

# Romania's newest Wetlands of International Importance

20/01/2012

The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands is delighted to report that Romania, which is generously preparing to play host to the next meeting of the Ramsar Conference of the Contracting Parties in July 2012, has increased its number of Ramsar Sites to 8, covering a surface area of 824,897 hectares. As summarized by Ramsar's Kati Wenzel, from the data sheets accompanying the new designations, **Comana Natural Park (Parcul Natural Comana)** (24,963 hectares, 44°09'N 026°09'E), a Natural Park and Natura 2000 (SPA, SCI) in Giurgiu County, is a complex in the flat plain of southern Romania characterized by a high diversity of flora and fauna and consisting mainly of forests, agro-ecosystems, meadows, rivers, lakes, canals, oxbow lakes and a micro-delta. Some 157 bird species have been observed in the park, which regularly supports more than 20,000 waterbirds, many of them migratory. The park also supports numerous fish species, including the endemic *Petroleuciscus boristhenicus* and the internationally threatened *Umbra krameri*. Neajlov River and its microdelta are optimal habitats for the Otter (*Lutra lutra*), and the Tree-marten (*Martes martes*), Fitchew (*Putorius putorius*), Jackal (*Canis aureus*), and Badger (*Meles meles*). Of the 1,300 plant species, 72 are threatened nationally and species like *Marsilea quadrifolia* L. are also protected in Europe.

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



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*Peonia peregrina*. Photo/Foto: Andra Nuta