Ecological Restoration of Vlascuta Lake, Romania

Year of issue

2025

Summary

The project’s objective was to improve the conservation status of aquatic bird species in Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Park (Galați County, RO) through scientific inventory, monitoring, site restoration, awareness-raising, implementation of the park management plan, and the designation of Natura 2000 SPAs. Partners were the University of Bucharest, the Romanian Ornithological Society and Romsilva – Galați Forestry.

At Vlăscuța, connectivity with the Prut was re-established by de-clogging the access (366 m) and outflow (176 m) channels and installing two sluices to stabilise lake levels; a birdwatching tower was also built here. The site is a national natural reserve (RONPA0433, 41.8 ha) within the Natura 2000 network (park overlaps ROSCI0105 and SPAs including ROSPA0070). Recent management documents confirm these works and facilities.

Photo Gallery






Location

45.7775, 28.147222

Project

NWRM

National ID

Romania_ 09

Sector

Hydromorphology

Installation Date

2010-10

Implementation status

Completed

Contact

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Overview

Location of the project

In Măstăcani commune (Drăculești village), inside the Prut embanked area; access from DN26 Galați–Cavadinești and the local road DC “Șoseaua Rusului” to the Prut dyke.

Country

Romania

NUTS2 Code

Sud-Est

Sponge measures implemented in the case study

Floodplain restoration and management

Lake restoration

Objectives

Improve the conservation status of 13 priority and 50+ other Birds Directive species present in the Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Park.
Re-establish the ecological balance of lakes by fixing degraded hydrological structures and improving/maintaining water levels.
Designate four SPAs (Romanian Natura 2000) and prepare/approve an integrated park management plan and administration.
Carry out inventories and monitoring, plus public engagement (village consultations, picture books, nature trails, six annual environment days, bird-watching towers).
De-clog access canal 366 m and evacuation canal 176 m; install two dams/sluices (with a small footbridge) to control levels.

Involved partners

Authority type	Authority name	Authority role	Comments
Regional / sub-national water authority	Regional Environmental Protection Agency Galati	—	—
Other	County Council Galati	Financing	County Council

Authority type	Authority name	Authority role	Comments
Other	University of Bucharest, Research Center for Environment and Impact Studies	Implementation	Research and development center for environment
NGO	Romanian Ornithological Society	Other	—
Forest owners	Forestry Department Galati	Determination of design details of the measure	—
NGO	Park Administration Lower Prut Floodplain	Initiation of the measure	—

Site Information

Climate Zone

Cool temperate dry

Precipitation

500.00 mm

Temperature (°C)

11.00 °C

Elevation range

6

Groundwater level

~9–32 m depth; flow toward the Lower Prut floodplain

Vegetation class

The specific vegetation for the area of Vlascuta Lake is represented by the water flora itself made up by: reed, mace reed, sedge, shave rush, duckweed, water milfoil, white water lilies and many other characteristic species.

WFD Ecological status

Moderate

WFD Chemical status

Good

Water quality status

Organic loading and high mineralization; risks from agricultural pesticides and transboundary accidental discharges

Design and Implementation

Project scale

Micro

Project scale specifications

Site-level hydromorphology within a meso-scale park project.

Project area

41,8

Area subject to Land use change or Management/Practice change (ha)

41.80 ha

Favourable preconditions

Wetlands belong to the category of ecologically fragile areas, their dynamic being influenced mainly by the qualitative and quantitative characteristic of the water in the hydrographical basin in which they extend. For this reason, the conservation measures promoted in these spaces must be doubled by a strict control of the anthropic activities / arrangements using water for different purposes or as a medium of discharging some wastes.

Financing

Total cost

824710.00 €

Financing authorities

Authority name	Type of funding	Comments	Financing share
European Union	EU-funds: LIFE+	412,355 €	50 %
The Ministry of Environment and the Sustainable Development	National funds	412,355 € with all non-EU sources	50 %

Authority name	Type of funding	Comments	Financing share
Galati County Council	Local funds	412,355 € with all non-EU sources	50 %

Compensations

Non

Policy and Governance

Policy description

Within the perimeter of the Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Park, it was the area Vlascuta Lake, who needed ecological reconstruction works, because it was situated on a floodable land and the clogging phenomenon is rapid and advanced. All these are also due to the fact that the basin of the Prut River underwent, during the last 70 years, many hydrotechnical and hydrological works. These works consisted in the building of dams and draining on a large surface of the wetland. The Lower Prut Floodplain underwent the most radical alteration by the draining of the main part of Brates Lake. In the case of Vlascuta Lake, the ecological reconstruction works were quite necessary, since the canal for the access of the water from the Prut River was partially clogged, and the water evacuation canal from Vlascuta Lake was almost completely clogged.

Land ownership

State public domain (lake basin).

Policy targets

Increase Water Storage

Improved Biodiversity

Groundwater Recharge

Part of a wider plan

Oui

Wider plan

Wider plan type	Wider plan focus	Name
National	Environment & Biodiversity	Lower Danube Green Corridor programme

Public consultation

Oui

Consultation activities

Activity stage	Activity type	Key issues
Implementation phase	Awareness raising activities	These include information dissemination, consultation of every village in the area, and active participation and education with local educational material to be produced. The project takes into account that there is a relatively high illiteracy in the area and will address stakeholders in wide variety of ways, including picture books, nature trails, six annual environment days with expeditions into the area, children's exhibitions, and bird watching towers

Has contractual arrangements

Non

Impacts and Monitoring

Monitoring System

Monitoring requirements

The park’s management plan assigns ongoing monitoring to the Lower Prut Floodplain NP Administration, with long-term LIFE monitoring on birds, water quality/quantity, and bioaccumulation of organochlorine pesticides; facilities include a tower at Vlăscuța

Monitoring parameters

Bird population status (with a formal species monitoring programme and watch facilities) and bioaccumulation of organochlorine pesticides in birds; water quality and quantity, land-use and awareness tracking.

Maintenance

Maintenance requirements

Lake levels are controlled by operating two sluices/dams on the inflow and outflow channels; the site also keeps its birdwatching tower operational.

Socio-economic Impacts

Direct benefits information

Better conditions for the birds population; increasing the number for aquatic bird species (especially those listed in Annex I of Birds Directive, Bern Convention and in ORNIS lists); improve the trophic state and saprobity of the target aquatic systems; allowing the water oxygenation of the lakes through the input of the fresh water from the Prut River; including the monitoring birds protocols in the adaptive Management Plan of Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Park;
Eco-tourism and fisheries potential supported by restored hydrology and a bird tower; activities framed by park rules for organised tourism.

Ancillary benefits information

Supply the potential of fisheries resources; using the potential of providing services for tourism and recreation

Biophysical impacts: Hydrology

Hydrological effects

Increased water storage and maintained levels

Biophysical impacts: Biodiversity

Improved biodiversity

Oui

Information on improved biodiversity

Restoration of aquatic birds sites in the natural protected area located in Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Patk - Vlascuta Lake

Biophysical impacts: Water & Soil Quality

Water quality overall improvements

Positive impact-WQ improvement

Information on water quality overall

Improved trophic state and saprobity and oxygenation of the lakes by fresh Prut inflows

Lessons Learned

Key lessons

Re-opening short inlet/outlet channels and operating two small sluices was enough to stabilise levels so habitats are protected in both droughts and floods—turning Vlăscuța into a showcase for redeveloping and broadening habitats that support Natura 2000 objectives. Strong public outreach embedded in the project helped social acceptance.

Barriers

Barrier type	Barrier role	Comments
Other	Main barrier	Severe clogging of access/evacuation canals (pre-project condition to overcome).
Legal obligations / restrictions	Secondary barrier	Communication constraints in the wider project area (high illiteracy handled via tailored materials).
Lacking financing sources	Secondary barrier	Park-level maintenance funding gaps leading to dike degradation and siltation (long-term risk to hydraulic function).

Drivers

Driver type	Driver role
Organisation committed to it	Main driver

Success factors

Success factor type	Success factor role	Comments
Attitude of decision makers	Main factor	Clear roles among agencies (REPA Galați, Park Administration, Forestry Dept., University of Bucharest, SOR).
Financing possibilities	Secondary factor	Blended financing: EU LIFE+, national ministry, Galați County Council.
Communication activities	Main factor	Early, targeted awareness work (village consultations, nature trails, events, towers).

Transferability

Highly transferable to low-gradient river–floodplain lakes: modest channel dredging plus small sluices and dyke repairs can restore levels and habitat. Success hinges on sediment load and long-term maintenance, available inflows, protected-area rules and stakeholder alignment. Watch for rapid re-siltation, drought-driven low flows and fish-farm constraints; embed monitoring of birds and water quality.

Sources

Sources

Some aspects concerning wetland restoration programs in the Prut River Basin

Lower Prut Floodplain - Ecological restoration of the Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Park

Ecological Reconstruction Works– Vlascuta Lake

Ecological reconstruction works – Vlascuta Lake

Wetland and floodplain habitats management and solutions in Lower Meadow of Prut Natural Park

Bird fauna long-term monitoring in the Romanian Lower Prut river basin

Planul de management – Parcul Natural Lunca Joasă a Prutului Inferior (PNLJPI)

Anexa nr. 1 – Lista consolidată a ariilor naturale protejate din România (RONPA)

LIFE Public Database – LIFE05 NAT/RO/000155 “Ecological restoration of the Lower Prut Floodplain Natural Park”

“2.1.7 Sectorul pescăresc” – FLAG Galați Strategy (archive 2012–2015)

“Schema cu Riscurile Teritoriale din județul Galați – 2024” (PDF)

“Comunitate – Comuna Măstăcani”

Fișa standard a sitului Natura 2000 – ROSCI0105 „Lunca Joasă a Prutului”