# World Wetlands Day 2011 Forests for water and wetlands



# Events of Green Balkans NGO for the World Wetlands Day 2011 Report





#### 1. The Ramsar Convention and WWD

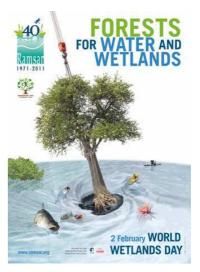
The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance was signed on February 2, 1971 in the Caspian seaside resort of Ramsar in Iran. That is why on this date every year a World Wetlands Day is celebrated and the efforts of nature lovers and conservationists from all over the world turn

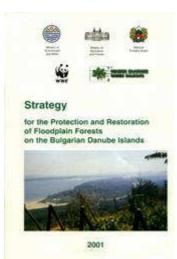


towards attracting public attention onto the significance and problems of wetlands - rivers, lakes, marshes, sea coast, etc. 2011 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ramsar Convention and it is celebrated by hundreds of state and non-governmental organizations all over the world. Bulgaria joined the Convention in 1976 and was one of the first 10 countries (number 8, 24/01/76) in the world to do that. Ten are the wetlands of international importance in Bulgaria included in the Ramsar list: Ropotamo Complex, Srebarna, Atanasovo Lake, Durankulak Lake, Lake Shabla, Belene Islands Complex, Ibisha Island, Poda, Pomorie Wetland Complex, Vaya Lake.

## 2. WWD 2011

The anniversary year's theme for World Wetlands Day is Wetlands and Forests with focus on the connections between these. Unfortunately the huge importance of forests for securing enough stocks of fresh water on Earth and maintaining the normal operation of wet ecosystems is often neglected. Forests act as protection in major flood events, maintain high level of ground water, host thousands of animals and plants, serve as a major part of the water cycle, prevent erosion, remove toxic substances, thus securing pure drinking water, provide shade, preventing over-evaporation, create leaf deposits, serving as food for many animals. At the same time forests in wetlands are of extreme importance for the environmental equilibrium on Earth.





This year's WWD topic coincides with Green Balkans NGO former activities on riparian forests conservation along Bulgarian stretches of Danube River. These include development of **STRATEGY FOR CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF THE FLOODPLAIN FORESTS ON THE DANUBE ISLAND** and **ACTION PLAN FOR CONSERVATIO AND RESTORATION OF THE FLOODPLAIN FORESTS ON THE BULGARIAN DANUBE ISLANDS** – 2003-2007. These were pioneer documents adopted by Bulgarian Forestry Agency at a time when a better part of the Bulgarian Danube Islands was turned into intensive poplar plantations. Later on pilot projects in partnership with Local Forestry Units were undertaken and logged plots of plantations were re-planted with native tree species of poplar, ash and willows thus restoring habitat and biodiversity.

### 3. Events organized by Green Balkans NGO for WWD 2011

To celebrate the World Wetlands Day 2011 Green Balkans NGO organized several events in Plovdiv and Pomorie.

Plovdiv. Next to one of the bridges across the Maritsa River - one of the most significant bio-corridors and wetlands inland - the Green Balkans' team carried out an awareness campaign. All interested were informed citizens about the importance of wetlands and had the chance to observe the rich biodiversity of the river through a spotting-scope and other provided optical equipment. For many of them it was a nice surprise to find out that just next to their homes there are such beautiful and interesting birds like Kingfishers, Grebes, Teals and Mallards. The fact that Maritsa River is one of the most





important wintering sites worldwide for the globally threatened Cormorant Pygmy (Phalacrocorax pygmeus) and the its largest roots along the river is just next to the big city was another revelation for many of the locals. Other event in the city was held in the Children Section of the Ivan Vazov National Library where a representative of Green Balkans introduced the kids from several schools of Plovdiv to the rich wild life of Maritsa River with an interesting multimedia presentation. The supported by events were Ministry of

Environment and Waters and its regional body in Plovdiv by providing translated Ramsar materials - posters, stickers, leaflets.

**Pomorie.** The town is situated just south of one of the ten Ramsar sites in Bulgaria - Pomorie Wetland Complex (Ramsar Site No 1229). Pomorie Lake Visitor Centre  $40^{\text{th}}$ celebrated а double holiday: of  $10^{\text{th}}$ anniversary Ramsar and anniversary of designation of Pomorie Lake protected site. An Open Door event was held at recently built Pomorie Lake Visitor Centre with multimedia presentation to local community describing what wetlands are, why they are important, what is the Ramsar



Convention and which are the 10 Ramsar sites in Bulgaria, the Forests and Wetlands topic for WWD 2011, etc. A public showing of the Ramsar Secretariat video "Wetlands: Keeping our



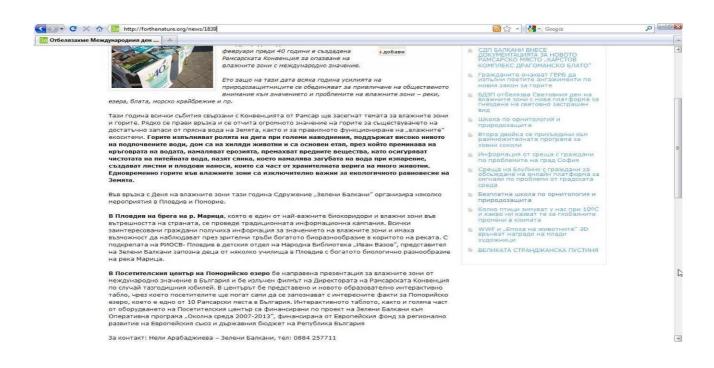
planet alive and well" was also part of the program. The visitors had also the chance to use the available optical equipment and observe some of the winter visitors of Pomorie Lake like Redshanks, Grey plovers, Black-headed gulls, Mallards, Teals, Coots, Shelducks and Mute swans. Last 2 species are among those 8 species covering the Ramsar criteria for inclusion of the site into the Ramsar List of Wetlands of international Importance. Great interest attracted the interactive touch-screen panel that is part of the Visitor centre's exhibition. It is providing interesting facts

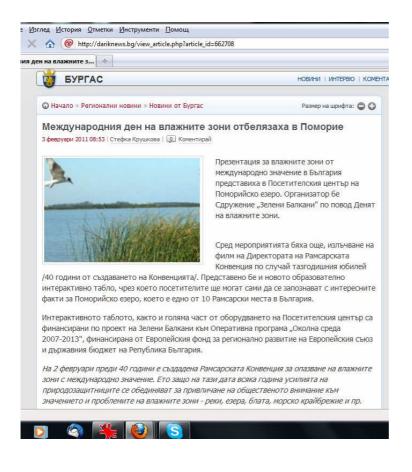
concerning Pomorie Lake like available eco-trails for birdwatchers and nature lovers, biodiversity and human activities in the area (sea salt production and medicinal mud extraction), other sites to visit in the region, rich photo gallery, etc.

Printed materials provided kindly by Ramsar Secretariat were distributed at events in Plovdiv and Pomorie.

#### 4. Media coverage

The media coverage included news articles on websites and participation in NBT (New Bulgarian Television) program "Today".





Contacts: Dimitar Popov – <u>dpopov@greenbalkans.org</u> Neli Arabadzhieva – <u>narabadzhieva@greenbalkans.org</u>

Photo credits: Neli Arabadzhieva, Dimitar Popov, Doncho Kirov

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