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FACTSHEET

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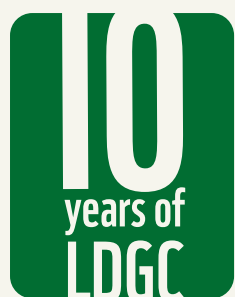
Nature Restoration

More space for rivers

Restoring former meanders, wetlands and abandoned fishponds in Bulgaria



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223,000 ha

A NETWORK OF
FUNCTIONAL
WETLANDS,
RECONNECTED TO
THE NATURAL
DYNAMICS OF THE
RIVER

Contribution to the LDGC

The most ecologically-important areas along the Lower Danube Green Corridor in Bulgaria are the Island of Belene and Kalimok Marshes. There, former floodplain forests and wetlands are being restored, reconnecting them with the river, creating rich feeding, breeding and spawning grounds for fish, flora and fauna.

This has provided opportunities for fishing and economic benefits from grasslands and wetland resources, along with the survival of the riverine floodplain forest as an ecologic benefit. These model projects are the first of its type in Bulgaria.

Stakeholder engagement

The large scale restoration projects on Belene Island and Kalimok Marshes was carried out by the Ministry of the Environment and Waters in Bulgaria and the main donor was the Global Fund for Environment.

WWF has implemented the projects on Lom and Vesselina Rivers in partnership with the Administration of the Nature Park Rusenki Lom, the Club „Friends of Rusenski Lom” and with the support of the Ministry of Culture.

The framework of action

The wetlands on Belene Island (800 ha) are among the most important places in the Lower Danube for the breeding and feeding of different water species of birds and fish. In the 50's, the island was surrounded by dykes and the wetlands drained. After more than 50 year, the dykes were opened and the Danube flooded the island again, creating a wetland that is home now to hundreds of rare birds: Dalmatian pelicans, Ferruginous duck, Pygmy cormorants, terns, herons and others. Following a similar approach, Kalimok Marshes (2000 ha) have been reconnected to the Danube, enhancing the biodiversity of the area and offering new economic alternatives to the local communities (e.g. sustainable use of reed as biomass).

Lom River is flowing through Rusenski Lom Nature Park, but the floodplain in its lower section has been converted into fish ponds, currently abandoned. In 2006, the floods damaged the dykes and the river claimed back its floodplain in the area near Ivanovo village. One year after, the dyke was removed on three sections reconnecting the former fishpond to the natural dynamic of the Lom River.

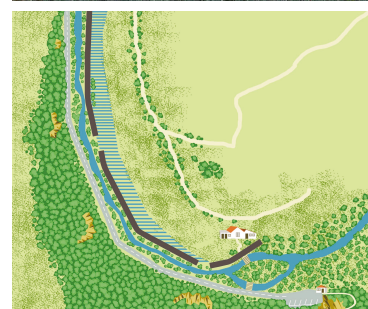
The Vesselina River is known for its natural beauty but also for the number of meanders the river formed along its flow, many of them, unfortunately, being cut off from the system by flood protection dikes. Near the village of Mindya, one of these meanders was reconnected to the river to provide breeding conditions for many fish, amphibians and birds species and reduced flood risks and soil erosion at the same time.

On a long-term, these restoration projects will benefit nature and local communities through:

- Enhanced quality of habitats and increased number of species of flora and fauna;
- Reduced impacts of floods and droughts;
- Increased self-purification capacity of the water in the isolated riverbeds.



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Vision

More river sectors with free-flowing conditions and wetlands where biodiversity thrives and ecosystem services are being generated for the local communities.

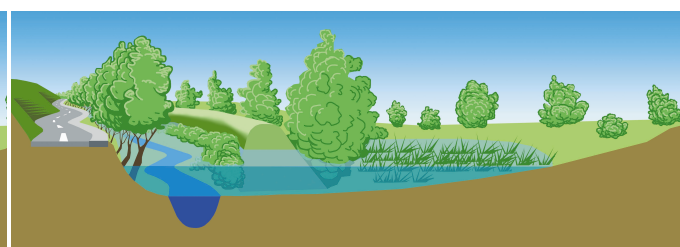
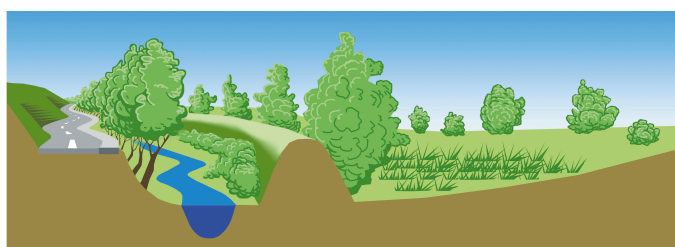
What we achieved

+800 ha of wetlands
Belene island

+2000 ha of marshes
Kalimok

+120 ha of natural ponds
Lom river

+1000 m of meander
Vesselina river



Why we are here

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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