**Good to know:** Gorge built by the Rusenski Lom River, hosting ancient cave monasteries. The administration also manages the Kalimok-Brushlen Protected Site, valuable marshlands along the Danube.



### Persina Nature Park

[www.persina.bg](http://www.persina.bg)

**Location:** Bulgaria, about 80 km upstream from Ruse

**Surface:** 22,000 ha

**Good to know:** With Belene Island, the largest Danube Island in Bulgaria, this nature park represents the lowland river section with its broad riverbed, numerous islands and sand banks and dynamic morphology.





1 Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve 2 Kalimok-Brushlen Protected Site 3 Rusenski Lom Nature Park 4 Persina Nature Park 5 Djerdap National Park 6 Lonjsko Polje Nature Park  
7 Kopački rit Nature Park 8 Gornje Podunavlje Special Nature Reserve 9 Duna-Dráva National Park 10 Duna-Ipoly National Park 11 Fertő-Hátság National Park  
12 Dunajské Luhy Protected Landscape Area 13 Záhorie Protected Landscape Area 14 Donau-Auen National Park 15 Donauauwald Neuburg-Ingolstadt



# ANCHORING THE DANUBE PARKS NETWORK



Georg Frank,  
Project Manager  
of DANUBE PARKS

**Danube Inside:** Georg, the Danube River Network of Protected Areas was established in 2009. Which goals have you reached so far, and what is still missing?

**Georg:** We definitely did a good job developing a strong and enriching partnership and a platform for intense experience exchange between the Protected Areas in the Danube countries. In addition, thanks to the enthusiasm of all colleagues, we created a lively Network resulting in visible and concrete positive results for the nature we are working for. We reached initial results towards the development of a strong joint voice on a strategic and political level, but much more work has to be done to strengthen our common position.

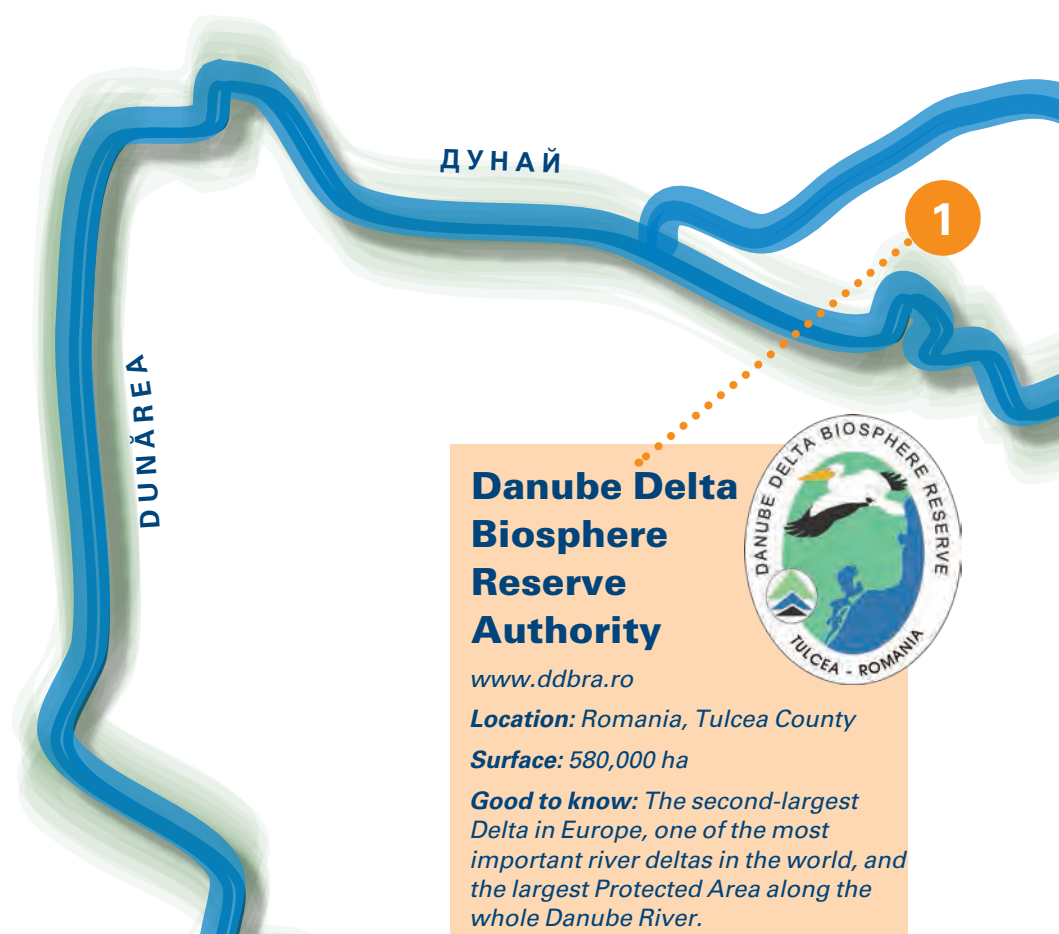
**DI:** How do you want to sharpen the strategic role and position of the DANUBE PARKS Network?

**Georg:** First, the DANUBE PARKS Network is a long-term initiative. A few years of networking on the Danube-wide scale is a short time, and more years of growing together are needed to develop this strong voice. Therefore, the funding of DANUBE PARKS STEP 2.0 by the ETC-SEE Programme is crucial and supports not only the implementation of river restoration projects or actions for the conservation of flagship species, but the strategic development of the partnership

in particular. This includes training to raise the skills of project managers, strategic partnerships such as with the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) or the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, sharing experiences with existing networks like the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (ALPARKS), not to mention the strategic enlargement of the DANUBE PARKS Network: Additional Protected Areas along the Danube and its tributaries could contribute to make DANUBE PARKS even more effective.

**DI:** What do you expect for DANUBE PARKS in the future?

**Georg:** Today, we see the clear intention on the political level, for example by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, to strengthen the Danube as an inspiring lifeline for the South-East Europe macro-region. This initiative has to include intact nature, rich biodiversity and the inspiration to connect society and the region's natural treasures. Danube Protected Areas can play an important role as multipliers by linking this policy with the local population and visitors of Protected Areas. Consequently, I see an increasing role for the Danube Protected Areas and a clear mission of the DANUBE PARKS Network to strengthen the voice for nature conservation on a Danube-wide scale.



**Danube Delta  
Biosphere  
Reserve  
Authority**

[www.ddbra.ro](http://www.ddbra.ro)

**Location:** Romania, Tulcea County

**Surface:** 580,000 ha

**Good to know:** The second-largest Delta in Europe, one of the most important river deltas in the world, and the largest Protected Area along the whole Danube River.



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**Website & newsletter subscription:**

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