

## NETWORK 2013, Summer Survey 17th to 21st July 2013

### Summer Survey of Jackals' Habitat in RAMSAR Units, SE Romania

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Yoluka Europe NGO wants to thank NGO Crispus Sibiu Romania, their Department of Ecology and especially to Ovidiu Banea, MSc. Environmental Ecology, for the invitation to participate in this Golden Jackal's habitat monitoring in Ramsar Convention's wetlands at Comana Natural Park and Danube Delta in South East Romania.

#### 13:30 Time Expansion (18.07.2013)

This journey started at 08:00h. in Sofia Bulgaria, where I begin the 380 km trip to Comana Municipality in Romania to meet Ovidiu Banea, who had arrived in Comana Natural Park the day before. He is NGO Crispus Sibiu Romania ecologist and one of the founders and leaders of GOJAGE ([Golden Jackal Informal Study Group in Europe](#)). During the day before my arrival, he surveyed the park's area by bike, to see under what conditions is it, to search Jackal's tracks and to set up a camera trap in the field for all the night in a corridor for wildlife under the highway.

In The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands web site, we can find a Short description of this park ([http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-archives-2011-romania-two/main/ramsar/1-26-45-489%5E25548\\_4000\\_0](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-news-archives-2011-romania-two/main/ramsar/1-26-45-489%5E25548_4000_0) ).

"Comana Natural Park (Parcul Natural Comana) (24,963 hectares, 44°09'N 026°09'E), a Natural Park and Natura 2000 (SPA, SCI) in Giurgiu County, is a complex in the flat plain of southern Romania characterized by a high diversity of flora and fauna and consisting mainly of forests, agro-ecosystems, meadows, rivers, lakes, canals, oxbow lakes and a micro-delta. Some 157 bird species have been observed in the park, which regularly supports more than 20,000 waterbirds, many of them migratory. The park also supports numerous fish species, including the endemic *Petroleuciscus boristhenicus* and the internationally threatened *Umbra krameri*. Neajlov River and its microdelta are optimal habitats for the Otter (*Lutra lutra*), and the Tree-marten (*Martes martes*), Fitchew (*Putorius putorius*), Jackal (*Canis aureus*), and Badger (*Meles meles*). Of the 1,300 plant species, 72 are threatened nationally and species like *Marsilea quadrifolia* L. are also protected in Europe".

"Special conservation areas have been established for thorn *Ruscus aculeatus* as well as for the Romanian peony *Peonia peregrina*, which lends its name to the Peony Festival, celebrated in the park in May. The site plays an important role in water purification, flood protection, shoreline stabilization, groundwater recharge, and stream flow maintenance. About 10,000 people who live inside the park directly benefit from these services and also use the site for fishing, hunting and traditional agriculture. Historical importance derives from the Comana Monastery, built by Vlad Tepes (commonly known as "Dracula") in 1462".

I met Ovidiu in Comana at 15:00 on 18.07.2013. After we picked up the camera trap set up the night before, we took the highway to the city Constanta (263km) on the Black Sea Coast, after that we traveled 145 km more to the town Murighiol, where we arrived at 23:00 h. In the dock of Murighiol we left the car and continue in the boat "Laura" in company of the Captain Ion Panait. We started navigation on the southern Danube's arm Saint George for 25 km to the East (downstream to Black Sea), then we entered on Erenciuc Channel to the North for 8 km to access the Lake Puiu. We continued 15 km through the channel Caraorman and finally we arrived to Crisan (Sulina Arm) at 05:00, 19.07.2013. For all the time I remember the words of Ovidiu when he told me that we will expand the time in this expedition and in the end it will seem that two days, will appear as being two weeks. His watch doesn't work and had stopped at 13:30 or 1:30 it depends on how you look, so it was always the same time and in that way we didn't worry too much about the time, so this was a very good start.

### **The Last Frontier (19.07.2013)**

“Romania’s Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve (DDBR) covers around 580,000 hectares, where the waters of the Danube enter the Black Sea. It is the second largest and the best preserved of Europe’s deltas; its dynamic, relatively wild ecosystem supports a rich diversity of wetland habitats, numerous lakes, ponds and over 330 species of birds and 45 species of freshwater fish. The region has a long history and the DDBR includes a number of Iron Age fortified sites, remnants of Greek and Roman settlements, and early Christian architecture. The site has been listed as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance since 1991”.

([http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/case\\_studies\\_tourism/Romania/Romania\\_Danube\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/case_studies_tourism/Romania/Romania_Danube_EN.pdf))

In the morning we took the small motor boat and continue the route 18 km to the North, to the Lake Merhei through Dovnica Channel, after that we continued another 17 km NE to Periprava village in Chilia arm. Here we met Mr Sorin Ros an excellent administrator and guide of the [Touristic Complex “Hotel Ultima Frontiera”](#), he showed us a big part of the complex and told us about their eco-friendly activities in this place, like the birds watching programme that they have together with [Skua Nature Group](#).

However, Mr Sorin also told us, that they are searching the way to preserve all the biological diversity of this place and in order to do that, they need to get more professional counselling from ecologists and biologists. This is an important opportunity to develop a project for conservation and environmental management plan for these part of the Danube Delta.

We continued by car to Sfistofca village passing close to Letea Forest. In this town a Lipovan Russian Community lives with no more than 50 inhabitants. The testimonies that we took from all the people we talked with in the Touristic Complex and in Sfistofca town, told us about the presence of the Jackal in this area.

The Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*) is a canid species, its geographic distribution, in Africa correspond to the east (southerly to southern Kenia), west (southerly to Senegal) and North, in Europe south-easterly to central Europe and at Asia southerly from Malaysia to India and Thailand (Corbert, 1978; Spassov, 2007). Ovidiu explained to me that “the Jackal is an opportunist species and is very associated to human settlements and water sources. There is two hypothesis of how this species arrived to Danube Delta. The first is that they came from the South Dobrogea region and the second is that they arrived from the north Ukraine. He recognized that on this place, on Letea surrounding and Periprava, both clusters of southern Danube Delta and the northern Ukraine could meet in 2009”. One of the used methods to assessed population of the jackal is the bioacoustic monitoring survey, that combined acoustic registered jackal howls stimulation and visual observations of jackals (Giannatos *et al.* 2005, Krofel 2007).

In the evening at sunset we left Sfistofca village and continued the route to Letea Village walking 7 km, between CA Rosetti and Letea Village we made a calling station, where we play backed jackal howls but without responses, perhaps due to the season and method’s limits.

In evening we arrived to Letea village and we took the small motor boat back to Crisan.

### **Long Road to Home (20.07.2013)**

This really was a very long day, the day before when we were exploring near Periprava town and Letea forest past very fast, but on this day was my return to home and was a long way home. Captain Ion, Ovidiu and I left Crisan at midday in the small motor boat following the route back to Murighiol where we had left the car two nights before. We went to Constanta by car and here we separated and I continued to Sofia arriving at 4:00 of the next day with a big smile in my face.

At the end I would like to say that it was an incredible experience and it really felt like, as per Ovidiu words we were in a two weeks expedition.

The Ecological Network of Jackal species needs more attention and after this survey we understand that further works and joint activities need to be done in wetland areas. *Apodemus sp* and White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* populations, birds communities especially ground nesting birds and waterfowls need to be monitored together. Human activity as fishing and cattle pasturing also seems to influence species abundance.

During next months an autumn survey will be performed together with partners as Crispus NGO and GOJAGE, on entire Letea maritime Levee (Letea Forest and surrounding villages) to find the density of jackal species and the level of this cluster, where, at this moment is proposed for ecoturistic activities.

**For more information**

<http://deltachallenge.blogspot.com/>

**References**

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