



Protection of Biodiversity of the Sava River Basin Floodplains



Lonjsko polje Nature Park, Croatia / Duska Dimovic

The Sava River

The Sava River is the second largest tributary to the Danube River and is of biological significance because of its outstanding biological and landscape diversity. It hosts the largest complex of alluvial floodplain wetlands in the Danube basin and the largest lowland forests. The Sava is a unique example of a river where the floodplains are still intact, supporting both floods alleviation and biodiversity. The total length of the Sava from its source to the Danube is 945 km. The Sava River springs in Slovenia and runs through Croatia for 562 km constituting the border with Slovenia for 2 km, and with Bosnia and Herzegovina for 311 km and discharges into the Danube in Serbia. The most important landscape characteristics are

found in the central Sava basin with a mosaic of natural floodplains and cultural landscapes formed by traditional land-use patterns typical to the river valleys of Central Europe in the past. The Sava River is considered by nature conservationists and scientists to be one of the “Crown Jewels” of European nature and has been selected as a focal region in the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) of the Council of Europe.

The Project

To secure the integration of the protection of ecological values along the Sava into the management of the Sava River, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and Wageningen International (WI) with

technical support from Orbicon (DK) have jointly initiated the Protection of Biodiversity of the Sava River Basin Floodplains project to support the Sava Basin countries in identifying, designating and managing the biological and landscape diversity along the Sava River and in supporting the implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. The proposed project will demonstrate innovative protection and management schemes that seek to combine viable land use practices, biodiversity protection and management and flood management.

Donors and Partners

The project is financially supported by the LIFE-Third countries programme and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The international project applicant responsible for executing the project is IUCN Regional Office for Europe. Throughout the project, the IUCN together with the WI will be responsible for the project management, while the partner institutions from the Sava countries - the Center for Ecology and Natural Resources of the Faculty of Science in Sarajevo, the Agricultural Institute of Republic of Srpska, the State Institute for Nature Protection of Croatia, the Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia - will provide important expert inputs to the project through their participation in the project working groups and trainings. An additional expert contribution will be provided by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation.



Obrez village, Serbia / IUCN

Objectives and Activities

The overall objective of the project is to protect and manage the unique landscape and biodiversity along the Sava River by supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia to: identify, protect and manage floodplain areas of importance for the landscape and biodiversity applying the criteria of the Birds and Habitats Directives; design a coherent transboundary ecological network of the core areas, buffer zones and corridors; introduce land use practices that support the protection of the landscape and biodiversity; and to raise awareness on the need to protect and manage the unique landscape and biodiversity along the Sava through transboundary co-operation.

The project will support the elaboration of national interpretation manuals of EU Natura 2000 habitat types relevant for the Sava River in order to meet EU requirements when selecting sites for the ecological network, and as a national and regional contribution to the relevant conventions (Bern Convention, Bonn Convention, Convention on Biological Diversity).

To design the ecological network, an inventory of the biodiversity along the Sava River will be carried out with specific focus on identifying the presence of the habitat types and species annexed under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and by assessing the already existing systems of protected areas in the Sava countries.

Training and capacity building activities will support the countries in implementing the Birds and Habitats Directives and other relevant international conventions on the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Furthermore, the project will identify the threats to the biodiversity of the floodplains and also define the current conservation status of the existing Natura 2000 habitat types and species identified along the Sava River.

The specific biodiversity features of the Sava floodplains are directly linked to the traditional land use of grazing by domestic animals that has shaped the area for ages. Preserving the specific landscape and biodiversity implies the maintenance of some extensive live stock grazing enabling the local communities to sustain traditional extensive agriculture practices. The challenge the project faces it to sustain these grazing activities while securing sufficient income for the farmers along the Sava River.

This project will assist to enable the responsible authorities and scientific institutions in handling, managing and exchanging data on the ecological network through both capacity building on and the development of a GIS database. The structure and procedures of the GIS data base need to be harmonized and shared by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia.

It is of utmost importance to achieve public and political support for the protection and management of the transborder ecological network along the Sava River. This will among others be achieved by raising awareness on the role the Sava floodplains play in the protection of biodiversity of European importance and the important role the floodplains play in flood alleviation.

Enhanced co-operation between the environmental sector and the water management sector in each country is one of the leading objectives of this project.

For more information, please contact:

IUCN Programme Office for SEE
Dr Ivana Ribara 91, 11070 Belgrade
Serbia
Tel: + 381 11 22 72 411
Fax: + 381 11 22 72 531
<http://www.iucneurope.org>

Mr. Joerg Lohmann
Project Director
E-mail: joerg.lohmann@iucn.org

Mr. Boris Erg
Project Manager
E-mail: boris.erg@iucn.org



Pannonian Grey Cattle / IUCN