

Adriatic East Coast



Seeing Birds and Experiencing Nature in Historic Landscapes on the Mediterranean Coast

Martin Schneider-Jacoby & Borut Stumberger

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About the authors



photo: J. Mahroldt

Dr. Martin Schneider-Jacoby (left)

Dr. Martin Schneider-Jacoby was born in Cuxhaven in 1956 and introduced to ornithology by his father, Horst Schneider. He began working on conservation projects in the Wollmatinger Ried preserve on Lake Constance at age 15. His university studies took him to the eastern coast of the Adriatic, which he revisited countless times both on vacation and as a working biologist.

Martin Schneider-Jacoby lived in Croatia from 1986 to 1988, when it was still part of Yugoslavia. His work on birds as ecosystem indicators on the floodplains of the Sava for the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Radolfzell went on to become his doctoral thesis at the University of Constance. He joined EuroNatur – then known as the European Nature Heritage Fund – in 1989, charged with directing projects in eastern and southeastern Europe.

Dr. Schneider-Jacoby's focus on the protection of migratory birds on the Adriatic coast of the Balkans intensified after 2002, when the precarious status of the unique resting areas on this important flyway was becoming increasingly evident. Here as elsewhere, his conservation efforts revolved around the enhancement of regional economic development and the welfare of local people while preserving the inherent value of natural areas.

Dr. Schneider-Jacoby was taken seriously ill while this book was in press. He died on August 15, 2012. A tribute to his quarter century of dedication to the goals of EuroNatur can be found at the conclusion of this book.

Borut Stumberger, Dr. vet. med. (right)

Borut Stumberger was born in Ptuj/Pettau, Slovenia, in 1956 and still lives near the Drava river. He has been birdwatching all his life. After training as a veterinarian, he was instrumental in the establishment of BirdLife Slovenia from 1991 through 2001. Since then, he has worked as an independent consultant to a variety of conservation programs. His close contact with EuroNatur began in 1992 with the foundation's work on behalf of the intermittent lake Cerknica. In the years that followed, Stumberger focused his energies on the creation of the Mura-Drava-Danube transboundary (Croatia/Hungary) UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Borut Stumberger first got to know the Adriatic east coast as a child on vacation trips, continuing with research fieldwork as well as shipboard service in the Yugoslav navy. Besides, he has led numerous organized ornithological tours in the region. He became the regional coordinator for EuroNatur's Adriatic Flyway project in 2002 and is responsible for carrying out migratory bird counts in some of the most important areas and for designing conservation schemes. His veterinary experience allows him to contribute a profound knowledge of heritage livestock breeds to EuroNatur's project work, in which the sustainable agricultural practices, adapted to local conditions, that first created Europe's countryside continue to play a key role.

Foreword

The Adriatic coast – from Slovenia through Croatia and Bosnia to Montenegro and Albania – is a holiday destination of great beauty that at the same time possesses extraordinary significance for environmental conservation in Europe. The countries' marketing campaigns use slogans like „Wild Beauty“ (Montenegro) or „The Mediterranean As It Once Was“ to attract tourists, assigning central importance to the intact natural environment and attractive countryside with its people and traditional ways of life. But the information tourists would need to find those hidden treasures is lacking. This little book hopes to close that gap. It invites the reader to get more closely acquainted with the Adriatic east coast and – above all in spring and fall – to enjoy the varied landscape, diverse animal and plant life, and interesting cultural sites.

For bird lovers, the coastal landscapes on the eastern Adriatic are an Eldorado. Birds occur here in amazingly large variety and numbers. Not only important breeding sites (often of species hardly present any more elsewhere in Europe) are found here, but also resting sites on which huge flocks of migratory birds on their strenuous long distance journeys over mountains and seas depend urgently. Thus we have, so to speak, foregrounded the potential for birdwatching. It is not among the least of our goals to draw the attention of international ornithological circles to the bird populations on the eastern shore of the Adriatic and their, in many cases, still very deficient conservation status. Generally speaking, a strong increase in the number of birdwatchers would be very helpful in attaining better protection for the birds and their habitats.

Bird lovers are important in nature conservation. The more of them come, the more money they bring into a country, the more likely people and authorities in the respective region will develop an interest in this kind of visitors and what attracts them, thus raising the willingness to establish protected areas and wildlife sanctuaries and ensure their practical as well as legal implementation.

Nonetheless, one need not be a dyed-in-the-wool birder to benefit from this nature travel guide. It is addressed equally to all other people who have a sense of nature's fascination and enjoy the outdoors. This book is designed to help them make intriguing and rewarding discoveries.

While many areas on the Mediterranean are becoming known as eco-tourism hot spots, there is still a lack of relevant information on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. One reason is surely the lack of well-run nature reserves in almost all the countries there, with the exception of Slovenia and perhaps the Vransko Jezero Nature Park and Paklenica National Park in Croatia. In the region for sun and surf, most visitors fail to notice the rich nature on offer. And this makes them come only in midsummer, missing both the spring – always an interesting time to make observations of the natural world – or the soothing autumn with its splendid colors and water still warm from the sun.

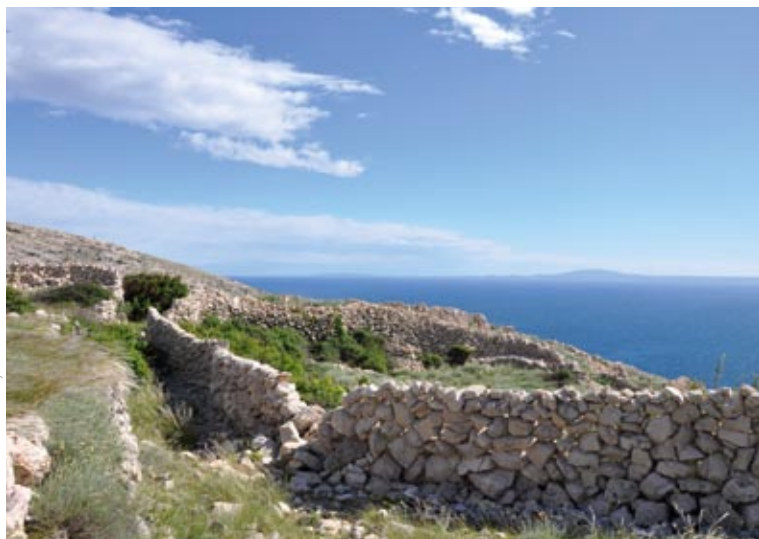


photo: M. Schneider-Jacoby

Hiking trail on Krk, near Stara Baška.

"Ecotourism" on the Adriatic east coast is often simply a marketing term denoting active sports carried out alternately with a sense of drama or a fairground atmosphere. Offerings include whitewater rafting, off-road vehicles, kite surfing, paragliding, and even bird hunting. Yet the majestic landscape with its opportunities to experience wild nature, its calm, the marked hiking and biking trails and its age-old culture have much more to offer active tourists. Most guests still value such opportunities for discovery and relaxation, as evidenced by the island of Lošinj. In its very first year, the new trail to the top of Mt. Orsošica with its wonderful views was used by nearly every visitor to the island.

This travel guide aims to raise the profile of the many beautiful natural areas and sites on the Adriatic's eastern shore and to enliven ecotourism – properly understood – along the coast from Slovenia through Croatia and Bosnia to Montenegro and Albania. The trip is worth making. You will see glorious landscapes with interesting flora and fauna, but you will also meet nice people, eat good food, and see many a sight of historical and cultural significance. You will also encounter birds familiar from home: A substantial number of the migratory birds that breed in central Europe cross the Adriatic twice a year and rely on resting sites along the Adriatic coast to top up their energy reserves. Watching for those birds can be a relaxing and enriching part of your holiday, and your visit will help make the Adriatic Flyway safer for all migratory birds.

We wish you a relaxing vacation full of new experiences and would like to help make it possible with our suggestions and tips.

An underground river emerges in Hutovo Blato nature park.



photo: M. Schneider-Jacoby

Livanjsko Polje in January (top) and July 2010 (L8, p.194).



photo: M. Sarac



photo: M. Schneider-Jacoby

River deltas

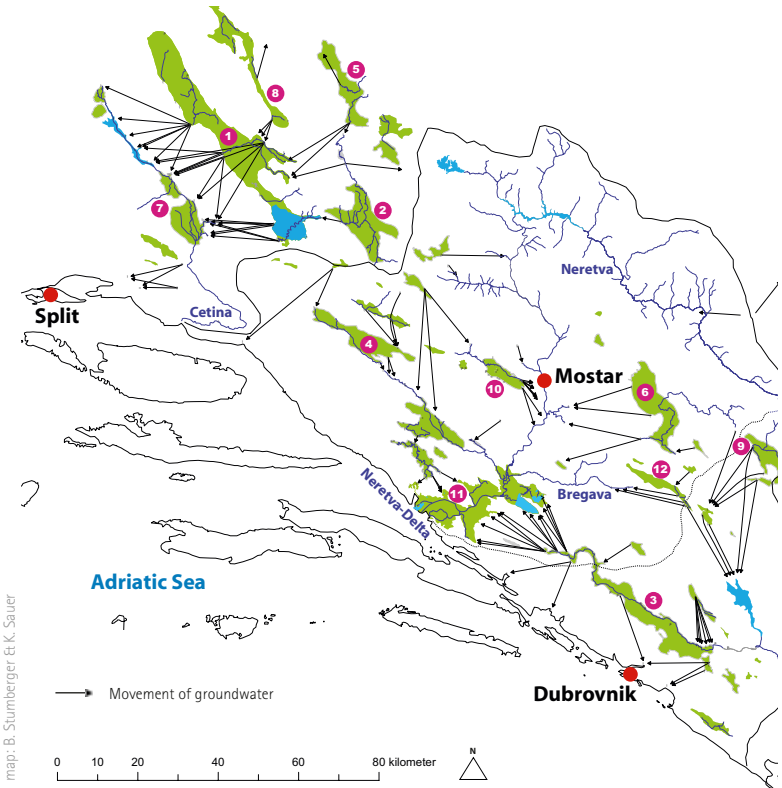
A river delta is the area where a river's sediment load is deposited after its long journey downstream. The term delta for areas of silt deposition in river mouths was coined by Herodotus in 450 B.C. to refer to the mouth of the Nile, because its distributaries, spreading into the form of a triangle, resemble the Greek letter delta (Δ). There are several thousand river deltas around the world. They vary in size and shape and whether they are located on the seacoast or on an inland lake.



photo: M. Schneider-Jacoby

View from Veliki Trovro (N13, p. 176) near Rogotin toward the mouth of the Neretva.

Karst poljes in the Cetina and Neretva watersheds



- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1 Livanjsko polje | 7 Sinjsko polje |
| 2 Duvanjsko polje | 8 Glamočko polje |
| 3 Popovo polje | 9 Gatačko polje |
| 4 Imotsko polje | 10 Mostarsko blato |
| 5 Kupreško polje | 11 Hutovo blato (Deransko-Svitavsko polje) |
| 6 Nevesinjsko polje | 12 Dabarsko polje |

Effects of bird hunting

Counting garganeys in the Bojana/Buna delta on March 22, 2006, Borut Stumberger and Damijan Denac arrived at an estimate of 20,000: 8,279 in the Ulcinj salt works, another 1,000 elsewhere in the delta, and 10,000 in the air along the coast (1,500 ducks per hour). Joining them were 4,263 black-tailed godwits, 656 common shelducks (*Tadorna tadorna*), 4,355 ruffs and nearly 10,000 dunlins (*Calidris alpina*). In total, 40,000 waterbirds were observed at rest in the Bojana/Buna delta that day – stunningly high numbers. For instance, BirdLife puts the number of garganeys in all of Europe at only 390,000 pairs, so that 20,000 birds makes up a significant percentage of the total.

The reason for the 2006 bird bonanza? The avian influenza scare: Springtime came and went without a shot fired.



Hunting blinds on beaches in Montenegro have been illegal since 2009.



photos: M. Schneider-Jacoby

Cranes have learned to bypass the dangerous wetlands on the coast. Migrating cranes in chilly Nikšičko Polje (Montenegro), 50 km inland, at an elevation of over 600 m.

Ferruginous ducks.



photo: P. Sackl



photo: Tiefenbach

Little stints (*Calidris minuta*).



photo: P. Sackl

Common redshank (*Tringa totanus*).

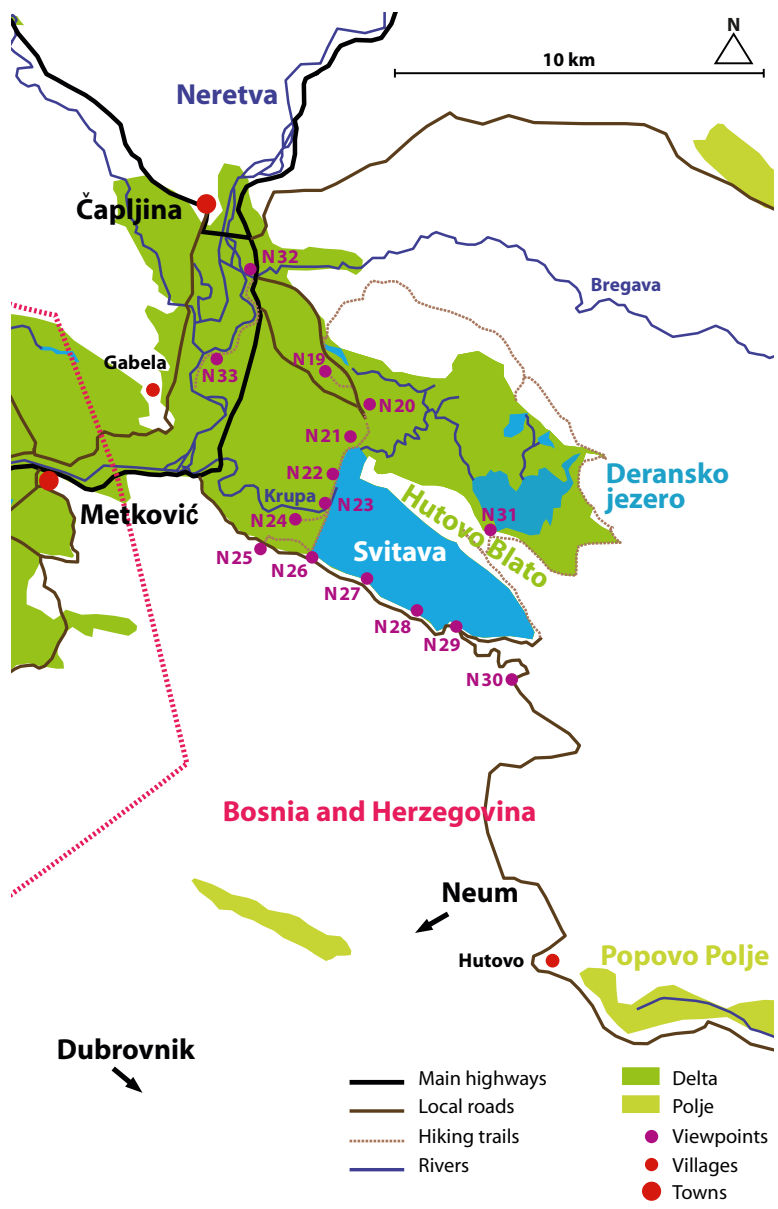
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Map of the Neretva delta



map: B. Stumberger & K. Sauer



Register of species

Plants

- A**driatic lizard orchid (*Himantoglossu adriaticum*) p. 70
Alder (forest) (*Alnus glutinosa*) p. 59, 197, 237, 240
Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*) p. 71, 237, 240, 242
Amethyst sea-holly (*Eryngium amethystinum*) p. 69
Asphodel ((*Asphodelus albus*) p. 167, 22
Bertoloni's bee orchid (*Ophrys bertolonii*) p. 159
Black pine (*Pinus nigra*) p. 71, 149, 153
Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) p. 136
Blood-red pink (*Dianthus sanguineus*) p. 69
Broom (*Genista spec.*) p. 68
Bug orchid (*Orchis coriophora*) p. 238
Burning bush (*Dictamnus albus*) p. 69 f.
Caper (*Capparis spec.*) p. 167
Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) p. 73 f., 222
Creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera*) p. 238
Crocus (*Crocus spec.*) p. 58
Crown imperial (*Fritillaria orientalis*) p. 69
Cyclamen (*Cyclamen*) p. 71 f.
Cypress (*Cupressum sempervirens*) p. 175, 184, 246
Daffodil (*Narcissus tazetta*) p. 58, 64 f.
Dalmatian iris (*Iris pallida*) p. 69
Downy oak (*Quercus pubescens*) p. 136, 155
Dwarf mountain pine (*Pinus mugo*) p. 153
English oak (*Quercus robur*) p. 59
Feather Grass (*Stipa pennata*) p. 68, 143, 155
Flax (*Linium maritimum*) p. 133
Gentian (*Centaureum spicatum*) p. 133
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Grape hyacinth (*Muscari armeniacum*) p. 159
Halophytes (Halophyte spec.) p. 65, 131, 133, 142, 178, 204, 236, 243 f.
Hop horbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*) p. 149 f.
Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolis*) p. 228
Loose-flowered orchid (*Orchis laxiflora*) p. 58, 136, 159
Military orchid (*Orchis militaris*) p. 136
Mulberry tree (*Morus*) p. 157
Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*) p. 138
Narrow-leaved ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia*) p. 59, 197, 213, 237, 240

*And my soul spread
wide its wings
and flew through quiet lands
as though flying home.*

Joseph Karl Benedikt Freiherr von Eichendorff



In Memory of Dr. Martin Schneider-Jacoby

In August 2012 Dr. Martin Schneider-Jacoby died after a brief, severe illness at the age of 56. Ever since the founding of EuroNatur in 1987 – and so for virtually half his life – he threw himself into the task of preserving the natural heritage of Europe: his commitment never faltered. His dedicated work for nature conservation in the Balkans, a part of Europe he held very dear, is especially deserving of mention as is – equally – his passionate campaigning for the protection and habitat of migratory birds. It was not only the EuroNatur foundation that benefited from his store of experience, enriched over the many years. A far-reaching network of nature conservation partners over the whole of Europe benefited equally. His deep love of nature made Martin Schneider-Jacoby an excellent field biologist, who knew as no-one else did how to infect others with his enthusiasm. The influence Martin Schneider-Jacoby exerted on the direction EuroNatur Foundation has taken was profound and will be long-lasting. For the EuroNatur Board and the EuroNatur Team Martin Schneider-Jacoby will continue to live in the wild rivers of the Balkan, in this "Blue Heart Of Europe", and in the migrating birds resting on their long journey on the Eastern Adriatic coast.

EuroNatur Travel Guide to the Adriatic East Coast Seeing Birds and Experiencing Nature in Historic Landscapes on the Mediterranean Coast

Every year millions of sun-hungry tourists come to the eastern shore of the Adriatic to enjoy the pleasant Mediterranean climate and the alluring beaches. But those who limit their travels to the summer months and the tourist hot spots seldom get to know the region's real treasures, to which this little book calls attention.

This travel guide encourages readers to discover the charming coastal region from a novel perspective and shows them – often just a few miles from heavily travelled main roads – unsuspected natural highlights. Tips on cultural treasures along the way are not forgotten. Well-informed descriptions of the various habitats, with their rich and interesting flora and fauna, prepare readers to discover the region's astounding diversity and magical beauty. Detailed route descriptions lead nature lovers to the region's most rewarding destinations.

Not exclusively but especially for readers interested in birds, the nature travel guide – written with passion by experienced field ornithologists – is a genuine treasure, providing in-depth information on numerous significant but little-known habitats on one of Europe's most important migration flyways.



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