



# NATURE PARK KOPAČKI RIT



**KOPAČKI  
RIT** Park prirode  
Nature Park



**PARKOVI  
HRVATSKE** Parks  
of Croatia

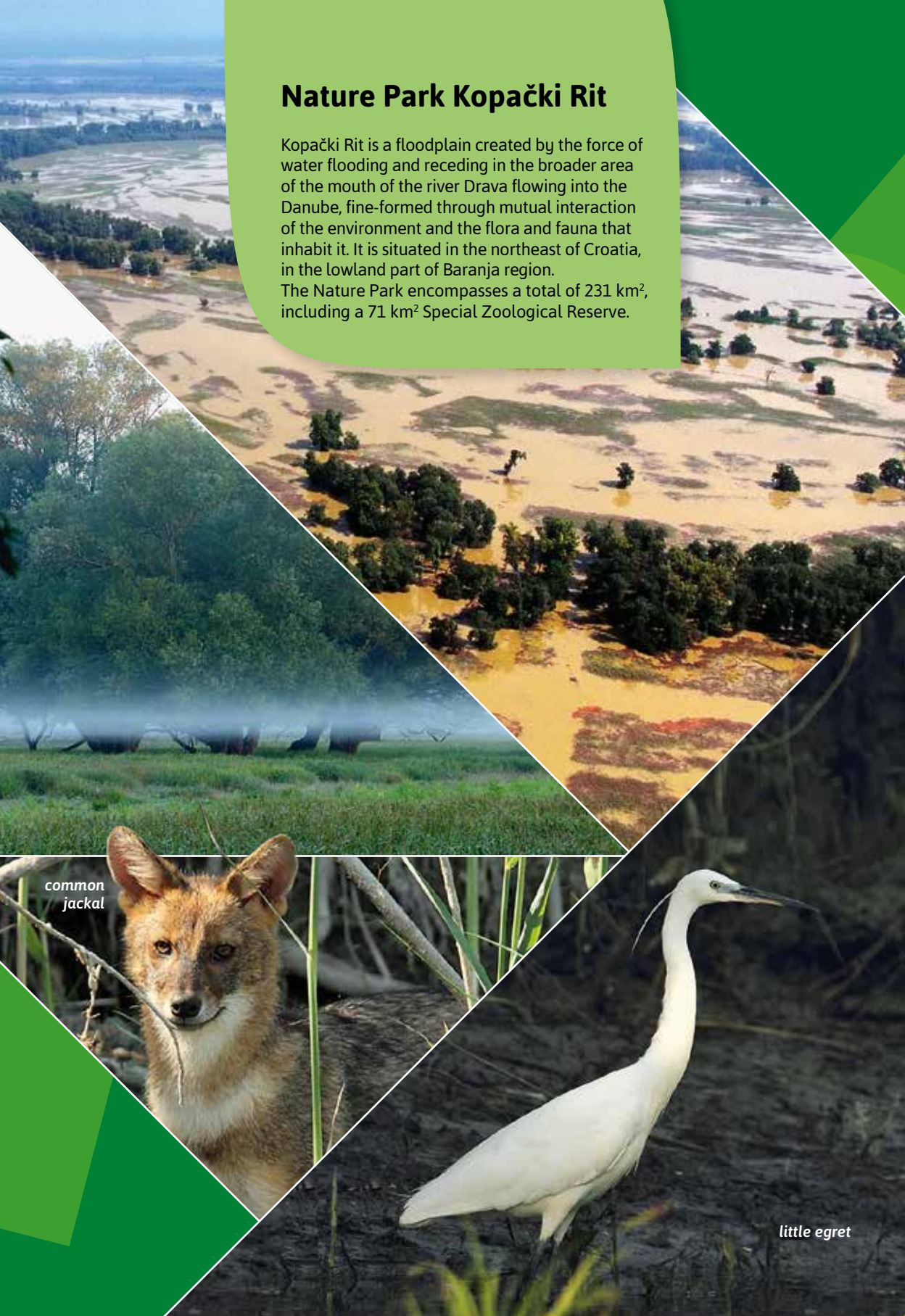
## The heart of the Danube



## Nature Park Kopački Rit

Kopački Rit is a floodplain created by the force of water flooding and receding in the broader area of the mouth of the river Drava flowing into the Danube, fine-formed through mutual interaction of the environment and the flora and fauna that inhabit it. It is situated in the northeast of Croatia, in the lowland part of Baranja region.

The Nature Park encompasses a total of 231 km<sup>2</sup>, including a 71 km<sup>2</sup> Special Zoological Reserve.



common  
jackal

little egret



## Conservation status

Kopački Rit is a valuable natural heritage site, protected since 1967 and recognized internationally.

Due to the abundance of fauna found in the southern part of the Park in particular, this area has been declared a Special Zoological Reserve. Moreover, due to the Park's extreme importance as a habitat of a large number of birds, in 1986 it was included in the Important Bird Areas in Europe list. Its international significance was further confirmed in 1993, when it was included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Kopački Rit is at the heart of a network of protected areas along the river Danube called DANUBE PARKS. The network was established in 2007 and focuses on conservation and promotion of natural and cultural heritage in the Danube Region and is closely connected with the implementation of the EUSDR (EU Strategy for the Danube Region). Kopački Rit is also an extremely important part of the Croatian-Hungarian Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube established by UNESCO in 2012.

## Water brings life

Life in the floodplains is inextricably linked to the natural flooding cycles. Depending on the quantity of water flowing in and out of the Park, the mosaic of intertwining stretches of water and land changes like a kaleidoscope, both in terms of appearance and function.


The bodies of water in the Park include lakes, for example Kopačko Lake, which is the largest, and Sakadaš Lake, which is the deepest, and numerous other water bodies such as ponds (Bijelo Lake, Sarvaš Pond, Semenča).

Lakes and ponds are interconnected by a network of natural canals (Vemeljski Dunavac, Hulovski Canal, Renovski Canal, Čonakut and other canals), which connect the lakes and ponds with one another or with the Danube or Drava.

The relief of Kopački Rit is the result of the force of water, which works its way across the floodplains, creating ponds (lower elevations) and sandbars (higher elevations). The long and narrow sandbars extend for hundreds of meters, side by side, and their curvature is what gives the area its unique appearance.

The entire floodplain of Kopački Rit takes on the appearance of a delta and, what is truly unique, the mighty Danube, assisted by the river Drava, forms what is known as an inner delta, a phenomenon that makes this area world-famous.

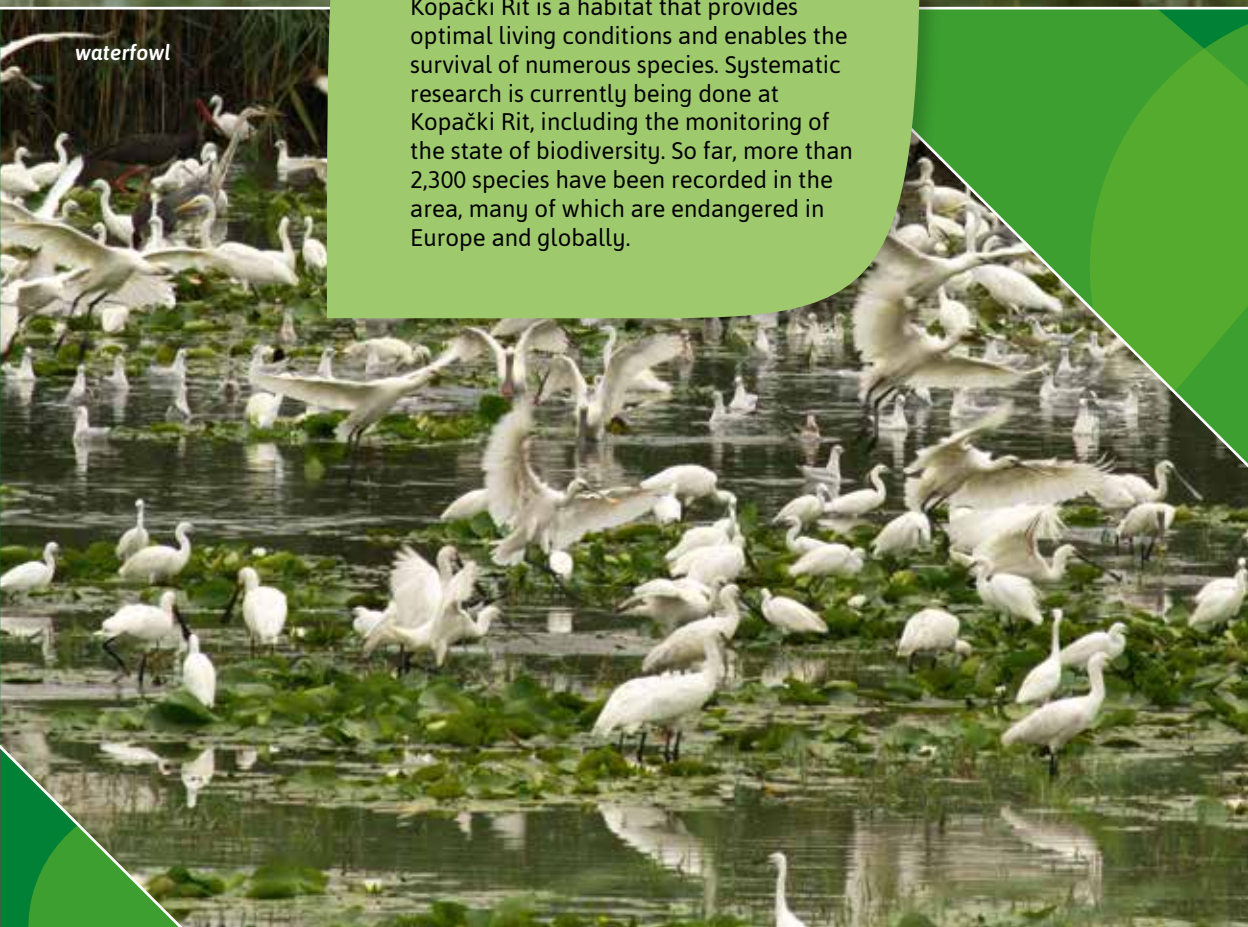


Two black storks with long, straight red bills and dark feathers are perched on a large, weathered log in a lush green wetland. The background is filled with tall grasses and reeds, and the water reflects the surrounding vegetation.

black storks

## Unique biodiversity

Nature Park Kopački Rit is one of the best-preserved large river floodplains in Europe. It is characterized by exceptional landscape forms and rich biodiversity. Kopački Rit is a habitat that provides optimal living conditions and enables the survival of numerous species. Systematic research is currently being done at Kopački Rit, including the monitoring of the state of biodiversity. So far, more than 2,300 species have been recorded in the area, many of which are endangered in Europe and globally.

A large flock of waterfowl, including many white swans and some darker birds, is gathered in a shallow wetland. The water is covered with green lily pads, and the birds are engaged in various activities like swimming and standing. The scene is vibrant and full of life.

waterfowl

## Wildlife

According to currently-available research, mammal fauna of Kopački Rit comprises 55 species, which is more than a half of the total mammal species of Croatia.

Reed beds stretching as far as the eye can see, ponds, flooded forests and wet meadows all provide optimal living conditions for many mammals, such as the red deer, roe deer, wild boar, wildcat, otter, beaver, badger and many more.



*red deer hinds*



*European otter*



*European beaver*

*red fox*



*wild boars*





mallards



white-tailed eagle



kingfisher

Nature Park Kopački Rit is known far and wide for its population of birds. It is home for as many as 300 different bird species, which is 80% of all bird species recorded in Croatia. Among them, more than 140 species nest regularly or occasionally in Kopački Rit. Species nesting in large colonies are especially interesting, like the grey heron, whiskered tern, great cormorant or black-headed gull. During spring and autumn migration, Kopački Rit is an important rest stop for many waterfowl species. The Park is also the nesting ground of the largest population of the white-tailed eagle in the entire Danube Basin. This bird is the Park's symbol. The great cormorant is a water-loving, fish-eating bird that nests in colonies in Kopački Rit.



cormorants



whiskered terns

Amphibian fauna of Kopački Rit comprises 12 species, which accounts for as much as 60% of the total of 20 amphibian species recorded in Croatia. The biology of all these species makes them bound to marshes and aquatic habitats.

Ten species of reptiles have been recorded in Kopački Rit, including one species of turtle, four lizard species and five species of snakes. This represents 25% of the total of 39 species of reptiles in Croatia.

European pond turtles can often be seen basking in the sun near the White Water-lily Boardwalk.

Snakes such as the dice snake and the grass snake, the lifestyle of which is also bound to water, can often be seen sunbathing or swimming just below the water surface.

Kopački Rit is the largest spawning ground of fish native to this part of the Danube Basin. The Park's fish fauna comprises more than 50 freshwater species, with European carp, northern pike, wels catfish and zander being the most common ones. New ichthyofauna species are regularly recorded during monitoring at the Park.



*green frog*



*European pond turtles*



*dice snake*



Pierid butterflies


## Park's smallest inhabitants

Kopački Rit is also home to numerous invertebrates such as nematodes, gastropods, bivalves, earthworms, leeches, crustaceans and - the group with the most members - insects (including 48 species of dragonflies, 85 species of beetles, 64 species of butterflies, 104 species of moths, 19 species of mosquitos, 26 species of horseflies...) The Park is home to a unique species of bivalve, *Unio tumidus kopaciensis*.



dragonfly

pond skaters




Siberian iris


## Flora and habitats

As a result of its mildly undulated microrelief, Kopački Rit is characterized by intertwining, mosaic-forming habitats. Depending on water depth and the duration of flooding, different plant communities appear in the landscape. For example, the largest area of the floodplains is covered in white willow forests, whereas communities of white willow and black poplar appear on somewhat higher ground. The terrain that is the most elevated is covered in pedunculate oak forests.

Water surfaces are covered in communities of common duckweed, pondweed, watermilfoil, water-lily and yellow floating heart. The most common sight in the occasionally flooded areas are reed beds and communities of tall sedges, which create the iconic vistas of the marshland. According to research conducted so far, the Park's flora includes more than 500 plant species.



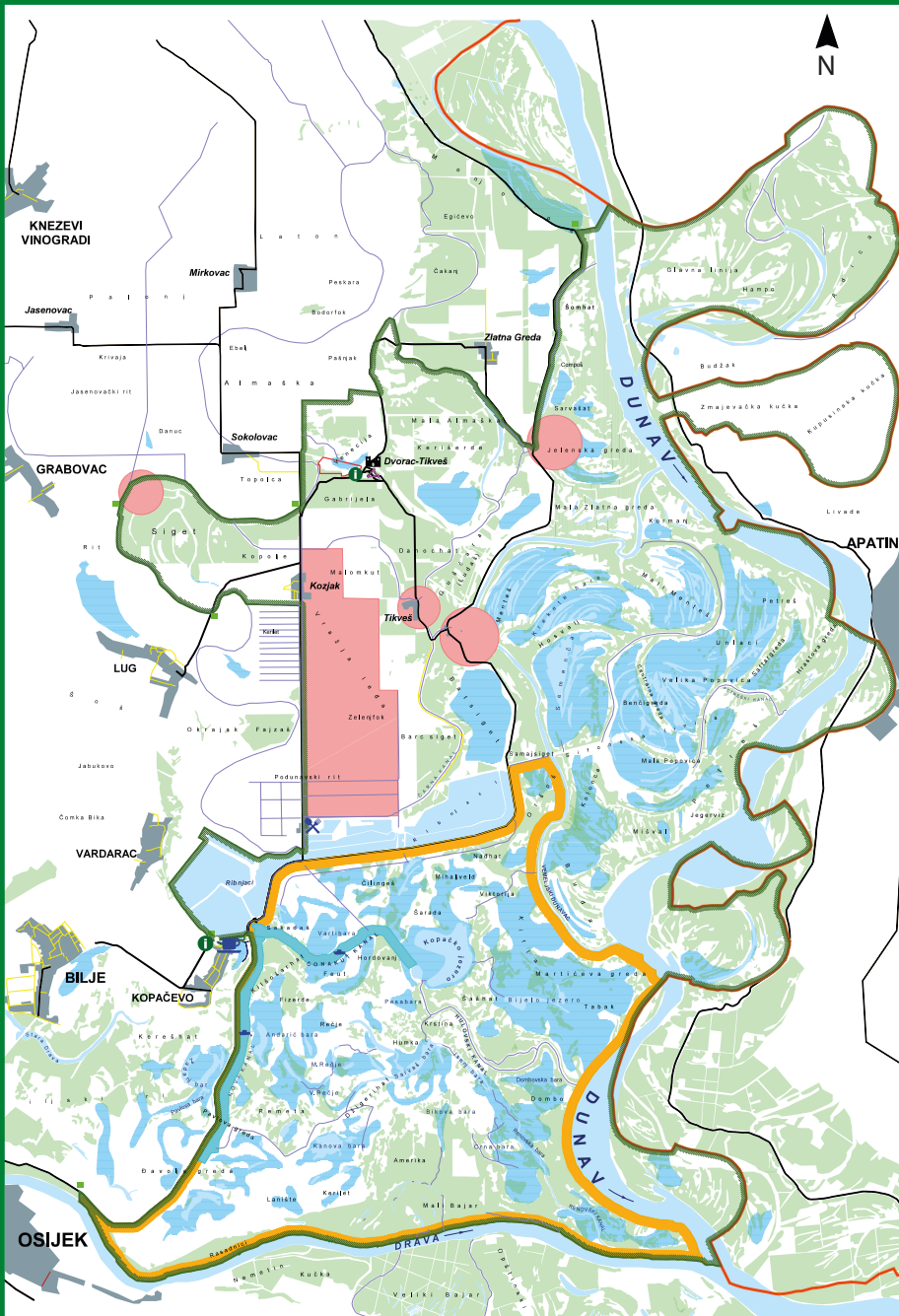
lady orchid





















white water-lily and  
yellow floating heart



## Position of Nature Park Kopački Rit



- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|  Reception                        |  “Veliki Sakadaš” Educational Trail      |  Boundary of the Special Zoological Reserve |
|  Restaurant                       |  „Tikveš Castle” Educational Trail       |  Rivers, lakes                              |
|  Cafe                             |  “Old Elm Tree” Educational Trail        |  Marshland                                  |
|  Boat tour route                  |  Castle                                  |  Main canals                                |
|  Fishing areas                    |  State border of the Republic of Croatia |  Small canals                               |
|  “Mali Sakadaš” Educational Trail |  Boundary of Nature Park Kopački Rit     |  Forests                                    |

## Cultural and historical heritage of the Park

By a grant awarded by Emperor Leopold I in 1699, Prince Eugene of Savoy came to own the Belje Manor, which included the grounds of the modern-day Kopački Rit. In the vicinity, in Bilje, this famous Prince and general built a hunting palace. Not far from this palace, there is the Tikveš castle compound, which comprises country houses built in the 19th century by members of the Teschen branch of the Habsburg family. The compound sits right at the heart of Baranja, surrounded by forests and gardens. Historically, the castle was known all over Europe and worldwide as a hunting retreat, but one that was reserved for aristocrats and guests of the Court. Photographs shot at Kopački Rit by Archduchess Isabella, which show the typical marshland motifs, were published in many famous magazines of that time.

Archduke Albrecht Franz established the Albertina Biological Station in the area in 1941. After World War II, the area of Kopački Rit was governed by "Belje" National Estate, after which it was managed by Hunting & Forest Management Estate "Jelen" in the 1960s. In 1967, by virtue of a proclamation of the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia, Kopački Rit became a Managed Nature Reserve. After the Homeland War, in 1997, by virtue of a Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Public Institution Nature Park Kopački Rit took over management of park grounds. In other words, the area has been systematically protected for more than 50 years and a public institution designed especially to that end has been operating for more than 20 years now.



Country Manor



New castle  
with annex



## Tourist offer

The exceptional abundance of natural heritage that the Park boasts and its rich cultural and historical heritage represent the cornerstones of the Park's tourist offer.

Access to the Park is enabled via the local road Bilje-Kopačevo-Kozjak, leading right up to the Park's Reception Centre sitting at the outskirts of the picturesque Kopačevo village, nestled in untouched marshland surroundings.

Visitors have a bus and car park at their disposal.

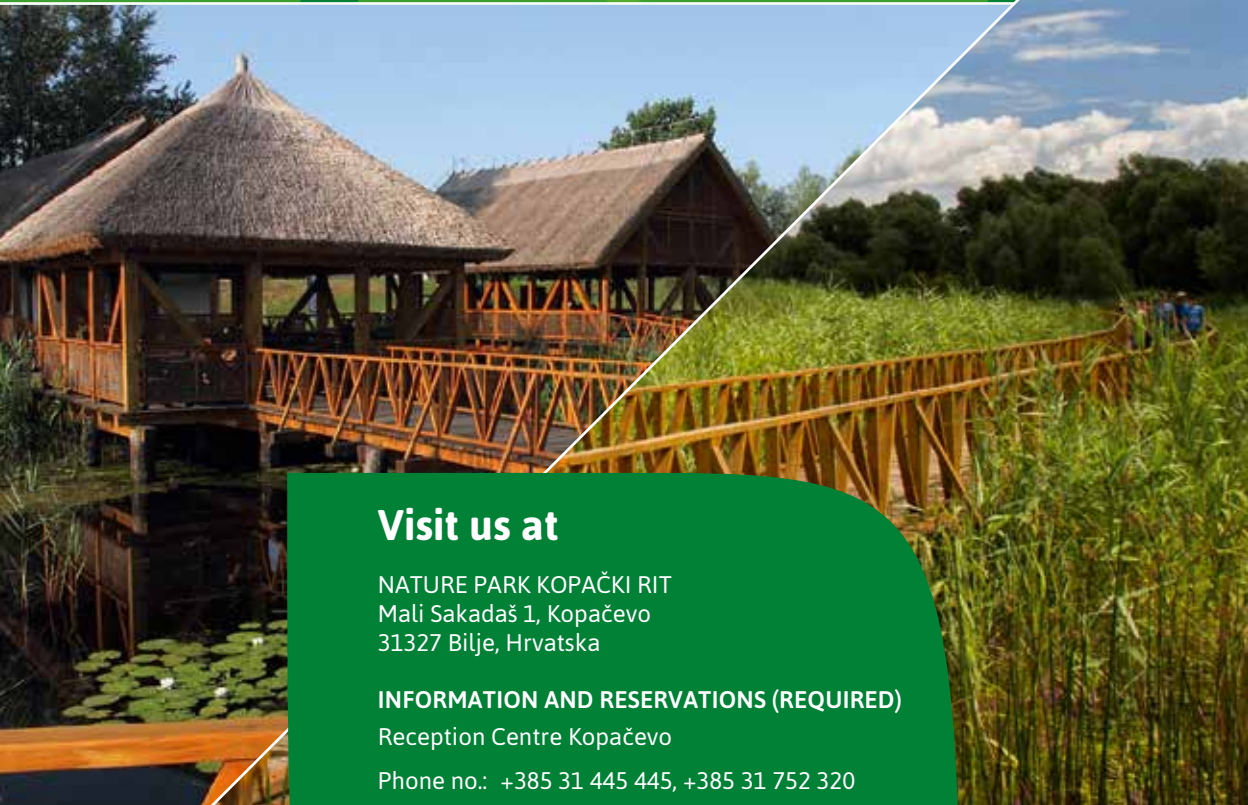
At the Reception Centre there is a multi-media hall with interactive displays, an information centre and a souvenir shop.

In the pavilion visitors can see a promotional film on Kopački Rit, after which they can take a walk along the White Water-lily Educational Trail.

Refreshments are available at Lopoč Cafe.

In addition to the basic programs, the Park's offer also includes birdwatching and photo safari with professional guides. To truly take in the unique riches of the Nature Park, visitors can also opt for attractive rides on tour boats, row boats, canoes, bicycles or tourist train.

There are four main fishing areas in Nature Park Kopački Rit (canals connected to the Danube, the river Danube itself, area in the vicinity of pumping stations Zlatna Greda and Tikveš at Vemeljski Dunavac). Sport fishing is allowed in these areas, provided that you have a fishing permit, which can be bought at the Public Institution.



## Visit us at

NATURE PARK KOPAČKI RIT  
Mali Sakadaš 1, Kopačevo  
31327 Bilje, Hrvatska

### INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS (REQUIRED)

Reception Centre Kopačevo

Phone no.: +385 31 445 445, +385 31 752 320

✉ E-mail: [prijemni.centar@pp-kopacki-rit.hr](mailto:prijemni.centar@pp-kopacki-rit.hr)

[www.pp-kopacki-rit.hr](http://www.pp-kopacki-rit.hr)

 [www.facebook.com/kopacki.rit](https://www.facebook.com/kopacki.rit)

 [www.instagram.com/ppkopackirit](https://www.instagram.com/ppkopackirit)

### ONLINE TICKET SALE

[www.parkovihrvatske.hr/webshop](http://www.parkovihrvatske.hr/webshop)





Sakadaš

## Current projects at the Park



New Tikveš castle



**KOPAČKI RIT**  
Park prirode  
Nature Park



Europska unija  
"Zajedno do fondova EU"



REPUBLIKA HRVATSKA  
MINISTARSTVO ZAŠTITE  
OKOLIŠA I ENERGETIKE



**PARKOVI HRVATSKE**  
Parks  
of Croatia



EUROPSKI STRUKTURNI  
I INVESTICIJSKI FONDovi



Operativni program  
KONKURENTNOST  
I KOHEZIJA



REPUBLIKA HRVATSKA  
Ministarstvo regionalnoga razvoja  
i fondova Europske unije



**“Project of construction of Sakadaš tourist dock in Nature Park Kopački Rit”** - the project of construction of new dock infrastructure and development of new educational elements will enable more tourist visits. The procurement of solar-powered boats will allow a more undisturbed experience of watching the flora and fauna of the Park.

**“Presentation and Education Centre Tikveš”** - this project is focused on restoring, repurposing and furnishing the existing Tikveš castle compound and transforming it into a contemporary centre, with unique exhibits as the starting point in education on natural heritage of Kopački Rit and the importance of its conservation.

**“Development of a framework for managing the Natura 2000 ecological network”** - this project includes the designing of plans for management of areas included in the Natura 2000 ecological network - strategic documents that will regulate the purpose and condition of

the areas and prescribe management activities and objectives.

**“Demining, restoration and protection of forests and forest land in protected and Natura 2000 sites in the Danube-Drava region (NATURAVITA)”** - this project involves the demining of 2,534 ha of forests and forest land in the Regional Park Mura-Drava and Nature Park Kopački Rit, restoration of forests and valuable natural habitats, construction of forest firefighting infrastructure, training sessions, drafting of a revitalisation study and establishment of a monitoring system.

**“DANUBEparksCONNECTED” (Interreg Danube Transnational Programme) – project of a network of DANUBE PARKS** – project activities are focused on improving the connection between protected habitats in and around the river Danube and strengthening the green corridors along the Danube, which will result in preservation of Danube region biodiversity, which is unique in Europe.



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