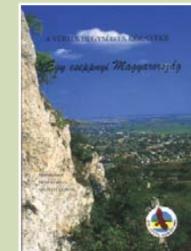


EDUCATION, AWARENESS-RAISING AND ECO-TOURISM

One of the most important tasks of our Public Foundation is to promote environmentally aware way of thinking. We carry out our educational activities with enthusiasm because we hope that the attitude shown by us will result in a deep change in the way of thinking of the young generations in order to save our environment. Our experience shows that there is and increasing demand on behalf of educational institutions for classes in nature, excursions, forest schools, camps, associated museum visits, lectures and fieldwork making the children active in them.



To secure the success of our educational activities, we:



- Published a monography about the Vértes region in 1996, entitled „A drop of Hungary”;

- Organize a competition every year on the day of Birds and Trees, combined with lectures and fieldwork, together with the primary school of Csákvár since 1997;

- Organize a bird ringing research camp each year;



- Established the Vértes Natural History Museum in 2000, located in the so-called Geszner-house in Csákvár, which has been extended since then;

- Published a book „Mysterious birds of the Csákvári-meadow” in 2001, which contains the results of the ornithological research carried out by Szabó László Vilmos in the Zámoly Basin, complemented by our experience

- Established the „Vidrafű” Nature Trail at the Csikvarsa Meadow;

- Bought a building in Vértesboglár in 2006, in order to establish a Forest School in it, and after renovation we opened it to the public in 2008.



The establishment of touristical locations serving the protection of the values and their introduction at the same time, furthermore the development of programmes in connection to these are relatively new activities of our Public Foundation, but these became very important. This part of our activities is based on both the natural and the cultural sights of the Vértes hills and their surrounding. Our offer today consists of:

- Vértes Natural Exhibition in the Geszner-house**

Looking at the three dimensional images and photographs of the exhibition we can see a variable picture bearing all kinds of landscape characters to be found in Hungary. Based on this, it is realistic to call the Vértes a „Drop of Hungary”.

- Farm centre and “puszta” inn at Fornapuszta**

The renovated Dohányos-house, furthermore the Százados-farm which is the centre of our organic farming programme, are suitable not only for the keeping of our animals but for the introduction of traditional farming life as well. Native animal species are represented not only by the grey cattle herd, but by different ancient poultry, buffalo, horse and Hungarian dog breeds as well.

- Mihány-day horse-rider and shepherd meeting**

Parallely to the traditional way of landuse in our area we think that it is a priority to save and revive folklore and cultural values, and the traditions. On the last weekend of September we organize this event each year since 2000, in order to serve this goal.

- Excursions leading by Experts**

Based on preliminary application, our colleagues will guide you through the Nature Trail across the Csikvarsa Meadow in Csákvár, or the Nature Trail introducing the unique flora and fauna of the Haraszt-hill, or in other places.

- Excursions by horse-drawn carriage**

Some of the touristic routes in the foreland of the Vértes are usable with a horse carriage as well. The comfortable, covered carriages can carry 15-20 people to an enjoyable excursion at a time.



Orchis laxiflora

MONUMENT PROTECTION

Besides the protection of nature, another goal of our Public Foundation is to save, and if needed, reconstruct the important cultural values and monuments of the Vértes region. These facilities reconstructed in their original state can be used in different traditional or modern ways, so as to contribute to their long-term sustaining and protection.

The most important results of our monument protection programme are:

- The reconstruction of the Geszner-house**

The are is a former water-mill, later used as summer residence, located in the park of the Esterházy-castle in Csákvár. It was destroyed in the 1950's, and the lake at its basement was filled up - it became a garbage dump. In 1996 we cleaned the lake, and reconstructed the house based on ancient photographs. Inside the building we provided space for the centre of our Public Foundation, a research facility, an educational and showroom, furthermore a natural history exhibition which introduces the values of the Vértes



- Reconstruction of the Hunters' chapel**

One of the first buildings erected in the English-style Park of the Esterházy-castle in Csákvár was the so-called Turkish-tower located in the Allé-forest. It could not avoid the fate of the other buildings, and it had been destroyed during the years. We started its reconstruction in 1998. The chapel was consecrated as Saint Francis Ecumenical Chapel, and today it serves as the romantic scene of family occasions, as weddings and christenings.

- The reconstruction of the farm buildings of the Esterházy Lordship in Fornapuszta.**



OPERATION OF THE VÉRTES NATURE PARK

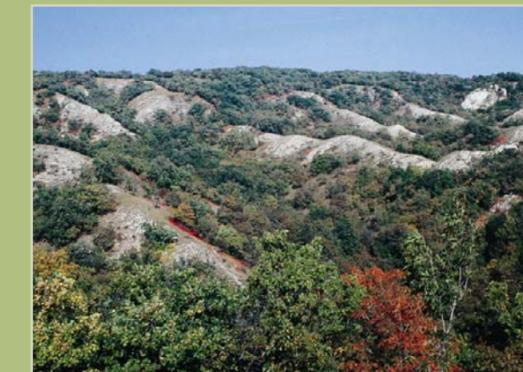
The first officially declared Nature Park of Hungary, the Vértes Nature Park was established in 2005 based on the letters of the Act no. LIII. of 1996, which was modified in 2004., about the protection of Nature.



The regional co-operation, which is unique in its way in Hungary, was initiated by us. The municipalities of the involved settlements (Bodmér, Bokod, Csákberény, Csákvár, Csókak_, Gánt, Mór, Oroszlány, Pátka, Pusztavám, Szár, Szárliget, Tatabánya, Várgesztes, Vértesboglár, Vértesmőly and Zámoly) - in consent with the Municipalities of Fejér and Komárom-Esztergom Counties - asked our Public Foundation already in the preparatory phase to co-ordinate the tasks and to operate the visitors' centre which also serves as the headquarters of the Park. During the development of the programme offered by the Nature Park we would like to emphasize - with the consent of all involved parties - the following subjects:

- A solid touristical development based on the existing values,
- The establishment and maintenance of tracking, bicycling and horse-riding trails, thematic and educational trails,
- The establishment of outdoor education centres,
- The promotion of the local produce in the market,
- The development of a solid, uniform image, together with the information system of the settlements and the information centre,
- The production of information materials in order to promote the sights and programmes.

Our own programmes offered in frame of the Vértes Nature Park contribute to the expert information transfer to our visitors, and, through the introduction of the wide variety of sights, to the useful and enjoyable possibility of spending time here.



Dear Reader! If you agree with our goals, programmes and activities seen above, and if you would like to join us in protecting the natural and cultural values of the Vértes region, please support our efforts.

Pro Vértes Public Foundation for Nature Conservation

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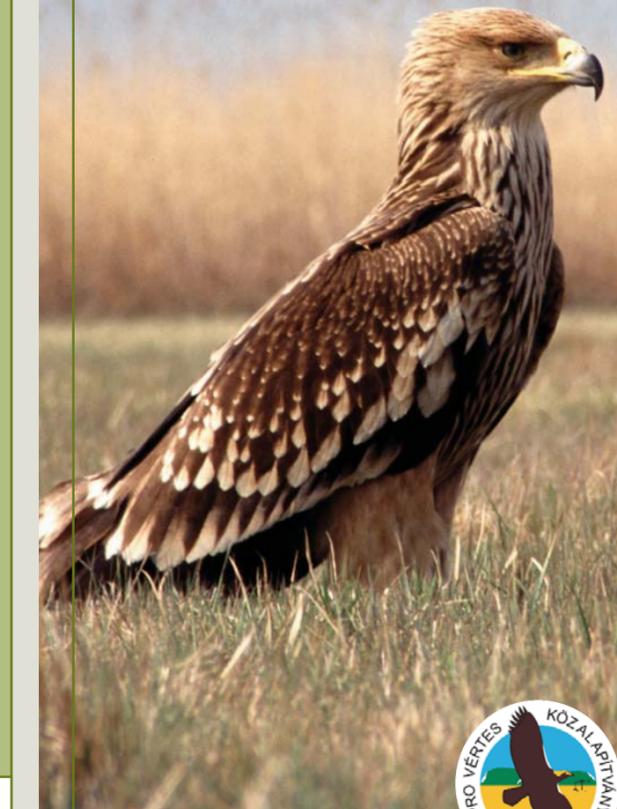
Bank account:
OTP Bank 11736020-20004501



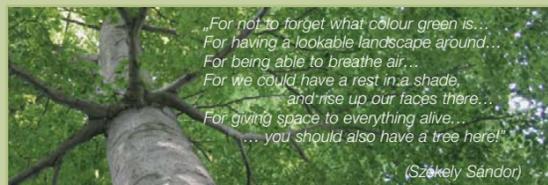
Made in the frame of "Tér a holnapért-Espaces pour demain"
French-Hungarian biodiversity protection program, supported by



PRO VÉRTES PUBLIC FOUNDATION



17 years
in service of Nature



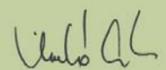
Dear Reader,

You are holding the leaflet of **Pro Vértes Public Foundation for Nature Conservation**, which introduces you to our various activities performed in order to protect the natural and cultural values of the Vértes Hills and its surrounding, in the heart of Hungary. We would like to give you a comprehensive oversight of our goals set at the foundation, to our work which we perform in order to reach these goals, and our results already achieved.

The predecessor of the Public Foundation - Pro Vértes Foundation for Nature Conservation - was established in 1991, in order to solve the nature protection issues arising in the Vértes region within a not-for-profits frame. It was transformed into a Public Foundation in 1994, and it operates as a prominently public benefit organization since 1998. Our main goal set at the beginning was to solve the nature protection and cultural heritage problems arising from the legal gaps and the privatisation that inevitably came along with the change in the regime of the country, with the harmonisation of state, municipal and public tasks, and with the involvement of the local public. The scope of our activities has been widened through the past years, as a result of our successful and ever more secured activities, and we have started and continued to date the following programmes: nature protection management; nature-friendly land-management; education and awareness-raising; the protection of historical buildings; eco-tourism; operation of the Vértes Nature Park.

We did not think when we founded the organization of public utility for the protection of nature that it would become one of the leading development directions of the Vértes region by now, which has also gained organizational frame by the founding of the first Nature Park of the country. We hope that with the realisation of our ideas, with the protection and new style management of protected areas, many people will obtain nice and long-lasting experience in our region, and we hope that the rich natural environment of the Vértes region will offer a growing and long-lasting livelihood for the people of the region.




 Viszló Levente
 President of the Board of Trustees
 Pro Vértes Public Foundation
 for Nature Conservation

Species protection

The first programme of our Public Foundation was bird protection, which primarily aimed at the saving of the populations of strictly protected endangered birds of prey (the Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*), and the Saker *Falco cherrug*) inhabiting Fejér county. The proof of the success of our efforts is that the populations of these birds have stabilized in the region by now. Among our methods the most important ones are the guarding of the nests, winter feeding, furthermore the placement of artificial nests.

Guarding of the nests

Our most spectacular and most popular species protection action is the nest guarding in order to guard the nests of sakers and large eagles. The direct results of these are not only the nice increase of the populations of the breeding birds, but also that many young secondary and higher education students get in direct contact with nature, and the efforts carried out in order to save it.



Placement of artificial nests and hollows

In frame of bird protection activities we place out artificial nests - on the first place, in order to help maintaining and improving the populations of the White-tailed Eagle and the Saker. The programme of artificial nest placement for the Saker, which occupies the nests of other birds of prey, started here and has been extended to the whole area of the country. Apart from this, another important activity of ours is the insulation of medium voltage electric poles in order to protect birds. Artificial hollows mean a valuable help for songbirds, such as the Roller *Coracias garulius*, the Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and different tits, and these hollows are also used by small mammals in winter as lodging.

Habitat protection

We consider saving, maintaining and sustaining the remnants of our natural or close-to-natural environment very important, because the area of these decreased drastically due to the intensive agriculture, different industrial activities and the fast development of our transport networks. We succeeded to restore water supply in some of the moorlands surrounding the Vértes (e.g. Csikvarsa Meadow), formerly threatened with draining, with the establishment of a sluice system which controls the water regime. Thanks to the floodings, different species of ground-nesting waders could return. As a result of favourable conditions, almost unique breeding population of the Crakes of Hungary could develop. We restored the habitats of the Téglaházi-kubikgörök, also belonging to the Csikvarsa Meadow, together with the Directorate of the Duna-Ipoly National Park, so an open water wetland could develop, where already Greylags *Anser anser* are also breeding.

NATURE PROTECTION MANAGEMENT

Our priority task is to restore the ploughed grasslands of the Zámoly Basin into grass habitats. To our best hope, with the expansion of the Hungarian great bustard *Otis tarda* population, these beautiful birds will recolonise their former habitats here.

Thanks to our diligent work, the area of the Vértes Hills and the Zámoly Basin are listed among the 400 most important bird habitats of Europe and the Hungarian Natura 2000 network as well.



Research and monitoring

We substantiate our activities carried out in order to save, maintain and widely promote the natural and cultural values of the Vértes Hills and their forelands on different research activities:

- Vegetation mapping of the Forest Reserve in the Juhdöglő Valley and Csikvarsa Meadow
- Research carried out for the substantiation of the declaration of the nature protection areas of local importance managed by us
- Complex habitat investigations of the Velence Lake - Vértes Region
- Basic researches of Natura2000 areas in Zámoly Basin and Csikvarsa Meadow

We started a series of research programmes in 2004 in order to investigate the effects of grass cutting on wildlife on our grassland habitats. In order to experimentally determine the optimal way of management and to observe its effects on wildlife, we carry out observations related to the flora and the bird populations of the area.

We follow the changes in the wildlife of the area as well as the effects of different management methods on these during our continuous monitoring activities in the whole year. In order to successfully complete management tasks, we need the valuable information about the breeding birds, the timing of breeding, and the fledging of the youngs, collected by the volunteers and in the bird observation camps near the Csikvarsa Meadow lead by the employees of the Duna-Ipoly National Park as well, besides the data collected by our experts.

Habitat protection, and parallelly performed management activities demand for well-trained colleagues with extensive and specific knowledge, who are also able to react in special cases. This means that the wide scope of the tasks of the experts working for our Public Foundation reaches from bird protection and botanical observations through traditional livestock breeding and agriculture to water- forest- and game-management.

Establishment of protected areas of local importance and their management

A special part of Hungarian nature protection is formed by the natural values which are declared as protected by municipalities of the settlements. The Municipal Law was born in the historical situation determined by the change of the regime, and it also developed new possibilities of municipal government this way.

Our Public Foundation initiated the declaration of certain areas as protected ones, in the nearest and wider surroundings of the Vértes Hills as well. We think that through this local people get to know valuable treasures of their own land better, so that they can also start playing a role in the protection activities for it. In this field, we offer expert advice to the municipal authorities.

But, declaration of a protected area is not enough itself, because the long-term protection of the values can only be ensured by expert management carried out with care. With our expert knowledge and tools we carry out nature protection management tasks in the following protected areas:

- **Northern Vértes Nature Protection Area**
This is the biggest among this type of nature protection areas in Hungary, which was established thanks to our initiative in 1994, by the municipalities of the settlements Tatabánya, Vértes-szló, Várgesztes, Gánt, Szár and Szárliget - as a complement to the Vértes Landscape Protection Area, declared as protected by state.
- **Burok-valley Virgin Forest Nature Protection Area**
Maybe the only real virgin forest of the country was declared as protected by the municipality of Isztimér in 1995.
- **Csákvári Castle Park Nature Protection Area, Csákvár, 1993**
- **Orondi-pasture Nature Protection Area, Csákberény, 1998**
- **Tóhely-hill Nature Protection Area, Magyaralmás, 1998.**



NATURE-FRIENDLY LANDMANAGEMENT

The most important goal of our Public Foundation was to purchase land, approximately 2000 acres, which was considered useless by others, but was very rich in natural values. These areas were given to 600 different individual people at the time of the change of the regime, so we signed contracts with them. Approximately 75% of our land property is grassland, the other areas are forested, providing nesting places, and ploughlands, providing feeding grounds. With the buying up of these areas the fragmenting of these areas rich in natural values was prevented, but at the same time, as proprietors, we had to face new, water- grassland- forest- and game-management tasks.

Grazing of extensively kept native domestic animals

It was evident for us from the start that it is only possible to save the valuable areas by traditional (extensive) farming. With our organic farming programme we wanted to establish a sample farm, which not only serves for a sustainable ecological use of these areas, but, by its activities, the related folklore lifestyle, habits and values would also be protected, revitalised and the ancient domestic animal breeds would be sustained as well. So we bought a smaller herd of Hungarian Grey Cattle in 1997, the population of which grew to 500 up till now. This way, after a hundred years of absence, bolter cattle graze the Csikvarsa Meadow again. With grazing, we can use the relatively dry areas, or those where cutting is not possible because of water coverage, bird nesting, or in order to protect the tussocks for providing nesting places. Apart from this, we entered into agreement with some local farmers in order to get them graze their herds in the region according to the nature protection requirements.



The stables and the corrals were built at the Százados-farm. The species which characterise the ancient habitat (the Little Owl *Athene noctua*, Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, swifts and swallows) are helped to live here, by placing out baskets, hollows and boxes for nesting.



With the mentioned activities in the Zámoly Basin this way:

- We secure the protection and survival of natural values (species and habitats);
- Keeps the diversity of the landscape;
- Helps save the native domestic animals genetically clean with extensive farming;
- Realises the reconstruction and development of habitats and landscapes;
- Helps the production of healthy and nutritionally rich food;
- Realises traditional landuse;
- Helps ancient and now rare lifestyles and professions and the traditions survive and revive.

Bird-friendly mowing

The majority of our areas are meadows, so we developed the method of late - end of June, July - mowing and after this, grazing them. Before the change of the regime, for organizational reasons (in order to be able to stock the hay before the harvest), the grass was mowed already in June, and this caused serious damage to wildlife. With our buying of this land, these problems are solved now, and our Public Foundation mows the hay in appropriate time for nature, flora and fauna with our own machines, equipment and well-trained employees.



The mowing, based on more years' experience will be carried out:

- once in a year, with a timing based on the results of bird trapping in the area, later than usual (end of June - July);
- Leaving the frequented, richest natural areas intact;
- In a layout which is bird-friendly, furthermore
- In a cutting width of maximum 2 meters and
- With using a chain to alert wildlife;
- By people who are committed to nature and are well-trained.