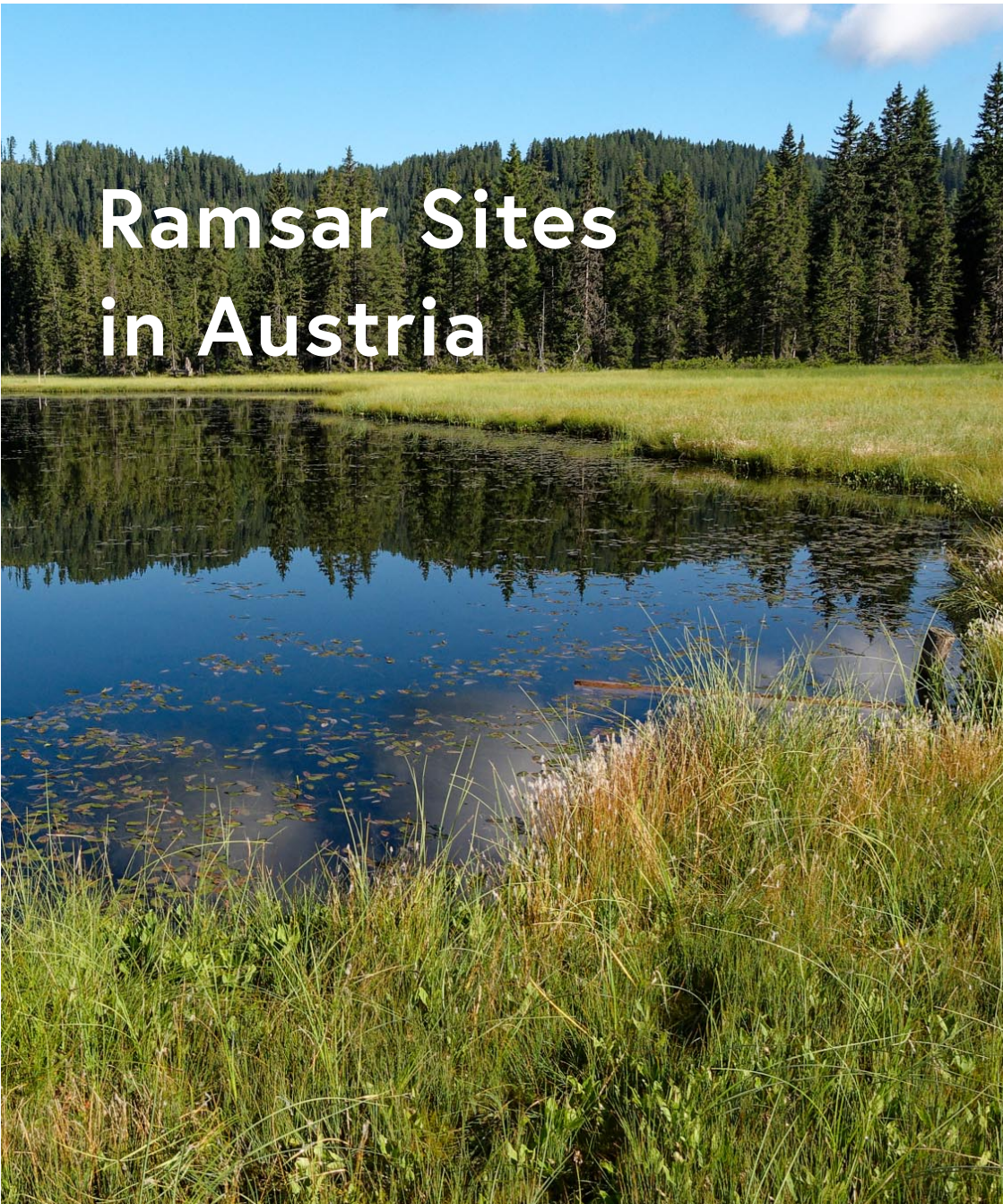


Ramsar Sites in Austria



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Preface

Austria's magnificent natural and cultural landscape bears a rich potential for biodiversity and recreation as well as economic power. To preserve this potential for future generations, it is our responsibility to manage this landscape in an environmentally friendly and resource-conserving way and, as a result, protect certain areas. Wetlands, such as streams, creeks, riparian forests, lakes, mires and wet meadows are important in this regard as it is the availability of water that often makes a habitat attractive for countless animal and plant species – as well as humans.

Until only a few centuries ago, wetlands had been considered undesirable landscapes useful only if drained. Consequently, drainage, stream regulation and peat excavation have changed this country dramatically. Today, we know that wetlands not only enrich biodiversity but also play important roles in our daily lives, such as flood protection, securing potable water reserves and storing CO₂ which is important for the climate.

As part of the Ramsar Convention, signed by 173 states around the world, contracting parties designate certain wetlands as “Ramsar Sites” and agree to maintain and preserve the ecological properties of these sites through “wise use”.

This brochure provides an overview of all 26 Ramsar Sites that have been designated since Austria joined the Convention. These, and all other important Austrian wetland sites, represent a vital contribution to conserving the biodiversity of our country.

Yours Norbert Totschnig
Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry,
Climate and Environmental Protection,
Regions and Water Management



Federal Minister
Norbert Totschnig

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History and Goals of the Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty that provides the framework for national action and international co-operation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar by the Caspian Sea in 1971 and has been signed by 173 countries. The basic condition for participation is to designate internationally important wetlands as “Ramsar Sites”.

Ramsar Sites now cover all geographic regions of the planet and the list of contracting states increases every year due to the importance of Ramsar’s mission: Wetland conservation is crucial to ensuring sustainable access to fresh water! The Convention has progressed from prioritizing the conservation of water- and shorebirds to now protecting entire habitats. This process led to extending the convention’s goals to match some of the

goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity (protection – sustainable use – equitable sharing of benefits). The Convention seeks to establish management plans, ecological monitoring and collaborations with other regional and global conventions and institutions. Another important aim is to include local communities through public outreach.

What is the Ramsar Convention about?

The Convention’s mission is “the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world”.

The Convention uses a broad definition of the types of wetlands covered in its mission, including swamps and marshes, lakes and rivers, wet grasslands and peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, near-shore marine areas, man-



groves and coral reefs, and human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and salt pans.

Why wetlands?

Wetlands provide fundamental ecological services and are regulators of water regimes. Wetlands not only secure our access to fresh potable water and play an important role in flood control, they also act as carbon sinks and are critical for climate protection.

Wetlands are sources of biodiversity at all levels. They harbour genetically diverse populations and contain an overall high diversity of species and habitats. Wetlands also provide a resource for traditional land use, scientific research, cultural diversity and human recreation.

The encroachment and subsequent loss of wetlands often leads to irreparable damage to the environment including important ecosystem services. Already

damaged wetlands need to be restored and intact wetlands need to be conserved by ensuring their wise use.

“Wise use” Concept

“Wise use” is defined by the Ramsar Convention as a use that benefits mankind while simultaneously conserving the properties and ecosystem services of natural habitats.

Wise use of wetlands is defined as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development” for current and future generations.

The “wise use” concept relates to conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources for the benefit of humankind. This includes the management of wetlands through restoring river banks and constructing water retention measures in drained peatlands.



What do contracting parties do?

Contracting parties have committed themselves to:

- designate at least one suitable site for the List of Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar List”) as part of their declaration of accession and ensure the effective ecological management of the site;
- contribute as many suitable wetlands as possible to the “Ramsar List”; although sites do not need to be protected by policies and legislation, parties are obliged to maintain and preserve the ecological properties of sites through “wise use”;
- work towards the wise use of all their wetlands through national land-use planning and ensure maintenance and protection of “Ramsar Sites”;
- promote research on wetlands and offer training to facilitate maintenance and wise use of wetlands; and
- build international collaborations with

respect to transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems, shared species, and development projects that may affect wetlands.

How does the Convention work?

- The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) meets every three years to discuss globally relevant strategies to protect and wisely use wetlands and to adopt policies and guidelines.
- The Ramsar Secretariat, established in Gland, Switzerland, manages the daily activities of the Convention. Its responsibilities include representing Ramsar at international conferences (on water, climate, biodiversity, etc.), designating new Ramsar Sites, preparing the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) and assisting the 173 contracting states.
- In Austria, the implementation of the Ramsar Convention falls on the federal provinces (nature conservation) and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Man-



agement (water management, environmental education and international nature conservation). At annual meetings of the “National Ramsar Committee”, federal and provincial representatives collaborate with NGOs like the Chamber of Agriculture and the Austrian Federal Forestry AG (ÖBf, www.bundesforste.at).

- Project-based funding for wetland protection and management in Austria comes from federal and provincial budgets as well as European funding programmes like LIFE, INTERREG, Rural Development and Leader.

Globally, about 2500 wetlands with a total area of two and a half million square kilometres have been designated “Ramsar Sites” – this is 30 times the size of Austria!



Austrian Ramsar Sites

Ramsar Sites reflect the diversity of wetlands in Austria. They encompass marshes, wet grasslands, salt pans, riparian forests, streams, lakes and human-made habitats like ponds and reservoirs.

To date, Austria has designated 26 Ramsar Sites. Peatlands are the prevailing habitat type among these localities. Almost two thirds of all sites (17) are different types of mires distributed across the provinces Salzburg (6), Carinthia (4), Styria (3), Tyrol (2), Lower Austria (1) and Upper Austria (1). Some of these sites cover vast areas and include other habitat types like karst and tufa springs or alpine wood- and grassland communities.

Riparian landscapes also form a significant share (30 %) of Ramsar Sites in Austria. These sites are located at the Danube River east of Vienna, the Morava River, the Lafnitz River, the Upper Drava

River, the Lower Inn River and the Rhine delta at Lake Constance.

Among all Ramsar Sites, Neusiedler See – Seewinkel has special status. The goal at this largest Austrian Ramsar Site is to conserve the steppe lake with its Pannonian alkaline ponds, wet grasslands and steppes. Another Ramsar site was established to protect a near-natural section of the shore at Lake Wörthersee.

The Ramsar List of Internationally Important Wetlands also includes “second-hand habitats” like Güssing Fishponds and Lower Inn Reservoirs. Another Ramsar site was established to protect a near-natural section of the shore at Lake Wörthersee.



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Ramsar Site	Federal province	Trans- boundary	Nomination	Area [ha]	Conservation status	Visitor centre
Autertal – St. Lorenzen Raised Bog	Carinthia		2011	48	Biosphere Park	–
Bayerische Wildalm and Wildalmfilz	Tyrol	DE	2004	120		–
Donau-March-Thaya-Auen	Lower Austria	CZ, SK	1982	36.080	National Park	+
Güssing Fish Ponds	Burgenland		2013	124	Nature Reserve	–
Hörfeld Mire	Carinthia, Styria		1996	137	partial Nature Reserve	–
Lafnitztal	Burgenland, Styria		2002	2.180	partial Nature Reserve, area under protection	–
Lendspitz – Maiernigg	Carinthia		2023	78	Conservation area	–
Mires and Lakes of Keutschach-Schiefling	Carinthia		2004	543	Conservation area	–
Mires of the Nassköhr	Styria		2004	211	Nature Reserve, nature park	–
Mires of the Pass Thurn	Salzburg		2004	190	partial Natural Monument	–
Mires of the Sauerfelder Forest	Salzburg		2004	119	partial area under protection	–
Mires of the Schwarzenberg	Salzburg		2004	266		–
Mires of the Styrian Salzkammergut	Styria		2025	150		–
Mires of the Überling	Salzburg		2004	264	partial area under protection	–
National Park Kalkalpen	Upper Austria		2004	18.532	National Park	+
National Park Thayatal	Lower Austria		2025	1.630	National Park	+
Neusiedler See – Seewinkel – Waasen	Burgenland	HU	1982	44.229	National Park	+
Upper Drava River	Carinthia		2014	1.029		–
Pürgschachen Mire	Stmk.		1991	62	Conservation area	–
Rhine Delta at Lake Constance	Vorarlberg		1982	2.060	Nature Reserve	+
Rotmoos in the Fuscher Valley	Salzburg		1995	58	partial Nature Reserve	–
Sablatnig Mire	Carinthia		1992	96	Nature Reserve	+
Lower Inn Reservoirs	Upper Austria	DE	1982	870	Nature Reserve	–
Lower Lobau	Vienna		1982	915	National Park	+
Waldviertel ponds, peat bogs and floodplains	Lower Austria		1999	13.000	Natural Monument, Nature Reserve	+
Wilder Kaiser	Tyrol		2013	3.781	Nature Reserve	–
				126.772		



Area descriptions

Autertal – St. Lorenzen Raised Bog

Carinthia

Raised bog, sedge reeds, moor birch carr
Area: 48 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2011

The St. Lorenzen raised bog is situated near the end of the Autertal Valley in the Gurktaler Alps within the Carinthian municipality of Reichenau. Its centrepiece is an 11-hectare raised mountain pine bog surrounded by various sedge reeds, wet meadows, nutrient-poor grazing areas, a moor birch carr and a larch-swiss pine forest. In the Austrian bog conservation catalogue, raised bogs are considered nutrient-poor rain bogs. In addition to the bog, the meandering Autertal Stream contributes to the special charm of the landscape.

In a small part of the bog, peat was extracted for litter production during the first half of the 20th century. For economic reasons peat cutting was suspended in 1968. In 2007, management measures were taken to rehabilitate the

drained part of the bog. Several wooden dams were built into the drains to stop the water loss and to enhance peat moss growth. In 2003, six water level recorders were installed in order to monitor the water table fluctuations and the impact of the measures taken.

Noteworthy animals and plants: nine bat species, moorland clouded yellow (*Colias palaeno*), cranberry fritillary (*Boloria aquilonaris*), bog fritillary (*Boloria eunomia*), large white-face darter (*Leucorhinia pectoralis*), large pink (*Dianthus superbus* ssp. *superbus*), moor birch (*Betula pubescens* ssp. *czerepanovii*), lesser panicked sedge (*Carex diandra*), true fox sedge (*Carex vulpina*), large brown clover (*Trifolium spadiceum*), bog cranberry (*Vaccinium microcarpum*), round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), varnished hook-moss (*Hamatocaulis vernicosus*) and others



Mires of the Bayerische Wildalm and Wildalmfilz

Tyrol, Germany (Bavaria)

Bog complex with different mire types

Area: 133 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2004

The mires of the Bayrische Wildalm are located at the border of Tyrol and Bavaria near Lake Achen at ca. 1430 metres above sea level. The part of this bilateral Ramsar Site that is located in Austria is managed by the Austrian Federal Forestry AG.

The local microclimate, a terrain featuring shallow pits and basins, and traditional land cultivation all led to the formation of a diverse mosaic of different mire types, alpine pastures and mountain forests. Karstic zones usually contain dry habitats because water drains quickly through the gaps and clefts in the limestone bedrock. At Bayrische Wildalm, water-retaining layers of clay and marl allowed the formation of mires. The bog complex is located in a so-called polje, a karst depression surrounded by mountain slopes, and is pervaded by hollows and

smaller depressions. The raised bog mostly consists of peat mosses, dwarf shrubs and mountain pines that have accrued to form a rich peat layer.

A meandering stream flows into the Polje (doline) where the water drains into an underground sinkhole. A large fen has developed in places where seepage water or stream water collect or where the groundwater table is particularly high.

Noteworthy animals and plants: Eurasian pygmy owl, alpine salamander, bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), brown gentian (*Gentiana pannonica*), lesser butterfly-orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*), broad-leaved marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza majalis*), common cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), sheathed cottonsedge (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), spoonleaf sundew (*Drosera intermedia*), bottle sedge (*Carex rostrata*), mud sedge (*Carex limosa*), pod grass (*Scheuchzeria palustris*), marsh club moss (*Lycopodiella inundata*) and others



Donau-March-Thaya-Auen

Lower Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic
Riverine and floodplain forest
Area: 36.090 hectares
Ramsar Site since 1982

Unspoiled landscapes near large streams featuring wide floodplain forests, oxbow lakes, impenetrable reeds and a diverse avian fauna have become rare in Central Europe. The Ramsar Site Donau-March-Thaya-Auen is one such site located across three countries and considered the largest remaining tract of riverine and floodplain forest in Central Europe.

The site combines a diversity of biotypes to form a unique ecosystem which is home to an unmatched species richness: more than 900 flowering plant and fern species and more than 500 animal species including 100 bird and almost 60 fish species. This largely intact wetland ecosystem is considered an important refuge for many animals and plants that live in the Pannonian Basin. As a result of its high conservation value, the wetlands between Vienna and the Morava river inlet were declared a national park in 1996.

Donau-March-Thaya-Auen was declared a trilateral Ramsar Site (AT-CZ-SK) in 2007. As a result, common goals for site management have been formulated. A great way to experience the site is by bicycle. A 60-kilometre bicycle trail runs along the Slovakian side of the March River through the untouched scenery of the Zahoei conservation area, and connects Hohenau and Bratislava.

Noteworthy animals and plants: common tern, common merganser, common redshank, black kite, sea eagle, eastern imperial eagle, white stork, black stork, great egret, European bee-eater, corn crane, European mudminnow, European pond turtle, southern festoon (*Zerynthia polyxena*), water chestnut (*Trapa natans*), *Urtica kioviensis*, water soldier (*Statiotis aloidis*), mouse garlic (*Allium angulosum*) and others



Güssing Fish Ponds

Burgenland

Pond landscape, marshes and floodplains

Area: 148 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2013

Several man-made fish ponds located on the outskirts of the picturesque town of Güssing are the centrepiece of this wetland. The Ramsar Site comprises one large and three smaller ponds separated by dams. The landscape is shaped by the vast alluvial plains of the ponds, the marshes around Zickenbach Creek and remnant copses of alluvial forest.

The ponds are home to many critically endangered animals. They are of national significance as breeding grounds for several species of waterfowl. For instance, two globally threatened bird species, the ferruginous duck and the sea eagle, are regularly encountered here. This wetland is one of the most important waterfowl resting areas during their migration between the Danube River/Morava River/Lake Neusiedl area and the Adriatic Sea. Güssing Fish Ponds are of great significance due to their large size and old age

as the bank structures have naturally grown over centuries.

Noteworthy animals and plants: ferruginous duck, sea eagle, little bittern, water chestnut (*Trapa natans*), yellow day-lily (*Heimerocallis lilioasphodelus*), marsh gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*) and others



Hörfeld Mire

Carinthia, Styria

Fen complex with riverine forests and carrs, tall forb communities and damp meadows

Area: 137 hectares

Ramsar Site since 1996

The extremely diverse fauna and flora and the renowned “Kelchtopfe” (deep water holes that never freeze over) continue to draw people to the Hörfeld Mire. The mire is fed by the Steirerbach Stream and the Hörfeldbach Stream which meander through the valley. Partly inaccessible marshes, riverine forests, carrs, tall forb communities and damp meadows form a mosaic of landscape elements.

The Hörfeld Mire was formed in a valley basin carved out by a branch of the Mur Glacier. Following the ice age, the basin filled up with meltwater to form a lake. Over the course of several millennia, the lake eventually silted up to form the mosaic of water holes, floating mats, reed beds and small forests that shape the landscape today.



The combination of meadows used for traditional agriculture and unspoiled natural landscape played an important role in fostering high species richness in the area. Meadow cultivation in late summer is an important factor in sustaining this diversity. Without regular mowing, the area becomes fallow and a few select species outcompete the majority of wetland-specific plants.

Noteworthy animals and plants: whinchat, water rail, common snipe (overwintering), common rosefinch, common minnow, yellow-bellied toad, bog fritillary (*Boloria eunomia*), marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), sundew species (*Drosera* spp.), bottle sedge (*Carex rostrata*), buckbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) and others



Lafnitztal

Burgenland, Styria

Meandering river with widespread marshes and meadows

Area: 2180 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2002

The upper and lower parts of the Lafnitz River are considered some of the last freely meandering stretches of river preserved in near-natural condition. Here, the untamed force of the water has still been able to create a diversity of structures like eroded bank sections, islands, dolly tubs, areas with dead wood and abandoned meanders. Seasonal flooding, a high groundwater table and low human impact are the reasons why this unique river landscape featuring vast marshes and near-natural alder-ash meadows is intact today.

The Ramsar Site comprises a river and adjacent marshes and meadows as well as the nature reserve Lafnitz-Stögersbachmündung near Wolfau, including the protected area "Kaltenbrunner Lahn".

In recent years, two LIFE projects co-financed by the EU have been imple-

mented to protect the land, establish passive flood protection and restore the continuous flow of the river. Extensive animal husbandry also contributes to preserving the species-rich landscape.

Noteworthy animals and plants: European otter, common kingfisher, black stork, white stork, sedge warbler, white-finned gudgeon, yellow-bellied toad, European fire-bellied toad, dusky large blue (*Phengaris nausithous*), marsh gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*), Siberian iris (*Iris sibirica*), creeping willow (*Salix repens*), maiden pink (*Dianthus deltoides*) and others



Lendspitz-Maiernigg

Carinthia

Moorland, swamp forest and lake landscape

Area: 78 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2023

The Lendspitz-Maiernigg Ramsar Site is located to the east of Lake Wörthersee and extends over a 500-metre-long natural, undeveloped shore zone, which also includes the lake's outlet. The area is characterised by a succession of typical siltation zones and wetlands. The nutrient-poor, lime-rich open water zone of the lake is followed by a belt of aquatic plants and a reed zone. Landward, it is bordered by moorland and moor grass meadows as well as extensive swamp and moor forests.

The area represents the last remnants of what were once extensive marshes in the Klagenfurt region.

Centuries of extensive farming have created litter meadows and nutrient-poor orchid meadows. Trees and shrubs have gradually grown on wet meadows that are no longer farmed, quickly developing into swamp and moor forests. Wetlands dominated by trees and shrubs make up the largest part of this Ramsar Site in terms of area.

The area lies on the main migration route of many bird species and serves as a resting place for migratory birds. Over 180 bird species also use the area as a breeding ground or for wintering.

Noteworthy animals and plants: lesser horseshoe bat, Daubenton's bat, pipistrelle, white-edged bat, alpine bat and mosquito bat, steppe barbastelle, yellow-bellied toad, Balkan moor frog, dice snake, lake loach, bitterling, bulbous snail, shiny slug, common river mussel, large spring damselfly, large moss damselfly and others



Mires and Lakes of Keutschach-Schiefling

Carinthia

Mires and lakes with carrs, marshes, sedge reeds, moor grasslands and reed beds

Area: 543 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2006

The Ramsar Site, which is part of the ca. 2500-hectare conservation area Keutschacher Seental, is located in a valley between Lake Wörthersee and the Sattnitz Mountain range in the municipalities of Keutschach and Schiefling. Numerous lakes, such as Keutschacher See, Hafnersee, Rauschelesee and Bassgeigensee that have formed through several moraine walls during the glacial ice melting, are characteristic for this area. In addition, several ponds contribute to the aquatic landscape. The landscape mosaic consists of meadows, carrs, water bodies with water lilies, reed and sedge communities, fens, moor grasslands, damp meadows and elements of a raised bog.

About 6000-year-old pile dwellings in Lake Keutschach, part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are another highlight of the site. In recent years, Ramsar Associations in both Keutschach and Schiefling have built several nature observation facilities (nature discovery trail, observation tower, etc.) and have implemented measures to protect the meadows. These meadows provide habitat for the largest population of the dusky large blue (*Phengaris nausithous*) in Carinthia.

Noteworthy animals and plants: European otter, Daubenton's bat, whinchat, little grebe, Eurasian golden oriole, Italian crested newt, European tree frog, yellowbellied toad, dusky large blue (*Phengaris nausithous*), scarce large blue (*Phengaris teleius*), fen orchid (*Liparis loeselii*), marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), English sundew (*Drosera anglica*), lesser bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*) and others



Mires of the Nassköhr

Styria

Mire complex with raised mountain pine bogs and fens

Area: 211 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2004

Consisting of 23 mires, Nassköhr is the biggest mire complex east of the Northern Limestone Alps. It is located in northern Styria, about three kilometres northeast of Neuberg a. d. Mürz near the Schneealpe. The limestone bedrock is covered with a layer of impermeable loam and the absence of aboveground runoffs allow water retention. This has been the prerequisite for the formation of a mosaic of bogs, transitional mires and fens over the course of thousands of years.

The mire complex is situated in a karst-depression and comprises about 211 hectares, 31 of which are peatland. The most important areas from a conservation perspective are two raised mountain pine bogs: Capellarowiese (3,5 hectares) and Zerbenwiese (13 hectares). Like in many other mires, there are still traces of past

land use at Nassköhr: Overgrazing and peat cutting have left some areas significantly damaged. As part of a mire protection initiative, the Austrian Federal Forestry has built 120 wooden dams at Capellarowiese and Zerbenwiese to revitalize the mires. The goal was to raise the water table and stabilize the hydrology.

Noteworthy animals and plants: lesser horseshoe bat, northern goshawk, Eurasian sparrowhawk, Eurasian pygmy owl, large pink (*Dianthus superbus*), Ivan's paddle (*Drosera x obovata*), marsh club moss (*Lycopodiella inundata*), slender sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*), flea sedge (*Carex pulicaris*), Traunstein's Dactylorhiza (*Dactylorhiza traunsteineri*), bog cranberry (*Vaccinium microcarpum*), pod grass (*Scheuchzeria palustris*) and others



Mires of The Pass Thurn

Salzburg

Mire complex featuring peatlands at various stages ranging from spring fens to raised bogs

Area: 190 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2004

The raised bog complex is located north of the municipality of Mittersill at 1200 metres above sea level.

A botanical gem of international importance is the Wasenmoos. This site is not only home to all native carnivorous plants like sundew, butterwort and bladderwort, it also features rarities like silver birch, moor birch and dwarf birch.

There are several drainage ditches within the mires from former peat cutting. In 2002, the Austrian Federal Forestry implemented several restoration measures to convert all formerly exploited areas in the mire back to natural peatlands. The project also included the installation of an observation deck and a themed nature trail. The trail features interesting facts about the flora and fauna, the history of

peat cutting and the restoration process of the mires.

Noteworthy plants: black grouse, western capercaillie, hazel grouse, felwort (*Swertia perennis*), dwarf birch (*Betula nana*), marsh club moss (*Lycopodiella inundata*), round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), bog cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*), bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), dioecious sedge (*Carex dioica*), dotted sedge (*Carex punctata*), bog sedge (*Carex paupercula*), mud sedge (*Carex limosa*), slender sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*), sheathed sedge (*Carex vaginata*), brown bog-rush (*Schoenus ferrugineus*) and others



Mires of the Sauerfelder Wald

Salzburg

Mountain pine bogs, flush fens, transitional mires

Area: 119 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2004

The Ramsar Site is located east of Tamsweg in the “Niedere Tauern” mountain range and managed by the Austrian Federal Forestry AG.

The mire complex is located between 1480 and 1720 metres above sea level towering over mica-schist and glacier moraines. The site comprises eleven single mires, such as mesotrophic percolating mires, flush fens, oligotrophic rain bogs, transitional mires and mountain pine bogs.

The Mires of the Sauerfelder Wald are perfectly preserved. Not even grazing has damaged the mires in the past; they remain in their natural condition. Today, human use of the mires is limited to hunting.

The prevailing mountain pine-spruce-peatmoss communities are a special highlight of the mires. Such communities are extremely rare in the Alps and only known to occur in a few other places.

Noteworthy plants and animals: black grouse, western capercaillie, hazel grouse, felwort (*Swertia perennis*), dwarf birch (*Betula nana*), marsh club moss (*Lycopodiella inundata*), round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), bog cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*), bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), few-flowered bog sedge (*Carex pauciflora*), bog sedge (*Carex paupercula*), dioecious sedge (*Carex dioica*), thread rush (*Juncus filiformis*), cleft bog moss (*Sphagnum riparium*) and others



Mires of the Schwarzenberg

Salzburg

Mire complex with rain bogs, raised mountain pine bogs and spring fens

Area: 267 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2004

The Ramsar Site is located on the plateau of Schwarzenberg Mountain in the municipalities of Tamsweg, Unternberg and Ramingstein. The site is managed by the Austrian Federal Forestry AG.

The subalpine continental climate at higher elevations of Schwarzenberg Mountain, siliceous decalcified bedrock and glacially impacted landforms have provided favourable conditions for the formation of an alpine mire complex. The Ramsar Site comprises several peatlands: Saumoos, Sattelmoos, Moor bei der Bayerhütte, Kohstattmöser Moore, Seemoos and several mires at Obernock. The different mire types here are nutrient-poor rain bogs, raised mountain pine bogs and spring fens. The boundaries of the site extend to the perimeter of the mire complex.

Noteworthy plants and animals: black grouse, western capercaillie, Eurasian pygmy owl, black woodpecker, Eurasian woodcock, bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), dwarf birch (*Betula nana*), pod grass (*Scheuchzeria palustris*), mud sedge (*Carex limosa*), few-flowered bog sedge (*Carex pauciflora*), bog sedge (*Carex pauciflora*), round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), bog cranberries (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*, *Vaccinium microcarpum*), bog billberry (*Vaccinium uliginosum*), buckbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), several *Sphagnum* species and others



Moore im Steirischen Salzkammergut

Styria

Mire complex with raised bogs, transition mires and fens

Area: 150 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2025

The Ramsar Site is located in the Ausseerland region, also known as the Styrian Salzkammergut. It encompasses the Flecklmoos, Zlaimmöser Moore and Miesbodensee moorlands, all of which lie within the Salzabach catchment area. They are characterised by a high natural quality and a variety of different types of moorland – from lowland moors to transitional moors and raised bogs. The areas of this Ramsar Site are owned by the Austrian Federal Forestry Office (ÖBf), which is also responsible for their management.

The Aussee moorlands are home to numerous rare and endangered plant species. Of particular note are moss and liverwort species such as Richardson's

sphagnum moss, shiny sickle moss and neighbouring sphagnum moss.

Noteworthy animals and plants: wire sedge, thread sedge, mud sedge, arm-flowered sedge, long-leaved sundew, round-leaved sundew, moor rush. The open water areas provide valuable habitats for numerous water birds, dragonflies and other invertebrates.



Mires of the Überling

Salzburg

Mire complex with terrestrialization mires and flush fens

Area: 265 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2004

The Ramsar Site is located in the municipality of Tamsweg and managed by the Austrian Federal Forestry which implemented extensive restoration measures in 2000.

The Mires of the Überling are the largest concentration of peatlands in the Alps with 117 hectares of mires representing all typical features and types of mires. Many of these peatlands are boreal aapa mires, unique to the Alps, but spring fens and terrestrialisation mires are also abundant. One lake, Gstreikel Moos, remains almost completely covered by the biggest floating mat in the Alps. A large number of plant communities associated with boreal conditions also contribute to the rich biodiversity of the region. The mires are all in natural or near-natural condition except for one bog, the "Moor SE Überlinghütte", which was drained in

the 19th century to be used as pastureland. The site is now subject to a restoration project financed by the Austrian Federal Forestry.

Noteworthy plants: felwort (*Swertia perennis*), dwarf birch (*Betula nana*), chickweed wintergreen (*Trientalis europaea*), marsh club moss (*Lycopodiella inundata*), sundew species (*Drosera* spp.), bog cranberries (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*, *Vaccinium microcarpum*), bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), few-flowered bog sedge (*Carex pauciflora*), bog sedge (*Carex pauciflora*), dioecious sedge (*Carex dioica*), mud sedge (*Carex limosa*) and others



National Park Kalkalpen

Upper Austria

Alpine landscape with mires, forests, grasslands and streams

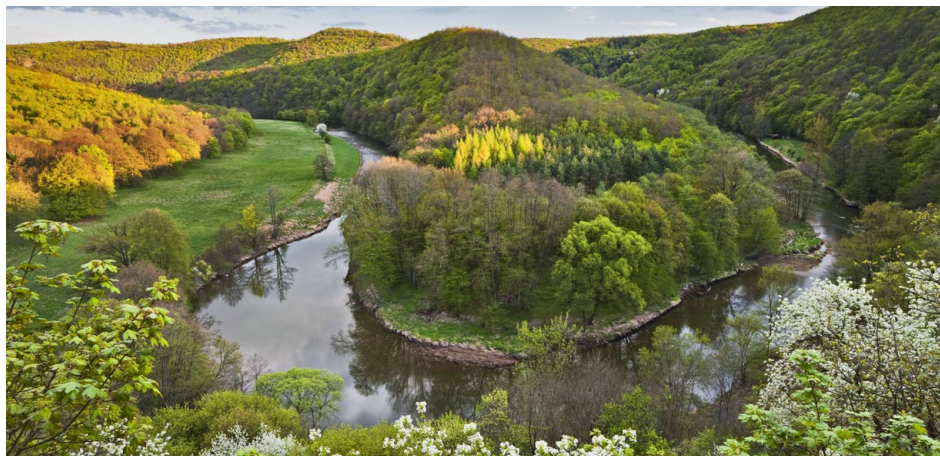
Area: 18.532 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2004

The Ramsar Site is located across the Reichraminger Hintergebirge and the Sennengebirge and extends from 400 to almost 2000 metres above sea level. The site's boundaries correspond to those of the National Park Kalkalpen which was established in 1997. At Reichraminger Hintergebirge there are dolomite gorges and mountain streams with more than 800 springs. This constitutes the largest intact spring ecosystem in the Eastern Alps. Along with the subterranean karst water system, these two elements have been the deciding factors in nominating the area as a Ramsar Site. The diverse range of forest communities contributes to making the national park a biodiversity hotspot. This range includes ravine forests, deciduous forests and mountain forests (with many areas suspected to be primary forest) which are located next to barren karst fields near the summit.

Human use has played an important role in shaping the landscape. Over the course of many centuries, humans have used the forests as hunting grounds and pastures. They also used wood for construction and as firewood, and the streams as a means of transport. Therefore, one of the most important goals at this site is to restore natural conditions in order to allow nature to regenerate without any human disturbance.

Noteworthy plants and animals: European otter, lynx, barbastelle, Bechstein's bat, white-backed woodpecker, grey-headed woodpecker, Eurasian three-toed woodpecker, white-throated dipper, boreal owl, Eurasian pygmy owl, golden eagle, shaghen falcon, whinchat, red-breasted flycatcher, collared flycatcher, hazel grouse, wood grouse, *Rosalia longicorn* (*Rosalia alpina*), *Cucujus cinnaberinus*, endemic cave-dwelling carabid beetles, freshwater snails (*Hydrobiidae*), autochthonous brown trout, stone crayfish, apollo (*Par-nassius apollo*), woodland brown (*Lopinga achine*), *Pericallia matronula*, *Dianthus alpinus*, *Primula clusiana*, lady's-slipper orchid and others



Nationalpark Thayatal

Lower Austria and Czechia

Gorge landscape

Area: 1360 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2025

The cross-border national park is one of the last near-natural valley landscapes in Central Europe. It covers a total area of 7660 hectares, with the majority located on the Czech side in the Podyjí National Park.

The river landscape of the Thaya, deeply carved into the Bohemian Massif, is characterised by narrow valley meanders and steeply rising surrounding mountains. The geomorphological conditions have created a small-scale mosaic of habitats, ranging from near-natural oak and beech forests to species-rich dry grasslands and meadows to steep rocky sites and river floodplains. This diversity is reflected in an exceptionally high level of biodiversity. In addition, the untouched valley land-

scape is of enormous importance as a migration corridor for various animal species.

Its inaccessibility and peripheral location on the Iron Curtain spared the area from major human intervention. As a result, one of Europe's most striking breakthrough valleys has been preserved in its original state. However, the high natural potential of the area is diminished by the Vranov and Znojmo power stations. The operation of Vranov is responsible for significant fluctuations in the flow of the Thaya.

Noteworthy animals and plants: wildcat, otter, Daubenton's bat, black stork, kingfisher, dice snake, noble crayfish and others



Neusiedler see – Seewinkel – Waasen

Burgenland, Hungary

Steppe lake, reed belt, salt marshes, steppes

Area: 44.229 hectares

Ramsar Site since 1982

Lake Neusiedl, located at the Hungarian border, is the westernmost steppe lake in Central Europe. Together with Seewinkel it forms a unique landscape harbouring many rare animal and plant species.

The 44.000-hectare site Neusiedler See – Seewinkel – Waasen is Austria's largest Ramsar Site. The prevalent features are: a widespread bog called the Hanság, over 630 alkaline waters in Seewinkel and an extensive reed belt around Lake Neusiedl. A large portion of the site is part of the – National Park Neusiedler See – Seewinkel.

Despite numerous alterations to the landscape through human use, we still find a mosaic of wetland habitats and xeric grasslands with nutrient-rich black earth and desert-like soda lime locations. Many coastal plants like glassworts (*Salicornia* spp.), sea arrowgrasses (*Triglochin mar-*

itima) and alkali grasses (*Puccinellia* spp.) have been able to settle here in the middle of the continent.

Since 1988, the site has been listed as a conservation area of the European Network of Biogenetic Reserves. In 2001, Lake Neusiedl's cultural landscape has been designated a transboundary (AT-HU) World Heritage Site by UNESCO. As part of a ceremonial act in Eisenstadt in 2009, the existing Ramsar Sites were declared the "Transboundary Ramsar Site Neusiedler See – Seewinkel – Waasen" (AT-HU).

Noteworthy plants and animals: Eurasian spoonbill, ferruginous duck, great egret, Eurasian bittern, pygmy cormorant, pied avocet, snowy plover, Danube crested newt, European fire-bellied toad, sea aster (*Tripolium pannonicum*), Siberian wormwood (*Artemisia laciniata*), blue iris (*Iris spuria*), glasswort (*Salicornia prostrata*), *Camphorosma annua*, Dwarf plantain (*Plantago tenuiflora*) and others



Upper Drava River

Carinthia

Wide network of rivers with inner alpine grey alder alluvial forests

Area: 1029 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2014

The Ramsar Site Upper Drava River corresponds to the Natura-2000 Site with the same name. It extends from the border of East Tyrol to the outflow of the Paternion Hydroelectric Power Plant. Thanks to extensive restoration measures, the 70-kilometre stream is now home to many rare and endangered animal and plant species.

Regulatory measures, which have been in effect since the second half of the 19th century, have reduced the former biodiversity of the river. Therefore, a water supervision concept has been developed and was used as the basis for two LIFE projects. As part of these projects, extensive restoration measures to improve water habitats and counteract species loss have been implemented.

Another important goal has been to enlarge the river banks as part of extensive river widening measures which have also improved flood control in the area. Further goals are the creation of new alluvial forests with backwaters, the reintroduction of highly endangered or regionally extinct animal and plant species and the implementation of other species conservation measures. Measures to stabilize the Drava riverbed have also been implemented.

Noteworthy plants and animals: Italian crested newt, yellow-bellied toad, European otter, common sandpiper, little ringed plover, Danube salmon (*Hucho hucho*), German tamarisk (*Myricaria germanica*), dwarf bulrush (*Typha minima*) and others



Pürgschachen Mire

Styria

Mire complex with raised mountain pine bogs and fens

Area: 62 hectares

Ramsar Site since 1991

The Pürgschachen Mire is located in the Enns Valley between Liezen and Admont near the village of Ardning. It is considered one of the few mostly undisturbed valley bogs in the Alps and has gained significance due to its large size.

The mire has formed in the basin of a post-glacial lake. Over thousands of years, the peat layer has become an impressive six metres thick. At the surface, mire-specific species such as sphagnum mosses, round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), bog cranberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), sheathed cottongsedge (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and white beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) are prospering. The central part of the Ramsar Site consists of a raised mountain pine bog surrounded by fens and forest belts.

As part of a LIFE project, valuable sections of the area have been protected through purchasing, leasing or exchanging land and damaging features like drainage ditches and spruce monocultures have been removed. The conserved fens and damp meadows support a high species richness and give rare bird species like the corn crane a place to live.

Noteworthy plants and animals: common shrew, corn crane, white-spotted bluethroat, moorland clouded yellow (*Colias palaeno*), white-faced darter (*Leucorrhinia dubia*), small cranberry moss (*Sphagnum rubellum*), bog rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), white-beak sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and others



Rhine Delta at Lake Constance

Vorarlberg

Reedlands, alluvial plains

Area: 2065 hectares

Ramsar Site since 1982

Between the original river delta of the Rhine River and the 1990-built Rhine channel in the east, one of the most important shallow water zones of Central Europe has formed. The so-called Rohrspitz is a headland that reaches into Lake Constance and represents all that is left of the old river delta.

The main part of the site is constantly under water except for the winter months. About 700 hectares of the site are taken up by fens and marshes, sedge communities and reed communities. Important natural areas from a conservation point of view are moor grasslands, transitional mires and near-natural alluvial forests along the old Rhine River.

The Rhine Delta is one of the most important winter roosting sites for many waterbirds due to its widespread ice-free zones. Thousands of red-crested

pochards, northern pintails, gadwalls, great crested grebes, whooper swans and common mergansers populate the shallow waters in autumn. Almost the entire alpine population of common mergansers moults here. The fact that little bitterns and kingfishers breed in the Rhine Delta also showcases the great importance of this site. Botanically significant species like dwarf bulrush (*Typha minima*) and marsh gladiolus (*Gladiolus palustris*) are found here, and it is the only known location for marsh pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) in Austria.

Noteworthy plants and animals: common mergansers, whooper swans, red-crested pochard, gadwalls, northern pintails, northern crested newt, European bitterling, European bullhead, marsh pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), dwarf bulrush (*Typha minima*) and marsh gladiolus (*Gladiolus palustris*), summer lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes aestivalis*), musk orchid (*Herminium monorchis*), star duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*) and others



Rotmoos in the Fuscher Valley

Salzburg

Calcareous fen

Area: 58 hectares

Ramsar Site since 1995

The Rotmoos is located between roaring waterfalls and steeply rising mountain chains of the Glockner Massif near the end of the Fuscher Valley at 1300 metres above sea level. Although the mountain range “Hohe Tauern” is almost exclusively made up of silicate rock, Rootmos is a calcareous fen. The fen’s substrate consists of calcareous rock from surrounding areas.

The Fuscher Ache, a tributary of the river Salzach, flows through the valley basin and the fen landscape. The meandering streams are lined with gray alders, bright fields of yellow mountain saxifrage (*Saxifraga aizoides*), bottle (*Carex rostrata*) and cotton sedge (*Eriophorum* spp.) communities, and orchid-rich meadows. The name “Rotmoos” (transl.: Red Fen) is most likely due to iron (III) oxide-hydroxide which deposits at slow-flowing parts of

the Fuscher Ache and gives the water curious colour combinations. The great abundance of orchids including the western marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza majalis*) which blooms by the thousands in early summer is the reason the inner Fuscher Valley is also called the “valley of orchids”.

Noteworthy plants and animals: whinchat, northern wheatear, common sandpiper, European bullhead, clouded apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), ruddy highflyer (*Hydriomena ruberata*), shepherd’s fritillary (*Boloria pales*), marsh lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*), western marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza majalis*), marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), Davall’s sedge (*Carex davalliana*) and others



Sablatnig Mire

Carinthia

Mire complex with spring fens and a flush fen

Area: 96 hectares

Ramsar Site since 1992

The Sablatnig Mire is located in south-eastern Carinthia, only 25 kilometres from Klagenfurt. The mire complex formed when a large post-glacial lake silted up. It consists of large spring fens and a flush fen. Reed beds, large sedge swamps, tall forb communities, damp meadows, small sedge reeds, black alder carrs and other wetland habitats are characteristic of this site.

The mire is one of the most important bird sanctuaries in Carinthia. More than 170 bird species have been recorded in recent years. Starting from the “Tomarkeusche”, a small visitor centre, the best way to explore the mire is by using a pair of binoculars. Various water plant communities featuring water lilies and water knotweed (*Persicaria amphibia*) are visible from the river banks, while in the open waters of the Sablatnig

pond great crested grebes, little grebes and tufted ducks can be observed. An educational nature trail explains the features of this idyllic landscape to visitors.

Noteworthy plants and animals: Eurasian bittern, common pochard, common snipe, western yellow wagtail, yellow-bellied toad, moor frog, thick shelled river mussel (*Unio crassus*), lesser bladderwort (*Utricularia minor*), marsh gentian (*Gentiana pneumonanthe*), round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), fen orchid (*Liparis loeselii*), marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), early marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*) and others



Lower Inn Reservoirs

Upper Austria, Bavaria

Marshlands and alluvial plains

Area: 870 hectares

Ramsar Site since 1982

More than 70 years ago the Inn River between Braunau and Schärding at the Austrian-German border was dammed to support a hydroelectric power plant. Over the course of several decades, extensive fine sediment deposits have formed in the shallow water zones of the reservoir.

The conservation area extends over 25 kilometres and consists of four reservoirs which are among the most important rest and overwintering locations for waterbirds in Central Europe. The most important sections on the Austrian side are Hagenauer Bay, Mühlheimer banks, a large island and the Reichersberger floodplains. A remarkable feature is a breeding population of black-crowned night herons comprising 30 to 50 breeding pairs in the last few years. The great importance of this transboundary site for the bird fauna has been a contributing factor to the designation of the area as a

Ramsar Site. At times, as much as one-fourth of all waterbirds from Austria and Bavaria are concentrated in this area. The Lower Inn River has been a nature conservation area since 1978 and has now been awarded the title “European Nature Reserve”.

Noteworthy plants and animals: little bittern, black-crowned night heron, Mediterranean gull, common kingfisher, bluethroat, Eurasian penduline tit, red-crested pochard, gadwall, flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*), spikerush (*Eleocharis acicularis*), mare's tail (*Hippuris vulgaris*) and others



Lower Lobau

Vienna

Alluvial floodplains with forests, marshes and gravel ridges (“Heißbländen”)

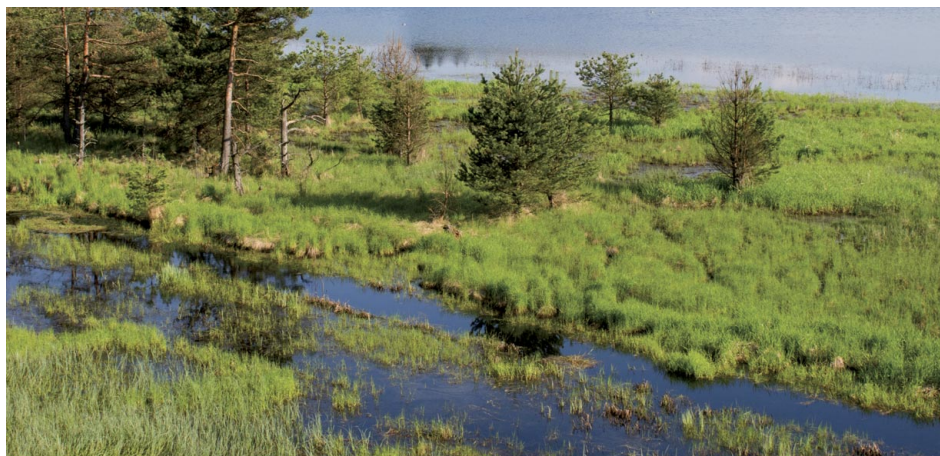
Area: 915 hectares

Ramsar Site since 1982

The Danube-Auen between Vienna and Hainburg is one of the largest continuous areas of alluvial forest in Central Europe. The Ramsar Site Lower Lobau, located within the Vienna metropolis, comprises about two thirds of this forest. The site is an internationally recognized biosphere reserve and part of the National Park Danube-Auen established in 1997. The largest portion of these precious floodplains is located behind a flood embankment that was erected in the 1970s. Since then, the oxbow lakes have been largely cut off from the river dynamics which transformed the flooded forest into an alluvial forest. This transformation also caused the forest to slowly shift from softwoods to hardwoods. Only the south-eastern area is still a near-natural willow-poplar alluvial forest since it is periodically flooded by retreating flood waters. Nevertheless, the Lower Lobau

harbours considerable species richness and abundance due to the mix of wet, damp and xeric habitats. “Heißbländen” are a special feature of the Lower Lobau. These are high stacks of gravel which resemble savannahs and provide a stark contrast to the alluvial forests. The lack of flooding allows xerothermic conditions and has promoted the development of xeric bushes like hawthorn and common sea-buckthorn and dry grasslands with numerous orchid species.

Noteworthy plants and animals: little bittern, black kite, European weatherfish, Danube crested newt, yellow-bellied toad, Eurasian fire-bellied toad, European pond turtle, water soldier (*Tratoides aloides*), bug orchid (*Orchis coriophora*), early spider orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*), lizard orchid (*Himantoglossum hircinum*) and others



Waldviertel ponds, peat bogs & flood-plains

Lower Austria

Mires, ponds, wet grasslands, meandering streams

Area: 13.000 hectares

Ramsar Site since 1999

The landscape between Gmünd, Schrems and Litschau is shaped by raised bogs, ponds and near-natural streams like the Lainsitz and the Reißbach. Due to its location at the border of the Czech Republic the site has been mostly spared from human disturbance in the past.

The history of the fish ponds extends far back: They were established in the 13th century and consist of, in part, richly structured aggradation zones. The wetlands are an important rest area for many migrating wading birds and plover species.

The Ramsar Site consists of six mires or mire complexes: Karlstifter Moore, Gemeindeau, Rottalmoos, Schönaauer Moos, Haslauer Moor and Schremser Moor. Traces of former peat cutting are

still apparent. As part of a LIFE project, two of the mires were reflooded by sealing drainage ditches with wooden dams.

At the Nature Park Hochmoor Schrems and the Nature Park UnterWasserReich, visitors can experience and learn about the fascinating Waldviertel Ponds and Mires. The nature parks “Heidenreichsteiner Moor” and “Blockheide-Gmünd-Eibenstein” consist of a unique landscape featuring granite boulders and rocking stones.

Noteworthy plants and animals: European otter, Eurasian harvest mouse, black stork, eared grebe, western marsh harrier, European honey buzzard, noble crayfish (*Astacus astacus*), moor frog, European tree frog, European spadefoot toad, mountain pine (*Pinus mugo* ssp. *rotundata*), marsh calla (*Calla palustris*), marsh labrador tea (*Rhododendron tomentosum*), water flag (*Iris pseudacorus*), yellow water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*), sundew species (*Drosera* spp.), bladderwort species (*Utricularia* spp.) and others



Wilder Kaiser

Tyrol

Alpine landscape with mires, forests and meadows

Area: 3781 hectares

Ramsar Site since 2013

The karst area of the Kaiser Mountains is shaped by Wetterstein limestone which features bizarre rock formations and steep cliffs.

Long before humans started to take an interest in this area, the mighty mountains were inhabited by prehistoric animals. Thousands of bones in the Tischhofer Cave prove the existence of cave bears, cave hyenas, cave lions and reindeers from the ice age. Rather inconspicuous but no less impressive are the animals living there today like the green earthworm *Allolobophora smaragdina*.

At the southern slope of the Kaiser Mountains there are near-natural spruce-fir-beech forests with several mires (e.g., Hüttlmoos, Windwehenmoos, Steinbichlwaldmoor and many smaller mires). The goal of an Austrian-Bavarian INTER-

REG restoration project initiated by the regional tourist board and implemented between 2005 and 2007, was to convert the mire back to its natural state and to eliminate damage caused by drainage. Several barriers were installed within the drainage ditches to raise the water table and to stimulate regeneration. The project received state, federal and EU funding as well as funding from the Austrian Federal Forestry AG.

Noteworthy plants and animals: common European viper, fire salamander, northern crested newt, yellow-bellied toad, golden-ringed dragonfly (*Cordulegaster boltonii*), round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*), English sundew (*Drosera angelica*), marsh violet (*Viola palustris*), marsh calla (*Calla palustris*), common cottonsedge (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), cottonsedge (*Eriophorum latifolium*), sheathed cottonsedge (*Eriophorum vaginatum*) and others



Ramsar – A testimony for nature conservation and tourism

The Ramsar Convention has become an important impetus for habitat and species protection in Austria.

The creation of Ramsar Sites has stimulated the formation of new partnerships. The interaction of nature conservation, agriculture and forestry, water management, tourism and other groups has been essential to the success of these conservation projects. This has created the foundation for the sustainable positive development of Ramsar Sites.

“Ramsar” has become an important testimony for the value and high quality of a wetland. Ramsar Sites are frequently promoted in books, brochures and digital media. Especially amongst nature-lovers, which make up an increasing part of our society, the Ramsar trademark has positively affected local tourism. In particular, Ramsar Sites stimulate sustainable tourism. Ramsar has helped to place a new value on wetlands so that they are now considered precious and important, which has not always been the case.

Gaining Ramsar status has been an important impulse for the optimal development of each site. Therefore, detailed management plans have been created to cover the fundamentals of protecting and maintaining sites. Also, the continuous monitoring of all Ramsar Sites is considered standard practice today.

Many Ramsar Sites feature themed nature trails, observation decks, information centres or other educational facilities. Such facilities provide an important economic and tourism stimulus. Broader impacts include creating awareness among the local community about the economic value of wetland conservation.



Protection of Mires through the Austrian Federal Forestry

The Austrian Federal Forestry (Österreichische Bundesforste AG, www.bundesforste.at) is the largest landowner in the country and has given rise to many important initiatives and measures for marsh and wetland conservation in the past.

Peatlands are among the most endangered habitats in the world. Their use as a source of fuel can be traced back to the Bronze Age. Changes to these landscapes through human activities had been self-evident and accepted over the course of centuries. Lastly, a fundamental rethinking process started and the importance of mire conservation was realized. On the occasion of the 1993 “year of the wetlands” designated by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the Federal Forestry decided to place all their mire under protection. At present, the ÖBf owns 474 peatlands covering an area of about 1700 hectares, 70 percent of which are in near-natural condition.



As part of the WWF campaign “Lass sie leben” (transl.: “Let them live”) ÖBf, the University of Vienna and WWF signed a cooperation agreement on “active marsh conservation”. According to the agreement, marshes that have suffered damage through drainage, peat excavation, grazing and reforestation should be actively restored. The ambitious program for marsh protection started in 2000 in the mire southeast of the Überling hut in the municipality of Tamsweg where the mire was restored through waterlogging.

In addition to Ramsar Sites, ÖBf mire protection projects also pertain to many peatlands of national and international importance. For instance, the focus of restoration and revitalisation efforts in 2012 was placed on Upper Austria (Salzkammergut).



Life projects to protect wetlands

LIFE is an EU funding program that provides financial support exclusively for environmental and nature conservation projects as well as climate policy projects. In this way, LIFE contributes to the implementation and further development of environmental policy and promotes sustainable development in the EU. In recent years, several LIFE projects for the conservation and protection of moors, wetlands, and river landscapes have already been implemented in Austria.

The latest LIFE project contributes to moorland conservation. LIFE AMooRe aims to initiate the implementation of the Peatland Strategy Austria 2030+. On the one hand, this is achieved through direct measures within the project and, on the other hand, by developing the necessary foundations for further implementation after the end of the project. The Peatland Strategy Austria 2030+ as part of the na-

tional and EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 contributes to the implementation of the relevant (EU) legislation. The focus is on achieving the objectives of the Flora-Fauna-Habitat (FFH) and Birds Directives. However, due to its scale, this project will also make a significant contribution to climate protection and climate change adaptation at the regional level.

Further information on the LIFE project AMooRe can be found on the website: <https://life-amoores.at>



Wording of Ramsar Convention

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (signed in 1971, updated version)

The Contracting Parties,
 RECOGNIZING the interdependence of Man and his environment;
 CONSIDERING the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands as regulators of water regimes and as habitats supporting a characteristic flora and fauna, especially waterfowl;
 BEING CONVINCED that wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreparable;
 DESIRING to stem the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands now and in the future;
 RECOGNIZING that waterfowl in their seasonal migrations may transcend frontiers and so should be regarded as an international resource;
 BEING CONFIDENT that the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna can be ensured by combining far-sighted national policies with co-ordinated international action;
 Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

1. For the purpose of this Convention wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.

2. For the purpose of this Convention waterfowl are birds ecologically dependent on wetlands.

Article 2

1. Each Contracting Party shall designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in a List of Wetlands of International Importance, hereinafter referred to as "the List" which is maintained by the bureau established under Article 8. The boundaries of each wetland shall be precisely described and also delimited on a map and they may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands, especially where these have importance as waterfowl habitat.

2. Wetlands should be selected for the List on account of their international significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology or hydrology. In the first instance wetlands of international importance to waterfowl at any season should be included.

3. The inclusion of a wetland in the List does not prejudice the exclusive sovereign rights of the Contracting Party in whose territory the wetland is situated.

4. Each Contracting Party shall designate at least one wetland to be included in the List when signing this Convention or when depositing its instrument of ratification or accession, as provided in Article 9.

5. Any Contracting Party shall have the right to add to the List further wetlands situated within its territory, to extend the boundaries of those wetlands already included by it in the List, or, because of its urgent national interests, to delete or restrict the boundaries of wetlands already included by it in the List and shall, at the earliest possible time, inform the organization or government responsible for the continuing bureau duties specified in Article 8 of any such changes.

6. Each Contracting Party shall consider its international responsibilities for the conservation, management and wise use of migratory stocks of waterfowl, both when designating entries for the List and when exercising its right to change entries in the List relating to wetlands within its territory.

Article 3

1. The Contracting Parties shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory.

2. Each Contracting Party shall arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its ter-

ritory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. Information on such changes shall be passed without delay to the organization or government responsible for the continuing bureau duties specified in Article 8.

Article 4

1. Each Contracting Party shall promote the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl by establishing nature reserves on wetlands, whether they are included in the List or not, and provide adequately for their wardening.

2. Where a Contracting Party in its urgent national interest, deletes or restricts the boundaries of a wetland included in the List, it should as far as possible compensate for any loss of wetland resources, and in particular it should create additional nature reserves for waterfowl and for the protection, either in the same area or elsewhere, of an adequate portion of the original habitat.

3. The Contracting Parties shall encourage research and the exchange of data and publications regarding wetlands and their flora and fauna.

4. The Contracting Parties shall endeavour through management to increase waterfowl populations on appropriate wetlands.

5. The Contracting Parties shall promote the training of personnel competent in the fields of wetland research, management and wardening.

Article 5

1. The Contracting Parties shall consult with each other about implementing obligations arising from the Convention especially in the case of a wetland extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or

where a water system is shared by Contracting Parties. They shall at the same time endeavour to coordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna.

Article 6

1. There shall be established a Conference of the Contracting Parties to review and promote the implementation of this Convention. The Bureau referred to in Article 8, paragraph 1, shall convene ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties at intervals of not more than three years, unless the Conference decides otherwise, and extraordinary meetings at the written requests of at least one third of the Contracting Parties. Each ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties shall determine the time and venue of the next ordinary meeting.

2. The Conference of the Contracting Parties shall be competent:

- a) to discuss the implementation of this Convention;
- b) to discuss additions to and changes in the List;
- c) to consider information regarding changes in the ecological character of wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 3;
- d) to make general or specific recommendations to the Contracting Parties regarding the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands and their flora and fauna;
- e) to request relevant international bodies to prepare reports and statistics on matters which are essentially international in character affecting wetlands;
- f) to adopt other recommendations, or resolutions, to promote the functioning of this Convention.

3. The Contracting Parties shall ensure that those responsible at all levels for wetlands management shall be informed of, and take into consideration, recommendations of such

Conferences concerning the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands and their flora and fauna.

4. The Conference of the Contracting Parties shall adopt rules of procedure for each of its meetings.

5. The Conference of the Contracting Parties shall establish and keep under review the financial regulations of this Convention. At each of its ordinary meetings, it shall adopt the budget for the next financial period by a two-third majority of Contracting Parties present and voting.

6. Each Contracting Party shall contribute to the budget according to a scale of contributions adopted by unanimity of the Contracting Parties present and voting at a meeting of the ordinary Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Article 7

1. The representatives of the Contracting Parties at such Conferences should include persons who are experts on wetlands or waterfowl by reason of knowledge and experience gained in scientific, administrative or other appropriate capacities.

2. Each of the Contracting Parties represented at a Conference shall have one vote, recommendations, resolutions and decisions being adopted by a simple majority of the Contracting Parties present and voting, unless otherwise provided for in this Convention.

Articles 8 to 12 refer to the organization of the Ramsar Secretariat and other contractual aspects. See www.ramsar.org for details.



Addresses

Federal Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry, Climate and Environmental Pro-
tection, Regions and Water Management
www.bmluk.gv.at

Ramsar
www.ramsar.org

Umweltbundesamt
www.umweltbundesamt.at

Federal provinces

Burgenland
www.burgenland.at

Carinthia
www.ktn.gv.at

Lower Austria
www.noel.gv.at

Upper Austria
www.land-oberoesterreich.gv.at

Salzburg
www.salzburg.gv.at

Styria
www.verwaltung.steiermark.at

Tyrol
www.tirol.gv.at

Vorarlberg
www.vorarlberg.gv.at

Vienna
www.wien.gv.at

Ramsar Site Partners

Austrian Federal Forestry AG
www.bundesforste.at

Austrian League for Nature Conservation
<http://naturschutzbund.at>

Naturefriends International
www.nfi.at

WWF
www.wwf.at

BirdLife
www.birdlife.at



Information centres relating to Ramsar Sites

Burgenland

Information centre National Park
Neusiedler See – Seewinkel
www.nationalparkneusiedlersee.at

Lower Austria

National Park Centre Donau-Auen in Orth
an der Donau
www.donauauen.at

National Park Centre Thayatal-Podyjí
in Merkersdorf
www.np-thayatal.at

Nature Park Hochmoor – Unterwasserreich
Schrems
www.unterwasserreich.at

Upper Austria

Information Centre
Kalkalpen National Park Centre in Molln
www.kalkalpen.at

Vorarlberg

Rhine Delta at Lake Constance
www.rheindelta.org

Vienna

“Nationalparkhaus wien-lobAU”
www.nph-lobau.wien.at
www.donauen.at

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