



2 February 2012

World Wetlands Day in Bulgaria

“Wetland Tourism: A Great Experience”

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Bulgaria is actively participating in the implementation of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. A good example is that in 2011 the Ministry of Environment and Water added a new site – “Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex” to the National List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites). The new wetland is unique, as in spite of the anthropogenic pressure in the region of its location, only 30 km away from the capital of Bulgaria – Sofia, and taking into account that in the 30s of the 20th century the wetland was completely destroyed, today the wetland is fully restored and is currently a habitat for a number of rare and protected plant and animal species. 256 species of birds have been recorded so far in the area, which forms about 61% of the Bulgarian avifauna, 9 species of amphibians, 11 species of reptiles, 43 mammals and 180 vascular plants, as most of them are endemic species for the country and the Balkan Peninsula. “Dragoman Marsh” is an important area and for a number of species of butterflies and dragonflies of European and World importance.

On 2 February 2012 press conference and Ramsar site certificate awarding ceremony was organized. The ceremony was organized with collaboration of Municipalities of Dragoman, Slivnitsa and Kostinbrod and Sofia District Administration. The press conference was the first promotion of the new and biggest Ramsar site in Bulgaria “Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex” on local, national and regional level. The press conference was held on 2 February 2012, Thursday, at 11:00 pm, in "National Press Club" at the “Bulgarian News Agency”. At the press conference Mayors of the municipalities Dragoman, Slivnitsa and Kostinbrod within the wetland falls and which will manage it according to the principles of the Ramsar Convention were awarded with certificates of Ramsar site "Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex," issued by the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention.

Awarding ceremony was led by **Mrs. Evdokia Maneva - Deputy Minister of Environment and Water**. The press conference was attended by Mrs. Irena Petkova – representative of Governor of Sofia District Administration, Mr. Dimitry Petrov – Deputy Mayor of Kostinbrod, Mr. Vasko Stoilkov - Mayor of Slivnitsa, Mr. Andrey Ivanov - Mayor of Dragoman, Mr. Stefan Borisov - Director of Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water – Sofia and representatives of “Balkani Wildlife Society” NGO. Also at the press conference attended representatives of the “National Nature Protection Service” (NNPS) Directorate at the Ministry of Environment and Water – Mr. Michail Michaylov – Director of the NNPS

Directorate, Mr. Nikolay Nedyalkov – Head of Natura 2000 Department and Ms Aylin Hasan – National Coordinator of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The press conference was attended by journalists from all national media and the news for the new and biggest Ramsar site in Bulgaria and were presented in all national media.

Pictures from 2 February 2012 press conference and Ramsar site certificate awarding ceremony:

Picture 1: Deputy Minister Evdokia Maneva, Mayors of Municipalities Slivnitsa, Kostinbrod and Dragoman, representative of Sofia District Administration, representative of Deutschen Botschaft Sofia and representative of “Balkani Wildlife Society” NGO



Picture 2: Deputy Minister Evdokia Maneva, Mayors of Municipalities Slivnitsa, Kostinbrod and Dragoman during certificate awarding ceremony



Picture 3: Mayors of Municipalities Slivnitsa, Kostinbrod and Dragoman with Ramsar site certificate



Under the implementation of the project ***“Public awareness for new Bulgarian Ramsar site “Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex”***, funded by the program ***“NatuRegio_floodplains”*** together with “Balkani Wildlife Society” NGO as a partner a **photo competition** titled ***“The best view of the “Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex”*** wetland was announced. The announcement was published on the Ministry website, on the project partner “Balkani Wildlife Society” NGO website and also on the Municipality administration of Dragoman, Slivnitsa and Kostinbrod websites.

Initial plans were to make selection of winners from photo pictures competition to 2 February 2012 and to present them during the celebration. But due to bad weather conditions – very strong winter last weeks we decided to extend the period for competition and the selection of winners will be made at the beginning of March. Then all selected pictures will be presented at the visitor centre of the wetland.

Traditionally, the World Wetlands Day 2011 in Bulgaria was celebrated with campaigns over the country, organized by the regional structures of the Ministry of Environment and Water and directed to kindergartens, schools and universities, and including open lessons, exhibitions, presentations, activities of different environmental school clubs, competition, birdwatching tours.

On 2 February 2012 a celebration campaign in “Dragoman marsh” visitor centre was planned with the project partner “Balkani Wildlife Society” NGO and with identified as one of the most important priority target group – children and teachers from local schools in Dragoman. But unfortunately the week of 2 February was announced flu vacation for all schools in Sofia District. From this reason the planned celebration in visitor centre held on 8 February. But due to very low temperatures and the ongoing flu epidemic vacation fewer children able to attend the event.

Pictures from the celebration campaign in “Dragoman marsh” visitor centre:

