

Basic ideas for the development of sustainable tourism on the Ada Island

Ulcinjaska Primorje - Montenegro

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Fig. 1. Ada Island, Reserve Velipoja and the Bojana River: Protected Natural Heritage of Global Importance in Montenegro and Albania

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2 Introduction

The Master Plan for Tourism for Montenegro promotes the development of sustainable tourism based on the natural and cultural heritage of the country. The Regional Master Plan for Tourism for Ulcinj and the coastal areas proposes a step-by-step development of the Velika Plaza based on Environmental Assessments and the development of protected areas in the Eastern part including Ada Island.

3 Ada Island

3.1 European Green Belt

Large prime natural areas in Europe were not protected by nature conservation authorities, but as border regions controlled by military and border control. Beside the Iron Curtain, the Albanian border very strictly controlled and without access to the public. The Ada Island and the Bojana River is one of the best examples how this borders restricted development and



Fig. 2. Habitat Map of the Ada Island, Reserve Velipoja and the Eastern part of Velika Plaza – an unique natural area in the Mediterranean.

preserved natural areas. Only recently this strict regulations have been weakened leading to more disturbance on the island and the surrounding natural areas.

Initiated by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and under the lead of IUCN, the creation of a chain of protected areas has been started to transfer the Iron Curtain into a

European Green Belt. The Ada Island is one of the starting points for the trans-European initiative.

3.2 Protection Status

The Ada Island is not protected as Natural Monument in Montenegro, but part of the “coastal estate” under special jurisdiction of the country.

Ada is the only strict controlled area with a hunting ban in the Bojana-Buna Delta. It is protected by the local hunting organisation from Ulcinj and the community.

3.3 Ecological Values

Beside the tourist facilities and the recent impact along the Bojana River, the Ada Island is a natural area, unique in the Mediterranean.

The island is characterised by a natural mosaic of habitats formed by the dynamic growing Delta of the Bojana River. This process is still going on and needs careful monitoring.

The virgin alluvial forest represents also a unique value. Huge trees grow on the island which has not been impacted over more than fifties years.

The value can be documented also by a great number of bird species protected in Europe (see Appendix II).

3.4 Flagship Species

This species and species groups are mentioned, as they are important for the tourist development and the conservation value.

3.4.1 Dolphins

Dolphins migrate about 30 km upstream the river Bojana. This is unique in Europe.

3.4.2 Marine Turtles

Marine Turtles have been observed egg laying in 2002 during the Euronatur Assessment.

3.4.3 Golden Jackal

While this species is extremely seldom in Albania and also not common in Montenegro, three packs have been monitored during the Euronatur Assessment of the Ada Island.

3.4.4 Mixed Herons colony

A colony with four species of herons, Pygmy Cormorants and Spoonbills is breeding in the forest of the Island.

3.4.5 Stone Curlew

The Stone Curlew breeds beside other species of waders on the island.

3.4.6 Bioluminescence

The sea at the mouth of the Bojana is enlightened by “Bioluminescence” during the night: a natural phenomenon caused by the rich plankton.

3.4.7 Fish diversity and migration

Ada is based at the entrance to the Bojana River and Lake Skadar. It is of international importance both as fish migration corridor and by the species diversity.

4 Tourist development

4.1 Famous nudist camp

In compare to the actual illegal development of tourist facilities, small-scale weekend and fisher house, the nudist camp built in former Yugoslav times and under strict control of the border, impacted the Ada Island only on the very Western edge. The natural landscape had been preserved during this time, and the border areas were strictly protected. Due to the border and the lack of trails during this time, tourists did not impact the ecological value. Even more important is, that the right side of the right branch of the Bojana during this time was not impacted by tourists at all – today this area is a monument of the missing enforcement of law and nature preservation in Montenegro with a dramatic increase of illegal houses during the last two years.

The management of the old nudist camp proved, that it is no problem fill tourist facilities at the Adriatic coast from April until October. Comparing the actual situation without a working tourist camp on the island with the situation before, the impacts are for sure today higher. It would be important to organise the use of the Ada Island and the Bojana River as early as possible to avoid even more impacts. In 2003 the unique mixed Herons colony was not successful due to the different impacts and virgin forest was cut.

4.2 Capacity assessment

Impacts of tourist facilities depend on the size and the impact on the surrounding landscape. In the case of Ada Island – a protected area – the development of tourism has to be based on the natural heritage. But comparing the situation now, and before, a restricted use of the island as tourist camp offers better opportunities to preserve the natural heritage as the actual status.

There are good examples for tourist facilities in natural areas, which do not impact these, but contribute, to their protection. If the natural heritage is accepted as the basic tourist value, it is easy to create offers as bird watching, riding and other recreation activities on the island and in the surrounding areas. Extremely important would be bicycle trails along the Bojana, towards Ulcinj and around the Salinas of Ulcinj. The examples how to develop Ada Island as a tourist place have to be chosen carefully and inside protected areas as National Parks.

4.3 Outlines for Tourism on the Ada Island

The tourist facilities should only use the already over built and the space where the buildings are. The capacity has to be adapted to the size of the beach which can be used for tourism – only a part of the beach can be used and special measures to protect the marine turtles are needed - and the trail and interpretation system on the islands. A growing pressure on the natural heritage has to be avoided. These criteria have to be accepted by every developer. Even better would be a strategic assessment or a development plan prepared by an expert team for nature protection as a basis for every potential investor. Damages to the natural heritage would be extremely negative for Montenegro as a growing new tourist destination. Already now the situation is extremely critical as the herons colony was destroyed in 2003

and illegal building – with all negative impacts as water pollution, disturbance, over fishing, ... - is spreading out rapidly.

4.4 Interpretation

Most important for the tourists on the Ada Island is interpretation of the natural values. The site is ideal to combine recreation as swimming, surfing and riding with nature tourism. This is only possible if a visitor information system will be developed as a part of the tourist product. This system can include the visit of the Heron colony and a nursery for young marine turtles. The island is attractive all over the year for guest interested in nature, if it is well protected and part of a wider Biosphere reserve or transboundary protected area.

5 Perspectives for the region

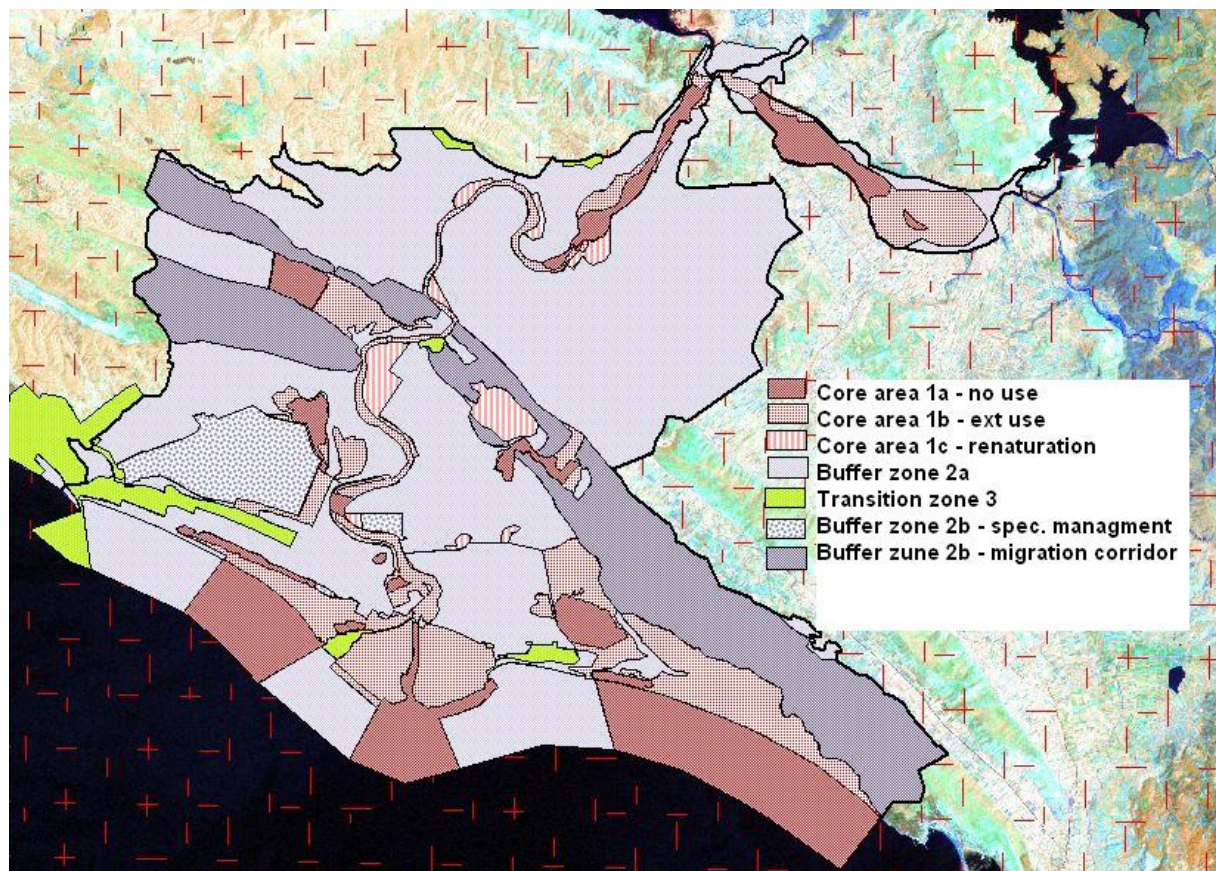
The Ada Island and the Velipoje Reserve (AL) are the core areas of the Bojana-Buna Delta (Appendix I). The Rapid Assessment of Euronatur comes to the conclusion, that these two already protected areas should be in the centre of the Marine Park Bojana-Buna Delta, a transboundary biosphere reserve between Montenegro and Albania. This kind of development would respect the Strategy of Montenegro to become an Ecological State and at the same time place the Ulcinjska Primorje at a top of the list of tourist destinations in the Mediterranean. The Marine Park Bojana Delta would not limit the development possibilities, but stream line them to a sustainable use of the natural resources as proposed by DEG in the Regional Master Plan for Tourism. It would also follow the UNDP proposal, to develop alternative models of eco-tourism in the country: Ada Island is the best place to start with.

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7 Appendix I

Proposal for a Transboundary Marine Park Bojana-Buna Delta (Euronatur in prep.)



8 Appendix II

List of Birds of international conservation concern on the Ada Island

| Species | Scientific name | Status | Number | EU Lev | SPEC | EU Threat | Conventions | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------|------|------------|-------------|-----|----|
| | | | | | | | EU | Be | Bo |
| Pygmy Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax pygmeus</i> | colony | 35-50 pairs | | 2 | Vulnerable | I | II | II |
| Dalmatian pelican | <i>Pelecanus crispus</i> | visitor | >5 | 1%* | 1 | Vulnerable | I | II | II |
| Little Bittern | <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i> | passage | > 50 | | 3 | Vulnerable | I | III | |
| Night Heron | <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> | colony | 30 pairs | | 3 | Declining | I | III | |
| Squacco Heron | <i>Ardeola ralloides</i> | colony | 15-20 pairs | | 3 | Vulnerable | I | III | |
| Little Egrett | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> | colony | 60 pairs | | no | Secure | I | II | |
| Purple Heron | <i>Ardea purpurea</i> | breeding | ? | | 3 | Vulnerable | I | II | II |
| Grey Heron | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> | colony | 10 | | 2 | Rare | I | II | II |
| Spoonbill | <i>Platalea leucorodia</i> | colony | 19 | <1% | 3 | Endangered | I | II | II |
| Montagus Harrier | <i>Circus pygargus</i> | breeding? | >2 | | 4 | Secure | I | II | II |
| Levant Sparrowhawk | <i>Accipiter brevipes</i> | breeding | 2-4 pairs | | 2 | Rare | I | II | II |
| Reed-footed Falcon | <i>Falco vespertinus</i> | passage | >30 | | 3 | Vulnerable | I | II | II |
| Baillons Crake | <i>Porzana pusilla</i> | breeding | 4-20 pairs | <1% | 3 | Rare | I | II | II |
| Stone Curlew | <i>Burhinus oedipnemos</i> | breeding | 2-3 pairs | | 3 | Vulnerable | I | II | II |
| Collared Pratincole | <i>Glareola pratincola</i> | breeding? | >4 | | 3 | Endangered | I | II | II |
| Kentish Plover | <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i> | breeding | 2 pairs | | 3 | Declining | | II | II |
| Slender-billed Gull | <i>Larus genei</i> | breeding? | 2 | | no | Secure | I | II | II |
| Little Gull | <i>Larus minutus</i> | passage | >447 day max | 1% | 3 | Declining | | II | |
| Mediterranean Gull | <i>Larus melanocephalus</i> | passage | >163 | | 4 | Secure | I | II | II |
| Sandwich Tern | <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> | passage | >50 | | 2 | Declining | I | II | II |
| Little Tern | <i>Sterna albifrons</i> | feeding | >70 | | 3 | Declining | I | II | II |
| Nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> | breeding | >1 | | 2 | Declining | I | III | |
| Bee-eater | <i>Merops apiaster</i> | feeding | 300 | ** | 3 | Declining | | II | II |
| Little Owl | <i>A. noctua</i> | breeding | 1 | | 3 | Declining | | II | |
| Scops Owl | <i>Otus scops</i> | breeding | 3 pairs | | 2 | Declining | | II | |
| Syrian Woodpecker | <i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i> | breeding | 10-15 pairs | | 4 | Secure | I | II | |
| Crested Lark | <i>Galerida cristata</i> | breeding | 5-8 pairs | | 3 | Declining | | III | |
| Woodchat Shrike | <i>Lanius senator</i> | breeding | <5 pairs | | 2 | Vulnerable | | II | |
| Jackdaw | <i>Corvus monedula</i> | roost site | >250 | | no | Secure | II2 | | |
| Corn Bunting | <i>Miliaria calandra</i> | breeding | <10 pairs | | 4 | Secure | | III | |

Legend:

feeding = colony or nest is near

breeding? = status not yet clear / species is during our visit (22.4.-6.5.2003) still arriving

EU lev = proportion of European population

SPEC = Species of European concern

* = 5 ind. between 22.4.-6.5.2003, out of breeding season up to 20 (info: D. Saveljic)

** = several pairs breeding each year in SD

EU = EU Wild Birds Directive Annex I Be = Bern Convention Appendix I - III

Bo = Bonn Convention Appendix II

Be = Bern Convention Appendix I - III