

## THE AESTHETIC VALUE OF THE NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS IN THE DANUBE DELTA

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First of all it is worth highlighting the fact that Romania is known throughout the world as both the country of the Carpathian Mountains and of the Danube mouths, which enjoys the blessing of sheltering on its territory the Danube Delta, the supreme gift offered by the river and the sea equally. The exuberant, lush geographical zone known as the Danube Delta has often been called the kingdom of waters, the birds' paradise or the kingdom of reed; these statements relevant to the truth have been used so often that they have ceased to be treated as metaphors.

The charm of the Delta invites to quiet and meditation, to fusion with its nature full of beauties and joys, but only those who come to know and protect it, to live through it can truly enjoy the feeling of it. That is why we all should guard the inestimable value and beauties which form the Danube Delta, our existence, our prestige, our national pride.

Why do we love the nature of the Delta?

Because, throughout the years, becoming familiar with the Delta's natural ecosystems, with their various forms that include forests, pastures, insects, birds etc., you realise that, in fact, they are symbols of life, of permanence, that you can find here the utmost idea of perfection.

Maybe the first feeling of the splendour of the Delta it is one of wondering before its miracles, maybe after you watch everything profoundly the feeling turns into a real passion of the mysterious environment which is an ancient natural temple.

If you see the Delta just from a ship or motor-boat, it is no more than a river, a channel, a pool. But if you want to know it, you must travel it, penetrate into its secret places less crossed by people. The real Delta begins where you can only go by boat to reach a wonderland that stretches further on where neither boat nor man's step can reach, where you can only travel by your inner eye, heart and through along routes of sand banks, lakes and channels, marshes and floating reed islands.

Thus, the fantastic Delta reveals itself to the researcher or the tourist as a realm full of unwonted charm, with a fascinating variety of hues or nuances, fascinating in itself and fascinating through the speed of its changes, sometimes from day to day.

It is said that the Danube Delta is the realm of reed. Now, we are interested in the truth rather than in the metaphor and the truth is that reed is one of the primordial and fundamental elements of the Delta. The truth is that the formation and growth of the Danube are organically connected with reed. The truth is that reed means as much as fish does for the economy of the Delta. The truth is that there is other spot in the world with such a large surface and so thick with reed.

In its turn, reed generates another fundamental element for the formation and development of the Delta floating reed islets. This is one of the natural curiosities of the Delta, an apparently solid formation like an island but floating continuously, carrying the amazing variety of wildlife from one place to another across a lake. When the reed islet gets old and reed roots fix it to the bottom of the lake, it shelters at its edges the most beautiful and vigorous species of catfish, carp, pike, bream.

Only when sands and alluvia come to the surface, when more and more layers settle upon one another so that the surface not covered with water fills with leaves, flowers, birds and butterflies, with colour, perfume and songs, only then the Delta is born. But although defeated, the waters do not give in. They are everywhere, known or not, visible or not, and they feed the Delta, which invaded their empire.

The sands of Caraorman... they are indeed hallucinating. At Caraorman, the bright and hot south blows gently, creating the illusion of the desert. Among small, isolated woods, the dunes are still moving carried and moulded by the sea winds, the sand is extremely dry, and when they see the sun they enjoy it, satiated with light heat, and sparkle like a beach of diamonds. The sands of Caraorman are really hallucinating and there is so



much sun at Caraorman that you would rather look at the sun than at the bright sands which reflect it like a mirror.

Before reaching C.A. Rosetti village, between Periprava and Letea, the sands bear miraculous forests where just like the birds, the north and south flora grow together. Can there be anything more fantastic and surprising than a grey oak-tree invaded by lianas, than a lush exotic vegetation, entrancing and fondled by the sun?

We will not have the power of making another Delta! There is nothing more rational and imperative than to keep the Delta offered by nature, to leave the Delta unspoiled, for the Delta is "the stone" that remains after the river loses its waters into the sea.

If we love the Delta, if we want to bequeath it to our descendants so that they may enjoy its beauties, we must love and protect its life. Maybe, the birds are most representative for the wildlife of the Delta. They are its air, they are the Delta's flight to life.

One could write beautifully about the birds of the Delta, poems inspired by their song, by their flight, by the beauty of their feathers or merely by the masterly form of their body, perfectly adaptable to life on land, in air or water.

You can never forget the special impressions and sensations you experience when you enter a colony of pelicans, like the one at Rosca ("Roshka") - Buhaiova, or among flights of birds belonging to various species on Sahalin Island or in Histria zone.

Out of 322 species recorded in the Danube Delta throughout the time, some disappeared and others are very scarce.

But you can always discover the multitude of birds represented by the migratory species, the passing birds or the winter guests, the Delta remaining the same paradise of birds in this part of world.

You can see that millions of life spring from a drop of water, flowing one from another, one for the other.

Individuals, species, plankton, biocoenosis, ecosystems. All of them determine the necessity of biodiversity conservation against factors which would trigger an irreversible deterioration.

The populations of organisms of a species or several species, of the same ecological structure determine the stability and perennality of a natural

ecosystem (the climax stage). Any artificial decrease in the species, equivalent to a partial destruction of the genofund in a natural ecosystem of the Delta reduces its regenerating capacity. This fact will result in the appearance of maximum fluctuations which precede the fatal end - the disappearance of the ecosystems.

The comprehensive action plans of DDBR Authority, concerning the relationship man-nature in the Delta, contain numerous research programs as well as guiding principles in the exploitation of natural resources. They start from two main ideas: the minimum destruction of the ecological processes and the maximum conservation of the natural resources and energy in the Delta.

If man observes all these conditions, the Delta will keep offering wonders anywhere and everywhere unfolding its amazing harmony and beauty. But if you want to have the feeling of the Delta in the highest degree, you must cross certain places where the aesthetic value of the ecosystem is overwhelming.

During a trip on Litcov or Shontea Canals in May, when the vegetation simply bursts and butterflies and birds rise in the air, you get the impression of hovering in an unreal world, of becoming imponderable and feel like participating in the genesis cycles.

You can experience the same sensations in other zones, too, such as Dunavatz or Dranov canals or St. George branch. Although some of these canals were made by man in order to help water circulate and fish productivity to increase, they have gradually become part of the natural landscape of the Delta. Nowadays they can be included without reserve, in the touristic routes of great scientific and landscape value.

Leaving this place for a longer time, you take them with you. If you grow fond of a place you can never leave it, you just walk out of its materiality, of its daily life, enriched with the bliss of its unforgettable splendour.

An egret, a patch of sand, a stem of reed, a graceful water-lily, they all form the Delta, lake by lake, landscape by landscape, colour by colour, perfume by perfume, light by light, an infinity of worlds so close and similar and, yet, so distinct.