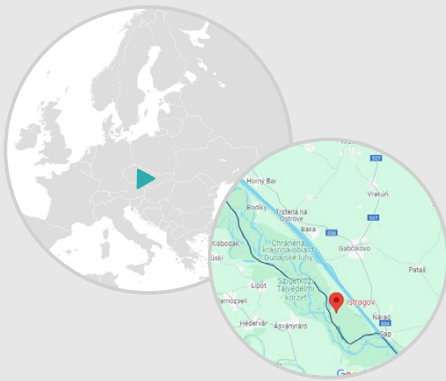


NATURAL CLIMATE BUFFER



Slovakia



Legal Status

Natura 2000 site, natural reserve

Habitats and Protected Species

Habitats: River branches surrounded by wetlands, floodplain forests and meadows

Species: common kingfisher, white-tailed eagle, black stork, Pannonian root vole, Danube crested newt, smooth newt, European tree frog, agile frog

Management

BROZ – conservation association

Information sources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNfwRiSSJw>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_ozlB1wLkK&t=33s

Istragov wetlands

Introduction

The Istragov wetlands are located in the inland Danube delta in Slovakia. Istragov were originally vast river wetlands with an area of approximately 77 ha. It was made up of a mosaic of shallow water bodies, wetlands and reed beds. Thanks to extensive changes in the Danube basin due to the construction of the Gabčíkovo water dam, the adaptation of the riverbed for shipping transport and the enabling of commercial forests plantation, the site had been dry for most of the year. In 2012, the revitalization of Istragov began as part of the LIFE Danube Birds project. It was possible to secure the supply of water to the Istragov branch, and at certain times during the year, water also reached the wetlands.

As part of the LIFE Microtus II project, more than 1.5 km of inlet channels were created to flood the area during simulated floods that partially mimic the natural dynamics of the river.

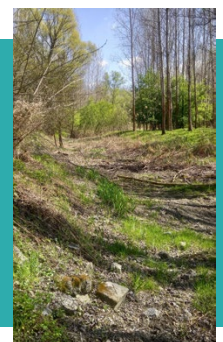
As a result of the lack of water, the conditions in Istragov have changed and invasive plants have spread. The presence of water and flooding is a key factor for the restoration of natural conditions and their long-term preservation for native species.

Issues & key challenges

- compensation for the loss of the river's natural dynamics and ensuring presence of water in the wetland after 30 years of drought during simulated floods
- restoration of the native vegetation by raising the water level, which will "flush out" invasive species such as Canadian goldenrod; we also supported the restoration by planting native species of trees
- The challenge is to ensure a year-round water supply - various measures are being discussed, in particular land ownership is a challenge and, given the complex inland delta system, which is influenced by many factors, finding consistency with measures that are part of other projects is also a challenge

Outcomes & benefits

- simulation of natural floods; return of water to dried-out areas and resulting restoration of wetlands
- biodiversity restoration and the return of native plant species; suppression of invasive species
- creation of bio corridors for the expansion of rare species like the Pannonian root vole
- providing an important habitat for reproduction of amphibians and fish
- major carbon sink and space for water retention



Lessons learnt & future

- old maps with former channels and river branches were key for the project planning, however, flexibility and adjustment according to the present conditions are crucial
- land ownership is crucial for effective nature restoration project implementation in current conditions
- cooperation with stakeholders is key

As a next step nature-friendly grazing is to be introduced. Grazing used to be common in this area, it will support biodiversity and different groups of species. However, the main reason to introduce grazing at this site is suppression of plant invasive species.



BLUE-GREEN SPACE



CARBON SINK



NATURAL SPONGE

More info



Co-funded by the European Union

Eurosite Factsheet

Wetlands and Climate Change

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