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1st Danube-wide White-tailed Eagle Winter Census

For the first time, coherent data about wintering White-tailed Eagle along the Danube are available. The DANUBE PARKS Network coordinated this transnational winter count on January 12th in 9 Danube countries.



300 counters, field workers and eagle experts ranged the Danube River and its floodplain forests synchronically and had to bear cold and wind. Based on the experiences of national winter counts implemented by numerous NGOs ([BirdLife](#), [WWF](#) and many more) already in the past years, now for the very first time a comprehensive picture stresses the high relevance of the Danube River as wintering site for White-tailed Eagle in South-East Europe: 750 individuals were recorded!



This winter census underlines the need for transnational co-operation in the Danube region and the outstanding role of protected areas: the trilateral cross-border area in Croatia ([Nature Park Kopacki rit](#)), Hungary ([Duna-Drava National Park](#)) and Serbia ([Gornje podunavlje Special Nature Reserve](#)) hosts approximately 200 Eagles - all soon to be protected in a multilateral UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.



Other hotspots are the Danube Delta (150 Eagles), the Lower Danube in Romania and Bulgaria (210 individuals) as well as the border region shared by Austria, Slovakia and Hungary with approximately 100 Eagles. After more detailed scientific analyses the results will be available on the [White-tailed Eagle database](#); for more details [visit the DANUBE PARKS website](#).



Flagship species, such as the White-tailed Eagle, have high demands to their habitat. If the landscape structure, the prey, or the calmness around nesting areas isn't right, they won't survive and reproduce. By orientating our protection actions along the requirements of flagship species, we can protect habitats for numerous other species as well. At the same time, they support awareness-raising actions with their fascinating appearance. In the frame of this winter census, public events found great response by the public and the press.



This coordinated Danube-wide winter census is to be seen as a contribution to the implementation of the "[Action Plan for the Conservation of the White-tailed Eagle along the Danube](#)". Many more steps have to follow in the future to conserve this species as a symbol for a diverse nature along the Danube.

Updates from Project Activities

Public interest in river dynamics



The monitoring of indicator species for river dynamics – Little-ringed Plover and Sand Martin – was finished in July, but public events took place only in August and September: The time when the ICPDR Joint Danube Survey, to which our results contribute, goes on. A special three-day wilderness excursion from Vienna to Bratislava, a festival and a specialized excursion in Hungary, and an [action with a children's club](#) in Bulgaria gave many people the chance to experience from close what river wilderness means.

New partners at the Lower Prut



End of August, the last DANUBEPARKS [Steering Committee Meeting](#) was held in combination with the International Danube Festival in Tulcea (Romania). The Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Park (RO) and the Lower Prut Nature Reserve (MD), with whom we had cooperated already before, presented themselves and were officially welcomed as new network partners.

The festival afterwards, which was held jointly with the RowMania Fest, gave chance to celebrate this new success: Culinary, information stands, traditional and contemporary music, a joint participation in the rowing competition – it was all there!

Can we define quality?



This continuous question was finalized on beginning of October at a DANUBEPARKS expert meeting on nature tourism in Lonjsko Polje Nature Park (HR): We can't give you a word-by-word definition, but at least we defined some basic criteria that nature educational offers in Protected Areas should follow. These guiding principles build up on the experiences collected within the [Assessment Tour](#) on Environmental Education Offers: in May and June 2013 an expert team visited over 40 programmes and infrastructures related to environmental education along the Danube River. [The final report is now available!](#)

Solving conflicts, identifying synergies – navigation and nature



Representatives from waterway management authorities (NEWADA Network) and Protected Areas (DANUBEPARKS Network) [met in October in Hainburg](#) (Austria). The discussions focused on solutions for potential conflicts, e.g. in the areas of dredging or river training structures. The WildIsland Initiative – the idea to protect "wild" dynamic islands along the whole Danube River in a joint effort of both sectors – was discussed intensively with the agreement to go on with more detailed planning and with further joint steps into its realization. Additional ideas for cooperation projects were developed and will be in the focus at a follow up meeting in Vienna in spring 2014.

Journey along the Danube: Djerdap National Park (Serbia)



Djerdap National Park protects one of the most scenic valleys along the Danube River, together with its Romanian counterpart on the other shore, the Iron Gates Natural Park. Here, the river breaks its way through the Carpathian Mountains. Despite serious degradation of the natural characteristics due to the Djerdap I hydropower plant, fauna and flora still represents this fascinating mixture between river and mountain habitats. For example, the rare European lynx can be found here. Recently published books report records of over 270 bird species in Djerdap National Park as well as its great international significance for the protection of bats, over 19 species – most of them highly threatened – were recorded.



For visitors, the information centre of the National Park in Donji Milanovac is the first point of contact. Hiking tours in the mountains or a cycling tour along the gorge should definitely form part of your stay in the area. Not to be missed is also a stop at the partly sunken Golubac fortress, and the Lepinski vir archaeological excavation site with brand-new information center!

<http://www.npdjerdap.org/en>

Upcoming Events

International Conference on Floodplain Forests: Novi Sad, April 24-25

Protected Area and Forestry experts will come together to review results from the Black Poplar Mapping and Analysis done by DANUBEPARKS. Agreements on the future nature-oriented management of floodplain forests should be found.

International Danube Festival: Backi Monostory, August 8-9

In summer, DANUBEPARKS joins the Bodrog Festival in Vojvodina/Serbia. At the well-visited Festival, we present our areas, provide children's programmes, and inform about excursions for visitors.

Imprint

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