

# ROMANIA

## Danube Delta

### Brief description

The waters of the Danube, which flow into the Black Sea, form the largest and best preserved of Europe's deltas. The Danube delta hosts over 300 species of birds as well as 45 freshwater fish species in its numerous lakes and marshes.

### 1. Introduction

**Year of Inscription** 1991

#### Agency responsible for site management

- Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority  
Ecological Management, International Relations  
Portului 34A, 820243 TULCEA  
TULCEA, Romania  
e-mail: [gbaboianu@ddbra.ro](mailto:gbaboianu@ddbra.ro)  
Website: [www.ddbra.ro](http://www.ddbra.ro)

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** N (iii), (iv)

#### Justification provided by the State Party

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve is considered to merit inclusion in the World Heritage List for the following reasons:-

- It represents an outstanding example of the earth's evolutionary history at the meeting point of the Palearctic and Mediterranean biogeographical zones.
- It is an outstanding example of significant ongoing geological processes, biological evolution and, in particular, man's interaction with his natural environment, as evidenced by the exceptional scale and diversity of wetland plant and animal communities sustained by traditional, compatible uses.
- It is an outstanding example of a dynamic wetland ecosystem on a vast scale, unique both in its European context and internationally.
- It is a habitat complex of world value for certain rare and endangered species.

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve is unique in Europe and on a world scale. It is a vast and intricate mosaic of the richest biodiversity of a wetland ecosystem, having also a very special cultural value and character which makes comparative judgments difficult.

#### As provided in IUCN evaluation

As the largest continuous marshland in Europe, the Danube Delta is an outstanding example of an important ecosystem and thus could also meet criteria (iii). Finally, the Delta is of great importance for bird conservation. It supports the majority of the world population of two endangered species (pygmy cormorant, red breasted geese), has 5% of the breeding population of a third (white pelican) and is used by at least three other threatened bird species. It is also a majoring wintering area for ducks and thus meets criteria iv.

Conditions of integrity are largely met as the boundaries of the site encompass almost the entire Delta and also the buffer zone. Adequate protection of the migratory species (condition v), however, will always be a concern as this cannot be guaranteed. The Danube Delta is clearly one of the most important natural sites in the Palearctic and meets criteria iii and iv. Although it has been severely degraded over the past few decades, its future conservation and restoration is now given much greater priority by the Romanian Government. Recently designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, the Delta has also been proposed as a Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO's MAB program. A number of projects with assistance from IUCN, WWF, ICBP and others are now underway to support the Romanian government initiative.

In light of these important advances, it is possible (but perhaps still premature) to provide reasonable assurance to the committee that the site will meet the high standards of integrity and management required for World Heritage sites. The final law legitimizing the Reserve is awaiting approval by Parliament and the management plan process has just commenced. The possibility of a transfrontier property with the Ukraine side is also in the informal discussion stages.

IUCN's recommendation for inscription, therefore, is favorable given the need for international support and the increasing prospects for an improved conservation regime for the Delta. A positive decision should include accompanying recommendations to the Romanian authorities on: 1) completing the legal process; 2) supporting the

management planning process (which will hopefully result in an increase of land zoned in the strictly protected category); and 3) dialogue with the Ukrainian SSR concerning cross-border cooperation. Initiatives in transboundary agreements with the other seven countries in the drainage basin should also be encouraged. The Committee may also wish to express its willingness to assist Romania in implementing aspects of the management plan and to congratulate them on their policy changes which will reverse further decline in the conservation values of the Delta.

(Since the Bureau meeting a management planning workshop was held in the Reserve and a smaller World Heritage boundary was proposed. The workshop report and a new map of the site will hopefully be available in the Committee meeting.)

#### **Committee Decision**

Bureau (1991): The Bureau agreed in principle that this site met natural heritage criteria (iii) and (iv). The Bureau, however, requested the Romanian authorities to provide information before the next session of the Committee, on progress made in relation to

- a) the legal declaration of the site;
- b) development of a management plan and
- c) negotiations with the Ukrainian SSR regarding international co-operation. The Bureau also recommended that the Committee encourage transboundary agreements among the seven countries sharing the drainage basin of the Danube and congratulate the Romanian authorities for changing their policy on the delta to give priority to its conservation values.

Session (1991): The Committee noted with satisfaction that the recommendations of the Bureau had been taken into account, namely that the Romanian authorities have redefined the boundaries of the property, started to elaborate a management plan and set up a local authority for protection and management. The Committee was informed by the Representative of Romania of the present state of legal protection of the area, the implication of the adoption of the new Constitution of Romania for the legal status of the property and further efforts envisaged by the Government to enhance protection and restoration. In the light of the assurances given, the Committee decided to inscribe this property and requested the Secretariat and IUCN to provide a progress report at its next session.

Furthermore, the Committee also requested the Secretariat:

- a) to contact the Ukrainian authorities in order that they envisage the nomination of the Ukrainian part of this site for inscription on the World Heritage List, so as to constitute a transborder site; and
- b) to develop agreements for protection with the countries of the Basin, notably within the framework of the UNESCO "Blue Danube" project.

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- No change required

#### **Boundaries and Buffer Zone**

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate

#### **Status of Authenticity/Integrity**

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

### **3. Protection**

#### **Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- Laws regarding establishment of the Biosphere Reserve (1993, 2001), and implementation of zoning and protection measures (1994, 2001)
- Laws concerning territorial planning for Romania (2000), concerning wild flora and fauna conservation (2001)
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- To improve legal framework in cooperation between national authorities and voluntary park wardens to motivate their contribution
- Timeframe: 2006

### **4. Management**

#### **Use of site/property**

- Visitor attraction, national park, rural landscape

#### **Management /Administrative Body**

- Steering group: legally constituted, 05/1994
- Site manager on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; local
- The current management system is highly effective

### 5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: 05/1995, currently in revision (through a consultation process with international support) which is estimated to be complete 12/2006
- Adequate
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: information not available

### 6. Financial Resources

#### Financial situation

- Budget sources: through national budget
- Bi-lateral: PHARE funding, GEF grant
- Insufficient

### 7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 122

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, management, promotion, interpretation, education, visitor management

### 8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Scientific institutions: Information and ecological centres in Tulcea, Crisan and Sulina
- Training on site management: for specialized staff organized by site authority or Ministry of Environment & Water Management

### 9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: (number not given) estimated on basis of our company numbers and visitor centre records
- Trend: growing (2004)
- Visitor facilities: visitor centre, small publications (i.e. leaflets, posters, etc.), various accommodation options, various transportation options
- Visitor needs: new visitor centres, improvements to drinking water supply and waste management system

### 10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, studies relating to site value, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys, visitor management
- Studies used for site management purposes, in particular those focusing on wetlands conservation, natural resources sustainability, integrating monitoring systems, public utilities infrastructure, integration of traditional land use activities
- For the creation of the pre-feasibility study on the "Support for the sustainable development in Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve- Master Plan"

### 11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local authorities
- Need for awareness raising: improve communication at local level; diversify public awareness method, better publicity and media communication; supported through Public Awareness Strategy (2000);
- Web site available: [www.ddbra.ro](http://www.ddbra.ro), Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority
- Local participation: consultation on major management decisions, consultation regarding main sustainable development needs (2005)

### 12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

#### Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Bureau sessions: 17<sup>th</sup> (1993); 24<sup>th</sup> (2000)
- World Heritage Committee sessions: 17<sup>th</sup> (1993); 24<sup>th</sup> (2000); 29<sup>th</sup> (2005); 30<sup>th</sup> (2006)

#### Conservation interventions

- Conservation: Almost 11,000 ha of abandoned polder were ecologically restored to wetlands, supported by The World Bank Project "Danube Delta Biodiversity" The financial support of most studies and civil works for improving the ecological conditions were supported by the National budget
- Present state of conservation: very good

#### Threats and Risks to site

- Visitor and tourism pressures

### **13. Monitoring**

- A formal monitoring programme exists
- Measures taken: ongoing monitoring through laboratory analysis, surveys, sampling, etc.
- Key indicators: air, water, soil quality; status of biological biodiversity; local waste management; economic balance in sustainable development systems; pollution

### **14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions**

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social factors, economic factors, management, cultural and educational factors
- Strengths of management: Ecological restoration projects; Public awareness strategy; Lower Danube system sturgeon stock management Strategy; Two Eurosite prizes, for ecological restoration of Babina polder (1996) and for the reserve management (2000); In 2000, the Council of Europe awarded the European Diploma of protected areas for the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, and in 2005 was renewed; Danube Delta Biodiversity Project - World Bank
- Weaknesses of management: The existing staff (122) is not enough to cover all the necessary work; an increase of the staff of at least 25% is necessary; the existing equipment (boats, cars, warden huts, computers, etc.) is not enough; the modernization of the existing equipment should be taken into consideration. Further training of the existing staff