

# Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

As approved by Rec.C.4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Montreux, Switzerland - July 1990

NOTE: Please read the accompanying guidelines before attempting to complete this form. An example of a completed data sheet is also included.

Completed sheets should be returned to: T.A. Jones, Ramsar Database, IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX, England

1. Country: Austria

2. Date: 2. 4.12.1992

3. Ref:

7AT002

4. Name and address of compiler:

Ing. Irene Fischer; Umweltbundesamt (Federal Environmental Agency), Spittelauer Lände 5, A-1090 Wien  
Tel.: 0222-31304; Telefax: 0222-31304400

5. Name of wetland: Donau-March-Auen

6. Date of Ramsar designation: 16.4.1983

7. Geographical coordinates: 48°12'N, 16°28'E - 48°11'N, 16°58'E and 48°11'N, 16°58'E - 48°43'N,

8. General location: (e.g. administrative region and nearest large town)

The area is situated in the area bordering Slovakia, east of Vienna, Austria.

9. Area: (in hectares)

38500 ha

10. Wetland type: (see attached classification, also approved by Montreux Rec.C.4.7)

M, N, T

11. Altitude: (average and/or maximum & minimum)

148m

12. Overview: (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)

The Donau-March-Auen (riverine and flood-plain forests) constitute the largest comprehensive riverine and flood-plain forests of Central Europe. The Ramsar site is one of the last natural flowing parts of the river Danube, whereby the dynamics is still intact. The riverine forests represent the transition from the eastern steppe-area to the alpine region of Central Europe. Noteworthy is the high number of species of flora and fauna.

13. Physical features: (e.g. geology; geomorphology; origin - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth; water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; catchment area; downstream area; climate)

Holocäne riverine and flood-plain forests, pleistocäne terrace (Würm, Riss)

Donau-Auen: Calcerous gravel, heavy and dense; March-Auen: acid sand, porous, light. Average annual temperature: 9,8°C; Average annual precipitation: 550 mm.

The Danube has mountainous character whilst the March has pannonic features. The Danube riverine forest is regularly flooded in June, when the snow melts in the mountains. The spring floods of the March, the Danube's floods in summer, which reach the March area, as well as the high ground water level in the Danube riverine forest, determine the ecological factors in the area. The rude material which was transported from the landscape of the river and riverine forest of the Danube.

The March has a bad water quality, while the Danube shows a biological water quality of II-III.

14. Ecological features: (main habitats and vegetation types)

The Ramsar area represents a unique ecological situation: the Danube, a mountain river meets an pannonic river, the March, which shows SE-European character traits.

The site comprises a strip of land either side of the River Danube between the state of Vienna and the Slovakian border; a strip of land along the River March (Morava) from its confluence with the Danube to the south of the Slovakian town of Brecliar (Hainburg to Hohenau); and a strip along the Thaya from Bernhardstal to Hohenau. It contains riverine marshes, ponds, oxbow lakes and meadows with vegetation, including alder (*Alnus* sp.) and original woodland. These areas comprise the largest remaining tract of near-natural to natural riverine and flood plain forest in Central Europe.

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## 15. Land tenure /ownership of:

### (a) site

Mostly federal forests; some estates, WWF Austria and private property owners.

### (b) surrounding area

intensively used private farmland

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## 16. Conservation measures taken: (national category and legal status of protected areas - including any boundary changes

which) The site is partly protected within an area of six nature reserves, totalling 2213 ha, including Marchauen-Marchegg Nature Reserve (1.150 ha) with 50% WWF Austria ownership and 50% private ownership. The Landscape Protection Area comprises 2000 ha and the Biosphere Reserve "Untere Lobau" 1000 ha.

To safeguard the typical wet meadows alongside the March, management measures (mowing, hay-harvest) are taken by the landscape management society "Distelverein".

To stabilize the groundwater aquifer an artificial canal was built through the Marchfeld, upstream Vienna, to bring water from the Danube to the Rußbach.

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## 17. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially proposed as a protected area etc.)

The National Park "Donau-Auen" is under preparation, as well as the study of comprehensive management plans. The existing meadow management along the March is to be extended.

Currently a Ramsar working group was set up by the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Youth and Family and the state government of Lower Austria to develop a site plan, taking Ramsar rules into consideration.

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## 18. Current land use: principal human activities in:

### (a) site

Forestry, agriculture, hunting, fishing, filter beds of a sugar-refinery, recreation area for neighbouring settlements, canoeing

### (b) surroundings/catchment

agriculture, hunting

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## 19. Disturbances/threats, including changes in land use and major development projects:

(factors which may have a negative impact on the ecological character of the wetland)

### (a) at the site

The sinking ground water level in the riverine forest due to the deepening of the Danube into its river bed, constitutes a danger for the dynamics of the riverine forest. Donau-Elbe-Oder Canal, plans for various power plants at the Danube, increased recreation activities, manuring of the meadows, drastic reduction of meadows and natural wood areas.

### (b) in the surroundings/catchment

agriculture

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## 20. Hydrological and physical values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc.)

The complete part of the river Danube east of Vienna was regulated in the last century. Nevertheless, both the groundwater and flood dynamics for large riverine areas remained. Depending of the Danube's bed due to erosion, the fall of the groundwater level and the big flood control dam (Hubertusdamm) already built last century lead to the drying up of large parts of the riverine forests.

During the last century, regulation work along the river March was carried out. The surrounding area of the River March, which is used agriculturally, was protected by dams against flooding.

Danube (Furcation type): Height of fall 40 cm/km

March (Meandering type): Height of fall 16 cm/km

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## 21. Social and cultural values: (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc.)

The riverine forest and flood-plains of the Donau-March is of great importance for securing a balanced water economy in the region, whose precipitation is rather poor. The riverine forest is also a retention area for floods. A great potential exists for fishing and forestry, and hunting has always played a big role. In recent years, the Donau-Auen have become very popular as recreation area.

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## 22. Noteworthy fauna: (e.g. unique, rare, endangered, abundant or biogeographically important species; include count data etc.)

Breeding species: *Ciconia nigra* (6 pairs), *C. ciconia* (30 pairs), *Pernis apivorus*, *Milvus nigrans* (20 pairs), *Circus aeruginosus* (1), *C. pygargus*, *Crex crex*, *Alcedo atthis*, *Picus canus*, *Dryocopus martius*, *Dendrocopos medius*, *Sylvia nisoria*, *Picedula albicollis*, *Lanius collurio*, *Tringa totanus*, *Podiceps nigricollis*, *Limosa limosa*, *Tachybaptus ruficollis* etc.

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## 23. Noteworthy flora: (e.g. unique, rare, endangered, or biogeographically important species/communities etc.)

Vegetation of the Danube riverine forest: demontan-pannonic, vegetation of the March riverine forest: panonic-pontic. About 650 plant species can be found in the Donau riverine forests. Some plants of the SE European riverside reach their westerly border in the March riverine forests, e.g. *Acer tartaricum*, *Urtica kioviensis*, *Leucosium aestivum*, *Rumex altissima*, *Eryngium planum*, *Gratiola officinalis* and *Clematis integrifolia*.

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**24. Current scientific research and facilities:** (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.)  
The area is a genetic reservoir, and as such it is irreplaceable for research work. Testing methods, as well as studies, have been carried out since 1990, as regards the possibility of setting up a National Park "Donau Auen". Foundation research of the March riverine forest is carried out by the Federal Environmental Agency with the help of aerial photographs. National Park Institute Donau-Auen of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Applied Eco-Ethology, situated in Haringsee.

**25. Current conservation education:** (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.)

Public relations activities were so far carried out only by the WWF. Information and education possibilities are planned in conjunction with the establishment of the National Park "Donau-Auen".

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**26. Current recreation and tourism:** (state if wetland used for recreation/tourism; indicate type & frequency/intensity)

No recreational facilities exist in the area of the March riverine forest. Only temporary tourism in the region of the "Marchfeld Schlösser" (Castles). In the Donau-Auen tourism is increasing rapidly, due to the vicinity of Vienna. The area is used for hiking, biking, as well as for canoeing.

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**27. Management authority:** (name and address of body responsible for managing the wetland)

Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, Abt. II/3, Angelegenheiten des Naturschutzes, Dorotheergasse 7, A-1010 Wien  
Tel.: 0222-53110; Telefax: 0222-53110 5280

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**28. Jurisdiction:** (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept of Environment etc.)

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**29. Bibliographical references:** (scientific/technical only)

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**30. Reasons for inclusion:** (state which Ramsar criteria - as adopted by Rec.C.4.15 of the Montreux Conference - are applicable)

1c, 1d, 2a, 3b, 3c

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**31. Map of site** (please enclose the most detailed and up-to-date map available - preferably at least 1:25,000 or 1:50,000)  
ÖK numbers: 26, 43, 59, 60 and 61 (M 1:50000)

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