

Example of good practice	Evolution in restoration and preservation of grassland habitats – Obedska bara
Categories	Management; education; local initiatives; local produce
Organisation	Regional Institute for Environmental Protection; Young Researchers of Serbia
Partners	PE “Vojvodina šume”; The municipality of Pećinci (the Development Agency and the Tourist Organisation); the Association of Citizens “Zelen Pogled” – Kupinovo; Provincial Department of Urbanism and Environmental Protection; Ministry of Environmental Protection; Natural Museum of Belgrade;
Area of Activity / Location	Obedska bara
Country	Serbia
Form of protection	Special nature reserve; Ramsar site; IBA; IPA
Scope of implementation (local, national)	local
Time	8 years
People	A great number of employees within organisations involved in programme/project-related activities
Budget	EUR 458,000
Funding	National, provincial and local (municipality of Pećinci) The Ekonet Fund (EuroNatur), Frankfurt Zoological Society, USAID; German Environment Agency
Project info	http://www.pzzp.rs/rs/sr/zastita-prirode/podrucja-od-medunarodnog-znacaja/srp-obedska-bara.html
Contact	Slobodan Puzović
Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing the attitude of the inhabitants towards the protected area – the value of pastures and flood control

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The return of animal husbandry – founding pasture associations • 20 years of organising international work camps with over 470 volunteers • Improving the water drainage system and flood control capacity • The international significance of the return of the glossy ibis and the common spoonbill • Exponential increase in the number of species and pairs in mixed heron and cormorant colony • Significant decrease of invasive plant species (especially false indigo-bush) on valuable humid habitats • Developed infrastructure for education, recreation and tourism through a system of paths, belvederes, canopies, towers, bridges, info panels, signposts
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Problem/opportunity	
Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of biological and landscape diversity • Disrupted water drainage system, substantial sedimentation and eutrophication • Insufficiently operative programme of protected area management • Conflicted interests of sectoral policies • Habitat succession and expansion of invasive species; • Low awareness of the general public and decision makers on the significance and potential of the protected area;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient involvement of the local population in management and development; • Disappearance of traditional modes of using space; Insufficiently developed tourism programmes, eco-education and recreation.
Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development in line with the benefits for nature and people; • Revitalisation and maintenance of fragile open habitats by means of traditional usage of space (grazing) • Sustainable development of eco and ethno-tourism, educational and recreational programmes • Development of national and international volunteer camps (working and educational)
Planning	
Pre-requisites for success	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bringing together interested parties into a common operative team (synergy of individual small-scale capacities); 2. Changing the attitude of the public on a local level, of decision makers on all levels, as well as of managers towards the protected area; 3. Coordinating sectoral policies in the areas of forestry, water management, agriculture and environmental protection; 4. Improving insufficient cooperation and coordination between different interest groups; 5. Changing the public attitude that a protected area is merely a limitation offering no possibility of creating new value; 6. A new approach to evaluating local initiatives and products and fostering tradition and local customs;

	<p>7. Involving regional, national and international organisations and institutions</p> <p>8. Improving management programmes and introducing European standards</p>
Initial idea	<p>The idea came about in 1991 among the Young Researchers of Serbia and the Natural Museum of Belgrade.</p> <p>The concept and basic objectives were defined that same year.</p> <p>In the period of 1992-1996, research and educational camps were organised.</p> <p>Near the end of 1996, the Environmental Protection Institute and Young Researchers of Serbia cooperated in coming up with new directions of action and consequently started to organise volunteer working camps in 1997.</p> <p>Subsequently, numerous other institutions and organisations became involved.</p> <p>A more significant involvement from a local level since the beginning of the 2000s.</p> <p>Since 2003, more substantial involvement by international organisations (EuroNatur, Frankfurt Zoological Society) through special projects.</p>
Strategies	<p>Beginning of the 90s – “Transitioning from passive to active protection of natural and created values” – directing/managing natural processes where necessary.</p> <p>During the 90s – “Small but consistent/constant steps/actions to significant long-term results”</p> <p>Beginning of 2000 – Forming a clear strategy of the area</p> <p>2006 – adopting a Zoning Plan for the protected area on the level of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.</p>

	Since 2012 – finalising the strategy through the area management programme by the Natura 2000 standards.
Partner roles	One of the keys to long-term success is the fact that the execution deadline and funding of the project are not clearly defined but rather the project is quite flexible and accessible to partners in accordance with their current possibilities. That is why the project has no clearly defined developer nor a strict hierarchy in terms of partnership. They are all seemingly equal and welcome to get involved in each of the upcoming activities:
Implementation	
Project key stages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Active protection of natural and created values 2. Volunteer working camps for the purpose of revitalising habitats 3. Reparation and revitalisation of endangered habitats (bogs and meadows) on a large number of locations 4. Improving the water drainage system by constructing dedicated systems (Manager) and dredging part of sediment deposits 5. Drafting of the management programme for the period of 2012-2020 6. Developing traditional grazing in cooperation with the local population; 7. Drafting of the Zoning Plan of Special-Purpose Areas for the protected area and its surroundings by means of the process of public consulting and discussions; 8. Promotion of protected area 9. Educational activities and infrastructure development

<p>Budget</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1992-1996 – investment related to the organisation of annual two-week camps (ca. € 2,000 per year, funded on a national level and via the Manager). • 1997-2002 – investment related to the organisation of volunteer working camps and the maintenance of revitalised habitats (ca. € 3,000 per year, funded on a national level and via the Manager). • 2003-2008 – the EAF invested € 18,000 through EuroNatur in the project of habitat revitalisation and the promotion of the protected area. • 2003-2016 – Provincial Department of Environmental Protection invested ca. € 240,000 in different activities related to the protection and promotion of the protected area. • 2010-2017 – Ministry of Environmental Protection invested ca. € 200,000 in the protected area (preservation, equipping, promotion, management, improving conditions) • 1992-2017 – Manager invested a significant amount of resources primarily for the purpose of preserving and managing the protected area which are difficult to estimate, since they were not directly invested but channelled through the efforts of the workforce, equipment and machinery. • 2010-2017 – The unit of local self-government (the municipality of Pećinci) invests ca. € 2,000 a year in the maintenance of the international volunteer camp;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1997-2017 – Young Researchers of Serbia invest ca. € 2,000 a year on average in the organisation of volunteer camps and other activities. • 2010 – the USAID invested ca. € 30,000 in the construction of the “Kula Kupinka” • 2014 – the German Academy of Environmental Protection invested € 5,000 in the construction of an eco-classroom.
<p>Actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The YRS initiated the international long-term programme “The Return of the Ibis” (1992); • Regular organisation of international volunteer working camps; • Organisation of numerous educational and promotional content (talks, exhibitions, presentations, press conferences, publications); • Comprehensive work activities related to the reparation and revitalisation of endangered habitats (bogs and meadows) on a large number of locations; • Improving the water drainage system by constructing dedicated systems (Manager), dredging part of sediment deposits; • Drafting of the operative medium-term action plan and long-term management programmes; • Drafting and execution of a long-term project of coordinated management and development of a part of the protected area, in cooperation with the Manager and provincial and state institutions for the period of 2008-2017; • Drafting of the management programme for the period of 2012-2020 by the Natura 2000 standards, supported by EU funds;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks with the local population interested in developing traditional grazing; • Drafting of the new Zoning Plan of Special-Purpose Areas for the protected area and its surroundings by means of the process of public consulting and discussions; • Drafting of the plans of detailed regulation for significant cultural and historical sites adjacent to the protected area; • Reconstructed ethnological house museum as a project under the unit of local self-government and the Visitors Centre as a project under the Manager. • Development of on-site infrastructure for the purpose of education, recreation and tourism. • Placing tourist signposts on roads in the general vicinity of the protected area; • Organising a multitude of media appearances; • Organising field trips for employees of Carlsberg Serbia and Intesa Bank as part of a nature-based team building day. • Summarising the results achieved and further necessary steps in the monographs of 2010 and 2015.
Stakeholders selection	All interested local stakeholders, as well as the organisations interested in getting involved in works on Obedska bara, were included and were not seen as stake holders but rather as partners.
Vulnerable groups involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary school children were included in educational activities • Older children were included in work activities • Women’s associations of the extended community were included during promotional

	<p>activities and events (e.g. the Mother Angelina Regatta organised by the unit of local self-government – the municipality of Pećinci)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gender ratio of the participants of international volunteer working camps is generally balanced, dominated by participants of around 25 years of age. Until now, over 250 volunteers from 25 countries (Europe, Asia, America) participated, ca. 100 domestic volunteers, as well as 120 volunteers employed by the Manager and Carlsberg Serbia and Intesa Bank.
Rights to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The foresters were the ones that made decisions on area management for decades. • The local population was informed on the existing laws and their respective rights. The procedures are very important. • They started to claim their rights by initiating grazing associations. • The local population started getting significantly more informed about the protected area, its value, but also about their own possibilities and limitations;
Communication	<p>The foresters informed the local population on the upcoming activities via the local council.</p> <p>The partners were informed on the future and upcoming activities and accomplishments via different media channels.</p>
Climate change adaptation & mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalisation of bog and water habitats by dredging part of the sediment and deposits, and also forming water drainage pits and corridors in order to enable the reception of a large quantity of water at flooding;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming mosaic habitats resistant to extreme climate conditions; • Taking action to prevent the drafting of plans for the narrowing of the existing flood zones of the river (alluvial plains); • Improving the quality of the fluvial water and balancing its flow.
Challenges	Financial: constant struggle to secure the minimum of necessary working resources.
	Administrative: problems related to fulfilling procedures and collecting/providing documentation
	Technical: connecting all entities in the chain in order to bring the planned work to fruition.
Change (your contribution to change)	
Positive effects on environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial changes in the diversity of the landscape in the most valuable part of the protected value; • a significant increase of wet meadows, shallow bogs, pits and pastures, while also improving their environmental status; • improving the water drainage system and increasing the surfaces of open water mirrors; • exponential increase in the number of species and pairs in mixed heron and cormorant colony; • results evident on the national and international level since 2016, with the return of the glossy ibis, along with the common spoonbill, when the mixed Charadriiformes colony once again became one of the most populated in the country. • Significant decrease of invasive plant species (especially false indigo-bush) on valuable humid habitats;

<p>Positive economic and social changes</p>	<p>The public sector (local, national)</p> <p>Economic: Significant increase of interest and involvement of the unit of local self-government in activities related to protection and sustainable development of the greater area;</p> <p>The forest received certification (additional points for usage) thus raising the value of wood in the Western market.</p> <p>Social: Strengthening of the civil sector on the local level. Increased interest of the local teaching staff to organise classes in the protected area; counteracting emigration.</p>
	<p>The business sector</p> <p>Economic: Incentive for initiating and expanding events (e.g. the Mother Angelina Regatta, Days of the Knights); three restaurants, revitalisation of fishponds;</p> <p>Social: Increasing the number of concrete initiatives on the local level.</p> <p>Increase in investment of local entrepreneurs in activities related to environmental protection (e.g. restoration of an old fishpond – aquatic habitat for tourism and recreation; construction of an animal husbandry site; opening an ethnologically based restaurant on the coast and water);</p>
	<p>Protected area management:</p> <p>Economic: A general increase in the number of tourists and visitors to the places adjacent to the protected area;</p> <p>grazing income, income from mechanical works of habitat revitalisation</p> <p>Social: change in the attitude of the managers in relation to the management method – they</p>

	<p>started to independently invest in management and information centre, recognising the importance of the protected area and building the image of environmentally conscious company;</p> <p>developed infrastructure for education, recreation and tourism through a system of paths, belvederes, canopies, towers, bridges, info panels, signposts, etc.</p>
	<p>The local community:</p> <p>Economic: Increase in interest of the local population for traditional activities (animal husbandry, catering industry) related to the protected area.</p> <p>Increase in real estate demand and prices in places adjacent to the protected area due to the improvement in natural, landscape and cultural-historic values</p> <p>Social: Possible effect on keeping the younger population living in the places adjacent to the protected area;</p> <p>Strengthening/fostering customs and tradition.</p> <p>Increase of interest in the protected area and the possibilities of utilising it (evident in the participation in volunteer working camps and the number of livestock farmers);</p> <p>Increased awareness of local decision makers and water management representatives of the significance of the protected area for flood control;</p> <p>Restoration of religious structures (the Church of Mother Angelina), cultural-historical (the Kupinik fortress) and ethnological heritage (ethnological house museum).</p>

	<p>The scientific community:</p> <p>Social: long-term monitoring of species in the area; science camps; return of long-unseen bird species</p>
Replication and recommendations	
Essential things to replication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined coordinated work (synergy); • volunteer field work (international and domestic volunteers); • perseverance even in the most difficult of times (lack of support and lobbying for adverse interests); • open communication with all interested parties regardless of their stance and methods of action; • clear vision, objectives and execution stages;
Recommendations	<p>The programme should have been initiated sooner, in the mid-1960s for example, when the fully developed traditional way of using the space and resources was still in existence.</p> <p>The recommendation is for a more active and concrete inclusion of international organisations and foundations into the programmes.</p>
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear initial vision • Gathering partners and synergy • Start of concrete/visible activities • Broad volunteer approach to work • Persistence in execution • Resolving conflicts with dialogue • Openness to new ideas and forces/partners • Gradual inclusion of expert/scientific institutions • Collaboration with the local community • Cross-border expansion • Appropriate presentation of results

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalising individual programme sections and initialising new ones
Needed policy improvements	Abolishing grazing fees. People are rewarded by aiding nature by means of sustainable grazing.
Expectations	
From WWF?	That it enlists in the partnership related to the “Return of the Ibis” programme and to do/contribute something concrete, with visible effect in the field and of long-term use to nature and people.