Two Polish Ramsar sites removed from the Montreux Record

Poland has completed the formalities for the removal of its two Ramsar sites that have been on the Montreux Record of sites “where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur” for quite a few years. According to documentation provided by the Administrative Authority in the Ministry of Environment, managers at Lake of Seven Islands Nature Reserve (Rezerwat przyrody "Jezioro Siedmiu Wysp") and Warta River Mouth National Park (Park Narodowy "Ujscie Warty") have made substantial progress in resolving the problems for which the sites were added to the Record in 1990 and 1993 respectively, and after consultations with the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) they have been removed from the Record as of 5 November 2007.

In the late 1980s Lake of Seven Islands Nature Reserve (Rezerwat przyrody "Jezioro Siedmiu Wysp") was facing a serious disappearance of water plants due to several causes, including abiotic factors, urban and domestic effluent, nutrient-rich agricultural inflow, and drainage work carried out on the lower reaches of the river Oswinka in the territory of the ex-USSR, prompting vegetation encroachment into the marsh and water management deficiencies.

In 1993 the construction of a new impoundment led to the rise in the water level of the lake and an increase in the number of the local swamp and aquatic plants. This restoration measure also improved the hydrological conditions and vegetation succession. In 2004 the reserve was extensively enlarged with concomitant changes in the use of the adjacent land, which was formerly managed for agricultural purposes and was now brought under protection. A management plan including a monitoring system has been developed and will be implemented in the coming years, while the restoration of the mosaic of habitats characteristic of the area is currently under way.

Warta River Mouth National Park (Park Narodowy "Ujscie Warty") was listed in the Montreux Record due to human and natural causes affecting the water quality and quantity of the Slonsk reservoir and its surrounding meadows.

Now the site has been extended and designated as a National Park, and a management plan ensures species, water quality and water level monitoring activities. There has been a reintroduction of traditional cattle grazing for meadow management and control over angling activities. The site no longer suffers from early spring water deficits.

The two sites therefore show a remarkable recovery since the problems were faced, and STRP members have recommended that they might be used in the near future as potential wise use case studies.

The Montreux Record was created by the Parties in 1990 to highlight those Wetlands of International Importance that require urgent conservation attention. Sites are added and removed from the Record at the request of the Party concerned in collaboration with the Secretariat and members of the STRP. There are presently 57 Ramsar sites on the Record, and over the years 25 sites have been removed from the list because of improvements in their situations. The Guidelines for listing and removing a site were defined by Resolution VI.1 (1996) and can be seen here, and the completed "Montreux Record Questionnaires" for Lake of Seven Islands (PDF) and Warta River Mouth (PDF) are worth reading in themselves. The current list of Montreux Record sites can be seen here.

-- Monica Zavagli, Ramsar