

LAKES, WET MEADOWS, DRY GRASSES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE KÁLI BASIN

The middle part of the basin is the most valuable and most interesting territory of the Balaton Uplands National Park. The features and the villages, the origins of which go back to the Middle Ages, of this territory prove that there have been farming activities in harmony with nature since almost 1000 years, first of all grazing, because the natural circumstances allow only this activity (53). This area is not suitable for agriculture because of the rocky soil and the wet conditions (1, 2). The landscape have been determined by the geological past; the formation of the surface, the local climate, the hydrographical conditions and human influences. The basic layer of the basin is impermeable rock, marl, from the Triassic period. The next layer is porous dolomite (7, 9) in which karst water can flow freely. The terrain is characterised by smaller hills

and shallow depressions between them (8). Lake Kornyí (Kornyí-tó) is located in the biggest basin. This lake is covered with reeds (54).

Because of the varying amount of rain in every year or even within a year, the level of karst water is extremely variable (44, 45). In rainy periods karst water appears at the bottom of the basins and creates temporary ponds. During droughts, however, even Lake Kornyí becomes completely dry (55).

Due to all these changes, dry grasses live on the dolomite hills (56). The characteristic grasses of the area are various types of feathergrass, the Spring Pheasant's Eye (16) and the Early Spider-Orchid (17).

On meadows which are temporarily covered with water, you can find other, protected plants e.g.: the Early Marsh-orchid (24), the Green-winged Meadow Orchid

(23), the Siberian Iris (22), the Great Burnet (25) and the Pyramidal Orchid (26). On areas which have been used for pasturing for a long time, there can be found numerous arts of plants.

A grazing with trees is located on the south-western side of the area. Pasturing has been, however, strongly reduced in the last decades. Thus domestic animals did not eat the sprouts of trees and bushes. As a result of this, shrubs cover the grazing which used to be a grove with only some trees.

The thick shrubs provide home for wild boars now. These wild animals, however, destroy the grasses and endanger the herbaceous plants in the area due to their burrowing.

Reeds have proliferated in Lake Kornyí recently. Due to this natural process the lake is almost completely covered with reeds today (41). It is, however, advanta-

geous for the local waterfowl (swamp chickens (49), little bitterns) if there are only reed islands on a lake. Rocky beaches without plants are needed for moving birds.

But the above mentioned changes had a negative influence on the fauna of Lake Kornyí and the Sásdi meadows. That is why the Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate started nature preservation actions with the help of a project of the European Union.

The gross sum of the invested money for the project "Protection and restoration of habitats on the areas of the Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate" („Élőhelyvédelem és helyreállítás a Balaton-felvidéki Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság területein”), project number KEOP-3.1.2/2F/09-11-2012-0014, is 390.291.389 HUF. This sum of money is provided by the European Regional De-



velopment Fund and by the central budget grant of Hungary.

From this money the reeds were removed from some parts of Lake Kornyi (57).

The former groves in the south-western part of the area were also rehabilitated. The thick shrubs under the trees were cut out. Many of the young trees were felled and a grove was created from the forest (58). The former habitat can be restored by mowing and regular grazing.

Because of the draining of the wet meadows, water conservancy actions were also needed. Due to a false economic strategy from the past, the wet meadows were drained with drainage ditches. But fortunately, this was not completely successful, thus some smaller habitats remained intact.

The streambed of the Sásdi Brook, which flows across this area, was straightened and deepened (59). As a result of this, the underground water level of the area be-

came lower, which endangers the local species. But the actions of today reverse these harmful processes.

Locks will be built in the former drainage ditches and in the Sásdi Brook and these will dam up the water level in the area. Embankments also help in managing water, for example, a new embankment leads water from the Sásdi Brook to deep, dry areas (60).

A 3 km-long path was also created from the project money. The path has six stations – provided with signs – and these display and describe the natural values of the area.

The path can be approached on foot from the car park of the road between Köveskál and Kővágóörs. From the stone statue on the nearby hills (52), you can see the first station near the Máté Spring. The second station has a bird watching building which has been erected recently.



As you walk along the Sásdi Brook, you can experience the biodiversity of the area. A small pond welcomes the tourists at the fourth station. There used to be a stone quarry here, but it was flooded by karst water (61). Today the pond has water plants and also its fauna is growing.

As you leave the picnic place, you can see the restored grove. Finally, you reach the Sásdi Brook again at the sixth station. The path beyond the bridge leads to Szentbékáll. If you follow the broken line on the map, you can go back to the car park.

