

CHRISTOPH ROLAND

Birding

HOTSPOTS

43 ROUTES AROUND
**LAKE
NEUSIEDL**



Interreg
Austria-Hungary

European Union – European Regional Development Fund

Vogelwarte Madárvárta 2



Nationalpark
Neusiedler See - Seewinkel

CHRISTOPH ROLAND

for
Elisabeth and Paula

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AROUND
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Translated from German by
Benjamin Seaman



Foreword

It took quite a long time for scientific ornithological research to be properly established in the Lake Neusiedl and Seewinkel region. Today, we find that no other group of animals is as thoroughly studied as the birds. The abundance of rare and/or conspicuous species in this region is an enormous attraction. More than 350 species have already been observed here. The diversity of habitats – giant reed expanses, mowed meadows, pasture areas, vegetation-free shores of the saline lakes, loess and sand scarps, haystacks, small forests, and windbreaks – enabled this rich birdlife to develop.

Birdwatching combines the challenge of identifying species with the sheer joy of observing birds' natural behaviour. It is little wonder, therefore, that a love for birds – already described in antiquity as a “scientia amabilis” – has developed into a major recreational pastime. Birdwatching has become a trend in Austria – a fact that is illustrated by the stream of visitors to the “BirdExperience”, hosted annually by the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park.

Many birdwatchers visiting the region are well prepared and know when and where certain species are best encountered. But one can never have too much information about this region and its bird fauna.

What does this book offer? – Detailed descriptions of 43 select routes around Lake Neusiedl (including Hungary and the lake's western shore), lists of species to expect, recommended seasons to visit, detailed maps of observation sites, and additional information about individual species and historically relevant events along each of the routes.

The author, Christoph Roland, is a freelance ornithologist, a National Park guide since 2003, and a scientific collaborator in the ornithological monitoring of the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park.



I am convinced that this book will be a valuable reference for any ornithological excursion, and wish readers many happy hours birdwatching in this wonderful region.

Dr. Alois Herzig

Scientific director of the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park

Acknowledgements

Even though I explored and tested all of these routes myself, this book would never have been possible without the help of many experts, photographers, friends, and members of my family.

I would specially like to thank Tibor Hadarics for his wealth of information and contacts on the Hungarian side, and Günther Wöss for his conceptual ideas, contacts, and copy-editing work. Hans-Martin Berg, Michael Dvorak, Eva Karner-Ranner, Johannes Laber, and Andreas Ranner were at hand during all phases of this book when I required advice or expert knowledge on the area's birdlife, as was Harald Schau for questions concerning the botanical sector.

The following experts (*in alphabetical order*) assisted me in their respective fields of expertise: Birds (*Hans-Martin Berg, Arno Cimadom, Michael Dvorak, Nikolaus Filek, Alfred Grill, Gilbert Hafner, Rupert Hafner, Eva Karner-Ranner, Thomas Kessler, Philipp Kolleritsch, Johannes Laber, Erwin Nemeth, Andreas Ranner, Marion Schindlauer, Beate Wendelin, Sebastian Zinko*), Butterflies and Moths/Beetles/Dragonflies and Damselflies (*András Ambrus*), Grasshoppers and Crickets (*Eva Karner-Ranner*), Grazing Animals (*Michael Kroiss*), Mammals (*Péter Kugler*), Amphibians/Reptiles (*Attila Pellingner*), Dragonflies and Damselflies (*Maria Schindler*), Grasshoppers and Crickets/Amphibians/Reptiles (*Günther Wöss*), Butterflies and Moths (*Thomas Zechmeister*), various animal orders (*Helmut Höttinger*), Plants (*Roland Albert, Harald Schau, Gábor Takács, Victoria Werner*).

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Having access to www.ornitho.at, BirdLife Austria's observation platform, was a great help and provided me with an exact view of abundance and phenology of the region's bird species. I would like to express sincere thanks, at this point, to the team of BirdLife Austria and to the hundreds of birdwatchers who have recorded their observations on the platform.

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Please send any suggestions for improvement and notes for a revised edition to: c.roland@bird.at

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The Birdlife

around Lake Neusiedl

As Austria's prime birding hotspot and one of the best birdwatching areas in Hungary, the region around Lake Neusiedl has been intensely travelled and studied since the 19th century. Many publications and reports resulting in the establishment of a number of protected areas (see page 268) attest to the significance of this Central European bird paradise and to the worthiness of its protection.

The highlights of the bird year are certainly the **migration periods** in spring (April, May) and autumn (August, September), the mating season and display of the **Great Bustards**, the many **Greylag Goose families** in early spring, and the flocks of geese returning to roost, known as the “**Gänsestrich**” (see page 104), in autumn. Of course, the **breeding season** with its diversity of songs and displays around the saline lakes and the reed belt is not to be forgotten.

The area is traditionally popular with – largely German and British – birdwatchers wishing to spot certain species that are only ever found at home as extreme rarities (if at all). Some species reach the western edge of their distribution here or occur in particularly high numbers – which makes them considerably easier to observe. Some of the most sought-after species include **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Ferruginous Duck**, **Eastern Imperial Eagle**, **Little Crake**, **Broad-billed Sandpiper**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Red-necked Phalarope**, **Hoopoe**, **European Bee-eater**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, **Moustached Warbler**, **Crested Lark**, **River Warbler**, **Collared Flycatcher**, **Penduline Tit**, and **Serin**.

Of more than 350 bird species ever recorded in the Lake Neusiedl region, 178 species breed in the area, and 145 species are considered regular breeding species.

Since comparably few species are added to this number in winter (e.g. **Rough-legged Buzzard**, **Hen Harrier**, **Merlin**, **Snow Bunting**, **Brambling**, **Twite**, and **Great Grey Shrike**), the chapter “Selection of Bird Species” (see page 302) focuses on “request species” of the breeding season and migration periods. Information on where to see the more common species is easily found in the route chapters, while the chapter “Top Rarities” (see page 70) concentrates on the other end of the spectrum.

Specific chapters spread throughout the book (on **Great Bustard**, **Kentish Plover**, **skuas**, and **reed birds**) provide in-depth insight into certain special species or species groups.

Region *and* Routes

Most ornithologically-minded visitors travel to Europe's westernmost steppe lake because of the many shallow saline lakes dotting the Seewinkel, to experience the unique birdlife – for Central Europe – encountered here. This “birder's paradise” is addressed in plenty of detail. But Lake Neusiedl and the surrounding region have a lot more to offer – from the lake's vast reed belt to the arid grasslands, the sloping vineyards, the forested Leitha Mountains, the Baroque palace grounds, and the Austrian-Hungarian border area, steeped in legend, known as the Hanság.

With 43 select routes and a number of specific chapters, this book attempts to provide a diverse and varied cross-section of the region's landscapes and birdlife. Beside information on the bird species to expect, the best time of year to visit, and tips on transport and gear, all routes also list “Other animals and plants” that can be discovered during the excursion – some more easily than others.

While the route chapters offer plenty of information on common and less common species, the chapter “Selection of Bird Species” (*see page 302*) provides more ambitious birders with details on when and where to expect the rarer species. Finally, the chapter “Top Rarities” (*see page 70*) lists (with date and location) all of the “mega-rarities” discovered in the Austrian Seewinkel between 2008 and 2017.

Information on habitats, species, conservation, and matters of cultural interest are woven into the text and should provide visitors with a more

profound insight into the wonderful world waiting to be discovered around the lake.

Owing to the location of the lake, the routes cover both Austrian and Hungarian territory, and are mostly situated in close vicinity to the lake itself. The few exceptions are either explained by the routes' location in other parts of the cross-border Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park / Fertő-Hanság Nemzeti Park, or by the occurrence of very specific bird species.

The presented area is delimited in the north-west by the elevations of the Leitha Mountains, in the south by the Sopron Mountains and the Hungarian M85 expressway, in the east by the Hanság, and in the north-east by the Wagram (the southern escarpment of the Parndorf plateau).



For an overview map
see pages 316/317

Rules of Conduct

in the National Park

Every bird's reaction when approached too closely is to escape. Some bird species react especially sensitively and also alarm others around them, who may not (yet) have felt disturbed. Serious birdwatchers know from personal experience how important it is to respect these flight distances. Frequent disturbances have an extremely negative effect on birds' energy balance and breeding success.

Staying on designated pathways

Visitors are required to stay on designated paths and trails in all parts of the cross-border National Park. Entering forests, meadows, reed beds, or bodies of water is strictly forbidden. The network of paths around the protected areas is partly open to cars, partly open to bicycles, and can partly only be used on foot. National Park rangers ensure that visitors keep to the designated pathways.

If you should notice other visitors disrespecting this rule during your visit to the National Park, please report the incident by calling:
0043/2175/3442 (Austria)
0036/99/537620 (Hungary)

Observation platforms, towers, and hides

Visitors will find observation platforms, towers, and hides in all parts of the National Park on both sides of the border. They are placed along the public pathways, thus never directly within a protected area, and provide good views and sometimes also protection against the elements. Two observation platforms are also suitable for wheelchair users (Illmitzer Zicksee and Oberer Stinkersee).

Appeal to nature photographers

Please do not block hides and observation towers with your equipment for extended periods of time, so as to ensure that they can be used equally by all visitors. Current and more in-depth information on the habitats, observation options, and on the visitors' programme can be picked up in the National Park information centres.



Weather *and* Gear



Pannonian climate

The climate of the Lake Neusiedl region is categorised as Pannonian – thus there is a beginning continental influence and only a weak effect of Atlantic currents. In other words, with an average annual precipitation of 600 mm and a little over 2000 hours of sunshine, the region is one of Austria's driest and warmest. Warm and hot summers (up to 40 °C) juxtapose cold winters (down to -20 °C). Some of the region's plant species have adapted to the hot summer months by suspending growth and blossoming a second time in autumn.

The huge lake acts as a temperature buffer and grants the plants of the Seewinkel (viticulture included) a particularly long vegetation period of approx. 250 days. Due to the generally prevailing north-westerly air currents, the wind absorbs humidity and warmth over the lake and passes them on to the Seewinkel bordering the lake to the east (even at night). The Lake Neusiedl area – especially the lake's eastern shore – is one of the windiest areas in inland Europe, making it particularly attractive to water sports enthusiasts.



Wind and sun protection

On longer tours, it is essential to remember to take wind and sun protection. More than once, even the author has had to call off an excursion in “good” weather because the wind had turned the prevalent positive temperatures into perceived negative ones – and not just in winter!



Spotting scope and binoculars

The large distances in the Seewinkel and the semi-open landscapes around the lake make a spotting scope indispensable. But visitors heading for the hilly forests of the Leitha Mountains will easily make do with a good pair of binoculars.



Maps and provisions

Aside from sufficient provisions (water!), good maps or a GPS-capable device are helpful, especially on tours into the forests of the Leitha Mountains. Timber extraction trails which may have been open a few years ago can quickly become overgrown, and formerly visible trail markers can disappear in the thickening vegetation.



Sturdy shoes

Though the area east and south of Lake Neusiedl is by all means flat, and though one is strictly obliged to stay on the largely gravelled and paved paths at all times, good shoes can still be recommended for warmth. What is more, after stronger rainfall some of the paths can remain muddy for days, thus also calling for an adequate choice of shoes.

Nature Tourism

Contacts

National Park Information Centre Illmitz

*National Park Information and
Ecological Education Centre*

www.nationalpark-neusiedlersee-seewinkel.at

+43 2175 / 34 42

info@nationalpark-neusiedlersee-seewinkel.at

Address

Hauswiese, A-7142 Illmitz

Opening hours

April to October

Mo – Fr: 8:00 – 17:00

Sa, So, and holidays: 10:00 – 17:00

November to March

Mo – Fr: 8:00 – 16:00

Neusiedler See Tourismus GmbH

Tourism Information Lake Neusiedl Region

www.neusiedlersee.com

+43 2167 / 86 00

info@neusiedlersee.com

Address

Obere Hauptstraße 24, A-7100 Neusiedl am See

Haus am Kellerplatz

Neusiedler See - Leithagebirge Nature Park

Neusiedler See - Leithagebirge World Heritage Nature Park

Ramsar Site Neusiedler See - Seewinkel

www.neusiedlersee-leithagebirge.at

+43 2683 / 59 20

info@neusiedlersee-leithagebirge.at

Address

Am Kellerplatz 1, A-7083 Purbach am Neusiedler See

Opening hours

9:00 – 19:00, daily

National Park Visitor Centre Sarród

www.ferto-hansag.hu

fhnp.nemzetipark.gov.hu

+ 36 99 / 537 620 | + 36 99 / 537 622

fhnpinfo@fhnp.kvvm.hu

Address

Sarród, Rév-Kócsagvár Pf 4, H-9435

Opening hours

Mo – Th: 9:00 – 16:00 | Fr: 9:00 – 14:00

Go Car-free!

By bike, ferry, train, or bus ...

The area described in this book has a very well developed public transport network. With few exceptions, all routes can easily be accessed by train or bus.

A dense network of bicycle paths – combined with a number of private bicycle rentals and almost 40 nextbike rental stations (*these bikes can be returned at any other nextbike station*) – make it even easier for bird-watchers to leave their cars at home.

Bicyclists will appreciate the Neusiedler See-Radwanderweg (Lake Neusiedl bicycle and hiking route), which can be used for a number of different birding tours. When it comes to crossing the lake itself, there are a number of bicycle ferries on offer.

The following websites can be of help when planning climate-friendly travel by public transport:

**Austrian
Federal Railways**

www.oebb.at

*Route planner and tickets:
rail and bus*

**Transport Association
Eastern Region**

www.vor.at

*Route planner and tickets:
rail and bus*

Google

www.google.at/maps

*Route planner:
car, rail, bus, and bicycle*

Tourism information (AT)

www.neusiedlersee.com

*Bicycle rental, accommodation,
bicycle ferries*

nextbike

www.nextbike.at

*Bicycle rental around Lake
Neusiedl and further afield*

Rail travel in Hungary

elvira.mav-start.hu

*Route planner and tickets
in Hungary*

Observing without disturbing

Observing birds in nature has gained a lot of popularity in the past years. At the same time bird populations have diminished worldwide – often dramatically. This has led to some protected areas becoming true oases of diversity, which in turn attracts ever increasing numbers of visitors.

To promote a sense of cooperation and to minimise disturbance of our fellow creatures, here are a few of BirdLife Austria's recommended rules – the “BirdLife code of conduct”. BirdLife Austria is the largest and only nationally active organisation for bird conservation and ornithology in Austria.

BirdLife code of conduct

- ✓ Protecting animals, plants, and habitats is the greatest priority. Distressing animals and damaging vegetation must be avoided as far as possible. There is no excuse for knowingly disturbing animals,

especially breeding birds at their nests or while feeding. Foraging guests, migrants, and roosting communities also require peace and quiet – especially during the cold time of year!

- ✓ Respect rules to stay on designated pathways in protected areas, and seek timely information on local legal situations (*permitted entry periods, ...*). Make use of available observation infrastructure (*e.g. hides*) – birds can be observed with less disturbance from here. Respect private property and the rights of landowners and beneficiaries; maintain public peace and quiet (*e.g. at cemeteries*).
- ✓ Observe the behaviour of birds (*and other animals*): they will often reveal when they are stressed (*leaving the nest, warning, distraction display, extended carrying of food, ...*) – though not always (*e.g. increased heart rate*).
- ✓ Use of call playback must be kept to a necessary minimum outside of scientific studies, e.g. limited to establishing whether a certain species is present.
- ✓ Share your enthusiasm for birds by reporting your observations (www.ornitho.at) and adding photos; they can constitute an important record and valuable addition to data collections. Act responsibly on your own knowledge and on the information provided by others, especially regarding sensitive observations; observations can be “protected” in ornitho.at – not every observation ought to be shared openly (*species susceptible to disturbance, sensitive habitats, ...*).
- ✓ BirdLife abstains from using nest photos in its own print media (with few exceptions), and removes or protects such photos in its online media (ornitho.at).
- ✓ Lead by example when birdwatching and photographing; accept missing an observation or photo if negative impacts are apparent. Politely point out any potential misconduct to fellow birdwatchers.

BirdLife Austria - Austrian Ornithological Society
Museumsplatz 1/10/8, 1070 Wien, Österreich
Tel.: +43 1 5234651 | office@birdlife.at
www.birdlife.at



Reporting *your* Observations

Common today – possibly on the brink of extinction tomorrow? Many bird species are currently experiencing difficult times due to a number of different human impacts. Even the most “trivial” observations today may well need to be assessed differently in the very near future. In any case, reporting observations can be seen as a valuable contribution to the collection of scientific and conservation-relevant knowledge.

Reporting observations online

Please report your observations on the following websites:

(Species, sex, age, number of individuals, date, location)

- » **www.ornitho.at**
The observation platform of BirdLife Austria.
- » **www.birdlife-afk.at**
Website of the Austrian Avifaunistic Committee – for reports of rarities.
- » **www.birding.hu**
An online form for rarities is available here for observations on Hungarian territory.

Reporting observations by email

Sending reports of observations by email is also possible:

(Species, sex, age, number of individuals, date, location)

- » **support@ornitho.at**
(Austrian observations)
- » **birding@fhnp.hu**
(Hungarian observations)

Contact addresses for bird ringing centres and for reporting bird rings can be found in the chapter “Reading and Reporting Bird Rings” (*see page 162*).

Reporting observations via app

“BirdList Neusiedler See” – the all-in-one mobile application

This free app for smartphones and tablets can be downloaded from Google Play and the App Store. Beside a complete species list and various additional information, personal observations can also be saved and exported.

Lake Neusiedl and Reeds



The lake

As Europe's westernmost steppe lake, Lake Neusiedl marks the border between the eastern foothills of the Alps and the Little Hungarian Plain. With its present area of 320 km² (of which the reed belt makes up approx. 180 km²), a length of 36 km, maximum width of 12 km, and average depth of just 1.5 m, the lake is one of the largest but also youngest in Central Europe. Unlike most of the Alpine lakes, which were formed through glacial activity during the last ice age, Lake Neusiedl was formed through tectonic depression of the lake basin approx. 13,000 years ago.

Due to the lake's shallow depth, the energy absorbed during the day (the lake can warm to 30 °C on hot summer days) is passed on to the Seewinkel at night by the primarily north-westerly winds – with added humidity. Viticulture in the Seewinkel has profited from this favourable location and from the vegetation period thereby extended to around 250 days. The lake originally had no drainage (thus referred to as a steppe lake) and has only one noteworthy inflow – the Wulka, flowing into Lake Neusiedl near Donnerskirchen. However, the majority of the lake's water, at least 80%, comes from precipitation – particularly during the winter months. The rumour of warm springs apparently emerging in the middle of the lake from cracks in the ground has long persisted. Research has shown that these so-called “Kochbrunnen” or “cooking springs”, which are supposed to explain the ice-free patches even in harsh winters, are in fact gas emissions – primarily of methane. Before humans began influencing the lake basin's water regime with weirs, ditches, channels, and sluices, the maximum expanse of the lake reached far into the area of the Waasen / Hanság. If strong wind blew in from the north-west, its primary direction, for more than a few days in a row, the former marshland area was outright flooded. The embanked causeway between Pamhagen and Fertőd, completed in 1780, was the first major construction to prevent water spreading to the east. Further west, fluctuating water levels – ranging from floods (e.g. in 1838 and 1941) to the lake completely falling dry (last occurrences in 1740, 1773, 1811 and 1865-1870) – continued to characterise the landscape. While the lake floor was even parcelled during such dry periods (to cultivate beets, grain, and rice), a number of place names in the Seewinkel's villages – Wasserzeile, Uferweg, or Seegasse (“water alley”, “shore way”, or “lake lane”) – are reminders of the potential water levels during large-scale flooding. In Pamhagen, a town not necessarily associated with its lakeside proximity today, a hunter once commented that “even the milk smelt of fish”. Meanwhile, from Wallern – about 20 km away from the lake today – the following quote was recorded in the second half of the 19th century: “Animals graze and bales of hay stand, during dry periods, in the very places where fishermen cast their nets a few weeks later.” With the completion of the Einser-Kanal – the main regulation channel draining Lake Neusiedl towards the Danube – and the opening of the weir at the Mexicopuszta, the lake's wildness was tamed even further.

The reed belt

With an expanse of 180 km², the reed belt of Lake Neusiedl is the second largest continuous reed area in Europe – only the reed area

of the Danube Delta is larger at 1800 km². The reed belt's expanse changes depending on water levels: last time the lake fell dry around 1865, the reeds disappeared almost entirely, only to return and expand – aided by the drops in water level due to the Einser-Kanal and to eutrophication from surrounding farmland. While the reeds' expansion towards the centre of the lake has since stagnated, abandonment of pasturing in the 1970s led to land-side expansion. At least in some parts of the National Park, grazing projects (*see page 136*) have succeeded in pushing back the reed plants and maintaining species-rich lakeshore meadows.

Seen from above, it is immediately apparent that the reed belt is not evenly distributed around the lake. It is up to five and even ten kilometres wide in the west and south, respectively, but quite narrow on the eastern side, and actually missing entirely on a stretch of almost four kilometres near Podersdorf. Prevailing weather conditions offer a rather simple explanation for this phenomenon: during so-called “shelf ice drift” events, ice is regularly pushed towards the eastern shore by the prevailing north-westerly winds, where it piles into metre-high walls. On its way, the ice mechanically destroys the reeds' continued attempts at expansion. The lake dune (*see page 63 “Did you know?”*), running parallel to the eastern shore for 25 km, also owes its formation to these shelf ice drift events.

Due to silicate deposits, which make the reed stalks especially durable and sturdy, the reeds of Lake Neusiedl also have a good reputation in a number of human uses. Besides being used for reed mats and insulation material, they are primarily exported for thatched roofs – especially to northern Germany and Holland.

While utilisation of this natural resource ensures the stands' regular rejuvenation – benefiting some bird species that prefer younger stands to untouched mature reeds – overuse and careless harvesting practices can cause lasting damage to the reed belt: even decades later, one can still make out large-scale traces of overuse – either through the use of machines that were too heavy, or through the reeds being cut too close to their base. If, during the main harvesting period (winter), water manages to get into the reeds' air-filled roots from above, they can freeze solid and die off completely. It is very difficult for new reed plants to recolonise areas affected in this way. Aside from the reeds themselves, which make up about 95% of the reed belt, a further 233 vascular plants, 13 species of moss, and 13 (microscopic) species of algae have been recorded. The “Birds of the Reed Belt” are described in the chapter of the same name (*see page 120*).



Major Habitat

Seewinkel

Origin of the name

The 450 km²-large area of saline lakes known as the Seewinkel (literally “lake corner”) is situated in “the corner” of the formerly much larger and L-shaped Lake Neusiedl. This region, once covered in thermophilic mixed oak forests (except for the areas closest to water), was subsequently deforested and used for centuries as common pastureland. Trampling, grazing, and fertilisation by cattle, horses, pigs, goats, and sheep formed a secondary steppe landscape also known as “puszta”.

The saline lakes and the salt

The famous saline lakes of the Seewinkel, shallow salt pans that periodically fall dry, are the westernmost soda lakes of the Eurasian steppe belt.

The closest representatives of this very specific type of water body are found in central Hungary.

There are a number of theories concerning the lakes' formation. While the saline pools closest to the lake probably formed between the lake dunes running parallel to Lake Neusiedl, the pingo-theory suggests a different formation history for the saline lakes of the central Seewinkel: ice lenses (so-called "pingos") were formed during the Würm ice age (approx. 115,000 to 10,000 years ago), which were not covered by the Danube's gravel deposits, and formed depressions – today's lakes – when the ice melted.

The lakes' salinity stems from subterranean marine deposits (the region was covered by ocean 13 million years ago) and varies in its composition from lake to lake, making each pool a unique habitat. Beside the main salt, soda ash (sodium carbonate – Na_2CO_3), other salts such as Glauber's salt (sodium sulphate – Na_2SO_4), Epsom salt (magnesium sulphate – MgSO_4), and common salt (sodium chloride – NaCl) also occur in the lakes.

Rapidly increasing salinity during evaporation, and stark differences in temperature between day and night, make the saline lakes truly extreme habitats. The fact that the shallow bodies of water regularly fall dry does not constitute a problem; on the contrary, it is essential for their ecosystem survival: beside reducing fish populations, the wind is thus able to disperse the accumulated nutrients; meanwhile, branchiopods and other small organisms survive these dry periods as cysts and remain available to birds as food once the water returns.

If permanently low groundwater levels lead to longer-term drying of the lake floors, however, they can become permeable and their salinity can decrease (due to leaching and wind transport), potentially leading to the lakes' disappearance. Drainage, addition of fresh water (for fishing or swimming), and land consumption are further hazards for this type of water body. While there were still at least 139 saline lakes in the Seewinkel around 1850 (with a total area of 3615 hectares), the number declined to 63 in 1986 (805 hectares), to the current number of just 30-45 saline lakes (656 hectares).

Saline habitats of botanical interest

Aside from the many bird species that make the Seewinkel a true birder's paradise, a few plant species are also worth mentioning here, which are found around the edges of the intact lakes and whose closest relatives are otherwise found in coastal habitats: they include sea aster and slender glasswort as well as *Suaeda pannonica* and *Lepidium cartilagineum*.



Waasen / Hanság

Former large-scale water wilderness

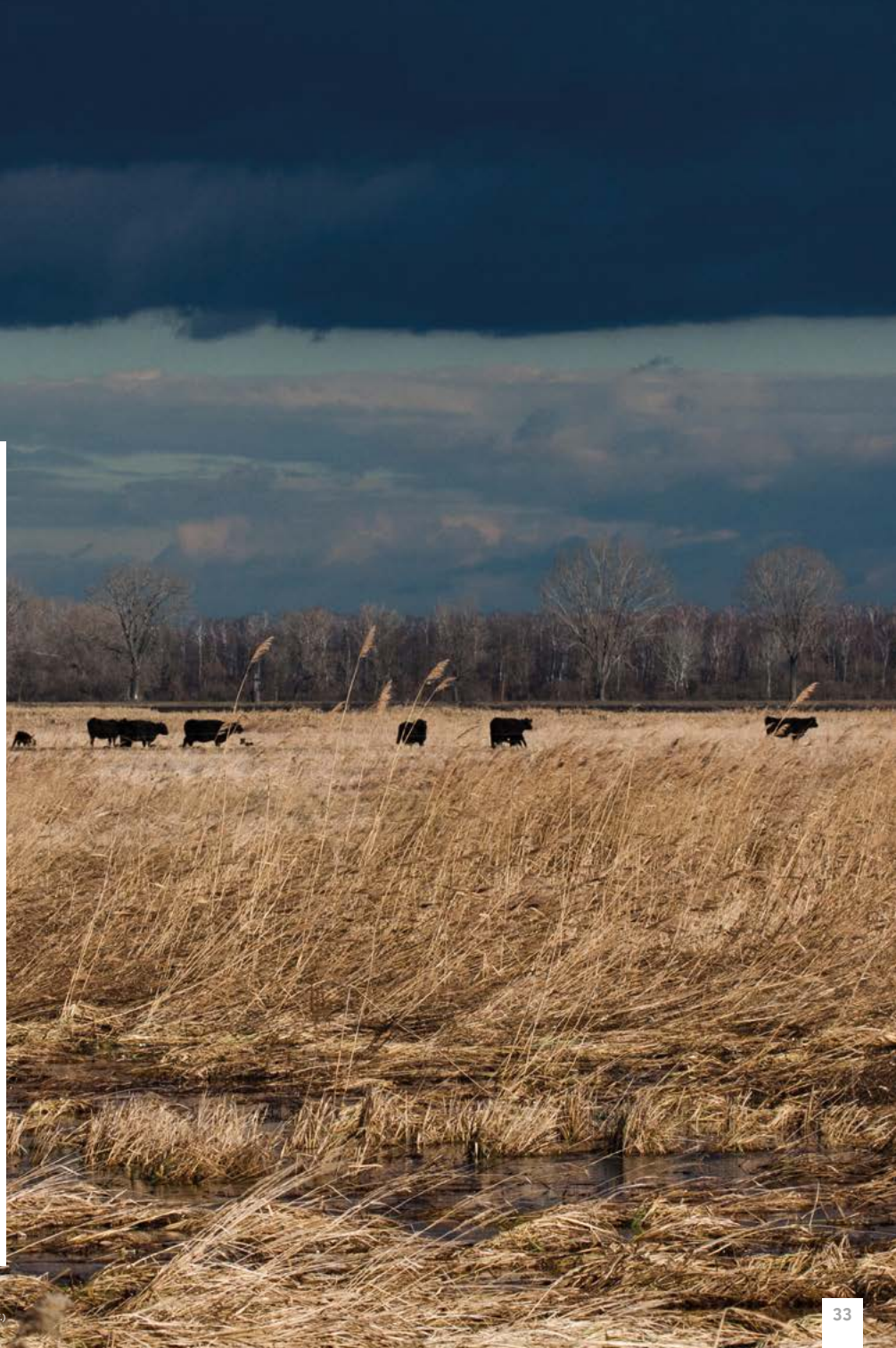
Before humans lastingly altered the landscape through multiple interventions, the 460 km² of the Hanság (German: Waasen) had been a significant part of the Lake Neusiedl area and – with its natural connection to the former primeval forest area of the Danube floodplains – a large-scale water wilderness. Two excerpts from hunting reports of Ludwig Baron Fischer from the Hanság area, published in 1887, give us an idea of the vast diversity of birdlife at the time:

“For completeness’ sake, I wish to enumerate the predators I have already seen and in part captured at this colony: White-tailed Eagle, Imperial Eagle, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Saker Falcon, Hobby and Kestrel, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, Red and Black Kite, all Harriers, Hooded Crow, and Magpie.” ... “Having arrived at the next colony, I saw a very mixed community circling above it: Grey Heron, Purple Heron, Night Herons in large numbers, two Squacco Herons and Little Herons each, a white Great Egret, and a pair of Glossy Ibis.”

[Source: Dick G., Dvorak M., Grüll A., Kohler B. & Rauer G. (1994): Vogelparadies mit Zukunft? Ramsar-Gebiet Neusiedler See - Seewinkel. - Umweltbundesamt Wien. 356 pp.]

Dams and channels

Separated from Lake Neusiedl by an artificial embankment between Pamhagen and Fertőd, and already drained by a number of channels, the Hanság was reduced to mere marshland as early as the 18th and 19th centuries. Land use increasingly shifted from fishing and hunting to hay farming. Higher-lying areas were grazed extensively. The forest was largely cleared (only to be reforested later with monocultures), and peat was extracted – only remnants of the original alder carr forest have lasted to





this day. After further drainage measures, such as the completion of the Einser-Kanal (1909) and other channels, the last marshy meadows and reed expanses, and the last saline lakes, disappeared from the Hanság. What is more, many of the semi-arid and arid grasslands formerly used as pastures around the villages were ploughed.

Renaturation

Reconstruction and maintenance measures of the cross-border Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park / Fertő-Hanság Nemzeti Park have succeeded in halting the area's negative development, and have partially been able to reverse it. For example, the large-scale habitat reconstruction sites on the Hungarian side (Nyirkai-Hany and Osli-Hany) were quickly recolonised by diverse birdlife, and the comparably large Komassantenwiesen (140 hectares, part of the National Park since 1993), with their Great Bustards, Montagu's Harriers, and Short-eared Owls, appear secured for the future.

Leitha Mountains

Ridge and weather divide

As an extension of foothills to the Alps, the Leitha Mountains extend from Hornstein to Bruck an der Leitha over a length of almost 35 km. During the monarchy, this ridge separated Transleithania from Cisleithania – western Hungary from Austria. Today, a large part of the border between Lower Austria and Burgenland runs along the Leitha Mountains. The label “mountains” is carried not entirely without good reason, seeing as the basin of Lake Neusiedl lies at an altitude of 115 m, and the peak of the Sonnenberg near Eisenstadt lies at 484 m a.s.l. The influence of the Leitha Mountains as a weather divide is incontrovertible: the sunny southern slopes, with their vineyards and orchards, profit from their leeward position behind the ridge, and what is more, the mountains intercept most of the storms predominantly coming in from the north-west – much to the dismay of the Seewinkel, which usually goes empty-handed.

Geology

Geologically, the core of the Leitha Mountains consists of gneiss and schist and is thus of crystalline origin. A layer of limestone formed above the core through deposition of former coral reefs – known today as Leitha limestone. The quality of this stone was already valued by the Romans, and it is little wonder, therefore, that it was used as a building material in many stately buildings in Sopron and Vienna – even in Vienna's St. Stephen's cathedral.





Agricultural landscape with floral highlights

The forest of the Leitha Mountains is dominated by oak, hornbeam, and beech, and is only fragmented in its far north by the extensive meadow areas of the Bruckneudorf military training area.

With few exceptions, the formerly large pasture areas on the eastern slopes of the range have had to yield to agricultural utilisation – mostly viticulture. The colourful floral carpets of the “Thenauriegel” and the Hackelsberg are remnants of these former pasturing practices and attract many visitors every year, especially in early spring – though the magnificent view of the Lake Neusiedl basin surely also has a role to play in this respect.

Calvary hill *in* Neusiedl am See



Common Whitethroat (© P. H.)



Corner of Kalvarienbergstraße and Mexikosiedlung
(N: 47.943900, E: 16.858500)

Approaching from the North to explore the eastern shore of Lake Neusiedl, an early-morning visit (with the sun in one's back) to the "Kalvarienberg", the Calvary hill, is highly recommended. Only few places around the lake (such as the big tower at the Podersdorfer Pferdekoppel, the gloriette at Fertöboz, and the Hackelsberg near Winden) offer such a remarkable view over the area.

2.7 km

Length

min. 1 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access

J F M A M J J A S O N D

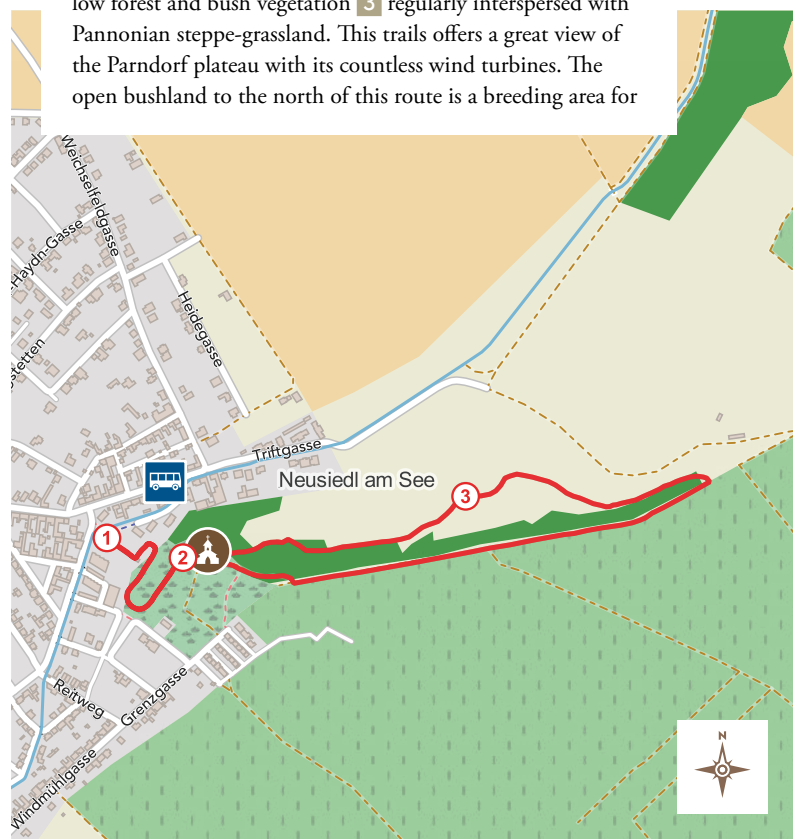
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

A narrow trail leads through the sparsely wooded scrub, interspersed with semi-arid grassland, to the east of the chapel. This trail is particularly rewarding in spring. Unfortunately, the surrounding area of the hill is already quite densely built up.

Route

The ascent begins at a small path lined with chestnut trees **1** and leads past twelve of the stations of the cross to the chapel **2**. Much of the area was cleared of trees and shrubs and subsequently grazed with sheep and goats, and today offers a splendid abundance of spring blossoms once again. In the summer months, the chapel is a good place to observe **Bee-eaters** on their foraging flights, while **Green Woodpecker** can be heard from the town. A few metres above the chapel, an unmarked trail leads along the northern slope, through low forest and bush vegetation **3** regularly interspersed with Pannonian steppe-grassland. This trail offers a great view of the Parndorf plateau with its countless wind turbines. The open bushland to the north of this route is a breeding area for



Swallowtail (© C. Rol.)



Lesser Whitethroat (© H. Kol.)


Horehound
(© G. Lot.)


Blackcap (© M. Tie.)



Golden Oriole (© M. Tie.)



Calvary hill (© C. Rol.)

Lesser Whitethroat and **Common Whitethroat**, **Blackcap**, **Red-backed Shrike**, and **Yellowhammer**. **Golden Oriole** can often be heard calling from the stands of higher trees.

After about 800 m, the trail passes through a wide windbreak and reaches a track bordered by vineyards to the south. From here, one has a good view of the Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen, the lakefront resort at Weiden am See, and the enormous reed belt. Following the track to the west almost until the end, a narrow path then branches off and leads back up to the chapel. On an evening walk, and with a lot of luck, it is possible to hear the calls of **Little Owl** here.

Other animals and plants

Field cricket (*Gryllus campestris*), Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*), Pheasant's eye (*Adonis vernalis*), Small pasque flower (*Pulsatilla pratensis* subsp. *nigricans*), Greater pasque flower (*Pulsatilla grandis*), *Dianthus pontederiae*, Asian flax (*Linum austriacum*), Purple mullein (*Verbascum phoeniceum*), Spiked speedwell (*Veronica spicata*), Horehound (*Marrubium pulegioides*), Goldilocks aster (*Galatella linoxyris*), Pygmy iris (*Iris pumila*), Tassel hyacinth (*Muscari comosum*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The fourteen stations of the **Via Crucis** were erected between 1871 and 1872 thanks to a generous donation by the respected resident Paul Schmückl. In 1943, some of the oldest known gold items in Austria were discovered in a burial mound on the Calvary hill.

Ungerberg at Weiden/Gols:

Bee-eater colony



Bee-eaters (© P. M.)



A little to the east of Weiden am See, on a slight hill, there is a sand-coloured scarp that is clearly visible from a distance. For many years, this has been the site of a colony of brilliantly colourful Bee-eaters. Bee-eaters are strictly protected and it is imperative that one use the spacious hide to the west of the breeding wall, so as not to disturb the birds' breeding activity.

2.4 km

Length

min. 1 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



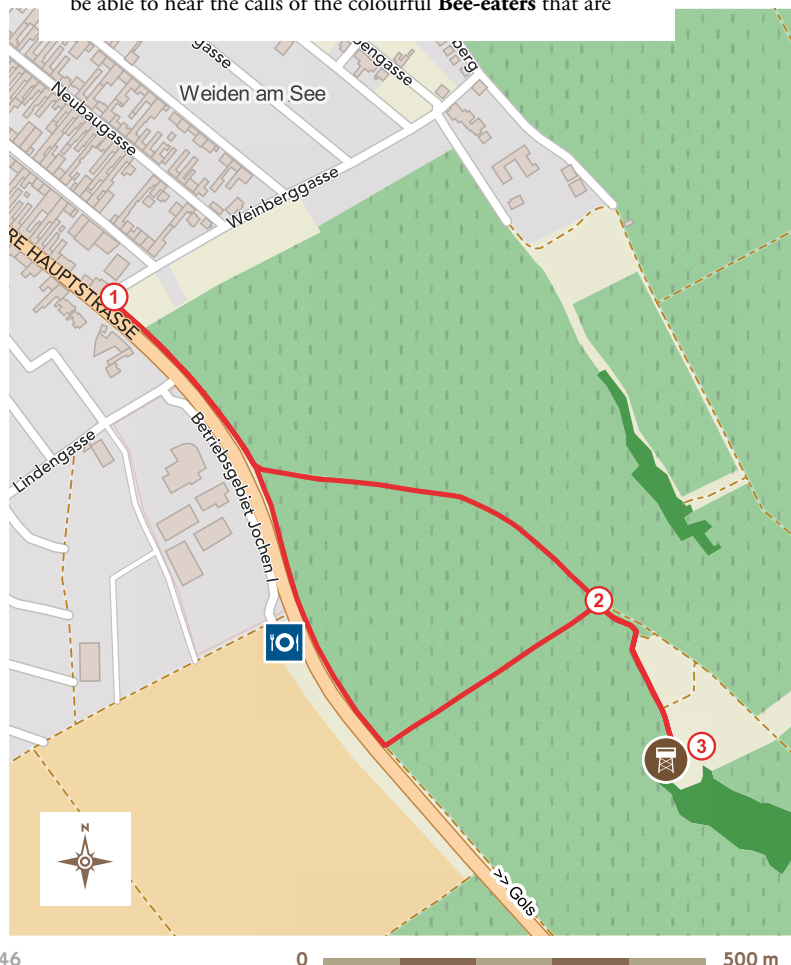
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

Other birds also make use of abandoned or seized Bee-eater nesting burrows during the breeding season, and the loess wall can harbour a couple of surprises every year.

Route

The route begins at the eastern edge of Weiden am See **1** and follows the by-road, immediately north of the main road, to Gols. After 300 m, take the track branching off to the left and leading slightly uphill. In spring and summer, **Nightingale**, **Blackcap**, **Linnet**, and **Serin** can be heard singing from the many vineyards and little stands of trees and bushes. At the next fork in the road **2**, at the latest, one should already be able to hear the calls of the colourful **Bee-eaters** that are



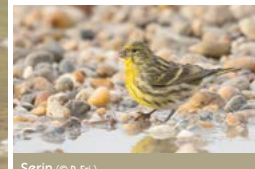
Rabbits (© G. Lot.)



Little Owl (© P. Fri.)


Kestrel
(© P. Fri.)


Linnet (© P. Fri.)



Serin (© P. Fri.)



Loess scarp (© A. Cim.)

present here between mid-May and early August. So as not to disturb the birds of another breeding wall nearby, take the trail leading off to the right along the southern edge of a little patch of forest, which leads directly to the desired wall. The entrance to the hide is a few metres to the south **3**. It is important to stay inside this hide for the duration of one's visit to the colony. Aside from the many Bee-eaters, the breeding wall is also used by **Kestrels**, **Starlings**, and **Jackdaws**, to name but a few. A pair of **Little Owls** even breeds here in some years.

Other animals and plants

European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), Common bugloss (*Anchusa officinalis*), *Artemisia austriaca*, Hairy star of Bethlehem (*Gagea villosa*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The first Bee-eaters were recorded in Austria towards the end of the 19th century. The first breeding sites were located along the unregulated banks of the Danube. Today, breeding sites in Austria are restricted to secondary breeding walls in sand and gravel pits, vineyards, and defiles. Since Bee-eaters dig a new burrow every year, smaller breeding walls can be used up fairly quickly. Knowing the locations of occupied breeding walls, avoiding (human) disturbance during the breeding period, and occasional maintenance of the walls are essential for a vital breeding population of the richly coloured birds.

Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen



Grasshopper Warbler (© P. M.)



Weiden am See train station
(N: 47.925725, E: 16.86426)

ROUTE
3

This diverse meadow area is part of the northernmost conservation zone of the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park and holds many interesting observations in store at the right time of year – not just for bird lovers. Aside from their ornithological significance, the Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen are best known for their botanical diversity, which boasts a number of rarities.

min. **6.4** km

Length

min. **2** h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

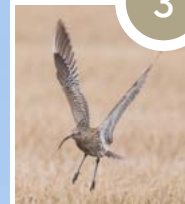
The ecological value of this largest connected area of lowland meadows in Burgenland was recognised early on, and it was first protected during the interwar period for the duration of approx. 10 years. The Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen were declared Burgenland's first strict nature reserve in 1962. Today, the diverse meadow area is part of the northernmost conservation zone of the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park (650 hectares are National Park conservation zone and a further 260 hectares are ecologically significant fallow land) and attracts not



Southern skimmer (© J. Hoh.)



Montagu's Harrier (© O. Sam.)



Curlew
(© P. Fri.)



Marsh helleborine (© G. Lol.)



Common Whitethroat (© F. Wen.)



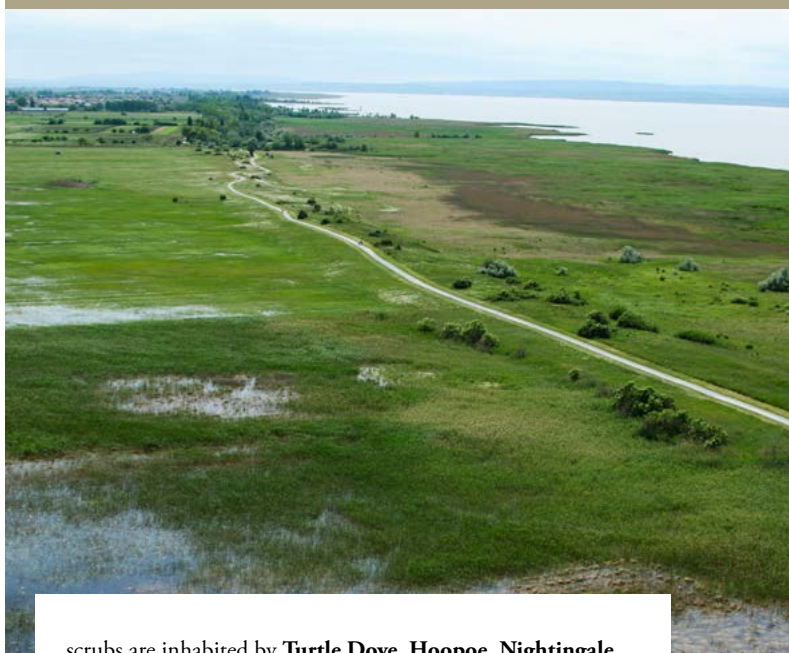
Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen (© C. Rol.)

just ornithologically-minded visitors at the right time of year. Apart from the four classic **meadow-breeding waders** – **Lapwing**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Curlew**, and **Redshank** – the area is best known for the occurrence of **Montagu's Harrier** and **Short-eared Owl**, though these species only breed here irregularly today. With a bit of calm and patience, other species such as **Bittern**, **Bluethroat**, **Grasshopper Warbler**, **Barred Warbler**, **Red-backed Shrike**, and **Corn Bunting** can almost always be detected here.

Bicycles are only allowed on the western track (along the lake dune). For the large circuit on foot, be sure to carry enough to eat and drink! There is one observation tower on the lake dune and one along the track running centrally through the area.

Bicycle route

The Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen are best explored from Weiden am See **1** or Podersdorf am See **9**. The two towns are connected by a bike path approx. 7 km long **waypoints 1-2-5-9**, running along the western edge of the meadows, on the lake dune. This partially raised and largely unpaved track offers a great overview of the area's astonishing expanse, and good opportunities to observe species of the lakeshore zone. Apart from the typical **reed passerines**, one can also expect to hear singing **Bluethroat** **south of 5**, and booming **Bittern**. The lakeshore area is grazed by a herd of cattle. The copses and



scrubs are inhabited by **Turtle Dove**, **Hoopoe**, **Nightingale**, **Grasshopper Warbler**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Golden Oriole**, and **Red-backed Shrike** during the breeding season.

In the southern part of the Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen, it pays to stop by the cattle stable **7**. On the way there – along a canal – look out for **Stonechat**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Red-backed Shrike**, and **Corn Bunting**.

A short detour into the reeds is also possible at **8**. This scarcely frequented path is a good place to observe **reed-dwelling warblers**, and with luck one can even hear **Little Crane**.

In order to explore the meadow area more closely, one will have to do so on foot, because bicycling is not allowed on the other paths.

On foot – Option 1: The route begins at the train station at Weiden am See **1**. Here, one crosses over to the bike path towards Podersdorf, which runs west of the train tracks. After about 600 m, the path leaves the train tracks and soon reaches the Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen. **Curlew** breeds regularly, among others, in these mostly wet meadows. At waypoint **2**, take the first turn to the east. After about 600 m, this path reaches the walking trail running the length of the central meadows. East of the crossing point **3** it is usually possible to encounter

as many as three blossoming iris species simultaneously in the last ten days of May (*Iris spuria*, *I. sibirica*, and *I. pseudacorus*). The bushes near the observation tower are a reliable spot for **Barred Warbler** and **Corn Bunting**. Following the track to the north and keeping right at a fork in the road, one soon crosses the railway tracks again and then turns left onto a dirt road leading back to Weiden am See. Follow the first road in town a little way south-west back towards the railway tracks and then turn right onto Seegrund. After a few metres there is an information point **4** about archaeological discoveries from the Early Bronze Age to the Second World War. Follow Seegrund back to the starting point **1**.

On foot – Option 2: Identical to option 1 until the turnoff at **2**. Then the route continues until the observation tower **5**, from where one can scan the Scheiblingsee for **ducks** and **gulls** with a spotting scope. The tower offers a rewarding view of the reed belt to the west and of the rolling expanse of the meadow area to the east. The information board at **6** provides information about the history, conservation, and inhabitants of the Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen. Heading north from here, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Curlew**, **Lapwing**, and **Red-shank** are repeatedly encountered, until one rejoins Option 1 at **3** and follows the route back to Weiden am See.

Other animals and plants

Tundra vole (*Microtus oeconomus*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Danube crested newt (*Triturus dobrogicus*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), Moor frog (*Rana arvalis wolterstorffi*), Scarce blue-tailed damselfly (*Ischnura pumilio*), Southern skimmer (*Orthetrum brunneum*), Keeled skimmer (*Orthetrum coerulescens*), Keeled plump bush-cricket (*Isophya costata*), Large copper (*Lycena dispar*), Alcon blue (*Maculinea alcon*), Scarce large blue (*Maculinea teleius*), Dusky large blue (*Maculinea nausithous*), *Chondrosoma fiduciaria*, *Galatella cana*, Blue iris (*Iris spuria*), Siberian iris (*Iris sibirica*), Marsh helleborine (*Anacamptis palustris*), European feather grass (*Stipa pennata* s. str.)

DID YOU KNOW?

The Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen are named after the town of **Zitzmannsdorf**, which was disbanded at the beginning of the 16th century for economic reasons. Approaching the area from the north-east on the L205, a slight rise in the landscape can be made out south-west of the railway crossing – this is where the town of Zitzmannsdorf was situated.

Halbturn palace grounds



Nuthatch (© H. G.)



ROUTE
4

 **Parking area west of Halbturn palace**
(N: 47.874326, E: 16.97225)

The “Schlosspark Halbturn”, the expansive grounds around the Baroque Halbturn palace, a former hunting and summer residence of the Habsburg imperial family, are well worth a visit any time of the year – both from an ornithological and cultural point of view.

3.7 km

Length

min. 1.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

While the park's old trees attract forest **woodpeckers**, **owls**, and **passerines** in particular, the palace itself attracts many visitors with its interesting exhibitions, concerts, and other events. The Pannonian Christmas market in December is certainly one of the atmospheric highlights of the year!

Route

From the parking area **1** west of the building, head clockwise around the palace until the Christinenallee leading away from the building to the north-east. By now, at the latest, one should have encountered one of the many species of **woodpecker** occurring here, such as **Green Woodpecker**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, or **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**. In early spring, the calls of **Rooks** and **Jackdaws** occupying a small colony in the treetops are heard throughout the park. A nightly excursion in late winter offers great chances of hearing **Tawny Owl**. Different forest species, such as **Nuthatch**, **various tits**, **Robin**, **Wren** and **Spotted**



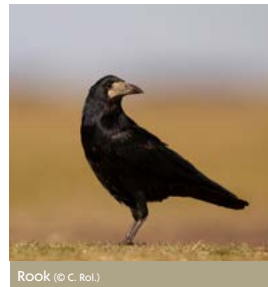
Stag beetle (© G. Lol.)



Great Spotted Woodpecker (© W. Tr.)



Blue Tit
(© P. Fri.)



Rook (© C. Rol.)



Christinenallee (© C. Rol.)



Red squirrel (© G. Lol.)

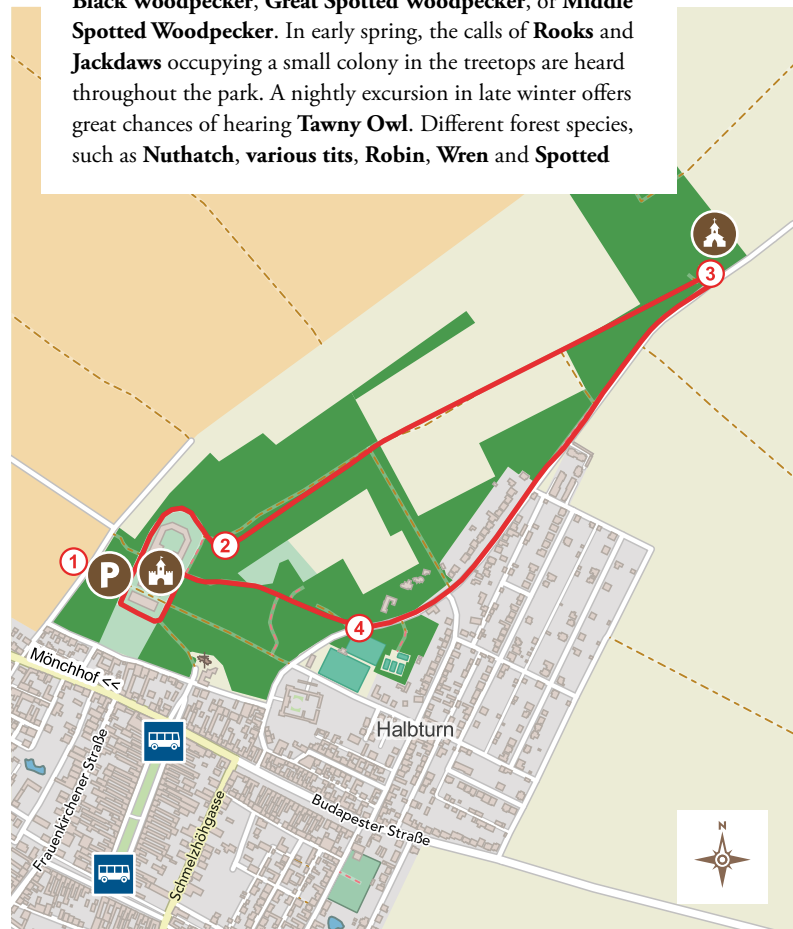
Flycatcher can be expected along the next few hundred metres. The Christinenallee avenue continues through farmland, where **Skylark**, **Song Thrush**, and **Yellowhammer** can be encountered. Make a sharp right at the Johannes chapel **3** and follow Parksiedlung and Parkstraße outside of the park grounds until the entrance back into the Baroque gardens at **4**. The path leads through another forested section until one reaches the palace and turns south to return to the starting point on the western side of the palace.

Other animals and plants

Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), *Plagionotus floralis*, European beak (*Libythea celtis*), Great banded grayling (*Brintesia circe*), Giant peacock moth (*Saturnia pyri*), *Ornithogalum kochii*

DID YOU KNOW?

The Halbturm palace grounds were designed as an English landscape garden. They are one of the most significant garden-architectural sites in Austria and are listed as a protected historic monument. Breeding of a formerly unknown breed of white horses began in the Habsburg Halbturm palace. Due to the insecure times (paramilitary units regularly invaded, even between the Ottoman Wars), these horses were eventually moved to the South of the monarchy. Since then, they carry the name of the town of Lipica ...



Podersdorfer Pferdekoppel and Hölllacke



Little Egret (© P. Fr.)



Arriving in the Seewinkel from the north, the Podersdorfer Pferdekoppel is the first real highlight of the area. This grazed horse paddock in the lakeshore zone is an ideal stopover site for waterbirds on migration.

4.1 km

Length

min. 2 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



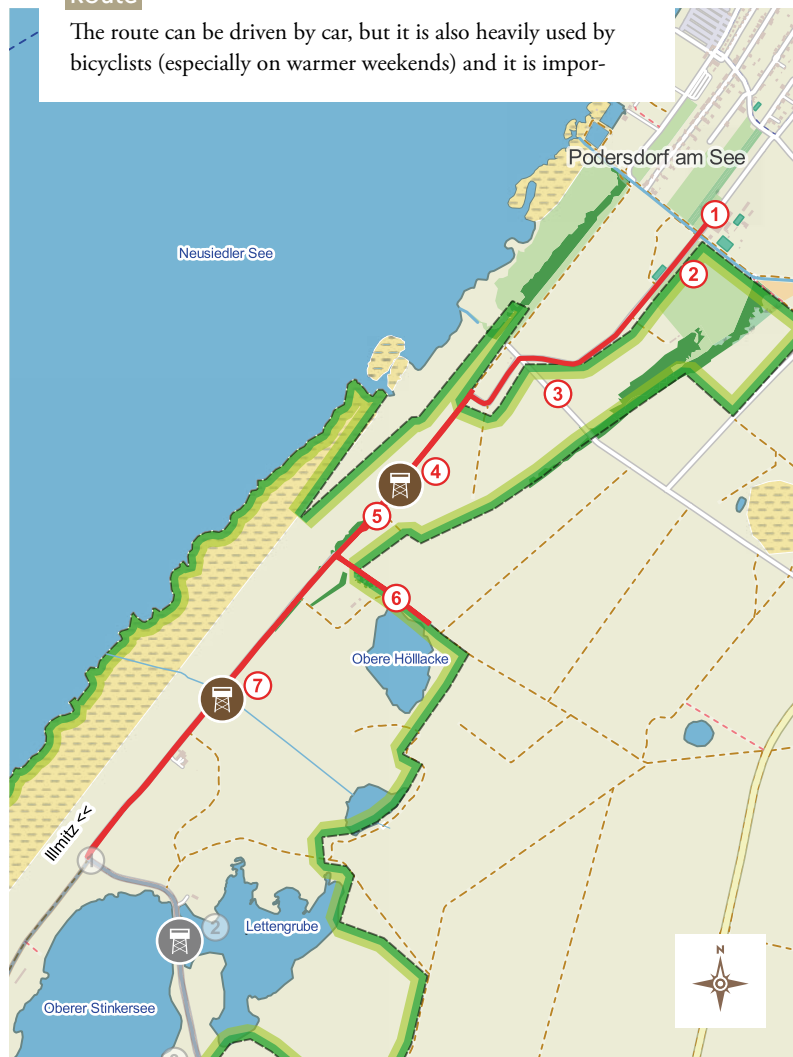
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

A great diversity of **waders** and **ducks** can usually be seen here, and **Greylag Geese** like to rear their young in the area. **Little Egret**, **Pygmy Cormorant**, and **Spoonbill** are also often observed here. The windbreaks and little patches of forest and bushes often harbour a number of interesting species, not just during the migration periods. The list of rarities recorded here underscores the significance of this attractive stretch of land.

Route

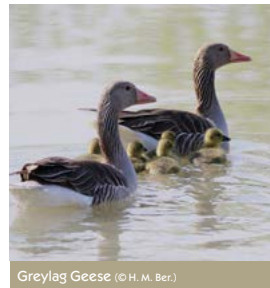
The route can be driven by car, but it is also heavily used by bicyclists (especially on warmer weekends) and it is impor-



Lakeshore area (© D. Weg.)



Spoonbill (© P. Fr.)


Dunlin
(© P. Fr.)


Greylag Geese (© H. M. Ber.)

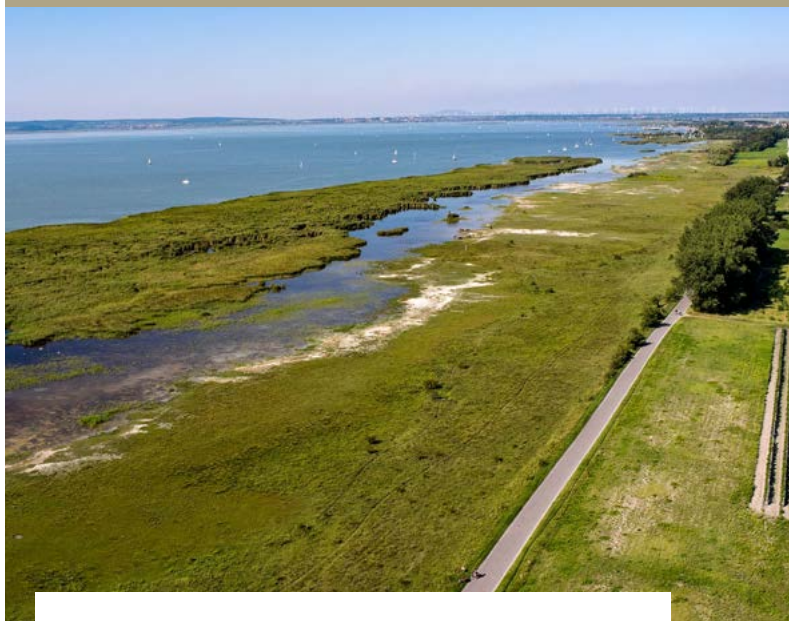


Mangalica pig (© B. Bal.)



Podersdorfer Pferdekoppel (© A. Cim.)

tant to drive cautiously and slowly! The route begins at the Georgshof **1**, a riding stable best reached from Podersdorf. It pays to stop immediately south of the Georgshof, particularly in wet years, because the adjacent horse paddock **2** is often frequented by **Redshank**, **Lapwing**, **Ruff**, and **Greylag Goose**. **Hoopoe** is also frequently heard here in April. The paved road **3** bordering the paddock to the south is popular with photographers when water levels are high and **Garganey**, **Shoveler**, **Lapwing**, and **Redshank** forage for food quite close to the road. **Grasshopper Warbler**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler**, and **Reed Bunting** can be heard from the other side of the road. Continuing on to the road closest to the lake (the B20 bike path), the old windbreak soon opens up and reveals a view of the lakeshore area, the Podersdorfer Pferdekoppel. A first proper stop should be planned after just a few metres, at a small observation tower **4**. This site offers a view of a small **resting area for gulls** as well as good viewing of the species mentioned in the site's general information. Furthermore, **Marsh Harriers** breed in the narrow reed belt in the background. After an enclosure with Mangalica pigs (left of the road) **5**, one can make a small detour to the Hölllacke **6**, which is a breeding site for **Garganey**, **Shoveler**, **Pied Avocet**, and **Little Ringed Plover**, among others. It is also a good place to observe other **waders** during migration. Back at the lakeshore area, a climb up the big observation tower **7** is an



absolute must-do. This bird's eye perspective offers a great view of the small-scale agricultural landscape littered with saline lakes and meadows, the lakeshore area, Lake Neusiedl, and the Rust Hills and Leitha Mountains in the distance. The bushes near the tower, meanwhile, are a reliable place to see **Barred Warbler**. **Stonechat** and **Red-backed Shrike** can also be reckoned with here – the former being best observed in early spring. The height of the vegetation increases in the southern part of the route and makes the bushes and windbreaks there especially attractive for **passerines** during migration. **Hoopoe** and **Syrian Woodpecker** are two further species of this habitat. This route connects to route 6 in the south.

Other animals and plants

Mangalica pig, European hare (*Lepus europaeus*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Variable damselfly (*Coenagrion pulchellum*), Southern emerald damselfly (*Lestes barbarus*), Four-spotted chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*), Southern darter (*Sympetrum meridionale*), European mole cricket (*Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa*), *Dianthus pontederiae*, Pale madwort (*Alyssum alyssoides*), Purple golden drop (*Onosma arenaria*), Field eryngo (*Eryngium campestre*), Sea aster (*Tripolium pannonicum*)

DID YOU KNOW?

Lake dune and shelf ice drift: If the temperatures rise quickly after a very cold winter, the prevailing north-westerly winds can cause shelf ice drift events: ice mats drift towards the shore and can often pile up to a height of a few metres. This phenomenon regularly causes the reeds to be pushed back mechanically – especially on the eastern shore of Lake Neusiedl, which explains why the reed belt is much narrower here than on the opposite shore. Podersdorf is a particularly good place to observe this natural event, because it is the only natural reed-free section of the shore of Lake Neusiedl (aside from the lakefront resorts). The lake dune between Weiden am See and the Sandeck, 25 kilometres long and up to two metres high, was also created by the mighty forces of this ice drift piling up huge quantities of loose sand from the lake to form a sand wall. The lake dune is approximately 2000 years old. Further slight elevations to the east of the dune suggest that a number of similar walls were formed by the lake over the course of time. Due to the sandy substrate and thanks to grazing, a very specific fauna and flora with highly specialised species of arid habitats were able to develop. Both the digger wasp *Bembix rostrata* and the funnels of antlions can be found here.



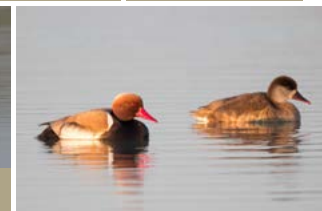
Hölle (© J. Hoh.)



Common Buzzard (© P. Frl.)


Observation tower
(© L. Khl.)


Hare (© P. Frl.)


Pygmy Cormorant and Little Grebe
(© P. Frl.)


Red-crested Pochards (© G. Lol.)

Stinkerseen, Hölle, and Lettengrube



Caspian Tern (© P. H.)



Parking area north-west of Oberer Stinkersee
(N: 47.819500, E: 16.793000)

The most obvious habitats along this route are the three Stinkerseen (“stinking lakes”) – Oberer, Mittlerer, and Unterer Stinkersee – and their shore zones. But a closer look reveals a true mosaic of meadows, pastures, little forests, groups of bushes, disused and cultivated vineyards, and wetland habitats.

min. 5 km

Length

min. 2.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement
(Limited
access by car)



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

Even when the northernmost saline lakes frequently fall dry in summer, the “Unterstinker” is well worth a visit because its water level is higher and means that a different array of species can be expected here. The route can be combined with route 5 in the north and route 10 in the south.

Route

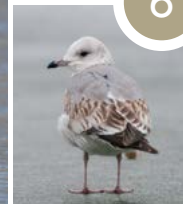
The starting point is a little patch of forest on the north-western shore of the “Oberstinker”, where many **passerines** rest between mid-April and mid-May. **Hoopoe, Spotted Flycatcher, Icterine**



Red Knot (© P. Fri.)



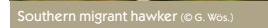
Common Shelducks (© P. Fri.)


Mew Gull
(© J. Hoh.)


Oberer Stinkersee (© G. Wos.)



Little Stint (© P. Fri.)

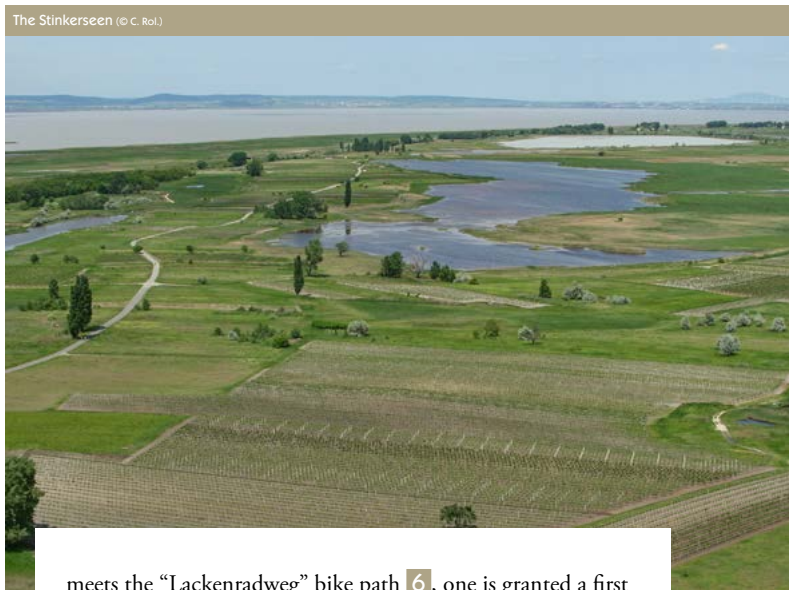


Southern migrant hawk (© G. Wos.)

Warbler, and **Nightingale** can regularly be heard here in spring.

Following the paved road to the south-east, one reaches a wheelchair-accessible observation platform **2**, which is a great place to scan for **waterbirds** on the Oberer Stinkersee to the west as well as the Lettengrube to the east. The list of **waders** recorded here is very long! The Lettengrube has a mud island near the hide, where **Pied Avocet**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Ruff**, and other **waterbirds** appear more than happy to pose for nature photographers. The tree frogs on the observation platform and the **Moorhen** and **Coot** chicks beneath it are always sure to draw “Aaahs” and “Ohhhs” from the visitors.

The “Oberstinker” is a reliable place to see **Pied Avocet**, **Red-crested Pochard**, **Shoveler**, and **Mew Gull** – in fact it is probably the most reliable place in this area to see the latter two species. The southern shore can be viewed well from points **3** and **4** (observation tower). This shore is a traditional resting place for various **gulls** that can sometimes be joined by **Caspian Terns** on migration. The Mittlerer Stinkersee **5** is usually a little less rewarding, but **Pied Avocet** and **Common Shelduck** as well as **Garganey** and **Shoveler** are regularly observed here as well. The dirt road continues past vineyards and over a slight rise. After about 400 m, a small colony of blue iris (*Iris spuria*) blossoms at the end of May. A little later one reaches the northern shore of the Unterer Stinkersee with its many **reed passerines**. Where the dirt road



meets the “Lackenradweg” bike path **6**, one is granted a first unobstructed view of the northern part of this lake. Due to the deeper water compared to many of the other lakes, one doesn't just find **dabbling ducks** and **Coots** here, but also **diving ducks** such as **Common Pochard** and **Red-crested Pochard**.

It is worth keeping an eye open for neckbands on the **Mute Swans** that are common here. A number of purple mullein (*Verbascum phoeniceum*) blossom in the meadows around the observation tower **7** during the first ten days of May. The areas of shallow water in front of the tower are particularly attractive to **waders**. In spring, one can hear **Nightingale**, **Golden Oriole**, and **Hoopoe** from the west, and can observe **Common Buzzards** displaying. At the southernmost point of the route, one has a great view of the southern part of the Unterer Stinkersee **8**, which is separated from the rest of the lake at low water levels. A great diversity and abundance of birds can be expected here, provided water levels are high enough: **Black-headed Gull**, **Common Tern**, **Black-winged Stilt**, and **Pied Avocet** breed here, while a number of **ducks** and **waders** come here to forage for food. Back on the western shore of the “Unterstinker”, turn west at **6** for a chance to scan the large paddock for **waterbirds** at point **9**. The route continues north between the diverse lakeshore area and the western shore of the “Oberstinker”, back to the starting point **1**.

Other animals and plants

European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), Southern emerald damselfly (*Lestes barbarus*), Scarce blue-tailed damselfly (*Ischnura pumilio*), Southern migrant hawk (*Aeshna affinis*), Scarlet darter (*Crocothemis erythraea*), Intermediate cross-backed grasshopper (*Docostaurus brevicollis*), Low goosefoot (*Chenopodium chenopodioides*), *Suaeda pannonica*, Narrowleaf trefoil (*Lotus tenuis*), Sea aster (*Tripolium pannonicum*), Blue iris (*Iris spuria*), *Puccinellia peisonis*

DID YOU KNOW?

There are a number of explanations for the origin of the name “Hölle” (“hell”), which refers to the area between the Oberer Stinkersee in the south, Obere Höllacke in the north, and Untere Höllacke in the east. The most plausible is that the Middle High German term “Helja” once referred to the most distant cultivated plots from any village. The “Stinkerseen” (“stinking lakes”) themselves are not the cause of the sulphurous odour that is sometimes perceived in the “Hölle” (depending on the weather). Rather, it is caused by artesian springs around the lakes effusing sulphurous groundwater into the landscape.



Interm. cross-backed grasshopper
(© G. Was.)



Shoveler (© W. Tr.)



Sea aster
(© G. Lot.)



Pied Avocet (© P. Fr.)



Oberer Stinkersee (© C. Rol.)



Golden Oriole (© W. Tr.)

Top Rarities

in the Seewinkel between

2008 and 2017

As an attractive resting area for birds on migration, the Austrian Seewinkel also attracts especially large numbers of birdwatchers. It is little wonder, therefore, that comparably many top rarities are discovered here.

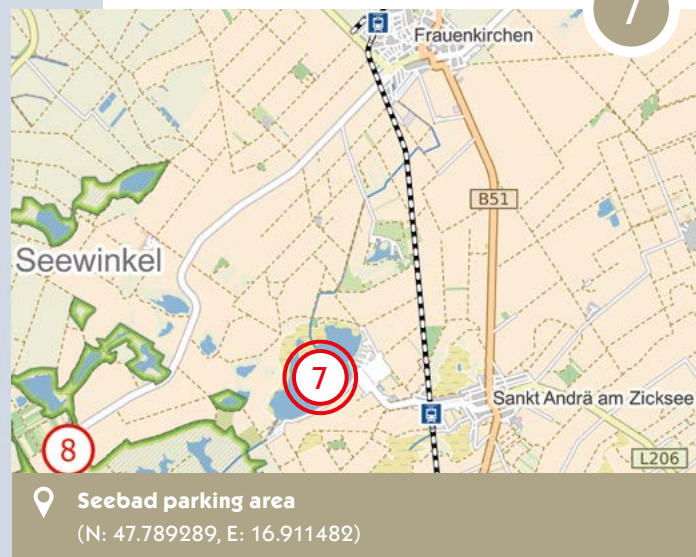
The following list includes all species discovered in the Seewinkel in the last 10 years, of which no more than 10 individuals were recorded in the whole of Austria in the same period of time. For each of these records, the following are listed: species name, date, location, age of bird (as far as known), and respective number of record in Austria.

- » **Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** 13.-14.9. and 29.9.2008 Lange Lacke area Apetlon, 1 juv.; 10th record
- » **Pacific Golden Plover:** 12.11.2008, Lange Lacke eastern shore, 1 Ind.; 1st record
- » **Pink-footed Goose:** 7.-26.12.2008 central Seewinkel, 1-2 ad.; 9th record
- » **Baird's Sandpiper:** 23.-26.5.2009 Warmblutkoppel/Illmitz, 1 ad.; 6th record
- » **Baird's Sandpiper:** 13.9.2009 Lange Lacke/Apetlon, 1 juv.; 7th record
- » **Pink-footed Goose:** 21.10.-10.11.2009 central Seewinkel, 1 ad.; 10th record

- » **Dalmatian Pelican:** 4.-9.5.2010 Seewinkel, 1 ad.; 3rd record
- » **Dalmatian Pelican:** 23.8.-2.9.2010 Seewinkel, 2 ad.; 4th record
- » **Dalmatian Pelican:** 16. & 23.4.2011 Graurinderkoppel/Apetlon & Illmitz, 1 ad.; 5th record
- » **Black-winged Pratincole:** 22.-23.8.2011 Warmblutkoppel/Illmitz, 2 1Y; 6th record
- » **Sabine's Gull:** 24. & 29.8.2012 Seebad Illmitz & Silbersee/Lake Neusiedl, 1 ad.; 6th record
- » **Pallas's Gull:** 12.9.2012 Warmblutkoppel/Illmitz, 1 1Y; 3rd record
- » **Semipalmated Sandpiper:** 15.-17.9.2013 Zicklacke/Illmitz, 1 1Y; 1st record
- » **Pallas's Gull:** 1.-3.4.2014, Oberstinker/Illmitz, 1 2Y-summer; 4th record
- » **Great Spotted Cuckoo:** 10.-15.7.2015, between Darscho and Fuchslochlacke, 1 juv.; 9th record
- » **Baird's Sandpiper:** 4.-11.11.2015, Graurinderkoppel/Apetlon, 1 1Y; 9th record
- » **Greater Sand Plover:** 28.-30.4.2016, Lettengrube & Podersdorfer Pferdekoppel, 1 Ind.; 3rd record
- » **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater:** 21.-22.5.2016, St. Andräer Zicksee, 1 Ind.; 1st record
- » **Greater Sand Plover:** 21., 26. & 28.6.2016, Przewalski-Pferdekoppel & Lettengrube, 1 Ind.; 4th record
- » **Pallas's Gull:** 10.4.-10.5.2017, Oberstinker & Podersdorfer Pferdekoppel, 1 1Y-summer; 6th record
- » **Isabelline Wheatear:** 6.5.2017, Graurinderkoppel, 1 f.; 2nd record
- » **Pacific Golden Plover:** 20.5.2017, Graurinderkoppel/Apetlon, 1 ad.; 2nd record
- » **Black-winged Pratincole:** 7.-8.8.2017, Graurinderkoppel/Apetlon, 1 Ind.; 8th record
- » **Black-winged Pratincole:** 30.-31.8.2017, Graurinderkoppel/Apetlon, prob. 1Y; 9th record
- » **Baird's Sandpiper:** 3.9.2017, southern Graurinderkoppel/Apetlon, 1 1Y; 10th record
- » **Dusky Warbler:** 10.10.2017, Biological Station/Illmitz, 1 Ind.; 2nd record
- » **Dusky Warbler:** 14.10.2017, Neudegg, 1 Ind.; 3rd record

*Abbreviations used: ad. = adult, juv. = juvenile, 1Y = first-year, 2Y = second-year, f. = female
(Source: Annual reports of the Austrian Avifaunistic Committee: www.birdlife-afk.at)*

St. Andräer Zicksee



The St. Andräer Zicksee isn't part of the National Park and can, therefore, be utilised in many ways. But despite an abundance of people fishing, surfing, and otherwise seeking recreation, the lake is worth an ornithological visit.

Greenstank (© P. M.)

2.9 km

Length

min. 1 h

Duration



Gear



Movement
(No bikes
in northern part)



Access



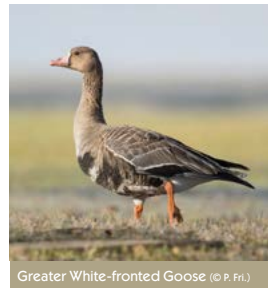
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

In autumn and winter, the Zicksee attracts thousands of **nordic geese**. The first flocks often already arrive to drink and rest late mornings, and are scanned by birdwatchers for rare species and neckbands. It is not uncommon for hunting **White-tailed Eagles** to put an abrupt end to the bustling activity on the water, sending the clamouring flocks into the air to return to nearby or more distant foraging grounds. If the Lange Lacke, the main roosting area, is dry at this time of year, the geese will mostly also return to the Zicksee to sleep.



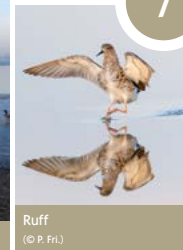
Scarlet darter (© pixabay)



Greater White-fronted Goose (© P. Fr.)



Mute Swans at the St. Andräer Zicksee (© C. Rol.)



Ruff (© P. Fr.)



Barn Swallow (© P. Fr.)



Black Tern (© P. Fr.)

Due to its slightly deeper water, the St. Andräer Zicksee is generally popular with **diving ducks** and **mergansers**. **Great Cormorants**, **gulls**, and **Coots** also appreciate this large body of water. During longer periods of bad weather, large congregations of foraging **marsh terns**, **Little Gulls**, and **swallows** can often be seen here.

When the shore zone becomes wider with falling water levels, an abundance of waders attracts birdwatchers and photographers. The more common **waders** on the Zicksee include **Little Ringed Plover**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Redshank**, **Greenshank**, **Ruff**, and **Black-winged Stilt**.

Route

For a good view of every part of the lake, it is worth scanning the surface from a number of points. Starting on the southern shore near the Reihersiedlung **1**, a trained ear will be able to pick the **reed passerines** from the western shore as well as the **garden birds** from the residential area. Scanning the western shore for **rails**, **herons**, and – provided water levels are low – **waders** can produce the occasional surprise. An unremarkable tree-covered lawn right by the surf club **2** can attract **Yellow Wagtail** and other **passerines** on migration, while the entire length of the eastern shore can be interesting for **waders** and **gulls**. The old stock of trees at the lakefront resort **3** is often frequented by **Syrian Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Wood-**



St. Andräer Zicksee, south-western shore (© C. Rol.)



St. Andräer Zicksee, south-western shore (© P. Fri.)

pecker, and **Green Woodpecker**, while **Song Thrush** and **Wood Pigeon** can be seen at quite close quarters. During the spring and summer months, **Black-headed Gulls** and the occasional **Common Tern** like to rest on the shore. Finally, the bay at the northern shore 4 is a great place to see ground squirrels up close, as well as birds of the reed edges. At lower water levels, it provides another chance to observe **waders**.

Other animals and plants

European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), Scarlet darter (*Crocothemis erythraea*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The mud from the Zicksee and other saline lakes is said to have a beneficial effect on the skin and joints. In earlier times, it was used to treat rheumatism in the orthopaedic clinic on the north-eastern shore of the lake.



Greater White-fronted Geese (© P. Fri.)



St. Andräer Zicksee with Schneeberg (© C. Rol.)



Trees along the shore (© P. Fri.)



Common Sandpiper (© P. Fri.)

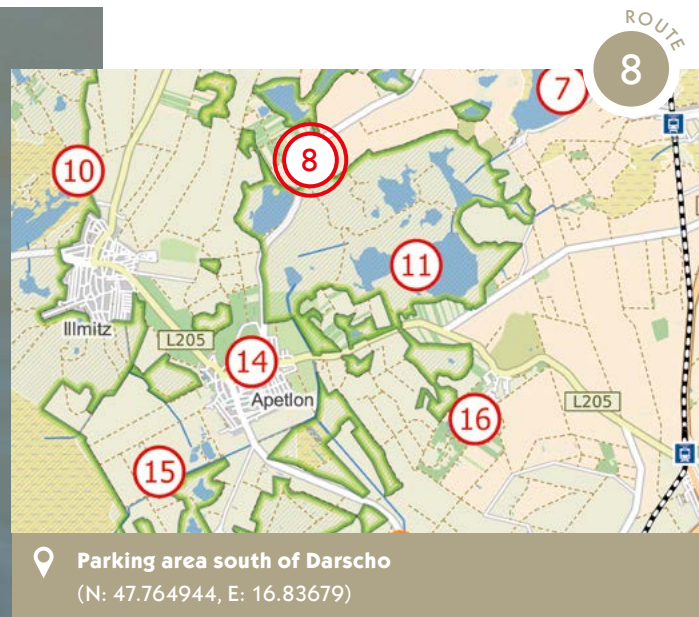


Little Gulls (© G. Lol.)



Ground squirrel (© G. Lol.)

Darscho, Neubruch-, and Fuchslochlacke



With the Neubruchlacke, this route includes a largely untouched saline lake with its typical inhabitants. But the route also leads to other lakes that are more affected by human utilisation, which, in turn, provides habitat for other species.

11.2 km

Length

min. 2 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



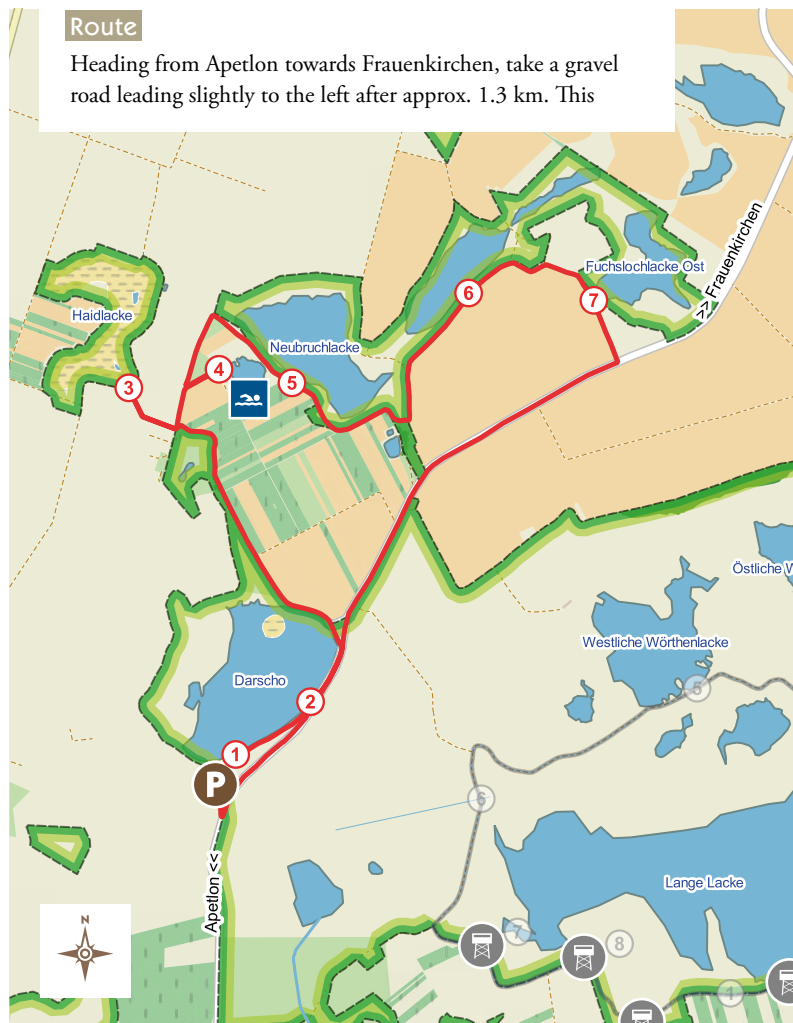
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

This route is greatly appreciated by nature photographers, who use their cars as moveable hides because this allows them to get very close to foraging waders – especially at the Darscho (also known as the Warmsee) and, at higher water levels, at the Neubruchlacke (also known as the Obere Halbjochlacke). The **Long-eared Owls** and **Kestrels** breeding in the nesting aids at the Apetlon swimming lake are further highlights of this route, which ends at the little-visited (but no less interesting!) Fuchslochlacke.

Route

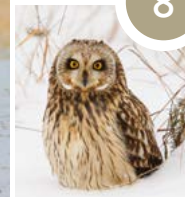
Heading from Apetlon towards Frauenkirchen, take a gravel road leading slightly to the left after approx. 1.3 km. This



Long-eared Owl (© F. Wen.)



Common Redshanks (© G. Lol.)



Short-eared Owl
(© P. Fri.)



Common Merganser (© P. Fri.)



Kentish Plovers (© G. Lol.)



Snow Bunting (© L. Khl.)

road leads straight to the southern shore of the Darscho **1** and then continues north along the eastern shore. The lake is not part of the National Park and is used for fishing, which explains why water is artificially added using pumps. Since the Darscho therefore never falls dry, during dry periods it is a veritable magnet for **waterbirds** and, in consequence, for nature photographers. In winter, the lake is a popular resting place for **geese**, **gulls** and **Common Mergansers**. Horse-riders, walkers, and bathers (the mud has always been said to have a healing property) also like to use this body of water – a fact that doesn't always make all parties equally happy. The eastern shore is therefore avoided by breeding birds as a place to nest. Both the Darscho itself and the track along its eastern shore are private property. All described forms of use are merely tolerated and could be denied by the owner. The slightly elevated (semi-)arid grassland between the gravel road and the main road harbours a photogenic reed hut and typical pastureland plants. This is a good place to set up a spotting scope and study the birds of the Xixsee to the east. It is worth stopping at the end of the gravel road **2** to observe the **waders** that are drawn to the northern shore. In winter, the **flocks of geese** to the east of the road can also be inspected from here, without disturbing them. If one follows the sign on the northern shore to the "Badese" (swimming lake), at least in spring one should make a stop at the Haidlacke **3** – a good place for



Yellow Wagtail and **Corn Bunting**. Spring and early summer are also the best seasons to stop by the Apetlon swimming lake **4**. The nesting aids affixed to the trees here are occupied by **Long-eared Owl** and **Kestrel**. A gravel road continues along the southern shore of the Neubruchlacke (also known as the Obere Halbjochlacke) **5**. This is a breeding site for **Pied Avocet**, **Little Ringed Plover**, and **Kentish Plover**, as well as for **Common Tern** and **Common Shelduck**. Post-breeding congregations of **Black-tailed Godwit** and **Curlew** are also characteristic for these lakes. Quite large groups of **Common Ringed Plover** and **Teal** are possible here during migration. **Gulls** and **terns** like to rest here, and **Snow Bunting** can be expected along the shore in winter.

The formerly large Fuchslochlacke, which is adjacent to the north-east, has been split into smaller segments in the past decades through human impact. The western part of the Fuchslochlacke **6** is drawn out and only rarely hosts interesting bird species. The separate eastern part (also known as

the Östliche Fuchslochlacke) **7**, on the other hand, can hold surprises during migration, aside from the **waders** and **ducks** that breed here. The route returns to the starting point along the main road.

Other animals and plants

European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), European green toad (*Bufo viridis*), Tuberous grey bush-cricket (*Platycleis affinis*), Field cricket (*Gryllus campestris*), Marsh cricket (*Pteronemobius heydenii*), Dainty damselfly (*Coenagrion scitulum*), Southern emerald damselfly (*Lestes barbarus*), Southern darter (*Symptetrum meridionale*), Sticky catchfly (*Silene viscosa*), Spiny retharrow (*Ononis spinosa*), *Astragalus asper*, Austrian sage (*Salvia austriaca*), Sea aster (*Tripolium pannonicum*)

DID YOU KNOW?

In summer, visitors to the Seewinkel will notice a pale, matted, paper-like structure on the ground where some of the saline lakes have fallen dry. This so-called “meteor paper”, also known as “meadow cloth” or “meadow leather”, consists primarily of dried green algae that formed thick algal mats in the water in spring. (See photo below by G. Loidolt, with sea aster)



Östliche Fuchslochlacke (© C. Rol.)



Common Redshank (© C. Rol.)



Field cricket
(© pixabay)



Sea aster on “meteor paper”
(© G. Loid.)



Darscho (© C. Rol.)



European green toad (© G. Loid.)

Seedamm and Przewalski- Pferdekoppel



Black-winged Stilt (© G. Lo.)



A diverse mosaic of landscape elements and an abundance of insect species, rare plants, and interesting birds await those opting for this long but idyllic route.

4.4 km

Length

min. 2.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement
(sandy sections!)



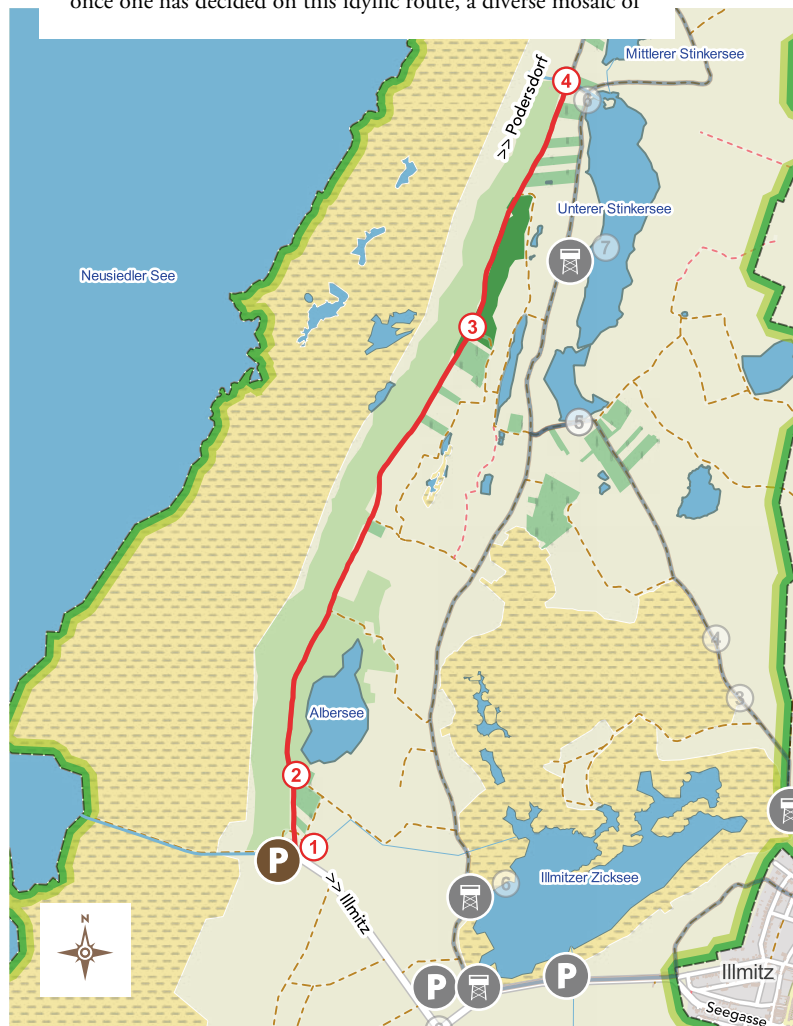
Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

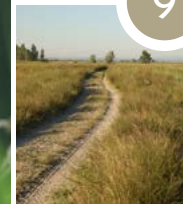
This somewhat remote but scenically appealing route along part of the 25 km-long lake dune ("Seedamm" in German) calls for some important information upfront. Bicycles are not recommended because the ground often consists of deep sand. Measuring 4 km (one way!), the route is quite long and is therefore only recommended in full length if sufficient time is available. As an alternative, one can take a shortcut through the southern part of the Illmitzer Gemeindewald **3**, or one just walks part of the way and then back again. But once one has decided on this idyllic route, a diverse mosaic of



Asian flax (© C. Rol.)



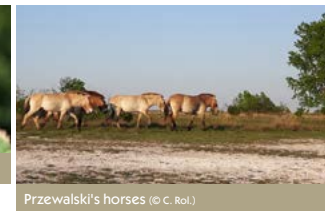
Reed Bunting (© C. Rol.)


Lake dune
(© C. Rol.)


Turtle Dove (© W. Bit.)



Pine chafer (© G. Wos.)



Przewalski's horses (© C. Rol.)

landscape elements and an abundance of insect species, rare plants, and interesting birds awaits.

Route

The surroundings of the Biological Station are a good place to see **Syrian Woodpecker** and **Turtle Dove**, as well as **Long-eared Owl**, which breeds in old crows' nests there.

In spring, the short trail along the windbreak to the Albersee **2** offers good chances to hear **Hoopoe**, **Wryneck**, **Cuckoo**, **Nightingale**, **Barred Warbler**, **Golden Oriole**, and **Penduline Tit**. In wet years, the Albersee has good breeding populations of **Black-winged Stilt**, **Pied Avocet**, **Little Ringed Plover**, and **Common Shelduck**. From here on, the trail is sandy and very difficult to ride by bicycle. The following kilometres are characterised by a stark contrast between extremely arid habitat and the wet lakeshore zone. Insect-rich and brightly blossoming sand dunes are interspersed with little patches of wooded shrubland, disused vineyards, wet and marsh-like meadows, bare "zick"-areas (from the Hungarian "szik", for "soda"), and old windbreaks. As well as the species mentioned earlier, **Kestrel**, **Turtle Dove**, **Collared Dove**, **Wood Pigeon**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, **Skylark**, **Blackcap**, and **Red-backed Shrike** feel at home here. Some **Common Whitethroat** and **Stonechat** – particularly in the northern part of the area – complement the array of species. The



lakeshore zone is inhabited by **reed-dwelling warblers** and **Reed Bunting**. The larger species such as **Great Egret**, **Grey Heron**, **Purple Heron**, **Bittern**, **Spoonbill**, **Great Cormorant**, **Pygmy Cormorant**, and **Marsh Harrier** are mostly only seen in flight.

Between May and October, visitors may encounter a herd of Aberdeen-Angus cattle that are grazed on the pasture areas along the lake dune for landscape management purposes. At the level of the Unterer Stinkersee, the trail leads into a little forest about 800 m long and 100 m wide – the Illmitzer Gemeindewald. **Hoopoe**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, **Turtle Dove**, **Nightingale**, **Icterine Warbler**, **Barred Warbler**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Golden Oriole**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Greenfinch**, and **Goldfinch** can be seen here, among others. During migration, little patches of forest such as this one are good resting places for **flycatchers** and various other **passerines**, including **Common Redstart**. The last part of the route leads through more scrub landscape between the lakeshore zone and vineyards. At 4, one reaches the former stable of the Przewalski's horses (see "Did you know?") that grazed the lakeshore zone to the south for many years (the so-called "Przewalski-Koppel" or "Przewalski's paddock"). Near the stable, the vegetation is still pushed back by the horses' trampling and grazing, which has provided **waterbirds** with a little hotspot. Conditions are perfect here for a number of **ducks**, **herons**, **waders**, and

gulls. On the short stretch of road to the Unterer Stinkersee (Lackenradweg), the smaller of the two buildings has a tap with drinking water!

Other animals and plants

Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Red-eyed damselfly (*Erythromma najas*), Scarlet darter (*Crocothemis erythraea*), Southern darter (*Sympetrum meridionale*), Steppe spiny bush-cricket (*Gampsocleis glabra*), Tuberous grey bush-cricket (*Platycleis affinis*), Steppe bush-cricket (*Montana montana*), Intermediate cross-backed grasshopper (*Docostaurus brevicollis*), Black-spotted toothed grasshopper (*Stenobothrus nigromaculatus*), Common club grasshopper (*Myrmeleotettix maculatus*), Pine chafer (*Polyphylla fullo*), Chinese wolf spider (*Lycosa singoriensis*), Striped corn catchfly (*Silene conica*), Spanish catchfly (*Silene otites*), Prickly saltwort (*Salsola tragus*), Steppe spurge (*Euphorbia seguieriana*), Sand plantain (*Plantago arenaria*), European feather grass (*Stipa pennata* s. str.)

DID YOU KNOW?

Przewalski's horses (Mongolian "Takhi")

It was only in 1879 that scientists became aware of these wild horses at the edge of the Gobi Desert. Just a hundred years later, they had died out in the wild due to hunting and expanding pasture farming. Thanks to the efforts of a number of zoos, the Przewalski's horse was able to survive in captivity. Because many of the horses were not faring well in captivity and were not breeding, an international breeding programme was initiated with the 13 remaining animals. The successful reintroduction of suitable animals to Mongolia began in 1992, and even two animals from this lakeshore herd were brought to the Gobi Desert in 2004. In 2017, almost 500 of the horses were once again living in their original habitat. Scientists discovered in 2018 that Przewalski's horses may not be – as hitherto assumed – the last remaining wild horses, but may instead be feral descendants of horses domesticated thousands of years ago. In the same year, the National Park's herd of Przewalski's was moved from the "Przewalski-Koppel" to the "Warmblutkoppel" (warmblood paddock) (see Route 12).

Illmitzer Zicksee and Geiselsteller



Common Ringed Plover (© P. Fr.)



The natural features and easy accessibility of the Illmitzer Zicksee (thanks to its proximity to Illmitz, the touristic centre of the Seewinkel) make it a much frequented highlight of any visit – not just for bird lovers. Traditional draw-wells and reed huts, cattle herds, families of geese, blossoming orchids in spring, and extensive salt efflorescences in summer are popular photo motifs.

8.2 km

Length

min. 2.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement

(Cars only permitted along southern shore)



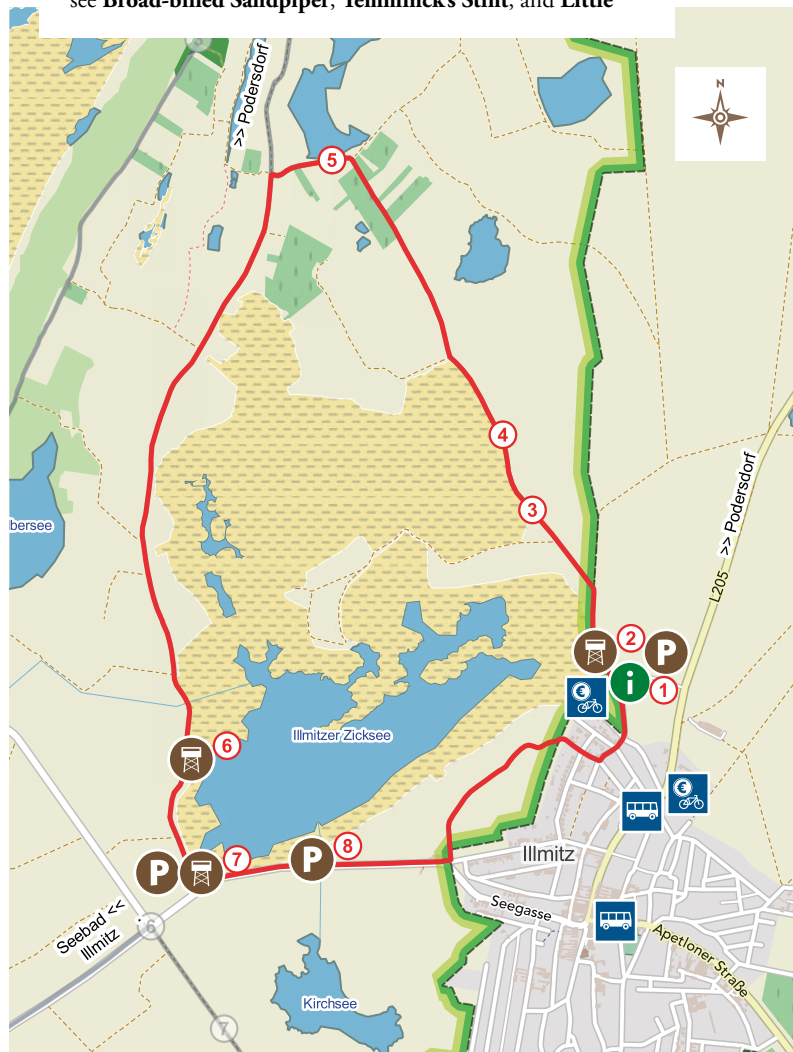
Access



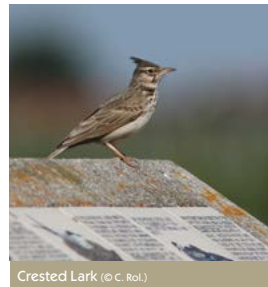
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

From an ornithological point of view, the Illmitzer Zicksee (also known as the Zicklacke) is certainly a “must-see”. At high water levels, a number of places offer good opportunities to observe birds at very close range. During the course of the year, about 15 **duck species** and 30 **wader species** use the lake or its shore zone as a resting area, and **Garganey**, **Shoveler**, and **Mallard** breed here. At peak migration in May and July/August, this saline lake is the most reliable spot in the area to see **Broad-billed Sandpiper**, **Temminck’s Stint**, and **Little**



Illmitzer Zicksee (© L. Khl.)



Crested Lark (© C. Rol.)



Temminck's Stint (© P. Fri.)



Red-backed Shrike
(© C. Rol.)



Spurge hawk-moth caterpillar
(© C. Rol.)



Little Stint (© G. Lol.)

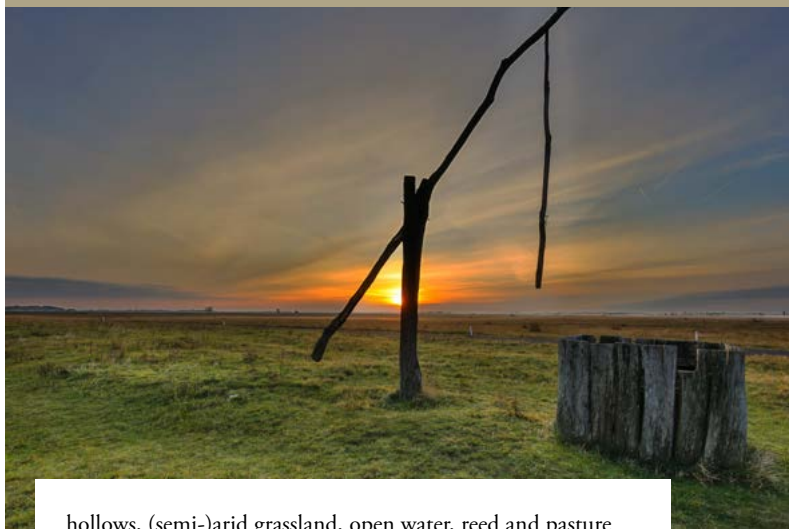
Stint. It is also a good place to see **passerines**: **Yellow Wagtail**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Red-backed Shrike**, and **Reed Bunting** are common, and reliable singing perches for **Crested Lark** and **Barred Warbler** are almost “common knowledge”.

Route

The large circuit (8.2 km / 1-8) is only recommended if one is travelling by bicycle and has plenty of time. The most rewarding observation points are along two sections of this route – Geiselsteller 1-4 and the southern shore 6-8 – which are described in the following.

The Geiselsteller is easily reached from the National Park information centre 1. A high viewing tower at the information centre provides a great view of the Illmitzer Zicksee, especially in the morning hours. Following the windbreak to the north, one soon reaches a hide 2 which is especially worthwhile at high water levels. **Black-winged Stilt**, **Lapwing**, and **Redshank** breed in the surrounding wet meadows. During migration, **Common Snipe**, **Wood Sandpiper**, and **Ruff** can often be seen quite close. The bushes and trees should also never be disregarded at this time of year, as they can hold an abundance of **passerines**.

About 300 m further along the windbreak, turn left to reach the Geiselsteller area 3, a mosaic of water-saturated dips and



hollows, (semi-)arid grassland, open water, reed and pasture areas, and the shining white “Zick”-patches. The efflorescent salts in these patches make for extreme environmental conditions that allow only a limited number of plant species to exist here. But the **Kentish Plover** doesn't mind, and breeds on precisely these patches in relatively low numbers each year. **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Lapwing**, and **Redshank** are easier to find, also breeding quite close to the paved path. At suitable water levels, **Greylag Goose**, **Red-crested Pochard**, **Shoveler**, and **Garganey** can also be observed very well. The passerines breeding here include **Yellow Wagtail**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler**, and **Reed Bunting**, while **pipits** and **wagtails** frequent the area particularly during migration. Thanks to the abundance of potential prey, **Marsh Harriers** often try their luck here.

It pays to go at least as far as the draw-well **4** on the eastern side of the path, because there are many botanical specialties to be seen here in spring, like the large population of early spider-orchids at the beginning of May. Further to the north, the path passes an area of vineyards inhabited by **Hoopoe**, **Stonechat**, **Red-backed Shrike**, and **Linnet**. At the southern end of the Unterer Stinkersee **5**, this route meets route 6 (where the species most often found in this section of the route are listed). Turn left and then take the Lackenradweg heading south to reach the western shore of the Illmitzer Zicksee. For the next 2 km the route passes through diverse and

species-rich agricultural landscape interspersed with meadows, fallow land, groups of bushes, and disused vineyards. At the Pfarrgraben, look out for **Stonechat** before crossing the little bridge, as well as for **Barred Warbler** in the bushes on the other side. The observation tower on the western shore **6** provides a great vantage point from which to scan for exciting discoveries. It is best visited in the afternoon, when the sun is at one's back. It also provides a good view of the vineyard to the west and of the meadow behind it, which can be scanned for **Curlew**. The parking area at Kirchentellinsfurter Platz **7**, at the south-western corner of the Illmitzer Zicksee, offers a drinking fountain and a wheelchair-accessible observation tower. In spring, **Crested Lark** often uses the information boards as singing perches, and at good water levels **Ruff**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Redshank**, **Wood Sandpiper**, and many other **waterbirds** come very close to the shore. Finally, heading back towards Illmitz, the route passes a photogenic draw-well and shepherd's shelter **8**. The mud surfaces closest to the shore at this point are probably the best place in the whole Seewinkel to see **Broad-billed Sandpiper**, **Temminck's Stint**, and **Little Stint**. **Barred Warbler** and **Red-backed Shrike** nest in the bushes along the canal.

Other animals and plants

Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), European green toad (*Bufo viridis*), Southern emerald damselfly (*Lestes barbarus*), Southern migrant hawk (*Aeshna affinis*), Scarlet darter (*Crocothemis erythraea*), Large copper (*Lycaena dispar*), Spurge hawk-moth (*Hyles euphorbiae*), Common milkwort (*Polypogon monspeliensis*), *Lepidium cartilagineum*, Pygmy iris (*Iris pumila*), Marsh helleborine (*Anacamptis palustris*), Green-winged orchid (*Anacamptis morio*), Early spider-orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*), Grape hyacinth (*Muscari neglectum*)

DID YOU KNOW?

Soda factory Illmitz: The soda (Zick = soda) which crystallises at the surfaces of saline lakes in the hot summer months used to be processed to soda, soap, or washing detergent. Soda extraction was first mentioned in Oberillmitz and Unterillmitz around 1800, until the soda factories were closed in the interwar period – likely forever.

Kentish Plover

(*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

The Seewinkel, with its saline lakes and pastureland, is the only place in Austria where this extremely rare breeding species is found. Observations are possible from mid-March until November.

This species does not migrate through the area, since the Seewinkel is situated at the north-western edge of the South East European population's range. A certain degree of post-breeding dispersal from neighbouring breeding sites in the Carpathian Basin are all that is observed.

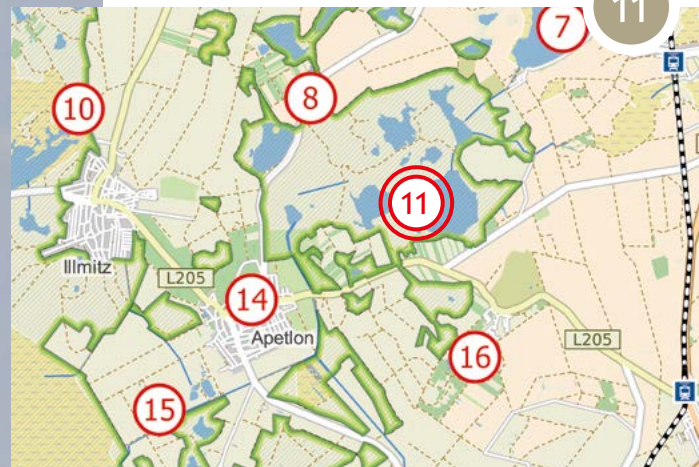
Kentish Plovers primarily breed on bare "zick"-patches that must be surrounded by very low vegetation. After common pasturing was abandoned between the 1940s and 1980s, the local Kentish Plover population suffered a strong decline.

Thanks to the reintroduction of grazing through National Park habitat management, these population declines have partially been reversed. Disappearing lakes (*see page 30*), more frequent extreme weather events, and disturbance of breeding activity all pose an increasing threat to this species. While Kentish Plovers were found at almost all saline lakes of the lakeshore area up until the 1970s, breeding sites today are limited to the Geiselsteller, the Illmitzer Zicklacke, the "zick"-patches of the Graurinderkoppel, and the Lange Lacke.

It must be emphasised that any form of disturbance of this species near its breeding sites is strictly forbidden.



Lange Lacke *and* Wörthenlacken



Parking area at Lange Lacke
(N: 47.752179, E: 16.867738)

The Lange Lacke is the largest and probably the best known saline lake in the whole area. Provided the shallow body of water is not completely dried out or frozen over, it is well worth a visit at any time of year.

8.3 km

Length

min. 4 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

In spring, it is primarily the migrating **ducks**, **waders**, **gulls**, and **terns**, as well as many breeding birds, that attract visitors to the colourfully blossoming area. Meanwhile, the southward migration of **waders** (in particular) in the hot and dry summers, though richer as far as individuals are concerned, traditionally draws less attention.

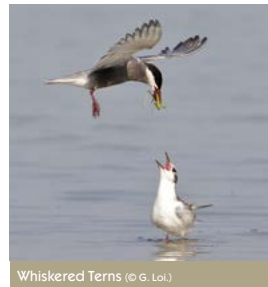
Only in late autumn does the Lange Lacke experience its next inrush of nature enthusiasts, when thousands of **nordic geese** return to roost every evening, landing clamorously around dusk. If conditions are good (no closed snow cover and sufficient open water for drinking, bathing, and sleeping), the geese remain in the area until spring and offer observers plenty of opportunity to scan the flocks for rare species.



Yellow Wagtail (© P. Fri.)



Mediterranean Gull (© G. Lol.)


Hare
(© P. Fri.)


Whiskered Terns (© G. Lol.)



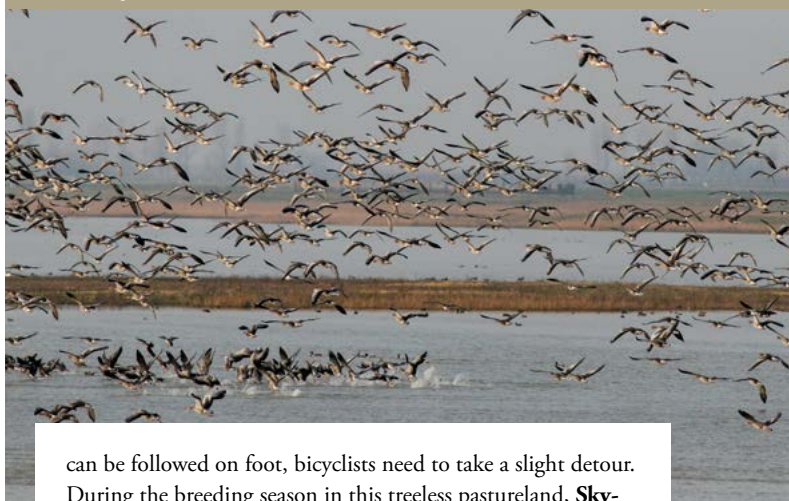
Dunlin (© P. Fri.)



Red-breasted Goose (© W. Tri.)

Route

The 8 km-long, entirely flat circuit route can be reached from different sides. Depending on available time, the position of the sun, and current water levels, it is also possible to visit just part of the Lange Lacke area. The starting point for this route is the parking area of the Nationalpark-Stüberl **P**. A short path leads to an observation tower (not ideally placed from today's perspective) and to the gravel path that leads all the way around the lake. Follow this path to the east. The tower is useful to judge if parts of the Lange Lacke have fallen dry. The peninsula on the southern shore **1** is home to a colony of **Black-headed Gull** during the breeding season, which is also often used by **Mediterranean Gull**. This latter species' main breeding site, however, switches between Lange Lacke, Illmitzer Zicksee, and the expanses of water at Mexicopuszta and Nyirkai-Hany, depending on the water levels. At suitable water levels, the shallow areas here are also good for observing **waders**. The observation tower **2** on the south-eastern shore offers a good view of the eastern part of the Lange Lacke. In winter, this is also a good place for scanning the **huge flocks of geese**. The surrounding meadows are often frequented by **Curlew**. After running close to the road for a little stretch, the path then turns north and continues for about 250 m beside an old windbreak **3**, which is particularly attractive for **thrushes** in winter. While the "Lukas-Hoffmann-Naturpfad"



can be followed on foot, bicyclists need to take a slight detour. During the breeding season in this treeless pastureland, **Sky-lark**, **Yellow Wagtail**, **Red-backed Shrike**, and **Corn Bunting** are regularly encountered. When thousands of migrating and wintering geese are in the area in autumn and winter (known in German as the “Gänsestrich”, see page 104), whole birdwatching groups often come to marvel at the spectacular arrival of the **geese** at their roosting area. Shortly after the paths rejoin, there is a good view of the northern shore of the Lange Lacke. The **geese**, **gulls**, and **waders** that like to frequent this part of the lake sometimes attract **raptors** such as **White-tailed Eagle** and **Peregrine Falcon**. The observation tower in the north-east of the circuit 4 offers a view of almost the entire Östliche Wörthenlacke. This saline lake is a popular place for various **ducks**, **geese**, and **waders**, and often still holds water once the Lange Lacke has completely dried out. **Mute Swan** occurs here in particularly large numbers. The high rabbit density occasionally attracts **Eastern Imperial Eagle** and **Saker Falcon**, and **Merlin** is a regular winter guest. A number of **Pied Avocet** often rear their young on the Katschitzlacke (also known as the Östliche Hutweidenlacke) to the west of the tower. After about 700 m, one reaches the Westliche Wörthenlacke 5, which hosts **diving ducks**, **Little Grebe**, and **Black-necked Grebe**, as well as **geese**. In spring, **Bittern**, **Water Rail**, **Great Reed Warbler**, and **Savi's Warbler** can be heard from the reeds. A breeding colony of **Whiskered Tern** has established itself in the western part of the Westliche Wörthenlacke (the so-called Neufeldlacke), and the begging

young birds are quite conspicuous along the shores of the neighbouring lakes in summer.

The fields to the north-west of the Lange Lacke are a good place in winter to scan the different species of **geese** for rarities or rings. The little weir structure 6 across one of the former drainage canals offers a good view of the western part of the Lange Lacke, especially in the afternoon. A mixed colony of **Pied Avocet** and **Common Tern** can be seen here in spring and summer. In autumn, **Red-throated Pipit** can occasionally be seen here. In winter, the pastureland surrounding the Lange Lacke also hosts a regularly returning charm of **Twite**, which can appear briefly only to restlessly disappear again. The tower on the western shore of the Lange Lacke 7 is only rewarding at high water levels, when **Common Tern**, **Pied Avocet**, and **Kentish Plover** breed on the adjacent “Sauspitz” and various **waterbirds** and **waders** forage in the neighbouring bay. Finally, one reaches the last observation tower 8 on the circuit. This one is most popular in the late afternoon, with the sun in one's back, and is a great place to observe **gulls** that spend the nights here in summer and autumn and **geese** landing here to roost in winter.

Other animals and plants

European hare (*Lepus europaeus*), European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), European hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*), Steppe polecat (*Mustela eversmanni*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Danube crested newt (*Triturus dobrogicus*), Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), European green toad (*Bufo viridis*), Southern emerald damselfly (*Lestes barbarus*), Southern skimmer (*Orthetrum brunneum*), Tuberous grey bush-cricket (*Platycleis affinis*), European mantis (*Mantis religiosa*), Horned dung beetle (*Copris lunaris*), Large copper (*Lycena dispar*), Chinese wolf spider (*Lycosa singoriensis*), *Lepidium cartilagineum*, Spiny restharrow (*Ononis spinosa*), Lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Field eryngo (*Eryngium campestre*), Slender hare's-ear (*Bupleurum tenuissimum*), *Artemisia santonicum*, Pygmy iris (*Iris pumila*), Green-winged orchid (*Anacamptis morio*), *Ornithogalum kochii*

DID YOU KNOW?

The threat of destruction to the areas around the Lange Lacke was the trigger for the foundation of WWF Austria in 1963. The surrounding areas are the only area in the Austrian part of the National Park with uninterrupted pasturing.

Migration of the Geese

A large flock of geese is captured in flight against a clear blue sky. The birds are scattered across the upper two-thirds of the frame, appearing as dark silhouettes. Below them, a calm body of water reflects the sky. In the distance, a dense line of bare trees marks the horizon. The overall scene conveys a sense of natural beauty and seasonal migration.

From kindergarten to the “Gänsestrich”

The year offers two absolute highlights for fans of geese. First, the **Greylag Goose goslings** hatch at the beginning of April and can then be observed around the bodies of water in often quite large “kindergartens”. Second, the so-called “Gänsestrich” offers a true spectacle of geese every evening beginning in late autumn. This local term describes the huge flocks of migrating and wintering nordic geese (primarily **Greylag Goose**, **Greater White-fronted Goose**, and **Bean Goose**) returning from their foraging grounds and landing at their roosting sites at dusk. To a smaller extent – and spread over a longer period of time – the geese also land at these bodies of water around midday to drink, bathe, and rest. In good conditions (no closed cover of snow and sufficient expanses of open water), the geese remain in the area until spring and offer observers plenty of opportunity to scan the flocks for rare species (**Pink-footed Goose**, **Lesser White-fronted Goose**, **Barnacle Goose**, **Red-breasted Goose**, and **Brant Goose**).

Population development

The numbers of geese wintering in the area fluctuate often considerably, which is related to a number of different factors. For example, the lemming cycle (usually three years) influences the breeding success of **Greater White-fronted Geese** in the far north: predators in these Arctic breeding grounds regularly need to switch to alternative prey after rodent populations crash. In the case of **Bean Geese**, which used to be the most common wintering geese in the Seewinkel with over 20,000 individuals as late as the 1980s, climatic changes are likely to have caused a shift of migration routes to the Dutch/German Lower Rhine region. Today this species only comes to Lake Neusiedl in three-digit population sizes, especially on the Hungarian side.

Where?

Special National Park excursions take visitors to the two best places to observe this natural spectacle (Lange Lacke and Borsodi-dűlő).

Illmitz:

Warmblutkoppel, Seewäldchen,
Seestraße, and Seebad



Great Crested Grebe (© G. Loh)

This route offers a very good cross-section of different habitats ranging from land to open water. Birds of forests, semi-open agricultural landscape, the lakeshore zone, the reed belt with its interspersed pools, and the open lake surface all occur here within a relatively small area. Golden Oriole, Spotted Flycatcher, Wryneck, Barn Owl, Penduline Tit, Pygmy Cormorant, Little Crake, Ferruginous Duck, Great Crested Grebe, and Bittern are just a few of the species one can expect to see here.

5.4 km

Length

min. 2.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



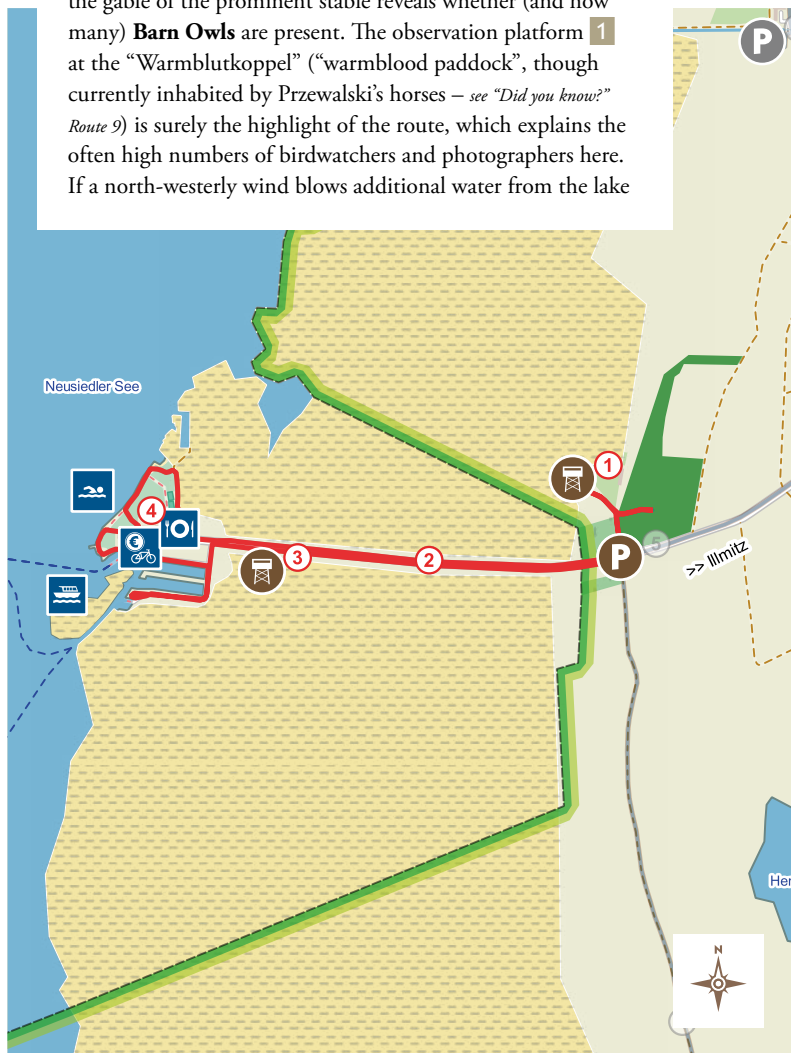
Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

Route

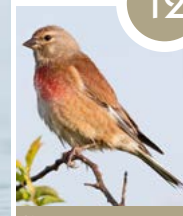
The starting point is the parking area **P** at the “Illmitzer Seewäldchen”, the little Illmitz forest. Following the sandy trail to the north, the voices of **Golden Oriole**, **Hoopoe**, **Wryneck**, **Icterine Warbler**, and **Spotted Flycatcher** can be heard at the forest edge in spring. Surprisingly, the latter even nests here between the rows of vines. **Hoopoe**, **Linnet**, and **Goldfinch** like to come to the adjacent vineyards to forage for food. A quick look with a spotting scope towards the opening under the gable of the prominent stable reveals whether (and how many) **Barn Owls** are present. The observation platform **1** at the “Warmblutkoppel” (“warmblood paddock”, though currently inhabited by Przewalski’s horses – see “Did you know?” Route 9) is surely the highlight of the route, which explains the often high numbers of birdwatchers and photographers here. If a north-westerly wind blows additional water from the lake



Bearded Reedling (© P. Fri.)



Long-tailed Jaeger (© P. Fri.)


Linnet
(© P. Fri.)


Common Redstart (© P. Fri.)

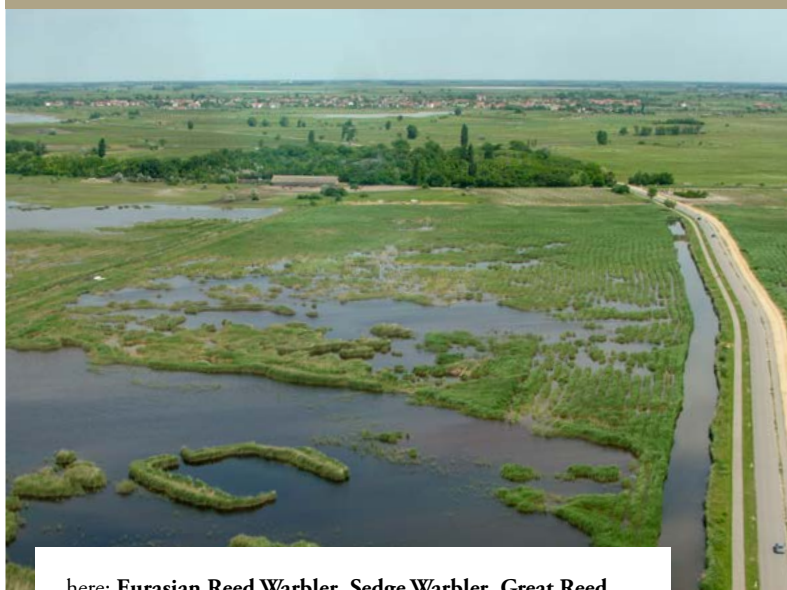


Pomarine Skua (© P. Fri.)



Kingfishers (© M. Tie.)

towards the platform at high water levels, the **waterbirds** often come very close to the “hide”. **Spoonbill**, **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Great Egret**, **Little Egret**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Great Crested Grebe**, and **Kingfisher** can be seen here regularly. Regarding **ducks**, **Teal**, **Mallard**, and **Red-crested Pochard** are common, and this is probably the most reliable spot for **Eurasian Wigeon** in the whole area. At receding water levels, a small mudflat quite near the shore draws in **gulls**, **terns**, **ducks**, and others to rest and sleep. Thanks to the relatively close distance, the feet of the gulls standing here can be checked for rings. The area is also a rewarding place for **waders** and **wagtails**. Looking out towards the lake, different species can be seen on their foraging flights over the reed belt. After a short walk back to the parking area, the Seestraße causeway **2** leading out to the lakefront offers an even better place to observe these foraging flights. In the right conditions, the breeding species of the “Große Schilfinsel” (“large reed island”, see page 120) and other breeding colonies come flying over the causeway in large numbers: **Great Cormorant**, **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Spoonbill**, **Great Egret**, **Little Egret**, **Grey Heron**, and **Purple Heron**. **Marsh Harrier** is by far the most common raptor in the reed belt, and can easily be seen from any point. On the way to the Seebad (the lakefront resort) in spring, birdwatchers familiar with the voices of **reed passerines** will be able to hear all of the species breeding



here: **Eurasian Reed Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Moustached Warbler**, and **Savi's Warbler**, as well as **Bearded Reedling**, **Penduline Tit**, and **Reed Bunting**. Bird photographers will find it quite easy to get good photos of **Sedge Warbler** and **Great Reed Warbler** here. **Little Grebe**, **Moorhen**, **Common Pochard**, and **Great Crested Grebe** can be seen swimming in the pools of open water within the reed belt, as can – with a little luck – the occasional **Ferruginous Duck**. Shortly before the Seebad, a little raised walkway leads across to an observation hut **3**, but this facility can only be accessed as part of guided National Park excursions and is otherwise locked. Some of the species mentioned above can be observed particularly well from here.

The Seebad **4** itself has become known among “birders” for two primary reasons. First, periods of bad weather between April and mid-May can force large numbers of migrating **passerines** (e.g. **wagtails**, **pipits**, **thrushes**, **Common Redstart**, **Pied Flycatcher**, **Wood Warbler**, and **Willow Warbler**) to seek refuge in the few available trees, bushes, and meadows. Second, this part of the shore of Lake Neusiedl is the best place in all of Austria to see **skuas** (see page 112). A few specimens of this rather rare bird family (at least for inland birdwatching) are discovered here every year between mid-August and mid-October. The harbour inlet for ferries

is a good place to get quite close-range photos of some of the more common **gulls**. The wooden pylons are regularly used as perches by **Yellow-legged Gull** and (occasionally) **Caspian Gull**, as well as by **Black-headed Gull**, **Mew Gull**, and **Common Tern**. Furthermore, with a little luck, **Little Gull** and both **Black Tern** and **Whiskered Tern** can be seen out on the lake before and after their breeding periods. Last but not least, two temporary resting places of **Pygmy Cormorant** (perching prominently on high bushes) and **Night Heron** can be seen from the Seebad in the areas adjacent to the south-west and south-east. The latter species, however, will only be seen at dusk when it takes off for its foraging grounds.

On the return walk to the parking area **P**, the Seestraße holds a particular attraction, even on a night-time excursion. Once the moderate traffic noise has subsided, **Bittern** and **Little Crake** can be discerned from the countless voices of the reed forest. *One more tip: With the Neusiedler See Card, parking and entrance into the Seebad is free.*

Other animals and plants

Przewalski's horse, Danube crested newt (*Triturus dobrogicus*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Southern migrant hawk (*Aeshna affinis*), Emperor dragonfly (*Anax imperator*), Scarce chaser (*Libellula fulva*), Large white-faced darter (*Leucorhina pectoralis*), Short-tailed blue (*Cupido argiades*), Greater bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris*), Fern-leaf yarrow (*Achillea asplenifolia*), Great reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), Great fen sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), Common reed (*Phragmites australis*)

DID YOU KNOW?

Austria's first citizen's initiative was formed after the Burgenland state government had decided in March 1971 to construct a 2341 m-long bridge across Lake Neusiedl from Mörbisch to Illmitz. With 142 pylons of reinforced concrete, it was to become the second-longest bridge in Europe. Klara Köttner-Benigni, a writer from Eisenstadt, was able to convince biologists like Otto König, Bernhard Grzimek, Konrad Lorenz, and Antal Festetics, as well as the botanist Gustav Wendelberger, to join the resistance, which was also supported by WWF and the Naturschutzbund. After a review by a German group of experts, the construction could eventually be prevented.



Skua Migration

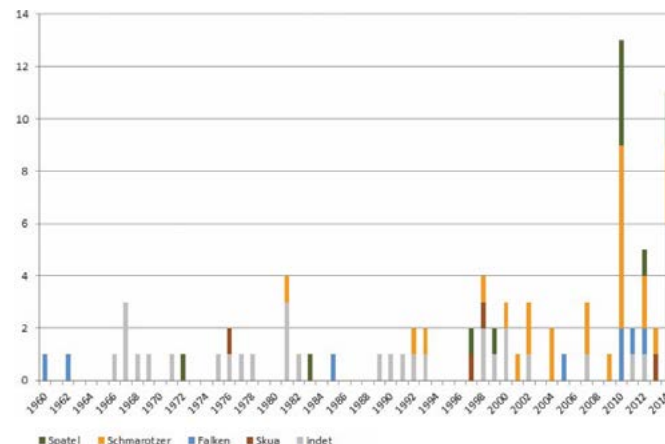
in the Seebad Illmitz

Normally, “seawatching” describes the act of observing (mostly migrating) seabirds from the coast. In some places, however, seabirds can also be spotted inland.

His curiosity piqued after reviewing old records, the ornithologist Dr. Andreas Ranner began systematic migration observations from the Seebad Illmitz in 1997. This lakefront resort offers a few crucial advantages compared to other lakefront access points: firstly, situated quite centrally and at the narrowest point of the lake, one “only” has to deal with a distance of 3.2 km to the opposite shore; and secondly, the angle of observation is very wide at this slightly protruding point, and visibility is not obstructed by any reed islands.

He was soon rewarded with observations of migrating and resting skuas, which quickly aroused the attention of other birdwatchers. As an example of these species’ frequent occurrence, skuas were observed from the Seebad in all years between 2010 and 2017 except two (2011 and 2013).

The following graph emphasises this point and shows all skua observations in the Austrian Lake Neusiedl area between 1960 and 2014. Aside from highlighting two exceptional years (2010 and 2014), the graph also clearly shows that the skua species are not equally common in the area. While Parasitic Jaeger can almost be considered an annually occurring species, at the other end of the scale Great Skua must be considered a real rarity.



Annual number of skua records in the Austrian Lake Neusiedl area between 1960 and 2014
(source: Ranner A., 2014, Auftreten und Phänologie von Raubmöwen im Neusiedler See-Gebiet. *Elanus* 9, 82-107).

The focus of all four species’ migration is in autumn – only about 7% of observations are made in spring.

The overview below lists all four skua species according to the frequency of their occurrence in the Austrian part of Lake Neusiedl (until 2014). Furthermore, the peak of migration / the current number of accepted records / and the age ratio are also provided:

- » **Parasitic Jaeger:** late August until mid-September
34 Ind. / 16 1Y, 6 immat., 12 ad.
- » **Pomarine Skua:** mid-September until mid-October
14 Ind. / 11 1Y, 1 immat., 1 ad., 1 indet.
- » **Long-tailed Jaeger:**
last ten days of August until the first ten days of September
8 Ind. / 6 1Y, 2 ad.
- » **Great Skua:** second half of September
4 Ind. / 3 1Y, 1 ad.

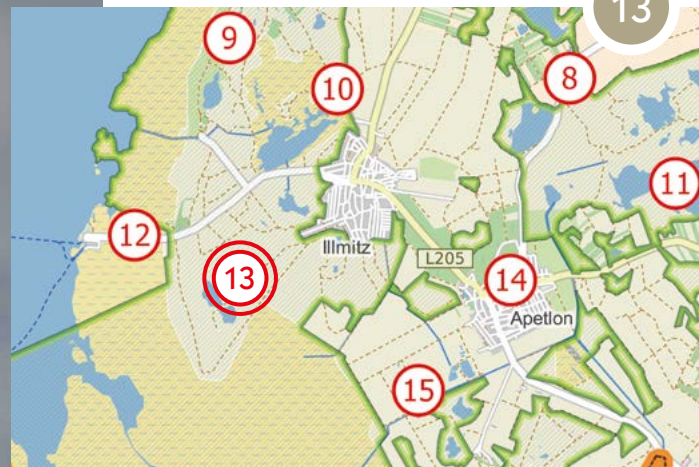
Abbreviations used: ad. = adult, 1Y = first-year, immat. = immature, indet. = indeterminate, Ind. = individuals

To improve the quality of data for this difficult family, it is urgently requested that all observations – also inconclusively identified birds – be reported to the Austrian Avifaunistic Committee (AFK / see page 22). Photographic documentation is requested wherever available.

Sandeck *and* Wasserstätten



Black-tailed Godwits © G. Loj



Western end of Schrändlgasse (Illmitz)
(N: 47.754246, E: 16.788706)

The former border watchtower in the Sandeck, which was transferred here in 1994 from the Fertőújlak area, offers a breathtaking view of the impressive mosaic of reeds, pools, and channels in the nature reserve zone of the National Park. A further attraction are the white donkeys (see page 140), an old breed that is deployed by the National Park administration to graze this area.

8 km

Length

min. 3 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access

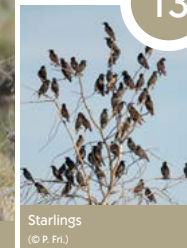
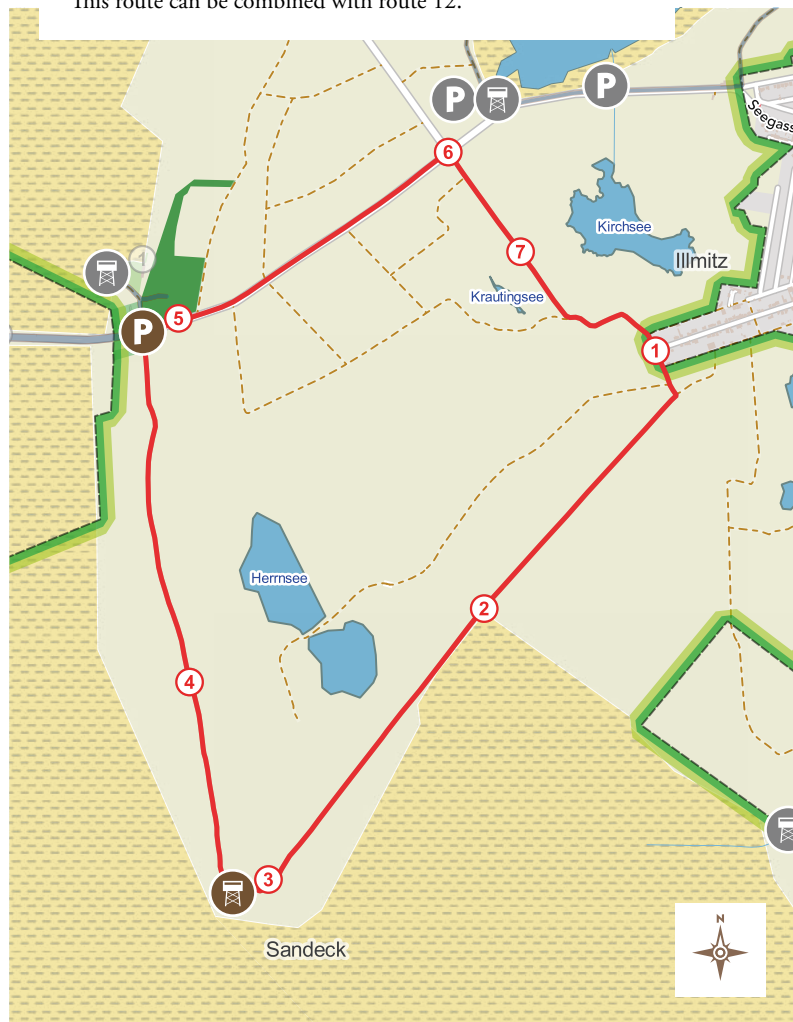


Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

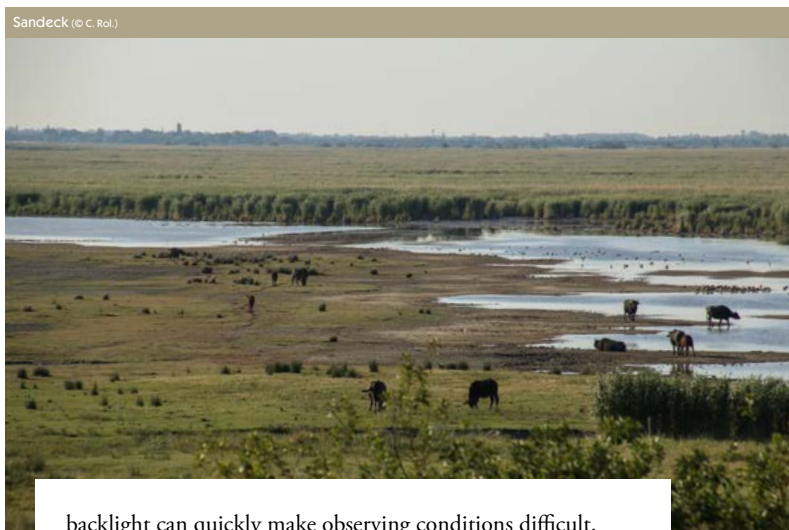
The Sandeck is the southern-most end of the sandy lake dune (see “Did you know?” Route 5) stretching 25 km from Weiden am See to this point. The two access routes lead through the conservation zone of the National Park and are quite diverse, both ornithologically and regarding their landscape. Arid grassland, fallows, and small stands of bushes and trees alternate with vineyards (many of which have been disused in recent years), and wet meadows transition into expansive inundation zones and finally into the giant reed belt.

This route can be combined with route 12.



Route

The starting point is the western end of Schrändlgasse **1**. From here, the route leads about 200 m to the south. At a stable, turn right onto a very long, straight path. The former border watchtower can already be seen in the distance as an orientation point. Look out for **Crested Lark** at the beginning of this path. The route continues through an expansive meadow area, where **Curlew**, **Lapwing**, **Kestrel**, and **Skylark** have their breeding territories. **Rooks** and **Starlings** often forage in these meadows in large flocks. After almost a kilometre, the ground starts to become wetter and wetter, and the area known as the Wasserstatten **2** begins on the eastern side of the path. A wide variety of **ducks** and **herons** frequent the northern part of the area at high water levels, and **Reed Bunting**, **Sedge Warbler**, and **Great Reed Warbler** should also easily be heard here. The southern part of the Wasserstatten, which is also the western end of the Graurinderkoppel (see Route 15), is much more open and expansive, and is a great place for **waders** such as **Pied Avocet**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Ruff**, and **Spotted Redshank**. **Teal** and **Shoveler** are mostly abundant here, as are **sandpipers** at low water levels, while **Spoonbills** often forage here in quite large groups. Due to the large observation distances, it definitely pays to carry a spotting scope on this route. If possible, be on site a little before sunrise, otherwise heat shimmer and



backlight can quickly make observing conditions difficult. The route until the observation tower **3** in the Sandeck is a beautiful mosaic of partially disused vineyards, meadows, single trees, and bushes. **Turtle Dove**, **Cuckoo**, **Nightingale**, **Barred Warbler**, **Goldfinch**, and **Tree Sparrow** are just some of the species of these habitats. The little patch of forest in the Sandeck also provides habitat for **Golden Oriole** and **Hoopoe** as well as a mixed colony of **Rooks** and **Jackdaws**. Disused **Magpie** nests are regularly used by **Long-eared Owls**, while the white donkeys' stable is often shared with **Barn Owls** – which is indicated by the black, glistening pellets on the ground. The wide expanse of the lakeshore zone is inhabited by many different **waterbirds** and is occasionally used as hunting grounds by **White-tailed Eagle** and **Peregrine Falcon**. From the tower, the reed belt of the nature reserve zone can be scanned for flying **herons**, **Pygmy Cormorant**, and **Marsh Harrier**. **Ferruginous Duck** and other **swimming waterbirds** are often spotted in the channels between the reeds. The path northwards along the lake dune **4** is sandy at first (bicycles are best pushed!), but quickly transitions into a normal, slightly raised dirt road that leads through vineyards and a bush-strewn landscape. Chances of seeing **Barred Warbler**, which is fairly common here, are highest in mid-May. **Kestrel**, **Grey Partridge**, **Hoopoe**, **Common Whitethroat**, and **Red-backed Shrike** are further species breeding along the lake dune. The rest of the way to Seestraße **5**, the route offers a good view of the lakeshore zone of Lake Neusiedl on the one

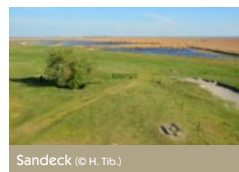
side and the wet meadows around the Herrensee on the other. Next, follow Seestraße towards Illmitz. At the signpost to the Biological Station Illmitz, turn the opposite direction – to the right – onto a dirt road that leads back to the starting point. The area between Kirchsee and Krautensee **7** can be a great place to observe **meadow-breeding waders**, particularly in wet springs.

Other animals and plants

Hungarian Grey cattle, White donkey, Water buffalo, European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Southern emerald damselfly (*Lestes barbarus*), Southern darter (*Sympetrum meridionale*), Hoary erysimum (*Erysimum diffusum*), Pale madwort (*Alyssum alyssoides*), Star-fruited fennel (*Medicago monspeliaca*), Sainfoin milk vetch (*Astragalus onobrychis*), Pygmy iris (*Iris pumila*), Siberian iris (*Iris sibirica*)

DID YOU KNOW?

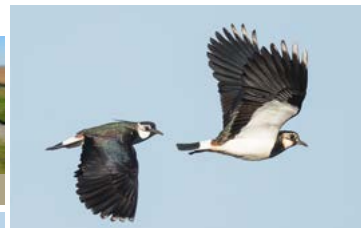
The two 16 m-high observation towers in the southern lakeshore area (Gaurinderkoppel and Sandeck) were originally Hungarian border watchtowers which were transferred to their current sites after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The upper levels can only be accessed as part of National Park excursions.



Sandeck (© H. Tib.)



Sedge Warbler (© P. Fri.)



Lapwings (© P. Fri.)

Observation tower
(© Archiv NP-NSSW)

Sand lizard (© C. Rie.)



Kestrel (© G. Wos.)

Birds of the Reed Belt

Measuring 180 km², the reed belt of Lake Neusiedl is the second largest continuous reed area in Europe. Though the expanse may appear like a uniform monoculture from the ground, seen from above it quickly becomes clear how structured this habitat truly is.

From the often very wide lakeshore zone to the inner edges of the reed belt with high wave action, there is a mosaic of interchanging habitats ranging from mature to young reed stands, channels, pools of open water, and artificial embankments, all of which are inhabited by different species. The population sizes of some of these species are certainly impressive by European standards. For example, the entire reed belt is home to 1000-2000 breeding pairs of **Little Crane**, 1500-3000 pairs each of **Moustached Warbler** and **Great Reed Warbler**, 2500-5000 pairs of **Water Rail**, 4000-7000 pairs of **Sedge Warbler**, at least 5000 pairs of **Bearded Reedling**, 5000-10,000 pairs of **Savi's Warbler**, and 45,000-60,000 pairs of **Reed Warbler**.

While the population estimates of widespread species are extrapolated from exact counts at select points, the large colony-breeding species are recorded quite exactly during so-called "heron-flights" (from a small aircraft). A special focus during this method is placed on the "Große Schilfinsel" (the large reed island) in the nature reserve zone of the National Park, which is home to a mixed colony of **Great Cormorant**, **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Night Heron**, **Little Egret**, **Great Egret**, **Grey Heron**, **Purple Heron**, and **Spoonbill**.

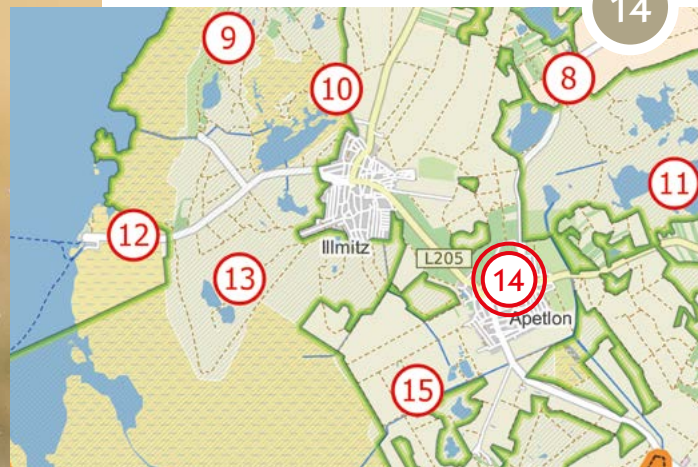
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Great Egret	745	643	518	486	647	678	766	764	640	655	561	701	776	382	329
Purple Heron	133	86	35	99	110	89	138	159	141	107	129	134	152	129	139
Grey Heron	128	98	99	94	81	156	83	107	88	119	108	75	67	53	84
Spoonbill	81	45	39	38	47	84	92	91	101	103	79	72	121	90	67
Night Heron	8	?	?	?	?	?	3	3	16	18	40	17	18	41	38
Little Egret	?	?	?	?	1	?	3	?	6	4	11	8	7	14	9
Pygmy Cormorant					14	16	77	52	146	116	189	123	358	278	229
Great Cormorant										4	19	23	32	47	38

Table: Population sizes of herons, Spoonbills, Pygmy Cormorants, and Great Cormorants breeding in the Austrian part of Lake Neusiedl between 2003 and 2017; numbers represent breeding pairs. Great Egret does not breed in the Hungarian part of the reed belt. There is currently no good explanation for the species' decline after 2016. (Data compiled by Erwin Nemeth)

Apetlon



Goldfinches (© P. Fu.)



Apetlon municipal office
(N: 47.742855, E: 16.831201)

The town of Apetlon is invariably associated with the Lange Lacke. Some might also associate the town with the lowest measured point in Austria, the Hungarian Grey cattle, the storks on the old Hufnagelhaus, and the “famous” Long-eared Owl roost in the cemetery.

3.2 km

Length

min. 1.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



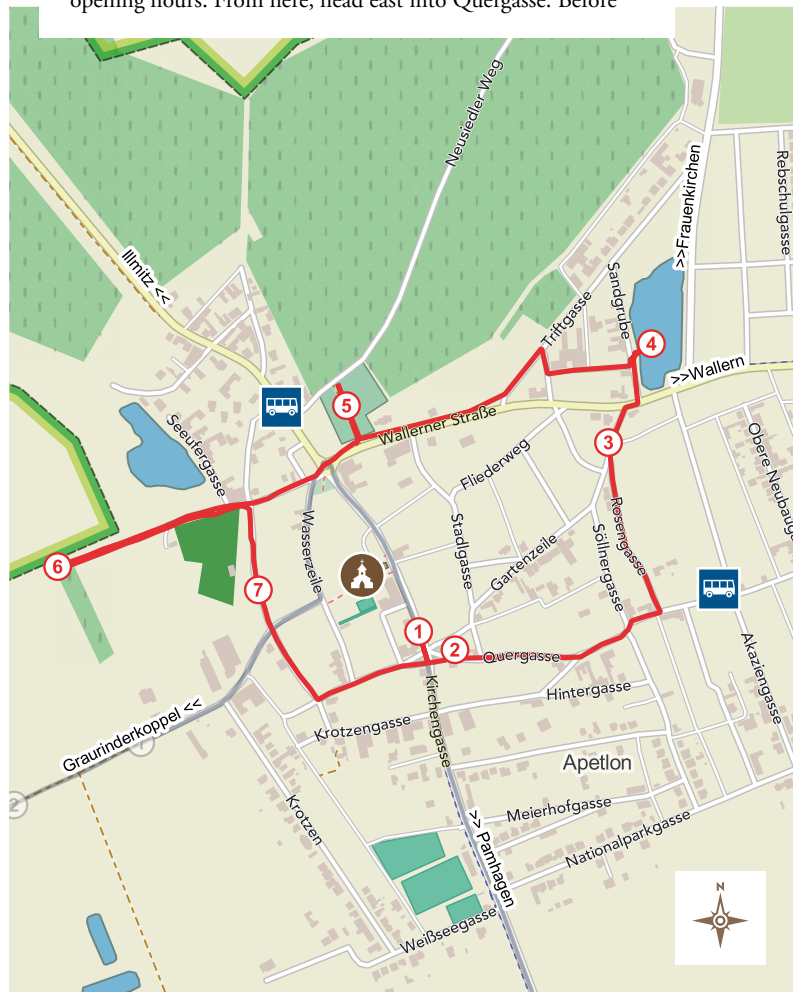
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

This route through the municipality of 1800 inhabitants connects the most important points and offers a cross-section of different habitats and their associated birdlife. Visitors with enough time will enjoy “losing their way” in this little town with its alleyways, gardens, green spaces, and ponds, and the surrounding pastures, meadows, hedges, and patches of forest.

Route

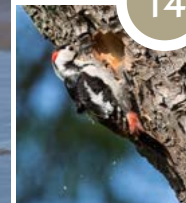
The starting point is the municipal office of Apetlon **1**, where one can also pick up a detailed map of the town during opening hours. From here, head east into Quergasse. Before



Village pond (© K. Wei.)



White Wagtail (© P. Fri.)


Syrian Woodpecker
(© O. Sam.)


White Stork (© C. Rol.)

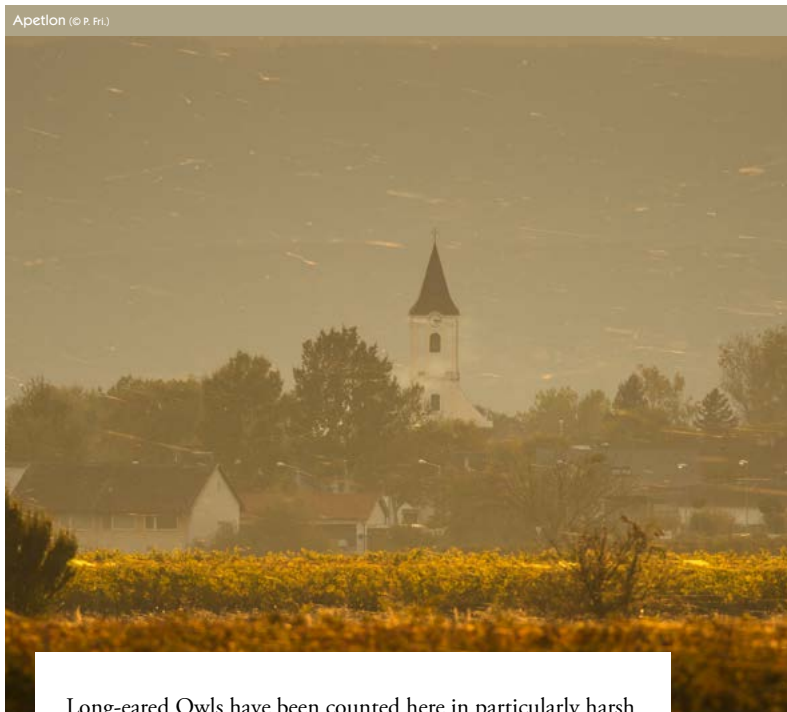


Black-tailed skimmer (© P. Fri.)



Black-headed and Mediterranean Gulls (© C. Rol.)

the road becomes narrower, the landmark of Apetlon, the Hufnagelhaus **2**, appears behind an old draw-well. Almost every year, a pair of **White Storks** nests on the chimney of this approximately 250-year-old light blue house with a Baroque gable. After passing the inn “Zum fröhlichen Arbeiter” (“the cheerful worker”), turn into Rosengasse, the second road on the left. In this quiet side road with overgrown barns, gardens, and patches of fallow land, bird density appears to be particularly high – the songs of many **passerines** are heard from all directions in spring. Where Rosengasse merges into Söllnergasse, one passes an organic winery with the next **storks’ nest** **3**, this time on a robinia. Following the course of Söllnergasse for 150 m, one reaches Apetlon’s village pond **4**, which was formerly used as a watering place for horses and as a firewater reservoir (reed roofs!). Though it is mainly used by wild and semi-domesticated **Mallard**, one can sometimes encounter other visitors from the National Park here as well, such as **Black-headed Gull**, **Mediterranean Gull**, or **Common Tern**. After circling the pond and maybe stopping off at the little island, the route continues west on Wallernerstraße to the Apetlon cemetery **5**, shortly before the roundabout. In late autumn and winter, the line of thuja trees in the cemetery can be searched for **Long-eared Owls**, which roost in these dense trees during the day and give themselves away by their regurgitated pellets under the occupied trees. Up to 70



Long-eared Owls have been counted here in particularly harsh winters – in normal winters there are around 20 individuals. The birds should be approached with utmost caution because they can take flight when disturbed and experience stress a lot sooner, even though it may not appear so. Naturally, visitors observing in the cemetery should also be considerate of the town's inhabitants, who tend to the graves here and come to remember their deceased. **Syrian Woodpecker** can also be expected around the cemetery, as can **Spotted Flycatcher** in spring. The route continues across the roundabout into Seeufergasse, where it pays to make a quick detour into the surrounding agricultural landscape **6**: the little patch of forest south of the road out of town hosts **Golden Oriole** and **Hoopoe** in spring, and the paddocks, meadows, and hedges beyond can be searched for **Greylag Geese**, **meadow-breeding waders**, **Crested Lark**, **Skylark**, **Turtle Dove**, and **Red-backed Shrike**.

Back in Apetlon, one takes the first turn south along the line of rear entrances to the farms and wineries **7**. The little gardens, hedges, fences, and the patch of forest in the background form a diverse habitat where the typical village species such

as **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, **White Wagtail**, **Black Redstart**, **Song Thrush**, **Blackcap**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Golden Oriole**, **House Sparrow**, **Tree Sparrow**, **Serin**, **Greenfinch**, **Goldfinch**, and **Linnet** feel right at home. Now one can either return to the starting point via Quergasse, or one can continue to stroll around the diverse south-east of Apetlon, with its interesting road names such as Krotzengasse and Krotzen.

Other animals and plants

European green toad (*Bufotes viridis*), Black-tailed skimmer (*Orthetrum cancellatum*), Marsh cricket (*Pteronemobius heydenii*), Common wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*), Spiny plumelless thistle (*Carduus acanthoides*), Marsh-mallow (*Althea officinalis*)

DID YOU KNOW?

You can't get any lower! A little more than 2 km south of Apetlon lies the Tegeluferlacke. Beside this saline lake, at the intersection of two dirt roads, is the **lowest measured point in Austria**, at 114 m above sea level. In wet years this overgrown body of water is a breeding place for **Lapwing**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, and **Redshank**.



European green toad (© C. Rol.)



Black Redstart (© P. Fri.)



Long-eared Owl (© F. Wen.)



Tree Sparrow (© C. Rol.)



Hufnagelhaus (© C. Rol.)



Roe deer (© G. Lok.)

The Pannonian BirdExperience

Austria's only fair for birdwatchers

Since 2010, Austria's only birdwatching fair has taken place every year in the information centre of the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park. Aside from a diverse programme of exhibitions, talks, workshops, and excursions (also across the border), the newest photography and long-range optics products are also on display to be tested extensively by beginners and experienced ornithologists or birdwatchers.

The fair addresses the topics of nature and species conservation, protected areas, NGOs, outdoor activity, travel, literature, tourism, and sustainable mobility – all of which are represented by a number of experts and exhibitors. Another important point is regional cuisine, which is particularly welcome after such exciting BEX-classics as the Birdquiz, the BEX-BirdRace, or the public bird ringing sessions.

What is more, a fun and educational childcare programme has also been developed for the main weekend.

www.birdexperience.org



Graurinderkoppel and Apetloner Hof

ROUTE
15



South-western end of Apetlon-Rohrung
(47.732239, E: 16.801454)

The Graurinderkoppel in the lakeshore area of Apetlon was already more or less overgrown with reeds after common pasturing had ended there. In 1995, the National Park began grazing the area with Hungarian Grey cattle and water buffalo. The high vegetation quickly retreated, and plant species already believed lost celebrated a comeback.

White-tailed Eagle (© C. Röl.)

10 km

Length

min. 2 h

Duration
(by car)



Gear



Movement



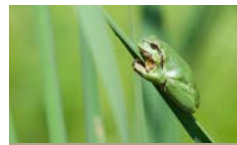
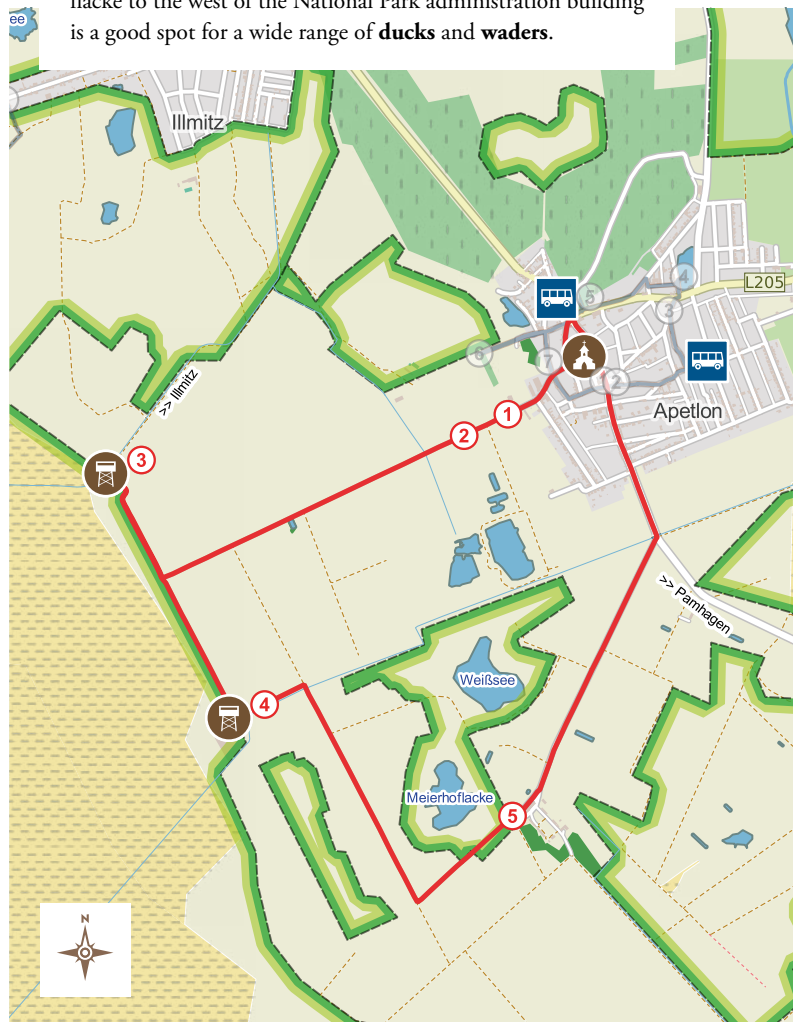
Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

The low vegetation now provides **meadow-breeding waders** and other ground-breeding birds with a good all-round view once again, and these species have responded with rapidly increasing breeding populations. Two observation towers provide a good overview of the grazed lakeshore area. **White-tailed Eagle** and **Peregrine Falcon** like to hunt in the dense flocks of **waterbirds**. In autumn, the “Graurinderkoppel” (the Hungarian Grey cattle paddock) is probably the best place in Austria to see **Cranes** (see “Did you know?”). In wet years, the Meierhofacke to the west of the National Park administration building is a good spot for a wide range of **ducks** and **waders**.



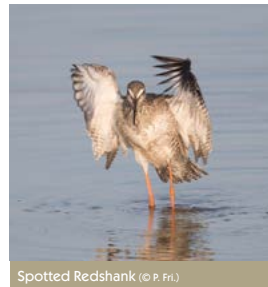
European tree frog (© C. Rie.)



Cranes (© P. Fri.)



Shoveler (© W. Tri.)



Spotted Redshank (© P. Fri.)



Whiskered Terns (© G. Lol.)



Graurinderkoppel (© C. Rol.)

Route

Following Wasserzeile in Apetlon, turn right at the signpost to “Steppenrinderherde” (“Hungarian Grey cattle herd”) and follow the long road “Apetlon – Rohrung” that leads straight to the lakeshore zone.

Just outside the town’s limits there are some horse and cattle paddocks to the north of the road **1**, which **Greylag Goose**, **Crested Lark**, and **Red-backed Shrike** like to frequent. In wet years, things start to get interesting to the south of the road just past the turnoff to “Feriendorf Vogelparadies” **2**. **White Stork** and **Marsh Harrier** forage for food here, while **Lapwing**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Redshank**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Stonechat**, and **Reed Bunting** vociferously defend their territories. A magnificent **concert of frogs** can also be heard here on nightly excursions. The moment one reaches the Graurinderkoppel after about 2 km, the dimensions of this vast pastureland quickly become clear. A very spacious observation tower **3** offering good protection against the elements can be reached (only on foot or by bicycle) a little to the north. This is a great vantage point from which to scan the majority of the water surfaces for **waterbirds**. Even when the water retreats back towards the lake in summer, one still has a perfect view of the remaining damp patches from here. The distances are considerable, so using a spotting scope is recommended in the first morning light to avoid heat shimmer. The inundation



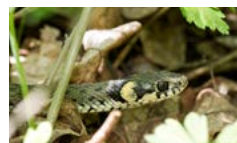
zones at the edge of the reeds are important foraging areas for **Spoonbill** and **Whiskered Tern**. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** is just one of the highlights that occurs here regularly on migration. In summer, **Night Heron** is sometimes seen flying overhead in the evenings. In winter, the Graurinderkoppel is foraging ground for **nordic geese** and hunting ground for a variety of **raptors**. It is worth making regular observation stops on the way to the Grey cattle stable, be it to look out for **Red-throated Pipit** taking flight (which like to rest here), or to take in the magnificent evening arrival of the **Cranes** after late October. Probably the best view of the Crane spectacle can be had from the old border watchtower next to the Grey cattle stable **4**, which also offers an open vista towards the Hungarian border to the south. In wet years, it pays to stop off at the Meierhofacke **5** next to the Apetloner Hof, the administration building of the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park. Aside from **Teal**, **Shoveler**, and **Garganey**, this lake can also be bustling with **Common Snipe**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Wood Sandpiper**, and **Ruff**. Following the road to the north, one returns to Apetlon town at its southern edge.

Other animals and plants

Hungarian Grey cattle, Water buffalo, Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Pool frog (*Pelophylax lessonae*), Hairly dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*), Lesser emperor (*Anax parthenope*), Brown nonea (*Nonea pulla*), Whitetop (*Lepidium draba*), Lesser honeywort (*Cerinthe minor*)

DID YOU KNOW?

From the extinction of the Hanság breeding population in the 19th century until around the turn of the millennium, observing **Cranes** in Austria was a matter of chance. Since then, observations have become more and more frequent, especially south-east of Lake Neusiedl (on the Hungarian and Austrian sides). Thanks to positive population development and to shifts in migration routes, quite large flocks can now be expected here, especially between mid-October and mid-November. The best observation points are the Graurinderkoppel in Austria and the Borsodi-dűlő in Hungary (see *Route 20*), where **Cranes** are best observed at dusk when they land to roost.



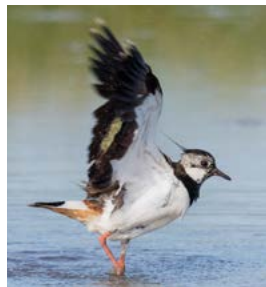
Grass snake (© G. Löl.)



Spoonbill (© P. Fr.)



Peregrine Falcon
(© O. Sam.)



Lapwing (© P. Fr.)



Crested Lark (© P. Fr.)



Graurinderkoppel (© C. Rol.)

Grazing

around Lake Neusiedl

Where pasturing of Central European lowland areas largely fell victim to profitability after the Second World War, it is recently celebrating a bit of a comeback. Beside the notion of slow-food and the associated desire for healthy eating and happy animals, one of the key drivers is also habitat and species conservation.

Well-planned extensive grazing is an ideal means of creating a mosaic of small-scale habitats profiting a wide range of species. The Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park / Fertő-Hanság Nemzeti Park predominantly uses old animal breeds to graze its pasture areas. These “four-legged employees” are mostly responsible for keeping the areas closest to the lake and the saline pools free of reed and bush encroachment. Surely, the most conspicuous animal profiteers of the resulting open landscapes are ground squirrel, Kentish Plover (*see page 96*), and the four meadow-breeding waders occurring here (**Curlew**, **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Redshank**, and **Lapwing**), which require a clear view and low vegetation to rear their young.

A few of the habitat managers around Lake Neusiedl are introduced on the following pages.



Hungarian Grey cattle

Population in the National Park
at least 1700 animals

From the 14th to the 18th century, the Hungarian Grey cattle was a prized meat breed well beyond Hungary, and was increasingly used as a work animal as agricultural practices intensified. The herd book of 1931 reveals that the population had fallen to a record low of just 187 cows and 6 bulls. Today the Austrian-Hungarian border area alone is home to at least 1700 animals.



Hungarian Grey cattle (© P. Frl.)

Water buffalo

Population in the National Park
approx. 350 animals (300 in HU, 50 in AT)

All domesticated water buffalo descend from the Asian buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*). Kept either for milk or as draught animals, they still play an important role in many parts of the world. In the National Park they are mostly deployed in the lakeshore zone, together with Hungarian Grey cattle, where they penetrate much further into the reed belt, in line with their semi-aquatic nature.



Water buffalo in the Sandeck (© C. Rol.)

Fleckvieh

Population at the Lange Lacke
approx. 300 animals

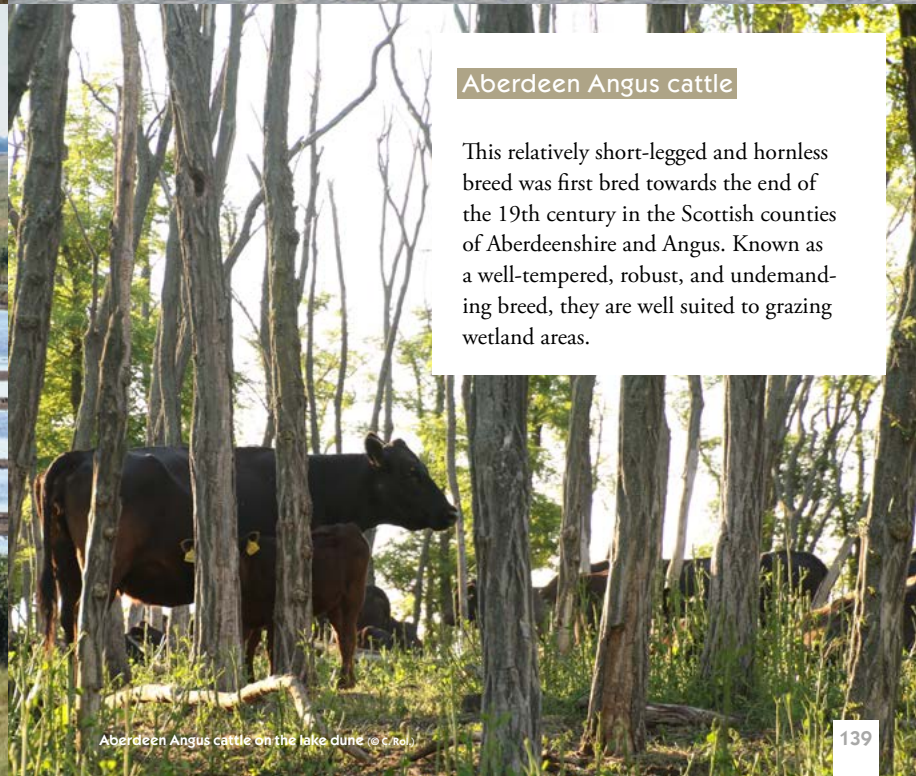
The pastureland around the Lange Lacke is the only place in the Seewinkel where the common pasturing tradition was never interrupted. To this day, between May and October, a herd of cattle accompanied by shepherds and dogs wanders around the species-rich area.



Fleckvieh cattle at the Lange Lacke (© P. Frl.)

Aberdeen Angus cattle

This relatively short-legged and hornless breed was first bred towards the end of the 19th century in the Scottish counties of Aberdeenshire and Angus. Known as a well-tempered, robust, and undemanding breed, they are well suited to grazing wetland areas.



Aberdeen Angus cattle on the lake dune (© C. Rol.)

Austro-Hungarian Baroque donkey

Population in the National Park (Sandeck)
approx. 20 animals

Often erroneously identified as albino donkeys, this old domestic breed was commonly bred as a prestige object by the more affluent social classes in the 17th and 18th centuries (Baroque period). Unlike real albinos, which lack all pigmentation, these white donkeys have whitish-yellowish fur and blue eyes – features characterised as “flavism”. The breed was rediscovered in the 1980s. Thanks to a breeding programme, their population has since been increased to over 250 registered breeding animals.

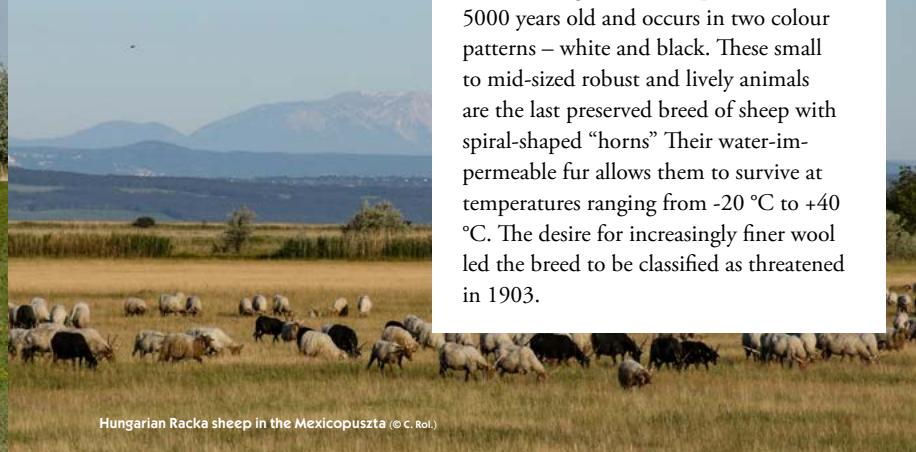


White donkeys in the Sandeck (© G. Wös.)

Hungarian Racka sheep

Population in the National Park (Hungarian part)
approx. 500 animals

This breed of sheep, formerly known as “Hortobágy Racka sheep”, is likely 5000 years old and occurs in two colour patterns – white and black. These small to mid-sized robust and lively animals are the last preserved breed of sheep with spiral-shaped “horns”. Their water-impermeable fur allows them to survive at temperatures ranging from -20 °C to +40 °C. The desire for increasingly finer wool led the breed to be classified as threatened in 1903.



Hungarian Racka sheep in the Mexicopuszta (© C. Rol.)

Przewalski's horse

Population in the National Park (Austrian part)
approx. 15 animals

For further information, see Route 9 under “Did you know?”

Warmblood horse

The horses grazing the so-called Podersdorfer Pferdekoppel are predominantly private riding horses.



Przewalski's horses (© Archiv NP-NSSW)

Limousin cattle

Limousin cattle originate from the French region of the same name and were formerly kept as draught and fattening animals. Today they are bred worldwide purely as beef cattle. A private herd grazes the steppe landscape between Krautensee and Herrensee.



Limousin cattle (© pixabay)

Forest

near VILA VITA Pannonia resort



Nightingale (© P. M.)



In the open landscape of the Seewinkel, visitors are excused if they start to yearn for the change of a nice forest walk. In this case, the forest near the VILA VITA Pannonia resort, which is almost unknown among ornithologists, is warmly recommended. At a length of 2 km and width of up to 600 m, this also happens to be the largest patch of forest in the Seewinkel.

4.3 km

Length

min. 1.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



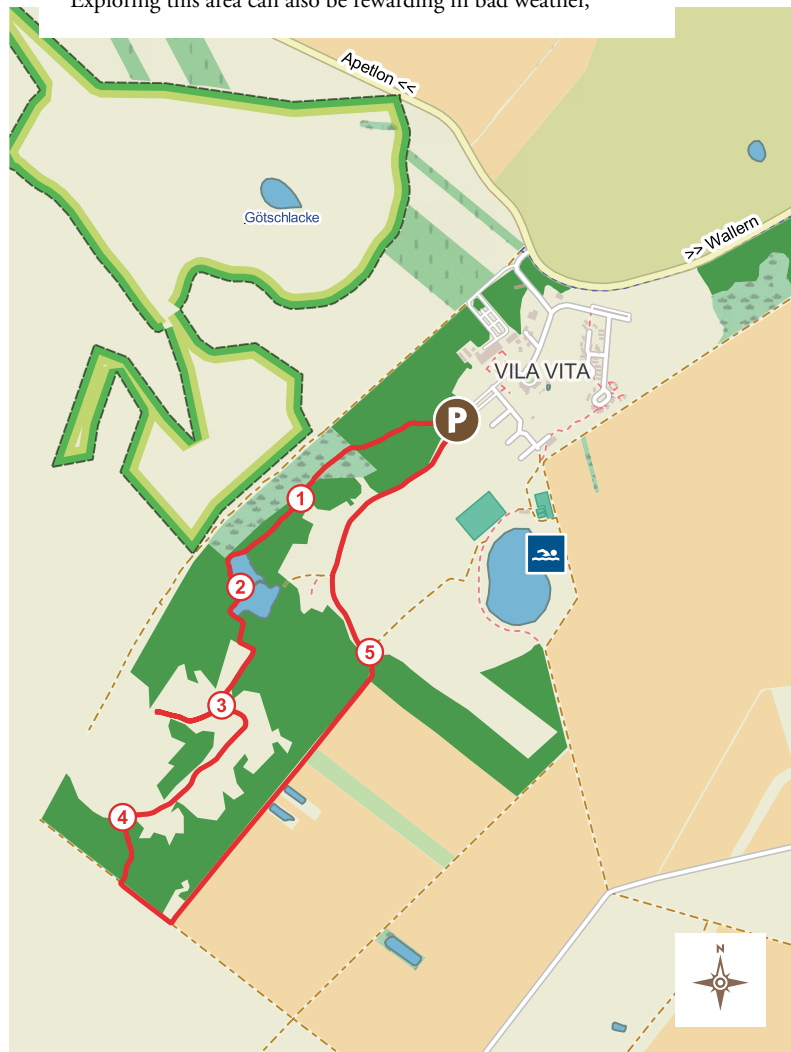
Access



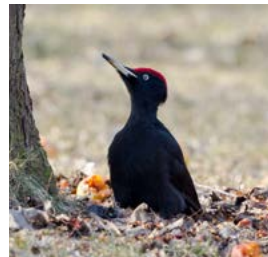
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

Access to the area is free except for the swimming pond, where an entrance fee is charged. The paths, often running tracks nicely padded with bark mulch, are well signposted and lead through the near-natural part of the premises. Aside from **typical forest species** such as **woodpeckers**, some other typical **meadow**, **scrub**, and **reed birds** can also be seen here. A stroll through the resort itself compliments this species array with some typical **village species** and a pair of **White Storks**. Exploring this area can also be rewarding in bad weather,



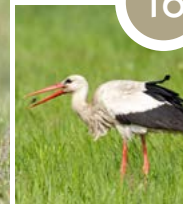
Semi-open forest (© C. Rol.)



Black Woodpecker (© O. Sam.)



Green Woodpecker (© P. Fri.)


White Stork
(© G. Lot.)


Common Whitethroat (© C. Rol.)

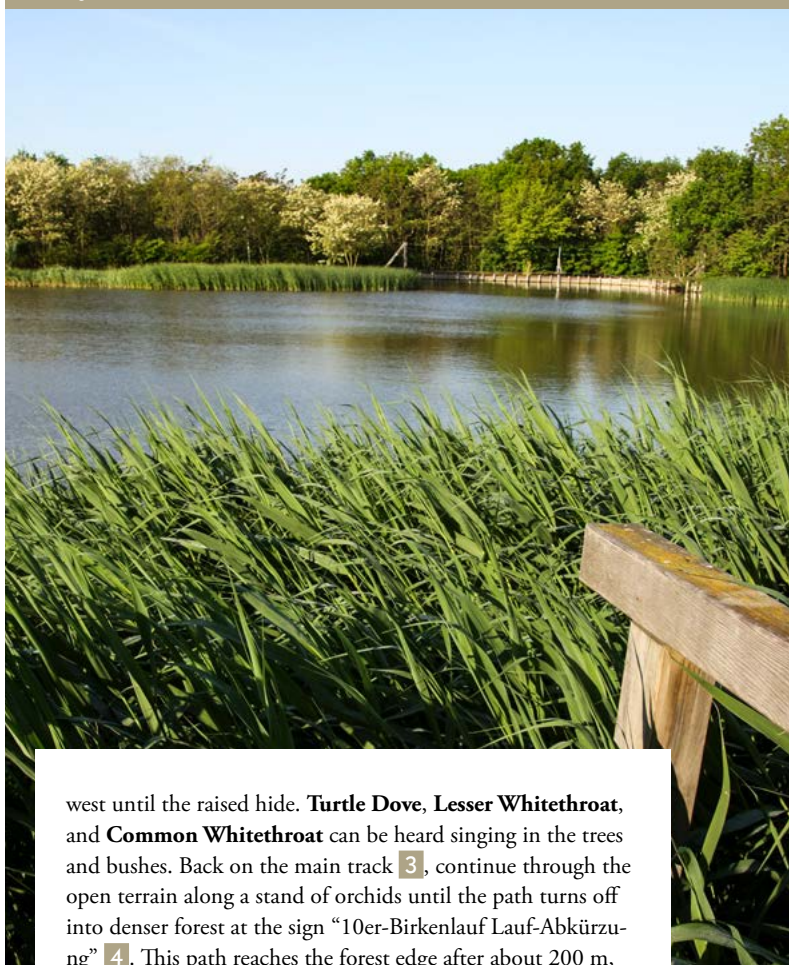


Cuckoo (© P. Fri.)

when **migrating passerines** seek refuge in the sparse patches of forest the Seewinkel has to offer.

Route

To reach the beginning of the route, turn off of the L205 between Apetlon and Wallern into the resort's access road (at the level of the Schwarzseelacke). Follow the signs to "Reception" and continue to parking area "Nr. 3" **P** in the south-western-most part of the resort. A wooden gateway, "The Mile of Fame", with a number of signs is the beginning of this route. The forest, rather young at first, soon thins out and is interspersed with little patches of meadow. The meadow complex of the Götschlacke **1** borders the forest to the west and is best seen from here in winter when vegetation is not as dense. **Hen Harrier**, **Great Grey Shrike**, and **Rook** can be encountered in the semi-open landscape at this time of year, while **Cuckoo**, **Turtle Dove**, **Icterine Warbler**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Nightingale**, **Golden Oriole**, and others are heard in spring and summer. A little further, the path passes west of two ponds **2**, where **Great Reed Warbler** is heard loudly singing from the reeds in spring. One soon reaches a perpendicular trail, but leaves it again almost immediately, heading south. Not quite 200 m further on, one finds oneself amid a sparse stand of birches with individual groups of bushes. At the fork in the path **3**, it pays to take the trail heading south-



west until the raised hide. **Turtle Dove**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, and **Common Whitethroat** can be heard singing in the trees and bushes. Back on the main track **3**, continue through the open terrain along a stand of orchids until the path turns off into denser forest at the sign “10er-Birkenlauf Lauf-Abkürzung” **4**. This path reaches the forest edge after about 200 m, where one turns onto a dirt road heading south-east and then another heading north-east. To one’s left, one still has the chance to catch any **forest species** one might have missed, while the fields and vineyards to the right can be scanned for **farmland birds**. By the time one crosses the narrow patch of forest at the end of the long, straight road, with a little luck one will have seen or at least heard **Green Woodpecker**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, and **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**. At the large central area of (semi-)arid grassland, follow the path to the north-west, past paddocks with sheep and white donkeys, to the starting point.

Other animals and plants

White donkey, Cameroon sheep, European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Scarce chaser (*Libellula fulva*), Stripe-winged toothed grasshopper (*Stenobothrus lineatus*), Giant peacock moth (*Saturnia pyri*), Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*), Green tiger beetle (*Cicindela campestris*), Manna ash (*Fraxinus ornus*), Spiked speedwell (*Veronica spicata*), Common hedgenettle (*Betonica officinalis*), Broad-leaved spignel (*Cervaria rivini*), Goldilocks aster (*Galatella linoisyris*), Green-winged orchid (*Anacamptis morio*), Early spider-orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*)

DID YOU KNOW?

After humans cleared the semi-open oak forests of the See-winkel centuries ago to graze their animals, a diverse secondary steppe-landscape (Hungarian: puszta) developed. The oak stands that can still be seen at this site likely originate from this former forest cover. The more conspicuous tree species making up the majority of the current forest are species that were introduced in the past 150 years, such as robinia (North America), oleaster (Asia), and manna ash (Mediterranean).



White donkeys (© B. Bal.)



Early spider-orchid and Green-winged orchid (© C. Rol.)



Mulched trail (© C. Rol.)



Asian flax (© C. Rol.)



Green tiger beetle (© G. Lol.)



Forest near VILA VITA (© C. Rol.)

Waasen/Hanság, Kommassanten- wiesen, and Einser-Kanal



Bustard observation tower along B22 bicycle route from Andau
(N: 47.731515 E: 17.053316)



Great Bustards © F. Kow

The Kommassantenwiesen are “famous” among birdwatchers for the easily observed displays of Great Bustards in spring, for the Short-eared Owls becoming active at dusk, and for the considerable diversity of raptors. But they are also worth a visit in winter, when guests from the north such as Hen Harrier, Merlin, and Great Grey Shrike hunt for food in the meadows, and White-tailed Eagles are out looking for prey.

18 km

Length

min. 2.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



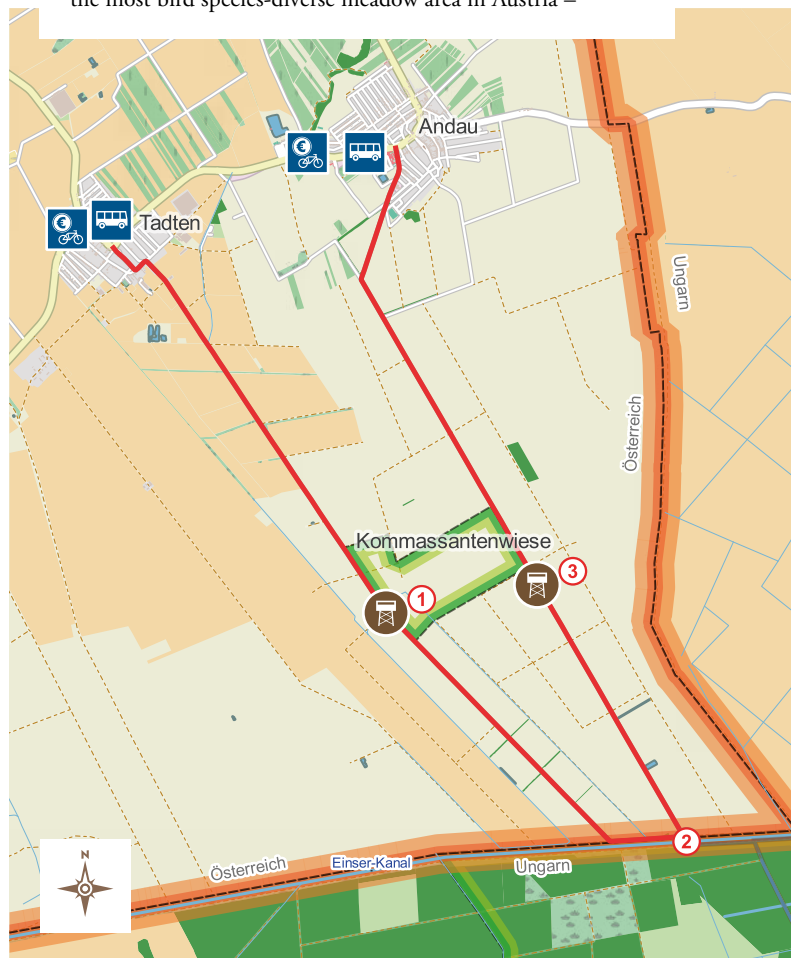
Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

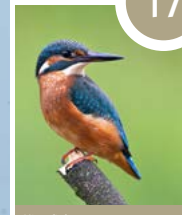
The Waasen or Hanság (in Hungarian) is a 460 km²-large fen area south-east of the Seewinkel, the larger part of which lies in Hungary – only around 70 km² are Austrian territory. Once part of the Lake Neusiedl area and described as an impassable water wilderness, the area's valuable semi-aquatic habitats were massively impacted through numerous human interventions (see page 32). As late as the late 18th century, Tadtén, Andau, Wallern, and Pamhagen had still been fishing villages! Today, the Austrian part of the Hanság is known – at best – as a temporarily inundated arid habitat with huge agricultural areas. Nevertheless, part of the Hanság is still the most bird species-diverse meadow area in Austria –



White Storks (© H. M. Ber.)



Common Snipe (© P. Fri.)


Kingfisher
(© G. Lok.)


Curlew (© P. Fri.)



Whinchat (© H. Kol.)



Short-eared Owl (© P. Fri.)

Montagu's Harrier, Common Snipe, Curlew, Lapwing, Redshank, Corn Crane, Spotted Crane, Short-eared Owl, Yellow Wagtail, Whinchat, Stonechat, Grasshopper Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, and Corn Bunting all breed here. The formerly occurring **Black-tailed Godwit** is the only typical meadow-breeding bird missing today from this species array. But the breeding populations of some of these species fluctuate strongly depending on the meadows' and fallows' water supply.

Some of the species are exceedingly sensitive to disturbance, so visitors must strictly remain on the paths at all times to not jeopardise breeding success.

Route

Two embanked roads lead south-east to the Einser-Kanal (the main regulation channel), one from Tadtén and the other from Andau. The most important observation points can easily be combined on this circuit. Due to the distances and the risk of disturbing certain species, driving is the recommended means of transport here. In the meadow area itself, it is best to get out of one's car only at the points described here. Starting onto Dammweg at Tadtén, after about 3 km of driving through agricultural fields, one reaches the meadows known as the Kommassantenwiesen. There is an observation tower **1** at a slight kink in the road, which offers a good overview of the



meadow area. Facing east to the embanked road from Andau, between early April and mid-May one should be able to make out the displaying **Great Bustard** males resembling “cotton wool balls”. Also keep an eye open for **Curlew**, **Lapwing**, **Redshank**, and **Common Snipe**, which all breed here in varying populations sizes each year. Meanwhile, **passerines** such as **Yellow Wagtail**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Marsh Warbler**, **Savi's Warbler** (in mature reed stands), **Red-backed Shrike**, and (rarely) **Bluethroat** can also be seen here. Raptor fans should remember to scan the sky for **White-tailed Eagle**, **Eastern Imperial Eagle**, **Marsh Harrier**, and **Montagu's Harrier** – and with a little luck one might even discover a migrating or temporarily stationary **Red-footed Falcon** in May. The long, straight road continues past meadows and cattle pastures to the Einser-Kanal. The northern base of the embankment (not the middle of the channel) marks the border to Hungary. Turning left, the route continues on the rather rough road to Andauer Dammstraße. The bushes beside the road and the forests on the Hungarian side are home to **Turtle Dove**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Barred Warbler**, **Nightingale**, **River Warbler**, and **Yellowhammer**. The skies should be scanned here regularly, especially for **Black Stork** and various **raptors**. During migration, rare raptors like **Short-toed Snake Eagle** and **Booted Eagle** occasionally appear here, demanding careful identification and documentation. At the intersection

with Andauer Dammstraße, the historic “bridge at Andau” ² (see “Did you know?”) leads across the Einser-Kanal to Hungary (remember to take a passport or ID card!). The Osli-Hany and Király-tó (see Route 18) in the Hungarian Hanság can easily be explored by bicycle from here. The bridge itself is a good place to spot **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Great Cormorant**, **Ferruginous Duck**, **Common Tern**, **Kingfisher** (on migration), **Great Reed Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler**, and **Raven**. In spring and early summer, **Grasshopper Warbler** is heard from the nearby meadow-like fallows. The route returns along Andauer Dammstraße. About half-way, make sure to stop at the spacious observation platform ³, where the **Great Bustards** sometimes come quite close to the road (particularly in the early mornings). **Curlew**, **Montagu's Harrier**, **Hobby**, **Yellow Wagtail**, **Whinchat**, **Stonechat**, and **Red-backed Shrike** can also be seen west of the road. And in some years **Corn Crane** can be heard here quite well, calling from the Kommassantenwiesen at late dusk.

Other animals and plants

Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Banded demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*), Red-eyed damselfly (*Erythromma najas*), Short-winged cone-head (*Conocephalus dorsalis*), Large marsh grasshopper (*Stethophyma grossum*), Carpathian dancing grasshopper (*Chorthippus oschei*), Southern festoon (*Zerynthia polyxena*), Lesser purple emperor (*Apatura ilia*), Downy birch (*Betula pubescens*), Birthwort (*Aristolochia clematitis*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The bridge at Andau. The original bridge was used by local farmers to reach their fields, some of which were on the other side of the channel. After the Hungarian revolution had been suppressed and around 70,000 Hungarians had fled to Austria at this point alone, the bridge was blasted by Soviet troops on 21 November 1956. 40 years later, the “New Bridge at Andau” was erected by Hungarian and Austrian soldiers working together, and was ceremonially opened. The 9 km-long road to Andau, known as the “Road to Freedom” is lined by around 90 sculptures by international artists commemorating the events of November 1956.

Great Bustard

(*Otis tarda*)



One of the most spectacular bird species of the Lake Neusiedl area must surely be the very social Great Bustard. As one of the heaviest birds in the world capable of flight, this species lures countless bird-watchers to the Austrian part of the Hanság between early April and mid-May with its spectacular ground display.

Impressive display and interesting facts

At the display sites, which are usually maintained for generations, the otherwise well-camouflaged males turn into conspicuous white feather

balls by inflating their throat pouches, cocking their tails, and abruptly lowering their wings, making them easy to spot in the open landscape. Observing them later in the year is not quite as easy because the vegetation is higher and some of the females will have flown further afield to incubate their two (sometimes three) eggs.

Between 44,000 and 51,000 of these birds, the males of which weigh up to 16 kg and the females 5.3 kg, inhabit a large but fragmented range between Portugal and eastern China. The European population comprises between 38,000 and 47,000 individuals, of which 30,000 occur in Spain alone.

Population development

Originally a steppe bird, the Great Bustard profited from widespread deforestation in Europe between the early Middle Ages and the 19th century, thus becoming a rather common bird of open agricultural landscapes. But agricultural intensification with ever heavier machines and more frequent tilling of fields started to make life difficult for this sensitive species. Not only did more densely sown plants make the microclimate near the ground cooler and wetter, and thus less suitable for the young birds in particular, the birds were also hunted on the ground and even faced an unexpected problem in the air: overhead power lines (medium and high voltage) pose a serious collision risk for the sluggish bustards. And so the winter numbers of the west-Pannonian population (Austrian, Czech, Slovakian, and western Hungarian populations), which includes the Hanság population, decreased from about 3500 individuals around 1900 to just 130 individuals in 1995. Extensive and highly ambitious conservation measures, including the creation of bustard conservation sites and laying underground cables in place of overhead lines, were effective and led to a rapid increase of the west-Pannonian population, which was back to 505 animals in the winter of 2017/18.

The breeding population in the Austrian part of the Hanság comprised 40-50 individuals as late as the 1970s, and has remained more or less stable between 10 and 27 animals since the turn of the millennium.

Threats

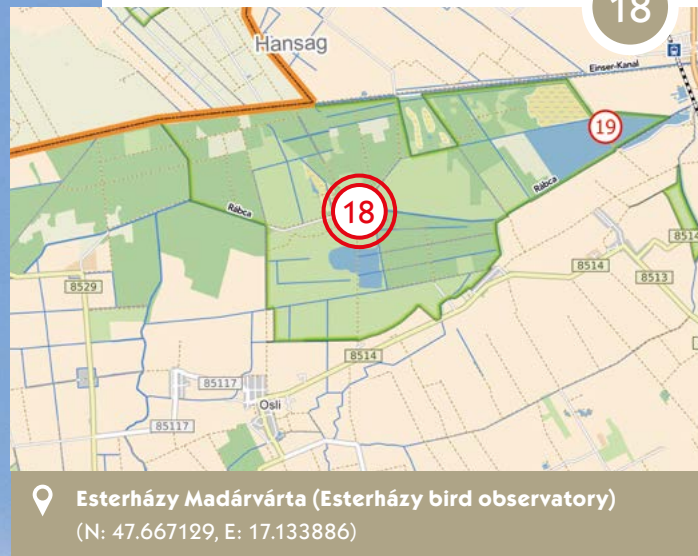
Since Great Bustards are threatened worldwide and are very sensitive to disturbance, in Austria they should only be observed in the Waasen - Hanság conservation zone of the National Park. Special National Park excursions during the displaying season and specially erected observation towers at the Kommassantenwiesen (see Route 17) increase visitors' chances of catching a glimpse of these spectacular birds.

Hungarian Hanság:

Esterházy bird observatory,
Király-tó, and Osli-Hany



Imperial Eagle (© R. Köt.)



Just like the Austrian part of the Hanság, the Hungarian part has changed considerably over the past centuries (see page 32). Nevertheless, time seems to have passed more slowly on the Hungarian side – no doubt the Iron Curtain had a role to play in this respect. Upon arrival in the area along narrow and bumpy country roads lined with trees and colourful meadows, it quickly becomes clear that the landscapes are more intact here, even outside of protected areas.

min. **11.4** km

Length

min. **4** h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

The Király-tó und Osli-Hany areas are part of a formerly huge alder carr forest, which only remains today in small patches. Nevertheless, in early spring **Black Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, **Green Woodpecker**, and **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** can all be heard in one day, as can – a little later in the year – a remarkable number of **River Warbler**. Look out for **Tree Pipit** at the forest edges. Aside from the forests, wet and marshy meadows, smaller and larger inundation zones, reed beds, tall-sedge beds, channels, and sand hills, the area also boasts vast pasture areas grazed by Hungarian Grey cattle and water buffalo and inhabited by **Short-eared Owl**, **Corn Crane**, **Yellow Wagtail**, **Stonechat**,



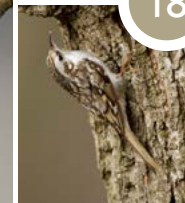
Corn Crane (© F. Wen.)



Bullfinch (© G. Lol.)



Siskin (© O. Sam.)



Eurasian Treecreeper
(© O. Sam.)



Hungarian Grey cattle (© C. Rol.)



River Warbler (© O. Sam.)

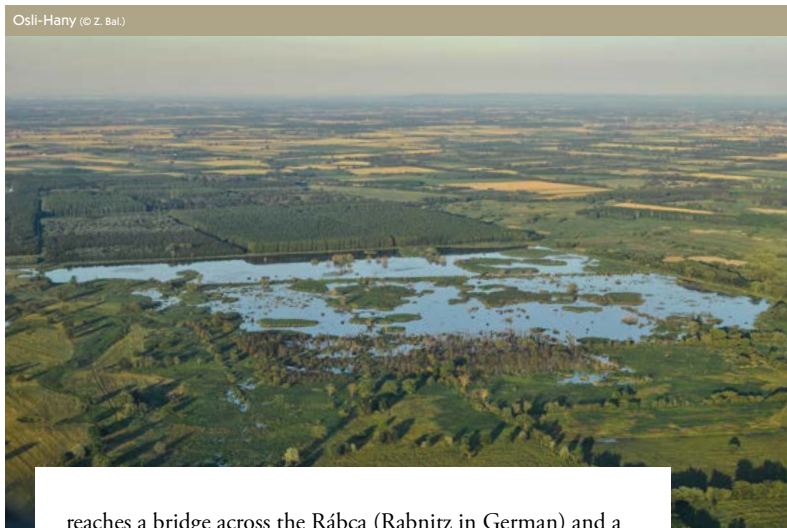
Red-backed Shrike, and **Corn Bunting**. It pays to check the mighty solitary trees in the pasture areas for **White-tailed Eagle** and **Eastern Imperial Eagle**.

Route

The area is quite remote and, although it can be reached by bus to Földsziget, a car or bicycle is recommended. From the bridge at Andau (see “Did you know?” Route 17) the area can be reached quite quickly by bicycle.

About 500 m west of Földsziget, a sign directs to “Esterházy Madárvárta”, the Esterházy bird observatory **1**, which is reached after almost a kilometre. If one has enough time, it is worth leaving the car here and exploring the area on foot or by bicycle. The first **forest birds** can be discovered on the long, straight path through the commercially exploited mixed alder forest. **Mistle Thrush**, **Bullfinch**, and especially **Siskin** are quite common here in winter – though the latter does not breed in the area. A sign at the end of the straight path provides information about the Csíkos-éger **2**, an 80 hectare-large natural remnant of the original alder forest. One is not allowed to enter this inundated forest, named after the weatherfish that used to be common here. Nevertheless, the trees with their seemingly primeval supportive roots will leave a lasting impression, even seen from the path.

The gravel road continues through various forest types until it



reaches a bridge across the Rábca (Rabnitz in German) and a forester's lodge **3**, which is also the last possible place to park. Before crossing the Rábca, a path behind the lodge leads around 800 m to an observation tower **4** in the Osli-Hany, on an ancient sand hill. **Bee-eaters** breed in a man-made scarp nearby, and the tower is a good place to observe their breeding activity and foraging flights over the adjacent pastures. Aside from the many **meadow birds**, the wet dips and channels and the large surface of water in the south of the area also harbour a variety of **waterbirds** such as **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Spoonbill**, **Purple Heron**, and **Little Egret**. After crossing the Rábca, the vast pasture area to the north-east offers great potential for observing interesting **meadow birds** and **raptors**. **Black Stork** can also be seen here regularly (at least in flight). A few metres after crossing the little canal, there is a cross-roads **5** with five options. The path to the north-west leads to the Einser-Kanal and the bridge at Andau **7**, while the path to the south-west, along the forest edge, leads to the Király-tó nature trail, which begins after a compost deposit site. The “royal” alder forest (Király-éger) is worthy of its name and is home to **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Eurasian Treecreeper**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, and **Icterine Warbler**. **Siskin** is also seen here regularly in winter. Once the forest thins a little and merges into willow bushland mixed with reeds, the abundance of **waterbirds** will start to increase. The remote location and marshy landscape are an apt setting for the confirmed story of the famous

“Waasensteffel”, who was supposedly found in this very area (see “Did you know?”). The observation tower at the Király-tó **6** is the end of the nature trail and the route.

Other animals and plants

Hungarian Grey cattle, Water buffalo, Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*), Pine marten (*Martes martes*), Tundra vole (*Microtus oeconomus*), Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*), Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Danube crested newt (*Triturus dobrogicus*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), Moor frog (*Rana arvalis wolterstorffi*), Scarce chaser (*Libellula fulva*), Southern festoon (*Zerynthia polyxena*), Large copper (*Lycaena dispar*), Marsh fern (*Thelypteris palustris*), Marsh nettle (*Urtica kioviensis*), Marsh pea (*Lathyrus palustris*), *Cirsium brachycephalum*

DID YOU KNOW?

In March of 1749, according to the legend, the Waasensteffel was picked up in the Király-tó area by fishermen from Kapuvár, who handed him over to the prince in exchange for a reward. This water figure was approximately ten years old, had webbed fingers, long nails, and couldn't speak. The boy, later baptised as “Hany István” (there is actually a Latin record of this in an old register of the Kapuvár parish), was taught to perform simple tasks (such as carrying water) and took a long time to become accustomed to wearing trousers and a shirt. His preferred food consisted of grass, roots, snails, and other water animals. He would often jump fully clothed into the palace pond to catch frogs and eat them on the spot. A good year later came the wedding day of the caretaker's daughter, with whom the Waasensteffel had become friends. As a well-meant present, he emptied a basket of live frogs, lizards, and slowworms over the banquet table. Startled by the commotion he had triggered among the wedding guests, he jumped into the park pond, fled across the moat into the water wilderness of the “Waasen”, and was never seen again.

Bird Rings

It is often by coincidence that colourful plastic rings are discovered on the legs or necks of birds, especially waterbirds. These “field-readable rings” are designed to be read over large distances and provide clear information as to when and where a bird was ringed and has since potentially already been identified.

Practised observers will notice that, on top of this field-readable ring, all colour-ringed birds also have a metal ring on their tibia or tarsus, which bears an engraved longer ring number and also the name of the ringing centre that issued the ring. Smaller birds, which are less likely to be “field-read”, only carry this comparably light leg ring. For a successful ring report, these birds usually have to be recaptured alive or found dead (often as the unfortunate victims of collisions with traffic, wind turbines, or glass). If one is lucky enough to read a ring or has found a ringed bird, one should carefully note the inscription (the code) and positioning of the ring (or rings), the bird’s species, sex, and age, and information as to when and where the bird was found, along with details as to the circumstances. All of this data should be sent to the relevant ringing centre (see next page). In exchange, one will receive the bird’s “life history” and the satisfaction of having made a small contribution to understanding the fascinating puzzle of bird migration.

With state-of-the-art equipment, neck collars on geese or swans can be read from a distance of up to 800 m, while colour leg rings on large gulls can be read from up to 300 m away! It also pays to look out for colour rings on Spoonbills, herons, storks, waders and Great Cormorants.

Where to see or take part in bird ringing

Bird ringing has a long tradition in the Lake Neusiedl area. The following places offer the opportunity to experience bird ringing up close, or even (after applying) to participate:

» **Biological Station Illmitz**
Tel.: +43 2175 / 232 854 12
post.bs-illmitz@bgld.gv.at | biologische-station.bgld.gv.at

» **Pannonian BirdExperience** (see page 128): Public bird ringing sessions take place every hour during the BirdExperience.

» **St. Martins Spa**
Only in combination with guided tours – approx. every 10-20 days.
www.stmartins.at

» **Hungarian part of the National Park**
(see contact “Hungarian Bird Ringing Centre”)

Anybody can read and report a ring

It is very important that rings be reported to the ringing centre of the country where the ring was found and read. This ringing centre will then pass on the data and will contact you once they have heard back from the original ringing centre. Alternatively, rings can also be reported at the following websites:

» www.ring.ac
» www.geese.org (for colour-ringed geese)

Further information

The following website provides information about colour ringing projects:
» www.cr-birding.org

Austrian Ornithological Centre

ring@klivv.at
www.vetmeduni.ac.at/klivv

Konrad-Lorenz-Institut
für Vergleichende
Verhaltensforschung
Savoyenstraße 1a, A-1160 Wien

Hungarian Bird Ringing Centre

ringers@mme.hu
birding@fhnp.hu

BirdLifeHungary/
Hungarian Bird Ringing
Centre
H-1121 Budapest, Költő u. 21

Nyirkai-Hany



Great Cormorant (© G. Lás.)



Barrier in eastern part of route (point 1 on route map)
(N: 47.706960, E: 17.221231)

The approx. 450 hectare-large habitat-reconstruction site in the east of the Hanság is the lowest point of the Little Hungarian Plain and one of the eastern-most parts of the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel / Fertő-Hanság National Park. The rewetting measures, completed in 2001, quickly took effect, and the many water surfaces of different depths were quickly populated by waterbirds and other species. The observation tower offers a good overview of the expanses of water.

5.5 km

Length

min. 2 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



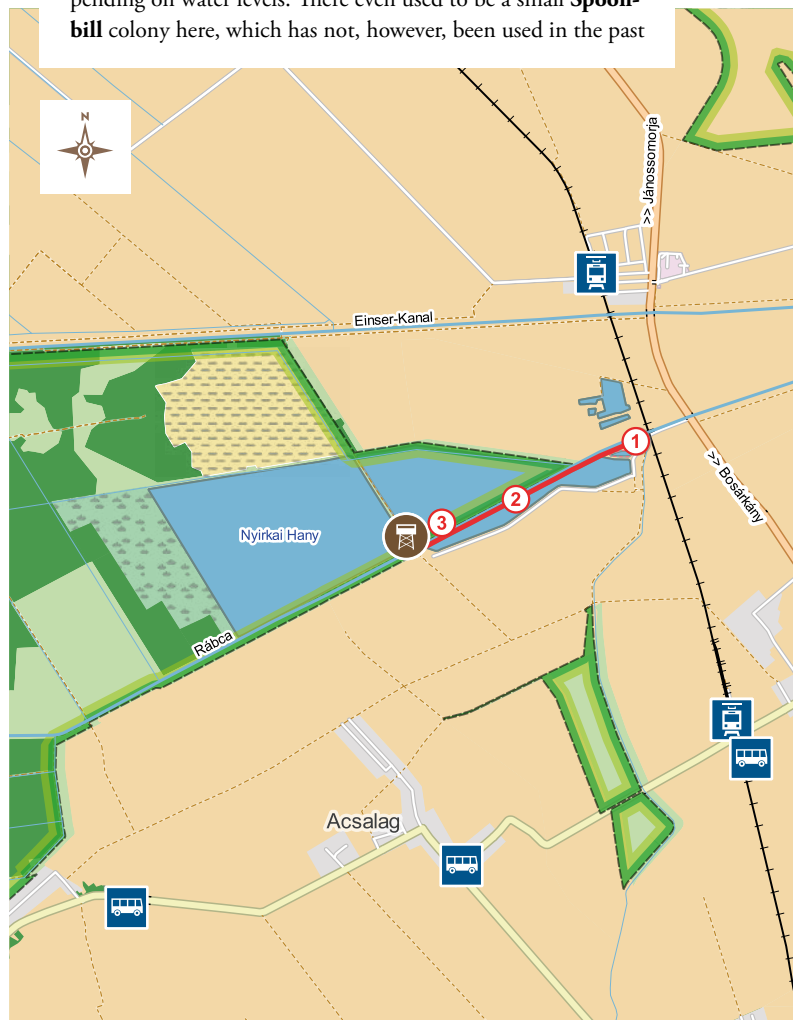
Access



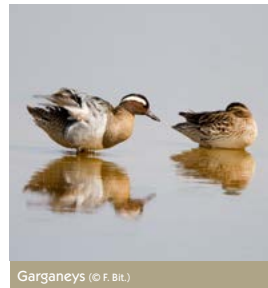
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

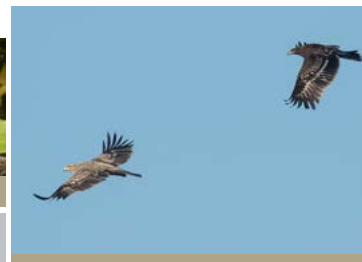
Breeding species include **Great Cormorant** (which breeds in a conspicuous colony in dead trees), **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Greylag Goose**, **Purple Heron**, **Great Egret**, **Night Heron**, **Little Grebe**, **Great Crested Grebe**, **White-tailed Eagle**, **Lapwing**, **Pied Avocet**, **Black-winged Stilt**, and **Common Tern**. A few **Garganey**, **Red-crested Pochard**, and **Common Pochard** breed here as well. **Mediterranean Gulls** shift their main breeding site between Lange Lacke, Illmitzer Zicksee, the expanses of water at Mexicopuszta, and the Nyirkai-Hany, depending on water levels. There even used to be a small **Spoonbill** colony here, which has not, however, been used in the past



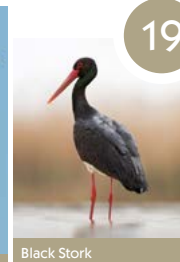
European pond turtles (© C. Rol.)



Garganeys (© F. Bit.)



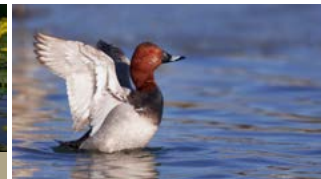
Imperial Eagle and Greater Spotted Eagle (© P. Fri.)



Black Stork
(© L. Khl.)



European white water lily (© G. Tak.)



Common Pochard (© C. Rol.)

years. All three **marsh tern** species hunt here regularly during migration, and **Ferruginous Duck** also occurs occasionally. At the right water levels, the Nyirkai-Hany can become a real Eldorado for **waders**. In winter, **Eastern Imperial Eagle** and also **Greater Spotted Eagle** are regularly encountered. One or two individuals of this latter rare migrant have been wintering in the Hungarian part of the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park since 1996 – especially, in recent years, in the Nyirkai-Hany.

Route

The train station of Hanságliget is a little more than 2 km from the starting point of this route. On road 86 from Hanságliget to Bősárkány, turn west onto a small road immediately after crossing the Rábca. The road crosses the railway line a little further on before coming up against a barrier at a pumping station **1**. From here, the rest of the way (about 2 km south-west) must be done on foot or by bicycle. The path along the embankment **2** is lined with willows and groves, from which **Turtle Dove**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Cuckoo**, **Nightingale**, **Penduline Tit**, and **Chiffchaff**, among others, are heard singing during breeding season. Various **reed birds** such as **Sedge Warbler**, **Reed Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, and **Savi's Warbler**, as well as **Reed Bunting** can be heard from the stands of reeds on both sides of the path. At the end of the straight path,



Nyirkai-Hany (© Z. Bal.)



Nyirkai-Hany (© C. Rol.)

turn right to soon reach the only observation tower **3** of the area, which offers the best view of the expanses of water of the Nyirkai-Hany. The route returns along the same path.

Other animals and plants

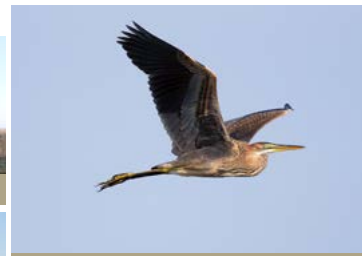
Tundra vole (*Microtus oeconomus*), Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*), European mudminnow (*Umbra krameri*), European pond turtle (*Emys orbicularis*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Danube crested newt (*Triturus dobrogicus*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Marsh frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*), Lesser emperor (*Anax parthenope*), Southern festoon (*Zerynthia polyxena*), Lesser purple emperor (*Apatura ilia*), Yellow water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*), European white water lily (*Nymphaea alba*), Longroot smartweed (*Persicaria amphibia*), Water caltrop (*Trapa natans*), Fringed water lily (*Nymphoides peltata*)

DID YOU KNOW?

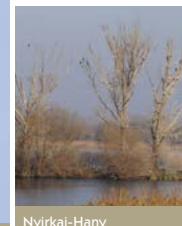
Up until its drainage in the course of modern hydraulic engineering measures, the “Hanyság” (as it is marked in older works of cartography) had been a wetland shrouded in legend and only frequented by fishermen and hunters. It was hunters who published the most detailed accounts of the region’s animal diversity before the completion of the main regulation channel, the Einser-Kanal.



Observation tower (© C. Rol.)



Purple Heron (© G. Lol.)


Nyirkai-Hany
(© Z. Bal.)


Nyirkai-Hany (© H. Tib.)



White-winged Tern (© C. Rol.)



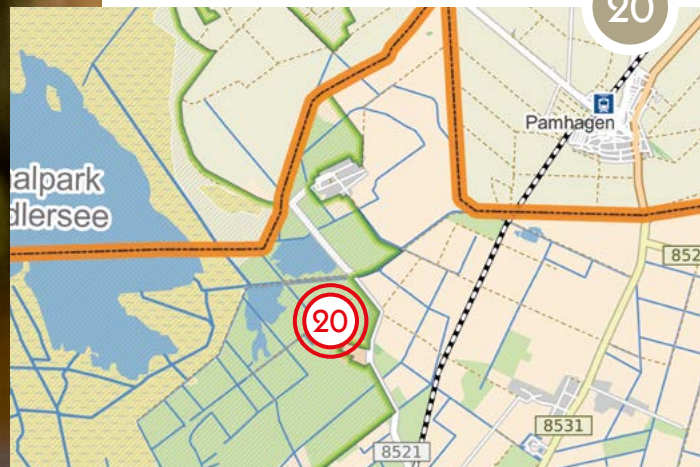
Sand lizard (© C. Rie.)

Fertőújlak

(Mexikopuszta)



Little Bittern (© G. Lás.)



Parking area along Einser-Kanal
(N: 47.679098, E: 16.847285)

The area between the town of Fertőújlak (Mexikopuszta in German) and the Nyéki-szállás on the Einser-Kanal is often simply called the Mexikopuszta. It is probably the best birdwatching area in the Hungarian part of the National Park. Beside vast meadow and pasture areas with Hungarian Racka sheep, water buffalo, and Hungarian Grey cattle, it is the restored saline wetland areas, in particular, that draw in so many bird species.

min. **7.3** km

Length

min. **3** h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

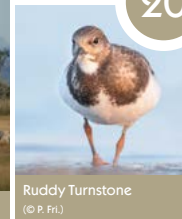
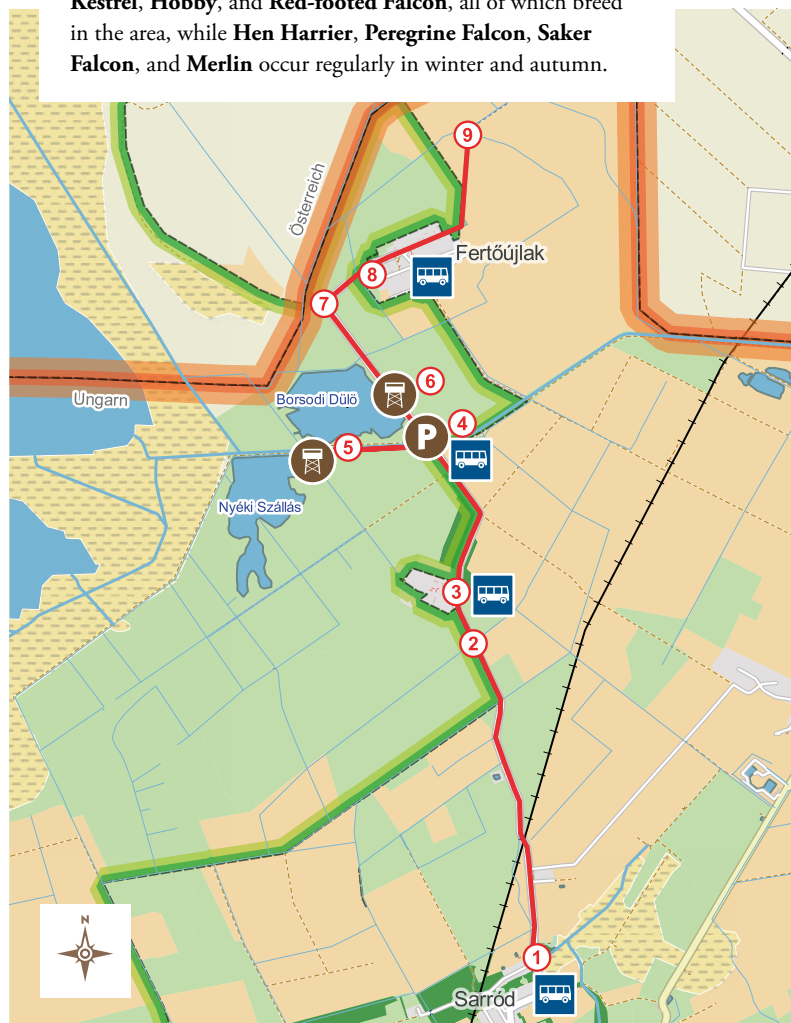
In the flood year of 1996, the ring dyke protecting the grazed lakeshore area from floods was breached. Thousands of birds quickly discovered the new wetland as a foraging and breeding area, and hydraulic management of the area has since been adapted to suit the birds' requirements. The easily accessed observation tower on the eastern shore of the Borsodi-dűlő is a particularly good spot to observe a wide variety of **water-birds**. Raptors worth noting here are **White-tailed Eagle**, **Eastern Imperial Eagle**, **Common Buzzard**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Kestrel**, **Hobby**, and **Red-footed Falcon**, all of which breed in the area, while **Hen Harrier**, **Peregrine Falcon**, **Saker Falcon**, and **Merlin** occur regularly in winter and autumn.



Red-footed Falcon (© P. Fri.)



Hungarian Racka sheep (© C. Rol.)


Ruddy Turnstone
(© P. Fri.)


Route

Though it is not even 7 km along a bike path from Apetlon, the majority of visitors reaches the area by car from the direction of Fertőd. There is also a bus line that stops at the route's most important points. Time permitting, one should definitely stop at the Egret cottage **1** on the northern edge of Sarród – the Hungarian National Park centre. Plenty of information material can be picked up in this architecturally striking building, which also houses a little shop and regular exhibitions, and is also the starting point for excursions into the National Park. After crossing the railway line, a large pasture area soon opens up to the west, which is best viewed from beside an information board about **Eastern Imperial Eagle** **2**. Aside from this species, **Montagu's Harrier** and **Red-footed Falcon** can be seen here with a little luck, while one can safely rely on seeing **Skylark**, **Stonechat**, and **Corn Bunting**. The shepherds' museum **3** in Lászlómajor keeps a number of traditional animal breeds, and also features information on the history of shepherding, fishing, and farming, and of the National Park in general. The windbreak to the north of the museum is home to a number of species, including **Kestrel**, **Long-eared Owl**, **Icterine Warbler**, **Long-tailed Tit**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Blackcap**, and **Golden Oriole**, as well as (occasionally) **Raven**. There is a good parking opportunity after the regulation weir for the Einser-Kanal, at which point the Borsodi-dűlő opens up ahead. Before going there, the route first heads back south across the weir and then west. The large stable building is private property and cannot

be accessed! From a distance one can nevertheless see **Collared Dove**, **Crested Lark**, **White Wagtail**, **House Sparrow**, and **Tree Sparrow** breeding in and around the stable. The songs of **Sedge Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, and **Reed Bunting** can be heard along the Einser-Kanal, while **Little Bittern**, **Great Egret**, and **Purple Heron** are mostly seen when they take flight. The cattle pasture south of the canal is a breeding site for **Lapwing**, **Yellow Wagtail**, and **Corn Bunting**, and **Ruff** can be seen here in large numbers in wet springs.

The route follows the path as far as the observation tower on the Nyéki-szállás **5**, where a variety of **herons**, **geese**, **ducks**, **waders**, and **terns** can be seen at good water levels. A rather large colony of **gulls** breeds here in wet years. Activity can vary considerably here, because the area is not inundated every year, depending on water management. In dry years, the meadows to the south should be scanned for **Curlew** in spring, and **geese** and hunting **Peregrine Falcon** in winter. Back at the weir on the Einser-Kanal, the route now continues along the Borsodi-dűlő to the observation tower on its eastern shore **6**. This is the best place to observe a wide variety of **waterbirds**. It certainly pays to bring a spotting scope for the more distant parts of this huge expanse of water. **Water Rail**, **Garganey**, **Common Pochard**, **Teal**, **Common Tern**, **Pied Avocet**, and **Black-winged Stilt** breed here alongside many other species, while a number of migrants and foraging guests can also be encountered here. The meadows around the tower are a popular place for **Greylag Geese** to raise their young. In April and May, one should take a close look at the flocks of curlew. Up to 100 **Whimbrel** can be seen alongside approx. 150 **Curlew** at this time of year. Provided the area hasn't frozen over or is completely covered in snow, between autumn and spring a number of **nordic geese** (including rare species!) frequent the area to sleep and drink. The geese's return from their (often distant) foraging grounds at midday and in the evening – known locally as the “Gänsestrich” (see page 104) – can be seen especially well from here. A large autumn roosting site for migrating **Cranes** has become established on the Borsodi-dűlő in recent years. The meadows and pastures leading up to the town of Fertőújlak are hunting grounds for **Hen Harrier**, **Peregrine Falcon**, **Great Grey Shrike**, and sometimes **Saker Falcon** in winter. At the bend in the road **7**, one is just 200 m away from the “Sandeck – Neudegg” conservation zone on

Austrian territory. The formerly large ground squirrel population on the higher-lying meadows north of the Borsodi-dűlő has unfortunately decreased significantly in recent years. Apart from the National Park information centre **8** on the right hand side as one enters the little town, Fertőújlak also boasts abundant birdlife: breeding species include **Barn Owl**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, and **Spotted Flycatcher**, to name but a few, while up to 50 **Long-eared Owls** share communal roosts during the day in winter. The bike path **9** leading from the eastern edge of town to the Austrian border offers good vantage points from which to scan the flocks of **geese** and **Cranes** at the right time of year.

Other animals and plants

Hungarian Grey cattle, Water buffalo, Hungarian Racka sheep, Mangalica pig, European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), Common noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Danube crested newt (*Triturus dobrogicus*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*), European green toad (*Bufotes viridis*), European tree-cricket (*Oecanthus pellucens*), Red-eyed damselfly (*Erythromma najas*), Lesser emperor (*Anax parthenope*), Large copper (*Lycena dispar*), Scarce swallowtail (*Ipchilides podalirius*), Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*), Chinese wolf spider (*Lycosa singoriensis*), *Camphorosma annua*, Slender glasswort (*Salicornia prostrata*), *Suaeda pannonica*, *Astragalus sulcatus*, Sea aster (*Tripolium pannonicum*), Green-winged orchid (*Anacamptis morio*), Early spider-orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*)

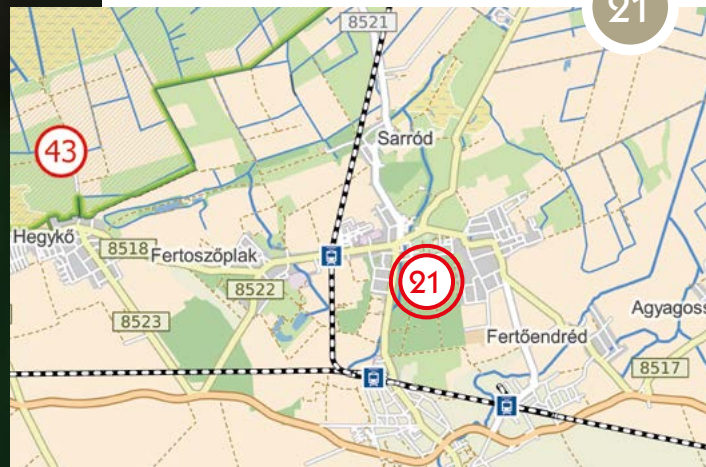
DID YOU KNOW?

Egret cottage: After a series of drainage measures, the shore of Lake Neusiedl is now a long way from Sarród, which used to be a fishing village. The National Park centre of the Fertő-Hanság Nemzeti Park, the so-called “Egret cottage”, was built in the former harbour area of Sarród and mimics a fishing village of the Pecheneg people. The entrance gate symbolises the raised wings of two Great Egrets facing each other. Seen from above, the building – the largest in Hungary covered in reed thatch – is reminiscent of a Great Egret's spread wing. What is more, the gable wall of each individual “house” matches one town on the lake. The Egret cottage houses the National Park administration, an information centre, exhibition space, and also offers accommodation.

Fertőd palace grounds



Tawny Owl (© O. Sam)



Parking area at Fertőd palace grounds
(N: 47.622362, E: 16.870321)

The Rococo Esterházy palace in Fertőd is worth a visit both from an ornithological and a cultural point of view. The world famous composer Joseph Haydn spent many years here as the music director for the Esterházy princes. The sweeping palace grounds with their abundance of birdsong may even have inspired one composition or another.

5.7 km

Length

min. 3 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

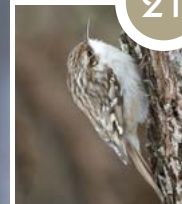
One of the first things one notices upon arrival are the many **Jackdaws** that nest in the palace's chimneys and in cavities in the large plane and chestnut trees. Even after extensive (but cautious) renovation work, the façade of the inner courtyard is still used as a breeding site by a number of **House Martins**. The Baroque garden design, which is only strictly adhered to today in the immediate palace vicinity, merges into near-natural sections further into the expansive grounds. These are habitat for typical **forest species** such as **woodpeckers**, **Nuthatch**, **Eurasian Treecreeper**, **Short-toed Treecreeper**,



Aesculapian snake (© C. Rie.)



Great Spotted Woodpecker (© W. Tri.)


Short-toed Treecreeper
(© O. Sam.)


Spotted Flycatcher (© P. Fri.)



Palace grounds (© H. Tib.)



Tree Pipit (© W. Tri.)



and **Hawfinch**. On a visit in early spring, one can reckon with drumming or calling **Black Woodpecker**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, and **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, though **Syrian Woodpecker** is mostly found closer to the palace. The regular breeding species of the palace grounds include **Wood Pigeon**, **Cuckoo**, **Tree Pipit**, **Robin**, **Nightingale**, **Song Thrush**, **Blackbird**, **Blackcap**, **Chiffchaff**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Great Tit**, **Blue Tit**, **Marsh Tit**, **Jay**, **Starling**, **Tree Sparrow**, **Chaffinch**, **Goldfinch**, **Greenfinch**, **Serin**, and **Yellowhammer**. With a little luck, a night-time visit to the palace grounds will be rewarded with **Long-eared Owl** and **Tawny Owl**. **Mistle Thrush**, **Fieldfare**, **Brambling**, and **Bullfinch** are all common here in winter.

Route

The grounds are easily reached by public transport and can even be explored by bicycle! Free parking can be found in town to the west of the palace, and there is a dedicated parking area to the north-west where a fee is charged and souvenirs can be bought. The route begins at the main entrance to the palace **1**, where the many **House Martin** nests can be seen on the façade even in winter. Continue clockwise around the main building, and look out for the **Jackdaws** mentioned above. After entering the park, continue a little further south



and then follow the eastern-most of the palace's three visual axes, heading south-east. The path turns a slight corner where a garden residential area **2** has since been built, and continues along a field to the south. Before a stand of old trees **3** with some truly impressive oaks, the path turns west. On this next stretch until the old forester's lodge **4**, look out for **Black Woodpecker**, **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, **Tree Pipit**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, and **Yellowhammer** in particular. It is worth making a short detour to the south at the forester's lodge. Continuing north, there are a number of nesting boxes and bat boxes in this old patch of forest. Eventually one reaches the palace's western visual axis and turns east after about 300 m to reach the so-called Bagatelle **4**. The costs of constructing this pavilion specially for the visit of Maria Theresia were – according to Nikolaus I. Joseph Esterházy

(“the Magnificent”) – but a bagatelle. Look out for coniferous forest birds in the little patch of forest to the north. Before leaving the palace grounds, it is worth taking a stroll through the north-western part of the park, with its old trees lining the paths and avenues.

Other animals and plants

Greater mouse-eared bat (*Myotis myotis*), Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), Aesculapian snake (*Zamenis longissimus*), Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), Agile frog (*Rana dalmatina*), Japanese silk moth (*Antheraea yamamai*), Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), Garden star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum* agg.), *Scilla vindobonensis*

DID YOU KNOW?

The Esterházy palace was the summer residence of the family of the same name. To distinguish it from the palace in Eisenstadt, this palace was often referred to as **Eszterháza**. For more than two decades, Joseph Haydn was the music director at this “Hungarian Versailles”. Apparently the excellent quality of the music performed at the palace once led Empress Maria Theresia to say, “If I want to hear a good opera, I have to go to Eszterháza.”



House Martin nests (© C. Rol.)



Skylark (© P. Fr.)



Deadwood (© C. Rol.)



Scilla vindobonensis (© G. Tak.)

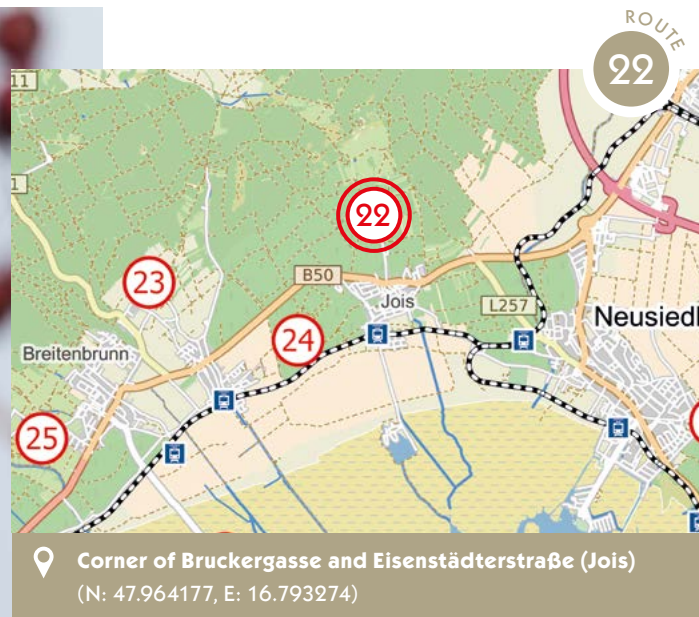


Yellowhammer (© M. Tie.)



Wren (© P. Fr.)

From Jois to the Teufelsjoch



The northernmost route in this book leads from the town of Jois through an area of vineyards that was already mentioned in documents as far back as 1345. Passing fallows, copses, stacks of timber, and a large patch of forest, the path leads all the way to the Teufelsjoch at the border of the Bruckneudorf military training area. In its western section, the route joins the “Cherry blossom bicycle route” and the “Jois wine trail”.

Fieldfare (© P. M.)

7.1 km

Length

min. 2.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

The area covered by this route harbours a wide array of bird species: from **Hoopoe** and **Woodlark** in the sloping vineyards, and a range of **woodpeckers** in the forests, to **Barred Warbler**, **Common Whitethroat**, and **Red-backed Shrike** in the copses, and **Skylark**, **Stonechat**, and **Corn Bunting** in the (semi-)arid grassland of the Teufelsjoch.

Route

With a little physical effort, the route can also be done by bicycle. The starting point is the eastern edge of Jois **1**, from



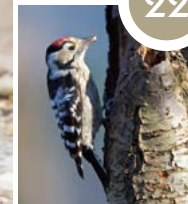
Stonechat (© G. Loi.)



Marsh Harrier (© P. Fri.)



Hawfinch (© P. Fri.)


Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
(© G. Loi.)


Corn Bunting (© O. Sam.)



European green lizard (© C. Rie.)

where one heads north and slightly uphill on the road through the fields. After passing a little patch of forest, the view is still obstructed by the new Jois industrial area for a little while, but opens up with every metre of elevation gained until one eventually sees Lake Neusiedl spread out before one behind the Jungerberg and Hackelsberg (see Route 24). The forest known as Martalwald **2** is soon reached, and the path continues along its edge for almost 1.5 km. **Honey Buzzard**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, **Eurasian Treecreeper**, **Wood Warbler**, **Collared Flycatcher**, **Jay**, and **Hawfinch** can all be seen here during the breeding season. The path eventually makes a slight turn north-west and continues first through rather dense bushland and then into the extensively used meadows of the Teufelsjoch. The yellow signs warning against entering the military training area **3** cannot be overlooked. There is, however, an additional sign with a map of the surroundings explaining which paths can be used when and where (outside of shooting times) – these paths must not be left under any circumstances for safety reasons! Aside from the marvellous view and the diverse plant and insect life, one will likely see or hear **Wryneck**, **Skylark**, **Stonechat**, **Barred Warbler**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Yellowhammer**, and **Corn Bunting** here. Even **Marsh Harriers** frequently come up here from the lake to hunt, and



one can also expect to see other **raptors** during migration. The path continues west past the Ochsenbrunnen, through a little patch of forest, and then more or less along the forest edge, until one turns south at a crossroads **4**. Back in the vineyards, follow the “Joiser Weinlehrpfad” (Jois wine trail) east at the T-junction. In spring one should pay special attention to **Hoo-poe** and the attractive song of **Woodlark**, which is represented

here by just a few breeding pairs. At the “Zehetner-Kreuz” **5**, either cut across to the Martalwald and return to the starting point, or continue downhill directly to Jois.

Other animals and plants

European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), Aesculapian snake (*Zamenis longissimus*), *Dorcadion aethiops*, Krauss's plump bush-cricket (*Isophya kraussi*), Wart-biter (*Decticus verrucivorus*), Field cricket (*Gryllus campestris*), Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), Spotted fritillary (*Melitaea didyma*), Garden tree-mallow (*Lavatera thuringiaca*), Lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Stiff hedgenettle (*Stachys recta*)

DID YOU KNOW?

Not quite 2 km east of this route, in the Hanf or Hanif valley, a small remaining Burgenland population of **Ortolan Bunting** had existed up until the mid-1990s. This species of bunting, which is now likely extinct in the whole of Austria, used to be a sparse and local breeding species of the wine areas between Neusiedl and Rust up until the mid-1950s.



Teufelsjoch (© C. Rol.)



Honey Buzzard (© O. Sam.)

Vineyard guard's hut
(© C. Rol.)

Barred Warbler (© P. Fri.)



Ground squirrel (© P. Fri.)



View from the Teufelsjoch (© C. Rol.)

Gruibert *and* Königsberg

(“The bald-headed”)



Sparrowhawk (© M. Tre.)



📍 **Northern end of Bachgasse (Winden am See)**
(N: 47.955616, E: 16.751586)

This route leading north of Winden am See has a lot to offer. Not just ornithologically-minded, but also botanically and culturally interested visitors will have plenty to see – both on foot and by bicycle: a crystal-clear stream with old weeping willows, an outdoor museum with a ground squirrel colony, a protected arid grassland with rare plants, diverse landscape, and finally the ascent through the forest to the Königsberg, endearingly called “der Glatzerte” (“the bald-headed”) by the locals – not to mention the view!

min. **5.5** km

Length

min. **2.5** h

Duration



Gear



Movement
(Königsberg not
accessible by bike)



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

The diverse birdlife of this area includes **Sparrowhawk**, **Hoopoe**, **Wryneck**, **Woodlark**, **Long-tailed Tit**, **Marsh Tit**, **Golden Oriole**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Jay**, **Hawfinch**, and **Yellowhammer**.

Route

Except for the ascent to the Königsberg, the route can easily be done by practised bicyclists with all-terrain bikes. A minimum level of orientation skills (or a GPS device) are also recommended for the Königsberg. The route starts at the northern end of Bachgasse 1 in Winden am See. From here, follow the paved road north-west. Passing two reed-lined ponds and continuing along a little stream with old weeping willows, one



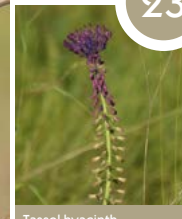
Greater pasque flower (© C. Rol.)



Chaffinch (© P. Fri.)



Tree Sparrows (© P. Fri.)



Tassel hyacinth (© C. Rol.)

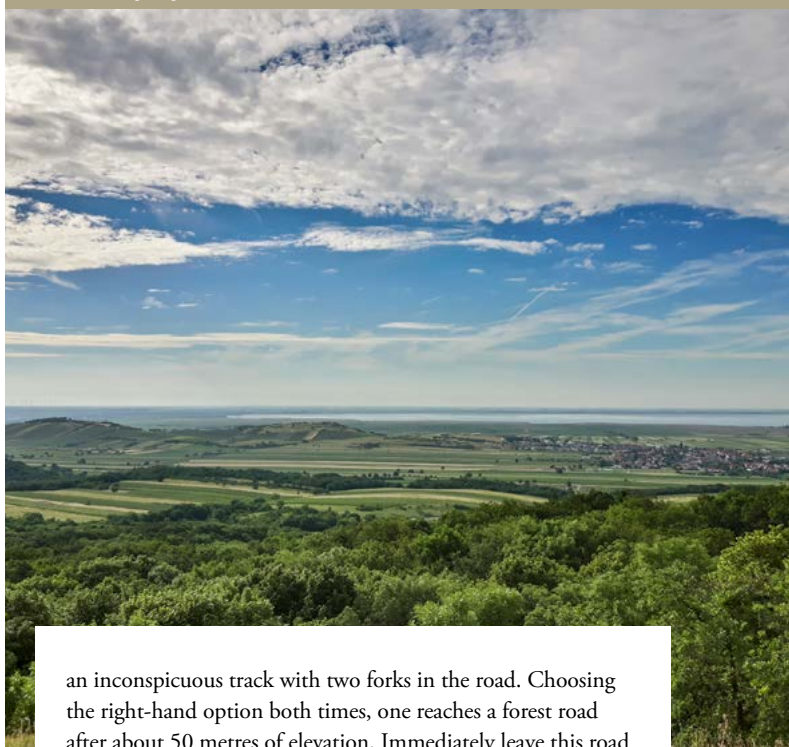


Pheasant's eye (© C. Rol.)



Agricultural landscape (© C. Rol.)

soon reaches the outdoor museum of the sculptor Wander Bertoni 2, who also made the “Sonnenanbeter” (sun worshipper) in Winden (see Route 24). A number of bird feeders attract **passerines** in winter, while a ground squirrel colony populates the trimmed lawns during the summer months. **Collared Dove**, **Black Redstart**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Starling**, **Tree Sparrow**, **Greenfinch**, and **Goldfinch** inhabit the area around the well-maintained old buildings. The road ascends slightly after crossing the “Kirschblütenradweg” (cherry blossom bicycle route) (see Route 30) and leads along the eastern edge of a patch of arid grassland 3, which is easily identified thanks to the colourful signs indicating the “Naturschutzfläche” (nature conservation site). During the breeding season, by now one will have seen or heard a range of species of semi-open agricultural landscape such as **Kestrel**, **Turtle Dove**, **Hoopoe**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Woodlark**, **Nightingale**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Yellowhammer**, and **Corn Bunting**. After a right-hand curve, the route continues for 600 m along the lower of two paths running parallel to the slope until a little patch of forest on the downhill side of the path. Here, the route first continues uphill past a row of oaks and then back through the vineyards along the upper path. After about 400 m, near a timber storage site 4, one has the option of continuing to the top of the Königsberg. Taking the trail running east of the stacks of timber across the field to the forest edge, one soon finds oneself on



an inconspicuous track with two forks in the road. Choosing the right-hand option both times, one reaches a forest road after about 50 metres of elevation. Immediately leave this road again, however, taking the right-hand forest trail. After about 100 m, there is a turnoff to the short, final ascent to the 286 m-high, treeless peak **5**. From here, one has a fantastic view of the Parndorf plateau, the Hackelsberg and Jungerberg (see Route 24), Jois, Winden, and the northern part of Lake Neusiedl. If one hasn't already encountered **Wood Pigeon, Black Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Robin, Eurasian Treecreeper, Chiffchaff, Marsh Tit, Golden Oriole, Chaffinch, and Hawfinch** on the way up, one has another chance on the way back down to the timber storage site **4**. Next, take the upper path south-west through the vineyards, then briefly follow the main road heading south, before turning into the Gruibert residential area **6**. After skirting the residential homes and leaving the last one behind on the right hand side, continue along the road over a little scarp towards Winden. At the next option, turn left onto the dirt road which leads back to the bottom edge of the protected arid grassland **3**, thus closing the circle.

Other animals and plants

European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), Aesculapian snake (*Zamenis longissimus*), Eastern saddle bush-cricket (*Ephippiger ephippiger*), Common pincer grasshopper (*Calliptamus italicus*), Blue band-winged grasshopper (*Oedipoda caerulea*), Black-spotted toothed grasshopper (*Stenobothrus nigromaculatus*), Orange-tipped grasshopper (*Omocestus haemorrhoidalis*), Capricorn beetle (*Cerambyx scopolii*), Dryad (*Minois dryas*), Pheasant's eye (*Adonis vernalis*), Greater pasque flower (*Pulsatilla grandis*), Downy oak (*Quercus pubescens*), Purple golden drop (*Onosma arenaria*), Moon carrot (*Seseli libanotis*)

DID YOU KNOW?

Bear cave at Winden: Heading east from the starting point of this route and then following Bruckerstraße towards the Leitha Mountains, after not quite 1.5 km one reaches the so-called Zigeunerhöhle. After another 190 m, take the narrow track about 20 m of elevation uphill to the Bärenhöhle ("bear cave", also known as the Ludlloch). The cave, which was formed by wave erosion in the Miocene ocean, is a protected historic monument and access is denied by a metal gate. Palaeontologists discovered the remains of bones of ice-age cave bears, hyenas, brown bears, and wolves in this cave. The complete skeleton of a cave bear can be viewed at the tower museum in Breitenbrunn.



Outdoor museum (© C. Rol.)



Hoopoe (© C. Rol.)



Starlings (© P. Fl.)



Purple golden drop (© G. Lot.)

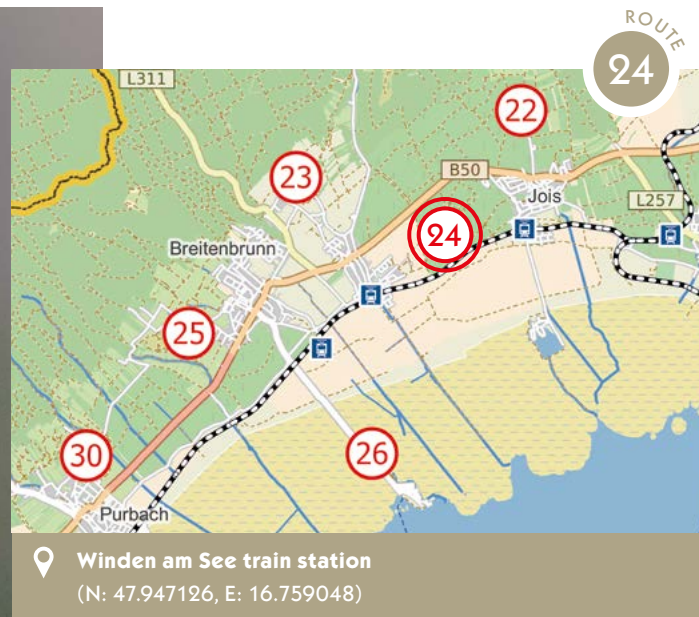


Ground squirrel (© P. Fl.)



Woodlark (© W. Th.)

From Winden to Jois over the
Hackelsberg and
Jungerberg
 (Tannenberg)



These two widely visible little elevations are foothills of the Leitha Mountains sloping down to the northern shore of Lake Neusiedl. The arid grassland that used to cover the thin layer of soil over crystalline rock has been widely replaced by vineyards, but the remains still harbour a plant and insect life of remarkable significance within Austria. Beside the beautiful view of the Leitha Mountains, the Parndorf plateau, and Lake Neusiedl, the local birdlife also has a lot to offer.

Northern Wheatear (© G. Loh)

7.4 km

Length

min. 2.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



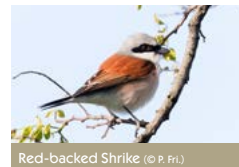
Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

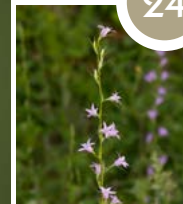
Over 1000 species of butterfly have been recorded on the Hackelsberg alone, and the slopes falling steeply to the south-east are covered by one of the most significant downy oak shrub forests in Austria. Crossing the two hills in spring, one is likely to encounter **Hobby**, **Skylark**, **Woodlark**, **Northern Wheatear**, **Nightingale**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Golden Oriole**, **Linnet**, **Yellowhammer**, and **Corn Bunting**. With a spotting scope, one can even watch the **Great Egrets**, **Greylag Geese**, and **Marsh Harriers** of the lakeshore zone from here.



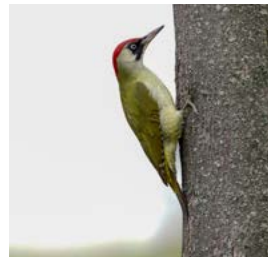
Red-backed Shrike (© P. Fr.)



Northern Wheatear (© H. Kol.)



Rampion bellflower (© G. Lot.)



Green Woodpecker (© G. Lot.)



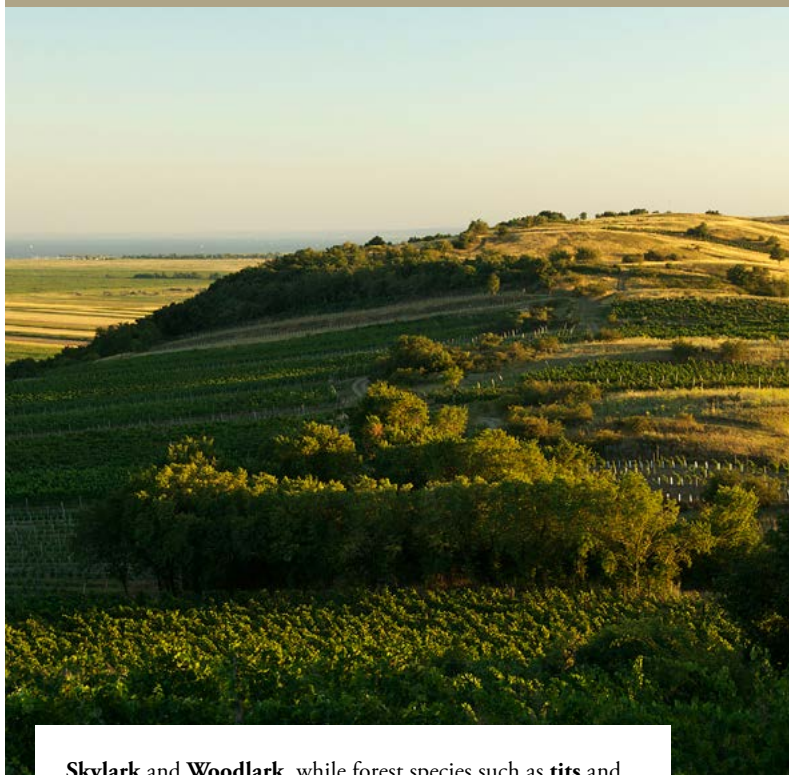
Small pasque flower (© C. Rol.)



Hackselberg and Jungerberg (© A. Cim.)

Route

Since the path across the Hackelsberg and Jungerberg leads through protected arid grassland and can become very narrow in the scrub vegetation, it is best to do this route on foot. What is more, one must stick to the paths at all times! The starting point is the railway station at Winden am See **1** from where one follows the road around the cemetery until Kellergasse. At this point it is rewarding to make a brief detour through the winding lanes of the cellar district to the location where the oldest wine press in Austria was discovered. Continue along Rudolf-Heinz-Straße, which eventually becomes a dirt road, until the timber storage site. **Northern Wheatear** nests here regularly in the niches between the stacks of wood, and **Stonechat**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Yellowhammer**, and **Corn Bunting** are further breeding species of this part of the route. At the sparkling, widely visible “Sonnenanbeter” (sun worshipper) **2**, made by the sculptor Wander Bertoni for the world exhibition in New York in 1965, one is offered a first view of the Lake Neusiedl basin. The route continues on a dirt road through the vineyards directly towards the Hackelsberg. After a left and a right turn, there is a little trail that leads quite steeply through the arid grassland to the top of the Hackelsberg **3**. In early spring, one is not only rewarded with a breathtaking carpet of flowers and the expansive view, one can also enjoy the songs of



Skylark and **Woodlark**, while forest species such as **tits** and **Blackcap** are heard singing from the downy oak forest. The trail continues east through the arid grassland and down into dense bush vegetation, where **Barred Warbler** and **Common Whitethroat** are heard in spring, until it joins a dirt road leading through the vineyards. Take a right at the first fork in the road, and a left at the second fork shortly thereafter. One finds oneself at the bottom of a patch of arid grassland and can see a single pine tree standing further up. After circling the arid grassland around its western side, continue from here to the top of the Jungerberg **4**. Individual **Woodlarks** can be heard here in spring from the vineyards towards the lake. An S-shaped path continues through viticultural monoculture and merges into the road of wine cellars in Jois. Leave this road on a little road **5** heading west at the first opportunity. With the widely visible church of Saint George behind one, one follows the road back to Winden, passing south of the two hills one has just crossed. The last part of this section

follows the marked “Kirschblütenradweg” (cherry blossom bicycle route) (see Route 30).

Other animals and plants

European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), Tuberous grey bush-cricket (*Platyleis affinis*), Rock-dwelling grasshopper (*Omocestus petraeus*), Black-spotted toothed grasshopper (*Stenobothrus nigromaculatus*), European mantis (*Mantis religiosa*), Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*), Scarce swallowtail (*Iphiclidus podalirius*), Small pasque flower (*Pulsatilla pratensis* subsp. *nigricans*), Greater pasque flower (*Pulsatilla grandis*), Downy oak (*Quercus pubescens*), Mountain alyssum (*Alyssum montanum*), *Phelipanche caesia*, Rampion bellflower (*Campanula rapunculus*), Annual everlasting (*Xenanthemum anuum*), Pygmy iris (*Iris pumila*), Lady orchid (*Orchis purpurea*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The so-called Hexenbründl (“little witch spring”), which is shrouded in legend, emerges from the southern foot of the Hackelsberg. Strange lights are seen here at midnight and witches come out to do their nefarious deeds... Seeing as springs used to be vitally important places for the local population in previous times, it is little wonder that they tried to keep strangers away with scary tales.



Tuberous grey bush-cricket (© G. Wos.)



Scarce swallowtail (© J. Hoh.)



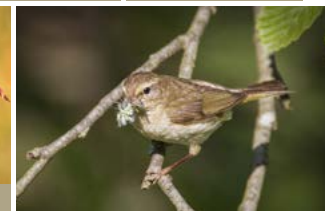
Hackelsberg and Jungerberg (© F. Kov.)



Annual everlasting (© G. Lot.)



European mantis (© P. Frl.)



Willow Warbler (© H. Kol.)

Thenauriegel



Hoopoe (© P. M.)



The Thenauriegel is all that remains of a formerly much larger common pasturing landscape. It stretches over a number of sparsely vegetated plateaus which are intersected by little, often rocky valleys.

min. 3.4 km

Length

min. 1.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

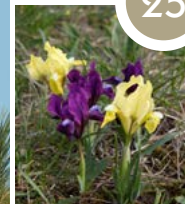
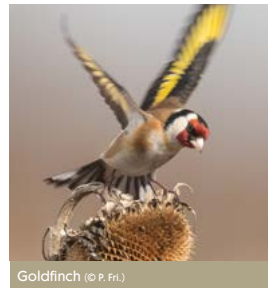
The 42 hectare-large Thenauriegel west of Breitenbrunn is one of the largest areas of arid grassland in Burgenland, and is a strict nature reserve since 1979 due to its high species diversity. Every year in early spring the area attracts many visitors who come to enjoy the floral carpets of greater pasque flower and pygmy iris. The paths and trails span the area very nicely and must not be left in order to protect the sensitive plant species! The bird species most commonly encountered during the breeding period are species of (semi-)open landscapes: **Kestrel**, **Hoopoe**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Woodlark**, **Stonechat**, **Barred Warbler**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Long-tailed Tit**, **Nightingale**, **Golden Oriole**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Magpie**, **Linnets**, **Yellowhammer**, and **Corn Bunting** – though **Woodlark** actually breeds in the adjacent vineyards. On top of these,



Yellowhammer (© L. Khl.)



Magpies (© P. Fri.)


Pygmy iris
(© G. Lok.)


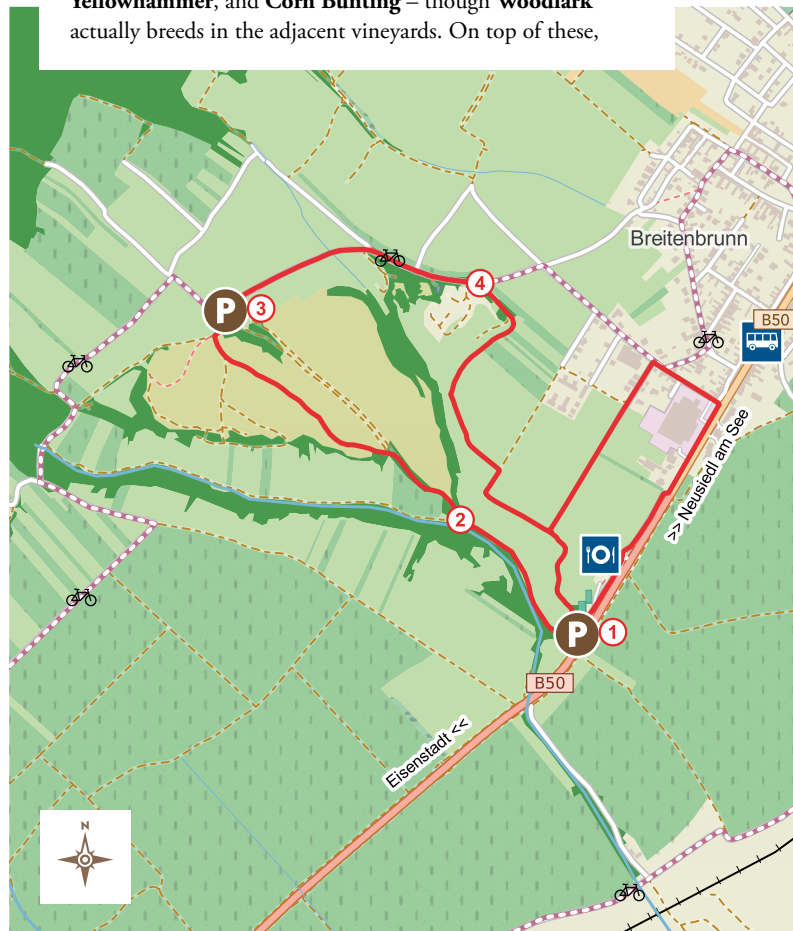
Goldfinch (© P. Fri.)



Blackcap (© W. Tr.)



Lesser Whitethroat (© C. Rol.)



Common Buzzard, **Wood Pigeon**, **Cuckoo**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Willow Warbler**, **Blackcap**, **Jay**, **Chaffinch**, **Goldfinch**, and **Hawfinch** can be heard from the bushes and patches of forest. To counteract scrub encroachment into the steppe-like meadows, the area is regularly grazed with sheep. Ground squirrels can occasionally be seen in the surrounding vineyards.

Route

Though it is easy to circle the Thenauriegel by bicycle, it can only really be explored properly on foot and with good shoes. Around 200 m after the “Gasthaus am Lerchfeld” on the south-western edge of Breitenbrunn, a wide path **1** leads into the area. After almost 500 m, an inconspicuous trail **2** branches off into the bushes on the right hand side and leads past a disused quarry into a little valley. At a sign designating the “Naturschutzgebiet” (nature conservation area), turn left onto one of the plateaus and follow the trail uphill. Remember to turn around regularly and take in the marvellous view of the arid grassland in the foreground and the vast reed belt of Lake Neusiedl in the background. The “Kirschblütenradweg” (cherry blossom bicycle route) **3** (see Route 30), runs along the upper edge of this area. Follow it to the east until just before the first vineyard on the right hand side **4**. A dirt road branches off here, which leads more or less along the border



Thenauriegel (© F. Kov.)



Thenauriegel (© C. Rol.)

between natural landscape and farmland back to the starting point. Since the last section of the trail is no longer tended to and is already quite overgrown, returning to **1** via Breitenbrunn is recommended.

Other animals and plants

European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), Aesculapian snake (*Zamenis longissimus*), Heath snail (*Xerolenta obvia*), Rock-dwelling grasshopper (*Omocestus petraeus*), Black-spotted toothed grasshopper (*Stenobothrus nigromaculatus*), Black-veined white (*Aporia crataegi*), False grayling (*Arteusana arethusa*), Spurge hawk-moth (*Hyles euphorbiae*), Pheasant's eye (*Adonis vernalis*), Greater pasque flower (*Pulsatilla grandis*), Narrow-leaved flax (*Linum tenuifolium*), Asian flax (*Linum austriacum*), Common kidneyvetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), *Hesperis tristis*, Spring draba (*Draba verna*), Chamois cress (*Hornungia petraea*), Common ball flower (*Globularia bisnagarica*), Mountain germander (*Teucrium montanum*), Siberian bellflower (*Campanula sibirica*), Pygmy iris (*Iris pumila*), *Ornithogalum pannonicum*, European feather grass (*Stipa pennata* s. str.)

DID YOU KNOW?

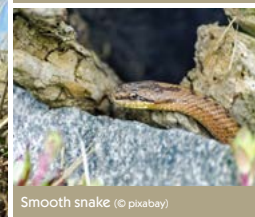
Before viticulture came to dominate large areas above the Leitha Mountain municipalities, the slopes between the small limestone quarries were characterised by the cattle and horses that grazed there. Only few arid grassland areas survived the decline of pasture farming.


Black-spotted toothed grasshopper
(© G. Wos.)


Chaffinch (© P. Fr.)


Green Woodpecker
(© P. Fr.)


Greater pasque flower (© C. Rol.)



Smooth snake (© pixabay)



Corn Bunting (© P. Fr.)

Breitenbrunn: Dammstraße and Seebad



Little Grebe (© M. Tiz.)



Parking area at start of reed belt
(N: 47.931511, E: 16.746158)

The Breitenbrunn Seedamm, the causeway leading out to the lakefront Seebad, offers a great opportunity to experience the reed belt and its feathered inhabitants. Aside from a viewing tower and a number of information boards, approximately halfway there is also a trail that branches off to the left into the reed wilderness and returns to the causeway just before the lakefront begins.

5.9 km

Length

min. 2 h

Duration



Gear



Movement
(No bikes in the
lakefront resort)



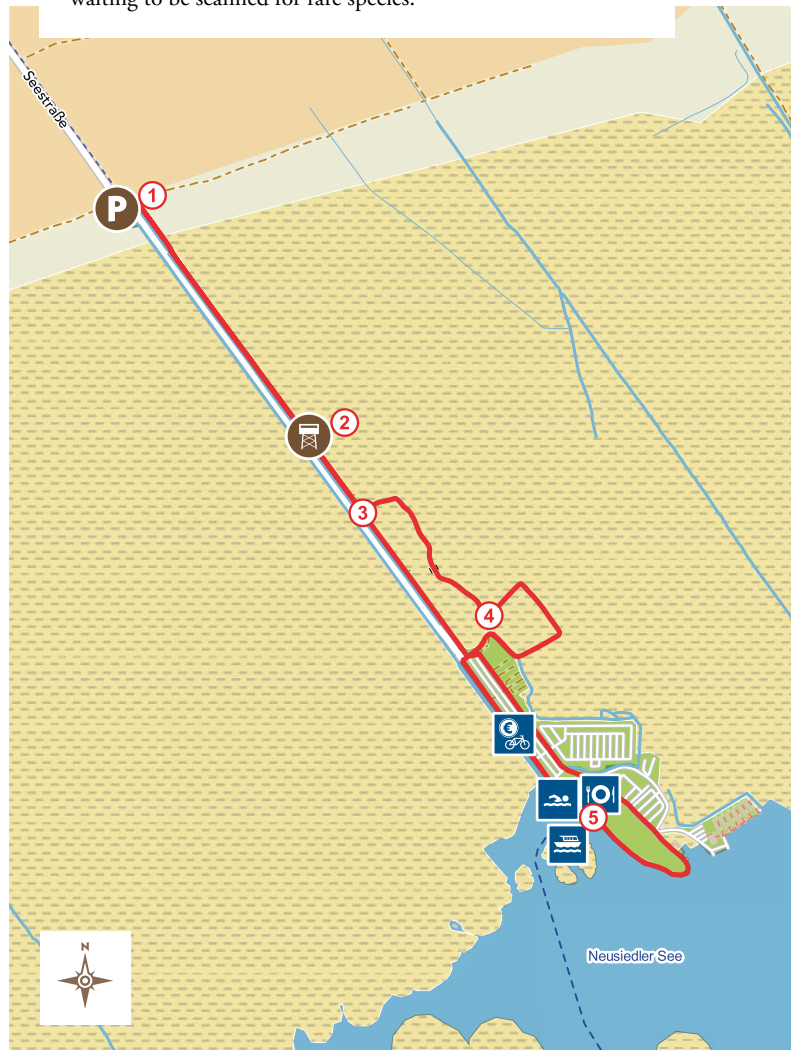
Access



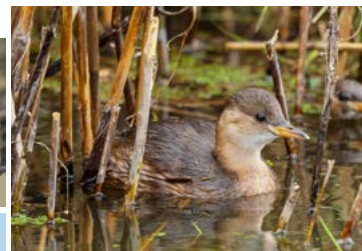
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

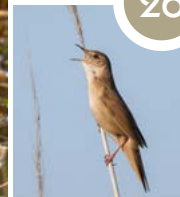
Beside **Little Grebe**, **Bittern**, **Great Egret**, **Purple Heron**, **Red-crested Pochard**, **Ferruginous Duck**, **Coot**, **Moorhen**, **Water Rail**, **Little Crane**, and **Marsh Harrier**, almost all **reed passerines** of Lake Neusiedl can be seen or at least heard on this route. The lakefront itself is a good place for interesting discoveries at any time of year, be they the numerous **passerines**, **dabbling ducks**, and **terns** often appearing here on migration, or the **gulls** standing on the pylons in the winter months, as if waiting to be scanned for rare species.



European tree frog (© C. Rol.)



Little Grebe (© P. Fri.)



Savi's Warbler
(© G. Loh.)



Marsh Harrier (© P. Fri.)



Yellow-legged Gull (© P. Fri.)



Great Egret (© P. Fri.)

Route

The starting point is the parking area **1** on the landside end of the causeway, next to a large reed storage site. Here, one crosses over to the northern side of the causeway, to the pedestrian and bicycle path, where one has a view of the lakeshore meadows which host **Greylag Goose**, **Lapwing**, and **Red-shank** in some years. **Garganey**, **Shoveler**, **Ruff**, and **Wood Sandpiper** can be seen on the adjacent inundated areas in spring (when water levels are high). A number of information boards between here and the lakefront introduce visitors to the special features of the lake and the reeds. After 800 m there is an observation tower **2** offering a good view of the reed beds, the Leitha Mountains, and the Hackelsberg. Not quite 200 m further, one can turn left onto an alternative trail **3** to the lakefront, leading further into the reeds and parallel to the main road. Shortly before the lakefront, yet another trail leads around the former silt sedimentation basins **4**, which are now densely covered in reeds. With a little luck, by now at the latest one's observation list should include the most common **reed passerines** such as **Bearded Reedling**, **Penduline Tit**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Moustached Warbler**, **Reed Warbler**, and **Great Reed Warbler**. The lakefront Seebad **5** (an entrance fee is charged in the summer months!) is visited by countless kite-surfers and bathers in summer. The early morning hours in spring and autumn are the best times to



scan the lawns and shady trees for migrating **passerines** such as **Yellow Wagtail**, **Wood Warbler**, **Willow Warbler**, and **Pied Flycatcher**. The piers and pylons and the open water of the lakefront, meanwhile, are the best place to see **gulls** and **terns**. The characteristic species here are **Black-headed Gull**, **Mew Gull** (especially in autumn and winter), **Yellow-legged Gull**, **Caspian Gull** (especially in late autumn and winter), and **Common Tern**. But at the right times of year, **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, **Mediterranean Gull**, and **Little Gull**, as well as **Black Tern** can also be expected here.

One more tip: With the Neusiedler See Card, parking and entrance into the Seebad is free.

Other animals and plants

European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Marsh frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*), Southern migrant hawkler (*Aeshna affinis*), Lesser emperor (*Anax parthenope*), Greater sea spurrey (*Spergularia maritima*), Sea aster (*Triptolium pannonicum*), Mud rush (*Juncus gerardii*), Common reed (*Phragmites australis*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The lakefront resorts around Lake Neusiedl: Bathing cabins were installed at Rust as early as 1840, but they had to be moved regularly due to varying water levels. There followed a bathing house in Neusiedl am See in 1852 and a lakefront resort in Fertőboz in 1855. Though these first bathing installations were erected on pylons and could only be accessed by boat by the sufficiently wealthy, the lakefront resort at Neusiedl am See recorded a remarkable 100,000 visitors in 1927. In the same year, in the promotional event of a Viennese department store, Lake Neusiedl was touted as the “Sea of the Viennese” – a description that is certainly no longer valid regarding the large numbers of international guests.



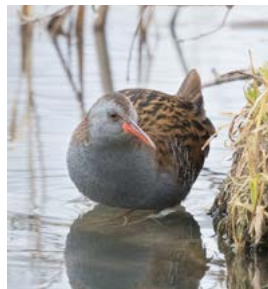
European fire-bellied toad (© G. Wos.)



Purple Heron (© P. Fr.)



Wood Sandpipers
(© P. Fr.)



Water Rail (© P. Fr.)



Moustached Warbler (© W. Tr.)



Eurasian Bittern (© P. Fr.)

Seedamm Purbach



Eurasian Bittern (© G. Loai)



Parking area at start of reed belt
(N: 47.905563, E: 16.708703)

At almost 3 km, the Purbach causeway is by far the longest of all publicly accessible routes through the reeds of Lake Neusiedl. Thanks to the road being closed to cars, this is a chance to escape most of the usual noises of civilisation (except for air traffic).

min. **5.7** km

Length

min. **2.5** h

Duration



Gear



Movement



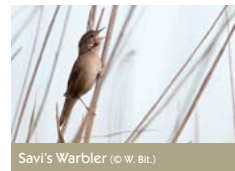
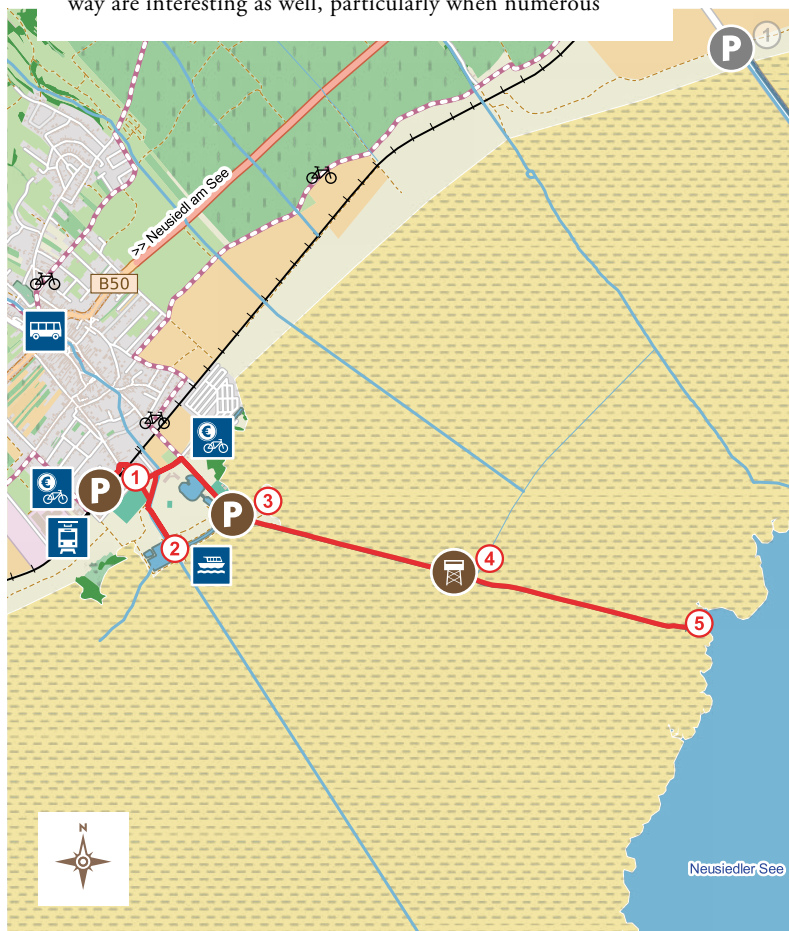
Access

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

Beside the more common **reed passerines** like **Sedge Warbler**, **Reed Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Bearded Reedling**, **Penduline Tit**, and **Reed Bunting**, one might even be able to make out the voices of the rarer **Bluethroat** and **Moustached Warbler**. Likewise, **Bittern** and **Little Crake** will more likely be heard than seen, both of which are especially active in the evening and night-time hours. Further species regularly encountered here during the breeding season include **Red-crested Pochard**, **Ferruginous Duck**, **Little Grebe**, **Great Egret**, **Purple Heron**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Water Rail**, **Cuckoo**, and **White Wagtail**. During migration, the bushes and trees along the causeway are interesting as well, particularly when numerous



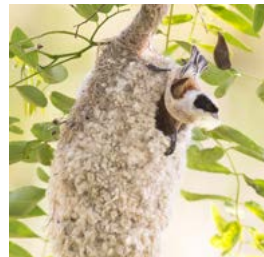
Savi's Warbler (© W. Bit.)



Water Rail (© P. Fr.)



White-spotted Bluethroat (© P. Fr.)



Penduline Tit (© P. Fr.)



European fire-bellied toad (© C. Rie.)



Bee at the Purbach causeway (© C. Rol.)

passerines land here during bad weather to rest or forage. Under these circumstances, species like **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Chiffchaff**, **Willow Warbler**, **Wood Warbler**, **Pied Flycatcher**, **Robin**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Whinchat**, and **Stonechat** can be encountered far into the reed belt. **Great Grey Shrike** also takes up quarters here in winter.

An observation tower roughly halfway along the gravel path provides a view across the seemingly endless expanse of the reed belt. The little bay at the end of the causeway, with its wooden pylons sticking out of the water, is a popular resting place for **Great Cormorant**, **gulls**, and **terns**, and offers a good view of the north-eastern part of the lake's open water.

Route

Coming from the railway station **1**, one should definitely head along the Angerbach towards the harbour **2**. The old trees and surfaces of open water, in particular, often host interesting species.

At the beginning of the causeway, an expanse of bushland opens up to the north **3**, which is particularly attractive for migrating **passerines**. Shortly before the only noticeable bend in the causeway stands the observation tower **4**, and the isolated bay **5** is located at the end. The route returns along the same path.



Other animals and plants

European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Marsh frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*), Southern migrant hawkmer (*Aeshna affinis*), Lesser emperor (*Anax parthenope*), Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Greater bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris*), Great reedmace (*Typha latifolia*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The Purbach Turk: In 1532, according to legend, a band of Ottoman horsemen rode through Purbach plundering the village while the population hid in the Leitha Mountains. Having had too much of the good Purbach wine, one of the Turks overslept and missed his comrades' departure. He only awoke once the Purbach people returned to their village. He hid in a chimney but was soon discovered, smoked out, and put in prison. On the condition of converting to Christianity and becoming a servant in the house where he was found, he was eventually released. Ever since, the Turk's head, chiselled in stone, decorates the chimney of house 163 in Purbach.

Donnerskirchen: Kirchberg



Kirchengasse in Donnerskirchen
(N: 47.898433, E: 16.642017)

Despite its widely visible parish church and the arid grassland behind it, the Donnerskirchen Kirchberg is rarely visited by bird-watchers. Maybe the rather steep ascent to this “peak” in the Leitha Mountains scares some nature lovers away. But even just the view of the town, the basin of Lake Neusiedl behind it, and the Rust Hills are well worth an excursion.

Woodlark (© W. Tr.)

2.2 km

Length

min. 1 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access

J F M A M J J A S O N D

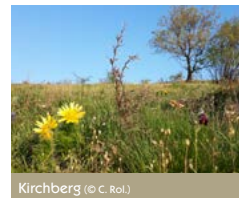
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

The municipal conservation area “Kalkmagerrasen Kirchberg” (Kirchberg calcareous meadow), which is grazed during the summer months and regularly cleared of shrubs, not only offers a spectacular show of springtime flowers, rare insects, and reptiles – the birdlife here is also impressive. Beside typical **village species**, inhabitants of forests, vineyards, and semi-open agricultural landscape are also encountered on this varied route.

Route

The route begins in Kirchengasse **1** in Donnerskirchen (right on the “Kirschblütenradweg”, the cherry blossom bicycle route, see Route 30), where one ascends the short Via Crucis (only inaugu-



Kirchberg (© C. Rol.)



Donnerskirchen (© NP Leit.)



Blue Tit
(© P. Fr.)

rated in 1994) to the parish church. Typical **village species** can be observed around the church, like **Green Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, **Barn Swallow**, **House Martin**, **White Wagtail**, **Black Redstart**, **Song Thrush**, **Blackbird**, **Blackcap**, **Chiffchaff**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Blue Tit**, **Great Tit**, **Starling**, **Greenfinch**, **Goldfinch**, **Serin**, and **Yellowhammer**. Continuing up the gravel road above the church, an inconspicuous little trail **2** turns off into the steep forest next to a bench on the left hand side. This trail soon leads to the area of (semi-)arid grassland, where cows graze in the summer months. On the trail to the top of the hill **3** and on the return to Donnerskirchen over the forest road, during the breeding season there are good chances of seeing **Honey Buzzard**, **Hobby**, **Turtle Dove**, **Cuckoo**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Woodlark**, **Wren**, **Robin**, **Nightingale**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Wood Warbler**, **Chiffchaff**, **Collared Flycatcher**, **Golden Oriole**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Linnet**, **Hawfinch**, and **Yellowhammer**. At the route's northernmost point **4**, an information board provides details on the Celtic settlement of “Ehrenfeld”.

Other animals and plants

Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), Aesculapian snake (*Zamenis longissimus*), Krauss's plump bush-cricket (*Isophya kraussii*), Veyssel's slender bush-cricket (*Tessellana veysseli*), False grayling (*Arctusana arethusa*), Pheasant's eye (*Adonis vernalis*), Greater pasque flower (*Pulsatilla grandis*), *Ononis pusilla*, Common kidneyvetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), Goldilocks aster (*Galatella linoxyris*), Branched St Bernard's-lily (*Anthericum ramosum*)

DID YOU KNOW?

Looking west from the Kirchberg to the nearby Mahdberg (also known as the Martinsberg), one can make out the shapes of **burial mounds** of the early Hallstatt culture, which contained remarkable burial objects.

Landlerstal near Donnerskirchen



Wren (© P. H.)



Parking area at Sonnenwaldbad
(N: 47.892278, E: 16.631443)

Due to the rapidly growing vegetation, signposts and trail markers are often badly visible throughout the Leitha Mountains. This can lead to serious difficulties with orientation. This route attempts to combine forest roads that can be followed without orientation aids to a multi-faceted route through a species-rich patch of forest. For the route option in the rear section of the route, however, a GPS device (or detailed map) is strongly recommended.

min. **7.2** km

Length

min. **3** h

Duration



Gear

(GPS recommended
for long route)



Movement



Access



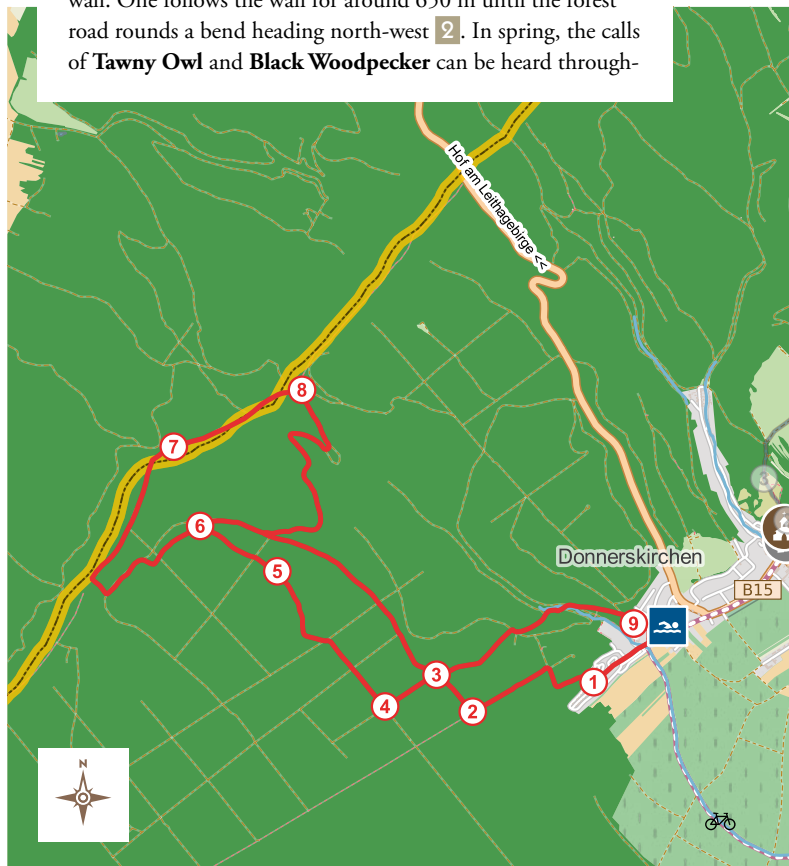
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

Visitors exploring the area in spring can expect to see **Woodcock**, **Turtle Dove**, **Cuckoo**, **Tawny Owl**, **Nightjar**, **Wry-neck**, **Grey-headed Woodpecker**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, **Wren**, **Robin**, **Wood Warbler**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Collared Flycatcher**, **Long-tailed Tit**, **Marsh Tit**, **Jay**, **Hawfinch**, and **Yellow-hammer**. **Mistle Thrush** and **Bullfinch** are also common in winter. Remember to look out for **raptors** at the few places offering a clear view.

Route

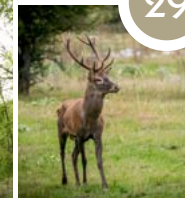
The route begins at the western end of Mobilheimplatz, at the beginning of a forest road that soon reaches an old sand stone wall. One follows the wall for around 650 m until the forest road rounds a bend heading north-west **2**. In spring, the calls of **Tawny Owl** and **Black Woodpecker** can be heard through-



Nightjar (© M. Tie.)



Deciduous forest (© C. Rol.)



Red deer
(© J. Pri.)

out the forest area, which is privately owned by the Esterhazy Betriebe, and roaring red deer stags are sometimes even heard in autumn. The road goes downhill for a short stretch until the next turnoff **3**, where one turns left and follows the road gradually uphill. At the next turnoff **4**, turn right and from then on continue more or less straight ahead. East of the Ramsauberg the slope falls away quite steeply on the right hand side **5**, opening up a wide vista of the surrounding forested hills. At the route's turning point **6**, provided one has good shoes and a decent sense of direction, one can choose a route option along the border between Burgenland and Lower Austria. The chances of seeing a number of forest species are higher on this narrow, partially overgrown, and sometimes very steep trail **7**. After joining a forest road **8**, this route option leads back to the main route without any further noteworthy inclines. The road leads north of the Landlerstal, quite close to the valley's base, back to a familiar turnoff **3**. This time, turn onto a smaller forest road heading east. After about 150 m the road reaches a mighty oak and finally joins a wider forest road, which leads back to civilisation east of the Donnerskirchen swimming pool **9**.

Other animals and plants

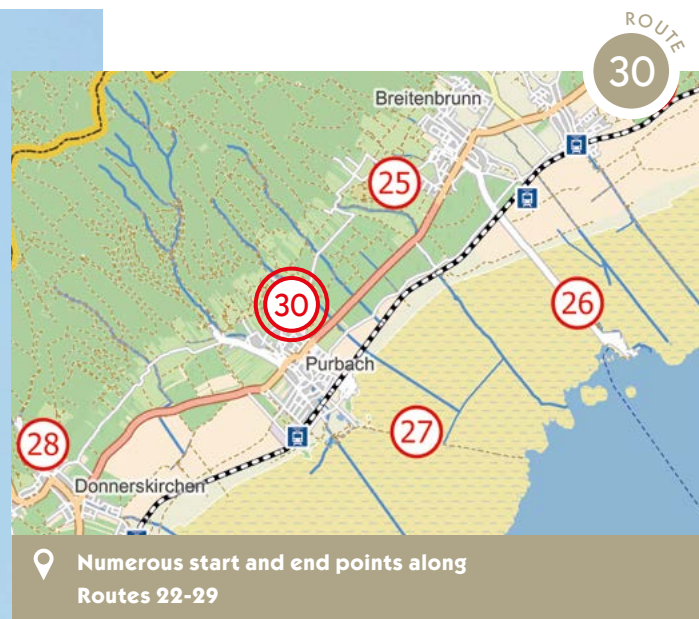
Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), Wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), Large tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis polychloros*), Camberwell beauty (*Nymphalis antiopa*), European bladdernut (*Staphylea pinnata*), Yellow-berried mistletoe (*Loranthus europaeus*), Sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), Common hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Field maple (*Acer campestre*), Cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The forest is open to hikers, but bicycling, driving, and horse riding are only permitted with the explicit consent of the landowner!

Cherry blossom bicycle route

between Donnerskirchen and Jois



The well-marked and largely paved “Kirschblütenradweg” (Cherry blossom bicycle route) leads slightly up and downhill through the vineyards and orchards of the Leitha Mountain foothills, and back through the flat lakeshore area.

43.6 km

Length

min. 5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement
(Pure travel time
min. 3h)



Access

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

This popular route among bicycle tourists is not just worth visiting at “peak season” in April, when hundreds of cherry trees are in full bloom and **Woodlarks** can be heard singing along the route. Spanning the distance between the towns of Jois and Donnerskirchen, this bicycle route also connects routes 22-29. Beside the interesting cultural and natural features described in the other chapters, there are plenty of other attractions along this route! The bike path only partially leads through the town centres, with their old houses, wine cellar lanes, and wine taverns (the “Heurigen”), for which one should plan enough time. Of course, the **storks’ nests** in Winden, Breitenbrunn, and Purbach are not to be forgotten. What is more, roadside vendors offer their regional products along the main road during harvest season. The ornithological features worth highlighting along the route include **Honey**



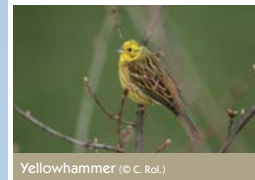
Wine cellar lane (© C. Rol.)



Stonechat (© P. Fri.)



Wryneck (© P. Fri.)


Jay
(© M. Tie.)


Yellowhammer (© C. Rol.)



Cherry blossom (© C. Rol.)

Buzzard, Hoopoe, Wryneck, a number of woodpeckers, Woodlark, Nightingale, Stonechat, Barred Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Golden Oriole, Red-backed Shrike, Jay, Linnet, Serin, Corn Bunting, and Yellowhammer.

Route

There are enough opportunities to catch a bus or train along the way, so the route can also be completed in stages.

Other animals and plants

See other chapters along the route!

DID YOU KNOW?

Cherry trees were first cultivated on the slopes of the Leitha Mountains in the 18th century, the sweet fruits being largely intended for the Viennese market. The dominant varieties were ones that bore fruit early in the season and also had to be able to withstand the transport. Where up to 15,000 trees had once stood in individual municipalities up until the post-war period, today there are “only” between 10,000 and 12,000 trees in the entire region. A number of activities in recent years have successfully raised the local population’s awareness for the value these regional cherries have to offer.

St. Georgen: Hochbergweg



Collared Flycatcher (© O. Saml.)



The Eisenstadt district of St. Georgen is well known for its wine tradition. But the agricultural landscape around the town and the forest stands of the Leitha Mountains to the north are also well worth a visit for nature-lovers.

min. 4.4 km

Length

min. 2 h

Duration



Gear



Movement

(Bikes only permitted
on southern section)



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

This route to the north-east of Eisenstadt has two very different sections. The southern section leads quite leisurely through vineyards interspersed with fallows, meadows, and copses. The species seen here during the breeding season include **Green Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Woodlark**, **White Wagtail**, **Nightingale**, **Blackcap**, **Long-tailed Tit**, **Marsh Tit**, **Nuthatch**, **Linnet**, **Goldfinch**, **Greenfinch**, and **Yellowhammer**, while **Hen Harrier**, **Mistle Thrush**, **Great Grey Shrike**, **Linnet**, **Serin**, and **Reed Bunting** can be seen in winter.

The northern section leads along often steep and increasingly



View from the Hochbergweg (© C. Rol.)



Wood Warbler (© P. Fri.)


Clouded Apollo
(© pixabay)


Linnet (© P. Fri.)



Deciduous forest (© C. Rol.)



Marsh Tit (© O. Sam.)

overgrown trails through mixed deciduous forest privately owned by the Esterhazy Betriebe. Only hiking is permitted here, and a good sense of direction is recommended (or a GPS device to assist in this respect). But the effort is rewarded with species like **Green Woodpecker**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**, **Mistle Thrush**, **Wren**, **Robin**, **Wood Warbler**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Collared Flycatcher**, **Nuthatch**, **Eurasian Treecreeper**, **Golden Oriole**, **Bullfinch**, and **Hawfinch** – though **Mistle Thrush** and **Bullfinch** are only seen in winter.

Route

Starting at the cemetery **1** in St. Georgen am Leithagebirge, follow the paved road Flachgraben past timber storage sites, vineyards, and little copses. After about 1 km of slight incline, an old sand stone wall starts to run alongside the road in the middle distance with a number of very old trees behind it. Shortly before the road leads into a patch of forest, turn north at the Schauerkreuz **2** (and a mighty oak) onto Hochbergweg. This gravel path is lined with colourfully blossoming meadows. At the second right-hand turnoff **3** into the forest, one can choose between continuing along Hochbergweg back to the starting point or taking the forest route. The latter option soon leads to a sign with



information about the conservation measures implemented to preserve the last remnants of arid grassland. Continuing past a small disused quarry, the route goes a little way downhill and then back uphill through a defile. Two further defiles branch off this path in the steep terrain – take the left one first and the right one second. Once up on the more level crest of the hill, take a slight left at a rather inconspicuous turnoff **4**. The trail is quite overgrown at first but joins a wide forest road after about 600 m. Now turn left and continue west until Eisenstädter Straße (L213) is very close **5**. If one likes, one can continue from here for another 300 m to see two beautiful, ancient oak trees **6**. Back at the crossing, the route heads downhill towards Hochberg-

weg. Having passed a barrier, at the next turnoff **7** choose the left option, which leads past the eastern slope of the Hummelbühl back to the vineyards and Hochbergweg. Now follow Hochbergweg south-west until it joins Flachgraben and eventually returns to the starting point.

Other animals and plants

European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), Slowworm (*Anguis fragilis*), Hairy dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*), Capricorn beetle (*Cerambyx scopolii*), Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), Camberwell beauty (*Nymphalis antiopa*), Sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), Hairy fleabane (*Inula hirta*), White helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*)

DID YOU KNOW?

In contrast to the hot, dry Seewinkel, between June and October the shady forests of the Leitha Mountains are a true paradise for mushroom collectors – provided, of course, the year's temperatures and precipitation levels were suitable. Much to the dismay of collectors familiar with the area, the mosquitoes of the Leitha Mountains also appear to prefer precisely these conditions.



Slowworm (© C. Rie.)



Mistle Thrush (© W. Tr.)



Oak tree
(© C. Rol.)



Hawfinch (© O. Sam.)



Hairy fleabane (© G. Lot.)



Vineyards (© C. Rol.)

Eisenstadt: palace grounds



Entrance at Glorietteallee
(N: 47.847901, E: 16.516720)

These almost 50 hectare-large palace grounds in the centre of the capital of Burgenland, which are designed in the style of an English landscape garden and are protected as a historic monument, offer visitors a perfect combination of nature and culture. Just a stone's throw away from Esterházy palace and the historic centre of Eisenstadt, a network of winding paths leads through this diverse and multi-faceted park, which was commissioned by Prince Paul Esterházy in 1622.

Grey Wagtail (© P. H.)

2.3 km

Length

min. 1 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



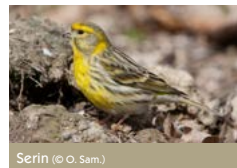
Access

J F M A M J J A S O N D

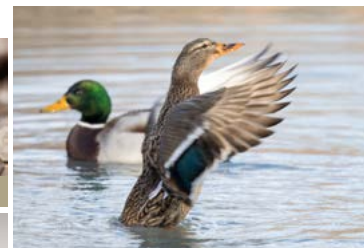
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

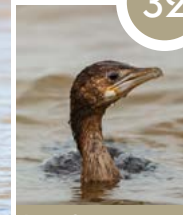
Large expanses of lawn, two rather large ponds, and the predominantly old stock of trees provide habitat for a wide array of species. Most birdwatchers like to come here for the diversity of **woodpeckers** (**Green Woodpecker**, **Black Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, and **Middle Spotted Woodpecker** can be seen regularly), but the two larger of the four ponds can also occasionally produce some interesting species that come here to rest or forage. Individual **Eurasian Wigeons**, **Gadwalls**,



Serin (© O. Sam.)



Mallard (© P. Fr.)



Pygmy Cormorant
(© P. Fr.)



Blackbird (© P. Fr.)



Wood Pigeons (© P. Fr.)



Song Thrush (© P. Fr.)

Red-crested Pochards, **Ferruginous Ducks**, **Kingfishers**, and even a **Pygmy Cormorant** have all been recorded here. The park's breeding birds include **Mallard**, **Kestrel**, **Wood Pigeon**, **Collared Dove**, **Robin**, **Blackbird**, **Song Thrush**, **Great Tit**, **Blue Tit**, **Marsh Tit**, **Long-tailed Tit**, **Nuthatch**, **Jackdaw**, **Goldfinch**, **Greenfinch**, **Serin**, and **Hawfinch**, while **Sparrowhawk**, **Grey Wagtail**, and **Mistle Thrush** are only found here in winter. Information boards explain the park's attractions to visitors, such as the **Leopoldinentempel**, the orangery, or the **Maschinenteich** (see "Did you know?").

Route

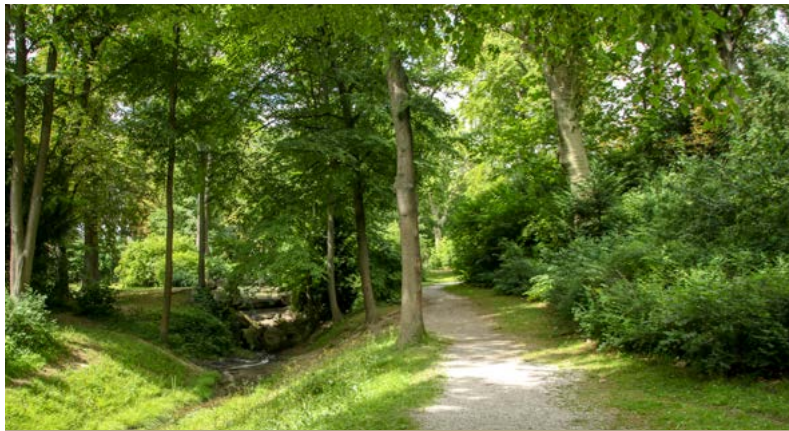
The route begins at the southern entrance off **Glorietteallee**, where one soon reaches the **Leopoldinentempel** (Leopoldine temple) built on an artificial rock outcrop above the pond. The first right-hand turnoff leads to the terrace of the orangery, which one leaves again over one of the two central flights of steps.

A little stream flows through the old stand of trees to the south, which is inhabited by **Jackdaws** during the breeding season. The stream pours over a little waterfall into the **Maschinenteich** (machine pond), which the route circles in a counter-clockwise direction. East of the orangery, a path leads rather steeply uphill between old beech trees to the Obe-





Leopoldine pond and temple (© C. Rol.)



Eisenstadt palace grounds (© C. Rol.)



Eisenstadt palace grounds (© C. Rol.)

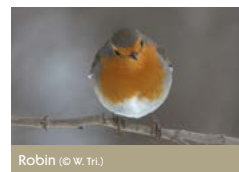
liskteich (obelisk pond) **4**. During the breeding season, look out for **Black Woodpecker** cavities in the old beech trees – they are regularly used by **Jackdaws** as well. West of the pond, take the path leading back to the path that had led uphill, but now continue west. South of the Leopoldinentempel **5**, a small trail leads through the artificial rock wall back to the Leopoldiniteich.

Other animals and plants

Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), Large white-faced darter (*Leucorrhinia pectoralis*), Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*), Hungarian glider (*Neptis rivularis*), Camberwell beauty (*Nymphalis antiopa*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The Maschinenteich owes its rather unusual name to the first Watt steam engine of the Habsburg Empire. As far back as 1750, the water for the gardens (Rococo at the time) was pumped to the higher-lying parts of the park with the help of draft animals. In 1803, Prince Nikolaus II modernised the system with Watt's sensational machine acquired from London!



Robin (© W. Tr.)



Black Woodpecker (© W. Bit.)



Middle Spotted Woodpecker (© M. Tie.)



Syrian Woodpecker (© G. Loi.)

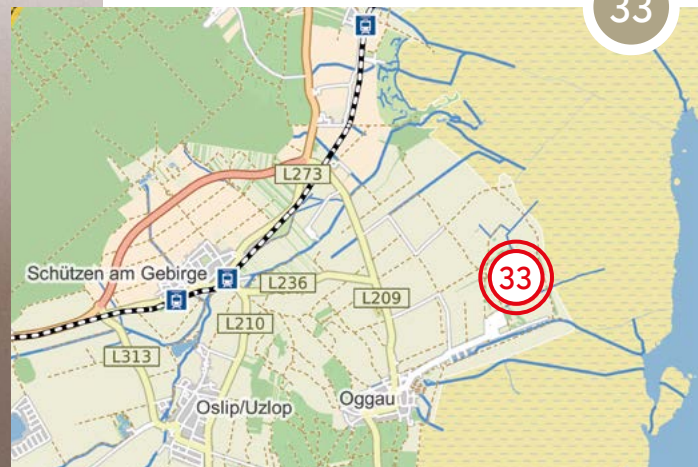


Jackdaw (© P. Fri.)



Nuthatch (© P. Fri.)

Oggau heath



Seegasse in Oggau
(N: 47.840807, E: 16.681073)

The 8.5 km-long, bicycle-compatible, and completely flat circuit has a varied mix of habitats to offer. As late as the 1960s, the “Oggauer Heide” was an expansive area of pastures and meadows.

8.8 km

Length

min. 3 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

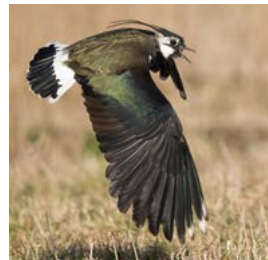
At this point – in an extensive, partially grazed, and saline lakeshore zone – the extremely wide reed belt along the western shore of Lake Neusiedl merges into salt marsh meadows, copses, and finally into semi-arid grassland and narrow agricultural plots. Depending on the specific habitat, **Bittern**, **Great Egret**, **Purple Heron**, **Greylag Goose**, **ducks**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Common Buzzard**, **Kestrel**, **waders**, **gulls**, **Common Tern**, **Nightingale**, **Stonechat**, **reed passerines**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Golden Oriole**, and **Red-backed Shrike** can all be encountered here during the breeding season. **Red-footed Falcon**,



Lake Neusiedl in winter (© C. Rol.)



Great Grey Shrike (© P. Fri.)


Redwing
(© P. Fri.)


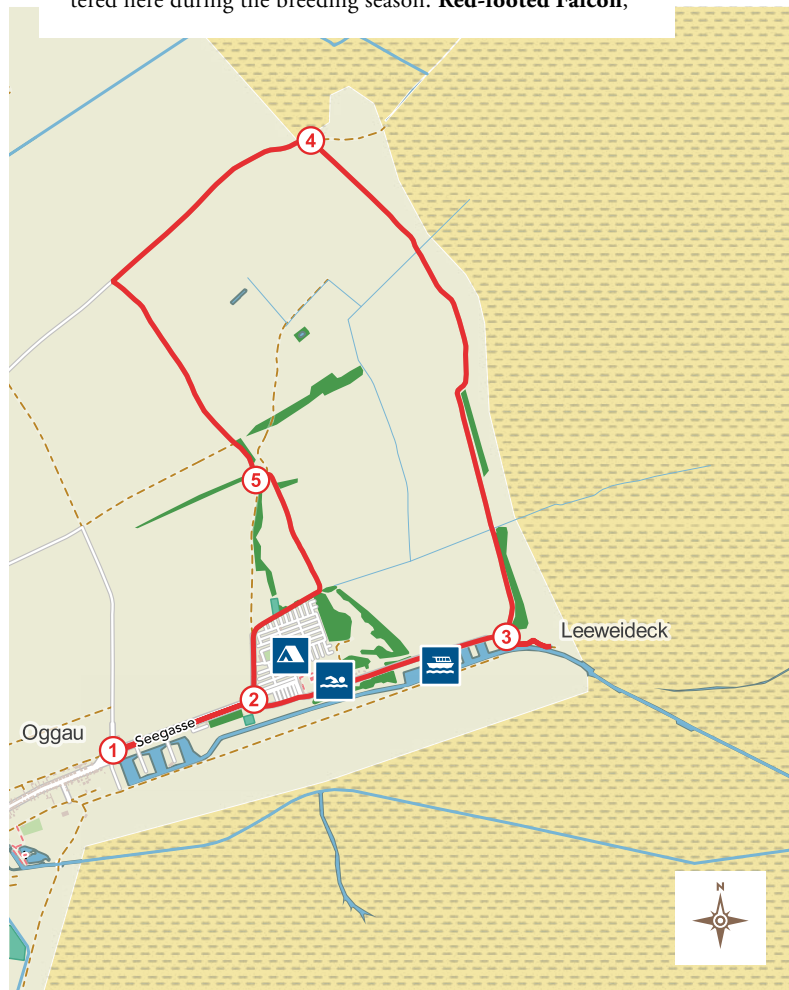
Lapwing (© P. Fri.)



Reed storage site (© C. Rol.)



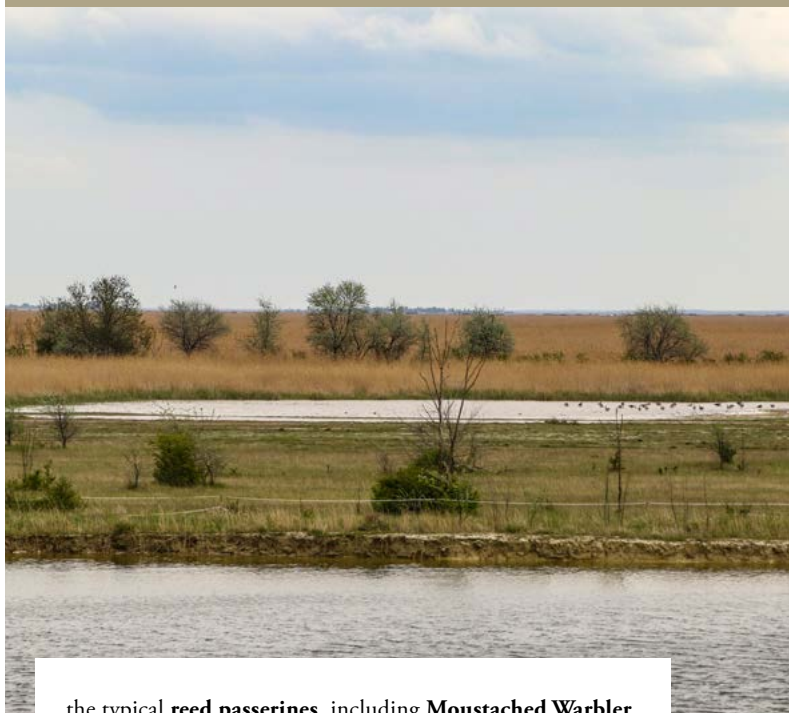
Fieldfare (© H. Kol.)



Hobby, and **Whinchat** pass by here regularly on migration. Frequent winter guests include **Hen Harrier**, **Merlin**, **Fieldfare**, and **Great Grey Shrike**.

Route

The starting point is at the north-eastern edge of Oggau, at the crossing of Seegasse and “Auf der Heide” **1**. Expansion of the built-up area with single-family homes is in full swing here, but it still pays to look past the new houses to the grazed lakeshore area. The white patches of ground around the water’s edge are a telltale sign of salinity, and even the **ducks**, **waders**, and other **waterbirds** migrating through here in spring can remind one of the Seewinkel on the opposite shore. As a matter of fact, **Greylag Goose**, **Pied Avocet**, **Little Ringed Plover**, **Lapwing**, and **Redshank** do indeed breed here. **Marsh Harrier** and **Common Tern** can be seen here during breeding season as well, although their breeding sites are further back in the wide reed belt. Continuing east, the road passes tennis courts **2** and reaches the swimming pool. From here until the harbour, the lawn on the southern side of the road and the bushes in the background are especially popular with migrating **thrushes**. The so-called Leeweideck **3** is reached just after the harbour. Here, a short trail leads along the canal through the reeds used by boats from the harbour – just far enough to be able to hear



the typical **reed passerines**, including **Moustached Warbler**. Back on the road – which is closed to cars from here on – one continues north. The stands of trees over the next 500 m are inhabited by **Turtle Dove** and **Nightingale** during the breeding season. For the next 2 km until the Steinriegel **4**, smaller and smaller copses alternate with reed storage sites and extensively used meadows to the east, while there are rocky plots of arable land between fallows and meadows to the west. The open landscape is interesting for **raptors** during migration and for **waders** in wet years. Rather large flocks of **Greylag Geese** also like to rest here in winter. The road turns to the south-west and then the route follows the Neusiedler See - Radwanderweg (Lake Neusiedl bicycle and hiking route) back to Oggau. Shortly after the stands of trees and bushes become thicker again, a trail **5** turns off to the east and then continues south. These scrub-encroached meadows – a former military training ground – are a breeding site for **Cuckoo**, **Skylark**, **Nightingale**, **Stonechat**, **Blackcap**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Common Whitethroat**, and **Red-backed Shrike**. To return to Seegasse, one can circle

the campsite to the west on the road, or to the east on a little trail through the bushland and meadows.

Other animals and plants

Tundra vole (*Microtus oeconomus*), Harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), Moor frog (*Rana arvalis wolterstorffi*), Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Scarlet darter (*Crocothemis erythraea*), Large white-faced darter (*Leucorrhinia pectoralis*), Keeled plump bush-cricket (*Isohya costata*), Short-winged cone-head (*Conocephalus dorsalis*), Marsh cricket (*Pteronemobius heydenii*), Slender green-winged grasshopper (*Aiolopus thalassinus*), Small blue-legged grasshopper (*Epacromius coarctatus*), Large copper (*Lycaena dispar*), Knapweed fritillary (*Melitaea phoebe*), Slender glasswort (*Salicornia prostrata*), *Suaeda pannonica*, European wand loosestrife (*Lythrum virgatum*), Field restharrow (*Ononis arvensis*), Sea plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Sea aster (*Tripolium pannonicum*), Sawwort (*Serratula tinctoria*), Early spider-orchid (*Ophrys sphegodes*)

DID YOU KNOW?

Because archaeological excavations here once produced drinking cups with residues of red wine, Oggau likes to call itself the “oldest red wine municipality of Austria”.



Viviparous lizard
(© G. Wos.)



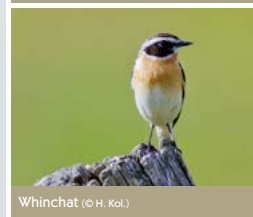
Hobby (© W. Tr.)



Common Tern
(© P. Fri.)



Hen Harrier (© P. Fri.)



Whinchat (© H. Kol.)



Slender glasswort (© A. Cm.)

Roman quarry *at* St. Margarethen



ROUTE
34

📍 **Visitor parking area at Roman quarry**
(N: 47.802693, E: 16.635688)

The impressive Roman quarry outside of St. Margarethen im Burgenland, on the crest of the Rust Hills, is largely disused today. It is best known for its sculpture symposium, the Opera in the Quarry, and the St. Margarethen passion plays. Over millennia, excavation of the coveted Leitha limestone created rock faces and niches that have since been colonised by nature.

1.7 km

Length

min. 1 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

Kestrel, **Common Swift**, and **Jackdaw** regularly breed in the quarry. One level higher, where arid grassland interspersed with bushes and stands of downy oak have persisted, **Honey Buzzard**, **Turtle Dove**, **Bee-eater**, **Nightingale**, **Song Thrush**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Blackcap**, **Chiffchaff**, **Golden Oriole**, **Red-backed Shrike**, and **Yellowhammer** can be encountered during the breeding season. Observations of **Hoopoe**, **Barred Warbler**, and **Northern Wheatear** have become rarer nowadays – the latter species had used the mighty sandstone sculptures as a breeding place until just recently. To hear the song of **Woodlark**, it is best to visit the sloping vineyards surrounding the site in early spring.



Yellowhammer (© O. Sam.)



St. Margarethen quarry (© C. Rol.)



Kestrel
(© P. Fri.)

Route

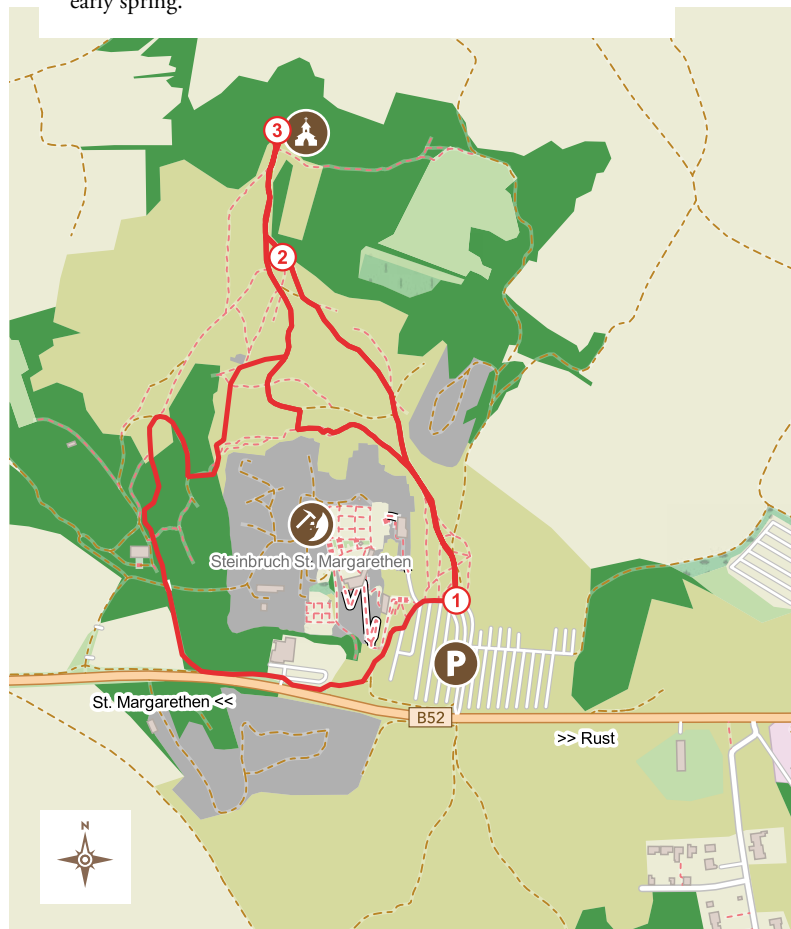
Just east of the quarry (which is privately owned and operated by the Esterhazy Betriebe) there is a grassy parking area **1** that is inhabited by a colony of ground squirrels. A number of trails lead from here across the Kogelberg **2**, past one sculpture after another, to the Kogelkapelle (Kogel chapel) **3**. Walking along the fence either on the way up or on the way down, one is granted occasional views into the quarry. The quarry itself can be visited on guided tours. On clear days the Schneeberg can be seen from the chapel, while the parking area offers a good view of the central part of Lake Neusiedl.

Other animals and plants

European ground squirrel (*Spermophilus citellus*), Blue-winged sand grasshopper (*Sphingonotus caeruleus*), Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), Swallowtail (*Papilio machaon*), Scarce swallowtail (*Iphiclidus podalirius*), Jersey tiger (*Euplagia quadripunctaria*), Pheasant's eye (*Adonis vernalis*), Greater pasque flower (*Pulsatilla grandis*), *Dianthus pottederae*, Asian flax (*Linum austriacum*), Cypress spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias*), Dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*), *Dorycnium germanicum*, Burning bush (*Dictamnus albus*), Hoary rockrose (*Helianthemum canum*), Swallow-wort (*Vincetoxicum hirsutaria*), Wall germander (*Teucrium chamaedrys*), Hungarian thyme (*Thymus pannonicus* agg.), Common ball flower (*Globularia bisnagarica*), Goldilocks aster (*Galatella lino-syris*), Branched St Bernard's-lily (*Anthericum ranunculoides*), Feather grass (*Stipa eriocalis*), Hairy melick (*Melica ciliata*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The quarry's much sought-after Leitha limestone was already quarried by the Romans, who used it for parts of Carnuntum. The stone was also used in many buildings on Vienna's Ringstraße and is still used in renovation work on St. Stephen's cathedral.




Rust:

Centre of town, Storchenviese
and lakeshore area

ROUTE
35



 **Parking area "Am Seekanal" (Rust)**
(N: 47.800000, E: 16.678000)

Rust is not only the smallest administrative district but also the smallest statutory city in Austria. If this sounds too dry, Rust is especially known for its wine and climate, its immediate vicinity to Lake Neusiedl, and its lovingly preserved buildings (the historic centre is completely protected as a historic monument). And of course the White Storks are not to be forgotten, which give Rust the reputation as "the" city of storks in Austria.

White Storks © H. M. Ben

min. **1.9** km

Length

min. **1** h

Duration



Gear



Movement



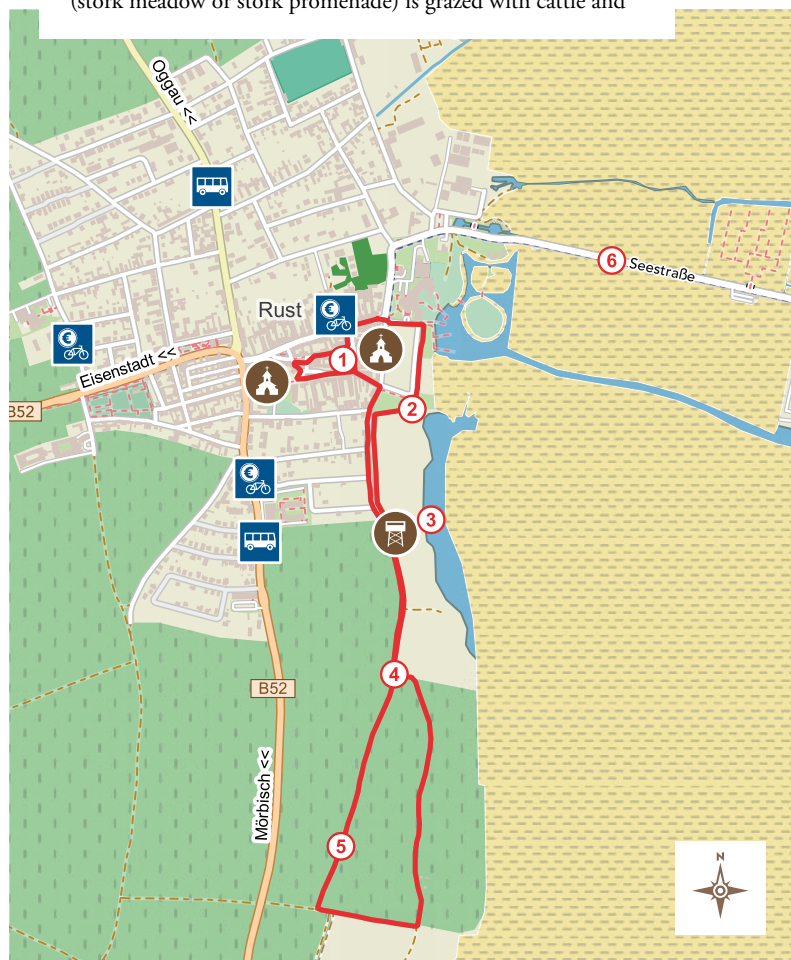
Access

J F M A M J J A S O N D

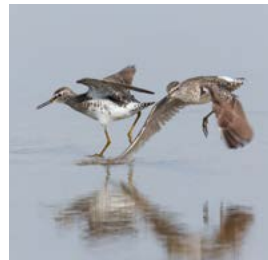
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

The high density of storks is due to the 16th to 19th century buildings' large chimneys, on which the massive nests are built. Rust was first colonised by **White Storks** in 1910. By the 1930s there were already 24 breeding pairs, and the record of 40 breeding pairs was reached in the 1960s. Due to a combination of negative factors such as drought, pesticide use, intensified agriculture, wetland drainage, and hunting, the species' population declined worldwide between 1970 and 1990. In Rust, the population was reduced to just three breeding pairs in 1995. To create attractive foraging grounds for the storks, the so-called Storchenviese or Storchpromenade (stork meadow or stork promenade) is grazed with cattle and



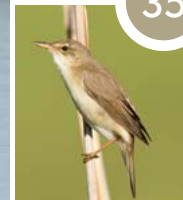
Green Sandpiper (© M. Tie.)



Wood Sandpipers (© P. Fri.)



Pygmy Cormorants, Great Egret, and Grey Heron (© P. Fri.)


Marsh Warbler
(© P. Fri.)


Rust Storchenviese (© C. Rol.)



Syrian Woodpecker (© H. Kol.)

Hungarian Racka sheep in alternating years. Large parts of the reeds were pushed back through grazing and trampling, and the lakeshore area became a species-rich habitat once again. The improved availability of food as well as other measures benefited the storks and many other species: there were 21 pairs of White Stork breeding on Rust's roofs in 2018, and the Storchenviese has become an important observation site for birdwatchers. For example, there is no better place on the western shore of Lake Neusiedl to see **Pygmy Cormorant** – and even **Glossy Ibis**, **Red-necked Phalarope**, **Cattle Egret**, and **Squacco Heron** have been seen around the Storchenviese in recent years (as exceptional rarities).

Route

It is good to start with a little tour through the historic centre of Rust, where impressive **White Stork** nests can be seen from almost any point. The spire of the catholic parish church **1**, which unfortunately isn't always open, allows one to look down on almost all of the storks' nests – with a little luck the storks even fly past here at eye level. Many of the houses' façades also host **House Martin** nests – provided they haven't been removed by "cleanliness fanatics". From the southern end of the large parking area **2** next to the lakeshore zone, one is offered a first look at the Storchenviese, but the view is even better from an observation tower **3** further south. Regular



species here include **Spoonbill**, **Greylag Goose**, **Shoveler**, **Teal**, **Garganey**, **Red-crested Pochard**, **Great Crested Grebe**, **Little Egret**, **Great Egret**, **Grey Heron**, **Purple Heron**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Kingfisher**, and a number of **waders**. **Black-winged Stilt** and **Pied Avocet** are found here regularly during the breeding season, while **Common Snipe**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Green Sandpiper**, **Greenshank**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Little Ringed Plover**, and sometimes **Dunlin** rest here on migration. The best time to see **Tringa waders** is in late summer and autumn. **Syrian Woodpecker** and **Long-eared Owl** can be discovered in the surrounding poplars throughout the year. The latter nests in old crows' nests and has communal roosting sites in winter.

The route continues a little further south along sloping vineyards on the Neusiedler See - Radwanderweg (Lake Neusiedl bicycle and hiking route). After a rather large almond orchard, turn left onto a gravel road **4** that runs parallel to the lake-shore area through small-scale agricultural landscape. Passing meadows, fallows, copses, and a few paddocks with various domestic animals, expect to see **White Wagtail**, **Nightingale**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Marsh**

Warbler, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Blackcap**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Magpie**, and **Reed Bunting** here during the breeding season. Now, either return to Rust along the bike path **5**, or continue south through the multi-faceted lakeshore area until Mörbisch (see Route 36). Visitors intending to leave the area on the bicycle ferry to Podersdorf can look out for **Moustached Warbler** and other **reed passerines** on Rust's Seestraße causeway **6**.

Other animals and plants

Variable damselfly (*Coenagrion pulchellum*), Emperor dragonfly (*Anax imperator*), Scarlet darter (*Crocothemis erythraea*), Field cricket (*Gryllus campestris*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The population of Rust bought their status as a "royal free city" from the Hungarian crown (Habsburg Archdukes) in 1649 for **gold and a lot of wine**. Viticulture dominates almost the entire municipal area to this day.



Rust lakeshore area (© C. Rol.)



Rust Storchensee (© C. Rol.)



Common Snipe
(© P. Fr.)



White Stork (© C. Rol.)



Spotted Redshank (© P. Fr.)



House Martin nests in Rust (© C. Rol.)

Mörbisch: reed trail



Great Egret (© P. M.)



Mörbisch am See, situated just north of the Hungarian border, is associated by most with romantic wine cellar alleys, good wine, and the lake stage where operettas by Austrian composers are performed every July and August. But there is also diverse birdlife waiting to be discovered.

2.3 km

Length

min. 1 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



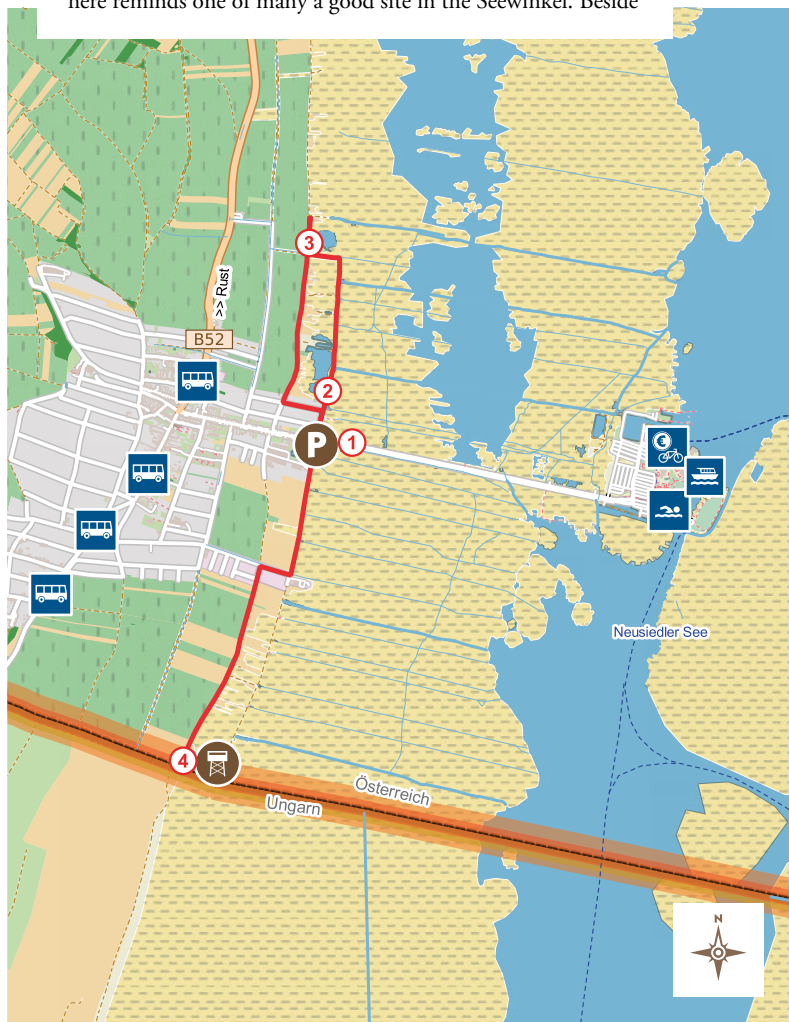
Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

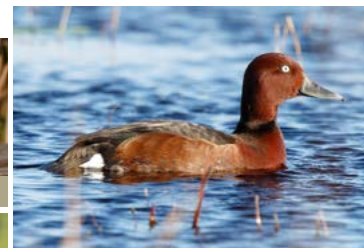
First, there is the Seestraße causeway to the lakefront resort, from which all of the area's regular **herons** and **reed-dwelling warblers** as well as **Ferruginous Duck**, **Pygmy Cormorant**, and **Common Tern** can be seen or heard. The latter pass by here regularly on foraging flights from their breeding sites hidden away in the reeds. The second noteworthy area is the lakeshore zone, especially north of Seestraße: the "Mörbischer Schilfweg" (Mörbisch reed trail), a circuit not quite 2 km long, leads through a true mosaic of small-scale habitats. The birdlife here reminds one of many a good site in the Seewinkel. Beside



Eurasian Reed Warbler (© P. Fri.)



Penduline Tit (© P. Fri.)



Ferruginous Duck (© P. Fri.)


Bearded Reedling
(© P. Fri.)


Greylag Goose (© H. M. Ber.)



Common Shelduck (© C. Rol.)

the species mentioned above, one can expect to see a variety of **ducks**, **waders**, and **passerines** here in a relatively small area.

Route

The area is located right on the Neusiedler See - Radwanderweg (Lake Neusiedl bicycle and hiking route) and can also be reached quite easily on the bicycle ferry from Illmitz. Coming from the lakefront Seebad, it is worth stopping at a couple of points along the Seestraße causeway. Right at the edge of Mörbisch, east of Mörbischer Hof, a parking area **1** is well-suited as the starting point for the Mörbisch reed trail. Cross Seestraße to the north from here, and follow the (initially) paved road. A number of channels allow occasional glimpses into the wide reed belt on the one side, while the path passes alternating inundation zones, paddocks, meadows, fallows, vineyards, copses, and narrow plots of arable land on the other. After the last houses, a lengthy expanse of water **2** opens up on the left hand side, which appears to exert a particular attraction on local **waterbirds**. One should be especially careful while observing here, however, because the birds startle easily. Regular **waders** appearing here on migration include **Little Ringed Plover**, **Wood Sandpiper**, **Green Sandpiper**, **Green-shank**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Redshank**, **Spotted Redshank**, and **Common Snipe**, while a few **Pied Avocet** and **Black-winged Stilt** have even nested here in recent years. **Greylag**



Geese and **Common Pochards** also rear their young at this body of water, while the **Bitterns** regularly booming here during the breeding season suggest a sturdy population. The **reed passerines** heard singing from both sides of the bumpy path include **Sedge Warbler**, **Moustached Warbler**, **Reed Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Bearded Reedling**, **Penduline Tit**, and **Reed Bunting**. Other interesting species encountered along the Mörbisch reed trail during the breeding season are **Little Bittern**, **Purple Heron**, **Common Shelduck**, and **Ferruginous Duck**.

After a short detour to the north **3**, where the lakeshore zone can be scanned once again, the route returns along the bicycle and hiking route to Mörbisch.

To explore the southern lakeshore area as well, continue from the starting point **1** on the dirt road heading south. Here (like in the northern part) there are reeds regularly intersected by channels on the lake-hand side of the path, and dryer habitats on the land-facing side. Beside **Nightingale**, **Blackcap**, **Common Whitethroat**, and **Reed Warbler** breeding here, this section is also attractive to **Common Redstart**, **Whinchat**, **Wood Warbler**, and **Pied Flycatcher** during migration. The path is idyllic, hardly frequented, and ends abruptly in the reeds. If one would like to reach the viewing tower **4** on the Hungarian border, one has to switch over to the parallel road a lot sooner. There are a number of panels around the tower informing about historic events, Lake Neusiedl, the “European Green Belt”, and plans of the “Seevorland Mörbisch” asso-

ciation to manage the lakeshore area extensively once again through mowing and grazing.

Other animals and plants

European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina orientalis*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Southern migrant hawk (*Aeshna affinis*), Large white-faced darter (*Leucorrhinia pectoralis*), Lesser emperor (*Anax parthenope*), Large cone-head (*Ruspolia nitidula*), Field cricket (*Gryllus campestris*), Leek grasshopper (*Mecostethus parapleurus*), Scarce swallowtail (*Iphiclides podalirius*), Camberwell beauty (*Nymphalis antiopa*), Common reed (*Phragmites australis*), Great reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), Great fen sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), Greater bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris*)

DID YOU KNOW?

Until the westernmost parts of the counties of Moson (Wieselburg), Sopron (Ödenburg), and Vás (Eisenburg) were separated from Hungary in 1921, Mörbisch (Megyes) had been one of the eight municipalities of Ödenburg. The Hungarian name refers to the abundance of cherry trees (actually sour cherries) in the vineyards above the village.



Horse paddock (© C. Rol.)



Black-winged Stilts (© P. Fri.)



Mörbisch reed trail (© C. Rol.)



Pygmy Cormorant (© P. Fri.)



Typical narrow houses (© C. Rol.)



Starlings (© C. Rol.)

Piuszpuszta – Pan-European Picnic



Scops Owl (© O. Sam.)



Parking area at Pan-European Picnic memorial site
(N: 47.756536, E: 16.622619)

An exceptionally historic site lies between St. Margarethen im Burgenland and Sopronköhida (German: Steinambrückl): this is where the “Pan-European Picnic” (see “Did you know?”) took place. From an ornithological perspective, however, the surroundings are more interesting than the memorial site itself. They include a sandpit with a sizeable Bee-eater colony, mulberry trees from which Scops Owl are occasionally heard, and a giant grass steppe inhabited by Corn Crake during the breeding season.

4.1 km

Length

min. 1.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



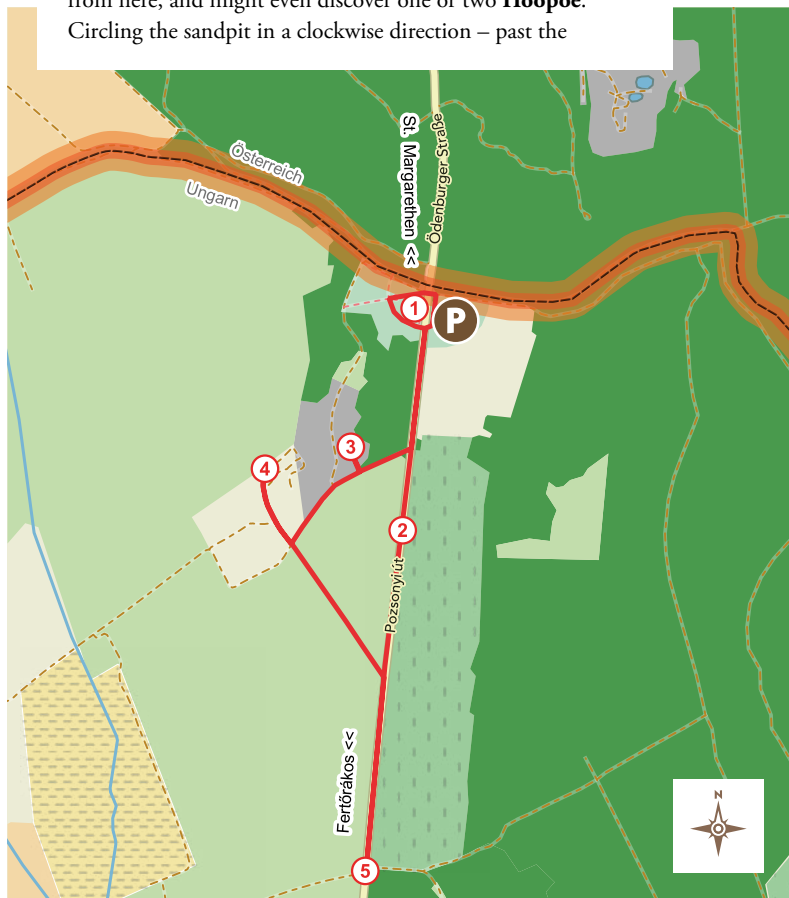
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

Unfortunately, this remote area has lost a lot of its appeal due to the opening of borders and the consequent heavy commuter traffic, especially in the mornings and evenings.

Route

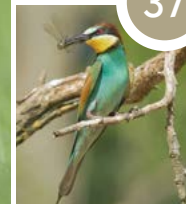
From the Pan-European Picnic memorial site **1**, head south on the main road **2**. The mulberry trees lining the road for the next kilometres are the best place around here to hear the monotonous hoots of **Scops Owl** in early summer nights – but they are not present every year. At the first dirt road turning off to the south-west, make a short, careful detour to the sandpit **3** nearby. Keeping a respectful distance, one is able to watch the hustle and bustle of the **Bee-eater** colony from here, and might even discover one or two **Hoopoe**. Circling the sandpit in a clockwise direction – past the



Piuszpuszta (© C. Rol.)



Skylark (© W. Tri.)


Bee-eater
(© P. Fri.)


Barred Warbler (© H. Kol.)



Corn Bunting (© J. Hoh.)



Sandpit (© C. Rol.)

remains of farm buildings – one soon reaches the expansive Piuszpuszta **4**, where **Corn Crane** is one of the breeding species. The route returns to the main road along an avenue of poplars. Scanning the scrubby meadow area to the east of the road can produce a number of species of open countryside: **Skylark**, **Stonechat**, **Barred Warbler**, **Lesser Whitethroat**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Yellowhammer**, and **Corn Bunting** are quite abundant here. There is a patch of forest **5** east of the road after about 550 m. Here, either return to the starting point or continue south to the areas at Fertőrákos (Route 38) or the Kis-Tómalom (Route 39).

Other animals and plants

Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), European green toad (*Bufo viridis*), Lady orchid (*Orchis purpurea*), Military orchid (*Orchis militaris*), Round-headed leek (*Allium sphaerocephalon*)

DID YOU KNOW?

Pan-European Picnic: On 9 August 1989, a peace demonstration took place at the guarded gate of the “Iron Curtain” on the border between Austria and Hungary. It went down in history as the “Pan-European Picnic”. During the event, which is seen as a milestone in the events leading up to the fall of the Iron Curtain, a few hundred (largely East German) citizens succeeded in crossing the border to the West.

Nature Conservation

around Lake Neusiedl

Scientific understanding as to the enormous biodiversity of the Lake Neusiedl region led to individual areas being placed under protection very early on.

As early as the mid-1930s, the Austrian Naturschutzbund began leasing land, and there soon followed efforts to establish a large-scale protected area, a National Park, in the region – but this was only to be finalised 50 years later. Even the foundation of WWF Austria is linked to the efforts to protect this region: when the common pasturing areas around the Lange Lacke were to be sacrificed for agricultural modernisation in 1963, the Austrian branch of this internationally active conservation organisation was established.

Today, the Lake Neusiedl area is decorated with a number of protected area categories. The most important of these are listed in the following. Some areas are found in more than one protected area category, due to spatial overlaps or complete integration.

National Parks were established in 1991 on the Hungarian, and in 1992 on the Austrian side of Lake Neusiedl. These parks were officially

recognised by the IUCN in 1993 and were symbolically combined to the “Nationalpark Neusiedler See - Seewinkel / Fertő-Hanság Nemzeti Park”.

National Parks are partitioned into nature reserve zones and conservation zones. The former is characterised by a protection of processes: nature is left to its own devices and visitors are strictly prohibited from entering. The nature reserve zone stretches south from the eastern lakeshore zone near Podersdorf into the ever widening reed belt. Meanwhile, in the conservation zone, which is usually agricultural landscape, targeted management is applied to preserve valuable habitats. This is also where the obligatory educational work, in the form of excursions, talks, etc., is carried out.

At 23,587 hectares, the area of the Hungarian National Park (Fertő-Hanság Nemzeti Park) is more than twice the size of the Austrian part (9673 hectares). While the Hungarian parts of the National Park are entirely situated on state-owned land, for the Austrian areas, contracts needed to be agreed on with approx. 1200 landowners.



UNESCO world heritage

The aim of the world heritage convention is the protection and long-term preservation of cultural and natural monuments of exceptional universal value. The “Fertő / Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape” has been listed as a UNESCO world heritage site since 2001 and encompasses almost 75,000 hectares – one third of which in Hungary and two thirds in Austria.



Ramsar site

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty on wetlands of international importance, especially as waterfowl habitat. Three Ramsar sites established earlier were combined in 2009 to form the 53,000 hectare-large cross-border Ramsar site “Neusiedler See - Seewinkel - Waasen / Neusiedler See - Fertő-Hanság”.



Natura 2000 site

These sites comprise protected areas that were designated under the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive of the European Union. The central aim of these two directives is to secure biological diversity by preserving natural habitats and wild animals and plants. Natura 2000 sites on Austrian territory include: “Nordöstliches Leithagebirge” and (with a total area of 41,735 hectares) “Neusiedler See - Seewinkel”, which comprises the nature and landscape conservation area “Neusiedler See und Umgebung” including the areas of the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park and the nature protection areas “Hackelsberg”, “Jungerberg”, “Thenauriegel”, “Goldberg”, and “Pfarrwiesen”.



National Park

The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) is an international umbrella organisation comprising all nation states and internationally active nature conservancy organisations. It defines a National Park as follows:

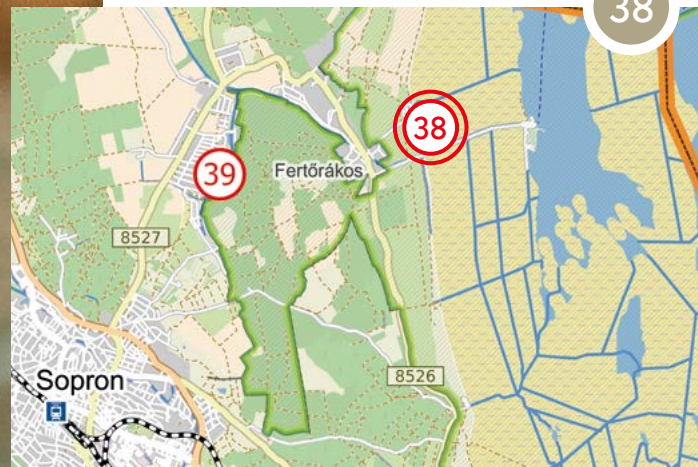
- “A natural area of land and/or sea, designated to*
- protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations;*
 - exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area;*
 - provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational, and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.”*

Fertőrákos:

quarry, causeway, and lakefront



Black-throated Loon (en, fr)



Parking area at Fertőrákos quarry
(N: 47.726779, E: 16.644176)

The picturesque town of Fertőrákos just south of the Austrian border has managed to retain much of its charm until the present day. A number of inns in the typical narrow buildings and courtyards, a village museum, and a bishop's palace invite visitors to linger. The small-scale agricultural landscape and larger forests around the town offer plenty of space to go exploring.

6.4 km

Length

min. 2.5 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

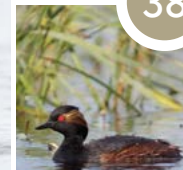
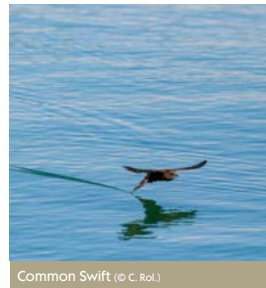
Both the impressive limestone quarry on the northern edge of town – with one of the rare natural breeding sites of **Common Swift** – and the causeway to the lakefront beach resort (the only resort on the Hungarian side of Lake Neusiedl) are well worth a visit. While the typical **reed birds** can be seen from the causeway, at the lakefront one can expect to see various **gulls**, **divers**, and **grebes**, particularly during autumn migration.



Sand lizard (© G. Wos.)



Great Crested Grebe (© P. Fl.)


Black-necked Grebe
(© G. Lot.)


Common Swift (© C. Rol.)



Fertőrákos lakefront (© C. Rol.)



Fertőrákos lakefront resort (© T. Had.)

Route

The entrance fee to the quarry **1**, where **Kestrel** and **Common Swift** breed, is well spent. A little circuit trail first leads up some steps to the edge of the quarry, where one finds oneself amid Pannonian sloping steppe and arid, rocky grassland, and has a wonderful view of Lake Neusiedl. A number of information boards provide interesting facts about the habitats in the general area and their inhabitants. The path continues downhill into the cool cave system and ends at an exhibition (see “Did you know?”).

At the other end of Fertőrákos, the causeway leads out through the reed belt to the lakefront beach resort. There are only few places for drivers to park along the causeway, but there is also no dedicated pedestrian or bicycle path. But the lakefront resort itself (an entrance fee is charged in the summer months) offers good opportunities to see **reed birds**. North of the canal, a dirt road **3** leads along the shore of the lake past a reed storage site. Beside seeing **reed birds**, one can also use a spotting scope to scan the reed roofs, pylons, and poles of the large lake huts in the water for colour-marked **gulls’ feet**. Some of the buildings in this row of houses on pylons were ravaged by flames in 2017 when a fire broke out in one of the huts and quickly spread to others in strong wind.

The best “seawatching” spot on the Hungarian side of



Lake Neusiedl is the end of the breakwater in the lakefront resort **4**. Autumn offers the best chances of observing **gulls, divers, and grebes** here, such as **Red-throated Loon, Black-throated Loon, Great Crested Grebe, Horned Grebe, and Black-necked Grebe**. Even in very cold winters, some ice-free patches usually remain in the large bay, which are used by **geese** and various **waterbirds** to sleep and drink.

Other animals and plants

Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), European green toad (*Bufotes viridis*), Green-eyed hawker (*Aeshna isocetes*), Eastern eggar (*Eriogaster catax*), Willowherb hawkmoth (*Proserpinus proserpina*), Four-spotted chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*), Pheasant's eye (*Adonis vernalis*), Greater pasque flower (*Pulsatilla grandis*), Rock buckthorn (*Rhamnus saxatilis*), Burning bush (*Dictamnus albus*), Feather grass (*Stipa pennata* agg.)

DID YOU KNOW?

The white Leitha limestone from the impressive quarry was already used by the Romans – and many public buildings, residential homes, and churches were built with this stone in Sopron and Vienna as well. Until its closure in 1948, the continued quarrying activity had created cavities with excellent acoustics. These caves are now used in summer for theatre performances, concerts, operettas, musicals, and other events. What is more, a modern exhibition in the cave system informs visitors about the Leitha limestone and the fauna and flora of the prehistoric ocean that formed it. The exhibition features impressive, life-sized representations of prehistoric whales and sharks and other extinct marine animals that once existed here.



European green toad (© C. Rie.)



Black-necked Grebe (© G. Löl.)



Kestrel
(© P. Fr.)



Caspian Gulls (© P. Fr.)



Great Reed Warbler (© F. Wen.)



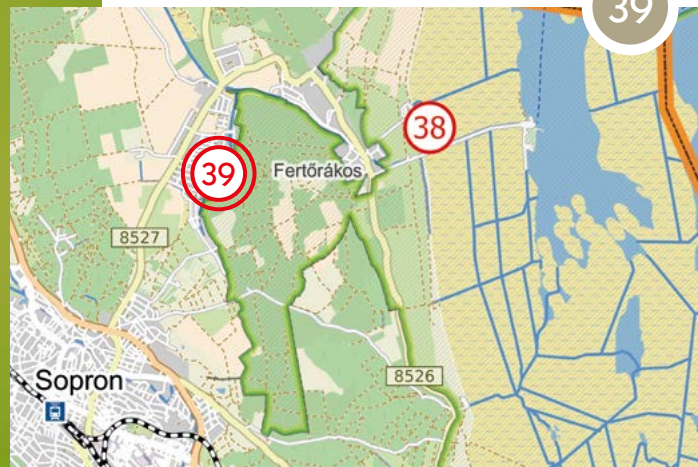
Feather grass (© C. Röl.)

Kis-Tómalom

(little pond-mill)



Kingfisher (© P. Fu.)



Swimming area at Sopronkőhida
(N: 47.718200, E: 16.626300)

Kis-Tómalom (translates as “little pond-mill”) is the name of one of the two idyllic little lakes between Sopron and Fertőrákos, which can also be reached by bicycle from Mörbisch, 9 km away. Nestled between mixed oak forests and a rather new residential area of Sopronkőhida (German: Steinambrückl), a wide variety of birds can be discovered along these two elongated ponds – mostly in the shade of old, cavity-rich trees.

3.9 km

Length

min. 2 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

During the breeding season, the bodies of water and their comparably large lakeshore zones harbour **Mallard**, **Water Rail**, **Moorhen**, **Coot**, **Savi's Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Penduline Tit**, and **Reed Bunting**. Sometimes **Marsh Harrier** come by here to hunt, and **Common Swift** and **swallows** to drink.

From the slopes of the mixed oak forest, **Wryneck**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Middle Spotted Woodpecker**, **Blackcap**, **Long-tailed Tit**, **Nuthatch**, and



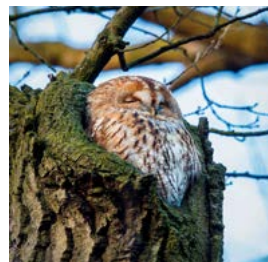
Long-tailed Tit (© H. M. Ber.)



Moorhen (© P. Fri.)



Middle Spotted Woodpecker (© G. Lot.)



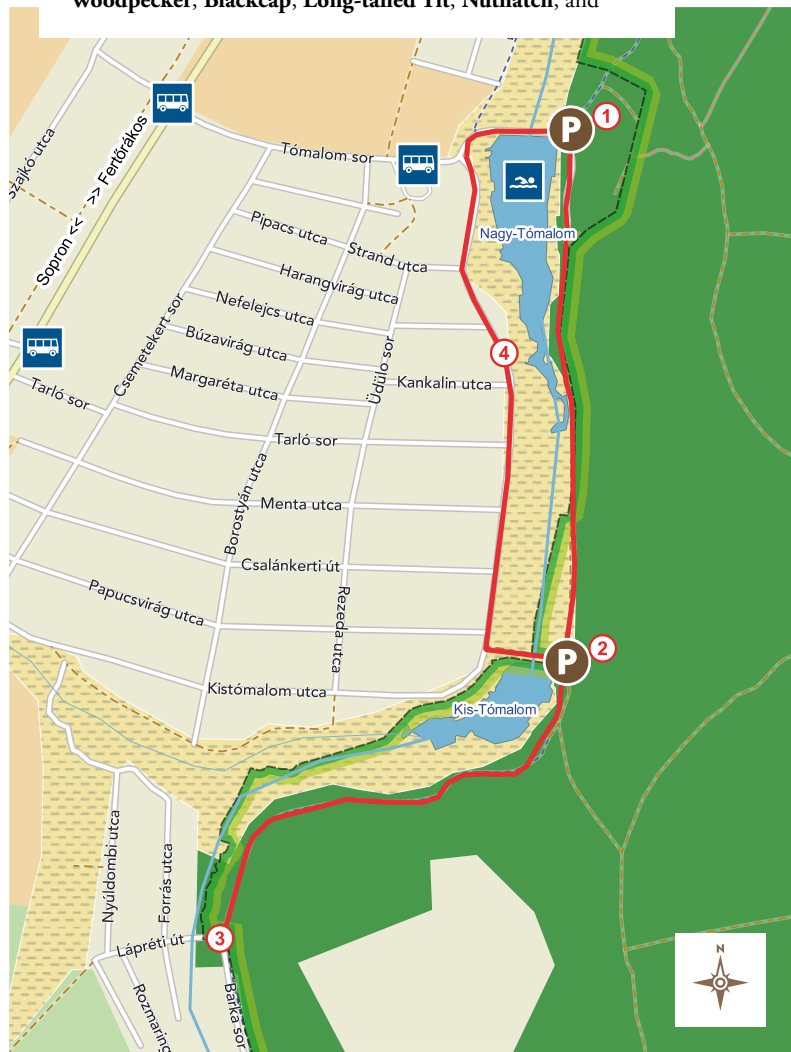
Tawny Owl (© G. Lot.)



Wryneck (© P. Fri.)



Coot (© C. Rol.)



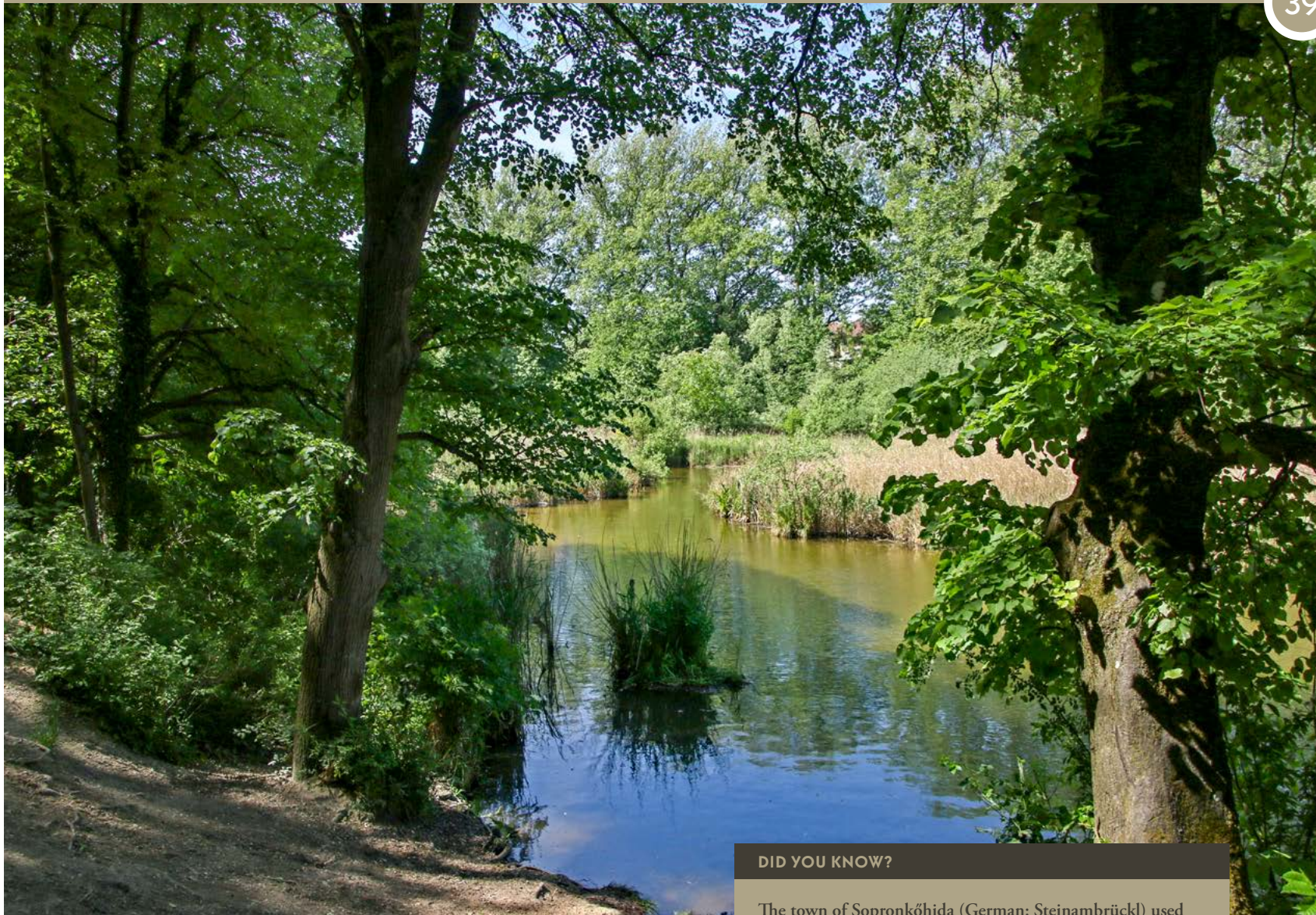
Golden Oriole can be heard in spring. The ponds are also used for fishing, which explains the many platforms along the water's edge. For those in need of cooling off, the northern pond, the Nagytómalom, also offers a swimming beach.

Route

The route begins (on foot or by bicycle) at the north-eastern end of the Nagytómalom **1**, very close to the swimming area. After heading south for almost a kilometre, one reaches the Kis-Tómalom **2** and follows its eastern shore. A few metres later there is a fork in the road with a barrier. Take the right-hand trail here and follow it along the protected lakeshore zone (entering it is strictly prohibited!) until the first road **3**. From here it is best to take the same way back to the northern end of the Kis-Tómalom **2**, where one can turn left this time and follow the western shore of the Nagytómalom **4** back to the starting point.

Other animals and plants

Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), Aesculapian snake (*Zamenis longissimus*), Danube crested newt (*Triturus dobrogicus*), Common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Marsh frog (*Pelophylax ridibundus*), Downy emerald (*Cordulia aenea*), Green-eyed hawklet (*Aeshna isoeles*), Scarce swallowtail (*Iphiclides podalirius*), White admiral (*Limnitis camilla*), Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*), Marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), Early marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata* subsp. *ochroleuca*), Fen orchid (*Liparis loeselii*), Black bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Davall's sedge (*Carex davalliana*)

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The town of Sopronköhida (German: Steinambrückl) used to consist largely of a sugar factory and its outbuildings. In 1883, the strictest **prison** of the monarchy was erected here, which continued to be used throughout the National Socialist and Communist regimes and was “specialised” on political prisoners.

Várhely

(Burgstall)



Goldcrest (© G. Ló.)



Parking area along Récényi út
(N: 47.652700, E: 16.530800)

Although it is already quite distant from the lake basin, this route (which also has plenty of interesting history to offer) is included in this compilation for good reason: the diverse forest offers a good opportunity to add coniferous forest species to one's observation list, which are otherwise not found in the immediate vicinity of the lake.

min. **3.4** km

Length

min. **2** h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access

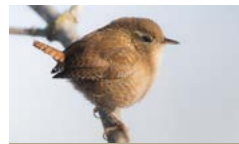
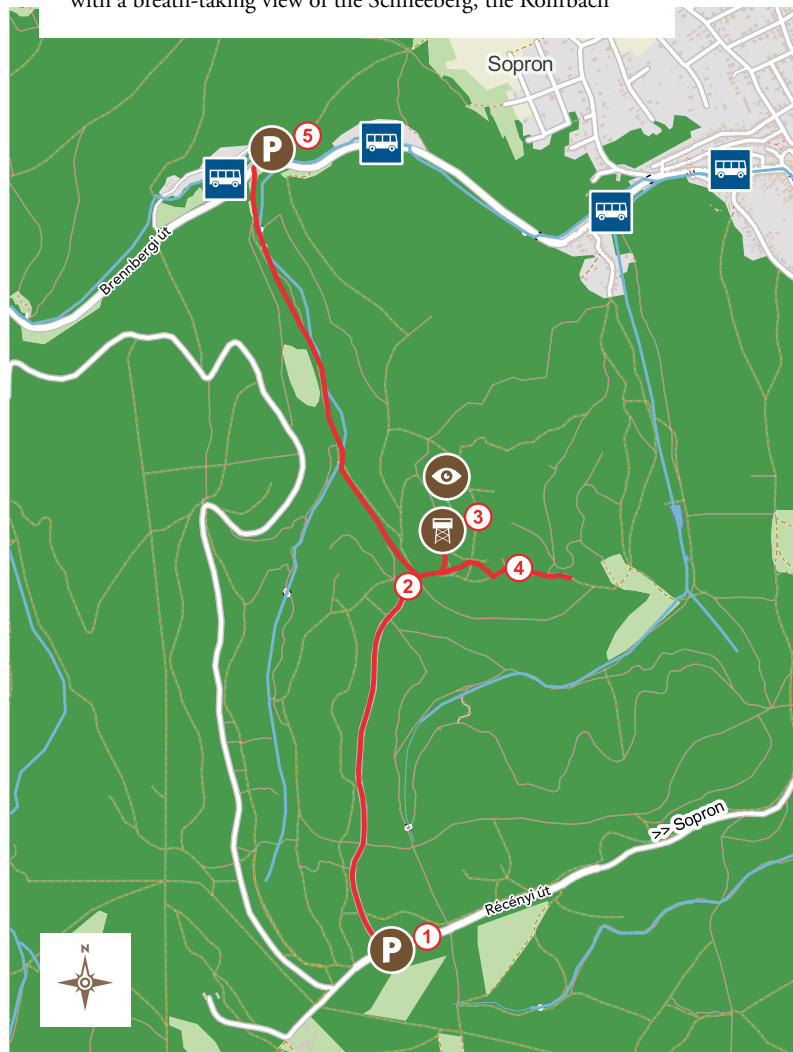


Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

Tawny Owl, Black Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Wren, Robin, Firecrest, Goldcrest, Crested Tit, Coal Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Jay, and Red Crossbill all belong to the species array of this tour.

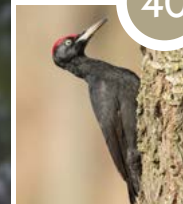
On top of that, the route passes a significant field of burial mounds (see “Did you know?”). From the Várhely lookout tower at the route’s highest point, in good weather one is rewarded with a breath-taking view of the Schneeberg, the Rohrbach



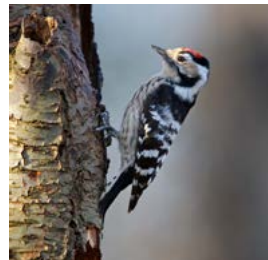
Wren (© P. Fri.)



Crested Tit (© H. Kol.)



Black Woodpecker (© P. Fri.)



Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (© G. Löl.)



Firecrest (© H. Kol.)

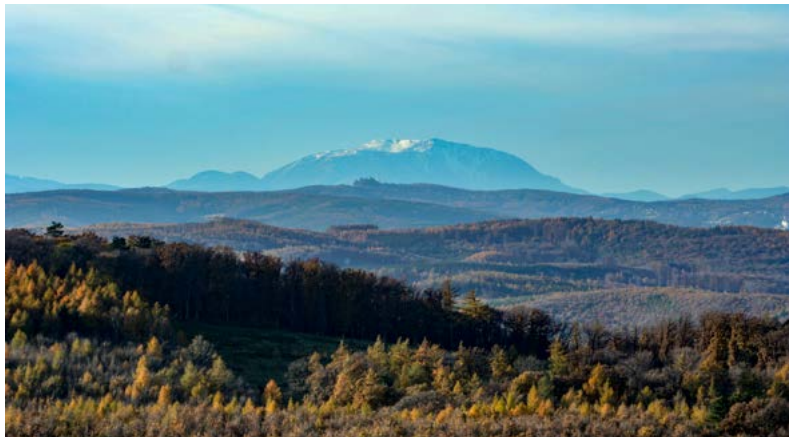


Tawny Owl (© W. Blt.)

ponds, and Lake Neusiedl. Since this route will mostly be reached via Sopron, the tour can easily be combined with a visit to the town’s lovely historic centre.

Route

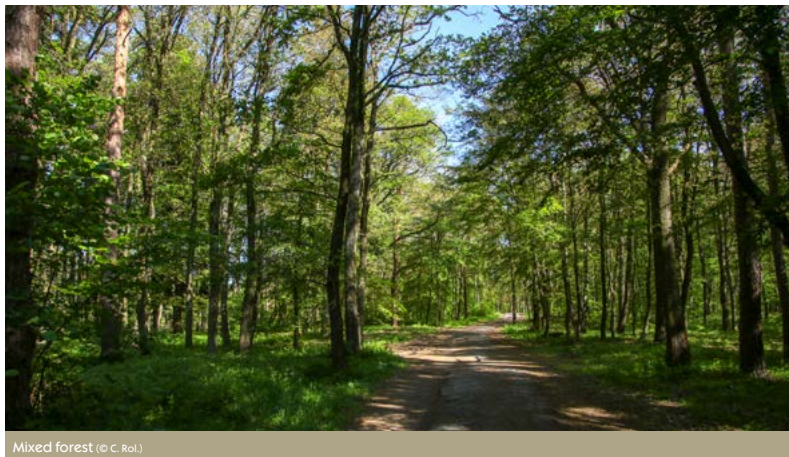
At the south-western edge of Sopron, take Récényi út and follow it for 4 km to a parking opportunity beside the road **1** with picnic benches, information boards, and a barrier. Behind the barrier, the partially paved forest road heads north along the ridge of the hill through forests of beech, oak, chestnut, larch, fir, and red pine. Shortly after a rest area (with a memorial to the archaeologist Lajos Bella), one reaches the only major fork in the path **2**, where the route continues towards the top of the hill. After about 100 m, a narrow trail branches off to the left, heading for the crest of the Várhely and the lookout tower located there **3**. If one continues straight ahead at this turnoff and follows the trail downhill heading east at the next turnoff as well, one soon reaches an old stand of fir trees **4** which is a real hotspot for coniferous forest species. With sufficient energy reserves and good shoes, back at the large crossroads **2** one can choose to take the path down the valley on the western side of the Várhely until Brennerbergi út **5**. **Grey Wagtail** and the rare **Balkan goldenring** can be seen here in summer, while **White-throated Dipper** can be spotted in the stream in win-



View from the Várhely towards the Schneeberg (© S. Mog.)



View from the Várhely towards Sopron (© S. Mog.)



Mixed forest (© C. Rol.)

ter. Of course the route can also be accessed from this point as an alternative.

Other animals and plants

Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*), Slowworm (*Anguis fragilis*), Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), Aesculapian snake (*Zamenis longissimus*), Fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*), Common frog (*Rana temporaria*), Balkan goldenring (*Cordulegaster heros*), Green snaketail (*Ophiogomphus cecilia*), Orange underwing (*Archicaris parthenias*), Camberwell beauty (*Nymphalis antiopa*), Large tortoiseshell (*Nymphalis polychloros*), Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), Alpine cyclamen (*Cyclamen purpurascens*), Broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The archaeologist Lajos Bella first started studying the field of burial mounds at the fortified settlement on the Burgstallberg (Várhely) in the late 19th century. He discovered that the site was used during various consecutive ages, from the time of the Urnfield culture (approx. 1300 to 800 B.C.), throughout the Hallstatt period, until the late La Tène period.



Fire salamander (© C. Ric.)



White-throated Dipper (© P. Fri.)



Várhely observation tower (© C. Rol.)



Coal Tit (© G. Loi.)



Rest area (© C. Rol.)



Red Crossbill (© H. Kol.)

Gloriette at Fertőboz



Hobby (© w. Bau)



Beginning of trail to the gloriette
(N: 47.636500, E: 16.698222)

Visitors circling Lake Neusiedl should definitely stop at the little town of Fertőboz, south-west of the lake. Two paths, one of which with steps, lead quite steeply about 40 metres of elevation through hillside forest to the gloriette, a little open pavilion with an exceptionally beautiful view of Lake Neusiedl. At no other place is the reed belt as wide and mighty as it is here: it is almost 6km from the edge of the lake basin to the “Silbersee”, as Lake Neusiedl’s large southern expanse of water is known.

min. 1.5 km

Length

min. 0.75 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



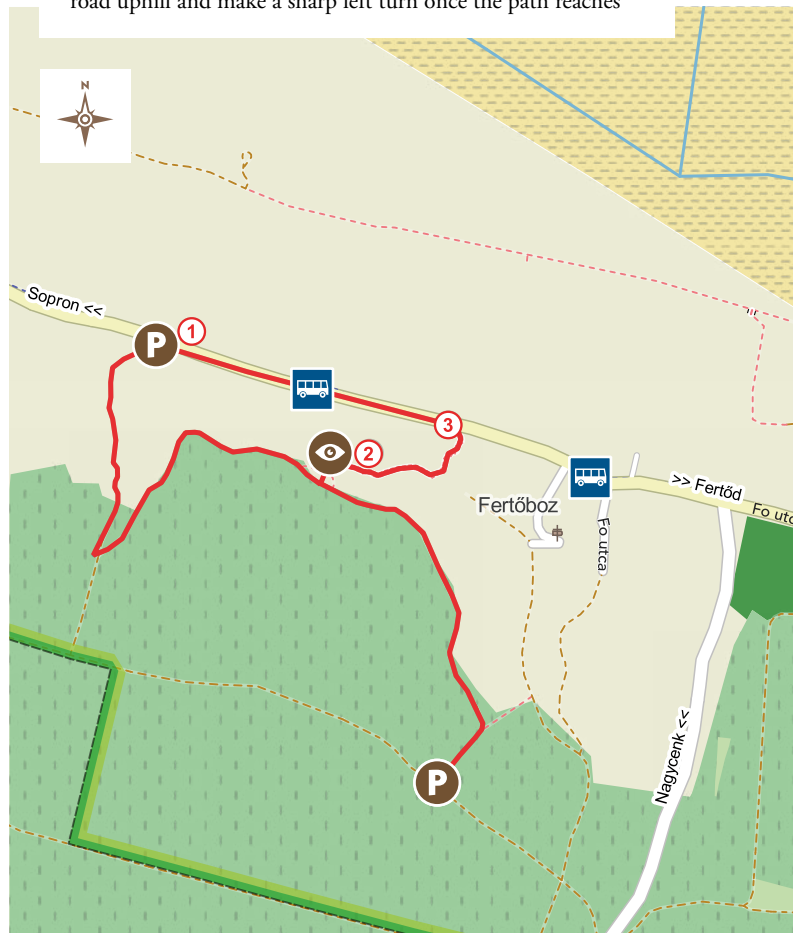
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

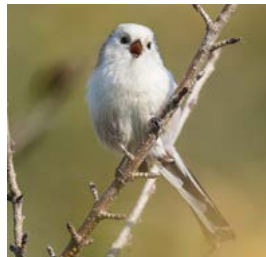
The most likely reed species to be observed from up here are the **Marsh Harriers** performing their acrobatic aerial displays over the forest of reeds in spring. With luck (and a strongly magnifying spotting scope!), **Pygmy Cormorant** and other **waterbirds** might also be discovered in the distant reed channels. **Hobbies** are observed here occasionally, hunting in flight.

Route

A little valley incision just within the western limits of Fertőboz, with a parking area next to the road **1**, mark this route's starting point. From here, follow the steep, unpaved road uphill and make a sharp left turn once the path reaches



Grass snake (© G. Löl.)



Long-tailed Tit (© P. Fri.)



Marsh Harrier (© H. M. Ber.)


Red-backed Shrike
(© P. Fri.)


European green lizard (© C. Rie.)



View from the gloriette (© C. Rol.)

the vineyards at the top. Now the route follows the forest edge for a good 400 m until it reaches the gloriette **2**. Following the vineyard a little further east until the next dirt road, one is offered another spectacular view of the lake and (during the breeding season) may have added **Hoopoe**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Woodlark**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Long-tailed Tit**, and **Red-backed Shrike** to one's observation list.

Back at the gloriette, a narrow trail leads down a long flight of steps to Fertőboz, to a rest area with a tapped spring **3**. Of course the route can also be started from here!

The Nagyecsek palace grounds and the avenue of lindens (see Route 42) lie not even 2 km east of the gloriette – the connecting path along the ridge, with a continuous view of the lake, is highly recommended!

Other animals and plants

Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), European green lizard (*Lacerta viridis*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Clouded Apollo (*Parnassius mnemosyne*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The construction of the gloriette was commissioned by Count Ferenc Széchenyi (see Route 42) on the occasion of the visit of Palatine Joseph (Archduke Joseph of Austria).

Nagycenk: palace grounds and linden avenue



Robin © M. Tó.



Parking area at Széchenyi railway museum in Nagycenk
(N: 47.60990, E: 16.705000)

The beautiful palace grounds, with 200-year-old plane trees, a Californian Sequoia, and other exotic tree species, offer plenty of birdlife. Together with the palace and the avenue of linden trees planted in 1754, the park is a world heritage site.

Széchenyi palace in Nagycenk, constructed in a late Baroque and Neoclassicist style, was the home of two significant members of the Széchenyi family.

min. **2.8** km

Length

min. **1** h

Duration



Gear



Movement



Access



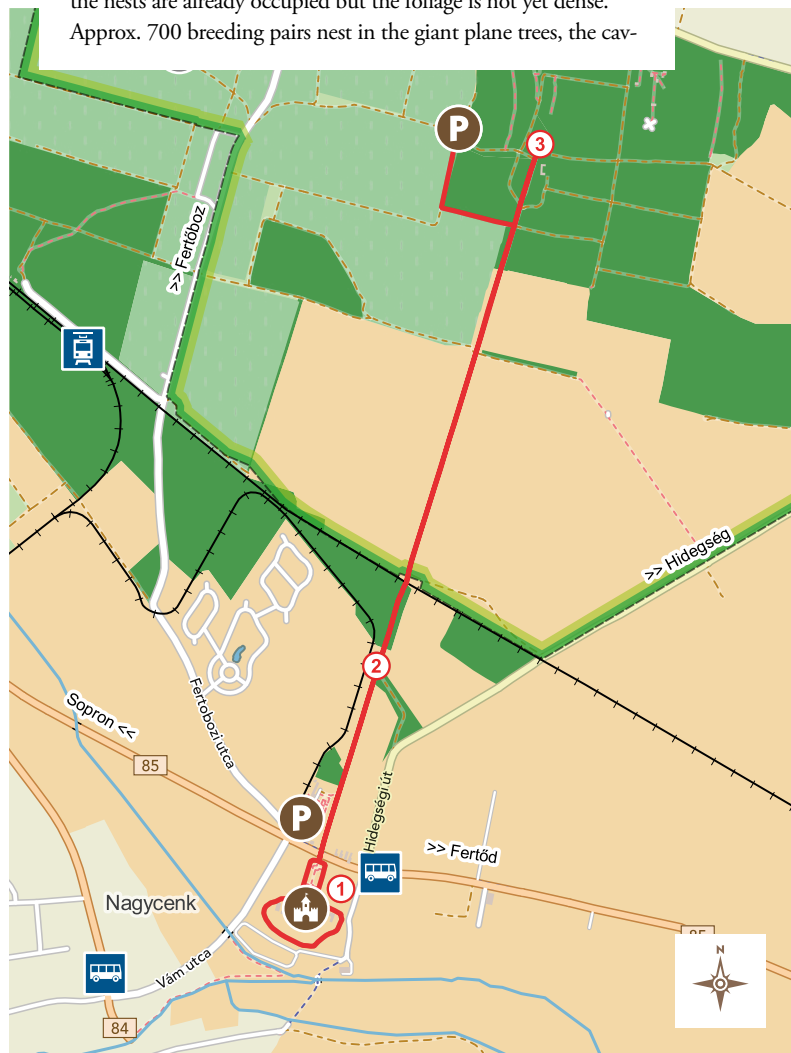
Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

General information about the area

Ferenc Széchenyi not only founded the Hungarian National Museum, but also the National Library. His son, István Széchenyi, a Hungarian state reformer and businessman, is still known to many of his compatriots as “the Greatest Hungarian”.

Route

The public park **1** is home to what is probably Hungary’s largest colony of **Rooks**, which is best viewed in early spring when the nests are already occupied but the foliage is not yet dense. Approx. 700 breeding pairs nest in the giant plane trees, the cav-



Nagycenk palace grounds (© T. Had.)



Collared Flycatcher (© M. Tie.)



Long-eared Owl
(© P. Fri.)

ities of which are also used by around 50 pairs of **Jackdaw**. Bird abundance is generally quite high: breeding species include **Rock Dove**, **Collared Dove**, **Long-eared Owl**, **Tawny Owl**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Syrian Woodpecker**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Song Thrush**, **Robin**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **House Sparrow**, **Serin**, **Greenfinch**, **Goldfinch**, and **Linnet**. Should the park not be satisfying enough, one can also stroll north along the beautiful avenue of linden trees **2**, which is 2.6 km long and 20 m wide. Preservation work on the avenue’s trees in the interest of nature conservation is coordinated by the Fertő-Hanság National Park administration. Only while crossing the railway tracks should one’s attention be shifted briefly from the beautiful trees to watch out for approaching trains! **Turtle Dove**, **Hoopoe**, **Skylark**, **Collared Flycatcher**, **Golden Oriole**, **Red-backed Shrike**, and **Yellowhammer** are some of the breeding species along the line of trees. At the end of the avenue, continue a little further on a little trail into the forest: the grave **3** of István Széchenyi’s son and wife, reached after about 250 m after passing old oaks, is absolutely worth seeing. Beside many other forest species, one should be able to add the fourth species of pigeon, **Stock Dove**, to this route’s list – if only acoustically.

Other animals and plants

Greater mouse-eared bat (*Myotis myotis*), Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Grey long-eared bat (*Plecotus austriacus*), Lime hawk-moth (*Mimas tiliae*), Beautiful demoiselle (*Calopteryx virgo*), Ornate bluethroat (*Coenagrion ornatum*), Small pincrestail (*Onychogomphus forcipatus*), *Arum cylindraceum*

DID YOU KNOW?

Nagycenk palace (German: Groß-Zinkendorf) has one of the most relevant museums of the region’s history, where the role of István Széchenyi as a reformer is presented in detail.

Hegykö nature trail



Purple Heron (© P. Frit)



Not quite 6 km west of Fertőd, a multi-faceted nature trail leads from the town of Hegykő along arable land, meadows, pastures, copses, and channels into the lakeshore zone of Lake Neusiedl. Select bird, amphibian, reptile, and plant species are presented on information boards along the trail.

Just before the observation tower at the end of the trail, there is an “Iron Curtain” memorial site. Different methods used to secure the border are presented with largely original preserved material.

4.9 km

Length

min. 2 h

Duration



Gear



Movement



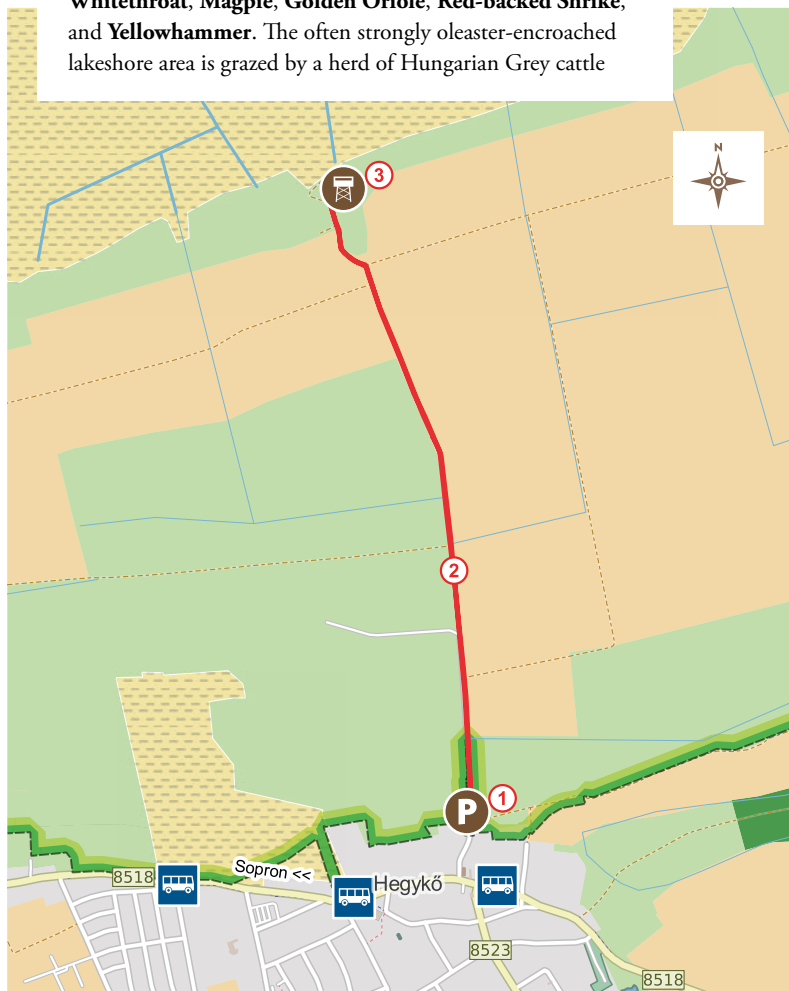
Access



Best months: ● normal ● good ● very good

Route

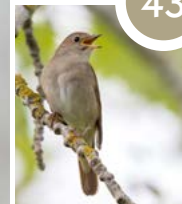
Turning off the main road in Hegykő next to the catholic church, a parking area **1** is reached shortly after the last houses, where the nature trail begins. The “duck pond” right next to the parking area was formerly used to water horses and is now inhabited by **Mallard**, **Coot**, **Sedge Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, and **Reed Bunting**. For the next 2 km until the lakeshore zone – along a largely gravel road **2** – the species most commonly encountered will be species of open to semi-open landscapes, such as **Common Buzzard**, **Kestrel**, **Hobby**, **Turtle Dove**, **Stonechat**, **Nightingale**, **Blackcap**, **Common Whitethroat**, **Magpie**, **Golden Oriole**, **Red-backed Shrike**, and **Yellowhammer**. The often strongly oleaster-encroached lakeshore area is grazed by a herd of Hungarian Grey cattle



Hungarian Grey cattle (© C. Rol.)



Common Buzzard (© P. Fri.)


Nightingale
(© G. Lok.)


Great Reed Warbler (© P. Fri.)



Coot (© W. Tri.)



Observation tower (© C. Rol.)

and water buffalo. The monotonous song of **Grasshopper Warbler** can regularly be heard here in spring, while **Sedge Warbler**, **Reed Warbler**, **Great Reed Warbler**, **Penduline Tit**, and **Reed Bunting** can be heard from the wide reed belt. The giant expanse of reeds can be scanned for **Marsh Harrier** and **herons** flying overhead from the observation tower **3** at the southern end of one of the larger channels.

Other animals and plants

Hungarian Grey cattle, Water buffalo, Pine marten (*Martes martes*), Mediterranean water shrew (*Neomys anomalus*), Viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), Danube crested newt (*Triturus dobrogicus*), Smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*), Moor frog (*Rana arvalis wolterstorffi*), European fire-bellied toad (*Bombina bombina*), European tree frog (*Hyla arborea*), Green-eyed hawk (*Aeshna isoeles*), Migrant hawk (*Aeshna mixta*), Southern migrant hawk (*Aeshna affinis*), Military orchid (*Orchis militaris*), *Cirsium brachycephalum*

DID YOU KNOW?

Golden jackal: Since the first records of the species' successful reproduction in the Austrian lakeshore zone in 2007 and 2009, there has been a lack of current sightings in the Lake Neusiedl area. But since the “reed wolf” is continually expanding its range from South-east Europe, it is only a matter of time until the species will next be recorded in the area. A rather remote grazed lakeshore area, like the one here, south of the lake, is the perfect habitat for this shy species.

Selection of

Bird Species

The following pages provide details regarding the population sizes, seasonal occurrence, and best observation spots of selected bird species along the 43 routes. A complete species list is available in printed form at the National Park information centre, or as a download from the National Park website. Furthermore, the free app “BirdList Neusiedler See” is also available for download from Google Play and the App Store.



Pygmy Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

5 (5, 7), 12 (1–3), 13 (3), 19 (3), 20 (5–6), 35 (2)

Breeding species in the lake's reed belt since 2007; currently 229–358 pairs; occasionally also breeds in the Hanság. Post-breeding congregations of 400–700 individuals in August and September. Winters along the Einser-Kanal and in the inundation zones on the Hungarian side.



Eurasian Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

11 (5), 12 (1–3), 20 (5–6), 26 (1–4), 27 (3–5), 36 (1–4), 38 (2–4)

Common breeding species in the lake's reed belt, in the Hungarian Hanság, and in the saline lakes with stronger reed growth. Best identified acoustically.



Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

5 (5, 7), 12 (1), 13, 15, 19 (3), 20 (5–6)

First recorded as a breeding species in the reed belt in 1998; since then intermittent breeding species with up to 14 pairs. Occasional breeding also in the Nyirkai-Hany and the Kóny-tó. Occasional congregations of 30–100 individuals after the breeding season.



Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

12 (1–3), 13 (3), 19 (3), 20 (5–6), 38 (2–4)

Common breeding species in the reed belt, with a population of 150–200 pairs; also breeds in smaller numbers in the Hungarian Hanság. Best seen on foraging flights above the reeds.



Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

5 (5, 7), 12 (1–2), 13 (2), 15 (3), 19 (3), 20 (5–6)

Breeds on the reed belt's large reed island with 67–121 pairs; irregular breeding species in the Nyirkai-Hany.



Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Common in the saline lakes of the Seewinkel and in the lakeshore area.

Common breeding species in the lake's reed belt (> 100 pairs), rarer around the saline lakes (< 20 pairs); also breeds in small numbers in the Hungarian Hanság. Gatherings of 2000–2800 individuals in April and June, predominantly males.



Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

12 (1–3), 13 (3), 17 (2), 19 (3), 20 (5–6)

Common breeding species in the reed belts of Lake Neusiedl and in the Nyirkai-Hany; only few breeding pairs in the saline lakes.



very rarely seen



rarely seen



commonly seen



White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

7 (1-4), 11 (1-8), 15 (3-4), 17 (1-3)

1 breeding pair around Lake Neusiedl; numerous eyles in the Hungarian Hanság; otherwise regular winter guest with 10-30 individuals.



Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

17 (1, 3), 20

Breeds in the Hanság and the Zitzmannsdorfer Wiesen with 1-2 pairs each; more common and widespread during migration, and regularly seen at Lake Neusiedl and the Hungarian Hanság especially in April.



Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

19 (3), 20 (5, 6)

Rare migrant, but 1-2 individuals wintering in the Hungarian part of Lake Neusiedl and in the Hanság since 1996, in recent years especially in the Nyirkai-Hany.



Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

17 (1, 3), 20 (2, 5)

Breeding species in the Austrian and Hungarian Hanság and also around Lake Neusiedl for a few years.



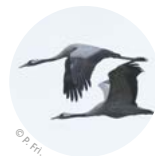
Little Crane (*Porzana parva*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

12 (1-2), 20 (5, 6), 26 (1-4), 27 (3-5), 38 (2)

The lake's reed belt is home to one of Europe's largest breeding populations; also breeds in smaller numbers in the Hungarian Hanság; best identified acoustically during the breeding season.



Common Crane (*Grus grus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

15 (4), 20

Breeding species in the Hanság in the 19th century. Regular migrant in strongly increasing numbers (many thousand individuals in exceptional years in autumn); Individuals occasionally spend summer on Hungarian side.



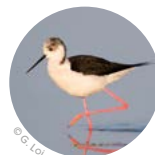
Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

17 (1, 3)

Rare breeding species in the Austrian Hanság with currently 5-10 breeding females; most conspicuous during mating season between April and mid-May with currently 10-12 displaying males (see page 154).



Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

19 (3), 20 (4, 5, 6)

Widespread breeding species with 120-210 breeding pairs, especially at grazed parts of the lakeshore zone and at saline lakes with stronger reed growth. Breeding dependent on water levels; avoids white-water saline lakes.



Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

5 (6), 6 (2-4, 8), 8 (5), 11 (4, 6-8), 19 (3), 20 (4, 5, 6), 33 (1), 36 (2)

Character species of the Seewinkel's saline lakes with sparse reed growth; record population levels in 2009 and 2010 with 250-280 breeding pairs.



very rarely seen



rarely seen



commonly seen



Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

10 (3–4, 6–8), 11 (7–8), 13 (2), 20 (5, 6)

24–45 breeding pairs around the saline lakes and at a few pastures in the Seewinkel. Only 17 breeding pairs were recorded in the extremely dry year of 2017 (see page 96).



Temminck's Stint (*Calidris temminckii*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

6 (1–3), 10 (7, 8), 20 (5, 6)

Markedly focussed migration in the first half of May with up to 100 individuals; during autumn migration, especially in August, up to 50.



Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

6 (2, 3), 10 (7, 8), 11 (7–8), 15 (3), 20 (5, 6)

Increasing number of observations in recent years, and increasing group sizes, especially during spring migration. Often found in amongst groups of other sandpipers.



Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

3 (6), 8(5), 10 (6–8), 11 (4–6), 20

Breeding species of the Seewinkel's meadows and pasture areas with 90–130 breeding pairs; moulting congregations between June and early August with up to 300 individuals, e.g. at the Illmitzer Zicksee and Unterer Stinkersee.



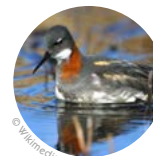
Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

10 (6–8), 13 (2, 3), 20 (4–5, 4–8)

Single breeding record from 1914. Annual migrant in small numbers, up to 20 individuals.



Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

10 (6–8), 11 (2–4), 20 (5, 6)

Very rare but annual migrant, especially in the second half of May (adult females) and late August.



Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

11 (1, 2), 20 (4–5, 4–7)

Up to 100 breeding pairs in recent years; the main breeding site shifts between Lange Lacke, Illmitzer Zicksee, Mexicopuszta, and the Nyirkai-Hany, depending on water levels.



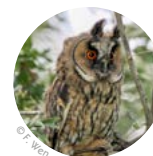
Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

11 (5), 19 (2–3), 20 (4, 5, 6)

Breeding species since 2009 in wet years with 40–70 breeding pairs – in exceptional years approx. 300 pairs (2015).



Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

14 (5), 20 (2–4), 21, 32, 39, 42

Common breeding species. Frequently breeds in Magpies' nests. Locally large communal roosting sites in winter.



very rarely seen



rarely seen



commonly seen



Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

17 (1)

Pronounced fluctuation in breeding and wintering populations in the expansive meadow areas. Up to 10 breeding pairs in good mouse years, none in bad years.



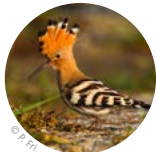
European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

2 (3), 18 (4), 37 (3)

Regular breeding species with few colonies.



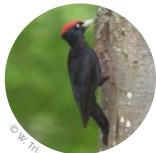
Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

5 (2-7), 6, 9, 10 (1), 13 (3-5)

Widespread breeding species in the Seewinkel; rarer on the western shore of the lake and in the Hanság.



Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

18, 21, 29 (2), 32 (3-4), 39, 40, 42 (3)

Widespread breeding species in the Leitha Mountains; isolated breeding species in the Hanság. Increasingly regular guest in the Seewinkel.



Syrian Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos syriacus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

6 (7), 9 (1-3), 14 (5-7), 20 (8), 21, 35 (2-3)

Widespread in residential areas and cultivated land with trees. Much more common in open countryside than Great Spotted Woodpecker.



Middle Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos medius*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

4 (1-4), 21 (3-5), 23 (4-5), 39 (1-3), 42 (3)

Isolated breeding species in the Hanság and locally common breeding species of old oak stands in the Leitha Mountains; otherwise guest from nearby forests.



Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

10 (8), 13 (1-2), 15 (1), 20 (4)

Local breeding species, particularly in commercial areas at the towns' edges, and around horse paddocks.



Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

3, 10 (3-4), 12 (4), 17 (1-2), 18, 19, 20, 37, 43

Breeding birds and absolute majority of migrants belong to the subspecies *flava*; subspecies *thunbergi* occurs regularly during migration, occasionally also *feldegg*, *flavissima*, and *cinereocapilla*.



Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints) _____

20 (5)

Breeds in the reed belt's land-facing edges and along lakefront causeways; also in small numbers in the Seewinkel and the Hanság. Widespread in the reed belt at low water levels.



very rarely seen



rarely seen



commonly seen



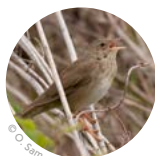
Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

17 (3), 18 (3-4), 20, 37, 43

Regular breeding species in the Hanság, but also widespread in other areas during migration.



River Warbler (*Locustella fluviatilis*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

17 (2), 18 (1-3, 5-6), 39, 43 (3)

Local breeding species along the Einser-Kanal, in the Hanság, as well as in small patches of floodplain forest on the western lakeshore between Purbach and Mörbisch.



Moustached Warbler (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

12 (2-3), 26 (1-4), 27 (3-5), 36 (1-3), 38 (2-3)

Very common breeding species of the reed belt, predominantly in mature reed stands. Rare breeding species in the Hungarian Hanság, does not occur around the saline lakes.



Barred Warbler (*Sylvia nisoria*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

3 (3), 5 (7), 9 (1-3), 10 (7, 9), 13 (4-5), 17 (2), 18, 37, 41, 42 (2-3)

Locally widespread breeding species in tall, dense stands of bushes and in hedgerows.



Collared Flycatcher (*Ficedula albicollis*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

22 (2-3), 28 (4-1), 31 (3-7), 40

Few breeding pairs in the Hanság, fairly widespread in the Leitha Mountains. Otherwise regular but very rare migrant in spring, between mid-April and early May.



Bearded Reedling (*Panurus biarmicus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

12 (2-3), 19 (2-3), 20 (4-5, 4-6), 26 (2-4), 27 (4-5), 38 (2-3), 43 (3)

Very common breeding species in the reed belt of Lake Neusiedl. Also breeds in smaller numbers at reed-lined bodies of water in the Hungarian Hanság. Winters in the region in varying numbers each year.



Penduline Tit (*Remiz pendulinus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

9 (1-2), 12 (P-2), 18 (3-6), 19 (2-3), 26 (1-4), 27 (3-4), 33 (3), 36 (1-3), 38 (2-3), 39, 43 (3)

Breeding species around the edges of the lake, along the lakefront causeways, around the saline lakes, and in the Hanság. Often seen in large groups in the reed belt in winter.



Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

3 (5), 5 (4-7), 10 (3-4), 13 (3-5), 18, 23 (3-4), 37, 41, 42 (2-3)

Common breeding species and migrant in open countryside.



Serin (*Serinus serinus*)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Route (Waypoints)

20 (3, 8), 21 (1, 2), 38 (1-2), 39 (1-4), 41 (1-3), 42 (1), 43 (1)

Common breeding species and migrant. Together with Linnet (and, rarely, Spotted Flycatcher) the only species that breeds in grapevines.

Source: Dvorak M., Laber J., Ranner A., Pellingner A., Táti S. & A. Lang: Artenliste. Die Vögel des Neusiedler See - Gebiets. Hrsg. Nationalpark Neusiedler See - Seewinkel und BirdLife Österreich, o. O., 2014. (supplemented and updated)



very rarely seen



rarely seen



commonly seen

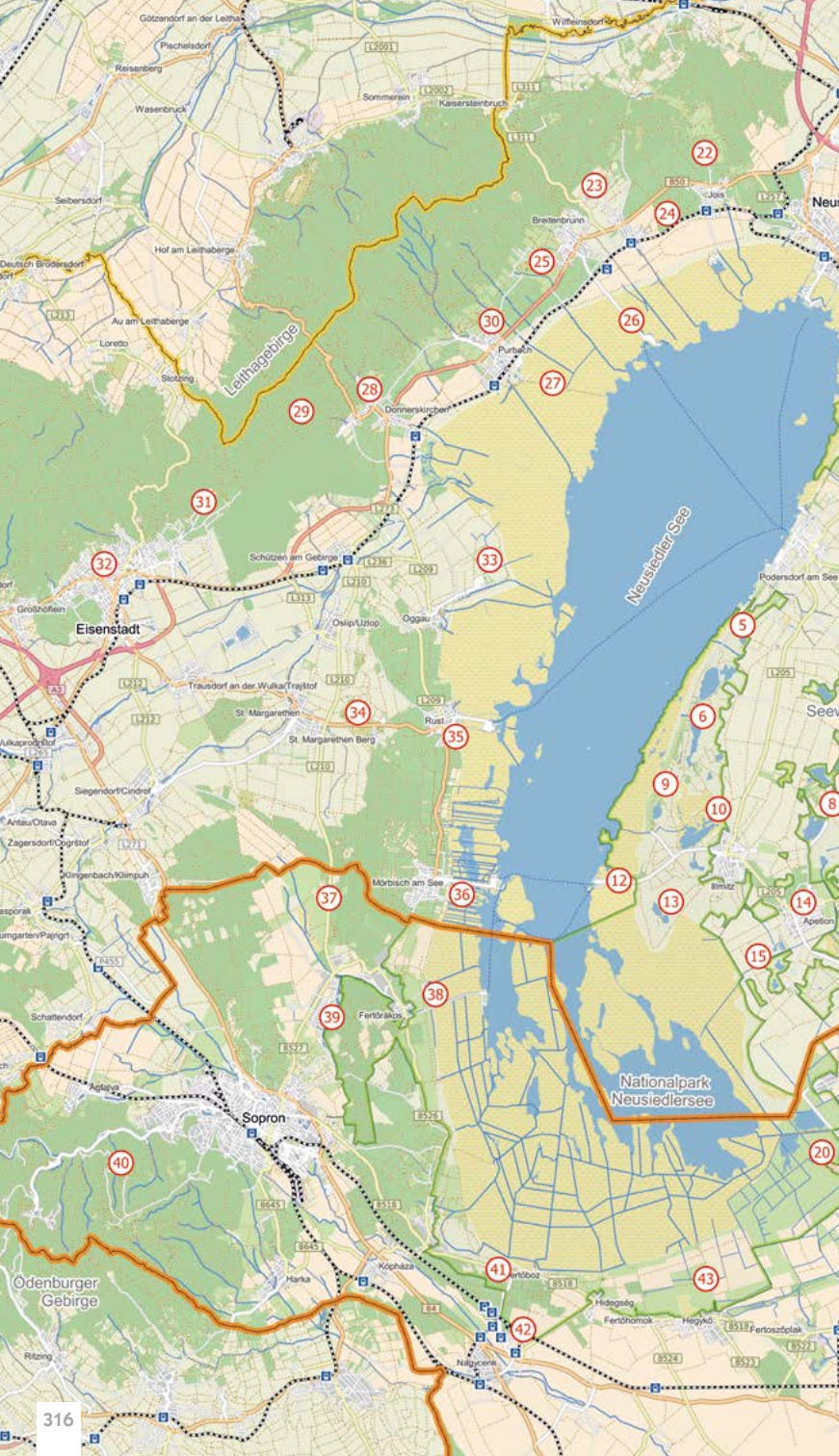
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A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a grey beanie and a dark jacket with an Arcteryx logo, is looking out at the ocean. A Herring Gull is in flight in the background, its wings spread. The sky is overcast.

About the Author

Christoph ROLAND

Christoph ROLAND, born in Vienna in 1972, is a freelance ornithologist in Austria. Though his work has taken him far beyond national borders, he has had a particular interest in the birdlife of northern Burgenland since 1996. His enthusiasm as a guide on ornithological excursions in the Neusiedler See - Seewinkel National Park has delighted many visitors since 2002, and the same goes for the birding trips to exceptional birding locations abroad, which he regularly guides for BirdLife Austria.

The author's passion for all bird-related matters is multifaceted. He is not only the organiser of the annual "Austrian BirdRace", he is almost obsessive in his pursuit of "ring reading" (*reading bird rings in the field*), and is an enthusiastic bird photographer. The principle of bird conservation is always central to all of these activities.

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