

Life along the Sava

March 2008

No. 1

In this issue:

Financially supported by

Core topic: Ecological Networks

Sch

In focus: Lonjsko Polje Nature Park

Interview with... Slobodan Puzovi

News & Events: ISRBC, SSHP, BED, Zasavica...



The first issue of a new magazine always brings with it dual excitement. Firstly, it brings the satisfaction of providing new reading material to the public (in this case, a specialized and thematic edition intended for a certain geographical region). The second reason is the simple anticipation of whether the new issue will be positively welcomed by the public, whether it will succeed in satisfying the diverse needs of its readers, and whether it will be successful in achieving its mission. In your hands you hold the first edition of the bulletin *Life along the Sava*. The bulletin was conceived with the idea of covering a broad range of topics related to the conservation of the natural and cultural values of the Sava River floodplain. This bulletin is not only intended for experts on the Sava River, but also for all those interested in the wise management of wetland habitats that are so typical of the Sava River floodplain. This first edition is dedicated to the formation of the ecological networks, which represent a significant contribution to the modern comprehension of space and the relations between humans and nature. This topic is imperative for the conservation of all the diversity associated with the Sava River. Of course, the bulletin also offers a

series of other articles directly and indirectly related to the conservation of the values of *Life along the Sava*.

This bulletin was made possible within the framework of the project entitled *Protection of Biodiversity of the Sava River Basin Floodplains*, and supported by the LIFE III financial instruments and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The overall objective of the project is to protect and preserve the unique areas and the diversity of flora and fauna along the Sava River, in line with the criteria of the

from industrial activities around a protected area can have serious effects on species within. Buffer zones allow a smoother transition between core areas and surrounding land use. The size and utilisation of buffer zones depends heavily on the particular needs of the specific ecosystem and its local population.

4. Sustainable use areas: These are remaining areas that can come under more intensive land use. But they should still take full account of the successful provision of ecosystem goods and services.

The European ecological network represents the backbone of nature conservation in Europe, by connecting ecosystems and populations of threatened species in the all-encompassing habitat fragmentation. These connections allow species to move freely throughout the fragmented environment and facilitates the exchange of genetic material between populations or parts of the metapopulation, thereby creating the guidelines for the survival of threatened species and ecosystems. The Sava River represents an exceptionally significant ecological corridor and, as such, can be considered one of the backbones of the Pan-European ecological network.

In order to establish a functional ecological network in Europe, the following must first be achieved:

- better understanding of the fundamental natural processes, including the effects of climate change;

- better links and communication among all sectors having an impact on ecological connectivity, including transport, tourism, agriculture, water management, physical planning, etc;
- more intensive involvement of the private sector and financial institutions in investments in environmental protection;
- development of concrete programmes at the European, national and regional level, in order to allow for better ecological connection of habitats;
- sound management of core areas of ecological networks in Europe.

Perhaps the most comprehensive explanation of the principle of the ecological networks in Europe is contained within Article 10 of the Habitats Directive:

Member States shall endeavour, where they consider it necessary, in their land-use planning and development policies



Development of the Emerald Network in Serbia

The Emerald project is aimed at the establishment of ecological networks made up of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI), which are spatial entities and habitats of particular national and international importance for biodiversity conservation. This project was launched by the Council of Europe as part of activities stemming from application of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention). This Convention, adopted in 1979, was ratified by Serbia in November 2007.

The Emerald Network is based on the same principles as the Natura 2000 network, and is formally considered to be preparation for the implementation of the Habitats Directive. All new EU Member States, and all those yet to become Member States, are obliged to submit a list of proposed areas for the Natura 2000 ecological network and the accompanying database. Thus, the implementation of the Emerald Project consti-

tutes a direct contribution to the achievement of this goal.

All in all, a total of 61 areas, which are particularly important for the protection and conservation of flora, fauna and their habitats, have been selected for the Emerald Project and the envisaged ecological network in Serbia. The most important criteria to point out is that each area contains important habitats and species listed under the Bern Convention as those priority species and habitats for conservation at the European level. The majority of the selected areas have some form of protection status at the national level (50 areas have been proclaimed protected natural goods or are under protection revision). Some areas are of particular importance at the international level, i.e. MAB Biosphere Reserves (1 site), Ramsar Wetland Areas (6), Internationally Important Plant Areas (IPA; 33), Internationally Important Bird Areas (IBA; 33), Prime Butterfly Areas (PBA; 7). Several areas are in

the process of receiving protection, while others are currently the site of preliminary investigations. The data received here will form a sound foundation for their future protection at the national level.

Within the Sava River valley, two Emerald areas have been selected, the Obodska Bara and Zasavica Special Nature Reserves. Both reserves are included as IPA and IBA areas, while the Obodska Bara Special Nature Reserve was included in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance in 1977.

The project is coordinated by the Council of Europe, with the financial support of the European Environment Agency. Other countries participating in this project are Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia and Macedonia, each of which is aiming to establish its own ecological networks.

For more information, please visit

www.natureprotection.org.yu

or contact Nenad Sekulić at:

nenad-sekulic@natureprotection.org.yu

Code							



Lonjsko Polje

an example of preserving a floodplain area and the traditional way of life

The Lonjsko Polje Nature Park is situated on the left bank of the Sava River, in the middle reaches of the river's course. The park stretches over 506 km, from Sisak to Nova Gradiška, and represents a unique landscape and ecological system of flooded river areas, which are the result of the impacts of natural flooding cycles and human cultural activities.

The area was proclaimed a nature park in 1990 and was included on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance in 1993. The nature park was included on the list of internationally Important Bird Areas in 1989 and has also been proposed for inclusion in the NATURA 2000 ecological network.

Today, the Lonjsko Polje Nature Park is a preserved authentic area from the period

of the historical Military Border between the Hapsburg Monarchy and the Ot9.5 also been

1. As an expert who has long been involved in studying and conserving the biodiversity of the Sava River floodplain, particularly the area of Obedska bara, how do you assess the current state of the biodiversity in the lower courses of the Sava River and its level of protection, in terms of the efficiency of the existing protection models?

Despite the evident changes, Posavina is still one of the major centres of biodiversity in Serbia and in central Europe. This is the site of the largest floodplain area in the country (i.e. Obedska bara, 12,000 ha) and the largest complex of natural oak forests and ponds. This is also site of the Debela gora forest, which many experts believe to be a unique common oak forest in international terms. Bear in mind the Bosut forest complex of 20,000 ha in Gornji Srem, the unique areas of Zasavica, the confluence of the Drina River at Mača and the exceptional flora and fauna, we can get an overall idea of the value of Posavina in Serbia.

Unfortunately, adequate care is still not given to the natural values and potential of Posavina. Obedska bara is formally under management that does not support its protection, the Bosut forest is only of marginal interest, as is the sec-

tion of the Sava River from Mačanska Mitrovica to Šabac and from Progar to Ada Ciganlija. The unique mouth of the Drina River at the Sava, which represents a pearl of international importance due to its natural values and landscape properties, has been completely neglected. The same is true for the mouth of the Kolubara River. The only positive steps have been taken at Zasavica, thanks primarily to an adventurous manager who had a "vision" of conservation and development.

One of the key problems is the inadequate management of protected and other areas in the Sava River valley, in addition to the lack of funds

3. How do you assess the level of involvement of the local community in the protection of the natural and traditional cultural values of Posavina. What do you consider their role to be in that process?

There is an exceptional discord between the wants and needs and the true involvement of the local population in protection and managing the natural values of Posavina. For decades, the local population was completely marginalized, which only contributed to its inactivity and inability to envision the perspectives of the area. For many years, certain interest groups dominated, and the local population with their traditional customs could not speak out and satisfy their needs. Over time, they were completely forced out of the floodplain areas. The area lost a significant driving component, which was most felt through the impoverishment of biological and landscape diversity. Things began to change slowly, the local governments began to see the exceptional potential of Posavina, both in terms of ecology and the socioeconomic aspect. Now they are increasingly seeking their

the ever increasing trends of development with the conservation of nature and tradition of life in Posavina and why is this important?

Culture, tradition and land use in Posavina have very strong ties to the conservation of biodiversity and landscapes. In Posavina, man and nature have created recognizable landscapes. Man was once an important factor in the creating the complexity of the landscapes and the formation of its entities, only to later withdraw under the pressures of other interest groups. The age old acorn grazing by pigs in the forests of Srem, the grazing of cattle, mowing of meadows, shearing and construction in the traditional style have all since died out. The result was the impoverishment of the landscape diversity. Pastures became overgrown, as did the humid meadows and ponds, which led to the disappearance of numerous rare and threatened species,

place and role in the management of natural values. Further steps have been taken in the Zaslavica Special Nature Reserve.

4. What is the relationship between the traditional forms of land use, such as the cultivation of native agricultural crops and the like in preserving the values of the Sava River floodplain? How is it possible to harmonize

International Sava River



Brod Ecological Society

The Brod Ecological Society (BES) is a non-governmental organization from Slavonski Brod that was established in 1989. Its most evident results have been achieved in the protection of natural and biological diversity. Today, the Society

has 160 registered members and some 40

Development of Profit Sector in Province

ment...
trusted...
Beograd... the Development...
ube to the... Autonom...
and the Dan... b...
south and we... civil organiza...
ha. The island is...
lands – Great and L...
Great War Island... work,

ral fish spawning ground...
Danube III fishing area...
is situated on the border of...
regions, the Danube III and Sava...
fund is a direct reflection of the...
sheries in the waters of these two...
The interior aquatic areas on the island...
the former channels of Veliki and Mali Galijaš...
that previously had direct links to the river,
thereby allowing for fish spawning. Prior to
the start of works, the channels were filled in
and were overgrown with vegetation, with
little water to be seen.

In October 2007, the revitalization and
cleaning of the Veliki Galijaš channel was
completed. The silt was removed and the
channel restored to its original state. The
objective of the revitalization is to create
the conditions for natural spawning and
the preservation of the fish fund in the
channel during fluctuations in the water
levels on the Danube and Sava Rivers in
the characteristic time of year. There is no
better way to ensure an equally compre-
hensive and thorough stimulus to native
fish reproduction and conservation of the
native fish species.

For more information, please visit
www.zelenilo.co.yu or contact Snežana
Antonijević at: s.antonijevic@EUnet.yu

...have given their con
...all those interested
...and institutions that a
...our activities, research,
...importance for the protect
...national heritage and the su
...its floodplains. Articles sh
...s with spaces (about 250 wo
...illustrations (resolution 150
...contributions to the following addre

...n Bosnian)
...les in Croatian)
...com (articles in Serbian/BiH)
...rotection.org.yu (articles in Serbian
...les in Slovenian and other language