

# THE DANUBE PARKS ASSOCIATION

## A SHARED COMMITMENT TO DANUBE CONSERVATION



# DANUBE PARKS

### DANUBE PARKS – The Danube River Network of Protected Areas

The DANUBE PARKS Association is the platform for coordinated and extensive collaboration among the various administrations of the Danube Protected Areas. Building on existing transnational cooperation and successful Danube-wide joint initiatives over the last years, the Danube Protected Areas have developed a strong and enriching partnership. The non-profit DANUBE PARKS Association was founded in 2014. As a clear signal of our long-term and shared commitment to the Danube's natural heritage, the founding of the DANUBE PARKS Association will enable us to intensify our joint conservation efforts.



#### A new association dedicated to a shared natural heritage

The Danube River Network of Protected Areas brings together 17 national and nature parks, biosphere and nature reserves from nearly all the Danube countries, including Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, and Germany. The DANUBE PARKS secretariat serves as a hub for coordination, communication and representation, advocating tirelessly for nature conservation along the Danube. The aim of transnational cooperation is to increase both the number and effectiveness of individual Danube Protected Area projects and programmes.



### The DANUBE PARKS mission

The mission of the DANUBE PARKS Association is to preserve, develop and restore the Danube River, its main tributaries, and surrounding wetlands. As a

cohesive ecosystem, it should be an inspiring lifeline for all the inhabitants of this new European macro-region.

#### DANUBE PARKS works to:

- ensure the integrity of the ecosystem
- develop the Danube River as an eco-corridor
- support sustainable management of natural resources
- improve Protected Area management practices
- raise awareness for the importance of Danube River conservation among the general public and decision makers.

#### DANUBE PARKS – working on behalf of the Danube's natural heritage by:

- providing networking opportunities for experience exchange among Protected Area managers

- offering capacity-development activities/ plans for Protected Area managers
- creating joint strategic documents, action plans and position papers
- coordinating Danube-wide joint initiatives among all member organisations (e.g. species and habitat protection, habitat restoration, monitoring and research, awareness raising and education, regional development and nature tourism)
- implementing specific model and pilot projects
- helping raise awareness of nature conservation among the general public
- improving cooperation with other sector stakeholders along the Danube (e.g. waterway management, forestry, tourism)
- promoting DANUBE PARKS positions among policymakers on all levels, from local to European/EU-wide.

### DANUBE PARKS – nature's havens along the Danube

The Danube River is home to priceless natural treasures. The Danube Protected Areas preserve the most impressive and valuable sites. Thanks to their extensive experience in the management of habitats and species, the Danube Protected Areas administrations play a key role in the sustainable development of the region. Our areas are a source of inspiration and a place of recreation for millions of people, and our visitor centres and nature tours are ideal for learning more about our precious natural heritage.



#### Working together for a common future

The Danube is the world's most international river. Because nature doesn't recognize political boundaries, cross-border and transnational cooperation is essential for nature conservation.

The main task of the members within the DANUBE PARKS Network is to coordinate joint projects and take on challenges on a Danube-wide scale.

Thanks in part to important Danube-wide projects funded by the ETC-SEE programme and successfully implemented between 2009 and 2014, DANUBE PARKS has become a widely recognized nature conservation network.



### DANUBE PARKS – Active for the Danube River

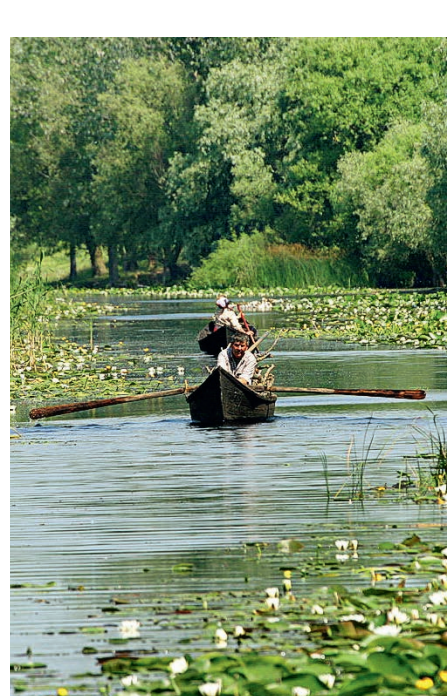
- Over 150 pilot programmes have been implemented to date.**
- Conservation programmes for Danube flagship species like the White-tailed Eagle have been realized.
  - Actions on behalf of the "giants of the Danube," the Black Poplar, have helped improve the overall conservation status of Danube wetlands forests.
  - Danube-wide monitoring programmes for indicator species of river dynamics have increased our understanding and serve as the foundation for river restoration projects.
  - Festivals and public awareness campaigns have created a positive public perception of the work carried out by the Danube Protected Areas.

DANUBE PARKS' cross-sector approach has enabled us to qualify as a flagship project for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Our outstanding achievements on behalf of Danube nature conservation have been recognized in form of a nomination for the 2014 IRF European Riverprize and winning the 2015 Natura 2000 Award.



### The Danube habitat corridor – a DANUBE PARKS priority

Due to human intervention, the natural Danube ecosystem has become fragmented and reduced to isolated patches, cutting off many species from their natural range, seriously threatening the functionality of riverine habitats and lowering the overall ecological capacity of the Danube Protected Areas. For this reason, restoration of habitat connectivity is regarded as essential to counteract this development.



### DANUBE PARKS – working to preserve the Danube River as Europe's green lifeline

#### The DANUBE PARKS working programme defines the following activities as high priority:

- Elaboration of strategic concepts and partnerships to further develop the Danube habitat corridor
- Realization of best practice management and restoration of key habitats within the Danube eco-corridor
- Cross-sector cooperation to establish a "green infrastructure"
- Implementation of conservation programmes for Danube flagship species as an illustration of the urgent need for habitat connectivity
- Generation of awareness and support among stakeholders and the public for the importance of the Danube River as an eco-corridor in Europe

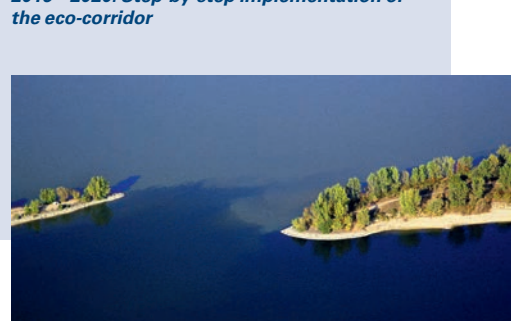
#### DANUBE PARKS roadmap: towards a Danube habitat corridor

**2009 – 2012: DANUBE PARKS established as Danube-wide network**

**2012 – 2014: Transnational cooperation and pilot activities enhance coherence among the Danube Protected Areas**

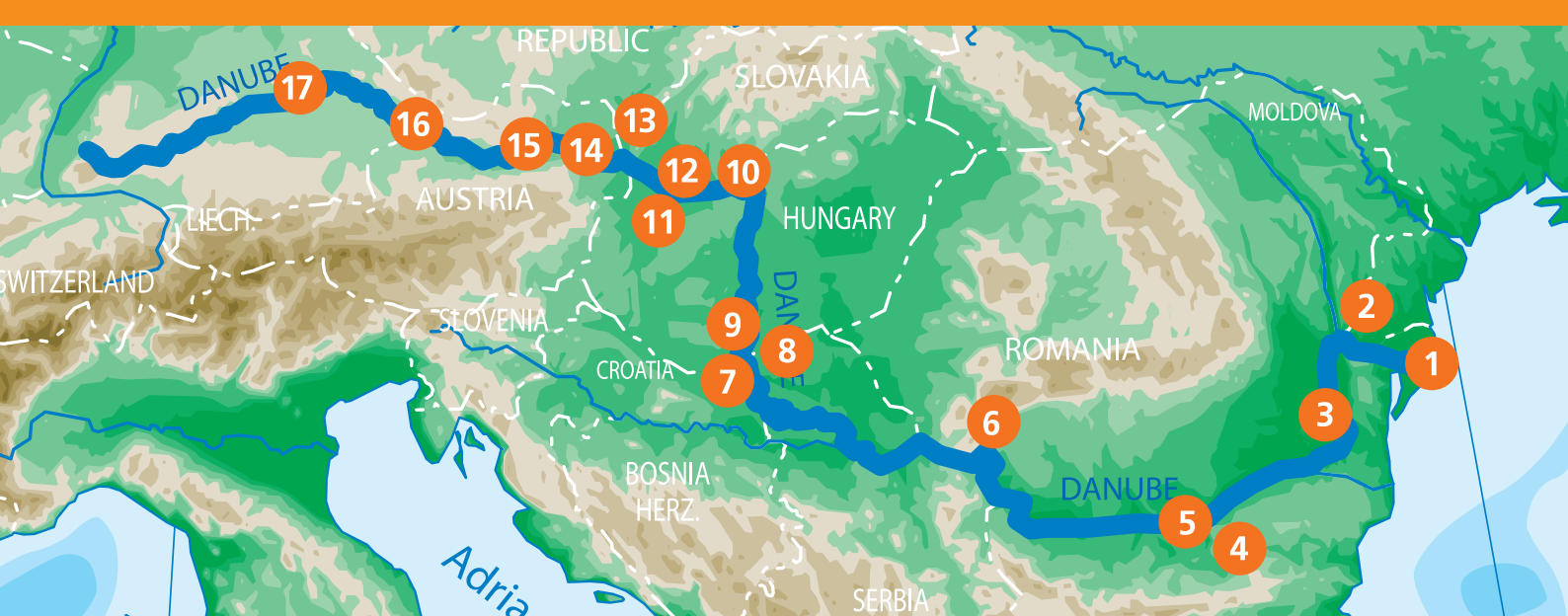
**2015 – 2016: Danube-wide concepts and strategic partnerships to further develop the Danube habitat corridor**

**2016 – 2020: Step-by-step implementation of the eco-corridor**



**DANUBE PARKS –**  
Winner of the 2015  
Natura 2000 Award





1

**Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve**  
Romania

**Nature's Haven**  
**Area:** 580,000 hectares    **Established:** 1990  
A majestic show of nature, known as a paradise of birds and wildlife, the Danube Delta is the greatest natural protected area on the European continent and the only delta in the world declared entirely as biosphere reserve, acquiring many international recognitions (UNESCO Man and Biosphere, Ramsar Site, UNESCO World Heritage, NATURA 2000).  
**Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority**  
[www.ddbra.ro](http://www.ddbra.ro)



2

**Lower Prut Nature Reserve**  
Moldova

**Moldova's small delta**  
**Area:** 1,755 hectares    **Established:** 1991  
One of the natural wonders of the Republic of Moldova, the Lower Prut Nature Reserve is a true paradise for diverse bird, fish and plant species, protecting the area surrounding Lake Beleu and the Prut River.  
**State Agency for Forestry "Moldsilva"**  
[www.moldsilva.gov.md](http://www.moldsilva.gov.md)



3

**Small Wetlands of Braila**  
Romania

**Wild & unique islands**  
**Area:** 24,123 hectares    **Established:** 1994  
Just before the final bend of the Danube towards the east, the river branches out into several arms which embrace the expansive and wild Braila Islands. Like all Danube Protected Areas, this habitat complex is part of the European Natura 2000 Network and thus one of the core areas forming the Danube habitat corridor.  
**RNP Romsilva Small Wetland of Braila Natural Park Administration R.A.,** [www.bmb.ro](http://www.bmb.ro)



4

**Rusenski Lom Nature Park**  
Bulgaria

**Spectacular rock monasteries**  
**Area:** 3,400 hectares    **Established:** 1980  
Located on the tributary Rusenski Lom in northeast Bulgaria, the Rusenski Lom Nature Park protects a winding, scenic canyon that is home to many cliff-breeding birds and bats. Its wild beauty is enhanced by spectacular rock formations as well as the ruins of ancient castles and settlements.  
**Nature Park Rusenski Lom Directorate**  
[www.lomea.org](http://www.lomea.org)



5

**Persina Nature Park**  
Bulgaria

**Life on an island**  
**Area:** 21,762 hectares    **Established:** 2000  
One of the youngest nature parks in Bulgaria, the unique Persina Nature Park encompasses numerous islands in their natural state and is home to over 200 different bird species. The island complex was proclaimed a Ramsar Site in 2002.  
**Persina Nature Park Directorate**  
[www.persina.bg](http://www.persina.bg)



6

**Iron Gates Natural Park**  
Romania

**Where the Danube meets the Carpathians**  
**Area:** 128,000 hectares    **Established:** 2000  
The Iron Gates Natural Park is located at the spot where several major Carpathian and Danube regions meet, thus forming a spectacular landscape rich in biodiversity. This Protected Area is a vital link for habitat corridors in South East Europe.  
**Iron Gate Natural Park Administration**  
[www.pnportiledefier.ro](http://www.pnportiledefier.ro)



7

**Kopački rit Nature Park**  
Croatia

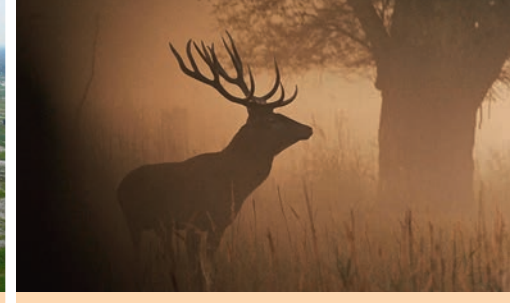
**Journey to the heart of the Danube**  
**Area:** 23,891 hectares    **Established:** 1996  
Located where the Danube meets the Drava, the Kopački rit Nature Park is one of the most impressive wetlands in the whole of Europe. The area is the most important spawning grounds for fish in the Central European part of the Danube River.  
**Public Institution Nature Park Kopački rit**  
[www.pp-kopacki-rit.hr](http://www.pp-kopacki-rit.hr)



8

**Gornje Podunavlje Nature Reserve**  
Serbia

**Model for cross-border cooperation**  
**Area:** 19,605 hectares    **Established:** 2001  
Gornje Podunavlje is the largest wetlands area in Serbia. Together with Kopački rit in Croatia and the Danube- Dráva National Park in Hungary, this reserve forms the 70,000-hectare Central Danube Floodplain Area, a core transnational biosphere reserve.  
**Public Enterprise "Vojvodinašume"**  
[www.vojvodinasume.rs](http://www.vojvodinasume.rs)



9

**Duna-Dráva National Park**  
Hungary

**High banks, wildcats and oxbow lakes**  
**Area:** 50,000 hectares    **Established:** 1996  
The Duna-Dráva National Park stretches across vast wetlands at the confluence of the Danube and the Dráva. Together with Kopački rit Nature Park and Gornje Podunavlje Nature Reserve, it hosts the most important population of the White-tailed Eagle in South East Europe.  
**Duna-Drava National Park Directorate**  
[www.ddnp.nemzetipark.gov.hu](http://www.ddnp.nemzetipark.gov.hu)



10

**Duna-Ipoly National Park**  
Hungary

**Into the caves of the Danube**  
**Area:** 60,314 hectares    **Established:** 1997  
Situating between the Danube and the Ipoly Rivers, this park unites the Pilis-Visegrád Hills, Börzsöny, Ipoly Valley and the Danubian part of the Great Plain. Its principal mission is to preserve the natural heritage of its highland forests and river habitats – but also the 334 caves found in its characteristic rock formations.  
**Duna-Ipoly National Park Directorate**  
[www.dunaipoly.hu](http://www.dunaipoly.hu)



11

**Szigetköz Landscape Protection Area, Fertő-Hanság National Park**  
Hungary

**A water maze of islands**  
**Area:** 9,175 hectares    **Established:** 1987  
The Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate manages protected areas from the slopes of the Bakony to the Sopron Mountains, from the Danube to the meadows and oak forests in the Rábaköz region. The Szigetköz Landscape Protection Area covers about 500 small islands and hundreds of shallows, islets and inner lakes.  
**Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate**  
[www.ferto-hansag.hu](http://www.ferto-hansag.hu)



12

**Dunajské Luhý Protected Landscape Area**  
Slovakia

**A complex inland river delta**  
**Area:** 12,284 hectares    **Established:** 1998  
The Dunajské Luhý Protected Landscape Area is one of the largest inland river deltas in Europe. The complex system of natural levees, depressions and the accumulation of a dense network of river branches is its most significant characteristic.  
**BROZ - Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development**  
[www.broz.sk](http://www.broz.sk)



13

**Záhorie Protected Landscape Area**  
Slovakia

**Wind, sand & water**  
**Area:** 27,522 hectares    **Established:** 1998  
The Záhorie Protected Landscape Area is the first lowland landscape area in Slovakia to have been proclaimed protected. Well preserved thanks to its function as a border between Western Europe and the former Eastern bloc for 40 years, the north-eastern part of the area is influenced by wind processes associated with the transfer of sand.  
**State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic**  
[www.sopsr.sk](http://www.sopsr.sk)



14

**Donau-Auen National Park**  
Austria

**Free-flowing and ever-changing Danube**  
**Area:** 9,300 hectares    **Established:** 1996  
The forests, meadows, marshes and bodies of water along the Danube River between Vienna and Bratislava form one of the largest remaining wetlands in Central Europe. Here, the Danube is still free flowing and forms the lifeline of the park.  
**Donau-Auen National Park**  
[www.donauauen.at](http://www.donauauen.at)



15

**Wachau Protected Landscape Area**  
Austria

**World's Heritage**  
**Area:** 21,329 hectares    **Established:** 1955  
The Wachau region is famous for its picturesque landscapes, excellent wines and flowering apricot trees. In one of the last free-flowing Danube sections on the Upper Danube, conservation actions are focused on river dynamics and restoration. The Wachau has become part of UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2000.  
**Wachau Dunkelsteinerwald Regionalentwicklung**  
[www.arbeitskreis-wachau.at](http://www.arbeitskreis-wachau.at)



16

**Narrow Valley of the Danube near Passau**  
Germany

**Natural gem at the heart of Europe**  
**Area:** 1,776 hectares    **Established:** 1986 and 1996  
The Narrow Valley of the Danube in the Passau district protects and manages river habitats and islands together with the slope forest and dry meadows along the Danube. Impressive views are to be had as the river breaks through this gorgeous valley.  
**Landkreis Passau**  
[www.landkreis-passau.de](http://www.landkreis-passau.de)



17

**Donauauwald Neuburg-Ingolstadt**  
Germany

**Orchids & a royal legacy**  
**Area:** 2,927 hectares    **Established:** 2005  
The former hunting grounds of the Dukes of Bavaria, the Donauauwald Neuburg-Ingolstadt area now protects one of the largest riparian hardwood forests along the German Danube. An ambitious restoration project has reintroduced natural river dynamics to the wetland forests.  
**ARGE Donau-Auwald Neuburg-Ingolstadt**  
[www.donauauen.de](http://www.donauauen.de)



**Imprint**  
**DANUBEPARKS Association**  
c/o Schloss Orth, 2304 Orth an der Donau, Austria  
Phone: +43/2212/3450-28, Fax: +43/2212/3450-17  
[g.frank@danubeparks.org](mailto:g.frank@danubeparks.org)  
[www.danubeparks.org](http://www.danubeparks.org)  
**Text:** Georg Frank  
**Photos:** Baumgartner, BROZ, DANUBEPARKS, Domazetović, Duna-Ipoly National Park, Đerdap National Park, Fehrer, Fűzfá, Hoyer, Kalotás, Kern, Kopački rit Nature Park, Kovacs, Kudich-Zsirmon, Kracher, Mititelu, Persina Nature Park, Petrescu, Rusenski lom Nature Park, Valachovic, Wagner  
**Layout:** Michael Kalb, [www.michaelkalb.at](http://www.michaelkalb.at)  
**Translation and Editing:** Kimberly Weinrich  
[office@weinrichworld.com](mailto:office@weinrichworld.com)  
**Printing:** Druckerei Janetschek  
Print run of 2,000. © June 2015. Produced using environmentally-friendly technologies and materials. Errors and omissions excepted.

