

CASE STUDY

THE ORMOŽ BASINS NATURE RESERVE

Reimagining old industrial spaces for
environmental, social & economic benefit



Background

Once an important economic player in the region, the Ormoz Sugar Factory and wastewater ponds, which were a critical part of the sugar processing cycle, were a key feature in the Ormoz landscape until its closure in 2006. The resulting drainage of the ponds, which had been an important habitat for migrating birds, led to degraded habitats and biodiversity loss.

Concerned by this loss, the Bird Watching and Bird Study Association of Slovenia (DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia) initiated a dialogue with factory management to take over the ownership of the ponds and begin restoring the wetland habitats.

The management of the factory supported the idea, and the majority owner, the Dutch Royal Cosun corporation, agreed as well. On 2 March 2010, they donated the entire area to DOPPS for the establishment of a nature reserve.

Benefits

- The restored ecosystem enhances biodiversity and contributes to climate resilience
- The wetlands have created a new opportunity for ecotourism, education and recreation, attracting visitors and generating revenue and jobs.
- The project engages local communities, fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship for the natural environment.
- It aligns with Ormoz's vision to integrate sustainable and green practices into the local community and its economy.

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‘THE WETLAND IS OF CRITICAL NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR MANY ENDANGERED BIRD SPECIES, IT PROVIDES A VITAL STOPOVER FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS’

Dominik Bombek - RRC Ormož



The Wetlands Today

Today the 55 hectare wetland provides a vital lifeline for many endangered bird species since it offers a key resting point for migratory birds. The wetland was declared a nature reserve in 2017 following EU-funded remediation measures, uses shipping containers as observation posts to remind visitors of its past cohabitation with the factory.

Over 30 migratory bird species are known to visit the area regularly, with their numbers at times soaring to tens of thousands. Among these, the wood sandpiper and the ruff are particularly abundant, making them the most frequently observed visitors during migration periods.

The reserve is also an important breeding ground for nearly 30 species of waterbirds, including several rare or endangered ones. Notable among them is the little crane, a tiny bird that thrives in dense reed beds, as well as the striking ferruginous duck, the elegant black-winged stilt, the common redshank—easily identified by its piercing piping calls—and the common tern, renowned for its swift and agile flight.

Beyond the diverse birdlife that inhabits or passes through the wetland, the Ormož Basins provide refuge for a variety of other wildlife. Beavers and otters make their homes in the waterways, while water buffaloes, introduced to graze freely, help maintain the landscape naturally, eliminating the need for mowing.

More Info: <https://www.dlib.si/details/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-VX0VOXSF>