

Ulcinj Salina is one of the most valuable wetlands in the Balkans and is of exceptional importance for birdlife. However, because of only sporadic maintenance work, the dams and dykes are collapsing and valuable salt areas are being flooded with fresh water, with the result that the ecological value of this paradise for birds is diminishing.

On the occasion of World Wetlands Day, EuroNatur is drawing attention to recent developments in the struggle to protect Ulcinj Salina. In a letter to the Executive director of EuroNatur, Gabriel Schwaderer, the Montenegrin government, newly elected two months ago under minister president Zdravko Krivokapić, emphasised that the restoration of Ulcinj Salina is a top priority. A visit by several ministers to the salt pans on 17th December 2020 signalled that the new government in Podgorica is seriously interested in the protection of the Salina. By appointing an independent expert, the authorities have injected new impetus into the issue of the still unresolved ownership status of Ulcinj Salina.

Ulcinj Salina, located in the far south of Montenegro, was given protected status in June 2019 by the previous government. EuroNatur and its international partner organisations had campaigned for this for 20 years. Shortly after the granting of protected status, Ulcinj Salina was also declared a Ramsar site, that is to say a wetland of international importance. “Even this designation had not led to the previous government taking serious steps towards the improvement of the salt pans. Ulcinj Salina was only protected on paper,” says Janinka Lutze, a campaigner with EuroNatur. “We are expecting that the new government will convert its promises into action and provide the financial means necessary to restore the salt pans to their former glory as a breeding area and stopover for thousands of birds,” continues Lutze.

Ulcinj Salina is one of more than 2,400 wetlands worldwide that have been declared as Ramsar sites for their special ecological importance. Tomorrow, 2nd February 2021, the Ramsar Convention will be celebrating its 50th anniversary. Since 1997 this World Wetlands Day has been celebrated annually on 2nd February, the date on which the Convention was signed.

Source: euronatur.org