



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Committee of Ministers
Comité des Ministres

2024.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR SZÉNÁS HILLS PROTECTED AREA



EUROPEAN DIPLOMA HOLDING SITE

1995

CATEGORY A

2024.

State: Hungary	
Name of the area: Szénás Hills Protected Area	
Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas: 2020 (4 years)	
Central authority concerned:	
Name:	Department for Nature Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture
Address:	H-1055 Budapest, Kossuth tér 11. Hungary
Tel:	+36-1-795-2399
Fax:	-
e-mail:	andras.schmidt@am.gov.hu (Mr. András Schmidt)
www:	www.termeszetvedelem.hu
Authority responsible for its management:	
Name:	Danube–Ipoly National Park Directorate (DINPD)
Address:	H-1121 Budapest, Költő u. 21., Post address: H-1525 Budapest Pf. 86. (Central office) H-2084 Pilisszentiván, Bányász u. 17. Hungary (Szénás Hills PA local office)
Tel:	+36-1-391-4619 (Central office) +36-30-663-4655 (Manager of the Szénás Hills PA)
Fax:	+36-1-200-1168
e-mail:	dinpi@dinpi.hu ; pilisilen@dinpi.hu ; kezdyp@dinpi.hu (Mr. Pál Kézdy)
www:	www.dunaipoly.hu

1. CONDITIONS:

By 2022, replace the current five-year management plan (expired 2018) with a new and approved five-year plan

We reviewed and modified the current conservation management plan. After that, we have to ask for the opinion of the competent authorities, municipalities, owners, asset managers, farmers, and civil organizations. First of all, we need to consult with Pilis Forest Company, which manages the assets of the state forests. If these consultations are successful, we will send the plan to the minister responsible for nature conservation. Finally, legislation will appear on the new management plan. We are going to continue this process in 2025.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. develop a long-term twenty-five-year management strategy by 2023, including the following aspects:

- a. objectives for the relative cover of grasslands and woodlands, their ecotones and connectivity between them, and the natural ecological processes and other management measures required to meet them; this should be based on sound evidence of the ecological value of these broad habitats and the ecological requirements of their characteristic species;**
- b. enhanced understanding of the ecological requirements for particularly rare and endangered species; with strategies for appropriate species recovery programmes where necessary;**
- c. an assessment of the potential impact of climate change on priority habitats, species and related ecological processes, together with an adaptation plan where necessary;**
- d. an assessment of future land-use pressures, especially from recreation, tourism and urban development, and potential strategies for mitigating the negative impacts of these;**
- e. the need to determine and implement the range of management options and nature-based solutions necessary to meet the long-term challenges of maintaining the ecological interest of the Szénás Hills Protected Area, especially with regard to long-term ecological trends, including climate change;**

*The most important conservation problem in the Szenas Hills PA is the drastic decline of dolomite flax (*Linum dolomiticum*), which is an endemic species, found only here in the whole world. In 2020, a new LIFE project "Conservation of endemic species and dry grassland habitats in the contact zone of Pannonian and Alpine bioregions" (LIFE endemic PANALP) has been started. The expected end date of the project is 28/02/2027. The Szénás Hills PA – especially the habitat of the dolomite flax – is one of the project sites.*

In the framework of the LIFE project, several activities are ongoing, the results of which are needed to prepare a long-term management plan, and therefore we request an extension of these recommendation's deadline till 2027.

The most important activities are as follows.

- *In 2021 we set up a Scientific Advisor Committee (SAC) for the conversation of *Linum dolomiticum* (see annual Report 2022).*

*The SAC has a meeting once a year and gives recommendations on researches and interventions we need to do to conserve *Linum dolomiticum*. In line with the previous recommendations, this year the following progress has been made:*

- *samples have been collected for the phytocoenological, genetic and mycological (mycorrhizal) studies,*
- *bee colonies have been established in the area to promote pollination of *Linum dolomiticum*.*

On 5th of November the SAC held its annual meeting, where the researchers presented the partial results.

- *Dolomite flax monitoring*

Since 2001, we have been monitoring dolomite flax annually. Its population has been decreasing since 2010, unfortunately. This year we carried out three types of tests.

1. Demographic surveys

In 2024, the drastic downward trend that has been going on for years has moderated. In closed dolomite grasslands, the number of young individuals shows a minimal increase. Several dormant individuals appeared this year.

2. Data of the in situ planting squares

We have been conducting in situ planting experiments since 2017. Based on the data, closed dolomite grasses are mainly suitable for planting the species. This is in line with the experience that even in natural occurrences in closed grasslands, the species has substantial renewal.

In 2024 we established 4 new sample squares, where 600 seeds were planted.

3. Examination of the planting material

In 2024, weather was cool at the time of flowering, more pods did not ripen, but despite this, the thousand-core mass was barely below the long-term average.

2. continue the close co-operation by the Danube-Ipoly National Park Directorate, the Pilis Forest Company and the municipality of Pilisszentiván in the management of the protected area; ensure that nature conservation is the primary consideration in decisions affecting the protected area; and enhance co-operation between the managing authorities and the local municipalities by:

a. establishing equivalent trilateral agreements of co-operation with Nagykovácsi and Piliscsaba;

b. establishing more regular local forum meetings of officers and also the public;

- *North of the Szenas Hills PA is the Pilis Biosphere Reserve, designated as part of the UNESCO MAB programme. On 25 September 2024, we submitted an application to UNESCO for the extension of the Pilis Biosphere Reserve. The biosphere reserve will include parts of the villages of Pilisszentiván and Piliscsaba. The Szénás Hills European Diploma Site will thus directly border the biosphere reserve. UNESCO is expected to take a decision in July 2025. This decision significantly strengthens cooperation with both municipalities and contributes to the fulfilment of the recommendation.*
- *Results of the annual agreement of cooperation between the Danube-Ipoly National Park Directorate, the Pilis Forest Company and the Local Government of Pilisszentiván:*
 - *We have continued the monitoring of habitats where we removed Black pine stands.*
 - *We have continued the monitoring of the effect of large game species, comparing the vegetation of 6 fenced and 6 control quadrats;*
 - *The municipality of Pilisszentiván and Nagykovácsi gave financial support to our work in the visitor centre;*
 - *In 2004 there were local elections in Hungary. On 9 December 2024, we held a meeting with the new mayor of Pilisszentiván to continue the cooperation.*
- *We extended the cooperation agreement with Nagykovácsi and Piliscsaba, which were signed by directors of Danube-Ipoly National Park Directorate, Pilis Forest Company and the mayors in 2024.*

The trilateral agreements include the following:

- *Cooperation on public information. We can promote the values and management of the Szénás Hills in local newspapers and websites.*
- *We organise joint actions to preserve the area. Municipalities provide wildlife cameras for this purpose. We try to prevent together the dumping of green waste in the strictly protected area.*
- *Municipalities provide financial support for environmental education. DINPD gives discounts to local schoolchildren to participate in its programmes.*
- *The Pilis Forest Company provides professional assistance on forestry issues.*

3. continue to pursue European Union funding to meet management objectives; ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of project delivery by including the employment costs of the appropriate project staff in the project bids and subsequent budgets;

- *The LIFE project will supplement our (Danube-Ipoly National Park Directorate) resources for a few years as long as it lasts (until 28/02/2027). It includes several habitat reconstruction interventions, restorations and research.*

4. where short-term European Union funding is supporting longer-term needs, secure an appropriate, predictable and sustainable budget to ensure stability of funding;

- *As mentioned, a European Union funding (LIFE) is providing resources for managing the area until 2027. The continuation of this is ensured by agreements with the Pilis Forest Company and the local municipalities.*

5. continue effective game management in line with previous commitments, to reduce populations of non-native mouflon and fallow deer to zero; establish a time line, funding and appropriate methods to achieve this eradication within ten years; and continue to manage native large mammal populations, based on effective monitoring by the Pilis Forest Company. Game management can be effective only with the continuous maintenance of the fence around the area and with a combination of control

methods (for example, big game drives, shooting, trapping);

- *The management and monitoring of large game population and the maintenance of the fence around the area is part of the agreement of cooperation between the Danube–Ipoly National Park Directorate and the Pilis Forest Company (Agreement).*
- *Maintenance of the fence surrounding the protected area is carried out continuously by DINPI staff and volunteers. In the frame of the LIFE project (see above) we organised three volunteering days with 40 participants. Pilis Forest Company is also providing financial support for this work, which is part of the Agreement. This work is very important in order to prevent the technical sporting activities and to ensure the effectiveness of wildlife control.*

6. continue the eradication of non-native tree species, especially the black pine and black locust; especially for the black pine, establish a time line to complete the clearance programme, with funding and appropriate methods to achieve the objective within ten years; and investigate with forest authorities where and how, in appropriate locations, black pine stands as well as other woodland areas might be restored to open grassland, considering appropriate techniques, costs and opportunities, and addressing the regulations which govern such open habitat restoration;

- *The LIFE project includes the removal of additional stands of black pine in the Buda Hills, in the habitat of two endemic species, *Vincetoxicum panonicum* and *Linum dolomiticum*, on a total area of 171 ha. This work is planned to start in 2025.*
- *In November 2024, we presented to 75 participants of the Hungarian Conservation Biology Conference the work we have been doing for more than 40 years to eradicate non-native tree species.*

7. enhance the effectiveness of the buffer areas by the inclusion of appropriate regulations in land-use plans to limit inappropriate development; and investigate the practicality of regulating other activities (for example, fly tipping or the introduction of non-native species) in these areas;

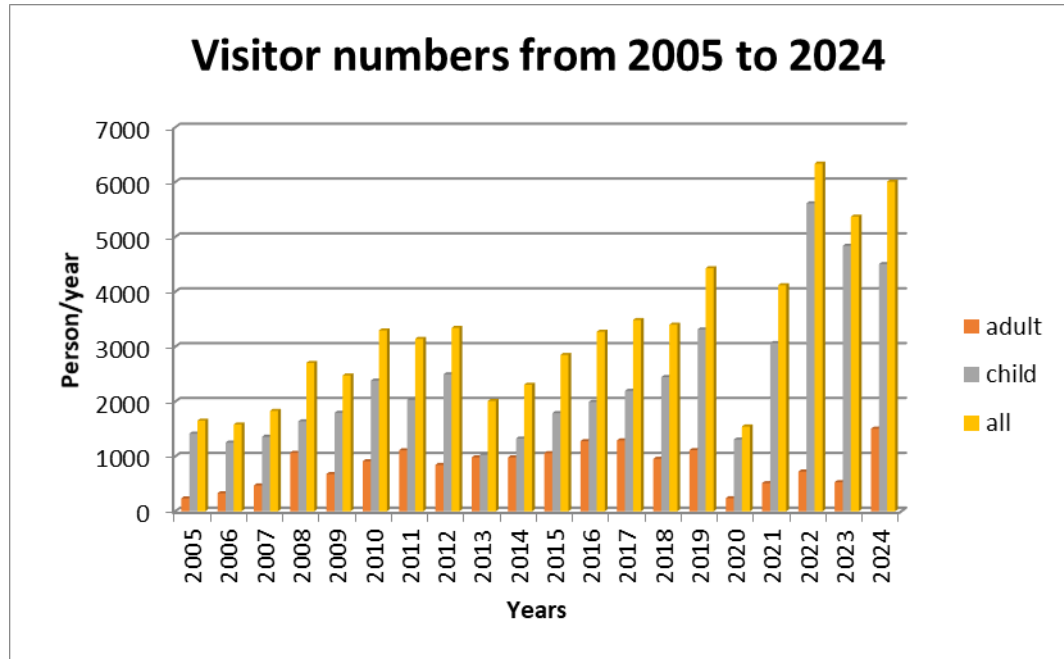
No changes

8. continue the effective management of visitor access for a range of user groups, including enhancing provision away from sensitive areas, such as horse-riding trails and mountain bike routes, where this can relieve pressure on the protected area.

- *There are 2 nature trails in the protected area. Both are being renovated in the frame of the LIFE project. We also organised a volunteer day for the trail renovation. In May, the renewed Nagy-Szenás trail was inaugurated with a ceremony attended by the mayor of Nagykovácsi and the director of the Pilis Park Forest Company.*
- *Last year we have completed one more nature trail in the village Pilisszentiván (Slötyi Nature Trail). This year we have created a phone app for it.*
- *We held many new programmes: family events, summer camp for children, nature birthday parties, etc. We were very popular with school groups, too. We organized outdoor programmes and series of lectures for the local children (primary school, nursery school. Some of the programs are as follows:*
 - *“Dolomite flax tours” in April and May - guided tours to the habitat of *Linum dolomiticum*,*
 - *Night Forest event in June*
 - *Summer camps for children (2 weeks)*
 - *Bird-watching and -ringing programmes regularly*
 - *Treasures of the autumn forest’ (18/10/2024) event.*
- *However, when the dolomite flax was in bloom, the rangers closed the area. Only the guided tour members were allowed to enter. This measure was necessary because of the increasing vulnerability of dolomite flax (see above).*
- *We joined the International Day of Birds and Trees (11/05/2024) and the International Bird Watching Day (05/10/2024).*
- *This year, we expanded World Water day to a theme week, because the interest has been huge for years.*
- *We created last year a modern escape room in the exhibition, which works successfully.*
- *A new Hungarian forest school rating system has been introduced in the Hungarian national parks, in which*

the visitor centre participates as a training place. This is a whole new opportunity for us.

- *Field exercises were held for university students (several weeks).*
- *We held two orientation days for elementary schools.*
- *We held a forest school programme for grammar school students.*
- *In August a field exercise was held for university students.*
- *A long-term increase is observed in the number of visitors (see 1. diagram). Between 01/01/2024 – 30/11/2024 : adults 1507, children 4507, all 6010.*



1. diagram: Visitor numbers from 2005 to 2024

3. Site Management: List here any changes to the European Diploma holding site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

- *Details of the ongoing LIFE project see above.*

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma holding site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any unresolved difficulties that you have encountered.

- *No changes*

5. Other information: List here any other information about the European Diploma holding site which you consider should be provided to the Council of Europe.

- *In 2024, we have completed the full recording of several Natura 2000 trigger species (*Pulsatilla grandis*, *Seseli leucospermum*) in the area. For *Pulsatilla grandis*, there is a decrease compared to previous data.*
- *The local NGO-s help our works (regular patrolling, habitat reconstruction works). The New Acropolis Association (NAA) and the Forest Guards Foundation (FGF) were the most active partners. The NNA members help in the habitat reconstruction work, regularly. The FGF placed nest-boxes and bird feeders into the forest (next to our nature trail).*
- *Every year, we have university field trainings and also some volunteers are helping us regularly. It's a good opportunity for them to learn, but at the same time, they help our work, too.*
- *We have promoted the area and the European Diploma several times in Hungarian public media and other local media.*