

## NATURE PROTECTION MANAGEMENT



### Grazing

One of the most important tools in protecting ecological values is reviving traditionally based, sustainable land use - livestock grazing and extensive meadow cultivation. This is accompanied by controlling invasive, alien plants. Preserving ecological values is linked to preserving the genetic diversity of traditional Hungarian livestock. In the Somogyfajsz woody meadow we are grazing herds of Hungarian Grey Cattle and Racka Sheep. The grazing is conducted by sections, considering the vegetative cycles of the plants of conservation value.



### Mowing

There are several thousand plants of the endemic subspecies of the Small Pasque Flower (*Pulsatilla pratensis subsp. nigricans*) on the dry hillsides of the woody meadow, while in the lower-lying, wetter parts extensive patches of several hundred Lax-flowered Orchids (*Orchis laxiflora*), Early Marsh-orchids (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*) and Military Orchids (*Orchis militaris* L.) are found. As in the sinking soil any machinery can only advance causing severe trampling damage, after orchids have finished flowering, areas covered in Giant Goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*) area mowed by hand. Outside orchid habitats and in drier areas weeds area being cleared using rotational mowers, naturally after the end of the vegetative cycle. Regularly moving the goldenrod provides habitat again to native grasses and orchids. The results of the work we have done so far are already visible.

### Fighting Black Locust

The earlier neglected state of the woody meadows and the favourable soil also resulted in the Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) covering huge areas that used to be habitat for original plant communities. The habitat of Small Pasque Flower is dry sand dunes. Considerable areas freed from Black Locust provide favourable conditions for the original plant communities once again. It was an important duty requiring hard manual labour to clear off Black Locusts that grew under century-old oaks and this process also enhanced the strengthening of the young oak recruits. Our volunteers also took an important part in this work.



### The Táska Meadow

Because of the lack of grazing and mowing, the once flourishing, ecologically important wet meadow became weedy, covered mostly by Giant Goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*). The first aim of the habitat-restoration was intermittent mowing several times a year and restarting grazing. At the same time the investigation of the water regime of the area and the planning and realisation of water regulation structures was started.



### Conservation actions of wetlands owned by the public Foundation

A type of sustainable and conservation-enhancing land use is extensive fishing. During this activity, one of our main aims is to maintain, manage, monitor and protect the 500 hectare total area woodland wetlands which are owned by the public Foundation. The main role of these wetlands is ecological, to maintain and protect natural values. These areas provide habitat to a population of European importance of Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*) along several other protected species, such as White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*). The constant ecological and technical maintenance on dams, floodgates, locks and other structures state is very labour-intensive. A constant duty is the maintenance and development of the interpretive centres (routes, observation points, buildings) and providing the necessary human and technical conditions.



We joined an international stork protection programme of eight European countries and Morocco. The most important elements of the programme are the protection of the two species, White (*Ciconia ciconia*) and Black Stork, and their habitats, education of people of all age classes, extracurricular activities and organising community events.



### Kőrösberki lakes

The ecologically most important habitat restoration in the history of our Public Foundation was the investment in the floodplains of the Korokna Creek. During this habitat restoration, three nearly natural lakes, one wetland and several kilometres long canal system was created, totalling about 15 hectares. The wetland-complex improves the groundwater supply of a further 50-ha area that positively affects populations of many protected species (e.g. orchids). In the case of a sudden heavy down-pour this newly-built system plays an important role in mitigating floods and enhancing the settling of sediment. The Korokna Creek is in the catchment area of the Balaton Lake, therefore the above-mentioned effects also positively influence the water quality of the Balaton Lake.



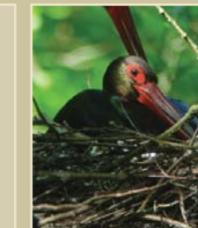
After having finished geotechnical operations and engineering works, on the 12th August, 2006 the area was flooded for a probational period. From this moment we witnessed the process of Nature, a diversity of species reclaiming the area. In 2006 September Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and migrating flocks of Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*) appeared at the lakes. Grey Herons (*Ardea cinerea*) and Great Egret (*Egretta alba*) appeared almost immediately, followed by Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*), that stayed because of the mild winter. Spring migration enriched the avifauna with Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), Garganey (*Anas querquedula*), Common Teal (*Anas crecca*), Coot, Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) and Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*). Frog species typical to the region were present in high numbers in the mating and breeding season. From May 2007, European Bee-eaters (*Merops apiaster*) have been breeding and European Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*), Northern Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*), Shanks (*Tringa sp.*), Common Snipes (*Gallinago gallinago*) and Wagtails appeared on areas covered in shallow water. Black and White Storks (*Ciconia nigra*, *C. ciconia*) appeared on the new feeding grounds. In summary, we can conclude that the habitat restoration has been successful, it has reached its goal, flora and fauna typical to the floodplains of the Korokna Creek is returning to the floodplains of the inner Somogy, such as the Kőrösberék.



Dear Reader! If you agree with our goals, programmes and activities seen above, and if you would like to join us in protecting the natural and cultural values of the Inner-Somogy region, please support our efforts.

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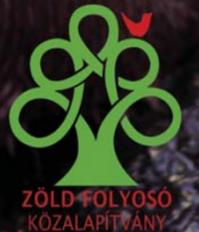


Made in the frame of "Tér a holnapért-Espaces pour demain"  
French-Hungarian biodiversity protection program, supported by



# ZÖLD FOLYOSÓ

PUBLIC FOUNDATION



14 years  
in service of Nature

In Hungary economically poor regions are rich in conservation values. In these regions, a possible alternative in development is sustainably using the natural potential. An important aim is for the people to realise this capital value and with continuous help from experts and use this potential in a way that is traditional in the region and preserve it.



The **Green Corridor Public Foundation** was funded in August 1, 1995 by the local government of Somogyfajsz, Somogy Provincial Association for Nature Conservation and four private persons.

The Public Foundation mostly acts in Inner-Somogy, but also participates in regional, national and international programmes. In total, it manages about 300 hectares of land owned or rented meadows and about 500 hectares of ponds. The meadows are managed by extensive grazing by traditional Hungarian breeds (Hungarian Grey Cattle and Racka Sheep), breeding and husbandry and extensive pasture management. Ponds are managed by extensive fishing. The income from the management and from our supporters are used to purchase endangered areas, areas rich in conservation values, maintain the ecological and infrastructural state of the areas, protect their natural values, start, develop and maintain the touristic and educational infrastructure necessary to their operation.



The Public Foundation collaborates with the **Somogy Provincial Association for Nature Conservation** to found environmentally-conscious behaviour, activities enhancing ecological knowledge, maintain programmes aimed at habitat and species protection. It also provides expert methodological help to workers and local governments in management aimed at maintaining ecological values. Another role is to organise workshops, conferences, programs on these topics.

## NATURAL VALUES

Korokna Creek is one of the important rivers in the water catchment area in the southern part of Balaton Lake. From Újvárfalva to the delta in Nagyberek, a half century ago there used to be seven mills on the creek. The Korokna Valley is geographically plain, where a few metres of altitudinal difference could result in significant differences in the vegetation. The reason for this is that in depressions of the ground around (temporarily) collected water vegetation typical to marshland while on the dry, sandy hills vegetation typical of dry meadows has formed. This phenomenon results from the different water-holding capacity of different sandy soils. The depressions that are flooded for longer slowly became marshy. From these smaller alder and willow bogs have formed. Along the creeks, a mosaic of alder, oak, beech and ash trees, and patches of marshes are found. On the rich, wet soil there are sparse groups of oak and hornbeam, and among them the odd group of beech. Areas of higher elevation are covered in oak and the clearings in meadows. This diversity is also noticeable in the forbs and grasses.



The Korokna Creek is one of the most important tributaries of the Nagyberek, which flows into the Balaton through the canals of the river. The inner, undisturbed marshlands of Nagyberek provide a safe haven for birds. Pastoralism and grazing used to be the typical land use in the periphery. Among the botanical values of the area the protected sedge *Carex appropinquata*, Early Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*), Lax-flowered Orchid (*Orchis laxiflora*), Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*) and Scouringrush Horsetail (*Equisteum hyemale*) need to be mentioned. These plants occur in sparse groups in degraded steppe remnants. Habitat rehabilitation also serves the protection and strengthening of orchid populations. The presence of a rare, protected Tundra Vole (*Microtus oeconomus*) also indicated the conservation significance of the area.

The Somogyfajsz woody meadow is an important mosaic in the ecological web between the Balaton Lake and the Dráva River. This lime-avoiding sandy grassland association with sparse open woodland is one of the last remnant woodlands in Somogy. The direct contact of marshes forming in the depressions in the sandy dunes and dry grasslands of various sizes results in a unique diversity of flora and fauna.



Among the plants, hundreds of Green-winged Orchids (*Orchis morio* L.), Lax-flowered Orchids (*Orchis laxiflora* Lam.), Military Orchids (*Orchis militaris* L.), Early Marsh-orchids (*Dactylorhiza incarnata* (L.) Soó) and Large Pinks (*Dianthus superbus* L.), and several thousand individuals of endemic subspecies of Small Pasque Flower (*Pulsatilla pratensis* subsp. *nigricans*) can be found on the sand-plains.



Among animals, for instance, the presence of the locust *Acrida hungarica* (*Acrididae*), Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*) and Baillon's Crake (*Porzana pusilla*) indicates the ecological value of the habitat. This area used to be grazed for centuries and unfortunately some birds, typical to woody grazing lands, such as the European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*) and the Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) have disappeared because of unfavourable changes of the habitat.

## EDUCATION, AWARENESS-RAISING

One of our major aims is the education of the people interested in the natural values of the ecological web between the Balaton Lake and the Dráva River, in the activities to protect these values, and provide ecotourism programmes for these people. One of the basic aims of the programmes is to make a strong foundation to and develop environmentally-conscious lifestyle and thinking and responsibility among inhabitants of the dwellings in the region and visiting tourists.

We developed a permanent route, where groups leaving the southern bank of Balaton reach the Dráva River in six days. Participants pass by Balaton-Nagyberek, Somogyfajsz Shepherd Park, Boronka Protected Area and Petesmalom Otter Park to get acquainted with typical, mosaic habitats of inner Somogy and their diverse flora and fauna.



### The Somogyfajsz Nature Conservation and Touristic Information Centre

The Public Foundation headquarters is in a building that used to be the Kund Castle. Besides coordinating and directing professional issues, the centre responsible for providing conservation and touristic information to people. It also performs nature protection awareness raising and supplementary educational activities, and it hosts expert methodological and cultural events as well. With the reconstruction of the building, the circumstances of visitors improved, and so did the standards of information supply. The tourists interested in the Korokna Valley or the natural and cultural values of the surrounding arrive here, and, at the same time this is the starting point of the programmes introducing the values of the Green Corridor stretching between the Balaton Lake and the Dráva River.



### Somogyfajsz Shepherd Park

The introduction of the traditions of the Somogyfajsz shepherds is growing more and more popular each year. The visitors can get to know here the past of a shepherd's life in Somogy, their art, traditions, beliefs, superstitions and tools. Significant development has been carried out in the park lately, which makes the introduction more authentic, and serves the comfort of the visitors. The maintenance of the visitor infrastructure of the 200 hectares area and the guiding of the visitors are big and important tasks.

A permanent exhibition of the artefacts of shepherd life was also established in one of the halls at Kund-castle. The visitors get an insight into the former mood of the landscape on the introductory trail starting from the building. Groups from primary schools can get to know the sights, the natural and cultural values of the region during one-day or longer field programmes. We provide expert guidance for the visitors of the Shepherd Park.



### Ciframalom, Fishermen's Lodge

Our visitor centre located in the Boronka-side Landscape Protection Area has been renewed. After finishing the investment, we have the possibility to comfortably put up fourteen people in the building, while within the area of the resort further 30 people can stay in tents. We offer various programmes for our visitors wishing to get closer to the wildlife of the Landscape Protection Area.



### Petesmalom Otter Park

The aim of the Otter Park is to demonstrate the fauna and flora and the ecological values of the 150-ha woodland lake, typical to inner Somogy. Visitors can learn about the role and importance of the extensive fishing, which is a form of sustainable use of natural resources and ecologically sound land-use. A basic feature of our programmes is the human-nature interaction the, and the introduction to the changes in human activities from the avar age up to now. The pedagogical goal is to help to initiate and facilitate an environmentally aware way of thinking, attitude and behaviour.



The park is extraordinarily popular, it is visited by numerous groups from all over the country and from abroad as well. Apart from groups, families and individual people also arrive in large numbers. The number of visitors is around 5000 per year on the average. That's why a very important step in our work was the modernisation of the visitor centre and the renovation and modernisation of the introductory trail and the observation points. Visitors gain new knowledge while they are introduced to the lifestyle and habits of the Otter, and while looking at the life in the lakes, and during this process they will emotionally be bound and will start to feel responsible for what they see. We give expert guidance, a detailed map of the routes and some information material describing the sights to visitors. We also organize supplementary educational programmes for nurseries and primary schools in the field, and we provide expert contribution and supervising for these. The Otter Park is open all year round, every day.

The Otter Park is also used as a shelter for endangered (too young or wounded) Otters (*Lutra lutra*), other protected mammals or birds. During the project period 14 Otters, many White Storks (*Ciconia ciconia*), a Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*), and a weak, but already full-grown young White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) lived temporarily here.

