

BULGARIA

Srebarna Nature Reserve

Brief description

The Srebarna Nature Reserve is a freshwater lake adjacent to the Danube and extending over 600 ha. It is the breeding ground of almost 100 species of birds, many of which are rare or endangered. Some 80 other bird species migrate and seek refuge there every winter. Among the most interesting bird species are the Dalmatian pelican, great egret, night heron, purple heron, glossy ibis and white spoonbill.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1983

Years of inscription on List of Danger 1992-2003

Agency responsible for site management

- Ministry of Environment and Water
Marija Luiza Street 22
1000 Sofia
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Website: www.moew.government.bg

2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria N (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

The Nature and Biosphere Reserve "Srebarna" is an old and traditional habitat of a number of rare and threatened by extinction bird species of world (Pelecanus crispus and Haliaeetus albicilla), regional (Casmerodius albus, Platalea leucorodia, Plegadis falcinellus, Phalacrocorax pygmaeus, Branta ruficollis, Anser erythropus), and national (Podiceps griseigena, Anas strepers Aythya nyroca, Netta rufina, Chlidonias nigra, Chlidonias hybrida, Anser anser, Panurus biarmicus) importance. In recent times the nature reserve Srebarna becomes increasingly important as a ground for conservation education.

As provided in ICOMOS/IUCN evaluation

IUCN: Srebarna, with its important breeding populations of a number of threatened species of birds and as an important wetland on the Western Palearctic migratory bird flyway, qualifies for the World Heritage list under criteria iv.

Committee Decision

1983: Bureau: The Bureau requests the authorities to provide additional details concerning the buffer zone foreseen in the perimeter of protection.

The Committee made no statement

- Statement of significance does not adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- A proposal for text has been made
- A decision from the World Heritage Committee regarding a new Statement of Significance is requested
- A change in official UNESCO site description is suggested by the State Party. The State Party suggests a new description which incorporates the entire territory of the managed reserve

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate
- Original boundary of site at inscription amounted to 600 ha - States Party increased the boundary of the managed reserve in 1993 to 892 ha in order to include: "adjacent lands, located northeast of the water surface, the riverside of the Danube River, the Devnya Island, and the river course between the island and the riverside"
- In the Periodic Report, the States Party requests an extension of boundaries. However, the Ministry of Environment and Water decided that the boundaries would not be changed. The property will remain as inscribed in 1983
- Buffer zone: So far, buffer zone of the World Heritage Property has not been defined and proposed by the State Party. State Party updated buffer zone in 2004
- The State Party will undertake measures to update the information in the dossier of Srebarna Nature Reserve World Heritage property
- State party will propose a buffer zone of the World Heritage Property. The last will include both the extension of Srebarna Managed Reserve as protected area (according to the Bulgarian legislation), covering the area from 600 ha up to 892 ha and the existing buffer zone of Srebarna Managed Reserve as protected area according to the Bulgarian legislation

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained but there have been significant changes to the site

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- The territory of the protected area was extended by nearly one third in 1993 (Order No. 581) – up to the present 892 ha
- Protected Areas Act (1999) - according to this Act the category of the protected area was changed into a "managed reserve", 15.10 (Order No RD-367)
- Ramsar procedure for monitoring of endangered wetland was opened in 1993, according to the Convention of Montreux (1990)
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management

Use of site/property

- National park (or other national protected area)

Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group: yes; Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water (RIEW) for the town of Russe and the Administration of the Srebarna Managed Reserve under the RIEW
- Site coordinator on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national, regional
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: 12.2001
- Management plan considered adequate
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water for the town of Russe under the Ministry of Environment and Water

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Bulk of the budget in 2004 provided by Enterprise for Management of Environmental Activities, under the Ministry of Environment and Water
- Funding is sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- number of staff: 5 at full-time

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across following disciplines:

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

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

- Annual training courses organised by the Ministry of Environment and Waters, which includes courses on: application of national legislation in the field of nature and biodiversity preservation; knowledge and application of the requirements of international conventions and agreements in the field of nature and biodiversity preservation, including the Convention for Preservation of the World Heritage; specialized training in flora and fauna; specialized training in public relations
- Further training needs are identified by State Party in the following areas: involving funding organizations; the use of GIS in the site's management; attracting tourists; involving the local population in the Reserve's problems and management

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 8,248 visitors to the museum in 2001, 11,680 visitors in 2002, 4,210 visitors in 2003 (museum under repair), and 10,334 in 2004; 17 visits for education and scientific purposes in 2002, 86 visits in 2003 and 101 visits in 2004
- Trend is fluctuating
- Visitor facilities: museum, bird-monitoring sites, visitor paths

10. Scientific Studies

- Monitoring exercises and studies related to the value of the site: a team from the Central Laboratory of General Ecology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences performs on an annual basis monitoring of the site. Various parameters are monitored, related to water quality in the lake and the state of plant and animal species' populations
A separate monitoring program for the population of the *Pelicanus Cispus* is also underway, which is implemented by a local NGO
- Studies used for management of site: the research team performing the monitoring

activity submits annual reports to the MEW and RIEW – Rousse, and recommends undertaking specific managerial activities based on these results

- Other: a database is being created including all publications based on scientific studies carried out on the site

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to the World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Web site available: www.riosv.ruse.bg. A Web site dedicated particularly on Srebarna Nature Reserve World Heritage property will be also developed.
- No local participation in site management
- developing programs to restore traditional local crafts and occupations (sport fishing, reed mowing), and courses for locals in ornithology and ecology

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Bureau sessions: 16th (1992); 17th (1993); 18th (1994); 19th (1995); 20th (1996); 22nd (1998); 24th (2000); 25th (2001)
- World Heritage Committee sessions: 16th (1992); 17th (1993); 18th (1994); 19th (1995); 20th (1996); 21st (1997); 22nd (1998); 23rd (1999); 24th (2000); 25th (2001); 26th (2006); 27th (2003); 28th (2004)

Conservation interventions

- Restoration of the marsh's hydrological regime through construction of a channel and locks connecting the lake with the Danube River. This provides an inflow of fresh water during the spring months, which is designed to prevent shallowing, eutrofication, and deterioration of water quality. The channel was constructed in 1994.
- A repair of one of the sluice gates was provided, as well as a portable electric generator was purchased in order to provide fast closure of the sluice gates in case of emergency. These actions were taken to implement the

recommendations of a joint mission of the UNESCO and Ramsar, which was held on the site in 2001, as well as the recommendations made by the World Heritage Committee

- Digital model of protected area and buffer zone created
- Present state of conservation: Good

Threats and Risks to site

- Environmental. Agricultural/forestry regimes (in the past)
- Specific issues: illegal fishing, presence of non-local plant (esp. *Ailanthus altissima*, *Amorpha fruticosa*) and animal species (*Canis aureus*, *Nyctereutes procyonoides*)

Actions, on-going and to be further developed in order to remedy risks include:

- Illegal fishing minimized by the establishment of special zones for sport fishing
- Special fencing to protect local species nesting grounds
- Replacement of hybrid poplar with local species;
- Program of removal of *Ailanthus altissima* and *Amorpha fruticosa*

13. Monitoring

- A formal monitoring programme is in place, organised by the Central Laboratory of General Ecology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The monitoring activities are carried out to control protected areas and the World Heritage property's state of conservation and to provide scientific justification of managerial decisions. Monitoring focuses on abiotic and biotic parameters
- An independent program focusing on Wool-Headed Pelicans is implemented by an NGO and funded by a foreign donor

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social, management
- Strengths of Management:
 1. A Management Plan for the Managed Reserve was elaborated and is already being implemented.
 2. A digital model of the protected area was prepared
 3. A Program for Ecological Monitoring is carried out by the Central Laboratory of General ecology under the Bulgarian Academy of sciences

4. A Program to monitor the conservation status of *Pelicanus crispus* has been implemented by an NGO sponsored by foreign donors

5. A digital model of the buffer zone surrounding the Managed Reserve, is also under preparations

- Weaknesses of Management: none given

Future actions:

- Continued implementation of management plan in relation to maintenance of the water level and the water conditions; cleaning and reconstruction of the channel that connects Srebarna lake with Danube river, etc.
- Management activities in relation to these actions may require international assistance through the World Heritage Fund