



# World Wetland Network

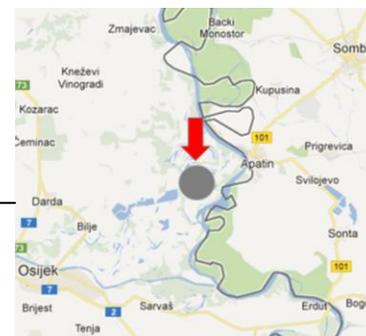
## Wetland Globes

**Category:** Grey Globe Award, Europe

**Name of wetland:** Kopački Rit Nature Park, Croatia

**Location:** Lat: 45.588 Long: 18.8326 Area: 23,894 ha.

**Type and key characteristics:** Kopački Rit is an inland delta Ramsar site, situated in the central section of the Danube floodplain, at the confluence of the Danube and a major tributary. The area is a mosaic of lakes, marshes, wet grasslands, reed beds, and riverine forests, flooded annually for up to three months. It contains the largest and best preserved floodplains and floodplain forests along the entire Danube



Kopački Rit is an intact, natural and functioning inland delta of a major river - this is rare in temperate climates. The site is internationally important for maintaining the biological diversity of the region. It is an important migration and wintering site for waterfowl, with on average 15,000 geese and up to 50,000 ducks as well as the European Otter and fire-bellied toad. It is the most significant spawning ground in the central and upper Danube area for all fish species in the river system many of which are on IUCN Red Lists.

**Justification for why the wetland won the award:** The Croatian Danube regulation project is threatening 50,000ha of protected areas of outstanding natural value in Europe, with plans to canalize the river with major structural measures. The main purpose of this project is explained as “fixing the river regulation line in order to establish a navigation route, stabilise river banks and allow movement of ice and sediment.” This goal, however, contradicts the international protection commitments and ecological needs of protected habitats and species which depend on natural riverine structures. It is planned to regulate 53km of the river stretch – from the Croatian/Hungarian border downstream to the confluence of the Drava River.



**Quotes:** "I grew up in Kopacevo, a small village on the edge of the Kopački Rit and for many years I have devoted myself to nature protection of the area within the NGO “Croatian Society of Bird and Nature Protection”. Kopački Rit Ramsar site has been listed on the Montreux list as a wetland of international importance under threat since 1992. For over a decade river regulations, intensive forestry and hunting are slowly but steadily decreasing its functions and values. With the help of strong international support these should be stopped. It is the time - now!"

**Jasmin Sadikovic**



**Future plans for the wetland:** During the past 200 years regulation of the Danube River for navigation and drainage of the Danube floodplains has had immensely negative effects with only 30% of the original wetlands left. Due to regulations the river bed incision is 1 cm per year resulting in a decrease of the surface and groundwater levels and death of alluvial forests. Continuation of this ‘traditional’ regulation project will put the whole ecosystem processes and values in jeopardy. Formal protection of the area started in 1967 and slowed down the detrimental anthropogenic influences. Further plans to increase the protection, improve the use of natural values and restore parts of the degraded habitats could improve the overall situation for wildlife and people.

WWN is using the Grey Globe award to highlight wetlands that are actively being degraded, are being neglected, or are currently subject to a threat that is likely to lead to significant damage. The award is specific to a wetland and not the wetland management body, as factors affecting the wetland may be beyond their control. The award is intended to raise awareness of specific threats, and to encourage stakeholders and governments to find solutions to better protect and restore wetlands.

