



WWF

FACTSHEET

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RIBNJAK PODUNAVLJE © JOZEF MIKUŠKA

# Wetland restoration in the Mura-Drava-Danube area

## Ecoregion

Danube-Carpathians

## Priority Place

Greater Black Sea Basin

**Area** Confluence of the Danube and Drava rivers

## Countries

Croatia and Serbia

**From January 2011 WWF is implementing a two-pillar project “Wetland restoration in the Mura-Drava-Danube area“ that will undertake practical wetland restoration in the Drava-Danube confluence area. Restoration will take place in two places: in the Štrbac area of Gornje Podunavlje Special Nature Reserve (Serbia) and in the Podunavlje fishponds in Kopački Rit Nature Park (Croatia). The project duration is two years and the aim is to support and enable successful preservation of natural values in the project areas.**

## Project objectives

Looking to the future, the project will help support the implementation of EU environmental legislation: Birds Directive, Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive, EU Biodiversity Strategy and EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

The Danube has lost 80 percent of its former floodplains, and with them the most biologically productive areas and essential ecosystem services, from flood protection to water purification. This project will contribute to WWF goal to be achieved by 2020: 1.5 million ha of floodplains on 1,500 km of free-flowing river sections are protected and connected to the river system in order to sustain biodiversity, build resilience and provide ecosystem goods and services for people.

The project aim is to restore floodplains in Serbia (Štrbac) and Croatia (Podunavlje fishponds) to provide vital habitat for the Danube’s rich flora and fauna.

Practical wetland restoration of both sites will demonstrate the benefits of integrated water management and sustainable use of water resources and provide inspiration for similar projects across the region. This project primary contribution will be that wetlands in Kopački rit and Štrbac will be restored to support biodiversity and generate ecosystem services to local communities.

This project will restore the natural wetlands in protected areas in Serbia and Croatia, halt the loss of biodiversity, as well as enhance opportunities for eco-friendly tourism and recreation.

## Restoration in Serbia

In SNR Gornje Podunavlje the area to be restored consists of wet meadows and shallow ponds that have been overgrown by shrubby and wooden vegetation. This has led to the decline of pristine natural habitats of the Štrbac area which has negative impact on biodiversity. Restoration of Štrbac aims to promote the reestablishment of mosaic natural habitats (wet meadows and shallow ponds), improve the conservation status of species through habitat restoration and improve the possibilities for local sustainable ecotourism, paticularly birdwatching.

## Restoration in Croatia

The restoration in NP Kopački Rit will take place at the Podunavlje fishponds near the village of Kopačevo in the Baranja region. The fishponds have been abandoned; the earlier extensive fish production has been halted, thereby decreasing wetland functions and values. This has negatively impacted biodiversity since the area served as a feeding, resting and breeding site for rare and threatened species.

## Natural values

Both protected areas, SNR Gornje Podunavlje and NP Kopački rit are part of the vast Central Danube Floodplains that encompass two neighboring countries, and represent one of the most prolific wetland areas in the middle course of the Danube.

This internationally recognized area is a hot spot of rare natural habitats such as large floodplain forests, river islands, gravel and sand banks and oxbows. It is home to the highest density of breeding pairs of white-tailed eagle in continental Europe. This area hosts endangered species such as black stork, wild cat, badger, beaver, otter and numerous fish. It is an important stepping stone for more than 250,000 migratory waterfowl every year.



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Due to their exceptional natural features, both Kopački rit and Gornje Podunavlje have been recognized as Ramsar Sites, being also part of the European Green Belt.

SRP Gornje Podunavlje and NP Kopački rit are recognized as a part of future UNESCO Transboundary Biosphere Reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube” that will comprise five countries – Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia.

During the project implementation WWF established many partnerships, with responsible institutions and organizations of Croatia and Serbia.

Project is financially supported by The Coca-Cola Company, with the aim to improve the status of wetlands in Danube River basin and to become a model example of how businesses and non-profits can work together to benefit nature conservation. This project is a part of efforts driven by The Coca-Cola Company to replenish to nature and communities an amount of water equivalent to what is used in finished beverages. By uniting networks of WWF and The Coca-Cola Company, and combining expertise, skills and influence, the conservation partners hope to demonstrate that challenges such as the global conservation of water resources can be met, and at the same time inspire others to partner in the global movement to conserve the world's freshwater resources.



PARTNERS WHO ARE CONTRIBUTING TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION:



PARK PRIRODE KOPAČKI RIT



HRVATSKO DRUŠTVO ZA ZAŠTITU PTICA I PRIRODE



VOJVODINAŠUME

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To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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