

Winner case study of the CEEweb Award
in the *Managing our natural resources* category

Reintroduction of cattle in abandoned areas

BROD Ecological Society - BED

Brief Description of the case



Free-range grazing on flooded common grasslands is the key ecological process in the Sava River area because it keeps invasive plant species under control. Those man-made habitats with its spawning and nesting possibilities in alluvial areas, match biodiversity richness and value as the habitats of the pristine nature. In last few decades these wet meadows and grasslands are in danger of dying out. The reintroduction of cattle in abandoned areas was pivotal in fight against the aggressive dispersal of invasive species (in particular *Amorfa*

fruticosa). The choice of Croatian indigenous breeds as keepers of biodiversity proved to be ideal because they show exceptional durability in all, even extreme weather conditions. NGO BED's is present as co-manager on Gajna grassland since 1989 and made Gajna into something of an „Arc“ for reintroduced native Croatian cattle breeds. Through the numerous projects on this protected landscape conducted by BED, it has been proven that the combination of cattle grazing and treading is the best way to permanently keep invasive species under control.

Detailed Description

Type of case: Strategic cooperation

Location: Oprisavci/Poljanc

Habitats/species managed: Natural eutrophic ponds with Hydrocharition or Magnopotamion vegetation, Wet meadows of Central Europe + Bird Directive Habitat

Duration: 06/27/2007 - 09/20/2014

Involved organizations (both business and green NGOs):

- County Institution for Nature Protection of Brod Posavina County – Public Institution – Croatia
- Municipality Oprisavci – Local government – Croatia
- Tourist Board of Brod Posavina County – Public Institution – Croatia
- Tourist Board of Oprisavci Municipality – Public Institution – Croatia

Activities carried out in the framework of the cooperation including concrete tools used:

Activities in initial project resulted in following:

1. Operational eco-cooperative with sustainable program of ecological food production
2. Preservation of endangered and indigenous species, (herd of 20 Slavonian Podolian cows, 2 Black Slavonian pig, and 2 Posavina horses)
3. Protection of biodiversity of protected area Gajna
4. Monitored accessibility of infrastructure within protected area
5. 100 km of mapped and marked bicycle and horseback riding route through protected areas in Brod Posavina County
6. Ensuring the continuous presence of professional guardian on Gajna grassland
7. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of biological diversity
8. Increased ecological awareness in community through promotional/educational activities

Results:

Short term: From 2007-2009 BED as a main applicant with its partners and associates successfully implemented the project "Protection, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the development of environmental awareness through the breeding of Croatian indigenous breeds and encouragement of organic farming." Reintroduction of the Croatian indigenous species was necessary in order to protect and preserve the biodiversity on the pasture. The limited areas have undergone forced intensive grazing and stumping by alternate grazing on the different area of the pasture during the certain number of days. The result was visible decrease of non-indigenous plants and visible increase of helio-philic plants significantly raising the number of species on the pasture.

Long term: The successful EU funded project ended in 2009 but turned into the special BED's multi-year programme „Protection of biodiversity on pasture GAJNA through indigenous breeds“ with the goal to protect, conserve and improve the biodiversity of protected area GAJNA. With its own example as a breeder and complete network of support to the local community from 2007 until today (2014) BED shares their fate as and tries to fight the laws and the subsidy system to ensure the sustainability of this way. BED was also a founder of Eco-cooperative which re-registered as a first Pasturing community in Croatia in 2012 which created a Management plan created for Common pasture GAJNA in 2012.- with the special measures for nature protection approved by Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection.

Benefits and motivation of partners (businesses, green NGOs):

Ecological benefits were monitored by the State Institute for Nature Protection which reported that result is visible decrease of non-indigenous plants and visible increase of helio-philic plants significantly raising the number of species on the pasture.

Economic/social: Activities in this project and its results directly affected the local community of villages in Municipality Oprisavci by providing the conditions for ecological production and ensuring the economic development of the region. By assisting in the foundation of the eco-cooperative Gajna the project created ground for the inhabitants to participate in various national and international programs. Village community was also educated through communal lectures on the importance of ecological production.

Situation before the project

Abandonment of extensive grazing practice is leading to a tendency of overgrowth by the invasive species, which is a common problem in the Sava and Danube River flooded areas. There was a need for a project that would put the economic needs of the village and the ecological need of the conservationists in harmony. Slavonian Podolian Cow which was the main reintroduced breed in the project was almost extinct, classified by FAO as critically endangered species with less than 100 heads in the whole Croatia. There was virtually no institutional support for the site and the cooperation of different sectors in charge was low. Ecological awareness was relatively low with frequency of incidents and there was no infrastructure for the monitored accessibility to the area.

More information and attachments:

<http://www.bed.hr/>

- [Gajna-pdf.pdf](#)
- [leaflet-english-resized.pdf](#)