

FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

(SWAN PM – 22.04.2015)

7.30 – Departure from Sofia – Meeting point at Hotel Arena di Serdica

8.30 – 11.30 - Guided tour at the Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex

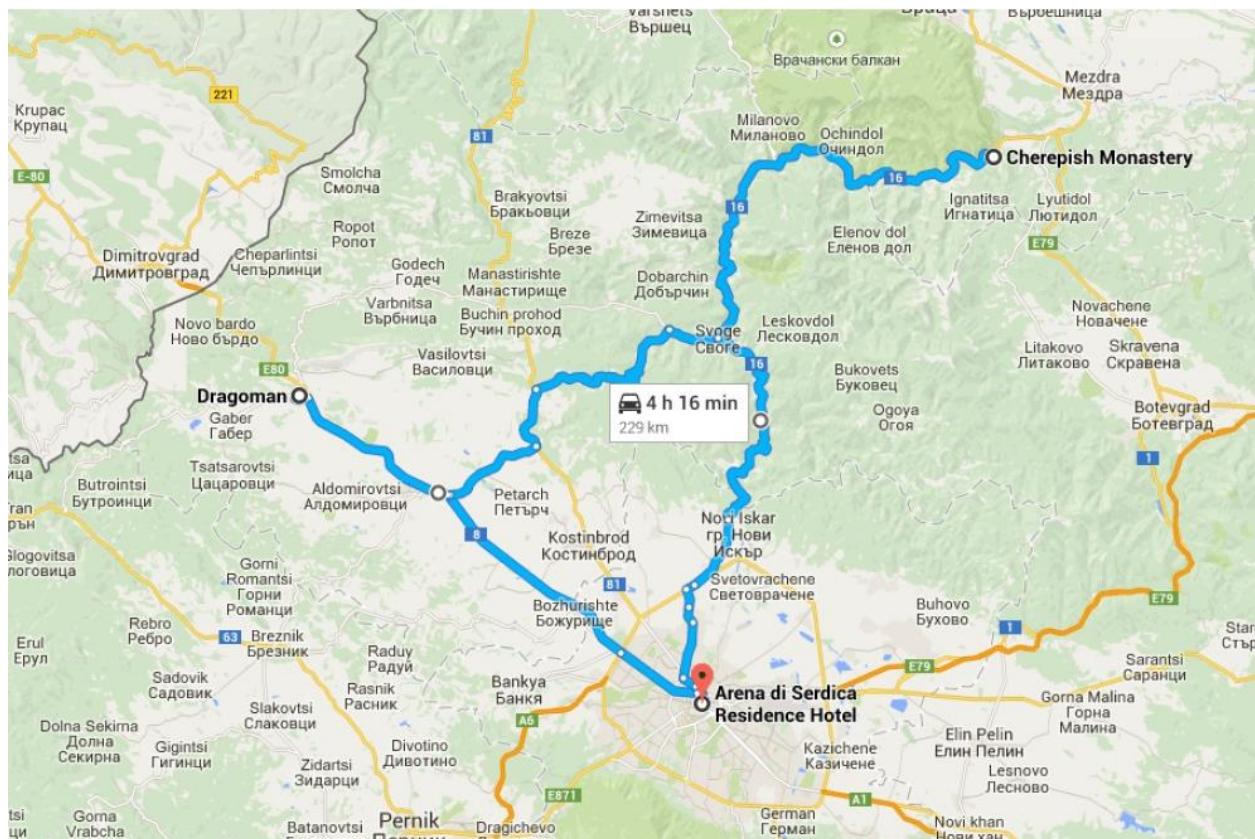
11.30 – 13.30 – Bus drive to Cherepish Monastery along Iskar River Gorge

13.30 – 15.30 – Lunch and site-seeing at Cherepish Monastery

15.30 – 18.30 – Bus drive back to Sofia with stops at sites of interest

- Eco trail and karts spring
- Sreden Iskar Cascade Hydro Power Plants along Iskar river

Map of the trip: <https://goo.gl/maps/xSdbq>



DRAGOMAN MARSH KARST COMPLEX

The Dragoman Marsh Karst Complex is a Wetland of international importance (Ramsar site) declared in 2012. It contains the last conserved karst marshes in Bulgaria and one of the few on the Balkan Peninsula – Dragoman and Aldomirovtsi Marshes, wet meadows and some smaller wetlands. Dragoman marsh is the biggest limestone marsh in Bulgaria - now its area covers about 400 ha. Aldomirovtsi Marsh (120 ha) is linked to it through subterranean waters and was declared a protected area in 1989.

In 19th century the Dragoman Marsh was one of the most important places in Bulgaria for the Crane (*Grus grus*), both in terms of breeding and migration (old records for thousands migrating Cranes in Sofia district exist). Unfortunately during the 1930s the whole marsh was drained. Drainage channels and a pump station were built and the whole area was changed into arable land. Subsequently a lot of rare species in the area got extinct. After the 1990s all types of drainage activities stopped and the Dragoman Marsh slowly started to recover.

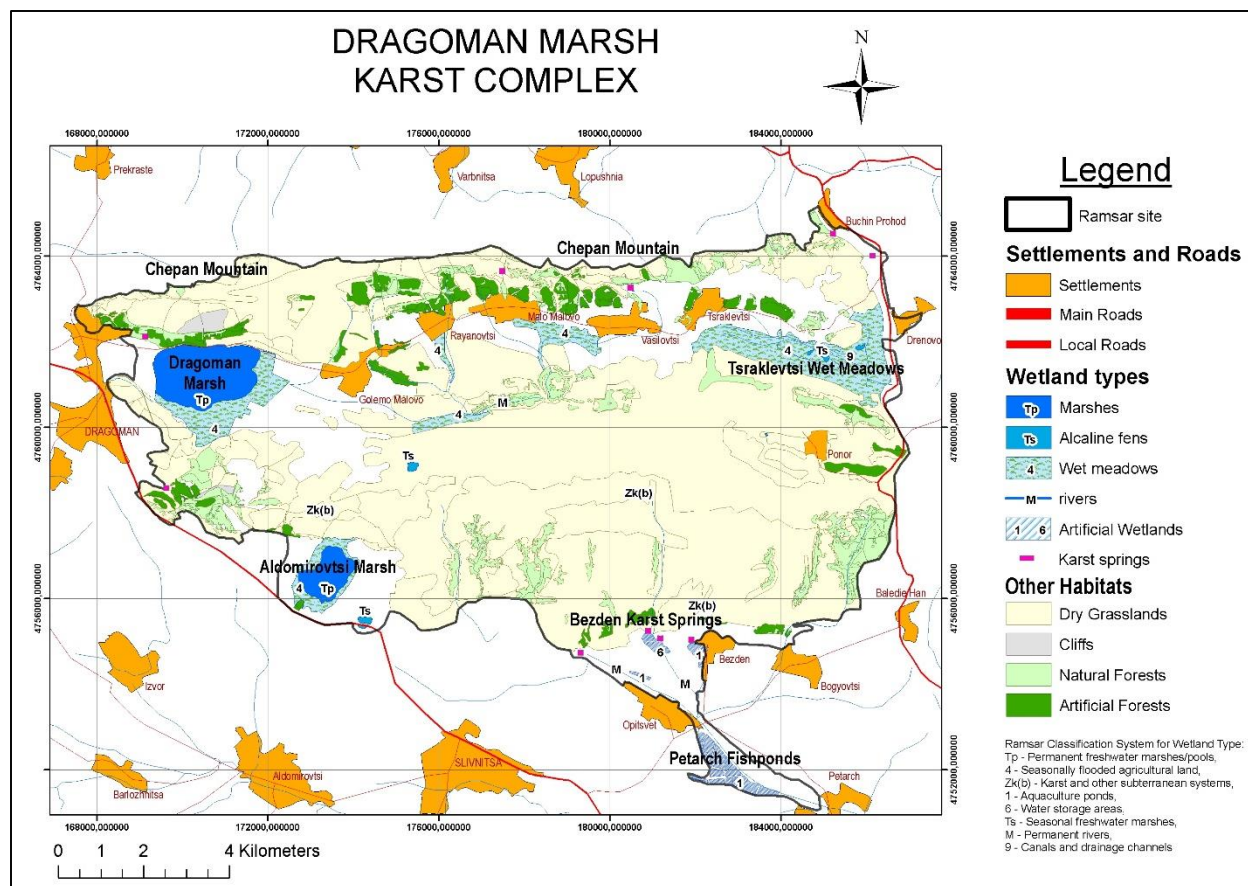
The whole area is on the way of the so called “Via Aristotelis” Migratory Pathway, and nowadays is an important stopover for a number of migrating water birds. The vast wet grasslands around the marshes and also in the eastern part of the complex are unique because of their natural flooding regime and their relict flora.

The Protected area Aldomirovtsi Marsh has the same history but it disappeared in late 80s of the 20th century, possibly due to military maneuvers affecting the karst. Currently it is recovered and a lot of rare birds started nesting there.

NATURA 2000 site for protection of birds "Rayanovtsi" was declared in 2008 and another site under the Habitats Directive “Dragoman” is expected to be declared soon.

Balkani Wildlife Society is a non-profit organisation, working for the public benefit. The main aims of the Society are study, conservation and restoration of flora and fauna in natural ecosystems, their preservation for future generations and raising public awareness on the problems of nature conservation, development of environmental education, public campaigns etc.

Part of Balkani WS activities are taking place in the region of Dragoman town where the Wetland Conservation Centre “Dragoman marsh” was established in 2009. The mission of the centre is to promote the importance of wetlands and their protection, work with visitors and school groups, development of environmental education in Bulgaria through out-of-school activities and informal education (<http://balkani.org/en/activities/site-conservation/dragoman-swamp-and-mountain-chepan/>).



CHEREPISH MONASTERY

The Cherepish monastery “Uspenie Bogorodichno” was built during the rule of Tsar Ivan Shishman (1371-1393). In the monastery statute, which was written in the period between 1390 and 1396, it is mentioned that the monastery was destroyed during one of the last battles with the Ottoman invaders, which took place in that region. Until this moment there hasn’t been found any data about the history of the Cherepish monastery in the following two centuries. The architecture type of the today’s Catholic Church confirms that it was built in the end of the 16th C. In 1762 Paisiy Hilendarski mentions in his “Istoriya Slavyanobolgarskaya” that the famous Bulgarian painter Pimen Zografski “renovated the Cherepish monastery by the river of Iskar and here passed away...in 1610”.

During the Bulgarian National Revival the monastery became a cultural and educational centre. A church school was founded and books, martyrologies and gospels were written and rewritten. Some of them include: “The Cherepish Gospel” from the 16th C. (1512), bound with golden covers and ornate with scenes from the Bible; “The Gospel of Danail”, rewritten in 1616, “Panegrik”- 1623; “Apostle” – 1630, a collection of sermons and instructions, called “Margarit” from 1732. In 1798-1799 during the time of the attacks of the kardzhalii (brigands in the Ottoman

Empire), Sofroniy Vrachanski found shelter in the monastery. By 1836 the abbot Joseph had built "The Methodius building", The Vladish building, the old abbot house, the reception building, the Rashid house, the church school, the Danail building, the chapel with the charnel house, the belfry, etc. The monastery church was repainted with mural paintings by Jonko Popvitanov from Tryavna and Vasil Iliev from Debarsko. Drillings have found that parts of the old mural paintings, created by Pimen Zografski, have been conserved. Among the prominent subjects of the interior decoration of the church is an iconostasis with an artistically made fretwork and a shroud, embroidered in 1844. The monastery has been declared a cultural monument of national significance. (from: <http://gowhere.bg/en/guide/culture/cherepish-monastery/cherepish-monastery.html>)

ISKAR GORGE

The Iskar Gorge is a true pearl in the tourist necklace of Bulgaria. It is a natural miracle carved out in the Balkan Mountain, for thousands of years the waters of the Iskar River have dug their way into the rock. The gorge starts from the Sofia Plain, crosses the Balkan and ends around the town of Cherven Bryag, the total length is 155 km. The most beautiful part of the gorge is located between the town of Novi Iskar and Lyutibrod Village and is 67 km long.

From the very start of the gorge the valley narrows sharply to outline the well-visible meanders. Then come the fairytale sights of Tserovo and Lakatnik, where the beauty of the scenery is increased further by an amphitheater of stone. At Cherepish the river struggles to find its way through a valley between vertical walls of snow-white lime. Several kilometers later one is struck by the awesome sight of the Ritlite.

For centuries, the heart of the Iskar Gorge has been difficult to access. The railway line was built in 1889 and when this was completed life along the river started to change. New settlements appeared, new people came in, new industries developed. In most recent times, the best and most picturesque locations on both sides of the Iskar River, near the railway stations and bus stops, close to the villages and quarters host villa settlements (predominantly of citizens of the capital city), which only add additional colour to the gorge.

The only town in the gorge is Svoge, situated in the widest possible part of the gorge, 40 km to the north of Sofia. It is a resort with clean and fresh air, located among the most breath-taking of natural surroundings. Some 10 km to the west, in the valley of the Iskretska River, is Iskrets and one of the biggest sanatoriums for people suffering from lung diseases. The past of the town of Svoge and the surrounding villages is reflected in the Archaeological Museum. The St. Paraskeva Church has preserved interesting frescoes from the 16th and 17th centuries. Svoge is a starting point for hiking tours to the picturesque areas.

After Svoge, the rock walls and particularly those on the left bank of the river become more and more impressive. These stone walls are the perfect challenge for any climber. 1 hour-walk from Bov railway station takes the visitors to one of the highest Bulgarian waterfalls Skaklya (85 meters). After Zverino, the river is again squeezed between the white lime stones and one is

struck by the rock cliffs and the fairytale meanders. One kilometer before the village of Lyutibrođ - the practical end of the gorge - the Ritlita as the final, one of the most interesting natural phenomena of the Iskar Gorge - four unique-shaped stone walls. Closer to the river they are 49 meters high while at the western end their height is up to 200 meters. (form: <http://bgtourinfo.net/ledenika.html>)

ECO TRAIL AND KARTS SPRING

The eco trail is starting at a karst spring close to the road and the river bed and the area provides very good environment for recreation and relaxation. We will stop for a short break at the karst spring and if you feel like you can go for a short walk on the eco trail. There is also a coffee place nearby.

SREDEN ISKAR CASCADE HYDRO POWER PLANTS PORTFOLIO PROJECT

The Sreden Iskar Cascade Hydro Power Plants Portfolio Project envisages the establishment of nine Hydro Power Plants (“HPPs”) on the river Iskar, about 40 km north of Sofia, with the overall objective to generate Emission Reduction Units (“ERUs”), reducing 370,969 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in the period 2008 till 2012 (inclusive). In year 2000, the Municipality of Svoge carried out a feasibility study of the proposed HPPs. It attracted the interest of several energy companies that proposed to jointly develop the project with the city and in late 2003 the Municipality of Svoge and Petrolvilla signed a Letter of Intent. Based on the Memorandum of Understanding on co-operation between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Bulgaria in reducing emission of Greenhouse Gases (“GHGs”) under article 6 of the KP the proposed JI portfolio project aims at reducing GHGs by replacing electricity generated from fossil fuel with electricity generated from renewable hydraulic energy sources. The project will contribute to the sustainable environmental-socio-economic development of the region. The use of renewable sources, which today represent about 2% of the national energy production and about 8% of electrical energy supply, will permit to improve the exploitation of local resources avoiding import from abroad and, above all, it will permit to produce clean electricity by hydropower plant reducing emissions of NO_x, SO₂, VOC and solid particles that would be otherwise emitted during electricity generation from fossil fuels. The implementation of HPPs portfolio project will generate renewable electricity and displace conventional thermal electricity production. The construction of HPPs on the river Iskar, in the municipalities of Svoge and Mezdra has been favoured by the Ministry of Economy and Energy (formerly the Ministry of Energy and Energy Resources). Besides these environmental benefits, the proposed portfolio projects have additional revenues to those derived from tariffs, like returns from Carbon Credits and from Green Certificates, which will support debt services and return on equity. Revenues

from JI activities will permit to construct according to the newest state of the art technologies. In absence of the KP instruments these technologies have hardly been implemented in Bulgaria because of the high risk due to the little experience with such project types and the resulting difficulties of financing. As the value of Green Certificates is uncertain, extra benefit from carbon credits helps to mitigate the price risk on the green certificates. Furthermore the project contributes to meet EU requirements for the Bulgaria regarding:

- Electricity generation from renewable energy sources;
- Reduction of NOX, SO2 and VOC in the country.

Finally the project has a significant social impact creating several jobs for qualified and nonqualified local workers.

For more information visit:

<http://ji.unfccc.int/UserManagement/FileStorage/Z2VZI1U53FC2XE1E9CLV34NGM3RM5V>

http://ji.unfccc.int/JI_Projects/DB/YQQRQ871RMMZTD13CBWOLCT1Q8FBDN/Determination/DNV-CUK1199438668.02/viewDeterminationReport.html

<http://www.moew.government.bg/?show=top&cid=357&lang=en>