

We were celebrating the World Wetlands Day 2011 along the Mura River

Tabrih Association, Međimurska Priroda, International Committee for the Conservation of Mura River, Naša Mura-Unser Mur and other associations and individuals, carried out the 12th Nature walk along the Mura River on Sunday 30th January 2011 to celebrate the World Wetlands Day.

Despite of that during the last decades great parts of Mura River have been regulated and its adjacent wetlands have been damaged by draining and turned into arable land, floodplains along the Mura River still have a key importance for supporting the freshwater supply and biodiversity in this part of Europe. Therefore organizers of the walk are sending clear and unambiguous message to Slovenian, Austrian and Croatian governments. Mura River with its remaining wetlands and floodplain forests should be included on the list of Wetlands of International Importance protected by Ramsar Convention.

This year, more than 500 friends of Mura River and hikers from Slovenian Obmurje, Austrian Styria, Ljubljana and of course from Croatian Međimurje gathered in Križovec, in front of the Visitors Centre of the Međimurska Priroda Public Institute.

The area along the Mura River in Međimurje is part of 144,000 ha large Regional Park Mura-Drava, which stretches from the Slovenian-Croatian border to the mouth of Drava into Danube. The Croatian government declared the area as a Regional park shortly thereafter on 10th February 2011.

There were some celebrities walking with us like famous Slovenian musician Vlado Kreslin who has devoted many songs to Mura River. But we missed politicians and decision makers. During the 10 km long march, we walked along the Mura River and its side arms, through the floodplain forests and parts of area drastically changed in past and still at present days by illegal gravel and sand extraction. Unfortunately many parts near the river and side arms are now abandoned and overgrown with invasive alien species like the Giant Goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*).

Some of us had luck and have seen the White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) couple, which can be often seen in this area as the Park Rangers Zvonko and Velimir told us. Mura River with adjacent wetlands, forests, oxbows, river islands, gravel and sand banks counts to Central Europe's a biological hot spots. Just in Slovenian part of Mura more than 600 plants, 200 birds, of which 110 are breeding here, 30 mammals, 15 amphibians and 1200 species of butterflies were recorded (Bedjanič, Urbanek 2001). On the wet meadows in the Regional Park Mura-Drava the last population of the Scarce Large Blue butterflies (*Maculinea teleius*) and the Dusky Large Blue butterflies (*Maculinea nausithous*) in Croatia can be found (Kadi, Pavlic, 2010). Furthermore Mura and Drava basin are home for endangered species such as Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*), Middle Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus medius*), Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*), Otter (*Lutra lutra*) and Beaver (*Castor fiber*) as well.

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Photos [here](#) by Stanka Dešnik

Song from Vlado Kreslin and Lidija Bajuk »[Šetala se lepa Mara](#)«